

SECOND EDITION

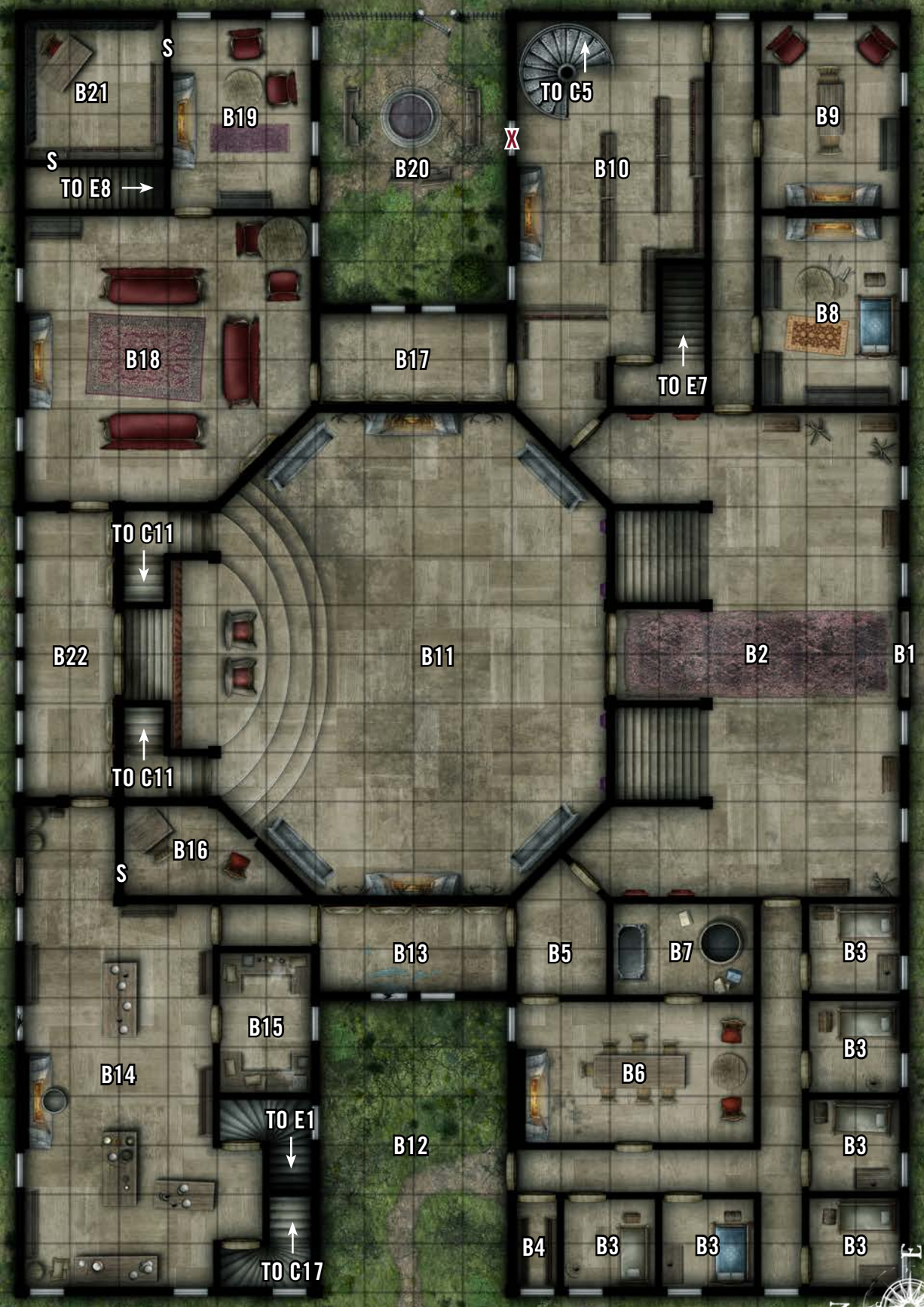
# PATHFINDER<sup>®</sup>

## MALEVOLENCE

JAMES JACOBS



XARWIN MANOR GROUND FLOOR



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



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# MALEVOLENCE

## Malevolence

by James Jacobs

### Chapter 1: Susurrations

### Chapter 2: Manifestation

### Chapter 3: Recrudescence

## Adventure Toolbox

by James Jacobs

### Researching the Malevolence

### Spells and Magic Items

### Psychopomp, Algea

### Tanglebones

## CONTENT WARNING

Malevolence presents a fully detailed haunted house—a place filled with horror, tragedy, and elements that some players might find uncomfortable. These elements include body horror, filicide, domestic violence, gore, mental illness, mental trauma, mutilation, physical trauma, and suicide. Before you run this adventure, understand that consent from everyone at the table, including the players and the Game Master, is vital to a safe and fun play experience. You should talk with your players before beginning the adventure and modify descriptions or events as appropriate.

## ON THE COVER

Exploring a dark and haunted library, Lem and Quinn are set upon by a vampiric mist in this creepy and dynamic cover by Igor Grechanyi.



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## Chapter 1: Susurrations.....4

Xarwin Manor has stood for decades over the ghost town of Crooked Cove. As the PCs explore the manor grounds, they get their first hints of what awaits them within the haunted mansion.

## Chapter 2: Manifestation .....16

Within the manor, the PCs are confronted with a harrowing combination of haunts, phantasmal visions, and creatures who have come to the manor and have been overwhelmed by the malevolence that now rules within these walls. By uncovering clues, investigating libraries, and speaking to a few of the less violent (though no less strange) inhabitants, the PCs begin to piece together the manor's horrific history.

## Chapter 3: Recrudescence .....44

Finally delving into the ancient ruins below, the PCs come face to face with the raw, monstrous power of Xarwin's horrific legacy. Something vile quickens deep below, and the sinister ghost of Ioseff Xarwin rises against those who would dare intrude.

## THE MALEVOLENCE

The primary antagonist of this adventure is Ioseff Xarwin, a ghost who has become obsessed with the pursuit of forbidden knowledge and the awful desire to merge the trapped consciousness of his murdered wife and children with his own mind, but there's more haunting the manor than a mere ghost. The slumbering remains of an ancient evil named Tchekuth, once a man but now a monstrosity transformed by contact with the Dark Tapestry, lies deep beneath the manor. The combination of Ioseff Xarwin's ghost and Tchekuth's slowly awakening consciousness has combined to form a powerful spiritual blight upon the manor and the dungeon below. This combination of spiritual energy is referred to in this adventure as "the malevolence."

## ADVANCEMENT TRACK

- 3** The PCs begin this adventure at 3rd level.
- 4** The PCs should reach 4th level before fully exploring the upper floors of Xarwin Manor.
- 5** The PCs should be 5th level before they start exploring the basement and dungeons.  
PCs who perform significant amounts of research should reach 6th level by the adventure's end, potentially even before the final encounters

## MALEVOLENCE FLIP-MAT

This adventure makes use of a custom Flip-Mat, available now everywhere you buy your games. Each side depicts an important location found in this adventure, and each map is also available on the inside covers of this book. There's no need to draw out these locations when you can pick up this Flip-Mat and have the work done for you!







## CHAPTER 1: SUSURRATION

During the height of the Thassilonian Empire, worshipers of Desna were persecuted. One such priest was an astronomer who lost his faith and called out to other gods for aid against the cruelty of the runelords. An answer came from not a god but an entity known as the Ashen Man, a trickster of fate and engineer of apocalypses. Nine years before Earthfall, the Ashen Man gave the astronomer a dangerous artifact plucked from a vault on an impossibly distant world—the *Void Mirror*. The church of Desna, aghast that one of their own turned to such evils, rose up against him.

The astronomer fled across the southern sea, and the Desnans pursued him until they finally confronted him on an unknown far shore. There, he invoked the greatest aspect of the *Void Mirror* and took the energies of the Dark Tapestry into his own soul, beginning a horrific transformation by

inviting an ancient alien intellect named Tchekuth into his soul. The Desnans defeated him before he could complete his alien apotheosis; they buried him deep underground and placed the *Void Mirror* as a capstone to that grave, using its own magic against him to ensure he would never rise again. These Desnans never returned to their home, instead forming the cloistered Order of the Starless Night and living out the remainder of their days watching over their enemy's grave.

Yet this series of events fully aligned with the Ashen Man's plan, as he'd never intended for the astronomer to threaten doomed Thassilon. When the Desnans buried him, they unwittingly played into the Ashen Man's machinations. For the past ten thousand years, the astronomer's name and legacy have vanished. Only Tchekuth remains, growing and ripening deep under what's now Xarwin Manor. This entity is the

# MALEVOLENCE

true source of the malevolence that threatens the world above, yet none suspect what slumbers below.

Not long before the Age of Lost Omens began, the small town of Crooked Cove sprung up on the same shoreline on which the forgotten astronomer met his fate so long ago, in what is now Ravounel. The Hellknight Order of the Gate originally founded the settlement in 4599 AR as a staging ground for the initial construction of Citadel Enferac (some 75 miles away in the mountains to the southeast of the town). Crooked Cove was left to its own devices after the Hellknights completed the above-ground portion of their citadel and turned to infernal sources to complete the bulk of their underground fortress. Four decades later, when the Chelish Civil War that erupted at the onset of the Age of Lost Omens ended in a Thrune victory, Crooked Cove again attracted outside attention.

A newly appointed Paracount named Ioseff Xarwin moved to Crooked Cove and built a manor for his family on a bluff overlooking the town, incorporating the ruins of the Order of the Starless Night's shrine into the estate grounds. Years later, a mysterious tragedy struck Xarwin Manor. Over the months to follow, other tragedies infected the town, and by the end of the year, the citizens of Crooked Cove had abandoned the town entirely. Faced with other, more pressing issues, the Chelaxian government never bothered to replace Ioseff Xarwin or to look into the events that emptied Crooked Cove. Now and then as the years rolled by, adventurers and explorers visited the region to explore the ruined town, but those who visited Xarwin Manor either vanished or remained quiet about their experiences therein. The years turned to decades, and Crooked Cove remained largely ignored. However, among certain circles, Xarwin Manor cultivated a reputation as one of Cheliah's "most-haunted forgotten places."

House Thrune had little time to meddle in Ravounel's remote corners, but when Ravounel escaped from Cheliah's clutches in 4715 AR to become its own nation, its new leaders took an increasing interest in reclaiming and rebuilding its hinterlands—the parts of the nation that Cheliah had left alone for so many years. With a renewed interest in rebuilding Crooked Cove, newcomers will soon arrive in the region. However, they're unlikely to be fully prepared for the awful malevolence that awaits them in and below the sagging eaves and moldering walls of Xarwin Manor.

## Starting Malevolence

*Malevolence* presents a fully detailed haunted house for your PCs to explore. A wealth of sinister secrets and awful truths await discovery within this old

### UNLOCKING RESEARCH TOPICS

Research is an important part of this adventure, and as the PCs progress through the story, they'll unlock new topics to investigate. See the Adventure Toolbox beginning on page 59 for full details on how the PCs can research the mysteries of Xarwin Manor.

manor, along with some potent treasures, rare spells, and opportunities to save the region from an unseen threat from beyond the stars. This adventure heavily relies on exploration and investigation, so if players miss clues or inadvertently skip areas that could help them progress, you should try to give them hints or even encourage them to revisit parts of the manor.

Only one road provides access to the region: a long and winding track that becomes increasingly overgrown the further it stretches from Kintargo, the capital of Ravounel. The journey from Kintargo to the site is 280 miles. As travelers round the final corner to take in the sight of the long-abandoned settlement, a partially collapsed sign proclaims the site to be "Crook Cove." The town's buildings have largely collapsed into rubble. Half-collapsed pilings of wood jut from the surf, all that remains of many of the structures that once graced the shoreline.

None can miss the lone surviving building that stands within a clearing atop an otherwise wooded bluff overlooking the town to the northeast. Surrounded by a rusty iron fence, this manor was built so many years ago by Ioseff Xarwin, and among the town's buildings, it alone has stood the test of time. A short additional walk up the hill along a barely-discernible track leads to reach the front gates to the manor grounds.

Before the PCs can make that trip up the hill and begin their exploration of Xarwin Manor, they'll need a reason to visit this "haunted forgotten place." Perhaps it presents a convenient place to take shelter in during a storm. Maybe they've heard rumors of how haunted the place was, so curiosity drew them here to see for themselves. Two slightly more detailed hooks to start *Malevolence* are presented below. In any event, as the PCs explore the manor, they'll learn of an even more important goal: to defeat a lingering but growing evil that, if left alone, could someday herald the end of the world.

## An Unexpected Inheritance

Ioseff Xarwin betrayed his parents and siblings to House Thrune, but one of those siblings could have

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possibly escaped imprisonment and excruciation by seeking asylum in a friendly city like Kintargo. When Ravounel separated from Chelaxian rule, the task of sifting through decades of paperwork to make restitution to families who suffered under House Thrune became one of the new nation's goals. The complex maze of redactions and missing documents has made it a maddening task, but now and then, a discovery is made.

This adventure hook assumes one such discovery—that one (or more, at your discretion) of the PCs is the last surviving heir of the Xarwin line. The PC could be a direct descendant from the escaped sibling (who would have sought shelter in Kintargo almost 80 years ago in 4642 AR), an adopted child, or even the offspring of a close family friend. Whatever the connection, legal researchers determine that the PC in question is the rightful inheritor of the Xarwin estate, which includes the forgotten manor and, likely, much of what remains within its walls. Alternatively, an NPC heir could have hired the PCs to travel to Xarwin Manor to examine the estate and catalog its contents. In either case, notes within the document make it plain that before the estate can be liquidated, it must first be made safe to prospective buyers. Whether or not the PC wishes to make the manor their new home or simply prepare it for sale, a full exploration of the site made to ensure its safety is required.

This adventure hook unlocks the topics of Xarwin Manor and Ioseff Xarwin.

## Investigating a Legacy

A curious NPC has heard rumors about Xarwin Manor being one of the “most-haunted forgotten places” of Chelax, is intrigued by the unknown legacy of a minor Chelaxian noble, or has learned about a mysterious magical relic said to have last been in the possession of Ioseff Xarwin. Choose one of the research topics on page 60, and once they fully research the topic, they'll have enough information to earn a payment of 400 gp after reporting to their patron. Alternately, depending on your group's playstyle, the players could be the curious party in question, in which case the only

reward for completing the research topic is satisfying their own curiosity.

This adventure hook unlocks the topics of Xarwin Manor and one of the following additional topics: Asethanna Xarwin, Ioseff Xarwin, the *starless scope*, or the *Void Mirror*.

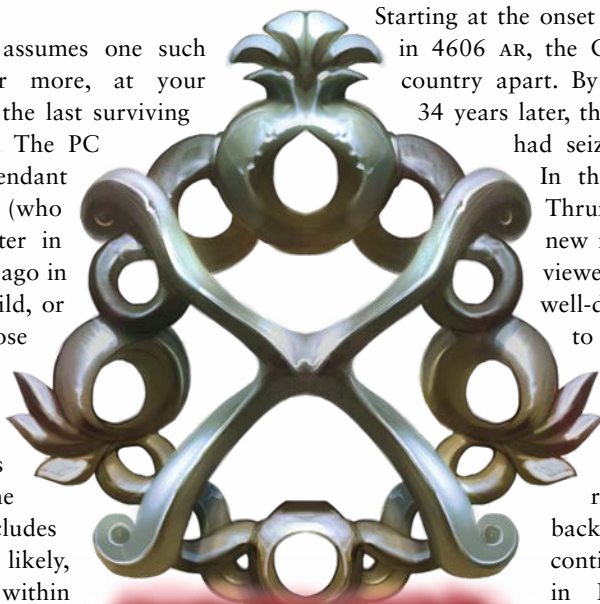
## The Xarwin Tragedy

Starting at the onset of the Age of Lost Omens in 4606 AR, the Chelish Civil War tore the country apart. By the time the dust settled 34 years later, the diabolical House Thrune had seized control of the nation. In the following years, House Thrune set about assigning new nobility to its lands. Many viewed these assignments as well-deserved rewards for loyalty to Thrune; however, there was one exception—the archduchy of Ravounel, a remote reach of Chelax that quickly garnered a reputation as an undesirable backwater. While House Thrune continued posting nobles in Ravounel to punish or humiliate those who had fallen from favor, an eager young noble quickly volunteered for the job of overseeing the southwesternmost county of

Ilverness: a young noble named Ioseff Xarwin.

Ioseff was a bitter fourth son of a minor noble family, frustrated by a perceived lack of opportunities. When he met an intriguing and charming young woman named Asethanna Arvanxi during a political party, his frustrations only grew, for while he and Asethanna quickly fell in love, Asethanna's father Elden would clearly never approve of her marriage to a man of Ioseff's station. So, Ioseff made a fateful choice—he betrayed his family to House Thrune, revealing to the church and state that his mother, father, and siblings were Desnan sympathizers.

Though never a loyal Desnan himself, Ioseff nonetheless had great interest in his family's old books that hinted at the mysteries of the dark regions of the universe between the stars—the so-called Dark Tapestry. Before he betrayed his family to House Thrune, Ioseff stole several of his parents' tomes and hid them away to later study. Thrune came knocking soon thereafter, and in return for revealing the dissidents hiding among the nobility, Thrune



Xarwin Family Crest



granted Ioseff the title of Paracount. This sudden change in fortune proved more than enough to please Asethanna's father, and while the rest of Ioseff's family awaited their executions in prison, he and Asethanna wedded.

As for where he wished to be posted as Paracount, Ioseff had already made his choice. Among the old Desnan texts he'd kept for himself, he found warnings of aliens from the Dark Tapestry known collectively as the Dominion of the Black. Ioseff's interest grew as he read of Dominion practices through which knowledge could be directly transferred from one mind to another by absorbing the other mind into one's own. The concept of learning a lifetime's lore with a single procedure fascinated Ioseff. The texts also mentioned rumors of several magical artifacts associated with the Dominion, including something called the *Void Mirror*—a looking glass that only reflected the night sky and reputedly had the power to call down “those who dwelt behind the stars.” The tome went on to mention that a sect of Desnans known as the Order of the Starless Night had hidden the *Void Mirror* inside a sacred monolith called the Cosmic Crypt on the west coast of Cheliox—a site near the village of Crooked Cove. Ioseff's explorers confirmed the existence of a monolith that could only be the Cosmic Crypt he sought.

Ioseff choosing Ilverness as his post upon becoming Paracount puzzled House Thrune, though they were pleased to have at least one trustworthy loyalist in Ravounel. Asethanna needed little convincing; Crooked Cove would give her a peaceful place to pursue her interest in sculpture and painting as well as put some much-desired distance between herself and her overbearing family.

Over the following year, Xarwin drew upon funds provided by the Chelaxian government and saw to the construction of a regal manor on a bluff overlooking Crooked Cove. When his workers discovered a small underground complex below the site, Ioseff knew he'd chosen the right place for his home. He ordered the workers to brick over the entrances to the underground complex and that no worker should enter; Ioseff then instructed them to complete their work on the manor above. Soon after the workers finished the construction, they met unexpected ends, as Xarwin secretly arranged for their “accidental deaths” to keep the existence of those chambers to himself.

Paracount Xarwin arrived in Crooked Cove with a full contingent of court-appointed servants, soldiers, and a pregnant wife. Asethanna gave birth to twins—Marney and Mira—the first night the couple spent in their newly constructed manor, and

for the next few years, the noble family had an idyllic life. During this time, Ioseff built secret doors in the brick walls between the manor's basement and the ancient structure below, and soon thereafter, he discovered the *Void Mirror* after entering the Cosmic Crypt. He took it from its cradle and installed it in the observatory he'd built into the highest point of his manor. By doing so, Ioseff unknowingly removed the only thing that kept the consciousness of the slumbering monstrosity below his home—the ancient evil Tchekuth—in check.

For years, life stayed blissful for the Xarwins, but as Tchekuth's consciousness grew, his malevolence began to subtly affect Ioseff—an influence that also drew the attention of an increasing number of nosoi psychopomps. While these strange birdlike creatures delighted and inspired Asethanna, Ioseff found them unsettling and threatening. When he wasn't studying, he took shots at these birds—and increasingly any bird life—with his bows and magic. The nosois learned to keep their distance, unable at that time to directly intervene as long as Tchekuth's consciousness remained buried and dormant.

As the years wore on, the family dynamic gradually decayed. Asethanna grew protective of the nosois and irate at her husband's hatred toward them, increasingly turning her attentions to creating her psychopomp-inspired artwork. Servants and tutors largely raised the twins, Marney and Mira, who were left to their own devices for weeks at a time to pursue their interests in hunting and architecture, respectively. Ioseff spent more and more time locked away in his office, observatory, or hidden laboratories below, growing more and more obsessed with the Dominion of the Black.

In 4645 AR, Ioseff took the next step down the fated path that brought ruin and death to his family. He learned that the last known *starless scope*, a rare and powerful magic item said to have links to the Order of the Starless Night, was going to be auctioned at Ustalav's Sinkomakti School at the end of the year. Ioseff traveled to Ustalav and spent several weeks researching the *starless scope*'s history; there, he confirmed his suspicion that the magical telescope was just what he needed to unlock the *Void Mirror*'s deepest secrets. During this trip, he also met an eccentric half-elf astronomer named Fulvia Nostraema. The two started a torrid affair, even exchanging inscribed rings purchased from a local (and discrete) jeweler; however, Ioseff broke off their affair when he realized Fulvia was only using him to secure funds and access the *starless scope* for herself. Weeks later, Ioseff returned home with the magical prize in his possession.

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Over the following years, Ioseff continued seeking out texts and magical items to further his research. To develop his theory of absorbing the memories of other minds, he needed to extract and preserve brains. Several years passed since his purchase of the *starless scope* before Ioseff had his first true success with the *Void Mirror*, when he used it to call down and recruit a surreal, fungal creature called a mi-go to aid him in his research. After securing the mi-go's long-term compliance with an *inveigle* ritual, Ioseff managed to extract and preserve a human brain for the first time—the brain of Faldur Adenathy, an astronomer and occultist whose lectures Ioseff had attended during his trip to Ustalav in 4645 AR.

A decade later, love had already left the Xarwins, but what would have surely been a death blow to Ioseff's marriage arrived in the form of Fulvia Nostraema and a sullen youth she introduced to Ioseff as Anitoli—his son by way of their affair. Fulvia promised to refrain from sharing this revelation with Asethanna on a singular condition: that Fulvia receive unimpeded access to Ioseff's libraries and resources (particularly the *starless scope*), along with a place to stay for the many months she needed to complete her masterpiece. Ioseff indignantly agreed and gave over the northeastern wing of Xarwin Manor's upper floor for Fulvia and her son to inhabit. He explained to Asethanna that Fulvia would pay handsomely to rent the living spaces and for access to his equipment and library. Asethanna had her suspicions about the truth, but by that point, she had largely come to see Ioseff as little more than a necessary evil to finance her own work and lifestyle; at the time, she accepted her husband's story at face value.

A year later in 4656 AR, things finally came to a tragic end. Fulvia neared completion of what she viewed as her masterpiece—a lengthy text she called “Nihilism's Sacred Garrote.” She never finished it, though, for as she continued to research the religious practices of the Dominion of the Black, Fulvia came to suspect that an agent of the Dominion slumbered beneath the very manor and that its dreams were luring a vast, devouring star toward Golarion. She became convinced that this entity and the Dominion intended to offer up Golarion to the lightless star as part of a sacrifice known as the “Banquet.” Fulvia then killed her son to spare him the agony of perishing along with the rest of the world before attempting to burn the manor down. Ioseff stopped her before she succeeded in the latter task and, upon realizing what she'd done to Anitoli, took the opportunity to escort Fulvia off to Darakole Sanitarium in Vyre “for her own protection.” He paid for the service

by handing “Nihilism's Sacred Garrote” over to the Sanitarium's director, explaining that the text was brilliant and, if Darakole published it, would certainly earn more than enough from the venture to cover expenses.

When Ioseff returned home late that night after seeing Fulvia off, he was greeted in his private office by a furious Asethanna, who had taken advantage of her husband and Fulvia's departure to search Fulvia's rooms. The discovery of Anitoli's murder already scandalized her, but her discovery of an inscribed ring pushed her over the edge, for now she had proof of her husband's affair. She confronted him with the ring and accused him of driving Fulvia to murder their own son, whereupon Ioseff snatched the ring away from her and defiantly put it on, proclaiming Fulvia to have been the better of his two lovers. Enraged, Asethanna used one of her carving hatchets to lop Ioseff's left hand off at the wrist and took it, ring and all, from the room to burn in a fireplace. Though grievously wounded, Ioseff recovered enough, with the aid of some healing potions, to confront Asethanna in her room as she and the house's majordomo were packing belongings to leave the manor with the children.

There, Ioseff murdered Asethanna and the majordomo. Now beyond redemption and having lost sight of reality, Ioseff hatched a plan to “reunite and rebuild” his family, but first, he had to preserve his family's brains. Using the techniques he'd learned from the trapped mi-go, he extracted Asethanna's brain and preserved it. He then murdered his own children and did the same with their brains. He hid the bodies of all three within the basement. When the frightened servants woke the next morning, knowing only arguments and screaming had filled the night before, Ioseff spun a tale that his wife had taken the twins and left him to return home to central Chelax. The servants knew better than to question the story.

Life in Xarwin Manor changed forever after this awful night. The servants were banned from visiting the manor's upper floors entirely, and those few who dared to break this rule invariably went missing. However, life for a Chelaxian servant in those days left little room for options—they kept their heads low and did as they were told, and for several months, an equilibrium was established. Ioseff split his time between killing the birds that increasingly tormented him and poring through his texts for a method by which he and his family could become one.

Ioseff soon settled on an outrageous and awful plan. Using methods similar to those he'd employed



to call down his trapped mi-go, he would call down and imprison an alien of the Dominion of the Black: a brain collector. Then, with the aid of his mi-go prisoner, Ioseff would have his brain transplanted into the other alien's body, after which he could collect the preserved brains of his wife and children within his own body so that they would be once again reunited with him—this time for eons.

As the months wore on, Ioseff made the complex preparations for his heinous plan, growing more and more obsessed. He spent much of his evenings crafting a life-sized statue of a brain collector and incorporated containers to keep his family's brains on display. Servants who grew too rebellious or curious became stock for his increasingly violent experiments, their remains disposed of in a shallow underground pool in a cave below the manor. Simultaneously, the nosoi psychopomps in the area grew bolder. Ioseff spent an increasing amount of time on the balconies of the upper floors using crossbows and magic to exterminate these avian "pests." When the psychopomps nearly managed to manifest as a full swarm known as an algea for the first time, Ioseff knew he had to step up in progressing his plan to merge with his family before the psychopomps could ruin everything.

Rushing his work proved to be Ioseff's undoing. That night, he used the *Void Mirror* to perform the ritual to pull down a brain collector from the Dark Tapestry, but Ioseff botched the rite. The brain collector tore free from the *Void Mirror*'s influence and attacked him. Ioseff managed to defeat the monster, but not before it afflicted him with a powerful, debilitating spell: *internal insurrection* (page 67). Ioseff retreated to his hidden laboratory; he raced against time to reverse engineer the rare spell and find a cure, only to perish at his desk minutes after he finally deciphered the magic. As he died, Tchekuth's slowly reviving remains pulsed awful power, drawing and feeding on what remained of Ioseff's compassion and humanity to leave behind a wracked, ruined ghost.

For several days, no one in Crooked Cove realized that Xarwin Manor finally stood empty. Yet each night, the town's citizens endured increasingly awful dreams. Further empowered by the atrocities in Xarwin Manor, Tchekuth's influence had begun to infect the town, and as these nightmares drove the citizens to acts of brutality, depravity, and suicide, those who had endured soon pulled up stakes and abandoned the settlement. No one bothered to check on Xarwin Manor. No one learned of Ioseff's final fate.

The combination of Ioseff's unquiet spirit and Tchekuth's growing malevolence now infects Xarwin

Manor from root to crown. An ectoplasmic shell encases the abode to ward off the psychopomps and to preserve what dwells within, much akin to Ioseff's methods of preserving extracted brains. He knows that his family's brains remain preserved and viable, yet as a ghost, he lacks the corporeal body (and brain) required to join with them in a fresh new brain collector. Even in this state of undeath, Ioseff retains his poisoned mind, though his own brain has long since rotted away.

Now, all Ioseff needs is a proper host.

All he needs is a flesh and blood brain.

## A Malevolent Timeline

The following timeline lists dates for important events associated with this adventure.

Date	Event
-5300	The Ashen Man gives the <i>Void Mirror</i> to Tchekuth. Soon thereafter, Tchekuth is slain on a distant shore far from his home by Desnans who use the <i>Void Mirror</i> to help imprison him.
-5098	The last Desnan of the Order of the Starless Night dies, leaving the <i>Void Mirror</i> unguarded and forgotten.
4599	Crooked Cove is founded.
4640	House Thrune wins control of Cheliah; Ioseff Xarwin and Asethanna Arvanxi fall in love.
4641	Ioseff betrays his family to earn the trust and support of Thrune; he becomes Paracount and weds Asethanna.
4642	Construction of Xarwin Manor is completed; Ioseff and Asethanna move in. Marney and Mira Xarwin are born. Ioseff discovers the <i>Void Mirror</i> . Tchekuth's consciousness begins to stir deep below while nosois start gathering in the surrounding woods.
4645	Ioseff travels to Ustalav, where he and Fulvia Nostraema have a brief affair; Ioseff purchases the <i>starless scope</i> .
4653	Ioseff calls down and traps a mi-go; with its magically compelled aid, he extracts and preserves Faldur Adenathy's brain.
4655	Fulvia Nostraema and her son Anitoli arrive at Xarwin Manor.
4656	Fulvia murders her son and is committed to Darakole Sanitarium. Ioseff murders his wife and children and preserves their brains.
4657	Ioseff's attempt to call down a brain collector backfires. He perishes and becomes a ghost. Tchekuth's dreams infect Crooked Cove, and the town is abandoned by the end of the year.
4716	Ravounel secedes from Cheliah.
4721	The current year.

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## ABOUT THE CAUL'S HATRED

The Xarwin Caul's burst of hatred effect is meant to give the PCs an immediate and dramatic visual cue to the power and sinister nature of the evil influence over the manor. It isn't meant to punish PCs who have birds as animal companions or familiars, or who are avians themselves (like tengu). The burst of hatred slays bird wildlife in the region but doesn't affect birds who have formed a bond with a character or sapient birds. When the caul bursts, such avians feel the sudden intense wave of hatred directed at themselves rather than at the surrounding wildlife, but they experience no lasting effects beyond this occurrence.

## Xarwin Manor Grounds

The overgrown road comes to an end at a pair of rusty wrought-iron gates flanked by two stone pillars. Beyond, the woodlands recede before a large clearing of tall, dry grass, at the center of which looms Xarwin Manor. The building's roofline rises in the middle to a third level surrounded by a walkway, while the closed dome of what appears to be an observatory rises above. Slate shingles cover the steeply-slanted roofs below this central dome with more rusty ironwork adorning its eaves. The paint along the manor's wooden walls has mostly peeled away, leaving behind a weathered building clad in creeping vines that looks like forgotten by the world. Even at a distance, the building's facade seems unusually moist, as if it had just weathered torrential downpour despite the dryness of the surrounding grounds.

Any PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check notes the presence of what seem to be hundreds of whippoorwills perched quietly on the manor's roof. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Nature check to Recall Knowledge notes this behavior as unusual; a character who succeeds at a DC 25 Religion check or DC 15 Psychopomp Lore check to Recall Knowledge knows that whippoorwills are associated with psychopomps, death, and the faith of Pharasma, and that their presence in such numbers suggests unquiet spirits might linger within the manor.

## The Xarwin Caul

When Ioseff Xarwin died, the slowly wakening remnants of Tchekuth deep below fed on the once human and compassionate parts of the nobleman, leaving behind a ruined soul incapable of continuing to the afterlife. A few days later, this same process created the Xarwin Caul—a thin layer of pale, transparent,

green ectoplasm that encases the aboveground portion of the manor. The Xarwin Caul can be thought of as a supernatural extension of two of Xarwin's greatest obsessions. Outward, it represents his fear of death, symbolized by a hatred of psychopomps and their goals of shepherding souls into the Boneyard. Inward, it represents his desire to absorb knowledge by drawing the memories and intellect of creatures within the manor into his own being.

As long as the Xarwin Caul is active, avians and psychopomps can instinctively sense a source of great hatred from somewhere within the manor. Characters who are avian or have ties to psychopomps (including any who worship Pharasma or a psychopomp demigod) can feel this strange sensation as soon as they step onto the manor grounds. The sensation isn't harmful and has no rules-associated effects but remains unsettling nonetheless.

All living creatures in Xarwin Manor feel a strong sense of "belonging," as if they had always considered it their home. These sensations arise from the malevolence's intrusion into the minds of living creatures within the manor, during which it feeds on memories. This slow and insidious feeding takes months to completely absorb all of a creature's memories of life before coming to the manor. As a result, it's unlikely to cause long-term damage to the PCs, but creatures who do succumb feel that they've always dwelled within the house, forgetting their prior lives. You can determine how much time it takes for a creature to forget all its memories and seek to forever stay in Xarwin Manor, but it shouldn't take less than a month.

This effect is why some of the manor's living creatures, many of which entered the manor years ago, continue to live there to the present day. In cases where the PCs establish communication with the manor's residents, the PCs should feel unsettled or disturbed by these creatures' eerie convictions about Xarwin Manor being their home. Creatures who have reached this level of influence from the malevolence don't regain their memories if the Caul is disabled, but they do feel uncomfortable and instinctively aggressive toward anything they perceive as invading their "home." The compulsion to remain within the manor's walls fades only once the Caul is completely destroyed, yet these creatures' memories of their lives before their time at the estate remain gone forever.

**Hazard:** The Xarwin Caul is a powerful haunt but not one that can particularly harm the PCs or their companions. The PCs can't permanently destroy the Caul until they put Xarwin's ghost to rest. As long as the Caul is active, it exudes an aura



that causes any psychopomp within a mile of the manor to become sickened 1, and any within 300 feet to become sickened 3. These psychopomps can't reduce their sickened condition while in this area. This effect doesn't function against psychopomps within or below the manor, and it's suppressed if the caul bursts.

## XARWIN CAUL

HAZARD 10

UNIQUE HAUNT

**Stealth** DC 35 (master)

**Description** The Caul is a thin layer of transparent, moist webbing clinging to the manor's exterior surfaces. The stuff feels slippery and unnaturally cold to the touch, and it clings and stretches when a finger or other object used to touch the Caul is pulled away.

**Disable** DC 32 Occultism (master) or DC 34 Religion (expert) to exorcise the caul

**AC** 30; **Fort** +22, **Ref** +16, **Will** +24

**Hardness** 18; **HP** 70 (BT 35); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weaknesses** positive 10

**Burst of Hatred** **Trigger** (emotion, mental) A creature opens any door or window into Xarwin Manor, or any creature or object passes through the caul from outside into the manor; **Effect** The caul immediately bursts like an oily bubble, vanishing in an instant of foul-smelling smoke. A wave of susurrations creeps through the area, and all sapient creatures experience a sudden sensation of utter hatred toward birdlife for the span of a single heartbeat. All natural avians within a 300-foot emanation from Xarwin Manor (but not those within the manor or underground) take 15d6 mental damage (DC 33 basic Fortitude save).

**Reset** 1 week; putting Xarwin's ghost to rest permanently destroys the haunt.

**Reward:** The PCs earn 40 XP after interacting with the Caul and another 40 XP the first time they remove it from Xarwin Manor. Once they put Xarwin's spirit to rest and permanently disable the Caul, they earn an additional 120 XP.

## Xarwin Manor Phantasms

As the PCs explore Xarwin Manor, the malevolence manifests disturbing phantasms to wear away at the PCs' resolve. The Xarwin Manor phantasms have a debilitating effect on the PCs over the long term by making them increasingly susceptible to the more dangerous haunts found in the building, but they also give the PCs a chance to experience brief revelatory visions into the nature of the evil within Xarwin Manor. You can determine when phantasms occur, though the best way to use them is to keep the PCs on their toes

by having one occur in a room they previously thought they'd cleared of peril. Some keyed encounter areas suggest points where you can have a phantasm occur.

Details on the malevolence condition that Xarwin Manor phantasms can cause appear on page 60.

## XARWIN MANOR PHANTASM

HAZARD -1

UNCOMMON HAUNT

**Stealth** DC 15

**Description** The malevolence manifests a disturbing illusion meant to unsettle and erode intruders' resistances to the manor's dangers. Roll 1d12 on the Xarwin Manor Phantasms table to determine what sort of illusion occurs; alternatively, pick an appropriate one from the table or create one of your own using the listed results as examples or inspiration.

**Disable** DC 15 Occultism or Religion (to exorcise the disquieting phantasm)

**AC** 12; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +2, **Will** +9

**Hardness** 2; **HP** 12 (BT 6); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weaknesses** positive 2

**Haunting Vision** **Trigger** (emotion, enchantment, fear, mental, occult) **Effect** A creature comes within 5 feet of the phantasm; **Effect** The disquieting phantasm creates a haunting vision. The triggering creature must attempt a DC 19 Will save.

**Critical Success** The creature is unaffected.

**Success** The creature is unaffected.

**Failure** If the creature doesn't have the malevolence condition, the value of its malevolence condition increases by 1.

**Critical Failure** The creature increases its malevolence condition by 1.

## XARWIN MANOR PHANTASMS

d12	Result
1	A damp, ectoplasmic handprint appears on a window or wall, only to reach out of the surface briefly to try to choke a character. The hand vanishes a moment later, but the PC's left hand feels weirdly damp until it's wiped off.
2	A painless, bloodless incision manifests across a PC's forehead, completely encircling their skull over a few seconds; when the incision completes its circuit, the PC experiences a momentarily excruciating headache before the incision vanishes.
3	The PC catches a glimpse of a shadowy figure in a reflective surface; the figure raises an arm as if to point at them, yet the arm has no hand. When the PC turns to confront the image or blinks, the figure is gone.
4	The PC stumbles then notices that loose objects in the room shake, curtains swing,

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and floorboards shift. If a window is visible, the trees outside sway even though it's a windless day. As everything grows still, the PC gets the feeling that something immense just shifted somewhere down below. No other PC experiences this sensation.

- 5 The PC feels a sudden pain on their left wrist and is convinced that their hand has been cut off. Upon looking at the suspected wound, the pain vanishes and the hand looks fine.
- 6 The sky through a window appears to be fully night during the day, or the ceiling above suddenly fades away to reveal the night sky. The PC feels something looking back at them from somewhere between the stars, but as soon as they blink, look away, or draw attention to the night sky, the image reverts to normal.
- 7 The PC is suddenly overcome with the conviction that they've lived in this manor for decades and that the other PCs are trespassers, only for the feeling to vanish moments later.
- 8 The PC suddenly feels an overwhelming sense of betrayal from one of the other PCs—preferably the one with which they have the closest emotional ties. A heartbeat later, the feeling fades away.
- 9 The PC can hear what sounds like a small bird trapped in a wall, struggling for escape; no other PC can hear it. A few moments later, the PC feels that they're the trapped bird, and then the phantasm fades away.
- 10 The PC suddenly loses all senses and feels weightless for a split second. In the darkness, they get the creeping thought that something is about to give them the gift of sight, but they know that what they'll see will be awful. Then, everything returns to normal.
- 11 The PC is, for a few frightening moments, suddenly convinced that someone else is thinking for them and that they've been tricked into thinking they're in their own body when they're not.
- 12 The PC suddenly remembers an awful memory from their past or childhood, then feels a sense of relief as that memory is pulled from their minds. They can remember that something bad happened but not what it was.

## A1. Front Gate

Swaths of moist green moss grow on the stone pillars that flank this rusty wrought iron gate. Tangles of blackberry vines weave through the gate's bars. A rusty metal coat of arms comprised of a series of overlapping circles, rings, and stars adorns the front of the gate.

The front gate isn't locked, but the thick growth of vines helps hold it closed. A PC can Force it Open with a successful DC 13 Athletics check; alternatively, the vines can be hacked through with a few rounds of work, after which the gates can be pushed open without an Athletics check, though the rusty hinges shriek and squeal in protest. The gate and iron fence surrounding the manor grounds are 10 feet high. Characters can Climb over both with a DC 15 Athletics check, but on a critical failure, the climber slips and impales themselves on one of the many iron spikes that adorn the top of the fence or gate, taking 1d8 piercing damage (DC 16 basic Reflex save).

A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Society or DC 16 Heraldry Lore to Recall Knowledge knows that Ioseff Xarwin designed the coat of arms on the gate in 4641 AR as his official Paracount seal and new family crest. With a successful DC 18 Astronomy Lore or DC 20 Nature Lore check to Recall Knowledge, a character notes that the coat of arms is a stylized geocentric map of Golarion's solar system.

## A2. Fallen Oak

## Moderate 3

The overgrown path leading from the front gate splits into a crossroads. To the north, the path leads to the manor's front door, while to the east, it curls around the manor's side. To the west, the path leads toward a collapsed building and an algae-choked pond before winding around the manor as well. The rotting trunk of a fallen oak tree lies across the crossroads, almost as if forming a barrier to those who would approach the manor—or perhaps to keep something within from traveling out.

**Creatures:** The fallen oak is merely an old tree, not a supernatural omen, but a character who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check notes that the soggy bark seems to flex and throb slightly in places, akin to a pulse. This motion stems from a pair of centipede swarms that infest the log. If anyone approaches within 10 feet of the log, both swarms erupt in a slithering burst of crawling, bright-orange awfulness. The swarms hunger and attack all living creatures, but they don't pursue further than 60 feet from the log.

## CENTIPEDE SWARMS (2)

## CREATURE 3

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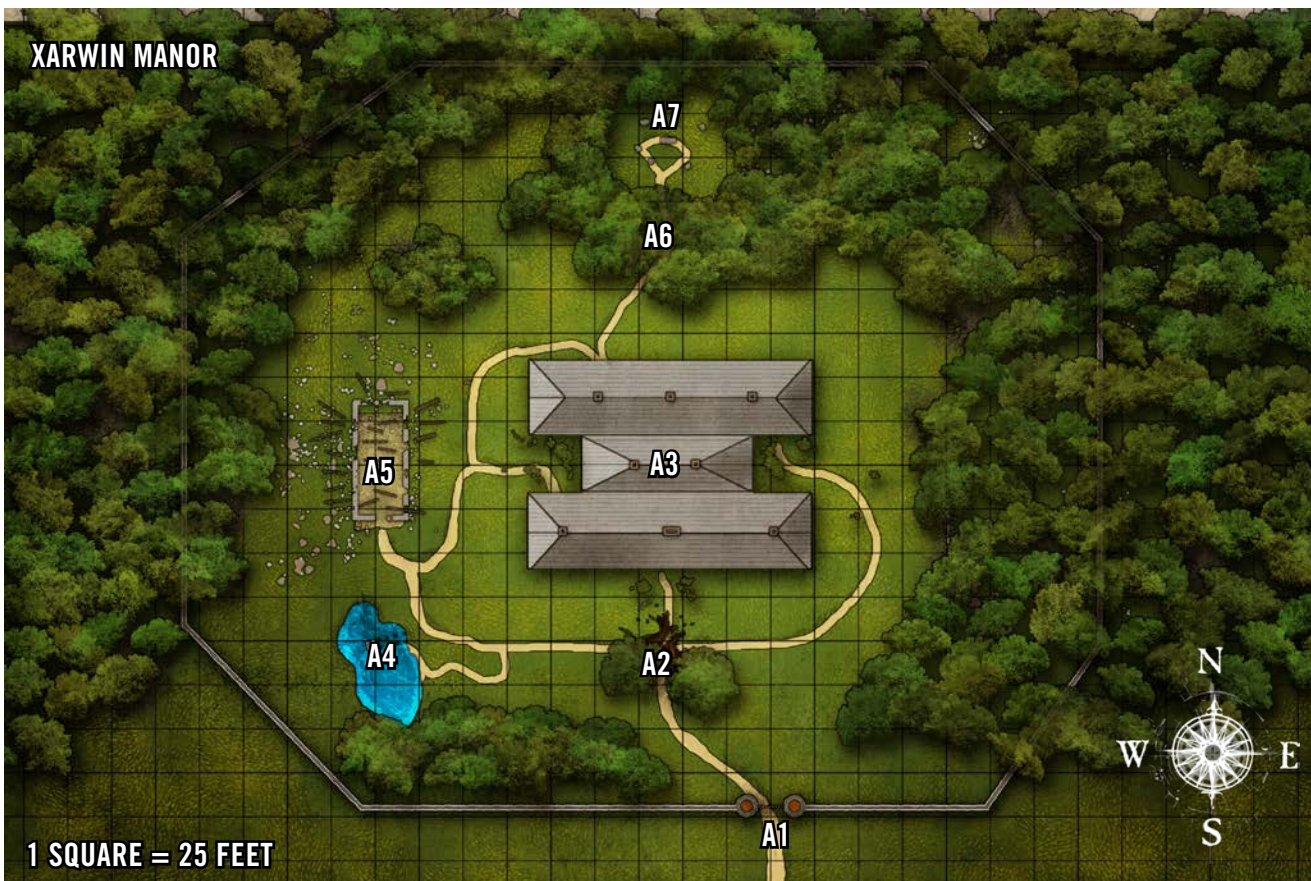
**Initiative** Stealth +9

## A3. Xarwin Manor

As the PCs approach, dozens of whippoorwills perched along the eaves of the run-down manor



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perk up and begin to cry out in their eerie song. There are hundreds of the birds in all on the building's roof and in the surrounding trees, and when the PCs come within 30 feet of the building, the whippoorwills take to the air, flying in a spiral in the sky above. The birds continue to fly in this spiral pattern as long as the PCs remain within 30 feet of the manor, but once a PC opens any door or window into the building, the Xarwin Caul triggers and all of these doomed birds drop dead, raining down in sudden, awful silence save for the momentary patter of hundreds of warm corpses hitting the ground.

In all, four doors allow access into Xarwin Manor, along with numerous windows. The position of these doors and the difficulties in opening them are detailed in Chapter 2. All of the tightly shuttered windows have wooden frames with filthy, mold-encrusted glass panes. The glass windows could once be opened from within, but all are now latched and stuck from the passage of time; a character who succeeds at a DC 20 Athletics check can force any of them open without breaking them.

A few of the windows in the manor have broken, indicated with a small red "X" on the inside cover maps. While the Caul is active, a thin membrane of slimy

webbing stretches over these otherwise open windows, and moving through one causes the Caul to burst.

Characters can climb up the walls to the widow's walk on the third floor, 25 feet off the ground with a successful DC 20 Athletics check (this check suffers a  $-4$  circumstance penalty if the Xarwin Caul is still present due to the ectoplasm layer's slippery nature).

### A4. Star Pond Moderate 3

A winding trail, once perhaps a neat gravel path but now just a slightly less overgrown swath of dry grass, leads down to this roughly oval-shaped pool. Thick patches of reeds grow on the pool's shores, and the water looks opaque with sheets of algae and lily pads, yet there's no sign of insect or amphibian life. Near the pool's center stands a five-foot-wide, mossy stone platform supporting a rusty iron sphere measuring about three feet across. Rotting wood pilings jut out from the water between this platform and the west shore, suggesting a footbridge might have once allowed access to the platform from land.

With a successful DC 15 Nature or Society check or DC 10 Astronomy Lore check to Recall Knowledge, a PC recognizes the style of the rusting iron sphere



as once being a representation of Somal, Golarion's moon, and that this location was a "star pond"—a landscaping technique favored by astronomers. Before the sphere fell into decay, lanterns or *everburning torches* placed within the hollow interior shone through after dark to create patterns of constellations on the globe's surface. These globes had clockwork apparatuses that allowed them to rotate, so the light of the constellations reflected in the water surface below. With a critical success on the check to Recall Knowledge, a character also recalls that most star pond globes included a hidden compartment near the base where valuable stargazing equipment, such as spyglasses or telescopes, could be stored.

The waters of the star pond are only 3 feet deep, with a 6-inch layer of silt. A Medium creature can wade through the water as difficult terrain, while a Small creature treats it as greater difficult terrain—or, a creature can Swim in the water with a successful DC 10 Athletics check.

**Creature:** A few weeks ago, a gibbering moulder slithered in from the wilds, oozed through the bars on the fence, and settled in the pond. The creature can sense the malevolence within the mansion but is comfortable lurking here rather than creeping into the building.

When the PCs approach the pond's edge, the gibbering moulder lurches up from the water surrounding the central platform. It winds its body into dozens of twisting ribbons made of flesh, eyes, and teeth, weaving its tendrils through the rusted holes of the globe. Its dozens of mouths begin to cry out "Tchekuth! Tchekuth!" over and over, but it doesn't attack anyone unless a person approaches within 10 feet or it's attacked first via ranged weapons. Once it begins combat, the monstrosity doesn't pursue foes further than 30 feet of the star pond's shores.

Though it's unlikely for low-level characters, a PC who succeeds at a DC 35 Occultism check recognizes the word "Tchekuth" as the name of an ancient entity said to be associated with the Dominion of the Black (succeeding at this check unlocks both of those research topics). A character who speaks Aklo can attempt a DC 23 Perception check to interpret the gibbering moulder's weird repetition as being a paean to an unknown entity, suggesting that "Tchekuth" is a name. If a PC who speaks Aklo replies to the gibbering moulder with the word "Tchekuth," the creature chortles and undulates before crying out, "Iä Tchekuth!" (which translates to Common as "Hail Tchekuth"); it then sloshes forward to attack.

## GIBBERING Moulder

CREATURE 5

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**Initiative** Perception +15

**Treasure:** A character who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check discovers a hidden compartment at the base of the globe's platform, a few inches above the waterline (if the PCs Recalled Knowledge about these secret compartments, this Perception check DC is lowered to DC 10). The hidden compartment contains a fine spyglass worth 80 gp and a glass lens wrapped in a purple silk handkerchief. This lens is a spare lens for the *starless scope* and radiates divination magic. A character who succeeds at a DC 22 check to Identify Magic confirms that the lens has no intrinsic properties, but it seems to be a special lens meant to fit into an unknown magical scope—it's too large to fit into the fine spyglass found in the compartment. This spare lens is worth 100 gp.

## A5. Collapsed Stable

A large stable once stood here, but today, the building has collapsed into a tangle of timbers and shingles, all overgrown with layers of blackberry vines.

This stable collapsed a decade ago during the same storm that toppled the old oak at area A2. While the PCs won't find anything of value here, if they persist in searching the ruins, they experience a phantasm.

## A6. Overgrown Path

This once well-kept path has become overgrown in the years since the Xarwin tragedy. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Survival check can navigate this path to area A7 with ease.

The first time the PCs step into the woods facing the mansion's northern facade, allow them all to attempt Perception checks. Regardless of the results, tell all of the PCs that, for a moment, they felt like someone—or something—was watching them from the south. The PC who rolled the highest on the check catches a glimpse of movement among the row of windows on the second floor that look into area C12 as a seemingly human figure retreats from view.

## A7. The Cosmic Crypt

The oppressive forest retreats into a clearing of dry grass that seems to almost whisper as a breeze wafts through. A ring of seven ancient standing stones surrounds a circular crypt-like stone structure that measures roughly twelve feet in diameter and rises to a height of fifteen feet. Carvings of moths and butterfly-winged people flying among the stars decorate the crypt's sides, while its heavy stone slab door is

embedded with a series of bronze rings set in grooves. Each of the rings has a single, small disk of differently colored crystals attached to it; at the very center, a larger orb of pale-yellow crystal is affixed to the stone.

This structure was created thousands of years ago by the Order of the Starless Night to house and hide the *Void Mirror*. With a successful DC 23 Religion check or DC 18 Desnan Lore or Thassilonian Lore check to Recall Knowledge, a PC identifies the workmanship of the monolith as evoking an ancient, largely abandoned style of Desnan art that experienced its height of popularity in ancient Thassilon, nearly ten thousand years ago. The circle of rings represents the solar system. Succeeding at this check unlocks the Order of the Starless Night research topic. A PC who critically succeeds at any of these checks notes that these decorations were often used as combination locks to keep a door sealed.

The cosmic crypt is infused with ancient magic that has slowed its erosion over the years and enhanced the strength of the stone. A character who attempts to Force Open the door must succeed at a DC 40 Athletics (expert) check, and the stone is supernaturally hard (Hardness 28, HP 120 [BT 60]). If the PCs don't realize they can rotate the rings representing the planets, a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check learns of that fact after a cursory examination. Moving the system's planets around the sun at the center quickly reveals that there are tens of thousands of possible combinations, with little clue of what could be the proper positioning. A character who attempts to Pick this Lock must succeed at 11 consecutive DC 30 Thievery checks (each critical success counts as two successes, while a failure resets the entire lock) to place the 11 planets in the correct locations to open the door. The proper combination for this lock can be found in area D6.

If the PCs get this door open, it grinds down into the ground to reveal a 10-foot diameter space within. No floor exists, as it reveals an open shaft that drops 30 feet down into the ground to area E4. A series of grooves in the wall serve as crude ladder rungs that a PC can scale with a successful DC 10 Athletics check to Climb; the last 10 feet of the shaft open into the middle of the room, leaving a 10-foot drop into the cave below.

An intricate frame constructed of silver and iron is affixed to the middle of the ceiling. The

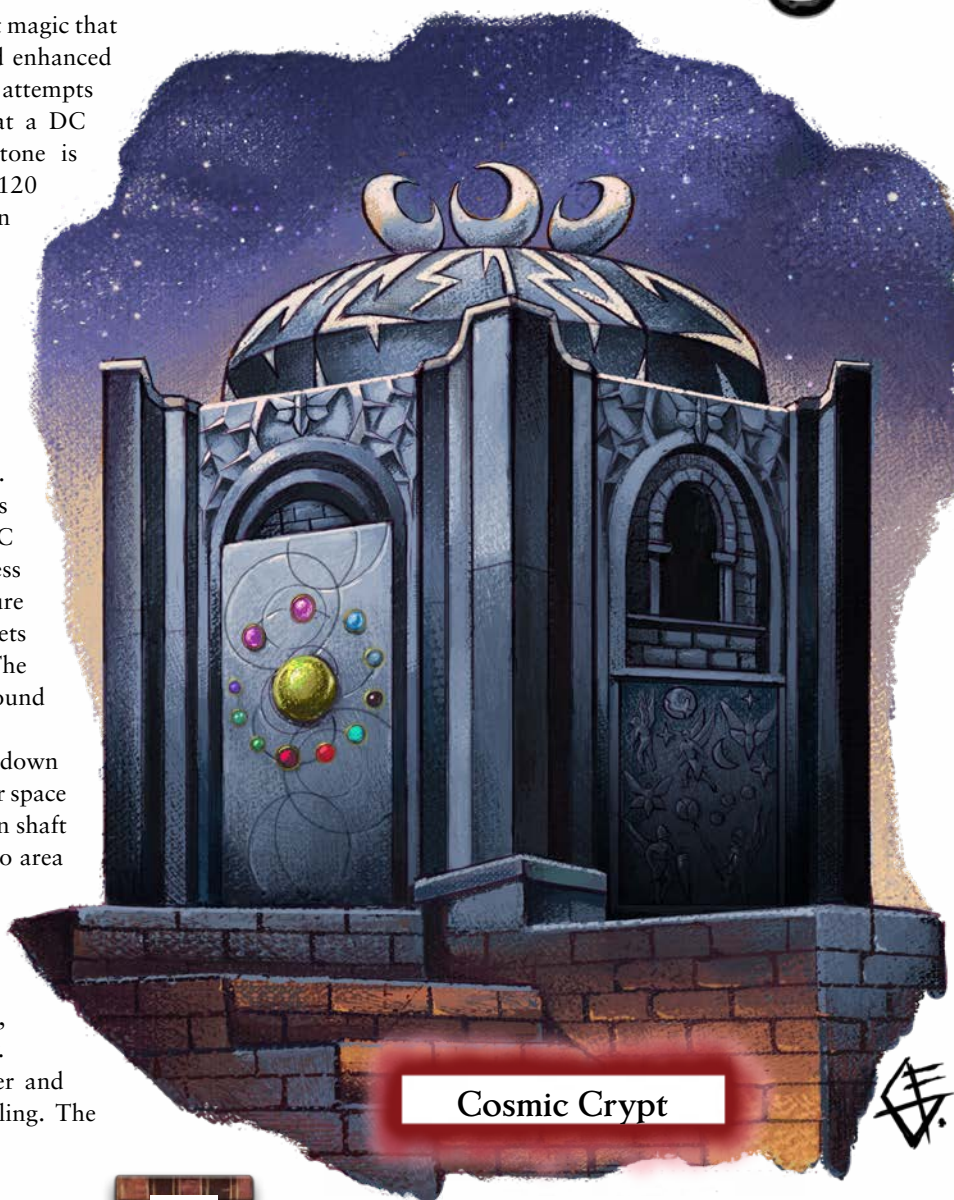
frame appears to be built to hold a rectangular object measuring 5 feet long by 1 foot wide and is positioned so that the object aims downward at an angle. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check confirms this angle seems to aim at some point deep underground, below Xarwin Manor. This frame was built ages ago by the Order of the Starless Night to hold the *Void Mirror*; while mounted in this frame, the *Void Mirror* contains Tchekuth's consciousness deep below-ground and prevents the entity from waking. The frame is protected by the same magic that wards the crypt and is also supernaturally hard (Hardness 28, HP 90 [BT 45]). It can be wrenched from its anchor points by a character who succeeds at a DC 35 Athletics check to Force it Open; doing so, of course, ruins the frame and renders it useless for holding the *Void Mirror*.

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## CHAPTER 2: MANIFESTATION

The aboveground floors of Xarwin Manor host a wide range of dangers, but for the most part, the PCs won't directly face the ghost of Ioseff Xarwin at this time. While a few areas in Xarwin Manor require keys or skilled lockpicking to reach, the PCs can generally explore the manor as they wish. Note that the upper floors contain more dangerous encounters than those on the ground floor, but since most of the perils on the upper floors won't pursue PCs far, wise heroes can always retreat downstairs or even out of the manor to rest and recover.

### Xarwin Manor Ground Floor

Xarwin Manor's interior has a musty and still atmosphere. Thick layers of dust cover everything in most rooms, yet no sign of vermin (such as cobwebs or rat droppings) can be seen (unless specifically mentioned in an encounter, such as in area C6).

Ceiling height is a spacious 10 feet. Despite the passage of decades, the floors, ceilings, and walls—all made of wood—remain stable and strong. The floors' carpeting has generally moldered and rotted, and the walls alternately feature rotting strips of hanging wallpaper, flaking paint, or barren wood caked with stains—all of which help to give Xarwin Manor its decrepit, abandoned feel.

All doors are made of wood, and while they can be locked, very few are; the text indicates whenever there are locked doors. The manor's brick and mortar fireplaces have chimneys that extend upwards to connect fireplaces between floors before rising up to the roof above. Each chimney is 2 feet wide, and as long as the Xarwin Caul is active, sheets of damp ectoplasm drape over the tops. A Small creature can clamber up a chimney with a successful DC 20 Athletics check, but a Medium creature must also

attempt a DC 20 Acrobatics check to Squeeze each turn before making any progress from climbing.

Air can flow through the Caul, but poorly. Within the manor, the air carries a foul underlying scent of mold and decay. The PCs might worry about contagions carried by the foul-smelling air, but this part of Xarwin Manor doesn't contain hidden peril. After the first time the PCs enter Xarwin Manor and the Caul bursts, the different air pressure within gives the eerie sensation that the mansion just took a deep breath around the PCs.

## B1. Front Door

A double door made of dark oak stands in the middle of the manor's facade, carved with a series of overlapping circles with a stylized "X" at their center.

The design on the door is the Xarwin family crest, similar to that on the front gates in area A1 but with the addition of the letter in the middle. If the Xarwin Caul hasn't been deactivated yet, it bursts the instant this door opens.

## B2. Entrance Hall

Low 3

Motes of dust drift through the air of this large entrance hall. To the north, a pair of wide staircases ascend to a balcony that encircles the room above. An old, musty carpet on the otherwise-bare wood floor partially leads the way to a double door between the stairs. Four other doors provide exits to either side, while the southwestern and southeastern walls have tall cabinets and coat racks set against them. On the upper floor, the railed ten-foot-wide balcony circles this room, leaving the central area open to the second floor's ceiling twenty feet above.

A PCs who succeed at a DC 15 Perception check can hear the faint ticking of what sounds like a grandfather clock somewhere above. Every hour on the hour, this clock (area C2) chimes with strangely muffled bells, as if heard underwater, announcing the hour.

**Creature:** Not all of the cabinets in this room are what they appear to be—one near the door leading east toward area B8 is actually a mimic that made its way into the house nearly two decades ago. It has spent those years moving from empty room to empty room, thinking of itself as the furnishing that completes each room's decor. The mimic has waited as a cabinet here for well over two years, and as soon as a PC approaches within 10 feet (including coming close enough to open the nearby door), one of the cabinet's upper slats opens to reveal a large, rheumy eye the size of a dinner plate. The eye glares angrily at the PC, and then below, a longer drawer near the PC's feet opens

## THE GATHERING FLOCK

Each night that follows after the Caul bursts, an increasing number of nosoi psychopomps arrive in the area, but they don't approach closer than the fence surrounding the manor grounds. Their eerie cries fill the nights, providing a constant companion after dark in the manor grounds. They avoid the PCs if approached, but if the PCs can establish communication, they'll learn from the psychopomps only that something dangerous lies within or beneath the manor—something that should have moved on eons ago but has remained like a sickness in the world. The nosois want to usher this presence on but lack the ability, bravery, or intellect to do so themselves.

Each time the PCs defeat the corrupted psychopomps in areas D5 and E4 and the undead psychopomps in area E1, they briefly hear a swell of whippoorwill calls. Once the PCs defeat all three of these loose psychopomps, the nosois will be able to merge into an algea swarm (page 70) that comes to the PCs aid when they confront Xarwin's ghost in area E9.

into a mouth to rasp out in Common, "My house! You trespass! Begone!" If the PCs don't immediately leave the manor, the overprotective mimic attacks. It pursues foes relentlessly through the building but not outside; otherwise, it fights to the death.

## MIMIC

CREATURE 4

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**Initiative** Perception +9

## B3. Servant's Bedrooms

This ten-foot-square bedroom features a single drab bed, a footlocker, a dresser with a wash basin atop it, a clay chamber pot, and a grimy window.

These six rooms were once the quarters of the manor's staff, and a glance through the footlocker's contents reveals that the servants were a cook, a butler, a maid, a tutor, a carpenter, and a groundskeeper. Any one of these rooms is an excellent place to have the PCs encounter a Xarwin Manor phantasm; the window at the end of the hall is another good place for a Xarwin Manor phantasm.

To reach area B12 from here, a PC must Force Open the door with a successful DC 18 Athletics check.

## B4. Linen Closet

This room features several shelves stacked with linens and cleaning supplies.

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There's nothing of value and no danger lurking within this room, which makes it an excellent place to confront the PCs with a Xarwin Manor phantasm.

## B5. Servants' Cloakroom

Coat hooks adorn the walls of this otherwise empty room.

Once used as a place for the servants to store cloaks, jackets, and other clothing, this room is now empty. The PCs should experience a Xarwin Manor phantasm here the first time they enter this room.

The door to area **B6** is stuck; a PC can Force it Open with a successful DC 15 Athletics check.

## B6. Servants' Lounge

Low 3

While the door from the west hall opens normally, the eastern door is stuck and must be Forced Open (see area **B5**).

At the center of this room, three chairs surround each side of a long wooden table. In the room's southern portion, two tall leather-backed chairs face a smaller table. To the north looms a brick fireplace, a spray of dusty ashes and charcoal scattered across the floor in front of it.

The manor's servants used this room to take their meals and socialize. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Survival check while examining the ash and charcoal surmises that something kicked the debris out of the fireplace many years ago.

**Creatures:** A group of chokers squeezed down the chimney years ago and have since succumbed to the influence of the manor. They now think of this room as their rightful home, spending the majority of their time in a trance-like state. If they notice the PCs approaching (which happens automatically if the PCs Force Open the door in area **B5**), the chokers lie in ambush—one hidden under the central table and one up in the chimney just out of sight. They wait for the PCs to filter into the room, and use Stealth for initiative. If they don't notice the PCs' approach, both chokers remain seated in the southern chairs, motionless except for blinking and periodic twitching as they imagine themselves as house servants experiencing a lull in conversation; in this case, the chokers use Perception for initiative. When the chokers become aware of the PCs, they gurgle threats (in Aklo) to the PCs, accusing them of intruding on the "master's home."

At the start of the 3rd round, the choker matriarch in the washroom (area **B7**) to the east opens the door and enters the battle as well. The chokers fight to the death.

## CHOKERS (2)

CREATURE 2

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Initiative Perception +7 or Stealth +9

## B7. Washroom

Low 3

The tiled floor of this room is dusty and spotted with patches of mold. To the north sits a large bathing tub, while to the south sits a smaller washtub for linens and clothes. Next to that is a partially collapsed laundry basket with shredded bits of clothing strewn around its base.

The servants bathed and did laundry in this room. **Creature:** The chokers' leader, a grizzled, warty



Choker Matriarch

monster, lives in this room. In the unlikely event that she doesn't hear the PCs, they'll find her lounging in the dry tub as if enjoying a long, luxurious bath (despite the fact that she has wrapped herself in a few scarves and shawls harvested from the hamper), but more than likely, she bursts into area **B6** to join a fight there. Like the other chokers, she shrieks threats in Aklo, particularly a warning to the PCs that "the master will have your heads!"

## CHOKER MATRIARCH

## CREATURE 3

Elite female choker (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 6, 51)

**Initiative** Perception +7 or Stealth +9

**Treasure:** Most of the clothing in this room is dirty, moth-eaten, and ruined. However, a long blue-and-yellow scarf worn by the choker matriarch is a filthy but functional *dancing scarf* that she has no idea is magical.

## B8. Librarian's Quarters

In this musty-smelling room, full bookshelves line the western wall and either side of the door in the northern wall. Along with a bed to the south, a footlocker, a small round reading table, and a partially collapsed wooden chair also furnish the chamber.

This bedroom once belonged to the house librarian, Zedna Murashi. Beyond her duties to care for the manor's library (area **B10**), Zedna also had the task of maintaining older tomes and tending to the chapel library; Ioseff murdered her while she performed the latter duty.

**Research:** The books kept on the shelves here can be used to research the following general topics: Dominion of the Black and Psychopomps. If the PCs discover Zedna's journals, those books also allow research on the topics of Ioseff Xarwin, Asethanna Xarwin, Fulvia Nostraema, and Xarwin Manor, as Zedna recorded several examples of events in the manor over the years.

**Treasure:** Zedna's footlocker contains a few spare changes of clothes, a set of sterling artisan's tools suitable for Craft checks associated with bookbinding or book repair (worth 50 gp), an iron key that fits the lock on the door leading downstairs from the library to area **E7**, and several of Zedna's journals (see Research above).

## B9. Reading Room

A pair of high-backed reading chairs sit in the corners of this room to the east, and a large brick fireplace rises to the west. Bookshelves on the north and south walls are

empty save for a few knickknacks, while the middle of the room stands a long table with a chair at both ends.

**Treasure:** This room was set aside as a comfortable place for family members and visitors alike to sit back and read. The shelves held the books taken from the library as they awaited a chance for the librarian, Zedna, to reshelve them. Most of the knickknacks on these largely empty shelves are relatively worthless or broken. One particularly well-crafted wooden sculpture depicts two teenaged youths standing back to back and is worth 10 gp. Carved into the base of the sculpture are the initials "A.X."; if the PCs have seen the paintings in area **B22**, they might recognize that the two subjects (a boy wielding a bow and arrow and a girl holding a hammer and ruler) resemble Marney and Mira Xarwin.

## B10. Library

## Moderate 3

Several floor-to-ceiling bookshelves turn this large room into a cozy, almost cramped library. The musty smell of old books fills the air, and most of the shelves are stuffed with books of all shapes and sizes. A large brick fireplace is built into the northern wall, and a wrought-iron spiral staircases rises to the northeast. The window between the staircase and the fireplace is broken; the flooring and wall around it appear more weathered than anywhere else in the room.

This library features a wide range of topics ranging from art history, astronomy, medicine, occultism, and fiction. The door to the stairs leading down is locked (DC 20 Thievery to Pick the Lock); it can be opened with the key found in area **B8** or the skeleton key found in area **C15**. These stairs lead down to area **E7**.

The spiral stairs lead up to area **C5**.

**Creatures:** A pair of vampiric mists slithered into this room through the broken window several months ago. As with the other living occupants of the manor, they've come to see themselves as the rightful residents of the room. Kept sated by the malevolence's influence, the mists seem content to slowly drift among the stacks, now and then caressing the spines of books as if preparing to make a selection before moving on to search elsewhere—the mists never actually pick up a book from the shelves and, in fact, can't even read most of the titles since they only understand Aklo. The mists don't react to the PCs at all unless they're attacked or if they notice anyone attempting to pick up one of "their" books from the shelves. Once a PC does attract their attention in this way, the mists hiss in hunger as they notice the proximity of fresh blood for the first time. They attack at once and will pursue the PCs throughout

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the manor and the manor grounds, but not beyond its borders.

## VAMPIRIC MISTS (2)

## CREATURE 3

*Pathfinder Bestiary 2* 278

**Initiative** Stealth +10

**Research:** A PC who Investigates while in this library can use the books to gain a +1 item bonus to any Recall Knowledge checks associated with the primary topics represented here (see above).

The extensive collection of books can be used to Research the following topics: the Dominion of the Black, the Order of the Starless Night, or psychopomps.

## B11. Ballroom

## Severe 3

This large ballroom has a wide, open floor of dust-caked woodwork. A pair of grand brick fireplaces stand to the west and east; low stone benches fitted with rotting cushions flank either side of each fireplace. Several dozen antlers from deer and elk adorn the walls around and over the fireplaces. To the north, three long risers lead up to a stage with two large chairs placed on it. A flight of stairs leads upward to either side of the chairs, and a ratty tapestry of red and black—the colors of House Thrune—hang behind it.

The Xarwin family rarely used this large ballroom. Instead, the space often served as a meeting place when Ioseff felt the need to address the entire staff and family at once.

With a successful DC 20 Perception check, a PC notices a tiny peep hole in the wall at eye level that opens into a dark room beyond (area **B16**). A character who peers into the hole is in for a potentially painful surprise as the undead carpenter in the room beyond attempts to drive his hand drill through the hole into the PC's peeking eye (see area **B16** for details). The staircases to the north lead to area **C11**.

**Creatures:** When Xarwin first took the mantle of Paracount, several one-time competitors scrambled to adjust their relations with him, showering Xarwin with compliments and gifts in hopes of currying favor with him. Most of these gifts Xarwin quickly sold to finance his expensive tastes in occult books, but two in particular appealed to him—a pair of necrophidiuses crafted by a wizard named Endreth Sarini (who had been appointed to Kintargo at about the same time that Xarwin took his post in Crooked Cove). The two skeletal, snake-like constructs were programmed to serve Xarwin, and he commanded them to drape themselves artfully among the antlers above the fireplaces to the east and west. They remain there to this day, still awaiting commands

from a dead master to come to his defense in the case of an attack by visitors.

Both necrophidiuses were painted in a black and red pattern, the colors of Cheliox's flag, to honor House Thrune. Today, the two constructs remain motionless until the PCs move further than 20 feet into the room from the south or any distance into the room from the north. At this moment, Ioseff's ghost manifests in the western chair. The wild-eyed figure rises up from his seat and raises his left arm, red smoke bleeding from the stump where his left hand should be. The smoke quickly coalesces into a misty red hand, a pointing finger aimed at the PC with the highest Intelligence score. His voice booms as he proclaims in Common, "You have what should be mine!" (referring to that PC's flesh-and-blood brain). At the word "mine" his voice grows louder and louder, seemingly shaking the foundations of the manor (a sensation that only those in this room feel, while those in other rooms of the manor notice nothing). After this occurrence, his ghost collapses into a puddle of blood red ectoplasm, and the necrophidiuses on the walls animate, slithering off their antler beds to attack. They don't pursue the PCs from this room and merely return to their posts if the PCs flee; in this case, if the PCs return to the room, the necrophidiuses attack again.

## NECROPHIDIUSES (2)

## CREATURE 3

*Pathfinder Bestiary 2* 180

**Initiative** Stealth +9

## B12. Overgrown Garden

## Moderate 3

Thick tangles of blackberry vines, shrubbery, and a few stunted trees grow along the walls here, in what once might have been an herb garden.

The door to the manor in the south wall is jammed; a character can Force it Open with a successful DC 18 Athletics check.

**Creature:** The region's sinister nature attracted a particularly powerful mandragora to this site. The blood-drinking plant enjoys the ambience of the area but never felt the need to enter Xarwin Manor; as such, it never became affected by the Caul. The mandragora regularly shambles away from the garden to seek fresh blood, but the first time the PCs come to this area, the creature is present, hunkered down over the carcass of a fox it caught in the woods and carried back here to feed upon. It tosses the body aside with a gurgling cry as it notices fresher blood and attacks at once, fighting to the death. When this mandragora uses its Piercing Shriek, it actually

cries out the name “Tchekuth!” Like the gibbering moulder in the Star Pool (area A4), this sinister plant has been affected by the region’s malevolence more than it realizes.

## ELITE MANDRAGORA

*Pathfinder Bestiary 2* 6, 170

**Initiative** Stealth +22

## CREATURE 5

### B13. Servant's Gallery

One of the two windows in this ten-foot-wide hall’s east wall is broken, and years of weather exposure have caused significant damage to the walls and floor. On the opposite wall hang eight medium portraits, only two of which have escaped mold and decay—one depicts a stern-looking bald man wearing a leather carpenter’s apron and holding a hand drill in his hands, and the other depicts a nervous-looking elderly woman dressed in the attire of a majordomo.

**Treasure:** This gallery once displayed portraits painted by Asethanna Xarwin, each of which depicted one of the manor’s eight servants. The broken window encouraged the growth of mildew in the room, so the portraits bearing the plaques reading “Cook,” “Butler,” “Maid,” “Tutor,” “Groundskeeper,” and “Librarian,” are ruined. The two undamaged portraits depict Nils Kelveken, the carpenter, and Cathilda Athemer, the majordomo. Asethanna’s signature is visible on both undamaged portraits, each of which is worth 10 gp.

### B14. Kitchen

### Trivial 3

This large kitchen has several counters and tables, along with cabinets and shelving on the walls that afford places to store utensils, pots, and pans. However, someone has taken these tools and arranged them in strange patterns throughout the room—lines of forks and spoons spelling out nonsense words, pans and pots balanced together or stacked in towers, knives jabbed into the wooden floor or the four oak tables, and so on. The fireplace to the north has a large cauldron and grill for cooking. The window just to the right of this fireplace is cracked and missing a few large panes of glass near the bottom. A human skeleton lies sprawled over one of the tables in the middle of the room, a gleaming rapier clutched in one of its hands.

Two flights of stairs lie beyond doors to the southwest; the stairs leading up go to the dining room (area C17), while those leading down connect to the root cellar (area E1). The secret door to area B16 can be discovered by a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check.

**Creature:** An unusually brave and unusually stubborn nosoi psychopomp named Ezramalkun has been trapped in this room for a year. Equal parts intrigued and offended by the aura exuded by Xarwin Manor when she came upon it, Ezramalkun managed what few other nosois could—the bravery to enter the manor. She arrived at the manor several days after a foolhardy thief broke the window into this room to clamber in. She braved the hole and, once inside, startled the thief. Ezramalkun found herself in a fight for her life, but she managed to defeat the thief with a desperate use of *sound burst*, which knocked her out at the same time. When she woke several hours later, badly wounded but alive, the Xarwin Caul had reformed around the manor. Since then, she has become affected by the malevolence and can’t bear the thought of leaving the manor.

Since then, Ezramalkun has entertained herself by reorganizing the utensils in the room, studying the magical auras all around her, and dreaming strange dreams. She can sense the tormented presences of the fallen psychopomps above and below (in areas D2 and E1, but not the one in area E4). However, the overwhelming blasphemy of the malevolence, so long clinging to this world and resisting the call to the Boneyard, remains her greatest obsession.

The PCs’ arrival intrigues Ezramalkun, but her last experience with people (the dead body of which still lies sprawled on the table) was anything but friendly. She watches from a corner, invisible, as the PCs explore the room, but after a few rounds (or as soon as it looks like the PCs are about to leave), her curiosity gets the better of her. She calls out in Common, “What are you doing in my kitchen?”

Ezramalkun pretends to be a bodiless spirit—a benevolent ghost of a long-dead cook—as she speaks to the PCs, trying to figure out what they want. Her initial attitude is indifferent, but if she’s made Friendly, or if the PCs make it clear that they intend to rid the manor of the haunting, she excitedly thanks them, telling them that she would be “ever so grateful if they could drive these evil spirits out of my house!” Ezramalkun hasn’t explored the rest of the building (she couldn’t manage to open any of the heavy doors) but is quite comfortable here in her kitchen. She warns the PCs that some “bad birds” live up above and that some “monster dogs” dwell down below, though she isn’t sure where—she can hear their “naughty calls” now and then (she senses the presence of the corrupted nosois in area D5 above and the esobok ghouls below in area E1). If the PCs manage to increase her attitude to helpful, or if they convince her that they’re allies (such as showing that one of them worships

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Pharasma), Ezramalkun reveals her true form. As with all of those who have fallen victim to the malevolence, she has few memories of her life before the house with the exception of a fair amount of lore about her kind, which she remembers as half-forgotten dreams. Use Ezramalkun as you wish to provide the PCs with hints, clues, and direction. She can certainly warn them that she senses some sort of bad spirit anger beyond the doors to areas **B16** and **B22**, and you could have her point out the secret door to area **B16** if the PCs seem puzzled by it. She won't agree to accompany the PCs on their journey but might, at your discretion, follow along behind to watch as they work; in this case, she can step in to aid the PCs in an emergency.

If the PCs anger her, she fights back as best she can, fleeing if reduced to fewer than 10 HP.

## EZRAMALKUN

## CREATURE 2

Elite female nosoi psychopomp (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, 270)

**Initiative** Perception +8

**Research:** Conversations with Ezramalkun can be used to research psychopomps, Tchekuth, or the Xarwin Caul.



Ezramalkun

**Treasure:** Though once a human thief in life, the dead body is now merely a sprawl of bones held together by a suit of old leather armor. The +1 *rapier* clutched in his bony hand is dusty but fully usable. A cracked leather pouch at his side contains a silver religious symbol of Norgorber worth 2 sp, a set of infiltrator thieves' tools, 12 gp, and 8 sp.

**Reward:** If the PCs establish a rapport with Ezramalkun, grant them 60 XP.

## B15. Pantry

Shelves heaped with dust and ancient-looking dried bread and vegetables line the wall of this moldy pantry.

The food once kept here has long since dried to the point of being inedible or rotted away. This room is an excellent place to have the PCs encounter a Xarwin Manor phantasm.

## B16. Observer's Nook

## Moderate 3

The air in this dust-caked room is musty and dry. The northeast corner has a chair and small writing table with a hooded lantern resting atop a small stack of papers. A second chair to the south is placed near small a hole in the wall that narrows down to a peephole for undetected observation of the other side.

**Creatures:** Xarwin had this room built so he could post a loyal servant here to keep an eye on events in the ballroom or on those seated on the nearby bench just on the other side of the wall. In the last few weeks before the final tragedy, his one remaining loyal servant, the carpenter Nils Kelveken, moved out of his quarters in area **B3** and into this room, having grown paranoid of the other servants conspiring against him. Unfortunately for Nils, when Xarwin perished in his laboratory below and became one with Tchekuth, the resulting blast of mental energy drove him over the edge. In a desperate attempt to release the disturbing thoughts, he drilled a hole in his skull then perished a few minutes later.

Nils Kelveken continues to exist as a skeletal champion, the drill hole in his skull blatantly apparent. When the PCs enter, he appears slumped and motionless in his chair by the peephole. If someone looks through the hole from this side of the room, they hear Nils's raspy voice behind them crying out, "I seen what ye did!" just before the skeletal champion lurches up to its feet to attack with his hand drill. Once animated, Nils pursues foes relentlessly throughout the manor and surrounding grounds, periodically calling out, "I seen what ye did! I seen what ye did!"

If a PC peeks into this room from area **B11**, have that PC roll for initiative with Perception and Nils with Stealth. If the PC rolls the higher initiative and can see in the dark, they spot Nils lurching up from his chair to bring his hand drill to bear; otherwise, Nils attempts to Strike the PC in the eye through the peep hole. Nils makes a normal hand drill Strike, giving the PC the benefits of standard cover. On a critical hit, Nils deals normal damage and partially blinds the PC—the damage isn't enough to permanently last, but until the PC is completely healed of all damage, they suffer a -2 status penalty to Perception checks that require them to see and on all ranged Strikes. He then attempts a DC 20 Acrobatics check each round to Force Open the hole in the wall so that he can clamber through and continue fighting the PCs in area **B11**, all the while shrieking "I seen what ye did!"

## NILS KELVEKEN

## CREATURE 5

UNIQUE CE MEDIUM SKELETON UNDEAD

Variant skeletal champion (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 298)

**Perception** +13; darkvision

**Languages** Common, Necril

**Skills** Acrobatics +11, Athletics +12, Crafting +11, Intimidation +11, Stealth +13

**Str** +5, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +2

**Items** hammer, hand drill, leather carpenter's apron (functions as leather armor), key ring (contains keys to all non-secret doors on the ground floor)

**AC** 23; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +15, **Will** +13

**HP** 55, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Resistances** cold 5, electricity 5, fire 5, piercing 5, slashing 5

**Speed** 25 feet

**Melee** ♦ hand drill +14, **Damage** 1d6+7 piercing plus 2d6 negative

**Drill Deeper** ♦ (manipulate) **Requirements** Nils Kelveken hit a creature with a hand drill Strike with his previous action; **Effect** Nils grabs the drill and twists, drilling deeper into the victim. He automatically deals 1d8 piercing damage, and the creature being drilled into must succeed at a DC 22 Fortitude save to avoid taking an additional 1d6 persistent bleed damage (2d6 on a critical failure).

**I Seen What Ye Did!** ♦ (auditory, emotion, enchantment, fear, linguistic, mental, occult) Nils Strides up to his speed toward a target within 30 feet, shrieking "I seen what ye did!" at them as he approaches. The target must attempt a DC 22 Will save.

**Critical Success** The target is unaffected.

**Success** The target becomes disturbed at what Nils might have seen and becomes frightened 1.

**Failure** As success, but the target is frightened 2.

**Critical Failure** The target falls into a phantasmagoric nightmare state where time seems to slow down as they can think of nothing but running away, yet as fast as they try to flee, Nils can catch up with ease. The target is slowed 2 at the start of its next turn and fleeing until the end of its next turn.

**Treasure:** The *necklace of fireballs* Nils used to burn the servants in area **B18** lies forgotten under his chair. This type I necklace is missing one of its 6d6 *fireballs*.



Nils Kelveken

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## B17. Art Gallery

Four large paintings depicting various subjects hang from the west wall of this hallway: a gothic cityscape, a flock of birds among the trees, an imperious-looking woman, and Xarwin Manor under a starry sky.

Asethanna Xarwin created each of these paintings.

A plaque on the gothic cityscape reads “The Motherland.” With a successful DC 12 Society check, a PC identifies it as a depiction of Egorian, the capital city of Cheliox.

A plaque on the bird painting reads “The Watchers.” With a successful DC 12 Nature check, a PC identifies the birds as whippoorwills.

A plaque on the portrait of the woman reads “The Queen.” With a successful DC 16 Society check or a DC 13 Cheliox Lore check, a PC identifies the subject as Queen Abrogail I.

The painting of Xarwin Manor is the most technically adept of the four. Its plaque simply says “Home.”

Any PC who looks at this painting must attempt a successful DC 18 Will save. On a failure, something about the painting makes the character feel uneasy and nervous. A character who succeeds at a DC 25 Perception or DC 20 Art Lore check while examining this painting has a disturbing realization—the way the background (stars above, forest behind, soil and grass below) is rendered gives the faint look of an immense open mouth cradling the manor.

**Treasure:** The painting of Xarwin Manor is worth 50 gp, while the other three are worth 10 gp.

## B18. Study

**Moderate 3**

This large study features three cozy looking sofas arranged around a low oval table. Two large stuffed chairs sit in the southeast corner, facing a low round table, while to the north looms a brick fireplace.

**Hazard:** Near the end of his life, Ioseff Xarwin had come to fear that his servants were plotting against him. At the same time, he’d become fascinated with the growing prevalence of haunts in the upper floors and decided to handle his problem with the servants by performing an experiment. With the aid of the one servant he still trusted, the carpenter Nils, Ioseff informed the manor’s servants that he had been reassigned by House Thrune and that they would all move back to the Chelioxian heartland soon. He then asked them to join him in the study—a cozy, intimate place—for them all to speak about the move’s logistics. The servants were wary and suspicious, but they weren’t truly prepared for the fate Xarwin had arranged for them.

When they arrived, Ioseff had the servants gather in the center of the room and then sprung the trap he had Nils rig above. Several tanglefoot bags dropped onto the servants, gluing them to the floor. As they struggled, he and Nils stepped out of the study, and then Nils tossed a sphere from a *necklace of fireballs* into the room, burning the servants alive.

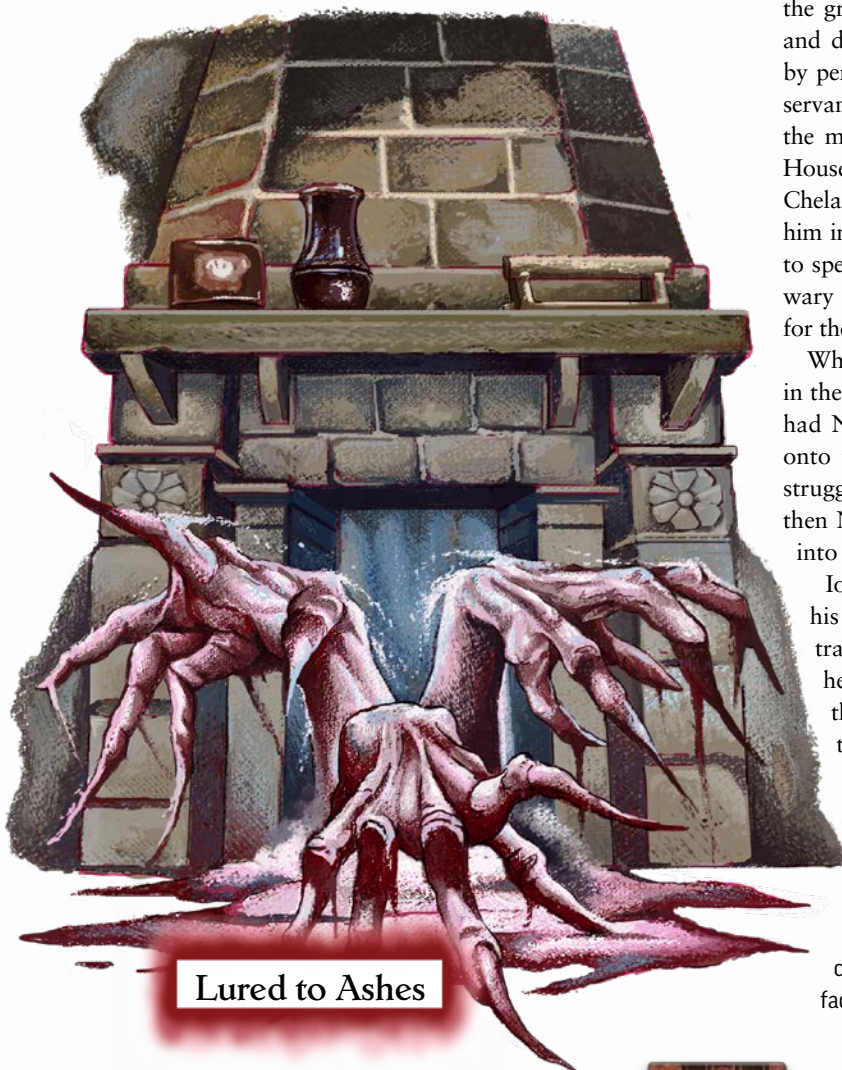
Ioseff was delighted in the days that followed as his theories proved right; the energies in his manor transformed the violence into a haunt, even after he gathered the burnt bones of the victims and threw them into the large pool in his basement to dispose of them. The haunt remains active to this day.

## LURED TO ASHES

**HAZARD 5**

UNIQUE COMPLEX HAUNT  
Stealth +13 (expert)

**Description** The illusory scene of a furnished study covers the room’s actual appearance. It flickers and fades, revealing a scorched and burnt chamber. A



Lured to Ashes



# MALEVOLENCE

Can you feel me sleeping  
from underneath my bed?  
Will I keep on dreaming  
even after I'm dead?  
Every time I waken  
the nightmare fades away.  
But now my mother's taken;  
she left me here to stay.  
I thought you were a monster,  
turns out you're so much worse.  
You called in an imposter  
beyond the universe.  
Now Tchekuth's impending,  
was that always your plan?  
Did you begin this ending  
to save the Ashen Man?  
So now no one is sleeping,  
I wait under my bed.  
And I'm no longer dreaming,  
because I'm finally dead.

Can you feel me sleeping from underneath my bed? Will I keep on dreaming even after I'm dead? Every time I waken the nightmare fades away. But now my mother's taken; she left me here to stay. I thought you were a monster, turns out you're so much worse. You called in an imposter beyond the universe. Now Tchekuth's impending, was that always your plan? Did you begin this ending to save the Ashen Man? So now no one is sleeping, because I'm finally dead.

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moment later, the screams of burning victims fill the room, and blazing skeletal arms reach from the ashes and charred walls to scrape and claw.

**Disable** DC 26 Intimidation to command the spirits haunting this room to be silent or DC 23 Religion to exorcise the haunt

**AC** 22; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +15, **Will** +9

**Hardness** 12; **HP** 50 (BT 25); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weaknesses** positive 5

**Lure** 🌀 (auditory, enchantment, linguistic, mental, occult)

**Trigger** A creature moves more than 5 feet into the room; **Effect** All creatures in area **B18** and all creatures within 10 feet of an open door or window adjacent to area **B18** hear a compelling voice inviting them into the room to discuss a future move back to central Cheliah. Each creature must attempt a DC 22 Will save (creatures outside of area **B18** gain a +2 circumstance bonus to this save). On a failure, the creature is compelled to move into area **B18** and be seated on one of the sofas. Creatures who succeed at the save aren't compelled and see the room as the burnt ruin that it is. The haunt then rolls initiative.

**Routine** (1 action; fire, necromancy, occult) If there are no targets within area **B18** when the haunt takes its action,

it can use its Lure reaction to try to get nearby victims back inside. The haunt manifests several burning skeletal arms that reach up from the ruined floors or out of the burnt walls to claw at every creature in area **B18**. These creatures must attempt a DC 22 Reflex save (creatures seated on a sofa take a -2 circumstance penalty to this saving throw).

**Critical Success** The creature takes no damage.

**Success** The creature takes 1d8 fire damage.

**Failure** The creature takes 2d8 fire damage and gains weakness 5 to fire. This weakness persists until the creature is fully healed.

**Critical Failure** As failure, but 4d8 fire damage and weakness 10 to fire.

**Reset** 8 hours; destroying the tanglebones in area **E3** destroys this haunt forever.

## B19. Parlor

This room has a large brick fireplace to the north. The rest of the parlor is empty save for a pair of chairs seated next to a small round table to the southeast.

This room was set aside as a private place for Xarwin to meet with visitors. The door to the garden



is locked (DC 20 Thievery to Pick the Lock). A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check notices the secret door to area **B21**. This otherwise-safe room is an excellent place for the PCs to encounter a Xarwin Manor phantasm.

## B20. Fountain

Three partially ruined wooden benches surround a dry fountain in the middle of this fenced-in garden. The fountain features what looks like five ravens perched on the edges, but each of their heads has been broken off. Two small trees grow to the east, while to the west, a huge patch of blackberries and thistles thrives.

The door to area **B19** is locked (DC 20 Thievery to Pick the Lock). The gate to the east is rusted shut and must be Forced Open (DC 20 Athletics) or climbed over; characters who climb this fence do so at the same risks they faced climbing over the fence surrounding the manor grounds (area **A1**).

PCs who inspect the fountain see that the five stone ravens, while still decades old, were newer additions to the existing fountain. With a successful DC 25 Religion check, a PC identifies them as depictions not of ravens but of nosoi psychopomps.

Asethanna sculpted these stone additions to the fountain partially as a way to honor her psychopomp inspirations, but mostly to vex her husband in the days after Fulvia joined the household. Ioseff smashed the heads off each of these the stone carvings soon after he murdered his wife.

The first time the PCs approach the fountain, have each of them attempt a Will save. The PC who gets the highest result feels a sense of pride over the workmanship of the ravens and satisfaction knowing that someone who has annoyed them recently will be bothered by the art. The PC who gets the lowest result feels a complex sensation of fear and betrayal at the sight of the headless ravens, along with an urge to smash at where the heads once were. These psychic echoes of the Xarwins have no other effects but can give the PCs a bit more insight into their complex relationship.

## B21. Secret Study

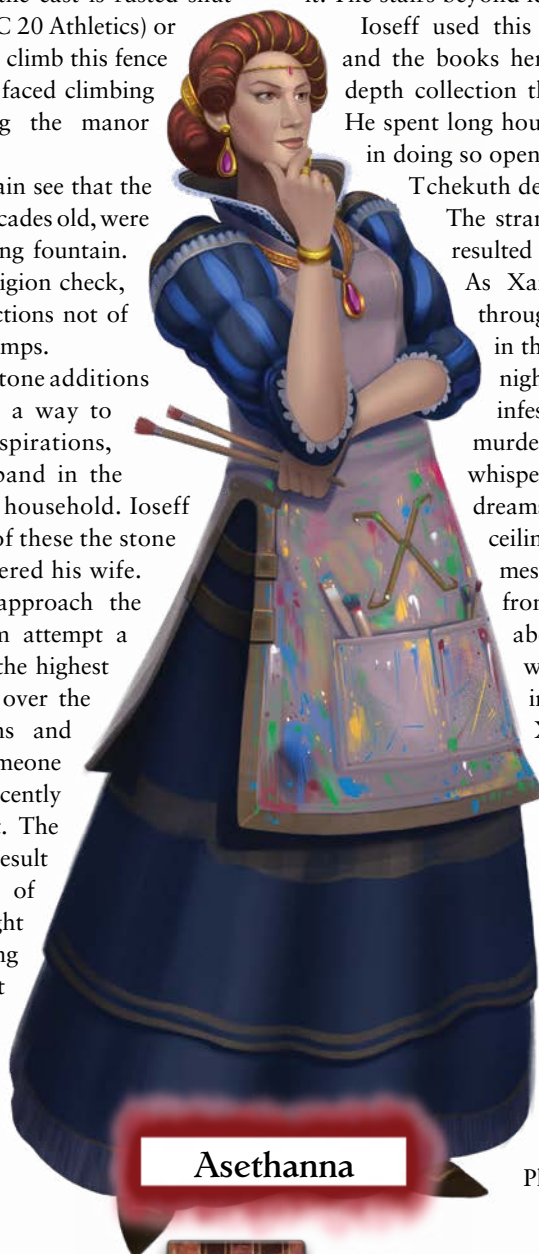
The air in this windowless room is stuffy and stale. Densely packed bookshelves line the wall to the west and most of the south. The only other furnishings in the room are a large wooden desk with a high-backed chair in the corner opposite the shelves. Thick black curtains with little glowing spots hang on the north and east walls, giving the impression of a star-filled night sky. Above, a strange, spiral-shaped growth of fungus almost looks like a twisted series of letters.

From inside this room, the secret door to area **B19** is obvious, but the secret door built into a bookshelf to the west is more difficult to discover and requires a PC to succeed at a DC 22 Perception check to notice it. The stairs beyond lead down to area **E8**.

Ioseff used this room for his occult studies, and the books here represent a much more in-depth collection than those found in area **B10**. He spent long hours here lost in his studies, and in doing so opened his mind to the influence of Tchekuth deep below.

The strange spiral shape on the ceiling resulted indirectly from these studies. As Xarwin was prone to studying through the night, Fulvia's son slept in the room directly above, so each night, young Anitoli's dreams were infested and corrupted. After his murder, but before he rose as an attic whisperer, residue of his tormented dreams leached down through the ceiling above to manifest an eerie message—rather than whispering from above, Anitoli wrote from above. This long line of text, written in Common, manifested in a spiral pattern above Xarwin's desk (see **Handout #1** on page 25).

With a successful DC 16 Religion check or DC 13 Pharasma Lore, a PC notes that the orientation of the spiral suggests a link to Pharasma, whose religious symbol is a spiral, but with a critical success on either check, the PC recognizes that the orientation of the spiral is reversed, indicating something opposed to Pharasma. Upon reading this



Asethanna

erie poem, the PCs unlock Tchekuth and the Ashen Man as research topics.

**Research:** The collection of books here can be used to aid Investigation activities like the texts in area **B10**, or to research the topics of the Dominion of the Black, the Order of the Starless Night, Tchekuth, the *Void Mirror*, the *starless scope*, or the Ashen Man.

## B22. Family Hall

## Severe 3

A line of grimy windows along the north wall faces four large portraits to the south. Each of these paintings presents a life-sized depiction of a different person: a teenaged boy carrying a crossbow in the woods; a teenaged girl building a dollhouse that looks like Xarwin Manor; a red-haired woman standing in a graveyard, carrying a pair of matching crimson-handled woodcutter's hatchets hanging from her belt straps, ravens swarming around her; and a stern-looking man holding a silver telescope in his hands as he looks up into the night sky.

Asethanna Xarwin created all these paintings, which bear her signature.

A plaque on the teenaged boy's portrait reads "The Little Hunter." It depicts Marney Xarwin.

A plaque on the teenaged girl's portrait reads "The Little Architect." It depicts Mira Xarwin.

A plaque on the painting of the red-haired woman reads "Self Portrait." It depicts Asethanna Xarwin.

A plaque on the stern man's portrait reads "Lord of the Manor." It depicts Ioseff Xarwin holding the *starless scope*.

**Hazard:** These four portraits were among Asethanna's greatest works, and the malevolence has made sure to infuse them with awful energies.

### XARWIN PORTRAITS

### HAZARD 6

UNIQUE COMPLEX HAUNT

**Stealth** +18 (expert)

**Description** The paintings suddenly start to bleed—Ioseff Xarwin from the left wrist and the other three Xarwins in a line cutting across their brows—as the viewers receive glimpses of the traumas the family endured.

**Disable** DC 25 Religion to exorcise one of the paintings (a critical success exorcises all of the paintings at once) or DC 21 Thievery to quickly cover a painting with a cloak or remove it and turn it to face the wall

**AC** 21; **Fort** +17, **Ref** +11, **Will** +18

**Painting HP** 56 (BT 28); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weakness** positive 5

**Inflict Agony** ☞ (necromancy, occult) **Trigger** At least four characters are in area **B22**, or someone touches or attempts to damage a painting; **Effect** All characters

in area **B22** must attempt a DC 27 Will save to resist sudden, agonizing pain (the PC with the highest Intelligence feels this pain in the left wrist, while the others feel it in their heads). On a failure, a PC becomes sickened 1 from the agony (sickened 2 on a critical failure). The haunt then rolls initiative.

**Routine** (4 actions; emotion, fear, mental, necromancy, occult) The haunt uses up to 4 actions to afflict bleeding wounds on different creatures in area **B22**. These bloody wounds manifest where the target would have felt pain from Inflict Agony, regardless of whether they succeeded in resisting that effect or not. A creature can't be targeted more than once by this routine. Each creature affected must attempt a DC 24 Fortitude save. The haunt loses 1 action for each painting that's disabled or destroyed.

**Critical Success** The creature is unaffected.

**Success** The creature takes 1d8+3 slashing damage and is frightened 1 by the conviction that these wounds were caused by a loved one.

**Failure** As success, but 2d8+6 slashing damage, 1d6 persistent bleed damage, and frightened 2.

**Critical Failure** As failure, but 4d8+12 slashing damage, 2d6 persistent bleed damage, and frightened 3. Increase the value of the character's malevolence condition by 1.

**Reset** 1 hour; putting Xarwin's ghost to rest destroys this haunt forever.

**Treasure:** These paintings are worth 20 gp apiece if they aren't damaged, but each is 4 Bulk, so they're awkward to transport.

## Xarwin Manor Second Floor

The upper floor of Xarwin Manor is much like the lower one except there's been obvious foot traffic through areas **C1**, **C2**, **C17**, and all of the hallways. A PC can spot vaguely humanoid-shaped footprints the size of human children or halfling feet in the dust with a successful DC 10 Perception check (PCs who critically succeed notice that the toes have talons). A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Survival check to Track confirms that the foot traffic in area **C1** and the hallways leading toward area **C17** are the busiest. While the grioths (to whom these prints belong) can all be encountered in area **C17**, they alone among the manor's residents are mobile, and if the PCs take their time reaching area **C17**, they might (at your discretion) encounter a few of these creatures wandering the halls.

## C1. Balcony

A ten-foot-wide balcony winds around the entry hall below, the edges adorned with elegant but dust-caked wooden railings. To the south, a tall clock stands on a

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platform extending from the balcony. Beyond the clock, four tall windows in the southern wall appear to be caked with filth and grime. To the north of the stairs, the frame of an elegant wooden double door is decorated with stars, planets, and comets.

The reinforced wooden door to the north, which leads to area **C10**, is locked. A character who succeeds at a DC 25 Thievery check to Pick the Lock can open the complex lock, as can they by using the skeleton key found in area **C15**. The first time a character touches the door or attempts to Pick its Lock, a sudden wave of anger and hatred washes over them, as if something powerful seethes just beyond it. A moment later, a pool of blood splatters onto the floor then creates a dripping trail to the west to area **C13**, as a ghostly echo of Asethanna carries her husband's freshly severed hand to that room.

## C2. The Brainclock

An elegant, eight-foot-tall grandfather clock stands on a platform extending from the balcony. The clock's face is six feet off the ground, a mix of brass and bronze etched with ornate stars and planets. The clock's iron hands are shaped like curving comets. Below, grimy glass windows built into doors allow the complex clockworks to be observed as the pendulum swings back and forth. Above the clock face is a complex-looking pair of interlocking doors decorated with a tangle of curving metal strips. The arrangement resembles a set of intricate bars, which appear to secure the enclosed compartment.

**Treasure:** The ticking of this clock can be heard throughout area **C1** and area **B2** below; when the bells behind the clock face ring on the hour, they can be heard throughout the manor. The clock appears impressively crafted; a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Crafting check to Recall Knowledge confirms that it was crafted decades ago in distant

Alkenstar. The wood and brass clock (Hardness 15; HP 60 [BT 30]) is worth 100 gp but is 12 Bulk and thus difficult to transport.

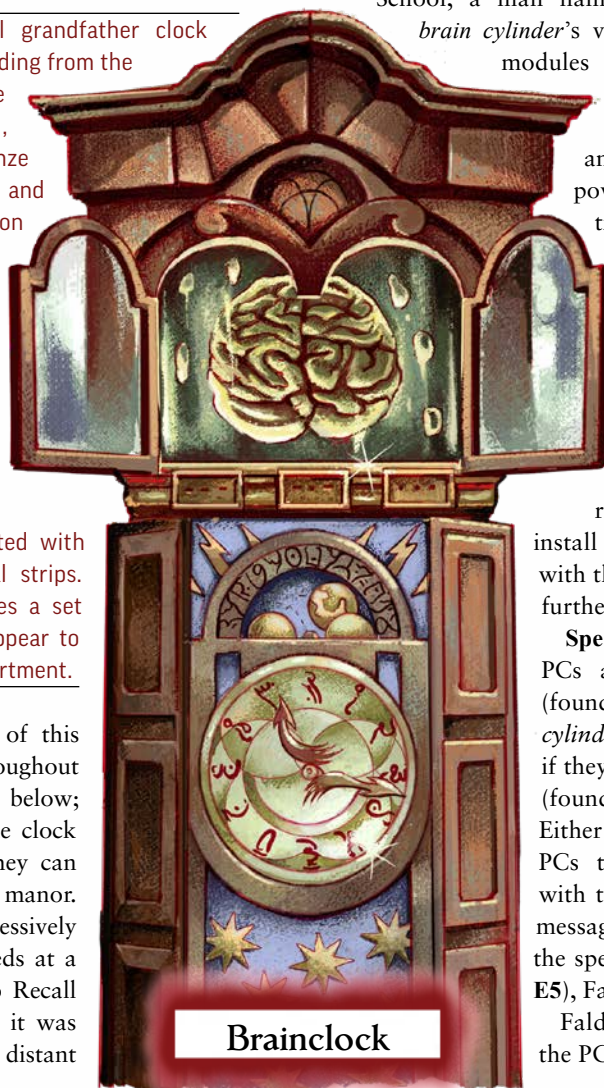
The clock has a potentially even greater value hidden within. The interlocking iron bands on the clock's doors just above the face function as a sort of puzzle, though a PC who succeeds at three consecutive DC 20 Thievery checks to Pick the Lock can solve the puzzle. Alternatively, a PC can Force Open the bars with a successful DC 21 Athletics check, or they can break off the bars by dealing damage (Hardness 5, HP 20 [BT 10]). A PC who critically fails on an attempt to Force Open the doors or on any attack against the bars deals 4d6 bludgeoning damage to the object within.

Within the compartment, a human brain floats inside a metal-and-glass container filled with bubbling fluid; this contraption is a *brain cylinder* (page 66) that contains the preserved brain of a long-missing astronomer from Ustalav's Sinkomakti

School, a man named Faldur Adenathy. The *brain cylinder's* vision, hearing, and speech modules are missing, but the PCs can find them elsewhere in the manor (areas **C15**, **D6**, and **E5**). The *brain cylinder's* power has kept the clock ticking all these years. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Crafting or Thievery check made as an action with the manipulate trait can remove it (a critical failure deals 8d6 damage to the *brain cylinder*). Once the cylinder is removed, that character can install and remove it as an action with the manipulate trait without further checks.

**Speaking with Faldur:** If the PCs attach the vision module (found in area **C15**) to the *brain cylinder*, Faldur can see. Likewise, if they attach the hearing module (found in area **D6**), he can hear. Either attachment enables the PCs to communicate one way with the brain (either by written messages or speech), but without the speech module (found in area **E5**), Faldur can't reply.

Faldur's initial attitude once the PCs establish communication



**Brainclock**

is unfriendly—not due to any ill will toward the PCs, but because of spending years in isolation and the shock of adjusting to his current state. When Faldur speaks, he mostly cries out in panic and horror at not knowing where he is or why he can't see his own body. A character can Coerce Faldur into cooperating with a successful DC 26 Intimidation check, or they can soothe his torment with a successful DC 24 Diplomacy check to Make an Impression (both of these DCs are reduced by 5 if Faldur's sight and hearing modules are applied so that he doesn't feel so isolated). If the PCs do the latter, any attitude adjustments toward the PCs are permanent. If his attitude is made hostile, Faldur becomes incoherent, and he rants and raves without providing any useful information; in this case, the PCs' further attempts to Coerce or Make an Impression have no effect. Casting *restoration* heightened to 4th level restores Faldur's attitude to unfriendly and allows for new attempts to adjust his attitude.

If made friendly, Faldur calms down enough that he can tell the PCs his name, that he was once a professor of astronomy at the Sinkomakti School, and that one night, he was jumped from behind while on a stargazing stroll in some nearby woods. He then remembers a long period of “floating in the dark” interspersed by strangely vivid dreams periodically interrupted by a voice that asked him various questions about astronomy and other occult matters. The voice identified himself as “Ioseff Xarwin,” but Faldur never learned much more than that from his forever-unseen interrogator.

With a successful DC 28 Occultism check, Society check, or appropriate Lore check to Recall Knowledge, a PC remembers the old but infamous case of Faldur's mysterious disappearance back in 4653 AR, in which his body was never found. A character who's from Ustalav or has an interest in astronomy or the occult reduces the DC of this check by 10.

**Research:** By the time the PCs have gathered the modules to allow communication with Faldur, they likely have already pieced together much of the lore and mystery of Xarwin Manor. Conversation with Faldur can reveal what happened to him (see the What Happened to Faldur? sidebar on page 27), as Ioseff eventually revealed this information to him during one of their conversations. Faldur has +18 to Astronomy Lore and +15 to Occultism should the PCs wish to consult with him on Recall Knowledge checks. He also can help them in their investigations, and conversation with him allows the PCs to Research the Ashen Man, the Dominion of the Black, Ioseff Xarwin, the Order

## WHAT HAPPENED TO FALDUR?

During his search for the *starless scope* in Ustalav, Ioseff Xarwin attended several of Faldur's lectures and was impressed with the man's knowledge. Several years later, after Ioseff successfully captured and enslaved a mi-go, he paid a band of mercenaries to abduct Faldur and transport him across Avistan to Xarwin Manor. They kept the professor unconscious via drugs, and soon after his arrival in Crooked Cove, Ioseff (with his mi-go prisoner) performed the operation to extract Faldur's brain and preserve it in a *brain cylinder* (page 66). In so doing, Ioseff secured a captive assistant and advisor for himself. Knowing Faldur's appreciation of clockworks, Ioseff stored his assistant in a specially crafted housing in his Alkenstari clock (area C2), taking Faldur out secretly after dark to bring down to the basement and converse with as needed. To help ensure that only he could communicate with Faldur, Ioseff kept the three sensory modules for the *brain cylinder* hidden in several places throughout the manor.

The mercenaries Ioseff hired for the job fared little better, and in the present, their bodies lie amid the undead tanglebones in area E3.

of the Starless Night, the *starless scope*, Tchekuth, or the *Void Mirror*.

**Saving Faldur:** Faldur's body has long since decayed away, but he remains horribly alive inside the *brain cylinder*. The PCs might wish to put him out of his misery by destroying the *brain cylinder*. At this point, Faldur dies and his soul moves on to the Boneyard, and if the PCs secure the expensive resources, they can restore him to life provided they use magic like *resurrect* or *reincarnation* that doesn't require an intact body. Restoring him to a body before his brain dies requires either powerful magic (such as *miracle*, *wish*, or the like) or a long, likely dangerous, and potentially morally complex quest to secure the talent and tools needed to transfer his brain into a new body.

Given time, Faldur can adjust to his new condition. As long as someone remains at hand to care for his well-being via conversation, helping him to read or stargaze, or simply keeping him company, characters can keep the horror of his fate at bay until they can secure the means to restore him. There are also many in Kintargo who would take him in, not the least of which would include any of the good religions who maintain temples in the city.

If the PCs express compassion toward Faldur and his fate, grant them 80 XP.

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## C3. Sculptor's Workshop

This dusty room once served as a sculptor's workshop, with cabinets and shelves along the wall storing a wide range of artisan's tools. A display case against the west wall holds a stand designed to display two objects, although it currently displays only a single red-handled hatchet. A round table in the middle of the room and a workbench to the south appear to be where an unknown artist carried out the bulk of their work. A nearly completed carving of a bird still sits on the workbench. A large number of wood blocks and stone slabs, raw materials for carving, are stacked to the southeast. The fireplace to the east has a kiln-like oven built into it.

Asethanna split much of her time during her final years living in the manor between this room and its neighbor (area C4), losing herself in her artwork. An



Asethanna

investigation of the partially completed woodcarving on the workbench reveals it to be an exquisite work depicting Pharamasma seated on her throne. Asethanna was putting the finishing touches on this carving when Ioseff left the manor that fateful night to deliver Fulvia to agents from Darakole Asylum. After she made her discoveries in the northeast wing of the manor, she never returned to complete this statuette. A PC can complete the work by Repairing it with a successful DC 18 Crafting check; on a critical success, their repair work further manages to capture Asethanna's artistic intent and results in an especially valuable sculpture.

**Treasure:** The sculptor's tools found here can be gathered together to form a set of sterling artisan's tools for sculpture and woodcarving and a superb repair kit. If the PCs complete the sculpture of Pharamasma with a critical success, it becomes a work of art worth 30 gp.

The hatchet on display here is an elegant weapon and tool, part of a matched set that Asethanna used as weapons when needed but also to harvest blocks of wood from the surrounding forest for later carving. The missing hatchet is still in area C10—the one on display here is a +1 *hatchet*.

## C4. Painter's Workshop

**Moderate 4**

The door to this room is boarded over and locked. Removing the boards takes only a few minutes of work. Without the skeleton key from area C15, a PC can open it with a successful DC 20 Thievery check to Pick the Lock. Ioseff boarded up this door soon after he realized the room beyond had become haunted by his wife's undead spirit, intending to prevent curious servants from having easy access to it.

An easel with a covered canvas stands near a stool in the eastern part of this room. Painter's supplies clutter the shelves to the north, while a tall-backed chair is placed near a fireplace to the west. What appears to be several spills of fresh paint glisten on the floor in the middle of the room. A bed to the southeast has a pillow and sheets caked with dried blood where an occupant's head might have rested. At the foot of the bed lies a set of traveler's cases, partially filled with clothing and other supplies for a long journey. A human skeleton clad in a rotted majordomo uniform lies sprawled amid these supplies.

**Creatures:** Asethanna moved out of the bedroom she shared with her husband long before the fateful night she found proof of his infidelity. Ioseff murdered his wife Asethanna and the manor's majordomo Cathilda in this room as they hastily packed for an

escape from the manor after Asethanna confronted her husband and chopped off his hand. Ioseff left Cathilda's body where it lay but quickly carried his wife's body downstairs to his laboratory to extract and preserve her brain.

Yet, since Ioseff murdered the two women here, their spirits remain bound to this room, both manifesting into unusual undead entities.

When the PCs enter the room, Asethanna and Cathilda's spirits rise up from the spilled paint, taking on two-dimensional, distorted, and liquescent forms that immediately attack in eerie silence. If the PCs have seen these two women's portraits (in areas **B22** and **B13**), the PCs can recognize the spirits' distorted features and discern their identities with a successful DC 14 Perception check.

These two undead souls function as shadows, but as they're made of liquid, they can't move through solid barriers like most incorporeal creatures. They can seep through cracks in a doorframe but lack the strength to open windows.

The two spirits attack the PCs relentlessly, pursuing them throughout the house as needed; they treat closed doors as difficult terrain unless the PCs take a 3-action activity with the manipulate trait to use material to block the gap under the doors and plug the keyholes with cloth or other materials. They won't pursue the PCs into areas **B21** or **C10**, or into the ancient construction of the dungeon level below, for there, Ioseff's influence is too unpleasant for either undead spirit to bear. If slain, a spirit melts into a puddle of paint, only to revive 24 hours later to continue the attack if the PCs remain or to return to this area otherwise. This cycle repeats as long as the malevolence remains.

If a PC carries the completed statuette of Pharasma, Asethanna pauses and says in a gurgling voice, "You finished it... let me see my Pharasma..." If the PC shows Asethanna the finished artwork, she sighs in nostalgic relief and melts into the ground, as does Cathilda. These undead spirits no longer torment the PCs, but they remain trapped until the malevolence is removed.

## ASETHANNA AND CATHILDA CREATURE 4

Variant shadows (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 289)

**Initiative** Stealth +14

**Hazard:** The canvas under the throw cloth is blank, but the first PC who pulls the cloth away experiences a specific Xarwin Manor phantasm. This haunt manifests as an unsettling vision of that PC's own portrait with the top of their head cut away to reveal their empty braincase within. The image animates and cries out "Help me!" in a tormented voice that only

the PC can hear, and then it fades away; otherwise, it functions as a typical Xarwin Manor phantasm.

## PHANTASMAL SELF-PORTRAIT HAZARD -1

Xarwin Manor phantasm (page 11)

**Stealth** DC 15

**Treasure:** The supplies at the foot of the bed have largely decayed; Asethanna and Cathilda once intended to use these supplies after gathering the twins and escaping the manor, but Ioseff confronted them before they could finish packing. A search of the supplies reveals nothing of use, but a character who investigates Cathilda's skeletal remains finds a pouch of 25 gp, still clutched in her hand from when she died.

## C5. Chapel Moderate 4

Three shelves filled with books occupy the western half of this room, while to the east an iron spiral staircase descends to the floor below. A long table surrounded by broken chairs sits before a tall brick fireplace, while a battered, partially destroyed wooden statue of a woman stands on the wooden platform to the east. Broken furniture and decorations, including several ruined paintings and a wheeled ladder once used to access books on higher shelves, lie scattered throughout the chamber.

With a successful DC 12 Religion check, a PC deduces that this room was once a chapel devoted to Pharasma, but everything within has been destroyed with the curious exception of the books on the shelves. The spiral stairs lead down to area **B10**.

**Creature:** After he murdered his wife, Ioseff forbade the servants from entering the upper floors, but at first, some of the servants didn't take him seriously enough. The manor's librarian, Zedna, came up here a few days after Asethanna's "disappearance" to return several repaired books to the chapel stacks, and Ioseff confronted her in a rage. After he accidentally let slip that Asethanna was still in the manor—in a manner of speaking—he panicked and murdered Zedna. He disposed of her remains in the pool in area **E3** and told the other servants she'd broken his commands, so he dismissed her. The servants dared not disobey him after that incident.

While her remains have become the tanglebones in area **E3**, Zedna's spirit lingers in the chapel to this day as a powerful poltergeist. She attacks anyone who enters the room but can't leave the chapel, and she won't use her powers to disturb any of the books.

## ELITE POLTERGEIST CREATURE 6

*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, 264

**Initiative** Stealth +16

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**Treasure:** A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check while searching the ruined statue of Pharama sees the initials of the statue's creator—"A.X."—carved into the statue's left foot. More interestingly, this check reveals that the foot itself can be swiveled to the side. Doing so causes the foot and a portion of the statue's base to open, revealing a hollow within that holds several journals (Asethanna's diaries—see "Research" below), a *scroll of restoration* (4th), and a *scroll of ghostly weapon*.

**Research:** The books on the shelves escaped the poltergeist's wrath simply because the malevolence itself covets knowledge, even that of its enemies. The PCs can use these books for the research topic Psychopomps. If the PCs discover Asethanna's diaries, they can be used to research Asethanna Xarwin herself.

## C6. Majordomo's Room

Low 4

This dusty bedroom contains a simple bed and a tall dresser to the north. Against the eastern wall, a pair of chairs placed on opposite sides of a small table are set between two grimy windows. The wall opposite this table also features a fireplace.

This room once served as the personal quarters of the manor's majordomo, Cathilda Athemer, whose remains the PCs can find in area C4.

**Creature:** When the PCs enter this room, a character who succeeds at a DC 19 Perception check hears a strange, soft rasping and buzzing sound from the fireplace. Today, several hundred wasps occupy this room, their nest built inside the fireplace's chimney. After nearly two decades of dwelling here after being trapped by the caul, the wasps have become strangely influenced by the malevolence. When they swarm to attack, their buzzing sounds almost like the word "Tchekuth" if the PCs have heard this word elsewhere—otherwise, they don't sound unusual at all. The swarm has the eerie habit of periodically forming into the shape of an enormous left hand as it flies, and any creature who reaches stage 2 of its poison increases their malevolence value by 1. This increase can only happen once per character, and when it does, they hear strange, buzzing whispers

that invite them to "stay here... with me... become one... with me..."

## ELITE WASP SWARM

CREATURE 5

*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, 324

**Initiative** Perception +12

## C7. Guest Room

Thick dust has settled on the furniture in this seemingly unremarkable bedroom.

This guest room rarely saw use even while the Xarwins lived. There's nothing of interest here, making it a good place for the PCs to encounter a Xarwin Manor phantasm.

## C8. Fulvia's Room

This room is in a state of disarray, with books torn from shelves and furniture ripped apart. A writing desk has its drawers pulled out and upended.

Ioseff Xarwin gave this guest room to Fulvia Nostraema as a place for her to stay and write. After she had her breakdown, murdered her son Anitoli, and tried to burn down the manor, Ioseff had her committed to Darakole Asylum. While he saw to this unsavory task, Asethanna tore this room apart looking for evidence of Fulvia's actual relationship with her husband—and her fears proved true. The room has been left in this disarranged state, as Ioseff never returned to this wing after he murdered his family.

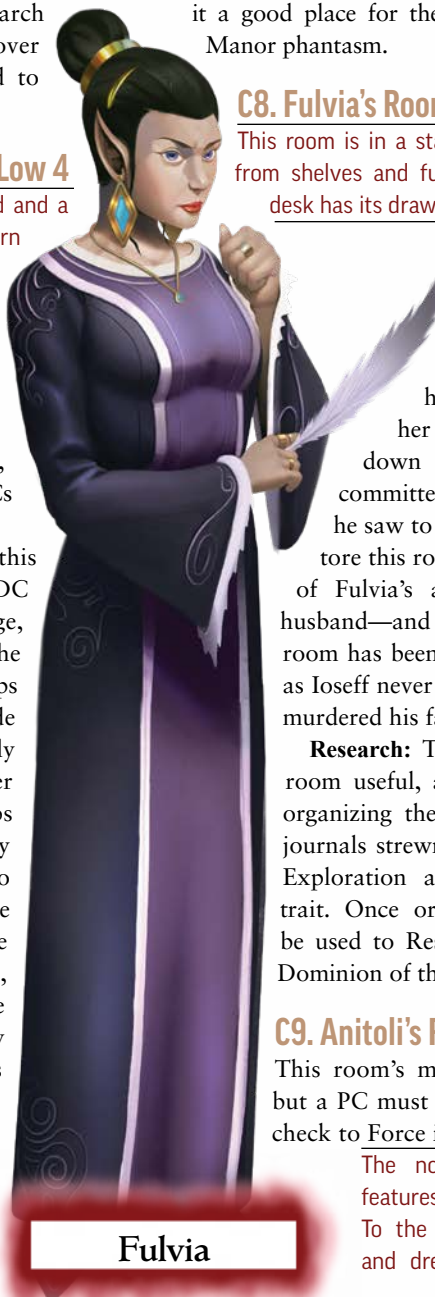
**Research:** To make the materials in this room useful, a PC must spend four hours organizing the chaos of books, notes, and journals strewn throughout this room as an Exploration activity with the concentrate trait. Once organized, these resources can be used to Research Fulvia Nostraema, the Dominion of the Black, or Tchekuth.

## C9. Anitoli's Room

Moderate 4

This room's mold-caked door isn't locked, but a PC must succeed at a DC 20 Athletics check to Force it Open.

The northeast corner of this room features a dust-covered but made bed. To the south, a fireplace has shelves and dressers to either side of it. An



Fulvia

overturned child-sized chair lays on the floor beside a low table between grimy windows to the north. Toys lay scattered over the floor, along with fragments of dolls and ripped-up pages from children's books. The debris appears arranged in a roughly spiral shape and is caked to the floor with patches of mold.

Fulvia's son Anitoli—a precocious lad whose talent with writing and poetry might have blossomed into a remarkable voice had he survived to adulthood—lived and died in this room. The toys on the floor lie in the approximate position of the strange spiral poem on the ceiling of area B21 below.

**Creature:** Fulvia smothered Anitoli with a pillow as he slept after she became convinced that Golarion had only months before being offered up for the Banquet by the Dominion of the Black. Ioseff never bothered to even enter this room, much less bury the body within, as he increasingly withdrew into his obsessions in the months following his murderous spree. Anitoli has since become a particularly powerful attic whisperer, yet he never leaves this room. He spends much of his time walking the narrow path between the spiral of toys and garbage on the floor, whispering his repeated rhymes over and over. He wears ragged green robes and has a vulture's skull for a head, his bones held together (or in spots where they're missing, entirely replaced by) clots of pale green fungus. Anitoli fights to the death but doesn't pursue foes beyond this room. During combat, he continually apologizes to the PCs for the coming "Banquet" and warns them that death is the only escape anyone on Golarion can hope for.

## ANITOLI NOSTRAEMA

## CREATURE 6

UNIQUE NE SMALL UNDEAD

Variant attic whisperer (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 28)

**Perception** +15; darkvision

**Languages** Aklo, Common

**Skills** Deception +14, Occultism +13, Stealth +15

**Str** +0, **Dex** +5, **Con** +2, **Int** +3, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +4

**AC** 23; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +17, **Will** +15

**HP** 95, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

**Aura of Sobs** (auditory, aura, emotion, enchantment, mental, occult) 10 feet. As attic whisperer, but DC 21 Will save.

**Whispered Despair** ⤵ As attic whisperer.

**Speed** 20 feet

**Melee** ♦ jaws +17 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 3d8 piercing plus steal breath

**Melee** ♦ bony hand +17 (agile), **Damage** 2d12 negative plus steal voice

**Steal Breath** (curse, incapacitation, necromancy, occult) As attic whisperer, but DC 24 Fortitude save.

**Steal Voice** (curse, necromancy, occult) As attic whisperer, but DC 24 Will save.

## C10. Xarwin's Office

## Severe 4

The door to this room is locked—see area C1 for more details.

Shelves line the east and west walls of this office, while twin tapestries depicting the reds and blacks of Cheliax hang to the north. In front of a wide wooden desk are two chairs, one overturned, with a third chair behind it. A red-handled hatchet sticks up from the desk's surface, embedded in the wood and surrounded by a stain of dried blood.

This room served Ioseff Xarwin as his private office in life—the place where, ostensibly, he attended to his duties as Paracount. In fact, he spent much of his time researching his obsessions here, although as time wore on, that research increasingly shifted to his laboratory in the dungeons below.

**Hazard:** Ioseff came to this room immediately after he returned home from his trip to hand Fulvia over to the caretakers at Darakole Asylum, where he summarily set about preparing the paperwork needed to deal with her actions (the murder of her child and attempted destruction of Chelaxian



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property) to stave off an unwanted full investigation by Thrune agents, but his enraged wife interrupted him not long after. She confronted Ioseff here with the ring she found in Fulvia's room, and when Ioseff defiantly put the ring on his finger and insulted his wife, she hacked off that hand with one of her hatchets then disposed of the hand in area **C13** before returning to area **C4**. Ioseff left his office after several minutes, though he used some of the potions in his desk drawer to heal his grievous injury as best he could. After his murderous actions, he could never bear the thought of returning here and simply locked up the room. Since that time, the malevolence has seized upon the lingering trauma within this room, resulting in a dangerous haunt.

## WRATHFUL HATCHET

## HAZARD 7

UNIQUE COMPLEX HAUNT

**Stealth** +17 (expert); darkvision

**Description** The hatchet embedded atop the desk wiggles, vibrates, and then flies into the air, accompanied by a rage-filled cry of a woman.

**Disable** DC 27 Diplomacy to soothe the haunt's wrath or DC 25 Religion to exorcise the haunt

**AC** 25; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +18, **Will** +16

**Hatchet Hardness** 14; **HP** 60 (BT 30); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weakness** positive 7

**Furious Shriek** ⤿ (auditory, emotion, fear, mental, occult) **Trigger** A creature approaches within 5 feet of the hatchet or more than 3 creatures enter area **C10**; **Effect** The furious shriek of Asethanna's rage resonates throughout the room, and all creatures within 25 feet of the hatchet must attempt a DC 25 Will save. The haunt then rolls initiative.

**Critical Success** The creature is unaffected.

**Success** The creature becomes frightened 1.

**Failure** The creature becomes frightened 2.

**Critical Failure** The creature feels as if the wrathful haunt is particularly enraged at them. The creature becomes frightened 2; their frightened condition doesn't decrease automatically as long as the haunt remains active, and the hatchet gains a +2 circumstance bonus to all wrathful hatchet Strikes it attempts against the creature.

**Routine** (3 actions; evocation, occult) The haunted hatchet uses an action to move to a square adjacent to a creature within 25 feet, attempts a wrathful hatchet Strike against an adjacent creature, or attempts to Escape from being immobilized or restrained. If there are no creatures within 25 feet, the hatchet moves in a random direction. If it ends its turn and there are no creatures within 25 feet, the hatchet falls to the ground, and the haunt ends.

**Melee** ♦ wrathful hatchet +18, **Damage** 1d6+6 slashing plus 2d6 mental and 1d6 bleed

**Reset** 24 hours; putting Xarwin's ghost to rest destroys this haunt forever.

**Treasure:** The hatchet is a +1 *hatchet*, the matching pair to the other found in area **C3**. If the PCs take it with them and haven't disabled the haunt, the wrathful hatchet might attack them again after it resets in 24 hours. Once the PCs disable the haunt, the hatchet functions as a normal +1 *hatchet*, but with an additional property: when wielded against Ioseff Xarwin's ghost, it functions as a +1 *striking ghost touch hatchet*.

One of the desk's drawers appears slightly open and stained with old blood. The drawer holds several of Xarwin's journals (see Research below), along with a rack built to hold six potion vials. Only three potions remain in the rack; the other three empty potion vials are caked with dried blood and lie on the floor under the desk. All three of these potions are *moderate healing potions*.

**Research:** The majority of the books and notes found in the office concern outdated Chelaxian government procedures. A PC who succeeds at a DC 21 Perception check uncovers a small stack of notes on the clock in area **C2**. These notes are written in Infernal, but a PC who can read them can follow the instructions to open the locked compartment atop the clock without making Thievery checks; to do so, a PC must spend 1 minute following the instructions as an activity with the manipulate trait.

The bloodstained ledgers and journals from the desk can be used to Research Fulvia Nostraema, Ioseff Xarwin, the Order of the Starless Night, the *starless scope*, the *Void Mirror*, and Xarwin Manor.

## C11. Landing

The flights of stairs to the north of this landing lead down to area **B11**, while the stairs behind the doors in the southern wall lead up to area **D2**. These doors are both locked. The skeleton key in area **C15** unlocks them, as can a character who succeeds at a DC 20 Thievery check to Pick the Lock.

## C12. Crypt Overlook

This long room contains a few high-backed chairs, which allows one to sit in comfort while gazing out through the wall of dusty, grime-encrusted windows to the north.

Despite the filthy windows, a character can clean a spot to peer through as an action with the manipulate trait, allowing them to look out over the forest north

of Xarwin Manor. A character who succeeds at DC 12 Perception check notices a clearing in the woods just north of the manor with some curious objects within it—this area is the Cosmic Crypt (area A7).

**Hazard:** The first time a character peers through this window, a Xarwin Manor phantasm manifests in the glass, giving the impression of a man standing before the central pillar in the clearing as he does something to manipulate the front of the structure. A moment later, the pillar's front opens like a door. The man steps into the darkness within and then the door closes, but not before he glances back up to the window, as if he notices the PC watching him. Anyone who has seen a depiction of Ioseff Xarwin recognizes him as the man down in the clearing. This image functions as a Xarwin Manor phantasm—later investigation of the Cosmic Crypt reveals no evidence of the man seen through the window.

## PHANTASMAL REFLECTION

**HAZARD -1**

Xarwin Manor phantasm (page 11)

**Stealth** DC 15

## C13. Washroom

The room has a five-foot-wide wooden bench placed against the wall opposite the entrance. Directly north, the tattered remnants of a silk curtain hang from the ceiling. Ample holes and rips in the curtain provide glimpses into the room beyond, which appears to be a washroom. An oversized cast-iron tub sits against the far wall, while to the west a large fireplace looms next to a pair of water barrels.

The Xarwins used this room to bathe and relax. The fireplace heated water for the bath, but both water barrels are long-empty now. This is an excellent place for the PCs to experience a Xarwin Manor phantasm.

**Treasure:** A character who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check while Searching the fireplace notices a skeletal left hand partially buried in the dust and ash. A gold ring glitters on the hand's ring finger, and the bones at the wrist look cleanly chopped through. This hand belonged to Ioseff, burnt here by his wife after she lopped it off—just before she retreated to area C4 to prepare for a flight from the manor she never made.

The ring is the only survivor of a matched set that Ioseff and Fulvia bought for each other during the height of their affair in Ustalav. Both rings bore the inscription "Love Eternal Under Starless Sky—Ioseff ♥ Fulvia" in Elven. Ioseff melted his down soon after he broke off the affair, when he realized Fulvia had been using him to help finance her bid on the *starless scope*; Fulvia kept her ring throughout

the years, hoping to someday rekindle Ioseff's love for her. The ring is worth 25 gp, and while it isn't magical, it can be used as a weapon against Ioseff (see page 53 for further details).

## C14. Twins' Rooms

**Moderate 4**

Both of these rooms look very similar in layout, and between them, they share a single complex haunt that triggers once a character enters either room. Both doors are locked; they can be opened with the skeleton key from area C15, or by a character who succeeds at a DC 20 Thievery check to Pick the Lock. You can use the following read-aloud text for either room.

A single bed sits in the corner of this room. Tangled sheets marred by ancient bloodstains lie in a heap on the floor. The opposite corner features a half-sized fireplace; a freestanding dresser and a table with a chair fill out the room's remaining furnishings.

For area C14a, add the following.

Atop the table rests a shortbow, several arrows, and a taxidermy fox. Paintings of the woods and hunting scenes decorate the walls.

For area C14b, add the following.

Atop the table sits a scale model of Xarwin Manor, along with several sheets of paper and drawing instruments. Paintings of houses with striking architecture decorate the walls.

Area C14a belonged to Marney (the Xarwin son), while area C14b belonged to Mira (the Xarwin daughter). Ioseff came upon them during the night of his rampage, one after the other. He quickly overpowered his children before moving them to the laboratory below to harvest their brains. He locked both doors to their rooms and never returned to either room after the murders.

**Hazard:** The frightened spirits of the Xarwin twins haunt these rooms, but once the haunt activates, they experience their traumas in reverse, going from the torment of having their brains removed to a misplaced, childlike perception that the PCs are here to play.

## ARCHITECT AND HUNTER

**HAZARD 6**

**UNIQUE** **COMPLEX** **HAUNT**

**Stealth** +15 (expert)

**Description** A ghostly pair of teenagers—the Xarwin twins—cry out in pain as their brains are replaced into their heads. As if their trauma reverses, the initial pain fades and they express the desire to play.

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**Disable** DC 21 Performance (trained) to distract the haunt and entertain it until it becomes soothed or DC 25 Religion (trained) to exorcise the haunt

**AC** 24; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +17, **Will** +15

**HP** 54 (BT 27); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weaknesses** positive 9

**Brain Pain** ➤ (mental, necromancy) **Trigger** One round passes after a living creature opens the door to either of the children's rooms; **Effect** Both doors to the rooms open violently as the PCs experience visions of the twins having the tops of their heads cut away by unseen blades, followed by the ghastly sight of brains being placed into the empty skulls within. All creatures in either **C14a**, **C14b**, or in the hallway outside the rooms must attempt a DC 24 Will save. The haunt then rolls initiative.

**Critical Success** The creature is unaffected.

**Success** The creature is sickened 1 by the pain.

**Failure** The creature takes 2d8+9 mental damage and increases their malevolence value by 1.

**Critical Failure** The creature takes 4d8+9 mental damage, is stunned 1 by the pain, and increases their malevolence value by 2.

**Routine** (2 actions) The architect (Mira Xarwin) uses Shackled Memories to cause a strange, house-like cage of solid ectoplasm to spring up around a randomly determined target. This house bears an uncanny resemblance to the home the target grew up in. The hunter (Marney Xarwin) then attempts a hunting shot Strike at that target.

**Shackled Memories** ➤ (emotion, incapacitation, mental) The target believes a miniature version of their childhood home has built up around them, locking them in place. The target must attempt a DC 24 Will save.

**Critical Success** The target is unaffected and is temporarily immune to Shackled Memories for 24 hours.

**Success** The target is flat-footed until the end of their next turn.

**Failure** The target is flat-footed and immobilized until the end of their next turn.

**Critical Failure** The target is restrained for 1 minute or until they Escape.

**Ranged** ➤ hunting shot +17, **Damage** 3d8 piercing and 1d8 persistent mental as the target imagines they're bleeding to death

**Reset** The haunt resets automatically 1 hour after it's defeated or after no living creatures remain in the area to play with. Removing Marney's and Mira's brains from the brain collector statue in area **E9** destroys the haunt.

room. The sheets are tangled, and a headboard that doubles as a shelf displays several knickknacks, candlesticks, and a small iron coffer. The mantle of the large brick fireplace to the west appears decorated with small art objects. South of the bed, two chairs flank either side of a round table, while the nightstand near the bed and the dresser in the southeast corner have mostly fallen into disrepair.

Ioseff and Asethanna originally used this room as a bedroom, but for the last few years of their lives, the couple had taken to sleeping in separate rooms.

**Creature:** If any entity considers Xarwin Manor a delight, it would be a will-o'-wisp. One found its way to the manor, drawn by the delicious aura of fear the place exuded. Perhaps as a result of its immunity to magic, or maybe as a side effect from its supernatural hunger, the will-o'-wisp found that it could come and go through the Xarwin Caul as it desired, passing through without bursting the caul. Likewise, it never fell victim to the malevolence's influence and doesn't see the manor as its home, though it does consider Xarwin Manor a never-ending banquet.

As a result, the will-o'-wisp spends most of its time in a state of torpor, lying in a semi-gelatinous heap of faintly pulsating light atop the middle of the bed. It takes a -4 penalty to Perception checks due to long weeks of glutting on the malevolence, but once it notices the PCs, it rises from the bed to take on a faintly skull-like shape. It speaks in Common, introducing itself as the "master of this house" and demanding to know why the PCs have intruded upon its home. Despite all the feeding the wisp has done, it has no true insights into who once lived here, and PCs who mistakenly assume they're speaking to Ioseff's spirit and attempt to draw information out of the wisp should quickly realize the truth.

Once the wisp realizes that the PCs have seen through its ruse, the wisp Goes Dark, hoping the PCs assume it simply vanished. It then invisibly follows them, eager for a new flavor of meal. The wisp continues to stalk them, so the next time a PC suffers a fear effect or is dying, it feeds on that fear. Doing so reveals it to the PCs, of course, after which point it attacks. The wisp fights until reduced to 20 or fewer hit points and then tries to flee. Yet with the wisp so weakened, the malevolence finally has the proverbial last laugh. While the creature's feeding over the years didn't pose much more than a nuisance to the malevolence, akin to a tick lodged in a hard-to-reach nook, the malevolence seizes this chance to be rid of the wisp. As it flees, bands of ectoplasmic energy extend from the floors, walls, and ceiling to restrain the wisp—this energy, unlike that comprising

## C15. Ioseff's Room

## Moderate 4

A large four-poster bed is set against the north wall of this

the Xarwin Caul, can very much affect the wisp. Each round at the start of the wisp's turn, the malevolence spends a reaction to attempt to Grapple the wisp with a +15 Athletics check. It can't damage the wisp, but it can use the PCs indirectly; for as long as it holds the wisp in place, the PCs can attack the wisp without fear of it escaping. Once the wisp is slain, the ectoplasmic tendrils retreat into the walls and floor, leaving awful discolored stains where they slide back into the building's structure.

## WILL-O'-WISP

## CREATURE 6

*Pathfinder Bestiary* 333

**Initiative** Perception +16

**Treasure:** The knickknacks displayed on the headboard and mantle of this room are mostly gifts given to the Xarwin couple during the early days of their marriage—statuettes of Asmodeus, ceremonial daggers, portraits of Abrogail I, and so on. In all, these art objects are worth a total of 20 gp. The sight module for the brainclock in area C2 sits on the fireplace mantel.

The locked iron coffer on the headboard holds contents of greater value. This coffer can be unlocked with a small bronze key hidden behind a loose brick in the fireplace (a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check locates the key), or a character can attempt a DC 20 Thievery check to Pick the Lock. The coffer holds Ioseff's wedding ring (worth 30 gp), a skeleton key that can unlock all of the locked doors in Xarwin Manor (but not those in the dungeons below), and a red and black *diplomat's badge* that Ioseff only wore on special occasions.

## C16. Bathroom

A rotting curtain divides this bathroom into north and south halves, but the hanging rags do little to obscure either side from the other.

There's little of import or value in this room, but it makes for an excellent location for the PCs to encounter a Xarwin Manor phantasm.

## C17. Dining Hall

## Severe 4

A single long table sprawls through the middle of this dining room, surrounded by a combination of chairs, broken and otherwise. A pair of fallen chandeliers lie atop the table at either end. To the south, a shattered cabinet for displaying fine place settings just barely stands, while a sideboard for food preparation nearby teeters on rotten-looking legs. A large fireplace to the north is cold and dark, though it has become the

centerpiece of a disturbingly majestic display of rotten curtains and table linens, strips of carpet, fragments of wood, and, in a few places, strange bones of what appear to be bat-like humanoids, all arranged to depict an immense bat with its wings spread from one end of the room to the other. Its head looks like little more than three hand mirrors placed to give the impression of an alien, three-lobed eye.

While this room could have seated over a dozen people back in the day, it rarely seated more than the four Xarwins—and as the years wore on, full family gatherings grew even rarer.

With a successful DC 20 Religion check, a PC recognizes the sinister bat-like display on the north wall as a depiction of the Outer God Nyarlathotep in his guise as the Haunter of the Dark. With a successful DC 16 Occultism check, a PC identifies the strange bat-like bones as belonging to grioths.

**Creatures:** A character trained in using the *Void Mirror* could perform a ritual with it to call down creatures from the stars. However, the powerful magical mirror has been known to activate on its own when the stars are in the right places and certain creatures on the far side of the universe pay attention. Such a case happened only a few months ago, when a small group of alien explorers stumbled upon a curious rectangle of light in the depths of space. These creatures were a band of bat-like grioths, and upon examining the rectangle, they found themselves transported across the universe to Xarwin Manor's observatory (area D6). The undead brain collector dwelling there slew several of them within moments, and they fled downstairs before eventually coming to this floor. Since then, the grioths, ever obedient to their lone surviving priest, have dwelled in the dining room here and have become enthralled by the manor. They haven't lived here long enough to lose all their memories, but to them, their lives before exist only as dreams laced with homesickness.

Today, the seven grioths have converted this room into a lair and shrine to their sinister patron, Nyarlathotep, and not a day goes by without the cultist commander leading prayers for the grioths to be contacted by others of their kind. They dare not return to the *Void Mirror*, for fear of the undead brain collector that guards the room (the grioth bones on display here came from those who didn't survive that initial attack), but neither do they seek to return home. For grioths, the discovery of new worlds to conquer is their driving urge, and they hope that by arriving at this strange new world, others of their kind will come calling.

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There are six grioth scouts here and a single cultist leader, but it's possible the PCs might have encountered a few of the scouts in the manor halls. While the scouts see the PCs as their first opportunity to begin conquering this world, the priest holds them back before ordering an attack. The priest does their best to communicate with the PCs by speaking Aklo, asking about the world beyond and if others of its kind rule here yet. The grioths know little more about the malevolence that haunts Xarwin Manor, but they should at least mention that they came through the window above from across the universe, and that it's only a matter of time before their brethren follow. Just before the grioth cultist orders the attack, they wonder if the PCs might just step up to the "apex above to view the glory of the window to beyond," hoping to convince the PCs to confront the monster in area D6

so that the grioths can then swoop in to finish the PCs off and claim the *Void Mirror* for themselves.

In case no one speaks Aklo and communication can't be established, the grioths are just as fine with attacking the PCs to secure living sacrifices to Nyarlathotep; in this case, they fight to the death.

## GRIOTH SCOUTS (6)

## CREATURE 1

*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 122

**Initiative** Perception +7

## GRIOTH CULTIST

## CREATURE 3

*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 123

**Initiative** Perception +10

**Treasure:** In addition to the curious voidglass weapons the grioths carry, the grioth cultist has a pouch at its side that contains a shiny glass lens it snatched up from a table in area D6 before fleeing. This spare lens is meant for the *starless scope*, identical to the one found in area A4.

## Disturbing Dreams

Although Ioseff is site bound to his laboratory (area E9), he can sense and observe events that unfold within the manor, experiencing these things almost as dreams or visions. As a result, he knows the PCs have intruded on his realm. Ioseff is particularly taken with the PC who has the highest Intelligence score, as he hopes to possess this PC and then use their brain to finish his plan to merge with his murdered family.

At some point during this adventure, preferably after the PCs have reached 4th level but before they've explored much of the dungeons below, Ioseff begins to torment the characters from afar while they sleep. Every night, he uses *nightmare* and *dream message* against two separate characters. He uses *dream message* against his chosen PC (the one with the highest Intelligence score), sending a dream wherein the PC drifts through the depths of space and hears a strangely comforting voice repeating "you have what should be mine" 25 times before the message ends. He then uses *nightmare* against a different PC whom he suspects would be the most effective against him in battle (preferring a good-aligned champion



Grioth Cultist

or cleric). Ioseff inflicts visions of the PC being strapped to a table, making them feel a horrific lurching sense of vertigo as their point of view shifts upward and away, and gives the PC a brief glimpse of their own brainless, eyeless corpse on the table—smiling in relief before darkness descends. The remainder of the nightmare consists of an endless fall through the depths of space, and as the dream nears its end, a glowing sphere of light beckons. Just as the dreaming PC sees that the light is a hole in reality into where their body rests, that hole grows fangs and snaps shut—the PC awakens an instant later and must attempt the save against Ioseff's *nightmare*.

If this tactic repeats too often, you should consider adjusting the nature of the nightmares Ioseff sends. You can even use these nightmares to give the PCs clues as to what they should attempt next as Ioseff accidentally reveals too much.

## Xarwin Manor Upper Floors

The third floor and observatory are located above the center of the manor (for their maps, see page 47). This floor's ceilings are 10 feet high. Ambitious PCs could theoretically reach this place before exploring the lower floors by clambering up the exterior of the building, but they might find themselves in over their heads if they do.

### D1. Roofwalk

A wooden walkway surrounds the central portion of the manor and looks out over the building's rooftops to the east and west, and to the manor grounds beyond. A rickety railing adorns the walkway's edge, looking just about ready to collapse.

Though old and weathered, this walkway remains stable. You can have portions of railing crumble away at dramatic moments, but they shouldn't present much danger to the PCs. The door to area **D5** is locked (DC 20 Thievery to Pick the Lock); the skeleton key from area **C15** unlocks the door.

### D2. Children's Hall

#### Moderate 4

Dozens of crushed bird skeletons and drifts of feathers lay strewn over this room's floor. Glass display cases featuring feathers, preserved insects, and framed documents adorn the walls. To the south, two semicircular tables, each set against the walls, feature an exquisitely crafted miniature building, while benches along the opposite walls are covered with more feathers and bird bones.

Ioseff and Asethanna once placed the twins' accomplishments on display in this room as a show

of distanced pride intended to absolve either parent from having to take too much time to personally encourage the children's pursuits; the manor's live-in tutor arranged the displays. The preserved insects and feathers were captured by Marney Xarwin (with a successful DC 15 Nature check, a PC confirms these creatures were all local species), while a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Society check identifies the two model buildings as replicas of Thrune Manor in Egorian and Bhaltvrest Hall (and its iconic observatory) in the Sinkomakti School in Ustalav, both built by Mira Xarwin. The framed documents hold various certificates of accomplishment for the twins.

**Hazard:** A PC discerns that the bird remains on the floor appear to be whippoorwills with a successful DC 14 Nature check, but a critical success (or a DC 20 Psychopomp Lore check) reveals that they're the remains of dozens, perhaps hundreds, of nosoi psychopomps.

## CARRION VORTEX

## HAZARD 6

UNIQUE COMPLEX HAUNT


**Stealth** +15 (expert)

**Description** The countless bones and feathers on the floor churn into the air in a clattering swarm of partially reconstructed skeletal birds, whose mournful song fills the area as surely as do their slashing beaks and talons.

**Disable** DC 23 Nature to convince the carrion vortex that the PCs pose no ill intent or DC 20 Religion to exorcise the haunt

**AC** 24; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +17, **Will** +15

**Hardness** 10; **HP** 58 (BT 29); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weakness** positive 7

**Psychopomp Dirge**  (auditory, emotion, fear, mental, occult) **Trigger** Three or more creatures enter area **D2**, or anyone attempts to gather or destroy the bird remains; **Effect** The carrion vortex fills area **D2** with the overwhelming cries of what sounds like thousands of whippoorwills, but this cacophony can't be heard beyond this room. Creatures in area **D2** must attempt a DC 21 Will save (worshippers of Pharasma or those with ties to psychopomps gain a +4 circumstance bonus to this save). The haunt then rolls initiative.

**Critical Success** The creature understands the dirge is also intended as a warning and a desperate request for absolution. The creature can sense the presence of the corrupted psychopomps in areas **D5** and **E4**, as if under the effects of a *locate* spell, for 24 hours. As long as this effect persists, the character gains a +1 status bonus to attack rolls, saving throws, and skill checks made against the corrupted psychopomps in these areas.

**Success** As critical success, but the *locate* effect only lasts 10 minutes. The creature takes 2d8 mental

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damage from overwhelming feelings of sadness and despair.

**Failure** The creature takes 4d8 mental damage from overwhelming feelings of sadness and despair.

**Critical Failure** The creature takes 6d8 mental damage from overwhelming feelings of sadness and despair, and as long as the haunt remains active and they remain in area **D2**, the character is slowed 1 as they're forced to do nothing but sob for one action every round.

**Routine** (1 action; evocation, occult) The churning vortex of beaks and bones takes its action through area **D2**, clawing and pecking at any creature in the area. All creatures in area **D2** take 2d8+9 slashing damage (DC 24 basic Reflex save).

**Reset** 24 hours; defeating the corrupted psychopomps in areas **D5** and **E4** destroys this haunt forever.

## D3. Taxidermy Workshop Trivial 4

Shelves of taxidermy tools line the southwest walls of this cramped room, and barrels partially filled with straw and sawdust sit on the floor nearby. A bloodstained cloth lies on top of a workbench under a grimy window, the shape of an unidentifiable object underneath the fabric.

**Creature:** The first character to approach the workbench must attempt a DC 20 Perception check. Regardless of the result, this character sees something struggling feebly under the bloodstained cloth. However, on a success, they also hear a softly whispered voice coming from under the cloth call out, "Help them... save them..." The PC hears the words in their native language.

If a character lifts the cloth, a partially stuffed, bloodstained, and long-dead nosoi psychopomp suddenly flies into the air, careening in circles about the room as it shrieks and cries. If the corrupted psychopomps in area **D5** still live, this haunted psychopomp corpse tries to fly to that room to attack them, battering itself on doors or windows if it can't. If the PCs help the haunted nosoi reach area **D5** or allow it to go there on its own, it triggers its Vengeful Burst ability as soon as it can. If the psychopomps have already died, the haunted nosoi collapses to the ground soon after it animates with a whispered "thank you" to the PCs, who immediately understand the reason for its gratitude. If it's attacked, the haunted nosoi fights until destroyed.

## HAUNTED NOSOI CREATURE 2

UNIQUE N TINY MONITOR PSYCHOPOMP UNDEAD

Variant nosoi (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 270)

**Perception** +8; darkvision, lifesense 60 feet

**Languages** truespeech

**Skills** Acrobatics +8

**Str** -1, **Dex** +3, **Con** +1, **Int** -3, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +3

**Lifesense** (divination, divine) As nosoi psychopomp.

**Truespeech** The haunted nosoi speaks in Requian, the language of psychopomps, but all creatures hear its words in their native languages.

**AC** 18; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +10, **Will** +8

**HP** 28; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Weaknesses** slashing 3;

**Resistances** negative 3

**Vengeful Burst** ⤴ (divine, necromancy) **Trigger** The haunted nosoi is destroyed or it enters a square adjacent to a corrupted psychopomp in area **D5**; **Effect** The haunted nosoi dies as it explodes into a burst of positive energy. This heals all living creatures within 10 feet for 3d6 damage, and if triggered in area **D5**, the Vengeful Burst deals 2d12 negative damage to any corrupted psychopomps in that area (DC 18 basic Will save).

**Speed** 15 feet, fly 40 feet

**Melee** ⤴ beak +8 (finesse, magical), **Damage** 1d4+1 piercing

**Treasure:** The shelves display sterling artisan's tools suitable for taxidermy work. A *crafters eyepiece* wrapped in a silk cloth sits atop the workbench.

**Reward:** If the PCs help the haunted nosoi by destroying the corrupted psychopomps in area **D5**, grant them XP as if they defeated it in combat.

## D4. Armory

A collection of bows and crossbows rest on a shelf in the south part of this dusty room. To the northwest, two barrels filled with bolts and arrows sit under a grimy window.

**Treasure:** In this former storeroom, Ioseff kept a collection of weapons used to hunt birds and psychopomps from the roofwalk. There are 40 arrows and 40 crossbow bolts in the barrels. The weapons on the shelves include three shortbows, two longbows, two crossbows, and a heavy crossbow. One of these weapons (choose one that a PC favors) was the last weapon Ioseff used before he perished, and when he died, a portion of his spiritual energy clung to this weapon, transforming it into a +1 *ghost touch weapon*. As long as Xarwin's ghost endures, though, this weapon has a side effect: a character who carries this weapon (or any weapon to which the *ghost touch* rune has been transferred to) takes a -1 item penalty to all saving throws against haunts or undead in Xarwin Manor. If the PCs permanently destroy Ioseff Xarwin, this side effect fades, but the item remains a +1 *ghost touch weapon*.

A small case on the shelf also has 5 arrows or crossbow bolts (the ammunition type should match the magic

weapon found here) with adamantite arrowheads; these pieces of ammunition are worth 35 gp each.

## D5. Museum

## Moderate 4

The door to area **D5** is locked (DC 20 Thievery to Pick the Lock); the skeleton key from area **C15** unlocks the door.

An elegant but dusty flight of spiral stairs ascends in the middle of this room. Paintings, display cases, hunting trophies, and taxidermic birds decorate this room, covering every available bit of space between the grimy windows—two of which to the east appear broken in a few places, as if by thrown rocks. Low, round display tables with sculptures atop them dot the chamber. The sculptures and paintings all seem damaged in one way or another.

In the early years, both Ioseff and Asethanna took pride in their accomplishments and took steps to display them here. Commendations from House Thrune, paintings, and hunting trophies as well as sculptures of devils, animals, and Queen Abrogail I make up the bulk of these objects. After Ioseff murdered his wife, he defaced and destroyed anything created by Asethanna that remained here.

**Creatures:** In the days after Ioseff's death, some psychopomps attempted to invade the manor before it became enshrouded in the caul. One of them dwells below the manor today (area **E4**), but four of them now lurk in this room—all five have become corrupted by their long imprisonment.

Once a group of four nosoi psychopomps, these creatures have transformed into sinister and cruel playthings of the malevolence. They've abandoned their masks, and what remains of their heads look more like fleshless human skulls with sharp fangs than what one might expect to see atop a raven's body. The four corrupted nosois lurk amid the other hunting trophies in this room, their heads tucked under their wings, but they immediately leap to attack any intruders, using Stealth to roll initiative. As they do so, their cries—shrieked out in a tangle of the languages they speak—threaten the PCs that “the Lord slumbers below, you're nothing but his dreams, and when the lord awakes, you'll know the end of things!” The psychopomps fight to the death, pursuing the PCs throughout the manor grounds.

## CORRUPTED NOSOIS (4)

## CREATURE 2

RARE NE TINY MONITOR PSYCHOPOMP

Variant nosoi (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 270)

**Perception** +8; darkvision, lifesense 60 feet

**Languages** Abyssal, Celestial, Infernal, Requian

**Skills** Acrobatics +8, Stealth +8

**Str** -1, **Dex** +3, **Con** +1, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +3

**Lifesense** (divination, divine) As nosoi psychopomp.

**AC** 18; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +10, **Will** +8

**HP** 28, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease;

**Resistances** negative 3

**Speed** 15 feet, fly 40 feet

**Melee** ♦ beak +8 (finesse, magical), **Damage** 1d4+1 piercing plus corrupted touch

**Corrupted Touch** A corrupted nosoi's Strikes deal 1d6 negative damage to living creatures. A creature critically hit by a corrupted nosoi's Strike must attempt a DC 18 Fortitude save or become drained 1 (drained 2 on a critical failure) as rot spreads through their flesh.

**Haunting Melody** ♦ (auditory, concentrate, divine, enchantment, incapacitation, mental) As psychopomp, but those who are targeted instead hear the refrain mentioned above in their native language, rather than an entrancing song.

## D6. Observatory

## Severe 4

A set of spiral stairs leads into this octagonal observatory, although the room appears to have been torn apart long ago from a violent search or perhaps a long, drawn-out fight. A desk and chair in the northern part of the room seem to have escaped this violence, as did a five-foot-tall, one-foot-wide mirror of dark glass in a frame made of wood, but other pieces of furniture, shelves, and books lie scattered through the rest of the room. A pile of rubble near the south walls appears to be the shattered remains of what might have once been an observation platform. At the room's eastern and western sides, gears and chains look like they once allowed for the retraction of the roof above, but the mechanisms and chains to the east lie in rubble. Several strange skeletons lie strewn about the place; these long-dead creatures appear both humanoid and bat-like yet resemble something else entirely.

The eastern winch once controlled the opening mechanism for the roof above, but it's now destroyed. A PC can rebuild the winch with a successful a DC 24 Crafting check to Craft it from scratch, provided they recover the formula for the process from this room and the character attempting the check is 6th level; the winch costs 200 gp to recreate. It can then be used to retract the roof above with a minute-long activity that has the manipulate trait (the western winch still functions, so the PCs can use it to close the roof).

The skeletal remains in this room consist of five and a half grioths, part of the group that came through the spontaneous portal caused by the *Void Mirror*. One of them got bisected when the portal closed abruptly,

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leaving that grioth's left half sprawled on the floor near the *Void Mirror*, while the chamber's undead occupant slew the other five.

**Creature:** When Ioseff Xarwin attempted the final, fateful ritual, the brain collector he conjured from the depths of space attacked him. He subsequently slew the horror then fled down to his laboratory with the *Void Mirror* to find a way to escape the horrific curse it had afflicted him with, leaving the brain collector's body sprawled amid the rubble herein. Once the malevolence infused the manor, it animated this dead alien into a unique undead horror. The undead brain collector is bound to this room and can't pursue PCs from it. While the monster attacks on sight, PCs who have successfully researched the malevolence might also know its intimidating presence helps to constrain Xarwin's ghost. If the undead brain collector is slain, Xarwin's ghost becomes more mobile, as detailed on page 43.

The undead brain collector is a deadly foe, but its transition to undeath has, fortunately for the PCs, lessened the power it commanded compared to when it lived. Its brain blisters have burst, leaving it without its spellcasting capacity or the ability to collect brains efficiently, but it possesses a few unique and eerie powers. Attempts to communicate with the creature reveal only its hatred for this world and its desire to

wipe it clean of life so that it can return to its distant home beyond the stars and take comfort in knowing that nothing else lives on this planet where it was slain. It fights until destroyed.

## UNDEAD BRAIN COLLECTOR

CREATURE 7

UNIQUE CE LARGE ABERRATION UNDEAD

Variant brain collector (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 46)

**Initiative** Perception +17; darkvision

**Languages** Abyssal, Aklo, Common, Draconic, Protean, Undercommon; telepathy 100 feet

**Skills** Acrobatics +16, Athletics +17, Occultism +12, Stealth +16

**Str** +6, **Dex** +3, **Con** +5, **Int** -1, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +0

**AC** 24; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +12, **Will** +15; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

**HP** 130, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

**Absorb Phantom Brain** ⤵ (necromancy) **Trigger** The undead brain collector possesses at least 1 phantom brain after using Brainlash; **Effect** The undead brain collector absorbs 1d4 of its phantom brains, gaining 1d8 temporary hit points for each brain it absorbed.

**Speed** 25 feet

**Melee** ⤵ jaws +18, **Damage** 2d10+8 piercing plus mind-rotting toxin

**Melee** ⤵ claw +18 (agile), **Damage** 2d8+8 slashing

**Brainlash** ⤵⤵ (mental, necromancy, occult) The undead brain collector extrudes a writhing tangle of ectoplasm from its bursted brain blisters. These ectoplasmic strands lash out at all living targets within 30 feet. Targets in this area must attempt a DC 25 Will save. After the undead brain collector uses this ability, seven phantom brains glow and shimmer where its brain blisters once were. It can't use Brainlash again until all seven phantom brains are Absorbed.

**Critical Success** The creature is unaffected.

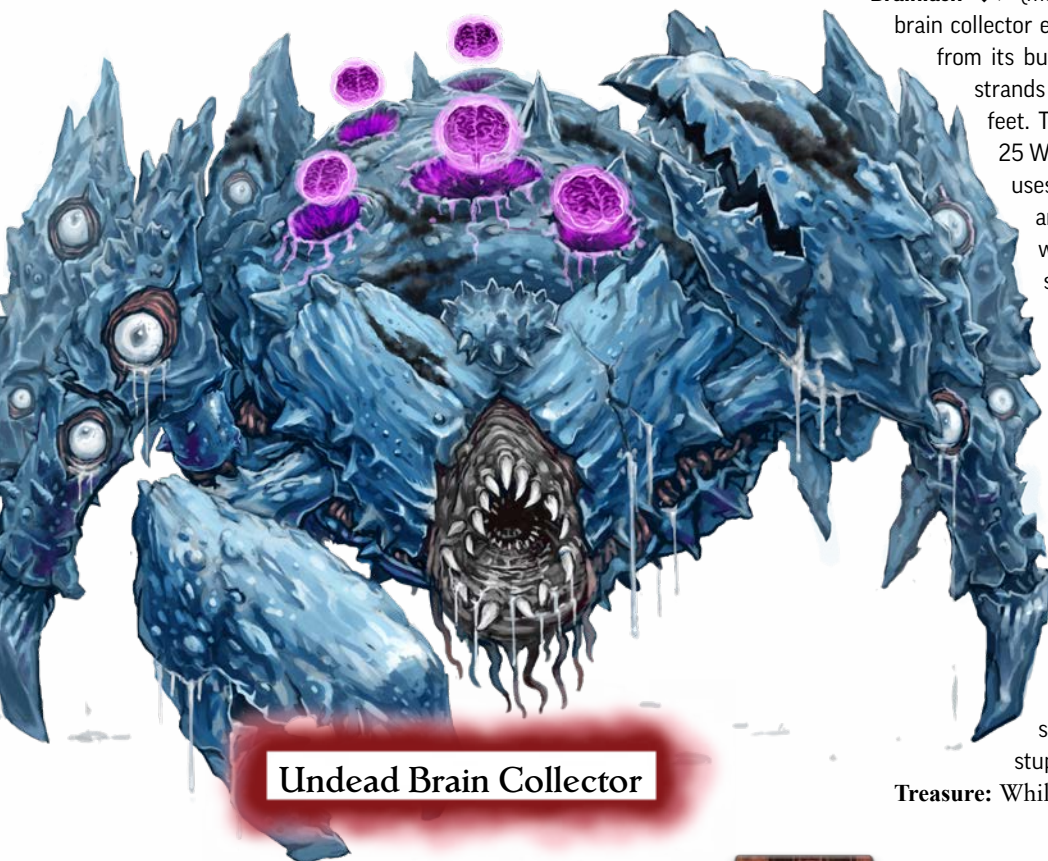
**Success** The creature takes 4d6 mental damage.

**Failure** The creature takes 8d6 mental damage.

**Critical Failure** The creature takes 8d6 mental damage and is confused.

**Mind-Rotting Toxin** (poison) **Saving Throw** DC 25 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** 1d6 negative and stupefied 1 (1 round); **Stage 2** 1d6 negative, stupefied 1, and slowed 1 (1 round); **Stage 3** 2d6 negative, stupefied 2, and slowed 1 (1 round)

**Treasure:** While the room is devastated, it contains



Undead Brain Collector

Xarwin's notes and books, which have remained intact. With an hour's work, these materials can be gathered and organized into a small collection that can be used to Research the Dominion of the Black, the Order of the Starless Night, the *starless scope*, the *Void Mirror*, and Tchekuth.

Five voidglass kukris lie amid the remains of the dead grioths.

If a PC succeeds at a DC 19 Perception check while looking through these books, they discover two things of note: a formula for a retracting roof like the one in this room (this is an Uncommon 6th-level formula worth 12 gp) and a set of detailed drawings of the Cosmic Crypt (area A7) that reveals the proper method to open it.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check while searching the rubble in the room finds three more items of value: a copper astrolabe set with garnets and amethysts worth 45 gp, a *traveler's any-tool*, and the hearing module for the brainclock in area C2.

Perhaps the greatest treasure in this room is the *Void Mirror*. The grioths first came to the manor through this ancient artifact, but since then, it has remained quiet. See page 68 for more details on this item.

## Xarwin Stirs

## Moderate 5

Once the PCs destroy the undead brain collector in area D6, one of the spiritual oppressions that looms heavily over Xarwin Manor fades away, but unfortunately, its destruction also frees Ioseff to extend his influence further from his laboratory in area E9. While he can't leave that area as a ghost, the sheer force of his malignant will can manifest a wraith-like version of himself anywhere inside of (or below) Xarwin Manor.

There are no scripted encounters for when the PCs should meet Xarwin's manifestation, and you can even omit this encounter entirely (particularly if the PCs remain focused on the goal and don't pause in their march toward Xarwin's laboratory). The best points to have Xarwin's manifestation appear are during lulls in play between the undead brain collector's defeat and the adventure's climax. You can use the manifestation to provide what are, in effect, classic horror movie "jump scares" by having him lurch out of a wall or floor to attack the PCs as they wander through parts of the manor that might seem safe. He can seek out the PCs to attack them if they spend a night in the house or take time to research tomes and other clues. The manifestation can even appear during (or immediately after) a combat to give adroit PCs an extra challenge. You can even use the manifestation to give the PCs additional clues or

insights, such as letting them see firsthand the effects of Fulvia's ring (a tactic they might devise after researching the manor's history).

Note that while the manifestation is an extension of Xarwin's ghost, it isn't an autonomous force. It functions more akin to a remote-controlled puppet than its own entity. If the manifestation is defeated, Xarwin doesn't suffer. He can create a new manifestation to haunt the PCs after 24 hours have passed but can never have more than one active at a time. Finally, while Xarwin controls the manifestation (which thus has his intellect), he won't use the spirit to communicate with the PCs—other than, perhaps, to shriek "You have what I need!" when facing the PC whose brain he has chosen as his goal.

## XARWIN'S MANIFESTATION

## CREATURE 7

UNIQUE CE MEDIUM INCORPOREAL UNDEAD WRAITH

Variant wraith (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 335)

**Perception** +14; darkvision, lifesense 60 feet

**Languages** Aklo, Common, Infernal

**Skills** Acrobatics +14, Intimidation +17, Stealth +16

**Str** -5, **Dex** +3, **Con** +0, **Int** +6, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +4

**Manor Bound** The manifestation can't leave Xarwin Manor or the dungeons below.

**AC** 24; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +14, **Will** +16; +1 status to all saves vs positive

**HP** 90, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, precision, unconscious; **Resistances** all 5 (except force, *ghost touch*, or positive; double resistance vs. non-magical)

**Recoil** If a character forcefully presents Fulvia's ring to Xarwin's manifestation as an action with the manipulate trait, he must attempt a DC 26 Will save.

**Critical Success** Xarwin's manifestation is unaffected.

**Success** Xarwin's manifestation takes 4d6 mental damage and is frightened 1.

**Failure** Xarwin's manifestation takes 8d6 mental damage, is frightened 2, and flees as long as he remains frightened.

**Critical Failure** Xarwin's manifestation is destroyed.

**Speed** fly 40 feet

**Melee** ♦ spectral hand +17 (finesse), **Damage** 2d8+7 negative plus drain memory

**Drain Memory** (necromancy, occult) When the manifestation damages a living creature with its spectral hand Strike, the manifestation gains 5 temporary Hit Points, and the target must succeed at a DC 23 Fortitude save or become stupefied 1. Each time it deals damage to a creature, that creature's stupefied condition increases by 1 on a failed save, to a maximum of stupefied 4.

**Haunting Touch** When the manifestation critically hits a creature with its spectral hand Strike, the creature's malevolence condition value increases by 1.

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## CHAPTER 3: RECRUDESCENCE

Despite the dangers of the aboveground portions of Xarwin Manor, the chambers below are the most perilous areas the PCs can face while exploring this haunted house. Here, the malevolence holds complete control as it slowly spreads its influence deeper into the region like a quickening sickness. Its very presence can disrupt the senses or usurp the mind of those who let down their guard for too long. If the PCs destroyed the one thing that Ioseff's ghost fears—the undead brain collector that haunts the manor's observatory—they'll have to contend with the ghost himself as he begins to reach out from his remains.

The encounters under Xarwin Manor assume the PCs are 5th level.

### Xarwin Manor Dungeon

The dungeons below Xarwin Manor consist of three different construction styles: new construction

built during the manor's creation (areas **E1**, **E7**, and **E8**), natural caverns (areas **E2–E4**), and ancient construction built thousands of years ago by the Order of the Starless Night (areas **E5**, **E6**, and **E9**).

**New Construction:** These areas have brick walls, reinforced ceilings, and flagstone floors. The ceilings have an average height of 8 feet, and the rooms are unlit.

**Natural Caverns:** These caves already existed when the Order of the Starless Night confronted Tchekuth, and they were included in the Order's ancient construction although the structures the Order built in the caves have long since crumbled. Ceiling height varies in the caverns, and a pale green phosphorescent glow fills these areas with dim light. This glow has no apparent source, but periodically, from the corner of their eye, a character might observe a ripple of faint light pulsing along the cave walls—light that vanishes instantly when one turns to directly observe it.

**Ancient Construction:** The malevolence is at its strongest in these chambers. The obvious ripples of light that give the caverns dim illumination glow much brighter. Glistening rivulets of pale green ectoplasm trickle and rill up the walls, pooling in rippling puddles on the ceiling that defy gravity and bathe the surrounding areas in bright light. This ancient construction's walls are made of carefully-fitted pale lavender porphyry flagstones; its ceilings have an average height of 20 feet in most places. Carvings of stars, moons, comets, and other celestial objects adorn the ceilings, giving the pools of glowing ectoplasm strange shapes to fill and ripple against. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Society check or a DC 20 Architecture Lore or Thassilon Lore check to Recall Knowledge notes that the architecture evokes themes found in Thassilonian ruins. As with those ruins, ancient preservative magic helps this architecture resist the effects of erosion in most places (with the notable exception of the subsidence in areas E2 and E6b).

## E1. Kitchen Cellar

## Moderate 5

Partially collapsed wooden shelves turn this brick-walled room into something of a maze. Where the shelves still stand, dried food, dusty firewood, and other ancient kitchen supplies remain, but elsewhere, only collapsed piles of wood and rubble can be found. The northern wall has a fireplace amid the shelves.

The old and wooden stairs to the south creak loudly when trod upon. Any attempt to Sneak across these stairs takes a -2 item penalty to the Stealth check. The stairs lead up to the kitchen (area B14). The secret door to area E2 (marked with an "S" on the map on page 47) can be discovered by a PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Perception check.

**Creatures:** In the days before the Xarwin Caul descended over the manor, a catrina psychopomp named Yianyin led a pair of esoboks into the manor to investigate the site in the hopes of helping Ioseff's restless spirit move on to the River of Souls, only to be corrupted by the malevolence that had grown within these chambers. She lives still (in a manner of speaking) in area E4, but her two esoboks weren't so fortunate for they were her first victims. The malevolence's influence drew them back to unlife as ghouls, and the two skull-faced, lion-like undead creatures have dwelled in this room ever since.

The two ghouls hunker down amid the shelves in the northern corners of the room; they cast *invisibility* on themselves as soon as they notice the PCs approaching (they automatically notice the PCs during the day if the PCs don't take care to move carefully down

the creaking stairs). The esobok ghouls have fallen completely under the malevolence's influence, yet they still hunger for flesh and attack as soon as they're noticed or the first PC moves more than halfway into the room; the ghouls attempt to pounce and then flank their foes. They will pursue creatures through areas E2-E4, but not into the ancient chambers; otherwise, the esobok ghouls fight until destroyed.

## ESOBOK GHOULS (2)

## CREATURE 5

RARE CE MEDIUM GHOUL UNDEAD

Variant ghoul (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 168)

**Perception** +14; darkvision, lifesense 60 feet, scent (imprecise) 60 feet.

**Languages** Abyssal, Celestial, Infernal, Requian

**Skills** Acrobatics +13, Athletics +12, Intimidation +11, Religion +6, Stealth +13, Survival +12

**Str** +3, **Dex** +4, **Con** +4, **Int** -3, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +2

**AC** 21; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +13, **Will** +10

**HP** 90, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

**Speed** 30 feet

**Melee** ♦ jaws +14 (magical), **Damage** 1d10+7 plus corrupted touch, ghoul fever, and paralysis

**Melee** ♦ claw +14 (agile, magical), **Damage** 1d6+7 slashing plus corrupted touch and paralysis



Esobok Ghoul

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**Divine Innate Spells** DC 22; **2nd** *invisibility* (×3, self only)

**Pounce** ♦ The esobok ghouls Strides and then makes a claw Strike. If it began this action hidden, it remains hidden until after the Strike.

**Consume Flesh** ♦ (manipulate) As ghoul, but regains 3d6 HP.

**Corrupted Touch** An esobok ghouls Strikes deal 1d6 negative damage to living creatures. A creature critically hit by an esobok ghouls Strike must attempt a DC 18 Fortitude save or become drained 1 (drained 2 on a critical failure) as rot spreads throughout their flesh.

**Ghoul Fever** (disease) As ghoul, but Fortitude DC 22.

**Paralysis** (incapacitation, occult, necromancy) As ghoul, but Fortitude DC 22.

## E2. Cavern Entrance

A pale green phosphorescence dimly illuminates a sudden drop downward into a cavern some 20 feet below. An old bridge made of wooden planks, several of which have fallen away, crosses the chasm where a narrow, rickety-looking wooden staircase descends down from the eastern side. To the south, the rough cave walls become worked stone. Here, eerie ripples of pale, glowing green fluid dribble up the sides of the pale lavender stone walls to pool impossibly on the ceiling, glowing softly as the fluid fills the carvings of crescent moons, stars, and other astronomical designs. A stone double door stands in the wall to the south.

This chamber is where ancient Desnans broke into the natural caverns long ago during their construction of their guardian shrine. The stairs and bridge are more recently constructed, as Ioseff built these himself to aid in moving across the chasm or down into area E3, but the workmanship has deteriorated over the years. A character must take care while crossing the bridge, stepping from one plank to another while avoiding the holes left by fallen boards. Doing so requires them to succeed at a DC 20 Acrobatics check—on a critical failure, the PC falls 20 feet into the cave below. The stairs leading down are more solid and don't require a check to navigate.

A character can scale the chasm walls with a successful DC 15 Athletics check to Climb.

**Hazard:** The first PC to attempt to cross the bridge has more to worry about than loose boards, for a startling haunt manifests at their crossing's midway point. The phantasmagoric vision caused by the haunt is visible to everyone but vanishes as soon as its reaction resolves.

## MOUTH OF TCHEKUTH

## HAZARD 6

**UNIQUE** **HAUNT**

**Stealth** DC 25

**Description** The chasm below shifts and ripples,

transforming into a vast, gaping mouth filled with countless sharp fangs. A puckered, rasping tongue lances up from the noxious gulping depths below to lash and taste. Two words boom up from the vast throat below: "Iä Tchekuth!"

**Disable** DC 28 Occultism or Religion (to exorcise the startling phantasm)

**AC** 24; **Fort** +17, **Ref** +11, **Will** +18

**Hardness** 14; **HP** 56 (BT 28); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weaknesses** positive 5

**Hungry Tongue** ☞ (emotion, enchantment, fear, mental, occult) **Trigger** a creature crosses the chasm; **Effect** A vast, fanged maw appears to open below, and a long rasping tongue lurches up to attack the triggering creature, who must attempt a DC 24 Will save.

**Critical Success** The creature realizes the haunt is a frightening phantasm that can't actually hurt them and is unharmed.

**Success** The creature dodges the rasping tongue but falls from the bridge as a result, taking 10 damage from the fall (the creature can Grab an Edge with a successful DC 24 Reflex save).

**Failure** For a brief moment, the creature feels the awful touch of the rasping tongue as it brushes against them, licking away memories and causing the creature to become stupefied 1 for 24 hours. The creature then falls (as success above).

**Critical Failure** The creature feels the tongue wrap around them and then experiences the awfulness of being pulled downward for what seems like days, but in fact, only an instant passes. The creature becomes stupefied 2 for 24 hours, during which time they can't remember their name. The creature also increases the value of their malevolence condition by 1 and then falls (as success above).

**Reset** The haunt resets after 24 hours and is destroyed permanently if Ioseff's ghost is put to rest.

## E3. Disposal Pond

## Moderate 5

The air of this sprawling cavern is cold, moist, and glowing; soft, green light emanates from no discernible source. Moisture glistens on the walls and floor, and much of the cavern's central portion is taken up by a wide but shallow pool of water in which the bones of what seems like over a dozen humans have been strewn.

The pool in this room is only a few feet deep along the shore, dropping away to a depth of 5 feet further out. Ancient Desnans used the once pure water here as a reservoir; today, the water tastes brackish and foul (a character who drinks it must attempt a DC 20 Fortitude save to avoid becoming sickened 1, or sickened 2 on a critical failure). The bones are the



# MALEVOLENCE

## XARWIN MANOR DUNGEON

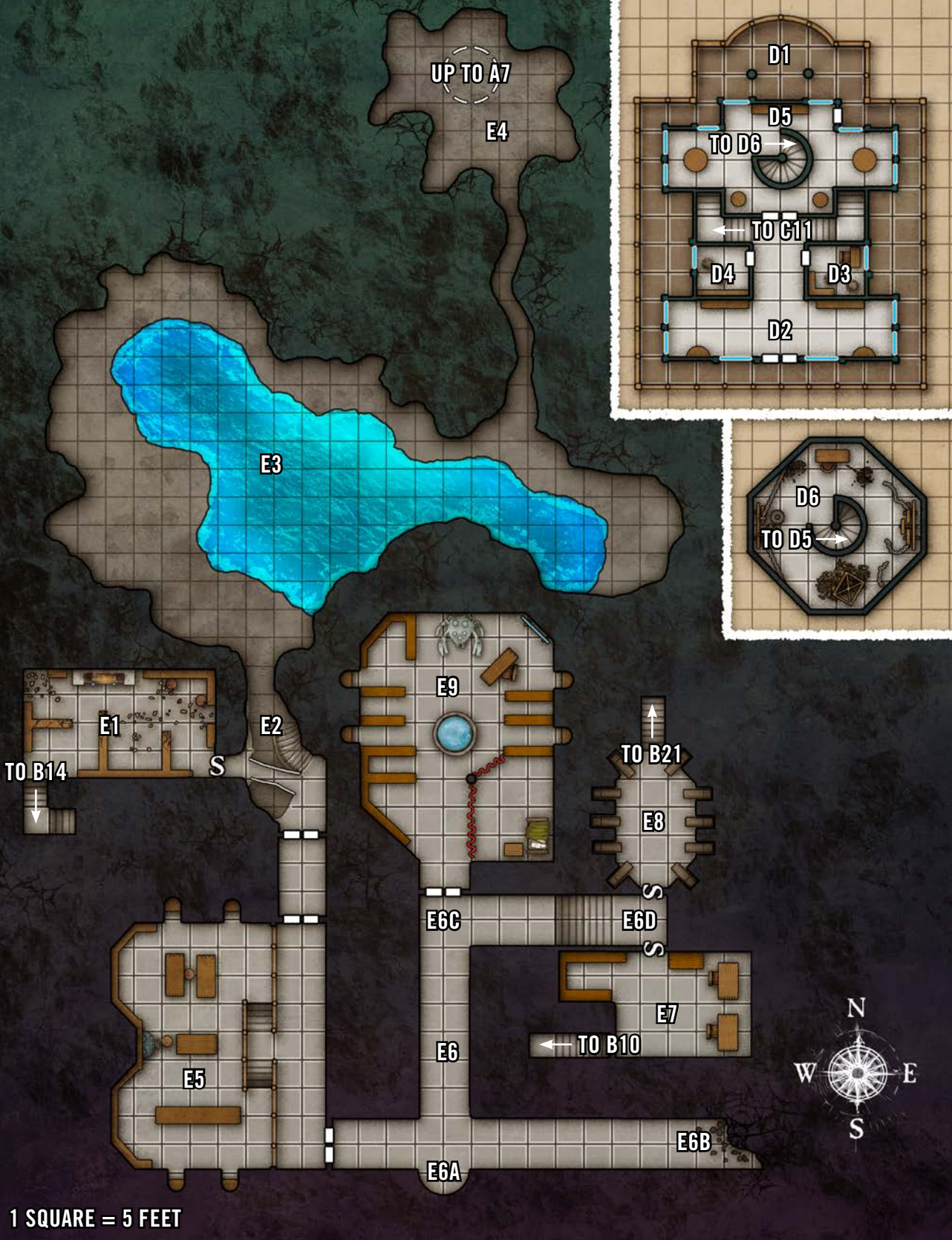
## XARWIN MANOR UPPER FLOORS

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remains of those who became inconvenient to Ioseff Xarwin while he still lived—from servants who grew too curious or mercenaries who completed sensitive tasks and couldn't be allowed to live.

**Creature:** Though the bodies dumped unceremoniously in this pool by Ioseff Xarwin didn't immediately rise as undead, their souls—traumatized by betrayal—didn't enter the soulstream immediately. As the manor grew more haunted, the spirits trapped here began to manifest phantasms as well, and Xarwin largely avoided lingering here in his final months.

When the malevolence awoke with Xarwin's death, the unquiet spirits here were torn apart and stitched back together, bound to the bones they left behind and transformed into a grotesque, clattering monstrosity—a tanglebones. This undead monster rises up from the waters of the pond as soon as a PC attempts to search the bones or moves more than 30 feet into the cavern. Hundreds of skeletons crawl into a heap strung together by thick tangles of slimy

black ectoplasm, their arms reaching forward to grasp at the living. The tanglebones can move through the pool without having to swim but treats the water as difficult terrain as it sloshes about. The tanglebones pursues relentlessly once it awakens, and it can easily fit down 5-foot-wide passages or through doors. It won't pursue the PCs into the manor above or into area E9; otherwise, it fights until destroyed.

## TANGLEBONES

## CREATURE 7

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**Initiative** Stealth +15

**Treasure:** Xarwin carefully stripped his victims' bodies of their valuables before dumping them here, but one of the mercenaries he disposed of had swallowed a *gold nodule aeon stone* he'd purloined on a mission in hopes of not having to share the prize. He died before he could retrieve the stone. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check while Searching the pool can locate the *aeon stone*, which grants the ability to understand Aklo.

## E4. Undercrypt

## Moderate 5

The walls of this 10-foot-high irregular cavern are adorned with ancient carvings—images of stars, comets, and moths near the ceiling. Near the ground, images of monstrous shapes appear buried deep underground. A 10-foot-wide hole in the ceiling leads up into darkness.

The hole—indicated on the map on page 47 with a dotted circle—leads up to the Cosmic Crypt (area A7). Though a PC can climb the niches with a successful DC 10 Athletics check (if a character can reach the lowest rung 10 feet off the ground), there's no mechanism on this side to open the crypt above to access the surface. With a successful DC 15 Religion or Desna Lore check, a PC notes that the wall carvings represent a strange variant of a common artistic theme. Normally, the moths of Desna stand watch in the night sky to protect from the Dark Tapestry far above, but the carvings here appear strangely reversed, as if the moths of Desna were watching over a danger far below.

**Creature:** Once an eager emissary from the Boneyard seeking to help quiet the disturbed spirits within Xarwin Manor, Yianyin and other psychopomps stood vigil over the region during Ioseff Xarwin's final



Tanglebones

days. When Xarwin perished, the psychopomps felt his soul resist moving on, but Yianyin ignored their advice and pressed on into the manor with two esoboks. The malevolence rose up soon thereafter, and when it shrouded the manor in its caul, those psychopomps who remained outside were slain. Yianyin received no such mercy, for she became corrupted by the malevolence and now sees herself not as a guide to lost spirits, but a harvester of souls.

The malevolence's influence typically keeps Yianyin in a fugue state while she stands motionless in the southeastern alcove, but as soon as she notices any intruders, she shakes off a thick layer of dust from her bones and deep blue robes. Pale green ectoplasm drips from her bones and causes her long, white hair to writhe about her head as if underwater. Upon sighting the PCs, Yianyin spreads her arms wide as if to invite them into an embrace and says, "Step forward and become one with the Lord Below!" and uses her *Compel Condemned* ability. She then rolls *Diplomacy* for initiative. She fights to the death but won't pursue creatures up the shaft toward the surface. As Yianyin fights, she continues to invite the PCs to lay down their arms, release their souls to the Lord Below, and turn their backs on the River of Souls to join with Tchekuth.

## YIANYIN

## CREATURE 7

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM MONITOR PSYCHOPOMP

Variant catrina psychopomp (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 209)

**Initiative** Perception +16; darkvision, lifesense 60 feet

**Languages** Abyssal, Celestial, Infernal, Requian; telepathy 120 feet, *tongues*

**Skills** Acrobatics +17, Boneyard Lore +16, Diplomacy +17, Intimidation +17, Medicine +16, Occultism +14, Religion +16

**Str** +0, **Dex** +6, **Con** +5, **Int** +3, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +6

**AC** 25; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +17, **Will** +16; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

**HP** 115; **Immunities** death effects, disease;

**Resistances** negative 7, poison 7

**Unnerving Presence** (aura, divine, fear, emotion, enchantment, incapacitation) 30 feet. A creature

that begins its turn within the aura must attempt a DC 22 Will save.

**Critical Success** The creature is unaffected and becomes temporarily immune to unnerving presence for 24 hours.

**Success** The creature's attack rolls take a -1 status penalty for 1 round.

**Failure** The creature feels Yianyin's eyeless gaze upon them but knows that something far more dangerous and monstrous watches them through those empty sockets. The overwhelming presence of this alien intelligence causes the creature to become slowed 1 for 1 round as they shake and tremble with fear.

**Critical Failure** As failure, but the creature is instead stunned 1 and knows the name of what watches from those empty eyes: Tchekuth.

**Speed** 25 feet

**Melee** ✦ fist +18 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 2d8+2 bludgeoning plus corrupted touch

**Occult Innate Spells** DC 25; **4th** *confusion*, *phantasmal killer*; **3rd** *illusory disguise*; **2nd** *invisibility* (at will, self only); **Cantrips (4th)** *dancing lights*; **Constant (5th)** *tongues*

**Compel Condemned** ✦ (divine, enchantment, incapacitation, mental) As catrina, but DC 25 Will save.

**Corrupted Touch**

Yianyin's Strikes deal 2d6 negative damage to living creatures. A creature critically hit by Yianyin's

Strike must attempt a DC 18 Fortitude save or become drained 1 (drained 2 on a critical failure) as rot spreads throughout their flesh.

**Kiss of Death** ✦✦ (death, divine, manipulate, necromancy) As catrina, but 4d6 negative damage.

## E5. Surgical Workshop Severe 5

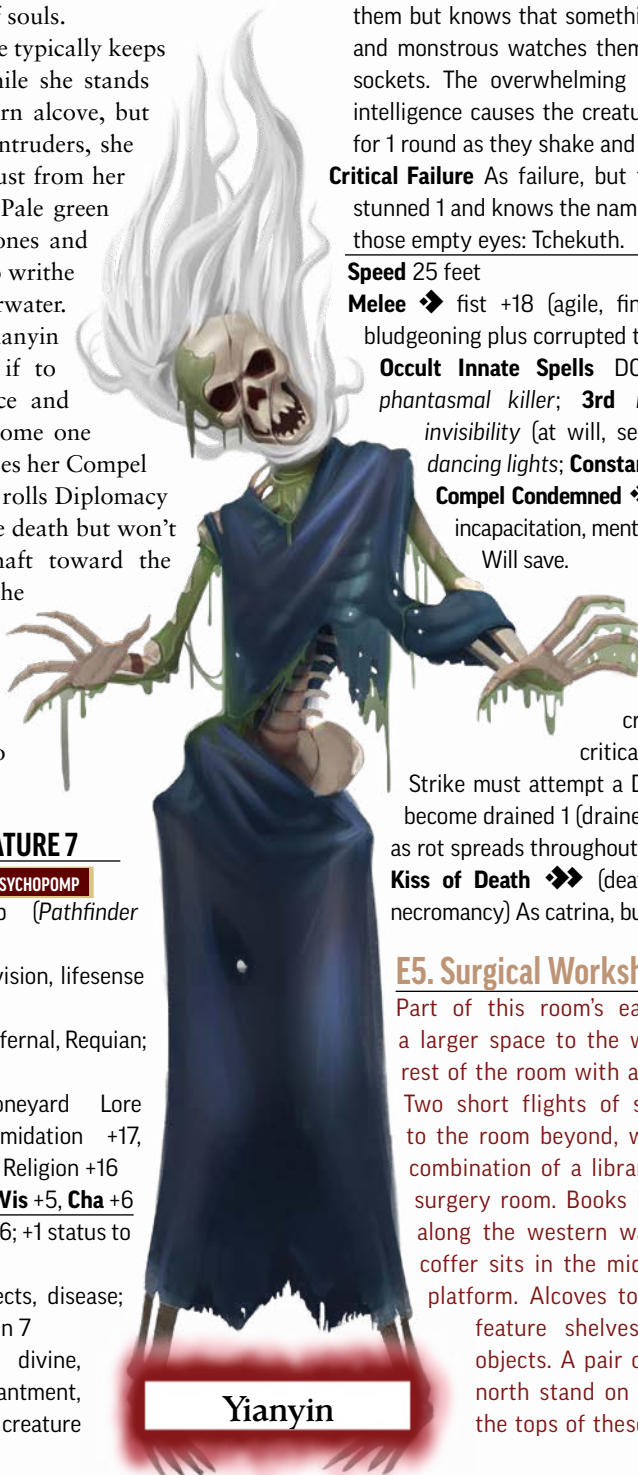
Part of this room's eastern area overlooks a larger space to the west, set off from the rest of the room with an elegant, iron railing. Two short flights of stairs descend 5 feet to the room beyond, which appears to be a combination of a library, a workshop, and a surgery room. Books line the stone shelves along the western walls, and a small iron coffer sits in the middle on a semicircular platform. Alcoves to the north and south feature shelves filled with strange objects. A pair of workbenches to the north stand on either side of a stool; the tops of these workbenches appear

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Yianyin



covered with several empty glass jars and partially constructed metal cannisters. To the south, alchemical tools and glassblowing equipment cover a long, stone table. In the middle of the room, a metal and wooden operation table features surgical tools along with several restraint bits that rest nearby. Rivulets of phosphorescent green fluid dribble up the stone walls to pool in glowing puddles on the ceiling above.

Long ago, the ancient Desnans used this chamber as a library, but when Ioseff took over the site, he spent years setting it up as a place to research and perform the process of extracting and preserving living brains at the operation table. The workbenches to the north contain several partially completed *brain cylinders*, while Ioseff used the longer table to the south to craft glass components and preservative fluids. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Occultism check while Searching this room's contents correctly interprets the purpose of this room.

**Creature:** Originally called down from the stars with the *Void Mirror* and kept compliant by *inveigle* rituals, a powerful mi-go named Ixirizmid still dwells here. While the *inveigle* that Xarwin used to keep Ixirizmid compliant as a surgical advisor has long since expired, the malevolence's influence had plenty of time to work its will on the alien fungi's mind. Today, Ixirizmid thinks of themselves as the caretaker of this laboratory and has spent their time polishing equipment, organizing devices, and keeping the tools ready for use.

Upon sighting the PCs, the mi-go welcomes them with its buzzing voice, asking which of them are ready to cast aside the limitations of flesh and to begin their new lives. Any character that accepts the mi-go's offer is, over the course of a painful operation, slain as their brain is transplanted into a *brain cylinder* (see page 66 for details). Of course, those who wish to avoid such a fate are under no compulsion to comply. Ixirizmid attempts to capture the PCs alive if they resist but won't pursue them out of this chamber.



Ixirizmid

## IXIRIZMID

## CREATURE 8

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM FUNGUS

Variant mi-go (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 168)

**Perception** +17; low-light vision, tremorsense (precise) 30 feet

**Languages** Aklo, Common, Mi-Go

**Skills** Acrobatics +16, Arcana +18, Athletics +15, Deception +17 (+21 to Impersonate), Medicine +21, Occultism +18, Religion +17, Stealth +16, Thievery +16

**Str** +3, **Dex** +6, **Con** +4, **Int** +6, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +3

**AC** 26; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +18, **Will** +17

**HP** 170; **Immunities** cold; **Weaknesses** slashing 5

**No Breath** Ixirizmid doesn't breathe and is immune to effects that require breathing (such as an inhaled poison).

**Speed** 25 feet, fly 40 feet

**Melee** ♦ claw +18 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 2d8+5 slashing plus Grab

**Rituals** *extract brain* (page 67)

**Clever Disguises** Ixirizmid can use Deception to impersonate any Medium humanoid creature, although creating such a disguise takes 1 hour. They can't impersonate a specific individual with this ability.

**Eviscerate** ♦ (manipulate) Ixirizmid performs a swift and painful surgery on a creature it has grabbed or restrained, or who's otherwise immobilized. They roll a Medicine check against the target's Fortitude DC. Regardless of the result, the

target then becomes temporarily immune to Eviscerate for 24 hours.

**Critical Success** The target takes 8d6 slashing damage, is slowed 1 for 1 round, and becomes clumsy 1, enfeebled 1, or stupefied 1 (the mi-go chooses) for 24 hours.

**Success** The target takes 5d6 slashing damage and is slowed 1 for 1 round by the pain.

**Failure** The target takes 3d6 slashing damage.

**Critical Failure** The target takes no damage.

**Sneak Attack** Ixirizmid deals an additional 1d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

**Treasure:** The collection of books and papers on this room's shelves predominantly cover the topics of anatomy, surgery, and a wide range of experimental and mostly unethical experiments. A character who Investigates while in this library can make use of the books to gain a +1 item bonus to any Recall Knowledge checks associated with these topics.

A character who succeeds at a DC 24 Medicine or Occultism check while studying these books during an 8-hour period spent Investigating can gather enough notes that can be used to learn the *extract brain* ritual (page 67).

Xarwin had heavily annotated many of these books. A character can use these annotations to Research Ioseff Xarwin, Asethanna Xarwin, Fulvia Nostraema, the Dominion of the Black, and the Order of the Starless Night.

The unlocked metal coffer on the shelf to the west holds the speech module for the brainclock in area C2.

Among the equipment on the southern table is a set of expanded alchemist's tools, a pair of *alchemist goggles*, and a spare lens for the *starless scope* (identical to the one found in area A4).

## E6. Ancient Hall Moderate 5

Glowing green fluid slowly drips up the pale lavender walls of this 10-foot-wide hallway, while countless tracks in the dust on the floor look disturbingly like fingerprints the size of a human head.

This hallway once served as the primary artery for traffic and allowed access to the deeper complex where the Order of the Starless Night kept their living quarters, temple, and treasury. However, a flaw in the preservative magic resulted in the tunnel's collapse, sealing the deeper chambers away.

Area E6a features a 10-foot-wide alcove in which once stood a guardian azata, but its term of service ended long ago and it returned to Desna's palace in Cynosure. Today, this alcove has become a focus of the malevolence's influence (see Creatures below).

The collapsed tunnel in area E6b once led deeper into the Order of the Starless Night's underground temple, but these chambers are now inaccessible. Ioseff spent some time trying to dig out the rubble, only to lose his nerve when the debris shifted ominously. Instead of risking the collapse of his whole manor, he left the rubble untouched. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check notices the decades-old evidence of Ioseff's attempt, while a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Engineering Lore check to Recall Knowledge notes the potential perils of excavation. You can determine whether or not the PCs can clear this tunnel and what might lie in the long-sealed chambers beyond.

The doors in area E6c have been locked. A PC can open them with the key from area C15, with a successful DC 22 Thievery check to Pick the Lock, or with a successful DC 20 Athletics check to Force Open the doors.

The ceiling in area E6d is only 8 feet high. When the complex was first built, this area connected to the surface, but over the many centuries, it was buried until Xarwin's workers bored through into it while building the scriptorium. Xarwin had them brick over the hole then installed the secret door to the south. To the north, Xarwin installed a secret door to area E8. A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Perception check notices both secret doors (indicated by the "S-es" on the map on page 47).

**Creatures:** The curious markings in the dust in this hall were left by a pair of immense manifestations of the malevolence drawn directly from Ioseff's traumatized mind: a pair of human-sized left hands, severed at the wrist as if by an enormous hatchet. Each of these giant left hands wears a massive ring that looks identical to the one the PCs might have found in area C13. The two giant crawling hands remain at rest in area E6a until they notice anything approaching within 30 feet and then immediately move to attack. Each fights until destroyed, at which point the entire hand (ring included) melts away into a noxious tide of green ectoplasm that swiftly evaporates. As long as Ioseff's ghost remains, new crawling hands manifest here after a week passes.

## ELITE CRAWLING HANDS (2) CREATURE 5

*Pathfinder Bestiary 2* 6, 56

**Initiative** Perception +14

## E7. Scriptorium

A pair of desks stand in the east side of this brick-walled room—one a writing desk and the other a bookbinding worktable. To the north, a cabinet with cracked glass doors shelters a collection of writing implements. A large nook to the west is filled with shelves containing mildewed parchments, paper, and bookbinding supplies.



Often, Xarwin found the strange, ancient tomes he collected in poor condition. When that happened, Ioseff performed repairs to the tomes here. The stairs beyond the southwest door lead up to the library (area **B10**). The shelf to the west once held the supplies needed to repair books, but time hasn't been kind to these materials—they're ruined.

The secret door to the north can be discovered by a PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Perception check.

This room is an excellent place for the PCs to encounter a Xarwin Manor phantasm.

**Treasure:** The cabinet contains sterling artisan's tools usable for bookbinding and writing. In addition, a small wooden case contains three occult scrolls: a *scroll of comprehend language*, a *scroll of hypercognition*, and a *scroll of restoration* (4th).

A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check while Investigating the shelves in the northwest alcove discovers a hidden panel that, when moved aside, opens into a locked metal safe built into the wall. This safe can't be unlocked with the key from area **C15**; only the safe key found on Xarwin's remains in area **E9** can open it. Otherwise, a PC can crack open the safe with a successful DC 32 Thievery check to Pick the Lock or Force it Open with a successful DC 35 Athletics check; the safe can also be battered open (Hardness 18, HP 72, BT 36). The safe contains what remains of the Xarwin family fortune. After having spent most of it on his occult pursuits, Ioseff had hoped that the publication of Fulvia's essay would keep him financed until he could perform his final transformation. The safe contains several small wooden coffers containing a total of 340 cp, 665 sp, 198 gp, and 8 pp. A leather ledger holds a few dozen IOUs and expired letters of credit with House Thrun; the ledger and its contents are worth 20 gp as a collector's item. Near the back of the safe, wrapped in a bloodstained handkerchief, is Asethanna's wedding ring, worth 50 gp.

## E8. Family Crypt

Low 5

Mildew dots the brick-lined walls and floor of this damp room. Sarcophagi stand in alcoves along the rest of the walls, 10 in all. Each sarcophagus has a bronze nameplate, though only four have been etched.

This room was originally intended to serve as a family crypt, potentially serving several generations of the Xarwin line. The four etched nameplates adorn the four southernmost sarcophagi and bear the names of Ioseff, Asethanna, Marney, and Mira. While Ioseff's sarcophagus is empty, even a cursory examination reveals that the lids for the other three

have been sealed with strips of lead pounded into the seam. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Athletics, check can Force Open any of these stone sarcophagi. Each contains the skeletal remains of Xarwin's murdered family, placed here by Xarwin himself after he took from them what he needed. In all three cases, the skeletons of Asethanna, Marney, and Mira have had the tops of their craniums surgically removed. No haunting presence dwells here, though, for the unquiet spirits of these victims remain where they were slain in the manor above.

Xarwin most often used the secret door in the southern wall to come and go from the ancient chambers, and as such, it's a little easier to find than the others—a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check notes its existence. Upstairs, the door to the north leads to area **B21**.

**Creature:** Not long after the Xarwins moved in, Ioseff asked his wife Asethanna to carve for him a wooden statue to serve as the body for a golem. This construct remains here to this day, a strikingly lifelike representation of Ioseff Xarwin (with both hands intact). The golem stands quietly before the secret door, still obeying its orders to let none other than Ioseff Xarwin pass. It attacks anyone who attempts to push it aside to open the secret door (including anyone who opens the door from area **E6d**) but doesn't pursue foes from this room.

## WOOD GOLEM

CREATURE 6

*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 130

Initiative Perception +12

## E9. Xarwin's Laboratory

Extreme 5

The pale lavender walls of this room ripple with glowing green fluid that drips up to pool against the ceiling. Alcoves in the walls to the east and west contain a few books and tools, while many more books sit on the numerous wooden shelves lining the walls. To the southeast, dark blue curtains obscure what lies beyond: a horrific statue made of glass, bronze, and wood. A depiction of a crab-like creature with several glass domes on its back stands to the north—human brains float within three of these fluid-filled domes.

To the west of this unsettling statue is an empty wooden mirror frame. A paper-cluttered desk and chair near this frame face the statue. A human skeleton clad wearing rotted black and red aristocrat's clothing over a chain shirt slumps forward in the chair. The area around the body has been sprayed with dried blood and bits of leathery flesh—as if the figure's skin and organs had burst from its body, leaving the skeleton intact. The skeleton's left hand is missing at the wrist, but the right cradles a long silver telescope against its chest.

At the center of the room, a 10-foot-diameter, one-foot-high platform of stone supports an eight-foot-diameter slab of six-inch-thick stone—almost akin to a slab covering a well. This entire platform seethes with pale green ooze that constantly extrudes wavering tendrils into the air before absorbing them over and over.

This room served Xarwin as a laboratory, and in his final years, as a bedroom, too. The rickety bed and nightstand behind the curtained area grants gloomy insight into the man's last lonely years of life.

The statue to the north depicts a brain collector (a PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Occultism check to Recall Knowledge identifies this creature). The glass domes on its back can all function as a *brain cylinder* (page 66), except that they afford brains preserved within no ability to see, hear, or speak. These brains once belonged to Asethanna, Marney, and Mira Xarwin, left for the past several decades to dream and sleep; they remain largely ignorant of their fate even as their souls continue to haunt their rooms in the manor above. Destroying these *brain cylinders* causes the corresponding haunts in areas **C4** and **C14** to fade and allows the Xarwins to move on to the Boneyard.

The stone slab in the middle of the room is a gravestone of sorts—Tchekuth's ossified but slowly wakening remains lie hundreds of feet directly below this stone. The writhing green ectoplasm caking the stone radiates overwhelming chaos and evil if examined with *detect alignment*. An inscription on the stone's surface, written in Celestial, can be read through the writhing ectoplasm by a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check. It reads, "May you remain below, shrouded in stone, apart from the dark above. May your name be forgotten forever, and your evils left to the memories of the long dead. May all your nights remain starless forever more." Although eerie and unsettling, the ectoplasm is harmless.

**Creatures:** In life, Ioseff Xarwin was a Paracount of Cheliox and an accomplished bard whose enigmatic muse drove him to obsession with the Dark Tapestry. In undeath, however, he lost much of his humanity, his political ambitions, and most of his bardic powers save for his occult spellcasting. He doesn't rise from his bones when the PCs enter. Instead, his ghost slithers out of Tchekuth's gravestone, pulling with it long tethers of sticky green ooze as he turns to face the PCs. If the PC he chose as his host is present, he points his good finger at that character and cries out, "And now I shall take what is mine!" Otherwise, he'll make this announcement to the PC with the highest Intelligence in the room. Ioseff doesn't pause to speak further—he attacks at once, using Intimidation for initiative.

During combat, Ioseff attempts to use Malevolent Possession on his targeted PC each round, using his third action to move to be adjacent to that target as necessary or Striking at another PC in reach if he doesn't have to Stride. Once he's reduced to 80 HP or less, though, Ioseff realizes the PCs are perhaps more dangerous than he expected and abandons this tactic. He then attempts to use Phantasmal Amputation on his targeted PC, after which he switches to spells. On the next round, he casts *summon entity* to summon a gibbering mouter, after which he sustains the spell and uses other spells to damage the PCs, seeking to leave his targeted PC unhurt in hopes of defeating that PC's allies so he can go back to possession attempts.

If the PCs have enabled the gathered nosois to turn into an algea (page 70), the sound of hundreds of whippoorwills fills the room once Ioseff is reduced to 50 or fewer hit points. The swarm enters the battle on the next round, having spent the previous rounds of the fight until then flying to this location from outdoors, such as by smashing through windows and forcing doors open along the way; it uses Acrobatics for initiative. The algea attacks Ioseff, and for this encounter, its grieving aura affects only him, not the PCs. Ioseff tries to use *banishment* on the swarm as soon as he can, then he focuses his attacks thereafter on the swarm. If the swarm manages to capture him in a soul cage, it tries to *plane shift* away with the ghost. If Ioseff resists the effect of the soul cage, the swarm *plane shifts* to the Boneyard, leaving the PCs to finish the fight on their own. If he fails the save against the algea's soul cage, his soul is whisked away and is swiftly judged (see Putting Ioseff to Rest on page 55).

If Ioseff manages to possess his target PC, he cries out in triumph and says "You will be with me again soon, my loves!" before continuing to fight the PCs with his spells. In this circumstance, he can leave area **E9** to pursue his foes. A PC wearing Fulvia's ring automatically realizes that they can attempt an unarmed Strike against a possessed PC with the hand that wears the ring. On a hit, Ioseff must attempt a DC 30 Will save to resist being expelled from his host. If he critically fails this saving throw, he's also stunned 3 and can't use Malevolent Possession for 24 hours.

Ioseff is bound to this chamber and can't pursue PCs from this room, but he can certainly use his spells against PCs who retreat into area **E6**. However, at the end of any round in which no PC remains in area **E9**, the malevolence causes these doors to slam shut.

If he's reduced to 0 HP, Ioseff isn't destroyed, but every PC who has the malevolence condition has that condition reduced to 0 immediately. His ghostly body

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shrieks as it melts away into an ectoplasmic stain on the floor, but re-forms after 2d4 days, fully healed.

## IOSEFF XARWIN

## CREATURE 9

UNIQUE CE MEDIUM GHOST INCORPOREAL SPIRIT UNDEAD

Male human ghost (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 166)

**Perception** +16; darkvision

**Languages** Aklo, Common, Infernal

**Skills** Arcana +17, Astronomy Lore +21, Cheliax Lore +17, Deception +19, Intimidation +19, Occultism +21, Society +19, Stealth +18

**Str** -5, **Dex** +3, **Con** +0, **Int** +6, **Will** +3, **Cha** +4

**Site Bound**

**AC** 29; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +18, **Will** +18

**HP** 112, negative healing, rejuvenation; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, precision, unconscious; **Resistances** all damage 10 (except force, *ghost touch*, or positive; double resistance vs. non-magical)

**Recoil** If a character forcefully presents Fulvia's ring to Ioseff as an action with the manipulate trait, he must attempt a DC 26 Will save; he's thereafter immune to Recoil for 24 hours.

**Critical Success** Ioseff is unaffected.

**Success** Ioseff takes 4d6 mental damage and is frightened 1.

**Failure** Ioseff takes 8d6 mental damage and is frightened 2.

**Critical Failure** Ioseff takes 8d6 mental damage, is frightened 2, and is stunned 3.

**Rejuvenation** (divine, necromancy) See Putting Ioseff to Rest on page 55 for details on how to stop his ghost from rejuvenating.

**Shame** Ioseff takes a -1 item penalty to attack rolls and saving throws against a character who carries Fulvia's ring (area **C13**). This penalty doubles to -2 against a character who wears Fulvia's ring. At the start of their turn, a character who possesses Fulvia's ring can attempt a secret DC 20 Perception check; on a success, they sense a faint compulsion fueled by outrage to present Fulvia's ring to the ghost.

**Speed** fly 25 feet

**Melee** ♦ bloody ectoplasmic lash +19 (agile, finesse, magical, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d8+7 negative

**Occult Innate Spells** DC 28, attack +20; **5th** *banishment*, *summon entity*; **4th** *grim tendrils*, *nightmare*, *phantasmal killer*; **3rd** *dream message*, *paralyze*, *slow*; **2nd** *gentle repose*, *mirror image*, *telekinetic maneuver*; **1st** *command*, *fear*, *ray of enfeeblement*; **Cantrips (5th)** *daze*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*, *telekinetic projectile*

**Rituals** DC 28; *extract brain*, *inveigle*

**Incite Insurrection** ♦ **Trigger** A creature within 30 feet of Ioseff fails a saving throw against one of his spells; **Effect** Ioseff infuses the magic of his spell with the agonies of

his own death. In addition to any effects caused by the triggering spell, the target must also attempt a DC 28 Fortitude save or contract internal insurrection at stage 1 (stage 2 on a critical failure); see page 67 for details of this eerie alien affliction.

**Malevolent Possession** ♦♦ As ghost, DC 28 Will save. A character who carries Fulvia's ring on their person gains a +4 item bonus to their save and treats the result of the save as one degree of success better than their rolled result. If Ioseff attempts to use this ability on a character who wears Fulvia's ring, he can attempt a Perception check against the ring-wearer's Stealth DC to notice the ring in time to avoid the attempt; on a success, he loses the two actions he took to make the attempt but avoids further effects. If he doesn't notice the ring and attempts to possess the ring-wearer, the ring-wearer automatically gains a critical success on their Will save, Ioseff is stunned 3, and he can't use Malevolent Possession again for 24 hours.

**Phantasmal Amputation** ♦ (necromancy, occult) **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Ioseff holds up the stump of his left arm, and the streaming blood begins to form a ghostly hand that he then uses to point out a humanoid creature within 30 feet. That creature must attempt a DC 28 Fortitude save.

**Critical Success** The creature is sickened 1 by a sudden, agonizing pain in their left hand.

**Success** As critical success, but the creature also takes 2d6 slashing damage and is clumsy 1 for 1 round as they feel as if their left hand just got lopped off by a hatchet.

**Failure** The creature is sickened 2, takes 5d6 slashing damage, and is clumsy 2 for 1 minute as they feel as if their left hand just got lopped off by a hatchet.

**Critical Failure** The PC is sickened 3 and takes 8d6 slashing damage and 2d6 bleed damage as their left hand appears to detach and fall to the floor before instantly decaying into bones. The PC is clumsy 2 and wounded 1. As soon as this wounded condition is removed, the PC's hand miraculously returns and the clumsy condition ends.

**Treasure:** Ioseff's skeletal remains cradle the *starless scope*. The *starless scope*'s lens is shattered—one of the replacements (found in area **A4**, **C17**, or **E5**) must be placed in the scope before it can once again function. See page 67 for more details on this item.

In addition to the *starless scope*, a search of Ioseff's remains reveals a +1 *chain shirt*, a *wand of spiritual weapon*, a broken *wand of soothe* (2nd), a +1 *striking dagger*, and a *ventriloquist's ring* on his remaining hand.

The scrawled scrolls on his desk include a *scroll of internal insurrection*, along with Ioseff's notes that he hoped to use his deciphering of the alien spell to save

himself. The notes trail off before he could finish his thoughts, as he succumbed to that very spell before he could take steps to recover.

The collection of books kept on the shelves here are well suited toward Researching the topics of the Ashen Man, the Dominion of the Black, the Order of the Starless Night, the *starless scope*, Tchekuth, and the *Void Mirror*. Among these books are some of Ioseff's most private confessions; PCs who take the time to read them should be able to piece together answers to most of their lingering questions about the malevolence at Xarwin Manor.

Amid these books, the PCs can also find volumes that they can use to learn the *inveigle* ritual.

Perhaps of most interest to curious PCs are the half-completed notes of the ritual Ioseff had almost completed that would have allowed him to usurp control over a brain collector and merge the minds of his wife and children with his own. With a successful DC 30 Occultism check, a PC confirms that, had Ioseff spent only a few more weeks on his project, the ritual might have become functional. In its current state, the vile ritual is worthless, and most PCs should rightfully feel the urge to destroy the notes. Otherwise, you can decide what might come of these notes if they fall into the wrong hands.

## Putting Ioseff to Rest

If the PCs manage to secure the aid of an algae swarm and the psychopomp manages to *plane shift* Ioseff's ghost to the Boneyard, he's swiftly judged and his spirit is put to rest.

Barring this swift resolution, though, the PCs must first reduce the ghost to 0 HP before they can put his spirit to rest permanently. The method to put him to rest requires three steps—if the PCs have trouble putting these steps together, they can learn them by fully Researching Ioseff Xarwin (page 63).

In order to put Ioseff to rest, the following three conditions must be met after defeating Ioseff but before he rejuvenates:

- The undead brain collector in area **D6** has been destroyed.
- The brains of his wife and children have been freed from the brain collector statue, allowing their souls to move to the Boneyard.
- The *Void Mirror* has been replaced in its frame in the Cosmic Crypt.

As soon as all three of these conditions are met, a bone-chilling howl of frustration and pain fills the air as Ioseff's ghost rises up from the ground near the PCs.

Ioseff makes a move as if to attack, but a tangle of long, spidery legs made of blood-red ectoplasm reaches up from the ground around him and pierces his ghostly body in a dozen places. A moment later, an immense set of toothy jaws rises up to swiftly close around him. Ioseff screams in agony as this ectoplasmic manifestation of Tchekuth consumes his soul, absorbs his memories, and then retreats back into the deep below, once again slumbering as long as the *Void Mirror* remains in place.

## Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs are defeated, or if they abandon the horrors of Xarwin Manor without placing the *Void Mirror* back in its frame in the Cosmic Crypt, it's only a matter of time before Tchekuth rises, fully transformed into

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Ioseff's Ghost



a gargantuan aberration. The process only quickens if Ioseff manages to possess a flesh and blood body, after which it'll be less than a month before he completes his final act to have his brain and those of his family absorbed into a new brain collector he can then control from within. Tchekuth's influence then compels him to quicken the ancient evil's return.

Tchekuth's cataclysmic birth from below the manor completely obliterates the estate, and the resulting landslide buries what's left of Crooked Cove. As a level 24 aberration, Tchekuth is a foe only the highest-level PCs can hope to face, but until his defeat, his influence spreads like a contagion through western Avistan as he draws cults to his cause and prepares Golarion for the Dominion's Banquet—the end of the world as the planet is drawn into a ravenous, sentient black hole brought to the system through Tchekuth's will. Of course, Tchekuth and the *Void Mirror* will escape this devastation, leaving the Ashen Man to watch over the end of yet another world. The timing of when this awful apocalypse strikes is left for you to determine. A full campaign where PCs strive to defeat Tchekuth's growing cult while much of Ravounel and western Cheliax fall under his corruptive control could well be the only thing that can save Golarion!

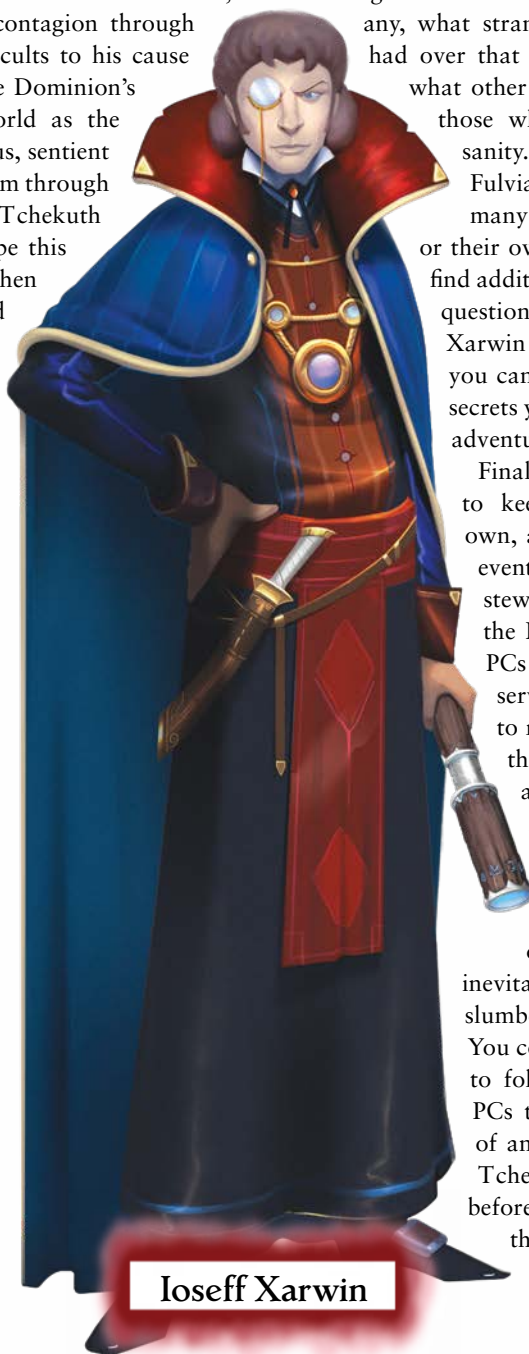
In light of these potentially apocalyptic outcomes, the fate of the souls trapped within Xarwin Manor might seem minor, but putting them to rest is no less a triumph for the PCs. Certainly, if Ioseff remains a ghost, he'll eventually possess a body and finalize his eldritch plan to transpose his body into a brain collector that houses the brains of his family. Even if the PCs put those brains to rest, though, having Ioseff Xarwin reborn as a brain collector could still engineer Tchekuth's return, setting himself up as the Malevolence's new high priest on a doomed world.

If, on the other hand, the PCs cleanse Xarwin Manor and return the *Void Mirror* to the Cosmic Crypt, the area soon reverts to normal. The manor would work quite well as a base of operations once it's rebuilt and restored, of course, but as time goes on, the PCs might find themselves visited by strange and sinister folk eager to have access to "the Xarwin legacy" for unmentioned research topics of their own. If the PCs follow up on Fulvia Nostraema, they might well be surprised to find that she still lives, her elven lineage making her one of Darakole Asylum's longest-lived inmates. You can determine, if

any, what strange influence she could have had over that establishment's occupants or what other secrets she might share with those who rescue or restore her to sanity. Through conversations with Fulvia, in-depth research of the many books found in the manor, or their own divinations, the PCs could find additional answers to any lingering questions they might have about Xarwin Manor's history, though you can keep to yourself the deepest secrets you wish to preserve for future adventures of your own design.

Finally, if the PCs choose not to keep Xarwin Manor as their own, a small gathering of Desnans eventually arrive to take over stewardship of the site. In this case, the Desnans might even offer the PCs free healing and spellcasting services for life if they're allowed to remain as custodians. In time, this sect might see the return of a much more positive force from Thassilon's dying days—the return of the Order of the Starless Night.

Still... all of these outcomes only delay the inevitable, for as long as Tchekuth slumbers below, his threat remains. You could build an entire campaign to follow this adventure with the PCs traveling the world in search of an alternate method to destroy Tchekuth, the *Void Mirror*, or both before the malevolence returns—this time not just to haunt a lonely manor, but to haunt an entire world.



Ioseff Xarwin

## Behind the Scenes: Whispers From Ravounel

*Malevolence* began as a keystone for a Pathfinder campaign I've been running for friends at work—a campaign I've called Whispers in Ravounel set in a small, forgotten town at the southwesternmost corner of the eponymous nation. While I started the game as a way to learn the rules of Pathfinder Second Edition, the main reason I did so was to play the game with my friends. Whispers in Ravounel is a true sandbox game. While I've got the town of Crook Cove (a version of Crooked Cove that survived the disaster and, at my table, is still populated) detailed out in my notes along with thousands of words of potential adventure hooks, where the PCs go and what they do is entirely up to them. In some cases, they've stumbled into areas where I've run some of my old favorite adventures from other games, but in the case of Xarwin Manor, I built it from the ground up. I started with a map of the haunted house and then raced ahead of the PCs, barely managing to stay a few encounters ahead of them—and in fact, falling behind a few times and having to improvise particularly complicated haunts (the haunted portraits come to mind).

In any event, the mayhem in Xarwin Manor must have impressed Adam Daigle (one of my players) since he suggested I write it up as an adventure for publication. And 18 months or so later, here we are! Ironically, as is the nature of sandboxes, the Whispers in Ravounel PCs ended up encountering some major distractions, and at the time I'm writing these words in early December, the group still hasn't explored the third floor, observatory, or basement of the manor. In my campaign, Xarwin's ghost still exists, and having been alerted to the PCs' presence and then being left to stew in his manor for several days, you can be sure he's up to something. I'm not going to say what here, though, since Adam's the one developing this adventure, and I need to keep at least a few things secret from him after I spoiled the whole thing for him in the preceding pages!

One of the best parts of it has been curating the pacing of the encounters or ad-libbing spooky events based solely on the actions or expectations of the players themselves. I've done my best to seed the most successful of them throughout the text, but you, the GM, will need to take these leads and carry them over the proverbial finish line, modifying them as you need to time them just right. I've listed a few of my favorites below in hopes that they'll inspire you to explore opportunities of your own in-game.

**Cliffhangers:** I try to end my sessions on exciting cliffhangers so that the players are eager to get to the next game and so that the start of the next game has an obvious beginning point. While exploring Xarwin

Manor, I improvised the bird-killing burst of the Xarwin Caul as one such cliffhanger. In your games, as you near the end of your session, keep an eye out for opportunities to end on a shock. Just before a fight begins or as a haunt triggers are good points, but you can just as easily have a Xarwin Manor phantasm manifest right before you say, "And that's where we're ending tonight!" This way, you'll have all the time until your next session to think about that phantasm and, perhaps, design a full encounter or haunt based on that introduction that's hand-tailored to spook your players! You know what scares them better than me, after all!

**Over Your Shoulder:** When the PCs entered area C12, I ad-libbed what became the phantasmal reflection. Taking that as a clue, the party split up (yay!), leaving half the group in the overlook while the others went down to the crypt to try to replicate the actions they'd seen in the phantasm. The idea was that the group in area C12 could watch through the window to see if the PCs down at the crypt were in the right spot, or maybe that the vision in the window might change. Instead, as the PCs down at the Cosmic Crypt gave up their search and turned around to indicate to those still in the manor that there was nothing to see, they saw Xarwin standing right behind the PCs left in area C12, his bloody stump over a PC's shoulder as tendrils of blood crept around their neck about to strangle them. Of course, when the PCs in area C12 saw those downstairs frantically pantomiming, "Turn around!" They saw nothing at all in the room with them. It ended up being a great way to take advantage of the group splitting up without hitting them with an unfair fight!

**Chased Into the Woods:** The group encountered the vampiric mists at a point when they'd expended most of their resources and chose flight as the better option. As they fled the manor, they scattered in different directions—since there were five of them and only two mists, the hope was that they'd confuse the monsters, I guess? In any case, one PC ended up being chased by both mists. He tried to flee across a river and failed his Athletics check to swim, and in the spirit of "failing forward," I told the PC that as they floundered underwater, they saw the mists above, trying and failing to chase them into the water and swiftly giving up. It ended up being an intense scene with a logical way for the PCs to escape, and when they returned to the manor after resting up, revenge on the vampiric mists seemed to be particularly cathartic.

In any event, running *Malevolence* for my group has been a blast; seeing their faces and expressions when a particularly effective haunt shows up or after they achieve a long-sought-after goal is one of the best parts about being a GM. Here's hoping you have as much fun or more with this adventure!

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# ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

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## Researching the Malevolence

The key perils within and below Xarwin Manor can be defeated only temporarily through combat and magic. To put these hauntings and sinister undead to rest permanently, the PCs must discover the secrets of the manor's history by researching clues found within the structure's libraries and collections, by studying journals and notes left behind by its doomed inhabitants, or even by experiencing vivid dreams. These insights into the area's history will help guide the PCs' explorations, reveal goals, and (as they complete research topics) earn them experience points.

These investigations are performed using the Research subsystem, as detailed on pages 154–155 of the *Gamemastery Guide*. The PCs can choose to research several topics, some of which they might not initially have access to when the adventure begins and must be discovered (or “unlocked”) through the course of play. When a PC wishes to Research, they should indicate to the GM which topic they want to investigate and then attempt an appropriate skill check for the venue of research they utilize.

## Special Terminology

The rules presented in the *Gamemastery Guide* assume PCs research divisions within a library, but in this adventure, the terminology used differs slightly. Instead of being organized under libraries, divisions are listed as topics, such as “Ioseff Xarwin” or “Psychopomps.” Within each topic, numerous venues are listed, be it the PCs' own knowledge, a collection of books, journals found in the manor, discussions with NPCs, phantasms, or dreams experienced while under the manor's influence. The amount of time needed to perform the check varies by venue but is listed in each topic's stat block.

Each topic has a level associated with it. Once the PCs reach all of a topic's research thresholds, they earn XP as if they'd defeated a creature of the topic's level. For example, a party of 3rd-level characters, upon completing research about a 5th-level topic, earn 80 XP, the same

amount this party would have earned for defeating a 5th-level creature. To keep things moving, you should let the PCs know when they've completed research on a topic rather than let them continue trying in vain learn more.

## Dream Research

Once the PCs visit Xarwin Manor, their psyches become linked to the malevolence. Thereafter, whenever they sleep within a five-mile radius of the manor, they experience disturbing and unsettling dreams that seem to simultaneously present strangely precise clues and revelations. The PCs might all share the same or very similar dreams, or each character might receive a different visions in the same night, at the GM's discretion.

Whenever the PCs have these strange dreams, have them roll a DC 15 Arcana (trained), Nature (trained), Occultism (untrained), or Religion (untrained) check while they dream. On a success, that PC realizes that they can use this dream to research topics they've unlocked during the adventure by taking the Dream Research activity.

## DREAM RESEARCH

CONCENTRATE DOWNTIME

**Trigger** You fall asleep within 5 miles of Xarwin Manor.

**Frequency** once per 12 hours

While you sleep, you experience dreams that verge on nightmares. In these dreams, your mind drifts from your soul, and everything you know feels like it's being drawn up into the dark places between the stars to be devoured. During the dream, you can concentrate on one research topic you've unlocked that you haven't fully investigated. If you choose a topic for which the party has already discovered all research thresholds, you can immediately switch to a different topic.

The skill you use and the DC for the check depend on the topic, as detailed in that topic's Dreams venue. If you're not dreaming within the manor grounds, the spiritual link to the malevolence is lessened and you take a –2 status penalty to the check.



## MALEVOLENCE CONDITION

As the malevolence begins to take its hold on creatures, their body, minds, and souls become increasingly haunted by the supernatural force infesting Xarwin Manor. Malevolence is a special condition that can affect PCs who play in this adventure. The malevolence condition always includes a value. You take a status penalty equal to this value to all saving throws against effects generated by haunts and against all curse and possession effects. The malevolence condition can be reduced by *restoration*.

The malevolence can never increase above a value of 4. If an effect would increase a creature's malevolence value higher than 4, the creature is instead stupefied 1 for 24 hours as the malevolence consumes a few of their random, short-term memories. A creature that has a malevolence 4 won't voluntarily leave the Xarwin Manor grounds.

Each time you get a full night's rest in a region not influenced by the malevolence condition, the value of your malevolence decreases by 1.

**Critical Success** You gain 2 RP.

**Success** You gain 1 RP.

**Critical Failure** You peer too far into the malevolence, which notices your attempt. You manage to break the mental link just before you lose some memories to its ravenous appetite. Increase your malevolence condition value by 1.

## Research Topics

When *Malevolence* begins, the PCs might start with certain research topics already unlocked, depending on what adventure hook you choose. In this case, a PC can use the Regional Lore venue to perform research before traveling to Xarwin Manor.

In cases where a PC must attempt a Library Lore check, you can allow a PC with another potentially appropriate Lore skill to roll that skill instead. Options to Recall Knowledge to know information automatically can only be attempted once per character per venue.

Before the PCs can research a topic, they must unlock that topic. A topic can be unlocked during play in encounter mode, or it can be unlocked by successfully researching related topics. As this adventure progresses, you (or a player) should keep a list of unlocked Research topics for quick reference as needed during play.

Note that for most of these topics, the final research threshold manifests as a dream. If the PCs reach this threshold using the normal Research activity rather than Dream Research, this final revelation manifests as a sort of waking dream or vision on the spot, triggered by a final bit of successful study on the topic.

## XARWIN MANOR

## TOPIC 3

**Regional Lore** This venue includes research done in a settlement or Library, or even information that a PC might recall on their own; **Maximum RP 4**

**Research Checks** DC 16 Library Lore (2 hours), DC 18 Diplomacy (2 hours), DC 20 Society (to Recall Knowledge, one action)

**Zedna's Journals (area B8) or Xarwin's Journals (area C10)**

The PC studies the journals; **Maximum RP 4** per venue

**Research Checks** DC 16 Library Lore or DC 18 Society (2 hours)

**2 Research Points** The PC learns the location of Xarwin Manor, the date of its construction (4642 AR), and the date it was abandoned (4657 AR).

**4 Research Points** Several of the workers who built the manor vanished soon after it was completed, and the manor's original floor plans were lost or destroyed.

**6 Research Points** The workers who vanished were those hired to build the basement chambers under Xarwin Manor.

**8 Research Points** The PC has done enough research that they can rebuild a basic floor plan of the manor's aboveground floors and the basement chambers of areas **E1**, **E7**, and **E8**. The PC also learns about the locations of the secret doors in area **B16** and **B21**.

**10 Research Points** The workers who vanished knew about hidden chambers below the manor said to have been built eons ago by the Order of the Starless Night. This unlocks the Order of the Starless Night topic and reveals the location of the secret doors in areas **E1**, **E7**, and **E8**.

## XARWIN CAUL

## TOPIC 4

**Manor Facade** The PC studies the Caul, either by examining it physically or magically; **Maximum RP 3**

**Research Checks** DC 19 Ghost (or similar) Lore (Recall Knowledge), DC 21 Occultism or Religion (10 minutes), DC 24 Arcana or Nature (10 minutes); these checks take a -4 circumstance penalty if attempted after the Caul bursts.

**Conversations with Ezramalkun (area B14)** The PC speaks with the nosoi psychopomp Ezramalkun, learning what she has learned over the years; **Maximum RP 3**

**Research Checks** DC 20 Diplomacy (10 minutes)

**Dreams** The PC focuses on the Xarwin Caul; **Maximum RP 4**

**Research Checks** DC 19 Intimidation (to understand and empathize with the source of anger that helped create the Caul), DC 21 Perception (to witness elements of the Caul's supernatural formation), DC 24 Psychopomp Lore (to learn from the whispers of whippoorwills during the dream)

**2 Research Points** The Caul is an ectoplasmic manifestation of a powerful force of will linked to the manor, and as long as this haunting presence remains within, the Caul can't be destroyed permanently.

**4 Research Points** The Caul is a reflection of the malevolent will's hatred of birds and thirst for knowledge, yet it's still unclear why these two drives caused the Caul to form. The Caul's influence suffuses all of Xarwin Manor and the surrounding fenced-in manor grounds.

**6 Research Points** The Caul absorbs knowledge and memories from sentient creatures that dream within its area of influence, and these absorbed thoughts are siphoned into the actual malevolence that haunts the manor (the PC doesn't receive insights into the malevolence's nature but does confirm that disabling the Caul doesn't prevent the malevolence from feeding). The PC also understands the mechanics of the Caul's Burst of Hatred, its antipathetic aura against psychopomps, and that it takes a week to reset. This unlocks the Psychopomps topic.

**8 Research Points** The PC dreams of the source of the malevolence infusing the area and feels a name imprinted in their mind: Tchekuth. This unlocks the Tchekuth topic.

## ASETHANNA XARWIN

## TOPIC 5

**Regional Lore** This venue includes research done in a settlement or Library, or even information that a PC might recall on their own; **Maximum RP** 3

**Research Checks** DC 20 Library Lore (2 hours), DC 22 Diplomacy (2 hours), DC 25 Society (to Recall Knowledge, one action)

**Zedna's Journals (area B8), Asethanna's Diaries (area C5), or Annotated Books (area E5)** The PC studies the books and journals; **Maximum RP** 3 per venue

**Research Checks** DC 22 Library Lore or DC 24 Religion or Society (2 hours)

**Dreams** The PC focuses on Asethanna; **Maximum RP** 5

**Research Checks** DC 18 Craft or Art Lore (to admire Asethanna's artistic skills), DC 20 Diplomacy (to empathize with Asethanna's situation), or DC 22 Society (to understand how aristocratic traditions worked during the early years of House Thrune's rule)

**3 Research Points** Asethanna Xarwin, a human woman, was the wife of Paracount Ioseff Xarwin. They had two children—twins named Marney and Mira.

**6 Research Points** Asethanna's maiden name was Arvanxi. She was the great-aunt of Queen Ileosa of Korvosa. Asethanna was a well-regarded sculptor and painter in her time, although today her work is largely forgotten.

**8 Research Points** Sometime after she moved into Xarwin Manor, Asethanna's art became increasingly focused on her growing faith in Pharasma and on psychopomps. This unlocks the Psychopomp topic.

**10 Research Points** Asethanna supposedly left her husband, taking her twin children with her and returning to her ancestral home in Egorian in 4656 AR. However, no record of her ever arriving at Egorian exists—she seems

to have vanished after this date.

**14 Research Points** The PC dreams of watching Asethanna find a ring bearing a damning inscription—the moment she discovered that her husband had an affair and an illegitimate son with Fulvia Nostraema. She goes on to confront her husband in his office, where he takes the ring, puts it on a finger on his left hand, and proclaims that “Fulvia had been the better lover.” Asethanna uses one of her woodworking hatchets to chop off Ioseff's left hand. She then flees the office, burns the hand in the washroom, and enters her painting studio to prepare to leave her husband. The dream comes to an abrupt end as Ioseff, now one-handed, bursts into the room and kills Asethanna by casting *grim tendrils* on her and letting her bleed to death. This unlocks the Fulvia Nostraema topic.

## FULVIA NOSTRAEMA

## TOPIC 5

**Zedna's Journals (area B8), Fulvia's Room (area C8), Xarwin's Journals (area C10), or Annotated Books (area E5)** The PC studies the books and journals; **Maximum RP** 2 per venue

**Research Checks** DC 20 Library Lore or DC 22 Occultism or Society (2 hours)

**Dreams** The PC focuses on Fulvia; **Maximum RP** 5

**Research Checks** DC 18 Occultism (to understand Fulvia's theories and motives), DC 20 Diplomacy (to empathize with Fulvia's situation), or DC 22 Deception (to identify with Fulvia's methods and her eccentricities)

**2 Research Points** Fulvia Nostraema, a half-elven woman, was an astronomer who spent many years working at Ustalav's Sinkomakti School before she traveled to Cheliaz on an extended visit with Paracount Xarwin in 4655 AR. During this visit, she wrote the lengthy essay she's best known for today: “Nihilism's Sacred Garrote.”

**4 Research Points** “Nihilism's Sacred Garrote” was about the Dominion of the Black's religious practices. The PC also learns that Ioseff Xarwin had Fulvia committed to Darakole Asylum in Vyre after she had a nervous breakdown and attempted to burn the manor down.

**8 Research Points** Fulvia had a son named Anitoli, and Ioseff mentioned (under confidence) to the Darakole Asylum doctors that she smothered him during her nervous breakdown. No record of what happened to her son's body can be found.

**10 Research Points** The PC dreams about Fulvia's affair with Ioseff in Ustalav, their impromptu exchange of inscribed rings, their breakup over an argument about who should buy the *starless scope*, and her later arrival at Xarwin Manor with her son. The PC also learns how she blackmailed Ioseff into letting her stay at the manor and use his resources, including the *starless scope* and the *Void Mirror*, to aid her own research. The dream ends with a brief flash of Fulvia's conviction that the world was about to end and be offered up to a vast “devouring

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black star” by the Dominion of the Black. This unlocks the topics of the Dominion of the Black, the *starless scope*, and the *Void Mirror*. More importantly, the PC can sense the location of Fulvia’s ring and knows that the person who wears it will gain protection against Ioseff.

## IOSEFF XARWIN

## TOPIC 5

**Regional Lore** This venue includes research done in a settlement or Library, or even information that a PC might recall on their own; **Maximum RP 3**

**Research Checks** DC 18 Library Lore (2 hours), DC 20 Society (to Recall Knowledge, one action), or DC 25 Diplomacy (2 hours)

**Zedna’s Journals (area B8), Xarwin’s Journals (area C10), or Annotated Books (area E5)** The PC studies the books and journals; **Maximum RP 2** per venue

**Research Checks** DC 20 Library Lore or DC 22 Occultism or Society (2 hours)

**Conversations with Faldur (area C2)** The PC speaks to Faldur’s preserved brain; **Maximum RP 4**

**Research Checks** DC 22 Diplomacy (1 hour)

**Dreams** The PC focuses on Ioseff; **Maximum RP 5**

**Research Checks** DC 18 Occultism (to understand Ioseff’s motivations and identify with his interests), DC 20 Intimidation (to identify with his attitude and temper), or DC 22 Society (to correctly interpret his actions as a Paracount)

**3 Research Points** Ioseff Xarwin, a human man, was the first Paracount of the county of Ilverness and was married to the artist Asethanna. They had two children—twins named Marney and Mira.

**6 Research Points** Ioseff betrayed his family to House Thrune in order to impress his future wife and to secure a role as Paracount. His collection of rare occult items focused primarily on ancient history (particularly an ancient sect of Desnans) and the Dark Tapestry. This unlocks the Dominion of the Black and the Order of the Starless Night topics.

**9 Research Points** Ioseff grew more and more obsessed with securing expensive occult items as time wore on. These financial expenditures, combined with his increasingly irrational hatred of birds and psychopomps, likely caused his marriage to sour. This unlocks the *starless scope*, the *Void Mirror*, and the Psychopomp topics.

**12 Research Points** Ioseff’s wife and children vanished in 4656 AR after they left Ioseff. The PC also learns that Ioseff had a houseguest named Fulvia Nostraema committed to an asylum. This unlocks the Fulvia Nostraema topic.

**16 Research Points** The PC dreams of Ioseff shrieking in anger as he fires on birds from the manor’s roofwalk, of moments of passion with Fulvia, of contacting strange aliens through the *Void Mirror*, of discovering

Fulvia had murdered her son and stopping her from burning the manor down, of his wife’s attack and the loss of his hand, and finally, of the multiple murders he committed—several servants, mercenaries, workers, and even his wife and children. The dream ends with a sudden conviction that while his family is gone, they can be brought together again as one mind, along with the urge to preserve the brains of his wife and children in anticipation of this ritual. After receiving this dream, the PC’s malevolence condition increases by 1, and if they hadn’t realized yet, they know now that Ioseff Xarwin lingers on as a ghost.

**18 Research Points** The PC discovers the three steps necessary to put Ioseff’s ghost to rest (see page 55).

## DOMINION OF THE BLACK

## TOPIC 6

**Librarian’s Quarters (area B8), Library (area B10), Secret Study (area B21), Fulvia’s Room (area C8), Annotated Books (area E5), or Xarwin’s Laboratory (area E9)** The PC researches the topic among the books; **Maximum RP 2** per venue

**Research Checks** DC 22 Library Lore or DC 24 Occultism (2 hours)

**Conversations with Faldur (area C2)** The PC speaks to Faldur’s preserved brain; **Maximum RP 2**

**Research Checks** DC 22 Diplomacy (1 hour)

**Dreams** The PC focuses on the Dominion of the Black; **Maximum RP 6**

**Research Checks** DC 18 Occultism (to have a frame of reference about the Dominion of the Black), DC 20 Desna Lore (to recall warnings from prayers), or DC 22 Astronomy Lore (to approach the dream from a scientific viewpoint)

**3 Research Points** The Dominion of the Black is a loose confederation of alien entities with an affinity for stealing thoughts, inhabiting bodies, or eating memories.

**6 Research Points** The Dominion of the Black has destroyed countless worlds over the eons. Their interest in Golarion isn’t new, but recently, the Dominion has become more active in certain parts of the world.

**9 Research Points** An ancient order of Desnans known as the Order of the Starless Night once fought against the Dominion’s influence in pre-Earthfall Thassilon. This unlocks the Order of the Starless Night topic.

**12 Research Points** Ioseff Xarwin became increasingly obsessed with the Dominion and collected many books and items associated with the topic. This unlocks the *starless scope* and the *Void Mirror* topics.

**18 Research Points** The PC dreams of the source of the malevolence infusing the area and feels a name imprint in their mind: Tchekuth. The PC understands that this creature has links to the Dominion of the Black. This unlocks the Tchekuth topic. Additionally, the PC feels

a supernatural pull toward area **D6** and knows that an undead alien from the Dominion of the Black is found therein—and that the malevolence in the region has a strange fear of this undead monster.

## ORDER OF THE STARLESS NIGHT TOPIC 6

**Regional Lore** This venue includes research done in a settlement or Library, or even information that a PC might recall on their own; **Maximum RP 2**

**Research Checks** DC 22 Library Lore (2 hours), DC 24 Diplomacy (2 hours) or DC 27 Society (to Recall Knowledge, one action)

**Library (area B10), Secret Study (area B21), Xarwin's Journals (area C10), Annotated Books (area E5), or Xarwin's Laboratory (area E9)** The PC researches the books and journals; **Maximum RP 2** per venue

**Research Checks** DC 22 Library Lore or DC 24 Religion (2 hours)

**Conversations with Faldur (area C2)** The PC speaks to Faldur's preserved brain; **Maximum RP 2**

**Research Checks** DC 22 Diplomacy (1 hour)

**Dreams** The PC focuses on the Order of the Starless Night; **Maximum RP 4**

**Research Checks** DC 20 Desna Lore or DC 22 Religion (to understand and communicate the Order's religious beliefs) or DC 24 Occultism (to approach the topic from a scholastic standpoint)

**2 Research Points** The Order of the Starless Night was a sect of Desnans active in Thassilon. They saw themselves as guardians against the sinister influence of entities from the Dark Tapestry. The Order is believed to have died out not long after Earthfall.

**4 Research Points** The Order of the Starless Night crafted magical telescopes called the *starless scopes*, which they used to scan the night skies for threats from the Dark Tapestry. This unlocks the Starless Scope topic.

**6 Research Points** Ioseff Xarwin believed that the Order of the Starless Night built a compound in what is now western Ilverness, which is why he chose this site for his manor.

**9 Research Points** Not long before Earthfall, the Order of the Starless Night pursued an evil astronomer named Tchekuth, who had made contact with the Dominion of the Black, from Thassilon into present-day Ravounel, where they supposedly confronted and defeated him. This unlocks the Tchekuth topic.

**12 Research Points** The Order of the Starless Night took a powerful artifact called the *Void Mirror* Tchekuth after his defeat and used it to ensure he would stay dead. This unlocks the Void Mirror topic.

**16 Research Points** The PC dreams of a group of ancient Desnans confronting a wild-eyed Thassilonian man in

a wild hill country. The man begins to transform and swell into something monstrous, only to be defeated before completing the transformation. The Desnans then bury him with a magically-created earthquake. The dream ends as the Desnans erect the Cosmic Crypt where the earthquake's rift opened and then closed over the man's remains. Once a PC has this dream, their advice reduces the Thievery check DC to Pick the 11 Locks on the Cosmic Crypt to 20.

## PSYCHOPOMPS TOPIC 6

**Librarian's Quarters (area B8), Library (area B10), or Chapel (area C5)** The PC researches the topic among the books; **Maximum RP 2** per venue

**Research Checks** DC 22 Library Lore or DC 24 Religion (2 hours)

**Conversations with Ezramalkun (area B14)** The PC speaks with the noso psychopomp Ezramalkun, learning what she has learned over the years; **Maximum RP 3**

**Research Checks** DC 20 Diplomacy (10 minutes)

**Dreams** The PC focuses on psychopomps; **Maximum RP 5**

**Research Checks** DC 20 Psychopomp Lore or DC 22 Religion (to understand the role psychopomps play in the region), or DC 24 Perception (to observe and listen to the psychopomps)

**3 Research Points** Psychopomps often gather in regions where the cycle of death has become disrupted, but the psychopomp presence around Xarwin Manor indicates an unusual amount of attention for a single location.

**6 Research Points** The lord and lady of Xarwin Manor had very different opinions on psychopomps: Asethanna drew inspiration from them and increasingly saw them as divine muses, while her husband Ioseff saw them as pests or even threats and took to hunting them in later years.

**9 Research Points** A powerful corruption simultaneously lures psychopomps to the region and does them harm, corrupting those unfortunate enough to come too close to the manor.

**12 Research Points** The PC dreams of the corrupted psychopomps in areas **D5** and **E4**, and of the undead ones in area **E1**. The PC can now sense the directions to these creatures as if under the effects of a *locate* spell. The dream concludes with a promise from the scattered nosois in the region: if these corrupted and undead psychopomps can be defeated, the nosois will spread the word and come to the PCs' aid when they confront Ioseff's ghost.

## STARLESS SCOPE TOPIC 7

**Regional Lore** This venue includes research done in a Library or information that a PC might recall on their own; **Maximum RP 2**

**Research Checks** DC 23 Library Lore (2 hours) or DC 25 Occult or Religion (to Recall Knowledge, one action)

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## ABOUT TCHEKUTH

The alien entity Tchekuth has risen (and been defeated) seven times through the course of this cycle of reality. Each time he's slain, his intelligence is cast back into the Dark Tapestry to await another opportunity to rise again through the body, mind, and soul of a foolish mortal who tried and failed to use the *Void Mirror* to Become the Void.

No statistics are included for Tchekuth in this adventure, as the PCs will presumably prevent his eighth recrudescence. His statistics might be provided in a future Paizo product, but if you wish to create your own version of this alien monstrosity, Tchekuth is a level 24 gargantuan aberration.

**Secret Study (area B21), Xarwin's Journals (area C10), or Xarwin's Laboratory (area E9)** The PC researches the topic among the books; **Maximum RP** 2 per venue

**Research Checks** DC 23 Library Lore or DC 25 Occultism or Religion (2 hours)

**Conversations with Faldur (area C2)** The PC speaks to Faldur's preserved brain; **Maximum RP** 2

**Research Checks** DC 23 Diplomacy (1 hour)

**Dreams** The PC focuses on the *starless scope*; **Maximum RP** 3

**Research Checks** DC 23 Occultism or Religion (to immerse one's self in the *starless scope*'s magical aura) or DC 25 Perception (to pay close attention to the dream)

**2 Research Points** The *starless scopes* were said to be an ancient magical telescope that allowed the observation of the night sky even during the day.

**6 Research Points** The *starless scopes* were created by an ancient Desnan order; the only known surviving *starless scope* was sold at an auction to Ioseff Xarwin in 4645 AR. This unlocks the Order of the Starless Night topic.

**9 Research Points** The PC learns of the *starless scope*'s abilities, as if they succeeded at a check to Identify Magic (see page 67).

**12 Research Points** The PC dreams of Xarwin Manor. It's midnight, and the moon appears full as a swarm of blue and white butterflies descends from the sky to swarm three different areas on the manor grounds: area **A5**, the windows looking into area **C17**, and the foundations around the manor's southwest corner (as if the butterflies were trying and failing to get underground). The PC understands these butterflies are a vision granted by Desna, who's using them to direct the PC's attention to these three areas to find objects associated with the *starless scope*.

## VOID MIRROR

## TOPIC 7

**Regional Lore** This venue includes research done in a Library or information that a PC might recall on their own; **Maximum RP** 2

**Research Checks** DC 23 Library Lore (2 hours) DC 25 Occult (to Recall Knowledge, one action)

**Secret Study (area B21), Xarwin's Journals (area C10), or Xarwin's Laboratory (area E9)** The PC researches the topic among the books; **Maximum RP** 3 per venue

**Research Checks** DC 23 Library Lore or DC 25 Occultism (2 hours)

**Conversations with Faldur (area C2)** The PC speaks to Faldur's preserved brain; **Maximum RP** 2

**Research Checks** DC 23 Diplomacy (1 hour)

**Dreams** The PC focuses on the *Void Mirror*; **Maximum RP** 5

**Research Checks** DC 23 Occultism (to immerse one's self in the *Void Mirror*'s magical aura) or DC 25 Perception (to pay close attention to the dream)

**2 Research Points** The *Void Mirror* is a pre-Earthfall artifact said to have the ability to communicate with strange intelligences from the Dark Tapestry.

**5 Research Points** The *Void Mirror* had supposedly been given to an ancient Thassilonian astronomer named Tchekuth by an entity called the Ashen Man for unknown reasons. This unlocks the topics of Tchekuth and the Ashen Man.

**9 Research Points** The PC discovers the *Void Mirror*'s basic (non-activation) functions, but not the eerie side effect of feeling like something watches them when they look into the mirror or fact that the mirror can hold Tchekuth's transformation in check while mounted in the Cosmic Crypt.

**13 Research Points** The PC learns of the three activated abilities the *Void Mirror* possesses, but not how to activate them; the PC does know that researching the personalized rites required to activate these three abilities will take much more study, access to greater research faculties, and great understanding of Occultism.

**16 Research Points** The PC dreams of the Cosmic Crypt. It's midnight, and the moon appears full as a swarm of blue and white butterflies descends from the sky to swarm about it. The crypt's doors open, and the butterflies swarm inside to cling to the ceiling. The PC understands these butterflies are a vision granted by Desna, who's using them to direct the PC's attention to a place where the *Void Mirror* must be returned in order to keep Tchekuth from arising.

## TCHEKUTH, THE MALEVOLENCE

## TOPIC 8

**Conversations with Ezramalkun (area B14)** The PC speaks with the nosoi psychopomp Ezramalkun, learning what she has learned over the years; **Maximum RP** 3

**Research Checks** DC 24 Diplomacy (10 minutes)

**Secret Study (area B21), Fulvia's Room (area C8), or Xarwin's Laboratory (area E9)** The PC researches the topic among the books; **Maximum RP** 2 per venue

**Research Checks** DC 24 Library Lore or DC 26 Occultism or Religion (2 hours)

**Conversations with Faldur (area C2)** The PC speaks to Faldur's preserved brain; **Maximum RP** 2

**Research Checks** DC 24 Diplomacy (1 hour)

**Dreams** The PC focuses on Tchekuth; **Maximum RP** 5

**Research Checks** DC 24 Occultism or Religion (to observe and understand the malevolence's nature)

**3 Research Points** The PC understands that the source of the haunting in Xarwin Manor comes from a potent entity that was slain thousands of years ago on this spot: an entity named Tchekuth.

**6 Research Points** In life, during the final years of Thassilon, Tchekuth was a human astronomer, but as he died, he was undergoing an eldritch transformation into something more.

**9 Research Points** For thousands of years, Tchekuth has remained in a sort of stasis, but when Ioseff Xarwin arrived, he did something that woke the malevolence from that sleep.

**13 Research Points** The PC dreams of Ioseff Xarwin calling a brain collector through the *Void Mirror* into his observatory, only to be attacked. They witness Ioseff defeat the brain collector, then stagger back down to his laboratory, obviously suffering from a painful spell the creature had cast upon him. The dream ends with Ioseff dying of this spell at his desk in area **E9**, wracked with a combination of fear, guilt, and frustration. The PC wakes knowing that something at the top of Xarwin Manor keeps Ioseff's ghost at the bottom from fully emerging to pursue his quest to merge with his family's preserved minds.

## ASHEN MAN

## TOPIC 9

**Secret Study (area B21), or Xarwin's Laboratory (area E9)**

The PC researches the topic among the books; **Maximum RP** 3 per venue

**Research Checks** DC 26 Library Lore or DC 28 Occultism (2 hours)

**Conversations with Faldur (area C2)** The PC speaks to Faldur's preserved brain; **Maximum RP** 3

**Research Checks** DC 26 Diplomacy (1 hour)

**Dreams** The PC focuses on the Ashen Man; **Maximum RP** 4

**Research Checks** DC 26 Will save (to look without despair upon ruined worlds that, in the past, the Ashen Man has visited)

**3 Research Points** The Ashen Man is a mysterious figure associated with apocalypses. His influence grows in regions where apocalyptic events might soon occur.

**6 Research Points** Natural apocalypses seem to hold little interest to the Ashen Man, who concerns himself more with devastations caused by entities associated with the Dark Tapestry. He has even been said to coax such events toward resolution without directly setting them in motion, as if he prefers these apocalypses to come about as the result of the actions of those who live on the doomed world.

**9 Research Points** Among those the Ashen Man is said to have influenced is an ancient Thassilonian astronomer whose true name has been lost to time. The Ashen Man supposedly gifted this astronomer the *Void Mirror* so as to help the entity Tchekuth move along a potential apocalypse. It's unclear if either Tchekuth or the astronomer knew of this manipulation.

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Ashen Man



**13 Research Points** The PC dreams of a towering figure clad in a hooded cloak of constantly wafting ashes. The figure's arms are blood red, and it carries a twisted staff on which are threaded a web of internal organs that the PC feels they should recognize, as if they came from their own body. The figure raises the staff, nods to the PC, and whispers, "Your hearth is cold, your time is done. Does your world deserve to go on?" Then, the dream ends. The PC's malevolence condition value increases to 4, but all further checks made by that PC to research topics in this adventure gain a +4 circumstance bonus.

## Spells and Magic Items

The following new spells and magic items appear in this adventure.

### BRAIN CYLINDER

### ITEM 6

**RARE** **MAGICAL** **NECROMANCY**

**Price** 250 gp; **Bulk** 1

**Perception** +15; precise vision 30 feet, imprecise hearing 30 feet



Brain Cylinder

**Communication** speech (all languages known in life)

**Skills** varies (see below)

**Int** +2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +2

**AC** 21; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +8, **Will** +15

**HP** 68; **Immunities** bleed, disease, death effects, paralyzed, poison; **Weaknesses** bludgeoning 7, sonic 7; **Resistances** fire 7, piercing 7, slashing 7;

A *brain cylinder* allows the extracted brain of a Large or smaller creature to continue to function even after it has been removed from the body. As long as the brain remains in the cylinder, the creature remains alive and can continue to think, even though its body is dead. Detachable modules that fit into the base of the cylinder allow the brain to see, hear, or speak using a raspy speaker. So long as these are attached, the brain can speak and understand any languages it knew in life, though nothing within the cylinder compels it to do so if it is unwilling. It also retains its living alignment, and can use Intelligence-, Wisdom-, and Charisma-based skills. A standard *brain cylinder* has one skill at +15, one at +13, and two at +11, as chosen by the GM.

The brain retains no other abilities it possessed in life, including purely mental ones. Mi-go typically preserve humanoid brains in this manner when they wish to interrogate a creature at a later date, or when they wish to preserve a creature as a resource for consultation or research purposes, as a brain preserved in this manner can live for centuries. If a *brain cylinder* is destroyed, the brain dies and its soul finally moves on to the Boneyard. Restoring a brain in a *brain cylinder* to its former body can be done by any effect that restores life (and, in most cases, any capable of creating a new body, since the original is typically missing or long gone).

Note that the level 6 *brain cylinder* presented above represents a level 6 creature's brain. A less powerful or more powerful brain can be placed in a *brain cylinder*, which can affect the *brain cylinder*'s Perception, mental ability scores, Will save, and skill modifiers (and can drastically alter the value of the *brain cylinder*), but the physical properties of the *brain cylinder* remain unchanged. Higher-level *brain cylinders* can be crafted, with resistances and weaknesses increasing as appropriate to their level. However, they always have low AC and HP and terrible Fortitude and Reflex saves for a creature of the *brain cylinder*'s level.

You can open a *brain cylinder* by taking three consecutive actions with the manipulate trait. If the *brain cylinder* contains a brain, the brain dies 3 rounds after it's removed or if the cylinder is left open for more than 10 minutes. You can transfer a brain from one *brain cylinder* to another with a DC 25 Medicine (expert) or Occultism (expert) check. This is a two-action activity with the manipulate trait. On a critical failure, the brain dies.

## INTERNAL INSURRECTION

## SPELL 4

**RARE** **DISEASE** **NECROMANCY**

**Traditions** divine, occult

**Cast** ♦♦ somatic, verbal

**Range** touch; **Target** 1 creature

**Saving Throw** Fortitude

You afflict the target with the supernatural disease known as internal insurrection, causing portions of their body to rebel against the whole, leading to painful agonies and, in time, death. The target must attempt a Fortitude save.

**Critical Success** The target is unaffected.

**Success** The target becomes clumsy 1 for 1 round as pain wracks their body.

**Failure** The target is afflicted with internal insurrection at stage 1.

**Critical Failure** The target is afflicted with internal insurrection at stage 2.

**Internal Insurrection** (disease); **Level** 7.

The target can't recover from the clumsy condition from internal insurrection until the disease is cured; **Stage 1** clumsy 1 (1 day); **Stage 2** clumsy 2 (1 day); **Stage 3** clumsy 2 and flat-footed (1 day); **Stage 4** clumsy 3 and flat-footed (1 day); **Stage 5** death, and the target's body splits apart into a mass of fragments that crawls outward in a 10-foot-emanation before perishing, leaving a bare skeleton surrounded by gore.

## EXTRACT BRAIN

## RITUAL 4

**RARE** **NECROMANCY**

**Cast** 1 hour; **Cost** fine surgical tools and rare preservative salts and fluids worth a total value of 100 gp

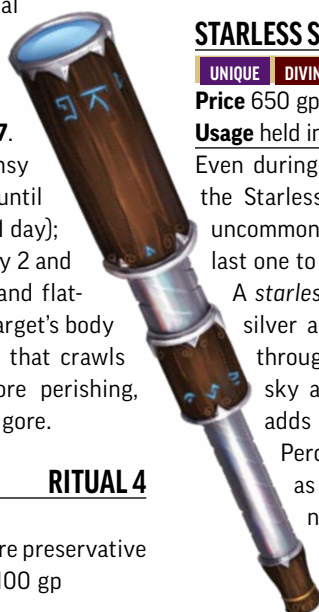
**Primary Check** Occultism (expert)

**Secondary Check** Medicine

**Range** touch; **Targets** 1 Large or smaller creature or corpse

You perform a complex magical operation on a willing or restrained creature or a corpse, delicately cutting into the skull and removing the creature's brain without damaging the organ. If you have an empty *brain cylinder* on hand, you can place the extracted brain into the *brain cylinder* as part of this ritual (this includes preparing the *brain cylinder* for use, such as removing a previous brain and filling the cylinder with the preservative fluids required to make it function). Or at the GM's discretion, if you have a nearly completed carrion golem at hand, you can place the extracted brain into the golem. The body of a living creature subjected to this ritual dies, regardless of the ritual's result, as does the extracted brain if it is not placed into a golem or cylinder (or otherwise preserved) within 3 rounds.

**Critical Success** The ritual succeeds on a living creature, or on a corpse that has been dead no longer than 8 hours



before the ritual began. If you place the brain into a golem, the golem retains the brain's memories, along with its mental ability scores, alignment, and related skills.

**Success** The ritual succeeds on a living creature or on a corpse that has been dead no longer than 1 hour before the ritual began.

**Failure** The ritual fails and the brain dies.

**Critical Failure** The ritual seems to succeed but warps the brain unrecognizably into a hostile entity, potentially allowing an alien intelligence to seep into it.

**Heightened (8th)** You can place the extracted brain into an inactive flesh golem on a critical success.

**Heightened (9th)** You can place the extracted brain into an inactive alchemical golem on a critical success.

## STARLESS SCOPE

## ITEM 9

**UNIQUE** **DIVINATION** **DIVINE** **MAGICAL**

**Price** 650 gp

**Usage** held in 1 hand; **Bulk** 1

Even during the time of Thassilon, when the Order of the Starless Night still existed, *starless scopes* were uncommon. Today, this final scope might well be the last one to survive the passage of time.

A *starless scope* is a handheld telescope crafted of silver and fine wood. When one peers at the sky through a *starless scope*, one always views the sky as if during a clear night. A *starless scope* adds a +2 item bonus to Astronomy Lore and Perception checks made to observe the skies, as it causes all celestial objects to dim when not directly observed, allowing its user to more easily observe their intended subject.

It also grants a +2 item bonus to all Occultism checks made to Identify Magic.

A *starless scope* also functions as a divine focus for worshipers of Desna. The magic of a *starless scope* requires a specially prepared lens to function, and it's possible to shatter the lens if you roll poorly when activating the *starless scope*.

Without a functional lens, a *starless scope* doesn't function. You can replace a shattered lens with a functional lens by taking a two-action activity with the manipulate trait. If you know the formula for the *starless scope*, you can Craft a new lens with a DC 25 Crafting (master) check. A *starless scope* lens is a level 9 item worth 100 gp.

**Activate** ☞ Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Requirement** you worship Desna; **Trigger** you use the *starless scope* as a divine focus; **Effect** You attempt to enhance the effects of a spell as you cast it by attempting a Religion check against the spell's DC, as determined by Table 10-5 on page 503 of the *Core Rulebook*.

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**Critical Success** Any attack rolls you make with the spell gain a +2 status bonus, and any saving throw a foe makes against the spell takes a -2 status penalty. If you would normally cast the spell from a spell slot, and the spell is 5th level or lower, you don't spend the spell slot and cast the spell from the *starless scope* instead.

**Success** Any attack rolls you make with the spell gain a +1 status bonus, and any saving throw a foe makes against the spell takes a -1 status penalty.

**Failure** The spell is cast normally. Attempt a DC 11 flat check. On a failure, the *starless scope*'s lens shatters.

**Critical Failure** The spell is disrupted and the *starless scope*'s lens shatters.

**Activate** ♦♦ (abjuration, divine) Interact; **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** You raise the scope to your eye and observe a creature within 30 feet. You can attempt to identify the creature by Recalling Knowledge. The *starless scope* adds a +2 item bonus to this check. If the creature is associated with the Dominion of the Black or the Elder Mythos, or is a creature whose actions have blasphemed against Desna (Ioseff

Xarwin's ghost falls into this latter category), the creature must attempt a DC 27 Will save.

**Critical Success** The creature is unaffected, and the *starless scope*'s lens shatters.

**Success** The creature shines with starlight for 1 round. During this time, the creature can't be concealed if it is visible. If it's invisible, it's concealed rather than being undetected. The creature takes a -1 status penalty to saving throws against divine effects while it shimmers with starlight.

**Failure** As success, but the creature also suffers an additional effect. An incorporeal creature loses its incorporeal trait as long as it shines with starlight. Any other creature becomes slowed 1 as long as it shines with starlight.

**Critical Failure** As failure, but the duration of the starlight is 1 minute, and the status penalty to saving throws against divine effects increases to -2.

## VOID MIRROR

## ARTIFACT 20

UNIQUE ARTIFACT CONJURATION DIVINATION MAGICAL

**Usage** mounted in frame (see below); **Bulk** 3

The *Void Mirror* was created on a distant planet by a now-extinct alien cult to aid in unlocking the secrets of the Dark Tapestry. It appears as a 5-foot-tall, 2-foot-wide mirror of dark glass. As long as it's unmounted in a frame, the *Void Mirror* functions only as a mirror, save that it always reflects the sky as if it were night, regardless of the time of day. When the *Void Mirror* is mounted in a frame, it instead serves as a window into space, displaying a star field in its glass rather than a reflection. This frame can be of any quality, but stouter frames help to prevent the frame's destruction and thus help to keep the *Void Mirror* functional.

The view presented by the *Void Mirror* is any view of the night sky possible from its current physical location, regardless of time of day. Observations of the sky in this way add a +3 item bonus to Astronomy Lore or Perception checks made while using the mirror. The point of view can be shifted through hand gestures, causing the scene within the mirror to reorient in any direction desired.

A character who peers into the starscape within the *Void Mirror* must attempt a DC 41 Will save. On a failure, the character feels something looking back at them from the dark places between the stars. On a critical failure, this sensation causes the character to become frightened 1. The character is then temporarily immune to this effect for 24 hours.

By placing the *Void Mirror* in a specially-constructed frame (such as the one within the Cosmic Crypt in this adventure), it can halt the ongoing transformation of a creature that has performed the apotheosis activation.



Void Mirror

Building such a frame is beyond the skill of low-level characters, as it requires an artisan with legendary proficiency in Crafting.

The *Void Mirror* can be utilized in other ways, but before a character can activate these effects the occult methods to access these ritual-like effects must be Researched separately. Since the specific methods for these activations vary slightly from person to person, these methods can't be taught; each person who seeks to activate the *Void Mirror* in one of the following ways must complete their own research to unlock the artifact's secrets. Each requires a separate number of Occultism checks to Research, as detailed below for each activation.

**Activate** 1 hour (Interact); **Research** Accumulate 12 RP by making DC 20 Occultism (expert) checks when Researching (1 week per attempt); **Frequency** once per month; **Effect** The first activation ritual is known as "Speak to the Void" and allows the user to contact an intelligence in a distant part of the universe, provided the mirror shows that location (regardless of distance). This alien intelligence infuses the user's mind with answers, allowing the user to Recall Knowledge using Nature or Occultism as if they were legendary proficiency with the skill (including the +8 proficiency bonus). If this check fails, the character takes 10d6 mental damage (100 mental damage on a critical failure) as the imparted knowledge does more harm than good.

**Activate** 1 hour (Interact); **Research** Accumulate 12 RP by making DC 30 Occultism (master) checks when Researching (1 month per attempt); **Frequency** once per year; **Effect** The second activation ritual is known as "Call from the Void." The user performs a 1-hour-long rite before the *Void Mirror*, during which they indicate a type of aberration, beast, fungus, ooze, or plant creature that's an alien life form from the planet the user is currently located on. The target creature must be a level equal to or less than the user's level +4. As the rite ends, the user attempts an Occultism check against the target creature's Will DC.

**Critical Success** The creature is drawn across the universe to appear in a space adjacent to the *Void Mirror*. The creature's initial attitude toward the user is helpful, but this attitude can shift quickly if the creature realizes its goals and personality differs dramatically from the user's, or if the user makes a request of the creature that's against its nature. As long both the creature and the user are within 30 feet of the *Void Mirror*, the user can return the creature to its original location by Dismissing this activation. The creature can attempt a Will save against the user's Occultism DC to resist being returned; if it succeeds, it's temporarily immune for 24 hours.

**Success** As critical success, but the creature is indifferent upon arrival.

**Failure** As critical success, but the creature is hostile upon arrival.

**Critical Failure** As failure, but magical feedback from the failed activation causes the user to become stunned 3.

**Activate** 7 days (Interact); **Research** Accumulate 12 RP by making DC 40 Occultism (legendary) checks when Researching (1 year per attempt); **Frequency** once per century; **Effect** The third activation ritual is known as "Become the Void" and requires the user to continue performing the rite for 7 consecutive days (as if they were performing a multi-day ritual). If the user fails to perform this rite for one of these 7 consecutive days, they immediately suffer the critical failure effect below.

**Critical Success** The user's body, mind, and soul are infused with alien energies drawn from the Dark Tapestry, which transforms the user into an aberration of a level no higher than their current level +4. This new form could be an existing aberration or a unique one of the GM's creation. The user retains their memories and spellcasting ability (including any rituals they know) but becomes chaotic evil and loses all other abilities they possessed in their previous form.

**Success** As critical success, but the aberration the user transforms into can be of a level no higher than half the user's current level.

**Failure** The user's attempt to change is a painful mistake that deals 10d6+40 bludgeoning damage as their body twists, bends and breaks. Ultimately, they are not transformed.

**Critical Failure** The user is slain, but their body shifts and transforms into a brand new creature as the bodiless alien intelligence Tchekuth incubates within the user's flesh, mind and soul. This transformation takes another 7 days to complete but can be halted indefinitely if the *Void Mirror* is placed in a specially constructed frame aimed at the body's location (regardless of any solid object between the mirror and the body). Slowing or stopping this transformation via other means requires complex rituals or divine intervention, subject to the GM's whim. After 7 days, the body completes its transformation and Tchekuth rises once more as a physical threat.

**Destruction** A creature that completes the apotheosis of Becoming the Void can destroy the *Void Mirror* by smashing it, though doing so also destroys the creature performing this action in a violent burst of occult energy.

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## ONE OF MANY

The individual psychopomps that comprise an algea swarm are particularly minuscule nosoi psychopomps. If statistics for a single such creature become necessary, treat it as a nosoi psychopomp with the weak adjustment (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6).

## Psychopomp, Algea

Algeas protect (and sometimes retrieve) souls at risk of being claimed by other entities, particularly spellcasters who dabbled with otherworldly forces but never officially pledged their souls.

### ALGEA

### CREATURE 11

**N** **LARGE** **MONITOR** **PSYCHOPOMP** **SWARM**

**Perception** +22; darkvision, lifesense 60 feet, see magic

**Languages** Abyssal, Aklo, Celestial, Infernal, Requian

**Skills** Acrobatics +22, Boneyard Lore +21, Occultism +21, Religion +20, Stealth +22

**Str** -1, **Dex** +7, **Con** +5, **Int** +2, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +3

**See Magic** An algea can see magic auras on creatures or objects that it can observe; it can't see magic auras on creatures or objects that are hidden from its view. It learns the schools of magic for all spells affecting creatures.

**AC** 30; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +24, **Will** +22; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

**HP** 144; **Immunities** death effects, disease, precision, swarm mind; **Weaknesses** area damage 5, splash damage 5; **Resistances** bludgeoning 10, negative 10, piercing 10, poison 10, slashing 5

**Grieving Aura** (aura, divine, emotion, enchantment, mental) 30 feet. A creature that begins its turn in the aura must attempt a DC 27 Will save. Undead take a -2 circumstance penalty to this saving throw. The creature is then temporarily immune to the grieving aura for 1 hour.

**Success** The creature is unaffected.

**Failure** For 1 round, the creature can't use reactions and is slowed 1 for that turn as it sobs uncontrollably.

**Critical Failure** As failure, but the effects lasts while the creature remains in the aura plus 1 minute.

**Speed** 15 feet, fly 40 feet

**Divine Innate Spells** DC 30, attack +22; **7th plane shift** (self and soul caged creature only, to the Boneyard only); **4th confusion, talking corpse**; **2nd invisibility**

**Rituals** DC 30; *call spirit*

**Drain Magic** (abjuration, divine) Whenever a creature fails its save against Frenzied Beaks, the algea attempts to counter a spell effect active on that creature (6th level, counteract check +22). The algea can choose which effect to attempt to counteract for each creature.

**Frenzied Beaks** ♦ Each foe in the swarm's space takes 5d6 piercing damage (DC 30 basic Reflex) and is exposed to drain magic. This damage affects incorporeal creatures as if it had the effects of a *ghost touch* property rune.

**Soul Cage** (divine, incapacitation, necromancy) An incorporeal undead damaged by Frenzied Beaks must attempt a DC 30 Will save.

**Critical Success** The undead is unaffected and is temporarily immune for 24 hours.

**Success** The undead takes a -10-foot status penalty to Speeds for 1 round.

**Failure** As success, but the undead is also immobilized for 1 round, although it can attempt to Escape (DC 30).

**Critical Failure** The undead is restrained for 1 round. The algea can attempt to *plane shift* with the restrained creature even if that creature isn't willing, but an unwilling creature can attempt a Will save to resist *plane shift*. If it succeeds, the algea *plane shifts* and leaves the incorporeal creature behind, which is then no longer restrained.



## Tanglebones

Sometimes, when murderer buries a large number of victims in a mass grave, the vengeful spirits of the slain can become similarly tangled together. When these spirits can't untangle, they instead return to their physical remains, fusing into one horrific mass of bones and black, tar-like sludge—a tanglebones.

One awful tale speaks of a bitter old dowager who learned that, through a legal loophole, ownership of her estate would revert to her estranged daughter. She murdered her 13 servants, buried their bodies in the house's basement, and then played the gracious mother in handing over the manor keys at the appointed time. One night, the tanglebones that arose from the dowager's atrocity murdered the daughter and her family. By the time the authorities learned of what happened, the dowager had fled the nation, changed her identity, and (the story goes) wasted no time rebuilding her fortunes—this time becoming a queen.

### TANGLEBONES

### CREATURE 7

**RARE** **CE** **LARGE** **UNDEAD**

**Perception** +17; darkvision

**Languages** Necril

**Skills** Acrobatics +14, Athletics +17, Stealth, +15

**Str** +6, **Dex** +3, **Con** +4, **Int** -2, **Wis** +6, **Cha** +2

**AC** 24; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +12, **Will** +17

**HP** 145, negative healing; **Weakness** bludgeoning 7; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyze, poison, unconscious

**Ectoplasmic Filament** **Trigger** A creature within the tanglebone's reach uses an action with the manipulate trait or a move action, or leaves a square during a move action it's using; **Effect** A filament of black, oily ectoplasm lashes out at the triggering creature, dealing 2d8+8 slashing damage (DC 25 basic Reflex save). If the filament deals damage, the tanglebones gains 2d8 temporary Hit Points.

**Speed** 25 feet

**Melee** **◆** claw +17 (agile, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d8+8 slashing plus Grab

**Ranged** **◆** hurled bone +17 (brutal, range 30 feet), **Damage** 2d4+8 bludgeoning

**Eerie Flexibility** A tanglebones can shift and adjust its mass to fit into smaller areas, allowing it to fit through tight spaces as if it were a Medium creature. While Squeezing, it can move at its full Speed.

**Gnaw** **◆ Requirements** The tanglebones has Grabbed a foe; **Effect** The tanglebones gnaws and chews on the grabbed target with its many skulls, dealing 2d6+8 piercing damage (DC 23 basic Fortitude save). On a critical failure, the creature is also sickened 1 from the pain.

**Skeletal Storm** **◆◆** The tanglebones makes a single claw Strike against every creature in reach. These attacks count toward the tanglebones' multiple attack penalty, but the multiple attack penalty doesn't increase until after the tanglebones makes all its attacks.

**Sprawled Bones** **◆** (concentrate) Until the next time it acts, the tanglebones appears as a sprawling mass of bones. It has an automatic result of 35 on Deception checks and DCs to pass as a grisly but seemingly harmless mess.



### UNRAVELERS

It's believed that a tanglebones's formation can be prevented if even one body in the mass grave died from a different cause than its fellows. In regions where these undead horrors are more common, additional bodies known as unravellers are often dropped into mass graves in an attempt to prevent a tanglebones from rising.

Chapter 1:  
Susurratation

Chapter 2:  
Manifestations

Chapter 3:  
Recrudescence

Adventure  
Toolbox





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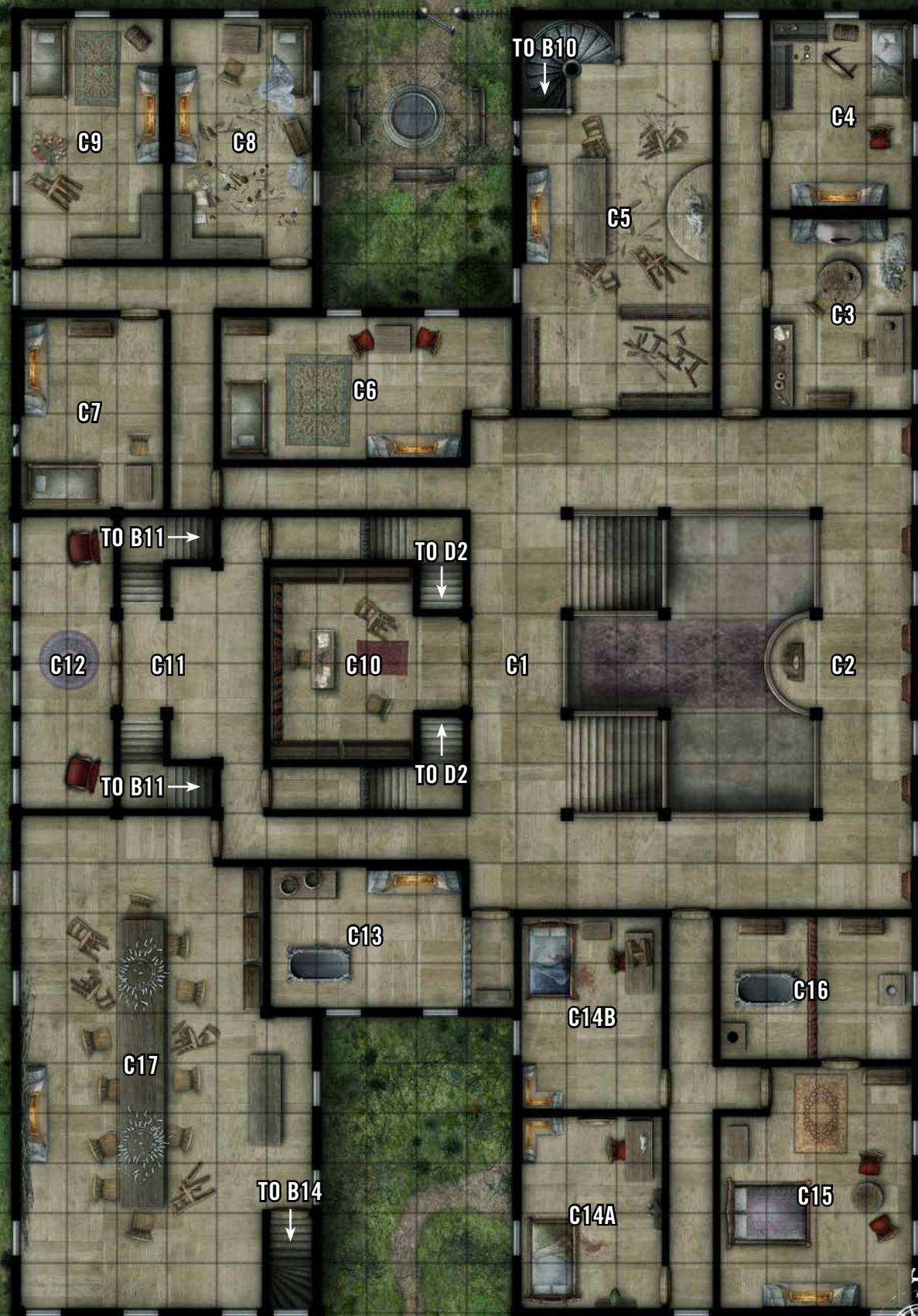
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