



Pathfinder 2nd Ed.

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THE RATIFICATION



AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF 4TH TO 6TH LEVEL

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THE RATIFICATION

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF 4TH TO 6TH LEVEL

THE RATIFICATION IS A PATHFINDER SECOND Edition adventure for three to six characters of 4th to 6th level, optimized for a party of four 5th-level characters. A terrified fugitive has fled into the Temple of Saint Leopoldine seeking protection from a devil who holds a contract claiming their soul. The fiend cannot seize its prize by force while the temple's wards hold, but infernal law grants it the right to argue its claim before the saint's arbiter at sunset. In the hours before twilight, lesser devils are sure to begin probing the temple's wards, hoping to trespass its walls to destroy any documentation that might see the contract voided. Can the party defend the archives and argue for the fugitive before their soul is lost? This adventure takes place in the city of Dorran in the Cartosia campaign setting, but the names of people and places can be changed to place this adventure in any urban environment across a variety of campaign settings.

BACKGROUND

Three centuries ago, the city of Dorran suffered under the predations of the tyrant devil Narzijal, whose agents preyed upon the dying and the desperate. A young magistrate of a local church named Leopoldine made themselves a thorn in the devil's side, challenging infernal claims in mortal courts and voiding them through procedural defects, lapsed deadlines, and improper witnesses. Narzijal eventually consented to negotiate. The two struck the Leopoldian Accord: in exchange for Leopoldine's soul, Narzijal would never again seize a citizen of Dorran without first submitting the claim to formal arbitration on consecrated ground. Leopoldine surrendered himself willingly, and his remains were interred beneath the temple that now bears his name. The mosaic that marks the saint's resting place is the accord's seat. Any infernal claim heard above it must be argued in good faith, and any judgment rendered there is binding upon devil and mortal alike.

Decades ago, a Dorran merchant named Vlisvor Habornu faced ruin when his trading fleet was lost in a storm off the coast. Desperate to spare his family from poverty and his reputation from ruin, Vlisvor summoned a lesser devil of Narzijal's brood and signed a contract restoring his fortunes in exchange for the soul of his firstborn great-grandchild, to be collected upon their thirtieth birthday. He lived another four decades, never speaking of the bargain. His firstborn great-grandchild, a young sailor named Nehlad Habornu, drowned at twenty-two in the very waters that had once threatened the family's ruin. The devils, however, were not so easily denied.

Vilette Habornu, Vlisvor's second-eldest great-grandchild, was consecrated to Saint Leopoldine in infancy as is the custom for newborns of Dorran's faithful families, and has otherwise spent her thirtieth year as a glassblower of modest

means in ignorance of the curse her great-grandfather placed upon the line. Yesterday evening, an infernal courier delivered a sealed writ to her shop, naming her as the contract's subject and demanding her presence at the Temple of Saint Leopoldine at sundown the following day. Vilette fled to the temple at once. The clergy granted her sanctuary, but possessed not the legal expertise to mount a defense, and have put out a discreet call for any capable hands willing to assist.

The advocate dispatched to press the claim is Zirzetoth, a coarti with five centuries of contract arbitration to her name. Her case is not airtight: the original collection window expired with Nehlad's death, and the wealth promised to Vlisvor was drawn in part from the estate of a previously condemned soul. While the proceedings unfold, lesser devils probe the temple's wards in search of relevant documentation, hoping to destroy them before the defense can present its case.

GETTING THE QUEST

Word of the temple's predicament travels quickly through Dorran's quieter circles. Whether through a trusted contact, a parish acquaintance, or a note pressed into the party's hands by a stranger, the party finds themselves summoned to the Temple of Saint Leopoldine in the late afternoon, where the clergy have put out a discreet call for any capable hands willing to assist. Sunset, and the formal commencement of the devil's claim, is perhaps three hours away.

The party is received inside a small office by Magistrate Bhammad Shadah (world-weary she/her human zealot with holy trait instead of unholy and *heal* spells instead of *harm*; *Pathfinder NPC Core*), the temple's presiding arbiter and the senior of two clergy currently in residence. She is a composed woman in her sixties, dressed in unadorned gray robes, and though her hands are steady, her voice suggests exhaustion. After thanking the party for coming, she explains the situation:

- A woman named Vilette Habornu came to the temple last night seeking sanctuary. She bore a sealed writ from the Hells naming her as the subject of an infernal contract, signed nearly seventy years ago by her great-grandfather Vlisvor in exchange for the restoration of his family's fortunes. The collection price was the soul of Vlisvor's firstborn great-grandchild upon their thirtieth birthday.
- The temple's wards, established by the Leopoldian Accord, prevent any devil from seizing a citizen of Dorran by force. They do not prevent a devil from formally pressing its claim before the saint's arbiter, however. A messengerdevil named Zirzetoth has filed such a claim, and the proceedings will commence at sundown in the central hall.
- Shadah is not equipped to mount a defense on Vilette's behalf. The Accord requires that the case be argued in

good faith, which means evidence must be produced, the contract examined, and arguments presented in the central hall. The temple's archives hold relevant documentation, but locating, interpreting, and presenting it is work that no priest among the temple's staff can accomplish in the hours remaining.

- Shadah can feel the presence of the lesser devils that have been probing the temple's wards since Vilette's arrival, and the magistrate believes they intend to destroy any documentation that might void the contract before the defense can present its case. The wards are strained but holding; how long they will continue to hold against an assault is uncertain. The party may have to fend off intrusions while the defense is being prepared.

If the party agrees to help, Magistrate Shadah can offer access to blessed items kept in the temple's reliquary as compensation for their service. She also explains the limited time and the procedures for the argumentation, which demands that each argument be defended by a different advocate. She then leads them to Vilette, and to acquaint them with their adversary.

Vilette Habornu. Vilette (industrious she/her human dockhand; *Pathfinder NPC Core*) is found in the temple's small southern shrine, where she has spent most of her day in unbroken prayer. She is a slight, soot-streaked woman with calloused hands, having come directly from her glassworks the previous evening with no time to gather her belongings. She knows nothing of the contract beyond the writ's summary of the claim upon it, and is bewildered that her great-grandfather would have signed away her soul. Her father, a retired sailor who lives a day's travel north from the city, has not been informed of his daughter's predicament, and she does not wish to alarm him.

Zirzeth. The coarti is permitted within the temple's central hall in the hours before the proceedings, though the wards prevent her from approaching the saint's mosaic until sundown. She can be found seated on one of the rear pews, idly running her clawed fingers along a sheaf of black vellum. She is not interested in genuine conversation, but will spare the party a few words if directly addressed—she expresses cold amusement at their involvement, assures them that her case is already won, and warns that any attempt to interfere with her by violence is a violation of the Accord. The temple's wards enforce this. Any character who attempts to attack Zirzeth before sundown is immediately stunned for 1 minute.

GENERAL FEATURES

The Temple of Saint Leopoldine is a single-story stone structure in Dorran's lower market district, distinguished from the buildings around it by its fortified outer walls and the modest cloister gardens that surround it. Worship has thinned over the past several decades, and the parish has dwindled to a handful of regular faithful.

Ceilings, Walls, and Floors. The temple is constructed of gray stone blocks, fortified at the perimeter. Exterior walls are two feet thick; interior walls are one foot thick. Ceilings reach 15 feet in the central hall and 10 feet in the smaller adjoining chambers.

Doors. Doors throughout the temple are made of heavy oak reinforced with bronze bands. They have 20, Hardness 8, and 30 Hit Points (Break Threshold 15). They are unlocked unless otherwise stated.

Light. During the day, sunlight floods through the temple's high windows and the open archways of the inner walkway. As sundown approaches, oil lamps mounted in wall sconces are lit throughout the interior to provide dim light.

The Leopoldian Wards. The temple is protected by ancient, invisible wards anchored to Saint Leopoldine's interred remains beneath the central mosaic. They prevent any citizen of Dorran from being directly assailed by infernal action while within, and prevent any soul claimed under contract from being collected before that claim has been heard before the saint's arbiter. The wards are presently strained by Zirzeth's presence and by the sustained pressure of her brood's attempts to breach them; lesser devils have been probing the perimeter throughout the day, and any successful breach will admit a small contingent into the temple before the wards reseal at that point. The wards cannot be fully restored before sundown.

Other Clergy. Aside from Magistrate Shadah, the temple is currently staffed by a single junior cleric, Halling Brung (naive he/him human acolyte; *Pathfinder NPC Core*). He is helpful but inexperienced, primarily occupied with parish duties and with preparing the central hall for the proceedings. He can hold a defensive position, if necessary, but is not a capable combatant.

The following areas are keyed to the provided map of the Temple of Leopoldine:

1. FORTIFIED OUTER WALLS

Stone walls ring the temple grounds, set with squat planters and cloister gardens that buffer the temple from the bustle of the surrounding district. A gate at the northern approach admits the faithful into the courtyard. The walls represent the outermost extent of the Leopoldian Wards, and lesser devils probing for breaches manifest first along this perimeter.

2. INNER WALKWAY

A paved walkway encircles the temple proper, set between the outer wall and the temple's exterior face. Ornamental gardens fill the spaces between, and the walkway is open to the sky.

3. HEAD PRIEST'S CHAMBERS

Magistrate Shadah's private quarters and workspace, furnished with a writing desk, a small altar, and a narrow cot. She is likely to be found here if not actively engaged with the party or attending the central hall. Magistrate Shadah initially receives the party in this room.

4. MEETING ROOMS

Two small rooms occupy the west side of the central hall, each fitted with a table and several chairs and used for private consultations between clergy and parishioners. Either room is suitable for any private discussions the party may wish to conduct over the course of the afternoon.

5. THE MOSAIC

The temple's central hall is dominated by a great floor mosaic depicting Saint Leopoldine in his magisterial robes, surrounded by a sunburst of golden tile. Two marble statues of armored knights stand at the mosaic's eastern and western edges, their helmed forms inclined inward and their gauntleted hands interlocked with one another, as though embracing the saint at their center.

The mosaic is the seat of the Leopoldian Accord. Any infernal claim heard at the temple must be argued in good faith above it, and any judgment rendered here is binding upon devil and mortal alike. Saint Leopoldine's remains are interred in a sealed crypt directly beneath. The mosaic radiates strong magic detectable by *detect magic*, and cannot be damaged or disturbed by any means short of a *manifestation* ritual.

The knights depict Saint Leopoldine's two sworn protectors, who stood beside him during the negotiation of the Accord and pledged to guard its seat in death as in life. Each is inscribed at its base with the protector's name and the date of their oath.

6. COMMUNAL PRAYER

Rows of plain wooden pews fill this space, and the eastern wall bears embroidered banners depicting episodes from the saint's life and martyrdom. The hall is presently empty save for Zirzeth, who occupies a rear pew during the hours preceding the proceedings. The pews can be overturned to provide half cover during combat.

7. STUDY

A small annexed chamber off the central hall serves as both reading room and archive. Shelves crowded with bound ledgers, scroll cases, and stacked correspondence line the walls; two reading desks stand near the center.

The archive contains decades of parish records, copies of contracts and writs witnessed at the temple, and correspondence between the temple and the secular and ecclesiastical courts of Dorran. The party's preparatory research takes place here (see *Defending the Case*).

Treasure: Reliquary Cabinet. A locked cabinet in the room's western nook holds the temple's modest reliquary, opened by Magistrate Shadah as part of the party's compensation for their service. Its contents are detailed in the *Aftermath*.

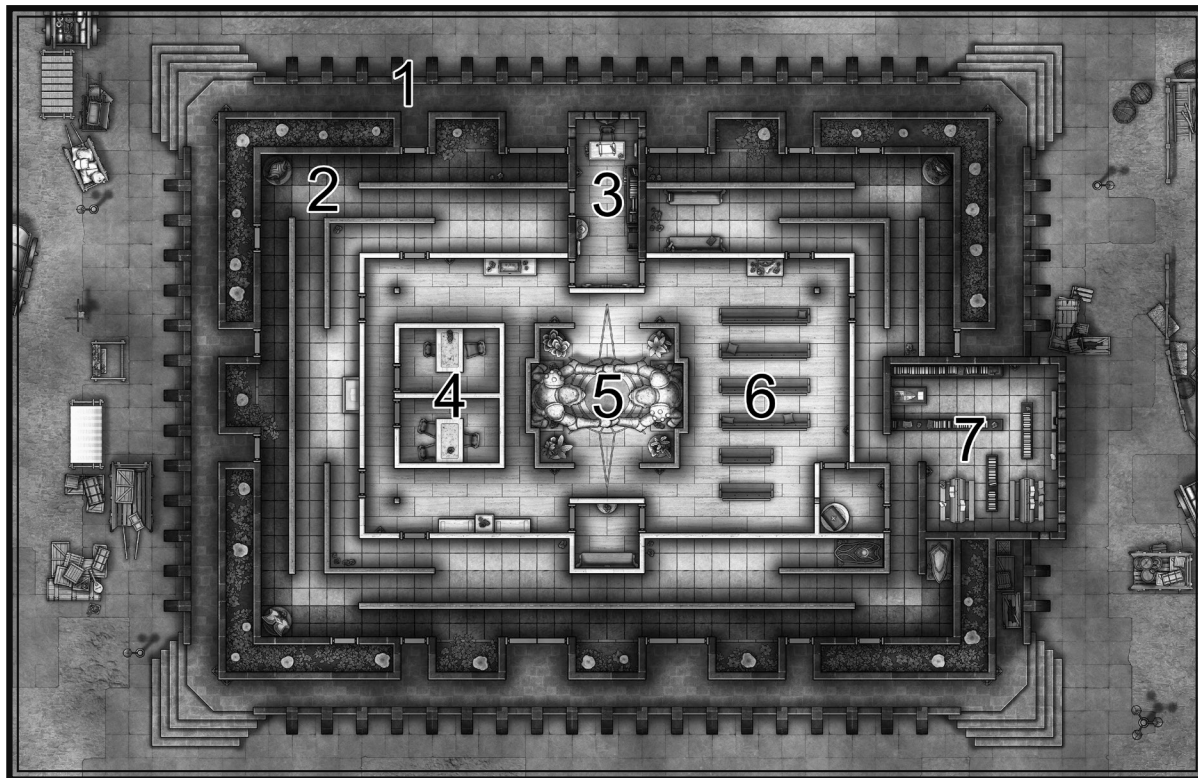
DEFENDING THE CASE

The party has roughly three hours before sundown. The work uses the **research** subsystem and the **influence** subsystem (both *Pathfinder GM Core*). They will need to Research to gather evidence, Discover to understand the infernal rules binding the devil Zirzeth, and finally Influence to present their case against Zirzeth. Each time a PC performs the Research activity, they must choose one topic to research: the contract's terms or the Hobarnu family itself. Once the PCs collect enough Research Points, they can identify and retrieve documents relevant to Vilette's defense. Time is short, leaving only eight 15-minute rounds of exploration activities, probably either Research or Discover. After 4 rounds (1 hour), and again after another 4 rounds, they are interrupted by a wave of infernal intrusion as Zirzeth's devils probe the wards.

Questioning Vilette Habornu: The young woman is utterly unprepared to debate someone about the actions of her great-grandfather, whom she never knew; **Maximum RP 2** toward Habornu family history only; **Research Checks** either DC 15 Genealogy Lore or Dorran Lore or DC 18 Society to jog her memory about her family tree, DC 17 Diplomacy to get her talking openly about her father's reminiscences despite buried anguish, DC 18 Deception to invent a shared connection to get her to open up without confusing her recollections with invented details

Magistrate Halbrek's Files: An idiosyncratic maze of scholarly journals on infernal case law, ledgers, and scroll cases; **Maximum RP 4** toward contract terms, 3 toward Hobarnu family history; **Research Checks** DC 17 Genealogy Lore to find Hobarnu family history documents

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by signatory, or DC 18 Academia Lore or Legal Lore to research contract terms under conventions of decades-old Dorran legal practice, DC 18 Accounting Lore to recognize relevant financial records, either DC 19 Dorran Lore or DC 21 Society to cross-reference notable historical events that might have involved Vlisor Habornu, either DC 20 Devil Lore or DC 22 Religion to interpret diabolic sigils, DC 23 Perception to spot misfiled documents

Magistrate Nol's Files: A mix of haphazard card catalogs, personal journals, shorthand notes, and religious meditations covering the time until Nol's death 4 years ago; **Maximum RP 6** toward Hobarnu family history only; **Research Checks** DC 18 Library Lore to work through the system by date and areas of responsibility for each junior magistrate, either DC 18 Genealogy Lore or Dorran Lore or DC 20 Society to work backwards from potentially related files, DC 20 Religion to recognize ecclesiastical documents including relevant facts, DC 23 Diplomacy to question Magistrate Shadah at length about her predecessor's tenure and methods

CONTRACT TERMS	RESEARCH 5
Unique, Contract, Devil, Divine, Fiend, Unholy	
Research Checks Magistrate Halbrek's files	
1 Research Points The PCs find the full contract text, summarized below, and can now use it for future Research checks on this topic. 4 Research Points The PCs learn the contract assumes the named subject will live to the collection date. Death is not	

addressed by the incapacity provision, and the contract provides no mechanism for the claim to pass to anyone else upon the named subject's earlier demise.

- 6 Research Points** The PCs recognize one of the estates listed in the contract—the Sorrelfast holdings—as having belonged to a soul condemned and collected by Narzijal's brood some eighteen years prior to the contract's signing. The wealth Vlisvor received was probably not Narzijal's to sell.
- 8 Research Points** The PCs find a copy of the Sorrelfast family's financial records filed with the Sorrelfast matriarch's final will and testament. The will gives to Sorrelfast's son a holding that was sold by Narzijal in Vlisvor's contract, proving Narzijal's original payment was illegal.

HABORNU FAMILY HISTORY	RESEARCH 5
Unique, Human, Humanoid	
Research Checks Magistrate Halbrek's files, Magistrate Nol's files, questioning Vilette Habornu	
1 Research Points The PCs learn Vilette's father had a falling out with his own father and moved out of the city before Vilette was born, leaving open the possibility of loopholes such as an illegitimate birth or an unknown older cousin who should have been claimed instead. 3 Research Points The PCs find Vilette's grandfather's family tree including her father, her father's estranged brother Velvazor, and her great-grandfather Vlisor.	

5 Research Points The PCs find a funeral sermon for Velvazor, a younger first cousin of Vilette's father who died twenty-nine years ago. The sermon invites a few words from Velvazor's son, Nehlad. Nehlad must be of Vilette's generation and is likely older than Vilette to speak so long ago; if he is, that would make his soul and not Vilette's the proper payment for the contract. This evidence alone is not proof, however.

6 Research Points The PCs find the infant consecration record for Vilette, confirming her parentage and that she is now the right age to be claimed but supporting that Nehlad is her elder and should have been claimed instead.

8 Research Points The PCs find the death certificate of Nehlad Habornu, showing he drowned at age twenty-two seventeen years prior; this can be combined with Vilette's consecration record to prove she is not the firstborn great-grandchild of their shared great-grandfather.

One of Magistrate Shadah or Halling Brung may grant one automatic success by recalling where their predecessors filed certain correspondence, if prompted by the party.

Adjusting the Research. If the party is 4th level, reduce the Research DCs by 1. If the party is 6th level, increase the Research DCs by 2. If there are only three PCs, reduce all the Research thresholds by 1 RP (minimum 1). If there are five PCs, increase the ultimate RP thresholds to 9. If there are six PCs, increase the penultimate RP thresholds to 7.

Outcome. The search ends upon the earlier of the party accumulating four successes or alternatively accumulating six failures. For every two failures the party accumulates, one of the three documents proves to be unrecoverable—either the party fails to identify it as a possibility in the first place, or the party becomes aware of its potential existence but is nevertheless unable to locate it. The GM determines which document is lost based on the nature of the failed checks where possible, or at random otherwise. For example, if the party accumulates four successes while also accumulating four failures, the search ends with the party having identified just a single document.

INTERPRETING SPECIFIC DOCUMENTS

At certain Research Point thresholds, the characters can find certain documents useful in various lines of reasoning. Potentially useful documents include the original contract, the Sorrelfast matriarch's will, Vilette's grandfather's family tree, Vilette's consecration record, and Nehlad Habornu's death record. The contract and the consecration record each carries observations the players themselves may identify, supported by checks for characters who wish to dig deeper. The GM should present the bulleted observations below to any character who examines a given document, and allow further checks to surface the underlying flaws

The Original Contract. A bound sheaf of seventeen pages, sealed in dark wax bearing Narzijal's mark and signed in

Vlisor's increasingly unsteady hand. When a character examines the contract, share the following:

- The collection clause names "the firstborn great-grandchild of the signatory, upon their thirtieth year." No name is given; the language is generic.
- A later clause addresses transfer of claim "in the event of the subject's incapacity," but defines incapacity narrowly as "afflictions of body or mind that prevent the soul's transfer."
- The contract references a schedule appended as Exhibit C, listing the fortunes restored to Vlisor's accounts and the various estates from which they were drawn. The rights to these estates are not clearly defined in the schedule.

Characters can now use the Research activity to attempt one of the following checks in addition to the three above.

Full Contract Text: The text is presented side-by-side in both Diabolic and Common, so anyone who can read both languages (or who is Aided by someone who can do so) gets a +2 item bonus on checks to Research it; **Maximum RP 4** toward contract terms only; **Research Checks** either DC 20 Legal Lore or DC 24 Occultism to parse out the terms, either DC 20 Mercantile Lore or DC 22 Crafting to understand the assets promised

Vilette's Infant Consecration Record. A short record of Vilette's consecration to Saint Leopoldine in her first year of life, witnessed by Magistrate Nol and signed by Vilette's

parents. When a character examines the record, share the following:

- The consecration follows the standard form for newborns of Dorran's faithful families, pledging the child's soul to the saint's protection in life and in death.
- The witnessing language describes the consecration as "in perpetuity, prior to all subsequent claim, mortal or otherwise."

A character makes a successful DC 17 Religion check recognizes that the consecration creates a binding prior claim under divine law: a soul already pledged cannot lawfully be the subject of a later infernal contract signed on its behalf. A character who makes a successful DC 20 Devil Lore or expert Legal Lore check confirms that infernal contract law, while alien in its conventions, recognizes the precedence of prior consecration. Either finding supports a "Prior Claim" argument at the proceedings.

Likely Arguments. The research leaves three clear logical flaws that defenders can exploit in the hearing, although you and the players might devise others. Each argument will be presented by performing a single Influence activity, which gains an item bonus of up to +5 if presented with evidence. Presenting any relevant evidence allows a character to add their level as their proficiency bonus with an untrained skill to the Influence check and at least a +1 item bonus. The likely flaws are as follows.

- **Expired Collection Window.** Vilette is not the "firstborn great-grandchild" (suggested by the funeral sermon at 5 RP in Habornu family history and proven at 8 RP). Presenting the family tree, infant consecration record, and death certificate grants a +5 item bonus. Providing the funeral sermon and any two of the three other documents grants a +3 item bonus.
- **Prior Claim.** Vilette's parents swore her soul to Saint Leopoldine at her infant consecration (alleged by her consecration record at 6 RP in Habornu family history and proven with case law requiring the listed further check). Providing the record grants a +2 item bonus; citing the case law as well increases the bonus to +5.
- **Material Misrepresentation.** The contract paid for the soul with wealth that was not the devil's to give (proven by full contract text combined with the Sorrelfast matriarch's will at 8 RP in contract terms). Providing both the full contract text and the Sorrelfast matriarch's will grants a +5 item bonus to the check.

Identifying Flaws Without Checks. If a player works out a flaw from the bulleted observations alone—reasoning that the contract has no provision for the subject's death, for example, or recognizing the implications of the consecration's "in perpetuity" language—they may prepare the corresponding argument without a check. The GM is encouraged to reward this kind of engagement.

Magistrate Nol's Notes. A character who Searches the reading desks and makes a successful DC 18 Perception check finds a slim folio of personal notes left behind by Magistrate Nol, who served as the temple's arbiter until her death four years ago. The folio contains her private misgivings about several of her predecessor's witnessed writs, including the Habornu contract, which she suspected was flawed but had no occasion to challenge during her tenure. Her notes do not name specific flaws, but a character who reads the folio gets a +2 circumstance bonus on their next Research check on the topic of the contract terms. The folio thus serves as a hint for any party stuck on a particular document.

FIRST WAVE: THE OUTER BREACH

After 1 hour (four rounds of Research), likely after the adventurers have found some documents, a wave of Zirzetoth's minions mount an assault. The wards shimmer and split along the eastern perimeter, and the lamps in the central hall sputter as a contingent of devils tears through the breach and manifests within the building.

Low Encounter: First Wave. Two zebubs (*Pathfinder Monster Core 2*) and three imps (*Pathfinder Monster Core*) materialize within the eastern perimeter of the inner walkway (Area 2). The zebubs engage any defenders directly, while the imps fly toward the archive (Area 7) in search of documentation to destroy. An imp that reaches the point in the archive where the relevant documents are present uses three Interact actions to set fire to the documents; one relevant document may be destroyed at the end of the imp's next turn unless the imp is slain, grappled, or driven more than 5 feet from the desk. The imps prioritize destruction over survival and will not flee.

Adjusting the Encounter. If there are only three PCs, only two imps appear. If there are five or six PCs, one or two additional imps appear but attack the party. If the party is 4th level, remove one imp and a hellbound attorney (*Pathfinder Monster Core 2*) named Alezara Larou appears alone in place of both zebubs before the imps; she Lies that she has come to help and tries to locate any documents before summoning the imps to attack. If the party is 6th level, replace only one zebub with Alezara, who appears first and acts as described for a 4th-level party. Alezara surrenders if reduced below 13 HP.

Aftermath. The priests ask the characters to stand aside and rest for 15 minutes while they restore the wards, giving time to Treat Wounds or otherwise rest but not Research. The wards prevent further intrusion until they are next strained.

SECOND WAVE: THE INNER BREACH

After the final round of exploration activities before nightfall, the wards fail again as the rest of the brood surges forward into the temple. The breach manifests at the inner wall, and the devils that come through aim not only at the documents but at the embracing statues, whose vigil reinforces the wards.

Moderate Encounter: Second Wave. One **vordine** (*Pathfinder Monster Core*; a peer of Zirzetoth's, assisting from outside the proceedings), and two **zebubs** breach the inner wall near the south end of the temple. The vordine engages the party directly while the zebubs split: one flies to the archive attempting to burn documents as in the first wave, and one races to the embracing statues, where they attempt to chip at the inscriptions with their claws.

Each statue has AC 19, Hardness 6, and 35 Hit Points (Broken Threshold 17). If either statue is broken, the wards collapse entirely; Zirzetoth is permitted to seize Vilette without a hearing the moment sundown arrives, and the party loses the case automatically. If a statue is broken but not destroyed, it can be Repaired (DC 25).

Adjusting the Encounter. If there are only three PCs, only one zebub appears and they target the statues. If there are five or six PCs, one or two imps also appear respectively and try to burn documents again. If the party is 4th level, replace the vordine with four **orts** (*Pathfinder Monster Core*). If the party is 6th level, add two more zebubs, one which only attacks the party and one which attacks a statue.

Aftermath. The wards reseal upon the encounter's conclusion. Sundown arrives shortly after the last devil falls, and Magistrate Shadah summons the party to the central hall.

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At sundown, oil lamps are lit along the temple's high windows and Magistrate Shadah takes her position at the head of the saint's mosaic. Zirzetoth advances to the mosaic's southern edge, the sheaf of black vellum unfolded in her hands. Vilette is placed under the magistrate's protection at the rear of the hall, accompanied by Halling Brung. The party stands at the mosaic's northern edge as the proceedings commence.

The hearing follows infernal protocol, which provides one influence round for the devil to present her case and then one round for each opposing advocate's counterargument (including Zirzetoth's rebuttal for each counterargument). Zirzetoth presents her case first, reciting the terms of the contract and naming Vilette as the lawful subject of its collection; during this round, the heroes can each attempt to Discover but cannot Influence. Each argument the party has prepared is then presented in turn, with one party member at a time acting as advocate for any given argument. The mosaic enforces the truthfulness of every word spoken above it, and the Accord compels both sides to argue in good faith. Open lies provoke a visible flicker in the mosaic's golden tile, and Magistrate Shadah will set aside any argument she perceives as such.

For each prepared flaw, one party member acts as advocate and makes a single Influence check to carry the argument against Zirzetoth's rebuttal. Providing documents grants an item bonus on the check chosen, as listed for the argument.

ZIRZETOTH CREATURE 7

Unique, Medium, Devil, Fiend, Unholy

Double-dealing coarti

Perception +17

Will +15, +1 status to all saves vs. magic

Discovery DC 19 Devil Lore, DC 21 Dorran Lore, DC 23 Perception, DC 21 Religion

Influence Skills DC 20 Legal Lore (dispute a technical interpretation of any contract clause), either DC 20 Genealogy Lore or Dorran Lore or DC 22 Society (establish Vilette's older cousin was the only valid soul to collect, and the opportunity has expired), either DC 20 Accounting Lore or Mercantile Lore or DC 22 Society (dispute the legitimacy of Narzijal's financial payment), DC 21 Religion (cite religious doctrine that Saint Leopoldine has the prior claim on Vilette's soul), DC 22 Performance (hold everyone's attention with rhetorical force), DC 23 Diplomacy (appeal to reason), DC 24 Intimidation (cornering Zirzetoth on the implications of her own logic), DC 25 Deception (fabricate useful precedent, subject to the magical penalty below)

Influence 0 Zirzetoth successfully refutes all the party's objections. She is permitted to seize Vilette and depart the temple with her soul. The party may pursue; the wards no longer constrain the devil nor the party.

Influence 1 Zirzetoth concedes one point a character presented, but comes up with a rebuttal to justify partial payment. One soul owes a term of a decade confined to the Hells, after which the contract is permanently dissolved. If the party successfully argued an expired collection window, that soul is Vilette's long-lost cousin, whom Zirzetoth must now go retrieve from his afterlife. Otherwise, it is Vilette; if the heroes attempt to keep her by force at this point, the Accord no longer protects her and should Zirzetoth get away, Vilette will be held forevermore. If the party successfully argued material misrepresentation, Zirzetoth finds a loophole that forces Vilette to give all her property in reparations to the Sorrelfast family.

Influence 2 As Influence 1, but the partial payment term is only a year and a day. If Habornu wealth was found to be taken from the Sorrelfast family illegally, Vilette and all other living Habornus must pay a modest reparation, the rest paid by Narzijal.

Influence 3 The contract is voided. Zirzetoth is compelled by the mosaic to depart, and the writ in her hand crumbles to ash as she crosses the temple's threshold. Vilette is freed. If Narzijal was found to have stolen from the Sorrelfasts, he alone owes heavy reparations to them.

Resistances Zirzetoth is unfriendly and resents anyone bothering her before the hearing formally begins, increasing the DC to Discover before the hearing by 2 unless a character first makes her indifferent with a successful DC 25 check to Make an Impression. Attempts to Influence her have no effect before arguments begin. Appeals to emotion without a logical argument against the contract or Zirzetoth's collection are forbidden by the Accord and automatically fail.

Weaknesses Zirzetoth can't deny hard evidence, so documents presented grant an item bonus on Influence checks against her (listed in the likely arguments).

Penalty The magical wards reveal lies. When each character steps forth to offer an argument, they attempt a DC 25 Will save against the ward. It functions as a 5th-rank ring of truth spell except instead of ringing for true statements, the spell makes a flash of light when anyone lies (success on the save prevents the flash if the Deception check succeeds, and critical success on the save means no lie ever causes a flash of light). Anyone who triggers the flash of light automatically fails.

Adjusting the Encounter. If there are only three PCs, the first successful Influence attempt earns an extra Influence Point. If there are six PCs, Zirzeth uses their own arguments against them, raising the DC of any Influence check using the same skill as a previous Influence attempt by 1 per previous use. If the party is 4th level, reduce the DC of all Influence attempts by 1. If the party is 6th level, increase the DC of all Influence attempts by 2.

Zirzeth's Rebuttals. For each argument, Zirzeth offers a counter—a procedural objection, an appeal to precedent, a reframing of the original signatory's intent. The mosaic ensures her good faith but does not blunt her cunning. The following rebuttals may be elaborated upon by the GM as appropriate.

- **Expired Collection Window.** Zirzeth contends that "firstborn great-grandchild" is a category and not a name, and that infernal precedent has long permitted such categorical claims to pass to the next eligible subject upon the original's death. She gestures dismissively to the contract's silence on the matter, calling it custom rather than oversight.
- **Prior Claim.** Zirzeth contends that the consecration of an infant is a matter of clerical custom rather than of binding obligation, and that a soul cannot be encumbered by a benediction to which it never consented. She calls Vilette's parents "well-meaning but unauthorized," and notes that infants make poor signatories.
- **Material Misrepresentation.** Zirzeth contends that the consideration was rendered in full and accepted without inspection, and that Narzihal's court is not in the practice of disclosing the provenance of every coin. She raises the doctrine of "caveat emptor" as it is understood in the Hells: a signatory who does not investigate the source of his fortune cannot later claim to have been deceived.

Outcomes. Magistrate Shadah weighs each argument as it is made and pronounces her judgment at the conclusion of the proceedings. The contract's fate is determined by the number of Influence Points, as detailed in Zirzeth's stat block.

Moderate Encounter: Confronting Zirzeth. If the contract is not voided, the party may well wish to disregard the contract and attack Zirzeth following the proceedings, before she has a chance to leave with Vilette. Neither Shadah nor the temple's wards prevent this from occurring once the ratification has resolved. Zirzeth is a **coarti** (*Pathfinder Monster Core*) who can cast *silence* (4th rank) once per day and is immune to mental effects that would compel her to destroy, nullify, or alter a contract. She represents a challenging fight for a party that may not have access to all of their resources following their earlier rebukes of devil intrusions. Zirzeth will fight until she is destroyed.

Adjusting the Encounter. If there are only three PCs, she is slowed 1 by handling Vilette's shackles. If there are five or six PCs, Zirzeth summons one or two imps to escort her away, respectively. If the party is 4th level, Zirzeth and any imps

have weak adjustments. If the party is 6th level, Zirzeth and any imps have elite adjustments.

AFTERMATH

In the case of full victory, Vilette is freed and the Habornu line is cleared of the contract. Magistrate Shadah opens the reliquary cabinet and grants the party its contents in gratitude: a *diplomat's badge* or *fleet bravery baldric* (party's choice) and three *lesser healing potions*. Vilette returns to her glassworks, and in the weeks that follow sends each member of the party a piece of her finest work (worth 15 gp each).

In the case of partial victory (1 or 2 RP), Vilette must surrender herself to the Hells temporarily (unless her cousin was successfully designated the payment), after which the contract is permanently dissolved. She departs in Zirzeth's custody. The reliquary's contents are still offered in recognition of the party's service.

If the party is defeated at the proceedings and chooses not to confront Zirzeth in combat, the messenger devil departs the temple with Vilette in chains. Magistrate Shadah grants the reliquary's contents in recognition of the party's service regardless of outcome, though she does so with visible grief, and she does not soon forget Vilette's fate. Narzihal's brood, emboldened by their success, are unlikely to be finished with Dorran for long.

Adjusting the Reward. If the party is 4th level, the reliquary contains one fewer potion and the choice of item is between *healer's gloves* or *sailor's collar* (*Pathfinder Battlecry*). If the party is 6th level, the party instead receives two *moderate healing potions* and their choice of either a *choker of elocution* or a *cassidian helmet* (*Pathfinder Treasure Vault*).

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