

THE FUGITIVE SCHOLAR

MASTER OF EVALUATIONS **KANRAL**

Bodache is on the run from his arcane college in the city of Rettikus. He has been framed for a royal “murder” by one of the settlement’s head merchants; the missing prince has been kidnapped and hidden with abyssal power. The race is on for the party to help the beleaguered wizard before the abductors find him or decipher a fabled map, something Kanral evaluated during his task checking salvaged goods for the city. To uncover what is going on the PCs have to protect the fugitive scholar and reveal his enemies, saving a prince in the process and perhaps all of Rettikus.

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A 5E COMPATIBLE ADVENTURE FOR FOUR TO FIVE CHARACTERS OF 5TH TO 6TH LEVEL

SYNOPSIS

Some time ago the leader of the Vastane Trading House came upon dark knowledge in his pursuit of success, thinking he had successfully bound a potent demon named Vardjas. The fiend has played the merchant for a fool however, amplifying the feeble man's powers so that it might acquire a map leading to holy relics it can defile. Patis Vastane has gone to great lengths to acquire this map and—sensing that the items found by a salvager named Sutu Korvalseis might be what he seeks and seeing a weakness in the powers that rule Rettikus—has made his move.

Further empowering his evil ally and gathering the map before it could be identified by Kanral Bodache, in one wicked stroke Patis Vastane has helped Vardjas possess and mask the body of Prince Vurstlik, simultaneously framing the Master of Evaluations (the person in the city with the greatest chance of uncovering his treachery) as a murderer of the royal scion. The other trading houses have cast suspicion onto Kanral Bodache and the Rettikus guard have their hands full



with the royal family gone from the city, leaving the Master of Evaluations without anyone to rely upon to clear his name.

When the party catches onto the scent of Patis' malfeasance the diabolist sends a relic golem (statistics included at the end of this adventure) to kill them or throw them off his trail (making it seem that the Salamorvar Trading House is responsible), finally confronting the three adventurers alongside Vardjas in the Vastane Trading House in a bloody brawl.

THE CITY OF RETTIKUS

This walled city is framed on either side by two mountains—one steep and precipitous, the other less critical but far more imposing in size. Wooden houses and stone buildings litter the settlement's interior in a haphazard pattern, but even from a distance it is clear that it is a place bustling with activity. A line of carts, steeds, and travelers wait at its gates, slowly filtering inside after the guards rifle through their belongings.

Rettikus sits at a geographical chokepoint between two mountains—precipitous Peiksarv to the south and the enormous ranges of Suursarv to the north—and its critical location has long played an essential role to the culture within. Long ago the region's merchants gathered here to fortify the settlement and establish houses of trade which still stand today, and their ancestors' foresight has paid off.

The walled city is well-staffed with guards and heavily patrolled, making it a tough place for criminals to operate in. All vehicles and packs entering the city are subject to search as well as fierce taxes; staple foods, textiles, lumber, antiquities, and all sorts of goods are checked at the gates before anyone is granted entry to Rettikus.

The Vurstlik royal family has the final say in the numerous disputes that arise from the city's strict importation laws, but most squabbles are resolved by the many trading houses of Rettikus. Merchants are a dime a dozen and found everywhere throughout the settlement (constantly backstabbing one another and skirting the law with the help of traveling adventurers) but three in particular play an important role in this story.

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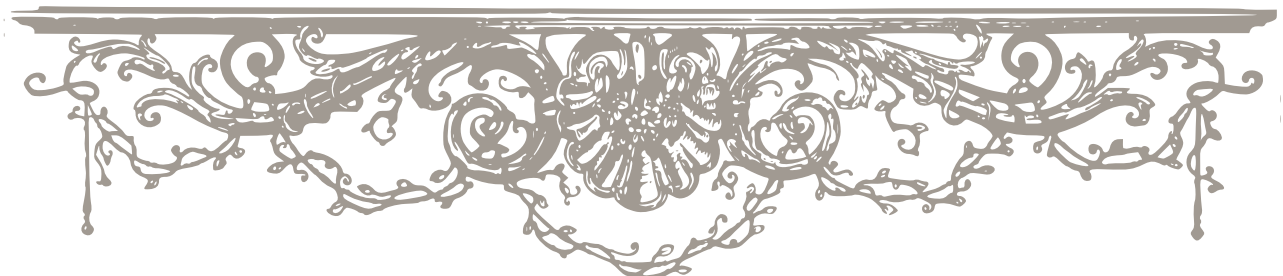
- ▶ Ellujanu Saematerjal (a **veteran** known as “Ellujanu the Blade”) is a loud, boisterous master of the axe. A descendant of the first lumberer to establish a trading house in Rettikus, she is extremely proud of the city—an esteem seconded only by the satisfaction she takes from her heritage. Though her demeanor is brash and uncouth, she respects truth and forthrightness. Unfortunately she sees red when it seems like her kin or those whom work for her are in harm’s way, making her even more audacious and prone to less than respectable behavior.
- ▶ Taprea Salamorvar (an **assassin**) is the master of antiquities and salvage. Any valuables that a person cannot properly account for (usually lacking their seal or worn markings that obviously match the owner’s grip) are remanded to her assessors for taxation. This usually amounts to clockwork devices, jewelry, and personal effects, but Taprea’s fingers are deep in the intrigues of Rettikus and virtually any “untyped” good generally falls under her purvey. Few know it but she is also the leader of the most prevalent thieves’ guild in the city, making her the target of many a social slight or political maneuver from the heads of other trading houses.
- ▶ A talented spellcaster named **Patis Vastane** (see the Index at the end of the adventure) has a fleet of acolytes (**cult fanatics**) that are always stationed at the gate, using *detect magic* to scan folks coming into Rettikus for any magical goods. These are meticulously logged in books kept by the city guard, but

there have been increasing reports that a few confiscated enchanted items have gone missing—nothing has come of it however as of all the merchant lords in the settlement, Patis is one of the slipperiest.

- ▶ Captain Politsei Kell (use **knight** statistics) is the head of the Rettikus’ guards. Normally Prince Isand, Queen Emand, or King Kabe would be in charge of wrangling the many trading houses in the Mercantile Congress, but with none of them available the task falls to this old retired adventurer. He is a patient man but he does not suffer fools and tolerates no tomfoolery whatsoever.
- ▶ Meis Triki, head of the Rettikus Arcane College, is performing in-depth research on the planes and has been absent for weeks.

The Vurstlik monarchs (Queen Emand and King Kabe) are visiting other royalty in another region, leaving Prince Isand in charge while they’re gone. Since he is nowhere to be found by the time the adventurers arrive in Rettikus, the authority of the city falls entirely onto the merchant council and city watch, both already strained by how populated the settlement has become as of late. To get inside the party had to fork over some a few silver each in taxes (particularly if they have magic items).

For GMs that wish to include this sequence rather than narratively gloss over it, a reasonable amount of creativity and subtlety (using magic or skill to get their goods over the wall, or having a familiar carry things over, or any other number of means at their disposal) can save the party from spending their precious coin.





INTRODUCTION

The adventure begins after the party has traveled to Rettikus as they enter the most popular tavern near the east or west entrance (whichever they came through): the Hardened Path.

As you open the door to the tavern your nose is assaulted by the acrid tang of spilt blood, a crimson sheen of it soaking into the old wooden floor. Only one man stands amid the wreckage of booze, unconscious patrons, and broken tables: a simple fellow of middle age with an exasperated expression on his well-groomed face. “Allow me to explain,” he says, “I am a scholar.”

Without anyone conscious and surrounded by mayhem, Kanral Bodache (use **mage** statistics) is quick to explain his current situation and he doesn’t hold back when he sees that the adventurers lack insignia from any of the trading houses. He is wanted—unjustly—for the crime of murder but completely unwilling to leave the city, insisting that doing so would be seen as an admission of guilt in the eyes of the Vurstlik royal family (who are certain to be furious with whomever is blamed for their son’s “death”) and start him down an inevitable path to the noose.

Kanral has been on the run from the authorities, using his magic and contacts to stay out of reach of the city guard, but his components have run dry as the reward for his capture rose (now a total of 1,000 gold). Desperate to restock his arcane supplies, Kanral met with a friend here in the Hardened Path looking for help but instead he was betrayed and forced to subdue everyone in the establishment. A DC 8 Wisdom (Insight) check confirms that all of these claims are true. Should the adventurers make an attack or cast an offensive spell targeting Kanral, he swears once more that he is innocent before casting *dimension door* to escape.

When the PCs lower their guard and make it clear to Kanral that he’s no longer in danger, he relaxes visibly, pours himself two flagons of ale, and then takes a seat.

“It has been an extremely long two days and I have built up a wicked thirst.” Raising one of his two flagons to his lips and draining it in a few considerable gulps, the aged man slumps into a seat and continues. “This all began not two days ago. I’m the Master of Evaluations, you see; when something comes through the gates that the Salamorvar assessors find curious, it falls to me.” He peers at each of you in turn before continuing. “A hunter named Sutu Korvalseis came across a body on a cliff of the Peiksarv and among the dead fellow’s goods she found a strange piece of blank parchment that resisted ink of all kinds. It was obviously magical but I had exhausted all my spells for identification and the next morning when I arrived to re-evaluate it, the scroll was gone; someone had brazenly broken into my office and absconded with all of Sutu’s salvage! Worse yet following the trail of magic left behind by the strange page led me to the royal chambers of Prince Isand: where I was the first to discover his corpse.”

He looks at you all dryly, gesturing around the tavern. “You can imagine how the rest of my day went. The city watch is already overburdened and I fear they are not up to the task of investigating this, and I am extremely wary of the rage that Rettikus’ ruler are likely to harbor for the accused murderer of their child. I need rest however—protect me while I sleep and spare me some reagents, and I’ve 200 gold pieces with your names on them.”

There are several other taverns throughout the city that the PCs can find a room in— Bogdal’s Whistle, Hen’s Bounty, Morewell’s Delight, The Scarred Climber, and Tenwar’s Barrel—but to secure Kanral and find themselves a place to sleep the PCs need to perform the three following tasks:

- ▶ Escape the scene of this crime with DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) check (sneaking Kanral inside) or Intelligence (Stealth) check (exploiting the tavern staff’s timing and patterns of behavior).
- ▶ Disguise Kanral with a DC 13 Intelligence (disguise kit) check.
- ▶ Deceive the owner of the other tavern with a DC 12 Charisma (Deception) check.



The next morning Kanral summons a familiar that returns with the party's promised gold and he thanks them profusely, promising more reward when he's no longer wanted by the law and that the royal family will pay a king's ransom to the people that uncover the true murderer of their treasured prince. After their business is concluded he promises to meet the adventurers in another two days' time in the alleyway behind Tenwar's Barrel, then he casts a spell and disappears.

Well, They Are Unconscious...

Without anyone to stop them or catch them at it, the PCs might want to loot the unconscious patrons of the Hardened Path tavern. Each of the two dozen dozing patrons has 1d10 sp on their persons and there's a 20% chance one has an uncommon magic item (though if the party went through the gates like normal travelers, they should be reminded that enchanted goods are catalogued by the guard when entering the city).

INVESTIGATION

Depending on their abilities the party have a variety of ways to find out more about the mysterious parchment, "dead" Prince Isand, and the rest of Kanral's claims. Inevitably they're sure to head for Rettikus' main hub of authority—which, because of the King and Queen absence, is the Mercantile Congress—where they'll meet the traders most involved with the situation.

MERCANTILE CONGRESS

Built when the city's walls first went up and frequently remodeled, the Mercantile Congress is a juxtaposition of old and new architecture, building materials, and functionaries. Read the following:

As you near the center of Rettikus, the wooden houses common nearer the outskirts become far rarer, replaced almost entirely by stone buildings that grow more and more ostentatious until one structure stands out like a sore thumb.

The Mercantile Congress of Rettikus is a mishmash of aged timber and patterned bricks in varying textures, all of them covered with intricate carvings and artful sculptures. Though you can't quite make out what's being discussed, the shouts of a loud argument can be heard from behind the heavy wooden doors in the entryway.

The PCs arrive as Ellujanu the Blade is finishing an argument with Captain Kell, demanding that more of Rettikus' resources be spent on tracking down the prime suspect of Prince Isand's "murder" and the current target of her temper: the scholar Kanral Bodache. Her tirade against him (which includes accusations of forgery, smuggling, theft, and even tax evasion) reaches its crescendo just before Ellujanu stomps out of the Mercantile Congress.

Though clearly exhausted, Captain Kell is willing to tell the adventurers what little he knows about the situation and offers them the mage's confiscated journal—both of which match up with Kanral's explanation—and suggests that

the party seek out the three trading houses most involved with the belongings found on the dead explorer discovered by Sutu Korvalseis (the Patis, Saematerjal, and Salamorvar trading houses, as well as the salvager Sutu Korvalseis herself). A DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that though he would probably prefer this to remain a matter for the city guard, he definitely wants to get the issue off his chest before the monarchs return to the city and a DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces him to offer the PCs 300 gold for resolving the case.

SAEMATERJAL TRADING HOUSE

The Saematerjal Trading House sits on the majority of steep hills leading up to Suursarv Mountain on the north side of Rettikus. The vast mansion is made entirely from timber and with supply roads leading out of the city (the only paths aside from the eastern and western gates, used almost exclusively by merchants that deal in bulk), it is one of the most protected areas in the settlement—staffed by a coterie of lumberjacks that have had enough training to frequently spotlight as city watch.

Ellujanu the Blade has an axe to grind with Kanral and has been extremely vocal about pursuing, trying, and executing the fugitive scholar. This has nothing at all to do with his possible guilt but everything to do with personal slights. As the head of a Rettikus Trading House,

Royal Dreams

Should the PCs' investigations reach a dead end, they begin to hear Prince Isand's tortured screams in their sleep and they only quiet when in the presence of Patis Vastane's bodyguard. If things are still dragging along and the PCs are still unsure how to proceed, other clues can be revealed to the party in their dreams. These might include glimpses of Taprea Salamorvar shadowing Patis Vastane, the room the parchment is in (with Vastane symbols inside), the relic golem being enchanted by a mage the party recognize from the city gate as a Patis acolyte, or any other hints the GM deems appropriate.

From Enemy to Ally

Depending on how well they like the PCs, Ellujanu and Taprea Salamorvar can be convinced to render aid to the PCs and even join them in the final battle in the Vastane Trading House. The GM is encouraged to make additional Trading Houses that cater to the group and further the needs of their campaign's larger narrative (with leaders that know of Taprea Salamorvar's alternate persona or other clues for the adventure).

Ellujanu is well-versed in the subtleties of conversation and evades any questions regarding anything but the murder, adroitly refusing to reveal their personal history unless challenged as a liar (possibly precipitating a duel) or pressed on the matter by someone with leverage. A DC 12 Charisma (Investigation) check to gather information around Rettikus discovers that the real reason for her anger at Kardal is a simple matter of business: twice now the mage has arranged the rejection of timber cut by Ellujanu's associates because it was taken from woods the locals believe to be haunted. Despite her lacking knowledge of anything important in the case, she thinks she knows people who know more, and she tries to send the party toward Taprea Salamorvar (whom she claims is involved with the Varastaja Thieves' Guild) and Patis Vastane (who has become increasingly overbearing regarding salvaged goods as of late) with the expectation that they'll end up finding Kanral.

In truth Ellujanu doesn't have any particularly strong reason to suspect Kardal Bodache of anything other than being opposed to her at times because of his job. Should the PCs spend long enough talking to her and getting to know her—a DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check is enough to convince her to join them for a night of drinking—she reveals that she doesn't truly believe he is capable of so heinous a crime as murdering Prince Isand, and that mostly she wants to embarrass him publicly (tarnishing his name with suspicion) to weaken the strength of his word against hers for future disputes.

SALAMORVAR TRADING HOUSE

Officially, Taprea Salamorvar is Rettikus's Master of Antiquities and Salvage, but what most citizens fail to realize is that she is also Hilma the Sneak, de facto head of the Varastaja Thieves' Guild—the most prevalent criminal organization in the settlement. The sizable home of her family is carved out of and built into the side of the steep Peiksarv Mountains and holds one of the most private and profitable merchant dynasties in the city. The majority of the trading house leaders know her secret but are careful not to let on as much, fearful of what her reprisal might be. Though certainly not a force to be reckoned with lightly, the Varastaja are predominantly smugglers that use a network of caves tied into secret doorways in the Salamorvar Trading House to move contraband into and out of Rettikus.

Should the party gather information in the city about Prince Isand's murder, the second most likely suspect in the eye of the public is Taprea Salamorvar. Though a scant few suspect she is Hilma the Sneak, her public persona's greed is well known and has gotten her trading house implicated in several previous crimes (though none of the charges ever seem to stick).

Taprea isn't candid about what she knows however, especially when confronted directly with evidence that Kanral might not be guilty—

the real trouble is getting an audience with her. Knowing that having the scholar tried for the crime would be the most expedient and profitable outcome for their trading house, her majordomo Üldist Salamorvar (use **spy** statistics) made sure to fill her schedule each day with private audiences and other business appointments. Once the adventurers have managed to circumvent Üldist, Taprea will demand an introduction but warm to the party when she realizes that they might be of use to her greater aspirations in Rettikus.

- ▶ Taprea has an excellent alibi. She was seen by many nobles in the King's court that very night, entertained by the jester Relik Mylem (though she's fooled the court in a similar way before, Relik's use of magic was without doubt beyond her ken).
- ▶ Patis Vastane has been unusually active lately, visiting with all of the trading houses for one reason or another and speaking at length with their leaders. Taprea found most of the discussion annoying but noticed the spellcaster lingered on in some rooms, almost as if he had been looking for something.
- ▶ She knows Patis Vastane is always checking Kanral's salvage records and has been searching for something specific for months now (exactly what, Taprea can't fathom).

Relic Golem Attack!

After the PCs directly interact with Taprea Salamorvar, one of Patis Vastane's spies in the rival trading house gets word to him and he sends the **relic golem** (see the Index) to attack them! Read the following as they travel through an alleyway in Rettikus:

There's a strange noise from the rooftop above you, like stones scraping on metal. No sooner than the sound reaches your ears, a remarkable creature vaults into sight—a golem made from metal and stone with various enchanted items glowing from its hands, chest, and forehead. It slams into the street in front of you, cracking the paved bricks with resounding force before bounding to attack!

Though the adventurers are likely to draw their own conclusions, two culprits might be responsible for this. A successful DC 5 Wisdom (Insight) check about their interactions with Taprea Salamorvar confirm that she spoke the truth—constructing something like this would be impossible for her—but comparing the magic items that powered the creature to the logs of the city watch match them with goods thought to be mishandled by Salamorvar assessors. However, if the party carefully observes the remains of the relic golem with a *detect magic* spell and DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check (or bring them to their meeting with Kanral), they discover that the real force behind the monster is demonic in nature.

VASTANE TRADING HOUSE

The stronghold of the Vastane Trading House sits toward the western gate of Rettikus, opposite of Vurstlik Castle. This fortress-like abode is staffed by acolytes all trained under the purvey of Patis Vastane, using their knowledge to make assessments on enchanted items, spell components, spell books, arcane or divine focuses, and anything else magical that comes through the city gates. Unlike the Rettikus Arcane College, an air of mysticism remains within the stone hallways of the Vastane Trading House, creating a sense of the occult that its merchants use to great effect when negotiating with their peers.

Patis Vastane is just as enigmatic as his home and the true culprit behind the “death” of Prince Isand but faces any questions or interrogation by the PCs head on, using the opportunity to emphasize the need to catch and try Kanral as soon as possible so that “whatever magic the mage used to obscure the royal murder can be

undone.” When pressed on the matter he outright accuses Taprea Salamorvar of being Hilma the Sneak and head of the Varastaja Thieves’ Guild (though he can’t prove it), and what more, that they are in league with one another. Should the adventurers continue to show uncertainty, a DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check tells them that Patis’ most outrageous claim—that Taprea has supplied Kanral with relics the scholar has used to prevent magical attempts from contacting Prince Isand’s soul—is a blatant lie. Insinuations that he is not being truthful get Patis to reveal his biggest piece of blackmailing information on Taprea (that she is not just a thief, but an assassin as well), along with an explanation that he only withheld the information for fear of his life.

The full truth of things is that Prince Isand is far from the boyish persona most of Rettikus attributes to him. Seeking a path to power beyond his royal birthright, he has been secretly apprenticed to Patis Vastane to learn



the mystic arts. It didn't take long for Isand to learn everything Patis had to teach, spurring the merchant to take dire measures lest he lose influence over the powerful political tool under his tutelage. Utilizing a scroll kept locked away by his ancestors, the head of the Vastane Trading House summoned a duplicitous demon named "Vardjas" but misspoke the fiend's name while conjuring it.

Thinking it under his control for some time, Patis allowed the creature to amplify his spellcasting abilities for a while as he looked for a means to secure himself from it should things go awry, seeking out a map that leads to powerful relics once wielded by holy warriors of the distant past. As soon as the Vurstlik monarchs left the city together, Vardjas compelled the merchant to action and revealed the location of the map that Patis has been seeking (the blank scroll), promising to acquire it so long as a suitable host could be possessed—Prince Isand being the only one available. His mind corrupted by the demon, Patis relented and since procuring the map Vardjas has been hiding in plain sight using the prince's body, altering its features and remaining near its "master" at all times. The body found by the guards appears to all to be Prince Isand, but in fact it was only a peasant grievously wounded by the demonic bodyguard, warped into a strong resemblance by fell magic.

A DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check made when asking Patis Vastane directly about the blank scroll tells the party that he knows its location, but otherwise after indemnifying Taprea and Kanral, Vardjas interrupts the trader and the two excuse themselves from the adventurers, leaving the party to chase after red herrings. While questioning Patis and again after leaving the Vastane Trading House, the PCs receive a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check to realize there is something *off* about his bodyguard.

If the PCs visit Patis Vastane's trading house after the relic golem attack, a DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals some of Kanral's personal items are pushed into the shadows

Spies Abound

All of the trading houses in Rettikus employ spies that share confidential information about their rival's doings. Throughout the party's investigations in the city, agents from the Salamorvar Trading House keep a distant watch on their activities. Should the adventurer's struggle to connect the dots, grant them Wisdom (Perception) and Wisdom (Survival) checks to realize they are being shadowed; if they pursue their pursuer, use **spy** statistics (though the NPC makes every attempt to escape and avoids combat at all costs).

on desks or hastily put behind other objects on bookcases and the like. Any questions about them are met with excuses about fidelity and security until Patis can change the subject back to the scholar's obvious guilt.

RETTIKUS ARCANES COLLEGE

At some point the adventurers are likely to investigate the school to which Kanral was a member—the Rettikus Arcane College—a series of stone towers on the eastern side of the city. Somewhere between student and professor, all of the various faculty on site (Professors Esilemanamine, Jumalik, Mundama, and Völur) speak highly of Kanral but none are versed in the nuances of divination, which was his specialty. Should the party bring the remains of the relic golem to them for analysis, the mages confirm that it was certainly powered by evil magics but little else.

Kanral's Quarters

Searching Kanral's room in the universalist school's tower yields little, save that the city watch politely (and carefully, likely with a magically talented assessor nearby) rifled through his belongings in order to find the personal journal given to the PCs by Captain Kell.

However, if the adventurers return to Kanral's chamber or do not visit it until after the relic golem attack, they see a different scene. While they fought the construct Patis Vastane sent

Black Market, Anyone?

As one would suspect, there is a thriving contraband trade in Rettikus. This is ultimately under the control of the Varastaja Thieves' Guild and Hilma the Sneak (also known as Taprea Salamorvar); any attempts to track down Kanral or information about the situation brings the party to her attentions, in which case Hilma conveys most of the information that Taprea would normally reveal.

lackeys here to search for scrolls, spare spellbooks, or anything else that might work to reveal what the blank parchment hides. A DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that a second wave of very rough searching went on in the mage's room—possibly quite recently, depending on how long it's been since the relic golem attacked the party. A Wisdom (Survival) check (DC 14 + 1 per day since the assault) is enough to track the perpetrators back to the general area around the Vastane Trading House.

SUTU THE SALVAGER

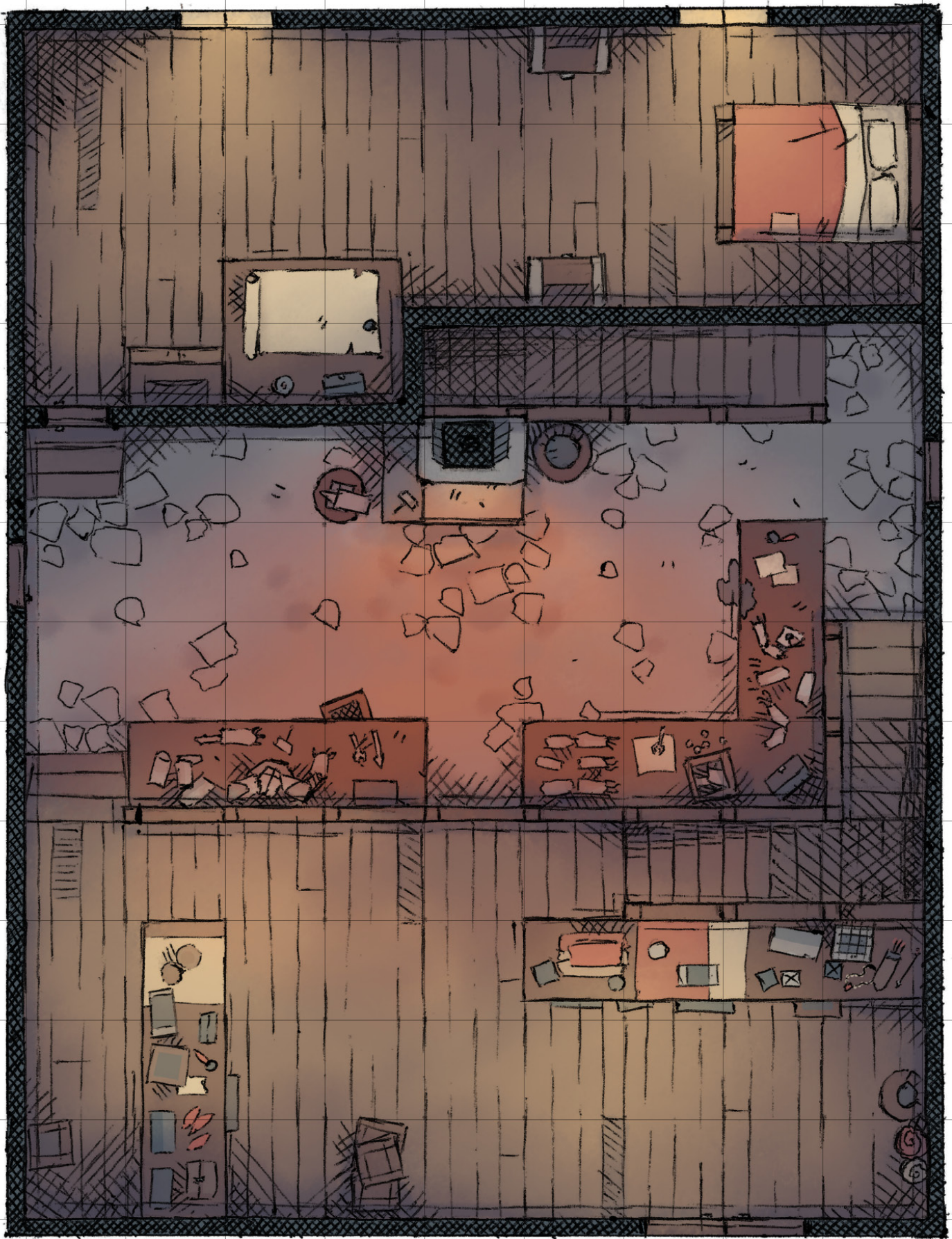
Sutu Korvalseis (use **scout** statistics) is a hunter by trade and found the remains of an explorer up on the craggy peaks of Peiksarv above the city. While she could have avoided Rettikus entirely and dragged the dead man's pack to another settlement, Sutú decided to take the easy way home and deal with the taxes to make sure she got her money's worth (she knows nothing of how to value antiquities and so on). She is frank about what little she knows of the explorer (that he was a male half-elf and his almost decomposed body is about half mile up the mountainside), what any of the greater situation portends, or regarding her lack of any emotional investment in the whole affair—Sutu just wants to be paid. She accuses whomever she thinks will bring things to a faster close, but is most suspicious of Kanral and Taprea Salamorvar (though if asked about Patis Vastane, Sutú reveals that the merchant relentlessly questioned her and even got agitated at her relative ignorance.)

MAYHEM AT VASTANE TRADING HOUSE

After two days of investigation, the meeting with Kanral Bodache in the alleyway behind Tenwar's Barrel approaches and the PCs should have a new suspect (hopefully someone in the Vastane Trading House). The fugitive scholar is in much the same condition as they found him last time—bloodied, weakened, and nearly out of resources—but he's done some snooping himself in between bouts with the city guards. He doesn't know much however, only that some of his personal belongings were taken from his room in the Rettikus Arcane College to the Vastane Trading House very recently (throwing additional suspicion onto Patis Vastane. After exchanging notes he promises to meet the adventurers behind the Hen's Bounty tavern in two days' time, but once out of sight he casts *invisibility* on himself and follows the party, wanting to see things play out with his own eyes.

Whether led there by dreams, clues or revelations from Kanral's room, hints by Taprea Salamorvar, or through the use of deduction or magic, the adventurers once more find themselves outside of the Vastane Trading House and the true culprit of Prince Isand's "murder": Patis Vastane. Inside they find the grounds to be eerily deserted, but PCs that make a DC 8 Wisdom (Perception) check hear chanting coming from the back of the stronghold.

Palpable warmth emanates from the chamber beyond this double door and peeking through you can make out nearly a dozen robed individuals, many of them openly wearing the symbols of the Vastane Trading House. They are all chanting in a low dirge, encircling a table where Patis Vastane and his bodyguard work on something—what exactly is hard to tell. Though it's certainly in the shape of a man, it can't be conscious, because you watch it twitch only slightly as the merchant carefully places a glowing pendant on the prone form.



Before fighting Patis Vastane and his bodyguard, the PCs are assaulted by 4 **cult fanatics** and 4 **cult sorcerers** who ostensibly fight to keep the party from disrupting the ritual. A DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that they are crafting a new relic golem (confirming any suspicions of Patis' nefarious doings) though as long as the adventurers don't take a long rest before engaging the pair of central antagonists, the monster remains dormant.

The railing grants half cover to anyone behind it and any of the tables can be flipped with a DC 12 Strength check to be used as cover (AC 7, 10 hp). Leaping over the railing between the wooden and stone floored rooms requires a DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check. As combat breaks out, Kanral ends his *invisibility* and casts spells to clean up targets wounded by the party, picking off almost-dead cultists with *acid splash* but otherwise avoiding confrontation.

When half the cultists have been defeated, or if the PCs ignore the cultists and attack Patis Vastane directly, his bodyguard, **Possessed Prince Isand** (see the Index), intervenes. The possessed prince uses its Unholy Conduit feature to absorb damage dealt to Patis until the host body of Prince Isand runs out of hit points and Vardjas is forced to reveal its true demonic form.

Once Patis Vastane takes damage he fights back, abandoning the ritual and casting *gust of wind* near the forge to create a 15-foot cone of wild embers that deals 1d4 fire damage (no save) to anyone traveling through a square it occupies and 2d4 fire damage to creatures that end their turn in a square it occupies (a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw halves this damage). He retreats toward his bedroom, completely fleeing through one of the windows when reduced to 10 hit points or less (forgetting the map entirely).

After the battle is over the PCs can pick the locks on the chests in Patis' bedroom with a DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check to find a plethora of old scrolls and maps worth a total of 100 gold and 10d4 gp.

CONCLUSION

If Patis Vastane is still alive, after fleeing from his Trading House and being implicated with Prince Isand's murder-turned-abduction-by-a-demon he leaves Rettikus (if not, the party acquires a *brooch of shielding*, *cloak of displacement*, and *eyes of charming* from his corpse, as well as two +1 *hand crossbows* and a +1 *flail*). Prince Isand (roughed up though he was by the adventurers) remains intact, however, and he is effusively thankful for their help. He absolves Kanral Bodache of all the charges put against him and awards the prized map to the PCs along with 800 gp for their efforts. Should the party choose to stay in Rettikus, they are guests of the highest caliber and treated as if they were themselves royalty. When King and Queen Vurstlik arrive a grand feast and parade are held in the adventurers' honor, and they'll go down in history as heroes of the city.

Given proper time for study Kanral carefully analyzes the blank parchment; with the use of some obscure, ancient magics, he reveals it to be a map leading to the tombs of several great heroes that were champions against evil, each buried with the powerful relics they wielded in the fight for good. Of course the actual contents of the parchment are at the GM's discretion—it could be a secret missive from another monarch, a confidential message restricted to the highest orders of a powerful church, or a lich's shopping list—but whatever is actually written on the formerly blank scroll should include a hook to the party's next quest. 🗺️

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NPC STATISTICS

Name	Stat Block
Captain Politsei Kell	Knight
Ellujanu “The Blade” Saematerjal	Veteran
Kanral Bodache	Mage
Patis Vastane	see below
Possessed Prince Isand	see below

Name	Stat Block
Relic Golem	see below
Sutu Korvalseis	Scout
Taprea Salamorvar/Hilma the Sneak	Assassin
Üldist Salamorvar	Spy
Vastane Assessor	Cult Fanatic or Cult Sorcerer

Patis Vastane

Medium humanoid, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (half plate, *cloak of displacement*)

Hit Points 104 (16d8 + 32)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	19 (+4)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Con +5, Cha +6

Skills Arcana +5, Deception +9, Insight +7, Perception +7, Stealth +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Damage Resistances force, poison

Damage Immunities psychic

Condition Immunities poisoned

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Infernal

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Brooch of Shielding. Patis Vastane has resistance to force damage and is immune to damage from the *magic missile* spell.

Cloak of Displacement. Patis Vastane projects an illusion that makes him appear to be standing in a place near his actual location, causing all creatures to have disadvantage on attack rolls against him. If he takes damage, the property ceases to function until the start of his next turn.

Cunning Action. On each of his turns, Patis Vastane can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Dark Devotee. Patis Vastane has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened and gains darkvision to a range of 60 feet. Patis Vastane’s weapon attacks deal an additional 2d8 necrotic damage.

Eyes of Charming. Patis Vastane can spend an action to cast the *charm person* spell (save DC 13) on a humanoid he can see within 30 feet. After using this ability 3 times, he cannot use this ability again until the next dawn.

Spellcasting. Patis Vastane is a 7th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). Patis Vastane has the following cleric and druid spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *produce flame, resistance, sacred flame*

1st level (4 slots): *bane, cure wounds, detect magic, healing word*

2nd level (4 slots): *blindness/deafness, gust of wind, hold person, spiritual weapon*

3rd level (3 slots): *bestow curse, call lightning, spirit guardians*

4th level (2 slots): *confusion, death ward*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Patis Vastane may make two weapon attacks or casts one cantrip and makes a weapon attack.

Magic Flail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) magical bludgeoning damage and 9 (2d8) necrotic damage.

Magic Hand Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 30/120. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) magical piercing damage and 9 (2d8) necrotic damage.

Possessed Prince Isand (Vardjas)

Medium humanoid, chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 133 (14d8 + 70)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)

Skills Acrobatics +7, Athletics +7, Deception +8, Insight +7, Perception +7

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Damage Vulnerabilities radiant

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning, necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Brute. A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when Possessed Prince Isand hits with it (included in the attack).

Possessed. When reduced to 0 hp, Possessed Prince Isand's body goes limp and a **hezrou** demon forms nearby at full hit points. While in Possessed Prince Isand's body, the demon does not count as a fiend (a paladin PC who uses his or her detect ability does notice that something is awry and that Possessed Prince Isand is evil).

Unholy Conduit. Possessed Prince Isand can spend a bonus action to accept any amount of damage dealt to Patis Vastane until the start of its next turn. Each time Patis Vastane takes damage while this ability is active, Possessed Prince Isand chooses how much of the damage to take.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Each turn, Possessed Prince Isand makes two maul attacks or one thrown object attack.

Maul. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (4d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Throw Object. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range (20/40), one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) damage. The damage type depends on the object (bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing) and at 100 pounds and every 100 pounds thereafter, the damage increases by 1d8, up to 31 (6d8 + 4) at 500 pounds.



Relic Golem

Large construct, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 114 (12d10 + 48)

Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	14 (+2)	19 (+4)	3 (−4)	14 (+2)	9 (−1)

Saving Throws Int −1, Cha +2

Skills Acrobatics +5, Perception +5 (gains advantage on sight-based checks)

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15 (cannot be surprised)

Damage Resistances acid, force, necrotic, poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantite

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Languages understands Abyssal and Common but can't speak

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Force Absorption. Whenever the golem is subjected to force damage, it takes no damage and instead regains a number of hit points equal to the force damage dealt.

Berserk. Whenever the golem starts its turn with 40 hit points or fewer, roll a d6. On a 6, the golem goes berserk. On each of its turns while berserk, the golem attacks the nearest creature it can see. If no creature is near enough to move to and attack, the golem attacks an object, with preference for an object smaller than itself. Once the golem goes berserk, it continues to do so until it is destroyed or regains all its hit points.

Embedded Magic Items. The golem is powered by five magic items: a *periapt of health*, two *rings of protection*, an *ioun stone of awareness*, and *eyes of the eagle*. Each of these magic items has an AC equal to the golem's AC and 20 hp; attacks against embedded magic items are at disadvantage if the golem is not incapacitated or restrained. These magic items can be pried loose if the golem has the incapacitated or restrained condition by making a DC 15 Strength check or DC 15 Dexterity check, but there is a 50% chance that a magic item is destroyed during removal.

Immutable Form. The golem is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The golem has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The golem's weapon attacks are magical.

Regeneration. The golem regains 3 hp at the start of its turn for every magic item embedded in its form.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The golem makes two slam attacks or one thrown object attack.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or have its hit point maximum reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. The target dies if this attack reduces its hit point maximum to 0. The reduction lasts until removed by the *greater restoration* spell or other magic.

Thrown Object. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range (20/40), one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d8 + 6) damage. The damage type depends on the object (bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing) and at 100 pounds and every 100 pounds thereafter, the damage increases by 1d8, up to 33 (6d8 + 6) at 500 pounds.