



## The Hidden City

### Act II

The corridor you are in leads to a huge cavern with a crater-like depression in it. Arranged in concentric circles within the crater are many buildings frequently boasting towers and look out points. In the center of this odd settlement a single column of rock stretches up into the darkness. Floating in the air around the column are huge stone tablets inscribed with the stark and jagged Skorne script. Each of these huge stone banners gives off an eerie green light. In the city itself occasional screams can be heard and the ringing of steel on steel echoes a warning.

A forlorn wailing can be heard from above.

### The City Proper

The corridor opens out onto the main part of the Fortress: a hollowed out circular section 350 feet wide. The main area is 40 feet below the corridor and a promenade runs around the perimeter of this depression. Houses are built up against and under the promenade wall and more houses form an inner circle on the opposite side of the circular street. Four stone staircases descend at the compass points. The stairs here (South) have been destroyed and there is a 12 foot drop. In the centre of the circular area is a column fifty foot thick with stairs of wrought iron attached to it.

Surrounding the central column on six sides are 100 foot tall, 30 foot wide sheets of stone. They float 60 feet off the ground in a vertical position like huge banners. The sheets of stone are inscribed with huge swirling runes that are almost impossible to decipher (DC 35). They are ancient arcane Skorne and anyone of Skorne blood who is within 100 ft of them (the whole of the main chamber) is effectively under the effects of the Heroism Spell.

The inscriptions glow with a subdued turquoise light (count as starlight). Each banner has a hardness of 10 and 100 hp.

### Random Encounter Table: City Proper

If the party dither around or are hiding out somewhere trying to get some rest then use the following table:

**01-10:** 1D3+2 Ghouls (the Ghouls will be able to smell them and will creep up as best they can).

**11-16:** An escaped human (Commoner 1) chances to stumble across the party and begs them to see him to safety.

**17-24:** Skorne patrol – 1D4+1 Skorne Praetorians led by a Veteran Praetorian.

**25-30:** A Cyclops is lumbering about, he has lost his handler and is looking for trouble. It is likely he will not even see the party if they don't draw attention to themselves.

**31-40:** Skorne patrol – 1D4+2 Skorne Hestatians.

**41-100:** No encounter.

### An Endless Supply Of Enemies?

The city only contains a finite number of Skorne and their beasts. Many have been killed during Harven Dordra's initial assault and ensuing prison break and Ghoul infestation. Remaining Skorne should be no more than:

One Skorne Tormentor Paingiver  
Five Paingivers  
Three Skorne Lieutenants  
Three Skorne Wizards  
Four Skorne Assassins  
Thirty-five Skorne Hestatians  
Fifteen Skorne Praetorians  
Five Skorne Veteran Praetorians  
Twenty Skorne Conditioned Humans  
One Titan Gladiator  
Three Cyclops





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### **Southern Quarter: Promenade Stairs**

The Promenade stairs have been destroyed halfway down by what looks to have been a cannon shot. The party will need to climb down (DC10, 20 foot drop).

### **Southern Quarter: Townhouse**

A terrible screaming draws your attention. In between screams you can hear feral grunts and growls. The noise seems to be coming from one of the many imposing town houses. The sturdy door has been smashed from its hinges and the lower levels are in disarray.

If the PCs investigate, they find four insistent Ghouls hammering on a door on the second floor. Once the Ghouls are defeated the party may break down the door (Strength check DC 13) or pick the lock (DC 18) In the bedroom is a Skorne woman. She has taken her life rather than be eaten by the Ghouls.

### **Southern Quarter: Noble's Tower**

Opposite the stone staircase up to the promenade you notice the tallest structure in this part of town: a squat-looking sturdy tower with a bronze dome for a roof. Ornate banners hang outside, no doubt proclaiming the family's wealth or status. Light shines from each window, indicating an occupant is still inside or a hasty departure.

This tower is home to one of the less senior wizards of the city. A listen check (DC15) will reveal a fire is lit inside and occasionally a choked sob can be heard. The door is locked (DC 30) and has a hardness of 5 and 20 hp.

The **first floor** is given over to a well appointed kitchen; a female Skorne is here sleeping in a chair. She is armed with a knife.

The **second floor** is a sitting room and has a small table and chairs.

The **third floor** is a study where the Wizard is currently siphoning blood off of a human slave. (The slave dies during combat)

The **fourth floor** is a small bedroom. The Wizard's chest is here.

**Treasure:** The Skorne Wizard has a scroll of *Cause Fear* (written in Skorne), a potion of *Cure Light Wounds* and a Headband of Intellect (+1 to Intelligence) worth 3000 gp and a bag of seven pearls. These are all locked in a sturdy stone chest with a fine lock (DC 35) that is also trapped.

**Ungol Dust Vapor Trap:** CR 5; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; gas; multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-by-10-ft. room); never miss; onset delay (2 rounds); poison (ungol dust, DC 15 Fortitude save resists, 1 Cha/1d6 Cha plus 1 Cha drain); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 16. Market Price: 9,000 gp.

### **Southern Quarter Encounter (Outer)**

As the party makes to leave the Wizards tower (or perhaps they are just leaving this area) they encounter a Skorne Lieutenant on his way to visit the Wizard. He has a small bodyguard of two Praetorians.

**Treasure:** The Skorne Lieutenant has two Longswords +1, a bronze coloured key (Search DC 19), a potion of *Cure Moderate Wounds* and wears a ring inset with a ruby (*Identify* reveals it is a ring of *Feather Fall*).

### **Southern Quarter (Inner/ Central Plaza)**

Lying on the south side of the plaza is a mountain of flesh bound up in ruined armour. An elephantine beast has collapsed after sustaining hideous wounds, its flesh is seared and burnt. Nearby is a mighty cannon and the flagstones all around are fractured and split.





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### **Southern Quarter (Inner/ Central Plaza) continued.**

The Southern side of the Central Plaza is quiet but a stamping and growling can be heard from the far side of the column. A huge creature lies on its side having suffered massive damage to its head from a Lightning Bolt. This was a Titan Canoneer - hence the damage to the southern steps.

### **Eastern Quarter: Promenade Stairs**

The Promenade stairs are in good repair in this part of the city and unguarded.

### **Eastern Quarter: Street (Outer)**

Eastern Street is quiet. Eerily quiet. All the circular streets are 40 feet wide. A search of the area turns up the slightly decomposed corpse of the Wizard who accompanied the Liaison. The body bears two deep gashes (from blades) and clutches a note in one hand. Give the players Handout 3 - Dieter's Last Note.

**Treasure:** In addition to the Bracers of Armour (+2) and the Mechanical Wand of *Magic Missiles* Dieter's corpse has a Signet ring, 30 platinum coins and a master work Orgoth dagger worth 600 gp to a collector. His spell book has spells appropriate for a fifth level Wizard.

### **East Quarter (Outer): Guard Tower and Pits**

A stout looking tower dominates Eastern Street, it has four floors and was clearly a guard point. The door is locked with a large stout padlock (DC 25). Inside the tower is a dead Skorne Praetorian. He has bled to death in a chair and the floor all around him is sticky with congealed blood. Harven Dordra broke in here after his party was captured or killed. He slew the Skorne in his sleep. Characters making a spot check (DC 15) will notice a rope dangling from the parapet. This is the route Harven

Dordra took to gain access to the tower.

In the faint green gloom you make out a stout circular tower with a domed roof. The windows are all heavily barred and lantern light shines from inside yet all is deathly quiet. Outside are three grates set into the street. Awful smells arise from under the roads.

Across the city you hear the occasional yelp or cry of pain. It seems the Skorne are tirelessly rounding up the escaped prisoners.

The **first floor** is an armoury and has three sets of paired Skorne long swords. There are also ten spears and a healing kit.

The **second floor** is a barracks and has six beds and a bucket.

The **third floor** is a look out point and has a roof, there is a grappling hook and rope attached the parapet courtesy of Harven Dordra.

Outside there are three grills set in the ground. If the party shine a light into the pit a twinkling reflection shines back... if only there wasn't a Gibbering Moulder hiding down there.

**Treasure:** A platinum tiara encrusted with rubies worth 3,300 gps. D10 x 5 silver pieces, D10 x 3 gold pieces.

### **Eastern Quarter (Inner/ Central Plaza)**

The inside of the Eastern Quarter forms part of the Central Plaza. There is no one around at present. A well has been partially knocked down and one of the houses has collapsed slightly. Corpses of human prisoners lie in the street.

The house to the side of the collapsed building has light coming from the upstairs windows. If the party investigates they will find a female Skorne and three infants. If the party is blundering around in plain sight the Assassins in the Northern Quarter may well see them.





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### Western Quarter: Promenade Stairs

The Promenade stairs are slick with blood. Nearby a Praetorian sits biting off curses as he dies a slow death, he holds his entrails in with one hand whilst his other still clutches at his longsword.

Humans have passed this way recently and overpowered the lone Praetorian who was on watch. The Skorne does not speak any human languages but if the party find a way to communicate with him they could interrogate him.

With succesful Intimidate or Profession (Torturer) checks the party will learn the following pieces of information.

- The Paingivers are conditioning the human slaves to create a caste of expendable warriors. The Titans and the Cyclops are both examples of the power of conditioning.

- Recently one of the Paingivers dabbled in an art called Mortithergy. An experiment went wrong and subject escaped. It is thought this subject died and became undead and started the Ghoul infestation.

- The pillar of stone is heavily trapped. It leads to the Ancestor's Shrine and the training rooms. The Dakars and Paingivers also have their quarters in this area.

- Another detachment of Skorne is due any day with fresh warbeasts (Sense Motive DC 9 reveals he is lying).

The Praetorian doesn't know much more than this. Unless the PCs stabilize him he will die fairly quickly. Assume he has the Endurance and Die hard feats just to stay concious on minus wounds.

**Treasure:** The Praetorian has a Masterwork Longsword, an amber pendant (worth 15 Gp) and an ornate platinum ring (worth 40 gp) and four Obsidian Figurines. Each figurine is about two inches tall and worth 10 gp.

### Western Quarter: Townhouse

Inside this town house a feral screaming can be heard. If the PCs investigate they find a Skorne female trying to hold her chamber door closed against five insistent Ghouls. She is guarding her two infants. She is armed with a dagger. If the PCs let her live she will begin screaming from her window the moment she thinks she is out of danger.

The party will run into a patrol of Hestatians not long after the alarm is raised.

The sound of screaming is becoming very familiar to you now. The noise seems to be coming from a nearby town houses. The sturdy front door has been smashed from its hinges and the lower level. All around the stench of death is overpowering

### Western Quarter: Street (Outer)

Four Skorne Praetorians are escorting twelve manacled humans to the central plaza. All the humans are close to starvation and filthy and ragged.

When the PCs dispose of the Skorne the humans will be very grateful and emotional. Some may even recognize the PCs if they took part in the Witchfire Trilogy. They warn the PCs that the Skorne have lost control of their own city and that a ghoul infection is running rampant. They recently staged a prison break but failed to find a way out of the city.

The sound of clinking chains reaches your ears. Marching sluggishly are a dozen manacled humans led by four stern looking Praetorians. The humans look miserable and famished and you feel a pang of guilt as they are led off into the gloom. Dare you try to rescue them?

### Consequences

Having rescued the humans the party will need to stash them somewhere until the city is safer. The humans are all too shocked to be much use and many are wounded.





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### Conditioning Centre West Quarter (Outer)

A large secure building stands unlit in this part of the town. Inside can be heard sobbing and the occasional growl. The door is securely locked with two huge padlocks (DC 30). Inside the building is divided into four rooms off a central corridor.

Each room is 15 feet square and has a barred door. Chains attach the captives to the walls. In the center of each area is high table with many torture instruments.

- In **room one** the eight bound humans are all dead. They failed to endure the conditioning meted out by the Paingiver.
- In **room two** a young girl sobs uncontrollably, she is surrounded by dead humans. She is heavily wounded and quite insane. Treat her as affected by a Confusion spell 50% of the time.
- In **room three**, seven of the eight confined humans have turned into ghouls but cannot escape. The players may make Coup de grace attacks quite freely here.
- In **room four** all eight ghouls have broken free of their confinement and eaten the Paingiver. They wait in the shadows for anyone foolish enough to open the door. They will have heard the party enter the building and will get a surprise round unless the PCs *Detect Evil* or *Detect Undead* from outside of the room.

**Treasure:** The Paingiver had a masterwork whip, a potion of *Cats Grace*, a healers kit and jewellery worth 275 gp. He also had a bronze coloured key (Search DC 19). This key will open all the locked doors in the central column.

### The Source of the Problem

As the party make to leave from the Condition Centre, the source of the Ghoul infestation finds them. A Ghast has been hiding on the roof of the building. As the PCs leave he will leap down and attack them. The Ghast has no treasure.

### Western Quarter (Inner/ Central Plaza)

Ahead of you stamping its feet bullishly is a monstrous four armed elephantine creature. Huge armoured plates cover its body and massive pitted war gauntlets are tied to its arms with elaborate knots. It seems you have stumbled into the path of a Titan Gladiator. Behind the beast are two Skorne who cruelly whip the Titan into a frenzy.

The Titan and two Paingiver handlers have been left at the Plaza whilst patrols search the ruins for escaped prisoners. They are not expecting the PCs but immediately attack them.





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### **North Quarter: Town House (Outer)**

This hovel has torchlight coming from underneath the door, indicating someone is inside. The characters will notice this no matter how badly they fluff their spot rolls. The door is a strong wooden door (Hardness 8, 20 hp) with an average lock (DC 25).

If the party simply knock on the door a gruff (but human) voice will ask 'Who is it?'

If the party stealthily unlock the door a ragged human armed with a cudgel will jump up in shock. 'Come in, come in!' he says quickly.

The intelligence liaison Harven Dordra has holed up here and is suffering from starvation (-2 Str, -2 Con). He also has the Shakes (-5 Dex) and is generally in a bad way. Four humans are caring for the Liaison. The humans are also in a very bad way; they have found little food in the city since escaping. Harven begs the party to try and gain entrance to the upper levels where he suspects his comrades Darioch Giamati and Evangeline Toras are being tortured. He asks the party if they have encountered a human Wizard.

If any of the party come into physical contact with Darioch they stand a chance of contracting the Shakes (Fort save DC 13, one day incubation).

Harven has little information for the party aside from the facts that he assisted a prison break and at about the same time Ghouls started appearing. He knows the central column leads to the Officer's quarters and suspects the city is being ruled by what the Skorne call a 'Paingiver'.

If the party are wounded or in need of rest Harven will suggest they stay until they are ready to move on. If the party rest each member has a 10% chance of contracting the shakes for every 12 hours they stay.

Harven Dordra looks pale and sickly in the lantern light. He coughs into a filthy rag and shakes fitfully as he pulls a shawl around his shoulders.

"You're welcome to stay but please, whatever you do, take the stairs up to the upper levels. My friends are up there and are no doubt going to pay for all the trouble we've caused."

### **Northern Quarter: Street (Outer)**

Skorne Conditioned Humans: These humans were once proud folk of Corvis but are now feral creatures at the whim of their Skorne masters. There are six of them and they prowl the streets like angry spirits.

A strange hooping noise startles you and scuttling creatures loping about on all fours scramble down the street towards you. With a crawling certainty you realize that the creatures were once human. Strapped to their arms are spiteful looking clawed bracers.

### **Northern Quarter (Inner/ Central Plaza)**

The western side of the Central plaza looks deserted but in fact there are three Skorne assassins keeping watch from the rooftops (Hide check DC 14). They will attract the attention of the Titan on the West side of the Plaza.

All seems peaceful here, nothing moves in the faint green gloom. Perhaps this is a good opportunity to investigate the looming column at the center of this forsaken city. High above you a bridge extends from the column to other parts of the Skorne settlement.

Having defeated the Titan and its handlers the party may attempt to make their way up the column to the upper reaches of the city.

