

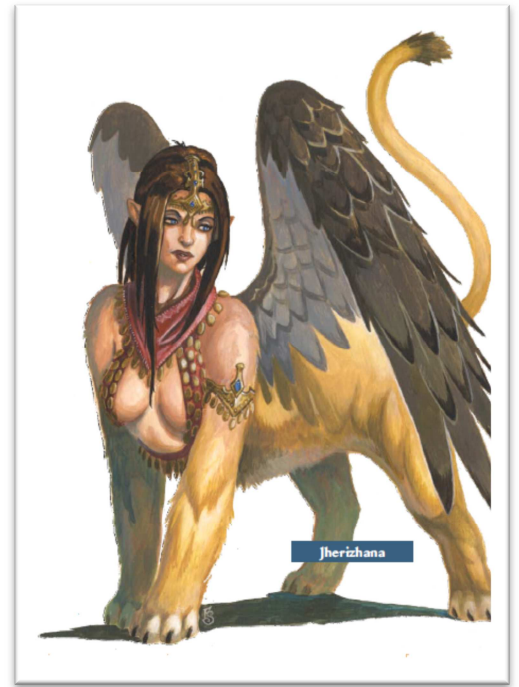
Jherizhana the Sphinx

-female sphinx (large magical beast with the wings of a falcon, the body of a lion and the head and torso of a beautiful woman)

Less moralistic than their male counterparts (the “androsphinx” –a different creature entirely than the sphinx presented here), sphinxes are careful and methodical in their decision-making, and pride themselves on their cold logic and impartiality. Sphinxes love riddles and complicated dilemmas, and treasure strange facts and arcane trivia far more than gold or gems.

While not great scholars in any traditional sense, sphinxes' great appreciation of puzzles leads them to research shallowly in a wide variety of subjects, and they can often be invaluable sources of information, especially when making use of their magical abilities. They are usually happy to barter with other races, and regularly trade material goods for information or new and interesting quandaries. Sphinxes place great value on politeness, but can be dangerously temperamental—while they may decide to share their latest riddles with travelers out of altruism, they think little of devouring those who don't give their dilemmas adequate attention or provide useful insight.

Sphinxes are typically 10 feet long and about 800 pounds. While their wings are capable of holding them aloft for long periods of time, they are poor fliers, and prefer to land before engaging foes, lashing out with their powerful claws. Though fiercely territorial, they tend to give intruders plenty of warning before attacking.



Almara Delisen

- female Varisian, mid-30s
- owner/operator of the Umbra Carnival
- outgoing, matriarchal, proud



Kyra Feldane

- Sheriff of Ilsurian
- female Chelaxian, mid-40s
- impatient, suspicious, tense



Archivin Walder

- Proprietor of The Locked Box
- male Chelaxian, mid-60s
- cold, stiff, quiet & starting to smell worse

Archivin Walder's murder scene

- located in a small clearing behind a thicket just off the road about halfway between the carnival and the town
- the only signs of tracks are a set of medium booted feet and a set of large animal tracks, like those of a predator
- telltale signs of a scuffle; the booted feet enter the woods from the road where the large animal tracks suddenly appear
- bloodstains on the ground indicate fatal injury

Agnes Walder

- Widow of Archivin Walder
- female Chelaxian, early 50s
- grief-stricken, volatile, prejudiced

Archivin Walder's Murder Scene - CSI Version

- the ground in the clearing has been swept clean of tracks other than what you were intended to find
- the animal tracks you found don't match the sphinx's; there's an extra toe there that felines don't have
- the depth of the tracks suggests that whatever made them did not weigh nearly enough to be a sphinx, which are almost 800 pounds

Shiver

- a highly addictive drug, Shiver causes a user to fall into a deep sleep and experience vivid dreams, during which they constantly shake which earned the drug its moniker
- Shiver's main ingredient is venom from a Dream Spider, native to the Mwangi Expanse; thus Shiver is expensive to make and not common outside of major cities

Sister Esrelda Woodmere

- ranking cleric of Erastil in Ilsurian
- female Chelaxian, late 40s
- charitable, resolute, matriarchal

Robella Monchello

- Proprietor of Mistress Robella's Curiosity Shop
- female Chelaxian, mid-30s
- suspicious, anxious, tense



Borvius Monchello

- operator of Ilsurian Hauling & Storage
- male Chelaxian, late 30s
- arrogant, swaggering, loud



Ika

- entertainer for the Umbra Carnival
- female Varisian, late 20s
- mischievous, quiet, unpredictable



Filton Legg

- town drunk
- male Chelaxian, late 40s
- formerly a renown fisherman, now a shadow of the man he once was



Archivin Walder's Corpse

- the body has been washed and wrapped in a shroud in concordance with Varisian funeral custom
- there are many wounds evident on the body, including sets of lacerations consistent with a large animal's claws and puncture wounds consistent with a bite pattern
- the claw wounds are on the back and arms
- the bites are local to the shoulders and neck

Sister Esrelda's Corpse

- the body has defensive wounds on the hands and arms consistent with a large animal's claws
- there is one set of punctures around the face, almost the full circumference of the head
- the throat has been mangled

Sister Esrelda's Corpse - CSI Version

- flapping the throat back into place, you notice ligature marks around her neck indicating she was strangled prior to her throat being mangled

Sister Esrelda's Murder Scene

- the door of the sphinx's cage is ajar
- it is difficult to track around the area because of the amount of foot traffic
- one thing that is evident is there are no animal tracks like at Archivin Walder's murder scene

Sister Esrelda's Murder Scene - CSI Version

- there are recent tracks of several humanoids exiting the tent by pulling up stakes and rolling under the wall
- there are three glass vials discarded in this area, they are empty but some residue remains
- the tracks end a short distance away from the sphinx's tent, under a wagon where two discarded clown costumes are found

Three Discarded Vials

- the residue is an alcoholic concoction known as a tincture; this was not a magical potion, more like an extract made by an alchemist
- without a larger sample it is not possible to identify the specific effect of this extract

Filton Legg's Murder Scene

- Legg's lifeless body is hanging by a rope noose from a tree
- his eyes have been gouged out, his mouth is stuffed with rags and his left hand is missing at the wrist
- a note is pinned to his chest; it states "We take care of our own" in Varisian
- a harrow card, The Desert, is in his pocket; it depicts an androsphinx
- a well-handled letter from an "Arhaneem Braeton" is in his back pocket

Milandru Vagoslav

- his family works for the Umbra Carnival
- male Varisian, 13 years old
- shaken, naïve & yearning for his mommy
- states that he was looking for a friend (Grayson) he made so he could say goodbye
- he tried to sneak into town on account of the quarantine, was spotted, chased and caught by some townies

Filton Legg's Backstory DC 10

He was addicted to a substance known as shiver. Some people suspect the drug is produced locally, but sold in other towns and communities so that the drug's manufacture is not traced directly back to the source. Filton seemed to have an inside connection.

Filton Legg's Backstory DC 15

Having sold or lost everything he had of value, Filton was reduced to begging. Nevertheless, he started to change over the past few months—drying out, attending temple, and becoming respectable again. Filton had been looking for honest work of late, but was publicly bitter toward persons he would not name.

Filton Legg's Backstory DC 20

The practice of severing the left hand was a popular among gangs and thieves' guilds in Korvosa some 10 to 20 years ago. It was a reprisal done to someone who sought relief from an illegal debt by going to the authorities. The idea was the victims retained their right hands so they could still make good on their obligations.

Arhaneem Braeton

- operator of Braeton Inland Shipping
- male Chelaxian, early 40s
- has a reputation as an honest, hard-working local business owner
- owns over a dozen river barges and most of the dock slips in Ilsurian
- his fleet serves settlements along Lake Syrantula and the Skull River
- conducts most of his business out of his home so he can be close to his growing family

Arhaneem Braeton's Letter

“This man is a probationary employee of Braeton Inland Shipping. As such he is authorized by my signature to purchase on company credit such apparel and sundry items as he requires for the performance of his duties.
(signed) Arhaneem Braeton”

Overheard The Morning After:

“Didja hear old man Walder got hisself kilt last night? He tried to get frisky with that sphinx what from the carnival. Damn creature broke out of the cage and hunted Walder down when he fled. Them carnival folks, they’re all actin’ like nothin’ happened. I can tell ya, Sheriff Feldane ain’t gonna let it alone.”

“I almost slapped my boy’s ears off his head last night. Little snapper tried to sneak in waaay past dark. Found out he wuz dallying at the carnival with his friends. Afterward he told his brother that he wuzn’t cryin’ from getting a whuppin’, made up a fishin’ story about something big flying over the town last night. Said it flew real close to them an’ he heard it fussin’ an’ growlin’. What a buncha hogwash! The boy knew he got whapped.”

“Someone did in poor Cedrick Vandolph last night. He was standin’ watch over at The Locked Box. Not sure what happened, I woke up when I heard this awful wailing next door at the Vandolph’s cottage. I went over to see what’s what and his sister told me her momma just got back from the temple an’ her brother’s dead. Murder most foul, it was.”

“I heard that too! That family is gonna be in a whole lotta hurt now, Cedrick was the one who kept food on their table. He was so young! Terrible business. Guess The Locked Box got cleaned out too. That skinflint Walder better take care of Cedrick’s family—you know he won’t lest Esrelda rides him.”

“You heard about old man Walder? Turns out that carnival is nuthin’ but a Sczarni folk. Walder musta cheated them or sumthin. He was workin’ late at The Locked Box an’ they came callin’. Sicced their pet sphinx on him while they did for that Vandolph kid he hired for the night watch. Sheriff’s gonna put together a posse to put the beast down. Everyone knows I’m a crack shot with the bow, Sheriff’s probably looking for me right now. I’d do it too, but I got a mess of sticky buns to deliver. Momma says she’d knock the idea out my head if she weren’t sure my all marbles’d spill out too.”

“Don’t it just figure? That Sheriff don’t know which way’s up! She should be raising the hue an’ cry already. We got two respectable, gods-fearing townfolk murdered an’ what’s she doin’? ‘*Collecting evidence*’ she says! Got us an army of beady-eyed Varisians camped on our doorstep and Sheriff can’t figure it out without some ‘evidence’. Why don’t she start hangin’ ‘em until they come clean? You put a noose around a man’s neck and he’ll get real cooperative. If not, it’s not like anyone’s gonna miss a few Varisian cutpurses, that’s for sure!”

“I did so make that lion roar! BAM! ROARRRR! I thought I broke the hammer, to tell the truth. That Ulfen guy said he’d never heard it roar so loud either. Just ask him if you don’t believe me. I’d show you the crown I won, if I didn’t lose it in the masked lady’s tent.”

“I’m doomed! I got a harrowing last night at the carnival. Waited an over hour for an appointment with All-Seeing Hajeck, and now I wish I hadn’t. It was like I was outside of my body watching my whole life described to me. Then she told me about my future. She drew The Avalanche, The Idiot and The Betrayal. She started crying and saying she was sorry. She said she couldn’t finish and gave me my money back. She didn’t want me in her wagon and I should stay away from the carnival. Doomed I am!

“My sister just came home from the temple and said she an’ Sister Esrelda just said last rites over old man Walder and young Cedrick. Said they was cut up so bad it took all night to wash their bodies clean. Said Esrelda was plenty mad, but Sheriff said **she’d** be the one to handle things. Then Esrelda said Sheriff better do something soon or Erastil was going to have a word about it. Then Sheriff comes back from the carnival and now she’s all ‘we musn’t rush to judgment’ or some horseshit. I’ll bet Sister Esrelda is hot under the collar now!”

“Did you hear that the baby dragon got out of its cage at the carnival yesterday? It was going to hurt this little girl, but my big brother Butch said he jumped on top of it and wrestled it back into the cage. He said he had to hold its jaws shut so it couldn’t breathe fire on him. He’s got a burn on his arm too, he showed me it this morning. Said everyone at the carnival was so grateful he got free admission to all the shows.”

“I shaw it, backlit by tha moon it wuz. Wingshpan had to be twenny feet! If I hadn’t been so dumbshtruck that I fell over, it wouldda got me just like it got Arshivin. Right outshide the carnival it wuz. Yeah, I been drinkin’, wha’sure point? Grog don’t drink ishelp. I shaw what I shaw, godshdamn you if ya don’ believe me!”