

SECOND EDITION

# PATHFINDER<sup>®</sup>

## Hellfire Crisis

### Hell's Destiny

ADVENTURE PATH

## Player's Guide

By John Compton

# PATHFINDER

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# Hell's Vesting

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### CONTENT WARNING

This adventure contains themes of war, oppression, torture, and political violence. Before you begin, understand that player consent (including that of the Game Master) is vital to a safe and fun play experience for everyone. You should talk with your players before beginning the adventure and modify descriptions of the narrative as appropriate.

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### The War So Far

This Adventure Path continues the ongoing war storyline that begins in *Pathfinder Battlecry!* and is explored further in the Hellbreakers Adventure Path. While reading or playing through that content prior to Hell's Destiny helps expand the context for this Adventure Path, neither is necessary to enjoy this campaign. The following summarizes the story so far.

**The Past Century:** A hundred years ago, during its civil war, the empire of Cheliox fell under the control of the diabolical House Thrune. In protest, parts of that empire seceded, forming contemporary nations such as Mendev, Nirmathas, Nidal, Galt, Isgar, and (most importantly for this story) Andoran. Cheliox has spent the last 60 years seething at Andoran's disobedience and sickeningly democratic politics, ever scheming ways to crush the "upstart" government and return the nation to imperial control. Andoran is equally eager to topple Thrune's tyrannical regime. Yet despite decades of plausibly deniable skirmishes and espionage, neither side risked all-out war—at least, until recently.

**The Past Year:** In response to a conflict in the Isgeri town of Breachill (driven in part by an upstart group calling themselves the Hellbreakers), Cheliox urged Hellknights to move in and restore order—a command they followed with their usual ruthless efficiency. Concerned by the outcry, a contingent of Eagle Knights and diplomats from Andoran arrived to negotiate leniency with the Hellknights. In response, the Hellknights captured and publicly executed the Andoran mission's leader, General Kormoth.

As Andoran and Cheliox each made diplomatic overtures in public, they also began mobilizing their forces for a greater conflict while their proxies (a large contingent of Eagle Knights and the local Hellknights, respectively) clashed around Breachill. Ultimately, Her Infernal Majestrix Abrogail Thrune II declared Andoran's incursions into Isgar an act of war. Since then, the two nations have fought openly and fiercely, all while cajoling other states into joining the fray on their respective sides.

The tides of battle have so far ebbed and flowed, inflicting deep scars on the border regions of both Andoran and Cheliox, with neither side achieving a decisive win. Yet the conflict has

provided Isgar an opportunity it's long craved: freedom from Cheliox's control. A grassroots rebellion known as the Hellbreakers united disparate factions in Isgar to oust Cheliox and achieve independence.

While Isgar charts its future, Cheliox remains too entangled in its larger war to reassert control over the region—and other provinces have realized the empire's momentary weakness. To the southwest, Corentyn controls the Arch of Aroden and the sole strait connecting the Arcadian Ocean to the Inner Sea, earning vast profits from trade and taxes. However, needing both obedience and capital, House Thrune has imposed increasingly onerous demands on Corentyn. The city has less and less to give since the war has threatened shipping. The rulership only caring about the flow of gold has resulted in otherwise prosperous businesses being devastated by drained coffers. Unwilling to suffer any protests, Cheliox has established martial law in the city to extract whatever resources it needs to crush Andoran once and for all.

This initiative has trapped both long-term residents and casual travelers alike in the port city—including the PCs.



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### NAMES AND PLACES

The following is a brief overview of key people and places featured in this campaign.

**Abrogail Throne II:** Cheliox's current ruler, an accomplished sorcerer, and a descendant of Abrogail I who first signed Cheliox and her family over to Asmodeus nearly a century ago.

**Arch of Aroden:** Massive pylons support this ancient, broken bridge that spans most of the Hespereth Strait. Its arches are so wide that even large ships can sail between the columns.

**Corentyn:** This port city along Cheliox's southwest border controls traffic into and out of the Inner Sea.

**Dottari:** A term for Cheliox's police, with different cities each maintaining their own forces.

**Eagle Knights:** Andoran's elite soldiers who (in times of peace) operate in small groups to undermine tyrants throughout the Inner Sea region.

**Egorian:** Located near the country's center, Cheliox's capital features fearsome architecture meant to showcase House Throne's power and its diabolical allies.

**Khari:** Seized by Cheliox nearly 700 years ago, this port city in Garund controls the opposite side of the Arch of Aroden.

**Linetta Seacarver:** A young Twilight Talon and Andoren spy operating in Corentyn. She contacts the PCs at the beginning of the adventure and provides aid throughout the campaign.

**Twilight Talons:** A clandestine branch of the Eagle Knights that specializes in espionage and sabotage, with a handful of agents operating in many cities.

**Urdun Gravelhands:** Linetta's mentor and superior in the Twilight Talons, Urdun is an experienced spy with a legendary memory for everything happening in Corentyn.

### SUBSYSTEMS

This campaign uses several subsystems. You'll want to be familiar with Victory Point mechanics (*Pathfinder GM Core* 184), especially the influence subsystem (*Pathfinder GM Core* 187). The adventure also periodically uses other *GM Core* mechanics such as chases.

That said, the most common subsystem is skirmish combat (detailed on pages 158–161 of *Pathfinder Battlecry!*), which appears in almost every chapter—sometimes numerous times. In a skirmish encounter, one or more PCs directly commands and joins with a Gargantuan troop of allied combatants. In most of these encounters in Hell's Destiny, each PC will command a single troop.

You're unlikely to reach your first skirmish encounter until the end of the first chapter, but it's still worth familiarizing yourself with those rules as you create your character. By design, skirmish rules don't require any special feats, abilities, or character choices; Instead, some class abilities and feats you would already consider selecting offer additional options or advantages when commanding a troop.

### Character Suggestions

Though you're free to make any kind of character you like for the Hell's Destiny Adventure Path, taking the following suggestions into consideration will help you get the most out of this campaign.

### ANCESTRIES

The ongoing war cares more about combatants' allegiances and abilities than it does their origins, and characters of virtually any ancestry will be welcomed into the coalition against Cheliox. The following provides additional context for several noteworthy ancestries around Cheliox.

**Humans:** Although Cheliox is home to all of the common ancestries in the Player Core, humans are by far the most populous. In addition, Cheliox's major noble houses are predominantly human, and while they recruit retainers of any ancestry, the houses favor less diversity when deciding whom to adopt or marry.

**Halflings:** Halflings have inhabited the region for centuries, having quietly integrated into (and sometimes been exploited by) whichever empire ruled. Wanting more freedom and opportunities, many halflings have emigrated from Cheliox—often escaping old obligations, unfair contracts, and even physical shackles with the help of the Bellflower Network, a regional halfling-created network of spies and freedom fighters. That said, a noteworthy population has remained in Cheliox, often because their connections and intimate knowledge of how Cheliox operates open up lucrative opportunities.

**Goblins, Orcs, and Dromaars:** The Chitterwood goblins have posed a longtime threat to Cheliox's puppet state of Iger, with the Goblinblood Wars having ravaged much of that country a generation ago. While tales of the Chitterwood and its inhabitants still unsettle Chelaxians hundreds of miles away, attitudes toward goblins as a whole have softened with time. Enterprising goblins have earned Cheliox's wary respect and approval—at least so long as they abide by the empire's laws and political institutions.

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### SUGGESTED CHARACTER OPTIONS

|                             | Ancestries  | Classes  | Languages   | Skills  |
|-----------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| <b>Strongly Recommended</b> | Halfling, Human   | Bard, Champion <sup>PC2</sup> , Commander <sup>BI</sup> , Fighter, Guardian <sup>BI</sup> , Swashbuckler <sup>PC2</sup>  | Common, Diabolic  | Deception, Diplomacy, Religion, Society                             |
| <b>Recommended</b>          | Dwarf, Elf, Gnome, Nephilim   | Alchemist <sup>PC2</sup> , Barbarian <sup>PC2</sup> , Cleric, Druid, Exemplar <sup>Wol</sup> , Ranger, Rogue, Sorcerer <sup>PC2</sup>  | Draconic, Fey   | Acrobatics, Athletics, Intimidation, Performance, Stealth, Survival |
| <b>Appropriate</b>          | Goblin, Hobgoblin <sup>PC2</sup> , Kobold <sup>PC2</sup> , Leshy, Orc, Strix <sup>AG</sup> , Other ancestries | Gunslinger <sup>G&amp;G</sup> , Inventor <sup>G&amp;G</sup> , Kinetacist <sup>RoE</sup> , Magus <sup>SoM</sup> , Monk <sup>PC2</sup> , Investigator <sup>PC2</sup> , Oracle <sup>PC2</sup> , Psychic <sup>DA</sup> , Summoner <sup>SoM</sup> , Witch, Wizard | Azlanti, Dwarven, Empyrean, Halfling, Jotun, Pyric, Strix | Arcana, Crafting, Medicine, Nature, Occultism, Thievery             |
| <b>Not Recommended</b>      | —   |  | —   | —   |

<sup>AG</sup> See *Lost Omens Ancestry Guide*

<sup>BI</sup> See *Pathfinder Battlecry!*

<sup>G&G</sup> See *Pathfinder Guns & Gears*

<sup>PC2</sup> See *Pathfinder Player Core 2*

<sup>RoE</sup> See *Pathfinder Rage of Elements*

<sup>SoM</sup> See *Pathfinder Secrets of Magic*

<sup>Wol</sup> See *Pathfinder War of Immortals*

Much of the same applies to orcs. For millennia, orcs have dwelled in the Mindspin Mountains along Cheliox's northern border, periodically descending the slopes to raid nearby settlements. Cheliox and several of these alpine communities have negotiated indefinite trade deals, so while small groups of orcs are an uncommon sight in the lowlands, they cause no alarm. Orcs' acceptance is helped along by dromaars, who have been part of Chelaxian society since the Taldor marched across Avistan millennia ago.

**Gnomes:** Brastlewark, one of the Inner Sea region's few majority-gnome settlements, thrives along Cheliox's shared border with Andoran. In general, Brastlewark and House Thrune have enjoyed a live-and-let-live policy, with the former enjoying limited autonomy so long as it acknowledges the latter's supremacy, pays taxes, and contributes talented engineers, innovators, and other professionals to the empire's economy. However, Brastlewark is located near the war's main front and, while its gnome population has briefly appreciated the unfamiliar experiences war brings, the cumulative suffering quickly lost its novelty. Many gnomes have fled Brastlewark to avoid the fighting (including Chelaxian conscription), realizing that the excitement they really seek is a Cheliox freed from Thrune rule.

**Nephilim:** Over the past century, countless nephilim have been born in Cheliox, typically of the Hellspawn lineage. A few of these doubtlessly stem from amorous

dalliances with devils, but the majority seem to be a spontaneous result of Cheliox's strong connection to Hell, traced back to Abrogail Thrune I's deal with Asmodeus. Despite a nephilim's supernatural edge, they rarely receive a warm welcome in Chelaxian society; the narrative of House Thrune is that Cheliox has mastered and weaponized Hell, not married it, so a nephilim's existence suggests that at least one ancestor couldn't properly separate business and pleasure. This attitude still survives in some social circles, yet after nearly a century of coexistence, most Chelaxians' prejudices directed at nephilims have mellowed.

**Strix:** The Mindspin Mountains are also home to the winged strix, whose long history of conflict with humans drove them into the high peaks. Strix have since reached a tentative peace with Ravounel to the west, yet the former still maintains a cautious distance. A strix PC might be willing to battle Cheliox, even if settlements like Devil's Perch remain neutral, not wanting to get involved in what they perceive as a human war.

### CLASSES

Most classes are appropriate for Hell's Destiny, though some will be more thematically relevant than others.

**Leaders:** While Andoran and Cheliox fight, many neighboring societies and states hesitate as to whether they should risk Cheliox's wrath by joining the fray. This Adventure Path presents many opportunities to

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lead troops and rally NPCs—anyone from individual freedom fighters to heads of state—to join a coalition against House Thruene. Classes such as the champion, commander, exemplar, and fighter thrive in this role, as can spellcasting classes like the bard (especially with the warrior muse), cleric (especially with the battle herald or warpriest doctrines), and sorcerer (with such bloodlines as aesir, celestial, or diabolic).

**Spies:** This campaign takes place almost entirely in Cheliax, and while the PCs will spend part of that campaign boldly leading troops and spitting directly in the figurative face of House Thruene, they'll often need to pick their battles wisely by sneaking behind enemy lines, infiltrating contested cities, and gathering intelligence. Classes such as the investigator, ranger, rogue, and swashbuckler fit this role well, as can an alchemist (especially one specialized in alchemical bombs whose splash damage can devastate enemy troops).

**Warriors:** This is a war campaign, and there are ample opportunities to battle foes and repel entire squadrons of enemies at a time. Classes like the barbarian, champion, fighter, guardian, ranger, and swashbuckler can thrive in this role. A properly equipped inventor could bring their innovations to bear, especially when using the light mortar innovation from *Pathfinder Battlecry!*.

If your GM allows Starfinder character options—and Starfinder's second edition is fully compatible with Pathfinder's second edition, even if the futuristic gear isn't a good fit for this campaign—the soldier class with

### THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB

This Adventure Path frequently features devils and troops as foes, so it's worth keeping their defenses in mind when creating your character.

**Devils:** Many devils resist physical damage except from silver weapons, some resist poison, and immunity to fire is nearly ubiquitous. As a result, characters that rely heavily on fire damage might become frustrated unless they have a reliable way to overcome immunities or resistances. Characters who rely on physical damage—anything from longswords to arrows to the *needle darts* spell—would do well to carry a silver weapon.

**Troops:** A typical troop is immune to effects that target only a single creature, whereas splash damage and area effects often deal additional damage. This doesn't just affect enemy troops; if you're commanding a troop, your followers might not benefit from helpful spells and abilities unless they affect an area. Naturally, spells and alchemical bombs are reliable choices for defeating troops, but consider less common options such as ancestry abilities (like a kobold's Kobold Breath feat) and kineticist impulses.



the close quarters combat style could be an exciting choice for Hell's Destiny. The soldier's emphasis on area attacks would make them a force to be reckoned with, given troops' weakness to area damage.

### ARCHETYPES

A wide range of archetypes are appropriate to the Hell's Destiny Adventure Path. Archetypes that bolster one's combat abilities are a good fit, such as the archer, mauler, and sentinel. Likewise, consider archetypes like the captain (*Battlecry!* 82), cavalier, marshal, or multiclass commander dedication that enhance allies and turn the PC into an inspiring leader. The campaign includes some intrigue and urban adventuring, too, rewarding archetypes like the assassin, celebrity, and dandy. Finally, the combat-focused archetypes from *Pathfinder Battlecry!* can all thrive, especially those like the munitions master or war mage class archetypes.

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### LANGUAGES

The primary language in Avistan is Taldane, referred to as Common in this Adventure Path. Beyond that, Diabolic features regularly due to the many devils the PCs face throughout the campaign. As the PCs venture beyond Cheliaz's urban centers, they might encounter creatures that speak Draconic, Emypyrean, Fey, Jotun, Pyric, or Strix. Beyond that, Azlanti colonies dotted Avistan's western coast ages ago, and being able to read that language might occasionally benefit adventurers.

### FAITHS

Due to House Thrune's dominance and its contract with Hell, Cheliaz is the nexus of Asmodeus worship on Golarion. Inhabitants are expected to politely acknowledge and avoid offending the Prince of Darkness, his devils, and his mortal representatives. Worshipers of Hell's Archdevils isn't common (at

least not openly) as Asmodeus and Thrune don't appreciate the competition. In the Hell's Destiny Adventure Path, few if any unholy faiths are a good fit for player characters—Asmodeus least of all. In rare circumstances, a PC might revere the halfling god Thamir or even quietly worship Zon-Kuthon in the hope that by destabilizing Cheliaz, Nidal might grow in power. However, even these concepts would be difficult to incorporate into the story without upsetting many of the PCs' potential allies.

By contrast, deities interested in revolution, personal freedom, and aiding the downtrodden are excellent potential patrons, such as Arazni, Cayden Cailean, Desna, and Milani. Your PC might be especially inspired by a deity like Nocticula, whose origins illustrate how someone can take a flawed, fiendish institution and transform it into something greater. Warrior deities who encourage valor or "honorable war" also work well, including Iomedae or a host of Emypyreal Lords. Finally, a multitude of other deities are suitable for this campaign, for even though their own areas of interest don't align with the conflicts in Cheliaz, your PC might nevertheless be invested in this Avistani war.

### SKILLS AND FEATS

Hell's Destiny is a combat-heavy campaign punctuated by extended periods of urban adventuring and diplomacy.

**Recalling Knowledge:** Your PCs face off against many human and infernal foes, so skills like Religion and Society will help you learn about their motivations and weaknesses. When planning military operations or interacting with career commanders, the Warfare Lore skill can give you a vital edge.

**Force:** Whether you're vaulting obstacles to lead by example or demoralizing an enemy army, skills like Athletics and Intimidation can be just as important as knowing how to swing a sword.

**Self-Sufficiency:** This campaign explores both urban and wilderness areas in Cheliaz and, while they can sometimes contract NPCs' services, the PCs must still troubleshoot many their own problems while behind enemy lines. Skills like Crafting, Medicine, Nature, and Survival can help navigate these areas and repair whatever damage the PCs sustain.

**Subtlety:** Though high-level, the PCs aren't invincible. There are many situations in which the PCs must evade enemy detection, convince neutral parties to join forces against Cheliaz, or exploit a dangerous shortcut rather than lead a perilous direct assault. PCs with skills like Deception, Diplomacy,



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Stealth, and Thievery might bypass serious threats or even turn potential antagonists into allies of convenience.

**Downtime:** The PCs' objectives often play out over the course of several weeks, providing a modest amount of opportunity for downtime activities. There are some chapters that move much more quickly, though, so downtime opportunities can vary considerably throughout the campaign. As a result, you can get some mileage out of downtime-focused skills and skill feats without expecting major returns on the investment.

### BACKGROUNDS

The PCs all begin in Corentyn, though as 10th-level characters, they might have backgrounds and a heroic resume that began far from Cheliox. Nearly any background can fit this campaign so long as it provides your PC a sound reason for being near Corentyn during the war. Some might be especially good alternatives—especially any with Warfare Lore or other Lore skills represented in the new backgrounds—such as acolyte, field medic, martial disciple, noble, saboteur (*Player Core 2*), sailor, scout, or warrior.

In addition, any of the campaign backgrounds for the Hellbreakers Adventure Path are a good fit for this Adventure Path. You might work with your GM to replace any regional Lore skills provided by those backgrounds (such as Goblin Lore or Isgar Lore) with Lore categories better suited to this adventure.

### HELL'S DESTINY BACKGROUNDS

The following new backgrounds are designed specifically for the Hell's Destiny Adventure Path.

#### ANTI-THRUNE SABOTEUR BACKGROUND

UNCOMMON

House Throne has cast its tyrannical shadow over Cheliox for over 80 years, and you long to topple the dynasty and free southwest Avistan from its grip. You might be a spy for Andoran or another active combatant in the ongoing war, or perhaps you're a rebellious soul who grew up under Throne's thumb and dreams of a better future. Whatever the case, you're a versed saboteur ready to destroy Cheliox's armies from behind enemy lines.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Dexterity or Charisma, and one is a free attribute boost.

You're trained in either Deception or Thievery, as well as either the Cheliox Lore or Engineering Lore skill. If you chose Deception, you gain the Lengthy Diversion skill feat. If you chose Thievery, you gain the Dirty Trick skill feat.

#### ARCHDEVIL APOSTATE BACKGROUND

UNCOMMON

You once worshipped a powerful archdevil but have turned away from fiendish practices. Whether you walked away due to moral compunctions or cold pragmatism, you know your soul was once bound for Hell and you can only pray that your new path erases the sins you've committed.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Charisma or Intelligence, and one is a free attribute boost.

You're trained in the Religion skill and the Devil Lore skill. You gain the Student of the Canon skill feat.

#### DEFIANT NOBLE BACKGROUND

UNCOMMON

Any Chelioxian aristocrat is trained to acknowledge House Throne's power and sing its praises, lest their entire dynasty be devastated and absorbed by a stronger house. You grew up among the Cheliox's upper crust and learned to play its game, all the while harboring secret dreams of reform—if not outright rebellion. The ongoing war would be an opportunity to win glory and accolades on the battlefield in Throne's name. But while others are distracted, you'd rather undermine your rivals, aid the secessionist ambitions of Cheliox's vassals, or even overthrow House Throne itself! At least outwardly, your family will denounce your action, even if they might silently pray for your success.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Strength or Charisma, and one is a free attribute boost.

You're trained in the Society skill and either the Cheliox Lore or Legal Lore skill. You gain the Courtly Graces skill feat.

#### EMBARGO SURVIVOR BACKGROUND

UNCOMMON

Soon after the outbreak of war, Cheliox sealed one of its greatest chokepoints: the Arch of Aroden, which spans the lone western entrance to the Inner Sea. A Chelioxian armada guards the strait and has prohibited nearly all traffic into or out of the nearby port of Corentyn. You might be a longtime Corentyn resident versed in shipping or a traveler whose ship became trapped by the sudden embargo, trapping you in the city. Whatever the case, you've had to learn quickly how to survive under martial law in an increasingly claustrophobic city with dwindling supplies and desperate civilians looking to you for leadership.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Constitution or Wisdom, and one is a free attribute boost.

You're trained in Survival and either the Sailing Lore or Warfare Lore skill. You gain the Scrappy Defiance action.

**Scrappy Defiance** ♦ (mental) **Frequency** once per day; **Trigger** Your turn begins, and you are commanding a troop;

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**Effect** You encourage your followers to persevere against all hardships. The troop you command gains temporary Hit Points equal to twice your level which last for 1 minutes. If your troop's size would be reduced due to damage, you can attempt a DC 16 flat check; on a success, your troop's size isn't reduced at that threshold until the end of your next turn.

### HELL-HUNTED

UNCOMMON

Cheliox's vengeance and Hellknights' reach aren't limited to southern Avistan. Whether you committed a grievous crime or have been targeted for disproportionate justice for a minor wrong, you're in a tyrant's crosshairs and have been on the run from the law. You might not have made it beyond Corentyn before realizing you'd never make it past the naval blockade alone. Perhaps you have trekked across continents while being hounded by Hellknights, and you've determined that the only way to end this twisted game is to confront Cheliox and the Hellknights on their own turf. Whatever the case, your ordeal has left you toughened and wise to infernal tactics.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Dexterity or Constitution, and one is a free attribute boost.

You're trained in Stealth and either the Devil skill Lore or Hellknight Lore skill. You gain the Terrain Stalker skill feat.

### BACKGROUND


### SCHOLAR OF BATTLEFIELDS

UNCOMMON

Though you probably don't revel in the violence of war, you are fascinated by battlefield tactics and regional conflicts' effects on history. Perhaps you traveled to Cheliox to study its strategies, document its logistical innovations, and chronicle events. You might instead be an enterprising mercenary looking to sell your services in the conflict. No matter your original intentions, you've become mired in Corentyn's martial law, and the more that Cheliox harms its own citizens to maintain wartime compliance, the more eager you've become to aid its enemies.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Strength or Intelligence, and one is a free attribute boost.

You're trained in Athletics and the Warfare Lore skill. You gain the Relentless Assault action.

**Relentless Assault**  (fortune) **Frequency** once per day;

**Trigger** A creature would succeed or critically succeed at a saving throw against the offensive ability of a troop you command; **Effect** With an encouraging command, you direct your troop to make a few additional attacks. The triggering creature rerolls its saving throw and uses the worse result.

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