Zeitgeist™

THE GEARS OF REVOLUTION

EN Publishing™

The Investigation Begins



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ZEITGEIST Adventure Path Act One

The Investigation Begins

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Foreword
by Russ Morrissey

In your hands you hold the gorgeous full-colour hardback book which constitutes the first Act of the Zeitgeist: The Gears of Revolution Adventure Path. That is, unless you're reading the PDF, in which case you do not hold in your hands the gorgeous full-colour hardback book which constitutes the first Act of the Zeitgeist: The Gears of Revolution Adventure Path.

This is our second major adventure path. Our first was called War of the Burning Sky, and it was also enormous: the full hardcover came in at 800 pages. Zeitgeist is bigger, though—just Act 1 fills 500 pages. I honestly think that this adventure path is the best work we've ever done to date—and critics and reviewers agree! They call it things like "one of the epic Adventure Paths of this decade."

All of that is immensely gratifying. It's hard to put your all into something and then let it free for the world to judge, and hearing stories of people playing and enjoying our adventure path is a certain type of joy that is hard to describe. I honestly believe we've done something special here—something that caters to the experienced GM and doesn't shy away from complex plots, motivated NPCs, and the general bucking of trends.

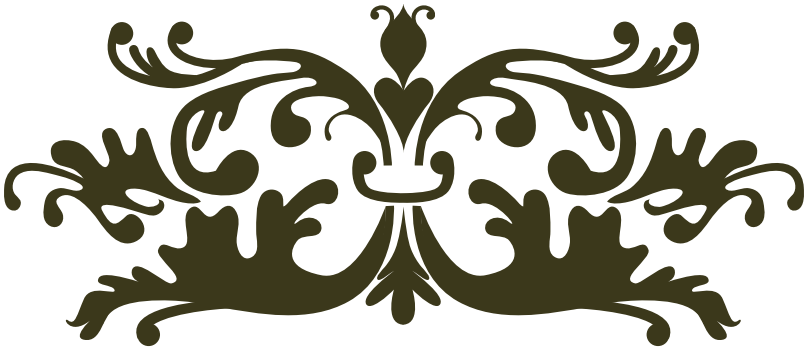
Of course, I can't take too much credit. Ryan Nock was the lead developer on this monumental task, and the team of writers, artists, cartographers, and graphic designers he put together is second to none. Eric Life-Putnam conceived the general sumptuous look and design of the series, and I personally feel that Ryan is amongst the very top tier of adventure writers in the world, and I feel that this adventure path is one of the very best RPG adventure experiences—and when you've read this enormous tome, I think you'll agree.

We like to make our adventure paths complex. An EN Publishing adventure path is not to be undertaken lightly, and we design deliberately for GMs willing to take on the task. The rewards are immense, and I hope that running the Zeitgeist adventure path will be one of the more memorable highlights of your gaming career.



ZEITGEIST Adventure Path

Player's Guide



From the Pen of Ryan Nock

Evocative Cover Illustration by Claudio Pozas

Stunning Cartographic Displays by James Hazelett
Jonathan Roberts

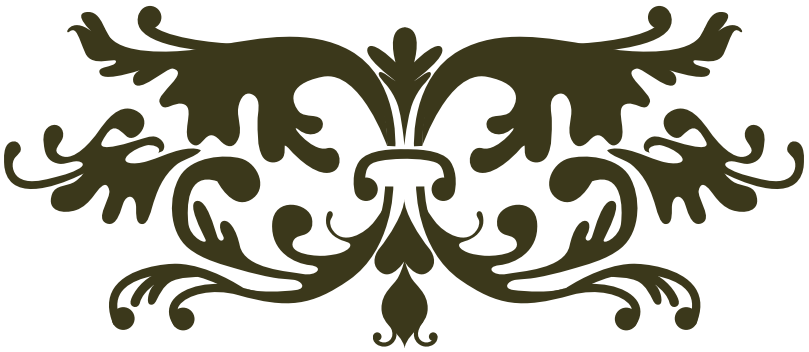
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Brian Lindahl
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Ably Produced and Facilitated by Russell Morrissey

Special Thanks to *our hundreds of Kickstarter backers, and to the many GMs and players who were our "external playtesters" the first time these adventures were published.*



PLAYER'S GUIDE: Introduction

Steam and soot darken the skies above the city of Flint, and winds sweeping across its majestic harbor blow the choking products of industrial forges into the fey rainforests that dot its knife-toothed mountains. Since the earliest ages when the people of Risur founded this city, they feared the capricious beings that hid in those fog-shrouded peaks, but now, as the march of progress and the demands of national defense turn Flint into a garden for artifice and technology, the old faiths and rituals that kept the lurkers of the woods at bay are being abandoned.

The Unseen Court, the Great Hunt, and the many spirits of the land long ago conquered by Risur's kings no longer receive tribute, but they cannot enter these new cities of steam and steel to demand their tithe. The impoverished workers who huddle in factory slums fear monsters of a different breed, shadowy children of this new urban labyrinth. Even their modern religions have no defenses against these fiends.

Times are turning. The skyseers—Risur's folk prophets since their homeland's birth—witness omens in the starry wheels of heaven, and they warn that a new age is nigh. But what they cannot foresee, hidden beyond the steam and soot of the night sky, is the face of this coming era, the spirit of the next age. The zeitgeist.

Contents

This Player's Guide contains materials for both players and the DM. The **Zeitgeist** Campaign Guide, also freely available, has details of all the adventures, and should be read only by the DM.

Section One: Characters offers new backgrounds and equipment for PCs, and guidelines for handling the campaign's industrial age technology with the Dungeons & Dragons rules.

Section Two: Setting describes the nations and history of the **Zeitgeist** adventure path. You can read only the parts of this section that relate to your character, or skip over it entirely.

Section Three: Flint explores the campaign's focal city in detail. All players should have at least a passing familiarity with the city before starting the second adventure.

Section Four: Royal Homeland Constabulary provides an overview of the local offices of the Royal Homeland Constabulary, to which the PCs all belong. It also presents guidelines for common investigative tasks, useful for both DMs and players.

Pronunciation Guide.

- **Risur.** REES-ser (rhymes with "fleecer"). A native is a Risuri (rhymes with "Missouri").
- **Crisillyir.** kris-SILL-lee-ur (rhymes with "the sillier"). A native is a Crisillyiri (rhymes with "this ill eerie").
- **Danor.** DAN-nor (rhymes with "fan oar"). A native is a Danoran (rhymes with "can foreign").
- **Drakr.** DRAHK-kur (rhymes with "locker"). A native is a Drakran.
- **Elfaivar.** el-FIE-vahr (rhymes with "bell five bar"). A native is an Elfaivaran.
- **Lanjyr.** LAN-jeer (rhymes with "fan jeer").
- **Yerasol.** YAIR-uh-sahl (rhymes with "aerosol").
- **Aodhan.** Traditionally, AID-un, like the name Aidan. Foreigners mispronounce it OWD-hahn (rhymes with "loud Ron").
- **Srasama.** srah-SAH-muh (rhymes with "the llama").

WHAT IF I WANT TRADITIONAL FANTASY?

Some gaming groups are hesitant to introduce technology more recent than the Renaissance to their fantasy campaigns. While the conflict between technology and traditional magic is a key component of the Zeitgeist adventure path, it is certainly possible for the DM to retool the campaign so arcane and psionic power fill the role normally played by industry, leaving primal and divine power to represent "tradition."

Likewise, if you are playing Zeitgeist in a different setting, the DM will have to decide how to adapt the geography, history, and cosmology to fit with that world. For questions like this, and any other help you'd like for your game, we encourage you to post on the EN World messageboards, where the community and the E.N. Publishing staff is always willing to help fellow gamers.

Campaign Primer

A Step Away from Classic Fantasy.

In the Zeitgeist adventure path, your characters serve in the Royal Homeland Constabulary of the nation of Risur, protecting the country and its citizens from foreign threats lurking within its borders. During missions of espionage and assassination, your duty will be to root out hostile spies and pursue international conspiracies. As you learn more of your homeland's own secrets, however, your loyalties may be tested, may even be turned, and you may find that it is you whose hand controls the gears of the turning age.

It is not necessary to read the entire Player's Guide in order to play. Anything that matters to your game will be introduced in the course of the adventures. We do suggest all players give this primer a quick read to get the gist of the setting. Then those players who want to sink their teeth into the world can read the full guide to see how Zeitgeist stands apart from the "points of light" assumed world of traditional Dungeons & Dragons®. If you're interested in learning more, follow the links to the recommended pages.

Humans and the Great Nations.

Humans rule three of the five great nations of the continent Lanjyr. Their ascendance in the past two thousand years toppled a mighty eladrin empire and has provoked belief in doomsday millennialism among many dwarves. The campaign begins in Risur (page 32), and every PC should have a strong loyalty to the nation, even if the character does not hail from there.

Eladrin, Devas, and the Great Malice.

Long ago elves known as the eladrin built an empire of magical wonders. Then five hundred years ago the death of the eladrin goddess Srasama caused nearly every eladrin woman to perish. Those few who survived were often claimed as trophies by human conquerors, though a handful of free matriarchs head their own family lines in the ruins of the old empire. Those interested in the eladrin should read the section on Elfaivar (page 45).

Mortals present at the death of the eladrin goddess have continually reincarnated in the following centuries as devas, as if a sliver of Srasama's divine spark has granted them a semblance of immortality. Those interested in devas should read the section on Crisillyir (page 41).

Tieflings, Technology, and Dead Magic.

When the eladrin goddess died, an entire other nation became a dead magic zone, and some in that land were marked by a curse, turning them into tieflings. In the centuries since, however, the tieflings have come to rule that nation, and in the last few decades they have begun a revolution of industry and mighty science almost as powerful as the magic they lack. Those interested in tieflings should read the section on Danor (page 42).

If you are interested in utilizing some of the new revolution's technology for your character, particularly firearms, see the section on Equipment (page 17).

Dwarves, Doomsday, and Nihilism.

The major dwarven nation is bleakly resigned to an imminent doomsday, when ancient horrors will claw free from glaciers and engulf the world in a frigid death. Adherence to duty is so ingrained in their culture, however, that the dwarves continue to toil in their forges even as they prepare for the world's end. Those interested in dwarves should read the section on Drakr (page 44).

Savages, Primitives, and Peace.

Freed from the yoke of toppled dragon tyrants, the youngest of the great nations formed from an alliance of several monstrous races which now live in an uneasy peace as their rulers seek to force the disparate peoples into the modern age. Those interested in dragonborn, gnolls, goliaths, minotaurs, and orcs should read the section on Ber (page 39).

Piety and the Planes.

The heavens possess an undeniable hold on the world's religions, its people, and its very structure. In Risur, skyseers believe that the movements of the night stars foretell the future and direct the fate of the world. More enlightened scholars study distant planes of elemental and temporal power to understand how the flow of their energies affects the fundamental nature of reality. The eladrin people have begun to withdraw into the Dreaming (also known as the Feywild), and the bishops of the high church of the Clergy invoke condemned spirits from the Bleak Gate (also known as the Shadowfell) to frighten sinners into worship.

The Astral Sea, Elemental Chaos, and Far Realm exist only as postulations, and there are countless other theories on the nature of reality. No one in this world has ever traveled to these planes, and even travel between the known worlds of the night sky is brief, with summoned beings never remaining more than a few minutes.

Those interested in the setting's metaphysics should read the section on The World (page 46).

Heroic Themes.

The Zeitgeist campaign setting presents nine character themes that reinforce the heroic archetypes of the world, such as eschatologists, gunsmiths, and technologists. Each player should choose one Theme for his or her character, preferably one unique to the world of Zeitgeist (page 7).

An Exceedingly Brief Timeline

- **–1200 B.O.V. (Before Our Victory):** King Kelland defeats the fey titans and founds Risur, the first mortal nation on the continent of Lanjyr. In the following centuries, other nations rise up throughout Lanjyr.
- **–1117 B.O.V.:** The demonocracy arises, its monstrous rulers enslaving the primitive nations of the north. Risur keeps it from expanding south, and Elfaivar blocks its eastward growth.
- **–500 B.O.V.:** Triegenes the fisherman founds the Clergy in what is modern-day Danor, overthrows the demonocracy, then dies and ascends to godhood.
- **–50 B.O.V.:** The First Victory, a holy war between humans and eladrin, ends with the eladrin losing much territory.
- **1 A.O.V. (After Our Victory):** The Second Victory begins as an eladrin effort to reclaim lost lands, but ends in their decisive defeat when the eladrin goddess Srasama manifests physically, and is slain. Danor collapses into chaos as the nation becomes a dead magic zone. The seat of the Clergy moves to Crisillyir, which begins to colonize the devastated lands of Elfaivar. Dwarves seize control of their own nation in Drakr.
- **300 A.O.V.:** King Boyle of Risur slays the last dragon tyrant of Ber. The nation of Danor, resurgent with industry and technology, begins to contest Risur for control of the lush Yerasol Archipelago.
- **460 A.O.V.:** King Aodhan is crowned in Risur. He encourages his people to pursue industry so they can fight back against Danor. Meanwhile in Ber, Bruse Le Roye unites tribes of monstrous races into a new nation.
- **493 A.O.V.:** The Fourth Yerasol War ends, with Risur having lost many islands.
- **500 A.O.V.:** Present day.



SECTION ONE: Characters

We assume as a baseline that your characters in the Zeitgeist adventure path will work for the Royal Homeland Constabulary, a Risuri organization created by King Aodhan to monitor threats to his nation, both home-grown and from foreign lands.

Every constable must have passed a background check and magical inquisition to prove his or her loyalty to Risur. These precautions allow even foreign-born citizens to serve, giving the constabulary a valuable tool in pursuing investigations overseas. Groups of constables are often assigned to pool their talents to accomplish dangerous and complex tasks, such as rescue missions, surveillance to catch smugglers and traitors, and even espionage or assassination.

In the default version of the adventure path every PC should have a strong devotion to Risur, though PCs can certainly have other affiliations and allegiances that may eventually draw them away. Additionally, over the course of the campaign the PCs will encounter other power groups with their own motivations. One of the themes of the campaign is deciding what one believes in and why, so feel free to nudge your fellow PCs toward one faction or another as the campaign progresses. Remember, though, that games can quickly turn unfun without party unity.

Of course, if your DM chooses, you may begin the campaign affiliated with a different organization, or perhaps as free agents hired by the RHC, much the same way Scotland Yard sought help from Sherlock Holmes. We offer suggestions for such options in the Campaign Guide.

Setting Considerations

Almost every class power and magic item is available for the **Zeitgeist** campaign setting, unless your DM decides otherwise.

Some character options might be exceedingly rare, even unique—like sentient golems (warforged), half-elementals (genasi), or mantis-men (thri-kreen). The nature of the planes of the world makes creatures with the aberrant and immortal origins effectively unknown, aside from devas. Strange races could be reskinned—a bladeling as an unusual dragonborn, a shardmind as a normal humans who fell victim of an arcanoscientific accident—or just be from the far corners of the world.

Feats, powers, and items that reference materials from other settings or that involve different planes should generally be reskinned. There's no Underdark or drow in **Zeitgeist**, but perhaps a dark-skinned race of elves lurks in the mountains of the Bleak Gate. Nor was there a Bael'Turath, but tieflings could pine for the glory days of the Clergy from before the Great Malice.

Gods do not make themselves regularly known in this world, and it is impossible to visit the planes where they reside, so it's even possible to doubt whether they exist at all. You can use existing gods or those of the DM's own creation.

Classes.

Risuri natives tend to favor arcane, martial, and primal classes. Most warlocks follow fey or dark pacts, since the nature of the planes makes it difficult to contact infernal or far realm patrons.

Few gods have large followings in Risur, but pockets of foreigners or native converts provide a likely source for divine classes. More rarely a person with strong philosophical ideals can wield divine power through the gestalt will of those who share his beliefs.

Psionic classes are relatively new and rare, though many cultures have their own variations of people who seem to be able to see through the veil of reality and forsake the limits of their flesh. In particular, eladrin monks are infamous for their unusual fighting techniques, while dwarven philosophers sometimes possess the powers of ardents.

Magic.

Only two types of magic are wholly off-limits: long-duration flight, and long-duration planar travel.

The nature of the elemental planes that feed energy into the world makes it impossible for magic to create permanent flight. Powers that grant flight for never last more than five minutes, though flight with wings is fine, as long as the creature is Medium sized or smaller. There are no flying carpets or airships. Since the reported extinction of dragons, flying creatures do not grow any larger than an eagle or condor.

Likewise, despite theories that suggest it should be possible to travel to distant planets via mighty rituals, all attempts to visit any foreign world never last longer than a few rounds before the traveler is shunted

back to this plane. It is possible to wander into the Dreaming or the Bleak Gate and return, but even these trips are usually only possible when the moon and stars align properly, and getting back can be even more difficult than going in the first place.

Mechanically, this means that no creature can ever leave its home plane for more than five minutes, barring unique circumstances that are beyond the control of player characters. Such options may become available to PCs later in the campaign, but traveling to another world in Zeitgeist is never as simple as performing a single ritual.

Technology.

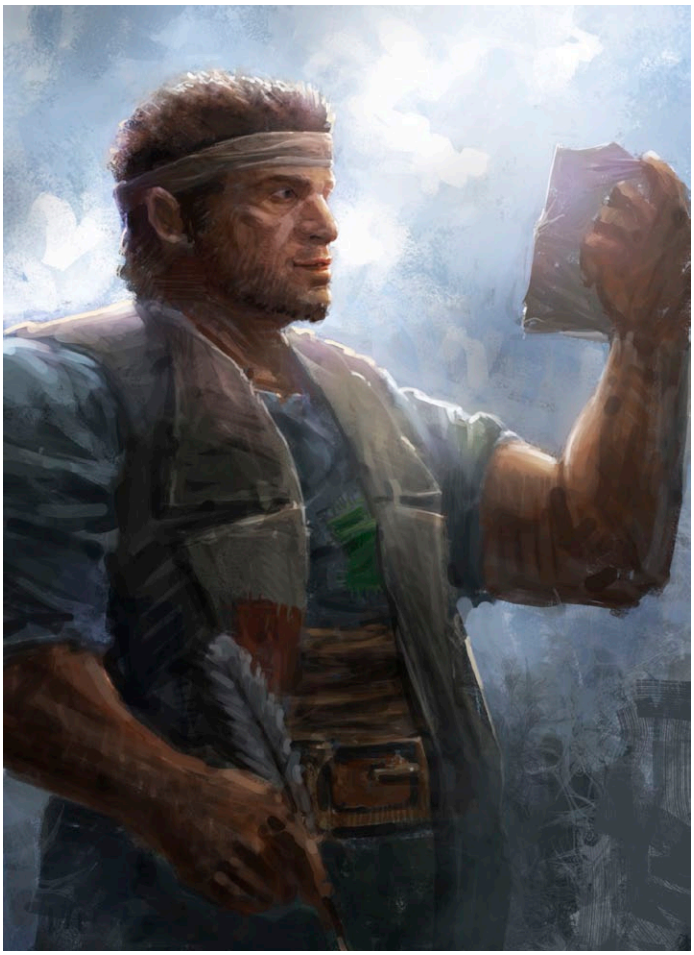
While the city of Flint sits under a haze of coal soot, its streets illuminated at night by gaslight lanterns and its ferries powered by steam boilers, the majority of Risur remains at roughly a Renaissance level of technology. Soldiers carry alchemical pistols as back-up weapons, and elite fusilier units carry muskets and carbines, but aside from the occasional new rail line splitting the countryside, most citizens of Risur never see any of the new technology that is changing the world around them.

To be clear, though, there are no automobiles, electric lights, or flying vehicles. Most firearms still are muzzle-loaders, and rifles only exist as custom creations of innovative gunsmiths.

Character Themes

The nine themes below provide a quick hook to link your character to the **Zeitgeist** campaign setting. As with all the new character options in this document, we strive to make them as compatible with the Character Builder software as possible. While the powers of these themes cannot benefit from the automatic calculations the Character Builder offers, we have included power cards at the end of this document for ease of printing, with empty spaces to let you fill in the appropriate numbers.

- **Docker.** Bohemian working man artists and performers.
- **Eschatologist.** Philosophers devoted to the proper end of things.
- **Gunsmith.** Designers and wielders of custom firearms.
- **Martial Scientist.** Educated and analytical warriors.
- **Skyseer.** Folk prophets who see the future in the stars.
- **Spirit Medium.** Mentalists who communicate with spirits.
- **Technologist.** Designers of contraptions and masters of devices.
- **Vekeshi Mystic.** Activists devoted to the philosophy of slow, proper vengeance against those who oppress the weak.
- **Yerasol Veteran.** Highly regarded naval war heroes.



Docker.

Flint's industrial docks—with their unusual confluence of peasant workers, educated engineers, and constantly-arriving refugees from the wars in the border states between Danor and Drakr—have in the past decade given birth to an unorthodox social movement. Graffiti artists brighten soot-cloaked warehouses with colorful murals and boastful self-portraits. Dancers and musicians bolster moods in breezy bars, while amateur philosophers giddy on fey pepper entertain drunken teamsters with humorous moral puzzles that often mock public figures.

Occasionally these popular artists, called dockers, get it in their heads to start a riot or get a tad too precise with their criticism. The dockers and the city police have each taken their hits in these confrontations, and tensions grow higher with every accidental death, but for now Roland Stanfield, the city governor of Flint, seems to have a soft spot for these tepid anarchists.

Role: Leader.

Gold and Teleportation.

In Zeitgeist, in addition to its value as a precious metal for jewelry and currency, gold can be fashioned into a barrier against teleportation. While characters can teleport freely carrying gold, they cannot teleport through an opening framed in gold. Critical buildings thus often have thin strips of gold set into all their doors and windows; typically, the gold is concealed by additional masonry or some other artistry. Prison cells meant to hold eladrin and others thought to be capable of teleportation are often surrounded by rings of gold.

Similarly, a creature wearing a gold ring—an actual ring, a bracelet, or even a thin thread of gold wire twisted into a circle—cannot teleport or be teleported, so those wary of abduction might wear hidden gold toe rings to stymie would-be kidnappers. The protection can be bypassed by simply removing part of the ring, as worn or carried gold doesn't prevent teleportation unless it forms a full loop. This fact, combined with the potential temptation for thieves, keeps large gold warding circles from common use.

Playing a Docker.

The docker spirit is not limited just to those who perform in public, but extends to anyone who suffers through hard work and low wages, yet can still appreciate intelligent art for its sublime beauty. The worse conditions get for the workers in Flint, though, the more they turn to dockers for relief from their fatigue. When things get heated, every good docker needs to be able to handle himself in a scrap.

Sometimes a docker gets in over his head, and with a little help from sympathetic bar owners or police officers he'll drop out of the scene and find a new safer career. In this way, the docker movement has spread to pockets of the city slums and even out to the surrounding farmlands. One popular song on the docks even tells of a graffiti artist who fled to Crisillyir and is now painting cathedrals with subversive interpretations of the Clergy's doctrines.

Benefits.

If you choose Docker as your character's theme, the party's Prestige with Flint starts at 2 instead of 1. Make sure you read the rules for Prestige (page 20). Additionally, you gain the following power at 1st level.

Docker's Jank

In a band, every musician has to know his bandmates' parts in case they need to switch places or pick up the slack.

Docker Attack 1 ✦ Arcane, Teleportation

Standard Action Encounter

Close Burst 5

Effect: You and a willing ally within the burst teleport and switch locations. Your ally may then use an at-will power that can be performed as a standard action, with a +2 power bonus to his or her attack rolls.

At 5th level, you gain the ability **Sing Your Praises.** A song about the exploits of your team, perhaps even penned by you, has grown wildly popular in Flint. Once per day as a minor action you can shout a line from the song to inspire your allies. You and each ally in a Close Burst 5 can make a saving throw. The area increases to Close Burst 10 at 11th level, and Close Burst 15 at 21st level.

At 10th level, you gain the ability **Audience Participation.** If there are noncombatants present who are friendly to you and aware that you're engaged in combat, whenever an enemy starts its turn, it takes 5 damage for each square of those noncombatants it is adjacent to.

More Information.

At higher level, you might take the Notorious Celebrity paragon path (page 28), having gained enough prestige or infamy to affect your foes by reputation alone. One such celebrity is musician and adventurer Rock Rackus, who claims to have explored fiery dungeons, traveled to the moon, and cuckolded a fey king.

Eschatologist.

The Heid Eschatol movement began among the dwarves of Drakr, after the scholar Vlendam Heid published a treatise on the myths of his nation and how they continued to influence modern perceptions. The book captured the culture's consciousness, particularly a section that used the legend of the Lost Riders to explain the Drakran tradition of defining civilizations and eras by how they end. In the three decades since its publication, Heid's "On the Proper Endings of Things" has given birth to a whole field of academic study devoted to finding the perfect way to end friendships and romances, business relationships, wars, serialized literature, and even one's own life.

Heid's disciples refer to themselves as eschatologists, from the term for the study of the end of the world. Their popularity has only strengthened Drakr's existing obsession with apocalyptic prophecies and doomsaying, and has raised awareness of their beliefs in other nations. The Clergy, however, denies that the dwarven endtimes are near, and its agents take a dim view of Heid's followers.

Role: Controller.

Playing an Eschatologist.

Dwarves from any nation likely feel some sympathy toward Heid Eschatol, and soldiers who fought in the wars in the border kingdoms between Drakr and Danor often saw enough horrors that when they came home they were comforted by the thought of an orderly judgment day. A handful of apocalyptic cults have sprung up, and increasingly their members are seen less as fringe nuts and more as just another religious sect. Only a few outside of Drakr actually believe in a literal imminent end of the world, with most adherents simply appreciating the comfort they can find by confronting death with reason instead of fear.

Regardless of how a character was drawn to Heid's movement, he is likely to give regular thought to the future, especially to life's thresholds and endings. Every eschatologist regularly updates his will, and pays heed to his companions' desires in the event of their untimely yet unavoidable deaths. A few race toward death, but most are pragmatic and take exceptional precautions to forestall any accidental demise that might ruin their plans.



Benefits.

If you choose Eschatologist as your character's theme, the first time each encounter a creature you're aware of would die, you may choose to have that creature stabilize instead. If it would have died from damage, it will die if it takes any more damage before receiving healing.

Additionally, you gain the following power at 1st level.

Icy End of the Earth

The world shall end in ice. As you sense the closeness of your own mortality, this undeniable doomsday manifests in your presence.

Eschatologist Attack 1 ✦ Psionic, Cold

Standard Action Encounter

Close Burst 2

Requirement: You must be bloodied to use this power.

Special. You cannot reduce the damage this power does to you by any means. Other creatures' resistances and immunities function normally.

Effect: You create a stationary zone of unnatural winter in the area. The zone lasts until the end of your next turn. Creatures in the zone cannot heal damage or gain temporary hit points. Creatures that start their turn in the zone (including you) take 5 cold damage.

Level 11: 10 cold damage.

Level 21: 15 cold damage.

Sustain Minor. You must be bloodied to sustain this power. If you are outside the zone, you take 5 cold damage. If you are inside the zone, you can sustain without spending an action. You cannot heal or gain temporary hit points while this power this active.



At 5th level, you gain the ability **It Will All Turn to Dust.** When you use your *icy end of the earth* power, you may choose to peel away impermanent physical structures. If you do, within the zone creatures can move through man-made objects and structures that are less than a thousand years old as if they had phasing.

At 10th level, you gain the ability **Gaze into the Abyss.** When you are dying, your allies gain a +5 bonus to damage rolls.

More Information.

At higher level, you might take the Logos paragon path (page 25), allowing your speech to alter reality. It is said the doomsday philosopher Grandis Komanov, who presides over a cult of frost-bitten, beardless dwarves in the far north, can be harmed by no living creature, since she exists partially at the end of time.

Gunsmith.

Knowledge of fusils—the cylindrical weapons that use explosive alchemical reactions to propel bullets at deadly speeds—has existed for centuries, but these weapons were considered inferior to existing magical attacks, which were more accurate and had less risk of accidental death. Only after the Great Malice did the Danoran military begin to refine and improve fusils. The latest innovations in these weapons, now commonly called "guns," have led to their spread into Risur and Drakr, where industrial production helps equip armies with firepower on par with a well-trained sorcerer.

Firearms fascinate gunsmiths, who are not content simply to purchase and practice with guns. They tweak and tinker with their own refinements, and whenever two such craftsmen cross paths they bargain and deal for each other's secrets. Especially now that firearms have moved beyond the null magic lands of Danor, seemingly limitless possibilities have opened up for the development of weapons that mix spellcraft and chemistry. Flint's city governor Roland Stanfield is already planning a technological exposition where gunsmiths and other inventors can showcase their creations.

Role: Striker.

Playing a Gunsmith.

Not all gunsmiths devote their combat training to wielding firearms; some just like to have the weapons for their aesthetic appeal, or to take advantage of the common man's fear of their power. More often, though, gunsmiths practice endlessly to improve their aim, and try to learn as many trick shots as possible to prove the superiority of their chosen killing device. Those with magical training often master rituals to enchant their pistols. One gunsmith, Lerema Kurtz, is said to be able to conjure a cannon from her petticoat pocket.

Many romanticize the deadly purity of guns, or decorate their weapons with baroque inlays and carvings. A few gunsmiths, however, take a bleaker view, rejecting any form of poetry. They just know guns are damned good at killing people, and that life's as good as worthless when a bullet costs less than a mug of beer.

Benefits.

If you choose Gunsmith as your character's theme, you can perform the ritual *enchant magic item* in order to create firearms, firearm ammunition, and alchemical items. You can requisition advanced Drakran weapons like grenades and rifles without increasing the Favor level of the request. (See Requisitioning Equipment, page 22.)

Additionally, you gain the following power at 1st level.

The Man with Two Guns Is God

You have discovered the coolest-looking fighting style in the world.

Gunsmith Attack 1 ✦ Martial, Weapon

Standard Action Encounter

Ranged Weapon

Special: This power does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Effect: You may drop, sheathe, or store what you're holding, then draw one or two firearms.

Target: One creature. If you are wielding two firearms, you can target one additional creature within 5 squares of the first creature.

Attack: Primary ability vs. AC

Hit: 1[w] damage, and the target cannot take opportunity actions until the end of your next turn. If making two attacks, one target takes damage from the primary hand weapon, the other from the off-hand weapon.

Level 11: 2[w] damage.

Level 21: 3[w] damage.

At 5th level, you gain the ability **Tinker.** You can declare a single weapon as your primary weapon. Each firearm you wield can benefit from your primary weapon's enhancement bonuses to attack and damage.

Additionally, you have custom-built a firearm modification, which you can apply to up to five firearms (your own or your allies'). You cannot mass-produce this innovation. Choose one of the following:

- **Alchemical Launcher.** You can load one alchemical item or grenade into this underslung launcher at a time, as a standard action. You can use the item as if it were in your hand. If the item normally requires an attack roll, it uses your gun's attack bonus. If normally you'd make a ranged attack, it instead uses your gun's range. If it normally makes an area attack, it uses your gun's short range and its normal area.
- **Ammunition Clip.** For a pistol, a revolver cylinder lets you fire six shots before you need to reload. For a carbine, musket, or shotgun, a stripper clip instead holds five rounds. If combined with alchemical launcher, you can load three alchemical items as well. Reloading is a minor action, or a free action if you have the Speed Loader feat.
- **Cover-Piercing Bullets.** You've modified your barrel to fire heavier rounds. If you attack a target with cover and miss by 2 or less—or by 5 or less if the target has superior cover—you deal half damage. If the cover is a creature, it also takes half damage.

  You can also attack a creature with total cover; you take a –5 penalty to your attack roll, and if you hit you deal half damage.

  These rounds usually only work through less than a foot of wood or dirt, a few inches of stone, or a half-inch of metal.
- **Sniper Scope.** This can only be attached to rifled weapons. When you aim down this finely-tuned telescopic sight, you are considered blind except against creatures in a direct line from you to your target. However, quadruple all range increments to attack the target, and your attack does an extra 1[w] damage. If you are 11th level or higher, it does an extra 2[w], and if 21st or higher an extra 3[w].
- **Suppressor.** Your shots are very quiet. If you are hidden when you attack, you remain hidden from creatures more than 10 squares from you. A creature struck does, however, know the direction the shot came from.

At 10th level, you gain the ability **Bling.** You develop a second attachment that you can apply to five firearms. You can apply both your attachments to the same gun(s), or divide them among different weapons.

More Information.

At higher level, you might take the Mad Shootist paragon path (page 26), experimenting with freeze rays, rocket launchers, shrink rays, and the like. Meanwhile, more mundane explosives and ballistics are on sale in the arms markets of Trekhom, the capital city of Drakr, which guards its harbor with cannons so massive they can crack the hull of even an ironclad ship. But not all the clever weapons are designed by dwarves; this autumn Flint will be hosting the Kaybeau Arms Fair, sure to bring in plenty of gun-happy inventors.

Martial Scientist.

In the war academies of Danor, students speak of combat like a science. Their curriculum involves not merely practicing forms and maneuvers, but writing theses about renowned warriors, or crafting and defending theorems regarding the mechanics of swordplay. The normally reserved Danorans honor the graduates of these battle colleges like other nations honor great poets and sculptors. As those warriors have proven the efficacy of their innovative techniques, the sentiment has spread throughout Lanjyr, and other nations have founded similar schools.

Any brute can hurl a spear or hack through a ribcage, but students of the war academies bring reason to the savagery of war. Often rising to high military ranks, these scholars of battle study anatomy and perform autopsies to learn vulnerabilities of the body, learn physical theorems that underlie the most effective angles of attack and defense, and take time to ponder the psychological and sociological considerations of mortal conflict—from the vast scope and human cost of an invasion,



down to the emotional resonance and cultural significance of specific sword techniques through history.

Role: Striker.

Playing a Martial Scientist.

Danor has the greatest concentration of war colleges, but the Banhaman Academy in Risur's capital Slate has a reputation for elite siege engineers and artillerists, and the Battalion outside of Flint trains the best wilderness forces in Lanjyr. Smaller local schools mostly serve to provide pensions for retired soldiers turned tutors, but even they have led to noteworthy theses, such as *The Wounding Effectiveness of Stealthy Singular Rapier Contrasted with a Twin Strike of Dual Long Swords*, which provoked a very spirited debate and even a few expulsions when things got heated.

In Drakr, emphasis is given to testing the physiological limits of endurance and surviving in battle with limited resources, as would be likely in a world-ending conflict. The Clergy in Crisillyir add a strong theological and monstrous anatomy component to the students in their military academies. The lone war college in Ber has a vast library of battle songs, which according to a disputed theory will inspire the courage and attack accuracy of soldiers, though most likely it is just meant to keep in check the often wild emotions of its bestial students.

You should work with your DM to determine what your graduate thesis was, unless you left before finishing your education.

Benefits.

If you choose Martial Scientist as your character's theme, you gain training in History. If you already are trained in History you may gain training in another skill. You are proficient in all military weapons.

Throughout the campaign you will have the ability to learn new techniques from other martial scientists. Keep track of which techniques you know. At the end of an extended rest, choose any one technique you know. You have access to that technique's power for the day. At 1st level, every martial scientist starts with the *experimental strike* technique.

Experimental Strike

Scientific breakthroughs are born of both careful study and wild experimentation. Your old reliable attack technique has failed, so it's time to try option B.

Martial Scientist Attack 1 ✦ Martial, Weapon

Free Action Encounter

Trigger: You miss all targets with an at-will attack power on your turn.

Effect: You may sheathe a weapon or implement and/or draw a melee weapon. You can shift 2 squares and attempt something the rules don't cover (as detailed in the D&D 4E Dungeon Master's Guide), such as slicing a rope to pin an enemy with a chandelier, or smashing a pipe to spray blinding steam on an enemy. After the attack, you may sheathe a weapon, and/or draw a weapon or implement.

Special: You can only use one martial scientist technique per day. At the end of an extended rest you can swap this power for that of another technique.

At 5th level, you gain the ability **Martial Mythbuster.** People (and monsters) sometimes have a flawed understanding of the nature of combat, but you can disabuse them of these notions. When a creature misses you with an attack, you can use your *experimental strike* power as an immediate reaction.

At 10th level, you gain the ability **Doctor of Modern Warfare.** You gain proficiency in all weapons, armor, and implements, and you can change your chosen martial scientist technique after a short rest, not just an extended rest.

Designer Notes
Martial Scientists

If you've ever played *Final Fantasy* games, you might be familiar with the concept of blue mages: characters who learn the techniques of their enemies. The martial scientist follows that conceit, while also promoting the idea that combat in the world of Zeitgeist is more the work of refined thinkers than berserkers or savages.

This theme offers players the opportunity to acquire numerous small and quirky talents. While not typically useful in a normal fight, they can come in handy in niche situations. If you're the kind of player who likes outwitting enemies or having a deep bag of tricks to draw from, this might be the theme for you.

More Information.

At higher level, you might take the Polyhistor paragon path (page 29), using your deep well of martial knowledge to craft unique fighting techniques in the heat of battle. The legendary Henri Jierre who founded the *Jierre Sciens d'Arms* martial academy is said to have never needed more than three sword strokes to defeat any foe.

Skyseer.

Truly ancient lore suggests that once the mortal races were able to travel to the stars with the aid of lost magic, much like demons and angels can be briefly summoned into this world. But for the full length of remembered history, the heavens have been nearly inscrutable. The druids, used to thinking in long terms of seasons, years, and the lifespan of trees, were the first to notice subtle connections between the movements of stars and the affairs of this world. They too were first to learn how to step through the veils that lead to the Dreaming or the Bleak Gate, and without their aid King Kelland could never have defeated the fey titans.

For over a thousand years, the druids would gaze into the sky night after night, awaiting dreams that would grant revelations of the future. These seers, by guiding journeyers and heroes with their visions, averted many catastrophes. When the Second Victory led to Srasama's fall, the skyseers read the signs and helped hundreds of eladrin women flee their homeland so they could avoid genocide.

In the past few centuries, however, the many orders and factions of skyseers in Risur have struggled to divine much of import from the stars. Their visions, never precise or clear to begin with, failed to foresee the rise of Danor's industry, failed to avert scores of natural disasters and man-made tragedies. The people of Risur still go through the motions of skyseer rituals, but the old druids' influence has faded. Few young people today aspire to join their once-prestigious ranks.

Role: Leader.

Playing a Skyseer.

Those few who study to be skyseers today usually have a close mentor among the druids. Some may have spent countless nights as children staring up at the stars, before one night waking from a vivid, prophetic dream. Apprenticed to an elder skyseer, they learned the names of the stars and planets, their patterns and influence. Though precise visions are rare, it is still indisputable that magic of travel works better under the full moon, and that any ship that sets sail the night when Jiese enters retrograde within the constellation of the Mad Pirate will face great misfortune before it reaches its destination.

Skyseers favor the night, and with a glance at the starry sky can tell time as precisely as any clock. Even in this new age of technology, most Risuri ship's captains won't sail beyond sight of shore without a skyseer aboard. Though their influence has faded somewhat, they still have strong connections with many families, villages, and organizations, and they can easily find a welcome home—as long as they do not begin speaking of prophecies.

You should definitely read the sidebar on Planets and Planes (page 48).

Benefits.

If you choose Skyseer as your character's theme, you gain the following powers at 1st level.

Skyseer Vision

You find a clear view of the night sky, focus your mind on the future, and await a prophetic dream.

Skyseer Utility 1 ✦ Primal

Extended Action Daily

Requirement: You can only use this power during an extended rest, and only if you can watch the night sky for an hour and then sleep.

Effect: Ask up to three questions about possible courses of action in the near future. At the end of your extended rest, you awaken from sleep having received a vision regarding your questions. This functions similarly to the ritual Hand of Fate (see the D&D 4E Player's Handbook), in the sense that you receive vague images that provide guidance.





Look Skyward

You share with your allies a glimpse of the motions of the heavens, revealing fortuitous and unfortuitous paths.

Skyseer Utility 1 ✦ Primal

Minor Action Encounter

Close burst 5

Target: One ally in burst

Effect: The ally chooses an attack power he knows, rolls 1d20, and marks the result. The next time the ally would make an attack roll for that power during this encounter, he must instead use the rolled result. If the power has multiple targets or attack rolls, only the first roll is replaced.

When the ally uses the rolled result, he can still apply effects and powers to modify the attack roll. For example, a human could still use *human perseverance*, an elf could still use *elven accuracy*, a warlord's *tactical presence* would still grant a bonus if the ally used an action point to use the power, and an avenger would still roll a second die and pick the better of the two results.

At 5th level, you gain the ability **Follow Yonder Star.** When you spend an action point, until the end of your next turn your enemies miss with their opportunity attacks that target you or your allies.

At 10th level, you gain the ability **Handy Intuition.** Once per day as a free action you can have on your person a mundane item that you can carry. An intuition told you to prepare for this moment and have the item on hand. You must retroactively pay whatever costs would have been necessary to get and keep the item. You cannot use this ability if events would have made having the item impossible (such as if you were captured and your possessions seized, or if you crawled through a narrow tunnel and now you want a huge shield).

More Information.

At higher level, you might take the Applied Astronomist paragon path (page 23), letting you manifest the powers of the different planets in the night sky. Perhaps you might even discover why the visions of the skyseers have grown so vague these past few decades.

Spirit Medium.

The Danoran industrial revolution has changed the ways of war, giving even the poorest man weapons that can kill the wealthy and well-equipped. Why then should not matters of the soul also move from the purview of the enlightened into the grasp of the common people? So ask spirit mediums, who wish to explain the mysteries of spirits and the afterlife so that men no longer need priests to tell them what awaits beyond death.

Certainly, many mediums are charlatans who prey on the weakness of bereaved aristocrats. But a few have discovered how to contact the dead through a form of psionic meditation called a *séance*. Some will only use their talents to help those who have a sincere need to know the secrets of the dead, and will only train students who share the same worldview, but most mediums reject such insularity as smacking of organized religion, and will gladly wake the dead for a quick chat at the drop of a few coins.

Role: Controller.

Playing a Spirit Medium.

The ability to speak with the recently departed is of great value to the Royal Homeland Constabulary, which recruits enthusiastically people with useful talents. Compared with the normal life of a medium, criminal investigators seldom have to convey messages between the dead and their living friends and relatives, though such conversations can help elicit otherwise unyielding secrets.

Benefits.

If you choose Spirit Medium as your character's theme, you gain the following powers at 1st level.

Speak with Spirit

With your urging, the spirit of a recently dead person speaks briefly with you.

Spirit Medium Utility 1 ✦ Psionic

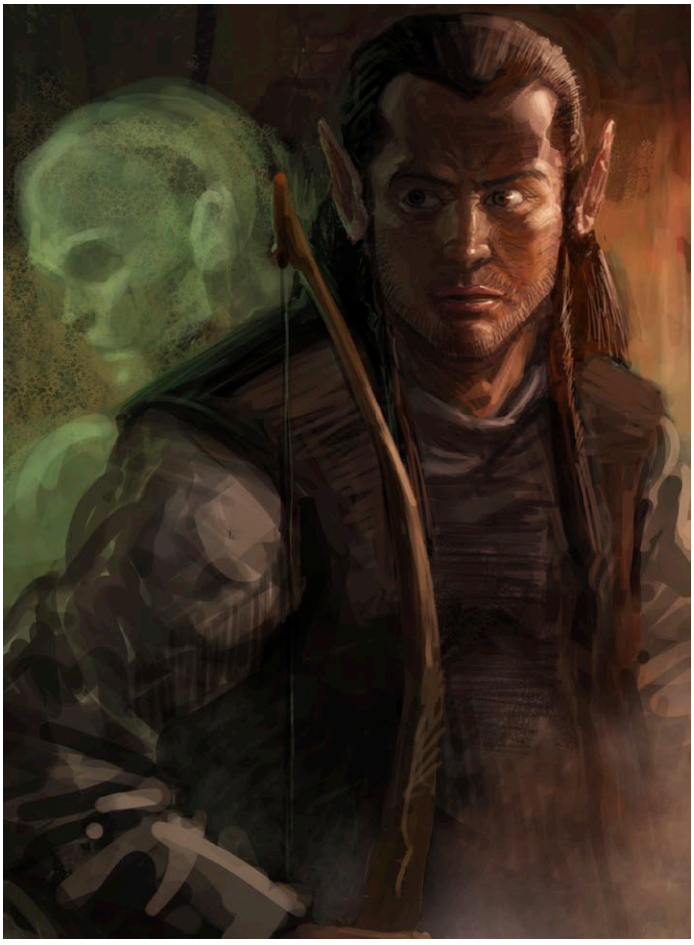
Standard Action Daily

Close Burst 1

Target: One creature in burst. The creature must have died within the past day, and must still be dead.

Effect: You may ask three questions of the target. For each question make an Arcana, Diplomacy, or Insight check. The DC is based on the target's level, and is Easy, Medium, or Hard depending on the target's demeanor toward you when it died and how protective it is of the knowledge. If you succeed the check, the target gives you a short answer, usually a minute or less.

At the DM's prerogative, you could also use this power to communicate with uneasy spirits who have not yet moved on, regardless of how long ago they died. Using this power against undead, or in any combat situation for that matter, is possible but very difficult.



Unfinished Business

With a manipulative whisper, you call up the spirit of a recently slain creature for one last attack.

Spirit Medium Attack 1 ✦ Conjuration, Psionic

Standard Action Encounter

Close Burst 10

Effect: Choose a creature that was killed or destroyed this encounter within three miles of your current location. It must still be at 0 hit points or fewer.

You conjure the spirit of that creature in a square within the burst. The creature attacks with one of its at-will attacks as if it were alive. You choose the power it uses and any decisions for the power, such as targeting or forced movement. The creature gains a +2 power bonus to its attack rolls for this attack, and it deals full damage to insubstantial targets. After the attack, the conjured spirit is removed from play.

At 5th level, you gain the ability **Psychic History.** Once per day you can sense the history of an object. By spending a minute holding the object, you see an image associated with the object's past. You see two images at 11th level, or three at 21st. If you are trained in Arcana, you see an additional image. More recent and more prominent images appear first. You can only use this power once per object.

At 10th level, you gain the ability **Ghostly Whisper.** You can communicate via telepathy with creatures you are aware of within 10 squares, but you must share a language. They can respond in kind.

More Information.

At higher level, you might take the Urban Empath paragon path (page 32), gaining the power to communicate with the *genius loci* of cities, learning their secrets and calling upon their unique powers. The most famous medium, the halfling Jared Smithee, had a prosperous career giving comfort to the bereaved, until he attended the state funeral of the last Sovereign of Danor. The Danorans tried to arrest him when he claimed to have a message from the man, and he remains on the run.

Technologist.

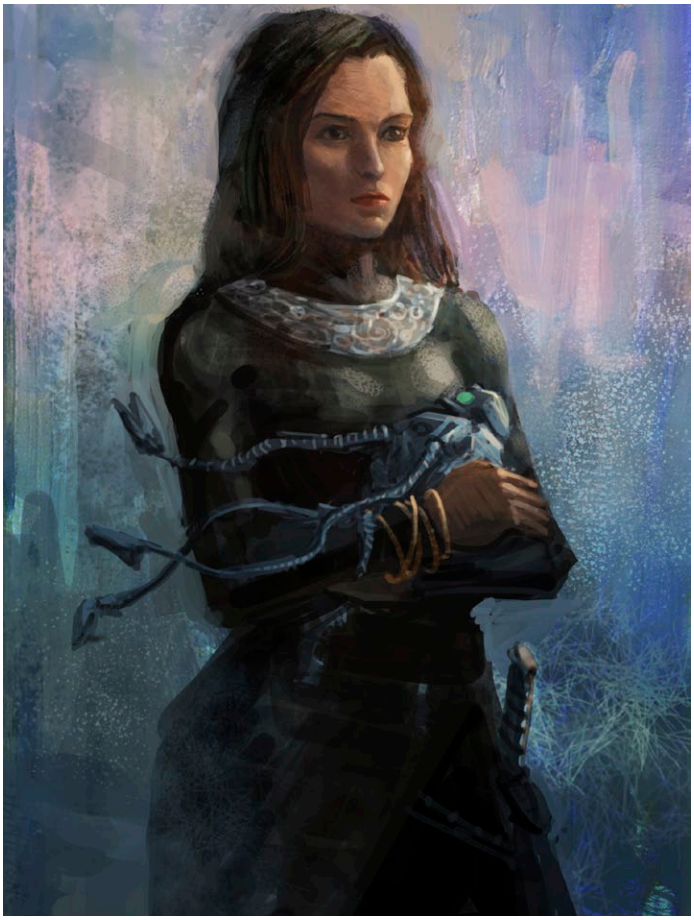
Some people cannot get enough of new technology. Those with talent tinker or create. Those without collect, study, or simply nag every engineer and inventor they meet. Whether dabblers or professionals, often these technology enthusiasts come up with ideas for devices that straddle the line between clever and impractical.

In Danor, academies train technologists in specialized fields, while in Drakr master dwarven craftsmen guide huge stables of apprentices in the massive engineering projects. Crisillyir punishes such tinkering with holy flagellation, as do colonists in Elfaivar, whereas the native eladrin are as unsettled by technology as are the denizens of the Dreaming. A few enterprising technologists in Ber curry favor of the royal court, which responds eagerly to such intellectual pursuits.

Role: Controller.

Playing a Technologist.

After centuries of reliance upon swords, bows, plate armor, and the occasional arcane evocation, keeping up with the modern pace of developing technology is daunting to many power groups, especially law enforcement and the military. Such groups might enlist technologists as specialists to explain unfamiliar devices, or to craft specialty weapons or tools. While the Danoran industrial revolution has mass-produced many common tools and weapons, only a few have the knowledge and talent to create custom items.



Technologists tend to gather lots of disposable tools and weapons, so that they always have something handy in an unusual situation. Many make a point to learn a bit of magic or alchemy as well, though every technologist is inspired by a different vision of what technology can provide.

Benefits.

If you choose Technologist as your character's theme, you will have access to certain technological information and resources not readily available to other characters. Additionally, you gain the following power at 1st level.

Disposable Simulacrum

You pull out a pre-assembled gadget, tie it to your life force, and animate it so it can recreate one of your fighting techniques.

Technologist Utility 1 ✦ Arcane, Summoning

Minor Action Encounter

Effect: You place a Small contraption in an unoccupied square adjacent to you. It has your defenses, speed 4, and hit points equal to half your bloodied value.

Choose an at-will power you know. You can spend a standard action to have the contraption use that power. If the power is sustainable, you can spend actions to sustain it. You cannot enhance the power with power points.

You can spend a move action to have the contraption take a move action. The clumsy contraption has only simple limbs, and can only manipulate objects about as well as a dog with no mouth, unless the at-will power you chose lets it do otherwise.

The contraption remains active until the end of the encounter, or until you deactivate it as a free action. If it is destroyed, you can repair it during an extended rest.

At 5th level, you gain the ability **Mechanical Pet.** Your contraption follows the rules of an animal companion, with your defenses, speed 6, Strength 4, and hit points equal to half your bloodied value. Instead of having its own attacks, it uses your chosen at-will power. It can manipulate objects with about as much manual dexterity as a trained monkey. Whenever you take a move action, it can also take a move action. If you are unconscious or otherwise unable to command it, it can take actions on its own, first moving adjacent to you and then attempting to protect you from harm.

At 10th level, you gain the ability **Second Self.** You can use any at-will or encounter power you know through your contraption, and can use a different one each round. You can see and hear things from its location.

More Information.

At higher level, you might take the Steamsuit Pilot paragon path (page 30), designing a machine you can wear into battle. Not all technologists are solitary tinkers, however. The gregarious Risuri industrialist Benedict Pemberton, who made his wealth in mundane factories, is said to have developed an interest in more exotic creations and to be recruiting clever engineers and mages for a secret project.

Vekeshi Mystic.

If fatalism defines the traditional dwarven philosophy, then the cornerstone of eladrin ideology is that living well is the best revenge.

After the goddess Srasama died and nearly all eladrin women perished with her, there was a great drive in Elfaivar to fight until the last man in a short-sighted bid for vengeance. As the rest of the nation whipped itself into a frenzy, however, a composer named Vekesh wrote a song of mourning that contained a simple sentiment: defeat is only tragedy if the defeated allow the story to end there.

While many eladrin could not be stopped from their self-destruction, Vekesh convinced some of his people that a tale that goes from defeat to revenge to death is a shameful tragedy. Revenge distracts one from one's grief, but is ultimately valueless. Instead, he said, a tale of defeat, resilience, and renewal is the best way to thwart their enemies' goals.

The proper form of retribution, then, is to endure, rebuild from weakness, and prosper into strength.

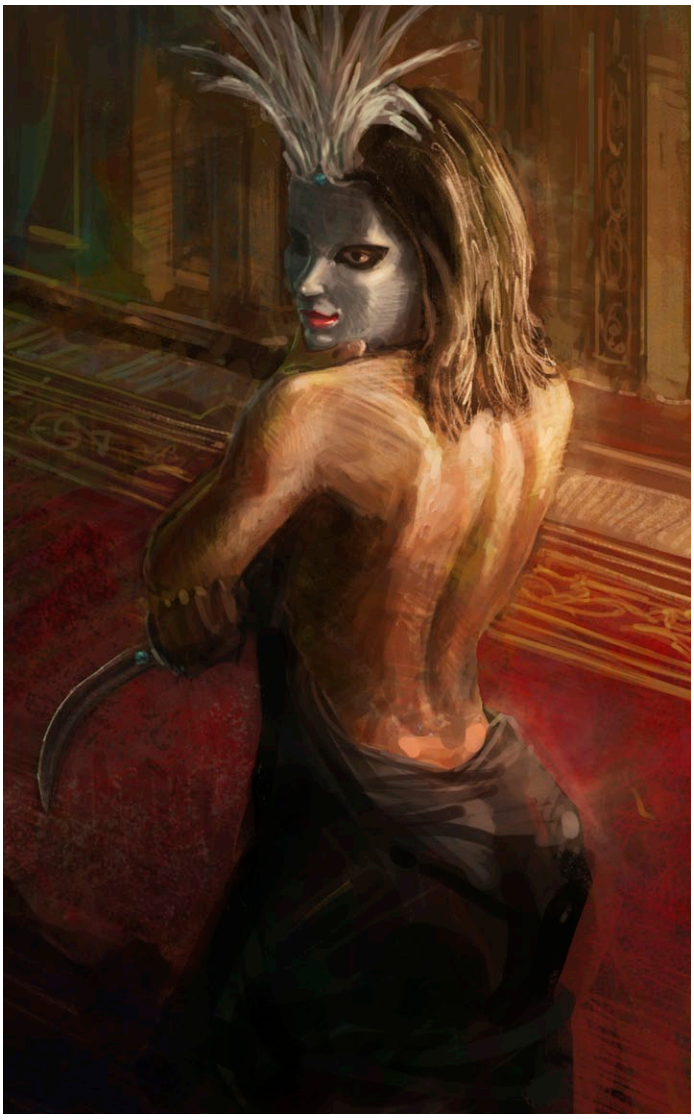
His guidance ensured that in at least a few isolated enclaves, the eladrin race pulled back from the brink of annihilation. In the following decades a loosely codified collection of vekeshi teachings spread throughout Lanjyr. The mantras of Vekesh have helped many cope with loss and find a new path for themselves.

To the general public, though, "vekeshi" is synonymous with murderer and terrorist. While the majority of vekeshi avoid violence when possible, Vekesh believed that taking up arms is sometimes necessary to protect those at their most vulnerable. The deepest secrets of vekeshi mysticism are taught only to a rare few adherents who demonstrate a skill for battle, and the wisdom to know when to use their power.

Role: Defender.

Playing a Vekeshi Mystic.

Anyone might casually study Vekesh's teachings for a bit of personal guidance, but to be initiated into the mystical side of the philosophy requires painful rituals. Aspirants are taken in the night across the threshold of the Dreaming, where they experience the fall of Srasama through psychic illusions, making them keepers of the shared memory of the Great Malice. Thereafter they are held in a cage for days, along



with poisoned food that they must resist, so that the starvation teaches them the importance of patience. Finally, they are burnt until their skin blackens, and then are magically healed to seal in the power of the flames.

If a vekeshi passes these trials, he rests and recovers in luxury as his teachers instruct him in the secrets of the philosophy, and drill into him the necessity of discretion. Upon leaving the Dreaming, vekeshi mystics return to their normal lives, but seek positions of power in military, law enforcement, or the underworld, where they use their authority to punish those who continually threaten people who are simply trying to make a better life for themselves.

Vekeshi mystics seldom gather in large groups, but on certain irregular lunar holidays they slip into the Dreaming for secretive festivals. Only on the rarest occasions will a mystic be called to act openly. Donning an iconic mantle of eladrin armor and a mask that conceals his face, the mystic acts as the surrogate hand of the fallen goddess Srasama, with the sole purpose of meting out punishment against one directly responsible for large-scale suffering.

Benefits.

If you choose Vekeshi Mystic as your character's theme, the party's Prestige with the Unseen Court starts at 2 instead of 1. Make sure you read the rules for Prestige (page 20).

Additionally, you gain the following power at 1st level.

Hands of Retribution

The faint burning outline of a six-armed goddess hovers behind you. As enemies strike your allies, the goddess lashes out in retaliation with blades of fire.

Vekeshi Mystic Attack 1 ✦ Divine, Fire, Radiant

Free Action Encounter

Trigger: A creature you can see in the burst hits one of your allies, and the ally is bloodied before or after the attack.

Target: The triggering creature

Effect: You deal fire and radiant damage to the target equal to your primary ability score modifier.

Special: You can use this power once per encounter at 1st level, twice at 6th level, three times at 11th, four at 16th, five at 21st, and six at 26th, but no more than once per round.

At 5th level, you gain the ability **Vengeful Gaze of the Goddess.** Once per day as a minor action you can choose a target you can see. Guided by the divine sight of Srasama, you unerringly know the direction to the target until you take an extended rest.

At 10th level, you gain the ability **Patient Revenge.** There are more important things than immediate victory over your enemies. Whenever you face an enemy whose identity you know who has antagonized you before (whether in battle or not), you gain temporary hit points equal to half your bloodied value at the start of the encounter.

Additionally, if on your turn you can see an enemy but don't take any hostile actions, you have Resist 10 All, allowing you to advance with implacable intimidation against a foe.

More Information.

At higher level, you might take the Vekeshi Excoriant paragon path (page 33), to let you yield the power of the dead goddess Srasama. The secrets of your order are not to be shared with other players, but speak to your DM to learn the names and operations of mystics active in Flint and beyond.

Yerasol Veteran.

The islands of the Yerasol Archipelago were perhaps the most verdant, beautiful battleground in history. During two centuries of intermittent warfare, untold thousands of soldiers from Risur and Danor died among the windblown rainforests and flowered beaches of those isles, trying to protect their homelands' exceedingly prosperous plantations. Those who survived—the ones who didn't succumb to aberrant infections, crippling physical injuries, or unyielding mental trauma—often turned their war-time glory into profit or political clout.

Poets of the two nations memorialized the greatest acts of heroism from the Four Yerasol Wars, the last of which ended seven years past. It's an open secret that history is written by the survivors, and many so-called war heroes were merely lucky enough to witness something brave and amazing, and not die in the process so they could take the credit for themselves. A rare few, however, demonstrated genuine heroism and lived to have their tales told by others.

Role: Defender.

Playing a Yerasol Veteran.

Everyone knows the names of a few veterans who distinguished themselves in battle—not quite famous, but certainly memorable. Every veteran of the isles has a story that made him a celebrity, though many



do not enjoy recounting their tales. The fact that everyone likes a war hero doesn't lessen the trauma of having seen friends die.

After two centuries of trial and error, though, Risur and Danor have learned to exploit these heroes of the moment, giving them cushy jobs and helping them reacclimate to civilian life. It doesn't do to have a "hero" become a drunkard and embarrass his nation, after all. The aid and adulation from their nation helps a great many Yerasol veterans become pillars of their communities. Such aid quickly dries up, though, should a hero ever decide to publicly criticize his homeland.

Benefits.

If you choose Yerasol Veteran as your character's theme, the party's Prestige with Risur starts at 2 instead of 1. Make sure you read the rules for Prestige (page 20).

Additionally, you gain the following power at 1st level.

Display of Heroism

Seeing an ally in peril, you rush into harm's way and cover his escape.

Yerasol Veteran Utility 1 ✦ Martial

Standard Action Encounter

Effect: Shift 3 squares. One bloodied or unconscious ally adjacent to you can spend a healing surge and may stand as a free action. You may then switch spaces with that ally. You and that ally gain a +2 bonus to all defenses until the end of your next turn.

At 5th level, you gain the ability **Courage Under Fire.** Once per day when an ally is reduced to 0 hit points or below, you may gain an action point. If you do, you can use an additional action point this encounter, but no more than one per turn.

At 10th level, you gain the ability **Call of Duty.** Whenever you roll a 1 to 7 on an Initiative check, treat it as an 8.

More Information.

At higher level, you might take the Monument of War paragon path (page 27), which lets you give form to your memories of war, calling in gunfire and artillery. You'll also want to become familiar with the naval quick-play rules in Appendix K: Seas of Zeitgeist (page 516), or the full ship combat rules in *Admiral o' the High Seas* (a naval adventures supplement by E.N. Publishing). You too might one day achieve a feat as grand as King Aodhan, who sailed into the harbor of Danor's capital, seized its flagship, and sailed it back to Risur as his prize.

Feats

Firearm Expertise.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls with firearm weapons. This increases to +2 at 11th level, and to +3 at 21st level. You ignore partial and superior cover with firearms attacks. See the equipment section below for more information on firearms. (To use this feat with the Character Builder, select its analog, Crossbow Expertise.)

Steady Hand Shooter.

You can use your Strength to modifier ranged basic attacks with firearms instead of Dexterity. (To use this with the Character Builder, the best you can do is equip javelins instead of firearms. They have the same range and damage as pistols, but you'll have to manually adjust the range and damage dice for carbines and muskets.)

Sturdy Contraption.

Prerequisite: Technologist theme.

The contraption you summon with *disposable simulacrum* has hit points equal to your bloodied value.

Salary, Stipend, and Requisitions

As constables of Risur, your characters have a slightly different relationship with treasure than typical Dungeons & Dragons adventurers.

Firstly, you're assumed to receive a reasonable salary that covers your normal living expenses, but needs not be tracked in-game.

Additionally, from time to time you will receive an official stipend to fulfill your duties. These will come roughly whenever you gain a level, since more experienced constables are given more challenging tasks. The Constabulary's resources and connections let you use this stipend to requisition the tools you need for your missions. After a mission ends you can trade in items you no longer need, freeing up that portion of your stipend for other tasks.

The RHC, and more broadly the nation of Risur, has access to a vast array of magic items, but you are not its only agents. Also, concerns about theft and corruption mean those who control these resources tend to be conservative in their release. However, as you prove your loyalty you will be entrusted with great wealth, and if deemed worthy you might even be granted access to precious relics held in the Risuri royal vaults.

Powers of Kings and Gods.

As the campaign begins, the concept of people as powerful as gods (i.e., epic tier) is seen as wholly fanciful. That didn't stop one economic theorist named Solace Petrov from positing that such living immortals would inevitably acquire priceless resources like weapons forged from the essence of whole demi-planes, rituals that harness the collective will of a thousand state mages, and long-forgotten artifacts unearthed by the concerted efforts of an entire nation's adventurers.

Which is to say, if you reach 21st level, you won't be receiving a "stipend" anymore. Rather your resources will be limited by the total wealth and resources of those whom you are defending.

Upgrades, Loot, and Skimming Off the Top.

You can turn in any item you have requisitioned to restore its full value to your stipend. This allows you to keep yourself equipped with the best material available, or at least the best that government bureaucracy thinks you can be trusted with.

When you recover rare magic, treasure, or other valuables, RHC protocols allow you to make use of them for a limited period of time, if you need them. However once they are no longer required, you are expected to hand them over to higher authorities, who will make proper use of them. If desired, you can use your salary or stipend to keep these items long-term, assuming you file the proper paperwork and your request is deemed warranted.

An alternative, of course, is to hold onto items and not report them to the RHC. This is illegal, and would likely be grounds for dismissal. Such pecuniary misdeeds are expected of common police, but the RHC is held to higher standards. If you attempt to sell such an item, you cannot take advantage of the RHC's favorable rates, and must use the normal values (20% base cost for common items, 50% for uncommon, 100% for rare). Be careful, though, because prison is not kind to former law officers who turn to crime.

Exceptions and Variants.

If you receive a gift, you can keep it, though the RHC might factor it into how much of a stipend they need to provide for your next mission.

If the DM prefers, you could alter the setting so that magic items are rarer. The PCs could use the inherent bonuses rule and would be provided a much smaller stipend (about ¼ the suggested amount), which could be used to purchase expendable items and ritual components.

Finally, if the DM decides to run a campaign where you are not part of the RHC, or if the party decides to spontaneously become pirates out of frustration with the bureaucracy they have to deal with, you can use traditional treasure parcels. The adventures will provide suggestions for what the PCs find and where.

Equipment

The new technological revolution has produced new weapons, and some items are unique to the **Zeitgeist** adventure path.

Explosive Alchemicals.

Early firearms used smoky gunpowder as propellant for its ammunition, but recent alchemical advances have produced firedust. This powdered variant of alchemist's fire produces practically no smoke when used in firearms, has a lower risk of fouling or corroding the weapon's internals, and is hydrophobic, allowing it to burn even after immersion in water.

Many other firearm accelerants exist, including magmite (a granular black substance rendered in alchemical furnaces) and phlogistite (transluscent red vapor slime that floats in globules if exposed to open air), but firedust is by far the most widely used. Steam engines use a variant, firegems, which burn slower but longer.

While it is the source of a firearm's deadly power, firedust is relatively harmless as a weapon in its own right, since it burns too fast to cause serious wounds like traditional alchemist fire. If someone ignites a cask full of firedust, though, the resulting explosion could seriously hurt those nearby. The dwarves of Drakr field grenadiers who use hand-held explosives, but constables and even criminals find little use for such indiscriminate destruction in an urban environment.

Example Explosion.

A twenty pound cask of firedust, roughly a foot across, might explode in a Burst 1 centered on the cask, dealing 10 damage. A one-ton pallet, enough to fill an entire square, could explode in a Burst 5, dealing 30 damage. Specifics will vary by circumstances, of course.



SIMPLE RANGED WEAPONS.

One-Handed.

Weapon	Prof.	Damage	Range	Price	Weight	Group	Properties
Grenade*	+2	1d10, special	5/10	10 gp	3 lb.	Firearm	Brutal 2, high crit, inaccurate
Pistol	+2	1d6	10/20	25 gp	2 lb.	Firearm	Load standard, brutal 2, high crit, off-hand
Target Pistol	+2	1d6	10/20	200 gp	2 lb.	Firearm	Load standard, brutal 2, high crit, off-hand, rifled

Two-Handed.

Weapon	Prof.	Damage	Range	Price	Weight	Group	Properties
Carbine	+2	1d8	15/30	25 gp	5 lb.	Firearm	Load standard, brutal 2, high crit
Rifle-Carbine*	+2	1d8	15/30/150	200 gp	5 lb.	Firearm	Load standard, brutal 2, high crit, rifled
Shotgun*	+2	1d8	6/12	25 gp	5 lb.	Firearm	Load standard, scatter

SUPERIOR RANGED WEAPONS.

Two-Handed.

Weapon	Prof.	Damage	Range	Price	Weight	Group	Properties
Musket	+3	1d10	20/40	30 gp	10 lb.	Firearm	Load standard, brutal 2, high crit
Rifle-Musket*	+3	1d10	20/40/200	250 gp	10 lb.	Firearm	Load standard, brutal 2, high crit, rifled

* This item is rare in Risur and must be imported. Increase the Favor level to requisition one by 1 step. (See Requisitioning Equipment, page 22.)

Firearms.

Firearms use explosive alchemicals to fire metal ammunition. Reloading involves drawing and tearing open a paper cartridge, which contains firedust and a bullet. The gunman pours firedust down the barrel, then packs in the bullet with a ramrod. The firing hammer of the weapon strikes a firegem set at the back of the barrel, which acts as a percussion cap, producing a spark inside the barrel. A typical firegem percussion cap must be replaced every few dozen shots or else there is a risk the gem will crack and misfire, but the cost is negligible.

Risur produces pistols, carbines, and muskets from a variety of factories in Flint and elsewhere. Drakr possesses somewhat superior firearm technology, and it is possible to import (or custom-make) shotguns, grenades, and rifled versions of normal firearms. Additional innovations such as metal cartridge ammunition are known to exist, but they are the domain of specialized gunsmiths, and as yet cannot be mass-produced.

Reloading and Character Design.

Reloading a firearm takes a standard action. Normally powers that let you make multiple ranged attacks let you reload freely between attacks, but you cannot freely reload firearms in this way. For that reason, a typical character might carry one or two loaded firearms to use as a once-per-encounter weapon.

A character who takes the Speed Loader feat can reload a firearm as a move action. Quick Draw lets a character pull multiple pistols round after round. Later in the campaign, enchanted weapons or technological advancements may make it easier to fire multiple shots without being stuck in one place.

Character Builder.

We understand that many gaming groups use Wizard of the Coast's Character Builder, and that adding new items is impossible. For that reason, we have based each firearm on an existing crossbow. The firearms trade a slower reload time for the brutal 2 and high crit properties.

To give your character a firearm, just equip the analogous weapon. When you print out your character sheet, you just need to remember or mark the different traits. To give your character Firearm Expertise, instead take the feat Crossbow Expertise. Feats, abilities, and powers that apply to crossbows usually can also apply to firearms, and any character proficient in a crossbow is proficient in the equivalent firearm.

We admit this is a bit of a kludge, but it should let you take advantage of the Character Builder's automatic calculations of attacks and damage, while giving firearms their own unique identity.

Items on the table marked with an asterisk have no clear analogue in the Character Builder, so you'll have to add them to your character sheet manually. These weapons are also not commonly manufactured in Risur, and must be imported from Drakr. When requisitioning magical versions of any of these, increase the Favor level by 1 (see Requisitioning Equipment, page 22).

Weapon Descriptions.

Pistol. A muzzle-loaded one-handed firearm with a firegem percussion cap. This weapon is analogous to a hand crossbow.

Carbine. Like a pistol, but with a stock and barrel, with a total length of three to four feet. This weapon is analogous to a crossbow.

Grenade. This heavy metal explosive resembles a somewhat rounded dodecahedron. Small firegem percussion caps at its vertices ignite the firedust inside when they are struck with sufficient force. Sometimes these caps do not ignite at first impact, so grenades hold the risk of bouncing and exploding somewhere other than their intended target.

The thrower chooses a target square and, after making a saving throw (see Inaccurate, below), makes an attack roll against each creature in a Burst 1. The attack deals half damage if it misses. Since this is a weapon attack, powers that do multiple [W] damage can make grenades deadly.

Musket. The extended barrel of this firearm, bringing it to a total length of over five and a half feet, is an attempt to grant long range accuracy. This weapon is analogous to a superior crossbow, from the Adventurer's Vault.

Rifle-Carbine. Effectively just a carbine with a rifled barrel to enhance accuracy at distance.

Rifle-Musket. Effectively just a musket with a rifled barrel.

Shotgun. This smoothbore weapon fires pellets that spread out, striking a roughly 5-foot radius at a range of 100 feet. It is not particularly effective at range, but can be devastating point-blank.

Target Pistol. Effectively just a pistol with a rifled barrel.



New Weapon Traits.

Inaccurate. Before making any attack rolls for a grenade, the thrower makes a saving throw. If the save fails, the grenade veers off course, missing by 1 square in a random direction, or 2 squares if the target area was at long range. On a natural 1, the grenade simply bounces without exploding, and can be recovered and reused. If the attacker spends a move action to aim, he does not need to make the save.

Rifled. Rifling greatly extends the range a firearm can accurately hit a target, though lining up a shot takes time.

A gunman can spend a standard action to aim down the weapon's sight. He chooses a creature he can see. Until he stops aiming, he can target the creature out to extreme range (noted after the second slash mark in the stats above). He takes a –4 penalty to this attack, instead of the normal –2 for long range. Each turn thereafter he can spend a minor action to continue aiming at the same target or switch to another target he can see. If he moves or takes damage, his aim is ruined and he has to start over again.

Scatter. A gunman firing a shotgun makes two attack rolls, giving him a chance to "wing" a target. Additionally, if the target is at close range and both rolls hit, the attack has its normal effect, plus deals an extra 1[w] damage. If the gunman is 11th level or higher, it does an extra 2[w], and if 21st or higher an extra 3[w].

Combination Weapons and Bayonets.

Some firearms integrate a bladed weapon into their designs, such as a dagger with a pistol that fires along the crosspiece, or a carbine that fires down the length of a longsword. Such weapons are almost always custom-built. Other firearms have attachments that let the wielder affix a melee weapon to a gun barrel. Typically this is to attach a bayonet to a carbine or musket, allowing the weapon to be used as a spear.

Mechanically, these hybrid weapons function as two distinct weapons, and each would need to be enchanted separately. Their main benefit is to allow a wielder to switch between ranged and melee attacks without having to draw a new weapon.

The DM should use common sense to determine whether a combination is feasible, and if it should reduce the efficacy of a given power. You might be fine with a rogue using a pistol with a bayonet as if it were a rapier in melee. Likewise, a carbine/axe could theoretically work, but a pistol/spear or spiked-chain/musket is ridiculous. (Some groups might like ridiculous, though.)

Optional Firearm Rules.

The firearm rules are designed to be easy to use while providing enough flavor to differentiate guns from crossbows. The default assumption for the campaign is that firearms have advanced so that they no longer release gouts of smoke or have significant risk of mishap. You can change these assumptions if you want, though.

- **Gunsmoke.** Whenever you shoot a firearm, you create smoke in a Close Burst 1, including your own square. This smoke provides concealment, and lasts until the end of your next turn. Strong winds may disperse such smoke immediately, whereas very enclosed spaces might cause the smoke to linger additional rounds.
- **Mishaps.** Whenever you roll a natural 1 on an attack roll with a firearm, you can choose to reroll the attack. If you do, the gun is damaged after the attack, and must be repaired during a short rest before it can be used again. Additionally, if the second roll is a 1, the weapon deals 1[w] damage to you.

  If the gun is magical, it is only damaged if the second roll is a natural 5 or less. Magical guns still deal damage to you if the second roll is a natural 1.

As a heroic adventure game, weapons of all varieties are less lethal in D&D than in reality. However, if you feel guns should be more dangerous than archaic melee weapons, the following options achieve that, albeit by wildly altering the balance of combat and the world's aesthetic. If you use these options, more people will want guns, and fights might end much more quickly. You might want to balance things out by making it take two full rounds to reload a firearm (or if you really want nuance, four move actions).

- **Killing Tool.** Firearms lose the brutal property. Instead, pistols deal 2 extra dice of damage. A 1[w] attack with a pistol deals 3d6 damage, a carbine 3d8, or a musket 3d10. A 3[w] attack with a musket deals 5d10. On a critical hit, that attack would do 50 damage + 1d10 from high crit.
- **Threat of Force.** A character with a loaded, ready firearm can easily strike before an opponent closes to melee. The character can make a ranged basic attack as an immediate reaction when a target he is aware of enters a space within 6 squares of him. If the target had cover or concealment relative to him at any point during its movement, it benefits from the cover or concealment for this attack. If the character does shoot in this way, he skips his standard action on his next turn.

Miscellaneous Gear.

Item	Price	Weight
Ammunition, bullets and firedust (20 shots)	1 gp	2 lb.
Fey pepper, week's supply	10 gp	—
Firedust, cask	20 gp	20 lb.
Gentleman's outfit	30 gp	6 lb.
Goggles	5 gp	1 lb.
Lady's outfit	30 gp	12 gp
Leaf of Nicodemus, week's supply	1 gp	—
Pocket watch	25 gp	—
Surgeon's kit: bone saw, debriding curette, ether, forceps, morphium, probes, retractors, scalpels, scissors, sutures, syringe	50 gp	2 lb.

Miscellaneous Gear.

Fey Pepper. This rare plant only grows near paths to the Dreaming, and since the fall of the Elfaivar empire five hundred years ago it has been a black market item in most of Lanjyr. When chewed or smoked, the pepper makes the user giddy and upbeat. With a sufficient dosage, the user begins to hallucinate, though many claim these visions are actually glimpses into the Dreaming.

Gentleman's Outfit. This fine outfit includes coat, vest, cane, top hat, and more. A true gentleman *does not* wear goggles.

Goggles. Designed for working in factories or laboratories with searing chemicals or embers, these goggles are atrocious for peripheral vision. While wearing them, you can immediately make a saving throw with a +5 bonus when an effect would blind you to ignore the blindness. However, you take a -5 penalty to Perception.

Lady's Outfit. This ornate dress has an excess of weight composed of frills, whalebone corseting, multiple layers of fabric, and possibly a small hat with a lace veil. Still no goggles. Definitely no cogs either.

Leaf of Nicodemus. Monks cultivate this herb, which grows best on the islands of the Yerasol Archipelago. When crumbled, rolled, and smoked as a cigarette, the monk's leaf soothes nerves and sharpens perception slightly. It can be addictive if used extensively, but has no social stigma, unlike fey pepper.

Pocket Watch. In addition to telling time, a pocket watch deters the attention of minor fey. Watches will occasionally stop, skip, or run backward in the presence of powerful fey creatures.

Surgeon's Kit. You must be trained in Heal to use this item. During a short rest, the first healing surge spent by any of your allies who are bloodied restores an additional 5 HP. At the DM's discretion, this item might also aid the treatment of long-term afflictions.

Vehicles.

The Risuri navy, armed with enchanted cannons and guided by skyseers who can control the winds, are arguably the greatest seafaring military in the world. Though Risur is slowly integrating steam engines into its fleet, most of its vessels are still powered by sail.

Not every threat to Risur happens in the streets of Flint, and sometimes the RHC is called upon to act at sea. Your squad of constables will receive access to a ship of your own, and you will be able to acquire enhancements for it as the campaign progresses. You can find our naval quickplay rules in Appendix Two. If you and your DM want to bring this element to the forefront, you should check out E.N. Publishing's naval adventures rulebook, *Admiral o' the High Seas*.

Prestige

Most fantasy adventurers are "free agents" with no boss but themselves, usually out on the edge of civilization with few allies they can call on in a pinch. In Zeitgeist, though, you and your fellow PCs may want to call in favors from the RHC, the local police, or other power groups. The Prestige mechanic provides a quick guideline of how much clout the party has, whether they're calling in a mage to perform a ritual too high-level for them, or trying to get their hands on a rare battle wand before assaulting a criminal stronghold.

During the course of the Zeitgeist adventure path, the DM will need to track the party's Prestige with five groups:

- **Flint.** The citizens of Flint.
- **Risur.** The RHC, the police, and the greater Risuri government and military.
- **The Unseen Court.** The fey lords who rule in the Dreaming.

Prestige Rating.

The prestige rating represents how well-regarded the party is, either as an ally or enemy. If the party thwarts several criminal plots but anger Flint politicians in the process, the criminals might view them as a significant threat (Prestige 3), even though they're pariahs to the Risuri establishment (Prestige 0).

- **Rating 0:** The party is viewed with disdain, perhaps as buffoons or pariahs. The group will not take the party seriously.
- **Rating 1:** The party is relatively unknown within the group.
- **Rating 2:** The party has done interesting things, but most group members don't know them or assume they'll do nothing else of note.
- **Rating 3:** The party has distinguished itself, and most members of the group know about their actions and talents.
- **Rating 4:** The group pays close attention to the party, either viewing them as a powerful ally or a dangerous enemy.
- **Rating 5:** The party is a top priority of the group. A lot of resources are devoted to either helping them out or taking them down.
- **Rating 6:** The party has the ear of the leader of the group (or actually *is* in charge), or they're viewed as the face of the enemy.

- **Criminal.** A criminal group, the identity of which is secret at the start of the campaign.
- **Philosophical.** An ideological group, the identity of which is secret at the start of the campaign.

As with any rules for social interaction, these are just guidelines, and the DM should use his best judgment when adjudicating them.

Using Prestige.

In addition to acting as a handy track of your notoriety, your Prestige lets you call in favors, usually to acquire special gear or to get help from allies. The higher your Prestige, the easier and faster you can get what you want.

Use the following guidelines to determine the Favor level of what you want. Then compare that rating to your Prestige to see how fast you can get what you want. You can make a Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 15 + 3 per level of the favor) to increase the speed of your favor one step, (for example, from a week to a day).

If the Favor level is...	Then your favor gets fulfilled in...
Less than your Prestige	As little time as humanly possible.
Equal to your Prestige	A few hours.
Your Prestige +1	A day.
Your Prestige +2	A week.
Your Prestige +3	A month.
Your Prestige +4	Never.

Calling in a favor represents the party expending resources and good will to find people who are both able and willing to help, so there are limits to how often the party can take advantage of the Prestige system.

The party as a whole can call in one favor per day from a given allied group. For example, a party with Risur Prestige 2 might call on a soldier for back-up (Favor 1) and get someone to show up in a few minutes. The next day they might call for a ritual caster to craft some common magic items for them (Favor 2), and he'd show up in a few hours. If the next day they requisitioned a flaming sword (Favor 3) to fight a frost monster, it would arrive the next morning unless the party pulled some strings or yelled a lot (a Diplomacy or Intimidate check, as appropriate).

If the party needs to call in more favors, one PC needs to make a Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 15 + 3 per level of the favor + 2 per each previous favor beyond the limit in the same day). For instance, if on day two the party above also needed a squad of four police to stake out a wharf for a night (Rating 3), they would need to make a check (DC 24) to even get the favor, plus also another check (DC 24) to round up the squad in time for that evening.

If they failed the first check they'd have to wait until the next day to call in the favor. If they failed the second check, the squad might be willing, but can't get their schedules together until the next day.

The above favors would be based on the party's Prestige with Risur, and wouldn't count against the limit if the party wanted to call on favors from the people of Flint. If they wanted street urchins to tail a suspect for a week (Level 3), and needed a group of technologists to spend a few hours testing the air in various districts for traces of a particular chemical (Level 4), it wouldn't make the police any less likely to help the party.

The Favor Ratings below are just guidelines. The DM can impose modifiers as he sees fit, or state that certain favors are impossible. For instance, if you call in back-up to a crime scene, and all the officers are killed because you screw up, the police force will be less inclined to send you back-up next time. If you just saved the police chief's life and need a dozen men to track down the assassin, you'll have an easier time of that.

Flint Favors.

Here are some sample help, provided by Flint's citizens.

- **Level 0.** Urchins to watch a street for you. A secretary to look through documents or handle your paperwork. A carriage-driver to provide you discreet passage around a district.
- **Level 1.** A ferry-man to give you discreet passage around the city. A craftsman to make a custom non-magic item for you. A minor bureaucrat who can bend the rules. A journalist to run a story.
- **Level 2.** A docker to create a distraction that will probably get him beaten up or arrested. A journalist to run a false story that could get him in trouble. A major public figure agreeing to talk with you for a few minutes.
- **Level 3.** A gang of thugs to commit some violent crimes for you. A small group of concerned citizens to rally and protest somewhere. A journalist to print an exposé on a powerful political figure.
- **Level 4.** A large crowd of protesters to block off a whole building or street. A class of university students to come out and use their skills for the common people. A ship captain to smuggle in something for you.
- **Level 5.** A politician to take a stand for something that might make him lose his office. A city-wide search for a missing person. A local celebrity to put on a private show.
- **Level 6.** A city-wide protest. A call for all citizens to take up arms.

Risur Favors.

And here are some examples of help provided by the RHC, the police, or the military.

- **Level 1.** An officer to provide back-up or investigate a lead for you. A soldier to fight alongside you. (See Appendix J.)
- **Level 2.** Four officers or soldiers. A level 6 ritual caster who can perform several rituals (the PCs pay for any ritual components).
- **Level 3.** A squad of twelve officers, or a unit of twelve soldiers. A level 10 ritual caster.



- **Level 4.** A precinct-wide alert for all officers to assist. Four 12-soldier units. A level 12 ritual caster.
- **Level 5.** A city-wide alert for all officers to assist. A company of one hundred soldiers. A level 14 ritual caster.
- **Level 6.** Four companies of soldiers. Principal Minister Harkover Lee, who is a level 18 ritual caster.

Unseen Court Favors.

It's always dangerous to ask for help from the fey. Favors must be repaid in kind, a bargain which can be magically compelled at any moment.

- **Level 1.** A tiny fey to deliver an item to a specific house without being seen. A dryad to hide someone on the run from the law.
- **Level 2.** A pixie to kill a person's pet and eat everything but its head. A nymph to lure someone off into the Cloudwood.
- **Level 3.** A hag to provide an illegal magic item (the PCs pay for the cost). A young treant to sneak into the city and observe a target.
- **Level 4.** A vekeshi mystic to abduct and threaten a factory owner.
- **Level 5.** A fey lord (though not one of the Unseen Court) to meet and provide information.
- **Level 6.** A member of the Great Hunt to chase down and kill a target in the wilderness.

Taking Time.

As a default, favors like those above can get people to help you for up to half an hour. If you want someone to help you for a few hours, increase the level by 1. If the favor requires working for a day or more, increase the level by 2; and if a week or more, by 3. Particularly with large groups, you'll usually need to factor at least a 1-level increase to give the group time to gather and travel to wherever the party needs them. Even the king needs a few weeks to march an army to war.

Requisitioning Equipment.

Between adventures, there's no need to use the Prestige system. Characters can file the appropriate paperwork and whether it takes a few days or a few weeks, the item they need will arrive before the start of the next adventure.

When you want to request something during an adventure, though, you need to call in a favor using your Risur Prestige. Use the Favor levels listed below as a guideline. This abstraction represents what would realistically be a complex system involving very large quantities of paperwork. Remember that the favor only represents making the item available; you still have to pay for it.

- **Level 1.** Requisition any number of Common items, include weird non-magical things like wagons with cannons hidden in them.
- **Level 2.** Requisition an Uncommon item no more than 4 levels higher than the party. Alternatively, requisition up to three Uncommon consumable items.
- **Level 3.** Requisition a Rare item no more than 4 levels higher than the party, or an Uncommon item of any level.
- **Level 4.** Requisition a Rare item of any level.

When requesting Uncommon or Rare items, if the party has more such items than twice the number of PCs, increase the level of the request by 2. You don't have to count items toward this limit if the RHC doesn't know you have them.

Paragon Paths

The following nine paragon paths are tied to the character themes presented above, but they are options, not mandatory. Indeed, as your character becomes familiar with the other traditions active in Risur, he may be drawn to the path of a different theme. For those characters who choose one of these paths instead of one in the Character Builder, you'll have to manually add the details to your character sheet.

Implements and Math.

Unlike most paragon paths, these could apply to characters of many different classes. Rather than having complicated rules for the interactions of classes, we want to keep it simple and ensure characters can use these powers at a fair power level. For any powers below that require an implement, characters can use any weapon or implement they are proficient with as an implement for the power.

Additionally, all of the paragon path powers are keyed to the character's "primary ability score," which is whichever ability score of theirs is highest. Sure, it's odd to discuss philosophy with your Dexterity, but that's Fourth Edition for you.

Applied Astronomist

The myriad motes shining in the night sky influence the world through subtle magic, and with the proper study that magic can be grasped and harnessed. Skyseers, familiar with sensing the patterns of the stars, can learn to wield this magic in battle, enhancing themselves, conjuring otherworldly destructive forces, or shifting the environment to be more like those of these wandering planes.

The last skyseer who unlocked these powers, Hugo Theroby, died in 493, leaving an unfinished telescope and observatory atop one of the mountains in Flint's Cloudwood. Today the facility is overrun by pixies who exhibit unusual magical abilities.

Prerequisite: Skyseer theme, or trained in Arcana and Nature and training by a skyseer

Features.

Stargazer (11th level): You gain darkvision and cannot be blinded.

Touching the Wheel of Heaven (11th level): Different planes are in ascendance or decline each day, entering or leaving conjunction with various constellations and other celestial phenomena.

After an extended rest, if you were able to spend an hour watching the night sky in the past day, roll two times on the following table to determine which planes you are able to connect to. Reroll duplicates. This connection determines the types of damage you can deal with your paragon path powers, and influences other abilities. The connection lasts until you take another extended rest, but no more than 24 hours.

Planar Connections

1d8: Roll two times each day.

1—Jiese, plane of fire.
2—Avilona, plane of air.
3—Av, plane of dreams.
4—Mavisha, plane of water.
5—Urim, plane of earth.
6—Apet, the distant plane.
7—Reida, plane of time.
8—Nem, plane of ruin.



Walking the Cosmos (11th level): By the scale used to measure between stars, any distance on a single world is insignificant. When you spend an action point, the next power you use this turn has an unlimited range, though you must still be able to see the target or origin square.



Heavenly Flare (11th level): You gain the following power.

Heavenly Flare

The blinding glow of a star manifests where you point, emitting waves of planar energy.

Applied Astronomist Attack 11 ✦ Primal, Implement, Radiant
Standard Action Encounter

Special: Choose a plane you're connected to today. It will influence this power's effect.

Area burst 1 within 10

Target: Creatures in burst

Attack: Primary ability score vs. Fortitude

Hit: 1d10 radiant damage, and the target is affected by the attack rider of the plane you chose:

- Jiese, plane of fire—Ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends)
- Avilona, plane of air—Deafened and slowed (save ends both)
- Av, plane of dreams—Dazed and insubstantial until the end of your next turn.
- Mavisha, plane of water—Slide 2 squares, and ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends)
- Urim, plane of earth—Cannot teleport (save ends) and knocked prone
- Apet, the distant plane—Teleport the target 6 squares.
- Reida, plane of time—Stunned until the end of your next turn. While stunned, the target is immune to damage, forced movement, and status effects.
- Nem, plane of ruin—Ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends)

Straddling Realities (12th level): You gain the following power.

Straddling Realities

You bring a portion of this world coterminous with another.

Applied Astronomist Utility 12 ✦ Primal
Standard Action Daily

Effect: Choose a plane you're connected to today. You create a zone, area burst 3 within 10, which lasts until the end of the encounter. The effect of the zone depends on which plane you manifest.

- Jiese, plane of fire—As a minor action you can create an object composed of solid firegem, of any rough shape, up to 3 squares across in any unoccupied space in the zone. The object is as durable as wood, but vanishes when the zone ends.
- Avilona, plane of air—Zone fills with fog (concealment), or winds up to 30 miles per hour (–2 penalty to ranged weapon attacks), or calm air (makes the temperature comfortable and the air breathable).
- Av, plane of dreams—Enemies in the zone take a –2 penalty to their Will defense. Allies gain a +2 bonus to theirs.
- Mavisha, plane of water—Zone fills with water to the depth of your choice, either calm (Athletics DC 10 to swim) or choppy (DC 20).
- Urim, plane of earth—As a minor action you can roughly tunnel through up to three 5-ft. cubes of stone or earth in the zone, or extrude an equal amount of stone from a rocky surface.
- Apet, the distant plane—Attacks originating inside the zone cannot affect targets outside the zone, and vice versa. It's possible to step across the threshold and attack, but otherwise the distance is effectively infinite.
- Reida, plane of time—Creatures in the zone can take an extra minor action each turn.
- Nem, plane of ruin—Creatures that start their turn in the zone take 10 necrotic damage, and unattended objects in the zone are exposed to years' worth of decay each round.

Space Travel (16th level): You gain new movement options or bonuses each day from the two planes you are connected to.

- Av, plane of dreams—You gain a Climb speed (spiderclimb) equal to your walking speed.
- Avilona, plane of air—You gain a Fly speed equal to your walking speed, with clumsy maneuverability.
- Jiese, plane of fire—You can shift 1 square as a minor action.
- Mavisha, plane of water—You gain a Swim speed equal to your walking speed.
- Urim, plane of earth—You ignore the first square of forced movement whenever you'd be moved. You may automatically resist being teleported.
- Apet, the distant plane—You can teleport 2 squares as a move action.
- Reida, plane of time—+2 speed.
- Nem, plane of ruin—You hover slightly above the ground and seem to pass through small obstacles, allowing you to ignore difficult terrain.

Conjunction (20th level): You gain the following power.

Cataclysmic Conjunction

A huge flash of light heralds the arrival of a new, otherworldly landscape.

Applied Astronomist Attack 20 ✦ Primal, Implement, Radiant

Standard Action Daily

Special: Choose a plane you're connected to today. It will influence this power's effect.

Area Burst 3 within 10

Target: Creatures in burst

Attack: Primary ability score vs. Fortitude

Hit: 3d10 radiant damage, and the target is affected by the attack rider of the plane you chose, from the table above for Heavenly Flare.

Miss: Half damage.

Effect: The attack's area becomes a zone until the end of the encounter, with the effects of the plane you chose, form the table for Straddling Realities.



A skyseer examines the heavens for answers.

From left to right: Jiese, plane of fire; Av, the moon and plane of dreams; Avilona, plane of air; Mavisha, plane of water; Urim, plane of earth; Apet and its ring Reida, planes of distance and time; Nem, plane of ruin.

Planet sizes have been greatly exaggerated to reveal details invisible to the unaided eye."

Logos

Philosophers practice swaying people's opinions with words, by reshaping how they think about the world. Convince a man that charity is wasting money on people who contribute nothing to society, and he will see a starving child as a beggar. Convince that same man that charity can lift up the poor so they rejoin the workforce, and he'll see the same child as a potential worker or investment. Great heroism and horrid cruelty can occur when a powerful idea holds sway.

Underlying philosophy is the understanding that some if not all truths are relative. And some philosophers—whether they have grown jaded to the constant ebb and flow of ideologies battling for ascendance, or they have come to realize that even their own beliefs are impermanent and their perceptions inherently faulty—can effect changes in the world through speech alone.

It is said that the second-century Drakran philosopher von Copenhoff learned to yield such power after he discovered a book written by William Miller, a philosopher whose teachings were declared heretical by the Clergy. Perhaps the Clergy was wise, for von Copenhoff nearly took control of an entire nation by declaring to people in power one-by-one that they agreed with him.

Prerequisite: Eschatologist theme, or trained in Diplomacy and History and experience discussing philosophy.

Features.

Fiat (11th level): Under the right circumstances, you can declare by fiat that a creature will take a particular course of action. When you spend an action point, instead of gaining an extra action yourself, you may force a creature that can hear you to take an at-will standard or move action of your choice. This action cannot directly cause the creature damage (such as by entering a fire, jumping off a cliff, or stabbing itself), but it can put it in a dangerous situation (standing beneath a teetering boulder, running past foes and provoking opportunity attacks).

Pathos of the Inanimate (11th level): People can disagree with an argument, but inanimate objects have no power to resist your words. You can manipulate unattended objects within 30 feet by speech alone, causing furniture to move, trees to crack, locks and doors to open or close, and even guns to fire on their own. You can move tiny things up to 30 feet as a free action, objects as large as person as a minor action, and those filling up to a 10-ft. square area as a move action. This cannot affect objects that have been given a name, since doing so imbues them with a fragment of willpower.

Make It So (11th level): You gain the following power.

Make It So

With a brief utterance, you declare whether an attack hits.

Logos Attack 11 ✦ Psionic

Standard Action Encounter

Effect: Choose a creature that can hear you. You can choose to have its next attack roll either hit or miss.

Inexplicable Narration (12th level): You gain the following power.

Inexplicable Narration

Until you see a place, that location could contain anything. You use that uncertainty to declare one of its traits.

Logos Utility 12 ✦ Psionic

Standard Action Daily

Effect: Choose an area you are unaware of the details of, no more than a 10 squares across. Describe that area. If any creature enters that area within the next five minutes, it will match your description permanently. You can declare mundane objects or minor elements of terrain, but cannot use this power to cause damage, create creatures, or create objects of any noteworthy value.

Simple changes are almost always possible (e.g., the doors down that hallway are unlocked, and the lever to deactivate any traps is within easy view; or behind this wall is a hidden chamber filled with weapons), but at the DM's discretion more drastic declarations may cause the power to simply fail (e.g., the hold of this ship is filled with lava; or a note explaining the villain's plans just happens to be sitting on a table waiting for us).

Ethos of the Unwilling (16th level): While some element of consciousness exists beyond the simple gray matter of a mortal's brain, that flesh is itself just an object, as easy to redefine and control as a doorway. Though outright controlling a mind is still a challenge, you can easily influence the fringes of a person's ideology. Whenever you hit a creature with an attack, that creature takes a –2 penalty to its next attack roll.

Revoke Agency (20th level): You gain the following power.

Revoke Agency

The creature's will is not its own. It does precisely what you say.

Logos Attack 20 ✦ Psionic, Implement

Standard Action Daily

Ranged 10

Target: One creature that can hear you

Attack: Primary ability score vs. Will

Hit: You control the target's actions (save ends). While so controlled, it is stunned. You can spend your actions to make it take actions (e.g., standard actions for standard actions, etc.). You cannot make the creature take self-destructive actions.

Miss: The target is dominated until the end of your next turn.



Mad Shootist

Guns, feh. Guns are passé. The weapon of the future needs to do more than just shed blood. A firearm can store magical power, firing explosive projectiles, striking with beams of elemental energy, or creating even more unusual effects. You never know what tool you need to win a battle, but soon you will be able to carry them all at once!

Prerequisite: Gunsmith theme, or trained in Arcana and training by a gunsmith.

Features.

Inventive Gunnery (11th level): Choose a type of firearm (e.g., pistol, carbine, musket, shotgun, etc.). You have invented a modular arcano-scientific version of that weapon, colloquially known as a blaster. You can load your blaster with normal ammunition, or you can have it fire force blasts. These are identical to normal rounds, except they deal force damage and can be fired limitlessly without requiring reloading.

You can have only one blaster active at a time. If you let someone else fire it, it begins to pulse, and then if you do not regain possession within three rounds, it explodes. *Close* Burst 3. *Attack (implement):* Primary ability score vs. Reflex. *Hit:* 6[w] damage. *Miss:* Half damage.

If your blaster is destroyed, you can spend 1 hour to repair it, or to upgrade another firearm of any type into a new blaster. During this hour you can also transfer enchantments between weapons.

Autofire (11th level): With a flip of a switch, your blaster converts from firing a single shot to a 10-round burst. This normally will require using force blasts. Whenever you make a ranged attack with your blaster (i.e., not close or area), you can choose to autofire, dealing damage equal to your Dexterity or Intelligence modifier (whichever is higher) to each enemy in Area burst 1 centered on on the attack's target. Creatures that have cover relative to you take no damage from autofire.

Piercing Shot (11th level): When you spend an action point, you may use your blaster to attack multiple targets. When you next attack with your blaster, draw a straight line from any part of your space to any part of your target's space, and then onward up to three more spaces. Make your attack against each creature whose space the line passes through. You cannot use your blaster again until the end of your next turn.

Beam Shot (11th level): You gain the following power.

Beam Shot

You load a glowing cartridge into your blaster, choose a setting, and fire an energy pulse.

Mad Shootist Attack 11 ✦ Arcane, Weapon
Standard Action Encounter

Special: Choose freeze ray, shrink ray, or wave beam. You must use your blaster for this attack.

Ranged weapon

Attack: Primary ability score vs. AC

Hit: The option you selected determines what happens when you hit:

- ✦ **Freeze Ray.** 1[w] + primary ability score modifier cold damage, and the target is restrained and gains vulnerable 10 against non-typed damage (i.e., attacks that damage with kinetic force that might break ice, not energy) (save ends both).
- ✦ **Shrink Ray.** 1[w] + primary ability score modifier force damage. The target shrinks by three size categories and deals half damage with its weapon attacks (save ends both). If it is reduced to smaller than Tiny size, its reach is reduced 0, its speed to 1, and it deals one-quarter normal damage with weapon attacks (save ends all).
- ✦ **Wave Beam.** 3[w] + primary ability score modifier force damage. This attack ignores cover.

Mobility Shot (12th level): You gain the following power.

Mobility Shot

An electrical grapple flies from your blaster's barrel and connects with the ceiling. You leap and swing to safety.

Mad Shootist Utility 12 ✦ Arcane
Move Action Encounter

Effect: Choose a solid anchor point at least 1 square across within 6 squares. You fire a grapple beam to that point and can either pull yourself to that location and hang, or use it as the anchor point of a swing, potentially letting you travel 12 squares as part of this action. You can keep the grapple shot engaged as long as you want, but once you release it, it takes 5 minutes to recharge. While the grapple beam is engaged, you cannot fire your blaster.

At the DM's discretion, an Acrobatics check might allow you to do other clever things with this shot. However, the beam will not connect with a creature, not can it be used to pull objects closer to you.

Rocket Launcher (16th level): You can create up to five rockets per day. Any more destabilize the arcane matrix, causing them all to become inert. You can never have more than five rockets at a time. Rockets are effectively grenades with range 20/40, which you can load into your blaster as a standard action.

Hyper Beam (20th level): You gain the following power.

Hyper Beam

You overcharge your blaster, gaining immense power for a short period of time.

Mad Shootist Attack 20 ✦ Arcane, Force, Weapon
Minor Action Daily

Effect: You can make the following attack with your blaster until the end of the encounter.

Ranged weapon

Target: One creature

Attack: Primary ability score vs. AC

Hit: The first time you attack with this power, a hit deals 3[w] + primary ability score modifier force damage. The second time, a hit deals 4[w] + primary ability score modifier damage. The third time, a hit deals 5[w] + primary ability score modifier damage, and at the end of your turn your blaster explodes, as detailed in Inventive Gunnery above.



Monument of War

Risur spins its greatest war veterans into mythic heroes, who come to embody the ideals and hallmarks of its various wars for the citizenry. Some rare veterans become empowered by this public investment in their life stories, and learn to manifest parts of their myth in battle today. At the veteran's invocation, a remembered fusillade of cannons might strike a new foe, or a fallen ally might once again step in the path of a bullet to spare the veteran's life.

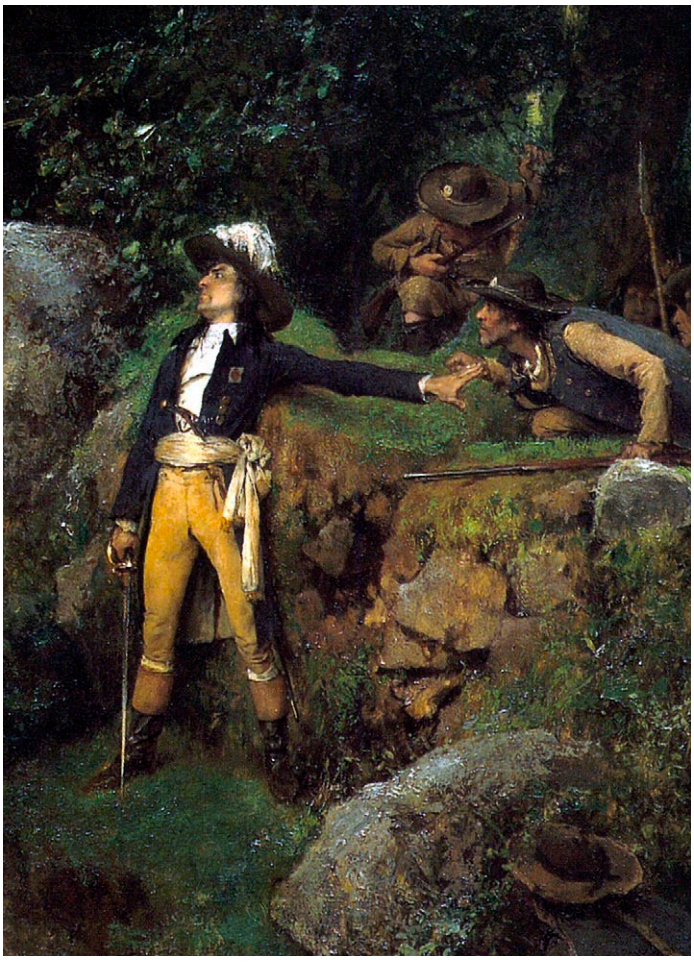
These living monuments of war are often haunted by their fallen brethren or by the dishonorable acts they had to perform to survive, which they must now keep secret as the public cheers them as unimpeachable heroes. Yet others just wish to recapture their glory days or to get another shot at the enemies who wronged them and got away.

Prerequisite: Yerasol Veteran, or veteran of another war and trained in Arcana and History.

Features.

Instant Boot Camp (11th level): When you spend an action point, you and each ally who can see or hear you becomes trained in Athletics and proficient in all simple and military weapons until the end of your next turn. Those already trained in Athletics can treat any roll of 1 to 7 for an Athletics check as if they had rolled an 8. You and each of those allies can immediately stand up or drop prone, then move 2 squares.

Fearless Mein (11th level): Accounts of your heroism carry their own strength. You and allies within 5 squares gain a +4 bonus to your defenses against Fear attacks and to saving throws to resist fear effects.



Shell Shock (11th level): You gain the following power.

Shell Shock

For a moment your mind flashes back to when you were caught in an artillery barrage, and suddenly cannons strike nearby you.

Monument of War Attack 11 ✦ Psionic, Implement
Standard Action Encounter
Special: This power does not provoke opportunity attacks.
Area burst 3 within 3
Target: Creatures in burst
Attack: Primary ability score vs. Reflex

Hit: 4d10 + primary ability score modifier damage and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: The area is filled with dust and smoke, providing concealment until the end of your next turn. The origin space is cracked and caved in to a depth of three feet, since an artillery shell has struck it.
Note: You must include yourself in the area, but you can benefit from cover relative to the origin space.

Remembrance of the Human Shield (12th level): You gain the following power.

Remembrance of the Human Shield

The face of a long-dead friend flickers into view just in time for his body to once again save an ally from an attack.

Monument of War 12 ✦ Psionic
Immediate Interrupt Daily

Trigger: A melee or ranged attack hits you or an ally you can see.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The attack instead hits the psychic manifestation of your fallen ally. The manifestation is instantly destroyed, but the creature targeted by the triggering attack is unaffected.

Do You Want to Live Forever? (16th level): You have survived bullet hells where the crossfire should have killed anyone, and that story is so well-known and powerful that it protects you. When you have no physical cover or concealment, you gain the benefit of cover against non-melee attacks.

Cannon Overture (20th level): You gain the following power.

Cannon Overture

You focus your memories on the most violent engagement you ever endured, and once again the cannons of your allied warships pound the battlefield around you.

Monument of War Attack 20 ✦ Psionic, Implement
Standard Action Daily
Area burst 3 within 10
Target: Creatures in burst
Attack: Primary ability score vs. Reflex

Hit: 4d10 + primary ability score modifier damage and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: The area is filled with dust and smoke, providing concealment until the end of your next turn. The origin space is cracked and caved in to a depth of three feet, since an artillery shell has struck it.
Sustain standard. Repeat the attack, choosing a new origin square at least 5 squares from all previous ones.

Notorious Celebrity

They say gods gain power from the devotion of their followers, and that kings are strengthened by the approval of their subjects. So if you're famous, and people spend more time each day thinking about your dramatic and entertaining feats than about stodgy monarchs or absent deities, why shouldn't your notoriety grant you power and influence?

A handful of notorious celebrities seem to only grow more impressive the more people hear of them. They demand attention, and attract followers (colloquially known as a posse) who do their bidding and share in their supernatural power. To take full advantage of their unique abilities they must make an effort to have an audience wherever they go, and they find it impossible to avoid scrutiny. Perhaps not the best choice for a constable who might need to travel incognito, but sometimes the affection of fans is more useful than the indifference of strangers.

Prerequisite: Docker theme, or Charisma 15+ and a wildly popular career as an entertainer.

Features.

Roll with a Posse (11th level): You attract four loyal followers, your "posse," who protect you from unimportant people and do tasks you don't have time for, as well as aid you in combat. Each member of your posse has the following stats.

Posse Member	Minion Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, various	XP n/a
HP 1; misses never damage a minion	**Initiative** +2
AC 14, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 12	**Perception** +0
Speed 6	
Traits	
▸ **Bolstered by Celebrity**	
As long as a posse member has seen his celebrity in the past five minutes, the posse member gains a bonus to defenses and attack rolls equal to his celebrity's level, and a bonus to skill and ability checks and damage rolls equal to half his celebrity's level. You should calculate these bonuses each time you level up.	
▸ **Bodyguard**	
Your guy protects you and your friends, keeping an eye out for danger.	
Allies adjacent to the posse member gain a +2 bonus to defenses.	
Standard Actions	
⊘ **Scrap and Slash (weapon)** ✦ At-Will, Basic	
Your guys have a variety of weapons. Sometimes they just need to break some teeth. Sometimes they need a spear to hold off a monster. Mostly they use those fine matching swords you bought them.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. AC	
Hit: 4 damage.	
⊘ **Bang Bang** ✦ At-Will	
But sometimes a good bullet to the chest does the job.	
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +5 vs. AC	
Hit: 4 damage, or 8 damage on a critical hit.	
Load standard.	
Str 14 (+2) **Dex** 15 (+2) **Wis** 8 (–1)	
Con 12 (+1) **Int** 13 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+0)	
Alignment Same as celebrity **Languages** Various	

Posse members don't act without your direction. When you spend a move action, each posse member can also spend a move action. You can use an opportunity action to have a posse member make an opportunity attack against an enemy you can both see. Also, you can spend actions to direct a single posse member to do a specific thing like open a door or manipulate an object. Otherwise, posse members wait for your orders, though if you give them no orders they'll reload their pistol if needed.

Due to your supernatural connection to your posse, whenever something deals damage to a posse member, you can transfer that damage to yourself. If the same source damages multiple posse members simultaneously, you can protect all of them but only take the damage once. If a source would damage *you* as well as the posse members simultaneously, you can shield them automatically without taking any extra damage.

If a posse member is reduced below 0 HP they automatically stabilize as long as you're alive, and you can use a minor action to expend a healing surge and restore any number of posse members you can see to 1 HP.

A posse member who dies can be replaced casually the next time you're somewhere you have fans. You might eulogize your fallen ally in a song, and fans will say how great you are for respecting what's-his-name.

Center of Attention (11th level): When you spend an action point, each enemy aware of you takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls against targets other than you until the end of your next turn.

One-Upmanship (11th level): You gain the following power.

One-Upmanship

You'll let him finish, but you've got to show off really quick.

Notorious Celebrity Attack 11 ✦ Arcane

Immediate Interrupt Encounter

Trigger: An enemy hits you or an ally with an attack.

Effect: Use an at-will or encounter attack power you know as an immediate interrupt. If the trigger was a critical hit, you may instead use a daily power you know. You gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls that target the triggering enemy with this power.

Summon Audience (12th level): You gain the following power.

Summon Audience

With a snap of your fingers, an illusory crowd appears to cheer you on.

Notorious Celebrity Utility 12 ✦ Arcane

Minor Action Daily

Effect: You create illusory people in eight unoccupied spaces within 10 squares. These illusions are stationary but immune to damage, and last until the end of the encounter or until you dismiss them. You and your allies can move and attack through their spaces freely, but they are difficult terrain to enemies, and they grant cover against ranged attacks made by enemies. The illusions count as real onlookers for the purpose your Crowd Effect ability (see below), or for the Docker ability Audience Participation.

Crowd Effect (16th level): While you have an audience of at least eight non-combatants, you gain a +5 bonus on death saving throws, and whenever you bloody or drop an enemy you gain 5 temporary HP.

Shock and Awe (20th level): You gain the following power.

Shock and Awe

You and your posse strike at once, overwhelming your enemies with an intimidating show of force.

Notorious Celebrity Attack 20 ✦ Arcane

Standard Action Daily

Effect: Use a level 1 at-will attack power. Then each of your posse members can make a basic attack. Enemies hit by one of these attacks take a –2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

Polyhistor

Ballistics is a science. Angle, velocity, force—all these can be calculated and refined for the perfect shot. Medicine is likewise a science. Arteries, ligaments, organs—damage to these in varying intensities cause readily-measured negative consequences to the injured party. Similarly the kinetics of motion, the materials science of armor and weapon, even the nascent study of psychology and sociology all can lend understanding to the complex system that is a battle.

As a polyhistor you are versed in an expansive list of sciences, each with a focus on its relation to warfare and combat. Using your diverse knowledge and keen intellect you can compose at a moment's notice the ideal method of attack for any situation. Admittedly, doing so can be mentally taxing, so you may need to pause and regain your poise in order to track all the factors at play in a battle. Likewise, sometimes an immediate attack is not optimal. Better perhaps to observe a foe's patterns, and to let him leave an opening you can exploit to crush him.

Prerequisite: Martial Scientist theme, or Intelligence 15+ and trained in Heal, Insight, and History.

Features.

Elementary Stances (11th level): You have learned five elementary stances that cover nearly every combat technique known to man (see sidebar, page 30). At the start of your turn as a free action you can switch to any of these stances. You can have any one elementary stance and up to one stance from another source active at a time.

The elementary stances—Alert, Brute, Close, Defensive, and Evasive—are detailed on page 30.



Combat Focus (11th level): Instead of gaining an encounter attack power from this paragon path, you start each encounter with three martial dice (1d6 each), which you can expend for various effects based on which elementary stance you are in.

If you spend a standard action on total defense, you add three additional martial dice to your pool as long as an enemy is actively engaged in combat within 10 squares of you. You can have a maximum of ten dice in your martial pool at any time, and whenever you start a new encounter your total resets to three.

You can expend your martial dice for the following two options regardless of which stance you are in:

- **Two Targets.** Once on your turn when you make a basic attack, you may expend one die to make another basic attack which must target a different enemy. You may stow and draw weapons between these two attacks.
- **Multiple Targets.** When you make a melee basic attack on your turn you may expend two dice to target every enemy in a Close Burst 1. When you make a ranged basic attack on your turn you may expend two dice to target every enemy in an Area Burst 1 within range. (With these options combined you can spend two dice to make a melee basic attack against every enemy in a Close burst 1, spend one die to add an extra *ranged* basic attack, switch to a ranged weapon, and use two dice so that attack targets a group of enemies in an Area Burst 1 within range.)

Perfect Aim (11th level): When you spend an action point, you gain access to the following option for your martial dice until the end of your turn.

- **Precision.** After you make an attack roll with a basic attack, you may expend any number of dice and roll them, adding their result to your attack roll.

Decipher Technique (12th level): You gain the following power.

Decipher Technique

You can read your enemy like a book. His style is transparent to you, though defeating him is not certain.

Polyhistor Utility 12 ✦ Martial

Standard Action Daily

Effect: Choose an enemy you can see that either you have hit or that has hit you. You become aware of its defenses, traits, and powers. (Generally, unless there is secret information in its statblock, the GM should allow you to see the enemy's statblock.)

Additionally, add two martial dice to your pool.

Combat Transcendence (16th level): At the start of an encounter your martial dice pool resets to five dice instead of three, and your maximum dice pool is twelve instead of ten.

Masterstroke (20th level): You gain the following power.

Masterstroke

You combine all your knowledge of combat for one spectacular display.

Polyhistor Attack 20 ✦ Martial

Standard Action Daily

Effect: You gain seven martial dice which must be used before the start of your next turn, and which do not count toward your dice pool limit. Until the start of your next turn, you can use martial dice for powers from any stance.

Make a basic attack.

Elementary Stances

The five elementary stances are a class feature of the Polyhistor paragon path (see page 29).

Alert Stance

- **Warding Strike.** When a creature enters the reach of your melee weapon, you may expend one die as an immediate reaction to make a melee basic attack against that creature.

  If you are wielding a ranged weapon, when a creature enters a space without cover or concealment from you within 5 squares, you may expend one die as an immediate reaction to make a ranged basic attack against that creature.

Brute Stance

- **Damage.** When you roll damage dice for a basic attack, you may expend any number of dice and roll them, adding the result to the damage roll. If you are wielding either a two-handed weapon, or a weapon in both hands, roll d8s instead of d6s.
- **Forced Movement.** When you hit an enemy with a melee basic attack, you may expend one die to push, pull, or slide the target 2 squares.

Close Stance

- **Grab.** When you hit an enemy you are adjacent to with a melee basic attack, you may spend one die to grab the enemy, even if you don't have a free hand. If you do have a free hand, you do not need to spend a die to grab them.
- **Major Affliction.** When you hit with an enemy you have grabbed with a melee basic attack, you may expend two dice and choose one of the following major conditions. The target gains the condition until the end of your next turn. Major conditions include: blinded, dazed, immobilized, or weakened.
- **Minor Affliction.** When you hit with an enemy you have grabbed with a melee basic attack, you may expend one die and choose one of the following minor conditions. The target gains the condition until the end of your next turn. Minor conditions include: deafened, disarmed, prone, or slowed.

Defensive Stance

- **Guard.** When an enemy hits you or an adjacent ally with an attack, as an immediate interrupt you may spend any number of dice, roll them, and add them to you or your ally's defenses against that attack. If you are wielding a shield, you may an extra +2 to the result of these rolled dice.

Evasive Stance

- **Evade.** When an enemy ends its movement close enough so it could attack you with a melee attack, you may spend a die as an immediate reaction to move your speed.
- **Skirmish.** Once on your turn when you make a basic attack you may spend a die to move your speed. If you combine this with the Two Targets option above, you can move between the attacks.

  If you combine it with the Multiple Targets option for a melee attack, instead of attacking in a Close Burst 1, you may make a melee basic attack against each enemy you move adjacent to during this movement.

Steamsuit Pilot

If you can build a quadruped contraption that can fire a gun or channel magical energy, it's merely a matter of scale to produce a larger vehicle, perhaps something someone could wear like a suit of armor. Now, a man would have to be a fool to strap himself into heat-conducting pile of metal powered by an arcane steam boiler, but well, you've invented the damned thing. It'd be *more* foolish to let it go to waste.

Each technologist who tries to design a steamsuit adds his or her own flair and quirks. Sometimes an elf wants a verdigris suit of skin-tight plate armor that increases his strength and speed. Sometimes a gnome wants to ride around in a mechanized gorilla the size of a bear and tear through everything in his path. But invariably, these suits are just machines, and any machine, no matter how ingeniously crafted, can break.

Prerequisite: Technologist theme, or trained by a technologist and training in Arcana.



Features.

Steam & Steel (11th level): Choose which size steamsuit you have designed—Medium or Large. You cannot create a suit smaller than you, but you can create a suit larger than you.

A suit is inert without a pilot, and only a creature the same size as you can fit into your suit. Creatures can enter or exit a suit as a move action. Most suits are designed with masterful locking mechanisms which can be opened either by a key as a minor action, or by a Thievery check (DC 30) as a standard action. When you enter the suit you can lock it as a free action.

Once inside, your armor bonus becomes +10, and you apply the enhancement bonus of whatever armor or clothing you are wearing. The suit counts as heavy armor, so you do not add your Intelligence or Dexterity bonus to AC. However, since it is powered it incurs no armor check penalty, and requires no armor proficiency to use properly.

The armor bonus increases to +11 at 16th level, +12 at 21st level, and +14 at 26th level.

The arcane steam engine that powers the suit can be activated or deactivated as a free action on your turn. A suit that is deactivated (either by damage or because the pilot turned off the engine) is practically inert. The pilot is immobilized and is considered blinded and helpless. Effectively the only actions he can take are those that affect himself, or he can exit the suit as a move action.

When the engine is active, the pilot has a magical link to the suit, allowing him to move, perceive, and attack as if the suit were part of him. The suit is typically designed with analogues of whatever weapons you carry, and those weapons have the same enchantments of the weapons they're based on.

A Medium suit gives the pilot a lifting and carrying capacity as if he had a Strength of 60 (e.g., a light load of 600 pounds) and grants him a speed of 7. This effective Strength score does not affect the pilot's skill or ability checks, nor his attack or damage rolls. A Large suit has double the lifting ability of a Medium suit (e.g., a light load of 1,200 pounds), but grants a speed of only 5 and imposes a –5 penalty to checks that require mobility or fine motor control, including most Acrobatics, Athletics, and Thievery checks. However, when subjected to forced movement, a Large suit reduces the distance pushed, pulled, or slid by 1 square.

Whenever the pilot takes damage while in the suit, he makes a saving throw. If the pilot fails three saves, the suit is damaged. A damaged suit is slowed and imposes a –2 penalty to attack rolls, ability checks, and skill checks. You can repair the suit during a short rest, removing the damage and restoring the suit's normal operating parameters.

If the pilot is not the suit's inventor, he takes a –5 penalty to these saving throws, and if he fails three saves the suit is deactivated rather than damaged.

Defensive Shield (11th level): You can enhance your armor's resilience with charged wards with limited duration. Whenever you spend an action point, you gain Resist All 5 until the start of your next turn.

Power Fist (11th level): You gain the following power.

Power Fist

Steam bursts from the joints in your suit's arm as it punches with the power of a piston. It then takes a moment for the pressure in your arm joints to return to normal.

Steamsuit Pilot Attack 11 ✦ Arcana, Implement

Standard Action Encounter

Special: You may use any weapon or implement as the implement for this power.

Melee 1 (or 2 if you have a Large suit)

Attack: Primary ability score vs. Reflex

Hit: 4d10 + primary ability score modifier damage and the target is pushed 5 squares and knocked prone.

Effect: You are weakened (save ends).

Redline Rush (12th level): You gain the following power.

Redline Rush

You overheat the engine and put all the power into movement; maybe it won't explode.

Steamsuit Pilot 12 ✦ Arcana

Move Action Encounter

Effect: You move twice your speed and gain a +5 bonus to all Acrobatics or Athletics checks during this movement. You are immobilized (save ends).

Quick-Don (16th level): As a standard action, you can cause your suit to magically collapse into a mechanical object that fits into your palm and weighs only five pounds. As a standard action, you can cause this object to transform into your suit; as part of this standard action, you may have the suit form around you and activate the engine.

Steam Blast (20th level): You gain the following power.

Steam Blast

Your overload your armor's arcane boiler, priming it for a devastating blast of steam and arcane energy that will leave you temporarily immobilized.

Steamsuit Pilot Attack 20 ✦ Arcane, Fire, Force, Implement

Standard Action Daily

Effect: You gain an aura 1. Any creature that starts its turn in the aura (including you) takes 10 fire damage. As a free action at the start of your turn (just before you would take this damage), you may choose to make the following attack, which ends the aura.

Ranged 20

Target: One creature

Attack: Primary ability score vs. Reflex

Hit: 6d12 + primary ability score modifier fire and force damage, and the target is blinded (save ends)

Miss: Half damage.

Effect: Each creature adjacent to the target takes 10 fire and force damage, and your suit becomes deactivated. While the suit is deactivated, it counts as disabled (i.e., you are slowed, grant combat advantage, and take a –2 penalty to attack rolls). You can make a saving throw as a standard action; if you succeed, the suit reactivates.

Urban Empath

Mediums can sense the lingering thoughts of spirits of the dead, but people have for ages referred to cities as having a spirit, a *genius loci*. Especially in a place where so many have died over the years, with the right mindset it becomes possible for a medium to attune to the psychic nature of cities. The city begins to sustain them, speak to them, and protect them.

This close communion with urban environments has its limitations, of course. A medium who devotes himself to speaking with cities can still use his powers in the wilderness, but in a much weakened capacity. In the smog-choked streets of a burgeoning industrial metropolis, though, he has a veritable army at his command.

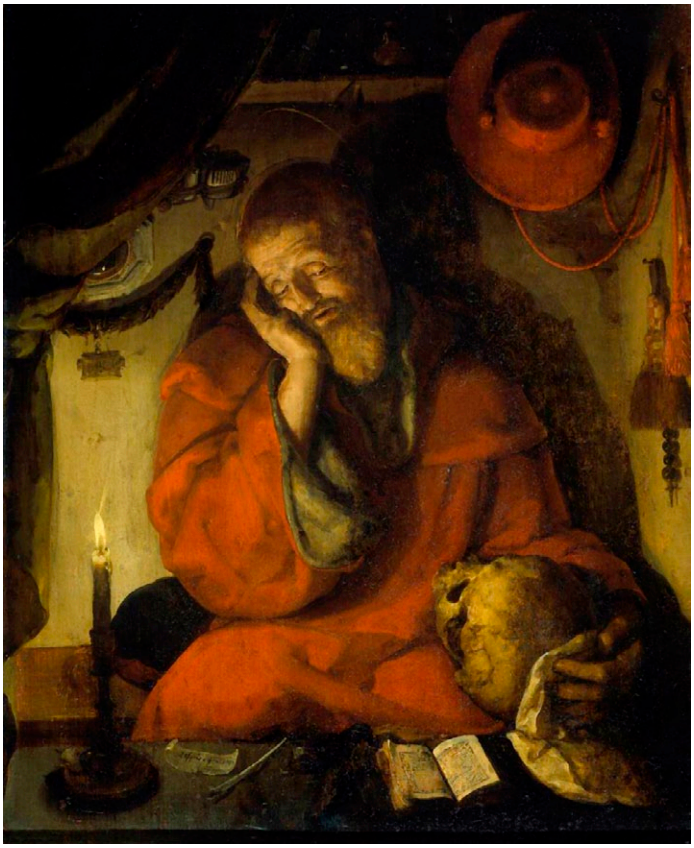
Prerequisite: Spirit Medium theme, or the ability to commune with nature and training in Diplomacy and Insight.

Features.

Every Building a Welcoming Home (11th level): When you spend an action point, until the end of your next turn you can move through manmade structures as if you had phasing.

Urban Bond (11th level): While in an urban environment (defined generally as a bounded area with a population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile), you need neither food nor drink, and you gain a +5 bonus to Acrobatics, Athletics, and Perception checks. These effects generally extend as long as you're within 3 miles of the border of an urban area.

Additionally, three times per day you can communicate with buildings, roads, or other structures in an urban environment, asking them up to three questions about what they have witnessed or been involved with. This communion functions similar to the Object Reading ritual, but only takes 5 minutes to perform.



The City Comes Alive (11th level): You gain the following power.

The City Comes Alive

With a wave of your hand you direct a part of the city to surge, strike an enemy, and either knock him aside or trap him in a maw of bricks and cobblestones.

Urban Empath Attack 11 ✦ Psionic, Implement

Standard Action Encounter

Special: You can use any weapon or implement as an implement for this power.

Area Burst 2 within 20

Special: If you are not in an urban setting, instead the attack is Area burst 1 within 10.

Target: Enemies in burst

Attack: Primary ability score vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d6 + primary ability modifier damage. If you are in an urban environment, you may choose to either slide the target 3 squares or restrain it (save ends).

The City Whispers (12th level): You gain the following power.

The City Whispers

You cock your head and listen. For a moment, you know everything that the city sees and hears.

Urban Empath Utility 12 ✦ Psionic

Minor Action Daily

Effect: If you're in an urban setting, you learn the general state of every publicly accessible location within 3 miles, and can also sense disturbances in private locations if they could be seen or heard from a public area. You can choose a creature or small group that you can identify through some physical means and you learn whether it is in the area and where, unless it entered a private area in which case you learn when it entered. Finally, you gain a perfect and intuitive understanding of all publicly traversable terrain in the area, allowing you to navigate perfectly.

In a non-urban setting, this awareness extends 150 feet.

Every Window an Eye (16th level): You gain tremorsense 20 in an urban environment, and can sense the presence and location of creatures that have total concealment or cover as long as they are hidden by manmade structures. This allows you to target your Urban Empath powers even through walls.

The City Marches to War (20th level): You gain the following power.

The City Marches to War

In your time of dire need, the walls, streets, and gates move at your command.

Urban Empath Attack 20 ✦ Psionic

Standard Action Daily

Area Burst 5 within 20

Special: In a non-urban environment, the attack affects Area Burst 2 within 10.

Effect: The area becomes a zone until the end of the encounter. You can spend a move action to move the origin space of the zone 6 squares.

An enemy that starts its turn in the zone takes 10 damage.

As a minor action once per round you can cause up to six 5-ft. cubes of terrain in the zone to move up to 6 squares, or to extrude into the area from an existing wall or floor, or to withdraw into an existing wall or floor. This moving terrain can only enter unoccupied spaces, and it is generally composed of whatever the prevailing building materials in the area are.

Vekeshi Excoriant

Only a handful of mystics among the vekeshi learn the rituals of the fallen goddess Srasama. Though she has passed on, a sliver of her power can still be touched by those who maintain sufficient devotion. It's unclear whether the goddess herself grants these adherents what little remains of her power, or if the collective memory of Srasama's death somehow carries its own influence.

These true believers excoriate their skin and use fire to cauterize and scar in symbols sacred to Srasama, commemorating her three forms of Maiden, Mother, and Crone. Excoriants often either find themselves in charge of local cells of vekeshi mystics, or they altogether transcend hierarchies and pursue their own agendas. Every night however they focus their will by reciting the teachings of Vekesh, so that they maintain a purity of purpose to protect the weak and punish those who would abuse them.

Prerequisite: Vekeshi Mystic theme, or induction into the mystics and training in Arcana and History.

Features.

Dreadnought (11th level): The mystic rites you have undertaken to connect you to the goddess have strengthened your will and freed your will to resist worldly temptations. You gain a +2 bonus to Will defense, as well as to saving throws against charm, fear, or illusion effects.

Threefold Presence (11th level): When you spend an action point, you may spend a move action this turn to move to three locations from your initial starting position, as if you were splitting into three versions of yourself. At the start of your next turn you must choose one of those locations to remain at, at which point the other two versions of you disappear. Until that time you can take actions as if you were in any of those locations, and you can be affected by others as if you were in any of those locations. Things that would affect multiple versions of you, such as if an area attack struck two versions of you, only affect you once.



Vision of the Fall (11th level): You gain the following power.

Vision of the Fall

You enforce your faith upon your enemy, then grant him the vivid memory of Srasama's demise, which wounded all those who followed her.

Vekeshi Excoriant Attack 11 ✦ Divine, Fire, Implement, Radiant
Standard Action Encounter
Special: You can use any weapon or implement as an implement for this power.
Ranged 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Primary ability score vs. Will
Hit: 2d8 + primary ability score modifier fire and radiant damage, and each ally of the target you can see takes fire and radiant damage equal to your primary ability score modifier.

Triune Blessing (12th level): You gain the following power.

Triune Blessing

Three spectral figures appear, representing the three aspects of Srasama. Maiden, mother, and crone touch your allies and grant their blessings.

Vekeshi Excoriant 12 ✦ Divine
Minor Action Daily
Effect: You or one ally you can see can make a saving throw with a +2 bonus. You or one ally you can see can spend a healing surge to heal. You or one ally you can see gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls until the start of your next turn. (You can divide the blessings or apply them to the same person as you desire.)

Live for Vengeance (16th level): Whenever you start your turn dying, you may choose to spend two healing surges but regain HP only equal to that of a single healing surge, allowing you to regain consciousness. Doing so counts as if you failed a death saving throw, however, so this ability can only be used twice per encounter.

Aspect of Srasama (20th level): You gain the following power.

Aspect of Srasama

A towering, flaming image of the fallen goddess steps into existence. Her features shift by the moment, from youthful warrior, to mature healer, to withered and skeletal sorceress. She strides toward your enemies, six burning swords in her six hands.

Vekeshi Excoriant Attack 20 ✦ Divine, Fear, Fire, Implement, Radiant, Summoning
Standard Action Daily
Special: You can use any weapon or implement as an implement for this power.
Effect: You summon a large Aspect of Srasama in unoccupied squares within range. The aspect has speed 7. Any enemy within 5 squares of the aspect not immune to fear takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls with attacks that do not include the aspect as a target.
Standard Action: Melee 2; make the following attack six times this turn, divided as you choose among any number of targets that are within range; it can attack during its movement; primary ability score vs. Reflex; 1d6 fire and radiant damage.
Standard Action: Ranged 10; targets one creature; primary ability score vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + primary ability score modifier fire damage, and the target gains ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).
Instinctive Effect: If you haven't given the aspect any commands by the end of your turn, each ally within 5 squares of the aspect (including you) gains 6 temporary hit points.

SECTION TWO: Setting Overview

Most of the action of the *Zeitgeist* adventure path occurs in Risur, a subtropical nation with ancient ties to the magic of its land, struggling to adapt to a recent revolution of technology and industry. While the nation's historic capital lies in Slate with its antique castle manors and elite gated villas, the fulcrum of its power is slowly shifting to Flint, an industrial powerhouse benefiting greatly from the nation's need these past few decades for more and more advanced weapons and warships.

It was Risur's traditional enemy Danor—bereft of magic after a cataclysm five centuries past—which began the industrial revolution. Their steam-powered ships and deadly cannon fusillades won them many battles, but the artificers of Flint are combining magic and industry in ways impossible for their enemies, and the tiefling oligarchy of Danor seems content with the land it has acquired.

Many of the other great nations, however, fear what Risur can achieve with the marriage of magic and technology, and King Aodhan of Risur worries they might try to disrupt his nation's safety and prosperity.

Elsewhere, the dwarven homeland Drakr preaches of a nihilist doomsday and sells technomantic arms and war machines to warlords and mercenaries across the land. The clergy of theocratic Crisillyir loathe Danor and its tiefling leaders, and they wield piety as a lash to inflame distrust of what they claim is a godless abomination.

Just across a mountain border to Risur's south, the warlike clans of Ber have formed an alliance, which might signal a coming invasion. Even in distant Elfaivar, where a small Risuri colony struggles against settlers from other nations to claim the broken empire's bounty, the natives lash out at these interlopers, unable to forgive a centuries-old grievance still fresh in their long-lived hearts.

Risur

Every Risuri child knows that before King Kelland, no human nation had ever endured more than a few years in Lanjyr. The mighty nature spirits known today as the fey titans only allowed the elves to walk their domain, and they terrorized all others with beasts and storms and blight. But in 1200 B.O.V. (Before Our Victory), Kelland subdued the lord spirits of field and forest, of marsh and mountain. With their grudging blessings he established Risur.

The people of Risur offered the spirits tithing and tribute, and eventually lulled them to sleep. What were once uncharted wilds of fierce beasts and tiny enclaves of elves became a prosperous civilization of men. In the seventeen centuries since, Risur's rites of rulership have ensured that Kelland's crown only passes to those mighty enough to cow the land's primal spirits should they ever seek to reclaim their domain.

Land and Culture.

Risur is a subtropical country, possessed of vast forests and fertile fields fed by hundreds of rivers and streams which flow from the southern Anthras mountains to the northern shore of the Avery Sea. Temperatures are warm but comfortable year-round, though a rainy season strikes near the end of what the northern nations consider summer.

Even the poorest Risuri can enjoy fresh fruit year-round. Wealthy foreigners cherish Risur's pineapples, limes, bananas, and massive jackfruit, but most prized are its cocoa and sugarcane, and alcohols

KINGDOM OF RISUR.



Capital: Slate
Government: Constitutional monarchy and parliamentary federal republic
Head of State: King Aodhan
Official Language: Primordial
Common Races: Human 86%, Elf 6%, Halfling 5%, other 3%.

made of each. A typical Risuri meal consists mostly of fruit, beans, bread, and fish, with the occasional beef or pork. Factory workers in Flint seldom can afford quality meat, and instead make savory stews by soaking bones and sausages in dark beans. Holiday celebrations often include steaming milk flavored with either chocolate or honey.

Terrain.

Four main landscapes make up Risur. The northern Avery Coast is dominated by a mix of wooded beaches—where mountainous granite domes rise out of the sea and anchor dry lands—and forested swamps, often referred to by the native Elven word *bayou*—where the country's many rivers sweep soil out into broad floodlands.

The Weftlands of Risur are low plains covering most of the western two-thirds of the country, which draw their name from the countless rivers that weave toward the sea like yarn in a cloth. Most towns and farms lie here, though pockets of wild forests and rocky hills create uninhabitable divides between provinces.

The land rises to the south, and in the mid-altitude hills an unusual swamp wriggles across the landscape, known as the High Bayou. Though the hills are uneven, huge numbers of nesting beasts and giant insects have dammed swaths of the land, slowing the rivers that flow out of the mountains and ensuring a steady source for rivers year-round. Few Risuri live here aside from villages of elves who never integrated with the rest of the nation.

Beyond the High Bayou, the rain-carved Anthras Mountains forms a broad border with Ber. Forests cover most of these mountains, though mining in the east has stripped many peaks. Centuries of attacks from Ber have kept many towns from flourishing here, but numerous old forts dot the King's Road, which runs from the richest mining lands, all the way north to the capital.

Flint, City of Industry.

The industrial powerhouse of **Flint** sits nestled among dozens of granite peaks along the eastern stretch of Avery Coast. With a rapidly-growing population of over half a million, slums for factory workers have begun to clump along these steep hills, while builders work to clear large sections of rainforest from within the city limits. Small satellite towns cling to the islands outside Flint's harbor, and many foreign nations and businesses have flocked to the city to gain influence in the past forty years.

The party is based out of the Royal Homeland Constabulary branch in Flint. Extensive details on the city are presented in Section Three (page 50).

Slate, the Historic Capital.

Risur's capital of Slate lies on the banks of the Great Delve River, in verdant plains fifty miles from the Avery Sea. It is by far the largest city in the country, with a population of nearly a million people. A half-dozen major highways converge on Slate, including the King's Road. Slate is still the heart of Risur's internal trade and business, though more and more international trade goes through the next-largest city.

For people used to living in the bustle of Flint, the city of Slate appears stately, calm, and perhaps a bit doddering. The Great Delve River, with its steep banks turning it almost into a manmade channel, generally separates the city into the noble west bank and the common east bank.

Six antique castles sit along the inside of a wide bend on the river's west bank, arranged in a pattern originally designed to defend against invasion. Each castle acts as a nexus of a community of elite gated villas, and here live the nobles descended from the many kings and queens Risur has had throughout history. Today the district resembles an overly-manicured flower garden, more pretty than practical.

Across the shore lie dozens of less affluent neighborhoods surrounding the Grand Weft, a massive square where three highways intersect. Wealthy businesses clump along the Lowland Highway, which leads from the square to docks along the river. The king's residence, Torfield Palace, sits atop a broad grassy hill a mile south of the weft. It is symbolic of the government of Risur that the king lives with the people, and only once he steps down or dies does his family move to the west bank.

Other Cities.

Other prominent Risuri cities include the beleaguered **Shale** on the western coast near the war-wracked Yerasol Archipelago, where druids keep wary watch from sandy barrier islands and shipyards assemble

Languages and Accents.

If you're interested in giving characters from different nations distinctive accents, here are some guidelines. These suggestions are intended for Anglophones, so if English isn't your native language, just choose whatever sounds best to you.

- Risur speaks **Primordial**, derived from the ancient speech of the original fey titans who ruled the land. Educated people of Risur often speak Common as well. Risuri speakers have English accents (or whatever local variant of English you speak: American, Australian, Canadian, etc.). All PCs gain Primordial as a bonus language.
- The language **Common**, which served a role in Lanjyr similar to Latin in Europe, is spoken in Ber, Crisillyir, and Danor, albeit with some local variations.
- Ber mixes **Draconic**, **Giant**, **Goblin**, and **Common**, with most state business conducted in Common. Berans have a Spanish accent (or Mexican, if that's easier for you).
- Crisillyir speaks **Common** as well as **Dwarven**, with strong Drakran influences. Crisillyiri sound like Eastern Europeans.
- Danor speaks **Common**, but its schools and academies are strict in maintaining the language's purity. Danorans sound like the French.
- Drakr speaks **Dwarven**. Drakrans sound Russian.
- Elfaivar speaks **Elven**, plus the Common of their conquerers. Elfaivarans should have a non-European accent: perhaps Iraqi, Indian, or Japanese.
- The fey of the Dreaming speak **Elven** amongst themselves, though most of them also speak **Common**. They tend to have a sing-song cadence and earthy pronunciation, a bit like someone reciting *Beowulf* in Old English, though smaller fey like pixies just tend to sound high-pitched.
- The seldom seen races that live under the sea have a language of their own known as **Deep Speech**, but their affairs almost never interact with people of the surface.
- The language known as **Supernal** has only been found in fragments on truly ancient artifacts, decipherable only by magic. No one can be said to truly understand, much less speak, the language.
- **Abyssal**, the language of the fallen Demonocracy, is practically extinct: it's studied by curious scholars, used by a handful of demented cultists, and understood by the warriors of the Clergy who strive to stamp out the last lingering traces of that unholy empire.

the mightiest sailing vessels in the world; and lumber-rich **Bole** in the Antwalk Thicket southeast of Slate, source of some of the finest food and theater, and host to finely cultivated forest gardens.

Both cities were once capitals of their own smaller nations in ancient times, before joining with Risur, yet they were always connected by water routes. The Great Delve's tributaries start near Bole, and the river only widens and deepens as it passes Slate and eventually pours into the sea near Shale.

A dozen other cities with a hundred thousand or more people dot the coastlines, and a few more flourish along the most traversable rivers, but much of the country's interior is rural.

Transportation.

The numerous rivers across the country hold great potential for trade inland that has not yet been realized. Most trade occurs along the coast, with rivers primarily used to carry lumber downstream to shipyards. Every new king or queen expresses an interest in expanding settlements into the more rural regions, but vast swaths still remain uninhabited.

One development that might change that is the introduction of railroads. Though rail travel is far more prevalent in Danor and Drakr, a few lines have been constructed across Risur, usually traveling perpendicular to the flow of rivers. The most developed line runs from mines in the Anthras Mountains to Flint, helping to feed its hunger for raw industrial materials. Many traditionalists, however, oppose the expansion of the railroad and warn that its churning wheels will anger the native fey.

Race and Religion.

The humans of early Risur outfought or outgrew the native elves, though many elves and half-elves call the land home today. The submen races from what is today Ber—dragonborn, goliaths, half-orcs, minotaurs, and shifters—survive in pockets, often as the descendants of slaves taken in old wars, now freed but not accepted. Dragonborn in particular are viewed with suspicion, out of paranoia that they hold a grudge for a Risuri king slaying the last dragon.

Some families of halflings mingle with humans in farming communities, and dwarves similarly in mining towns. Tieflings receive an odd mixture of fear and respect, though common folk tend to believe their influence on the nation is dangerous. Other races are too rare for most people to recognize them, and are generally lumped together with eladrin as being distrusted "fey."

Risur's main religion is a mix of old human pantheism, elven druidic rites, and reverence for local fey titans who slumber in the earth. Centuries ago many gave worship to the eladrin gods or even archfey who claim to be emissaries of the fey titans, but after the fall of Elfaivar in the Second Victory a cultural shift has taken hold across the whole continent away from fey icons.

For most of Risur's history, their most respected religious leaders were the skyseers, druids who devoted themselves to understanding patterns in the stars. The skyseers offer guidance and occasionally proclaim prophecies to guide kings, lords, and common folks alike. But the skyseers have many sects, and in the past century their prophecies have grown more and more vague. Many still respect them, but they no longer hold the same political power they once did.

Some elements of the millennium-old Clergy faith have taken root in Risur, in particular the Great Man doctrine, which sits well with a people whose first king personally changed the course of history. However, Risuri reject the Clergy's elaborate celestial hierarchy of planar domains and stars, which states the dots in the night sky are actual worlds of their own. To the Risuri, such belief reduces the prominence of the mortal races, instead placing greatest import on beings from realms no man has ever visited.

Fey and Mortal Realms.

The folk of Risur know that the Dreaming exists, though they might call it the feywild, the green land, the unseen house, the world beyond the looking glass, or the happy hunting grounds. Most Risuri treat it like an unpredictable neighbor. While human kings rule in the material plane and there are clear cities, nations, hierarchies, and borders, the Dreaming follows rules mortals can only struggle to understand.

Once every few years the Unseen Court sends emissaries to collect the tribute that King Kelland promised the fey titans at Risur's founding, typically made in the form of magic items, prize hounds and horses, or more exotic gifts. In one notable event, a cadre of archfey arrived on the summer solstice and demanded one thousand engraved silver moons before sunrise.

The ultimate desires or motives of the Unseen Court are unknown, but so far their requests have never been onerous. When they are not appeased, however, they retaliate by sending agents to seize infants from cribs, drive wild animals into cities, or call forth impossible weather like flashdroughts and hailstorms of frozen toads.

The most famous manifestation of the Dreaming in Risur is the Great Hunt. Every seventeen days a mass of mounted fey warriors tromp across the entire length of the nation, avoiding cities and sticking to the uncertain borders of civilization and the wilds. The wind carries the stamping



of their steeds' hooves, the melodies of their riding sounds, and the baying of their hounds, but they are only ever seen by the light of the full moon.

Many folk charms are said to ward off the unwanted attentions of the fickle fey. Lines of salt block their crossing, iron and the sound of iron bells drives them away, and red liquid—blood, paint, or muddy clay—distracts their attention. They are unsettled by anything with spinning parts, from wagon wheels to the gears of a clocktower, and often try to break such devices as fervently as a man might chase a mosquito. On the other hand, milk or cheese left outside a home will win a fey's favor. Of course, as a fickle lot, fey do not always follow their own rules.

Fey Titans, Archfey, and the Unseen Court.

The fey titans are five creatures of colossal scale and near god-like power, which in their heyday could reshape terrain or alter weather with their will. All the creatures in their domain, from the lowliest bug to the primitive elves who had just learned to craft stone, honored them and catered to their will. When Kelland became the first king of Risur, he challenged the five titans and bested them. Rather than slay them, he made a pact that his people would honor them, but in turn the titans would never attack his nation.

Today, the five fey titans slumber, and on the rare occasion they do awaken, lesser fey quickly seek to appease them to prevent whatever devastation their discontent could cause. For this service, these fey are able to draw upon the power of the titans.

The five titans, known to every child in Risur, are:

- **She Who Writhes**, a kraken that slumbers on the ocean floor. There are whole societies of merfey and far more alien aquatic life that tap her power to control the water ways. The archfey Beshela, for instance, ensures Risuri ships can travel safely in exchange for regular gifts of appeasement.
- **Father of Thunder**, a many-horned gazelle-like herd beast that fell asleep and has been coated in a grassy plain. Farmers make offerings to him for good weather, which are gathered by grigs and other field fey, who then herd the various wild animals that the Great Hunt will chase every 17 days.
- **The Voice of Rot**, a white serpent who controls swamps and dead animals. He is roused from his slumber most often, since there are few mortals who live in his domain and think to leave him offerings.
- **Ash Wolf**, a white-furred hunter who rests in a forest cave with her pack. She's said to awaken during great forest fires, so woodsmen are encouraged to gather brush and burn it before they go hunting.
- **Granny Allswell**, a corpulent gremlin who snoozes somewhere in the mountains. Her gremlin offspring harass miners because they don't' want the noise of digging to wake her. They likewise hate loud machinery and tend to break it if they can.

Archfey, meanwhile, are simply fey of substantial power, all of them long-lived, most of them humanoid. Some are servants of the fey titans, other simply mighty warriors or mages who have a domain of their own in the Dreaming analogue of Risur.

Then there is the Unseen Court. The Court represents feykind in negotiations with Risur, but their internal politics are nearly impossible for outsiders to fathom, having as much to do with style and emotion as with any tangible effect. The actual members of the Court are, true to their name, never seen except in truly exceptional circumstances, but they have many agents. Some vekeshi mystics claim to speak for the Court, but there is practically no way to confirm or deny this.

THE SWORD OF THE BLACK NEEDLES.

Five centuries ago, as Lanjyr was reeling from the fall-out from the Great Malice, the Voice of Rot rose up against Risur and cast a smoky pall across the sun. The king at the time, Dukain, was a mighty but aged wizard who wielded magic through his sword. He traveled to a mountain ridge overlooking the High Bayou, known as the Black Needles, and there he battled the fey titan, which had taken the form of a towering anaconda of smoke and peat.

The king battled the titan high into the Black Needles, and after three days neither side could force the other to surrender. Realizing he could not defeat the titan and thus was unworthy of his crown, Dukain cast aside his sword and abandoned the battle. The titan, in its fey logic, saw that it and the king were equally matched, so when Dukain ceased to fight, so did the titan. Dukain yielded his crown to his chosen successor, the titan returned to its slumber, and Risur was saved.

Scholars fear that should the lost Sword of the Black Needles ever be recovered, it would signal a resumption of battle for the fey titan, and once again threaten the existence of Risur.

Sometimes the archfey serve the Court, but their interests do not always align. The common metaphor Risuri use to understand the affairs of the fey is that the Court are the nobility, and the archfey are wealthy land-owners. It's much like politics in the real world, except with more giving men donkey heads and tricking people into falling in love by sniffing poison flowers.

Monarchy and Government.

Risur's current monarch, **King Aodhan**, rules from Torfield Palace in Slate. Now in his seventies, Aodhan was only thirty when the previous king chose him as his successor. Aodhan had distinguished himself in the Third Yerasol War against Danor, performing feats of strength and heroism most men today assume are just tall tales.

Aodhan has always been fascinated by Danor's technology, ever since he lured its first steam-powered warship into a kraken's reef lair, waited for the crew to abandon ship, then beat back the kraken and single-handedly piloted the vessel—still bearing scars of the kraken's tendrils—to the harbor of Flint. (Or at least that's one story of how it happened.) Once he took the crown, Aodhan pushed for industrial investment to keep up with Danor, but regional governors forced him to keep foreign technologies out of Slate. Flint became the next most obvious choice.



KING AODHAN.



DUCHESS ETHELYN OF SHALE.

King Aodhan's aged wife died four years ago. Though heredity and marriage has little impact on national succession, many wonder whether the king will seek a new bride so late in life. Despite his great strength in his youth, the king grows weaker each year.

Many suspect he will name his younger sister **Duchess Ethelyn of Shale** as his replacement, and indeed she has distinguished herself as a leader in the Fourth Yerasol War that ended seven years ago, even though her city nearly fell to Danor. She is rumored to have close ties to the Unseen Court, and acts as Risur's ambassador to its nearest neighboring nation. However, her coronation would be the first in Risur's history that transferred the crown between two blood relatives.

Politics.

Twenty-three governors direct the affairs of Risur's various provinces. Most of these are of noble lineage, descended from one of the nation's previous kings. Noble governance tends to follow family lines, unlike the crown. Each governor sends several representatives to the national Parliament, which handles the details of implementing the king's decrees and can with a supermajority overrule them. Various officers of the court and of Parliament direct specific sub-bureaucracies and agencies to handle affairs involving the nation's commerce, culture, defense, and so on.

Perhaps the most prominent noble these days is the headline catching **Catherine Romana**, a descendant of a previous queen and ally of Duchess Ethelyn. She stridently opposes Danoran-inspired industries, and prefers to counter that new technology with arcane innovations. She is rumored to be planning a major announcement later this year, and has been seen in the company of brilliant researchers from Pardwight and Mitchell University.



CATHERINE ROMANA.



GOVERNOR ROLAND STANFIELD.

One famous exception to the power of the nobility is **Roland Stanfield**, the deva governor of Flint. Five hundred years ago he witnessed the fall of the eladrin goddess Srasama, and in various reincarnations he has called Risur his home ever since. Forbidden by the rites of rulership from pursuing the crown because he is no longer precisely "mortal," Stanfield was long content to govern Flint and its relatively insignificant province of farmers, miners, and fishermen. When King Aodhan decreed Flint would become the seat of Risur's industry, however, the old deva eagerly took to the challenge, claiming he was excited to try something new after so long.

Royal Homeland Constabulary.

With the recent influx of foreign technologies and therefore foreign influence, thirty years ago King Aodhan ordered the formation of a new government agency to protect the traditional identity of the Risuri homeland. Within a decade this mission had morphed into investigating significant threats to the nation, particularly those involving technology. Today the Royal Homeland Constabulary ("RHC") uses a combination of investigators, spies, and warriors to root out, undermine, capture, and if necessary kill any groups who endanger Risur.

Though most activity occurs in Flint, officially the Constabulary's central chamber is based out of Slate and headed by **Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill**, who was a commander in the Fourth Yerasol War. His Lordship's greatest success as director was presiding over the apprehension of a group of Drakran necromancers attempting to animate undead dragons in the Anthras Mountains.

Regardless of where they are based, agents of the RHC have broad jurisdiction throughout the nation, and enjoy mild immunity while overseas when acting in an official, acknowledged capacity.

Extensive details of the Flint branch are detailed in Section Four (page 58).



VISCOUNT INSPECTOR NIGEL PRICE-HILL.

History and Place in the World.

Risur paved the way to nationhood, and many others followed the same path. By placating the dominant fey titans of Lanjyr they turned the continent into a land for mortals. The Risuri people have always respected the spirits and the fey they share the land with, but they believe the era of those beings has rightfully passed.

While the northern nations waged holy wars between the Clergy and the Seedism faith of Elfaivar, Risur was preoccupied defending its borders from the sub-men of what is modern Ber. The dragons who terrorized the lands south of the Anthras Mountains feared the progress of civilization, and would often gather armies of savages to raid or assault Risur. It is believed that two centuries ago King Boyle slew the last great dragon of Ber, after which attacks from the south finally faded.

No sooner had Risur found safety to its south than did Danor arise in power to the north. Risur and Danor have warred for nearly two hundred years, mostly using the islands of the Yerasol Archipelago as a proxy battle ground, in a series of four Yerasol Wars. Occasional waves of conquest have lapped over each nation's shores, and today the two countries have more in common than either likes to acknowledge. The current king assumed the throne at the end of the Third Yerasol War, four decades ago, and he presided over the fourth, in which Risur lost much land against the threat of Danor's superior technology.

Leaders of Risur's merchant guilds, its military, and its noble families are grateful for the stability, but fear a resumption of hostilities. They have taken advantage of the new international cordiality in order to catch up with Danor's technological revolution. Whether the next threat comes from Danor or another foe, Risur is arming.

Ber

Ber's history is tied to dragons. Until just a few centuries ago, the land was in constant flux, with different dragons battling for supremacy while the mortal races served as their slaves. Tribes of dragonborn, goliaths, gnolls, minotaurs, and orcs ascended to tiny nation states under the banners of their draconic overlords, built cities and strip-mined mountains to gather wealth for these kings, and eventually collapsed into chaos when their rulers fell. Newborn nations conquered each other like a ring of serpents devouring their tails, and whenever a dragon had willpower enough to unite all of Ber, it would inevitably make the mistake of pressing into Risur or Elfaivar, and be slain in retaliation.

Despite the endless turnover of rulers, Ber did manage to establish a few long-lasting cities—Ursaliña, Reo Pedrecoso, and the capital **Seobriga**, among others—and develop a shared culture, often thanks to wandering minotaur bards who were seen as neutral. After the death of the last dragon king Inatch the Hex-Eater two hundred years ago, Ber splintered into racial and tribal factions. Only in the past forty years has a semblance of unity returned to the land.

Le Roye Bruse.

Four decades ago, an orc warlord, Vairday Bruse, declared himself king of Ber after he managed to conquer the three largest cities in the land. Risur expected an imminent invasion, but instead the new king opened diplomatic channels with Danor, asked for help writing a constitution, and arranged for the construction of factories. The wealth from this new industry helped keep tribal warlords cooperative, and the work gave would-be soldiers something to do with their energy.

Dubbed "Le Roye," a Danor diminutive for "the king," Bruse managed to keep peace until his death five years ago, and had the foresight to arrange a peaceful transition of power. He took his cue from Risur, and passed the crown to a respected ally who was not a blood relative; indeed he was a minotaur, not even an orc. The new king kept his predecessor's name in place of the typical "king," and so was crowned **Bruse Shantus**.

Though there are still factions in the Anthras Mountains who refuse to bow to the new monarchy, many old enemies are now clamoring for a share of this new prosperity. Against nearly everyone's predictions, it appears that Ber will endure as a unified nation.

KINGDOM OF BER.



Capital: Seobriga
Government: Absolute monarchy
Head of State: Bruse Shantus
Official Language: Common, Draconic, Giant, Goblin
Common Races: Orc 26%, gnoll 18%, goblin 16%, minotaur 10%, kobold 8%, goliath 6%, dragonborn 5%, other 11%.

Executores dola Liberta.

One of Vairday Bruses's more contentious programs was to aggressively end the practice of slavery except as a punishment for criminals. He enlisted bureaucrats from Crisillyir to reform the country's legal system and track convicts, and then created a law enforcement group of warriors and priests, the Enforcers of Freedom.

Comprised primarily of women, the *executores dola liberta* are officers of the king, tasked with wandering the country and finding rich or powerful people who abuse their station by forcing others into slavery or slave-like conditions. Such wrongdoers they thrash brutally, dragging them into public locations and pummeling them with royally-empowered fists or staves while proclaiming the person's crimes.

They inflict similar punishments on those who try to quash protests, silence vocal complaints, forbid undesired religious practice, or hoard wealth from those they tax rather than providing value for their money.



BRUSE SHANTUS.

Membership in the Enforcers is strictly monitored, and those few who hypocritically abuse their own authority suffer excruciating public torture, then are executed.

Remnants of the Dragon Kings.

Beran cities tend toward stout, vertical buildings with prominent rooftop perches. Dragons no longer alight these roofs, but they have become part of Ber's romantic conception of its own identity. Many festivals are celebrated on these old draconic perches, and many inventors from Crisillyir come to Ber to study winged flight and test glider designs. Window cleaners can commonly be seen swinging from colorful ropes tethered to high rooftops, singing of lovers meeting to watch the sunset from the top of the city.

In the countryside, the dragon kings left an even more obvious mark: megafauna. Beasts of great hunger and great size, dragons protected herds of elephants, massive cattle, and deer as large as houses, forbidding their enslaved mortals from hunting the creatures. Huge swaths of Ber are still relatively uninhabited because these megafauna and the giant bears and tigers that hunt them pose too great a threat for cities to endure. Even more deadly are the pets that were bred for the dragon tyrants: giant bipedal reptiles known as tyrannosaurs.

Some ranches have managed to domesticate megafauna, which can feed a whole village for days. Wealthy foreigners pay huge amounts for the privilege of serving such a beast at their banquets.

Scars and Loyalists.

The nation bears the scars of many mines. Sadly, the wealth from these mines is mostly lost, hidden away in the lairs of paranoid dragon kings, and booby trapped even after the tyrants' deaths to prevent their recovery.

Along the southern coasts, unincorporated tribes composed primarily of gnolls refuse to join the nation. Bruse Shantus has cheerfully appointed one gnoll as his Minister of Rebellion, and claims this shows his graciousness to his enemies. In truth, the gnolls are simply too numerous to ignore, and they have a violent and messianic faith in the eventual return of their slain dragon tyrant Gradiax, the Steel Lord.

By contrast, the citizens of Ber's cities love to keep trophies of long-dead dragons. In the capital Seobriga, the courthouse has integrated the skeleton of the dead tyrant Widoreva into its décor.

The Panoply.

This young movement consists of a few educated Berans who have proclaimed themselves scholars. Inspired by the new—and comparably peaceful—cooperation among the many races of Ber, they have begun to found schools throughout their nation. There they educate students in matters of art and culture from around the world, pursuits normally mocked by those who follow the old tribal ways.

A few traveling professors from the Panoply schools have made a splash among the dockers in Flint, and every year more foreign artists and poets attend the parties of wealthy Beran nobles who are eager to appear cultured.

The Ursaliña Bear Games.

The mountain city of Ursaliña hosts a strange tradition, wherein those who wish to act as ambassadors of Ber hold proxy battles using trained short-haired bears, each standing a dozen feet high at the shoulder. A great colisseum, once used for entertaining bloodthirsty dragon tyrants, now hosts these vicious battles, which occur every few months; different days determine the positions of different ambassadorships.

Thousands turn out to watch the games, which are surrounded with grand pomp and much feasting. The fights between the bears are seldom to the death, because each beast is worth a small fortune. One game five years ago, however, witnessed an event so unbelievable that word of it spread throughout Lanjyr.

A minotaur merchant, **Brakken of Heffanita**, was competing to be named Ber's ambassador to Orithea, a tiny war-torn nation between Danor and Drakr, when his dire bear had its throat mangled in the arena. Brakken leapt into the arena and stepped between his bear and its opponent, staring into the other bear's eyes. To the shock of the crowd, the other bear hesitated in its attack, then fled, as if intimidated by a person half its size. Bruse Shantus gladly named Brakken an ambassador.

Perhaps even more unexpected, two years after Brakken began his ambassadorship in Orithea, the country's civil war ended, and it came under the protection of Danor. Today Orithea is part of the rail route along the north Avery Coast, and it is enjoying unprecedented prosperity.

This past year, Brakken competed to become ambassador to Risur, and won without any challengers.

Fear of the Clergy.

Ber has never had any close ties to Clergy religion, for it was insulated by its neighbors. Some eladrin sought refuge in Ber after the Second Victory, and brought with them great distrust of the Clergy. Ber's religions are a disjointed mish-mash of different tribal beliefs, involving hundreds of gods and spirits without any unifying doctrine.

Recently, however, preachers from Crisillyir have begun to visit Ber, and a few have set up missions to spread their faith. Some of these have been met by violence retaliation, including one incident where an Enforcer of Freedom tossed a battered priest into a rowboat and told him



BRAKKEN OF HEFFANITA.

THE TYRANT'S EYE.

In 700 B.O.V., the dragon Yerev controlled a small empire, cowing his enemies with the power of his unblinking third eye. It was said this pale, scarred orb could slay any creature it could see. On a moonless night, an army of thousands rose up against the dragon tyrant and managed to slay the beast, but when he collapsed, his eye remained open, killing any who crossed its path.

Nearby townsfolk carefully surrounded Yerev with all his treasure to appease his spirit, then carted the soil from the nearby hills to bury his corpse, finally blinding his eye. Supposedly the only sign today of Yerev's cairn is a field of lush potato flowers. Only the most foolish or desperate seek the treasure, lest they inadvertently unearth the deadly eye.

to return home after the man's church abducted several children from a nearby village under the auspices of teaching them.

Ber has seen what the Clergy can do to a nation when they disagree with its faith. Especially since the Bruse became so friendly with Danor—itself deemed heretical by the church—many in Ber fear that Crisillyir might someday invade in a bid to forcibly convert them.

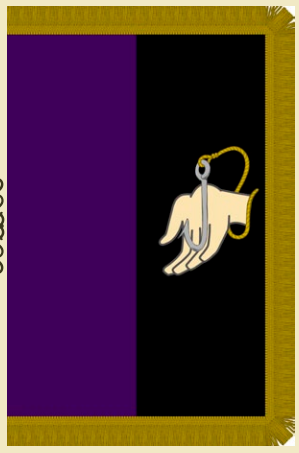
Crisillyir

Crisillyir is ruled by the hierarchs of the Clergy, the religion that freed the nation from demonic rule a millennium ago. Today, Crisillyir is a rich land, its fields bountiful, its coffers full of colonial gold. Centuries of divine rituals have turned its great cities into beacons of enlightenment and magical research, though this prosperity seems to attract attention from supernatural threats. Elaborate aqueducts feed water from the snowcapped Enfantes Mountains throughout the nation; it is said that each column in the aqueduct system is engraved with one chapter from the Clergy's holy book, acting as a massive ward against the ancient evil that still lurks in the land.

In Crisillyir, the power of the church is supreme, but not unquestioned. While grand summoners conjure forth tortured specters from the Bleak Gate to cow their flocks into piety, collegial arcanists debate concepts of the cosmos that do not match church dogma. Fat merchant lords pay lip service to the faith, sell weapons and ritual components to eladrin assassins, then purchase indulgences to absolve themselves. And though the inquisitive gold-mantled *geneu credetos* ("spirits of belief," or more commonly "godhands") are tasked with guarding the nation from unholy, fey, and undead influences, criminal organizations nevertheless manage to smuggle in contraband and use resurrections to extort even the dead.

The Clergy.

According to the church's holy text, one thousand years ago a human fisherman named Triegenes from what today is Danor discovered the secret of divinity while lost in a storm at sea. He returned and preached about the divine spark within all mortals, and how by constantly challenging oneself, a person can become like a god. He inspired followers to fight beside him, and together they toppled tyrants, slew legendary monsters, and eventually established a new nation, based upon a hierarchy of divinity, where rank and reward were based solely on merit.



Sacred Kingdom of Crisillyir.

Capital: Alais Primos
Government: Ecclesiastical elective monarchy
Heads of State: Prime Cardinal Tito Banderesso, Arch Secula Natalia Degaspare
Official Language: Common
Common Races: Human 85%, gnome 7%, dwarf 4%, other 4%.

The Humble Hook.

When Triegenes passed on from his mortal shell, the prelates of the Clergy cremated his remains in a grand state funeral. As they gathered his ashes to spread across the nation's soil, they found a small harpoon hook—the kind used by some fishers—which somehow had been caught in the living god's body since before he achieved divinity.

The priests crafted the hook into a pendant, and for over a thousand years it has been worn by the hierarchs of the faith, as a reminder that we all have humble origins. Doctrine claimed that it let its wearer learn the history and background of anyone he met, allowing the leader of the faith to deal with overly prideful enemies and heads of state.

In 260 A.O.V., however, it was lost when an eladrin assassin slew that era's hierarch and stole the pendant. Critics of the faith claim that its loss was part of a plan to steer the Clergy away from its original humble core, so that high priests could better profit from their stations.

After his kingdom was established, Triegenes undertook the greatest challenge left in the mortal world: to defeat the demonocracy that oppressed the lands to the east. He confronted the abyssal lords who had taken residence on this world, sacrificed himself to banish them forever, and then left his mortal shell and ascended to godhood.

The Clergy believe in many gods, with no pinnacle godhead, but they preach foremost the teachings of Triegenes, that every man has greatness within him, and he merely needs to be challenged to awaken his potential. And while a thousand years have burdened this original message with a complex celestial bureaucracy, vaguely-interpreted visions of a multiverse of planes, and a strong emphasis on the superior potential of humans above all other races, the simple dogma that anyone can improve their life, and that indeed this is the main *purpose* of life, holds strong appeal. The Clergy is now the most widespread faith in Lanjyr.

Cities.

The capital city **Alais Primos** is dominated by massive temples, sepulchers, and libraries, some so large they straddle the canals that run through the city. Massive and enchanted walls once surrounded it, holding back the eladrin armies, and while the city has long since expanded beyond their boundaries, their magic still defends the heart of the city. Since the Clergy views the godless tieflings of Danor as apostates, industry and technology are forbidden in Alais Primos. Confiscated items are ritually disposed of in a fiery rift of Enzyo Mons in the nearby mountains, symbolically casting back the tools of evil.

The island city of **Sid Minos** is site of the nation's greatest naval yards and its military academies, which train paladins and warpriests to hunt unnatural beasts, as well as fight foreign armies. Tunnels and dungeons riddle the rocky island beneath the city, and undead horrors occasionally emerge from these dark lands, but their source is unknown. Because the hierarchs view Sid Minos as already somewhat tainted, they allow technology onto the island. Off the shore lies the Isle of Odiem, home to the Crypta Hereticarum, where the Clergy stores the most vile cursed beasts and objects that they cannot simply destroy.

An isthmus connects Crisillyir and Elfaivar, and the city of **Vendricce** has grown fat from taxing trade through its gates, including the Avery Coast Railroad that terminates here. A grand arched bridge that once spanned the channel between the two nations was destroyed during the Second Victory, but Danor is funding its repair, hoping to extend the railroad so it can feed through the city and into Elfaivar.

Colonies to the East.

After the eladrin empire fell in the Second Victory, Crisillyir and the other conquering nations established garrisons within the collapsing eladrin nation, and divided the land into several colonies. Despite the great wealth these colonies provide, they are a thorn in Crisillyir's side; intermittent rebellions and acts of terrorism target the colonial governors and their allies in the homeland. At least once a decade, a spree of assassinations strikes, shaking the complacency of the nobility, and frightening the common folk.

The largest colonial city is **Santi Simone**, over the ruins of Elfaivar's original capital Bharata. In an uncharacteristically sympathetic move, the Clergy built a giant memorial to the countless dead eladrin women, interring their bodies in tombs carved into a massive rock that sits along the city's river.

Devas, Angels, and the Dead.

The Second Victory ended with a legendary battle just outside the walls of Alais Primos, where legions of Clergy-blessed warriors faced an army led by the goddess Srasama herself. After hours of battle, Srasama was felled by a thousand cuts, and fire exploded from her body. The warriors nearest to her were annihilated, but those who survived and were close enough to see the death of a god were marked by the experience.

Many of these veterans settled in the lands liberated by the eladrin army's retreat. In the years that followed, whenever one of them died, open flames would flicker for miles around, and somewhere within three days' travel the man or woman would be reborn in the wilderness. No longer quite human, these reincarnated souls took the name *deva*, from an eladrin word for deity.

When a deva reincarnates, he recalls language, culture, and enough knowledge to make his way in the world, but usually possesses only vague recollections of his previous life. Acquaintances are unfamiliar, and expert skills like magic, craftsmanship, or swordplay fade, but usually the deva quickly slips into the same basic role he held before death.

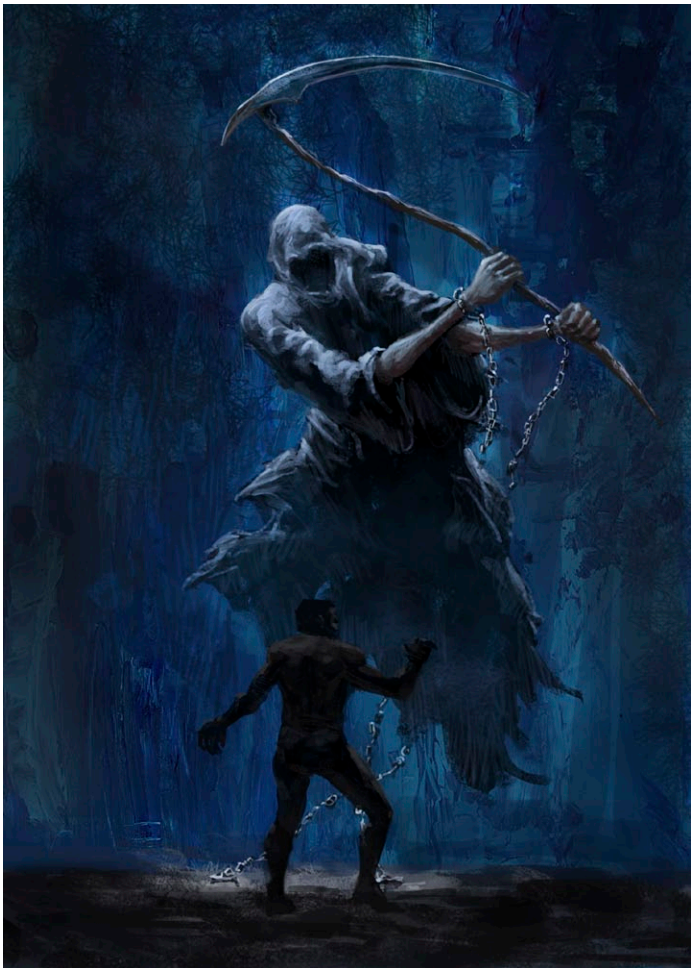
Where devas are rare, one that dies is usually found quickly after reincarnation, and after a period of acclimation he will manage to continue as if nothing had happened at all. In Crisillyir, though, devas are common enough that they seldom manage to return to their previous lives. In either case, devas still fear death because it means an end to all they are. While a reincarnated deva might be able to continue the same mission left unfinished at the end of his previous life, he'll never recreate the emotions and memories that made him unique.

Many devas find a place in the Clergy, where through special training they can act as vessels for invoked celestial beings. Such angelic visitations never last long, and occasionally result in the death of the vessel, so they are only used in situations where the priesthood feels inadequate to answer questions of guilt or opine on matters of morality.

In a similar way, on certain bleak holy days the priests of the Clergy will reach through the veil into the Bleak Gate and capture uneasy spirits, which they parade in front of crowds of worshippers. Compelled by magic, these undead specters wail about the sins they committed in life that left their souls trapped in "Purgatory." The priests then offer absolution, and destroy the unholy beings.

The Family.

One of the few chinks in the strong face the Clergy presents is a criminal organization known as the Family. Most people only know of them in rumors and hearsay, but it is said that they are behind most of the crime on both sides of the Avery Sea.



Where they have taken root, crime becomes civilized. The Family seems to respect loyalty and avoids doing violence to innocents, though when they move into a new city they viciously cut out the current criminal element and institute a more refined form of corruption and lawlessness.

Danor

Guided by a congress of businessmen and scholars, Danor is devoted to endless progress. Old beliefs, especially religion, are cast aside in the face of newer and more profitable ideas. After surviving an apocalyptic collapse five hundred years ago, reason and hard work have created armies more powerful than any in the world, where a common man can wield weapons as mighty as the magic of legendary heroes. After centuries of complacency, the other great nations eye Danor with envy, and with fear.

Following the Second Victory, the social order in old Danor was upended. The Great Malice left the capital of the Clergy bereft of magic. Horrible monsters that spawned in the border regions of wild magic wrought havoc as quavering holy warriors struggled to destroy them without their divine aid. The whole country was cut off from its usual channels of communication, and in a matter of weeks, thousands of priests killed themselves, believing their gods had died, and many more fled in every direction. A once-mighty nation fractured into desperate enclaves, and the old capitol was abandoned as an accursed place.

A major contributor to the region's downfall was that its previous leaders—the hierarchs of the Clergy—had been transformed by the Great Malice into seemingly demonic creatures with horns and barbed tails.

People in what today are the Malice Lands refused to let these people reach the new capital in Crisillyir, believing the old rulers were "from the deep pit of hell," and thus dubbed them "deeplings" or "tieflings."

After decades of chaos, a tiefling named Jierre who had once been a priest near the top of the sacred hierarchy gathered the fractious leaders and managed to convince them in the span of a mere five years to reunite under a new vision. If the hands of the gods could no longer reach into Danor, then it would be the hands of mortals that would give them power and safety.

It was magic, after all, and the superstitions and archaic beliefs that were its trappings, that had held back the people of Danor from their potential. Jierre understood that they had a unique opportunity. No foreign nations would bother a land without magic, so the new Danor needed not to worry about invasion. It would decide its own fate, and as long as all were devoted to the ideal of progress, Danor would one day be the strongest nation in the world. Finally, after centuries of insular work and struggle to build a new society, Danor has begun to claim its place in the world.

The House of Jierre.

Common belief attests that Srasama cursed the leaders of the Clergy with infernal horns and jagged tails, sacrificing half her mortal followers in a Great Malice when she realized she could not defeat the armies arrayed against her. When Jierre united Danor's factions, almost all those so accursed joined him, adopting the moniker "tiefling" as a badge of rebellion. Some became decisive merchant leaders, while others took a role in government.

Jierre, for his part, refused to be crowned king, and for his remaining years he served as part of a congress of peers. In the centuries since his death, though, his family—tieflings all—has proven a source of many great statesmen, scholars, and inventors. Though officially Danor has only a Congress and a Sovereign who is elected every decade, the House of Jierre is effectively Danor's royal family. Where they point, most follow.

The Sovereign today is **Han Jierre**, former president of the nation's oldest and most prestigious academy of war, the *Jierre Sciens d'Arms*. Various relatives and in-laws hold many positions in the government and military. A few have even traveled abroad to study magic and apply Danoran principles of science to explain how it works, rather than relying on traditional beliefs. So far, detailed theories have eluded them, as if magic itself refuses to let itself be understood.

Without a doubt, the House of Jierre rules Danor, but their prominence has not gone uncontested. Periods of riots and protests have plagued the nation, especially in the early days of its industrial revolution, though it certainly helped that, in a realm where few have ever even seen magic, any tiefling can still rebuke a person who attacks him by engulfing him in infernal flame.

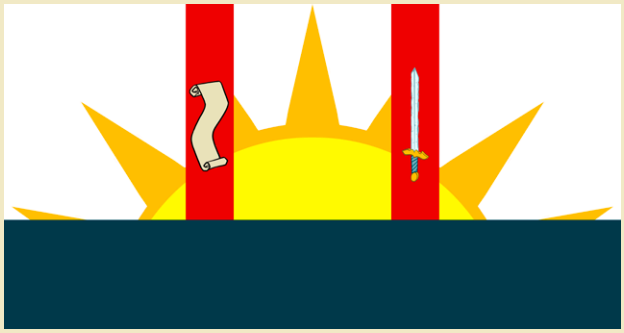
Cities and Industry.

Danor's historical capital of **Methia** lies abandoned. Though Danorans reject superstition, even they cannot help but feel uneasy in these ruins. Nothing grows there, wild animals stay out, and even in the height of summer a chill breeze blows under overcast skies.



SOVEREIGN HAN JIERRE.

REPUBLIC OF DANOR.



Capital: Cherage
Government: Constitutional republic
Head of State: Sovereign Han Jierre
Official Language: Common
Common Races: Human 81%, tiefling 17%, other 2%.

WILD AND DEAD MAGIC.

Within Danor's borders, magic quickly seeps away, a consequence of the Great Malice, wherein the eladrin goddess Srasama died five hundred years ago. Rituals cannot be cast within Danor. Magic item powers, enhancement bonuses, item bonuses, and properties function normally, subject to DM adjudication.

A creature's own innate magical powers still function, such as a tiefling's *infernal rebuke* or an eladrin's *fey step*. Magic class abilities that aren't implement-based also function normally. Creatures cannot use implement-based class powers unless they have a magic implement with at least a +2 enhancement bonus. These items carry enough innate magic with them to power spells and prayers, but over a period of weeks or months, even their power fades entirely.

Since it is impossible to create magic implements in Danor (doing so requires the Enchant Magic Item ritual), almost no Danorans study magic. The few Danoran mages there are either traveled to other nations to study, or purchased magic implements and paid exorbitant amounts to import tutors.

Just beyond Danor's borders, in a broad swath hundreds of miles wide, the fabric of magic is damaged but not destroyed. In these places, known as the Malice Lands, whenever a character performs a ritual, uses a magic item power, or uses an implement-based class power, roll an unmodified 1d20. On a 1, a mishap occurs. This usually takes the form of the power backfiring, manifesting as a free-willed monster, or otherwise going dangerously awry.

The modern capital of **Cherage**, though, is a bustling center of business and trade. Two centuries of practice at industry has moved the pollution-coughing factories and poverty-riddled worker villages outside the city, where deep canals provide the water for mills. After the city was attacked in the Third Yerasol War, the Danoran navy constructed landfill islands off the shore to place massive artillery batteries and look-out stations.

Trains powered by steam crisscross the nation, and the great Avery Coast Railroad runs from mountainous **Beaumont** on the west coast, through Cherage, and on eastward to Drakr, passing through Crisillyir, before finally ending three thousand miles away just across a channel from Elfaivar. Warships armored with iron churn along the nation's coast and among the islands it holds in the Yerasol Archipelago, protecting shipments of food that feed Danor's burgeoning population of industrial workers.

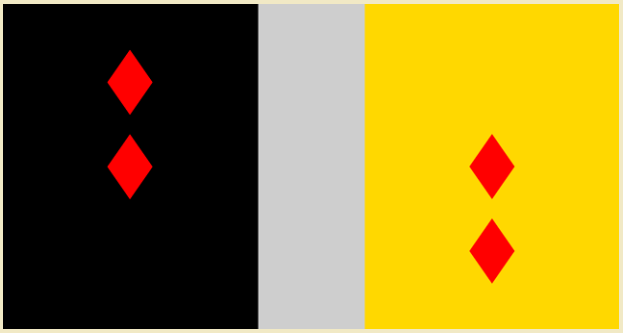
Drakr

Before the rise of the kingdom of Triegenes, dwarven warlords in Drakr subdued the undead titans of the land, encased them in crystal, and buried them deep beneath the earth. The dwarven warlords made alliances with the demonocracy in the east, trading the lives and souls of their mostly-human subjects for infernal power. Each warlord erected a tower as a symbol of his power, and from these bases they marched unnatural armies to battle for territory and supremacy.

Later Triegenes assailed those towers, toppling each as a stepping stone toward the demonocracy itself. The tyrants fell, and dwarves became an oppressed minority in what had once been their homeland. When the Great Malice shattered the kingdom of Triegenes, several clans of dwarves overthrew the priests who had ruled over them. They prepared for war, intending to recreate new dwarven kingdoms, but the deadly threat from the Malice Lands forced them to band together, even unite with humans to keep newly-birthed abominations at bay.

The dwarven clans and fractured human provinces that survived the collapse of the kingdom of Triegenes created a loose federation that has grown ever more united. Regional governors, mostly human, handle normal farming and trade, while dwarven lords direct grand mining operations and command the nation's army and navy.

Federated Drakran States.



Capital: Trekhom
Government: Federal parliamentary republic
Head of State: Chancellor Dmitra Takhenov
Official Language: Dwarven
Common Races: Human 67%, dwarf 30%, other 3%.

The Lost Riders.

After most of the dwarven tyrants had fallen to Triegenes, the last five warlords gathered at a fiery tower in the Shawl Mountains to discuss a plan for war. As they camped and planned, one of their archmage servants warned that a winter storm stronger than any in history was approaching. Afraid of being stranded from their battle, the five warlords mounted their various dread steeds and rode forth. But when the storm fell upon them, they lost their direction.

Too cruel and convinced of their invincibility to die, the five continued riding until they vanished forever into the blizzard. For over a millennium the dwarves of Drakr have told tales of the lost riders, continuing to search for the battle that they should have fought and won. Folk tales warn never to offer aid to lost travelers, lest you anger their pride and earn their wrath.

Once again the nation has grown fond of towers, not just as symbols of power but as strongholds against intermittent waves of monstrous incursions from the Malice Lands. Dark magic is not precisely *endorsed*, but it is tolerated as a necessary evil for the nation's defense. Criminals convicted of any great crime vanish into mountain prisons to serve in hellish mines, until the day they are sacrificed to empower a magical ward or weapon.

Metal and Magic.

Unsurprisingly, Drakr has taken easily to alliances with Danor, both military and economic. In particular they helped build and still today defend the Avery Coast railroad, and are in the process of building their own rail lines. Their trains, however, are powered by arcane furnaces that burn blood red yet whose metal skin feels eerily cool to the touch.

Similarly, the Drakran military has embraced firearms, and several companies have become famous for slaying implacable malice beasts which previously would have taken an army to defeat. The finest guns come from Drakr, and many of those are enchanted. Unlike Risur, however, Drakr has not rushed to develop steam warships. They have limited interest in naval matters, and prefer to defend their coasts with forts and cannons, though a few Drakran shipyards do construct iron-clad vessels for Danor.

The capital city of **Trekhom** is a major hub of industrial trade, as well as a nexus for several rail lines. Every day countless tons of refined steel arrives by train from the northern forge city of **Mirsk**, high in the snowy Shawl Mountains. It is said that giants work some of the mines in those frigid mountains, lending their physical might in exchange for enchanted weapons and armor.

Where the Avery Coast railroad crosses the border into the Malice Lands, a steel spire rises five hundred feet above the desolate landscape, guarded by a battalion of soldiers and mages. Its purpose is unclear, but some suspect it is enchanted to drive away malice beasts, or to help mend the tear in the fabric of magic.

The Philosophy of Governance.

Though intellectuals of the rest of the world are quick to disassociate themselves with some of the darker trends in Drakran philosophy—those grounded in the power of the old warlords—many heap great praise on the wise and open deliberations in the nation's parliament.

The old ecumenical tradition of the Clergy survived the Great Malice in the form of schools of philosophy. Often each clan or township would



VLENDAM HEID.

have its own line of local philosophers. Their ideas would influence local leaders and businessmen, who would in turn spread them through the rest of the nation, with the most successful and intriguing philosophers earning their home prestige and profit.

Today the most visible philosophy is Heid Eschatol, which focuses on proper endings to all of life's affairs. Its founder, **Vlendam Heid**, makes a living speaking to audiences around the world, engaging them with philosophy rather than letting them be passive consumers of ideas from books. But other ideologies still battle in the marketplaces and academies of Drakr, and any successful federal representative has to be a studied philosopher, or else espouse wild teachings that will get him noticed.

Elfaivar

Before the Great Malice, the kings of Elfaivar held power to rival all the other nations of Lanjyr. Commanding legions of slave armies from the far east and fielding battalions of fey mages and monsters, the long-lived eladrin monarchs were able to ensure the security and prosperity of the mightiest nation in the world.

Today, only ruins survive.

The Great Malice slew every eladrin woman in the empire and beyond, with only the rarest and most unlikely survivors: women currently polymorphed, on other planes, or who had forsaken the Elfaivaran faith entirely. The eladrin empire had been poised to crush the impudent Clergy who had twice launched a holy war against it, but within weeks, it descended into chaos. Within decades the population had collapsed to the tiniest sliver of its original number.

A stirring eulogy of the poet Vekesh convinced a few eladrin to seek harmony, to endure, and to prosper—and above all else, to find and free eladrin women from bondage so the race could heal. But for millions of grief-stricken eladrin men, the aftermath of the Great Malice was a time of constant battle.

Those few women who had survived were quickly claimed as property, and anyone who could keep ownership of a wife against a hundred thousand other suitors could command enclaves of desperate followers. Whole cities of despairing men would fight to the death for the chance of winning their lord another wife. Mages laid curses upon swaths of cropland, but some enclaves chose to starve rather than hand over their "queen." Slavers brought ships of human and elf women who were sorcerously transmuted to pass as eladrin and then sold into servitude, only to be slain when the truth was discovered.

Many eladrin men fled to other lands, seeking wives of other races, but they could sire no children. As attrition whittled down survivors, and too few children were born to keep society alive, ever more wealth and magical relics pooled in the hands of fewer and fewer men. When foreigners from Crisillyir or the distant east tried to claim Elfaivaran land they were driven back by fearsome eladrin warriors. Trained by constant battles for survival, and possessed of the finest arms and armor of entire cities, each man was match for a hundred normal soldiers.

Eladrin are long-lived, but old age eventually claims even them. Some made pacts with the powers of the Dreaming or other planes, but after two centuries, Elfaivar was practically a ghost nation. It took nearly a century more for Crisillyir and other nations to defeat the few vengeful hold-outs and begin to colonize the empty landscape.

Jungle had reclaimed cities. Mighty magical effects had lost their cohesion, spilling strange enchantments into the land. In some places the material world had blended and merged with the Dreaming. It was in these confusing borderlands that a handful of Vekesh-inspired enclaves survived.

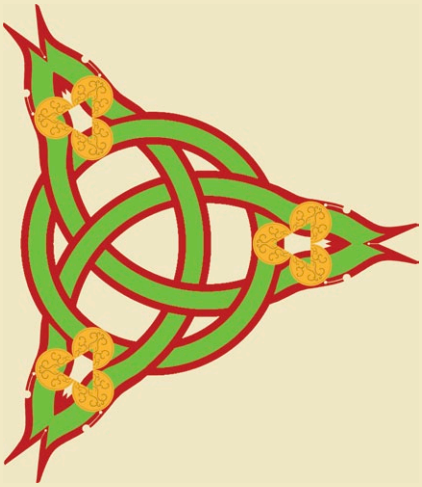
Modern Enclaves.

Early on, the freed women of Vekesh enclaves gained great power, both politically and magically, for they came to embody the hopes of thousands of survivors. New daughters were fiercely guarded and intensely trained so they could defend themselves and someday lead their own enclaves. Despite this, sometimes foreign mercenaries would manage to abduct an eladrin woman, for they became prized status symbols in the rest of Lanjyr.

These abductions led to the first vekeshi retributions, as mystics undertook daring missions to rescue lost women or at least punish those who would steal them. In general, though, the enclaves stay hidden. They'll deploy spies to keep eyes on human activity in nearby lands, and will make bargains with fey to scare off those who get too close, but they realize that they cannot risk antagonizing the human nations.

A rare few eladrin seek to integrate with human society. They wear as much gold as they can, which prevents them from using fey step, in an effort to cut themselves off from their fey heritage. By contrast, some vekeshi mystics also adorn themselves in gold, but only as rituals of self-flagellation, to meditate on their distance from their people's history so they can ponder how best to reclaim their birthright.

Empire of Elfaivar (Defunct)



Capital: Bharata (now Santi Simone)
Government: Feudal monarchy
Official Language: Elven

The Arsenal of Dhebisu.

Eladrin tell a tale of a god who turned against their pantheon and was transformed into a tiger that walked like a man: a rakshasa. As a god, no weapon in the world could harm him, and he ravaged the lands of Elfaivar, drowning villages and tearing entire cities free from the earth with a swipe of his clawed hands.

A warrior named Dhebisu, infamous for her incongruous brilliance as a poet and lewd sense of humor, was called upon to defeat the rakshasa. She befriended the cats of the jungle to learn of the monster's weakness, and consulted with sages to learn when the next meteor shower would occur. That night she sang a mocking tune to lure out the rakshasa.

The beast attacked her, but she pulled a falling star from the sky and wove it into her hair. Thenceforth any weapon she touched became infused with the powers of the heavens. They battled through the night, until finally, the rakshasa tried to slay her with a poisoned arrow. But Dhebisu snatched the bolt and plunged it into the fiend's loins, destroying it so that it could never reincarnate.

The Fallen Goddess.

Srasama was just one of dozens of prominent gods in the Elfaivar pantheon. Traditionally she was the six-armed sculptor who gave form to the raw creation discovered by her husband. She had dominion over the lives of women, and she particularly oversaw rituals of womanhood, marriage, and grief. For these, she would take three different forms of maiden, mother, and crone, but in all she was a fierce defender of the Elfaivar empire.

The famous adventurer Hamyd of the East claimed in the year 72 A.O.V. to have witnessed a conclave of eladrin matriarchs, wherein they performed the ancient rituals of Srasama. According to him, though, they cut short the rituals of the crone, and his guide alleged that this was because the matriarchs had forsworn grief, and so can never age.

The World

All of the events of the campaign occur on the continent of Lanjyr, aside from a few forays into the coterminous planes of the Dreaming and the Bleak Gate, so we leave it to the DM and players to decide the nature of the world beyond the edges of the map.

Border States and the Malice Lands.

Risur, Ber, Crisillyir, Danor, Drakr, and Elfaivar are the largest and most prominent nations in Lanjyr, but by no means are they the only ones. Some regions on the continental map are marked as "border states." These lands play no noteworthy role in the **Zeitgeist** campaign, but you should feel free to use them for whatever purpose the DM needs.

Other areas surrounding Danor are called the Malice Lands. When Danor had its magic stripped away during the Great Malice, these lands were at the edge of the effect's radius. The magic there was left fractured and unstable. While Danor was able to restore itself in the relative stability of its dead magic zone, the wild magic of the Malice Lands has led to irregular catastrophes and small cataclysms that tend to wipe out any nation that tries to establish itself there.

Most people in the Malice Lands live in small villages or as nomads in order to avoid the more deadly manifestations of this wild magic. These war-torn lands tend to become havens for criminals who cross into their neighboring countries to pillage and plunder. One noteworthy



exception is the city-state of **Orithea**, which has managed to prosper in a small pocket of stable, albeit weakened magic.

In general, the border states between Risur and Ber are little more than mountainous tribal lands that refuse to join either larger nation. The border states between Crisillyir and Drakr are fairly autonomous and stable, while the border between Drakr and Danor is near anarchy. North of Drakr, a few minor nations stay out of the politics of greater Lanjyr, while beyond Elfaivar lie powerful protectorates of a distant empire, still recovering from the fall-out of the collapse of Elfaivar centuries ago.

These lands are generally outside the scope of this campaign, which gives the DM an excuse for whatever foreign oddness he wishes to introduce in his own games.

Calendar.

The region generally uses a simple calendar devised over a millennium ago by the skyseers of Risur. This calendar divides the year into four 91-day seasons, each starting on an equinox or solstice. After the 91st of Winter, one extra day is used to celebrate the new year.

The most common celestial rhythm is the cycle of the moon over 29 and a half days. People might say something happened "a month ago," but individual months are not named. Instead dates are referenced in the format "17 Spring 473 A.O.V."

In the year 500 A.O.V., the first first-quarter moon of each season occur on 12 Spring, 10 Summer, 9 Autumn, and 7 Winter. Festivals of the Old Faith typically fall on these nights. More colloquially, there are names for each prominent moon phase throughout the year. These terms have fallen out of favor except in poetry, academia, and mysticism.

Lunar Myth.

Some say the moon is made of glass, and they claim they can see stars through it, or perhaps within it. Poets have long noted that the "right side" of the moon (the edge that crests the horizon first) seems to have the shape of a man with his arms extended, while the left side has the image of a woman facing away from the man. This gave rise to a shared myth of the moon.

In this tale, an orphan boy meets a girl whose mother is dying beneath a cypress tree. The girl is taken away to be trained as a mage (or an artist, a princess, or a scholar depending on the version), and the orphan boy joins a band of hunters (or rogues, brigands, or rebels). They cross paths, fall in love through their trials, wed, and become heroes. But he dies, and she lives on to raise their child.

Though different seasons can have more specific names, generally the first quarter moon—when only the "man" is visible—is called Hunter's moon. The full moon is Lovers' moon—when both man and woman are present. The third quarter is Maiden's moon—with the woman alone. And the new moon is Dreamer's moon.

Much of the nuance of Skyseer prophecy depends on which moon rises first in a season, and which stars if any are in conjunction with it. The specialized names typically start with the first Hunter's moon each season; phases before those are just called by the generic terms of "early Lovers, early Maiden, or early Dreamer moon."

The more flavorful names, in order, are below:

- **Spring.** Hart moon, Plow moon, Thunder moon, Dreamer's moon. Stranger's moon, Forest moon, Mage's moon, Dancer's moon. Hero's moon, High Spring moon, Legend's moon, Dreamer's moon.
- **Summer.** Husband's moon, Marriage moon, Bride's moon, Dreamer's moon. Dragon moon, Honey moon, Kraken moon, Sleeper's moon. Hero's moon, High Summer moon, Legend's moon, Dreamer's moon.
- **Autumn.** Serpent moon, Harvest moon, Mother moon, Dreamer's moon. Martyr's moon, Pyre moon, Widow moon, Black moon. Hero's moon, High Autumn moon, Legend's moon, Dreamer's moon.
- **Winter.** Hunger moon, Snow moon, Wolf moon, Dreamer's moon. Orphan's moon, Cypress moon, Daughter's moon, Hope moon. Hunter's moon, High Winter moon. Maiden's moon. Dreamer's moon.

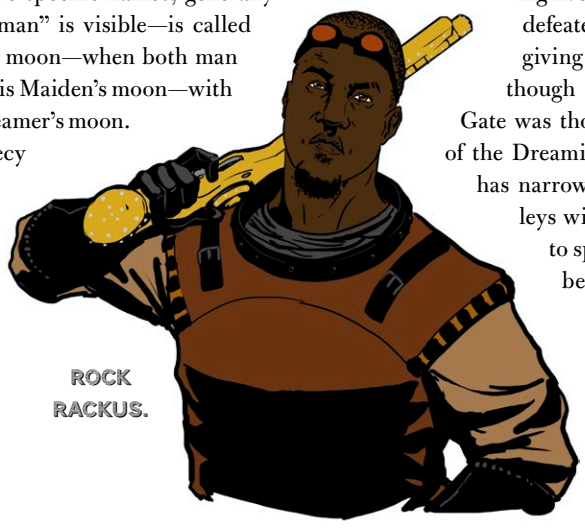
Planes.

Everyone knows that the fey live in the Dreaming, and that spirits of the dead can linger in the Bleak Gate, but most people are unclear on just what they are. They disagree on whether you can physically go to these realms by walking, or if you would need magic, and if you went there just what you'd see.

The Clergy states that the Dreaming, which they call the Green Temptress or Hell's Garden, is where people's minds go when they sleep, and that the beings called the fey are dreams given flesh by evil magic. Folk religion in Ber proclaims that the moon is a looking glass, and the Dreaming is what we look like reflected in it, while many Drakrans believe it's a trap between this world and the afterlife, meant to trick people from their just ends.

As for the Bleak Gate, common lore of the Clergy calls it Purgatory, and envisions it as a hollow copy of this world lying just underground, a place where the dead pass through on their way to their reward or punishment in the afterlife. The dwarves of Drakr know better, and believe that it is a vision of the distant future, of what the world will look like when everyone has died. Berans believe it lies on the dark side of the moon.

In Risur, folk tales say that once the beings of the Dreaming lived here in our world, and then King Kelland defeated the fey titans and split the world in two, giving the fey and humanity each their own homes, though the titans would exist in each. The Bleak Gate was thought to be a darker, more malevolent part of the Dreaming, a belief reinforced of late. As industry has narrowed the streets of Flint and darkened its alleys with soot, more and more people have begun to speak of disappearances, and of strange black beings that walk in the shadows.



ROCK RACKUS.

Key Religions.

Four religions dominate the Zeitgeist campaign setting. Unlike typical Dungeons & Dragons, there is no planar travel, magic to summon extra-planar creatures is exceedingly rare and brief, and only once in recorded history has a god actually physically appeared in the world—and then she was killed. While it is undeniable that powers and forces exist beyond this world, their shapes cannot be proven, and must be taken on faith.

The Clergy.

Organized religion based in Crisillyir. Every mortal can empower himself, even reach godhood, if he confronts the challenges of the world. "Beyond this world exist many planes, each a more perfect manifestation of some aspect of our reality, and they are presided over by powerful gods, angels, and spirits that can be entreated for power."

Guerro.

Folk religion of Ber. "Every tribe has its own gods, conquered from the tribes who were not strong enough to stand alone. As the tribes battle, so do the gods. For now, it seems, the gods are at peace, and so we make peace, but all good things die in battle. A syncretic combination of Clergy and Guerro is enjoying a popular surge in Drakr."

The Old Faith.

Folk religion of Risur. "Honor the spirits of the land, and draw power from nature. The stars above trace patterns that predict events on our world, but the only other worlds are the ones we can visit: the Dreaming and the Bleak Gate."

Seedism.

Folk religion of Elfaivar. "Our actions are seeds, and will shape the face of the world, though it may take ages. Elves and eladrin have long memories. Before the rise of Man, the gods spoke to us, and we still remember their names and teachings. Srasama, the three-faced mother-warrior-queen, was slain by human treachery, but it is our duty to endure and outgrow this injury. The archfey of the Dreaming were once vassals of the gods, and so we revere and respect them."

Planets and Planes.

Common lore in Risur claim the heavens are a massive distant dome, and that the planets of the night sky move in reaction to the unseen hand of fate. According to the skyseers, each star is a source of magic, and the planets in particular are the source of key elemental powers.

Each planet and star is conceived of as an empty garden that only comes alive when an outsider enters, and which has no permanent existence. Skyseer myths say ancient men once traveled freely to these worlds, where they could tap directly into powerful magic, but that the stars grew distant. Even today, though, wise men can look skyward and see clues to the course of fate.

The Clergy, by contrast, believe that the heavens are a black sea, and that every star and planet is a physical world, each with its own people and gods. Danoran astronomers, usually loath to agree with the Clergy, claim that they have seen the surfaces of the planets through their finely crafted telescopes, though they cannot confirm any civilizations.

Meanwhile, the modern celebrity **Rock Rackus** (pictured on page 47) tells wild tales of using magic to visit these worlds, meet the strange locals, and return with treasure as proof. Skyseers dismiss his claims as a fool being tricked by fey, but Rackus's shows sell out as audiences delight at his bawdy and bold adventures.

Below we list the most prominent objects in the sky, along with the myths and theories associated with each. These myths aren't necessarily consistent with each other.

- **Vona.** The sun, source of pure arcane force and magical radiance, but too bright to observe the surface. It influences revelations and discoveries.
- **Av.** This ancient name for the moon comes from a legend about a sleeping queen of the fey, cursed to slumber after her soul was captured in her reflection on a bottomless pool. Influences nothing, but reflects subtle clues of people's desires.
- **Jiese.** The plane of fire, home to serpent men whose skin glow like coal. Ancient myths claimed this was a dragon, which chased Avilona. Influences war and strife, as well as notable births.
- **Avilona.** The plane of air, where desolate islands of rock float amid the clouds, covered in long-abandoned ruins. Ancient myths claimed this world was a titanic eagle, constantly fleeing the ravenous Jiese. Influences weather, notable deaths, and animals.
- **Mavisha.** The plane of water, home to krakens lurking beneath the waters and leviathans swimming rippling liquid columns that writhe above the sea like the tentacles of a living world. Legend states that a drowned bride long ago cursed sailors to join her in the lightless depths of this endless ocean. Influences the seas, great movements of people, and conflicts within families.
- **Urim.** The plane of earth, or rather a scattered, shattered belt of relatively tiny shards of metal, which sometimes fall from the sky bearing precious ores and accursed worms. Influences the earth, the rise and fall of fortunes, and random meetings of strangers.
- **Apet.** The distant plane, said to be a permanent storm of sand and dust on a featureless plane, with the only point of reference being an arc of silver an unknowable distance above. Influences subtle nuances of distance and time, as well as the grand cycle of ages.
- **Nem.** The plane of ruin, this planet is a myth among the skyseers, who say it sheds no light, and can only be seen as it glides silently through the heavens, devouring stars and leaving nothing but a hole in the night. Influences secrets and the dead.

The Philosophy of William Miller.

While Drakran philosophy is in ascendance today, many older works are still read and discussed throughout Lanjyr. Most popular are the writings of a clerical monk, William Miller, who in the run up to the Great Malice composed a treatise on hypocrisy, suggesting that it is better to admit you are uncertain of your beliefs than to act in contradiction with your stated values. The book, widely recognized as an attack on the Clergy, allegedly drove the monk to flee persecution.

Miller reappeared several years after the Great Malice with a new work of political philosophy that coincided with his effort to found a small nation, Pala, amid the chaos of the Malice Lands. In his multi-chapter book he examined possible social structures, comparing robustness and stability with various moral values. Early chapters allude to a conclusion that would detail a handful of ideal nations, but today there are no complete copies of the book.

In 18 A.O.V., the reconstituted Clergy branded Miller a heretic, invaded Pala, and sacked its capital. He was brought to Alais Primos, the new seat of the Clergy, where he was tortured in an effort to compel a confession. After he refused to recant, his captors made a pyre of his heretical writings and burned him alive upon it.

Today, Miller's incomplete writings are popular among the bohemian dockers in Flint and followers of the Panoply in Ber. Rumors say that copies of Miller's final chapters are kept in a library vault in Alais Primos, where it shares shelf space with other "heretical" texts.

Dominant Philosophies.

Certain groups promote secular ideologies independent from the metaphysics of religion.

Heid Eschatol.

Developed in Drakr, popular in Risur. "It is important to plan for good endings, whether that's for a business venture, a story, a love affair, or your own life."

Panoply.

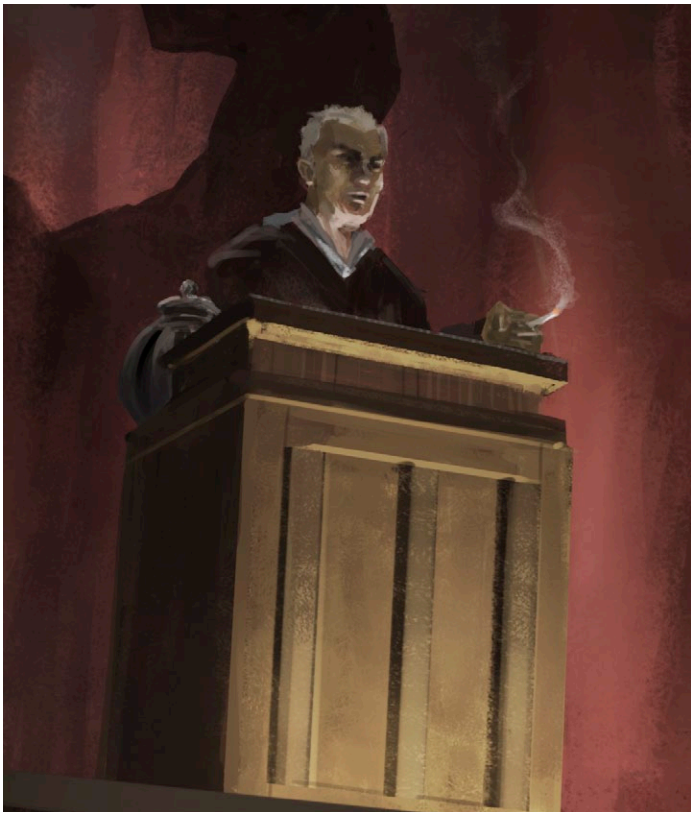
Nascent philosophy from Ber, concerned with examining how and why cultures differ. Followers often arrive at the Panoply philosophy because they feel dissatisfied with the traditions of their homeland, and they defend the value of foreign ideas.

Pragati.

Official position of the Jierre ruling party in Danor. "Gods are the creation of men who were unable to comprehend the real structure of the world. Those who hold false beliefs, be they in gods, in disproven economic theories, or anything else, are a threat to progress."

Vekesh.

Guiding principle that helped the eladrin survive after the fall of Elfaivar. "After a tragedy, the best revenge is to heal and grow stronger than you were before."



SECTION THREE: The City of Flint

The city of Flint is the heart of Risur's industrial revolution, and it is the base of operations for the PCs. Before Adventure Two, you and your fellow players should have at least passing familiarity with this primer, to prepare you for a murder mystery that will take you from the heights of the city's majestic rainforest mountains to the depths of its criminal underbelly.

District Overview

The city of Flint has nine districts, each presided over by a district mayor.

- **Bosum Strand.** Mayor Griffin Stowe.
- **Central.** Mayor Oncala Putnam.
- **Cloudwood.** Mayor Doyle Idylls.
- **The Nettles.** Mayor Reed Macbannin.
- **North Shore.** Mayor Aaron Choir.
- **Parity Lake.** Mayor Rosa Gohins.
- **Pine Island.** Mayor Roger Pepper.
- **Stray River.** Mayor Chrystine Robinson.
- **The Ayres.** Effectively independent.

Flint, in Brief

Population: 800,000
Head of Government: City Governor Roland Stanfield
Key Districts: The Ayres, Bosum Strand, Central District, the Cloudwood, the Nettles, North Shore, Parity Lake, Pine Island, Stray River.
Prominent Landmarks: Cauldron Hill, Parity Lake, Stanfield Canal.

City Districts

Each district has its own mayor who handles local affairs, all of whom are elected except the mayor of The Nettles, whose additional role as guardian of the cursed Cauldron Hill requires he be appointed by the governor and approved by the king.

Districts also elect representatives to the city council, whose authority is balanced against that of the city governor, Roland Stanfield. Technically the position of governor is elected, but aside from brief periods after the deaths of various incarnations, Stanfield has held the position for nearly five centuries.

Bosum Strand.

Depending on who you ask, the name Bosum Strand comes either from the boatswains who frequented its taverns, or from the harbor's more traditional name, which translated to bosom of the sea. In either case, the docks along the east shore of Flint Bay are the heart of the city's trade, culture, and crime.

Hundreds of warehouses serve Flint's merchant fleet, and dozens of bars, taverns, gambling houses, and brothels serve its dock workers. Craftsmen, artists, and money changers own shops surrounding several scattered public squares throughout the district, and the district's mayor **Griffin Stowe** has strong-armed property owners along major streets to ensure that when the wealthy and influential travel the strand they are not forced to see any of the district's uncouth underbelly.

This is why, of course, the dockers make a point to perform on as many street corners and squares as possible.

The district is currently clearing out tenants and demolishing buildings for a freight rail line. The station is already under construction, and once complete it will speed delivery of raw materials and natural exports. More importantly, it will let Flint share its industrial bounty with the rest of the nation. Unusually, many local druids have been recruited to speak with the spirits of the land and appease them so they will not disrupt the building process.

The Night of the Mirror Moon occurs when the High Winter moon is the fourth full moon of the season. From the moment the moon shines on Flint Harbor, anyone who enters the water while holding a mirror will emerge in the Dreaming analogue of Bosum Strand. There, it is said, the docks are replaced by a glorious beach where all the fey from miles around gather for the wildest party one could ever imagine. Sometimes people fail to get back before the moon sets, while others return with magical powers, a gift or bargain from the fey. The last such Mirror Moon happened seventeen years ago, in 483 A.O.V., and the next will be in two years.

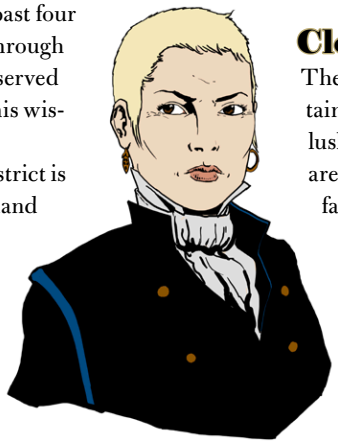
Central.

The oldest and most developed district of Flint is home to its main government structures, including the city council, superior court, police headquarters, and the offices of various civil functionaries like tax collectors. Grand party halls, ornate druidic garden temples, and parks filled with monuments to old wars provide recreation and entertainment for the city's nobility and prospering middle class, while the Orange Street commodities market and the prestigious Pardwight University are the dual hearts of Flint's economic and academic cultures.

The district mayor **Oncala Putnam** recently approved construction of a grand subrail station to serve as the hub of a city-wide transportation network. Currently the Central district is often clogged with traffic from the surface rail station, since the proposed tunnel through Humble Hill in the Nettles, meant to provide an easier route to the factories of Parity Lake, has been dogged by sabotage from elements opposed to the industrialization of Risur.

Just off the coast in Flint Bay, the city governor's mansion occupies what was once an island fortress. For the past four hundred years the deva Roland Stanfield has, through various incarnations and with only rare disruption, served as city governor, earning near universal respect for his wisdom and leadership.

Perhaps most importantly for the PCs, Central district is home to the local headquarters of the Royal Homeland Constabulary, headed by **Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby**. Extensive details of the local branch are presented in Section Four: Royal Homeland Constabulary (page 56).



LADY INSPECTRESS MARGARET SAXBY.

Subrail Construction.

A major freight and passenger railroad line enters from the south and stops at King's Station, but local light rail routes are being constructed throughout Central District. Most of this route travels underground, thus earning the moniker subrail. One section parallel to the freight line travels aboveground in the same corridor, and a brief stretch of track near Pardwight University rises to the surface by necessity, due to some magical quirks of geography.

Cloudwood.

The eastern outskirts of Flint are dominated by towering mountains, their peaks constantly shrouded in clouds that feed lush rainforests and verdant streams. The steep highlands are sparsely populated, but numerous plantations and small farms fill the flatter terrain near the coast. Few city folk venture out to these lands, believing that here the veil between the real world and the Dreaming is thin. Local myths include countless tales of farmers, travelers, and juvenile miscreants who wander into the foggy woods and suffer wretched fates at the hands of capricious fey.

While most who live in Cloudwood consider it common courtesy to share a bowl of milk or plates of



sliced fruit with unseen nightly visitors, the district's new mayor, **Doyle Idylls**, has forbidden district employees from engaging in the old tradition. Mayor Idylls shares his office with the local police branch, and he recently had salt baked into bricks around its base in order to keep away curious fey. Soon thereafter, the building developed a gopher problem.

Though criminals in Flint tend to make the Nettles their first stop when on the run from the law, those who really need to lay low find the wild rainforests of Cloudwood ideal. The most rural areas of the district are practically independent thorps and hamlets, many of which are sympathetic to desperate outsiders. Until recently they reaped rewards from collaborating with at least three gangs which operated out of the forest, but a new player in the area has somehow managed to get the gangs to call off their attacks.

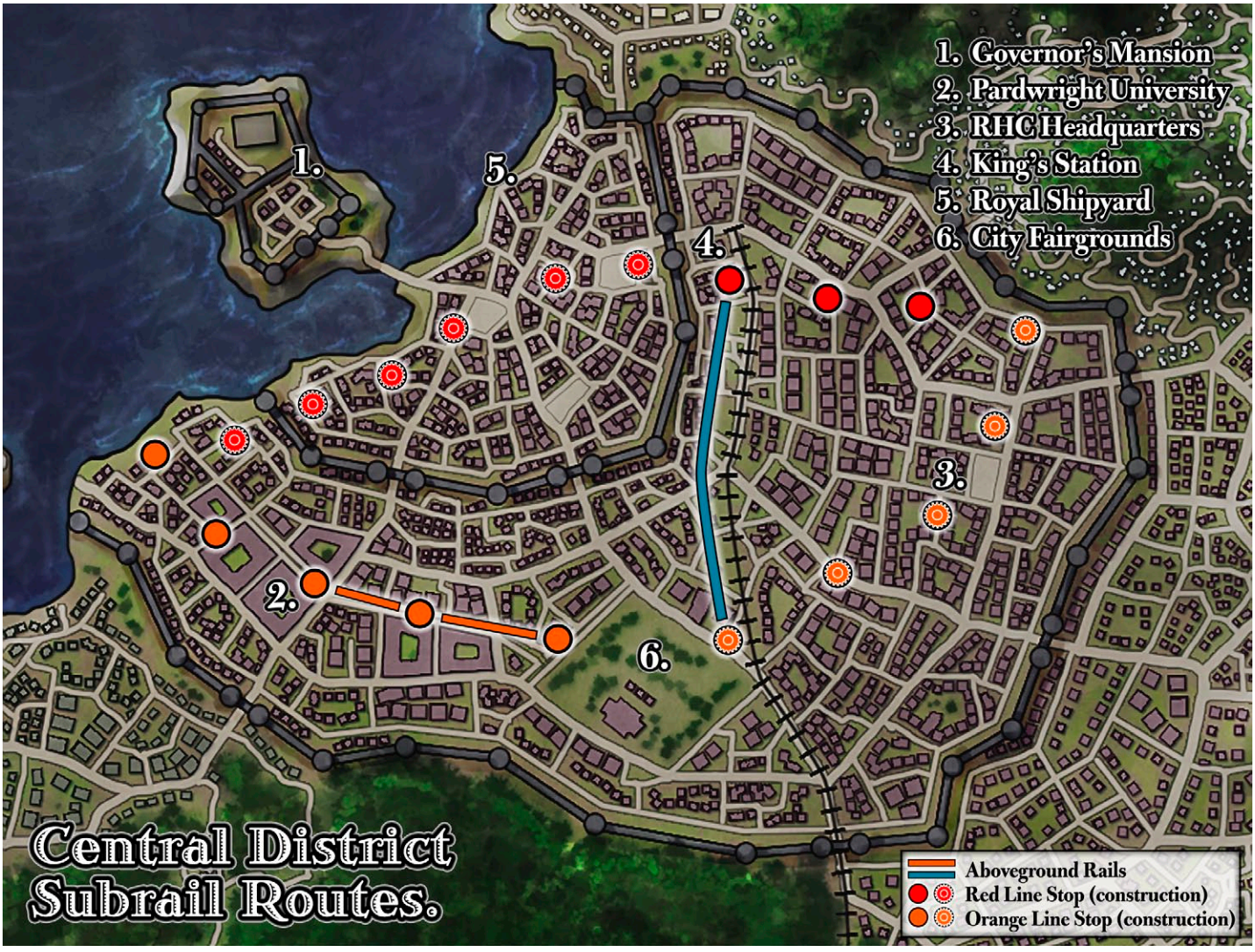
Somewhere in the high misty mountains hides **Hana "Gale" Soliogn**, an eladrin who fled to Risur after she escaped the rich Danoran family who had kept her as a trophy for over a century. Upon leaving the dead magic zone of Danor, Soliogn discovered an exceedingly rare talent for innately controlling winds and weather, which earned her the name Gale.

She enjoyed a brief celebrity upon arriving in Flint a year ago, but almost immediately withdrew into the wilderness and began recruiting followers among those opposed to the influx of industry. Law enforcement officials believe she's trying to punish Danor by proxy, and in the past several months hundreds of acts of sabotage on factories and

The Navras Opera House

Flint's oldest surviving building is the Navras Opera House in the central district. Navras, an eladrin who fled Elfaivar after the Great Malice, designed the opera house and laid the cornerstone with a brick he had brought from his homeland. He spent nearly two hundred years personally overseeing its construction, and was aided by no less than eight Risuri kings. When he completed the building, incongruously huge for what was at the time just a small river fort city, Navras gave the first performance by singing the dirge of Vekesh. As the audience cheered and wept at his performance, he walked off the stage and disappeared forever.

The acoustic design of the performance hall somehow captures magical power from song, or from the emotional reactions of the audience. Impresarios who coordinate performance almost always hire spellcasting bards to harness this energy and craft a magic item as a memento of the show. In the three hundred years since the Navras Opera House opened, most of these items have found their ways into private collections, but a rare few have become famous, such as the Hurricane Violin, which commemorated the Fable of Seaquen and later banished a sea monster that threatened Flint Harbor in 417 A.O.V.





GALE SOLIOGN.

steamships have been linked to her. In one incident, Gale was caught in the act of trying to assassinate a sleeping industrialist, but she managed to fly away and avoid capture.

The Nettles.

A small spur of the mountains of the Cloudwood cuts into the heart of Flint, and for most of the city's history these hills saw only druidic rituals and romantics wishing to witness wondrous vistas of the beaches from on high. Their traditional name came from an old commander of the Flint fort, who saw them as a thorny barrier against attack from the north.

But then in 346 A.O.V. a coven of witches took residence upon a jagged mountain at the range's edge, which ever since has been called Cauldron Hill. For decades they terrorized the city, sending goblins and specters to abduct people for sacrificial rites, then hiding in the veil between this world and the Bleak Gate whenever any tried to assault them.

Eventually the witches were defeated when King Lorcan allied with a Crisillyiri godhand and led an assault during a lunar eclipse. Ever since, the peak of Cauldron Hill has been rife with haunting and spirit activity, and one of the key tasks of the district mayor has been to keep daring fools from ascending the mountain and coming down possessed.

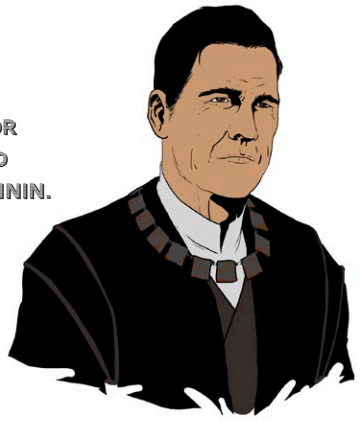
Traveling Between Districts.

Flint is a sprawling city, and often the party's investigations will take them across it and back in the course of a single day. In general, by making use of carriages it takes a half hour to move from the heart of one district to the heart of an adjacent one. Walking can double this time.

Crossing Flint harbor or reaching one of The Ayres is usually an hour-long affair by sailboat, or half an hour if you know a friendly steamboat captain. Moving through the maze of rookeries in the Nettles can take hours, and it's always faster to just go around than go over. Few paved roads lead to the Cloudwood, which makes carriages unsuitable, and one could spend hours or days roaming the mountains to the east or bayous to the west.

The few completed subrail stations in Central District do provide fairly swift transport, on par with carriages while being cheaper and able to carry more people. Once the full subrail network is completed, it should be possible to move between Central and either Bosum Strand or Stray River in as few as ten minutes. And if ever the route under the Nettles can overcome sabotage, it could shave nearly an hour off the time to go around the troublesome hills.





MAYOR REED MACBANNIN.

The greatest achievement of the previous district mayor was constructing a highway across Humble Hill to make travel across the city easier, but in the past few decades the district, even the base of Cauldron Hill itself, have grown thick with slum housing, as more and more people flock to Flint hoping to find work in the factories. The broad switchbacks of the highway are cluttered with shacks, often with two or three families sharing the same building. Poorly crafted houses cling to the sides of slopes, and they have become a nightmare for local police to patrol, giving a whole new connotation to the name "The Nettles."

The current district mayor **Reed Macbannin** has been unable to halt the new arrivals, and he hasn't been helped by the common prejudice that the factory workers are prone to crime, laziness, and general mayhem. Despite this, he has managed to earn passing respect from the people of his district; few are trusted with the stewardship of Cauldron Hill, and he has leveraged his office to get city tax money for the poorest of the poor.

North Shore.

The sun rises through the mists of Cloudwood, banishing the night with pale purple clouds dashed by the golden gleam of dawn. Fresh sea breezes sweep the gloomy haze of soot away from pristine beaches, letting clear daylight fall upon gently crashing waves. The day wanes, and the sky explodes with crimson and vermilion as the sun sets behind the twin peaks of Great Horned Mountain. Night drapes a starry curtain across the world, and still the waves gently lap upon the North Shore.

Home to the most beautiful urban beaches in all of Lanjyr, Flint's North Shore district prides itself on its appearance, despite being so close to the polluted Parity Lake. Demand for beachside property has pushed out all but the wealthiest land-owners, those who can afford to hire druids to pray for favorable winds to keep the smoke at bay, and armies of cleaning crews to scrub their walls and streets when the druids fail.

Of course with wealth comes corruption and temptation. Young girls end up dead in alleys. Criminals stage daring robberies of villas protected by curses. Destitute nobles, dragged down from their towers by the machinations of rivals, stumble into strangely-scented shops they'd never seen before, and find offers they cannot refuse.

The district mayor, **Aaron Choir**, serves the interests of the wealthy, and is petitioning to build a wall between North Shore and Parity Lake to keep out undesirables. Likewise, police violently deter the occasional protest that crops up outside the Danoran consulate, which sits a few blocks inland from the shore. Mayor Choir is careful, though, not to appear too friendly with the unpopular Danorans, no matter how much they pay him in kick-backs.

Parity Lake.

When Flint first began building factories, this inland lake fed by runoff from the Nettles was chosen by the city governor Roland Stanfield. A massive construction project widened and deepened a natural river that ran from the lake to the harbor in Bosum Strand, providing easy transit of manufactured goods out of—and coal or heating oil into—the district. Homes of fishermen on the lake were demolished, while new flophouses and stacked tenements were erected for the waves of people who came from around the country seeking work in the new factories. Wealth poured into the city's coffers, and into the pockets of those canny enough to lease their land here, rather than sell it.

During the Fourth Yerasol War seven years ago, factories in Parity Lake mass-produced firearms, cannons, and other weapons, and a lumber mill transformed logs from the Cloudwood into components for shipyards in Bosum Strand. New factories sprang up to create armor for men and ships, and soon even steam engines were being churned out to retrofit Risur's fleet.

The war effort transformed Parity Lake from a booming collective of new businesses to a crowded, foul-smelling, soot-choked warren, overcrowded with the children of now second-generation factory workers, surrounding a pool that every day more resembles sludge than water. The police manage to keep crime down through heavy-handed measures; the district's mayor **Rosa Gohins** has publicly stated that the safety and stability of the factories are more important than the moral of the factory workers. In the past few months, a spate of fires have struck around the district, which authorities suspect to be arson, possibly tied to the fey terrorist known as Gale (see The Cloudwood, above). The fires have precisely targeted individual homes and businesses related to local industrialists, but despite their minimal collateral damage, people in the district fear an inferno if one goes out of control.

More dreaded, however, is a killer known as the **Ragman**, who is said to stalk dark alleys near the canals and drag young men into the sewers. He has been tied to at least six disappearances in the past year, but so far law enforcement have taken few steps to catch him. Strange occult symbols scrawled on the undersides of bridges that cross the canal have provoked suspicions that the Ragman might be retribution from the long dead witches of Cauldron Hill.

Those with more level heads tend to see the Ragman story as a cover for the murders committed by the local guild of thieves, led by strongman **Lorcan Kell**. Kell's guild are most well-known for high-profile abductions and ransoms, while their more mundane crimes often go unreported since three journalists were found decapitated and holding their heads on the bridges over the Stanfield Canal. Many locals allege that the police know perfectly well where to find Kell himself, but are either too corrupt or too scared to go after him.



LORCAN KELL.

Pine Island.

Though the ground of most of Flint's coast is rocky and hilly, the western coast of the bay has a strange sprawling bayou surrounding dozens of short granite hill-islands. Pine Island takes its name from the aquatic pine trees that anchor the bits of dry land throughout the bayou, though the hills are mostly grassy ranchland. Not as well known or developed as the bustling east coast, this district nevertheless plays a significant role in the city's business.

While Bosum Strand handles industrial and textile trade, Pine Island services hundreds of plantations in its soggy lowlands and small ranches in its western hills. The main docks on Flint Bay are practically a floating city of wooden bridges and stone anchors, which has slowly grown away from the silt of the bayou to better serve deep-water merchant ships. Further inland, complicated streets, connected by ferries and bridges, weave between islands ranging from the size of a single house to a small neighborhood.

Criminals ply the waters of the bayous in shallow boats, often parking ships of smuggled drugs, magic, or women just off shore, then taking circuitous routes through the flooded forests in order to bypass dock authorities. While most dockside businesses are legitimate, deeper in the bayou you can find gambling houses, brothels, and opium dens. Pacts with local fey who are angry with the spinning gears on the other side of the bay help these criminal establishments hide from law enforcement, all for the low price of just a few newborns a year.

Farther west, where there are no longer even the occasional outcroppings of hills, the Battalion academy trains elite soldiers and martial scientists in the ways of war, with an emphasis on wilderness survival and the best techniques of intimidation against an occupying force. The district's mayor, **Roger Pepper**, is a graduate. Many of the Battalion's teachers served in the Yerasol Wars and various skirmishes, and the common fishermen of Pine Island say some of them brought back strange spirits from those distant islands. Recent folk tales tell of pale fish-scaled men who steal fowl and livestock each month during the neap tide.

Stray River.

The cluster of businesses and homes where Stray River empties into the bay is the closest thing to a typical Risuri city one can find in Flint. The Stray River district has well-tended streets, quaint two-story brick houses, and enjoys easy prosperity as the place most visitors to the city stay. The district is also home of some of the oldest mills in Risur, powered by small canals that loop off the main river to avoid disrupting water traffic.

One strange attraction of the district is the Penny Pyre. Originally it was a small blackened pit, where a mage's accident caused copper to burn as easily as wood, but last far longer. When the effect persisted, it became a fixture of the district's festivals. Various copper sculptures are designed by the districts artisans and placed atop the pit to burn over the course of hours or days. On normal occasions, people will occasionally toss a spare copper coin into the pyre for good luck. The royal mint has tried to end the practice, but the district's mayor, **Chrystine Robinson**, defends the tradition, saying more coins are simply lost in the dirt than tossed in the pyre.

The Ayres.

North of the city lie a clear island chain and several satellite islands. Many of these are merely rocky sandbars with a few trees, but a few larger islands serve as remote villas for the city's wealthiest. Nobles hold many family estates here, though one island is owned by a man new to his money: **Guy Goodson**, who swindled his initial wealth from a dozen naïve villages, and invested early in Flint's industrial boom. Today he owns dozens of factories in Parity Lake, and regularly dines with his noble neighbors, who delight in the small steamboat he uses to visit them.

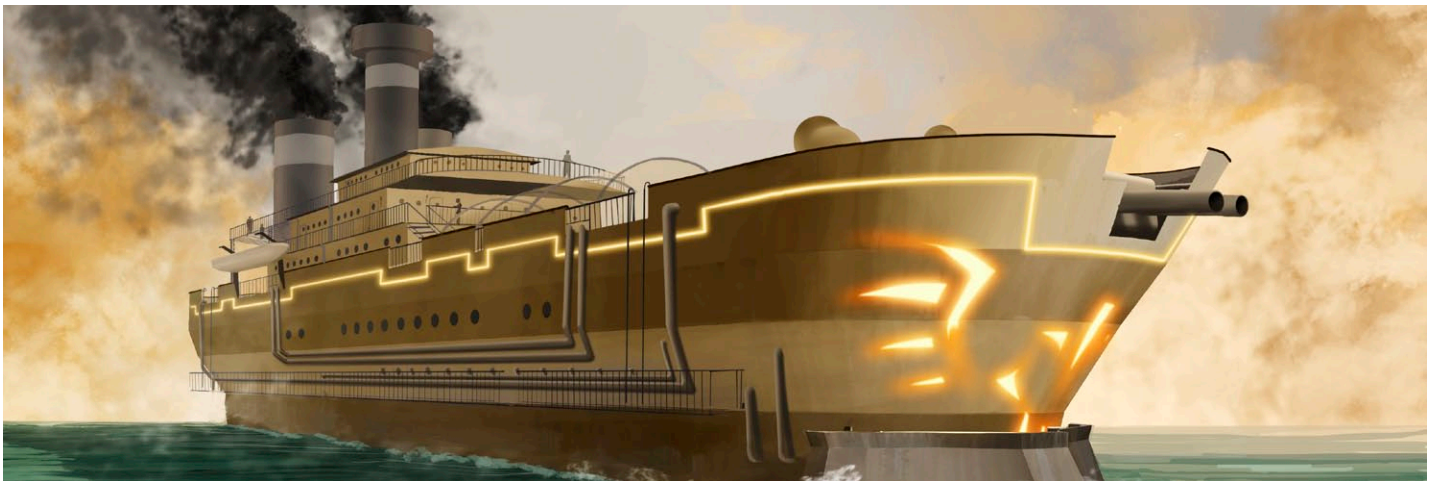
Since technically The Ayres is considered part of North Shore, it does not have its own district mayor. In practice, law and government officials never bothers the nobles on their islands unless an equally wealthy or powerful individual lodges a complaint.

The Military

The Battalion school of war in the bayous of Pine Island trains hundreds of future officers every year, and works in connection with various district forts throughout the city, as well as naval bases on an island near the mouth of Flint Harbor. Flint still remembers a few naval skirmishes that threatened shipping eight years ago, and so the military maintains a constant watch for possible threats. Normally, though, they will not respond unless a district mayor or the city governor himself calls on them.

While few individual soldiers have magical training, the military has acquired over the years a wide variety of enchanted weapons and defenses. Perhaps foremost among these, every soldier stationed in The Nettles district fort is given an amulet to ward them against supernatural influence, should they be called upon to face a reawakening of the eldritch horrors that reigned over Cauldron Hill during the time of the witches.

The local commander of Flint land forces is **Colonel Greg Masterson**; the naval defenses are overseen by **Rear Admiral Morris Dawkins**.



SECTION FOUR: The RHC

The Zeitgeist adventure path assumes the PCs will begin as agents of the Royal Homeland Constabulary. RHC constables are law enforcement officers tasked with protecting Risur from serious threats, usually in the form of foreign plots, magically equipped criminals, and various supernatural foes everyday police are not capable of handling.

The directorate in Flint generally keeps busy thwarting arms smuggling, industrial espionage, and the sorts of magical and monstrous threats once handled by plucky self-motivated "adventurers."

First Mission: Launch Party.

It is spring of the year 500 A.O.V. (After Our Victory).

Seven years after the end of the Fourth Yerasol War, the shipyards in Flint have completed the first Risuri warship powered solely by steam engine, not sail. Your monarch, King Aodhan, has come to Flint to witness the official launch of this mighty vessel. Wooden-hulled but with a heart and skin of iron, the Royal Naval Ship *Coaltongue* will act as a deterrent against future aggression from Risur's enemy across the sea, the nation of Danor.

The Royal Homeland Constabulary has been called upon to provide security, and you have spent the past several weeks working to make sure this event goes off without a hitch: canvassing the docks, performing background checks on the guest list, coordinating with the local police to set up a perimeter around the royal docks, and following various directives of your superiors. Now, as a warm breeze off the sea mingles the scents of elaborate floral decorations with the pervasive coal soot that always hovers over Flint, the king's carriage approaches, and you spy disgruntled faces amid the cheering crowd.

When you've finished the Player's Guide, you can start your mission in Zeitgeist Adventure One, *Island at the Axis of the World*.

Authority and the Law

Constables are invested with the authority of the king, and so are granted great leeway in their pursuit of justice and safety. While normal police must acquire warrants before they can search a building, RHC constables are trusted to not abuse their authority, and so can act as swiftly as needed. However, they are required to fill out proper paperwork and give testimony justifying their actions. A constable who uses his power for personal gain—or to harass anyone having political clout without a very good reason indeed—will find himself penalized, demoted, and possibly even imprisoned.

Constables are expected to take suspects alive whenever possible. Do note that the Fourth Edition rules allow characters to choose to subdue an enemy rather than kill it when it's reduced to 0 hit points. Execution is a likely punishment if a trial deems a suspect to be an enduring threat, though some criminals with political value might be kept under special house arrest, as long as they do not actively pursue plots against Risur.

Every constable has access to binding ropes as well as handcuffs (albeit not quite as advanced as the modern variety). Most handcuffs include gold wire or thread, which can be tied off after the cuffs are closed to prevent creatures from teleporting while wearing them. In special cases, *mage-cuffs* can be requisitioned.

Mage-Cuffs

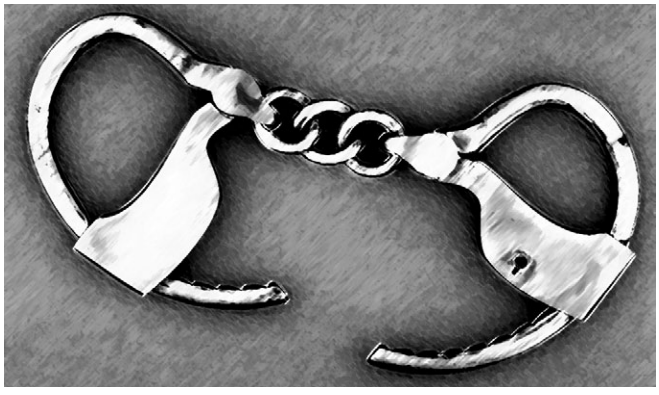
Lvl 1 360 gp

Common Wondrous Item

Property: When a person wearing *mage-cuffs* uses any magical power (generally defined as an arcane, divine, primal, psionic, or shadow power, or equivalent non-typed abilities), the cuffs glow, make a warning whistle sound, and deal 10 damage to the wearer. A creature reduced to 0 hit points this way becomes unconscious.

Mage-cuffs can only be applied to helpless or willing creatures of Small or Medium size.

Constables can usually hand over arrested suspects to the police, though the RHC headquarters in Flint does have specially prepared cells to handle more dangerous criminals. These cells are all lined with enchantments similar to those of mage-cuffs, and are surrounded by rings of gold and bricks baked with salt and other warding agents. When needed, even more specialized items can be used, such as chains that can hold incorporeal entities or prevent shapechanging, hoods that block gaze attacks, and sigils to nullify innate energy threats like flaming elementals.



When it comes to interrogations, this is not a modern police force. Characters who choose to be enlightened and use less-violent approaches can often get what they need with less hassle, but threats and actual violence are common tools when trying to make suspects talk, and most superiors won't bat an eye as long as no one is seriously injured or dies.

Loyalty to Risur

The RHC recruits from police, military, universities, and many other sources of talent, occasionally even accepting foreign applicants. In addition to requiring extensive background checks, recruits must undergo a magical inquisition. The king grants each branch's local director the ability to test the loyalty of all who would apply to join the constabulary.

A candidate who agrees to undertake the test opens their mind so the director may sense their true intentions. If they have any ill will to Risur, its people, or its leaders, it will be revealed. More importantly, the candidate must show a devotion to protecting Risur. Risur need not be the primary concern of the applicant—people are expected, after all, to value their family, friends, even careers—but this precaution has kept the RHC from ever having produced a traitor in the thirty years it has been active.

Hierarchy and Constable Teams

Approximately twenty constables are active in the Royal Homeland Constabulary's Flint directorate, supported by almost a hundred researchers, office assistants, laboratory technicians, security guards, carriage drivers, and the like.

Leadership.

The Flint branch is run by **Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby**, a former superstar investigator who cracked many famous cases, became the darling of the public, and earned herself a knighthood. During the Fourth Yerasol War she married a young nobleman, acquiring clout among aristocratic circles. When the then-director of Flint's branch of the RHC lost favor in a scandal, she easily won the appointment to take his place.

Lady Saxby leads her branch with incisive intelligence and an experienced intuition for determining which of her constables should pursue which threats. On the other hand, some complain that her confidence borders on megalomania. On several occasions underlings who have become a bit too popular for her liking have received transfers to less prestigious postings.

While she now nears fifty, Lady Saxby remains quite fit and retains much of youthful beauty. She demands authority wherever she goes, and uses many subtle reminders to let people know who is boss. For example, there is only one (expensive, comfortable) chair in her office: hers.

Units and Oversight.

Saxby's role as director often has her dealing with bureaucrats and nobles, and while she officially is also the Chief Inspector, she leaves most affairs of investigations to Assistant Chief **Inspector Stover Delft**, who oversees four units of constables and coordinates their activities.

A local Flinter in his early 40s, Delft gets squinty and condescending when his authority is questioned, but he can recognize talent and good work. Since his days as a constable himself, Delft served a vital role handling logistics, though in the past few years he's acquired a modicum of leadership skill. He often expresses pride for three of his old underlings who went on to head spy cells overseas.



ASSISTANT CHIEF INSPECTOR STOVER DELFT.

Delft chews leaf of Nicodemus, and thinks he looks charming if he grins while sucking the juices. He walks with a cane because a mimic tore a chunk out of his leg fifteen years ago. He has a habit of poking inanimate objects with the cane before he gets too close to them, and spitting on them when he wants to be extra sure.

Some other constables in the Flint branch include.

- **Carlao**, a human veteran of the Fourth Yerasol War who proudly wears his plate armor even in the city. He's something of a director's pet, and acts as Saxby's trusted aide.
- **Serena**, a human tinkerer who often crafts gadgets useful for spying and "wet works," but is surprisingly cheery, seeing all female constables as her sisters.
- **Kaea**, an eladrin evoker widely distrusted by the local fey and druids after she went undercover among the skyseers to expose a vekeshi murderer.
- **Dima**, a dwarf priest with an unhealthy fondness for paperwork.
- **Josiah**, a human sniper constantly fiddling with his rifle when he's not on mission seducing people of interest.
- **Gaethan**, a half-elf ranger whose ability to speak with the dead has made him a bit addled and unreliable, having to carry a notebook to remind himself of his daily affairs.

Ships of the RHC

The Flint branch has five vessels at its disposal, since sometimes the constabulary needs to deal with threats at sea or simply pursue investigations in other cities or countries. Usually, though, these ships stay docked, with only maintenance crews aboard. Stats for these ships can be found in Appendix Two: Seas of Zeitgeist.

Audacious, Excise Cutter

This traditional fore-and-aft rig of a 30-ft. long cutter has a single mast supporting a mainsail and two or more headsails attached to a bowsprit, plus an optional topsail for extra speed. Excise cutters often serve as harbor patrol and law enforcement. Units of constables have used this beloved ship for decades, and this affection manifests by granting all the crew a +1 bonus to saving throws while within sight of the ship as long as it has no damage.

Requesting the *Audacious* is a Rank 1 favor using Risur prestige, modified by the time the ship will be needed. It has no standing crew of its own, so constables must pilot it themselves.

Inevitable, Steam Cutter

Designed to fill the role of sailing excise cutters, steam cutters can more easily travel against the wind, but are louder and must rely on fuel, which somewhat limits their long-distance uses. Inevitable has only been in use by the RHC for five years, and its first crew died in a boiler explosion. The ship was salvaged and repaired, and now some unearthly force daunts those who would threaten the vessel. The first attack roll against the ship in each combat takes a –5 penalty, and hostile creatures stepping aboard treat the first square they enter as difficult terrain.

Requesting the Inevitable is a Rank 1 favor using Risur prestige, modified by the time the ship will be needed. It has no standing crew of its own, so constables must pilot it themselves.

Roscommon, Fey-Pact Schooner

The 90-ft. *Roscommon* mounts a three-masted square-topsail rig. Laid down in 417 A.O.V., when it was nearing completion its designer had a druid deliver a replica to a fey circle near the logging town of Roscommon. The model ship delighted the local fey queen Medb, and the next morning when the designer returned to work, the ship's figurehead had been replaced by a beautiful faerie woman carved from living wood. The rigging is somewhat petulant, but can teleport short distances, an incredible power in ship-to-ship combat.

Requesting *Roscommon* and its crew of sixteen is a Rank 3 favor using Risur prestige, modified by the time the ship will be needed.

Khalundurrin, Bold Dwarven Steamship

Risuri forces captured the *Khalundurrin* from the Drakran navy when the ship strayed too close to an ongoing naval battle during the Fourth Yerasol War. Its captain claimed that he tried to avoid the fight, but his ship had changed course when he wasn't looking, like it wanted to get into combat. Arcanists who examined the ship postulate that some manner of spirit might inhabit its steam engine. Crew who serve on it sleep easily and speak of dreams filled with bold imagery like something out of a dwarven opera.

Requesting *Khalundurrin* and its crew of eight is a Rank 3 favor using Risur prestige, modified by the time the ship will be needed.

Impossible, Extreme Clipper

The 250-ft. *Impossible* is built wholly for speed, and is primarily used for missions of immense urgency. Due to the ship's great expense, it is usually only deployed at the command of Lady Saxby or one of her superiors. Its captain, Rutger Smith, has never seen combat. He sees himself as a philosopher, not a warrior, and while his crew have great morale, they are the target of mockery from other crews in the RHC and the navy.

Requesting the Impossible and its crew of sixty-four is a Rank 4 favor using Risur prestige, modified by the time the ship will be needed.

Headquarters

Located in Central District, the Flint branch of the RHC has one primary headquarters building, plus three satellite buildings containing libraries, laboratories, and more supplies and offices. The main headquarters has two floors, plus a basement for captured suspects. The jail has only twice reached capacity in the past thirty years.

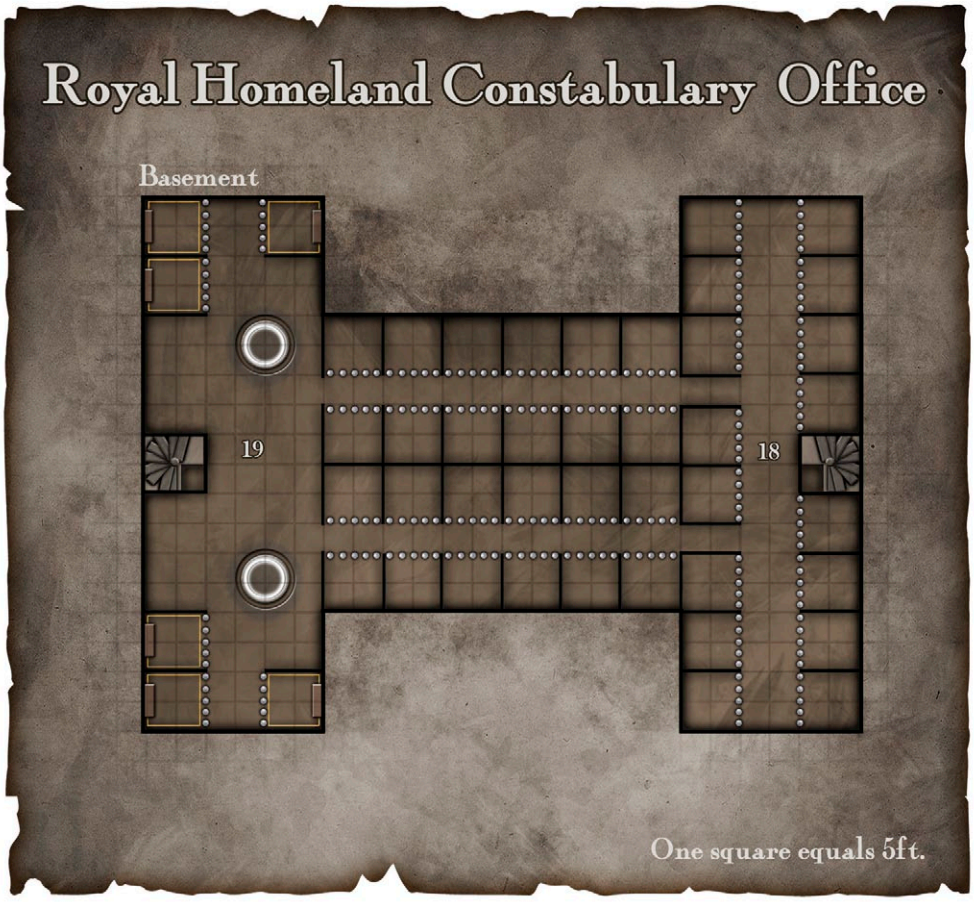
Most rooms have gas-lit lamps either along the walls of in recesses in the ceiling.

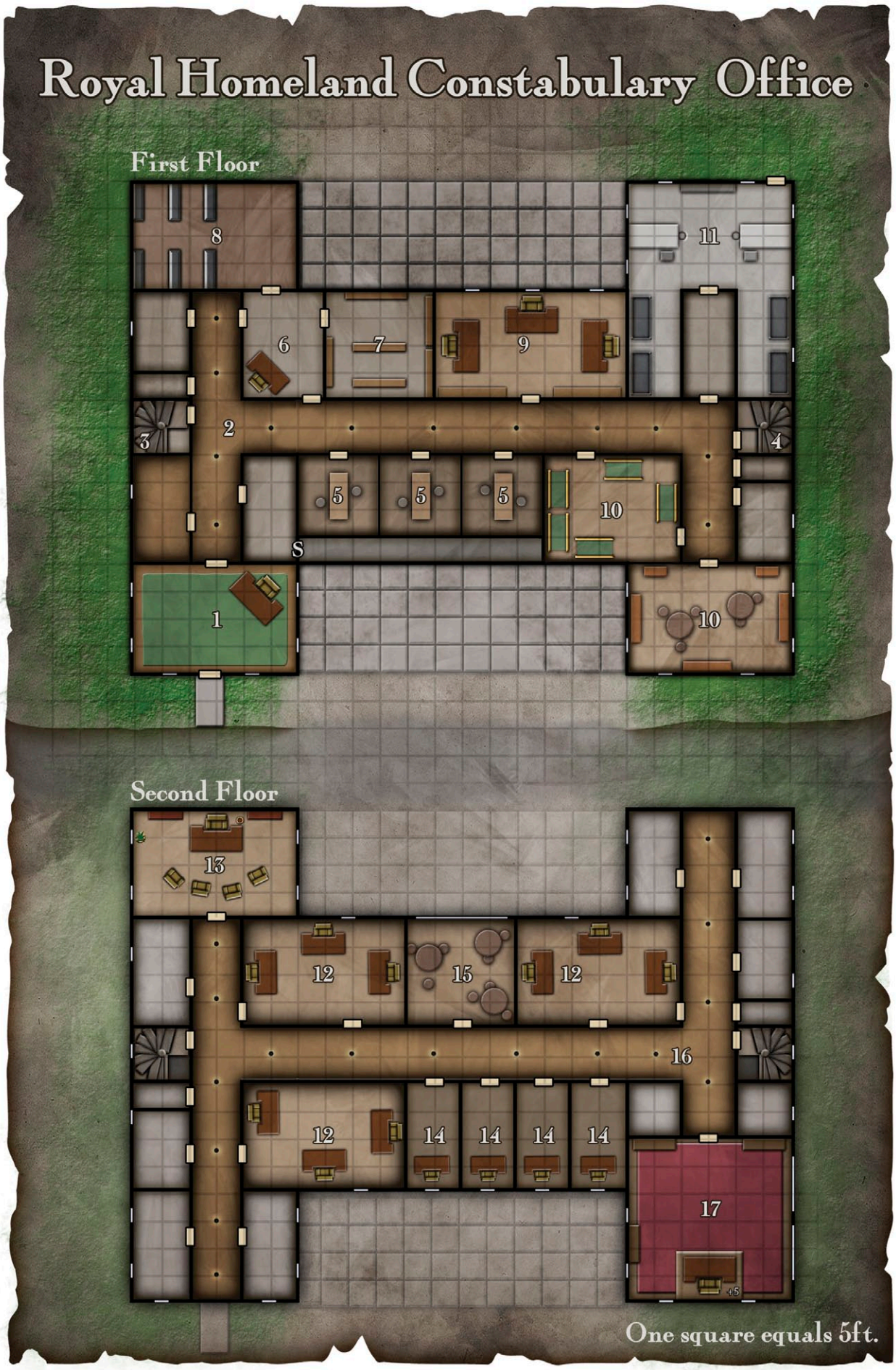
First Floor.

1. Entrance. At least two guards are on duty at all times.
2. Lower Hallway.
3. Western Stairwell.
4. Eastern Stairwell.
5. Interrogation Rooms.
6. Quartermaster Office.
7. General Supplies. Door locked. Requires a quartermaster to access.
8. Evidence. Door locked. Requires paperwork to access.
9. Secretary Pool.
10. Guard Room. Each room typically has another two guards.
11. Morgue.

Second Floor.

12. Inspector's Desks.
13. Delft's Office.
14. Support Offices.
15. Break Room.
16. Upper Hallway.
17. Saxby's Office.




Royal Homeland Constabulary Office
First Floor
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Second Floor
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+5
One square equals 5ft.

Basement.

18. Holding Cells. At least two guards are on duty at all times.

19. Magic Cells. Spellcasters are kept here. The cells are enchanted to function like *mage-cuffs*; any attempt to use magical powers sounds an alarm and does 10 damage to the prisoner. A golden ward also blocks teleportation and summoning. Two columns glow with pale white light, which grants everyone within 5 squares Resist 10 against all energy types.

Investigation & Interrogation

Two common challenges during the Zeitgeist adventure path will be following suspects to see where they go, and interrogating suspects. While you and your DM can always handle these situations narratively or with *ad hoc* dice rolls, those who want more structure can use the following mechanics as a baseline.

Tailing a Suspect.

Variable Level Skill Challenge.

Key Skills: Athletics, Bluff, Perception, Stealth, Streetwise

Difficulty: Skill DCs are based on the level of the person being tailed. To start, use a "Moderate challenge" DC.

Sometimes following a suspect is easy, and only one check is required to avoid being spotted. But if a target is trying to avoid being followed, the tailing challenge will include multiple "stages," typically three. Each stage represents one effort of the target to get somewhere without being spotted.

For instance, a target might take a carriage to a merchant district (stage one), shop innocuously for a bit (stage two), then slip into a shop that sells contraband (stage three). Or a particularly cautious target might travel the streets in random routes (stage one), switch clothes (stage two), hop onto a ferry (stage three), wait for everyone else to get off the ferry first before leaving (stage four), then spend an hour in a busy dockside bar (stage five), before heading a few blocks away to an illicit meeting (stage six).

Torture and the Rule of Law.

This is a topic the group should probably discuss before starting this campaign. Maybe everyone is alright with violent interrogations, but not with outright sadism. Perhaps they'd prefer to have a more heroic tone, where all the "good guys" have to do is pretend that they'll hurt a prisoner to get him to open up. Or the group could desire a more grim take, recognizing the fact that throughout most of history and even today, many in law enforcement believe that hurting someone will get them to talk.

Just make sure to go no farther than any player is willing to deal with. It becomes everyone's responsibility to make sure a social and supposedly "fun" game doesn't make cause friends to be uncomfortable around each other. Personally, we suggest that King Aodhan won't allow his representatives to commit such barbarous acts, and that the modern drives of society have discredited prolonged violence as an interrogation tactic.

For each stage, the DM narrates what the target is doing, then the PC has to make two checks, one to keep up, the other to stay hidden. The skill checks required will depend on the circumstances and the PC's ingenuity. Based on the result of the PC's checks and the target's plans, the DM can narrate the next stage of the pursuit.

If a PC fails a "keep up" check, the DM should increase the DC of further "keep up" checks by one step to the "Hard" DC, regardless of what skill is used. This represents the PC falling behind and having trouble seeing where the target is going. A second failed "keep up" check means the PC has lost his target.

Likewise, if the PC fails a "stay hidden" check, the DM should increase the DC of further "stay hidden" checks. The target has gotten suspicious and is more on guard. A second failed "stay hidden" check means the target has made the PC. The target's reaction will vary based on situation and personality—flight, confrontation, attack, calling the guards—but he or she almost certainly won't let the PC see anything incriminating.

It can be helpful to bear in mind that if you think you might fail, it could be smarter to give up and try another way to learn about the target, instead of tipping off a potential enemy.

Keeping Up.

Each stage requires the PC to make a check, typically Perception. If the target runs it might be Athletics. If the target goes through a crowded district, perhaps Streetwise would be more appropriate. If the target is a corrupt police officer and has other officers block anyone from taking the same route as him, Diplomacy or Bluff might allay the guards' suspicions. Feel free to come up with your own solutions to these challenges, but the DM might adjust the DC based on how appropriate your plan is.

Stay Hidden.

Each stage requires the PC to make a check, typically Stealth. Athletics might let you stalk along rooftops, if the terrain is appropriate. Bluff might let you blend into the patrons at a coffee shop. Perhaps you might even hold his breath and hide underwater with Endurance when following a target near the docks.

Multiple PCs.

There are benefits and drawbacks to sending multiple constables to follow a target. It's easier to keep up because you have more eyes watching the target, but it's easier for the suspect to notice a group that keeps following him.

If multiple PCs are trailing the same target, each PC makes the checks. If anyone succeeds the "keep up" check, it counts as a success for the whole team. However, if anyone *fails* the "stay hidden" check, it counts as a failure for the whole team and increases the DC for future checks of that sort. If the team gets a second failure to stay hidden, only those who failed their checks are spotted by the target.

Other Complications.

This just presents a fairly simple situation of tailing a single target. In practice, the enemies of the RHC often are clever in avoiding detection and pursuit. Avoiding an ambush by the minions of a potential suspect might be more important to the mission's success than simply following blithely, and cracking enough skulls won't necessarily crack the case.

Interrogating a Suspect.

Variable Level Skill Challenge.

Key Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Insight, Intimidate

Difficulty: Skill DCs are based on the level of the person being interrogated. To start, use the "Moderate challenge" DC.

An interrogation might involve subtly getting a suspect to talk about himself, verbally intimidating or manipulating a prisoner into confessing a secret, or physically punishing a target until he breaks. To get useful information, the PC must establish and maintain a rapport, and then extract information out of the target.

When running an interrogation as a skill challenge, the DM should first have the player explain or roleplay how they'll attempt to establish rapport, and then have them make a check. Then if they succeed they can explain what information they're trying to extract, and make a check for that.

Rapport.

Rapport reflects the target's trust of the PC. In a casual conversation, a target might think the PC is just a normal person and have no reason to look for ulterior motives, and after establishing a rapport with the PC he might be willing to share things he wouldn't with a total stranger. During a harsher interrogation, the PC must make sure that the target's anger or loathing of his captor does not overwhelm whatever other emotion the interrogator is trying to evoke.

To establish rapport, the PC must make a skill check. If the PC has a genuine connection to the target, he might make a Diplomacy check to keep the target happy. Bluff works if the target is faking a connection, particularly for seduction. If the target is a mage or scholar, the PC might even use Arcana, History, Nature, or Religion to make the target think they have much in common, and Streetwise might work to pose as a fellow criminal. Intimidate also works, but will usually leave the target unfriendly or even openly hostile after the interrogation.

If the PC succeeds his check, he establishes rapport, and he can move on to extraction. If he fails the check, the target cannot be coaxed to open up. The PC can try again, but the DC increases to "Hard." If he fails a second time, the target won't respond to further attempts unless something changes in his or her relation to the PC (such as if the PC saves the target's life).

Extraction.

Once the PC has established a rapport, he can make a skill check to extract information from the target. The skill used to extract information is almost always Insight. If successful, the PC gets the target to reveal something useful. The target might tell a total lie, but the PC is able to see through it and figure out what's really true.

If the PC fails his check, the target gives up nothing and becomes a little wary. If the PC fails a second time, he loses his rapport with the target, which counts as one failure on a rapport check.

Good Cop, Bad Cop.

When two or more characters coordinate in an interrogation, each PC can make a check to establish rapport. As long as at least one PC succeeds his check, the whole team establishes rapport. Only if everyone fails does the DC for further attempts increase.

Once the team has established rapport, anyone can actually ask the questions, but the PCs as a group make just one Insight check to extract information, using the highest skill modifier among them.

In the classic "good cop, bad cop" situation, two PCs coordinate to get the target to open up, and then the character with better Insight asks the questions. A variant is to have one person physically break a target, and then afterward a different interrogator asks the questions. The same mechanic could handle five PCs carousing at a bar, getting a suspect drunk, and then encouraging him to brag about his secret mission.

Before Adventure Two

The second Zeitgeist adventure, *The Dying Skyseer*, takes place in the city of Flint, as do parts of other adventures. To help players learn about the city, after the end of Adventure One and before the start of Adventure Two, the DM should ask each player to pick two districts and come up with a contact his or her character has in each district.

This contact could be a friend or family member, a criminal informant, an ex-boyfriend, a merchant whose shop you frequent, a minor noble who owes you a favor, a religious figure, your fey pepper dealer, or many other options. These NPCs help connect the PCs to the city, and will come in handy as they investigate a murder mystery and other threats.




Sechim's Alkahest &



ZEITGEIST Adventure Path

Campaign Guide

From the Pen of Ryan Nock

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Ably Produced and Facilitated by Russell Morrissey

Special Thanks to *our hundreds of Kickstarter backers, and to the many GMs and players who were our "external playtesters" the first time these adventures were published.*

CAMPAIGN GUIDE: Introduction

If you plan to be a player in the Zeitgeist adventure path, please don't read any further—this book is full of spoilers for the DM!

If you haven't read the Player's Guide, you should: it contains vital details about the Zeigeist campaign setting, while this Campaign Guide outlines the adventures themselves and the forces opposing the PCs. Players should only read the Player's Guide, and not this document. DMs also need to be familiar with the setting to have the proper understanding of the information in this guide. You can download a free copy of the Player's Guide from *zeitgeistadventurepath.com*.

Needless to say, spoilers abound.

Contents

This Campaign Guide contains the following sections.

Key Terms Primer. A brief list of major names, places, and ideas in this adventure path.

Campaign Synopsis. Details of the conspiracy known as the Obscurati, their goals, and their membership. Also a brief overview of other main plot threads in the campaign.

Running the Campaign. Guidance for handling new mechanics and doling out revelations at a satisfying pace, as well as a synopsis of all thirteen adventures.

Appendix: Ancient History. Information given out to the players over the course of thirteen adventures is compiled here for the DM's convenience.

Wherein We Invite You to Join the Conspiracy

"The motion of the stars allows different ideals to gain ascendance: war, decay, chaos, exploration, order, creation. But no longer shall the procession of heaven obey the whims of an ancient, absent clockmaker. Now the hand that moves the stars shall be ours!"

—Nicodemus the Gnostic, founder of the Obscurati

A secret cabal is constructing a magnificent machine to let them set the alignment of the multiverse, reshaping reality to reflect their ideology. As the heroes tease the conspiracy out from the shadows, adherents of other faiths and philosophies will battle to determine the spirit of a new age: the zeitgeist.

Our goal with this guide is to give the DM clear knowledge of the campaign from beginning to end. While there is plenty of room to adjust things based on your players' actions, it is important to know what will likely be happening at 10th, 20th, and 30th level, so that you can lay the groundwork at 1st level. Climaxes, twists, and revelations are only compelling if they have been properly built up to.



Key Terms Primer

Geography and History.

Lanjyr. The continent of the campaign, consisting of five major nations—Risur, Danor, Ber, Crisillyir, and Drakr—plus numerous weaker states, and the conquered eladrin Elfaivar Empire, now divided into many small colonies.

Risur. A human kingdom, central to the campaign, whose traditional reverence for nature has begun to clash with a recent push for rapid industrialization.

Flint. A major city in Risur, center of the nation's industry, and location where most of this campaign's events take place.

Danor. The tiefling-ruled nation Risur has been at war with on-and-off for two centuries. The nation-wide dead magic zone prompted technological innovation, leading to today's industrial revolution.

Yerasol Archipelago. Lush islands off the coast of Risur and Danor. For the past two hundred years the nations have vied for control of the archipelago.

The Clergy. The foremost religion in Lanjyr, led by priests pious to various allied deities. The most revered is Triegenes, a human fisherman who allegedly rose to godhood a thousand years ago. Doctrine focuses on how divinity exists in all people, albeit with a humanocentric bent.

The Old Faith. The druidic religion of Risur, concerned with appeasing nature spirits rather than praying to gods.

Seedism. The ancient faith of elves, gnomes, and eladrin, based upon supplication to gods not seen in this world for millennia, with respect for the lords of the Dreaming, believed to be those gods' vassals. It remains the primary religion in Elfaivar, and less orthodox sects practice in small pockets in the human nations.

The Victories. Two mighty wars five hundred years ago, wherein adherents of the Clergy conquered parts of the eladrin Elfaivaran Empire in a bid to stamp out Seedism. Calendars mark years starting at the end of the Second Victory, 1 A.O.V. (After Our Victory).

The Great Malice. In the Second Victory, humans slew the eladrin goddess Srasama. In the aftermath, every eladrin woman in the world died, which quickly led to the collapse of the Elfaivaran Empire. Simultaneously the nation of Danor became a massive dead magic zone. Common belief attributes Danor's affliction to a curse lain by the dying goddess, in which she sacrificed millions of followers for a final act of spite.

The Dreaming. A parallel world and home to the fey, where reality tends to obey dream logic. Normally only accessible through powerful magic or at specific locations like crossroads or toadstool rings during specific times of the month or year.

The Bleak Gate. A darker parallel world where the dead linger before they pass on to the afterlife. Only horrors and nightmares live here natively. Sounds do not echo. Seas are flat. The air is still. The sky never grows brighter than a gray gloom. Normally inaccessible to the living, except during exceedingly rare celestial events.

The Axis Seal. This primordial ritual buried a massive golden plate—carved with symbols representing eight planes of the multiverse—in what was then the center of the known world. The plate acts as a seal for



a portal to the rest of the multiverse, and limits access from this world to only eight others. The ritual's completion shattered the continent, and today the seal lies forgotten on an island in the Yerasol Archipelago. If it were opened, it would be possible to change what planes influence this world, or to travel the multiverse.

Power Groups and Modern Philosophies.

Risuri Homeland Constabulary. A law enforcement group sponsored by King Aodhan of Risur, tasked with pursuing threats that transcend country borders. The campaign assumes the heroes belong to this organization, but we offer several alternatives.

House Jierre. A tiefling family which has come to rule Danor since the Great Malice. Proponents of industry and technology. Many scions of the family have had a hand in shaping the development of the great nations in the past five centuries.

The Unseen Court. A "government" for the fey who live in the analogue of Risur in the Dreaming, obeying whims of metaphor and ruling with magically binding obligations and promises. These powerful and secretive fey have long received tribute from the mortals of Lanjyr, and they have grown disgruntled in response to recent industry, which has turned people's minds away from their faith in the old ways. Many loyal fey have turned violent and aggressive, and rumors say the Court is just waiting for the right time to step out of the Dreaming and attack Risur.

The Kell Guild. The brutish Lorcan Kell rose from a merciless gang enforcer to figurehead of Flint's largest crime syndicate. They grew rapidly in strength when the city began building most of its factories on their turf, allowing them to extort and smuggle their way to riches.

The Family. A criminal organization based out of Crisillyir, working to gain a foothold in Risur. Practices protection rackets, extortion, and smuggling, just like the Kell Guild, but with a veneer of honor and concern for the community as a whole. Though publicly opposed by the Clergy, their leadership is actually a secret sect of the faith, allowed to thrive so the church can coordinate with a unified criminal element instead of scattered gangs.

Heid Eschatol. Dwarven philosophical movement concerned with the endings of things—from how best to order one's affairs at the end of life, to how to break up with a lover, or in what manner to confront the imminent end of the world. Started in Drakr, and has migrated to universities throughout Lanjyr. Some radical factions actively seek to cause suffering so as to hasten the world's end.

The Panoply. A loose movement of anti-establishment thinkers and artists, based primarily in Ber, but rapidly making inroads among the dockers of Risur. Commonly viewed as instigators and anarchists.



WILLIAM MILLER
AKA
NICODEMUS
THE GNOSTIC

Zeitgeist and Magic.

The world of Zeitgeist has three unique magical traits due to the nature of the planes it draws energy from.

First, 200 years ago the connection to the plane of air was damaged, so now no spell or magic item can allow for permanent flight. PCs can still have flight magic of their own, but no effect ever lasts longer than five minutes, and people still react to flying mages with amazement because of how rare the magic is. Only one person in the setting, the fey terrorist Gale, has the ability to fly perpetually at the start of the adventure path.

Second, gold blocks teleportation. Line of sight for short-range teleportation cannot pass through any door or window that has even a thin wire of gold tracing its frame, and a creature wearing a ring of gold cannot teleport. Prison cells for eladrin are typically lined with threads of gold, and even beat cops usually carry a gold ring with them just in case they have to slip it on the toe of a suspect to keep them from escaping.

Third, the Axis Seal inhibits planar travel. Unless the caster has a rare and special connection to another plane (such as the king of Risur, who by the rites of rulership is connected to the Dreaming), magic cannot allow a creature to travel to another plane permanently, and even powerful effects will end abruptly after five minutes. Special celestial occurrences can create circumstances to make travel easier, and the villains of the campaign are unique for being the only people ever to figure out how to bypass this limit, and even then only to get to and from the Bleak Gate.

Make sure your players understand these limits. If someone wants to be special and break one of these limits, you're probably fine to allow it as long as you don't let them easily travel to the Dreaming or the Bleak Gate, since both those planes need to be hard to reach for critical plot reasons.

The Obscurati.

Nicodemus the Gnostic. Founder and leader of the occult organization, the Obscurati, Nicodemus resents religion and superstition and seeks the ascendance of human reason. We detail his motivations and history in this document, but his name should remain secret to the players until Adventure Five, and his real identity hidden until Adventure Eight at least.

William Miller. A monk who five hundred years ago opposed the Second Victory and traveled to Elfaivar in a failed bid to stop the war. Though he was always a philosopher of note, he has become a heroic icon of the Panoply movement, who widely disseminate his writings among commoners and the working class.

As he witnessed the atrocities of the Second Victory, Miller grew disillusioned with the Clergy. He traveled under the name Nicodemus the Gnostic, a nickname he had earned in his monastery for his doubting and his habit for smoking "leaf of Nicodemus" (i.e., cigarettes). Historians know practically nothing about Nicodemus, and have not connected him to the philosopher William Miller.

While tending the injured after a great battle in the city of Alais Primos, Nicodemus met a similarly embittered eladrin wizardress, Kasvarina Varal, and together they strove to mitigate the religious conflict. Eventually they learned of a ritual that could give physical form to a belief, but which bound the lives of those who held that belief to the physical avatar. They tried to trick the Clergy into using the ritual to summon their own god of war—which Nicodemus and Kasvarina had a plan to slay, ending the war—but the Clergy discovered their ruse and instead invoked the eladrin goddess Srasama. When an army slew the goddess's avatar, it had terrible consequences for the entire continent.



KASVARINA VARAL



SOVEREIGN HAN JIERRE OF DANOR

Nicodemus tried to stop the ritual, but the magic tore his soul from his body, allowing him to survive as a sort of untethered ghost able to possess the bodies of others. He managed to flee as the Great Malice took effect, which did indeed end the war, but at a cost far greater than he had intended.

In the relative peace after the war's end, Nicodemus tried to make amends. He switched back to his original name of Miller and created Pala, a small nation of thinkers and philosophers on the border of modern Danor. But in 18 A.O.V. the Clergy branded Miller a heretic, invaded Pala, and sacked its capital. He was brought to Alais Primos, the new seat of the Clergy, where he was tortured in an effort to compel a confession. After he refused to recant, his captors made a pyre of his heretical writings and burned him alive upon it.

After his second murder by the Clergy, Miller abandoned his peaceful idealism in favor of more Machiavellian techniques. He left his identity as Miller behind, allowing people to remember him as a martyr to reason, and set out to force the world to change.

After acquiring a new body, Miller met with two trusted cohorts and proposed a path to reshape the world into one free of the dangerous iconoclasty of the Clergy. Knowing any open effort would result only in the loss of more innocent lives, they formed a secret society, to become known as the Obscurati.

Kasvarina Varal. A centuries-old eladrin who allied with Nicodemus during the Second Victory, managed by fluke to survive the Great Malice, and later helped found the Obscurati. Her key responsibility has been to undermine the Clergy's military and monetary might, primarily by forming vengeance cults among her fellow surviving eladrin. More recently she oversaw the grand Colossus project, detailed below.

Scions of House Jierre. Those who participated in the ritual that invoked Srasama were twisted to become tieflings. One among them, Jierre, grew horrified by what he had done and was instrumental in the creation of Miller's short-lived philosopher state of Pala. Jierre escaped persecution and later joined the conspiracy of the Obscurati, charged with the dynastic task of establishing a nation in the dead magic zone, free from the influence of the Clergy, where reason would rise above religion.

Today, scions of House Jierre hold many key positions in the nation of Danor, including the Sovereign Han Jierre.



SECTION ONE: Campaign Synopsis

Zeitgeist takes place over the course of thirteen adventures, in which the party will ascend from 1st to 30th level. Because we understand not all groups can manage the endurance to run such a long campaign, we offer a few options for abridged campaigns. In the Adventure Roster section (page 81) we explain the plots of each of the thirteen adventures, but first let us examine the narrative arc that runs through the campaign.

The Grand Conspiracy

Imagine if one day the whole world woke up and agreed with you.

On its broadest scale, Zeitgeist is about the party's investigation, discovery, and fight against a conspiracy that calls itself the Obscurati, which seeks to alter the fundamental reality of the world.

In the primordial age, the world floated in a sea of many planes, its borders unprotected against incursion from hostile and maddening entities. An alliance of primitive peoples gathered the magical energies of several worlds and crafted the Axis Seal. Beneath this seal they placed icons and complex geometric patterns that linked a handful of safe slivers of the multiverse to their own world. When the ritual was complete, these slivers were pulled from the primordial sea and left to float in the heavens as a star and its orbiting planets.

These planes and the powers they represent—air, earth, fire, water, life, death, space, and time—shape the course of the world's events. If one were changed, even by merely swapping which sliver of the elemental planes became this system's plane of fire, a complex cascade of changes would alter how the world works and what its fate holds. This ancient ban is long forgotten to most, but the Obscurati seek to open it, alter the planes it links to, and seal it again. In so doing they will force the whole the world to adhere to their philosophy, and set the future on the path they desire.

For more information on the history of the Axis Seal, see Appendix One: Ancient History (page 91).



Foundation, Ideology, and the Ghost Council.

The earliest seed of this plot was planted centuries ago by the secret society's three founders—the human philosopher Nicodemus the Gnostic, the eladrin mage Kasvarina Varal, and the tiefling aristocrat Jierre. They all were disillusioned with society's adherence to old beliefs. Together they envisioned a world where reason and inquiry were supreme.

In their ideal world, gods would hold no sway over mortals. People would be respected for their knowledge, and enlightened self interest would drive the progress of civilization, not pettiness and tribalism. Even the poorest and weakest would be educated and uplifted. Before the public execution that led him to take the name Nicodemus, William Miller wrote much on this seemingly impossible ideal, and those texts are cherished by many poets and rebels today. But many painful, jading years have passed, and the founding dreams of the Obscurati have shifted to a darker, more pragmatic ideology.

The original Jierre has long since died, but his family holds power in Danor. The Jierre line has cultivated a competitive system for the advancement of reason and science, often with an emphasis on discrediting other nations' reliance on gods. Magic brought into Danor fades swiftly, so the religions of Lanjyr have struggled to plead their case without access to their usually persuasive toolkit of miracles. Few

Danorans have any faith to speak of, which suits the Obscurati just fine. Unfortunately, the conspiracy needs magic to accomplish its goals, so they have founded cells in other nations, and their official base of operations is in Crisillyir, on an island called Mutravir. Nevertheless, the might of Danor gives them great leverage in world politics.

Kasvarina survives, and in the centuries since Elfaivar was toppled she has worked to inspire eternal resentment of the Clergy among eladrin. She ruled from a roaming castle in the Dreaming, and her direct decrees or subtle suggestions could ensure that eladrin warriors would strike and kill any foes of the conspiracy. Everyone in Lanjyr is so familiar with eladrin revenge killings that they don't imagine there's any guiding hand behind them.

Nicodemus learned how to recreate the magic that let him survive after his body was destroyed. In the following centuries, on rare occasions he has used this power to let loyal allies endure as spirits, forming a council of ghostly philosophers, scientists, and other wise men. They direct and advise the top-level actions of the Obscurati.

These undead advisors, no longer connected to the daily trials and needs of the living, have given ever more callous counsel to Nicodemus. Through centuries of setbacks, Nicodemus has held fast to his hope to create a more perfect world, but he has seen too many noble endeavors fail, watched too many friends die, and he has begun to question his vision. If he put his faith in the common people of his ideal land, he doubts they would do anything but disappoint him.

Organizing a Conspiracy.

The structure of the Obscurati resembles a pyramid, with different threads branching off at lower tiers.

Tier One: Triad.

Three people have final say about what course the Obscurati take: Nicodemus, Kasvarina, and whoever the scion of House Jierre is—currently Han Jierre.

Tier Two: Ghost Council

The Ghost Council advises and tracks logistics. They review regular reports from heads of the various cells, and make decisions regarding recruitment, promotion, and—when necessary—elimination of operatives. Their primary purpose is to make sure the conspiracy's resources are deployed efficiently while minimizing the risk of discovery.

Tier Three: Cell Leaders

The conspiracy separates its operations into three major cells and numerous minor cells, each with delineated goals. The heads of each cell generally have authority to pursue goals as they see fit, though Nicodemus—able to move easily from body to body without arousing suspicion—checks in regularly with the cell leaders to ensure everything's running smoothly, and to field any requests.

Only rarely will leaders from two different cells meet, and in normal circumstances they are not supposed to contact each other. The leaders of the three major cells all know what the conspiracy's overall goal is, but even these trusted individuals do not know the full scope of all the conspiracy's allies and operations. Meanwhile the leaders of most minor cells have been told only that the Obscurati seeks to reward reason and selflessness. The grandiose extent of the full plan is kept secret.

Nicodemus intends to gather all the cell leaders together shortly before enacting his grand design. Partially this is because he wants reassurance that his plan to change the world is not selfish hubris. Partially it's to prepare the cell leaders so they can deal with any unforeseen consequences of the alteration. And partially it is so he can gauge their reactions and learn which cell leaders are participating only out of a desire for personal power, so that he can dispose of them. (This convocation is the focus of events in Adventure Seven, *Schism*.)



MINISTER
LYA JIERRE

Golden Cell. Based in Danor, this cell is tasked with excavating the ancient seal on Axis Island, which lies in the Yerasol Archipelago, off the coasts of Risur and Danor. Additionally, this cell researches how the planar ban works, and searches for scattered smaller seals in ancient ziggurats. The cell's leaders die during Adventure One, and thereafter leadership is assumed by **Lya Jierre**, Danor's Minister of Outsiders and niece of Sovereign Han Jierre, the current ruler of Danor.

Lantern Cell. Based in the Crisillyiri city of Vendricce, this cell gathers information and performs experiments regarding different planes, so that when the Obscurati open the seal, they can choose the right collection and alignment of planes to create the world they need. They have finalized most of their research, and are in the process of researching an eldritch machine called the *wayfarer lantern*. The lantern initially makes travel between planes easier, but scaled-up versions will be placed in lighthouses and other key locations around the world to make the transition to the new world faster and smoother. **Vicemi Terio**, one of the oldest members of the Ghost Council, commands this cell.



GHOST
COUNCILOR
VICEMI TERIO



GOVERNOR ROLAND STANFIELD

Colossus Cell. Based in the city of Flint in Risur, this cell is devoted to the construction of a 300-ft. tall golem. The Obscurati will use the colossus to lift open the Axis Seal, which is one hundred feet across, 30 inches thick, and weighs over ten thousand tons. The seal's opening will unleash wild magic that is too destructive for mundane cranes, but the mighty colossus should be able to withstand it. Afterward the Obscurati plan to use the colossus as a peacekeeping weapon, in case some people choose to resist the new world order.

This massive undertaking involves building the colossus itself, smuggling industrial material and copious manpower into the city, and diverting investigations, which is possible because the cell's leader is Flint's city governor, **Roland Stanfield**.

Minor Cells. The conspiracy requires many other cells, mostly devoted to local needs like acquiring rare resources for other cells, scouting for talent, and killing people who learn too much. After the Ob opens the Axis Seal, these cells will be prepared to take down strong-willed leaders who resist the new world order, or destroy any monsters that might be released as an unexpected side effect of the ritual. The PCs will have only limited interactions with these cells.

Tier Four: Major Projects

Those in tier four are aware they're part of a conspiracy of some sort, but are given subtle misinformation by their superiors so they will not realize exactly what they are working toward. They do not even know the word "Obscurati."



LEONE QUITAL

OBSCURATI RING CODE.

Most officers of the Obscurati in tier three and four—and a handul in tier five—wear rings with secret codes. These serve both as an indicator of allegiance and as a focus for a magical rite that shields these officers from divination. Sometimes cell leaders give rings to their underlings as gifts, not revealing their purpose.

Each ring has a three word inscription. The first two words can be anything, as long as their initials are O.B. The number of letters in the third word indicates what tier of the conspiracy the officer is in, and the material the ring is made of identifies which cell. A gold ring is obviously Golden Cell. Silver rings mark Lantern Cell. Bronze rings indicate Colossus Cell. Most local cells use some local tree's wood, or have a specific cut and color of gem inset.

The rites of the Obscurati magically separate a person's normal identity from their role as an officer of the conspiracy. Magic that attempts to determine the identity of a conspirator wearing his ring fails outright, as if such a person did not exist. Likewise, attempts to determine whether a given person is affiliated with the Obscurati will fail.

Divinations that do not relate to his involvement with the conspiracy can function, but have a chance of yielding useless, innocuous results. Whenever a character attempts to use magic to divine an Obscurati officer's location, thoughts, status, or the like, that character must make an Arcana check (DC 34). If he fails, the magic reports something deceptive, usually in a way to lessen suspicions.

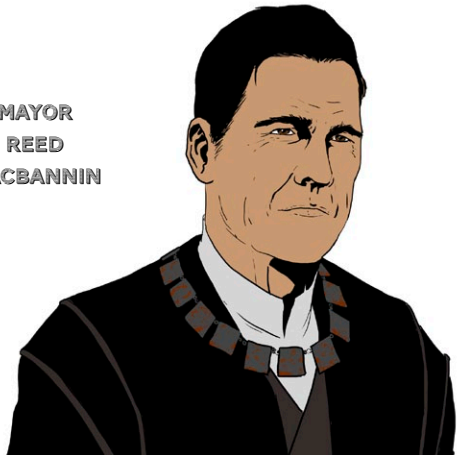
The protections these rites grant do not function if the officer does not wear his ring, nor if the diviner knows the words inscribed within his ring. That said, the leadership triad and some Obscurati officers are powerful enough to shield themselves without requiring these rites. Roland Stanfield of Colossus Cell never wears his ring.

Some rings the party is likely to discover in early adventures are:

- **Lya Jierre.** Originally tier 4 Golden Cell, "One Bested Four." Later tier 3, "One Betters All."
- **Mayor Reed Macbannin.** Tier 4 Colossus Cell. "Overcome Black Arts."
- **Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby.** Tier 5 Colossus Cell. "Opportunity Begets Glory."
- **Caius Bergeron.** Tier 4 Golden Cell. "Old Bergeron Gold."
- **Finona Duvall.** Tier 5 Golden Cell. "Original Brave Ideas."
- **Brianne "Bree" Kaldeckis.** Tier 5 Golden Cell. "Oathkeeper Bree's Sword."
- **Ottavia Sacredote.** Tier 4 Lantern Cell. "Orthodoxy Bolsters Gods."

Most tier four members oversee specific projects toward the overarching mission of their cell. Colossus Cell, for instance, is split into two main tier-four branches: one in the Bleak Gate, and one in the real world.

Leone Quital—called the Steelshaper, one of the creators of the colossus—handles operations in the shadowy plane of the Bleak Gate. **Reed Macbannin**—an expert on defense against the dark arts, and mayor of one of Flint's districts—coordinates the real-world side of things. Each man believes that Flint City Governor Roland Stanfield is building a weapon for Risur's king capable of fighting primordial entities known as the fey titans, which Risur must keep appeased lest they attack. They think the construction must be secret to avoid outrage and sabotage by the fey and those loyal to them. Macbannin and Quital have met each other once or twice, but don't delve into each other's business.



MAYOR REED MACBANNIN

Similarly, in Golden Cell, tier four officer **Caius Bergeron** is responsible to coordinating archaeological digs around the continent. Another tier four member (who dies off-screen in Adventure One) manages the massive excavation projects on Axis Island.



CAIUS BERGERON

Sometimes officers will get promotions or switch cells. **Ottavia Sacredote**, previously a tier five agent in a minor cell looking for useful-but-technically-heretical information known only to the Clergy, gets promotions before Adventure Four, *Always on Time* and joins Lantern Cell when she's trusted with the mission of escorting the newly invented *wayfarer's lantern* across the continent.



OTTAVIA SACREDOTE



LADY INSPECTRESS MARGARET SAXBY

Tier Five: Trusted Experts.

Each cell branch requires the work of individuals with rare skills, but they are usually only exposed to small elements of the greater project. Indeed, much of the conspiracy's work appears innocuous, either as legitimate business dealings and academic research, or as illegal but mundane smuggling and violence.

Again using Colossus Cell as an example, in the real world Reed Macbannin has enlisted the head of the local office of the RHC, **Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby**, to ensure investigations that risk revealing the conspiracy run into dead ends. She simply trusts that Macbannin—an upstanding, respected, and patriotic politician—is working for the king, and that by helping him she stands to rise in power.

He also has an alliance with crime boss **Lorcan Kell**, who runs a complex smuggling operation moving industrial materiel into the Bleak Gate, and who won't ask questions if someone needs killing. Kell thinks he's working for a corrupt politician dabbling in dark magic.

At Macbannin's manor on haunted Cauldron Hill, **Kaja Stewart** is head arcanoscientific researcher experimenting with possible magical fuels, which she assumes is just normal military research. **Cillian Creed**, a retired spy who can change his appearance, acts as liaison to Saxby and Kell and helps eliminate any evidence that lead to Macbannin.

None of Macbannin's associates know anything about the colossus.

Meanwhile in the Bleak Gate, Leone Quital keeps his personnel divided into two main groups. The outer ring work in factories along the analogue of Parity Lake, taking smuggled materiel and assembling it into components for the colossus. This ring also includes security forces who protect them from the monsters of the Bleak Gate. The inner ring works in a subterranean facility under Cauldron Hill, using the components to build the colossus in a massive hollow chamber beneath the mountain.



LORCAN KELL


KAJA STEWART


TINKER ODDCOG

They all know they're involved in something secret—after all, they're confined to a shadowy alternate plane, prohibited from returning to the real world until the project is complete, and paid exorbitantly for their work and discretion. They have been told this is a Risuri military project.

Leone suspects there's more going on than meets the eye, but he's ambitious and intrigued by secrecy. Only two other people in the Bleak Gate facility know that the colossus is being built for a group unaffiliated with Risur. One, the slightly-insane gnome artificer **Tinker Oddcog**, known as the Gearbuilder, can talk to machines, which have told him of conversations between Leone and other secretive visitors. He doesn't particularly care, though, as long as he gets to build this grand machine.

The other, the unwilling enchanter **Alexander Grappa**, known as the Mindmaker, actually witnessed a meeting between Leone and Kasvarina and figured out more than he was supposed to. Fortunately for the Ob, Kasvarina has placed a powerful *geas* on each of the three—Steelshaper, Gearbuilder, and Mindmaker—ensuring they cannot tell outside the conspiracy about its goals.

Lower Tiers.

Anyone below tier five is basically just hired help, with no special insight. They usually think they're working for some rich benefactor who values his privacy, or that they have a grant for some unusual research or activity. For instance, Roland Stanfield encouraged a businessman with an alchemical factory in Flint to makes alkahest—universal solvent—so that a few vials could be smuggled by Lorcan Kell to the colossus assembly pit, where it is needed for etching wards in the adamantine skin of the titanic golem. The factory owner and all its workers are utterly oblivious that anything is going on, other than that occasionally thieves nick some of their product.

Specialty Gear.

Needlewire.

When Ob cell leaders need to contact Nicodemus, they can use a unique magical compound, called *needlewire*. Injecting this fluid into a person alerts Nicodemus from anywhere in the world, and lets him possess the subject from afar. These are not full possessions, though, so Nicodemus cannot wield his full power through them. Afterward, Nicodemus returns to his original location, and the vessel remembers nothing.

Normally only leaders of cells have access to this compound, though they might give some to a trusted lieutenant for a special mission requires an immediate report to the Triad. In an emergency, any bum off the street can act as a vessel for the conspiracy's mastermind.

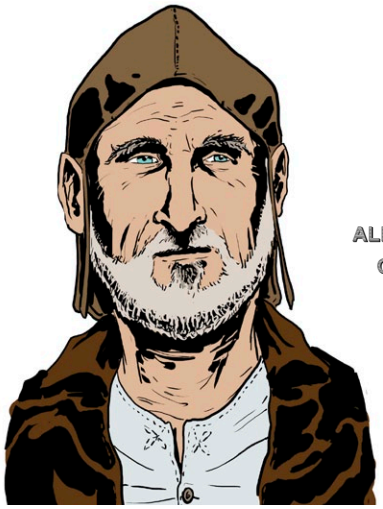
Witchoil.

The real world has two parallel planes—the fey Dreaming and the shadowy Bleak Gate. A veil separates the real world from each of these others, and when slightly pierced, unusual physical manifestations appear in the real world.

Tears in the veil to the Dreaming often produce rings of toadstools, while tears leading to the Bleak Gate cause a viscous black fluid called witchoil to bubble up from the ground, smelling like burnt engine grease. Common folk have no idea that either manifestation is anything unusual, but the Obscurati have studied withcoil extensively.

Witchoil is only slightly flammable by itself, but it has the unique property of trapping the souls who die in its presence. Normally those who die pass on to the Bleak Gate and then to whatever afterlife might await, but the witchoil acts like a tiny sliver of the Bleak Gate, drawing souls into itself. A single ounce of witchoil is enough to trap a single


CILLIAN CREED


ALEXANDER GRAPPA

soul, and the few scholars who know of its abilities suggest it could make resurrection magic easier. On the other hand, it seems that souls in witchoil are trapped and can never "pass on." The theological consequences of this are unknown.

The Obscurati's interest focuses on the greatly increased combustability of witchoil once it has been refined with souls. Normally even a single vial of witchoil is a rare commodity, but their operations on Cauldron Hill have found the veil between worlds there to be thin. Even more conveniently, thousands of years of druidic ritual sacrifices mean all the oil on Cauldron Hill comes ready for use.

While the colossus can function without any fuel, simply relying on natural magical energy around it, the Obscurati don't know exactly what it will have to cope with while opening the Axis Seal, and so have equipped it with a witchoil furnace that can power it from within even if the environmental mana changes.

In Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*, the Obscurati's refinement of the fuel risks going awry, causing an industrial disaster that would poison huge swaths of Flint.

RECURRING ANTAGONISTS

In role-playing games, nearly every enemy ultimately faces off against the PCs and loses. It might help to know which Obscurati members the party will face when. Occasionally the party may thwart a villain's plot, yet fail to capture the villain, leading to a rematch later. If, on the contrary, the PCs defeat one of these NPCs prematurely, you'll need either to invent someone to take their place, or "promote" another member of the conspiracy, which might have complex ramifications.

Lya Jierre. Head of Golden Cell (starting after Adventure One). Though she antagonizes the PCs in Adventure One, they won't cross blades until Adventure Four. She has a magical contingency to flee to the Bleak Gate when bloodied, but the party can finish her off when she confronts them again in Adventure Six.

Roland Stanfield. Head of Colossus Cell. Stanfield keeps his involvement with the conspiracy hidden until Adventure Nine, but if he's unmasked or even slain prematurely, he can reincarnate and return to be the climactic villain in Adventure Nine.

Vicemi Terio. Head of Lantern Cell. The spectral Terio doesn't appear until Adventure Seven, at which he'll probably be slain by the PCs.

Han Jierre. The party first meets the sovereign of Danor at a peace conference in Adventure Five, and might spot him again in Adventure Seven. After the Obscurati open the Axis Seal, Han infuses himself and several trusted lieutenants with the spirits of the Ghost Council, making them a match for high-level PCs.

Kasvarina Varal. In Adventure Eight, the PCs have a chance to win Kasvarina's loyalty. If they succeed, her betrayal incenses Nicodemus. If they fail, she helps Nicodemus kill them. It will take great effort from the PCs to recruit her, but she could be a mighty ally.

Nicodemus the Gnostic. The head of the Obscurati first meets the party in Adventure Two, disguised as a seemingly inconsequential visitor to Reed Macbannin's estate. They may briefly speak with him in Adventure Four, though he's only present via *needlewire* and thus incapable of fighting them. He first introduces himself properly in Adventure Seven, by which point he has chosen a long-term body for himself. They have a chance to defeat him temporarily in Adventure Eight, and can finally destroy his spirit form in Adventure Thirteen. Nicodemus maintains a five centuries-old smoking habit, regardless of whose body he's in.

The Colossus. Named "Borne" by one of its creators, the colossus's memory is stolen by Alexander Grappa the Mindmaker during Adventure Two, delaying the conspiracy's plans as they try to restore it. In Adventure Five, Grappa helps the party enter Borne's construction bay, and he frees the colossus, which wanders and accidentally causes destruction. After driving the golem off, the PCs don't cross paths with it again until Adventure Eight, when they may make a doomed attempt to gain control of it. "Off-screen" events of Adventure Nine leave it critically damaged on Axis Island. In Adventure Thirteen, however, the party will compete with the Obscurati to reactivate and control this mechanical titan.

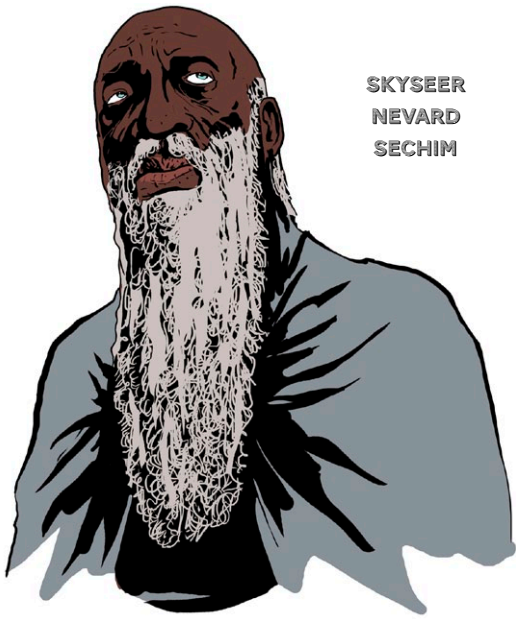
Other Plot Threads

While the Obscurati are the main antagonists of the campaign, the party will have to deal with several other ongoing threats and movements. How they resolve these challenges will influence the allies and resources they have along the way to deal with the Obscurati.

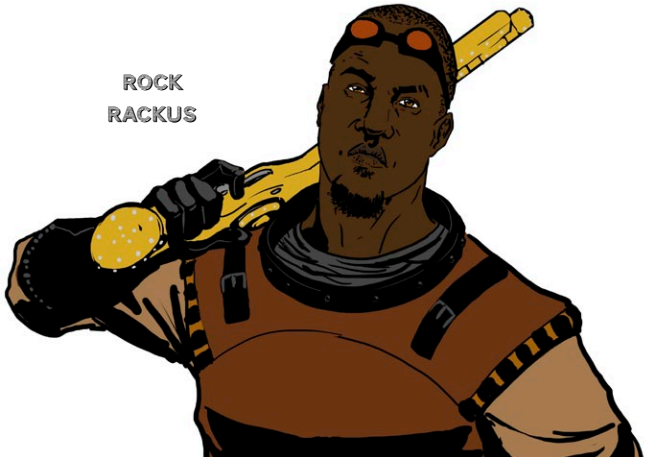
- **Civil Unrest.** Workers distrust factory owners, the government, and the police, making Flint a bit of a powder keg.
- **Kell Guild vs. The Family.** Two criminal organizations vie for dominance in Flint, and one of them is working for the Obscurati.
- **Vekeshi Mystics and the Unseen Court.** Fey-aligned groups with goals unrelated to the conspiracy provide distractions and occasionally assistance.
- **Eschatologists.** The philosophical movement is gaining popularity in Flint, but some of its advocates are connected to a radical terrorist group from Drakr who want to bring about chaos and war.
- **Pemberton.** A prominent industrialist with genteel charm, Benedict Pemberton is actually one of the few surviving dragons, who has bided his time and is preparing to stake out his own territory again.

Civil Unrest.

In Flint—and to a lesser extent in the cities of Ber the party visits in Adventure Six—the growth of industry is making some rich while leaving the underclass endangered and embittered. Dockers fight regularly with police and a simmering unrest threatens to break out into open riots if given enough provocation.



SKYSEER
NEVARD
SECHIM



The party can become heroes of the common people, or be cast as agents of an uncaring government, or simply be in the middle, having to deal with recalcitrant witnesses and balancing the consequences of their actions on the people of Flint. Three major events will shape how the party is seen in their home city: Nevard's rally, the arrest of Rock Rackus, and the rampage of the colossus.

Nevard's Rally.

In Adventure Two, in addition to saving workers from a factory arson and averting an industrial disaster when the Obscurati's research goes awry, the party can help the respected skyseer named **Nevard Sechim**. He calls a rally to warn people of danger he saw in a vision, and depending on how well the party has handled other threats, the public might take this warning to heart and avoid the cursed Cauldron Hill, or they might panic and start a riot.

The Arrest of Rock Rackus.

Rock Rackus is an obnoxious and overconfident performer whom common folk love because he used to be a dock worker. At the start of Adventure Three, Rackus gets drawn into a fight against monsters that the party is fighting. One of his bullets goes awry and kills a man, giving the local police an excuse to arrest someone they see as a rabble-rouser. The public sees him as a hero and might start threatening the police if he's not freed. To make things worse, a rogue vekeshi mystic finds his songs offensive to the Unseen Court and tries to have him assassinated.

For his part, Rackus is a bit too shallow to worry about the effect his lyrics have on people, but the party might be able to take more responsibility and even become a worthy face for the proletariat. Unless the party has a hand in doing him in, Rackus's dumb luck and witless charm find him stumbling into the party's affairs in later adventures, until eventually he gets his hands on the magic they need to travel the cosmos in Adventure Twelve.

Rampage of the Colossus.

At the end of Adventure Five, the Obscurati's colossus breaks free prematurely, transitions into the real world from the Bleak Gate, and proceeds to tear its way through Flint. Though the party will have help here, how fast they react and how effectively they keep the colossus





QUENTIN AUGST

from crushing buildings and killing hundreds of people will determine whether the city sees them as incompetents or heroes. If the former, the following year will be filled with riots and civil unrest; if the latter, the party likely manages to keep the peace enough that when Flint is really in danger, its citizenry will be able to help.

Kell Guild vs. Family.

The thieves' guild run by Lorcan Kell is the dominant power in Flint's industrial district of Parity Lake. His chief advisor, a lawyer named **Quentin Augst** who represents many of Kell's thugs when they get caught, has helped turn the savage Kell into a frightening figurehead while he handles most of the daily affairs. Police generally don't contest the guild's authority, though Kell and Augst are wary of pushing too far and ruining a good thing. Right now they can rob a little, extort a lot, and enjoy being the top dogs.

But recently a new criminal element has emerged, their base of operations in the more middle-class Stray River district. The Family is commonly known as a powerful crime syndicate from Crisillyir which is trying to expand its reach. In terms of raw might and wealth, The Family far eclipses the Kell Guild, but any fight over turf is tough.

Obscurati Plot.

Kell has been working with Reed Macbannin's man Creed to smuggle industrial materiel from the factories of Parity Lake. Kell's people mark specific crates with certain magic symbols and send them down Stanfield Canal on barges. They pass under the bridges of the canal, which have been secretly lined with enchanted rings of rusted iron, and the two magics interact to pull the crates into the Bleak Gate bit by bit. At the end of their trip, they disappear from the real world and fall into the canal in the Bleak Gate, where Obscurati agents have to use a specialized wand to finalize the transition.



MORGAN CIPPIANO



ASRABEY VARAL

In Adventure Five, the party will need to capture Kell or his advisor Quentin Augst in order to get access to this route into the Bleak Gate. The Obscurati can help him escape, and he is likely present at the adventure's big showdown.

Family Business.

Morgan Cippiano serves as the head of The Family in Flint, and he holds his people to a higher standard of behavior than Kell. In Adventures Two and Three, he offers to reward the party if they help him smuggle weapons and drugs into the city, and he can provide useful information about the operations of the Kell Guild. In Adventure Five he'll gladly assist the RHC's attempts to take down Kell.

While Cippiano and The Family in general don't play a major role as either allies or antagonists in the first two acts of the campaign, they add some flavor and provide you and your players an avenue to make your mark on the campaign. How much the party wants to get in bed with the criminal underbelly of the city is up to the players, and Cippiano's ambitions to have leverage in Flint provides opportunities for myriad side-plots, ranging from cop procedurals to political intrigue.

The final role of The Family is to help get the party involved with events in the final four adventures. In Adventure Four, the party visits a cursed clericist vault, the Crypta Hereticarum, and Cippiano hints at his affiliation with the Clergy when he next meets the party, asking to know what happened so he can report any potential release of unholy artifacts. Later, when cataclysms start afflicting Crisillyir—where the party just so happens to be heading to recover some ancient artifacts—Cippiano's relationship with the party can give the mission more relevance and weight.



VLENDAM HEID



Vekeshi Mystics and the Unseen Court.

The vekeshi mystics won't necessarily play a major plot role unless there is a mystic in the party. Otherwise their actions are mostly background flavor, with the occasional murder or mishap being blamed on the vekeshi.

With a vekeshi PC, however, the party might get embroiled into some of the strife between the adherents of the old faith and the modern push for industry and innovation. We establish only two prominent members of the cult in Flint. "The Old Stag," actually Rear Admiral Morris Dawkins, always conceals himself beneath a mask with stag horns, though he could be identified by his gnarled hands. He's effectively the head of the mystics in Flint, and will occasionally give missions to a vekeshi PC. Far less prominent is Tyler Starke, a man who probably should never have been admitted into the cult, and who abuses his powers to punish those who displease him personally.

Mystic PCs will be tasked with befriending and protecting the fey terrorist Gale in Adventure Two. In Adventure Three, Tyler Starke pretends to be The Old Stag and orders the death of Rock Rackus simply because he finds the man's music offensive. Adventure Four gives a mystic PC the chance to rescue an eladrin woman about to be sold into slavery, and in Adventure Five an emissary of the Unseen Court named **Asrabey Varal** will call upon the mystics to prevent a fey lord from starting a war.

Eschatologists.

The main involvement of eschatologists in the plot comes in the form of NPCs who are fond of philosophical discussions. Mostly this helps lend a different air to Zeitgeist by emphasizing the competition of moral ideologies over a simple dichotomoy of good vs. evil. A few eschatologists cross the party's path, and they even get to meet the movement's found **Vlendam Heid** in Adventure Four, but they don't become a major part of the campaign until Adventure Five, when a group of terrorist who follow the teaching of radical eschatologist Grandis Komanov attacks Flint.

If you have an eschatologist PC, you might involve him in the development of a club of philosophers in Flint, and have many members be eschatologists. At some point during Adventure Three have a visitor from Drakr come speak and present the more radical position of Komanov: not simply to prepare for proper endings, but to help bring about the end of things. While the philosophers might dismiss him as an anarchist, it could give the PC a connection to the later threat posed by the radicals.

Komanov and her radicals never rise to "top tier" villain status, but in Adventure Eleven they make a bid to wipe out Drakr with the aid of the Lost Riders who have returned now that the world has changed, and may aid the Voice of Rot's bid to actually destroy the world.



BENEDICT PEMBERTON



PRINCIPAL MINISTER HARKOVER LEE

Benedict Pemberton.

The industrialist **Benedict Pemberton** shows up early on only as a name behind a company making grand technological innovations, with a specialty in humanoid automatons. The party might visit his company's tent in the Kaybeau Arms Fair in Adventure Three, but otherwise he doesn't make an impact until Adventure Six.

That adventure sees the party head to Ber to chase Tinker Oddcog, designer of the colossus, who's on the run from the Obscurati's agents. Unbeknownst to both the PCs and the conspiracy, Tinker will have already been picked up by Pemberton, who uses him to design grand weapons of war.

In truth, Benedict Pemberton was once the dragon tyrant Gradiax, Lord of Steel. Two hundred years ago when the world's link to plane of air was damaged, all dragons lost the ability to fly, making them easy pickings for adventurers. Gradiax went into hiding, remade himself as a wealthy land-owner, and by pretending generation after generation to be men of the same family he took on the role of industrialist, seeing a chance to retake control of the land that was once his.

Though his plans are grandiose, Pemberton enjoys playing the role of a wizened geezer with folksy charm. When the party thwarts him he initially seeks revenge by disrupting their later missions to confront the Obscurati, but eventually he realizes that the Ob are a threat even to him. By Adventure Nine he's even willing to lend them a little aid, and in the last four adventures he tries to join their side to take down the conspiracy, with the understanding that in the aftermath he'll have earned the right to be in charge of his own country.

On a related note, **Principal Minister Harkover Lee**, the highest advisor to Risur's king, was also once a dragon known as Inatch the Hex-Eater. He long ago forsook his draconic identity, but he keeps watch on Pemberton, afraid of the man's ambition.



SECTION TWO: Running the Campaign

The Zeitgeist campaign saga presents a few challenges traditional fantasy adventures don't. We hope to make it easy for you to handle those issues.

Prestige.

The Player's Guide introduces the Prestige mechanic. For each of the five following groups, keep track of the party's Prestige rating. During the course of the campaign, the party's Prestige will affect how the different groups interact with them.

Flint.

Saving the city and treating its workers well can earn the PCs support from a public normally tight-lipped around law enforcement. Key moments in earning Flint Prestige are averting a factory district fire and industrial accident in Adventure Two, getting celebrity docker Rock Rackus off from murder charges in Adventure Three, and driving off the rampaging colossus in Adventure Five.

Risur.

High Prestige here earns promotions, access to better equipment, and the trust of officials who might otherwise be skeptical of wild conspiracy claims. Major moments that earn Risur prestige are arresting Reed Macbannin in Adventure Two, defending the RHC headquarters in Adventure Three, completing the spy mission in Adventure Four, and helping the king banish the rampaging colossus in Adventure Five.

Unseen Court.

Those favored by the Court will be well received by the local fey of Flint, those who follow the old druidic faith, and vekeshi mystics in positions of authority. The party can earn prestige with the Unseen Court by meeting peacefully with the fey terrorist Gale in Adventure Two, fulfilling the command of the Voice of Rot in Adventure Three, rescuing the eladrin Isobel in Adventure Four, and stopping the fey lord Ekossigan in Adventure Five.

Clergy.

The party's early interactions with The Family criminal organization may filter up the chain of command to the priests who endorse the crime syndicate. The party can get noticed by the Clergy through helping The Family with smuggling in Adventure Two, by sneaking into the Crypta Hereticarum in Adventure Four, and by helping The Family replace the Kell Guild as the primary criminal organization in Flint in Adventure Five, but they likely won't interact directly with the Clergy proper until much later in the campaign.

Obscurati.

Intellectuals and creative geniuses who show disdain for the status quo might be approached by recruiters, or even asked to act as double agents. Normally, though, prestige with this group just reflects the conspiracy marking the party as dangerous opponents. Starting with Adventure Five, the Obscurati will generally try to ambush or assassinate the PCs at least once every adventure.

Tracking Prestige.

The party starts with Prestige 1 for each group listed to the left, though certain character themes can bump this to 2. At the end of an adventure, the party might gain a point of Prestige if they served the group's interests or thwarted one of their plots. If the party fails publicly and disastrously, their Prestige might suffer, or even drop straight to 0 until they clear their names.

Usually you just need to track the party as a whole, but some situations will depend on individual PC traits and actions. You might also want to steer each PC toward a different group, to let that PC be the "face" of the party for that group.

For instance, the Clergy—as represented by Morgan Cippiano, the head of The Family—might interact primarily with the party's Spirit Medium ranger, while the Unseen Court's affiliates like Gale or Asrabey liaise through the Skyseer wizard. The Obscurati might try to tempt the Technologist assassin into becoming a double agent, and the Yerasol Veteran knight might be pushed by Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill to pursue politics, while the Eschatologist cleric finds his likeness painted across Flint as he becomes an unlikely local hero.

We expect that by the end of Heroic Tier, most groups will reach Prestige 5 with Flint, Risur, and the Obscurati, and Prestige 3 with the Unseen Court and Clergy. By the end of Paragon Tier, likely they'll have Prestige 4 to 6 with nearly every group. This may vary if the party takes pains to cozy up with certain groups or if they go to great efforts to remain discreet.

Mystery Guide

One of the key challenges in running a campaign with a long-term mystery is balancing how much to reveal about major secrets. You want to keep the players interested in the mystery, but make them work for clues. And when it comes to the big reveal, playing your hand too soon or too late can ruin its impact.

Each adventure will details what secrets the PCs might discover in the course of the adventure. Some secrets you need to make sure the PCs discover, or else they won't be able to advance their investigation. Others you should try to keep hidden, but be prepared in case the PCs do something unorthodox and crack the case prematurely. Then there are a few that can go either way, which can sate the curiosity of players who put in extra effort to find answers.

For instance, in the first adventure, the PCs visit the island that is the key to the Obscurati's entire plan, but the most likely course of action will just leave them thinking the place has strange magic and a few arcane factories. If they decide to detour from their mission and explore the island's interior, they can stumble upon evidence of a much more substantial project: a massive canal is being built to drain a lake because the Axis Seal lies beneath that lake; surveyors have drawn maps of magical energy nexuses to locate subterranean control pillars; mighty golems guard research bunkers with various eldritch experiments involving elemental energies.

Players who find these shouldn't be able to put the pieces together yet, but if they happen to guess correctly, no one with authority will believe them without evidence. If they make a big deal about it, many

would regard them as kooks, like Mulder in *The X-Files*. And if for some reason you have the party find a letter explaining the entire plan in Adventure One,[1] the Obscurati still have a massive, geographically distributed organization that must be tracked down and defeated.

So don't worry if you accidentally give away some clues prematurely, or if the players manage to guess some major secret. While we think the thrill of the unknown is a great motivator for players, even if the twist is revealed early, there's still plenty of adventure and heroism needed to stop the villains.

Miscellaneous

A few other issues you should keep in mind throughout the campaign.

Using the Adventures.

Each adventure is divided into acts, to help you pace your game sessions, and each act is divided into scenes. Each scene is presented in a format of Title, keywords, and tag-line. Keywords include:

Scene Type: Action, Exploration, Exposition, Puzzle, Social, or Hybrid.

Duration: Montage (a few hours or days), Real-time (a few minutes), or Tactical (round-by-round).

For example:

CROWD SECURITY

Social. Real-Time. Level 1.

A crowd of hundreds waits at a security checkpoint. In half an hour they'll line up along streets to cheer the king's arrival, and you must make sure no one dangerous gets through.

To set the tone for the campaign, the first encounter is a quick investigation. Thousands of visitors have poured into the city, hoping to see the king. They've gathered in Royal Square, on the mainland side of a bridge that leads to the Royal Shipyard. The police are counting off exactly seven hundred people who will be let onto the bridge and into Fleet Square on the shipyard island so that they can cheer…

Your Majesty.

One of the PCs is likely to end up king or queen of Risur at the end of Adventure Nine. If you have a likely candidate, give him or her opportunities to lead and inspire.

Technology and Allies.

In a world where the PCs can just buy explosives, and where their connections let them call in reinforcements if they know a fight is coming, we've had to design our adventures a little differently. You as DM should try to encourage the players to take advantage of these sorts of resources, or else they're missing out on some of the potential of the setting.

Using Character Themes.

Though we make sure to include at least some events or characters in each adventure that resonate with all the Zeitgeist character themes, it ultimately falls to you to turn them from vignettes to key parts of an ongoing story. We offer more hooks early on than in later adventures, since we can't predict how your players will develop their connections to their themes. Some characters might even let their original themes fade into the background as they get interested in other aspects of the setting.

Side Missions.

Don't be afraid to add some extra missions for the party to pursue that aren't related to the Obscurati plot. We intend to produce sample RHC Casefiles later, but for now you might simply use the events listed in the "Meanwhile in the News" sections before each adventure to show that the party isn't always just dealing with one massive conspiracy. Even *The X-Files* had that episode with a murder at a carnival.

One example would be the hunt for a killer known as The Ragman. Is it a monster? A vivisectionist serial killer? A warlock who must fulfill a dark pact with a fiend? Or just a bit of background flavor that the party never deals with? It's up to you.

A Tall Ship.

We've tried to work in a lot of ship-based encounters throughout the saga. This starts with taking a small cutter to blockade smugglers in Flint Harbor, then battling a mercenary vessel for access to a sunken ziggurat, but later the party's missions take them into hostile waters. They can customize their vessel, enhance its defenses or firepower, and occasionally trade up to larger ships. In Adventure Ten they can even get access to the first airship the world has ever seen.

We include naval quick-play rules in the Player's Guide, but if your group is particularly interested in seaborne adventures you may want to pick up E.N. Publishing's *Admiral o' the High Seas*.

Put that Liberal Arts Degree to Good Use.

You can easily run this campaign as an action-adventure mystery, paying little attention to the various ideological conflicts and focusing instead of the temporal threat posed to the PCs and their homeland. But if you and your players have an inclination toward philosophy, in the campaign's climactic confrontation the PCs can debate with Nicodemus during battle in an attempt to turn the colossus Borne to their side, winning the day through words and ideas, moreso than physical might.



[1] **Disclaimer:** Do not do that.

Adventure Roster

To help you plan for the campaign, we present a brief synopsis of each adventure, as well as suggestions for if you need to abridge the series.

Act One: The Investigation Begins.

The PCs investigate plots against their homeland as it seeks a peace treaty with its greatest enemy.

Adventure One: The Island at the Axis of the World.

By Ryan Nock

After thwarting an assassination, the party is sent to track down the king's traitorous sister on a Danoran island before she can provoke a war.

Date: Spring of 500 A.O.V.

Party Level: 1.

In their first major mission for the Royal Homeland Constabulary, the party stumbles upon a plot to assassinate King Aodhan during the maiden voyage of Risur's first steam-powered battleship, the R.N.S. *Coaltongue*. The king's traitorous sister, Duchess Ethelyn of Shale, has close ties to the Unseen Court and seems to have attempted her coup to stop a peace treaty that would bring more Danoran industry to Risur.

The duchess flees and, with a small army at her side, conquers distant Axis Island, a seemingly inconsequential piece of land home to strange planar magic. It is also home to a Danoran fortress—and secretly is the center of the Obscurati's entire plot, for beneath the island lies the Axis Seal. Guided by a skyseer prophecy, the duchess hopes to find proof that Risur is being manipulated by hostile forces.

The party's boss, Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft, calls a meeting with Danor's Minister of Outsiders, Lya Jierre. She briefs the PCs on the island's defenses and explains that to maintain the peace she can give Risur a few days to remove the duchess; otherwise, Danor will consider her attack an act of war. The party is sent on a critical mission to infiltrate the fortress the duchess has occupied and open a sea gate so Risur's navy can stage an amphibious assault and capture her.

The party finds the island full of odd magic, and if they explore they see clues of massive Danoran projects researching arcanoscience as well as archaeology. The mission is time-sensitive, though, preventing thorough investigations.



Once the PCs open the sea gate they can rest while marines storm the fortress, but mid-battle a mighty eladrin warrior, Asrabey Varal, enters the fortress and tears his way through both sides of the conflict. Asrabey is a husband of Kasvarina Varal, and she has sent him to silence the duchess, under the premise that Risur must be shown the Unseen Court does not approve of her assassination attempt. Conveniently it lets the Obscurati keep their secrets without any blame falling upon Danor.

By the time Asrabey reaches the duchess, though, he has battled hundreds of warriors and his stamina is nearly spent. If the PCs follow in his wake they have a chance to learn what the duchess has found, but they'll have to decide whether they'll risk a fight against even a weakened Asrabey in order to bring the traitorous duchess in alive.

In the denouement, the PCs witness the Danorans coming to reclaim the island. Lya Jierre thanks them, and reveals that she is to be King Aodhan's bride. The PCs should come away distrustful of this future villain, and wondering what exactly Danor is up to while being unable—for now—to investigate further.

Big Scenes: Chasing saboteurs through the bowels of a warship while a brass band on deck plays the national anthem. Facing an eladrin dreadnought with a flaming sword and a roaring lion shield, and deciding just how committed you are to your mission.

Adventure Two: The Dying Skyseer.

By Ryan Nock

Amid civil turmoil, investigate a murder, unearth a smuggling operation, and take down a politically-powerful noble coordinating various criminal endeavors for the Obscurati.

Date: Summer of 500 A.O.V.

Party Level: 2–4.

Several months later, all is back to normal in Flint, except for the occasional unusual tremor. The party's new mission—to capture or kill the fey terrorist Gale who has been sabotaging factories—brings them to a murder scene at the Danoran consulate. An associate of Gale's was killed in a robbery, but the circumstances of her death are unusual, and the consulate staff are being cagey.

Chasing leads, the PCs find Gale working with The Family to smuggle wands into the city, and learn that the victim is related to an infirm but respected skyseer, Nevard Sechim, a regular contact of Gale. More mysteriously, a foreign doctor named Wolfgang von Recklinghausen was handed a bundle of documents by the victim as she was dying and has fled to parts unknown. Clearly something was stolen from the consulate worth killing for, and the RHC is not the only group who want it back.

These three threads interweave, with pursuit of the doctor leading to crime boss Lorcan Kell, who'll hand him over if the party stops The

Revelation Timeline.

The campaign saga revolves around the Obscurati trying to keep its various secrets. The adventures are designed to reveal them to the party a bit at a time. Then in epic tier the focus shifts to starting a conspiracy of their own and figuring out how to undo the villains' plot.

If somehow the party finds out or figures out something prematurely, it doesn't ruin the campaign, because the adventures link actual existential threats to these revelations. Even if you already know by the end of Adventure Two that they're building a colossus in the Bleak Gate, attacking their facility alone would be suicide, so you need evidence to convince the higher-ups. Adventures Three and Four give the party ways to find that evidence, though you should feel free to shuffle events or speed up the timeline to match the party's efforts.

Here are the main revelations of each adventure.

Adventure Two. A conspiracy hiding in the Bleak Gate is smuggling in materials somehow for a mysterious construction protect.

Adventure Three. The conspiracy is studying ancient magic tied to planar travel, which might explain how they're able to so easily reach the Bleak Gate. They call themselves the Obscurati.

Adventure Four. The Obscurati have invented a device that weaponizes extraplanar energy, and Lya Jierre, the king's fiancée, is part of the plot.

Adventure Five. Holy crap, they've built a 300-ft. tall colossus!

Adventure Six. Alexander Grappa, a former member of the Obscurati who helped design the colossus, is hiding in Drakr, and knows where the conspiracy will be meeting.

Adventure Seven. Their ultimate plan is to alter the fabric of reality, but many in the conspiracy disagree with the plans of their leader, Nicodemus the Gnostic. Kasvarina Varal was once co-leader of the conspiracy, and might be able to unite the Obscurati against Nicodemus.

Adventure Eight. Kasvarina and Nicodemus were responsible for the Great Malice. The Obscurati plan to assassinate the king of Risur and perform a ritual in Flint to make the country succumb to their new world order.

Adventure Nine. The actual core of the ritual wasn't in Flint, but on distant Axis Island. (At this point, the PCs might manage to protect Risur, but most of the world falls under the control of the Obscurati.)

Adventure Ten. The ritual that can change things back will require three key components: an accurate map of the multiverse, a machine to properly calibrate planar energies, and energy gathered from those planes.

Adventure Eleven. We have pieces one and two, but piece three requires dying and traveling to the graveyard of the multiverse.

Adventure Twelve. We have piece three, and we have learned a separate ritual that will make us strong enough to withstand the chaos at the Axis Seal, and to defend against the might of the Obscurati.

Adventure Thirteen. One last question remains: what shall we make in this new world?

Family's wand smuggling. Meanwhile, Nevard offers to get the party in touch with Gale if they do him a favor: he seeks a vision, but needs to stand upon the cursed mountain Cauldron Hill to see above the haze of pollution that clings to the city, and he wants the party as his bodyguards.

To get permission to climb the hill, the party must ask Mayor Reed Macbannin, the man actively trying to stop their investigation, since the documents von Recklinghausen carries can reveal his whole illegal operation with Kell. He lets the party head up with Nevard, then sends his operative Cillian Creed to arrange their demise.

If they survive, the PCs can follow other clues while Nevard prepares to reveal his vision to the whole city. Gale warns of mysterious goings-on in the Bleak Gate, The Family tries to get the party to help in their fight against Kell, and Macbannin tries to tie up loose ends with the aid of arsonists who threaten to set half the industrial district ablaze.

With Gale's help, the party can track down a facility using captured souls as ritual components to create shadowy monsters, a few of which have already been sent to kill Nevard before he can reveal his prophecy. Nevard manages to share his vision—perhaps only with his dying breath if the party fails to protect him—and warns that three dooms shall befall Cauldron Hill.

When the party can finally manage to track down von Recklinghausen, one final ambush—led by Leone Quital the steelshaper—nearly buries them in a cave-in, but should they survive they find sufficient evidence to arrest Macbannin.

Macbannin understandably tries to resist being taken in, but at that same moment the tremors the city has been suffering from (secretly caused by trouble with the colossus Borne being built under Cauldron Hill) become a full-fledged earthquake. Macbannin's manor begins to crumble, and toxic witchoil being refined elsewhere on his compound starts to spray up from the ground. The party must shut down Macbannin's witchoil laboratory before it explodes and pours the deadly substance down the side of the mountain.

Before Macbannin can be tried or magically interrogated, he commits suicide in his cell.

Big Scenes: A chaotic ship-to-ship skirmish against wand smugglers in the black of night. Holding off eerie predators of the spirit world as a dying prophet seeks a vision. Ambushing a pair of dragonborn arsonists by a factory they're about to burn down. Storming a mountain villa to arrest the mastermind as an earthquake unleashes a landslide of necromantic oil.



Adventure Three: Digging for Lies.

By Matthew J. Hanson

Discover a conspiracy researching an ancient magic ritual. Thwart a test run that targets you directly.

Date: Fall of 500 A.O.V.

Party Level: 5–7.

Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby, the head of the Flint branch of the RHC, takes the party off the Macbannin conspiracy case for "political reasons," and assigns them as simple security guards to an international arms fair, where she hopes they won't cause any trouble.

At the fair, though, they battle horrible monsters summoned by a staff, which they learn was sold by Kaja Stewart, a researcher who had worked for Macbannin. The staff is ancient, and the monsters are unlike anything known by scholarship, but a bit of digging leads the party to an archaeologist named Xambria Meredith.

Xambria recently returned from a disastrous expedition in Risur's High Bayou, excavating an Ancient ziggurat. Some disaster killed the rest of her team and left Xambria mentally unhinged, but she confirms the staff was found at the ziggurat. After finding it, she sent it to her sponsor, a tiefling named Caius Bergeron. Bergeron refuses to talk to the party and has enough clout to get out of trouble, so to follow the only remaining lead, the PCs must head to the High Bayou and see what killed Xambria's team.

The PCs explore the ziggurat, fight more alien monsters, and learn that the ziggurat contains a portal to the plane Apet which was sealed by the Ancients to stop an invasion by beings known as the Gidim. As they leave the ziggurat, the PCs are confronted by the fey titan known as the Voice of Rot, who demands they track down an escaped Gidim. It grants them the ability to track the planar energy of Apet that marks the creature's trail; the trail leads back to Flint, where the PCs find Caius murdered and Xambria missing.

A note arrives for the party from Xambria, claiming that the Gidim is controlling her mind, and that it's asking about the "Obscurati." The party is able to track her down and capture her, and she says that the creature killed Caius and learned things from him, including that Saxby is part of the conspiracy. But when the party confronts Saxby at the RHC headquarters, the Gidim emerges from Xambria's body and enacts its plan.

The Gidim opens a portal to Apet, flooding the RHC headquarters with strange energies and more monsters, hoping to eliminate any evidence of its presence. It intends to return to its homeworld and bring



back a new invasion force, but its portal becomes unstable, unleashing a massive monster that the party must defeat if they want to close the portal and save the RHC from being drawn into a maddened cyst of reality.

Adventure Four: Always on Time.

By Jacob Driscoll

Ride a train full of ne'er-do-wells, and stop a powerful invention from falling into enemy hands.

Date: Winter of 501 A.O.V.

Party Level: 8–9.

Clues from Caius's correspondence tell the party that a gathering of high-ranking Obscurati members will await the arrival of a train in Crisillyir on the 16th of Winter. Tracing the train's schedule backwards, the party adopts cover identities and boards at its westernmost stop, hoping to figure out whom the Obscurati are meeting and what they're up to. The train follows a scenic coastal route, so they have a ship shadow them, ready to reinforce them or aid their escape at the end of the mission.

The person of greatest interest is Luc Jierre—brother of Lya and inventor of the *wayfarer's lantern*. But Luc is guarded several bodyguards all traveling incognito, and the party has only a few days to pick them out of crowd of other suspicious characters. As the train travels from Danor, through the Malice Lands, into Drakr, to a city-state run by mages, and finally into Crisillyir, each side spies against the other, looking for clues and opportunities to remove their enemies.

Among the crowd of strangers: a stowaway with connections to Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen, a wealthy matchmaker taking an eladrin woman to be sold into slavery, a family of "new money" half-orcs from Ber taking in the sights, a war vet who might have crossed paths with a PC in the past, a suave gunslinger, a gambler on the run, and a railroad guard who's set the train up for a robbery. Some of the innocent travelers fall into danger, and the party has to decide whether helping them is worth risking their cover being blown.

Eventually Obscurati diviners warn Luc of the party, and at the train's next stop one of his bodyguards uses illusions to trick the party into chasing them onto a cursed island, where the Clergy keeps heretical and unholy items locked up. If they fall for the trick they are trapped, but can earn the aid of Ashima-Shimtu, a demon who has been trapped for centuries. Though she cannot escape herself, she can help the party finish their mission.



At the end of the line, the party can witness Luc being invited to join the conspiracy by his sister, proving that Lya Jierre is a threat to Risur. With a narrow window to act, the party can sweep in and try to steal the lantern and possibly capture or kill Luc and Lya. But their arrival brings down a huge retaliation, for the party is on the Obscurati's home turf, and they'll likely have to ride the train off a half-finished bridge over the harbor in order to reach their ship and escape to safety.

Adventure Five: Cauldron-Born.

By Thurston Hillman

As dignitaries arrive for a peace summit, the party is tasked with bringing down the Kell Guild and revealing the conspiracy's operations in the Bleak Gate.

Date: Spring of 501 A.O.V.

Party Level: 10–12.

Though King Aodhan now knows Lya Jierre is part of the conspiracy, he still wants to avoid war, and so the planned peace summit will continue. But he hopes to unmask the conspiracy and negotiate from a position of power, so he tasks the party with entering the Bleak Gate and attacking whatever facility the Obscurati have that. To do that, they will head up a task force of police officers to destroy the Kell Guild and capture its leader. His people smuggled goods into the Bleak Gate, and he can help the party get there too.

Two complications force the party to split their attentions. First, a lord of the Unseen Court, Ekossigan of Spring, gathers fey from the across the city to perform a vile ritual and march an army into the Bleak Gate, which might actually help the party if not for the arrival of Asra-bey Varal, who claims that the Court demands Ekossigan be stopped.

Second, a faction of radical dwarven eschatologists launch terror attacks around the city. They hope to disrupt the peace summit, and while they're not affiliated with the Obscurati, they have to be stopped before they kill hundreds of people, including the king.

Eventually the party heads into the Bleak Gate, guided by Alexander Grappa—the mindmaker—who helped create the colossus but now wants to take down the conspiracy. After fighting their way into the colossus construction facility, the party confronts Leone Quital, but in the battle the colossus breaks free and begins to rampage. It tears a hole through the side of Cauldron Hill and emerges into the real world, threatening to devastate Flint.

To stop the destruction, the party they must lure the colossus to the sea, then get close enough and survive its attacks while King Aodhan invokes his royal power to banish the colossus to the Dreaming. It's only a temporary solution, and by the time they're done many of the Obscurati have made good their escape, but the PCs have protected Risur, and thwarted—for now—the conspiracy's plan.

Act Two: The Grand Design.

The PCs disrupt a conspiracy's plot to alter reality so they can ascend to power.

Adventure Six: Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman.

By Ryan Nock

Travel to a nation in turmoil to track down the tinker who built the colossus.

Date: Summer of 501 A.O.V.

Party Level: 13–14.

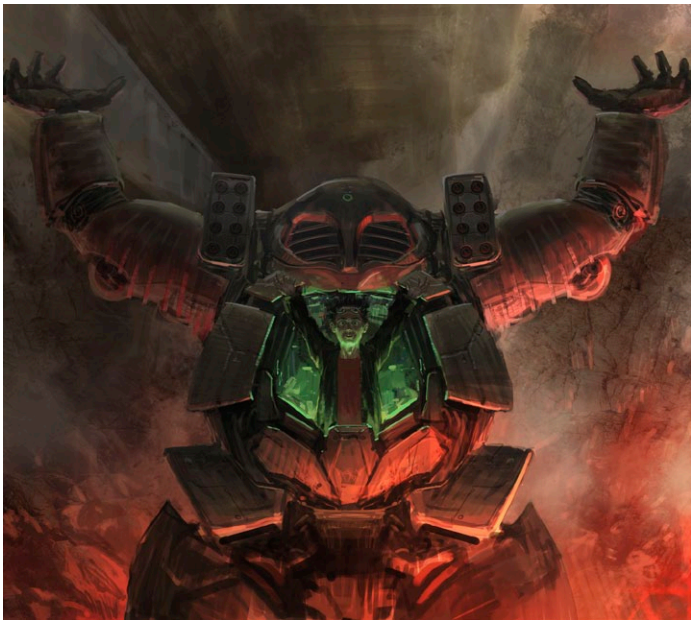
The party heads to Ber, following a lead on Tinker Oddcog. Oddcog, the gearbuilder, designed the colossus and could tell Risur how to defeat it—or control it. But the Obscurati are looking for Tinker too, hoping to silence him. Led by Lya Jierre, the Ob have befriended the ruler of Ber, Bruse Shantus, who has extended his supernatural protection over the gnome. Tinker is useful for Ber's industrial growth, and the Bruse will only give him up if he's properly entertained.

The Bruse forbids the party from harming Lya's group and vice versa, then gives them both a sort of competition. Two companies are rushing to finish Ber's first cross-country railroad; the Bruse gives the party one company and Lya the other, with points awarded to whichever side finishes its length of track first. Sabotage is encouraged.

Also, the Bruse has a politically powerful rival, and he either wants him to pledge loyalty or be embarrassed. To embarrass him, the Bruse wants Lya to convince one of his hot-headed naval captains to launch a raid on a Risuri fort. The party has to find a way to convince a stubborn old orc warlord to pledge fealty before Risuri territory is attacked.

After getting his entertainment, the Bruse announces a winner and delivers Tinker to whichever team he liked best. But Tinker reveals





himself to be a construct controlled remotely, with a bomb in his chest. It turns out that the whole time, Tinker was actually working for Benedict Pemberton, an industrialist from Risur who was once the dragon tryant Gradiax the Steel Lord. The party has to save the Bruse from Gradiax's coup attempt, then possibly ally with Lya to reach Tinker on a heavily-guarded island controlled by Pemberton.

After fighting their way into Tinker's volcano lair/factory, the PCs are attacked simultaneously by Lya's team and by Tinker, or rather by his mechanical duplicant (who is piloting a steam-powered mecha suit), under control of Pemberton. Pemberton himself is only present in duplicant form as well, and if his plans are thwarted he vows to have his revenge on the party.

Adventure Seven: Schism.

By Ryan Nock

Infiltrate the most important gathering of the Obscurati and learn their master plan.

Date: Autumn of 501 A.O.V.

Party Level: 15–16.

The party receives a request from Alexander Grappa, who offers to get them into an Obscurati convocation if they can free him. With the aid of kobold spies from Ber the party locates Grappa, whose consciousness is trapped inside Leone Quital after Grappa perished in Adventure Five. After capturing Quital the party takes him to a remote glacial rift controlled by frost giants, where Grappa can use forbidden magic to destroy Quital's soul and take control of the body himself.

The same magic will let the party take control of the bodies of Obscurati cell leaders, who were meeting with Leone to travel to the convocation. Carrying their original bodies in an extradimensional space the party goes in deep undercover to the island of Mutravir, seat of power of the conspiracy. There they are greeted by Nicodemus the Gnostic, and see the ghost of Reed Macbannin, who recently joined the Ghost Council.

Over two days the party learns the entire plan of the conspiracy, but they notice there are cracks forming within it. When Nicodemus calls a vote to decide just how to shape the coming world, the conspiracy splits into two sides. The party can cast deciding votes, but it matters little because Nicodemus uses replicas of the *wayfarer's lantern* to mollify those who disagree with him. He intends to kill the PCs, so that only those with the proper mix of idealism and pragmatism will continue with the conspiracy.

That's when Benedict Pemberton, who also managed to infiltrate the convocation by replacing a conspirator with a duplicant, thanks Nicodemus for revealing the whole plot, then sets off a bomb. This frees the opposing faction from the magic holding them and kicks off a chaotic battle between the two sides, with the party caught in the middle.

Adventure Eight: Diaspora.

By Thurston Hillman

Guide an amnesiac member of the conspiracy to retrace her history and the history of the fall of the eladrin people.

Date: Winter of 501 A.O.V.

Party Level: 17–19.

The party has found the colossus' three fathers—Tinker Oddcog the gearbuilder, Leone Quital the steelshaper, and Alexander Grappa the mindmaker. Now they seek its mother, Kasvarina Varal, whom the colossus bonded with while it was being trained. But more than a year earlier, when Grappa betrayed the conspiracy, he locked away the memories of both colossus and Kasvarina.

The party finds Kasvarina in Elfaivar, protected by Asrabey and other powerful eladrin. Her memory is in tatters, but the eladrin know of an artifact that can cause the past to manifest when in the presence of one who lived it. The *Lost Arc of Reida* lies in a perilous ruin, but if the party recovers it they can take Kasvarina on a journey to relive her history.

Whenever they reach a place with a prominent memory, the silver relic psychically manifests a recreation of the past. Some are benign but informative. Others bring back to life long-dead foes which must be slain to restore the next piece of Kasvarina's life. The trail leads them to her first meeting with Nicodemus, and eventually to the cursed vault where they spoke with the demon Ashima-Shimtu.

Enemies pursue the party as well, and as they get closer to the most pivotal memory in the abandoned city of Methia, whole armies threaten to surround them. But Methia lies in a region of near total antimagic, so much so that the colossus, which despite being trapped in the Dreaming has been intuitively following Kasvarina's journey, is able to step into the real world.





As whole battalions pursue them, the party races to reach the former center of the Clergy, where Kasvarina and Nicodemus were responsible for the Great Malice. The relic is able to manifest a past when magic was possible here, giving the party a chance to fend off the oncoming armies. Depending on how the party has interacted with Kasvarina, she might decide that her original decisions were wrong and side with the party, but more likely she realizes she chose right all along.

Kasvarina's memories reveal the Obscurati plan is too widespread and close to completion for the party to stop entirely, but they have a chance to keep their homeland Risur from falling under Ob control. Ob forces attack, but when the vision of the past flickers out and the ritual that caused the Great Malice is completed, the party is blasted away into another world. They know now how to save Risur, but the conspiracy is able to regain control of the colossus.

Adventure Nine: The Last Starry Sky.

By Matthew J. Hanson

Choose sides in a fey civil war so you can escape the Dreaming, save the king, and stop a ritual from turning all of Risur loyal to the Obscurati.

Date: Spring of 502 A.O.V.

Party Level: 20–22.

The party ends up stuck in the Dreaming, and learn that the Unseen Court is at war with itself. To get back to the real world the party will have to pick a side and get the aid of one of the fey titans, which exist in both worlds. They reach the capital of Risur while it is under siege, but learn that King Aodhan has been captured and is being held in Flint.

Rushing to Flint they discover magic is fluctuating, as if some great change is passing over the world. They fight their way past a naval blockade of the governor's island and find Roland Stanfield, head of the Obscurati's Colossus Cell, at the controls of an eldritch machine. As stars rain from the heavens the party has to stop a ritual before all of Risur falls under the Ob's control. But the king is likely mortally wounded, and he passes his crown to the most worthy among the party.





Act Three: Age of Reason.

The PCs battle the conspiracy's new world order, and must set the course of the future.

Adventure Ten: Godmind.

By various authors

Find allies who can still resist the Obscurati, and hatch a plan to set the world right.

Date: n/a

Party Level: 23–24.

Something went wrong during the Obscurati ritual, and though people obey the Ob's ideology, the Axis Seal remains open. The world has been lost at the edge of the cosmos, endless night has fallen, and invaders have once again set their sights on invading this land.

At best, Risur is resisting the Obscurati, but every thought is a struggle. The rest of civilization is wholly loyal, except for a few pockets of strong-willed individuals, many of whom would make critical allies for the fight to retake the world. The tables have turned, and now the PCs are the conspiracy hiding in the shadows in an attempt to change reality.

Adventure Eleven: Gorged on Ruins.

By various authors

Seek the lore needed to undo the Obscurati ritual while cataclysms around the world threaten to destroy civilization.

Date: n/a

Party Level: 25–26.

Along with the dangers the PCs find themselves in in Adventure Ten, other threats endanger all civilization. The fey titans wreak destruction upon inhabited lands in Risur and must be subdued. Armies of the dead are led by doomsday cultists in Drakr. Infernal legions march through the Dreaming and the Gidim invade from a foothold in Ber.

As the PCs stave off these threats, they earn praise and loyalty from several regions around the world. But the most imperiled nation is where they must go to find critical information to defeat the Obscurati. The party heads to the grand librarium of Alais Primos, capital of Crisillyir and seat of the Clergy, but their research is interrupted when the newly enlightened and rational populace of the city takes it upon themselves to conjure avatars of their gods and place them on trial.



When the citizens of Alais Primos execute a god they deem unfit, a nearby mountain erupts in lava, unleashing an unholy dragon that could consume the city and incinerate the books that contain the knowledge that could save the world.

Adventure Twelve: The Grinding Gears of Heaven.

By Thurston Hillman

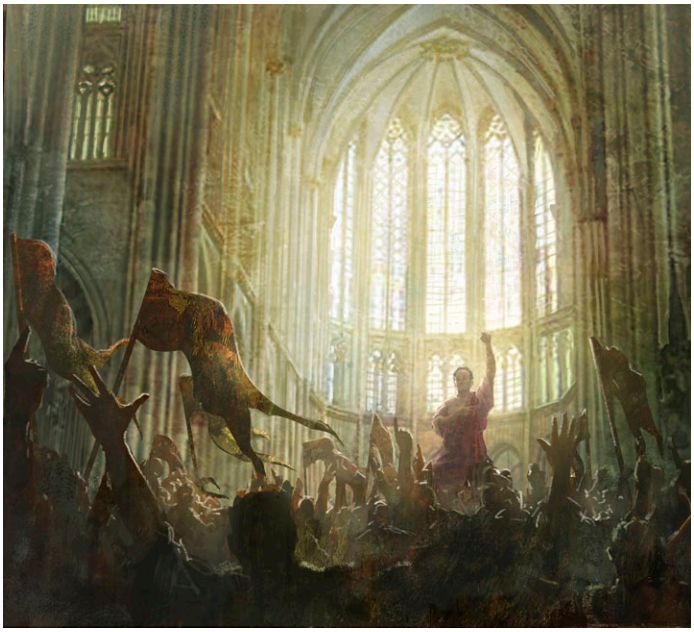
Travel to the graveyard of the multiverse to find safe planes to bond this world to and set a better fate for it.

Date: n/a

Party Level: 27–29.

Though the PCs and their allies have the information they need to undo the ritual of the Axis Seal, they need to find worlds it would be safe to bond to. They set out across the multiverse to the Gyre, a planar graveyard for worlds that are dying or abandoned. There they encounter ghosts from history, and discover that the fey titan known as the Voice of Rot has prepared for this moment and seeks to use the world's destruction to fuel its own ascension to godhood.





Adventure Thirteen: Avatar of Revolution.

By Ryan Nock

Empowered by the worldwide uprising against the Obscurati, stand against Nicodemus and his colossus in one final battle of ideas.

Date: n/a

Party Level: 30.

Returning home, the party rallies people from across the world and becomes the focus of a ritual that makes them the avatars of civilization's will so they can confront the last of the Obscurati and secure the next age.

Abridged Conspiracy

Not all groups have the time or stamina for a full 30-level campaign.

Act One Only.

If you only run the campaign through Adventure Five, you have to strip away much of the greater conspiracy in order to simplify things. The villain becomes Lya Jierre who, with the aid of Flint city governor Reed Macbannin and Lorcan Kell, is constructing a colossus so she can defeat the fey titans of Risur. Her goal is to claim the throne of Risur, then use the colossus to expand the power of Danor. The activities of Golden Cell and Lantern Cell simply become tests to let the colossus travel and fight in the Dreaming and the Bleak Gate.

Acts One and Two.

If you only run the campaign through Adventure Nine, the great seal that the Obscurati want to open is on an island in Flint Harbor, with Axis Island just having been a testing ground. At the climax, Nicodemus the Gnostic repeats the ritual that led to the Great Malice to place his spirit into the colossus, which is invincible until it opens the seal. But the unleashed energy would weaken Nicodemus, and the altered planar energy would restore Benedict Pemberton's ability to fly as a dragon. Though hostile to the party, he realizes the Ob are a greater threat, and so lets them climb aboard his back and battle Nicodemus and the colossus.

When the PCs defeat Nicodemus, the ritual's backlash kills everyone who is part of the Obscurati, and the party has a chance to slightly alter the nature of reality before the Axis Seal closes itself for good.

The Middle.

If you prefer to start the campaign later, a series that runs from the peace summit in Adventure Five to the opening of the seal in Adventure Nine (with the changes detailed above) lets the players start as powerful heroes and have some international super-spy adventures. The challenge mostly involve filling in the PCs with a bit of extra backstory, and adjusting scenes where the PCs are expected to recognize NPCs from earlier adventures (for example, half-orc railroad owner Damata Griento in Adventure Six and the ghost of Mayor Reed Macbannin in Adventure Seven).

Acts Two and Three.

Like above, this works best if you start with Adventure Five. The lack of set-up with Axis Island from Adventure One makes the climax a little less satisfying, and the Gidim's return in Adventure Eleven will seem like just a random alien invasion.

You might even try just running Act Three; the party would be lacking a lot of backstory and connection to the villains. Perhaps it could work with the PCs as leaders of countries that have unexpectedly fallen under the control of the Obscurati, but you'll have to do a fair bit of work for things to make sense to the players.





Adventure Number 1

The Island at the Axis of the World

From the Pen of Ryan Nock

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ADVENTURE ONE: Introduction

Wherein It Begins.

Welcome to the first adventure in the Zeitgeist adventure path. In this adventure the party will save Risur's king from an assassination attempt, track down the traitor responsible, and play a key role in the conflict between Risur's old allies the fey Unseen Court, and its traditional enemy, the industrial nation of Danor.

By the adventure's end, the PCs will have earned their king's respect, which will place them in a position to tackle ever-greater threats to Risur. They'll also have stumbled upon the slightest hints of the grander conspiracy that drives the events of the campaign.

Before you run this adventure you'll want to be familiar with all the material herein, and clear up any questions the players have about the setting and their role with the RHC. If you've purchased the Zeitgeist *Act One NPC Cards*, hand out the cards for Stover Delft, King Aodhan, Duchess Ethelyn, Governor Stanfield, Harkover Lee, and Geoff Massarde, all of whom the party should know about in advance.

Background

Risur and Danor have been at war on-and-off for two centuries for control of the lush Yerasol Archipelago that lies between them. The current ruler of Risur, **King Aodhan**, was just a common soldier during the Third Yerasol War, which ended forty years ago. He captured territory for Risur, earned the respect of the military and the adulation of the common people, and even seized control of Danor's first steam-powered warship. People of Flint still talk about the day when he single-handedly steered the ship into Flint's harbor as a spoil of war.

The king of the time chose Aodhan as his successor, and in the four decades since, Risur has gone from owning a single captured steam engine to having an industrial revolution of its own. Today it prepares to launch its first armored warship to solely use steam propulsion: the R.N.S. *Coaltongue*, named after a mythic warlord said to breathe smoke and fire.

King Aodhan has come to Flint from Risur's capitol to witness the ship's launch. However the king's own sister, **Duchess Ethelyn of Shale**, plots to kill her brother during the maiden voyage of the *Coaltongue* so she can lay claim to the throne, abandon industry, and restore Risur to its traditional values.

The Duchess.

During the Fourth Yerasol War, which ended seven years ago, Duchess Ethelyn governed the city of Shale, Risur's bulwark against Danor. But the king insisted the duchess force her military of traditional druid- and shaman-backed units to start using firearms and cannons. Burdened with the unfamiliar new technology, the duchess lost nearly every battle for control of the archipelago.

Bitter for years over the defeat, the duchess recently learned that the king plans to press for peace with Danor. Fearing what could happen, she consulted a skyseer—one of Risur's folk prophets—for guidance, and he told her of a vision:

A globe spins on its axis, and a steel ship sets off to war on a sail of shadows. The world passes into night, and blackness grips all of Risur as the stars fall from the sky. The king's eyes turn a soulless white, and he moves as a puppet, his strings pulled by a man who has already died a thousand times.

Adapting the Adventure.

This adventure assumes the PCs are agents of the Royal Homeland Constabulary, or RHC. If your players are free agents, they might be attending the launch of the *Coaltongue* as guests of Captain Rutger Smith, or bodyguards of the tiefling engineer Mr. Massarde. One of the PCs might even be a minor noble. If a PC is a Yerasol Veteran, the party might have been invited to help sell the idea of the warship to the public.

Compared to modern Earth, the concept of security is slightly different in Risur: the king is able to defend himself even in his seventies, so PCs will be allowed to carry weapons, though they'll get thoroughly checked by the *actual* constables before they're allowed on the pier.

The duchess tried to warn her brother of the danger, to convince him to return to the old ways. She tried to remind him of when they both were just commoners, so he would pay more heed to the suffering of workers in the industrial warrens of Flint. But the king was too intent on achieving peace in his life, and did not listen.

Desperate, the duchess spoke with the liaison of the Unseen Court, a powerful eladrin warrior named **Asrabey Varal**. He told her the Court would view Risur as an enemy if it made an alliance with Danor. The duchess decided she would rather betray her brother than her nation's history, and so she began to plan his downfall.

Axis Island.

A year ago, the duchess's spies contacted **Nathan Jierre**. Nathan works as an astronomer on Danor-controlled Axis Island, the eastern-most point in the Yerasol Archipelago. Nathan saw that the island's factories and shipyards were producing weapons and warships, and so he began leaking information to the duchess. He expected she would use the information to encourage Risur to keep pace with Danor's military, and thus ensure neither side would be in a position to start a new war.

The duchess plans to assassinate her brother during the launch of the *Coaltongue*, lay the blame on Danor, then attack Axis Island and reclaim it as Risuri territory. She believes that once she shows proof to her people that Danor was building new weapons of war, she'll be able to secure her claim to the throne and steer Risur in the right direction.

Adventure Overview

The party is assigned to work security at the launching of the *Coaltongue*. The adventure starts after they have already done all the boring work of preparation and canvassing, so now their mission is to ensure the dignitaries' safety during the ship's brief maiden voyage.

As the sun sets, the ship weighs anchor, and the PCs are sent to make sure Duchess Ethelyn attends the king's speech. When they check on her, they find she has fled and her handmaiden is leading a plot to sabotage the engine. As a band starts to play Risur's national anthem and fireworks launch, a desperate chase and fight develops belowdecks. The PCs must stop the assassins before they cause the steam engine boiler to explode, annihilating anything nearby with fire and a hail of shrapnel.

In the aftermath, the party receives accolades for saving the king. Hundreds of miles away armies prepare for a potential civil war. Then a week later the party is called to meet with tiefling **Lya Jierre**, the Danoran "Minister of Outsiders."

She explains that the duchess has attacked Danoran territory—Axis Island—and has kidnapped her cousin Nathan Jierre. She has agreed to let Risur handle the task of removing the duchess, and she quickly briefs the PCs on the oddities and dangers of the island.

The PCs are just supposed to accompany and assist more experienced infiltrators, who will create an opening for the Risuri assault fleet. But when an accident kills the infiltration team, the PCs are the only ones in position to finish the mission. Their ultimate goal is a sea gate which protects the entrance to the fortress's harbor. By stealth, trickery, or open assault, the PCs reach the lighthouse that houses the sea gate controls, open the gate, and signal the fleet to attack.

At this point they may think they're out of harm's way, content to let the military take control of the fortress and capture the duchess. But the eladrin liaison of the Unseen Court, Asrabey Varal, has stowed away on a Risuri ship, and the PCs spot him as he heads for the duchess, killing anyone on either side who gets in his way.

Asrabey has come under orders from the Unseen Court to execute the duchess. In their fey logic, that will prove that they did not endorse the duchess's assassination attempt, and it doesn't matter how many rank and file soldiers they had to slaughter in the process. The PCs have a chance to intercede, and they can decide the duchess's fate, as well as whether Asrabey takes Nathan Jierre as a hostage.

Once Asrabey is dealt with, the PCs have only a few hours before Risur has to hand control back over to Danor. They can collect a few enigmatic clues to what Danor was up to, but then, as the highest-ranking representatives of the RHC, they are responsible for the official hand-off. Lya Jierre arrives, thanks the party for their help, and casually mentions that she'd like to invite them to her wedding next year, since the king plans to marry her to secure a peace treaty.

The PCs leave the island, but they have met many powerful individuals who will be enemies or allies later on, and they have the first clues toward a mystery that will forever change the world.

The actions of your players may take things in unusual directions, so don't feel constrained to only using the scenes we present herein. Change them, drop them, or add new ones as needed if you think it will add to your group's enjoyment.

NPC Roster.

Because of the large number of NPCs the party will meet, you'll want to familiarize yourself with their appearances, goals, and mannerisms. detailed entries are included throughout the adventure close to the characters' first appearances.

NPC Entry	Page
Thames Grimsley	97
Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft	101
Principal Minister Harkover Lee	101
Duchess Ethelyn of Shale	102
Sokana Rell	102
Geoff Masarde	103
Benedict Pemberton	103
Captain Rutger Smith	103
City Governor Roland Stanfield	103
King Aodhan	103
Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre	110
Nicolas Dupiers	117
Asrabey Varal	126
Lieutenant Hessar Marseine	128
Nathan Jierre	131

Recurring Characters. Stover Delft, Harkover Lee, Rutger Smith, Governor Stanfield, Benedict Pemberton, King Aodhan, Lya Jierre, and Asrabey Varal all play prominent roles in later adventures. All other NPCs that appear in this adventure might recur in minor roles, but feel free to do with them as you wish. If anyone important dies, you can replace them with someone thematically similar.

Difficulty Class by Level.

Level	Easy	Moderate	Hard
1	8	12	19
2	9	13	20
3	9	13	21
4	10	14	21
5	10	15	22

Rewards

At the end of this adventure, the PCs should be 2nd level. Their Prestige should remain at 1 for all groups (or drop to 0 with Risur if they screw up). See the Player's Guide for details of the Prestige system and how the PCs can use it to request items.

After the PCs receive their orders to go to Axis Island, they each receive 728 gp that they can use to requisition equipment and magic items.

If the PCs are free agents instead of members of the RHC, have the Constabulary offer to pay them 120 gp apiece to undertake the mission to Axis Island (equivalent to one monetary treasure parcel per PC). The RHC asks the PCs to hand over Asrabey Varal's sword, shield, and cloak, but the party can keep the three *Golden Icons* in the Genius Loci encounter (level 2, 3, and 4 rare items), as well as Asrabey's *boots of spider climbing* (a level 5 uncommon item, detailed in the D&D 4E Player's Handbook®).

You can dole out any remaining treasure parcels (120 gp apiece) in the form of any random items the PCs decide to loot, or as a gift from an involved NPC, such as if Lya Jierre wants to thank the party for saving her cousin Nathan.

A Final Word, Before We Start...

Everything in this adventure is just a suggestion. Only you and your players know what's fun for your group, so feel free to change whatever you need to change—characters, settings, events, and even tone—if you think making changes will lead to a better gaming experience for you and your players. You don't have to think the same way we do (at least not until the Obscurati complete their grand plan).



CHAPTER ONE: The R.N.S. Coaltongue

In this chapter, the party handles security during the launch of Risur's newest warship and thwarts an explosive assassination plot.

AN EXPLOSIVE ASSASSINATION PLOT.

Barring PC interference, the duchess's plan would start around 8:00 in the evening, after the *Coaltongue* is launched and has set out for a party on the open water. The duchess and her handmaiden Sokana would retire to an aft room on the ship's berth deck, supposedly for the duchess to nap. There they'd link up with three other saboteurs on the ship—a halfling assassin posing as a cook, and two human engineers who came to the launch ceremony as servants of other nobles unaware of the plot.

At sunset, as the ship weighs anchor, the duchess will use her magical power to call upon an archfey of the sea: Beshela, servant of the fey titan known as She Who Writhes. The archfey will subtly inhibit teleportation so that the king cannot teleport to safety. Then the duchess will perform a Water Breathing ritual on herself and her allies. Meanwhile, Sokana prepares an Affect Normal Fires ritual, storing the ritual magic in an amber rod.

Shortly after sunset, nearly all the crew will assemble on deck with musical instruments, forming a military band to play Risur's national anthem. With only a skeleton crew below decks, the assassin and two engineers will head to the magazine and engine room, where they will kill the guards and crew. The assassin will return to the duchess to report that the lower decks are clear, at which point the duchess will exit out the window, calling upon Beshala to carry her to safety.

The engineers begin to sabotage the boiler. The halfling will head down to the magazine to remove fire wards, while Sokana goes to the engine room. She'll place the amber rod in the engine's furnace and rust the door shut, while the engineers empty the fuel bin and pile the firegems around the furnace, causing it to rapidly heat up. They'll then rush back to the duchess's room and dive out the window.

By timing the sabotage to coincide with the blaring music of the national anthem, the duchess hopes people on deck won't notice that steam has stopped coming out of the ship's stacks. The engineers' sabotage will ensure that no warnings alert the crew on the bridge.

As the three-minute anthem reaches its final crescendo, the build-up of pressure will cause a boiler explosion. The shockwave of the steam blast will shatter and ignite the firegem fuel, which will send forth waves of fire through the ship's lower decks. These will in turn detonate the firedust in the ship's magazine, and the resultant explosion will tear the ship apart and kill anyone within 100 feet with concussion, shrapnel, and inferno.

Set-Up

Before launching the first scene of the campaign, give the players a chance to familiarize themselves with each other's characters, since they're part of the same unit in the Constabulary and have likely been working together at least a few weeks. Make sure the players are familiar with the Dramatis Personae handout, to help them keep track of the characters they'll be dealing with, and have a copy of the *Coaltongue* layout to show them once they board.

Launch Party

Exposition.

The PCs keep an eye out for trouble before dignitaries arrive for the launch of Risur's new warship.

Read or paraphrase the following to your players.

It is spring of the year 500 A.O.V. (After Our Victory). Seven years after the end of the Fourth Yerasol War, the shipyards in Flint have completed the first Risuri warship powered solely by steam engine, not sail. Your monarch, King Aodhan, has come to Flint to witness the official launch of this mighty vessel. Wooden-hulled but with a heart and skin of iron, the Royal Naval Ship *Coaltongue* will act as a deterrent against future aggression from Risur's enemy across the sea, the nation of Danor.

The Royal Homeland Constabulary has been called upon to provide security, and you have spent the past several weeks working to make sure this event goes off without a hitch—canvassing the docks, performing background checks on the guest list, coordinating with the local police to set up a perimeter around the royal docks, and following various directives of your superiors.

Now, as a warm breeze blows off the sea, mingling the scents of elaborate floral decorations with the pervasive coal soot that always hovers over Flint,, you're at the first of two checkpoints, working with Flint police to let in a crowd of local citizens who just want to line the streets and cheer their king.

SKYSEER VISION.

If any PC has the Skyseer theme, mention that last night he had a vision of a crowd, a purple ribbon, the Beran city Seobriga, an empty bed, a broken tin whistle, and a girl with a lisp singing the Risuri royal anthem.

The PC gets a +2 bonus on checks toward the third goal of "Find the Dockers"; if he shares his vision with the other PCs, so do they. When the PCs start looking for suspects, they find squat Coulton drinking from a flask near a tree with a purple ribbon wrapped around it. Lanky Mercliffe stands outside a mapmaker's shop reading a map of Ber in the window. Scummy Iscalio glowers at a young girl trying to sing the royal anthem. The rest of the vision pertains to other threats throughout the day.

Crowd Security

Social. Real-Time. Level 1.

A crowd of hundreds wait at a security checkpoint. In half an hour they'll line up along streets to cheer the king's arrival, and you must make sure no one dangerous gets through.

To set the tone for the campaign, the first encounter is a quick investigation. Thousands of visitors have poured into the city, hoping to see the king. They've gathered in Royal Square, on the mainland side of a bridge that leads to the Royal Shipyard. The police are counting off exactly seven hundred people who will be let onto the bridge and into Fleet Square on the shipyard island so that they can cheer as the carriages of the king and other dignitaries arrive.

Four dockers—Coulton, Mercliffe, Iscalio, and a war vet named Dafton—have come to the event, ready to cause some trouble. They're angry that the city police force has been cracking down on docker gatherings; indeed, all of them but Dafton still have bruises from a scuffle earlier in the week. Mostly they just intend to heckle and shout insults, but Dafton plans a more dramatic gesture: he wants to assault Governor Stanfield.

Meanwhile **Thames Grimsley**, a grizzled sailor who is trying to organize an official dockers guild, has caught wind of the men's plan, and he's trying to get to them before they get themselves arrested or worse.

The four dockers are spread throughout Royal Square, waiting for the cops to finish counting before they link up. Once the cops reach seven hundred, they'll let the whole crowd through the check point and onto the bridge. The PCs have about half an hour to survey the crowd for possible threats and spot the dockers. If they fail, Thames Grimsley arrives just after the parade crowd is let in. The police won't let him pass, but if the PCs investigate, Grimsley might be willing to help them.

If the PCs are lucky, they can pull the dockers aside early and avert a crisis, but once the crowd gets sent in, the four men will link up, making it much harder to deal with them without a brawl.

Find the Dockers

Find the Dockers (Level 1 Skill Challenge).

Key Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, History, Insight, Intimidate, Perception, Stealth, Streetwise

Difficulty: Unless otherwise noted, all skill checks are DC 18.

This challenge has four goals, requiring a total of eight successful skill checks to get a full victory, and six or seven for a partial victory. The party has half an hour to accomplish these goals, and they cannot progress to the next goal until they have succeeded the current goal.

Goal One: Brief the Party and Police. 1 success.
Goal Two: Canvass the Crowd. 4 successes (5 total).
Goal Three: Find the Dockers. 2 successes (7 total).
Goal Four: Find the Fourth Man. 1 success (8 total).

UGH, SKILL CHALLENGES?

We've heard the tales of bad experiences with skill challenges. We use them sparingly in Zeitgeist, and whenever they show up they'll be more detailed than just rolling dice and hoping for 12 successes before 3 failures. Whether a skill challenge is right for your group is your call, but we hope the structure of our skill challenge encounters will prove useful even for DMs who prefer a more free-form and rules-light approach.



A grizzled sailor, still with a full head of hair in his early 50s, Grimsley acts as head of a nascent dock workers guild in Flint. Though he only worked the docks in his youth, Grimsley spent decades sailing—primarily as captain of a ferry service in Flint's harbor, but with a stint in the navy during the last Yerasol War. He took a gash from a policeman's knife on the side of his face in the last big docker riot, and since then has tried to organize a unified front for the dockers' concerns. A couple of months working at a theater as a child gave him a very stylized public speaking voice, one full of unnecessary, melodramatic pauses.

Passage of Time.

Every ten minutes of the encounter is one "round," and each PC can make one skill check per round. If a PC spends an action point, he can make a second skill check in the same round. All told, a five-person party will get to attempt fifteen skill checks during the half hour, and they need a total of eight successes.

In the first ten-minute round, the crowd waits idly and people chatter amicably. In the second round, a half-dozen messengers hand out lyric sheets of the royal anthem, to make sure people get the later verses correct. In the third round, the excitement builds as people press toward the ropes, and various unsynchronized groups start singing the anthem or other festive sounds.

After the third round, the impatient crowd will go through the checkpoint. If the PCs don't want to let them, the small contingent of police they have are insufficient to hold back so many. Only something drastic will get the crowd to stop, but since the whole point of the PC's assignment is to avoid ruining the event, doing so will lessen the PCs' clout. Later in the evening when real threats crop up, people might not believe the party at first.

Accomplishing Goals.

Each goal requires one or more successful skill checks, and we suggest the skills best suited to each goal. If a player thinks of a clever way to achieve the goal, let them use another skill, or if it's sufficiently clever just grant them an automatic success.

Some things certainly won't help, like using Arcana to sense magical threats, since there aren't any here. You might want to nudge the players in the right direction if they start wasting their actions like this. Failing a check doesn't have a penalty, but remember the party is on a clock.

Goal One: Brief the Party and Police.

You can't just question the whole crowd. You need a clear idea of what appearances or mannerisms might be clues that someone's a threat.

In their preparation for today's event, the Royal Homeland Constabulary determined that four groups in particular are likely to cause trouble. The fastest way for the PCs to search for threats is to figure out who in this crowd of seven hundred people fit any of these profiles.

- Dockers, angry because of how the city treats them.
- Primalists—i.e., believers in the old druidic faith—angry at all the new industry.
- Agents of the fey terrorist known as "Gale," who might try to sabotage the ship.
- War veterans, who might target the ship's tiefling designer.

Create a Threat Profile. (History or Streetwise, DC 16) To be able to brief the police and the rest of the party, a PC needs to have a clear sense of the different threats. A PC who attempts this check get a +2 bonus to this check if any member of the party has the Docker theme, and another +2 bonus if anyone has the Yerasol Veteran theme.

Once any PC makes a successful check, give the party the following information.

Dockers are usually burly working men with eclectic fashion. Primalists have particular hairstyles, wear sandals, and adorn themselves with druidic religious icons. Fey saboteurs are typically elves or half-elves with impeccable grooming from their rituals, though they often try to hide this by dressing in soot-stained clothes. War veterans will usually be either in the mid- to late-twenties, or late-fifties/early-sixties, usually in better fighting shape than common citizens.

Goal Two: Canvass the Crowd.

You have to look for possible threats out of hundreds of men, women, and scampering children. Work together and with the police to canvas the whole crowd.

The crowd can be roughly divided into four quadrants. To search the whole thing for people matching the above profiles, the party has to succeed a total of four checks, but they can do that with any combination of the following methods (or creative ideas of their own). If you have four PCs skilled at Perception, they might all just hang back, but most likely the party will use a combination of skills.

Mingle with the Crowd. (Insight) A PC could go into the crowd and look for people who match the profiles.

Recruit the Cops. (Diplomacy) A PC might coordinate a small group of cops to also scan the crowd.

Recruit some Rascals. (Streetwise) A PC could try to convince a few kids to be his eyes and ears.

Scan the Crowd. (Perception) A PC can watch from afar to spot people who look like they match the profile.

Goal Three: Find the Suspects.

You've picked out about twenty people of interest, but you need to separate the innocent parade-goers from actual threats.

Failed skill checks here probably result in the party pulling aside innocent people, and then wasting time questioning them before realizing they're not a threat.

The PCs need two successes here. The first success identifies Coulton. The second identifies both Mercliffe and Iscalio. If the PCs are smart, they can pull the three aside peacefully, but if they antagonize the men, the dockers might try to fight. If that happens, see Docker Brawl, below.

Confrontation. (Insight) A PC could go to people of interest and ask questions.

Deception. (Bluff) A PC might feign camaraderie with the different people of interest in an effort to draw out an admission.

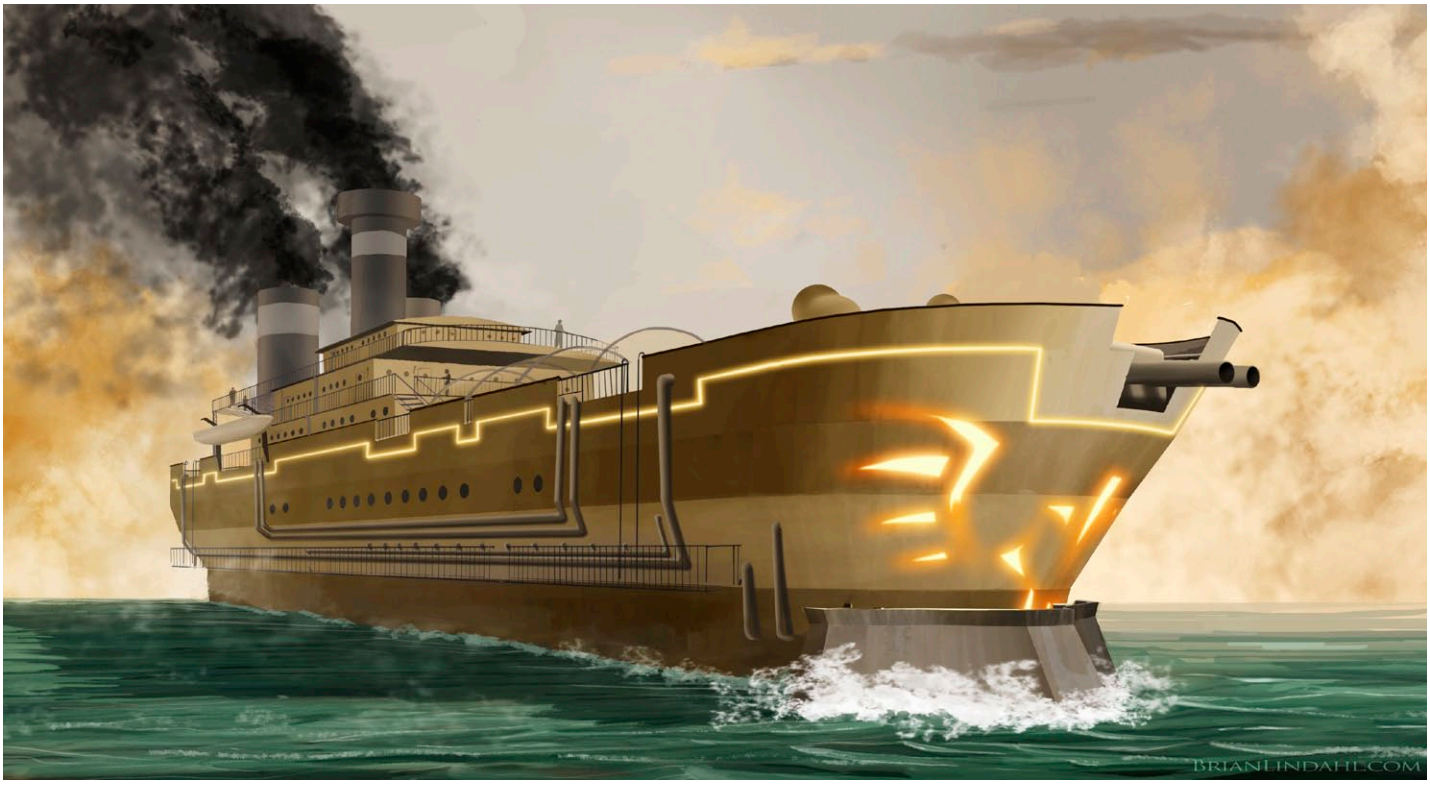
Good Cop, Bad Cop. (Diplomacy or Intimidate) This option is only available once the party identifies Coulton. Two PCs must both spend time on this action. One PC makes an Intimidate check, and another makes a Diplomacy check. They each gain a +2 bonus to their check. If they both succeed, the dockers also rat out Dafton, which counts as a success on goal four.

Observation. (Perception) A PC could watch the various people of interest to see how they react to all the law enforcement activity.

Yank Them All. (Stealth) A PC might just grab as many people of interest as he can, but he has to do so discreetly so that no actual threats get tipped off and try to hide in the crowd.

Goal Four: Find the Fourth Man.

Once the PCs have the three dockers, drop some obvious clue that there's a fourth man, Dafton. The three dockers aren't too bright, and they let slip that someone else is with them, but they don't want to cooperate with the PCs. With likely little time left, the party needs to find the most dangerous member of the group. They just need one success.



Various. (Various skills, DC 20) The PCs can use any of the methods from the previous goal.

As with above, Dafton might go peacefully, but if the PCs anger him, he's ready for a fight.

Development.

If a fight breaks out at any point, see Docker Brawl, below.

Right after the crowd goes through the checkpoint, Thames Grimsley arrives in Royal Square and tries to get onto the bridge. If the PCs didn't manage to achieve goal two, they might think there is no threat at all. They're scheduled to meet with their superior, so it might not be worth the hassle to listen to what the old sailor has to say.

If any of the dockers got past them, though, Grimsley can point them out to the party. By that point, though, the men will have linked up, and they're so close to their goal they feel overconfident. Almost any attempt to remove them will result in a fight.

Docker Brawl

Action. Tactical. Level 1.

The gathered crowd panics as a street fight breaks out.

The moment anyone draws a weapon, people scream and the crowd backs away in panic, giving the PCs and dockers the 30-ft. wide bridge to themselves. The thick crowds keep the police from getting there for 10 rounds. Of course, if the fight occurs elsewhere things will go differently.

If the PCs have treated him and his men well, Grimsley might stand aside and let the constables do their job. If they've been rude, he might side with his fellow dockers.

List of Adversaries.

- 3 docker longshoremen (Coulton, Mercliffe, and Iscalio)
- 1 docker veteran (Dafton)
- Thames Grimsley

Docker Longshoreman (3) Level 1 Brute
Medium natural humanoid XP 100
HP 38; **Bloodied** 19 **Initiative** +2
AC 13, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 10 **Perception** +5
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊘ **Brawl** ✦ At-Will, Basic
The docker tries to grab you and pummel you with his fists.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10+5 damage.

✓ **Angry Cut** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
After taking a beating, the docker loses his temper and draws a knife.
Prerequisite: The docker longshoreman must be bloodied, and wielding a knife.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4+5 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Str 14 (+2) **Dex** 15 (+2) **Wis** 10 (+0)
Con 18 (+4) **Int** 10 (+0) **Cha** 6 (–2)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Docker Veteran Level 3 Soldier (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid XP 150
HP 49; **Bloodied** 24 **Initiative** +5
AC 17, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13 **Perception** +8
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊘ **Binding Brawl** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10+5 damage, and the target can't shift until the end of the veteran's next turn.

✓ **Disarming Brawl** ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10+5 damage, and the target drops a weapon or implement it is holding. If the docker veteran has a free hand, he can choose to grab the item himself.

✓ **Armed Offensive** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
Prerequisite: The docker veteran must be wielding a weapon. If he has two weapons, he can target an additional creature.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10+9 damage. If the docker veteran has only one weapon, he grabs the target (escape DC 14).

Minor Actions

▸ **Mocking Jig** ✦ Encounter
The docker claps mockingly and hops from foot to foot like he's dancing a jig. Obviously he's not taking you seriously.
Effect: The docker veteran's allies can shift 2 squares and gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls until the end of the docker veteran's next turn.

Str 19 (+5) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 15 (+3)
Con 17 (+4) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+1)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Thames Grimsley Level 3 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid XP 150
HP 37; **Bloodied** 18 **Initiative** +7
AC 17, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 16 **Perception** +7
Speed 6

Standard Actions

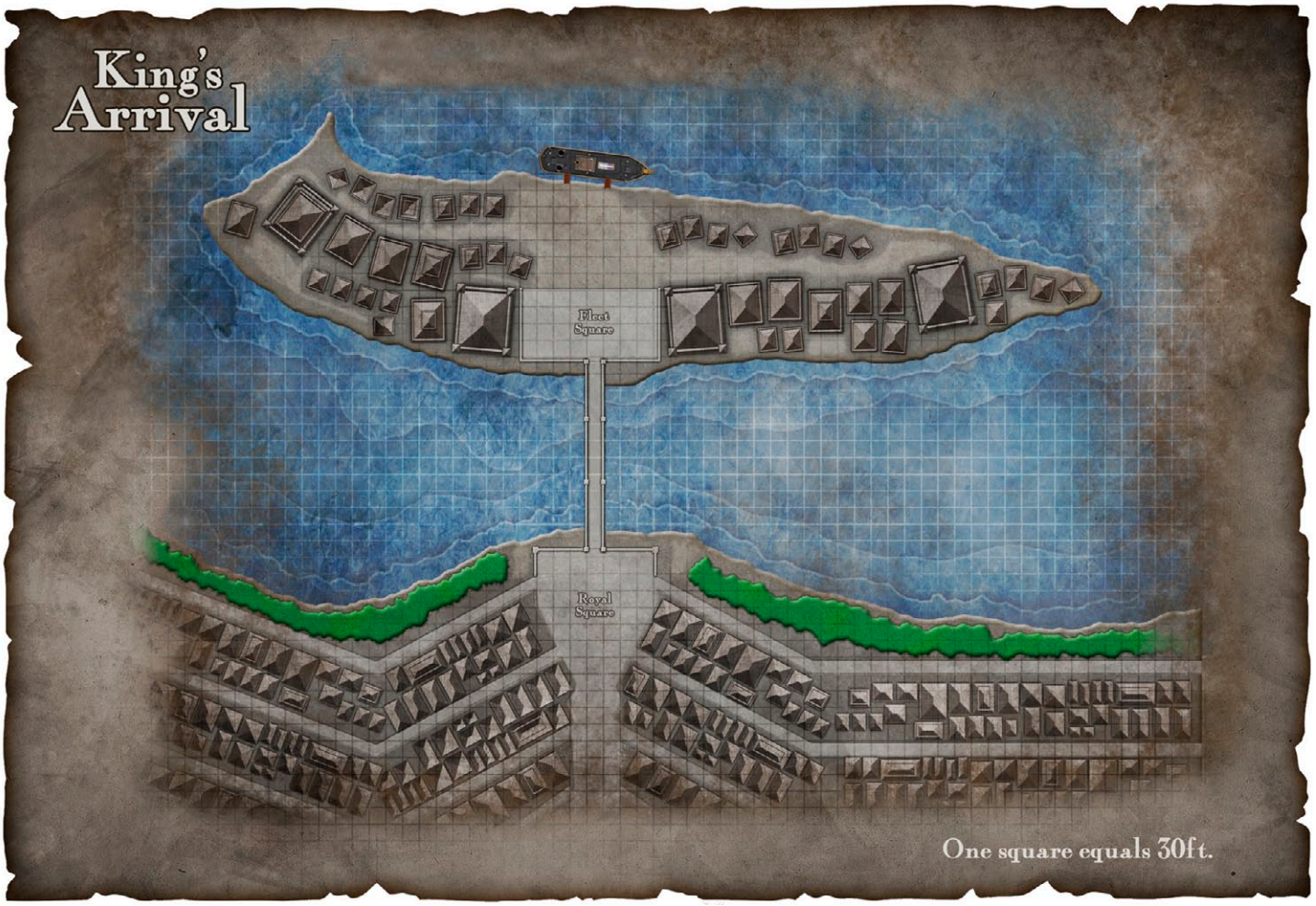
⊘ **Two-Fisted Thwack** ✦ At-Will, Basic
The docker laces his fingers together and smashes you with both fists.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6+8 damage, and the target grants combat advantage until the end of Thames Grimsley's next turn.

⇜ **Flying Clothesline** ✦ Encounter
The old docker leaps and twists in mid-air so his body crashes into you lengthwise.
Grimsley jumps 1 square and then makes the following attack.
Attack: Close Burst 1 (enemies in burst); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+6 damage, and the target is knocked prone and dazed until the end of Grimsley's next turn.
Effect: Grimsley falls prone.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Dramatic Throw** ✦ Encounter
The old man grabs your wrist, turns his back to face you, and bends forward, flipping you over his shoulder.
Trigger: An adjacent enemy misses Grimsley with an attack.
Effect: The triggering enemy is knocked prone and is dazed until the end of Grimsley's next turn.

Skills Acrobatics +10, Athletics +6, Bluff +10, Diplomacy +10
Str 10 (+1) **Dex** 18 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+2)
Con 15 (+3) **Int** 13 (+2) **Cha** 18 (+5)
Alignment Good **Languages** Common, Primordial



Tactics.
The three longshoreman brawl wildly, then pull out knives when things are looking bad for them. Dafton stands back for a moment and claps a jaunty beat to mock the party and bolster his allies. Then he goes after whichever PC has the most interesting melee weapon, trying to disarm him and then take on the rest of the party. If Grimsley gets into the fight, his goal is to daze enough PCs with his theatrical leaps that he and his men can dive off the bridge and flee to friendlier areas of the city.

Terrain. If the fight's on the bridge, it's a 20 ft. fall to water (dealing 1d10 damage) if anyone goes over the railing. You might add some difficult terrain in the form of an abandoned cart that holds flowers to be tossed and lyric sheets of the royal anthem. Innocent bystanders hang back, but block off the edges of the area.

A PC might be able to get some help from the crowd with a Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 12) as a minor action. If successful, three people in the crowd come to their aid. They don't fight, but they can help flank or otherwise distract a docker so he grants combat advantage.

Aftermath.
The police eventually arrive and arrest the dockers. If any dockers get away, it's a matter for the cops to handle. The crowd considers the fight a bonus bit of entertainment, and the event can continue with minimal disruption. The PCs will want to clean themselves up a little, then go report to their superior before the nobles start showing up.

Grimsley might ask (or demand) that the party pass a message to the governor for him in exchange for his help. He says his people are tired of the local police harassing them just because a few of the city's nobles don't like being made fun of in tavern songs. Worse, some dockers have been arrested in the past few weeks because they refused to work sixteen hour shifts loading and unloading industrial cargo.

DISARMING?

Disarming can be a hassle: you need to recalculate attack bonuses, and some characters can't use their powers if they are unarmed. If you want to avoid this hassle but still use Dafton as written, treat "disarmed" as a condition that imposes a –2 penalty to attacks and reduces the victim's [W] value to 1d4 (2d4 starting at 21st level)—the PC uses an improvised weapon or unarmed attack. The condition lasts until the affected character retrieves or picks up a weapon (typically a minor action).

TAKING PRISONERS.

As officers of the law, the PCs should generally take enemies alive unless they suspect the enemy can easily recuperate and escape or threaten others. The rules allow characters who reduce an opponent to 0 hit points choose whether to kill or just knock unconscious.

Additionally, PCs might try to make an Intimidate check to convince bloodied enemies to surrender, but it's a difficult thing to pull off (DC 20 for the brawlers, DC 23 for Dafton).

Grimsley warns that his people are restless. They're raring for a riot, and he's trying to keep them calm. If Stanfield can't take some of the pressure off them, Grimsley fears there'll be blood in the streets. This isn't a concern in the course of this adventure, but the problem rears its head again in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*.

If the PCs deliver the message to the governor, they'll earn the sailor's respect, perhaps even get an invite to a street party a few days hence in a dockside neighborhood. If the party wrongs Grimsley, they win admiration from the police, but for the rest of the campaign they'll have a hard time getting anywhere in the city in a hurry if they have to go by boat, as sailors carry their leader's grudge and do their best to obstruct the PCs.

Long Night Ahead

Social. Real-Time. Level 1.

The PCs are invited to join this evening's party aboard the warship.

Read or paraphrase the following to your players.

The first of the noble carriages have begun to approach the royal shipyard, and already the crowd on the bridge is doing its job: cheering, throwing flowers, and performing folk songs and dances to show their support.

Before things get too busy, your direct superior—Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft—asked you to come to a last-minute meeting to give you your marching orders. You find him chewing a bit of tobacco and eyeing a halfling chef who is carrying a tray of chocolate confections toward the docked *Coaltongue*.

His attention turns to you, and he smiles. "Only the finest for our king, right?

"Now then," he says, "we're about to earn our pay. Lots of nobles about, so first, don't make a scene, and definitely don't talk to any of the nobility unless they address you first.

"Second, if something goes wrong, try to handle it yourselves, would you? I'm going to be busy applying my not-inconsiderable charms to very important people. The RHC doesn't get by on just good will and pretty faces, you know.

"And third, you did good work, so I've got a surprise for you."

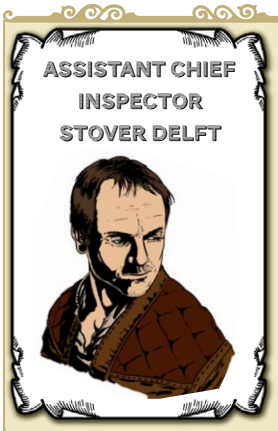
He grabs his cane and leads you to the gangplank of the *Coaltongue*. But he's not pursuing the halfling chef. Rather, ahead of you waits Principal Minister Harkover Lee, the king's chief advisor and personal bodyguard.

Inspector Delft waves tiredly to **Minister Lee**, who has just finished checking the warship for magical threats. After introductions, in which Delft cheerily refers to Lee as "the old man," the Principal Minister says that he's confident security is in order. Still, he would like some representatives of the RHC aboard this evening. After the fireworks and banquet, the king is planning a major announcement. Lee wants some constables present to be extra eyes and ears, so Lee can get a gauge of how various individuals in the crowd react.

Plus, he adds, there are a few recalcitrant guests who might need corralling. When he says this, he looks in the direction of one of the checkpoints, where a guest and her handmaiden are disembarking from a horse-drawn carriage.

Though this is likely the first time most PCs have seen her, from their briefings and preparation they easily recognize the person who has elicited Minister Lee's distaste: the king's sister, Duchess Ethelyn of Shale, escorted by an elven handmaiden named Sokana Rell.

Principal Minister Lee says he must prepare for the king's arrival. He encourages the PCs to direct any questions to their boss Delft. After Lee departs, Delft tells them to remember what he said about bothering him, and then he heads off to mingle.



A local Flinter in his early 40s, Delft is generally good-natured to his subordinates, but has a penchant for grousing about people behind their backs. He gets squinty and condescending when his authority is questioned, but he can recognize talent and good work. A much better manager than investigator, Delft has advanced this far in the Constabulary by finding good agents, supporting them on difficult missions, and sharing the accolades from their successes.

Delft chews tobacco, and thinks he looks charming if he grins while sucking on tobacco juices. He walks with a cane because a mimic tore a chunk out of his leg fifteen years ago. He has a habit of poking inanimate objects with the cane before he gets too close to them, and spitting on them when he wants to be extra sure.



Perhaps the most powerful mage in Risur, Lee acts as King Aodhan's bodyguard and chief of staff. Straight-backed and virile despite being in his 60s, Lee has a slight Ber-tinged accent, and was said to be quite the ladykiller in his youth. He always dresses in reds and golds and carries a solid gold wizard's orb tucked into his robes. He never eats or drinks in public.



Now in his 70s, the current king of Risur looks rather unassuming. He prefers to resolve disputes by being cool-headed and rationally persuading those who will listen to his side. For those who won't, he's shrewd enough to give them a sliver of what they want and then distract them with harmless endeavors while those worth dealing with get the job done. Despite all this, though, he trains regularly to keep his stamina and swordplay robust, and the rites of rulership grant him daunting magical powers.

The Crowd

Social. Real-Time. Level 15.

The king's sister approaches the PCs with a request.

More people arrive over the next half hour. All told, the crowd of about 100 consists of roughly 25 dignitaries (nobles, wealthy merchants, and prestigious military folks), 50 retinue members and personal servants, and 25 local staff, some of whom are plains-clothes police. Try to work in the following interactions, but let the players take the lead.

Tiefling Engineer. The person who stands out the most is **Geoff Massarde**, the Danoran tiefling who helped Risur design the *Coaltongue*. A few industrialists and military officers hang near him,

Early Discovery

The duchess is an excellent diplomat and liar, so the PCs shouldn't get any sense that she's up to something nefarious. If they somehow reveal the plot, the duchess turns invisible, teleports a short distance away, and changes her appearance to fade into the city crowds. Eventually she reaches her allies and teleports to her stronghold in Shale. Sokana, on the other hand, will be left in the lurch. The *Coaltongue*'s launch will certainly be postponed.

If the PCs manage to stop the duchess from escaping, the plot can still continue: one of the duchess's subordinates leads the attack on Axis Island.



This dark-skinned, distinguished woman in her 60s speaks with a poet's precision, always pausing to consider her words, which helps those she's speaking to feel like she's giving them her full attention.

The Duchess dislikes industry and technology, and she wears extravagant diamond cluster earrings—representing the stars of the night sky—to display her allegiance to the old ways. She is rumored to be capable of using several types of magic, though some of these rumors could be exaggerations.



Though in her 50s, this eladrin woman looks to be in her 20s. In the Third Yerasol War, Sokana was rescued by the duchess—then just a sorceress in the Risuri military—from the island plantation of a rich Danoran, who had kept her as a trophy wife. Sokana settled with an elven family in Risur, hiding her true identity to avoid retaliation by the Danorans. The duchess helped her rediscover her fey roots, though Sokana only displayed a marginal talent with magic.

Today she passes as an elf, but when she uses magic her eyes flare an unearthly azure, revealing her heritage.



A 40-something tiefling with an airy voice and a fondness for wine that outmatches his ability to handle his alcohol, Massarde is one of a handful of Danoran tieflings working for the Risuri military to help construct warships and other weapons. He has few kind words for his homeland. He is fascinated with ice, and carries a wand given him as a gift by a Drakran train engineer, which can chill small objects with a touch. Mostly he just uses it as a novelty to cool beverages.

asking questions about how the ship will hold up under actual combat. Wine glass in hand, he'll gladly talk shop with interested PCs, but he's used to people acting belligerently to him here in Risur, so he has two burly bodyguards standing by him at all times.

Captain Impossible. Also in attendance is **Captain Rutger Smith**, commander of the distinguished R.N.S. *Impossible*, a swift clipper ship which occasionally assists the RHC on missions. He's discussing philosophy and political theory with a black-bearded dwarf. Smith endorses the post-Malice writings of the old monk William Miller, who said all conflicts could be avoided by sufficient understanding between opposing groups. The dwarf counters with standard Heid Eschatol theory that any ordered system will inevitably be ruined by some random accident, so a single misunderstanding would doom Millerite theories of peace. Both men smoke thick cigars.

Charming Industrialist. Eccentric and genteel industrialist Benedict Pemberton hobnobs and gazes admiringly at the *Coaltongue*. While regaling some other guests with a joke about cooking pigs on his mama's farm when he was a kid, he waves one of the PCs over and without explaining himself draws a short folding knife, flicks it open, and snips a loose thread dangling from the character's sleeve. Then he smiles and finishes his story. Pemberton is otherwise innocuous, though he occasionally glares smugly at Harkover Lee. He remains primarily a background character until Adventure Six.

The Coaltongue. No one is allowed aboard the ship now. A gangplank leads to main deck, guarded by sailors. Stairs lead up from a pier to a scaffolding beside the ship's bow; it is here that the king will smash a bottle of champagne on the ship's iron hull to officially name it and enter it into the Risuri navy.

The Duchess.

After a few minutes or if the PCs seek her out, Duchess Ethelyn asks the PCs for help. She introduces herself, then says, "It is my understanding that you have some sway over the arrangements of this event. If you could do an old lady a kindness, the air here is already leaving me winded, and the company is already giving me a headache. I know my brother's party is going to run late, so I need a room I can nap in. I'd be very grateful if you'd arrange this for me."

If the PCs strike up a conversation with the duchess, she might admit that she's unenthused about this metal monstrosity, and suspects the only thing keeping it from sinking is infernal tiefling magic. She'll encourage the PCs to remember the old ways of the skyseers and the fey, and not to be tricked into thinking Danor's industry is good for Risur just because her brother uses the word "progress" a lot.

Handmaiden. Insight (DC 20) can let a PC tell that Sokana is actually eladrin, but this is not suspicious by itself. Many eladrin—especially women—prefer to pose as elves to avoid hassle.

Moving On. Before the conversation goes on too long, horns blare, announcing the approach of the king.

King's Arrival

Social. Real-Time. Level 1.

King Aodhan arrives; after brief pleasantries, launches the Coaltongue.

With great pomp and grandeur, trumpeters announce the arrival of the king's carriage. Elite guards line the thoroughfare and open the door, and first the city governor Roland Stanfield, then King Aodhan himself emerge.

The king offers a one-sided smile to the crowd and is greeted by his Principal Minister and his sister. Children, gathered in advance by royal aides, cheer and sing the traditional crown anthem as the group makes its way to the docks.

Docker Violence.

If the PCs failed to remove all the disgruntled dockers, heckling begins from the crowd at this point. The royals and their retinue maintain their composure, but the rest of the crowd murmurs in displeasure, and the PCs spot both Principal Minister Harkover Lee and their boss Delft glaring daggers at them.

Then the docker Dafton, if he's present, yells, "Stanfield! Look at me, Stanfield! You ain't human! You forgot what it feels like. Here, Stanfield. Let me remind you!" He breaks free from the crowd and advances on the royal retinue, cracking his knuckles. Royal guards intercede before he gets close, and though he tries to throw a few punches, he gets smashed to the ground by the haft of a polearm, then held down by three men until the king, governor, and the rest are safely out of the way.

This can have grave consequences later, because people will be less inclined to trust to the party after this screw-up. If the PCs show up during the king's big speech later that evening, yelling that the duchess is trying to blow up the ship, it might take an extra 3 or 4 rounds for people to take the threat seriously.

The Launch.

The ceremony goes without a hitch. The king takes a champagne bottle, announces that the ship shall be formally known as the Royal Naval Ship *Coaltongue*, then smashes the bottle across the bow. At that precise moment a steam whistle sounds, and black smoke begins to roil out of the ship's stacks.

The crowd begins to board the ship, and if the PCs dally, Assistant Chief Inspector Delft reminds them they've got a party to enjoy. Once everyone is aboard and enjoying light refreshments on the main deck, it sweeps toward the center of the harbor, where eight traditional four-masted ships enter formation with it. Against their white sails, the black clouds from the *Coaltongue's* smokestacks makes for a dramatic image, and though the PCs catch the duchess glowering at the sight, they can also see crowds along the shore cheering as the small fleet sets a course out of the harbor, toward open sea.

All Aboard

Exposition. Montage.

Over the next hour, people wine, dine, and take tours of the fantastic warship.

The PCs have one hour before the *Coaltongue* reaches its destination, just beyond the Ayres islands north of Flint. Now's a good time to show the players the Ship Layout handout (page 104), knowledge of which can represent a combination of research and a guided tour of the vessel.

If the players want to get into details, you can have them meet a few notable crewmembers, but these NPCs are just for flavor, and to tug the players' heartstrings if they turn up dead during the assassination plot.

Divianne Athel. A guard at the ship's magazine, she explains that fire wards hung in the two rooms of the magazine keep the ammunition from accidentally exploding in battle. She says she's stationed here through most of the party, and that she hopes some food will be left when her shift is done.



The bold and idealistic captain of the R.N.S. *Impossible*, Captain Smith earned his first command five years ago. Now 37, he has never led his ship into battle. That, combined with his fondness for the Malice-era philosophical writings of the monk William Miller, has made him the target of mockery by more established naval officers. For his own part, Smith seems unaffected by the criticism and appears content to drill his crew twice as hard as any other captain, encouraging them with philosophical aphorisms between puffs on a cigar.



Stanfield witnessed the fall of the eladrin goddess Srasama five hundred years ago and died soon thereafter in the chaos of Elfaivar's fall. But he reincarnated, restored to life by a sliver of the divine power he absorbed when Srasama was slain. His memories vague and jumbled, he found his way back to his homeland of Risur and eventually settled in Flint, then just a modest coastal port.

In the centuries since he has died with irregular intervals, and with each rebirth he returned to the city he calls home. For most of that time he has served as Flint's governor, having constantly striven to improve himself with each life, from a simple warrior, to a humble leader, to an educated renaissance man nimbly handling the complex challenges of the fastest-growing city in the world. Stanfield wears a near-constant expression of contented optimism, but still occasionally complains of a war wound he took to his back in his first life.



Owner of experimental arms manufacturer Pemberton Industries, this man looks only about fifty, and has the verve of a young man, but he jokingly exaggerates his infirmities. Though on the cutting edge of mechanical warfare, Pemberton plays up his homely country roots, speaking slowly in a deep voice and often leaning back and tucking his thumbs in his belt loops.

Fitzcairn Luckshore. A young technician in the engine room, he gets excited if any women show up, or if anyone asks him about the engine. He gets a little bubbly describing the intricate interactions of various valves and pipes. The other two men in the engine room give him a hard time because with his scrawny arms he never shovels an equal load of firegems.

Elian Aughtbrook. A petty officer, Elian has been assigned to keep the visitors happy. He'll interact with the PCs if they actually try to arrange a room for the duchess to rest in. Otherwise, Elian does it on his own. He has a small notebook where he wrote down notes he made in advance about the visitors, and he enthusiastically tries to make small talk based on badly-formed ideas of what nobles and industrialists care about.

Ship Layout

The R.N.S. *Coaltongue* has a wooden hull sheathed with 5-inch thick iron armor plating, engraved with subtle magical icons of defense and power. Measuring 205 ft. long with a beam of 50 ft. and a draft of 20 ft., the warship has three lower decks and a two-story command bridge amidships the maindeck. The steam engine, powered by heating a boiler with burning firegems, gives the vessel a top speed of 18 knots (roughly 20 miles per hour).

A heavy turret on the main deck fires enchanted shells in a forward arc. Twenty-three cannons line the gundeck, which is capped at the rear by the galley. When being pursued, this room can be converted into a firing platform.

Below that is the berth deck, with the ship's magazine at the bow and quarters for the ship's wizard and guests at the stern. The engine deck contains the engine, fuel bins, and various cargo.

The bridge's main level contains quarters for captain and officers, while the second story command deck has speaking tubes to various sections of the ship, and is where the captain must stand to direct the Brand.

All the lower decks have sections of grated floor panels to help circulate air. Characters easily have line of sight, but not necessarily line of effect, through this grating.

Capacitor and Brand

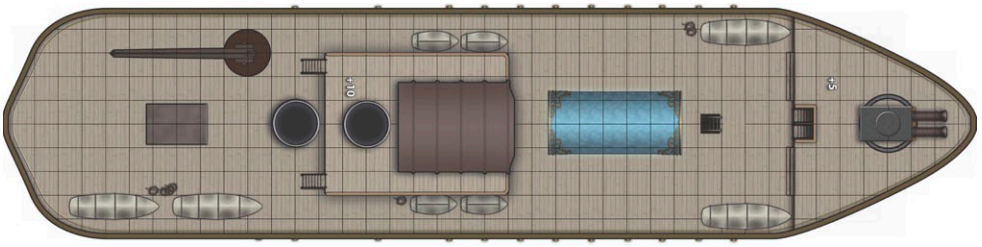
On the *Coaltongue's* maindeck sits an elaborate glass frame, reinforced by magic to be as strong as steel, and shaped in a half-cylinder to resemble the boiler of a train locomotive. While its design is partially aesthetic, intended to evoke the power of Risur's new industry, this innovative structure is Risur's greatest trump card against Danoran warships: a magical capacitor.

Excess energy from the steam engine is stored in thin metallic etchings within the structure. Even while storing its full power, the interior of the capacitor is perfectly safe to walk through, and its expansive windows let it serve as venue for ceremonies and celebrations. But the primary purpose of the capacitor is to power attack spells of the ship's warmages, and to charge the Brand.

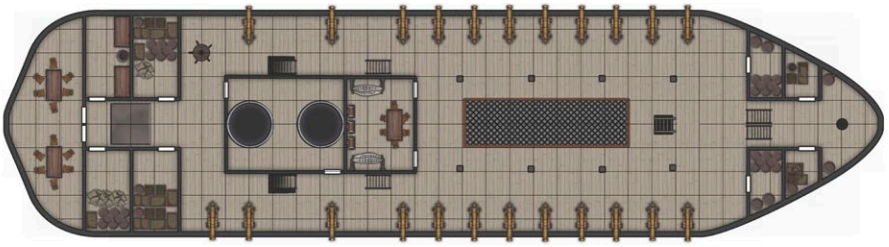
The Brand—so named because it burns an image into any surface it strikes—fires a massive blast of pyromantic energy from the ship's figurehead, often enough to outright destroy a smaller vessel and cripple a larger one. Its range is limited to about a hundred feet, and after firing it takes hours to recharge the capacitor, but combined with the *Coaltongue's* speed and maneuverability, the Brand should deter attacks by Danor's navy.

R.N.S. *Coaltongue*.

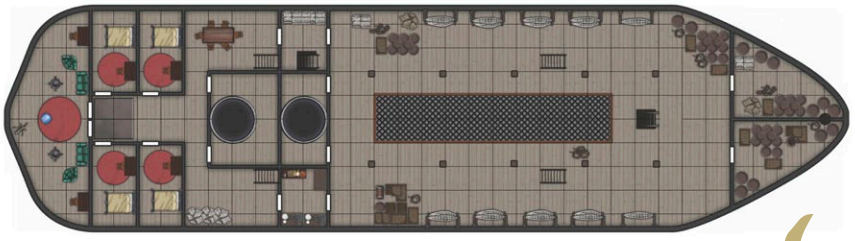
MAIN DECK.



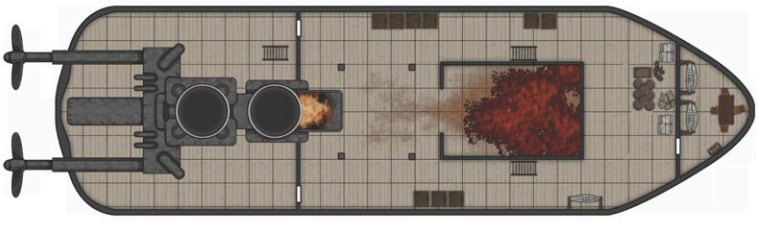
GUN DECK.



BERTH DECK.



ENGINE DECK.



Golden Ward

The gunports, windows, and main deck are all ringed by a thin inlay of gold wire. As detailed in the Player's Guide, this decorative work prevents teleportation across any opening so ringed.

A Simple Favor

Social. Real-Time. Level 1.

The PCs stumble upon the duchess's accomplices in the middle of their plot.

Near nine o'clock, the *Coaltongue* sits anchored just within sight of shore, surrounded by its eight-ship escort. The starry blanket of night hovers overheard, and a quarter moon peeks above the eastern horizon. The crew have set up an outdoor kitchen on the aft maindeck, and are using the interior of the capacitor as a banquet room. The ceiling occasionally flickers with silver arcs of magical energy, delighting the crowd.

The Band. A whistle from the bridge sets off motion as nearly the entire crew starts to line up around the outer deck, carrying horns, drums, and woodwinds.

Indigestion. The king and his Principal Minister move for the front end of the capacitor/banquet hall, and a nearby PC overhears the king complaining about indigestion.

"One of the local archfey is upset I parked my ship here," he guesses, laughing it off. "One of the burdens of kingship; the fey can really let me know when they've got an opinion. I always get burps that taste like fish when I sail these days."

From now until they get back to land, the king cannot be teleported.

Errand. Stover Delft detaches himself from a trio of military veterans arguing about small-unit tactics and comes to the PCs. He says that the duchess hasn't gotten back yet from the nap she went to an hour ago. He suggests the PCs go to the ship's wizard's quarters at the aft of the berth deck, where the duchess is napping, to check on her and make sure she's not trying to embarrass the king by hiding during his big speech.

What happens next depends on where the PCs go. If they wait more than a few minutes to head belowdecks, their only warning of the imminent explosion is when steam stops coming out of the stacks, so you can skip to the combat section of the next encounter. If they wait a short while then head down, they might cross paths with Sokana and the halfling assassin. If they head straight for the engine room or magazine, they notice the guards are missing (Perception DC 12 to spot signs that the bodies have been hidden behind casks of firedust), and might interrogate the engineer saboteurs, who claim everything's fine.

But most likely is that the PCs go to the quarters where the duchess is supposed to be napping. The door is locked, and Sokana stalls by saying that the duchess is sleeping, while she tries to hide the evidence of her ritual. If the duchess hasn't left already, she opens the aft window and dives out at this moment. Meanwhile the halfling assassin hides by the entrance, ready to attack if the PCs force their way in. If cornered, Sokana might climb out the aft window, clamber along the outside hull, and try to sneak back into the ship through one of the open gunports.

Duchess and Archfey

Right as the band starts to play, the duchess dives into the ocean and is caught by the archfey Beshela, who appears as a sea nymph riding atop some massive submerged sea creature. The PCs might get a glimpse out the window of the duchess willingly heading underwater with the archfey.

If a PC tries something wild like leaping out after the duchess or attacking Beshela, be merciful. The duchess's stats are presented in Act Three. Beshela is a paragon-tier creature, and could easily knock out a PC with a glance, but neither of them wants to waste time fighting. They flee, and the sheer scale of the giant squid Beshala uses as a mount should hopefully cue the PCs in that this foe is beyond them.

If combat breaks out, the instant the two sides roll initiative is when the military band on the main deck starts to play the national anthem. For the next three minutes, no one up there is going to hear anything belowdecks.

The Sabotage

Action/Puzzle. Tactical. Level 3.

Stop the duchess's agents before they finish their assassination plot.

List of Adversaries.

- Sokana, eladrin warlock
- Ilton, halfling assassin
- 2 engineer saboteurs (Jenner and Ostman)
- 6 fire sprites

Tactics.

For the saboteurs, making sure the boiler explodes takes precedence over their own escape and safety. Only after they set the engine to detonate do they turn their attention to knocking out PCs so they can escape.

Sokana's primary goal is to reach the engine room and throw her amber rod into the boiler furnace. If the combat begins in the ship's wizard's quarters, she uses *fey step* and *otherwind stride* to get away from the PCs and teleport down to the engine room as fast as possible. She will *conjure fire sprites* to try to keep PCs from pursuing her, and if she has a spare use left when she reaches the magazine, she'll send the sprites into the magazine to remove the fire wards.

Ilton the assassin tries to hobble and pounce on any PCs who are harassing Sokana, and once she's safely away he'll try to keep attention focused on him as long as possible. The fire sprites are little more than distractions, though if they get loose in the magazine and succeed in taking out the fire wards, they grab casks of firedust and charge PCs, planning to explode when they get close enough.

In the engine room, Jenner and Ostman finish their sabotage, then try to force enemies close to the dangerous heat of the furnace.

Terrain.

Deck Access. Multiple ladders lead between the levels of the ship.

Grating. Parts of each deck's floor are grating, which grants line of sight between decks, but not line of effect. Teleportation can pass through these sections of floor.

Magazine Firedust. At the front of the berth deck above the engine room, a three-chambered magazine stores casks of firedust and cannonballs. A small wreath-like charm hangs in each of the two rooms, and a third hangs on the wall between the doors into those rooms. While a charm is mounted, all creatures and objects within 3 squares of it gain resist fire 20. If removed from its mount, the charm grants its resistance only to the creature carrying it. Their power fades after a day if not renewed by a ritual.

The wards normally prevent firedust from detonating in the magazine. Once the wards are removed, however, a cask of firedust that takes any fire damage explodes, dealing 3d6 fire damage in a Close Burst 1. If multiple casks are caught in a fire attack, the size of the explosion increases to as much as a Close Burst 5, and the concussive force of the explosion pushes any creatures in the area to outside the burst.

Even if all three wards are removed, the design of the magazine prevents an explosion in one room from setting off a chain reaction.

Sokana, Eladrin Warlock Level 3 Elite Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid, eladrin XP 300

HP 84; **Bloodied** 42 **Initiative** +7
AC 17, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 17 **Perception** +2
Saving Throws +2 Low-Light Vision
Speed 6
Action Points 1

Traits

▸ **Amber Fire Rod**

Sokana carries an amber rod that stores fire mana and an Affect Normal Fires ritual. If she places the rod in a fire, it doubles that fire's intensity.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Amber Rod** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The eladrin's thin weapon buffets you with wind, forcing you aside.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10+6 damage, and Sokana slides the target 1 square.

✲ **Searing Barrier** (fire) ✦ At-Will
Effect: Sokana creates a wall 3 within 10 squares, which lasts until the encounter ends or until she uses this power again. The wall provides concealment. Any creature that ends its turn in the wall or enters it takes 10 fire damage.

⟋ **Beguiling Lure** (psychic) ✦ Encounter
Time seems to slow as the beautiful eladrin beckons you closer.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +8 vs. Will
Hit: 1d10+6 psychic damage, and the target is pulled 5 squares and is dazed (save ends).

✧ **Otherwind Stride** (teleportation) ✦ Encounter
A whirlwind gale pulls you off the ground, and then the eladrin vanishes into the vortex.
Attack: Close Burst 1 (creatures in burst); +6 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d6+3 modifier damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of Sokana's next turn.
Effect: Sokana teleports 5 squares.

Move Actions

▸ **Fey Step** (teleportation) ✦ Encounter
Sokana teleports up to 5 squares.

Minor Actions

▸ **Conjure Fire Sprites** ✦ At-Will, once per round
Sokana conjures three fire sprites in unoccupied spaces within 10 squares. She can use this ability twice per encounter, for a total of six sprites.

⟋ **Rusting Touch** ✦ At-Will, once per round
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex
Hit: Sokana can cause a metal weapon or suit of armor the target has to become rusted until the end of the encounter. This has no effect by itself, but if Sokana would rust a nonmagical item that is already rusted, the item is instead destroyed.

Str 10 (+1) **Dex** 18 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+2)
Con 10 (+0) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 20 (+6)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

CHASES AND SLOW PCS

What if you have a party full of dwarves in plate armor? Chasing down Sokana before she gets to the engine room is meant to be tough, but there's a risk it might frustrate players with slow characters. If you want to give the PCs a chance to catch up, perhaps the security guards haven't been taken out yet, and they attack Sokana when she reaches the magazine, forcing her to spend a round or two to kill them.

Ilton, Halfling Assassin Level 1 Lurker
Small natural humanoid, halfling XP 100

HP 22; **Bloodied** 11 **Initiative** +7
AC 15, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 15 **Perception** +1
Speed 6

Traits

▸ **Nimble Reaction**

Ilton gains a +2 bonus to AC against opportunity attacks.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Short Sword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6+5 damage.

▸ **Foot Poke** (weapon) ✦ Encounter
Effect: Ilton uses *short sword*. If he hits, the target is also knocked prone.

▸ **Poison Juice** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
Effect: Ilton opens a vial amid a collection at his hip, then smears poison on his sword. The next time he hits with a *short sword* attack, the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage and is weakened (save ends).

Minor Actions

▸ **Chest Pounce** ✦ At-Will
Effect: Ilton shifts 1 square into the space of a prone enemy. That creature cannot stand while it shares a space with Ilton.

Skills Acrobatics +10, Bluff +8, Stealth +10
Str 10 (+0) **Dex** 18 (+4) **Wis** 11 (+0)
Con 10 (+0) **Int** 11 (+0) **Cha** 18 (+4)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Engineer Saboteurs (2) Level 1 Brute
Medium natural humanoid XP 100

HP 33; **Bloodied** 16 **Initiative** –1
AC 13, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 11, **Will** 12 **Perception** –1
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊘ **Wrench Smash** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The engineer bludgeons you with a wrench as big as a warhammer. The impact jars you long enough for the engineer to grab and shove you across the battlefield.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d12+5 damage, and the engineer slides the target 2 squares.

▸ **Rusting Wand** ✦ At-Will
Effect: The engineer causes one adjacent unattended metal object to become rusted.

Str 16 (+3) **Dex** 8 (–1) **Wis** 8 (–1)
Con 13 (+1) **Int** 13 (+1) **Cha** 14 (+2)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Fire Sprites (6) Level 1 Minion Soldier
Small fey humanoid XP 25

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +3
AC 16, **Fortitude** 10, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 13 **Perception** +2
Speed 6 Low-Light Vision
Resist 5 fire

Standard Actions

⊘ **Scrabbling Claws** ✦ At-Will, Basic
The sprite leaps on you, clawing at you as it flails around, making it hard to move.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 4 fire damage, and the target is grabbed (escape DC 12).

Str 6 (–2) **Dex** 17 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+2)
Con 13 (+1) **Int** 3 (–4) **Cha** 6 (–2)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven

The only way to detonate all the casks and cause a catastrophic explosion to destroy the ship is to damage them all simultaneously—such as by blowing up the steam boiler in the engine room. That much heat is far more intense than low-level fire attacks can cause, so the PCs cannot accidentally blow up the ship.

Furnace and Boiler. Any creature that starts its turn or moves in front of the door of the furnace takes 5 fire damage from the roaring heat. Any creature subject to forced movement who ends up adjacent to the boiler or furnace takes 1 fire damage from making contact with the searing metal.

Steps of Sabotage.

Unless the party finds a way to interrupt them very early, the saboteurs will have already overloaded the furnace and disabled the alarm sirens when this encounter begins. To make sure the engine explodes as intended, however, they must achieve several additional goals.

Countdown. From the start of the encounter, the PCs have 40 rounds before the boiler explodes. They can take actions to gain more time, to get assistance, or to mitigate the effects of the boiler explosion.

Overloaded Furnace. The furnace is crammed full of firegems, hot enough to melt metal. If the door to the furnace isn't rusted shut, a PC can use a shovel to remove some firegems as a standard action, taking 5 fire damage per round, as detailed above. After a given shovel is used ten times, it slags and is no longer useful. There are two shovels near the furnace, and ten more elsewhere in the engine room.

The cantrip *mage hand* can accomplish as much as a shovel without risk. However, these firegems must be placed somewhere, so every five standard actions worth of shoveling fills one square with firegems, making it difficult terrain and dealing 5 fire damage to anyone in that square.

If ten standard actions are devoted to shoveling out firegems, double the rounds left on the countdown. If twenty standard actions are devoted, the countdown stops. The mitigating factor here is damage from heat, and sufficient shovels.

Engine Alarm Sirens. In the room aft of the furnace, the pressure gauge on the boiler that would trigger a siren has been sabotaged. Repairing it requires a PC to have both hands free and succeed two Intelligence checks (DC 12), each of which takes one standard action. This repair doesn't help prevent an explosion directly, but five rounds after the alarm is fixed, Geoff Massarde and three of the *Coaltongue*'s engineers will arrive to help.

Engine Boiler Relief Valves. Each of the two boiler stacks in the room aft of the furnace has a sturdy valve. As soon as the engineers realize they've been found out, they start trying to disable them. Disabling a valve requires two move actions to close it, and a use of *rusting wand* to break the mechanism. Each closed valve takes 5 rounds off the countdown toward explosion.

An unbroken valve can be reopened with just two move actions, which adds back 5 rounds to the countdown before explosion. Fixing a broken valve is impossible in this scene's time frame, but the relief pipes can be cracked slightly by dealing 20 damage to the pipe or making an Athletics check (DC 19). This adds 5 rounds to the countdown but fills the aft engine room with searing steam, which grants everyone in that room concealment and deals 1 point of fire damage each round. Breaking a second valve adds another 5 rounds, but doesn't make the steam any worse.

Fuel Bin Firegems. Forward of the furnace is a large bin of firegems which engineers normally shovel in as fuel. Already Jenner and Ostman have filled the furnace to the brim, so the rest are of relatively no consequence.



Magazine Fire Wards. Removing or remounting a ward just takes a minor action, or the ward can be destroyed by dealing 5 points of damage to it. Most likely Sokana will send her fire sprites to remove the charms, though they can't destroy them with their attacks.

If a PC tosses a fire ward in the furnace, it adds 5 rounds to the countdown clock, but the ward is burned away to nothing.

Ritual Amber Rod. Sokana will likely have just finished her ritual when the PCs come investigating. The ritual infuses an amber rod with fire magic. If she can toss the rod into the furnace, it flares with light and the furnace begins to shudder with barely-contained arcane energy. Halve the rounds left in the countdown. Then she or one of the engineers will rust and seal the furnace door.

Opening a rusted furnace door requires an Athletics check (DC 19). A character who reaches in to pull out the amber rod takes 20 points of fire damage, though he can manage to get the rod out first even if the damage knocks him out or kills him. Of course, there are tongs nearby, though noticing them in the heat of the moment may be difficult (Perception DC 19). Removing the rod doubles the rounds left in the countdown.

Boiling Point.

Once the PCs realize that the boiler is building up to a deadly explosion, they have to decide whether to try to undo the damage themselves, seek help, or evacuate the ship. To keep the pressure up, you might want to have a 30-second timer to represent each round; don't be too strict, especially if the players need you to clarify something their characters should know.

Getting Help.

The drunken tiefling Geoff Massarde is not eager to risk his life, but the pressure of everyone looking to him convinces him to go. Massarde can automatically succeed checks needed to destroy the furnace (see Fix It! below), and he's quite handy with a shovel, since he's resistant to damage from the heat.

If the PCs propose the capacitor plan to Harkover Lee, he says his duty to the king takes precedence, and he makes the preparations detailed in the "Evacuate" section below.

Evacuate.

If the PCs warn the dignitaries fast enough, there's a chance they might be able to escape before the explosion.

King Aodhan gravely orders everyone to remain calm, and then nods to his Principal Minister. Harkover Lee uses a telekinetic flick of his hand to tear free the nearest piece of gold ward around the ship's edge. After 5 rounds, the ship's crew manages to prep the two life boats, and key political figures pile into them. Then 5 rounds later the lifeboats are in the water, and 5 rounds after that the sailors rowing them get far enough away to avoid the explosion.

Once the lifeboats hit the water in round 10, Harkover Lee urges the king that they have to leave. The king nods, orders everyone else to swim, and then removes a gold ring from one finger. Lee grabs the king and concentrates, planning to teleport a hundred feet to the nearest of the escort ships. Fey magic from Beshala disrupts his spell, and though Lee teleports away without trouble, the king is left behind. Lee is only capable of such a jaunt once a day, so he is powerless to help his king.

In round 10, those who aren't in the lifeboats heed their king's orders and start diving into the water to swim to safety. A quarter of the crowd manages to get to safety by round 15, and another half by round 30, but the last quarter are too feeble to swim even that far. They will be caught in the blast. The king, a 70 year-old man, swims with them, and gets to safety 15 rounds after he's alerted to the danger.

The ocean waters are gentle (Athletics DC 8 to swim).

Fix It!

All the easy options the PCs have available only serve to delay the inevitable. Reasonably creative idea might add a round or two to the countdown clock, at your judgment. A PC who can deal cold damage each round, for instance, might add 1 round to the clock for every 5 rounds he devotes to the action.

They can mitigate the damage slightly if they replace the fire wards in the magazine. When the boiler explodes, the firedust casks don't explode. The ship's lower hull ruptures, and the whole thing sinks within ten minutes, but that's enough time to evacuate everyone.

Likewise, they might stop the explosion altogether with the unorthodox tactic of detonating five or more casks of firedust in the forward compartment of the engine room. This cracks the hull, and 5 rounds later seawater floods the furnace and kills the reaction.

The most efficient way to stop the explosion is to break the furnace, which is too sturdy to be affected by most weapons. A cask of firedust pushed into the furnace immediately detonates, dealing 3d6+1 damage in close burst 1 but shattering the furnace. Alternately, a PC can spend a standard action and make an Intelligence check (DC 12) to correctly place a cask of firedust so it will fracture the furnace when it explodes. If two casks are detonated this way, the furnace is destroyed.

This either obliterates the relief valves—which fills all the lower decks with scalding steam for 5 minutes—or breaks open the bottom of the furnace—which spills out firegems onto the floor, warping the metal and forcing an evacuation of the engine room. Once the furnace is destroyed, though, the ship is safe.

Alternately, the PCs might go for a *Star Trek* style technobabble solution: channel the excess fire mana from the engine into the capacitor, then release it as a blast of the ship's brand. Unfortunately, since this was just supposed to be a casual cruise, the brand isn't calibrated yet. The brand uses a complicated mix of magical energies, but can be calibrated if PCs in the engine room succeed three checks, one each Arcana, Nature, and Religion (DC 19).

The ship shudders, the engine room glows with red-orange light from all directions, and on deck, the capacitor fills with crackles of red energy. The dignitaries scream and cower in fear, and then a gout of flame shoots forth from the figurehead with a roar, vaporizing a spot on the ocean a hundred feet away. The ship shudders one last time, and then the furnace dims to a safe level.

If the PCs come up with other suitably dramatic, risky, or clever plans (like using Sokana's amber rod as a focus to recast a jury-rigged version of her Affect Normal Fire ritual), those can work as well, at your discretion.

And if the PCs are doing terribly, and the countdown has 10 rounds left, you might want to suggest they get the hell out of there.

Aftermath

Exposition/Social. Montage. Level 1.

The PCs learn the full story of what happened.

What happens next depends on how the PCs handled the sabotage.

Critical Failure.

If the PCs don't stop the boiler in time, it explodes. Every creature in the engine room is slain by the combination of pressure and heat. If the firedust casks are warded, the ship merely has its hull cracked. It sinks 5 ft. every round, and 7 rounds later the main deck is underwater. The escort ships rescue everyone, but the *Coaltongue* sits in a watery grave.

If the casks are not warded, though, they explode in a chain reaction, which tears apart the bow of the ship. Every creature on or near the ship is killed. If this happens and the PCs failed to warn the king, well, they're probably already dead, but the king is too. Continue the campaign with a new set of PCs, perhaps recruited by Lya Jierre to prove that the duchess was behind the whole plot.

Failure.

If the ship explodes, but the PCs warn the king in time for him and others to get to safety, they are publicly commended for saving the king, but privately reprimanded for botching the challenge. When they are recruited to go to Axis Island, it's their boss Stover Delft's attempt to get them a chance to make up for their initial failure.

Success.

If the PCs keep the ship from sinking, they are highly commended, and are given the mission to Axis Island precisely because they have proven themselves.

Critical Success.

The PCs might manage to stop the ship from sinking without even interrupting the king's party. If they end up firing the brand, it might coincide with the crescendo of the national anthem, setting off a round

of applause from the crowd. They can come up on deck, discreetly notify Harkover Lee to deal with prisoners, and let the king give his prepared remarks without disruption.

Debriefing.

In the immediate aftermath, the PCs are treated for their injuries and questioned thoroughly by Principal Minister Lee. The king asks to speak to them before the night is out, and he thanks them personally. He spares five minutes at a very critical time to ask their names and ask about their families; he's especially interested in anyone who has siblings. The king is troubled that his own sister could betray him, and he prays that the PCs never find an enemy among their own flesh and blood.

The King's Speech

Either to a small crowd on the ship, or the next day before a crowd of thousands, the king gives a five minute speech in which he recounts the trials Risur has faced to defend itself from Danor through four wars that ultimately earned either side little. For centuries, the king says, his people have viewed Danorans as cursed and unnatural, while they claim Risuri are superstitious and primitive. But ironically their latest efforts to arm for war have brought the two nations closer together, as Danorans have helped Risur with its industrial revolution.

The king hopes that his successor, whoever that may be, will not have to lose any more young men and women to another pointless war. And so, even though he first started this arms race, King Aodhan now intends to seek peace with his old, respected enemy, the sovereign of Danor. In one year's time he will convene a peace summit here in Flint, and to seal the proposed treaty he intends to marry a Danoran.

Normally making peace with a distrusted enemy is a tough sell, but reactions polarize quickly because of the duchess's assassination attempt. Even if the PCs killed all the assassins, within a few days mages have extracted from their corpses and souls enough evidence to brand the duchess a traitor. A handful try to defend the duchess's actions, claiming that Risur is going in the wrong direction, and that Danor is not to be trusted, but they are denounced. Some high-ranking supporters of the duchess are driven from their homes and sent fleeing westward to Shale.

What's Next for the Constables?

By the time anyone knows what's going on, the duchess is long gone, having fled by *linked portal* to her stronghold in Shale, where, still determined, she prepares to launch her naval assault on Axis Island.

Even though the PCs are the heroes of the hour, they're not of high enough rank to be given any critical assignments. Others in the constabulary are given the task of figuring out who was involved in the plot, and most of the PCs' tasks involve following up on the work of other investigators. Assistant Chief Inspector Delft keeps them busy for the next few days, conducting low-level interviews, filling out paperwork for search warrants, and the like.

Journalists seek to interview the PCs, and they might bask in momentary celebrity, but there's no 24-hour news channel or Internet, so the PCs don't hear much about what's going on hundreds of miles away in Shale.

Then, about a week after the *Coaltongue*'s launch, the PCs are in the main RHC office late one afternoon, filing their paperwork, when one of their coworkers tells them that Delft wants them in his office.



CHAPTER TWO: Three Towers

In this chapter, the party helps Risur's navy to take down the treasonous duchess.

MINISTER OF OUTSIDERS LYA JIERRE



An ambitious tiefling in her late 20s, Lya is the niece of Han Jierre, the Sovereign of Danor (her father is Han's brother). She graduated top of her class from the prestigious academy of war, the *Jierre Sciens d'Arms*, and many students of other war colleges have read her thesis, *Field Study of Melee Effectiveness and Foe Debilitation through Focused Limb Severance Techniques Contrasted with Mainstream Opportunistic Techniques*, which she wrote near the end of the last Yerasol War.

Despite her youth, she was awarded the position of Minister of Outsiders, giving her great leeway to travel and make alliances. For the past three years she has worked with King Aodhan to keep the peace between their two nations, and as they began making plans for a formal alliance, she accepted the king's offer of marriage as a symbolic union.

Secretly, she is also a tier-four member of the Obscurati's Golden Cell, tasked with recruiting archaeologists and miners around Lanjyr to seek out ancient seals like the one on Axis Island. She merely thinks this is part of a scientific endeavor to better understand the nature of the planes. During the course of this adventure, however, the leadership of Golden Cell are all slain when Duchess Ethelyn of Shale attacks the island.

Lya is not aware how important the operations on the island are until after this adventure, when she is contacted by the ultimate head of the conspiracy and promoted to leader of Golden Cell. Lya should be portrayed as a complex character with competing motivations. Though she gets involved with Risur out of a desire to gain great political power, she does so with no malice. After she is promoted within the Obscurati, she sees a chance for a more meaningful and lasting peace, but to reach that goal she must tell ever more elaborate lies.

Three Towers

Puzzle/Social. Real-Time. Level 1.

The wits of the PCs are tested by the cunning Lya Jierre.

Assistant Inspector Delft is not alone in his office. He tells the PCs to sit, then introduces them to the "Minister of Outsiders" from Danor, Lya Jierre. She's dressed in a rich formal coat of red and purple, which is tailored to give her a lot of freedom of movement—fancy looking yet suitable for a sword fight.

And indeed she has a sword at her hip; it looks like a rapier, but has some tiny mechanical device attached at the guard. The sheath is thicker than one would expect for a rapier. In the unlikely event the PCs get a glimpse, the blade's edge consists of a thin sharpened wire which works something like a razor chainsaw when the sword's mechanism is activated. The weapon is an arcanotechnological marvel, a rarity and mark of great prestige among Danorans.

Without explaining why she's here, she directs the PCs' attention to a strange collection of items on Delft's desk.

There are three ivory "towers," each three inches tall with a steel plate on its base. Next are three stone rings—one red, one green, and one blue—each just slightly larger in diameter than the towers. Each ring has three strands of thread clipped to it, and each of the nine strands ends in a small silvery magnet, which can stick to the bases of the towers.

Lya Jierre says, "The three towers are about to be attacked. They must be reinforced by magic that flows like water from three portals—fire mana is red, earth is green, water is blue. The wires are canals through which the mana flows. But if the mana streams cross, they'll destroy their respective portals. How do you arrange the portals, towers, and streams of mana so that each tower gets all three types of magic, without any of the streams crossing?"

Delft looks impatiently amused by all this, but he tells the party to give the lady an answer so they can move on to their mission.

Presenting the Puzzle. If you want to assemble the test for your players, some rooks from chess with metal washers glued to the bottom work for the towers. A shower ring or cheap plastic bracelet can work for the portals, and you can use different colored threads with tiny magnets glued to their ends for the mana streams.

Alternately, some scrap paper and pens should work to let players scribble potential solutions.

The Solution. The puzzle is a trick, a test by Lya to see how smart the PCs are and how fast they figure out that there is *no* way to connect the three portals to the three towers without the wires crossing. More accurately, it is impossible to solve the puzzle unless the PCs bend the rules slightly and move into three dimensions.

If a PC presents a solution that tries to "jump" one wire over another, hold one tower in the air, or otherwise solves the puzzle, Lya huffs a laugh and commends them on being smart enough to change the rules of the test.

If the PCs announce the puzzle is unsolvable, Lya nods and thanks them. If they keep trying for more than a minute or two, Lya sighs, explains that the puzzle has no solution, and asks Delft if he's sure these are the ones he wants to send on this mission.

The Mission.

After the puzzle, Delft explains what's going on. The expected civil war doesn't seem to be materializing. Instead, the duchess and some of her allies have seized a single island in the Yerasol Archipelago, known as Axis Island because compass needles endlessly spin on their axes there. Danor conquered the island seven years ago in the last war.

Lya says that there's a Danoran mining project on this island, as well as advanced steelworks, a shipyard, and a coastal military fort. (If all of this seems surprisingly forthcoming, it's because the PCs are going to be finding it all out anyway.) According to Lya, this is a key Danoran military holding, and the duchess's attack might be seen by Danor as an act of war. Lya wants the duchess and her people off the island soon, because she agrees with King Aodhan's desire for peace, and she doesn't want to risk giving her congress enough time to start another war. But she is not authorized to command Danoran forces, and even if she did, a Danoran counter-attack might result in the accidental death of the king's sister.

So Lya is bending the rules a little bit. She wants Risuri forces to remove the duchess, and to hand control back over within the next three days, and King Aodhan has graciously agreed.

Delft says that a fleet of Risuri ships with marines on board are preparing to assault the island in a few days. The PCs are to set out this evening, taking the Constabulary's fastest ship, the RNS *Impossible*, to meet up with the fleet. Other investigators will take point, and the military will handle the heavy lifting, but the PCs will be there because they were the last ones to interact with the duchess's forces. They might spot something others would miss.

Simply landing at some secluded beach is infeasible, because spells at the Axis Fort will alert the duchess if anyone sets foot on the island. But Lya has a work-around. The *Impossible* will rendezvous with the naval armada, where it will pick up a group of infiltration specialists—four highly decorated Homeland constables from the Slate office. While the navy waits out of sight, the *Impossible* will enter a cove under the cover of darkness. A sea cave in that cove leads to the bottom of a mine; Lya Jierre knows its location, but not the layout of the mine. With the aid of a Water Breathing ritual, the infiltrators will go in first to secure the cave, and then the PCs will be given the signal to follow.

The island's fortress has a sea wall around a harbor, which protects against storms and assault, but provides access for shipments in and out. The infiltrators are tasked with opening the fortress's sea gate so the armada can storm the fortress more easily. The military will capture the duchess, who will likely be holed up in a keep in the center of the fortress. Once the dust settles, the PCs will be on the scene to look for clues and interrogate the duchess and her associates.

At least, that's the plan. If anything goes awry, the PCs are the infiltrators' back-up. They'll be supplied with mission-critical resources, but once they're on the island there won't be any help until they open the sea gate for the navy. If they get into a fight, either with the island's original Danoran defenders, or any of the duchess's allies, the PCs have approval to defend themselves, but take prisoners if feasible.





The Complication.

While the RHC's main priority should be the capture of the duchess, Lya has two demands. First, to avoid a war, she says that by sunset three days from now (roughly 12 hours after retaking the island, if all goes by schedule), Risur must hand control back over to her people.

Second, as a personal request, Lya wants the PCs to ensure the safety of one person. Her cousin Nathan Jierre was on the island when it was attacked, and she's worried the duchess might have harmed him just because he's a tiefling. Nathan was a teenager during the last war, so he bears no responsibility for whatever grudges the duchess holds. Other people working on the island knew the risk of working in contested territory, but Nathan is innocent, and Lya asks the PCs to protect him.

More Details.

Lya is willing to answer a few questions, but she's a busy woman and will soon leave the PCs to work out details with Delft. She'll readily admit that Danor has factories on the island, and that yes, strange magical things happen there, but she only ever spent a few days in the fortress, not exploring the island. She knows that there is an archaeological investigation of an ancient culture living on the island, and so she asks them to try not to damage anything of historical value. As stated above, Lya is not yet familiar with the plans of the Obscurati, so she doesn't feel any need to keep these things secret.

Once Lya Jierre leaves, Assistant Chief Inspector Delft tells the PCs that he's got a hunch there's more going on here than what the Danorans are saying. It might just be that the island was one of the nearest Danoran military installations in the archipelago, but Delft wants the PCs to try to keep an eye open for anything unusual.

If a PC is a spirit medium, Delft smiles grimly as he explains that, if the duchess doesn't surrender, it'll be up to the ghost-talker to seek answers as to whether the duchess has any other secret accomplices, or if there was some ulterior motive for her attacking this particular island.

If any PCs have the Yerasol Veteran theme, they may have fought a battle on Axis Island nine years ago. It was a pretty place, with steep jungles and beautiful beaches, at the edge of the wild magic zone that surrounds Danor's dead magic zone.

About Axis Island.

Thousands of years ago, the Ancients performed a ritual on Axis Island to seal off this world and a few affiliated planes from the rest of the multiverse. Planar travel is difficult elsewhere in the world, but after millennia, energy from these other worlds bleeds through near the Axis Seal. What some interpret as the island being alive is just random fluctuations of reality caused as slivers of foreign planes briefly overwrite parts of the island.

These fluctuations happen most often in the presence of stray conscious thoughts, where idle imaginings make it easier for a foreign reality to become real. Large quantities of people tend to stabilize an area, since the mass of thoughts crowd out other planes. Likewise, the nature of the seal ritual makes iron a ward. The seal-builders placed key components of their ritual in veins of iron-rich rock, and the Danorans working on the island install small iron spikes at regular intervals in walls or floors, which help lock normal reality in place.

The fortress on Axis Island is led by a military commander, General Alsanor, who is also head of the Obscurati's Golden Cell. He dies before the PCs ever make it to the island, though the PCs might ask about him.

There were few casualties because the place wasn't inhabited to begin with, and the commanders weren't willing to settle in for a slog. A lot of weird stuff happened there, though—terrain seemed to shift, spells backfired, rockslides and treefalls happened too often to be coincidence—as though the island was fighting both sides. Even the Danorans seemed spooked, but they're not superstitious as a rule, so they held out while the Risuri commander ordered a withdrawal.

Mission-Critical Supplies.

The PCs will be sent with two sunrods each, four ritual scrolls of Water Breathing, four of Pyrotechnics, two of Silence, two of Passwall, and enough ritual components for all of them (2,380 gp worth). Though such rituals are normally beyond the skill of 1st level PCs, scrolls can be used regardless of level. The RHC, of course, expects any unused material to be returned.

The PCs each receive a stipend now: 728 gp, as detailed in Rewards (page 95). They can use it to requisition equipment.

EXPANDED ADVENTURE.

If you want to expand the scope of the adventure and have the party explore the island, perhaps have Lya Jierre give Risur four days instead of three, and assign the party the task of locating an engineer who designed the Axis Fortress, without whom the party won't know where to use their Passwall ritual scrolls. Details of other island locations appear under Optional Encounters (page 118).

The R.N.S. Impossible

Social. Montage. Level 1.

The party sets sail for Axis Island and links up with their fellow constable infiltrators.

That evening, the *Impossible*—a 170-ft. long clipper—leaves Flint's harbor and turns west. The captain, Rutger Smith, recalls the PCs from the events aboard the *Coaltongue*, though his opinion of them depends on how well that great ship fared.

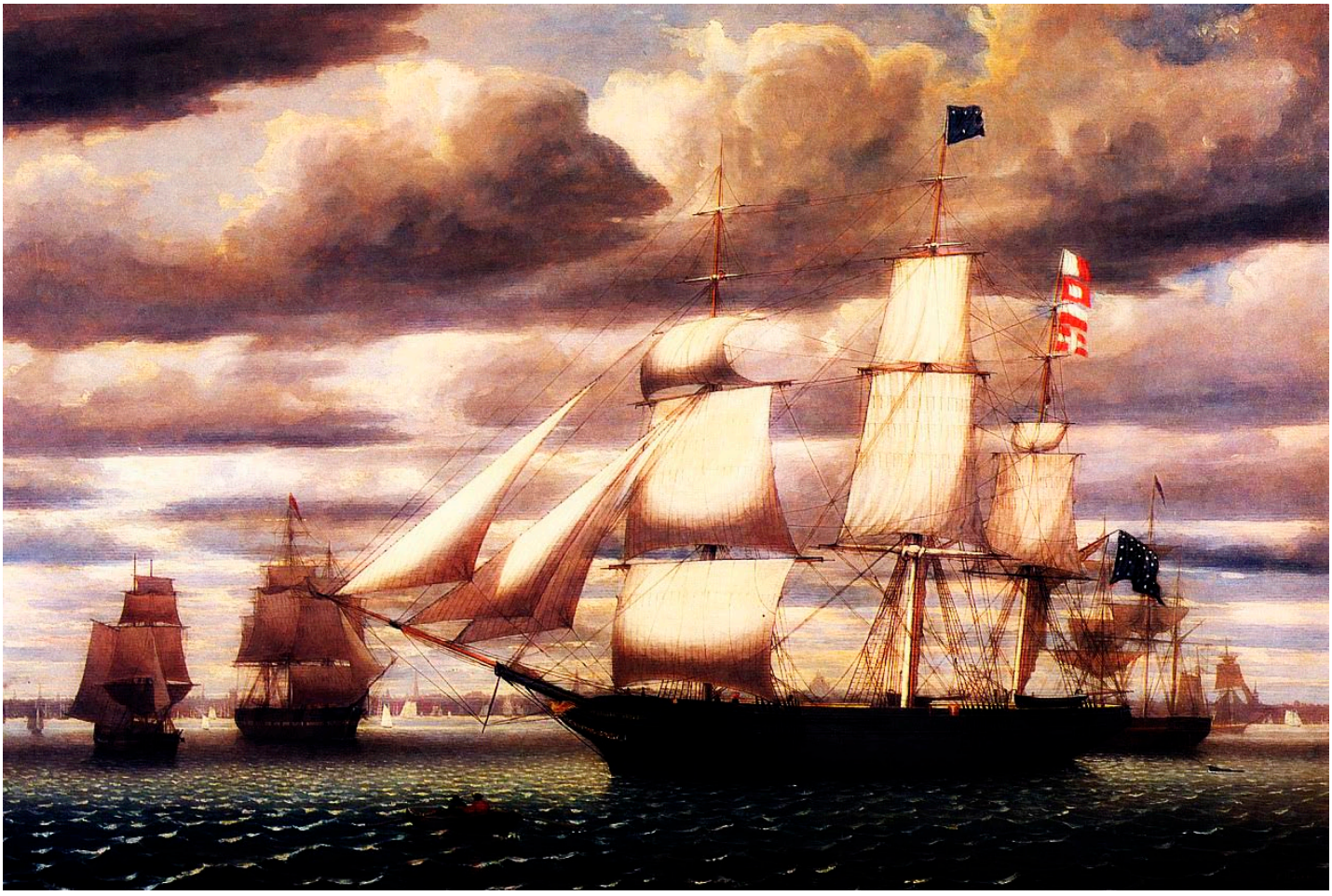
During the brief but intense voyage, the PCs get to experience his unorthodox tradition of discussing philosophy with his crew during meals. If you want to give the PCs a chance to ponder the pros and cons of the duchess's actions, now is a good opportunity. Of course, while the crew is willing to discuss the topic, all of them insist they're firmly loyal to the king.

Aided by a skyseer to keep the course at night and a druid to guide the wind, the *Impossible* sails the five hundred miles to Axis Island in just under two days, arriving before sunset the day of the first-quarter moon.

Infiltrators.

The four other constables arrived earlier in the day from Slate. They take a rowboat from their ship to the *Impossible*, and make quick introductions before getting down to planning.

- **Tanya.** Half-elf shaman with a hound spirit companion. Leader of the group, confident but cautious. Double-checks everyone's armor and gear before setting out.



Infiltrator Stats.

The infiltrators likely all die or are disabled before they have a chance to get into any fights, but if you need combat stats, reskin existing creatures from level 5 to 7. Tanya would be a controller, Letmas a lurker, Seven-Foot Dan a soldier, and Burton a skirmisher.

- **Letmas.** Human illusionist who is excellent at faking accents. Slips off to make tea during the mission briefing while an illusion of himself stays behind.
- **Seven-Foot Dan.** Towering human fighter with a spiked chain. A veteran of the Fourth Yerasol War. Offers to give lessons in "breaking stuff," and has a bag full of bricks and wooden boards for that purpose.
- **Burton.** Goblin rogue who carries a fancy surgical kit containing many varieties of daggers, knives, saws, and scalpels. According to Letmas, Burton once camped out in a Danoran latrine for three hours to get a shot at the commander of an enemy company. Ever since then, he's worn an amulet that constantly cleans him as the cantrip Prestidigitation.

The plan is that evening the ship will hoist black sails and reach the cove around 9:00 PM, at low tide. Once they arrive at the sea cave entrance, Letmas will perform two Water Breathing rituals so that the infiltrators and PCs can breathe underwater for an hour or so. The infiltrators will then take a 500-ft. length of rope, dive underwater, and swim to the sea cave. There's supposedly a 200-ft. stretch of submerged cave before an opening with fresh air at the bottom of a mine.

Once there, they'll secure the location, and signal back—by using an Animal Messenger ritual, by sending Burton back, or by just tugging really hard. The PCs will then follow the rope to link up with them. Sunrods will let everyone see underwater.

Together, the two groups will make their way to the mine's exit (marked as Mine C on the island map), which should be on a low mountain facing an island valley. They'll then cross over the mountains to the north shore of the island and descend to the back of the fortress. They'll use Passwall to breach the fortress, and then the infiltrators will try to open the sea gate. Once it's open, they'll use Pyrotechnics to send a signal flare up to alert the navy.

Quitting Early?

The most likely course of action after the infiltrators are put out of commission is for the party to enter the sea cave, head to the surface, then sneak into the fortress and finish the infiltrators' mission. But the PCs might decide otherwise.

If they avoid getting onto the island altogether, the *Impossible* sails back to the fleet, which uses its back-up plan of landing on the shore near the fortress and marching their forces in for a traditional attack. The fort's defenses are already weakened from one successful assault, so the forces loyal to the king will succeed, though they'll take worse casualties. They can still call in the PCs for all events of Act Three.

If the PCs get onto the island but avoid the fortress or don't try to open the gate, they might witness some strange phenomena as they try to survive the island. A few hours later they'll hear sounds of cannons and battle, and later in the day troops loyal to the king will track them down and bring them back to the fortress, just in time for them to deal with Act Three.

Meanwhile the PCs hole up and wait for the military to arrive. Once the fleet is signaled, it will take about ten minutes for them to strike. They'll be able to sail directly into the interior harbor of the fortress, and they outnumber the duchess's forces about 5 to 1, so victory should be a foregone conclusion.

Once the dust settles, they'll bring the PCs in to handle Nathan Jierre and to pore through whatever evidence the duchess and her allies may have left behind. If needed, however, the infiltrators or military may ask the PCs for help.

Sea Tunnel

Exploration. Real-Time. Level 1.

Tragedy forces the PCs to decide whether to undertake their mission without aid.

The first-quarter moon hangs overhead as the infiltrators dive overboard and swim for the sea cave, trailing a rope behind them. It should take them less than five minutes to get through, but two minutes in a strange vibration wave ripples the water around them, and the rope goes slack. A few minutes later, the rope starts to jerk fitfully.

What happened is that while the infiltrators swam through the tunnel, a random planar fluctuation dislodged part of the stone above them, and they were crushed. Unless you'd like to keep some of them alive, Tanya, Letmas, and Seven-Foot Dan were killed instantly. Burton only got his leg caught under a boulder; he's now bleeding from a compound fracture, and is barely conscious enough to tug on the rope for help.

When the PCs come upon the scene, the Water Breathing ritual lets them speak with Burton, who says he felt like he was someplace else for a moment—a swamp with yellow frogs and a purple sky—and then the ceiling cracked. He's a little delirious, and after explaining what happens he grabs anyone beside him. He demands they cut off his leg and get him out of here before sharks eat him.

If the party can manage to lift 1000 pounds (a combined Strength score of 50 will do it, or some quick fulcrums and levers), they can unpin Burton. His leg can be tended so he won't bleed to death, but he's useless for the mission until he can see a ritual healer back with the navy. That's time the party can't really spare, and when he calms down a bit Burton will suggest leaving him in the mine, then coming back for him when the mission's over. A better plan might be to take him to the *Impossible* now.

The party has a little while to discuss their options, but the Water Breathing ritual only lasts about an hour more. If they press on, the sea cave goes about two hundred feet before opening into a large vertical chamber.

Genius Loci

Action/Exploration/Social. Real-Time. Level 1.

A paranoid mine foreman tries to kill the PCs as they examine an airy artifact.

List of Adversaries.

- Nicolas Dupiers, mine foreman
- Axis air elemental
- Axis earth elemental
- Axis shadow stalker

The 80-ft. diameter, 60-ft. high cave at the end of the tunnel has no light sources, but the air is pleasantly warm for being underground. At low tide when the PCs likely arrive, the water at the bottom of the cave ranges from 10 ft. deep to just a few inches. Wooden platforms anchored to the walls form a makeshift dock and stairs, which lead up to a 30-ft. wide tunnel that intersects horizontally with this chamber 35 ft. above the water line. Iron spikes, each 6 inches long, are driven into the walls every 30 ft. as a defense against planar fluctuations.

A 20-ft. diameter pillar of dull gray stone rises from the water line to the ceiling. A dramatic splinter of white marble extrudes from the gray stone, 5 ft. wide and rising 17 ft. above the water. Ages of surf have eroded its surface, but in places one can still find hints of ancient pictogram carvings. It looks like once the splinter was part of a longer column, but something snapped free its top. The missing section of pillar is nowhere to be found.

In a tiny nook carved into the tip of the marble splinter sits an oversized gold coin. About three inches across, it has primitive designs of birds, clouds, and dots that might represent stars. A PC with the Skyseer theme, or any other character who succeeds a DC 19 Nature check, recognizes the constellation of The Eagle, which is said to hold great influence over the planet Avilona, which affects weather and air magic. This coin, the *Golden Icon of Avilona*, can easily be removed.

One of the mining platforms sits just beneath the nook. Anyone standing right beside the marble splinter hears what sounds like voices muffled by a thin wall.





Golden Icon of Avilona

Lvl 2 520 gp

Rare Wondrous Item

Property: When you use an action point, once before the end of your next turn you can fly your speed as a move action.

While on Axis Island, a person holding the icon or wearing it as a necklace gains a jump speed equal to his or her walk speed, and can influence air magic. Most notably, air elementals are drawn to it, and they defend the bearer and obey his or her orders.

Being Watched.

When the PCs arrive, anyone who makes a Perception check (DC 20) spots a lurking, shadowy figure that quickly flees up the stairs to the tunnel 35 ft. up. The shadow is bound to Nicolas Dupiers, the mine's foreman, who has been hiding here since the duchess's attack. His makeshift lair is nearby in the bottom of the mine, and he wears a necklace with two golden icons similar to the one in the marble splinter—one tied to shadow magic of the planet Nem, and one to earth magic of the planet Urim. These are the only icons of this type the Danorans have excavated so far, and when the attack came, Dupiers tried to hide them.

Dupiers has set a loyal shadow creature here to watch the lower entrance to the mine, and has an earth elemental watching another approach to his lair. If the shadow alerts him, he sneaks up to the top of this chamber. He's very paranoid and twitchy, so unless the PCs come in talking about how great Danor is, Dupiers assumes they've come to kill him. He tries to strike with the element of surprise.

Nicolas Dupiers, Mine Foreman Level 1 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid XP 100

HP 24; **Bloodied** 12 **Initiative** +0
AC 13, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12 **Perception** +1
Speed 6, climb 4 Darkvision

Traits

▸ **Earth Icon**

Dupiers has resist 5 all while he's not bloodied.

▸ **Shadow Icon**

If Dupiers moves 3 or more squares on his turn, he gains concealment until the beginning of his next turn.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Pistol Whip** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4+3 damage.

⟋ **Pistol Shot** (weapon) ✦ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4+7, and Dupiers either pushes the target 1 square or the target is blinded until the end of Dupiers's next turn. 1d4+13 on a critical hit.
Load standard.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Shadow Slip** ✦ Encounter

The frantic man disappears, but his shadow slides away, and then he reappears beside his shadow.

Trigger: Dupiers is first bloodied.
Effect (Free Action): Dupiers teleports three squares.

Str 9 (–1) **Dex** 10 (+0) **Wis** 13 (+1)
Con 12 (+1) **Int** 16 (+3) **Cha** 14 (+2)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common

Golden Icon of Nem

Lvl 4 840 gp
Rare Wondrous Item

Property: When you use an action point, you may become insubstantial until the end of your next turn. This effect ends if you attack.

While on Axis Island, a person holding the icon or wearing it as a necklace gains darkvision, and can influence shadow magic. Most notably, shadow creatures are drawn to it, and they defend the bearer and obey his or her orders.

TAKING PRISONERS.

When a PC reduces an enemy to 0 hit points, he can choose to knock out the foe instead of killing it. Similarly, the duchess's forces here want to take the PCs prisoner. In situations where enemies might prefer to take the PCs alive rather than slaughter them, whenever a PC is reduced to 0 HP or below he immediately stabilizes. He can be revived with healing, but he no longer makes death saves, so has no chance of waking up on his own in the middle of the fight.

If the whole party is defeated while on Axis Island, they wake up in the fortress prison. They can interact with the other prisoners, detailed in Act Three, and will eventually be rescued when loyalist forces manage to finally breach the fortress's defenses, shortly before Asrabey Varal storms the inner wall.

Golden Icon of Urim

Lvl 3 680 gp
Rare Wondrous Item

Property: When you use an action point, you can create a wall of stone 2 squares high, which fills 3 contiguous squares within 5 squares of you. The wall lasts until the end of your next turn.

While on Axis Island, a person holding the icon or wearing it as a necklace gains Resist All 5 while not bloodied, and can influence earth magic. Most notably, earth elementals are drawn to it, and they defend the bearer and obey his or her orders.

Axis Air Elemental Level 1 Lurker
Small elemental magical beast (air) XP 100

HP 23; **Bloodied** 11 **Initiative** +7
AC 15, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 13 **Perception** +5
Speed 0, fly 6 (hover) Blindsight 5
Vulnerable 5 fire

Traits

▸ **Murmurs in the Air**

The air elemental becomes invisible whenever it starts its turn without an enemy adjacent to it. The invisibility lasts until the end of its next turn or until it hits or misses with an attack.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Flyby Slam** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Claws of wind wrap around you and tug you through the air.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6+6 damage. The air elemental slides the target 3 squares, then shifts 3 squares to a space adjacent to the target.

Str 16 (+3) **Dex** 17 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+0)
Con 11 (+0) **Int** 5 (–3) **Cha** 6 (–2)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** understands Primordial

Axis Earth Elemental Level 1 Soldier
Small elemental magical beast (earth) XP 100

HP 34; **Bloodied** 17 **Initiative** –2
AC 16, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 11, **Will** 12 **Perception** +0
Speed 5, burrow 5 Tremorsense 5

Traits

▸ **Brittle Skin**

Whenever the elemental takes thunder damage, it takes a –2 penalty to all defenses until the end of its next turn.

▸ **Earth Glide**

The elemental can pass through earth and rock as if it were phasing.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Slam** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8+4 damage, and the target cannot shift until the end of the elemental's next turn.

Minor Actions

▸ **Wall Extrusion** ✦ At-Will, once per round

The wall beside you lurches outward, cutting off your path with a massive horizontal stalagmite.

Effect: One unoccupied square adjacent to a stone wall within 5 squares of the elemental becomes blocking terrain until the end of the encounter or until the elemental uses this power again.

Str 16 (+3) **Dex** 6 (–2) **Wis** 10 (+0)
Con 18 (+4) **Int** 5 (–3) **Cha** 6 (–2)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** understands Primordial

Axis Shadow Stalker	Level 1 Lurker
Medium shadow humanoid	XP 100
HP 13; **Bloodied** 6	**Initiative** +7
AC 13, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12	**Perception** +1
Speed 8	Darkvision
Resist insubstantial	

Traits

▸ **Born of Shadows**

The stalker can make a Stealth check to become hidden when it has concealment instead of needing total concealment.

▸ **The Light, It Burns!**

Radiant damage ignores the stalker's resistances. When the stalker takes radiant damage, it loses its insubstantiality (save ends).

Standard Actions

⊘ **Draining Touch** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +4 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d8+4 necrotic damage.

✓ **Shadow Stalk** (necrotic) ✦ Encounter

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d8+4 necrotic damage, and the stalker shifts into the target's space and melds with its shadow (save ends). While the stalker is melded with the target's shadow, it moves when the target moves without provoking opportunity attacks, and it gains a +4 bonus to all defenses and a +5 bonus to attack rolls against the target. When the target saves, the stalker shifts to a square adjacent to the target.

Str	12 (+1)	**Dex**	19 (+4)	**Wis**	14 (+2)
Con	14 (+0)	**Int**	5 (–3)	**Cha**	6 (–2)

Alignment Evil **Languages** understands Common

Tactics.

The shadow stalker gets as close as possible, and Dupiers shoots as soon as it attacks. The earth elemental throws a barrel of oil, then intercepts anyone trying to climb up to its master. Thereafter Dupiers hides behind barrels for cover, and struggles to reload his gun fast enough to keep PCs at bay. Prolonged exposure to the icons has granted him unusual elemental protections.

An air elemental lurks near the ceiling, almost invisible. It doesn't join the battle unless someone has the air icon, at which point it acts as that creature's ally.

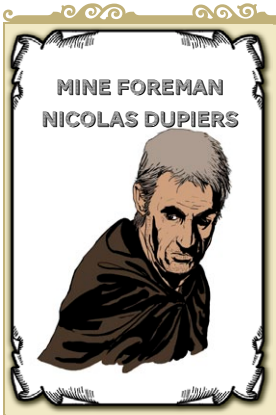
WHAT IS THIS PLACE?

As stated in the Campaign Guide, the Ancients who created the Axis Seal carved runes and symbols into trees as part of the ritual. These carvings, along with specially crafted golden icons, drew a small group of planes to this world. The ancients used magic to turn the trees to stone and lower them into the earth, ensuring a strong connection between the worlds.

They then crafted smaller stone pillars, and placed them in a pit beneath the massive golden Axis Seal in the center of the island. This locked the connections in place.

The Danorans dug mines on Axis Island to retrieve iron ore, but Obscurati members guided their excavations toward the locations of the ancient petrified trees. For their ultimate plan, the Obscurati will need to replace the icons each tree is tied to, which is why Nicolas Dupiers has two already.

The ancients did not know about the sea cave when they lowered this pillar into the earth. The force of tides and erosion broke the pillar, which weakened the world's connection to Avilona, the plane of air. Recall that in Zeitgeist, flight magic is limited.



A white-haired Danoran in his 50s, Dupiers meets the PCs several days after the duchess attacks Axis Island. He ran the iron mines, and is completely unaware of the Obscurati. However, he knew that archaeologists working for the island's military commander—General Alsanor—had found golden icons that resemble coins a three sites deep underground. When the fighting began, Dupiers panicked, stole two of these icons, and fled to the mine that contained the third icon, thinking their magic might help him. When he realized they let him see in the dark, he hid in the mine, fearing discovery by Risuri forces.

Negotiating. As soon as the fight begins, Dupiers yells to the PCs, "You killed all my men, you dirt worshippers! That wasn't enough? Now you want me dead as well?"

The PCs might be able to talk him down, at which point he'll call off his monsters. If he's bloodied, though, Dupiers starts screaming that he's going to die. He tries to get the air icon, either from the pillar or by knocking out whoever has it. He thinks it will keep him safe.

Terrain.

Any of the ladders that stretch horizontally between the platforms can be crawled across safely (no check required), or walked across with an Acrobatics check (DC 12). A character who fails makes no progress; one who fails by 5 or more falls off.

Normal vertical ladders lead between levels of the scaffolding. A rope dangles from a wooden crane at the tunnel at the top of this chamber. The rope can be climbed (Athletics DC 12), or a creature at the crane can raise or lower the rope 20 ft. as a move action.

A pair of ropes stretch between two sides of the scaffolding. Normally the miners hung lanterns from here for light, but a daring character could try to walk (Acrobatics DC 19) or climb (Athletics DC 12) along the ropes.

The barrels in the high tunnel are filled with lantern oil, and Dupiers rigged them with charges of firedust. A creature can throw or drop a barrel, making a Str or Con vs. Ref attack, dealing 1d10+Str/Con damage on a hit. If a barrel strikes a creature or solid surface it shatters, and each creature in close burst 1 takes ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Aftermath.

If taken alive, Dupiers recounts how, when the island was attacked, he stole the golden icons from a safe, then fled to the mine. He thinks most of his miners fled into the jungle. If the PCs explain the situation and calm him down, he can guide them safely to the fortress.

Exiting the mine is relatively easy; the industrious Danorans hung signs with handy directions. At the mine's forested exit, however, the party finds a recent mass grave. The PCs find signs that the Danorans tried shooting and hacking at trees, as though the forest itself attacked them. A few hours after Dupiers got into the mine, many other Danorans tried to flee there, but dryad allies of the duchess ambushed the men and slew dozens of miners.

Island Mysteries

Exploration. Montage. Level 1.

Oddities abound on Axis Island, making the path to the fortress dangerous.

The PCs have a few brief encounters on their trip to the fortress. Also, if they are enticed to wander and explore, or if they finish their mission and want to take a look around before leaving, we also provide suggestions for other possible encounters.

Road Trek.

If the PCs follow the trails and roads from the mine to the central valley, then around the coast to the fortress, they have the following encounters.

Duchess Patrol. Occasionally the duchess's forces send patrols to hunt for Danorans or search Danoran facilities. A typical patrol consists of 2 rebel investigators and 12 rebel patrolmen (a level 1 combat encounter). Stats for these enemies appear in the Sea Gate encounter (page 122).

At least once while traversing the main road, the PCs get dangerously close to one of these patrols. Have each PC make a Perception or Stealth check (DC 12), or let them devise their own avoidance method. If at least half the party succeeds, they can get away without being spotted.

Reality Fluctuation. The PCs are all gripped by vertigo. Their surroundings briefly flicker, revealing a wooded marsh filled with croaking yellow frogs, where a blue sun sets in a purple sky. Then the world snaps back to its normal form. A few PCs' shoes or cloaks are still damp from having fallen into the marsh.

If the PCs wait long enough, a similar event occurs every few hours, each time with a different odd landscape, some of which may not be so benign. But all have the same blue sun. That element shows up later at the fortress's observatory, providing a clue to the island's purpose, so make sure to mention it.

Trap. The PCs come across an overturned wagon. Swords and firearms have spilled out onto the road, but this is a lure to get people to come close. A suspicious PC can make an Arcana check (DC 12) to detect a magical aura infused with wintry cold. Alternately, Perception (DC 19) reveals that the weapons couldn't have fallen where they are; they must have been placed there.

The duchess's forces inscribed runes of warding on the wagon and its spilled contents. If any of the inscribed items are disturbed, all the runes trigger at once. If a PC picks up any of the weapons or examines the wagon, the magical ward makes an attack: +12 vs. Reflex against the triggering creature. On a hit, the target takes 3d10+5 cold damage and is restrained as chains of ice manifest around his arms and legs. The chains are as strong as iron (Escape DC 19, 20 HP).

A character can disable the trap with a Thievery check (DC 12), letting the party loot the wagon for supplies safely. A failed check triggers the trap. Cautious or clever players, of course, could set off the trap from afar, or shield the person trying to disarm the trap.

Truly clever players might try to retrieve the items without triggering the trap (Arcana or Thievery DC 19), though each item has only one rune, which has a lesser effect.

Frost Shackle Inscription

Common Wondrous Item (single-use)

Property: The first time any weapon inscribed with a *frost shackle rune* hits a target, the rune is expended from all weapons that were inscribed as part of the same trap. The target hit takes an extra 5 cold damage and is slowed (save ends).

Wandering Monster. The PCs hear metallic grinding and the thump of heavy footsteps coming from the woods, headed vaguely in their direction. Any character with the Spirit Medium theme also hears echoes of voices, too many to make out.

If the PCs wait or investigate, they find a huge iron golem lumbering through the forest, missing its head from what looks like a combination of magical rust and an explosion. It leaks black oil that seems to have motes of white light floating inside it. This substance—witchoil—will make an appearance in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*, where the PCs will discover that it absorbs the souls of those who die nearby, and that when the oil is burnt these souls provide great magical power.

If any PC gets within 10 ft. of the golem, it blindly swipes at him. There's no reason for the PCs to fight this level 15 monster, but if they try, they're unlikely to be successful.

Wilderness Trek.

If the PCs avoid the roads and just climb over the mountain to reach the fortress, they have the following encounters.

Fire in the Woods. At one point a fierce gout of flame bursts up from the trees a hundred feet away, rising fifty feet into the air. It's a solitary event, and while a few trees got slightly scorched, there's absolutely no sign of the fire's source.

Perilous Terrain. Descending the mountain is hazardous. Have each PC make an Athletics or Nature check (DC 12). If at least half the party succeeds, the whole party avoids injury. Otherwise, each PC who failed takes 6 damage.

Reality Fluctuation. This encounter happens regardless of which path the PCs take.

Wandering Monster. This encounter happens regardless of which path the PCs take.

Optional Encounters.

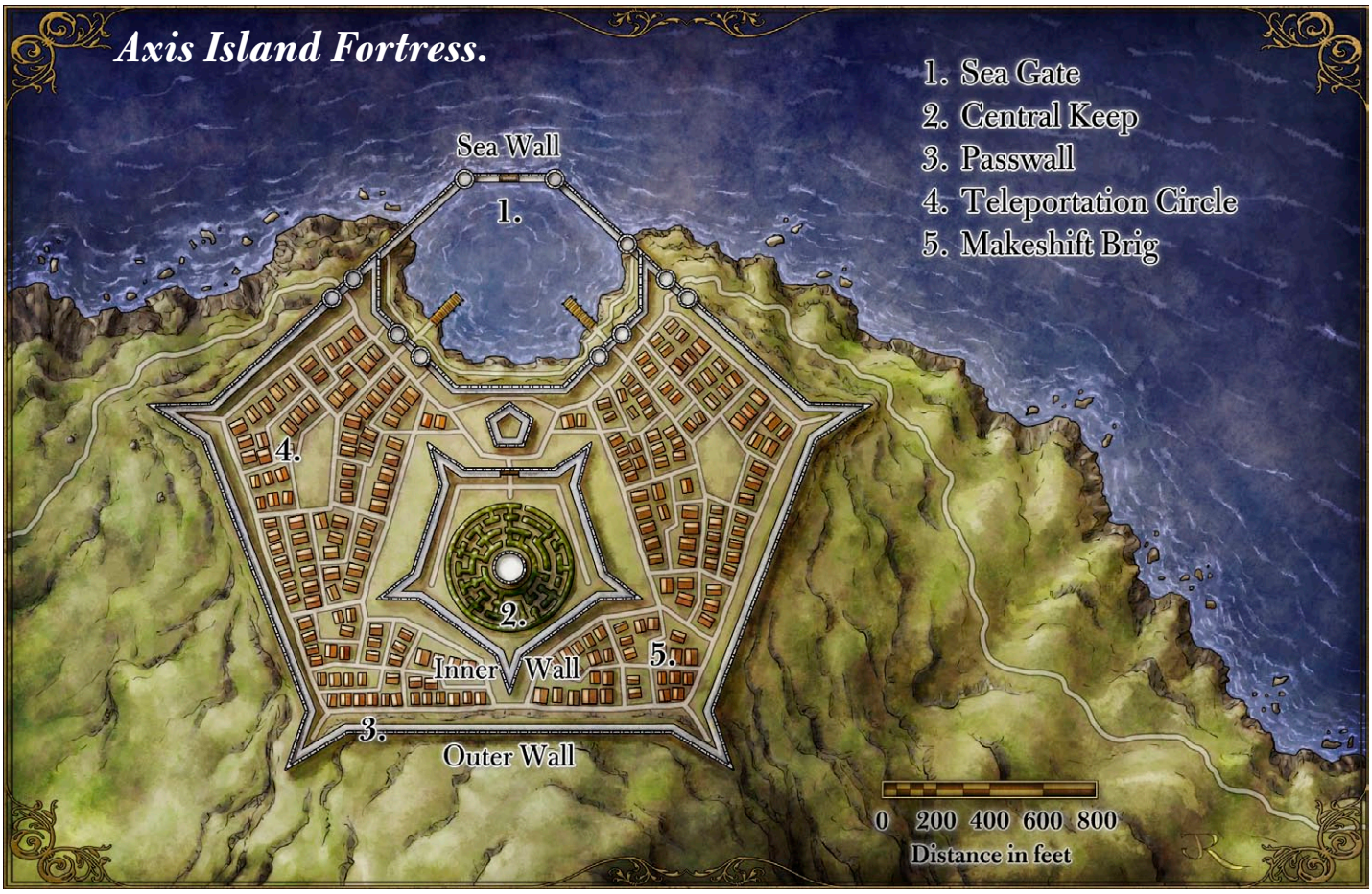
If the PCs go exploring, they might come across these encounters, and you can also re-use encounters from the above treks.

Abandoned Facility. There are more than a dozen villages, mines, lighthouses, and dig sites on the island. All such places show signs of fighting in the past week, and in many places the bodies of dead Danorans lie in the mud. Each village usually has a small factory, using local magical energies instead of traditional mill or steam power. One refines iron and rare gems into the metal adamantium, while others craft huge, perfectly-balanced gears and cogs, ropey exhaust piping with dozens of small exhaust valves, or other bizarre and advanced arcano-technology.

If the PCs poke around too long, a Duchess Patrol might arrive, intent on searching the facility for incriminating evidence.

Axis Ruins. The PCs might spot a few ancient bricks from crumbled buildings, or find a rock wall carved with primitive designs that resemble men and beasts. On the south of the island, though, a temple survives fairly intact, preserved by layers and layers of ritual magic. The huge compound, an eerily empty marvel of Stone Age architecture, must remain for now an enigma. The designs on the walls come from before the invention of written language, so while clearly this place was very important at one time, its intended purpose and its original creators are inscrutable.

Danorans in Hiding. About 100 Danorans hide in scattered pockets in the jungle. The PCs might spot a campfire, or stumble across a search party out to hunt or scavenge supplies from an abandoned facility. The Danorans are easily spooked, and would rather run than fight, but they might be convinced to distract the duchess's forces for the PCs.



Axis Fortress

Exploration. Montage. Level 1.

The PCs sneak inside a Danoran stronghold controlled by the duchess.

In order for the Risuri navy to attack, the PCs must breach the fortress's outer wall, reach the harbor, activate the sea gate control mechanism in the lighthouse, then signal the fleet and make sure the duchess's forces cannot close the sea gate for ten minutes.

The PCs might just follow the infiltrators' plan (see page 114). But if they aren't particularly stealthy, or if they've managed to lose the ritual scrolls, they'll have to come up with a new plan. Also, they might decide to roam, so make sure you're familiar with the fortress's general layout.

Fortress Layout

Axis Fortress has a 60-ft. high **central keep**, topped by an astronomical observatory. A **hedge labyrinth** surrounds that, recently grown by a male dryad-like fey named Gillie Dhu. Barracks and critical supply warehouses are built into the 40-ft. high inner wall.

The outer fortress has dozens of buildings, and is effectively a small town. Many of these buildings were damaged or destroyed in the duchess's assault, and only a few important ones are occupied.

Namely, a nondescript warehouse houses the fortress's **teleportation circle**; when the duchess attacked, she used a circle key provided by Nathan Jierre to march hundreds of soldiers directly into the fortress. After securing the fortress, she suppressed the circle with a ritual of her own, and placed eighty-nine gold-inlaid blades in and around the circle so that anyone who managed to teleport anyway would be sliced to pieces. As an additional layer of security, she has a dozen guards stationed here, ready to sound an alarm if anything stirs in the circle.

Also, a stable was converted into a **makeshift brig** to house about fifty prisoners who surrendered or were captured for ransom. The prisoners are crammed in tight quarters, and guarded by ten men.

Finally, the sheltered bay is surrounded by a 40-ft. high sea wall. A **sea gate** opens to the north, its control mechanism in the basement of a nearby lighthouse. Currently only a handful of ships sit in the harbor. Several sank in the duchess's assault.

The outer and inner fort are detailed in Chapter Three.

WHAT'S SHE UP TO?

Now that she has Axis Island, the duchess plans to hold it until her own naval reinforcements arrive. Her patrols scour the island, documenting what the Danorans were up to here. Though her assassination attempt failed, she still believes she has solid proof that Danor is a threat, at least enough to get the nobles of Risur to reject her brother's peace plans.

However, ships loyal to the king have been busy keeping the duchess's allies from reaching the island. A whole separate level of unseen conflict is occurring between King Aodhan and the duchess's fey allies; in particular, the king has used subtle magic to hide the approach of his fleet from the aquatic fey the duchess is counting on to warn her of an attack.

Right now the duchess is considering abandoning her position and going back through the teleportation circle to her stronghold in Shale, but she is not ready yet to abandon land that she claimed for Risur. Indeed, she hopes Danor does try to take back the island, because if she dies it will spur more Risuri to view them as enemies.



Fantasy Defenses.

Beyond the normal thick walls—sloped and angled to reduce damage from cannons, star-patterned to give defenders wider firing arcs with muskets—Axis Fortress integrates magical defenses to thwart common fantasy siege tactics. Since Danor does not use magic much itself, most of these defenses were crafted by Drakran dwarves.

Webs of iron bars etched with ritual inscriptions are set within the walls, which generate a slight outward force that weakens the impact of cannons and has the fringe benefit of making it exceedingly difficult to climb. Rings of gold thread weave together deep inside the walls, forming a barrier against teleportation and similar magic. Finally, intermittent pockets of the rare stone opaline acts as a magic sink, absorbing spell energy.

On a more mundane note, the walkways along the tops of the walls and roads near them on the inside are all covered in a patina of light gravel, which crackles underfoot, making it more difficult for people to move about invisibly. The fortress also had many watchdogs trained to attack creatures they could smell and hear but not see, but most of those are dead or in a kennel now.

Lya Jierre provided the RHC with details of a known weak spot in the walls, which is the best spot to perform a Passwall ritual. The ritual caster must succeed an Arcana check (DC 15) to breach the wall at that location; elsewhere the DC increases by 10. The location is marked on the Axis Fort map.

The inner walls have no such vulnerable points, and indeed are more resistant to magic. The Risuri military plans to try Passwall and the like, but those rituals will have no effect.

Moving About the Fortress.

Once the PCs reach the fortress, they can use a Passwall scroll to get inside the Outer Fort. The duchess doesn't have enough forces to keep a full look-out, and if the PCs are all natives of Risur they might have the benefit of being able to pass as members of the duchess's forces. She only brought a few hundred people, though, so guards will be wary of unfamiliar faces.

There's not much to be gained by looking around right now, but the party might try to release prisoners as allies, rig up some sort of distraction, or even go confront the duchess and try to talk her down.

Fortress Security.

Moving between areas requires Stealth checks. Failed Stealth checks increase the alert level, and the higher the alert level, the faster forces will respond when the PCs finally reveal themselves. Most likely the PCs will only reveal themselves once they're at the lighthouse sea gate, but if they make a mess of things early, use the response groups from the Hold the Lighthouse encounter, below.

- *Secure.* (0 failed Stealth checks) Business as usual.
- *Mild Alert.* (1 to 3 failed Stealth checks) Defenders are slightly nervous, but suspect any trouble is a false alarm.
- *Elevated Alert.* (4 to 5 failed Stealth checks) Defenders are suspicious of strangers and have weapons at close reach. Increase the DC of Bluff checks by 2.
- *High Alert.* (6 or more failed Stealth checks) Defenders are prepared for immediate battle. Increase the DC of Bluff checks by 5.

As the PCs go through the fortress, they must make skill checks. Keep track of the number of Stealth checks they fail. While the defenders won't chase after every person they might happen to spot in the distance, the more small disturbances occur, the faster the duchess's forces will respond to the PCs revealing themselves.

Explore Outer Fort. Each PC must make a Stealth check (DC 8) to avoid being noticed. The PCs become familiar with the layout of the streets and buildings, and learn the two facilities being guarded—the brig and the teleportation circle. They can move to the sea wall without requiring an additional check.

Get into a Secure Location. A PC can attempt a Bluff check (DC 12) to get the party access to the brig or the teleportation circle. Failing this check means the PCs have revealed themselves, and response teams will come after them.

Instead, a PC could try to break in: a Thievery check (DC 12) opens a path for the rest of the party, but with each attempt a Stealth check (DC 12) is required to avoid attracting attention. Once the way is open, the rest of the party must make Stealth checks of their own to get in.

Enter Inner Fort. Stealth (DC 12) for each PC. From here the PCs might survey the hedge labyrinth so they know its layout in advance.

Enter the Central Keep. It's very difficult to get to the central keep without Gillie Dhu spotting and confronting them (Stealth DC 19 per PC). A truly brazen PC might try to deceive Gillie Dhu and the guards into letting him and the party through (Bluff DC 19), but if anything goes wrong the PCs will be in no position to flee.

The Sea Gate

Action. Tactical. Level 1.

The PCs must get past enemy look-outs and get inside a lighthouse to open the sea gate.

Once the PCs get to the harbor, they can easily get onto the sea wall. From there, it's a 300-ft. shot to the lighthouse. However, a wizard in the lighthouse will make their approach difficult if he spots them, and a handful of workers and look-outs are active on the sea wall, searching a docked ship.

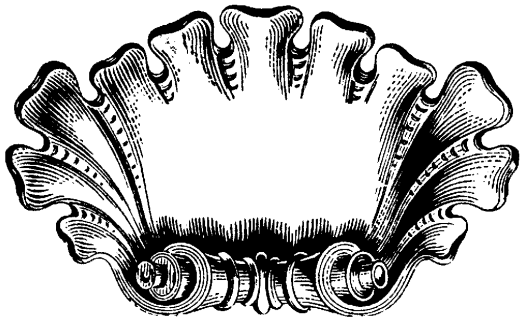
If combat breaks out, the lighthouse wizard will ring a bell to alert the main fortress, which counts as a failed Stealth check for determining the Alert Level. If the PCs are very sneaky, they might manage to take the lighthouse without an alarm going up, giving them a chance to take a short rest before they reveal themselves by opening the sea gate and using Pyrotechnics to signal the fleet.

Methods of Approach.

The cleverest method might be to use a spare Water Breathing scroll, swim up to the lighthouse, sneak in, and assassinate everyone.

The PCs could try to sneak along the sea wall (Stealth DC 14 or lower). The defenders are unlikely to pay attention to anyone more than a 100 ft. away (i.e., off the battle map). Gaslight lamps every 60 ft. each illuminate 5 squares in every direction, leaving small pockets of shadow between them. People might not notice if a couple lamps flickered out—snuffed by cantrips or precise bowshots. Alternately, the PCs could try to con their way in (Bluff DC 19 or lower).

If the PCs get to the lighthouse without starting a fight, the moment they open the sea gate or fire off a signal, the local defenders will try to stop them. More likely, though, the PCs will tip their hand and combat will begin.



Set-Up.

Two rebel patrolmen stand guard inside the ground level of the lighthouse, while the rebel wizard watches from the window one floor up. His pet fey drake naps beside him. A patrolman stands watch near each of the lamp posts on the map. The remaining three patrolmen are on the ship and gangplank down the ramp to the left. The investigator is directing a search of the ship, while the soldier is smoking a pipe at the bend in the ramp switchback.

List of Adversaries.

- Fey drake
- Rebel investigator
- Rebel wizard
- Rebel soldier
- 8 rebel patrolmen



Fey Drake Level 1 Lurker
Small fey beast (reptile) XP 100

HP 24; **Bloodied** 12 **Initiative** +7
AC 15, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 12 **Perception** +6
Speed 6, climb 6

Standard Actions

⊘ **Tail Trip** ✦ At-Will, Basic
The colorful lizard nips at your heels to distract you, then suddenly entangles your ankle with its tail and yanks you off your feet.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +4 vs. Fort
Hit: 1d6 damage, and the target falls prone.
Effect: The fey drake shifts 1 square.

▸ **Invisibility** (illusion) ✦ Recharge when the fey drake takes damage
With an amused hiss, the lizard vanishes.
Effect: The fey drake becomes invisible until it hits or misses with an attack.

✓ **Poison Fangs** (poison) ✦ At-Will
The invisible beast drops onto your shoulder and sinks its fangs into your neck.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature that cannot see the fey drake); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+2 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage and is weakened (save ends both).

Skills Stealth +9
Str 8 (–1) **Dex** 18 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+2)
Con 16 (+3) **Int** 3 (–4) **Cha** 10 (+0)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Understands Elven

Rebel Investigator Level 1 Controller
Medium natural humanoid XP 100

HP 30; **Bloodied** 15 **Initiative** +3
AC 15, **Fortitude** 11, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 12 **Perception** +4
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊘ **Shillelagh** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6+5 damage.

✓ **Fey Mists** (cold, implement, psychic) ✦ At-Will
Chilling, impenetrable mists suddenly blind you.
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature) +4 vs.Will
Hit: 1d6+5 cold and psychic damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the investigator's next turn.

▸ **Delude** (charm) ✦ Recharge ⚄ ⚅
Lurid hallucinations trick you into attacking the wrong person.
Effect: The investigator slides the target 2 squares, and the target makes a melee basic attack against a creature of the investigator's choice.

Minor Actions

✲ **Faerie Fire** ✦ Encounter
Attack: Area Burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +10 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target is limned in harmless fire. Until the end of your next turn, all attacks against the target have combat advantage, and the target cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment.

Skills Arcana +6, Insight +9
Str 10 (+0) **Dex** 16 (+3) **Wis** 18 (+4)
Con 14 (+2) **Int** 12 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+0)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Rebel Wizard Level 1 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid XP 100

HP 22; **Bloodied** 11 **Initiative** +1
AC 15, **Fortitude** 11, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14 **Perception** +4
Speed 6

Traits

▸ **Feather Fall**
The rebel wizard takes no damage from falling.

▸ **Wind Shield**
The rebel wizard gains a +2 bonus to defenses against area and ranged attacks.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Orb Conk** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The perturbed wizard cracks you on the skull with his wooden orb.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6+4 damage.

✓ **Gale Dagger** (implement, thunder) ✦ At-Will
A shimmering silver blade flies at you, carried on the wind.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +6 vs. Fort
Hit: 1d10+3 thunder damage, and the target is pushed 4 squares.

✓ **Personal Thundercloud** (implement, lightning, thunder) ✦ Encounter
A tiny cloud appears above you, crackling with lightning as it chases you.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +6 vs. Will
Hit: 1d10+3 thunder damage.
Effect: The target is followed around by a thundercloud and takes ongoing 2 lightning damage (save ends). The target takes a –4 penalty to his saves against this effect, but gains a +1 bonus for each square he moves on his turn before making the save. When the target takes this ongoing damage, any ally adjacent to him takes 2 lightning damage.

Skills Arcana +9, Bluff +5
Str 8 (–1) **Dex** 12 (+1) **Wis** 18 (+4)
Con 10 (+0) **Int** 18 (+4) **Cha** 10 (+0)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Rebel Soldier Level 1 Soldier (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid XP 100

HP 33; **Bloodied** 16 **Initiative** +3
AC 17, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 15 **Perception** +4
Speed 5

Standard Actions

⊘ **Glaive** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10+3 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the rebel soldier's next turn.

▸ **Get Him!** ✦ Recharges if attack misses
Effect: The rebel soldier uses *glaive*, and if he hits he slides the target 1 square, and the target is slowed and grants combat advantage until the end of the soldier's next turn.

Str 16 (+3) **Dex** 12 (+1) **Wis** 16 (+3)
Con 16 (+3) **Int** 12 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+0)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Rebel Patrolmen (8)	Level 1 Minion Artillery
Medium natural humanoid	XP 25
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion	**Initiative** +3
AC 13, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12	**Perception** +1
Speed 6	
Standard Actions	
⊘ **Longsword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 4 damage.	
⊘ **Crossbow Skirmish** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic	
Effect: The foot soldier moves 3 squares and makes the following attack.	
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 4 damage.	

Str	13 (+1)	**Dex**	17 (+3)	**Wis**	12 (+1)
Con	13 (+1)	**Int**	10 (+0)	**Cha**	8 (–1)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Tactics.

The patrolmen hang back, trying to shoot from cover as much as possible—behind lamp posts, doors, or barrels. The investigator links up with the soldier and they advance as quickly as possible. Meanwhile, the lighthouse wizard blasts from relative safety. When the wizard is bloodied, or if the PCs breach the tower, he and his pet drake move downstairs to back up the patrolmen.

Bear in mind the elevation differences; a shooter at sea level might not be able to target someone on the outer side of the sea wall.

Terrain.

A lamp post, door, and windows provides cover. The sloped ramp down to the inner harbor provides a good venue for rolling barrels down at foes (+4 vs. Fort; 1d10+3 and knock prone). If the fight happens to reach the top floor of the lighthouse, anyone in the path of the light is blinded, and the beacon turns 90 degrees at the start of each turn.

The highest ledges of the sea wall have chest-high stone railings, so forced movement can't slide PCs into the ocean, at least not easily.

If the PCs investigate the pallets on the docked ship, they find crates full of firedust, just waiting to be detonated with a little fire damage. The explosion hits burst 5, does 1d6+5 fire damage, and turns the ship into a zone that deals 5 damage to any creature that enters or starts its turn there.

The bottom floor of the lighthouse contains the sea gate mechanism and a small hearth for warmth. A closet leads to a cluttered storage basement, too tight for much combat, but with plenty of odd things PCs might use as barricades or traps in the next encounter.

Sea Gate Mechanism. Operating the sea gate mechanism is quite easy. A single standard action lets a PC turn some valves, open a safety latch, and pull a lever, which starts the sea gate moving with a loud mechanical clanking sure to alert anyone nearby. It takes a minute for the gate to open enough to let a ship through.

Aftermath.

The next encounter starts as soon as the PCs open the gate or signal their allies. A very stealthy party might manage to secure the lighthouse without an alarm being raised, and could take a short rest. Otherwise, enemies are on the way, leaving no time to rest. Let PCs get back their encounter powers, though, and remind them to use their second wind if they haven't yet and they need healing.

FOR THE WARGAMERS.

If you think your players would get a kick out of a "defend the base" style combat, you can use stats from the previous encounter to create waves of enemies. The PCs have a few rounds to set up barricades and possibly even traps. Use the skill challenge timeline and alert level to determine how much lead time the party has.

- **Wave A.** 12 rebel patrolmen and 2 rebel soldiers.
- **Wave B.** 2 rebel investigators, 3 rebel soldiers, 20 rebel patrolmen.
- **Wave C.** 2 fey drakes, 1 rebel wizard, 5 rebel soldiers, 20 rebel patrolmen.

Running several combats in a row could be a bit of a grind, though, and the enemies are all fairly faceless, so if you plan to run this scene as traditional combat, you can give it more emotional impact by making NPCs whom the players will want to thwart. Perhaps as they sneak through the fort they spot a smarmy military officer making a pair of Danoran scullery maids fight each other with knives for the amusement of him and his men. The PCs would be in no position to attack a large force out in the open, but now that they have walls to protect them, it could be satisfying to get some revenge.

Hold the Lighthouse

Action. Real-Time. Level 1.

The PCs must defend the lighthouse as the fortress's defenders try to close the sea gate.

When the PCs alert the navy, an alarm goes up, and fortress defenders move toward the mainland end of the sea wall to retake the lighthouse. The PCs have limited time to prepare. They have to defend their position for ten minutes, long enough for reinforcements to arrive.

We present this scene as a quick, tense skill challenge, which should go by much faster than if you choose to run this encounter as a traditional combat.

Hold the Lighthouse (Level 1 Skill Challenge).

You can see enemy forces gathering in the distance. You have limited time to prepare yourself, but a little ingenuity might negate the need for a fight.

Key Skills: Arcana, Athletics, Bluff, Diplomacy, Endurance, Intimidate, Stealth, Thievery

Difficulty: Unless otherwise noted, all skill checks are DC 18.

In this encounter, the PCs want to ensure the sea gate remains open so their allies can storm the fort. They are contested by enemy forces trying to reach the controls for the sea gate and close it. The enemy forces come in waves, and the PCs have time before each wave to prepare defenses.

The PCs can lay traps, set up barricades, attack, or otherwise fend off the enemies' advance. If the enemies defeat the PCs, they will close the sea gate and make it much harder for the party's allies to attack.

Victory: The PCs win if the sea gate is open at the end of Round Ten or any round thereafter. Their allies sail through and provide enough reinforcements that the duchess's forces cannot manage to retake the lighthouse.

Failure: The PCs lose if they are all knocked unconscious, surrender, or flee, and the sea gate is closed.

Passage of Time.

Every minute of the encounter is one "round," and each PC can take one action per round. If a PC spends an action point, he can take an additional action in the same round. PCs can also expend powers to heal or prevent damage without having to spend extra actions, since the amount of time required is inconsequential in the span of a one minute "round." The PCs don't have time to take any short rests during this encounter, though.

Locations.

There are three locations in this skill challenge: the sea wall, outside the lighthouse, and inside the lighthouse. Keep track of where enemy groups are. When PCs take their actions they can move to any location, but they remain in that location until the start of their next turn. If a PC wants to set up a trap on the sea wall, for instance, he risks being caught in the open by approaching enemies.

If getting to a location would require moving through a location currently occupied by enemies, the PC must make a Stealth check (DC 12). This does not count as his action for the round, but if he fails, he gets stuck in the enemies' location. If that happens, he can choose a different action, to try to make the best of a bad situation.

- **Sea Wall**—This location is too large to barricade effectively.
- **Outside the Lighthouse**—This location can have no more than 20 points of barricade at a time.
- **Inside the Lighthouse**—This location can have no more than 10 points of barricade at a time. If the lighthouse has more than 5 points of barricade, PCs cannot easily move into or out of the lighthouse. If an ally can throw a rope down from a window, the PC can get inside, but both PCs involved take a –5 penalty to their actions for the round.

Enemy Forces.

Three waves of enemy forces are on their way. Mechanically, each wave consists of a number of enemies, though one "enemy" might actually be several minions. When PCs take actions to kill enemies, you can use the suggested compositions in the sidebar on page 123 to help flavor your descriptions.

Wave A. 5 enemies. Arrives on the sea wall at the start of round 1.

Wave B. 10 enemies. Arrives on the sea wall at the start of round 4.

Wave C. 16 enemies. Arrives on the sea wall at the start of round 7.

If the PCs manage to defeat a given wave they might have some time to prepare for the next one. If a latter wave reaches the location of an earlier wave, combine them into one group.

Timeline. The alert level when the PCs reached the lighthouse adjusts the arrival times of the waves. If Secure (0 failed Stealth checks), delay each wave's arrival by 3 rounds. If Mild (1–3 failed checks), delay the wave by 2 rounds. If Elevated (4–5), delay by 1 round. If High alert, use the base time.

Enemy Actions. After the PCs take their actions, the enemies act. Various PC actions can destroy enemy units, but to reflect the simultaneity of the scene, an enemy that is destroyed still gets to act on the turn. It is then removed at the end of the turn.

When enemies act, they move as far as they can, but they cannot enter a location with a barricade, and they stop if they reach a location with a PC, trap, or ward.

If they stop next to a barricade, they first work to remove the barricade. Each enemy reduces a given barricade by 1 point. When the barricade is reduced to 0, it is destroyed.

Then, if they are in a location that contains a PC, for each enemy that didn't use its turn to remove barricades, one PC in the location takes 6 damage. If there are multiple PCs in the area, the PCs divide the enemies' attacks as they choose among themselves.

Finally, for every enemy who still hasn't acted, one PC in an adjacent location takes 3 damage from enemy ranged attacks. The enemies can only affect PCs inside the lighthouse if those PCs spent their action to attack this turn. (Otherwise the PC is considered safe behind walls.)

PCs reduced to 0 hit points this way automatically stabilize and do not make death saving throws, but they can be revived by healing.

Suggested Character Actions.

You may want to remind your players that they can always aid their allies if their own skill modifiers are too low to have much chance of succeeding alone.

Assemble Barricade. (Athletics) A PC hurriedly piles whatever's at hand to halt the enemies' advance. The PC creates 3 points worth of barricade inside the lighthouse, or 2 points of barricade outside the lighthouse. A failed check places 1 point of barricade.

A PC cannot assemble a barricade in a location already occupied by enemies, and there is not enough material to effectively barricade the sea wall.

Battle. (Special) The PC does not have to make a check to perform this action. Instead, he must have an attack power that can reach the enemy forces, even just a ranged basic attack. Melee attacks work if the PC ends his turn in the same location as the enemies. A range of 5 squares is necessary if the enemies are in an adjacent location, or a range of 20 squares if the enemies are not in an adjacent location.

The PC kills one enemy. The PC can expend an encounter attack power to kill 2 enemies, or a daily attack power to kill 3 enemies.

A PC in the lighthouse can make a Stealth check (DC 18) to snipe and move to cover when attacking enemies outside the lighthouse or on the sea wall. If successful, he takes half the damage from any counterattacks.

Boiling Oil. (Special) This action can only be done once, and only has an effect if enemies are right outside the lighthouse. No check is required, but three PCs must be in the lighthouse and must all use this action in the same round to have any effect. The PCs use the lighthouse beacon's brazier and supplies of fuel to create a pan of boiling oil, which they pour out the window, searing anyone in front of the entrance. This kills 5 enemies.

As with Battle, a PC can attempt Stealth to reduce damage from counterattacks.

Brace. (Endurance) The PC must be inside the lighthouse to use this action. By using his own force to hold barricades in place, he makes it harder for enemies to get through. The first 2 enemies who try to remove barricades this round have no effect.

Sabotage the Gate. (Special) A PC with the Technologist theme does not have to make a check to perform this action. Other PCs must

Smaller or Larger Parties.

Reduce Waves A, B, and C by 1, 2, and 4 enemies each for each PC fewer than five, and increase likewise for larger parties. A party of seven PCs, for instance, would face 7, 14, and 24 enemies.

make an Intelligence check (DC 18). If successful, the PC damages the controls of the sea gate mechanism. Even if the PCs are defeated by the enemy forces, it takes 2 rounds for the enemies to repair the damage and close the sea gate, giving reinforcements more time to get in.

Set Trap. (Thievery) A PC uses available materials (weapons, ropes, loose stones, supplies from storage) to assemble a trap that lasts until the end of the encounter or until expended. A PC cannot assemble a trap in a location already occupied by enemies. When the enemies reach that location, the trap is expended and kills 1 enemy.

Set Ward. (Arcana) As Set Trap, except a PC scratches some sigils into a surface and uses one of his magical power to prepare a temporary trap that lasts until the end of the encounter or until expended. To use this action, the PC must have either the Ritual Caster feat, or know an implement attack power.

Stall. (Diplomacy or Intimidate) The PC shouts to the approaching enemies, perhaps to try to convince them to surrender, to negotiate a feigned surrender of the PCs, to cow them into holding off for reinforcements, or to create a hostage situation. If the check succeeds, no enemies advance this round.

Increase the DC by 2 for each previous round the enemies were stalled. If the PC is using Diplomacy, increase the DC by 2 if the party attacks at all this turn. If the PC is using Intimidate, increase the DC by 2 if the party *doesn't* attack at all this turn.

If the PCs have hostages, they get a +5 bonus to checks to Stall. If the stalling PC lies (such as to feign surrender, or to fake having hostages), he must also make a Bluff check (DC 12) or the Stall attempt fails.

Multiple PCs can try to Stall. Only one needs to succeed to stop the enemy advance.

Complications and Lucky Breaks.

If things are going too easily for the PCs and you want to ratchet up the tension, or if you want to cut them some slack, consider these options.

Extra Enemies. The simplest option is to add an extra wave of enemies equal to the number of PCs in the party. This might be necessary if it hits round 7 and the party has 30 points of barricade up.

Invisible Ambush. If no PC spots them (Perception DC 19), a pair of invisible fey drakes climb up the side of the tower, break through the windows, and get inside the lighthouse. Place 2 enemies in the lighthouse. This might provide enough of a disruption for the next wave to get close and assault the lighthouse doors.

Surrender or He Dies! If a PC is knocked out in an area occupied by enemies, the enemy leader might put a sword to the PC's throat and threaten to kill him unless the rest of the party surrenders. Be careful if you think your players might resent being sentenced to death by their "friends."

Unnatural Wave. At the start of the round, the PCs spot a sudden disturbance on the coastline, as the local planar fluctuations cause a hundred foot high shaft of amber to erupt out of the sea floor, then disappear just as suddenly. A massive wave rushes toward the sea wall, and at the end of the round it hits. The wave deals damage to each PC on the sea wall equal to his bloodied value, and it kills half of the enemy forces on the sea wall.

Aftermath.

If the PCs win this challenge, allied ships sail into the harbor, and archers and mages on-deck attack any remaining enemy forces. Within a few minutes, soldiers reach the lighthouse to reinforce it, and military doctors and druidic healers start to tend to the PCs' wounds. Each PC can regain hit points as if he had spent two healing surges, but then they only get a short rest before the beginning of Chapter Three.

If the PCs fail, the sea gate slams shut, and the PCs are carted off in shackles to the makeshift prison in the outer fort. It takes several hours for the navy to maneuver to shore and prepare a ground assault. It's nearly sunrise by the time the PCs are rescued, and their allies have already suffered hundreds of casualties. When they're rescued, doctors and healers tend to them, as above. Being in prison, however, is not comfortable enough for the party to take an extended rest; the best they can manage is a short rest.



CHAPTER THREE: Under the Wheel of Stars

In this chapter, the party helps take down the duchess and confronts a daunting emissary of the Unseen Court.

ELADRIN DREADNOUGHT ASRABEY VARAL



A centuries-old eladrin warrior, Asrabey was born shortly after the death of the goddess Srasama. When he was old enough, he became one of the many husbands of Kasvarina Varal, a powerful matriarch who had survived the Great Malice. Kasvarina was unable to have children, and she encouraged Asrabey's resentment of the humans who had sentenced their people to death. For years he trained, and undertook many daring raids until he became famous as one of the greatest eladrin warriors in the world.

Eventually Kasvarina and her clan realized that they needed to be more discreet to survive humanity's hunt of them. Asrabey left Elfaivar and offered his services to the Unseen Court, though he has kept a much lower profile for the past two hundred years. The fey lords have been content to squabble amongst themselves, and have only called upon Asrabey when someone of prominence in Risur starts to scheme against them.

Asrabey has not seen Kasvarina for fifty years, and he has not the slightest inkling of her affiliation with the Obscurati. He might respect a few humans from Risur, but he hopes that some day Kasvarina will come to him and ask him to lead a final war of retribution against the Clergy that ruined their race, and the nation of Danor, whose tiefling leaders bear the mark of their crime.

Asrabey is much more powerful than the PCs, but because he has fought so many enemies to reach the duchess, the PCs will have a chance to take him down. We present two versions of his stats.

The first treats him as a Level 20 skirmisher who, by the time he reaches the duchess, is down to 27 HP. His defenses are nearly unhittable, but the party can defeat him with natural 20s, powers that damage without an attack roll or on a miss, or by various clever tricks. Combat is likely to be fast and brutal, since if they don't drop him, Asrabey can easily take down one PC per round.

The second version presents him as a variant Level 2 Solo Skirmisher with 164 HP. As he hits certain damage thresholds, Asrabey disengages from the party and changes tactics. The party has a better mathematical chance of hitting this version of him, but the fight will last longer, cover more ground, and give the PCs more opportunities to use their powers.

Each version presents about the same level of challenge, though depending on how well the party has done in preceding encounters they might stand a fair chance or be even more exhausted than Asrabey. The main difference is one of play style. From a purely simulationist standpoint, Asrabey should be a level 20 creature, but if you prefer a more gamist design, where the rules bend to offer a more balanced play experience, use the level 2 solo version.

The Assault

Social/Exposition. Montage.

The PCs rest for an hour as their allies muster and assault the fortress.

Risuri warships sail into the harbor, firing cannons, arrows, and spells at the duchess's forces who dare to break from cover. The duchess's forces fall back to the walls of the Outer Fort while ships line up out the mouth of the harbor. Crews lash gangplanks from prow to stern so a thousand soldiers can march to the mainland.

The Second Invasion in a Week. Axis Fortress still has damage from the last time it was sacked, and so the Risuri loyalist forces have several options for breaching the defenses. They outnumber the duchess's forces five to one, and plan to quickly climb over the walls with the aid of siege engines they brought on the lead ships.

The fort is designed to be defended by people with muskets and cannons, weapons the duchess's forces aren't well-trained with, so the outer wall will be overcome within an hour. The inner wall is a tougher nut to crack, however, and so the plan is basically to surround it and assault different sides in turn, then fall back, forcing the defenders to rush from battle to battle. This should eventually cause them to leave an opening that can be exploited, while minimizing casualties to loyalist forces.

If the PCs failed to open the sea gate, though, the duchess's forces have more time to prepare and attack incoming siege engines, which makes it much harder for loyalist forces to breach the outer fort.

Mission's Not Over. The PCs have a chance to rest, and after about half an hour Captain Rutger Smith of the *Impossible* arrives at the lighthouse to speak with them and get a report. He offers them all cigars, but tells them not to smoke them until the mission is fully complete. He explains that with the tragic death of the infiltrators, they're technically the highest authority for non-military matters, so it's their responsibility to deal with the duchess once the soldiers reach her. Captain Smith suspects she'll hole up in the central keep, but the military should be able to surround her within a few hours.

To help the undoubtedly worn-out party, Smith arranges to get a small military escort of one Allied Soldier apiece. Each of these soldiers is basically an allied minion controlled by a PC. To keep them simple to use in combat, they never make attack rolls. See Appendix J: Allied Stats.

Meet the Grunts. Sergeant Glassman reports for duty to the PCs, and introduces the rest of his small detachment of warriors, who will be the party's allied soldiers.

Glassman has taken a vow of total honesty, which makes him appear rather fatalistic. If the PCs direct him and his men into harm's way, he'll remind them that it's likely they'll be responsible for his death. He'll obey orders, but he occasionally chimes in with off-color comments (e.g., if they're going to send someone into danger, he'll suggest, "Send Private Waterhouse first. I don't much like the guy.").

The sergeant has just finished introductions when a commotion draws the party's attention outside.

Allied Soldier	Level 5 Minion Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP n/a
HP 1 (see *tougher than your average minion*)	**Initiative** n/a
AC 19, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 15	**Perception** +2
Speed 5	

Traits

▶ Linked Ally

Each allied soldier is linked to one PC, and only acts at that PC's direction. Whenever a PC uses a move action to move, his linked ally can take a move action to move as well. The PC can also spend a move action to have the ally move on his own, or a minor action to have his ally take a minor action like picking up or manipulating an object.

If a PC is unconscious or dead, the player can control the ally independently. It can take two move actions and one minor action per turn.

▶ Tougher than Your Average Minion

When an allied soldier would take damage from any source, even a missed attack, if that source does less than 7 damage, the soldier takes no damage and instead becomes bloodied. The next time he would take damage from any source, even a missed attack, he is reduced to 0 HP.

Allied minions are not killed when reduced to 0 HP as long as their allied PC is alive. Instead they are knocked unconscious. They regain consciousness after a short rest and return to 1 HP, unbloodied. If their allied PC is dead, they die when reduced to 0 HP. Likewise they die if someone goes to the effort of delivering a coup de grace.

▶ Follows Orders

When an Allied Soldier moves, it deals 5 damage to one enemy adjacent to it at the end of its movement. If it moves more than once in a turn, it only deals this damage once.

▶ Alchemist Fire

Once per day, a PC can spend a standard action to have his allied soldier throw a flask of alchemist fire. One creature within 5 squares takes 5 fire damage and gains ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends). No attack roll is required.

▶ Pistol

Once per encounter, a PC can spend a standard action to have his allied soldier fire his pistol. This deals 8 damage to a creature within 10 squares, and requires no attack roll.

Str	10 (+0)	**Dex**	10 (+0)	**Wis**	10 (+0)
Con	10 (+0)	**Int**	10 (+0)	**Cha**	10 (+0)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common

The Dreadnought

Action. Real-Time. Level 1.

A servant of the Unseen Court, eladrin warrior Asrabey Varal, makes an imposing and dramatic arrival.

Gunshots and screams of panic sound from one of the Risuri ships in harbor, hundreds of feet away from the lighthouse. A few flashes of fire light up the night, and then a massive ball of flame engulfs the ship. Smoke billows upward as the rigging catches ablaze, and the party can faintly make out a humanoid figure striding across the burning deck. He points a flaming sword and sweeps it in an arc toward the sea wall. All of the gas lamps shatter and go dark.

This is Asrabey Varal, armed with a sword of pure fire and a lion-faced shield that can fly and bite his enemies. He then leaps thirty feet from the ship to the sea wall, and his cloak transforms into a cloud of smoke, making him practically invisible in the night.

All this transpires in two rounds, too fast for the PCs to get close enough for a fight.

Asrabey stowed away aboard one of the warships headed for Axis Island, using fey magic to remain invisible in the hold. Once the assault began and the crew disembarked, he left his hiding place, but was confronted by the remaining crew. Refusing to be delayed, he slew the men and used a spell to set fire to the ship, hoping the demonstration of his power would make others hesitate to stand in his way.

A few sailors on nearby ships saw what happened, and if the PCs question them they describe the eladrin as if he were an invincible demigod. They say he was shot by three men but did not flinch, and that his shield flew from his hand to maul a druid who might have had the magical power to stand against him. Messengers have already set off running to alert the rest of the military. The ship takes an hour to burn to a husk, by which time rowboats have nudged it away from the rest of the fleet.

Character Knowledge. From their own distant observations, or by examining the ship before it becomes too inflamed to be safe, the party might draw some conclusions.

- **Arcana.** DC 12: The magic used is fey in origin.
- **Arcana.** DC 19: The spellcaster was likely an eladrin, probably a Vekeshi mystic, based on patterns of scorch marks and the way tongues of the still-active fire takes the shape of hands. A Vekeshi Mystic PC doesn't need to make a check to know this.
- **History.** DC 12: The attacker had a flaming sword and a flying shield. There was a fey warrior who matched that description at a battle two hundred years ago, in the First Yerasol War.
- **History.** DC 19: His name was Asrabey, and he fought to rescue an eladrin woman who was captured by a Danoran general. He aided the Risuri forces indirectly, but was not technically an ally.
- **Perception.** DC 12: The warrior's flaming sword changed shapes between a short blade and some sort of long flaming flail or whip.
- **Perception.** DC 19: There is just a little fresh blood on the sea wall, probably from the attacker.

If PCs succeed the hard (DC 19) checks for both Arcana and History, they deduce that Asrabey works for the Unseen Court, though for now they can only speculate as to why he's here. You might also remind the players that the duchess has been Risur's liaison to the Unseen Court for decades.

Pursuit. Asrabey is speeding toward the Risuri loyalists setting up their siege engines. He'll rush to the top of one of those engines as it nears the fort's outer wall, killing anyone who gets in his way. Then he leaps with magical force over the wall and cuts through swaths of the duchess's warriors who make the mistake of attacking him on the far side.

From there he runs to the nondescript warehouse in the outer fort that conceals the teleportation circle. His plan is to prepare a *linked portal* ritual there, then go to a less-defended section of the inner wall, where he will unleash the power of an ancient magical item to get him into the inner fort. He runs along the tops of the hedges of Gille Dhu's labyrinth, setting it afire, then jumps to the outer wall of the central keep. He spiderclimbs to a window and tears free stones in the wall until he finds the gold thread designed to block teleportation. He rips the golden ward out, teleports through the window, and battles his way to the top floor of the keep.

He plans to confront and kill the duchess, leave a scroll containing a letter for King Aodhan atop her body, and then rush back to his nearly complete ritual so he can teleport to the mainland.

It's not particularly feasible for the party to pursue Asrabey, especially not through the battle going on at the outer wall. The adventure assumes that the party will next cross paths with him as he breaches the inner wall (see Immurement, page 129), but the party might wander into the same location he is before then. Asrabey cares only that his mission is not stopped, so he prefers to just avoid combat and conversation if possible. If his movement is blocked he will cut down one or two PCs, then flee over their bodies, unconcerned about opportunity attacks.

Brig and Belligerence

Social. Real-Time. Level 1.

The PCs question Danoran prisoners.

About an hour later, a courier finds the PCs and reports that they've found a makeshift brig housing dozens of Danoran prisoners the duchess had captured. Twelve of them are tieflings, and so they thought the party might want to check to see if Nathan Jierre is among them.

The courier can guide the PCs (and their allied soldiers) to the brig, a stable that was hastily converted with iron bars to make cells out of animal pens. Along the way they spot a lot of wounded, a few dead on their side, and slightly more dead on the duchess's side. The soldiers are busy disassembling their siege engines, hoisting them over the outer wall, and reassembling them on the far side, all by torch or lantern light, and while ducking the occasional magical missile or arrow fired from the inner wall.

The brig itself sits about 200 ft. from the inner wall, but at a location with minimal fighting. Inside, a single wounded soldier and a handful of enlisted sailors are trying to take a survey of the prisoners, but between the cacophony of livestock and the angered shouts of nearly a hundred Danorans, they're making slow progress.

Infantryman Sander Wodeham took an arrow through his hand, and so was assigned here. He says he was told to convince the Danorans to provide information that might make breaching the inner wall easier.

The only Danoran officer on Axis Island taken captive when the duchess invaded, Marseine has a wretched wound to his eye where he took shrapnel from an exploding musket. Several generations of his ancestors died in wars against Risur, and he eagerly served in the Fourth Yerasol War, excited for the chance to repay his grudge.

The duchess's assault has caused his anger to flare back, and he's eager for a chance to spill Risuri blood. But Danoran tradition demands its soldiers to be cool and rational, so he seethes and tries to goad his captors into giving him an excuse for a fight.





Plus his superiors want a recommendation whether it's safe to release the Danorans and just keep them under watch, so the actual cells could be used to house prisoners from the duchess's forces. Wodeham gladly passes this task off to the PCs.

The Jail Boss.

Nathan Jierre is not here, but if the PCs can get the Danorans talking, they can learn what happened to him. Getting them talking could be tough, though.

Danorans think of Duchess Ethelyn of Shale as an infamous enemy, so when it was clear that the fortress was lost, many soldiers retreated into the island to prepare a guerilla campaign. Those who stayed behind were mostly non-combatants—cooks, maids, factory workers, and such.

Only one officer was taken captive: **Lieutenant Hessar Marseine** took shrapnel to his eye and was unconscious when brought to the brig. The lieutenant has the respect and obedience of the other prisoners, and he has ordered them not to answer Risuri questions or help in any way. If the PCs want any information, they're going to have to convince Marseine first.

If the PCs start asking questions, the crowd of prisoners yell at them until finally Marseine stands and gestures for them to be quiet. He says they should listen to what the PCs have to say before jumping to conclusions. In truth, though, this is just a polite and reasonable face. Marseine has a short temper and is willing to fight at the slightest provocation. He just wants out of the cell first.

Negotiating.

Marseine already knows the basic story of who's attacking whom and why. He says he'd be willing to have his people provide some help, on the condition that any Danoran who's willing be given weapons and allowed to join the fight against the duchess's forces. He insists on a show of good faith—he wants a pistol, a musket, and a sword—before his people will talk.

Marseine's cooperative if the party gives him what he wants, but if they mock him, question his combat skill, or even just remind him that he's in the brig because of a dumb accident, he'll get snippy, and will start to take everything in the worst light possible. If not handled gently, he might threaten a PC, possibly even attack one if provoked. This could ruin the party's ability to get some useful information.

What they Know.

If the PCs manage to get the prisoners to talk, they report that the duchess's initial assault was through a linked portal inside the walls of the fort. The ritual circle was only crafted in the past year. No one out of the group here knows much about how magic works, but they were led to understand that the key to activate the portal was secret. They suspect someone on the inside betrayed them. They can show the party in person or on a map.

Additionally, Lieutenant Marseine has a key to the roof door of the central keep, hidden under a pile of hay in his cell. An architect prisoner knows the route of the sewer system under the keep, and could provide a map to let PCs sneak into the basement of the central keep, avoiding the hedge maze labyrinth. The map starts in any of several buildings in the Outer Fort, and the only obstacle in the way to the central keep is some stinking offal and a couple of iron grates. Removing them triggers alarms, but the duchess's forces don't know enough about the fort to respond to the breach.

Immurement

Action. Real-Time. Level 1.

Asrabey tears the fabric of reality to open a path to the duchess, and the PCs have a chance to follow him.

As the party is wrapping up their investigation of the prison, read or paraphrase the following passage, but give them a chance to interrupt if they want.

A flash of red-orange light illuminates the street from above, and as it streaks by you hear footsteps sprint across the roof of the brig. You hear shouts of dismay outside, a gunshot, and then more shouting. A soldier runs in from the street and yells, "The fire monster's coming!"

Outside you see an entity leap from the roof and into the street, sprinting for the inner wall. The figure resembles a cloud of smoke with a faint humanoid outline inside illuminated by an orange glow.

A couple of defenders on the wall start firing arrows, and you hear an audible curse of pain from the smoky entity. He ducks behind a bit of debris down the street, 80 ft. away from the wall, 120 ft. from the brig. He pulls out an orb that glows with white light, which pierces even his smoke shroud.

The whole street begins to shake, and the brig with it. Iron nails and iron prison bars shudder in their mountings, and a few rip violently free. In the street outside, cobblestones shatter upward and iron spikes burst out of the ground and float inches off the ground. Some of the Danorans in the brig cry out in shock as the space they're occupying becomes a tangle of jungle. Up on the wall, the duchess's defenders scream as the wall beneath them turns to mist and they plummet to their deaths on a lightly-wooded field.

In an area roughly two-hundred feet across, the landscape that was the fortress is comingled with a day-lit jungle landscape. Only in places with enough iron does the original landscape remain, while in a few pockets, typically along the edges, other landscapes flicker in and out—a fiery rockslide, a swamp with yellow frogs, a beige bank of clouds. You notice the edges are shrinking inward slowly, and you can guess the wildly powerful magic will only last a minute or two.

On the other side of the comingled terrain, you can make out the keep where you suspect the duchess is, and a huge tangle of brush around it. The smoky entity discards his orb and runs forward though the temporary gap in the inner wall. He casually lashes out a whip of flame to kill a defender who tries to get in his path, and then sprints onward toward the keep.

The light in the orb is slowly fading; the effect will end soon.

Asrabey has used a rare *immurement*, a type of magic item that houses a sliver of another world within it. The item's power was magnified by the fluctuations of Axis Island. The PCs have a choice between charging ahead into the center of the fort with minimal back-up, or hanging back and being cautious. After a few minutes the *immurement's* magic ends, and the fort returns to its previous shape. The *immurement's* power is expended, but it would be an interesting curio to keep.

If the PCs wait, they can sneak in through sewers, or wait until the military surrounds the keep, by which point Asrabey will have taken the duchess hostage.

If the PCs go in now, emphasize the strangeness of the overlaid world they run through, which is lit from a sun they cannot see. Moments after they clear the gap the *immurement's* magic ends, and the fortress wall snap back into existence. In the sudden darkness, a handful of the duchess's soldiers on distant walls fire errant bowshots. The party will want to make a beeline for the hedge maze only a few dozen feet away. This is the labyrinth of Gillie Dhu, a fey ally of the duchess. The tops of the hedges are already on fire from Asrabey's passage.

The Labyrinth of Gillie Dhu

Action/Social. Tactical. Level 1.

A furious fey tries to thwart the PCs' path to the duchess, but he can be convinced that Asrabey, and fire to his hedge maze home, is a greater threat.

Gillie Dhu	Level 1 Solo Lurker
Medium fey humanoid	XP 500
HP 112; **Bloodied** 56	**Initiative** +1
AC 15, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 11, **Will** 14	**Perception** +8
Speed 6 (forest walk)	Low-Light Vision
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 2	

Traits

▸ **Woodsman**

Gillie Dhu can see and move through hedges and other plants as if they weren't there. His attacks ignore such terrain for the sake of cover and concealment. If Gillie Dhu ends his turn in such terrain, he can be attacked as normal.

▸ **Flammable Home**

Whenever Gillie Dhu starts his turn, he takes 1 fire damage for each hedge square in the labyrinth that is on fire. At the end of Gillie Dhu's turn, every square of burning hedge adjacent to him burns up in a sudden flash and becomes clear terrain.

▸ **Body of the Tangle**

Whenever Gillie Dhu is stunned, he can take one standard action on his turn, but still grants combat advantage and cannot take opportunity or immediate actions. When he is dazed, he can take actions as normal, but still grants combat advantage. When he is blind, enemies only have concealment, not total concealment. Gillie Dhu loses these benefits if he is more than 5 squares from a space filled with a hedge.

Standard Actions

⊘ **"Have at Thee!"** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The fey bristles a grin at you as he swings his cudgel for your chest.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+10 damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares. Gillie Dhu can push targets through hedge squares; such squares become difficult terrain.

✧ **"Ha! You're Surrounded!"** ✦ At-Will

Claws made of bramble and thorn reach out from nearby hedges.

Attack: Close Burst 2 (enemies in burst adjacent to a hedge); +5 vs. Ref

Hit: 1d6+5 damage, and the target is restrained (escape DC 12).

▸ **"What Kind of Scoundrel Burns a Man's Home?!"** ✦ At-Will

The gnarled fey scowls at you and sprints off to fight flames elsewhere in the hedges.

Effect: Gillie Dhu shifts his speed and must end his movement adjacent to at least one square of burning hedge. He can use *Have at Thee!* and *Ha! You're Surrounded!* each one time at any point during his movement.

Triggered Actions

▸ **"A Duel! Most Splendid!"** ✦ At-Will

The gnarled fey retaliates against your strike with a lunging swipe of his shillelagh.

Trigger: An opponent within 3 squares of Gillie Dhu hits him with an attack.

Requirement: Gillie Dhu must not be bloodied.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): Gillie Dhu shifts 2 squares and uses *Have at Thee!* against the triggering enemy.

✧ **"Rargh! Get Out!"** ✦ At-Will

The old fey angrily swings his shillelagh and tears through hedges to get to you.

Trigger: An opponent within 3 squares of Gillie Dhu hits him with an attack.

Requirement: Gillie Dhu must be bloodied. The blast must include the triggering enemy.

Attack (Immediate Reaction): Close Blast 3 (enemies in burst); +5 vs. Fort

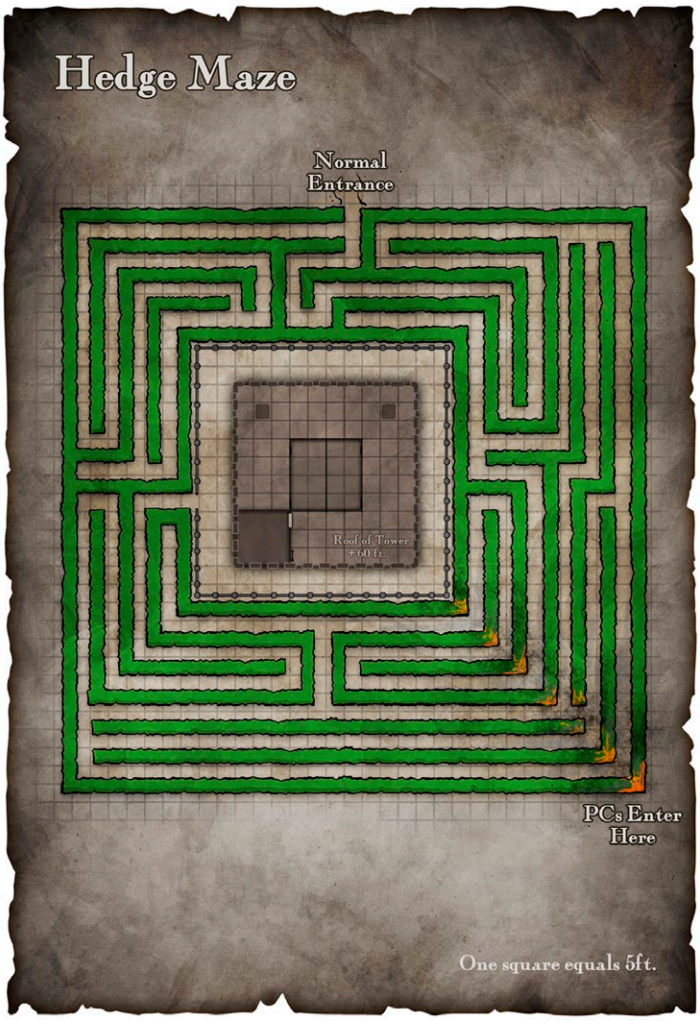
Hit: 1d6+5 damage.

Effect: Each hedge square in the blast becomes clear terrain.

Skills Arcana +6, Insight +8, Nature +6, Perception +8

Str 16 (+3)	**Dex** 8 (–1)	**Wis** 16 (+3)
Con 12 (+1)	**Int** 12 (+1)	**Cha** 16 (+3)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven, Primordial



Tactics.

When Asrabey reached the hedge, he ran across it, his footsteps igniting a few leaves, but only the two corners nearest the southeast are actually burning significantly. If the PCs are in hot pursuit of the eladrin, when they arrive here they spot Gillie Dhu beating his shillelagh at a burning hedge at the edge of his labyrinth. The fire goes out and the bit of hedge withers to ash, opening up a path into the maze.

When Gillie Dhu spots the PCs he disappears into the maze, shouting, "Your flaming friend may have gotten by me, but I shall not let you pass! Come into my maze if you dare!"

Terrain.

Hedges: Hedges are normally impassible, and they provide concealment and superior cover to those on the opposite side. A character can try to enter a hedge square, which requires 4 squares of movement and an Athletics check (DC 19).

Hedges are 8 ft. tall and can be climbed (Athletics DC 12). The top of a hedge is difficult terrain, and each square requires an Acrobatics check (DC 19) to avoid falling prone.

Burning Brush: If an area or close attack deals 5 or more fire damage, any hedge squares in the area catch fire. A single-target attack can also be aimed at hedge square, and if it does 5 fire damage, the hedge square catches fire. A hedge that catches fire burns slowly; it might go out by itself or spread over the course of several minutes, but for the duration of the encounter the hedge simply continues to burn on its own unless someone puts out the fires.

Because each square of burning brush does damage to him, usually Gillie Dhu will disengage from the PCs and rush to put out fires on his turn. He assumes he'll have time to get back to the party before they can navigate the maze. If a PC is creating a lot of fire, though, he'll focus his attacks on that character. Even if the PCs themselves have no fire powers, their allied soldiers each have a flask of alchemist fire. Clever PCs can manage to keep Gillie Dhu busy putting out fires until they get to the central keep.

Negotiating: Gillie Dhu gladly talks with the PCs during combat, calling them scalawags and fools for doing the dirty work for a bunch of Danorans. He assumes Asrabey came with the party and the fleet. If the PCs suggest that the eladrin means to kill the duchess, and they just want to take her prisoner, a hard (DC 19) Diplomacy check can convince him to stand down and let them into the keep.

The Trio

Social. Real-Time. Level 1.

The party must confront the deadly Asrabey before he executes the duchess and abducts Nathan Jierre.

At the center of the hedge maze sits the tower keep, 60 ft. tall. It consists of three floors. The first two contain a command center, arrow slits around the outer walls, and quarters, with basement supply rooms to hold out in a siege. Cramped sewer tunnels lead into the basement.

The third floor, 20 ft. above ground level, houses a library including maps of the island and the night sky, as well as a work room for scholars. The top floor, which has a 40-ft. high ceiling, houses a telescope observatory, which Nathan Jierre and other astronomers used to track the interactions between planetary or stellar orbits and magical fluctuations on the island.

In the observatory, a metal staircase leads to a door that provides access to the crenellated roof, where musketeers could harass any approaching enemies, though the duchess doesn't have enough forces to put troops there. The main bulk of the roof is a mechanically-operated hatch. Controls in the observatory can manipulate the hatch to provide a broad view of the night sky. The door and hatch are both locked from the inside.

The duchess has been directing the battle from the keep, and her non-combatant advisors and allies—including Nathan Jierre—fled to the observatory when Asrabey attacked. The eladrin managed to breach the keep's defenses and kill the duchess's guards. If the PCs are in pursuit, moments before they arrive he defeats the duchess in battle, and prepares to execute her.

Getting In. If the PCs reach the front door, they find it ajar and burning, having been blasted open from within by Asrabey. If they took the sewer route, they emerge in the basement and find the lower level smoldering. The bodies of dozens of soldiers lie about slashed and charred, and as the party ascends the stairs it should be clear that Asrabey is far more powerful than them.

Alternately, the PCs might climb the outer wall of the tower and enter through the roof door, using a key provided by Lieutenant Marseine.

Eavesdropping. If the PCs reach the top floor after pursuing Asrabey, they hear Asrabey, the duchess, and Nathan Jierre arguing in the observatory chamber. A few of the duchess's advisors lie nearby, killed only moments earlier, as well as a dozen soldiers who had been protecting the roof, most of them dead, one clinging to consciousness (and thus able to provide the details of this conversation later if the PCs never

come here themselves). The duchess sits on the ground, holding a hand over her stomach, which is blackened and bloody. The bodies of slain summoned wolves are slowly fading away. Nathan Jierre cowers on the far side of the chamber, trying to hide behind an orrery.

Asrabey circles the duchess, limping slightly. He's covered in small cuts and bruises, and is managing to stay standing despite a handful of arrow and bullet wounds across his legs and arms. His wooden, lion-faced shield bears fresh blood on its fangs, and his flaming sword flares whenever he wants to emphasize a word or sentence. The smoke shroud does not hang around him.

Read or paraphrase the following, but give the PCs a chance to interrupt at any time. If the party decided to wait for the army to surround the keep, they can hear the details of this conversation from the surviving soldier.

Duchess: "Asrabey, don't do anything you'll regret."

Asrabey: "Save your pleading breath for prayer."

Duchess: "If you have come for the reason I suspect, you should pray with me as well. You are a murderer, Asrabey. Did I so displease the Court that you needed to slaughter a hundred to reach me?"

Asrabey: "To forestall war, yes! Your people must not think we are the ally of a kingslayer. And worse," *he sneers at the tiefling,* "one who consorts with devils."

Tiefling: "Um, perhaps reason is a bit much to expect at this time, but can we talk about this?"

The eladrin flicks his sword, which extends out to a flaming whip and cracks the tiefling across his face, then snaps back to a longsword.

Asrabey: "You are lucky your cursed flesh will not burn. But I have other ways to make you suffer." *To the duchess he says,* "Prepare yourself, and you may die with dignity."

Duchess: "Wait! My brother won't execute his own blood, and so long as I live I can still oppose him. There are more important matters than—"

Asrabey: "You struck the first blow. Aodhan was a soldier, as I am, and forgiveness does not come easily to our kind. He'll never listen to you, not in the short years he has left. Already you are vilified. You promised your land would pull away from these fiends, would return to the old ways, yet you have fallen in with them yourself."

Duchess: "You don't understand. Nathan is on our side. There's a threat to Risur and the Unseen. I told the Court as much—"

Asrabey: "Enough. Ethelyn, please do not make me watch you beg."

Duchess: *She glares.* "Asrabey Varal, your closed mind has doomed us all." *She sits up straight despite her stomach wound.* "Very well. Finish it."

Tiefling: "Wait a minute, Varal? Are you kin to a Kasvarina Varal?"

The eladrin stops before he has managed to raise his sword for a killing blow. He turns away from the duchess, grabs the tiefling by his vest, and leans close.

Eladrin: "How do you know Kasvarina?"

Tiefling: "Um, what—? She… she was here, months ago! She was on the arm of a Crisillyiri man. In the company of my cousin. They took a tour of the mines. They left a few days later. I… I think she was the one who crafted the portal ring."

Duchess: "Asrabey, I'm trying to tell you, he's an ally. He's seen things, and we're trying to find out what it all means. I think Danor means to destroy both our nations. My brother wouldn't listen, even the Court ignored me, but you have to believe me."

The eladrin considers for a long moment. Then he heads for the double doors to check his escape route.



Cousin of Lya Jierre and nephew of Danor's sovereign, Nathan avoided politics and pursued science. After years studying theories of magic and astronomy, he came to Axis Island to understand how the two are tied together. His attention easily drifts to cerebral topics, and so people often have to repeat things to him. But he has a knack for seeing what most people miss, and his enthusiasm for understanding complex interactions helps him unearth things that others are interested in hiding. Once he realized his people were building new weapons, he went to the duchess, hoping to avoid another war. He did not expect the duchess to attack. Now he realizes he's a traitor, and is afraid what will happen when his people find out.

If the PCs aren't here, Asrabey sees the battle outside and realizes that getting Nathan Jierre off the island will be difficult, so he changes plans and prepares a hostage situation. But if the PCs are here, Asrabey notices them. If they don't make the first move, he'll demand they leave or else he'll kill the duchess.

Hostage Situation. If Asrabey gets a chance to make his demands, he says that he intends to leave this island with the tiefling. Firstly, he wants a message delivered to King Aodhan, explaining that the Unseen Court did not endorse the duchess's actions, and that they desire her execution as a traitor. Second, he wants a ship prepared with an unarmed skeleton crew. They will sail him to the Risuri mainland, at which point he will let them go. He will keep the duchess with him, but will hand her over once he boards the ship.

He claims, falsely, that he will not harm her. The whole plan is a ruse, though. He actually intends to use the duchess as a human shield until he and Nathan Jierre can reach the outer fort. Then he will slit her throat, heave Nathan over his shoulder, and run for the teleportation circle. Once there, he only needs one minute to complete his ritual, which will teleport him to an old forest deep in the Risuri weftlands.

Brinksmanship. Asrabey's hesitant to make the first move, and he hopes to intimidate the party into leaving because he's not sure he has the strength left to take them in a fight. The party might likewise try to cow him into backing down.

The eladrin is willing to talk for a few minutes to get a gauge of the party's intentions and willingness to risk their lives. The duchess—who recognizes them from the *Coaltongue*—tries to break in and explain why she tried to kill her brother. She tells of her vision (see page 93), but Asrabey cuts her off soon after that. He's not interested in letting his hostages talk, and will try to cow the party into leaving.

Combat. If the party refuses to leave or raises weapons to fight, Asrabey will try to kill them all. The duchess is at 0 hit points and has no healing surges, but she's stable. She won't die from her wounds, but she can't fight unless a PC can grant her healing that doesn't rely on a healing surge. Nathan Jierre is a non-combatant.

The high-level versions of Asrabey and the duchess appear below. If you prefer, use the alternate (level 2) versions on the following pages.

Asrabey Varal Level 20 Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid, eladrin XP 500

HP 186 (currently 27); **Bloodied** 93 **Initiative** +17
AC 34, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 32 **Perception** +12
Speed 8 Low-Light Vision
Resist 10 fire

Traits

▸ **Slippers of Spider Climbing**
Asrabey can walk on horizontal and vertical surfaces at normal speed without needing to make an Athletics check to climb.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Vekeshi Blade** (weapon, fire) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Asrabey's unmatched swordsmanship evades all your defenses. He slices a burning gash in your flesh.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10+10 fire damage.

✧ **Fire Sweep** (weapon, fire) ✦ Encounter
The eladrin swings his blazing sword in a massive arc.
Attack: Close Burst 2 or Close Blast 3 (creatures in burst/blast); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10+10 fire damage.

✲ **Barrier Slash** (fire) ✦ Encounter
As he swipes his blade, a line of fire slices across the ground. The flames quickly grow, threatening to burn you if you don't move.
Effect: Asrabey creates a wall 10 within 1 of dim fire. Until the beginning of Asrabey's next turn the fire is harmless. Thereafter the fire flares, and any creature that enters the wall or starts its turn there takes 20 fire damage. The wall lasts until the end of Asrabey's *next* turn after it flares.

Move Actions

▸ **Fey Step** (teleportation) ✦ Encounter
Asrabey teleports up to 5 squares. If he teleports into the air, he doesn't fall until the end of his turn.

Minor Actions

▸ **Cloak of Smoke** ✦ Encounter
Effect: Smoke fills a Close Burst 3, providing total concealment until the start of Asrabey's next turn.

⟋ **Lion Shield** (weapon) ✦ Encounter
Asrabey's shield roars and flies from his hand, fangs bared.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +23 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d10+5 and the target is restrained (Escape DC 25). Until the target escapes or falls unconscious, it takes 10 damage at the start of its turn.
Effect: Asrabey grants combat advantage. When the target escapes, the shield returns to Asrabey's hand. He can also recall the shield as a free action on his turn.

Skills Acrobatics +21, Arcana +16, Athletics +18, Endurance +18, Intimidate +18
Str 17 (+13) **Dex** 23 (+16) **Wis** 14 (+12)
Con 17 (+13) **Int** 13 (+11) **Cha** 16 (+13)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Duchess Ethelyn of Shale Level 15 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, human XP n/a

HP 140 (currently 0); **Bloodied** 70 **Initiative** +8
AC 29, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 25 **Perception** +13
Speed 5
Resist 10 psychic; **Immune** poison

Traits

▸ **Rites of Rulership**
Until ritually stripped of her power, Duchess Ethelyn derives strength from the people of her land. She is immune to the blinded, dazed, dominated, stunned, and weakened conditions. She makes saving throws at the beginning of her turn and always succeeds.

Standard Actions

✧ **Exile to Dream** ✦ Recharge ⚄ ⚅
The duchess levels a disapproving glare at you, and then the entire world dissolves into mist and tangled vines.
Attack: Close Burst 5 (one creature in burst); +18 vs. Will
Hit: 1d10+5 psychic damage. The target is briefly transported to the The Dreaming, and cannot interact with anyone in this world (save ends). When the effect ends, the creature reappears in its previous space, or the nearest unoccupied space.

▸ **Nature's Defense** (summoning) ✦ At-Will
A wild beast appears and attacks.
Effect: A medium wolf appears in an unoccupied space in close burst 10. It has the duchess's defenses and 1 hit point. The wolf lasts until the end of the encounter. Whenever the duchess takes a move action, the wolf can also move 6 squares. The wolf makes the following attack as soon as it is summoned, and also whenever a creature provokes an opportunity attack.
Attack: Melee 1; +20 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage.

Move Actions

▸ **Dreaming Flight** (teleportation) ✦ Daily
The duchess teleports up to 40 squares. She does not need line of sight to her destination.

Minor Actions

▸ **Glamer** ✦ At-Will
Effect: The duchess changes her appearance to that of any humanoid of roughly the same size.

▸ **Unseen Favor** ✦ At-Will
Effect: The duchess is invisible until the end of her next turn, or until she attacks.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Widdershins Delusion** ✦ At-Will
Trigger: A creature within 10 squares of the duchess makes an attack roll.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The duchess changes the attack roll's target to another creature in the burst. The new target need not be within the original attack's range, but the triggering creature cannot target itself.

Skills Arcana +15, Bluff +20, Diplomacy +20, Intimidate +17, Nature +15
Str 7 (+5) **Dex** 13 (+8) **Wis** 22 (+13)
Con 12 (+8) **Int** 16 (+10) **Cha** 20 (+12)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Elven, Goblin, Primordial

Asrabey Varal (Alternate) Level 2 Solo Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid, eladrin XP 500

HP 164; **Threshold I** 110; **Threshold II** 55 **Initiative** +9
AC 16, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14 **Perception** +4
Speed 6 Low-Light Vision
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Near Death**

No matter how many HP Asrabey has, he counts as bloodied. Asrabey has two HP thresholds; when his HP fall below each threshold, he gains and loses powers.

▸ **Cloak's Shroud**

Smoke billows around Asrabey, granting him concealment. When Asrabey is reduced to 110 HP, his cloak tears free and he loses this defense.

▸ **Shield's Protection**

Asrabey is immune to the dazed, stunned, and dominated conditions as long as he is holding his lion shield. (See *lion shield*.) When Asrabey is reduced to 55 HP, his lion shield cracks and he loses this defense.

▸ **Skirmisher's Action**

On an initiative of 10 + his initiative check, Asrabey can shift up to his speed and make a basic attack. If he is dazed or stunned, he instead ends those conditions.

▸ **Slippers of Spider Climbing**

Asrabey can walk on horizontal and vertical surfaces at normal speed without needing to make an Athletics check to climb, but he falls at the end of his turn if he doesn't have a free hand to hold on.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Vekeshi Blade** (weapon, fire) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Asrabey's unmatched swordsmanship is slowed by his injuries, but his flaming blade promises a wretched wound should it strike.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +7 vs. AC

Hit: 1d10+4 fire damage, or 1d10+10 if Asrabey has 55 HP or fewer.

✣ **Fire Sweep** (weapon, fire) ✦ Encounter

The eladrin swings his blazing sword in a massive arc.

Attack: Close Burst 2 or Close Blast 3 (creatures in burst/blast); +7 vs. AC

Hit: 1d10+4 fire damage, or 1d10+10 if Asrabey has 55 HP or fewer.

Move Actions

▸ **Fey Step** (teleportation) ✦ Encounter

Asrabey teleports up to 5 squares. If he teleports into the air, he doesn't fall until the end of his turn.

Minor Actions

✓ **Lion Shield** (weapon) ✦ Encounter

Asrabey's shield roars and flies from his hand, fangs bared.

Requirement: Asrabey must have 56 HP or more.

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +5 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d6+2 and the target is restrained (Escape DC 13). Until the target escapes the grab or falls unconscious, it takes 5 damage at the start of its turn.

Effect: Asrabey loses *shield's protection*. When the target escapes, or he recalls the shield (a free action on his turn), the shield returns to his hand and this effect ends.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Aspect of Vengeance** ✦ Encounter

Though grievously wounded, Asrabey seems to grow stronger the closer he comes to death. He tears off his tattered cloak of smoke, defiant and unwilling to hide anymore. Wispy fires flicker across his body, taking the shape of a furious deity with six arms.

Trigger: Asrabey drops to 110 HP or fewer.

Effect (No Action): Asrabey pushes each creature in a Close Burst 2 one square. Any negative conditions or effects affecting him are transferred to the enemy who last dealt damage to him. Asrabey rolls a new initiative, his encounter powers recharge, and he gains another action point. Until Asrabey drops to 55 HP, he has threatening reach, but he can only make one opportunity attack per round.

▸ **Barrier Slash** (fire, teleportation) ✦ Encounter

Asrabey's shield cracks. He sneers, blood on his lips, and swipes his blade at the ground, conjuring a snaky line of fire. The flames quickly grow, threatening to burn you if you don't move. Only then do you notice that the eladrin has teleported away. His shield clatters to the ground where he last stood.

Trigger: Asrabey drops to 55 HP or fewer.

Effect (No Action): Asrabey teleports 5 squares. Any negative conditions or effects affecting him end. He rolls a new initiative, his encounter powers recharge, and he gains another action point. Asrabey also creates a wall 10 within 1 of dim fire. Until the beginning of Asrabey's next turn the fire is harmless. Thereafter the fire flares, and any creature that enters the wall or starts its turn there takes 10 fire damage. The wall lasts until the end of Asrabey's *next* turn after it flares.

Skills Acrobatics +13, Arcana +8, Athletics +10, Endurance +10, Intimidate +10

Str	17 (+5)	**Dex**	23 (+8)	**Wis**	14 (+4)
Con	17 (+5)	**Int**	13 (+3)	**Cha**	16 (+5)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Asrabey Varal (Alternate) Condition Track

Stage	Abilities
1 (164 HP)	Has *cloak's shroud* (concealment) and *shield's protection* (immune dazed, stunned, and dominated while holding shield).
2 (110 HP)	*Aspect of vengeance* triggers. Loses *cloak's shroud*. Gains threatening reach (only one opportunity attack per round).
3 (55 HP)	*Barrier slash* triggers. Loses *shield's protection* trait and *lion shield* attack. Loses threatening reach. Attacks do more damage.



Duchess Ethelyn of Shale (Alternate)	Level 2 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP n/a
HP 36 (currently 0); **Bloodied** 18	**Initiative** +2
AC 16, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 12	**Perception** +7
Speed 5	
Resist 10 psychic; **Immune** poison	

Traits

▶ **Rites of Rulership**

Until ritually stripped of her power, Duchess Ethelyn derives strength from the people of her land. She is immune to the blinded, dazed, dominated, stunned, and weakened conditions. She makes saving throws at the beginning of her turn and always succeeds.

Standard Actions

✧ **Exile to Dream** ✦ Recharge ⚄ ⚅

The duchess levels a disapproving glare at you, and then the entire world dissolves into mist and tangled vines.

Attack: Close Burst 5 (one creature in burst); +5 vs. Will

Hit: 1d6 psychic damage. The target is briefly transported to the Dreaming, and cannot interact with anyone in this world (save ends). When the effect ends, the creature reappears in its previous space, or the nearest unoccupied space.

▶ **Nature's Defense** (summoning) ✦ At-Will

A wild beast appears and attacks.

Effect: A medium wolf appears in an unoccupied space in close burst 10. It has the duchess's defenses and 1 hit point. The wolf lasts until the end of the encounter. Whenever the duchess takes a move action, the wolf can also move 6 squares. The wolf makes the following attack as soon as it is summoned, and also whenever a creature provokes an opportunity attack:

Attack: Melee 1; +7 vs. AC; *Hit:* 5 damage.

Move Actions

▶ **Dreaming Flight** (teleportation) ✦ Daily

The duchess teleports up to 40 squares. She does not need line of sight to her destination.

Minor Actions

▶ **Glamer** ✦ At-Will

Effect: The duchess changes her appearance to that of any humanoid of roughly the same size.

▶ **Unseen Favor** ✦ At-Will

Effect: The duchess is invisible until the end of her next turn, or until she attacks.

Triggered Actions

▶ **Widdershins Delusion** ✦ At-Will

Trigger: A creature within 10 squares of the duchess makes an attack roll.

Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The duchess changes the attack roll's target to another creature within 10 squares of her. The new target need not be within the original attack's range, but the triggering creature cannot target itself.

Skills Arcana + 9, Bluff +14, Diplomacy +14, Intimidate +11, Nature +9

Str	7 (–1)	**Dex**	13 (+2)	**Wis**	22 (+7)
Con	12 (+3)	**Int**	16 (+4)	**Cha**	20 (+6)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Elven, Goblin, Primordial

Tactics.

Fight. Asrabey charges into the midst of the PCs and tries to take them out as quickly as possible. If using the lower-level version, during his second stage he withdraws to the telescope room, trying to string the party out. During his third stage he'll seek to reach the roof, either by stairs or by climbing the telescope and then teleporting through the open hatch. He can then climb down the side of the keep and flee.

Negotiation and Takedown. Truly bold PCs might convince Asrabey to leave without a fight. Even if the PCs convince him he can't win a fight, he first demands they take the duchess and give him the tiefling. The party must be very imposing to get him to leave and take nothing. He definitely refuses to surrender, though he could be taken alive after a fight.

Terrain.

The ceiling here rises an impressive 40 ft. high. A 10-ft. high platform dominates the room, with a 20-ft. high telescope mounted atop it, so leaving a 10-ft. space to a hatch, which opens up to allow viewing of the night sky. A control panel at the base of the telescope can be activated as a minor action to open the hatch to the roof. The panel can also adjust the aim of the telescope. Someone inclined to climb the telescope can find easy handholds (Athletics DC 8), though not much space to stand or fight.

Someone on top of the telescope, or with a rope (or a whip, like Asrabey's), can spend a standard action and make a Strength check (DC 12) to knock the huge object off its mount, which can crush those nearby. Make an attack, +8 vs. Ref (creatures within 2 squares of the telescope), 3d8+3 damage on a hit, half damage on a miss.

A few bits of furniture are covered in charts and old plates of food. Doors in the north corners lead to the hydraulic mechanisms that move the roof hatch, as well as rain cisterns.

A catwalk staircase in the southwest corner provides roof access, though the door at the top of the stairs is locked from the outside (Thievery DC 12). The roof itself has crenellations, but all the defenders who had been there rushed down and were cut down by Asrabey.

Aftermath

Social. Montage. Level 1.

On behalf of the victorious forces, the PCs turn control of Axis Island back to Danor.

After resolving the situation with Asrabey, the party might have prisoners—or bodies—to take back to Risur. The navy came prepared to take spellcasters into custody, and can slap *mage cuffs* (see the Player's Guide) on the duchess or Asrabey if needed. Nathan Jierre cooperates, though he enthusiastically petitions the PCs to guarantee him passage to Risur, especially if he learns that his cousin Lya is coming.

With fairly limited time left before the island must be handed over, the party might search for clues of what was going on. It should be clear that Danor was experimenting here with merging magic and industry, and that they're on track to build military shipyards and gunworks. The excavations of ancient ruins might raise some suspicions, but there is no evidence of a direct, immediate threat to Risur.

Nathan's Knowledge.

Either by speaking with Nathan Jierre, or making a few Arcana and Nature checks in the observatory, the party learns that the Danorans were interested in tracking an unusual interaction of magic and planetary movement. While the Skyseers and others long ago noted how the planets affect major types of elemental magic, Nathan was tasked with determining what magic is affected by the much more distant stars.

It could be coincidence, but the star he has been observing most thoroughly is a bright blue one, the same color as the sun the PCs witnessed when reality flickered earlier. He also has, in a glass case, a dissected frog from that same strange place, pinned down with gold needles.

Departure.

The military grabs the duchess's forces, loads its people on ships, and departs. Eventually only the *Impossible* remains behind. Near sunset,

a steam-powered Danoran warship named *Lux Profectusque*—squatter and slower than the *Coaltongue*, but sturdier for open seas travel—coasts into the Axis Fortress harbor. Lya Jierre disembarks, flanked by a pair of unusual bodyguards.

The first, **Rush Munchausen**, is a snide half-elf who carries a pair of elaborately decorated platinum rods, slotted into holsters at his hips. Amid images of roiling clouds and celestial spheres, two golden buttons stand out by each rod's gripping end. His forearms are massively muscled.

The second, a hulking half-deaf half-orc named **Merton Goncala**, wears a steel helmet with unusually thick protection over his ears, but otherwise has no armor. He holds a thickly-wrapped object, like an overlong walking staff, twice as thick at the top as where he holds it. Layers of white cashmere conceal the object's head.

These two warriors accompany Lya most everywhere she goes, and when the party finally gets an opportunity to face them in combat in Adventure Six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*, they will discover that Rush fights with a pair of specially-designed extensible *immovable rods*, while Merton carries a polearm capped with an adjustable and powerful sonic tine, like a giant tuning fork. Lya Jierre, of course, has an arcano-technological rapier designed to slice off hands and feet.



RUSH MUNCHAUSEN



MERTON GONCALA

Handover.

When Lya sees the party she smiles and asks if she can take back her country's island. She'd like to know what happened, especially to her cousin, but first she has to go through a few formalities. She produces a pair of matching documents, minor treaties that plainly state that Risur condemns the duchess's attack on the island and will not press a claim to it on account of this particular military event. The PCs are empowered to sign on behalf of Risur. Afterward, Lya is genuinely thankful the party has helped avert a crisis, and even if they have bad news about her cousin, she remains positive. She asks that the party leave soon, because not all of her people are as fond of Risur as she is.

But before the party leaves, find some way to work into the conversation that Lya Jierre is planning to marry King Aodhan if the negotiations over the next year go well. She might mention (if Nathan is headed to Risur) that she hopes she'll see him before the wedding; or she might simply invite the PCs by way of saying thanks.

With that, there's nothing left to do but board the *Impossible* and sail back to Risur. The mission is accomplished, but a mystery is just starting to reveal itself.

Prisoners, Punishments, Pardons.

A few months pass between this adventure and the next, *The Dying Skyseer*. In that time, the king gets his house mostly in order, though some protest groups are emboldened and treat the duchess as a hero, especially if she died. If she survived, a public ritual strips her of her title, leaving her with only weak magical powers. Now just Ethelyn, she's imprisoned in the Bridge Tower in Slate.

Nathan Jierre, if the PCs let him go to Risur, becomes a guest of a minor noble in Flint, but his movements are almost as limited as the duchess's. If the Danorans get him, he eventually flees a trial for treason and finds his way to Risur anyway.

Neither Nathan nor the Duchess have any scripted role in the rest of the campaign. If either ends up in Risur, the party might be sent to question them between Adventures Two and Three or visit them briefly at the beginning of Adventure Six; you can use them to fill in any knowledge gaps the PCs might still have. If Asrabey takes either, the party won't see them again until they end up in the Dreaming in Adventure Nine.

The PCs get a very stern talking to if they killed Asrabey, because he was technically a diplomat of the Unseen Court, but circumstances justify their actions. If he survives, he is soon allowed to return to the Dreaming with no consequences. His sword, shield, and cloak are returned to him or given to his allies, along with his body, if he died.

Conclusion

By the end of this adventure, the party should have a clear sense of the relationships among Risur, Danor, and the Unseen Court. They've met several future power players, including King Aodhan and Lya Jierre, and they should realize that Danor is up to something on Axis Island, but that they aren't equipped to find out what yet. And by finding themselves in the right place at the right time (more than one time, already), they've had a chance to shape the fate of their nation.

The next adventure, *The Dying Skyseer*, keeps the action and mystery entirely in the city of Flint, as a high-profile murder draws the party into an investigation of foreign doctors, fey terrorists, local corruption, and soul-stealing dark magic from the city's past.





Adventure Number 2

The Dying Skyseer

From the Pen of Ryan Nock

Evocative Cover Illustration by ShenFei

Stunning Cartographic Displays by Brian Patterson
Jonathan Roberts

Masterful Interior Illustrations* by Claudio Pozas
Dede Putra
ShenFei

with Layout and Graphic Design by Eric Life-Putnam

Ably Produced and Facilitated by Russell Morrissey

Special Thanks to *Gabi, for teaching me about faeries. And you know who, for teaching me about crazy, soul-devouring banshees.*

* some illustrations from the public domain are courtesy *fromoldbooks.org*

ADVENTURE TWO: Introduction

Wherein Solving a Murder Averts Doomsday.

In the first adventure of the Zeitgeist adventure path, *The Island at the Axis of the World*, the PCs thwarted a coup attempt and helped prevent a war, but did so by aiding their homeland's traditional enemy. Such are the duties required by agents of the Risuri Homeland Constabulary, for protecting the nation is often at odds with simple black-and-white concepts of friend and foe.

In *The Dying Skyseer*, as the party investigates a murder they will cross paths with enemies they can recruit as temporary allies, and work with supposed friends who seek to mislead and betray them. This is a complex world, and it will take canny and dogged investigators to sift truth from amid layers of deception.

Of course, this is a heroic adventure game, and while different groups might turn the Grim-Dark dial up or down a few notches for their own campaigns, what players generally want is to find bad guys, take them down, and be rewarded for it. There are plenty of villains lurking under the smoggy skies of Flint, and it doesn't take a prophet to know the PCs are going to thwart their foul plans.

Before you run this adventure you'll want to be familiar with the Background, Adventure Overview and NPC Roster.

One benefit of having the adventure in both print and digital format is how easy it is to search the text. We do our best to make information easy to find, but if the PCs suddenly start suspecting Barb and you have no idea who that is, a quick search can turn up the information. (Barb is completely innocent, by the way.)

Background

For the past few months, tiny tremors have shaken the city of Flint, which has no history of earthquakes. Docker poets take it as a manifested metaphor of the rifts opening up between the different districts and cultures. Angry protests march through Bosum Strand and Parity Lake to denounce cruel treatment of factory workers, and the police thrash those who make too big a name for themselves.

While these divisions concern the common people of Flint, three more powerful forces are at work in the city during this adventure.

Gale and the Fey Terrorists.

The rise of industry in Flint has faced opposition from many sources, most prominent among them being **Hana Soliogn**, dubbed "Gale" by the newspapers for her singular ability to fly away from the scenes of her crimes, despite most scholars saying such flight magic is impossible.



ADAPTING THE ADVENTURE.

All the heroic tier Zeitgeist adventures assume the PCs are agents of the Royal Homeland Constabulary. If your players are free agents, they might be brought in as specialist investigators due to the tricky political nature of a murder at the Danoran consulate. Alternately, a PC with the Docker or Vekeshi Mystic character theme might have known Nilasa and so have a personal reason to solve the mystery.

If you're using this adventure in a different setting and want to strip out the technological elements, you just need to keep a similar element of simmering social unrest. You might replace factories with more old-fashioned sweatshops making goods for a group of distrusted foreigners; perhaps the workers blame some mysterious disease on those foreigners.

The mystery generally remains the same, with emphasis on tracking down people who have clues to secrets hidden in the Bleak Gate (the Shadowfell, in more traditional D&D), while another group tries to stop your investigation. You'll need to change the reason Reed Macbannin is refining witchoil, particularly if you're not planning to run the later adventures.

Gale's attacks usually take the form of sneaking into factories at night and sabotaging machines so work must stop, or unmooring ships so they drift into the harbor and sink, and for these she has won the sympathies of those who view industry as Danoran meddling. But many common workers see her as a threat to their livelihood, and the government has labeled her a foreign provocateur with ties to the Vekeshi Mystics. She is also blamed for thefts from the homes of wealthy factory owners, for the killings of a company of surveyors who wandered into the Cloudwood to site a potential railroad, and for a botched assassination attempt against **Kane Westman**, a tax collector with strong political friends.

Gale wants to garner more support with the common people. She recognizes that blindly attacking factories makes her look like a villain. In the weeks leading up to this adventure, one of Gale's loyalists, a half-elf woman named **Nilasa Hume**, gained the trust of a security guard at the Danoran consulate in Flint. Gale had tasked Nilasa with retrieving financial documents and political letters from the consulate in order to get a better sense of whom to target for future attacks. Nilasa's mission gets her killed just as the adventure begins.

The Family.

The Family criminal organization is based in Crisillyir, and sees the growth of Flint as a great opportunity to expand into a new market. For the past year they've been competing with the various local gangs, with many daring battles led by veteran bravura **Morgan Cippiano**, the face of the organization in Flint.

The Family tries to focus its violence only against other criminals, and targets its crimes against wealthy factory owners and merchants, rather than everyday people. They seek to convince townsfolk from relaxed Stray River to the gritty streets of Parity Lake that the Family will protect them better than the police can. Of course, they're working to get the police in their pockets too.

Gale and the Vekeshi.

The secretive cult of the Vekeshi Mystics has been trying to recruit Gale, since she and the Vekeshi have common enemies, and her ability to fly would make her an ideal assassin.

Before the adventure starts, inform any PC with the Vekeshi Mystic character theme that she has been given a mission. The latest gathering of adherents occurred on the last full moon before the solstice, when a representative of the Unseen Court opened a path into the Dreaming and offered everyone drink, dance, and love-making with beautiful fey.

The Old Stag, one of the most respected members of the Flint cell—he always wears a mask, but has distinctive hands, marked with scars and calluses—took the PC aside and said it would be her task to protect Gale. While the RHC is tasked with capturing the fey terrorist, the Vekeshi want the PC to deliver a gift, and a message.

The gift is a bizarre mirror. It resembles a wreath of gnarled wood, and instead of a pane of glass, a sheet of water hangs within, no matter what angle you hold it at. It is magical, but its purpose is unclear. Normally it is just a beautiful mirror.

That message is: "The Unseen Court is watching. Take this mirror, and when you see the face of our enemies within it, bring them down and we shall reward you."

The party will have a chance to meet Gale, and this delivery can be the first step of many throughout the campaign that draws the PCs toward the Unseen Court.

Kane Westman.

If the PCs check out Mr. Westman, he's clean. Gale attacked him because she detected energies from the Bleak Gate around his home, but he wasn't the source. In truth, Cillian Creed, Macbannin's aide, had been coordinating with Westman to ensure certain smuggled items disappeared from tax logs, but Westman assumed it was everyday bribery, and he has no idea about the operations on Cauldron Hill.

While most native criminals handle petty theft or crude protection rackets, the Family pursues high-end burglary, smuggling, and blackmail. Facing bloody opposition, Morgan has cleverly tricked gangs into turf wars that weaken them so the Family can move in. They're having trouble unseating one power player, though: **Lorcan Kell**, who has become a fixture in the industrial smuggling scene.

Nilasa Hume has connections with both Gale and the Family, and she has arranged for Gale and her allies to purchase a huge cache of smuggled magic items that Family thieves stole from Crisillyir.

The Obscurati.

As detailed in the Campaign Guide, the Colossus Cell of the Obscurati are constructing a massive golem inside Cauldron Hill, or rather the analog to Cauldron Hill that exists in the shadowy plane called the Bleak Gate.

This massive undertaking is secretly overseen by the city governor, **Roland Stanfield**, with the construction in the Bleak Gate directed by a steelshaper named **Leone Quital**. This adventure, however, focuses mostly on the involvement of **Reed Macbannin**, mayor of The Nettles, the city district where Cauldron Hill lies.

Macbannin spent years studying how to defend against dark magic, and he sincerely wants to protect Flint from whatever curses and evil energies were left behind by the witches of Cauldron Hill. He does not know about the existence of the Obscurati. Rather, he believes that Governor Stanfield is running a secret and morally-gray weapons research program for King Aodhan.

Macbannin has been told that the king expects an eventual war with the fey of the Dreaming—possibly even the awakening of the fey titans—as retaliation for his planned treaty with the Danorans. Hoping to cow the fey with technology, high-level officials in Risur and Danor are cooperating to construct a colossal golem. Of course common people would balk, and discovery by the fey would be disastrous, so secrecy is critical.

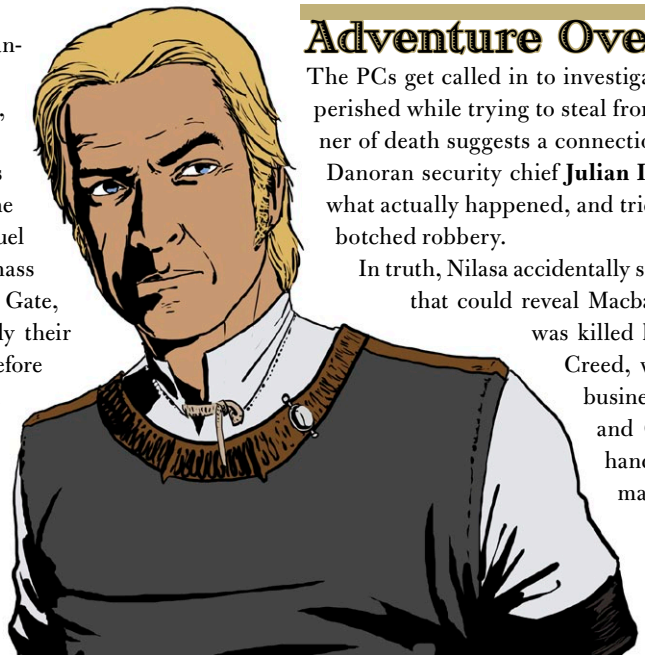
Macbannin coordinates the myriad elements that must work in the normal world to let Quital do his construction in the Bleak Gate. This includes working with crime boss Lorcan Kell to smuggle the necessary components into the Bleak Gate without raising any red flags, intimidating uncooperative factory owners to change their minds, and making sure investigations into mysterious happenings yield no results.

Macbannin carefully shields himself from direct involvement, typically sending messages through his butler **Cillian Creed**, a retired spy whose mastery of disguise conceals horrid physical corruption from a failed experiment involving energies of the Bleak Gate.

Of late, Creed has hired the services of a pair of dragonborn arsonists from Ber, **Eberardo and Valando**. When a factory produces something Quital needs for his colossus but which the owner is unwilling to part with, he is likely to find his house aflame, or his business ignited. An outsider will offer to buy the factory while it burns, after which firefighters rush to put out the blaze. These new owners—proxies of Lorcan

Kell—are of course cooperative to Macbannin's interests.

While Quital constructs the metal titan, Macbannin is researching his own way to aid the defense of Risur. Since fey magic is not trusted, Macbannin is repurposing the dark magic of the Cauldron Hill witches to fuel the mighty golem. He has found a way to mass produce a liquid manifestation of the Bleak Gate, called witchoil. When people die, normally their souls linger in the Bleak Gate for a time before passing on, but if a person dies near a vial of witchoil, their soul is trapped in the fluid instead of passing into the plane of the dead. When the oil is burned, the soul is consumed, making it a potent power source. Macbannin has arranged to stash witchoil vials throughout many factories, which are naturally prone to industrial accidents. Meanwhile he refines an ever larger supply of the substance in a secret facility hidden beneath his manor on Cauldron Hill. Macbannin doesn't believe a soul has much worth after death, and so has no qualms trapping and annihilating souls of the deceased to help the living.



Cillian Creed, the Killer but Not the Villain.

Adventure Overview

The PCs get called in to investigate the death of Nilasa Hume, who perished while trying to steal from the Danoran consulate. Her manner of death suggests a connection to the fey terrorist Gale, but the Danoran security chief **Julian LeBrix** is under orders to cover up what actually happened, and tries to make it look like just a normal botched robbery.

In truth, Nilasa accidentally stumbled upon a cache of documents that could reveal Macbannin's criminal activities, and she was killed by Mayor Macbannin's aid, Cillian Creed, who was at the consulate for other business. Unfortunately for Macbannin and Creed, just before Nilasa died she handed off the stolen documents to a man who fled the scene.

This man, **Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen**, has no connection to any of the major players in the adventure, and was just an innocent bystander who panicked and ran. Once he discovered what he'd been handed he hid in The Nettles, hoping to shake pursuit and arrange for passage out of the country.

The PCs set out to find the doctor and figure out what Nilasa was up to. By tracing Nilasa's connections they learn of a smuggling operation bringing in magic items to arm Gale's allies. Clues from various sources lead to a confrontation with wand smugglers in Flint's harbor. After a battle that fields barely-controlled magic wand blasts, the party captures a few Family toughs. Soon thereafter they are contacted by Morgan Cippiano, who offers to help the party out with their larger investigation in exchange for letting off his people.

Another thread of Nilasa's activities leads them to **Heward Sechim**, a man who runs a factory producing alchemical acid, and who was friends with Nilasa. Sechim, who despite owning a factory is opposed to Danoran presence in Risur, defends Nilasa as a good young woman.

Heward can get the party in touch with **Nevard Sechim**, Heward's sickly old uncle and a once-renowned skyseer. Nevard is highly respected by Gale, and if the party is willing to help him, he can get them a meeting with her. Nevard wants to climb above the smog cloaking the city to see the stars again; he hopes a vision will help soothe the unrest in the streets. But the only place to get a clear view within the city is the top of Cauldron Hill, said to be haunted and thus prohibited, except by permission of the mayor of The Nettles, Reed Macbannin.

When the party goes to Macbannin, he agrees to let Nevard up the mountain, and encourages them to go with the old man to defend him against the evil spirits. In truth he hopes to arrange for their deaths and thus end their investigation; simultaneously he sends his dragonborn arsonists to destroy Heward Sechim's factory so he won't be able to point any other constables this way. When the party survives Macbannin's ploy, Nevard receives several visions, one of which guides them to thwart the arson just in time. Macbannin, of course, pretends to be pleased they survived the dangers of the mountain, while secretly planning another way to thwart them.

Nevard arranges for Gale to meet with the PCs on safe ground. She claims they have a common enemy, and shares her hunches and limited knowledge of a secret group operating in the Bleak Gate, which she think has ties to the Danorans. If the party doesn't try to arrest her, she gives them a ritual that will let them track the trace "scent" of a person

The Bleak Gate and the Dreaming

These two planes are detailed in the Player's Guide. In brief, they have the same general geography as the real world, but with distinct inhabitants and magical energies. Traveling to them typically requires powerful magic, but sometimes pathways open between the worlds, through rings of toadstools or banks of rancid fog on moonless nights.

The Bleak Gate is where the spirits of the dead linger before passing on. Gloomy clouds block out both sun and stars, and it's almost impossible to keep track of time. There are no birds or insects, and most sounds echo dully, except for howls and moans of monsters and the dead, which carry for miles in the windless air.

A hundred and fifty-four years ago a coven of witches took residence upon Cauldron Hill, which rises high in the center of Flint. They hid in the veil between the real world and the Bleak Gate, learning to use the souls of the dead as fuel for their foul sorcery. After years of terrorizing the city, they were defeated by the king of Risur and his allies, but unnatural forces still haunt the peak of that ominous hill.

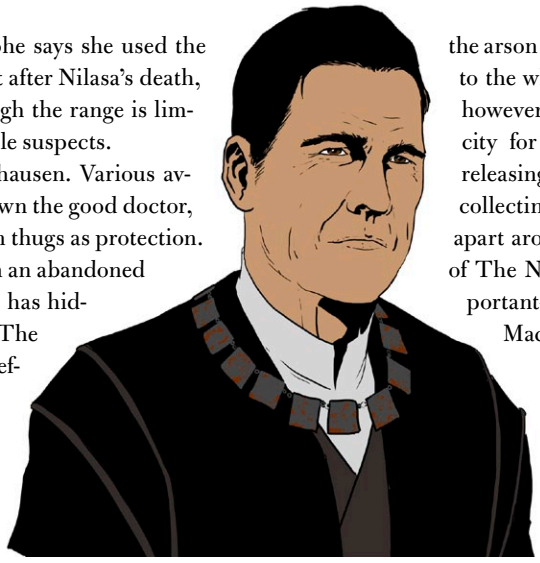
Today the Obscurati have carved a massive complex out of the stone of Cauldron Hill in the Bleak Gate. As the mountain shifts and settles, it sends occasional tremors through the city, rattling even into the real world. The construction complex is guarded with monsters and magic, but the PCs will have a chance to pierce its defenses in Adventure Five, *Cauldron-Born*.

The Dreaming is a tangle of verdant and teeming nature, home to faeries, boggarts, trolls, and the Unseen Court. The land follows dream logic, and traveling requires a proper mindset more than a precise map. Though at first glance more pleasant and safe than the Bleak Gate, the Dreaming is home to capricious fey who delight in misleading and confusing people to their deaths.

who has traveled into the Bleak Gate. She says she used the ritual at the Danoran consulate the night after Nilasa's death, and sensed traces of dark energy. Though the range is limited, it can point the party toward possible suspects.

The final thread is Dr. von Recklinghausen. Various avenues give the party a chance to track down the good doctor, who has hired some of Lorcan Kell's own thugs as protection. The PCs can find von Recklinghausen in an abandoned Clergy church in The Nettles, where he has hidden the documents Nilasa gave him. The doctor read the documents and found references to a substance he recognized as "witchoil"; he says they were written by Danoran security chief Julian LeBrix.

Before the party can bring the doctor in, however, Cillian Creed tries to ambush the party and steal the documents. If that fails, Leone Quital traps them inside and threatens to blow them up unless they hand over the doctor and the documents. The party has to find a way to escape.



Reed Macbannin, the Villain but Not the Killer.

LeBrix reveals that months ago he was investigating strange goings-on in Danoran-funded factories. He thought they might have been caused by sabotage by Gale, but instead he stumbled upon strange vials of witchoil, stashed in dozens of factories. He wanted to find out what they were, but was told by his superiors to end his investigation. The party realizes that someone is using the deaths of factory workers as a way to gather energy for some nefarious purpose. With the information from the documents Nilasa stole as a starting point, it might be possible to figure out who's behind it.

With evidence of larger goings-on, but no clear idea of who is responsible, the party gets guidance from Nevard the skyseer, who says he will present his visions and interpretations of what they mean at a large rally. Dockers, factory workers, and thousands of townsfolk attend, making security nearly impossible, but the party gets clues in advance that the same group who killed Nilasa and tried to recover the documents will target Nevard. Magically-altered great cats, infused with shadow energy, attack and create a panic, and it's up to the PCs to save the skyseer, or to listen to the revelations on his dying breaths.

Ultimately, with a combination of evidence and aid from Nevard, Gale, Morgan Cippiano, the documents Nilasa stole, and interrogating the arson brothers, the party is able to link Reed Macbannin to the whole plot. When they go to take him into custody, however, the strange tremors that have been shaking the city for weeks finally erupt into a massive earthquake, releasing huge torrents of witchoil that Macbannin was collecting and refining. As the mountain starts to break apart around them, the witchoil flood threatens the slums of The Nettles, forcing the PCs to decide what's more important—saving thousands of innocent lives, or capturing Macbannin.

Running an Investigation

A mystery adventure is usually more complicated to run than a dungeon crawl, but after you've read through the adventure you should have a clear sense of which groups and individuals want what and how their goals are interconnected. The PCs' initial mission should be to use Nilasa as a lead to track down Gale, but as they follow the clues it becomes clear that her death is connected to something more dangerous than the fey terrorist.

RHC Protocol.

To help structure the PCs' investigations, you might suggest the following pattern. Since there are no phones (and magical communication is rare and expensive), Royal Homeland Constabulary protocol for these sorts of cases encourages constables to start each day at the RHC office in Central district. Their personal office will probably have some sort of slate board marked with names of key figures, locations, and events, with arrows tracing their connections.

Each morning the group gets together at the office, files reports about the previous day, and makes plans for which leads they want to follow. If that entails splitting up, they can either meet up at the office the next morning, or set a meeting place and time, typically a district police station but possibly the home or business of one of the PCs' contacts.

Elements of the investigation are time-sensitive, while other events happen in response to the PCs finding the right clue or catching the attention of the wrong person. The adventure starts on the 1st day of summer, and you'll want to keep track of what day it is. If you want to keep track of time spent each day, consider that it typically takes an hour to travel from the center of one district to the center of an adjacent one if going by foot, or half an hour by carriage.

It's not a hard and fast rule that the party must return to the office each day, but bringing them back here gives them a clear sense of the passage of days, and reminds them that they have resources at their disposal. It also provides you a convenient time to hand out new information or messages; witnesses or requisitioned items can be waiting for the PCs at the RHC offices at the end of each working day.

Plus, their boss Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft reads their daily reports, so he has a record and can tell *his* higher ups what's going on. This can give you an excuse as the DM to have an NPC remind the PCs to follow up on a clue they may have neglected.

Finally, in Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*, action occurs in the office, and it will have greater impact if the party is familiar with the place. You can find a map and details of the RHC headquarters in the Player's Guide.

Combat-Hungry Players?

The first Zeitgeist adventure started with a bang (which may have annihilated the party in an explosion of steamship parts). This adventure takes a slower pace, and players who are eager for combat might get impatient.

You might try adding a bit of random action early on, perhaps moving the Fog of War encounter (page 169) to the start of the adventure, as part of an unrelated case. When the party comes back to the RHC office they get news of the murder, and so the mystery begins.

You know best what your players will enjoy, but give them a chance to get involved in the mystery. They might discover that they like challenging their investigative skills as much as challenging their combat build.

An Investigator's Best Friend.

Remember that the players don't know what's in this adventure. Your job is to keep them engaged, to provide useful cues as to when they're on the right track, and to ensure the adventure doesn't become unsatisfying because the players decide to follow a few bad hunches.

When a PC goes looking for clues, if you call for a skill check, generally a success should mean they easily get useful information (i.e., an informant knows what they want), and a failure means they have to deal with a challenge (i.e., an informant points them to a shady meeting where they can get what they need). Don't let a failed check dead-end the investigation.

Likewise, if a PC goes looking for clues in the wrong place, if possible try to find a way to nudge them in the right direction. If he goes looking for Dr. von Recklinghausen in local hospitals, rather than just saying he finds nothing, perhaps another doctor mentions that sick people in The Nettles aren't going to charity clinics as often.

What If?

It's fine for the PCs to take a different route to tracking down Macbannin than we assume, but if your players come up with a way that might solve the mystery early—like by breaking into the Danoran consulate and seeking documents like the ones Nilasa stole, or by catching and mind-controlling Cillian Creed during a combat encounter—you might need to tweak things if you want to still make use of the rest of the adventure.

Don't make their efforts pointless, but try adjusting what information they yield so that the party gets some clues, instead of getting all the answers. Perhaps the consular kept documents in his safe that list various factories that are cooperating in "the project" and how much they're being paid, but they make no mention of Reed Macbannin. They might even reference Cillian Creed as "that old disfigured spy," but if the PCs try to find out who fits that description, you can justifiably say it takes a few days to track down the answer. Then, when the party is already in the thick of Thread Four: Conspiracy, their research bears fruit and they realize, gasp, that old disfigured spy is Macbannin's butler!

Of course, if you want a game where verisimilitude is more important than "adventure," let the players solve the case, commend them on their daring and clever plans, and move on to actually stopping the bad guys. Evidence might get stolen, witnesses might be killed in their cell, and the PCs will have to find more solid proof before they accuse a respected politician of being a mad scientist.

Contacts and Informants.

As detailed in the Player's Guide, before the start of this adventure, you should ask each player to pick two districts and come up with a contact his or her character has in those districts.

Contacts can be friends, family members, criminal informants, ex-girlfriends, merchants whose shops the PCs frequent, minor nobles who owe a PC a favor, religious figures, or other options. These NPCs help connect the PCs to the city, and provide you an easy way to set the scene whenever the party first goes to a particular district to investigate, or when they need to call in a favor (see Prestige in the Player's Guide).

Throughout the adventure, the PCs will seek clues in four different threads of a mystery. Often their search will require skill checks. At your discretion, if a particular PC has a contact who could be useful in finding information about a particular thread, you could grant the PC a bonus to his skill checks or perhaps even provide the occasional automatic success.

This gives slight benefit to PCs who have contacts of the unsavory, criminal sort, so look for creative opportunities to make use of more mainstream contacts.

Adventure Layout

The Dying Skyseer's plot has a precise beginning and climax, but the middle of the adventure can take many different paths. We roughly divide events into a beginning, four threads of investigation, and a climax. Each investigation thread has several prominent scenes, but the precise order the PCs reach them depends on their choices.

An easy way for you as DM to keep track of the plot is to think of the different threads as smaller individual adventures that occasionally link together. Completing each of the three initial threads (involving Smugglers, Gale, and Doctor van Recklinghausen) provides key clues to the fourth thread (Conspiracy). Once the PCs complete that thread, they'll be able to identify Reed Macbannin as the main villain, and the Climax details how they can take him out.

Difficulty Class by Level.

Level	Easy	Moderate	Hard	Level	Easy	Moderate	Hard
1	8	12	19	5	10	15	22
2	9	13	20	6	11	15	23
3	9	13	21	7	11	16	23
4	10	14	21	8	12	16	24

Other Constables.

If you need the PCs to interact with their coworkers, remember that most constables are busy with their own cases, and are fairly low level anyway. But if you want to set up friendships or rivalries, you might use the sample group first introduced in the Player's Guide:

- Carlao, human Yerasol veteran knight.
- Serena, human technologist executioner assassin.
- Kaea, eladrin skyseer evoker.
- Dima, dwarf eschatologist cleric.
- Josiah, human gunslinger ranger.
- Gaethan, half-elf spirit medium hunter.

Carlao is the nominal head of the group, but Serena is the brains and face. She and Kaea get along like sisters, but both have their eyes on Carlao. Dima has a bizarre joy for filing paperwork, while Josiah fills the stock role of "quiet loner sniper." Gaethan styles himself a cunning investigator, and he keeps a small book full of names of just about every person, place, or thing that has come up in a case.

Currently the group is assigned to investigate a group of Drakran eschatologists who have recently gained the ears of several politicians. The RHC suspects they are trying to recover relics from the old demonocracy. These radicals play a prominent role in Adventure Five, and their founder—philosopher Grandis Komanov—becomes a major threat in Adventure Eleven.

NPC Roster

Detailed entries are included throughout the adventure close to the characters' first appearances.

Recurring Characters. Stover Delft, Morgan Cippiano, Lorcan Kell, Leone Quital, and Gale all play prominent roles in later adventures. All other NPCs that appear in this adventure might recur in minor roles, but feel free to do with them as you wish. If anyone important dies, you can replace them with someone thematically similar.

NPC Entry	Page
Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft	147
Consulate Security Chief Julian LeBrix	147
Nilasa Hume	151
Thames Grimsley	153
Morgan Cippiano	167
Heward Sechim	169
Skyseer Nevard Sechim	172
Cillian Creed	179
Hana "Gale" Soliogn	180
Lorcan Kell	184
Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen	187
Leone Quital	191
Eberardo and Valando	194
Mayor Reed Macbannin	202

Incidental NPCs. The following NPCs probably only show up for a single scene, but if the PCs latch on to anyone, you can refer here to remind yourself who is who.

NPC Mention	Page
Kane Westman, tax official	140
Alfred Bellastair, police officer	146
Tia Jedeau, consulate secretary	147
Braden Sarkin, Nilasa's boyfriend	148
Methan duNadria, Danoran consular	148
Bartide Jannis, consulate house cleric	148
Jack Byron, carriage driver	150
Tad Hilly, owner of Thinking Man's	152
Barb, waitress	152
Jered Lawman, halfling bard	153
Hennet Rinus, professor	153
Derek Goodson, prison director	155
Ford Sorghum, two-timing accomplice	155
Travis Starter, accomplice with kid	155
Blander "The House Elf" Waryeye	156
Danisca Waryeye, apothecary	156
Deorn Feldman, river smuggler	160
Amba Bandia, Crisillyiri smuggler	164
Dozy Miccini, Family contact/cobbler	167
Renard Woodsman, Cloudwood brigand	169
Pazamu, orc shaman	173
Dr. Barnaby Camp, surgeon	182
Prof. Lynn Kindleton, human biologist	182
Officer Roger Porter, alias of Creed	182
Rufus Hammerton, Kell lieutenant	184

Rewards

At the end of this adventure, the PCs' Prestige with Flint should increase, but if they act unheroically it might stay flat, or even drop if they dramatically screw up. As long as the PCs solve the case, their Prestige with Risur and with the Obscurati each increase one step.

If the party proves to be useful allies or staunch enemies for the fey terrorist Gale, their Prestige with the Unseen Court could increase one step. Likewise, involvement with Family representative Morgan Cippiano can increase their Prestige with the Clergy. See the Player's Guide for details of the Prestige system, and how the PCs can use it to request items and call in favors.

At the start of the adventure, the PCs each receive a stipend of 1,072 gp. They get another 1,479 gp when they reach 3rd level, and 2,096 gp when they reach 4th level. This represents a mixture of salary and stipend for their investigation.

If the PCs are free agents instead of members of the RHC, you'll need to make sure they receive the appropriate treasure parcels. One possible mix would be:

- **Start of Adventure.** Payment of 170 gp total as payment (from dockers or Heward Sechim who want to know about Nilasa's death), four magic items possessed by NPCs, and 170 gp apiece of incidental loot (from the smugglers or other criminals). Most of the magic items being smuggled in would be seized by authorities unless the party is very clever at hiding them.
- **At 3rd Level.** Four magic items possessed by NPCs, 225 gp total in thanks from Heward Sechim for saving his factory (or as a bounty on the arsonists), and 225 gp apiece in loot from the Bosum Strand warehouse fight.
- **At 4th Level.** Four magic items possessed by NPCs, 280 gp total payment from the city for stopping Macbannin, and 280 gp apiece as bribe by Morgan Cippiano to help him take out the arsonists.

Pacing and Leveling

The adventure can take many routes, and we discourage precise XP tracking, so when should you level the party? The party starts this adventure at 2nd level. We recommend that they reach 3rd level after they finish the Smugglers Night, Arson & Alkahest, or A Weight of Crumbling Stone encounter, then 4th level after the Dawn Square encounter, and finally 5th level at the adventure's end.

List of Magic Items as Treasure.

Cards for new items are presented in Appendix M.

- Various potions, elixirs, and other alchemical consumables worth 680 gp. Choose items useful for the PCs.
- Blander's *hat of hats*.
- Blander's *hedge wizard's gloves* (see the D&D 4E Adventurer's Vault™ for details).
- Two +2 *vendetta bullets*.
- Six *potions of healing* (see the D&D 4E Player's Handbook® for details).
- A smuggled +1 *wand of Egal the Shimming*.
- Eberardo's +1 *defender greatsword*.
- *Cracked cauldron*.
- Renard Woodsman's *aeriad bracers*.
- Gale's *messenger wind*.
- Valando's +2 *staff of arson*.
- Dr. von Recklinghausen's +2 *malice-wrought rapier* (plus possibly the *surgical precision* power for Martial Scientists).
- Nilasa's *canary in a coal mine pendant*.

A Final Word, Before We Start...

This is a detail-rich, multi-layered adventure. Your players will inevitably outwit you and find some way to short-circuit the expected path of the investigation, but that's fine. Just make sure that the key players don't reveal the existence of the colossus and that Governor Stanfield's role in the plot remains hidden; anything else is fair game. After all, the PCs are supposed to win. We're just trying to make the chase challenging enough to be fun.



Character Themes in the Adventure.

Each Zeitgeist adventure includes one or more scenes that bring the PCs' character themes (detailed in the Player's Guide) to the forefront.

- **Dockers** should be welcomed in the Thinking Man's Tavern and the various riots and protests throughout the city. Thames Grimsley might invite a docker constable to speak at the rally.
- **Eschatologists** have a chance to talk philosophy at the Thinking Man's Tavern. The *icy ends of the earth* power can help immensely in battling the dragonborn arsonists.
- **Gunsmiths** who befriend security chief Julian LeBrix can learn how to create *vendetta bullets*. Also, the ship-to-ship wand battle provides a great opportunity for prolonged ranged combat.
- **Martial Scientists** can learn the *surgical precision* attack power from Dr. von Recklinghausen, and can meet a fellow scientist, Lieutenant Dale.
- Any **Skyseer** PCs give the party an easier path to contact the skyseer Nevard, and they receive prominent visions atop Cauldron Hill.
- **Spirit Mediums** can learn a great deal from the spirit of Nilasa Hume, and they might sense from afar the shrieking souls trapped inside vials of witchoil, particularly when it comes to the creation of the flayed jaguars.
- **Technologists** can find like-minded souls in the Thinking Man's Tavern, and have the best chance to stop the witchoil avalanche in the climax.
- **Vekeshi Mystics** start the adventure with a special mission to protect Gale, and to recruit her for a mission of assassination.
- **Yerasol Veterans** will naturally receive the focus of attention from journalists after various high-profile deeds, and will receive a special note from Cillian Creed.

IT BEGINS: Danoran Consulate

This chapter details the characters, events, and clues surrounding the Danoran consulate where Nilasa Hume was murdered. Investigating these should provide the PCs with hooks to the four threads of investigation that make up the rest of the adventure.

TIMELINE.

The adventure begins on the 1st day of summer. Keep track of how much time the PCs spend because some events occur on set days. The wand smuggler meeting, for instance, occurs the night of the 4th, and the villains find Wolfgang on the 7th if the party hasn't yet. If the party dallies, the earthquake atop Cauldron Hill strikes on the 10th.

GETTING AROUND IN A HURRY.

In general it takes half an hour to get from the heart of one district to the heart of an adjacent district (not counting The Nettles, which always takes at least an hour or two to pass through). To get to North Shore, the PCs leave the RHC Headquarters in Central and pass through Bosum Strand, meaning the trip takes an hour by carriage.

However, when the party is about to leave the RHC Headquarters, Delft suggests that they take their boat. Yes, the party has access to a boat—either an excise cutter or a steam cutter, as detailed in the Player's Guide.

The trip from HQ to the RHC dock and to a police dock on North Shore only takes half an hour total. That is, unless the party angered Thames Grimsley in the previous adventure, in which case they find their ship blocked in by a smug ferryman.

OFFICER BELLASTAIR AND THE POLICE.

Bellastair and his three squadmates are willing to help the party for half an hour, but if the party wants them to assist for a few hours or more, such as to help track down leads after their investigation, one PC needs to call in a rank 1 favor with Risur Prestige. To get this help in a timely fashion, the party either needs to start with Risur Prestige 2, or have Prestige 1 and succeed a Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 18).

Aside from providing a personal face to the PCs interactions with the police, Officer Bellastair plays no special role in the campaign.

On the Fence

Puzzle/Social. Real-Time. Level 2.

The PCs investigate a murder scene.

If you want to give your players a brief feel for the city of Flint, read or paraphrase the following.

> Forty years ago the city of Flint was a second-tier port, mostly a haven for fishermen and loggers. Still struggling to overcome the stigma of having once been the domain of a perilous coven of witches, Flint was prosperous, but played little role in Risuri affairs.
>
> Then the Third Yerasol War ended and the new king declared Flint would be his nation's seat of industry. Mines in the Anthras Mountains poured iron and coal downriver to Flint's harbor. Old forests within the city limits were clear-cut and factories erected in their place to build guns, refine alchemicals, and forge steel rails and train cars.
>
> Thousands of immigrants and gold-seeking villagers crowded into shabby flophouses and tenements around the factories; when those were filled, they built new slums on the sides of the city's steep hills. Smoke and soot poured forth from factory roofs, and criminal elements took root beneath these gloomy clouds, growing strong and feeding on the desperation of a new population of workers, prostitutes, and orphans.
>
> In places, Flint's historical beauty still endures—in the governor's island mansion fortress, high atop haunted Cauldron Hill, deep in the breeze-swaying branches of the Cloudwood, and on the bayou plantations west of Pine Island. And the confluence of people from so many stations has inspired great art and technological innovation. But cracks between competing groups are straining the peace, and all it would take are a few disasters to rive the city apart.

It's just before 11 AM on the 1st day of Summer, and the PCs are at the main office of the Risuri Homeland Constabulary going over leads in the Gale investigation when their superior, **Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft**, interrupts them.

> "Time for some field work, constables. We just received a delightful report about the perfect lead for you. Young woman, identity unknown, jumps out of the fourth floor window at the Danoran consulate, impales herself on the spires of the compound fence, and perishes. Technically half of her is in our jurisdiction, which is good for you because the fence she landed on was forty feet from the window. Seems like our young victim thought she could fly."

If necessary, remind the PCs that Gale's most distinguishing trait is her ability to fly without limit and that it's rumored she can share this power with her followers. The early summer morning is warm and muggy, and a foul breeze blows a cloak of smog over the normally clear-skied North Shore district. The street that runs past the consulate has no buildings on its opposite side, just beach, but four Flint police officers are trying to block off access to gawkers. A black coroner's carriage waits outside the consulate gate; the back door is open, and its driver sits on the slab where a dead body should go, looking bored.

By the time the party arrives, nearly two hours have passed since the woman's death. **Alfred Bellastair**, the officer in charge, looks at his cheap pocket watch as the PCs approach, then impatiently comes forward.

"We responded to some panicked witnesses, and by the time the first of our men got here the Danorans had taken the victim off the fence and carried her inside. But everyone had pretty much the same story. They heard gunfire, saw the woman jump out the window, and she landed on the fence. One scoundrel apparently stole stuff off her body and ran away as she was bleeding out. The Danorans wouldn't let us inside, but I yelled at them that you'd be showing up, and they said they wouldn't get rid of the body. The guy you want to talk to is the security chief, Julian LeBrix.

"You can handle the investigation from here without my men, right? We've got better things to do than sit around for another hour while the 'special constables' drink up the hospitality of the Danorans."

The Body.

The Danoran security chief Julian LeBrix meets the party at the gate to the consulate, while cleaning staff work to scrub blood and viscera off the fence just beside the gate. LeBrix introduces himself, then walks the party in through the courtyard gardens into the entry hall of the consulate. Along the way he says:

"What a mess. I took a diplomatic post to *avoid* blood and death. It has our people shaken up—none of them ever saw war—and so I hope you can take the woman's body and go quickly. Better for everyone I think if the consular doesn't have to be bothered. He has more important things on his mind than a burglary. We have treaty negotiations, trade contracts, and you don't want powerful men thinking about death when they're deciding our fates, you know?

"The victim went by the name Nilasa Hume. She's been in a few times these past few months. Seemed nice enough. She brought us breakfast this morning. One of our security personnel, Braden, was dating her. She used him to case the building, and must have overheard someone talking about upstairs.

"I noticed she slipped out while everyone else was eating the food she'd brought. A hunch led me upstairs, and I found her slipping gold forks and spoons into her pockets."

LeBrix pulls out a small padded bag, then pulls from that a tiny ceramic egg, beautifully decorated with gems and gold.

"She also had this. It's worth thousands, and we had it sitting out on display. I saw her, drew my pistol. She ran. I realized she was about to jump out the window. I thought she was trying to kill herself, so I fired and hit her in the leg. Then she jumped. Flew straight through the glass. Now I'm thinking she's about to escape, so I reload and shoot her in the back. That's when she fell.

"That all happened within the consulate grounds. I'm within my rights to have taken these actions, though I wish I hadn't had to."

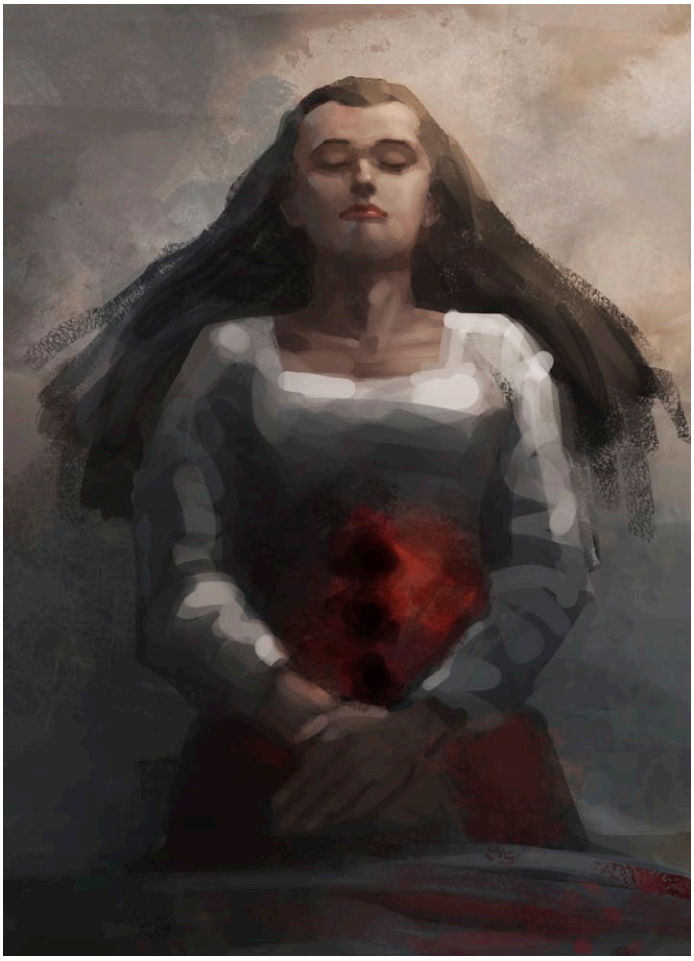
The consulate's main secretary, **Tia Jedeau**, watches the party as they come in, but gets back to work when LeBrix tosses a sidelong look at her. LeBrix takes them down a hall and stops outside a storage room.

"We're all professionals here," LeBrix says. "It would help me if you can take the body and leave quickly."

Examination and Investigation.

Inside the storage room, a bloodied white tablecloth covers Nilasa's body. Braden sits in a chair beside it, stunned and grieving.

LeBrix lets the party examine the corpse or ask questions of Braden or other staff, but he stays with them unless they make an effort to distract





A local Flinter in his early 40s, Delft gets squinty and condescending when his authority is questioned, but he can recognize talent and good work. Delft chews tobacco, and thinks he looks charming if he grins while sucking on tobacco juices.

He walks with a cane because a mimic tore a chunk out of his leg fifteen years ago. He has a habit of poking inanimate objects with the cane before he gets too close to them, and spitting on them when he wants to be extra sure.



Old, balding, and rheumy-eyed, LeBrix served Danor in the Third Yerasol War, then spent decades as seneschal to various minor nobles. Soft-spoken and forward thinking, LeBrix is still handy with a pistol, but he prefers to anticipate trouble and avoid it. The consulate usually appreciates how smoothly he manages things, but a few months ago his diligence got him in trouble when he found clues to a conspiracy his superiors wanted to keep secret. He locked up the report and now is afraid of losing his job.

him. While he's watching, the consulate staff cooperates, but they omit or change certain key details in order to corroborate LeBrix's story above. (In particular, LeBrix claims he discovered Nilasa during the theft, but in actuality no one knew what was going on until they started to hear gunshots from upstairs.) The security chief also tries to rein them in if they start snooping around the consulate or asking to go upstairs to see where Nilasa jumped from the window.

You'll want to read The Mission and Its Aftermath below so you know what happened and what information the various witnesses have. Then, since this is the party's first investigation in the campaign, you might need to guide the players a bit to make sure they check the body, talk to witnesses both in the consulate and on the street, and then follow up on where clues take them.

The Mission and Its Aftermath.

Three Months Ago.

Gale asked Nilasa to go undercover. Deploying her natural charm and her cover as an established factory worker, Nilasa convinced a thick-jawed guard at the consulate—**Braden Sarkin**—to be her boyfriend. After a few weeks of earning the trust of the staff and learning their patterns, she began to opportunistically steal documents for Gale. Usually she'd sneak in at night, but she knew the consular's office was closely watched in the evening, but not as much during the day, so she devised a plan to sneak in during normal business hours.

One Week Ago.

Nilasa narrowly avoided being arrested when police raided the seedy home of two of her old burglar buddies—**Ford Sorghum** and **Travis Starter**. She had bragged to them about an imminent deal with smugglers to bring in some expensive wands, but so far they haven't sold her out.

This Morning, 9 A.M.

While a light drizzle dappled the city, Nilasa breezed into the consulate carrying a box of brigadeiro chocolates she'd picked up at Thinking Man's Tavern (in Bosum Strand). In the lobby, she briefly chatted with Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen, who was waiting for his visa appointment.

Nilasa's boyfriend Braden came to meet her, and she told him she'd brought breakfast for the staff. She made coffee and set out the chocolates for the staff, which drew away the attentions of most of the consulate's security. After distracting security's attention with the free food, she used an *elixir of invisibility* to sneak up to the fourth floor office of the consular.

Meanwhile, Dr. von Recklinghausen spoke with a low-level bureaucrat, who signed paperwork to get him a travel visa to Ber.

Simultaneously, Cillian Creed was meeting with the consular—**Methan duNadria**—in a basement chamber. Creed wanted to check on the status of a few factories that produce materiel needed for the construction of the colossus. When his discussion with the consular came to an end, Creed—an experienced spy—immediately noticed how the consulate's security had been drawn away from their posts.

This Morning, 10 A.M.

Nilasa picked the lock to a drawer, grabbed a bundle of files that looked promising, and tucked them into her shoulder bag.

Creed quickly swept up to the fourth floor, knowing that's where the consular kept documents that needed to remain secret. He spotted Nilasa and tried to talk her into surrendering. When she bolted for a window, he slipped through shadows and slashed at her face with talons, blinding her. She jumped anyway, smashing through the window and invoking magic to fly, but it did not carry her far enough.

At the same moment, Dr. von Recklinghausen was emerging from the consulate and just passing through the gate when Nilasa plummeted and was impaled on the spiked fence beside him. People nearby panicked, but Wolfgang tried to help the dying woman. She forced into Wolfgang's arms a bundle of documents she had stolen, then grabbed her *canary in a coal mine* necklace and told him, "Take this to Nevard."

In the fourth floor window, Creed spotted the hand-off, and he fired a pistol at Wolfgang. At the relatively long range, he missed and struck Nilasa in the leg. Wolfgang yanked the necklace from Nilasa's neck and fled. Wanting to make sure the thief did not survive, Creed reloaded, aimed carefully, and landed a second shot, this one in Nilasa's back.

The consulate was chaotic in confusion, but Creed immediately set off in a chase after Wolfgang, leaping through shadows to pursue him. He confronted the doctor in an alley, but to his surprise the doctor fought back. Wolfgang carries a +2 *malice-wrought rapier*, a sword forged in the Malice Lands, which has an innate power to harm unnatural creatures. A single strike stunned Creed, and the doctor followed up with a shocking touch and a cut to Creed's hamstring. Creed's unnatural physiology allowed him to heal quickly, but by then the doctor had made good his escape.

Wolfgang, in no state to think straight, ran to the nearest carriage and demanded the driver take him to his hotel, explaining away his bloody hands by saying he was a doctor in the middle of a surgery. At the hotel he told the driver to wait for him, then hurriedly packed his belongings and fled out another exit without paying. Knowing of the stories of criminals hiding in the Nettles, Wolfgang headed there on foot. In a bar in eastern Parity Lake he asked for advice on hiring a bodyguard, and enlisted two toughs who are part of the Kell Guild, who said they could find him a hiding spot. He arrived in the Nettles shortly thereafter.

Cover-Up. Less than five minutes after Nilasa died, Creed staggered back to the consulate. Knowing that the wounds to Nilasa's face would rouse suspicion, he told the Consular duNadria to have the woman's body dragged inside and be healed by the consulate's house cleric—**Bartide Jannis**—so it would look like she was just killed with gunshots and the impact. Creed then had the consular personally dismiss Jannis and send him home, figuring that the RHC would arrive soon and not wanting the cleric around to answer questions.

Brigadieros.

Named after the brigadier general who invented them, this confection consists of a gooey ball of chocolate covered in granulated chocolate, castor sugar, or grated coconut.

Travel, Visas, and Bureaucracy.

Dr. von Recklinghausen, from the minor Malice state of Arrovia, travels under the protection of a Danoran passport. The burgeoning nation of Ber has enthusiastically embraced bureaucracy, so the doctor has had to make three separate trips between the Beran and Danoran consulates to get a travel visa to Ber.

Creed checked the consular's desk to see what documents had been stolen, then intimidated Security Chief LeBrix into going along with the story. It was LeBrix's suggestion to use the expensive ceramic egg as cover for what the thief was really after.

With matters at the consulate settled as well as possible on short notice, Creed set out to find the doctor and recover the stolen documents.

The Clues.

The following clues are marked Obvious and Hidden. A PC who makes an effort to search the right thing or talk to the right people can make a DC 13 check to find an Obvious clue, or a DC 20 check to find a Hidden clues. Characters trained in the appropriate skill automatically pick up Obvious clues with no need to roll. You might also grant bonuses to checks or outright successes for good roleplaying or clever thinking.

The idea here is to ensure the players get the clues they need to keep investigating, and to reward good ideas with more clues to help crack the case faster. Even once they get clues, though, they still have to put them together themselves.

Nilasa's Body.

Perception.

Obvious, DC 13: Physical scrutiny of Nilasa's body reveals glass wounds on her arms, two fence punctures to her abdomen, gunshot to her back left thigh and shoulder, and an unusual wound on her scalp.

Examination of her clothes reveals a bail certificate in a hip pocket. The document, from the Parity Lake police station, reveals that she was picked up in a contraband raid recently but released on bail, paid by one "Heward Sechim." Law requires her to carry the certificate until her trial. A trip to the Parity Lake police station can pull up details of her arrest. See File of Nilasa Hume (Appendix L).

Also in that pocket is a receipt for a purchase of a dozen items, their names abbreviated, with notes of "16 drams" or "48 drams" for each, valued at a total of "2.450 gp," signed "D.W." On the back of the receipt, scrawled in a different handwriting, it reads "Silvo, Deorn Feldman, family wharf." A PC with the appropriate background recognizes drams as an apothecary's measurement of volume.

Hidden, DC 20: Hidden in a pocket in Nilasa's bodice is an empty elixir vial. A character trained in Arcana can tell it contained a strong *elixir of invisibility*. Any constable knows that magic that makes you invisible for more than a few seconds is illegal. (Constables and the military are allowed to use such things, of course.)

Arcana.

Obvious, DC 13: Nilasa did not have any magical skills of her own, but she has several different lingering magical auras on her.

Hidden, DC 20: Nilasa recently used flight magic, but there's no sign of the source. She also has some illusion magic in her blood, implying she consumed an elixir or potion. Healing and necromantic energy was used on her face and head, but it's not possible to tell what they did.

Heal.

Obvious, DC 13: The wound on Nilasa's scalp was caused by necromantic energy. The bullets from the two gunshot wounds have been extracted. One shot to her leg was non-life-threatening. The other shot entered her back and pierced her lung.

Hidden, DC 20: The depth of the gunshot wounds indicate they came from over 30 feet away. Her face shows signs of post-mortem regeneration, creating healthy flesh along the path of four parallel slashes.

Spirit Communication.

A PC spirit medium, or one requested through either Risur or Flint Prestige (Favor Rating 3), can ask three questions of Nilasa's spirit within a day of her death. A PC trained in Religion can intuit that she's probably an adherent of Seedism. By speaking to her in terms she relates to, that PC gains a +5 bonus to checks to communicate with her.

Arcana, Diplomacy, or Insight.

Obvious, DC 13: She'll readily share details of her death, and ask that they help protect Heward, her adopted father.

Hidden, DC 20: She will answer questions about her mission, admit her criminal involvement with the Family's upcoming smuggling operation, and/or talk about her association with Gale.

Consulate Staff.

Nilasa's boyfriend Braden freely shares Nilasa's connection to Thinking Man's Tavern and Sechim's Alkahest and Alchemicals, and he asks that the PCs let people there know what happened to her.

Diplomacy.

Obvious, DC 13: The secretary Tia recalls Nilasa was speaking with a foreign doctor in the lobby. She's willing to share Wolfgang's case file, which lists his temporary hostel address and Flint contacts.

Hidden, DC 20: Tia or another staffer reveals that Consular duNadria had a guest in the basement meeting room. He had a Risuri accent, but was otherwise pretty nondescript.

Insight.

Obvious, DC 13: Most of the consulate staff seem oddly upbeat. If talked to, they say they liked Nilasa. All of them lick their lips slightly, and might break off mid-sentence to wonder if there are any more brigadeiros left.

Hidden, DC 20: Julian LeBrix is following orders he doesn't agree with.

Arcana or Thievery.

Obvious, DC 13: Examining the brigadeiros reveals that they were laced with fey pepper. Its effects are similar to the real-world drug ecstasy.

Perception.

Obvious, DC 13: If the box the brigadeiros came in is examined, it has an inkstamp on the side saying it is from the Thinking Man's Tavern.

Upstairs.

If the PCs want to search the fourth floor offices, LeBrix stays with them at all times, trying to hurry them up. He insists the consular's office is off-limits, and that nothing happened there.

Insight.

Obvious, DC 13: LeBrix seems worried about what the characters will find in the consular's office.

Perception.

Obvious, DC 13: In the gallery where Nilasa jumped out the window, a rug was moved. Underneath it are bloodstains.

Hidden, DC 20: Looking at the consular's door reveals that its lock was picked. It's a very fine lock (Thievery DC 25), so Nilasa must have

had plenty of time to pick it. If a PC opens the consular's room it would probably cause an international incident and the PC would be suspended from the RHC for a month (though Delft will encourage the PC to keep working on the case).

Thievery.

Obvious, DC 13: The consular's door lock was picked (see above under Perception).

Heal.

Obvious, DC 13: The bloodstain under the carpet is consistent with a slashing attack that flicked blood sideways from the victim, not a gunshot that would have caused a puncture and spurt.

The Crowd Outside.

If your players prefer to roleplay their interactions with witnesses, they find an assortment of wealthy businessmen who were headed out to gamble, household servants who were heading home after their night shifts, fleet messengers delivering trading news from the stock market in Central district, carriage drivers delivering Danorans who had appointments at the consulate, beggar children (but of the well-dressed, respectable sort), and a trio of glaziers who were fortunate enough to walk by just as a fancy window was shattered.

If your players are more into mechanical dice-rolling, they can just make skill checks.

Diplomacy.

Obvious, DC 13: Most of the people who saw the event have already left, but any number of PCs can spend a half hour chasing down witnesses. Those who do so can make a Diplomacy (a PC can also try Intimidate, but the crowd is generally willing to talk, so the PC takes a -5 penalty for coming across as an asshole). Each success nets the party one of the pieces of information below. If a character beats DC 20, he's able to find an additional piece of information in that time. The party can spend more time and make additional checks if they want.

- The woman crashed out the window, hit the fence, and then there were two gunshots, a few seconds apart. When she jumped, she had her arms covering her face, as if to shield herself.
- Someone was up in the window, but he looked like he was completely black, except for something shiny, perhaps a gun. A moment later he had vanished.
- A man with a goatee went up to the dying woman, and she handed him a bundle of papers and folders, then whispered something before she died. The man yanked a yellow pendant and necklace off the woman's neck before running away.
- A man sprinted down the street then turned down an alley, carrying an armful of something. (The witness can point out the alley.)
- When the Danorans took the woman's body off the fence, her face was covered in blood. People matching the description of LeBrix, Consular duNadria, and a third nondescript man got into a brief shouting match as the body was being carried inside.

Alleyway Scuffle.

If a witness points them the right direction, or if they search themselves for half an hour (Perception or Streetwise DC 13), the PCs find signs of a brief scuffle, and a fallen piece of paper in the mud, a copy of a deed of ownership for a canal barge marked with the seal of the Danoran consulate. This fell from the bundle of documents as Wolfgang fled.

SURGERY? WHAT ABOUT MAGICAL HEALING?

While the wealthy and fortunate do have access to magical healing, some ailments are more complex than mere gashes and bruises, making them beyond the skills of novice clerics and other healers. Additionally, the current academic belief is that healing magic could be more effective if the practitioner possessed a thorough understanding of the human body, so surgery and vivisection is popularly seen as a progressive form of research.

Dr. von Recklinghausen, for instance, understands both advanced surgery and magical healing, allowing him to more precisely repair wounds that normally require high-level magic to fix.

Arcana.

Hidden, DC 20: Electrical magic was recently used here.

Perception.

Hidden, DC 20: A tiny spurt of oddly coagulated blood sits in a smear of mud. A PC trained in Arcana can tell the blood is infused with necromantic energy.

Where Wolfgang Went.

If the PCs make it to the alley, a carriage driver named Jack Byron spots them and comes to talk. Otherwise, this information reaches them through a police report delivered to the RHC office later that day and marked for their attention. Byron, the carriage driver who picked up Dr. von Recklinghausen, wasn't paid, and after a few hours he returned to the street where he picked the man up, hoping to maybe collect money from someone who knew him. When he saw the criminal investigation, he came looking for the PCs.

Byron tells the PCs that he picked up a man with bloody hands who was carrying some kind of bundle—the driver opines that the bundle contained surgical tools. The man with the bundle spoke with an accent the driver found unfamiliar, but the driver placed the accent as originating north of the Avery Sea. The man asked to be driven to a hostel, the House of Blue Birds, two miles away on the western edge of the North Shore district, and he eventually explained away the blood, claiming that he was a doctor in the middle of a procedure and that he needed specialized surgical equipment that he knew could be found at the House of Blue Birds. The driver took his passenger to the hostel, then waited for half an hour before realizing he'd been ditched.

Searching for the Alchemist.

Once the party finds out Nilasa has receipts, and that she used a potion and drugs to pull off her mission, they might want to track down the seller of the alchemicals, Dansica Waryeye. When the party finds her, see page 156.

Arcana.

Obvious, DC 13: If the party finds the *elixir of invisibility*, an hour in an alchemical laboratory can determine the composition of its ingredients, which includes brackish water, suggesting the PCs start their search for the alchemist who made it in Pine Island.

Streetwise.

Obvious, DC 13: If the party tries to track down the shop where Nilasa's receipt came from (with or without the elixir as a clue), a PC can devote four hours to searching a district. Multiple PCs shorten the time needed. A failed search isn't a dead end; after another four hours he can attempt the check again, slowly eliminating districts from the list to search. A successful search of Pine Island locates Waryeye's shop.

Hidden, DC 20: Another apothecary points the PCs to Waryeye, and mentions her husband 'The House Elf.'

Hidden, DC 20: Similarly, a search for the source of the fey pepper Nilasa used in the brigadeiros requires four hours hitting up criminal contacts in any given district. A successful search in Pine Island finds Danisca; and a success in Stray River reveals that most of the fey pepper west of the river is picked up from Pine Island. A success elsewhere reveals that new cheaper fey pepper is coming out of Pine Island, and it has the dealers east of the river in a panic.

Pursuing Leads

At this point there's not much else the PCs can do here. They'll need to decide which threads of the investigation they want to pursue, and whether they'd rather all work together on one lead at a time, or split up and pursue different leads in small groups. These paths are detailed in the following chapters.

Nilasa's Criminal Background.

If the PCs contact or swing by the Parity Lake police station, after about three hours they finally receive a thin hand-copied file of what information the police have on Nilasa Hume, reproduced as a handout at the end of this adventure. Details are sparse, but they include her last few known residences, a list of accomplices and their whereabouts, and details of her various arrests.

Of particular interest is her latest arrest, when she was picked up in a raid on a known den of criminals just a week ago. She was charged with Supporting Criminal Activities and told to appear in court a few days from now. Her bail was paid by Heward Sechim, whose address is listed (he lives at his factory). The document notes that she was picked up with two men—Ford Sorghum and Travis Starter, both of whom are currently serving a term for parole violation, locked up in a floating prison in Flint Bay called the Goodson Estuarial Reformatory (page 154).

RHC Hierarchy.

The party reports to Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft, who reports to Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby. Saxby doesn't play a prominent role until next adventure, but make her at least a small presence during this one. Mention her talking with Delft when the party shows up at the headquarters, or have her call in a different PC each day to get their thoughts on the investigation.

Saxby doesn't realize yet that the party's investigations will lead them to Macbannin, but when she finds out at the end of the adventure, she'll try to stall them a bit, asking for time to prepare for the public relations fall-out. Paint her as ambitious and political, though, not hostile.

Returning to the Consulate

In the course of their investigations the PCs might come back to the consulate, but they won't get any new answers unless they've found the proper clues and know to ask the right questions.

Breaking In.

If the PCs want to sneak in and find more documents of the sort Nilasa stole, make sure they understand that getting caught will cause a diplomatic disaster and probably land them in prison. Security is tighter, with experienced guards stationed on the fourth floor at all times, and magical alarm wards placed in the consular's room. The consular clears out any incriminating documents, and he places them in a wall safe.

Getting LeBrix's Trust.

If the party recovers from Dr. von Recklinghausen the documents which Nilasa stole, they find reports signed by Security Chief LeBrix. If they mention these reports to LeBrix, and share some of what they've seen, they might get him to open up about his investigation and how it was shut down.

If the party captures the dragonborn arsonists or any of their accomplices, they can learn about a canceled hit job, where the arsonists were hired to burn LeBrix to death in his home, but called off a few hours before they did the deed. This also helps earn LeBrix's thanks, and if the PCs have not yet taken down the arsonists, LeBrix can give them something to help out. If any PC uses firearms, LeBrix provides two +2 *vendetta bullets* (see Appendix M), one etched with Eberardo's name, the other with Valando's.

If a PC has the Gunsmith theme, LeBrix instructs the character in how to harness one's ire to create such bullets in the future, effectively granting them the ability to use the Craft Magic Item ritual, but only for *vendetta bullets*.



By the time the party encounters Nilasa she's already dead, but details of her life can come out through investigation or magic.

The illegitimate daughter of a blacksmith's wife and the wood elf who seduced her, Nilasa left home as early as she could and spent her teenage years living off petty crime, with occasional stints of incarceration. Several years ago she tried to give up crime and reform, and she found work in Heward Sechim's alkahest factory. Her bold personality earned her many admirers in the streets near the factory, as well as at the Thinking Man's Tavern in Bosum Strand, where Heward would occasionally bring his workers after a shift.

But she was drawn to the rebellious rhetoric of Gale, and so she joined up with the so-called "terrorist," performing reconnaissance for acts of sabotage and using her old criminal connections to acquire illicit magic weapons and defenses. Shortly after Duchess Ethelyn's failed attempt to kill King Aodhan, Gale decided to take a different approach, and recruited Nilasa to infiltrate the Danoran consulate. To aid her missions, Gale gave Nilasa a pendant—the *canary in a coal mine*—which allows brief bursts of flight, as well as money to buy various potions and elixirs.

THREAD ONE: Smugglers

This chapter details what the PCs can discover as they investigate Nilasa's criminal background and her connection to the Thinking Man's Tavern. If the PCs do poorly at this thread, for the rest of the campaign the criminal element in Flint will have ready access to cheap and dangerous magic wands. Even if they fail, though, they'll catch the eye of Morgan Cippiano, head of The Family in Flint, who can be of use later in the adventure.

Meanwhile, in the News...

The adventure already has a lot going on, but if you want to give a little extra life to the city of Flint, you can occasionally drop mentions of the following current events. People murmur about these in cafes, gossip on the streets, or read about them in papers. Only a few have even a tangential connection to this adventure's plot. You might spin some of these into side quests, but be careful that your players don't latch onto the wrong ones and run off chasing red herrings.

- **Murder.** The Ragman has grown more active, and is believed responsible for four deaths over the course of two weeks. Flint police investigate, and an impoverished Yerasol Veteran claims he saw the same pattern of wounds on fellow soldiers in the last war.
- **Music.** Randall Pell, a renowned composer from Slate, will be conducting the Navras Opera House and plans to hold auditions for performers. This has led to a boom in sales of "respectable" attire for amateur Docker musicians, who want to make a good impression.
- **Mayhem.** A rash of eighteen small fires in Parity Lake is believed to be arson. So far the burns have killed over forty, but fire responders have managed to keep them from spreading. The fires seem to target properties of by factory owners, even the occasional factory out-building, and so are believed to be the work of Gale.
- **Monsters.** Citizens are warned to avoid the western bayous around the Battalion school in Pine Island. The martial university has imported exotic wild beasts from a Risuri colony in Elfaivar, and will be conducting exercises in beast tracking and monster slaying.
- **Marriage.** Wealthy industrialist and renowned son of Flint Guy Goodson is getting married to a Crisillyiri noblewoman: Faith Unitas. The ceremony will be closed to the public, but reporters are eagerly sharing every detail of the arrangements. The intense interest has journalists excited about all the papers they'll sell when King Aodhan has his marriage early next year.

Thinking Man's Tavern

Social. Real-Time. Level 2.

Clues to the activities of the murdered woman wait at a watering hole for scholars, artists, and revolutionaries.

The Thinking Man's Tavern lies a few streets off from the main docks of Bosum Strand, memorable for the cobbled-together statue that stands by its entrance, an assortment of flotsam and jetsam assembled into the shape of a sitting man deep in thought.

If the PCs come by early in the day, they'll be unlikely to find anyone who knew Nilasa. Waiters might encourage them to come back in the evening, when a larger crowd has assembled.

The tavern has seven main sections.

- The bar, with stools for ten and tables for an additional thirty.
- The common room, with tables to seat sixty on the ground floor, and another forty on an upstairs balcony. Each floor has a lavatory with plumbing.
- Patio in front of the building with seating for ten and the titular "thinking man" statue.
- The game room on the ground floor, which seats thirty; there is a pool table and a storage closet that holds various game supplies. A secret panel (Perception DC 22) in the storage closet reveals a locked trap door (Thievery DC 20) leading to the basement.
- The riot room on the uppermost floor. It has limited dining space, but its chairs are usually claimed by writers, artists, and philosophers who just want to sit in a dormer window, drink, and scribe, sketch, or share their latest thoughts.
- The kitchen, on the ground floor in back, with the many necessary pantries and supplies.
- The basement, seldom used to begin with because it gets moldy, has flooded to ankle-deep since the city-wide tremors started. Mostly just used as a joke at the expense of new employees who ask where to find something, since nothing's down there. A side tunnel hidden behind a cracked statue (Perception DC 22) leads to similarly flooded basements of other establishments in the area. Courtesy and several padlocks deter criminal entry, but the owner has keys handy for those he wants to sneak out.

Owner and Staff.

Tall like a ship's mast and twice as well-traveled, **Tad Hilly** bought the tavern after he retired from a twenty year career as a merchant marine, though often when the night's drinking runs long he prefers to recount his history as one of piracy and adventure. He brags about outwitting the king of the mer-fey and outwrestling his pet kraken, and occasionally offers to let drunkards "search for his buried treasure" (by which he means bail out the flooded basement) to cover their tab.

The rest of the staff mostly consist of women scholars studying at Pardwight University, or occasionally the wives or daughters of professors. Eschewing the typical brand of wait and cook staff hired for their looks, Hilly knows his customers derive more enjoyment from exchanging repartee with women who are cleverer than them.

The tavern's most famous hand is **Barb**, now going on sixty and starting to show the physical wear and tear from her other job at a factory

that makes bores and drills. At first impression she seems little more than wrinkles, a toothy smirk, and two handfuls of silver rings, but she effortlessly makes visitors feel at home and shriekingly silences any regular who gets too full of himself.

Tad knew Nilasa only by appearance, but Barb formed an early bond with the woman before she realized the gorgeous young Nilasa could fend for herself against the attentions of the other patrons. Few people have a higher opinion of Nilasa, but like in most mother-daughter relationships Barb had no idea just what trouble the young woman was getting into.

Patrons.

While the tavern has a generous mix of performers, revolutionaries, intellectuals, and poseurs to the same, two main groups can provide useful information about Nilasa.

First, the Band is a group of a dozen musicians with connections to the Cloudwood brigands (page 169), but who prefer to work in the city. Led by a long-haired halfling ocarina-player named **Jered Lawman**, the Band writes and performs songs that support Gale, the duchess, and other fey-friendly figures. They then have further connections to other rebellious groups throughout the city. They crack jokes in bad pidgin Elven, pass around the latest screeds that mock the king and insinuate that he's a puppet of Danor, and in general think haughtily that they're part of the vanguard of an imminent revolution against the industrial powers. When the PCs arrive, the Band is practicing a song made popular by local celebrity Rock Rackus, entitled "Too Poor to Be Lazy."

Nilasa was one of their main connections to the Cloudwood brigands, and in the past few months she had managed to steer these musicians toward actually causing trouble rather than talking about it. Jered was planning on the 5th of Summer to have his band dress up as eladrin warriors, sneak aboard a ship carrying huge casks of firegems, and throw the fuel into the harbor.

Second, the Professors consist of eight "professional students" who have been attending Pardwight University for a decade or more, plus their various less-experienced colleagues. Dominated by a dual philosophy/archaeology student in his late forties named **Hennet Rinus**, the group have weekly meetings and nightly drinking, often collaborating on and sharing papers and books on eclectically cross-disciplined topics. The august body likes to round out its weekly meetings with a shared pipe of fey pepper, and the wild thoughts they have during these often prompt next week's discussion topics.

Nilasa had only recently made friends with this group, after she learned that Hennet had spent a year in Crisillyir, studying the fossils of dragons and demons near Alais Primos. She had recently begun negotiations with the Family smugglers (page 161) to bring in a cache of stolen wands, and after determining she could trust Hennet she had him help her write correspondence in fancy Crisillyiri style to make a good impression with the criminals' boss, Morgan Cippiano. Hennet knew that Nilasa was working with some Crisillyiri group to acquire something illegal, and that she was writing to someone named Monsignor Morgan Cippiano, but no specifics.





A grizzled sailor, still with a full head of hair in his early 50s, Grimsley acts as head of a nascent dock workers guild in Flint. Though he only worked the docks in his youth, Grimsley spent decades sailing—primarily as captain of a ferry service in Flint's harbor, but with a stint in the navy during the last Yerasol War. He took a gash from a policeman's knife on the side of his face in the last big docker riot, and since then has tried to organize a unified front for the dockers' concerns. A couple of months working at a theater as a child gave him a very stylized public speaking voice, one full of unnecessary, melodramatic pauses.

Finally, the PCs can spot a familiar face, **Thames Grimsley**, whom they met in the first adventure. Now head of a slowly-growing docker union, Grimsley is organizing large protests outside of factories that abuse their workers. His presence and how the PCs treated him in the first adventure can sway the crowd here.

Trembler.

When the party first enters the tavern, the place shakes a little bit. Patrons freak out as glasses topple off tables and crack. An orc sailor from Ber cries out, "Earthquake!" but the tremor stops almost immediately.

People are momentarily nervous until Hennet Rinus speaks up from a table by the bar, loud enough for the whole place to hear.

> "Don't listen to the porcine panic. Flint has been geologically stable since it was founded. We could no sooner have an earthquake than a blizzard! It was probably just the ground settling."

Soon, the clientele return to their drinks and food.

Asking Questions.

As is usual in Bosum Strand, initial reaction to government authority figures is suspicion. If the PCs were police they wouldn't get anywhere, but the RHC is slightly more respected. Still, the party should sense a palpable disapproval once it spreads that they're law enforcement.

If the PCs mention that Nilasa is dead, Barb in particular cries out in despair and demands to know what happened. Word ripples through the tavern, and those who associated with her clam up, not wanting to talk until they figure out if trouble might spill over to them.

Barb can initially help the party identify whom to talk with, but if the PCs start to reference Nilasa's criminal connections, Barb turns against them, convinced that they're dishonoring the name of a wonderful girl who would never hurt anyone. The more the party upsets Barb, the harder they find their inquiries in the rest of the tavern. If they step on enough toes, or make the mistake of bringing up gruesome details of Nilasa's death or threatening anyone in the tavern, Tad Hilly has his bouncers throw the party out. Resisting leads to an all-out brawl, with the party outnumbered at least ten to one.

Existential Investigation.

If the PCs comport themselves well, they'll have to convince either the Band or the Professors that it's in their interest to talk. Whichever group they go to first, Hennet Rinus shows up and poses an assignment. (Do not be surprised if the PCs interrupt him during his lecture.)

> "In any society there are rituals of interaction to establish authority and mark the passage of one stage of life to another. You as law officers must be familiar with these rituals, particularly the one where you ask questions, the suspect claims he knows nothing, and you by turn explain how you will punish those who do not cooperate.
>
> "But this is an old tradition, and we live in modern times. We live in what some call an age of reason. A few of the ladies and gentlemen in this fine establishment would prefer if it were an age of revolution. And like a revolution, reason requires us to turn our thoughts. Always approach a problem the same way, with the same ritual, and you miss other possible paths to satisfaction.
>
> "So I pose to you, constables, an assignment. Rather than convincing us that your authority is mighty and that we should quail at the thought of disobeying it, can you give us reason why your authority is legitimate? We can leave for another day the discussion of whether it serves our interest to let watchmen hold us to account for actions when we are arguably individuals of free will. Today, though, just tell us why you think you have the right to enforce the law."

Arguments and Abuse.

As long as the PCs are good sports, Hennet just throws up a few questions to their rationale ("If you're part of a governmental structure endorsed by society as a whole, what size society is necessary for a group to claim it is separate from that whole?" or "If you're protecting us from harm, what makes you better arbiters of what is harmful than any of us?" or "If outnumbering us gives you the right to tell us what to do, why do you allow us to do anything you dislike? Have you heard *their* music? Don't they deserve to get arrested for *that*?").

Jered and his band might heckle and jeer anything that involves prying into their secrets, but Hennet encourages them to "follow the forms of the ritual" and answer the constables' questions. He'll even do the same, admitting to his Crisillyiri correspondence while maintaining ignorance of any criminal wrong-doing. Jered will in turn admit to knowing Nilasa worked with a band of brigands in the Cloudwood, and he can provide general directions to find them.

If the PCs balk, or argue with might rather than logic, Hennet tells everyone to just lie to the constables, since it's more fun than playing along. It's still possible to intimidate people into talking, but news will quickly hit the streets, and the PCs will become infamous as mindless government goons.

Returning to the Tavern.

Once the PCs learn of Nilasa's links to the brigands and the smugglers, Thinking Man's Tavern holds little extra of use in this investigation, but depending on your party it might become a familiar stomping ground, or a nest of rivals.

If the party needs to get word spread across the city in a flash, this is one of the best places to start a rumor or make a proclamation. Different groups of specialists can also help with niche problems. A gang of amateur geologists might assemble makeshift seismographs and set them up around the city, finding evidence that further tremors are emanating from Cauldron Hill. Talking with sailors might provide clues at least of where smugglers *wouldn't* arrange a delivery. Simply meeting with would-be rioters who come here for marching orders might help quell some of the violence later in the adventure.



In later adventures, Hennet can be a resource on matters archaeological, and despite his initial foppish appearance, Jered can be shaped into a useful agent when foreign elements disrupt the city.

Goodson Estuarial Reformatory

Social. Real-Time. Level 2.

Nilasa's associates are incarcerated on a barge off the coast of Pine Island, and with the right deal they'll share what she bragged to them about.

Guy Goodson is a wealthy factory magnate who owns a private island in the Ayres. He portrays himself as a philanthropist, and a few months ago he convinced the city legislature to approve his reformatory program. Taking old sailing ships that would normally just be scuttled or dismantled and replaced by newer steamships, the program hastily refitted the vessels to have cells and guard quarters, with the intention of "moderating the criminal impulses of recidivists." A dozen such vessels sit off the coast of Pine Island, loosely moored together and anchored in place, with no rigging to tempt prisoners into wild escape attempts. A thirteenth ship sank in a tragic fire a few weeks ago, allegedly after one of the prisoners agreed to testify against his old accomplices.

Inmates spend most of the day in their cells, equipped with hammocks and plenty of books (nevermind the fact that most of them can't read). They get fed breakfast in their cells, then are let out to clean the deck in the afternoon, which they must do if they want to get dinner. Their legs are always lightly manacled, so the distance to shore usually deters escape attempts. A musketeer sits in every ship's crow's nest, just in case distance and drowning isn't enough of a deterrent.

Staff, prisoners, and visitors have to be ferried over by rowboat. To help "socialize and acclimate" the prisoners, each day different activities are arranged, usually musical performances, classes on Risuri history and geography, or calisthenics. All the boats have fresh coats of paint that are smeared dark at the waterline with all the human excrement that floats around the stationary barges.

The director of the reformatory is **Derek Goodson**, son of Guy Goodson. He'll want to meet with the PCs if they come to interrogate any of his inmates, and will hastily shuffle around some men so his best-behaved prisoners will be around to show how "well" things are going.

Nilasa's Accomplices.

Ford Sorghum and **Travis Starter** used to work with Nilasa in petty burglary and cons, but they haven't had any jobs with her for two years. She was hanging out with them, reminiscing about old times, sharing the bounty of her recent successes, and bragging about a big smuggling deal she was arranging, when a police raid picked them all up. Ford and Travis were wanted for various acts of larceny, and so they were put away. But they cared for Nilasa enough that neither incriminated her, despite being offered a plea deal.

Each man knows that Nilasa was working with a group of newcomers to the city to acquire a large cache of wands stolen from a Crisillyir eldritch repository. The newcomers call themselves The Family, and they're edging in on the other smuggling operations in the city. Nilasa said they could provide dozens of magic wands to her allies in the Cloudwood, which would make future acts of sabotage all the easier, and which would help protect them against law enforcement.

Nilasa told them the delivery would be on the 4th of Summer, and implied she and an ally she called "**The House Elf**" would link up with members of The Family and sail out to the meet-up from some place in Pine Island. She said she was going to be paying tens of thousands of gold pieces for the haul. When they asked how she got that much money, she waved casually and said Gale had friends among the merfey, and that seventeen centuries of shipwrecks pays for a lot of contraband.

The PCs have to break one of the two men to get this information, but both Ford and Travis have heard rumors that snitches get killed out here, so the PCs must provide a sweet deal to get them to talk. The men are petty thieves, and RHC constables have authority to get them pardoned in exchange for their assistance, but this scene is largely to see how comfortable your players are making deals with shady characters.

Turning a Witness.

Start with the mechanics for Interrogating a Suspect from the Player's Guide (page 61).

Use a base of DC 13 for skill checks to establish Rapport, but possibly easier (DC 9) or harder (DC 20) based on how the party approaches them. Do they come when they're locked up (which makes the men nervous that their cell mates will overhear), or chat on the forecastle while a visiting string quartet plays nearby, or bring them to shore and treat them to a fine meal and some wine to loosen their tongues?

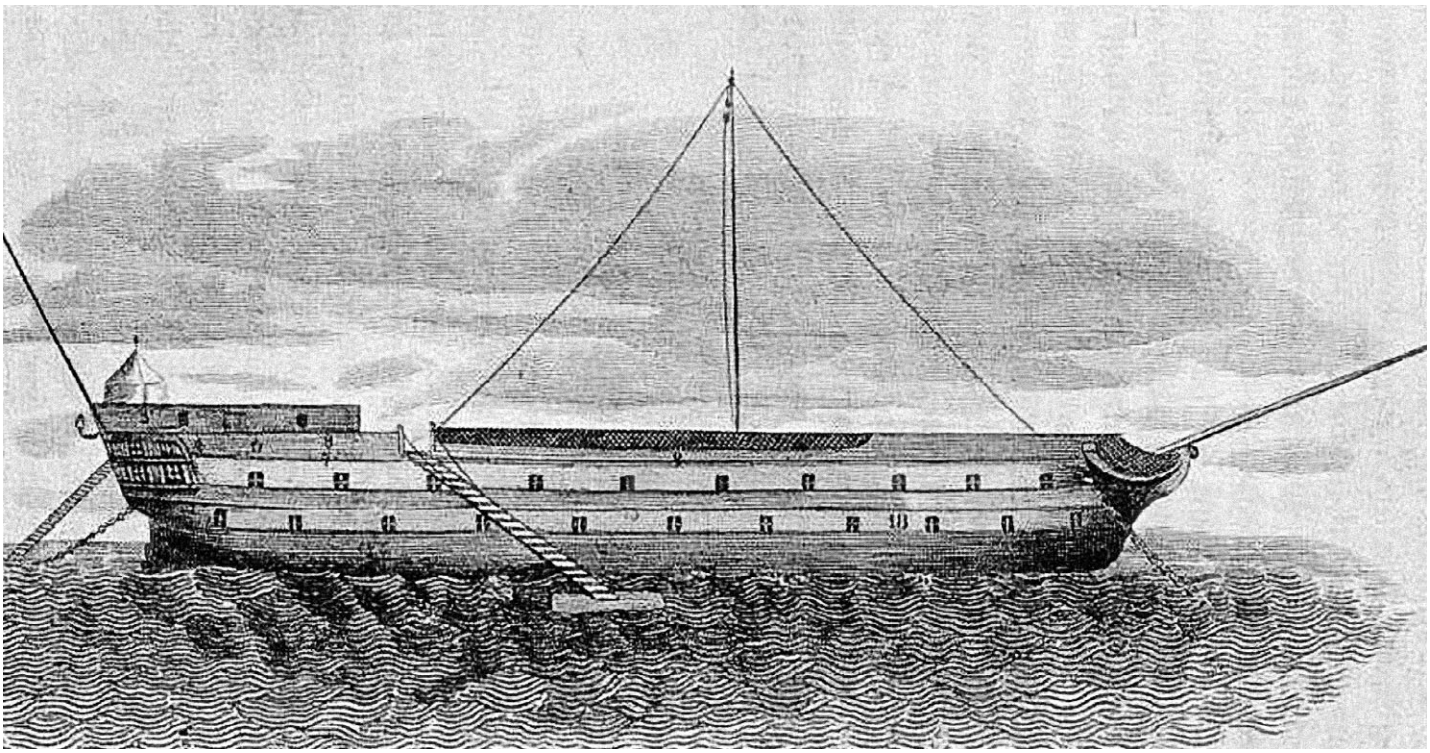
If the party can establish Rapport with Travis and Ford, the men are interested in cutting a deal, but are reluctant to talk because of rumors of snitches dying out here, resulting in a base of DC 20 on skill checks for Extraction. The party can sweeten the deal, though, making extraction easier.

If given the chance to say so, both prisoners say that their first desire is to both get out of prison. Doing so counts as calling in a Rank One favor (see Prestige in the Player's Guide). If the PCs aren't willing or able to do that, Travis wants the party to arrange weekly visits by his son, who is currently living in an orphanage. Meanwhile, Ford wants to be allowed conjugal visits; he says there's a good space for such things in the ship's aftcastle, where the guards usually take their breaks. He says he'd be willing to cooperate if the party can get both of his girlfriends to come by—on different nights, of course.

Finally, either man could begrudgingly agree to help in exchange for a few extra amenities—weekly laundering of their bedsheets and clothes instead of monthly, and getting the ship turned just a bit so direct sunlight isn't heating up their cell in the afternoon so much. This can be accomplished with a quick word to Derek Goodson.

If the party accedes fully to the men's demands, reduce the DC to 9. Giving them just a little of what they want reduces the DC to 13.

Once they have the prisoners' information, the party can start tracking down The House Elf. If the party fails to get any answers here, they have the harder task of searching for other people who might have information and be willing to talk.



The House Elf

Action/Social. Tactical/Real-Time. Level 4.

The party tracks down a skilled liar and illusionist.

Nilasa had allies all throughout the city. In the Pine Island district, she bought her drugs and elixirs from **Danisca Waryeye**, a gnome mage to whom she was introduced after she made contact with the Family. Danisca is the Family's main producer of fey pepper, taking smuggled plants and extracting the powder from its pods. Though the Family pays Danisca well, she was inspired by Duchess Ethelyn of Shale's stand against the king's industry, and she recently started crafting alchemical weapons to arm Gale's allies. Together Nilasa and Danisca convinced the Family to sell them stolen wands, and the deal is set to go down on the night of the 4th.

Nilasa planned to attend the deal and bring along Danisca's husband, **Blander Waryeye**, an absent-minded stage magician who performs under the name The House Elf. He's handy in a fight, despite his quirks. A unique marriage ritual grants the couple an empathic link, so Danisca would have been able to notify Gale if she sensed her husband in enough peril.

After word reaches her that Nilasa is dead, Danisca will decide to go to the meet-up too. If the party interrogates Danisca and gets her to break, they can learn the precise launch point and time of the wand deal. By taking her and her husband out of the picture early, they'll have a much easier time with the smugglers.

Two Fronts.

The Waryeyes own a pair of buildings that sit back to back on a strand of shops in the Pine Island district. Streets run past the front face of each building, one her shop Waryeye's Apothecary, and the other a small illusionist's studio with just a painted sign of a clichéd magician in a gentleman's coat pulling a badger out of a top-hat. While Danisca makes most of their money through sales of minor magic in her shop, her husband Blander operates a side business as a performing magician.

Blander mostly just spends his days fiddling with possible illusion tricks, devising creative combinations of actual spells and impressive sleight of hand. On occasion he'll put on acts for festivals or parties.

Most of the time, they keep to their own buildings, but they can cross via a fenced-in bridge on the second floor. Due to their wedding ritual empathic connection, if either gets into trouble, the other won't be long. Also, because of the valuables in her shop, during business hours Danisca keeps two guards, and at night she wards the place with the usual spells. The Waryeyes share a bedroom upstairs of the apothecary shop.

Danisca comes across as ebullient and methodical, working through complex situations with an enthusiastic smile. She buys eclectic and colorful fashions, and has magically turned her hair bright purple. Blander, for his part, stands even shorter than his wife and has an impishly curled moustache. He uses magic to switch hats multiple times throughout a conversation, and is prone to bizarre non sequiturs on technical topics, ranging from the proper way to store goat's milk for travel, to the different types of undead that are capable of turning those they kill into more undead. He longs one day to build a trebuchet.

Meet the Apothecary.

It's possible the PCs will track Danisca down by tracing the fey pepper or elixir they found at the consulate. If so, they can question her, but she tries to deceive them. Already an adept liar (Insight DC 21), if Danisca realizes the PCs are law enforcement, she'll offer them fresh water or sweetened lime juice, then discreetly imbibe an elixir from her kitchen-laboratory to enhance her skill at prevarication (Insight DC 26).

She'll claim that Nilasa was a regular customer, and that she sold her the fey pepper and an *elixir of invisibility*, but that Nilasa presented the proper permit (since normally magic that can make you invisible for more than a few seconds is illegal). She feigns ignorance of Nilasa having any criminal connection.

If the PCs take the time to snoop around, they might (Perception DC 21) notice a secret gnome-sized door that leads from behind her shop counter to her laboratory. Searching around in the upstairs office can (Perception DC 21) find her wall safe behind a painting, but it's locked (Thievery DC 21), and she won't open it or let the PCs open it without a warrant, which takes a day unless the party calls in a Rank 1 Risur favor, which speeds that up to about an hour. Magic-using characters might (Arcana DC 21) detect a faint illusion concealing the magical auras of the items within the safe. More cavalier PCs might just open it anyway and get a warrant later. The safe contains contraband like *elixirs of glibness*, *elixirs of invisibility*, and dried leaves, which can be identified (Nature DC 14) as coming from the fey pepper plant. There's no actual fey pepper here at the moment, however.

If the PCs want to arrest Dansica, her reaction depends on how much trouble she thinks she's in. As a legitimate businesswoman, she doesn't want to attack or flee if she'll just get hit with a fine, but if she thinks she might go to jail or have her business license revoked, she'll try to lure the party into her *dreaming dust* trap.

Meet the Magician.

Alternately, the PCs might never know about Danisca, and instead try to track down the House Elf. Two hours of asking around (Streetwise DC 14) reveal the House Elf's reputation and the address of his studio, as well as dozens of conflicting stories of his appearance and powers.

Blander assumes the PCs want him to perform for them, and he'll start eagerly showing off his pet honey badgers even before the party gets a chance to start asking him questions.

Blander isn't as good a liar as Danisca (Insight DC 10), and he's not as cool a thinker, so at the first sign that the PCs know he's involved in criminal activities he'll bolt. He calls for Danisca's help mentally and then scampers upstairs to the bridge that leads to Danisca's shop. When he links up with Danisca she chides him and again tries to lure the PCs into her *dreaming dust* trap. If that fails, they'll try to escape.

List of Adversaries.

- Blander Waryeye
- Danisca Waryeye
- 2 apothecary guards
- 3 honey badgers
- Drowning tank trap
- Razzle dazzle trap
- Dreaming dust trap

Blander Waryeye Level 2 Lurker
Small fey humanoid, gnome XP 125

HP 30; **Bloodied** 15 **Initiative** +2
AC 16, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 14 **Perception** +5
Speed 6, Teleport 3

Traits

▸ **The Prestige**
Any charlatan can make something disappear, but making it reappear in an unexpected place is how you make a real impression.
When Blander hits a target on his turn, if he was hidden or had total concealment from that target at the start of his turn, his attack deals an extra 2d6 damage.

Standard Actions

✓ **Sleight of Hand** ✦ At-Will, Basic
The mustachioed gnome breezes past you in a flurry of movement, opening clasps, loosening buckles, tying laces together, and all around confusing you.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6+7 damage and the target grants combat advantage, cannot make opportunity attacks, and takes a –2 penalty to its attack rolls until the end of Blander's next turn.

⟋ **House Elf Fling** ✦ At-Will
A telekinetic force far larger than the tiny fey controlling it picks you up and chucks you across the room.
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +5 vs. Fort
Special: This ability does not provoke opportunity attacks.
Hit: 1d10+5 damage and the target is slid 5 squares and knocked prone.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Fade Away** ✦ Encounter
"Unfair!" exclaims the gnome as your attack grazes him. He scowls for a second, then vanishes completely.
Trigger: A creature hits Blander with an attack.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Blander turns invisible until the end of his next turn.

Skills Acrobatics +10, Arcana +8, Bluff +3, Stealth +12, Thievery +10
Str 4 (–2) **Dex** 18 (+5) **Wis** 8 (+0)
Con 12 (+2) **Int** 14 (+3) **Cha** 16 (+4)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

IF THERE'S NO FIGHT.

If the party never comes here, or if the PCs resolve the situation without a fight, you can still make use of this location later in the adventure. If the PCs try to lure Dr. von Recklinghausen to talk with his friend Lynn Kindleton, he might arrange to meet at an abandoned apothecary's shop that's identical to this one. Or if the PCs get Morgan Cippiano's help to take out the dragonborn arsonists, he might hire the brothers to burn down Danisca's recently-abandoned shop, and the PCs can lay a trap here. Or if you just want some filler between adventures, you can use it as the site of a drug sting, perhaps spiced up with a turf battle between the Family and the Kell guild.

Danisca Waryeye Level 2 Elite Controller
Small fey humanoid, gnome XP 250

HP 66; **Bloodied** 33 **Initiative** +5
AC 16, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 17 **Perception** +3
Speed 6
Saving Throws +2; **Action Point** 1

Standard Actions

✓ **Let Go!** (charm) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Danisca shoves you away, her hands glowing with faint charm magic.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10+4 damage.
Effect: The target is pushed 1 square and cannot take opportunity or immediate actions until the end of this turn.

✲ **Sense Seizure** (charm, psychic) ✦ At-Will
The colors of the world start to dance and spin you around.
Attack: Area Burst 1 within 5 (enemies in area); +5 vs. Will
Hit: 1d6+4 psychic damage, and the target is blinded and slowed until the end of Danisca's next turn.

⟋ **Temporary Alliance** (charm, psychic) ✦ Encounter
Oh no! These strangers are attacking your friend Danisca. You have to protect her.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +5 vs. Will
Hit: The target is dominated until the end of Danisca's next turn, then dominated (save ends).
Aftereffect: The target takes 3d6+4 psychic damage.
Miss: Target is dominated until the end of Danisca's next turn.

Minor Actions

⟋ **Alchemical Flurry** ✦ At-Will
Danisca reaches into her coat and hurls the first flask she finds.
Prerequisite: Danisca can only use this power ten times during the encounter.
Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +5 vs. Ref
Hit: The target is affected by one of the following effects at random (roll 1d6).
1 Alchemist Fire. 1d12+4 fire damage and ongoing 5 fire (save ends).
2 Thunderstone. 1d12+4 thunder damage and the target is pushed 2 squares and deafened (save ends).
3 Jinx Juice. 1d12+4 necrotic damage and the target takes a –5 penalty to its next saving throw this encounter.
4 Alkahest. 1d12+4 acid damage, and each creature adjacent to the target takes 2 acid damage.
5 Tanglefoot Flask. 1d12+4 damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of Danisca's next turn, then slowed (save ends).
6 Healing Potion. The target can spend a healing surge. If it has no healing surges, it regains 10 HP.

▸ **Minor Healing Potion** ✦ Encounter
Danisca pulls out a flask and quaffs it herself, causing her wounds to heal.
Effect: Danisca heals 16 HP.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Fading Escape** ✦ Recharge when first bloodied
The gnome yelps as your attack connects, but then she vanishes and you hear scurrying feet.
Trigger: A creature hits Danisca with an attack.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Danisca turns invisible until the end of his next turn, and she moves her speed.

Skills Arcana +9, Bluff +11, Insight +8, Stealth +8
Str 8 (+0) **Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 12 (+2) **Int** 16 (+4) **Cha** 16 (+4)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial


Two Fronts
1st Floor
+5
+5
2nd Floor
+15
+15
+15
+0
+15
One square equals 5ft.

Apothecary Guard Level 1 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 100

HP 30; **Bloodied** 15 **Initiative** +4
AC 17, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 10 **Perception** +5
Speed 5

Traits

▸ **Hired Defender**

When an apothecary guard makes an attack on his turn, he marks the target. If that creature shifts away from the apothecary guard or attacks a creature other than the guard, the guard can make an opportunity attack against the marked target.

Standard Actions

✓ **Baton Flurry** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+2 damage.

✓ **Grapple** ✦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +4 vs. Ref

Hit: 1d8+4 damage, and the target is grabbed (escape DC 13).

Str	14 (+2)	**Dex**	15 (+2)	**Wis**	10 (+0)
Con	14 (+2)	**Int**	10 (+0)	**Cha**	10 (+0)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Honey Badger Level 1 Minion Brute
Small natural beast XP 25

HP 1 (see *diehard*) **Initiative** +1
AC 14, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 11 **Perception** –1
Speed 5
Resist 5 poison

Traits

▸ **Diehard**

The honey badger just doesn't care.

When a honey badger would take damage from any source, even a missed attack, if that source does less than 11 damage, the badger takes no damage and instead becomes bloodied. The next time any source would deal damage to it, even a missed attack, the badger is reduced to 0 HP. (Either deal 11 damage to it in one hit, or hit it twice.)

Standard Actions

✓ **Gnaw** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC

Hit: 5 damage, or 8 against an immobilized, restrained, or helpless target.

Str	11 (+0)	**Dex**	12 (+1)	**Wis**	8 (–1)
Con	18 (+4)	**Int**	2 (–4)	**Cha**	6 (–2)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Drowning Tanks Level 2 Obstacle
Trap XP 125

The floor drops out beneath you and you plunge into a cramped glass-walled tank filled with water. A trap door snaps shut above you, promising a horrible drowning death if you can't find a way out. Criss-crossing threads of gold wrap around the outside of the glass, and gold blocks teleportation, so you're in trouble.

Perception

- DC 15: You're pretty sure when the magician ran through here, he jumped over a section of flooring.
- DC 15 (only if viewing from the level of the tank, not from above): On second thought, there's paint flaking off the "gold" threads revealing some other metal beneath.
- DC 20: A hinge in the floor is probably some sort of trap.

Trigger

Two tanks are placed beneath two trap doors on the second floor. These trap doors fall open if anyone steps on them.

✲ **Attack**

Immediate Reaction; Area 1 within 0

Target: Triggering creature

Attack: +5 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target falls into the tank and needs to hold its breath or else drown. The ceiling seals shut.

Miss: The ceiling seals shut.

Special: Normally used as an escape artist act, the drowning tank's "gold threads" aren't actual gold, and so they don't inhibit teleportation at all. Blander can easily teleport out, but others might fall for the deception.

Countermeasures

- Submerged characters who are holding their breath have some time to discover a means of escape. Consult the drowning (suffocation) rules in the D&D® 4E Dungeon Master's Guide®.
- A latch on the ceiling of the ground floor can disable the trap door. If a person falls into the tank while someone else is already inside, the second person can make a DC 13 Athletics or Acrobatics check to stand on top of the first person and keep from plunging in. This stops the ceiling from automatically shutting and latching.
- A character trapped inside can make a DC 20 Thievery check to jigger the latch and unlock the top of the tank. They then need to make a DC 20 Athletics check to lift the lid off while swimming.
- Dealing 30 damage to the tank shatters it, spilling the creature out. The tank has resist 5 all, and a creature trapped might not be able to use certain options, like two handed weapons.

Tactics.

If the PCs try to arrest Danisca, she pretends to go along, but mentally alerts Blander, who'll sneak in to the upstairs balcony and follow her lead. She tells the PCs that she needs to take a few minutes to safely put away some alchemicals in her lab, or else the place might burn down. She lets the PCs accompany her to the entrance of her lab, but warns them to stay at the doorway. She heads to the far corner of the room, then uses a cantrip *prestidigitation* to release a burst of *dreaming dust* from the ceiling (see below). Her hope is to confuse the PCs and wipe their recent memory.

If that doesn't work, she'll try to dominate a PC. When she's attacked she turns invisible and flees to the second floor, then across to Blander's magician studio, hoping the traps will slow pursuit down so they can escape into the street. Meanwhile Blander tries to cause a distraction by unleashing his penned honey badgers (he uses them in magic tricks like humans would use doves, and they're very fond of him).

The guards, for their part, know not to go near the *dreaming dust* trap. Though they're wary of getting charged with attempted murder, they figure that Danisca can muddle the memories of the PCs as long as they can knock them out.

Alternately, the PCs might approach Blander first, in which case he'll try to reach the second floor bridge over to Danisca's shop. Danisca, empathically alerted, will have already unlocked the doors for the bridge, and will be waiting to slam the door shut and lock it once Blander gets through.

Though focused on making their escape, when Danisca and Blander do attack, they try to strike from opposite directions, drawing enemies apart so neither of them gets surrounded. Danisca uses her alchemicals to stymie pursuit, while Blander throws enemies into piles of volatile magic or the various traps set up in his studio.

Razzle Dazzle Level 2 Lurker
Trap XP 125

This place is a real fire hazard. Dozens of buckets filled with quick-flash firedust and other theatrical alchemicals lie stacked about, some of them having fallen on their sides. Worse, the floor is riddled with strings and tiny pressure plates, and you think you might have just lit a fuse by stepping on one of them.

Perception

- DC 15: The floor here does not look safe to step on.
- DC 20: A single misstep here will trigger a cascade of blinding and burning explosives.

Initiative +0

Trigger

A creature who steps into one of these spaces triggers a blindingly bright burst of light and fire.

Attack

Standard Action; Close Burst 2
Target: Creatures in burst
Attack: +5 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d6+5 fire damage and the target is blinded (save ends).
Effect: Any other un-triggered razzle dazzle spaces in the burst are triggered, and they go off one round later.

Countermeasures

- A flask of water splashed on a fuse can stop a square from going off. Jumping on top of a canister of alchemicals will cause the creature to be automatically hit, but will limit the attack to just the origin space, and prevent other razzle dazzle spaces from being triggered.
- A DC 10 Thievery check can disable a square.
- A single point of fire damage dealt to one of these spaces will immediately trigger the explosion, which can handily clear out the area before the party goes through.

Terrain.

The multiple floors of the two buildings suit Blander well, since he can teleport from ground to balcony or catwalk while most enemies have to use the stairs.

Many spaces in Danisca's shop are display tables covered with volatile chemicals. These spaces count as difficult terrain, and they require an Athletics or Acrobatics check (DC 13) to enter safely. If a creature fails its check, or if forced movement moves it into the space, the creature takes 1 point each of acid, cold, fire, necrotic, and thunder damage. A character can take at most 5 damage in this way in a single turn, no matter how many spaces it moves through at once.

Blander's magician studio has several props that can act as traps, and Danisca has set up a dreaming dust trap in her lab.

The second floor doors between the buildings are locked (Thievery DC 20), but Danisca and Blander both have keys, and most likely the doors will be unlocked before a fight begins.

Aftermath.

If either of the pair is knocked out or captured, the other will stop fleeing and will fight to free them. Remember that the PCs should be trying to take prisoners, not kill the pair. Likewise, neither of them wants a murder charge, so they won't go for killing blows.

Once captured, Danisca tries to make a plea deal, getting her sentence reduced so she and her husband avoid jail in exchange for her telling the party where and when they can find the smugglers. She knows the man who's captaining the ship that Nilasa was going to ride is named **Deorn Feldman**, and that the ship is to set out at high tide, two hours after sunset on the 4th, leaving from a particular dock she can provide directions to. She doesn't know exactly where the meet-up is, but it's going to be somewhere near an uninhabited rock in The Ayres islands.

Dreaming Dust Level 2 Blaster
Trap XP 125

With a quick magical nudge, Danisca causes a metal plate to fall on and shatter several vials of dreaming dust hidden in the ceiling. Yellow powder bursts downward through tiny holes, filling the entrance to her laboratory.

Perception

- DC 15: There are small regular holes in the ceiling just inside the entrance to the lab, like a sieve for passing powder.
- DC 20: You can barely make out some glass vials through those holes.

Trigger

Danisca can activate the trap by using magical *prestidigitation* as a minor action. Otherwise, jostling the ceiling might set it off accidentally. This creates a zone of intoxicating powder in close burst 2 centered on the space just inside the hallway door, which lasts until the end of the encounter or until dispersed. When the trap triggers it makes the following attack against each creature in the area.

Attack

Opportunity Action; Close Burst 2
Target: Creatures in the burst
Attack: +3 vs. Will
Hit: The target is dazed (save ends).
First Failed Save: The target is stunned (save ends).
Second Failed Save: The target falls unconscious.
Special: If a creature ends its turn in the zone of the dust, the trap repeats its attack against that creature, and if the creature is already dazed or stunned from being hit previously, a hit counts as the creature failing a saving throw, which worsens its condition.

A creature that gets stunned by *dreaming dust* becomes highly susceptible to suggestion, to the point that even its short-term memories can be changed by simply telling it something else happened. The susceptibility wear off after a few hours, but the memory alteration is permanent.

Countermeasures

- A character who wears a specially-made breathing mask is immune to dreaming dust. Simply holding your breath or covering your mouth and nose with a cloth is not enough. A few such masks lie scattered around Danisca's lab.
- A character adjacent to the trap can disable it with a DC 15 Thievery check.

If the Waryeyes knock out the PCs, Danisca will drug them with a heavy dose of *dreaming dust*. If she gets lucky and her trap succeeds, she'll talk to the susceptible PCs and tell them a cover story. If they came to her shop, she'll say they talked to her, and that everything was in order. If they were looking for The House Elf, she'll instead say they found a stage magician who talked to them and seemed completely unsuspicious.

She'll then encourage them to go to a nearby pub and drink the rest of the day away. By the time the powder wears off, the PCs won't remember what happened except for a general sense that it was a dead end. If they decide to come back, Danisca will have cleared out anything incriminating, and Blander will just hide and not talk to the PCs. Danisca will then start making plans to close up shop and move to another city, but not before warning Gale and the Family that the PCs are onto them.

Treasure.

In addition to a variety of potions and alchemicals the party could loot (worth roughly 680 gp), the party can recover Blander's *hedge wizard's gloves* and *hat of hats*.

Smugglers' Night

Action. Montage/Tactical. Level 5.

Smugglers working for a group called the Family have a ship docked in Pine Island. The party can follow them to their rendezvous, or ambush them before they get out to sea.

By interrogating Danisca, or perhaps by following other leads, the PCs can learn the location of the dock where Family smugglers are prepared to set out on the night of the 4th, sailing a small cutter called *Silvo*. They intend to rendezvous with a Crisillyiri merchant ship, *Li Grifoni Grinyande* (*The Grinning Griffin*), off an uninhabited island in The Ayres.

The Crisillyiri will hand over three crates of magic wands, and the local smugglers will pay them with a case of gold worth 10,000 gp, plus stack of bills of mark worth a total of one hundred and fifty thousand gold pieces. These bills are popular currency for massive transactions, but the bank that backs them with actual coinage is based in Nalaam, a small neutral city between Drakr and Crisillyir.

The party has a few choices of how to go after the smugglers.

- **Caught in the Act.** First, they might requisition a ship of their own (detailed in the Player's Guide), wait for the smugglers to depart, and shadow them to the rendezvous. There's enough traffic in the harbor near dusk that they probably can watch from afar without attracting attention. Then once the two ships link up they can close and apprehend them.

  Using this plan, the PCs can catch both groups at once. The drawback is that if there's a fight, they'll have a lot more enemies to contend with. If they're clever the PCs might sneak up, make a note via spyglass or swimming scout of the name of the Crisillyiri vessel, then wait for them to separate. The party can chase down the local smugglers and seize the wands, then alert the port police to seize the Crisillyiri vessel when it docks.
- **The Boss Has a Cold. He Sent Us.** Alternately, the party might attack the wharf in Parity Lake before the local smugglers can set out. Prisoners can give them directions to the rendezvous, and the PCs can board the smugglers' ship, letting them get close to the Crisillyiri ship and catch the crew off guard.
- **I Sure Hope They Come Back Soon.** The party might decide to let the local smugglers go to the rendezvous, while the PCs lie in wait at the Parity Lake wharf. The smugglers plan to stop briefly back at their dock to hand over one crate of wands to some local allies, but then they'll sail up to Stray River, where they'll offload the other two crates of wands. Family operatives will deliver one crate to Gale's allies in the Cloudwood the next day, and they'll distribute the rest to their people throughout the city.

  Though Nilasa is dead, even if the PCs keep Danisca Waryeye from going on the smuggler's ship, Morgan Cippiano knows the value of making allies, so he'll stick to the deal and hand over the wands to Gale as promised.

Ships of the RHC

One goal of this scene is to establish that the PCs, as constables of the RHC, have access to ships for their missions. All the later adventures will include scenes that involve ships. Though at first they just have access to simple coast guard style cutters, as they increase in Prestige they'll be able to trade up for superior vessels. If you have the E.N. Publishing naval adventures supplement *Admiral o' the High Seas*, you can also let your players upgrade their ship, making it a mobile base.

Appendix K, Seas of Zeitgeist, has stats for ships the party can access, as well as quick-play naval rules. Though the mission will take a few hours, their Prestige should be low enough that they can only request small cutters with minimal shipboard weapons. In the coming pages and in later adventures you'll find stats for other ships. Luckily on this mission their foes' ships are also barely armed.

If you use battle maps and miniatures, we recommend you print the ship layouts on thick paper, or hand draw them, then cut out the ships so it's easier to move them through the battle.

If your PCs are not members of the RHC, you might have one character—preferably a Yerasol Veteran—own his own ship, or the party might borrow a ship from the Constabulary.

***Silvo*, Cutter**	Level 5 Vehicle
Small Vehicle	1,000 gp
Hull Integrity 2	**Command** +8
Defense 10	**Full Crew** 4
Maneuverability 10	**Minimum Crew** 1
Speed 6	**Total Complement** 10
Design	
Length 30 ft. Beam 15 ft. One mast, 40 ft. high.	
Total Cost 1,000 gp	
Hull (base level 2, sails, improved speed ×2, Level 5): 1,000 gp	

***Li Grifoni Grinyande*, Galleon**	Level 10 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	7,960 gp
Hull Integrity 3	**Command** +6
Defense 15	**Full Crew** 16
Maneuverability 8	**Minimum Crew** 4
Speed 6	**Total Complement** 60
Design	
Length 90 ft. Beam 25 ft. Four masts, 70 ft. high. Three decks, plus a forecastle and a two-tiered aftcastle.	
Defensible	
The high castles help defend the crew, but crowd out room for weapons.	
The crew has cover against attacks made from outside the ship.	
Armaments	
A small array of cannons, three to either broadside.	
Crew: 10. Attack: +5, broadsides only.	
Total Cost 7,960 gp	
Hull (base level 6, sails, improved maneuverability, improved speed ×2, Level 10): 5,000 gp	
Armaments (Small, broadsides, Level 7): 2,600 gp	
Defensible (Level 1): 360 gp	

Multiple Encounters.

If the PCs make poor plans, they can get caught in an overwhelming level 6 encounter, whereas if they are clever and already dealt with the Waryeyes, they might just have to face two level 1 encounters.

Some groups prefer challenging set-piece action scenes, and would want a tough fight even if they are clever. If that describes your group, you might need to add some foes to some of the encounters.

If the PCs confront the two ships together, it's a level 5 encounter (or level 6 if the Waryeyes are present)—an appropriately challenging capstone of this thread of the investigation.

Alternately, the PCs might go after the Parity Lake wharf, which is a level 3 encounter (or level 5 if the Waryeyes are there). That leaves *Li Grifoni Grinyande*, normally just a level 1 encounter. To kick it up to level 5, you might decide to have the whole crew join any fight, increasing from 15 minions to 35 minions, though that could get tedious. Alternately you could add 8 more minions plus three sacred mastheads, spirits of beautiful women willingly bound to the ship's mast. Stat-wise they're just reskinned apothecary guards (see page 159) that can animate the ship's planks and rigging to thwack and entangle the PCs.

If the PCs decide to confront the two ships separately and they go after the *Grifoni* first, you might just increase it to a level 3 encounter (add two sacred mastheads and two more minions), and then increase the *Silvo* from a level 1 encounter to level 5. For that, make the crew consist of Deorn and nine Family bravuras. If the Waryeyes are tagging along, they provide enough of a challenge that you can get away with just converting two sailors into bravuras, for a total of Deorn, five unscrupulous sailors, four Family bravuras, and a pair of married gnomes.

Either way, one of the biggest excitement factors of this scene is the chaotic blasts from the smuggled wands, so if you're shooting for drama, try to steer the party to go after whoever has the wands only after they've dealt with the other group.

Family Wharf

Encounter Level: 3 (5 with the Waryeyes)

This small bayou house can only be reached by a narrow boardwalk which the Family keeps watch on, or by swimming or taking a boat. The party might completely bypass this area, but if they do want to strike here, they'll have a hard time making good use of their ship in the tight quarters. Rowboats would be more useful, or perhaps simply swimming. Of course, there are piranha in these waters.

Because the ships can move, the map for this encounter doesn't include either the *Silvo* or the two rowboats. The *Silvo* is moored to the east of the house. One rowboat sits outside to the north, the other on the south by the boardwalk.

Under the direction of **Deorn Feldman**, a local Flinter whom the Family recruited for his excellent riverboating skills, seven unscrupulous sailors prep the *Silvo*, a short cutter, single-masted, 30 ft. long, little more than a hull with a sail. Two Family bravuras stand lookout on the boardwalk, separated by 20 ft., just within sight of each other. The other two bravuras are busy cleaning up after dinner. If the party hasn't apprehended them or scared them off, Danisca and Blander Waryeye are also present, full after a fine Crisillyiri meal of pesto chicken and pasta.

Technically only Deorn and the bravuras are members of the Family, but it's tradition in the criminal syndicate to share a meal with teammates to help build trust and get a sense of who might be a liability.

A piranha throng lurks by the cypress trees east of the house. Normally schools of piranha don't attack large creatures, but the smugglers have made a habit of dunking their leftovers and the leavings of butchered fish and fowl, to let the piranha clean dishes and leave stripped bones that local fishermen buy as jewelry. Busy with prepping the *Silvo*, the smugglers haven't fed the fishies yet tonight, and they are hungry. They attack indiscriminately.

The stats for this location are included at the end of this encounter, to consolidate the crews of the two ships. If the Waryeyes are present, their stats are on page 157.

List of Adversaries.

- Deorn Feldman
- 4 Family bravuras
- 7 unscrupulous sailors
- Piranha throng
- Danisca Waryeye (maybe)
- Blander Waryeye (maybe)

Tactics.

If the party approaches by boardwalk, the two lookout bravuras try to hold the boardwalk and bottleneck the party while the rest of the criminals rush to launch the *Silvo*. Two of the sailors act as crew, and at the end of the round the ship pulls away from the house and flees into the night. The remaining bravuras then dive into the marsh and try to swim away.

If the party approaches by boat, Deorn figures he can't just run, so he tries to lure the PCs in. The bravuras on the boardwalk take a rowboat and try to stop the party from making landfall. Deorn and his sailor minions fan out and fire from cover behind fences and buildings—go prone, then stand, shoot, and go prone again. Meanwhile the bravuras in the house sneak to the second boat and stay out of the light as they try to flank.

If the Waryeyes are present, they try to stay out of combat until the party actually gets to the house. Neither has good long-ranged options, but once the party closes in they can disrupt attempts to take out Deorn and the sailors. If anyone is bloodied while in the water, the piranha throng streaks in and swarms the unfortunate victim.

If the party has their ship and the smugglers manage to slip past them, see the *Silvo* Chase skill challenge, below.

Terrain.

A chest-high fence conceals parts of the boardwalk and house, and gives defenders cover, but it wouldn't be hard to smash through the old, bayou-rotted wood.

Light water near the cypress trees can be waded through as difficult terrain. The rest of the water is at least 10 feet deep and must be swum through (Athletics DC 10). Though the water to the north is fairly open, surrounding trees make navigating ships through here difficult.

Aftermath.

If defeated, the smugglers can be convinced to tell the party where the meet-up is through clever interrogation or an offer to let one of them go in exchange for squealing. (If that happens, one of the unscrupulous sailors takes the offer, and ends up dead within a week.) They have little here at the wharf of value aside from the money they were planning to use to pay for the wands.

This might be a good time to remind the PCs that they are expected to turn in any items of value recovered in their investigations to the RHC. And it's a good opportunity to see how honest and law-abiding they are.


Bayou Wharf
-10
-10
-15
-15
-10
-15
-10
-5
-15
-5
One square equals 5ft.

If the smugglers take out the party, they know better than to kill law enforcement officers. Instead Deorn has the party disarmed, tied up, and taken to the house of a nearby friend who can keep his mouth shut. Then after finishing the wand exchange, Deorn loads the party in his ship and delivers them to Family allies in Stray River. The next morning the party will wake up to a meeting with Morgan Cippiano.

The Meet-Up

Encounter Level: Special.
Both Ships, 5 (with the Waryeyes, 6).
Only the *Silvo*, 1 (with the Waryeyes, 4).
Only *Li Grifoni*, 1.

The local Family smugglers have a pre-arranged plan to meet south of an uninhabited rocky island in The Ayres. On the *Silvo*, Deorn will play a set of five horn notes every few minutes and then the captain of *Li Grifoni Grinyande* will respond with another set of notes. This, combined with lantern signals, will let the two ships find each other in the night.

If either captain blows a single long horn note, however, it will warn the other ship that it's not safe, and the meet-up will be canceled. Afraid of being discovered by customs, the Crisillyiri smugglers will send a longboat out to a nearby island and quickly bury the cases of wands just off the beach. They'll hope to retry the exchange a few days later, and with luck the rich owner of the island won't happen to dig up their treasure in the interim.

If it comes to a fight, the opposition includes the following:

List of Adversaries.

Aboard the *Silvo*

- Deorn Feldman
- 2 Family bravuras
- 7 unscrupulous sailors
- Danisca Waryeye (maybe)
- Blander Waryeye (maybe)

Aboard *Li Grifoni Grinyande*

- Captain Amba Bandia
- 15 unscrupulous sailors

The Exchange.

When the two ships are together, they tie ropes to keep themselves close, and they adjust their sails so they're relatively stationary. The actual hand-off takes about ten minutes, and involves friendly greetings, a few shared drinks, and then the transaction of money for wands. If anything interrupts them, it takes five rounds for the crews of the two ships to ready their vessels for departure, so if the PCs approach stealthily they can strike while their enemies are vulnerable.

Stealthy Approach.

In the dark of night, the PCs can spot the lights of the two smuggler ships from nearly 1,000 feet. If the PCs snuff their lights they can easily come within 500 feet (an adjacent stage) without being spotted. Even if they have a steamship, the sound of wind and surf covers engine noise.

To approach any closer, the party can attempt three skill checks (DC 20)—one Perception to determine what angle best hides them from the enemy lookouts, one Nature to best take advantage of the waves and wind, and one Stealth to pick the proper angle that hides them in the shadow of an island. If the party succeeds at least two, they can get within 50 ft. (Short range) before being noticed.

Fight or Flight.

If the party confronts both ships, the criminals figure they outnumber the party and will try to pincer the PCs' ship, then attempt to board them.

If the party approaches the *Grifoni* while it's on its own, Captain Bandia orders her crew to discreetly arm themselves, but acts casual when the PCs arrive. If they ask to inspect the ship, she invites them on board, hoping to swarm them with her crew. Though she has cannons and outguns them, she prefers to remain discreet, and won't start firing unless the PCs' ship fires on hers first.

If they go after the *Silvo* when it's alone, Deorn orders the crew to turn about and run back to the *Grifoni*, where they'll have reinforcements for a fight. If the party makes a point of waiting until the *Silvo* is far from the *Grifoni*, then Deorn's goal is to flee back to the Parity Lake wharf. It's a similar result, just with different reinforcements.

Ooh, Temptation.

By all means, let the PCs claim some of the wands, even though it's against protocol, highly illegal, and they're technically stealing from the Clergy, one of the most powerful organizations in the world. In the next adventure an audit of their activities will likely uncover any illicit activities they've been up to, but until then they can certainly justify having a little extra power when going up against dangerous criminals.

Plus, what good is being a cop if you can't benefit from being corrupt?

Silvo Chase.

If during naval combat the *Silvo* manages to get further away from the party than one stage (500 ft.), use the chase rules presented in the Player's Guide.

If within a mile of the *Grifoni*, the *Silvo* only has to keep ahead of the party for about ten minutes to get back to that ship. Any farther out, and Deorn prefers to flee back to Pine Island, which requires staying ahead of the party for an hour. He might then look for reinforcements at the wharf, or just try to slip into the swamp and hide.

Ship-to-Ship Combat.

The party does have forward-facing guns on their ships, which can be useful in a chase against the *Silvo* if they can get close enough. Since the *Silvo* has no cannons of its own, its crew will try to stay to the side or aft of the party, and then board.

The *Grifoni*, by contrast, greatly outguns the party's ship, a fact which should be readily obvious with just a glimpse at its many gunports. The party's ship is probably more maneuverable, but be prepared in case the PCs pick a fight they can't win. They might be left adrift in a crippled ship awaiting rescue.

Wands of Wonder.

If you were a bunch of desperate criminals about to get arrested while you're sitting on a cache of magic weapons, what would you do?

The Crisillyiri wands belonged to a military collection and have been enchanted so they could be easily shown off to visiting nobles and religious hierarchs. Each is unique, from any of a dozen different centuries, and an archaeologist or arcane scholar could keep herself delighted for years discovering the secret iconography and histories of these weapons. But for rich Crisillyiri patrons, it's important to be able to pick it up and shoot it without worrying about command words or magical training.

All of the wands have been enchanted so that they can each be fired once per month by whoever is holding them, requiring only a simple act of will. No training or command word is needed. However, the power level of the spell cast through the wand is minimal, so some flashy effects will miss wildly or do inconsequential damage.

When a fight breaks out between the PCs and the smugglers, Deorn or Amba quickly orders the sailors to take cover behind the crates, crack them open, and start shooting with whatever they can get their hands on. A character adjacent to a crate of wands can spend a minor action to retrieve a wand, and a standard action to use it. As he activates it, the wielder innately learns the power the wand possesses so he can properly choose its target, but he can't choose not to use it. After the wand is used once, it can't be used again until the wielder studies it and learns the proper commands.

Each crate contains about fifty wands, carefully wrapped in fine fabrics to keep their energies from intermingling catastrophically. When a character draws a wand from a crate, roll 1d12 and consult the table below to see what he gets.

d12	Random Wand
1.	**Magic Missile.** Attack does 2 force damage to a target within 20 squares, no attack roll.
2.	**Thunderwave.** +6 vs. Fortitude, Close Blast 3, 1d6 thunder damage and push 1 square.
3.	**Burning Hands.** +6 vs. Reflex, Close Blast 5, 2d6 fire damage.
4.	**Ray of Enfeeblement.** +6 vs. Fortitude, Ranged 10, 1d10 necrotic damage and the target is weakened until the end of your next turn.
5.	**Fire Burst.** +6 vs. Reflex, Area Burst 2 within 20 squares, 2d6 fire damage.
6.	**Dimensional Jaunt.** User teleports 10 squares.
7.	**Lightning Bolt.** +6 vs. Reflex, Ranged 10, 2d6 lightning damage. On a hit, +6 vs. Reflex against two creatures within 10 squares of initial target, 1d6 lightning damage.
8.	**Invisibility.** User or adjacent ally turns invisible until the end of your next turn.
9.	**Godlasers.** +6 vs. Reflex, Ranged 5, 1d8 radiant damage and one ally you can see gets +2 to his next attack roll against the target.
10.	**Expelliarmus.** +6 vs. Reflex, Ranged 10, the target is disarmed, and whatever he was holding flies to your hand.
11.	**Song of Jumping.** Close Burst 10. Creatures in burst get +10 to Athletics checks to jump until the end of your next turn.
12.	**Viscid Globs.** +6 vs. Reflex, Ranged 10, the target is restrained (escape DC 14).

Tactics.

When Deorn realizes the jig is up, he has whichever men aren't busy crewing the ship take defensive positions. He hopes to strafe the PCs, ordering his men to fire crossbows, or use the wands if they've received them. If the two ships hit each other, he takes his bravuras and tries to board while the sailors provide cover fire.

Terrain.

There's not much in the way of terrain here, except for the ships. If the fight occurs back at the wharf there are cypress trees and a boardwalk to deal with, and during a chase the PCs might force the *Silvo* near shoals or some rocky islands.

The deck of the *Grifoni* is covered in barrels and crates that provide cover and mobility options. On the *Silvo*, the hull of the ship is deep enough that a prone character gets cover from attacks originating off the ship. The unscrupulous sailors will try to stay prone except for when they pop up to shoot, or when Deorn orders one of them to jump between the two ships and get in the party's face.

Aftermath.

Much as in the Family Wharf encounter, if the PCs are defeated, they're handed over to Morgan Cippiano for a polite conversation the next morning.

Defeated smugglers clam up, except for Deorn, who brags that he'll be free in a week. None of them know how to get in touch with Gale or the fey, but members of the Family will say that someone who does know will be contacting the PCs shortly.

Deorn Feldman — Level 2 Brute (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, human — XP 125

HP 44; **Bloodied** 22 — **Initiative** +0
AC 14, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 14 — **Perception** +3
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊘ **Cutlass** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Armed with a cutlass and an oversized pistol, the massive sailor smiles with knowing confidence as he attacks.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+6 damage.

✓ **Hand Cannon** (weapon) ✦ Encounter
A single shot of his huge pistol startles birds for a mile around.
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+6 damage, or 2d6+18 on a crit.
Effect: All creatures within 5 squares are deafened until the end of Deorn's next turn.
Special: Deorn is also deafened by this power. Deorn can spend a standard action to reload his gun and recharge this power, but first he must sheathe his cutlass.

Minor Actions

▸ **Go Get Em!** ✦ At-Will (1/round)
The sailor glances at a cowering ally, gives him a swift kick, and yells for him to charge.
Effect: One allied minion adjacent to Deorn moves its speed and makes a melee basic attack. Until the start of Deorn's next turn, he and his allies get a +1 bonus to attack rolls against whatever target the minion attacked.

Skills Nature +7
Str 16 (+4) **Dex** 8 (+0) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 12 (+2) **Cha** 14 (+3)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Family Bravura Level 1 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 100

HP 30; **Bloodied** 15 **Initiative** +3
AC 15, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 13 **Perception** +0
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊗ **Free-Hand Pummel** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He leads with his sword, but instead of slicing you, he uses it to bat away your own weapon, then slams his free fist into your face and chest in a flurry of punches.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 3d4+1 damage.

⊘ **Double Dagger Fling** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 2d4+3 damage.
Special: The Bravura has four daggers, and can only use this power twice per encounter unless he recovers his weapons.

▸ **Bravado Rush** ✦ At-Will
Effect: The Family Bravura charges an opponent. If he hits, he pushes the target 1 square.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Part of the Family** ✦ Encounter
Your attack knocks the criminal to the ground, but before he loses consciousness he reaches out for help toward one of his allies. That ally's expression burns with vengeance.
Trigger: A creature's attack reduces the Family Bravura to 0 HP.
Effect (Free Action): One allied creature with this same ability can move its speed, then can make a make a basic attack against the triggering creature.

Str 14 (+2) **Dex** 12 (+1) **Wis** 10 (+0)
Con 14 (+2) **Int** 10 (+0) **Cha** 14 (+2)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Unscrupulous Sailor Level 1 Minion Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 25

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +0
AC 13, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 13 **Perception** +0
Speed 6

Traits

▸ **Desperate Imprecision**
The sailor seems more concerned about not getting hit than about hitting you.
When trading fire with enemies, an unscrupulous sailor often chooses to keep his head hidden behind cover. If he has cover, he can choose to attack without looking. He takes a –5 penalty to his attack rolls because his opponents have total concealment, and his enemies take a –5 penalty to attack rolls against him because he has superior cover.

Standard Actions

⊗ **Crossbow Smash** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 4 damage.

⊘ **Crossbow Shot** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 5 damage.
Special: Load minor.

Str 11 (+0) **Dex** 10 (+0) **Wis** 10 (+0)
Con 11 (+0) **Int** 10 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+0)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Captain Amba Bandia Level 2 Skirmisher (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 125

HP 37; **Bloodied** 18 **Initiative** +9
AC 16, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12 **Perception** +1
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊗ **Rapier** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The captain adjusts the fine Crisillyiri lace of her cuffs, then nods politely as she draws her rapier with a flourish.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8+6 damage.

✓ **Whip** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
Brushing her massive assortment of hair curls and brooches, the captain unfurls a whip and cracks it toward you.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8+6 damage, and Amba's allies gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls against the target until the end of Amba's next turn.

✓ **Whip Snare** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
The elaborately coifed captain snags you with her whip and flashes you a smirk.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +5 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d8+6 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 12). The target can move closer to Amba, but not farther away. The whip can be attacked and has Amba's defenses. Any hit destroys the whip. (Amba has two whips.)

Minor Actions

▸ **Swashbuckling Swing** ✦ At-Will
The captain lashes her whip around a yard and swings across the battle.
Special: Amba must have a whip and be on a ship.
Effect: Amba flies 4 squares, but cannot increase in elevation by more than 1 square.

Skills Nature +7
Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 18 (+5) **Wis** 10 (+1)
Con 13 (+2) **Int** 12 (+2) **Cha** 16 (+4)
Alignment Unaligned
Languages Common, Elven, Primordial

Piranha Throng Level 2 Controller
Medium natural beast (swarm) XP 125

HP 28; **Bloodied** 14 Initiative +7
AC 14, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12 Perception +1
Speed 0, swim 6
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks
Vulnerable 10 against close and area attacks

Traits

☼ **Churn the Water** ✦ Aura 1
It's said a school of swarming piranha can chew a full cow down to bare bones within minutes. The roil of their feeding frenzy makes it nearly possible to swim to safety.
Any creature that starts its turn within the aura takes 5 damage. The aura is difficult terrain for creatures other than the throng, and Athletics checks to swim in the aura take a –5 penalty.

Str 1 (–4) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+1)
Con 10 (+1) **Int** 1 (–4) **Cha** 4 (–2)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Treasure.

If any PC uses a wand as an implement, he is drawn to one wand amid the stash, an ancient *wand of Egal the Shimmering*. The RHC confiscates all the wands, but the wand mysteriously appears in his possession at the start of each day.

Make Them an Offer

Social. Real-Time. Level 8.

Morgan Cippiano, head of the Family's operations in Flint, wants to have coffee with the party.

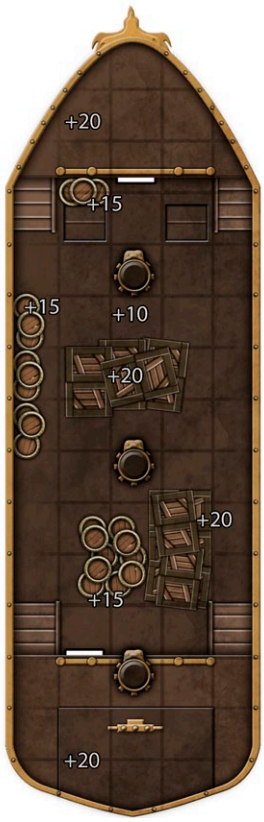
The party can get to this encounter several ways. If they lose a fight to Family allies, they might wake up in an unfamiliar room, windowless but pleasantly appointed with a bed for each PC, its door locked. Their wounds have been dressed, fashionable clothes in their sizes will have been laid out by each of their beds. A young boy with a Crisillyiri accent will come by shortly, inviting them to breakfast.

Or if the party's successful, a day after thwarting the smuggling, finely-handwritten letters arrive for them at the RHC headquarters, each with a variant arcane lock on its wax seal so only the named person can open the letter. The missive invites them to come to a coffee shop in Stray River on the corner of Yearling Street and Healers Street, near where a subrail station is being built.

The writer, who signs "Morgan Cippiano," says he takes breakfast and lunch there, and he'll wait at their convenience for the next three days. He says he wishes to discuss the legal case against his "family members," and says he might be able to help them in their greater investigation.

If the party doesn't come for three days, Morgan finds a way to arrange that they share a route with him for a few minutes, perhaps a stroll, a carriage, or a ferry. He has plenty of Family members along the way as a precaution.

Li Grifoni Grinyande



Silvo



Coffee and Cakes.

When the party arrives, Morgan casually gestures to the proprietor, who tells his daughters in Crisillyiri to bring out comestibles. Sitting at a table, already partway into a cup of black but intensely sweetened coffee, Morgan cranes his head to get a view of the PCs' shoes. He makes a sincere effort to niceties, with a particular emphasis on fashion and clothing, then moves to business after some light fare is brought out.

Morgan mentions that he has friends all over the city, and when the party managed to get involved in that smuggling business, he got interested. He had his friends ask around, and he learned just how busy the party is. He says he admires their diligence—it's a trait that's very handy for both government and private entrepreneurs like himself. Now he wants to know if they might have more in common, and he'd like to begin their relationship by offering them some help.

Inform the party that they have gained a Prestige rating of 2 with The Family. (It's actually a Prestige rating with The Clergy, since these criminals are just a distant arm of their interests, but that will be revealed later.)

Morgan wants to make a deal to get his men out of trouble—the bravuras in particular. Deorn isn't family, not really, and Morgan couldn't care less about any unscrupulous sailors, though he might make an effort for the Waryeyes because he has a soft spot for married couples. What he offers depends on where the PCs stand.

You as DM can use this situation as a way to nudge the party if they're lost—perhaps Morgan's men can point the party to Wolfgang's lair, or arrange passage through the Cloudwood to Nevard's henge. More likely, though, the party will meet Morgan late in the adventure, in which case he can offer to lure the dragonborn arsonists to a trap so the party can arrest them, or his men can "encourage" Cillian Creed's carriage driver to come forward to the PCs.

While it's perfectly possible for the party to solve this entire adventure without Morgan's help, you want them to feel like they got a massive break by compromising just a little.

Aftermath.

The party might rebuff Morgan, but he's a hard man to upset. If the party or any individual PC is interested in forging a stronger relationship with the criminal elite of Flint, Morgan is too busy to spend much time personally with the party, but he can get them in touch with an underling—a talented cobbler named **Dozy Miccini**. With Family help the party will have an easier time fencing illicit goods and hiding their ill-gotten wealth from investigations.

You can also deploy Morgan and the Family later in the adventure if you want to make an impression of how civic-minded these guys are. If the party loses track of any key bad guys, from one of the dragonborn to Macbannin himself, in the wrap-up of the adventure the person in question is delivered to the RHC headquarters along with a fancy coffee press and finely ground coffee beans.



Morgan Cippiano, going on forty and stylishly bald, conducts Family business from the nondescript coffee shop in an immigrant-heavy neighborhood, occasionally going outside to encourage the kids playing street sports. Morgan came over from Crisillyir a few years ago with instructions to foster Family interests by recruiting Crisillyiri immigrants and any local Risuri followers of the Clergy who had a similar ideology.

A devout Clericist (follower of the Clergy), Morgan strives to keep a moral code while running a branch of a powerful criminal organization. He hopes some day to be seen as a father figure to his community, but for now he's willing to smash a few heads and order a few throats slit in order to clear out the competition.

Though gruff-voiced and cocky, Morgan has an unusual fascination with fashion. He rejects trends, but has a good eye for classical styles that people of any culture can appreciate. He considers coffee quite fashionable, and is trying to convince more of his family back in Crisillyir to start drinking it so he can be a business contact.

THREAD TWO: Gale

This chapter details what the PCs can discover as they investigate Nilasa's lodgings at Heward Sechim's alkahest factory and her connection to the fey terrorist known as Gale.

Heward's Alkahest Factory

Social. Real-Time. Level 2.

The PCs question the owner of a factory where Nilasa lived and worked.

By searching Nilasa's body or investigating her associates, the party should learn about Sechim's Alkahest & Etchings, a factory in Parity Lake that produces powerful acid. (Alkahest is sometimes referred to as "universal solvent," but this name is just an exaggeration.) After nearly landing in prison five years ago, Nilasa tried to reform and found work at the factory just as it was starting up. Ever since she has been a sort of mascot for the workers; her sense of humor made it much easier to cope with the stress of constantly being in danger of getting dissolved.

Factory Details.

A few hundred employees work in shifts throughout the day; most live in tenements in Parity Lake, with a few trekking down from slums in The Nettles. Like most buildings on its street, the factory is 40 feet tall, on a lot 50 feet wide, by 80 feet long, with streetside doors for workers on the front and a small pier facing the lake itself at the back. There are no windows below the third floor.

The wide open factory floor has catwalks and chain pulleys twenty feet up. Raw materials enter from the pier, and different teams handle the purifying and refining procedures. Then specialists combine reagents to create acids and corrosive pastes of various strengths. One section of the factory floor is separate with a low wall; Heward is currently experimenting in this room, trying to create a magic urn that you can simply pour raw materials into, wait, and let it create acid, without labor-intensive oversight.

The second floor is 30 feet up, consisting of a common lounge area, Heward's personal residence, storage rooms, and a room with a few cots for workers who are pulling double shifts and want a nap. (Few factories have such a luxury.)

Heward lives and works at the factory, so he should be there whenever the party comes by, either tinkering in his personal laboratory, overseeing on the factory floor, or in his upstairs residence.

The Neighborhood.

As the PCs arrive, it's obvious that something's different with Heward's factory. This whole section of lake-side factories all contribute to Risuri military and naval resources, but Nevard's factory is the only one not being protested.

The factory to its left, which uses various drills and bores to finely machine cannons, guns, and steamworks, is surrounded by a small mob of women singing traditional Risuri folk songs. Thick metal chains are wrapped around the double doors leading into the bore factory, and the entrance is guarded by burly men that the party might (Streetwise DC 13) recognize as off-duty police officers.

An identical scene fronts the factory to the right, which employs hundreds of people to manually sift firedust into different grains and package it into charges with bullets for firearms. And across the street three smaller factories all have comparable crowds. The women are the wives, mothers, and daughters of factory workers, and their protest is the second stage of a months-long conflict with the factory owners.

Previously small groups of dockers had come to argue for better working conditions for the workers. Momentum had built and there was talk of having a worker walk-out. The owners retaliated by locking their factories in the middle of a shift, and they refused to let anyone leave unless they produced their quota, and even then only if a new worker came in to replace them. Also, they're not paying any workers until the protests end. Now the women are protesting to try to get their loved ones free. Similar protests dot the district, since many factory owners coordinated their actions.

Heward posts a trio of guards outside the front door to keep the adjacent factories from trying to sabotage the alkahest factory.

Breaking the Bad News.

When the party tells Heward about Nilasa's death, he grimaces, then nods and says his uncle warned him about this. He explains that his uncle, a skyseer, is getting on in years and doesn't have many visions anymore, but just a week ago he told him that "an adopted daughter will blindly ride the wind to her demise."

Heward says he knows Nilasa had been trying for years to befriend Gale and the fey terrorists. He blames himself, because she listened to him a bit too much when he would talk about how horribly other factory owners treated their workers. Heward just wanted to instill a sense of pride and allegiance in his people, but he thinks Nilasa wanted to punish harsher owners. He says he cared for her too much to try reporting her.

Nilasa's Room.

Heward will gladly let the PCs check out Nilasa's small room upstairs, but there's not much to find: just some clothes, incidental money, and a lesson book for her to learn Elvish.

A Favor.

Heward makes a point to say that he understands both sides of the debate about Risur's tradition versus its future. He's been on both sides, gotten into his fair share of trouble both times. He's not the kind of person who can fight, because he doesn't think either side is wrong.

He asks the party if they can get in touch with his uncle Nevard. He says that Nevard has the respect of radicals like Gale but isn't violent and could arrange a peaceful meeting between Gale and the authorities. Heward hopes that could prevent any other misguided kids from getting themselves killed. Any PC with the Skyseer heroic theme knows a great deal about Nevard's life and history, and any PC trained in Arcana or Nature at least recognizes his name as that of a highly respected Skyseer.

He can give the party directions through the rough roads and trails in Cloudwood to the henge where Nevard and his followers live. He hopes the party hurries, though, because Nevard's an old man, and if he dies one of the best chances for reconciliation dies with him.

Other Concerns.

In the course of the discussion, Heward mentions that he's got a lot on his plate already. There are the protests on either side, the government pushing for him to lower his price so they can get the arcane etchings they need for the next ship like the *Coaltongue*, and then some strange men who he's afraid will damage his factory.

The men, who smelled odd, sort of like burnt engine grease, wanted to buy a few cases of alkahest, but insisted he not report the sale. Since he sells to the government and his product is hazardous, he has to account for all his materials; so he refused. The men got angry, made some heavy allusions to the fires that have been striking around the district, and then left, saying they'd be back. The second time, two different men came. Heward stalled, said he needed time to arrange something, then had the men followed. They went to a seedy part of the district, away from the lake and nearer to the Nettles, but that's as far as they could be tracked.

Unbeknownst to Heward, these were agents of crime boss Lorcan Kell, who is trying to discreetly assemble the many various components needed to construct the colossus in the Bleak Gate. Intensely strong acid is needed to etch runes into the adamantine skin of the titan, and since Heward isn't cooperating Lorcan is making plans to have the dragonborn arsonist brothers set fire to the factory so one of his affiliates can buy it cheaply.

Want to Buy Some Acid?

Heward is willing to sell many types of acid and alchemicals, and is willing to fill custom orders or offer some basic vials of acid as gifts if the party can get him some answers to what led Nilasa to be killed.



Using wealth he received from his prestigious skyseer uncle Nevard, Heward Sechim spent the past two decades developing a reputation as a crafter of pure and potent acids, a critical component for devices that combine magic and technology. Five years ago he was challenged by his uncle to open a large factory that would treat its workers with respect; most such operations are wretched and dangerous.

One of his first hires was Nilasa, whose upbeat personality had a positive effect on the rest of the workers. Heward thinks of her as a daughter, and he's grown worried of her flirtations with terrorist activities. He lets her sleep in one of the top floor storage rooms of the factory.

Heward has to rein in his natural exuberance for experimentation in order to keep his promise to his uncle. His main business just mass produces liquid acids and corrosive glazes, and he keeps separate his arcanotechnical work-room separate from the main floor, to cut down on the chance of a kid getting incinerated in an incomplete enchanted forge. Indeed, he tends to only have child workers handle cleaning and maintenance, and not work with actual acid. A few times each week, Heward takes the hardest workers out for drinks at the Thinking Man's Tavern, and he makes a point of keeping the windows open to let out noxious fumes. By Flint standards, the factory is an almost pleasant workplace.

Fog of War

Action. Tactical. Level 5.

En route to meet with skyseer Nevard, the party finds a carriage imperiled by Cloudwood brigands.

In the steep, tangled terrain of the Cloudwood only a few roads are well-maintained enough for carriages to travel, and most traffic is on foot or horseback. Four miles from Parity Lake, Nevard's henge lies near the end of one of the roads, as does a community of musicians who act as the main contact this region has with outsiders. Bands of brigands roam the forest, and they get their supplies from this outpost in exchange for providing protection.

As the PCs near Nevard's henge, they're nearly two thousand feet above sea level, and the humid, sweltering air is thick with low clouds that cut visibility to as short as a few feet at times. The road ascends on switchbacks toward a forested plateau, and when the PCs reach this area they hear the panicked neigh of a horse galloping toward them. The animal streaks past, an arrow in its shoulder and a snapped carriage harness trailing behind it. Then they hear a woman's muffled cries and intermittent sounds of gunshots and bowfire.

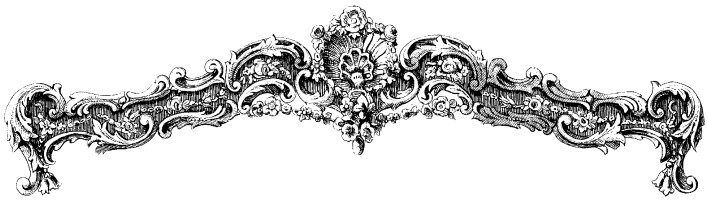
It takes a few rounds to get within view of the unfolding battle. A carriage leans precariously at the corner of a switchback, its wheels stuck in undergrowth. The door to the carriage hangs open and three men huddle near it, reloading poorly-made pistols and looking around as if seeking enemies. A fourth man, the driver, sits dead atop the carriage with an arrow in his chest. Just as the party arrives, an arrow streaks in from the south hill and kills one of the men, and the other two scramble to the opposite side of the carriage. The woman's screams continue from within the carriage, which seems to slowly be sliding toward a 30-foot plunge.

At first glance, it appears that a group of travelers have been set upon by Cloudwood brigands. The situation's a bit more complex, though. The carriage men are members of Lorcan Kell's thieves' guild. For the past several months the Family has been making in-roads in the city by playing different criminal groups against each other, and in this situation the Family had convinced a gang of Kell's thieves that they deserve a cut of the banditry going on in the Cloudwood. The dispute got out of control, and members of Kell's gang decided to kidnap **Morena**, the lover of the brigands' leader, **Renard Woodsman**.

After the kidnapping, Renard and his fastest men intercepted the carriage and managed to pin down the kidnappers. More of his men are on their way, and they'll all assume the PCs, being outsiders, are hostile. Renard's attention is so closely focused on killing the kidnappers that he's unaware that Morena's carriage is about to fall and kill her.

List of Adversaries.

- Renard Woodsman
- 4 Cloudwood brigands
- Cloudwood falconer
- 2 Kell-Guild pistoleers
- 4 hummingbird huntswarms



Renard Woodsman Level 3 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 150

HP 38; **Bloodied** 19 **Initiative** +3
AC 15, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 15 **Perception** +8
Speed 6, climb 4

Traits

▸ **Aeriad Bracers**
If Renard falls, his magic bracers let him shift 1 square for every 10 ft. he falls.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Longbow** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The archer's bow creaks as he draws back and aims for you.
Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10+5 damage.

⊘ **Cloudwood Axe** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
You don't have time to admire the folk carvings on his axe's haft as he chops for your face.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8+6 damage, and Renard pushes the target 1 square.

▸ **Show Your Face, So I Can Put an Arrow There** ✦ At-Will
The archer grimaces and holds an arrow taut, waiting for a clear shot.
Effect: Renard chooses a creature he doesn't have line of sight to. The next time he has line of sight to that creature before the start of his next turn, he uses *longbow* and can ignore normal cover and concealment against his chosen target.

Skills Athletics +7, Intimidate +8, Nature +7, Perception +8, Stealth +8
Str 13 (+2) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 12 (+2) **Cha** 14 (+3)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Cloudwood Brigand Level 1 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 100

HP 30; **Bloodied** 15 **Initiative** +4
AC 17, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 10 **Perception** +5
Speed 6, climb 4

Standard Actions

⊘ **Cloudwood Axe** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
All these brigands have fine hand-carved axes. Sharp-looking, too.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6+1 damage.

▸ **Twin Axes** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
These axes look like a matched set.
Effect: The brigand uses *Cloudwood axe* twice.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Intercepting Lunge** ✦ At-Will
As you make a move for the brigand's ally he leaps in your way and swings his axe.
Trigger: A creature within 3 squares of the brigand makes a melee or close attack that doesn't target the brigand.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The brigand moves his speed to a space adjacent to both the triggering enemy and its target, then uses *Cloudwood axe* against the triggering enemy.

Str 14 (+2) **Dex** 15 (+2) **Wis** 10 (+0)
Con 14 (+2) **Int** 10 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+0)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Cloudwood Falconer Level 3 Controller (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 150

HP 46; **Bloodied** 23 **Initiative** +2
AC 15, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 15 **Perception** +3
Speed 6, climb 4

Standard Actions

⊘ **Bow Smash** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10+4 damage.
Effect: The first time the falconer uses this power, his bow cracks slightly. The second time he uses it, it breaks and can only be used for melee attacks, not ranged attacks.

⟋ **Gale Arrow** (weapon, thunder) ✦ At-Will
Thunder rumbles as the druid looses an arrow.
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +6 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d10+4 thunder damage and the falconer slides the target 1 square.
Effect: The falconer pushes each creature adjacent to him 1 square.

⟋ **Blood Arrow** (weapon) ✦ Encounter
A red-fletched arrow twists in the air and flies for your heart.
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d10+4 damage and the target takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

✲ **Earth Surge** ✦ Encounter
The stone beneath you comes alive and heaves you away.
Attack: Area Burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +7 vs. Fort
Hit: 2d6+5 damage and the target is knocked prone and slid to the nearest square outside the burst.
Miss: Half damage.

Minor Actions

▸ **Cloudburst** ✦ At-Will
The falconer waves an irritated hand at a fog bank, and the cloud moves.
Effect: The falconer chooses a cloud bank he can see, and slides it 3 squares.

Skills Athletics +7, Nature +5, Stealth +7
Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 12 (+2) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 8 (+0) **Cha** 8 (+0)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Kell-Guild Pistoleer Level 1 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 100

HP 23; **Bloodied** 11 **Initiative** +0
AC 13, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 13 **Perception** +0
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊘ **Pistol Whip** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8+4 damage.

⊘ **Pistol Shot** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8+4 damage, or 1d8+12 on a crit.
Special: Load standard.

Minor Actions

▸ **Kidnap** ✦ At-Will
The pistoleer grabs you and uses you as a human shield.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +4 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target is grabbed (Escape DC 12). Until the target escapes, the pistoleer can use the target as cover.

Str 11 (+0) **Dex** 10 (+0) **Wis** 10 (+0)
Con 11 (+0) **Int** 10 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+0)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Hummingbird Huntswarm	Level 1 Minion Skirmisher
Small fey beast (swarm)	XP 25
HP 1 (see *minion swarm*)	**Initiative** +4
AC 17, **Fortitude** 10, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 10	**Perception** –1
Speed 0, fly 6	

Traits

▶ **Minion Swarm**

A ranged or melee attack that does less than 11 damage to the hummingbird huntswarm does not destroy the swarm. Instead, it becomes bloodied, and any further damage, even from a miss, destroys it. Area and close attacks that hit the swarm, or that deal damage on a miss, destroy the swarm.

Standard Actions

▶ **Humming Streak** ✦ At-Will

A tiny horde of black and ruby hummingbirds streak by and graze you with jagged beaks.

Effect: The huntswarm flies its speed and makes the following attack during the movement. This movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks from it target.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC

Hit: 5 damage. If the target is bloodied or taking untyped ongoing damage, the huntswarm enters the target's square and frenzies. While frenzying, it can take no actions but deals 5 damage to the target on its turn. The frenzied swarm stays in the target's square until it is destroyed or subjected to forced movement.

Str	1 (–5)	**Dex**	18 (+4)	**Wis**	8 (–1)
Con	10 (+0)	**Int**	2 (–4)	**Cha**	6 (–2)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —

Tactics.

Renard and one Cloudwood brigand are perched on the south rise, content to wait for reinforcements to arrive. On the northeast rise a Cloudwood falconer has just summoned four swarms of ruby-red blood-drinking hummingbirds (monsters from the Dreaming are beautiful and weird), and another brigand guards the man's flank as he sends forth his minions to drive the kidnappers from cover.

Another two Cloudwood brigands are approaching from the north, and will reach the map on the start of the 3rd round. They move around the northwest rise in a bid to drive the two surviving kidnappers from cover. The kidnappers spot the PCs and call out for help, but stay in the cover of the wagon, only occasionally popping out to shoot at enemies. Morena is tightly tied up on the floor of the wagon, but she has managed to get her gag loose and cries out in fear.

Development.

At the start of the 2nd, 5th, and 8th round of combat the wagon slides 1 square west. On the 8th turn this movement takes it over the edge, and it plummets 30 feet, dealing 3d10 damage to anyone inside. This mortally wounds Morena, but magical healing or a Heal check (DC 22, multiple attempts possible) can save her if administered within 3 rounds.

Keep two of the four Cloudwood brigands off the map until the start of the 3rd round. Unless interrupted, the pair spend rounds 3 and 4 circling around the northwest rise; they plan to reach the kidnappers on their turn in the 5th round.



Only after the kidnappers are killed or subdued will Renard listen to the PCs. At that point, it might be possible (Diplomacy DC 22) to get him to stop shooting and call off his men to talk. This becomes much easier (DC 15) if the PCs point out that there's a woman in the carriage in mortal peril and that they can help save her.

Terrain.

The steep granite cliffs of this area have plenty of small trees growing out of them, and can be climbed with an Athletics check (DC 15).

The carriage is 2 squares by 2 squares, and it starts 1 square from the edge of the 30-ft. high cliff at the corner of the switchback. It only falls off the cliff if all its squares are over the edge. As a standard action, a character can slide the carriage 1 square (Strength DC 20) or tip it over (Strength DC 22) or sabotage all four of its wheels (Thievery DC 22) so it stops rolling toward the edge. If a creature tries to move or "trip" the carriage with an attack, treat it as having AC, Fortitude, and Reflex of 25. Morena is much easier to move.

At the start of the encounter, place three small cloud banks on the map. Each cloud bank is 5 squares across, and creatures inside have concealment from adjacent enemies, or total concealment from non-adjacent enemies. Each round the cloud banks drift 2 squares to the southeast. If one leaves the edge of the map, place a new one somewhere on the opposite side of the map. Perhaps use a token to mark the center of these clouds, and move them each round. A thunder attack used inside a cloud bank destroys it.

Aftermath.

Renard and his men are criminals—they've robbed dozens and killed more than a few in the past year—but they're not specifically hostile to the party. Indeed, killing them will earn the enmity of dozens of other brigands in these woods, and might sabotage efforts to speak with Nevard and Gale.

If the party saves Morena, Renard is willing to escort them to Nevard. If Morena dies, Renard's men have to hold him back from attacking whichever PC he thinks is most to blame. He orders them to leave the forest or suffer his ire, and then he recovers her body and departs. He can be convinced (Diplomacy DC 15) to let the party through to talk to Nevard, and he'll automatically allow in a party with a Skyseer.

In either case, though, Renard wants to kill the kidnappers, and persuading him not to (Diplomacy or Intimidate DC 15) becomes much harder (DC 22) if Morena is dead. If the party can't get him to back down, he'll fight them if necessary for the right to kill those who took his love. If the party fails to get his permission to continue on, they'll need to either make Stealth and Nature checks (DC 10), or attract the attention of a patrol of eight brigands.

Treasure.

If the party arrests Renard, they can recover his *aeriad bracers*.



For decades Nevard was one of the most prescient and respected skyseers in Risur. Then with the rise of industry and the fading power of the skyseer's visions, his star waned, and he withdrew into the Cloudwood east of Flint to focus on keeping his order alive. Now nearing one hundred and twenty years old, Nevard cannot see the path forward—for the world or for his order.

The old man walks feebly and leans on a plain staff which carries the banner of his family line. His deep voice warbles frailly, but somehow when he speaks the wind hushes so everyone nearby can hear him. He possesses no overt magical power, certainly nothing of use in a fight, but the land and sky respect him and make his passage easy.

He has foreseen that he'll die within the year, but he is conserving his strength, hoping to make one last journey, before he dies, to the peak of Cauldron Hill.

Nevard's Henge

Social. Real-Time. Level 2.

The party seeks an elderly prophet's aid to arrange contact with the fey terrorist Gale.

Uphill from the nearest cluster of homes, a ring of stone plinths stand in a grassy clearing. Normally empty during the day, now a tent sits at the edge of the clearing, and a half dozen caretakers sit outside, waiting for their leader to pass.

Nevard's closest family and followers have brought the old man to live out what they expect will be his dying days near the henge where for most of his life he would watch the stars every night. No single ailment is killing him; his heart is weak, his kidneys failing, his bones brittle, his blood thin. But he has more strength than he lets on, having foreseen he would need to test himself one last time before he dies.

Occasionally Nevard receives visitors who wish to pay their respects, and often his younger skyseer peers come to ask his advice for keeping their order alive. The summer nights are warm enough to sit out and stargaze, but the mountains here are low, and thick clouds, streaked with soot blown out from Flint's factories, obscure accurate views of the night sky. Still, each night Nevard invites his guests to sit with him, hoping to see something of the future.

Nevard's tenders are wary of the PCs unless they come with Renard's recommendation, or include a character with the Skyseer theme. Otherwise they are stopped at the edge of the clearing. The party might persuade (Diplomacy DC 20) the guards that Nevard would want to see them; alternately they might offer medical service (Heal DC 13), or show familiarity enough with skyseer traditions (Nature DC 13) to earn entry.

Failing that, Nevard himself is always interested in talking, and while his tenders try to keep visitors away, if the party makes a commotion Nevard will hear them and invite them into his tent.

A Dying Man's Wish.

Inside the tent, the light from smoldering incense sticks is dim, to spare the old man's eyes. A faint stench of withering cloys the air, not quite masked by fragrant scents of cinnamon and cloves.

Nevard knows that Gale has been causing mayhem in Flint. Indeed, she has come to him several times asking his guidance. She hasn't listened to him much, which makes him chuckle. But the last time she visited she said she had followed his advice and had found a mutual threat that even the people of Flint would take seriously.

Nevard might not agree with Gale's tactics, but he likes her because she's one of the few beautiful women who'll give an old man like him more than polite conversation, and she always is accompanied by the sweet music of birds. He hopes she'll be able to get people to listen to her warnings, and he would like if the party could help her, but he is

wary of betraying her trust. He says he can easily arrange for Gale to meet with them—she owes him that much—but he'll only do it if the party can grant him his dying wish.

He wants to go to the peak of Cauldron Hill, the highest point in the city, with the clearest skies and the strongest font of magical power. There he thinks he might be able to pierce the strange veil that seems to have fallen over the vision of the skyseers. He wants to find a path that can let people like Gale and those pushing for industry walk together in harmony.

But Cauldron Hill is firstly restricted, and only Reed Macbannin, the mayor of the Nettles district and a mage skilled in the defense against the dark arts, can grant anyone access. Secondly, the reason it's restricted is because it is probably the most dangerous and cursed place in the country, so even if Nevard can go there, he'll need armed protectors.

Nevard wants the PCs to arrange for he and they to climb to the peak of Cauldron Hill and spend an evening. It's not unprecedented; Macbannin and some of his apprentices go there to keep eyes out for threats before they get out of hand, and occasionally the military trains elite warriors atop the mountain. With the right wards from Macbannin, it could even be safe.

The PCs can easily arrange an appointment to meet with Macbannin, if they're willing to help Nevard.

A Witch's Brew.

One of Nevard's allies—an orc shaman from Ber named **Pazamu**—possesses a scroll of a forbidden ritual, Bond of Forced Faith, originally used by the witches of Cauldron Hill to make themselves nigh invincible in battle. It binds the life forces of one or more people to the ritual's target, so that one person can share the health and vigor of the others.

If the PCs approve, the day of the climb Pazamu will perform the ritual. Each willing PC sheds a drop of blood into a cup of milk, and Nevard drinks. Then, for the next 24 hours, Nevard will be able to climb and move with the health of a normal adult person, and damage that would be dealt to him is instead divided evenly (rounded down, minimum 1 apiece) among those bonded to him. Those who are bonded must be within 150 ft. of Nevard for the effect to function.

The ritual is written on a scroll of human flesh with invisible ink made from the blood of an infant sacrifice and the milk of its also-sacrificed mother. Neither Pazamu nor Nevard mention these unpleasant details, but a PC observing the ritual might (Arcana DC 20) recognize the abhorrent history of the magic. The scroll is a centuries-old relic, and will be consumed with the casting; Nevard prefers it be used for good rather than the horrors it was originally intended for.

Refusal.

If the PCs decline, Nevard eventually manages to arrange for Gale and some of her allies to sneak him to the top of Cauldron Hill. He still uses the Bond of Forced Faith ritual, and without the PCs to draw Macbannin's attention, he is not set upon by Cillian Creed's sabotage. He schedules his rally to reveal his vision, as detailed in Thread Four: The Conspiracy.

Nestled Atop the Nettles

Social. Real-Time. Level 7.

Nettles district mayor Reed Macbannin holds the key to fulfilling Nevard's wishes.

The one quality road in The Nettles curves around Cauldron Hill, heading up to the manor of Mayor Reed Macbannin, located a thousand feet up the twenty-three hundred foot high mountain. Here the gentle slope of the lower mountain turns to a steeper and rockier rise of stone, making Macbannin's rich manor the gatekeeper between the slum homes of thousands and the cursed mountaintop.

The compound's high iron fence surrounds a manor house, servant houses, a stable and a track for horses, a carriage house, a small farmhouse with pigs and goats, a red brick gardener's building, and overall beautiful landscaping with myriad flowers. Macbannin employs fifty regular staff, and all of them have received at least rudimentary training to understand the dangers of the eldritch magic further up the mountain.

While it's possible to bypass the manor and attempt a more perilous climb, stories of people coming back down changed and evil are enough to keep most fools from trying. Also, throughout the day Macbannin's guards patrol a ring around the mountain with hunting dogs to check for signs of people who have snuck through.

Secrets and Sorcery.

Any person who sits as mayor of The Nettles must have the approval of the previous mayor and the city governor. He is not elected to his position. A lattice of wards, assembled over centuries, protects the rest of the city from the dangers of old witchcraft, and whoever oversees these wards must be skilled in defensive magic and be trusted not to be corrupted by undead spirits of the witches who once ruled there.

Macbannin is not corrupted, simply deceived. He believes his actions are sanctioned by the king, and so he acts with patriotic zeal to protect the king's secrets. By the time the PCs come to him, he has already learned from Cillian Creed about the theft of documents from the Danoran consulate, and that the PCs are investigating the crime. Knowing their reputation after the events in Adventure One, *Island at the Axis of the World*, Macbannin can't take the chance that the PCs will simply fail to solve the mystery.

Macbannin sees their coming to his own doorstep as a great fortune. He sees a chance to kill the party without suspicion, thus ending the investigation. While he laments having to kill loyal subjects of the king, he believes he acts for the greater good.

The Courier.

When word of the consulate theft reached Governor Roland Stanfield, head of the Colossus Cell in Flint, he contacted the leader of the Obscurati, Nicodemus the Gnostic. Governor Stanfield has used *needlewire*, a magic serum, to transfer Nicodemus's consciousness remotely into a middle-aged human vagrant. A quick shave and bath later, Nicodemus assumed the role of a simple courier named **Doro**, ferrying messages between Reed Macbannin on Cauldron Hill and Leone Quital *beneath* Cauldron Hill in the Bleak Gate.

Nicodemus uses a secret system of arches along the Stanfield Canal to pass between the two worlds, and in the past few days he's gotten on top of the threat to their project's secrecy. Even Macbannin and Quital don't realize he's anything more than a trusted courier of Governor Stanfield, and indeed in a matter of hours Nicodemus plans to kill this body and return to the Obscurati palace on the island of Mutravir in Crisillyir.

When the PCs arrive to speak with Macbannin, Cillian Creed—in his role as the manor's butler—asks the party to take a seat in the garden in front of the house. A few minutes later Nicodemus finishes delivering a message to Macbannin about how Quital is sending over some of his soldiers to help recover the missing Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen. (If this event—see A Weight of Crumbling Stone, page 190—has already occurred, the meeting instead is to discuss how to resolve the doctor, and whether to recruit him or execute him.)

Creed goes to inform Macbannin of the party's arrival, and Nicodemus stops in the garden for a moment. He lights a cigarette—known as *leaf of Nicodemus*—and nods to the party. His gaze is drawn to the slums stretching out across the nearby hillsides, and he shakes his head as he exhales a huff of smoke.

"Can you imagine what it's like to live down there?" he asks, almost rhetorically. "Chaos, that's what it is. The mayor," he nods his head back toward the house, "he could come up with the most brilliant plan to help those people. He could get all the money in the city's coffers. He could do everything right, but he's just one man. Not a cog in a machine, but a pebble on a beach. Chaos."

He takes another draw on the cigarette, then smiles. "It's beautiful, what people can create out of chaos. But I'd gladly give it up to stop their suffering."

At that point a groom comes up, guiding Nicodemus's horse. If any PC makes an effort to engage him in a discussion of morals or ideology, the mastermind can spare a few minutes, long enough to finish his cigarette. Soon Cillian Creed comes to the garden to say the mayor is ready to meet them, and Nicodemus mounts up, lights another cigarette, and departs.

The Meeting.

Macbannin invites the party into his office, its rear window facing a farmhouse and pigpen, and beyond that the higher slope of Cauldron Hill. As the party says their piece, the butler serves whatever the PCs desire from the mayor's supplies of tea, wine, coffee, and sweets. Macbannin listens to their request with a grim expression, ponders the possibilities, then grins and says that he'll be glad to help.

He speaks with a convincing enthusiasm about how he hopes Nevard is actually able to avert further attacks by Gale, and that he thinks it will help his district if people know that he helped make it happen. If any of the PCs seem particularly interested in the history of Cauldron Hill and in defense against dark magic, he intimates that after this is all over, he'd be interested in taking the PC under his wing to teach them more; he says he expects the PC will go far, and he wants to leave a good legacy through his students.

Unless the PCs go to extra lengths to observe Macbannin in other situations, they shouldn't get any hint that he's up to anything nefarious. He's quite experienced at telling these lies, so seeing through them is wildly unlikely. If the party gets a vibe from him that he's not being completely sincere, it's easy for them to chalk it up to him just trying to find an angle that will benefit his public standing.

Defense Against the Dark Arts.

Macbannin is willing to give the PCs one night on the mountain, and he insists that they come through his manor on the way up and the way down. They should ascend during the day and make camp at the peak before nightfall.

He will provide them each with a slightly rusted iron amulet, which they must wear to protect from possession by evil spirits. He'll also give them four kegs of goat's blood, which they must use to paint a ring of red around wherever they make camp. Spirits are distracted by blood, and the color red in general. They will likely smell the party, but when they spot the blood they'll believe they've found the trail of a wounded animal, after which they'll mindlessly walk in circles since they'll never find the end of the ring.

It's not flawless. If the PCs don't stay out of sight, the denizens of the Hill will pay more heed to a moving creature than a trail of blood. Also, while a dim fire will be useful because of the supernatural chill on the mountaintop, he suggests the party surround the fire with stones to hide its light.

The weather should be clear for the next few days, so they don't have to worry about rain washing the blood away, but they should be careful not to mess up the ring themselves.

These recommendations are all legitimately useful. Macbannin plans to arrange the party's deaths, but he doesn't want it to be obvious that he was tricking them if somehow they survive.

He adds that on the way down, the party should come back through his manor. He'll have a purification ritual prepared so he can clear away any dark energy that might be clinging to them. Macbannin plans this as a fallback way to kill the PCs, but events will conspire to keep him from following through on that plan.

Amulet Mechanics.

The amulets have no real mechanical effect, and they simply keep the PCs from being possessed by the barrage of supernatural energy on the mountaintop. They're no use against domination or other attacks from the monsters that await them. Also, their enchantment only works in conjunction with the lattice of wards on the hill, and so they're useless elsewhere.

If any PC takes off his amulet at night atop the mountain, he is afflicted with the Curse of Cauldron Hill.

Curse of Cauldron Hill — Level 5 Affliction

Stage 0: The PC recovers from the curse.

Stage 1: *Initial Effect:* If the PC is at less than full health, he treats his allies as enemies for the purpose of making opportunity attacks. While within 1 mile of the Cauldron Hill, he must make opportunity attacks against any creature, except those also afflicted with the curse.

Stage 2: In addition to the initial effect, the PC gains darkvision. He cannot take rests except during the day. If he tries to rest at night he loses consciousness and sleepwalks for 5 minutes, during which his body is controlled by a malevolent spirit. If the spirit takes any hostile action, the PC wakes up.

Stage 3: *Final State:* In addition to the previous effect, at night if the PC tries to rest he becomes fully controlled by the malevolent spirit until sunrise. It quickly begins to rampage, seeking to spill as much blood as possible, and the PC does not wake during these actions. However, it cannot move more than 3 miles from Cauldron Hill, and must return as quickly as possible if it is already farther away.

Check: At the end of each extended rest, the target makes a Wisdom check if it is at stage 1 or 2.

13 or lower: The stage of the disease increases by one.

14–19: No Change

20 or higher: The stage of the disease decreases by one.

Night on Bald Mountain

Puzzle. Montage. Level 3.

The perils of Cauldron Hill will emerge at sundown, but will the party's wards be sufficient?

When the PCs ascend Cauldron Hill with Nevard, Mayor Macbannin offers them amulets of protection and kegs of goat's blood, then sends them on their way. The RHC can provide climbing kits, and in general the ascent is not particularly challenging. After an hour or two of climbing, the PCs reach the summit, a mix of rocky patches and dense treecover, with only scattered grasses and undergrowth.

The view is majestic, but from this height it's easy to see how thick the smog is over Parity Lake. A gray smear covers most of that district, while the upscale Central district on the other side of the Nettles is clearer and brighter. Nevard, though, looks upward. He smiles as a warm breeze blows his robes and beard, and he nods happily at the clear view of the sky.

The peak is long, narrow, and relatively flat, with a travesible slope to the east, but perilously steep drops of a thousand feet or more on the other three sides. If the PCs explore, in addition to scattered old bones of what look like human fingers, they can find a small black cauldron caught in a tangle of brush, down fifty feet on a rocky lip on the north face. It must have fallen centuries ago, but it has resisted rust. The climb down is difficult without rope (Athletics DC 21), and the cauldron weighs about forty pounds, but it can be hoisted fairly easily. The *cracked cauldron* is detailed in Appendix M.

Before Sunset.

The PCs should pick an area up to 10 squares in diameter to surround with their ring of blood. An ideal place is amid the toppled hengestones of the western rise, now grown over with grass, which would let the party make a fire for warmth without revealing themselves. It also provides an excellent view of the surrounding terrain, and has the least obstructed view of the sky, which Nevard appreciates.

There are several ways the party can prepare for the trial ahead:

- **Camouflage.** The clever arrangement of stones, branches, and leaves (Stealth DC 13) can create a screen for the party to hide behind, granting a +2 bonus to Stealth checks against monsters outside the ring.
- **Hear our Prayers.** Whoever puts out the blood might want to reinforce it with defensive spells and prayers (Arcana or Religion DC 13), which can grant the same benefit as camouflage. If both are present, increase the bonus to +5.
- **Snares.** A PC might try to set a few snares (Thievery DC 13). Within reason, a PC probably doesn't have supplies for more than three or four snares unless they made a point of stocking up earlier. Each snare is a one-use trap: **Trigger:** A creature enters the square, **Atk:** +5 vs. Reflex, **Hit:** Target is grabbed (Escape DC 15).
- **Traps.** By using a weapon and some ropes and wood, it might be possible to make a trap (Thievery DC 13): **Trigger:** A creature enters the square, **Atk:** +7 vs. AC, **Hit:** 1d8+6 damage.
- **Magic.** Rituals like Endure Elements would mitigate the need for Endurance checks when the temperature drops at nightfall. Silence impose a –10 penalty on monster's Perception checks to notice sounds within the area. Later in the evening simple spells like *mage hand* or *prestidigitation* can help keep the ring of blood pristine, and *light* can distract monsters.

SEEKING A VISION.

Skyseers normally watch the stars, then sleep so that the subtleties of what they saw will be translated into dream visions. Those of great skill such as Nevard can sometimes foretell the future while awake, just by tracking the interaction of the stars, planets, and other influences most people are blind to.

Any PC who is protecting Nevard through the Bond of Forced Faith ritual will also see glimpses of a vision later in the night.

- **Fake Camp.** Alternately, the PCs could bring up a few live goats, stake them to the ground on the eastern rise, and lure off a few monsters with a free meal.

Nightfall.

The sun descends brilliantly, gleaming off the waters of Flint Harbor, though the light is dulled by a haze across the city. Buildings far below cast long shadows in the streets. The darkness grows, consumes the city, and for a moment the mountain top is the only thing still illuminated. Then the night claims it as well.

City lights smear out below the party, but overhead the stars are brilliant and clear. Nevard says that he must study the stars for as long as possible, and that in the morning he will sleep.

Within an hour the air drops from the warmth of a tropical summer to a soul-chilling winter freeze. The wind fluctuates wildly, sometimes eerily still, then bursting with gusts that shake every tree on the mountaintop. Moans slide across the peak like waves, and when the wailing wind quiets, the party can hear suddenly-dry leaves cracking underfoot, and erratic bursts of malevolent laughter further down the slope.

Characters with the Spirit Medium theme can hear voices all around, but as long as he wears his amulet the sound is muted, like a party down the street. If anyone without the Spirit Medium theme takes off his amulet, he hears the wild music of spirits wailing in chorus while horns and strings cross dissonantly. If a Spirit Medium takes off his amulet, he's stunned for a round as the whole mountain screams insanely and imprints flashing images of bonfires and silhouettes of humans being sacrificed atop the mountain.

The PCs start to see shadows moving in the trees, creeping upward toward the peak. Wispy white spirits circle and swoop lazily to the silent music, and though they do not seem to see the PCs, slowly more and more float by them, as if attracted by a scent. Then the actual monsters show up. First something that looks like a semi-transparent legless man, its head just a bare skull, crawls hand over hand toward the PC's camp. It's hard to make out details in the dark, but it stops when it reaches the ring of blood, and then it turns to follow. Eager, maddened chuckling comes from the thing, like it's excited about an imminent meal.

Then a crowd of foot-high goblin-like spectres approach from the other direction, cavorting and jumping in wild circles like it's a celebration. They suddenly stop when they spot the ring of blood, and they too start to follow it, gibbering to each other in Abyssal. In the following minutes they're joined by horned vestiges of tiefling-like demons, a growling lion whose head is framed by a cluster of writhing snakes, bat-winged rats whose screeching rattles listeners' ears, and more—all of them barely visible, like they're pressing up against a veil trying to reach into this world.

None of them cross the ring, but within an hour the party is surrounded on all sides by crowds of monsters, all of them mindlessly tracing endless circles in search of something to devour.

Vigilance.

The party must overcome several threats to make it through the night. For each of these, describe the threat, then let the players describe how they address the threat. If they have a solid plan, they can avoid a skill check, but otherwise they must make checks to avoid negative consequences.

- The first threat is the cold. Have each PC make an Endurance check (DC 21, or DC 9 if they have a fire) or lose a healing surge.
- The next challenge is staying hidden. Have each PC make a Stealth check (DC 9, or DC 13 if they have a fire). If any PC fails, one of the monsters perks its head up and looks into the circle as if it can't quite see the party. Only if half the party or more fails will the monster decide to break off from chasing the ring of blood in order to enter the circle.
- Third is the hours-long, mind-eroding cacophony of wails on the wind. Those who take no precautions lose a healing surge from psychic damage, but it's possible to mitigate the danger with magic (Arcana DC 13), traditional chants (Religion DC 13), crafting earplugs (makes the PC deafened), or singing a more upbeat tune. Singing automatically helps the whole party, and the monsters are too obsessed with tracking the blood ring to tell a human song from an insane demon mountain song.

The Vision.

Occasionally unnatural drowsiness will slide across one PC, or another will hear eerie horns playing in the night, while a third spots an impossible oddity, like a mirror image of the party sitting on the opposite rise.

Then an apparition manifests in the center of the circle of blood: a velvet red curtain hovers in the air, looking completely solid, glowing as if hit by a spotlight that doesn't exist. The curtain sways, and there seem to be figures on the other side.

After a moment, or if anyone goes toward the curtain, Nilasa steps out before they can go in.

Nilasa puts a hushing finger to her lips, then points out into the night and says, "The man who killed me is coming. His face is scarred, so he hides behind many faces." Then she raises a featureless black mask to her face. When she puts it on she fades away, as does the curtain. The air is suddenly thick with the stench of burnt engine grease.

The following vision appears to PCs who bound their blood to Nevard.

The stars overhead seem to streak in lines as time stretches out, and then to the north, down by Parity Lake, a building catches fire with dreamlike swiftness. Suddenly you find yourselves standing between two factories, and two tongues of flame leap from one to the the next, like a pair of burning dragons. Screams erupt from the people trapped inside, the conflagration consumes the factories, and the charred buildings collapse to reveal tomorrow morning's sunrise. A blackened sign sits in the ash, saying "Sechim's Alkahest & Etchings."

The vision ends with a snap, and the PCs find themselves standing on the black peak of Cauldron Hill. Nevard, still looking to the stars, gives a knowing hum. He points up at a red star.

"Jiese, the plane of fire, is brighter tonight than usual. Its light reflects off the lake. You saw it, didn't you?"

It's still unclear whether they're awake or dreaming when a man cries out for help from the dark beyond the ring. It sounds like he's been set upon by monsters, but Nevard shakes his head and warns the PCs not to step outside the ring. The screams last for hours.



A Ring of Blood

Action. Tactical. Level 5.

A sinister figure sabotages the party's defenses and unleashes the spectral horrors of Cauldron Hill.

Slightly after midnight, during a lull in the mad dance of the spooks and monsters, any PC whose Passive Perception beats 21 notices something moving through the crowd of monsters perhaps a hundred feet away, on the other rise. Somehow less feral and wild, more deliberate in its movements, one would almost think it's a man, but the monsters aren't accosting it. They lose sight of it a moment later, and a minute passes. If any PC is so bold to venture forth, they can possibly thwart a disaster about to happen.

Almost imperceptible above the cacophony of spirits, the party hears the crack of a sunrod against stone. A brilliant glow lights up the mountaintop, shedding bright light in a 20-square radius. All the monsters surrounding the ring of blood turn to look.

A humanoid figure holds the sunrod, its body inhumanly angular, its skin featureless and black like a silhouette. It sprints to the near edge of the other rise and then hurls the sunrod. The glowing beacon arcs and then hits right in the center of the PCs' camp. As one, the monsters surrounding the blood ring lock eyes on the party and attack.

The Shadow Man.

The hostile figure is Cillian Creed in his normal form—without his illusory disguise. Macbannin gave him stronger wards than the PCs'; infused with the essence of the Bleak Gate, he incurs no attacks from the shadow monsters. He has three other sunrods, and will throw them at the party's camp to keep the PCs from simply throwing the light away before the monsters attack. He doesn't feel safe enough alone on the mountain to actually attack the PCs, and if the PCs hit him, especially with radiant attacks, he'll flee into the darkness. You can find his stats on page 189, but he's not a real combatant in this scene.

Spooks.

The main threats are four powerful monsters, but the mountain is filled with countless other creatures. While they could easily slaughter the PCs here, our assumption is that most of the dangerous creatures are far enough away that they won't make it to the party during the course of the fight. Either during or after the fight, the PCs should throw the sunrod(s) elsewhere on the mountaintop, which creates enough of a disturbance that they can escape.

However, to keep up the tension, you should liberally scatter Cauldron Hill spooks across the mountaintop. These are feeble minions, and act more like hazardous terrain than creatures. Start with twice as many as there are PCs in the party, but add two more every round the party's camp is brightly illuminated, creating a tension of whether to throw away the light, or to keep it so you can see what you're fighting. They move slowly, but in huge numbers they can't be ignored.



List of Participants.

- Nevard Sechim, dying skyseer (ally)
- 10 Cauldron Hill spooks
- Cackling crawler
- Serpent-maned lion
- Hag wraith
- Vestige of death

Nevard Sechim, Dying Skyseer
Medium natural humanoid, human

HP 20; **Bloodied** 10 — **Initiative** +3
AC 13, **Fortitude** 7, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 18 — **Perception** +6
Speed 6, forestwalk

Traits

▶ **Enchanted Age**
The old seer moves with an enchanted vigor.
When under the effects of the Bond of Forced Faith ritual, Nevard gains a +5 bonus to Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution-based checks. All damage that would be dealt to him is instead divided evenly among the creatures he is bonded to (rounded down, minimum 1 point per creature).

Standard Actions

▶ **Look Skyward** ✦ At-Will
Nevard glances to the stars, and offers a soft word of guidance.
Effect: Nevard chooses an ally within 5 squares. The ally chooses an attack power he knows, rolls 1d20, and marks the result. The next time the ally would make an attack roll for that power during this encounter, he must instead use the rolled result. If the power has multiple targets or attack rolls, only the first roll is replaced.

When the ally uses the rolled result, he can still apply effects and powers to modify the attack roll. For example, a human could still use *human perseverance*, an elf could still use *eloen accuracy*, a warlord's *tactical presence* would still grant a bonus if the ally used an action point to use the power, and an avenger would still roll a second die and pick the better of the two results.

Skills Arcana +12, Insight +14, Nature +12, Religion +12

Str	4 (–3)	**Dex**	4 (–3)	**Wis**	22 (+6)
Con	4 (–3)	**Int**	16 (+3)	**Cha**	16 (+3)

Alignment Good **Languages** Common, Elven, Giant, Primordial

Cauldron Hill Spook — Level 0 Minion Brute
Small shadow beast — XP 5

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion — **Initiative** +4
AC 13, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 11 — **Perception** –1
Speed 2, fly 2 — Darkvision

Traits

☼ **Pandemonic Dance** ✦ Aura 1
Spectral goblins, swooping bats, tiny horned men, baying hounds, and disembodied heads scamper and dance in a slow, endless horde, ascending to the peak of Cauldron Hill. When one of these spooks spots a mortal creature it drags the poor soul into the throng of cavorting horrors.
Any enemy that ends its turn within the aura takes 2 damage. The spook treats any creature that is brightly illuminated, even other monsters, as if they are enemies.

Str	1 (–5)	**Dex**	18 (+4)	**Wis**	8 (–1)
Con	10 (+0)	**Int**	2 (–4)	**Cha**	6 (–2)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** –

Cackling Crawler Level 5 Brute
Medium shadow animate (undead) XP 200
HP 75; **Bloodied** 37 **Initiative** +3
AC 17, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 17 **Perception** –2
Speed 6, climb 4 Darkvision
Immune poison

Traits

▸ **Legless Laughter**
This half-a-corpse drags itself with unnatural speed, and its bare skull chuckles constantly at the thought of an imminent meal.
The crawler is prone and cannot stand. It does not grant combat advantage to melee attacks for being prone, and it moves at its full speed. Ranged attacks against it take a –2 penalty.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Clamber** ✦ At-Will, Basic
The corpse yanks at your legs, crawls up your body, and pulls you about before you manage to shake it off.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10+5 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 15) and grants combat advantage until it escapes.

✓ **Maddened Glee** (psychic) ✦ At-Will
The skull's eyeless gaze burrows through the crumbling wall of your mind as its laughter reaches a lunatic crescendo.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Will
Hit: The target takes ongoing 10 psychic damage that lasts until the crawler is no longer adjacent.

Str 20 (+7) **Dex** 13 (+3) **Wis** 3 (–2)
Con 15 (+4) **Int** 3 (–2) **Cha** 6 (+0)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** –

Serpent-Maned Lion Level 5 Brute
Medium shadow beast XP 200
HP 72; **Bloodied** 36 **Initiative** +5
AC 17, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 17 **Perception** +2
Speed 6 Darkvision

Traits

☼ **Snapping Fangs** (poison) ✦ Aura 1
A writhing mass of flicking tongues and venom-slick fangs frame its fierce visage.
Any enemy that ends its turn within the aura takes 3 poison damage.

Standard Actions

⊘ **A Thousand Bites** (poison) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The lion's teeth dig in, then countless serpents in its mane bare their fangs and strike.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

⊘ **Claw** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 damage, and the target cannot regain HP until the end of the lion's next turn.

▸ **Prideful Fury** ✦ At-Will
Requirement: The lion must be bloodied.
Effect: The lion uses *a thousand bites* and *claw*.

Minor Actions

▸ **Wake the Mountain** (fear) ✦ Encounter
The lion roars, raising the hair on your neck and shaking the trees of the entire mountaintop. A chorus of wails, shrieks, and hisses swirl around you in reply.
Effect: Every enemy within a mile is immobilized (save ends).

Str 19 (+6) **Dex** 16 (+5) **Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 2 (–2) **Cha** 6 (+0)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** –

Hag Wraith Level 5 Controller
Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP 200
HP 42; **Bloodied** 21 **Initiative** +6
AC 19, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 18 **Perception** +3
Speed 6, fly 4 (clumsy) Darkvision
Resist insubstantial; **Immune** poison; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant

Traits

▸ **Nightmare Rider**
The wraith clings to your back with emaciated arms, riding you and carrying you as she flies through the night.
When the wraith is adjacent to a creature it has dominated, it gains a +3 bonus to all defenses and whenever it moves it takes the dominated creature with it.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Kiss of Worms** (charm, psychic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The wraith forces you into a horrid embrace and vomits worms through your unwilling lips.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Will
Hit: 1d12+6 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

✓ **Rancid Allure** (charm) ✦ Recharge when no enemy is dominated by this power
Your nostrils are thick with the stench of curdled milk poured upon viscera and shit, but to you it is an irresistible perfume.
Attack: Ranged 3 (one immobilized or dazed creature); +8 vs. Will
Hit: The hag pulls the target 3 squares, and the target is dominated (save ends).

Str 16 (+5) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 13 (+3)
Con 15 (+4) **Int** 15 (+4) **Cha** 22 (+8)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Primordial

Vestige of Death Level 5 Lurker
Medium shadow humanoid (devil, undead) XP 200
HP 34; **Bloodied** 17 **Initiative** +6
AC 19, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 15 **Perception** +3
Speed 2, fly 8 Darkvision
Immune poison; Vulnerable 5 radiant

Traits

▸ **Reaching Through the Veil**
Barely able to enter the world in life, this vestige of an otherworldly hooded horror can only reach through the veil long enough to strike and vanish.
The vestige is removed from play when it isn't its turn. It cannot ready actions or delay.

When a creature has one shroud it can see the vestige even when it's removed from play, but cannot affect it. When the creature has two shrouds it can affect the vestige, but its attacks do half damage. When the creature has three shrouds it can affect the vestige normally.

If the vestige is surrounded by a ring of gold (such as if it is grabbed by a golden garrote), it cannot leave play.

Standard Actions

▸ **Caress of Death** (fire) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Purple fire flickers on the devil's scaled hand as it brushes your cheek. The world darkens briefly as if a veil had been pulled across your soul.
Effect: One creature adjacent to the vestige takes 5 fire damage and gains a shroud.

✓ **Reaper's Scythe** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will
A bone-white scythe appears in the vestige's grip, and it delivers a killing slice.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature with three or more shrouds); +10 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target takes 5d12 necrotic damage.

Str 18 (+6) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 13 (+3)
Con 15 (+4) **Int** 5 (–1) **Cha** 6 (+9)
Alignment Evil **Languages** understands Abyssal

Tactics.

Nevard uses *look skyward* and then tries to stay out of harm's way.

The cackling crawler goes after someone who looks easy to grab, while the serpent-maned lion tries to get into the center of as many enemies as possible. The hag wraith and vestige of death each try to go after targets who aren't in melee. If the whole party is in melee, they strike for Nevard, creating a second front. The spooks just swarm toward the sound of battle, or toward light.

The monsters are all designed to make standing still in the "safety" of the ring of blood actually be a bad idea, so Nevard might suggest that they move. None of the monsters can push, so luring them to the edge of a cliff and shoving them off is a smart move.

Terrain.

Whenever a PC becomes bloodied, mark the square he was in. Those squares, as well as any square of the original ring of blood, count as difficult terrain for the monsters, who struggle to resist the temptation of food.

Aftermath.

Once the major monsters are defeated and the sunrod removed, there are no more attacks, though the PCs do get a feeling like something huge and invisible is standing over them, watching their every movement. Then a shooting star streaks across the sky, and the ominous sensation passes.

Nevard suggests, as casually as if he were recommending a coat for cold weather, that it might be a good time to leave. He believes he has seen enough, and he needs to rest to understand what it all means. Also, he asks the PCs pay heed to the vision of the fire dragon at the factory, and see if they can help his nephew Heward (see page 168). With a bright light source like the sunrods drawing attention elsewhere, the hour climb back down is safe.

Down the Mountain

Social. Real-Time. Level 3.

Bedlam grips the Macbannin manor as the PCs head down the mountain.

The PCs might rush past this scene on their way to the alkahest factory arson. If so, make note of which PCs don't get Macbannin's purification ritual; later Gale will detect the stench of the Bleak Gate on them.

Military Response.

Guards at the rear gate to the manor let the PCs in, but before they get far they're intercepted by Mayor Macbannin and a squad of heavily armed soldiers in green and black night operation uniforms. Led by one **Lieutenant Dale**, the soldiers were ordered up Cauldron Hill an hour ago when a sudden bright light appeared on the top of the mountain. The soldiers have swords drawn and defensive totems strapped to their shields, and they watch the party warily.

Macbannin tries to explain it all as a silly mix-up on his part. He didn't think to notify the military that people would be on the mountain, and he was as surprised as anyone when a bright light suddenly appeared. He asks the PCs to explain everything, and—after checking the party's amulets and convincing Lieutenant Dale that the PCs aren't possessed—he asks them into his manor, where he can purify them of ill energy.

Originally Macbannin planned to have the PCs disarm and disrobe, and then he would "purify" one PC at a time with a soporific poison. Once they were all asleep he'd take them down to his laboratory, slit their throats, and wait for a convenient time to dispose of the bodies.

Where's the Arson?

The Factory Aflame encounter is in Thread Four, on page 192.

A Vision for Skyseers.

If a PC in your group has the Skyseer theme, they have the following vision the next time they sleep.

> You sit in a field of grass, the night sky overhead, the planets hanging huge and low. Breeze whips the grass across your skin, and a tiger stalks you, somewhere out in the dark.
>
> A light flares overhead, an old blue star called Mishados, and it begins to drift downward. Not to the horizon, but toward the earth. Then other stars rattle, like grains of sand shaken loose from a wet glass, and their descent turns to a plummet, turns to a streaking rain of light.
>
> They fall in all directions, but you know where Mishados will fall, and you know you must catch it.

This vision foretells events that occur in Adventure Nine, *The Last Starry Sky*. If the PC is curious about Mishados and researches its history, he learns it is named after an incarnation of the dead goddess Srasama. Said to have been a healer, the blue-skinned dog-faced Mishados waits in the heavens for when she'll be called to restore Srasama to life.

That isn't an option now, so to keep up appearances Macbannin performs an actual ritual—it takes just 10 minutes—to clear away Bleak Gate energies. If any PC did take off his amulet and mentions it, Macbannin can also perform a *remove affliction* ritual. Macbannin's too busy to use all his precautionary divinations, so a PC who doesn't mention taking off his amulet can slip through and keep his curse active.

Reinforcements.

Lieutenant Dale and his squad are all dressed up with nowhere to go. If the party asks nicely (Diplomacy DC 13) they can get Dale to send along one man with the PCs to check out the arson vision. If they're very convincing (DC 21), all five will go along. Treat them as Allied Soldiers (see Appendix K). PCs with the Martial Scientist theme know of Dale and vice versa. He attended the Battalion academy; his thesis was *Meditation, Coffee, and Cherry Pie: Unorthodox Salves Against the Supernatural*.



Creed served as an overseas operative of the RHC, but took an early retirement after suffering a disfiguring facial wound in the last war. A master of disguise and illusions, Creed chooses to wear his former face in most occasions, now more necessary than before due to a recent change in his "condition."

Willing to follow any orders to defend his homeland no matter how heinous, Creed was recruited by Reed Macbannin to help keep a weapons research program secret. One experiment in refining the essence of the Bleak Gate into an oil form went awry, and Creed was infused with shadow magic. Now he can shift into an incorporeal form of living darkness, or reach out and attack others through their shadows. Several layers of illusions and wards allow him to pass as normal.

Audience with the Wind

Exposition. Real-Time. Level 5.

Gale, leader of an organization of fey terrorists, agrees to meet with the party, and can offer critical clues to the real threat to the city.

Some time during the day after Nevard and the party ascend Cauldron Hill, a sudden breeze gusts over them, and a yellow canary flies a circle around them. The breeze speaks with a woman's voice, elegant and tinged with a Danoran accent.

"Your character comes recommended by a dear friend of mine. At his suggestion, I would like to arrange a meeting so you and I may discuss a mutual enemy. Speak to the wind a time that is convenient for you, preferably within the next two days, and my canary will guide you when you are ready. The meeting will occur in my territory, because while I trust my dear friend, I confess I find him a poor judge of character. After all, he associates with me."

The wind lingers for a minute or two, then swirls away and flies off invisibly. The canary stays near the PCs, but isn't a nuisance, and can be stuck in a cage fairly easily. Observation can reveal (Arcana DC 20) that it is a magical effect, and that it's probably remembering what the party is doing, but it will have to return to Gale to deliver the information.

A Convenient Time.

An hour before the time the PCs stated, the canary starts singing and trying to get the party's attention to head out. It guides them to the Cloudwood, down wild trails and up lush hills, before finally stopping at the top of a three hundred-foot high waterfall with a clear view of the eastern horizon. Natives of Flint will recognize the cascade as the Bridal Veil, a romantic locale immortalized in folk poetry and the site of several famous weddings.

The river that feeds the waterfall rolls over a eighty-foot wide cliff, spreading the cascade into a thin sheet that at dawn can illuminate the whole valley with the sun's reflection. Wildflowers wreathe the cliffs and dot the few boulders that hang near the falls' edge. Hummingbirds flit about, and they seem to pay close attention to the party's presence.

Gale emerges from the treeline on the opposite shore of the waterfall, and she holds out a hand. The canary that guided the party flies to her, and when it touches her hand it disappears. If the party hasn't made any hostile moves, Gale then steps off a high rock and glides a few feet above the surface of the water, stepping on three boulders over the 80-ft. river as easily as if hopping a narrow stream. She lands on the shore by the party, nods to them, and thanks them for coming.

Gale is wary but willing to risk talking. She assumes the PCs know her politics, and she respects them enough not to try to persuade them unless they ask. Instead she devotes her attention to explaining a mutual threat she has discovered.

"I have a contact: a courier to the Unseen Court who lets me call him Ellik. He's an eerie creature, dwells in shadows, but is loyal to the court and has a fondness for this nation which treated his people well for so many years.

"Just over a month ago, when the last new moon was aligned with the planet Nem, Ellik arranged for me to walk with him into the Bleak Gate. I will spare you the details of that journey's emotional toll, but during the few hours that night when I could see into the dark side of the world, I discovered something.

"There is activity in that mirror image of Flint. Not much. I never saw anyone other than my guide. Most of the buildings are hollow, like abandoned shells of dead sea creatures. But there are no echoes, and no wind blows, so you can hear footsteps from miles away. And in the distant gloom I saw torches and lanterns, lights that the denizens of that world would never need. Their path ran along the canal, to the still analogue of Parity Lake, and then up toward the Nettles. I did not have the time to get close, but I heard churning there, and saw smoke and steam drifting into the starless sky.

"They are working, assembling something, hidden right where we can't see it, on the other side of our shadow. My Nilasa found a clue. I sent her on a mission, and she found the truth, and they killed her for it. I am furious at her murderers, but Nevard has made me realize that this conflict is larger than my selfish desire for revenge.

"Unfortunately, I can't return to the Bleak Gate, nor show you what I saw. The same alignment with Nem will not repeat for decades, and I have not yet found another way into that world. But I do have proof of my own."

She produces a tiny vellum book from her belt and offers it.

"This is a copy of a ritual that will detect various energies, though you have to have been exposed to what you're seeking. It's worthless to most people, but I have been to the Bleak Gate, and I believe that when you were with Nevard so did you, or at least you touched the veil.

"I've flown across this city, trying to find sources. In some place the stink of it bleeds through naturally, especially on Cauldron Hill, but I've followed trails. The night after Nilasa was murdered, I found a strong source at the consulate, and I tracked it across three districts before I lost it. And too often I've found it clinging to factories, or in the foyers of rich businessmen.

"There is a conspiracy afoot. The Danorans are involved, and industrialists in this city, and some third force in the Bleak Gate. They've already killed to protect their secrets. We need to find out what their goal is."

The book contains the ritual Detect Planar Energy (see page 181 for details).

FIGHTING GALE.

If the PCs attack, Gale leaps off the cliff and down the waterfall. After falling two hundred feet she soars away. She doesn't fight back.

Gale has a larger role and may engage in combat in Adventure Five, *Cauldron-Born*; her stats are presented there.



An eladrin woman just over 100 years old, Hana spent most of her life as the property of House Soliogn, a family of Danoran mine owners. Having always felt an affinity to the fey history of Risur, Hana fled Danor a year ago and found her way to Flint, where her innate magical powers awakened. Initially sheltered by druids in the Cloudwood, once she learned to control her gifts she turned them toward revenge upon the Danorans. Gale can fly at will, control winds, and speak with birds, but has no directly offensive magic, so her tactics have relied on stealth and mobility to disrupt industrial endeavors that have backing from Danorans.

Gale has a huge chip on her shoulder and is highly distrustful of strangers. She has increased her attacks lately, ever since the defeat of Duchess Ethelyn of Shale proved to her that Risur's rulers are just minions of Danor. With the aid of fey servants of the Unseen Court she is able to slip into the Dreaming when truly threatened, but so far the Unseen Court refuses to grant her an audience.

What's Next?

Gale believes this conspiracy is a mutual enemy, and she wants to make an alliance with the party. If they can help her find out who killed Nilasa and why, she'll do her best to calm her people and stop the attacks on industrial targets. Eventually she hopes to be of service to the city, and perhaps earn an audience with Governor Stanfield to press for formal negotiations.

Gale knows that she likely won't be able to convince the nation to abandon technology altogether, but she wants to do anything she can to protect some people and places from its effects.

She wants to build trust, but she doesn't intend to meet face to face any time soon. To help the PCs in their investigation, and to let them share information with her, she gives them a *messenger wind* (see Appendix M). She keeps one feather for herself so she can call and receive messages.

In the meanwhile, she asks that the party look out for Nevard. He will be hosting his rally soon, and she worries that his revelations might threaten those who killed Nilasa.



Vekesh Mission.

If any PC has the Vekeshi Mystic character theme, now is an opportunity to fulfill the mission (see page 140), though one would be wise to exercise discretion and caution when delivering a gift from a so-called murder cult to a so-called terrorist.

Gale accepts the gift cautiously, and if she has a chance to speak with the PC she asks for more information. She wants to know if she's expected to be an assassin, or just to "remove" threats. So far she has tried to avoid killing people who aren't a direct threat, and she won't promise to obey orders from a faceless court.

Give the PC a chance to sway Gale one way or the other. If the PC does nothing, at the end of the adventure news will break of Gale abducting wealthy industrialist Guy Goodson in the middle of his wedding, carrying him off to the Cloudwood after sabotaging and sinking the steamship Goodson uses to get to and from his island villa. If the PC advocated violence, the news mentions that Gale trapped Goodson inside his steamship before sinking it.

If the PC took a position against violence, the news mentions that Gale snuck into the wedding as a guest, congratulated the couple, delivered a gift, and flew away, leading to rampant speculation that Goodson is in cahoots with the terrorist.

Making Nice with Criminals.

If the PCs don't try to arrest Gale, when they file their report with the RHC, their boss Stover Delft is less than thrilled to hear about it. He ultimately trusts his constables, but that won't spare them from some exasperated shouting.

If they don't mention the meeting, eventually Delft will want to know what they've been up to. The next adventure includes an audit of the PCs' activities by the Constabulary, and it could be interesting to see how the party manages lying to their superiors and co-workers.

NEW RITUAL.

Detect Planar Energy

The energy drifts to you like a fragrance on a breeze. You spin and locate the strongest source of the smell, then set out.

Level: 1 **Component Cost:** 17 gp
Category: Divination **Market Price:** 50 gp
Time: 10 minutes **Key Skill:** Arcana
Duration: 1 hour

Choose a plane you have visited, or otherwise have had contact with. For the ritual's duration you can sense the direction to and intensity of energies from that plane, to a maximum range of one mile. These energies tend to fade after a few hours or days, but it is possible to track creatures native to other planes by following their trails. The ritual can be foiled by strong sources of energy from the same or other planes. For instance, Cauldron Hill in Flint is a powerful beacon of shadow energy, so you would be unable to pinpoint any sort of foreign energy there, not even fey or elemental energy.

THREAD THREE: The Doctor

This act details what the PCs can discov-er as they track and investigate the foreign doctor, Wolfgang von Recklinghausen.

Person of Interest

Puzzle. Montage. Level 3.

The party pursues a foreign fugitive through the chaotic streets of Flint.

The details of this scene vary depending on if the party sets out after Wolfgang immediately, or if they follow the lead later. In either case the doctor has a several-hour lead on the party, but whom the party comes across and what they know depends on the time.

There's not much of a ticking clock, and several paths can all eventually lead to their quarry, so give the party plenty of leeway on how they want to track Dr. von Recklinghausen.

Case File.

If the party acquired the doctor's case file from the Danoran consulate (page 149), they learn he was staying as a guest at a hostel called The House of Blue Birds in North Shore. Of his two references, Dr. von Recklinghausen listed his primary contact as a local surgeon named **Dr. Barnaby Camp**, and he listed his secondary contact as **Lynn Kindleton,** a professor of human biology at Pardwight University.

The PCs can also obtain a record of the doctor's address in the Malice state of Arrovia and a brief bio that lists his educational background across three different countries and his practice as a surgeon.

House of Blue Birds.

The staff here recalls "the doctor with the foreign accent," and remember him rushing in, claiming he was coming back from a surgery, and asking for water and a towel to wipe blood from his hands. Then he hurried to his room and a few minutes later exited through a back door.

An hour afterward (and so possibly just a short while before the PCs show up), a man with a pencil thin mustache came to the hostel and asked about the doctor. He showed a police badge with the name **Officer Roger Porter**, so they let him into the doctor's room. After five minutes of flipping over mattresses and pulling any stray personal item into a small bag, the officer handed over a few gold coins as a bribe and left. (The hostel staff do not mention the bribe unless the party presses them hard for information.)

One of the cleaning staff noticed Officer Porter wince in pain a few times, and thought she noticed a bandage and dressing on his chest. She didn't see any blood, but when he left his shirt did have an odd black stain there, and he smelled oddly like scorched engine grease. The same cleaning woman took a blackened rag from the doctor's room after he left, before the officer showed up. Examination (Arcana DC 9) reveals small quantities of oil used to maintain a sword, plus a large amount of black fluid that possesses shadow energy. With a few hours and access to alchemical tools, it's possible to identify the black fluid as a strange mix of burnt oil and human blood.

This was actually Cillian Creed, magically disguised in the aftermath of his fight with the doctor, and the rag was from the doctor wiping his sword clean. Because Creed already cleaned out all of Wolfgang's personal possessions, there are no clues in his room. However, the hostel does still have the forms the doctor filled out when he arrived, and the letter of recommendation from Dr. Barnaby Camp, who vouched for the doctor to stay for a few weeks.

Rundown.

It's not impossible to track Wolfgang's movements from the hostel. After an hour checking the streets, a PC can make a Streetwise check (DC 20) to find people who recall seeing a man matching Wolfgang's description. If the party can succeed this check three times (or if they call in a favor to get cops to help for a few hours), they can recreate his trail.

The doctor fled in an erratic southward route from North Shore to Parity Lake. He started to head toward Bosum Strand, then went deeper into the industrial district. The last anyone saw of him was in a very bad part of town, near the turf of local crime lord Lorcan Kell.

He is Altering the Deal.

Wolfgang made contact with a representative of Lorcan Kell's thieves guild, and paid for bodyguards and a safe haven, with a promise to pay more if they could get him travel papers into Ber. By nightfall the doctor was holed up in an abandoned Clergy church in The Nettles.

The next few days Wolfgang writes letters to Dr. Camp and Professor Kindleton, trying to find other solutions to his problem. By the 5th of Summer he realizes that Kell's men are trying to extort him for more money, and are ready to sell him out if he can't pay extra for a Beran visa. On the 7th day Kell's people sell him out and Cillian Creed takes him into custody, unless the party intervenes.

Doctor Camp.

The party can find Dr. von Recklinghausen's sponsor, Dr. Barnaby Camp, either at his residence, or teaching at a surgical theater, both of which are in North Shore. Camp is a portly, curly-haired man who had Wolfgang as a student many years ago. They had kept in touch with occasional letters, and a few months ago Wolfgang referenced some marital troubles and a desire to travel alone to Ber, so Camp arranged for his residence in Flint.

Like at the hostel, Camp has already been contacted by Cillian Creed posing as "Officer Porter" by the time the PCs find him. Camp says he offered to let one of his students treat the man's injury for free, in exchange for letting the class watch, but the officer rudely refused.

Camp is a bit of a dead end until the 3rd of Summer, when he receives a new letter from the doctor, who is in hiding. The letter asks Camp to try to arrange safe passage out of the city for him, and alludes that he has made deals with criminals in order to avoid a monster that he thinks is chasing him. Wolfgang directs Camp to contact Lynn Kindleton at Pardwight University, who will know how to get in touch with him.

Camp normally would just want to stay out of trouble, but he was unsettled by "Officer Porter," and so he hands the letter over to the PCs and asks them to take care of the problem.

Professor Kindleton.

The "campus" of Pardwight University weaves through many streets and occasionally shares buildings with other offices in Central District, and Professor Lynn Kindleton meets with students every morning in her office above a butcher shop, then teaches class in a hospital morgue a few streets over.

Unlike Camp, Lynn is much more loyal to Wolfgang. They studied and worked together, and years ago he tried to get her to move to Arrovia with him.

Creed, in the guise of Officer Porter, visits Lynn the night of the 1st of Summer, right after she finishes her class. She claimed she knew nothing, but she's a terrible, nervous liar, so Creed has her under surveillance. She receives her first letter from Wolfgang the morning of the 2nd, delivered by a boy from the Nettles. Thereafter every day she leaves a letter at the downstairs butcher shop, and a messenger comes from the Nettles, delivers a letter from Wolfgang, then takes Lynn's letter and a supply of meat and other foods back to the doctor. The messages do not go directly, though, and instead transit through Lorcan Kell's men, who read and reseal them.

On the 6th of Summer, a letter comes asking Lynn to help Wolfgang flee, since he no longer trusts his bodyguards. On the 7th, she is captured with him unless the PCs intervene.

In the meantime, Lynn will lie and claim she hasn't heard from Wolfgang since before he went missing. Since she's already been visited by another officer, and Wolfgang warned her that he's being followed, she won't trust the PCs unless they go a little overboard, such as by taking her to the RHC office to show her that they're legitimate constables. Even then, at best she'll want to arrange a meeting with Wolfgang in private, though the party could possibly follow her. When she tries to go to The Nettles, though, her guide takes her to Parity Lake, where Kell takes her captive as additional leverage over the doctor.

The Hard Way.

After spending eight hours scouring The Nettles, hiking up and down hills and through narrow streets filled with petty thieves and swarms of beggars, a PC can make a Streetwise check (DC 25). A failure yields only rumors about another group of people also looking for the doctor, which has the locals on edge and nervous about talking. A success produces a few leads pointing to hiding places where criminals might be laying low, based on where messengers are going in and out of the district.

After another eight hours and a second successful Streetwise check (DC 25), the PCs find a group of burglars who have heard about Kell's thieves protecting a foreigner on the run from the Danorans. They can point to the right hill, but it takes yet another eight hours and a third Streetwise check (DC 25) to find the actual church where Wolfgang is hiding.

How Does the Smuggling Plot Work?

Reed Macbannin used his knowledge of the paths to the Bleak Gate to craft a series of partial portals under the bridges of the Stanfield Canal, which runs from Bosum Strand to Parity Lake. Subtly embedded in the steel beneath the bridges are rusted iron bars etched with ritual spells.

Whenever an object passes under these bridges, if it has the proper sigil stenciled on it, the ritual pulls the object closer to the Bleak Gate. There are six of these bridges, and after passing beneath the sixth bridge, the item vanishes and plunges into the water in the Bleak Gate analogue of the canal. If it doesn't go through all six within an hour, the magic fades and soon it's impossible to notice anything amiss.

Even then, a final spell is required to keep the item (or person) from returning to the real world five minutes later. Guards on the Bleak Gate side have wands for this purpose.

Cillian Creed delivers lists of items needed to Kell, who has his people either directly steal it and pack in crates, or arranges to trade it for protection. The crates are then stenciled and sent down the canal. None of Kell's people ever travel with the crates, so they assume someone else picks them up at the other end, which is close to true. When the crates splash down in the Bleak Gate, Leone Quital's people recover them and take them to Cauldron Hill. In the real world, people just assume some items were stolen in transit.

Theater of Scoundrels

Social. Real-Time. Level 8.

A powerful crime boss, Lorcan Kell, might provide the party with the doctor's location, but only if they can entertain him.

The party will probably have to go through Lorcan Kell to find Wolfgang. Cillian Creed has a long-standing relationship with Kell, because Kell's men handle the smuggling of industrial goods. Kell knows Creed is looking for Wolfgang, but in his opinion the existing business arrangement doesn't include sharing all his secrets. When he gets word the PCs are asking questions too, he decides to solve both problems at once.

Kell's goal is to bring the PCs to him, have a little cruel fun at their expense, then have them do him a favor in exchange for the doctor's location. Then when they're on the way to Wolfgang's hideout, Kell will notify Creed so he can catch the PCs in an enclosed environment.

The Lure.

Starting the afternoon of the 2nd, one of Kell's agents watches the RHC headquarters, and when he sees one of the PCs he approaches and says that Lorcan Kell knows where the doctor they're looking for is, and that he invites them to negotiate at a neutral location: Lammers Theater in Parity Lake. Kell will be there tonight, and the curtain goes up at 8 PM.

Constables in the know (Streetwise DC 24) recall rumors that Kell runs his guild out of a theater, which means it's probably anything but neutral territory. But Kell won't budge, and unless the party comes to him, he doesn't care to talk to them.

If the party asks around and does some research, they hear tales of Kell's operations, and how he likes to treat outsiders. A group that brings a gift to the crime boss gets a pleasant reception. But if the party just breezes in expecting to be in charge, Kell will make their visit painful.

The Bait.

Kell's center of power is in eastern Parity Lake, where some of the slightly better-off factory workers live, paying protection money to Kell's thieves guild. It's still a seedy neighborhood, and if the PCs come here, it's obvious they're being watched. Their guide leads them to the heart of the area, which PCs with the right background might recognize.

Then just before they turn onto a new street they hear angry threats, a man's grunt of pain, and a woman's scream. A carriage is stopped 100 feet down the side road, its driver reeling on the ground from an apparent blow to the head, its single horse nervous. A woman kneels over the driver, screaming, "Someone stop them!" and pointing down the street. Two thugs wearing bright red scarves look over their shoulder as they sprint away.

All in this staged scene, as well as most of the onlookers on the street, are Kell's people. They expect the PCs to chase the thieves, who run down a street and then duck into an alley, making sure the PCs can easily follow. Then in the alley they open a door into the back stage of Kell's Theater of Scoundrels, luring the PCs onto the stage, where the curtain will come up, revealing an audience all leveling guns and crossbows at them while Kell applauds from a high box seat.

If the PCs hesitate, the woman improvises, adding, "They kidnapped my baby! Stop them!" If that doesn't work, she tries running after the men herself, hoping the PCs follow. There's enough amiss about the scene—the perfect timing, how unsurprised some of the people peering out street windows appear, how the bright scarves make it easy to follow the thieves—that PCs can reasonably see through the trap (an easy Insight check, or a moderate one if the players aren't at all suspicious).

In that case, the thief-actors fess up, and a moment later one of Kell's lieutenants—an athlete named **Rufus Hammerton** who bounces a leather football on the ground as he talks—invites the party to join his boss inside the theater to talk business while taking in a show. To emphasize the "politeness" of the request, a dozen men come out of the buildings and form a loose wall behind the party.

In this neighborhood the PCs are horribly outnumbered; if a fight starts, an overwhelming force of thieves and scum will quickly appear and surround them. If the PCs insist on fighting, they'll end up overwhelmed, beaten to within an inch of their lives, then dumped naked in the lake near a sewer drain. Rufus alludes to this possibility when he points out that accepting his boss's invitation to talk will be much more pleasant than declining it.

Star Attraction.

Once the PCs are in the theater, Kell invites the party to his box, and though he is supremely confident they won't attack him, his guards do search the party and take away any obvious weapons or implements before the meeting. They'll be returned when the party leaves. He tells his people to "put on a comedy," then calmly eats a sandwich while talking. He doesn't offer food to the PCs, and there are no chairs in the box for them to sit on.

Kell says that he knows the PCs are looking for "that northerner doctor," and that his men are keeping said doctor safe but hidden while he waits for an opportunity to turn a profit from the situation. He's willing to have his men take the PCs to the doctor; in return, he wants them, as RHC constables, to stop a smuggling deal he's gotten wind of. He hears it's going down the evening of the 4th, bringing in magic weapons that will be bought by some of his competitors. Kell is content if the constables just do their job and arrest the smugglers, since it will harm one of his rivals. But he suggests it might be more worth their while to deliver whatever is being brought in to him.

Should the PCs decline the offer, Kell makes a show of indifference, insists they stay for the show, and then signals for his "comedy" to begin. A drunk and confused docker is pushed out on stage, and a scandalously dressed seductress flirts with him and makes a show of picking his pocket while he's distracted by her advances. Then another thief pretending to be a jealous boyfriend makes an appearance, and after a brief slapstick routine, wherein the "boyfriend" chases the docker around the stage brandishing various props—eliciting guffaws from the crowd—things turn darkly serious as the seductress and her "boyfriend" take turns savagely beating him.

Kell quietly considers the PCs' reactions, and after a few moments says he'll let the man go if they agree to his offer. If the PCs continue to refuse, have Kell be as vicious and cruel as you think your players are comfortable with. Lorcan Kell will get his comeuppance later, but for now he's in a position of power that he loves to abuse.

Aftermath.

If the party agrees to his offer, he tells them that once some of his cop friends let him know the smuggling operation is thwarted, he'll send a guide to take them to Wolfgang.

If the party declines, or avoids this encounter, they have other ways to find Wolfgang, but he'll be better defended.

If the party attacks Kell, his stats appear in Adventure Five. In the very likely event the party loses that fight, Kell kills most of them, but leaves the person who first attacked him alive. He'll disfigure that person and keep him chained up long enough to parade all his friends and loved ones through the theater and kill them.

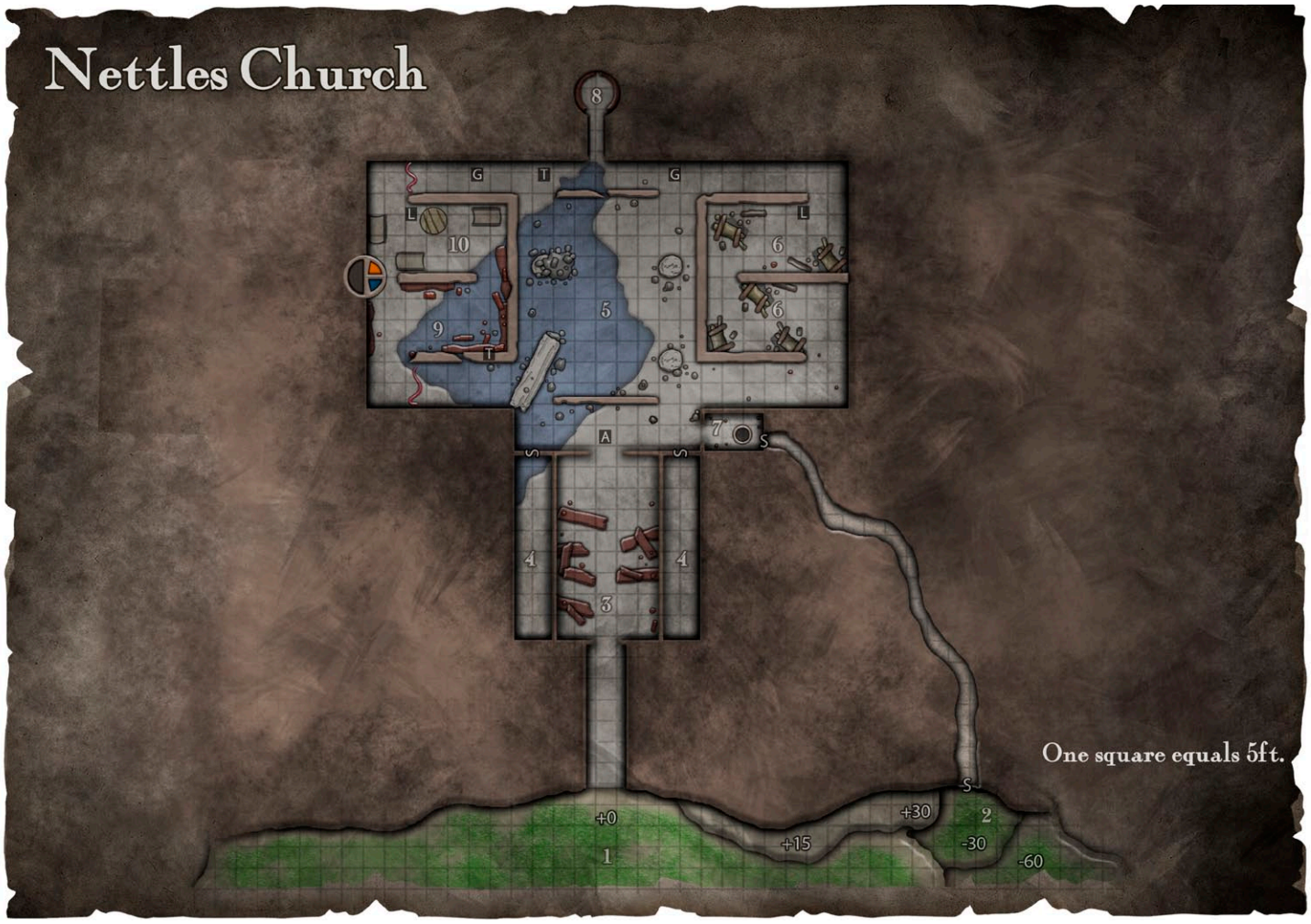


Now in his fifties, the grizzled Kell grew up an enforcer for local gangs, then eventually murdered his way into a position of leadership. He does, however, possess a great knack for instilling loyalty in intelligent minions who can run operations for him. Now he feigns gentility, dressing in elegant clothing that conceals no fewer than eight blades at any time.

Kell is unpredictable and hot-headed, confident he can kill anyone who's a threat, and when people try to stand up against him he takes it as an opportunity for entertainment. For him, nothing's better for him than taking self-righteous do-gooders down a few pegs by showing off his power.

His seat of power is a theater in Parity Lake where scum are welcome and decent people are turned away. Kell's guild of thieves practice their lies and legerdemain in the form of stage plays, often improvisational and with life-or-death stakes. Actors practice disguises and assuming unique personas, all the sorts of subtle techniques Kell personally never bothered with. He enjoys the shows, but his favorite game is to drag in a pair of random townspeople, and give one of them the choice of who of the two will receive a beating.

Kell is aware of the encroaching Family presence in his city, but he expects his "intelligent minions" to come up with a plan against them, not realizing that most of those minions are being wooed by Morgan Cippiano.



Old Faith

Action/Social. Tactical. Level 5.

The doctor has turned an abandoned church's catacombs into a trap-filled lair.

Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen has taken refuge within an abandoned Clergy church built into a rocky cliff face in The Nettles. The church's keepers left decades ago when the swell of poor factory workers moved in; their adherence to the Old Faith overwhelmed the Clericists who had lived on this hill. Using scrounged items and some tools from his surgical kit, he has assembled traps to defend himself, though if the party has made a deal with Lorcan Kell, the doctor's bodyguards will disable the traps before the party arrives.

Hallowed Halls.

Within the church, creatures who fail three death saving throws stabilize instead of dying. Creatures can still die from hit point loss, but a latent blessing protects the mortally wounded.

Layout.

Unless noted, rooms inside the church are in total darkness.

1. Plateau Façade.

The front of the church shows years of neglect, and you could walk by without noticing the place through the tangle of brush, vines, and tumbled stones. Out of some sense of respect, the locals have given the church some space. The nearest homes are a hundred feet from the entrance, though if you ascend a cliffside staircase, the next tier of the hill is clustered with slum housing.

2. Latrine Cliff.

Effluvium once flowed from the church's latrine to this concealed cliff. The passage into the back of the privy is a tight squeeze, but disuse has left the place relatively clean.

3. Chapel.

Broken and tattered pews lie around this room. The 20-ft. high arched ceiling once reverberated the sound of singers, but now just echoes eerily. Whisper holes to the Song Galleys along the sides of the room let people hear activity through the walls.

The doorway to Area 5 no longer has a door, and the hallway is cluttered with debris. When the party arrives, six slum-dwellers sit in the tunnel, paid by Kell's men to discourage curious visitors.

If the party arrives early in the week, a woman is waiting outside with her husband, who is holding his severed thumb in a bloody cloth. The man lost his thumb earlier in the day in an industrial accident, and the woman has heard there's a doctor here, so she's trying to get the slum-dwellers to let her in so she can have the doctor to reattach the thumb. This is well within Wolfgang's talents, but his bodyguards are trying to prevent him from taking on hard luck cases in an effort to keep news of his presence from spreading.

If the PCs arrive near the end of the week, there's a line of people with sick children or injured family members shouting for the doctor to come out and help them. All the people, including the slum-dweller look-outs, scatter quickly at the first sign that a fight might be coming.

4. Song Galleys.

Monks would once stand in these two hallways and sing during services.

5. Common Area.

Once the center of activity for the church's monks, this room was shaken in the recent tremors, creating a broad flooded sump. Of the four pillars that held up the roof, one crumbled and one toppled.

Wolfgang hid the documents he took from Nilasa in this room. Above the crumbled pillar there's a hollow in the ceiling. Wolfgang placed the documents in his water-resistant surgeon's bag, then tucked it in that hollow. His bodyguards on loan from Lorcan Kell didn't see him hide the bag, and aren't aware of where the documents are.

- **Alarm:** An alarm trap, marked **A** on the map, triggers if anyone enters this area. A trip wire (Perception DC 20) yanks a weight that rings a cluster of small bells, alerting everyone in the church to intruders.
- **Traps:** Additionally, two bonesaw traps, marked **T** on the map, protect the approach to Wolfgang's hiding spot. Anyone who steps in the trapped squares is attacked—see below for the trap's statistics.
- **Gates:** Spaces marked **G** on the map have iron gates that hang from the ceiling, hinged so that when released they swing down. They are easy to spot, and aren't hard to disable (Thievery DC 13). Levers, marked **L** on the map, can be pulled as a minor action to trigger the nearby gate. Any creature in the gate square is attacked: +10 vs. Fortitude. A hit deals 1d6 damage and slides the creature 1 square in the direction away from the associated lever.

  Thereafter, the heavy gate blocks its square, though it can be lifted with a combined Strength score of 15. A creature holding up a gate clears the square, but grants combat advantage.
- **Secret Doors:** Two secret doors (Perception DC 13) lead to Area 4.

6. Sleeping Quarters.

Of the sleeping quarters, only scattered bits of furniture remain.

7. Privy.

A wooden seat over a bucket was the best available in The Nettles, which has no plumbing. The door leading to Area 2 is hidden (Perception DC 20) behind a tattered old curtain displaying a pleasant pastoral scene. Wolfgang and his bodyguards still haven't noticed it.

8. Cloister.

This small room was used for private prayers. Rows of bookshelves line the walls, empty from old looting.

9. Storage.

A recently-erected curtain blocks out light so the fire in Area 10 isn't visible in Area 5. Kell's men brought a few bags of supplies with them, and regular deliveries have provided food and lantern oil.

A small well in one corner of the room is fed by rainwater. If the stones behind the well were knocked loose, it is possible to climb the chimney up 30 ft. (Athletics DC 20) to the next tier of the hill.

10. Kitchen.

Wolfgang and his bodyguards usually stay here, relying on either the fireplace or a lantern for bright light. As in Area 9, a curtain blocks light, and a secret chimney behind the fireplace leads up and out.

Fighting Wolfgang.

Kell can arrange for Wolfgang's bodyguards to disable the traps, then leave and let the PCs in to take the doctor, who doesn't resist if he sees how outnumbered he is. Alternately, very persuasive PCs might get Professor Kindleton to convince Wolfgang to meet and talk. If the party just comes unannounced, though, Wolfgang and his guards put up a fight.

List of Adversaries.

- 2 bonesaw traps
- 3 Kell-Guild thugs
- Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen

Bonesaw Trap — Level 2 Obstacle
Trap — XP 125

The stones underfoot crunch, and a wire twangs. Before you can react, a serrated blade swings into your shin and is pulled sideways, digging into flesh and bone.

Perception

- DC 20: There's a bit more rubble here than seems randomly possible, almost like its hiding something.

Trigger

When a creature enters the trapped space, the trap attacks.

▶ **Attack**

Opportunity Action; Melee 1

Target: Triggering creature

Attack: +10 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+4 damage, and the target is knocked prone, and is slowed (save ends).

Special: When a creature leaves the trapped space, the trap resets.

Countermeasures

- **Athletics DC 10:** A character can hop over the rubble as part of a move, which avoids triggering the trap.
- **Thievery DC 13:** A character adjacent to the trap can disable it. Failure by 5 or more triggers the trap, and it attacks the character.

Kell-Guild Thug — Level 2 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, half-elf — XP 125

HP 40; **Bloodied** 20 — **Initiative** +1
AC 17, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 13 — **Perception** +1
Speed 6 — Low-Light Vision

Standard Actions

✓ **Jagged Shortsword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The blade digs past your armor and snags your flesh.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC

Hit: 1d6+6 damage, and if the target leaves its space before the end of the thug's next turn it takes an additional 6 damage.

Minor Actions

✓ **Kidnap** ✦ At-Will

The thug grabs you and uses you as a human shield.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target is grabbed (Escape DC 13). Until the target escapes, the thug can use the target as cover.

Str	15 (+3)	**Dex**	8 (+0)	**Wis**	8 (+0)
Con	16 (+4)	**Int**	8 (+0)	**Cha**	8 (+0)

Alignment Unaligned — **Languages** Common, Primordial

Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen Level 2 Elite Controller (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 250

HP 78; **Bloodied** 39 **Initiative** +7
AC 16, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 13 **Perception** +4
Speed 6
Saving Throws +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

▸ **Surgical Precision**
The doctor wields his rapier like a scalpel.
If a creature is granting combat advantage to Wolfgang and he hits with his *malice-wrought rapier*, Wolfgang chooses a limb to debilitate (save ends). A creature cannot attack with weapons or implements held in debilitated arms and gain no bonus to defenses from shields in that arm. A creature with a debilitated leg is slowed.

▸ **Pendant Defenses**
If Wolfgang is wearing the *canary in a coal mine pendant*, he gets a +5 bonus to all defenses during a surprise round. He also gains this bonus at the start of any encounter; it lasts until he takes his first turn.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Malice-Wrought Rapier** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The sword is just a keenly sharpened piece of metal, nothing fancy.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 damage, plus ongoing 5 damage (save ends).
Effect: The target automatically fails its first save against any conditions Wolfgang inflicts this turn.
Special: Once per day, if the rapier critically hits a creature whose origin is not natural (i.e., if it's aberrant, elemental, fey, immortal, or shadow), the target cannot perceive Wolfgang until the end of the encounter, or until he attacks.

Minor Actions

✓ **Stop Your Heart** (lightning) ✦ At-Will (1/round)
The doctor taps your chest, and your body spasms.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d6+5 lightning damage and the target is knocked prone and cannot stand (save ends).

▸ **Geometric Footwork** ✦ At-Will
Angling his blade to drive your attack away, the doctor steps cleanly past your guard.
Effect: Wolfgang shifts 1 square.

▸ **Physician** (healing) ✦ Recharges when first bloodied.
With a touch of the doctor's hand, the wound closes.
Effect: One ally adjacent to the doctor can spend a healing surge. If used on the Kell-Guild Thug, this heals 10 HP.

▸ **Heal Thyself** ✦ Recharges when first bloodied
Blue lightning limns the doctor's hand, and suddenly his ailment passes.
Effect: All conditions affecting the doctor that a save can end or that would end within a turn end now.

▸ **Pendant Flight** ✦ Daily
Effect: If Wolfgang is wearing the *canary in a coal mine pendant*, he can use this power to gain a fly speed equal to his speed until the end of his next turn.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Cheat Death Yet Again** (healing) ✦ Encounter
The doctor's limp body surges with electricity, and he stands in a sudden burst of life.
Trigger: The doctor starts his turn unconscious or dead.
Effect (No Action): The doctor heals 19 HP and stands up. All conditions affecting him end.

Skills Arcana +10, Bluff +5, Heal +15, Religion +10
Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 18 (+5) **Wis** 15 (+3)
Con 15 (+3) **Int** 18 (+5) **Cha** 9 (+0)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Abyssal, Common, Dwarven, Giant, Primordial
Equipment *malice-wrought rapier*, *canary in a coal mine pendant*

Tactics.

If the alarm triggers, one thug grabs a burning brand from the fireplace to use as a torch, then runs from Area 10 to Area 6. He splashes through the water to avoid the bonesaw trap, which produces enough noise to hopefully draw attention after him. He plans to wait by the lever in Area 6 and drop the gate to stymie pursuit. If he thinks people are focused on him, he'll run for the exit. Otherwise he'll come back and aid Wolfgang and the other thugs.

Meanwhile, the other two thugs wait by the curtains in Areas 9 and 10, each with torches of their own. Wolfgang hides in Area 10, ready to move if his guards say there's a clear path. If a fight breaks out, the thugs fall back into area 10, hoping to draw the PCs into a spot where Wolfgang can surprise them with his *stop your heart* power. Then the thugs will gang up on the stunned target.

Wolfgang won't believe PCs who claim to be law enforcement, so he fights until knocked out. Once his *cheat death yet again* power triggers, he might try to flee, but likely will just surrender.

Aftermath.

A combat encounter immediately follows this scene, but the enemies won't attack until the party tries to leave. The easiest way to keep the party from leaving right away, before they get a chance to heal, is to knock out at least one PC. That forces a short rest to get everyone on their feet, so when the party leaves they'll be ready for another combat.

Failing that, you might have Wolfgang say that the documents he was given are hidden nearby, and that they shouldn't leave without them, but that he won't reveal where they're hidden until he knows he can trust them. Don't try to make the stalling too obvious, lest the players feel rail-roaded.

It takes some work for the PCs to convince Wolfgang he can trust them. Even so, Wolfgang remains cautious: rather than handing over the documents, he'll tell his story from his perspective, then explain what he found in them, trying to suss out from the party's reactions whether they're sympathetic or hostile.



A distinguished, intelligent, and poised gentleman in his late 30s, Dr. von Recklinghausen speaks elegantly with a hard-to-place accent. He appears fairly innocuous, though his sharply-groomed goatee and the rapier at his hip give him a hint of menace.

Born into wealth in a minor nation in the Malice Lands known as Arrovia, Wolfgang pursued medicine and magic, learning surgery in Danor and spellcraft in Risur. But as the dwarven writings of Heid Eschatol became popular in his homeland, Wolfgang became convinced this focus on death was short-sighted in a world where resurrection was a known—if exceedingly rare—occurrence.

After years of intense study and experimentation, his marriage in tatters and his fortune nearly depleted, Wolfgang finally achieved his goal of combining medical knowledge with sorcery in order to restore a corpse to life. The party might learn more in Adventure Four, *Always on Time*, but suffice it to say that six months ago Wolfgang fled his estate and made for Risur. Traveling on a Danoran visa, the doctor hopes to reach Ber and keep traveling as long as possible.

Treasure.
Wolfgang wields a *malice-wrought rapier* and wears Nilasa's *canary in a coal mine pendant*. The PCs can recover these items if they defeat him, and if he is taken captive in the Hiding in Plain Sight encounter, Wolfgang drops his sword. If the party hands him over to Leone in the A Weight of Crumbling Stone encounter, Wolfgang gives the party these items before leaving.

What's in the Documents?

First, there are numerous reports and notes written by Security Chief Julian LeBrix, which reference financial irregularities of Danoran-owned factories. He posits that there's a campaign of smuggling that explicitly targets Danoran enterprises, though the huge number of reports—covering hundreds of witnesses from dozens of factories—makes it hard to synthesize an accurate narrative from all the data.

If the party get their hands on the documents, a cursory read-through reveals that all the smuggled items seem to be going to a single construction project, probably something like a large warship.

If they manage to hold onto the documents, with a few days of work and the aid of some RHC staff with more financial know-how, they can determine that many of the factories that have lost items to this smuggling operation were recently acquired by a variety of buyers. The buyers have no history of entrepreneurship, but a few actually have criminal records. If the party looks into their finances, they see that they were all paid shortly before they purchased the factories.

Should the party put the right effort in, this can be one way for them to discover that Reed Macbannin is behind the whole operation. By cross-checking different accounts and perhaps bribing some bank officials to share their books, they can find proof that the payments to acquire the factories were funded by Macbannin.

There is also a detailed report of certain factory visits by Julian LeBrix: he discovered flasks of strange black oil with floating motes of white light in them, and soon after he did, his investigation was shut down.

When telling his story, Wolfgang says that he recognizes the substance. It is called witchoil, a substance produced when the energy of the Bleak Gate bleeds into this world. It's rare to find even a few ounces, and Wolfgang can't imagine where someone would have gotten the pints LeBrix discovered. The oil, if burned, can stand in for ritual components, but no moral person would use it, since burning witchoil consumes souls that were awaiting their final rest.

If asked how he knows about it, Wolfgang looks a bit haunted and says that in his homeland, magic normally cannot be used, but witchoil is a reliable power source, so power hungry men find it easy to overcome their qualms.

Wolfgang as an Ally

After the last encounter, Wolfgang should have revived with 19 hit points. He'll fight alongside the party as long as possible, but he's Creed's first target. If the party bargained with Lorcan Kell to get Wolfgang without a fight, he'll be at full health, and a much stronger ally. If you want the next fight to remain a challenge, add an extra two skulking knife-fighters to balance out his presence.

Hiding in Plain Sight

Action. Tactical. Level 5.
Lurking enemies emerge from the shadows of the Bleak Gate to ambush the party, retrieve the documents, and abduct the doctor.

The steelshaper Leone Quital has brought allies from the Bleak Gate to help Cillian Creed recover Wolfgang and the documents. They wait nearby in a trio of carriages pulled by wraith horses, partially in the Bleak Gate and invisible to normal eyes. After the PCs enter the church they set their trap in motion.

Leone uses his steelshaping powers to embed a dozen steel bars (which he brought on the carriages) into the church's outer doorway. They can be pried free (Strength DC 16 each), but at least three must be removed before it's possible for a Small creature to squeeze out, or at least six for a Medium creature. Of course, Leone and his allies won't stand by and let the party free themselves without a fight.

Creed and a small strike force all wear temporary magical amulets that let them phase through the bars. Creed has a spare amulet that he intends to put on Wolfgang so they can abduct him.

The strike force enters the church and waits in Area 3. Creed eavesdrops, wanting to get as much information as possible from Wolfgang before striking. When it sounds like the party is about to leave, Creed and his squad sneak in. They disable the alarm and other traps in their way, if they are still active, and get as close as possible to the party. Characters with Passive Perception 16 or higher are not surprised.

List of Adversaries.

2 skulking nethermancers
Cillian Creed, shadow operative
2 skulking knife-fighters

Skulking Nethermancer	Level 2 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 125
HP 35; **Bloodied** 17	**Initiative** +1
AC 16, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 14	**Perception** +2
Speed 6	Darkvision

Standard Actions

⊘ **Orb Conk** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The mage's obsidian orb orbits around her and smashes you if you come too close.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8+5 damage, and any light sources the target carries are suppressed until the end of the nethermancer's next turn.

▸ **Shatter the Light** (cold) ✦ At-Will
Black tendrils crackle within the mage's obsidian orb, and then your sunrod explodes with frigid energy.
Effect: Choose a target within 10 squares that is carrying a light source. That light source is destroyed unless it is magical. Magical light sources are suppressed until the end of the encounter. The target and each creature adjacent to it take 5 cold damage.

⟋ **Ray of Enfeeblement** (necrotic) ✦ Encounter
An invisible lance from the mage's orb pierces your chest, and your limbs grow weak.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +5 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d4+6 necrotic damage and the target is weakened until the end of the nethermancer's next turn.

Skills Arcana +9, Stealth +6

Str	9 (+0)	**Dex**	10 (+1)	**Wis**	13 (+2)
Con	11 (+1)	**Int**	17 (+4)	**Cha**	9 (+0)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Cillian Creed, Shadow Operative Level 5 Elite Lurker
Medium shadow humanoid, human XP 400

HP 96; **Bloodied** 48 **Initiative** +10
AC 19, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 18 **Perception** +5
Speed 7; **Resist** insubstantial Darkvision
Saving Throws +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

▸ **Hide in Shadows**
The silhouette of the shadow man merges with the gloom around him, and he vanishes. Suddenly, your own shadow seems reach out for you.
Creed can make a Stealth check to become hidden when he has concealment instead of needing total concealment. While Creed is adjacent to any enemy, he is invisible.

▸ **Hideous Reveal**
Light burns away the man's matte black skin, revealing for a moment raw muscle and sinew and weeping rivulets of blood before his cloak of shadowy flesh reforms.
Radiant damage ignores Creed's insubstantial trait. Whenever Creed takes radiant damage, he loses insubstantial and *hide in shadows* until the end of the next turn of the creature that dealt that damage.

▸ **Quickdraw**
Once per round as a free action Creed can draw, stow, or swap weapons or similar items.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Eclipse Claw** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Shadowy claws lash out from across the room, dig into your eyes, and unleash a gush of blood.
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+4 necrotic damage and the target takes ongoing 5 damage and is blinded (save ends both).

⊘ **Chrome Pistol** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The shadow aims a pristinely polished chrome pistol in its black talons.
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+2 damage, or 2d6+14 on a crit.
Special: Load minor.

▸ **Blinding Skirmish** (necrotic, weapon) ✦ At-Will
Effect: Creed uses *eclipse claw* and *chrome pistol* in any order, and can move 2 squares before, after, or between them.

✓ **Chrome Syringe** (poison, weapon) ✦ Recharge on miss
Light gleams off a metal needle as it plunges into the flesh of your neck.
Requirement: Creed must be hidden from the target.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The target takes 3d10+7 poison damage and is dazed and takes ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends both). This damage cannot kill, only render unconscious.
Aftereffect: The target is dazed until the end of Creed's next turn.

Minor Actions

▸ **Deceptive Veil** (Illusion) ✦ Encounter
Effect: Creed assumes the appearance of any medium humanoid creature. He can end this effect as a free action. An Insight check (DC 22) lets an observer notice that Creed is disguised by an illusion. When he's disguised with his original face, which he wears normally, the DC increases to 32.

Triggered Actions

✧ **Torrent of Shadows** (necrotic) ✦ Encounter
The shadow man growls in pain, and as his blood strikes the ground your own shadow comes alive and thrashes in shared agony.
Trigger: Creed is first bloodied.
Attack (No Action): Close Burst 10 (creatures in burst); +8 vs. Will
Hit: The target is immobilized (save ends).
Effect: Creed ends any immobilized or slowed condition affecting him, teleports 6 squares, and gains phasing until the end of his next turn.

Skills Arcana +9, Bluff +12, Insight +10, Stealth +11
Str 12 (+3) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 16 (+5)
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 14 (+4) **Cha** 14 (+4)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Primordial

Skulking Knife-Fighter Level 2 Brute
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 125

HP 42; **Bloodied** 21 **Initiative** +3
AC 14, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 12 **Perception** +2
Speed 6 Darkvision

Standard Actions

⊘ **Slashing Flurry** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The knife-fighter slices you a half dozen times before you realize you've been hit.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 6d4 damage.

⊘ **Pistol** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6+7 damage, or 1d6+15 damage on a crit.
Special: Load standard.

Skills Stealth +8, Thievery +8
Str 10 (+1) **Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 13 (+2)
Con 12 (+2) **Int** 12 (+2) **Cha** 9 (+0)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Tactics.

The nethermancers strike first, trying to suppress the party's light. Creed moves adjacent to Wolfgang and tries to inject him with the syringe, intending to drag an unconscious Wolfgang out while avoiding a fight, using his spare amulet to pull him through Leone's barrier of bars.

If the fight goes long, the strike team assumes they can take the party, but Creed is cautious. When he is bloodied he flees to Leone.

Leone is accompanied by three additional nethermancers, six additional knife-fighters, three non-combatant carriage drivers, and three horse-shaped wraiths that pull the carriages. They dramatically outnumber the party, and if any PC tries to get through the barred entrance, the knife-fighters outside take turns shooting at him, three per turn. It should be obvious to the PCs that they're pinned down.

Aftermath.

The strike team works docks security in the Bleak Gate, so they know that there is activity in the shadow plane, but they know nothing about the construction facility or the colossus. They're sternly secretive, and they know about Leone's back-up plan, so if captured, they expect to be handed over as hostages. If the strike force fails to drag out Wolfgang, or if Creed gets the doctor but not the documents, Leone prefers not to waste any more men. He switches to his back-up plan, detailed below.

If Creed and company manage to defeat the party, they leave them for dead and scour the church until they find the documents. The church's hallowed aura keeps the PCs from dying, and about an hour later they awaken when a slum-dweller tries to loot one of their bodies.

Treasure.

Wolfgang wields a *malice-wrought rapier* and wears Nilasa's *canary in a coal mine pendant*. The PCs can recover these items if they defeat him. If he is taken captive in the "Hiding in Plain Sight" encounter, Wolfgang drops his sword. If the party hands him over to Leone in the "A Weight of Crumbling Stone" encounter, Wolfgang gives the party these items before leaving.

A Weight of Crumbling Stone

Social. Real-Time. Level 13.

Should the ambush fail, a foe with daunting power bars the party's escape and poses escalating threats until they cave, or are caved-in.

If the strike force is defeated or driven off and Leone does not have both the doctor and the documents in his possession, he orders two of the carriages away, keeping the third in case he needs to make a quick escape. One goes to fetch a hostage, the other to retrieve enough firedust to collapse the cliff face. If either the doctor or the documents have been retrieved, Creed stashes them in the remaining carriage.

He directs his remaining men—six knife-fighters and three nethermancers—to cover the entrance. He then telekinetically pulls a metal folding chair from his carriage, as well as a metal case that contains his favorite bromago cheese and a bottle of wine from his own vineyard in Crisillyir (marked with a wax seal that a wine expert could recognize as matching Quital wine). He sits down to relax, using his telekinetic control of metal to hover a platter of cheese and cut slices as he enjoys his bottle, all while keeping an eye on the exit.

If the PCs are careful they can overhear him talking with Creed, who wears his disguise as Officer Porter, but still drips a bit of black blood. Creed says that "according to Kell," there's only one way in or out of the church, and that the air vents are too small to climb out through. (This is not accurate.) Leone nods and tells him, "go tell your boss that the situation is under control."

Leone wants to talk to the party, and if no PC comes to the exit, after he finishes his first cup of wine he'll call out that he wants to parlay.

From the barred exit, the party can see Leone sitting out in the open. His nine allies wait by the cover of the carriage, or stand out of direct line of sight, but can be heard moving about and occasionally yelling at the locals that they should keep away if they know what's good for them.

Stage One: The Easy Way.

Leone Quital introduces himself and explains that he doesn't see any reason to shed more blood. He says that he just came to get the doctor and the documents in his possession. Once he has both of those, he'll depart, and the PCs can take their time prying loose the steel bars.

If the party tries to offer other terms, Leone explains that this isn't a negotiation. If they try to stall, he says that in an hour the easy option goes away, and things get much less pleasant. He then pulls out a pocket watch, checks the time, and smiles.

If the PCs claim they don't have the documents, Leone says he's confident they're in the church somewhere and suggests they look quickly before the hour is up. Wolfgang really doesn't want to be handed over; he thinks they should prepare a defense for when the enemy tries to dig them out, or possibly send smoke signals through the kitchen fireplace.

If the party agrees, Leone does not keep his word. He'll bend the bars to let Wolfgang or the documents out, then close them to keep the PCs from getting any ideas. Once he has what he wants, he tells the party to wait. Skip stage two, and move to stage three.

Stage Two: Hostage.

If the party waits for an hour, a carriage arrives with an additional nethermancer and a hostage inside. This might be Lynn Kindleton, Heward Sechim, or a friend or contact of the PCs'. The hostage has been shadowed in preparation of this scenario, was caught unaware by a magical sleep effect, then tossed into a carriage, bound and blind-folded.

Leone walks the hostage to within view of the entrance and lets the party talk with them to prove that it's not an illusion. Then he revises his offer. Hand over what he wants within an hour, or he kills the hostage. He holds up his pocket watch, smiles, and then pours a cup of wine for himself and his hostage.

Wolfgang doesn't trust Leone, and would need to be convinced to trade himself for the life of someone else. If the party agrees, it goes much as above, except he puts the hostage inside the church with the party.

If the party refuses, Leone makes a show of counting down, having his men hold the hostage as he prepares to slit the hostage's throat. When the countdown reaches zero, Leone slashes open the person's jugular and tosses them to the ground in front of the entrance.

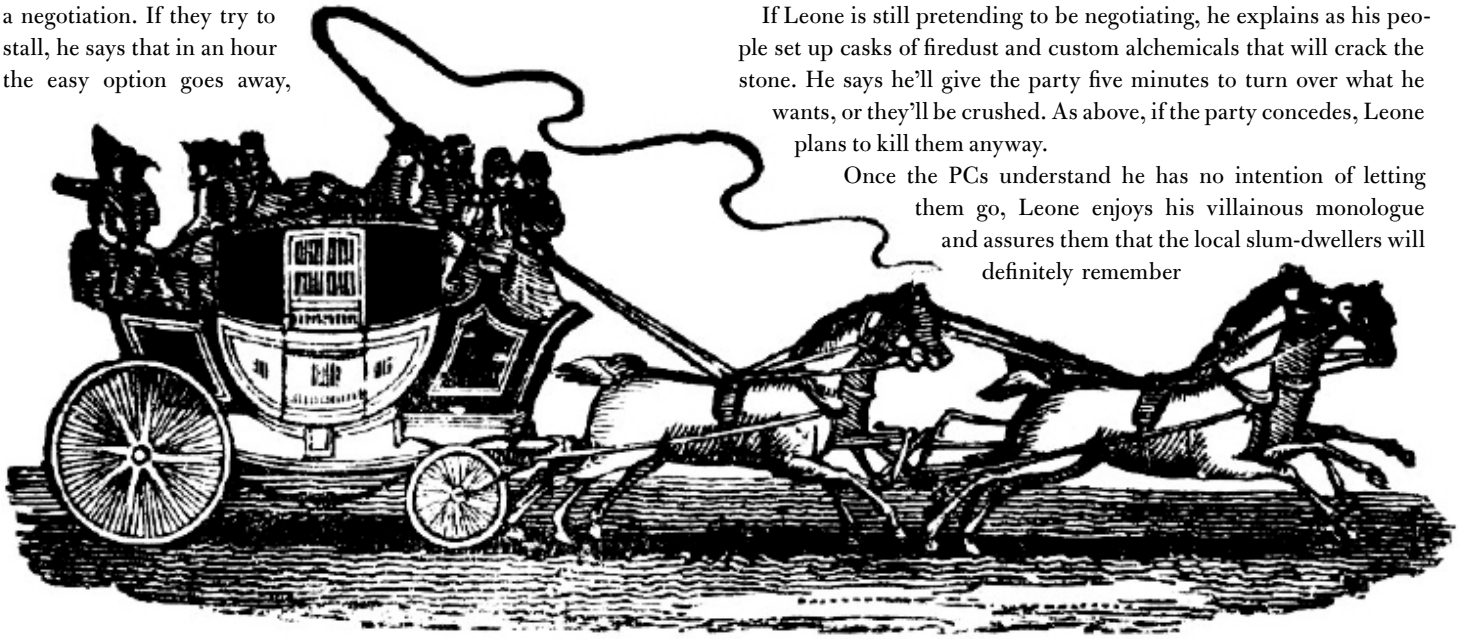
Move to stage three.

Stage Three: Death.

Eventually the other carriage arrives, bearing the materials necessary to set off an explosion and collapse the cliff face. Leone assumes this will either crush the party directly, or seal them in until they suffocate or starve. The hill is sturdy enough, though, that only the chapel will collapse, giving the party a chance to survive and find a way out.

If Leone is still pretending to be negotiating, he explains as his people set up casks of firedust and custom alchemicals that will crack the stone. He says he'll give the party five minutes to turn over what he wants, or they'll be crushed. As above, if the party concedes, Leone plans to kill them anyway.

Once the PCs understand he has no intention of letting them go, Leone enjoys his villainous monologue and assures them that the local slum-dwellers will definitely remember



their heroism. The charges are all set in locations the PCs can't see from inside the church, and after only a few minutes Leone and his force withdraw, unspooling 30-ft. fuses. They load into the carriages, and Leone triggers the fuses at range. The carriages pull away, and thirty seconds later the charges detonate.

Anyone in Area 1 or 3 when the explosion goes off is killed instantly. Otherwise, the party is unharmed, just assumed dead.

Sneaking Out.

The party might try to sneak away, either out the chimney or latrine tunnel during negotiations, or perhaps tearing open the exit at the last second after the fuses are lit and getting out of range before detonation.

If the PCs go out the latrine tunnel, they must succeed Stealth checks (DC 10) to avoid being noticed by one of Leone's men, which would set off a chase through The Nettles. The PCs have an advantage here, since the locals have a strange fondness for the doctor, and will interfere with the pursuers.

Sneaking out the chimney allows the party to easily avoid detection. If the party runs out the front entrance, one of the carriage drivers spots them fleeing, but Leone decides getting away before people investigate the explosion is more important.

Fighting Leone.

Leone and his unique magnetic powers make another brief appearance at the end of Adventure Four, *Always on Time*; he plays a larger role in Adventure Five, *Cauldron-Born*, before finally meeting his end in Adventure Seven, *Schism*.

His stats are presented in Appendix G.



Leone plays a limited role in this adventure, and the key traits he should demonstrate are his fondness for fine bromago cheese, his mastery of steelshaping and telekinetic control of metal, and his feigned romantic notion of honor, which should be easily revealed as false when he tries to bury the party alive. Leone has a larger presence in Adventure Five, *Cauldron-Born*, and Adventure Seven, *Schism*.

Aftermath.

If nothing else, the party can survive the collapse, then be rescued by police who dig them out. Stubborn or suicidal parties can prevent the villains from getting Wolfgang or the documents, which gives them a slight leg-up on figuring out that Macbannin's their target. If the party loses both the doctor and the documents, it's a set-back, but should motivate them to finish the case.

When the PCs finally do return to Macbannin's manor and explore his underground laboratory, they will find Doctor von Recklinghausen, if he was taken captive.



Thread Four: Conspiracy

This act details events that occur after the party visits Cauldron Hill, as Reed Macbannin attempts to silence anybody he thinks might know about the conspiracy. These events might occur during the same days as events in the other threads, depending on when the party resolves each thread.

Factory Aflame

Action. Tactical. Level 5.

It's a race against time to stop arsonists before they start a fire that will spread out of control.

This encounter occurs after the party escorts Nevard the skyseer to Cauldron Hill's peak, shortly before sunrise the next day. Whether the PCs rush down the mountain or take time to call in reinforcements, when they arrive the arsonists are still setting up. Only if the party truly dallies will the fire start without them.

The dragonborn brothers Eberardo and Valando have been setting fires in Flint for months, on orders from Cillian Creed. They met in person twice, Cillian disguised as a nondescript businessman, then communicated solely by letters. Payments were through dead-drops. The brothers still have a few of the letters so they can verify the handwriting of new missives. When they're not out setting fires, they have a lair in an old tunnel underneath a firegem depository in Parity Lake.

The fires help Lorcan Kell acquire factories from distressed owners, to smooth the flow of material to the colossus. The brothers don't know the reason for their jobs; they just enjoy lighting fires.

After the party came to Macbannin to go up Cauldron Hill, the mayor had Creed arrange for the brothers to burn down Heward Sechim's factory. When the party actually goes up the hill, a messenger delivers a letter to the brothers, setting them into action. Now, with four human allies in tow, they begin setting up accelerants and long-burning firegems around the edge and roof of the factory.

Wildfire.

The brothers excel in burning out buildings without causing their fires to spread. However, the brothers aren't aware that a factory next door to Sechim's Alkahest & Etchings processes firedust in a way that makes it volatile enough to combust when it gets too hot.

If the party doesn't intervene, the fire starts shortly before sunrise, burns down through the roof, and then eats out the innards of the building. But rather than leaving a husk, the heat causes the firedust factory next door to erupt in flame, and the resulting fire burns out of control, spreading throughout the whole district.

The city will do its best to put out the blaze, a massive operation that takes two days before the fire is contained. In the aftermath, not only will dozens of factories and hundreds of homes be destroyed, but thousands of factory workers will perish because they were locked in by their bosses. Then, rather than a low rumble of protests, the city will erupt in violent riots almost as destructive as the fires themselves.

Arson in Progress.

When the party arrives, they probably notice lanterns in the alley between Sechim's factory and the adjacent firedust factory. The small protests outside the two adjacent factories have dispersed this late at night, but a pair of sleepy guards stand in front of the chained doors of each. They're disinterested in the arsonists, who came with a wagon full of supplies, making them look like they were delivering material to Sechim's factory.

Valando, the magic-using pyromancer, has climbed to the roof and is setting up a pulley to lift the supplies. Eberardo, the fire-breathing warrior, coordinates his minions on the ground. They're fairly easy to sneak up on, and the arsonists assume people who don't come into the alley are on other business.

If the PCs approach without immediate violence, Eberardo engages them in conversation, trying to gauge their forces while encouraging them to leave and avoid a fight. Valando hides above (Perception DC 13), waiting to strike in case a fight breaks out.

List of Adversaries.

- 4 Flint arsonists
- Valando, dragonborn pyromancer
- Eberardo, dragonborn arsonist

Flint Arsonist	Level 5 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 50
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion	**Initiative** +3
AC 16, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15	**Perception** +1
Speed 6; **Resist** 5 fire	
Traits	
▶ **Sturdy Minion**	
He's not afraid of a little fire, but he doesn't look up for a fight.	
When an arsonist would take damage from any source, even a missed attack, if that source does less than 13 damage, the arsonist takes no damage and instead becomes bloodied. The next time any source would deal damage to it, even a missed attack, the arsonist is reduced to 0 HP.	
Standard Actions	
⊘ **Arsonist's Short Sword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic	
The arsonist slices at you, and whenever you try to extinguish the flames on your clothes, the man does his best to keep you burning.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 8 damage, and the target cannot save against ongoing fire damage as long as it is adjacent to the arsonist.	
Str 15 (+4) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 8 (+1)	
Con 10 (+2) **Int** 9 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+2)	
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Primordial	

Valando, Dragonborn Pyromancer Level 5 Elite Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, dragonborn XP 500

HP 102; **Bloodied** 51 **Initiative** +3
AC 17, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 19 **Perception** +3
Speed 6; **Resist** 5 fire
Saving Throws +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

☼ **Staff of Arson** ✦ Aura 3
Allies within the aura deal an extra ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends) on a critical hit.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Quarterstaff** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8+6 damage.
Effect: The target and each creature adjacent to it gain ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

▸ **Draw Fire Mana** (fire, implement) ✦ At-Will
The dragonborn thumps his staff on the ground, and the air suddenly glows red hot. The heat and light coalesces into a burning mote atop the dragonborn's staff.
Effect: Creatures within 3 squares take 10 fire damage, and Valando's encounter powers recharge.

✲ **Arson Bolt** (fire, implement) ✦ Encounter
A bead of shining fire flies from the crown of the dragonborn's staff and ignites the ground at your feet.
Attack: Area Burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +9 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d8+6 fire damage.
Effect: The burst becomes a zone of fire until the end of the encounter. Any creature that enters the zone or starts its turn there takes 5 fire damage.

✧ **Torchstep** (fire, implement, teleportation) ✦ Encounter
The scaly wizard teleports to safety in a blinding conflagration.
Attack: Close Burst 1 (creatures in burst); +9 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8+12 fire damage, and the target cannot see anything farther than 3 squares away from it until the end of Valando's next turn.
Effect: Valando teleports 5 squares.

▸ **Flaming Wall** (fire, implement) ✦ Daily
The wizard swings his staff, and an arc of fire rises up into a burning wall.
Effect: Valando creates a zone (wall 8 within 10 squares), up to 4 squares high. The wall lasts until the end of his next turn. Any creature that ends its turn adjacent to the wall takes 7 fire damage. Any creature that enters the wall or ends its turn there takes 15 fire damage. Entering a wall space requires 3 extra squares of movement. The wall blocks line of sight.
Sustain Minor: The wall persists.

Minor Actions

✧ **Dragonborn Breath** ✦ Recharge when first bloodied
Flames burst from the dragonborn's mouth, and they cling and crawl across you like living things.
Attack: Close Blast 3 (creatures in blast); +8 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d6+6 fire damage and the target takes ongoing 5 fire (save ends).

Triggered Actions

▸ **Dragon Tail Style** (weapon) ✦ Encounter
In a surprisingly elegant move, the dragonborn pivots to track your movement and smacks you with his quarterstaff.
Trigger: An enemy moves to a position adjacent to Valando.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Valando uses *quarterstaff* against the triggering target. If he hits, he pushes the target 1 square and knocks it prone.

Skills Arcana +11, Athletics +10, Bluff +9, Insight +9
Str 16 (+5) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 15 (+4) **Int** 18 (+6) **Cha** 15 (+4)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic, Giant, Primordial

Eberardo, Dragonborn Arsonist Level 5 Elite Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, dragonborn XP 500

HP 134; **Bloodied** 67 **Initiative** +5
AC 21, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 17 **Perception** +9
Speed 5; **Resist** 5 fire
Saving Throws +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

▸ **Defender Greatsword**
Eberardo's greatsword lets him know the conditions affecting his allies who are within 20 squares, and whether they are bloodied, unconscious, dying, or dead.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Arsonist's Greatsword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
You're too busy avoiding the dragonborn's massive greatsword to worry about putting out that little flame slowly burning you alive.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12+6 damage.
Effect: The target cannot save against ongoing fire damage as long as it is adjacent to Eberardo.

✓ **Dragon Fangs** (fire) ✦ At-Will
The dragonborn pulls you to his face and clamps his fangs into your shoulder. Fire flickers in the wound and sears through your veins as he tosses you to the ground.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d12+6 damage, and the target is slid 2 squares to a space adjacent to Eberardo, then knocked prone. The target takes ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Minor Actions

✧ **Dragonborn Breath** ✦ Recharge when first bloodied
Flames burst from the dragonborn's mouth, and they cling and crawl across you like living things.
Attack: Close Blast 3 (creatures in blast); +8 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d6+6 fire damage and the target takes ongoing 5 fire (save ends).

Triggered Actions

▸ **Cut the Curse** ✦ Daily
As the massive greatsword slashes you, you see the effect of one of your previous attacks undone.
Trigger: Eberardo hits a target with an attack using his greatsword.
Effect (Free Action): One condition that was created by the target struck and that is affecting one of Eberardo's allies ends.

▸ **Dragon Tail Style** (weapon) ✦ Encounter
In a surprisingly elegant move, the dragonborn pivots to track your movement and smacks you with the flat of his blade.
Trigger: An enemy moves to a position adjacent to Eberardo.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Eberardo uses *greatsword* against the triggering target. If he hits, he pushes the target 1 square and knocks it prone.

Skills Athletics +13, Bluff +8, Insight +9, Intimidate +8, Perception +9
Str 22 (+8) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 19 (+6) **Int** 11 (+2) **Cha** 12 (+3)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic, Giant, Primordial

Terrain.

Street lights illuminate 3 squares in each direction. The roof of Sechim's factory has four vents surrounded by a miasma of noxious gas. A creature that enters or ends its turn in one of these squares takes 2 acid damage. A water tower on top of the building could be knocked over (20 damage, or Strength DC 15), causing a torrent that would put out fire below and knock creatures in its path possibly over the edge of the building.

The various levels of Sechim's factory and the adjacent factories can be reached by exterior ladders. If the fight ends up inside, both buildings are cluttered with dangerous terrain.



Infamous bandits from Ber, the dragonborn brothers were run out of their country and came to Flint, lured by the prospect of a city powered by steam and fire. Valando has turned youthful pyromania and a knack for spellcraft into a grand talent for arson. Eberardo, meanwhile, embraces the natural might of his race, and indeed most people assume he's a dull brute, when in truth he's nearly as clever as his wizard brother.

A smooth talker, Eberardo comes across as a charming leader, but he's willing to sacrifice allies without qualm in order to get himself and his brother out of trouble. Valando prefers to keep quiet and watch from afar, both on missions and when working with potentially treacherous criminals. After years dodging the law together, they've done many a heartless thing to stay alive, but they'd never betray each other.





Tactics.

As soon as possible, Valando creates a *flaming wall* in the alley, making sure to include the space their wagon occupies, and if possible to curve the wall to block off the PCs from his brother. The wall's flames set off the materials in the wagon, and they will burn fiercely for hours unless put out with massive amounts of water or cold damage. He tries to sustain the wall each round, and then he and his brother flee.

The minions, thinking that Eberardo is huge and imposing, expect him to stay and fight, so they're a bit slow to follow, which is exactly as the brothers plan, since it gives them more protection.

If either brother is slowed or trapped, though, both will stay and fight until they have an opening to run. Then they shout to each other in Draconic, and continue to flee.

Aftermath.

It's likely that, especially after surviving Cauldron Hill, the party won't be able to take the brothers. Thankfully, they don't want to press their luck, so the party may have to find another way to track them down. A man-hunt could turn up their lair, or the party could get help from Morgan Cippiano.

If called upon, the Family leader would use his network of criminals to offer the brothers a quick job and enough money that they could safely flee the city. He then would tip the party off to the location, so they could wait in ambush. This gives you an opportunity to use any locations that the party otherwise avoided, perhaps repurposing Danisca Waryeye's shop as another random building.



If the party captures the brothers, they resist talking at first. Then, when you feel it's time for the party to discover Macbannin's role, the brothers break. The threat of execution looms, and they are willing to sell out their boss in exchange for being deported to Ber. Failing that, they at least want to be imprisoned somewhere away from Flint, so they don't have to worry about the families of arson victims.

They don't know Macbannin himself was involved, but they have letters Creed delivered, and they know the courier who delivered them, a freelance carriage driver named **Albert Eccleston**. Eccleston heard enough gossip to know that the man who gave him the letters took carriages to and from Cauldron Hill, and that various carriage drivers managed to figure out there was one guy wearing various disguises going on different missions.

Alternately, the PCs might use a ritual like Magic Map to track the writer of the letters. Either way, after the party defeats the arsonist brothers, it's only a matter of time before they get pointed to Macbannin.

Screams and Security

Puzzle. Montage. Level 3.

Unnatural energies signal a possible threat to Skyseer Nevard's imminent rally.

The evening after the party takes Nevard up Cauldron Hill, word spreads that the old skyseer is gathering a rally, to be held the next afternoon. He has called in all his favors to help increase attendance, and he claims his vision is critical to protecting Flint from disaster. The rally will occur in Bosum Strand at Dawn Square, a beautiful grassy park that can comfortably hold ten thousand people.

Depending on whether the party stopped the arsonists, this scene could occur with the backdrop of an out of control fire and wild riots in the streets. Even if there is relative peace, Gale asked the party to protect Nevard. And if that's not enough to motivate them, their boss Stover Delft orders the party to attend the rally, because if a riot breaks out, the police are too disliked to quell it, but Nevard at least trusts them.

This Warrants Investigation.

The morning before the event, one or more of the party's contacts in Bosum Strand (or someone from Thinking Man's Tavern, if they need a contact) comes to the party with strange news. People are reporting an intense uneasy feeling in a several-block area, not far from Dawn Square, and the air smells like burnt engine grease. The oddity just started last night.

If the party investigates, Spirit Mediums can hear dozens of screaming voices echoing through the streets, but that still only narrows down the search a bit. Perceptive PCs might notice odd slicks of oil in the streets which burn to the touch. The party might just search door to door, but the fastest method is to use the ritual Gale provided to detect energy from the Bleak Gate. This leads them to a gated warehouse. There are three doors, but two are blocked from the outside with barrels and crates. The third is pad-locked, but accessible.

The warehouse contains large amounts of munitions, and is normally guarded by military forces, but they were dismissed overnight, and their replacements were never notified. If the party asks around, some kids saw a group of men wheeling crates filled with jaguars into the warehouse around midnight, then leaving and sealing it up from outside.

The situation is that Macbannin is worried Nevard might have had a vision that could warn the Unseen Court of the colossus and ruin the secrecy of their project. But the old skyseer is being careful to hide his location until the speech, so Macbannin has approved the creation of horrific creatures, infused with witchoil, that can slip through the veil from the Bleak Gate and attack during Nevard's speech.

The warehouse has been set-up as a short-term laboratory. By the time Nevard's speech begins, the place should be deserted, but the party has a chance to learn about the plan and get clues of how to disrupt it.

Monsters, Inc.

Inside the warehouse, eight technicians who work in the subterranean laboratory on Macbannin's manor have just finished infusing a bunch of poor jaguars with necrotic energy that rotted their flesh and left them constantly bleeding rivulets of witchoil. Tattered leather collars around their necks make them obey the commands of Cillian Creed, who holds an attuned leash.

A rusted iron ring sits on the floor of the warehouse, and it acts as partial portal between the two worlds. Inside Macbannin's laboratory, the technicians and Creed passed through a set of similar rings while wearing amulets, allowing them to shift into the Bleak Gate. They then traveled, accompanied by a golem that carried their supplies, to the warehouse's analogue in that world. By stepping into the iron ring and using the golem as a focus, they were able to shift partially back into this world.

They then performed their procedures on the jaguars, which were firmly in this world. The technicians transferred their amulets to the cats, which let them shift slightly into the Bleak Gate when they stepped into the rusted ring. Cillian Creed took the cats, now in the veil between worlds, and headed for Dawn Square to prepare the attack on Nevard.

When the PCs arrive, the technicians are stuck in a half-state, only partially in this world. They plan to clean up the monster-making studio, then step through the ring along with the golem, letting them shift enough into the Bleak Gate that they could sneak unseen back to Cauldron Hill. The PCs need to stop them before they destroy all the useful evidence.

Sneaking In.

The one door that is easily accessible, of course, is warded with a ritual alarm spell that alerts the technicians. The two back doors and the windows 20 ft. up are not alarmed, and the technicians are very distracted (Passive Perception 5). The golem won't attack until the techs come under attack or give it orders.



Bleak Golem	Level 3 Solo Controller
Large shadow animate (construct)	XP 750
HP 184; **Threshold I** 123; **Threshold II** 62	**Initiative** –1
AC 18, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 14	**Perception** +1
Speed 4	Darkvision
Resist 5 necrotic	
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 1	

Traits

▸ **Infused with Decay**

A bleak golem has two HP thresholds. When its HP are reduced to certain thresholds, it gains some powers and loses access to others. It counts as bloodied when it is reduced to 123 HP or below.

▸ **Bleak Aura**

The golem's attacks smear its target with witchoil and unleash the energy of the Bleak Gate.

A creature affected by *bleak aura* gains ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends). Whenever the affected creature takes this damage, each creature within 3 squares of it takes 5 necrotic damage.

▸ **Hulking** (Stage 1 & 2)

When a bleak golem is subjected to forced movement, reduce the number of squares moved by 1. If it would be knocked prone, it can make a saving throw to remain standing.

Due to its immense metallic weight, if it climbs a surface less sturdy than stone (such as wooden crates), it instead destroys that terrain.

When the golem is reduced to 62 HP or below, it loses this trait.

▸ **Witchoil Ward** (Stage 1)

Dull etched runes in the golem's torso hold in gallons of witchoil, and disrupting those wards is hazardous.

If the golem starts its turn dazed or stunned, the runes flash with crimson light, and each creature within 3 squares is dazed until the start of the golem's next turn, as overwhelming wails of the spirits in the witchoil assault those nearby.

When the golem is reduced to 123 HP or below, it loses this trait.

☼ **Howl of Souls** ✦ Aura 3 (Stage 2)
The howl of a hundred trapped souls pour from the golem's breached armor.
The golem gains this trait when it is reduced to 123 HP or below. Any creature that ends its turn within the aura is dazed until the end of its next turn.
When the golem is reduced to 62 HP or below, it loses this trait.

▸ **Hollow Stalker** (Stage 3)
Combat damage has torn away plates of armor and cracked the husk's torso, leaving only a lean skeleton of rusted steel. The husk still drips black oil as it speeds across the battlefield.
The golem gains this trait when it is reduced to 62 HP or below. The golem's speed increases to 6, it gains a Climb speed of 6, and at an Initiative count 10 higher than its own initiative it can take an additional move action. If it is dazed, stunned, immobilized, or slowed at that point, instead of moving it can make a saving throw against each of those conditions.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Witchoil Fist** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Black oil leaks between the rusted joints of the golem's iron fist, and after it smashes you, droplets wither your flesh and emit waves of rotting energy.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 4d8+4 damage.
Effect: If the golem has 124 HP or more, the target is affected by *bleak aura* (see above).

✲ **Hurl Object** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The golem hefts a crate as large as a man and hurls it at you.
Effect: The golem picks up a crate or similar object in an adjacent space. After the attack, the crate's space is empty, and the targeted area becomes difficult terrain.
Attack: Area Burst 1 within 5 (creatures in burst); +6 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6+4 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

▸ **Rusty Rampage** ✦ At-Will
Effect: The golem uses *witchoil fist* and *hurl object*.

Move Actions

▸ **Clear the Way** ✦ Encounter
The golem thrashes its limbs, knocking aside creatures and obstacles.
The golem moves its speed and can enter the spaces of Medium obstacles (Medium creatures, or objects of similar size). When it enters an obstacle's space, it pushes that obstacle 1 square. It cannot push obstacles into occupied squares (but can push diagonally to get obstacles out of its way). If it cannot push an obstacle, it cannot enter that obstacle's space. Entering a creature's space in this way does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Witchoil Leak** ✦ Encounter
The cracked steel flesh of the golem seeps oil and flickers with light the color of blood. The howl of a hundred trapped souls pour from the breached armor, and a geyser of black oil sprays from its latest wound.
Trigger: The golem drops to 123 HP or fewer.
Effect (No Action): The creature that last hit the golem is affected by a *bleak aura* (see above). Any negative conditions or effects affecting the golem end. The golem rolls a new initiative, its *clear the way* power recharges, and it gains another action point. The golem loses the *witchoil ward* trait and gains the *howl of souls* trait.

▸ **Witchoil Breach** ✦ Encounter
The crimson runes on the golem flicker and die. No longer able to hold in the roiling black oil, the golem's torso shatters, and the horrible fluid explodes outward. The golem teeters, falls, but catches itself on one mangled forelimb. Scraps of metal that were once its fist scrape the ground like claws, and it begins to lope toward you with sudden agility.
Trigger: The golem drops to 62 HP or fewer.
Effect (No Action): The golem pushes each creature within 5 squares one square. Those creatures are affected by a *bleak aura*. Any negative conditions or effects affecting the golem end. It rolls a new initiative, its *clear the way* power recharges, and it gains another action point. The golem loses the *howl of souls* and *hulking* traits, and gains the *hollow stalker* trait. The golem then makes a charge attack.

Skills Athletics +14

Str	24 (+8)	**Dex**	6 (–1)	**Wis**	10 (+1)
Con	14 (+3)	**Int**	3 (–3)	**Cha**	6 (–1)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** understands Common

Terrain.

The warehouse is full of crates which can be climbed to get out of the golem's reach, and catwalks above that. A chain fence cordons off the area just inside the entrance, and the gate into the rest of the warehouse is locked (Thievery DC 20). Another chain fence surrounds the monster-making operation and the rusted ring, and it has a latch, but is not locked. The area within the laboratory fence is brightly lit by three torches; the rest of the warehouse is dimly lit.

Creatures on the opposite side of a fence are treated as having cover with respect to characters armed with projectiles or ray-like attacks, or total cover with respect to characters armed with thrown weapons.

Tactics.

The golem tries to keep the party away from the laboratory fence; after it hits a few times, it should become obvious that standing and fighting it in melee is a bad idea, and that clustering together subjects the PCs to its *bleak aura*. If the PCs take to high ground, the golem does its best to knock their perch down; it uses *hurl object* if they get to the catwalk.

Meanwhile the technicians scramble to set fire to documents and destroy supplies. Once they've caused enough havoc, the technicians will take turns waiting in the center of the rusted ring, ready to flee. When the golem starts its turn, its internal structure flickers with white light, and one technician in the circle disappears, slipping back into the Bleak Gate. A PC in the ring is unaffected, since the technicians are already partially in that shadowy plane.

The techs all have defenses of 10, and 1 hit point. If injured, they fall and can be interrogated, but after five minutes, the magic keeping them in this world fades, and they vanish into the Bleak Gate.

After all the techs are gone, the golem will try to step into the ring itself and vanish at the start of its next turn. If the party destroys the golem, they can stop the techs from escaping.

Aftermath.

If the party takes any technicians alive, they know they will fade into the Bleak Gate, so they aren't worried about being arrested, but threats can get them to talk. They were all recruited from universities and independent laboratories to work on what they were told was a project for the Risuri military, overseen by Reed Macbannin. They know nothing about the colossus, and assume their work is going toward weaponizing witchoil and creating monsters.



Additionally, depending on how soon the party stops the techs from escaping, they can get different levels of information.

- **Round 8+.** The party can sift through burnt documents and find a sketch of a jaguar ribcage, with marks of where to attach a chest plate with screws.
- **Round 7.** Some documents weren't burnt, providing a precise description of how the chest plate protects the witchoil vial.
- **Round 6.** Supplies for enchanting the collars survive, plus a note that anyone who holds the collar and says "Obey" can then give that cat commands.
- **Round 5.** A checklist is still held to one cage by a magnet. It lists key steps of "sedate cats, extract blood, remove heart, implant witchoil, attach collar and amulet, perform ritual; if error, shatter witchoil vessel; if successful, attach chest plate."
- **Rounds 1 to 4.** Clear documented evidence survives, written in Macbannin's hand, explaining a ritual to replace the cat's blood with witchoil, and mentioning to "take the same precautions you would at the manor reservoir."

Dawn Square

Action. Tactical. Level 7.

As thousands gather to hear the skyseer's vision, the party tries to defend him from unnatural assassins.

Nevard is scheduled to start his speech at noon; by the time the PCs finish with the monster laboratory, the square is crowded with over three thousand people. Nearly a hundred local police officers lurk around the edges to watch traffic rom the dozen streets that lead to the square. Hawkers sell food from wagons throughout the square, while poets and musicians perform wherever people have clustered under trees for shade.

A large part of the turn-out is from the new docker's union Thames Grimsley has organized, which had the knock-on effect of luring hundreds of sailors whose ships are stuck in port until their cargo is loaded. Large groups chant about throwing out Danorans, and a few people scuffle as different camps argue over whether the problem is the Danorans who brought the factories, or the Risuri who are running those factories. The densest crowds, of course, cling to the handful of bars along the periphery of the square.

Depending on how Nevard's speech goes, Grimsley is prepared to march his people and whoever else will join down to the shore near the governor's mansion, to make the protest more visible. The police, in turn, plan to withdraw and set up a blockade ahead of the march so they can beat people down and force them home.

MORE VILLAINY, PLEASE.

If you want to spin Macbannin and his crew as more overtly evil and less "shades of gray," you could, for example, have one of the technicians be aware of the target of their work. Then, as the other captured techs profess their ignorance, the lead tech can chuckle and mock the party, saying they'll never be able to protect the "foolish old man." Ideally, a PC will do the melodramatically appropriate thing and grab the lead technician by the collar and interrogate him, demanding answers as the technician sneers and fades into the Bleak Gate.

Layout.

The square is ½ mile long, and its original checkerboard grid of stone and greenery has grown mottled with grass through years of poor maintenance. Islands of trees provide shade in grassy areas, while fountains and statues dominate the stone squares. The west end feeds into the docks of Bosum Strand, while a now-stagnant man-made lake forms the east edge.

For major events like this one, a wooden stage stands near the lake. A sputtering old fountain lies behind the stage, surrounded by three towers capped with braziers, which provide light for night-time events. The majority of the crowd is located off the west end of the map.

Chaotic Assassination.

Creed is hidden in the veil between the Bleak Gate and the real world, able to watch but not influence. He is not willing to strike openly in such a large crowd, so he leaves the murder to his new pets. He only needs a ring of rusted iron to send them back to the real world for their attack.

Creed has infiltrated ten undead skeletons into the crowd, disguised in archaic white robes and porcelain masks some druid sects wear in their ceremonies. They walked in pulling a pair of ornate wagons, and the police assumed they were part of Nevard's group. The wagons each contain a hinged ring of rusted iron, which looks fairly innocuous when collapsed.

In the half hour before Nevard arrives, the skeletons drag their wagons near the corners of the stage, at the front of the crowd (west side of the map). Then at noon, Nevard and an entourage of a dozen (non-combatant) druids will march through the crowd and up onto stage, all while the crowd applauds and sings classic druidic chants. Once

Nevard is on the stage, the skeletons will pull out the rings, snap them to full size, and drop them on the ground, at which point one flayed jaguar will step through each ring. The monsters' appearance will trigger a panic, and thousands of fleeing people will clog the streets so police cannot come to Nevard's aid.

Creed has stationed the other three flayed jaguars near the fountain behind the stage, which has an old iron lining, long-since rusted. With attention focused on the two in front, he'll send the other three through to charge up the stage and kill Nevard.

Averting the Attack

When the party reaches the square, they likely have little time to make plans or look for threats, and they only have a narrow window to speak with Nevard, since he stays hidden until just before noon. Even if the PCs warn Nevard as he makes his way through the crowd, he says getting his message out to as many people as quickly as possible is more important than his own life. He trusted the party to protect him once before, and he'll trust them now.

The party might try standing guard on the stage, or scouring the crowd like they did while preparing for the king's arrival in Adventure One. The white-clad skeletons are easy to spot so close to stage, but only by interacting with them is it possible to tell they're not just very slender humans. If the party attacks the skeletons before they get a chance to deploy their rings, Creed can still send all five jaguars through the fountain, though the last two show up a round after the first three.

Very canny parties might check the fountain and notice its age and rust. By smashing the iron they could keep Creed from using the fountain as a portal, but they'd have to time things precisely to disable all three potential portals quickly enough to keep Creed from using at least one.

Nevard's Speech

Nevard takes the stage and holds up his hands to quiet the crowd. When he speaks, everyone in the square can hear his voice at a conversational level, courtesy of a ritual by Gale.

He begins with a preamble about how the skyseers used their visions to guide Risur, and though the clarity of their future sight has faded in recent years, they believe they can still guide with their wisdom, to mediate between the conflicting forces of a changing nation. But, he says, he sensed danger was approaching, and so he sought guidance, climbing atop Cauldron Hill to once again bask in the rhythm of the heavens. And he has had a vision.

> "I saw a dark figure, standing atop Cauldron Hill, towering over our city. The sun set, and he cast a shadow across Parity Lake, stretching northwest, into the sea, beyond the horizon. And also—"

It's at this point that people start screaming in the crowd just in front of the stage as a pair of fleshless jaguars dripping black blood snarl into view from beside the wagons. Two people get mauled immediately, and the crowd breaks. Terror spreads like a ripple in a pond.

List of Adversaries.

- 5 flayed jaguars
- 10 disguised skeletons

NEVARD'S VISIONS.

Once the party stops the monsters from attacking, or if they speak to him after the attack, Nevard can share the full extent of his vision.

> "I saw a dark figure, standing atop Cauldron Hill, towering over our city. The sun set, and he cast a shadow across Parity Lake, stretching northwest, into the sea, beyond the horizon. He is born in our city, but his ultimate goal is elsewhere. And also things moved in his shadow—indeed, his shadow moved before he did, for while he was mighty, he was controlled by others.
>
> "I saw smoke hiding his face, for he was made mighty by industry. In my vision, a king chased him out to sea and defeated him by slicing him free from his shadow. But the cauldron had already shattered, and many thousands were drowned and devoured in its roil.
>
> "I saw three birds alight on the peak, the first of black silk, the second of black steel, both weeping blood. But the third was made of stars, and it sang many songs.
>
> "I tell you this: Cauldron Hill is not safe. Twice will danger arise, and twice will we be deceived into thinking it is safe to return, but we must avoid the place and avoid being tricked. I have arranged shelter in the Cloudwood, where people can be safe until the darkness passes."

Nevard also saw other visions, but he's less certain what these mean, so he did not plan to tell them to the public.

> "A woman sat on a leather couch in a waiting room, surrounded by red curtains. She held a gold coin and rolled it across the back of her fingers. A pick lay against the side of the couch. I asked her what she was waiting for, and she answered in a language I didn't know, saying, 'The place I'm going isn't here yet.'
>
> "A trumpeter carried a lantern onto the stage of a darkened theater, and the people gathered for his performance applauded, then lit lanterns of their own. The theater never got bright enough for him to see their faces.
>
> "One man tore himself in two, and his twin selves fought over a woman, tearing her into three, who ran away. Mice skittered around them, collecting cheese fallen amid the rails of a trainyard. Then a train roared down the track past me, but it had no one driving it. In the distance it derailed, and crushed two of the women, but which of the three survived?
>
> "A man carrying a bronze staff with three keyholes was assailed by swords and arrows and fire, but nothing killed him. He began to take off his robes, revealing tiger fur beneath them, while stars fell from the sky all around him. Then the sky was dark, and when the sun should have risen, instead a pale glowing cloud floated in the dark.
>
> "Finally, a tyrant and murderer languished in prison, hanging from twelve chains and hooks that pierced her feet, her legs, her thighs, her shoulders, her arms, and her hands. But the thirteenth hook that sealed her mouth swung loose, and it fluttered in the breeze as she whispered a map that led everywhere."

Flayed Jaguar	**Level 6 Skirmisher**
Medium shadow beast	XP 250
HP 68; **Bloodied** 34	**Initiative** +9
AC 20, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18	**Perception** +4
Speed 8	Darkvision
Resist 5 necrotic	

Traits

▸ **Corrupted Blood**

You deliver a wretched wound to the flayed, unnaturally strong flesh of the jaguar. Its black blood sizzles and releases a horrid stench where it stains the ground.

Whenever an attack hits the jaguar, if it is bloodied after the damage, the square it is currently occupying is corrupted until the end of the encounter. If the damage kills it, the jaguar's space and each adjacent square becomes corrupted. When a creature enters a corrupted space or starts its turn there, the creature takes 5 necrotic damage.

▸ **Witchoil Vessel**

A steel plate is bolted directly into the ribcage of the poor creature, and black oil leaks in pulses, like the beating of a heart.

As a standard action, a character adjacent to the jaguar can make a Strength check (DC 10) to tear free the steel plate over its chest. The character takes a –1 penalty to this check for each square the jaguar moved on its last turn, unless the jaguar is immobilized or prone. If the plate is removed, the jaguar takes ongoing 10 damage, and any attack that hits it kills it.

▸ **Command Collar**

A tattered leather collar hangs around the monster's neck.

If a creature successfully grabs the jaguar, it can say the command word "Obey." Thereafter the flayed jaguar treats that creature as an ally and will obey its verbal commands.

Standard Actions

✓ **Claw** ✦ At-Will, Basic

You can see the muscles of the skinless jaguar flex as it swipes a claw at your leg and trips you.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+7 damage. If the jaguar hits the target with this power as an opportunity attack, it knocks the target prone.

✓ **Maul** ✦ At-Will

Requirement: The target must be prone.

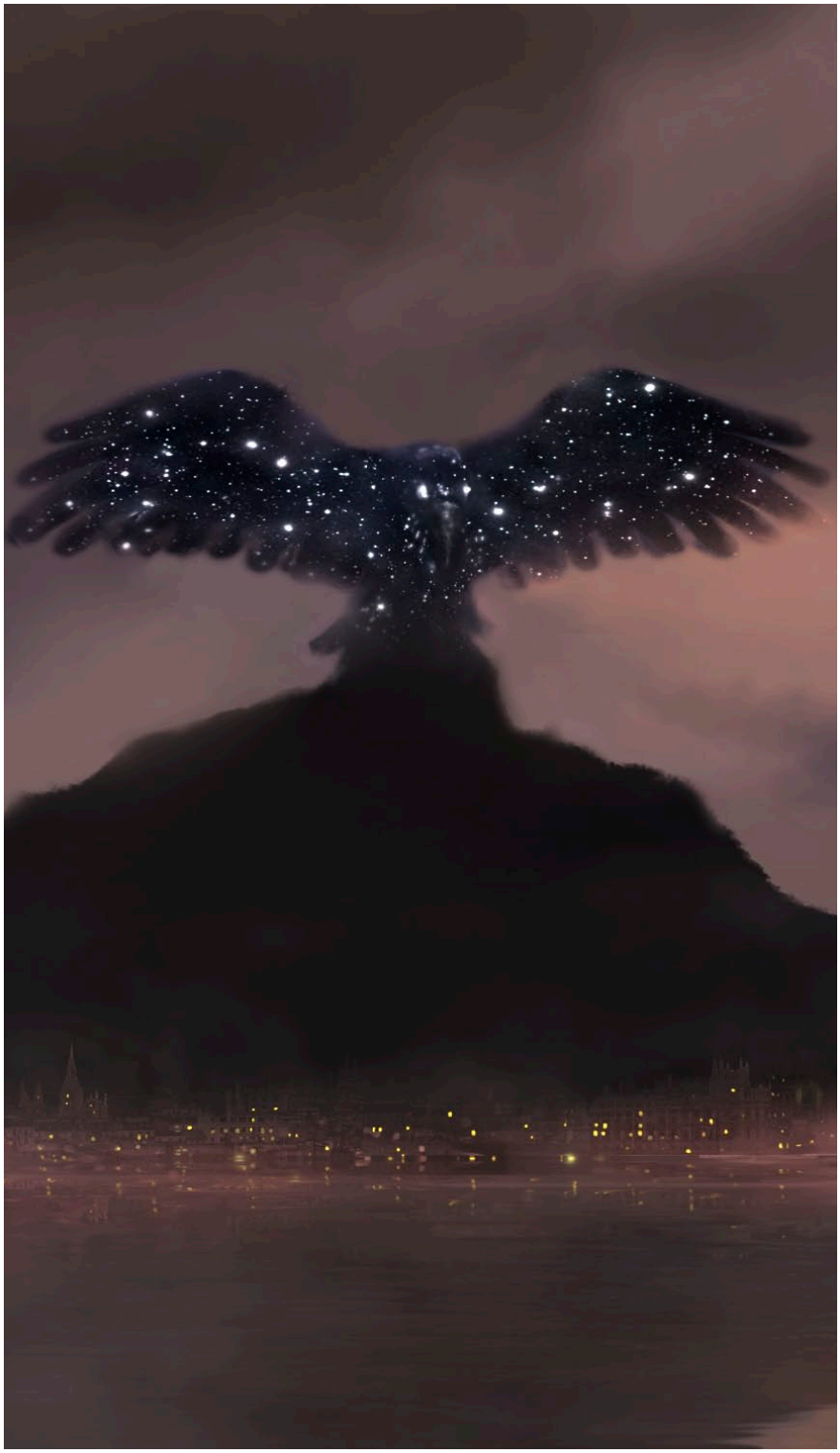
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC

Hit: 3d6+8 damage, and the target cannot stand up as long as the jaguar is adjacent to it.

Skills Athletics +9, Stealth +12

Str	12 (+4)	**Dex**	18 (+7)	**Wis**	12 (+4)
Con	12 (+4)	**Int**	2 (–1)	**Cha**	6 (+1)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –



Disguised Skeleton	Level 1 Minion Brute
Medium natural animate (undead), human	XP 25
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion	**Initiative** +3
AC 15, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12	**Perception** –1
Speed 6	Darkvision
Immune poison	

Standard Actions

⊘ **Overwhelming Rush** ✦ At-Will, Basic

The slender druid charges toward you, and as it slams you to the ground, its mask slips loose, revealing a skull daubed with blue sigils.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC

Hit: 5 damage, and the target is pushed one square. If the skeleton charged, the skeleton and the target are both knocked prone.

Str	15 (+2)	**Dex**	16 (+3)	**Wis**	8 (–1)
Con	13 (+1)	**Int**	6 (–2)	**Cha**	6 (–2)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Noncombatants.

Hundreds of people are waiting in front of the stage, and a few behind, but they flee as soon as combat begins. Nevard (stats on page 177) and a retinue of twelve people stand on the stage. Nevard's retinue are essentially noncombatants—all have 1 hit point and defenses of 10—but they stay on the stage unless ordered otherwise. Indeed, though they have no chance of harming the cats, they resolutely stand between the monsters and Nevard, hoping to protect him.

Nevard is no longer under the effects of the ritual that protected him on Cauldron Hill. A single hit might lay him low.

Terrain.

Place the two wagons by the western corners of the stage. Each is 2 squares long and 1 square wide.

The high ground of the stage is easily defensible, but the cats can climb up the scaffolding (Athletics DC 10) if the stairs are blocked.

Three 40-ft. tall spires form a triangle around the fountain. Each spire is capped with a gaslight lantern. Each spire just consists of a wooden truss and a thin metal pipe, and they are hazardously easy to break (Strength DC 15). If broken, the tower crashes sideways like a sawed tree, and a geyser of flame shoots out of the ground where the spire stood. Any creature entering the square or ending its turn there takes 15 fire damage.

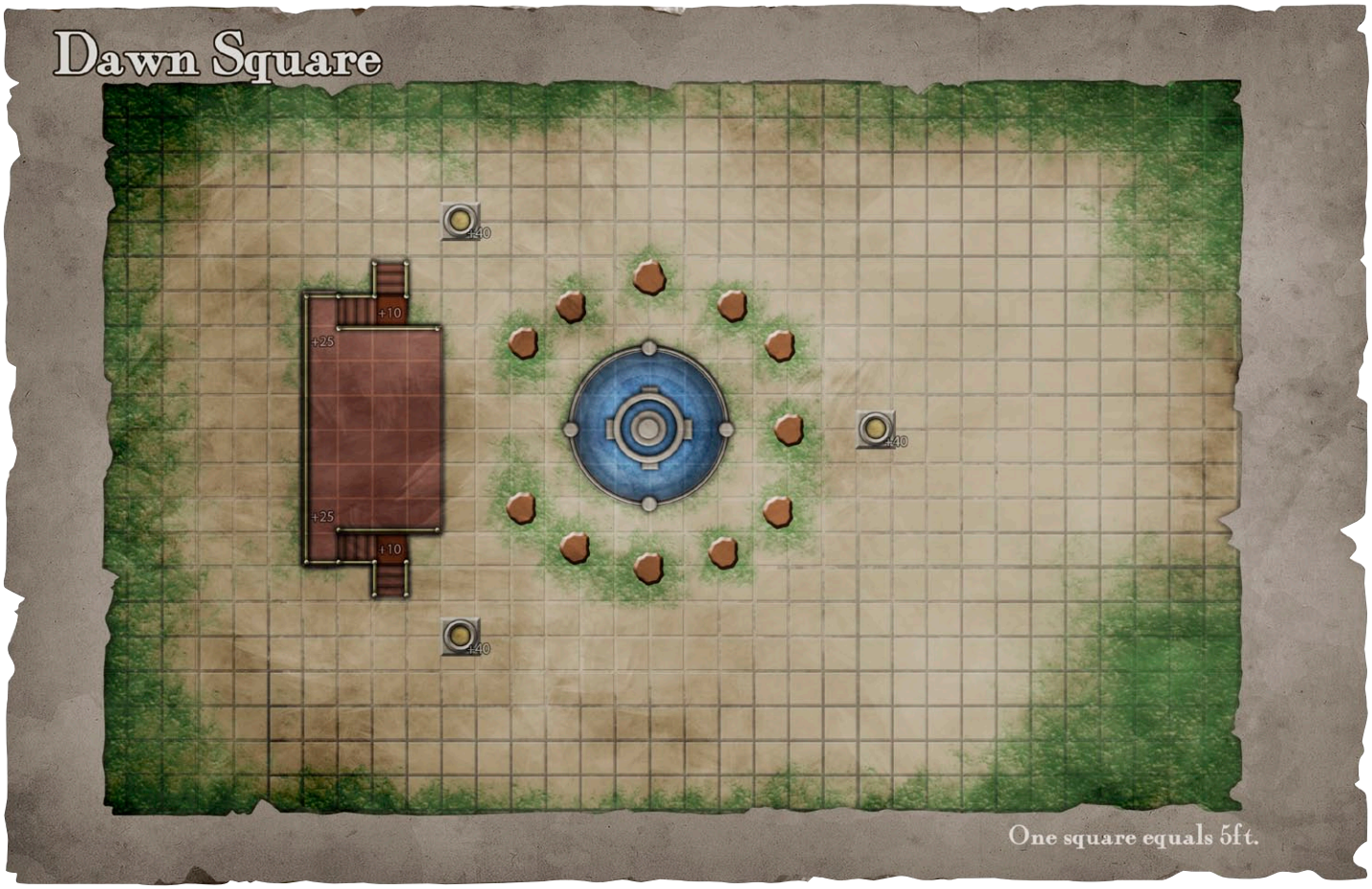
Aside from its role as portal for flayed jaguars, the ring of trees and the fountain are relatively mundane. Fleeing off the map is possible, but it's another three hundred feet in any direction before reaching armed allies, and the cats are faster than Nevard by far.

Tactics.

The skeletons' last order from Creed is to ram their wagons into the spires, with the expectation being that the fire hazard will discourage Nevard from fleeing down the stairs. If possible, one skeleton makes a Strength check (DC 15) while the other four aid, for a total of a +10 bonus. Thereafter they split into groups of two or three to attack people who try to help Nevard.

The jaguars swarm the stage, but if Nevard gets away (or if the PCs manage to create a convincing fake to lure them off), the cats give chase.

Ten rounds after combat starts, police officers who managed to force their way through the panicked crowds start to reach the scene, one per round. Use the stats for Allied Officers (see the Player's Guide).



Aftermath.

The experiments on the jaguars will kill them within a few hours. Even if the PCs figure out some way to keep them alive, no, the RHC will not let them keep the creatures as pets.

If Nevard is killed, treat him instead as mortally wounded beyond the PCs' ability to heal. He clings to life long enough to touch a PC's face, close their eyes, and impart a vivid memory of his vision, before finally perishing.

If Nevard survives the immediate threat, after assuring everyone he's all right, he calls the crowds back and continues to recount his visions. That done, he lauds the party for protecting him and stopping this danger, and asks all present to trust them. Dangers will come, he warns, but there are still heroes in this world who will protect the innocent.

Then he slumps and asks all those who live in The Nettles on Cauldron Hill to prepare and leave before sunset, to come with his people to a place of safety in the Cloudwood. He expects to see one last starry sky before his heart gives out, and he would love if the people of Flint would look up tonight and stargaze with him.

Nevard has already sent letters with his vision to newspapers and gazettes in Flint and beyond, so the next morning the entire city will know his warning. People living in the slums of Cauldron Hill will begin packing up and leaving, and a day and a half after the attack, the hill will be a veritable ghost town.

Creed's Offer

Social. Real-Time. Level 5.

Knowing the investigation is near its end, Cillian Creed appeals to the patriotism of his enemy.

This scene only occurs if a PC has the Yerasol Veteran theme or has made a point of being vocally patriotic toward Risur. Some time during this thread, when they're close to figuring out Macbannin is responsible, perhaps even moments before the attack on Nevard, an urchin approaches the PC in question with a note. He says a scary shadow man told him to deliver it.

The note is reproduced in Appendix L (A Warning Note) and reads:

> You are a patriot. Already once you have defended our kingdom against enemies within its borders. Know that what you are about to reveal will damage our nation. I cannot tell you more, but if you can convince your companions to abandon this investigation, soon you will understand. I have taken no joy in conspiring to thwart you, so I give you this last chance to leave with your life.

If the party does indeed decide to give up, the earthquake still occurs, which could draw them up to Cauldron Hill for the climax.



A long-time player in Flint politics, Macbannin's fascination with Cauldron Hill's history led him to pursue mayorship of The Nettles. He studied all manner of defensive magic, as well as a fair share of proscribed dark arts, in order to earn the trust of the previous mayor. Macbannin has protected the city from the curses on Cauldron Hill for over a decade now.

Despite his age and somber responsibilities, Macbannin comes across as high-energy, with a rascally sense of humor. He'll often first meet people with a stern, sour expression and brief statements of disapproval, before cracking a smile and saying he was just kidding. He loves helping people because he knows the good will of others makes him look good.

Above all, though, Macbannin is skilled at keeping secrets. He knows dangers of the Hill few would believe. He has saved the careers of other politicians by keeping his mouth shut. And currently he's coordinating the logistics needed to construct a colossus beneath his mountain. He has spoken to Governor Roland Stanfield and accepted a magical *geas* that forbids him from revealing this secret, and has done so out of a misguided belief that the project is sanctioned by Risur's king.

Loose Ends

Puzzle. Montage. Level 4.

If any enemies have escaped or clues have gone undiscovered, the party must redouble their efforts to solve the mystery.

Most likely the party will have discovered that Macbannin is behind the beasts that attacked Nevard, and thus he is implicated, if not heavily involved, in the pursuit of Dr. von Recklinghausen, and therefore he must be up to something nefarious—something revealed in the documents Nilasa stole from the Danoran consulate. The party might have the documents themselves; if so, though it's a bit complicated, it does back up Macbannin as the villain. Or perhaps the PCs captured and interrogated the dragonborn arsonists, and back-tracked their contacts to Cillian Creed and then Reed Macbannin.

On the other hand, if the PCs are a little lost, it may be because there's a loose end they need to tie up. If the arsonists got away, perhaps Family spokesman Morgan Cippiano arranges a sting to give the party a chance to capture them. If the party never went to the warehouse laboratory, perhaps the police have managed to arrest one of the lab technicians—in this case, the tech got separated from the group and eventually slid back into the real world in an impossible place.

Do what's necessary to make sure the PCs can put all the pieces together without putting the pieces together for them. Then they can decide how to deal with Macbannin. Stover Delft wants the party to at least recuperate after the fight with the cats, which will give him time to acquire a warrant to search Macbannin's manor and give the PCs time to call in a favor and get some back-up. If the party rushes in, they run the risk of getting overwhelmed and giving the villain a chance to escape. As a precaution, Delft recommends the party stay at a safehouse tonight.

The recommendation is smart, because if Creed knows where the PCs are, he might try to kill them in their sleep. But he's wary, and won't walk into a trap. Naturally, we don't actually recommend ending the adventure with each PC being coup de graced and injected with deadly poison—that'd be bad form.

As for Macbannin, the mayor suspects he might soon be exposed, but he's not going to run and so make it obvious that he's guilty. He's confident Governor Stanfield will cover for him, and he knows it's easy enough to eliminate evidence or silence witnesses. Plus, the tremors have gotten stronger since Leone Quital came over to help recover Dr. von Recklinghausen, so Macbannin wants to stay and tend to the witchoil reservoir beneath his manor. However, these same tremors will ruin his chances of keeping things quiet.

CLIMAX: Macbannin's Manor

In this act, the party's attempt to take down Mayor Reed Macbannin is interrupted by an earthquake.

Macbannin's Surrender

Social. Real-Time. Level 6.

You don't think he's really going to surrender, do you?

Macbannin goes about business as usual, though he calls in a few more bodyguards than usual, including a few on Lorcan Kell's payroll. The biggest card up his sleeve, though, is the ritual Bonds of Forced Faith. The same witchcrafted magic Nevard used to provide strength to his old bones, Macbannin uses to divert all harm from him to his bodyguards.

Macbannin makes a show of coming out of his main manor and greeting the party in his garden. Cillian Creed lurks in the house, in his normal butler guise, watching through a window.

Preposterous.

Macbannin asks what they want, and after hearing their claims his expression darkens.

"So you found me out?" He shakes his fist melodramatically, "And when I was so close to finally unlocking this *mountain's dark power*!"

Then he relaxes and grins. "Come on, be serious," he says, with the tone of someone who's done humoring small children's fantasies. "You haven't told anyone about this yet, have you? You seem like good people—and good officers, too, I'm sure—and I wouldn't want to see you get in trouble for," he chuckles, "jumping to *wild* conclusions. I appreciate your diligence … but I have nothing to hide!" At this, he spreads his hands wide.

"Here," he says, decisively. "I'll show you I'm not up to anything. Allow me to give you the guided tour! Take as long as you want to look for anything amiss. Do we want to start in the basement? That's where the villain's always getting up to his nefarious deeds of ill import, right? Or the attic? Isn't that where the villain is always stashing the evidence of dark goings-on? Maybe I've concealed something incriminating in the pig-pen out back!" He continues grinning.

"What's your pleasure?"

Allow the interaction to go on for a little while, during which the PCs notice house staff members watching from windows and balconies, and a few gardeners not doing any work, just tense and waiting for a cue to fight.

Just before tensions reach a head—when someone announces their intention to attack, or the PCs agree to take the tour (which would lead to an ambush), or Macbannin is caught in a lie—the ground begins to tremble. If a PC just spontaneously opens hostilities, the earthquake erupts at the end of the next turn.

Earthquake

Action. Tactical. Level 6.

As Cauldron Hill shakes itself apart, the party must stop Macbannin from escaping.

A titanically strong colossus lies beneath Cauldron Hill in the Bleak Gate, and of late it has strained at its bonds. In an effort to use witchoil as fuel, Macbannin has begun to pump huge amounts of the substance from a subterranean reservoir in the Bleak Gate, into a furnace at the "heart" of the giant machine. Soon after the PCs arrive, sabotage by one of the colossus's creators (Alexander Grappa, see Adventure Five for more details), causes the colossus to thrash out of control. This shakes the mountain from within and triggers an earthquake.

Several seconds of deep rumbling precedes a deafening crack as a fissure cuts its way directly through Macbannin's manor house. The rear half of the house heaves upward 10 feet, and the rest sways and crumples, threatening to collapse completely. The hiss of fluid under pressure comes from within the damaged structure, followed by the horrified screams of dozens of workers. A moment later the wretched stench of burnt oil wafts through the garden in a thin, visible fog, and flowers begin to wilt.

Macbannin's eyes widen with shock, but he recovers with amazing aplomb. Almost casually he shouts to his butler at the window. "Creed, check the reservoir. Everybody else, kill these people for me."

The Kell-Guild guards take the distraction as a cue to attack the party, and the house staff follow their lead.



List of Adversaries.

- Mayor Reed Macbannin
- 2 Kell-Guild scoundrels
- 22 Macbannin house staff

Mayor Reed Macbannin Level 7 Controller (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 300

HP 76; **Bloodied** 38; see *bonds of forced faith* **Initiative** +4
AC 21, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 21 **Perception** +6
Speed 6

Traits

▸ **Bonds of Forced Faith**
The hairs rise on the back of your neck as you attack him. Your blow sinks into his flesh, but then leaves no wound, and instead one of the house staff cries out and falls."Witch magic," Macbannin says. "Illegal and immoral, but hell, being mayor has its perks."

Whenever an attack or effect would affect Macbannin, it affects the nearest member of his house staff instead. Damage from attacks and effects kill one member of the house staff for every 11 damage that would have been dealt to Macbannin. Excess damage bloodies the next nearest surviving staff member.

Macbannin can only be harmed or subject to conditions if he has no house staff within 150 feet. While he has any surviving house staff within range, he gains a +5 bonus to Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution-based checks.

▸ **Scholar of Hexes**
"I have to warn you guys," Macbannin says. "I'm not much of a fighter, but I happen to have studied about a thousand different curses, and there's a little situation over in my garden shed I need to deal with. I'm not going to take it easy on you."

Whenever a creature deals damage to Macbannin, as an immediate reaction he hexes that creature with one of the curses in the sidebar at right. He can only use each curse once per encounter. If he has already used all three curses, the creature instead takes 10 psychic damage.

☼ **Abjuration Mastery** ✦ Aura 5
Macbannin sighs as his house crumbles behind him. "I've been keeping this city safe from evil forces for decades. Now a couple of chumps with badges come and start messing with my staff and, I gotta say, it's kinda rubbing me the wrong way."

Whenever a creature makes an attack roll against one of Macbannin's allies within the aura, the creature rolls twice and takes the worse result.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Hex Touch** (psychic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
A dull black sigil floats in front of Macbannin's hand.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d8+2 psychic damage, and the target is hexed until the end of the encounter.

✲ **Tolling of the Bleak Bell** (psychic) ✦ At-Will
The world darkens and you hear a distant hollow bell, calling you toward the end of existence.
Attack: Area Burst 1 within 10 (enemies in burst); +10 vs. Will
Hit: 3d4+11 psychic damage, and the target is insubstantial, slowed, and weakened until the end of Macbannin's next turn.

Minor Actions

▸ **Break Enchantment** ✦ At-Will, 1/round
With a wave of his hand, Macbannin dismisses an unpleasant effect.
Effect: Macbannin ends one curse affecting a creature within 10 squares, or grants himself or an ally within 10 squares a saving throw.

Skills Arcana +12, Bluff +14, Diplomacy +14, Insight +11, Nature +12, Religion +12
Str 8 (+2) **Dex** 12 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 12 (+4) **Int** 18 (+7) **Cha** 18 (+7)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Abyssal, Common, Giant, Primordial

MACBANNIN'S CURSES

▸ **Curse of the Cacophony** ✦ Encounter
Once again the mad song of the mountain-top surrounds you, louder than ever before, shrieking and screaming in sadistic glee until your ears bleed and you lash out at anything just to make it stop.
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, the target is deafened, grants combat advantage, and treats all creatures as enemies. It must take opportunity attacks if possible. At the end of the target's turn it can make a Perception check (DC 23) to recognize the cacophony as illusory and end the curse. Any creature adjacent to the target can spend a standard action to make a Religion check (DC 23) to chant a prayer that will nullify the curse until the end of that creature's next turn.

▸ **Curse of the White-Eyed Doppleganger** ✦ Encounter
Your voice chuckles quietly from behind your ear. You spin and see an exact duplicate of you, except for the eyes, which are flat white.
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, whenever the target makes an attack, he repeats the attack against himself, perceiving a doppelganger-like duplicate attacking. The duplicate exists only in the target's mind; nothing can damage or affect it. At the end of the target's turn it can make an Insight check (DC 23) to recognize the duplicate as illusory and end the curse. Any creature adjacent to the target can spend a standard action to chant a prayer that will nullify the curse until the end of that creature's next turn (Religion DC 23).

▸ **Curse of the Writhing Cauldron** ✦ Encounter
"Last chance!" Macbannin shouts. "Surrender or I'll hollow that one out!" Sudden agony streaks up your throat, and you vomit a black centipede. The pain grows, and you feel a mass writhing in your stomach, devouring you from within.
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, whenever the target performs a standard action, it takes damage equal to its bloodied value. If the target dies, it erupts into a harmless swarm of centipedes.

Any creature adjacent to the target can spend a standard action to chant a prayer that will nullify the curse until the end of that creature's next turn (Religion DC 23).

Kell-Guild Scoundrel Level 4 Brute
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 175

HP 65; **Bloodied** 32 **Initiative** +3
AC 16, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 11 **Perception** +8
Speed 6

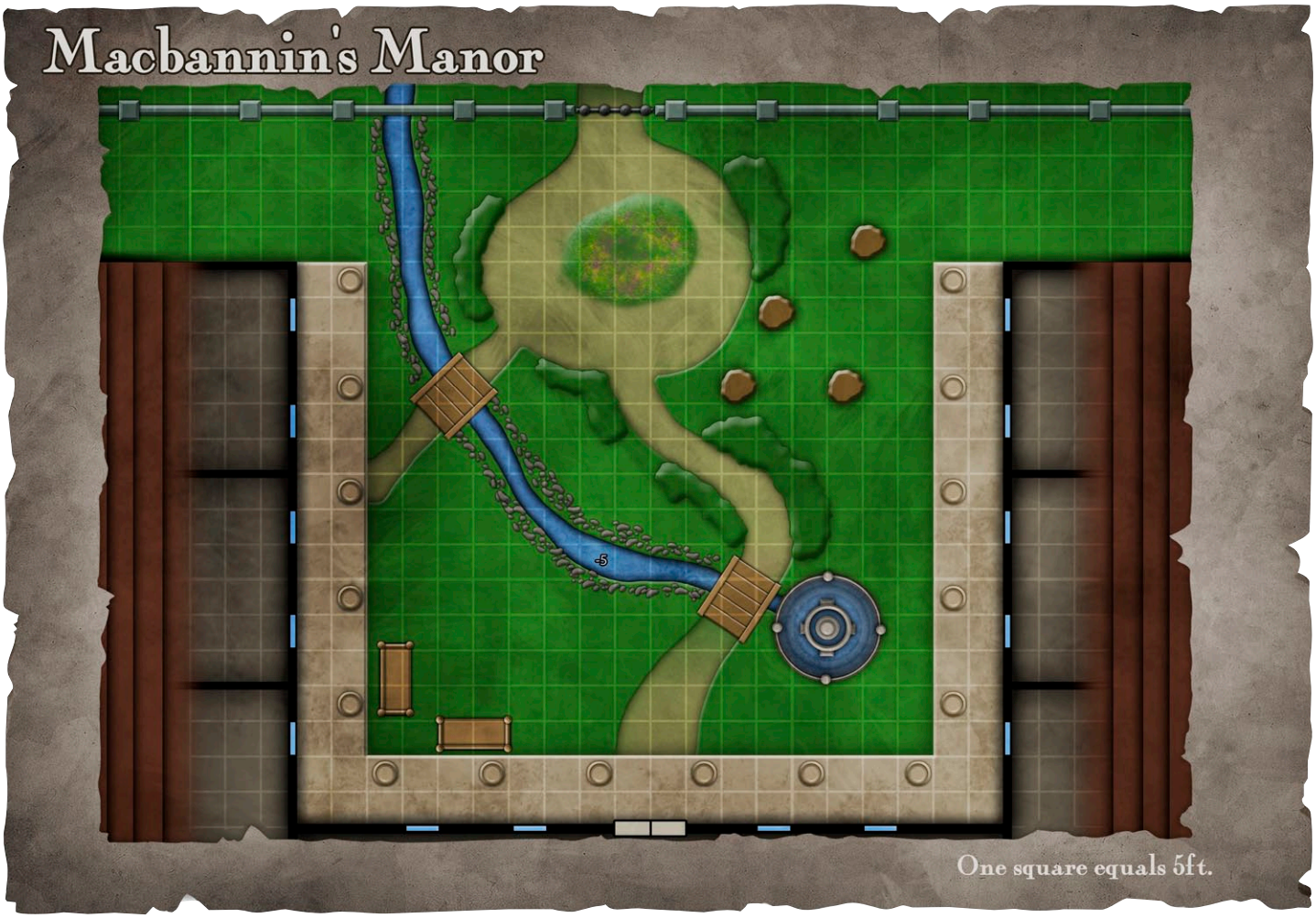
Standard Actions

⊗ **Whole Lotta Knives** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
You're not sure where he hid all those things, but he doesn't seem to be running out of blades.
Attack: Melee 1 or Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+6 damage. If the scoundrel is grabbing the target, he can slide it 1 square.

Minor Actions

✓ **Kidnap** ✦ At-Will
The scoundrel grabs you and uses you as a human shield.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target is grabbed (Escape DC 14). Until the target escapes, the scoundrel can use the target as cover.

Skills Bluff +11, Perception +8, Stealth +8
Str 14 (+4) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 15 (+4) **Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 14 (+4)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial



Macbannin House Staff Member	Level 2 Minion Lurker
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 31
HP 1; see *hired meat*	**Initiative** +5
AC 16, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 14	**Perception** +2
Speed 6	
Traits	
▸ **Hired Meat**	
When a Macbannin house staff member would take damage from any source, even a missed attack, if that source does less than 11 damage, he takes no damage and instead becomes bloodied. The next time any source would deal damage to it, even a missed attack, the staff member is reduced to 0 HP.	
Standard Actions	
⊗ **Makeshift Weapon** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic	
Some of them have sickles, some have rakes, and some just hoist a hefty brick and get ready to bash you.	
Attack: Melee 1 or Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 5 damage	
Skills Stealth +6	
Str 11 (+2) **Dex** 10 (+1) **Wis** 13 (+2)	
Con 10 (+1) **Int** 13 (+2) **Cha** 13 (+2)	
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial	

Terrain.

The two Kell-Guild scoundrels tend to the garden, trying to look innocuous (Insight DC 21) while maneuvering behind the cover of hedges or benches. The garden is surrounded on three sides by a covered walkway. Pillars support balconies on the second floor, and the house staff are split between these balconies and the open windows of first floor rooms.

Between the gate and the manor's entrance, the garden is a 100-ft. square, if you include the walkways. To represent the upheaval caused by the earthquake, each round at initiative count 0, roll a d20 and count from the west a number of squares equal to the roll, then repeat and count down from the north. This is the nexus of a sinkhole.

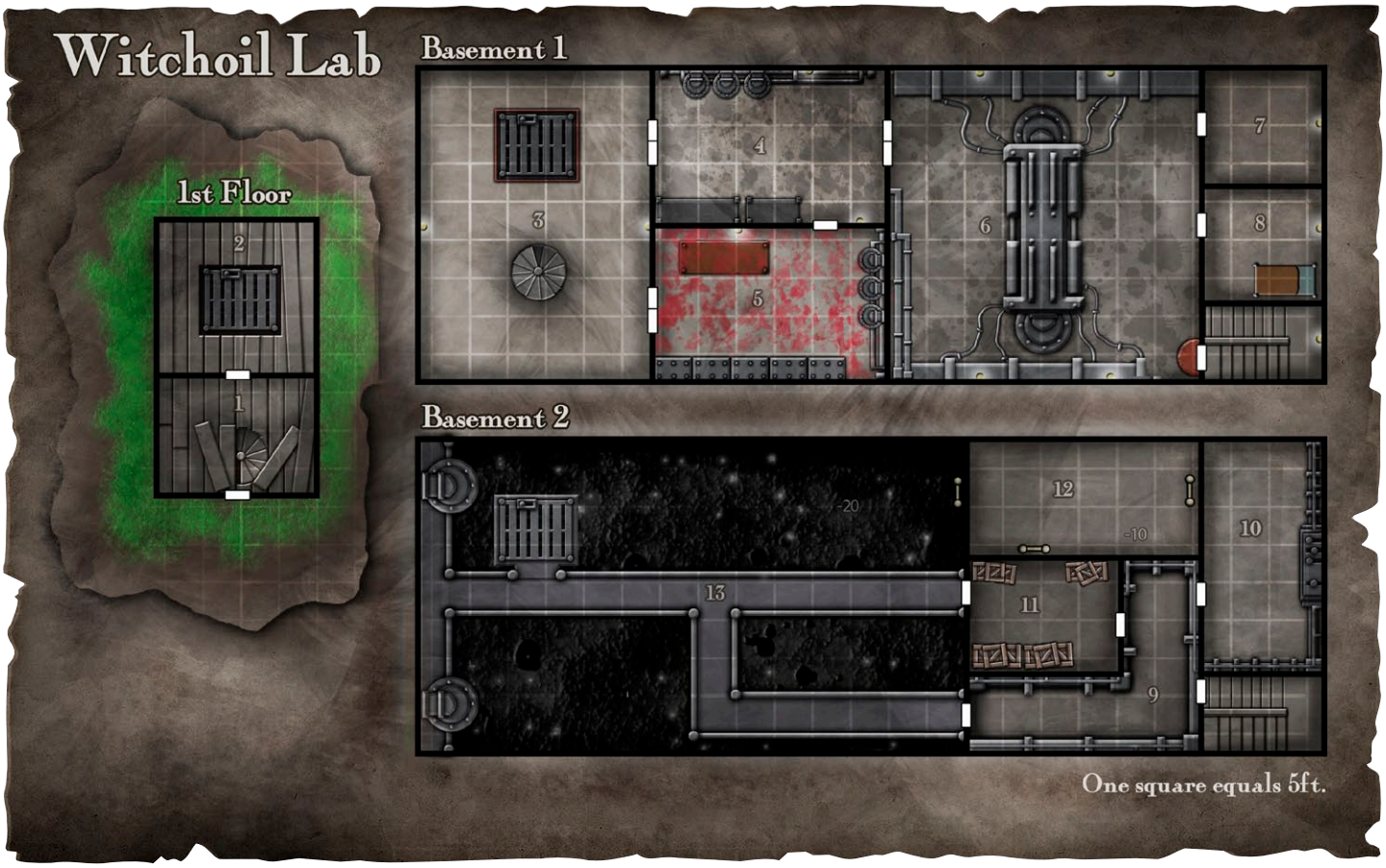
The sinkhole nexus and each adjacent square collapses into a 5-ft. deep pit. Any creature in the central square falls into the pit, and creatures adjacent can make an Acrobatics check (DC 10) to shift 1 square away and fall prone. Otherwise it also falls into the pit.

Repeat this each round, and whenever you create a new sinkhole, the last sinkhole begins to flood with witchoil. A creature that enters or ends its turn in a witchoil-flooded square takes 5 necrotic damage.

If you create a sinkhole in a space that already has collapsed, instead a geyser of witchoil sprays into the air. Any creature that enters or ends its turn within 2 squares of a geyser takes 5 necrotic damage. If a creature enters the geyser's square it takes 10 necrotic damage and is pushed to the nearest open space.

If a sinkhole opens in a column space, creatures on the balcony above fall, and those below take 10 damage and are restrained (Escape DC 15).

After ten rounds, the quake dies out.



Tactics.
When the earthquake begins, the Kell-Guild scoundrels advance on the PCs to keep them off Macbannin. Macbannin is protected by his *bonds of forced faith* trait as long as he has any house staff left, so he attacks the party without fear.

The house staff on the balconies use ranged attacks until they see a balcony section collapse, at which point they climb down. The house staff on the ground level make ranged attacks as they emerge from the house, then charge and try to take down the party with force of numbers.

Aftermath.
If Macbannin and his crew defeat the party, they leave them for dead in the face of advancing slicks of witchoil. Some kindly house staff who weren't in the fight might pull the party to safety while Macbannin runs to the laboratory beneath his garden shed.

If the party triumphs, Macbannin will bargain for their help. He says that if the flow isn't stopped, the whole mountain will collapse, releasing all the evil spirits trapped within. He's exaggerating (Insight DC 24), but if pressed he explains that he has truly gargantuan quantities of witchoil in his basement, and if the pressure isn't relieved it will erupt, flow down the mountain, and kill everything in its path. Of course, only he knows how to adjust the flow to avert that. He's still exaggerating (Insight DC 24).

Industrial Disaster

Action/Puzzle. Tactical. Level 7.
A torrent of soul-devouring witchoil threatens the city, and the party must either stop or divert its flow while Macbannin's forces try to silence them.

Macbannin's combination workshop and laboratory is hidden under his garden shed. It lies partially in the Bleak Gate, and rusted ring gates restrict access so only people wearing the appropriate amulets can see and enter it.

Macbannin has spent the past several years crafting an eldritch machine to refine witchoil on a massive scale and designing an engine suitable for the colossus, which uses the oil as fuel. Secondary experiments used witchoil in the creation of golems and monsters, and at the bottom of the lab is a truly huge reservoir of the substance.

The earthquake has damaged key machinery components, and the laboratory is minutes away from erupting in the worst industrial disaster the world has ever seen.

Layout.
Rooms inside the laboratory Basement Level 1 are in total darkness, but when the engine in Area 6 is turned on, bright lights come on. Basement Level 2 is in total darkness, and its lights have been destroyed.

1. Shed Entrance.

When the party enters, the planks covering the secret entrance have been removed, revealing a rusted ring and a seemingly solid floor of stone. However, a woman lies dead here, clutching an armful of amulets, her body half in the ground. Her head was crushed by a falling piece of the ceiling right as she came up a spiral staircase. If the PCs put on the amulets, they can see and pass through the rusted ring.

2. Lift.

A primitive elevator here can descend into the basement, but it too passes through a rusted ring, and so requires passengers to have amulets. It has no walls, just an open floor and a lever to control ascent or descent. If a character spends a minor action to control the level, at initiative count 0 the lift travels 5 ft. in the desired direction.

3. Laboratory Foyer.

Toppled blackboards here list experiments scheduled in the lab. There's enough discarded paper and supplies to suggest a good dozen people managed to flee here in the past few minutes. The air stinks of burnt oil, and snarls come from the door to Area 5.

4. Golem Lab.

Oil stains the floor, the mark of experiments that created the Bleak Golem and others like it. Spare machine components sit on shelves, and pipes on the north wall dribble witchoil through tiny fissures.

5. Monster Lab.

Fresh blood streaks the floor amid dismembered bodies. Three flayed jaguars broke free from their cages during the quake; with no command collars, they quickly mauled the technicians. Only one remains in this room, and it attacks madly as soon as someone opens the door.

- Flayed jaguar (page 200)

6. Experimental Engine.

This huge device powers the lower level control room. It is currently off. The other two flayed jaguars prowl here, pawing at the door to Area 8. They are attracted to sounds of combat, though.

The floor in front of the stairway leading down has a pressure plate. A lever on the wall can toggle the pressure plate, but if it isn't turned off, a creature that steps into the square triggers a cleansing spray of air and fresh water. This grants the triggering character a save against each effect affecting him, and deals 10 damage to any creature with the shadow origin (such as the jaguars or Cillian Creed).

- 2 flayed jaguars (page 200)

7. Infirmary.

This room contains medical supplies, surgical tools, and anesthetic.

8. Temporary Cell.

With no better place to keep him, Macbannin locked up Wolfgang in this room, normally used by scientists sleeping in the lab overnight. The doctor is groggy, having just awoken. The mask that pumped anesthetizing gas slipped free in the quake, but his memory is still fuzzy. He just recalls being asked a lot of questions about his philosophical stances. He was being tested, at the suggestion of Nicodemus the Gnostic, for possible recruitment to the cause. Wolfgang didn't live up to their hopes, but they did learn intriguing things about his experiments.

The door to the room is locked and trapped. Instead of having a normal knob or lever, there is a slot one must reach into, such that you slip your forearm fully into the wall. At the far end is a lever that releases the door's locking mechanism. It also, if not disabled, tries to sever the person's arm.

Attack: +14 vs. AC. Hit: 2d12+6 damage and make the following attack.
Secondary Attack: +14 vs. Fortitude. *Hit:* The target's arm is severed above the wrist. The target takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

The trap's blade is hard to spot (Perception DC 23), but its location is easy to guess. Disabling it is also a cinch (Thievery DC 12). If someone does lose their arm, Wolfgang says he just needs a surgery kit and some ritual components and he can fix that before the limb gets cold.

If Wolfgang was not captured, instead a terrified tech hides inside from the jaguars; in this case, the trap is not activated.

9. Manual Feed Hall.

This tunnel is lined with pipes. If someone were very familiar with the system, it is possible to adjust the flow of witchoil from here, but the PC will need to use the control room in Area 10. From here the PCs can hear the the irregular bubbling of backflowing oil, but above it all rings a shrill alarm bell from inside Area 10, incurring a –2 penalty to Perception checks.

10. Control Room.

Until the engine in Area 6 is turned on, this room just consists of a lot of dead dials and frozen levers and knobs. An alarm rings, but it can be turned off with a switch.

The northwest end of the room has no wall, but rather is open to Area 12. A ladder descends, but when the PCs arrive the area below is overflowing with witchoil.

11. Supply Room.

Here the party can find pipe covers, tools, and lanterns. The north end of the room has no wall, and is open to Area 12.

12. Eldritch Machine.

The walls of this lowered room are completely covered with sigils, runes, and prayers to control the tiny device at its west end. Near the edge of the platform, overlooking the basin of Area 13, a section of pipe sits on a metal frame. Oil flows out one end, despite there being no source of oil from the other direction. A simple control panel manages the speed of the witchoil flow. When the PCs arrive, however, this area is flooded 5 ft. deep (15 ft. deeper than the normal depth listed on the map), making the device inaccessible.

13. Reservoir.

Catwalks, normally 20 ft. above the pool of oil, now rise only 5 ft. over the perilous sludge. Giant pipes on the west end direct oil to two possible outflows. The lowest platform level of the lift stops here. The catwalks have firm railings, so creatures gain a +5 bonus to saves to avoid being pushed off the edge.

On the west end, two huge pipes dribble witchoil from their seams. The north one is labeled "Down," and the south one is labeled "Relief."

Disaster Avoidance for Dummies.

In addition to the general hazards of the laboratory, there are four main laboratory components with which the PCs can interact. If they can control these machines properly, they might avert a cataclysm. Characters with the Technologist theme automatically understand how these mechanisms function upon seeing them. Others must work through trial and error.

Unless otherwise noted, skill checks mentioned below require a standard action to perform.

- **General Hazards.** A creature that ends its turn submerged in witchoil takes 10 points of necrotic damage. It is possible to swim through the oil (Athletics DC 10).

  Wards prevent a cascade explosion from stray sparks, at least within the lab, but if an attack deals fire damage to a square of witchoil, that square and each adjacent to it release a burst of wailing spirits, which blinds creatures in that square until the end of their next turn. It also turns the damaged square into a viscous tar, immobilizing creatures in the square (save ends).
- **Experimental Engine (Area 6).** Macbannin and his technicians have devised a massive internal combustion engine that runs on witchoil. This engine must be running in order for the control room (Area 10) to work. It also provides power for the lights in Basement Level 1. The quake shut down the engine, and to restart it, first you must prime it (Intelligence DC 10), then align the energized throttle with the flow from the reservoir (Arcana DC 24), then pull the start cord (Strength DC 10).

  Unfortunately, the quake also damaged some valves, which can be spotted with a close inspection (Perception DC 15). Starting the engine without first repairing them sprays the whole room with witchoil, dealing 5 necrotic damage whenever a creature ends its turn in the room. Turning off the engine is a standard action.

  Supplies to effect repairs are in Area 11, and it takes a total of five successful Intelligence checks (DC 10) to repair the engine with proper supplies. The engine functions fine even if its leaks aren't repaired.
- **Control Room (Area 10).** Various pipes, valves, and pumps can be monitored from here once power is restored. Also, the PCs can activate the pumps as a standard action, and adjust the flow to "off," "slow," "medium," or "fast." They default to "off."

  At "slow," 1 ft. of oil is pumped out per minute (reducing the depth of the oil flood by 1 ft.). "Medium" pumps 1 ft. per round. "Fast" pumps 5 ft. per round. If the pumps *and* the eldritch machine in Area 12 are both on, their effects might partially offset each other.
- **Eldritch Machine (Area 12).** Macbannin used an eldritch machine to slice open the veil between this world and the Bleak Gate, then refine the leaking energy into liquid form. The eldritch machine, shaped like a pipe with glowing red runes, functions as an endless spigot of witchoil.

  The eldritch machine sits at the edge of the ladder down to Area 13. A creature next to it can as a minor action adjust the flow to off, slow, medium, or fast. The controls are easy to operate, and a red warning latch keeps people from shifting to "fast" by accident. At the start of the encounter, the eldritch machine is set to medium, but is actually submerged in 5 ft. of oil, making it nigh inaccessible.

  At the current flow rate, the oil will get 1 ft. deeper every minute. At "slow" it's 1 ft. every 10 minutes. At "fast" it's 1 ft. per round.

  If the machine is set to "off," a PC can spend a standard action to try to seal the rift (Arcana DC 24), which cuts off the flow permanently. Moving or smashing the machine (200 HP) also closes the rift.
- **Witchoil Reservoir (Area 13).** Hundreds of thousands of gallons of the oil sit in a reservoir at the bottom of the laboratory. Small pipes run from the reservoir to experiments upstairs and deep into the mountain.

  On the west wall, the large north pipe, labeled "Down," leads hundreds of feet deeper into the mountain, feeding into the colossus assembly hangar. The south one, labeled "Relief," leads sideways to vent onto the north face of Cauldron Hill, uphill from hillside slums. A heavy steel wheel on the wall can be rotated (Strength DC 10) to switch the flow between the two pipes.

  When the reservoir got too deep, a fail-safe sealed the "Down" pipe and opened the "Relief" pipe, but the quake collapsed the part of the mountain the "Relief" pipe runs through, which has blocked flow. Now the reservoir is 15 ft. deeper than the normal level, which is marked on the map.

  If a character cares to commit suicide, the reservoir's bottom is 40 ft. below the listed oil level.

The Problem.

The eldritch machine is pumping oil into the reservoir, but the outflow Relief pipe is crushed and blocked. If this condition is allowed to continue untreated, in five minutes the laboratory will be destroyed and completely unsalvageable. Half an hour later, oil will start to bubble to the surface, and Macbannin's manor will eventually turn into a perpetual fountain of deadly oil, pouring down the side of the mountain and into Parity Lake.

The PCs have to be careful if they try to fix this mess. If they turn on the engine without repairing it, they might kill themselves. When the engine turns on, pumps try to purge the overflow witchoil down the Relief pipe, which creates dangerous pressure that could eventually explode the mountain face. And even if they do things right, Cillian Creed is waiting to attack while they're distracted.

The Solutions.

The party can solve the problem in any of the following ways, but you should reward any reasonably clever plan with success.

Ideal Solution.

This procedure ends the flow of witchoil completely with no risk of further damage.

- Fix engine leaks, then turn on engine (Area 6).
- Switch oil outflow from "Relief" pipe to "Down" pipe (Area 13).
- Turn on pumps. To drain the reservoir quickly, set them to "fast" (Area 10).
- Once oil level falls enough, switch eldritch machine off (Area 12).
- Destroy or disenchant eldritch machine (Area 12).
- Turn off the pumps (Area 12).

Dangerous Pressure.

If the party turns on the pumps without switching the oil outflow, pressure builds up in the "Relief" pipe, and oil seeps into the cracked stone of the mountain face. After 5 ft. of oil is pumped down this pipe, the pipe begins to shudder and another alarm rings. After 10 ft. of oil is pumped down this pipe, metallic screeching comes from the walls, and a handful of sparks start to fly as pipes crack and scrape stone. If 15 ft. of oil is pumped out this way, the underground pumps explode, and the entire reservoir of witchoil catches on fire.

Twenty rounds later, fire travels down the pipe and the northern cliff face explodes in a cloud of screaming spirits and a rain of burning necrotic tar.

Trigger Another Quake.

If the oil outflow is switched to the "Down" pipe, but the pumps aren't turned off, the reservoir is emptied, which causes a horrible accident deep in the colossus construction hangar. The colossus is angered by the continued spray of witchoil, and it shakes again, provoking an aftershock. If the PCs don't turn off the pumps, the quake continues for a minute, at which point the laboratory collapses on itself.

It's worse if they do this and don't turn off the eldritch machine, in which case after the laboratory collapses, the witchoil flows down the hillside forever.

Battle Below.

Cillian Creed arrived here before the earthquake finished, and he ordered the lab technicians out. One lab tech, Kaja Stewart, crosses paths with the PCs in the next adventure.

When the flayed jaguars got loose he withdrew as well, then hid at a spot on the surface where he could observe the manor's main gate and the laboratory entrance. The technicians who escaped assured him the witchoil was safe, so Creed switched to his other goals: kill the PCs and help Macbannin escape.

If the PCs head to the lab but don't take Macbannin with them, Creed tries to rescue the mayor, at which point Macbannin insists they head into the laboratory to make sure the eldritch machine is shut off. Macbannin may be the villain, but he doesn't want to see his city suffer if he can avoid it. Alternately, if Macbannin defeated the PCs, they might come upon Creed and Macbannin mere rounds after they have cleared out debris and reached Basement Level 1.

In either situation, Macbannin's magic lets him control the flayed jaguars, so he, Creed, and the jaguars form a challenging Level 7 encounter. Add three house staff minions for every quarter of Macbannin's HP he is missing; if he was knocked out, he starts at only one-quarter (19 HP).

More likely, though, the party has Macbannin in tow, cuffed so he cannot use magic against them. He can still run, though, and shout warnings to his allies. In this case, the party confronts the three flayed jaguars first. Then before they have a chance to rest, Creed and two Kell-Guild scoundrels ambush the party, preferably after they turn on the pumps, when the noise makes it harder to hear them sneaking up.



The scoundrels descend the stairs and try to shove the PCs off ledges into witchoil, while Creed clambers down the lift cable to the platform in Area 13, and tries to attack the party from behind. Alternately, Creed might use a belt to tie the lift's handle in the down position, causing it to descend to Area 13 and draw the party's attention while he and his allies approach from behind.

Unlike his previous encounters with the party, Creed will not flee until his enemies are silenced, or he himself is dead.

Aftermath.

By the end of this encounter it should be clear that Macbannin was working with or for some other entity. His *geas* magically prevents him from talking about the rest of the conspiracy controlled by Leone, but it's obvious that Macbannin was pumping witchoil *somewhere*. No one else at his manor knows where it was headed, though a few suspect it was for a military project, sanctioned by the king himself.

If the party failed to shut down the witchoil flow, there's either an ongoing industrial disaster as oil pours into the lake, or a short-duration one from an explosion that wiped out huge swaths of slums downhill of the manor. Luckily, the people of The Nettles heeded skyseer Nevard's warning, and everyone had evacuated beforehand.

Police and military reach the manor within a half hour and help the party take people into custody. Though PCs are notorious for their tenacity, they're just one cog in the machine of justice, and so requests to stay with Macbannin will be refused. The mayor will be held in a top-security cell in the main courthouse in Central district, but he is owed legal counsel without the presence of authorities.

The manor building itself has caught fire, and continues to burn into the night, a beacon visible as far as The Ayres.

Summons to Court

Social. Real-Time. Level 5.

The party is called to testify on the events of their case, but Macbannin's ultimate fate just poses more questions.

We don't expect you to drag the party through legal proceedings, but Stover Delft tells them to get their stories straight immediately, because they'll be called to testify. Macbannin had a lot of powerful friends, and though the evidence seems overwhelming against him, any inconsistencies could sink the case.

As early as the next morning, the party is summoned to court to speak with a judge, while city governor Roland Stanfield is in attendance. A full hearing is scheduled, and all the witnesses that can be found are being brought in to help clear things up. Reporters and crowds of angry factory workers and skeptical Nettles residents throng outside. Elite abjurers are present to protect the gathered officials in case Macbannin somehow attempts to use magic.

Then, when the hearing is set to begin, Macbannin doesn't show. There's a bit of a commotion, and if the party doesn't rush to the cell themselves, the police call for them. In a secure room, past guards and dozens of witnesses, Macbannin lies dead, having smashed his head repeatedly into the wall until his skull cracked. Mingled with the smell of fresh blood is the rich smoke of leaf of Nicodemus.

The horrified guards who were watching him say he had seemed fairly amicable, as if he was looking forward to the trial. But then he swayed, slumped onto his cot, and started whispering to himself for a few minutes. They were wary in case he was trying the "sick prisoner" trick, but they knew the cell would stop him from using his magic.

A bit later he nodded, stood back up, and asked one of them if he could borrow a cigarette. He smoked slowly, and didn't talk to them again until he finished. Then he thanked them, stretched his shoulders, and killed himself.

If a Spirit Medium tries to talk to his ghost, his spirit is not present.

What Happened?

Governor Stanfield contacted Nicodemus the Gnostic, head of the Obscurati, and informed him of the incident. Nicodemus traveled in spirit form, slipped through the walls of the courthouse, and possessed Macbannin's body. In a brief conversation, mostly internal between the two minds, Nicodemus offered Macbannin a chance to join the ghost council of the Obscurati. Then, with Macbannin's approval, he ended the body's life, then fled, carrying Macbannin's soul with him.

Reed Macbannin will return as a ghost in Adventure Seven, *Schism*.

Failed Investigation.

If the party completely fails to pin things on Macbannin, or if the party chickens out and decides they don't want to go after a popular politician, to help keep the campaign on track you need the disaster on Cauldron Hill to still happen.

Perhaps Gale and her allies attack, and when the earthquake strikes Macbannin can't reason with her, so the laboratory explodes. Macbannin flees (and returns—alive—in Adventure Seven), while Creed can show up at a dramatically appropriate moment later.

Or maybe the earthquake hits and Macbannin is able to avert a catastrophe, but a few days later LeBrix finds his spine and goes public with what he knows. The party might be tasked with protecting LeBrix, but Macbannin goes on the run and burns down his own manor to hide the evidence.

In either case, the party's Prestige with Risur drops and their allies suspect they were actually working with Macbannin the whole time.

Conclusion

With the key suspect dead, the actual trial wraps up fairly quickly. The PCs are in the spotlight in Flint, but they'll manage to avoid retribution from Macbannin's allies, who fear exposing themselves. There are still threads of leads in the case, but the head of the Flint branch of the RHC, Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby, assigns them to other agents, claiming she wants the PCs to take a break so their notoriety doesn't disrupt the other investigators.

As they'll learn in Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*, this is just a way of killing the case, but the party will have enough bureaucratic red tape to keep them busy for months. The city puts out the fires, but can't yet rebuild the damage on Cauldron Hill. The Nettles grow more restless and lawless, and Lieutenant Dale from The Battalion takes over as interim mayor. Violence between factory workers and bribed police intensifies. The Ragman takes another few victims.

But on one somber day, a week after Macbannin commits suicide, the city holds a moment of silence. Thousands attend Nevard Sechim's state funeral, and if the PCs walk through the procession to view his body, they can spot Gale, observing and approving from afar. That night, the sky over Flint is clear, and the stars shine brightly, as if promising there is still a future yet unknown.



Adventure Number 3

Digging for Lies

From the Pen of Matthew J. Hanson

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***Special Thanks to** Jennifer Taber, for her patience.*

* some illustrations from the public domain are courtesy *fromoldbooks.org*

ADVENTURE THREE: Introduction

Wherein Archaeology Answers Modern Mysteries.

The climax of the first Zeitgeist adven-ture occurred in a Danoran observatory, gazing upward at the stars on an island where one could glimpse flashes of other worlds. The second adventure entailed protecting a Risuri prophet who foresaw the future in those stars, and at its conclusion the party discovered a conspiracy hiding within the Bleak Gate, a shadowy plane that parallels the real world.

Now, in the third adventure, the party will find the connection between those seemingly unrelated threads. By investigating why modern inventors and arcanoscientists are interested in prehistoric relics, the party can discover the name of an international conspiracy—the Obscurati—and hints of its ultimate goal. But before they can track down the conspiracy's head, they first will have to protect their homeland from an otherworldly invasion held at bay for thousands of years.



Before you run this adventure you'll want to make yourself familiar with the Backgroound, Adventure Overview, and NPC Roster.

Background

Thousands of years ago, long before King Kelland defeated the fey titans and founded Risur, monsters and beings from other planes tried to claim this world as their own. Only the most obscure stories provide clues of this time, but occasionally truly ancient ruins were discovered, first by adventurers and more recently by archaeologists.

The current prevailing theory holds that the continent of Lanjyr was briefly home to a civilization of orcs who enslaved goblinoids and minotaurs. None of the ruins have any sort of writing, so scholars use various names—Hill Kings (for the mounds found by most of their ruins), Lithians (for their use of stone tools), or even simply PKPs (for Pre-Kelland People). But most simply call them the Ancients.

All anyone knows about the Ancients is that they built stone and wooden structures, had at least a rudimentary grasp of magic, and possessed no metalworking skills, with the strange exception of goldsmithing. The Ancient ruins found so far have been troves of jewelry, religious totems, and even weapons, all made of gold. Scholars struggle to explain how these primitive people, living in a wilderness supposedly dominated by mighty fey creatures and capable of only simple mining, were able to craft so elaborate (or so many) golden artifacts.

The true nature of the Ancients is unknown to modern scholarship. But the secrets of the Ancients are not entirely unknown; in fact, the Ancients' true nature is a secret carefully protected by a conspiracy of philosophers known as the Obscurati (or "Ob"), because the Ancients once shaped the fate of the world, and now the Obscurati wish to repeat the feat.

In their exploration of the Ancients' history and magic, the Obscurati have funded archaeological expeditions throughout the continent of Lanjyr. Usually these digs, if they uncover anything, are quickly hidden through a mix of murder and recruitment. But now a dig has gone awry.

Adapting the Adventure

All the heroic tier Zeitgeist adventures assume the PCs are agents of the Royal Homeland Constabulary. It may be that your players are free agents because they were dismissed after Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*, by Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby, ostensibly because keeping them employed would be politically tricky.

If they aren't working for the RHC, the PCs might instead have been hired to work security at the Kaybeau Arms and Technology Exposition. Perhaps a Gunsmith, Martial Scientist, or Technologist PC has a friend with an exhibit there, or perhaps the character has a booth of his own. In any event, when the party discovers the Apet relics, they're approached by Xambria to investigate what happened at her dig in the High Bayou.

If you plan to run this adventure outside the Zeitgeist adventure path, the arms fair can be less technological, and more of a magical bazaar. You can simply spin Apet as a deadly sliver of the Far Realm that was sealed off ages ago.

The Ancients and the Axis Seal.

Modern scholars have a flawed view of ancient history. Those long millennia ago, the first mortal races had just begun to develop cultures when the world was discovered by alien entities.

The Golden Legion of Egal the Shimmering marched from Hell to use this world as a staging ground in an eternal war. Agents of so-called gods contacted their chosen people while dragons and titanic beasts staked out their territories. The hordes of strange creatures that found their way into this world were beyond count, and were only growing more numerous by the day.

The meager villages and tribes of mortals could not fight back the intruders through force of arms, but a handful of clever heroes devised a plan to cut off the pathways to this world. At first they just found portals between planes and sealed them, but then they learned how to lock off a whole plane at once, using a golden plate as both a physical seal and as the focus of the magic. To protect portals from those who would reopen them, the Ancients constructed elaborate ziggurats full of traps and undying guardians.

In an infinite multiverse, these seals were only temporary solutions. Clever foes would always find a new route to a world with such precious resources. But this was part of the Ancients' plan. The invaders eventually abandoned the dead-end worlds, giving the Ancients an opportunity as well as a buffer of safety. The Ancients performed the mighty ritual of the Axis Seal, cutting off all of the planes except for a handful of these dead ends, which they knew were free of invaders.

The planes that are still accessible are detailed in the Player's Guide. Apet in particular plays a prominent role in this adventure.

A Fatal Flaw is Revealed.

The Ancients made one great mistake. The Gidim, a semi-humanoid race from a far off realm, had hidden an invasion force on the world of Apet, which the Ancients thought was abandoned like all the other dead-end worlds. Once the Axis Seal was in effect, and they had no competition from other planes, the Gidim struck.

The Ancients managed a hurried revision to the Axis Seal ritual, which turned Apet into a prison plane. While the massive world still orbits the sun and shares its mystical energies, it cannot be reached. The strike by the Gidim devastated the burgeoning Ancient culture, however, and with their heroes dead, the mortal races reverted to their previous primitive state for millennia.

The Common Lore of Apet.

According to modern scholarship and the lore of the skyseers, the massive planet of Apet is the farthest visible world in the star system. Skyseer visions of Apet claim that its surface is just a blasted wasteland of blinding sand, and that no creatures live there. But those who have gazed at Apet long enough claim that sometimes foreign thoughts would poke at their mind from other places or times.

Around Apet orbits a silvery arc called Reida, said to be the arc of time. Interestingly, it's not a solid ring; about a 30-degree segment is empty. Scholars have theorized for centuries what this might indicate about the nature of the past and future.

Obscurati Archaeology.

The Obscurati have been searching for the original seals in preparation for opening the Axis Seal. To maintain secrecy they first sponsored adventurers, and more recently archaeological expeditions, all of whom have as their liaison a tiefling benefactor, **Caius Bergeron**. Caius reports to Lya Jierre, head of the Golden Cell (see the Campaign Guide).

One archaeologist, **Dr. Xambria Meredith** of Slate's Mitchell University, led an expedition that discovered the Apet ziggurat in the High Bayou. In Spring earlier this year she reported to Caius and sent back many minor relics from the dig site. In mid-summer, Caius sent a team of experts to open the seal. That's when disaster struck.

Pocket Dimensions.

When the Axis Seal took effect, small slivers of the worlds already sealed by the Ancients were trapped between the two magical bans, like bugs caught by a double-pane window. A handful of creatures survived in stasis, and in the Apet seal that included a Gidim wayfarer called Sijhen. While the rest of its kin were left trapped without sustenance on Apet, Sijhen was only dimly aware of the dreamlike passage of time.

When Xambria's expedition opened the Ancient's first seal to the plane of Apet, Sijhen was freed. Afraid and surrounded by humans, it was drawn to Xambria, who was carrying the *golden icon of Apet*. Sijhen slithered into Xambria's mind and guided her to escape the onslaught of Gidim war-beasts that slew the rest of her dig crew. Then, once she was safe, it coiled in the recesses of her subconscious to observe and learn.

Sijhen realized countless years had passed, but it saw no history of its own people. It tried to use the same old rituals that millennia ago would have let it travel to and from Gidim, but they failed. Unaware of the power of the Axis Seal, Sijhen was left to try to solve a mystery.

It remained hidden in Xambria's body, wary of discovery. It hopes to return to the dig site to seek clues, but Xambria's too traumatized and still has too much control to be willing to return. So now Sijhen contents itself with wriggling deeper into her mind, and teasing at clues connected to who hired Xambria for the dig in the first place.

Macbannin's Fallout.

In Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*, the PCs took down Reed Macbannin, a district mayor in Flint and a high-placed member of the Obscurati. Macbannin believed himself working on a military research project for Risur's king, but the royalty denied any such plot. Macbannin died in his cell before more information could be uncovered.

Macbannin had many subordinates working in his laboratory. When they realized they had been working for a traitor, some turned themselves in, but many fled, taking whatever valuables they could carry. One of these is **Kaja Stewart**, one of the head researchers developing the soul-burning fuel called witchoil.

Macbannin had also been in league with local crime boss **Lorcan Kell**, who had been making a tidy profit helping smuggle raw materials to the Obscurati's construction facility in the Bleak Gate. Macbannin had been the middle man, and without him, Kell had access to a lot of material, but nowhere to sell it. He had his people track down Kaja Stewart, and in the past few months has set her up as head of a custom magic armaments business.

Finally, Macbannin managed to keep all his illicit activities secret for so long because he had several law enforcement heads in his pocket. This included **Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby**, the director of the Flint branch of the Royal Homeland Constabulary. She got nervous when the PCs took down Macbannin, so she moved quickly to conceal

any suspicious evidence from Macbannin's manor, including several obscure texts and ancient relics that she keeps locked in a trapped safe under her office desk.

Next, she made a point to take the PCs off the case. While there were plenty of leads to follow, she claimed it would look bad for the PCs, who had already been involved with the defeat of Duchess Ethelyn of Shale (see Adventure One, *Island at the Axis of the World*) to be tied to the disgrace of another popular politician. Lady Saxby has a reputation for being politically savvy, so word around the RHC office is that she's just worried the PCs will get more popular than her.

In the intervening few months, Lady Saxby has assigned the party unrelated cases and let a different squad follow up on the Macbannin case. These other constables are more interested in covering themselves than solving crimes, and Saxby has encouraged their slow pace.

None of Macbannin's former associates—Lorcan, Kaja, or Lady Saxby—know of the Obscurati plot, but by piecing together clues that each has, the PCs will be able to outwit the conspiracy going into Adventure Four, *Always on Time*.

Adventure Overview

The PCs' immediate boss, **Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft**, orders them to provide extra security for the Kaybeau Arms and Technology Exposition. The PCs are present when strange monsters unknown to modern scholarship appear and attack fair-goers. After killing the monsters, the party learns that the creatures were summoned by an ancient magic staff made of solid gold, which a fair-goer had purchased on the black market.

Only a day into their investigation, the party learns that **Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill**, national director of the RHC, is coming to Flint to oversee an audit of the local branch. PCs who have been cutting corners, breaking the law, or failing to hand over evidence so they could keep it for themselves will have to scramble to avoid punishment.

Through a string of contacts, the party tracks the sale of the staff to Kaja Stewart, who stole the relic and several others from Macbannin's manor. If arrested, she gets transfered by Saxby to the RHC office in the capital city Slate, and goes missing soon thereafter, secretly recruited by Risur's military to develop weapons. Crime boss Lorcan Kell pursues the PCs for harassing his business partner, and various minor threats from the expo keep them busy, but eventually the party connects the relics to Pardwight University.

Hans Weber, the curator of Pardwight's natural history museum, is planning a gala of artifacts of the Ancients, and he can put the PCs in contact with Dr. Xambria Meredith.

Xambria recalls finding the staff at the site of her last expedition, but she claims she was away when disaster struck and all of her cohorts were killed. She suggests the party find Caius Bergeron, who sponsored her dig, then vanished after the disaster. When Caius claims to be a harmless philanthropist, the PCs have few options left other than to head to the dig site and scour it for clues.

At the ancient ziggurat, the party must avoid dangerous traps and battle strange creatures from another world. They find the bodies of Xambria's expedition, as well as a group of specialists who had been sent by Caius Bergeron. The golden seal is missing, and a map in the ziggurat points to another possible dig site.

Their presence draws the interest of a long-slumbering fey titan, the serpentine **Voice of Rot**, who believes the lands around the ziggurat are his domain. He tells the party that an interloper from another world

Madness of Apet

Several aberrations in the adventure are so bizarre that they tax a character's sanity.

Mind Strain

The monsters of Gidim are foreign and horrifying. Creatures who view them struggle to grasp their precise location, and that uncertainty creeps into their minds, slowly eroding their sanity. Several monsters in this adventure can cause the disease Distant Madness.

Distant Madness Level 8 Disease

When you reach out, you aren't sure whether what you see is close enough to touch, or as distant as the stars in the night sky.

Stage 0: The target recovers from the disease.

Stage 1: *Initial Effect:* The target gains vulnerable 5 psychic. If knocked unconscious by psychic damage, the target gains a Mind Scar (see below).

Stage 2: As above, plus the character grants combat advantage, and suffers a –2 penalty to attack rolls.

Stage 3: *Final State:* As above, plus if the character makes an attack and misses all targets, the character is dazed until the end of his next turn.

Check: At the end of each extended rest, the target makes an Insight check if it is at stage 1 or 2.

10 or lower: The stage of the disease increases by one.

11–15: No change.

16 or higher: The stage of the disease decreases by one.

Mind Scar

Mind scars reflect permanent insanities tied to the unhinging effect of Distant Madness. When a character obtains a mind scar, roll 1d6 to determine the general nature of the insanity.

1. Phobia. Irrational fear of a type of creature, object, or situation.

2. Paranoia. Irrational belief someone is trying to harm the PC.

3. Hallucinations. Seeing or hearing things that don't exist.

4. Delusion. Irrational belief in something untrue.

5. Obsession. Irrational desire to be near a creature, object, or situation.

6. Compulsion. Urge to take specific actions in irrational circumstances.

The specifics of the insanity are left up to the DM or players. Most of the time, a mind scar should serve as a role-playing hook. Occasionally, however, the DM may offer a bit of insane insight in exchange for forcing the character to take a detrimental action appropriate to their mind scar. If the player accepts and the PC follows the desired course of action, the character can use the following power during the current encounter.

If a player proposes a detrimental course of action appropriate to his insanity, the DM may also reward him with this power. A character cured of Distant Madness is cured of any mind scars he is suffering.

Insane Insight

Your allies thought you crazy, but in a moment of self-peril, you saw reality from afar and understood your situation with inhuman clarity.

Mind Scar Utility ✦ Psionic

Free Action Encounter

Requirement: You must have followed a detrimental course of action related to your mind scar during this encounter

Effect: You gain one of the following benefits of your choice.

- Take an additional standard action on your next turn.
- Treat any single d20 die roll as a natural 19.
- Recharge an encounter power other than this one.

escaped the ziggurat, and that he will punish the mortals in his realm if they do not deal with the intruder for him. The party can use ritual magic to track the foreign planar energy trail left by the creature, which leads them back to Flint.

The trail of planar energy criss-crosses itself and leads to several red herrings, but also goes to Xambria's home, where there are signs of a struggle, but no sign of the woman. The trail also points to Caius's inn, where the PCs find that he has been murdered, and his brain has been devoured. While searching his room for evidence, they learn that Caius sent an expedition to the dig site marked on the map in the ziggurat, off the coast of Ber, several hundred miles away.

Chasing the second expedition, the PCs reach Ber and find three ships in a stand-off. One is owned by Caius, and it tries to protect a group working to open the seal, which is underwater. The second is a Beran archaeology vessel, while the third is a boat Xambria chartered. She claims she was attacked back in Flint, and that she headed for this site, hoping to stop Caius's team before they unleashed more monsters.

The energy trail points to Xambria, though she can explain this away because she has been wearing the *golden icon of Apet*, which she recovered at the first dig site. She plays the frightened innocent, but in truth she has fallen under Sijhen's control. After the party defeats Caius's team, Sijhen bides its time, then distracts the party by summoning monsters. During the disturbance, Sijhen devours the brains of any prisoners, steals the ritual book they used to open the seal, and flees via teleportation.



Xambria was a rising star in the academic world of archaeology, and at 28 she's the youngest professor at Mitchell University in Slate. She has always had a particular interest in Ancient relics, since the golden treasures were so wondrous to behold.

Xambria preferred a hands-on approach to unearthing the secrets of history, and frequently put her life in danger, either on digs in hostile lands, or because the excavations themselves were filled with traps. She enjoyed nothing more than exploring ancient ruins, using a canny mix of caution and daring to avoid curses and traps or survive the ones she didn't see in advance.

But a month ago something went terribly wrong at one of her digs. For months she had been excavating and exploring a ziggurat of the Ancients, a truly legendary find. She had taken all the proper precautions—careful probing for traps, magical auguries, prayers and supplications to appease the spirits of the land being disturbed. To her dismay, there is a hole in her mind, and she does not know what happened.

She remembers leaving for supplies, then returning and finding dead bodies, mangled and mutilated. After that, her memory is a blur. She took a train to Flint, sought shelter with peers at Pardwight University, and struggled to cope with the horrors she'd seen.

Despite her trained athleticism, Xambria dresses conservatively, more comfortable displaying her mind than her body. Now, though, she takes care to cover as much as possible—sometimes when she thinks about what she saw at the dig she can almost feel something trying to wriggle out of her skin.

Though traumatized, Xambria has devoted her life to uncovering mysteries. She wants to find out what killed her dig crew, but somehow she knows that if she goes back to her dig, it will not end well for her.

When the PCs get back to Flint, Pardwight curator Hans Weber asks them to protect the Ancients gala. Xambria attacks the event with a host of monsters, and she tries to steal relics from the ziggurat of Apet. Even if she obtains them, however, she lets the PCs defeat her and quickly surrenders.

This is part of Sijhen's gambit. To get home, it hopes to open a portal to Gidim. But to properly aim that portal, it needs an Ancient star map. Lady Saxby just happened to confiscate one after the downfall of Macbannin, and she keeps it locked up in her office in the RHC headquarters.

Xambria stages her own capture so she'll be brought to the headquarters, and so Saxby will be present. Before her capture, Xambria sends word to the Obscurati that Saxby is planning to turn on them, and so the Ob sends assassins to silence the Chief Inspectress.

Sijhen wants to consume Saxby's brain, as well as those of the assassins, since it plans to return to this world eventually, and wants more knowledge about the Obscurati. It isn't afraid of the mere mortals who stand in its way, but it doesn't realize that the Axis Seal will utterly thwart its attempts to go home.

Shortly after the PCs lock up Xambria in an RHC jail cell, Sijhen springs its trap. Using a makeshift portal, monsters and reality-warping energies from Apet pour into the building, letting Sijhen escape. It heads for Saxby's office as assassins make their move, all while the other staff of the headquarters are driven mad and turn on each other.

The party must rush to avert several catastrophes, and when they confront Sijhen at its portal, a mishap unleashes a massive warbeast, long ago bred by the Gidim and trapped on Apet. The PCs must kill it or drive it back so they can seal the portal before the energy of Apet destroys the RHC and drives them all mad.

TIMELINE

Xambria discovered the ziggurat in Spring, and the seal around the 15th of Summer. The seal was opened around the 45th of Summer, and Xambria made it back to Flint on the 51st. On the 75th, Caius Bergeron sent another team of Obscurati experts to the dig to bring back the golden seal. They return on the 85th. The team leaves for the sunken ziggurat of Mavisha on Summer 91 (the last day of summer).

The adventure begins on the 1st day of autumn. The PCs will likely spend a few days investigating leads from the arms fair, then take about a week exploring Xambria's dig site and returning. Xambria kills Caius Bergeron on Autumn 7, breaks into Saxby's home on the 8th, and leaves for Ber on the 9th. She arrives at the sunken ziggurat on the 15th.

The PCs likely get back to Flint on the 12th of Autumn, and probably spend a day or two following leads before they set out for the sunken ziggurat. Sailing to the ziggurat in Ber requires at least three days, most likely a week, but Xambria and the Obscurati experts will both still be there.

The Ancients Gala opens on the 31st of Autumn, though curator Hans Weber waits to put the three Ancient relics (amulet, blade, and staff) on display until the PCs are available to provide protection. Xambria, likewise, waits to strike until the PCs are present, because she wants her arrest to be convincing.

Feel free to adjust the timeline to give the adventure a tense pace. In particular, if your PCs would refuse to let the case sit fallow for the long term, you might move the adventure's start to a just a week or two after the end of *The Dying Skyseer*.



Difficulty Class by Level.

Level	Easy	Moderate	Hard	Level	Easy	Moderate	Hard
3	9	13	21	7	11	16	23
4	10	14	21	8	12	16	24
5	10	15	22	9	12	17	25
6	11	15	23	10	13	18	26

Obscurati Note.

Why did Macbannin have items from the dig site? Macbannin was part of Colossus cell, and normally had no contact with Golden Cell, which handles the digs. But Macbannin was an expert in defending against dark magic, so Caius got special permission to have the mayor examine a few relics to ensure they weren't dangerous. Macbannin was defeated before Caius could recover them.

A Note About Weather.

Autumn is the start of the rainy season in Risur. The first week usually just has rainy afternoons, but by the end of the month it's almost always at least drizzling. The weather is worse in the High Bayou, location of the Ziggurat of Apet, where flooding will be imminent by the time the PCs arrive. Temperatures hover between 70 and 90 degrees Fahrenheit.



A semi-humanoid being of the Gidim race, Sijhen was poised thousands of years ago to invade this world from a vanguard in Apet. Though only a novice at controlling the minds of beasts and mortals, Sijhen was one of his race's experts in planar travel. It was studying the Apet side of a golden seal when the greater Axis Seal took effect, and so was trapped in a timeless space between worlds.

The Gidim can possess corporeal creatures, but in their natural forms they can waver between wholly physical and existing only as barely-visible thought-forms. Normally they assume the appearance of gray-skinned bipeds with tentacled heads. They subsist on thoughts, not physical food, and their own sentience is dependent on consuming enough complex ideas as sustenance. Their homeworld is itself a thinking being, but the Gidim could only expand by keeping mortal races as slaves.

Barely conscious in stasis, Sijhen dreamed of finding its way home. Then, when the Seal of Apet opened, Sijhen and a small horde of Gidim warbeasts were expelled into this world. Panicking, Sijhen hid in the mind of the first being it sensed, Xambria.

The two minds occupy the same body, and while Xambria retains control most of the time, Sijhen is capable of taking control for short periods of time, or "editing" what Xambria remembers or says. Sijhen is careful not to make his host seem crazy, and luckily the two minds have a shared purpose of discovering what happened at the dig site.

NPC Roster.

Detailed entries are included throughout the adventure close to the characters' first appearances.

NPC Entry	Page
Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby	272
Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft	226
Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill	423
Kvarti Gorbatiy	223
Rock Rackus	248
Kaja Stewart	227
Dr. Xambria Meredith	216
Sijhen	217
Benedict Pembertion	221
Caius Bergeron	233
Director of Infiltrations Lauryn Cyneburg	423
Captain Rutger Smith	258

Recurring Characters. Stover Delft, Nigel Price-Hill, Kvarti Gorbatiy, Benedict Pemberton, Rock Rackus, Lauryn Cyneburg, and Captain Rutger Smith are all scheduled to appear in future adventures. The Gidim survivor, Sijhen, likely will return much later even if the PCs defeat it, because its alien biology makes it hard to permanently kill.

Incidental NPCs. The following NPCs probably only show up for a single scene, but you can refer here to remind yourself who's who.

NPC	Page
Sergeant Sara Lockheart, expo police	220
Timothy Lammers, gun range owner	222
Alfonse Irongut, ammunition seller	222
Alforb Irongut, good-for-nothing son	223
Nock, goliath gunmaker	222
Fildi and Dilfi, gnome badger fans	222
Alloquicious, halfling mechaneer	222
Simon Langfield	223
Colonel Sebastian Harlock	226
Isaac Randal	227
Gunter Inskeip	230
Carlao, RHC knight	271
Dima, RHC cleric	272
Serena, RHC assassin	272
Hans Weber	215
Diego Dolorosa, captain of *La Inspiración*	249
Paco de Los Loros, goblin archaeologist	249
Jack Glassmaker, captain of the *Dagger*	250
Bernardo Molinelli, captain of *Il Draçon de Mer*	250
Finona Duvall, tiefling summoner	254
Kranto, half-orc sea druid	254

Key Locations.

Use this list to keep track of locations the PCs might end up visiting in the course of the adventure.

Location	Page
Kaybeau Fairgrounds	221
Pardwight University	231
Lanternwood Subrail Station	227
Silver Swan	233
Bole	234
Agate	234
Ziggurat of Apet	235
Seobriga	249
Pezarillo	249
Ziggurat of Mavisha	257
RHC Headquarters	266

RHC Headquarters. The headquarters of the PCs' employer. The PCs should visit this building often to receive mission briefings, report findings, transfer prisoners, and turn over evidence. The party will be called to report for an audit during Act Two, and monsters from beyond will invade the headquarters during Act Three.

Kaybeau Fairgrounds. The Kaybeau Arms and Technology Exposition takes place in a large public park in the Central District, two miles from the RHC headquarters. The fair lasts until the end of the month, so after the PCs' initial investigations, they might revisit it later purchase equipment or talk to NPCs.

Lanternwood Subrail Station. Located a stone's throw from the fairgrounds, this construction site will one day be part of Flint's subrail network. Now it's mostly just a pit in the ground surrounded by a high fence, filled with stacks of iron and brick pallets.

Pardwight Unversity. The "campus" of Pardwight University weaves through many streets and occasionally shares buildings with other offices in Central District. Despite being less impressive than Mitchell University in Slate, Pardwight has prospered from generous donors in the burgeoning economy of Flint.

The Pardwight Museum of Natural History is a recently completed new building in the North Shore district. Dr. Xambria Meredith has been staying in one of the nearby apartment buildings, only a few blocks from the beach.

Silver Swan. The Silver Swan, the most elegant inn in Flint, fronts the beach in the North Shore district. Wealthy visitors come here for unmatched comfort and anonymity, including philanthropist and Obscurati operative Caius Bergeron.

Bole. The nearest large city to the High Bayou. The PCs likely pass through here on the way to Agate. Mostly famous for its lumber, Bole is an old, relaxed city compared to Flint, with a more active fey presence.

Agate. A small town on the eastern edge of the High Bayou, at the end of the rail line that leads to the Anthras Mountains. It mostly services miners, but it is the closest piece of civilization to the Ziggurat of Apet.

Ziggurat of Apet. A ziggurat constructed by the Ancients to seal and guard a portal to the distant plane, Apet. Xambria explored these ruins, and a group of Obscurati agents opened the seal of Apet, unleashing Sijhen and a host of other aberrations.

Seobriga. The capital of Ber, which the PCs might teleport to on the way to the sunken Ziggurat of Mavisha. Seobriga plays a larger role in Adventure Six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*, but basic details of Beran society can be found in the Player's Guide.

Pezarillo. A small fishing village on the coast of Ber, near the sunken Ziggurat of Mavisha. The PCs may have to stop here to repair their ship.

Ziggurat of Mavisha. This ziggurat was destroyed centuries ago in a massive earthquake that cast it into the sea. A team of specialists sent by Caius Bergeron attempts to examine the seal to Mavisha, the plane of water, but only if something goes awry will anything dangerous come through.

Rewards

At the start of this adventure, the PCs should be 5th level. They should reach 6th after Act One, 7th after Act Two, and 8th level after the climax. At the end of this adventure, the party's Prestige with Risur should increase by 1 rank if they save the RHC headquarters, though that might be mitigated if the party is found guilty in the audit. Unless the party makes fools of themselves, their Prestige with the Obscurati will increase by 1 rank.

The PCs' Prestige with Flint, the Clergy, or the Unseen Court will not necessarily increase, since the core events of the adventure are not important enough to those groups. Certain side-plots might yield a Prestige increase of 1 rank, however.

At the start of the adventure, the PCs each receive 2,900 gp. After the first act they receive 3,760 gp, and then 5,260 gp after the second act. This represents a mixture of salary and stipend for their investigation. However, The Audit (see Appendix B) may adjust what the party gets so that they end up with the appropriate resources for their level.

If the PCs are free agents instead of members of the RHC, you'll need to make sure they receive the appropriate treasure parcels. One possible mix would be:

- **Start of Adventure.** Four magic items possessed by NPCs, and 400 gp apiece payment for providing security at the arms expo.
- **At 6th Level.** Four magic items possessed by NPCs, and 720 gp apiece in golden jewelry and artifacts from the ziggurats.
- **At 7th Level.** Four magic items possessed by NPCs, and 1,040 gp apiece as reward for saving the RHC headquarters.

List of Magic Items as Treasure.

Cards for new items are presented in Appendix M. Feel free to modify the items to better match your players' preferences, such as making a staff a totem, or turning a sword into a glaive.

- Various ammunition and other consumables worth 1,800 gp, carried by Kaja Stewart.
- +2 *badger gun*.
- +2 *blade of the Ancients*.
- +2 *nock gun*.
- +2 *amulet of the Ancients*.
- Experimental steam suit.
- Saxby's *gloves of storing*. See the D&D 4E Adventurer's Vault®.
- +2 *staff of the Ancients*.
- 3,700 gp worth of fine art and treasure in Caius Bergeron's suite, plus ten ritual scrolls of Sending.
- Xambria's *golden icon of Apet*.
- *Il Draçon de Mer*, brigantine vessel defending the seal of Mavisha.
- Rock Rackus's *+3 diamond-encrusted piece* pistol.
- Plus possibly *Xambria's Consciousness* as a boon.

Other Constables

The Player's Guide presents a group of six constables you can use as coworkers of the PCs, to establish friendships or rivalries. With the PCs off the Macbannin case, three of these constables were given the task.

Carlao, human knight.

Dima, dwarf cleric.

Serena, human assassin.

Carlao is the obedient leader of the group, always willing to do what Lady Inspectress Saxby asks. Serena is the brains and face, while Dima has a bizarre joy for filing paperwork.

These three constables will be in the RHC headquarters at the end of Act Three, and depending on the PCs' relationships with them and how persuasive they can be, the group might act as allies or enemies.

Character Themes in the Adventure.

Each Zeitgeist adventure includes one or more scenes that bring the PCs' character themes (detailed in the Player's Guide) to the forefront.

Dockers have a chance to influence their sub-culture's fate. The rising star of Rock Rackus can turn the dockers either into a powerful popular movement, or a short-term flashy trend, all based on how a PC steers the buffoonish performer.

Eschatologists meet a kindred spirit in the assassin Kvarti Gorbatiy, who has a weapon crafted from an old Drakran relic with clues to the end of the world.

Gunsmiths have plenty of toys to play with at the arms expo, and can also talk shop with Kvarti Gorbatiy there.

Martial Scientists will be called upon by their old teachers or colleagues to acquire a specimen of the warbeasts of Apet for study, and will be pointed toward an obscure martial thesis that will come in handy.

Skyseers receive visions of the future at the two ziggurats.

Spirit Mediums can most easily deal with thoughtform creatures, have the best chance of saving Xambria, and can always recover clues from the many dead bodies they'll come across.

Technologists, like gunsmiths, have a lot of hooks at the arms expo, and in the final act they might make use of confiscated inventions in the defense of the RHC Headquarters.

Vekeshi Mystics have the flip side of the docker dilemma, where a rogue element in the cult might cause public outrage by ordering the death of Rock Rackus.

Yerasol Veterans will be singled out for possible promotion by Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill, and will be at an advantage in naval combat at the sunken seal.



ACT ONE: From Fair to Foul

In this act, the party stakes out a fair, captures a fence, and learns that their enemies have an interest in archaeology.

MEANWHILE, IN THE NEWS...

If you want to give a little extra life to the city and the world beyond, you can occasionally drop mentions of the following current events. People murmur about these in cafes, gossip on the streets, or read about them in papers. Only a few have even a tangential connection to this adventure's plot. You might spin some of these into side quests, but be careful that your players don't latch onto the wrong ones and run off chasing red herrings.

War and Peace. The Kaybeau Armament and Technology Exposition dominates the main festival grounds of Flint this month, but the city is already preparing for a summit between Risur and Danor. Scheduled for early next Spring, the summit will see the rulers of the two nations meet and discuss a long-lasting peace. The famed minotaur arbiter from Ber, Brakken of Heffanita, will moderate negotiations. Security is expected to be high.

Weird Illness. Goodson's Estuarial Reformatory has become home to a growing population of demented people, now nearly thirty. All of them suffer from a condition doctors are calling Distant Madness. Suspected to be a magical affliction, perhaps fallout from the events on Cauldron Hill in the summer, the condition causes victims to feel physically displaced and unable to tell how far away things are. The mad men and women hail mostly from Parity Lake. A few cases were reported in North Shore, but the wealthier victims have the resources to afford magical alleviation.

What Horror! Police are investigating a new bizarre serial killer in Central District, who first struck in the middle of summer. The authorities are unsure of a connection between the five victims, save that all of them had their brains removed through the palates of their mouths.

Wicket Gates Coming. Enthusiasm in the city is mixed concerning the burgeoning subrail tunnel system. While the well-to-do are willing to put up with the hassles of large construction projects, poorer Flinters worry that they won't be able to afford this new travel system. Proposed fees at the toll booths—called wicket gates—will just be 3 pennies per juncture.

Worsening Corruption? In the wake of Reed Macbannin's downfall, more people are claiming politicians, nobles, and even police officers are part of a culture of corruption. Flint City Governor Roland Stanfield commented, "Corruption is a constant in any large city. What has changed is the growing voice of the people who support our great modern nation. We must listen to those voices, because opportunities to truly improve society are rare."

Wunderbahn. A bill in Parliament is being considered to levy a salary tax on the entire nation to fund construction of a wider railroad network. The city governor of Shale, Catherine Romana, has proposed a counter bill to fund what she calls the Dream Road, "a roadway more in keeping with Risur's traditions." The Dream Road would involve hundreds of magical portals connecting every village, town, and city, but the magical reagents required to activate the portal cost over 100 gold shields to transport just a handful of people. Romana's opponents in Parliament call the idea preposterous.

The Fair Comes to Town

If you want to give your players a brief overview of the situation, read or paraphrase the following.

After the climactic defeat of Macbannin and his mysterious suicide in custody, a savvy investigator might conclude that the case isn't closed. That was certainly the opinion of your supervisor, Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft, who wanted you turning over every stone to get to the bottom of the mystery.

Unfortunately, *his* boss, Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby, is head of the Royal Homeland Constabulary in Flint, and she has ordered you off the case. She claimed she had missions "more suited to your talents," but all she's done is assign you banal investigations and busy work.

Delft grumbled and fought for you, but everyone knows what motivates the Lady Inspectress. She has her eye on politics, and she's ended the careers of more than a few constables who got too much positive press too fast. Lady Saxby's in charge here, and your job is to take orders. If reporters ask you any questions, you're to politely suggest they talk with the Lady Inspectress.

Don't worry. Delft assures you that it will all blow over in a month or two.

No use arguing, anyway. Another squad is on the Macbannin case. Your job, for the next month, is to be a gang of glorified security guards.

The Kaybeau Armament and Technology Exposition has come to Flint. The outdoor festival showcases amateur inventors and giants of the new industrial revolution as they display their creations with great pomp and spectacle. Everywhere you turn there's another pavilion boasting of the latest miracle of technology, from precision ballistics, to steam-powered armor, to clockwork pianos that play themselves. Vendors and fair-goers of all nations and races cram the aisles to see wonders once limited to the workshops of wizards and the vaults of kings.

It is hot, crowded, and littered with experimental weapons. What could possibly go wrong?

The police are charged with mundane concerns, like pickpockets and rowdy drunks; it's up to you constables to look for greater threats, such as arms smugglers and foreign spies, many of whom might use the fair as cover for espionage.

You're to coordinate your efforts with Sergeant Sara Lockheart, lead officer on site from the Flint Police. Each day, from the crack of dawn until the afternoon rains disperse the crowds, your job is to make sure everything is orderly. The Chief Inspectress never explicitly gave the order, but Delft recommends you try your damnedest to keep out of the papers.

Marching Orders

Social. Real-Time. Level 5.

The PCs get acquainted with the expo.

Sergeant Sara Lockheart meets with the party the morning the expo opens and gets them acquainted with its general layout and make-up, detailed below. She's generally professional, though she acts somewhat cold if the PCs have Risur prestige of 1, and dismissive if they have Risur prestige of 0.

The sergeant does not have any concrete leads to offer, but does suggest that they spend the whole first day at the fair looking for trouble. The subrail station and the center of the expo are more heavily watched,

so while her police can handle the rabble and any sort of petty theft or vandalism there, she suspects anything more major would go on in the peripheral tents and booths.

Kaybeau Arms and Technology Exposition.

Two miles southwest of the RHC Headquarters, in the largest public park in Flint, the expo resembles a small tent city. Dozens of small booths, a score of modest tents, and a trio of huge pavilions house the various vendors. As the party works here, whoever has the best Perception spots a woman tailing them. This is **Lauryn Cyneburg**, RHC Director of Infiltrations (see page 423), and if the party tries to confront her she vanishes into the crowd and teleports away.

Pavilions.

In the center of the park, these semi-permanent structures are near the recently completed and lavishly appointed Kaybeau Subrail Station.

Military Tent.

Here the Risuri military demonstrates its technological grandeur. Officers guide guests through models of famous battles with progressing levels of technology. A small museum showcases weapons and armor, trying to win propaganda points by presenting firearms as a natural development, while offering only brief mentions of magic in combat.

One massive installation displays the cross-section of a scaled-down R.N.S. *Coaltongue*. For a gold piece, a visitor can fire a cannon into the outer hull. A small field is littered with flattened cannonballs.

Rail Tent.

The conglomerate of businesses who coordinate with the Royal Rail Ministry give visitors here only one path through their exhibit. First, models show the mechanics behind steam engines. Then a somewhat ominous hallway has a relief map of the Avery Coast, with a model train constantly running the length (powered by magic). Flags mechanically rise and fall as the train passes through foreign nations, and a guide helpfully points out that the rail line, funded mostly by Danorans, is almost ten times as long as Risur's own railroad.

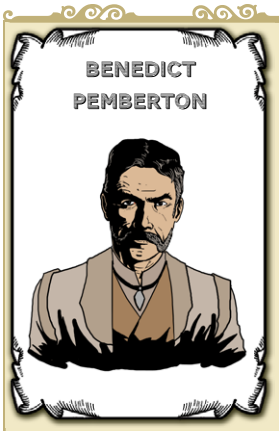
But the exhibit climaxes with a huge room thrumming with the sounds of trains. Here a scale model of Risur shows five majestic rail lines criss-crossing the country, while guides tout how much the nation will prosper from the faster travel.

Industry Tent.

Completely ignoring the civil unrest over the past half year, this pavilion highlights how much industry and the factories of Parity Lake have improved life in Flint, and presents a vision of the city of the future. A steamboat adorned with gorgeous women cruises around an indoor lake (subtle fans in the ceiling clear out the soot and steam). A model of the city is enchanted with an illusion showing "heroic" smokestacks sticking up from the Cloudwood, and steel towers rising everywhere.

Major Tents.

In a ring around the main pavilions, twenty large tents anchor the swaths of smaller booths of individual vendors. These tents belong mostly to local factories, with a few national and international arms manufacturers. The PCs aren't here to shop, but they can find any sort of non-magical weapon, armor, or technological invention here, as well as a few magical ones. Make sure to offer the PCs a chance to pick up any rare and advanced weapons like rifles, shotguns, and grenades.



Owner of experimental arms manufacturer Pemberton Industries, this man looks only about fifty, and has the verve of a young man, but he jokingly exaggerates his infirmities. Though on the cutting edge of mechanical warfare, Pemberton plays up his homely country roots, speaking slowly in a deep voice and often leaning back and tucking his thumbs in his belt loops.

Apex Tower Construction.

A local construction firm has no tent, just an open patch of ground, and throughout the expo they build a tower. Starting on the first day they dig a bit to lay a foundation of stones and steel. Using techniques fairly advanced for Risuri society—including primitive welding—they will manage to reach 50 ft. high by the end of the month.

Colleen Fuel Prospectus.

Funded in part by Risur's military, this company has been experimenting on using different fuels for mechanical engines. The party might discover, amid barrels of traditional oil, one barrel of witchoil, the soul-infused oil that Macbannin was refining in Adventure Two. The research group's owner, Colleen, bought the barrel from Lorcan Kell's people.

Gonzel's Cannery.

A half-orc culinary entrepreneur is showing off his canned foods. People can buy a can full of food, which his cooks will prepare. Then, in a rough mockery of the Apex tower, he begins stacking empty cans on a table. By the end of the month, he has to stop because his tent isn't high enough.

Liontamer Mechanical Orchestra.

The tall, wise-cracking owner of this tent builds crank-powered musical instruments that play themselves, from simple music boxes to his showpiece "orchestra," which has a piano, four violins (each playing just one string), a small drum set, and bellows that pump air through bassoons and oboes.

Pemberton Industries.

The wealthy **Benedict Pemberton** hosts exclusive parties here for aristocrats and high-ranking members of government and military. Wary guards keep away the uninvited, but if the party passes by Pemberton himself spots them and recalls that they saved his life on the *Coaltongue* (see Adventure One). He invites them (especially any martial scientists, technologists, or Yerasol veterans) to a party in his tent that evening.

At the event, dozens of potential investors watch as Pemberton shows off his company's latest inventions, including a man-sized steel construct that can be crudely controlled by a person wearing an enchanted headband. Also present is a B.E.A.R., or Battle-Enhanced Animalistic Replicant. He claims both inventions would be well-suited to Risur's war effort, and he suggests the RHC should be sure to buy some before he runs out.

Sechim's Alkahest and Alchemicals.

If the party saved Heward Sechim's factory in the previous adventure, the alchemist is riding a wave of popularity and selling intricately etched glass and weapons to fair-goers. He also lets people play a game of "Taste the Acid," except the acid is just really strong liquor. He offers the party all the free drinks they want.

The Trinket Stand.

This tent is a cooperative venture by several trinket sellers. They offer various knickknacks that seem out of place at a technology fair, but do brisk business because people are already here with money to spend.

Anybody who goes to the "jewelry booth" in the back of the tent, and says they are looking for "an anniversary gift for my wife Ethel," is sold a small but ornate jewelry box. The box contains slip of paper that gives a time and place where they characters can meet Kaja Stewart to discuss buying fenced goods (see page 227).

Stage Area—Gun Alley.

On the northern edge of the park, a stage hosts daily performances of local orchestras, international celebrities, and the occasional military reenactment. The Incident (page 223) occurs here, so we've included a thick knot of strange booths and NPCs that might draw the party's interest so they're present when the event occurs.

Area 1. Gun Alley Stage.

Backed by a wooded hill, the stage is shaded by a large canopy. A broad field in front of it is often full of audiences.

Area 2. Rock Rackus's Tent.

Famed explorer and musician Rock Rackus is scheduled to perform on the stage in the afternoon, followed by a lecture about his journey to the moon, then a book signing. When the PCs arrive he's alternately yelling or laughing at his stage crew as they set up massive moon-themed props. At the moment he is too busy to meet with the PCs unless they have obtained Prestige rating 3 in Flint, in which case he'll jump at the chance to talk to them. See Jailhouse Rock (page 248) for Rock's stories.

Area 3. Shooting Range.

Using a reinforced hill as a safety backdrop, **Timothy Lammers**, an enterprising war veteran missing half his lower jaw, lets people test fire weapons sold by nearby vendors. In exchange, the vendors give him a tiny share of the profits.

Area 4. Al's Ammo.

A Drakran dwarf named **Alfonse Irongut** sells a variety of magical ammunition at this huge tent-booth. These include bullet versions of any crossbow bolts you decide the PCs can have access to. Alfonse is impressed by those who know the trade, and Gunsmiths receive a 10% discount, as does anyone who can bullseye a target on the short shooting range (attack vs AC 25).

Area 5. Badger Gun.

A pair of gnome twins named **Fildi and Dilfi** decided to combine their two favorite things: badgers and guns. They do not understand why not everybody is as excited as they are about their *badger gun*. (See Appendix M for the statistics of this weapon.) The gnomes will even offer a special 20% off the gun if the PCs have a Prestige rating of 3 with the Unseen Court.



Area 6. Nock's Gun.

Nock, a goliath from Ber, had a brilliant idea. If a gun that shoots one bullet is good, one that shoots seven bullets is better! Unfortunately current gun barrels aren't strong enough to survive the shot without magical girding, so the weapon's prohibitively expensive. And the gun has some recoil issues for people shorter than 7'5". But that doesn't stop him from selling the weapon (see Appendix M).

Area 7. Steam Powered Armor.

A group of human and tiefling engineers from Danor, led by a straw-chewing halfling named **Alloquicious**, have constructed a prototype of a new kind of armor, one that uses steam power to enhance the wearer's strength, speed, and resilience. Unfortunately it's experiencing technical difficulties, but Alloquicious is itching to test out the arm-mounted flame-spewer. (See Appendix M.)

A character with the Technologist theme can easily diagnose the problem, while other PCs must succeed both an Arcana and Thievery check (DC 21 each). If a PC shares the solution, the Danorans get the device ready by the time The Incident occurs.

Miscellaneous Tents and Booths.

Several other vendors sell more mundane arms, or offer gun-themed accessories like holsters, bandoliers, paintings, and ten-penny novels about gunslingers.

Dwarven Philosopher.

A dwarven mercenary named **Kvarti Gorbatiy** roams the tents and booths in this region. He is legitimately intrigued by the variety of weapons on display, but his main purpose is observing Rock Rackus, whom he has been hired to assassinate. See Radical Vekeshi Plot (Appendix C).

Kvarti might strike up a conversation with the PCs, whom he recognizes from the papers, especially anyone with an interest in guns. If any PC is an eschatologist, he'll gladly discuss philosophy, asking with black humor if Reed Macbannin seemed content with his life at the end.

The Incident

Action. Tactical. Level 6.

Monsters appear from nowhere to attack the fairgoers.

This event occurs when the party is in the stage area, preferably on the first day. It might happen after the PCs have gotten independent word of Kaja's fencing operation, so they could be looking for Simon Langfield as a former client. When battle begins, read or paraphrase the following.

Screams erupt from a crowd of fairgoers not far from the stage as they run in panic. As they pass, horrid monsters that could only exist in nightmares pursue them. One massive creature is nothing more than a ring of flesh and bone, with teeth pointed inward, and lashing tentacles extending outward. The tentacles have already grasped one bystander—a young dwarf—and he dangles in the air. It looks like it could swallow a man whole, though it has no throat, just a gaping maw.



Two smaller monsters buzz about the sky, like fleshy dragonflies the size of a man, with sleek bodies and elephant-like trunks that end in sharp beaks. The skin of all three monsters shifts from a brown-dappled ivory to a glassy translucence, as if they can't decide whether they're solid or not.

A human male with long blond hair stands amidst the chaos, holding a gold staff in his right hand. He fires a magic missile from the staff, and a moment later a third dragonfly-beast materializes beside him.

The human is **Simon Langfield**, a rich but novice mage who purchased the *staff of the Ancients* from Kaja Stewart. He was trying to get the discount at Al's Ammo by hitting a bullseye with his *magic missile* spell, but accidently summoned monsters from the planet Apet. He has no control over them and is just as shocked to seem them as the PCs.

Monsters from beyond the mortal world are rare enough, but even educated PCs have never heard of anything like these before.

List of Involved Parties.

- 1 worm maw
- 3 flying things
- Kvarti Gorbatiy (bystander, ally)
- Rock Rackus (bystander, ally)
- Simon Langfield (ally)

Tactics.

Simon Langfield starts at Al's Ammo (Area 4), and the worm maw remains there, while the flying things flit about, keeping their distance from those attacking them. The panic causes the crowds to clear out, but a few bystanders huddle behind cover to watch.

The party might note (Perception DC 15) that Rock Rackus cowers at the edge of the scene, but he is quickly loading his gun like he wants to help. The dwarven "philospher," Kvarti Gorbatiy, makes a tactical withdrawal to the top of the stage. Starting on round 2, the two men make their own contributions to the battle.

The worm maw has already grabbed one bystander, **Alforb Irongut**, drunken son of shop-owner Alfonse. On its first round the worm maw swallows him and drops him through its hole. He falls to the ground



A dwarven locksmith turned mercenary, Kvarti never was interested in the philosophy of Heid Eschatol until he found a book on the subject in the hands of a man he had assassinated. Now, though he presents a weary face to maintain his reputation, he goes through life content. He has all his affairs in order, and while he hopes to find a cause worth dying for, he would not be angry if his life was cut short.

When Kvarti is hired to kill someone, he knows he won't be close for the final shot, and as someone concerned about the way things end, he likes to at least brush past his victim, perhaps even make some small talk, so he can better understand the greater context of the person's death.

Kvarti is more of a gunsmith than a philosopher, though. He has several custom-built firearms, including an enchanted, rifled musket. The stock of this weapon is carved from the thigh bone of a giant, pulled from a glacier in Drakr's far north. Words are engraved into the bone in the long-forgotten Abyssal language; Kvarti claims the femur was already carved when he found it. The words read, "Cry out / for at the end of time / I rise."

unconscious, and the maw becomes corporeal. Alforb dies at the start of the worm maw's next turn unless healed. When he dies or is healed, the worm maw becomes insubstantial and phasing again.

Simon Langfield, for his part, tosses a *magic missile* each round at whichever monster is closest. If reduced to 0 hit points, he dies after three rounds unless stabilized.

The monsters have only animal intelligence, and they're in wholly unfamiliar territory, filled with thoughts for them to eat. The worm maw has a taste for determination, so it is attracted to the PCs (likely the only people who aren't looking for a way to escape). It tries to "devour" its preferred victim, and will just fling away anyone else who gets too close.

The flying things hunger for confusion and desperation, so they go after panicked bystanders, at least until they're attacked, at which point they retaliate. When they're bloodied they fly away, and unless chased down they cause chaos through the fair and eventually find nests in the city.

Like all creatures from Apet, these monsters exist naturally as thoughts, and only become solid if they're eating another creature's mind. Their fluctuating nature makes them tough to hurt until the party figures out their weakness.

Langfield keeps using his staff, which keeps summoning more monsters unless the party gets him to stop it. Once 3 more flying things appear, have one of them attack him and knock him out so he can't make any more.

Flying Thing (3) Level 6 Skirmisher
Medium aberrant magical beast XP 250

HP 72; **Bloodied** 36 **Initiative** +9
AC 20, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 19, Will 18 **Perception** +3
Speed 1; fly 8 (hover), teleport 3

Traits

▸ **Thoughtform**

See Thoughtform, page 225.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Trunk and Beak** ✦ At-Will, Basic

The creature swings its elephantine trunk back, then slams the beak-tip into you with horrible force.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+7 damage.

⟋ **Ray of Dark and Light** (necrotic, psychic, radiant) ✦ At-Will

The flying thing's wings hum with energy, and then a pair of rays cut toward you, combining into a coruscating beam of light and darkness.

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +9 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d8+4 necrotic and radiant damage, plus ongoing 5 psychic damage (save ends). While the target is taking this ongoing damage, the flying thing loses its insubstantial and phasing traits. The target can choose to intentionally fail its saving throw.

Str	13 (+4)	**Dex**	19 (+7)	**Wis**	10 (+3)
Con	10 (+3)	**Int**	2 (–1)	**Cha**	6 (+1)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Worm Maw Level 6 Elite Controller
Large aberrant magical beast XP 500

HP 150; **Bloodied** 75 **Initiative** +4
AC 20, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 18 **Perception** +2
Speed 5
Saving Throws +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

▸ **Thoughtform**

See Thoughtform, page 225.

▸ **Vulnerable Tentacles**

Anybody that attacks the worm maw with a melee or ranged attack can try to free a creature caught in its tentacles. To do so, the worm maw and the grabbed creature must be within range of the attack. If the attack hits, it has its normal effect, plus the grabbed creature can make an Acrobatics or Athletics check to escape as a free action.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Grasping Tentacles** ✦ At-Will, Basic

A dozen small tentacles hold the maw off the ground, but it has a dozen more trying to coil around you.

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +9 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d12+12 damage and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 15). The worm maw can grab any number of creatures, and can sustain its grabs without spending any actions.

⊘ **Smashing Tentacles** ✦ At-Will

And it has a few left to knock away things it doesn't like.

Attack: Close Burst 1 (one or more creatures in burst); +9 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 1d12+12 damage and the target is pushed 2 squares.

⟋ **Swallow Mind** (psychic) ✦ At-Will

Tentacles push you into the monster's open jaws. It gnashes and slices your skin, and then your body falls limp out the other side of the ring of teeth. But your mind is trapped, swallowed into a horrifying psychic space within the creature's alien flesh.

Requirement: The target must be dazed, stunned, or helpless.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. Will

Hit: 3d12+12 psychic damage, the target is knocked prone, and if the worm maw is grabbing the target, the grab ends. The target is stunned (save ends). While the target is stunned in this way, the worm maw loses its insubstantial and phasing traits. The target may choose to intentionally fail its saving throws.

Miss: Half damage.

Minor Actions

▸ **Drain Thoughts** (psychic) ✦ At-Will (1/round)

Waves of light roll down the tentacle that holds you, flowing toward the beast's body. You see flashes of your own thoughts and memories in the glowing waves, like it's slurping up your mind.

Requirement: The worm maw must have a creature grabbed.

Attack: Melee 3 (each creature the worm maw has grabbed); +9 vs. Will

Hit: The target is pulled 2 squares and is dazed until the end of the worm maw's next turn. The character contracts Distant Madness (see page 215).

Str	17 (+6)	**Dex**	13 (+4)	**Wis**	10 (+3)
Con	19 (+7)	**Int**	2 (–1)	**Cha**	6 (+1)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Use the following brief stat blocks for bystanders who might fight.

Kvarti Gorbatiy Level 10 Ally
HP 84; **Bloodied** 42 **Initiative Count** 8
AC 25, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 20
Speed 5
Standard Actions
⊘ **Sniper Rifle** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Effect: Ranged 20 (one creature); 10 damage.
Load: After six shots, Kvarti has to spend a standard action to reload.

Rock Rackus Level 6 Ally
HP 55; **Bloodied** 27 **Initiative Count** 5
AC 19, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 16
Speed 6
Standard Actions
⊘ **Rapier** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Effect: Melee 1 (one creature); 6 damage.
⊘ **Diamond-Encrusted Piece** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Effect: Ranged 10 (one creature); 6 damage, and the target is marked until the end of Rock's next turn.
Load: After each shot, Rock has to use a standard action to reload.

Simon Langfield Level 1 Ally
HP 20; **Bloodied** 10 **Initiative Count** 0
AC 11, **Fortitude** 11, **Reflex** 11, **Will** 13
Speed 6
Traits
▸ **Accidental Summoning**
Any time Simon Langfield uses *magic missile*, roll a saving throw, If he fails, he accidentally summons another flying thing.
Standard Actions
⊘ **Magic Missile** (force) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Effect: Ranged 20 (one creature); 5 force damage.

Aftermath.

Panicked shouts die out slowly, and a crowd quickly grows in a wide, nervous ring. Someone calls out that a man is dead, killed by a stray bullet. The shot came from Rock Rackus, and if the bullet is removed, it's made of gold, as are all of Rock's bullets.

Four police arrive within a minute, by which point accusations are already flying. The chaos is cut short when Kvarti Gorbatiy, standing atop the stage, fires his rifle into the wood of the stage to get everyone's attention. He says that he had a high vantage point, and he saw Rock Rackus fire the stray shot. Gorbatiy views this as a way to save the performers's life. He was hired to assassinate Rackus, but he saw the man help out when strangers were imperiled, so he hopes for Rackus to be arrested long enough that people will stop calling for his head.

Unless the PCs intervene, the police arrest Rackus, with all the aggressive enthusiasm cops usually show dockers.

Monsters and Staff.

Bizarrely, the dead monsters do not disappear the way summoned creatures should. A character who makes an Arcana check (DC 15) can determine that the magical energies of the monsters match energy stored in Simon Langfield's staff. A character who makes a History check (DC 15) can connect the design to the Ancients.

Summoned Monsters and the Axis Seal.

Planar travel is extremely difficult in the world of Zeitgeist. A sufficiently skilled spellcaster with the right ritual and focus can reach any of the worlds in the orbital system, and creatures can remain indefinitely. The exception is Apet, which cannot be traveled to or from without use of Ancient magic. Only a handful of people have done so since the Axis Seal, and their spells are lost to history.

It is much easier to summon a creature for a few minutes, which rather than bodily transporting the being, just temporarily creates an aspect of it in this world. Even entities from worlds beyond the Axis Seal can be called forth this way. Again, however, Apet was especially sealed.

Simon Langfield's *staff of the Ancients* was actually used in the ritual to close off Apet, so it has the unique power to bypass the lesser seal. Its extreme age has damaged it slightly, though, and if precautions are not taken, whenever the staff is used a tiny rift to Apet opens, long enough for a creature to slip through. These monsters have permanently crossed into the material world and are stuck here.

Note that these creatures aren't native to Apet. The Gidim brought warbeasts there millennia ago, and they lingered near the sealed portal, subsisting on bare diets of thoughts that filtered through. All the sentient Gidim mentally starved, and either degenerated into savages, or were devoured by their own beasts.

Thoughtform.

Creatures with this trait are normally insubstantial and phasing. As insubstantial creatures, they take half damage from all attacks, except those that deal force damage. As phasing creatures, they ignore difficult terrain and can move through obstacles and other creatures, but they must end their movement in an unoccupied space.

Thoughtform creatures also take normal damage from psychic attacks, despite being incorporeal. While insubstantial and phasing, if a thoughtform creature would become dazed or stunned, it becomes corporeal instead until the end of the attacker's next turn, losing insubstantial and phasing. Once corporeal, further daze and stun effects affect it normally.

A spirit medium automatically understands how thoughtform works.

Mind over Matter.

The Ancients learned to fight the warbeasts of the Gidim by wielding thought as a weapon. The PCs are unlikely to try *thinking at* their enemies in their first encounter, but they have a chance to learn this technique from certain sources later in the adventure.

A PC within 5 squares of any creature with the Thoughtform trait can spend a minor action to try to influence the creature with its thoughts. The PC makes an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma check, and chooses to target Fortitude, Reflex, or Will. A character can only attempt this once per round.

Fortitude. If the attack hits, the creature loses insubstantial and phasing until the start of the attacker's next turn. If it's flying, it must land on its turn or fall.

Reflex. If the attack hits, the attacker can slide the creature 2 squares.

Will. If the attack hits, the attacker is invisible to the creature until the start of the PC's next turn.

Alforb Irongut, if he survived, is in a stupor, but his father Alfonse can explain how the monsters appeared when Simon cast a spell with his staff. The staff is gold, but Simon insists it was made of wood when he got it. Over the following minutes, the *staff of the Ancients* reverts to its normal wooden appearance.

Assuming the heroes saved Simon Langfield, he is extremely grateful and tells them all he knows. Simon honestly has no idea how the monsters came into being, and does not connect it to the staff, though if PCs make that connection he will grudgingly turn it over to the RHC. Langfield further admits that he purchased it at a steep discount from a dark-haired middle-aged woman in a blue trenchcoat (Kaja Stewart),, after setting up an appointment at the Trinket Stand (page 222).

Langfield's meeting took place in an alley beside a furniture store a block from the jewelry store Kaja's based in. If the party looks for Kaja there, though, they risk tipping off her spies that someone's on her trail.

Take It to Evidence.

Low-ranking RHC officers come by the site of the battle and begin to confiscate huge swaths of items. Standing orders for the RHC state that any previously unknown magic requires a thorough investigation. Mages come by and sense for magical auras they don't recognize, and they take anything that looks suspicious. The steam-powered suit, the various unique guns, and a lot of the mundane merchandise get taken away and locked up in the evidence room at the RHC Headquarters.

Many of the owners complain, but this is by orders of the king. The purpose of this event is to give the PCs some interesting resources to play with in the climax of the adventure.

The Audit

Social. Montage. Level 7.

The party is held to account for any law-breaking or corruption.

This subplot runs throughout the whole adventure. Starting the evening of the first day, the head of the RHC, Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill, arrives at the Flint headquarters. A large retinue accompanies him, and his mission is to root out possible corruption, in the form of the PCs.

This plot thread is detailed in Appendix B, The Audit (page 422).



A local Flinter in his early 40s, Delft is generally good-natured to his subordinates, but has a penchant for grousing about people behind their backs. He gets squinty and condescending when his authority is questioned, but he can recognize talent and good work. A much better manager than investigator, Delft has advanced this far in the Constabulary by finding good agents, supporting them on difficult missions, and sharing the accolades from their successes.

Delft chews tobacco, and thinks he looks charming if he grins while sucking on tobacco juices. He walks with a cane because a mimic tore a chunk out of his leg fifteen years ago. He has a habit of poking inanimate objects with the cane before he gets too close to them, and spitting on them when he wants to be extra sure.

That's Classified

Social. Real-Time. Level 6.

A military academy requests the PCs hand over the strange monster corpses.

A Martial Scientist PC is contacted by **Colonel Sebastian Harlock** the next morning. He is highly decorated but has never made the papers. He asks the PC to recover the bodies of the unusual monsters and deliver them in iced crates to The Battalion, a martial academy in Flint's western bayou.

Harlock emphasizes the importance of Risur's military studying any newly discovered creature or magic. He can arrange for boat transport of the remains, but he needs the PC to actually take the bodies, which otherwise will go into the RHC Headquarters' morgue. The PC can come along if he wants to be sure this is a legitimate military operation, and the crates are delivered to the Battalion, where they're received by old men in military mage uniforms.

Harlock offers no compensation, but says that anything they learn that might be useful in dealing with future similar threats he will pass along, as long as he has clearance to do so.

If the PC goes along with this, then when the PC returns from the Ziggurat of Apet, he will find waiting for him in the mail a copy of a thesis, *Methods of Extricating Warriors from a Variety of Tentacled and Tendriled Monsters*. This lets a Martial Scientist learn a new maneuver (see Appendix M). Also, if no PC receives the vision The Sealing of Apet (page 241), the PC will also receive a brief treatise on how conscious thought affects the creatures.

Investigations

Puzzle/Social. Montage. Level 5.

The PCs search for leads to the whereabouts of a dangerous black market.

The PCs have plenty to do at the fair, but after The Incident, their main goal should be to apprehend Kaja Stewart. She has been using the expo to find buyers and fence rare or illegal magic items, including three relics from the ziggurat of Apet. These magic items eventually lead the PCs to Pardwight University's Museum of Natural History, where Dr. Xambria Meredith can point them to her dig site in the High Bayou, and the shady philanthropist Caius Bergeron who funded it.

During the expo, Kaja uses a jewelry shop near the Lanternwood Subrail Station as her base of operations. Each day she chooses a new nearby spot to conduct business. She has runners deliver messages to and from the Trinket Stand (page 222), so she knows who might be coming and what they'd be interested in. She always travels with a construct bodyguard, and if she gets a bad feeling, she brings along back-up.

There are plenty of clues leading to Kaja the arcanoscientist criminal, and most lead to the under-construction Lanternwood Subrail Station, unless the PCs push extra hard to move the location. It's even possible that if the PCs are proactive, they might locate Kaja before The Incident occurs. We include two possible routes below.

Common Criminals.

A ring of young children pick the pockets of festival goers. Characters who spend an hour observing the crowds can make a Perception check (DC 23) to track a group of juvenile thieves back to their source. The ring was set up by a middle-aged woman who calls herself "Mama." If the party doesn't spot them, they might find out about the ring by asking the police about criminals they've arrested.

The pickpockets themselves are unimportant, but among the stolen items the PCs discover an amulet matching the one used at Macbannin's laboratory to gain access to the lower levels. If pressed, the young thief describes the man who carried the amulet as a short human with dark hair and a goatee, wearing a striped gray shirt, a gold bow tie, and violet pants. The party can use this description to locate **Isaac Randal**.

Randal was a researcher working for Macbannin on the witchoil project, and he fled when the earthquake struck. Now that his source of funding has been cut off, he's selling off equipment and technology that he scavenged. If PCs confront him, he tries to flee. If captured he admits selling everything he took from the lab to his former associate, Kaja Stewart. If suitably threatened or plied, he can be convinced to set up a meeting.

Randal knows Kaja is working with a criminal gang interested in finding out who Macbannin was working for. He will send a message through the Trinket Stand (see above) claiming that he found a lead. Kaja will respond back, suggesting a meeting later in the afternoon, when the rain has cleared out the construction workers at Lanternwood.

A Friend in the Family.

The Family is using the expo, and all the extra dock activity that comes with it, to move a large shipment of illegal fey pepper into the city. The Bosum Strand docks are far from the expo, but if the PCs think to scout there for suspicious activity, they might hear talk about the shipment (Streetwise DC 23), or notice the activity surrounding it (Insight DC 23). The PCs' informants might also tip them off.

If the PCs make a move on the smugglers, one of the Family bravuras recognizes the PCs and suggests they talk to Morgan Cippiano before they try arresting anyone. Alternately, the PCs might spot Cippiano from a distance as he attends the expo.

If the PCs talk to Cippiano, he offers them a deal. Rather than stopping the shipment, they can just accept a small gift—a month's supply of fey pepper. And in exchange, Morgan will point them to somebody they'll find more interesting: a fence outside of the Family who is accompanied by a construct powered by black oil. If they take him up on the deal, Morgan tells them how to find Kaja Stewart through the Trinket Stand.

Kaja and Her Toys

Action. Tactical. Level 6.

The heroes find the fence, and she doesn't go down without a fight.

The encounter might also include 2 Kell-Guild pistoleers; if so, the encounter is Level 7. The following battle assumes that the PCs pose as potential weapon buyers for Kaja's fenced goods, and meet her in the Lanternwood Subrail Station construction yard. If your players try a different approach, alter the details to suit your needs. When the PCs reach the construction yard, read or paraphrase the following:

> The afternoon rains have sent home the construction crews, and the guards have conveniently left the premises. Inside the wooden fence you can see the massive pit dug for the future train station; the gate hange open. A few steel and stone columns rise to suggest the skeleton of a future building, with only a flapping tarp stretched between them as a makeshift roof to keep the pit from flooding.
>
> Stacks of lumber, bricks, and girders provide plenty of hiding places, and the fence is feeble enough to offer numerous escape routes. But you spot someone on the far side of the pit, a woman with a high-collared coat and a huge coif of hair. Beside her towers a man, seven feet tall, draped in a black coat, his face concealed with a wide-brimmed hat.

Kaja waits on the other side of the pit from the obvious entrance to the construction yard, guarded by a construct similar to the bleak golem the PCs faced in Adventure Two, poorly disguised (Perception DC 15) as a human. In addition to her iron bodyguard, Kaja has brought several walking turrets, constructs that are little more than guns with legs. They hide amid the construction supplies, resembling nothing more than inert pieces of metal (Perception DC 23) until Kaja gives the word, at which point they animate and attack.

If the PCs talk to Kaja, she has them wait on the far side of the pit, where they must succeed a Bluff check (DC 15) to convince her they are legitimate buyers. Then she'll wave the party to come across the wooden bridge, while her golem opens a chest to reveal a variety of guns (including some exotic gun-blade mixes), plus the *blade of the Ancients* and *amulet of the Ancients*, and any other magic items that you might wish to include. She asks for market prices, but might be haggled down to roughly 80%.

In any circumstance, Kaja refuses to answer any questions about how or where she obtained the items, or how the staff summoned the monsters. If the PCs ask too many questions, or otherwise rouse her suspicions, she suggests they leave quickly. She conjures a musket out of thin air, and begins to withdraw toward her secret exit.

Possible Ambush.

If the PCs tipped off Kaja even before the meet-up, she brings two Kell-Guild pistoleers as back-up, who hide under tarps to the west of the main entrance (Perception DC 25). Also, Kaja has rigged the bridge so she can drop it as a minor action. She hopes to drop the PCs into the pit as they cross, then shoot them like fish in a barrel.

Tactics.

Kaja tries to keep her distance from the PCs, shooting from cover when possible, and using *suppressive fire* to punish any enemy that doesn't use cover too. If anyone reaches her, she orders all her allies to focus on that foe. Otherwise, she'll order the iron bodyguard forward, and will support it. If her bodyguard is destroyed and she is bloodied, she tries to flee. She surrenders when reduced to 0 hit points.

Terrain.

Almost every space other than the sawdust paths at the entrance is slick with mud. Moving slowly is safe, but at the end of any action wherein it moves, a creature must make an Acrobatics check (DC 10 +1 per square of mud the creature entered) or fall prone.

The muddy walls of the pit make climbing out difficult (Athletics DC 23), and even the stairs are slippery (Acrobatics DC 11). The steel pillars in thepit have many handholds and are easily climbed, rising 40 or 50 ft. (20 ft. above ground level at the top). Horizontal girders connect these pillars high above the battlefield.

Some spaces along the outer perimeter contain iron reinforcing bars pointed upward, meant for future construction. These spaces require an Athletics check to vault over or an Acrobatics check to weave through (DC 23). A creature forced into one of these squares takes 5 damage from piercing metal.

Eight massive steel pillars surround the dig site, each rising 50 ft. above ground level. A patchwork of giant tarps stretch between the tops of these pillars, but rain still pours through the gaps. Scattered ropes hold the canopy in place. Encourage the PCs to do weird things, like snapping a rope and riding the backlash across the pit, or cutting a few to cause a tarp to fall and pin everyone in a 30-ft. radius.

List of Adversaries.

- 1 iron bodyguard
- 2 Kell-Guild pistoleers (maybe)
- Kaja Stewart
- 4 walking turrets

Iron Bodyguard Level 6 Soldier
Medium natural animate (construct) XP 250

HP 78; **Bloodied** 39 **Initiative** +7
AC 22, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16 **Perception** +4
Resist 5 necrotic; **Immune** disease, poison Darkvision
Speed 5

Traits

▸ **Slightly Hulking**

When an iron bodyguard is subject to forced movement, reduce the number of squares moved by 1. If it would be knocked prone, it can make a saving throw to remain standing.

☼ **Bleak Bodyguard** ✦ Aura 3

Angry spirits swirl out of the golem's chest, forcing you to focus on the construct or else risk having your soul sucked out.

Whenever an enemy in the aura makes an attack that doesn't include the iron bodyguard as a target, each enemy in the aura takes 5 necrotic damage.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Iron Fist** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+7 damage.

✓ **Witchoil Fist** ✦ Recharges on miss

Black oil spurts through the joints of its mechanical fist as it smashes you.

Effect: The iron bodyguard uses iron fist. If the attack hits, the target is dazed and takes ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends both).

Triggered Actions

▸ **Absorb Harm** ✦ At-Will

Trigger: An ally within the Bleak Bodyguard aura is affected by a condition with a duration (e.g., save ends, or until end of next turn).
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The condition transfers to the iron bodyguard.

Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 18 (+7) **Int** 3 (–1) **Cha** 4 (+0)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** understands Common and Primordial

Kell-Guild Pistoleer (2) Level 5 Goon Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 100

HP 23; **Bloodied** 11 **Initiative** +0
AC 17, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 17 **Perception** +0
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊘ **Pistol Whip** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6+6 damage.

⊘ **Pistol Shot** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8+8 damage, or 1d8+16 on a crit.
Special: Load standard.

Minor Actions

✓ **Kidnap** ✦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target is grabbed (Escape DC 15). Until the target escapes, the pistoleer can use the target as cover.

Str 11 (+2) **Dex** 10 (+2) **Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 11 (+2) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 10 (+2)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Kaja Stewart Level 5 Elite Artillery
Medium natural humanoid (human) XP 400

HP 100; **Bloodied** 50 **Initiative** +6
AC 19, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 15 **Perception** +8
Speed 6
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Gun Summoner**

Kaja can magically draw and stow her firearms as a free action. She can also magically reload her pistols as a free action.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Pistol Bayonet** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6+5 damage.

✓ **Pistol (weapon)** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4+6 damage, or 1d4+12 on a critical hit.

⚔ **Twin Strike** (weapon) ✦ At-Will

Effect: Kaja Stewart makes two basic attacks.

⚔ **Stabs, Shoots, and Leaves** (weapon) ✦ Encounter

She simultaneously stabs the bayonets of her twin pistols and fires. With the guns' retort as distraction she leaps out of harm's way.

Effect: Kaja Stewart uses *pistol bayonet* twice. For each attack, she uses *pistol* against the same target. These attacks do not provoke opportunity attacks. She then shifts 2 squares.

✓ **Musket with Reaving Bullets** (weapon) ✦ Encounter

Her pistols vanish, suddenly replaced by a long-barreled musket. She fires, and the shot burrows beneath your skin, digging its way toward an artery.

Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10+8 damage, or 1d10+20 on a critical hit. The target takes takes ongoing 5 damage until it spends a standard action to dig out the bullet and end the ongoing damage.

✓ **Carbine with Shiver-Strike Bullets** (weapon) ✦ Encounter

She drops the musket, and it hasn't even hit the ground when a carbine materializes in her grasp. The bullet grazes you, then swirls in wide circles at everyone around you.

Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8+8 damage, or 1d8+18 on a critical hit. Each creature adjacent to the target takes 6 damage.

✓ **Summon Cannon** ✦ Encounter

With grandiose flair, Kaja plants her foot on a cannon that has suddenly materialized beside her, its fuse already sparking with fire.

Attack: Area Burst 1 within 40 (creatures in burst); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6+9 damage, or 3d6+27 on a critical hit. The target is knocked prone and dazed until the end of Kaja's next turn.
Miss: Half damage.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Suppressive Fire** ✦ At-Will

Trigger: An enemy Kaja can see ends its turn without concealment or cover relative to her.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Kaja uses *twin strike* to make two pistol attacks against the triggering enemy.

Skills: Acrobatics +9, Arcana +13, Bluff +11, Insight +8
Str 10 (+3) **Dex** 12 (+4) **Wis** 11 (+3)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 14 (+5) **Cha** 16 (+6)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Walking Turret (4)	Level 4 Artillery
Small natural animate (construct)	XP 175
HP 45; **Bloodied** 22	**Initiative** +6
AC 16, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 14	**Perception** +2
Speed 4	

Standard Actions

Ungainly Slam ✦ At-Will, Basic

The mechanical creature is just a pair of steel chicken legs with a musket mounted on top. It throws its barreled "head" at you, certain to collapse if it misses.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC

Hit: 1d10+7 damage and the target is pushed 1 square.

Miss: The walking turret falls prone.

Turret ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creature); +11 vs. AC

Hit: 1d10+7 damage.

Strafe and Advance ✦ Recharge ⚀⚁⚂

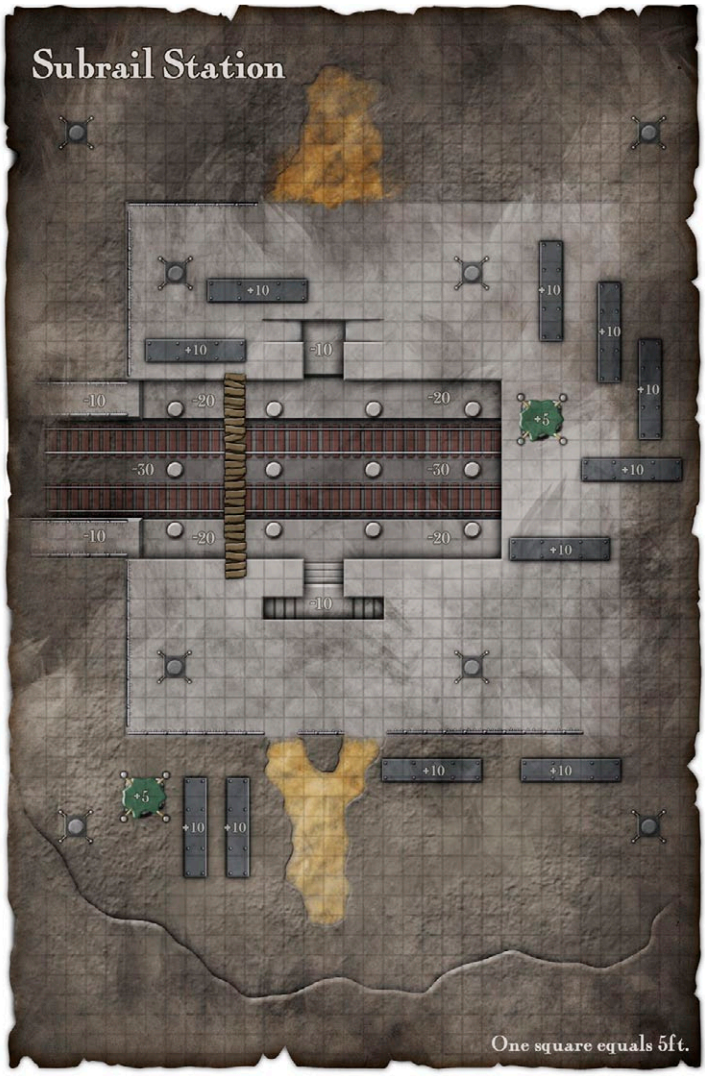
The walking turret scampers out of cover, shoots as it rushes toward you, then ducks behind cover again.

Effect: The walking turret moves its speed and uses *turret* at any point during the movement.

Skills: Stealth +11

Str	10 (+2)	**Dex**	18 (+6)	**Wis**	10 (+2)
Con	15 (+4)	**Int**	3 (–2)	**Cha**	1 (–3)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** understands Common and Primordial





Kaja was recruited as an arcanoscientific researcher by Reed Macbannin. When she realized she might be arrested for her involvement in his project, she hid, taking a collection of magic items from a laboratory located away from Macbannin's primary manor.

An expert in theoretical planar physics, Kaja devised the way to refine witchoil from the veil between the real world and the Bleak Gate. She now works for Lorcan Kell, and in the intervening months since her flight she has focused on crafting pocket dimensions for the purpose of concealing weapons and contraband. But unlike most of her cohorts who worked for Macbannin, Kaja is looking for a way to go back to work on her old project. Together she and Kell are trying to get in touch with the Obscurati, though they don't even know that's the group's name.

Aftermath.

Assuming the PCs leave Kaja alive, she won't answer questions in the short term, but the party may be able to get a few answers out of her with a longer interrogation back at the RHC headquarters (see below). Encourage them to take her in for questioning, and mention that the basement jail has a few cells suited for magic-using prisoners. You want the players to be familiar with the layout of their HQ before the events of Act Three.

Kaja genuinely has no idea how the staff summoned the monsters. She simply fenced the items, and even when she worked for Macbannin all she knew was that the items came from some archaeological site. She did not get a chance to examine them for danger before she stole them and ran.

She does recall a tiefling showing up at the laboratory when the items arrived, and Macbannin being upset, saying something about it "compromising protocol." She can describe Caius Bergeron, though she has no idea about the man's name, location, or affiliations.

The iron bodyguard was carrying a chest filled with contraband, including the *blade of the Ancients* and *amulet of the Ancients*. Characters who examine the sword or amulet can make a History check (DC 15) to connect them with the Ancients. They appear fairly primitive, but if their powers are used they briefly transform to solid gold.

If the PCs do take Kaja into custody, she sits in her cell for a day, and then Saxby has her transferred to the RHC branch in the capital city Slate. Kaja knows nothing about Saxby's involvement with the conspiracy, but just to be safe the Lady Inspectress is having the prisoner sent away. She calls in some favors from the military, and soon thereafter a carriage with armed guards arrives at the RHC to escort Kaja away. The military is intrigued by her gun-summoning powers, and intends to put her to use.

(Alternately, you could have Kaja murdered in her cell, but we think that it makes the RHC HQ seem insecure if another witness dies so soon after Macbannin. Better, we think, to just move Kaja off-stage. The party might encounter her again much later in the campaign.)

Mangled Golem

Puzzle. Real-Time. Level 6.

This mysterious murder scene won't be solved any time soon.

This scene lays key groundwork for events in Adventure Five, *Cauldron-Born*. It's intended as an unsolved mystery to which the PCs can return later to get a break in their case.

Shortly after the PCs track down Kaja Stewart, they get a request for help from the constables who have been assigned to the Macbannin case (see page 214). They've heard about the party's fight with Kaja and her golem, and they think the party might have some helpful insights on a scene they're investigating. They ask that the party keep it quiet, since Lady Saxby would not like the two groups collaborating.

The Scene.

The body was discovered in the basement of a steel mill in the thickest factory cluster of Parity Lake. The burning steel and firegems concealed the stench of decomposition, but workers found him just yesterday. The man had to have been dead for weeks at least. What got the case kicked over to the RHC was the presence of two strange things: a ring of rusted iron, and a slender golem which is torn to pieces.

What Happened.

During the climax of Adventure Two, an unwilling member of the Obscurati conspiracy tried to escape the compound in the Bleak Gate. He died in the attempt.

Alexander Grappa, known as the Mindmaker, had been working for the Ob under the the direction of Leone Quital, known as the Steelshaper. Grappa designed the consciousness of the colossal golem called Borne, whom the PCs should have little or no inkling of. Grappa developed doubts about the project, then eventually overheard a meeting between three high-ranking members of the conspiracy. Too valuable to kill, Grappa was locked up, which angered the colossus, leading to the minor tremors throughout Adventure Two.

Eventually Grappa arranged for his (man-sized) golem handservant to invite Kasvarina Varal, the eladrin mage who shared leadership duties of the Obscurati, to come speak with him. He interrogated her, then managed to catch her by surprise and wipe her memories. He hoped that by giving her a second chance to see the world she might turn against the conspiracy.

Using a mind controlled Kasvarina as cover, Grappa left his cell, snuck to the giant construction bay where Borne was being assembled, and then wiped the colossus's memories, too. The now-childlike golem strained against its bonds, provoking the massive earthquake that struck as the party attempted to defeat Reed Macbannin. During the chaos, Grappa fled the Obscurati compound, bringing his handservant golem and Kasvarina with him.

He hoped to reach the Flint harbor and sail to Elfaivar, where he could work with Kasvarina to rebuild her memories and defeat the conspiracy. But Leone caught up with him in the basement of this steel mill.

Leone easily overpowered Grappa, then tried to slowly torture him to death by pouring a vial of witchoil down the Mindmaker's throat. Grappa managed a desperate spell to transfer his consciousness to his golem handservant, then immediately used his new body to crush his original skull with a bronze fist to end his suffering. Furious, the Steelshaper tore the golem apart.

Leone took the confused and wailing Kasvarina back to the Ob compound, and in an act of spiteful carelessness he left Grappa's body to rot, thinking no one would find it.

The Victim.

The victim's wrists were bound together by a twisted steel bar, as were his ankles. It would take either magic or great strength to bend the steel, and this was done very precisely.

He had some sort of necklace, because links remain near his body, but most of it is missing. The chain matches (Perception DC 15) the amulets used at Macbannin's manor to slip partially into the Bleak Gate.

The victim has been dead for a while, and the remains are greatly deteriorated, but the PCs can determine the date of death (Heal DC 15) was some time early in the Summer. The apparent cause of death is a shattered skull, and the size of the wound (Heal DC 11) matches the fist of the damaged golem in the corner. A cursory look determines the man was a human in his fifties or sixties. He has (Heal DC 15) an old gunshot wound in his leg. His teeth (Heal or History DC 23) suggest he received dental care from a Risuri army doctor.

Probing the victim's throat or closely examining the body (Heal or Perception DC 23) reveals nearly a pint of witchoil, some of which the victim swallowed. However there is no soul energy trapped in the oil (Arcana DC 11); if the man had died while the oil was anywhere nearby, his soul should have been sucked in.

The victim had 5 platinum pieces and twenty gold pieces in his pocket, as well as a bundle of papers with ship schedules, berth numbers, and mentions that passengers were welcome, all of which were set to depart between the 5th and 15th of Summer. All of them were bound for Elfaivar. His socks have the initials "A.G." stitched into them (Perception DC 15).

The Golem.

The golem is in a hundred pieces. Its chest is "only" torn into four components, while its face cracked apart into countless tiny pieces. The main bulk of its "skull" looks intact, though, and it feels quite heavy, (Arcana DC 15) which suggests a finely-crafted internal structure appropriate for containing an advanced intelligence.

The body is unimposing. Before it was smashed to bits it probably stood about 5-foot–6, slender, mostly bronze. But again its internal structure is of the finest quality, with miniscule gears in the hands that would have allowed nuanced movements. The face, shattered though it is now, could once have displayed fantastic expressions. Even a Technologist has never seen such wondrous craftsmanship. It looks too fragile to use as a warrior, though.

There are a few chain links amid the golem's wreckage that match the necklace the victim was wearing.

Oddly, it looks like the golem wasn't hit by an object (Perception DC 15); it was torn apart, almost like it exploded along every major seam and joint. The head of the golem still possesses an aura of magic (Arcana DC 11), suggesting the thing might still be conscious, just blind and mute.

Other Clues.

Looking around the scene, everything has a fine layer of ash, which just drifts onto everything in the factory, even in the basement.

The party can find (Perception DC 11) several inches of torn fabric by the rusted ring. It's several layers stitched together of cotton and dyed silk, and if the party asks around to clothiers (or perhaps talks to Morgan Cippiano, a fan of fine attire), they discover it's likely from an eladrin woman's dress, the sort made before the Great Malice. The threads (Arcana DC 11) have residual magic on them, which given how long they've been removed from the garment suggests the enchantment was very powerful to begin with.

A few ingots of iron stored on nearby shelves have fallen onto the ground, and a few are below the victim's body. The ingots (Perception DC 23) were shaken free, probably during the earthquake in the summer, but there's no sign of ash on top of them, which suggests the victim died very soon after the quake.

What Now?

The other constables have to follow up on any suggestions the PCs make, but they thank them for their help, and promise to inform them of any breaks. They will have the body buried, but plan to take the remains of the golem to the RHC Headquarters, in hopes of perhaps reassembling it and getting it to talk.

The PCs might take an interest in fixing the golem, but it's a daunting project that would take even a skilled technologist several months. If the PCs try any clever rituals, its memories are muddled from the combination of Grappa's mind with the golem's. In Adventure Five, the golem becomes active, either by the party's actions, or other RHC operatives. It can provide critical clues at that time, but until then, it's just a riddle.

Pardwight University Museum of Natural History

Social. Real-Time. Level 5.

The PCs search for answers amid academics.

After confiscating the staff, sword, and amulet of the Ancients, the most logical place to go is Pardwight University. Asking about the artifacts, they are quickly directed to **Professor Hans Weber**, Professor of Antiquities and curator of the Museum of Natural History.

Professor Weber, a human originally from Drakr, believes himself smarter and more capable than just about everybody in the world, and he gets along well with anybody as long as they don't challenge his beliefs. Weber is busy preparing for the coming museum exposition featuring many wonders of the Ancients.

Professor Weber is a born lecturer who loves the sound of his own voice, and he quickly rattles off some of the Ancients' astounding accomplishments, including their understanding of astronomy, magic, and goldsmithing that were unheralded and unmatched for centuries, and some of which are *only now* being rediscovered! Weber is happy to answer any questions the party has, though like all mainstream scholars he has no idea about the Axis Seal.



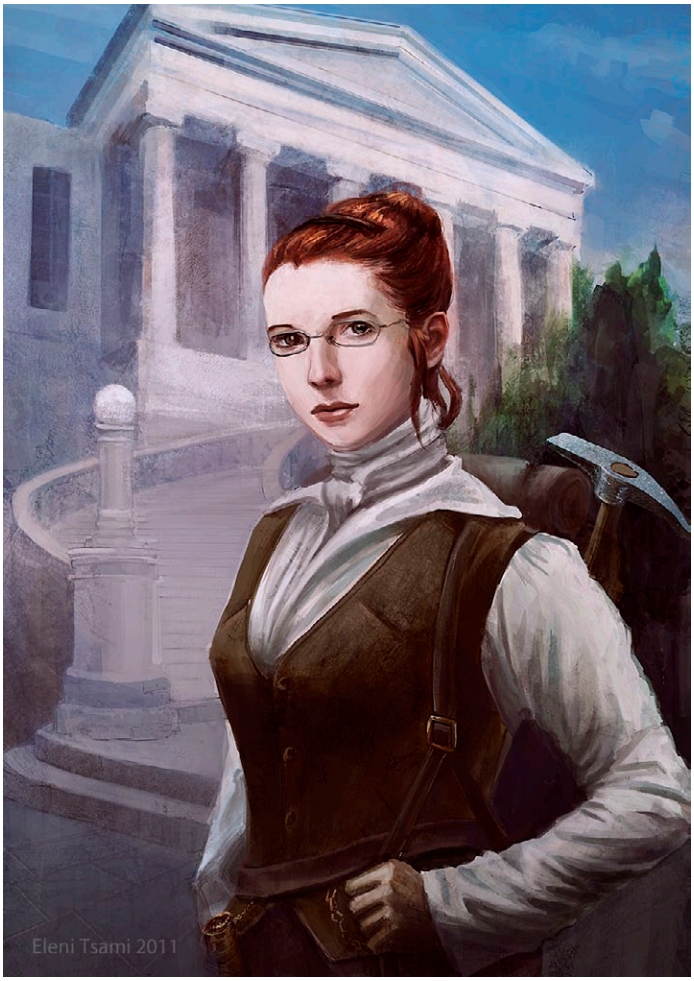
Recovered Relics.

Most of the museum's Ancient artifacts come from older digs, but when Weber heard rumors a few months ago of the discovery of an Ancient ziggurat in the High Bayou, he extended an offer to the young archaeologist who was heading the excavation: Dr. Xambria Meredith. Xambria sent back a detailed list of items recovered, with the caveat that her sponsor would have final say on their placement.

When Xambria returned a month ago as the sole survivor of her expedition, Weber arranged for her to stay at a Pardwight University apartment, both out of sympathy and out of a hope she would support his claim for the artifacts, should they ever be recovered. If the PCs mention finding them, Weber is at first ecstatic, then subdued.

Weber can set up a meeting between the PCs and Xambria, but he warns them that the tragedy placed a tremendous strain on Xambria. They should be gentle when speaking to her. As for the relics, he'll quickly produce paperwork from his office which shows he has a legal claim to the amulet, staff, and sword. He says he tried finding Xambria's sponsor, Caius Bergeron, but couldn't. With him missing, ownership falls to Pardwight University.

He will keep the relics in a royal safehold until shortly before the exhibition. Royal guards will protect the items from thieves, while mages ascertain whether the items are a hazard to the nation.



PRICELESS ANTIQUITIES.

In the real world, it's amazing enough for a museum to have a gold-decorated sarcophagus or a gem-studded crown worth millions of dollars. In a fantasy setting, how does government deal with museums wanting to display artifacts that might actually possess perilous magical powers?

Museums must allow royal inspectors to check relics for magic, and then to examine magic items for possible danger. A large stodgy body of bureaucrats determines what's safe enough to display, what's so dangerous it must be confiscated, and what is something the government might want to lay claim to, but allow on display for the time being.

The three Ancient relics the PCs have recovered, while very valuable and powerful, do not pose a significant threat. Anyone who might use the staff to cast spells would be able to use magic anyway, and likewise the sword is only as dangerous as its wielder. The amulet is wholly defensive. The only concern is that they might summon more monsters. To protect against that, Professor Weber offers to wrap the relics in gold thread. Additionally, as part of the Ancient exhibit, the entire gallery has an inlaid band of gold in the floor. Summoning in the relic room is impossible.

If the party wants to requisition any of the relics, they can get at most two; Weber has enough pull with people in power that he will at least hold onto one item. He's worried the constables might lose them and ruin his exhibit. They'll actually be safer at the museum than in the RHC headquarters. And the party does not have enough authority to prevent Weber from hosting the Ancients exhibit and showing off the relics.

As For Caius...

Weber has met Caius Bergeron in the past, and says the tiefling has been very generous to the university, but he was secretive at the best of times. He appears to have vanished at the same time as Xambria's tragedy.

Xambria

Social. Real Time. Level 5.

The party gets critical clues from someone who wants answers as much as they do.

Dr. Xambria Meredith, originally of Mitchell University in Slate, is currently recuperating at Pardwight, where she has been given a temporary office and living quarters. She jumps at the chance to talk to people who might help her find answers about what happened to her dig.

Xambria speaks politely to the PCs, and does her best to answer their questions. Though naturally charming and gregarious, she has fits of odd behavior. She might suddenly ask the group to stop talking so she can listen to sounds that nobody else can hear, or when asked directly about her dig she might get a distant look and insist, "I told you I don't remember."

In truth, much of Xambria's "trauma" results from the alien entity Sijhen, which has merged into her mind, and her odd behavior is often a result of the PCs asking questions that Sijhen does not want her to answer.

Foggy Recollection.

Xambria's story of the doomed expedition goes something like this. After discovering the ziggurat in Spring, she sent news and several artifacts to her sponsor, the wealthy philanthropist Caius Bergeron. Bergeron wanted to be kept apprised, especially if she found something he called a "golden seal": a large golden disk bearing astronomical symbols, which would radiate powerful protective magic.

The dig cleared through traps and collapsed passages, but in early Summer Xambria sent word that she had found a seal. A few days later she went to the train station in Bole to meet a group of specialists sent by Bergeron: three tieflings who were obviously spell casters (a rarity among Danorans), and a pair of human guards. She recalls this was a little while after she got news of some big scandal in Flint, but she doesn't remember the exact day.

She led the specialists to the dig, brought them to the seal, and then left at their request. The next day the specialists were still working at the seal, so she left to pick up supplies she was expecting to arrive by train. The round trip took a few days, and when she returned to the dig site, she discovered the bodies of her colleagues. They all lay dead either at the base camp or just inside the ziggurat. There was no sign of the specialists, but she dared not venture inside. She fled in a daze, boarded the train back to Flint, and reported the deaths to the police and the University.

She's convinced that Bergeron's specialists had something to do with the deaths, and she asks the PCs to return to the ziggurat and uncover the truth. As for Caius, Xambria thinks he knew there were dangers at the ziggurat. She tried to track him down when she got back to Flint, but the ways he had told her to get in touch were dead ends. She doesn't have the resources to find him, but she hopes the PCs might.

The Truth.

Xambria's version of events is mostly true, with a few edits imposed by Sijhen. Xambria was there when the specialists opened the Ancients' seal, and while they took precautions and set up a magical ward, one of Xambria's diggers panicked and disturbed the ward, unleashing the monsters. A host of Gidim warbeasts glided through the portal, and only thanks to Sijhen bonding with her was Xambria able to resist their psychic energy and escape.

Details of the Ziggurat.

If the party asks Xambria for a map of the ziggurat, she apologizes. Her memory is muddled, and though she remembers that there were traps, and some sort of indoor rainbow, she can't recall specifics. She suggests they look for her journal, which she probably left at camp, and which should detail everything they need to look out for.

Unfortunately for the PCs, Caius Bergeron sent a follow-up expedition about two weeks ago, and they have already ransacked the camp for all useful documents. They also carried off the golden plate that sealed the portal to Apet.

Ancients and Other Evening Conversations.

If the party spends a long time talking with Xambria, she'll inevitably go off on tangents about her study of the Ancients. She has a theory of how their civilization ended. Excavations of Ancient sites turn up tons of gold relics, but scholars have never found actual gold mines or the forges necessary to make such items.

She suspects that the Ancients might not have made the relics themselves, but either traded for them or looted them from another group that was more advanced. This foreign group could have come from another world, using magic that is impossible now. She theorizes that either these foreigners' method of travel was destroyed, or the Ancients actively fought them away. Perhaps Ancient culture collapsed without the presence of their foreign allies, or maybe the Ancients were too weak after fighting off invaders to sustain their culture.

She cites other examples of extinct entities that were once common—dragons in Ber, or the demons of Triegenes's time. She also claims that old Clericist scrolls in Danor make mention of the "Egal the Shimmering, lord of the golden legion" among a list of demons and other heresies. She thinks perhaps Egal was the source of all the Ancients' gold.

Her theory happens to be partially right, but to most people it sounds like a crackpot idea, like ancient astronauts on earth. The PCs might, however, have kept the *wand of Egal the Shimmering* from the smugglers in Adventure Two, which happens to be made of solid gold.

The idea here is to present Xambria as a prospective ally in solving the deeper mysteries of the campaign, and to get the party to like and trust her. Tricking players is tough, but if you pull it off, the reveal that Xambria is (or, more precisely, plays host to) the adventure's villain will make a huge impact.

Caius Bergeron

Social. Real-Time. Level 5.

A tiefling noble is surprisingly unhelpful.

Finding Bergeron can be quick if the PCs have contacts among the elite in Flint. Otherwise, the party has a long process of several Diplomacy and Streetwise checks to find someone who might know him.

The tiefling has a room at the Silver Swan Inn in North Shore, and can be found there most afternoons. He's far too refined (and too well guarded) to flee at the threat of law enforcement presence. He'll even offer to buy them a meal and discuss business with them.

At first Bergeron acts the part of the history-and-art-loving philanthropist. He is open to any questions about his philanthropic works, though his answers are often vague. He pretends to be simply interested in history and selling antiquities, and says that digs are often dangerous. He claims Xambria contacted him, and he offered compensation and aid. She said she wanted nothing to do with him, and so he assumed their arrangement was over. He plans to send another expedition, but the weather is turning foul up in the High Bayou, so it will have to wait until Spring.

If the PCs make any accusations, Bergeron asks them to leave until his lawyer can be present. If they arrest him, he won't even be processed into a cell before word comes in to let him go. Saxby tells the PCs to leave Bergeron alone.

If PCs manage to examine Bergeron's room at the Silver Swan, it is similar to how it's described on page 247, with a few exceptions. The map on his desk contains only the location of Xambria's dig site, and the pages torn from his books are present and describe discoveries made by Xambria's expedition (including the golden seal).

With no other leads in Flint, the party's next step for answers lies at Xambria's dig site.



Caius Bergeron comes from a wealthy Danoran noble family with a reputation for philanthropy. His great-grandfather founded the expedition that first discovered the Axis Seal, and members of his family have been recruited into the Obscurati ever since. He was a potential next-in-line to take over Golden Cell after the Duchess attacked Axis Island, but he prefers the academic side of the project.

His current stay in Flint lets him check up on several of his sponsored digs. He also has been tasked by the Ob top tier to keep an eye on possible loose ends from Macbannin's defeat. In particular he's watching Lorcan Kell and Kaja Stewart, evaluating whether to leave them alone, recruit them, or kill them.

Caius is constantly reading, either books or correspondence from archaeologists who benefit from his philanthropic donations. He keeps his fingernails and tail tip sharpened, and tends to leave deep scratches in furniture when he's impatient. He has a love for the Crisillyiri dish *polip alla infanti*, or live octopus, sliced and eaten while the tentacles still squirm.

ACT TWO:
Mysteries of the Ancients

In this act, the heroes explore ancient seals for for clues to the conspiracy.

Rail Travel in Risur.

Trains in the Zeitgeist setting had a slightly different genesis than in the real world. The first Danoran and Drakran innovators used a wider track gauge for their rail cars, so a track is typically 7 feet across (instead of the 4 feet, 8½ inches on Earth). Wider railroads led to larger, albeit slower trains.

A typical train car anywhere on the continent of Lanjyr is 12 feet wide and 60 feet long, and most trains have 10 to 20 cars. A usual mix is one engine, one firegem car, one or two sleeper cars, one dining car, three to five passenger cars, and three to ten freight cars.

The PCs likely travel in sleeper cars, each of which has two luxury suites 9 feet wide by 30 long, with a 3 foot wide hallway down the length.

Stretches of the railroad that pass through wilderness areas are usually lined with recently-planted trees from which red flags hang. These serve as both appeasement and distraction for fey who might be tempted to sabotage the tracks.

City of Bole.

The streets of Bole weave confusingly through a tangle of rolling hills, neighborhoods, and old thickets. The city center lies in the lowlands where most of the trees have been cleared to make way for riverside factories, lumber mills, and the last large station of the Risur railroad.

Bole is an old, relaxed city in contrast to the booming speed of Flint. The local RHC headquarters don't have much crime to worry about, and mostly serve to resolve disputes between loggers and the forest fey.

Agate.

A town of barely two hundred people, Agate sits at the where the foothills of the Anthras Mountains meet the marshlands of the High Bayou. It mostly serves as a nexus for gem miners in the hills, as well as silk trappers who collect threads from huge spider nests in the swamp. A small cadre of veteran monster hunters guard the town from giant spiders and the eerie alligators that crawl from stream to stream amid the web-shrouded hills.



Travel to the Ruins

Exploration. Montage. Level 5.

The heroes trek through Risur's High Bayou.

The PCs can take the train most of the way to the dig site, at the cost of 50 gp per person. The closest stop to the dig site is the city of Bole, which the PCs can reach within a day. From there it's a one-day trek through hills to the small town of Agate, and then another day through the High Bayou to the dig site.

If the PCs ask around in Agate (Streetwise DC 15), people corroborate the broad details of Xambria's story. It was the talk of the town that a bunch of city folks got themselves killed in the High Bayou, and that the only survivor was a young woman. But that was nearly two months ago.

More careful investigators (Streetwise DC 22) learn that two weeks ago another group of outsiders came through in the night, equipped for monster hunting. They returned a few days later and placed an object in the back of a wagon for transport. It was wrapped in cloth, about as large as a dinner table top, but much heavier than wood.

High Bayou.

Read or paraphrase the following.

Dr. Xambria Meredith provided a detailed map and directions. In the town of Agate you acquire pole-boats and set out into the High Bayou, a landscape unlike anywhere else in the world.

Though trees and other plant-life poke out of the slow waters, the land beneath is not coastline but rolling hills. Streams from the Anthras Mountains snake down to the bayou, but instead of flowing freely they are trapped by berms of massive spider webs. The giant ground spiders of the High Bayou have coated huge swaths of terrain with their nests, made of silk much like beavers craft dams of wood.

You have to travel slowly to avoid the dangers of the swamp. Swarms of biting insects flock to the scent of blood, and pale crocodiles blend into the white, silk-coated hillocks that peek out of the waters. Cypress trees shelter you from the sun, but you have to navigate carefully to avoid drifting into titanic walls of web, as large as a hundred feet across, stretched between trees.

And the rain. Always the rain. It cuts visibility, soaks everything, and dulls your ears to the movements of predators. Sometimes, through the calls of birds and croaks of toads, you imagine you can hear a slithering whisper, indecipherable beneath the drone of the rain.

Have the party choose one PC to be in charge of following Xambria's maps and directions. He must succeed three Nature checks (DC 15) to get the party to the dig site. Each attempted check takes four hours of travel.

Additionally, every four hours in the swamp, each PC must make an Endurance check (DC 15) or lose one healing surge from insect bites and fatigue. Also, every four hours have each PC make a Perception check (DC 22). If no PC succeeds, the party falls prey to an ambush monster. Let each PC propose a plan to mitigate the threat, and then make an appropriate skill check. Those who you deem don't have a good enough plan lose one healing surge in the ensuing struggle.



Alternately, if you want a combat encounter to represent the dangers of the High Bayou, create a level 5 encounter with spiders and ettercaps, perhaps with crocodiles or bats as opportunists. The majority of terrain is shallow water, with some deep water, some hills coated with sticky webs, and walls of trapping silk stretched between trees.

Offering of Decay.

If the PCs think to provide an offering to the Voice of Rot, the fey titan said to sleep in the High Bayou, they can make a Religion check (DC 22) to come up with an appropriate offering. Such an offering would consist of an additional pole-boat, filled with 100 gp worth of livestock that have been slaughtered and left to rot. If the PCs bring the boat along with them for at least four hours, the native creatures of the bayou will not attack them.

The Ziggurat of Apet

Exploration. Real-Time. Level 6.

The heroes examine the remains of the fallen expedition.

As the PCs draw near the archaeological site, they start to feel things going amiss. Characters trained in Nature notice that small animals are acting oddly, and those with the Skyseer theme experience a strange sense of dissonance.

The ziggurat has numerous traps and several areas where bestial creatures might attack them. If they reach the center of the ziggurat and aren't careful, they'll trigger a trap that forces them to flee in a hurry while dead guardians of the ruin try to kill them.

When the characters reach the site, read or paraphrase the following:

A golden strip of fabric flutters in the rainy breeze. Woven around the trunk of a tree, it marks the first clear sign you're getting close to Xambria's dig site. Beyond in the distance you spy another golden marker, and far past it, hidden in the drizzle, perhaps a third.

A patch of land cleared of webs near the tree also sports a hitching post of sorts for your boats. You tie them up, then follow the trail a few hundred feet up a slight grade. The sparse trees of the swamp thicken to a tangle of greenery, studded with golden markers to show that civilization was once here.

Then before you the wall of trees open onto a vast flooded plain. A large stone ziggurat looms at the edge of your rain-obscured vision. Three tiers of aged stone, their ancient carvings all but dissolved by time, rise up out of the forest to a sixty-foot high peak.

Or is it farther? Sudden vertigo strikes you all, and for a moment you can't tell which is closer—the top tier of the ziggurat, or your own hand. But when you look back down the sensation passes. You spot the remains of a camp site ahead, right beside the ruin's entrance. Three limp humanoid figures lie amid toppled tents and archaeological supplies.

Just beyond the camp and the remains of the dead, a fifteen foot high mouth yawns open in the stone side of the ziggurat's first tier. Vines that once hid it have been hacked away, and somewhere inside the ancient ruin, faint light glows.

Background.

These hills were once dry and full of caves. The golden legion of Egal the Shimmering found a path to this world through the plane of Apet, but Ancient heroes sealed that plane. The invaders abandoned Apet, and the Ancients built a small mound over the seal. A small camp defended the mound for a decade until the Axis Seal ritual was completed.

Soon thereafter, forces from Gidim entered the world and attacked the Apet seal, hoping to discover how to undo the Axis Seal. The guardians of the seal barely fended off the attackers, but by the time they could alert their allies to alter the Axis Seal to cut off Apet entirely, the invaders from Gidim had killed most of the leaders of the Ancients.

After the remaining Gidim were killed, the three guardians of the ziggurat of Apet built improved defenses and traps, then had themselves mummified and entombed upon death.

Several thousand years later, Xambria discovered the tomb. With great caution she and her team bypassed the traps, solved the puzzle of the rainbow bridge, and reached the golden seal. Soon thereafter specialists sent by Caius Bergeron carefully opened the seal, but a panicked digger damaged a ward. Monsters trapped in a timeless void beyond the seal killed everyone within except Xambria.

Xambria fled, and Caius sent another team who were prepared to fight monsters. They used the journals of Xambria's dead team to reach the seal safely. Using magic more powerful than that which the PCs have access to, they avoided triggering the final trap. Then they removed the actual golden plate itself and brought it back to Flint in relative secrecy.

Environmental Effects.

Several conditions are pervasive around the ziggurat.

Mind Strain: When the PCs see the ziggurat, make an attack roll against each of them, **+9 vs. Will**. If the attack hits, that character contracts Distant Madness (see page 215). A PC already affected by the disease has his disease progress an additional step. Keep rough track of how long the PCs take. Every half hour they remain within 100 ft. of the ziggurat, repeat the attack.

Bad Omens: Characters with the Spirit Medium theme who enter the campsite see a quick vision of three researchers clasping their heads as if in pain, and then collapsing. They died too long ago to speak with their spirits, but the traumatic nature of their deaths has left an impression in the area. As the mediums encounter more bodies within the ziggurat, they'll sense similar deaths. Characters with the Skyseer theme feel constantly as if they are on the verge of receiving a vision, though they have not stared at the night sky. If they look upward, they feel as though worms are crawling inside their heads. Once they enter the ziggurat, they recognize the energy here as matching that of the planet Apet, as well as something else they've never sensed before in the sky.

Hallucinations: The residual influence of Apet affects PCs' minds while they remain within the ziggurat, which they experience as fear-inspiring hallucinations. Each PC should experience at least one hallucination that is personalized to them at some point before they reach the portal to Apet. These hallucinations should involve the PC thinking he's someplace else, or seeing someone far away, but who is somehow closely linked to the PC. A docker, for instance, might think he's on a stage, surrounded by a crowd. It should not be obvious to the characters whether they're hallucinating, or if they're actually seeing or traveling somewhere else.

Investigating the Scene.

Three bodies—two men, one woman, all humans—lie dead in the camp outside the ziggurat. They died while sitting, eating, and working near the campfire and a small folding table. Even without approaching, characters might notice how odd it is that none of the bodies of the dig team have been cocooned, eaten, or carried off.

The bodies have been decaying in the heat and rain for at least a week by the time that PCs reach them, and so are well decomposed.



Examination (Heal DC 10) reveals no sign of wounds or trauma, but an autopsy (Heal DC 15) detects strange tumor-like bulges within each of the corpses. They all died from the psychic blast that the seal unleashed.

More noteworthy, however, is that the bodies have already been examined. PCs who check out the bodies can tell automatically that they were previously shifted about, and that their clothes were rifled through.

The camp site has a good amount of mundane gear, including rope, climbing kits, sunrods, and thieves' tools. There are also several journals, logs, and other notebooks, most of them carelessly tossed onto the ground. These contain no useful information. The journals with anything useful were taken back by the follow-up team sent by Caius two weeks ago.

Ziggurat Interior

Various Encounters. Level 6+.

Unless otherwise noted, interior walls of the ziggurat are weathered stone with barely visible carvings. There is light in Areas 1 and 7, but nowhere else.

1. Entrance.

When the PCs enter the ziggurat, read or paraphrase the following:

> A pattern of seven concentric rings surrounding a central white stone is prominent above the entrance to the ziggurat. A dot lies on the sixth ring from the interior.

The skill of the Ancients is still obvious after all these ages. The ziggurat rises sixty feet above the ground, but you descend what feels like fifty feet down rough stone stairs, to a room forty feet across, its twenty-foot ceiling adorned with decorative carvings. Stone amulets on golden chains hang from the carved mouths of jaguar and dragon statues all along the ceiling.

Two more bodies lie sprawled on the floor of this entry room, a man and a halfling woman. A toppled wooden tripod leans against one wall near the base of the stairs, and a cracked amber lantern on top of it emits dim but endless magical light. The light gleams off metal in alcoves along the walls, and a second glance reveals three tusked humanoid faces, their eyes closed, blindly watching all who enter.

When you glance back, you realize the staircase you came down was only ten feet long.

A Religion check (DC 15) identifies the entrance symbol as matching the star system. The sixth ring would correspond with Apet.

The two corpses here were more of Xambria's students, managed to flee this far before the monsters caught them. They show actual physical wounds of claws and necrotic burns.

The faces belong to the orc mummies who guard the ziggurat. They were preserved in bog acid thousands of years ago, and then placed standing in alcoves. Ropes lash their bodies to the stone, and golden bracelets marked them as great warriors. Close examination reveals that the hands of one mummy appeared to have been holding a sword, now missing. Another held a staff crossed over its chest. The third wore a necklace. All three were jostled a bit to remove the relics, which eventually found their way to Flint.

A note nailed to the wall reads, in Xambria's hand-writing, **"The mummies are worth more than all your tuition. Don't touch them."**

These mummies—as well as others throughout the complex—are destined to rise after the PCs trigger the ziggurat's final trap (page 243). However, until then they are harmless. Particularly paranoid PCs might destroy the mummies the first chance they get. If they completely destroy the mummies, remove them from the final encounter. Burning or determined hacking works, though each mummy takes at least 5 rounds to destroy. Simply hitting the mummy a few times has no effect.

Carvings on the walls depict a humanoid figure struck by a beam of fire and then burning. The beam came from some object that was set into the wall. Now only an empty rectangular nook, about a foot around, remains. It once held a small golden replica of the seal, but was taken by Caius's second team.

Two hallways lead away from this room. Though they're actually fairly short, characters passing through them feel like they're much longer, like their sense of time and space are being stretched out. Indeed, if they head down the hall to the west, the ziggurat's magic prevents them from heading back to this room until they solve the puzzle in the Rainbow Room (see Area 7).

2. Spear Traps and Mummies.

Spear traps are scattered throughout the ziggurat. As the PCs approach the first of these, they spot a lank mummy wearing a gold necklace. The inert corpse hangs from a wooden spear that has impaled it from behind.

The spear traps are not mechanical. Each hides a small cubby in the wall, where a mummy waits. Normally the mummies thrust their spears at passers-by, but when the final trap in Area 10 is triggered, the cubbies grind open and the mummies emerge. The mummy the PCs spot was, a few thousand years ago, a tomb-robber who fell victim to one of these traps. Now he has joined the ranks of the dead that guard the ziggurat.

Wall Spear Trap Level 5 Minion Obstacle
Trap XP 50

Something shifts in the wall beside you, and a spear thrusts toward your chest.

Trap: A spear pops out of the adjacent wall when a creature enters the trapped square.

▶ **Perception**

DC 22: You notice an ominous 2-inch wide hole at chest level on the wall ahead.

▶ **Trigger**

When a character enters the trapped area, the spear attacks. The trap resets after 5 minutes.

▶ **Attack** (Immediate Reaction)

Melee 1

Attack: +10 vs. AC (triggering creature)

Hit: 12 damage, and the target is restrained (escape DC 15).

Miss: Half damage.

▶ **Countermeasures**

- A character shorter than 4 feet tall is automatically missed, as is a larger creature that is prone. A creature can duck while moving through the space, at the cost of 1 additional square of movement.
- A creature that pauses to ask permission to pass in the Ancient language will not be attacked.
- A Thievery check (DC 15) can block the spear hole, preventing it from attacking.
- A Thievery check (DC 22) finds a seam in the stone which can be pried open as a move action, revealing the mummy within (see page 245), which immediately attacks.

3. Fire Burst Traps.

Two pillars in the hallway explode into flame when any creature draws near.

Fire Burst Trap Level 6 Obstacle
Trap XP 250

As you get near the pillar, the air around you bursts with fire.

Trap: Each pillar is 2 squares by 2 squares.

▶ **Perception**

- DC 15: A familiar pattern of seven concentric rings surrounding a central white stone marks two spots, one just before and one just after each pillar (marked with red dots on the map). A dot lies on the innermost ring. (Religion DC 15 identifies this symbol corresponds with Jiese, the plane of fire, which is closest to the sun.)
- DC 23: A 10-ft. pole leans against the wall beside the symbol, a convenient 10 ft. from the pillar. All but the last foot of the staff is blackened by fire. On the ground beneath the symbol sit several torches, oil, flint, and steel.

Initiative +4

▶ **Trigger**

When a character enters the burst area, it makes a first attack as an immediate reaction, then rolls initiative and attacks each round for five minutes.

▶ **Attack** (Immediate Reaction or Standard Action)

Close Burst 2

Attack: +9 vs. Reflex (creatures in burst)

Hit: 2d6+7 fire damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Miss: Half damage.

▶ **Countermeasures**

- A character who presses fire against the ring symbol, such as reaching in with a torch or attacking with a fire spell, suppresses both traps for five minutes.
- An Arcana check or Thievery check (DC 23) can modify the trap. When triggered, it does not attack as an immediate reaction, but it still attacks on its turn.

Mine Bypass.

Xambria's team dug a tunnel from the pillar trap in the southeast. They hoped to find a way to avoid the crushing force trap in Area 4, but to their dismay found another fire pillar trap at the end of their tunnel. This tunnel simply provides an alternate route for the PCs.

4. Crushing Force Trap.

A powerful force crushes any creature that enters as if pressed beneath tons of stone.

Crushing Force Trap Level 6 Obstacle
Trap XP 250

As you step into the area, an immense pressure pushes you down from above.

Trap: The trap occupies sixteen adjacent squares.

▶ **Perception**

- DC 15: A familiar pattern of seven concentric rings surrounding a central white stone decorates the floor up at three points near the edges of the trap (marked with yellow dots on the map). A dot lies on the fifth ring from the interior. (Religion DC 15 identifies this symbol corresponds with Urim, the plane of earth, which is fifth from the sun.)
- DC 23: Tiny shards of rock lie scattered all over the floor, as if a small boulder was crushed to pieces.

Initiative +3

▶ **Trigger**

When a character enters the burst area, it makes a first attack as an immediate reaction, then rolls initiative and attacks each round.

▶ **Attack** (Immediate Reaction or Standard Action)

Area special

Attack: +9 vs Fortitude (creatures in the area of the trap)

Hit: 2d6+7 force damage, and the target is knocked prone. The target is also slowed until the end of the trap's next turn.

Miss: Half damage.

▶ **Countermeasures**

- A character who places a stone weighing at least 20 pounds on the ring symbol suppresses the trap for five minutes.
- An Arcana check or Thievery check (DC 23) can modify the trap. When triggered, it does not attack as an immediate reaction, but it still attacks on its turn.

5. Hall of Needles.

When the characters enter this hall, read or paraphrase the following.

> Wall carvings of this long hallway feature rows of orc, goblin, and minostaur soldiers wielding spears and obsidian blades against an army of horned humans with swords of gold.
>
> A human body lies face-down in the hall, several weeks rotted.

The hall is warded with three hail of needles traps. The needles are magical conjurations. The trap never runs out of needles, and all needles fade away after five minutes.



Hail of Needles Trap Level 7 Lurker
Trap XP 300

Tiny needles fly through holes in the wall.

Trap: Each of the three traps cover an area two squares wide and four squares long.

▶ **Perception**

- DC 16: A familiar pattern of seven concentric rings surrounding a central white stone decorates the ceiling at two points, at either end of the hallway (marked with orange dots on the map). A dot lies on the second ring from the interior. (Religion DC 15 identifies this symbol corresponds with Avilona, the plane of air, which is second from the sun.)
- DC 23: The character notices tiny pinholes among the wall carvings, and that the floor looks like it could give.

Initiative +4

▶ **Trigger**

When a character steps in the area of the trap, he depresses a pressure plate. The trap makes a first attack as an immediate reaction, then rolls initiative and attacks each round for five minutes.

▶ **Attack** (Immediate Reaction or Standard Action)

Ranged special

Attack: +12 vs. AC (creatures in the trapped area)

Hit: 2d6+4 poison damage. If the target takes any damage it is slowed (save ends).

Miss: Half damage.

▶ **Countermeasures**

- A character who blows through a reed or similar pipe, aimed at the ring symbol, suppresses the trap for five minutes.
- A character can jump the trapped area (Athletics DC 21, or DC 11 with a running start).
- An Arcana check or Thievery check (DC 23) can modify the trap. When triggered, it does not attack as an immediate reaction, but it still attacks on its turn.

6. Hallucinatory Floor Room.

When the PCs enter the room, read or paraphrase the following.

> Aberrations like those you witnessed at the arms fair have claimed this room as their home. Two fleshy orbs covered with dozens of eyes float a few feet above the ground. Other creatures crawl along the walls and ceiling like massive spiders, except they have only four legs, and long barbed tongues protrude from their mouths. Their forms all waver from solid to translucent.

The aberrant creatures in the room are obvious, but the greater danger of the room is the sliding floor trap. It activates when one of the PCs first goes halfway across the room. At this point thick walls of vines grow across the doorways, blocking entrance and exit. Any PCs adjacent to the doorway can make a Dexterity check (DC 18) to jump to the other side as an immediate interrupt, before being sealed in or out. Then the floor starts retracting into the wall.

An actual sliding floor was far beyond the Ancients' engineering talents. This trap is an illusion, intended to drive intruders to the spear traps along the walls.

List of Adversaries (Level 7 Encounter).

- 2 eyes of madness
- 8 crawling spikers
- Hallucinatory floor trap
- 8 spear traps

Tactics.

The monsters believe the illusionary trap is real. The eyes of madness use *horrid hallucinations* to slide targets into their *paranoia* auras, or into the pit or spear traps. The crawling spikers simply try to drag prey away to feast on them.

Terrain.

The vine walls blocking the exits have 50 hit points per square. The ceiling here is 15 feet high.

Sliding Floor Trap Level 5 Obstacle
Trap XP 200

Stones grind in the walls, and suddenly the floor begins to split apart over a bottomless pit.

Trap: Two halves of the floor slide into opposite walls, as marked on the map.

▶ **Perception**

- DC 15: A familiar pattern of seven concentric rings surrounding a central white stone lies in the center of the room's floor, marked with a green dot on the map. A dot lies on the third ring, and an even tinier ring surrounds that dot. (Religion DC 15 identifies this symbol corresponds with Av, the plane of dreams, which is the moon of this world. This world is third from the sun.)
- DC 22: The character notices a seam running down the center of the room, north to south.

Initiative: Special

▶ **Trigger**

When a creature crosses from the north side of the room to the south, or vice versa, the trap triggers. The trap's initiative is directly before the character that triggered it.

▶ **Effect**

On the trap's turn, every creature on the floor slides 1 square toward either the east or west wall, whichever is nearest. If there is no free square for the creature to enter, it remains in place.

Any creature pressed into a square adjacent to either wall triggers a spear trap, if the trap has not already gone off.

On the trap's first turn, a 2-square wide strip running north to south in the middle of the room pulls apart over an apparent bottomless pit. Each round thereafter, the strip extends outward 1 square to the east, and 1 square to the west.

A creature unable to slide that is stuck over the pit—or moves or is moved over the pit—hallucinates that it falls. Other creatures see the same hallucination. It can make a saving throw to "grab onto the ledge" and hang on. Otherwise the creature falls prone and takes ongoing 5 psychic damage until it falls unconscious. The creature can act as normal, but it believes it is hundreds of feet away from the battle.

Once the floor has retracted into the wall, the floor moves back out into the room at a rate of 1 square per turn until the pit is again covered. At this point the vine doors open up. The trap will not trigger again for 5 minutes.

▶ **Countermeasures**

- A character who tries to disbelieve the trap can spend a minor action once per round to make a Wisdom check (DC 11). If successful, the trap no longer affects the creature, even if it later resets. Any damage already dealt remains, however. If an allied creature has already successfully disbelieved and acts in a way that shows it's just an illusion, the creature gets a +5 bonus to its check.
- Wildly unlikely, but if someone places a flower on the ring icon in the center of the room's floor, the trap is deactivated for five minutes.
- An Arcana check or Thievery check (DC 23) can modify the trap so that it does not open on its next turn.
- The walls have enough decorations that climbing is feasible (Athletics DC 15). Simply holding on is easier (DC 11), and a creature gains a +5 to its Athletics check if it sticks to spaces either adjacent to the vine barrier, or where spear traps have already triggered, since they offer good hand-holds.

Crawling Spiker (8) Level 6 Minion Soldier
Small aberrant magical beast XP 63

HP 1, see *thoughtform minion* **Initiative** +7
AC 22, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 16 **Perception** +4
Speed 7, climb 7

Traits

▶ **Thoughtform Minion**

The spiker has the Thoughtform ability (see page 225), but since it's a minion this has limited effect. Any attack that hits the minion while it's insubstantial bloodies it, and any further hit kills it. If hit while corporeal, any damage kills it.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Bite** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Four slithering pedipalps on the spider-beasts face draw you in and tear at your skin.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC

Hit: 7 damage the target is slowed until the end of the crawling spiker's next turn.

⟋ **Harpoon Tongue** ✦ At-Will

Its tongue snaps out like a whip and snags your arm.

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +11 vs. AC

Hit: 7 damage and the target is pulled 3 squares and grabbed (Escape DC 11). If the spiker is on the ceiling, the target is pulled off the ground.

Str 16 (+6) **Dex** 19 (+7) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 12 (+4) **Int** 2 (–1) **Cha** 5 (+1)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Eye of Madness (2) Level 6 Controller
Medium aberrant magical beast XP 250

HP 54; **Bloodied** 27
AC 20, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 20
Speed 0, fly 6 (altitude limit 1) **Initiative** +7
Perception +2

Traits

☼ **Paranoia** ✦ Aura 2

The longer you stay near this horrible creature, the more you wonder if you've been blind to the treacherous intent of your so-called allies. Now might be the perfect time to put an end to them.

If an enemy starts its turn in the aura, when it ends its turn, if it's still in the aura it charges a target of the eye of madness's choice as a free action.

▶ **Thoughtform**

See Thoughtform, page 225.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Horrid Hallucinations** ✦ At-Will, Basic

You stagger through a nightmare and emerge unsure of what's real.

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +9 vs. Will

Hit: 2d8+4 psychic damage, and slide the target 2 squares.

✧ **Burst of Terror** ✦ Encounter

Ten thousand years of solitude sweep through you.

Attack: Close Burst 1 (enemies in burst); +9 vs. Will

Hit: 2d8+4 psychic damage, and the target is affected by Distant Madness. If the target is already affected, its condition worsens by one step.

Str 10 (+4) **Dex** 17 (+7) **Wis** 13 (+5)
Con 14 (+6) **Int** 2 (–1) **Cha** 20 (+9)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

7. Rainbow Bridges.

The Ancients constructed this room as a puzzle to keep outsiders away. Normally an elaborate ritual performed by priests would solve the "puzzle" and open the exit into the map room (Area 8). From there, the priests could deactivate the defenses of the ziggurat. Unfortunately, the second team sent by Caius Bergeron removed the control stone, so the ruin's defenses cannot be turned off.

Monsters freed from the seal have taken up residency in this room, turning a puzzle into a death trap. Worse, the dimensional magic of the ziggurat makes it impossible to leave this room until the puzzle is solved. PCs trying to go down the hallway back to the ziggurat's entrance feel like they're moving, but the distance back to area 1 is effectively infinite. No matter how far they go, the moment they turn around, this room is mere steps away.

When the PCs enter this room, read or paraphrase the following:

A leathery curtain blocks your view of the next room, but a slowly shifting spectrum of light peeks through on the floor. When you step through, it takes only a single step, but when you look back the previous hall seems miles away.

Within, most of the vast room before you has no floor. A brief plateau of stone stretches fifteen feet before dropping away perilously. A chasm in the center of the chamber separates you from several other plateaus around the room's edge. On the far side you spot a doorway out, but the path is blocked by six dull veils of colored light.

Two wooden stands on the entrance plateau hold a pair of large white stones, marked with paint, one blue and one orange. The paint is recent, covering a faded symbol of seven concentric circles. You can spot two similar stands and stones on other plateaus.

If you look down, a rough sea of stone spikes stare back at you from the floor, thirty feet down.

The base of the pit has flooded with marsh water, and something moves down there. The horrid things might once have been centipedes, but they have grown massive and tumorous.

A new light flares from one of the far plateaus, and a pair of flashing orbs begin to float toward you, their light screaming through all of your senses. Below you, the centipedes begin to crawl upward.

The puzzle consists of a series of walls and bridges of force, colored red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet. To reach the exit, you must drop the walls one by one. When the puzzle starts, all the bridges are down, and the walls are up.

The bridges and walls are tied to stones throughout the room, which Xambria's team marked with paint to make it easier for them to keep track of which was which. Touching a stone turns on any walls and bridges of that color that aren't already on, and turns off all the walls and bridges of an opposing color (see below). Touching the same stone twice in a row does not "toggle" the colors; if you want to switch back and forth with blue and orange, you have to take turns tapping each stone. To determine the effects of the stones, consult the following table.

Crystal Color	Activates	Deactivates	Planetary Correspondence
Red	Red	Green	Jiese, plane of fire
Orange	Orange	Blue	Avilona, plane of air
Yellow	Yellow	Violet	Urim, plane of earth
Green	Green	Red	Av, plane of dreams
Blue	Blue	Orange	Mavisha, plane of water
Violet	Violet	Yellow	Nem, plane of ruin

The puzzle solution requires teamwork, and at least four PCs working together. If you have fewer than four PCs, they'll need to make use of flight, teleportation, or simple jumping. Or you can let the six walls in the center of the room stay deactivated once the PCs touch the appropriate stone, instead of toggling up and down.

The puzzle resets after five minutes of no activity.

List of Adversaries (Level 7 Encounter).

- 8 implanters
- 2 flashing orbs
- 2 mutated centipedes

Tactics.

The monsters here were either native bayou creatures mutated when Gidim warbeasts fused with them, or are free-floating thought-forms attracted by the light. They do not coordinate attacks, and seek only to feed on the first sentient thoughts to arrive in weeks.

The mutated centipedes and six of the implanters begin in the pit. Four of the implanters managed to get themselves trapped behind the yellow light veil, and will fly out when the veil goes down. The flashing orbs hide amid the veils of light (Perception DC 23).

Terrain.

The lower level of the room is 20 feet deep (2d10 falling damage). Additionally any creature that falls is attacked by the spikes at the bottom, **+10 vs AC; 2d6+6 damage**.

Implanter (8) — Level 7 Minion Lurker
Small aberrant magical beast — XP 75

HP 1, a miss never damages a minion — **Initiative** +7
AC 21, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18 — **Perception** +10
Speed 4, climb 4

Standard Actions

⊘ **Attach** ✦ At-Will, Basic
This small beast is nothing but whipping tentacles tipped with crab-like pincers, surrounding a bulbous ovipositor. It clambers toward you, then clamps a pincer on your neck.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 8 damage and the implanter is attached to the target. While attached, whenever the target moves or is subject to forced movement, the implanter is pulled adjacent to the target. A creature may end the attachment as though breaking a grab, except forced movement does not break attachment.

✓ **Implant** ✦ At-Will
The ovipositor materializes solidly as it tries to burrow into your ear. With a wet spasm, it implants an idea in your mind, and you scream in horror.

Requirement: The implanter must be grabbing the target.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The target is affected by Distant Madness, or its condition worsens by 1 stage if already affected. The implanter is reduced to 0 HP, and makes a secondary attack, centered on the primary target's square.
Secondary Attack: Close Burst 1 (creatures in burst other than the primary target); +10 vs. Will
Hit: 7 psychic damage.

Str	9 (+2)	**Dex**	19 (+7)	**Wis**	15 (+5)
Con	14 (+5)	**Int**	1 (–2)	**Cha**	7 (+1)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

If a character makes it through the puzzle and presses the white stone on the floor by the exit, all the bridges activate and all the walls deactivate. A bright white flashes, and any remaining monsters are knocked unconscious. The creature who presses the stone witnesses The Sealing of Apet vision, below.

Flashing Orbs (2) Level 6 Artillery
Large aberrant magical beast XP 250
HP 58; **Bloodied** 29 **Initiative** +5
AC 18, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 19 **Perception** +9
Speed 0; fly 4 (hover)

Traits

▸ **Thoughtform**

See Thoughtform, page 225.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Vicarious Strike** (psychic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
A tentacle of light lashes out and drives through your veins. For a moment, impossibly, you can feel the being's thoughtform flesh wriggling with colors.
Attack: Range 20 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+7 psychic damage. The next time the flashing orb takes damage before the end of its next turn, the target takes 5 damage of the same damage type. Until the end of its next turn, the flashing orb loses its insubstantial and phasing traits.

✧ **Psychic Burst** (psychic) ✦ At-Will
A scream rings your mind, and for a moment you feel like your body is not your own.
Attack: Close Burst 1 (each enemy in burst); +9 vs. Will
Hit: 1d8+7 psychic damage.

✧ **Chaos Storm** ✦ Recharge ⚃ ⚃ ⚃
A dozen conflicting memories and sensations roil around you, then settle on one particularly painful reality. That reality manifests and wounds you with energy.
Attack: Area Burst 2 within 10 (each creature in burst); +11 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6+7 damage of a random type. Roll 1d6 to see what the damage type is: 1—Acid, 2—Cold, 3—Fire, 4—Lightning, 5—Necrotic, 6—Thunder

Str 13 (+4) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 1 (–1) **Cha** 9 (+2)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Mutated Centipede (2) Level 5 Skirmisher
Medium aberrant magical beast XP 200
HP 60; **Bloodied** 30 **Initiative** +7
AC 19, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 17 **Perception** +4
Speed 8, climb 5

Standard Actions

⊘ **Paralytic Bite** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Its pincers graze your skin, and you feel like your arm is across the room.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+6 damage, and the target is weakened until the end of the mutated centipede's next turn.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Teleporting Retreat** ✦ At-Will
What? Centipedes aren't supposed to do that!
Trigger: The mutated centipede is his hit by a melee attack.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The mutated centipede teleports 6 squares.

Str 14 (+4) **Dex** 20 (+7) **Wis** 16 (+5)
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 1 (–2) **Cha** 8 (+1)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

THE SEALING OF APET

A character who finishes the solution of the rainbow bridge puzzle is briefly flooded with light, during which he experiences a vision of the three mummified guardians of the ziggurat, back when they were alive, at the sealing of the portal to Apet.

The three orcs, dressed in primitive hides and armed with their iconic relics—staff, sword, and amulet—stand in a bare cave surrounded by semi-translucent creatures similar to the tentacled monsters the PCs have recently encountered. They form a blockade in front of a golden plate set in the wall, and the monsters hesitate to attack.

The sword wielder barks something in his Ancient language, and the PC understands his words: "Warbeasts of Gidim! Toteth's seal failed."

"A trick," growls the amulet-wearer. "They're from Gidim, but I smell the dust of Apet on them."

"Sniff them later," says the sword wielder. "Think at them so I can cut them."

The staff wielder closes his eyes as if in meditation. One of the monsters nearest the sword-wielder turns solid, and the warrior hews it in two with his obsidian-edged greatsword.

The PC gains the ability to speak and understand Ancient (a benefit which is, honestly, pretty useless until much, much later in the campaign), and also learns that he can focus his thoughts to influence creatures of Gidim, as detailed on page 225.

8. Map Room.

When the characters enter this room, read or paraphrase the following:

> The room is dominated by a large stone map on the floor. Above the map, a grimy gold fixture hangs from the ceiling. Ropes support a gold plate which holds a white stone. From that plate, another larger plate hangs, also suspended by the ropes. Finally the ropes stretch down to the floor, where they're looped through gold rings at the edges of the map.
>
> The gold plates appear ancient, but strange modern contraptions of steel are attached to them, with complex gears and notches, like something you'd use to calibrate a scale.
>
> A large icon of seven concentric circles is carved into the west wall. Tiny nooks sit in the wall intersecting each circle, but they're empty.

The floor map depicts the continent of Lanjyr as it existed during the time of the Ancients. While vaguely familiar, major natural and magical disasters have since reshaped the land. Most notably, what is now the Yerasol Archipelago appears as a solid landmass that connects modern day Risur to Danor. Many other land and sea borders have also shifted.

The gold fixture above the map consists of several parts. Four ropes loop through a ring in the ceiling. The ropes pass through modern contraptions, a sort of clamp crossed with a belay. The clamps hold the top gold disk, which has a slot in the center that contains a white stone. Further down the ropes, a second set of clamp-belay contraptions hold a second gold plate in place. Finally the ropes loop through rings on the floor.

The lower plate has two holes in it. The white stone in the top plate is the same variety seen in the concentric ring designs throughout the ziggurat. A character who succeeds a History check (DC 15) recalls that the Ancients used white stones to represent the sun in their iconography.

The intent of the apparatus is to use a power that produces light on the white stone, or otherwise place a source of light there. Once they have done that, the light shines through the two holes in the disk, and drops two points of light on the map that correspond with this ziggurat, and the ziggurat of Mavisha.

The Ancients were secretive, and while they wanted allies to be able to find other ziggurats, they only left clues to the locations of a few, in hopes that, if enemies succeeded in breaching this ziggurat, they would still have to face other defenders to find the location of all the seals.

Xambria's team used the more modern contraptions because the original ropes and wooden loops had decayed, so they had to try a variety of heights and positions to find the correct alignment. It's fine now, and all the PCs have to do is provide a light source.

There is no requirement that the PCs solve this puzzle. The PCs can follow other clues to find Caius's second team as they work to open the sunken seal of Mavisha.

Control Stone.

The star system icon on the west wall was originally used to disable the traps throughout the ziggurat. Colored stones could be placed in nooks to turn on or off traps affiliated with specific planes. Caius's second team took the stones with them.

Mine Bypass.

Xambria's team dug through the wall in Area 9 to reach this room, so they wouldn't have to solve the puzzle in Area 7 every time they wanted to come in.

9. False Seal Room.

When the PCs enter this room, read or paraphrase the following:

> The walls of the room feature more mural carvings that depict orc in elaborate head-dresses performing a ritual beneath a sun and seven planets. Everything in the murals draws attention to a six-foot high rectangular indentation in the west wall. Both the huge indentation and smaller nooks in the walls sit empty, but dust within them suggests their contents were removed relatively recently.
>
> Another concentric ring icon sits on the floor in the center of the room. On this one, the fourth ring is marked.

A Religion check (DC 15) identifies that the symbol represents Mavisha, the plane of water, which is the fourth planet from the sun. If the PCs place a bowl filled with seawater on top the icon, they'll disable the toxic flood portion of the Final Trap (see page 243).

This room once held the false seal that Ancients created to fool potential raiders, as well as magic weapons and other relics. Caius's second team removed the false seal, and placed it in true seal's place in Area 10.

10. The Portal to Nothing.

The entrance to this room was originally a hidden door, but Xambria's team dug through. Now the door sits open. When the PCs enter, read or paraphrase the following.

> Iron poles jammed into a primitive stone mechanism hold open a secret door. On the floor just inside the threshold, someone placed an ironic rug woven with the word "Welcome." A pair of dead bodies lie just past it.
>
> The room beyond does not look like it should belong in a swamp. Dry gray stone, roughly cut apart by primitive tools, stretches away in the dark. Your light gleams faintly on something golden at the far end of this cave.



> As your eyes adjust, you spot five more bodies on the floor near that golden gleam. Two are humans, three are tieflings. Their bodies have sprouted additional eyes, tentacles, and small vestigial limbs. One of the bodies lies fallen across a circle of symbols drawn on the ground, with an empty brazier nearby. The circle intersects the wall, and it would have formed a protective ward, but it looks damaged and broken.
>
> In the far corners of the room, two stone pillars are carved to look like coiled feathered serpents. Between them, set in that far wall, is the source of the reflection: a plate of gold that must weigh several tons. The plate is carved with a scene of orcs, minotaurs, and goblins battling beneath a constellation of stars.

This was once the resting place of the true seal. The constellation on the seal is Alesia the Wayfarer, said to influence the planet Apet, which affects teleportation and divination magic (Religion DC 19).

The two bodies by the door were some of Xambria's team, mangled by Gidim warbeasts. The bodies at the center of the room are the remains of the Obscurati group who opened the seal. Like the bodies outside the ziggurat, they have been disturbed and their possessions searched.

Characters who examine the ritual around the golden seal might realize that there were actually two rituals (Arcana DC 15). The first was a warding circle, meant to hold back creatures. The second was intended to suppress a powerful abjuration magic.

Skyseer Vision of Apet

Though the Axis Seal prevents creatures from physically traveling from Apet, the plane's power pours invisibly through the portal in this room. When a Skyseer sees the false seal, she instantly senses that it is not really sealing anything, because she can feel Apet's intense energy.

If you have any personalized character plots, now is an excellent time for a Skyseer PC to witness events anywhere in the world to provide clues or drive those plots forward. In addition, a Skyseer has the following vision, which alludes to events in the last five adventures.

The planet Apet drifts through the stars. You see it closer than ever: an orb of swirling gray clouds, and around it the silvery ring of the plane Reida. When skyseers peer into the heavens, they believe this ring shows the past and future.

But the ring is incomplete. An arc has been snapped out of the circle. Your own reflection on its surface stands mere feet from the end of time.

You step into your reflection, stand upon the edge of the ring. Cracked shards of icy silver crunch under your feet. You can look down and see the endless dust storms of Apet, look out and see the heavens wheeling about you. And when you look forward, thousands of miles away, you can see the other end of the snapped ring. If you looked long enough, you could see the dawn of history."

Obscurati Trick.

The seal in at the back of the room is actually the false seal from Area 9, though Caius's second team placed it in the true seal's location. They suspected others might come to investigate the ziggurat, and they wanted to cover their tracks. The rug just inside the room covers a concentric ring icon, on which the outermost ring is marked, representing Nem, the plane of ruin.

When Xambria's team first breached this room, they carefully studied the Nem symbol until they figured out how to disarm it. Placing an orc skull on the icon disarmed the Dead Rising portion of the Final Trap (see below).

Caius's second team, using journals from the camp as guidance, figured out how the trap worked, then altered its magic so it *cannot* be deactivated. Then they placed a rug to cover the symbol. Now any creature that comes within 5 ft. of the room's entrance triggers the Final Trap.

The false seal is just granite covered in a thin layer of gold. A character might notice cracks in the gold coating (Perception DC 15 if within 10 ft., or DC 11 if adjacent). It does not radiate magic. The whole block of stone weighs about three hundred pounds.

Beyond the Seal.

If a character moves the false seal, he reveals a portal to nothing. Prior to the creation of the Axis Seal, the portal led to the plane of Apet, however now that the Axis Seal has closed off the planes, the portal leads to a void between the planes. There is no light, no matter, and no gravity in the void, though it has invisible edges and only is about a hundred feet across.

A human body floats in the void. Its face was torn off by some Gidim beast, but it has not rotted at all.

Some time after the party sees this room—after they've had a chance to explore, but before they can leave—they notice the flow of water from the Final Trap (see below).

If the party tries to hide in the void beyond the seal, the void will fill with toxic water and drown them.

The Final Trap

Action. Tactical. Level 10.

The party flees deadly waters while the dead try to drag them to their deaths.

When you decide it is time to activate the final trap, read or paraphrase the following:

You hear a faint trickling sound coming from the door. Some dark fluid is slowly pouring into the room, just an inch deep now, but swelling to ankle deep with an alarming speed. As the water crosses over the threshold it carries away the rug, revealing a glowing icon of concentric rings beneath.

At the same time, the corpses on the ground twitch, open their eyes, and fix them on you.

This encounter takes up the entire ziggurat, and does not end until the PCs escape. The constant factor of the encounter is the toxic flood trap. Flowing 4 squares in all directions each round, the flood will fill the ziggurat knee deep in less than two minutes, and then completely overflow it within five.

Toxic Flood Trap Level 5 Elite Obstacle
Trap XP 400

Dark green waters pour through the halls, growing deeper by the moment.

Trap: A torrent of poisonous water pours out of Area 9 and fills the entire ziggurat.

▶ **Perception**

✦ DC 22: The character hears distant water welling up out of the floor in Area 9, and can act before the trap takes its first turn.

Initiative Count 0

▶ **Trigger**

The trap activates if a creature passes within 5 ft. of the entrance to Area 10. Delay its onset as dramatically appropriate.

▶ **Effect**

On its first turn, the toxic flood fills every space in Area 9. These squares are ankle-deep.

Each round thereafter on its initiative, the flood spreads 4 squares in every direction, making those squares ankle-deep. All squares already ankle-deep become knee-deep.

Spaces within 8 squares of the ankle-deep waters have an inch of water, which is harmless but warns creatures of the oncoming flood.

Knee-deep water is difficult terrain.

Any creature who ends its turn standing in a knee-deep square, or prone in an ankle-deep square, takes 5 poison and necrotic damage.

▶ **Countermeasures**

✦ Run.

The Dead Rising.

As they run, the PCs have to worry about any monsters they haven't already killed, as well as the traps that are still active, since they might not be able to spare time to carefully disable them.

An additional threat, however, comes from the mummies throughout the tomb and any other dead bodies scattered about. When the trap of Nem activates, those bodies animate and wait to block the PCs' escape. As undead, these creatures are immune to the toxic flood's damage.

List of Adversaries.

Area 10.

- 7 zombie shamblers

Hallways.

- 12 mummy harriers

  The mummies in the spear traps remain hidden until a creature comes within 10 squares. Then they emerge (spending 2 squares of movement to do so) and attack.

Area 6.

- 8 mummy harriers

  The mummies ignore the sliding floor, intuitively realizing it's an illusion.

Area 1.

- 1 Ancient mummy warrior
- 1 Ancient mummy spellcaster
- 1 Ancient mummy brawler

Ancient Mummy Warrior Level 6 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (animate, undead) XP 250

HP 54; **Bloodied** 27 **Initiative** +5
AC 22, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 18 **Perception** +5
Speed 5
Resist necrotic 5, **Immune** poison, disease

Traits

▸ **Opportunist**

The Ancient mummy warrior gains a +2 to opportunity attacks, and if it hits a creature with an opportunity attack while the target is moving, the target stops and loses the rest of its move.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Mummy Slam** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+7 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the Ancient mummy warrior's next turn.

Minor Actions

⟋ **Curse of No Escape** ✦ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature): +11 vs. Will
Hit: The target is slowed until the Ancient mummy warrior is destroyed or it attacks another creature with this power

Str	18 (+7)	**Dex**	10 (+3)	**Wis**	15 (+5)
Con	14 (+5)	**Int**	7 (+1)	**Cha**	14 (+5)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** understands Ancient

Zombie Shambler Level 4 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid (animate, undead) XP 44

HP 1, a miss never damages a minion **Initiative** +2
AC 18, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 14 **Perception** +2
Speed 4 Darkvision
Resist necrotic 5, **Immune** poison, disease

Standard Actions

⊘ **Grab and Bite** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature): +9 vs. AC
Hit: 8 damage.

Str	12 (+3)	**Dex**	6 (+0)	**Wis**	10 (+2)
Con	12 (+3)	**Int**	1 (–3)	**Cha**	7 (+0)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —

Mummy Harriers Level 5 Minion Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (animate, undead) XP 50

HP 1, a miss never damages a minion **Initiative** +8
AC 19, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 15 **Perception** +2
Speed 5
Resist necrotic 5, **Immune** poison, disease

Standard Actions

⊘ **Defending Spear** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature): +10 vs. AC
Hit: 6 damage and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 15)

Str	12 (+3)	**Dex**	14 (+4)	**Wis**	11 (+2)
Con	15 (+4)	**Int**	4 (–1)	**Cha**	7 (+0)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** understands Ancient

Ancient Mummy Spellcaster Level 6 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid (animate, undead) XP 250

HP 44; **Bloodied** 22 **Initiative** +3
AC 20, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 20 **Perception** +7
Speed 5
Resist necrotic 5, **Immune** poison, disease

Standard Actions

⊘ **Accursed Touch** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11vs. AC
Hit: 1d8+5 necrotic damage.

⊘ **Bolt of Apet** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +11 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d6+7 damage, and the target is teleported to a space within 10 squares of the Ancient mummy spellcaster.

Minor Actions

⟋ **Curse of No Escape** ✦ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature): +9 vs. Will
Hit: The target is slowed until the Ancient mummy spellcaster is destroyed or it attacks another creature with this power

Str	15 (+5)	**Dex**	10 (+3)	**Wis**	18 (+7)
Con	14 (+5)	**Int**	7 (+1)	**Cha**	15 (+5)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** understands Ancient

Ancient Mummy Brawler Level 6 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (animate, undead) XP 250

HP 54; **Bloodied** 27 **Initiative** +9
AC 20, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18 **Perception** +5
Speed 5
Resist necrotic 5, **Immune** poison, disease

Standard Actions

⊘ **Mummy Flip** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Effect: The Ancient mummy brawler shifts 2 squares before or after the attack.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d8+9 damage and the target is knocked prone.

Minor Actions

⟋ **Curse of No Escape** ✦ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature): +11 vs. Will
Hit: The target is slowed until the Ancient mummy brawler is destroyed or it attacks another creature with this power

Str	15 (+5)	**Dex**	18 (+7)	**Wis**	15 (+5)
Con	14 (+5)	**Int**	7 (+1)	**Cha**	10 (+3)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** understands Ancient



Facing Down Death

Social. Real-Time. Level 30.

A fey titan thinks the PCs are agents of the king, and demands tribute.

The PCs likely emerge from the ziggurat with only moments to spare, but they are not safe. From the mouth of the ruin they spot shapes moving beyond in the rain, advancing from all directions. The three corpses from the camp stand nearby, reaching out to attack them, and out in the swamp it seems as if every dead creature within a mile has risen and is shambling toward them.

The deadly flood makes going back beneath the ziggurat impossible, and there must be thousands of creatures—peat-coated skeletons, zombified crocodiles, hollow carapaces of spiders, and swarms of centipedes, bats, and blood-thirsting birds. Beneath the cries of the throng, they hear a deep sound, like a growling voice.

It seems the only safe path is to climb the ziggurat. If the PCs hesitate, they hear a slithering whisper urge them, "Climb."

When the horde is within charging distance, a massive shape moves in the rain, almost as if the swamp itself is rising up, alive. Swaths of the hungry dead are pulled beneath the surface, and then the head of the marshy shape snakes out of the rain from the side and cuts off the approach of the undead. A titanic serpent, its half-rotted skull 20 feet long, snaps its teeth down upon the front line of the horde, and as it devours the dead it locks one enormous, milky gray eye on the party.

This is the Voice of Rot, fey titan of the High Bayou, who has slumbered for centuries without disturbance by man. But when the warbeasts of Gidim broke free, his rest was disturbed, and he has waited for representatives of Risur to come and answer his demands.

With a few brief thrashes of his coils, the titan—who is so large that the party can hardly make out the scale of his body through the haze of rain—destroys the gathered undead. Then he withdraws into the drizzle, partially hidden. The party can only make out his general silhouette, but the dull light from a single eye shines like a beacon.

An entity of this power has little time for conversing with mortals. He makes his demands known, perhaps clarifies one or two things, then vanishes into the rain. The voice of the titan is at once both guttural and sibilant.

> "My slumber is disturbed. You, agents of King Kelland, shall redress this offense. Most that fled your mortal trap were mute beasts. One had reason. It can be judged. Follow the scent of its homeland's blood. Find it. Cut its flesh, then do as you please. Kill it, and it will rot. Send it home, and it will despair. Either, and I shall be appeased."

Tracking the Escapee.

Every PC in the party becomes capable of performing the Detect Planar Energy ritual (page 181), if they did not already acquire it from Gale in Adventure Two. Their time in the ziggurat counts as contact with the plane of Apet, so the party can track the energies of Sijhen, who spent a great deal of time there. However, once Sijhen gets its hands on the golden seal of Apet, it is able to clean the energy from itself. Thereafter it leaves no trail. However, once Sijhen gets its hands on the golden seal of Apet, it is able to clean the energy from itself. Thereafter it leaves no trail.

The party can return safely from the ziggurat with no danger from the bayou's inhabitants.

If the party does not obey the titan's wishes (render Xambria/Sijhen bloodied at some point), then at the end of the adventure each PC experiences a vivid dream in which the Voice of Rot floods the town of Agate and leaves the villagers' bodies to feed the beasts of the bayou.

Forced Resurrection.

If anyone in the party died in the ziggurat, the Voice of Rot controls the waters of the marsh to pull their bodies to the surface, then restores them to life as if through the Raise Dead ritual. Until the creature completes three milestones and removes its death penalty, it cannot stomach any food that has not been left to rot for at least three days.

Characters resurrected this way become unwitting agents of the Voice of Rot. Whenever the character is at or below 0 hit points, but not dead, his body will remain limp, but his head will jerk about and his eyes strain to see what's going on. All he sees while in this state, the Voice of Rot knows. When he dies or regains consciousness, a half-rotted snake will slither out of his mouth.

This revolting condition can be dispelled by a Remove Affliction ritual, treating it as a level 8 effect.

Planar Trails

Puzzle. Montage. Level 6.

Energy from Apet smells like a distinct memory you've forgotten.

If the PCs plan to use Detect Planar Energy, they can come to a few useful conclusions.

- **Arcana DC 11.** Tracking the trail in the wilderness is fairly easy, but in a city it'll be harder. Numerous minor energies from magic items and spellcasters will muddle faint trails, but strong bursts of planar energy should be easy to locate. Those might lead to useful trails, but also could produce false leads left by people who just happened to come in contact with the energy.
- **Arcana DC 16.** Some magic exists to block planar energy. Reed Macbannin had purification rituals. Certainly whatever magic originally sealed the portal in the ziggurat could conceal or erase a trail.
- **Arcana DC 23.** Apet is the source of magical energy used in divination and teleportation, so practitioners of such magic might be false leads.

In the most basic sense, the trail leads to Agate, to Bole, then back to Flint, where it branches because several creatures were also exposed to the energy. Along the way, depending on when and where the party uses the ritual, they might find some other information:

- **Ziggurat.** (Perception DC 16) One entity left here over a month ago, trailing a lot of Apet energy. Some time between then and now a group left here, trailing lesser amounts of energy. Several other creatures have left the ziggurat, but they have very faint trails of Apet energy.

  If a PC tries the ritual to detect Bleak Gate energy and succeeds the Perception check, he notices that the second group left traces, suggesting they might be affiliated with Macbannin's allies.
- **Agate.** (Perception DC 11) A boat has a large amount of Apet energy. This was the boat rented to Caius's second group. As above, the party might detect Bleak Gate energy here.
- **Bole.** (Streetwise DC 23) The PCs might get a lead at the train yard about one railcar that was used by a secretive group of people transporting a large wrapped object (the golden seal). The PCs can use the ritual on the trains to find the right car. Then, by speaking with the train and station staff (Diplomacy or Insight DC 11) they can get descriptions of the travelers—a tiefling woman, two unarmed humans, and two dwarves with weapons and armor. See Finona's group (page 255) for details.
- **Flint.** (Diplomacy or Insight DC 23) At King's Station, if the party got a description of the team Caius sent to the ziggurat, they might learn from the staff that the group met up with a tiefling matching Caius's description, then departed in a pair of carriages.

  From the Flint train station, the energy trail is impossible to follow precisely, because it doubles back on itself many times. Clearly the entity has been in town for a while. The best the party can hope to do is perform the ritual in interesting places and hope they detect a strong trail nearby. A few likely spots include:
- **Arms Fair.** Starting near the stage where the PCs first fought Gidim warbeasts, the PCs find two local sources of Apet energy. The first is the stage equipment of Rock Rackus, which were stored under the stage after the performer was arrested. Rackus travels by teleportation regularly on his adventures, and one of the pieces of his stage show—a sacrificial dagger—was stolen from an Ancient ziggurat. The PCs might suspect he's involved with the Ob. If they talk to him, see **Jailhouse Rock** (page 248).

  Additionally, gnomish weaponsmiths Fildi and Dilfi have been modifying their *badger gun*, using a pair of badgers mutated when the Gidim monsters attacked. They've been keeping the critters in a secret cage under their expo booth. This is just a red herring.
- **Pardwight Museum.** None of the relics of the Ancients on display possess any energy from Apet except the *staff of the Ancients*. The staff is overcharged with energy and risks summoning monsters when used, but the other two relics the PCs recovered in Act One were removed from the ziggurat before the seal was opened.
- **Caius's Inn.** This location is detailed in the next encounter.
- **Xambria's Apartment.** The ritual detects strong energies here, but by the time the PCs arrive, Xambria has left the city. If the PCs enter the place, they find signs of a struggle between Xambria and some attacker, but no sign of forced entry. The apartment was locked up, and there's no indication of where Xambria is.
- **Saxby's Manor.** A trail leads from Xambria's apartment to the back fence at the outer wall of Lady Inspectress Saxby's manor, and a similar trail leads away. The guards won't let the party in, but if the party insists (Intimidate DC 16) they learn there was a break-in on the night of the 9th. Saxby, if asked, denies any such thing happened.

  The break-in occurred when Sijhen/Xambria tried to find the Ancient star map. Saxby handled the matter internally, and found nothing missing.
- **Stanfield Canal.** In the unlikely event the party uses the ritual along Stanfield Canal, they can trace Apet energies to a small locked (Thievery DC 23) warehouse rented by Caius Bergeron. A bloody, wheeled cart sits outside, suggesting perhaps a meatlocker inside. Instead, the interior is empty except for a few pallets, and one huge crate that has been opened up and its contents removed. Swaths of blood and scrambling footprints on the ground (Perception DC 15) indicate at least three people were killed, and then one person—either a woman or a slight man—dragged the bodies away.

Martial Science.

As detailed in That's Classified (page 226), if a Martial Scientist PC delivered a corpse of a Gidim warbeast to the Battalion military academy, he receives a packet of useful information when he returns to Flint.

- **The Docks.** If the party got the description of Caius's second team, by inquiring in Bosum Strand they might (Streetwise DC 23, one check every four hours) be able to learn that a tiefling woman, two humans, and two dwarves boarded a ship named *Il Draçon de Mer* (see page 250 for more details).

If the party uses the ritual, they sense Apet energies came through here and headed out to sea. Cross-checking the pier where the energy was strongest with port authority records reveals a small ship named *Dagger* that set out from that pier on the 9th. Some dock workers (Streetwise DC 23) recall seeing a woman matching Xambria's description.

There Goes the Main Suspect

Puzzle. Real-Time. Level 6.

The party finds Caius Bergeron murdered.

Either the party tracks down Bergeron themselves, or they're called to the Silver Swan when the police learn of his death. Caius dies on the 7th of Autumn, but he valued his privacy and asked not to be disturbed, so his body might go undiscovered for several days.

When the PCs investigate the scene of the crime, read or paraphrase the following.

> The room is in startlingly good condition for the scene of a grisly murder. The dead tiefling lies on the bed, blood trailing from his mouth onto the sheets beneath him. His desk is covered with ledgers and loose papers. A large bureau stands in the corner, and a traveling trunk sits next to it.
>
> The only openings other than the door are two glass-paned windows on the wall. They must be very tightly insulated, because the stench of the dead body didn't seep out.

Both the door and windows of the room were locked. Bergeron still has his copy of the room key, as does the innkeeper, who insists that the key was secure at all time. The windows each have a secure latch with a lock, and the frames are lined with a thread of gold to prevent teleportation.

Looking through Bergeron's possession locates several interesting items. A map of the continent of Lanjyr is unrolled on his desk. Somebody (Bergeron) recently drew two stars within circles on the map. The PCs recognize the location of one star as the ziggurat in the swamp that they already visited. The other is in the water off the coast of Ber. Precise coordinates are written onto the map.

Beside the map sits a book containing notes on the Ancients, but nothing they don't already know. The drawers contain all the journals of Xambria's dig crew, which were recovered by Caius's second team. Xambria's own journal is not present.

The wardrobe is unlocked and contains fine cloths, but little of interest. The trunk is locked (Thievery DC 23) and contains a variety of coin, gems, and jewelry, plus ten ritual scrolls of Sending. The chest has a false bottom (Perception DC 23) which is locked in such a way that it only can be opened when exposed to fire (Thievery DC 28, or DC 23 for someone, like a tiefling, who can naturally produce fire), though the hidden compartment below is empty. (It held Bergeron's ciphered notes about his various projects.)

Anybody who examines Bergeron's body automatically notices that this lower jaw has been unhinged. A closer look finds a gaping hole torn through the soft palate, and that his brain has been completely removed. The body exhibits no other signs of injury. Among his clothes, he wears a gold ring on his right pinky. A shallow inscription on the interior can just be made out; it reads, "Old Bergeron Gold." (Perception DC 23)

Characters who search for witnesses find several regulars of the Silver Swan (Streetwise DC 11). The witnesses remember that the night before the murder, Caius had an animated discussion with a woman who matches Xambria's description. They remember her raising her voice to say something about a "star map," and he hushed her, then had his bodyguards escort her out forcibly.

How She Did It.

The truth behind the murder is that during the night Sijhen waited for Xambria to sleep, then detached its thoughtform from her body. It scaled the outer walls of the inn, used psychic power to turn briefly incorporeal, and glided through the wall into Caius's room. Sijhen hit Bergeron with a psychic blast to keep him incapacitated, then devoured his brain. It searched the room and found the map and several interesting notes about Xambria's dig site and the sunken ziggurat off the coast of Ber. It took the notes and Xambria's old journal.

The most information came from Bergeron's mind. In the process of devouring it, Sijhen absorbed many of Bergeron's memories. It learned that Bergeron's society calls itself the Obscurati, and that prominent members wear a ring with markings along the inside that designate their rank and role in the organization. It knows Bergeron's general mission to find out about the seals, but a *geas* placed on Bergeron applied even in his death, hiding the most revelatory information about the Ob's goals.

Sijhen did, however, learn the location of the warehouse where Caius's people brought the Golden Seal of Apet (see Stanfield Canal, above). Shortly thereafter it found the seal, killed the guards, and tried to perform a ritual to return home to Gidim, using the seal as a focus.

When the ritual failed, Sijhen disposed of the guards' bodies in the canal, then loaded the seal onto a wagon and hid it in a sewer tunnel. The nature of the seal meant it was not marked by the energy of Apet, so the PCs cannot use their ritual to track it down.

Follow-Up.

The coordinates on Caius's map bear investigating. If the party doesn't think to look into it themselves, they might simply stumble onto it by following the trail of Apet energy out to sea. You can nudge them in the right direction through Stover Delft, if they seem lost.

Bergeron's Ring

As detailed in the Campaign Guide, prominent members of the Obscurati wear rings with secret codes so other agents can identify them. Caius's gold ring has an inscription "Old Bergeron Gold," identifying him as being tier 4 in Golden Cell.

His underling Finona Duvall's gold ring reads "Original Brave Ideas." Lady Saxby's bronze ring, given to her by Reed Macbannin, reads "Opportunity Begets Glory."

Jailhouse Rock

Social. Real-Time. Level 6.

The party tries to get useful information from a buffoonish performer.

If the party traces Apet energy to Rock Rackus, or otherwise wishes to contact him, he's in jail in Central district. A small crowd of dockers constantly protest outside the jailhouse. As the PCs make their way through the crowd, gathered dockers stop them to give these "government stooges" a piece of their minds. Parties with Prestige 3 for Flint are treated much better, however, and encouraged to get Rock released.

The crowd is full of protesters and rabble-rousers, and a dozen chants and slogans fill the air as people call for justice in Parity Lake, help for the poor in the Nettles, freedom in Bosum Strand, and better pay all around. Just after the party gets into the police station, someone throws a flaming bottle of liquor at the cops, which kicks off a small riot outside.

People in the crowd see Rock as a figurehead of their movement, unjustly arrested, and they expect that when he's released he'll lead them, somehow, somewhere. Due to his quirky personality and rapid rise as a celebrity, everyone knows who he is, but few know about his political positions. The police are close to releasing him on bail just to get rid of the crowds, and the dockers might be in for a rude surprise. Rock Rackus is not a leader of men.

Entitled Prisoner.

Rock has gotten his own personal cell with some decent amenities, and the party probably finds him tapping and humming tunes as he works out possible new songs. Unlike the rest of the prisoners, he's cleanly-dressed and has on plenty of jewelry, with no less than eight monocles to choose from tucked into his pockets.



Rock Rackus has managed to stumble his way to national celebrity. A one-time dock worker, he signed up for a tour on a merchant ship, crashed in the Malice Lands, found treasure on his way back to civilization, and got marginally famous selling his story. He would open for curious audiences before operas and symphonies, and venues loved using his street-born flavor to lure in people who would normally never attend.

Then, a year ago, he made an impromptu cameo in an opera, upstaging the lead actor and skewing the plot to one much more raunchy and violent. The public was fascinated, and he was asked to repeat the performance. For four months he ruined an excellent show and brought in record ticket sales. Before the novelty wore off, he left, saying he was going on a new adventure, and that he would bring back treasure for "his people in the streets."

He returned a month ago, armed with a diamond-encrusted gold pistol and claiming he had traveled to the moon, met the Unseen Court, and cuckolded the fey king. He began performing a bevy of sexually vulgar songs in taverns throughout Bosum Strand, and financed the works of dozens of other dockers with money allegedly stolen from the temple of a god Rock left bleeding from a gunshot wound.

The dockers love his wild new style. Scholars dismiss his tale of interplanetary travel as obvious fabrications, pointing to his most preposterous claims, like his having visited a forest that is on fire and has never burned out. Most in Flint and throughout Risur see him as an idiot at best or a blasphemer at worst. Naturally, the controversy has only made him more popular.

He'll gladly talk, mostly about himself and his own travels, but he constantly interjects how eager he is to get out of here. His tales include:

Meeting Caius Bergeron.

Rock claims that in the Malice Lands he found a burnt-out library full of magic scrolls. He took a few, and when he started selling them back in Flint to get quick cash, he was rounded up and brought to a tiefling, Caius Bergeron. The man offered him better money to get the rest of his scrolls, and to keep quiet, but Rock kept a few that he particularly liked because they had some "real deep philosophy" written in the margins.

These scrolls were plundered from the ruins of Pala, a short-lived nation of enlightened thinkers eventually brought down by the Clergy. The quotes Rack found were written originally by the nation's founder and famed philosopher William Miller (who secretly is the campaign's main villain, under the name Nicodemus the Gnostic). And the scrolls were Linked Portal rituals, aimed at very old teleportation rings near Ancient ruins.

Ziggurat? Yeah, I Did That Once.

Caius hired him to go on a bit of an expedition to some old ruin in Crisillyir, which had been built over centuries ago. Once it had been an Ancient ziggurat of Jiese, the plane of fire. He took some trophies from there, but he didn't like the attitudes of the people he worked with, so he declined to work with them again. They got past a bunch of fire traps, performed some rituals, stole some giant golden plate, and then he came back to Flint.

Going to the Moon.

One night, when he had grown bored with his first bout of celebrity, Rock decided to go adventuring again. He cracked out one of the scrolls he'd kept, performed the ritual, and ended up deep in a forest. Following the sounds of music and women's voices, he stumbled upon a gathering of high fey. They fled, and he chased them through a silver mirror. Suddenly it was daylight, and up in the sky he saw the world.

He claims he was brought before the Unseen Court as a criminal, but he claimed his right of trial by combat, then shot the fey who challenged him. After that it was sort of a blur—lots of sex and debauched parties. Then he woke up back in the woods, and found his gun was turned to gold and covered with diamonds.

I've Got Places to Be.

Rock has gotten very good at teleportation magic, but it's not cheap, and he has expensive taste in destinations. He's been all over the continent sampling fine fresh cuisine, sleeping with women, and picking up new fashions. Now he needs more cash, and he's got an offer for the party.

If the PCs can get the charges against him dropped, he'll owe them one free round trip by teleportation using Linked Portal, and he'll let them come along with him on a fund-raising expedition, using the last scroll he has from the Malice Lands ruin. He hired a skyseer once to do some divinations, and though the guy said he saw no future in the scroll, Rack doesn't trust old charlatans like skyseers. He thinks there'll be a ton of great treasure there, and he'll give the party one-fourth of whatever they find. Unfortunately, Rock has misplaced the scroll, but when he finds it, he'll let the party know right away.

This scroll leads to the ziggurat of Avilona, which plays a critical role in Adventure Twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*. The PCs' mission will take them there with or without Rock, but mentioning it now will make its impact later more meaningful.

Civic Duty.

Rock believes in a vague sort of way that people think he's important, but right now he's just looking out for himself. When he's released from jail he intends to milk his celebrity for all it's worth: bed some women, land some new performance gigs, and make some extra cash. He might even write a song about his adventures killing monsters with a group of RHC constables. For a while, people will rally behind him, and he'll be talked about in the papers and on the streets, and when he turns out to be just another self-absorbed, self-centered jerk, the docker movement will be discredited.

The PCs should have no trouble discerning that Rock isn't worthy of the dockers' respect, at least not as is. They might be able to convince him to lay low, or convince some other leaders in the docker movement to lower people's expectations, to mitigate the fall-out. But if they make an effort to steer him another direction, he might become a force for positive change.

Give the party a chance to talk politics and philosophy with Rock Rackus. He'll interrupt a lot, and mostly wonder how it will help his reputation, but the party might be able to inspire him (or just trick him into saying what they want him to say). Rock might decide that he could actually help the people who are in the same position he used to be in. If he shows up at the Gala of the Ancients, you've got a fine opportunity for him to get in trouble and need rescuing by the party, to help provoke a change of heart.

If the party succeeds in helping the docker movement, they'll increase their Prestige with Flint at the end of this adventure. If they do nothing, though, Flint will have no strong defenders against some of the great dangers in later adventures.

Journey to the Sunken Seal

Exploration/Social. Montage. Level 6.

Race by sea before another portal unleashes monsters into the world.

Most of the ships the PCs can requisition are fast enough to reach the northeastern coast of Ber, where the sunken seal lies, in seven days. If the party calls in a Level 5 Favor from Risur, they can instead enlist the R.N.S. *Impossible*, the RHC's fastest ship, and its able commander **Captain Rutger Smith** (see page 258). The *Impossible* can make the journey in three days, but getting clearance to use the ship might take longer than the time saved sailing.

The *Impossible* does, however, have a larger crew, handy as back-up. If the party doesn't try requesting the larger ship, Stover Delft might recommend they bring along back-up. He suggests they request four soldiers to sail with them for a week, a Level 5 Favor. If they're in a rush, they might get a single soldier as a Level 4 Favor.

The party might have discovered that Caius's team set out on a ship full of mercenaries. Without at least some help, the party risks getting over their heads.

See the Player's Guide for quick-play naval combat rules, stats for ships, and stats for potential allies.

Yerasol Experience.

If any PC is a Yerasol Veteran, before the PCs set out, refer to the scene A Possible Promotion in Appendix B, which might result in the party's ship being better equipped for their journey.

Situation.

The sunken seal lies a half mile off the coast of a small fishing village, Pezarillo, a couple hundred miles northwest of Ber's capital city Seobriga. The waters between Flint and there are fairly well patrolled, so once the PCs set off, the journey is uneventful. When they near the site, however, they see three boats have already beaten them to the location.

Two of the ships stay close to each other. A small unarmed vessel, *La Inspiración*, flies a Ber flag. Near it floats a tiny cutter named *Dagger*, flying under the flag of Risur. This is the ship Xambria chartered.

Third is a tall and impressive schooner, *Il Draçon de Mer*, flying a Crisillyir mercenary flag and clearly armed with a gunnery deck of a dozen cannons. As the PCs' ship draws near, *Il Draçon de Mer* signals with flags for them to keep their distance or they will be fired upon. If the party moves to an adjacent stage (within 1,000 ft.), *Il Draçon de Mer* fires warning shots. Any closer, and they attack.

If the PCs decide to simply wait, Caius's specialists feel a bit of pressure from the presence of a new ship. Their Sending rituals to Caius are failing and they don't know why, and they don't know who else to contact. (That's one drawback of a compartmentalized secret society.) They speed up their careful preparations, and finish their business one day later, removing the golden seal with no catastrophe.

They leave wards in place to hold at bay the creatures trapped in the void between the lesser seal and the Axis Seal. *Il Draçon de Mer* hoists the golden seal aboard, and they try to warily depart. At that point, Xambria will implore the PCs to act. It's likely, however, the party will intercede well before then.

La Inspiración.

La Inspiración is a relatively small Beran sailing vessel, with a total crew of six sailors and three passengers, captained by an orc veteran of the Beran navy named **Diego Dolorosa**, who is none too happy about *Il Draçon de Mer*.

If Diego is angry, his passenger, a goblin archaeologist named **Paco de Los Loros**, is livid. Paco was hired by Caius Bergeron early in the summer, after Xambria's expedition found her ziggurat's map room. Caius provided funding and promised Paco would be famous as the first Beran archaeologist to unearth Ancient ruins, connecting the old culture with Ber's modern aspirations.

Shortly after Caius's second team of specialists returned from the ziggurat of Apet, Paco discovered a golden disk that radiated powerful magic. Bergeron demanded Paco cease his activities, then dispatched his specialists here to prevent a repeat of Xambria's disaster. The specialists arrived in *Il Draçon de Mer* on the 7th of Autumn. They ordered Paco and his team to keep their distance by threat of force. Every day since, a group of five has dropped below the waters and not returned for several hours.

Paco initially believes the PCs are also foreign agents, but if befriended he shares his story and becomes willing to help out. Though intelligent and educated, Paco's goblin upbringing leads him to suggest various gruesome punishments for Bergeron's team of specialists.

Paco's Excavation.

The ziggurat slid into the sea ages ago, and most of its structure collapsed, probably due to an earthquake. Unlike Xambria, Paco could not simply outwit traps and kill monsters, he had to dig out tons of rubble. He was aided in this by a winch and crane on *La Inspiración*, but most of the work entailed long hours underwater.

Rather than rely on traditional Water Breathing rituals, which do nothing to keep at bay aquatic predators, Paco used expensive *diving bell lanterns*, custom created with Bergeron's coin. These crystal lanterns, mounted on iron poles about the size of a hatrack, hold water at bay in an Area Burst 2. If the lantern is moved, the area of air moves with it. The enchantment produces fresh, breathable air out of the surrounding water.

The lanterns can last indefinitely, but each must be custom made for a particular depth and water temperature, and if they're moved far from their designated location, their enchantment breaks. (In effect, the PCs might reverse engineer them, but they cannot be looted.)

Paco originally had a larger team, but all of them are staying at the nearby village of Pezarillo, waiting in case they're needed. They spent several months determining the contours of the ziggurat, divining for possible danger, and eventually digging out the central chamber that houses the golden seal. He has no idea what the specialists are up to now.

Dr. Meredith, I Presume?

Xambria's ship, *Dagger*, arrives at the sunken seal on the 15th of Autumn, so she likely is present by the time the PCs arrive. She has convinced the captain of her ship, a drunken lout named **Jack Glassmaker**, to stay within sight of *Il Draçon de Mer*, only taking occasional trips inland to resupply. She's paying well enough for him and his crew of three to sit and wait, but they have no desire to risk their lives for a crazy university professor.

Xambria is happy to speak to the party. She learned from Caius that another seal had been discovered, and she tried to convince the tiefling not to open it. Shortly afterward, she claims she was attacked by something horrible that she fled from in a panic. She only recalls tendrils and eyes, but everything else is a blur. When she came to her senses, she had run to the docks. Wanting to avoid the creature pursuing her and to stop another seal from being opened, she chartered the *Dagger*. She was not prepared for ship combat, and is in holding pattern, trying to decide how best to proceed.

Xambria is capable of casting rituals, and brought along the ritual texts for Water Walk and Water Breathing, but she would need the PCs to supply components, since she only brought enough for herself. She tried sneaking underwater once already, but luckily before she got too close she spotted the bodyguard for Caius's team: a druid with loyal sharks and octopi.

Xambria also has a secret ritual book that contains Linked Portal and the gate key to reach a portal in Flint near a military garrison in the bayou west of Pine Island. Sijhen is nervous someone like the PCs might figure out it is possessing Xambria, but as long as it can get ten minutes of solitude it can escape in a hurry.

Simple Assault

If you don't want to slow the game down to teach your players the naval combat rules, you can simply resolve that the PCs take fire as they approach *Il Draçon de Mer*. If the PCs are in a steam cutter or excise cutter, their ship is hulled at Short range. It begins to list and flood, and risks sinking as the mercenaries attempt to board.

If the PCs are aboard a larger ship, they suffer some rigging damage and enough Hull Integrity damage for the ship to start listing, which prevents the party from retreating once combat begins.

Sijhen's Goal.

The Gidim wayfarer followed Caius's specialists here in hopes of acquiring a clearer understanding of how the golden seals work. Sijhen was originally helping head the Gidim invasion of this world, so it already knows how to open a portal to another plane, but its several attempts to do so in Flint all failed.

After consuming Caius Bergeron's brain, Sijhen theorized it needed an Ancient star map to compare stellar positions between then and now. Sijhen thinks the PC's boss, Lady Saxby, has such a map, but it is wary of attacking the RHC headquarters. Looking for additional information, it wants to acquire whatever information Caius's specialists have, whether in the form of documents or brain tissue.

Uncomfortable Questions.

If the PCs question Xambria about her activity in Flint while they were away, she claims Caius dragged her to his inn, and asked questions about a "star map" he said she found at the ziggurat. He said it had been sent to "Macbannin," then went missing. She did not remember ever finding such a thing, and wonders if the PCs know anything about it.

This is a lie by Sijhen, in hopes the PCs will look for a star map, perhaps taking it from Saxby. It learned from Caius's mind that Saxby was an ally of the Ob. On the night of the 9th it broke into Saxby's home, but Saxby has the star map locked in a safe in her office at the RHC headquarters.

Afterward, Xambria remembers being accosted by some strange creature, and fleeing her apartment in a panic. In truth what happened was that Sijhen detached its thoughtform from Xambria's body so it could kill Caius, and when it returned and tried to merge back with Xambria, she had a moment of clarity and fought back. Sijhen is mostly in control now, though.

Should the party ask about anything Sijhen wants to keep secret, such as the theft of the golden seal or Caius's death, Xambria's memories of those events have been hidden away.

The party might try detecting planar energy of Apet on Xambria, which turns up a strong hit. She explains away the energy, showing off the *golden icon of Apet* she has had with her since leaving the ziggurat.

Despite the early Autumn heat, the good doctor does not expose any more skin than necessary. She has her own private quarters, and though Captain Jack has hit on her, the crew respects her privacy.

Il Draçon de Mer

Action. Real-Time. Level 6.

This Crisillyiri mercenary vessel protects the Obscurati specialists.

Captained by **Bernardo Molinelli**, *Il Draçon de Mer* is prepared for a fight. Only professional courtesy from Caius's specialists are deterring the mercenary crew from attacking the archaeologists sharing its waters. When the PCs arrive, the ship starts to prowl wary circles. Any approach by the party provokes a flurry of activity as *Il Draçon de Mer* arms for battle. If they are spotted going overboard, the Crisillyiri mercenaries do their best to ensure the party has no ship to return to.

Three main routes present themselves: rush *Il Draçon de Mer* at top speed, sneak up aquatically, or misdirect the mercenaries and attack while they're distracted.

Il Draçon de Mer has a crew of 30, dramatically outnumbering the PCs, but with the right plan they have a chance to succeed.



Into the Mouth of the Dragon.

As detailed in the Player's Guide, start the encounter with the ships in adjacent stages. The PCs must maneuver closer each naval round, taking fire from *Il Draçon de Mer*. There are several crew roles the party can fill, allowing them to help close the distance, avoid damage, and possibly attack back once close enough.

If the party's ship is sunk or crippled before then, *Il Draçon de Mer* closes in to kill and plunder. This still leads to tactical combat, but with the party at a major disadvantage. Most likely the party reaches Short range with some amount of damage, then boards the enemy vessel.

Naval Terrain.

Three Stages (i.e., naval locations) are likely to matter in this scene.

- **Open Water.** *Il Draçon de Mer* stays tries to stay in the deeper, open water north of the dig. There are no hazards here.
- **Above the Seal.** The sea directly above the dig site has turbulent water due to the energies of the ziggurat of Mavisha. This counts as a Chop hazard (DC 15).
- **Tropical Rocks.** South of the dig and closer to shore, jagged shards of stone dotted with foliage and palm trees stick out of the water. This counts as a Crash hazard (DC 20).

  During tactical combat, place five or six 2-square rocks that block ship movement and provide stepping stones for characters.

Enlisting Allies.

The *Dagger*'s captain is horrified of the thought of battle, but might be convinced if he's told he's just a diversion and in no real danger (Bluff DC 23). Paco and Diego are easier to recruit (Diplomacy DC 15), as long as Paco's assured he'll get access to the dig once the party is done here.

By coordinating with allies, the PCs can confuse the Crisillyiri mercenaries. One PC can spend his naval round directing the other ships: once per turn he can make a Bluff check and let the captain use it in place of a Command check during a Location or Bearing phase. The PC gains a +5 bonus to this Bluff check if both ships are allied with the party.

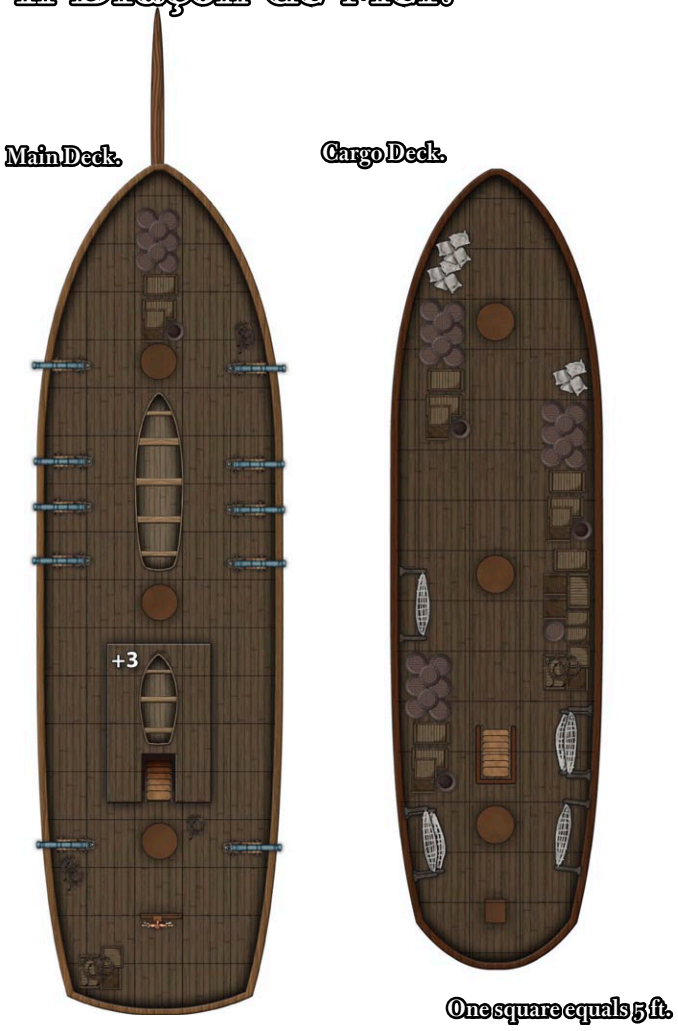
If the party's ship is crippled or sunk, however, *Il Draçon de Mer* will pursue the other ships and bombard them with cannons for a few minutes before returning to finish off the party.

Amphibious Alternative.

The party might try using Water Breathing rituals to swim up and catch their foes by surprise. If the party decides to set out from beyond Long range, they must each succeed a Stealth check (DC 11) or else look-outs on *Il Draçon de Mer* see them go overboard, which provokes a naval attack and makes it much harder for the party catch up with a moving ship.

If undetected, they then must succeed an Athletics check (DC 23) or else lose two healing surges from the swim, either passing through the turbulent waters over the seal or swimming a much longer route around.

Il Draçon de Mer.



If they depart at Long range, the Stealth check is harder (DC 16), but the Athletics check easier (DC 16). Getting any closer provokes an armed response by the mercenaries.

When the PCs near the ship, each must make a Stealth check (DC 16) or else be spotted by look-outs when they're 30 ft. away. At night, evading the look-outs is easier (Stealth DC 11), but the druid Kranto sends one of his sharks to circle the ship and deter any tricks (Stealth DC 22).

Look Over There.

By enlisting allies, the party might create a distraction. They could try sailing away, then returning under cover of dark. Meanwhile, an ally might rig lights along its deck to give the impression of being a different ship, drawing attention.

Boarding Action

Action. Tactical. Level 10.

The decks will soon be awash with blood.

This is a daunting encounter for the party, but if they have surprise or allied Risur soldiers on their side, they can triumph. Simply charging in without a plan will likely get them captured and ransomed back to Risur several months later.

Because of the sheer number of enemy crew, the bulk of the mercenaries are a type of variant minion that functions more like terrain than a creature. Do not use miniatures for these crewmen. Instead, mark each with a flat counter (such as a coin) that won't get in the way of other miniatures. If the PCs have the *Impossible*'s crew on their side, use different types of counters for each side.

List of Adversaries.

- Captain Bernard Molinelli
- 2 mercenary crossbowmen
- 31 mercenary sailors

Tactics.

Captain Molinelli of *Il Draçon de Mer* plans to ransom the party back to Risur. He tries to close the distance, then has his crew stay the sails and drop a 20-ft. long hook-tipped ramp across the gap between the two ships. Sailors try to stream across the ramp, while crossbowmen 50 ft. up in the crow's nests try to take out anyone blocking the way, or target PCs making ranged attacks. Occasionally Captain Molinelli will order a contingent of crew to leap across the gap between the ships if there's clear space on the other ship's deck.

Molinelli constantly shouts at the party to surrender before he changes his mind. If he's bloodied, he tries to withdraw, using his men as cover. If he goes down, his crew becomes nervous and might surrender.

Terrain.

On the tactical map, conditions will vary greatly based on the results of naval combat. In particular, if a ship is on fire, place a few zones the size of an Area Burst 1 filled with flames on the ship's deck. Creatures that enter or end their turn in a fire zone take 5 fire damage. Spaces near the fire should be filled with thick and blinding smoke.

Aftermath.

In the quarters of Caius's team, the party finds a map of the dig site below, a ritual book that contains the rituals Comprehend Languages, Linked Portal, Knock, Magic Circle, Open Ancient Seal, and Water Breathing, plus sufficient ritual components for the party to each be able to breathe water and descend to the seal. The ritual book also contains a memo that explains the nature of the seals and the general purpose of the excavation, with critical clues that lead to the next mission (see Memorandum to Finona Duvall in Appendix L).

Perhaps more impressively, the PCs might claim *Il Draçon de Mer* as their own, though they'll have trouble sailing it back unless they enlist extra sailors. The mercenaries might be be convinced to work for a while, but the RHC would want to replace them with loyal crew once the party returns to Flint.

The complications of dealing with prisoners are detailed in **Back to Flint** (page 259).

The party will have to descend to the seal below to deal with Caius's team. Xambria would prefer to stay on the surface. She asks to have a chance to read the documents found on *Il Draçon de Mer*, since they deal with the magic of the Ancients.

***Il Draçon de Mer*, Schooner**	Level 12 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	18,000 gp
Hull Integrity 3	**Command** +9
Defense 15	**Full Crew** 16
Maneuverability 6	**Minimum Crew** 4
Speed 8	**Total Complement** 30
Design	
Length 90 ft. Beam 25 ft. Three masts, 70 ft. high. Two decks.	
Armaments	
A small array of light cannons, five to either broadside, more for deterrence than offense.	
Crew: 15. Attack: +11, broadsides only.	
Total Cost 8,400 gp	
Hull (base level 6, sails, improved speed ×3, Level 10): 5,000 gp	
Armaments (Medium, broadsides, Level 12): 13,000 gp	



Bernard, Mercenary Captain	Level 7 Brute (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 300
HP 96; **Bloodied** 48	**Initiative** +6
AC 19, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18	**Perception** +3
Speed 6	
Standard Actions	
⊘ **Cutlass** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10+5 damage	
✓ **Cut to Ribbons** (weapon) ✦ At-Will	
Effect: Mercenary Captain makes 2 cutlass attacks against the same target. If both hit, Bernard pushes the target 2 squares.	
⊘ **Throwing Knives** (weapon) ✦ At-Will	
No Crisillyiri warrior would use a weapon as ungentlemanly as a pistol. A volley of throwing knives is much more traditional.	
Bernard makes the following attack three times.	
Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature): +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d4 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
Minor Actions	
▸ **Go Where the Money Is**	
The captain digs a handful of gold coins and tosses them at an open space on the deck. The crew nearest where they land hoot and move in after them.	
Effect: Four Mercenary Crewmen whom Bernard can see move their speed.	
Skills: Acrobatics +11, Athletics +12, Intimidate +13	
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 16 (+6) **Wis** 11 (+3)	
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 20 (+9)	
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven	

Mercenary Crossbowman	Level 5 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf	XP 200
HP 48; **Bloodied** 24	**Initiative** +6
AC 17, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16	**Perception** +9
Speed 5	Low-light vision
Traits	
▸ **Stable Footing**	
The mercenary crossbowman reduces any push, pull, or slide effect by 1. If knocked prone, he may immediately attempt a saving throw to avoid falling prone.	
Standard Actions	
⊘ **Cutlass** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8+8 damage	
⊘ **Distraction from on High** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic	
The dwarf balances this crossbow, almost as big as he is, on the frame of the crow's nest. The pain from its barbed bolt rips your attention away from the enemies around you.	
Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creature): +13 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d12+8 damage, and the target grants combat advantage and cannot take immediate or opportunity actions until the end of the mercenary crossbowman's next turn.	
Load: Minor.	
Skills: Acrobatics +11, Athletics +8, Perception +9	
Str 12 (+3) **Dex** 19 (+6) **Wis** 15 (+4)	
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 11 (+2) **Cha** 10 (+2)	
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven	

Mercenary Sailor	Level 5 Minion
Medium natural humanoid	XP 50
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion	**Initiative** n/a
AC 15, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 15	**Perception** +0
Speed 6	

Traits

▶ **Background Dressing**

A mercenary sailor never attacks. It can take a single move action per turn.

Non-minion creatures can move through the mercenary sailor's space. It counts as difficult terrain. A hostile creature that starts its turn in a mercenary sailor's space takes 6 damage. A creature that occupies multiple spaces only takes this damage once.

☼ **Cutlasses Swinging** ✦ Aura 1

They've got a mob mentality and will hack you to pieces if you get too close.

Any enemy that starts its turn within the aura takes 3 damage.

Triggered Actions

▶ **Crush of Bodies**

Trigger: A mercenary sailor starts its turn adjacent to a hostile minion.

Effect (No Action): Each creature deals 1 damage to the other.

Str	10 (+2)	**Dex**	10 (+2)	**Wis**	10 (+2)
Con	10 (+2)	**Int**	10 (+2)	**Cha**	10 (+2)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common



The Wreck and the Ruin

Action. Tactical. Level 7.

The specialists defend their excavation.

From the turbulent water above the seal, the PCs can look down and see an eerie light glowing on the rocky seabed, fifty feet below.

A tiefling summoner, **Finona Duvall**, leads the specialists at the dig site. She bribed a mercenary druid, the half-orc **Kranto**, with a promise to defend his territory if he helps them avoid being attacked while excavating the golden seal. For the PCs to reach the dig site they'll have to avoid the patrols of Kranto's animal companions.

List of Adversaries.

- 2 specialist warlocks
- Kranto, half-orc druid
- 2 sharks
- 2 octopi
- 2 specialist bodyguards
- Finona Duvall, tiefling summoner

Patrol.

Kranto swims a slow ring around the dig site, taking occasional breaks in an overturned shipwreck. At night he normally ascends to *Il Draçon de Mer*, bringing one shark to watch the ship and leaving the other shark and two octopi by the dig site.

If the sea creatures notice any intruders, they rush to alert Kranto, who then hurries to warn the specialists. Finona has no idea who the PCs are or what their agenda is, but no one is supposed to be coming down here unless *Il Draçon de Mer* asks first. Finona's clever and will respond to entreaties to talk, but she's worried of a trick and ready for a fight.

As the PCs approach they can each make a Stealth check. If they fail, the specialists have at least a minute to prepare and take cover. If they all beat DC 16 they get close enough that the specialists only have 5 rounds to prepare. If they all beat DC 23 they can arrive without being spotted. There is not much terrain to hide behind during the approach, but clever ideas, such as using a ship's shadow to conceal their movement, could grant bonuses.

Consequences of Inaction.

If the party takes out *Il Draçon de Mer* and then simply waits for the specialists to come up, they're in for a surprise. After realizing their allies on the surface are defeated, Finona concocts a ritual to tap the power of Mavisha. An hour later the water for miles around becomes rough, and it only grows in danger as time goes on. Before the party can get a chance to take an extended rest, strong currents threaten to beach their ships or capsize them.

If left alone for six hours, Finona manages to create a safe channel of easy water, and she and her team are able to reach land. Thanks to *sending* scrolls, within a few days they'll rendezvous with a trio of Crisillyiri mercenary ships to come back and try again to claim the seal.

Tactics.

Kranto tries to wait for the PCs to approach, hiding with his sharks within the wreckage of the ship, while the octopi hide on the other side of the dig, relying on their camouflage to hide them. The PCs might spot Kranto if they look inside the wreck (Perception DC 16), and they might see the octopi if they pass within 5 squares (Perception DC 23).

Kranto and his creatures try to strike as soon as the PCs pass by, in hopes that they'll be able to pincer them and drive them to Finona's team. He uses his *icy grasp* and *command currents* powers to keep foes away. He commands the octopi to focus on melee fighters and orders the sharks to attack softer looking targets particularly spellcasters. If the druid is slain, the animals continue to attack until they are bloodied, at which point they flee.

The bodyguards do their best to pin down melee warriors and keep them away from Finona. The warlocks focus their attacks on injured foes. None of the specialists can breathe water at this time.

Terrain.

Swimming here requires an Athletics check (DC 10) to move at half speed, though the higher up you go, the more severe the current becomes. The ground here is a crumbly mix of stone and shells, so in areas cleared of water by the *diving bell lanterns*, there is no mud. Climbing the loose rock is difficult (Athletics DC 16).

The specialists have set up a tent and winch near the golden seal inside the air shells of the *diving bell lanterns*. The bells' initial locations are marked by "**B**"s on the map, but they can be easily moved: it takes a minor action to pick one up, and each one weighs 10 pounds. Water moves away from the bells without disturbing the surroundings, but creatures might find themselves suddenly transitioning from water to air or vice versa.

The bells also brightly illuminate everything in their radius. During the day, everything else is dimly lit; at night, it is too dark to see.

The golden seal is protected by a glowing warding ring. The specialists are using careful magic to remove the golden plate while keeping the warding magic in place long enough to just bury the portal, but in the thick of combat, disaster might strike. If any creature enters the area within the ring (including any space up to 3 squares above it), the ward is broken, and the seal opens. See Seal of Mavisha, below.

In the southeast corner, a bright blue orb glows as a beacon so the Crisillyiri mercenaries could easily find the site.

Aftermath.

If the PCs disturb the wards around the golden seal (or if a dying shark were to, say, conveniently swim through the edge of a *diving bell lantern's* aura and fall into the ring), the portal opens.

Specialist Warlock (2) Level 7 Minion Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 75

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +8
AC 19, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 20 **Perception** +4
Speed 6

Standard Actions

Touch of Fear (implement, psychic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. Will
Hit: 6 psychic damage, and the target is pushed its speed and then falls prone.

Arcane Bolt ✦ At-Will
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +12 vs. Reflex
Hit: 8 damage.

Str	12 (+4)	**Dex**	16 (+6)	**Wis**	13 (+4)
Con	13 (+4)	**Int**	10 (+3)	**Cha**	19 (+7)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Giant, Primordial

Kranto, Half-Orc Druid Level 6 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, half-orc XP 250

HP 76; **Bloodied** 38 **Initiative** +5
AC 20, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16 **Perception** +8
Speed 6; swim 6 Low-Light Vision

Traits

Aquatic
This druid has enchanted himself with the underwater grace of a shark.
Kranto can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat he gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

Standard Actions

Icy Trident ✦ At-Will, Basic
As the half-orc thrusts his trident, ice crystals form in the water behind it, clouding your vision.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+7 damage.
Effect: Kranto's space and each adjacent square provides concealment until the end of the encounter.

Icy Grasp ✦ At-Will, Basic
The druid clenches his fingers, and a fist of ice closes around you.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +9 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d6+7 cold damage and the target is immobilized until the end of Kranto's next turn.

Minor Actions

Command Currents ✦ At-Will (1/turn)
The half-orc just grins tuskily as you're carried flailing away by the sea.
Attack: Close Burst 10 (1 creature in burst); +9 vs. Fortitude
Hit: Kranto slides the target 5 squares.
Miss: Kranto slides the target 1 square.

Skills: Athletics +11, Nature +13

Str	17 (+6)	**Dex**	15 (+5)	**Wis**	20 (+8)
Con	14 (+5)	**Int**	10 (+3)	**Cha**	11 (+3)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Giant

Shark (2) Level 5 Brute
Large natural beast XP 200

HP 75; **Bloodied** 37 **Initiative** +4
AC 17, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 17 **Perception** +9
Speed 1 (clumsy); swim 8 Low-light vision

Traits

Aquatic
This creature can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

Blood Frenzy
The shark gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and a +4 bonus to damage rolls against bloodied creatures.

Standard Actions

Bite ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+7 damage.

Str	18 (+6)	**Dex**	15 (+4)	**Wis**	14 (+4)
Con	15 (+4)	**Int**	1 (–3)	**Cha**	8 (+1)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —

Octopus (2) Level 5 Soldier
Medium natural beast XP 200

HP 67; **Bloodied** 33 **Initiative** +7
AC 21, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 17 **Perception** +4
Speed 3; swim 7 Darkvision

Traits

▸ **Aquatic**

This creature can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

▸ **Camouflage**

An octopus may attempt to hide even if does not have concealment or cover. If it moves it is no longer hidden.

▸ **Threatening Reach**

An octopus may make opportunity attacks against any creature who provokes them within 2 squares.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Tentacle Grasp** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +10 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+6 damage, and the octopus pulls the target 2 squares and grabs it (Escape DC 15).

✓ **Poisonous Beak** ✦ At-Will

You're blinded by a mass of flesh, but then suddenly a jagged beak reaches out for your face.

Requirement: The octopus must be grabbing the target.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+6 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Triggered Actions

▸ **Ink Cloud** ✦ Encounter

Trigger: The octopus is first bloodied.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): The octopus creates a zone (Close Burst 2) that lasts until the end of the encounter. The octopus then shifts 3 squares. Squares within the zone are heavily obscured. Creatures who enter or start their turn in the zone are blinded until the start of their next turn.

Skills: Stealth +13

Str	18 (+6)	**Dex**	16 (+7)	**Wis**	14 (+4)
Con	19 (+6)	**Int**	3 (–2)	**Cha**	6 (+0)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —

Reminders Concerning Aquatic Combat

Aquatic combat is fairly similar to land combat with a few exceptions. Attacks with the fire keyword take a –2 penalty to hit, as do weapon attacks using weapons that are not spears, guns, or crossbows. Creatures with the aquatic trait get a +2 bonus to attack rolls against creatures in the water who lack this ability. Unless the PCs possess a swim speed, they either need to walk along the sea floor at half speed, or make an Athletics check (DC 10) to swim half their speed.

Finally, aquatic combat allows characters to travel in three dimensions. One simple way to track this is to place a die next to each creature, and use the face up side of the die to track how many squares above the surface the creature swims. Remember that the air bubbles from the *diving bell lanterns* clear water out from ground level, plus 2 squares above.

Specialist Bodyguard (2) Level 8 Minion Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf XP 87

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion
AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 19
Speed 5 **Initiative** +9
Perception +11

Traits

☼ **Stable Guardian** ✦ Aura 1

Allies in the aura gain +2 to their defenses.

The effect of any push, pull, or slide against the bodyguard or any of its allies in the aura is reduced by 1. A creature knocked prone in the aura may immediately attempt a saving throw to avoid falling prone.

Standard Actions

⊘ **War Axe** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC

Hit: 8 damage, or 12 if the target is prone.

Str	20 (+9)	**Dex**	17 (+7)	**Wis**	15 (+6)
Con	18 (+8)	**Int**	10 (+4)	**Cha**	11 (+4)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Giant, Primordial

Finona Duvall, Tiefling Summoner Level 9 Artillery (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, tiefling XP 400

HP 92; **Bloodied** 46 **Initiative** +8
AC 23, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 21 **Perception** +5
Speed 6

Standard Actions

✓ **Flaming Dagger** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The tiefling frowns, and her dagger bursts into flames.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC

Hit: 2d4+5 damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

✲ **Thunder Burst** (thunder) ✦ At-Will

A section of air or sea teleports away, and the sudden vacuum creates a sharp boom.

Attack: Area Burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +12 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d6+6 thunder damage.

Minor Actions

✧ **Forceful Jaunt** (teleportation) ✦ At-Will (1/round)

You're suddenly not where you want to be.

Attack: Close Burst 10 (one creature in burst); +12 vs. Will

Hit: The target is teleported 5 squares to another space of Finona's choice within the burst.

Triggered Actions

✧ **Dislocating Rebuke** (fire, teleportation) ✦ Encounter

She snarls as you strike her, and fire wraps around you. When the inferno clears, you're somewhere else.

Trigger: An enemy within 10 squares of Finona hits her.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): The triggering creature takes 1d6+5 fire damage and is teleported 5 squares to another space of Finona's choice.

Str	10 (+4)	**Dex**	14 (+6)	**Wis**	13 (+5)
Con	12 (+5)	**Int**	20 (+9)	**Cha**	16 (+7)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Giant, Primordial



Seal of Mavisha

Action. Tactical. Level 7.

Neither side wants what's behind the seal getting out.

If the warding circle around the circle is disturbed, read or paraphrase the following.

> The golden seal flashes brightly, then it clatters to the ground. A wave of pain courses through your body as though something were trying to rip you apart from the inside. Where the seal had been, a hole in the rock pours out water and fishlike creatures. Some of the water seems different from the rest, visible because of it's pure of grit and dust. The massive being lashes out with tentacles made of pure water.
>
> A deep thrum of movement sounds from every direction as the whole sea around you comes alive. Rocks tear free from the sea bed and begin to spiral in a huge arc around the dig site, the makings of a titanic and destructive whirlpool.

Power of the Plane of Water.

Each creature within 10 squares of the seal must make an Arcana, Endurance, or Nature check (DC 15) to resist being infused with hydromantic energy. If the creature fails, it loses a healing surge and is dazed (save ends). NPCs take damage equal to half their bloodied value. Minions are killed. If this damage would kill a creature, it dissolves into a puddle of water mixed with blood.



Skyseer Vision of Mavisha.

When a Skyseer sees the golden seal of Mavisha, she instantly knows what plane it is attuned to. If the portal is opened, she has the following vision, which alludes to the events of Adventure Seven, *Schism*.

> "You break the surface of the waves, under a weary night sky. An island made of ghosts and shadows lies ahead of you, but the masses of people framed by the sea are blinded by high walls and dark paintings, and they cannot perceive the shifting tides outside.
>
> "Inside now. Rains streak glass along this hall of portraits. A face looks down at you, canvas and frame and watercolor dyes. And down the center of the face, a schism appears, like a river trying to flow two ways at once. Paint runs and flows free of its borders, leaving one face on the canvas, and another struggling, bereft of form, to find a home or else swirl away and die."

If the creature's check beats DC 23, not only does it resist the energy, but it manages to use the power to its advantage. It can spend a healing surge to heal and it gains an action point.

List of Adversaries.

- 9 fishmen of Mavisha
- Mavisha elemental

Terrain.

The fishmen emerge and, insane after an eternity trapped behind the seal, charge whoever they can see. Because it's made of water, the elemental can't move through the spaces in the aura of the *diving bell lanterns*, but it can lash out with its tentacles, pushing the lanterns away. When it moves them, water instantly fills the vacated space.

Teamwork.

If any of Finona's team are present, they'll panic for a moment, then shout for the PCs to help close the seal.

To close the portal, first the magic must be primed. To do this, creatures must spend a standard action to make Arcana checks (DC 23) within 5 squares of the portal. After succeeding three such checks, the edge of the portal starts to glow with faint gold light. Within 10 rounds, the portal must be shut, or else the checks must be made again.

While the magic is primed, if any sort of gold is put into the space of the portal, it forms a temporary block. Nothing can pass through the portal for one round, and so the elemental cannot attack through.

To completely shut the portal, it simply needs to be covered entirely. This might be done by collapsing part of the rock wall above it, if the party has the capability. Alternately, the original seal could be put back in place, using the winch on the ledge above. A creature would have to stand beside the golden seal and spend a standard action to hook up the winch, and then another creature could spend a standard action to control the winch and move it into place.

Of course, the PCs might just kill the monster first.



The bold and idealistic captain of the R.N.S. *Impossible*, Captain Smith earned his first command five years ago. Now 37, he has never led his ship into battle. That, combined with his fondness for the Malice-era philosophical writings of the monk William Miller, has made him the target of mockery by more established naval officers. Smith seems content to just drill his crew twice as hard, encouraging them with philosophical aphorisms between puffs on a cigar.

Captain Smith only appears in this adventure if the party requisitions the *Impossible* in Act Two.

Fishmen of Mavisha	Level 7 Minion Brute
Medium elemental humanoid	XP 75
HP 1, see *aqueous flesh*	**Initiative** +5
AC 18, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17	**Perception** +4
Speed 6, swim 6	Low-light vision

Traits

▸ **Aquatic**

This creature can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

▸ **Aqueous Flesh**

Any source that deals 13 damage to a fishman of Mavisha kills it. Any source that deals less damage bloodies it, and thereafter any damage kills it. Any amount of fire damage kills a fishman of Mavisha.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Barracuda Eel** ✦ At-Will, Basic

This humanoid-creature's head distends and snaps forward like an eel, with the jagged teeth of a barracuda.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature): +9 vs. AC

Hit: 8 damage.

Str	12 (+4)	**Dex**	14 (+5)	**Wis**	10 (+3)
Con	12 (+4)	**Int**	2 (–1)	**Cha**	7 (+1)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Failure.

If the party leaves without sealing the portal, they're caught in a maelstrom and dashed against rocks until they're dead. The elemental gets free and harasses the shipping lanes for a few months.

Success.

Resealing this portal merely resets the status quo, but it means the next time the PCs have to seal a portal to another world, they'll know what they're doing.

Mavisha Elemental	Level 11 Controller
Huge elemental magical beast (aquatic, water)	XP 600
HP 111; **Bloodied** 55	**Initiative** +8
AC 25, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 22	**Perception** +5
Speed 6, swim 6	

Traits

▸ **Aquatic**

This creature can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

▸ **Body of Water**

Whenever the elemental takes cold damage, it gains vulnerable 5 against the next attack that hits it before the end of its next turn.

Whenever the elemental takes fire damage, the attacker can push it 1 square.

Standard Actions

✓ **Tendril Slam** ✦ At-Will, Basic

My, a lot of monsters in this adventure have tentacles.

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +14 vs. Reflex

Hit: 3d6+9 damage, and the elemental pushes the target 5 squares.

✓ **Drown** ✦ Encounter

The elemental pours itself down your throat and tries to tear free halfway through.

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +14 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 3d6+9 damage, and the target is stunned and takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends both).

Special: When the target creature saves, the elemental recharges this power.

Str	20 (+10)	**Dex**	16 (+8)	**Wis**	11 (+5)
Con	15 (+7)	**Int**	5 (+2)	**Cha**	8 (+4)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages**–

ACT THREE: Xambria's Madness

In this act, the party returns to Flint to stop the villain from opening another deadly portal.

SIJHEN AND THE GIDIM

Sijhen's people, the Gidim, come from a world that was itself sentient. Like a magnetic field that points north on most worlds, on the Gidim homeworld, fields of psychic energy surrounded the physical landscape.

Eventually the world's stray thoughts evolved to be able to manifest physical forms, using psychic energy as a food source. Most of these thoughtforms were anchored to the ground where they could feed on psychic vents. More advanced creatures developed the ability to control their metabolism, so they keep parts of their bodies only semi-corporeal, letting them float and drift to other food spots.

Slowly, predators and herd entities developed, and finally sentient beings appearaed, though they could only maintain their consciousness for as long as they had access to a broad enough diet of thoughts from lesser creatures. These people, the Gidim, worshiped and served the world, calling it their Elder Mother. They traveled between worlds finding new thoughts to consume, both for themselves and for their mother.

Though weak at the time of the Axis Seal's creation, the Gidim today have taken whole planes as slaves. They harvest wild and delicious thoughts, which are fed into titanic tendrils that weave through portals to dozens of worlds, all finally back to their homeworld. They play a notable role during epic tier, once the Axis Seal opens.

OTHER SEALS

If asked, Finona reveals that she has explored four ziggurats—Mavisha in Ber, Apet in Risur, Jiese in Crisillyir, and Nem in the dead magic zone of Danor. None of these play any sort of prominent role elsewhere in the campaign.



Back to Flint

Social. Montage. Level 10.

Sijhen seeks an opportunity to strike and escape.

This scene must be planned carefully. Sijhen wants to get as much information as possible, then escape, but details depend on the PCs' actions.

The party should have figured out that Caius's organization is interested in these seals. Make sure they recover the memorandum to Finona, which reveals that Caius was supposed to attend a meeting in Vendricce in a few months. If nothing else, have Finona reveal that information in interrogation, because it provides the PCs' link to Adventure Four, *Always on Time*.

The party's next course of action likely is returning to Flint to look for more information. They have some issues to deal with first, and shortly after they set out the sudden departure of Xambria will reveal that the escapee from the ziggurat of Apet has been with them all along.

Prisoners.

The party might have prisoners from the dig site, as well as the mercenary sailors. Legally, constables are not supposed to kill prisoners, and even if all their foes died when reduced to 0 hit points, there are still a lot of bodies to dispose of. Feel free to gloss over this if you want, but the party should want to take at least some of the specialists as prisoners.

Not Worth the Hassle.

As for the mercenary sailors, the party has three likely options: to make arrangements to deliver them to mainland Ber, perhaps into the custody of local law enforcement; to let them and their ship go; or to recruit some of them for the journey back. The third option might even be necessary if the party wants to take ownership of *Il Draçon de Mer*.

The Important Prisoners.

Unless they came on the *Impossible*, the PCs likely have no brig on their ship. The party might try keeping the specialists on *Il Draçon de Mer*, but if they've enlisted any mercenaries, it might be too great a risk of them being set free.

Xambria offers a solution. The *Dagger* has a hold that can be easily secured, and she has convinced Captain Jack to keep the prisoners. In exchange, they'll be able to sail back with the PCs, preferring safety in numbers.

In order to transport magic-using prisoners, the official technique is to bind their hands with *mage cuffs* (see the *Zeitgeist* Player's Guide), as well as a gold thread to prevent teleportation. For added security, a locking hood can be added, to blind the prisoner.

Loose Ends.

La Inspiración might help with offloading mercenary prisoners, but Paco is eager to get back to his dig and see what has been damaged. He would prefer if the PCs let him take the golden seal, which he claims is the heritage and property of Ber. After seeing them fight, though, he's not going to press the point.

Interrogation.

Of the operatives at the dig site, only Finona is aware that Caius Bergeron worked for an organization with secret goals. Finona wears a golden ring inscribed with "Original Brave Ideas," marking her as a fifth-tier member of Golden Cell. She is tight-lipped and demands to meet with her employer. If questions, she can recount visiting several other buried seals, including one with Rock Rackus. She thinks Bergeron's superiors want to expand the possibilities of planar magic, but she understands that Bergeron had to keep her in the dark. She will explain, though, that she had explicit orders to make sure nothing got out of this ziggurat. If the party hasn't yet found the memorandum to her from Caius, she'll ask for leniency in exchange for revealing the location of the document.

Sijhen's Departure.

Sijhen wants as much information as possible, and to kill anyone who knows about its presence in this world, but it's wary of the party.

If the party doesn't suspect Xambria at all, Sijhen will wait for the PCs to bring prisoners from the dig site to the surface. Preferably they would be berthed on the *Dagger*. The evening the two ships set back for Flint, Sijhen would kill the crew of the *Dagger* and eat the prisoners' brains. It then creates a planar portal to Mavisha, sends the summoned monsters (see Snatchers in the Night, below) to swim and attack the PCs' ship, then takes five minutes to perform a Linked Portal ritual with a scroll, and teleports to Flint. Before leaving, Sijhen sets fire to all the *Dagger's* lantern oil, which causes the vessel to burn to a husk in under half an hour.

If the PCs keep the prisoners on their own ship, Sijhen uses a bit of clever distraction. Again it kills the *Dagger's* crew, then sends monsters to attack the PCs. Sijhen detaches its thoughtform from Xambria's body, and uses the distraction of the monsters to sneak aboard the PCs' ship, phase through the hull, and nibble on prisoner brains. Meanwhile, Xambria will be driven by a strong psychic compulsion to perform the Linked Portal ritual. With the utmost wariness to avoid combat with the party, Sijhen would glide back to the *Dagger*, re-merge with Xambria, and leave. It would still set fire to the ship to hide the evidence of its presence.

Sijhen still wants a head start on the party, so if it can't feasibly get the prisoners' brains, it will simply teleport away, and hope to finish the job when it attacks the RHC headquarters in Act Three.

If the PCs think that Xambria is acting oddly and lock her up, she can break free during the PCs' descent to the dig site and be gone before they return. Sijhen's ability to exit Xambria's body and remove her bindings means it will be very hard for the party to keep them both captive.

FAILURE STATES.

If the party never recovers information from Finona, they can still get pointed to the meeting in Adventure Four when a well-meaning sea captain who was supposed to ferry him to the Danoran city of Beaumont hears that his client died and reports to the RHC in hopes of helping the investigation.

Snatchers in the Night

Action. Tactical. Level 5.

Monsters from Apet distract the party while Sijhen escapes.

After several experiments with various planar portal rituals, Sijhen has figured out how to summon monsters. It still has trouble connecting to Apet for very long, but the proximity to the seal of Mavisha makes it easier for it to call upon aquatic monsters. They only linger in this world as long as the portal is open and for a few minutes afterward, but that's long enough to cause a distraction.

List of Adversaries.

- 15 slime walkers
- 2 hydra snatchers

Tactics.

The night after the party leaves the seal of Mavisha, their ship is attacked. The snatchers climb onto the ship, grab a victim, and withdraw. The slime walkers clamber onto the deck, three per round, and try to keep PCs from aiding their grabbed companions.

If Sijhen has to sneak aboard the PCs' ship, it waits for a patch of clouds to provide extra darkness to block moon and starlight. It sends the monsters ahead and leaves the *Dagger* the round they attack. It takes two rounds for Sijhen, gliding above the surface of the waves, to get to the PCs' ship and phase through a lower deck. Sijhen will be invisible for the approach, but any character who is on the maindeck might notice its departure (Perception DC 28).

On round three Sijhen mentally stuns the prisoners. It spends rounds four through seven eating the brains of four prisoners, then withdraws and is back on the *Dagger* by round ten. On round fifteen Xambria finishes her Linked Portal ritual, and Sijhen merges with her, sets fire to the ship, and steps through the portal. The portal closes after round seventeen. The monsters from Mavisha vanish after round twenty, and the fire on the *Dagger* becomes visible then.

Terrain.

The *Dagger* is traveling a hundred feet to port of the PCs' ship. The monsters generally stay on the starboard side of the party's ship, and very canny PCs might realize the creatures are trying to keep them from looking in the *Dagger*'s direction.

Aftermath.

The *Dagger* catches fire, but if the PCs hurry over and work to battle the blaze, they can keep the ship from sinking. Alternately, they might rush aboard to look for clues. The small ship's crew are all dead, but Xambria is missing. An examination of the Linked Portal ritual (Arcana DC 15) reveals that the portal headed to Flint.

If Sijhen managed to kill the prisoners, their jaws are all dislocated and their brains missing.

Slime Walker (15)	Level 2 Minion Controller
Medium elemental humanoid (water)	XP 31
HP 1; a miss never damages a minion	**Initiative** +5
AC 16, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13	**Perception** +3
Speed 6, swim 4	Darkvision
Resist 10 acid	

Traits

▸ **Slime Walk**

The surface of the sea turns a soupy green, and then a humanoid figure steps above the surface, its body entirely composed of noxious slime.

Slime walkers can walk on water as if it were solid ground.

Slime walkers can acquire "slime tokens," which cause them to grow slightly and become more dangerous.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Dissolving Touch** (acid) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC

Hit: 3 acid damage, plus 2 additional damage for each slime token it possesses.

Triggered Actions

✧ **Death Burst** (acid) ✦ At-Will

Trigger: The slime walker is reduced to 0 HP.

Effect (No Action): The walker explodes and creates a zone of slime in a Close Burst X, where X is the number of slime tokens it has. If it has none, the zone is its own space. The zone lasts until the end of the encounter or until destroyed.

When another slime walker enters the zone, it can choose to destroy the zone. If it does, the walker gains a slime token.

Any non-slime walker creature that enters the zone must make an Acrobatics check (DC 12) or fall prone. Creatures that end their turn in the zone take 3 acid damage.

Skills: Athletics +7

Str	12 (+2)	**Dex**	19 (+5)	**Wis**	14 (+3)
Con	16 (+4)	**Int**	1 (–4)	**Cha**	7 (–1)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Hydra Snatcher (2)	Level 8 Lurker
Large elemental magical beast (aquatic, water)	XP 350
HP 70; **Bloodied** 35	**Initiative** +10
AC 22, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 20	**Perception** +11
Speed 4, swim 4	Low-Light Vision

Traits

▸ **Aquatic**

This creature can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

▸ **Binding Teeth**

A scaled creature breaks the surface, three serpentine necks reaching upward and snapping their teeth at you. Its clawed fins carry it from the water to the deck.

A hydra snatcher can grab one creature for each of its three heads. It can sustain all grabs with a single minor action.

As a move action, a snatcher can move half its speed and pull with it any creature it has grabbed. This movement does not provoke attacks from the grabbed creature.

▸ **Hack Off the Head**

Why is it that you can't just hack off the heads of non-hydra monsters?

At the start of its turn, if the hydra was bloodied since its last turn, one of its heads is destroyed. At the start of its next turn, it grows another head unless it has taken acid or fire damage since it was bloodied.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Slam** ✦ At-Will, Basic

You move too close, and the hydra smashes you down with one of its meaty fins.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC

Hit: 2d10+7 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

✓ **Bite** ✦ At-Will

Two head distract you while the third lunges in and clamps onto your arm. Its teeth dig in like a thousand needles, and you can feel its guttural growls shake your flesh.

Attack: Melee 3 (one large or smaller creature); +13 vs. AC

Hit: 2d10+7 damage and the target is pulled 3 squares and grabbed (Escape DC 19).

Special: If the hydra has already grabbed the target, it can latch on with an additional head. For each head beyond the first, the Escape DC increases by 2.

Skills: Stealth +11

Str	20 (+9)	**Dex**	14 (+6)	**Wis**	14 (+6)
Con	16 (+7)	**Int**	2 (–1)	**Cha**	17 (+7)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Sijhen's Way Home

Action. Montage.

Sijhen likely beats the party back to Flint by several days. It plans to stay in Xambria's body long enough to open a portal to Gidim, but it has already tried and failed to create such a portal twice before.

By this point Sijhen has the golden seal of Apet stashed in a sewer tunnel off Stanfield Canal, plus either documents or the devoured knowledge of Caius's specialists. Sijhen knows it cannot use the same ritual that worked thousands of years ago, but it has figured out a way to create a tenuous portal to Gidim.

First, it plans to open a portal to Apet. Normally this is impossible, but since Xambria has the *golden icon of Apet*, she can bypass the Ancient's extra seal on the plane. Once this portal is open, energy from Apet will pour through, which Sijhen can gather and harness. Apet provides the magical energy needed to teleport, and a huge influx will power a portal that reaches much farther than is normally possible.

The portal will also release monsters, the mutated descendants of old Gidim warbeasts, which will intuitively serve as Sijhen's reinforcements.

Second, Sijhen will alter the existing portal ritual to point to Gidim. To aim the portal accurately, Sijhen needs the Ancient star map Lady Saxby has in her safe in the RHC headquarters.

Sijhen knows that physical matter cannot travel safely to worlds other than the few local planets, but it hopes that by detaching from Xambria and going through the seal as a thoughtform, it will be able to survive.

An Evil Genius's Plan.

Sijhen still sees itself as a scout and spy. It wants to get as much information as possible, report home, and make sure its presence goes unnoticed. It expects that soon after it returns home, the Gidim will attack this world, and it doesn't want the native races preparing for invasion. Confident in its genius intellect, Sijhen concocts a plan that will take it home and at the same time silence its enemies.

It needs the Ancient star map, but it fears Lady Saxby is taking extra precautions after Sijhen's failed break-in at her home. It wants Lady Saxby to let her guard down. So Sijhen plans to let the PCs capture it.

Plot's Timeline.

The morning of the 31st of Autumn, Sijhen kills workers excavating a subrail tunnel that passes near the underground jail of the RHC headquarters. It sets up the golden seal of Apet there as a focus, scribes various wards, and prepares a planar portal ritual.

That afternoon, using knowledge gleaned from Caius Bergeron, Sijhen sends a message to the Obscurati, warning that Lady Saxby will be meeting with the PCs at 9:30 this evening to reveal the conspiracy's secrets. Caius already had a contingency plan in place if the Saxby talked or the PCs learned too much, so Sijhen knows what to expect. It hopes the Ob agents will distract the PCs, or better yet kill them and cover the evidence of its presence.

Finally that evening the gala of Ancients will open at Pardwight museum at 7 PM. At 8pm Sijhen, in Xambria's body, will attack. After pretending to be interested in retrieving the three relics—amulet, blade, and staff—Sijhen will give Xambria back control so she'll surrender. Sijhen expects to be arrested and brought to the RHC jail, which should take no longer than an hour. The jail is separated from the location of Sijhen's ritual by only 50 feet of stone.

At 9:30 PM, a clock timer will place the final component of the portal ritual. Waves of energy from Apet will flow out and flood the RHC headquarters, causing living creatures to cycle from solid to insubstantial and back.

Monsters will emerge from the portal and attack the RHC headquarters, providing a distraction. By moving in time with the energy waves, Sijhen will be able to escape its cell. It will head for Lady Saxby's office and threaten her so she'll hand over the Ancient star map. Then it will head back down to the basement, through the wall, and into the subrail tunnel. It tries to avoid a fight, letting the monsters and the Obscurati keep the PCs busy.

With just a few minutes of concentration, Sijhen will be able to re-aim the portal to Gidim. It will shuck itself from Xambria's body and fly through the portal.

The Thing From Beyond.

Sijhen lacks the resources to ensure that the PCs will die, but it hopes its monsters will keep them from ruining its plan. If they find the ritual, though, Sijhen has special back-up.

From Sijhen's previous experiments opening portals to Apet, it knows that a massive monster lurks near the site of the old Gidim staging grounds. This is the mutated creature that formed after the soldiers of Gidim went mad from thought-starvation and began to eat each other. The Thing disturbs even Sijhen, so while it knows the creature will be loyal, it will only release the beast if the situation is dire.

What Could Go Wrong.

There's the chance the PCs might not take Xambria to the RHC headquarters after being captured. If Sijhen's plan goes off as it intends, it'll look like an evil genius. If the PCs decide to hold Xambria elsewhere, Sijhen will nudge Xambria to tell the party all she knows, hoping that the revelation about Lady Saxby will convince them to go to the headquarters.

If they simply kill Xambria, Sijhen can survive independently. It will bide its time, hiding in Xambria's body in hopes that the corpse is brought to RHC headquarters. If nobody takes the body there, Sijhen can slip away as an invisible thought-form. In this event, have a courier deliver a cryptic warning that will get the PCs to RHC headquarters just as strange things start to happen.

Back in Flint

Exposition. Montage.

The party tries to find the exile from Apet.

Home in a Hurry.

It takes the party 3 to 7 days to sail back to Flint, but if they're clever and willing to call in favors, they can shave this down. The party should not yet be able to teleport unless they purchased a ritual scroll, but they can sail to Ber's capital, Seobriga, in about a day. There they can find a ritual mage who, for 1,000 gp, will teleport them to the portal ring in the bayou west of Flint. Alternately, the party might use a Sending ritual to contact Stover Delft, who could arrange for a government ritualist to teleport in and pick them up for the lower price of 270 gp.

They might have to abandon their ship in Ber, which they'll be on the hook for. If their ship sank, they'll either have to charter one back, teleport, or spend a month hiking across the Anthras Mountains.

Report In.

When the PCs return to Flint, a messenger finds them at the docks with a request from Stover Delft: come as quickly as possible to Pardwight Museum of Natural History. Delft is there with **curator Hans Weber**; a dozen police officers provide security. Delft asks to hear the PCs' story, then fills them in on strange things he thinks are tied to their investigation.

There have been cases of the Distant Madness condition cropping up, mostly in Parity Lake, and every day they've found another innocent victim missing a brain. Hans Weber reported receiving a strange letter from Xambria, which warns that the relics of the Ancients might be targeted by whatever is behind all of this (see Appendix L).

Since recovering the relics, Weber has kept them at a royal safehold, but he'll display them at the opening gala of the Ancients exhibit. He can't afford to cancel the gala, so he hopes the PCs can provide security.

Also...

Before Delft leaves the party, he tells them that Lady Saxby wants to see them as soon as possible. See Appendix B.

Looking for Xambria.

The gala opens the evening of the 31st of Autumn. If the PCs have time to kill, they might look for Xambria. Sijhen is very wary of being caught, though, so it has gone to great effort to cover its trail. It has performed test portal rituals and killed victims, but never in the same place twice. When going out during the day, it has concealed Xambria's appearance by dressing her as a hooded druidess.

Still, rather than simply frustrating your players by having no leads, you can instead showcase Sijhen's cleverness by having it leave a false trail. The golden seal of Apet keeps the party from locating Sijhen's lair via the Detect Planar Energy ritual, but Sijhen might gather energy from Apet, contain it in an amberglass vessel, and place it on a barge that travels up and down Stanfield Canal and even to Pine Island. To add extra insult, Sijhen even picks a barge operated by a red-haired woman, so after the PCs follow the fake leads, find the amberglass vessel leaking Apet energy, and meet the barge owner, they'll realize that Sijhen was toying with them.

If you really need to keep the PCs busy for a while, maybe Sijhen lets itself be noticed in the turf of Lorcan Kell, so if the PCs go in they'll risk being attacked by hostile gangs. Alternately, you might just move up the opening date of the gala.

Gala of the Ancients

Action. Tactical. Level 10.

Sijhen attack the gala as an excuse to be arrested.

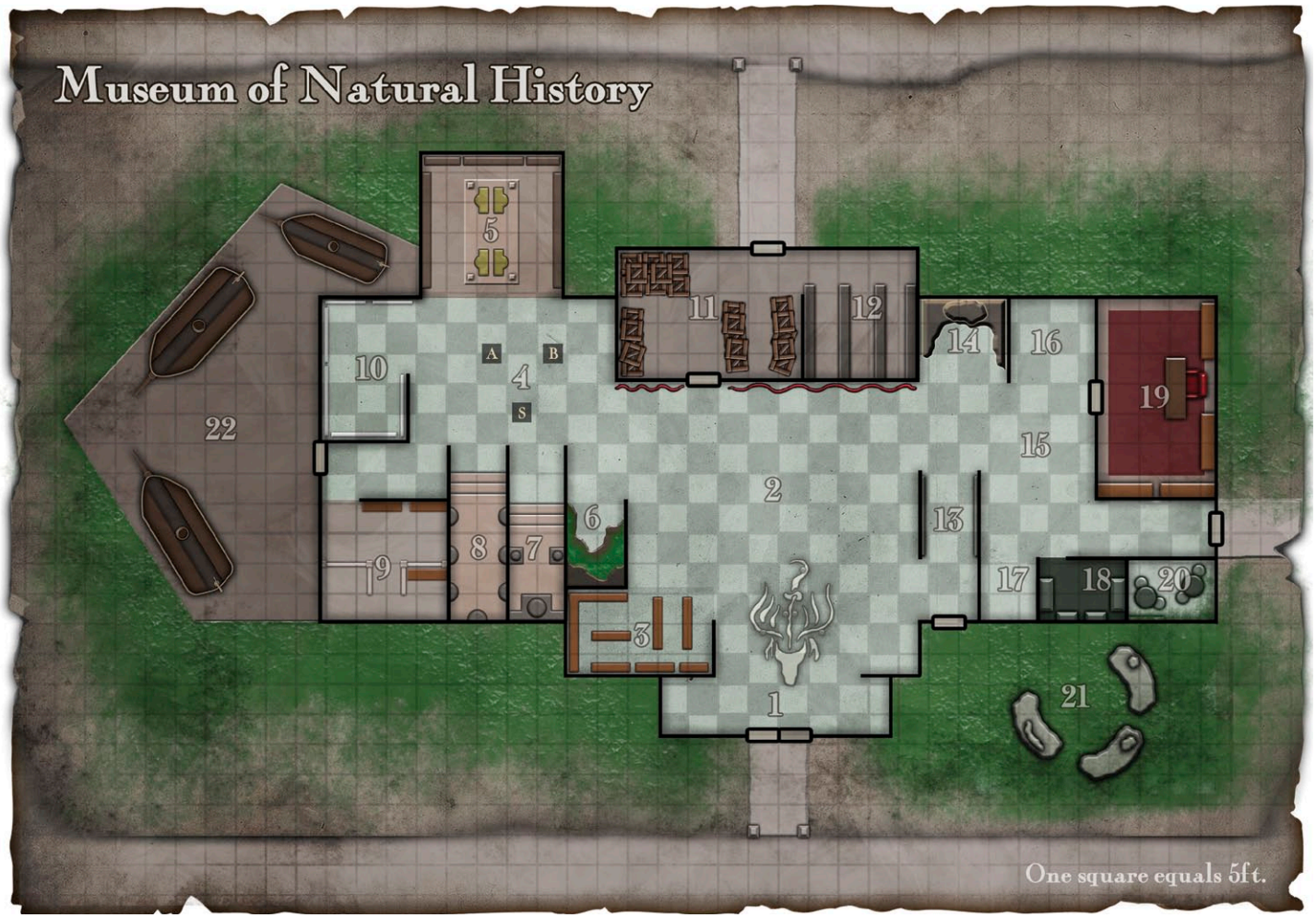
Weber allows the PCs to access the museum gallery at any point before the gala, and asks them to be present when the relics are removed from the royal safehold, an hour before the event starts. Weber does his best to accommodate security related requests, though some requests (such as removing the sword, staff, and amulet) he simply cannot abide.

The museum exhibit includes many Ancient items, the majority from Xambria's dig: gobs of gold jewelry; primitive decorated pottery, weapons, and household tools; two large stone statues; and dozens of statuettes.

The gala begins at 7 PM, though most of the guests do not show up for half an hour. The guests are primarily other academics and generous patrons of the arts. Feel free to include NPCs the PCs have met before, such as Nathan Jierre, Professor Lynn Kindleton, or Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen. Rock Rackus also shows up, much to Weber's chagrin. The assembled archaeologists can't resist critiquing the man's methods, but the more lay guests respond well to Rock's theatrics.

Museum Locations.

1. **Entrance.** Bones of a gargantuan dragon, posed in the entrance, are the pride of the museum.
2. **Plaza.** A common area for mingling. A curtain along the north wall is stitched with "The Ancients—Magic of a Forgotten Golden Age." Behind the curtain is the door to the loading dock.
3. **Gift Shop.** Full of furniture and shelves.
4. **Gala Hall.** Spaces marked A, B, S (for amulet, blade, and staff) are 15-ft. high glass cases displaying the most prominent relics.
5. **Ancients Gallery.** Four gold sarcophagi, and tables with jewelry and stonework.
6. **Cave Men Gallery.** A diorama of wax figures depicting the supposed appearance of typical Ancients, similar to the clothing of the mummies in the ziggurat of Apet, except as humans instead of orcs. (Yes, the museum is a little racist.)
7. **Risur's Founding Gallery.** Another diorama, this is a permanent exhibit of painted stone statues of King Kelland and his two greatest companions, plus other relics.
8. **Hall of Kings.** As above, but depicting famous and obscure kings over the seventeen centuries of Risur's existence.
9. **Offices.** Desks and cubicles mostly used for paperwork.
10. **Map Gallery.** Various maps of Risur and the world, including a framed canvas rubbing of the floor map from the ziggurat of Apet.
11. **Loading Dock.** Various materials needed for the museum.
12. **Archives.** Shelves of history books and scholarly papers.
13. **Gem Gallery.** Permanent exhibit of geodes, cut gems, and jewelry.
14. **Dragon Gallery.** A popular permanent exhibit, with a wall painting of the dragon tyrants of Ber, with a diorama of battling dragons in front.
15. **Beast Theater.** Illusions here show various monsters. Candles burn along the wall, and subtle incenses in the wax provide the magical energy to keep the illusions active.



16. **Titan Gallery.** A centuries-old fresco depicts (inaccurately) the fey titans She Who Writhes, Father of Thunder, Ash Wolf, Granny Allswell, and the Voice of Rot.
17. **God Gallery.** Recovered frescoes from Crisillyir and Danor showcase popular foreign gods.
18. **Demon Gallery.** A lightless room with paintings and a diorama related to the now-defunct demonocracy. Guests have to bring their own light sources.
19. **Curator's Office.** Fancy couch, carpet, desk.
20. **Employee Lounge.**
21. **Ancient Druidic Shrine.** Recovered hengestones believed related to proto-primalist religion.
22. **Ancient Ships.** Three reconstructions of Ancient sailboats, based on ceramic paintings.

Each large room—Areas 2, 4, and 15—has large skylights. Elegant oil lanterns along the walls provide light during the nighttime gala.

The Attack.

Sijhen attacks promptly at 8 PM, right as a nearby belltower chimes the hour.

The skylight above the Ancient gala hall shatters, and a woman in black leather descends on a silk rope amid the crashing glass. She flicks her head to adjust a braid of red hair, revealing Xambria's face. But something in her eyes is different—cold, calculating, alien.

She carries Xambria's old miner's pick, but does not wear the golden icon necklace you've seen her with every time before.

A security guard takes a step toward her, but she pulls back her miner's pick as a threat, and the man pauses. A hush falls over the crowd.

"You know," Xambria says as she glances at a diorama depicting Ancient dress, "they really didn't look like that. You all clearly don't know what you're dealing with, so just give me what I want and none of you have to die."

If not stopped, Sijhen will use *far hand* to retrieve the relics from their cases. Then, with an apologetic smile, she attacks the nearest PC. Simultaneously a swarm of eight Gidim implanters clamber in through the skylight and attack the bystanders, and then a worm maw flies in after them. The swarm also enters as soon as anyone attacks Sijhen.

The remaining four implanters move to block the outside exits, two at the front, one at each side. The loading dock exit is safe, but if anyone opens another door they'll be blocked by monsters.

Bystanders.

Scatter the museum with thirty random bystanders, plus curator Hans Weber. They count as difficult terrain, and flee toward the nearest exits, where they get clumped up and fight to escape first. If a monster attacks a bystander, don't bother rolling; just remove the bystanders targeted by the attack. They're either dead or unconscious.

Rock Rackus, if present, comes to the PCs' aid.

Rock Rackus	Level 6 Ally
HP 55; **Bloodied** 27	**Initiative Count** 5
AC 19, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 16	
Speed 6	
Standard Actions	
⊘ **Rapier** ✦ At-Will, Basic	
Effect: Melee 1 (one creature); 6 damage.	
⊘ **Diamond-Encrusted Piece** ✦ At-Will, Basic	
Effect: Ranged 10 (one creature); 6 damage, and the target is marked until the end of Rock's next turn.	
Load: After each shot, Rock has to use a standard action to reload.	

List of Adversaries.

- Sijhen
- 12 implanters
- 1 worm maw

Tactics.

Sijhen fights until bloodied, at which point it relinquishes control of its host body. A sudden look of astonishment and fear comes over Xambria, and she immediately surrenders to the PCs. The monsters attack indiscriminately, except they won't harm Sijhen or Xambria.

If Sijhen gets hold of the *amulet of the Ancients*, it gains resist 2 against acid, cold, fire, lightning, and thunder.

Aftermath.

When Xambria surrenders, she believes she is free of Sijhen's control.

Xambria drops her weapon, falls to her knees, and screams. She yanks and tears off one of her leather sleeves, revealing three human eyes poking out of her skin. All these eyes twitch and look in every direction, then stare straight back at Xambria. She reels in horror for a moment, then shakes her head.

"That is bloody strange."

She looks away from her mutated limb at the madness in the gala, as if seeing it for the first time. Then she looks to you and leans forward, desperate.

"Don't—don't kill me! I'm fighting it back. I can stop it. But cuff me, just in case. Lock me up—lock me up somewhere it can't escape. I know things it knew, and that you need to know!"

Of course, a battle might still be raging, and if the PCs need help, Xambria might lend brief aid. She nervously stays away from the PCs, though, worried she'll hurt one of them. If pressed, she can start sharing information detailed in Interrogation, below.

When combat ends, though, Xambria grows nauseous and goes into shock. Even if the PCs tend to her, it takes a while for her to have the will to delve into Sijhen's mind to look for more answers. She says she's afraid to go poking around until she's locked up somewhere safe, just in case the thing in her head gets free.

Stats for monsters that have already appeared in the adventure are collected in Appendix G, Enemy Stats.

Sijhen Level 10 Elite Controller
Medium aberrant humanoid, human XP 1,000

HP 103; **Bloodied** 51 **Initiative** +12
AC 24, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 22 **Perception** +11
Speed 7 Blindsight 10
Saving Throw +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

▸ **Dual Minds**
Though it wears Xambria's body, another mind controls her actions.
Sijhen gets an extra standard action on its turn. It cannot perform the same standard action more than once in a given round unless it spends an action point. If Sijhen would lose actions (such as by being dazed or stunned), add this bonus standard action after applying the effects of that condition.

Standard Actions

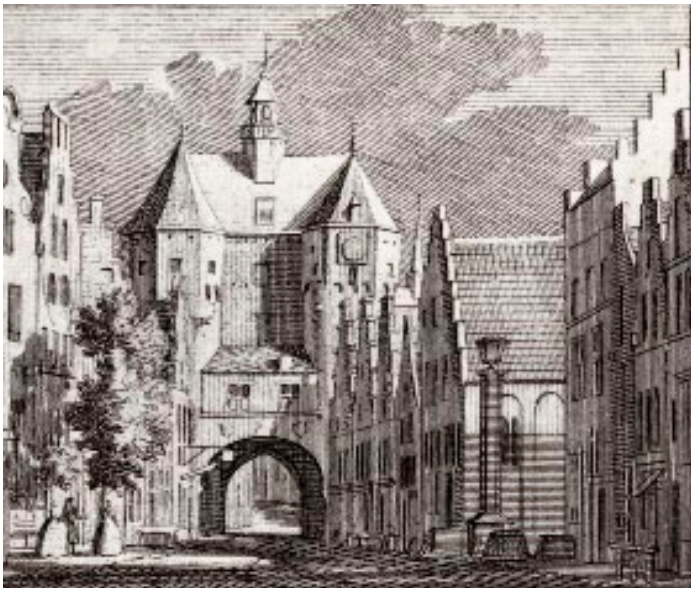
⊘ **Threatening Pick** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
She toys with you, faking you out with feints, then slams her pick hard into your side.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+11 damage, and the next creature to attack the target before Sijhen's next turn gains a +2 bonus to its attack roll.

✓ **Force Shove** (force) ✦ At-Will
There's no indication she did anything, but suddenly you feel the world twist and throw you across the room, so you're pretty sure she's responsible.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +13 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d10+9 force damage, and Sijhen slides the target target 4 squares. The target is immobilized until the end of Sijhen's next turn.
Special: If Sijhen targets a creature adjacent to it, this power does not provoke opportunity attacks.

▸ **Invisibility** ✦ Encounter
She vanishes.
Effect: Sijhen becomes invisible until the end of its next turn, or until it hits or misses a creature. Sustain Standard.

Move Actions

▸ **Twinmind Wayfarer** ✦ Recharge ⚄⚅
She seems to split into two and move in opposite directions.
Effect: Sijhen takes two simultaneous move actions, moving its speed from the same original spot but ending in different locations. When Sijhen is attacked it can choose as a free action to only be in one of those locations; the other copy vanishes. Sijhen must choose to end this effect at the start of its next turn. Until that time, Sijhen can make attacks and be targeted as if in either location.



Minor Actions

✓ **Ego Whip** (psychic) ✦ At-Will (1/round)
The threat of pain appears in the most primitive part of your mind, warning you not to harm her, or else you will suffer.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +13 vs. Will
Hit: 3d4+3 psychic damage, and if the target attacks Sijhen during its next turn, it becomes stunned until the end of its next turn.

✓ **Far Hand** ✦ At-Will (1/round)
Effect: Sijhen slides one unattended object within 20 squares 10 squares. If moved adjacent, Sijhen can bring object when it moves. It can psychically "carry" up to three items at a time using this power.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Shed the Flesh** ✦ Encounter
Trigger: Sijhen starts its turn at or below 0 hit points.
Effect (No Action): Sijhen may choose to leave Xambria's body, or can wait to take this action on a later turn. If it does, Sijhen's natural thoughtform body manifests adjacent to Xambria's body. It may use its *invisibility* power as part of this action so it won't be seen.

Skills: Acrobatics +15, Arcana +14, Athletics +10, History +15, Thievery +15
Str 10 (+5) **Dex** 21 (+10) **Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 15 (+7) **Int** 19 (+9) **Cha** 18 (+9)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Giant, Primordial

Sijhen's Bonus Powers

When Sijhen leaves Xambria's body, it loses the *dual minds* trait, the *threatening pick* attack, and *shed the flesh*. It heals to full hit points, and all conditions affecting it end. It gains an action point and acquires the following traits and powers.

Traits

▸ **Thoughtform**
See Thoughtform, page 225.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Grasp the Mind** (psychic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The alien creature glides forward, dodges your defense, and thrusts a semi-corporeal hand into your cranium.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: The target is dominated (save ends).
Aftereffect: When the target saves against this effect, it takes 2d8+9 psychic damage.

Interrogation

Social. Real-Time. Level 10.

Xambria reveals everything she knows to the PCs, and then Sijhen makes its jail break.

Most likely the PCs take Xambria to the RHC Headquarters jail. Once she feels safe enough that she won't harm anyone, she's willing to tell the PCs everything she knows.

Pacing Note.

The climax is a complex combination of multiple encounters. If you have to end a session some place, do it here, before the final action starts.

"So forgive me if this comes out a little non-chronolinearly; I think I've gone several shades of crazy. Getting everything out is more important than getting it clear. You might want to write some of this gibberish down.

"The thing in my head, its name is Sijhen. It's a Gidim. They're some sort of race from another world, and it was trapped behind the ziggurat's seal for thousands of years. Real lookers, from its memories.

"Do you know what brain tastes like? I'm not a fan. Imagine being brought by a friend you don't really like to the same restaurant that only serves—you know, never mind, you don't want to know. Never with my own mouth, thank you, though.

"It got out, got into me, made me forget. I'm still not sure what I don't remember, but it definitely was interested in the Obscurati. It only figured that name out later, after it ate old Mr. Bergeron's brain.

"You lot, you stopped Macbannin. He was with Bergeron. There are these cells, keep them all secret from each other. Only a few people at the top know how it all fits together, and Caius wasn't at the top. But the Obscurati—that's a long name. The Ob. Sounds less ominous. Ob.

"So the Ob, they want to find out all about the Ancients and these seals. Caius was paying for us to do that for them. He reported up. I think he had a spell put on him to keep anyone from finding out who 'up' was from him.

"Oh, and he's going to ride the train. Sijhen didn't care about that, because it's months from now, but I think it's important. Whoever is 'up' will be there.

"Sijhen kept opening these portals, but it could never go through. Something stopped it. Portals instead of trains, hmph. He's just like Catherine Romana. Even a madwoman can read the papers, you know."

Sounds of commotion come faintly from the other end of the jail, beyond the common prisoner cells.

"Damn. There was something else I just remembered that was important, but it's fighting. It made me forget. Your boss! Your boss, Saxby has something it wants. Saxby wasn't up, wasn't down, but was sideways. She worked for Macbannin. You probably ought to deal with that."

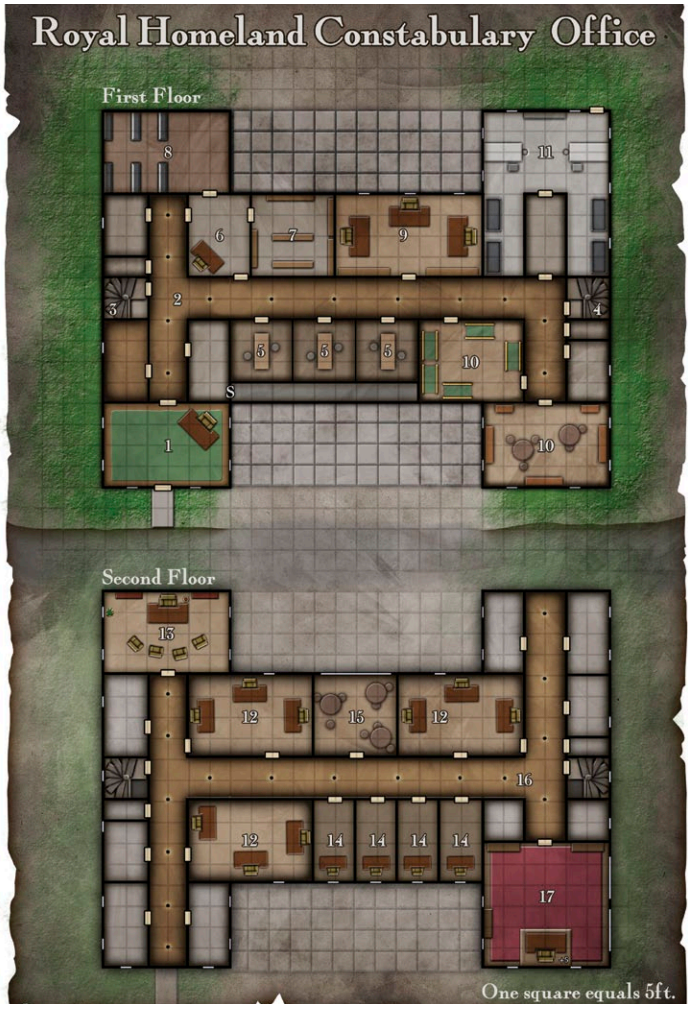
The commotion grows louder, and then follows a scream from some dying prisoner.

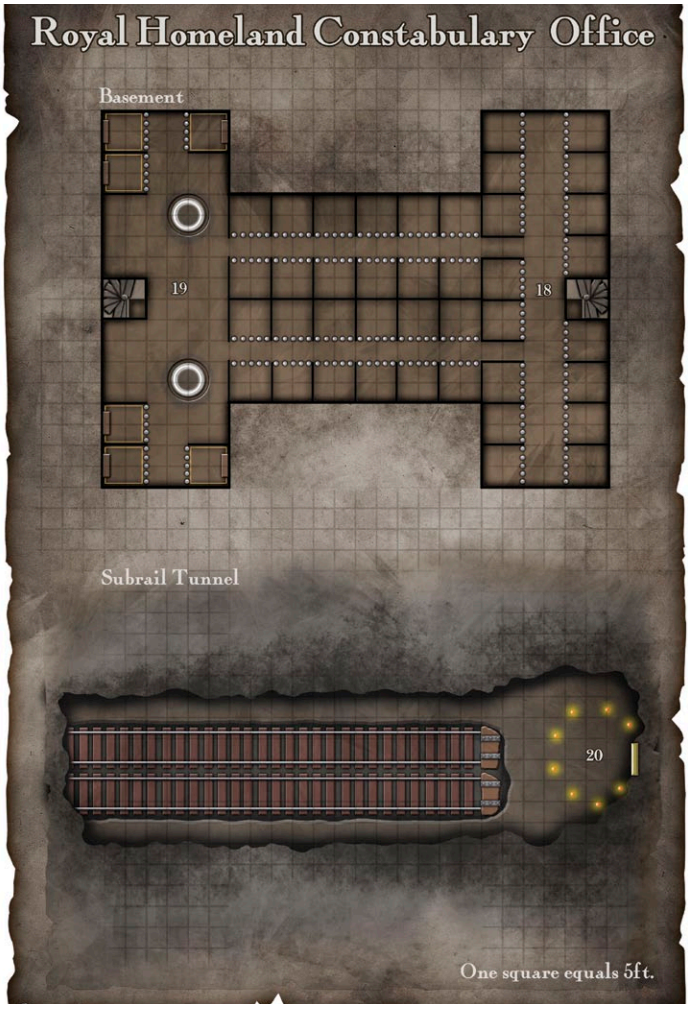
"Oh, I got it! Sijhen doesn't care about the train because it plans to leave, and bring an invasion back. It *planned* to get captured, and I'm not really in control. Oh, bloody—"

A sudden wave of extraplanar energy washes over you, pouring out of the stone walls to the south. You stagger at the sudden sense of dislocation, and as you struggle to regain your senses, every inanimate object around you not carried or worn turns impossibly translucent. You can see through stone, down to the sewer, out to the under-construction subrail tunnel, sideways to the band of black-clad murderers sneaking into the basement, up to the ground floor and all your equally confused coworkers.

And then the world turns transparent, nothing but contour lines and faded textures. The sight is too much for your mind to grasp, and vertigo drops you to your knees. But you do see one thing clearly. Xambria stands, jumps into the ceiling, digs fingers into invisible handholds, and pulls herself up through solid stone to the ground floor.

Your vertigo passes, and the world has started to darken back to translucence, and further still to solidity. But you can feel another wave coming, and for a moment, when everything was transparent, you saw monsters flying through the building above.





This Just Got Real

Various Encounters.

The RHC Headquarters are flooded with energy from Apet, and most of the staff goes mad.

The party has multiple crises to deal with. We provide a rough timeline of the actions of the enemies, but that may change based on the party's efforts. Handily, the phasing of reality gives you an excuse to track everyone's location on a map even if the PCs couldn't normally see them.

Of the many possible paths, perhaps the most satisfying would see the PCs start to chase Sijhen upstairs, rescue a group of RHC workers beset by monsters, then be cornered by the Obscurati kill squad. After that major battle, the party would need to relocate Sijhen and Saxby and try to reach them, but Saxby will likely have handed over the star map to Sijhen in order to avoid death. Sijhen heads back to the basement, while Saxby tries to escape the building with her bodyguards. The party could capture Saxby, notice Sijhen at the portal, and then rush to stop the Gidim from getting away.

Planar Phasing.

Waves of magical energy from Apet, affected by the psychic energy of the Gidim warbeasts gathered on the far side of Sijhen's portal, pour into the real world like a psychic tide. When these waves hit, creatures within a few hundred feet of the portal briefly become thoughtforms. They perceive the world to be fading in and out, but in truth the world stays the same, while they become alternately solid and phasing.

Keep track of rounds in cycles of 5, switching over at initiative count 0.

- **Round 1—Normal.** Reality is normal and opaque.
- **Round 2—Translucent.** Creatures can see through terrain as if it were cloudy glass, and have a general awareness of the locations of other creatures that are only separated by one or two walls.
- **Round 3—Transparent.** Creatures can see through terrain, though they're still aware of its locations and contours. Affected creatures become insubstantial and gain phasing, allowing them to move through solid objects and ignore difficult terrain; creatures cannot end their turns inside a solid object.
- **Round 4—Translucent.** As per Round 2.
- **Round 5—Normal.** As per Round 1. After this round, start a new cycle, back at Round 1.

For this encounter, you should consider making it so that attacks by insubstantial creatures deal normal damage to other insubstantial creatures, not half damage.

If the PCs learned how to use thoughts to affect *thoughtform* creatures, they can use those techniques on any creature during Round 3 of these cycles. If the PCs use an attack vs. Fortitude to make an enemy lose insubstantial and phasing, that enemy's attacks will do half damage against the PCs, since the PCs are still insubstantial.

Most of the enemies in this scene don't realize they can move through walls and floors. The PCs have a mobility advantage because they saw Sijhen do it, but their enemies might suss out the trick if the party does it often enough.

Encounter Overview.

This scene contains several smaller encounters. They can occur independently, or possible combine into one deadly encounter if the PCs aren't careful. The design of the RHC Headquarters and the planar phasing provide avenues for the PCs to get a reprieve from a dangerous situation.

Whenever the PCs defeat the last foe of any of these encounters, their encounter abilities can recharge, but they don't have a chance to take a proper short rest and heal.

- **Monsters of Opportunity.** At random intervals, additional monsters might swoop in and attack whoever looks vulnerable, perhaps even aiding the PCs. Normally, though, the PCs will need to save their coworkers.
- **Obscurati Kill Squad.** Ob operatives search for the PCs and try to kill them.
- **Rally the RHC.** By snapping Stover Delft out of his temporary madness, the party can turn their allies from imperiled bystanders to a small army.
- **Saxby's Flight.** Lady Saxby tries to get away, and has RHC members protecting her.
- **Sijhen at the Threshold.** The Gidim wayfarer flees back to its homeworld, and unleashes a monster to cover its tracks.

Stats for monsters that have already appeared in the adventure are collected in Appendix XX, Gidim Warbeasts. Other enemy stats are presented in the appropriate scene.

Climax Timeline.

Time is the main limiting factor to the PCs' actions. Barring PC intervention, events occur as follows.

- When the portal to Apet opens, everyone except Sijhen is stunned. Sijhen climbs via phasing through the ceiling and up to the second floor. It then runs east through the hallway and kicks open the door to Saxby's office right at the moment the PCs recover from their vertigo. On **Round 1**, Sijhen threatens to kill Saxby unless she opens her safe and hands open the Ancient star map. It takes until **Round 5** for Saxby to agree.
- On **Round 6 and 7**, Saxby disables the safe's trap, opens the safe, and hands over the map. Then she tries to attack Sijhen while it's distracted, and she shouts for help. But in **Round 8** reality becomes transparent again, so Sijhen turns invisible and dives down through the floors, back to the basement.
- Starting on **Round 9**, Saxby shouts for back-up and corrals three constables to be her bodyguards—Carlao, Dima, and Serena.
- On **Round 13**, when reality is transparent, Sijhen glides invisibly through the basement wall and into the subrail tunnel where its ritual is active. Sijhen has to let its invisibility lapse, but it is hard to spot even when reality is transparent. For the next few rounds it prepares the portal ritual to change targets, and spends the rest of its time making sure (using the Ancient star map) that it is picking the right star.
- On **Round 14**, Saxby and her bodyguards warily head down the eastern stairwell to the ground floor. Dead bodies and overturned examination tables block the morgue exit, so they head for the front entrance. If not hindered, they get out the front door at the end of **Round 20**. Saxby's bodyguards volunteer to head back in and try to get other people to safety. Saxby says she'll alert the police, then runs away and tries to hide.

GEAR UP!

The PCs are outnumbered, but they're on home turf. If they raid the General Supplies (Area 7), they can retrieve up to fifty *potions of cure light wounds*. The drinker may spend a healing surge to regain 1d8+1 hit points, instead of the normal amount. If he has no healing surges but is bloodied, he still regains the hit points. If neither of these things is true, there is no effect.

The supplies also contain various mundane weapons, armor, and equipment. Perhaps more useful, the PCs might head to the Evidence room (Area 8), where the experimental weapons recovered from the Arms Fair await, including the nock gun and the steam suit.

If the PCs take a short rest at any point, then somewhere around **Round 80** (8 minutes after all hell breaks loose), they feel the waves grow stronger, and can easily pinpoint the source of the energy. They have 20 rounds to reach Sijhen's portal in the subrail tunnel before Sijhen escapes and catastrophe strikes.

Monsters of Opportunity (Level 9).

RHC staff are scattered throughout the building, most of them gripped by Distant Madness and unable to move. The first time the PCs come upon a group of their coworkers, they find them under attack by a few Gidim warbeasts. Additionally, every time Round 3 in the cycle comes up, a few new monsters appear in the building, phasing through walls and going after vulnerable targets.

List of Adversaries.

Choose one of the following combinations, each of which is a level 1 encounter. Unless the PCs go looking for monsters, they should be attacked no more than four times during this scene.

Option One—Hanging Lights. *The spikers pinion people and pull them off the ground while the orb shoots immobilized targets.*

- 4 crawling spikers
- 1 flashing orb

Option Two—Seven Bad Ideas. *The monsters just swarm.*

- 7 implanters

Option Three—Crazy Eyes. *These monsters favor large crowds, which will be driven to attack each other.*

- 2 eyes of madness

Option Four—Don't Go Outside! *The monsters set upon anyone who leaves the building.*

- 2 flying things

Obscurati Kill Squad (Level 9).

The kill squad enters through a rusted ring in the wall of the stairwell (which the Ob installed surreptitiously several months ago), but they're only mostly in this world. After five minutes, or if they pass back through the ring, they return to the Bleak Gate. Until then they can interact with the PCs normally, but they appear dark, as if viewed through a black veil.

The nethermancer is in charge, and has the killers fan out in pairs, staying within shouting distance. They all have detailed descriptions of the PCs, and the moment any of them spot the party, they attack. The nethermancer and shadow walker are too professional to worry about the energies from Apet, and the others assume this is some side effect of traveling through the Bleak Gate.

List of Adversaries.

- 6 Obscurati killers
- Obscurati nethermancer
- Obscurati shadow walker

Not So Professional.

One of the killers, a member of Lorcan Kell's guild, taunts the party, saying "Lorcan Kell sends his regards. Do you like our new friends?"

The nethermancer snaps back, "Quiet! We have a strict no-gloating protocol."

Tactics.

The nethermancer's first action is to cast *tendrils of shadow* to pin down as many PCs as possible. The killers advance and act as a wall to protect the nethermancer, while the shadow walker teleports to flank the party and cut off their escape. This encounter would be challenging on its own for the party, and amid all this chaos could be overwhelming if the PCs don't think to make tactical withdrawals.

If the shadow walker and nethermancer are defeated, the remaining killers will strongly consider fleeing.

Obscurati Killer (6) Level 5 Brute
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 200
HP 75; **Bloodied** 37 **Initiative** +3
AC 17, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 12 **Perception** +8
Speed 6
Vulnerable 5 radiant

Traits

▸ **Veil of Shadows**
Intense radiance reacts with whatever shadow magic is cloaking the man, and he struggles to move into the light.
Whenever an Obscurati killer takes radiant damage, he is slowed until the end of his next turn. Also, the Obscurati killer treats any brightly-lit space as difficult terrain. However, whenever he is not brightly lit, he requires only concealment to hide, instead of total concealment.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Whole Lotta Knives** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
You're not sure where he hid all those things, but he doesn't seem to be running out of blades.
Attack: Melee 1 or Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+9 damage. If the killer is grabbing the target, he can slide it 1 square.

Minor Actions

✓ **Kidnap** ✦ At-Will
The killer grabs you and uses you as a human shield.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target is grabbed (Escape DC 15). Until the target escapes, the killer can use the target as cover.

Skills Bluff +11, Perception +8, Stealth +8
Str 14 (+4) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 15 (+4) **Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 14 (+4)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Obscurati Nethermancer Level 9 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 400
HP 95; **Bloodied** 47 **Initiative** +4
AC 23, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 21 **Perception** +5
Speed 6 Darkvision
Vulnerable 5 radiant

Traits

▸ **Veil of Shadows**
Intense radiance reacts with whatever shadow magic is cloaking the man, and he struggles to move into the light.
Whenever an Obscurati nethermancer takes radiant damage, he is slowed until the end of his next turn. Also, the nethermancer treats any brightly-lit space as difficult terrain. However, whenever he is not brightly lit, he requires only concealment to hide, instead of total concealment.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Orb Conk** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The mage's obsidian orb orbits around him and smashes you if you come too close.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8+9 damage, and any light sources the target carries are suppressed until the end of the nethermancer's next turn.

▸ **Shatter the Light** (cold) ✦ At-Will
Black tendrils crackle within the mage's obsidian orb, and then the gaslit lamps overhead explode with frigid energy.
Effect: Light sources in Area Burst 2 within 10 are destroyed unless they are magical. Magical light sources are suppressed until the end of the encounter. Creatures in the burst take 9 cold damage.

✲ **Tendrils of Shadow** ✦ Encounter
The nethermancer sweeps his orb, and insubstantial black tendrils reach up from the ground and snare you.
Attack: Area burst 2 within 10 (enemies in burst); +12 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6+9 necrotic and cold damage, and the target is restrained (escape DC 17).
Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter. All light sources in the burst are suppressed, and light from outside the zone cannot make the zone brighter than "dimly lit." Enemies treat the area as difficult terrain. Any enemy that ends its turn in the zone is attacked by the zone's secondary attack.
Secondary Attack: (An enemy who ends its turn in the zone) +12 vs. Reflex.
Secondary Hit: 9 necrotic and cold damage, and target is restrained (escape DC ⊡7).

✓ **Ray of Enfeeblement** (necrotic) ✦ Encounter
An invisible lance from the mage's orb pierces your chest, and your limbs grow weak.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +12 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d8+12 necrotic damage and the target is weakened until the end of the nethermancer's next turn.

Skills Arcana +12, Stealth +9
Str 9 (+3) **Dex** 10 (+4) **Wis** 13 (+5)
Con 11 (+4) **Int** 17 (+7) **Cha** 9 (+3)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

OBSCURATI ACTIVITY.

While the PCs have been investigating the Obscurati, crime boss Lorcan Kell has made contact with their branch in the Bleak Gate. With the death of Caius Bergeron, Leone Quital the steelshaper is desperate for allies in the normal world. He has made an arrangement with Lorcan to use the man's gang as muscle when necessary.

On this evening, a nethermancer leads several Kell-Guild enforcers on a mission to take out the PCs. They enter the headquarters basement, via a rusted ring portal in the basement, moments before the Apet portal opens.

Obscurati Shadow Walker	Level 8 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, half-elf	XP 350
HP 89; **Bloodied** 44	**Initiative** +11
AC 22, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 18	**Perception** +10
Speed 7, teleport 3	
Vulnerable 5 radiant	

Traits

▸ **Veil of Shadows**

Intense radiance reacts with whatever shadow magic is cloaking the man, and he struggles to move into the light.

Whenever an Obscurati shadow walker takes radiant damage, she is slowed until the end of her next turn. Also, the shadow walker treats any brightly-lit space as difficult terrain. However, whenever she is not brightly lit, she requires only concealment to hide, instead of total concealment.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Shortsword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+7 damage.

⊘ **Shadow Kidnap** (weapon) ✦ Recharge on a miss

The woman's shadow veil engulfs you, and you tumble through a horrid sliver of the Bleak Gate before emerging elsewhere.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. Will

Hit: 3d6+13 necrotic damage, the Obscurati shadow walker teleports 7 squares, and the target teleports to a square adjacent to the assassin.

Skills: Acrobatics +14, Stealth +14

Str	11 (+4)	**Dex**	20 (+9)	**Wis**	13 (+5)
Con	17 (+7)	**Int**	10 (+4)	**Cha**	12 (+5)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Rally the RHC (Level 5).

When the dimensional disturbance first occurs, Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft grabs his sword-cane, ready to fights the monsters. But a worm maw manifests just outside his office and manages to afflict him with Distant Madness. Delft manages to escape its grasp, but he locks himself in his room, and when the next wave hits he loses grip on reality. He becomes convinced that everyone in RHC has been replaced with doppelgangers, and he is next on their list.

Delft barricades himself in his office, and fires his pistol at anybody who comes near, shouting, "I see you doppelgangers! You won't steal my brain!"

List of Adversaries.

- ✦ Worm maw
- ✦ Stover Delft

Tactics.

The worm maw waits outside his office door, and on every Round 3 of the cycle it tries to phase through, but Delft's attacks keep it at bay. When the PCs reach the second floor, they likely find the monster smashing at the door.

Delft's madness interferes with his ability to employ advanced tactics. He prefers to stay at range with his pistol. If forced into melee he reveals a thin sword hidden within his cane and attacks whoever looks the most threatening, using his *disorientating strike* to keep them away.

No, Slapping Him Isn't Enough.

Convinced that the doppelgangers will kill him no matter what, Delft fights until he is reduced to 0 hit points, at which point he'll be defenseless but conscious. At this point, or if the PCs manage to kill the worm maw, then grab Delft and show that they mean him no harm, it's possible to talk him out of his delusion (Heal and Insight DC 15).

At that point, he is restored to at least 1 hit point, and he acts as a rallying point for any surviving bystanders. Bystanders who see Delft get their wits and start to fight back.

Stover Delft	Level 9 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 400
HP 95; **Bloodied** 47	**Initiative** +6
AC 23, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 23	**Perception** +11
Speed 6	

Traits

▸ **Disorientating Strike**

Whenever Delft hits with a basic attack, he can choose one of the following options:

- ✦ Impose a –2 penalty on the target's next attack roll.
- ✦ Slow the target until the end of Delft's next turn.
- ✦ Slide the target 1 square.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Cane Sword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

What he lacks in size, he makes up with crazed speed, thrashing you from multiple directions with his sword and the cane it was hidden in.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+7 damage.

⊘ **Pistol** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +13 vs. AC

Hit: 2d4+12 damage, or 2d4+20 on a critical hit.

Skills: Bluff +11, Insight +11, Perception +11

Str	8 (+3)	**Dex**	14 (+6)	**Wis**	14 (+6)
Con	15 (+6)	**Int**	13 (+5)	**Cha**	14 (+6)

Alignment Good **Languages** Common, Primordial

Rallied RHC Staffer	Level 1 Ally
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion	**Initiative Count** 0
AC 15, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 15	
Speed 6	

Traits

▸ **Background Dressing**

A Rallied RHC Staffer never attacks. It can take a single move action per turn.

Non-minion creatures can move through the staffer's space. It counts as difficult terrain. A hostile creature that starts its turn in a staffer's space takes 4 damage. A creature that occupies multiple spaces only takes this damage once.

☼ **Fighting Back** ✦ Aura 1

Any enemy that starts its turn within the aura takes 2 damage.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Crush of Bodies**

Trigger: A staffer starts its turn adjacent to a hostile minion.

Effect (No Action): Each creature deals 1 damage to the other.

Str	10 (+0)	**Dex**	10 (+0)	**Wis**	10 (+0)
Con	10 (+0)	**Int**	10 (+0)	**Cha**	10 (+0)

Alignment Lawful Good **Languages** Common, Primordial

Saxby's Flight (Level 9).

Unless the PCs are very fast, they likely reach Lady Saxby after Sijhen has gotten the Ancient star map. Saxby, unsure of how much the PCs know, tells three other constables that people might be driven mad, and that they need to protect her. Her goal is to get out of the RHC, reach a safe house in Bosum Strand, and flee the city the next morning.

List of Adversaries.

- Carlao, RHC knight
- Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby
- Dima, RHC cleric
- Serena, RHC assassin

Tactics.

Carlao stays beside Saxby at all times, with Serena scouting a few feet ahead and Dima bringing up the rear. They fight to cover Saxby's escape, but if Saxby sees an opening, she'll try to take out one of the PCs to slow the others' pursuit.

Saxby's three constable bodyguards are wary of the PCs, but open-minded. If the PCs accuse Saxby, she'll try to ignore them, saying they're lying as she continues fleeing. If the party attacks, the other constables defend her, but will ask the PCs to stand down and explain themselves. See "Aftermath" on the next page.

Carlao, RHC Knight Level 7 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 300

HP 80; Bloodied 40 **Initiative** +6
AC 23, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 19 **Perception** +5
Speed 5

Traits

☼ **Knight's Aura** ✦ Aura 1
Your coworker has his shield at ready to defend those near him, and his sword poised to punish your attack.
Any creature in the aura that makes an attack that does not include Carlao suffers a –2 penalty to attack rolls. See also *guardian strike.*

Standard Actions

⊘ **Longsword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+6 damage.

Triggered Actions

✓ **Guardian Strike** ✦ At-Will
Trigger: A creature in Carlao's aura makes an attack that does not include Carlao.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Carlao uses *longsword* on the triggering creature. If he misses, he still deals 3 damage.

Skills: Athletics +12, Diplomacy +8, Endurance +11
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 12 (+4) **Wis** 15 (+5)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+3)
Alignment Lawful Good **Languages** Common, Primordial

Lady Inspectress Saxby Level 10 Elite Skirmisher (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 1,000

HP 204; **Bloodied** 102 **Initiative** +12
AC 24, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 22 **Perception** +7
Speed 6
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Distracting Backstab**
Good for criminals. Great for government appointees.
Whenever Lady Saxby hits a target that is granting combat advantage, she deals an additional 2d6 damage, and the target cannot take opportunity or immediate actions until the end of Saxby's next turn.

▸ **Royal Power**
Margaret Saxby was granted the office of Chief Inspectress of the Royal Homeland Constabulary by the king himself. The might of Risur itself empowers and sustains her.
Lady Saxby has regeneration 10.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Longsword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+9 damage.

⊗ **Dagger** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 or Ranged 3/6 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 2d4+9 damage.

✓ **Skirmish** ✦ At-Will
Effect: Lady Saxby makes a basic attack, shifts 3 squares, and makes another basic attack against a different target. She can move through enemy spaces during this shift.

✓ **Let Others Fight Your Battles** ✦ At-Will
The Lady Inspectress strikes and shoves you at one of her allies.
Effect: Lady Saxby uses *longsword*. Whether or not she hits, she slides the target 2 squares, and then a creature adjacent to the target can make a basic attack against that target.

Minor Actions

▸ **Position Ally** ✦ At-Will
She glares at one of her allies, then twitches her eyes, silently ordering them to move.
Effect: Lady Saxby chooses an ally within 5 squares. That ally can shift 1 square.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Display of Power** ✦ Encounter
As her blood touches the floor, a fragment of the royal power invested in her office pulses outward, and you find yourself incapable of attacking her.
Trigger: Lady Saxby is first bloodied.
Effect (No Action): Until the end of Saxby's next turn, creatures cannot attack her. This effect only functions if Saxby is within the borders of Risur.

Skills Acrobatics +15, Bluff +15, Diplomacy +15, History +13, Insight +12, Intimidate +13
Str 10 (+5) **Dex** 21 (+10) **Wis** 14 (+7)
Con 14 (+7) **Int** 16 (+8) **Cha** 18 (+8)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Giant, Primordial

Dima, RHC Cleric Level 7 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf XP 300

HP 80; **Bloodied** 40 **Initiative** +2
AC 21, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 20 **Perception** +7
Speed 5

Traits

▸ **Stable Footing**
Dima's black beard wags as he shakes his head in disapproval.
Dima reduces any push, pull, or slide effect by 1. If knocked prone, he may attempt a saving throw to avoid falling prone.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Warhammer** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
"Creation and destruction are always at war," Dima says.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 8 damage.

⟋ **Fire of Philosophy** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
"And destruction usually wins."
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +10 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + 8 radiant damage and one ally may make a saving throw or gain 5 temporary hit points.

Minor Action

✧ **Word of Healing** ✦ Encounter
"But victory is only remembered if culture survives to record it. Ergo, the only victory worthwhile is that of creation."
Effect: Close Burst 5 (one ally in burst); the target spends a healing surge and regains 24 hit points instead of its normal surge value.

Skills: Heal +12, Insight +12, Religion +9

Str	11 (+3)	**Dex**	8 (+2)	**Wis**	19 (+7)
Con	16 (+6)	**Int**	13 (+4)	**Cha**	10 (+3)

Alignment Good **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Primordial

Serena, RHC Assassin Level 7 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 300

HP 75; **Bloodied** 37 **Initiative** +9
AC 20, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 19 **Perception** +2
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊘ **Lunging Strike** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
She seems too far away to reach you, but then a concealed contraption conjures a rapier out of her sleeve, and her blade digs into your leg.
Effect: Serena shifts 1 square before the attack, and after the attack can shift back to her original space.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+6 damage.
Special: The first time Serena hits with this attack, the target takes 10 poison damage and is dazed until the end of Serena's next turn.

✓ **Garrote** (weapon) ✦ Encounter
"Don't interrupt the dwarf when he's philosophizing."
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d4+6 damage and the target is grabbed. While grabbed, the target cannot speak and takes a –2 penalty to attacks against Serena.
Sustain Standard: Serena maintains the grab, and the target takes 11 damage.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Assassinate** ✦ Encounter
You've left an opening you don't even realize.
Trigger: Serena hits with a weapon attack.
Effect (No Action): Serena deals an additional 2d10 damage to the target.

Skills: Arcana +10, Stealth +12, Thievery +12

Str	14 (+5)	**Dex**	19 (+7)	**Wis**	8 (+2)
Con	11 (+3)	**Int**	15 (+5)	**Cha**	16 (+6)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial



A former superstar investigator who cracked many famous cases in her time, Saxby was promoted to the rank of Chief Inspector and transferred to take over Flint operations a decade ago. Lady Saxby was a darling of the public when she married a much younger veteran knighted during the Fourth Yerasol War, but the move was intended merely to improve her standing. Lady Saxby is highly intelligent, and her confidence borders on megalomania.

Despite her power and authority, Saxby grew bored with the role of an administrator, until Reed Macbannin recruited her in a clandestine project. She believed she was providing coverage for a critical secret military project, and she foresaw great rewards from the king when the project was complete. When Macbannin fell, she became far more concerned with maintaining her position than in rooting out threats to the nation.

While she now nears fifty, Lady Saxby remains quite fit and retains much of her youthful beauty. She demands authority wherever she goes, and uses many subtle reminders to let people know who is boss. For example, there is only one (expensive, comfortable) chair in her office: hers.

Aftermath.

If the PCs are very convincing, the constables might turn on Saxby and attempt to subdue her. Afterward, they prefer to rescue trapped staffers and civilians in nearby buildings, while letting the PCs handle Sijhen, but if the PCs press the point, there's no reason to deny them allies in the final encounter.

Sijhen at the Threshold

Action/Social. Tactical. Level 9.
While no match for the party by itself, Sijhen has a monstrous ally should they try to interrupt its ritual.

When the PCs find Sijhen's ritual, the Gidim wayfarer might be too busy to notice them, especially if they approach from farther down the subrail tunnel. Sijhen wears the *golden icon of Apet*, and holds the Ancient star map—a masterfully-crafted disk of gold, two feet in diameter, consisting of concentric rings with colored stones for the planets, and relief patterns representing constellations and distant stars.

Sijhen stands just outside a ring of eight lanterns glowing with harsh silver light, each inscribed with a sigil in the Gidim language. The lanterns hum and screech, and monstrous growls coming through the portal can cover the sound of the party's movements (Stealth DC 13). On the eastern wall sits the golden seal of Apet, shining in the lantern's glow. Sijhen has opened a portal in the wall behind the seal, but the seal is not flush with the wall, so energy leaks through.

Two 10-ft. wide sets of tracks run along a 5-ft. deep notch, then dead-end at wooden barricades mere feet from Sijhen's ritual. A 15-ft. long rail car sits parked on each track, at the west edge of the north track, and in the middle of the south track. These combination steam engine/cargo pallets were used for moving supplies and workers.

List of Adversaries.

- Sijhen
- The thing from beyond

Talking and Tactics.

Unless the PCs attack on sight, Sijhen attempts to stall. It takes a moment to set the ritual into its final stage (see below), and then it asks for the party to simply let it go in peace, and it will not bother them anymore.

If the PCs don't buy this lie, or if they attack on sight, Sijhen warns them that if they kill it, they'll kill Xambria too. Even if Xambria's body is dead, her consciousness survives as part of Sijhen's thoughtform. Sijhen offers to transfer Xambria to one of the PCs if they'll refrain from attacking.

Sijhen might still wear Xambria's body. In a fight, it uses Xambria's tactics until her body is mortally wounded, then feigns death for a moment before manifesting invisibly. The PCs might notice Sijhen's presence with Perception checks, but if not, the Gidim wayfarer waits for its chance to dash through the portal at the rituals' completion.

If Sijhen is about to lose, or if the PCs are close to ending its ritual, it moves beside the golden seal and pulls it away from the wall, which unleashes The Thing From Beyond.

The Trains.

Because they can move, the train cars are not shown on the map, but they are both 2-by–3 square objects that count as difficult terrain. The engine car has a parking break, which can be disengaged as a minor action. It can then be pushed as a standard action (Strength DC 13), which imparts it a speed of 1, or increases its speed by 1. Alternately, if the steam engine is targeted with an attack that deals at least 10 fire damage, the engine jolts to life and accelerates the train to speed 3, then to speed 6 on its next turn. The train moves its speed on initiative count 0.

Once the train reaches the barricade, it can no longer accelerate, but its momentum carries it one final turn. Any creature in its path is pushed forward, and takes 25 damage, plus 5 damage for every 1 square of the train's speed. If the creature is crushed against the wall, it takes an additional 50 damage.

If the golden seal is still next to the portal, hitting it with the train slams it fully shut, with the same effect as a safe closure.

Sijhen's Ritual.

If the PCs have arrived before Round 80, monstrous tentacles try to poke through the gap between the golden seal and the stone. Sijhen adjusts the rings while chanting words that echo off both the walls and the PCs' subsconscious minds. An Arcana check (DC 18) determines that Sijhen is adjusting the star map in an attempt to lock the portal onto some targeted world. A skyseer automatically senses this.

At this stage, the portal is stable, and attacking Sijhen won't affect the portal. The party's actions, however, might close, collapse, or rupture the portal (see below).

It only takes Sijhen a few moments examining the Ancient star map to be fairly confident where Gidim is, but it's being careful. Should the PCs attack, however, Gidim spends a minor action on its first turn to change the portal's target to the Gidim homeworld. A 20-round countdown begins, tracking each round at initiative count 0. If the PCs don't get here fast enough, Sijhen targets Gidim on round 80 of the previous encounter. The 20-round countdown starts the moment the PCs become aware of the change in energy, and that it's coming from the subrail tunnel.

The Final Countdown.

During the 20-round countdown, the golden seal shudders as streaks of light strobe out of the portal, like stars flashing as you fly past them in the heavens. A skyseer intuitively knows that the portal is sweeping through stars in the constellation called The Flood. Unless stopped, the portal connects to Gidim at the end of the countdown.

When the countdown finishes, the golden seal is blasted away from the wall, and for the briefest moment the PCs can see an alien world where pulsating thoughtform flora cling to red stones and a titanic purple tendril of psychic light sways into the sky from beyond the horizon. They are convinced that the world beyond has *noticed* them.

Sijhen, if still alive, shucks its corporeal flesh and flees through the portal as a thoughtform. Then the portal ruptures.

Stopping the Ritual.

The eight lanterns are the key to controlling the ritual, but they're just as fragile as normal lanterns. Any attack that hits a lantern destroys it.

The golden seal of Apet is the ritual's focus, and it also holds hostile creatures at bay. A PC might get the bright idea to move the golden seal of Apet away from the portal. This has the poor consequence of letting The Thing From Beyond into this world.

Closure.

As long as all the lanterns are intact, a character can attempt to gain control of the ritual. To do so, a character must stand beside a lantern and spend a minor action to make an Arcana check (DC 21). A character holding the Ancient star map gains a +5 bonus. A success causes the lantern to glow gold instead of silver. After all 8 lanterns glow gold, if the golden seal is next to the portal, the ritual ends.

If the seal is not beside the portal, the ritual can still be safely completed by moving the two ton gold plate adjacent to the portal.

TRANSFERRING XAMBRIA.

Sijhen may transfer Xambria's consciousness to a willing humanoid creature as a standard action. Likewise when Sijhen dies, Xambria's consciousness flies to the nearest (or most interesting) PC in an attempt to survive. The character can refuse to let the consciousness enter, but if he allows her in, he must make a Wisdom check (DC 11) to avoid being knocked unconscious (save ends) by the mental strain.

If Xambria's body dies, a spirit medium can sense her mind trapped in Sijhen's. If the spirit medium uses his *unfinished business* power, Xambria's mind is freed and safely joins with the mind of one of the PCs.

If a character merges with Xambria, he gains the benefits of the *Xambria's consciousness* boon (see Appendix M).

The Thing From Beyond Level 6 Solo Controller
Huge aberrant magical beast XP 1,250

HP 272; **Threshold I** 181; **Threshold II** 90 **Initiative** +2
AC 23, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 19 **Perception** +3
Speed 2; fly 2 (hover) Darkvision, tremorsense 5
Immune dominate
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Horrid Amalgam**

A thirty-foot long armored slug, this Thing lashes at you with jagged, harpoon-like tentacles of solid gold. It is not one solid being, though. Arms and hands reach out from within its fanged maws, and sometimes you glimpse screaming alien faces staring out between the gaps of its plated carapace.

The Thing From Beyond has two HP thresholds. When its HP falls below each threshold it gains some powers and loses access to others. It counts as bloodied when it has 181 HP or fewer.

▸ **Thoughtform**

See Thoughtform, page 225.

▸ **Vulnerable Tethers**

Anybody that attacks The Thing From Beyond with a melee or ranged attack can try to free a creature caught in its tentacles. To do so, The Thing From Beyond and the the grabbed creature must be within range of the attack. If the attack hits, it has its normal effect, plus the grabbed creature can make an Acrobatics or Athletics check to escape as a free action.

When the Thing moves, it slides each creature it is grabbing 5 squares. It cannot slide a creature farther away from it than 5 squares.

☼ **From a Distant Plane** ✦ Aura 5 (Stage 1 & 3)

Some strange distortion surrounds the creature. You fire your arrow, but it vanishes before it reaches its target.

Creatures outside the aura cannot affect creatures inside the aura with attacks or other powers, as if they were too far away. Attacks made with golden weapons or implements ignore this restriction.

Creatures inside the aura cannot move outside the aura on their own, though they can leave due to forced movement, or if the Thing's own movement leaves them outside the aura.

The Thing does not have this trait in its second form.

Standard Actions

✲ **Hurl Seal** ✦ Encounter

It picks up the golden seal in its tentacles and flings the metal plate at you.

Attack: Area burst 1 within 5 (creatures in burst); +9 vs. Ref
Hit: 3d8+18 damage and the target is knocked prone.

⊘ **Harpoon Spine** ✦ At-Will, Basic

The tentacles clustered around the thing's maw are tipped with jagged shards of gold. One snags your flesh and yanks you next to the monster's mouths.

Attack: Melee 5 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+7 damage and the target is pulled 5 square and grabbed (Escape DC 24).
When the grab ends, the target takes another 15 damage. The Thing can grab any number of creatures, and can sustain its grabs without spending any actions.
Special: During Stage 3, a creature hit by this attack is dominated (save ends). The domination effect also ends if the creature is freed from the grab.

✓ **Shredding Mouths** (psychic) ✦ At-Will (Stage 1)

You're pulled through three rows of independent, crunching jaws, and then you fall into its endless gut. You're trapped in an eternity without identity, and the screams of alien beings trapped in the monster's flesh begin to erode your sanity.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 6d6+21 damage and the target is swallowed (Escape DC 17). While swallowed, the target does not occupy a square and has neither line of sight nor line of effect to anything except the Thing. A swallowed creature takes 10 psychic damage at the end of its turn. When the target escapes or the Thing drops to 181 hit points, the target appears in an unoccupied square of its choice adjacent to the Thing.

✧ **Prismatic Scream** (fire, psychic, radiant, thunder) ✦ At-Will (Stage 2)

The beast's mouths whir like inward-facing saws as flashing lights glow within its gut. Then three blinding beams burst outward, accompanied by tormented psychic screams.

Attack: Close blast 10 (creatures in blast); +9 vs. Fort, Ref, Will
Hit (Fort): 1d8+6 thunder damage, and the target is knocked prone and deafened until the end of the Thing's next turn.
Hit (Ref): 1d8+6 radiant damage, and the target is blinded and takes ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends both).
Hit (Will): 1d8+6 psychic damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the thing's next turn.
Special: Make only one attack per target, but compare the attack result against all three defenses.

Move Actions

▸ **Crush** ✦ At-Will

The monster rolls its whole bulk sideways and simply flattens you.

Effect: The Thing From Beyond moves its speed. (Remember that huge creatures can share the spaces of creatures Medium or smaller.) If it is insubstantial and phasing, it loses those traits until the end of its next turn.

Each creature sharing The Thing's space is knocked prone. As long as it shares a space with the Thing, the target takes 10 damage at the end of its turn.

▸ **Immobile Predator** ✦ Encounter

All movement is relative. Though it appears not to move, you are suddenly closer to it.

Effect: The Thing From Beyond teleports a creature within 40 squares to a space within 5 squares of it.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Cracked Shell** ✦ Encounter

The strike peels away a piece of the monster's flesh, and a pile of twisted humanoid figures tumble out of the wound, pulsating with visible psychic energy.

Trigger: The Thing From Beyond drops to 181 HP or fewer.
Effect (No Action): Any negative conditions or effects affecting the Thing end, it recharges *immobile predator*, and it gains another action point. Any creature swallowed by the Thing appears in an unoccupied space adjacent to it.

Each square adjacent to the Thing is covered by a pile of insane Gidim vestiges until the end of the encounter. These squares are difficult terrain, and any creature that enters or ends its turn in that space takes 5 psychic damage.

The Thing loses the *from a distant plane* trait and *shredding mouths* attack. It gains the *prismatic scream* power.

▸ **Join with the Master** ✦ Encounter

It shrieks, and then the light in its mouths goes out. For a moment it appears that it might be dying, but then a humanoid torso tears free of the armored carapace just behind the mouths. The monster's master has fused with the creature itself.

Trigger: The Thing From Beyond drops to 90 HP or fewer.
Effect (No Action): Any negative conditions or effects affecting the Thing end, it recharges *immobile predator*, and it gains another action point.

The Thing teleports Sijhen (even if it is dead or inside of Xambria's body) into its body, and they merge into one creature. Sijhen's consciousness controls the Thing's body, but it no longer has access to its old powers.

The Thing regains its *from a distant plane* trait, but loses its *prismatic scream* power.

Str	23 (+9)	**Dex**	8 (+2)	**Wis**	10 (+3)
Con	16 (+6)	**Int**	14 (+5)	**Cha**	19 (+7)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Telepathy 10

Collapse.

If any of the lanterns are destroyed, a safe closure is impossible, but a dangerous collapse can be achieved. After all 8 lanterns are destroyed, if the golden seal is next to the portal, the ritual ends. As above, the ritual cannot end if the seal is not next to the portal.

When the portal collapses, the uncontrolled magical energies blast outward, **Close** Blast 20; **Atk** +13 vs. Ref; **Hit** 3d8+13 damage and the target is knocked prone; **Miss** half damage.

Additionally, if The Thing From Beyond hasn't already escaped, it emerges right as the link to Apet ends.

Rupture.

If the portal ritual manages to connect to Gidim, the power of the plane of ruin, Nem, manifests in an effort to stop travel across the Axis Seal. Immediately the entire eastern wall begins to disintegrate into frozen charcoal. The portal's edges crack and shatter, and then everything goes dark and the world turns silent except for a single bell's toll. Truly catastrophic magical energy of Nem sweeps outward, the portal disintegrates, and when the light returns everything has been laid to waste.



A Vision of Gidim.

If a skyseer witnesses the portal connect to Gidim, she knows this is not a world the skyseers have any knowledge of. In an instant before the portal closes, she glimpses a completely different starscape above the Gidim homeworld. The next time she sleeps, she has the following vision.

You lie back on the sentient grass. It sways around you in a gluttonous breeze. You ponder the heavens, and your curiosity satiates the grass.

Above you float flames and waves and wind and stone, but not the same you saw when you looked up as a child. They trace foreign paths and hum with impossible futures. You cannot read their fates. Beneath this alien sky, nothing is written.

Repeat the attack from Collapse above, except it affects every creature and object within a thousand feet. The RHC headquarters and every building for several blocks is cast into ruin, as if a thousand years had passed in an instant. Most creatures die and collapse into dust.

Meet the New Boss

Social. Real-Time. Level 6.

Word has come down from management: give them whatever they need.

Even if the PCs avert the destruction of the RHC Headquarters, it takes some time for the place to return to normal. With Saxby out of the picture—likely dead or on the run—the constabulary needs leadership. In a ceremony attended by dozens of reporters, most of Flint's nobles, and more than a few concerned criminals, Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill charges Stover Delft with the office of Chief Inspector.

The Viscount commends Delft in his opening remarks, and Flint's Governor Roland Stanfield briefly congratulates the PCs for their actions. Then it is time for Delft to speak. His words have been written for him, and they're only noteworthy for how little is actually said. The official story is that a monster got free from an Ancient ruin, came to Flint, and killed people in an attempt to recover old relics.

No one says anything about any creatures from other worlds, or of Saxby's betrayal, and certainly nothing about any secret conspiracies.

Delft has always trusted the PCs, and now that he's in charge he's going to give them everything they need to get to the bottom of this "Obscurati" conspiracy. With more care and caution than he has ever mustered before, Delft makes sure before the big ceremony to speak to each PC individually. He warns them not to share anything they know with anyone aside from him, no matter how trustworthy they might seem.

A day later, the new Chief Inspector asks them to meet him aboard their ship. Delft points out that the conspiracy doesn't know how much they've learned. It seems like they're overconfident in their ability to keep secrets, but the PCs have a time and place where they know this "Obscurati" will be gathered: the 20th of Winter, in Vendricce. It's time to plan their next move.





Adventure Number 4

Always on Time

From the Pen of Jacob Driscoll

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ADVENTURE FOUR: Introduction

Wherein a Lantern Heralds Dark Days

During the previous Zeitgeist adven-ture, *Digging for Lies*, the party discovered a tiefling philanthropist named Caius Bergeron was a member of a conspiracy known as the Obscurati, which appears hostile to the party's nation, Risur. The party also learned that Caius planned to take a trip by train to a meeting in a foreign city. In *Always on Time*, the party uses that lead to outmaneuver and unmask the conspiracy.

Risur's traditional enemy, the nation of Danor, operates the 3,000-mile long Avery Coast Railroad, which connects numerous nations. With the support of Risur's Royal Homeland Constabulary, the party will go undercover aboard this train and seek clues to what business Caius was traveling toward. Meanwhile, agents of the Obscurati assemble for a gathering of members of the conspiracy, bringing with them a magic lantern that is key to their ultimate goal.



Background

The Obscurati, detailed more fully in the Zeitgeist Campaign Guide, plan to alter the nature of reality. This requires a massive ritual to change the planets in the night sky that imbue this world with different energies and essences. They're still over a year away from the culmination of their plot, but one key component has just been completed.

The Lantern.

Luc Jierre, a socially awkward tiefling arcanoscientist with a nervous stutter, has invented a magical lantern. By burning fuel attuned to a specific plane, the device can channel planar energy through its light and suffuse its surroundings with the traits of that plane. This can create a variety of magical effects, making the lantern useful both as a weapon and as a tool of control.

The lantern's settings can be adjusted to change intensity and scope. For instance, if fed fuel attuned to the fiery planet Jiese, the lantern could simply make a single object become highly flammable, or it could allow fire elementals from that world to temporarily enter this world. Since Jiese also influences wars, the lantern could instead stir people toward conflict, either a whole area or just a few targets to whom the lantern has been properly attuned.

The lantern is a prototype, and it will be duplicated in large form in lighthouses across the continent. The Obscurati intend to use these lighthouses to keep the world stable while they transition the planes. More insidiously, the lighthouses will let them placate populations by manipulating their emotions *en masse*.

Recruitment.

Luc is not yet a part of the Obscurati. His uncle Sovereign Han Jierre, ruler of Danor and one of the conspiracy's three leaders, encouraged Luc's education, groomed him through life to pursue this invention, and made sure Luc had access to all the resources he needed. Under intense pressure to live up to these expectations, Luc grew up awkward and nervous, but nevertheless brilliant.

ADAPTING THE ADVENTURE.

All the heroic tier Zeitgeist adventures assume the PCs are agents of the Royal Homeland Constabulary. If, however, your party is a group of free agents, they might have been hired by the RHC, especially if they had previously uncovered Caius's secrets in *Digging for Lies*.

If you are using this adventure in another setting, the central element of a coastal rail line can be made into a pseudo-medieval pilgrimage route that travels 90 miles in six days. Several later encounters that use the train as a physical space may need to be heavily altered or omitted, but the core of the adventure still works.

Several scenes can be easily used as stand-alone encounters, including a naval engagement against a ship captained by an ice mage (page 293), a rescue of a damsel from a trio of wizards in an arena (page 316), or a cursed island and the dungeon beneath it (page 324; see also Appendix F).



Nephew of Danor's sovereign, Han Jierre, and brother of the country's Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre, Luc has always felt inferior to his family. From childhood, his stutter made him socially withdrawn, but he found comfort in arcanoscience. He could express himself on paper in clear formulae, and he could learn a skill the rest of his family did not possess.

Only recently did Luc realize that his family had been grooming him all along. He resents them somewhat, but cannot deny that he values power. He hopes that his new invention will earn him a place of respect. Now that he has finished the lantern, he expects he'll work on countermeasures to Risuri magical technology, or perhaps improve mana-storage devices, to let magic items last longer in Danor.

Once inducted into the Obscurati, he'll be given a major role in Lantern Cell, preparing larger version of his lamp and testing their ability to affect the minds of the public at large. That possibility will enthrall Luc, who has never before had the ability to make people do what he wants.

Luc has been told to take the Avery Coast Railroad from the Danoran capital of Cherage to the eastern terminus, the city of Vendricce. Luc crafted the lantern in Danor's dead magic zone, effectively a giant "clean room." Now he brings it for final testing, and he too will be judged whether he is worthy to join the conspiracy.

The Gathering in Vendricce.

The Obscurati have planned a gathering of all the heads of the various Obscurati cells to meet in Vendricce on the 20th of Winter, 500 A.O.V. (After Our Victory). To minimize the risk of discovery, the VIPs will stagger their arrival across a week; Luc Jierre arrives on the 16th. His sister **Lya Jierre** will waiting to greet him. The party met Lya in Adventure One, *Island at the Axis of the World*, and she is set to marry the king of Risur as part of a peace treaty.

The Ob know that the PCs were investigating Caius Bergeron (during Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*), but they have no reason to think the party knows about the gathering in Vendricce. And the party's superior, Chief Inspector Stover Delft, encourages them to trust no one.

Spy Mission.

The party's mission is to learn as much about the Obscurati as possible. All they have to go on, though, is the train schedule of a dead tiefling philanthropist. Chief Inspector Delft tasks the PCs to ride the same train and look for anyone Caius might have been meeting. With luck someone will lead the party to a meeting of the conspiracy.

It is important to stress that the PCs are not expected to run in and attack the conspirators when they find them, since they'll be severely outgunned. A victory in this mission would be to learn the identities of key conspirators and escape without being noticed. While we have included plenty of climactic combat, make sure you prepare your players to understand that they're trying to complete a mission, not win the war in one fell swoop.

The Railroad.

The main theater for this adventure is the Avery Coast Railroad, the pride of Danoran technology, and a showcase of the nation's engineering prowess. Though Danor has numerous railroads connecting its cities, the Avery Coast line is the longest in the world, spanning 3,000 miles, from the city of Beaumont on Danor's west coast, through the Malice Lands, Drakr, various minor nations, and finally ending in Vendricce, on Crisillyir's border with Elfaivar.

See Appendix D, The Avery Coast Railroad, for extensive details of the train's route, history, design, and crew.

Luc's Entourage.

Before Caius Bergeron was killed, he had already made security arrangements for the train trip with Brianne Kaldeckis, called **Bree**, a Danoran veteran of the Fourth Yerasol War. Caius gave her a gold ring to wear, which has an internal inscription that reads "Oathkeeper Bree's Sword." Any high-ranking member of the conspiracy who sees this inscription knows that Bree is working for Golden Cell, but she is tier five: useful but with no knowledge of the Obscurati's agenda.

Bree has not heard from Caius for a couple months now, and as a good soldier she's trying to complete her mission as best she can. She has enlisted two men as "plainclothes" guards—**Olivert Boone**, a carousing tiefling who performs gunslinging shows around the country; and **Verzubak Tantalovich**, a dwarf mage who manipulates fate and chance. They'll board the train between Beaumont and Cherage.

DEAD AND WILD MAGIC.

Within Danor's borders, magic quickly seeps away. Rituals cannot be cast within Danor. Static benefits of magic items function normally over the short term (i.e., you won't have to recalculate the stats on your character sheet). However, most activated powers of items don't function, and after a number of weeks equal to the item's level, its magic will be drained away entirely.

A creature's own innate magical powers still function, such as a tiefling's *infernal rebuke* or an eladrin's *fey step*. Any sort of non-martial power generally cannot be used unless its wielder has an implement with at least a +2 enhancement bonus.

Just beyond Danor's borders, in a broad swath hundreds of miles wide, the fabric of magic is damaged but not destroyed. In these places, known as the Malice Lands, whenever a character performs a ritual, uses a magic item power, or uses a non-martial class power, roll an unmodified 1d20. On a 1, a mishap occurs. This usually takes the form of the power backfiring, manifesting as a free-willed monster, or otherwise going dangerously awry.

TRAIN ROUTE.

The train passes through seven main points during the adventure.

- **Beaumont.** Major shipyard on the west coast of Danor. Train leaves here the morning of the 11th of Winter.
- **Cherage.** The Danoran capital, which has an evening curfew. Train arrives on the evening of Winter 11.
- **Orithea.** The only stable city in the Malice Lands. Train arrives on Winter 12.
- **Trekhom.** The capital of Drakr. The train arrives on Winter 13.
- **Nalaam.** A decadent casino city run by mages in the mountainous border states between Drakr and Crisillyir. Train arrives on Winter 14.
- **Sid Minos.** A haunted island city off the coast of Crissilyir. Train arrives on Winter 15.
- **Vendricce.** A forested border-city in Crissilyir. The Obscurati palace lies on Mutravir Island, off the coast. Train arrives just before sunset on the 16th of Winter.



Bree knows that Caius wanted her to come with him to a meeting at the Sovereign's mansion in Cherage, so she intends to follow that much of his plan. There she meets Luc and is given clearer instructions.

Luc has an escort of his own, **Ottavia Sacredote**, a deaf elf woman who is a spy within the religious hierarchy of Crisillyir. She is a bit conspicuous, especially in the company of a tiefling, but she's one of the few highly-ranking operatives the Obscurati can spare who is capable of communicating via Sending rituals, making her invaluable in case anything goes wrong. Also, just in case, a handful of passengers in the common cars are hired mercenaries who will come to Ottavia's aid if she gives the right signal.

Ottavia wears a silver ring that says "Orthodoxy Bolsters Gods," marking her as tier four of Lantern Cell.

Unrelated Actors.

The challenge for the party is the large number of passengers aboard the train. These include a half-orc businessman from Ber who has run afoul of a criminal syndicate, a Danoran madam who is taking a young eladrin woman to sell into slavery, a turncoat Risuri spy, a militia member working with train robbers, and a dirty hobo with an unlikely connection to someone the party has met before.

These characters have plotlines of their own that the PCs are likely to get involved with as they try to sort out real leads from red herrings. While each is a distraction from the main mission, if the PCs get involved and help people in need they can benefit greatly later in the campaign. Some of their fellow passengers might even prove instrumental in the success of this mission.

KEEPING TRACK.

Each night the train stops and people of interest head to different locations. To help you handle the inevitable splitting of the party, see Appendix E, Nightly Timelines.



Born deaf, Ottavia was given to a Clergy orphanage where she grew up devout in her faith, despite being an elf in a predominately human religion. She learned to communicate through sign language and even speak, albeit with some difficulty. When she reached maturity she began to hear the whispers of angels, and was trained to use magic. But as she rose in prominence among the Clergy, she began to doubt the purity of those in power.

Though still earnest in her faith, Ottavia was susceptible when an agent of the Obscurati noted her concerns and offered her a chance to make a difference. She believes the conspiracy just to be a group of enlightened thinkers who want to reform society and improve the lot of the poor and weak. In Crisillyir she has been subtly acquiring information to disgrace hierarchs she thinks are abusing their power, while helping promote more generous priests.

Ottavia took an instant liking to Luc when she realized the man knew her sign language. She believes Luc's lantern will be used to shield and illuminate the weak when an inevitable reckoning occurs. Throughout the trip she presses Luc to make sure his creation is used for the right purpose.

Ottavia has an enchanted headband that lets her project her thoughts. This helps her be understood more clearly by people who cannot sign, but makes it nearly impossible for her to lie, so she tries not to use it unless necessary.

Finona Duvall.

The PCs learned of Caius's plans by recovering a letter from him to a lady friend he was trying to seduce: a tiefling mage named Finona Duvall. The party likely defeated Finona in combat, and even if they spared her she probably died at the hands of an extraplanar monster that ate her brain. But it's possible she survived and could be pressed into service as a double agent, or a PC might try to pose as her.

This ploy could provide an "in" for the party to more quickly identify Luc and his entourage, so don't be afraid to reward the party for clever thinking. Remember that the focus of the mission is not Luc, but rather whom he's meeting at the end of the line.

Compartmentalized Secrets.

It's important to understand that at the start of the adventure, only Ottavia knows about the Obscurati, and even she just thinks that they are an organization of enlightened thinkers who are opposed to the Clergy. She knows nothing about the Axis Seal, the colossus being built in Flint, or the conspiracy's ultimate plan.

Bree knows she's working for a secret society, but not much else. Boone and Verzubak are just hired muscle, albeit very talented muscle. They don't ask questions.

Adventure Overview

The party sails to Beaumont, but on the way the PCs are intercepted by two privateer ships working for the Ob. The party has to lie, fight, or flee in order to reach Beaumont on time.

Their ship drops them off and sails ahead, and will be waiting for them in Trekhom, Sid Minos, and Vendricce, ready to provide supplies, support, and escape at mission's end. However, an experimental Ob submarine stealthily follows their ship's movements.

After some brief down time in Beaumont, the party boards the train and heads out. The first day provides many opportunities for the party to interact with other passengers, to try to get a sense of whom they should be keeping their eyes on. Suspects include **Damata Griento**, a nervous orc businessman who is taking his family on a first-class trip and **Elanor Yanette**, a fat, brusque enchantress accompanied by a veiled woman.

By the time the train stops in Cherage for the first night, Bree, Verzubak, and Boone are all aboard, but they pretend not to know each other. Bree sneaks off into the city to meet with Luc and Ottavia. Overnight, a masterfully athletic hobo stows away on the train. This is Andrei von Recklinghausen, who goes by the name **Mister Mapple**.

The morning of the second day, Luc and Ottavia board the train, but they try to stay out of sight. Also boarding is **Cardiff Hengehill**, a Risuri spy with secrets about the Danoran military. He has regular contact throughout the day with **Malia Baccarin**, a member of the train's militia who is Cardiff's contact with his buyers.

Complications.

Over the next five days, the party has multiple opportunities to observe each suspect, while other threats and mysteries provide their own distractions.

On the second night the train stops in Orithea. While most of the passengers sight-see or conduct innocuous business, Luc and Ottavia head to the city's lighthouse, where Luc meets with a local Obscurati cell leader. He shows how his lantern works and provides documents to help the local cell convert the lighthouse into a large scale version.

On the third day, bandits raid the train as it travels through the Malice Lands. They provoke a screaming hydra-like beast to emerge from a swamp and attack the train as a distraction, and the PCs have to weigh the risk of blowing their cover with saving the lives of the passengers—possibly even Luc and his crew.

That night the train limps into Trekhom. There Cardiff tries to sell his secrets, while Damata attends a lecture by the famous dwarf philosopher Vlendam Heid. Luc again sneaks away to a lighthouse to show off his invention to another cell leader. Meanwhile, Ottavia receives a Sending warning her that Risuri agents are after Luc. Luc's bodyguards become more wary and try to figure out who's spying on them.

On the evening of the fourth day, the train reaches Nalaam, where most of the plot-lines of the side characters come to a head. Since he has no Ob cell to meet with, Luc and Ottavia spend the evening preparing surprises for the party.

On the fifth day, as the train pulls into Sid Minos, Luc triggers a replica of his lantern, attuned to the PCs and infused with energy of the planet Nem. The PCs' souls are pulled from their flesh and trapped into a ghostly version of the train. If they do not manage to reach the train's engine and disable the lantern quickly, they'll never be able to reunite with their bodies.

They return to this world just as the train pulls into Sid Minos station. Ottavia boards a carriage and uses illusions of Luc and company to try to lure the party to follow her. She takes a boat to a nearby cursed island, and when night falls undead rise from the sea and attack the party. Ottavia confronts the party above a tomb, which provides safety from the horde of the dead, but also serves as a prison for an ancient

demon, **Ashima-Shimtu**. Though bound by magic far greater than anything the PCs could now overcome, she sees the party as an investment, and she offers to teleport them to Vendricce so they can complete their mission.

Of course the PCs might find their own way out, or simply avoid the trap. However they manage to reach Vendricce, when the train gets to the station it offloads all its passengers except Luc and his remaining guards. Then the train moves to a nearby private depot where a welcome party from the Obscurati waits. The party can spot Lya Jierre meeting with her brother, and there's an opportunity to steal the lantern before an overwhelming force of private security comes to take Luc to the Obscurati Palace.

While it *is* possible the party might follow discreetly all the way to the palace, they are likely spotted by look-outs at the depot. The fastest escape is to hijack the train and drive it to the harbor, where their ship awaits. But Lya Jierre and other Obscurati forces try to thwart them, and the submarine that has stalked them since the start of their mission blocks the mouth of the harbor. The PCs are outnumbered, and they must survive a gauntlet to reach their ship and escape.

Running an Undercover Adventure

While we have included a mix of action scenes and dungeon crawling, a major element of *Always on Time* sees the PCs going undercover and trying not to be detected as foreign agents.

If the players don't seem to be enjoying keeping a low profile, don't penalize them harshly if they fall back on familiar tactics. If the PCs simply attack Luc and company when they realize he's working with the conspiracy, then try to beat information out of him, the party still has to make it to Vendricce to see the gathering. And of course the Ob can have other agents watching the train, who can be responsible for the various threats on the party's life.

The Player's Guide contains guidelines on handling PC surveilling and interrogating their marks (see page 60). When it comes to tailing suspects, Bree, and later Luc Jierre, have back-up covering them when they head out each night. For each bodyguard still active, increase the DC of all the skill checks by 2 (for a maximum of +8 if Bree, Ottavia, Verzubak, and Boone are all on watch).

However, if the PCs have figured out the bodyguards are working together, one or two party members might distract them, so they won't count toward increasing the DC. This depends on the party being smart and learning the pattern of their enemies, and if done poorly it runs the risk of tipping their enemies off that the PCs are hostile.

Difficulty Class by Level.

Level	Easy	Moderate	Hard	Level	Easy	Moderate	Hard
5	10	15	22	9	12	17	25
6	11	15	23	10	13	18	26
7	11	16	23	11	13	19	27
8	12	16	24	12	14	20	28



A 40-something half-orc from Ber, Damata has brought his wife and two children on board for a vacation. Though the rest of his family is a boisterous party of new-wealth tourists eager to see the "Old World," Damata is troubled and edging toward manic-depression.

Damata hails from a family of orcish warchiefs in Ber, and he never fit in as a warrior, so he made his wealth in real estate, mostly dealing with Risuri and Danoran elites trying to set up factories. After a decade of success, though, he was suckered into a high-stakes con by a man posing as a Risuri train magnate, planning to build a railroad across the Anthras Mountains to connect the two countries. Damata was dazzled by a slick pitch that involved teleporting him to Flint and taking him to lavish parties.

Seeing vast potential for wealth and needing a huge down payment to buy a stake, Damata took a loan from The Family, a criminal organization based out of Crisillyir. When his "partner" disappeared with tens of thousands of gold pieces, Damata was on the hook. After begging for mercy, he was told to steal his family's magical heirlooms and war trophies and bring them to Nalaam, where local mages could convert the items into more liquid wealth. Damata botched an attempt to lie to his wife, and ended up with her and their kids tagging along, expecting to enjoy a vacation while Damata does "research for his railroad."

Damata has a *suitcase of holding* full of magic weapons and amulets he stole from his villa at home, about twenty items worth a total of 34,000 gp. He has a hunch he'll never make it home alive, and even if he does, he's pretty sure his family will kill him.

Damata plans to show his family a great vacation—museums, lavish hotels, grand musical venues, fine dining—until they reach Nalaam. He has made arrangements with a business associate in Sid Minos to take in his family if anything untoward should befall him.

- **Ejeka, the wife.** A darling in her late 20s, Ejeka is quieter and more reserved than her husband. She has an eye for art and fashion, but considers shepherding her two boisterous children to be her primary responsibility.
- **Dabo, the daughter.** Just turned 13, Dabo is something of a spoiled princess who is used to getting her way and speaking her mind. She isn't entirely enthusiastic about the trip, and complains frequently about missing her friends, and how unfair it is that she had to leave for months. She's disgusted by her father's recent maudlin affections, and was raised to think men are supposed to be tougher.
- **Tarro, the son.** A young boy of 7, Tarro is easily bored, and constantly seeks stimuli from new things, new people, new places, and new ideas. He explores, and like most bored children is always testing his boundaries with his parents.

Adventure Layout.

The majority of *Always on Time* occurs during the six days it takes the train to travel three thousand miles. Most of the party's investigations and interactions will occur at whatever pace they are comfortable with, but the various suspicious NPCs won't sit around and let themselves be interrogated all day. While the days are spent on the train with the occasional social interactions, the nights take the action into various cities.

We present the scenes that occur at specific locations in chronological order. You'll want to be familiar with the various NPCs in order to handle the PCs investigations, which can turn out countless different ways.

Pacing and Leveling.

The party starts this adventure at 8th level. We recommend that they reach 9th level after they leave Trekhom on day five. At the adventure's end they should reach 10th level.

Favors and Prestige.

The Player's Guide details the Prestige and favors system. Though this adventure takes place far from Risur, the RHC has agents around the world. If the PCs do well at establishing contacts during the Mission Planning montage, they will be able to get at least quick favors handled.



This hugely fat enchantress travels the Avery Coast, facilitating the buying and selling of valuable people to whorehouses or wealthy patrons. By a strict reading of laws she is not technically trafficking in slaves, but rather arranging contractual employment or performing wedding matchmaking. She's highly loathsome: rich, smug, and mostly lacking in empathy.

Since she can't rely on magic in Danor, Elanor makes use of drugs and poisons to placate her "products." She's developed quite an tolerance to drugs and poisons herself, so she can eat just about anything. Once the train gets through the Malice Lands, she starts shamelessly enchanting men who strike her fancy to sleep with her.

Little interested in conversation, Elanor is generally content to feast in the lounge car and then retire to her room to read erotic poetry. But if someone shamelessly compliments her or draws her into a discussion of celebrity gossip, fashion, or magic, she opens up and brags about her work; with long practice, she can easily and glibly justify her horrible behavior with the premise that it actually helps people.



A year ago Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen dabbled in dark magic to stitch together and reanimate dead flesh into a new creation. Thanks to the efforts of his father, the creation regenerates wounds like a troll, and has superhuman strength and agility. But as a consequence of the dark magic used in his creation, he drains the soul of anyone he touches.

Wolfgang named his creation Andrei and tried to teach him to be like a son. But Andrei recalled some of his former life, and when he finally realized how his "father" had created him, he lashed out. Andrei murdered Wolfgang's entire house staff, then drained the life out of the doctor's wife. He nearly killed Wolfgang too, but his father set him on fire and fled.

Andrei eventually recovered, but his home was destroyed. For months he had no thought but to find his father and kill him, but Wolfgang eluded him. Eventually Andrei was reduced to begging and theft, and he wandered until he came to the railroad. He's been stowing away for the past half year, seeing the world and learning voraciously, and has decided to enjoy the pleasures of life instead of dwelling on death and vengeance. But he can't touch anyone, and he longs for someone he could take as a bride.

He's chosen the name Mister Mapple, which he thinks sounds safe and pleasant.

NPC Roster.

Recurring Characters. Stover Delft, Damata Griento, Andrei von Recklinghausen, Ashima-Shimtu, and Lya Jierre all play prominent roles in later adventures. Other NPCs appearing in this adventure might recur in minor roles, but feel free to do with them as you wish. If anyone important dies, you can replace them with someone thematically similar.

NPC Entry	Page
Brianne "Bree" Kaldeckis, war vet	297
Chief Inspector Stover Delft	288
Damata Griento, orc businessman	283
Olivert Boone, gunslinger	298
Verzubak Tantalovich, luck mage	298
Elanor Yanette, sex trafficker	284
Isobel Travers, eladrin slave	298
"Mister Mapple," *a.k.a.* Andrei von Recklinghausen or the Creation	284
Luc Jierre, arcanoscientist and inventor	280
Ottavia Sacredote, Obscurati priestess	282
Cardiff Hengehill, turncoat spy	285
Malia Baccarin, treacherous train guard	285
Vlendam Heid, founding eschatologist	308
Ashima-Shimtu, imprisoned demoness	330
Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre	331

Incidental NPCs. The following NPCs probably only show up for a single scene, but if the PCs latch on to anyone, you can refer here to remind yourself who is who.

NPC	Page
Candace DeVille, RHC double agent	288
Hank Gallager, reporter/spy	288
Clark Dunstan, docker/spy	288
Miggs Maloney, cop/spy	288
Jessica, Anna, Emilia, Kell-guild thieves	288
Glaz du Sang Magie, Obscurati water mage	292
Jerrial and Auria, privateer captains	293
Xorin Marchand, conductor	295
Kov Marik, train chef	297
Doris Gavagne, piano player	297
Bucher Monmarl, Danoran bureaucrat	300
*Hanse Randall, architect/Obscurati cell leader	304
Rodinn, Malice bandit captain	304
Vankloff Jeanov, dwarf ritualist	309
Ulrik Pevedin, military secrets buyer	309
*Ramos Zoltan, prison magnate/Obscurati cell leader	310
Sylvester Fomazelli, Family *capodecina*	313
Azon the Stoneforger, magical item launderer	313
Lord Kulp, Master of Games	314
Nikola the Necromancer	314
Father Balthazar	314
Jaime the Weevil	314
Cordell Donofrio, Sid Minos businessman	324
Gene, lunatic godhand	328
*Lester Guillory, Risuri engineer/Obscurati tier 4	331
*Dustin Huff, Danoran astronomer/Obscurati tier 4	331
*Emily and Anna Davis, Crisillyiri lobbyists/Obscurati tier 4	331

** Members of the Obscurati*

Rewards.

At the end of this adventure, the party's Prestige with Risur should increase by 1 step. If they manage to stymie or confront the conspirators in Vendricce in any way and manage to escape alive, their Prestige with the Obscurati increases by 1. If they rescue Isobel and get her to safety, their Prestige with the Unseen Court will improve. If the party survives the Crypta Hereticarum, their prestige with the Family will increase. There's no likely way for the party's prestige with Flint to improve.

At the end of Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*, each PC should have had gear valued at 12,800 gp, not counting anything they hid from an office audit. At the start of this adventure, the PCs each receive 9,600 gp worth of stipend and salary. Even though the party levels up mid-adventure, they will find it hard to requisition rare magic gear so far from home, so they're given two levels worth of stipend.

If the PCs are free agents instead of members of the RHC, you'll need to make sure they receive the appropriate treasure parcels. One possible mix would be payment of 1,360 gp apiece at the start of the adventure, 1,680 gp apiece upon completion, plus eight magic items possessed by NPCs. Alternately, some the payment might be reduced to 1,000 up front and 1,000 upon completion, with the remaining 1,040 gp each received as rewards from thankful NPCs or incidental loot.

List of Magic Items as Treasure.

Stats for new items are presented in Appendix M.

- Luc Jierre's *wayfarer's lantern*.
- Bree's *butcher's girdle*.
- Ottavia's *headband of roaming thoughts*.
- Cardiff's +2 *amulet of the impeccable spy*.
- Boone's +3 *demonic pistol*. Boone's weapon is a revolver and can fire six cartridge bullets before it needs to be reloaded. See page 10 for details on revolvers.
- Verzubak's +3 *lucky dice ki focus*.
- Lya Jierre's +3 *razorburst rapier*.
- An apostate godhand's *hands of heaven and hell*.
- A shipboard mercenary's +3 *coral plate*. *Coral plate* has similar stats as Gith masterwork plate armor (see the D&D 4E Adventurer's Vault)—it was made by the merfolk of the Avery Sea and allows its wearer to swim and breathe underwater.





Your classic international man of mystery, Cardiff Hengehill spies in Danor without even bothering to conceal his Risuri accent or his memorably handsome face. After years of small time missions that he hoped would earn him a trip back home to retire while he still had his looks, Cardiff finally has achieved an espionage coup. Through contacts, bribery, and burglary, he managed to get a copy of a briefing on Danor's military build-up plans for the next five years.

He's done with Risur, though, and so he plans to sell the documents for 20,000 gold pieces to the Drakrans. Malia, a guard on the train, has arranged the meeting.

Cardiff's usual demeanor is cool disapproval; he tends to keep quiet, leaving other people to fill the awkward silence and risk revealing something. But he can feign interest with remarkable enthusiasm.



Dark, lithe, and beautiful, Malia grew up in Danor, though her family was Crisillyiri. She has tangential connections with various criminal organizations in every city along the Avery Coast line, and she enjoys favored status for getting crooks in contact with other crooks in ways that profit everyone. She makes sure to pick up the local newspapers at every stop along the train, and often has a bundle tucked under her arm as she does her duty through the train.

She's a skilled manipulator, and can cajole, goad, or seduce most any man into doing what she wants. Her dream is to retire in a few years with a solid stash of cash and buy an island villa in Crisillyir.

A Final Word Before We Start.

We are sensitive to the risk of rail-roading the players in an adventure that literally takes place on a railroad. The players can only score a complete success in their mission if they ride the train to the end, and so we list events that are very likely to occur at various points during the trip. However, do not hesitate to let the party's actions change things dramatically. Fun games are full of dramatic surprises, and a derailing train (metaphorical or actual) is certainly that.

Character Themes in the Adventure.

Each Zeitgeist adventure includes one or more scenes that bring the PCs' character themes (detailed in the Player's Guide) to the forefront.

- Dockers will find friends all along the Avery Coast, making it easier to blend in and send messages to allies at sea. But sufficiently popular dockers might find their fame a liability when trying to travel incognito.
- Eschatologists get to meet the founder of their movement, Vlendam Heid.
- Gunsmiths might enjoy shopping for enchanted firearms in Trekhom or dueling the gunsligner Boone..
- Martial Scientists will get to duel esteemed swordswoman Lya Jierre, and learn her signature severing technique.
- Skyseers got a lot of attention in the past two adventures. However, they'll have a strong intuitive grasp of Luc's lantern.
- Spirit Mediums as always provide an invaluable skill in an investigation where dead bodies might show up.
- Technologists are riding a train. Odds are high they'll get a chance to drive or possibly even crash the train. Who wouldn't enjoy that?
- Vekeshi Mystics have an opportunity to rescue an enslaved eladrin woman, and through Ashima-Shimtu they can learn part of the truth about the Great Malice.
- Yerasol Veterans will be heading into the homeland of the enemy they faced in the last war. You as GM should look for opportunities to present old rivals who remember the PC. Bree could work for this, but ideally the PC would not be compelled to attack her on sight, either for revenge or to maintain a cover story.

ACT ONE:
If You Choose to Accept

This act covers the party's planning efforts for their spy mission.

Meanwhile, in the News...

While the PCs are buckling down on their mission planning, what's going on in Flint and the rest of Risur?

Fire. Scholars throughout Flint weep as the Miller Memorial Library burns down. The library, which was built over 400 years ago during the first term of Governor Roland Stanfield, contained original copies of some of Risur's oldest literature, poetry, and religious epistles. Police authorities blame poor construction of the building's gaslight lanterns, but some found it suspicious that no adjacent buildings caught fire. The lawyer for of a pair of dragonborn brothers serving a life sentence in prison for arson delivered a statement on their behalf. Though they did not explicitly claim responsibility, they warned that Risur should release them, or else more buildings will burn.

Fireband. Benedict Pemberton, owner of experimental arms manufacturer Pemberton Industries, is on a tour of the nation, speaking with members of parliament and rich power-brokers to promote his new book, *Behold! Science!* In it, he argues that the Risur-Danor peace conference scheduled for early Spring 501 could kill the nation's progress in technological innovation, since without the threat of war there will be no motivation for research. Critics charge he's making a veiled push for war with Ber, about which he makes derogatory claims throughout the book.

Fired! As protests continue in Parity Lake over factory conditions and worker abuses, several owners discharged their entire workforce without notice and brought in police to arrest as trespassers any workers who showed up. The same day, several hundred Beran immigrants arrived at Bosum Strand and were ushered directly to the factories.

Fireworks. The year ends on the 91st of Winter, followed by the interim New Year's Day before Spring starts. That evening the people of Flint can expect a dazzling display of fireworks launched from ships in the harbor. Parades are being organized, including the grand March of Kings, a mobile costume ball with dancers and all manner of extravagant entertainment. A few small factories upstream of Stray River are producing high-quality fireworks, while those in Parity Lake are under watch to make sure nothing burns down.

Ice. Climate researchers at Pardwight University warn that extra soot and smoke in the air from the industrial economy will block sunlight, cooling the planet and causing horrible winters. A spokesman for Eschatologists of Flint United sent a thank you letter to the department, encouraging them to keep spreading evidence of the world's imminent demise.

Mission Planning

Puzzle/Social. Montage. Level 8.

The PCs and Chief Inspector Delft plan a mission in foreign territory.

To set the stage for the adventure, read or paraphrase the following.

> Mere days ago you learned the name of the conspiracy: the Obscurati.
>
> They have kept their secrets well. Though twice their plots have endangered Flint, both were accidents—an earthquake released a flood of deadly magical fuel they were refining on Cauldron Hill, and an alien monster freed by their tinkering with ancient magic nearly pulled the RHC headquarters into an insane far realm. You don't know what their ultimate designs are, but what you've seen suggests they have access to many resources.
>
> Your boss, Chief Inspector Stover Delft, asks you to meet him aboard your ship, far from any possible spies. The conspiracy seems overconfident in their ability to keep secrets, and they don't know how much you've learned. But you have a time and place where you know this "Obscurati" will be gathered: the 20th of Winter, in Vendricce. It's time to plan your next move.
>
> "I apologize for not bringing pastries and coffee," Delft says. "This meeting needs to be as hush-hush as possible. I have the first tiny bits of a plan in my head, but it won't work if any spies get wind of this. Loose lips sink ships, and you, constables, are going overseas."

Delft explains the basic idea of the mission: Caius's letter said he'd be traveling by train from Beaumont, at one end of the Avery Coast Railroad, to Vendricce, the other end. He'd be leaving on the 11th of Winter, and would attend a meeting on the 20th in Vendricce. Delft has a hunch he'll be meeting with someone else from this Obscurati group.

The party will take the same train Caius would have, and they'll look for people he might have been meeting along the way, or others headed to the same meeting. In Vendricce they'll try to recover useful intelligence about the conspiracy, possibly take a prisoner for later interrogation, and then return to Risur. He admits it's complicated, but they have about fifty days to figure out all the details.

Five Elements of a Good Spy Mission.

There are three elements that need to be handled before the party leaves, and two components to the mission itself.

First, **secrecy**. The party must tell as few people as possible what they'll be doing, because they can't know who might be a spy or be under surveillance. Toward that end, they'll need a cover story, a red herring so that any spies won't get suspicious at the lack of activity.

Second, **cover identities**. This will be a difficult operation, requiring them to use false identities as they travel through multiple foreign nations. They'll need documents, appropriate attire, and ways to explain their uncanny martial prowess if anyone sees them get into a fight. They'll be traveling first class, so even if the party has a bunch of weird races, sufficient money tends to get people to overlook such issues.

Third, **contingencies**. The RHC does have agents laying low along the route the PCs will be taking, but it will be a challenge to coordinate them so they can be useful to the party without drawing attention. Also, the nation of Risur has access to many resources, and the more preparation the party does, the easier time they'll have on their mission.

Once the planning is complete, there's still the actual mission. The party will board a ship and sail to Beaumont. That leads to the fourth component, **spycraft**. While on the train, the PCs will need to identify people of interest without blowing their cover. Delft figures that they can safely contain their investigations to first- and second-class passengers, since he doubts anyone important would ride coach. He reminds them that the big payoff is in Vendricce, so they should be careful not to move too soon and spook someone who might be or have a lead to more valuable information.

The final step is **extraction**. The PCs will have to come up with several ways to get out of Vendricce when the mission is over. Delft would prefer a quiet escape that ensures no one ever knows RHC agents were on the train, but he figures the party won't be so subtle, so they should plan ahead in case they're being pursued by an army or something.

Planning Montage.

The players are not expected to decide every detail; instead they'll spend the next few weeks in a sort of "planning montage," where the party's clever ideas and/or skill checks determine how well the party prepares for various challenges and contingencies.

To start, give the players the Avery Coast Railroad Brochure and Mission Timeline handouts (Appendix L), and then make sure they know the following key details.

1. The train they want to be on leaves Beaumont at 7:30 AM on the 11th of Winter. It reaches Vendricce at around 5:30 PM on the 16th of Winter. Caius's meeting is supposed to start on the 20th.
2. The party will want to leave for Danor with plenty of time to spare, in case of complications along the way. Delft suggests the 85th of Autumn, about 50 days from now.
3. Delft suggests having the PCs' ship drop them off in Beaumont, then sail ahead. The train moves faster than the boat, but due to terrain it would be possible for their ship to be in Trekhom when the train is scheduled to arrive on the 13th, as a contingency in case things go wrong. It could also be in Sid Minos when the party arrives on the 15th. From there it would still be able to reach Vendricce by the 16th.

Timeline.

The Zeitgeist calendar consists of four seasons of 91 days each. The adventure begins somewhere around the 35th of Autumn, right after the end of *Digging for Lies*. The party's ship sets out for Beaumont on the 85th day of Autumn. They should arrive seven days later, on the 1st of Winter, giving them ten days of leeway in case of delays. On the 11th, the train departs Beaumont, and barring a derailment it will reach Vendricce just before dusk on the 16th.

New Ship?

In Adventures Two and Three, the party likely cruised around on an unarmed cutter, just big enough for a party of adventurers to handle on their own. In *Always on Time*, though, they get access to either a two-masted schooner or a seaworthy steamship, armed with eight light cannons. If you own EN Publishing's naval rules supplement *Admiral o' the High Seas*, you can instead let the PCs personalize a Level 10 ship. Otherwise we present two designs in Appendix K—*Roscommon* and *Khalundurrin*.

Number in the Party.

During the skill challenge, for each PC fewer than five, reduce the number of successes needed for partial victories and complete victories. For each PC above five, increase the number of successes need by two.

After that, proceed to the montage, which should progress as a collaborative brainstorm. Don't be stingy with answering their questions or even suggesting a few elements they might have overlooked. After all, in-game the PCs have much more time to plan than the players do.

Preparing for the Avery Coast Mission.

Level 8 Skill Challenge.

Key Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, History, Insight, Intimidate, Perception, Stealth, Streetwise

Difficulty: Unless otherwise noted, all skill checks are DC 23.

This challenge has three goals which the party pursues simultaneously. Successful skill checks, clever ideas, or good roleplaying can count as successes, and the more successes the party has, the better chance they have for victory in their mission.

Each goal lists tactics that can contribute successes. Some tactics are marked with an asterisk (*). These do not contribute to the main pool of successes, but provide alternate routes to success or make things easier for other checks. It is unlikely the party will succeed at all their goals. That's fine.

- Goal One: Secrecy.
- Goal Two: Cover Identities.
- Goal Three: Contingencies.

Passage of Time.

This montage consists of seven rounds, each roughly a week in length. Handle events week by week. Like any good montage, you'll show lots of things happening at once to remind everyone of what's going on. With every round show a little improvement, but to show it all will take too long.

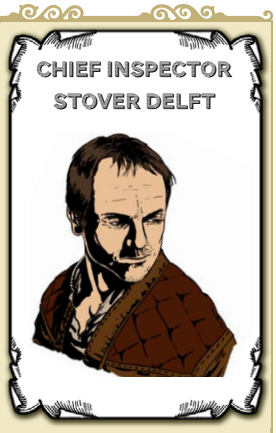
Have each PC choose one goal to pursue, then describe how he'll attempt to reach that goal. If necessary, use a skill check to adjudicate whether the PC succeeds. Once all the PCs have had their turn, a new round starts.

Goal One: Secrecy.

This represents keeping up appearances so that the various spies who are watching the party don't get suspicious, or simply hiding from the spies outright. Sample tactics for this goal include:

- **Do Busy Work, Leave Fake Paper Trail.** (Bluff, Diplomacy, Streetwise, Thievery) The PC pretends to be on another case, or actually pursues some minor investigation unrelated to the Obscurati, or files false paperwork. If the party gets at least one success this way each week for five consecutive weeks, the party earns two extra successes, because even spies assume the party can't be faking it for that long.
- **Act in Secret.** (Stealth) Alternately, a PC might arrange a careful system to ensure that no one can get a look at what the party is really up to. This tactic can contribute no more than four successes to the goal, however.
- **Locate Spies.*** (Insight, Perception, Streetwise) If the PCs are going to spend their time faking effort, they ought to make sure

A Flinter in his early 40s, Delft gets squinty and condescending when his authority is questioned, but he can recognize talent and good work. Delft chews tobacco, and thinks he looks charming if he grins while sucking on tobacco juices. He walks with a cane because a mimic tore a chunk out of his leg fifteen years ago. He has a habit of poking inanimate objects with the cane before he gets too close to them, and spitting on them when he wants to be extra sure.



those efforts are actually being watched by someone. This doesn't contribute to the main pool of successes, but a success on this tactic makes the above tactics easier, reducing busy work, fake paper trails, and actions in secret to DC 19.

- **Turn the Spies.*** (Diplomacy, Intimidate) This risky gambit can only be attempted after the party locates the spies. One success at this tactic establishes contact with the spies. A second success lets the party buy off the spies. For the price of a bribe worth 3,400 gp, the party convinces the spies to deliver false intelligence. (The bribe takes the form of various favors and small items, not a single cash payment.)

  The risk, however, is that a failure on either skill check spooks the spies, and they report that they've been discovered. At that point, no matter how many successes the party gets on this goal, they can never achieve a complete victory.

  Alternately, after the first check establishes contact with the spies, the party might try to just kill them. The spies are no real threat—equivalent to a handful of level 1 skirmishers and lurkers—so the party automatically can take them out, but this likewise tips off the spymasters that something's up, so the party cannot achieve a complete victory at this goal.

Results. If after seven weeks the party has eight successes, they get a complete victory; the Obscurati have no idea the party will be heading to Danor, making their enemies much less suspicious.

Six or seven successes are a partial victory; the Obscurati know the party is preparing for a sea voyage, so they make various precautions.

Fewer successes are a failure. The Obscurati pretty much know the party's plans—someone blabbed, or a spy snuck a magical listening device into their office, or they got a member of the party's ship's crew to betray them.

Goal Two: Cover Identities.

Before going undercover in foreign countries, the PCs need to make sure their cover identities will withstand scrutiny. Simply showing up and announcing they're RHC constables will get them tossed out of the country or arrested as spies. Some tactics toward this goal include:

- **Visas, Passports, Miscellaneous Documents.** (Diplomacy, Thievery) These items, acquired legally or illegally, provide "proof" for the party's cover identities. This tactic can contribute no more than three successes.
- **Look the Part.** (Bluff) A PC finds appropriate clothes and accoutrements for the whole party, and makes grooming suggestions to improve the verisimilitude of the disguise. This tactic can contribute no more than two successes.
- **Rehearse Personalities.** (Insight) A PC can quiz the rest of the party to make sure they won't be tripped up by questions, that they don't answer to the wrong name, and that they all know each other as well as they should. This tactic can contribute no more than three successes.
- **Finishing Touches.** (Arcana, Dungeoneering, History, Religion, Streetwise) The appropriate skill depends on what cover the party is using, but a PC could coach the party on topics their cover identity would know.

Results. A complete victory here means the party not only has pulled together convincing backstories, costumes, and documentation, but they've had a chance to get comfortable with their cover identities. They'll only be discovered if they act overtly out of character (and you as GM should try to remind them before they accidentally do anything that would break their cover).

A partial victory means the identities are hard to pierce, but they won't stand up to close scrutiny. A failure means that their identities are just the minimum sufficient to get them into Danor and onto the train. If they ever raise a fuss or draw attention of the authorities, they'll have to work to avoid discovery.

Goal Three: Contingencies.

Each week a PC can choose to take the necessary steps to prepare for one of the following contingencies. Most of these do not require any sort of skill check to succeed; it's enough for the narrative that the player is making plans. Some are harder to get, though.

- **Docks and Ports.** If the PCs need to sneak in or out of a city or get contraband delivered, this contingency will ensure they have allies they can turn to at the docks of one of the six coastal cities along the railroad (Nalaam is in the mountains). These allies might only number five or six, and they won't fight for the party, but they'll act as look-outs or do safe favors. The main challenge to this contingency is to arrange and communicate codes and signals to people across the sea. After all, the PCs and their allies have likely never met before.

  Each time the party chooses this contingency, they can arrange contacts in another city's port. A character with the Docker theme always has a chance of finding friends in port even if the party did not arrange for allies in a given city.
- **Enclaves.** Each night the train stops in a Danoran-owned enclave with entertainment and lodging. Each time the party pursues this

WHAT SPIES?

A secretary in the RHC office, **Candace DeVille**, thinks she's just keeping tabs on the PCs for a reporter named **Hank Gallager**, but the reporter is actually a spy who delivers his information to an anonymous proxy in Parity Lake. Gallager's information eventually makes its way to Lorcan Kell's thieves' guild, who pass it on to the Obscurati.

Meanwhile a docker named **Clark Dunstan** watches the party's ship, while an elderly cop named **Miggs Maloney** looks for chatter about the party from other police officers. Both report to a similar chain of command as Gallager. The only real threat are a trio of Kell guild thieves—**Jessica**, **Anna**, and **Emilia**—who watch the PCs' homes and occasionally tail them.

contingency, they can arrange for allies in one of the seven cities along the railroad. As above, these allies won't fight for the party, but they can be a useful extra set of hands.

- **Friendly Passengers.** Each time the party chooses this contingency, they can arrange for one Allied Passenger to be in the coach cars, ready to act when they see the right signal. Use the stats of either Allied Officers or Allied Soldiers, as presented in Appendix J.
- **Eyes on the Train.** (Streetwise) With a successful check, a PC can arrange for a low-level RHC agent to get a job aboard the train, likely as cleaning or cook staff. If the party succeeds a second check they can also get someone hired on to the train's security detail.
- **Teleportation.** (Arcana) If the party is not able to do so themselves, they might need a mage to teleport them, particularly if they get thrown off the train and need to catch up to the next stop. Only Trekhom, Nalaam, Sid Minos, and Vendricce have teleportation circles. A successful check gets a mage in one of those cities to wait on retainer, ready to teleport the party.

  Alternately, the PC might just negotiate with RHC infiltration specialist Lauryn Cyneburg, if they're willing to risk telling her. Lauryn will report any such request to Viscount Inspector Nigel Price Hill, but neither of them will ruin the party's secrecy.

  These cities' teleportation circles are in secure facilities under heavy guard. While foreigners are allowed to enter, they will be questioned thoroughly, subjected to mild divinations, and asked to pay for a teleportation visa if they do not already have one (at the cost of 500 gp per person, valid for five years).
- **Care Package.** (Diplomacy) If the party is capable of performing Sending rituals, they can requisition gear from the RHC just as if they were present in person. After first making an Arcana check to get a mage on retainer in Flint, the party will have to convince the RHC's quartermaster to be ready to hand over requested items to the mage. If successful, the party performs the ritual, uses the normal Prestige rules to requisition items, and then the items are delivered via teleportation to the city of their choice. The time required is roughly 8 hours longer than normal.

Results.

After the seven weeks of preparation, make a list of what contingencies the party planned for. When they run into trouble during the adventure, encourage them to call upon whatever plans they made in advance, and try not to say no to reasonable suggestions. It's likely the party will make some plans that are never necessary, so if they actually picked the right spot to plan, make sure to reward them for it.

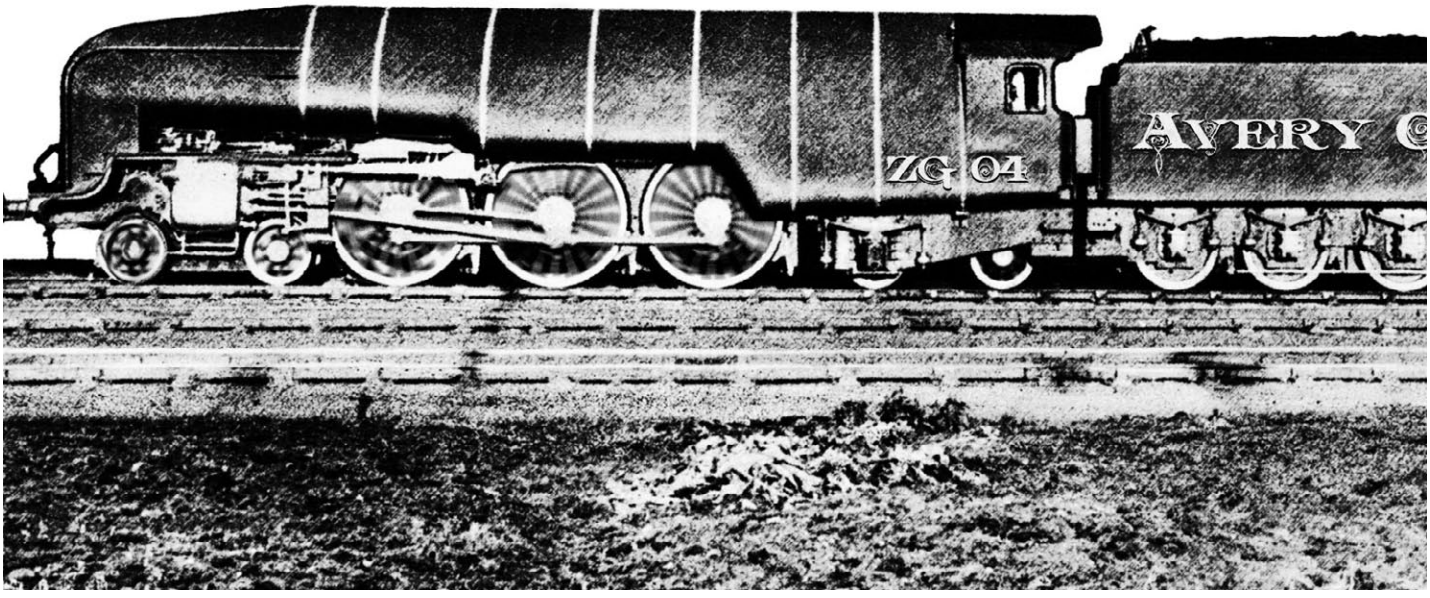
Bah! Let's Start Already!

If your players just want to jump into the mission, they can use the following cover identities. Adjust genders, names, and races as needed. Strange races like warforged and pixies will require more elaborate explanations.

- **Royston Porcher.** Veteran of the Fourth Yerasol War, turned land-owner in the southwestern Risuri province of Blackgap. Now touring the Avery Coast with his bodyguards and former war buddies.
- **Gary Normanson.** War buddy of Royston's.
- **Tristan Wolfe.** Another war buddy.
- **Scottie Butcher.** Mage bodyguard, hired to check for compulsions and illusions.
- **Chet Foster.** Foreign manservant.

As for secrecy and contingency, assume the party got a partial success on maintaining secrecy; and give them two "spy tokens." During the adventure they can hand over a spy token to get help for one of the contingencies above, as if they'd planned for it.

An Avery Coast Railroad train at full steam along a lonely stretch of track.



Act Two: All Aboard

This act covers the party's journey to Danor, and the train's travel through Danor and the Malice Lands.

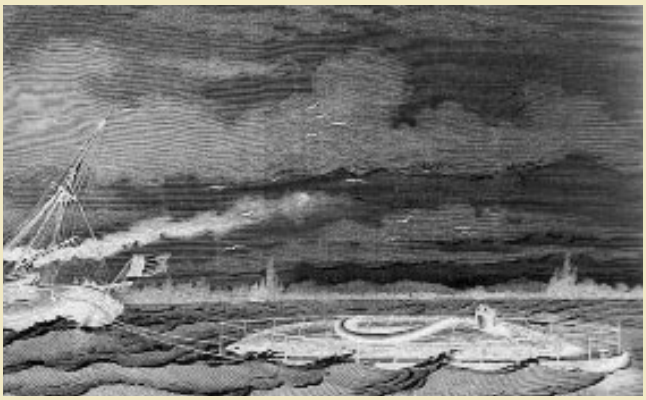
Sightseeing.

If the PCs take this opportunity to take a look at how things have developed on Axis Island since they left, warships patrol the waters near it. Should the party somehow get onto the island, they find excavations akin to those at the ziggurats, but on a much grander scale. Factories have sprung up around the Axis Fortress, assembling humanoid constructs for manual labor so that no menial workers will be exposed to the island's secrets. A lake is being drained, its feeding streams diverted so that in the coming months the giant Axis Seal can be unearthed. Security is extremely tight.

Naval Tactics.

You can find rules for naval combat in Appendix K, Seas of Zeitgeist. If the party tries to flee, use the Stern Chase rules. If they intend to fight off the enemy ships, we include stats for their vessels on pages 291 and 292.

In a naval battle, *Canis et Carnes* takes point, trying to close in, while *Amicus Selachii* makes an effort to cut off the party's ship and block it from escaping. They'll fire a few volleys to try to slow the PCs, but would rather board than sink. Meanwhile the *Cachalot* just shadows the party and only surfaces once the battle has begun.



An Ob vessel tows the **Cachalot** *into position for its subterfuge mission.*

Dangerous Waters

Exploration. Montage. Level 8.

The party sets sail across the Avery Sea, but their route is watched by the Obscurati.

On the night of the night of the 85th of Autumn, Delft wishes the party luck, and then they set out aboard their ship. Any skyseer in the party notes that one of the golden motes of Urim has disappeared, likely devoured by Nem. This heralds a change in fortune, and promises secrets will be revealed.

The ship sets out on a seven-day voyage west into the Yerasol Archipelago, then north to Beaumont. It's a well-trafficked merchant route, and though their ship flies Risuri colors, Danor's navy is not supposed to attack. On the fourth day, as they near Axis Island, the party might notice (Perception DC 24) a smoke plume following them a mile or two away, as if coming from a steamship. But there's no sign of an actual vessel. If a PC uses a spyglass eventually he spots a small steam pipe sticking five feet out of the water, emitting the smoke. Just in front of it is a periscope.

Cachalot.

The party's ship is being followed by the *Cachalot*, an experimental submarine powered by both steam and magic. The Obscurati have a handful of these vessels, and they patrol around Axis Island. Each is 110 ft. long, 15 ft. wide, and has a crew of 8 marines and one magitech engineer. They're little more than tubes with pumps, compressed air, and engines, but with the aid of magic they're fast enough to track any ship in the sea. If threatened they can dive to a depth of 30 ft. and easily slip away. Each also carries two smaller submersible pods with mechanical arms. They can be used as escape vehicles, or as delivery devices for spellbombs.

The engineer and captain of the *Cachalot* is a very old Danoran wizard named **Glaz du Sang Magie**. He specializes in hydromancy, but has a fascination for ice and steam as well as liquid water.

Welcome Party.

Obscurati mages on Axis Island regularly cast divinations to see if potential threats might be approaching, but they get lots of false positives because they're paranoid. So when the party approaches, they send a submarine. They also have on their payroll various privateer ships in the archipelago they can magically contact. The Ob's actions vary based on how well the party handled the Secrecy aspect of the planning montage.

Complete Victory. The Ob conspirators aren't sure who's on board the PCs' ship. One of the *Cachalot*'s pods sneaks up and plants a magical tracking device on the bottom of the PCs' ship's hull. The submarine tails them for a day until they get near Danor, where even the seas are part of the dead magic zone. It reports back to base, and the Ob perform more divinations. Eventually they realize who the party is and where they're headed, so they give the *Cachalot* orders to follow the party's ship all the way to Vendricce.

Partial Victory. As above, but the suspicious Ob also sends two privateer ships to board the party's vessel and look for anything out of the ordinary. This might provoke a fight, but it's not necessary.

Failure. The Ob knows the party are on board and wants to stop them now, so they order the privateers and the *Cachalot* to attack.



***Cachalot*, Steam Submarine**	Level 13 Vehicle
Huge Vehicle	36,360 gp
Hull Integrity 4	**Command** +11
Defense 20	**Full Crew** 16
Maneuverability 4	**Minimum Crew** 3
Speed 8	**Total Complement** 16

Design

Length 150 ft. Beam 30 ft. Steam engine, one deck, sealed hull accessible by central hatch. Forward storage compartment in ramprow.

Ramprow

When *Cachalot* rams another, prevent the first strike the rammed ship would deal to it.

Charged Hull

When activated, the hull gains a charge for one minute. Any creature on the surface of your ship or in the water within 30 feet takes 2d6 points of damage each tactical round. In naval combat, if a leviathan is at short range, make an attack 1d20 + 10 and add your ship's level.

Triggering is a standard action during tactical combat and can be done for free during the Attack phase in naval combat. It takes an hour for this component to recharge.

Nautilus

The *Cachalot* can submerge to a depth of 30 feet, and holds up to four hours of air with full complement. A periscope allows a crewman to act as look-out while inside the hull.

Total Cost 36,360 gp

Hull (base level 9, engine, improved speed ×2, Level 13): 17,000 gp
Ramprow (Level 3): 680 gp
Charged hull (Level 10): 5,000 gp
Standard nautilus (Level 12): 13,000 gp
Periscope (farseer, Level 3): 680 gp

Hand-Crank Submersible	Level 10 Vehicle
Tiny Vehicle	5,200 gp
Hull Integrity 1	**Command** +5
Defense 10	**Full Crew** —
Maneuverability 10	**Minimum Crew** —
Speed by oars	**Total Complement** 6

Design

Length 10 ft. Beam 5 ft. Propelled by handcrank (treat as oars; speed 1 per rower, maximum speed 6). Accessible via dorsal hatch or aft airlock clamp.

Lesser Nautilus

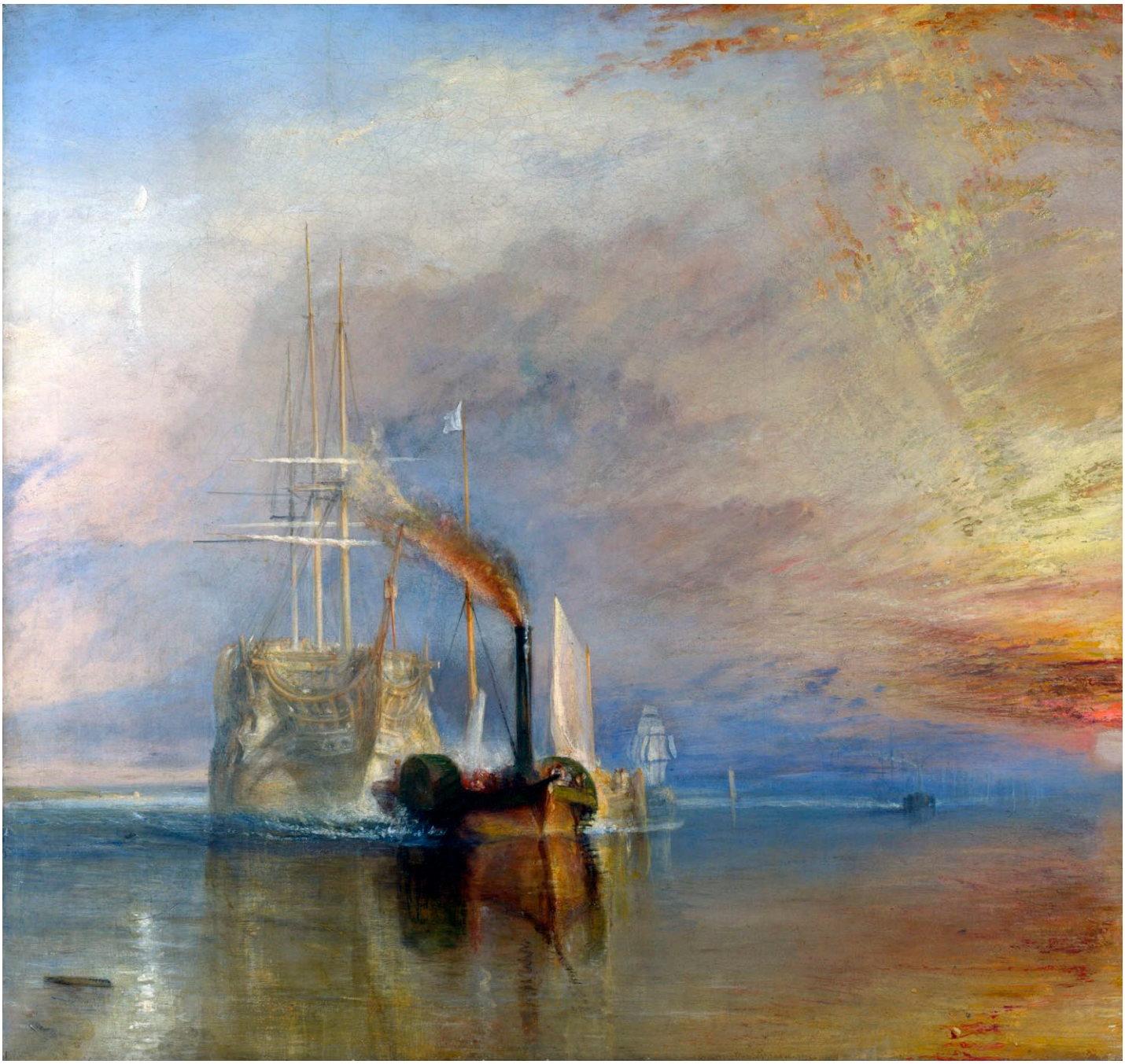
The submersible can detach and stay submerged to a depth of 30 feet for a single naval round, after which it must surface for two rounds before submerging again.

Total Cost 5,200 gp

Hull (Tiny, oars, Level 0): 200 gp
Lesser nautilus (Level 10): 5,000 gp

***Canis et Carnes*, Schooner**	Level 10 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	8,400 gp
Hull Integrity 3	**Command** +5
Defense 15	**Full Crew** 16
Maneuverability 6	**Minimum Crew** 4
Speed 8	**Total Complement** 30
Design	
Length 90 ft. Beam 25 ft. Three masts, 70 ft. high. Two decks.	
Armaments	
A small array of light cannons, five to either broadside, more for deterrence than offense.	
Crew: 15. Attack: +7, broadsides only.	
Total Cost 8,400 gp	
Hull (base level 6, sails, improved speed ×3, Level 10): 5,000 gp	
Armaments (Medium, broadsides, Level 8): 3,400 gp	

***Amicus Selachii*, Schooner**	Level 10 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	8,400 gp
Hull Integrity 3	**Command** +5
Defense 15	**Full Crew** 16
Maneuverability 6	**Minimum Crew** 4
Speed 8	**Total Complement** 30
Design	
Length 90 ft. Beam 25 ft. Three masts, 70 ft. high. Two decks.	
Armaments	
A small array of light cannons, five to either broadside, more for deterrence than offense.	
Crew: 15. Attack: +7, broadsides only.	
Total Cost 8,400 gp	
Hull (base level 6, sails, improved speed ×3, Level 10): 5,000 gp	
Armaments (Medium, broadsides, Level 8): 3,400 gp	



Interception.

The route through the Yerasol Archipelago gets a bit dicey in a few spots, and every captain has his favored stations of passage. One such is a steep wooded island called Rivenstone. The trees here yield soft lumber, good for quick ship repairs but not long-term shipbuilding. There's even a large safe cove with sheltering rock walls, named Colmarr's Folly after a gnome ranger who sank his ship when he sailed too close and cracked his keel. The wreck lies split on either side of the cove's threshold.

In the predawn hours of the fourth day of their journey (89th Autumn), the party's ship passes near Rivenstone. Any PC with darkvision who is on lookout might notice (Perception DC 24) one of the *Cachalot*'s pods sneak up under the party's ship in the predawn hours. If not detected, the pod uses its mechanical arm to first jam an enchanted metal spike into the bottom of the ship's hull, which acts as a beacon, making it easy for them to track the party's movements. Then, if the Ob has ordered a boarding or attack, they detach the party's ship's rudder.

If no PC noticed the pod, the party's crew realizes the rudder isn't working within a few minutes, by which point it has drifted away into the night. If the party spots the pod or is wary of sabotage, they might be able to get the rudder and start to reattach it. At best they'll get done just after sunrise, right as the privateers arrive.

The Battle of Colmarr's Folly

Action. Tactical. Level 6+.

Two ironclad privateers attempt to board the party's vessel, while a submarine lurks nearby.

Two privateer ships—*Canis est Carnes* and *Amicus Selachii*—appear on the horizon and make for the party. Using semaphore, the privateers signal for the party to yield to boarding and search. Once the ships reach close range, the privateers prefer to board and force surrender rather than sink a valuable ship.

List of Adversaries.

Canis est Carnes.	*Amicus Selachii.*	*Cachalot.*
✦ Jerrial, *Canis* captain	✦ Auria, *Amicus* captain	✦ 8 Obscurati marines
✦ 28 privateer crewmen	✦ 22 privateer crewmen	✦ Glaz du Sang Magie
✦ 2 privateer officers	✦ 4 privateer officers	

Each privateer ship individually is a level 7 encounter. Together they're a level 11 encounter. The *Cachalot* would be a level 12 encounter, except it withdraws if it doesn't achieve a very swift victory, so it's more like level 8. If the party is set upon by all the ships at once, it's equivalent to a level 13 encounter. Remember, though, that the PC have crew who can fight by their side. Use the stats of Allied Soldiers, or an Allied Unit for a group of twelve soldiers. A party of five 8th level PCs with twenty crew at their side are equivalent to a 10th level party.

Terrain.

If the PCs' ship has a rudder, they can make for the cove, Colmarr's Folly, which presents a bottleneck for the privateers so they can only attack one at a time. Also, because the cove is only about twenty feet deep at its entrance, the *Cachalot* won't follow because its captain is wary of getting stuck. Of course, the party might simply get caught out in open water.

The *Cachalot* can detach its side pods, each 10 ft. long with a hatch on top. The hand-cranked submersibles carry a crew of six: four marines and two sailors. They move at speed 1 per crew available to crank.

Tactics.

The privateers aren't particularly clever. Jerrial, who wears *coral plate* armor so he can swim safely and breathe water, leads his crew in melee. Auria has two of her crew hold and load spare muskets for her as she fires from her ship's forecastle at anyone who's out of reach of the main crew. The officers use their fencing skills to try to shove enemies overboard.

Aboard the *Cachalot*, Glaz watches through the periscope. Even if he has orders to attack the party, he's wary of risking his ship so he lets the privateers exhaust themselves first. Then he surfaces and pops the hatch so he can conjure an ice storm to trap the party's ship. Four marines swim to the ice floe and climb aboard the party's ship, while the others pair up in the sub's pods. Each pod has one pilot and one man up top, shooting out of the hatch.

If more than half the marines are defeated, or if Glaz feels threatened, he orders a retreat. As many men as possible pile back into the sub, and then it submerges.

Jerrial, *Canis* Captain Level 8 Brute
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 350

HP 84; **Bloodied** 42 **Initiative** +5
AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 20, Will 19 **Perception** +4
Speed 5, Swim 5

Traits

▸ **Coral Armor**

Jerrial can swim at his full speed and can breathe water. He takes no penalty to his attacks for being underwater.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Trident** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC

Hit: 1d10+5 damage, or 2d10+10 if the target is restrained.

⊘ **Net** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target is restrained (Escape DC 16). While restrained, it takes a –5 penalty to attack rolls with weapons without the off-hand trait.

Special: Jerrial cannot use this attack if he already has a creature trapped in his net. If he stops being adjacent to a restrained creature, he has to drop his net.

✓ **Fan Favorite** (weapon) ✦ At-Will

Effect: Jerrial makes 2 *trident* attacks or 1 *trident* attack and 1 *net* attack, both against the same target.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Shielding Crowd**

The armored captain ducks behind one of his crew, letting the poor sea dog absorb some of the blow.

Trigger: A melee or ranged attack hits Jerrial, and at least one privateer crewman is adjacent to him.

Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The privateer crewman takes 4 damage. Reduce the damage to Jerrial by 4.

Skills Athletics +13, Intimidate +11

Str	19 (+8)	**Dex**	12 (+5)	**Wis**	11 (+4)
Con	16 (+7)	**Int**	10 (+4)	**Cha**	14 (+6)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common

Privateer Crewman Level 1 Minion Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 25

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** n/a
AC 10, **Fortitude** 10, **Reflex** 10, **Will** 10 **Perception** +0
Speed 6

Traits

▸ **Background Dressing**

A privateer crewman never attacks. It can take a single move action per turn.

Non-minion creatures can move through the privateer crewman's space. It counts as difficult terrain. A hostile creature that starts its turn in a crewman's space takes 4 damage. A creature that occupies multiple spaces only takes this damage once.

☼ **Sabers Swinging** ✦ Aura 1

They've got a mob mentality and will hack you to pieces if you get too close.

Any enemy that starts its turn within the aura takes 2 damage.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Crush of Bodies**

Trigger: A crewman starts its turn adjacent to a hostile minion.
Effect (No Action): Each creature deals 1 damage to the other.

Str 10 (+0) **Dex** 10 (+0) **Wis** 10 (+0)
Con 10 (+0) **Int** 10 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+0)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common

Privateer Officer Level 8 Goon Controller
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 175

HP 38; **Bloodied** 19 **Initiative** +5
AC 20, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18 **Perception** +5
Speed 6

Traits

▸ **Man Overboard**

When a privateer officer hits a target with a melee attack on its turn, it pushes the target 1 square and can shift into the space the target vacated.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Saber** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 16 damage, and the target takes a –2 penalty to melee attack rolls until the end of the officer's next turn.

⊘ **Fine Danoran Pistol** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature): +13 vs. AC
Hit: 14 damage, or 20 on a crit.
Load: Standard.

Skills Acrobatics +10, Athletics +11, Intimidate +8
Str 14 (+6) **Dex** 13 (+5) **Wis** 10 (+5)
Con 12 (+5) **Int** 11 (+4) **Cha** 10 (+5)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common

Auria, *Amicus* Captain Level 8 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 350

HP 50; **Bloodied** 25 **Initiative** +8
AC 21, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 18 **Perception** +11
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊘ **Musket Bash** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6+8 damage.

⊘ **Musket Marksman** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8+12 damage, or 1d8+20 on a critical hit.
Load standard, or draw minor from adjacent minion.

Minor Action

▸ **Take Aim** ✦ At-Will

She sure is paying a lot of attention to you. You might want to hide.

Effect: Auria chooses a target she can see. On her next turn, her first ranged attack against that target gets +4 to the attack roll and deals an extra 2d8 damage if Auria has not moved since she used this ability.

Skills Bluff +14, Diplomacy +14, Perception +14
Str 8 (+3) **Dex** 18 (+8) **Wis** 18 (+8)
Con 14 (+7) **Int** 13 (+5) **Cha** 18 (+8)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common

Obscurati Marine Level 8 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 350

HP 89; **Bloodied** 44 **Initiative** +11
AC 22, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 18 **Perception** +5
Speed 8

Standard Actions

⊘ **Shortsword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+7 damage.

⊘ **Hydromantic Bullet** (weapon) ✦ Encounter

His gun sizzles with supernatural heat. When the bullet strikes, a rune upon it unleashes a blast of blinding steam.

Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +11 vs. Will
Hit: 1d6+13 damage, plus 2d6 fire damage.
Effect: The bullet creates a zone of scalding steam in burst 1 centered on the target. Any creature that ends its turn in the zone takes 5 fire damage. The zone grants concealment and lasts until the end of the encounter.

Move Actions

▸ **Courseur**

The men have the physique of soldiers, but the grace of acrobats. They climb, jump, and swing through the fray with supreme confidence in their course.

Effect: The Obscurati marine climbs or jumps his speed without needing to make an Athletics check. He gains a +4 bonus to defenses against opportunity attacks during this movement, but if he is hit he falls prone and his movement ends.

Skills Acrobatics +14, Athletics +9, Stealth +14
Str 11 (+4) **Dex** 20 (+9) **Wis** 13 (+5)
Con 17 (+7) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 8 (+3)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Glaz du Sang Magie	Level 10 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 500
HP 94; **Bloodied** 47	**Initiative** +12
AC 20, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 26	**Perception** +11
Speed 4	
Resist cold 10, fire 10	

Traits

☼ **Frost Sphere** ✦ Aura 1

A sphere of frost swirls around the decrepit old mage, freezing anything that comes close. Waves that crash around him freeze and shatter by his feet.

Creatures who move into the aura or start their turn there 10 cold damage.

Glaz can freeze water beneath his feet, letting him walk on water as if it were difficult terrain.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Press of Ice** (cold) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The mage steps toward you, and his ice shield nearly freezes your skin to your clothes.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d8+9 cold damage.

✲ **Icicle Rain** (implement) ✦ At-Will

The air around you drops fifty degrees, and then spearlike icicles drop as well.

Attack: Area Burst 2 within 20 (creatures in burst); +13 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d8+5 damage.

✲ **Blizzard** (implement) ✦ Encounter

A blizzard manifests from nowhere, coating every surface in ice and causing the ship to shudder to a halt as it becomes encased in an ice flow.

Effect: The spell creates a zone of ice, Area Burst 10 within 40, that lasts until the end of the encounter. Any creature that moves more than 2 squares in a single action through the zone must make an Acrobatics check (DC 10 + squares traveled) or fall prone. Water in the zone is frozen solid.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Shield of Ice** ✦ Encounter

Trigger: Glaz is hit by a ranged or area attack.

Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The attack misses Glaz. If the attack affected an area, any part of the area that would overlap with Glaz's *frost sphere* aura is excluded.

The edge of Glaz's *frost sphere* aura turns to solid ice until the end of his next turn. Until that time he is restrained, and creatures can neither physically cross the edge of the aura nor have line of sight or line of effect across it.

Skills Arcana +18

Str	6 (+3)	**Dex**	7 (+3)	**Wis**	16 (+8)
Con	6 (+3)	**Int**	22 (+11)	**Cha**	13 (+6)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Aftermath.

If the party prevails, they probably can't do much with the extra ships, though if they do manage to seize the *Cachalot* they might decide to trade up to the more advanced vessel. Glaz begs for mercy if defeated, and offers to give the party information about the Obscurati. He doesn't know much they aren't already aware of, but he can give them an idea of what's happening on Axis Island, and might even be willing to lie to the Ob via Sending ritual, telling them both the PCs' ship and his own sub sank, but that he found his way to an island and does not need rescue.

If the party is defeated and you want to salvage the rest of the adventure, perhaps have them taken to Beaumont as prisoners, where they'd have a chance to escape. They'd probably have to board the train as coach passengers, but they'd still have a chance. If you think your PCs might enjoy owing a favor to the fey, they might be rescued at sea when the privateers are attacked by merfolk agents of **Beshela**, the archfey who appeared briefly in the first adventure as an ally of Duchess Ethelyn.

Entering Danor

Social. Montage. Level 4.

Arriving in Beaumont, the party has a few days to get settled before the mission.

A ship riddled with cannon holes will raise a few eyebrows in the port of Beaumont, but luckily the Obscurati do *not* have allies everywhere, so the party can get into the city easily. A customs agent and his security staff briefly check the party's documents, then welcomes them to Danor.

The PCs should get lodgings appropriate to their cover stories, and they might fill their time by visiting the local military academy Lamar University, attending an opera, or taking in a burlesque show. The city is smaller than Flint, with a thicker stench of industry hanging in the air, but it's full of people like any other. Most dislike Risuri, but they're hardly a faceless enemy nation.

Very little magic works in Danor, and so the city lacks any of the tiny magical flourishes found in every civilized part of Risur. But perhaps the biggest shift is the climate. Just a couple hundred miles north of Flint, Beaumont has no shelter against frigid arctic winds blowing south. While it hasn't begun to snow yet, the temperature drops near freezing at night, weather unheard of in Flint.

Needle in a Haystack

Social. Real-Time. Level 8.

As hundreds of people board at the western terminus of the railroad, the party looks for suspicious characters.

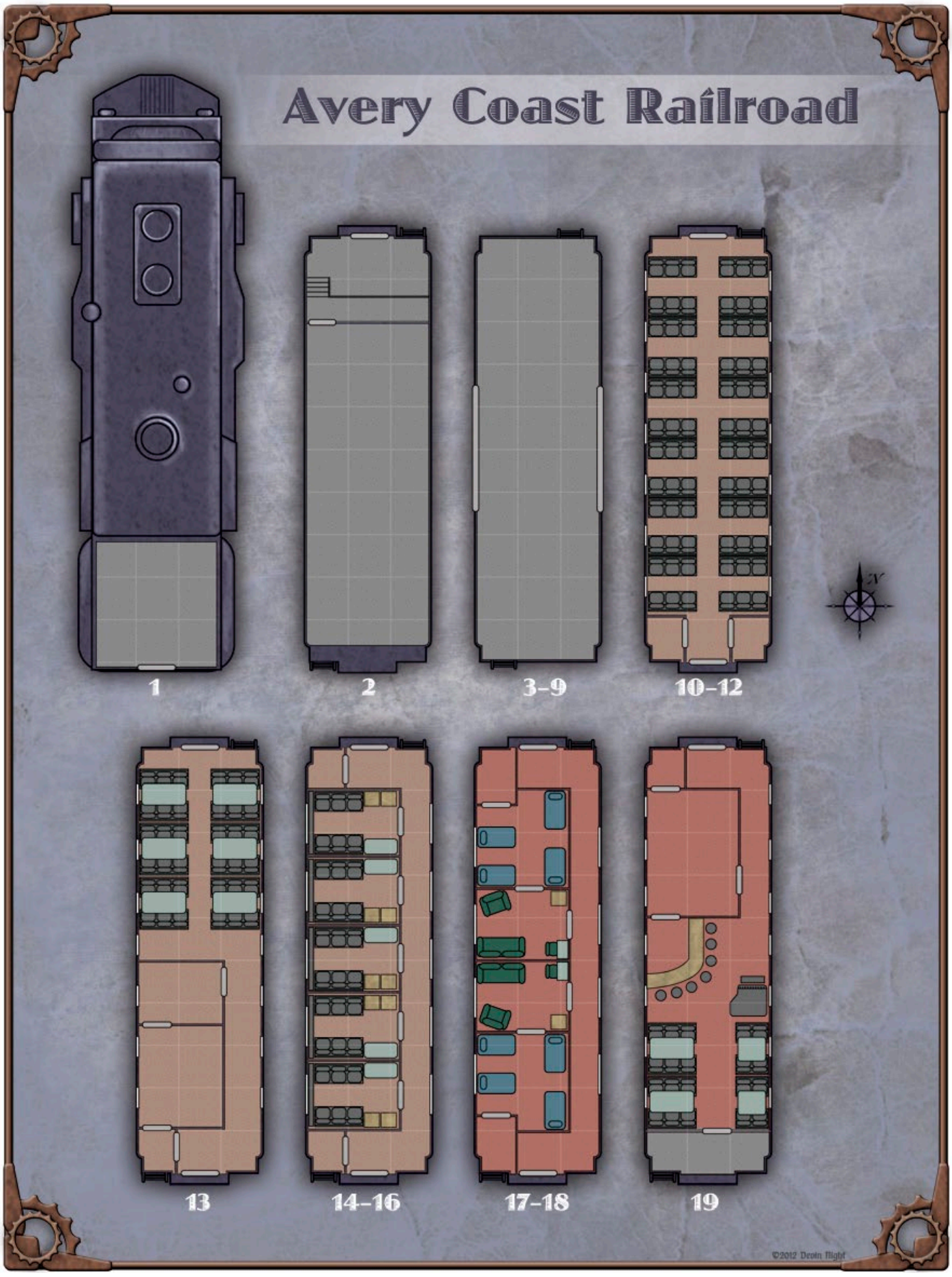
Boarding: Bree, the Griento family, the PCs.

On the morning of the 11th of Winter, the party's train is set to depart at 7:30 AM.

The elaborate architecture of Beaumont's Western Station looms over you: seemingly drooping, heavy with stone depictions of the celestial bodies. Behind you, imposing in its vastness, a giant marble clock face some twenty feet in diameter gives accurate Danoran Standard Time down to the second. Brass numbers dictate the passage of each moment, an exacting feat of engineering that Danor has exported to most of the world.

In front of you is another of Danor's marvels: the Avery Coast train, a great behemoth of black iron, still somehow appearing sinuous as it stretches into the distance in front of you. Windows stud its length, and, at the far end, gray smoke belches out of the smokestack of the locomotive. This is the marvel that is said to have tamed the Malice Lands, and it is working to unite the continent into one grand economy. Brochures announce that the railroad has proven that Danor can accomplish more with intelligence and manpower than most nations can accomplish with mystical secrets and genuflecting to gods.

The train hisses and steam spurts from its edge, casting a white haze over the platform and obscuring some of the other passengers waiting here. There is a whistle, and a man waves at the crowd, welcoming you aboard. He wears a brilliant red and yellow sash emblazoned with the symbol of the Avery Coast Line: a pair of train tracks, woven in an infinity symbol.


Avery Coast Railroad
1
2
3–9
10–12
13
14–16
17–18
19
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The waving man is the train's conductor, the amiable and boisterous **Xorin Marchand**, and when he realizes the party is traveling first class he beams at the chance to impress them. He offers to personally escort them to the rear of the train. Porters can take their luggage, and the whole group boards onto the lavish first class dining car, Car 19, while the crowd of coach passengers waits in line.

Xorin introduces the party to **Kov Marik** the first class chef and **Doris Gavagne** the piano player, then escorts them to their suite in Car 17. While the porters deposit their bags, Xorin encourages them to enjoy a complimentary breakfast in the dining car. The party might decline Xorin's tour so they can better watch who else boards the train, and he won't press the matter.

Exploring the Train.

The coach cars are about half-full with workers, and the second-class rooms are also about half-full with businessmen. Only one other suite in first class is occupied. If the party brings their tickets with them they have free run of everything from Car 10 on back, but the crew ask everyone to be in their assigned spaces when the train departs, to make sure they have an accurate count.

See Appendix D for a list of the train's cars. Among the hundreds of people on board, there are about forty in the second class rooms, and a family of four in the suite next to the party's. Of the former, only one makes an immediate impression.

Bree.

Brianne Kaldeckis, called "Bree," boards in a fairly sour mood, and if asked, she may confess that she has a friend who was supposed to board with her, who is now missing. Though she has a seat in Car 16, she sits in the first class lounge car, looking for Caius. She knows his mission was secret, though, so she won't give away many details. She's not terribly talkative, and if pressed tries to steer conversations to generic topics like travel and weather. Talking about the war does get her interested, and she's excited to hear how it looked from "the other side."

The Grientos.

A family of four Beran half-orcs is on board the Avery Coast line, riding it from one end to the other as a sightseeing trip. They are the Grientos, and behave very much like an archetypal tourist family. They are also very "new money," traveling in first class but fairly inexperienced at handling the matter gracefully. They board the train and take up residence in the first class lounge, in awe of their environment. The husband, **Damata Griento**, is particularly excitable and chatty, and he tries to strike up conversations about engineering, but hems and haws if anyone brings up sightseeing.

If the PCs haven't already noticed, Tarro (Damata's son) makes a fuss about Bree's arm scars. Ejeka (Damata's wife) apologizes and tries to get the boy to drop the topic, but Bree just smiles calmly and tells Tarro that if his sister's arm ever gets cut off, he should hold onto it in case they can sew it back on. This excites Tarro to no end, but Dabo (Damata's daughter) begins showing signs of a panic attack. Damata becomes stricken at the thought of his children being hurt, and hustles the children to their suite.

Last Check.

At 7:25, train security guard **Malia Baccarin** makes a pass through the first- and second-class sections, checking to make sure everyone's in the proper section and no rabble snuck in from coach. The beautiful, dark-skinned woman stands out in Danor almost as much as a half-orc.

Malia makes an offer to any men in first or second class, as well as women (like Bree) who look tough. She asks if they'll be staying with the train on to Trekhom. If so, it's traditional for distinguished guests to enjoy a "safari" of sorts in the Malice Lands. They sit on the roof of the train with muskets, and with the guidance of the train's security personnel they can shoot at any malice beasts that come at the train. Malia's ulterior motive here is to figure out who might be a threat when her brigand allies attack in the Malice Lands. If anyone shows interest, she offers to acquire fine rifles when they're in Cherage, for the low price of 300 gp apiece. See the Arms Dealers sidebar (page 308) for details.

Shortly after the security check, the clock tower outside the station booms out a tune on the half hour. There is a great snapping hiss heard throughout the train, and the behemoth vehicle lurches into action, metal squealing and clicking. The party can feel the train accelerating, slowly but steadily hauling its tons of cargo and passengers up to speeds unmatched except by magic. Beaumont glides past, and soon the scenery of pastoral Danor is flying by at a staggering sixty miles per hour.



A 47-year old veteran of the Fourth Yerasol War, Bree lost her right leg and arm to a Risuri summoned jaguar. The same druid who took her limbs kept her from dying, and after the war she was given a peg leg and sent back home to languish in a veteran's community. There she was approached by Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen, whom the party met in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*. Wolfgang used experimental magical science to attach a recently-dead woman's limbs to Bree. He enchanted a girdle to help with the mending process, which Bree wears to this day.

World-wise and granted a second life, Bree sold her services as a bodyguard. She came to the attention of Caius Bergeron after a clever ploy to thwart a pursuer; she detached her arm and set it across the room with a crossbow. Since her girdle let her control her limb at range, she was able to shoot the foe when he crossed its path. The Obscurati are always drawn to ingenuity, and Dr. von Recklinghausen had already drawn their attention, so Caius hired Bree.

Bree values honor and her word, and gladly serves as bodyguard, but she has turned down offers to serve as a soldier or assassin. She favors sleeveless shirts even in the cold, and is not shy about the massive scar around her right upper arm. When in Danor, her limbs itch at the seams, and she doesn't like to stay in the dead magic zone for more than a week at a time.

Keskay

Social. Montage. Level 8.

More suspects board at the city of Keskay.

Boarding: Elanor and Isobel, Verzubak, Boone.

The train stops about once an hour at different small cities, waiting just ten minutes for people to board or disembark. No one else boards on first class, but the ranks of second class and coach shuffle gradually through the day. If you need help fleshing out impromptu social interactions between the PCs and these unimportant passengers, see Filler NPCs (Appendix D).



The train stops in the agricultural hub city of Keskay at 11:17 AM. Out the windows the party can see people gathered on the landing, and amid a crowd of unassuming human workers and businessmen, four people stand out.

Big Pimping.

The people attracting the most attention on the Keskay stop are a pair of travelers joined at the wrists by ornate bracelets of gold. One of them is **Elanor Yanette**, a broad woman, well-dressed in a flowing silken gown, with a constant expression of disdain on her jowls. She escorts a figure wrapped from head to toe in black fabrics, such that it's impossible to tell if it's a man or a woman. Even the eyes are hidden by dark gauze. This is **Isobel Travers**, an eladrin woman who was raised by a Danoran family and has just turned twenty. Elanor is taking her to Nalaam, where she'll fetch a stunning price as a trophy wife.

Elanor leads Isobel, and the gazes of hundreds of curious onlookers follow them. The two board, and while their luggage is taken to a suite in Car 18, they head straight for the first class lounge. Elanor demands some food. Isobel sits across from her and never says a word. Occasionally she starts to hum, and Elanor slaps her hand to silence her.

Elanor only lets Isobel eat specially-treated food she brought along, which is laced with drugs that dull the senses and willpower. She'll let Isobel sober up in Nalaam to be presentable to buyers, but she doesn't want her valuables running away. Elanor keeps Isobel veiled to hide that she's an eladrin woman, and forces her to wear multiple gold rings and necklaces so she can't teleport. She never lets Isobel leave her sight, and won't blink to kill anyone who tries to steal from her.

Ladies' Man.

Another object of interest is **Olivert Boone**, a tall, refined-looking tiefling, dressed in a long leather coat, wearing an ostentatious red-velvet vest. His horns sprout through a rough hat that he wears to shield his eyes from the sun. He smiles charmingly at the two lovely, high-class looking women who have draped themselves around his shoulders. Once he has stowed his luggage (in Car14), he makes straight for the common food car (Car 13). He proceeds to buy drinks for the two dozen people there, flirts with some women, and then heads to the first class lounge (Car 19), grinning at the jealous anger of his two lady-friends.



An eladrin woman just turned 20, Isobel is a third generation Danoran, basically born and raised to breed more eladrin. Her host family has a small stable of six eladrin women, and they import eladrin men to father children. The sons are sold to other Danoran households, half the daughters are kept as future breeding stock, and the rest are trained to be fine wives for wealthy patrons around the continent.

When she's not affected by Elanor's mind-numbing drugs and magic, Isobel realizes that she's basically a slave, but she has no real desire to escape: she knows she could never survive on her own.

Among the many skills she was trained in to make her a desirable wife, Isobel has a beautiful singing voice, but while drugged she just hums to herself, mostly tragic songs about suicide and revenge.

Well, that Was Lucky.

Verzubak Tantalovich, a bleary-eyed and richly dressed dwarf, boards in the coach section (Car 10), then makes his way through crowded aisles to his seat in Car 15. As he is passing through the common dining car, there is a small outcry: a man has choked on a small nut and died. The PCs might investigate or learn later that the dead man was armed with a hidden, poisoned dagger, and he had a portrait in his pocket of a dwarf that sort of resembles Verzubak.

The dagger-armed man truly choked on the nut just as his target was passing by—Verzubak jostled him by accident. The dwarf is just lucky, thanks to the power of a pair of dice he uses as an enchanted implement. The power is subtle, but it protects him even in Danor's dead magic zone.

Secret Mission.

Bree, Boone, and Verzubak all note each other, but they don't interact. Someone hanging out in the first-class lounge who makes a very good Insight check (DC 24) can tell that the dwarf is ignoring the others a bit too studiously, but Boone and Bree are good enough liars not to give any tells unless the PCs engage them in close conversation.

Night in Cherage

Social. Real-Time. Level 8.

It's much harder to keep an eye on suspects when they all get off the train for the night in the capital of Danor.

The train arrives in Cherage at 5:38 PM. A few minutes later another train, heading west from Orithea, pulls up. Both park for the night.

Fifteen minutes outside of Cherage, the train guard Malia asks everyone to please return to their seats to keep an eye on their personal effects. The enclaves are always busy, she says, and it's easy for thieves to hop on board in the commotion and nick unattended valuables.

The majestic city looms on the hills around the station, casting deep purple shadows in the light of the setting sun. Already lights are beginning to turn the city into a shining wonder of wealth and prosperity. The hills shield the city proper from the smoke of its inland industries, but you can still smell soot on the wind.

The conductor and various security staff have repeatedly reminded you of Cherage's curfew for visitors, often pointing out tall buildings that show the scars of old fires. Because the Workers' Riots a generation ago nearly burned the city to the ground, now only those few citizens with proper passes are allowed to travel between city districts after sunset. But you are welcome to enjoy the fine dining and entertainments of the rail enclave.

Cherage is the capital of Danor, built on several hills around a bay. Streets are lit by gas lamps that reflect off the high windows Cheragans are fond of. Districts are separated more by elevation and architecture than by walls or gates. Police have the authority to ask for identity papers; anyone found outside their "home district" at night is arrested. The party's train tickets count as a permit for the railroad enclave, a few city blocks ringed by a 20-ft. wall, as well as rail tracks that intersect with the city's main railyard. The wall is more of a reminder than a blockade: it has many gaps, holes, and unlocked gates that anyone determined to break curfew can use to reach the rest of the city.

The enclave itself has one cheap hotel and one fancier hotel (where the PCs will stay), located on opposite sides of the train tracks. A handful of cheap bars, one fancy bar, two theaters, four restaurants, and a somewhat conservative dance hall cater to passengers, staying open well past midnight. Other buildings of note include a police station, the office of the city's transportation authority, and a few touristy museums.

The PCs are welcome to sleep in their suite on the train, but most everyone else goes to the hotels.



A tiefling with a smile that women swoon for, Boone went adventuring in the Malice Lands at an early age. He charmed many a woman and had to defend himself from jealous husbands. He developed an amazing knack with a pistol, and eventually while exploring burnt-out ruins he stumbled upon a magic urn. When opened, it released a demon that possessed his pistol, granting him nearly unparalleled accuracy, but at a price. His demon pistol demands blood.

Already a misogynist, it wasn't hard for him to switch to killing women after he loved them. He particularly likes bringing women on his adventures and coming back with sad tales of their demise. He came to Bree's attention when he rolled into Danor with chests full of loot from his adventures. She just knows his reputation as a gunslinger, and has no idea he's a serial killer.

When he's amused, he slaps one hand on his chest as a one-handed clap, so he never has to take his pistol hand far from his weapon. He's working this mission for the money (about 3,000 gp), and has no ideological ties to Luc Jierre.



A bleary-eyed dwarf who only lights up when he's winning at dice, Verzubak has studied the magic and mathematics of luck. Unfortunately, his calculations don't work as well in Danor's dead magic zone, so he owes a few hundred gold pieces to a gambling den in Keskay. But Verzubak still has enough luck that the killer sent for him dies before he even sees the dwarf.

He plans to bet boldly in the Nalaam casinos, which will test his theories to the limits, since magic is forbidden at the betting tables. To him, this bodyguard mission is just a way to get seed money for his "research."

Though he looks perpetually tired, he loves to drone on to anyone who'll pay attention. A genuinely nice dwarf, he can find a way to pay a stranger three compliments in a single sentence, and if someone looks like they're getting bored with his talk about numbers and science he'll let them talk and make them feel far more interesting compared to him.

Getting Into Trouble.

The passengers go about their own affairs at night, and the party might decide to follow one or split up to keep tabs on several. See the Player's Guide, Tailing a Suspect skill challenge (page 60), for guidelines. If the party gets into trouble, enclave police are equipped to deal with mundane threats, not highly-trained spies and spellcasters. But they can call for reinforcements, and enough carbines and pistols should be sufficient to get even PCs to stand down. If the party comes quietly, the cops will let them go for a small bribe (10 gp apiece). If the party fights, they might end up tossed in an oubliette and held until the Danorans figure out their identities.

Should the party raise red flags but escape, or if they piss off the wrong people, the next morning the police come on the train and insist

on searching the party and confiscating any weapons or magic items they find, calling them evidence. They happily explain that the party is free to stay in town and file the proper paperwork to have the items returned to them after the investigation is over. Of course, the same goes for other travelers, so the party's suspects aren't eager to start a fight.

The Grientos.

The family go to a few children-friendly buildings in the enclave, with Damata listing off interesting factoids about construction, engineering, and mathematics to educate his children ("these arches are fascinating constructs, each one using only gravity, placed on a single keystone to keep the entire building erect!," "This building was constructed in the early age after the Great Malice, by a governor who wanted to pay homage to his dead wife, whose stone portraiture makes up the columns . . . ," etc.).

As the family returns to the hotel, however, they cross paths with a group of drunken militia members traveling coach—the militia members sling insults, slurs, and half-full bottles at the foreigners. The group claims that all Berans are savages, especially orcs, and that they deserve only to be enslaved for their own good. Damata attempts to herd his family away from the belligerents, but his daughter Dabo starts crying and runs straight at them (in orcish culture, a girl's temper tantrums tend to be aggressive). If the party doesn't intervene, Dabo gets savagely beaten and kicked before she can be pulled away, and Tarro receives a black eye after biting one of the militia members' ankles.

If the party intervenes, the militia members aren't a real threat (level 1 soldiers), but a scuffle will draw the attention of the local police, who'll side with the militia.

Elanor and Isobel.

Elanor meets with two Cherage town guards after disembarking; an hour later, after she settles in her hotel room, they return with a travel permit to a wealthy district. She heads out, with Isobel in tow and the guards as protection, and arrives at a rather opulent manor house high upon a hill. She is greeted warmly at the door, and is welcomed inside.

Her host, a high-ranking bureaucrat named **Bucher Monmarl**, flatters Elanor and adores Isobel, hoping to curry favor so some day he might benefit from the woman's fleshmongering. A few more guests arrive and share a small banquet. Getting a close look would be very tough, but it would yield the purpose of Elanor's trip.

The Bodyguards.

Boone, Bree, and Verzubak travel independently but act in concert. They all get rooms in the fancy hotel, and then stagger their departure. The plan is for Boone to leave around 8 PM, being flamboyant, flirting with women in the hotel lobby, and intentionally attracting attention. He heads to the "cheap" hotel, where he convinces a 16-year-old woman to come with him to the enclave's fanciest bar, *L'Wabe du Fonne*. Five minutes later, Bree leaves her room and heads to the same bar. Verzubak, who has been sitting in the hotel lobby fiddling with dice and a notebook, watches both Boone and Bree to see if anyone follows them. Then, five minutes behind Bree, he goes to the same bar.

If the PCs follow Boone or Bree, Verzubak notices them if their "Stay Hidden" check (see Tailing a Suspect, page 60) does not beat DC 28. If they try to Stay Hidden from Verzubak, they only have to beat DC 23.

The bar is busy enough that the trio can all spend time there without crossing paths. Bree nurses a drink, Boone chats up this evening's lady,



and Verzubak plays the stereotypical Drakran dwarf, drinking, buying drinks, and laughing at people's jokes. He plays a lot of dice, losing mostly, but winning big once to recoup his stake.

At roughly 9 PM, Verzubak booms out a toast that quiets the room, offering to buy a round if everyone will listen to him for just a minute. His toast is a signal to the other two.

If he saw no one following either: "To those we trust in, and to those who earn our trust. May alcohol forever help bring us together!"

If someone was following Boone: "To adventure, and never waking up in the same town twice. Or at least not the same bed!"

If someone was following Bree: "To the owners of this fine establishment, who will soon be taking a lot of money from me. You give us drink; we give you this toast!"

If both of them were followed: "To the train, which unifies this continent, and to all the lovely people aboard it who will be sleeping off their hangovers tomorrow!"

If he personally is being followed: "All of you care so much for free drinks that you'll listen to a foreigner ramble on, so I suppose I must toast myself! To Verzubak Tantalovich!" (This elicits laughing boos.)

If Verzubak suspects the PCs have been following, he heads to them right after his toast and buys them a drink first, then suggests they play some dice. This lets his accomplices know who to look out for. After that, the dwarf's job for the night is done. He keeps a wary eye out for clues, but mostly just tries to help everyone have a good time. At 11 PM he joins a small crowd who head out to watch a burlesque show.

Sneaking Out.

A few minutes after Verzubak's toast, Boone suggests he and his young lady friend should find some place private. Boone offers some high-spirited shouts to the other beautiful women around the room, but then he and his friend leave the bar and head out of the rail enclave. They sneak north along the railroad tracks, avoiding any guards. Then they stop in an alleyway and have some private time.

Perhaps ten minutes later, Bree finishes her drink and leaves discreetly. She takes a different route out of the enclave, using an official travel pass to get past the guards. But then she takes a path that goes right past Boone's alley. If anyone followed her, and managed to get out of the enclave, Boone tries to disrupt their pursuit when they come past by stumbling into them, pretending to be drunker than he is, and threatening to challenge them to pistols at dawn. This distraction gives Bree a chance to shake the party, and counts as one failed "keeping up" check.

If the PCs aren't simply following the same streets Bree takes, Boone won't spot them. He's busy, after all.

Bree's Rendezvous.

Bree goes to a carriage depot and hires a ride. In the post-curfew streets of Cherage, following her will be challenging, but she goes to the Sovereign's mansion even if she knows she's being pursued. More and more police roam the streets as the party nears the capital district where all the major government buildings are. The Sovereign's mansion itself has a wide, flat lawn surrounding it, and numerous soldiers guard the walls.

Getting close ought to yield information, but there is almost no chance the party can follow Bree to the actual meeting. The grounds of the mansion are studded with stones gathered from Methia, the former capital of the old holy empire of the Clergy, abandoned after the Great Malice. These stones nullify magic entirely, except for a tiefling's *infernal wrath* power. Spellcasters might be able to scrape by elsewhere in the country, carrying their own mana with them, but here they are powerless.

Inside the mansion, Bree meets with Luc and Ottavia, who did not know about her or Caius. Sovereign Han Jierre, who is one of the heads of the entire Obscurati and knew Caius, makes the connection and tasks Bree with helping keep Luc safe on his journey. They spend the next few hours discussing plans, and then Bree heads back to the rail enclave.

Extracurricular Activity.

After Bree passes Boone, his job for the evening is done. He takes his lady to an even more secluded spot, then stabs her through her heart. He takes her hair and uses it as a brush to coat his demonic pistol in blood, then spends a few minutes disemboweling her. He stretches her limbs spread-eagle, places her liver in her right hand, her heart in her left, then pulls her intestines into a ring around her. When he's finished he walks away, and slowly the blood coating him is absorbed into the pistol, turning the metal crimson. It slowly fades over the coming day.

If the PCs won't give him privacy, he abandons his plan, and is surly the entire next day as the demon in his gun urges him to kill.

If interrupted during the act, Boone flees frantically, trying to hide his face. If cornered or if he knows he's been identified, he fights back. If he gets away, though, he makes a point of finding a police station and reporting that he was attacked by a group of thugs, led by a man with spiky white hair. He claims the woman he left the bar with was taken, and he was left in an alley. The cops eventually find the woman's body, and assume Boone is just a victim.

If he is not interrupted, though, Boone returns to his hotel and sleeps soundly. The next morning there's some talk about a woman who was brutally murdered in the night, but no one links her to the tiefling gunslinger. Boone is going to repeat this procedure every night throughout the journey until he's caught. He's careless on the first night, killing someone he's been seen with, but from then on he picks up strangers and performs his ritual sacrifice with somewhat more discretion.

Eventually, if the PCs don't manage to catch Boone first, Bree figures out what he's been doing and tries to punish him. That event is detailed in the scene Three Milestones (page 320).

Mister Mapple.

At some point later in the evening, perhaps as the PCs are returning to their hotel room, a man darts past them, grinning like he's enjoying himself. The shabby-looking gentleman wears nothing but a long coat with patches and holes, and he smells rather pungently of bath oils. Four enclave guards chase after him, but the man runs much faster. It only takes a few moments for the stranger to sprint to the bridge over the train tracks and jump down onto the train, not even breaking stride. He tumbles and rolls to the far side of the train, out of sight of the guards.

This is **Andrei von Recklinghausen**. If the PCs inquire, they learn that the stranger came to the hotel's front counter, introduced himself as "**Mister Mapple**," and asked if anyone was staying in the top floor Mayoral Suite. When he learned no one was, he walked outside and was spotted climbing up the side of the building. (He had pants on at that point.)

After half an hour, the hotel sent people up, and they found Mapple bathing in the suite's tub. He shoved his way past the guards with ease, and actually seemed to take it slow on the stairs down, like he was enjoying being chased. The cops figure there's no use looking for him now.

Mister Mapple, for his part, sneaks onto the train, steals clothes from random people's luggage, and heads for Car 6. He peels open the wooden paneling on a box of silver religious artifacts and plenty of cloth padding. He shifts the contents into other boxes and crates, then uses the box as his bed. He sleeps with one eye open.

Into the Malice Lands

Exposition. Montage. Level 8.

The railroad heads into an inhospitable region of wild magic.

Boarding: Cardiff Hengehill, Luc Jierre, Ottavia Sacredote.

Once again, the train is set to leave at 7:30 AM. First- and second-class passengers can have porters bring their luggage down from the hotel. If the party got into any trouble the night before, the police might show up around 6:30 to question them and search their suite. Conductor Xorin is aghast that his first-class travelers might be inconvenienced, and so he can manage to keep the party out of jail as long as they don't fight back.

If Boone was unmasked, he tries to sneak back aboard the train. He's taken a ton of precautions, so unless the party explicitly keeps an eye out for him around the cargo cars, he manages to stow away on board. Once he gets to Orithea he'll buy an illusory disguise and pick his mission back up where he left off.

New Passengers.

As the party gets back aboard, they notice Malia the train guard followed by a pair of men carrying a huge chest marked with the logo of a prominent gun manufacturer. These are the rifles she's acquired for the safari. She orders the men to load them into the first class lounge car's supply room.

Just then a tall handsome man with a briefcase strapped to his wrist by a leather cord—**Cardiff Hengehill**—pushes through the crowd, grabs Malia by the arm, and drags her aside for a private conversation. She shakes free of his grasp, but remains professional as she quietly tells him she'll give him a letter later with details on the meeting she has arranged. Cardiff walks off to Car 14 without a word.

A bit later, a very unusual pair arrives at first class: a flat-faced tiefling man with an air of boredom about him walks arm-in-arm with a sternly beautiful elf woman. Geometric tattoos are visible along her hands and neck, which the party might recognize (Religion DC 18) mark her as an oracle of the Clergy. They are both dressed in quite high fashion, and their luggage is carried on by private servants. Onlookers are abuzz with speculation about them.

Elanor Yanette recognizes the tiefling as **Luc Jierre**, and gossips loudly that he has a reputation as something of a shut-in, since he hasn't been seen in town for a few years. The woman she guesses is a bought bride, and she laments that she wasn't able to arrange the pairing.

Just before they get on the train, the woman, **Ottavia Sacredote**, waves her hands in very precise gestures. Luc pauses, responds with a few gestures of his own, and the woman laughs. She makes one more volley of hand signals, and then Luc thanks the porters, stuttering, "Th-th-the lady s-s-says th-th-thank you." Then they head for their suite in Car 18.

In the very unlikely situation that any PC understands the recently-developed Crisillyiri sign language, Ottavia asked if Luc was nervous, and he said that he's ridden the train plenty of times. If the party was hoping to eavesdrop, they're out of luck.

Across the Border.

Throughout the day the party can cross paths with other guests in the lounge car. The train goes through a city every hour or so, until finally at 4:51 PM it reaches a station at the base of a hilltop fort. This marks the border between Danor and the Malice Lands. Numerous soldiers disembark, leaving the coach section fairly empty. A boisterous band greets them, creating a festive atmosphere for a few minutes before the train moves on.

The air tingles and seems to shift temperature and humidity based on one's emotions (hence why the fort tries so hard to keep its troops spirits up). Outside the train, the terrain south of the track is a bog with jagged rocks rising out of it; to the north is a flat sheet of ice with cactuses sticking out of it.

Malia the train guard comes through and reminds people that while magic can work, because of the risks it poses they must insist that none be used until the train reaches Orithea. An assistant with her begins moving all the clocks on the train forward one hour. They've entered a new time zone.

Safari Time!

Malia starts rounding up people who were interested in shooting at malice beasts. She hands out rifles to those who are interested, then leads people up to the roof of Car 19. Malia's comfortable walking up top, but she suggests everyone else sit down and plant their feet on the lip along the edge. If anyone falls, the train can stop, but the conductor will be furious for being made late.

The train slows to a leisurely 20 miles per hour (the equivalent of 30 squares per round). This afternoon's safari will have to be brief—the train's schedule can only spare about half an hour—but tomorrow they'll have a couple hours. A keg of beer and pitchers of hot spiced cider are provided to make for a pleasant experience even if no monsters show up.

Feel free to choose a few Level 4 to 6 creatures, mostly natural or elemental beasts, and monstrify them with wretched malformations. Some just loiter a few hundred feet away. Some heard the train coming and roar as it rolls past, or charge after it, trying to leap onto its side and climb up. Malia just laughs, confident people in and on the train are safe.

Shooters.

In addition to any PCs who get involved, Bree, Boone, Cardiff, and both Damata Griento and his son Tarro want a crack at the monsters. Cardiff transfers the cord of his briefcase to his ankle instead of his wrist, so it won't bother his shooting. Malia and four other train guards also have rifles, but they don't shoot unless a monster looks like it might be an actual threat.

After the group fires a few dozen shots, people spot a figure standing atop Car 6, shouting at them and waving a crowbar in the air in frustration. This is Mister Mapple, whose afternoon nap was ruined by all the racket. The PCs should recognize his coat. A few guards go to try to get him down, but he ducks back into one of the cargo cars and hides.

Aurora over Orithea

Exploration/Social. Montage. Level 8.

As the train stops for the second night, the party can observe suspicious movements of the enemy.

The train arrives in Orithea at 6:04 PM. The train coming from Trekhom has already arrived.

The evening sky is streaked with the brilliant colors of gold, violet, red, and blue. More than just a sunset, the heavens warp and change the sun's light into an aurora, painting the sky with streaks of iridescent, chaotic color and ribbons of ethereal light.

Like the day before, fifteen minutes outside of Orithea the train guard Malia asks everyone to please return to their seats to keep an eye on their personal effects. The enclaves are always busy, she reminds you, and it's easy for thieves to hop on board in the commotion and nick unattended valuables.

As you roll into Orithea you can spot people mingling atop the odd wobbling spires that rise above so many of the buildings in this city. Almost no structures have straight edges. Out on the coast, even the beam cast by a lighthouse seems to curve on its way out to sea.

Then you enter the Danoran-operated rail enclave, and it's all perpendicular and parallel lines. The layout here is the same as every other nightly stop, with one fancy hotel, one common hotel, and plenty of entertainment. But there's no curfew like in Cherage, and out there await the oddities of Orithea, this one safe oasis in the Malice Lands.

Orithea's city center is smaller than Cherage, but dozens of idiosyncratic suburban farming towns surround it. Once you get outside the rail enclave there are a few places that tourists tend to gather. A series of high towers on hills north of the city give spectacular views of the constant aurora, and the Night Market near the docks is full of crafters hawking their wares and spellcasters promising safe rituals in the dim orange-green light.

In the enclave, the main entertainments are much tamer than in Cherage. Lounge singers backed by strings and pianos are popular, and one theater puts on an elaborate puppetry show. A museum tells the history of the Malice Lands, with a prominent exhibit presenting relics of the first "Malice State," Pala, founded by the philosopher William Miller shortly after the Great Malice. Daring travelers can sign up for an overnight trek outside the stable zone, to ruins north of the city, which are seeded with kitschy fake relics of a lost civilization.

Law Enforcement.

Standards are much laxer in Orithea than Cherage, and the city is more welcoming of weirdoes and foreigners. If the party causes trouble and gets caught, the city doesn't want to hold onto prisoners if it can just ship them out, so the party will be held overnight, then escorted to the train by a large complement of guards who ensure the group leaves town.

The Grientos.

The family takes in a puppet show until 8 PM, then heads to a high tower near the center of town—not as good a view as the north hill towers, but a safer spot to watch the aurora. Plus, there's a restaurant. Dabo claims to be a vegetarian, and Tarro ends his meal early to crawl beneath the table, but by and large the night is uneventful. Damata leaves a hefty tip after the meal, and has a romantic dance with Ejeka (much to Dabo and Tarro's disgust).

Elanor & Isobel.

Elanor leaves the hotel at 7 PM for the Night Market, Isobel as always at her side. Unbeknownst to her, Mister Mapple follows her, and the party might cross his path if they're also watching Elanor.

Other shoppers give Elanor a wide berth. She visits a small apothecary that deals in potions of charm and domination, where she purchases a few. On her way back to the rail enclave, Mister Mapple steps into her path and tries to engage Isobel in conversation, reciting a love poem about a troll who desired a princess, all the while wholly ignoring Elanor. Isobel of course is too dazed to respond coherently. Mister Mapple tries to pull aside the veils covering her face. Elanor reacts by reaching for her spell components, but Mister Mapple grabs her wrist and squeezes. He asks if she's willing to risk fighting him here. Elanor screams for help and guards, pretending to be a helpless old woman. At the sudden attention, Mapple backs away, then runs, leaps, and clambers up to a rooftop, out of sight.

Cardiff.

Cardiff takes a carriage to a very luxurious restaurant on top of one of the aurora observing towers, called Brilliance. He clearly has gold, and uses it to get a window seat, where he eats a fine steak, completely alone. During the meal he reads from a Dwarven phrasebook, and seems to be preparing for a business meeting. Cardiff leaves the restaurant shortly after his meal, and goes to one of the fancier inns in town for the night, but not one inside the enclave. He is never without his briefcase.

Malia.

Malia lingers at the train as many of the other militia members depart. When they ask her to join, she confesses that she's worried about some of the freight, and is staying behind to check up on it. She searches the cargo cars and eventually spots Mister Mapple's little nest in the box that once held silver church icons. Malia does not report the disturbance.

She heads to the Night Market. She makes contact with an old witch who offers potions and trinkets. Malia knows the witch, though, and the two of them leave for a nearby inn, where they descend to a basement. Malia pays the witch 75 gold pieces to use a Sending ritual to contact brigands in the Malice Lands. Tomorrow those brigands will rob the train.

The message is, "Train arrives at nine. Four guards at front. Six guards at caboose, eight hundred feet back. Target car six. Barricade six hundred feet from monster." Afterward, Malia goes to the Effervescent Cup back in the enclave, where she meets her fellow train guards.

Mister Mapple.

The stowaway has become intrigued by Isobel, whom he sees as a prisoner. His romantic streak manifests in a stalker-ish way, and he follows her and Elanor to the Night Market, as mentioned above. After Elanor gets him to back off, he flees back to the enclave, climbs the outside wall of the hotel and breaks into Elanor's hotel suite. He takes a relaxing bubble bath, steals some of her money, and then leaves.

Luc's Crew.

Boone, Bree, and Verzubak repeat the procedure from the night before, with just a few adjustments. After everyone gets settled in their rooms, Bree goes by their rooms and Luc and Ottavia's room. She slips a note under the door, explaining what route she wants that particular person to take, but she makes no mention of the others, so that the letter won't by itself reveal they're all working together.

At 7:30 PM, Bree goes to the *Effervescent Cup*. Shortly thereafter, Boone picks up a lady from the fancy hotel and entertains her between the hotel and the bar—they dally on the bridge over the train tracks.

Verzubak waits behind, playing dice with one of the enclave guards and writing mathematic equations in his notebook. Luc and Ottavia go to the concierge desk, and Luc stutteringly asks for advice on a few bars in the area. Then they too head out, Luc carrying a large case that contains his lantern. They pass Boone, who keeps an eye out to see if anyone's watching them. Then Verzubak follows from the hotel.

At the bar, once again they use toasts to signal whether they're being followed. In addition to the ones before (see page 301), they also use:

If Verzubak saw Luc and Ottavia followed: "To meeting strangers, and realizing that you only want to kill about half the people you meet!"

If Boone saw Luc and Ottavia followed: Boone toasts, "I don't want to detract from my own great time, but I just want everyone to raise a glass to my fellow tiefling. He looks a little nervous being out of Danor, so let's show him a good time, ah? Cheers!"

Luc's Crew Reacts.

The bodyguards try to use the same tactic every night to give Luc and Ottavia cover from being followed. If one of the bodyguards is unavailable—most likely Boone—the others follow as much of the plan as possible. If two of them are out, the one remaining bodyguard just tries to keep watch and slow down pursuers.

If they notice the party following one time, they'll be suspicious, but it's not enough for them to immediately decide the party is spying on them and must be eliminated. If they fumble a few times, though, Luc's crew will look to Ottavia for guidance. She follows the Obscurati guideline of maintaining secrecy first, and will tell everyone to stay as close to the train as possible. They'll try not to do anything to give the spies any more information, and Luc will ask the conductor to make the party vacate their suite and catch the next train. If that still doesn't work, they'll wait until the train has passed Nalaam to eliminate the threat (as detailed in Three Milestones, page 320).

If the party ever directly attacks Luc's party, all members who are present will defend each other with lethal force. Any survivors might try to get the party thrown off the train or arrested. Note that while it might make sense for Luc to just leave this train and catch the next day's, doing so will cause the party to miss out of most of the side plots that resolve in Nalaam.

If the party is discreet, though, Luc's crew won't suspect anything until Ottavia receives a Sending ritual in Trekhom.

Sneaking Out.

As in Cherage, Boone sneaks out with his lady friend. He plants himself in a spot on the way to the Night Market. Ten minutes later Bree departs and heads for the docks, where she pays a handful of dockers to do her a favor, then sits and watches the aurora over the sea.

Finally Luc and Ottavia excuse themselves and head out. They take a route past Boone, into the Night Market, then to a carriage depot. They hire a carriage for the evening and head to the docks, past Bree, toward the city's lighthouse.

If anyone is following them to the Night Market, Boone will again do his "stumble and get angry" trick to slow the pursuers. If the party follows them to the docks, Bree has her hired dockers delay the party by dropping and shattering crates in the road just after Luc and Ottavia's carriage goes by. If the PCs occupy a carriage of their own, they won't be able to get through the mess and will have to detour around it.

Once Bree's confident Luc and Ottavia are not being followed, she rendezvouses with them at the lighthouse.

Boone's Next Murder.

After his job is done, Boone takes his lady to an inn, sleeps with her, then slips out. He finds a random woman of the evening, takes her to an alley, and ritually sacrifices her to his pistol, just like in Cherage. The next morning, people again are talking about rumors of a second grisly murder, which leads to suspicions that the killer might be on the train.

Luc & Ottavia.

Luc and Ottavia follow Bree's plan to avoid being observed, but their ultimate goal is to present Luc's invention to a local Obscurati cell leader in Orithea. They meet on a small spit of land that juts into the harbor, at a small support building adjacent to the city's lighthouse, where a crowd of twenty armed guards greet their carriage.

Inside, a wealthy architect named **Hanse Randall** watches Luc show off his lantern, and then magic-using assistants ask questions about how it works, how to recreate it, and how to scale it up to lighthouse size. During the course of these questions, a small accident occurs. The wild magic of the Malice Lands causes the lantern to surge with excess power while burning oil infused with the essence of Mavisha. At exactly 10:14 PM, every fire in the city is transformed into water, leaving the city lit only by the aurora. Simultaneously, a patch of sea around the lighthouse bursts into flames for a moment.

People in Orithea treat this sort of oddity like people living near a fault line would react to a minor earthquake. There's caution, but no one's too worried.

The Screaming Malice

Action. Tactical. Level 12.

Train robbers strike while a towering monster distracts the guards.

The train leaves Orithea at 7:30 AM. The complement of first-class suites stays the same, and no one of consequence boards in second class. As in Cherage, if Boone is on the run, he sneaks on board in coach.

As soon as the train clears Orithea, Malia invites interested parties back up onto the roof of the lounge car for another round of shooting at helpless malice beasts. The same group as before shoots—Bree, Boone, Cardiff, Damata and Tarro Griento (Cardiff again attaches his briefcase strap to his ankle instead of his wrist)—plus six of the train's guards. The terrain changes rapidly, and creatures obediently show up and die. This goes on until 9 AM, when a gang of brigands spring their surprise.

The brigands have created an illusory barricade of logs and explosives atop the rails east of the edge of a swamp, which is home to a horrible psychic monster called a screaming malice. When the train emerges from the swamp's fog, engineer Steeg sees the barricade and pulls on the brakes. Just as Malia predicted, the train manages to stop 50 feet from the illusion. The monster will spring from the swamp and attack the middle and rear of the train, giving the bandits easy access to the freight cars at the front of the train.

Great Train Robbery.

As the train is passing through a fog-filled swampy region, the train lurches and its brakes begin to screech. Everyone on the roof must make an Acrobatics check (DC 14) or fall off the side of the train. Those already seated are safe. The train travels 40 squares before stopping.

Just as the train screeches to a stop, a deafening chorus of roars sounds from the fog. The screaming malice rises from the swamp north of Car 10 and attacks.

List of Adversaries.

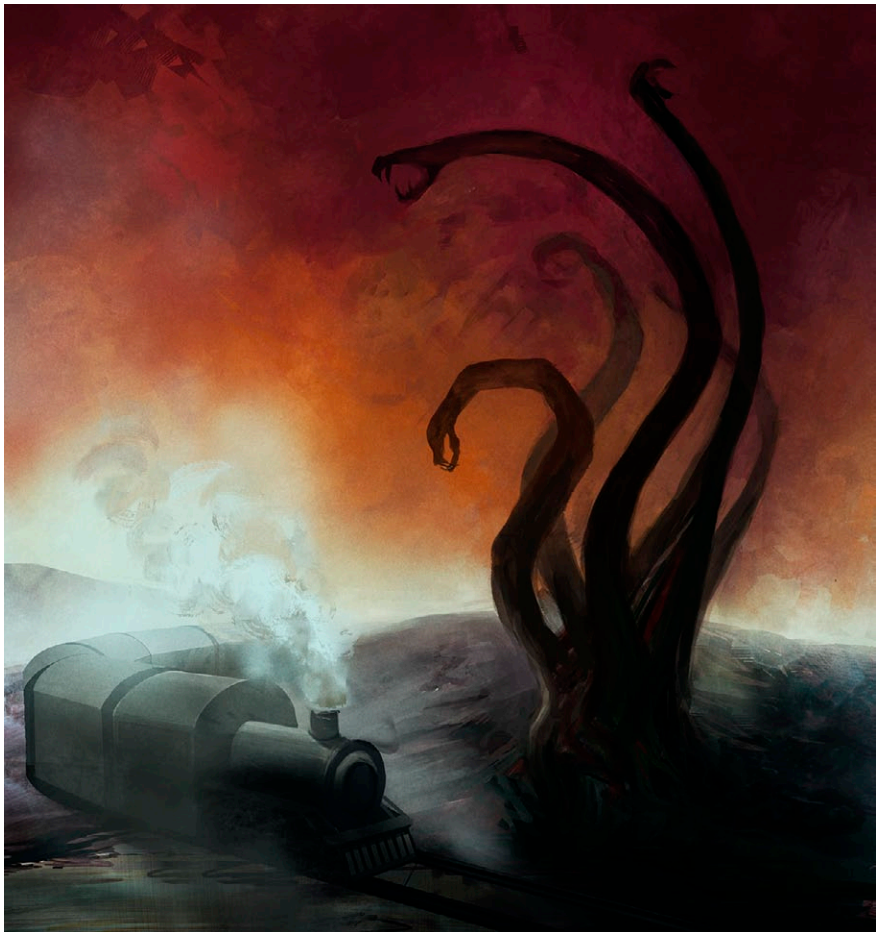
- Rodinn, Malice bandit captain
- screaming malice
- 8 Malice bandit riders
- 9 Malice beast steeds

Terrain.

The encounter is roughly divided into a swamp section to the west and a desert section to the east, with the train running eastward through them. At the start of the encounter, Cars 1 to 8 are in the desert, Cars 9 to 19 are in the swamp. The illusory log barricade the bandits set up is 50 ft. east of the locomotive (Car 1), created by the bandit leader

Rodinn. Clever PCs might notice that the nearby terrain of swamp and desert would not insufficient to provide enough logs.

The screaming malice appears north of Car 10. The assumed course of events is that the PCs make their way down the train to the screaming malice, then fight it off, save passengers from its spawn, or rush onward to the locomotive, to get the train moving. Use the timeline below to keep track of what happens up until when the PCs intervene in a particular location.



Timeline.

Front of Train.

- **Round One.** Bandits ride in. Chief guard Vodyarika Lerkem leads 3 other guards to the locomotive.
- **Rounds Two through Five.** Bandits jump their steeds onto the locomotive. They dismount and fire pistols while the steeds claw and bite. They kill one guard per round. Guards knock out one bandit each round. Engineer Steeg surrenders.
- **Round Six.** Bandits stabilize their wounded, who remain as rear flank.
- **Rounds Seven through Ten.** Bandit captain and four bandits remount and ride to Car 6.
- **Rounds Ten through Twelve.** Bandits shoot Mister Mapple, who tries to drive them off. He's left for dead, but will regenerate.
- **Rounds Thirteen through Twenty.** Bandits steal items of value from Car 6.
- **Rounds Twenty-One through Thirty.** If no one from rear of train is approaching, bandits quickly grab valuables in Cars 3, 4, and 5. They ride away as soon as they see trouble approaching.

Middle of Train.

- **Round One.** If any characters are near the front of the train, they may see a lump rising in the black, swampy water below the bridge. The tumescent growth rises, brackish water cascading off of it, revealing something slick, black, and tarry reflecting the dim sunlight. Something like a tentacle shoots suddenly out of it, smashing through the windows of Car 10. Other tendrils—actually long necks capped by amorphous, reptilian heads—rise up and begin to scream.
- **Round Two.** The head in Car 10 detaches, and the neck pulls back out. A new head regrows. The original head, still screaming, splits apart into four whip-tailed drakes called malice spawn. These begin to kill the passengers.
- **Rounds Three through Fourteen.** Each round, the screaming malice moves about half a car-length toward the back of the train. On odd-numbered rounds the malice reaches a new car, then smashes through windows with its head. Every even numbered round it detaches the head, creating new spawn. If not stopped, it reaches Car 16 in round thirteen.
- **Round Fifteen.** The screaming malice withdraws into the swamp, and its spawn leave the train. They'll merge with their original body, and thus feed the malice.

Rear of Train.

- **Round One.** People see the screaming malice rise up. The guards are dumbfounded. Tarro Griento screams, and Malia feigns terror as well. Cardiff detaches his briefcase from his ankle, considers attaching it to his wrist, but decides he needs both mobility and free hands to shoot.
- **Round Two.** Malia yells for the other guards to go help, and says she'll make sure the first class passengers are safe. She climbs down into the lounge car. Bree and Boone meet gazes, and she nods downward, implying they need to protect Luc.
- **Round Three.** Damata drags his son down the ladder, and heads into Car 18, shouting warnings as he runs to get his family in Car 17. Bree also climbs down, and she stops outside Luc and Ottavia's suite, banging on the door. Boone heads to the connection between Car 18 and 17, keeping an eye on the monster. Verzubak and a lot of other people flee from the second class suites toward the rear of the train.

The above people stay at these locations until the end of the encounter, unless the PCs get them to move.

The other six guards nervously approach the screaming malice along the train's roof. Cardiff grabs four of the rifles discarded by Damata, Boone, Bree, and Tarro, and he follows the guards.

- **Rounds Four through Eight.** Cardiff and the guards advance one car every two rounds, eventually stopping at Car 16.
- **Rounds Nine through Twelve.** Cardiff and the guards fire at the screaming malice; combined, they deal it 24 damage per round.
- **Round Thirteen.** With the monster only one car away, Cardiff and the guards run back toward the end of the train.

THE SUSPECTS.

- Luc & Ottavia stays locked in their suite in Car 18.
- Bree guards Car 18.
- Boone waits on roof between Car 17 and Car 18.
- Verzubak heads for Car 19.
- The Grientos stay in Car 17, arguing over whether to hide or run.
- Elanor & Isobel stay locked in their suite in Car 18.
- Mr. Mapple fights off bandits, gets shot and left for dead, regenerates.
- Cardiff leads train guards to shoot the monster.
- Malia waits in Car 19, trying to keep passengers from fleeing into the swamp.

See the table below to track how many spawn and casualties there are, and how much damage the guards have dealt with their rifles, when the PCs finally engage the monster. Make a note of how many casualties there are in this fight; it will affect the party in the encounter Three Milestones (page 320).

Round	Malice Location	# of Spawn	Casualties	Damage to Malice
1	Car 10	0	0	–
2	Car 10	4	0	–
3	Car 11	4	2	–
4	Car 11	8	4	–
5	Car 12	8	8	–
6	Car 12	12	12	–
7	Car 13	12	18	–
8	Car 13	16	24	–
9	Car 14	16	32	24
10	Car 14	20	40	48
11	Car 15	20	50	72
12	Car 15	20	60	96
13	Car 16	20	70	96
14	Car 16	20	80	96
15	Departs	20	80	96

Tactics.

The screaming malice feeds on intense emotions, and the bandits lured it to this swamp with a ritual and a sacrifice. When it senses the unease of the passengers on the train (due to the sudden braking), it approaches to eat. Its screams acts as a psychic aura to heighten people's emotions, and its spawn wreak havoc inside the train, causing panic and capturing actual flesh (terror is candy, flesh and blood are the veggies).

When the PCs get within its aura, or if any PCs attack it or its spawn, it is attracted by the rare taste of heroism. The malice spawn break off from killing passengers, and they rush the party—some through the train cars, others along the top. The screaming malice itself closes in and tries to bite and fling whoever is dealing the most damage to it. It does not move adjacent to the railroad, though, since the rigid metal injures it. (The attacks of the railroad guards are not substantial enough to get its attention, since the guards are as frightened as the passengers.)

The bandits try to flee before the party reaches them, but if forced into a fight the riders form a defensive group as they withdraw to their steeds, while their leader Rodinn unleashes dangerous wild magic.

Aftermath.

There are few wounded, but likely many are dead. Malia, upon seeing the carnage, withdraws from everyone, shocked because she just expected the bandits to use a monster as a distraction, not to actually kill people. Captured bandits know they had an ally on the train, but only Rodinn knows it was her. The surviving guards inspect the barricade and realize it's an illusion. Engineer Steeg nervously starts the train moving, and the illusion disappears when the locomotive hits it.

During the rest of the trip to Trekhom, Conductor Xorin makes his way through the train, checking on people and asking if they saw anything that might be useful for the formal investigation into the attack.

Rodinn, Malice Bandit Captain — Level 8 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, human — XP 350

HP 68; **Bloodied** 34 — **Initiative** +9
AC 21, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 18 — **Perception** +2
Speed 6

Traits

☼ **Exciting Chaos** ✦ Aura 10
The bandit leader growls in pain as his spell backfires, but then his eyes begin to crackle with red lightning, and he laughs maniacally.
Like anyone in the Malice Lands, whenever Rodinn uses a magic power he rolls 1d20. On a natural 1, the power goes awry. However, Rodinn actively wields chaotic magic, and he can turn these mishaps into power.
Whenever any magic goes awry within his aura, Rodinn gains an action point, and until the end of his next turn his attacks deal an extra 1d6 lightning damage on a hit.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Dual Daggers** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Rodinn makes the following attack twice.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4+4 damage.

⊘ **Chaos Blast** (implement) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +13 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d10+9 damage, and the target gains ongoing 5 damage (save ends). Roll 1d4 to determine the type: (1) acid; (2) cold; (3) fire; (4) lightning

✲ **Rodinn's Rhyming Doom** (implement, polymorph) ✦ Encounter
Attack: Area Burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +13 vs. Will
Hit: 2d12+11 damage. One object the target carries or is wearing transforms into something that rhymes with it until the end of the encounter. Swords might become boards, bows hoes, plate armor into grate armor, and so on. This generally either weakens the target until he gets a new weapon, slows him, or reduces his AC by 5, but other effects can occur, per your adjudication.

Minor Action

▸ **Major Illusion** ✦ Recharge when bloodied
The bandit leader blanches in horror as he looks past your shoulder. Behind you, something nasty snorts hot air across your neck.
Effect: Rodinn creates an illusion that can fit in a 2-square across space. The illusion lasts until the end of the encounter, or until it takes damage. It has Rodinn's defenses. Rodinn can spend a minor action to move it 6 squares.

▸ **Mishap Bound** ✦ Encounter
He snaps his fingers, and you feel dangerous fluctuations in your magic.
Effect: Rodinn chooses a target within 10 squares. The next magical effect the target uses mishaps.

Skills Arcana +9, Bluff +12, Intimidate +12
Str 8 (+2) **Dex** 18 (+7) **Wis** 8 (+2)
Con 14 (+6) **Int** 13 (+4) **Cha** 18 (+7)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common

Screaming Malice Level 8 Solo Brute
Gargantuan aberrant magical beast XP 1,750
HP 752; **Bloodied** 376 **Initiative** +4
AC 20, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18 **Perception** +6
Speed 6 (swampwalk)
Saving Throws: +5; **Action Points** 2

Traits

▸ **Truly Gargantuan**

The screaming malice has twice the normal HP for a creature of its level. However, once it is bloodied it flees, as do all its spawn.

The malice is immune to conditions and cannot be affected by forced movement. Its heads do not have this same immunity, however.

It takes a –5 penalty to attack rolls against creatures adjacent to its main body.

▸ **Many-Headed**

The screaming malice has five heads, each of which occupies its own space 2 squares on a side. When the malice moves it can move its heads to any space within 5 squares of its body.

The heads are part of the malice, and so share its defenses and HP. Effect that inflict conditions or force movement can affect a head, but each head tracks its conditions separately. The malice can only make attacks (including opportunity attacks) against creatures adjacent to one of its heads.

On the malice's turn, it gets one move action for its body and one standard action for each head.

▸ **All-Around Vision**

Enemies can't gain combat advantage by flanking the screaming malice, but they can by flanking one of its heads.

▸ **Malice Spawn**

Whenever a malice spawn is destroyed, the screaming malice takes 17 damage.

▸ **Vulnerable to Order**

The malice beast's flesh withers at the touch of the railroad. If its body or one of its heads starts its turn at ground level adjacent to the train, the screaming malice takes 17 points of damage.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Smashing Head** ✦ At-Will, Basic
The screaming malice swings a jet-black head at you.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 4d8 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square. The target can fall prone to reduce this damage by half and prevent the push.

⊘ **Bite** ✦ At-Will
Fangs as long as your arm graze your body as it clamps a maw around you. Frigid tar slathers your skin, making it hard to pull yourself free.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 4d10 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 19).
Special: When the malice moves its head, it can make an attack (+13 vs. Fort) to slide the grabbed target with the head. If the attack fails, the grab ends.

✣ **Shriek** ✦ At-Will (psychic, thunder)
The mouth stretches open mere feet from your face, then roars. This close, the wispy shadows of the monster's head appear full of hallucinatory detail and textures. You're so entranced you only realize afterward that its shriek caused blood to burst from your ears.
Attack: Close Burst 1 (one creature in burst); +11 vs. Fort
Hit: 3d8 thunder damage, and the target's emotions are affected until the end of the malice's next turn. Roll1d4.
1—Hopelessness: The target takes a –5 penalty to attack rolls.
2—Euphoria: The target's first action on its turn must be to run its full speed.
3—Fascination: The target is slowed and grants combat advantage.
4—Paranoia: The target must include an ally in any attacks it makes.

▸ **Produce Spawn** ✦ Recharge when there are 16 or fewer malice spawn.
Effect: The screaming malice detaches one of its heads. The squares it occupied become four new malice spawn. The head regrows at the end of the malice's next turn.

Str 24 (+11) **Dex** 10 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+6)
Con 20 (+9) **Int** 4 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+4)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —

Malice Spawn Level 8 Minion Skirmisher
Medium aberrant magical beast XP 88
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +7
AC 22, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18 **Perception** +9
Speed 7 (swampwalk)

Standard Actions

⊘ **Claw Swipe** ✦ At-Will, Basic
The tar-coated reptilian creature swipes a lanky clawed arm at you.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 8 damage.

Str 17 (+7) **Dex** 13 (+5) **Wis** 10 (+4)
Con 15 (+6) **Int** 4 (+1) **Cha** 6 (+2)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —

Malice Bandit Level 8 Minion Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 88
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +5
AC 18, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 18 **Perception** +4
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊘ **Pistol Whip** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 6 damage.

⊘ **Pistol** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature): +15 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage.

▸ **Band of Bandits** ✦ Encounter
Effect: The malice bandit treats the wounds of an adjacent malice bandit who is at 0 HP or below. That bandit is restored to 1 HP and can stand up.

Str 10 (+0) **Dex** 10 (+0) **Wis** 10 (+0)
Con 10 (+0) **Int** 10 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+0)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common

Malice Steed Level 8 Minion Skirmisher
Medium natural beast XP 88
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +5
AC 22, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18 **Perception** +4
Speed 8, jump 4

Traits

▸ **Getaway Vehicle** ✦ Mount
When a malice steed moves past an allied creature, that creature can mount the steed as an immediate interrupt, without the steed having to stop.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Disemboweling Claw** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 8 damage.

Str 10 (+0) **Dex** 10 (+0) **Wis** 10 (+0)
Con 10 (+0) **Int** 10 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+0)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —

ACT THREE: Turned Tables

This act turns the PCs from predator to prey as their targets receive word they're being spied on.

ARMS DEALERS.

Men hand out brochures near the hotel inviting visitors to various craftsmen of fine armaments. It has become a cottage industry in Drakr for weapons makers to collaborate with mages in the creation of new killing tools.

Either by following a brochure or following Verzubak after he toasts, the party might find their way to a shop called *Knigi, Grudi, Bongi, i Strely* (Books, Boobs, Bongs, and Booms), which caters to all sorts of marginally legal desires, with a library of controversial books and scrolls, exotic magical pornography, various drugs and paraphernalia, and, of course, explosives.

If the party wishes to purchase rare weapons like rifles, shotguns, or grenades, they can find them easily here.

Also present are primers on home-made explosives (like a dwarven *Anarchist's Cookbook*), written by Grundun Zubov, and filled with doomsday philosophy from the radical eschatologist Grandis Komanov. Zubov will launch a terror plot against Flint in Adventure Five, *Cauldron-Born*.

VLENDAM HEID.

What can be said about the world's most famous philosopher that has not already been written in hundreds of other books? Born into a family of well-to-do thinkers and soldiers, Heid's interests focused on mythology and how people perceive the world. His famous "On the Proper Endings of Things" secured his prosperity, as he regularly gives speaking tours around the continent. A wholly decent and wise man, Heid wants only to spare people undue suffering.



Layover in Trekhom

Exploration/Social. Montage. Level 8.

When the train stops in a city of dwarves, it's hard for suspects to blend in, but equally hard for the party to shadow them.

Less than an hour after the attack, the train crosses the border out of the Malice Lands and into Drakr. A steel spire rises five hundred feet above the desolate landscape, guarded by a battalion of soldiers and mages. The train does not stop there, and over the next few hours it passes by several small cities. At the conductor's urging, most people do not flee the train. He promises their needs will be better tended once they reach Trekhom.

The train is scheduled to arrive in Trekhom at 6:24 PM; if the party doesn't take a hand in getting the train moving again, it shows up at 6:45, by which time the enclave guards have gotten nervous.

With perfunctory formality, Malia comes through fifteen minutes outside of Trekhom. Still shocked by the morning's attack, she asks everyone to please return to their seats. After all that's happened today, she doesn't want anyone to fall prey to thieves hopping on board in the commotion to nick unattended valuables.

The train approaches Trekhom via a titanic, high bridge that passes over the mouth of a mighty sea. From a distance, you see pollution thicker than in any city you've been before. Huge steel mills churn coal smoke into the air. Gray snow drifts down from the sky, coating every surface in freezing wet grime. The enclave and surrounding railyard lie directly between the city center and the harbor, forcing the whole city to suffer from the smog in the name of efficient trade.

As the train arrives, night has already fallen and the air is thick enough with snow that you can only make out vague shapes of squat buildings, punctuated by massive towers.

Investigation.

When the train pulls up to the station, twenty enclave guards stand at ready, as well as the enclave's tiefling director. Conductor Xorin speaks with the director, and they quickly arrange for the basement of a nearby theater hall to be used as a makeshift morgue. Bereaved passengers have their tickets refunded and their lodgings paid for. Investigators try to question everyone so the railroad can prevent future attacks of this sort.

The train coming from Nalaam has already arrived. When word spreads of the monster in the Malice Lands, many of its passengers change their travel plans until they know it's safe.

Overnight, passengers in coach and second class are asked to take all their belongings because new cars will replace the damaged ones.

This scene is meant to give the party time to catch their breaths. Nothing dangerous happens tonight unless the PCs go looking for trouble.

The Grand Railyard.

The Avery Coast Railroad enclave sits within a crenellated wall, just to the north of a much larger conflux of railroads. Eight different railroads that span Drakr meet in a railyard that fills nearly an entire square mile. Hundreds of rail cars are parked along its tracks, and trains roll through the city at least once an hour.

People are free to come and go from the enclave, but the city does not offer much to the casual tourist. The city has no subrail due to disputes over subterranean property, but small overland rail lines weave between city districts. Older paths underground are also available, cramped for humans but lit with gaslamps and free of gray snow.

Law Enforcement.

Drakr is more prepared for dangerous travelers than the lands to the west. Human and dwarven mages—often armed with painful and borderline immoral magic such as mind control and soul-sucking necromancy—stand ready for people with uncanny combat prowess causing trouble.

Drakr is well-known for its harsh treatment of prisoners. Authorities here are said to prefer seeing people sent north to mining prisons than taking bribes to let them go. If the party gets arrested, they'd need to offer at least 500 gp to be set free.

Rendezvous with Their Ship.

As planned, the party's ship is waiting in the Trekhom harbor, perhaps stocked with supplies. If the party gets into too much trouble here, they can catch a ride and get to Sid Minos before the train does, but they'll miss out on the events in Nalaam.

The Grientos.

Ejeka wants to take her kids some place fun to take their minds off the carnage, but Damata is morbidly drawn to the theater where the bodies of the victims are being stored. People are talking about how a special guest is scheduled to speak tonight at the theater: Vlendam Heid, the dwarf who founded the major philosophical movement of Heid Eschatol.

Damata feels like it is fate that a man who wrote the book on preparing for death would be waiting for him on this trip where he expects to die. He insists on going, and Ejeka decides to go to a park with the kids to let them play in the dirty snow. Damata and Heid's interaction is presented in more detail below.

Elanor & Isobel.

Elanor huffs out of the enclave with Isobel in tow, takes a trolley to an inn at the docks called Korol Morya (Sea King), and meets an esteemed dwarf ritualist, **Vankloff Jeanov**. They go to a private basement room, where Vankloff acts as a conduit for long-distance communication.

If the party manages to eavesdrop, they can hear Vankloff speak with three different voices through the conversation—one with a brusque Drakran accent, one a charming Crisillyiri, and one a smarmy Risuri. They ask how the trip is going and express concern at the story of the attack.

Elanor is obsequious, thanking these "august gentlemen" for their "fine taste" and promising to "deliver the goods unmarred—I haven't had to beat her once yet, she is very obedient." She asks for specific instructions, and the Drakran voice responds that she can "simply come to the tower," and she will be welcomed, and, importantly, paid very handsomely for her "fresh, ripe, delightful cargo."

The Crisillyiri voice then asks if she has anything for his "other business interest." Elanor responds that she'll make a list of "prospective fodder for the arena," but warns that the best fighters were traveling first class and even he "can't go around abducting wealthy travelers, you might be killing my clientele."

The conversation is over in less than five minutes. Vankloff gets a payment of 1,100 gp. Afterward they share a drink, and then Elanor and Isobel return to the enclave hotel.

Cardiff.

During the investigation, Cardiff plays down his role in fighting the malice beast. Then he retires to his room in the enclave's fine hotel, changes clothes, exits discreetly, and rents a room in the cheaper hotel. He carries his briefcase hidden inside a dufflebag.

After midnight, Cardiff leaves the hotel and walks to the larger railyard. He's scheduled to meet his buyers at Warehouse Six at 1 AM. His buyer is a small, fat dwarf with wrinkled face full of stubble, dressed in a Drakran military uniform, named **Ulrik Pevedin**. He's flanked by two human attendants, and a dozen other armed soldiers hide in the warehouse. If the PCs don't interfere, the meeting proceeds as follows:

Cardiff puts down his dufflebag as he enters the warehouse, then pulls out his briefcase. He sets the briefcase on the table, and opens it. Inside there are many sheets of paper, and the fat dwarf leers over them.

"Ahahaha! These documents will be very valuable on the open market, my spy friend. Thank you ever so much. Danor's military secrets are, ahem, safe in my hands. Please, have a drink with me and tell me how you found these." The dwarf reaches to sift through the documents.

Cardiff closes the briefcase, almost catching the dwarf's fingers. "You can figure that out yourself after you pay me."

The dwarf heaves another briefcase onto the table. Cardiff moves to open it, then pauses and turns it so it opens facing the dwarf. The dwarf laughs, and after it opens without setting off any sort of trap, Cardiff counts the stacks of platinum and gold coins, then inspects a bag of gems, all told worth 17,000 gold pieces. He transfers the money to his dufflebag, leaving the dwarf's briefcase empty.

"You are too paranoid," says the dwarf, "even for this country. I would not kill you without being sure you are prepared for it."

"You can never be too prepared," Cardiff says. "Don't read page eight. It's trapped to explode."

Cardiff walks away with his dufflebag, and the dwarf laughs as he goes. Cardiff heads to the docks and catches a ship out at first light.

Stopping the Exchange.

If the party intervenes, Pevedin's fourteen goons will try to kill them. Cardiff will simply try to escape, either with the documents or with his reward (or both, if possible). Pevedin just cowers. You can use for his guards the stats of the Privateer Officers (page 294), reskinning sabers as maces.

The documents are related to Danor's naval maneuvers, and give highly detailed records of every ship in the navy, its captain, crew, armaments, capabilities, and recent deployments. This would be invaluable in the event of a war with Danor.

Malia.

Malia is enlisted to help carry bodies from the train to the theater-turned-morgue. Afterward she takes a long hot bath and goes to bed early, but has trouble sleeping. Malia really doesn't do much else of interest for the rest of the adventure, unless the PCs prompt some action.

Mister Mapple.

It's possible Mister Mapple was captured by the train guards after the attack, in which case he's taken into custody, but manages to escape shortly before dawn.

If unfettered, Mister Mapple follows the PCs because he's curious about them. He might address them briefly—calling down from a rooftop, ready to flee in an instant—to ask their names and introduce himself. He leaves before long, then goes to spy on Isobel through the window of Elanor's hotel room.

Luc's Crew.

Much like in Orithea, the group works to let Luc and Ottavia head to a lighthouse at the harbor. Due to the sad events of the afternoon, Verzubak has trouble finding people to gamble with, and Boone enlists a man as his drinking buddy instead of a young lady. The group watches each other's backs, heads to the inn *Korol Morya* (Sea King), and then gets the signal from Verzubak. Ottavia writes a note and has it delivered to Bree.

"Just received sending. Tell others, our mission under surveillance. Suspected Risuri group sailed into Beaumont. Do not confront. Give information to me."

If the party failed the secrecy part of the mission training montage, the note instead contains brief descriptions of the party, short enough to fit into the 25-word limit of the Sending ritual.

After seeing Luc off, Bree quietly shadows Boone. She doesn't see him kill his victim, but does find the body. She'll report this to Ottavia, who'll concoct a plan to deal with both the party and Boone, who has become a liability.

Luc and Ottavia meet up with a dwarf who owns all the prisons in northern Drakr, **Ramos Zoltan**. The lantern demonstration occurs without a hitch. If the PCs manage to get a glimpse into the meeting, they can see mock-ups of Trekhom's lighthouse, a few other city lighthouses along the Drakran coast, and the giant spire at the border of Drakr and the Malice Lands.

After leaving the lighthouse, Luc prepares a contingency. Using his family name as leverage, he gets the enclave director to agree to some special repairs for the train. He has a replica of his experiment installed atop the locomotive, concealed under a sheet of steel as part of the smokestack. He is also given access to the train's interior overnight; he scribes sigils into the hidden backsides of the gas lanterns that light the hallways. In this way, his lantern can affect the entire train if need be.

Doomed Men Are Often Philosophical

Social. Real-Time. Level 8.

Damata Griento has to decide how to face his death.

At 8 PM, the enclave clock tolls, and **Vlendam Heid** walks on stage, wearing a heavy brown suit and thick spectacles. The audience is filled with scholars, philosophers, and theologians, but a roped-off section in front reserved for railroad passengers is empty save for Damata. Depending on how the party has treated him, he might ask one or more PCs to sit with him.

"People ask me," he starts, "how will the world end? How in the various hells should I know? I am not a prophet. I don't believe you can know what will happen. Yes, mages and priests can see paths and visions, but it only takes one unlikely interaction or chance meeting to change the course of the future.

"I don't say I know how the world will end. But I know that it *will* end. Every fire burns itself out. Tomorrow morning, look to the sun. Feel how warm it is. One day it must burn out, and without it this world will freeze. Maybe some—."

He stops, then looks down to the front row and adjusts his glasses.

"I prepared a speech," he says. "They hired me and told me the audience would be layfolk. I tried to prepare something simple. I see I have some admirers in the back rows, but up front, it is pretty empty. You survived the attack on the train today?"

Damata nods. Unexpectedly, Heid sits down at the edge of the stage and lets his feet dangle as he addresses Damata (and the PCs, if they're present) directly.

"I have a contract, and I must speak on a level my audience understands. Let us be efficient. I wrote a rather long treatise on how best to prepare for death, and for other endings in life. Today there was a great deal of death on your train. I leave it to you: please ask whatever you want, and perhaps we can learn something from this tragedy."

Damata thinks for a minute, then says, "The people who died today don't have a chance to change anything anymore. I do. I hurt my family, and I can't stand myself now. I want to change things. I saw I could die out of nowhere, so I guess I should make amends while I have the chance."

"I have dealt with this before," Heid says. "Life has many chapters, and if you want the book to end properly, you must choose the path of each chapter well too."

"Oh." Damata slumps. "It's hard, because I think if I try to fix anything, I'll get myself killed."

People in the back of the theater make furious notes.

This sets off an earnest discussion between the burdened, plain-spoken Damata and Heid, who is intrigued by Damata's vulnerability. Damata explains his predicament. Heid seldom offers answers, but instead asks questions to guide Damata to figure out what matters to him. Heid's goal is to get Damata to act without fear, because he has come to grips with the possibilities of how this chapter of his life will end.

Final Will.

The PCs are welcome to get involved, but barring their intervention, Damata decides that he is likely to be beholden to the Family if he does not stand up to them. The only possible ending to this situation that he thinks would honor his family and his nation is if he follows the tradition of his ancestors and fights for his territory—in this case his family, his wealth, and his life. He is no fighter himself, but he comes from a family of warchiefs, and so he will rally warriors to him.

Unless somehow the party has completely avoided combat so far, Damata intends to ask the PCs to fight for him against the criminals who seek to make him their slave. He will offer to arm them and pay them in loot, as is the orcish way. If they refuse, he will see that as proof he is not worthy of his family name, and thus the weapons were not his to take. He will instead go to the meeting expecting with no payment, and will kill himself, because death is better than slavery.

The audience is quite excited, and Vlendam Heid himself asks to have the honor of a drink with Damata.

Recruitment.

Either at the theater or later in the evening, a slightly drunk Damata and Heid make Damata's offer to the PCs—waiting until they come back to the train at dawn if necessary. Using Heid's authority to back him up, Damata proposes that they are all free men, and that anyone who would threaten another man's family to make him into a slave does not deserve to live. Those who would aid such a slaver likewise deserve to die.

When they reach Nalaam, he asks the party to accompany him as his warriors. He'll have to see if he can buy some warpaint in the morning before the train departs, but he's prepared to arm them, though they must return the weapons to his family after the battle. In exchange, he'll grant them a place of honor at his villa in Ber.

Of course, if the party comes up with another solution (such as taking Cardiff's pay-off and handing it over to the Family), Damata's willing to change his mind. If the party refuses outright, Damata looks to Heid for strength, then nods and departs.

Weapons of the Warchiefs.

The simplest way to handle this is to just treat the items Damata carries as a collection of orcish tribal totems which anyone can wear. These totems only function when fighting for a warchief of the Griento family, and they grant the wearer 20 temporary hit points at the start of combat, and increase the enhancement bonuses of the PCs' weapons by 1 step (from +2 to +3, for instance).

If you want to add some more specificity, the following items might suffice. Whatever form Damata's items take, if the party steals them they will be cursed until they return the items to the Griento family. Whenever a cursed character gets into combat, he feels thick orcish hands grasp his limbs and prevent him from fighting. The cursed character is dazed until the end of his first turn each combat.

- Three sets of level 6 *iron armbands of power* (see the D&D 4E Adventurer's Vault).
- Three level 4 *+1 terror throwing axes* (see the D&D 4E Player's Handbook).
- Five level 3 *+1 thundering daggers* (see the D&D 4E Player's Handbook).
- Two sets of level 3 *gloves of piercing* (see the D&D 4E Player's Handbook).
- Two level 2 *shields of deflection* (see the D&D 4E Player's Handbook).
- Two level 9 weapons that have a +2 enhancement bonus.
- Two level 10 weapons that have a +2 enhancement bonus.

Under Investigation

Puzzle/Social. Real-Time. Level 9.

Luc Fierre's bodyguards try to figure out who's spying on them.

No Longer On Board: Cardiff.

During boarding, people mutter about news that another body was found overnight, ritually disemboweled like the last two. The prevailing theory is that whoever called the monster in the Malice Lands is trying to kill everyone on the train. Passengers are tense.

The train leaves at 7:30 AM. The coach cars are only a quarter full, and they will only end up half full by the time the train reaches Nalaam in the evening. Before then, things seem to have mellowed out, and the day goes by without any attacks or monsters.

The situation will depend immensely on how the party has done so far in their reconnaissance. They likely have identified Luc as their target, but they might not know how the others fit into the situation. Or they could have figured out everyone's situation, and just need to lay low and not attract attention.

Now, though, it's the villains' turn to spy on the party. Ottavia passes along a directive to in no way let on that they're suspicious, and not to take any overt actions. They are just to make a slight effort to tease information out of the party. If the party failed to maintain secrecy in the initial planning, Ottavia knows for sure who the PCs are. Otherwise, you might include some of the following encounters in the lounge car throughout the day.

Creepy Flirtations.

If the party has any female PCs, Boone will spend the morning flattering her shamelessly. If he feels he's got a shot, he suggests they retire to the party's suite while everyone else is eating lunch.

Throughout the day, the party might spot Boone flirting his way through second-class and coach. He only chats up women who look or sound Risuri.

Mysterious Couple at Lunch.

Luc and Ottavia enjoy wine and cheese, conversing by sign language. At one point Luc waves down Malia and stutters out a request. He wants to buy room service lunch for all the other first class passengers—fine meals. A server comes by the party's suite with fine wine and cheese, and does the same for Elanor and the Grientos.

An hour later, Luc goes to talk to the wait staff, asking for details on who ate what. He thinks he can detect a pattern based on how picky or paranoid the eaters were. He repeats the process—with cheaper wine—for the second-class passengers.

Statistical Analysis.

Verzubak's calculations show him who the most likely RHC spies are: they are likely in first class, they are likely Risuri, they are likely traveling under pseudonyms, and they likely have been on the train since Beaumont. If he's spotted the party following him, he's almost certain, but for all he knows, Elanor or Damata might be very clever spies. He craves proof.

His brand of proof is unusual. He walks down the length of the train, rolling dice in a cup and peering at the results. He uses his luck-based magic to measure the combined odds of getting a certain result on the dice with a given probability of each suspect.

Mind if an Old Soldier Expresses Her Thanks?

Bree finds a time when the party is in their suite, and she asks if she can come in and express her thanks for how they helped out against the malice beast. She has some fine Alwyr Red, a liquor imported from the far east, and she'd be honored to share it with them and swap war stories. She likes to tell the tale of how she got dismembered.

During the conversation, or if the party is hesitant to let her in, she mentions that she's actually pretty bored on this trip because the man who hired her for bodyguard duty, Caius Bergeron, never showed up. She already had a ticket, though, so she figured she'd ride anyway. She hopes the party's reaction will give them away (and she tries the same gimmick with several other suspects).

Your Presence Is Requested.

Though Elanor is devoid of empathy, people do hold value for her because they let her gloat. As the train nears Nalaam, Elanor has the staff deliver magically-written notes by her, inviting everyone in first class and a few suitable folks in second class to attend the Nalaam Arena's 10:00 show this evening.

Nalaam, the Decadent Playground

Exploration/Social. Montage. Level 9.

The party's chief suspects change their pattern amid countless distractions.

The train climbs into the snowy mountains and reaches Nalaam at 5:57 PM. The train from Sid Minos doesn't arrive until 6:08.

Fifteen minutes outside of Nalaam, Malia politely reminds you to please return to your seats. More than other cities on the route, Nalaam is renowned for its tricky thieves. She suggests you keep an eye on your personal effects, to make sure no one hops on board in the commotion and nicks your valuables.

Nalaam, a city founded upon a wellspring of magical energy, and controlled by a cabal of powerful wizards, announces its presence with light brighter and more colorful than the sunset. In the shadows of the surrounding mountains, the lights of this infamous den of iniquities hide many crimes and cruelties the rest of the world forbids.

As the train pulls into the enclave, a gilded, glittering spectacle is revealed. Throngs of people ply business and pleasure out of polished marble caves and atop bizarre structures built in the shapes of arches, trees, even dragons. Above it all rises the Grand Casino, a tower of endless games of chance and skill, which generates immense wealth for the archmage lords of the city.

Nalaam, with all its temptations, beckons you.

Tonight several of the side character's plots come to a head. Damata Griento kisses his family good-bye and marches to face a gang of criminals. Meanwhile, Elanor arranges for Mister Mapple to be arrested and thrown into an arena, then sells Isobel into sex slavery.

The people who aren't active are Luc's crew, since they just want to lay low until their trap for the party goes off tomorrow. How dangerous this evening gets depends on how many friends the party has made, and how much they're willing to risk their mission to help strangers who are in trouble. Helping Damata, Isobel, or Andrei von Recklinghausen here can pay dividends in later adventures, but the party can skip them entirely without affecting the core mission.

Fun and Games.

If the party isn't up for heroics, they might play cards, dice, or roulette at the casino, where cheating with magic is forbidden (which just means people have to be clever). They might visit one of the many very creative brothels in this city of mages, or simply shop for spells and magic. Plus there's always the Nalaam Arena, the Street That Is Always Downhill, and the only ski resort in the world.

Wellspring of Mana.

The Lords of Nalaam make their fortunes selling mana. Their Grand Casino is suffused with earth mana which leaks—unbeknownst to the public, but beknownst to the city lords—from an Ancient sealed portal to Urim, the plane of earth.

The mana takes the form of crystals, silver dust, or even nuggets of liquid gold, but fades quickly if taken beyond the city's valley. Mages are drawn to Nalaam by the promise of being able to build sturdy structures of whatever shape they desire, and to craft weapons and armor of exceptionally strong steel. Danor is trying to get the city to set up a factory to produce steam engines of great quality, but have had little success so far.

Literal Debts to Society.

Nalaam handles crime in a unique fashion. Gold rules here, so the city employs skilled economic theorists and an army of merchant surveyors to determine average values for anything that might be damaged by a crime—windows, carts, sense of security, even human life. When a criminal is caught—most violent criminals are, since every city guard has a bell that can alert watchmages of severe threats—magistrates determine the value of damages he imposed. He is then responsible for repaying that debt, plus 10 percent, in a fashion suited to his talents.

Offenders are branded with an arcane mark until their service is done. The point of this is to recoup losses, so as long as a person is not deemed a serious threat, Nalaam authorities prefer to recover value quickly instead of locking people up. Petty criminals might be sent to a mine or farm, craftsmen are forced to craft, and violent offenders are sent to the arena as entertainment. The audience can pay to request specific bouts, or the criminals can volunteer in order to get out faster.

Timeline and Course of Events.

Assuming the PCs don't just ignore the NPCs in need of help, the most likely course of events is that the party goes with Damata to his meeting with the Family at 8 PM, then the arena at Elanor's invitation (perhaps to keep tabs on Luc and Ottavia), where they see Mister Mapple fighting and surviving injury after horrifying injury. If they try to help him, after the final fight he'll climb out of the arena to attack Elanor and the prospective buyers of Isobel, who are watching from a cushy arena suite.

If the party doesn't get involved, Damata dies rather than pay the Family, Mister Mapple is defeated in battle and kept as a curiosity (until the Obscurati acquire him much later), and Isobel lives the rest of her life as a plaything.

The Grientos.

Damata tells his wife he has a business meeting to attend. At 7 PM, Ejeka and the kids head to the casino to watch a show with captive tigers. Damata leaves a letter for his family at the concierge desk, with instructions to deliver it in the morning if he hasn't returned.

If the party gets involved, see Family Stone, below.

Elanor & Isobel, Mister Mapple.

At 7 PM, Elanor has a cadre of lawmages visit her hotel suite. They escort her as she leaves the hotel with Isobel, and when they spot Mister Mapple following them they strike, using stoneshaping magic to trap him until he can be knocked unconscious and shackled. They cart the man off to the arena, and Elanor takes Isobel to meet the buyers.

They go to a tower near the main Nalaam Casino, pass through the guarded entrance, and proceeds to the top floor. To prolong the pleasure of the sale, she invites the three buyers to come watch a show at the arena. She wants them to see what passion Mister Mapple, a random hobo, had for young Elanor, in hopes of spurring the men to bolder bidding.

If the party gets involved, see "Hobo Maximus," below.

Luc's Crew.

Since there is no lighthouse here, and the Obscurati haven't managed to get a cell leader into any position of authority, the group has no objective this evening. Verzubak heads to the casino and makes a killing at dice, using magic to feel the flow of luck rather than predict the future or move the dice like most people try. Boone hits up a brothel, then later murders a female patron of the same brothel, leaving her in a gutter.

Luc and Ottavia leave their hotel briefly to browse an arcane commercial district, where mages sell potions, scrolls, and various reagents. Ottavia, in preparation for a plan the following evening, purchases a scroll that will let her create a detailed illusion. After that, they accept Elanor's invitation to the arena, and arrive shortly before the 10 PM show starts. Bree shadows them during their shopping and also goes to the arena, but has to guard them from afar because she cannot afford a suite.

Family Stone

Action. Tactical. Level 8.

Sometimes you just need to stand up to a bully. Killing the bully works too.

Damata's meeting with The Family is set for 8 PM. If the party is accompanying him, he helps them arm up beforehand.

His creditors told him to bring payment in the form of magic items to a cave a mile from the railroad enclave in a seedy part of town full of brothels. The cave—right next to a sleazy establishment called *Holes*—houses a forge owned by a priest who collaborates with the family. He launders stolen magic items into untraceable residuum, which can then be used to enchant new items.

Guards at the mouth of the cave escort Damata and any guests in to a foyer/store-front, beyond which a tunnel leads to the forge itself. In the foyer waits a foul-mouthed Family *capodecina*, **Sylvester Fomazelli**, plus ten of his enforcers and the owner of the forge, **Azon the Stoneforger**.

If Damata had brought the items as agreed, their deal would have been concluded, and the Family would not attempt to squeeze blood from a stone. But when Damata shows up without payment, they threaten him, threaten his family, and tell him his children will works the mines outside Nalaam until the day they die. Damata responds with aplomb by telling the party to kill them.

Negotiating with or intimidating Sly is not easy. He's not willing to be disrespected in front of his men, and Damata will demand that his debt be wiped clean before he lets any of them leave. There's not much room for compromise on either side.

List of Combatants.

- Sylvester "Sly" Fomazelli
- 10 Family enforcers
- Damata Griento

Tactics.

Sly starts by turning his whole crew invisible for a round, then slips up beside a vulnerable PC and tries to slit their throat. At first he ignores Damata, intending to save him for last, but if he becomes bloodied he tries with all his might to kill the half-orc. The enforcers provide cover for Sly, and flee if he goes down.

Azon and his guards don't get involved in the battle. The guards flee deeper into the forge and bar the door. Azon steps through the stone of the wall and follows them. He uses stoneshaping magic to keep the party from raiding his shop.

ALL BY HIMSELF?

If the PCs declined to help, Damata spends his last hour adorning himself with orcish war paint, then sets out alone. He confronts the Family members, refuses to pay them, and then when they threaten his wife and children he raises a knife and slits his own throat, preferring death to being beholden to them. His body is never found, and his wife receives his letter the next morning, explaining everything. She and the kids ride in a grief-stricken haze to Sid Minos, where they meet up with a business associate of Damata.

Aftermath.

Damata prefers to kill all the Family gang, but then leave quickly before police arrive. If the Family wins, they kill the party and are thrilled by how much treasure they can loot.

Sylvester "Sly" Fomazelli	Level 9 Lurker (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 400
HP 69; **Bloodied** 34	**Initiative** +11
AC 22, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 21	**Perception** +4
Speed 6	

Traits

▸ **Disappear in a Crowd** (illusion)

As you aim for the leader, his features shift, his clothes change, and you suddenly can't tell him apart from anyone around him. It's a crap-shoot whether you'll hit the right guy.

Whenever a creature attacks Sylvester, if he is adjacent to any creatures other than the attacker, randomly determines who out of those possible creatures the attacker actually targets.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Knife to the Throat** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

If you knew he was coming, he wouldn't be so dangerous. But suddenly your friend standing beside you steps up and slits your throat.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+6 damage.

Special: If Sylvester has not taken damage since his last turn, his target grants combat advantage to him. If he hits, he deals an extra 15 damage and the target gains ongoing 10 damage (save ends).

▸ **Sudden Disappearance** (illusion) ✦ Encounter

The leader snaps his fingers, and the whole gang disappears, but you hear their footfalls as they advance on you.

Effect: Sylvester and each ally within close burst 5 becomes invisible until the end of Sylvester's next turn. Those allies can each shift 1 square.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Part of the Family** ✦ Encounter

Your attack knocks the criminal to the ground, but before he loses consciousness he reaches out for help toward one of his allies, whose expression burns with vengeance.

Trigger: A creature's attack reduces Sylvester to 0 HP.

Effect (Free Action): One allied creature with this same ability can as an immediate reaction move its speed, then can make a make a basic attack against the triggering creature.

Skills Arcana +10, Intimidate +12, Stealth +12

Str	10 (+4)	**Dex**	16 (+7)	**Wis**	10 (+4)
Con	12 (+5)	**Int**	12 (+5)	**Cha**	16 (+7)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Primordial

Family Enforcer Level 9 Minion Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 100

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +7
AC 25, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 22 **Perception** +4
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊘ **Two-Fisted Pistol Whip** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He hammers you about the head with both his pistols
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 8 damage.

✓ **Pistol** (weapon) ✦ Special
Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 8 damage.
Special: The Enforcer has two pistols and can use this attack once per pistol; thereafter he must spend a standard action to reload a pistol.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Part of the Family** ✦ Encounter
Your attack knocks the criminal to the ground, but before he loses consciousness he reaches out for help toward one of his allies. That ally's expression burns with vengeance.
Trigger: A creature's attack reduces the Family Enforcer to 0 HP.
Effect (Free Action): One allied creature with this same ability can as an immediate reaction move its speed, then can make a make a basic attack against the triggering creature.

Str 14 (+6) **Dex** 12 (+5) **Wis** 10 (+4)
Con 14 (+6) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 14 (+6)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common

Damata Griento Level 1 Skirmisher (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, half-orc XP 100

HP 28; **Bloodied** 14 **Initiative** +2
AC 12, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 14 **Perception** +0
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊘ **Knife** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4+2 damage.

▸ **That Old Orc Blood**
He looked harmless until battle began and his blood started burning. Now he roars like a warlord as he points at a foe he wants dead.
Effect: Damata chooses an ally who can hear him. That ally gains a +4 to his first attack roll on his next turn and deals 12 extra damage if the attack hits.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Dying Fury** ✦ Encounter
Realizing he's about to die, Damata stabs his foe with every last breath he can muster.
Trigger: Damata is reduced to 0 HP.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): Damata charges an enemy and makes three *knife* attacks.

Str 14 (+2) **Dex** 10 (+0) **Wis** 10 (+0)
Con 12 (+1) **Int** 14 (+2) **Cha** 14 (+2)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Draconic, Giant, Primordial

Hobo Maximus

Social/Action. Real-Time/Tactical. Level 12.

Mister Mapple's identity is revealed as he is forced into a bloodsport arena.

With Luc, Ottavia, Bree, and Elanor in attendance, it might be hard for the PCs to keep away from the arena. This scene puts the party into an uncomfortable situation that tests their willingness to risk their mission in order to stop an unrelated injustice.

Nalaam's coliseum has seating along only three walls, with the western quarter of its circumference open to grant a clear view of a majestic snowy mountain, which gleams in the full moon's light. Stadium seating rises over a hundred feet high, and the crowd is thick this evening. The luxury box suites sit partially-recessed at the lowest level, just forty feet above the arena floor on the eastern edge of the arena.

Elanor and her bidders have taken the central suite. The suite to the right is reserved for the party, while Luc and Ottavia watch from the one to the left. The suites have a rear section recessed into the coliseum structure and walled off for privacy, and a front balcony section with seats that overlook the event. These seats can be seen from the other suites, and only a 10-foot gap separates the balconies. Fine foods, wines, and other luxuries are provided, and elite guards protect each suite, which are accessed by a private hallway in the interior of the building.

The night's events are presided over by **Lord Kulp, Master of the Games**, who directs the arena's staff to prepare various beasts or prisoners to battle in the snow-covered sands. Known as one of the more magnanimous of the city's lords, Kulp feels few qualms letting criminals die in the arena. He has been known in the past to grant mercy to those who seem wrongfully accused, however.

Audience Reactions.

The common folk in the stadium seating love the bloodshed, and between each five-minute bout people rush to bookie booths to shell out coins. If enough people pay, a gladiator can be forced to fight again, or specific monsters might be called out. When famous guests are in the luxury suites, the crowd might appeal to them, cheering their names and the names of their favorite beasts in hopes the most expensive spectacles will be paid for from on high.

Ottavia is excited by the early bouts, but is shocked when people are brought out and start dying. Luc reacts to the carnage with detached curiosity, since he knows he cannot do anything to stop it, so he may as well learn what he can. Ottavia refuses to watch, but stays near Luc to protect him.

Elanor's Show.

Elanor and Isobel arrive accompanied by three mages—the brusque Drakran **Nikola the Necromancer**, the charming Crisillyiri **Father Balthazar**, and the smarmy Risuri **Jaime the Weevil**. Isobel is still veiled, and Elanor escorts the young eladrin to the balcony, waiting until the show is about to start so she can make her sales pitch. At 10 PM, right as Lord Kulp is beginning his pre-games spiel, mirrored spotlighting from arcane braziers around the arena focus upon the central luxury suite's balcony. Elanor then instructs Isobel to stand and remove her veils.

Isobel slowly reveals herself a statuesque eladrin woman, with short-cropped, ice-blonde hair and brilliant azure in her blank eyes. She wears a provocative, intimate outfit. The crowd cheers at the eye candy. Lord Kulp then cuts off the spotlights, annoyed, and he directs the audience's attention down to the imminent bloodsport.

To her bidders, Elanor crows, "Gentlemen, this is the famous eladrin maiden, Isobel Travers, raised since birth to appease every desire a man might have! And as you have just witnessed, her value goes far beyond a toy for you virile men. She will make you famous in this city. Powerful men will gnash their teeth with jealousy. Beautiful women will beg for a chance to serve you as she does, I tell you with no bragging. This sort of grandeur is priceless, so I'm sure none of you will mind starting the bidding at, let's say, five hundred thousand gold?"

The wizards glance at each other, seeing who'll move first, but Elanor wags a finger at them.

"Not so fast, you old dogs. Bidding won't start for half an hour. I have one more show for you. And first, why not see how you feel with the merchandise? Balthazar, come down, sit, please. Get comfortable. I'm going to go make myself a drink."

Infamous Mages.

An Arcana check (DC 20) identifies the three mages and their reputations. In a city of slime and corruption, these three are arguably the worst. They are not lords of the city, but they flaunt their power and so have earned the lords' ire. Each is overconfident in his magical power.

- **Nikola the Necromancer**, a gaunt and bald human who stole his fortune by working as an assassin who killed only the wealthy. It is said that he purchases all the bodies of prostitutes who die in Nalaam, and that his private keep in the mountains outside the city is guarded by their zombies.
- **Father Balthazar**, the Clergy's highest priest in Nalaam, who siphons much of the wealth from the church into his own mansion. None move against him because it is said he can actually summon demons to do his bidding.
- **Jaime the Weevil**, a tiny man from Risur who forsook his druidic order and became obsessed with controlling animal pests, particularly bed bugs. He made his fortune both by controlling Nalaam's pests and offering "protection" to make sure they would not afflict people's homes and businesses.

Blood in the Snow.

During the show's first ten minutes, pretty criminals attempt to dodge a half-dozen angry bulls for the crowd's amusement. Afterward, a pack of starving wolves are sent in against a dire bear, which wins the fight handily. Then comes the main event: a dozen men are sent out onto the field, among them Mister Mapple. Their shackles are opened from afar by magic, and the bear chases them down as they run to try to get weapons scattered around the floor.

PC Involvement?

The party might sit this one out, might attack Elanor and the wizards as soon as they realize what's up, or might try to help Mister Mapple. His "parole" is set at twenty thousand gold pieces, a fee no normal man could ever pay off. But if the party does somehow manage to pay the full amount, they can get Mister Mapple out of the arena and sent up to their booth, where he might still move to confront Elanor.

Alternately, the party might head into the arena themselves to help Mapple survive his fights. Lord Kulp would love to see some foreigners kill Elanor and her twisted triumvirate, and if it happens at the arena he can cover for the party so there are no immediate consequences.

Mister Mapple, as soon as he's released from his shackles, tries to climb up the wall out of the arena, but mages around the edge of the wall knock him back with gusts of wind. Three men die, but Mister Mapple saves the last man and kills the bear with a two-handed axe. The crowd is thrilled.

The spotlights turn again to Elanor's booth, and Elanor stands, holding out a handful of gold coins. Lord Kulp asks if she has a request, and she says she wants to know the name of the man who killed the bear. Mapple just curses at her in response, but then Elanor tells Isobel to stand, and Mapple realizes who she is.

Elanor says, "This man was following me and my cute young friend these past three days. He's going to die tonight, but I want to know his name before I pay for his next fight."

Mapple responds, "I guessed what crimes you planned for her, that poor, that beautiful sweet maid. Ask *my* name? How 'bout I name you first? *Bitch!* No other word would let itself be worn by you. When I am free, no man, woman, or child will recall your name, but remember *me* they will. I, Bitch, am Andrei von Recklinghausen, and if I have to tear out your damned heart, I swear to free the woman next to you. Send me more beasts! I shall build a ramp and walk out of this pit!"

Elanor, feeling safe just thirty feet above Mister Mapple, sweeps her handful of gold so the crowd can see.

"A thousand gold pieces, Lord Kulp. My request?" She pauses, and the crowd shouts various monster names. "Bring out the pyrecat!"

The crowd whoops with delight, and from deep in the bowels of the arena, a deep roar echoes through the stadium. Lord Kulp gestures, and workers scramble, and soon a giant gate opens on the far side of the arena floor. A single fiery eye flickers in the darkness. It roars again, and its mouth lights up with flame as the huge creature strides into view.

The pyrecat stands as tall as an elephant, with all the deadly grace of a tiger despite that it is missing one eye, and that one of its forelegs ends just above the paw, which has been replaced by a rune-inscribed hook almost as big as a man.

Possible Battles.

If the party doesn't get involved, the pyrecat runs down Andrei, formerly known as Mister Mapple. As nimble and strong as he is, he manages to jump off walls and tumble through its legs for almost a minute, nicking it with his axe. It swipes at him a few times, knocks him down, but he pushes his entrails back into his abdomen and keeps fighting.

He leaps onto its back, and it bucks, trying to shake him loose, until finally it's right beneath the party's suite. Andrei raises his axe for a strike against the spine, but the cat immolates itself. Its fur turns to fire, and Andrei screams and jumps away. But he's high enough now that he gets hold of a stone decoration just underneath the party's balcony. He hangs one-handed and bats out the flames, which he seems incapable of regenerating from.

Before he can recover, the huge predator swings its hook claw up and pierces him through the chest. It yanks him down, pins him to the snow, and roars a blast of fire into his face. The crowd roars too, and the pyrecat drags Andrei away, back through the gate to devour. (This *still* doesn't kill Andrei. City mages who noticed his regeneration ability quickly get him away from the cat and help him recuperate, so they can study him.)

Elanor uses Andrei's enthusiasm for Isobel to drive up the bidding. By evening's end she sells Isobel to Father Balthazar for 1.5 million gp.

If the party does get involved, the fight can get complex. Isobel takes no actions of her own; she has 20 HP, and all her defenses are 10.

List of Adversaries.

- Andrei von Recklinghausen
- Elanor Yanette
- Nikola the Necromancer
- Father Balthazar
- Jaime the Weevil
- Pyrecat

Terrain.

The luxury suites are just forty feet above the arena, which is an oval roughly two hundred feet across, dotted with massive columns, some cracked and toppled. The coliseum mages don't get involved, at Lord Kulp's direction. Luc and Ottavia run for the exits, while the rest of the crowd can't believe their good fortune to witness such mayhem.

Tactics.

If threatened by the PCs, Elanor at first tries to grab Isobel and drag her away to the hallway, but Lord Kulp controls the stone in the building, and so locks the door (unless the PCs try to enter the suite through the door, which he'll allow).

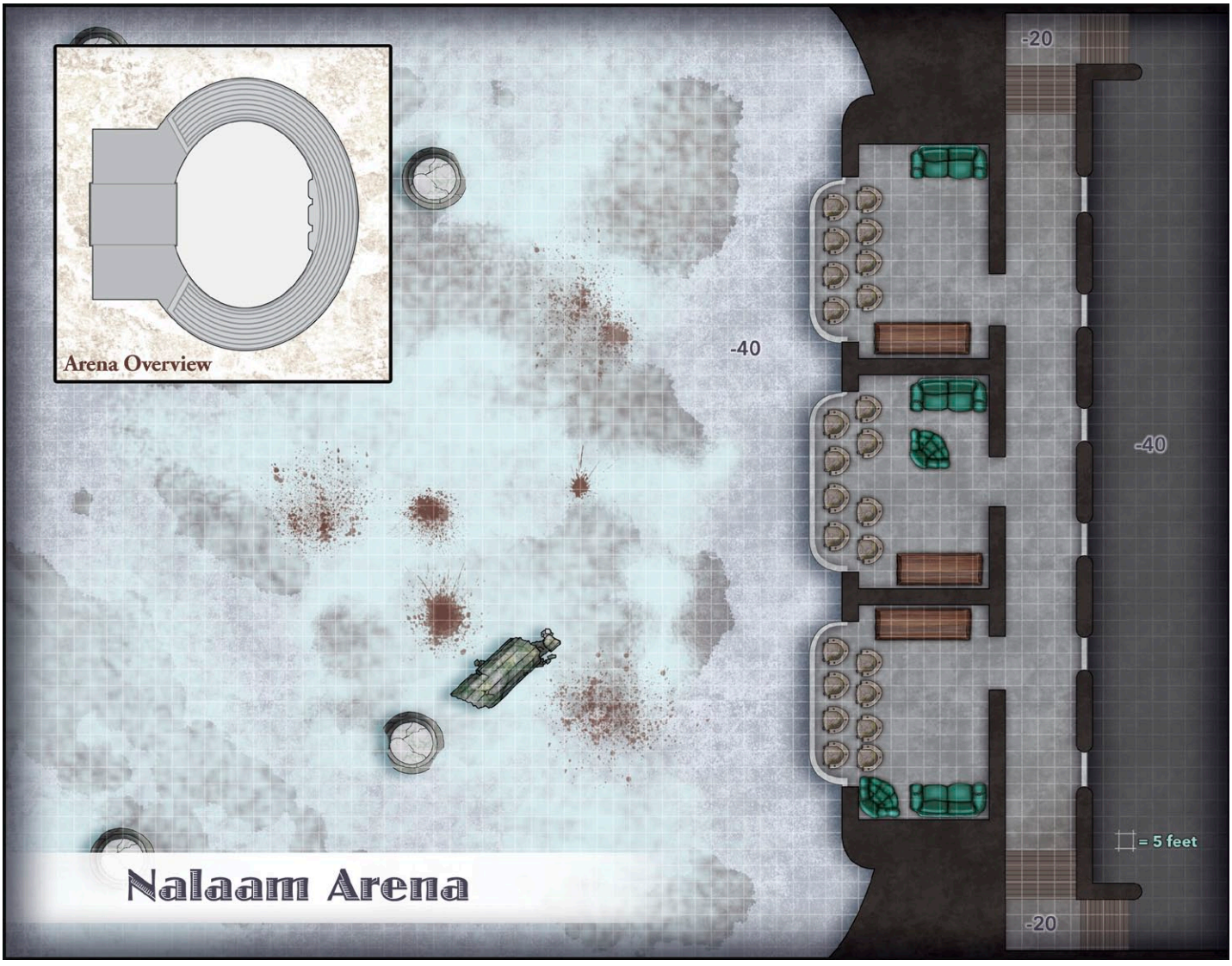
Nikola shouts to the others, "Pick one. Kill him. I need bodies." Balthazar and Jaime focus their attacks on the same target. Nikola uses *monosyllabic death spell* on another target who might otherwise be hard to kill through damage. Meanwhile Elanor uses *mindslaver* to keep any PC from threatening the mages in melee.

If Andrei gets into the luxury suite, he tries to throw Elanor off the balcony into the arena. The pyrecat is not picky with who it attacks.

VON WHATLINGHAUSEN?

The party might recognize Andrei's surname and question him about it. He doesn't like to go into details, and so claims merely that his father abandoned him, and that while he was angry for a while he decided he should use it as an opportunity to become his own man.

But if the party mentions knowing Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen, Andrei is conflicted. He'll feign indifference, but will want to know as much as possible. For the duration of the adventure he'll resist the urge to track down his creator, but eventually curiosity and pride will overtake his better judgment. Andrei will be making an appearance later in the campaign.



Aftermath.

If the party is defeated, Lord Kulp intervenes and calls for an end to the fight "for the safety of the audience." Guards carry the party away and arena healers stabilize the PCs. Any survivors from Elanor's group demand they be arrested, but Kulp insists the arena's charter protects their actions. The party will be released once they're conscious, though their train suite might end up with bed bugs.

Should they prevail, Lord Kulp invites the party to his private chambers beneath the arena and thanks them for getting rid of a blight that has steered this city the wrong way for years. If any PC is a Vekeshi Mystic, he briefly recites a common saying of the order in Elvish to see if anyone notices: "The best revenge is to live."

He offers to see Isobel safely to Elfaivar, where her people can help her recuperate. Andrei is suspicious and wants to go with her. It'll be a few hours before she recovers enough from the spells and drugs affecting her in order to actually talk to people. She's never had real freedom, but she wants to get far away from Danor. She says she has heard of Gale in Risur, and might want to meet her.

Andrei von Recklinghausen Level 13 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 800

HP 124; **Bloodied** 62 **Initiative** +11
AC 27, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 22 **Perception** +6
Speed 8

Traits

▸ **Regeneration**

Andrei regains 10 HP whenever he starts his turn and has at least 1 HP. When he takes fire or acid damage, his regeneration does not function on his next turn.

If Andrei is reduced to 0 HP but not killed, he heals to full after a short rest.

Standard Actions

✓ **Acrobatic Beatdown** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He leaps off the wall and swings from an unexpected angle, then lands and tumbles past you with intense speed, slamming you with massive strength.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 2[w]+13 damage.
Special: Adjust the damage of this attack based on what weapon Andrei is using. During this encounter he has a greataxe, for which [w] equals 1d10.

✓ **Draining Touch** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Where your skin touches the chill of the grave suffuses your flesh.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+5 necrotic damage, and the target takes a cumulative –1 penalty to attack rolls, saves, and skill or ability checks until the end of the encounter. If this penalty exceeds the target's level, the target dies.

✓ **Hurl** ✦ At-Will
He grabs you and flings you with a single arm.
Attack: Melee 1 (one or two creatures); +16 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8+7 damage, and Andrei slides the target 3 squares. If the target is wearing light or cloth armor, it takes a cumulative –1 penalty to attack rolls, saves, and skill or ability checks until the end of the encounter. If this penalty exceeds the target's level, the target dies.

Skills Acrobatics +17, Athletics +17, Stealth +17
Str 22 (+12) **Dex** 22 (+12) **Wis** 10 (+6)
Con 30 (+16) **Int** 12 (+7) **Cha** 8 (+5)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven

Elanor Yanette Level 9 Goon Controller
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 200

HP 45; **Bloodied** 22 **Initiative** +2
AC 21, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 23 **Perception** +6
Speed 5

Traits

▸ **Not Built for Fighting**

Sort of like a minion, Elanor is not built for a fight. She has half the normal HP for a creature of her level.

Standard Actions

✓ **Mindslaver** (charm) ✦ At-Will
She barely manages to get her spell's command words out between cursing you for ruining the deal that was going to let her retire.
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +14 vs. Will
Hit: Elanor slides the target 2 squares and the target is dominated until the end of Elanor's next turn.

Skills Arcana +12, Bluff +13, Diplomacy +13, Insight +11
Str 12 (+5) **Dex** 6 (+2) **Wis** 14 (+6)
Con 6 (+2) **Int** 16 (+7) **Cha** 18 (+8)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Elvish, Primordial

Nikolai the Necromancer Level 13 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 800

HP 124; **Bloodied** 62 **Initiative** +10
AC 27, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 25 **Perception** +6
Speed 6

Traits

▸ **Flock To Me, Ghouls** ✦ Aura 20

Whenever a natural, non-undead creature dies in the aura, if Nikolai commands fewer than five ghouls, the creature's body reanimates as a ghoul. It is undead, has 1 HP, and has its original stats and powers, but can only make basic attacks.

Standard Actions

✓ **Ghoul Touch** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Claws extend from his fingers and he swipes gashes through your flesh, chilling your bones.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6 necrotic damage, and the target is slowed and takes ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends).

✓ **Monosyllabic Death Spell** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will
The dour man just points at you and says, "Die."
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +16 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d6+11 necrotic damage. The target must make a death saving throw, even if he is above 0 HP. If he fails his third death save for the encounter, he dies.

Skills Arcana +15, Bluff +12, Stealth +12
Str 12 (+7) **Dex** 12 (+7) **Wis** 10 (+6)
Con 12 (+7) **Int** 18 (+10) **Cha** 12 (+7)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarven

Father Balthazar Level 13 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 800

HP 124; **Bloodied** 62 **Initiative** +10
AC 27, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 25 **Perception** +10
Speed 6

Standard Actions

Direct the Choir of Angels ✦ At-Will, Basic
The old priest waves his hands as if directing musicians and hums a happy hymn, but the air around him turns red and you feel jagged claws snag your arms.
Attack: Close Burst 10 (one creature in burst); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6+11 damage, and Balthazar slides the target 3 squares and restrains it until the end of his next turn (Escape DC 23).

Minor Actions

Healing Rite (healing) ✦ Recharge when first bloodied
The kind father directs a holy hand gesture at his ally, who surges with renewed health.
Effect: One creature within 10 squares of Father Balthazar heals 31 HP.

Triggered Actions

Bleeds Light (radiant) ✦ Recharges when first bloodied
Trigger: Father Balthazar is first bloodied, or reduced to 0 HP.
Attack: Close Burst 3 (creatures in burst); +16 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 10 radiant damage and the target is blinded (save ends).

Skills Arcana +12, Bluff +12, Diplomacy +12, Insight +15, Religion +12
Str 12 (+7) **Dex** 12 (+7) **Wis** 18 (+10)
Con 12 (+7) **Int** 12 (+7) **Cha** 12 (+7)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarven

Jaime the Weevil Level 13 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, elf XP 800

HP 93; **Bloodied** 46 **Initiative** +10
AC 25, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 23 **Perception** +10
Speed 7 Low-Light Vision

Standard Actions

Infestation Touch ✦ At-Will, Basic
He grabs your shoulder as you walk by, and a skin-crawling mass of insects pours from his sleeve and down your collar.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: The target takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends). Also, the target is infested with bed bugs. Until the target methodically purges all his gear of the bugs, his maximum healing surges are reduced by 1. If not treated quickly, the infestation can spread to the target's allies who sleep in close proximity.

Swarm Strike (poison) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The creepy elf rubs his hands together, then grins and hurls a ray of stinging wasps.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature in burst); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6+11 poison damage, and the target is weakened and takes ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends both).

Minor Actions

Metamorphosis (polymorph) ✦ Encounter
Effect: Jaime transforms into a giant cockroach, makes a save against everything affecting him, and shifts his speed. He then returns to his original form.

Skills Arcana +12, Bluff +12, Diplomacy +12, Insight +15, Religion +12
Str 8 (+5) **Dex** 16 (+9) **Wis** 16 (+9)
Con 16 (+9) **Int** 12 (+7) **Cha** 8 (+5)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

The Pyrecat Level 13 Elite Brute
Huge elemental beast (fire) XP 1,600

HP 336; **Bloodied** 168 **Initiative** +10
AC 25, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 22 **Perception** +13
Speed 10
Resist 10 fire; **Vulnerable** 10 cold
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

Blind in One Eye
The pyrecat cannot see out of its flaming right eye. In general it cannot make opportunity attacks except against targets that either it attacked or that attacked it since the start of its last turn, or targets adjacent to those creatures.

Standard Actions

Claw ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12+12 damage.

Hook ✦ At-Will
It lunges and impales you with the massive hook on its right foreleg.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 3d12+20 damage, and the target is knocked prone and grabbed (Escape DC 23).

Fire Breath (fire) ✦ Recharge ⚀⚁⚂
Attack: Close Burst 3 (creatures in burst); +16 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d12+6 damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

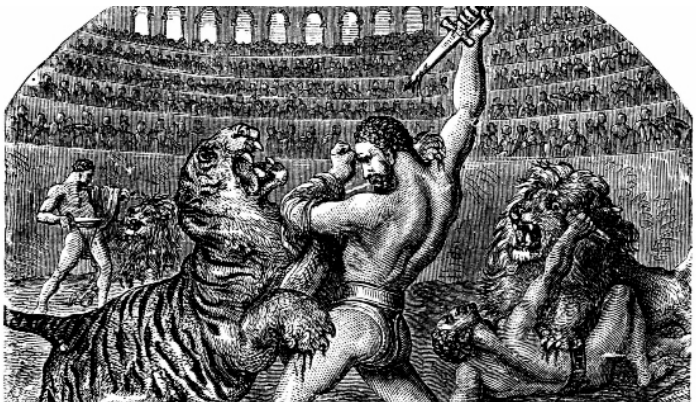
Move Actions

Flaming Trample (fire) ✦ At-Will
The huge feline smashes you to the ground as it runs past, leaving you prone in a blazing footprint.
Effect: The pyrecat moves its speed and can enter enemies' spaces. When the pyrecat enters a nonflying creature's space for the first time during this movement, the tower makes the following attack against that creature.
Attack: Melee 0 (creature in the square); +16 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d12+6 damage, and the creature is knocked prone.
Effect: The creature's square becomes a zone of fire until the end of the pyrecat's next turn. Any creature that ends its turn in that space takes 10 fire damage.

Minor Actions

Buck and Burn (fire) ✦ At-Will, 1/round
The pyrecat jumps and kicks, contorting its torso to try to fling you off. Its fur begins to sizzle, then ignites.
Effect: Any creature that is on top of the pyrecat must make an Acrobatics or Athletics check (DC 23) or else be pushed to an adjacent square and fall 10 feet. Any creature still on the cat after that takes 10 fire damage and 10 ongoing fire damage (save ends).

Skills Perception +13
Str 32 (+17) **Dex** 12 (+7) **Wis** 14 (+8)
Con 18 (+10) **Int** 2 (+2) **Cha** 18 (+10)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —



ACT FOUR: Off the Rails

In this act, the party's quarry tries to take them out before they reach the gathering of the Obscurati.

BEATING THE PLAYERS.

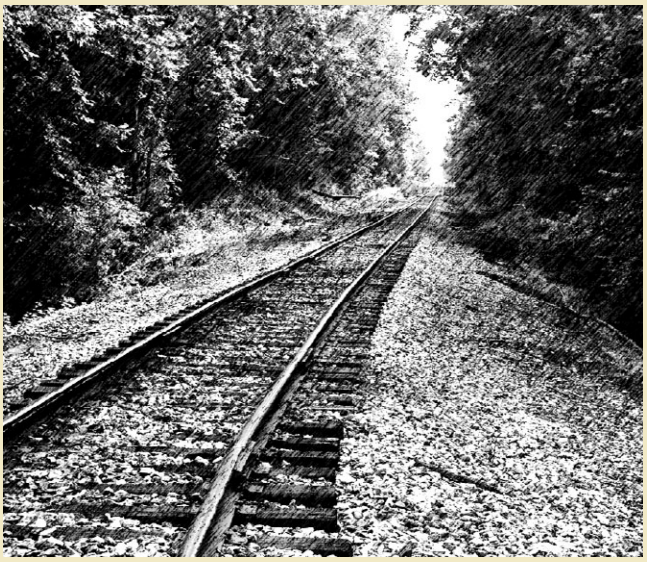
In the Act Two, the party had to get to the train and figure out the dynamics of how things work. In Act Three, they learned about the various passengers and tick them off the list of suspects. At this point, they should have little doubt that Luc is their target. Luc, meanwhile, knows he's being watched, and he tries to take out the party.

The adventure is written with the expectation that one of these attempts will actually work, and the party will end up in contact with the demoness Ashima-Shimtu, who provides clues to a key mystery of the campaign and plays a prominent role in the epic tier. Meanwhile, the villains will be lulled into a sense of security, so when the party comes to spy on their gathering they won't face overwhelming numbers of guards and look-outs.

Hopefully the players will enjoy their comeback from near death, and not feel their opponents' temporary victory is unfair. And if the party manages to outwit the villains, don't try to force the defeat.

KILL THEM IN THEIR SLEEP?

First, Luc would not kill anyone himself, at least not directly. Second, he doesn't want to risk anyone seeing his crew commit murder. Third, he thinks he's clever, and wants to prove it, so he trusts the lantern trick will kill the party without leaving any signs of foul play. Finally, he doesn't want to risk going near them, in case he or his allies get caught in the lantern's light and end up in Nem as well.



All Downhill from Here

Social. Montage. Level 9.

As the train leaves Nalaam and enters Crisillyir, Luc and company fortify in case of trouble.

No Longer On Board: Elanor, Isobel, Mister Mapple.

The next morning, the train departs at 7:30 AM amid light snowfall, rolling downhill out of the Penance Peaks and into Crisillyir. By mid-morning the snow from the mountains turns to a drizzle of sleet, but the train's run in worse. Malia assures everyone they're in no danger.

If Boone's murders have not been discovered yet, Bree finds an opportunity to slip a note to Luc, which reads, "Boone is a liability. He's been responsible for the murders in each city. Can you add him to the roster of what you're already planning?"

Lantern Light.

Luc's goal is to get the party all in the same enclosed location—preferably their suite, and preferably when they don't have anyone else with them. Then he'll activate the replica of his lantern hidden atop the locomotive, which will pull the party into the deadly plane of Nem.

Luc has marked the top of the party's suite's doorframe with a subtle rune, and if he can think of any inconspicuous way to get items with that rune into the party's possession, he does so. Options include marking coins and arranging for those coins to be included as change when the party buys lunch, or having Bree give coins to the party after the battle in Nalaam, claiming she made money on their fight with Elanor, and she wants to share her winnings. If the party is careless with their belongings, Bree might have accessed their rooms the night before and stitched tiny patches with the rune under collars or cuffs.

If necessary, Luc might mark the threshold of the first class lounge car to catch the party there, or even mark both ends of Car 17, which would also affect the Grientos. He's wary of having to leave his own suite, but if he has to, he'll mark Cars 17, 18, and 19, and try to slip away with Ottavia to the forward cars. He's willing to catch a few innocent bystanders.

If the party has been dutifully following Malia's recommendations to return to their seats fifteen minutes before the train stops, Luc will strike as the train enters Sid Minos. This makes it easier for him to adopt Ottavia's secondary trap if his first trap fails.

If the party hasn't followed a pattern, Luc will use his trap whenever he gets a chance. If the train nears Sid Minos, he might trigger it even if he can get only half the PCs.

Fall-Back Plans.

If the party won't cooperate and come together, Luc's preferred gambit is to have Bree pass a note to Boone:

"We need to gather them all in the same location. Approach one, say you want to talk to them in private and spy on their behalf. Try to get them into their suite. We have a spell that will knock you all unconscious. You won't be harmed, but we'll be able to kill them before they wake."

With luck, Boone will get the party all into their suite. The note is marked with Luc's rune.



Three Milestones

Action. Tactical. Level 9.

Luc Jierre activates a replica of his lantern, pulling the party into a ghostly parallel of the train.

The train is scheduled to reach the Sid Minos enclave at 5:22 PM. Luc prefers to strike ten minutes before this, just over three miles out from the enclave.

Fifteen minutes before the train stops in Sid Minos, Malia makes the rounds, asking you as usual to please return to your seats so you can keep an eye on your personal effects. Though the train has been assaulted by a monster and brigands, so far nothing has been stolen from the Very Important Passengers, and Malia wants to keep it that way. Again, she reminds you, the enclaves are busy, often thick with thieves, and it's easy in the commotion for someone to nick unattended valuables.

She leaves, and you approach down the coast toward Sid Minos, coming in with a good hour of daylight to spare. Light rain obscures your view, but the air is clean, thick with the fresh scent of the sea and only the train's own smoke to ruin it.

The gas-light lamp in your room flickers red, then starts to deepen to purple, and the sound of rain swiftly fades away. Outside, the sky begins to turn black.

When the time is right (likely 5:12 PM, ten minutes before the train stops in Sid Minos) Luc activates the replica of his lantern. For anyone he's not targeting, the only hint of oddity is that all the gaslight lamps throughout the train flicker red momentarily. But those affected by the lantern's magic are pulled into the plane of Nem. They see the lamps turn a deep purple, and the sun outside dims to a tiny speck, as if it had suddenly moved far away.

When the lantern activates, make an attack (+20 vs. Will) against each creature in the area. A creature that is hit falls under the lantern's effect for 10 minutes. Normally it would last 5 minutes, but Luc loaded an extra dose of oil into the replica lantern. Doing so will destroy the lantern after this single use.

Creatures hit by the lantern are pulled from their bodies into the plane of Nem, a spirit world on the far side of the Bleak Gate. The world resembles reality but is bereft of occupants and slowly fades away as the disembodied creature wanders away from the spot where it left its body. Even if their body moves, the spot where they entered Nem is an invisible gateway. If they ever stray more than three miles from that gateway, they pass into the afterlife and cannot be resurrected. This is normally not a factor with the lantern because it will not burn long enough, but because the train is moving, time is tight before the party is doomed.

While in Nem they cannot see or be seen by living creatures. They gain phasing. If their souls leave the area of the lantern (in this case, they would have to leave the train, because every car is affected by the lantern), they instantly return to the spot where they first entered the plane of Nem. This does not reset the "three mile" travel limit, so simply hopping off the train will not save the party.

If their bodies are moved outside of areas marked by Luc's rune, and if any tiny runes on their person are removed, their souls snap back to their bodies.

Countermeasures.

Those who avoid the lantern's first attack might flee their room when they see their allies fall unconscious. If they can shatter all the gas-light lamps within the car, or if they can get the party out of the area affected by Luc's rune, they can end the encounter early.

If the party—either in the physical world or in Nem—reaches the replica lantern on the locomotive and shatters it before the train travels three miles, they snap back to their bodies. Someone unaffected by the lantern might manage to threaten Luc and force him to end the lantern's effect early. Alternately, a PC might trigger the train's emergency break, or detach the rear cars from the front so they coast to a stop before traveling three miles. If the train is split, the replica lantern's magic quickly fades.

Where the Hell Are We?

PCs who are affected see the world fade to darkness, and those allies who have not yet been affected slowly disappear (then possibly reappear moments later when they *are* affected). The sky seems filled with ash, and the landscape outside looks like it has been abandoned and decayed for centuries.

Any Skyseer immediately knows they have somehow been transported to Nem. Others can guess that they're not in the Bleak Gate, because they've been there before, and this place is not just empty, it's ethereal and unreal. It feels distinctly different.

It's common folklore (Arcana or Nature DC 10) that the land of the dead lies on the far side of the Bleak Gate, and that ghosts almost never stray more than three miles from where they died. If the party doesn't figure out the danger right away, they notice within 30 seconds that the world is slowly fading away to blackness.

The Ghost Train.

The party is in the "spirit" of the train, identical in form but lit only by purple gas-lamps, and growing ever more dark as time passes. Aside from those also affected by the lantern they see no one else living. However, the presence of fresh souls attracts reapers, which fly in from the distance. Also, as the party explores the train they find faceless spirits called vestiges of tragedy, which linger at the spots where people died recently. For each person who died during the screaming malice attack there is one vestige, most of them concentrated in Cars 10 to 14.

If anyone looks out the windows, they can easily notice a purple glow coming from up ahead. By popping up to the roof, they can tell there's a lantern glowing atop the locomotive.

Murder Train.

If Boone is still on the train, Luc made sure to exile him too, to eliminate a murderer and tie up a loose end.

Ghosts of the four people Boone has killed since boarding the train fade in and out around him, causing him to panic. If he's not with the party, he crosses their path while fleeing. He begs for help even as the ghosts point at him and moan that he murdered them. The ghosts' spirits are trapped in his pistol and cannot cross over to the afterlife until the gun is destroyed, but are harmless save for the fact that they spoil Boone's secret.

Timeline.

Track the passage of time. The train is traveling at least 20 miles per hour, though it slows down as it nears the enclave. The party has ten minutes (100 rounds) before they are cut off from their bodies forever. If a PC falls off the train he effectively "respawns" in the spirit world wherever he was when he was affected by the lantern.

- After 5 rounds the dimming of reality is undeniable, so the party should realize they have to act fast.
- In round 10, if Boone wasn't already with the party he comes running toward them, chased by ghosts of his disemboweled victims.
- On the 20th round, after the party has had some brief time to talk and figure out what's going on, the first wave of reapers attack.
- On the 30th round, the world has faded enough so that everything is dim unless the party has their own light sources.
- On the 40th round, a second wave of reapers attack.
- On the 50th round, the world fades to darkness. Unless they have light of their own, all they can see is the glow of the lantern ahead and tiny motes of starlight overhead. Even the sun has faded. The only sound is the clickety-clack of the railroad tracks.
- On the 60th round, a third and final wave of reapers attack.

Alternately, instead of having reapers attack and lights dim by round, you might have this happen based on how close the party gets to the locomotive. Reapers might strike at Car 16, then lights dim at car 13, then more reapers at 10, then darkness at 7.

Monsters.

The train has a number of vestiges based on the victims who've died so far, and they attack when the party draws near if they're inside the train. Waves of reapers fly in, five at a time. And at the locomotive waits a ruin wraith, intelligent enough to know it must protect the lantern in order to ensure the party is trapped.

The party need not fight these spirits, just survive them. The reapers fly in from the front, since they're not fast enough to catch the train, and if the party avoids the cars where people died or runs along their roofs, they can get to the locomotive quickly.

Boone will try to help the party if they help him, but when they get near the front of the train he'll turn on them so they can't reveal his secret. He hopes to kill them, then break the lantern and return to the real world so he can kill Luc. If anyone else was brought over with the party, they are likely unable to aid in any sort of battle. It might be safest for them to hide in their rooms.

List of Adversaries.

- 15 reapers (5 per wave)
- 0 to 80 vestiges of tragedy
- 1 ruin wraith
- Olivert Boone

Terrain.

The ghost train is identical to the real version, minus the living people. Light dims throughout the encounter.

Tactics.

The reapers target whoever has the fewest hit points first and try to pull PCs off the train. They flee after they take any damage, since they're not used to lively folks around here. The vestiges just stand in the train, but attack if anyone comes within 2 squares. The ruin wraith confronts the party when they reach the fuel cars, and it weaves through them, trying to shove people off to force them to start over from the other end of the train.

Boone waits until the party is distracted by some other foes, then guns down a PC point-blank. He makes a break for the front of the train, glancing back at the party with a charming grin on his face. He apologizes for having to strand them here, but he can't let anyone who

knows his secret live. His preferred tactic is to fire his full clip one turn, then flee, hide, and reload on his next turn, often weaving between the interior and roof of train cars, doubling back if necessary.

Aftermath.

Destroying the lantern is as simple as breaking any lantern. Once the lantern shuts off, the PCs snap back to their suite. Any damage their spirit-forms suffered remains, but manifests as fatigue and exhaustion rather than physical wounds. Unless Luc had to spring his trap early, the train should almost be into the Sid Minos rail enclave. Except for those grabbed by the lantern's light, no one on the train has any idea someone just tried to murder the party.

If the party fails, you can still salvage the adventure. Instead of having Ottavia trap the party on the Isle of Odiem, they might appear there, trapped in a sort of Limbo, and have to reach the bottom of the tomb in order to return to the land of the living.

Reaper Level 10 Minion Brute
Medium shadow humanoid XP 250

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +11
AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 20 **Perception** +5
Speed 6, fly 6 Darkvision

Standard Actions

▸ **Invite Death** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will
The slender specter floats toward you with its scythe drawn back. You feel compelled to walk into its blade.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. Will
Hit: 11 necrotic damage, and the reaper slides the target 2 squares to a space adjacent to it.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Spiteful Retreat** (necrotic) ✦ Encounter
It reels as you strike it, as if offended. It swipes its scythe at you, then bolts away from the train. In a moment it has vanished.
Trigger: The reaper drops to 0 HP.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 11 damage.
Effect: The reaper is "defeated" and flees, but is not exactly destroyed.

Str	10 (+5)	**Dex**	18 (+9)	**Wis**	10 (+5)
Con	15 (+7)	**Int**	8 (+4)	**Cha**	7 (+3)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** understands Common, others



Vestiges of Tragedy Level 5 Minion Soldier
Medium shadow animate XP 50

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** n/a
AC 14, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 14 **Perception** +0
Speed 2

Traits

▸ **Stand Idle**
The spirits in this train car stand still and look at the floor, seeming to ignore you.
A vestige of tragedy does not take any actions and is immune to damage until a living creature triggers its *hunger for life* power.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Devour the Living** ✦ At-Will, Basic
It tries to merge into your soul, and when it cannot it rips pieces free.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Will
Hit: 6 damage.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Hunger for Life**
As you step close to the spirit, its blank-faced head turns to you. Its body flares up with spectral energy and it lunges forward, two arms extended.
Trigger: A living creature comes within 2 squares of the vestige.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The vestige moves 2 squares to a space adjacent to the triggering creature and uses *devour the living*.

Str	10 (+2)	**Dex**	10 (+2)	**Wis**	10 (+2)
Con	10 (+2)	**Int**	3 (–2)	**Cha**	10 (+2)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages**—

Ruin Wraith Level 10 Elite Controller
Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP 1,000

HP 212; **Bloodied** 106 **Initiative** +11
AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 20 **Perception** +12
Speed 8, fly 8; phasing Darkvision
Immune disease, poison
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

☼ **Feast of Ruin** ✦ Aura 5
You try to summon a reserve of stamina, but your resolve fails you. The wraith emits a hollow chuckle as it feeds on your strength.
Any enemy that would heal while within the aura does not heal, and the wraith heals the amount the enemy would have.

▸ **Insubstantial**
The ruin wraith takes half damage from any damage source, except those that deal force damage or radiant damage. In addition, if it takes radiant damage, it loses the insubstantial trait until the end of its next turn.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Grip of the Grave** ✦ At-Will, Basic
The wraith's emaciated fingers dig into your skin with inhuman strength.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8+5 damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).

✓ **Poltergeist Hurl** ✦ At-Will
It blurs past your allies, slams into your body, and hurls you back.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d8+5 damage, and the ruin wraith pushes the target 2 squares.

▸ **Hurling Streak** ✦ Recharge when first bloodied
Effect: The ruin wraith shifts its speed and can make a *poltergeist hurl* attack against each creature it moves adjacent to.

Str	26 (+13)	**Dex**	22 (+11)	**Wis**	14 (+7)
Con	18 (+9)	**Int**	8 (+4)	**Cha**	15 (+7)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** understands Common, others

Olivert Boone Level 9 Lurker
Medium natural humanoid, tiefling XP 400

HP 69; **Bloodied** 34 **Initiative** +13
AC 25, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 20 **Perception** +3
Speed 7 Low-Light Vision
Resist fire 9

Traits

▸ **Getaway Gun**

He blows on his pistol, and his breath glows with a hint of magic. Then he fires, and the bullet traces a line toward you.

Up to six times during the encounter, Boone can choose to enchant a bullet as a free action before firing it. If he hits, the target is slowed until the end of Boone's next turn.

▸ **On the Run From the Law**

Boone does not take a penalty to his Stealth checks for moving more than 2 squares or for running on his turn.

Standard Actions

⊗ **Sacrificial Knife** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

He flicks a beautiful scarlet knife out of his leather duster with his off hand and stabs for your ribs.

Effect: Before the attack, Boone can draw his dagger. He can make opportunity attacks even if he isn't wielding the weapon when an enemy provokes.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC

Hit: 3d4+10 damage.

⊘ **Demonic Revolver** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Boone sprays bullets out of his pistol, trying to keep you at bay.

Effect: Boone makes the following attack twice. Afterward, he can spend his move action to make two more attacks. He can then spend his minor action to attack twice more, emptying his clip. (He cannot spend his minor action this way without first spending his move action.)

Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +14 vs. AC

Hit: 1d4+7 damage, or 1d4+17 damage against a bloodied creature. On a crit, 1d4+13, or 1d4+23 against a bloodied creature.

Load Move: Reload all six bullets.

Load Minor: Reload one bullet (if he's desperate).

✓ **Impale** (weapon) ✦ At-Will

Boone thrusts his dagger into your gut, knocks you down, and shoves until the blade pins you to the floor.

Special: This attack can only target a bloodied creature.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC

Hit: 3d4+10 damage; the target is knocked prone and restrained (Escape DC 17) and cannot stand until he escapes the pin. Boone leaves his dagger in the target. Escaping the pin deals 15 damage to the target unless it succeeds a Heal check (DC 17).

Triggered Actions

▸ **Infernal Wrath** (fire) ✦ Encounter

When you strike him, his eyes flare with fire, and you are seared by the infernal power of the tiefling.

Trigger: A creature within 10 squares hits Boone.

Effect (No Action): The triggering creature takes 1d6+3 fire damage.

Skills Acrobatics +14, Bluff +14, Intimidate +12, Stealth +16, Streetwise +12

Str	14 (+6)	**Dex**	20 (+9)	**Wis**	8 (+3)
Con	14 (+6)	**Int**	12 (+5)	**Cha**	17 (+7)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarven

Follow that Carriage!

Action. Real-Time. Level 9.

Upon reaching Sid Minos, Ottavia enacts a ruse to lure the party into a death trap.

While the PCs are trapped in Nem, Ottavia uses a scroll she purchased in Nalaam to create an illusory duplicate of Luc (and possibly Bree and Verzubak if she thinks the party knows they're part of her crew). When the train reaches the rail enclave in Sid Minos, and Ottavia realizes that Luc's plan to kill the party has failed, she puts her own into motion.

Luc hides in the bathroom of his suite, with Bree and Verzubak perhaps guarding him, while Ottavia leads the illusions on a mad dash through the enclave to a carriage house that provides taxi service. She tries her best to be conspicuous, picks an impressive-looking carriage with purple banners along its roof, and waits long enough for the party to spot her before getting on board.

Although she *can* speak, she has written a note saying, "Please take us quickly to the harbor, to a boat that will take us to the Isle of Odiem." She hands the note to a man in charge of dispatching carriages, and he finds a carriage for her. She leaves the note with him as a bread crumb in case the party needs help pursuing her.

The Isle of Odiem.

Everyone in Sid Minos knows Odiem—a rocky spur a half mile off the coast marked by a lonely ruined lighthouse—is a damned and cursed place. Ships that sail too close at night are caught in a current of blood that dashes them against shoals, and it is said that the drowned sailors rise and devour any who linger on the island past sunset.

Fewer recall (Religion DC 17) that the island was converted nearly a thousand years ago into a vault by the Clergy. There they kept the most dangerous items found by their godhands, including creatures possessed by demons, since killing the creature would only unleash the fiend within.

Ottavia and her illusory companions ride a carriage down to the harbor, where she hands another note to the owner of a 20-foot long sailboat, offering to pay a large sum to get her to the island before sunset (at 6:30 PM). The man only agrees because she is a priestess of the Clergy, and claims she comes on official business. When the boat reaches the island she performs a brief augury. If the party is not pursuing she'll tell the boatman to turn back.

If the party is in pursuit, she (and her illusory crew) disembarks. The boatman makes a gesture of blessing and does not look back, though he will return at first light the next morning.

If the party wants to pursue Ottavia, don't make it hard for them. Any other carriage driver would know where they were headed, and even following on foot isn't too terribly difficult. At the harbor, their own ship likely waits and can provide a rowboat. If they don't want to draw attention to their vessel they have to offer at least 500 gp before any sailor will risk the trip so close to dark, or they can buy their own rowboat for 50 gp.

Without Ottavia.

Luc waits half an hour to make sure the party has left the train, then sends Bree out to verify it's safe. Overnight, they stay in the enclave hotel, and Bree shares the room to protect him, since they figure pretending not to know each other is moot now.



Not Falling For It.

If the party doesn't follow, Ottavia returns to the rail enclave and links back up with Luc. They plan during the evening for how to keep the party from learning anything important in Vendricce the following day, and make a contingency to destroy the lantern if it is about to fall into their hands.

When the PCs try to board the train the next morning the rail enclave's tiefling director meets them with a phalanx of guards. He refuses to let them on, claiming there is a problem with their paperwork. He's obviously been ordered to keep them off the train, and if the party decides to fight, the train's staff will flee so no one will be able to drive it. Luc certainly won't ride it if he knows the PCs are on board. The party can stow away, or catch a ride with their ship.

Super-Spies.

Truly excellent spycraft by the party might keep their identities from being discovered by Luc's crew. In this case, neither the Three Milestones nor this encounter will occur.

The Grientos.

With or without Damata, the Griento family leaves the rail enclave and goes to the home of a portly local businessman, **Cordell Donofrio**. They spend the night and do not return to the train.

Insula Memoriarum

Social/Action. Real-Time/Tactical. Level 9.

Ottavia rains magic down upon the party as the dead rise from the sea.

The island's surface looks rocky from a distance, but up close there are countless tiny outcroppings of rusted and pitted metal. Powdered rust mingles with gray mud to coat the ground. Once on shore, Ottavia's trail is fairly easy to follow, because everywhere she stepped the mud has been churned to reveal rust red wet footprints. They lead to a tall structure at the southern edge of the island; it was once a lighthouse, but it has rotted out in many places, and parts of the wall have fallen away.

Ottavia heads inside, then laboriously climbs the damaged steps and then the stone wall in order to reach the top level. From there she can look out and watch the party's approach, as well as keep an eye on the descent of the sun. She wants to stall the party for a few minutes once they reach the lighthouse, so she dons her *headband of roaming thoughts* so she can communicate telepathically with them.

When they come within 100 feet, she addresses them.

> "I am Ottavia Sacredote, oracle of the Clergy, and my task is to protect the man you pursue. He acts for the betterment of civilization, and he has deemed you a threat. But unlike some in my faith I do not rush to judgment. If you can defend your aggression, do so, and I shall listen. If you cannot, let he who is willing to risk his life to harm my charge be the first to step across the lighthouse threshold."


+30
+30
+30
Lighthouse Tower:
Second floor
Lighthouse Tower:
Third floor
Lighthouse Tower:
Fourth floor
Lighthouse Tower:
First floor
= 10 feet
CURSED ISLAND

If the party negotiates, Ottavia has trouble lying because of her headband, so the party can learn of her mission's parameters, namely to protect Luc until he reaches Vendricce, where he'll meet the leaders of the Obscurati. They can also tell that Ottavia is enamored of Luc, and while she recognizes he has a vengeful streak born from being looked down upon most of his life, he has sympathy for those who suffer. Keeping him free from harm is not just her mission; it's personal, driven by a need to give him a chance to prove that her faith in him is not misplaced.

If she becomes convinced the PCs are enemies, or if they try to enter the lighthouse prematurely, she tells them to wait, and uses her *enthrall* power. If it does not affect the entire party, she abandons that tactic and attacks. If she affects all the party, however, she begins to give a sermon on the nature of corruption, how a desire for personal power can lead people to abandon others in need, whether that power is wealth, political clout, or supernatural might. The enthrallment keeps the party from noticing as the sun sets and the dead emerge from the sea. Those affected can take no action to resist, up until the moment the first drowned corpse comes within 30 feet.

Another voice—feminine, sultry and breathing heavily—whispers into the party's minds as Ottavia speaks. "The priestess's sermon will see her foes dead. Her rivals, visitors to this island, are welcome below, where it is safer." Throughout the ensuing encounter, the voice beckons them to come below the island.

The first two drowned dead who accost the party still retain some semblance of their appearance in life, and can actually groan vague responses to questions; more likely, they will warn the party not to become like them. These are Meoric Shadowleaf, a burned, punctured, and twisted orc wearing glasses and a fancy if battered hat, and Darren Morrissey, heavily bearded and fat, but about the handsomest damned zombie the PCs will ever see.

List of Adversaries.

- Ottavia Sacredote
- 1,000 drowned dead of Odiem
- The Voice of the Island

Terrain.

Twelve foot high standing stones surround the lighthouse, their ancient wards eroded by sea and rain. Living creatures native to this plane gain a +2 bonus to defenses while adjacent to them. The northern cliff is a sixty foot plunge to rocks and crashing waves.

The doors to the lighthouse are weathered bronze, and if barricaded from within it they could hold the horde of undead at bay. When the party arrives, Ottavia has barred them, but characters might find their way over or through the wall so they can open the doors from within.

The walls of the lighthouse rise 30 feet high in the front section. Once it had a second floor, accessible by wooden stairs, but the stairs and floor have long since rotted away. The outside walls are still sturdy, but the roof of the front section is gone. Climbing is fairly easy (Athletics DC 13).

The upper levels of the lighthouse tower are missing huge sections of the northeastern wall, and to ascend a character will have to climb around or jump over the gaps. The roof of the fourth floor is missing, and the walls are only waist to chest high, granting Ottavia cover against attacks from below.

Unstable Terrain. Due to the island's curse, whenever a living creature in the lighthouse becomes bloodied for the first time in an encounter, the stones beneath their feet buckle. That creature's space becomes difficult terrain, and at the end of its next turn, the space collapses. On the ground level that causes a 20 foot fall into the first chamber of the vault below. On higher floors it can lead to a deadly plunge. A character that falls this way can make a saving throw to catch himself but be left dangling over the gap.

Tactics.

Ottavia enjoys a strong advantage being in the high ground, and she rains holy light down as the PCs try to enter the lighthouse. She switches to using *sound burst* if they start to climb the lighthouse tower.

The undead arrive five minutes after the party arrives, and can be seen approaching from hundreds of feet away. If Ottavia's *enthralling oratory* power succeeds, the horde shambles up and might attack while the party is distracted. Ten of the undead show up around the edges of the map, with another ten every round, all pressing toward the lighthouse. If blocked at the door, they laboriously climb up the walls and try to get inside. The sea below is also full of them, reaching up and moaning, longing to bring the living down beneath the waves with them.

The party might be able to hold them off, but it should be obvious that they have little hope of being able to escape the island. However, the stairs that lead down in the lighthouse offer an avenue of escape.

The Voice of the Island can aid the party with its *damning word* if they get into a real tight spot, but otherwise it mostly just calls for them to come to her.

Aftermath.

Ottavia's goal is to protect Luc, which means the party cannot be allowed to leave the island. She'll fight as long as she can, but if captured she is too honorable to betray the party to the dead. Likewise, if the party makes an effort to avoid a fight she might actually ally with them to avoid the horde of the drowned, since she's confident they're stuck here at least until dawn.

ESCAPE OPTIONS.

Aside from heading down to the vault, the party might rain magical attacks down upon the undead at the base of the cliff, then climb down and attempt to swim the mile back to shore. Each round, ten of the undead rise from the sea and attack. Each PC must swim at least 500 feet (making DC 13 Athletics checks each round), at which point they get beyond the range of the undead. A heroic fisherman spots them and brings them aboard his boat.

A ritual caster might also manage to teleport the party to safety. If they signal their boat from the lighthouse, their crew can get no closer than 100 feet from shore. The crew is then busy fending off the dead, leaving it to the party to close the gap.

Finally, the party might just hole up at the top of the lighthouse tower and push off any undead that tries to climb up. The drowned dead depart a few minutes before sunrise at 7:02 AM, giving the party a chance to rush back to the train before it departs. However, the guards at the enclave will refuse to let them board, so they might have to stow away.

Ottavia Sacredote Level 11 Artillery
Medium fey humanoid, elf XP 600

HP 81; **Bloodied** 40 **Initiative** +9
AC 23, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 25 **Perception** –3
Speed 7 Low-Light Vision
Resist thunder 10

Traits

▶ **Oracle's Curse**

Ottavia is deaf, and can hear only the voices of angels. She takes a –10 penalty to Perception checks (already included in her stats), but is resistant to sonic attacks and immune to any effect that requires her to hear.

▶ **Enthralling Oratory**

If Ottavia has not yet attacked, she can attempt to enthrall people within 20 squares (the range of her telepathy). She makes an attack against each creature (+16 vs. Will), and if she hits, the target is stunned as long as she continues her oratory, to a maximum of one hour. If a creature comes within range, Ottavia can make the same attack to try to enthrall that creature.

A creature that is not affected can spend its turn trying to get others to snap out of it, granting them a saving throw to break free.

If a hostile creature comes within 6 squares of someone who is enthralled, he gets a save to break free. If any creature attacks any enthralled person, the effect ends and those creatures cannot be enthralled again on the same day.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Morningstar of the Dawn** (radiant, weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
She holds the weapon more for defense than offense, but when she hits you the spiked mace flashes with holy light.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+7 radiant damage and the target is blinded until the end of Ottavia's next turn.

✓ **Searing Light** (implement, radiant) ✦ At-Will
A burning sunbeam lances out from her palm.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +16 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d10+4 radiant damage.

✲ **Sound Burst** (implement, thunder) ✦ At-Will
She snaps her fingers in your direction, and thunder explodes in your ears.
Attack: Area Burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +16 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d6+9 thunder damage and the target is dazed until the end of Ottavia's next turn, and deafened (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and the target is deafened until the end of Ottavia's next turn.

Minor Actions

▶ **Cure Light Wounds** ✦ Encounter
Effect: Ottavia or an adjacent ally heals 20 HP.

Triggered Actions

▶ **Elven Accuracy** ✦ Encounter
Trigger: Ottavia makes an attack roll and dislikes the result.
Effect (No Action): Reroll the attack roll. Use the second roll, even if it's lower.

▶ **Roaming Thoughts** ✦ Encounter
Though she is reeling from your attack, a gem in her headband flares, and you feel her consciousness slip into your mind.
Trigger: Ottavia starts her turn dazed, stunned, or affected by a power with the fear keyword.
Attack (No Action): Close Burst 20 (one creature in burst); +16 vs. Will
Hit: Ottavia's turn ends. The target immediately takes an extra turn under her control.
Miss: The target is affected by the same condition that triggered this power until the start of your next turn.

Skills Bluff +15, History +13, Religion +11
Str 8 (+4) **Dex** 12 (+6) **Wis** 15 (+7)
Con 12 (+6) **Int** 13 (+6) **Cha** 20 (+10)
Alignment Good **Languages** Common, Elven, Crisillyiri sign, telepathy 20

Drowned Dead of Odiem Level 9 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 100

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +7
AC 21, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 21 **Perception** +4
Speed 2

Traits

▶ **As Relentless as the Tide**
You look out at the masses of fallen undead and realize that some you hewed apart only moments ago have begun to move again. Their destroyed limbs gush with blood and sea water that is slowly coalescing into solid flesh.

Five minutes after a drowned dead is destroyed, it regenerates. Only freeing the demon Ashima-Shimtu can break the island's curse and allow the dead to lie still.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Grasp of the Sea** (psychic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The dead man's eyes lock on yours as he grabs you. The sea lies within those eyes, crashing, pressing down on your chest, dragging you under. You shake free of his grip but then bend over and cough seawater from your lungs. If you had not escaped, surely you would have drowned, standing here on solid land.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. Will
Hit: 6 psychic damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 18). As long as he remains grabbed by at least one drowned dead he cannot breathe. At the start of his turn he must make an Endurance check (DC 20) or else start to drown. If he fails three Endurance checks without getting a chance to breathe, he falls unconscious and starts dying, regardless of his HP. If he gets a chance to breathe, he regains consciousness.

Str 14 (+6) **Dex** 6 (+2) **Wis** 10 (+4)
Con 14 (+6) **Int** 1 (–1) **Cha** 4 (+1)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages**—

The Voice of the Island Level 25 Controller

HP N/A **Initiative** +0

Traits

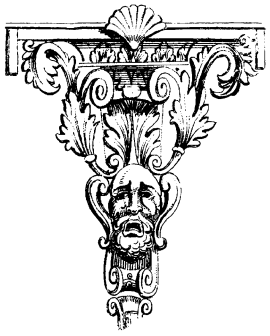
▶ **Blood-Bound**

The blood of the ancient demon Ashima-Shimtu has dripped into the sea for centuries, and now she is bound to the island. She is aware vaguely of everything happening on the surface of the island, and can occasionally extend her influence. Though her blood powers the undead, she does not control them.

Standard Actions

▶ **Damning Word** (evil, thunder) ✦ Encounter
The voice that has whispered to you now shouts. An infernal word echoes across the island, and every one of the dead cowers for an instant.
Effect: Every one of the drowned dead of Odiem is stunned this turn. If they are grabbing any characters, they release them.

Skills Arcana +24, Bluff +24, Diplomacy +24, History +24, Insight +23, Intimidate +24, Religion +24
Str — **Dex** — **Wis** 22 (+18)
Con — **Int** 24 (+19) **Cha** 24 (+19)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Elven, Infernal, Primordial



Crypta Hereticarum

Exploration. Montage. Level 9.

The only safe haven against a horde of undead is a cursed vault.

At the bottom of the stairs lies the entrance to a centuries-old vault. A gallery once provided a place of worship and reflection. Warnings in archaic language cover the walls, but most have been defaced. A pair of bronze doors hang open, their warding sigils scraped or melted off. A makeshift iron door-bar leans against the wall, formed from three swords melted together. Some time in the past few decades, another group got caught on the island and had to barricade themselves down here against the undead.

Beyond the doors, eight chambers are connected by hallways lined with bones of priests who were interred here to help sanctify the island and keep its evil from leaking out. The chambers contain various heresies, horrors, and demon-possessed men and beasts. Parts of the vault have sunk and become flooded, but the passages are navigable. In the center lies the vault's greatest prisoner, the ancient demoness Ashima-Shimtu.

The feminine voice from the surface continues to invite the party deeper into the vault, but it never responds to their attempts to communicate, or strays much from the "come to the center of the vault and I will free you" line.

Chamber List.

Though now empty, the chambers once contained a wide variety of evil.

1. Vault Entrance.
2. Heretical Texts.
3. Unholy Arms & Armor.
4. Blasphemous Artwork.
5. Accursed Items.
6. Afflicted Innocents.
7. Damned Souls.
8. Beasts of the Infernal Horde.
9. The Prison of Ashima-Shimtu, Lady of the Forked Tongue, Last of the High Fiends, Seneschal of the Demonocracy, Keeper of the Secret Which Must Not Be Lost.

From Chamber Seven, a tunnel leads north that ends in a pair of heavy bronze doors: the entrance to chamber nine. The doors have no lock or handle, and powerful magic holds it shut. A handprint has been pressed into the metal, and a ring of sigils surround the handprint. This is a spell (Arcana DC 18) to open the door, prepared specifically for the unique wards of this tomb. To use the spell, someone has to place their hand in the handprint. The ritual drains one healing surge (or does damage equal to half the character's bloodied value), and then the doors open.

The chamber beyond is not damaged or defaced like the rest of the vault, but looks fresh and preserved. Polished obsidian forms the ceiling, walls, and floor. The stone glistens and reflects the image of those walking over it. Time, however, has taken some toll, and a central section of the room has collapsed into a sump, twenty feet deep. From the doorway, there is no sign of any defenders, but the room feels foreboding.

If the party wavers, the voice promises them they are almost there.

Sinistra Diaboli

Action. Tactical. Level 10.

An insane heretic godhand seeks to offer up the party to the demon in the center of the vault.

Three centuries ago, one of the godhands of the Clergy (a sort of paladin-monk) grew obsessed with the lore of Ashima-Shimtu. He decided he would pledge himself to the demoness and find a way to free her. He found a way to bypass the door that guarded the central chamber of the vault, but in so doing he triggered a curse that trapped him underground. Worse, he discovered he could not actually free his mistress.

Not that Ashima-Shimtu wanted the crazy man as a minion anyway.

To keep himself alive, Gene broke the seals holding lesser fiends and bound himself to them so he no longer needed to eat. Over the centuries he has killed other tomb robbers and gathered various cursed items to his "lair" to help him defend his mistress. Now he hears her whispering to the party, beckoning them closer, and he hopes to kill them as an offering.

Meet Gene.

The godhand, **Gene**, sits on a small stone outcropping in the middle of the room, facing a 6-foot tall gold mirror. The old, bearded man looks fairly serene, sitting with his eyes closed in his silvery-white robes. He has no reflection in the mirror.

Once the party has gathered, he speaks to the mirror, saying that he's so very hungry. He asks if they have any food for him, then pauses as if hearing a reply. He whines and slumps his shoulders, muttering, "Souls again? I am ever so tired of eating souls. Ah well."

List of Adversaries.

- 8+ golden doppelgangers
- Gene, lunatic godhand

Terrain.

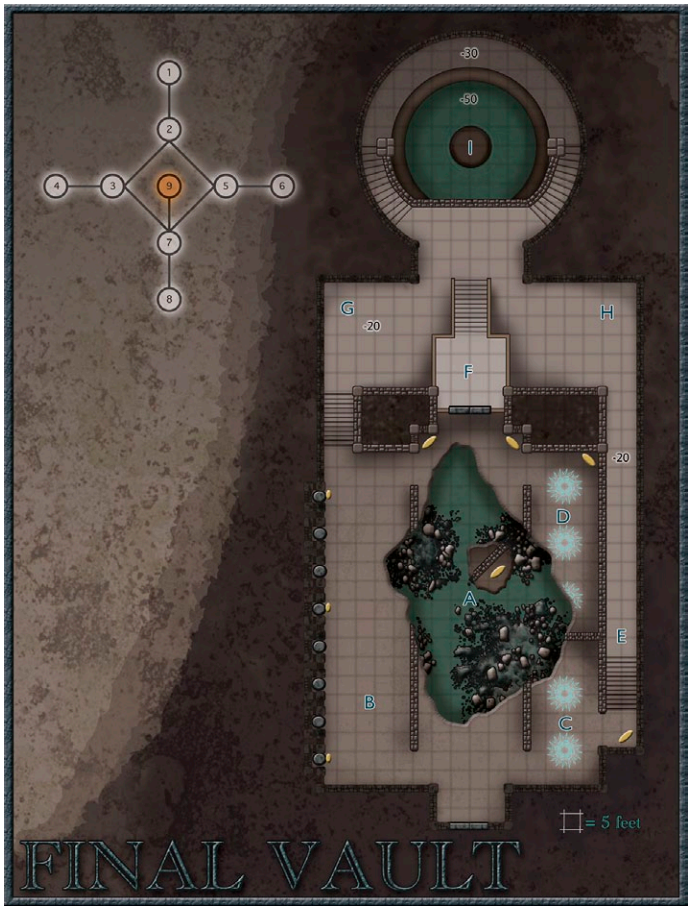
Five warding circles (one partial) glow with faint light. Gene has long since released the monsters within. If a creature enters one of these circles, he must succeed an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma check (DC 20) or else be trapped. A trapped creature cannot leave the circle or affect the circle, and can neither attack anyone outside the circle, nor use any sort of magic that goes beyond the circle. A creature can attempt once per round as a free action to break free of the circle. The creature can be released via forced movement, or by damaging the circle.

EXPLORING.

By default we present the vault after it has been cleared out through centuries of tomb-robbing. The cursed denizens have scattered across the world, and the traps have long since been disarmed, destroyed, or have simply decayed.

Appendix F, Crypta Hereticarum, adds a full suite of traps, monsters, and treasure on the way to the center chamber. The party's mission becomes purifying the desecrated chambers so they can safely reach Ashima-Shimtu.

The vault also makes an ideal place for you to present special items or plot hooks for your players. If any character has ties to the Demonocracy or the Clergy, or if they you intend to introduce any sort of prophecy or destiny, stumbling upon clues in an accursed tomb does have some classic cachet.



The pit in the center of the room is filled with rubble and sections of water 10 feet deep.

Cursed Mirrors. Around the chamber Gene has placed golden mirrors, which create evil reflections. They have warped over time, though, so the reflections are feeble and misshapen. Whenever a creature with a soul enters a space within 2 squares of the mirror, a golden doppelganger appears adjacent to that creature. Gene sacrificed his own soul, so he is unaffected.

A given creature can have multiple doppelgangers at once, but there can be no more than 8 at a time. If a mirror is knocked over, however, it no longer functions.

Golden Doppelganger Level 9 Minion
Medium immortal animate XP 100

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion

Traits

▸ **Evil Double**

It looks like you, if you had been drenched in gold and your body malformed.

Each evil double shares the defenses and stats of the creature it reflects, except that its Intelligence is 1, and its alignment is Evil.

Standard Actions

▸ **Evil Attack** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Your doppelganger uses one of your own attacks against you.

Effect: The doppelganger uses one of the at-will attacks of the creature it reflects.

Skills N/A

Abilities As copied creature

Alignment Evil **Languages** As copied creature

Gene, Lunatic Godhand Level 10 Elite Skirmisher
Medium immortal humanoid, human XP 1,000

HP 200; **Bloodied** 100 **Initiative** +10

AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 20 **Perception** +2

Speed 8 Darkvision

Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Hands of Heaven and Hell**

With each blow, his fists begin to crackle with more and more lightning, like he's gathering energy for a powerful attack.

Once per round when Gene hits a creature with a melee attack, he may pummel it or another creature adjacent to him, dealing 2 lightning damage. Each time he pummels this way, he gains one charge counter, which lasts until the end of the encounter.

Standard Actions

Juggler's Fist ✦ At-Will, Basic

His punch knocks you into the air.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC

Hit: 2d12+4 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Roundhouse Kick ✦ At-Will

His kick sends you flying across the room.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC

Hit: 2d12+4 damage, and Gene pushes the target 6 squares.

▸ **Full Discipline Attack** ✦ At-Will

Effect: Gene uses *juggler's fist* and *roundhouse kick*.

Move Actions

▸ **Aggressive Agility** ✦ At-Will

The godhand rolls into the midst of you faster than you can react.

Effect: Gene shifts his speed, but must end adjacent to an enemy.

Minor Actions

▸ **Renewing Strike** ✦ Encounter

Your perceptions slow for a moment, letting you savor the dramatic flare of lightning around Gene's fists as he swings for your face. When he hits, he laughs with pride at his own might.

Special: Gene can only use this attack if he has six or more charge counters.

Effect: If the next attack roll Gene makes hits, he gains a number of temporary HP equal to the amount of damage he deals.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Soul Swap** ✦ At-Will

When you strike him, one of the nearby doppelgangers shatters into gold dust.

Trigger: Gene is affected by a condition.

Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The condition never affects Gene, and instead the nearest golden doppelganger is destroyed. If there are no doppelgangers, Gene cannot use this ability.

Demon's Souls (fire) ✦ Encounter

You finally land a telling blow, and see that beneath his skin lies a roil of demon flesh. He explodes into fire, and then keeps burning.

Trigger: Gene becomes bloodied.

Attack (No Action): Close Burst 3; +13 vs. AC

Hit: 3d6+9 fire damage.

Effect: Gene gains an aura 1 until the end of the encounter. Any creature that ends its turn adjacent to him takes 5 fire damage.

Skills Acrobatics +16, Athletics +16, Religion +10

Str 18 (+11) **Dex** 18 (+11) **Wis** 4 (+2)

Con 14 (+7) **Int** 10 (+5) **Cha** 14 (+7)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Infernal

Tactics.

Gene leaps into the fray and tries to shove and maneuver the party near to mirrors so their golden doppelgangers appear. He then begins talking, but only addresses the doppelgangers. He mostly grumbles semi-coherently about how long he's been stuck here without people to talk to, and how his mistress stopped being so nice after he lost his soul.

He also tries to trap people in the warding circles or dump them down into the sump in the middle of the room. If anyone tries to enter Ashima-Shimtu's chamber at the north end, Gene flies into a rage and will not relent until he has removed them.

Aftermath.

When defeated, Gene's fires burn out and he slumps to the ground. He smiles through blood-stained teeth and jovially calls out to Ashima-Shimtu in the northern room, "Mistress, you have visitors!"

Then he collapses, dead.

Ashima-Shimtu

Social. Real-Time. Level 25.

Trapped for centuries, this survivor of the Demonocracy can make a deal to aid the party in their mission.

When the party enters the northern chamber after defeating Gene, read or paraphrase the following:

You hear the sea waves crashing from a wide well in the center of the room. Above it, a naked woman, her flesh scaled like a serpent, her face inhuman, hangs suspended. Six hook-tipped chains pierce her legs, her back, and her arms. Another hook that sealed her mouth swings loose, and it flutters in the breeze from her lips.

She raises her head and looks at you. The chains stretch and pull at her skin, and she draws a sharp, wounded breath. When the spasm of pain passes, she speaks.

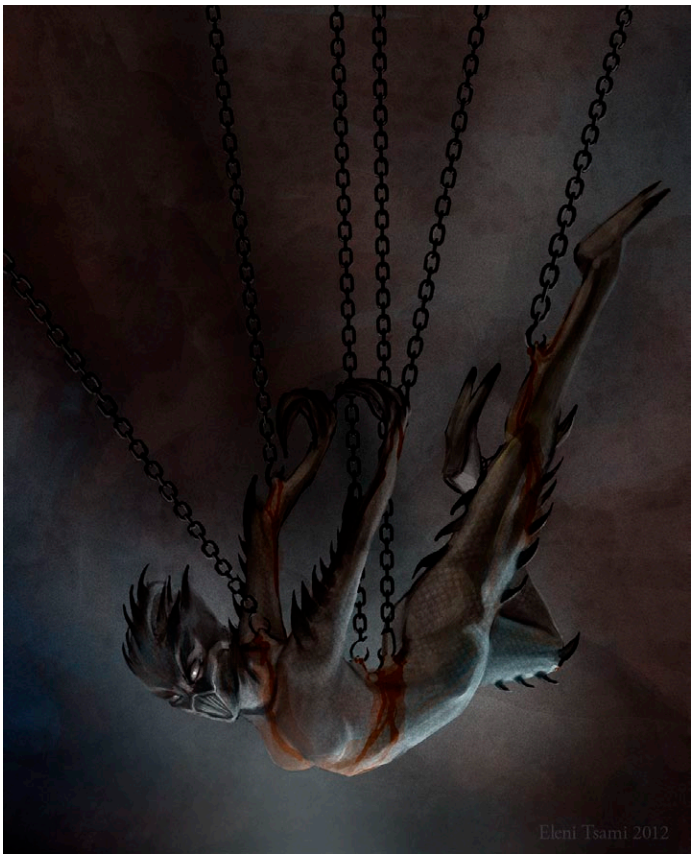
"When Triegenes, founder of the Clergy, defeated the Demonocracy, most of the fiend rulers were slain. Because their souls could not return to the hellish planes that spawned them, the corruption drained into this world. Ashima-Shimtu, however, bargained for her life, offering to be a prisoner, and in exchange she would provide guidance on how to find and trap the trace essences of the other high fiends.

"The Clergy chained her above this well that leads to the sea, and ringed the wall of the pit with blessings. Now she hangs above a massive font of holy water. The vapor forever stings her, and should she ever wriggle free she will fall and be dissolved. She upheld her end of the bargain for centuries, and learned to meditate and ignore her physical existence so she would not go mad from solitude. Eventually the Clergy captured every fiend's essence it could find, and they locked them into the same vault with Ashima-Shimtu.

"And so the Lady of the Forked Tongue would have been forgotten, if not for the holy war between the eladrin and the Clergy.

"Five hundred years ago two people came to the Isle of Odiem and received from Ashima-Shimtu a ritual that could give physical form to a belief. The ritual was used to conjure forth an avatar of the eladrin goddess Srasama, and when she was slain the eladrin race was nearly annihilated.

"The surviving heads of the Clergy learned that Ashima-Shimtu had been involved, but she refused to give them the secret of the ritual unless they released her. They threatened to kill her, but she knew the temptation to wield such power made her too valuable to kill. And so she remains, the Keeper of the Secret That Must Not Be Lost, waiting for the day the hierarch of the Clergy releases her.



"Today is not that day. The visitors to her prison could never break her chains. But she sees value in them."

Here Ashima-Shimtu identifies the PCs one by one, showing a mystical awareness of their souls and identities. For instance, she might say, "The killer who masquerades as an arm of the law to forget her sins. The knight who abandons all for the sake of duty, causing suffering in those who would love him. The drunkard druid who has betrayed tradition for the march of progress. The learned arcanist who turned to Vekeshi mysticism to aid her in vengeance."

This gives you an opportunity to develop or resolve inter-party drama, or simply to frame some of the personal journeys of the characters.

Then she makes her offer.

Ashima-Shimtu has meditated, and being the guest of priests this past millennium has given her time to consider matters of morality. She could condemn these intruders to a slow death of starvation, as she has so many times before, but she offers them instead their freedom, since she cannot have such herself.

"This is no devil's bargain, nor a gift that must be repaid by force of infernal contract. The visitors to her prison desire to leave. They need only step to the lip of this well, speak the name of where they would travel, and dive in. Ashima-Shimtu will see them safely there. More, she will conceal them for a time, so that the divinations of their enemies will think them dead. She thinks this is the least she can do to thank her visitors for removing the unpleasant man who had bothered her."

Then, eerily, the demoness seems to smile with amusement for a moment before lowering her head. The chains themselves seem to relax, and she sighs as the pain subsides.

If the party is wary, Ashima-Shimtu is not much for talking. She never addresses the party directly, but instead speaks as if narrating the scene. If the party declines, she lets them go as they will.

If the party agrees, they can name Vendricce and dive into the pool. Ashima-Shimtu's blood magic carries them through the sea, and they wash ashore near the harbor of Vendricce just before sunrise.

Make a note of any PC that became bloodied during the fight with Gene. Unless the party takes special effort to clean themselves of blood, when they dive into the pool Ashima-Shimtu's blood magic grants her some slight connection to them, which she will make use of later.

Terminus East

Exploration. Real-Time. Level 14.

A party of Obscurati welcomes Luc as he and his lantern arrive in Vendricce.

The train departs Sid Minos at 7:30 AM. Luc spends the day dejected at the thought that Ottavia is gone, having sacrificed her life to protect him. The train arrives in Vendricce at 5:42 PM.

This is currently the end of the line, and so no other train has come from the other direction. However, track is under construction heading east, with the intent of crossing the Strait of Sjögren into Elfaivar. The first quarter mile of bridge is complete, but beyond that just a skeleton of stone and steel rises from the sea. The track currently runs to the end of the completed bridge section, but a barricade waits at the edge of shore, surrounded by warning signs, to ensure no one accidentally drives a train off the end of the bridge and into the harbor.

Because the party can reach this location so many different ways, we present the actions and resources of the Obscurati group here, and leave it to your players to plan how to accomplish their mission and then escape. Also, we assume the players will realize the train is primed and ready to roll, making it the best possible escape vehicle, since its course will lead to the harbor, where the party's ship awaits.

Private Depot.

When the train arrives in the Vendricce rail enclave, the passengers all leave, then porters make sure no one has fallen asleep and that no luggage has been left behind. Luc, Bree, and Verzubak remain on board.

Then the train does some maneuvers to detach most of the central section, leaving just the locomotive, the fuel car, Luc's first class suite car, and the first class lounge (Cars 1, 2, 18, and 19). This small train pulls up beside a private depot building, stopping at 6:15 PM. Aboard the train are only engineer Steeg, Bree, Verzubak, and Luc (and possibly Ottavia if she never lured the party to the island).

At this point the train depot appears empty, but **Lya Jierre** waits inside for the sun to set, at 6:30 PM. At that point she walks out onto the platform and calls out to her brother. Luc and Bree step off the train onto the platform. (Verzubak remains on board, chatting with engineer Steeg.)

Luc carries his lantern covered with a dark sheet. Lya is dressed for a lavish ball (but still has her sword at her hip), and she gives her brother a boisterous hug.

FINAL ORDERS.

Chief Inspector Delft knows the PCs are scheduled to reach Vendricce on the 16th. That morning he has an RHC mage perform up to three Sending rituals to ask them the status of the mission and suggest a course of action. He encourages them to capture Luc if possible, kill him if necessary, and recover the lantern for study. Any additional information is just a bonus.

Luc says he expected a group would be here to greet him. Lya says they're here and produces a small vial of lantern oil from within her dress. She asks if they were followed, and Bree recounts the events of the trip.

As long as the PCs aren't visible and threatening, Lya is unconcerned. She hands Luc the oil and directs him to light the lantern. The lantern glows with blue light, and their surroundings peel away, revealing another train depot, this one gloriously illuminated by candles and chandeliers within while somehow much more deeply dark outside. The lantern has shifted them into the Bleak Gate, and for the next five minutes the two worlds will be coterminous. Everything within 10 squares of the lantern exists in both planes at once.

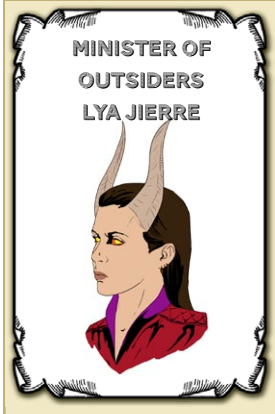
Bleak Gate Defenses.

Inside the Bleak Gate version of the depot waits Nicodemus the Gnostic, a few tier four members of the conspiracy who work in the Obscurati palace, and elite guards who wear capes clasped by golden pins in the shape of an open book. The grounds outside are patrolled by additional guards.

Nicodemus, head of the conspiracy, is wearing a different body than the last time the party encountered him (at Macbannin's manor in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*). He only has a weak connection to his current host, so he cannot contribute in a fight. However, he is completely fearless despite his frailty, since he cares not one whit if his body dies. The other guests at the depot are Risuri engineer **Lester Guillory**, Danoran astronomer **Dustin Huff**, and twin sisters **Emily and Anna Davis**, political liaisons to the government of Crisillyir who help with the conspiracy's finances. None of them are combatants.

Layout.

Lya has Luc place his lantern on one of the tables in the depot. The effect of the lantern extends 10 squares from it. The party is in the real world, but the lantern lets them see and interact with creatures in the Bleak Gate who are in that radius, and vice versa. However, if any of the characters in the Bleak Gate leave the radius of the lantern's effect, they fade out of view from the real world.



An ambitious tiefling in her late 20s, Lya is the sister of Luc and the niece of Han Jierre, the Sovereign of Danor. She graduated top of her class from the prestigious academy of war, the *Jierre Sciens d'Arms*, and many students of other war colleges have read her thesis, *Field Study of Melee Effectiveness and Foe Debilitation through Focused Limb Severance Techniques Contrasted with Mainstream Opportunistic Techniques*, which she wrote near the end of the last Yerasol War.

Despite her youth, she was awarded the position of Minister of Outsiders, giving her great leeway to travel and make alliances. For the past three years she has worked with King Aodhan to keep the peace between their two nations, and as they began making plans for a formal alliance, she accepted the king's offer of marriage as a symbolic union.

Secretly, she is also leader of the Obscurati's Golden Cell, tasked with determining how to open the great seal on Axis Island. Lya Jierre should be portrayed as a complex character with competing motivations. Though she gets involved with Risur out of a desire to gain great political power, she does so with no malice. She sees the Obscurati as a chance for a more meaningful and lasting peace, but to reach that goal she must tell ever more elaborate lies and, most likely, battle would-be heroes.

North of the private depot lies the grand station, where dozens of spare train cars and locomotives park for service. A low hill separates this scenic depot from the sprawl of those rails. On a hill to the south, the enclave keeps a small barracks of about two hundred soldiers, present in case forces from Elfaivar attack. These facilities also exist in the Bleak Gate, but are empty and inaccessible in any case.

In the Bleak Gate version, a small corral beside the depot currently holds four carriages and eight horses. After the meet and greet finishes, they'll carry everyone off to a dock, where a ship waits to take them to the Obscurati palace.

Welcome Into the Fold.

The party can see the following events through the depot's windows.

Lya welcomes Luc and Bree into the private depot. She begins to explain the basics of their group while introducing him to the other guests. She explains that some things still have to remain secret for now, but his invention, when scaled up and reproduced as lighthouses and clocktowers, will help them change the world.

Luc stutters as he tries to ask how they're changing things. He is willing to accept almost anything if it will get him respect and authority, but his conversations with Ottavia have him mindful of how people with power tend to abuse it.

Lya admits she was uncertain too at first, but when they get to the palace, Nicodemus will have a chance to explain in more detail. She assures her brother that they're doing this to make things better, and that they are aided by the wisdom of some of the wisest people of the past five centuries.

Nicodemus charmingly cuts her off there, chiding her for saying too much in mixed company. He compliments Luc's intellect and his bravery for having successfully made the journey while being spied on by hostiles. He apologizes, and says that there are some logistical issues they have to handle before proper pleasantries can begin.

Nicodemus produces three amulets, similar to the ones the party saw Macbannin's crew using in the witchoil laboratory. He explains that they'll need to be wearing them when the lantern goes out, and it will bring them across the veil into the Bleak Gate, where the *real* party waits. Normally the trip between the two planes is a hugely involved process requiring multiple gates that slowly shift you stage by stage by stage. But with Luc's lantern, the process will be so much more efficient.

Luc, Lya, and Bree put on the amulets, and Nicodemus tells them to mingle. He'll be back in a moment, but he needs to handle some last minute security first. The other Obscurati members come up to gush to Luc, while Nicodemus walks outside. He lights up a cigarette, tells the guards to keep watch, and then scans the night, looking for signs of the party.

A few minutes later, the light from the lantern starts to dim, and the guards move to prepare the carriages. Nicodemus goes back inside, and as the door swings shut behind him the lantern goes dark. The depot is suddenly empty, and the connection to the Bleak Gate is gone.

If the party hasn't acted by now, Luc and the lantern have gone beyond their reach.

Heightened Security.

If the party is not benefiting from Ashima-Shimtu's aid to hide from divinations, and they have not otherwise taken precautions, the Ob have used plenty of magic to make sure they know if anyone's crashing their event. If Ottavia lives, they will have used a Sending ritual to at least discover whether she's alive.

Nicodemus in any event now knows the identities of the party. If he thinks they're coming, he knows they have a knack for avoiding traps, so he prefers to deter them instead of trying to capture or kill them.

Inside the depot, the bookpin guards cover the entrances. Two musketeers wait outside each entrance, and another two stand watch on the platform by the train. A manipulator mage hides in each of the two buildings across the street, watching through curtains, and constantly detecting for magic, particularly illusions and charms. (This is particularly unfair to the party, because unless the lantern moves, the manipulators are outside its radius. So they can attack inward and affect any PCs who are trying to storm the depot, but the PCs cannot attack them back.)

Battle Plan.

The party might try to get help from Malia, who could let them hide aboard the train, and whose scoped rifles would be quite handy in this situation. If the party has watched a lot of heist films, they might manage to turn Verzubak to their side and have him replace Luc's lantern with the (repaired) replica from atop the locomotive before they even get to Vendricce. Or the party might just set fire to the depot and sweep in when people exit.

Until the party comes within 10 squares of the lantern, they are effectively invisible to the guards at the depot, which the party might abuse by attacking from outside the light's radius. If the party approaches from behind the train, the musketeers might not hear them (Stealth DC 19).

The lantern's light cannot be snuffed prematurely without destroying the lantern, which the Obscurati won't do except in dire circumstances. If the party attacks, they have a limited time to get past the guards and accomplish their goal—be it murder, destruction, or abduction.

If the party hasn't figured out the purpose of Luc, Lya, and Bree's amulets, they might get a nasty surprise when they try to drag Luc away and he vanishes at the edge of the lantern's light because the party's in the real world and he's in the Bleak Gate.

A stand-up fight against the depot's whole security force will likely not go their way, but if they sweep in and escape in a hurry, they might be able to survive a few rounds of attacks and then get away so the majority of the guards can't follow. Bree and Lya will remove their amulets and give chase, however.

List of Adversaries.

- Luc Jierre
- Lya Jierre
- Bree Kaldeckis
- Verzubak Tantalovich
- 2 Obscurati manipulators
- 8 Obscurati musketeers
- 4 Obscurati bookpin guards

DRIVING THE TRAIN.

If the party plans to escape on the train, a Technologist can start it moving without trouble. Anyone else needs to succeed an Intelligence check (DC 20) to figure out how to operate it, though the party might be able to do that in advance. Due to the lesser weight of the short train, its speed increases by 6 squares per round at full throttle, to a maximum speed of 160 squares per round.



Tactics.

Every combatant's main goal is to protect Luc. Bree stays by his side and covers him, while Lya charges any enemies she thinks she can reach, taking off her amulet if she needs to attack PCs who are beyond the lantern's light. The musketeers fire volleys if they can, or switch to swords and swarm enemies. The manipulators prefer to hide until foes close in on the depot, and then they disrupt and confuse them. The bookpin guards form a heavily armored perimeter around Bree and Luc. Nicodemus, while he does not fight, will stroll through the battle, doing his best to look harmless so he can reach the party and learn about them. If injured, he smokes a leaf of Nicodemus cigarette while he dies.

If the party gets away, Lya will definitely pursue. Whether her brother is safe or not, she knows that the party recognizes her, and she can't let them tell King Aodhan his future bride is conspiring against Risur (see also the "Recurring Villainy" sidebar on page 336).

Luc Jierre	Level 7 Minion Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, tiefling	XP 75
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion	**Initiative** +6
AC 23, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 19	**Perception** +4
Speed 6	
Standard Actions	
⊘ **Noble Knife** ✦ At-Will, Basic	
Luc's ornate knife slices into you.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 9 damage.	
Skills Arcana +16	
Str 10 (+3) **Dex** 13 (+4) **Wis** 13 (+4)	
Con 10 (+3) **Int** 21 (+8) **Cha** 10 (+3)	
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Draconic, Crisillyiri sign	

OBSCURATI FACILITIES IN VENDRICCE.

Though it's unlikely the party will encounter them in this adventure, the Obscurati has a palace on Mutravir Island, several miles south of the city. The stately grounds of the palace appear perfectly respectable, but various passages lead to a parallel version in the Bleak Gate, where most of the conspiracy's affairs occur.

The PCs will return here in Adventure Seven, *Schism*, and even when they're sufficiently advanced in level for that adventure they won't have enough power on their own to succeed in a frontal assault. If they try it now, they'd be spotted within a few minutes, run down by trackers on horseback, and captured before they could make it back to the city.

Lya Jierre Level 12 Elite Brute
Medium natural humanoid, tiefling XP 1,400
HP 280; **Bloodied** 140 **Initiative** +9
AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 24 **Perception** +8
Speed 6 Darkvision
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Benefits of Wealth**
As the niece of Danor's sovereign, Lya Jierre has access to the finest arms and equipment, the best trainers, and all manner of enchantments to protect her. Though already a master swordswoman, she clearly is protected by magic as well.
Lya can make one saving throw against a condition of her choice at the start of her turn, in addition to at the end of her turn.

▸ **Counterswarm Stance**
She seems to prefer being surrounded, and when you lunge she drops a leg behind your ally and swings behind him, gaining momentary cover.
Lya gains a +1 bonus to defenses against melee and ranged attacks for each opponent she is adjacent to after the first.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Exceptional Duelist** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Her uncanny swordsmanship forces you into unbalancing positions to avoid being taken out. Even if you dodge her strike, she nicks your wrist or grazes your thigh when she parries your counterattack. She seems to be a step ahead of you in the mental field of this battle.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 4d8+19 damage.
Miss: Half damage.

▸ **Whirlwind Attack** (weapon) ✦ Encounter
She's drawn you into her trap. She kicks away from one of you, spins and slashes another across the neck, ducks and swipes an ally's belly, then rises just in time to redirect your counterattack so you strike your own leg. She drops back into a defensive stance, breath heaving from exertion.
Effect: Lya uses *exceptional duelist* against each enemy adjacent to her.

⊘ **Revolver** ✦ At-Will
With her spare hand, Lya draws a finely engraved pistol and snaps off two shots.
Effect: Lya makes the following attack twice. Afterward, she can spend his move action to make two more times. She can then spend her minor action to attack twice more, emptying her clip. (She cannot spend a minor action this way without first spending a move action.)
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4+7 damage, or 1d4+13 on a crit.
Load standard to reload all six bullets, or *load move* to load just one if she's desperate.

Move Actions

▸ **Enchanted Leap** ✦ Encounter
Effect: Lya jumps her speed. At the height of her jump she is 3 squares off the ground.

Free Actions

▸ **Escape Contingency** ✦ Encounter
Realizing the fight has turned against her, she whispers a command word and vanishes. The stench of brimstone and burnt oil fills the air, and her sword clatters to the ground.
Effect: Lya triggers a magical contingency, crafted at great expense, and travels to the Bleak Gate.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Infernal Wrath of the Jierre Bloodline** (fire) ✦ Encounter
When you strike her, her eyes flare with fire, and you are immolated by the infernal power of the tiefling.
Trigger: A creature within 10 squares hits Lya.
Effect (No Action): The triggering creature takes 2d6+4 fire damage and gains ongoing 15 fire damage (save ends).

▸ **Razorburst Rapier** ✦ Encounter
An extra row of jagged blades hover just above her rapier's cutting edge, glinting and grinding across your weapon. She flicks a button on her weapon's guard and triggers a motor that sends these teeth spinning at blinding speed.
Trigger: Lya damages an enemy with this weapon and afterward the target has 24 or fewer HP.
Effect (No Action): The weapon shrieks as its bladed teeth saw back and forth as a mechanism near the hilt unspools. The target must make a saving throw. On a success, the target loses an extremity of its choice—hand, foot, arm, or leg. On a failure, Lya chooses which extremity the target loses. Creatures without extremities are unaffected.
A severed arm or hand prevents use of anything that the victim was holding or carrying. A severed foot slows the victim. A severed leg renders the victim prone.

Str 14 (+8) **Dex** 22 (+12) **Wis** 14 (+8)
Con 12 (+7) **Int** 17 (+9) **Cha** 18 (+10)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Primordial

Bree Kaldeckis Level 9 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 400
HP 97; **Bloodied** 43 **Initiative** +4
AC 25, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 20 **Perception** +11
Speed 6
Resist 3 ongoing damage

Traits

▸ **Bodyguard's Shield**
The war vet heroically steps in the path of your strike to defend her charge.
Bree can choose one creature at a time to defend as her charge. Whenever an attack would hit her charge, if it did not also hit Bree, she may have it hit her instead. If the attack hit both of them, she cannot protect her charge from it.
If her charge attacks, she cannot defend him until the end of the charge's next turn.

▸ **Bodyguard's Sword**
She's not going to let you turn your attention to anyone else.
Creatures marked by Bree who attack other creatures or shift away provoke an opportunity attack from her.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Arma Style** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Bree mixes longsword and close grapple techniques to keep you from getting away.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+8 damage.
Effect: The target is marked until the end of Bree's next turn.

✓ **Wallop** ✦ Encounter
Bree punches with her mangled arm, but the hit knocks the wind out of you.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d8+8 damage and the target is knocked prone, and is dazed until the end of Bree's next turn.

Skills Athletics +11, Endurance +12, Insight +11, Perception +11, Stealth +11
Str 14 (+6) **Dex** 14 (+6) **Wis** 14 (+6)
Con 17 (+7) **Int** 14 (+6) **Cha** 11 (+4)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Primordial

Verzubak Tantalovich Level 7 Controller (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf XP 300

HP 62; **Bloodied** 31 **Initiative** +9
AC 21, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 20 **Perception** +10
Speed 5

Traits

▸ **Jinxed Tumble**
Every time you try to hurt this man, something bad happens. You meant to hit him, and you ended up stabbing your ally and tripping on your own feet.
Whenever an enemy misses Verzubak with an attack, that creature falls prone and takes 5 damage. If Verzubak is bloodied, the enemy instead repeats the attack against one of its allies that is adjacent to Verzubak, then falls prone and takes 5 damage.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Bejeweled Fist** ✦ At-Will, Basic
His fist doesn't hit that hard, but a moment later you nearly twist your ankle, and then a stray bit of terrain clips you on your shoulder, and you nearly drop your weapon. It's like suddenly you're the most unlucky person in the world.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6+14 damage, and the target takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls, saving throws, and skill or ability checks until the end of Verzubak's next turn.

⊘ **Throwing Knife** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Verzubak launches a thin blade at you. His aim isn't that good, but at the last moment something draws your attention away, and you turn just right so the knife digs into something tender.
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8+12 damage.

Skills Bluff +11, Insight +10, Perception +10, Streetwise +11, Thievery +7
Str 10 (+3) **Dex** 8 (+2) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 17 (+6) **Cha** 16 (+6)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven

Obscurati Manipulator Level 9 Goon Lurker
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 200

HP 34; **Bloodied** 17 **Initiative** +10
AC 23, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 21 **Perception** +9
Speed 6

Traits

▸ **Goon**
Similar to a minion, the manipulator goes down quickly in a fight. He has half the HP of a normal creature of his level.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Orb Conk** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The mage's orb swings out from his hand and clocks you in the face.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 9 damage.

⟋ **Implant Memory** (charm, implement) ✦ At-Will
You feel someone walking through your memories, trying to plant a lie. You can choose to fight it off, or listen to its deception.
Requirement: The manipulator must be hidden from the target.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +14 vs. Will
Hit: The target can choose to either become dominated or stunned until the end of the manipulator's next turn.

Skills Arcana +14, Perception +9, Stealth +9
Str 8 (+3) **Dex** 10 (+4) **Wis** 10 (+4)
Con 10 (+4) **Int** 16 (+7) **Cha** 10 (+4)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Obscurati Musketeer Level 9 Goon Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 200

HP 34; **Bloodied** 17 **Initiative** +6
AC 21, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 21 **Perception** +9
Speed 6

Traits

▸ **Goon**
The musketeer has half the HP of a normal creature of his level.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Shortsword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 9 damage.

⊘ **Musket** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 16 damage.

Skills Perception +9
Str 12 (+5) **Dex** 16 (+7) **Wis** 10 (+4)
Con 10 (+4) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 10 (+4)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Obscurati Bookpin Guard Level 9 Soldiers
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 400

HP 92; **Bloodied** 46 **Initiative** +8
AC 23, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 21 **Perception** +9
Speed 5

Traits

▸ **Magical Defender**
The guard touches his golden cloak pin and says an arcane word.
Each allied creature adjacent to the bookpin guard can make a saving throw at the start of its turn to negate any charm or domination effect of level 9 or lower, even if it doesn't normally grant a save.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Longsword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+6 damage.

▸ **Plate and Shield** ✦ At-Will
The heavily-armored warriors hold their darkly-painted shields wide, more to protect those near them than the protect themselves. When your attack flies in, it impacts on an invisible barrier.
Effect: Until the start of the bookpin guard's next turn, allied creatures adjacent to him benefit from superior cover.

Skills Arcana +11, Athletics +11, Perception +9
Str 18 (+8) **Dex** 10 (+4) **Wis** 10 (+4)
Con 15 (+6) **Int** 14 (+6) **Cha** 10 (+4)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven

RECURRING VILLAINY

Ideally, as soon as Lya is bloodied, she'll break off combat. Perhaps she jumps off the train and crashes into a fruit cart, or if she's fighting in the streets a phalanx of two dozen soldiers charge in, and she's able to flee through their ranks. We know players hate it when NPCs escape, but recurring villains are fun.

If the party does manage to capture her, the events of Adventure Five, *Cauldron-Born*, can still occur, because Danor will contact King Aodhan, and the moment the party set foot on Risur, he would order her release for the sake of the peace summit. Until then, she would be amiable as long as they didn't kill her brother. In any case, a powerful *geas* forbids her from admitting any of the secrets of the conspiracy to outsiders.

If the party works extra hard and manages to break the *geas*, recall that the campaign can still work even if the heroes figure out the secret early. Lya knows about the seals, the colossus, the lantern, and the plan that involves them, but even then she doesn't know about the various liabilities that the PCs will be able to exploit in paragon tier to take down the conspiracy, nor about the secret history of how Nicodemus and Kasvarina brought about the Great Malice. Right now the party is close to cracking some of these mysteries anyway, so while some of the later twists will have less impact, they'll feel like they've scored a major coup.

Escape the Noose

Action. Tactical. Level 12.

The party must rush to reach their ship and flee before they're trapped.

Don't think of this scene as a specific encounter, but rather a reminder of the resources at your disposal to ratchet and release tension during the adventure's climax. If it seems your players feel successful for simply spying and getting away, or if they defeated everyone at the depot and survived, you can let them reach the harbor and board their ship without extra trouble.

But you want them to feel like they've earned their victory. Use these resources and ideas as needed to bring the party to the edge before they succeed. If they're on the train, it's a five-minute ride to the harbor. On foot it's a quarter hour or worse, depending on how stealthy they are.

General City Reaction.

- At the sound of combat at the train depot, alarm bells ring from the barracks to the south. Dozens of troops begin to scramble out the doors over the next minute. Horns sound an alert across the city, and the military and local city guards arm up and march for the harbor, which is the party's presumed destination. The alarm signals a high level magical threat, and people flee indoors.
- The city's churches ring golden bells, creating a cacophony that disrupts teleportation magic. It's not enough to stop the party from getting away, but it's enough to require an Arcana check (DC 25) to get any teleportation ritual to work. Personal short-distance teleportation works normally.
- Naval crews scramble to blockade the harbor, which the party can see as they approach.

On Foot.

- If the party flees through the city, they see frantic and confused patrols running down the streets, lanterns in hand, stopping any foreigners.
- A patrol confronts them as they near their destination (the edge of the city, the harbor, or a safe house), and calls for reinforcements.

Train to Harbor.

- Lya boards the train at the rear and runs along the top. If she can, she gets to the engine and applies the brakes, but she probably ends up engaged in a sword duel atop the roof of the fuel car instead. She might slice off a PC's hand before eventually leaping free when the fight turns against her. Bree might join her.
- City soldiers mounted on horses gallop alongside the train and fire muskets. Use Obscurati musketeer stats, but make it clear these are not actually Ob troops.
- As the train nears the harbor, construction workers wave frantically, trying to warn the driver to stop; they leap out of the way at the last second as the locomotive plows through a barricade of timbers. Ten seconds later the train flies off the end of the track and crashes into the incomplete bridge beyond. The impact shatters the boiler, which explodes in a cloud of deadly steam and sends a rumble of thunder across the harbor.

Out of the Harbor.

- The party's ship hoists sail, catching guards at the docks off guard. It sweeps out into the harbor, and the crew mans their posts bravely as bullets and arrows from the docks strike all around them.
- If the party had to ditch into the water, their ship sails up and crew throw them lines just as naval cutters are drawing near.
- Two warships have navigated to the mouth of the harbor, and the party's ship has to surge at full speed in order to sail between them before they can angle their guns for a devastating volley.
- Finally, if the party has still had it too easy, the *Cachalot* rises from the depths to block their path. Caught between two cannon-laden warships and a submarine with a dozen men, the party's best chance for escape might be to attack and board the *Cachalot*, claim it as their own, and flee beneath the waves.



Conclusion

The party returns to Flint and debriefs with Chief Inspector Delft to gauge the success of their mission.

The party should get back to Flint around the 24th of Winter. Delft meets the PCs in a secluded location and works with them to figure out everything they know. Have the PCs walk through the events of their mission and answer, as best they can, a battery of questions.

Using the Intelligence.

It will take at least a few days to get useful information out of any prisoners. Luc Jierre has the most valuable intel; if the party also has Ottavia as a prisoner, Luc might even be turned into a reluctant asset.

If the PCs recovered the lantern, learning how to use it is fairly easy, but acquiring oil suffused with the right planar energy could be a quest in and of itself. Or the party could just requisition it, and get it in a few months (specifically, when Adventure Five begins).

No matter how much information the party has, they don't have the manpower or resources to return to Vendricce right now. The politicians are already protesting about how much money was spent. Delft is going to need time to get support from people in power, and he thinks the party might want to lay low for a while in case the Ob retaliate.

The Chief Inspector will speak to King Aodhan, but even if he convinces the king and gets more resources, the Ob are hard to pin down. No one can do more than guess what all the Ob's plotting is building toward. However, they do know Lorcan Kell's thieves' guild has some connection to them, and so for the next two months the RHC will try to whittle away at the guild's power base and look for leads to the Obscurati leadership.

Two months from now, the Ob will be coming to the RHC's doorstep: Lya Jierre will be attending a peace summit in the Spring. When she arrives, the party needs to be ready to capture her and her allies and thwart whatever they are plotting.





Adventure Number 5

Cauldron-Born

From the Pen of Thurston Hillman

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Special Thanks to *Jamie—Because if I'm going to dedicate a book to you, it's going to be the one with a giant robot on the cover.*

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* some illustrations from the public domain are courtesy *fromoldbooks.org*

ADVENTURE FIVE: Introduction

Wherein the Second Bird Alights.

A conspiracy has woven itself firmly into the dark underbelly of the city of Flint. The Royal Homeland Constabulary (RHC) has learned of its existence and knows it has a base beneath the haunted mountain named Cauldron Hill. Now at the king's command it is time to rip this threat from its shadowy womb and thrust it into the light of day.

While they pursue that mission, two other forces are at work in Flint—a cult of dwarven assassins who want to disrupt a peace summit, and a rogue lord of the Unseen Court who seeks a war between man and fey. Either plot will spell disaster for Flint, but can the party spare the time to stop them before the doom beneath Cauldron Hill is born?

Plot Threads

Similar to the second adventure in the series, in *Cauldron-Born*, the PCs will find themselves racing against the clock to manage the numerous threats in and around Flint. Before you run this adventure you'll want to be familiar with the Timeline, Synopsis, and the NPC Roster. Additionally, we've provided a Dramatis Personae handout and the Mission Briefing dossier, which you can give to the players at the start of the adventure.

The adventure consists of a mix of party-driven investigation and time-based events the PCs must react to. Three plot threads occur simultaneously, and the party has great flexibility to pursue them as they see fit and even fail one or more while still reaching the climax. See Appendix H for a worksheet and quick references that can help you keep the various plots straight.

Timeline

The adventure begins on the 8th of Spring, in the year 501 AOV (After Our Victory), approximately two months following the end of *Always on Time*.

Spring 8. A carriage chase assassination attempt by Kell's thugs. The party meets with King Aodhan and are tasked to find Lorcan Kell. The B-Team picks up mediator Brakken. Asrabey, an emissary of the Unseen Court, embroils the party in the search for a rogue fey lord. Dwarven radicals attack Pardwight University.

Spring 9. The party and B-Team examine a broken golem for clues. A letter arrives from Vlendam Heid, warning the party about the eschatologists. The party takes command of the task force to capture Kell.

Spring 10. Asrabey asks the party to take him to Gale. In the evening, the B-Team escorts Brakken to the club Sunset Bench, one of Kell's fronts. Late at night the dwarven radicals bring a ship full of monsters into the city.

Spring 11. Brakken and the B-Team witness the effects of a fey curse in the Cloudwood. An evening opera gives the party a chance to nab Kell's lawyer.

Spring 12. The dwarven radicals attack a subrail station in the morning. At sunset, paranoia in the Cloudwood leads a mob to murder the mayor. Ekossigan performs his ritual sacrifice in the evening.

Spring 13. If the party hasn't caught him yet, Kell leaves his hide-out at 3 AM, giving the party a chance to take him down. That evening Han Jierre and his niece Lya arrive and dine with the party and the king. At midnight, the king will be able to send the party to the Bleak Gate if they have not already found a way.

ADAPTING THE ADVENTURE.

This adventure has to serve several purposes. First, it's the climax of the first part of the ZEITGEIST adventure path, and with a few small tweaks it can be the end of the campaign if needed. Second, we want the adventure to work as its own story, plus have enough novel events and locations that GMs might use it for inspiration for their own campaigns.

To run this as a stand-alone, you can cut out a lot of the context of the greater conspiracy, and put the focus on trying to protect the peace summit from a "cult." The dwarven radicals might be bundled in with Kell's guild as members of a doomsday cult trying to stop the peace talks, with the fey Ekossigan as a third party complication. The cult's complex might just be well-hidden, or can be in any Plane of Shadow-style location, and instead of crafting a colossus they might be summoning a doomsday demon, waking a dragon, launching a steampunk airship, or resurrecting a villain from your campaign's history.

Finally, this adventure can serve as the starting point of an abridged ZEITGEIST campaign. Start with the party having no knowledge of the conspiracy, so the focus is just on protecting the peace summit. When the colossus bursts free at the end of the adventure, that kicks off the missions in Adventures Six through Nine to get control of the golem before the Obscurati can.

Background

Risur and Danor have fought several wars over the past two centuries. **King Aodhan** of Risur is supposed to be pledging to marry **Lya Jierre**, niece of the sovereign of Danor, to cement an end to hostilities between the two nations. Lya, her uncle, and a small fleet of Danoran ships are already on their way to a peace summit in Flint, the industrial capital of Risur. They arrive in mere days.

Risur's spies, however, have discovered that Lya is somehow involved in a conspiracy known as the Obscurati. The Ob have been experimenting with strange magic, and they have a stronghold and factory in Flint, but hidden in the dark parallel world known as the Bleak Gate. What they have been building is a mystery, but Lya knows Risur suspects her. King Aodhan and his ministers can't fathom why she's still coming, nor can they tell what the conspiracy's true goals are.

They lack two pieces of the puzzle.

First, the Obscurati aren't necessarily hostile to Risur. Their goals—detailed in the Campaign Guide (see page 69)—are far larger than the affairs of two countries.

Second, Aodhan assumes that the Ob are building some sort of weapon to use against Flint, but their creation is actually a titanic golem, which is necessary for their broader goal. The colossus was named **Borne** by its creators, and nine months ago one of those creators betrayed the Obscurati and sabotaged the colossus, removing its mind. Now it is just a giant thoughtless machine, one the Ob are wary of activating. Lya's goal at the peace summit is to divert attention away from the secret factory and buy time for the colossus to be repaired.

Peace Summit.

King Aodhan still holds out hope for peace, though he prepares for catastrophe. He will meet with his Danoran counterpart, **Sovereign Han Jierre**, and they have called upon a neutral mediator, **Brakken of Heffanita**, a minotaur from the nation of Ber.

Many of the key details of the peace talks have been kept from all but the highest-ranked officials in Flint. The King is wary of sabotage or political embarrassment. The people of Flint are of mixed minds, some supporting their king, others protesting against Danor.

Turf War.

A year ago, a foreign crime syndicate known as the Family began to horn in on territory held by local strongman **Lorcan Kell**. Though the Family, led by the respectable and fashionable **Morgan Cippiano**, is better at subtlety and winning the favor of the citizenry, Kell's guild of thieves are backed by the Obscurati, for whom they work as muscle. Over the past few months sporadic gang fights have broken out and people allied with either group have been found murdered.

Return of the Unseen Court.

Just as the Bleak Gate is a shadowy reflection of reality, the fey land of the Dreaming is its verdant reflection. What little order and hierarchy exist in the Dreaming are controlled by the Unseen Court. These powerful fey do not take kindly to King Aodhan's peace overtures to Danor, for they find technology abhorrent, but the court cannot unite under a single response.

One member of the Unseen Court, **Ekossigan**, has pushed for war against Risur. Ekossigan performed divinations and sought visions to find proof that would spur his peers to action. But he peered too closely into the darkness of the Bleak Gate, and heard the screams of souls being burned as fuel in the Obscurati's forges.

UNRESOLVED ISSUES.

The main factors keeping Risur and Danor from establishing a long-lasting peace are:

- Long-standing animosity in the leadership, who typically spent their youths fighting in the last war and will overreact to any new provocation.
- Ownership disputes of the lush Yerasol Archipelago. Each side will have to forcibly evict some of its citizens who are dug in beyond what are considered "viable borders."
- Fears in Risur that Danor will use peacetime to grow its influence over the other great nations. Negotiations will establish lines each nation is forbidden to cross with regard to establishing factories and footholds in Drakr, Ber, and Crisillyir.
- Fears in Danor that Risur is stealing Danoran technology and, by combining it with magic, will eliminate what advantages Danor has. The two leaders will have to agree to the broad terms of an industrial patent treaty.
- Certain prisoners will need to traded. The most complicated factors here will be Nathan Jierre and Duchess Ethelyn of Shale (see Adventure One, Island at the Axis of the World). It depends on what the party did earlier in the campaign, but generally Danor wants Ethelyn as a prisoner, and wants Nathan returned to them if the party tried to grant him asylum.

Driven mad by the ordeal, Ekossigan left a poem hinting at his intentions, then disappeared to Flint, where he is gathering the local lesser fey—pixies, satyrs, gremlins, and such—to his banner. He is convinced he must destroy the Obscurati's factories, but it's nearly impossible for even a being of his power to enter the Bleak Gate. To reach the Ob's complex, Ekossigan must perform a horrendous act: hanging thirty-one children from the branches of a century-old tree.

The Unseen Court has dispatched one of its emissaries, the eladrin dreadnought **Asrabey Varal**, to follow Ekossigan to Flint and stop him before he succeeds in provoking the war he wants.

The Disciples of Heid Eschatol.

Radical dwarven followers of the philosophy of Heid Eschatol believe that the upcoming treaty is a step backwards from their prediction of doomsday. Rather than form a tenuous peace that will last for only a few decades, why should they not accept a war that will bring about finality to their conflict?

Led by the zealot **Grundun Zubov**, these devout eschatologists have seeded themselves within Flint over the past months. Unlike the true teachings of Heid Eschatol that speak of "preparing for the end of things," the followers of Zubov have begun a calculated plan to "make things end." Already dwarven assassins have planted bombs in key areas and set up discreet sniper positions. Zubov is prepared to die in the greatest terror attack Risur has ever seen.

As Zubov puts the final pieces of his destructive plot into place, his most recently hired gun is having misgivings. Dwarven sniper **Kvarti Gorbatiy**, whom the PCs likely had the pleasure of meeting in Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*, did not realize when Zubov hired him how radical the mission was, and even the coldly professional sniper is troubled by what Zubov is planning.

Obscurati Affairs.

Over the past several years the Obscurati have established a massive construction facility underneath the mountain Cauldron Hill, or rather in its shadowy analogue in the Bleak Gate. They had the aid of many government officials, most of whom were misled in the details and purpose of the operation. Some of these the party discovered and took down in earlier adventures.

Currently, the facility is overseen by **Leone Quital**, known by his moniker "the steelshaper" for his innate magical ability to reshape and telekinetically manipulate almost any type of metal. He was one of three architects of the colossus, but of the three he is the only one invested in the Obscurati's mission.

The Ob in Flint made use of Locan Kell's thieves' guild to smuggle in the materials it needed for the construction, and for the past six months Kell's men have been slowly slicing up loose ends. But Kell himself is a loose end because his men have been using the Obscurati's secret gates to travel between the real world and the Bleak Gate. After years of disciplined secrecy, the Ob are likely to be undone by the overconfidence of a top-hatted, bloodthirsty crime lord.

I, Grappa.

Nine months ago, one of the colossus's other two creators—**Alexander Grappa**, known as "the mindmaker"—tried to escape the Bleak Gate complex. (The third architect, "the gearbuilder" **Tinker Oddcog**, is the main focus of Adventure Six.)

The Ob had been trying for years to make a golem mind suitable for their ultimate plan, but none of their attempts were successful. The colossus would need to be intelligent enough to react to unpredictable dangers in an environment too deadly for anyone to stand nearby and give it orders. And it would need to be devoted enough to the conspiracy's beliefs that it would not give up, even though it would suffer incredible damage and might even be destroyed. But any golem mind smart enough showed too much independence, and the Ob feared they would go rampant when placed into the colossus's powerful body.

Grappa, a Risuri veteran of the Third Yerasol War who turned to golem-crafting in hopes of sparing other young men from the horrors of war, attracted the Ob's attention for his novel method of raising golems like children. He implanted some artificial memories into a construct as a baseline, then gave the "newborn" time to learn and mature. Learned experience was embedded with context and emotion, making it more real and effective than any crafted psyche could be.

Five years ago, Grappa was personally recruited by **Kasvarina Varal**, one of the heads of the Obscurati who traveled between the conspiracy's various cells. She helped him raise and train several golem "children," and then chose the one with the most promise, which Grappa had named Borne. Grappa oversaw the careful transfer of Borne's mind from a man-sized golem into the colossus, and spent months making sure Borne would be at ease in his new body.

During this time, however, Grappa grew nervous about the Ob's ultimate goals. After he snooped on something he shouldn't have, Kasvarina and Leone had him locked up. Grappa managed to escape, though, with the aid of a slender bronze golem handservant. He mind-controlled Kasvarina, interrogated her, then wiped her memories. He likewise extracted the colossus's mind, not wanting to see his "son" serve the conspiracy's goals. With Kasvarina as a hostage and his handservant at his side, Grappa tried to make for Flint's harbor. But Leone the steelshaper caught up with him and killed him.

Before dying, Grappa managed a desperate spell to transfer his mind to his golem handservant, but Leone tore the handservant apart before taking Kasvarina back to the Ob compound to try to restore her memories.

The RHC eventually discovered the scene, and agents took the shattered golem into their possession, intending to repair it. Grappa's mind endures within the bronze golem's head, and shortly after this adventure begins the RHC manages to repair the golem enough for it to move and haltingly speak. Grappa's limited by a *geas* so he cannot reveal all the conspiracy's secrets, but he still wants to bring them down.

The Cauldron Hill Complex.

The engineers and builders inside the compound are growing anxious as Leone keeps them there even after the colossus has been completed. A few unfortunate disappearances of dissenters have tanked morale, and even the guards are starting to grumble. Also, no one from the Ob has been able to restore Kasvarina's memories. For a variety of reasons (explored in Adventure Eight, *Diaspora*), many people around the world are interested in finding Kasvarina, and without her magical talents she is vulnerable. The Cauldron Hill complex is warded against many types of divination, so the Ob keep her there, hoping to find a solution eventually.

As the RHC has gotten closer to uncovering the conspiracy, the Obscurati leadership has put great pressure on Leone to activate the colossus. He lacks the carefully cultivated mind of Borne, though, so he has brought in less skilled enchanters to try implanting the consciousnesses of the other, less optimal golem "children." Each has failed to synchronize, and Leone had their minds extracted and killed to keep the titan from going out of control. The Obscurati are now in possession of a 300-foot tall paperweight.

Adventure Overview

On the way to meet with King Aodhan, the party is attacked by thugs working for crime boss Lorcan Kell, at behest of the Obscurati. Escaping the ambush, the party meets their king, who orders them to root out the conspiracy before the peace summit begins, five days hence.

The weak link in the Ob's secrecy is Kell himself. If the party can capture or kill him, they should be able to figure out how the Ob travel between the two worlds. The party takes command of a task force of fifty police officers and plans the take-down.

Meanwhile, a second group of constables—"the B-Team" (whom the players can take control of temporarily as secondary PCs)—meet the summit's mediator, the minotaur Brakken of Heffanita, when he arrives at Flint's docks. The B-Team serves as a second set of eyes, letting the players witness events that their main characters wouldn't be privy to.

Complications Arise.

While planning ways to capture Kell, Asrabey Varal, an emissary of the Unseen Court, arrives and warns that a fey lord named Ekossigan has come to Flint to provoke a war. Asrabey invokes the right of Kelland's Tribute to ask for aid, because he is magically forbidden from causing any harm to a member of the Court. The king leaves it to the party whether to help him or pass the buck to the B-Team.

The first Danoran dignitaries for the peace summit will arrive the next day, Spring 9, and Aodhan wants results by the 13th, when Sovereign Han Jierre and his niece Lya arrive, so he can know whether they are hostile to Risur. If the party can't manage that, then just after midnight on the 14th, the king and his ministers will be able to send the party to the Bleak Gate.

After the party finishes with the king, the B-Team witnesses the first attack by dwarven cultists. They derail a train with one bomb, collapse a building with another, then begin shooting panicked people from rooftops. Either the B-Team or the main party must stop them before hundreds are killed.

Three Threads.

The next four days then are filled with chasing down three targets—the dwarven radicals, the fey lord Ekossigan, and Lorcan Kell.

The radicals try to sneak in a shipment of horrifying monsters to stalk the streets, but the party has a chance to stop them at sea. While the party might manage to strike the dwarves' hide-out, their leader Grundun Zubov has already prepared his final attack. He intends to crash the opening of a new subrail station, take hostages, and then drive a train car loaded with explosives underneath the hotel where all the peace summit dignitaries are staying. If he's not stopped, the detonation will inflame Danor enough to provoke a new war.

At the same time, Ekossigan is gathering local minor fey to his banner in the rural city district called Cloudwood. The fey lord lays a curse on the district, which the B-Team witnesses first hand. If the party can't stop him, the people there violently turn on each other.

When they find him, Ekossigan is prepared to sacrifice thirty-one children in a treetop orphanage. Their deaths will open a portal to the Bleak Gate so he can march his army of fey through. The party has a chance to go with him if they let him perform his vile ritual. Otherwise they must fight him as he invokes a destructive ice storm and tries to bring down the whole tree orphanage around them.

If defeated, he disintegrates, but not before revealing that he has had a vision of Kasvarina Varal beneath Cauldron Hill. Though the party might not recognize the name, Asrabey has history with her, and he offers to aid the party on their mission to the Bleak Gate.

The primary goal, though, is capturing Lorcan Kell. With their task force the party knocks over Kell-aligned businesses, disrupts illicit transactions, targets the guild's lieutenants, and eventually assaults his stronghold, the Theater of Scoundrels. Along the way the B-Team can help the party arrest Kell's lawyer, and an opposing crime syndicate called The Family offers to lead the party to Kell himself if the task force's efforts have failed.

Kell always has an escape route planned, though, and if the party isn't careful he'll trick them with a decoy and link up with the Obscurati, who spirit him away to the Bleak Gate, but not before he brutally murders the B-Team in retaliation.

Preparing for Cauldron Hill.

Though not part of the three major threads, the party can get some help for their ultimate mission of attacking Cauldron Hill. The RHC manages to reassemble the handservant golem that houses Alexander Grappa's consciousness, and he offers to guide them into the Cauldron Hill complex.

Later, the party is invited to meet Lieutenant Dale, provisional guardian of haunted Cauldron Hill after its last protector turned out to be part of the Obscurati. He tells the party as much as he knows about the Bleak Gate version of the mountain, and invites them to practice a bit of meditation to protect them from the evil spirits in that dark world.

Adjusting for History.

The party's Prestige (see the Player's Guide, page 20) likely has reached 4 with Risur, and could be as high as 5. If the party's Prestige with Risur is only 3, the king is a bit more conservative on what resources he'll call upon, but he trusts Delft's opinion of the party. If their Prestige with Risur is 2 or less, the king might not even call upon the party, instead giving them the bodyguard duty while having the "B-Team" handle the investigation. Of course, when they get in over their heads and die horribly, the party can swoop in to save the day.

If Asrabey died in the first adventure, he's either back from the dead if you allow that in your game (if anyone has the resources for resurrection, it's the Unseen Court), or he's been replaced by a similar powerful eladrin male warrior, perhaps one armed with a bone scimitar and a *wand of scorching ray*. If somehow the party has already killed Lorcan Kell (and according to the E.N. Publishing messageboards, it nearly happened in at least two campaigns), you could simply slot in his lawyer Quentin Augst as the target, or invent a lieutenant who replaced him.

Messenger Wind.

The party will be active all across Flint, and might want to split up. They should have access to a *messenger wind* (provided by Gale in Adventure Two, or by the RHC if you're running this adventure as a stand-alone). There are five golden feathers that are linked to a central orb. Anyone with a feather can call upon the wind's power as long as they are within thirty miles of the orb.

When called, the wind flies ten miles an hour until it reaches the summoner. He can give it a message, and it will fly to any other bearer of one of these feathers to deliver that message. If multiple creatures activate this power, it resolves its first command before starting the second.

The party should likely have three of these, their boss Delft one, and the B-Team the remaining one.

Plan B.

While we want to make sure the PCs are aware of the scope of the dangers, we don't want to take away their roleplaying agency by forcing them to be in certain places at certain times. That's what the B-Team is for: you present brief vignettes so the players can have a broader perspective of the events in the adventure. Additionally, the B-Team scenes should be a fun break from the main plot, give the players an opportunity to try something new, and potentially provide the main party with extra resources to handle the numerous time-sensitive challenges.

Finally, for an adventure with so much going on, we think it's less believable if none of the good guys die. The B-Team lets you as GM pull out all the stops to demonstrate the threat the villains pose. They're only 4th level, so if they lose horribly to a foe, the main party should stand a chance, and the players might be well-motivated.

It is likely (and to be honest, preferable) if the B-Team suffer casualties or are otherwise defeated, ideally by Lorcan Kell as he escapes and joins up with the Obscurati. Kell serves as the main combat threat in the climax, and the more the party hates him, the better.

Brakken is a telepath, so when he eventually shares his memories of the B-Team, it helps gloss over any metagaming concerns of the players having knowledge their main PCs wouldn't.

Scenes involving the B-Team are marked with an asterisk.

Time to Get Dressed Up.

Though the party probably managed to stop the dwarven radicals and the fey lord Ekossigan, it's unlikely the party managed to catch Lorcan Kell and find a way to Cauldron Hill by the time Lya Jierre and her uncle arrive on the 13th. When Lya personally requests their presence at the first banquet of the peace summit, protocol demands they attend.

Given the chance to mingle with key figures of both nations, the party can try to wheedle information out of Lya, but must maintain proper decorum or be tossed out. Just as dessert is about to be served, Asrabey Varal bursts into the room and asks the king's permission to travel to the Bleak Gate. Though placed in an awkward position, Aodhan agrees, and the banquet ends on a sour note. The Danorans, spooked, quickly excuse themselves, but Brakken asks for a moment with the king and the party.

The minotaur reveals that he is a telepath, as well as a real bombshell: one member of the Danoran entourage is rushing for a secret portal that leads to the Bleak Gate, to warn the defenders. If the party acts fast, they can catch him and maintain the element of surprise.

Attacking the Compound.

Aodhan wants the party to try to take out the Obscurati's presence in Flint. Asrabey simply wants them to cover his infiltration as he tries to rescue Kasvarina. And Alexander Grappa in his golem body tags along if the party will let him, or sneaks after them if necessary, having used his magic to ensure he knows when the party attempts their assault. The party might have some Risuri soldiers with them, and perhaps other NPC allies.

The party has to figure out how best to breach the compound and find its heart, and stealth or trickery can make a far easier path than pure firepower. Regardless of whether the party sweeps through with overwhelming might or manages to get themselves outmatched and captured, they ultimately reach the massive central chamber where the colossus stands inert. As a last fight breaks out, somehow the colossus activates (perhaps the party damages it, or Leone tries to activate it as a last-ditch defense, or Grappa awakens it).

Filled with just wild instinct and a desire to break free, the colossus smashes its way to the surface, and the whole complex begins to collapse and shift into the real world. If the party has done well they can stamp out the Ob's forces in Flint, gather vital information and free dozens of engineers who will gladly join Risur. If they screw up, they might barely make it out alive.

Time to Dream.

The colossus begins to rampage, threatening to destroy half the city. Seeing their secrecy utterly ruined, Lya and Han Jierre teleport away, and it falls to the party to stop the titan.

King Aodhan has some magical control over who enters and leaves his realm. If the party can manage to drive or lure the mindless colossus to Flint's harbor, the king places them in charge of a small fleet. Depending on how the party comported itself during the banquet, they even get help from some of the Danoran ships, since most of Danor is not affiliated with this conspiracy and wants to help in Flint's time of need.

The king stands on deck and gathers magical energy, calling upon the loyalty of every citizen of the city. The party must keep the king close while avoiding the colossus's attacks and fending off monsters that hitched a ride on it from the Bleak Gate. If they can protect the king long enough, he banishes the colossus into The Dreaming, where it cannot harm Flint, and where it is beyond the reach of the Obscurati, at least for now.

Adventure Layout

Cauldon-Born's plot has a precise beginning and climax, but the middle of the adventure can take many different paths. We roughly divide events as follows:

- **Introduction—Meet the King:** The PCs' meeting with the king, and the arrival of Brakken and Asrabey.
- **Part One—Three Threads:** Tracking down Lorcan Kell. Helping Asrabey stop Ekossigan. The radical eschatologist attacks throughout Flint.
- **Part Two—The Etiquette of Gustatory Interrogation:** The party hobnobs with dignitaries. Varal requests to investigate Cauldron Hill.
- **Part Three—Expedition to the Bleak Gate:** Breaking into the facility. Confronting Lorcan Kell. Borne activates and goes crazy.
- **Part Four—To Battle a Colossus:** Attracting Borne out to the bay. Naval battle against Borne. King Aodhan's ritual.

From a pacing standpoint, "Act One" involves the party starting their investigation and finishing two of the three threads. In "Act Two," try to keep a fast pace as the party finishes the third thread just in time to attend the banquet (or runs out of time and fails). Then "Act Three" is the Ob complex, with the surprise ending of having to thwart the colossus.

Of course, if the party does really well, don't try to force them to take longer just so the pacing remains the same. If they can get into the Bleak Gate before the 13th, skip the banquet and go straight to "Act Three."

Character Themes.

Each Zeitgeist adventure includes one or more scenes that bring the PCs' character themes to the fore. In addition to the moments below, most of the backgrounds elicit strong interest by one of the attendees at the peace summit banquet.

Dockers can work together with Thames Grimsley to rally the dock workers of Flint to help crew the fleet that confronts Borne in the climax.

Eschatologists can be heavily involved in the terrorist actions of Grundun Zubov, and may receive advanced warning from Vlendam Heid, founder of their movement.

Gunsmiths will be able to readily identify many of the weapons used by the eschatologist radicals and the Obscurati, and may even receive special modifications to their own weaponry from Kvarti Gorbarity.

Martial Scientists can learn a new special ability from Major Dale that will protect them during their journey into the Bleak Gate.

Skyseers give receive a special vision during the encounter with the fey Ekossigan.

Spirit Mediums can aide investigations into the terrorist attacks and have the option to question Lorcan Kell and other people of interest even if they die. During the final encounter against Borne, Spirit Mediums will be able to relay the exact status of King Aodhan, giving the PCs an edge in managing the final battle.

Technologists will have the best chance of disarming the bombs used by the dwarven radicals. They'll also be best equipped to sabotage and sneak through the Obscurati complex.

Vekeshi Mystics are likely the best chance the PCs will have of gaining the trust and support of Asrabey Varal early in the adventure, and they'll have a chance to save Kasvarina in the Obscurati complex.

Yerasol Veterans will be able to identify better with many members of the peace talk banquet, giving the PCs an edge when dealing with high ranking Danoran dignitaries.

NPC Roster.

Detailed entries are included throughout the adventure close to the characters' first appearances.

Recurring Characters. Many NPCs in this adventure will have roles in future adventures in the series. Lya Jierre is the primary antagonist in Adventure Six, while Alexander Grappa and Leone Quital are key to Adventure Seven, and Asrabey and Kasvarina return in Adventure Eight. King Aodhan and Roland Stanfield will be vital to the end of the second arc of the adventure path, in Adventure Nine. Finally, Han Jierre rises to prominence in the last third of the campaign. If anyone important dies, though, you can replace them with someone thematically similar.

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Ekossigan, fey lord	378
Grundun Zubov, dwarven zealot	388
Han Jierre, sovereign of Danor	397
Hana "Gale" Soliogn, fey terrorist	353
Harkover Lee, Risuri principal minister	352
Kasvarina Varal, Obscurati leader	411
Kvarti Gorbatiy, dwarven mercenary	384
Leone Quital, the Steelshaper	411
Lorcan Kell, killer and guild-leader	371
Lya Jierre, Danoran minister of outsiders	397
Morgan Cippiano, Family crime lord	366
Quentin Augst, lawyer to criminals	362
Roland Stanfield, Flint's city governor	391
Stover Delft, RHC chief inspector	349

PACING AND LEVELING.

The adventure can take many routes, and we discourage precise XP tracking. The party starts this adventure at 10th level. We recommend that they reach 11th level after dealing with two of the three threads in Part One, 12th level after the banquet, then 13th level at the adventure's end. Alternately, you could cap the PCs at 10th level until the end of the adventure, at which point the knighthood from the king grants them a burst of royal power that lifts them to 13th level.

Incidental NPCs. These NPCs probably appear for only a single scene.

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Captain Dale, military defender of Cauldron Hill	361
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Kian Doherty, Risuri minister of agriculture	374
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Steffan Eberhardt, peace summit observer	354
Off-Screen, Overseas, and General Foreigners	
Giovanni Algardi, "The Carver"	366
Archmissionary Cornelius Eboracum, grand exorcist	371
Cruusk, Ber ship's bosun	353
Feroz, Brakken's bear	353
Gerax, one-legged Beran orc consular	354
Grandis Komanov, radical eschatologist figurehead	383
Rush and Merton, Lya's bodyguards	396
Tinker Oddcog, the Gearbuilder, gnome madman	408
Bartholomew Pryce, journalist	357

Difficulty Class by Task Level.

Level	Easy	Moderate	Hard	Level	Easy	Moderate	Hard
7	11	16	23	11	13	19	27
8	12	16	24	12	14	20	28
9	12	17	25	13	14	20	29
10	13	18	26	14	15	21	29

Rewards.

At the end of this adventure, the party's Prestige with Flint and Risur should increase by 1 step for their role in the peace talks and defense against Borne. If they manage to defeat Ekossigan and keep the mayor of the Cloudwood alive, their reputation with the Unseen Court goes up by 1. If the PCs took Morgan Cippiano up on his offer to assist with demolishing the Kell-Guild, their prestige with the Family increases by 1 step. Finally, the PCs prestige with the Obscurati increases by 1 step after they successfully infiltrate the Cauldron Hill complex and Borne is unleashed.

The PCs should have each about 22,400 gp in equipment by the start of this adventure. After the Prelude, Stover Delft delivers them a stipend of 25,600 gp each to aid in the various threads (which covers 2 levels worth of treasure). Just before the banquet, Delft approves a further 20,000 gp stipend per PC. If the PCs are free agents working for Brakken, instead of members of the RHC, you'll need to make sure they receive appropriate treasure. This is made easy by offering a one-time payment of 5,000 gp per player for assisting Brakken in his mission. The difference is made up by the various loot the party can take off its foes.

List of Magic Items as Treasure.

Cards for new items are presented in Appendix M.

- *Bleak Gate wards.* One per PC, a short duration item provided by Captain Dale.
- Level 11. *Figurine of wondrous power—mechanical carriage.* Owned by Lorcan Kell.
- Level 12. *+3 man-killing machete.* Owned by Lorcan Kell.
- Level 12. *+3 grappler's plate.* Owned by Nick Reder.
- Level 13. *Shoes of reliable style.* A gift from Morgan Cippiano.
- Level 13. *Gremlin gloves.* An offering from the fey.
- Level 13. *+3 eschatologist weapon*. Crafted by Kvarti.
- Level 14. *The hurricane violin.* A treasure of Flint.
- Level 14. *Distinguished top hat.* Owned by Lorcan Kell.
- Level 15. *+3 alleviating holy symbol*. Owned by Kate Glenn.
- Level 15. *+3 coat of the genteel butcher.* Owned by Lorcan Kell.
- Level 16. *+4 hammer of the lost riders.* Owned by Grundun Zubov.

A Final Word Before We Start.

This is a detail-rich, multi-layered adventure. Your players will inevitably find some way to short-cut the investigation, but that's fine. Just make sure that the key players don't reveal the existence of the colossus until the PCs see it firsthand, and that no one explains the Obscurati's ultimate goal. Anything else is fair game. After all, the PCs are supposed to win. We're just trying to make the chase challenging enough to be fun.



PRELUDE: To Meet a King

In this act, the party meets with their king to plan an assault on the Obscurati, and the B-Team greets and protects Brakken the mediator.

Meanwhile, in the News...

While the party prepares to crack the conspiracy, what's going on in Flint and the rest of the world?

Doctor. Tales from Ber tell of miraculous healing in the hinterlands. Long averse to the Clergy and their renowned curative magic, the upper class of Ber seem quite abuzz at rumors of a foreign doctor treating the sick using science and surgery, not sorcery. Though Flint has its own medical education programs that produce fine physicians, stories tell of this mystery man repairing severed spines, reattaching lost limbs, and restoring sight to the blind, feats currently beyond the scope of secular medicine.

Hue. Clothiers across Lanjyr are concerned that the upcoming peace summit might endanger the production of a popular dye, Tardisian Blue, which changes color in the presence of magic. The flower that yields the dye is native to a single island in the Yerasol Archipelago, and that island allegedly lies in a "buffer zone" that has been proposed, where neither side could have settlers. Druids in Risur cheer the announcement, saying it will let the islands return to their original historic beauty.

Baker. For months subrail travelers have wondered at the construction outside their windows as they passed beneath the heart of downtown. Wonder no longer. The Sharon M. Baker Station (Red Line, station 4) will be having its ribbon-cutting ceremony on the 12th of Spring. The city subrail authority apologizes that the Red Line will be shut down until noon that day for track maintenance and platform alignment.

Tenant. The Royal Docks of Upper Flint Bay have a new short-term lodger. *Freux Rouge*, a second-rate frigate of the Danoran navy, arrives on the 9th bearing dignitaries for this month's peace summit. The Flint garrison promises that Risuri ships will be ready at a moment's notice if the Danorans cause trouble. Indeed, the R.N.S. *Brawn*—the ship whose berth the *Freux Rouge* is taking—will be on regular patrol. Gawkers are expected, because the *Rouge* is one of Danor's few remaining sailing warships.

Smith. In Drakr, this spring's Forge Festival will see most every dwarf over the age of 10 working to craft something out of metal over the course of a single day. Trekhom's grand shipyard expects to launch a vessel at sunrise the next day, and has invited all non-dwarves in the city to come and watch the unprecedented construction.

Reunion. Centuries after it was destroyed in the Second Victory, the Aquilopolis Bridge which once connected the human world with the eladrin world has been reconstructed. Now the massive structure links Crisillyir and Elfaivar at the Strait of Sjögren, and the Avery Coast Railroad is already conveying passengers and freight between the two continents. However, security is tight, and the bridge's completion was delayed due to numerous attacks by jungle tigers.

Back on the Job

It's been just over a week since the new year's festival filled the skies over Flint with fireworks, metaphorically driving away the meager cold weather that passes for winter in Risur. Flowers are already blooming across the city, and despite the perpetual cycle of worker protests and police crack-downs, despite the gang violence, and despite the fringe eschatologists on street corners claiming that this is the last spring the world will ever know, the people of Flint are optimistic for the future.

The city is abuzz with talk of the peace summit. This morning the king arrived by ship from the capital city of Slate and took residence in Hotel Aurum, the newly-finished tallest building in the city. The party's presence has been requested in the afternoon, once the king and his retinue have settled in.

The Hotel Aurum.

Construction began only a year ago on the extravagant Hotel Aurum. Conceived by a genius halfling, the hotel is actually two separate buildings connected skywalks at the third, seventh, and eleventh floors. The distinction was meant to allow segregation of different classes, with one building being made for the "everyman" while the other side would cater to nobles.

Early in the construction, the hotel was chosen as the site for the peace talks, and the interiors were furnished to the exact specifications of the Danoran and Risuri delegations, with each side taking ownership of a separate side of the two-building hotel. The Risuri delegation resides in the less opulent "west building," while the Danorans have been given occupancy of the "east building." In order to better preserve the nature of the peace talks, the Danoran east building has been designated as a temporary consulate, and counts as Danoran sovereign soil for purposes of the peace talks.

Access and Protection.

Police watch the streets in a one-block perimeter around the building. The nearest subrail stop, Darvill Station (Orange Line, Station 2, see page 393), is just outside the perimeter, but the station has a constant security presence as well.

The entrances of both towers of the hotel are guarded by agents of their respective nations, with Danoran musketeers and pikemen guarding the east, while Risuri soldiers stand watch with sword and wand at the west. The Danorans won't allow any non-Danorans admittance to their building during the initial phases of the peace talks, and are sure to report any such attempts to their superiors (particularly Lya Jierre).

Guards on duty at the Risuri side of the hotel have been given profiles on the PCs, Brakken, and other RHC constables, recognizing them immediately.

Mages preparing defenses for the peace summit noticed an oddity: just as a ring of gold will block teleportation, the hotel's very name seems to have the same function. It is impossible to teleport into or out of the building, or between the two towers, though teleportation within a single building works normally.

In Medias Res

Action. Tactical. Level 10.

Kell's thugs attack the party.

Chief Inspector Stover Delft sent a carriage bearing the royal seal to pick up the party and deliver them to Hotel Aurum so they may meet with their king. During the journey, the carriage is set upon by Kell-guild thugs. Normally they're not much of a threat, but these men carry advanced weapons.

Though they intend to just murder the horses pulling the carriage then gun down the party, these are the king's horses, and they do not die so easily. (The driver's not so lucky.) What was meant as a brutal ambush likely turns into a high-speed chase through the streets.

Royal Carriage.

Reserved for guests of the king, this extravagantly beautiful carriage is big enough to hold six people. Latched shutters are normally closed when the carriage travels, but can be opened for a view, or to speak with the driver, a war vet named **Hadsworth Hudgins**. The walls, doors, and shutters of the carriage are practically bullet-proof and can be dead-bolted from within. Two royal horses pull the carriage.

The carriage picks up the party from RHC headquarters and goes south along a broad thoroughfare. As it nears a railroad crossing, Hadsworth taps the side of the carriage, leans over, and says, "I think I see troub—."

Then he's shot in the chest with a pair of muskets. His body slumps and falls off the side of the carriage, and the horses bolt.

High Speed Assassination Attempt.

The ambush consists of two carriages of Kell-guild attackers, one approaching from the front, the other from the rear. Each carriage has two musketeers perched on the front driver's seat; inside each carriage are two musketeers and one Kell-guild technologist, with special gadgets provided by the Obscurati. The rear carriage also has **Rufus Hammerton**, one of Kell's lieutenants, an athletic and arrogant warrior whom the party might have met in Adventure Two.

The front carriage pulls sideways to try to block the road, and then its side door opens. The two musketeers in the driver's seat shoot and kill Hadsworth. Then two shooters in the carriage fire muskets at the horses, but fail to kill them.

Finally, the technologist hefts a bulky, musket-like device with steam piping all across it, and then he shoots at the carriage. The PCs hear a thump, and then the high-pitched whine of a drill as the drill-dart tranq gun tries to burrow through the wall of the carriage and dose the party with poison gas.

List of Adversaries.

Front Carriage Crew

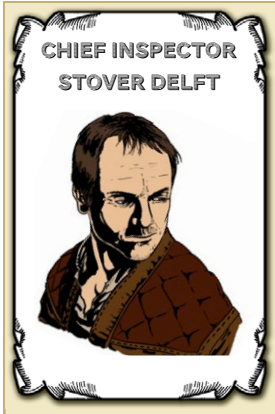
- 4 Kell-Guild veteran musketeers
- 1 Kell-Guild technologist

Rear Carriage Crew

- Rufus Hammerton
- 4 Kell-Guild veteran musketeers
- 1 Kell-Guild technologist

Lurking Monster

- 1 ghoulish crow swarm



A Flinter in his early 40s, Delft gets squinty and condescending when his authority is questioned, but he can recognize talent and good work. Delft chews tobacco, and thinks he looks charming if he grins while sucking on tobacco juices. He walks with a cane because a mimic tore a chunk out of his leg fifteen years ago. He has a habit of poking inanimate objects with the cane before he gets too close to them, and spitting on them when he wants to be extra sure.

Kell-Guild Technologist Level 8 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 350

HP 64; **Bloodied** 32 **Initiative** +6
AC 23, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18 **Perception** +3
Speed 5

Standard Actions

⊘ **Musket Smash** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+9 damage.

✓ **Tranq Drill Dart Gun** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
This thug hefts a bulky, musket-like device with steam piping all across it and mounts some strange device on the end, like a metal needle with arrow fletching. He fires, and the projectile impacts into the wall of the carriage, then begins whining as it drills through the surface. A moment later, noxious gas sprays into the cabin.
Effect: The technologist chooses a spot within 8 squares and shoots a drill dart that attaches to an inanimate object. A spool inside the device activates a drill that bores a narrow hole through surfaces up to three inches deep. The shot cannot attach to actual creatures.

The attack creates a zone of up to 4 contiguous squares beyond the barrier. A creature that ends its turn in the zone takes 5 points of poison damage.

The gas can be cleared out by opening a window, but that of course is the goal of the gadget: to force targets to remove their cover.

Each technologist only has two of these drill darts.

✓ **Time Bomb Launcher** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
He mounts another strange device on his bizarre musket, a fist-sized hunk of metal ending with four prongs. He fires, and the projectile thuds into the carriage's side, its prongs holding it tight. It begins to tick, tick, tick, tick...
Effect: The technologist chooses a spot within 8 squares and shoots a time bomb that latches onto an inanimate object. The shot cannot attach to actual creatures.

When it attaches, it begins ticking loudly once per second. After one round it begins ticking twice as fast, and after two rounds it ticks four times per second. At the end of the third round the bomb explodes. Make an attack, Close Burst 4, +13 vs. Reflex, 10d6 fire damage. Miss half.

Before it explodes, the explosive can be detached with a Strength check (DC 20), and the countdown can be stopped with a Thievery check (DC 25).

The timer can be manually set as a standard action, and can be set to anywhere from 3 rounds to 10 rounds.

Each technologist only has two of these bombs.

Str 12 (+5) **Dex** 16 (+7) **Wis** 8 (+3)
Con 12 (+5) **Int** 13 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+4)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial
Equipment weapons, 2 time bombs, 2 drill darts

Kell-Guild Veteran Musketeer Level 9 Minion Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 100

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +7
AC 22, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 20 **Perception** +4
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊘ **Short Sword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 6 damage.

⊘ **Musket** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Ranged 25/50 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 8 damage, or 12 on a critical hit
Load minor.

Str	12 (+5)	**Dex**	16 (+7)	**Wis**	10 (+4)
Con	12 (+5)	**Int**	8 (+3)	**Cha**	13 (+5)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial

Rufus Hammerton, Kell-Guild Lieutenant Level 9 Brute
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 400

HP 93; **Bloodied** 46 **Initiative** +7
AC 21, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 19 **Perception** +3
Speed 6, climb 4

Traits

▸ **Supreme Athlete**
Rufus can treat any Athletics check as if he rolled a 10. He always jumps as if he had a running start.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Short Sword Volley** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6+10 damage.

⟋ **Alchemist's Fire** (fire) ✦ At-Will
Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +12 vs. Ref
Hit: 2d6 fire damage, and each creature adjacent to the target takes 1d6 fire damage. Each creature damaged in this way gains ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).
Miss: The target and each creature adjacent takes 5 fire damage.

Minor Actions

✓ **Kidnap** ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. Ref
Hit: The target is grabbed (Escape DC 20). While the target is grabbed, Rufus can use him as cover.

Str	14 (+6)	**Dex**	16 (+7)	**Wis**	8 (+3)
Con	13 (+5)	**Int**	10 (+4)	**Cha**	12 (+4)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Primordial
Equipment 2 flasks of alchemist's fire

They Shoot Horses, Don't They?

The horses are non-combatants. The normal horses (HP 36, AC 13, Fort 15, Ref 13, Will 10) will panic if bloodied, causing their carriage to go out of control.

The royal horses (HP 84, AC 19, Fort 21, Ref 18, Will 19) are clever enough to keep running toward their original destination, but will obey orders if one of the PCs makes a Nature or Charisma check (DC 13).

Ghoulish Crow Swarm Level 8 Soldier
Medium natural beast (swarm, undead) XP 350

HP 63; **Bloodied** 31 **Initiative** +10
AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 19 **Perception** +5
Speed 4, fly 20 (hover) Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic, half damage from melee and ranged attacks
Vulnerable 5 radiant, 5 to close and area attacks

Traits

☼ **Swarm Attack** ✦ Aura 1
Dozens of scabrous crows, their eyes dull yellow and their beaks flecked with dried blood, surround and blind you as they claw at your flesh.
Any enemy that starts its turn in the aura is blinded until the start of its next turn.

▸ **Swarm**
The swarm can occupy the same space as another creature, and an enemy can enter its space, which is difficult terrain. The swarm cannot be pulled, pushed, or slid by melee or ranged attacks. It can squeeze through any opening that is large enough for a Tiny creature.

Standard Actions

֍ **Scrabbling Claws** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will
This murder is already dead.
Attack: Close Burst 2 (enemies in burst); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+5 damage. If the target is blind, the swarm can slide the target 1 square to a space adjacent to it.

Str	22 (+10)	**Dex**	18 (+8)	**Wis**	12 (+5)
Con	15 (+6)	**Int**	2 (+0)	**Cha**	12 (+4)

Alignment Evil **Languages** —

Tactics.

Try to keep things moving in this encounter. The royal horses pull the carriage past the ambushers trying to block the road, and the two other carriages give chase. People in the streets scream and dive out of the way, and the out-of-control carriage occasionally clips obstacles, slowing it enough for the assassins to gradually close in.

Have the party roll initiative, but make it clear that the carriage is not stopping on its own, so normal melee combat is unlikely. Indeed, the horses start sprinting, pulling the carriage at over twenty miles per hour, making it dangerous to try to jump out. Any character who falls out of the carriage at that speed takes damage as if he'd fallen 20 feet, and can try to soften the damage with an Acrobatics check as normal.

At the start of the encounter, the front pursuing carriage is 70 feet behind the royal carriage, while the other is 100 feet back and slightly off to the side so those on board can have clear shots. The royal carriage moves at a speed of 150 feet (30 squares) per round, while the hostile carriages travel at 180 feet (36 squares). Every round the Kell-guild carriages get 30 feet (6 squares) closer.

The ghoulish crow swarm descends from the rafters of a building at the start of the encounter, and it waits until the PCs open the door of the carriage, then it flies inside and makes life difficult. If it is outside of the carriage, it needs only to spend a move action to keep up each round.

On each enemy carriage, one musketeer is always busy driving. One shoots from the driver's seat and two lean out the sides. The technologist doesn't get involved until the carriages are within 40 feet; before then he's out of range of his gadgets.

Rufus Hammerton can throw alchemist's fire, but he yells at his carriage driver to pull in close so he can try to board the PCs' carriage. He's trained for brutal close-in knife-fighting.

At the end of the first round, the tranq drill-dart starts pumping out poison gas, giving the PCs an incentive to open the doors and possibly climb out to take control of the carriage. Moving from the carriage door to the driver's seat requires an Athletics check (DC 13). Characters who lean out of the carriage to shoot weapons have cover against counter-attacks if two carriages are roughly side by side, or superior cover if they're attacking down the length of the street.

Aftermath.
If the party rides out the danger for three minutes, traffic gets thicker and the assassins give up. If the assassins are stopped (killing their horses, destroying the carriages' wheels, tricking them into a collision), the party can interrogate them and learn they were sent by Kell. "The other guys," which is what the Kell guild calls the Ob, want the party dead, and provided this time and place to ambush them.

If things look bad, like if the front carriage is taken out and none of the party are down, or if his own carriage crashes, Rufus Hammerton tries to run, and he's athletic enough to outrun his fellow thugs. If taken alive, the party earns three Task Force Tokens (see page 364).

Eventually police can show up and provide a second, reinforced escort for the rest of the trip to Hotel Aurum.

Meeting with the King

Exposition. Real-Time.
The party plans with Aodhan.

Chief Inspector Stover Delft meets the party at the Risuri entrance to Hotel Aurum, and is shocked to hear they were attacked. Once he's sure they're alright he guides them to a novel (but primitive by modern standards) lift, which ascends to the eleventh floor, complete with an operator in a dapper uniform. Along the way Delft reminds them to be on their best behavior, then grins and says they're going to make a damned fine impression.

King Aodhan has established a temporary court, and dozens of advisors and minor nobles are busy setting up the eleventh floor's various offices and suites when the party arrives, likely bloodied and bruised from battle. An aide meets them at the lift and takes them to a conference room off the main court chamber, which has been furnished with a large meeting table, several chairs, and a map of the city on an easel. Officiates attend to King Aodhan, but when he sees the party, he dismisses everyone except the party, Inspector Delft, and Principal Minister Harkover Lee. The king's exact reactions to the PCs will vary based on his previous encounters, and you should give the party a chance to be complimented and exchange some formalities with the king before starting the mission briefing.

The king comes up and shakes each of your hands. "It's good to see you again, constables. I heard about your trouble on the way over, and what happened to Hadsworth, your driver." He shakes his head. "I wish I could give this more time, but I've got a hundred other things to do before tomorrow, so let us get on to business.

"I'm not trying to make you feel important by saying this, but I'm about to give you probably the most important mission I've had to send anyone on in my whole reign. The woman I'm supposed to be marrying might be trying to destroy my kingdom, and apparently there are people who want to make sure we don't find out what she's up to. We have five days until she gets here.

"Harkover?"



Now in his 70s, the king of Risur looks rather unassuming. He prefers to resolve disputes by being cool-headed and rationally persuading those who will listen to his side. For those who won't, he's shrewd enough to give them a sliver of what they want and then distract them with harmless endeavors while those worth dealing with get the job done. Despite all this, though, he trains regularly to keep his stamina and swordplay robust, and the rites of rulership grant him daunting magical powers.

Minister Lee gestures at Inspector Delft. Delft hands the party a small folder of documents. You can print out the Briefing Dossier in Appendix L as a prop for your players.

Minister Lee says, "Despite a variety of encounters with the Obscurati, we only have a sense of their actions, not their goal, nor the organization or extent of the group. We don't know who they are, but we do know where they are.

"The Ob maintain some manner of industrial complex in the Bleak Gate, in a location analogous to Cauldron Hill in this world. They have the ability to pass between the two worlds with relative ease. We do not have the same ability.

STANDALONE INTRO.

If you're running this adventure as a stand-alone, the Obscurati are part of the same cult as Grundun Zubov's dwarves. The king admits that they don't know who just attacked the party, but he assumes they want to stop the peace summit. He was just going to ask the party to provide security, but now they have a greater mission: find the people behind the attack and stop them.

Keep the B-Team material the same and bring in Asrabey as normal. Just simplify the plot so there's only one group—the eschatological radicals, who are allied with Kell and are secretly building something deadly at their Cauldron Hill base—plus the side complication of Ekossigan.

WAYFARER'S LANTERN.

In Adventure Four, the party might have acquired the *wayfarer's lantern*. If they burn special oil infused with essence of a given plane, the lantern can create effects tied to that plane, lasting for five minutes in a 50-ft. radius. If given oil infused with essence of the Bleak Gate, the lantern could create an area that is coterminous between the two planes. Such oil is expensive, but if the party wants they could acquire enough for three uses.

This could let them briefly interact with the Bleak Gate, but they wouldn't have time to complete the necessary mission. If when the oil ran out they were inside the Cauldron Hill complex (which is underground), they would be shunted through hundreds of feet of stone and likely slain from the shock.

If the party manages to get the amulets from Kell (page 371), they can use those with the lantern to transition fully to the Bleak Gate. Any amulets the party might have recovered from Macbannin's manor in adventure two have long since lost their enchantment.



Perhaps the most powerful mage in Risur, Lee acts as King Aodhan's bodyguard and chief of staff. Straight-backed and virile despite being in his 60s, Lee speaks crisply and passionately in a slight Ber-tinged accent, and was said to be quite the ladykiller in his youth. He always dresses in reds and golds and carries a solid gold orb tucked into his robes. He never eats or drinks in public.

"When you have time, review the material in these folders." Minister Lee grimaces at Inspector Delft. "Please ignore Inspector Delft's 'wit'—the official titles he's given to certain entries. Their inclusion will make sense in a moment." Inspector Delft smiles in reply.

Minister Lee spends the next few minutes debriefing the party. As Lee, walk the players through the results of the investigation so far, and reminds them of the occasional minor detail they might have forgotten. The highlights you'll want to hit are:

- The Ob are operating secretly and have caused harm to Risur, so we have to assume they're hostile.
- Lorcan Kell's guild worked with them to attack the RHC headquarters.
- The Ob have shown the ability to slip into the Bleak Gate via rusted ring gates.
- At least one powerful individual working with the Ob is unaccounted for—the steelshaper who confronted the party outside of the Nettles church (in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*).

After a few minutes of discussion, or if the PCs ask what the mission is, Lee defers to his king, who explains.

"Certain aspects of my office can't be discussed. But being king means that you're 'connected' to every man and woman in this country. Their approval grants power. There are rules, *old old* rules, there to prevent folks like me from abusing the power the people grant them.

"Being king also means you're 'connected' to the land. I feel whenever someone enters or leaves the country. If I focus, I can even forbid entry or cast someone out.

"This conspiracy, they're in the Bleak Gate. If they were in the Dreaming, this would be easy. I could head up an army and march into the Dreaming at the drop of a hat. It wouldn't make the Unseen Court happy, but I could do it. But the Bleak Gate is harder. I've never been there in my entire life, and they say kings have no power there, because no one rules the dead.

"So here's what I need from you. This group has a way into the Bleak Gate, and I want you to find it, use it, and drag those bastards into the light of day. And I need you to do it before my fiancée gets here."

The Dragnet.

Delft takes over and explains that they think their best lead is Lorcan Kell. His thugs used a ring gate to attack the RHC headquarters, and as the party just saw, they're using odd, high-tech equipment and taking orders from the Ob. The first step to get into the Bleak Gate, then, is to capture and interrogate Lorcan Kell.

Lya Jierre arrives on the 13th, which realistically gives the party just four days for this mission. Kell has a huge organization, but the party has help. It took a while to press through all the bureaucracy to get this arranged, but Delft is proud to announce that they have formed a task force to take down Kell's guild. The party will have 50 police officers at their disposal. Getting any more will require calling in favors (see Prestige in the Player's Guide).

Delft has one **Sergeant Deb Macon** waiting in a nearby office. She'll be helping the party coordinate their forces and deploy them over the next few days. The king is pretty busy, so Delft figures they'll spend some time kicking around a plan just down the hall, then come back to brief the king once they've got the details figured out. The task force can start in the morning. With luck, they'll find Kell before he knows what hit him.

Fallback Options.

Minister Lee briefly outlines some other contingencies before the party goes off to brainstorm. Taking Kell alive is optimal. If the party has no choice but to kill him, Lee can arrange for a powerful cleric from Crisil-lyir to be teleported in to pull up the dead thug's soul and question it.

A less likely option is to contact **Hana "Gale" Soliogn**. The woman is officially a terrorist, but she claimed to have been guided to the Bleak Gate by a fey named **Ellik**. She claimed the trip required unique circumstances, but it's possible Gale or Ellik could help out.

Delft also recalls something about a wrecked automaton some agents found that seemed suspicious. The king tells Harkover Lee to get some expert technologists to help the RHC look into the machine. This small tidbit lays the groundwork for bringing **Alexander Grappa** into the plot, so make sure not to accidentally forget it.

Finally, the king can open a brief portal to the Bleak Gate, but only at midnight during a new moon. The next new moon is on the 14th, a few hours after he's set to start talking with the Jierres. But if the party can't find another way in, Aodhan still wants the party to go after the Ob, so he'll send them through.

Switching Gears.

Aodhan asks them to clear the room so he can deal with some more menial elements of the peace summit. Before they go, he reiterates that they have his full backing on this mission. As the party meets Sergeant Macon and starts to plan the task force missions, Delft excuses himself, saying he has to check on another set of constables who should be meeting the Ambassador from Ber, who will be the peace summit's mediator.

At this point, change the perspective to the B-Team.

ENTER THE B-TEAM.

When you switch to B-Team scenes, hand the players the pre-generated character sheets from Appendix J. Please make it clear that these aren't full PCs. When they're "off-screen," as it were, you as GM have fiat over what happens to them, like any other NPC. This lets you drop the party into scenes and dictate the set-up of scenarios.

The B-Team consists of:

- Carlao, human Yerasol veteran knight.
- Serena, human technologist rogue.
- Kaea, eladrin skyseer wizard.
- Dima, dwarf eschatologist cleric.
- Josiah, human gunslinger ranger.
- Gaethan, half-elf spirit medium ranger.

SUBTLE NUDGES

Brakken's abilities provide GMs a unique opportunity to "nudge the plot" by having Brakken learn secrets with his abilities that the PCs may not have caught onto. He might share some info he "overheard" or that one of his "contacts told him," and suggest the B-Team constables pass it along to the PCs. Be sure to use this sparingly, as the PCs are the stars of the adventure, not a psychic minotaur. But if absolutely necessary, Brakken can be used to keep things moving.

A Bear in Bosum Strand*

Social/Action. Real-Time. Level 7.

The other constables greet Brakken and ensure his safe arrival.

The B-Team is waiting at the appointed dock when *Fuego Duradero* arrives from Ber at noon. The impressive galleon is crewed mostly by orcs and half-orcs, with a handful of gnolls, lizardfolk, and other monstrous humanoids. The ship's bosun, a brute of a lizardman named **Cruusk**, is first off the boat and asks with a hiss who's meeting the ambassador. He demands identification, though he only gives a cursory glance (not really knowing what an RHC badge should look like). Once the PCs have identified themselves, the lizardman sends word back to Brakken, but tells the constables that they will need to wait while the mediator finishes preparing his cargo for offloading. Cruusk gets to work with the rest of the crew. If the party tries to come aboard, the captain barks at them (he's a gnoll) to get off unless they have a search warrant.

A few of the crew come down the gangplank to the docks, and the local dockers warily prep a crane. A goblin and a docker get into a brief argument—neither speaks the other's language—and eventually the docker throws up his hands and lets the goblin take the crane's controls. The ship's crew hook it up and raise a huge crate from the galleon's hold.

I Feel Like I'm Being Watched.

The constables are being watched by a pair of Kell-Guild thugs, lurking at the door of a dockside bar 100 feet away (Insight DC 22 to get a hunch someone's watching; Perception DC 15 to spot the men—if Dima is with the party, he'll automatically spot them). If they're noticed, the thugs head into the bar and slip out through back doors, planning to get reinforcements. If the constables want to follow, they don't get far before a mishap with the crane distracts their attention.

Snap!

The crane is hoisting a massive steel cage off the *Fuego*, but the weight is too much, and the cable snaps, dropping the cage on the stone worked dock. It breaks on impact, and the creature in the cage claws its way out: a massive dire bear.

The bear belongs to Brakken, and is his prized fighting animal. Named **Feroz**, this beast is more startled than anything about his tumble. The Risuri dockers nearby panic (the ship's crew, who know the beast is tame, watch with amusement). The sudden flurry of movement spooks the bear, and it rears up defensively.

As long as no one attacks it, the dire bear soon settles down and ponderously approaches one of the constables (Carlao, most likely), then stops to stare into his face. The crew of the *Fuego* look on in stunned disbelief; Cruusk drops the crate he was holding. The goblin operating the crane quickly exits and begins swimming away, fearful of the consequences. Booming footsteps signal the arrival of **Brakken of Heffanita**, the minotaur mediator walking down the gangplank towards the dock. Brakken is amused by the sight, and calls out to Feroz. The large beast turns and plods back to Brakken's side.



An eladrin woman just over 100 years old, Hana can fly at will, control winds, and speak with birds, but she has no directly offensive magic. Bitter about her treatment by her Danoran "foster family," she uses her powers to sabotage Danor-owned industry. Some accuse her of more violent crimes, calling her a "fey terrorist." She seeks an audience with the Unseen Court, but she hasn't yet been granted one.



Alexander fought for Risur in the Third Yerasol War four decades ago as a mere foot soldier. After losing too many friends he devoted himself to learning magic of golem-crafting. Originally he hoped that his homeland could field an army of automata instead of shedding the blood of its young men and women, but his interest slowly drifted from golem construction to the crafting of minds for these artificial warriors, as well as enchantment magic and other ways to end a conflict without anyone dying.

When the Ob were ready to begin construction on the colossus, Kasvarina Varal (page 411) personally recruited Grappa, promising him he could help create peace. Nine months ago, though, he overheard the leaders of the conspiracy discussing their full plans, and was imprisoned and *geased* so he could not tell anyone. He managed to escape, but was killed, and only managed to preserve his consciousness by transferring it to his bronze golem handservant.



A minotaur from the nation of Ber, Brakken's ambassadorship in Orithea helped end that nation's civil war and bring on unprecedented prosperity. Recently Brakken became ambassador to Risur, and was tapped by the rulers of Risur and Danor to mediate their peace talks. He's said to be very canny, and that his mere presence tamps down on people's pretensions. He once even got a raging bear to back down with a single disapproving glare.

Brakken secretly is a telepath, and has had such success in negotiations because he can hear surface thoughts and, if necessary, nudge people toward compromise. He seldom pushes the actual leaders of each side, but he finds it helps immensely if he can calm the emotions of their advisors. He's genuinely driven by a desire to help people live in harmony, though raising his own prestige is certainly a bonus.

He dresses in simple tribal clothing from Ber and refuses to travel without his most trusted friend, a dire bear named Feroz.

If the constables attack the dire bear, it immediately retreats back up to the ship, where Brakken is able to calm it with his psychic abilities. Brakken scolds the constables, and for the remainder of the adventure, Feroz will growl and stare at the B-Team constables whenever they're near.

If the constables held their ground, Brakken congratulates them. He introduces himself as "Brakken of Heffanita, Ambassador to Risur from the Progressive Monarchy of Ber, and chosen mediator for the historic peace talks between Danor and Risur." He understands that there are those who might wish him harm, so he appreciates the protection, but he warns them that his job requires him to move around a lot. For instance, he wants to make sure Feroz is stabled at the Beran consulate, and then he'd like to get a late lunch before going to meet the king. He already has a place picked out. Brakken puts a pack on his bear's back, full of gifts meant for the dignitaries, and then he's ready to head out.

Escorting the Ambassador.

The Beran consulate is located in the southern district of eastern Stray River. The fastest way is to take a ferry, but Brakken asks to walk, which takes a couple hours. He wants to gently scan the minds of those around him to gain a sense of the city's mood, and he enjoys the reactions of "civilized people" to a giant bear ambling down the street.

Brakken makes small talk, shares stories about his homeland, and asks questions about Flint. As ambassador to Risur he's spent his time in Slate, not Flint, and this city is psychically much more complex than any he's been to before.

The route passes a few landmarks, like Dawn Square (where Nevard's Rally took place; here Brakken looks troubled), the Royal Shipyard (where the king's ships are docked; Brakken smiles), and Hotel Aurum (Brakken begins frowning a block before the party comes within sight of the blockaded street and the protesters gathered). Brakken isn't set to meet the king until later tonight, so he continues to Stray River, where his mood perks up.

The constables may simply shrug off Brakken's odd moods as him reacting to a new land, but they might notice (Insight DC 22) that he seems to adopt the mood of whatever neighborhood he's about to enter.

Mi Casa.

The Beran consulate is far less impressive than the Danoran consulate that the party visited in Adventure Two, but it spreads across more land. Rustic and relaxed, the consulate is rarely visited and sees only a handful of official guests every month. The grounds are patrolled by a half-dozen guards with fierce and loyal mastiffs.

Two stories tall and constructed of simple brickwork, the main consulate building is dwarfed by the stables. The stables are home to various normally ferocious animals, including several wolves and the consular's pet worg, Blademaw. Once every three months, the consulate lets in children from various schools on a tour, with the main sight-seeing attraction being the animals in the stables.

The consular, a one-legged orc named **Gerax**, greets Brakken and the constables like they're old friends. Gerax greets the constables in particular with great respect despite their relatively low standing. In truth, Brakken has never met the orc, but subtle use of his abilities makes the meeting an impressive scene.

For the remainder of the adventure, Brakken will spend his nights in the Beran consulate while Feroz remains at the stables. Gerax asks everyone to join him for drinks, but Brakken declines, saying he has a lunch date. He asks the constables to take him to Pardwight University, where he'll be meeting one **Steffan Eberhardt**, Drakr's representative to the peace summit. The meal's on him.



A centuries-old eladrin warrior, Asrabey became one of the many husbands of Kasvarina Varal, a powerful matriarch who had survived the Great Malice. Kasvarina encouraged Asrabey's resentment of the humans who had sentenced their people to death. For years he trained, and undertook many daring raids until he became famous as one of the greatest eladrin warriors in the world.

Eventually Asrabey left Elfaivar and offered his services to the Unseen Court, though he has kept a much lower profile for the past two hundred years. Asrabey has not seen Kasvarina for fifty years, and he has not the slightest inkling of her affiliation with the Obscurati. He might respect a few humans from Risur, but he hopes that someday Kasvarina will come to him and ask him to lead a final war of retribution against the Clergy that ruined their race, and the nation of Danor, whose tiefling leaders bear the mark of their crime.

Enter Varal

Social. Real-Time.

Cut back to the main party, a few minutes after they leave the king to continue planning. The party hears a commotion outside as an unannounced visitor shows up: **Asrabey Varal**. The PCs likely encountered Asrabey during Adventure One; depending on that encounter, he may react to their presence. If the PCs were able to defeat him, he grudgingly nods, but if he was able to escape or subdue the party, he ignores them.

Asrabey's sword is sheathed and his lion shield is strapped across his back. If the PCs try to stop him, he explains he's on official Unseen Court business and will brook no delays. (He will fight his way through if the party is stubborn; Asrabey is also exceedingly stubborn.)

Before the King.

The eladrin presents himself with a quick kneel before King Aodhan.

"Gracious King Aodhan, ruler of the mortal nation of Risur as recognized by the true lords of this land, I come on an urgent mission for the Unseen Court. The Court demands it be known that one of their ilk has taken an interest in this city and is acting on his own. I am here to tell you that the Court does not approve.

"His name is Ekossigan, herald of the four seasons, he who defends stags from arrows, widdershins prophet and liege of changelings. Upon leaving the Court he penned this poem:

When spring returns to winter, / The cauldron births a spark.
The steel betrays the vintner, / The silver spurns the arc.
The fire-bride's dissension: / Dismissed by green-adorned.
The wheel-woven dead man / Shall wake the cauldron-born.

"I ask your leave to search this city for the rebel. Moreover I invoke the Rite of Kelland's Tribute. We offer one war unfought in exchange for one season slain. The fey shall not retaliate if you kill that which the Unseen Court's greatest warrior cannot harm."

PCs making a History or Nature check (DC 13) recall that Asrabey, as an agent of the Unseen Court, is forbidden from harming Ekossigan himself, so he is requesting someone help him murder a rogue fey.



The king looks to the PCs for their reply, asking if needed how they will contribute. He is required to fulfill the tribute, but he will let the party decide whether they'll help Asrabey or have the B-Team handle it.

Aodhan ultimately agrees to allow Asrabey to hunt Ekossigan, but he demands that the eladrin otherwise obey Risuri law while inside the city. Asrabey agrees, then immediately turns to leave.

If the PCs have agreed to help, Asrabey tells them to meet him at the RHC office at dawn two days hence. He is not open to discussing his whereabouts within Flint, and if pressed about his activities during the intervening day, Asrabey will admit that the Unseen Court has sympathizers in Flint, and meeting them will be easier without the party present. The dreadnought refuses to be followed, and between his stealth, climbing ability, and teleportation is very hard to keep tabs on.

For more information on Asrabey's quest to stop Ekossigan, see Thread Two: One Season Slain (page 372).

ALTERNATE ASRABEY

If any PC is a Vekeshi Mystic or closely affiliated with the fey, Asrabey instead comes to that PC before the adventure begins, and does not burst in on the king until the dinner in Act Two.

Bombs Away!*

Action. Real-Time. Level 10.

Grundun Zubov's bombs start going off. Panic. Running. AHHHH!

One last scene before the adventure goes free-form.

At 2:15 in the afternoon, the B-Team and Brakken reach Pardwight District, where the city's main university lies. Brakken asks around a bit and eventually is pointed to a Yerasol restaurant that serves fruit, goat, fish, and fried plantains located in the Onça Student Hall (Area 11 on the map). There they are greeted by Steffan Eberhardt, and Brakken introduces him to the party as "Drakr's eyes at the peace summit."

Steffan—an old thin dwarf with sickly white skin, who supports himself on a skull-tipped ebony cane—shrugs in a "what are you gonna do" way and says, "We Drakrans thought we knew how the world was going to end—these two countries fighting until everyone is dead. Now we have to change all our predictions."

Brakken leans in to the constables as if Steffan can't hear him, "Drakr's just worried they'll have fewer customers for their guns and warships." The two laugh and Brakken looks for a seat big enough to support him.

Pardwight District.

One of the few parts of Central District that has managed to keep itself surrounded by a buffer of nature, Pardwight is host to the city's university. Classes fill spare rooms in the buildings of the district, with only a handful of facilities exclusive to the school.

The orange line of the subrail is actually above ground in the Pardwight District, and it has opened up the area to middle class socialites who are charmed by the eclectic clothiers, restaurants, and other shops in the area. Sailors and dock workers trying out the trains for the first time often jump off here to explore. Students tend to stay in the dorms, but the rail offers them easy access to the city's culture.

When the constables arrive, have each make a Wisdom check (DC 14) to notice that the clock tower (area 13) is seven minutes slow.

Unless otherwise noted, buildings are 30 feet high. Streets are 30 or 40 feet wide.

1. **Pemberton Industries Office Building.** This squat complex once served as a testing ground for the discredited Pemberton Industries' experiments with personal arcanoscientific devices. Now it is locked and lightly guarded until Benedict Pemberton or his debtors can clear out the labs. The university briefly had a department of arcanoscience based here, but now the students have been forced to find other accommodations, most of them much less safe in the event of accidents.
2. **Flint Tribune.** This five story building holds the offices of the city's foremost daily paper, as well as business printing presses. It also services the *Risuri Record* and *Pryce of Progress*, papers having more of a "tabloid" feel.
3. **Mixed Use.** Various shops, often with classrooms or apartments on different floors.
4. **Pardwight Medical Library.** Five stories tall, the library houses not just books but curative scrolls, galleries of famous healers, and an entire floor of preserved specimens, humanoid and monstrous.
5. **Mixed Use.** Another set of shops, galleries, and such, surrounding a pleasant garden.
6. **Strandholt Teaching Hospital.** The façade has three stories, while the two wings—for critical patients and chronic patients, have an extra floor. A basement extension houses the insane.
7. **Mixed Use.** If you have a mixed-use property, you want it here, because this one is really the prettiest. Look at that fountain.
8. **Hodgeman Hall.** The only part of the district that exclusively is owned by the university, these two buildings have several lecture halls and cozy classrooms for the teaching of classics, languages, and non-mechanical sciences.
9. **Pardwight Druidic Temple.** The university formally recognizes all druidic sects, and tolerates clericists and other religions, but its founders adhered to the way of the puma spirit, looking forward to prey or progress, not skyward like the skyseers.
10. **Quillis Upperclassman Dorm.** Fronted by a fresh air market, the dorm is actually run by a collection of former graduates who demand their lodgers work at least 4 hours a week in the market.
11. **Onça Student Hall.** A major gathering place for students, Onça Hall also houses most of the university's administrative offices, plus its commissary. The Yerasol restaurant Brakken wants to try is on the ground floor of the building.
12. **Pardwight District Court.** This somber building is known as the Stone Dome by the law students who study here. A small police station lies across the ravine to the southeast.
13. **Anderson Clock Tower.** The sixty-foot high clock tower predates Flint's industrial boom, and it has never stopped working for more than five minutes.
14. **Foyle Ravine.** Signs warn people not to enter the wooded ravine. Because of an old teleportation prank gone awry, anyone who tries to leave the gorge teleports back to the base unless they're wearing a gold ring. The local police keep gold rings on hand to rescue stranded pedestrians. The phenomenon is why the subrail has to go on the surface here.
15. **Pardwight Station (Orange Line, station 4).** This station has some of the most stark and modern architecture of the whole subrail system.
16. **Cesanne Sword Studio.** This physical education facility was originally founded to teach duelists. Today it mostly hosts dodgeball.

Terror Attack.

While Brakken, Steffan, and the constables partake of spicy fried fish, goat, and plantains, the agents of radical eschatologist Grundun Zubov prepare the opening salvo in their message to Risur. Snipers set up atop the medical library (Area 4) and the Anderson Clock Tower (Area 13), and a bomb waits in the skywalk of Hodgeman Hall (Area 8).

First Bomb.

At 2:25, right as the constables are receiving their food and right as a train is passing beneath the skywalk, the bomb detonates. The explosion tears apart the skywalk, shatters the windows in the restaurant the constables are at, and is loud enough to be heard anywhere in the city. The train derails, and a great black smoke cloud billows into the sky. Twelve fatalities result from the explosion, along with twenty-six wounded among those onboard the rail and those nearby hit by shrapnel.

It takes about two minutes for doctors to stream out of the hospital (Area 6), and five minutes for the first police to mobilize from the southeast. The constables have fifteen minutes until the second bomb goes off.

Total Casualties: 26 wounded, 12 dead.

After the First Attack.

Depending on how fast the constables react, they might learn some of these facts after the whole incident plays out, or they might figure out where the terrorists are and stop them before the second bomb.

Brakken and Steffan will do whatever the constables suggest. Steffan is a cleric, and will stabilize those who are pulled from the wreck. If the constables insist, he might even accompany them, in which case he can provide a *cure light wounds* spell or similar healing magic.

Bet He Wasn't Prepared for *That*.

An elderly dwarf—one **Takbar Rhozenko**—waited for the train reading a newspaper. Just before the train arrived he closed the paper, checked a pocket watch, and turned away. The bomb explodes, the train derails, but the dwarf is unfazed. While everyone else on the street is running to see what happened, he walks away casually, right past the now-shattered windows of the restaurant the constables are eating at.

The dwarf is distinctive, beardless with white hair and dark patches around his nose and finger tips from frostbite. He has a newspaper tucked in his armpit, and is fiddling with a pocket watch. If that's not enough to get the constables' attention, this will.

Recent earthquakes have jostled Flint, and when the explosion goes off it causes just enough damage to knock loose a puma-faced gargoyle from atop Onça Student Hall. The gargoyle plummets and strikes Takbar as he walks past the building, just feet away from the party.

Takbar is left dying but conscious, and he growls in pain. If the gargoyle is heaved away and he is magically healed, he can survive, but otherwise he passes on after a minute. Any PC can make a Religion check (DC 26) to realize that Takbar is a member of an obscure radical sect from Drakr. If no PC realizes this, Steffan points it out, shocked that someone from such a rare group would happen to be here.

If the party tries to interrogate Takbar, he resists until he realizes his meager lies aren't convincing them. Then he clamps down on his suicide pill, and mocks them with a promise that Zubov will destroy the world they know. The poison transmutes the dwarf's blood to ice, and his skin rapidly turns blue. He dies within moments.

The First Lead.

Astute characters might search Takbar and find the newspaper and the pocket watch.

The paper is a small-run circulation, the *Risuri Record*, which is owned by Risuri citizens who are sympathetic to Drakr and the Heid Eschatol philosophy. The tabloid is renowned for dealing with trash scandals—with their current run discussing an entirely baseless affair between Danoran Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre and her brother Luc Jierre.

The paper releases every week, but this one is dated for tomorrow. Clever characters can figure out that the dwarf got it from the printer today, and that the printer is just down the street, at the Flint Tribune.

As for the pocket watch, it's set for 2:40, fifteen minutes after the first attack. It radiates minor transmutation magic. The gargoyle cracked it and damaged its components beyond the scope of any immediate repair.

If they search him more thoroughly, they can find the forged work order for repairs last night at the skybridge, which has the address of Soknik Repairs, the contractor who apparently was providing the workers. Soknik Repairs is the hideout of Zubov's cell.

Second Bomb.

The second attack takes place fifteen minutes after the first, giving the constables a narrow window to avert it.

Zubov's men scouted the Flint Tribune building while visiting the *Risuri Record*, which has a small office on the second floor. Last night they bribed the cleaning crew to go home, then hid explosives in the crawlspace between floors, near every support column. These explosives have a magical trigger, one activated by the pocket watch of Takbar Rhozenko, who has headed to the roof of the Pardwight Medical Library.

After witnessing the bombing of the rail line, Takbar wound the watch to a fifteen minute timer, then pressed a button to start the countdown. This sent a message to linked devices in the Flint Tribune building, and so even though the gargoyle broke the watch, at 2:40 those bombs will go off unless the detonators (three each on two floors) are disabled (Thievery DC 18 each).

If the party somehow kept Takbar from being crushed, they can figure out that the watch sent a magical signal by fiddling with the device (Arcana DC 18), and it's even possible (Arcana DC 26) to trace the signal to the bombs. Takbar's watch cannot deactivate the bombs, but the spotter in the sniper squad atop the medical library also has a watch which can similarly be used to stop the countdown.

If the bombs detonate, the first two floors of the Flint Tribune (Area 2) burst in a cascade of explosions that annihilate structural support for the half of the building facing the rail line. In a thunderous crash of stone and steel, the building topples into the street. A gas line ruptures and a geyser of flame shoots into the air above the rubble. The building just barely misses the druidic temple, but a hundred people working at the newspaper are crushed, and most die within minutes without help.

What was initially shock and curiosity in the public turns to panic. People in the district believe that their offices may also be potential bombing sites, and many try to run.

For Later Investigation.

Zubov's terrorist cell planted specially crafted firedust casks in the skywalk supports, concealing them as additions to the normal stone pillars. The dwarves worked overnight on the 8th, and the local police were fooled by some simple disguises of them as workers and a moderately well-forged work order.

The trigger for the explosion was a wire on the tracks. When the train crossed over it sent a jolt down the line that set off the firedust. The wire was deactivated through most of the day, but a member of the cell passed by five minutes before the detonation and casually attached two connectors while adjusting the cuff on his pants.

Gunsmith PCs or those knowledgeable in the creation of firedust (Arcana DC 23) can identify the material as a variety of more explosive firedust typically only available to the military. An hour at a lab can identify the firedust as originating in Drakr.

Examination of the stone used to conceal the explosives determines that it's aggregate rubble concrete. A bit of work can track down a producer who sold an appropriately-sized quantity earlier this week. The buyer was Zubov, and the check he paid with was drawn on an account for a business named Soknik Repairs.

The dwarves in the sniper nests, as well as Takbar, all had white powder on their shoes. A chemical examination reveals it as sodium borate, along with several other compounds used as an insecticide.

Pryce is Right.

Some time later, while the party is at the RHC headquarters, **Bartholomew Pryce** meets with them. A firebrand sometimes critical of the monarchy and the RHC, Pryce was the editor of *Pryce of Progress*, a newspaper with heavy Docker sympathies. He's in his early thirties, reasonably good-looking if you can overlook the filthy smoking habit, and hangs out in different drinking or gambling dens in the Bosum Strand.

Pryce has the eye of a canny journalist, and can provide any information you think your party needs that they missed, since he saw the dwarves working in the Flint Tribune building but was too busy trying to meet a deadline to worry about them at the time.

Perhaps more importantly, now that the offices of the Flint Tribune are gone, he sees an opportunity to take its place. He's already acquired seed money for a new office and printing press, but he'd like to run his first issue with information about the Terror in Flint. He'd like an interview with the party, and if possible he wants to follow them and report on how they're helping protect the city.

Pryce plays no plot-relevant role in the adventure, but can give the party a sense that they're famous, and that people are watching to see how they lead.

When the building collapses, make an attack against each creature inside (+14 vs. Reflex, 5d6 damage, half on a miss). If a character survives that damage, assume he or she will eventually be rescued when pulled from the rubble. If a character is caught directly in the blast, it deals an additional 5d6 damage.

Total Casualties: 26 wounded, 100 trapped (soon to die), 12 dead.

Snipers!

Four dwarves are positioned atop the Pardwight Medical Library (Area 4), and another four on the Anderson Clock Tower (Area 13). Each group has two snipers with scoped rifles, one spotter with a long spyglass to report targets to the snipers, another dwarf that guards the entrance to the roof, plus a lurking ice elemental. (The ice elemental is a native to northern Drakr, not extraplanar, and it resembles a crystalline serpent, nearly invisible if you're not looking for it.)

Having panicked the crowd with the second bomb, the snipers wait for people to flee down the bridge to the southeast or the street to the north. Then they start firing, killing 10 people in the first minute. Panic turns to outright terror as people realize there's no way out.

The snipers continue to fire indiscriminately at the frightened crowd and at people in windows in nearby buildings. They make a point of killing anyone who tries to flee, or who tries to help those trapped in the rubble, as well as anyone in a police uniform.

Once the shooting starts a character can search for the snipers by spending a standard action, picking a building, and making a Perception check (DC 26) to spot sunlight reflecting off the scopes or spyglass. For the sake of fairness, don't have the snipers target the constables unless one of them intentionally makes himself a target.

Total Casualties: 26 wounded, 100 trapped (soon to die), 22 dead, plus another 5 wounded or dead per minute.

Sniper Crossfire.

If the constables don't intervene, the local police manage to find the snipers and take them out, which takes half an hour. By that point a hundred people are wounded from explosions and non-fatal shots from the snipers, and nearly two hundred are dead. Eight more police die attacking the snipers, who kill themselves rather than be taken alive.

The constables might choose to help earlier than that. If they move before the second bomb goes off they can at best round up four police officers to come with them (see Allied Officer in Appendix J). After the second bomb, the party can get a dozen officers, though that will make them targets. Let the players control the officers, especially if the party decides to split up to tackle the two sniper nests simultaneously.

If the constables go up to one nest, they'll take fire from the other, but after one nest is cleared out you can safely assume the police are able to stop those other snipers within a few minutes.

Alternately, the constables might call for help from the main PCs, using the *messenger wind*. From Hotel Aurum he party can probably reach the bombing site in five minutes.

Sniper Nests.

From fifty feet up, the snipers are easily within close range for most of their targets. The two nests are about 200 feet apart, so the snipers take a –2 penalty to hit the constables if they're attacking the other nest. Low walls on the roof grant superior cover against attacks from below, and cover from attacks made from the same elevation.

The medical library roof is fifty feet across, accessible by a central door. The team here is a silent crew, the only words being uttered are those of the spotter, indicating targets of opportunity. These dwarves are methodical in their attacks, and tend to aim at potential runners or anyone who looks like they might be trying to rally the crowd together.

The clock tower sniper nest is on one of the tower's "shoulders," and is accessed from the middle section near the clock face. It's much narrower, just fifteen by twenty-five feet. This second group is far more blasé, and the two snipers carry on a casual philosophical debate about the state of the world while murdering people. This team fires at mostly random targets, with the snipers justifying each of their shots aloud with comments like, "Oh, that overweight man clearly should have known he would not live long; he should have been prepared for an early death!"

List of Adversaries.

Team 1 (Medical Library)

- 2 eschatologist snipers
- 2 eschatologist radicals
- 1 ice serpent

Team 2 (Clock Tower)

- 2 eschatologist snipers
- 2 eschatologist radicals
- 1 ice serpent

Eschatologist Sniper	Level 9 Goon Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf	XP 200
HP 35; **Bloodied** 17	**Initiative** +5
AC 21, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 21	**Perception** +10
Speed 5	Low-light vision
Resist cold 5, poison 5	

Traits

▸ **Stable Footing**

He's a little madman, short and stout.

Reduce the distance the dwarf is moved by any push, pull, or slide effect by 1. If knocked prone, he may attempt a saving throw to avoid falling prone.

Standard Actions

⊗ **Wary Warhammer** (cold, weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The dwarf keeps you at bay with an unadorned warhammer.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC

Hit: 17 damage, and the sniper shifts 1 square.

⊘ **Rifled Musket** (weapon) ✦ At-Will

The dwarf's fine Drakran weapon could kill a man from a thousand feet away.

Attack: Ranged 20/40/200 (one creature); +16 vs. AC

Hit: 17 damage, or 27 on a critical hit.

Load standard.

⟋ **Snipe** (weapon) ✦ At-Will

The dwarf lines up the perfect killing shot.

Effect: The dwarf aims at a target he can see within 800 squares (4000 feet). Until he stops aiming he is considered blind against targets not in a direct line of sight between him and the target. When he attacks the aimed target with his rifle, quadruple his weapon's range increments, and his attack deals an extra 1d10 damage.

Str	10 (+4)	**Dex**	13 (+5)	**Wis**	12 (+5)
Con	14 (+6)	**Int**	11 (+4)	**Cha**	6 (+2)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarf, mediocre Primordial

Eschatologist Radical Level 9 Goon Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf XP 200

HP 47; **Bloodied** 23 **Initiative** +5
AC 25, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 21 **Perception** +10
Speed 5 Low-light vision
Resist cold 5, poison 5

Traits

▸ **Stable Footing**
He's a little madman, short and stout.
Reduce the distance the dwarf is moved by any push, pull, or slide effect by 1. If knocked prone, he may attempt a saving throw to avoid falling prone.

▸ **Fanatical**
The dwarf swings his hammer with radical fervor, remaining close with no concern for his own safety.
If a creature marked by the radical moves away or attacks another foe, as an immediate reaction the radical can move its speed after the marked creature and make two warhammer attacks against it. The marked creature can make a melee attack simultaneously against the radical. The damage from these attacks is simultaneous.

Standard Actions

⊗ **Fervent Warhammer** (cold, weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The dwarf drops his firearm and draws a warhammer. All of its carvings have been worn away.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 12 damage plus 5 cold damage, and the target is marked until the end of the radical's next turn.

⊘ **Shotgun** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
He doesn't have to aim well for this to hurt.
Special: For a shotgun, make the attack roll twice. If either roll hits, the weapon hits. If the target is at close range and both rolls hit, the attack deals an extra 1d8 damage.
Attack: Ranged 6/12 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 17 damage, or 25 on a critical hit.
Miss: Half damage.
Load standard.

Str 14 (+6) **Dex** 9 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+5)
Con 14 (+6) **Int** 11 (+4) **Cha** 6 (+2)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarf, mediocre Primordial

Ice Serpent Level 10 Lurker
Large elemental magical beast (water) XP 500

HP 48; **Bloodied** 24 **Initiative** +4
AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 22 **Perception** +5
Speed 7
Immune cold
Vulnerable fire 10

Traits

▸ **See Right Through**
It's icy body is almost transparent.
If the serpent is hidden from a creature, it does not need to maintain cover or concealment to remain hidden.

Standard Actions

✓ **Face-Eater** (psychic) ✦ At-Will
You sense something watching you, then lock eyes with a nearly invisible serpentine creature of ice. It slithers forward, holding you in its gaze, and slowly its head twists into an icy sculpture of your own face. You struggle to move, like you're trapped in ice.
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +13 vs. Will
Hit: 2d8+9 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized and weakened until the end of the serpent's next turn.
Miss: The serpent remains hidden from any creatures it was hidden from before the attack.

✓ **Numbing Coils** (cold) ✦ At-Will
The serpent wraps you in its coils, crushing the life out of you.
Requirement: The target must be immobilized.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d8 damage plus 10 cold damage, and the target is restrained (Escape DC 21). While it is restrained it takes a –5 penalty to attacks against creatures other than the serpent

Skills Stealth +9
Str 20 (+9) **Dex** 8 (+4) **Wis** 10 (+5)
Con 12 (+6) **Int** 4 (+1) **Cha** 11 (+5)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** understands Dwarven

Aftermath.

The dwarves, realizing that they will be stopped by law enforcement eventually, have special poison pills in their mouths (same as Takbar Rhozenko, page 357). If a dwarf thinks he's about to be taken alive, he'll chomp down on the pill as a move action.

Any snipers taken alive are fanatical and hard to break, but if the party applies the right pressure they will give up the location of Soknik Repairs. In any case they will gladly boast that their leader Grundun Zubov has already thought of a counter to anything the police could do to stop them.

PART ONE: Setup

This section contains two events that don't fit cleanly into the main plot threads, but which set up the party's eventual assault on the Obscurati base in the Bleak Gate.

A Bunch of Bolts

Puzzle. Real-Time.

The party and the B-Team meet and examine the partially reassembled bronze golem.

The morning of the 9th of Spring, before the party meets with their task force, a royal technologist comes to the RHC headquarters to help repair the mangled bronze golem that the RHC found a few months ago. The party is present to see what information it might yield. The B-Team is present because they found the golem originally, and one of their number, Serena, has been trying to repair it in her spare time.

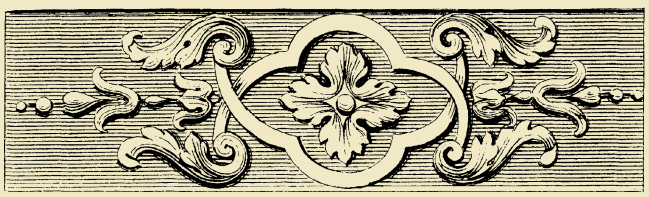
The royal technologist, **Justin Rollins**, is a big light-hearted black man who has a "pet contraption" the size of a small dog that walks on four legs and carries his tools—plus a box of chocolates that Justin idly munches as he works.

Golem Condition.

When the B-Team found it, the golem was in hundreds of pieces. Serena has spent most of her efforts to bend bits back into shape so she could assemble the body. Right now she has one and a half arms assembled, one leg, and the bulk of the torso, minus a few external casing pieces.

The head's back area is mostly intact, but the face and eyes are obliterated, and Serena hasn't tried attaching it to the body yet, unsure what would happen. She explains that it radiates magic still, and she thinks it could still control the body if reattached. Her hunch is that it could be given orders, perhaps even something like "take us back to your base."

Justin asks those assembled to securely restrain the body to a table with straps. He intends to put the head on, and he doesn't want the machine flailing around. After a few minutes of work with silver dust and wires engraved with arcane sigils, he magically fuses a thick cable between the back of the skull and the neck. The head still lies limply.



It's Alive.

The body twitches a bit, and then the fingers on its functional right hand begin tapping the table. Any character with the Yerasol Veteran theme recognizes the tapping as a letter-by-letter signal code—the equivalent of Morse code. (There's definitely someone in the building who can understand and translate if the party can't.)

The message is, "Would you kindly give me a pen?"

Alexander Grappa has been conscious inside his golem's severed head, able to hear but not to communicate until now. His strong will has kept him from going crazy, but his memory has some gaps, and there are things he still can't talk about because of a *geas*.

Either with a pen (writing roughly and blindly) or with additional tapping, Alexander communicates the following message:

"I am Alexander Grappa, the mindmaker. A magical compulsion prevents me from explaining everything, but I believe we have mutual enemies.

"Don't bother repairing the mouth. I did not design this golem for vocal communication. I would very much appreciate functional eyes, however. And if I'm to guide you to our mutual enemies I'll need legs. I have a feeling that my neck isn't in excellent shape either.

"Back in summer I was in my own body, imprisoned after I learned a secret that I unfortunately cannot share. Again, pardon certain vagaries that are necessary due to my geas. I fled the Bleak Gate with a woman and this golem at my side. A rival caught up and slew me, but I managed to transfer my consciousness into this machine. My rival destroyed this golem body, but did not realize he had failed to actually kill me.

"I would rather like to thwart his plans and help the aforementioned woman. If sufficiently reassembled I can guide you through the...the most I can say is to call it a facility. I cannot get to the Bleak Gate myself, but I know my way from there.

"In exchange for this, perhaps you could arrange me access to my old golem-crafting workshop. Ask around for Alexander Grappa, and I hope people will have heard of me. It would be very nice to design a better body for myself."

Justin explains it will take him about a day to get the golem functional. Out of Grappa's earshot, he suggests they keep the golem locked up—maybe toss him a few books to read or something—until they can be sure they can trust him.

By the afternoon of the 10th, the golem's body is intact enough to walk and climb, and Justin has enchanted a handheld tap-to-voice device so it can speak about a word every 2 seconds.

Further Questions.

The party understandably might have a lot of questions for Grappa, but all his *geas* allows him to say is that he was in a facility in the Bleak Gate, which has hundreds of workers and dozens of guards. He can neither name nor describe anyone he worked with, but he can say whether he knows people if the party describes them. For instance, if they mention meeting a steelshaper, or if later on they mention Kasvarina's name, Grappa can acknowledge that they were his "rival" and "the woman."

He cannot say the name Obscurati, nor that the facility is building something, let alone that it's building a giant colossus. Grappa also knows that the Obscurati plan to use the colossus to perform some



sort of ritual—he overheard Kasvarina talking about training the colossus about the planes, in case it had to make a split decision during the ritual—but he doesn't know what the goal of that ritual is. In any case, he can't tell the party about it. His best bet is to lead the party so they can find out the details themselves.

The party might try to have Minister Lee remove the *geas*, but when he tries to *remove affliction* it fails. This shocks the man, since it means whoever placed the *geas* is significantly more powerful than him, not to mention that it has lasted far longer than a normal *geas* should.

Guardian of the Hill

Social. Real-Time.

The party is invited up to Cauldron Hill by Lieutenant Dale.

After Mayor Reed Macbannin was revealed (in Adventure Two) to be performing horrible experiments atop Cauldron Hill, a replacement was assigned to keep track of the cursed mountain. Lieutenant Dale, an erudite and cool-headed military officer, used to be on call to respond in case of supernatural incursion.

Now ***Captain* Dale** maintains a garrison of eighty soldiers atop Cauldron Hill, and at the king's direction he sends an invite to the party because he hopes to be working with them. The invite arrives just as the party is finishing up with Alexander Grappa.

Martial Scientist PCs might know Dale from the Battalion academy and his infamous thesis on *Meditation, Coffee, and Cherry Pie: Unorthodox Salves Against the Supernatural*.

If the party goes up to Cauldron Hill, they find work crews at the mansion still repairing seismic damage from previous tremors, and another crew excavating the strange laboratory beneath Macbannin's garden shed. If the party can't make it, Dale understands that the party is on a tight schedule, and can meet the party down in the city, though he recommends a bar called the Bookhouse, which serves the best damned papaya pastries in the country.

Dale can provide the party with one *Bleak Gate ward* per PC. The *bleak gate ward* has no magical properties in the real world, but in the Bleak Gate it offers impressive magical defenses.

In addition, the captain offers to spend some time training with any Martial Scientists in the group, teaching them specialized technique to use against supernatural creatures. After a few hours, a Martial Scientist can learn the *Dale assault* maneuver.

The amulet and the maneuver are detailed in Appendix M.

Soldiers Ready.

Depending on which method of entry the party uses to reach the Bleak Gate, they might be traveling with most of Dale's soldiers. The night of the 13th, sixty soldiers will wait near Hotel Aurum, ready to go through the portal the king will open, though only thirty-one people will be able to pass through, so the party had better go first.

Thread One: The Downfall of Kell

In this thread, the party moves against Lorcan Kell's crime gang.

The Kell Guild

The party has several options on how to proceed with finding Lorcan Kell. First, for the GM's sake, what is the party up against?

Kell's operations are based out of the Theater of Scoundrels, a debauched hang-out for thieves and thugs. Here Kell holds court and watches his minions practice their skills. The "theater" aspect is a big draw to new members, because Kell throws a good party, and the stage often has raunchy, violent, and sometimes bloody shows. Guild members are encouraged to practice their lying by joining in plays.

Hierarchy.

Kell doesn't manage the daily affairs of his guild. He's just the figurehead who'll hunt you down and chop you up if you cause trouble. His lieutenants actually run the guild, foremost among them **Quentin Augst**, a lawyer based in Central district. Augst prefers opera to Kell's brand of low theater, so meetings of the guild leadership usually happen in one of their business fronts, the Sunset Bench.

If Rufus Hammerton escaped defeat at the start of the adventure, he's holed up in the Machete Hill stronghold (see below).

Fronts.

The guild operates the usual array of clubs, brothels, restaurants, and shops, but also have an atypical holding interest in a variety of factories—when the Ob needed certain goods, some factory owners capitulated to let the guild skim, others had their places burn down, but a few were killed outright, and their wills—forged and rewritten by Augst—put their whole businesses into guild hands.

Safe Houses.

Kell splits his time between several homes in Parity Lake and The Nettles, most of them gated villas. He also keeps numerous safe houses, usually multi-story buildings that are the tallest in the neighborhood. Conscious of how many times he's killed men who had no way out, Kell always plans his escape routes, and he's more than willing to leap between rooftops to avoid a trap.

Resources and Training.

Out of a city of eight hundred thousand, Kell's guild has three hundred official members and a couple thousand citizens who directly do business with them, most of them in Parity Lake or The Nettles. The official guildsmen are trained in the theater in the best way to knife someone, or to use a hostage as a human shield. Almost all carry pistols, and some of Kell's favorites have access to choicer weapons smuggled in from Drakr.

By contrast, the entire Flint police force numbers just seventeen hundred, and they tend to carry night clubs and crossbows, and some carry swords. The few firearms they do get are military surplus muskets. The authorities aren't looking to start a war in the streets.

Kell usually travels with two personal bodyguards—**Kate Glenn**, a corrupt priestess who protects Kell from hostile magic, and **Nick Reder**, a meaty bruiser who can hold back the largest foes.

The Ob have recently equipped the guild with high-quality firearms and alchemical weapons. A few prominent members of the guild have gotten magic or arcanoscientific gear, and Kell himself now enjoys riding around in a *figurine of wondrous power* that transforms into an armored carriage, drawn by tramping mechanical legs instead of horses.

In Hiding.

When he gets wind that the RHC are after him in force, Kell relocates to the Theater of Scoundrels, his seat of power. From there he prepares to fight the RHC, but tries to get in touch with his contacts in the Obscurati in case he has to run. Once things get too hot, Kell moves to a safe house and hides inside a *rope trick* to evade divination (see Kell Spooked, page 364).

Even if they can find him, catching him isn't easy. The Obscurati gave him a one-use item—a *gatecrasher charm*—which tears a hole in reality so he can slip into the Bleak Gate for a few minutes. It has nasty side effects though, and the trip isn't permanent unless there's someone from the Ob on the other side waiting to pull him all the way through. He can use the charm in a pinch to get a few minutes' head start on running.



Lorcan Kell's lawyer, and the guy who handles the guild's affairs. Augst started off just representing Kell's toughs in court, but eventually grew frustrated with the guild's inefficiency and promised Kell he could make both of them a lot richer if he could handle logistics.

Augst's home in North Shore is maintained by his half-elf handmaiden, who has looked after his children ever since Augst's wife died several years ago in a tragic fire—a fire Augst set when his wife realized his criminal connections.

A fan of opera, Augst usually sticks to Central District, where his friends know him as a bookish teetotaler who has to be dragged out to play polo occasionally. Though the guild members think he's weak, he makes sure everyone gets paid well, which engenders more respect than stabbing a backtalker ever could.

Mini-Game Training.

To ease the party into the rules for the Task Force, you might have a group briefing on the morning of the 9th, where Sergeant Macon introduces the party to the task force. Macon explains that she has taken the liberty of sending out two groups of 6 officers on Case a District missions, one to Bosum Strand, the other to North Shore, to see if they can start nibbling at the guild around its edges.

Mark that 12 officers have been deployed today. Then roll the Diplomacy checks for those two missions (1d20+10 vs. DC 17), and the Bluff check to avoid trouble (1d20+10 vs. DC 13). Determine the officers' findings.

Afterward, Sergeant Macon suggests sending some scouts to keep an eye on any locations they found, and recommends each group should consist of 3 officers. Mark those down and roll to determine their success (or let the PCs roll on their behalf), and then let the players take the reins from there. Don't have any moles sabotage these initial missions (see "Dirty Rats," next page).

What You Gonna Do When They Come For You?

Exploration. Montage. Level 10.

The party kicks in doors and runs down criminals to find Kell.

To capture Kell, first they must find him.

If your group has an idea of their own, run with it, but as a base suggestion we assume they'll try to drive Kell into the open by dismantling his guild. The party has several avenues, and each successful operation contributes to the overall challenge of finding Kell. It's up to the party to lead the task force, and men's lives are on the line if they screw up.

Task Force Makeup.

Most of the city's police keep to their regular duties or prepare security for the peace summit. But thanks to the wonders of overtime pay, the party has 50 officers at their disposal. Delft tried to get men from districts where Kell was unlikely to have moles, but unbeknownst to the party, three officers in the task force are actually on the take, and will rat out the party's plans to Kell's guild, making things more difficult if the party doesn't clean house.

Running the Task Force.

The party can deploy their 50 officers as they see fit, but each officer can only undertake one mission per day. Some missions gather intelligence. Others, called **strikes**, damage the guild, and the task force needs 6 strikes for a partial victory, or 8 for a complete one.

Dirty Rats.

The moles send word to Kell's guild as soon as the task force is convened. Thereafter, each day choose one of the following effects for each mole:

- **Misinformation 1.** If the party has officers case an area, the mole reports a juicy but false lead. If the party follows up on that lead, their effort is wasted.
- **Misinformation 2.** If the party sends out a scouting mission, the mole either under- or over-reports the danger by half, to lead the task force into a trap or waste its resources.
- **Tip Off 1.** When the party sends out a Bust Up a Joint mission or Sting mission, the mole warns those involved, and when the task force shows up, no one is there.
- **Tip Off 2.** When the party sends out an Assault mission, the mole warns the guild so they can prepare their defenses. Increase the number of defenders by half.
- **Cold-Blooded Murder.** If none of the other options present themselves, at night the mole kills a fellow cop and passes the murder off as a Kell-Guild assassination.

When a mole sabotages the party, each PC who went on the mission can make an Insight check (DC 20) to detect the mole. Also, if the party gets suspicious, once per day each PC can make an Intelligence check (DC 20), with a +1 bonus for each previous sabotaged mission, to figure out who one of the moles is. The party might also use its own methods to catch moles, and perhaps use the moles to feed false information to the guild.

Targets.

The task force has a variety of targets, most of which require some investigation to find.

- **Front.** A business the guild uses to launder money, have meetings, and keep an eye on an area. In Parity Lake, this might be a shoe store, bookseller, seafood restaurant, bath house, bar, brothel, etc. These are usually warehouses in Bosum Strand, money-lenders in Central, and high-end boutiques in North Shore. The Nettles doesn't have enough commercial activity to host any fronts.
- **Den of Thieves.** Hang-out spot for members of the guild. These will usually be bars or clubs, but sometimes they're just swanky homes with a good view.
- **Illicit Transaction.** Meet-up where guild members commit some major crime. Examples include smuggling magical poisons in the linings of hats, selling stolen military muskets, kidnapped women being charmed and magically altered to look like eladrin, planning to assassinate an ombudsman, wizard brought in to torture a captured cop for info, etc.
- **Stronghold.** One of three well-defended compounds that could easily repulse most police assaults. A fancy tower called Grand Suites and a mansion dubbed Casa de Kell are both in Parity Lake. The Nettles hosts a gated compound called Machete Hill.
- **Theater of Scoundrels.** The guild's seat of power in eastern Parity Lake.

Missions.

Each officer can be assigned one mission per day. Each mission has a Minimum Officers and Optimal Officers entry, though sometimes the party will need to scout to know these figures.

- **Case a District.** Look for Kell-guild activity.
- **Scout.** Watch a Front, Den of Thieves, Stronghold, or the Theater to see how many hostiles are present.
- **Bust Up a Joint.** Go into a Front or a Den of Thieves to look for information. Success earns one Task Force Token at a front, or two tokens at a den of thieves.
- **Sting.** Swoop in during an Illicit Transaction. Success earns 1 Strike and a Task Force Token.
- **Assault.** Attack a stronghold to earn 1 Strike. Attack the Theater of Scoundrels to earn 3 Strikes.

Going after the Theater of Scoundrels right away is foolhardy, since the task force is outnumbered and moles in the task force would spoil the attack. Waiting gives the party time to find the moles and spoil the guild's morale so people desert.

A smarter course is to chip away at the organization around the edges, frightening the guild members and driving some into hiding, making for an easier takedown. Still, the timeline is tight. With average skill rolls, it's actually likely that the task force won't manage to reach 8 strikes.

Party Involvement.

The party might undertake a mission themselves, or lead a group of officers. Each mission takes roughly 4 hours, once you factor in coordinating all the officers, getting into position, the mission itself, then clean-up and interpretation of any info found. This will cut into their time for the other threats facing the city. Each 10th level PC counts as 8 extra officers when determining whether you have the minimal or optimal amount.

You can briefly narrate their involvement and have one PC roll the appropriate check to determine the outcome, or you can play through the scene normally, assembling a group of foes from Appendix C: Kell-Guild Stats. The enemy forces are pretty weak compared to the party, so feel free to go back to the brief version if the players are bored with taking out pushovers.

Skill Checks.

Each mission calls for a skill check. If no PCs accompany the officers on a mission, roll 1d20+10 for their skill check. If a PC does come along, he can roll a check with his modifier instead.

The check takes a –5 penalty if the number of officers is below Optimal but at least Minimum. If it's below Minimum, he takes a –10 penalty. Using more officers than Optimal doesn't make things any easier. Particularly clever plans or usage of magic might add +2 or +5. The results of a successful mission are detailed with each entry.

Each mission calls for a second skill check to avoid a mishap. Mishaps (as well as failures on some missions) lead to officers being incapacitated. They might die, or just be injured enough that they can't help on further missions. If a PC is present on a mission, he can choose to take 3d6 damage instead of having an officer be incapacitated.

Task Force Tokens.

Certain missions can earn **Task Force Tokens**. A token can be spent to gain a +2 bonus on a skill check for a mission. This represents things like getting insider information, letting criminals off if they'll rat on their colleagues, or persuading their friends to leave town instead of fighting. Tokens must be spent before making the roll, and they are each single-use.

The Player's Guide suggests that each PC should have contacts throughout the city. For each contact located in a given district, the party starts with one token that can be spent in that district.

Favors.

The party might use their Risur Prestige to call in favors and get some military additions, or to get some officers to work even longer.

For example, it's a Level 2 favor to get 1 extra officer for a few hours (long enough to send them on another mission), Level 3 for 4 officers, Level 4 for 12 officers, and Level 5 for 50 officers. For military, it's a Level 3 favor to get 1 soldier for a mission, Level 4 for 4 soldiers, and Level 5 for 12 soldiers.

For the purpose of this mission, soldiers just count as normal officers for the missions Case a District and Scout, but count as 4 officers each in other missions.

See the Zeitgeist Player's Guide for more information on Prestige.

Progress.

The party realistically just has four days—from the 9th to the 12th—to locate Kell, since the peace talks formally begin on the 13th. They want to rack up 8 **strikes** against Kell's guild by then, which will give them an opening to take him down (see Duke of Slaughter, page 370).

On their way to 8, these events occur:

Kell Spooked. Kell starts in his Theater of Scoundrels, which he thinks is unassailable. Realistically, the party would be chewed up by dozens of Kell's thugs if they picked a fight here, and even the whole task force would probably be driven back, at least at first.

However, if the party manages to get three Strikes against the guild, Kell gets nervous. He leaves orders and pretends that he's going hunting, but in truth he and his two bodyguards make for a safe house in northwestern Parity Lake. They travel while protected from vision and divination by magic, and are only on the road for fifteen minutes.

They settle into the top floor of a four-story tenement, which has a narrow but deep canal running past it (the better to leap into as part of a getaway plan). Kate Glenn uses an *exodus knife* so they can hide and fool divination. Three low-level toughs watch the entrance to the building and to the *exodus knife*'s extradimensional space, and they can quickly signal if anything suspicious happens.

Two other men act as messengers, going out at morning and night to pick up or leave messages at a dead drop a few blocks away. One of these men is **Dester Rathnine**, who is actually on the Family's payroll, and whose information prompts Morgan Cippiano to offer to help the party track Kell down (page 366).

The Family Interested. Additionally, when the party gets to three Strikes, the Family sees a chance to actually take out Kell. This triggers the Enemy of My Enemy Is My Family encounter (page 366).

Betrayal in the Ranks. Once the task force has racked up six Strikes, Kell's guild starts to get shaky. Enough people try to cut deals with the party that they can easily figure out what safe house Kell is hiding in, though actually getting him is a challenge.

Break and Run. When the task force gets eight Strikes, Kell becomes certain that the noose is closing around him. He sends out the carriage created by his *figurine of wondrous power* as a decoy, then slips away and runs to a spot the Ob told him to go in case of an emergency. If he can evade the task force he gets a free trip to the Bleak Gate, but first he sends a message to the RHC by targeting the B-Team.

Other Options.

If the task force fails, the party might still be able to make a move on Kell with the Family's help (page 366).

Kell's Operations by District

The party starts off knowing the location of the Theater of Scoundrels and the three strongholds—The Grand, Casa de Kell, and Machete Hill. The Case a District mission gives the party the location of some of Kell's fronts and hang-outs, as well as the times of illicit transactions.

Bosum Strand, Central District, or North Shore. Success uncovers one operation. Roll on the table below to determine the type, and secretly roll to determine how many hostiles will be present.

1d6:	Result:
1–3	Front. 1d4+1 hostiles are present.
4–5	Den of Thieves. 1d8+1 hostiles are present.
6	Illicit Transaction. 1d12+4 hostiles are present.

Parity Lake. As above, but success uncovers 1d4+2 operations.

The Nettles. As above, but success uncovers 1d4 operations. Reroll any Fronts, since there's not enough commercial activity in this district to support them.

Mission Details.

You can find a player-appropriate version of these rules in Appendix L.

Case a District. The officers hit up contacts and try to figure out where Kell's guild has operations in a district. Each attempt targets one city district, but the districts where Kell's guild has a larger presence—Parity Lake and The Nettles—are more dangerous. After this mission, it is useful to Scout before sending in officers.

Minimum Officers: 2. **Optimal Officers:** 6.

Check: Diplomacy or Streetwise (DC 17).

Success: The task force uncovers some operations in that district, as detailed in the sidebar on the previous page.

Failure: The task force learns nothing of value.

Mishap: Make a Bluff check to avoid drawing unwanted attention (DC 17 in Parity Lake or The Nettles; DC 13 in Bosum Strand, Central District, or North Shore). On a failure, ambush! One officer is incapacitated.

Scout. Choose one location and send officers to figure out how dangerous it is. Scouting itself can be dangerous, especially for a stronghold. You cannot scout an illicit transaction.

Minimum Officers: 1. **Optimal Officers:** 3.

Check: Perception (DC 20).

Success: The task force learns how many enemies are at a location, and thus how many officers are required.

Failure: The task force learns nothing of value.

Mishap: Make a Stealth check (DC 15 normally, DC 17 at a Stronghold, DC 20 at the Theater). On a failure, ambush! One officer is incapacitated.

Bust Up a Joint. Officers target a Front or a Den of Thieves, looking for clues. Fronts are typically less well-guarded, but Dens of Thieves yield better information. Since the task force is likely to hit up multiples of these, be sure to narrate enough details about the locations so they feel distinctive.

Minimum Officers: Equal to the number of hostiles. **Optimal Officers:** Three times the number of hostiles.

Check: Intimidate (DC 20) to get hostiles to surrender.

Success: The task force arrests or kills all the hostiles, and suffers no casualties.

Failure: The task force suffers casualties equal to half the number of hostiles, and takes out a number of hostiles equal to the number of officers sent in.

Mishap: Spice things up by requiring a check (DC 15) to avoid some complication—Diplomacy to get bystanders out of the way to avoid innocent deaths, Thievery to keep a trap from killing officers, Perception to avoid piling too many people into an unsteady building in the Nettles, etc. A failure results in 1d8 good guys incapacitated.

Consequence: Regardless of the result of the skill check, if the task force takes out all the hostiles and has at least one survivor, it earns a Task Force Token. At a Den of Thieves, victory yields two tokens instead.

If all the officers sent are incapacitated without taking out the hostiles, the hostiles execute the officers.

Sting. Officers target an Illicit Transaction, with the goal of disrupting Kell's business and taking out his men. You cannot scout for a Sting, so there's greater danger of committing the wrong number of officers.

Mechanically, a sting works like Bust Up a Joint. If the task force takes out all the hostiles and has at least one survivor, it earns a Task Force Token and earns one Strike toward locating Kell.

After the task force has successful stung three Illicit Transactions, the guild gets skittish and cancels all other big meet-ups for the near future. Thus, Stings can only earn the task force a total of 3 Strikes.

Assault a Kell Stronghold. Officers storm one of the strongholds—the Grand Suites, Casa de Kell, or Machete Hill. Success takes out part of the guild's leadership and seizes a huge chunk of its assets. Mechanically, an assault works like a Sting, but with many more hostiles. Each stronghold that is taken out earns the task force a Strike.

Grand Suites. 30 hostiles. Intimidate (DC 22) to force surrender. Gunmen watch from the upper windows of this fancy six-story tower. Underground tunnels let the hostiles flee to the sewers. If a first attack is rebuffed, 1d6 replacement hostiles arrive per day through the tunnels.

Scouting discovers the tunnels. If the task force either blocks the escape or attacks through the tunnels, they gain a +5 bonus to their Intimidate check. Blocking also prevents reinforcements.

Casa de Kell. 22 hostiles. Intimidate (DC 22). This old mansion is surrounded by machinery factories, and traps fill the hallways. Scouting reveals this. During an attack, make a Thievery check (DC 17) to avoid an extra 1d8 deaths.

Machete Hill. Counts as 21 hostiles. If the party didn't manage to take down Rufus Hammerton, he's here too, raising the effective total to 25 hostiles. Intimidate (DC 22).

This gated compound has several squat buildings with quaint shuttered windows, laid out at angles so attackers entering the gate have to pass through a crossfire of cannons. Yes, cannons, and they're loaded with small shards of metal as grapeshot, since they're being used at close range. Scouting discovers the cannons, which can be neutralized with a careful advance behind tower shields, or by attacking through the gates. Otherwise, the task force suffers 2d6 deaths at the start of the mission, before they make the Intimidate check.

Assault Theater of Scoundrels. The task force takes on the seat of Kell's guild, a tattered theater that has been renovated into a killing gallery, guarded by 100 hostiles in the theater and nearby buildings. Intimidate (DC 25) to force a surrender, but they definitely will not surrender as long as Kell is present. As noted above, he goes into hiding after the task force accumulates 3 strikes.

Once Kell leaves, for every other stronghold the task force has taken out, 20 of the hostiles desert because of low morale. At best, the party only has to deal with 40 hostiles.

A success here counts as 3 Strikes against Kell's guild, though the party would be wise to acquire Task Force Tokens first. Smart, callous players will just burn this place down with all the criminals inside. Maybe pull the arson brothers Eberardo and Valando out of prison for the job. Doing so still requires getting close enough, though, and the hostiles aren't just in the theater, but in all the surrounding buildings.

Capture Quentin Augst. This is a bit more involved than a simple task force mission. See Attorney of Scoundrels, below. But if successful it counts as 2 Strikes against Kell's guild and ten Task Force Tokens.

The Enemy of My Enemy Is My Family

Social. Real-Time.

The Family can help get Kell.

A few hours after the task force reaches three strikes against Kell, a letter and package are dropped off at the RHC headquarters, or might be delivered to the party by a courier if the PCs are too busy to stop by base. The package contains *shoes of reliable style* (see Appendix M). The letter reads:

> I have men in your organization that tell me Lorcan Kell is priority one. I have men in Kell's organization who can deliver him to you. Meet me at the Brave Hall fashion show, corner of Yearling and Healers in Central this afternoon, and we can make a deal.
>
> (signed) Morgan Cippiano

The fashion show is going on all week, every evening. Alternately, the party might think to approach the Family themselves, in which case the crime lord **Morgan Cippiano** will personally meet them wherever they suggest, so confident is he that they won't betray him.

Dressed to Kill.

Brave Hall is a stodgy gentleman's club intended for men from aristocratic families, though they have started allowing men and women with newly acquired fortunes in on a provisional basis. Everyone is in coats and top hats, drinking brandy and smoking cigars as they watch handsome young men and waifish women parade about in unorthodox fashion like seersucker suits, denim pants, and a huge variety of sashes which, Morgan is confident, will just be a passing trend.

Morgan has no great reason for meeting here, other than that he'd already scheduled it and figured it might motivate the party to dress nicer. He asks them out to a balcony for fresh air, and talks business while looking at the sunset across Flint Bay.

You Actually *Can* Refuse This Offer.

Morgan's offer is simple: his man in Kell's guild will give the crime boss an excuse to leave his hiding spot—most likely a fake meeting with Kell's Obscurati contact, a man Morgan knows only by the name "Norm" (see Busy Night, next page). Yes, Morgan says, he's got some inkling about Kell's involvement with the group, though he hopes the party knows more about them than he does, because he can't find out much of anything.

Morgan's man will report back with the route Kell will take, and it will be up to the party to take him down. Morgan recommends enlisting some of the locals to be ready to protest or riot in order to cut off certain roads and funnel Kell where they want him. Morgan's suggestion is one of the bridges along Stanfield Canal, where Kell won't be able to slip down alleys to escape.

What does he want in exchange?

- First, a moratorium on murder investigations in Parity Lake, at least for a few weeks. It's dirty business, but this city deserves a better class of criminal. If his people don't cull the ranks of Kell's thugs, there'll just be another round of street wars in a few years. He'll practically be doing the city a favor, and he doesn't want his people getting locked up for it.
- Second, a prisoner release. Morgan reminds them that his "family" originates in Crisillyir. Though he doesn't like to get involved in politics, he promised a relative that he'd help out a family friend if he could. That friend is one **Giovanni Algardi**.

  The party might (History DC 13) remember him as an aged sculptor nicknamed "The Carver." It eventually was discovered that he could animate his statues to assassinate people inside their own exquisitely-carved homes. Algardi confessed to the murders of several Risuri nobles, but international politics has kept him from the gallows for three years.

  Morgan wants him released and teleported tomorrow to Alais Primos, capital of Crisillyir. Family members there will contact Morgan via sending to verify the delivery.
- Finally (and you can skip this if it doesn't apply to the party), Morgan asks what Ashima-Shimtu told them. The party likely met with the imprisoned demoness several months ago, in Adventure Four, *Always on Time*. Morgan wants to know whether they made a deal with her. If asked how he knows about it, he says word travels fast when people land on cursed islands.

Good Faith.

To show he is well-intentioned, Morgan offers them a free bit of information. The man in charge of the Obscurati facility here in Flint is Leone Quital, known as the "Steelshaper." Morgan reiterates that he doesn't know much about the actual group, but word has gotten around of the man making an appearance in The Nettles a few months ago, and he's distinctive enough that Morgan was able to find out who he is.

Morgan says that Leone is supposed to be able to control metal with his mind, to bend, break, or levitate it with ease. He doesn't know if it will be of much help in the current mission, but he can also give the party the location of the Quital family estate, northeast of Vendricce.

Making a Deal.

On their own, the party cannot hope to get either the moratorium or the prisoner release, but if they ask the king he'll back their decision. He has misgivings about releasing the Carver, though. It's a judgment call for the party whether they'll be able to nab Kell on their own, or if they need to accept Morgan's offer.

As for Morgan's third request, if the party shares the details of their encounter with Ashima-Shimtu he doesn't seem fazed at all. He'll thank them for doing business, then go back to the show. After it's over, he'll pass it along, using a Sending ritual, to his contacts in the Clergy back in Crisillyir.

Morgan Cippiano heads the local branch of the Family crime syndicate, based out of Crisillyir. Though gruff-voiced and cocky, Morgan has an unusual fascination with fashion. He rejects trends, but has a good eye for classical styles that people of any culture can appreciate. He hopes some day to be seen as a father figure to his community, but for now he's willing to smash a few heads and order a few throats slit in order to clear out the competition.



Man on the Inside.

If the party agrees, a few hours after Morgan gets word that Giovanni made it home safely, the RHC is visited by Morgan's man on the inside, **Dester Rathnine**. Scruffy, dressed like a common pickpocket but packing a pair of finely-crafted concealed daggers, Dester is cheeky, chatty, and a little arrogant. He's been a low-level street enforcer for Kell for years, but was recruited a few months ago by the Family as a double agent. Now he's one of the trusted runners who deliver information between Kell and his guild while he's in hiding.

Dester tells the party where Kell is hiding, about his bodyguards, and that he has mentioned a few times his "escape plan," which Dester thinks will let him teleport, but that he can only use once. If the RHC tries to assault him, he'll almost certainly be able to get away. He'd have used his ace in the hole, but it might take days to find him again.

What Dester thinks will work better is if he tells Kell that "the other guys" (by which he means the Obscurati) have agreed to get him to safety, and want to meet him. Dester suggests a bar on the south side of the Nida Street Bridge, along the Stanfield Canal, at 3 in the morning. The RHC could then whip up some sort of ritual to block Kell's get-away plan, and place it on the bridge, which would be deserted at that time of night.

The party can call upon Principal Minister Harkover Lee to perform a ritual that blocks all teleportation and planar travel in a 100-ft. radius. See Duke of Slaughter (page 370) for how Kell reacts.

Sunset Bench*

Social. Real-Time. Level 11.

The B-Team escorts Brakken and some dignitaries to one of Kell's fronts.

On the evening of the 10th of Spring, Brakken decides to take dignitaries from both Risur and Danor out for a night on the town, hoping that some fun will form bonds. The B-Team escorts the group from Hotel Aurum to a fancy club in North Shore, the Sunset Bench.

The outing consists of Brakken, **Geoff Massarde** (Risur-allied tiefling engineer), and **Captain Rosalyn Taylor** (representative from Danor's navy). The B-Team acts as bodyguards for all of them. Brakken leaves Feroz at the consulate, saying, "In Ber, you never bring your bear to a bar."

These NPCs reappear at the banquet in Part Two (page 395), but this scene and a few others with the B-Team gives you an opportunity to introduce them to the players, so you won't have to present a half-dozen new NPCs all at once at the banquet. The short version goes like this:

Geoff Massarde. Tiefling who helped build the Risuri flagship *Coaltongue*. Strong advocate for technology and reconciliation. Drinks too much and hits on women. Has a wand that can chill things with a touch, which he uses to make ice.

Captain Rosalyn Taylor. One-eyed redheaded captain of *Freux Rouge*, Danor's last sail-powered warship. Old-fashioned, high-spirited, and responsible.

A Very Important Mission.

When Brakken brings up the outing with the B-Team, he claims he needs their help for what might be the most important part of the peace talks: making sure everyone has a good time at a club. Depending on your party's enthusiasm for the B-Team, you might breeze through this scene, or let them treat it as a mission to get the two sides to be friendly.

Busy Night.

Sunset Bench is a truly fine establishment, on the ground floor of a five-level building with apartments for two dozen wealthy occupants. Every hall and room is gently lit by colored glass sculptures that have *light* spells active within. Beyond the foyer and its coat/sword check, the main room of the club is circular, two hundred feet across, with a sunken central area and small private cubbies dotting the outer walls. At the far end of the sunken area, spot lights illuminate the stage, behind which a curtain leads to the kitchens, dressing rooms, and storage. On the near side by the entrance, glass shelves loaded with various alcohols line the wall behind the bar.

The club is hosting the last night of a week-long tour starring local celebrity **Rock Rackus**. A band backs him up as he sings, narrates, and jokes about his many exploits across the world. He might even have a bit about the main PCs, if they interacted with him in a previous adventure. Brakken reads Rock's thoughts and is enthralled when he finds that the man's wild claims are actually true.

Also present tonight but keeping a low profile is Quentin Augst, who is meeting a representative of the Obscurati—a non-descript Risuri man who calls himself **Norm** (his real name is **Sylyx**). Augst is trying to bargain for help from the conspiracy, and the desperation in his voice is slowly convincing Norm that they'll need to kill the lawyer before he can talk to the authorities.

When the B-Team enters the club, they might recognize Augst in a corner of the crowded club (Perception DC 25), which could give them a chance to eavesdrop or make a move on the man, though he does have bodyguards lingering nearby in the crowd. If the constables can get close enough without attracting attention (Stealth DC 15), they hear the Ob rep offer an escape route to the Bleak Gate for Kell and a few of his lieutenants, but he can't send any forces.

Tip Your Servers.

Unless the constables suggest otherwise, Brakken selects a table near the stage and psychically "nudges" the current occupants, whereupon they suddenly decide it's a good idea to get up and leave the table.

After half an hour, Rock takes a break to let his band get some drinks, and he makes a point to remind everyone that this is his more casual show, put on by "the greatest venue in the city, Sunset Bench!" He'll be headlining at "a lesser venue, the Navras Opera House, tomorrow night." After that, he hops off the stage to hobnob with the crowd.

Eager to hear more of Rock's tales, Brakken enlists Geoff and Rosalyn to accompany him and meet the famous adventurer. Shortly after they get up, the discussion between Augst and Norm gets heated, with Augst snapping at a waitress who comes by to offer them drinks, then yelling, "We're not running. That's just *throwing money away!* We need firepower, not a damn escape route! And because you couldn't just shut up and agree, *now* I've missed half the show!"

Norm tells Augst to calm down, but instead Augst gestures to his bodyguards and storms out. If Augst leaves unaccosted, Norm finishes his drink and follows a minute later.

Making a Move.

If Augst realizes the constables are onto him, he'll leave in a hurry. If confronted, he looks at his men meaningfully, and suggests the two groups take things outside so no innocents get hurt. Then, just as he

nears the exit, he says, "Do it, please." One of his bodyguards pulls out a flask of alchemist's fire and chucks it at the shelves of liquor behind the bar. Flame bursts across the wall, and the crowd begins to panic.

List of Adversaries.

Augst and the Ob Rep

- Norm, Obscurati liaison
- Quentin Augst
- 3 Kell-Guild veteran pistoleers
- 6 Kell-Guild scoundrels

Norm, Obscurati Liaison — Level 10 Elite Lurker
Medium natural humanoid, human — XP 1,000

HP 92; **Bloodied** 46 — **Initiative** +10
AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 26 — **Perception** +6
Speed 6 — Darkvision
Action Points 1
Saving Throws +2

Standard Actions

⊗ **Dagger Flurry** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Relying less on finesse, the man attacks savagely with a pair of daggers.
Attack: Melee 1 or Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 2d4+9 damage.

✓ **Witchoil Dagger** (necrotic, weapon) ✦ At-Will
The dagger digs deep, and the man flicks a switch on its hilt, injecting a gush of burning liquid into your flesh.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4+9 damage. If Norm was hidden from the target before the attack, or if the target is bloodied after the attack, the target also takes an additional 5d10 necrotic damage and gains ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends). After that, the dagger crumbles to dust.

⟋ **Spectral Shocking Grasp** (lightning) ✦ At-Will
A hand appears beside you, grabs you, and delivers a shock.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +13 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8+9 lightning damage, and the target is dazed until the end of Norm's next turn.

⟋ **Enforced Suggestion** (charm) ✦ Recharge ⚄ ⚅
His recommendation sounds quite reasonable.
Effect: Norm gives you a command, which cannot involve you hurting yourself or your allies, or putting yourself or them in a situation of certain death.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +13 vs. Will
Hit: You follow his command to the best of your ability until the end of the encounter. On your turn you may choose not to follow his suggestion, but if you do you take 20 psychic damage.
Miss: 10 psychic damage.

Triggered Actions

Feigned Escape (teleportation) ✦ Recharge ⚄ ⚅
You've got him right where you want him, but then he vanishes in a burst of shadows.
Trigger: Norm starts his turn dazed, stunned, immobilized, or restrained.
Effect (No Action): Norm becomes invisible, teleports 3 squares, and can make an immediate Stealth check. Each creature adjacent to him is blinded (save ends). The invisibility lasts until he makes an attack.

Skills Arcana +11, Bluff +13, Insight +11, Stealth +11
Str 12 (+6) **Dex** 13 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 10 (+5) **Int** 12 (+6) **Cha** 16 (+8)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial
Possessions Obscurati wand (stashed in apartment; completes transition to Bleak Gate after using canal path, see below)

Quentin Augst — Level 1 Controller (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, human — XP 100

HP 23; **Bloodied** 11 — **Initiative** +1
AC 15, **Fortitude** 11, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 13 — **Perception** +1
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊘ **Dagger** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He's a cornered rat, but not a very skilled one.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4+4 damage.

⟋ **Alchemist's Fire** (fire) ✦ At-Will
He hurls a flask that explodes with fire.
Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +4 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 fire damage, and each adjacent creature takes 1d6 fire damage. Each creature damaged in this way gains ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).
Miss: The target and each adjacent creature takes 5 fire damage.
Special: Quentin has three flasks.

⟋ **Charm Person** (charm) ✦ Encounter
He waves a wand at you, and suddenly you like him a lot.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +6 vs. Will
Hit: The target is dominated until the end of Quentin's next turn, then dominated (save ends).
Miss: The target is dominated until the end of Quentin's next turn.

Skills Bluff +10, Diplomacy +10, History +11, Insight +9, Streetwise +10
Str 8 (−1) **Dex** 12 (+1) **Wis** 13 (+1)
Con 10 (+0) **Int** 17 (+3) **Cha** 14 (+2)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarf, Elven, Primordial

Kell-Guild Veteran Pistoleer — Level 9 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, human — XP 400

HP 66; **Bloodied** 33 — **Initiative** +8
AC 25, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 20 — **Perception** +5
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊘ **Machete** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He parries with his pistol, draws a machete, and hacks at your arm in one smooth motion.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+8 damage.

⊘ **Pistol** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
He's a crack shot, even in a crisis.
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+8 damage.
Load minor.

Minor Actions

▸ **Kidnap** ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target is grabbed (Escape DC 21). While the target is grabbed, the pistoleer can use him as cover.

Str 14 (+6) **Dex** 15 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+5)
Con 13 (+5) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 8 (+3)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Kell-Guild Scoundrel	Level 9 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 100
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion	**Initiative** +5
AC 21, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 20	**Perception** +4
Speed 6	
Standard Actions	
⊘ **Short Sword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC	
Hit: 10 damage.	
⟋ **Alchemist's Fire** (fire) ✦ Encounter	
He only has one of these damned flasks, so he'd better make it count.	
Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +12 vs. Reflex	
Hit: The target gains ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends), and each adjacent creature takes 2 fire damage.	
Miss: The target and each adjacent creature takes 2 fire damage.	

Str	16 (+7)	**Dex**	12 (+5)	**Wis**	10 (+4)
Con	12 (+5)	**Int**	8 (+3)	**Cha**	13 (+5)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Tactics.

The pistoleers grapple anyone who gets adjacent to their boss, but otherwise shoot to keep the constables at bay. Any shots that miss almost certainly strike someone in the club. The scoundrels gang up on vulnerable PCs to take them down, and shout at the constables to back off if they don't want anyone to die. The B-Team is likely outmatched here, and if given a chance, Augst and his men make a run for it.

Norm mostly hides in the crowd and watches. But if it looks like Augst is about to be captured, he'll use *spectral shocking grasp* to target the lawyer. The glowing hand freaks out bystanders, but people are too focused on the ruckus with Augst to notice Norm wiggling his fingers to cast spells. Once Augst is down, Norm will shock him again to make sure he's dead. This won't stop the party from speaking with his corpse or spirit, but it should limit the information they can get out of him.

Most likely, though, Augst and his crew will get away, and Norm will suggest to his superiors that the lawyer needs to be silenced.

Follow-Up.

If captured, Augst tries to cut a deal for a reduced sentence in exchange for information. This provides ten Task Force Tokens for the main party's efforts against the guild, and also counts as 2 Strikes.

Additionally, Augst knows the five arcane signs that are required to activate the rusted ring gates along Stanfield Canal. When the guild smuggled materials to "the guys on the other side," as he puts it, they would mark crates or objects as they were loaded onto barges going down the canal in the real world. Though the Ob were secretive, Augst figured out that each bridge had a ring of rusted metal worked into its stone on the underside, and the sigils were linked to each gate. As the barge went under the bridges one by one, each gate would draw the marked item more fully into the Bleak Gate. Eventually the item would shift fully over, disappear from the barge, and plunge into the canal, where he assumes it would be recovered by the other side's men.

One time he did a test, marking an empty box with the five signs, and sending it on a barge when the Ob were not expecting a delivery. The box did disappear from the barge briefly, but the crew spotted it floating in the water behind the ship and recovered it. Augst isn't sure if somehow the Ob can turn their gates on and off, or if there's some extra process at the end that's required to make the transition permanent.

It's the latter, by the way. When the Ob expect a shipment, a team waits at the end of the Bleak Gate analogue of the canal, then casts a minor spell from a wand on each object (or person) coming through. If they don't cast the spell, the object slips back to reality after a few minutes. Norm has one of these wands, which he uses to slip back and forth on his missions, but he keeps it stashed in his apartment in North Shore.

Augst can share these signs, which can get the party mostly to the Bleak Gate. Capturing Norm gives them a chance to get his wand (he also knows the arcane sigils), which would complete the deal. See Canal Route (page 401) if they try this method.

Dead Lawyer.

If Augst dies, it only counts as a single Strike, plus maybe one token if the party can use magic to interrogate his corpse and asks the right questions.

Escaped Lawyer.

If Augst gets away, Brakken comes to the constables and tells them that he overheard someone muttering, "We'll have to kill him before he talks." He actually just noted it telepathically, since it was one of the strongest thoughts in the room.

Norm will follow Augst, waiting for him to leave himself exposed without his bodyguards. Augst, though, is loath to run when he thinks he can salvage things. He holes up in his home and keeps sending runners out to try to coordinate with the guild.

After a few hours, Norm comes up with a plan. He knows Augst's fondness for opera, and recalls Rock Rackus mentioning that he'd be performing the next evening (Spring 11). So he purchases box seats for Augst and his children, enchants the tickets with a subtle suggestion, and has them delivered to Augst's house in the morning, with a fake note from Rock Rackus asking him to come.

Augst obeys the suggestion and attends, along with his children. He travels in a pair of carriages, never far from his bodyguards. But once he's at the opera house he asks his guards to wait outside the box. Norm has tickets for the next box over, discreet enough that no one will see him casting, and close enough to use *spectral shocking grasp* to kill the lawyer.

Of course, if the B-Team or the party or their task force put in much effort, they can probably get enough manpower to swoop in and capture Augst before Norm gets a chance (treat this as an Assault or Sting against 8 hostiles), but smart parties might wait for the Ob to make their move, in order to get more information. Indeed, if the party does capture Augst, they might use him as bait to draw out the Obscurati.

His Grace, the Duke of Slaughter

Action. Tactical. Level 11.

The party tries to capture Lorcan Kell.

There are a couple of ways this can go down.

List of Adversaries.

Kell's Team (see Appendix G)

- Lorcan Kell
- Kate Glenn
- Nick Reder
- 3 Kell-guild veteran pistoleers

Task Force Failure.

If the party gets five or fewer strikes against Kell's guild, they're unable to put enough pressure on Kell to leave his hiding spot, and they don't gather enough intelligence to figure out where he is. On the afternoon of the 12th, a representative of the Ob informs Kell via a Sending ritual that they'll get him out if he's willing to work for them. Kell agrees, but wants to send a message before he leaves behind his guild.

Kell and his bodyguards leave the safe house at 3 AM on the 13th, track down the B-Team, and kill them. See Massacre below. He and his bodyguards show up later in the Cauldron Hill complex.

Task Force Partial Victory.

If the PCs get six strikes against Kell's guild, they can find where he's holed up. There's a chance to catch him, but he has a massive advantage because of his *gatecrasher charm*. See Safe House Raid, below.

The Ob still have agents in the RHC and police, and so if Kell manages to escape the party here, the Ob track him down and bring him to the Cauldron Hill complex. As above, he likely goes after the B-Team first, unless he's been substantially injured.

Task Force Victory.

With eight strikes, Kell sees his empire destroyed, his allies falling or turning against him. The Ob don't want to be dragged into the conflict, though they will help him if he can get to safety.

The party learns where Kell is hiding, and have time to make some sort of plan. Enough members of his guild turn on him that the party should be aware of his *gatecrasher charm*, and they likely concoct a plan to let him run and then ambush him at a spot that is *dimensionally locked*. Most likely is that he's tricked into fleeing at 3 AM on the 13th, and his route will lead him into an ambush. See Road Ambush, below.



The grizzled Kell grew up an enforcer for local gangs and eventually murdered his way into a position of leadership. Now he feigns gentility, dressing in elegant clothing that conceals no less than eight blades at any time.

Kell is unpredictable and hot-headed, confident he can kill anyone who's a threat. He possesses a great knack for instilling loyalty in intelligent minions who can run operations for him. His guild's recent work with the Obscurati earned him a nice variety of magical toys, and as the turf war with the Family heats up, the Ob have promised him more aid to keep him loyal.

Family Assistance.

If the party takes Morgan Cippiano's offer for help, things look similar to the Road Ambush scenario. However, if there are still moles in the task force, the moles warn Kell that Dester Rathnine is a turncoat. Kell turns the party's ambush against them. See Cruel Variant below.

Massacre.

There are several scenarios where Kell avoids being caught. He might trick the RHC into chasing his carriage (with a thug inside dressed like him as a decoy), or he might use his *gatecrasher charm* to outrun the task force, or they might simply never get close enough to him. In these scenarios, Kell will try to spitefully kill some RHC constables—the B-Team—before he links up with the Ob and goes to the Bleak Gate.

The tone here might be pure spite, or it could be to show that Kell outwitted them and is taunting them. It might even be retaliation if the B-Team captured Augst. Most likely, Kell and his bodyguards attack the B-Team as they're nearing the Beran consulate at dawn on the 13th. Narratively, the purpose of this scene is to give the players a sense of Kell's capabilities before their main PCs deal with him.

Tactics.

The pistoleers likely strike first, trying to rush from hiding and grapple weak constables. Kell stalks into melee after them. If anyone seems to be legitimately a threat against Kell, Nick grabs them and pulls them away. Kate hangs back and readies to alleviate negative conditions on Kell.

The constables should be horribly out-matched, and unless they run, Kell should slaughter them. Play up the smug enjoyment he gets from sticking knives in people or gouging out eyes, and leaving foes debilitated with bleeding wounds. If he deals enough damage to kill someone, the killing blow likely involves a limb coming off or a throat being slit.

If he can blind someone, he'll dump that person to the ground and leave them as a witness. Otherwise, whenever he has only one foe left, he'll use nonlethal damage to knock them out, then will carve out their eyes and have Kate stabilize them so they can live to tell the tale.

Kell is under orders not to kill Brakken, but if the minotaur (or his bear) are present, he'll gladly cut them up and leave them barely alive. If the constables miraculously overpower him, he'll try to flee when reduced to 20 hit points. Otherwise, he cuts down the B-Team then slips away. Any witnesses are too horrified to even consider getting involved.

Safe House Raid.

Kell's safe house is the fourth floor of a tenement, and his group hides inside an extradimensional space to avoid divination. One thug watches the roof, another waits at the entrance to the extradimensional space with a bell tied to a rope around his ankle. If he isn't careful to remove the rope, any movement will ring out a warning to those inside the rope trick. The third thug rests in the extradimensional space, so the trio can work in shifts.

There is a clockwork time bomb next to the window, and another next to the door (the same type the Kell-guild technologists had in the first encounter). They are primed so a move action can activate a four-round fuse. The countdown can be stopped with a Thievery check (DC 25), or the bomb can be pried loose from the wall with a Strength check (DC 20).

If either bomb explodes it blows up the whole roof. Make an attack, +13 vs. Reflex, 10d6 damage. Miss half. Make the same attack on the third floor, but it deals only 2d6 damage.

The party can deploy any officers from the task force who haven't already gone on missions today. This would be a deadly fight for a party of 7th level characters, but backed up by two dozen officers, they have a good shot. The trick is keeping Kell from getting away.

Tactics.

If attackers are spotted, Kell and his people try to take up defensive positions away from windows. If he has at least a minute before the task force breaches the building, Kell gets one of his thugs to don a disguise—a top hat and coat—and be a decoy. The man heads down to the ground floor, goes to a rear entrance, and activates the *figurine of wondrous power* to conjure the mechanical carriage. Then he jumps in and speeds off as fast as a horse. Depending on who chases the decoy, Kell might be able to slip away.

If forced to fight, he and his team do so brutally, hoping to break the assault. If Kate goes down, or if Kell is reduced below 40 hit points, he decides to run for it. He triggers the fuse on the time bomb, then jumps out a window and plummets to a canal thirty feet below. Four rounds later, the top floor explodes.

If he thinks he's still not clear, Kell activates his *gatecrasher charm*. That gives him about a five minute head start, and he runs for The Nettles, where he can leave a few signs that will draw the Ob's attention. If the party doesn't manage to track him down within two hours, the Ob scoop him up and deliver him to the Bleak Gate. Of course, clever parties might tail him and then steal the Ob's equipment so they can head into the Bleak Gate themselves.

Road Ambush.

Kell can be tricked into thinking he's meeting with the Ob, and convinced to head to a rendezvous on the south side of the Nida Street Bridge. Though Principal Minister Harkover Lee is not a warmage and won't join the fight, he can prepare a ritual to blanket a 100-ft. radius of the bridge with a *dimensional lock* effect, blocking teleportation and plane-shifting for several hours.

Kell travels to the fake meeting in his mechanical carriage, and likely the party can rig something to block his path. The bridge is sixty feet wide, four hundred feet long, stone with metal railings and street lamps spaced widely enough that the party could hide. Also, at each of the pilings supporting the bridge, broad stairwells lead down to landings and small docks, thirty feet below. A few boats moor at these pilings, and so dozens of officers could hide just down the stairs.

Tactics.

If the party manages to block the carriage, Kell sends out a thug to see what the problem is, but he stays inside. The carriage is bullet proof and its doors can be locked for security (much like in the first encounter; see what we did there?). Kell refuses to surrender, and will try to activate his *gatecrasher charm* when he realizes he's trapped. When that fails, he'll try to fight his way to the edge of the bridge and dive off (at a spot that doesn't have a dock below). He'll still have to swim at least seventy feet to get beyond the *dimensional lock*.

If he does manage to avoid being filled with bullets and gets away, he links up with the Ob in the Nettles, as above.

Cruel Variant.

If the party relies on Morgan's man on the inside, Dester Rathnine, before they manage to get rid of all three moles in the task force, Kell lays a trap of his own for the party. He sends out his carriage, but when it stops on the bridge, no one gets out. If anyone opens it, they pull a cord that triggers the fuses for four clockwork time bombs stuck to the inside walls. And sitting right in the middle, bound, gagged, and panicked, is Dester Rathnine. Iron manacles around his feet loop through an iron ring on the floor of the carriage.

Kell uses the distraction to track down the B-Team to massacre them before joining up with the Ob, but he'll listen carefully for the distant sound of a massive explosion.

Interrogation

Social. Real-Time.

If the party takes Kell alive, or at least recovers a body…

So, the party has captured Kell. What have they won?

You can let the party interrogate the crime boss, or leave it to "professionals." Kell resists normal threats, intimidation, and even torture, but he can't resist magical compulsion. One mental domination ritual later and Harkover Lee gets Kell to share everything he knows about the Obscurati. It's mostly about the local cell's operations in the real world and how they get back and forth between the worlds. He's never been to the Bleak Gate facility, and hasn't even met Leone.

Like Quentin Augst, though, he knows the five sigils used to send crates down the Stanfield Canal. Also, he has a stash of amulets (just enough for the party and maybe a few other key NPCs) various Ob agents used when they shifted partially into the Bleak Gate. The magic of the amulets has faded out so Kell could never use them, but with Harkover's aid the party can reactivate enough to get the party equipped.

Finally, he managed to recover a broken wand of the sort the Ob use to finalize the transition. Like the amulets, Harkover can figure out what magic the wand had and reverse engineer it. With all these elements combined, the party can now undertake the Canal Route (page 401).

If they killed Kell, it takes a day to arrange for a powerful cleric from Crisillyir, **Archmissionary Cornelius Eboracum**, to teleport in. He performs frankly evil magic to drag Kell's soul out of the afterlife and compel it to provide the information above.

If Kell is defeated or dead, the Ob aren't going to go to the effort to rescue or resurrect him. Unless, that is, you get to the battle in the Obscurati complex, and the party is having too easy a time. Then … who knows? Ghost Kell? Golem Kell? Cyborg ghost?

A Powerful Ally.

Asrabey's stats are presented in Appendix J, but generally you should try to avoid involving him in combat. He's significantly more powerful than any of the PCs, and his assistance would make fights too easy and take the spotlight away from the party.

We suggest things for Asrabey to do in each combat encounter that involve him in the action without having him face (and completely outclass) the same foes as the party.

Thread Two: One Season Slain

In this thread, the party aids Asrabey in stopping Ekossigan.

Where's Ekossigan?

To open a portal to the Bleak Gate, Ekossigan needs to sacrifice thirty-one children on the branches of a century old tree. He has found the Gallo's School for Boys, an orphanage founded a century ago in 401 AOV by druids. It eventually faded into obscurity, but it has continued to raise children quietly. The orphanage sits in the boughs of a massive tree, a hundred feet high, about seven miles east of the city, in the southern Cloudwood.

Following Fey

Exploration. Montage. Level 15.

The party keeps tabs on Asrabey or looks for Ekossigan themselves.

Following Asrabey's brief meeting with the king, the dreadnought spends the next day gathering information from various contacts in Flint. The party is likely occupied on the first day with setting up the task force and looking for the dwarven radicals, giving Varal free leave to meet with sympathizers to the Unseen Court, all of whom he asks to keep an eye out for Ekossigan.

His contacts include members of the Vekeshi Mystics, like **Rear Admiral Morris Dawkins** (known as the **Old Stag**) in North Shore, and possibly a Vekeshi PC. Many gnomes and elves grant him hospitality, including **The Alderman**, a gnome beadle who lives in an alder tree in Pine Island, and **Valentina Yorke**, an elvish druid working in Central District to ensure their subrail construction does not anger the local spirits.

He also speaks with numerous fey throughout the city, including a pixie named **Mugwort** who has been hiding in the rafters at the RHC offices in Central District as a spy, and **The Trash Heap**, a filthy hag-like entity who lives beneath the city's dump northeast of the Nettles and has a penchant for giving out strange cast-off objects with prophetic usefulness.

One person he is unable to reach is **Gale**, the fey terrorist.

Following Asrabey.

Keeping an eye on the eladrin is tough, and doesn't earn the party much, except perhaps for political ammunition that goes beyond the scope of this adventure.

Tailing him to each of his meetings requires a Perception check (DC 20), but also calls for a Stealth check (DC 23) to keep from being noticed. The tail can take a penalty to his Perception check by hanging back farther, and get an equal bonus to his Stealth check.

If Asrabey spots his tail he will demand once that the character leave him be or else be cut down. He actually draws a weapon and will give the PC a minute to run away. The second time he spots his tail, he immediately attacks, though he will not intentionally kill. Remember how we said Asrabey is ridiculously stubborn? He also really doesn't like being followed.

Frosty Relations.

Varal shows up at the RHC office (or wherever the party is) on the morning of the 10th, as he promised. He explains that he has met with people around the city, none of whom have seen Ekossigan. But he had trouble finding several of his contacts in the Cloudwood, and he suspects that Ekossigan, as a powerful fey lord, is gathering the local fey in the forest under his banner.

Cloudwood Tension.

The party just needs to read the newspaper to see that the Cloudwood has been a hotbed of unexplained phenomena for the past few days. If they check with police reports and civilian complaints, they also learn that yesterday morning (the 9th) the body of a young boy was found strangled, lying in a stream, partially gnawed on by cats. No one in the district has reported any missing children, but people in the district are begging the police to protect their children.

On the 11th, the Flint Tribune (if it still exists) will break the story, and also accuse the RHC of endangering children by wasting police manpower on a violent and pointless crackdown in Parity Lake.

Where to Look.

Asrabey knows the party has had previous contact with Gale, and he wants them to arrange a meeting. He believes that even if she is sympathetic to the fey cause, she is nevertheless an eladrin, not a true fey. She might be persuaded to help, whereas the true fey are compelled to serve Ekossigan.

(If the party did not meet Gale in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*, Asrabey still asks them for help. Perhaps the party can find her by working through a journalist she gave an interview to, or by pulling police files to figure out where she's most often sighted.)

If the party still has the *messenger wind* Gale offered in Adventure Two, they can easily arrange a meeting for as soon as the same morning. Otherwise they can head into the Cloudwood to speak with the local druids, who can get a message to her. Any Vekeshi Mystic PC would know how to reach her as well, through a relay of contacts.

Tell Me About Ekossigan.

Asrabey doesn't go into much detail about the affairs of the Unseen Court, but he has dealt with Ekossigan in the past. The rebel fey has a nature that changes with the seasons, and sometimes when an event really affects him, his change in mood will change the seasons, leading to freak snowstorms in summer or trees blossoming in the middle of winter.

As for Ekossigan's combat abilities, Asrabey relates that the fey has shown little in the way of offense. He has great sway over true fey, though, so his minions may be a greater threat than he is. Indeed, if any members of the party are actual fey, Asrabey gives them a small charm to wear—a ring with gear teeth on the inside, within which a pair of other gears can spin—that will protect them from Ekossigan's influence.

Being part of the Unseen Court makes Ekossigan almost completely immune to divination that try to find him. Like many fey he can step from here to there without stepping in the space between, and around him arrows never hit what they're aimed at.

His skin is treebark, making him hard to harm. Asrabey then goes on to smile and mention that trees burn—while lightly igniting his sword for effect.

Casing the Cloudwood

Exploration. Montage. Level 7.

Ekossigan is hiding somewhere in the Cloudwood.

There are three major groups in the Cloudwood that the RHC have easy access to speak with. The local populace can be spoken with by wandering the streets, stopping at street cafes, and the like. The other two groups are conveniently located in the same office—the local police force, and the district Mayor, **Doyle Idylls**.

The Mayor.

Doyle Idylls is spooked about recent events happening in his district, but he officially blames them on local hooligans rather than actual fey intruders. Still, he's having his building's exterior painted with a coat of crushed mulberry and powdered chicken bone—a supposed ward against fey intrusion.

Idylls knows the party is heading up the task force against Kell; some of his police were pulled away for it, and he's getting yelled at by the locals who are afraid for their children. He won't readily meet with the party, though they can just barge in on him, or try to convince his secretary. Forcing the issue will make the mayor and his police uncooperative.

The Police.

The main police office is built on the backside of the mayor's mansion. Led by a boisterous second-generation immigrant from Danor, **Sergeant Langlois**, the police won't talk to the party unless they get approval from the mayor. If a chat is approved, the sergeant and his men can bring the PCs up to speed on a rash of vandalism that's overtaken many public offices in the district. During their visit to the station, the officers complain about oddities: rotten bird eggs keep falling on the sidewalk, gophers chew through his basement, and every book in the building mysteriously lost its last page.

They can also provide detailed maps of the forest, which is a nightmare to patrol. The police just set up guard posts along key trails to try to protect the district borders, and leave the deep woods alone. There are dozens of square miles of forest within a day's walk of the city where Ekossigan could be hiding, so just roaming and looking is pointless without some sort of lead.

Sergeant Langlois and his men can be requisitioned to help search the forest for fey. He really can't spare the officers, since too many of his people are already on the task force, but if the party pulls strings he'll go along with it. Another option is just to use the task force men, if the party thinks they can spare them.

The Kid.

If the party asks to look at the body of the child found in the woods, it's a grisly sight. He was found naked, covered with patterns of green paint, which an Arcana check (DC 18) identifies as old fey ritual markings from the time when men regularly fought the fey, nearly two thousand years ago. In-depth research, or an Arcana check (DC 26), can pinpoint the ritual: a curse on the child's family to cause paranoia and in-fighting.

The fingers and toes have been gnawed at by cats, and the throat is crushed. Closer examination (Heal DC 18) reveals that the child wasn't strangled, but hung by a rope. Also, he has dozens of thin lacerations across his body, like you'd get running through trees and brush naked. That, combined with numerous small fractures scattered throughout his body, might clue the party to the fact that he fell through tree branches.

What happened was the boy, one of the orphans at the Gallo school, was too old for Ekossigan to use in the ritual. He instead hung the boy from the tree the orphanage sits in, then cut him loose and sent some of his gremlins down to place the body where it would be found, several miles from the orphanage. Since the child was an orphan and he was being "raised by the state," the curse is spreading distrust through the whole district.

A Remove Affliction ritual cast on the body deals damage to the caster (instead of the victim) based on a level 15 afflicition, but will relieve the whole district. This lets the party call in one free favor with the locals which doesn't count against their normal limit per day. If the curse persists, though, tempers will soon flare.

The Locals.

Locals don't want to talk, and if they realize the party is law enforcement, they'll be unfriendly and angry, blaming them for leaving their children without proper protection.

Aside from a few blocks that make up the business part of the district, the Cloudwood is very rural, with farmland dominating the north and woodlands on the low mountains and further south. The place barely qualifies as part of the city. Your nearest neighbor might be over a rocky hill a half mile away. Nevertheless, people have been getting into fights, devolving into little tribes that are edging closer to a fight.

If the party can convince people to talk, they'll explain that local nighttime offerings of milk and sliced fruit to the fey have all been disappearing—normally only a few offerings disappear overnight (mostly thought to be starving homeless folk). A Nature check (DC 18) suggests that these offerings are taken in such quantities when the fey themselves feel the need to pay tribute to something greater than themselves.

People used to give these offerings out of respect for the fey, but since Doyle Idylls became mayor here and began trying to convince locals that the fey are a threat, the offerings have become more of a protection to avoid bad luck. If the party's clever, they might try to follow the fey who snag these offerings.

Fey Sympathizers.

In the deep woods, a handful of lumberjacks, farmers, and hunters are upset with Doyle Idylls's anti-fey sentiment. Though unfriendly to outsiders, if the party can earn their trust or feign having similar beliefs, they can learn that the group knows there's a major fey in the forest, and they're trying to meet him. Their goal is to force the mayor out. They have no clue of Ekossigan's real plan, but if the party seems stuck you can have these people guide them to the orphanage at the last minute.

Fey Contacts.

Any characters who have pre-established fey contacts with the forest cannot find their contacts. The intent here is not to punish players or take away leads, but rather to show what powerful influence Ekossigan has.

Her Majesty, Princess Fairy Dust

Social. Real-Time. Level 9.

The fey terrorist Gale might know how to find Ekossigan.

Gale has contact with a creepy gremlin named Ellik, who acted as a courier for the Unseen Court. When Ekossigan arrived in Cloudwood, Ellik sought Gale and asked for her help. She met with Ekossigan, and he played to her desires of being accepted by the fey, sweeping her up in a narrative of making a grand difference to the world.

Before she realized the danger, she had agreed to help him, and the binding power of a pact to a fey lord now compels her into his service. To make her a more useful tool, he imbued her with a sliver of the power of summer, giving her destructive weather magic that she never possessed before.

Gale hates Danor and theoretically should agree with Ekossigan, but as she sees the rapid pace of the fey gathering and preparing, she grows nervous. She wants to help the party, and struggles against her master's will so as not to betray them outright. He has ordered her to warn him of any threats, and to kill anyone who is trying to stop him, but that leaves her enough wiggle room of interpretation that she can spare a few minutes of conversation.

When the party approaches her, she asks to meet them at a switchback trail in the forest (see the Cloudwood Switchback map, page 171). She keeps her distance, hiding in the trees (Perception DC 36 for range and the concealment of trees) and speaks to them via *whispering wind*.

She warns them that Ekossigan is powerful, and asks that they leave. She knows Ekossigan plans to go into the Bleak Gate, and lead a small army of fey to Cauldron Hill. Though she's afraid of him, she thinks it will be best if the party just lets him go. If they insist, she confesses her mistake in promising to help the fey lord, and how she will have to fight the party if they continue.

The party has a chance to finagle around the legalese of Gale's bond to Ekossigan, such as if they convincingly claim they have no desire to stop Ekossigan. They can also break her free with a Remove Affliction ritual (vs. a level 15 affliction). Other magic might temporarily suppress the compulsion, but not free her.

List of Adversaries.

✦ Hana "Gale" Soliogn

Hana "Gale" Soliogn — Level 14 Elite Artillery
Medium fey humanoid, eladrin — XP 2000

HP 128; **Bloodied** 64 — **Initiative** +8
AC 28, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 26 — **Perception** +8
Speed 6, fly 10 (altitude limit 10)
Resist lightning 10, thunder 10
Saving Throws +2
Action Point 1

Traits

▸ **Whispering Wind**
You cannot see her, but you hear her voice floating on the breeze all around you.
If she so chooses, Gale can see or hear from any spot within 500 feet, and her voice can carry to any creature or creatures in that range.
Gale can also speak with flying animals.

▸ **Control Winds** ✦ Aura 100
The trees creak under the onslaught of winds, and you have to struggle to keep from being blown away.
Ranged weapon attacks against Gale take a –4 penalty due to wind blowing them off course. Creatures moving closer to Gale treat each space as difficult terrain unless they are behind cover that can block winds.

▸ **Feather Fall**
Winds buoy her descent.
Whenever Gale or another creature within 500 feet falls, she can slow their fall without needing to spend an action. The first 150 feet of the fall deals no damage. Gale can catch no more than nine Medium creatures in a single round in this way.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Touch of Summer Storms** (thunder) ✦ At-Will, Basic
She raises a hand to keep you at bay, and a blast of thunder drives you back.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d6+12 thunder damage, and Gale pushes you 10 squares and knocks you prone.

⊘ **Wind Bolts** ✦ At-Will, Basic
A swirling ball strikes you, picks you up, and dangles you.
Effect: Gale makes the following attack three times.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +19 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d6+8 damage and the target is grabbed by the wind until the end of Gale's next turn (Escape DC 24). The wind lifts the target 20 feet into the air, and when the grab ends the target falls unless it can fly.

✓ **Chain Lightning** (lightning) ✦ At-Will
A bolt of lightning flies from her hand, arcing from you to your allies.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +19 vs. Reflex
Hit: 4d8+14 lightning damage.
Effect: Repeat the attack against a secondary target within 20 squares of the primary target. Then repeat it for a tertiary target within 20 squares of the secondary target.

Move Actions

▸ **Fey Step** (teleportation) * Encounter
Just because she can fly doesn't mean she doesn't have the normal eladrin magic.
Effect: Gale teleports 5 squares.

Minor Actions

▸ **Cloudwood Fog** ✦ At-Will, 1/round
A dense bank of fog materializes around you, undeterred by the buffeting tempest.
Effect: Gale creates a zone of fog, a burst 2 within 100 squares. It provides total concealment until the end of the encounter.

▸ **Warding Vortex** ✦ At-Will, 1/round
A small whirlwind appears in your path, spraying dust and debris away from it at dangerous speed.
Effect: Gale conjures a vortex in an unoccupied space she can see within 100 squares. She can use *touch of summer storms* from those spaces, including as opportunity attacks. Any creature that ends its turn within 2 squares of a vortex takes 10 damage from flying debris, unless it is behind cover. If Gale already has four vortices active, when she uses this power she must cancel an existing vortex.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Four Winds Defense** ✦ At-Will
Fey trickery causes your attack to affect the wind, not the Gale.
Trigger: Gale is affected by a condition that slows, immobilizes, restrains, dazes, or stuns her.
Effect (No Action): The condition affecting her ends and her maximum number of vortices is reduced by one until she takes a short rest. She cannot use this power unless she has at least one warding vortex.

Skills Diplomacy +17, Insight +13, Stealth +13
Str 8 (+6) **Dex** 13 (+8) **Wis** 12 (+8)
Con 16 (+10) **Int** 14 (+9) **Cha** 21 (+12)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Tactics.

If the party insists on confronting Ekossigan, Gale attacks them, taking the horribly unfair advantage of being a flying spellcaster. She blasts severe winds at the party, so she's constantly upwind from them, which incurs a –4 penalty to their ranged weapon attacks. Then she hovers a hundred feet away, flies 50 feet up into the treetops, and launches spells at the party. She uses *Cloudwood fog* either to blind enemy ranged attackers, or to create concealment for herself when she needs to reposition.

If any PCs start to approach she uses *warding vortex* and *touch of summer storms* to drive them back, then changes position. Her compulsion forces her to fight to defeat, but the party will likely have to use cover and stealth to get close enough to harm her.

Throughout the fight she shouts that she's sorry, and that she's trying to resist. If Asrabey is with the party he hesitates to join a battle. Eladrin women are exceedingly precious and rare, and he doesn't want to risk her being harmed. If the party can convince him they can break Gale free from her compulsion he'll help, but will grow wrathful against any PC who kills her.

Aftermath.

Gale doesn't know where Ekossigan is; she communicates using her *whispering wind* power. But if she's freed from Ekossigan's bond, she can lead the party to Ellik, his lead henchman. Ellik has been to the Bleak Gate several times over his long life, and a year ago he took Gale, but the same route won't be available for years. If Ekossigan intends to get there, it will involve powerful magic, and she worries what the price will be.

If Gale manages to defeat the party, she contacts Ekossigan, who sends gremlins to recover them and bring them to him. He cannot use them as part of his ritual to reach the Bleak Gate, but he'll gladly hang them from the orphanage's branches as a message against those who oppose the Unseen Court.

If the party defeats Gale, she rambles semi-consciously about Ellik's location—The Nutgarden, an abandoned beer house that is infamous in the district for burning down and claiming the lives of forty people a few years ago. This information lets them skip the "Finding a Gremlin" part of the challenge in It Takes a Gremlin, and gives them a chance to go after the gremlin during daylight.

Torches and Pitchforks*

Social. Real-Time. Level 7.

An angry mob disrupts Brakken's visit to the Cloudwood.

At dawn on the 11th, the B-Team meets Brakken at the Beran consulate, picks up a dignitary from each side, and sets out for the Cloudwood on another bid to create some unity between the two groups.

Today's outing involves **Kian Doherty** (Risur's Minister of Agriculture) and **Pierre Riquier** (Danoran Minister of Magic), and Brakken hopes taking them out to the city district famous for its fey-friendly woodlands will be a bonding experience. Unfortunately, as the trio is enjoying some light brunch while hummingbirds flit about and a monkey snags their scraps, an angry mob is gathering just down the street, incited to paranoia by Ekossigan's curse. (If the party already removed the curse, this scene is very short and pleasant, *sans* angry mob.)

Kian Doherty. Well-groomed 40-something who values Risur's druidic traditions and hates being in Flint. Sullen, but trying to keep an open mind.

Pierre Riquier. A rare Danoran half-elf, Pierre came from a rich family that could afford magic lessons for him. Heavy spectacles, messy hair, full of trivia about magic. Weak-willed and obsequious, he isn't that interested in magic, honestly, but he's one of the few people qualified for his position.

A Wee Squabble.

The restaurant is next to a creek that weaves under several small bridges on the street. Other small shops line the road, and the mayor's mansion is just two blocks away. A few minutes into the meal, a young girl runs into view from between the buildings on the other side of the creek. She hops the creek, scampers past Brakken and the B-Team, and starts yelling for people to help.

A few seconds behind her, a woman in a sun dress holding a rolling pin runs to the creek, then stops when she sees the girl calling for help. After a moment's panic she turns and runs.

All that happened was that the girl, **Circe**, was taking a shortcut, and she went past the house of the woman, **Relle**. Relle didn't recognize the girl and yelled at her to get away from her house. Then, for no reason either of them rationally understands, Circe threw a rock at the house, and Relle gave chase. Nudged by Ekossigan's curse, the tiny distrust of a stranger turned into a chase.

Within a minute, Circe gets a dozen people to come out and meet her in the street, where she explains that she was chased, and she thinks the woman was going to kill her. The crowd starts getting weapons from their houses and shops, and over the next ten minutes the group grows to thirty people. Then they're ready, and they start to follow Circe back to the house so they can drag Relle out, search the house for signs of witchcraft, and burn the building down.

While the crowd is gathering, the constables probably notice (Perception DC 10) another kid, dressed in long sleeves and with a hood hiding his face, watching from the creek bed. He has a bundle in his arms. None of the locals care about *this* stranger, because it is actually a gremlin disguised as a kid. He was out collecting the neighborhood's offerings and got drunk on some stolen wine, so he just now woke up.

Forestalling a Riot.

Brakken can sense that the crowd won't respond to reason, and Pierre is too feeble to want to get involved, but Kian doesn't like how things are looking. When the mob is just forming, Kian gets up and asks what's going on. The crowd shoves him away and tells him to stop sticking his nose into things. A few minutes later, when it's obvious things are about to get violent, Brakken tries to leave, but Kian again tries to calm the group down, and they attack him, shoving him and knocking him down and eventually throwing him into the creek, where they pelt him with rocks—nothing big enough to kill him, but he eventually curls into a ball and yells for mercy.

Timing.

This scene takes place the morning after Brakken's visit to the Sunset Bench, detailed in Thread One. We apologize for the timeline being split this way, we hope this arrangement creates a good pace. Also, if you want to shuffle things a bit (such as to fill out a session that has run short), you might move this up to the morning of the 10th, or even the afternoon of the 9th, but no sooner.

A show of force from the constables—incapacitating at least four of the crowd—can get the mob to break up. Killing anyone, though, leads to a riot. If the group doesn't get involved, the mob leaves Kian cowering in the stream and goes to burn down Relle's house.

If the party goes after the gremlin, it runs. The constables can try to pursue the gremlin (see It Takes a Gremlin below), and they have a decent shot because they're chasing the critter during daylight. They might not know what to do with it if they catch it, though.

Further Trouble.

A few other small mobs attack people during the day. One albino cow is lynched.

Later that afternoon, people start frantically chopping down trees as a rumor spreads that "someone" is going to set fires tonight. The fires never occur.

The next morning, a small crowd chases down a police officer and beats him to death, on the rationale that if the police aren't going to protect the children, maybe they actually are the ones killing children. (No other children have been killed yet, but rumors are rampant.) Any Cloudwood police helping the party at this point return to their station to protect it.

Finally, at sunset on the 12th, if the curse hasn't been broken, the wave of paranoia reaches its peak. A huge mob of a hundred townsfolk rally around Circe, who is convinced that Mayor Idylls is a witch. The mob storms his house and a dozen people die before the police give up and flee. The mob then drags the mayor to a dairy and drown him in a huge tub of milk, then leave him out as an offering to the fey, in hopes the madness will end.

And ironically it does. Since the curse was tied to "the state" raising the sacrificed child, killing the local head of state ends the curse. Still, the district never quite returns to normal.

It Takes a Gremlin

Action. Montage. Level 10.

Ellik or another gremlin might lead the party to Ekossigan.

Chasing gremlins is a tough proposition in the middle of the night, especially if the PCs don't possess darkvision or a quickly activated light source. Given these conditions, successfully chasing down a gremlin and subduing it is broken down into a Skill Encounter as follows. This is meant to be a challenging pursuit, and it might take the party a few tries to get it right.

Key Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, Nature, Perception, Stealth

Difficulty: Unless otherwise noted, all skill checks are DC 24.

Goals: The party must first find a gremlin. Then they can either grab it and interrogate it, or chase it and follow it back to Ekossigan.

List of Adversaries

- 1 nuglub gremlin (page 380)

Finding a Gremlin.

Ekossigan's gremlin servants operate in the later hours of the night, typically between 2 AM and 4 AM. The tiny creatures move from house to house, ignoring those with any visible light sources and using their diminutive height to sneak under windows to stealthily claim the offerings, which they carelessly shove into a large sack. The actual quality of the offering is not important, merely the latent spiritual power invested in them. The gremlins actively hide and stick to the darkness when retrieving offerings.

Recommended Tactics.

The party can spot gremlins only after midnight, up until about 6 AM. On the night of the 12th, the gremlins are active instead from 8 PM until 11 PM, at which point they all rush to the orphanage for the ritual.

Checks made between 2 and 4, when the gremlins are most active, get a +2 bonus to the required skill check. If the party waits until the night of the 12th, increase the DCs by 2 because of the frantic activity of the locals.

A well-described action or a clever idea can earn another +2 to +5 bonus. A fool-proof plan counts as a success.

To find a gremlin, the party needs to succeed two of the following skill checks (or do something similar and effective). Each PC can make one attempt every half hour or so.

Nature. It is also possible to track down a roaming gremlin by looking for odd plant growths they cause.

Perception. A character can camp a particular house or roam about in a likely area. Those with low-light gain a +2 bonus to the Perception check, while darkvision grants a +5 bonus.

Stealth. A character can aid the party in being stealthy and hidden, which makes it easier to lure the gremlins in.

Thievery. A character might rig up some sort of trap near offerings, like a noose and a wire that rings bells to alert the party.

Police Force.

Bringing at least a dozen police officers negates the need for checks, as the officers are able to successfully discover several of the gremlins. Over a half hour of coordinated searching, the officers find a gremlin and bring the party by. They won't be much use in chasing it down, though.

Gale's Help.

If the party gets Gale's help or defeats her in combat, they can automatically locate the gremlin Ellik at the burnt out bar The Nutgarden. Even better, they can find him during daylight, making him much easier to chase down. If they give chase to him and fail, though, they'll need to start over and try to find another gremlin.

Catch a Gremlin.

After discovering one of Ekossigan's gremlins, the tricky part is capturing it. These creatures are fast and easily spooked if they so much as sense another living being approach. Once the party gets within 100 feet, they must use normal Stealth rules (against the gremlin's darkvision and Passive Perception 19) to get close enough to grab it, knock it out, or otherwise disable it. A captured gremlin can be interrogated.

If it spots another creature, a gremlin madly dashes in an attempt to escape a potential captor. If the gremlin manages to get more than 100 feet away from the party, proceed to the Chase section below.

Chase a Gremlin.

The party might have to chase a gremlin if they want to catch and interrogate it. Gremlins are wily, and fey in the Cloudwood have a tendency to teleport short distances, making pursuit erratic.

The PCs and gremlin start 100 feet apart, but keep track of each PC's distance separately, since the party might get split up. The gremlin leads them on a merry chase, and each minute each pursuing PC can make a skill check to try to close the gap. A success gets 25 feet closer; success by 5 or more gets 50 feet closer. Failure keeps the status quo, and failure by 5 or more means the PC falls back 25 feet.

Because the terrain doesn't lend itself to flat-out sprinting, having a faster or slower base speed is not a deal-breaker. A speed of 5 imposes a –4 penalty, a speed of 7 grants a +4 bonus, and a speed of 8 or greater grants +6.

Below are a series of suggested actions the gremlin can take, and how the PCs can respond. The normal DC 24 applies to a night chase when the party has light sources or darkvision. If a PC has neither, he takes a –5 penalty. If the chase happens during the day, the PCs get a +5 bonus.

Gap in the Wall. The gremlin wiggles through a narrow gap—a tall fence, hedge, wall of brush, or perhaps a fox burrow. Characters must use Acrobatics to follow.

Through a Pond. The gremlin dives underwater and tries to lose the party. Characters must make an easy Athletics check (DC 10) to keep up, plus a Perception check (DC 24) to see where the gremlin is under the water.

Up a Wall. A PC can use Athletics to follow as the little bugger is climbing up a cliff wall!

Crumbling Bridge. The gremlin scampers across an old wooden bridge seeing its last days, forcing an Acrobatics check to keep up.

Chasers' Options.

A character can make a Nature or Perception check to try a shortcut. Success brings the PC 50 feet closer. Failure causes the character to fall 50 feet behind.

A character can try to make a ranged attack against the gremlin or cast a spell, but doing so means the character isn't moving as fast. He falls behind 25 feet. Usually the gremlin will have cover and concealment from the terrain.

Ending the Chase.

Once a character gets adjacent to the gremlin, he can make a grab attempt to tackle the critter. Other attacks can take the gremlin out or slow it down. If the gremlin manages to get 200 feet away from all the PCs, it loses them. The party can follow its tracks with three successful Nature or Perception checks.

Tailing the Gremlin.

The party might want to just follow the gremlin all the way to Ekossigan. To do this, one PC must manage to keep the gremlin in his sights (within 200 feet during the day, or range of their light source at night) for at least five minutes. Then he must make three Endurance checks (DC 15) and succeed at least two to keep pace with the gremlin during the rest of the pursuit. The whole chase covers an erratic path some ten miles long, and likely takes three hours.

Interrogation.

With a captured gremlin in custody, the party can extract information from the creature. Gremlins are impulsive in nature, and those loyal to Ekossigan are borderline psychotic. Dealing with such creatures should test the PCs' patience, as keeping the creatures on task is difficult.

Only exceptionally skilled characters could hope to negotiate with such creatures (DC 30 Diplomacy or Intimidate), and even the promise of release, riches, or any other wild offering would be a hard sell (DC 28 Bluff). During such talks, the gremlins constantly switch topics, taking note of simple things like the color of the PC's clothing, or the current temperature in the room. The party gains a bonus to these interrogation checks equal to twice their Prestige with the Unseen Court.

Magical compulsion effects or divination magic might pull the necessary information out of the gremlin.

If successfully negotiated with, the gremlin reveals that Ekossigan is staying in the orphanage. However, its sense of direction doesn't rely on normal human landmarks, so finding the orphanage requires a Nature, Perception, or Streetwise check (DC 26), or some sort of magical guidance. If the district hasn't gone crazy yet, the party can also find the orphanage on a map in the mayor's office after about an hour of research.

Unless the party asks and succeeds a second round of interrogation, the gremlin does not mention that the children of the orphanage are set to be ritually sacrificed. The creature simply forgets this point—not thinking it important—and does not withhold it as an act of slight towards the party.

Asrabey Varal's presence in the interrogation grants the party an effective Prestige of 5 with the Unseen Court, and the dreadnought's reputation is worth another +5 bonus (for a total of +15).

Once the gremlin has talked, Varal quickly dispatches the creature with a cold iron stake through the head—an act of mercy for the fey's betrayal of the Unseen Court.

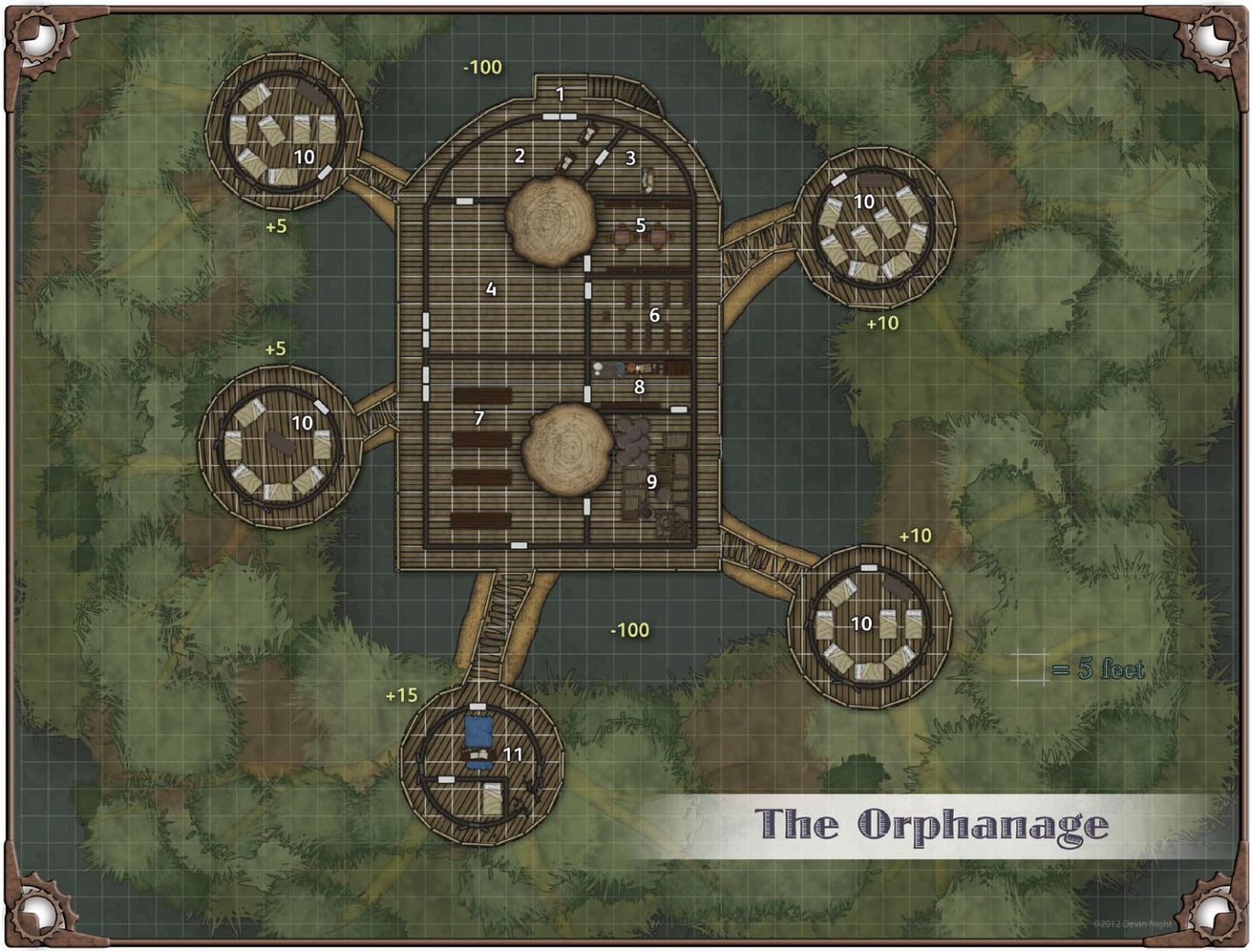
Ekossigan vs. the Obscurati.

The act of sacrificing the children and entering the Bleak Gate will drive Ekossigan from a little crazy to completely. He takes three dozen gremlins and numerous other fey with him, all of whom are driven a little mad as well. Indeed they do find the Cauldron Hill complex and attack it, and the gremlins set to work causing all the technology and machinery within to go haywire.

Ekossigan tries to attack within, but the defenders overwhelm him. Kept barely alive he's brought up to the golem lab (area 14, page 410) for experimentation. By the time the PCs arrive (likely on the 14th), the complex is in disarray, but most of the fey are scattered and unable to put up a unified front.

If left to their own devices, the battalion of fey will start to become twisted and monstrous, slowly shifting into blind grues and wraith-like monsters that wander away into the hollow city surrounding the mountain. Ekossigan, trapped and helpless, cackles himself to death. Alternately, if the party has already killed Lorcan Kell, you could have the Obscurati implant machinery in Ekossigan to turn him into a puppet for them, making him the headline foe in the Ob complex.

Should the party actually side with Ekossigan for the assault, their presence can keep him a bit more grounded, but he still shrieks at the sight of technology, making stealth fairly useless. See Mass Murder with Ekossigan (page 401).



Gallo's School for Boys

Exploration/Social. Real-Time. Level 11.

Dozens of children are imperiled. The party must approach carefully.

A light drizzle falls regularly on the area within a half mile of Ekossigan, marking his dour mood. It also helps discourage explorers from finding his hiding spot. Ekossigan has set up a small court for himself in an orphanage in the southeast of the Cloudwood district. He and his fey minions killed the headmaster, teachers, and attendants, but have kept the children here. Miles away from the nearest settlement, no one has any idea anything is amiss.

If the party guesses from the dead child that he might have disappeared from an orphanage, the locals do know about the place, but it's not prominent enough for any NPCs to suggest it. Similarly, if they figure out what ritual Ekossigan is planning, tracking down a "century-old" tree is hard, but with some asking around the party could learn about the orphanage, which was founded one hundred years ago, and whose logo is a tree with a book in place of its boughs.

The party has until midnight at the end of the 12th of Spring to stop Ekossigan. At that point he hangs the children at the orphanage, creates a portal to the Bleak Gate, and leads a small army of fey through.

Unless the party has tried to keep Asrabey Varal from following them, he will accompany them to the orphanage.



A fey lord of the Unseen Court, Ekossigan appears as a slender male, draped in robes adorned with leaves, his face concealed by a wooden mask with empty eye sockets. Ekossigan's magic and demeanor are tied to the seasons: chill and bleak in winter, spirited and hopeful in spring, and so on. When he is swayed by strong emotion, though, his nature may change, and his mood can manifest in the world around him.

Ever-changing Ekossigan has no set followers, but his very presence can turn lesser fey to his side. He sees technology as a greater threat than any in the Unseen Court, because it will change the perpetual cycle of seasons into a march for progress. He foresees a future where there is no such thing as nature, and the thought of such a future has driven him to desperation.

Gremlin Presence.

In total, the school is guarded by 14 pugwampi and 4 nuglub gremlins. Except for those on the balcony, they sleep during the day. At night they head out to gather offerings, though they make sure to all be back at the orphanage by 11:45 PM on the 12th, in preparation for the ritual.



If they detect intruders, the gremlins will fling rocks or shoot arrows down at people advancing up the staircase. Once the party gets onto the orphanage level, the fey try to slip through the holes in the walls to avoid being cornered in melee. There are other fey around—pixies, brownies, satyrs, a couple redcaps, and even a nymph—but they stay away from the gremlins and won't join the fight. Not yet, at least.

Layout.

Gallo's School for Boys has a few activity buildings on the ground level, but it is mostly 100 feet above the ground in the boughs of a massive centuries-old tree. A sturdy but vertigo-inducing staircase spirals around the tree's trunk up to the entrance. A rancid stench drifts on the breeze.

The orphanage sits in the boughs of a tree, and areas of leaves on the map represent terrain with enough branches to support a person. Moving through the branches requires an Acrobatics or Athletics check (DC 10), and they count as difficult terrain. Failure means the character makes no progress. Failure by 5 or more means the character falls.

The outside of the structure is made up of wood, given a recent coat of green paint. In places the slats and beams appear to have started sprouting short leafy branches, like the dead wood has come back to life. All the windows are shuttered, and now they've grown enough that they cannot be opened, though they still let in dim light during the day.

The warped walls provide Medium creatures with opportunities to squeeze through (Acrobatics DC 25). Small creatures can move through the walls (difficult terrain), and Tiny creatures aren't even slowed down. The "walls" thus provide superior cover, not total cover.

Stench.

Inside the orphanage, the new life is offset by the stench of rotten fruit, pools of spoiled milk, and piles of refuse. Inside areas 7, 8, and 9 the stench is overpowering.

Attack: Area Burst (creatures in areas 7, 8, or 9) +14 vs. Fortitude

Hit: The target is dazed and weakened (save ends).

Nooses.

The balcony around each dorm has seven or eight rope nooses tied to the railing, waiting for children's heads to be slipped through.

1. Balcony.

The walkway has a good view of the ground below. Railings, sized for children, make it hard to accidentally fall off. A pair of tiny gremlins hide (Perception DC 37 from the ground) and watch out for intruders, their miniscule bows always in hand.

List of Adversaries.

- 2 pugwampi gremlins

2. Lobby.

The desk chairs act as beds for some gremlins, while others doze in the desks' drawers. They've taken stacks of paper and clumped them into crude shapes of animals. If alerted, the tiny pugwampi gremlins take cover behind the desk so they can shoot intruders. The larger nuglub gremlins crawl through holes in the ceiling and try to sneak and ambush the intruders from above.

List of Adversaries.

- 4 pugwampi gremlins
- 2 nuglub gremlins

Pugwampi Gremlin	Level 11 Minion Artillery
Tiny fey humanoid	XP 150
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion	**Initiative** +8
AC 23, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 23	**Perception** +5
Speed 6	Darkvision

Traits

▸ **Gunshy**

You pull the trigger. Nothing happens. You pull again. Nothing. You move to check whether it jammed, and the instant you stop aiming, the gun fires.

Firearms aimed at a gremlin will not fire on first pull. If a character holds his aim on the gremlin for a round, the shot will go off at the start of the shooter's next turn. Otherwise the gun fires the moment the shooter stops aiming.

▸ **Unluck** ✦ Aura 4

Dust in your nose, forcing you to sneeze, right when you were about to ambush the monsters. What are the odds?!

A pugwampi radiates an aura of unluck. Any non-gremlin creature in this area must roll two d20s whenever a situation calls for a d20 roll (such as an attack roll, a skill check, or a saving throw) and must use the lower of the two results generated.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Dagger Dogpile** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The first gremlin rams your shin, stabs your boot, and knocks you off balance. The other three leap upon you, drag you down, and pound their tiny knives into you with screeching glee.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC

Hit: 1 damage, and the target is knocked prone. If the target is already prone, the attack instead deals 5 damage.

⊘ **Shortbow** (weapon, poison) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The arrow is the size of a thorn, but your skin burns from some fey venom.

Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creature); +14 vs. AC

Hit: 9 poison damage

Skills Stealth +15

Str	3 (+2)	**Dex**	13 (+6)	**Wis**	14 (+7)
Con	11 (+5)	**Int**	10 (+5)	**Cha**	16 (+8)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven, a few words of Primordial



3. Office.

Characters who are interested in keeping the orphans from being abandoned in the aftermath might want to look here for financial documents of the orphanage. There's enough resources to at least pay for a bit of lodging before the kids are left homeless.

4. Common Room.

This room is full of discarded toys, balls, and piles of clothes the gremlins can put on when they need a disguise.

Nuglub Gremlin	Level 11 Goon Brute
Small fey humanoid	XP 300
HP 51; **Bloodied** 25	**Initiative** +7
AC 23, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 22	**Perception** +9
Speed 6	Darkvision

Traits

▸ **Gunshy**

You pull the trigger. Nothing happens. You pull again. Nothing. You move to check whether it jammed, and the instant you stop aiming, the gun fires.

Firearms aimed at a gremlin will not fire on first pull. If a character holds his aim on the gremlin for a round, the shot will go off at the start of the shooter's next turn. Otherwise the gun fires the moment the shooter stops aiming.

▸ **Goon**

Similar to a minion, the nuglub gremlin goes down quickly in a fight. He has half the hit points of a normal creature of his level.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Bite and Claw Flurry** ✦ At-Will, Basic

The gremlin looks almost civilized, but then it smiles wider than should be possible for its head, revealing yellowed teeth like a bear trap.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC

Hit: 12 damage.

✓ **Heat Metal** (fire) ✦ Encounter

Your armor begins to burn, then glow red hot.

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +14 vs. Will

Hit: If the target is wearing metal armor or wielding a metal weapon, it takes 5 fire damage, then gains ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

Aftereffect: The target takes ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Special: If the gremlin dies, or the target divests itself of the heated metal, this effect ends.

✓ **Hanging Death** (weapon) ✦ At-Will

Out of thin air, the gremlin pulls a rope knotted in a noose, its other end tied to a railing. As you struggle to get to your feet, it slips the noose over your head and pulls tight.

Requirement: The target must be prone.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC

Hit: The target is caught in the noose. Until it escapes, it cannot breathe and takes ongoing 5 damage. The rope can be cut with a light blade as a standard action.

Special: While the target is noosed, the gremlin can spend a move action to make an attack (+16 vs. Fort) to slide the target one square. If it slides the target off the edge of a railing, the rope snaps tight and the victim dangles off the side of the school, choking and with a 100-ft. drop waiting if it cuts itself free.

Skills Stealth +14

Str	18 (+9)	**Dex**	18 (+9)	**Wis**	9 (+4)
Con	15 (+7)	**Int**	8 (+4)	**Cha**	12 (+6)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven, a few words of Primordial

5. Library.

Ekossigan, not without pity for the children, has moved all the books from the library to the various dorms. With no hope for escape, the children read to avoid thinking about their suffering.

6. Classroom.

The fey used mud, beeswax, leaves, and twigs to assemble remarkably life-like sculptures of adults sitting awkwardly in the classroom's chairs. One woman even has her arm raised like she wants to ask a question. The statues crumble at a touch.

7. Dining Room.

Four wooden tables with an array of broken chairs litter this room, all of them sprouting recent growth. During the day, a group of gremlins lounge in this room, eating leftover morsels from the previous night's offerings. They attack any intruders viciously, hoping to swarm them.

List of Adversaries.

- 8 pugwampi gremlins

8. Kitchen.

A large crockpot and various old metal eating implements are scattered throughout this room. During the day a duo of larger gremlins works here, preparing food offerings for Ekossigan in the attic. If interrupted the gremlins attempt to flee and get reinforcements from other fey in the building.

List of Adversaries.

- 2 nuglub gremlins

9. Storage Room.

This is the source of the stench. Nothing much useful is here.

10. Dorms.

Unsteady walkways lead down tree limbs to the dorms, each of which holds 8 children who sleep in bunk-beds, except the southeast dorm, which only has 7 children. The doors' wood has grown so they won't open except at the touch of a fey, or with a heavy shove (Strength DC 22 from outside, DC 27 from within).

11. Headmaster's Office.

If the party did not manage to defeat or free Gale, Ekossigan summoned her here when he sensed the party was coming.

Gale sits on the roof of this small building, undeterred by the light drizzle. She puts a finger to her lips and tries to discourage the party from going inside with just hand gestures. If Gale had to flee before she won't fight here, but she will use *feather fall* to save any PC who falls. If the party hasn't faced Gale at all, she'll reluctantly fight beside Ekossigan.

Inside the office the furniture has been shattered, leaving a cracked desk atop a tattered rug. There's a hole in the wall to the east. The fey have stashed a sizable treasure trove of offerings underneath the bed (1,000 gp value total), though mixed in with coins and jewelry are plates of half-chewed offerings and more than a few squirrel carcasses.

There's no sign of Ekossigan, but if anyone steps onto the balcony around the office, or if any outsider speaks within earshot of the building, Ekossigan addresses them. A fey lord like Ekossigan can easily step between this world and the Dreaming, and so he remains hidden in the parallel version of the office, speaking via a limited form of telepathy until he's ready.

Spring Returns to Winter

Action. Tactical. Level 13.

Ekossigan will kill those who are against him.

When the PCs enter the chamber, read the following. Though Ekossigan wants to say his piece to Asrabey, make sure he also speaks with the PCs. He's unlikely to stand down unless the party agrees to let him sacrifice all the children, in which case he'll invite them along. If the party attacks before he manifests fully into the real world, he just laughs.

A wooden mask with antlers sweeping back from its jaw appears in the air in front of you. Its eyes are hollow, but it tilts slightly, as if it's considering your appearance. Slowly a hood fades in behind the mask, giving the impression of an unseen head, and then a mantle of leaves over the shoulders of this invisible man.

"Greetings. I am Ekossigan of Spring, devoted servant of the Unseen Court and protector of the ever-turning seasons. With much remorse do I come to your dull and colorless world, but I shall rid this garden of the dark seeds you have planted."

The fey's mask turns to look you over, then stops at Asrabey.

"Ah, the guard dog of the Court. I had hoped that you would lend me aid, but I see your masters want me put down. Yet you cannot harm me, so the guard dog brings pups of his own.

"Do you know what is inside Cauldron Hill, little pups? Step with me into the gate, and we'll weed this dark garden together. And Asrabey, you know the gardener. Do you remember your dear wife, Kasvarina? I'm afraid she doesn't remember you."

Asrabey says, "How do you know—," but he stops mid-sentence because the ground is trembling.

Over the constant sussurus of the rain you hear movement: dozens of creatures below, wings fluttering, wet hair slashing tree branches, hooves tramping the grass. From the dorms on the other branches come the nervous cries of children.

Ekossigan's mask seems to grow more solid. "Opening the gate requires death. The fresher the flower when cut, the more beautiful the wreath when woven. Spring must ever turn to Winter."

More of his form begins to appear and blue light beams from every surface of his wooden skin. The temperature begins to drop, and the fey lord cackles once.

Asrabey says to you, "You stop Ekossigan. I'll keep his army at bay. But keep him alive; I need answers!"

Then he's out the door, sprinting toward the staircase, and you see the rain has turned to driving sleet. Ekossigan flares with near-blinding light, and then he stands before you, fully and physically in this world.

"Greetings," he says. "I am Ekossigan of Winter."

Killing Winter.

The mad fey seeks to slay the party so that he can complete his ritual sacrifice. While the party battles Ekossigan, Asrabey holds the staircase against an oncoming tide of hundreds of fey. The party has very little chance of being able to run, but once they defeat the fey lord his sway over his minions will be broken.

A pair of fey snow leopards, the Sentinels of Winter, manifest with Ekossigan and harry the party.

Winter Storm.

Ekossigan's change in nature has killed the tree the orphanage sits in. Its leaves begin to blow away quickly, its branches creak, and its bark cracks to the touch. Simultaneously, the drizzle of rain has turned to driving sleet. Surfaces across the tree are slowly coated in ice, and if Ekossigan is not stopped, whole sections of the tree will collapse under icy weight.

Unprotected flames are automatically put out. Protected fires like lanterns have a 75% chance of being put out. Ranged weapon attacks and Perception checks take a –4 penalty.

Treefall.

In the first round, surfaces are just starting to get slick. Outdoor areas are treated as difficult terrain.

In the second round, everything is coated in ice. In addition to being difficult terrain, the ice forces an Acrobatics check (DC 10) to move. Failing by 5 or more means the creature falls prone.

In the third round, the larger branches begin to creak, and the southwest dorm shudders as the branch supporting it splits down its length. Creatures on that branch must make an Acrobatics check (DC 10) or be knocked prone.

In the fourth round, the southwest branch cracks more thoroughly, and the branch starts to dangle at a 45° angle downward. Creatures on that branch must make an Acrobatics check (DC 12) or be knocked prone.

At the end of the fifth round, the southwest branch snaps off. Anyone inside the dorm plummets; With *feather fall*, Gale can save at most 9 creatures, who must be within 20 feet of each other and not inside the dorm building. With the branch gone, a large chunk of the foliage disappears too, shrinking the battlefield.

In the sixth round, the northwest and northeast branches have their first crack. They'll dangle precariously on the seventh round, and plummet to the ground on the eighth. The southeast and due south branches crack on the eighth, dangle on the ninth, and fall away on the tenth round.

If the fight is still going on in the twelfth round, the whole tree teeters, and at the end of the thirteenth round it topples to the ground.

On the Ground.

A creature who survives a fall to the ground takes 5 damage per round from the onslaught of a horde of fey, barring some sort of trick to keep them at bay. There's no feasible way to defeat the whole horde, but the fey will ignore someone who runs away.

Gale Assist.

If the party seems to be in trouble, and especially if a PC dies, Gale snaps out of Ekossigan's control (she can justify breaking the fey pact because she promised to aid "Ekossigan of Spring"). She can grant PCs fly speeds equal to their speed, but she can't bring herself to attack the fey lord.

List of Adversaries.

- ✦ Ekossigan of Winter
- ✦ 2 Sentinels of Winter

Ekossigan of Winter — Level 16 Elite Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid — XP 2800

HP 304; **Bloodied** 152 — **Initiative** +15
AC 30, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 26 — **Perception** +10
Speed 7, walk of nature (see below) — Darkvision
Resist cold 10, necrotic 10
Saving Throws +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

☼ **Arrowtwist** ✦ Aura 6
Your attack swerves in mid-flight and angles for an ally.
Any arrow fired at a creature within the aura (including the fey lord himself) swerves toward the next nearest creature in the aura instead. If multiple targets are equally close, randomly determine whom the arrow targets. If there is no creature other than Ekossigan within that range, the arrow simply thuds to the ground near his feet. Yes, this means the PCs may need to shoot at their allies.

This effect applies to any ranged attack, even magical ones. Area attacks work normally, unless their origin square is centered on a creature, in which case the area is instead centered on the next nearest creature.

▸ **Cold Skin**
It's like punching a frozen river.
Ekossigan's body generates intense cold. Any creature that hits Ekossigan with a melee attack takes 5 cold damage.

When an attacker deals fire damage to Ekossigan, the fey lord loses this ability and takes a –2 penalty to defenses until the end of that attacker's next turn.

▸ **Walk of Nature**
He glows, and you see him start to appear across the tree as he slowly fades out here.
Ekossigan can teleport through nature with ease. As a free action at the end of his turn he can begin his transition. He begins to glow, and he chooses a destination within 12 squares that must be in or adjacent to a tree. That spot also begins to glow. On his next turn he must spend a move action to teleport to the chosen destination. If he cannot, he takes 20 damage.

His feet hover slightly above the ground, so his movement is unimpeded by snow or ice. Additionally, he can choose to hover in midair as long as he is within five feet of a solid surface he could stand on.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Claw** (cold) ✦ At-Will, Basic
His claws leave no wound, but they cut through you like the coldest winter darkness.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC
Hit: 6d8+22 cold damage, and the target is slowed until the end of Ekossigan's next turn.

⟋ **Deep Slumber** ✦ Recharge when first bloodied
He offers you a passing glance, and you drop straight to sleep.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +19 vs. Will
Hit: The target falls asleep. It can be awakened by an ally who spends a standard action rousing him, or if it takes any damage. When it wakes, the target is dazed and slowed (save ends).
Miss: The target is dazed and slowed (save ends).

⌖ **Cone of Cold** (cold) ✦ Recharge when first bloodied
He exhales, and frigid air blasts you away.
Attack: Close Blast 5 (creatures in blast); +19 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 6d6 cold damage, and the target is pushed 5 squares.
Miss: Half damage, and the target is pushed 1 square.

✲ **Entangle** ✦ Recharge when first bloodied
The dry branches reach out and grab you.
Attack: Area Burst 3 within 20 (creatures in burst); +19 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The target is restrained (Escape DC 28). While the creature is restrained it has ongoing 10 damage.

Minor Actions

▸ **Widdershins Seasons** ✦ At-Will, 1/round
He spins counterclockwise, then sighs in relief.
Effect: Ekossigan ends one condition affecting him.

Skills Acrobatics +20, Athletics +14, Insight +15, Nature +15, Stealth +18
Str 12 (+9) **Dex** 24 (+15) **Wis** 14 (+10)
Con 16 (+11) **Int** 14 (+10) **Cha** 22 (+14)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial, animals, plants, stones, and the sky

Sentinel of Winter, Fey Snow Leopard	Level 11 Soldier
Medium fey beast	XP 600
HP 79; **Bloodied** 39	**Initiative** +10
AC 27, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 26	**Perception** +13
Speed 6 (snow walk), jump 6	Low-light vision
Traits	
▸ **Snow Walk**	
Because of its large, fur-covered paws, the sentry of winter suffers no penalty for movement through snow-covered terrain.	
Standard Actions	
⊘ **Maul** ✦ At-Will, Basic	
Ah, the good old claw/claw/bite.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8+6 damage.	
⟋ **Despair of the Hunted** (charm, psychic) ✦ Encounter	
As the weight of winter presses down upon you, you decide it's best that you die in the teeth of this beast.	
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +16 vs. Will	
Hit: 2d8+10 psychic damage.	
Effect: Until the end of the encounter or until the sentinel of winter drops to 0 hit points, the target is marked. At the end of any turn in which it is not either adjacent to the sentinel, or closer to the sentinel than where it began its turn, it takes 5 psychic damage and is weakened until the end of its next turn.	
Str 18 (+9) **Dex** 17 (+8) **Wis** 16 (+8)	
Con 16 (+8) **Int** 2 (+1) **Cha** 11 (+5)	
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —	

Tactics.

Ekossigan starts by using his breath weapon, then prepares to teleport to a spot in the tree's branches. He tries to distance himself from the party while using his various spell-like abilities to separate them. He'll seek to imperil someone on a branch about to fall by putting him to sleep or *entangling* him with dry, dying branches.

If Ekossigan's spells begin to fail him, he instead switches to using his claws up close, trying to tear down weaker PCs in melee and relying on his high defenses. The Sentinels of Winter don't stay close to Ekossigan. Instead they mark enemies and try to lure them away from their master.

During combat, Ekossigan will shout out the following quotes which you can use to embellish the battle:

- "You do not realize the child that sleeps in the mountain. Your nation's womb will birth a monster! He *shall not* be awakened. *He must not be awakened!*"
- "So many screams! How many were sacrificed to fuel this thing? How many souls consumed to create this abomination? What are a few more to stop it? You would do the same if you could hear it."
- "Why do you persist? The cold of winter takes all things—and even if it does not take you, that *thing* will."
- "You have seen him and he knows you, but you do not know him. The old man wishes to make amends, but he needs a body."
- "She waits in the hill Asrabey Varal, but for how long? Kasvarina, your lover is coming. Why do you hide?"
- (After a tree branch falls.) "You know, I *was* going to simply *hang* the children, but this works just as well!"

Ekossigan's Demise.

Once Ekossigan is defeated, the storm ends, the tree creaks but does not collapse, and the fey who were trying to fight through Asrabey stop and then flee. If Ekossigan was merely knocked out or otherwise disabled, Asrabey thanks the party, then presses a cold iron spike to the fey lord's heart and slaps him to consciousness.

He demands to know about Kasvarina, and Ekossigan, still deranged, whispers that he saw her held prisoner in a steel cage lined with tapestries, beneath Cauldron Hill in the Bleak Gate. He doesn't know anything else.

Unless the party stops him, Asrabey proclaims the Ekossigan is guilty of betraying the Unseen Court. Rather than impale him with the spike, though, he presses a dagger into Ekossigan's hand, and guides him to slit his own throat.

When Ekossigan dies (even if the party just takes him out in combat), his body begins to crumble away into a mass of dead leaves which are carried away on the wind. A "life bloom" overtakes the area, as plants begin to sprout and smaller trees begin emerging across the ground beneath the tree. The orphanage stops falling away, and each PC is returned to full health.

Skyseer Vision.

Any character with the Skyseer theme feels his gaze drawn to watch the leaves as they're blown skyward, and he receives a vision. It is simple: A bird made of black steel, weeping blood, lands at the peak of Cauldron Hill. Then it flies away toward the harbor, but there is no city beneath it. Instead its shadow falls across a verdant forest.

This invokes part of Nevard's prophecy from Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*, warning that a second doom would come from Cauldron Hill. It can also suggest to the party that when the colossus Borne heads for the harbor, they should try to drive him to the Dreaming.

Asrabey's Departure.

The eladrin dreadnought, saddened from having killed many fey who tried to assault the tree, perfunctorily thanks the party for their aid if they simply killed Ekossigan. If they kept him alive long enough for Asrabey to ask about Kasvarina he shows a bit more sincerity. Either way he says he intends to ask their king for permission to enter the Bleak Gate and explore Cauldron Hill, to search for Kasvarina. He warns them not to trust the Danorans, then leaves.

Aftermath.

In the coming days, the Cloudwood returns to normal as Varal and Gale deal with the remaining troublemaking fey. Doyle Idylls (if alive) is thrilled at the turn of events, and if he knows of the party's involvement, he offers to have statues made in their honor.

Whichever PC last injured Ekossigan receives an offering from the gremlins. The next time he wakes up he hears skittering feet and finds a pair of gloves piled atop a small mound of random necklaces, biscuits, and flowers, all arranged on a small ceramic plate. Blue paint on the plate reads, "We sorry. Don't eat us." The gloves are *gremlin gloves* (see Appendix M).

Thread Three: Eschatological Terrorists

In this thread, the party reacts to the surprise attacks by Zubov's group.

Zubov's plan is to sow panic amongst the citizens of Flint by perpetrating various loud, violent attacks at several sites throughout the city. After the first few attacks succeed in diverting police and RHC resources away from the peace talks, Zubov will directly attack a newly opened subrail station, which he'll use to gain access to a tunnel that passes near Hotel Aurum. A well-timed explosion in the tunnel will send the building tumbling down.

Epistle from Heid

Exposition. Real-Time.

Philosopher Vlendam Heid contacts the party.

If the party has an eschatologist, or if they befriended dwarven philosopher Vlendam Heid in Adventure Four, *Always on Time*, they receive a letter on the morning of the 9th of Spring. See Appendix L for the handout Epistle from Heid.

Investigating Zubov

Action/Exploration. Montage. Level 11.

Zubov knows the authorities will come looking for him.

After the first attack by the eschatologists, Stover Delft asks the party if they can spare time to investigate this threat while leading the task force and searching for Ekossigan. He knows they're busy, but they're his best constables, and the only other people he can really spare are the B-Team, which would leave the mediator at risk. It's up to the party whether to give it a shot or pass the buck.

If the PCs didn't have enough time to investigate the first attack, they can return and look for clues, though clean-up might have removed some of the evidence.

Between Steffan Eberhardt's knowledge of the radical sect, the objects on the bodies of the defeated attackers, and accounts of the dwarves' activities the night before, the party should either know about Soknik Repairs, or be able to track the dwarves to there with a few hours' work.

Another lead the party may wish to follow-up with is **Kvarti Gorbatiy**. The PCs likely met Kvarti in Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*, and may have struck up a relationship with the eschatologist gunsmith. Parties without an eschatologist in their ranks may seek out Kvarti to get some insight into the attacks, while eschatologist PCs will likely want to speak with Kvarti as per their letter from Vlendam Heid.

If the party is stuck on how to proceed, a surviving intern who was working at the *Risuri Record* comes into the RHC later in the day and says that they had technicians from Soknik Repairs come by the day before the explosion occurred. The intern believes that the repair technician may have been involved in the sabotage. He also asks if there's any reward for him offering this information.

A dwarven locksmith turned mercenary, Kvarti found a book of Heid Eschatol philosophy in the hands of a man he had assassinated. Though he presents a weary face to maintain his reputation, he goes through life content. All his affairs are in order, and while he hopes to find a cause worth dying for, he would not be angry if his life was cut short. His overly grim reputation got him his job as one of Zubov's snipers, but he does not agree with the man's philosophy.



Soknik Repairs.

A front business used to disguise a safe house and planning site for Grundun Zubov's attacks, Soknik Repairs caters to only a select clientele. The building is nondescript and contains several businesses, but a wide glass window makes up the entire exterior of the repair shop. Inside there is only a single room storefront, with a bland rug, a few display cases, and a single door leading to the back. The cases are used to show off various technological gadgets like ornate cuckoo clocks and a pedal-cranked sewing machine that the staff has "repaired." In truth these are just imports from Drakr. None of them are for sale.

During the daytime, a single human teenage clerk named **Doug Clapper** operates the counter. Those who come with honest inquiries are all rebuffed by the clerk, who insists that Soknik Repairs is full up on clients and all their technicians are scheduled for months ahead. This is of course a fabrication, as the building is nothing more than a front that keeps relations with a small number of key "target clients" such as the *Risuri Record*. The clerk was hired by Zubov to stop people from inquiring too much about the business.

At any point in the morning and afternoon, Kvarti Gorbatiy is set up in a second floor window across the street from the storefront, keeping an eye on those who go in. Zubov did not trust the mercenary enough to involve him in any of his major plans, and so uses the sniper to protect the storefront. His orders are to watch for law enforcement and if it looks like their cover is blown, to kill any officers if they try to get downstairs. From Kvarti's vantage point he can see through the glass storefront and target anyone inside with ease.

If the PCs arrive with a warrant to search the grounds, the clerk is truly shaken and clearly hiding something. The clerk is unable to stop the PCs and simply hopes that they will not discover the secret passage to the safe house in the backroom. The passage is hidden under a foot-pedal table saw workbench, and the clerk doesn't know where it goes.

Kvarti isn't ready to attack the PCs right away, so he'll wait to see what happens when they leave.

Searching the backroom reveals an amount of paperwork nowhere near appropriately sized for a company that is too busy to take on new customers. A casual inspection of the books reveals that the office has only a handful of small paying customers, and has been operating at a substantial loss since opening.

If the clerk is pressed about the state of the business, he pretends to crack (Insight DC 22) and says there's a trap door in the front office, under the rug. He heads back to the front and snaps his fingers in the direction of the window, a sign to Kvarti that their cover is blown. If Kvarti recognizes the party, he'll fire a warning shot, just trying to give Doug cover to run. Otherwise he'll try to pin the party down and injure but not kill them.



Kvarti Gorbatiy	Level 12 Ally
HP 96; **Bloodied** 48	**Initiative Count** 9
AC 27, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 22	
Speed 5	
Standard Actions	
⟋ **Sniper Rifle** ✦ At-Will, Basic	
Effect: Ranged 50 (one creature); 10 damage plus 1d6 cold damage.	
Load: After six shots, Kvarti has to spend a standard action to reload.	

Tactics.

If Kvarti recognizes the party, he's actually kind of amused, and he shoots at them in good fun, making a big show of shattering the display cases around them but never actually hurting any of them. Then he'll duck behind cover and wait for the party to come across the street and find him. He greets them with his hands over his head and his sniper rifle at his feet.

If he doesn't know the party, he'll be more aggressive, trying to heavily wound one or two PCs so the rest of the party will tend to them, giving him an opportunity to run downstairs and slip out into an alley.

If the party catches him, see Kvarti Talks (page 388) for details on interrogation.

Trapped Tunnels.

The trapdoor ladder leads down to a series of complex tunnels, originally dug out two hundred years ago. There are no light sources inside the tunnels or safe house—the dwarves bring lanterns with them. If the PCs have light they can see centuries-old graffiti denouncing the witches who once ruled atop Cauldron Hill. The tunnels are strewn with old wooden debris, as if furniture once filled the passages. The ground has dozens of cracks, sunken areas, and pools of stagnant water.

At the threshold of every turn or T-juncture, the hallway is framed by an arch of white stone. These arches are perfectly mundane, though two later on hide traps.

LONG-TERM PLANS.

The radical eschatologists led here by Grundun Zubov are just one cell of a radical movement whose figurehead is **Grandis Komanov**, a dwarven cult leader who hides in the frozen northern wastes of Drakr. Komanov wields mighty frost magic, and all of her followers eventually develop white hair and markings akin to frostbite.

When members of the sect prepare for death, they shave their facial hair, so they are no longer shielded from the cold winds of winter.

If one knows the route, the safe house is about five minutes from Soknik Repairs. The tunnels leading to the safe house have been trapped by Zubov's men. The dwarven radical ensured that all of his loyal followers were given the correct navigation route through the tunnel, and crafted various traps to kill or debilitate anyone else.

Recent tracks from those coming and going from the safe house can be followed (Nature DC 15 every 100 feet), which lets the PCs avoid danger. If they wander, they may stumble upon the following traps.

1. Trapped Puddle.

Throughout the sewer, some puddles conceal a magic rune scribed on the floor. When anyone steps across the rune, the trap activates (see the Cold Chill of Death Rune Trap stat block, below).

Cold Chill of Death Rune Trap — Level 10 Trap
Object — XP 500

Detect *Perception DC 26.* You spot some decoration on the ground beneath a puddle.
Arcana DC 26. There is a magical aura coming from the puddle.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Cold Chill of Death** (charm, cold, necrotic) ✦ At-Will
From the ground rises a chilled mist that freezes you to the bone. You can feel death approach. A sense of inevitability washes over you, preventing you from moving.

Trigger: A creature enters the trapped area for the first time in an encounter.
Attack (Opportunity Action): Melee 1 (triggering creature); +13 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d10+6 necrotic damage and the target is stunned (save ends).
Effect: Whenever a creature enters the trapped area, the rune feeds on his life force to expand the area of the trap. A freezing mist appears around him and in each space adjacent to him. These spaces provide total concealment and count as part of the trapped area, making it perilous to go in and try to drag an ally to safety. A creature that starts its turn in the mist takes 5 cold damage.

▸ **Countermeasures**

- **Disable:** Thievery DC 26 to disable the trap's rune before it triggers. Fail by 5 or more, and the trap attacks the person trying to disable it.
- **Dispel:** Arcana DC 21 can destroy one square full of mist. Any attack that deals fire damage also clears the mist in its area, but harms whoever is inside.
- **Escape:** A creature can shove, pull, or magically move an adjacent ally to safety.

Resetting Spiked Pit Trap — Level 8 Trap
Object — XP 350

Detect Perception DC 24. The floor ahead looks like it might fall away.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Plummet** ✦ At-Will
The ground beneath you snaps open, revealing another tunnel, twenty feet below, its ground littered with spikes.

Trigger: A creature enters the trapped area.
Attack (Opportunity Action): Melee 1 (triggering creature); +11 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target falls 20 ft. If the target takes any falling damage, it falls prone. Make the secondary attack for the spikes at the bottom of the pit.
Secondary Attack: Melee 1 (falling creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+6 damage.
Special: If the victim falls through, the trap door snaps shut. If the attack missed, the target can grab onto the floor in its current space, dangling from the edge of the pit and preventing it from closing. Or he can return to the last space he was in. Or he can attempt an Athletics check to jump the 10-ft. pit and land safely on the far side.

▸ **Countermeasures**

- **Disable:** Thievery DC 19 to safely trigger; DC 24 to jam the trap and hold it open or shut. Fail by 5 or more, and the person trying to disable it triggers the trap.
- **Jump:** Athletics DC 10 to clear the gap with a running start; DC 20 from standing.

2. Fool's Door.

A few twists, turns, and confusing splits beyond the puddle rune, the party reaches an area strewn with more wooden debris than usual, with platforms covering the ground and nailed-together planks leaned against the wall. One set of planks conceals what looks like a doorway (Perception DC 15). However, if the planks are disturbed, it triggers a *cold chill of death* rune (see below left). Also, immediately beyond the false door is a pit trap (see the Resetting Spiked Pit Trap stat block, below).

3. Threshold Trap.

Near the safe house, the arch the PCs pass under has a slot in the ceiling to drop a portcullis, with caulking packed into the slot to make it harder to notice (Perception DC 27). On the side of the arch closer to the dwarven hideout (and thus not visible unless the party passes through and looks behind themselves), are small runes in dwarven. They seem jumbled, and include the words: "Arc white the lost world in the heart beyond the serpent shall gyre the end in the coils of ice." Each rune can be depressed by pressing it once, or reset by pressing it again. If the runes are pressed in order to read, "The world shall end in ice," the party hears a clunk in the ceiling as the portcullis is locked in place.

Forty feet later, a final arch also has a hidden portcullis slot in the ceiling with runes on it. Beyond the arch is a short tunnel to the dwarven hideout. The moment anyone steps on the ground adjacent to the final arch, the trap triggers, and the two portcullises fall from the ceiling. The runes begin to glow, and ice starts to coat the walls of the hallway (see the Crushing Ice Wall Room stat block, below).

Crushing Ice Wall Room — Level 11 Elite Trap
Object — XP 1,200

Detect *Perception DC 19.* The ground here is clean; barely any dirt or dust. No graffiti.
Perception DC 27. There are slots in the ceiling of the arch.
Arcana DC 27. This room has a lingering aura of cold magic.

Triggered Actions

▸ **The End of All Things** ✦ Encounter
The room's temperature drops. The walls begin to gleam with reflected light as a sheen of ice coats it. But the ice is growing thicker. It's already an inch thick. If it keeps going at this speed, you'll be crushed.

Trigger: A creature steps on the ground adjacent to the second portcullis.
Note: The hallway is 5 feet wide, 40 feet long. There are runes on the arches, accessible by creatures at either end of the hallway.
Effect: The portcullises drop. Acrobatics DC 27 to leap across; creatures that fail by 5 or more take 1d10+8 damage and are restrained. An inch of ice coats the wall on either side of the room. Roll initiative (1d20+4) for the trap. Each round on the trap's turn, the ice on each wall grows thicker by an inch. The hallway is 5 feet wide, so after 6 rounds it's 4 feet wide, 12 rounds it's 3 feet wide, and 18 rounds it's 2 feet wide, tight enough that Medium creatures are immobilized. After 24 rounds, Small creatures are immobilized. After 30 rounds, any creature in the area is encased in ice. The ice remains for 5 minutes, enough to suffocate anyone who has to breathe.

▸ **Countermeasures**

- **Disable:** Thievery DC 27 to jam a portcullis so it doesn't fall. A failure by 5 or more causes the portcullis to fall, dealing 1d10+8 damage to the creature.
- **Dispel:** Arcana DC 27 can suppress the trap for a round so the ice doesn't grow.
- **Life:** Strength DC 22 can lift a portcullis enough for a Small creature to squeeze through. DC 27 gets it high enough for a Medium creature. Repeat the check each round, and failure means you drop it.
- **Shatter:** 20 points damage removes an inch of thickness from the walls in a 5-ft. long area. Fire deals double damage; cold, necrotic, poison, and psychic deal none.
- **Solve.** If the runes are pressed in the right order, the trap ends and the ice melts.

Safe House.

Beyond the threshold trap, the party finds a hallway with clean-picked pork ribs scattered across the ground. Thirty feet beyond the arch is a 30-ft. by 20-ft. living chamber, and off that is a pair of L-shaped rooms: a workshop and a meeting room.

The bones are one of the ways the dwarves keep at bay the army ant swarm that lairs here. A minute after the party arrives in the hallway, the ants pour out of cracks in the wall, drawn by the scent of food.

The dwarves treat their boots with sodium borate, which deters the ants from attacking them. They likewise powdered the floor of their living quarters with it, though if the party manages to enter the area faster than the ants show up, they spot several trails of ants snaking across the floor.

Living Chamber.

This simple room contains an assemblage of two dozen cots for members to sleep in. When the PCs arrive, it is likely that two eschatologist radicals are in the living chamber resting.

Four skeletons, animated by dwarven clerics from the old remains of those who once sheltered here from witches, stand in the corners. Their orders are to attack any non-dwarf humanoids who find the hide-out, as well as any creature that harms them. The ant swarm cannot deal any damage to the skeletons, so they ignore it.

Workshop.

Workbenches have been arranged along the walls of this room filled with small mechanical pieces, weapon scopes of different shapes and sizes, and several casks of firedust. This room is where the radicals designed their bombs and crafted several of their other specialty weapons. Another four skeletons stand in the corners.

Meeting Room.

Inside this chamber are several haphazardly arranged tables and chairs. The tables are littered with newsletters, notes, pictures, and maps. Several charts and maps of Flint are also affixed to the walls, and are clearly part of some large plan. Another four skeletons stand in the corners.

List of Adversaries.

- 2 eschatologist radicals (page 359)
- 12 long-dead skeletons
- 1 army ant swarm

Tactics.

When the dwarf radicals hear the threshold trap go off, they wake up and hide in a hurry, hoping the skeletons can keep the intruders stuck in the hallway long enough for the ants to eat them. They make sure not to catch each other in their shotgun lines of fire. As with everyone else in this sect, the dwarves will try to take their suicide pills if captured.

Putting the Pieces Together.

Once the PCs secure the safe house, they have a treasure trove of information to read over. Give them the Radical Eschatologists handout (Appendix L). Once the safe house is compromised (indicated by the clerk's absence) the radicals abandon the site, but continue on with their plans, believing that law enforcement doesn't have the intelligence and time to piece together their operation.

Long-Dead Skeleton Level 7 Minion Soldier
Medium natural animate (undead) XP 75

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +9
AC 23, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18 **Perception** +5
Speed 5 Darkvision
Immune disease, poison

Standard Actions

⊘ **Claws** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 7 damage.
Effect: The target is marked until the end of the skeleton's next turn.

✓ **Join Us** (charm) ✦ Encounter
For a moment a wispy figure appears in front of you, the memory of a creature that died long ago in these tunnels. It beckons you, but as you draw near, its flesh fades away to reveal a grasping skeleton.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +10 vs. Will
Hit: The target must spend its first action on its next turn to move as close to the skeleton as possible.

Str	18 (+7)	**Dex**	19 (+7)	**Wis**	14 (+5)
Con	14 (+5)	**Int**	3 (–1)	**Cha**	13 (+4)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Army Ant Swarm Level 7 Lurker
Medium natural beast (swarm) XP 300

HP 45; **Bloodied** 22 **Initiative** +13
AC 21, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 16 **Perception** +5
Speed 8, burrow 4 Tremorsense
Resist half damage from melee or ranged attacks
Vulnerable 5 against close and area attacks

Traits

☼ **Swarm Attack** ✦ Aura 1
You can feel a thick mass crawling up the back of your legs.
The swarm makes a basic attack as a free action against any enemy that starts its turn within the aura.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Swarm of Mandibles** ✦ At-Will
The ants climb through your clothes and devour you from every direction. The sensation is nauseating, the pain overwhelming.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6+7 damage, and the target is slowed and weakened and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends all).

Str	8 (+2)	**Dex**	22 (+9)	**Wis**	15 (+5)
Con	19 (+7)	**Int**	1 (–2)	**Cha**	6 (+1)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Meeting Room: Most of the valuable information can be found in the meeting room, where an analysis of the documents within can reveal that the radicals were awaiting a large shipment by boat from the Drakr border city of Ysfeld. Based off the departing location of the shipment, there should be nothing of note in the area, but those familiar with local fauna (Arcana or Nature DC 19) realize that the site is a hotbed of malice beasts, the misshapen monsters that live in the magically unstable region known as the Malice Lands.

The documents imply the ship will sneak into Flint harbor on the night of Spring 10 and that the dwarves will meet it at Golden Point, the western transfer station between the Red subrail line and Orange line. Due to weather and other factors, the ship might be delayed if you want to give a tardy party a chance to stop it.

A second set of documents seem to be city maps, each of them from a different decade, and each of them traced with the routes of the modern subrail lines. PCs who parse the meaning of these (Dungeoneering DC 13) realize the maps depict several hidden tunnels leading into the newly constructed subrail station.

Also present is an envelope, its seal broken, addressed to Brigitte Coulson at the Flint Tribune. You might want to create an envelope mock-up and give it to the party with the evidence hand-out above, to entice them to figure out what was inside it. Tracking down Coulson might be difficult, though, if the Tribune building blew up.

The letter was an invitation to send a reporter to the opening ceremony of a new subrail stop, Sharon M. Baker Station (Red Line, station 4). See page 52 for a map of the subrail system.

Workshop: A sweep of the construction area reveals that the radicals were in the process of constructing something far larger than their previous firedust explosives.

Spellcasters or those trained in alchemy can try to make sense of the magical elements of the devices (Arcana DC 19), and if successful are able to identify the components used, and can deduce that the newly constructed "super bomb" would not be as easily triggered as the previous firedust casks. Instead, such a device would need to be triggered on site and require some kind of countdown to activate all the necessary alchemical and magical reactions.

A more thorough examination (Arcana DC 26) can reveal the exact nature of the explosive. Based on the amount of materials that seem to have been present here and some of the formulae scribbled on stray papers, a character can determine that once the elements were combined it would take exactly twenty-six minutes and 18 seconds for it to explode. The force would be enough to level a couple city blocks. It's clear that whatever was being constructed here has already been completed, and these parts are leftovers or prototype test bits that were not cleaned up.

Technologist PCs gain a +5 bonus to any of the above checks.



Leader of a radical sect of eschatologists, Zubov is a man of few words. While his underlings chatter and philosophize, Zubov simply smokes his pipe, carved from glacial ice that will never melt. He knows his purpose, and talking won't change anything.

Zubov's clan back in Drakr has been long trampled upon by the rich and powerful, and after nearly dying in a pointless war against an equally pointless border state, Zubov felt nothing but hatred for his country. In the teachings of Heid Eschatol he saw a reason for his suffering: to prepare him for an uncelebrated death, but one necessary to bring about the end of the world. Though many like him and his family will die, the fall of the high and mighty will be oh so much greater.

The Plot: Don't nudge the players here, but if they ask the right questions, let them figure out that, based on the average speed of the subrail train, it could travel the distance between three stations in twenty-six minutes, or maybe six stations if there was no other traffic or stops. That means that from Sharon M. Baker station, it could reach Darvill Station by Hotel Aurum just as the bomb went off.

Kvarti Talks

Social. Real-Time.

The party likely has ways to track down Kvarti's temporary lodgings—a small rented condo in North Shore. The gunsmith is not present during most of the day, spending his time as a hired gun at Soknik Repairs, though he can be found here in the later parts of the evening. Either by tracking him down or simply meeting him at Soknik Repairs, the party might have a chance to chat with the dwarf.

Kvarti's relationship with Grundun Zubov is cold at best. Zubov made contact with Kvarti by letter several months in advance of the arrival of the radicals. It was Kvarti who found the tunnels, and he helped acquire forged documents to get the radicals into the city without drawing any attention. Kvarti was led to believe these efforts were a lead-up to an assassination attempt—his pet theory was that he'd be hired to kill the reincarnated man, Governor Roland Stanfield.

Once Zubov arrived and they met in person, though, Kvarti realized their views of the eschatologist philosophy were far apart. Zubov would not bring Kvarti in to any of the major plans, but he kept paying the dwarf to keep quiet, and Kvarti was prepared in case his employer double crossed him and tried to kill him.

Only after the bombings at Pardwight did Kvarti start putting the pieces together. Kvarti is now rethinking his contract, not wanting to be associated with mass murdering terrorists. If the Armageddon Beasts are unleashed before the party finds him, Kvarti decides to stop showing up at Soknik Repairs and ends his relationship with Zubov. Whether it succeeds or fails, the malice beast attack is the last straw for Kvarti, and if the party hasn't found him yet, he'll find them.

Information and Assistance.

If the party seems amenable, Kvarti might offer to work with them to help stop Zubov. He doesn't know how to reach the sect leader, but he knows they had a meeting planned at the docks for the night of the 10th. He describes the group as a doomsday cult, then corrects himself. "Dooms*days* cult. Multiple days of doom."

Rewards of Cooperation.

If Kvarti survives the adventure, he thanks the party by enchanting one of their weapons (the one belonging to whomever he has the best rapport with) as a *+3 eschatologist's weapon*.

Beasts of the End Time

Action. Tactical. Level 11.

The terrorists try to sneak armageddon beasts into the city.

Just after sunset on the 10th of Spring, **Captain Tamushin** of the Drakr steamship *Cherno Bezna* (Black Abyss) orders the engine shut off three miles from Flint. The dwarven crew deploys oars and rows silently for an hour and a half, enters Flint Harbor, and spends the next four hours slowly approaching freight docks near the Golden Point subrail stop in Central District. The ship carries six Armageddon Beasts—terrifying creatures from the Drakr-Malice Lands border. If the ship makes landfall it will unleash its cargo of monsters on the city.

Waiting for the ship to land is risky, and the party has a better chance of spotting the approach and catching them if they're on their own ship (see Appendix K, or EN Publishing's *Admiral o' the High Seas*).

***Cherno Bezna*, Steamship**	Level 10 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	14,400 gp
Hull Integrity 3	**Command** +7
Defense 15	**Full Crew** 8
Maneuverability 6	**Minimum Crew** 2
Speed 6	**Total Complement** 20

Design

Length 85 ft. Beam 25 ft. Steam engine, three decks.

Makeshift Oars

In a pinch, the engine can be killed and the ship rowed, letting it slip through the night silently.

If 16 crew work the oars, the ship can travel at speed 2.

Abyssal Shroud ✦ Installed

When this magic is activated, gloom falls upon the ship in a 100-ft. radius.

The engineer can activate the shroud as his naval action. A shrouded ship rolls twice for Command checks and shipboard weapon attack rolls, and takes the worse result. Other ships targeting it likewise roll twice on attacks and take the worse. At short range, the shroud does not affect attack rolls.

Armaments

A pair of enchanted cannons facing forward. Where they strike, ice spreads across the target, freezing the sea and making decks dangerously slick.

Crew: 5. *Attack:* +7, forward only.

Strikes that deal hull integrity damage create ice, reducing Speed on the next naval round by 2 per strike. Strikes against propulsion reduce the target's Maneuverability on the next naval round by 2 per strike.

Total Cost 8,400 gp

Hull (base level 6, engine, improved speed ×2, Level 10): 5,000 gp

Armaments (Level 10; freezing, Level 8): 8,400 gp

Shroud (Level 5): 1,000 gp

Beasts at Sea.

Spotting a ship under oars on a nearly moonless night is challenging, and a spotting a magically darkened ship crewed by dwarves with darkvision is nearly impossible. If the party is at sea between 8 PM and midnight, they have an opportunity to see the ship. Let each PC make a Perception check (DC 30) to notice the ship; if they patrol the harbor (giving them a better chance of being within range of the slow-moving *Cherno Bezna* at a given moment), they can make a check every half hour.

If the PCs keep watch near Golden Point, they get a +10 bonus to their Perception check, but may only make one. Also, the ship will just be a single naval round at full speed from reaching land.

Naval Tactics.

If the *Bezna's* look-out realizes a ship is headed for them, he'll alert the captain, who orders the engine back to life, and the crew back to their stations. In the first round of naval combat, the dwarven ship's speed is only 2 (due to oars), but thereafter it has its normal speed.

Depending on when the party spots them, the *Bezna* might still be miles from their intended drop-off point. If they're close they might try to flee, and just need to move a few stages to reach the docks, which they'll crash into (but at least reinforcements will be on hand). Otherwise they will try to ram the party's ship, then open the cages of the Armageddon Beasts and try to avoid being one of the hundreds that will be slain in the mayhem that follows.

List of Adversaries.

- Captain Tamushin, eschatologist prophet
- 2 eschatologist radicals (page 359)
- 17 suicidal eschatologist gunmen

Eschatologist Prophet	Level 7 Controller (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf	XP 300
HP 56; **Bloodied** 28	**Initiative** +4
AC 21, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 20	**Perception** +6
Speed 5	Low-light vision
Resist cold 5, poison 5	

Traits

▸ **Stable Footing**

He's a little madman, short and stout.

Reduce the distance the dwarf is moved by any push, pull, or slide effect by 1. If knocked prone, he may attempt a saving throw to avoid falling prone.

▸ **Guiding Vision**

The fanatical certainty in this dwarf's eyes helps drive his allies toward completing their mission, even in the face of death.

Allies of the eschatologist prophet who can see him gain a +5 bonus to saving throws and resist 5 all.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Bleeding Touch** ✦ At-Will, Basic

He strains to grasp your shoulder, and suddenly blood begins to gush down your arm.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d10 damage and the target gains ongoing 10 damage (save ends).

⊘ **Pistol** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

He probably won't bother reloading.

Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +12 vs. AC

Hit: 1d6+8 damage, or 1d6+14 on a critical hit.

✲ **Light's End** ✦ Encounter

Light dims, like a curtain falling across a stage, and even your heart falters as if this might be the end.

Attack: Area Burst 3 within 20 (enemies in burst); +10 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 4d6 damage, and the target is blinded (save ends).

Miss: Half damage.

Effect: Light sources in the area are snuffed or suppressed until the end of the encounter.

Str	10 (+3)	**Dex**	12 (+4)	**Wis**	16 (+6)
Con	13 (+4)	**Int**	12 (+4)	**Cha**	14 (+5)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarf, mediocre Primordial

Suicidal Eschatologist Gunman	Level 10 Minion Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf	XP 125
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion	**Initiative** +8
AC 22, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 22	**Perception** +5
Speed 5	Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊘ **Brawl** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The dwarf uses his gun and his fists to strike you.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC

Hit: 8 damage.

⊘ **Gunfire** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Dwarves don't just carry one firearm.

Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creature); +17 vs. AC

Hit: 10 damage, or 15 on a critical hit.

Str	10 (+5)	**Dex**	13 (+6)	**Wis**	10 (+5)
Con	14 (+7)	**Int**	10 (+5)	**Cha**	8 (+4)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarven

THE CARGO

We're conscious of the fact that in this campaign heavily based around investigation and cities there have been relatively few monsters, especially by normal fantasy RPG standards. The nature of the Armageddon Beasts doesn't matter too much, just that they're large and horrible.

Therefore, if you'd like to treat your players to a knock-down, drag-out fight with some nasty beasts, you can use the stats of existing level 10 to 13 monsters—just reskin them a bit, as Armageddon Beasts are notoriously misshapen. None of the beasts are intelligent beyond animal level, and none should fly. Otherwise, here's an opportunity to throw your favorite nasty critters at the party.

Some suggestions include:

- Bladerager troll
- Bulette
- Demonic savage minotaur
- Manticore striker
- Ogre juggernaut
- Savage displacer beast
- Stirge suckerling swarm
- Venom-eye basilisk

Welcome Party.

Awaiting the ship is a trio of radicals, here to pick up their caged beasts and deliver them to an empty warehouse. A dozen local dockers have been paid extraordinarily well by the eschatologists for this strange offload, but the dockers are so hard-pressed due to the influx of workers from rural areas that they took the job with no questions asked.

Zubov's men have bribed local authorities to not inspect the cargo, so unless the PCs are present, the offload occurs without a hitch. Once the cages are offloaded, the dockers cart them into a warehouse. The dwarves attach a clockwork device on each cage, set for half an hour, and when it runs down the gates of the beasts' cages will open. By then, the dwarves plan to have killed their docker helpers and gotten safely underground.

If the party approaches, the radicals are unfazed by their presence. If the PCs show their credentials and demand to see what's making all the horrible snarling sounds inside the cages, the dwarves can spend a move action next to a cage to advance the clockwork countdown and unlock the cage immediately. The Armageddon Beasts burst out, and the dock breaks out into a desperate scramble as everyone tries to avoid being eaten by monsters.

List of Adversaries.

- 1 eschatologist prophet (page 389)
- 2 eschatologist radicals (page 359)
- 12 dockers (noncombatants)

Tactics.

The beasts are crazed by the sudden influx of movement and targets, and move to attack those nearest the cages: the dockers. The dockers reply by trying to flee as best they can, while the eschatologists use their abilities to slow down the PCs so the dwarves can get away. As they say, you don't have to outrun Armageddon, just your friend.

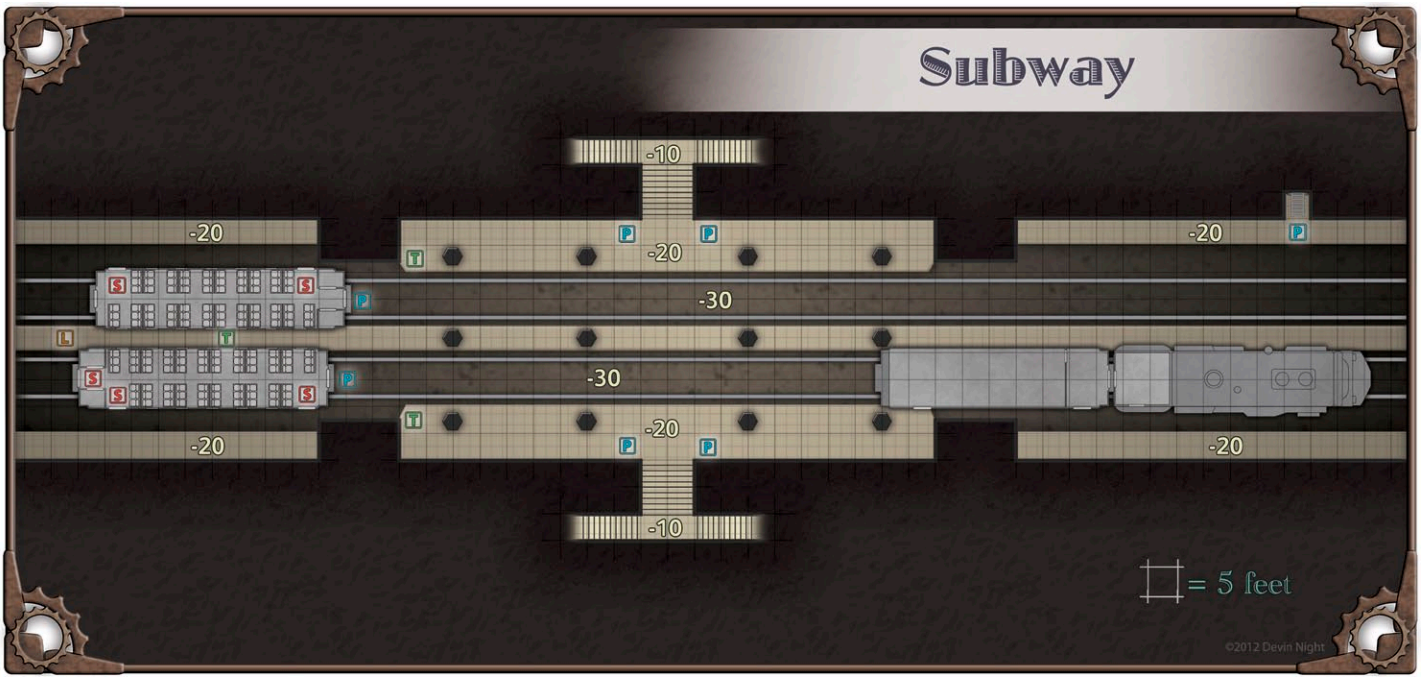
With luck, the party can stop the dwarves from opening all the cages, though in such a situation the extra monsters are liable to just make a run for it rather than tussle with other malice beasts.

Aftermath.

Zubov was counting on the monsters to stretch the city's police thin, so he'd have an easier time at his final attack. If the party stops the Armageddon Beasts, he'll have fewer men in the next scene.

If any of the Armageddon Beasts get away, they wreak havoc through the night and kill a dozen people or so apiece before finding a lair in the sewers. The next day, the authorities call in military aid from the bayou west of the city to hunt the monsters down. Soldiers track down the monsters and slay them, but the streets remain quite empty, because the people of Flint are fearful.

Later on, you might have one of these creatures happen upon the party in another encounter to liven things up, but in general it's okay to just leave them in the background wreaking havoc.



Hostage Situation

Social. Real-Time.

Will the party risk Zubov killing his hostages, or give in to his demands?

At 9 AM on the 12th of Spring, Flint's deva city governor Roland Stanfield invites several low-level dignitaries to the opening of the Sharon M. Baker subrail station. As the press, politicians, and business elite watch Stanfield cut the ribbon, Grundun Zubov and his radicals approach through secret passages that lead into the subrail tunnels.

A handful of dwarves wait outside the station, poised to distract law enforcement officers with a suicidal gun battle. Meanwhile Zubov and twenty more dwarves will burst up from the tunnels, abduct Stanfield, subrail architect **Kevin Wilson**, and several other VIPs, and then seize the platform.

Outside the police find notes on each of the dead radicals with a list of demands the terrorists have. Zubov doesn't particularly care if these are fulfilled, though he does want his message to get out. Mostly he cares about stalling for time while he prepares the alchemical bomb. He expects to have to repel a rescue attempt, but he wants to draw in law enforcement officers, pulling them away from Hotel Aurum. When the time is right—about fifteen minutes before noon—he and all but five radicals will set out in a short subrail train. Five will stay behind and attack the police as a distraction.

Zubov's route takes him from Baker Station (Red Line, station 4) to the Golden Point switchpoint, and finally to Darvill Station (Orange Line, station 2) a stone's throw from Hotel Aurum, where the bomb will explode, annihilating several city blocks and causing Hotel Aurum to tumble, killing everyone within. Harkover Lee will teleport the king to safety, but hundreds more will die.

Clearing the Tracks.

The Red Line was already being shut down this morning so VIPs could enjoy a trip on a train without rabble. The bomb at Orange Line station 4 stopped traffic on that line, so the tunnels are basically clear this morning.

We Don't Negotiate with Terrorists!

Within minutes of the attack, the local police precincts expend their limited-use magical communication to contact the military and the RHC. Likely by the time the PCs get on scene, the situation is being overseen by **Colonel Aden Tucker**.

Tucker brings the PCs up to speed on the situation, and explains that he's in charge and he doesn't want the RHC getting in his way. These dwarves have some qualms with the current leader of the RHC, and they're liable to overreact if they see RHC constables.

Tucker's initial plan is to stall until about noon, giving the terrorists a few snippets of what they have demanded. By noon his team will have arrived, and he intends to send them into the subrail tunnels from the sewers and launch a rescue mission. Unfortunately, by that point the dwarves will already have launched their bomb-filled train.

Colonel Tucker waits for his task force of forty soldiers to arrive, smugly confident that the dwarves are stuck in a hole so he can take as long as he wants to get overwhelming force. If the party reminds Tucker that the dwarves have access to a train so they can move, the embarrassed colonel pretends that changes nothing. Despite the risk to the hostages, Tucker thinks he needs his men to make the victory clean. He assumes the dwarves won't move, and prefers to wait.

Though Tucker may seem at first blush to be too confident to realize that he's been outwitted, he's actually a sympathizer to the Duchess and traditional Risuri values. He really wouldn't mind if the governor's metal machine road got negative press, and figures that even if the mission is a failure, the governor will just reincarnate anyway.

Only if the party has shown strong anti-Danoran sentiments will he listen to their advice. In that case they might be able to get four Allied Flint Soldiers (see Appendix J) who arrived early on their side. Otherwise, the party might have to move on their own.



Stanfield witnessed the fall of the eladrin goddess Srasama five hundred years ago and died soon thereafter in the chaos of Elfaivar's fall. But he reincarnated, restored to life by a sliver of the divine power he absorbed when Srasama was slain. His memories vague and jumbled, he found his way back to his homeland of Risur and eventually settled in Flint, then just a modest coastal port.

In the centuries since, he has died at irregular intervals, and with each rebirth he has returned to the city he calls home. For most of that time he has served as Flint's governor, having constantly striven to improve himself with each life, from a simple warrior, to a humble leader, to an educated Renaissance man nimbly handling the complex challenges of the fastest-growing city in the world. Stanfield wears a near-constant expression of contented optimism, but still occasionally complains of a war wound he took to his back in his first life.

Demands.

"I am Grundun Zubov, speaker for this clan of eschatologists. We follow the word of our philosopher Grandis Komanov, and we were responsible for the attacks this week. Do not trifle with us, and you will not have to suffer more deaths. My men have been active in your city for weeks, and if any harm befalls me or my men here, your city will reel from the devastation.

"Herein follow our demands.

"My men are going to need ale. Let's start with that.

"Then bring us that Price fellow, the one who runs the RHC in Slate. We know you can get him here with magic, and you will if you don't want to go searching for your governor's next incarnation. Nigel Price-Hill will pay for the death of our necromancer comrades.

"I want to speak to one of your skyseers. You no longer listen to them, but they could see the future. You threw smoke into the skies and blinded yourself to the truth: the world will end in ice. Once you hand over Price, and I have spoken with a skyseer, I will inform you of my further demands."

Subrail Assault

Action. Tactical. Level 12.

Trying to rescue the hostages is just playing into Zubov's trap.

Zubov lost a few radicals in the first rush, but he still has plenty of friends and followers guarding the subrail station. See the subrail station map on page 390.

List of Adversaries.

- Grundun Zubov
- 1 eschatologist prophet (page 389)
- 16 suicidal eschatologist gunmen (page 389)

Grundun Zubov	Level 10 Elite Brute
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf	XP 1,000
HP 192; **Bloodied** 96	**Initiative** +8
AC 26, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 26	**Perception** +8
Speed 5	Darkvision
Saving Throws +2	
Action Point 1	

Traits

▸ **Stable Footing**

He's a little madman, short and stout.

Reduce the distance the dwarf is moved by any push, pull, or slide effect by 1. If knocked prone, he may attempt a saving throw to avoid falling prone.

☼ **Shared Darkvision** ✦ Aura 10

Grundun Zubov and anyone working directly with him can see the end coming no matter how poorly lit it is.

Any dwarves allied with Grundun Zubov in the aura have darkvision, a boon from their sect leader Grandis Komanov.

Standard Actions

⊗ **Hammer of the Lost Riders** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Lost for centuries in the frozen north of Drakr, this hammer has ended thousands of lives.

Attack: Melee 1 or Ranged 3/6 (one creature); +15 vs. AC

Hit: 5d8+22 damage.

⌖ **Grasp of Death** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will

His hammer hovers beside him as he clenches his fist. Black energy flows from you into his grasp, and your heart seizes in your chest.

Attack: Close Burst 5 (enemies in burst); +13 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d6+6 necrotic damage.

Effect: Each target makes a death saving throw. This doesn't cause the target to actually drop unconscious, but if he fails 3 death saves in the same encounter, he dies.

Minor Actions

▸ **Selfish Command** ✦ At-Will, 1/round

He shouts a dwarf's name, and the man immediately drops dead, but Zubov seems renewed.

Effect: One ally Zubov can see dies. Zubov ends one condition affecting him.

Str	16 (+13)	**Dex**	12 (+8)	**Wis**	14 (+8)
Con	16 (+8)	**Int**	14 (+7)	**Cha**	16 (+8)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Giant, Primordial

Equipment *hammer of the lost riders*, full plate, heavy shield, *icy pipe*

Development.

Stopping the Armageddon Beasts means that there were more police at the subrail station, able to cause more casualties among the dwarves. For every 2 of the 6 beasts that the party kept from getting loose in the city, subtract one suicidal gunman from Zubov's group.

Upper Level.

The grand architecture is empty and bullet-pocked, with a few bloodstains where people fell. The place is deserted, its two exits covered by dozens of police officers. Wicket gates stand open, though normally they'd require a copper penny to pass through. In the center of the eerily quiet hall are two pairs of staircases, one set leading to the eastbound platform, the other to the westbound platform.

Tunnel Approach.

The secret tunnels Zubov's men used to enter the subrail open out two hundred feet west of the platform. The subrail route can also be accessed via sewers or access shafts, but the nearest shaft (shown on the map) is trapped. If the party goes to the next access shaft to the east or west, they can get onto the rails a hundred feet from the edge of the map.

Platform Level.

Grundun's men have rigged this area with traps, and tossed burlap sacks all across the ground to conceal some nasty surprises. They decoupled some of the train cars and moved them to the west to provide a bottleneck. The locomotive of the subrail train is "idling" but makes enough noise to cover the sound of footsteps.

L—Lantern. Not actually a trap, but since Grundun's magic lets the dwarves see in the dark, they keep everything dark except this one lantern. It's easy for them to notice if anyone moves in front of the lantern from that direction.

S—Shotgun. Anyone opening the rail car doors will get blasted with a trio of shotguns. This deters sneaking up, and works as an alarm.

T—Tripwire. Walking between the rail cars, or trying to climb up stealthily by the western pillars likely sets off a small mine attached to the tripwire.

P—Piercing Clamp. The burlap sacks conceal clamps that work like bear traps. When stepped on, the clamp tears through the sack and pierces the target's leg. The rest of the bag is weighted to keep the target from moving away.

Ounce of Prevention?

The party might figure out Zubov's target and lay a trap for him in the tunnels. They can easily get a dozen police officers to back them. The fight will be less dynamic than the one outlined below, so you might throw a curveball by having dwarven reinforcements arrive by rail car.

Mid-Route Attack.

The party might let Zubov start the train, then have some sort of blockade in the tunnel at Golden Point to stop them. The train would be packed with dwarves—Zubov, the prophet, 7 radicals, and 4 snipers—and if the party managed to defeat them they'd only have about ten minutes to disarm the bomb.

Shotgun Trap Level 7 Minion Trap
Object XP 75

Detect *Perception DC 19.* You barely manage to notice a taut wire attached to the door, leading inside the rail car. *DC 24.* Hidden in the mechanism under the train is a shotgun, pointed right at you.

Triggered Actions

▶ **Point Blank Blast** ✦ Encounter

As you slide the door open, a wire snaps and a trio of shotguns—one at floor level of the car, one pointed down from the ceiling, and one mounted underneath the car in its wheel area—discharge in your face.

Trigger: A creature opens the trapped door.

Attack (Immediate Reaction): Ranged 1 (triggering creature); +10 vs. Reflex

Hit: 3d10+6 damage, or 3d10+42 on a critical hit.

Miss: Half damage.

Secondary Attack: Repeat the attack against each other creature in Close Blast 3, but it deals half damage on a hit, and none on a miss.

▶ **Countermeasures**

✦ **Disable:** Thievery DC 24 to open the door safely and disarm the trap. Failing by 5 or more triggers it.

✦ **Dodge:** A character who suspects a trap can hide under the level of the rail car floor as he opens the door, and so is only hit by the shotgun in the train wheels. The attack deals 1d10+2 damage, or 1d10+14 on a critical hit.

Tripwire Mine Trap Level 7 Minion Trap
Object XP 75

Detect *Perception DC 24.* You react to the pressure of a wire against your shin fast enough to stop walking before you trigger the trap.

Triggered Actions

▶ **Mine Explosion** ✦ Encounter

Your foot snags something, and then you're hurled back by an explosion.

Trigger: A creature enters the trapped space.

Attack (Immediate Reaction): Close Burst 2 (creatures in burst); +10 vs. Reflex

Hit: 5d6 damage and the target is knocked prone.

Miss: Half damage.

▶ **Countermeasures**

✦ **Disable:** Thievery DC 24 to disable the trap. Failing by 5 or more triggers it.

✦ **Step Over:** A character aware of the trap can step over it (Dexterity DC 4).

Piercing Clamp Trap Level 2 Minion Trap
Object XP 31

Detect *Perception DC 20.* One of the burlap sacks on the floor has something metallic peeking through.

Triggered Actions

▶ **Foot Grab** ✦ Encounter

You step on what looks like a discarded burlap sack, but there's a click, and your leg feels like it's been bitten by a dragon.

Trigger: A creature enters the trapped space.

Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 1 (triggering creature); +8 vs. AC

Hit: 1d6 + 2 damage, and the target is grabbed by its foot, if it has one (escape DC 18). Until the grab ends, the target takes ongoing 5 damage. Each time the target makes an escape attempt against the grab, the target takes 5 damage. If the trap drops the target below 1 hit point, the target loses the foot.

▶ **Countermeasures**

✦ **Disable:** Thievery DC 20 to disable the trap.

✦ **Step Over:** A character aware of the trap can step over it with a Dexterity check (DC ⚀).

Hostages.

The dwarves have eight hostages—Kevin Wilson the architect, Governor Roland Stanfield, and six other dignitaries. They have placed two generic hostages, bound, gagged, and blind-folded, in inner window seats of the two parked train cars, expecting their presence to distract and slow down any attackers.

The other six hostages are bound and forced to sit on the floor of the second car in the short train. All are gagged except Stanfield, who engages Zubov in a philosophical discussion, arguing that reincarnation renders the Heid Eschatol philosophy a fool's platitude.

Stanfield is not worried. He is actually a masterful warrior with effectively centuries of experience, but he does not want this information known by the public. He doesn't care enough about the people around him to risk that secret for their lives. Only if he is stuck on the train when it is about to explode will he make a move; he breaks his hand to slip his bonds, stuns any foes with a few punches, then leaps free. He won't bother to rescue anyone, especially not PCs who he knows are trying to defeat the Obscurati. Of course, if there are witnesses to his escape, he'll do what is socially expected and try to save a few innocents in the process.

Tactics.

Two gunmen lie prone, one each on the north and south platforms on the right, their rifles trained on the spot between the two parked rail cars. A third gunman stands on the central divider, keeping watch on the other direction.

Eight gunmen hide in the trench where the rails run, ready to pop up and shoot soldiers coming down the stairs. Four stand in the train watching the hostages, having already smashed out a window on the back door so they can fire from cover. One waits crouched on the walkway at the front of the train, looking out for sneaky intruders.

Zubov works in the locomotive, watching the chemicals for the explosive as they mix. He has the train primed and ready to go at a moment's notice. The eschatologist prophet waits beside Zubov; his main mission is to extinguish the light sources of attackers.

If attacked, the dwarves unleash a devastating barrage of gunfire. Zubov does not expose himself to combat. If thinks his side is going to lose a fight, he starts the train as a move action and activates the alchemical explosive as a standard action. From that moment, the party has twenty-six minutes and eighteen seconds before it explodes.

When the train starts it travels 15 feet the first round, 30 the next, then 45, and so on until it reaches a speed of 90 feet per round. If the party jumps on, Zubov and any of his remaining radicals fight to their deaths, smiling the whole time at the thought of a glorious death. There's a good chance the party defeats him but are stuck traveling at ten miles per hour with a bomb.



Someone Set Up Us the Bomb.

The Eschatologists' bomb is a complex device that requires several steps to defuse.

Open the Case.

The first step requires the PCs to open the casing of the device without rattling the interior too much. This can be accomplished by sliding the metallic sheeting off the outside shell (Thievery DC 19). Alternatively a PC can quickly re-arrange some of the plates for easier access to the internals (Dexterity DC 13). Each attempt takes a minute. Failure here does not detonate the bomb, but will eat up time on the clock.

Examine the Internals.

Inside the case, twenty-nine rune-inscribed steel wires criss-cross an amberglass drum that holds forty gallons of alchemicals. The drum is divided into eight sections, each filled with a different substance. The eight substances are:

- **Fire Humor.** Refined trait in sentient beings that motivates activity and emotion. Acts as trigger.
- **Aether.** That which fills vacuum. Massively expands size of explosion.
- **Phlogiston.** Pure elemental fire in liquid form. The actual destructive agent of the explosion.
- **Frayed Chronosomia.** Fluid time which, when poured, extrudes in the shape of woven threads. This unstable version makes the explosion difficult to detect with foresight and divination.
- **Witchoil.** Black essence of the barrier between this world and the Bleak Gate. An accelerant that starts the reaction.
- **Blood Infused with Ambergris.** The calming agent that prevents premature detonation.
- **Serpent's Loop.** Scales of snakes that have devoured themselves, boiled in venom. Makes the fire burn any substance, even stone.
- **Frostburn.** Transmuted phlogiston that freezes instead of burns. Will coat everything burnt by the explosion with a layer of ice.

The runes on each wire are in Dwarven, and describe the connection, such as "Frayed Chronosomia to Phlogiston." One wire is engraved simply "Black," and it runs from the top of the barrel to the floor.

Every few seconds one of the twenty-nine wires starts to glow, and then the two chambers it connects admix some of their contents. The wires glow in no discernible pattern over the course of four minutes, and touching one of the wires while it is live will deal 1d6 lightning damage to the character. The wire labeled "Black" never glows. It acts as a magical ground, and a character holding it can touch any of the wires without concern for taking damage.

Disable the Mixture.

The mixing can be stopped simply by cutting all the wires. However if a PC cuts a wire while a chamber on either end has any of its wires active, the whole thing will detonate. For instance, if a PC cuts a wire that leads from Witchoil to Aether, and while it's being cut any other wire that connects with either Witchoil or Aether activates, this will set off the bomb. Figuring this out requires a minute of examination (Arcana or Thievery DC 27). Technologist PCs gain a +5 bonus to this check. Examination at the safe house might have previously determined this.

Isolating each of the reagents requires a Thievery check (DC 15 +1 per previous isolated reagent, to a maximum of DC 21 which isolates both the seventh and eight reagent). A failed check detonates the device. Being trained in Arcana grants a +2 bonus because the PC can detect subtle warnings concerning which wire is about to activate. Technologist PCs gain a +5 bonus to these checks; if a technologist is directing another PC, the bonus is only +2.

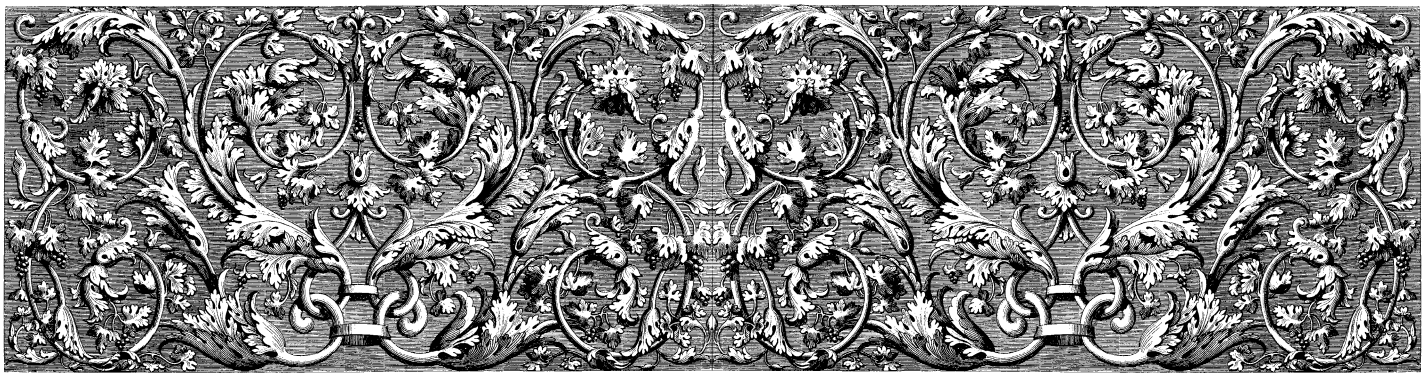
If the party manages to successfully cut all seven wires, the bomb is disarmed. If that seems daunting, simply cutting the wires only to Phlogiston requires just a single check, and it keeps the bomb from getting any more dangerous, but it will eventually go off unless they can deactivate the whole thing. Such an explosion is less destructive than the planned detonation, perhaps only collapsing the subrail tunnel, but it certainly kills any PCs nearby. The danger gets worse as time goes on, and by the time the train reaches Golden Point the bomb is primed enough that a detonation would create a thirty-foot wide crater.

Aftermath.

If the bomb is disarmed, the components can be disposed of safely. If the bomb goes off at full power, thousands die. In between, the party might decide they can't deactivate the bomb, so they have to choose where to let it go off. The safest spot is probably Golden Point, which only has wharfs and warehouses, but no residences; it's the easiest area to evacuate.

Between the police and marines, any eschatologists who escape are soon rounded up. Colonel Tucker grudgingly thanks the PCs for their assistance, but he remains unimpressed if they disobeyed his orders.

The press is, of course, ecstatic at any acts of heroics that occurred in their vicinity, especially if the party (or B-Team) previously took down the terrorists responsible for destroying the *Flint Tribune*. They want interviews, but Governor Stanfield orders the police to clear the area so clean-up can begin. He convincingly congratulates the party, thanks them for their services, and tells them he'll see them at the peace summit banquet.



PART TWO: Gustatory Interrogation

In this chapter, Risur sits down to dinner with its enemies.

THE GUEST LIST.

The party has a list of the attendees in the dossier they received at the start of the adventure, but here is a refresher for you. The NPCs who don't merit a full character bio get brief descriptions.

THE RISUR DELEGATION.

- **King Aodhan.**
- **Principal Minister Harkover Lee.**
- **Royal Engineer Geoff Massarde.** Tiefling who helped build the Risuri flagship *Coaltongue*. Strong advocate for technology and reconciliation. Drinks too much and hits on women. Has a wand that can chill things with a touch, which he uses to make ice.
- **Minister of Agriculture Kian Doherty.** Well-groomed 40-something who values Risur's druidic traditions and hates being in Flint. Sullen, but trying to keep an open mind.
- **City Governor Roland Stanfield.** Deva who has reincarnated for centuries, always returning to lead Flint. Calm, polite, and blandly political. Has a very long view on problem-solving, which is what drew him to the Obscurati. He secretly heads Colossus Cell, but keeps his distance from the daily affairs.

THE DANORANS.

- **Sovereign Han Jierre.**
- **Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre.**
- **Minster of War Eloise Duffet.** Broad, tall, dark-haired tiefling woman, bearing scars from the Fourth Yerasol War. Deeply bitter against Risur because she was orphaned in the Third Yerasol War. Dismisses any non-warriors as not having valuable opinions. Has a mechanical left arm with a spring-mounted blade.
- **Minister of Magic Pierre Riquier.** A rare Danoran half-elf, Pierre came from a rich family that could afford magic lessons for him. Heavy spectacles, messy hair, full of trivia about magic. Weak-willed and obsequious, he isn't that interested in magic, honestly, but he's one of the few people qualified for his position.
- **Naval Representative Rosalyn Taylor.** Human, one-eyed redheaded captain of *Freux Rouge*, Danor's last sail-powered warship. Old-fashioned, high-spirited, and responsible.

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES.

- **Mediator Brakken of Heffanita.**
- **Drakran Observer Steffan Eberhardt.** Old thin dwarf with sickly white skin, who supports himself on a skull-tipped ebony cane. Represents weapons manufacturers with a financial stake in the continued conflict between Risur and Danor, but would never consider trying to disrupt the talks.

Invitation and Welcoming

Social. Montage.

The PCs are invited to the banquet and are asked to attend the delegates' arrival.

On the morning of the 13th, Stover Delft tracks the party down and hand-delivers their invitations to the opening dinner of the peace summit. He tries not to make a fuss about the fact that he was not invited. He does, however, tap a finger meaningfully at the "Guest of" entry. The party was invited by Danoran **Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre**. (See the envelope handout in Appendix L.)

The five-course dinner starts at 8 PM, but tailors are standing by at the RHC headquarters to get the group properly presentable before 5 PM. The Danorans arrive at 6 PM, and the king wants the party present when they disembark their ship. The dinner will also give the party an opportunity to observe the Danoran delegation for clues to why they're still here when they have to know that the RHC knows Lya Jierre is involved with the Obscurati.

If your group is the sort that needs the reminder, Delft can point out that insulting—or gods forbid *attacking*—the Danorans can start a war, so the PCs should be on their best behavior. On the up-side, if the party *is* rude, technically Lya Jierre's responsible, since she invited them.

Meeting at the Royal Docks.

On the 9th, the *Freux Rouge*, captained by **Rosalyn Taylor**, parked at the Royal Docks. It bore a small party of dignitaries and a security detachment protecting the Danoran side of Hotel Aurum. At 6 PM on the 13th, a second ship arrives.

Lux Profectusque cruises into Flint Bay and makes a grand impression. Two hundred Danoran sailors in crisp white uniforms line the edge of its main deck, helping the ship seem to glow in the afternoon sun. The vessel swings about and closes with the Royal Docks, and with measured precision it cuts its engine and glides on momentum to stop not ten feet from the prow of Risur's own flagship, *Coaltongue*.

A company of Risuri marines flank the welcoming party in Fleet Square, while across the bridge in Royal Square, several hundred Flinters strain to watch. The king is not in attendance, having sent Governor Stanfield in his stead.

A ramp is deployed, and the line of crew parts to reveal, first, a small string and woodwind orchestra that strikes up the Danoran national anthem; and second, the head of state, **Sovereign Han Jierre**. He starts down the ramp as the elegant overture of the anthem begins. Beside him walks his niece Lya Jierre, and behind him follows the Danoran Minister of War **Eloise Duffet**, several bodyguards, and attendants bearing gifts. As they step off the ramp onto the dock, the strings and woodwinds rise and are joined by previously unseen brass instruments. Then, just as the sovereign reaches Governor Stanfield, the anthem crescendos and is joined by a blast of the steamship's horn.

The sound fades out, and Governor Stanfield formally welcomes the Danorans. He starts to introduce the party, but Lya Jierre slips in first and describes the PCs as "the good people I crossed swords with in Vendricce, and who helped us at Axis Island." She explains that she asked for them to come to the dinner to show her commitment to



clearing up any misunderstandings. This moment could play out a lot of different ways depending on how the party has previously interacted with Lya, but try to portray her as genuinely concerned that nothing gets in the way of peace between the two countries.

After some brief pleasantries, everyone loads up into royal carriages—windows shuttered so no rabble in the crowd are tempted to make a move on the Danorans—and they set out for Hotel Aurum.

Lya's Explanation.

If the party encountered Lya Jierre at the end of Adventure Four, they'll no doubt be curious why she's here when it seems obvious she's involved in a hostile conspiracy. In this case, the Obscurati is going for the big lie, and is counting on the compartmentalization of their conspiracy to pull it off.

A key aspect here is that even the heads of Obscurati cells don't know what's going on in other cells. Lya is head of Golden Cell, so she knows the conspiracy's ultimate goal, and she has been informed that, yes, the Ob do have a project in Flint, and that Reed Macbannin was involved. But she doesn't know what is being built here. She just knows her mission is to protect the peace summit and if possible delay Risuri efforts to disrupt the cell in Flint.

Lya claims that her brother Luc was indeed working on an experimental device, and that the lantern is intended to solve the "Magic Problem," as she puts it. Danor lies in a mostly dead magic zone, yet despite there being no access to elemental planes, the world still functions by following physical and chemical processes. Her brother's lamp, she claims, is a science experiment to help probe the nature of how such processes function in regions of different magic. She admits there are some niche military applications, but the primary purpose is scientific and technological inquiry.

Why then was Caius Bergeron—whom the party has clear evidence was part of a conspiracy called the Obscurati—supposed to be on the train with Luc? Lya states here that Danor's intelligence community investigated the events on the Avery Coast railroad and learned that Caius recruited bodyguards. But as far as anyone in Danor knew, Caius was just a philanthropist with a penchant for archaeology. It seems now that he was collaborating somehow with Reed Macbannin, and was trying to steal Luc's lantern for himself. Lya says her theory is that Caius was obsessed with ancient magic tied to other worlds, and that he thought the lantern would help him.

She claims that if there's any assistance she can offer to help ensure the threat from this group is squelched, the party need only ask. But she assures them that she was simply in Vendricce to meet her brother and support him as he tested his invention. Any combat that might have happened after that she chalks up to fear for her brother's safety.

And if asked why the gathering was hidden in the Bleak Gate, she explains that the Clergy in Crisillyir have long crafted personal domains in that realm, and they were simply making use of their host's generosity. Indeed, she points out that Danor is relatively inexperienced at using magic, and that if the party is looking for people who might have been working with Reed Macbannin and hiding in the Bleak Gate, it makes far more sense to look at Crisillyir.

Now, this lie is almost certainly not going to convince the party, but since the proof mostly comes down to the party's word versus hers, it's believable enough to keep the peace summit going. Plus there's a slim chance the PCs might think they've been tricked, and that between Ottavia Sacredote and Leone Quital, the Steelshaper, perhaps the conspiracy actually *is* based out of Crisillyir.

DANORAN BODYGUARDS.

In addition to the usual riflemen who would escort any Danoran dignitary, Lya travels with a pair of unique bodyguards, **Rush** and **Merton**.

Rush, a snide half-elf, carries a pair of elaborately decorated platinum rods, slotted into holsters at his hips, which function as extensible *immovable rods*. Merton, a hulking half-deaf half-orc, wears a steel helmet with unusually thick protection over his ears, which protects him from the staff-like object he carries: an arcanoscientific sonic weapon shaped vaguely like a tuning fork, but wrapped in cashmere to avoid attracting attention.



An ambitious tiefling in her late 20s, Lya's uncle is Han Jierre, the Sovereign of Danor. She graduated top of her class from the prestigious academy of war, the *Jierre Sciens d'Arms*, and many students of other war colleges have read her thesis, *Field Study of Melee Effectiveness and Foe Debilitation through Focused Limb Severance Techniques Contrasted with Mainstream Opportunistic Techniques*, which she wrote near the end of the last Yerasol War.

Despite her youth, she was awarded the position of Minister of Outsiders, giving her great leeway to travel and make alliances. For the past three years she has worked with King Aodhan to keep the peace between their two nations, and as they began making plans for a formal alliance, she accepted the king's offer of marriage as a symbolic union.

She is also the leader of the Obscurati's Golden Cell, tasked with recruiting archaeologists and miners around Lanjyr to seek out ancient seals like the one on Axis Island. She was told it was simply part of a plan to strengthen Danor by finding more magical powers, but she has suspicions of something greater. At the start of the adventure she does not know about Colossus Cell.



Han's father made sure he traveled and experienced the grand diversity of life, both good and bad, so that he would not be complacent with the sheltered prosperity his family enjoyed. He returned from his travels still devoted to the supremacy of science and reason, and his father brought him into the Obscurati, grooming him to become one of the conspiracy's three leaders.

Today Han is sympathetic to the needs and perspectives of others, but has ordered so many foul acts to promote the Ob agenda that he finds little joy in his own life. He still keeps in touch with the families of those he lived with during his youthful travels, to remind himself why he's pledged himself to this course.



The Banquet

Social. Montage.

Everyone is trying to be nice to each other, except one woman.

The banquet takes two hours in total, and generally is a polite diplomatic affair where no one wants to do anything contentious. But interspersed are moments where the party has a chance to define their positions and influence the opinions various NPCs have of them and of Risur.

The key with this encounter is to make the PCs feel involved in the politicking going on, and to give them a chance to flex their diplomatic and investigative muscle. Certain parties will not enjoy this type of gaming, so you'll need to decide whether to give your players time to hold full conversations with NPCs, or to gloss over everything but the key moments.

Running the Banquet.

To help the party keep track of who's talking, you might want to make stands or use minis for the different characters. You can point to each NPC as they talk, and heavily combat-oriented parties might pay more attention if they see minis and think combat is possible.

Event 1: Seating and the Toast.

Being members of the head table, the PCs await their declared entrance to the banquet in an adjacent chamber alongside the other members of the table. The PCs are kept in the back of the line, away from King Aodhan and Han Jierre, with the Risuri Head of Agriculture, Kian Doherty, one spot in front of them.

The group is announced, and each of the PCs is named. The line moves into the banquet hall, and the PCs and the rest of the table take their seats. The tables are set with empty plates, but the wine glasses have been filled in anticipation of the delegation's arrival.

King Aodhan is the first to rise, addressing the attendees in a loud voice, bidding them his deepest thanks and blessings for attending. He bids Han Jierre to rise and give the first toast of the evening. The Sovereign of Danor rises and takes the opportunity to give a toast to the cessation of hostilities between the two nations, proclaiming that "Our long conflict is finally at an end, and we can begin looking forward to a shining future."

After Han Jierre gives his toast, the king of Risur rises once again and gives his toast. The king thanks Sovereign Jierre before giving his toast in honor of his soon-to-be wife "the lovely and talented Lya Jierre. For without her, none of this would be possible."

Conversation murmurs around the various tables as King Aodhan sits. At this point etiquette permits one more person from each side to make a toast before the first course arrives.

Give the PCs a chance to go first, and either in the silence or in response to them, Danoran Minister of War Eloise Duffet proposes a toast:

"Let us remember the fallen sailors and orphaned children, and do them honor in these coming talks."

Then she gives a frigid glare to the king. A PC might recall a bit of Danoran propaganda from the Third Yerasol War (History DC 15) claiming Aodhan, before he was king, fired upon the Danoran capital of Cherage and struck an orphanage.

Event 2: Salad Fork, Soup Spoon.

Following the toasts, chefs come to deliver the first round of food. If you wish, have each PC make a Diplomacy check (DC 8) to maintain the proper etiquette as they eat.

The first course consists of a specially made Risuri soup imported from distant Shale. The soup is made using local spices and select fish that can only be found near the Yerasol Archipelago.

As people finish their soup, a second course of specially made Danoran salad and Beran breads are brought to the table. A server notes that the Danoran Minister of War Eloise Duffet has not touched her soup, to which Duffet responds that the soup's origin seems rather political. Shale was the seat of power of Duchess Ethelyn, the king's sister who led an attack on Danor.

Lya Jierre steps in and says that if a cow rancher murdered her father, she would not stop eating beef. The table chuckles, but Han Jierre seems intrigued by the topic. He brings up the exploits of brave RHC constables at Axis Island, expresses thanks for the aid to his niece in handling the matter, and then asks for your opinions about what the Duchess did and what punishment she deserved.

Duchess Ethelyn's betrayal of her brother King Aodhan played out in Adventure One. Let the PCs extemporize here. If your players are not the extemporizing type, let them off the hook by having Lya or King Aodhan brush off the question as one that is too serious for this gathering.

Event 3: Intermission.

Conversation can continue for a bit, but then the first intermission of the event is called. Guests are invited to view a gallery of fine art that has been set up in one of the skywalks. During the intermission the PCs have time to meet with other members of the crowd.

If the B-Team perished, the party receives three separate visits from Geoff Massarde, Kian Doherty, and Rosalyn Taylor, all of whom express condolences and recall their brief time with the other constables.

Once sufficient time has passed (DM's discretion), the attendees are called back to their tables for the next part of the meal.

Event 4: Let's Talk Peace.

The third course of the banquet consists of renowned meat samplings brought to Flint via magical transportation from the Risuri capital of Slate. Three plates are put on the table, each of them filled with a selection of finely spiced and thinly sliced meat meant as a preparatory appetizer for the guests.

When the attendees begin to eat, the conversation changes to a discussion about the start of the peace talks. Sovereign Jierre and King Aodhan give every impression of resuming an ongoing conversation about specifics of the talks, and they supply one another hints on how to handle some of their more difficult advisors and councilors. The tone of the conversation between the two sovereigns is open and friendly, and PCs should get a sense that both rulers are genuinely looking forward to the talks and bear no ill will towards one another.

Eventually Brakken, Lya Jierre, and Principal Minister Lee begin a conversation about what might be the hardest hurdle to overcome in the peace talks. Minister Lee believes that many in Risur are against the talks because of the fear of industrialization, while Lya Jierre believes her people cannot forgive past transgressions from the last Yerasol war. Brakken tries to include the PCs in the conversation, interested in hearing their opinions, since they're more in touch with the Risuri people on the streets.

Event 5: Agitation.

The next course arrives.

The fourth course consists of a haunch of specially bred boar from distant Ber, a personal gift from Vairday Bruse, King of Ber. The meat is accompanied by a selection of varied fruits from Elfaivar, sliced into bite-sized chunks, and everything is glazed with a sweet honey-based sauce.

The topic of conversation drifts again as Governor Stanfield talks about the changes that have come to Flint as a result of Risur's new industrial revolution. Stanfield feathers his own nest a bit by mentioning prominent construction, including the finished subrail system, the various factories of the Parity Lake district, and the Hotel Aurum.

At this, the Governor is confronted by the Danoran Minister of War, Eloise Duffet. She brings up several problems that have confronted Flint recently, including the corruption and suicide of Mayor Reed Macbannin, arsonist attacks, and the events of the past few days—which she pointedly explains she learned of only *after* arriving in the city today. Duffet wishes to hear the governor's thoughts on these matters, but Stanfield just offers a stock political answer:

"Every society has to find its balance after a transition, but we are committed to ensuring the safety of our citizens and our guests. You have my promise that if you had been in any danger neither I nor the king would have kept that information from you."

Duffet then asks the PCs what they've done to maintain the security in the city. She points out that the Danoran capital of Cherage has been peaceful for a generation, and claims the only violence in her homeland is what Risur brings to its shores. She neglects to mention that Cherage has had a strict curfew since its last riots.

Event 6: No Dessert.

A second intermission is called. This one includes a performance by a string quartet, with one violinist using the famous *hurricane violin*, enchanted in the Navras Opera House. Lya Jierre is trying to get Eloise to step aside for a private conversation when a Risuri guard comes running in, finds Minister Lee, and explains that Asrabey Varal is on his way up.

Less than a minute later, Asrabey Varal bursts into the gathering. No NPC will try to bar his way as he strides toward King Aodhan, where he intends to kneel as he speaks. If the party helped him with Ekossigan, he will show them respect and not try to force his way past them.

At no point does the dreadnought make eye contact with any of the Danoran delegation, seeing them as unworthy of his attention. He says,

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"King Aodhan, I apologize for my disruption. The Unseen Court wishes to know more of the danger Ekossigan saw, and so I request permission to investigate further, passing into the Bleak Gate to explore Cauldron Hill. Your nation owes me nothing, and so I ask this as a favor. If you would deny my request, you need only say so."

Asrabey is telling a white lie to the king, as the Court has no knowledge of what's happening in Cauldron Hill. But he sees this as his best chance to find Kasvarina.

The party might glimpse a slight twitch of anxiety from Brakken (Insight or Perception DC 26). This is because the mediator is hearing the surface thoughts of Han Jierre. (Roland Stanfield is immune

to mind-reading.) The Danoran sovereign is far better at keeping up a poker face than Brakken, and gives no indication of being perturbed by the specifics of Asrabey's request, though he demonstrates an appropriate level of displeasure at his breach of protocol.

King Aodhan berates Asrabey for choosing this moment of all times, and demands the eladrin leave at once. That said, he does not explicitly deny Asrabey's request; this sort of nuance is common in Risur-fey relations, but the Danorans don't pick it up. Asrabey accepts the king's statements and departs.

Most everyone else lets out the breaths they've been holding, and Aodhan jokes that dessert should be ready now. Han Jierre declines politely, saying he will take his leave so Risur can "deal properly with its fey allies." He nods to Brakken to verify they're still scheduled to meet the next morning, and with that the Danoran delegation leaves with as much dignity as is possible.

Aodhan asks the party and Minister Lee to come with him to talk in private. Brakken follows, promising the king he has information of import, but Minister Lee closes the door on his face, then casts a spell to sound-proof the room.

Final Preparation

Social. Real-Time.

The king tells the party to prepare for their mission to the Bleak Gate, and Brakken provides some key information.

King Aodhan is furious. He doesn't buy the Jierres' story that the evidence of their involvement is just a coincidence, but he wanted them to think he did. Now any element of surprise they might have had is blown because Asrabey likes making a dramatic entrance. Nevertheless, he recognizes that the party could use the eladrin's help in a fight, so if they don't have any objections, he'll grant Asrabey's request.

Telepathic Revelation.

Brakken, with no other recourse to get the king to listen, psionically sends a message to the party.

"I'm a telepath, and I read the Jierres' minds. Let me in."

When Asrabey Varal made his request, Brakken casually read the surface thoughts of all those in attendance. Han Jierre's reaction was the most shocking, and Brakken could tell he was quite worried of what Varal may unearth during his expedition to the hill. The Sovereign was also concerned that the knowledge might endanger his niece Lya. As for Lya's thoughts, Brakken sensed that she suddenly grew wary of her uncle, as if Asrabey's arrival had confirmed some suspicion she had about her uncle's activities.

Brakken has gotten a sense all night that everyone has been hiding things from each other, and that it all revolves around Lya's involvement in something far greater than he can read. But he knows that Cauldron Hill is at the center of it, because the last thought he overheard before the Danorans left was Han thinking, "I'll have to send a messenger to Cauldron Hill."

If the party doesn't figure it out, King Aodhan explains for them. If Han's sending a messenger to warn the Obscurati, that means they didn't already know an attack was imminent. And if the party can stop the messenger, they can maintain the element of surprise.

Minister Lee quickly calls in a few of his aides and gives them directions to watch for any way Han Jierre might pass along a message. If the party is ready to act, a few minutes later Minister Lee gets word of a Danoran guard heading downstairs toward the lobby; it might be worth following him and detaining him once he's out of the hotel. The man is unfamiliar with Flint, relying on a map to navigate to Stanfield Canal. He should be fairly easy to catch.

Meanwhile...

Han and Lya Jierre hold a quick meeting after the banquet, where Lya is incensed at how close Risur is to finding real proof of the conspiracy. The Danoran sovereign agrees that an intrusion to Cauldron Hill will be a setback, but he tells her not to worry. He knows things she doesn't, and there are contingency plans in place.

The best-case scenario for them is that the RHC and Asrabey are killed in the Bleak Gate and can bring back no information. If that fails, though, they'll have to be ready to leave at a moment's notice.

Han calls in one of his guards and gives the man the complicated instructions of how to deliver a message. He scribes five sigils on a sheet of paper, as well as a brief warning that the RHC and Asrabey are coming. He tucks the note into the man's pocket, then tells him to go as discreetly as possible along the Canal Route.

The man departs, and Han relaxes. Lya asks whether he thinks everything is fine now, and Han smiles. He explains that he expects the messenger to be captured. Sending him out will just lull Risur into a false sense of security, when indeed a message has already been sent that no bold hero could ever run down and catch.

Han knows that Roland Stanfield is part of Colossus Cell, and will pass along the news magically. Lya is unaware of Stanfield's involvement in the conspiracy.

Lya asks, and not for the first time, what is going on in Cauldron Hill, or at least when she'll have proved herself enough that he can trust her with the information. Han says later, certainly not until they leave Risur. He encourages his niece not to worry.

When, later, the colossus does rip free and cause a panic, Han resigns himself to giving up on peace with Risur. In the confusion he and Lya will withdraw to *Lux Profectusque*, which flees back to Danor at full speed. The ship will fight its way out if necessary, but if the party has a foolproof plan to halt the ship, the two can also make use of teleportation magic once they're out of the Hotel. They likely disappear when the party is too distracted to bother stopping them.

PART THREE:
Expedition to the Bleak Gate

The party attacks or sneaks into the Obscurati's complex.

Pick Your Team

Social. Montage.
If the party goes the Canal Route, they can bring along perhaps a handful of allies—if they're using amulets, there are only enough for the PCs, Asrabey, Alexander Grappa (in his fully reassembled golem body), and perhaps one or two other prominent NPCs like Kvarti or Gale, though the PCs need to be persuasive to convince them to step into the Bleak Gate. If they're relying on Obscurati wands to complete the transition, there are only a limited number of charges available, at GM's discretion. We know tagalong NPCs can be annoying. Asrabey and Grappa, though, have important plot roles.

If the party travels with Ekossigan, they'll have the fey lord and his hundreds of lesser fey minions, plus Asrabey. They might be able to convince Ekossigan to wait long enough to get Alexander Grappa, but he won't let them bring along military or police.

If the party uses the king's Ritual of Transposition, the expedition can include up to thirty-one people, which should include Asrabey and Grappa. The party might even convince Kvarti Gorbatiy to tag along. Sixty soliders gather to travel with them, but not all of them make it through the portal before it closes. Enough come through to constitute two Allied Units (see Appendix J).

Canal Route.
This route involves passing beneath five bridges that cross Stanfield Canal, which runs between Bosum Strand and Parity Lake. The route can be traveled by barge or steamboat (the bridges aren't tall enough for most sailing ships), or you can walk along a foot path paralleling the canal. The route to enter the Bleak Gate goes either direction—east-to-west or west-to-east—with guards at each end.

Each bridge is keyed to a different magical sigil, and a person or object must be marked with or carrying something marked with that sigil. Each bridge you pass under with the right sigil pulls you further into the Bleak Gate, and over the course of a few miles the real world fades out. The effect of each bridge only lasts about ten minutes unless you pass beneath the next in the line. The party might take this path if they manage to get the five sigils from Quentin Augst, but then they'd have to know to seize the Obscurati wand from the watchmen in order to complete the transition. If they got a wand from Norm or amulets from Lorcan Kell repaired by Minister Lee, they can get in on their own.

At either exit, watchmen wait beneath the last bridge with wands that finalize the transition. Without the wand's magic, a person can remain in the Bleak Gate only for a few minutes before snapping back to reality. Normally the watchmen just let through couriers or pick up crates that fall into the canal since the ship they're on isn't in the same plane as them. They've never had to deal with a hostile incursion. See Toll Bridge (next page).

Grappa and Asrabey.
If the party has these two with them, Asrabey mentions Kasvarina's name, and Grappa explains what he did to her. Because of his *geas*, all he can explain is that he learned about her history and thought that if she had another chance to experience her life she might make different choices.

Kasvarina was once a great person who did much good, but eventually the conspiracy corrupted her. So when Grappa fled, he locked away her memories. She'll regain them at a rate of a year's worth every few days, but she's over five centuries old, so it'll take a while. Certainly she'll eventually recall what the Ob have told her, but she won't have her own full memories for months or years. Being exposed to her original life can bring memories back faster, but they'll be spotty.

Asrabey is unsure what to make of this, but he promises he will find her and keep her safe. If she really is part of this conspiracy, perhaps he'll be able to help her recall something of use. If any PC is a Vekeshi Mystic, Asrabey asks for his help, and if other PCs offer he won't refuse them.

Mass Murder with Ekossigan.
Ekossigan, fully unhinged after sacrificing thirty-one children, marches with three dozen gremlins and numerous other fey—satyrs, nymphs, pixies, and the like. These are presented as generic Allied Fey (see Appendix J). The small army cavorts and dances from the bleak analogue of Cloudwood to the Nettles. The music starts boisterous but turns eerie as more and more fey start cackling maniacally. Ekossigan deploys scouts, and after a few hours they find the front entrance.

Ritual of Transposition.
After the banquet, the king and party take a carriage from Hotel Aurum to a wooded grove at the foot of Cauldron Hill. Sixty soldiers wait around an unlit bonfire. Stover Delft is also there to wish the party off, and has brought along Alexander Grappa. Asrabey arrives on his own.

Minister Lee draws a ritual circle with powdered rust, and then hands out thimble-sized charm bags woven with pieces of the Risuri flag. The king stands aside, concentrating and gathering power. A flicker of weakness passes through the crowd, and everyone present somehow knows that the king is drawing upon his people to perform the ritual.

At midnight, with no moon in the sky and no city lights visible through the trees, the king explains that once they appear in the Bleak Gate, they will be stuck there at least until the sun rises, though its light will be barely noticeable on that plane. After sunrise, if they want to return they can tear open the charm bags, which will end the spell's effect on them. He warns them that when the spell ends, they'll appear in the equivalent spot in this world—the terrain is the same, but structures might be very different, so be careful. If they don't open the bags by sunset, which will be in about eighteen hours, they'll be trapped there.

Stover Delft is unusually polite to the PCs during this time, knowing that this mission could prove to be fatal. He tells them to come back alive so he can take credit for training them.

When everyone is ready, the king begins the ritual.

Into the Gate

Exploration. Montage. Level 12.

The party navigates the Bleak Gate to reach Cauldron Hill.

Sounds do not echo in the Bleak Gate, but neither is there ambient noise to muffle them. The water is still, the sky black, cloudless, starless. Wherever the party appears, they smell an everpresent stench of burnt engine oil and hear a dull hiss coming from the direction of Cauldron Hill: the faint exhalations of dozens of steam boilers.

The city exists just as in the real world, the same buildings, the same trees, but wholly unoccupied. A single flicker of light could can be seen for miles, but there's no light to be seen.

There are five possible entrances the party can find to the Cauldron Hill complex: three "front doors," the entrance from Parity Lake, and the utility access from atop the hill.

Front Doors.

The front doors are three heavily-guarded mechanically-operated doors built into the side of Cauldron Hill. One faces Stanfield Canal, another is in the western Nettles, and one in the south Nettles. All three have similar defenses and open onto long passages that lead to the interior checkpoint.

Each of these also has a nearby U-shaped tunnel carved into the hillside, lined with rusted ring gates. These passageways, magically concealed, let Ob operatives step out of one of the front entrances, then immediately go through a short loop to transition four-fifths of the way into the real world. These gates have different sigils than the Stanfield Canal gates, and only have 4 gates, not enough to fully transition between the planes.

Parity Lake Entrance.

In the unlikely event the party explores the southern shore of Parity Lake, they can find another entrance with a channel to let small boats deliver materials directly into the complex. A large hydraulic elevator (Area 3 on the complex map) carries material up to the main level.

Utility Access.

On the surface of the mountain directly above the underground complex are five utility shafts, their exits surrounded by rocks or trees to making stumbling across them unlikely. However if a character gets within a hundred feet he can pinpoint the location by sound and eventually by the smoke and steam billowing out.

A grated cover is trapped with warding runes (Strength DC 25 to open, Perception DC 27 to detect trap, close blast 2, +17 vs. Reflex, 5d6+15 fire damage), but if it is removed the 20-ft. wide shaft provides access to the complex, a hundred feet down (Area 4 on the complex map). Each minute a character spends in the shaft he must make an Endurance check (DC 15) or else take 5 points of damage from the heat.

Toll Bridge

Action. Tactical. Level 12.

At the end of the canal route, Obscurati watchmen bar the way.

Depending on their resources, the party might simply need to avoid or kill these foes, or capture them and get them to explain where they keep the Obscurati wand that will complete the party's trip into this plane. The guards at this bridge have one wand between them.

If the party really has ruined their element of surprise, or if they're going in with a large force of allies, feel free to increase the defenders here dramatically. But normally only a skeleton force watches the canals.

Terrain.

The final bridge over the canal has a 10-ft. wide walkway passing beneath it, with a short drop into the still water on one side, and a gentle grassy slope on the other. The bottom of the bridge is 20 feet up and has various trusses and decorations in which the shadow trolls hide from the party. The two Cauldron Hill guards are posted at the top of the bridge with a dim shielded lantern.

List of Adversaries.

- 2 shadow trolls
- 2 Cauldron Hill guards

Shadow Troll	Level 12 Elite Brute
Large shadow humanoid, troll	XP 1400
HP 228; **Bloodied** 114	**Initiative** +10
AC 24, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 24	**Perception** +13
Speed 8, climb 8	Darkvision
Resist 10 necrotic	
Saving Throws +2, **Action Points** 1	

Traits

▸ **Regenerate in Shadows**

The troll regains 10 hit points whenever he starts his turn and has at least 1 hit point. When he takes fire or radiant damage, his regeneration does not function on his next turn.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Shadow Claws** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic

It swipes a claw and tears away part of your shadow. You feel horrible wounds, even though it didn't touch you.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +15 vs. Reflex

Hit: 4d6+12 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened until the end of the troll's next turn. The target cannot spend healing surges until it creates a light source.

⊘ **Double Claw** ✦ At-Will

Effect: The troll uses *shadow claws* twice.

⊘ **Snatch** ✦ At-Will

An arm swoops down from above, grabs you, and hoists you up to the bridge. A massive lanky creature opens its fanged mouth, eager to devour you.

Effect: The troll uses *shadow claws*. If the attack hits, the troll grabs the target (escape DC 24). It lifts the creature off the ground, sliding it up to 4 squares to a space adjacent to the troll.

⊘ **Tear Free Shadow** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic

It bites down and tears free shadowy flesh, leaving your skin unmarked, though the pain is horrifying. You see a darkened version of your own screaming face pulled into the troll's body, and you suddenly slip out of the creature's grasp.

Requirement: Target must be grabbed.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. AC

Hit: 8d6+24 necrotic damage. Until the troll is killed or until the end of the encounter (whichever comes first), the target and any gear it wields cannot affect the troll in any way, except for attacks with the fire or radiant keyword.

Skills Athletics +17, Stealth +15

Str	22 (+12)	**Dex**	18 (+10)	**Wis**	14 (+8)
Con	20 (+11)	**Int**	6 (+4)	**Cha**	9 (+5)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Understands Primordial

Cauldron Hill Guard	Level 12 Goon Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 350
HP 57; **Bloodied** 28	**Initiative** +7
AC 26, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 24	**Perception** +11
Speed 5	

Traits

▸ **Goon**

Similar to a minion, the Cauldron Hill guard goes down easily in a fight. He has half the hit points of a normal creature of his level.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Longsword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. AC

Hit: 3d8+6 damage.

⊘ **Pistol** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +17 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+10 damage.

Load minor.

▸ **Sound the Alarm** ✦ Encounter

He shoves himself away from you and runs, calling for help.

Effect: The guard ends any conditions that slow or immobilize him, and then shifts his speed.

Str	18 (+10)	**Dex**	13 (+7)	**Wis**	10 (+6)
Con	10 (+6)	**Int**	10 (+6)	**Cha**	11 (+6)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Equipment *potion of darkvision*, full plate, shield, longsword, pistol, Obscurati wand

Tactics.

The guards can easily see the party approaching if they carry light sources; if so, they move to the walkway and hide just out of sight up the hill. They drink their *potions of darkvision* so they can attack from the shadows. Meanwhile, the shadow trolls hide under the bridge and wait to attack the last PC in line. One uses *snatch* to pulls the victim off the ground, while the other uses *tear free shadow*.

When the trolls attack, the guards shoot at any PC in close range, then charge into melee. With the trolls on their side they think there's no one they can't beat. If things turn sour, a guard might run, but he's slow. If he manages to get back to the top of the bridge he'll light a flare that alerts the guards at the front door that faces the canal.

Aftermath.

The watchmen know about only areas 1, 2, and 3 of the Cauldron Hill complex. They seem almost relieved they were attacked, since it means things will soon change. Morale has been terrible, and after a bit of reflection a surviving guard might decide he'll be happier back in the real world.

Cauldron Hill Entrance

Action. Tactical. Level 6+.

The party fights or sneaks their way into the Obscurati's fortress.

The Obscurati don't like solicitors. Getting into their complex will require clever planning. Luckily, the early paranoia that helped create the base's defenses has faded, so the more expensive and tedious protections, like magic *alarms* on every entrance, are no longer active.

Layout.

The interior of the Cauldron Hill Facility is primarily made up of steel walls, specially shaped by Leone Quital. As most Obscurati operatives working in the facility lack darkvision, gas lamps dot the walls at intervals of about every 10 ft. Unless indicated, every room is considered to be fully illuminated by lights, though PCs can attack them if desired (treat as a lantern).

A pervasive smell of oil can almost be tasted throughout the facility. Recent activation attempts with Borne have resulted in pools of leaked witchoil. The smell lingers even though they were cleaned up.

Front Doors.

Each of the three main entrances is a highly defensible structure, with steel doors (20 ft. wide, 12 ft. tall, 4 inches thick) built into the stone sides of the hill. Thin lines of gold crisscross the frame on the inside, barring any sort of teleportation effects.

Beyond the doors is a simple foyer with a room for the guards on the right and the hydraulic-powered mechanism on the left that operates the doors. Though not separately mapped, they all resemble Checkpoint One (Area 1 on the complex map).

Beyond the foyer, a 10-ft. wide tunnel continues a half mile or more to Checkpoint One. Two sets of light rail tracks run the length, and small hand-cranked vehicles make it easier to ferry men and supplies, allowing travel at up to 15 miles per hour. There are currently two such vehicles stationed near the entrance.

The front doors remain closed most of the time, but a slot can be opened to communicate with visitors. When shut, the doors lock into the floor and ceiling with steel bars, making forcing them open nearly impossible (Strength DC 34). Gremlins with the party can make the bars jostle loose, so the doors simply have to be pushed apart (Strength DC 24).

In addition to the group of watchmen at the end of the canal, two other groups roam the area around the mountain, maintaining wards that keep evil spirits at bay. Therefore, every two hours the front doors open to allow people to cycle in and out. Each door has a daily passcode—today's are "outdoor," "gathering," and "yawning," and the guards are actually quite cautious because they've had to deal with a handful of incursions by possessed guards and evil shadow doppelgangers.

Defenders.

The Cauldron Hill facility is guarded by a mix of men and darklings, short shadowy beings with wrinkled gray skin, enlisted into service with bribes and magic. They dress in rags, carry rusted daggers, and communicate through the sounds of metal slicing against metal.

If the party comes by a route other than the Ritual of Transposition, there are only four Cauldron Hill guards and two dark creepers here, but the door is closed. They count as a Level 6 encounter.

If the party waits for the gate to open to let a group in or out, add those two extra guards to the hostile forces. This is a Level 9 encounter.

If the party waits until the 14th, the defenders are on alert. In addition to the normal guards inside the gate, an ambush contingent waits hidden on the hill, looking for light sources that approach any of the entrances. They then rush to the exterior of that entrance and hide a hundred feet away in the darkness. The ambush squad has several Bleak Gate monsters working for them, and they will try to attack from opposite sides to pin the party against the cliff face.

The ambush squad alone is a Level 14 encounter; adding the front door guards makes a Level 16 encounter. However, the party should have a lot of soldiers on their side, giving them the advantage, and making it feel like they really have to fight to get into the Ob complex.

List of Adversaries.

Normal Front Door Guards

- 2 Cauldron Hill guards (page 403)
- 2 Obscurati dark creepers
- 2 more guards during shift change

Ambush Squad

- 4 Obscurati dark creepers
- 2 tamed serpent-maned lions
- 1 Obscurati veteran nethermancer
- 2 tamed cackling crawlers
- 5 Obscurati slayers

RECRUITMENT.

How does one end up working in the Bleak Gate for a mysterious conspiracy? Most of the people here are patriotic soldiers and engineers, recruited with the promise of a chance to serve their country. In the aftermath of the adventure, the party might track down the head recruiter, one **Colonel Greg Masterson**, at the Battalion military academy. As soon as he gets word of the catastrophe at Cauldron Hill, though, he goes out into the bayou and blows his brains out. He reported to Roland Stanfield, and does not want anyone to discover Stanfield's involvement, not even by interrogating his corpse.

NUMBER OF DEFENDERS.

Unless you need to make the challenge tougher, assume the complex as a whole has the following occupants. There were more, but the party has killed a fair number who were sent on missions over the past year.

- **100 engineers.** 100 in the barracks.
- **60 Cauldron Hill guards.** 2 at the canal bridge, 4 on patrol, 2 each at the three front entrances, 2 at the Parity Lake entrance, 6 at Checkpoint One, and 40 in the barracks who are off duty but tend to the kitchen and various menial tasks. The off-duty ones aren't in armor but do carry weapons.
- **18 Obscurati dark creepers.** 2 each at the three front entrances, 12 who sleep outside on the mountain, staking territory so local monsters don't invade.
- **9 Obscurati slayers.** These work in the VIP suites (areas 10 to 26).
- **2 Obscurati veteran nethermancers.** They reside in the VIP suites.
- **6 elite researchers.** They also reside in the VIP suites.
- **3 golems.** 2 Borne prototypes and 1 greater Borne prototype, usually at the Golem Guardpost (area 5).
- **3 unique characters.** Leone Quital and the fairly helpless Kasvarina, plus possibly Norm, the Obscurati liaison to the Kell guild.

Obscurati Dark Creeper — Level 11 Goon Lurker
Small shadow humanoid, darkling — XP 300

HP 42; **Bloodied** 21 — **Initiative** +15
AC 25, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22 — **Perception** +11
Speed 6 — Darkvision

Traits

▸ **Goon**

Similar to a minion, the Obscurati dark creeper goes down easily in a fight. He has half the hit points of a normal creature of his level.

Standard Actions

✓ **Poisoned Dagger** (poison, weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d6+7 damage. If the target is granting combat advantage to the creeper, it also gains ongoing 10 poison damage and is dazed (save ends both).

▸ **Darkness** ✦ Encounter

The whole world goes pitch black.

Effect: The dark creeper creates a zone, Area Burst 2 within 20, of total darkness. It lasts until the end of the encounter.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Disappear and Ambush** ✦ At-Will

Your weapon goes through the monster's body, which vanishes in a black swirl. The rags it was wearing fall to the ground, then slowly disappear as well.

Trigger: The dark creeper takes damage and doesn't die.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): The dark creeper turns invisible, teleports up to 10 squares, and makes a Stealth check. It remains invisible until it attacks or until the end of its next turn.

Skills Stealth +18, Thievery +16

Str 10 (+5) **Dex** 22 (+11) **Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 12 (+6) **Int** 10 (+5) **Cha** 7 (+3)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Knifespeak, understand Primordial
Equipment rusted dagger

Tamed Serpent-Maned Lion — Level 13 Minion Brute
Medium shadow animate (undead) — XP 200

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion — **Initiative** +7
AC 25, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 25 — **Perception** +2
Speed 6, climb 4 — Darkvision
Immune poison

Traits

☼ **Snapping Fangs** ✦ Aura 1

A writhing mass of flicking tongues and venom-slick fangs frame the lion's fierce visage.

Any enemy that ends its turn within the aura takes 3 poison damage.

Standard Actions

✓ **A Thousand Bites** ✦ At-Will, Basic

The lion's teeth dig into you, and then countless serpents in its mane bare their fangs and strike.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC

Hit: 12 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Standard Actions

▸ **Wake the Mountain** (fear) ✦ Encounter

The lion roars, raising the hair on your neck and shaking the trees of the entire mountainside. A chorus of wails, shrieks, and hisses swirl around you in reply.

Effect: Every enemy within a mile is immobilized (save ends).

Str 19 (+10) **Dex** 16 (+9) **Wis** 10 (+6)
Con 12 (+7) **Int** 2 (+1) **Cha** 6 (+4)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** —

Obscurati Veteran Nethermancer Level 13 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 800

HP 97; **Bloodied** 48 **Initiative** +10
AC 27, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 26 **Perception** +10
Speed 6 Darkvision

Standard Actions

⊘ **Orb Conk** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The mage's obsidian orb orbits around him and smashes you if you come too close.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+9 damage, and any light sources the target is carrying are suppressed until the end of the nethermancer's next turn.

▸ **Shatter the Light** (cold) ✦ At-Will
Black tendrils crackle within the mage's obsidian orb, and your light source explodes with frigid energy.
Effect: Light sources in an Area Burst 2 within 20 are destroyed unless they are magical. Magical light sources are suppressed until the end of the encounter. Creatures in the burst take 11 cold damage.

✲ **Tendrils of Shadow** (cold, necrotic) ✦ Encounter
The nethermancer sweeps his orb, and insubstantial black tendrils reach up from the ground and snare you.
Attack: Area Burst 2 within 10 (enemies in burst); +16 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6+10 necrotic and cold damage, and the target is restrained (Escape DC 24).
Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter. All light sources in the burst are suppressed, and light from outside the zone cannot make the zone brighter than "dimly lit." Enemies treat the area as difficult terrain. Any enemy that ends its turn in the zone is attacked by the zone's secondary attack.
Secondary Attack: (an enemy who ends its turn in the zone) +12 vs. Reflex.
Secondary Hit: 11 necrotic and cold damage, and the target is restrained (Escape DC ⚀1).

Skills Arcana +15, Stealth +11
Str 10 (+6) **Dex** 11 (+6) **Wis** 14 (+8)
Con 12 (+7) **Int** 18 (+10) **Cha** 10 (+6)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Tamed Cackling Crawler Level 13 Minion Brute
Medium shadow animate (undead) XP 200

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +7
AC 25, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 25 **Perception** +2
Speed 6, climb 4 Darkvision
Immune poison

Standard Actions

⊘ **Clamber** ✦ At-Will, Basic
This half-a-corpse drags itself with unnatural speed, and its bare skull chuckles constantly at the thought of an imminent meal. The corpse yanks at your legs, crawls up your body, and pulls you about before you manage to shake it off.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 12 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 25) and grants combat advantage until it escapes.

✓ **Maddened Glee** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The skull's eyeless gaze burrows through the crumbling wall of your mind as its laughter reaches a lunatic crescendo.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. Will
Hit: The target takes ongoing 10 psychic damage until the cackling crawler is no longer adjacent.

Str 20 (+11) **Dex** 13 (+7) **Wis** 3 (+2)
Con 15 (+8) **Int** 3 (+2) **Cha** 6 (+4)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** —

Obscurati Slayer Level 10 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 500

HP 71; **Bloodied** 35 **Initiative** +12
AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 20 **Perception** +11
Speed 7, teleport 3 Darkvision
Vulnerable 5 radiant (see *veil of shadows*, below)

Traits

▸ **Veil of Shadows**
If the Obscurati slayer takes radiant damage, she cannot teleport or use *shadow kidnap* until the end of her next turn.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Shortsword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+9 damage.

⊘ **Rifle** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Ranged 20/40/200 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10+6 damage, or 2d10+16 on a crit
Load standard

✓ **Shadow Kidnap** (necrotic) ✦ Recharge on a miss
Your shadow and hers stretches out across the battlefield, and then you both reappear away from your allies.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6+15 necrotic damage, and the Obscurati slayer teleports herself and the target to two adjacent spaces within 7 squares.

Skills Acrobatics +16, Stealth +16
Str 11 (+5) **Dex** 22 (+11) **Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 17 (+8) **Int** 10 (+5) **Cha** 13 (+6)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Tactics.

If the guards are attacked, they send a dark creepers to the push cart. It cranks his way toward Checkpoint One, which takes one minute. This raises the alert within the compound, but no reinforcements come.

If the ambush party can attack from ambush, the cackling crawlers and serpent-maned lions attack first to cause panic. The slayers then move in pairs to strike whoever is most vulnerable at the edge of the group.

Parity Lake Entrance.

This entrance is accessible by a 30-ft. wide lightless tunnel with 10-ft. deep water. A much larger version of the front entrance doors, powered by a similarly large machine, allows this entrance to be locked. The entrance only opens for scheduled deliveries of materiel. It only takes a skeleton crew to make sure the doors stay closed, so should the party trick their way through here, there are only two Cauldron Hill guards.

Utility Access.

A party that enters from above must basically guess which of the five service shafts to go down. They're two hundred feet or more apart, so splitting up is a very bad idea. After a bit of shoving or unscrewing, the party can exit the service areas, though they need to make Stealth checks at a –5 penalty to avoid attracting the attention of those nearby.

Lower Facility.

This section of the facility has strong security, not ridiculous security.

1. Checkpoint One (Level 10).

Much like the front entrance guard houses, this defensive station has a pair of mechanically-operated steel doors at the front of a hallway, and

another pair at the end. Two secret doors (Perception DC 25, Thievery DC 30) lead to the side chambers, where a small guard force can observe the area outside with a complex series of mirrors and lenses that run through the ceiling. The main tunnel is a killing field, equipped with oil sprayers and firestarters. At the command of the guards in either side chamber, the oil room can be sprayed with oil, which takes three rounds. On the fourth round, several sparks ignite the whole room, burning people inside alive. The fire deals 3d6 damage per round, and if somehow they survive that, it consumes all breathable oxygen after one minute.

List of Adversaries.

- 6 Cauldron Hill guards (three on each side, page 403)

2. Barracks.

The rooms around the outer edges are occupied by about 100 engineers who won't get into battle. They try to pass the time with games, reading, and writing theoretical papers, since their work on the colossus is complete. These rooms also house 20 Cauldron Hill guards who are out of their armor (reduce all defenses by 2), who won't have their weapons handy if caught by surprise. The interior area consists of well-stocked supply rooms, offices for handling logistics, a large kitchen, and a commissary. Twenty more unarmored Cauldron Hill guards work here.

Two sets of service passages (Area 9) can be accessed via riveted (Strength DC 26) and *alarmed* hatches (Stealth DC 25, dispel DC 34). Leone is notified if anyone opens a hatch. One leads to Area 3, another to the Upper Facility. These passages have pipes for natural gas, fresh water, waste water, hydraulic pump pressure, and air circulation. Each passage is just less than 5 ft. wide and unlit. Their exits are also *alarmed*.

3. Checkpoint Two.

This huge hall was once a staging area for colossus construction, storing all the massive components needed. Now the space is empty, with vaulted ceilings and a floor that has huge gouges from several years of industrial work. On the east end, a massive hydraulic elevator descends three hundred feet to the Parity Lake entrance. A pair of service passages, riveted and *alarmed* like those in Area 2, lead off near the elevator.

A small checkpoint lies on the west end, this one is simply intended to keep curious engineers from roaming. The secret doors that lead to the side chambers are accessed from inside Area 3. There is no deadly oil-fire trap here. The double doors to the north are huge, each 15 ft. wide and 30 ft. tall. Controls are located in the two alcoves just south of the doors, but the doors stand open when the party arrives.

4. Utility Access.

These areas contain steam engines that power fans to circulate air, and operate pumps for the hydraulic doors, as well as sewage and fresh water pumps. Large vertical shafts lead to the surface.

5. Golem Guardpost.

This area functions like an airlock: the doors to Checkpoint Two can't open if the doors to the Colossus Chamber are open, and vice versa. The south doors are controlled from the south alcove, and the north doors are controlled from the north alcove.

However, once you're inside, you can be trapped, because controls next to the doors in the Colossus Chamber can operate and lock both ends of this area. As a final defense before the conspiracy's masterpiece, this chamber is enchanted to let the master of the facility—in this case Leone Quital—see what happens and communicate with anyone inside.

Welcome to My Parlor

Action. Tactical. Level 14.

Quital toys with the PCs by using prototype golems to try and kill them.

When the party arrives, unless the party has been completely stealthy and no one has had a chance to run and raise an alarm, Leone waits until he gets as much of the party as he thinks possible inside this area. Then he manipulates the controls to close and lock the south doors. He addresses the party, who should recognize his voice if they encountered him in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*.

The doors slam shut, and the gas lights along the walls flicker off. A disembodied voice echoes in the dark, speaking with an aristocratic Crisillyir accent.

"I don't know whether to be impressed with you getting past my security, or disappointed in the men who were supposed to stop you. But men, after all, are weak. That's why we build machines, why we have *progress*! All we're good for is thinking. That, and enjoying the pleasures in life."

You hear a soft sip, as if from a wine glass, then a contented sigh.

"Best to leave the violence and physical labor to the steam and steel. Now I leave it to you to decide whether to go the easy way or the hard way. Throw down your weapons and have a drink with me, and I'll explain what it is we're doing here. Would you believe the engineers we had working on it thought this was a Risuri military project? They were fools, and I'd like to hold out hope that you're not fools.

"So yes, throw down your weapons and we can think, and talk, and enjoy life. Or be foolish, and see which breaks first: your flesh, or my steel."

If the party refuses to throw down their weapons, the doors to the north open, revealing two man-sized and one 12-ft. tall golem that march in and attack. The northern doorway has two sets of doors, and the second set that actually would lead to the colossus construction chamber remain closed and locked. If the party *does* throw down their weapons, the exact same thing happens. Leone is a liar.

List of Adversaries.

- 2 Borne prototypes
- 1 greater Borne prototype
- Leone Quital (absent)

Leone Quital, Master of Magnetism

Defenses Leone has 175 HP, AC 27, Fort 27, Will 27, Ref 27, and a shield of floating metal that absorbs incoming damage. The shield has AC 29, 50 HP, and "heals" 10 HP per round, and prevents all attacks from affecting Leone until it is destroyed.

Traits

▶ **I'm an Effect**

Leone's full stats are presented in Appendix xx, Recurring Characters, but you can use these simplified stats for this encounter.

Standard Actions

▶ **Magnetic Magic**

Every round, Quital acts at the beginning of the initiative order with one of the following abilities:

- **Haste:** One Borne prototype can make a basic attack.
- **A Gentle Push:** Quital can slide one of the Borne prototypes 3 squares.
- **Drop Your Weapon:** Quital makes an attack against a PC holding a metallic item: +20 vs. Reflex. On a hit, the item is pulled from the target's hand and thrown across the room.
- **Pinned:** Quital makes an attack against a PC wearing metal armor: +20 vs. Fortitude. On a hit, the target is immobilized until Quital's next turn.

Greater Borne Prototype	Level 15 Elite Soldier (Leader)
Large natural animate (construct)	XP 2,800
HP 198; **Bloodied** 99	**Initiative** +13
AC 31, **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 23	**Perception** +6
Speed 6 (cannot shift)	Darkvision
Immune diseases, poison	
Saving Throws +2, **Action Points** 1	

Traits

▸ **Fire Good! Lightning Bad!**

The fire just seems to accelerate its arcane steam engine. Lightning, though, it doesn't react well to.

The first time the prototype takes fire damage each turn, it can shift 2 squares as a free action. When the prototype takes lightning damage, it is slowed until the end of its next turn.

Standard Actions

✓ **Smashing Fist** ✦ At-Will, Basic

"Dear brothers," says the golem, "you embarrass yourselves with your feeble strikes. Don't you wish they'd put you in this superior body?"

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+15 damage.

✓ **Wild Swing** ✦ At-Will

The golem actually frowns. "All things considered," it says, "I do wish they'd given us some actual combat training."

Effect: The prototype uses *smashing fist* against two adjacent enemies.

✓ **Awesome Blow** ✦ At-Will

"Aha! Here is a field application of Stowe's second law of motion. Behold."

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+15 damage and the target is knocked prone. The prototype slides the target 3 squares. If it ends this forced movement adjacent to another creature, make a secondary attack.

Secondary Attack: Melee 1 (creature adjacent to first target); +20 vs. AC

Secondary Hit: 2d6+15 damage and the target is knocked prone.

▸ **History Lesson** ✦ Encounter

"Linus, Hunting," says the golem. "Remember the Brandonesian War we studied? I'll be Mount Associa. You be General Kim's cavalry!" Then, like an avalanche, the golem falls upon you.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. Fortitude

Effect: The greater Borne prototype falls prone.

Hit: 2d6+15 damage and the target is knocked prone and restrained (Escape DC 31). If the greater Borne prototype stands, the creature escapes. The creature cannot stand until it escapes.

Effect: The two Borne prototypes can each shift their speed to a space adjacent to the target, then make a basic attack against that creature.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Arcane Reflection** ✦ Encounter

Your attack triggers a cascade of glowing glyphs across the golem's body, and then your own force rebounds upon you.

Trigger: An attack hits the prototype.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): The attack has the same effect on the target.

Str	27 (+15)	**Dex**	15 (+11)	**Wis**	8 (+6)
Con	25 (+14)	**Int**	16 (+10)	**Cha**	9 (+6)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Borne Prototype	Level 14 Skirmisher
Medium natural animate (construct)	XP 1,000
HP 94; **Bloodied** 47	**Initiative** +13
AC 28, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 20	**Perception** +6
Speed 6	Darkvision
Immune diseases, poison	

Traits

▸ **Fire Good! Lightning Bad!**

As the Greater Borne Prototype, above.

Standard Actions

✓ **Punch** ✦ At-Will, Basic

"I feel like we should have weapons of our own," says the golem. "Don't you agree, brothers? Look at these foes we face! Leone, it was foolish not to arm us."

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+12 damage.

Effect: The prototype can shift 2 squares and deal 5 damage to a different creature adjacent to it.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Arcane Reflection** ✦ Encounter

Your attack triggers a cascade of glowing glyphs across the golem's body, and then your own force rebounds upon you.

Trigger: An attack hits the prototype.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): The attack has the same effect on the target.

Str	23 (+13)	**Dex**	15 (+11)	**Wis**	8 (+6)
Con	21 (+12)	**Int**	16 (+10)	**Cha**	9 (+6)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Tactics.

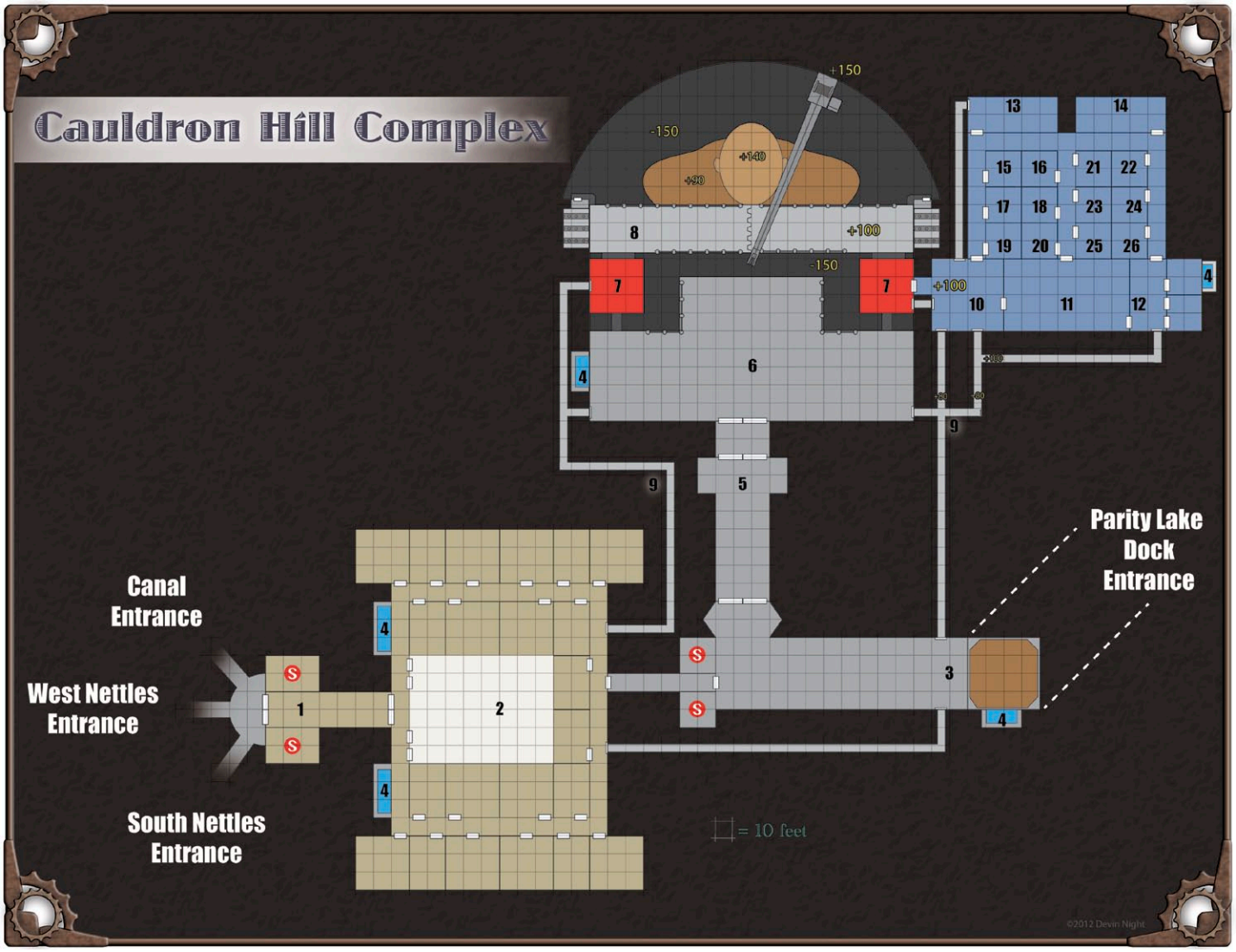
Quital gives the golems verbal orders, directing them to attack weaker PCs, and having them double team when possible. The greater prototype is a deadly threat from its sheer size, but it's not really built for brawling, and so it only has as much reach as a medium creature. It might shock the party when the golems start talking, bickering like brothers when one of them messes up or gets in another's way.

If a PC visibly does damage to the prototypes, Quital uses his action for that round to try and pin that PC, or disarm them if they have a particularly potent weapon. Should things be going well for the golems, he'll use his *haste* effect to make one of the golems more efficient in close combat.

The party's allies make a big difference here. Asrabey will try to keep the greater prototype at bay while the rest of the party handles the smaller ones. During the fight he shouts at Leone to bring him Kasvarina if he wants his death to be brief.

Alexander Grappa recognizes the golems—he raised them, after all—and uses his "click-to-voice" gadget to call out to them: Linus, Hunting, and Colin (the big one). Though he's useless offensively, Grappa's presence deters the golems. The golems won't attack him, and take a –2 penalty to attack any PC adjacent to him. After five rounds of slowly explaining who he is, he manages to convince them to stop fighting.

Without Grappa, the party might still reason with the golems, since they're starved for intellectual conversation. A petition to talk (Diplomacy DC 20) will get them to ask what the party has that's worth discussing in the middle of combat. If a character brings up interesting topics—by making an Arcana, Dungeoneering, History, Nature, or Religion check (DC 20) on his turn as a free action—the golems take a –2 penalty to their attacks for the round as they're too distracted for their own good.



Aftermath.

If the golems take the party out, Quital has them drag any survivors into Area 6 and where a medic can stabilize them so they can be interrogated. See Villainous Victory (page 410). If the party either destroys or talks down the golems, Leone scoffs and ends his observation of them so he can prepare a final line of defense. The party remains locked in the room, but some thorough dismantling (Thievery DC 36) can make the doors open. If they got the golems to stand down, Grappa asks them to smash the doors open, but they cannot manage it.

Gnomish Escape Plan.

If the party is stuck for more than a minute, they hear muffled nervous laughter coming from the walls—the voice of **Tinker Oddcog**, a gnomish artificer who designed the colossus. Tinker mutters about how small and dark and safe the tunnel he is in is, and then begins jabbering about how he needs them to get him out. He's quite erratic, obsessed with things being tiny, and has trouble carrying on a conversation.

He never moves out from behind the wall, but after a moment he seems to address the doors, saying, "I know you're large, and I don't trust you. You were always watching me. But you do as I say! Open up! Let these people through." And then the doors open, revealing Area 6.

Tinker won't show up again until Adventure Six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*.

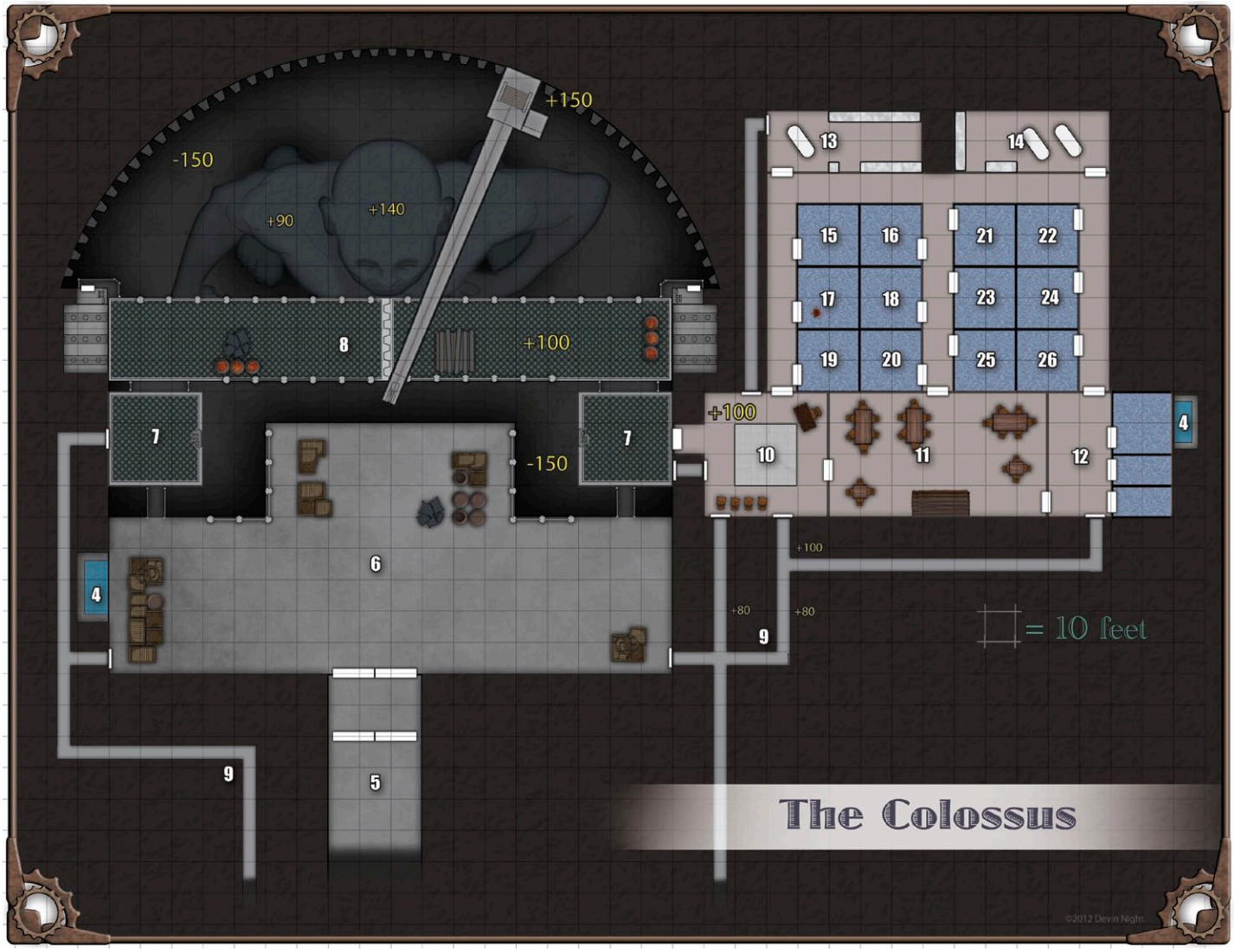
Upper Facility

The party likely won't have time for a thorough exploration.

From where the party enters, a giant shaft rises nearly 200 ft. above and a pit drops 150 ft. below to bare rock that is drenched five feet deep with witchoil. In the center stands the colossus Borne, three hundred feet of riveted steel and adamantine, etched with thousands of arcane runes of power and protection. He appears generally human-shaped, save for a small nook in the center of his chest, about five feet across. This is where the Ob intended to install a version of the *wayfarer's lantern*, to help stabilize it as it worked on the Axis Seal.

Two freight elevators (Area 7) run between levels. Though there are numerous defunct operating platforms at different elevations, the only two currently in operation are the entrance level and the VIP level 100 ft. higher up. A large drawbridge crosses the chamber at the colossus's shoulder level (Area 8), and a door off the right freight elevator leads to the VIP suites (Areas 10 to 26). Two utility shafts (Area 4) lead to the surface, and narrow service tunnels (Area 9) provide a possible way for characters to sneak into this area.

A truss of light catwalks surround his head, but they easily tumble if the bridge moves or if any part of the catwalks are damaged. A crane overhead sits unused, accessible only by narrow gear-toothed walkways around the edge of the chamber.



Element of Surprise.
If the party enters this area without having set off an alarm, people shout as they spot the intruders. Despite all the technology here, the Obscurati have no means by which to call for help from the lower facility—someone needs to make a run for it.

6. Staging Platform.
Crates, barrels full of witchoil, and a few stacks of adamantine scales the size of a whole man have been pushed to the edges of this area. Catwalks lead to the freight elevators, which can be called by a lever at the end of the catwalk. When the party enters, the left elevator is down, and the right one is up at the VIP suites level. Ladders on the walls do let people climb the 100 ft. if the elevator is out of order.

7. Freight Elevators
When called, or when operated from the elevator itself, these huge platforms ascend or descend 25 ft. per round.

8. Construction Bridge.
The bridge is suspended 100 ft. above the staging platform, but has side-support rails meant to prevent any falls. A visible "cut" in the middle of bridge indicates that the support bridge can be retracted. This feature is operated by a pair of control cabins, one at each end of the bridge. A character inside a control cab can spend a standard action and make an Intelligence check (DC 9) to incline half the bridge, causing it to tilt about 30 degrees per round. He can also raise or lower it, causing an entire half of the bridge to go up or down 10 feet per round.

9. Service Tunnels.
These 5-ft. wide tunnels contain the utility pipes. Each exit is riveted (Strength DC 26) and magically alarmed. As they approach Area 10, the shaft becomes vertical but has a narrow ladder.

10. Dignitary Checkpoint.
The guards here are Obscurati slayers, loyal members of the conspiracy and much better treated than the normal guards in the lower facility. Of the dozen slayers in the facility, four usually are on duty here, impeccably dressed. The other eight either rest or attend to maintenance of the VIP suites, acting as (again, very well-paid) butlers and cooks. If Leone knew the party was coming, eight of the slayers were sent out as the ambush party.

11. Dining Hall.
The VIPs dine here, as does the occasional Obscurati visitor like Kasvarina or Nicodemus. Leone was hoping to hold a celebration here, but Grappa's sabotage of the colossus ruined that plan.

12. Kitchen.
Behind a chilled meat locker is a utility shaft.

13. Hybridization Laboratory.
This lab is where researchers worked to infuse first animals and then humans with shadow magic and to apply mechanical enhancements to flesh. Most of these researchers worked on the witchoil golem and flayed jaguars the party faced in adventure two. They are non-combatants, and likely cower behind their shelves of dead experiments. The place is full of horrible devices and deadly fluids, in case combat ends up here.

14. Golem Laboratory.
Similar to above, here is where the prototype golems were constructed. Those that didn't guard Area 5 have been shipped off to other Obscurati projects or scrapped after their consciousnesses were transferred unsuccessfully into the colossus.

15–26. Lodgings.
Rooms 15, 17, 19, 22, 24, and 26 house the Obscurati slayers. Room 21, 23, and 25 were other researchers working in the two labs.

Room 16 is Leone's. 18 was Tinker Oddcog's, though he'll have fled before the party gets here. 20 was Grappa's, but currently Kasvarina stays here. See Grappa and Asrabey (page 401) for details of Kasvarina's state. Right now she only remembers events up to shortly before the Great Malice. Though a trained warrior and mage, the Ob have kept her drugged after several escape attempts. The walls of her room are covered in ornate tapestries, hiding the daunting shell of steel.

Villainous Victory

Action. Tactical. Level 14+.

With the party at his mercy, Leone torments the party. The colossus's activation prevents him from killing them.

If the party was defeated, they are disarmed, bound in *mage-cuffs* (which deal damage to anyone using magic while wearing them equal to the power's level), and dragged to the colossus construction chamber.

Leone has his men bring the party onto the bridge in front of the colossus and set them on their knees. Lorcan Kell and his bodyguards come out, and if necessary Kate Glenn rouses them with light healing magic.

If you think this scenario is likely, try to have an ace up your sleeve to get the party out of near-certain doom. Maybe the party has a verbal duel with Leone, and as he grows angrier the metal around him flexes, to the point that if the party enrages him a clamp securing the colossus breaks loose, and the titan moves. Perhaps Alexander Grappa can address the colossus and make it activate. If the party spared an Ob technician or operative earlier in the campaign, maybe the man has second thoughts; perhaps a disgruntled engineer who just wants out swings the crane and knocks the colossus loose.

But before that point, Leone gloats. You can use this opportunity to let him explain any lingering mysteries about how the cell operated (as long as you don't reveal Roland Stanfield's involvement, nor anything about the Axis Seal) and disabuse the party of any crackpot theories they might have tricked themselves into believing.

Depending on how dark you want things to get, Leone might use his power to torture or kill one of the PCs—slowly crushing him in his own armor, dangling him telekinetically over a two hundred foot drop into a pool of witchoil, or killing one PC with the weapon of another. Then, either right before or right after the point of no return, some lucky break gives the party a chance.

The colossus activates, the cavern shudders, Leone flees so he can try to regain control of it, and the party has to survive Lorcan Kell if they want to get out alive.

Borne to Be Wild

Action. Tactical. Level 15+.

Lorcan Kell attacks the party, and won't give up even as Borne activates and tears the mountain apart around them.

The party's arrival brings forth the last defenders of the complex. Exactly who shows up depends on how the party got here.

List of Adversaries.

Kell's Group
- Lorcan Kell
- Kate Glenn
- Nick Reder

Obscurati Defenders
- 4 Obscurati slayers
- 1 Obscurati veteran nethermancer
- Leone Quital, the steelshaper

Conditional Defenders
- 5 additional Obscurati slayers
- 1 Obscurati veteran nethermancer
- Norm, Obscurati liaison

Of course, feel free to add foes—likely Cauldron Hill guards or perhaps a couple Obscurati dark creepers—if you think the party needs the challenge. If they have a ton of soldiers or fey still with them, you might have an equivalent force of guards arrive, letting you reduce the two groups' battle to background detail while you focus on the party versus Kell and his bodyguards.

When combat begins, Asrabey abandons the party and moves at full speed for the VIP suites, shouting for Kasvarina. Leone sees that Asrabey has no metal equipment (wooden shield, sword made of fire), so he devotes himself to trying to manually control the colossus. He uses magnetic power to pull himself to the colossus's shoulder. Meanwhile, Grappa makes his way to the construction bridge.

If the party already killed Lorcan Kell (and if you don't think you can bring him back as a mechanically-augmented cyborg ghost or something), you might need to come up with another headliner foe, or perhaps change the focus to rescuing Kasvarina.

The key to this encounter is to make sure the party engages someone they perceive as the main threat, and halfway through the battle have something trigger the colossus's release. The main threat is likely Kell, and the colossus probably gets released when the party gets curious and does something to it, causing the wards the Ob put in place to stutter long enough for it to break free.

However, if the party isn't grooving on Kell, and if they don't disturb the colossus, you have some options.

Grappa.
The Mindmaker likely makes a move for the colossus as soon as he can. He climbs to the bridge, then scrambles across scaffolding to reach Borne's face. He tries to communicate with it.

If you don't think your players would mind NPCs doing something plot-critical in their presence, have Grappa place his hand to the colossus's face. Leone swoops in, recognizes the bronze golem, and realizes that it must be Grappa. He rips one of Grappa's arms off, but Grappa leaps at Leone and manages to grab his face. Leone proceeds to tear the bronze golem completely apart. This enrages the colossus, and it growls "Father!" as it rips free.

Leone.

The Steelshaper is beyond the party in a stand-up fight now, but if it leads to a good resolution, they could strike Leone while he's distracted, causing him to lose his perch and tumble. He would instinctively reach out with his steelshaping powers to catch himself, and in the shock of being attacked he over-exerts, tearing free sheets of metal that were warded to keep the colossus still. The titan begins to move, and Leone gets perhaps one or two more attacks off against the party before either they strike him again and knock him free, or the colossus's movement sends him plummeting deep into the construction pit. It's an ambiguous death, but the party won't have time to follow up since the whole facility will be collapsing around them.

Ekossigan.

If the party failed to stop Ekossigan and didn't come with him, perhaps he is the main threat, having been augmented and controlled by the Ob after he failed to defeat the complex. He fights much as in Thread Two, but as the ice spreads it causes the colossus to break free.

Alternately, an allied Ekossigan might get impaled by a steel spear thrown by Leone, and his death shakes the whole area, jostling Borne free.

Kasvarina.

Perhaps when Asrabey brings Kasvarina out of the VIP suites, she screams, confused and terrified by the combat. Her scream jolts the colossus, and it turns its head to face her. It growls, "Mother," and starts to tear free.

Battle on the Big Bridge.

The Obscurati slayers take up position on the big bridge (but generally stay away from the explosive red barrels). They rain fire down on the party with their rifles, and have cover against the party's counter-attacks.

Leone meanwhile manually grabs the colossus's right arm and swipes it across the staging platform. At initiative count 0 each round, make the following **Attack:** Area Burst (creatures in burst) +14 vs. Reflex; **Hit:** 3d6 damage and the target is knocked prone and slid 1 square toward the east end of the room.

Together, these likely force the party to take the lift up so they can avoid the slayers' advantage and get to a spot where the colossus—still mostly restrained—cannot reach.

Before leaving the VIP suites, Kate Glenn uses magic to turn herself, Nick, and Kell invisible. When the party reaches the bridge, Kell and his bodyguards attack. Alternately, they might descend on the lift or climb down the ladder if the party doesn't come up. Kell attacks with furious hate for the people who destroyed the guild he spent his life building, and he fights to the death. His bodyguards might surrender if he goes down and things look bad for them.



An aristocrat from Crisillyir, Leone was recruited into the Ob for his unusual, innate ability to manipulate and shape metal without having to actually learn or cast spells. Contacts groomed him and encouraged him to acquire skills that the conspiracy would need, but he only gained the leadership's trust after he helped rescue Kasvarina Varal eight years ago during a Risuri raid on Cherage. A cannon bombardment collapsed a factory she was touring, and Leone nearly killed himself with exertion to tear apart the crumpled steel and pull her to safety.

A few years later he was placed in charge of the secretive construction of the colossus, reporting directly to Roland Stanfield (page 391). Though he doesn't believe the cover story that the colossus is meant as a weapon to help Risur fight the fey titans, he works loyally, hoping to earn the right to know the group's real goal.

Though he prefers to appear refined, romantic, and honorable, Leone is flamboyant and short-tempered. He sometimes imagines himself a conductor, waving his hands to imagined music as he telekinetically manipulates metal. He has a fondness for fine bromago cheese, and often enjoys the wine from his family's vineyard.



A centuries-old eladrin who allied with William Miller during the Second Victory and later helped Nicodemus the Gnostic found the Obscurati. Her key responsibility has been to undermine the Clergy's military and monetary might, primarily by forming vengeance cults among her fellow surviving eladrin.

In the past few years she helped oversee the various cells of the conspiracy as they neared the opening of the Axis Seal, but nine months ago she was tricked by Alexander Grappa and her memories erased. Now she only recalls memories of over five hundred years ago, and though Leone assures her she was an ally of his, she doesn't trust him and wants to escape.

Uh-Oh...

After three or five rounds of combat, something should happen to let the colossus break free, and each round thereafter the facility becomes more unstable. If the party runs, Kell follows them, preferring vengeance to escaping alive.

Borne Round 1: A deafening rumble fills the chamber as a massive engine turns over. Black smoke begins to pour out of vents along the colossus's back, equivalent to a small factory worth of smokestacks. The party likely recognizes the distinct smell of witchoil burning within the golem's chest.

Borne takes its first step and tears its arm free from magical bindings. This causes a massive tremor to shake the room, knocking anyone inside prone unless they make a save.

Borne Round 2: Borne moves again, this time crashing through the main support bridge in front of him. The bridge heaves and anyone on it must make a save or be thrown 10 feet, perhaps off the side.

Borne Round 3: The colossus realizes its way forward is blocked, so it looks up and grabs the walls overhead. Its fingers tear through stone and steel, and it heaves itself up the construction shaft. Again creatures must make a save or be knocked prone from the tremors.

Borne Round 4: The colossus strikes the ceiling, roars, then punches several times into the stone above it. Everyone in the facility must make a final save to avoid being knocked prone. Then as debris falls around the room, make an attack against each creature: +15 vs. Reflex, 4d6 damage.

Borne Round 5: Borne tears a tunnel free to the surface and heaves itself up until its head peeks out of the hole. The massive weight of the colossus causes massive chunks of stone thirty feet or larger to cleave free from the walls. The party can see that they're about to tumble, and they have until the start of the next round to seek cover—perhaps the arch of the Golem Guardpost, or one of the VIP suites.

Borne Round 6: Borne pulls itself to the surface. Anyone out in the open is crushed, taking 10d6 damage. The resulting destruction shatters the various wards surrounding the facility, transporting the broken remnants of the complex, Borne, and all those inside the Cauldron Hill region of the Bleak Gate back to the material plane. Light from outside pours through the hole overhead—either daylight or starlight—making it clear to the party they've transitioned to the real world.

Later: Borne pauses a moment atop the hill. Though Grappa has removed its conscious memories, its base primitive mind marvels at the beauty of a world it has never seen. It stands still for a few minutes, giving the party a lull during which they can climb to safety.

Eventually Borne continues moving, slowly stomping its way down the mountainside. It triggers massive rockslides that would kill anyone still on the mountain, though luckily the natives of The Nettles fled this area months ago, thanks to the warnings of the skyseer Nevard. The colossus stumbles several times, having never actually walked before, and eventually it stops at level ground between the base of Cauldron Hill and Stanfield Canal.

Aftermath.

In the chaos, Leone and Grappa likely fall into the pit and have an ambiguous death. They'll return in adventure seven. If Grappa wasn't here, by the time the party gets back to the RHC headquarters, he'll have slipped away.

As soon as the facility shifts back to the real world, Asrabey grabs Kasvarina and uses magic granted him by the Unseen Court to travel to the Dreaming, sparing the party only a brief nod of thanks before leaving.

If necessary, the party might receive aid in exiting the pit when Captain Dale and his men atop Cauldron Hill throw ropes down. Dale handles the sudden appearance of the colossus with aplomb and points out that even if it isn't under anyone's control, it will devastate the city just by trampling buildings.

Alternately, perhaps Gale can help them out with air magic. If Kvarti is present, the dwarf announces that he's off to go drink, because he suspects the end of the world is nigh.



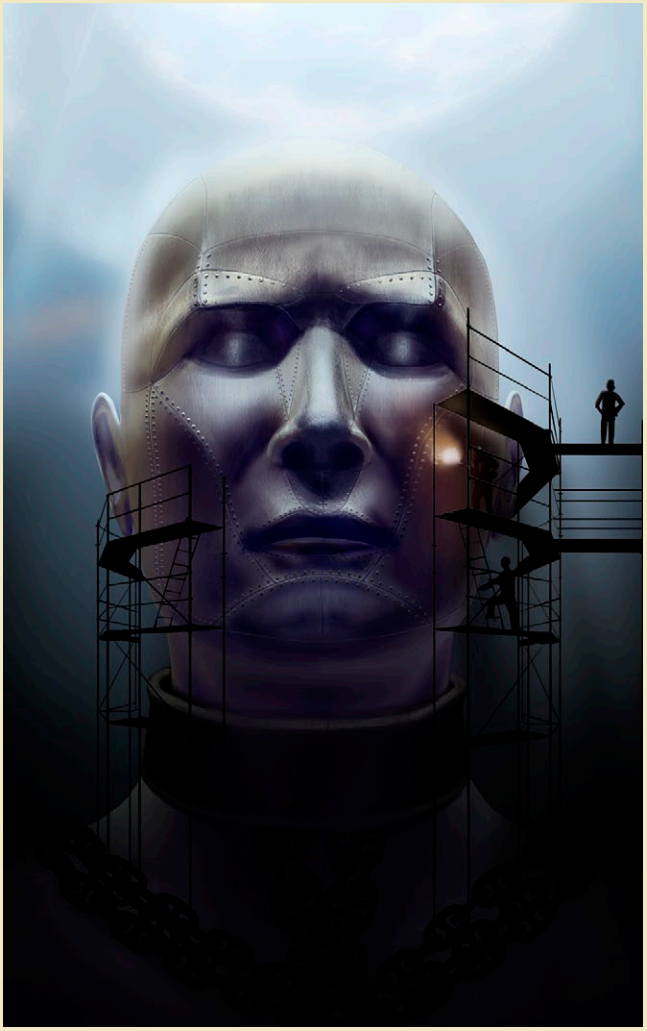
PART FOUR: To Battle a Colossus

The PCs work with the Risuri Navy to lure Borne out to sea, while King Aodhan enacts a ritual to send the creature to the Dreaming.

Shadow of the Colossus

Until dealt with, the colossus becomes a permanent fixture in the background of the city. It has no particular goal, so it is content for now to look at its surroundings and poke things like a child, curious to see how strong they are. Though each stride is fifty feet long or more, it does not stray far.

It is certain that if left unchecked, the titan will make the city unlivable. The king wants to get it out of populated areas, but trying to get it to move anywhere is likely to stir its anger, and that's when things will get really dangerous. First though, the party will need to make their way back to the Hotel Aurum, where King Aodhan is holding an emergency session to handle the situation.



Regroup Time

Social. Real-Time.

Let's talk to the King about this? Sounds like a good idea!

It takes the party at least an hour to make their way from Cauldron Hill to the Hotel Aurum. As the PCs approach, they can see that the Danoran contingent no longer has guards on post. A quick check with any Risuri guard reveals that Han Jierre and his group vacated the hotel mere minutes after the colossus was first reported. Reports are unclear where they went.

The PCs are admitted to meet with King Aodhan, who has convened on the ground floor lobby, since the ability to evacuate is more important than having good furniture. Present with the king are several military officers, Chief Inspector Stover Delft, and Harkover Lee.

During the quick debrief that follows, Aodhan and Stover Delft bring the PCs up to speed on what's happened in Flint. Parity Lake district is being evacuated, leading to panic and looting in neighboring districts. Reports keep coming in of ships fleeing the harbor, including *Lux Profectusque*, the Danoran capital ship. Worse, the panicked evacuation is making it difficult for the naval fleet that defends Flint to get back into the harbor. There are twenty first-rate ships-of-the-line stuck out at sea, and only a handful of combat-ready vessels in the actual harbor.

King Aodhan and Minister Lee have begun putting together a basic plan on how to remove the colossus threat, though it is highly dangerous.

The Ritual Plan.

Using a powerful magical ritual invested in him as part of the Rites of Rulership, King Aodhan intends to banish the colossus into the Dreaming. While the exact ramifications of performing such an act are as of yet unknown to him, King Aodhan believes it is the only option available to them if they are to save Flint.

In order to enact his ritual, the King requires thirty minutes of unimpeded casting time, and he must maintain line of sight and stay within five hundred feet of the target. The King knows the colossus will sense the threat he poses, and he's certain he wouldn't be able to enact the ritual safely while in the city. To this end, Aodhan wants to lessen the colossus's advantage by bringing the immense construct out into the harbor, where he hopes a small fleet of ships can confuse and outmaneuver it.

The main decision Aodhan has to make is whether to draw the colossus to the harbor via Stanfield Canal, a solution that would cause less destruction in Flint, or to draw it to the waters north of the city, near The Ayres, a solution that would allow more of the fleet to confront it. The first route only endangers a few blocks—though, unfortunately, it would destroy all the bridges along the canal—plus it gives them the ability to deploy the R.N.S. *Coaltongue*. The second route would wreck at least a mile of the city, but more ships would be able to fire on the colossus.

The king is inclined to go for the harbor, but he can be convinced to try the other route. Once that decision is made, Aodhan asks if anyone has a better plan, and if not he sends orders for every military ship in the harbor to assemble at the Royal Docks.

Other Plans.

Disabling the colossus seems infeasible. People have shot at it with pistols and muskets and it hasn't noticed. Observation by telescope suggests its skin is adamantine, effectively impervious to any mundane weapon, though perhaps enchanted cannons could injure it. Luckily it seems not to have any sort of ranged weapons.

Climbing it and looking for a way inside is an option, because there is some space along its back with hollow components intended for storing witchoil and other fuel. These do feed into its inner forge-heart, which provides magical energy to the colossus's limbs. However, any vulnerable part would be so hot as to set fire to flesh and melt most metals other than adamantine. Even if someone could get in, magical wards would dispel the intruder's protections and leave him doomed in the forge's heat.

Its mind is too limited for it to communicate, though it does respond with curiosity to unusual sights and sounds. It has no fear of anything, but it does get angry if it is harmed.

Luring It to Sea.

You can have the local authorities handle this, unless the party seems excited to volunteer or has their own plan. The plan Delft comes up with is to get as many spare fireworks as possible from the New Year's festival and perform a few quick test launches to see if the colossus responds to them, and if so, whether he goes toward or away from the pretty lights.

It takes an hour to set up, but then teams start setting off their fireworks. The first launch shows that the colossus is attracted to the light—it reaches out a hand and tries to grab at the blossom of fire in the sky—so the authorities begin firing a quickly-planned path that draws the colossus first to Stanfield Canal, and then down the canal toward the harbor.

Another option might be to requisition the *hurricane violin* and use its enchantment to amplify a song that would lure the colossus.

To Your Stations!

King Aodhan intends to board the *Coaltongue*, and he wants the PCs either by his side or on a ship of their own. Harkover Lee explains that no amount of armor or protection will keep them safe from the colossus; in this case, evasion is the best defense.

Minister Lee will join the main fleet attacking Borne, and add his own magical abilities to the battle, while Stover Delft will remain behind in the city to coordinate evacuations from coastal areas and use the local police and RHC to keep order.

The Battle of Bosum Strand

Social. Montage.

The party and their king rally a makeshift fleet to save Flint from destruction.

Dark clouds form ahead, and it begins to lightly rain during their trip from the Hotel Aurum to the royal docks. When they arrive, they see amassed a dozen Risuri warships—a mix of sail and steam, most of them sixth-rate (110-ft. long, 30 cannons) or smaller, as well as the RHC's ships like the R.N.S. *Impossible*. They await the arrival of their king, flags flying high, their skeleton crews nervous about the deadly mission before them.

Also present, surprisingly, is a Danoran warship, the *Freux Rouge*.

A Danoran Always Pays Her Debts.

The loud shouts of a woman with a heavy Danoran accent ring through the nearly abandoned docks. If the PCs met her at the banquet, they recognize the voice of Captain Rosalyn Taylor.

Unlike the *Lux Profectusque*, which fled at the first sign of trouble, Taylor and her crew actually sailed to the Royal Docks, intending to offer aid. A contingent of Flint marines prevents the captain from disembarking, but she shouts to get the attention of the party.

If approached, Taylor asks the PCs to let her know what's going on and how she can help. Unless the party made a terrible impression, she goes on to say that the Sovereign is safely away, and that she will obey the last directions he gave her, which was to protect peace with Risur. She would gladly add her vessel's armaments to the Risuri fleet. A first-class ship-of-the-line, the *Freux Rouge* is probably the second strongest vessel in the harbor after the *Coaltongue*.

Luckily, the PCs have King Aodhan at their side, and the king will give orders based on whatever the PCs decide to do with Captain Taylor's ship. If the PCs approve, Taylor proves true to her word, and the Danoran vessel joins the Risuri fleet in their distraction attack on Borne.

Dockers United.

Closer to the docked *Impossible* several transport vessels remain moored in the harbor. Hundreds of people shout and surge nervously, stranded after their ships fled the harbor. These people, most simple sailors or dockworkers, are close to panic, but from atop a warehouse Thames Grimsley tries to get the crowd's attention and calm them down.

The PCs should know that the naval vessels currently in the harbor are understaffed, since most of the ships were in dock for maintenance and repairs while the ship-shape ones were out guarding the open sea to the north. The dockers could be used to assist the vessels, by coming aboard and helping to man the rigging and give extra muscle in arming weapons and steering ships.

Getting their aid requires some manner of inspirational speech (Diplomacy DC 25). The character who makes the check gets a bonus equal to twice the party's Flint prestige, and a further +5 bonus if they're on good terms with Thames Grimsley or are themselves a Docker. Bringing the king certainly can't hurt.

If the attempt fails, the crowd devolves into a riot, another disaster that threatens to bring the great city down. If rallied, though, the dockers start pouring onto transports that take them to the makeshift fleet.

The Impossible Mission.

Another setback reveals itself: upon seeing the colossus, the aged captain of the *Coaltongue* suffered a heart attack. His first officer can take command, but this gives you a chance to keep the party close to the king, and perhaps provide a player who doesn't normally get to be captain a chance to control a mighty vessel of his own.

As the crew makes ready, the tiefling engineer Geoff Masarde appears and explains to any spellcasters who will be aboard how to make use of the ship's capacitor to empower their spells. He'll also provide a refresher for any gunners on how to use the ship's cannons and brand. Mechanically this is just represented by the ship's attack bonus, which combines cannons and sorcery. But it's a good excuse to remind the players of the mechanics of ship combat.

Each PC gets a quick tutorial on using the turrets, which allows them to make ranged attacks with the canons using their normal ranged attack bonuses. Harkover Lee says he'll devote his power to creating a defensive shield around the ship.

King Aodhan reminds everyone that he needs five minutes to complete the ritual that will banish the Colossus into the Dreaming, and he needs to stay within five hundred feet. (The *Coaltongue* must stay in either the same naval stage or an adjacent one for six consecutive naval rounds.)

He also states that he'll be particularly vulnerable during this period, so the PCs will need to protect him if anything tries to board the ship or harm him.

Let's Get Its Attention.

By the time the fleet is ready, the colossus is dangerously close to the end of the canal. The king gives the order to launch.

As the *Coaltongue* comes out to into the bay, it is hailed with a resounding salvo of cannon fire. The cannonballs land harmlessly in the waters in front of the Bosum Strand docks, but the resulting "boom" sound can be heard from most corners of the city. Borne immediately reacts to this by turning towards the distant fleet and standing to his full height.

From here, the fleet begins launching another barrage along with an impressive pyrotechnical display of magic. The result looks like brilliant fireworks crackling up in the sky during the ongoing downpour of rain. This display is enough to fully captivate Borne, and the colossus begins slowly walking towards the assembled fleet, stepping into water first as deep as its knees, then its waist.

The Battle Begins

Action. Tactical. Level 12.

The party engages the colossus in a naval combat that they cannot hope to win, only endure.

Use the naval rules in the Player's Guide to resolve this combat, likely with a PC as captain of the Coaltongue. The colossus's effective Command score is +5. (We use the term "ship" here for the colossus because it will behave mechanically like a ship.)

RNS *Coaltongue* Level 26 Vehicle
Gargantuan Vehicle 1,500,440 gp

Hull Integrity 4 **Command** +15
Defense 30 **Full Crew** 32
Maneuverability 8 **Minimum Crew** 4
Speed 18 **Total Complement** 200

Design

Length 205 ft. Beam 50 ft. Two level central bridge. Steam engine with two propellers. Five decks.

Armaments

Crew: 100. Attack: +25 in any firing arc. Can use acidic, chain shot, flaming, freezing, and shocking attacks, but no more than one in any given round in a single firing arc.

Eldritch Defenses

The ship gains a +5 bonus to saving throws against the burning condition. Any spells that originate more than 50 feet from the ship deal 26 less damage to targets within that area. Teleportation cannot enter or leave the ship.

Total Cost 1,500,440 gp

Hull (base level 14, engine, improved maneuverability x2, improved speed x7, Level 26): 1,125,000 gp
Armaments (huge, forward turret, Level 22): 325,000 gp
Gunnery components (acidic, Level 8; chain shot, Level 4; flaming, Level 10; freezing, Level 8; shocking, Level 8): 16,040 gp
Eldritch defenses (greater fire charm, Level 12; shield defense; Level 10; tar and brimstone sheathing, Level 8; teleportation ward, Level 12): 34,400 gp

***Freux Rouge*, Danoran Grand Frigate** Level 19 Vehicle
Gargantuan Vehicle 250,000 gp

Hull Integrity 4 **Command** +15
Defense 30 **Full Crew** 64
Maneuverability 2 **Minimum Crew** 16
Speed 18 **Total Complement** 500

Design

Length 250 ft. Beam 55 ft. Three masts, 150 ft. high. Six decks.

Armaments

Twelve light cannons on the maindeck, fifteen full cannons on each of two gundecks, and fifteen heavy cannons on the third gundeck.

Crew: 300. Attack: +23 to broadsides, or +20 forward or aft.

Total Cost 250,000 gp

Hull (base level 14, sails, improved speed x5, Level 20): 125,000 gp
Armaments (gargantuan, boards and chasers, Level 20): 125,000 gp

***Borne*, the Colossus**
Colossal Creature

Hull Integrity see *nigh invulnerable* **Command** +5
Defense 35 **Crew** N/A
Maneuverability 12
Speed 22

Design

Height 300 ft. Reach 100 ft.

Nigh Invulnerable

Incredible magic worked into the colossus's structure allows it to repair nearly any damage.

If the colossus takes 4 or more strikes in one round, its speed is reduced by 2 until it can rest five minutes to magically repair itself. Multiple hits like this are cumulative, potentially immobilizing the titan.

In water deeper than its mid-thigh (one hundred feet), the colossus's speed is halved. In water deeper than its chest (two hundred feet), the colossus's speed drops to 2. The colossus can continue to walk even if completely submerged.

Storm and Seas

Every step displaces as much water as the fleet's largest ship.

The stage the colossus is in has heavy chop (DC 20 to avoid). Adjacent stages have light chop (DC 15). Ships at Close range encounter severe chop (DC 25). Failure causes a witchoil monstrosity to wash aboard, and might knock crew overboard. Failure by 5 or more causes the ship to list.

Armaments

The angered colossus strikes with fists as big as a house, or kicks through the water and creates massive waves. When you manage to maneuver out of its grasp it growls, then glares at another ship. A cascade of glowing spirits fly from its eyes and the air fills with the stench of burnt engine grease. The spirits sweep across the ship's deck, and when they vanish a moment later everyone aboard lies dead.

Attack: +25 to fore, +20 to broadsides.1

Each round the colossus can make two attacks against targets at close or medium range, as long as the target is not behind it. It can also make one attack at long range (with a -5 penalty). Its long-range attack has the necrotic keyword and only damages crew, not ship components.

Additionally, whenever it hits a ship, the witchoil fueling it leaves a residue that manifests as 1 witchoil horrors for each strike inflicted.

Hurl Vessel

For the first time in history, someone uses a warship as a thrown weapon.

If the colossus hits a Large or smaller ship (a vessel shorter than 100 ft. long) at Close range, in addition to the normal effect of any strikes it can pick up the ship and make an attack at a target in any firing arc other than aft, out to Long range. Unlike its spirit eyeblast, this attack deals normal damage, but leaves no witchoil residue.

Mission Goals.

The party's goal is to stay in the same stage as the colossus (within 500 feet). Each naval round during the Location phase, if they beat the colossus's Command check they can choose to follow the colossus, block the colossus from moving to a new stage, or (if they beat it by 5) drive it to a new stage of their choice. If they fail the check they'll likely just have to change position to keep up with it. Smart PCs will try to drive it away from shore so it can't easily flee out of the water.

Stages of note in the area include the long stretch of docks, several areas of open water, one patch of estuarial weed, and a rocky plinth of an island.

After determining Location, handle Terrain. The colossus simply ignores most terrain due to its size, but its presence creates severe chop in its own stage (Command check DC 25 to avoid, with the *Coaltongue* gaining a +10 bonus due to its size), and heavy chop in adjacent stages (DC 20). A failed check results in a wave sweeping across the deck, which deposits a witchoil monstrosity (see below).

Next determine Bearing. If the *Coaltongue* can get behind the colossus, it is safe for the round. If it ends up in front of the colossus or to its sides, the colossus will try to kick or grab it. Luckily, the party has allied ships to distract the titan.

Allies and Back-Up.

The allied fleet consists of fourteen ships in total. Unless otherwise specified, assume that all the ships other than the *Coaltongue* stay in a stage adjacent to the colossus. The party can signal for them to come in closer in order to distract the colossus and protect the king, but the main risk is how choppy the water beside the colossus is. Captain Taylor of the *Freux Rouge* prefers to keep her distance and coordinate the attacks of the ships that aren't sailing underfoot.

- Two gargantuan ships, the *Coaltongue* and *Freux Rouge* (over 175 ft. long). The *Freux Rouge* has Defense 30 and an effective Command check of +25 to resist chop.
- Four huge ships (105 to 175 ft.), Defense 20, with an effective +15 Command check to resist chop.
- Eight large ships (65 to 100 ft.), Defense 15, with an effective +12 Command check to resist chop.

If the party doesn't have the dockers crewing their fleet, all the huge and large ships take a –5 penalty to Command checks, and –2 to Defense.

At the start of each naval round the party can call in as many ships from the fleet as they want. Each ship that moves into the same stage as the colossus must make a Command check to resist being attacked by a monster or even knocked on its side. If it survives getting that close, it can confuse the colossus, granting the *Coaltongue* a +2 bonus to its Defense.

Additionally, all the ships can combine fire on the colossus. Have the *Coaltongue* make one attack, with a +1 bonus for each Large ship in the same stage, and +2 for each Huge ship.

Likewise have the *Freux Rouge* make a second attack from Long range (with a –5 penalty), gaining similar bonuses from those ships that *aren't* in the same stage as the colossus. For each strike that hits, reduce the colossus's speed by 1 for the rest of the encounter. It's possible to wear the colossus down, immobilize it even, but eventually it will repair itself, and the fleet will run out of cannonballs.

Engaging Combat.

When the colossus first enters the harbor, it reaches out and grabs a Risuri warship, the *Avalanche*. Simple curiosity causes it to lift the hundred foot ship halfway out of the water, which snaps the wooden vessel in half in a stunning display of tossed bodies, exploding ammunition stores, and splintered wood.

The king curses and yells to keep the thing's attention. Then he begins his ritual. A verdant green swoosh of magic energy reaches out from the monarch to Borne. With the connection established, the colossus takes note of the *Coaltongue* and aggressively attacks.

For the first two rounds of naval combat, the colossus tries to get to close range and attack the *Coaltongue*, plus one other ship if any are in the same stage (or two such ships if the *Coaltongue* hides in the blindspot at its back). If it hits a Large ship, it uses it as a projectile against another target.

If the ships farther out attack it with cannons, it angrily retaliates by glaring and unleashing a roil of witchoil spirits from its eyes, striking one of those ships. A ship that suffers 2 or more strikes by this attack loses enough crew that it effectively is out of the fight. Have it target the *Freux Rouge* only if there are no other smaller vessels left.

Later Rounds.

If it manages to hit and damage the Coaltongue, it will keep fighting, hoping to stop whatever magic the king is using against it. If it's having trouble harming the *Coaltongue*, during round three it will turn and try to run all out for shore. The party will have to stop it somehow, or else it will get out of range.

If its attempt to flee is thwarted, it will turn back and keep attacking the Coaltongue. Though the colossus has a child's mind, it still can use basic maneuvers like Hard About or Full Speed Ahead to give it a better chance at fleeing or hitting.



Horrors that Hitched a Ride.

Whenever Borne strikes a ship, it leaves behind a witchoil residue that transforms into a **witchoil horror** at each location struck by the attack. If chop causes a wave to crash over the ship, that deposits a **witchoil monstrosity**. It also wouldn't hurt to scatter some difficult terrain of shattered ship bits if Borne has managed to destroy other ships this combat.

Either type of monster forces the party to enter normal tactical combat, which is concurrent with the naval combat. If left unchecked, each round a horror does 3 damage to King Aodhan; a monstrosity does 6 damage to the king. They also are likely rampaging through crew, engulfing and dissolving poor sailors who can't possibly defend themselves.

The king effectively has 200 hit points, and can be healed, but if he is reduced to 0 hit points, he must end the ritual, and he will be unable to restart it.

For every round a PC devotes to tactical combat instead of aiding the ship, that PC takes a –2 penalty to any checks or attack rolls he makes for the next naval round. This gives you an easy way to let those not captaining or piloting the ship have an effect on the battle.

Potential Saves.

As the combat progresses, the party might find themselves overwhelmed by the witchoil creatures or the attacks of Borne. Use your best judgment to keep the tension high, and if your players are more interested in the naval battle than facing the oozes, perhaps simply just require them to kill one group, determine how much time it takes, and guesstimate appropriate penalties for the party to take to their checks when more monsters show up.

If the party is in trouble, you can use one of the following saves.

- Minister Lee conjures a powerful evocation, centered on the deck of the *Coaltongue*, that burns away all the present witchoil creatures, but leaves him weakened and unable to keep casting spells.
- Captain Taylor's ship the *Freux Rouge* launches an all-out attack against the colossus, scoring a strike that takes the attention off the *Coaltongue*, but the colossus destroys the ship on its next turn.
- A ship under the direction of Thames Grimsley swoops in and picks up the king and other survivors if the *Coaltongue* does start to go down.

Ritual Complete.

During the minutes spent desperately maneuvering to avoid the colossus's wrath, the rain overhead intensifies into a thunderstorm, and as King Aodhan's ritual reaches its crescendo, a green light swirls around the colossus, like vines wrapping around an abandoned vehicle. The colossus surges toward the king and party and raises its fists, but then the light flashes and the colossus is simply *gone*. The sea heaves as water fills the suddenly empty space, but the storm abates, and the air is filled with the fresh scent of spring.

Failure.

If the party fails to protect the king, or if they are defeated, the colossus continues its rampage. The events of the next three adventures remain similar, since neither side is able to seize control of the colossus, even if it is on this plane. But it causes greater devastation, spending a day tromping around Flint before the rising sun draws it east toward Crisillyir.

Witchoil Monstrosity Level 13 Controller
Large shadow elemental (blind, ooze, undead) XP 800

HP 89; **Bloodied** 44 **Initiative** +8
AC 27, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 24 **Perception** +6
Speed 5 Blind, tremorsense 10
Resist 15 acid or necrotic

Traits

▸ **Aura of Decay**
The creature's body is speckled with white dots, souls trapped in witchoil. Its mere presence seems to be sapping the strength of the king.

For every combat round the monstrosity is on the ship after its first, it deals 6 damage to the king.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Relentless Advance** (acid, necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The oozing black mass slithers toward you, and thin feelers extend out faster, grasping you and pulling you closer.
Attack: Melee 5 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 1d12+4 necrotic damage and the monstrosity pulls the target 2 squares. The target gains ongoing 10 acid damage (save ends)

✓ **Engulf** (acid, necrotic) ✦ Encounter
It engulfs you.
Attack: Melee 5 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12+10 acid and necrotic damage, and the monstrosity pulls the target 1 square and grabs it (Escape DC 25). While the target is grabbed it has ongoing 10 acid and necrotic damage.

Skills Stealth +13
Str 20 (+11) **Dex** 14 (+8) **Wis** 11 (+6)
Con 20 (+11) **Int** 1 (+1) **Cha** 1 (+1)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** –

Witchoil Horror Level 13 Minion Controller
Medium shadow elemental (blind, ooze, undead) XP 200

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +8
AC 27, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 24 **Perception** +6
Speed 5 Blind, tremorsense 10
Resist 15 acid or necrotic

Traits

▸ **Aura of Decay**
The creature's body is speckled with white dots, souls trapped in witchoil. Its mere presence seems to be sapping the strength of the king.

For every combat round the horror is on the ship after its first, it deals 3 damage to the king.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Relentless Advance** (acid, necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The oozing black mass slithers toward you, and thin feelers extend out faster, grasping you and pulling you closer.
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 5 necrotic damage and the horror pulls the target 2 squares. The target gains ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends)

✓ **Engulf** (acid, necrotic) ✦ Encounter
It engulfs you.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 10 acid and necrotic damage, and the horror grabs the target (Escape DC 25). While the target is grabbed it has ongoing 10 acid and necrotic damage.

Skills Stealth +13
Str 20 (+11) **Dex** 14 (+8) **Wis** 11 (+6)
Con 20 (+11) **Int** 1 (+1) **Cha** 1 (+1)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** –

Conclusion

The king charges the party to ensure no disaster like this ever befalls their nation.

The city will be rebuilt, and the dead mourned. But first, the king seeks the party's counsel. As the damaged fleet returns to harbor, he sags onto a seat and tells them that the colossus has been banished. It's now in the Dreaming, where he hopes it's beyond the reach of the Obscurati.

He intends to send messengers to the Unseen Court to ask for their aid in keeping the machine from falling back into enemy hands, though he worries the fey might view the sudden arrival of the colossus as an act of war. Still, that's an easier mission than the one he has for the party.

Take time to heal, recover, and prepare, he insists. But once their agents find a lead, the party will need to be ready to go anywhere at a moment's notice. Today he's content to just have driven the colossus away, but when they cross paths with it again, he wants this weapon for Risur. He wants to know why the Obscurati were building it, and either how to control it, or how to destroy it.

The question he has for them, then, is what happens now between Risur and Danor. If he tells his people this was an attack by Danor, it will help with the rebuilding, and might be best for the security of the nation. But it's not quite true. He's not sure his people will appreciate the nuance of a multinational conspiracy that happens to be headed by the Sovereign of Danor, even if not all of Danor is part of it.

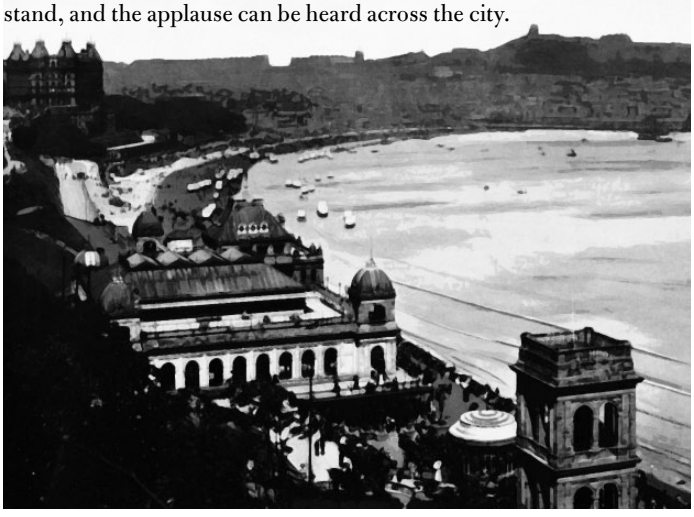
He gestures to the *Freux Rouge*, or its wreckage. By tomorrow, the crew of that ship will either be heroes who helped Risur defend against a mysterious new foe, or they'll be enemies, doomed for prison and possibly execution. He groans, feeling his age suddenly, and mentions that he probably wouldn't have agreed to be king if he'd known he'd have to make decisions like this.

Let the party offer their suggestions, and perhaps discuss the course ahead, but soon the ship nears shore.

Victory.

The people of Flint line the shore, cheering and applauding for the heroes that drove away the monster that attacked their city. As the party sails close enough to be clearly viewed by the citizens, the king stands, draws his sword, and asks the party to kneel. Then, with just a simple proclamation that no one will ever hear but them, he touches his sword to their shoulders and grants them each a knighthood.

The crowd grows quiet at the scene, and then Aodhan tells them to stand, and the applause can be heard across the city.



Onward to Adventure Path Act Two.

- In Adventure Six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*, the party races against Lya Jierre to track down Tinker Oddcog, the gnome Gearbuilder who knows all the secrets of the colossus's design. Tinker has the protection of the king of Ber, but is secretly working for the last hidden dragon tyrant, who wants the Obscurati's secrets for himself.
- In Adventure Seven, *Schism*, a letter from Alexander Grappa, the Mindmaker, invites the party to the capital of Drakr and explains that he has taken up residence in the brain of Leone Quital, the Steelshaper, and they are now struggling for control. The party finds the Steelshaper in a vast railyard, and after defeating him they can help Grappa take full control. The Mindmaker proposes a daring mission: they must strike another Ob cell, take live captives, and then slip their consciousnesses into those bodies so they can infiltrate a grand conclave of the Obscurati.

  While undercover, the party learns that the colossus will be used to manipulate the very nature of reality, to reshape the course of the world. But the conspiracy is at odds with itself, split into two camps with differing ideals. When the Ob's leader Nicodemus launches a purge, the party can find allies, information, and fabulous treasure if they're willing to risk getting killed in the crossfire.
- Having returned to their original bodies, in Adventure Eight, *Diaspora*, the party explores the wild jungle of Elfaivar to find Kasvarina. Asrabey has her convinced to help destroy the conspiracy, and she is determined not to repeat the mistakes that led her to such villainy. The party recovers an eladrin relic, the *Lost Arc of Reida*, which can reenact events from history. The party accompanies Kasvarina on a journey across many nations, retracing the steps of her lost memories and bringing them to life so she can reveal the creation story of the Obscurati.

  The colossus follows their path, drawn by a connection to Kasvarina, albeit hidden in the Dreaming. And the Obscurati pursue them both, seeing in Kasvarina a chance to gain control of the titan. The trek finally reaches the dread city of Methia, which lies in a planar sink where no magic works. The colossus simply steps into the real world, and an overwhelming force of the Obscurati sweeps in to capture it and kill the party. But the Crown can bring back the magic that once existed here, fully restoring Kasvarina's memories and giving the party a slim chance to escape.
- Finally in Adventure Nine, *The Last Starry Sky*, the party rushes back to Risur, having learned through Kasvarina that Governor Stanfield is part of the Ob. The deva plans a coup, and will activate a massive version of the *wayfarer's lantern* that will bring the entire nation under the conspiracy's control. Strange magic strands the PCs in the Dreaming until they can negotiate with a fey titan for travel back to the real world, by which time the king has been captured.

  Breaking through the defenses at Flint's governor's mansion, the party can try to destroy an eldritch machine manipulating the fabric of reality as the stars themselves fall from the sky in silvery shards. The king likely perishes, but he can pass along the mantle to one of the PCs, bestowing on the party the power they need to protect their nation. Even if the party succeeds, though, they learn that the Ob's plot was enacted simultaneously across the entire world. Though they may have saved one nation from becoming slaves of the conspiracy, the rest of civilization now lies in the hands of the Obscurati. Only the highest level heroes can now set out to put things aright.



ZEITGEIST Adventure Path

Appendices

APPENDIX A: Ancient History

To help you keep details of the world's history straight in your head, we present this appendix that compiles information doled out bit by bit to players over the course of several adventures.

The Ancients.

Thousands of years before Risur was founded, a civilization of primitive orcs fought against the numerous otherworldly forces trying to claim this plane as their territory. Since this civilization had no writing system, the adventurers and archaeologists who explore the few scattered ruins they left behind have dubbed them simply the Ancients.

A handful of heroes among these stone-age orcs nevertheless managed to understand, at least in general terms, the nature of the multiverse and how their enemies were invading this world. With that knowledge they were able to erect the Axis Seal and allow the mortal races to flourish, even though their own civilization did not survive.

Fighting the Invaders.

There are countless planes in the cosmos, and portals can theoretically link any two worlds. From across the multiverse came savage demons, titanic dragons, the angels of numerous gods, and many more, all trying to claim their own territory. But two main invasion forces had the greatest claim: the psychic and semi-humanoid Gidim, who consume the thoughts of whole planes to feed their sentient homeworld; and the Golden Legion of Egal the Shimmering, a lord of hell clad in treasure and able to wield his enemies' pride and vanity like blades.

The Ancients discovered a ritual to seal a portal and create a permanent dimensional lock in a wide area. Whenever they found one of the portals the invaders were using, they would stage desperate raids to seal those doors, then build enchanted ziggurats laden with traps over the closed pathways.

In an infinite multiverse, these seals were only temporary solutions. Clever foes would always find a new route to a world with precious resources. But what this slow and methodical tactic accomplished was to create tiny safe havens: buffer worlds from which the Ancients knew no further threats could come.

The architect of the Axis Seal, a wise orc whose name has been lost to time, intended to cut off his own world altogether, slicing it free from the rest of the multiverse. He knew, though, that a world completely cut off could not sustain itself. His world—any world—would continue to need the energies of other planes to allow life to flourish and magic to endure.

The Axis Seal.

The Ancients sealed as many of the invaders' portals as possible, and found worlds among those sealed that would provide the necessary energies: elemental air, earth, fire, and water, as well as the more esoteric




GIDIM

energies of life, death, space, and time. When the time was right, the greatest heroes of the Ancients gathered in the heart of their territory and performed the Ritual of the Axis Seal. Simultaneously, eight other buffer worlds were linked to this one, and all of them were pulled across the multiverse, creating a system of planets.

Some of the worlds that provided the required energies were chosen specifically; others were chosen simply because they were available and convenient. For example, Urim, once just a slice of the greater Plane of Earth, provides the world's necessary earth magics. It also has a trait that makes teleportation impossible for those bounded in gold, making it a clever defense against any possible later invasions by the Golden Legion. By contrast, Avilona, the plane of air, has fairly weak energy but it was the only air plane the Ancients could secure.

The power of the ritual cracked the surface of the world, flooding huge areas and creating what is today the Yerasol Archipelago. The great flood sent the Ancient civilization into disarray, leaving them too weak to defend against misfortune.

Fatal Flaw.

The Ancients made one great mistake. The cunning Gidim had realized what the orcs were planning and hid an invasion force on the world of Apet—the plane of space—which the Ancients thought abandoned. Once the Axis Seal was in effect and they had no competition from other planes, the Gidim struck.

The Ancients fought back, and they managed a hurried revision to the Axis Seal ritual, which turned Apet into a prison plane. While the massive world still orbits the sun and shares its mystical energies, it cannot be reached by any magic. The Gidim were ultimately defeated, but their strike devastated the vulnerable Ancient culture. With their heroes dead and their people separated by flooded rifts, the mortal races fell back to nomadic tribalism for millennia.

Legacy.

All that remains of the Ancients today are scattered, inexplicable ruins, many containing gold weapons looted from Egal's Golden Legion. (This greatly confounds archaeologists, who can find no evidence of the extensive Ancient mining necessary to have produced so much gold.)

In recent years agents of the Obscurati have funded expeditions to plumb the secrets of the ziggurats, which are scattered across Lanjyr. Priceless gold artifacts are less useful to them than the clues of how these primitive people connected to other worlds. Only the conspiracy has a sense of what the Ancients accomplished untold millennia ago.

The Ancients and their ruins come to the party's attention in Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*, but then do not play a significant role again until Adventure Twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*.

The party only ever is expected to explore the ziggurats of Apet, Mavisha, and Avilona. Feel free to use the others however you wish. Each could contain traps and monsters themed to the appropriate plane, with some clue to the location of another ziggurat in the set, and a central chamber that has the seal over the portal. These portals, if opened with the proper ritual, would be one of the few ways to travel to another plane for more than five minutes.

For your reference, the locations of the Ancient ziggurats are:

- **Ziggurat of Apet.** The portal to the plane of space is guarded by this ruin in Risur's high bayou. Its discovery sets off events in Adventure Three.
- **Ziggurat of Av.** The portal to the plane of dreams lies in the big thicket in eastern Risur.
- **Ziggurat of Avilona.** The plane of air's ziggurat sits atop a floating island in a perpetual storm off the south coast of Ber.
- **Ziggurat of Jiese.** The ziggurat of the plane of fire lies in the desert in eastern Crisillyir.
- **Ziggurat of Mavisha.** The plane of water's ziggurat sank underwater just off of Ber's east coast.
- **Ziggurat of Nem.** The portal to the plane of ruin lies near the abandoned city of Methia in Danor.
- **Ziggurat of Reida.** The plane of time was never actually used as a staging point for an invasion, and thus never had to be sealed or have a ziggurat built for it. That said, almost no one knows this plane exists.
- **Ziggurat of Urim.** This ruin was long ago discovered by mages, who used the power seeping through it to establish the independent city of Nalaam in the Penance Peaks.
- **Axis Seal.** The final ritual site entails a one-hundred foot diameter plate of gold over eight pits filled with petrified white trees that form the metaphysical links to the other planes. Additional trees were placed elsewhere on the island to lock in the connection. Unfortunately the small tree for Avilona was unwittingly placed into a sea cave, and after centuries of erosion it broke, making magical flight nearly impossible.

APPENDIX B: The Audit

In Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*, the party will be held accountable for any corruption or lawbreaking they've engaged in so far.

The Viscount Inspector

Social. Real-Time. Level 8.

The head of the national RHC arrives to oversee an audit of the party's expenses and activities.

Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill wants to meet the PCs face to face. Lady Saxby, worried about them making her look bad, holds the meet-and-greet in her office, where the lack of chairs makes long conversations awkward, thus keeping things brief. The Viscount congratulates the party for their work in bringing down Macbannin, but he says that after finding one incident of such egregious corruption, he thinks it is critical to be on watch for more.

After that, Saxby takes over and gives the PCs their marching orders: they're to stay on their normal case and cooperate with any requests from the Viscount's staff. Delft will handle most of the paperwork.

Give the PCs a few minutes to speak with the Viscount if they're interested. He's especially interested in conversing with Yerasol Veterans, since it's always good publicity to promote a veteran. Before long, though, Lady Saxby politely reminds her boss that there are other teams of constables to meet, and she glares at Delft as if to say, "Now get them out of here."

A Possible Promotion

Social. Real-Time. Level 8.

Yerasol Veterans always get first crack at promotions.

During Act Two, any Yerasol Veteran PCs get invited to the guest manor where the Viscount is staying, on the island of the governor's mansion. There's a formal ball, and the Viscount is giving the PC(s) a chance to make a splash amid the nobility.

Though the nobles are generally distinguished and polite, Risur is a tropical country, so they party well. Energetic music, lavish choreographed dances, and heated arguments fill the night, culminating in a drunken general throwing a pie out a window for reasons that aren't quite clear.

At some point during the night, the Viscount chats with the PC on a balcony, watching the sea while smoking a cigar. He wants to know if the PC has any interest in politics or higher stations, perhaps in the RHC, the army, or the navy. If the PC comports himself well, the Viscount says he's not comfortable sending important future leaders on missions without assistance. With the PC's permission, he'd like to send along some crack sailors on the party's mission to Ber.

If the PC agrees, the party will have five Allied Soldiers on their side, and the ship's captain will receive a +5 bonus to Command checks, and the ship gains a +2 bonus to its Defense.

Digging for Dirt

Social. Montage. Level 8.

Will the party set aside solving the mystery so they can cover their asses?

Morgan Cippiano. Gale. Locan Kell. Various fugitives, drug dealers, and other unsavory types. Make a list of anyone the party has had dealings with that might make them look bad. Investigators are sent to speak with them, or to look into their interactions with the PCs. If Delft is aware of any particular indiscretions by the party, he'll suggest they try to get to these people first to get stories straight and cover their asses.

Of course, the Viscount has done this before. Starting the morning of the 1st of Autumn, even before the PCs are told they're being audited, he sets a group of agents to watch them, led by RHC Director of Infiltration **Lauryn Cyneburg**, whom the party might have spotted at the Arms Fair (page 221).

Cyneburg's operatives tail the PCs, staying out of sight (Insight DC 24, once every four hours, though it might be easier in some areas where hiding in a crowd is harder). Shaking a tail is up to player ingenuity, and should consist of more than just a single skill check. Any illicit actions the party get into while being tailed get included in the report. However, the tails stay in Flint, and don't follow them to the ziggurats.

Harassment

Social. Montage. Level 8.

Crime boss Lorcan Kell harasses the party from afar.

When Kaja's smuggling operation is brought down, Lorcan Kell is furious at the PCs. Kell won't move directly against the PCs, since he's not sure what reaction that would provoke. But he's testing them for weakness, gathering intelligence, and looking for a way to take them down.

The morning after they arrest Kaja, the PCs each receive a letter, delivered to their homes, telling them to release her or suffer the consequences, but by that point, Kaja's probably been shipped out to Slate.

The next day, the PCs' neighbors mention seeing tough-looking men watching the PCs' homes.

By the time the PCs leave for the ziggurat of Apet, Lorcan has learned that the PCs are being audited. He decides to frame one or more of them while they're out of town by planting evidence at their homes.

Fake Evidence.

Lorcan has no shortage of people he wants to kill. So he picks one of them, has that person killed in a way consistent with a PC's personal style, then leaves a letter at that PC's house that identifies the target and thanks the party for taking over the smuggling operation from Kaja. The letter is written in a way that insinuates that Kell and Kaja had a falling out, and that he, Kell, is bringing the party into his operation. A sizeable payment, about 200 gp, awaits discovery on a table.

It's somewhat sloppy, but Kell isn't the cleverest crime boss. If the PCs are careful, they might have a friend watch their place. Otherwise, when they get back from the ziggurat the audit has turned up the evidence. The PCs will have to answer for it, and if they make a bad show of defending themselves they might be punished.

Consequences

Social. Real-Time. Level 8.

Lady Saxby shares the Viscount's report with the party.

When the party returns to Flint early in Act Three, Lady Saxby has Delft tell the party to come to her office. She is not patient, and will send local police to escort them if they dally. When they arrive, though, she has them wait for half an hour while the Viscount is summoned. Shortly before he arrives, Saxby brings the party into her office and goes through the report.

The report has three main sections. Saxby isn't the yelling type; her comments take a dismissive tone. She's never disappointed, because she never had high expectations for the PCs in the first place. Even if they've done well, she paints their performace instead as merely passable. Only if they've done really terrible things does she get emotional: amused, though, rather than angry.

Inappropriate Actions on the Job.

If the PCs have been roughing up witnesses, killing criminals instead of capturing them, or causing unnecessary property damage, Saxby lists what they've done wrong.

Unseemly Affiliations.

Here she highlights suspected corruption, kickbacks, or strong-arming, as well as friendships with criminals or people whom the press could write articles about. If any PC is really corrupt, she might later recruit him to be on her side and protect her interests.

Excessive Expenditures.

At the end of this adventure, each PC should be 8th level, and have wealth roughly equivalent to 12,800 gp (the cost of a 9th level, 8th level, and two 7th level items). If a PC has much more, Saxby lists what the character will have to hand over. Much less, and she'll sigh and pointedly remind them they have spare money for requisitions, and that if it doesn't get spent, the politicians will cut their budget next year.

Also, if a PC was hiding any items that should have been turned in to evidence, and that PC did not take action to hide it, he will have been discovered. Saxby demands the PC hand the item over to the quartermaster downstairs before leaving, and she'll consider pressing criminal charges. The hand-over should be done, or else the PC won't be let out of the building, but the criminal charges won't get anywhere before Saxby's driven out at the end of the adventure.

Final Word.

The Viscount arrives then, accompanied by Lauryn Cyneburg, his Director of Infiltration. He explains that she and her agents were keeping tabs on them, both through surveillance and divination. Lauryn adds, "In case it comes up again, the preferred form of address for fey titans is 'Your Titanicness.' Personally I think you could have taken him."

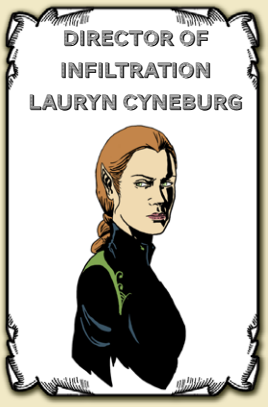
The Viscount discourages attacking giant serpents, then, and gives the PCs either a quick congratulatory speech, or a wise, fatherly reminder that they've shown themselves possessed of better natures than most people, and that they shouldn't waste themselves on petty pursuits. If any PC was particularly egregious, he'll make sure to take him aside afterward for a one-on-one chat.

Before departing, he says he has high hopes for them and wants them to know that Risur is safer and stronger thanks to their work.



The Viscount's family owns lands around the capital of Slate, so he could have lived in court, but he trained in the martial academies and fought in the Third Yerasol War. His career as an investigator began by rooting out profiteering during the war, and he later helped thwart several plots to embarrass the new king Aodhan. His most famous success, however, was defeating a group of Drakran necromancers who were trying to animate dragon corpses in the Anthras mountains.

The Viscount is disdainful of corruption, but has been through enough to understand how constables can be tempted to it. He has on several occasions managed to catch low-level investigators taking their first steps toward abusing their power, and turn them back on the right path by giving them a second chance.



Though over seventy years old, as a half-elf Lauryn only betrays her age with the weariness of her eyes. She has traveled, almost literally, everywhere on the continent of Lanjyr. As the RHC's Director of Infiltration, her expertise in teleportation has seen her delivering agents to missions around the world, and she's tired of seeing them not return when things go wrong.

Lauryn carries herself with an odd mix of stiffness and informality. She'll never let her guard down or expose her own emotions, and she hates jokes because she hates laughing. But she's used to dealing with uncannily powerful individuals, and she has a knack for saying things that seem like insults, but only to people who fight monsters for a living and think they should as a consequence be able to accomplish anything. Nigel Price-Hill enjoys keeping her around to remind him that his constables are real people, not mythic heroes.

APPENDIX C: Radical Vekeshi Plot

Rock Rackus has angered many who support the Unseen Court and traditional Risuri values. Most people just complain, but the Vekeshi Mystics are comfortable with killing those who offend them. In Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*, a member of the cult calls for Rackus's death, but he does not speak for all adherents.

Just a Little Misunderstanding.

Rear Admiral Morris Dawkins presides over the naval defenses of Flint, but a convenient illness kept him from the launch ceremony of the R.N.S. *Coaltongue* in Adventure One.

He also is one of the most respected leaders of the Vekeshi Mystics, and often attends celebrations and ceremonies. Dawkins wears an antlered mask, and no one knows his identity, so mystics can only identify him by voice, and by his distinctive hands, which are marked by scars and calluses. They call him the **Old Stag**, both for his mask and because he is sometimes seen in the company of a beautiful faerie woman, a representative of the Unseen Court.

In Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*, the Old Stag asked a Vekeshi PC to recruit the fey terrorist Gale to their cause. Shortly after the events of the adventure, Dawkins attended a celebration in the Cloudwood that any PC Vekeshi Mystics would have been at. The topic of Rock Rackus came up, and Dawkins off-handedly suggested the man deserved to be killed, if not for his insults to the Unseen Court, then for his terrible music. Most present simply laughed at the comment, but one witness, **Tyler Starke**, took it as a serious decree.

A *Crazy* Misunderstanding.

Starke is one of the bad seeds who make it easy for the public to decry the mystics as madmen and killers. The idle son of Flint's Attorney General, he styles himself a writer and scholar with a particular fondness of maritime law, and his interactions with other mystics are rare enough that most do not realize how unstable and petulant he is.

His induction to the mystics occurred after he murdered a Crisylliri priest who was a guest in his father's house. He claimed he was striking a blow against oppressors, but he just killed the priest because the man had mocked him in front of his father. Though weak-minded, he survived the initiation ritual into the Vekeshi Mystics by losing grip with reality and constructing an ever-wilder web of delusions.

A few months ago, Starke began to spread word that Rock Rackus was marked for death, and due to the secretive nature of the Vekeshi Mystics and the large gaps between their group gatherings, no one has been able to disabuse him of this notion. He gathered funds to hire Kvarti Gorbatiy to assassinate Rackus, and when that fails, Starke tries to recruit a PC Vekeshi Mystic to finish the job.

Recruiting for Murder.

Starke, somewhat missing the point of being in a *secret* society, mails a letter to the PC's home a few days after Rackus gets arrested at the arms fair (see page 221). The letter has a portion of a wax seal affixed, as if the writer were so used to signing and sealing his letters that he almost mailed it with his name affixed. There is no return address, but a trained investigator should be able to trace it, if he wants. The PC might get help from Kvarti Gorbatiy, if he needs the aid.

This is mostly a test of the character's morals, and an opportunity to protect the reputation and secrecy of the mystics.

Rock Is Dead.

If a PC kills Rock but does not implicate the mystics, the dockers treat the fallen performer as a martyr and blame the government for his death. Starke is not nearly as discreet as the PC, though, and word spreads through the mystics that the PC did the deed. Shortly after the resolution of the adventure's main events, the PC is summoned in the night to a ship in Flint's harbor.

The Old Stag and several attendants berate the PC for his foolishness, then drag out a panicked and piss-stained Starke. The Old Stag explains that this man is more objectionable to their beliefs than Rackus ever was, and he offers the PC a chance to redeem himself by killing Starke. Despite the misunderstanding, the PC is still valuable to the cult's leadership, and they will have more important tasks for him in the future.

Terror in Flint.

If a PC botches the assassination and either fails or implicates the mystics, Rock's celebrity causes the story to fill the headlines for weeks. Kell's guild manages to off a few difficult politicians and pin it on the mystics, and within a month, half the city is afraid the Vekeshi are plotting countless wild attacks on Flint.

Similar to above, one night the PC is drugged and abducted. He awakens in a ship's hold with Starke, and they are dragged out before the Old Stag, who says they both deserve to die for what they have done to the movement, but he is merciful. He hands a dagger to the PC, and Starke cries out in terror.

A Constable's Job.

A PC might decide to reject Starke's directive and prevent him from killing anyone. If confronted, Starke threatens to reveal to his father the Attorney General that the PC is a member of the Vekeshi. In a fight, Starke is no threat to a PC by this point, but getting to him when he is not protected by bodyguards and household security is a challenge.

After dealing with Starke, the PC is summoned to meet the Old Stag, who thanks him and suggests they can use his skills in the future. The party's Prestige with the Unseen Court increases by 1.

Not My Problem.

If no PC is a Vekeshi Mystic, or if a PC refuses, Starke eventually tries to go after Rackus himself. Rackus shoots him, and Starke is arrested. In interrogation he gives up the identities of every mystic he knows, perhaps forcing a PC to lie or face harsh questioning. The Vekeshi issue a letter to denounce Starke as not speaking for them, but public outcry and political fearmongering leads to arrests and witch hunts.

APPENDIX D: Avery Coast Railroad

Rail travel has existed for only a few decades in Danor and even less time in the other nations along the Avery Coast line. The promise of easy trade and travel convinced countries that once viewed Danor as an enemy to let Danoran engineers, businessmen, and even soldiers into their lands. In every town and city along its route, Danor owns small enclaves with housing and dining for long-haul guests. Though most of the employees of these enclaves are locals, each station is run by a very visible tiefling coordinator. Tickets are purchased in Danoran coins (helpfully provided by moneychangers), and this is slowly making international merchants comfortable doing business in Danoran currency.

Route

In Adventure Four, *Always on Time*, the party travels from Beaumont to Vendricce over the course of six days; each evening the train stops at a major city as a waystation. To minimize the risk of rail damage, derailment, and banditry, the train only runs during daylight hours. To traverse 3,000 miles and stay on schedule, the train reaches speeds as high as 60 miles per hour, unmatched by any other vehicle in the world.

BAD ECONOMICS

Normally the benefit of rail travel is that it allows easy transportation in directions not serviced by sea lanes or rivers. In the United States, for instance, the Mississippi River was an early boon to trade in its watershed, while transcontinental railroads ran perpendicular to the river, connecting the east and west ends of the country and starting a massive economic integration.

The Avery Coast Railroad, however, mostly hugs the coastline. Drakr already had its own network of railroads under construction by the time Danor proposed this international route. The only safe waystation in the Malice Lands was Orithea, which is coastal, limiting their options for connections with Drakr. The designers decided that rather than trying to create the most infrastructurally useful railroad, they would make it the most visible. Rather than creating opportunities for new towns to spring up, it runs through major existing cities.

Now that people are becoming comfortable with their presence, Danor is letting the various border states use their own money to hire Danoran experts to build additional branches of the railroad.

A total of twelve locomotives operate on the railroad at any given time, enough so that each day a train reaches each station going in both directions. Depots between major stops store replacement locomotives and train cars in case of damage, but daily maintenance has kept such failures low. For the three years of its operation the railroad has only had a handful of major delays. Travelers can count on a train coming to their city, headed in either direction, every day, and so the Avery Coast Railroad has earned one of its slogans: "Always on Time."

The other popular slogan, "Taming the Malice," is perhaps the railroad's greater achievement. The Malice Lands lie between Danor and Drakr, in the territory where magic works occasionally but erratically. Creatures mutate readily into monsters and inconstant magical energies conjure bizarre weather. The presence of so much iron in such a regular construction seems to have a stabilizing effect on the wild magic, and the railroad's crack militia can handle any threat with a pulse.

The railroad has seven major enclaves along its route. Each enclave is roughly 500 miles from the next, and the train stops at a different enclave each night. After twelve days, the train returns to Beaumont where it is taken out of service for a day for thorough cleaning and maintenance.

- **First Enclave:** Beaumont, on the west coast of Danor.
- **Second Enclave:** Cherage, the capital of Danor.
- **Third Enclave:** Orithea, the only stable city in the Malice Lands.
- **Fourth Enclave:** Trekhom, the capital of Drakr.
- **Fifth Enclave:** Nalaam, an independent city state run by mages in the mountainous border states between Drakr and Crisillyir.
- **Sixth Enclave:** Sid Minos, an island on the coast of Crissilyir.
- **Seventh Enclave:** Vendricce, a forested border-city in Crissilyir.

The Train

Refer here for names of key train staff and the disposition of security. Key staff include:

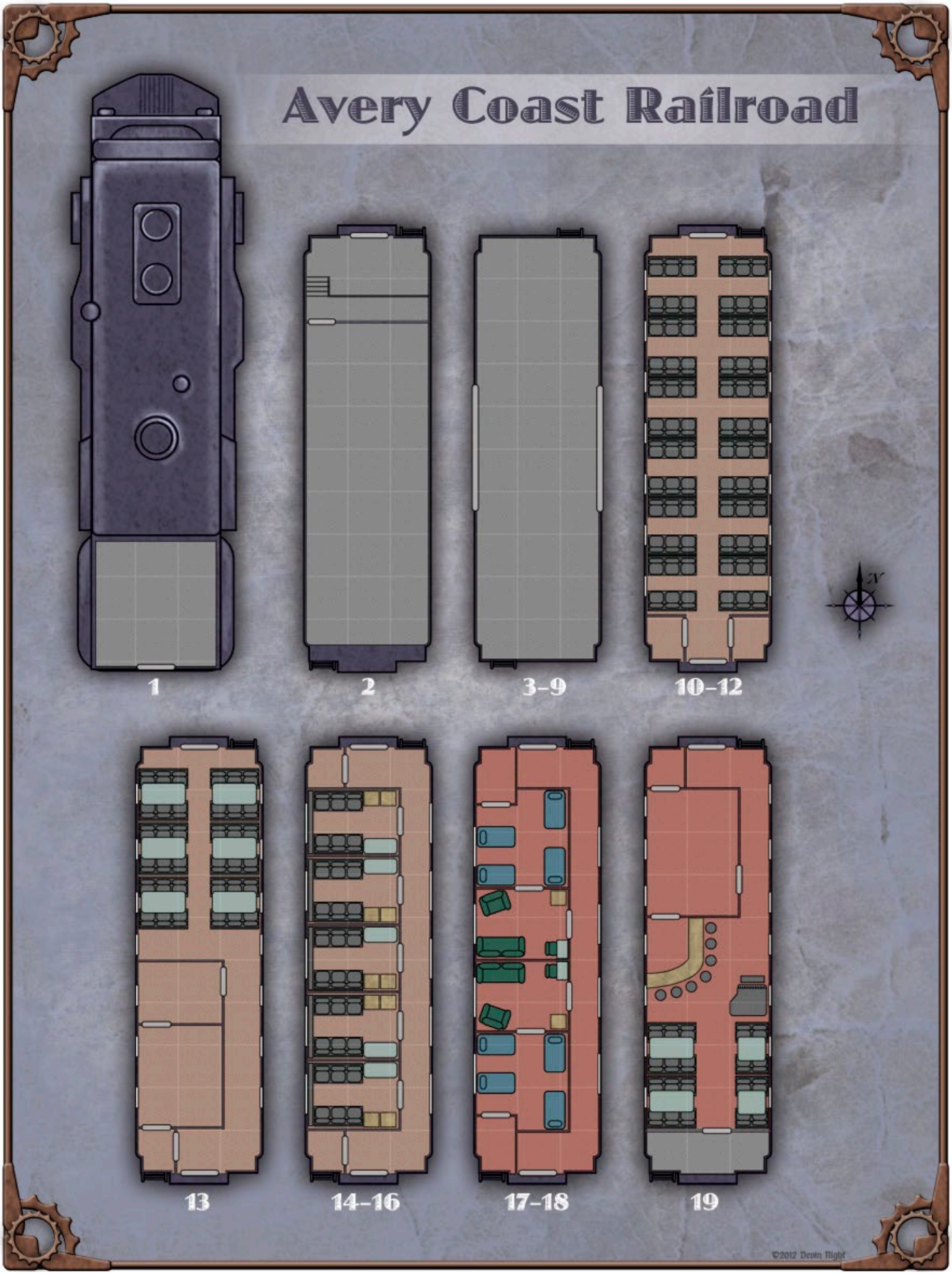
- Engineer Steeg Leon.
- Conductor Xorin Marchand.
- Vodyarika Lerkem, head of the train's militia.
- Grason Wasson, guard between second class and first class.
- Kov Marik, chef in first class.
- Doris Gavagne, piano player in first class.
- Malia Baccarin, guard liaison for first- and second-class.
- 8 miscellaneous attendants who keep the place clean, work as waiters, and respond to minor trouble.
- 9 miscellaneous railroad guards.

If any staff are injured or killed, assume they are replaced the next time the train stops for the night.

Stats for the railroad guards are presented on page 428. The railroad guards might shuffle a bit during the day at different stops, and there are too many for everyone to know each other. Overnight, enclave security guards watch the train, and in the mornings the train's guards are a bit lax when it comes to checking their work.

The layout of the train the PCs take, from front to back, is as follows:

- **Car 1—Locomotive**: This is where Engineer Steeg runs the train. Conductor Xorin also stays for the majority of the train's trip. They are usually guarded by two railroad guards.


Avery Coast Railroad
1
2
3–9
10–12
13
14–16
17–18
19
©2012 Devin Night

- **Car 2—Fuel Car**: The fuel car carries enough fuel for two days worth of travel, but it is re-filled at each nightly stop. Because Danorans cannot refine firegems themselves, and because the Malice Lands do odd things to the crystallized fire, the train runs on actual coal between Beaumont and Trekhom. From Trekhom to Vendricce, the train uses firegems instead, as they are cheaper than coal. A single railroad guard here helps shovel fuel for the engine.
- **Cars 3–9—Freight Cars**: There are five freight cars. At each stop, various pieces of freight are loaded and unloaded by teamsters in each town. The frontmost car is loaded with heavy industrial equipment for a steelworks, bound for Vendricce. That car has a contingent of five militia members, who occasionally check on the other freight cars whenever the train stops.

  If the PCs check the other cars, their contents vary day by day, but might include quite a bit of preserved food, some expensive Danoran fabrics, some casks of fine Trekhom ale, and several tomes of history and the arcane. Between the Freight Cars and the Common Cars, a railroad guard named Vodyarika keeps a stern watch.

  Mister Mapple stows away in different cars each day.
- **Cars 10–12—Common Cars**: Also known as the "sardine cars," these cars have seating for 36 people, but are usually crammed above capacity. Each car has two lavatories at the rear.
- **Car 13—Common Food Car**: A car serving nuts, dried fruits, and jerkies, with six tables set up in it. A militia man and two attendants work here, and a small private room often hosts train staff for brief breaks. The common food car is a frequent destination for families from the common and second-class cars, as well as anyone who just needs to stand up and stretch.
- **Car 14–16—Second-Class Cars**: These cars have five rooms with seating for six apiece, slightly more spacious leg-room, and minor furniture. Each car has a restroom at front and back. A railroad guard named Grason stands guard between the second-class cars and the first-class cars.

  Bree has a seat in Car 16, Verzubak in Car 15, and Boone in Car 14. Cardiff sits in Car 14.
- **Cars 17–18—First-Class Personal Cars**: These luxurious cars have two suites, each of which has beds for five people, a small common room, and a private restroom with standing shower.

  The party has had one suite rented for them in Car 17. The Grientos have the other suite in Car 17. Luc and Ottavia have one suite in Car 18; Elanor and Isobel have the other.
- **Car 19—First-Class Lounge**: The "caboose" of the train, the First Class Lounge is a richly-appointed bar. There are plush seats, wide windows, and a piano for entertainment. Portraits of the magnates of the Avery Coast line adorning the walls. A server and chef named Kov staffs the bar here, and cooks most meals. An old woman named Doris performs cheerfully on the piano, but has a good read of the crowd's mood and is never a bother.

Terrain Elements of the Train.

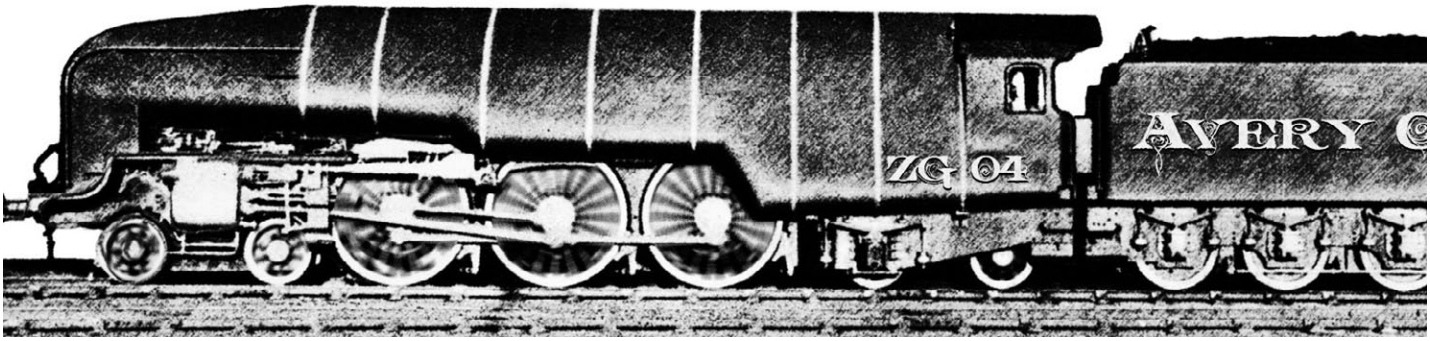
A few combats may happen on board the train itself. In these combats, there are benches, chairs, pianos, bars, and other bits of furniture the party may interact with.

- **Taking Cover.** Most of the cover on the train is not large enough to fill an entire square. However a creature can spend a minor action to take cover behind an adjacent object, such as by ducking down behind a bench, leaping behind a bar, or scurrying under the piano. They gain the benefits of cover against ranged attacks coming from the other side of the object.
- **Travel Between Cars.** To pass between cars one must open a first door, step across a 5-ft. platform with just a knee-high railing, then open a second door to enter the next car. In combat a character would have to spend a minor action, a move action, and a second minor action. We suggest you allow characters to open the doors by spending minor actions even during the middle of their movement, so a normal character could move 2 squares, open door one, move a third square, open door two, and then have 3 more squares of movement in the next car.

  The doors remain open unless someone closes them by hand.
- **Outside the Train.** Moving on the top of a train car in motion requires an Acrobatics check (DC 10), or else the character falls prone at the start of the movement. A character must make the same check if it takes damage while standing atop the train.

  The windows and decorations of the sides of the train provide plenty of handholds. Climbing along the side of the train requires an Athletics check (DC 15).

  It's quite safe to sit atop the train's roof, since a sturdy lip provides a good foot rest. A creature counts as prone, but can use crossbows and firearms without penalty. Militia members typically sit on the roofs while in the Malice Lands, the better to shoot any malice beasts that attempt to attack the train.
- **Driving the Train.** Normally the train travels at 50 to 60 miles per hour (100 to 120 squares per round). An operator in the locomotive can safely adjust its speed by 2 squares per round each round, to a maximum of 160 squares per round. The train can also move backward at a maximum speed of 20 squares per round. If the train takes a turn at a speed above 140 squares, it must make a save or derail.



In an emergency, the train can decelerate by 20 squares per round each round; this extreme braking can take it from cruising speed to a full stop in 6 rounds. Any creature on the train when it first brakes must make a save or fall prone and be pushed forward 1 square relative to the car it's in.

A technologist character can easily understand the machinery of the locomotive. Any other character must make an Intelligence check (DC 20) as a standard action to figure out how to accelerate, decelerate, or brake the train. After a successful check, the character no longer needs to make a check for that action.

Filler NPCs

The party is likely to talk to a lot of NPCs. If you don't want to tip them off by only having "important" NPCs have names, here's a quick roster of filler folk for the second class section.

- **Alexi Mohrbacher.** A Drakran human returning home after selling magical implements to Danorans who want to be able to use magic. It's a solid business because the goods never last more than a few months.
- **Bethany Cousineau.** A Danoran tiefling on a private errand for her family.
- **Charon Chevrolet.** Old man taking a vacation from his goat farm to see his grandchildren.
- **Dan Boyene.** A Danoran traveling ophthalmologist, with a suitcase full of eyeglasses.
- **Emile Davion.** A lieutenant in the Danoran military traveling with five soldiers who are enrolling in the Woodruff Memorial Martial University in Cherage.
- **Ford Zugoksy.** A minor Danoran politician going to a fundraiser in Cherage.
- **Giles Bonhomme.** A nervous musician who constantly holds his trumpet case to his chest.
- **Herbert Nembillion.** A tall blonde duelist going to Nalaam to fight in the arena.
- **Jacques Labelle.** A fat sea captain who has to go to Cherage to file an insurance claim.
- **Kipana Swansdotter.** A college professor from Nalaam who was doing experiments on how magic decays in Danor.
- **Leroy Flowers.** A man on the run after he murdered his wife.

Railroad Guard — **Level 2 Minion Artillery**

Medium natural humanoid, human — **XP 33**

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion — **Initiative** n/a

AC 11, **Fortitude** 11, **Reflex** 11, **Will** 11 — **Perception** +0

Speed 6

Traits

▶ **Background Dressing**

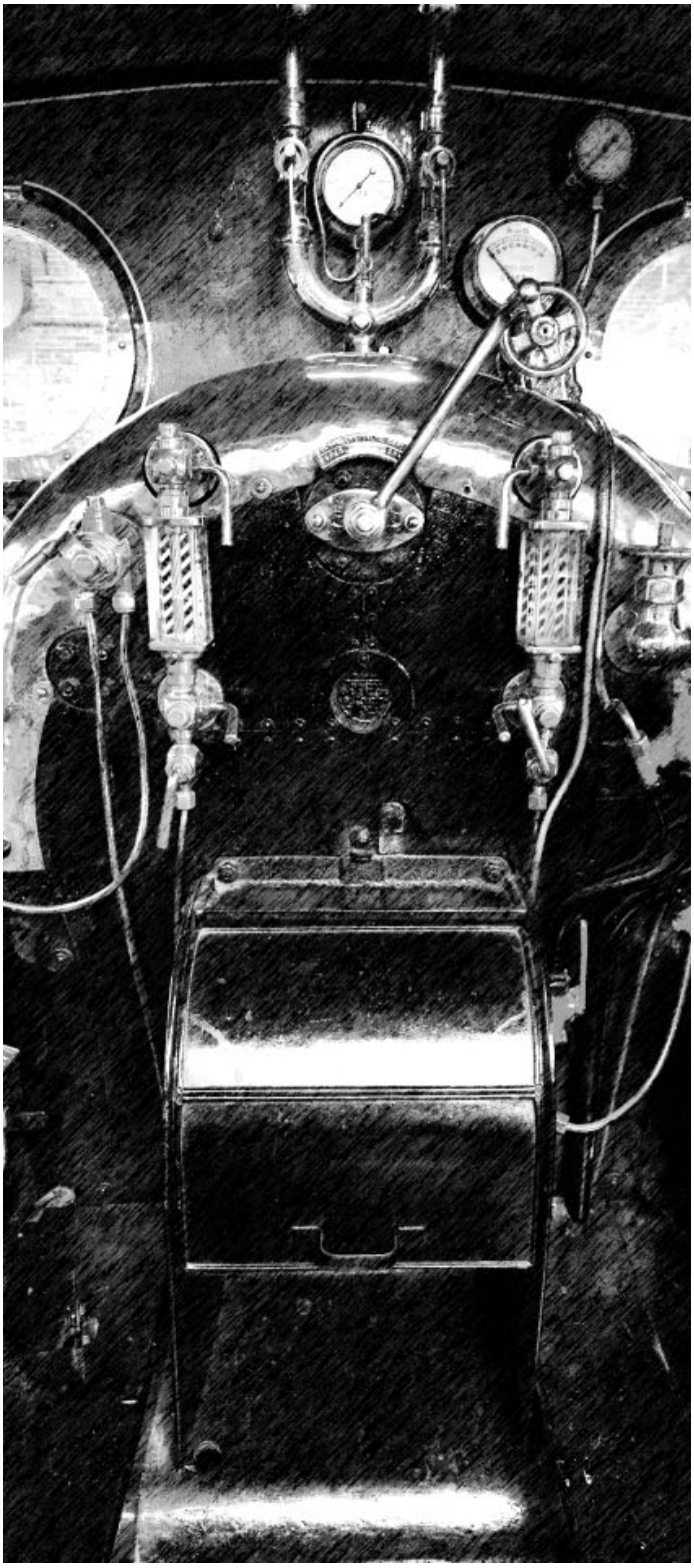
A railroad guard never attacks. It can take a single move action each turn.

Non-minion creatures can move through the railroad guard's space. It counts as difficult terrain. A hostile creature that starts its turn in a guard's space takes 2 damage. A creature that occupies multiple spaces only takes this damage once.

▶ **Rifle Fusillade**

Bullets zing past you.

At the start of the railroad guard's turn, it may deal 4 damage to a single creature within 50 squares that has no cover or concealment.



Triggered Actions

▶ **Crush of Bodies**

Trigger: A guard starts its turn adjacent to a hostile minion.

Effect (No Action): Each creature deals 1 damage to the other.

Str	10 (+1)	**Dex**	10 (+1)	**Wis**	10 (+1)
Con	10 (+1)	**Int**	10 (+1)	**Cha**	10 (+1)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common

APPENDIX E: Nightly Timelines

This appendix to Adventure Four, *Always on Time*, briefly notes the activities of each person of interest during the first four nights along the Avery Coast railroad, barring involvement by PCs. Feel free to adjust the events in the timeline as needed to suit your PCs and your narrative.

Night One: Cherage — Winter 11, 500 A.O.V.

- **Malia.** Stays at common lodging, hangs out with other train guards, does nothing of note.
- **Grientos.** The family leaves hotel at 7 PM. Sightsees until 9 PM. Accosted by drunk militia members as they return to hotel. Children get beaten and family flees.
- **Elanor and Isobel.** Elanor meets two town guards at 6 PM. Departs at 7 PM with permit to enter wealthy district, with Isobel and guards for protection. Attends banquet with bureaucrat Bucher Monmarl and other guests, where she brags about selling Isobel. Returns around midnight.
- **Bree.** Uses pre-arranged plan with Verzubak and Boone. Leaves hotel at 8:05 p.m. for fancy bar L'Wabe du Fonne. Leaves bar at 9:15, exits enclave through northwest gate. Passes Boone's alley at 9:20, and reaches capital district at 10:00. At 10:30 enters grounds of Sovereign's mansion and meets Luc and Ottavia. Returns to enclave by carriage at 1:30 a.m. Walks to hotel.
- **Verzubak.** Sits in hotel lobby at 7 PM, fiddling with dice and notebook. Leaves hotel at 8:10 for fancy bar L'Wabe du Fonne. At 9 PM, makes a toast indicating via code whether he saw Bree or Boone being followed. Heads to a burlesque show at the common theater at 11 PM, and returns to hotel around 2 AM.
- **Boone.** Goes to hotel lobby at 8 PM, flirts, heads to common lodgings hotel. Reaches fancy bar L'Wabe du Fonne at 8:30 with a young woman on his arm. Around 9:05, leaves with woman. Sneaks north along railroad tracks out of enclave, then stops in alleyway just off a major road. Makes out with lady friend until Bree passes at 9:20. Takes lady friend to a more secluded spot and murders her at 9:45. Returns to hotel at 11:00.
- **Mister Mapple.** Breaks into top-floor mayoral suite at some point late in the evening, bathes, and is chased out of the hotel whenever the party is present to see him.

Night Two: Orithea — Winter 12, 500 A.O.V.

- **Malia.** "Inspects" train cargo until 7:30 PM. Heads to Night Market, and contacts witch, who performs sending. Heads to Effervescent Cup and arrives at 8:50 PM, then hangs out with fellow train guards. Heads to common lodging around midnight.
- **Grientos.** Family attends a puppet show at 8:00 PM. At 9:00, they head to a high tower near the center of town to watch the aurora and eat. Return to hotel by 10:30.
- **Elanor and Isobel.** Leave hotel at 7 PM for the Night Market. At 7:45 Elanor buys potions from an apothecary, then heads back. At 8:00, Mister Mapple tries to speak with Isobel, but Elanor screams for help. Returns to her hotel by 8:30 and finds her room vandalized. Spends rest of the evening with guards present.
- **Bree.** Similar to previous night, uses pre-arranged plan with Verzubak and Boone. At 7:00 PM, Bree wanders hotel and slips notes under their and Luc and Ottavia's doors. Leaves for Effervescent Cup at 7:30. At 8:55, departs and heads for the docks. Hires dock workers. Lingers at docks until 10:30, then returns to hotel.
- **Verzubak.** Heads to lobby at 7:15 PM and fiddles with dice while keeping watch. Leaves for Effervescent Cup at 8:00. Makes a coded toast at 8:30. At 10:00, returns to hotel.
- **Boone.** Leaves hotel at 7:35 PM with a lady and does some romancing on the north bridge over the train tracks. Heads to Effervescent Cup at 8:15. Responds to Verzubak's coded toast. At 8:45, sneaks out with lady friend and heads to a spot near the Night Market. After Luc and Ottavia pass, takes his lady friend to an inn, sleeps with her, and slips out around 11:00. Hires a prostitute, takes her to an alley, and murders her, then returns to his hotel at 12:15 AM.
- **Mister Mapple.** Sneaks out of train and climbs to roof of premier hotel, watching. Follows Elanor and Isobel at 7 PM. Confronts them at 8:00, flees when Elanor raises a ruckus. Breaks into her room, bathes, and leaves by 8:29.
- **Luc and Ottavia.** At 7:45 PM, head down to concierge desk, with Luc carrying his lantern in a case. Ask for suggestions. Head out to Effervescent Cup, passing Boone on the bridge. Wait for toast, then depart at 9:00 for Night Market, passing Boone again. Rent a carriage at 9:30, and head to docks, passing Bree's docker assistants. At 10:00, arrive at lighthouse to meet with Hanse Randall. At 10:14, mishap causes nearby sea to burst into flame for a moment, and fires to turn to water throughout city. Return at 11:30.
- **Cardiff.** Leaves hotel at 7:00 PM, taking a carriage north to a very luxurious tower restaurant called Brilliance. Arrives at 7:35, eats alone. Leaves at 8:15, taking another carriage to an inn outside the enclave. Sleeps overnight, and leaves at 5:30 AM to return to train.

Night Three: Trekhom — Winter 13, 500 A.O.V.

- **Malia.** Carries bodies to common theater until 7:45 PM. Heads to common lodgings, bathes, and goes to bed at 9:00.
- **Grientos.** Ejeka takes kids to the park at 7:15 PM and returns to hotel at 9:30. Damata goes to common theater at 7:30, waiting until Vlendam Heid comes out at 8:00. Leaves by 8:30, goes drinking with the dwarf, and returns some time later to recruit PCs when they're at the hotel.
- **Elanor and Isobel.** Leaves enclave at 8:00 PM, takes trolley to the inn Korol Morya at the docks. At 8:30 goes into basement with Vankloff Jeanov, who performs long-distance communication ritual. Leaves at 8:45 and returns to hotel.
- **Bree.** Similar to previous night, leaves for Korol Morya at 7:30. At 9:00, receives note from Ottavia warning about RHC. Leaves at 9:15 to follow Boone. Finds the murder victim at 11:05. Returns to hotel at 11:45.
- **Verzubak.** Heads to lobby at 7:15 PM and fiddles with dice while keeping watch. Leaves for Korol Morya at 8:00. Makes a coded toast at 8:30. Stays at bar until he's kicked out at 2:00 AM, then takes carriage back to hotel.
- **Boone.** Leaves hotel at 7:35 PM alone and smokes on bridge over train. Heads to Korol Morya at 8:15. Responds to Verzubak's coded toast. At 9:15 finds a drinking buddy. Carouses until 11:00, then murders drinking buddy in an alley. Returns to his hotel at 11:30.
- **Mister Mapple.** No set schedule.
- **Luc and Ottavia.** Leave hotel at 7:45 PM and head to Korol Morya, passing Boone. At 9:00, Ottavia has note delivered across the bar to Bree, then they leave for a lighthouse to meet Ramos Zoltan. Return at 11:30.
- **Cardiff.** Leaves discreetly from hotel at 7:45 PM. Rents room in common lodgings at 7:55. Leaves at midnight and heads south to the grand railyard. Meets with Ulrik Pevedin. Gets a third hotel room in the city at 2:00 AM, then leaves the city by ship the next day after the train departs.

Night Four: Nalaam — Winter 14, 500 A.O.V.

- **Malia.** Does nothing of consequence.
- **Grientos.** Ejeka and the kids leave at 7:00 PM to watch a show with tigers. Damata leaves at 8:00 PM for his meeting with the Family.
- **Elanor and Isobel.** At 7:00 PM, lawmages visit their suite. Elanor leaves with Isobel at 8:05, and when Mister Mapple tries to accost her, the lawmages capture him. They reach the arena at 8:45, and the games begin at 10:00.
- **Bree.** Follows Luc and Ottavia to the arena at 9:30 PM, taking a different carriage.
- **Verzubak.** Heads to the casino at 7:30 PM, and returns at 12:30 a.m.
- **Boone.** Leaves for a brothel at 8:45 PM. Meets a female patron of the brothel and kills her in a gutter at 10:30 PM.
- **Mister Mapple.** Gets captured at 8:05 PM. Ends up in the arena.
- **Luc and Ottavia.** Stay in hotel until 9:30 PM, then leave for arena.



APPENDIX F: Crypta Hereticarum

Evil lies trapped within the Crypta Hereticarum—the Vault of Heresies. The Clergy believes that true evil cannot be destroyed, and that killing an unholy disciple or destroying a cursed item will only free its malevolence to wreak havoc elsewhere in the world. For centuries, whenever the priests and godhands of the Clergy collected dangerous items, captured evil acolytes, or rescued afflicted innocents whose curses they could not break, they placed them in the vault, built beneath the desolate isle of Odiem, off the coast of the city Sid Minos.

After the Great Malice, the Clergy fell into disarray for years, and those responsible for maintaining the vault had more pressing issues. They sealed it, tried to erase knowledge of it, and used their divine power to compel all those who had drowned in the rocky seas nearby to rise up and slay any intruders.

Many still tried to plunder its treasures—indeed, in the default version of events, it's already picked clean by the time the PCs arrive in Adventure Four, *Always on Time*. But these dungeon delvers are drawn not only by the promise of rare riches and powerful magic, but by the mysterious temptation of the vault's greatest prisoner, **Ashima-Shimtu**.

Ashima-Shimtu.
Known as the Lady of the Forked Tongue, the demoness Ashima-Shimtu has lived on this world for thousands of years. She served as seneschal to the rulers of the vile Demonocracy, which the Clergy overthrew in their liberation of the mortal races a millennium ago. The Clergy captured her, but dared not kill her, for she alone knew a secret that the Clergy feared could never be released. Only a handful know the nature of that secret, but in her thousand years of imprisonment, the Last of the High Fiends has only ever told the knowledge in full to two intruders. Within a year one great civilization had collapsed, another fell into chaos for decades, and the world was forever changed.

Using This Dungeon

Should you desire to give the party a full-fledged dungeon crawl during Adventure Four, *Always on Time*, we present this more-detailed Vault of Heresies, one which has not been so thoroughly ransacked.

Alternately, you might run the dungeon as a stand-alone adventure for a party of 8th-level PCs. The PCs might be a group of priests heading in to fix things after some disaster breaks most of the trapped monsters loose, a team of heretics determined to learn the most precious secret held by Ashima-Shimtu, or simply adventurers with a contact in the Clergy who can provide the necessary ritual to get them out—after they get as much treasure as they can carry. Or you might make it so the only way to get out is to use a Water Breathing ritual and go through the well beneath the final chamber.

The Zeitgeist adventure path returns to the Crypta Hereticarum in Adventure Eight, *Diaspora*. In that adventure, the party will have the *Crown of the Lost Arc*, an artifact that can make events from the past manifest; this item provides the perfect excuse to include horrors that weren't here the first time around. To make this dungeon a viable challenge for characters of 17th–19th level (the levels appropriate for Adventure Eight), you can simply give all the enemies herein a +5 bonus to all defenses, attack rolls, and damage rolls.

At any level, the nature of the dungeon prevents simply withdrawing to heal and regroup. The vault chambers become progressively more horrific and unfair the deeper the party progresses. Though we include sacred fonts as a way to keep an ill-prepared party from dying due to hit point attrition, careless PCs *will* stumble into traps or curses and die.

If you're afraid of killing your party mid-campaign, you can simply tone down the lethality—for example, instead of perishing, a PC who is "killed" is instead possessed by a demon that keeps his body functional despite blood loss and broken bones. If the character manages to get out of the crypt, the demon exits his body, leaving him horribly injured but stable.

Cursed Items Galore.

Many of the chambers of the vault have a cursed item the PCs can come across. Some might have niche uses, so don't be surprised if the players try to take lemons and make lemonade.

Forces at Work

Though Ashima-Shimtu is the most notable prisoner, two other figures hold power inside the vault. The first is **Giovanni the Painter**, a magic-using artist from the pre-Malice era who could create small pocket dimensions in his paintings. He was accused of debauched violence and sex in these worlds, which he ruled like a petty god. When the godhands came to arrest him, he hid in a massive painting and refused to emerge. The painting was carted into the vault and bound so Giovanni could never escape.

Giovanni shared his knowledge with generations of intruders who became stranded in the dungeon, and over time they converted many of the paintings in Giovanni's chamber into more pocket dimensions where these new prisoners could find food and slake all their carnal thirsts. His chamber has effectively become a constant bacchanalia.

The other figure of note, in Chamber Seven, Damned Souls, is the bearded devil **Belcamp of the Golden Chain**, a squad leader in a long-forgotten devil army that tried to conquer this world ages ago. Belcamp joined with the Demonocracy and eventually rose to a modest position. He freed and gathered the various evil spirits in the dungeon, and occasionally recruits foolish treasure hunters to join his "legion." Mostly he just broods, since there is little to do other than squabble with Giovanni for turf.

Those who join Belcamp's legion wear chains of lead—Giovanni possesses the only gold in the entire vault. These chains take away both their free will and their daily need for food or rest.

Both figures wish to leave, but in several centuries neither has. Only one intruder has ever made it into Ashima-Shimtu's final chamber: the lunatic godhand **Gene Javerto**. Gene went mad from a lifetime of facing evil and believed if he freed Ashima-Shimtu he could rule the Clergy. His assault on the vault killed dozens of priests and broke many of the seals that held the evil here in place.

He bargained with Belcamp, trading a spell that restored the devil's leaden chains to gold in exchange for a collection of lead sheets that had once been golden mirrors. Then he performed a blood rite to enter the final chamber and was never seen again.

With no prospects of escape, Belcamp and Giovanni are motivated by the wholly pointless and petty desire to overwhelm each other, and any new intruder is seen as a possible tipping point in their conflict.

Architecture of the Damned

Except where otherwise noted, the subterranean vault is unlit. The halls between chambers are 15 feet wide and tall—wide enough for some of the massive cursed items to be carted in. Though depicted as straight on the map, they actually curve and split with numerous small cubbies and side rooms that contain minor heresies like piles of defaced holy symbols. These pose no threat, but were stored here for political reasons.

Religious carvings dot the stone walls, flecked with bits of gold dust that makes teleportation out of the vault impossible. A Passwall ritual or similar stone shaping magic would work, but the layout of the vault makes such shortcuts of little use for escaping, though they can bypass the curses on the doors at the entrance of certain chambers.

The floors consist of a layer of thin concrete mixed with crushed bones from generations of priests who chose to be interred here. Beneath that is rusted iron grating, and under that a shallow channel of red-tinged seawater. Beneath that is bedrock, though centuries have caused the island to shift somewhat. Combined with the rust, in some places the floor has simply collapsed and flooded.

Heavy bronze doors mark the entrance and exit to the various chambers. All are unlocked, except the door to Chamber Nine, which is bound by a spell. Normally only someone who has passed the seven trials of virtue (see below) can open the door to the final chamber.

Infinite Hallways.

Chamber One leads south to Chamber Two. Once a person passes through the south door of Chamber One (Area I on the map), he is affected by the leaden curse. Subtle teleportation magic worked into the hallways cause them to feed back into each other. Trying to head north from Chamber Two leads to the southern doors of Chamber Eight, and vice versa. Likewise, heading east from Chamber Six leads to Chamber Four, and vice versa. Other scattered traps teleport explorers, which can cause groups to become scattered and dispersed among hostile areas.

When the leaden curse falls upon a character, any gold the character carries is transmuted to lead, leaving them vulnerable to the teleportation curses of the vault. (Priests would carry gold rings with them inside extradimensional spaces, then put those rings on after coming inside.) This spell is effectively a Level 20 Affliction on each person, and if dispelled that person's gold is returned to normal, and he can then leave the vault by the normal exit in Chamber One.

Seven Trials of Virtue.

Short of performing a very risky Remove Affliction ritual, a character can be freed from the spell if he "passes the seven trials of virtue." This is just a flowery way of saying that a character must drink from the holy water fonts in Chambers Two through Eight. At that point he can either open the door to Chamber Nine or leave through Chamber One. In the eyes of the designers of the crypt, anyone who chooses to speak with Ashima-Shimtu must be corrupted and cannot be trusted to leave the dungeon. Once a character enters Chamber Nine, none of the holy water fonts function for him anymore, and any holy water the character tries to drink evaporates on his lips.

Golden Ward, Leaden Curse.

In Zeitgeist, rings of gold block teleportation. This element is critical to the design of this dungeon. The stones in the walls are laced with gold, preventing creatures from teleporting out. But the dungeon relies on teleportation magic within to make the hallways a sort of infinite loop. Normally a creature wearing a gold ring could bypass this and just walk right out the front door, but the vault also a special curse laid upon it, which causes gold on any creature that enters the vault to turn to lead.

The leaden curse was only known to a few who crafted the vault, and none today are aware of it except those already trapped inside. Supremely cautious or prepared characters might dispel the magic along the threshold of the vault that turns lead to gold, or have the right magic to break the curse, but they likely fall prey and become trapped within.

Three ways out are likely: smuggle in gold rings inside an extradimensional space like a *bag of holding*, take the gold chain from Belcamp in Chamber Seven, or ignore the leaden curse altogether and exit by gaining Ashima-Shimtu's favor.

Foyer

Stairs lead down from the Odiem lighthouse to the centuries-old vault. The foyer once provided a place of worship and reflection. Warnings in an archaic language cover the walls, but most have been defaced. A pair of bronze doors hangs open, warding sigils scraped and melted off. A makeshift iron door-bar leans against the wall, formed from three swords melted together, sufficient to bar oneself inside the vault to keep out the drowned dead.

A feminine voice speaks into your minds. "Religious magic marks this crypt forbidden, but visitors may find shelter, wisdom, and wealth below, if such they seek. But more precious by far is the chance of escape, for at the center of the Vault of Heresies, its greatest prisoner offers freedom from the curse of the Isle of Odiem. These strangers are bidden to enter, lest in the grasp of the dead they shall drown by dawn."

This is the voice of Ashima-Shimtu. She has been trapped here for centuries, and the whole island's purpose was tied to her, so she has gained the ability to telepathically contact any creature here, though she does so sparingly. Her nature is reserved, and while she is prepared to find opportunities to escape, she is normally content to wait silently in her prison until someone sufficiently interesting comes along.

Drinking Vessels.

When anyone steps through the doors into Chamber One, they head a clatter behind them. Magic has conjured seven gold drinking vessels, but they fell to the floor because the stands meant to support them were long ago stolen. Each vessel can hold a pint. They last until the next sunrise and then disappear.

SKELETAL PRIESTS.

Throughout the vault, whenever blood spills on the ground (a living creature first becomes bloodied in an encounter, or someone intentionally spills blood), a sacred skeleton animates within 30 feet, rising up from the bone dust on the floor, and acts immediately. Normally these skeletons attack indiscriminately. Mark the space where the blood fell. Further blood shed there will not animate more skeletons.

Sacred Skeleton — Level 7 Minion Soldier
Medium natural animate (undead) — XP 75

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion — **Initiative** +9
AC 23, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18 — Perception +5
Speed 5 — Darkvision
Immune disease, poison

Standard Actions

⊘ **Claws** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 7 damage.
Effect: The target is marked until the end of the legionary's next turn.

⟋ **Join Us** (charm) ✦ Encounter
For a moment a wispy figure appears in front of you, the memory of a priest who was interred in these tunnels long ago. It beckons you, but as you draw near, its flesh fades away to reveal a grasping skeleton.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +10 vs. Will
Hit: The target must spend its first action on its next turn to move as close to the skeleton as possible.

Str	18 (+7)	**Dex**	19 (+7)	**Wis**	14 (+5)
Con	14 (+5)	**Int**	3 (–1)	**Cha**	13 (+4)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Chamber One: Vault Entrance

Water drips in the darkness, and puddles splash as the party walks. The walls show signs of being slashed and burned long ago, but this evening nothing stirs.

This whole chamber is basically empty, but by exploring it the party can become familiar with the general layout of the future chambers, which all are arranged similarly.

A. Main Gallery.

Inscriptions on the wall describe the purpose of each chamber. The inscriptions are damaged and vandalized, but the general gist of the remaining pieces is that this vault houses creatures, items, and people that contained evil, and that rather than destroying them and releasing their evil back into the world, the Clergy entombed them here. The inscriptions warn that those who enter must be strong in the seven virtues, and that they must resist temptation of the seven vices, for those who enter will be judged, and those found impure will never be able to leave.

The doors leading to area F have bronze plating over a rotted wooden core, and they scrape the ground, requiring a Strength check (DC 20) to push open as a move action, making an ear-wrenching screech. They are embossed with the names of the nine chambers:

1. Main Gallery.
2. Heretical Texts.
3. Unholy Arms & Armor.
4. Blasphemous Artwork.
5. Accursed Items.
6. Afflicted Innocents.
7. Damned Souls.
8. Beasts of the Infernal Horde.
9. The Prison of Ashima-Shimtu, Lady of the Forked Tongue, Last of the High Fiends, Seneschal of the Demonocracy, Keeper of the Secret Which Must Not Be Lost.

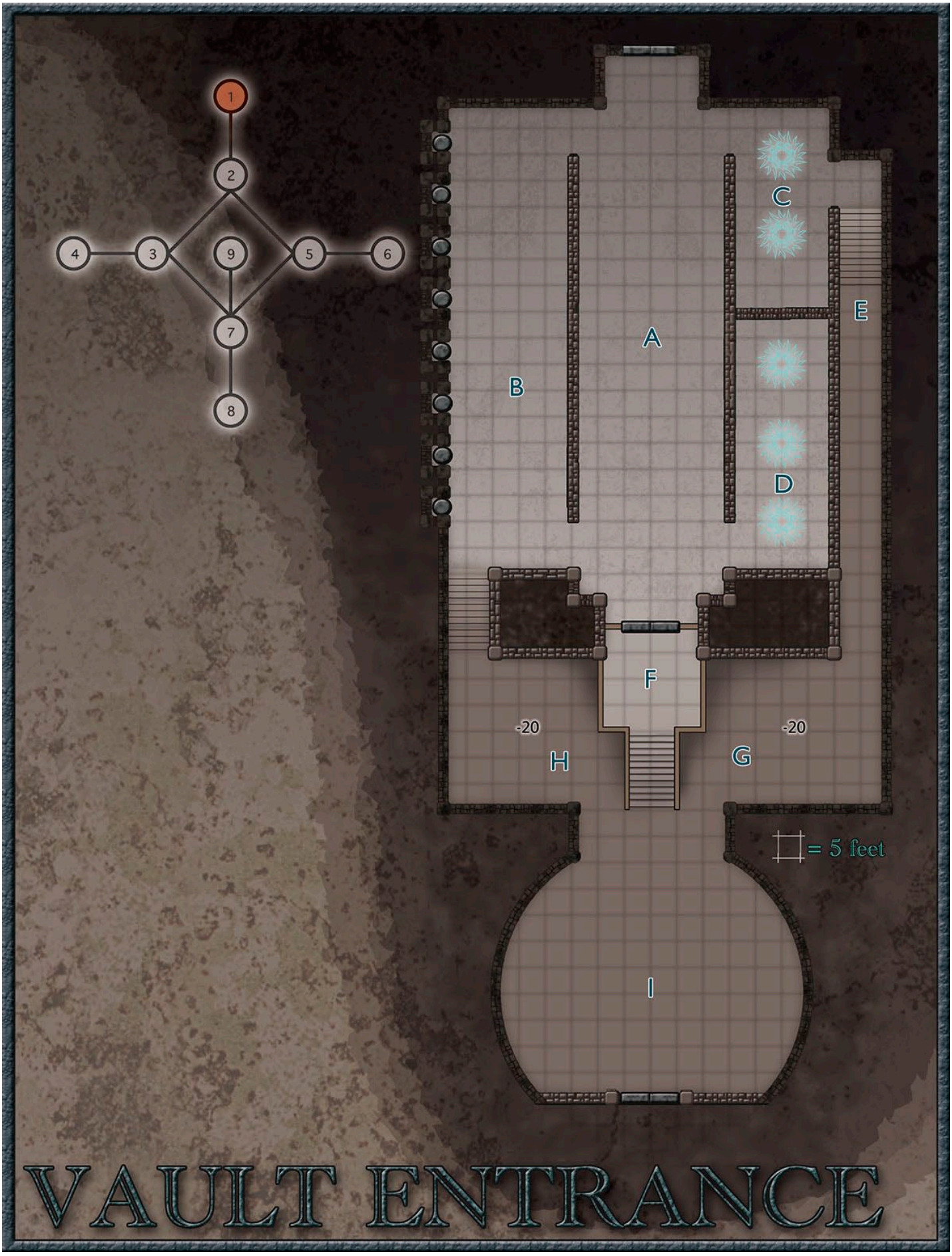
VIRTUES AND VICES.

The walls briefly detail the Clergy's seven virtues.

- **Honesty.** Purity of word and thought.
- **Temperance.** Restraint and moderation.
- **Charity.** Generosity and self-sacrifice.
- **Diligence.** Zealous, steadfast, and careful work ethic.
- **Mercy.** Resolving conflicts with peace.
- **Humility.** Modest and selfless behavior.
- **Bravery.** Courage to undertake dangerous tasks for the good of others.

And then its seven vices.

- **Hubris.** Ambition and a sense of superiority.
- **Gluttony.** Obsession with physical pleasures.
- **Greed.** Rapacious want of material possessions.
- **Sloth.** Failure to do as one is required.
- **Wrath.** Uncontrolled hatred and anger.
- **Envy.** Bitter desire to deprive others and take what they have.
- **Melancholy.** Lack of joy toward life.


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VAULT ENTRANCE

B. Statuary.

Cracked and toppled statues here depict seven saints of the Clergy who embodied the saintly virtues, as well as a statue of the hierarch who commissioned the vault.

C. Lesser Exhibits.

Two binding circles sit here, glowing dimly. If a creature enters one of these circles (or those like it throughout the dungeon), he must succeed an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma check (DC 20) or else be trapped. Creatures with non-natural origins take a –10 penalty to this check. A trapped creature cannot leave the circle or affect the circle, and can neither attack anyone outside the circle, nor use any sort of magic that goes beyond the circle. A creature can attempt another ability check as a free action once per round to try to escape. The creature can be released via forced movement, or by damaging the circle.

Each circle here has a pedestal supporting some item of note. One supports a book on a stand, sitting open to a story about a cat that taught mankind fire. An illustration actually moves as if it is a portal into another world, showing a small cookfire next to a tiny house in the woods, though there's no sign of the cat. Beside the pedestal lies a long-decayed human corpse that looks like it was mauled. The text, *The First Spellbook of Giovanni the Painter*, contains guidance for creating extradimensional spaces, and includes the Rope Trick ritual.

Anyone touching the book summons Agunn, Giovanni's vicious white house-cat familiar, which has the strength of a tiger. He attacks anyone who does not treat him properly, but can tell of his master if sufficiently flattered. Giovanni survives in Chamber Four, Blasphemous Artwork.

The other circle contains an enchanted helm of ivory whose only power is to grant the wearer the ability to speak and understand the language of demons.

D. Greater Exhibits.

Three binding circles here contain the *Legex Diaboli*, a lawbook of the old Demonocracy; the *sword of remorse*, which if the wielder ever releases it, it will teleport and stab the nearest other creature; and a simple length of gold chain, each link of which is inscribed with a holy verse asking for mercy.

E. Hall of Wisdom.

Down the side stairs, scripture and religious doctrine line both walls, though most has been defaced.

F. Pious Mount.

This rise overlooks the Keystone Exhibit (Area I), and despite the best efforts of previous looters, its hallowed enchantment remains. A mosaic resembling the flag of Crisillyir lies here: a hand wrapped by a thread and fishhook. A character might recall (Religion DC 18) a ritual this set-up suggests.

A person who cups a bit of holy water from the nearby font (Area H) in one hand, then places his other hand upon the hand in the mosaic, then drinks the water, is effected a blessing. First, he heals as if he had spent a healing surge. Second, he gains a +1 bonus to saving throws until he leaves the vault, or for 24 hours, whichever is sooner.

The blessings from Pious Mounts in other chambers are cumulative. A character can only benefit from a given Pious Mount once per day (which includes the healing effect).

G. Trial Room.

Originally priests would come to the vault and undergo tests of their piety. Three skeletons in tattered priestly robes lie here, each burned with a single hand-print that seared cloth and bone.

H. Blessing Room.

Broken and rotted benches here face a podium once used for organized prayer. The bones of at least a dozen people have been arranged around the podium, some of them showing partially burnt hand-prints. In one wall, a cracked stone basin still drips holy water.

I. Keystone Exhibit.

The vaulted ceilings of this seemingly empty chamber rises up 40 feet. Magical darkness shrouds the ceiling, and the moment anyone crosses the middle of the room or attempts to examine the ceiling, this chamber's prisoner plummets, screaming. Then her descent snaps to a stop just at eye level, as she reaches the end of her chains. Six golden chains descend from the ceiling, ending in silver hooks that dig into her arms, legs, and back. Sinewy and starved, she thrashes and screams again, reaching out desperately. Blood stains her feathered wings the color of rust, and her eyes have sunken so deep they appear to be black pits.

The prisoner, **Linia**, has lived on this world for thousands of years after finding long ago that some magic prevented her from returning to her homeland of gods and angels. She helped Triegenes defeat the Demonocracy and found the Clergy, but after his death she began to speak out against some of the decisions of the hierarchs, who chose personal profit over the welfare of all. For centuries she was a thorn in their side, until they finally staged her death and used it as an excuse to launch the First Victory.

Though as an angel she needs no food, centuries of imprisonment have left Linia feeble and mad. All she can do is wail and beg for death, but mighty enchantments on her chains render her immune to physical harm. Weapons simply bounce off as if she were stone. The hierarchs feared in death she might somehow escape and report their betrayal.

All she can offer the PCs is insane warnings.

"He travels in your breath, on your words, in the rustle of your hair in the breeze. You are not possessed. Don't believe the voices in your ears. Believe only the voice in your head. You have no torches. You'll go blind. You'll die of thirst, but drink with the left hand! Please leave now and beg them to cut me down. I'll agree to their lies. I'll call them gods. Please let me die."

There is nothing the party can do for her now, but she will be freed when the Obscurati complete their ritual at the end of Adventure Nine, which weakens the spells holding her.

The Leaden Curse.

Characters who pass through the doors to the south are affected by the leaden curse. The curse converts all gold to lead, effectively trapping the characters here by subjecting them to teleportation traps. It also simultaneously teleports any of the exhibits that were in this room back to their pedestals, unless they were carried in an extradimensional space.

Make sure the players notice the effects of the curse. If the PCs try to head back north into Chamber One, they end up entering Area I of Chamber Eight, where they're in for a nasty surprise.

Haunted Hallways

Encounter Level 10.

While the chambers themselves hold the majority of treasures, many of the greatest dangers lie in the hallways between them. Each hallway is roughly 400 feet long, with cubbies and side tunnels that just lead to minor chambers. The party encounters the following challenges as they go from chamber to chamber.

- **1 to 2 (or 2 to 8).** Radiant curtain and invisible stalker.
- **2 to 3.** Infinite hallway and möbius wind.
- **3 to 4.** All disabled.
- **2 to 5.** Flooded sump.
- **5 to 6.** Stone pillar drop.
- **4 to 6.** World's biggest portable hole.
- **3 to 7.** Pacifism penance.
- **5 to 7.** Spear fraises.
- **7 to 8.** Teleportation scatter trap.

Hall One to Two (or Two to Eight).

In this hallway lurks a free-roaming prisoner, the invisible stalker **Maensha'il**. Wholly evil, it derives joy only from mayhem and suffering. It would far prefer to drive a party to fight each other rather than engage them in combat, so it tries never to make itself known (Perception DC 41).

When the PCs are 300 feet in—100 feet from the next chamber—the character farthese away from the next chamber hears a voice whispering in some demonic tongue. This is Maensha'il, speaking from just outside the area of the radiant cascade trap. It hopes to split the party up and confuse them when the trap triggers.

Maensha'il, Invisible Stalker Level 10 Lurker
Medium elemental humanoid (air) XP 500

HP 81; **Bloodied** 40 **Initiative** +15
AC 20, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18 **Perception** +5
Speed 0, fly 8 (hover) Darkvision
Vulnerable 5 against close and area attacks

Traits

▸ **Naturally Invisible**
Only the slightest disturbance in the air betrays its presence.
Maensha'il is invisible, and always has total concealment. Typically attacks against it take a –5 penalty, and enemies grant it combat advantage. This effect cannot be dispelled, but creatures with blindsight or that can otherwise see invisibility can see it. Additionally, it does have a soul, and so is visible in Chamber Nine's golden mirrors.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Grab and Slam** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Something picks you up and shoves you into the wall.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: The target is slid 2 squares. If it ends this forced movement adjacent to a wall or similar solid surface, it takes 2d8+5 damage.

⟋ **Whispered Madness** (fear, psychic) ✦ Encounter
An eerie voice breathes on your ear, and you lash out wildly, convinced there's something beside you.
Attack: Ranged 1 (one creature); +13 vs. Will
Hit: The target makes a melee basic attack against a creature adjacent to it of Maensha'il's choice. If the attack hits, it deals 2 damage.

Skills Stealth +31
Str 20 (+10) **Dex** 22 (+11) **Wis** 11 (+5)
Con 15 (+7) **Int** 15 (+7) **Cha** 8 (+4)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Primordial, Supernal

Radiant Cascade Trap Level 17 Trap
Hazard XP 1,600

Perception DC 16 The ground up ahead is smoother than before.
Perception DC 23 A line of holy scripture is carved into the ceiling overhead. You'd have to walk farther to read it all. (It says, "In night the holy army held fast against the beasts of the infernal hordes. And lo the sun rose, and light did burn evil from one length of the world to the other.")
Nature DC 23 The bones on the ground here appear sun-bleached.

Description

The last hundred-foot length of the hallway before the entrance to Chamber Two has a line of scripture carved into the ceiling. The door itself has a small section torn free 13 feet up, big enough for a creature to wriggle through. Once a creature reaches the door, an arcane lock seals it shut, and a curtain of light appears down the hallway, 100 feet away. It advances 10 feet every round, making the following attack at the start of each round. Once it reaches the door, the trap resets.

Standard Action

▸ **Radiant Cascade** (radiant) ✦ At-Will
A curtain of light sweeps across the ground, charring everything it touches.
Effect: The 15-ft. wide, 10-ft. thick wall moves 10 feet closer to the door to Chamber Two each round. Creatures that start their turn in the area take 5 radiant damage. Creatures that enter or end their turn in the area take 25 radiant damage and are blinded, dazed, and take ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends all).

Countermeasures

- **Dispel** Arcana DC 23 or Religion DC 16. A character who touches the ceiling inscription can concentrate on its magic and attempt to stop the curtain's progress for one round. Mind you, the inscription is 15 feet up.
- **Escape** Athletics DC 20 to climb up the door to the narrow opening, and then Acrobatics DC 20 for a Medium creature to squeeze through. Small creatures can pass through automatically.
- **Unlock** Thievery DC 31 to undo the arcane-locked doors to Chamber Two. Alternately, a use of channel divinity will unlock the doors if the user succeeds a Charisma check (DC 16).

After the party gets past this trap, Maensha'il waits for the curtain to finish its path, then flies easily through the hole in the top of the door. It continues to follow the party throughout the dungeon, using *whispered madness* occasionally to cause them to strike each other during combat (this is especially nasty in Chamber Six), or moving valuable objects nearby a particular PC, as if to imply that the character is unconsciously taking them himself. If detected, it might try to throw a PC into harm's way, but then it flees. The stalker is just an option available to you to make the dungeon eerie, and to make an easy encounter have a sudden spike of danger.

Hall Two to Three.

A malfunctioning teleportation trap makes this path seem impassable. About a hundred feet down the hallway, a beheaded statue of a priest lies at the juncture of a T-intersection which slopes uphill to the left and downhill to the right. As the party approaches, the severed stone head of the statue slowly rolls from left to right down the hall. If they wait about a minute, it returns, rolling past again, just as it has for centuries.

Either direction proceeds for an apparent distance of 100 feet before returning back to the same T-intersection. Originally several mechanical traps filled these side halls—falling spears, scythes that slashed feet, and such—but previous tomb raiders disabled them, and their components lie shattered on the ground. The hall is now harmless, but a seeming dead end.

The statue at the T-intersection stands in front of a secret recessed

handle (Perception DC 30). If pulled, the statue is supposed to animate and step aside, and then the T-intersection would transform into a straight hallway. While the statue is missing its head, though, the conflux of teleportation magic goes awry if the handle is pulled.

Möbius Wind.

The walls rumble, and the left hallway seals shut, but the right one flickers: half closed, half open. The air of the room starts to stir in a sudden gust that spins in a ever-swifter loop through the malfunctioning portal. After a round, the statue's head is picked up and carried with the hurricane force wind. Any creature within 15 feet of the statue is in danger.

Recursive Wind. Area Burst 3 (one creature within the burst). *Attack:* +13 vs. Reflex. *Hit:* 2d10+6 damage and the target is pushed 2 squares toward the right hall. *Special:* A creature pushed into the right hall is teleported back beside the statue, is dazed (save ends), and takes an additional 2d6 damage from unstable shunting.

This recursive wind ends if the head is placed on the statue (Dexterity DC 18 to catch it in mid-air), or if the handle behind the statue is pulled again.

Hall Three to Four.

Various traps once existed here, but Giovanni's people have disabled them all. Sitting in the middle of the hallway is a mock ironic "guard dog," a *cursed watchful hound*.

Cursed Watchful Hound

This foot-tall magic statue depicts a wise hound carved from granite. Its eyes move to watch anyone who approaches.

Lvl 1 360 gp

Rare Wondrous Item

Property The owner of this item can say a command phrase—"buono cani"—which familiarizes the statue to a given creature within line of sight. Otherwise, the statue barks at the sight of any creature it isn't familiar with. (Obnoxiously, it keeps barking even as you try to familiarize it.) The statue has darkvision.

Curse Several times each day, if no one is watching the statue, food will disappear within 30 feet, leaving behind mysteriously torn and chewed containers or packs. Shortly thereafter, foul-smelling dog droppings appear beside the statue.

Hall Two to Five.

The stone here settled and cracked, and the middle 200 feet of this tunnel flooded. The original trap that was here rusted away, so now all the party needs to do is bypass the sunken area. Bear in mind that they probably cannot use light sources other than torches, forcing them to swim blindly.

Hall Five to Six.

At twenty spots along this 400-foot tunnel, stone pillars are rigged to fall from the ceiling, possibly crushing intruders. Each pillar is 5 feet square, and falls either on the left, right, or middle of the hall.

Every 20 feet the character in the lead effectively has a one-in-three chance of picking the wrong spot. Have the lead character make Perception checks (DC 26; see the stat block) every 20 feet until she succeeds, and each time she fails roll 1d3; on a 1, she triggers the trap. Obviously once the character triggers a trap, she can easily avoid it in the future, but if a character is running in a hurry you might call for a Wisdom check (DC 13) to recall all their locations.

Crushing Pillar Traps Level 13 Trap
Hazard XP 800

Perception DC 26 The bone gravel of the floor looks more flattened than usual across one-third of the hall. (A character who succeeds this check can automatically spot all the other pillar traps if she moves cautiously.)

Triggered Action

▶ **Crushing Pillar Attack** ✦ Encounter

A massive block of stone falls from the ceiling, and flattens you.

Trigger: A creature weighing at least twenty pounds steps on the ground beneath the trap.

Attack: Creatures in triggering square; +16 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d8+12 damage and the target is pinned beneath the pillar (Escape DC 29). Until it escapes or the block is lifted, the target is prone, restrained, and takes ongoing 5 damage.

Miss: The target moves to an adjacent space of its choice.

Special: The pillar magically levitates back into the ceiling five minutes after triggering.

Countermeasures

✦ **Intentionally Trigger** A character can try to step on or poke spaces intentionally to cause the pillar to fall. Once the trap triggers, the character must make a Dexterity check (DC 13) or else the tool used to poke is struck and likely destroyed. (It's not a good idea to try to trigger this trap with your feet.)

Hall Four to Six.

This hallway has a very simple trap, easily bypassed by an intelligent creature. The floor is covered in an old tarp that has been painted to resemble a pit, as wide as the hallway and 30 feet long. Indeed, a creature that steps onto the apparently solid surface falls into the tarp's painting, plummeting 50 feet (taking 5d10 damage).

The solution to bypass this is to shift the tarp slightly to create a pathway. It's heavy, requiring a standard action to clear one 5-foot square. Unseen servants will reset the trap five minutes later. Moving the whole tarp requires at least a dozen people.

Hall Three to Seven.

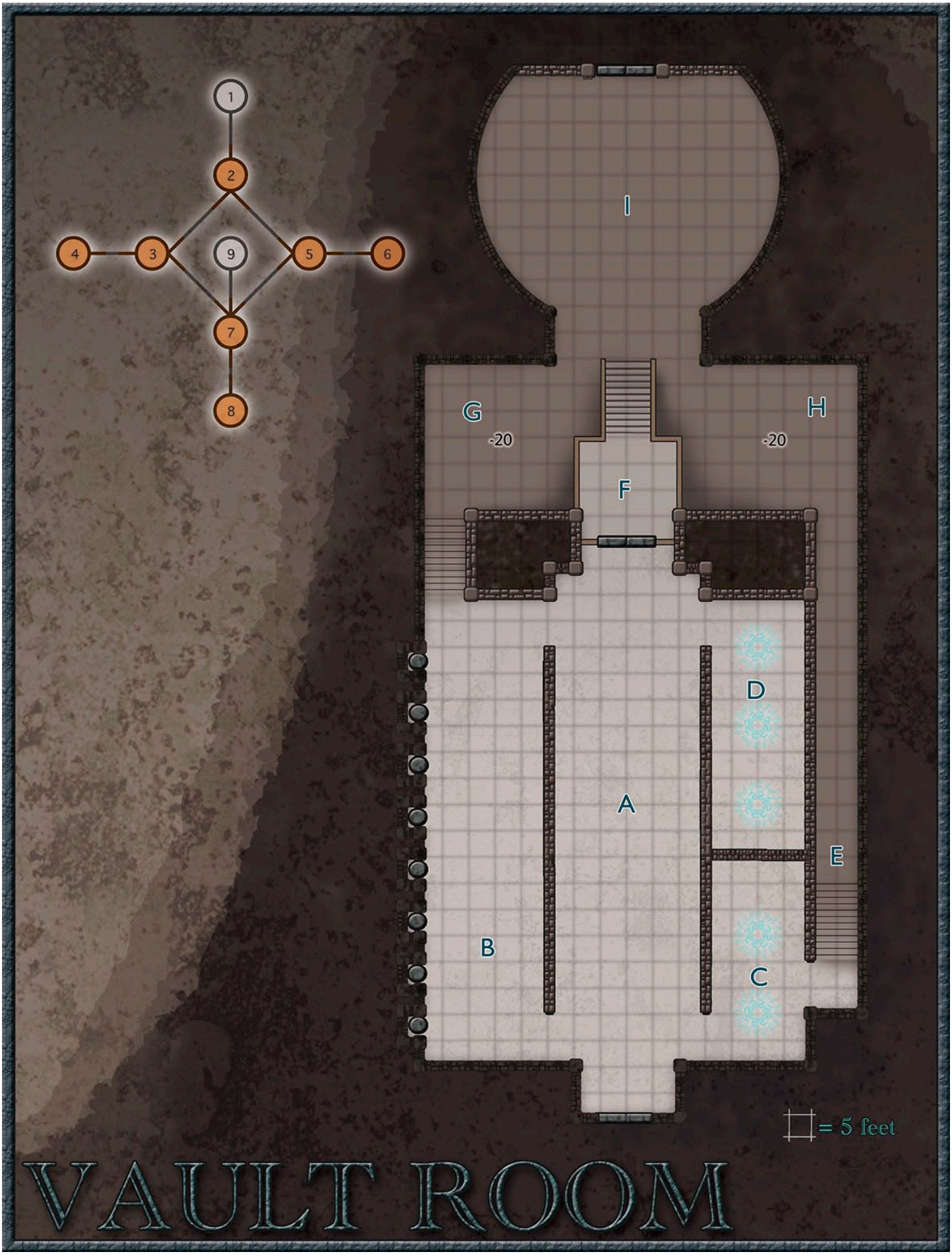
Every 5 feet a character walks down this hallway, each weapon or implement he is carrying deals him 1 point of damage as each strikes him suddenly. The magic is precise, though, and it won't hurt a character if he just throws his weapons, walks a few feet, then picks them up and throws them again. Extradimensional spaces also work fine.

Hall Five to Seven.

The original traps here were disabled. Now Belcamp's legion has placed obvious and easily-avoided fraises of bone and stone spears pointing toward Chamber Five, intended to deter incursions by the rust monsters there. A character that enters one of these spaces takes 5 damage unless he moves slowly. The rust monsters are too big and stupid to avoid the spears, so they just don't come through here.

Hall Seven to Eight.

Belcamp's legionnaires keep their doors sealed tightly just in case the beasts in Chamber Eight start roaming. Additionally, the halfway point in this hallway is marked by a 30-foot stretch of carvings of priests along the walls, facing each other. If a creature is already in that stretch of hallway and another creature enters the same area, both of them must make a saving throw. If both succeed, they are teleported to the edges of the area. If either fails, he is teleported to the doorway of a random chamber in the vault (roll 1d8+1 to determine which).


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VAULT ROOM

Hall Seven to Nine.

The approach to the final vault has no traps. Normally the only way to open the door to the final chamber is to perform the ritual atop the seven Pious Mounts throughout the dungeon, but if you want to let the party bypass that, you can include Gene's ritual (detailed in Adventure Four, *Always on Time*), which lets them place a hand in the center of a ritual circle, offer up a healing surge, and open the doors.

Chamber Two: Heretical Texts

Encounter Level 7.

The first PC to enter this chamber has a moment to see that the layout is similar to Chamber One, and that creatures of some sort lurk in the dark. But then he is immediately teleported onto a pyre in Area I, arriving chained to an iron stake, standing upon a pile of books. The room is pitch black for a moment, but then a fire kindles on all sides at the base of the pyre, threatening to consume him. Any cries for help do manage to carry all the way across the chamber, alerting the rest of the party of the danger.

A. Main Gallery.

Dozens of books that were stored in this area have been vandalized, torn apart, and scattered across the floor. A half-dozen minor demons—dretches—sit among the clutter, holding onto pieces of book like they're reading them. At the sight of intruders they run for the greater exhibits, where one reads a scrap of paper. The PCs hear a snarling voice recite, "And there was no light but *fire*!" And then, for the next twenty-four hours, no light sources of the party will function, forcing them to either rely on torches or lanterns, or to walk in the dark.

Light from the trap outside might shine in for a bit, and it should become obvious that there's a fire brewing in Area I. Also, the dretches' eyes glow fiery red in the dark, so if the party has no torches handy, they can still at least see well enough to stumble toward rescuing their friend.

If slain, the dretches' demonic essences flow like smoke into a nearby creature's lungs, trying to possess it. They remain there until the creature dies, and a few days thereafter reform in Chamber Eight. The dretches can be purged with radiant magic, freeing the character of possession, but cannot be destroyed permanently.

B. Statuary.

The statues here, mostly toppled, depict people holding books in various unpleasant scenarios. Some plunge into toothy maws of hell. Others have their flesh peeled from their skulls for looking at a text. One is being eaten by his own book.

C. Lesser Exhibits.

The binding circles here have been destroyed. One cracked podium has a nameplate that reads, "Scroll of the Gods," but it has gone missing.

D. Greater Exhibits.

These binding circles are also destroyed, but one noteworthy book page is tacked to the wall. This is a sheet from the *Book of Lorem*, which can tell no lies.

E. Hall of Wisdom.

This hall is thick with paper scraps, dangerous only if someone runs too fast. The walls that once held sacred wisdom have been carved with quotes from the heretical books the dretches tore to pieces.

Vault Dretches (6) Level 12 Minion Brute
Small elemental humanoid (demon) XP 250

HP 1; see *demon-spawn minion* **Initiative** +9
AC 24, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22 **Perception** +8
Speed 5 Darkvision

Traits

▸ **Demon-Spawn Minion**

Normal damage bloodies the dretch. The demon dies if dealt 16 damage by a single source, or if dealt any damaged while bloodied.

☼ **Sickening Miasma** ✦ Aura 1

Black smoke clings to their small demonic bodies.

Whenever an enemy in the aura takes a standard action or a move action, it takes 2 damage. Multiple sickening miasma auras stack, dealing up to 10 damage.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Claws** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. AC

Hit: 12 damage.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Gorging Evil** ✦ Encounter

The demon's body collapses into smoke which billows across you and presses at your lips, trying to enter your mouth.

Trigger: The dretch dies.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): One enemy within 6 squares must make a saving throw or become possessed by the dretch. Multiple dretches can possess the same creature, and indeed they try to focus all on one victim, because each dretch alone has trouble keeping control of a creature it has possessed.

The first time each encounter a possessed character becomes bloodied, he must make a saving throw or become dominated by the dretches (save ends).

Whenever a possessed character takes radiant damage, it can make a saving throw to purge one dretch's smoke, reducing the number of demons possessing it. The smoke flees to Chamber Eight, and reforms into the dretch in a few days.

A possessed creature takes a –1 penalty to all saves regarding this effect (resisting domination, ending the domination, and purging a dretch) for each dretch possessing it.

Str	20 (+11)	**Dex**	17 (+9)	**Wis**	12 (+7)
Con	16 (+9)	**Int**	5 (+3)	**Cha**	7 (+4)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common

Scrap of the Book of Lorem

This sheet has a dramatic illustration and appears to have been torn from an old holy book. Text on one side reads, "And there was no light but fire." The back says, "But that flame only strengthens his resolve."

Lvl 8 2,600 gp
Rare Wondrous Item

Property (Consumable) If a creature who holds this *scrap of the book of Lorem* would be affected by a charm effect or be dominated, the page bursts into flame, ends the effect, and makes the creature immune to being charmed or dominated for one minute.

Power (Daily) Standard Action. You read the front of the sheet aloud. All light sources other than fire within 100 feet are extinguished. Creatures within that area are unable to produce light for 24 hours, except through fire. Any non-fire light effects only last for a single round at most.

F. Pious Mount.

The dretches applied accursed glue from elsewhere in the vault to the doors between areas A and F. A creature that touches the door is stuck fast (Escape DC 13, 18, or 23 depending on how much contact they made with the doors).

The mosaic at the top of the stairs functions the same as in Chamber One. It also affords an excellent view of a PC who might be burning alive on the pyre.

G. Trial Room.

This room is empty.

H. Blessing Room.

A seventh dretch normally waits here, and as soon as it realizes they are intruders, it flees out the doors of Area I to warn its master, Belcamp, in Chamber Seven. The holy water font works here, but it doesn't produce nearly enough water to put out a campfire, let alone a bonfire.

I. Keystone Exhibit.

The mound of books here is 20 feet across and 10 feet high. The first round a PC is trapped here, there are only harmless flames at the edge of the pyre. On the second round the outer squares begin to burn, and any creature that enters or ends its turn there takes 5 fire damage. On the third round and onward, the whole pyre is burning. The character will likely burn alive in about a minute unless rescued.

Three options present themselves. First, the trapped character (or an ally) can attempt a Strength check (DC 25) as a standard action to break the chains holding him to the iron stake. Second, an ally can attempt to break the chains (AC 15, resist 10 all, 30 hit points).

Third, the lashed character is oriented so that if he looks up he can see, carved into the walls above him, the following phrase:

> "I recant my heresy. I ask forgiveness. Let me burn in this life so I will not burn in the hereafter."

If the bound character says that phrase, the fire damage increases to 15 per round, but it cannot reduce the character below 1 hit point. Once he is at 1 hit point, the fire is suddenly snuffed.

Otherwise, the pyre continues to burn for half an hour, filling the chamber with choking smoke, making it impossible to rest here. However, enough scraps of books lie scattered about that the party can assemble torches before they press onward. Outside the south doors, the hallway splits into two paths. Right leads to Chamber Three, left to Chamber Five.

Chamber Three: Unholy Arms & Armor

Encounter Level 10.

A carving above the entrance door reads, "Let your labor aid your fellow man. Thy task is to create, not destroy."



This chamber is overseen by **Hilde**, an evil and intelligent suit of full plate armor adorned with a wolf motif, who sees the world through a veinous black eye in the center of her helm. She telekinetically controls any loose weapon within a Burst 6 centered on herself, and can be a deadly opponent if angered. Though evil and desiring bloodshed, she loyally serves Giovanni the Painter, whose chamber she guards.

She lies inert against the wall in the statuary hall, able to listen to the PCs. If she suspects they are agents of Belcamp or will try to harm her master, she calls out, "Identify yourselves. Only friends of Giovanni may pass, and I know all of Giovanni's friends." (Make sure to clarify that this woman's voice is not the same as the voice the party heard upon entering the vault.)

She's willing to briefly talk with intruders, but won't speak if anyone is within sight of the armor, but clever parties can locate her if they figure out that they don't get responses while standing in the statuary. Hilde asks if they're willing to fight Giovanni's enemies, the legion of Belcamp. If they seem at least interested, she'll let them pass. If they decline or hesitate, she rises up and attacks them, shouting that the only way they'll get out of this pit is if they give in to their bloodlust and show that they're true warriors.

Terrain.

Each area of this chamber has various scattered weapons which Hilde can animate and attack with. Whenever she animates a weapon, decide which of the weapon types it is (see Unholy Animated Weapon, below).

- **A. Main Gallery.** Eight weapons.
- **B. Statuary.** Four weapons.
- **C. Lesser Exhibits.** Two weapons.
- **D. Greater Exhibits.** Two weapons. Hilde's helm was originally trapped here, and one of the binding circles is broken.
- **E. Hall of Wisdom.** Five weapons, but all are daggers.
- **F. Pious Mount.** No weapons. Its magic functions like in the other chambers.
- **G. Trial Room.** Seven weapons.
- **H. Blessing Room.** One weapon.
- **I. Keystone Exhibit.** Twelve weapons. A boulder sits in the center, with bent steel rings that once held in place a massive sword. When the Clergy was sealing the vault, the last entombed item was this item—one of the fallen swords of the slain goddess Srasama. Belcamp had it brought to his chamber, where he uses it as a torture rack.

Also present are discarded and broken implements and bits of armor, but they play no mechanical role in the battle. Most of the binding circles are active, and shoving Hilde into one is the best way to defeat her quickly.

The doors beyond Area I lead to Chamber Four, and as long as there's no battle it's easy to hear faint music coming from down the hall.

Tactics.

Hilde is linked to all the weapons throughout this chamber, and can telekinetically move and attack with any weapon within 30 feet of her. She can sense through these weapons, even if she doesn't have line of sight to them. Attempting to harm her directly is somewhat futile because of how resilient she is, but attacks against the weapons injure her and reduce her arsenal. As she loses weapons, she moves to other rooms to rearm. Once reduced to one-quarter her normal hit points she abandons her armored torso and limbs, and her helm flies away toward Chamber Four.

Hilde, Unholy Armor Level 10 Solo Brute
Medium natural animate XP 2,500

HP 405; **Bloodied** 202 **Initiative** +13
AC 22, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 18 **Perception** +5
Speed 5 Darkvision
Immune necrotic, poison
Resist see Unholy Steel
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 2

Traits

▸ **Unholy Steel**
She has no flesh to wound, and the steel of her armor resists most strikes.
Hilde has resist 10 to all against damage other than acid, psychic, and radiant. Particularly holy weapons deal full damage against her.

However, Hilde animates weapons throughout the chamber, without which she is not much of a threat. She can have up to four weapons animated at a time, and at any point during her turn she can animate up to her limit without spending an action. They act independently of her on her initiative +10, +5, –5, and –10. Each weapon can take opportunity attacks. If Hilde or a weapon moves so that the weapon is outside a Burst 6 centered on her, it falls inert, but she takes no damage.

These weapons can be targeted, and striking them harms Hilde (see unholy animated weapons stat block, below).

▸ **Helm Flight**
The wolf's head of her helm snarls in frustration, and then every part of the armor except the helm collapses to the ground. Before the clatter dies down, the helm has flown away.
When Hilde is reduced below 101 HP, her walk speed drops to 0, she gains fly speed 10 (hover), she becomes Tiny, and she can no longer use *gauntleted smash*.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Gauntleted Smash** ✦ At-Will, Basic
The armor's fists still shine with polish after all these years.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 3d10+6 damage.

⊘ **Blasphemous Eye** (charm, fear) * At-Will
The living eye in the center of the helm catches your gaze, and suddenly your own weapon comes alive in your hands.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +13 vs. Will
Hit: The target is disarmed and becomes convinced its own weapons and implements will turn against it (save ends). While so convinced, it will not draw or use any weapons, implements, or similar offensive carried items.
First Failed Save: The character further believes that its clothing has come alive. It must spend a move action each round if possible to disrobe. (This typically incurs a cumulative –1 penalty to AC each round, to a maximum of the character's armor bonus from gear.)

▸ **Swarm of Battle** ✦ At-Will
Effect: Hilde uses *gauntleted smash* or *blasphemous eye*, and then makes four attacks with animated weapons.

Str	20 (+10)	**Dex**	22 (+11)	**Wis**	11 (+5)
Con	15 (+7)	**Int**	10 (+5)	**Cha**	8 (+4)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common

Unholy Animated Weapon Level 10 Minion Brute
Tiny natural animate XP –

HP 1; see *durability* **Initiative** see Hilde's *unholy steel*
AC 22, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 22, Will 20 **Perception** +5
Speed fly 5 (hover) Darkvision
Immune necrotic, poison, psychic

Traits

▸ **Durability**
Normal damage bloodies the unholy animated weapon. The weapon is destroyed if dealt 15 damage by a single source, or if dealt any damage while bloodied. Any damage dealt to the weapon is also dealt equally to Hilde, but conditions affecting an unholy animated weapon do not affect her.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Melee Strike** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage, plus a special trait based on the nature of the weapon.
Special: Each animated weapon has one of the traits below. Most weapons here are swords. Try not to reuse the other traits until the whole set has cycled through.

- ✦ **Unholy Sword:** The target takes a –2 penalty to saves and attack rolls until the end of its next turn.
- ✦ **Hellspear:** The target is pushed 2 squares. If it ends adjacent to a wall it is restrained (Escape DC 19). While the target is restrained it takes ongoing 5 damage but the spear cannot attack.
- ✦ **Abyssal Scourge:** The target makes a saving throw or else is knocked prone.
- ✦ **Maggot-Skull Mace:** The target is blinded and takes ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends both).
- ✦ **Stirge-Dagger Swarm:** Until the end of the weapon's next turn, the target gains an aura 1 that deals 5 damage to any ally who enters or starts its turn there.
- ✦ **Sticky Shield:** The target is slowed, and the shield moves with the target.

Str	20 (+10)	**Dex**	10 (+5)	**Wis**	14 (+5)
Con	10 (+5)	**Int**	1 (+0)	**Cha**	1 (+0)

Alignment Evil **Languages** –

Chamber Four: Blasphemous Artwork

Encounter Level 7.

Of all the chambers in the crypt, only this one is well-tended and neat. The front door glides open with nary a creak. The statues all stand unbroken. Torches illuminate dozens of paintings that hang along the walls, though a few along the Hall of Wisdom (Area E) are draped with tattered black cloth. Fiddle music and gay laughter filter through the air, but at first glance there seems to be no one here. Then the party can hear the distinct vigorous sounds of sex coming through the cracked doors to Area F.

Nearly every painting here is a portal to a small demi-plane, where the images depicted in the painting come alive. Three dozen beings live in these paintings, relying on the food within and only occasionally returning to the real world when they need to visit a different painting, or

for the intermittent parties thrown in Area I, in front of the grand painting of Giovanni. No one here is physically a threat to the party, and if attacked they flee into paintings and then seal them so no one can follow.

When sealed from within, these paintings require a password to enter. Close examination of the frames reveal that they've been rubbed with numerous layers of blood and carved with ritual symbols pledging the souls of the creators to evil entities. Anyone who damages a painting or its frame is struck by lightning from Giovanni's painting (see below).

Every item of art here somehow offended the Clergy. Some of note:

- **A. Main Gallery.** A series of paintings depict six of the seven vices in lurid detail: Sloth, for instance, shows a pile of bones in a farmer's outfit in the middle of a vineyard, with a copper nameplate reading, "Take from nature. Work not to fill your masters' coffers." (Melancholy is in Area E; see below.)
- **B. Statuary.** Statues depict numerous elaborate sexual positions, many involving pairs of nuns, or elderly priests with young boys.
- **C. Lesser Exhibits.** A large painting here is alive with a constant orgy, including dozens of men and women among leashed beasts and a handful of devils.
- **D. Greater Exhibits.** A collection of jewelry and clothing with vulgar depictions of saints, or skulls impaled on fishhooks (the Clergy's traditional icon), is stored here.
- **E. Hall of Wisdom.** Various damaged or ruined paintings are stored here. Some have torn canvas; others were just demi-planes that were plundered and burnt from within.

  One particular painting, that of the vice Melancholy, has a veil that flutters in a constant light breeze. A character that enters a space adjacent to the painting triggers the following attack.

  Sucked in by Malaise. Close Burst 1 (triggering creature within burst). *Attack:* +10 vs. Fortitude. *Hit:* The target is pulled into a black void 20 ft. across, falls prone, and takes ongoing 20 damage each round it remains in the painting.

- **F. Pious Mount.** Giovanni has decreed that two people must have sex atop the Pious Mount constantly, even to the point of injury and exhaustion, so he can watch. He calls this "performance art."
- **G. and H. Blessing Room and Trial Room.** Paintings hanging here depict cities burning, torture chambers filled with illusory angels, a skeletal orchestra playing a constant cycle of music, and a series of five island landscapes where stone monuments praise Giovanni as a god.
- **I. Keystone Exhibit.** In front of the exit door stands a 20-foot high painting of a stormy landscape. Standing boldly in the foreground is the aged but muscular Giovanni, towering over all who approach but never moving except to speak. None can enter his painting, and he can never emerge. Invulnerable and omnipotent in his own domain, Giovanni is still trapped by old Clergy spells.

Painting Defenses.

While a painting is sealed, anyone who attacks it or attempts to remove it from its mount takes 5 lightning damage, plus 10 more lightning damage each round it carries the painting. Giovanni can also unleash bolts of lightning from the front of his painting at will as a standard action, though he can only strike targets he can see from his immobile position (in Areas F, G, H, or I). If he does, make the following attack:

Giovanni's Lightning Bolt. Ranged 20 (one, two or three creatures). *Attack:* +13 vs. Reflex. *Hit:* 5d6 lightning damage.

Festival of Endless Delights.

If the party isn't immediately hostile, as soon as Giovanni sees them, he invites them to rest and share wine with his people. Revelers emerge from paintings all around, offering wine, fruit, and succulent meats. A naked woman dances by with a censer that releases floral incense, and the couple atop the Pious Mount call down for the PCs to join in.

The party is welcome to rest here, and Giovanni boisterously engages them in conversation, but if they dally for more than ten minutes, the incense begins to have an effect on them all. Make the following attack:

Floral Incense. Area Special (all PCs within the incense cloud). *Attack:* +10 vs. Will. *Hit:* The target is compelled to engage in acts of lust and gluttony for the next two hours. At the end of this time the target falls unconscious for six hours and wakes thereafter with the benefits of an extended rest. Immediately repeat the attack.

The festival is *mostly* harmless, except to the characters' sense of decency. Time is likely sensitive for the PCs, however, so any character who resists the temptation can try to snap his fellows out of it by striking them. Any damage allows them to make a saving throw to break free of the compulsion, with a bonus equal to the amount of damage dealt.

Dour Discussions.

If the PCs decline to party, or if they attack the other revelers, Giovanni glowers, but makes them an offer. He sees they're talented warriors, and he wants them to rescue one of his people, a lillend lyrist named **Somnia**, whom Belcamp has taken prisoner. In exchange, he'll have his people prepare a "tame meal," a feast nutritious enough to heal their wounds without delaying them. Mechanically this meal grants anyone who eats it the benefits of an extended rest after one hour of dining.

Alternately, if the party can capture Belcamp and bring him here so he can be tossed into one of the prison paintings, Giovanni will give them a whole painting of their own. Though hardly an easily-carried bit of adventuring gear, the possible value of a perpetual portable pocket dimension are vast. Each painting demi-plane is only 100 feet in diameter (anything outside that area is just an illusion on an invisible wall), but Giovanni will give them any from the chamber that they desire, other than his own of course.

Giovanni shares all he knows about Belcamp and the rest of the vault, and warns that there are numerous traps near Chamber Seven which change regularly, but usually involve fire, acid, and steel. But if they lose a fight, he'll disavow having met them, since he doesn't want open conflict with Belcamp's warriors.

Battle.

Should the party manage to get the drop on Giovanni's revelers, the three dozen people try to flee to various paintings and seal themselves in. None are trained warriors, but usually they have enough warning of approaching enemies to hide before a fight occurs.

Harming Giovanni is probably only possible if the party gets the *cursed rod of negation* from Chamber Five, then uses it on the painting. That expels Giovanni—he's actually just a normal man, not the titan depicted in his portrait. Agonized at being returned to flesh, he cannot defend himself. When he dies, however, every painting in the chamber turns into a vacuous portal, like the one in the Hall of Wisdom above, and intense sucking air currents pull creatures toward the deadly traps.

Each round a creature must make a save at the end of its turn or be pulled 2 squares toward the nearest vacuous painting. A creature that manages to exit the chamber is no longer in danger.

Cursed Item.

If a fight occurs, one of the many prisoners who can be slain is a fiddle-player. He drops this wretched item.

Obnoxious Fiddle

Someone stained this fine fiddle a ghastly bright pink. It shows signs of having been stabbed and bashed, but somehow never broke. When you touch it, a childish voice chuckles and says, "You're not a good person."

Lvl 2 520 gp

Rare Wondrous Item

Property The fiddle itself grants no particular bonuses. Indeed, it telepathically talks to whoever owns it, encouraging them to be honest in all things, and getting upset if they don't adhere to a childish sense of right and wrong. The only real power of the fiddle is that it's nigh-indestructible.

Curse The owner can never dispose of the fiddle, and cannot tell any lies while he owns it. The GM is encouraged to be as obnoxious as possible in roleplaying this thing.

Chamber Five: Accursed Items

Encounter Level 10.

This chamber has no doors any more, their metal having been rusted away and devoured. Nearly everything of value here has either been stolen by looters or destroyed by the two bear-sized rust monsters that lair here. Belcamp and his legion never come here, since the monster's magical powers can dissolve any metal, even their leaden chains. This frustrates Belcamp, because he believes a *rod of negation* made of bone still lies somewhere in this chamber, and such an item would let him defeat the defenses of Giovanni's paintings and finally slay the painter's followers.

Terrain.

The whole floor is covered in a patina of rust, with a few piles of silvery powder filling scattered squares (four dozen in the Main Gallery, one or two in each other room, and ten in the Keystone Exhibit room). These are the remains of dissolved magic items that still crackle with unstable energy, which fills the chamber with dim light. A creature that enters a space adjacent to the silvery powder is attacked as an immediate interrupt. A creature that stays adjacent or moves away from a pile is safe; it only unleashes its dangerous energy when a creature comes close.

Unstable Energy Hazard. Close Burst 1 (triggering creature within burst). *Attack:* +10 vs. Reflex. *Hit:* 1d6 cold, 1d6 fire, and 1d6 lightning damage.

The binding circles in this chamber are all nonfunctional.

Tactics.

One rust monster lairs among the Statuary, on a pile of broken sculptures. The other nests in the Blessing Room. They sleep most of the time (Passive Perception 12), but if a PC comes within 50 feet while carrying metal items, they awaken and attack hungrily. If a metal item is thrown in front of one, it'll spend a standard action eating it as long as it hasn't been attacked in the past round. Getting through this chamber without a fight could be possible with a sufficient collection of metal items, such as the arsenal in Chamber Three.

Cursed Rust Monster (2) — Level 10 Elite Controller
Large natural beast — XP 1,000

HP 132; **Bloodied** 66 — **Initiative** +10
AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 21 — **Perception** +5
Speed 6 — Low-light vision
Immune unstable energy hazards
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Rusting Defense**

You deliver a fierce wound to the beast, but your entire blade has begun to rust and crack.

Whenever an attack using a metal weapon hits the rust monster, the weapon used in the attack rusts. While the weapon is rusted, it imposes a –1 penalty to attack rolls. Whenever an already rusted weapon hits the rust monster again, the penalty worsens by 1. When it reaches –5, the weapon dissolves into powdery rust and residuum. Before that time, the weapon can be repaired by rituals such as Make Whole.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Bite** ✦ At-Will, Basic

The creature kicks with one of its gangly legs to open your guard, then clamps its teeth upon your side. Metal plates rust and buckle, and you feel it hungrily licking up the detritus.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC

Hit: 2d10+7 damage. If the target is wearing metal armor, the armor rusts, taking a –1 penalty to AC. If the armor is already rusted, worsen the penalty by 1. When it reaches –5, the armor dissolves. Before that time, the armor can be repaired by rituals such as Make Whole.

⊘ **Devour Metal** ✦ Encounter

A thin tongue licks the monster's maw, and then it lunges at your weapon.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature wearing or wielding a rusted item); +13 vs. Reflex

Hit: One rusted item worn or wielded by the target is destroyed.

Minor Actions

⊘ **Cursed Antennae** ✦ At-Will, 1/round

The feathery antennae of the huge creature brush across you, and every piece of metal you carry begins to rust.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +13 vs. Reflex

Hit: Metal weapons and armor worn or carried by the character rust 1 step, as detailed above. Additionally, the target suffers a back-biting curse (save ends). While so cursed, at the start of the creature's turn it takes 10 damage if it dealt any damage since its last turn.

Str	16 (+8)	**Dex**	16 (+8)	**Wis**	10 (+5)
Con	15 (+7)	**Int**	2 (+1)	**Cha**	8 (+4)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Treasure.

Stashed in the blessing room, under a pile of cracked and gnawed bones, lies an unblemished rod made of ivory that gleams pristine and white. This *cursed rod of negation* was once the chamber's keystone exhibit, because once used it is nearly impossible to be rid of, with deadly consequences.

Cursed Rod of Negation

You grasp the three-foot long, intricately carved ivory rod, and are acutely aware of your own pulse beating in the veins of your hand.

Lvl 13 17,000 gp

Rare Wondrous Item

Curse Once a creature uses the power of this rod, he can never be the recipient of any beneficial magic. Hostile effects still function normally (unless he counters them with the rod), but the cursed victim cannot be healed magically, granted any bonuses by non-martial powers, or even have this curse broken by magic ritual. No other creature can use the rod's powers until the cursed wielder dies.

The ivory of the rod is stained with brilliant crimson, spreading from the handle, until it is completely red when you no longer have hit points. When you die, the rod returns to pristine white.

The rod itself can be destroyed by snapping it in half. This breaks the curse, but unleashes all the magic the rod ever thwarted in a Close Burst 5. *Attack:* +16 vs. Reflex. *Hit:* 5d6+50 damage. *Miss:* Half damage. *Special:* There may be other consequences of the negated magic being released, at the DM's discretion.

Power (Daily) Standard Action. Choose a magical effect you are aware of within 10 squares. Make a Charisma check against a DC equal to 10 + the level of the effect's creator. If you succeed, the effect is permanently dispelled, producing an amount of residuum equal to the item's value.

When you use this power, you lose a healing surge permanently (or take damage equal to half your bloodied value if you have no healing surges).

Power (Encounter) Immediate Interrupt. *Trigger:* An arcane, divine, primal, psionic, or shadow power would affect you. *Effect:* You lose a healing surge permanently and the power has no effect on you.

Additionally, when each rust monster dies it dissolves into a pile of crumbled metal, with a glowing golden egg in the center. These two eggs can briefly summon a new rust monster.

Rust Monster Egg

You throw the egg to the ground, and as it shatters a rust monster appears.

Lvl 10 500 gp

Uncommon Wondrous Item

Power (Consumable) Standard Action. You throw the egg up to 10 squares, and then summon a cursed rust monster (see page 443). It only has 1 hit point, and if not slain it lasts until the end of the encounter.

Chamber Six: Afflicted Innocents

Encounter Level 8.

Once this chamber contained dozens of people in magical stasis, holding at bay various curses or possessions that the Clergy was unable or unwilling to defeat. Most of those poor people were slaughtered, or released and joined either Belcamp or Giovanni. Now only the keystone exhibit remains: **Ennio Adolini**, the architect of the crypt.

As the crypt's construction neared completion, several chambers were yet unstocked, and the Clergy hierarchs saw an opportunity to ensure the secrets of the traps and defenses were never spoiled. They arranged for Adolini to become possessed by an ice devil, then held a swift trial and dragged him to the vault, where he has remained—trapped in a pillar of fire—for nearly a thousand years.

Vestige Demons.

Carved into the lintel above the entrance door is the admonition, "Let none cause harm to these afflicted innocents. Show them mercy."

A dessicated corpse lies just inside the doors, hands to its head as if it clawed at its face as it died. It wears a distinctive helmet, and if removed the PCs can see the man has only a single eye in the center of his forehead.

Cyclops Helmet

The ivory helmet is solid where eyes would need to look out, but has an opening over the center of the forehead.

Lvl 3 680 gp

Rare Head Slot Item

Curse A character who puts on the helmet is attacked at the start of each round. *Attack:* +10 vs. Fortitude. *Hit:* 10 damage. The target's head is agonizingly reshaped, removing his normal two eyes and replacing them with a single central eye which throbs with black veins and a red iris. Whenever the character reduces a creature to 0 hit points, he must spend a standard action as soon as possible to mutilate the body and remove its eyes before he regains control of himself.

A hush hangs over this chamber, but fire light flickers under the doors at the end of the Main Gallery. As the party explores, small burning motes float like embers through the air, but they follow the party as if with intent. These are the remnants of demons that possessed people who were entombed here. Their hosts died, and now they float seeking a new body to claim as their own. A use of channel divinity can drive the motes away for five minutes, but it's nearly impossible to destroy them.

If any character deals damage to another creature in this chamber, a mass of motes try to fly down his throat, punishing him for transgressing the commandment of mercy. Treat this as the following attack:

Merciful Motes. Area Special (triggering creature within Chamber Six). *Attack:* +10 vs. Will. *Hit:* The target becomes possessed by the demon, as per the dretches in Chamber Two (see the vault dretches' *gorging evil* power on page 439).

This is of course an excellent place for Maensha'il the invisible stalker to panic the PCs into attacking one another.

Vault Architect.

Ennio Adolini has long since stopped screaming. A broken shell of a man, he whimpers at his plight as the fire perpetually burns his flesh, but he will not beg for release. He knows that the fiend within him would harm people were he released, and he does not wish to be party to that. If addressed he can talk, though he cannot move or be moved from the pillar of fire in the center of the Keystone Exhibit (Area I).

Adolini warns the PCs not to try to free him. Any creature that touches the flaming pillar takes 20 fire damage and, in any case, the PCs have no way to move Adolini's body.

Salving the Tortured Soul.

Speaking to Adolini with friendship or pity can earn the party his trust. He longs for human contact, and though he knows he has been trapped far longer than a normal man's life, he still hopes justice will find those who trapped him here. If the PCs convinces him that they are good people, and if they agree to share his story when they get out, he asks them to prove their purity by undertaking the ritual atop the Pious Mount, drinking the holy water and being blessed. If they all do, he will offer them the knowledge that will let them escape.

First, he tells them the secret chant, "*Noli me tangere, fratris. Saepi cum fide, nobiles.*" If spoken or whispered, this chant will cause any sacred skeleton in the same chamber to ally with the party, rather than fight against them.

Second, he explains the nature of the leaden curse and the teleportation magic that makes the vault seem to have no borders. But if they've met Belcamp and seen his golden chain, they might realize they could take it from him and fashion it into gold rings so the teleportation wouldn't affect them, allowing them to leave by heading north through Chamber One.

Third and finally, he explains that it might be possible to swim through the well beneath Ashima-Shimtu in the final chamber. Though the tunnel is nearly 500 feet long, and is specifically enchanted to dispel shape-shifting and water-breathing magic, if they could make that distance they would emerge just off the coast of the island.

If Adolini should somehow be released, the ice devil inside him awakens and takes immediate, full control. Its first priority will be to escape, but it wouldn't mind eradicating a mortal or two on the way out if it can.

Devil-Possessed Adolini Level 12 Elite Soldier
Large immortal humanoid (devil) XP 1,400

HP 195; **Bloodied** 97 **Initiative** +14
AC 28, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 21 **Perception** +9
Speed 8 (ice walk) Darkvision
Immune cold
Saving Throws +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

☼ **Crippling Cold** (cold) ✦ Aura 2
The chill is not in the air, but in your blood.
Any enemy that starts its turn in the aura is slowed until the start of the ice devil's next turn. If the ice devil takes fire damage, this aura is suppressed until the ice devil can reactivate it as a minor action.

Standard Actions

⊗ **Icy Longspear** (cold, weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The frozen shell around the old man extrudes a glowing blue spear, longer than two men are tall.
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12+7 cold damage.
Effect: The devil marks the target until the end of the devil's next turn.

✧ **Freezing Breath** (cold) ✦ Recharge ⚀⚁⚂
The mantis-like head sighs softly, and a layer of ice coats every surface in the room.
Attack: Close Blast 5 (creatures in the blast); +15 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d8+8 cold damage, and the target is restrained (Escape DC 21). While restrained, the creature takes ongoing 10 cold damage.
Effect: The area becomes coated in ice. Creatures that move more than 2 square in a single turn must make an Acrobatics check (DC 10 + squares moved) or fall prone.

Minor Actions

⟋ **Tail Orb** (cold) ✦ At-Will, 1/round
Spines on the monster's tail glow, and then it flicks a jagged crystal at you.
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+5 cold damage.
Effect: Freezing mist fills an Area Burst 1 centered on one of the target's squares until the end of the encounter. The mist obscures vision and deals 5 cold damage to any creature that enters or ends its turn in a mist square.

Skills Endurance +19
Str 25 (+13) **Dex** 22 (+12) **Wis** 17 (+9)
Con 27 (+14) **Int** 15 (+8) **Cha** 19 (+10)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal

Counter-Offer.

When Adolini finishes sharing this knowledge (or when it becomes clear the party isn't going to earn his trust), the ice devil takes over his body and growls out an offer of his own: free him, and he'll carve a path to the exit.

If the pillar of fire is dispelled as part of a deal to set him free (such as with the *cursed rod of negation*), Adolini wails as the ice devil within him takes full control. Though he maintains his normal human body, a shell of ice forms around him in the shape of the fiend. The deal obliges the ice devil to serve the party for a time, though its appreciation is fickle.

Chamber Seven: Damned Souls

Encounter Level 12.

Two legionnaire guards stand in front of both the front and back doors to this chamber. All the legionnaires have leaden chains wrapped around their chest like double bandoliers, as well as various adornments of lead either worn or pierced through their flesh. They have no interest in socializing, and if addressed will direct visitors to speak with Belcamp. If attacked they roar to sound the alarm.

A total of twenty-three legionnaires reside here—two each at the front and back, four each in the Main Gallery, Statuary, and atop the Pious Mount, two torturing the lillend Somnia in the Trial Room, and five in the Keystone Exhibit room, serving as a throne for Belcamp. Most were afflicted innocents or other damned souls, though a few were adventurers who got stranded.

A trio of dretches also live here, serving as jesters for Belcamp when he's in an excitable mood. Normally they just sleep.

Door Traps.

The handles of all doors in this chamber have been shaped and sharpened so they have jagged teeth, then coated with poison (Perception DC 25). A character touching one of these doors is attacked as follows.

Jagged Handle. Melee 1 (triggering creature). *Attack:* +10 vs. AC. *Hit:* 1 damage, plus ongoing 5 poison damage and the target is dazed (save ends both).

The doors can be opened safely if one has thick enough gloves and knows to be careful.

Commander of the Leaden Legion.

The bearded devil Belcamp (his beard even larger than normal on account of his massive chin) once lead soldiers for the warlord Egal the Shimmering, who attempted to conquer this world thousands of years ago. When he was captured and brought here his golden regalia turned to lead, but he eventually traded with the lunatic godhand Gene to receive the only gold chain in the entire vault. It's only 3 feet long, a pale imitation of his former splendor, but it gives him some of the power he once wielded. He tore apart a fellow prisoner—a chain devil—and uses the leaden chains to adorn his followers, freeing them from the need to eat, drink, or sleep.

Belcamp doesn't realize that he could simply walk out of the vault if he took his chain and fashioned a ring to protect himself from being teleported in an infinite loop. Instead, he has convinced himself he's the ruler of the crypt, and spends most of his time brooding and planning how to destroy Giovanni and his followers. Of late he has found some entertainment in the torturing of the lillend Somnia, captured from Giovanni's flock.

Hostile Negotiations.

Belcamp is willing to make a few offers. He'll let the party join his legion, which grants them resist 10 fire, an extra healing surge each day, and an effect similar to a *ring of sustenance*. In exchange, though, they must follow his orders, or else take 5 damage every time they try to refuse. With extra forces, he'd be willing to try attacking the rust monsters and recovering the *cursed rod of negation*.

Alternately, he'd be willing to trade the lillend Somnia for the rod, and let the PCs use the Pious Mount to receive their blessing. He claims he just wants the rod to defend his people, but within hours of getting it he would launch an assault.

Finally, he might be cowed into handing over the lillend if the party threatens him with summoned rust monsters from their eggs. Belcamp doesn't realize the summoned creatures are so fragile, and he's afraid of a fight.

Combat & Tactics.

The legion, despite its name, has pitiful military training. If forced into a fight they just swarm and try to force PCs into the binding circles. Belcamp stays beside as many of his allies as possible to protect them. The sheer number of enemies here is probably too much for the party to handle.

Belcamp, Bearded Devil — Level 12 Soldier (Leader)
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) — XP 700

HP 97; **Bloodied** 48 — **Initiative** +10
AC 28, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 21 — **Perception** +13
Speed 6 — Darkvision
Resist 20 fire

Traits

☼ **Beard Tendrils** ✦ Aura 1
The snarled threads of its beard lash out and slice your skin, and they tangle your weapons and make it hard to strike the devil's minions.
Enemies that start their turn in the aura take 5 damage. Allies in the aura gain a +2 bonus to AC.

▸ **Commander of the Golden Legion**
The more blood he spills, the brighter glow the links of the golden chain he wears.
Whenever an enemy first becomes bloodied during this encounter while within 50 feet of Belcamp, that creature is dominated until the end of its next turn.

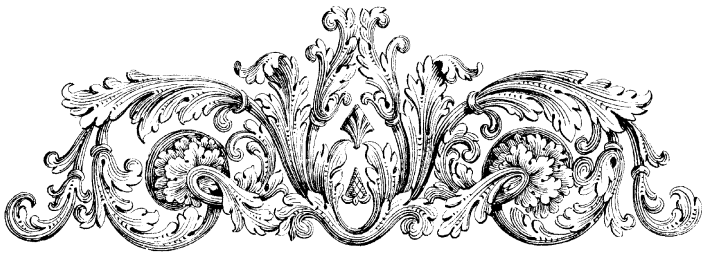
Standard Actions

⊘ **Wounding Glaive** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The jagged blade leaves a ragged wound.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8+5 damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 damage and cannot heal (save ends both).
Effect: The target is marked until the end of Belcamp's next turn.

Move Actions

▸ **Fiery Flank** (teleportation) ✦ Encounter
The devil disappears in a burst of fire and brimstone, then appears behind you and attacks.
Effect: Belcamp teleports 5 squares. Until the start of his next turn he gains a +2 bonus to his attack rolls, and on a hit he deals an extra 5 fire damage.

Skills Intimidate +11
Str 20 (+11) **Dex** 15 (+8) **Wis** 16 (+9)
Con 17 (+9) **Int** 10 (+6) **Cha** 11 (+6)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal



Leaden Legionnaires (23) — Level 7 Minion Skirmisher
Small elemental humanoid (demon) — XP 75

HP 1 (a missed attack deals no damage to a minion) — **Initiative** +9
AC 24, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22 — **Perception** +8
Speed 5 — Darkvision

Standard Actions

⊘ **Sword** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 7 damage.

⊘ **Manhandle** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The legionnaire slides the target 1 square.

Str 16 (+6) **Dex** 13 (+4) **Wis** 10 (+3)
Con 12 (+4) **Int** 8 (+2) **Cha** 6 (+1)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common

Dretches (3) — Level 12 Minion Brute
Small elemental humanoid (demon) — XP 250

HP 1; see demon-spawn minion — **Initiative** +9
AC 24, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22 — **Perception** +8
Speed 5 — Darkvision

Traits

▸ **Demon-Spawn Minion**
Normal damage just bloodies the dretch. The demon dies if dealt 16 damage by a single source, or if dealt any damaged while bloodied.

☼ **Sickening Miasma** ✦ Aura 1
Black smoke clings to their small demonic bodies.
Whenever an enemy in the aura takes a standard action or a move action, it takes 2 damage. Multiple sickening miasma auras stack, dealing up to 10 damage.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Claws** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 12 damage.

Str 20 (+11) **Dex** 17 (+9) **Wis** 12 (+7)
Con 16 (+9) **Int** 5 (+3) **Cha** 7 (+4)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common

Aftermath.

If the party rescues the lillend Somnia, she can perform a song that puts the rust monsters or the beasts in Chamber Eight to sleep for five minutes. The song doesn't work on intelligent creatures.

The torture rack used for Somnia is a 15-foot long mithral blade, which deals 1 fire damage per round to any creature that touches it. Though seemingly far too large to ever use in battle, it draws the attention of any eladrin or any Vekeshi Mystic who sees it. If an eladrin or Vekeshi Mystic grasps its hilt, it transforms into an appropriately-sized blade.

First Blade of Srasama

In your hands you hold a sliver of a goddess. The gleaming mithral weapon transforms to a blade of fire or back at a thought. In your mind's eye you feel the presence of Srasama's first aspect, that of the warrior-maiden.

Lvl 20 +4 125,000 gp

Rare Weapon (the bonded wielder can change the weapon to any Light or Heavy Blade as a minor action)

Critical +1d12 fire damage per plus.

Property The weapon can only be bonded to one creature at a time, and typically only an eladrin or someone who follows eladrin philosophy and religion. Only the bonded wielder can use the weapon's powers. The bonded wielder can teleport the weapon to her grasp as a minor action from any distance across the world.

Property You know the status and location of all women within one mile, and if you have met them before you also know their identities. If this power is ever used to harm innocents, the wielder immolates, taking ongoing 20 fire damage (save ends), and the sword teleports away and will never serve her again.

Property You gain a +5 item bonus to Acrobatics and Athletics checks.

Power (Daily) No Action. *Trigger:* You hit an enemy with an attack using this weapon. *Effect:* The attack deals an extra 1[w] damage, and you or an ally within 10 squares can make an implement attack as a free action.

Chamber Eight: Beasts of the Infernal Horde

Encounter Level 11.

The party ultimately only has one reason to go here: to perform the ritual on the Pious Mount. The monsters here are horrendous and deadly, but avoidable if the party has a few skeletons courtesy of Ennio Adolini, has the ice devil on their side, or can get Somnia to sing and put the beasts to sleep. If the party insists on fighting here, they get what they deserve.

Vault Hell Hound (6) Level 7 Brute
Medium elemental beast (fire) XP 300

HP 180; **Bloodied** 90 **Initiative** +5
AC 19, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18 **Perception** +11
Speed 7
Resist 10 fire

Traits

☼ **Fire-Limned** ✦ Aura 1

The hell hound produces light like a bonfire (illuminates a 50 feet radius). Any creature that enters or ends its turn in the aura takes 5 fire damage.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Bite** (fire) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC

Hit: 2d10 damage, plus ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

✧ **Fiery Breath** (fire) ✦ Encounter

Attack: Close Blast 2 (creatures in blast); +10 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d8+4 fire damage.

Str 14 (+5) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 17 (+5)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 8 (+2)
Alignment Evil **Languages** –

Bloody Juggernaut Level 15 Elite Brute
Huge immortal beast XP 2400

HP 244; **Bloodied** 122 **Initiative** +12
AC 32, **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 31 **Perception** +14
Speed 4 Darkvision
Vulnerable 10 cold
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Flayed Man**

This humanoid giant has had the flesh torn from its body and its feet removed. It crawls on hands and knees, constantly scraping its bloody muscles across the rough floors and walls.

Four sacred skeletons follow the juggernaut and fight the enemies it targets. If any are destroyed, at the end of the juggernaut's turn enough animate from the ground around it to get to the full amount of four. (If commanded by Adolini's chant, the skeletons turn on the juggernaut.)

▸ **Healing Vulnerability**

Skin forms across part of its wretched body, and the creature seems too overwhelmed to move.

If any form of healing (not just temporary hit points) is granted to the juggernaut, it takes 30 damage and is stunned until the end of its next turn.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Smash** ✦ At-Will, Basic

It punches you, and its blood coats you and burns you. As the blood drips off you, it slithers back to the juggernaut.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +20 vs. AC

Hit: 2d12+14 damage, and if the target is bloodied, the juggernaut gains 10 temporary hit points.

✓ **Primed Charge** ✦ At-Will

The titan roars and its blood turns as hard as steel for a moment as it gathers its strength. Then it charges, trampling everything in its path.

Effect: The juggernaut gains resist 20 all until the start of its next turn. At the start of its next turn it charges as a free action. During this charge its speed increases to 16 and it can shatter through thin walls and barriers. It makes a basic attack against each creature whose space it enters during the charge, and a basic attack against the target of its charge.

Minor Actions

✧ **Vomit Blood** ✦ At-Will, 1/round

It retches, and a spray of revolting, sizzling blood covers you.

Attack: Close Blast 5 (creatures in blast); +18 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 3d6+9 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Miss: Half damage.

Str 28 (+18) **Dex** 10 (+7) **Wis** 10 (+7)
Con 15 (+9) **Int** 2 (+3) **Cha** 8 (+6)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Treasure.

A steel decanter has been placed beneath the holy water font in the blessing room (Area H), and sits in an eternal flame created where the heartsblood of a hellhound was spilled. The decanter effectively serves as a tea kettle for the mixture of holy water and hellfire.


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FINAL VAULT

Cursed Tea

Despite the flames, the steel decanter is cool to your touch, and the water within smells like fine tea.

Lvl 5 1,000 gp

Rare Wondrous Item

Power (Daily) Standard Action. The decanter fills with holy water, which deals 10 radiant damage to undead or demons if thrown or poured at them.

Power (Daily) Standard Action. The decanter fills with excellent tea. Drinking the tea heals damage as if the creature had spent a healing surge.

Curse Whenever a creature drinks the tea, he is filled with heartwarming memories of a friend or loved one, then feels a sudden chill and an emptiness in his heart. That friend or loved one becomes unfriendly and uncaring toward the drinker, and spurns him for no discernible reason. It tends to affect people farther away first, so that the drinker isn't aware of the effect immediately. Drinking enough of this cursed tea will leave the drinker bereft of any who care for him.

Chamber Nine: Final Vault

If you are using these chambers when the party returns in Adventure Eight, *Diaspora*, that adventure occurs before Gene ever entered the vault, so the PCs find this chamber empty save for relics detailing the history of the Demonocracy and the atrocities committed or directed by Ashima-Shimtu. The meeting with the Lady of the Forked Tongue is detailed in that adventure.

If you're running this dungeon as part of Adventure Four, *Always on Time*, or as part of a stand-alone dungeon crawl, the party must fight past Gene the lunatic godhand (Gene's stats are reprinted on this page for your convenience).

If you're running this dungeon as a stand-alone adventure, what happens when the party meets Ashima-Shimtu depends on how generous you're feeling. She most likely finds them unworthy of her attention and leaves them to their own devices, which means they probably drown trying to swim out or stay trapped here forever.

If you don't want a downer ending, she might direct them to a ritual scroll Gene possesses that can break the leaden curse, allowing them to exit the way they came in, albeit with a chance the ritual itself kills them. Or if the party consists of priests sent in to set things right, Ashima-Shimtu asks only for a blessing that she might find forgiveness for her sins, then allows them to leave.

We suggest having the bloody juggernaut chase the PCs relentlessly from Chamber Eight to the entrance of the final vault. When they open the doors they have to deal with Gene, the golden doppelgangers, and the juggernaut, but if they can get the juggernaut to follow them to the well beneath Ashima-Shimtu, they can goad it into charging and falling into the holy water, killing it.

Gene, Lunatic Godhand Level 10 Elite Skirmisher

Medium immortal humanoid, human XP 1,000

HP 200; **Bloodied** 100 **Initiative** +10

AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 20 **Perception** +2

Speed 8 Darkvision

Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Hands of Heaven and Hell**

With each blow, his fists begin to crackle with more and more lightning, like he's gathering energy for a powerful attack.

Once per round when Gene hits a creature with a melee attack, he may pummel it or another creature adjacent to him, dealing 2 lightning damage. Each time he pummels this way, he gains one charge counter, which lasts until the end of the encounter.

Standard Actions

Juggler's Fist ✦ At-Will, Basic

His punch knocks you into the air.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC

Hit: 1d12+7 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Roundhouse Kick ✦ At-Will

His kick sends you flying across the room.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC

Hit: 1d12+7 damage, and Gene pushes the target 6 squares.

▸ **Full Discipline Attack** ✦ At-Will

Effect: Gene uses *juggler's fist* and *roundhouse kick*.

Move Actions

▸ **Aggressive Agility** ✦ At-Will

The godhand rolls into the midst of you faster than you can react.

Effect: Gene shifts his speed, but must end adjacent to an enemy.

Minor Actions

▸ **Renewing Strike** ✦ Encounter

Your perceptions slow for a moment, letting you savor the dramatic flare of lightning around Gene's fists as he swings for your face. When he hits, he laughs with pride at his own might.

Special: Gene can only use this attack if he has six or more charge counters.

Effect: If the next attack roll Gene makes hits, he gains a number of temporary HP equal to the amount of damage he deals.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Variable Resistance** ✦ Encounter

When you strike him with energy, a demonic visage manifests and absorbs the attack.

Trigger: Gene takes acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage.

Effect (Free Action): Gene gains resist 10 to the triggering damage type until the end of the encounter.

Demon's Souls (fire) ✦ Encounter

You finally land a telling blow, and see that beneath his skin lies a roil of demon flesh. He explodes into fire, and then keeps burning.

Trigger: Gene becomes bloodied.

Attack (No Action): Close Burst 3; +13 vs. AC

Hit: 3d6+9 fire damage.

Effect: Gene gains an aura 1 until the end of the encounter. Any creature that ends its turn adjacent to him takes 5 fire damage.

Skills Acrobatics +16, Athletics +16, Religion +10

Str 18 (+11) **Dex** 18 (+11) **Wis** 4 (+2)

Con 14 (+7) **Int** 10 (+5) **Cha** 14 (+7)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Infernal

APPENDIX G: Enemy Stats

Lorcan Kell's Guild

Guild Leaders.

Lorcan Kell — Level 14 Elite Brute
Medium natural humanoid, human — XP 2,000

HP 244; **Bloodied** 122 — **Initiative** +8
AC 26, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 26 — **Perception** +8
Speed 6
Saving Throws +2
Action Point 1

Traits

▸ **Distinguished Top Hat**
You deliver an attack that should send any man reeling, but all it does is bloody his mouth and knock his hat off.
While Kell is wearing his *distinguished top hat*, if an effect would daze, stun, or dominate him or knock him prone, he can make a saving throw to avoid that condition; if he fails, he can choose to have the hat knocked off and avoid the condition. He can pick the hat back up and put it on as a move action, but not if he's grabbing anyone.

▸ **Master Grappler**
You try to escape, but Kell just chuckles and shakes his head.
Kell gains combat advantage against creatures grabbed by him. He can maintain one grab at a time without having to spend an action (additional grabs each require a minor action, as normal). He can use his off hand to make attacks on his turn without ending the grab.
A creature grabbed by him cannot be affected by forced movement that would move the creature out of his grab unless Kell allows it.

▸ **Sticking Knives into People Who Need Knives Stuck in Them**
As his brutal machete attacks draw up your guard, he slams a short knife into your forearm and leaves the blade in.
Whenever Kell hits a creature with a weapon attack, he impales that creature with a knife, dagger, or other sharp implement. Whenever that creature ends its turn, if it took any standard actions on its turn, it takes 5 damage for each weapon stuck in it. The creature can spend a minor action to take 2 damage and remove one of these weapons. Kell has enough knives, daggers, and sharp implements to benefit from this trait every time he attacks.

Standard Actions

✓ **Man-Killing Machete** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He hacks three times with a bloody machete at your chest and abdomen.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 4d8+9 damage.
Miss: If Kell is wielding his *man-killing machete* and the target is a humanoid creature, the target takes 5 damage.

✓ **Throwing Knives** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
His fine coat parts to reveal an array of dozens of knives strapped to his abdomen. He grabs three and hurls them.
Effect: Kell makes the following attack three times.
Attack: Ranged 6/12 (one creature); +19 vs. AC.
Hit: 1d8+6 damage.
Special: Kell has enough throwing knives to make this attack as many times as he likes.

⚔ **Whirlwind of Slaughter** ✦ At-Will
Effect: Kell makes two basic attacks.

Minor Actions

✓ **Bloody Kidnapping** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
He slams a dagger into your ribs and pulls you into his grasp.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8+9 damage and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 26). While the target is grabbed, Kell can use him as cover.

Triggered Actions

✓ **Butcher** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
As you reel from your wounds, Kell smiles and stabs at your eye.
Trigger: A creature adjacent to Kell becomes bloodied for the first time in an encounter.
Attack (Free Action): Melee 1 (triggering creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 3d4+6 damage and the target is blinded (save ends). After the target saves, it continues to take a –2 penalty to attack rolls that require it to see its target until it can have its eye regenerated.

▸ **Human Shield** ✦ At-Will
Kell spins you in the way of an incoming attack.
Trigger: An attack targets Kell while he has a creature grabbed.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): Kell gains +4 to his defenses against the attack. If it misses, the attack instead targets the creature Kell has grabbed, using the original attack roll.

Str 22 (+13) **Dex** 15 (+8) **Wis** 14 (+8)
Con 14 (+8) **Int** 12 (+7) **Cha** 14 (+8)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Primordial
Equipment daggers, knives, throwing knives, machetes, *coat of the genteel butcher*, *+3 man-killing machete*, *distinguished top hat*, *figurine of wondrous power—mechanical carriage*, *gatecrasher charm*

GATECRASHER CHARM.

This one-use token can be crushed as a standard action to transport its holder most of the way into the Bleak Gate. The person so transported has five minutes to be pulled through fully by the magic of an Obscurati wand, or else he will return to the real world. This travel is dangerous. When activated (and again if he's pulled back to the real world), the traveler takes 5d6 necrotic damage.

Rufus Hammerton, Kell-Guild Lieutenant Level 9 Brute
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 400

HP 93; **Bloodied** 46 **Initiative** +7
AC 21, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 19 **Perception** +3
Speed 6, climb 4

Traits

▸ **Supreme Athlete**

Rufus can treat any Athletics check as if he rolled a 10. He always jumps as if he had a running start.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Short Sword Volley** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6+10 damage.

✓ **Alchemist's Fire** (fire) ✦ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +12 vs. Ref
Hit: 2d6 fire damage, and each creature adjacent to the target takes 1d6 fire damage. Each creature damaged in this way gains ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).
Miss: The target and each creature adjacent takes 5 fire damage.

Minor Actions

✓ **Kidnap** ✦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. Ref
Hit: The target is grabbed (Escape DC 20). While the target is grabbed, Rufus has cover.

Str 14 (+6) **Dex** 16 (+7) **Wis** 8 (+3)
Con 13 (+5) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 12 (+4)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Primordial
Equipment 2 flasks of alchemist's fire

Kate Glenn, Kell-Guild Priestess Level 9 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 400

HP 63; **Bloodied** 31 **Initiative** +7
AC 25, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 24 **Perception** +11
Speed 5

Standard Actions

⊘ **Mace** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+8 damage.

✓ **Unholy Shot** (weapon) ✦ Encounter

She fires off a single shot, then discards the gun and draws a mace. The bullet burns with unholy malice, sapping your strength even though it just grazes you.

Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+10 damage, and the target is weakened until the end of Kate's next turn. 1d6+24 damage on a critical hit.

✓ **Pain-Wracked Paralysis** ✦ Encounter

She chants, and your limbs contort and twist, overwhelming you with pain. You try to struggle free, but her unholy words hold you paralyzed.

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +14 vs. Will
Hit: 2d8+8 damage, and the target is stunned until the end of Kate's next turn.
Sustain Standard. When Kate sustains the power, the target takes 10 damage.

▸ **Alleviate** ✦ Encounter

She calls upon the power of Cauldron Hill, imbuing an ally with unnatural vigor.

Effect: Kate chooses a creature within 10 squares and ends all negative conditions affecting that creature. That creature is immune to negative conditions until the end of Kate's next turn.

Str 10 (+4) **Dex** 13 (+5) **Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 10 (+4) **Int** 12 (+5) **Cha** 14 (+5)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Primordial
Equipment breastplate, light shield, mace, pistol, ritual book with Rope Trick, *+3 alleviating holy symbol*

Nick Reder, Kell's Bodyguard Level 9 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 400

HP 69; **Bloodied** 34 **Initiative** +7
AC 25, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 21 **Perception** +4
Speed 5

Standard Actions

⊘ **Full Metal Grapple** ✦ At-Will, Basic

The huge man seems unencumbered by his plate armor. He grabs you, throws you to the ground, and tries to dislocate your shoulder.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+8 damage and the target is knocked prone, slid 1 square to a space adjacent to Nick, and grabbed (Escape DC 21). While the target is grabbed, it cannot stand.

⊘ **Musket with Flaming Ammunition** (weapon) ✦ Encounter

Flames shoot from the musket, then he throws it away, too impatient to reload.

Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10+6 fire damage, or 1d10+28 fire damage on a critical hit.

✓ **Submission Hold** ✦ At-Will

He uses his body as the fulcrum, and your body as the lever. The lever snaps.

Requirement: The target must be prone and grabbed.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d8+8 damage, and the target loses a healing surge. If the target is out of healing surges, it falls unconscious (save ends).

✓ **Stunning Fist** ✦ Recharge ⚄

His fist hammers your jaw so violently that you lose consciousness for a moment.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+6 damage, and the target is weakened until the end of Nick's next turn.

Str 18 (+8) **Dex** 13 (+5) **Wis** 10 (+4)
Con 16 (+7) **Int** 12 (+5) **Cha** 8 (+3)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Primordial
Equipment full plate, musket, *+3 grappler's plate*

Quentin Augst Level 1 Controller (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 100

HP 23; **Bloodied** 11 **Initiative** +1
AC 15, **Fortitude** 11, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 13 **Perception** +1
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊘ **Dagger** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

He's a cornered rat, but not a very skilled one.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4+4 damage.

✓ **Alchemist's Fire** (fire) ✦ At-Will, 3/encounter

He hurls a flask that explodes with fire.

Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +4 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 fire damage, and each adjacent creature takes 1d6 fire damage. Each creature damaged in this way gains ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).
Miss: The target and each adjacent creature takes 5 fire damage.
Special: Quentin has three flasks.

✓ **Charm Person** (charm) ✦ Encounter

He waves a wand at you, and suddenly you like him a lot.

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +6 vs. Will
Hit: The target is dominated until the end of Quentin's next turn, then dominated (save ends).
Miss: The target is dominated until the end of Quentin's next turn.

Skills Bluff +10, Diplomacy +10, History +11, Insight +9, Streetwise +10
Str 8 (–1) **Dex** 12 (+1) **Wis** 13 (+1)
Con 10 (+0) **Int** 17 (+3) **Cha** 14 (+2)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarf, Elven, Primordial

Lesser Thugs.

Kell-Guild Technologist Level 8 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 350

HP 64; **Bloodied** 32 **Initiative** +6
AC 23, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18 **Perception** +3
Speed 5

Standard Actions

⊗ **Musket Smash** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+9 damage.

⟋ **Tranq Drill Dart Gun** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
This thug hefts a bulky, musket like device with steam piping all across it and mounts some strange device on the end, like a metal needle with arrow fletching. He fires, and the projectile impacts into the wall of the carriage, then begins whining as it drills through the surface. A moment later, noxious gas sprays into the cabin.
Effect: The technologist chooses a spot within 25 squares and shoots a drill dart that attaches to an inanimate object. A spool inside the device activates a drill that bores a narrow hole through surfaces up to three inches deep. The shot cannot attach to actual creatures.

The attack creates a zone of up to 4 contiguous squares beyond the barrier. A creature that ends its turn in the zone takes 5 points of poison damage.

The gas can be cleared out by opening a window, but that of course is the goal of the gadget: to force targets to remove their cover.

Each technologist only has two of these drill darts.

⟋ **Time Bomb Launcher** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
He mounts another strange device on his bizarre musket, a fist-sized hunk of metal ending with four prongs. He fires, and the projectile thuds into the carriage's side, its prongs holding it tight. It begins to tick, tick, tick, tick...
Effect: The technologist chooses a spot within 25 squares and shoots a time bomb that latches onto an inanimate object. The shot cannot attach to actual creatures.

When it attaches, it begins ticking loudly once per second. After one round it begins ticking twice as fast, and after two rounds it ticks four times per second. At the end of the third round the bomb explodes. Make an attack, close burst 4, +13 vs. Reflex, 10d6 fire damage. Miss half.

Before it explodes, the explosive can be detached with a Strength check (DC 20), and the countdown can be stopped with a Thievery check (DC 25).

The timer can be manually set as a standard action, and can be set to anywhere from 3 rounds to 10 rounds.

Each technologist only has two of these bombs.

Str 12 (+5) **Dex** 16 (+7) **Wis** 8 (+3)
Con 12 (+5) **Int** 13 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+4)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial
Equipment weapons, 2 time bombs, 2 drill darts

Kell-Guild Veteran Pistoleer Level 9 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 400

HP 66; **Bloodied** 33 **Initiative** +8
AC 25, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 20 **Perception** +5
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊗ **Machete** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He parries with his pistol, draws a machete, and hacks at your arm in one smooth motion.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+8 damage.

⊘ **Pistol** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
He's a crack shot, even in a crisis.
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+8 damage.
Load minor.

Minor Actions

▸ **Kidnap** ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target is grabbed (Escape DC 21). While the target is grabbed, the pistoleer can use him as cover.

Str 14 (+6) **Dex** 15 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+5)
Con 13 (+5) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 8 (+3)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Kell-Guild Scoundrel Level 9 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 100

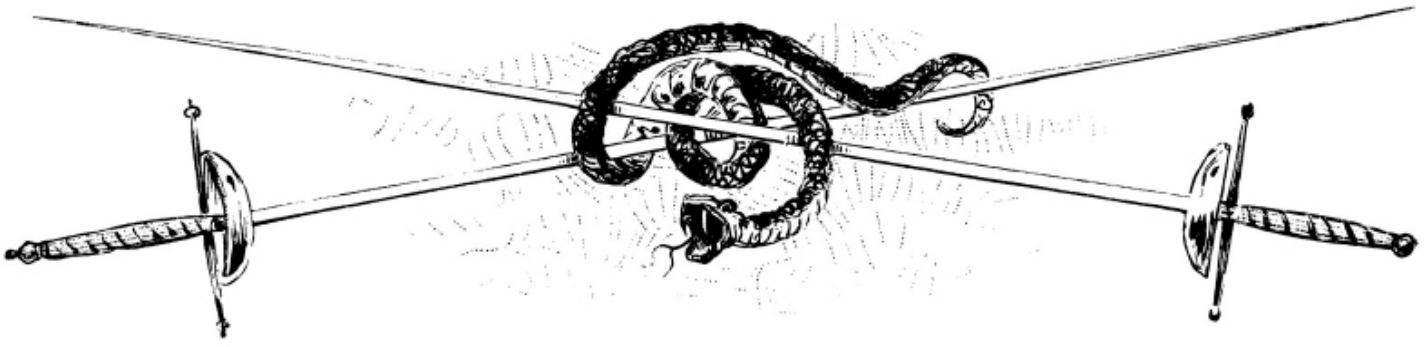
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +5
AC 21, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 20 **Perception** +4
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊗ **Short Sword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage.

⟋ **Alchemist's Fire** (fire) ✦ Encounter
He only has one of these damned flasks, so he'd better make it count.
Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +12 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target gains ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends), and each adjacent creature takes 2 fire damage.
Miss: The target and each adjacent creature takes 2 fire damage.

Str 16 (+7) **Dex** 12 (+5) **Wis** 10 (+4)
Con 12 (+5) **Int** 8 (+3) **Cha** 13 (+5)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial



Kell-Guild Veteran Musketeer Level 9 Minion Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 100

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +7
AC 22, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 20 **Perception** +4
Speed 6

Standard Actions

Short Sword (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 6 damage.

Musket (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Ranged 25/50 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 8 damage, or 12 on a critical hit
Load minor.

Str	12 (+5)	**Dex**	16 (+7)	**Wis**	10 (+4)
Con	12 (+5)	**Int**	8 (+3)	**Cha**	13 (+5)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial

Kell-Guild Bull Dog Level 9 Minion Soldier
Small natural beast XP 100

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +7
AC 23, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 20 **Perception** +4
Speed 6

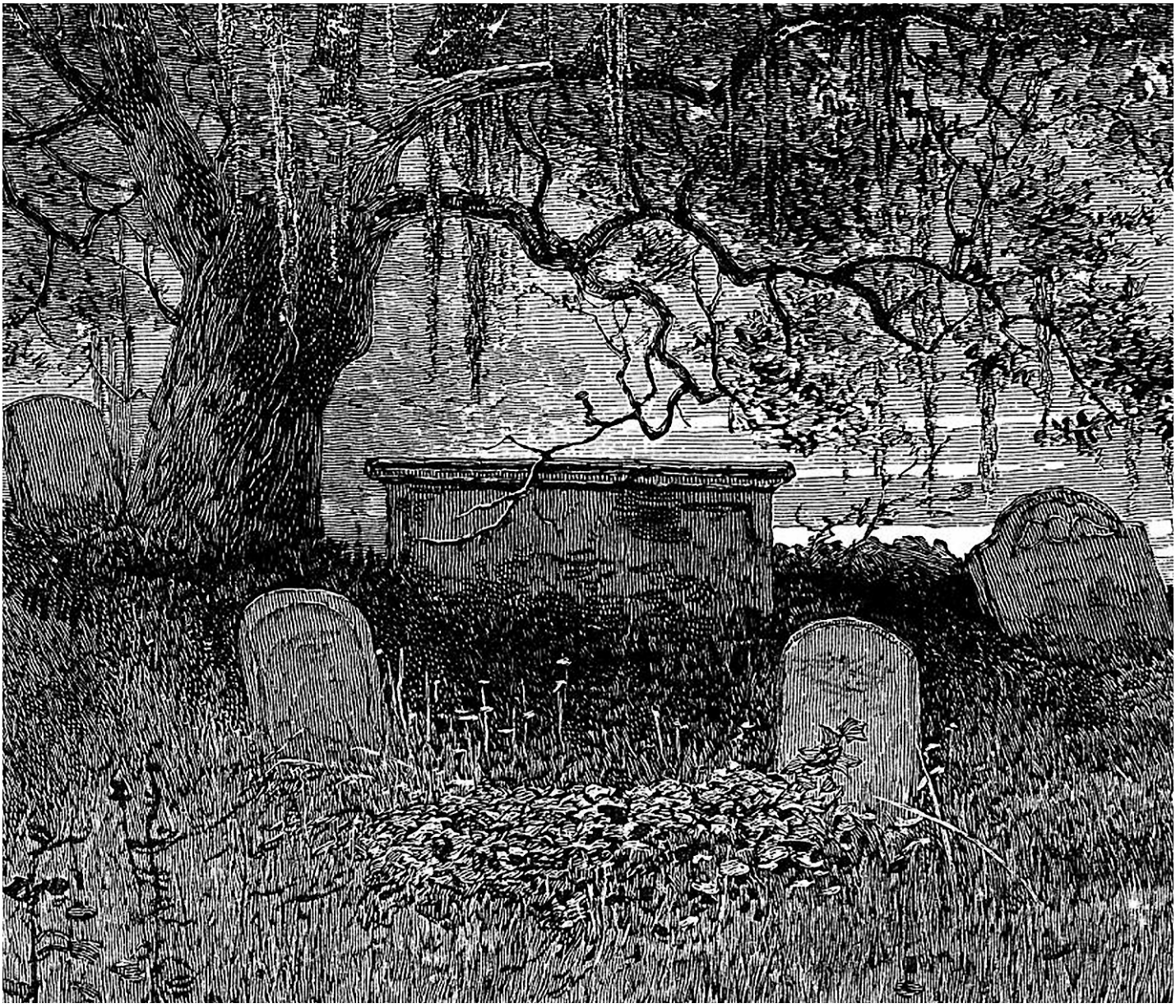
Standard Actions

Bite ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 8 damage.

Takedown ✦ At-Will
While you're distracted, the dog leaps up, bites your arm, and drags you to the ground.
Requirement: The target must be granting combat advantage to the dog.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 8 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 20) and knocked prone.

Str	13 (+5)	**Dex**	12 (+5)	**Wis**	10 (+4)
Con	16 (+7)	**Int**	2 (+0)	**Cha**	6 (+2)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —



Gidim Warbeasts

Gidim monsters may make multiple appearances. We collect all their stats here for ease of reference in Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*.

Worm Maw

Level 6 Elite Controller
Large aberrant magical beast
XP 500

HP 150; **Bloodied** 75
Initiative +4
AC 20, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 18
Perception +2
Speed 5
Saving Throws +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

▸ **Thoughtform**

See Thoughtform, page 455.

▸ **Vulnerable Tentacles**

Anybody that attacks the worm maw with a melee or ranged attack can try to free a creature caught in its tentacles. To do so, the worm maw and the grabbed creature must be within range of the attack. If the attack hits, it has its normal effect, plus the grabbed creature can make an Acrobatics or Athletics check to escape as a free action.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Grasping Tentacles** ✦ At-Will, Basic
A dozen small tentacles hold the maw off the ground, but it has a dozen more trying to coil around you.
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +9 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d12+12 damage and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 15). The worm maw can grab any number of creatures, and can sustain its grabs without spending any actions.

⊘ **Smashing Tentacles** ✦ At-Will
And it has a few left to knock away things it doesn't like.
Attack: Close Burst 1 (one or more creatures in burst); +9 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d12+12 damage and the target is pushed 2 squares.

↙ **Swallow Mind** (psychic) ✦ At-Will
Tentacles push you into the monster's open jaws. It gnashes and slices your skin, and then your body falls limp out the other side of the ring of teeth. But your mind is trapped, swallowed into a horrifying psychic space within the creature's alien flesh.
Requirement: The target must be dazed, stunned, or helpless.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. Will
Hit: 3d12+12 psychic damage, the target is knocked prone, and if the worm maw is grabbing the target, the grab ends. The target is stunned (save ends). While the target is stunned in this way, the worm maw loses its insubstantial and phasing traits. The target may choose to intentionally fail its saving throws.
Miss: Half damage.

Minor Actions

▸ **Drain Thoughts** (psychic) ✦ At-Will (1/round)
Waves of light roll down the tentacle that holds you, flowing toward the beast's body. You see flashes of your own thoughts and memories in the glowing waves, like it's slurping up your mind.
Requirement: The worm maw must have a creature grabbed.
Attack: Melee 3 (each creature the worm maw has grabbed); +9 vs. Will
Hit: The target is pulled 2 squares and is dazed until the end of the worm maw's next turn. The character contracts Distant Madness (see page 215).

Str	17 (+6)	**Dex**	13 (+4)	**Wis**	10 (+3)
Con	19 (+7)	**Int**	2 (–1)	**Cha**	6 (+1)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Flying Thing

Level 6 Skirmisher
Medium aberrant magical beast
XP 250

HP 72; **Bloodied** 36
Initiative +9
AC 20, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 19, Will 18
Perception +3
Speed 1; fly 8 (hover), teleport 3

Traits

▸ **Thoughtform**

See Thoughtform, page 455.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Trunk and Beak** ✦ At-Will, Basic
The creature swings its elephantine trunk back, then slams the beak-tip into you with horrible force.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+7 damage.

↙ **Ray of Dark and Light** (necrotic, psychic, radiant) ✦ At-Will
The flying thing's wings hum with energy, and then a pair of rays cut toward you, combining into a coruscating beam of light and darkness.
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +9 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d8+4 necrotic and radiant damage, plus ongoing 5 psychic damage (save ends). While the target is taking this ongoing damage, the flying thing loses its insubstantial and phasing traits. The target can choose to intentionally fail its saving throw.

Str	13 (+4)	**Dex**	19 (+7)	**Wis**	10 (+3)
Con	10 (+3)	**Int**	2 (–1)	**Cha**	6 (+1)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Flashing Orbs

Level 6 Artillery
Large aberrant magical beast
XP 250

HP 58; **Bloodied** 29
Initiative +5
AC 18, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 19
Perception +9
Speed 0; fly 4 (hover)

Traits

▸ **Thoughtform**

See Thoughtform, page 455.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Vicarious Strike** (psychic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
A tentacle of light lashes out and drives through your veins. For a moment, impossibly, you can feel the being's thoughtform flesh wriggling with colors.
Attack: Range 20 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+7 psychic damage. The next time the flashing orb takes damage before the end of its next turn, the target takes 5 damage of the same damage type. Until the end of its next turn, the flashing orb loses its insubstantial and phasing traits.

✧ **Psychic Burst** (psychic) ✦ At-Will
A scream rings your mind, and for a moment you feel like your body is not your own.
Attack: Close Burst 1 (each enemy in burst); +9 vs. Will
Hit: 1d8+7 psychic damage.

✧ **Chaos Storm** ✦ Recharge ⚀⚁⚂
A dozen conflicting memories and sensations roil around you, then settle on one particularly painful reality. That reality manifests and wounds you with energy.
Attack: Area burst 2 within 10 (each creature in burst); +11 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6+7 damage of a random type. Roll 1d6 to see what the damage type is: 1–Acid, 2–Cold, 3–Fire, 4–Lightning, 5–Necrotic, 6–Thunder

Str	13 (+4)	**Dex**	14 (+5)	**Wis**	13 (+4)
Con	16 (+6)	**Int**	1 (–1)	**Cha**	9 (+2)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Implanter Level 7 Minion Lurker
Small aberrant magical beast XP 75

HP 1, a miss never damages a minion **Initiative** +7
AC 21, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18 **Perception** +10
Speed 4, climb 4

Standard Actions

⊘ **Attach** ✦ At-Will, Basic
This small beast is nothing but whipping tentacles tipped with crab-like pincers, surrounding a bulbous ovipositor. It clambers toward you, then clamps a pincer on your neck.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 8 damage and the implanter is attached to the target. While attached, whenever the target moves or is subject to forced movement, the implanter is pulled adjacent to the target. A creature may end the attachment as though breaking a grab, except forced movement does not break attachment.

✓ **Implant** ✦ At-Will
The ovipositor materializes solidly as it tries to burrow into your ear. With a wet spasm, it implants an idea in your mind, and you scream in horror.
Requirement: The implanter must be grabbing the target.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The target is affected by Distant Madness, or its condition worsens by 1 stage if already affected. The implanter is reduced to 0 HP, and makes a secondary attack, centered on the primary target's square.
Secondary Attack: Close Burst 1 (creatures in burst other than the primary target); +10 vs. Will
Hit: 7 psychic damage.

Str 9 (+2) **Dex** 19 (+7) **Wis** 15 (+5)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 1 (–2) **Cha** 7 (+1)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Mutated Centipede Level 5 Skirmisher
Medium aberrant magical beast XP 200

HP 60; **Bloodied** 30 **Initiative** +
AC 19, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 17 **Perception** +4
Speed 8, climb 5

Standard Actions

⊘ **Paralytic Bite** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Its pincers graze your skin, and you feel like your arm is across the room.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+6 damage, and the target is weakened until the end of the mutated centipede's next turn.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Teleporting Retreat** ✦ At-Will
What? Centipedes aren't supposed to do that!
Trigger: The mutated centipede is his hit by a melee attack.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The mutated centipede teleports 6 squares.

Str 14 (+4) **Dex** 20 (+7) **Wis** 16 (+5)
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 1 (–2) **Cha** 8 (+1)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Crawling Spiker Level 6 Minion Soldier
Small aberrant magical beast XP 63

HP 1, a miss never damages a minion **Initiative** +7
AC 22, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 16 **Perception** +4
Speed 7, climb 7

Standard Actions

⊘ **Bite** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Four slithering pedipalps on the spider-beasts face draw you in and tear at your skin.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 6 damage the target is slowed until the end of the crawling spiker's next turn.

✓ **Harpoon Tongue** ✦ At-Will
Its tongue snaps out like a whip and snags your arm.
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 6 damage and the target is pulled 3 squares and grabbed (Escape DC 11). If the spiker is on the ceiling, the target is pulled off the ground.

Str 16 (+6) **Dex** 19 (+7) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 12 (+4) **Int** 2 (–1) **Cha** 5 (+1)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Eye of Madness Level 6 Controller
Medium aberrant magical beast XP 250

HP 54; **Bloodied** 27
AC 20, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 20
Speed 0, fly 6 (altitude limit 1) **Initiative** +7
Perception +2

Traits

☼ **Paranoia** ✦ Aura 2
The longer you stay near this horrible creature, the more you wonder if you've been blind to the treacherous intent of your so-called allies. Now might be the perfect time to put an end to them.
If an enemy starts its turn in the aura, when it ends its turn, if it's still in the aura it charges a target of the eye of madness's choice as a free action. The eye of madness cannot make the enemy enter any sort of hazardous terrain during this charge.

▸ **Thoughtform**
See Thoughtform, page 455.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Horrid Hallucinations** ✦ At-Will, Basic
You stagger through a nightmare and emerge unsure of what's real.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +9 vs. Will
Hit: 2d8+4 psychic damage, and slide the target 2 squares.

✧ **Burst of Terror** ✦ Encounter
Ten thousand years of solitude sweep through you.
Attack: Close Burst 1 (enemies in burst); +9 vs. Will
Hit: 2d8+4 psychic damage, and the target is affected by Distant Madness. If the target is already affected, its condition worsens by one step.

Str 10 (+4) **Dex** 17 (+7) **Wis** 13 (+5)
Con 14 (+6) **Int** 2 (–1) **Cha** 20 (+9)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

THOUGHTFORM

Creatures with this trait are insubstantial and phasing. They take half damage from all attacks except those that deal force damage (insubstantial), and they ignore difficult terrain and can move through obstacles and other creatures, but they must end their movement in an unoccupied space (phasing).

Thoughtform creatures take normal damage from psychic attacks as well as force attacks. While insubstantial and phasing, if a thoughtform creature would become dazed or stunned, it becomes corporeal instead until the end of the attacker's next turn (loses insubstantial and phasing). Once corporeal, further daze and stun effects affect it normally.

A spirit medium automatically understands how thoughtform works.

The Thing From Beyond Level 6 Solo Controller
Huge aberrant magical beast XP 1,250

HP 272; **Threshold I** 181; **Threshold II** 90 **Initiative** +2
AC 23, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 19 **Perception** +3
Speed 2; fly 2 (hover) Darkvision, tremorsense 5
Immune dominate
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Horrid Amalgam**

A thirty-foot long armored slug, this Thing lashes at you with jagged, harpoon-like tentacles of solid gold. It is not one solid being, though. Arms and hands reach out from within its fanged maws, and sometimes you glimpse screaming alien faces staring out between the gaps of its plated carapace.

The Thing From Beyond has two HP thresholds. When its HP falls below each threshold it gains some powers and loses access to others. It counts as bloodied when it has 181 HP or fewer.

▸ **Thoughtform**

See Thoughtform, page 455.

▸ **Vulnerable Tethers**

Anybody that attacks The Thing From Beyond with a melee or ranged attack can try to free a creature caught in its tentacles. To do so, The Thing From Beyond and the the grabbed creature must be within range of the attack. If the attack hits, it has its normal effect, plus the grabbed creature can make an Acrobatics or Athletics check to escape as a free action.

When the Thing moves, it slides each creature it is grabbing 5 squares. It cannot slide a creature farther away from it than 5 squares.

☼ **From a Distant Plane** ✦ Aura 5 (Stage 1 & 3)

Some strange distortion surrounds the creature. You fire your arrow, but it vanishes before it reaches its target.

Creatures outside the aura cannot affect creatures inside the aura with attacks or other powers, as if they were too far away. Attacks made with golden weapons or implements ignore this restriction.

Creatures inside the aura cannot move outside the aura on their own, though they can leave due to forced movement, or if the Thing's own movement leaves them outside the aura.

The Thing does not have this trait in its second form.

Standard Actions

✲ **Hurl Seal** ✦ Encounter

It picks up the golden seal in its tentacles and flings the metal plate at you.

Attack: Area burst 1 within 5 (creatures in burst); +9 vs. Ref
Hit: 3d8+18 damage and the target is knocked prone.

⊘ **Harpoon Spine** ✦ At-Will, Basic

The tentacles clustered around the thing's maw are tipped with jagged shards of gold. One snags your flesh and yanks you next to the monster's mouths.

Attack: Melee 5 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+7 damage and the target is pulled 5 square and grabbed (Escape DC 24). When the grab ends, the target takes another 15 damage. The Thing can grab any number of creatures, and can sustain its grabs without spending any actions.
Special: During Stage 3, a creature hit by this attack is dominated (save ends). The domination effect also ends if the creature is freed from the grab.

✓ **Shredding Mouths** (psychic) ✦ At-Will (Stage 1)

You're pulled through three rows of independent, crunching jaws, and then you fall into its endless gut. You're trapped in an eternity without identity, and the screams of alien beings trapped in the monster's flesh begin to erode your sanity.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 6d6+21 damage and the target is swallowed (Escape DC 17). While swallowed, the target does not occupy a square and has neither line of sight nor line of effect to anything except the Thing. A swallowed creature takes 10 psychic damage at the end of its turn. When the target escapes or the Thing drops to 181 hit points, the target appears in an unoccupied square of its choice adjacent to the Thing.

✧ **Prismatic Scream** (fire, psychic, radiant, thunder) ✦ At-Will (Stage 2)

The beast's mouths whir like inward-facing saws as flashing lights glow within its gut. Then three blinding beams burst outward, accompanied by tormented psychic screams.

Attack: Close blast 10 (creatures in blast); +9 vs. Fort, Ref, Will
Hit (Fort): 1d8+6 thunder damage, and the target is knocked prone and deafened until the end of the Thing's next turn.
Hit (Ref): 1d8+6 radiant damage, and the target is blinded and takes ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends both).
Hit (Will): 1d8+6 psychic damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the thing's next turn.
Special: Make only one attack per target, but compare the attack result against all three defenses.

Move Actions

▸ **Crush** ✦ At-Will

The monster rolls its whole bulk sideways and simply flattens you.

Effect: The Thing From Beyond moves its speed. (Remember that huge creatures can share the spaces of creatures Medium or smaller.) If it is insubstantial and phasing, it loses those traits until the end of its next turn.

Each creature sharing The Thing's space is knocked prone. As long as it shares a space with the Thing, the target takes 10 damage at the end of its turn.

▸ **Immobile Predator** ✦ Encounter

All movement is relative. Though it appears not to move, you are suddenly closer to it.

Effect: The Thing From Beyond teleports a creature within 40 squares to a space within 5 squares of it.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Cracked Shell** ✦ Encounter

The strike peels away a piece of the monster's flesh, and a pile of twisted humanoid figures tumble out of the wound, pulsating with visible psychic energy.

Trigger: The Thing From Beyond drops to 181 HP or fewer.
Effect (No Action): Any negative conditions or effects affecting the Thing end, it recharges *immobile predator*, and it gains another action point. Any creature swallowed by the Thing appears in an unoccupied space adjacent to it.

Each square adjacent to the Thing is covered by a pile of insane Gidim vestiges until the end of the encounter. These squares are difficult terrain, and any creature that enters or ends its turn in that space takes 5 psychic damage.

The Thing loses the *from a distant plane* trait and *shredding mouths* attack. It gains the *prismatic scream* power.

▸ **Join with the Master** ✦ Encounter

It shrieks, and then the light in its mouths goes out. For a moment it appears that it might be dying, but then a humanoid torso tears free of the armored carapace just behind the mouths. The monster's master has fused with the creature itself.

Trigger: The Thing From Beyond drops to 90 HP or fewer.
Effect (No Action): Any negative conditions or effects affecting the Thing end, it recharges *immobile predator*, and it gains another action point.

The Thing teleports Sijhen (even if it is dead or inside of Xambria's body) into its body, and they merge into one creature. Sijhen's consciousness controls the Thing's body, but it no longer has access to its old powers.

The Thing regains its *from a distant plane* trait, but loses its *prismatic scream* power.

Str	23 (+9)	**Dex**	8 (+2)	**Wis**	10 (+3)
Con	16 (+6)	**Int**	14 (+5)	**Cha**	19 (+7)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Telepathy 10

Obscurati Notables

The PCs aren't meant to face Leone Quital or Lya Jierre in direct combat during Act One of the adventure path. But you never can tell, so here are their stats just in case. Note that they're both extremely dangerous to heroic tier PCs.



Leone Quital, the Steelshaper Level 17 Elite Artillery
Medium natural humanoid (human) XP 3,200

HP 175; **Bloodied** 87 **Initiative** +9
AC 29, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 27 **Perception** +8
Speed 6, Fly 6 (hover)
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Master of Magnetism**
Your bullets swerve to avoid him. He smiles darkly, and you feel your armor clamp down and begin to crush you.

Attacks against Leone using metal weapons or ammunition suffer a –2 penalty to the attack roll. Leone gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls on attacks against targets in metal armor.

Many of Leone's powers are dependant on him having metal around that he can telekinetically apart to use as weapons. His powers generally have a range of 200 feet (40 squares), so use your judgment on what options he has if he ends up far from useful metal.

▸ **Steel Shield**
He tears a man-sized sheet of metal off the wall and hovers it in front of him like a shield.

Leone levitates a metal shield, either a single sheet or multiple pieces, which he moves to block incoming attacks. This shield protects him from any attack that targets AC, Fortitude, or Reflex. If the attacker has combat advantage or is phasing, the attack bypasses his shield.

The shield has 50 hit points. Whenever an attack would hit Leone's AC, Fort, or Ref, the shield absorbs the damage. If an attack's damage is wholly blocked by the shield, any additional effects of the attack do not affect Leone.

▸ **Magnetic Flight**
He pushes and pulls himself at a distance between masses of metal.

Leone has a fly speed of 6 and can hover as long as he is within 20 squares of one ton of metal.

Standard Actions

✓ **Shield Bash** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Leone's makeshift shield screeches as he telekinetically twists it and causes it to extrude spikes. Then he smashes it into you and grinds you into the ground.

Effect: If Leone's shield is destroyed, he acquires a new one with 50 HP. He needs a shield to make the following attack.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +22 vs. AC

Hit: 2d12+12 damage, and Leone pushes the target 3 squares and knocks it prone.

Miss: 8 damage, and Leone pushes the target 1 square.

✲ **Shrapnel Vortex** ✦ At-Will
Metal swirls, slashing anyone who tries to pass through.

Attack: Area Burst 3 within 20 (creatures in burst); +22 vs. AC

Hit: 3d6+25 damage.

Effect: The area becomes a zone until the end of Leone's next turn. Any creature that enters the zone or ends its turn there takes 20 damage.

Special: Leone is immune to damage from this power.

✓ **Makeshift Artillery** ✦ At-Will
With a glance he rips a one-ton steel wheel off a passing train and hurls it as a missile.

Primary Attack: Ranged 40 (creature in metal armor, or metal object weighing less than 2 tons); +22 vs. Reflex.

Hit: 5d6+20 damage. Leone slides the target 10 squares and makes the secondary attack.

Secondary Attack: Area Burst 1 (each creature adjacent to the primary target); +22 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 5d6+20 damage and the target is pushed 1 square.

*Miss:*10 damage.

Special: The primary attack automatically hits if Leone targets an unattended object.

▸ **Desperate Levitation** ✦ Encounter
He screams, and every metal object in earshot shudders.

Requirement: Leone must be bloodied.

Effect: Every negative effect affecting Leone ends, and he flies 6 squares without provoking opportunity attacks. Additionally, if he does not have a shield, he acquires a new one.

Leone then telekinetically lifts six railroad cars within 40 squares of him (each 12 squares long by 3 squares wide), can slide them individually up to 20 squares, and can cause them to hover up to 4 squares off the ground. Make the following attack against any creature in the path of the cars.

Attack: Melee 1; +22 vs. Reflex

Hit: 20 damage and the target is knocked prone.

Miss: The target is knocked prone.

Effect: At the start of Leone's next turn, the train cars fall. Any creature underneath one can make a saving throw. If successful, it dives to cover, but takes 100 damage and is knocked prone. If unsuccessful, the creature takes 500 damage.

Minor Actions

✓ **Yank** ✦ At-Will, 1/round
Your weapon is yanked from your hands.

Attack: Ranged 40 (one creature); +22 vs. Fortitude

Hit: A metallic item in the target's grasp is pulled away, and Leone slides it up to 10 squares.

✓ **Pin** ✦ At-Will, 1/round
Pieces of metal wrap themselves around your limbs, making it difficult to move.

Attack: Ranged 40 (one creature); +22 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target is grabbed until the end of Leone's next turn. While it is grabbed it is immobilized (Escape DC 23), grants combat advantage, and takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls.

Skills Arcana +19, Bluff +17

Str	9 (+7)	**Dex**	13 (+7)	**Wis**	11 (+8)
Con	14 (+12)	**Int**	22 (+14)	**Cha**	19 (+12)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Lya Jierre Level 15 Elite Brute
Medium natural humanoid (tiefling) XP 2,400
HP 368; **Bloodied** 184 **Initiative** +13
AC 27, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 27 **Perception** +9
Speed 8 Darkvision
Resist fire 12
Saving Throws +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

▸ **Benefits of Wealth**
Lya Jierre has access to the finest arms and equipment, the best trainers, and all manner of enchantments to protect her. Though already a master swordswoman, she clearly is protected by magic as well.

Lya can make one saving throw against a condition of her choice at the start of her turn, in addition to at the end of her turn, even if it normally does not grant a save to end.

When Lya spends an action point, all negative conditions on her end.

▸ **Improved Counterswarm Stance**
She seems to prefer being surrounded, and when you lunge she drops a leg behind your ally and swings behind him, gaining momentary cover.

Lya gains a +1 bonus to defenses against melee and ranged attacks for each opponent she is adjacent to after the first.

Lya can spend 2 squares of movement to stand up, instead of having to spend a full move action.

▸ **Dancing Storm Carbine** (lightning, weapon)
A short carbine floats in the air beside her, retorting at anyone who tries to attack from range.

Once each round on her turn, Lya can make the following attack without spending an action, as long as she is conscious. This attack does not provoke opportunity attacks, but she cannot target creatures adjacent to her. The carbine can be damaged by melee or ranged attacks, but is unaffected by area or close attacks or any sort of static damage effect. It has Lya's defenses and 50 hit points.

Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +20 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6+7 damage (critical 1d6+15).
Effect: The target takes ongoing 10 lightning damage and takes a –2 penalty to ranged or area attacks against Lya (save ends both).

Standard Actions

⊘ **Exceptional Duelist** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Even if you dodge her strike, she nicks your wrist or grazes your thigh when she parries your counterattack. She seems to be a step ahead of you in the mental field of this battle.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC
Hit: 4d8+19 damage.
Miss: Half damage.

▸ **Whirlwind Attack** ✦ Recharge when first bloodied
She's drawn you into her trap. She kicks away from one of you, spins and slashes another across the neck, ducks and swipes an ally's belly, then rises just in time to redirect your counterattack so you strike your own leg. She drops back into a defensive stance, breath heaving from exertion.

Effect: Lya uses *exceptional duelist* against each enemy adjacent to her.

⊘ **Sunder** (weapon) ✦ Recharge when first bloodied
You easily parry her latest attack, but realize too late it was a ploy. She triggers her sword's slicing mechanism, and your weapon is cleft in twain, not even slowing her weapon as she cuts into you.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC
Hit: 4d8+19 damage, and Lya chooses a weapon or implement the target is carrying. The target makes a save. If it fails, that item is destroyed. If it succeeds, the target takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls and does half damage with attacks using that item.

Move Actions

▸ **Enchanted Leap** ✦ Recharge ⚃⚄
Effect: Lya jumps her speed. At the height of her jump she is 3 squares off the ground.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Infernal Wrath of the Jierre Bloodline** (fire) ✦ Recharge when first bloodied
When you strike her, her eyes flare with fire, and you are immolated by the infernal power of the tiefling.

Trigger: A creature within 10 squares hits Lya.
Effect (No Action): The triggering creature takes 2d6+7 fire damage and takes ongoing 15 fire damage (save ends). Lya transfers all conditions affecting her to the target (including any conditions caused by the triggering attack).

▸ **Vorpal Rapier** ✦ At-Will (3/encounter)
An extra row of jagged blades hover just above her rapier's cutting edge, glinting and grinding across your weapon. She flicks a button on her weapon's guard and triggers a motor that sends these teeth spinning at blinding speed.

Trigger: Lya damages an enemy with this weapon and afterward the target is bloodied.
Effect (No Action): The weapon shrieks and its bladed teeth saw back and forth as a mechanism near the hilt unspools. The target must make a saving throw. On a success, the target loses an extremity of its choice—hand, foot, arm, or leg. On a failure, Lya chooses which extremity the target loses. Creatures without extremities are unaffected.

A severed arm or hand prevents use of anything that they were holding or carrying. A severed foot slows the target. A severed leg renders the target prone.

Skills Acrobatics +18, Athletics +14, Bluff +24, Diplomacy +16
Str 14 (+9) **Dex** 23 (+13) **Wis** 14 (+9)
Con 12 (+8) **Int** 18 (+11) **Cha** 18 (+11)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Primordial



APPENDIX H: DM Quick Reference Pages

Complete List of NPC Quick References

The following pages contain brief notes on prominent NPCs, listed in order by the adventure they first appear in, then alphabetical by first name. Use these notes to keep track of the characters and to make your portrayal of them distinctive.

Adventure One: *Island at the Axis of the World.*

- **King Aodhan Lesterman.** Cool-headed. Deflects trouble rather than fights. Healthy despite being 70. Physically feels the emotions of nearby fey.
- **Asrabey Varal.** Eladrin warrior of unmatched prowess. Flaming sword. Animated lion shield. Cloak of smoke. Despises Danorans. One of the many husbands of Kasvarina Varal, a centuries-old eladrin matriarch.
- **Benedict Pemberton.** Genteel owner of arms manufacturer Pemberton Industries. Plays up homely roots.
- **Duchess Ethelyn Lesterman of Shale.** King's sister. Considers words before speaking. Old-fashioned. Fondly recalls time before she was rich and powerful.
- **Geoff Massarde.** Tiefling engineer. Drinks, but low-tolerance. Airy voice. Danoran accent (sort of French). Dislikes his homeland of Danor.
- **Harkover Lee.** King's magical advisor/bodyguard. Straight-backed. Beran accent (sort of Mexican or Spanish). Never eats or drinks in public. Carries solid gold wizard's orb, and has unnatural strength.
- **Lieutenant Hessar Marseine.** Nasty eye wound. Looking for a fight. Reasonable if you're polite to him.
- **Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre.** Tiefling martial scientist. Niece of the Sovereign of Danor. Ambitious. Haughty but friendly. Progressive. Wants peace. Arcano-technological vorpal rapier.
- **Nathan Jierre.** Tiefling astronomer. Cousin of Lya Jierre, nephew of Sovereign. Observant but short-sighted. Wants peace, but didn't realize duchess wanted war. Afraid his people will brand him a traitor.
- **Mine Foreman Nicolas Dupiers.** Paranoid. Golden icons of earth and shadow. Pistol.
- **Flint City Governor Roland Stanfield.** Aasimar. Constant expression of contented optimism. Perfect politician's smile. Old war wound in his lower back.
- **Captain Rutger Smith.** Bold. Idealistic. Loves philosophy. Smokes cigars.
- **Sokana Rell.** Duchess's handmaiden. Eladrin disguised as elf. Quiet. Tries to avoid attention. Despises Danorans.
- **Stover Delft.** Party's boss. Chews tobacco. Cane. Spits. Good-natured.
- **Thames Grimsley.** Grizzled sailor. Leads docker union. Dislikes police. Oratorical, theatrical speech patterns. Pause for dramatic effect a lot.

Adventure Two: *The Dying Skyseer.*

- **Cillian Creed.** Former spy. Experiment-gone-awry infused him with Bleak Gate energy, melted his face. Hides behind magical disguises, but can attack through shadows. Usually incorporeal. Flees early in an encounter. Patriot who'd kill his own mother to protect Risur.
- **Eberardo.** Dragonborn arsonist warrior. Deep voice. Red scales. Huge sword. Not too proud to run. Loyal to brother Valando.
- **Hana "Gale" Soliogn.** Eladrin with wind magic. Flies constantly; supposedly impossible by most theories of magic. Was owned by a Danoran family with mining wealth. Uses terror and sabotage to hinder influence of Danor in Risur. Seeks approval of the Unseen Court.
- **Heward Sechim.** Alchemist and tinkerer. Heavy gloves with acid burns. Owns factory where Nilasa lived. Quirky and charmingly reckless, but generous to his workers. Harassed by criminals.
- **Leone Quital, the Steelshaper.** Crisillyiri aristocrat. Head of colossus construction. Telekinetic control of metal. Clothing woven with metal strands. Savors fine cheese, particularly bromago. Arrogant. No sense of honor.
- **Lorcan Kell.** Leader of thieves' guild. Ugly face. Fancy clothes and top hat. Lots of hidden knives. Torments 'good' people by threatening to harm them if they try to stop innocents being tortured. Not too clever. Relies on minions to run his guild.
- **Consular Security Chief Julian LeBrix.** War veteran. Squinty and cautious. Wears a pistol. Too curious for own good. Investigated Danoran factories, but was told to stop by superiors.
- **Morgan Cippiano.** Leads Flint branch of the Family. Bald. Gravelly voice. Wears hook pendant of the Clergy. Talks fashion. Very reasonable and friendly. Wants to "trade favors" with law enforcement.
- **Skyseer Nevard Sechim.** Days away from dying of old age. Too old to waste time sparing people's feelings. A bit rascally. Blind in bright light. Chest-length beard. Remembers a century of history, but prefers to talk about the future. Asks people what they look forward to.
- **Nilasa Hume.** Dead half-elf, but formerly upbeat, spirited, pretty. People wanted to impress her.
- **Mayor Reed Macbannin.** Politician. Phenomenal liar. Likes to feign anger or shock, then switch to a winning smile to defuse situations with a laugh. Wears defensive necklace relic. Master of defense against the dark arts. Knows curses from Cauldron Hill witches. Under geas so he cannot talk about colossus plot.
- **Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen.** Surgeon-mage from malice state of Arrovia. On the run from a monster he created. Deadly precise with a sword. Goattee. Well-dressed. Apologetic and distrustful.
- **Valando.** Dragonborn arsonist pyromancer. Raspy voice. Red scales. Muscular for a wizard. Always keeps an eye out for an escape route. Loyal to brother Eberardo.

Adventure Three: *Digging for Lies.*

- **Caius Bergeron.** Tiefling philanthropist. Funds archaeology for the Obscurati. Maintains plausible deniability. False graciousness. Ring – Old Bergeron Gold. Sharpened nails and tail. Scratches when irritated. Eats live octopus.
- **Kaja Stewart.** Arcanoscientist. Planar theorist. Summons guns. Affects a "common" accent despite education. Fascinated by the possibilities of technology.
- **Kvarti Gorbatiy.** Dwarven sniper and gunsmith. Old military uniform. Rifle's stock carved from giant bone, with ancient engraving. Contentedly philosophical.
- **Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby.** Head of local RHC office. Treats party like they're not there. Refined. Political aspirations. Overbearing. Gets others to fight for her. Ring – Opportunity Begets Glory.
- **Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill.** In charge of the RHC overall. Pitted and scarred face. Opposes corruption. Understands human frailty, tries to inspire others to be better.
- **Rock Rackus.** Celebrity explorer and musician. Permanent sneer-smirk. Diamond-encrusted gold pistol. Unbelievably arrogant. Makes ridiculous claims. Doesn't know what to do with his fame.
- **Sijhen.** Gidim wayfarer. Wary of discovery. Confident in own intellect, and for good reason. Naked. Tentacles. Four eyes. Smells like dust. Would be fascinated if a local tried to talk to it, since it views locals as food animals.
- **Dr. Xambria Meredith.** Archaeologist. Fearless. Slightly traumatized from recent disaster. Somewhat unhinged. Miner's pick, various tools. Athletic, but dresses conservatively. Driven to solve mysteries. Strong moral code.

Adventure Four: *Always on Time.*

- **Ashima-Shimtu.** Ancient demoness. Chained by Clergy. Scaled skin. Speaks as if narrating events, never in first person. Hints at knowing great secrets, reveals very few.
- **Brianne "Bree" Kaldeckis.** Danoran war vet. Dresses to show off right arm and leg transplants. Honorable. Clever. Loves hearing and telling war stories. Sympathetic to suffering.
- **Cardiff Hengehill.** Risuri spy. Handsome. Hides through confidence and looking like he belongs, instead of discretion. Suitcase strapped to wrist holds stolen Danoran naval intelligence documents. Bouts of heroism. Short temper. Grabs people when making a point.
- **Damata Griento.** Half-orc businessman. Looking for a friend. Pretends to be normal tourist. Afraid of dying, so overly sensitive and emotional. Panicked concern for family.
- **Elanor Yanette.** Hugely fat enchantress. Sex trafficker. No empathy. Smug. Keeps people around so she can show off wealth and gossip. Reads erotic poetry.
- **Isobel Travers.** Young, beautiful eladrin. Raised to have little personality. Beautiful singing voice. Usually drugged or magic-addled. Hums errantly.
- **Luc Jierre.** Tiefling inventor. Stutters. Avoids conversation. Resentful of those in power, but desires power of his own. Frighteningly intelligent. Excellent manners and etiquette.
- **Malia Baccarin.** Crisillyir-born, Danor-raised. Rail guard. Contacts with criminals along railroad. Collects newspapers. Skilled at cajoling, goading, seducing. Wants to score big, retire young.
- **"Mister Mapple," Andrei von Recklinghausen.** Scruffy, shabbily dressed. Smells of fancy bath soaps and perfume. Amazing acrobat. Lives to experience new pleasure. Romantic heart. Regenerates wounds. Touch drains life force.
- **Nicodemus the Gnostic.** Smokes leaf of Nicodemus. Movie-star charisma. Dominates a room with his presence, but encourages others to talk. Enjoys solitude and posing surprising questions about philosophy. Ghost who travels between bodies.
- **Olivert Boone.** Tiefling gunslinger and lady's man. Braggart. Jovially puts down people. Demon-possessed revolver demands sacrifices. When amused, claps by slapping chest with one hand.
- **Ottavia Sacredote.** Elf priestess. Geometric tattoos of a Clergy oracle. Deaf. Can talk, but prefers sign language. Devoted to ending church corruption. Recognizes people's flaws, tries to bring out their nobler sides. Cares for Luc, and is overly protective.
- **Verzubak Tantalovich.** Dwarven luck mage. Looks perpetually tired. Rolls dice, makes notes about random events in his notebook. Rejects Heid Eschatol focus on the end of life. Observant. Can tell what people care about, so pays a lot of compliments.
- **Vlendam Heid.** Dwarven philosopher. Glasses. Younger than you'd expect. Rhetorical speech pattern involves asking many questions. Excited by intelligent conversation, especially if it looks like people might take action because of it, instead of just talking in circles. Desires to prevent undue suffering.

Adventure Five: *Cauldron-Born.*

- **Alexander Grappa, the Mindmaker.** Died an old man, but transferred consciousness to bronze golem. Cannot speak, but communicates by tapping, writing, or arcanoscientific 'speech synthesizer.' Geas prevents talking about colossus project. Many regrets. Wants to bring down the Obscurati. Hates Leone.
- **Brakken of Heffanita.** Minotaur negotiator from Ber. Wears a quaint shawl. Travels with dire bear, Feroz. Loves being a tourist and "talking shop" about international diplomacy. Secretly telepathic, detects surface thoughts and moods of those nearby.
- **Ekossigan.** Fey lord of the four seasons. Member of the Unseen Court, with no face, just a mask. He who protects stags from arrows. Widdershins prophet. Liege of changelings. Opposes Risuri technology, and seeks to attack secret factory in the Bleak Gate's Cauldron Hill. Slowly driven mad by the screams he hears.
- **Grundun Zubov.** Beardless dwarven radical. Smokes pipe made of ice. Talks little. Doesn't proselytize, just wants to bring about the world's end. Believes it his destiny, as foretold by his sect's leader, Grandis Komanov. Infernal hammer out of a Drakran legend.
- **Sovereign Han Jierre of Danor.** Tiefling ruler of Danor. Stiff and formal, but personable when he can afford to be. Rich enough to magically enhance his lies, and smart enough to avoid getting found out. Surprisingly well-traveled and understands how common folk live. Restrains emotions out of necessity, so he won't collapse under the weight of all the evil he's endorsed in the name of the Obscurati's grand design.
- **Kasvarina Varal.** Eladrin matriarch, co-founder of Obscurati. Centuries-old, but looks in her thirties. Currently suffering amnesia, missing all memories from before the Great Malice. Trained warrior and mage, but cautious and confused.
- **Quentin Augst.** Pasty lawyer for Lorcan Kell's thieves' guild. Manages guild's daily affairs, but defers to Kell. Murdered own wife in a fire to hide criminal connections. Nannies raise his kids. Fan of opera, not a fan of polo but plays anyway. Teetotaler.

Adventure Two: The Dying Skyseer

INVESTIGATION GUIDE.

- **Timeline.** The adventure begins on the 1st day of Summer. Keep track of how much time the PCs spend because some events occur on set days. The wand smuggler meeting, for instance, occurs the night of the 4th, and the villains find Wolfgang on the 7th if the party hasn't yet. If the party dallies, the earthquake atop Cauldron Hill strikes on the 10th.
- **Main Villains.** Reed Macbannin refines witchoil as fuel for the colossus. Witchoil is liquid essence of the Bleak Gate, and it captures souls of those who die nearby, then releases them when burnt. Macbannin's butler Cillian Creed is former spy, master of disguise, and does Macbannin's dirty work.
- **Minor Villains.** Lorcan Kell runs thieves' guild, smuggles to aid Macbannin. Leone Quital handles construction of colossus in Bleak Gate. Both get come-uppance in later adventures.
- **Danoran Consulate (page 146).** Nilasa killed by Creed while trying to fly out fourth-floor window, suggesting connection to Gale. Dr. von Recklinghausen fled with documents Nilasa stole, but Danorans pretend no such documents exist. Alchemical examination of Nilasa's effects points to Waryeye's Alchemicals. Nilasa's boyfriend knew she frequented Thinking Man's Tavern. Her criminal history lists her residence as Sechim's Alkahest & Etchings, and mentions accomplices in Goodson's Estuarial Reformatory.
- **Thinking Man's Tavern (page 152).** Jered Lawman, halfling bard, visited Cloudwood brigands with Nilasa. Hennet Rinus, philosophy/archaeology student, wrote letters for Nilasa to Morgan Cippiano about arranging business meetings.
- **Goodson's Estuarial Reformatory (page 154).** Nilasa's accomplices know about "House Elf" smuggling contact, and that Nilasa was acquiring weapons for Gale.
- **Waryeye's Alchemicals/House Elf (page 156).** Married gnome couple provided magic for Nilasa's activities. They know location of wharf smugglers will set out from, and when.
- **Smuggler's Night (page 161).** Ship sets out from Pine Island to meet in Ayres with Crisillyiri merchant ship. Picks up cache of stolen wands, which would be split with Family and Gale.
- **Sechim's Alkahest & Etchings (page 168).** Heward Sechim knew Nilasa was getting into trouble. He wants the party to talk with his uncle, skyseer Nevard in the Cloudwood, since the old man might be able to talk down Gale. Sechim also has been harassed lately by criminals offering "protection."
- **Cloudwood Brigands (page 169).** Involved in turf war with Lorcan Kell's gang. Hostile to outsiders.
- **Skyseer Nevard (page 172).** Sick and dying. Knows Gale, but won't betray her. Wants to spend night on cursed Cauldron Hill to seek vision. If party helps, he'll arrange meeting with Gale.
- **Cauldron Hill—Take One (page 173).** Nettles district mayor Reed Macbannin lets PCs up, but plots their demise. Seemingly-innocuous smoking courier at his manor when PCs visit; this is secretly Nicodemus, the campaign's main villain. Macbannin doesn't notify military of PCs' ascent.
- **Chasing the Doctor (page 182).** Creed, disguised as police officer, gets to people before PCs. Hostel staff saw doctor flee in a hurry. Dr. Barnaby Camp, old mentor to Wolfgang, got a letter saying he was in trouble with Kell's guild. Professor Lynn Kindleton, old love interest of Wolfgang, knows he's hiding in The Nettles. Messages passed by Nettles children. Kell offers PCs the location of doctor in exchange for them disrupting Smuggler's Night. Once satisfied, he contacts Creed to take them all out.
- **Nettles Church (page 185).** Wolfgang hid documents in hole in ceiling. Creed tries to abduct him and get documents. If he fails at either, Leone Quital barricades PCs in and tries to pressure them into handing over what they want. At the end of negotiations, Leone uses explosives to collapse church entrance, but secret exits give PCs chance to survive and escape.
- **Stolen Documents (page 188).** Dense financial information that, when examined, implicates Macbannin in plot to smuggle Danoran industrial material. Also details discovery of witchoil flasks in factories; this was an original test of the substance to see how well it captured souls of workers who died.
- **Arson (page 192).** Creed hired arsonists to endanger factories so Lorcan Kell's proxies could buy them and help smuggle materials. The night the party goes up Cauldron Hill (see Take One, above), Creed sends the arsonists to burn down Sechim's factory. Arsonists have letters that can be traced back to Macbannin's manor.
- **Nevard's Vision (page 198).** Nevard calls rally to share visions of danger centered around Cauldron Hill. Macbannin creates monsters to attack Nevard during event. Temporary lab in Bosum Strand, from which psychic screams emanate, has documents and technicians who can finger Macbannin.
- **Cauldron Hill—Take Two (page 203).** Macbannin has witchoil laboratory under his manor. During his arrest, an accident triggers an earthquake. Even if captured, Macbannin tries to fix damage to lab before a flood of witchoil pours out. If PCs mess up efforts to fix the problem, it can cause an explosion that tears off part of the mountain's north face. Creed tries to ambush party to finish them off during the chaos.
- **Abortive Trial (page 210).** Nicodemus comes in spirit form, possesses Macbannin, offers to let him join Obscurati ghost council. Then he shatters Macbannin's skull and absconds with his soul, so there is no evidence of the plot.

Adventure Five: Cauldron-Born

Taking Down Kell's Guild

Location Tracker.

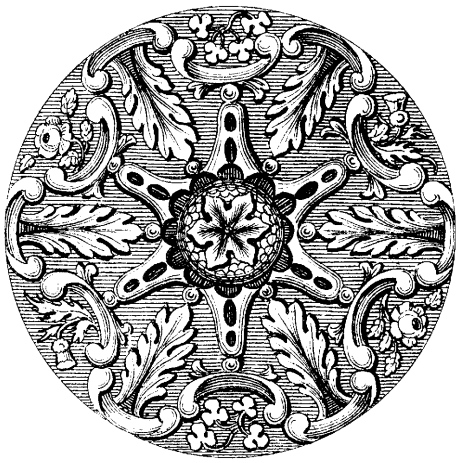
Scouted Location	Defenders	Defeated?

Scouted Location	Defenders	Defeated?

Transaction Tracker.

Scouted Transaction	Defenders	Defeated?

Maximum three strikes from illicit transactions.



Day Tracker.

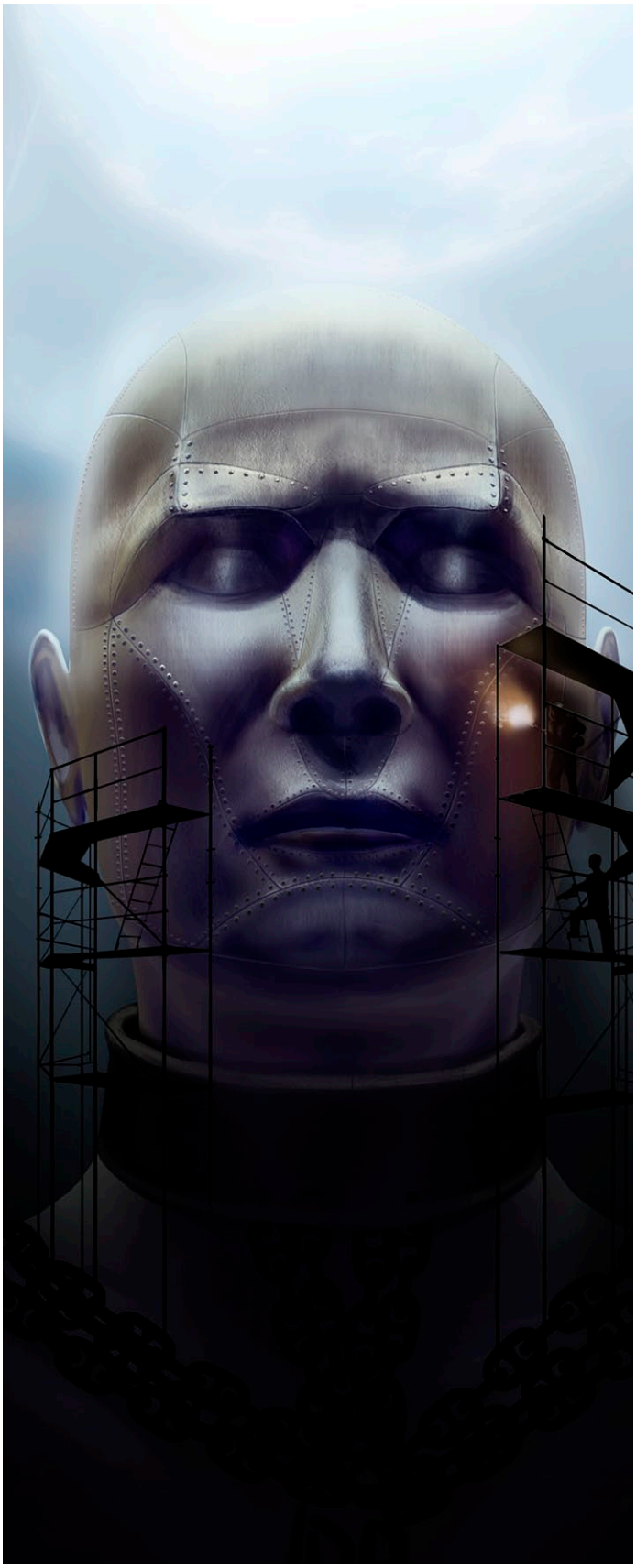
	Officers	Moles	TFTs	Strikes
Spring 9				
Spring 10				
Spring 11				
Spring 12				

Assault Tracker.

	Base Defenders	Trait	Current Defenders	Defeated?
Grand Suites	30	Tunnels—1d6 reinforcements per day		
Casa de Kell	22	Trapped. Thievery (DC 17) to avoid 1d8 deaths.		
Machete Hill	21 or 25 w/Rufus	Cannons kill 2d6 attackers if not successfully scouted.		
Theater of Scoundrels	100–(20 per defeated stronghold)			

Kell Tracker.

Strikes							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
		Hide			Feint		Flee



TIMELINE

Between the scripted scenes in Adventure Five, the party will probably be working to find Kell, Ekossigan, or the eschatologists. Scenes that involve the B-Team are marked with an asterisk to help you keep track of when to switch over to them.

Spring 8.

- **Afternoon.** The party meets with King Aodhan. Asrabey embroils the party in the search for Ekossigan.
- ***Afternoon.** The B-Team picks up Brakken, and eschatologist snipers strike.

Spring 9.

- **Morning.** The party and B-Team examine the broken golem.
- **Morning.** A letter from Vlendam Heid arrives, as does an invitation from Captain Dale.
- **Morning.** The party takes command of the task force to capture Kell.

Spring 10.

- **Morning.** Asrabey asks the party to take him to Gale.
- ***Evening.** The B-Team escorts Brakken to the club Sunset Bench, one of Kell's fronts.
- **Late Night.** An eschatologist ship full of monsters arrives.

Spring 11.

- **Pre-Dawn.** Eschatologist monsters rampage through the city, then find lairs.
- ***Morning.** Brakken and the B-Team witness a paranoid mob in the Cloudwood.
- **Evening.** An opera gives the party a chance to nab Kell's lawyer.

Spring 12.

- **Morning.** Zubov leads the eschatologist attack on the subrail station.
- **Evening.** At sunset paranoia in the Cloudwood leads a mob to murder the mayor.
- **Late Night.** Ekossigan performs his ritual sacrifice just before midnight.

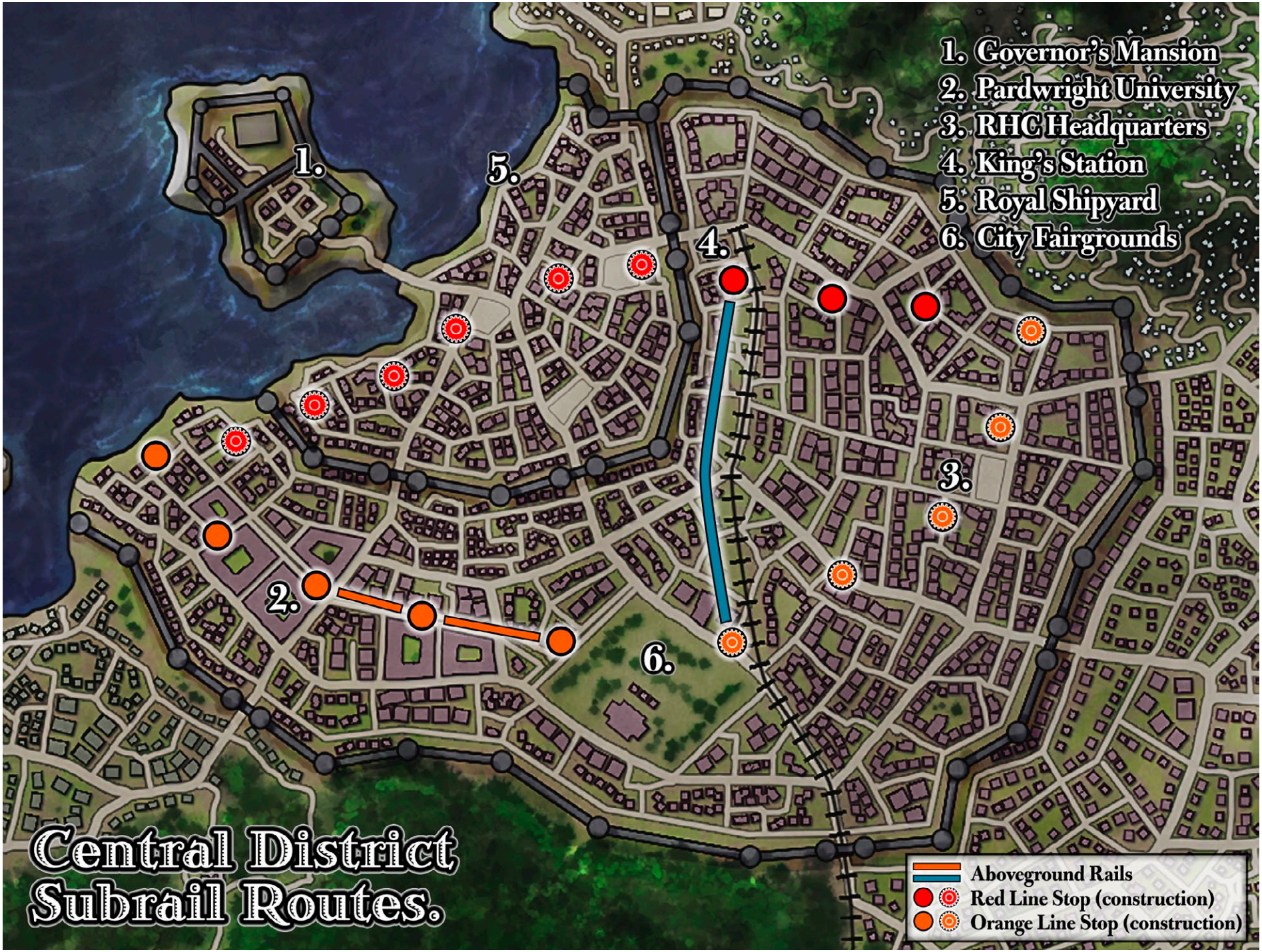
Spring 13.

- **Pre-Dawn.** Kell leaves his hideout, giving the party a chance to take him down.
- **Afternoon.** Han Jierre and his niece Lya arrive.
- **Evening.** Opening dinner of the peace summit.
- **Midnight.** The king will be able to send the party to the Bleak Gate if they have not already found a way.

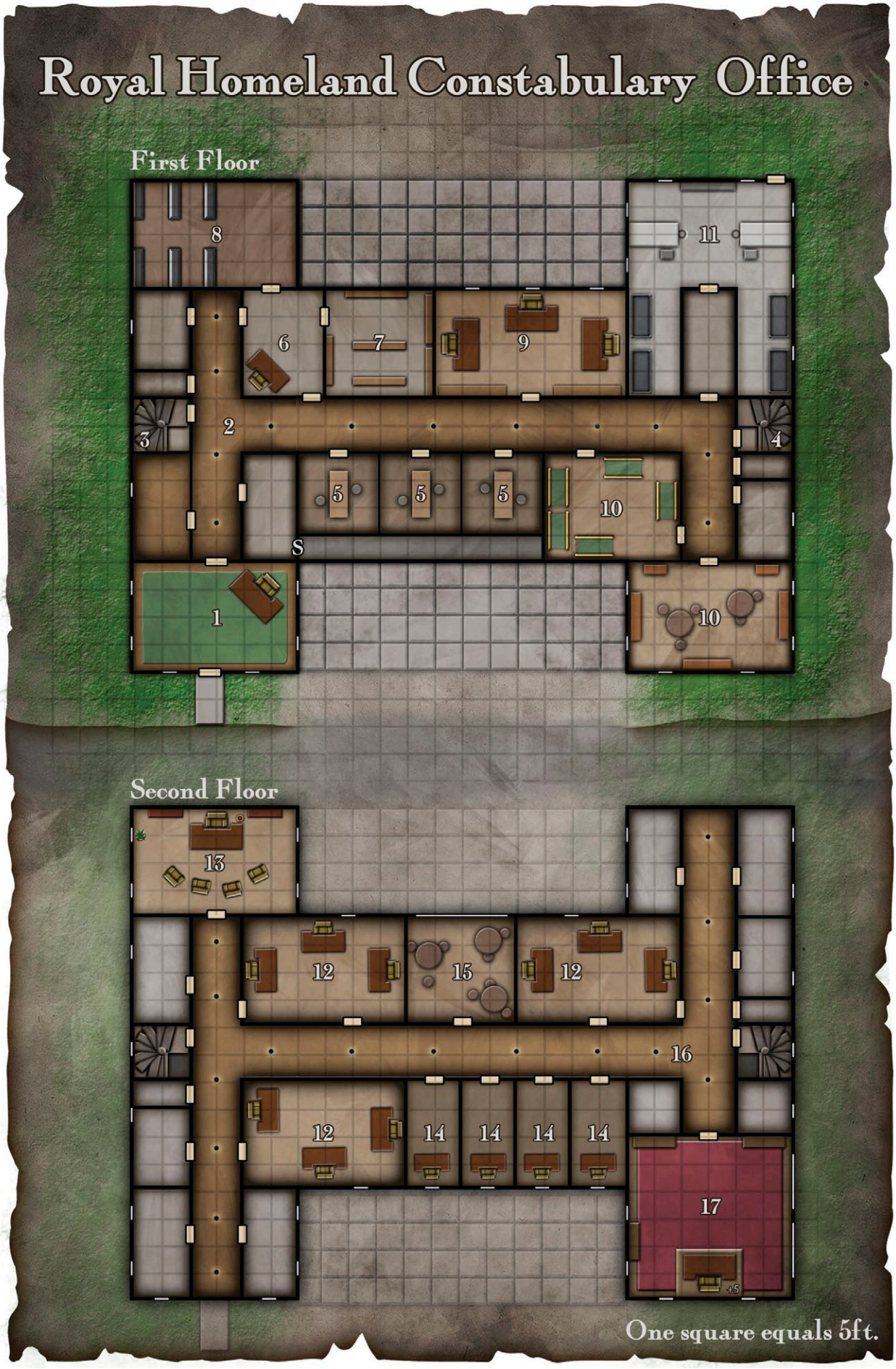
APPENDIX I: Collected Maps



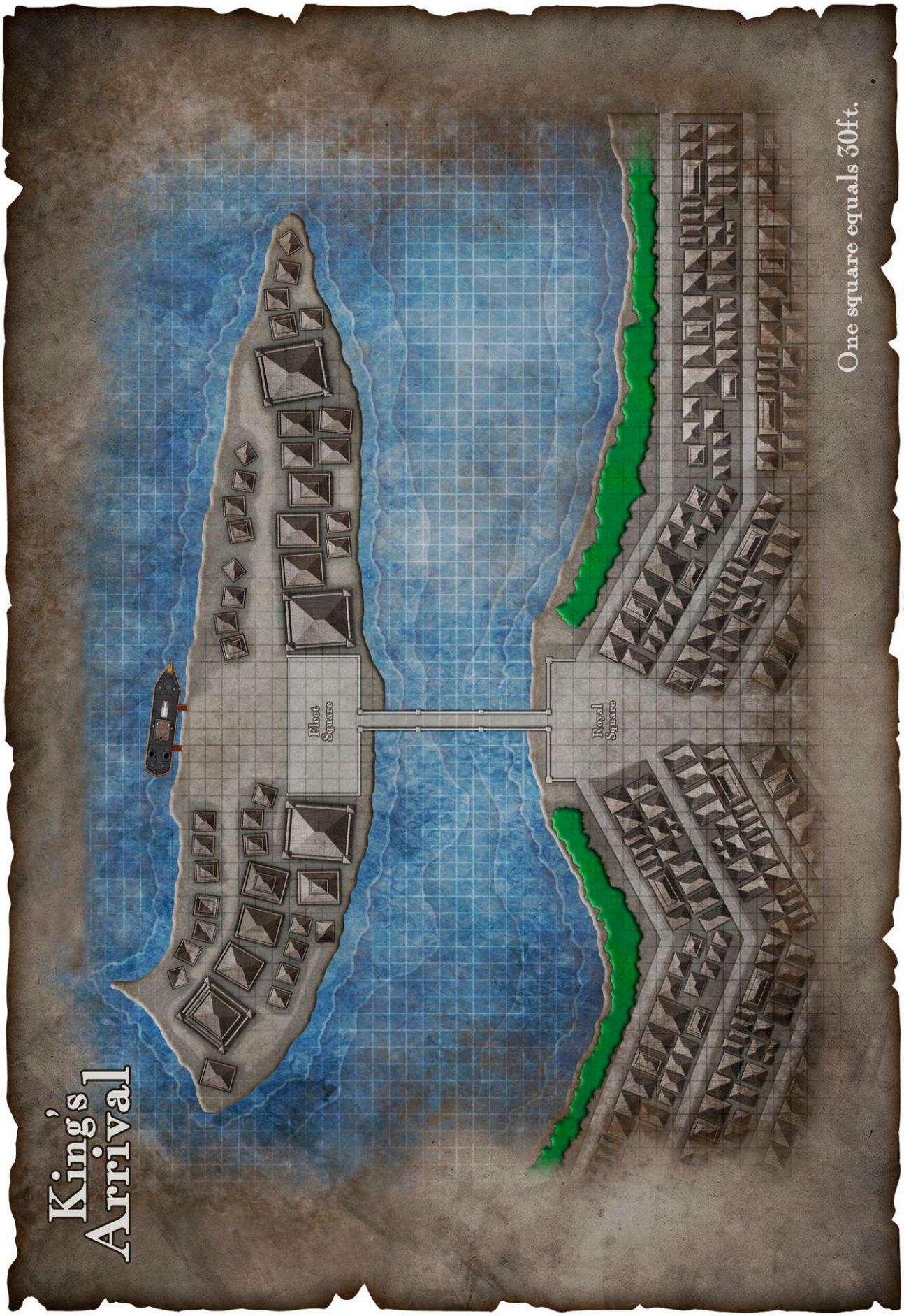
The City of Flint
1. Governor's Mansion
2. Pardwight University
3. RHC Headquarters
4. King's Station
5. Royal Shipyard
6. Cauldron Hill
The Ayres
North Shore
Parlay Lake
Boston Square
The Nemnles
The Cloudwood
Lower Flint Bay
Upper Flint Bay
Pine Island
West Bank
East Bank
Kay River
Central District
0 1 2 3 4
Miles


1. Governor's Mansion
2. Pardwright University
3. RHC Headquarters
4. King's Station
5. Royal Shipyard
6. City Fairgrounds
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
Central District
Subrail Routes.
Aboveground Rails
Red Line Stop (construction)
Orange Line Stop (construction)

Royal Homeland Constabulary Office
Basement
18
19
One square equals 5ft.

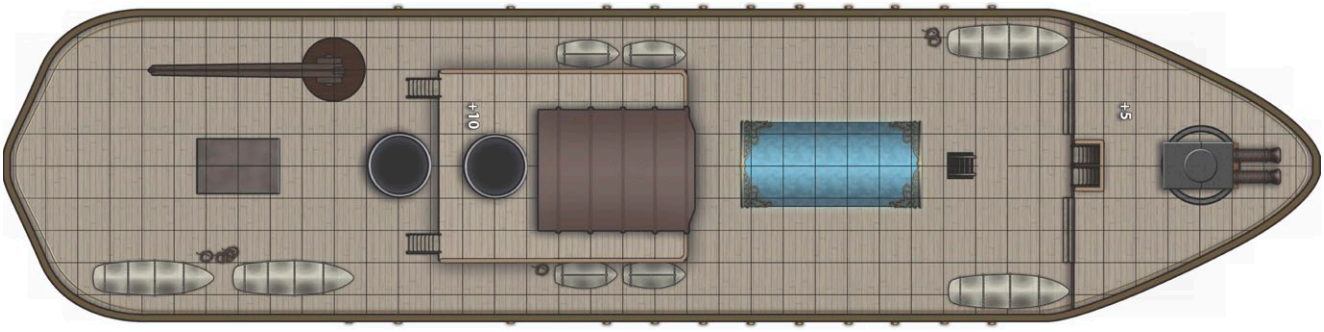

Royal Homeland Constabulary Office
First Floor
8
11
6
7
9
2
3
4
5
5
5
10
S
1
10
Second Floor
13
12
15
12
16
12
14
14
14
14
17
+5
One square equals 5ft.

The City of Eflint
1. Governor's Mansion
2. RHC Headquarters
3. Royal Shipyard
4. Cauldron Hill
The Ayres
North Shore
Lower Eflint Bay
Upper Eflint Bay
Pine Island
Posum Strand
Parlett Lake
The Nettles
Cauldron District
Old Quarter
East Bank
West Bank
Ayres River
The Cloudwood
0 1 2 3 4
Miles

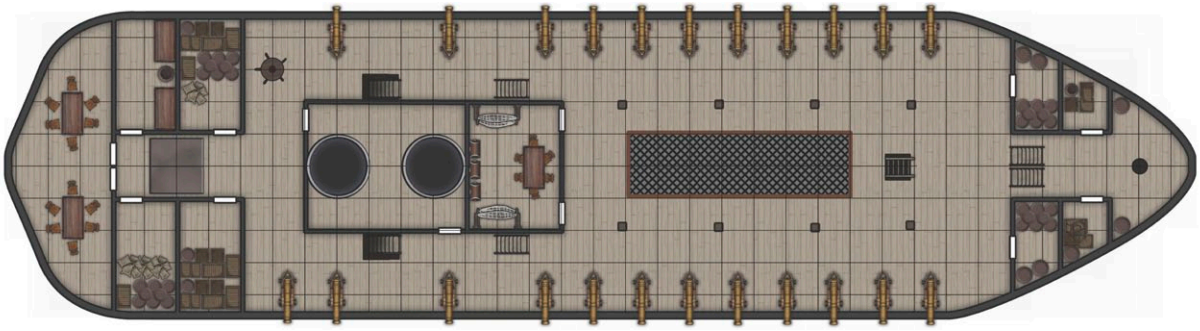

King's Arrival
Fleet Square
Royal Square
One square equals 30ft.

R.N.S. *Coaltongue.*

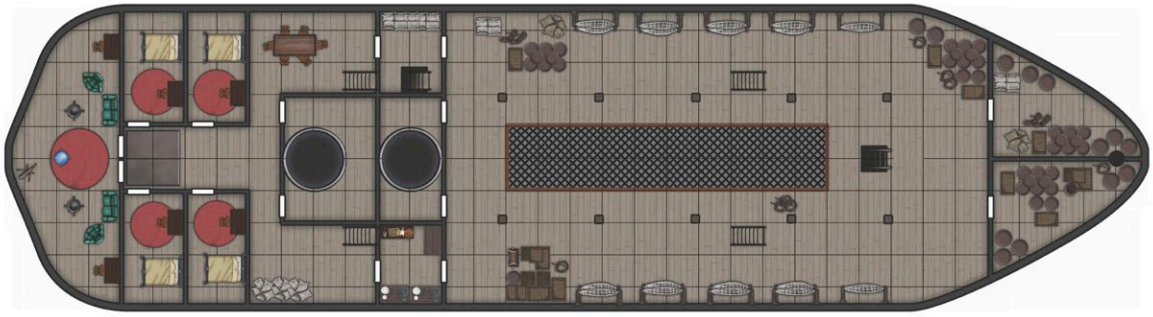
MAIN DECK.



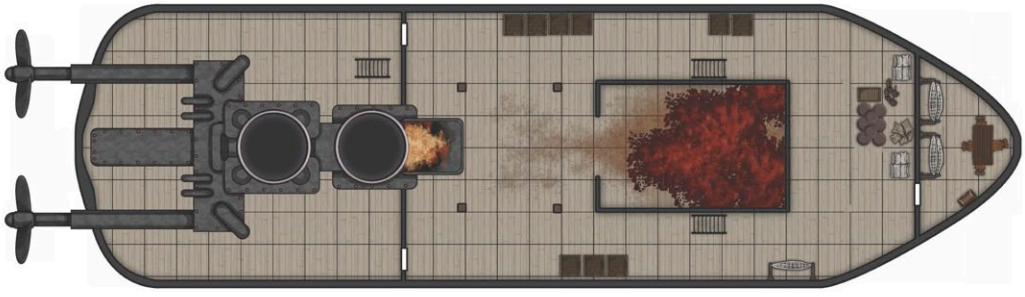
GUN DECK.



BERTH DECK.

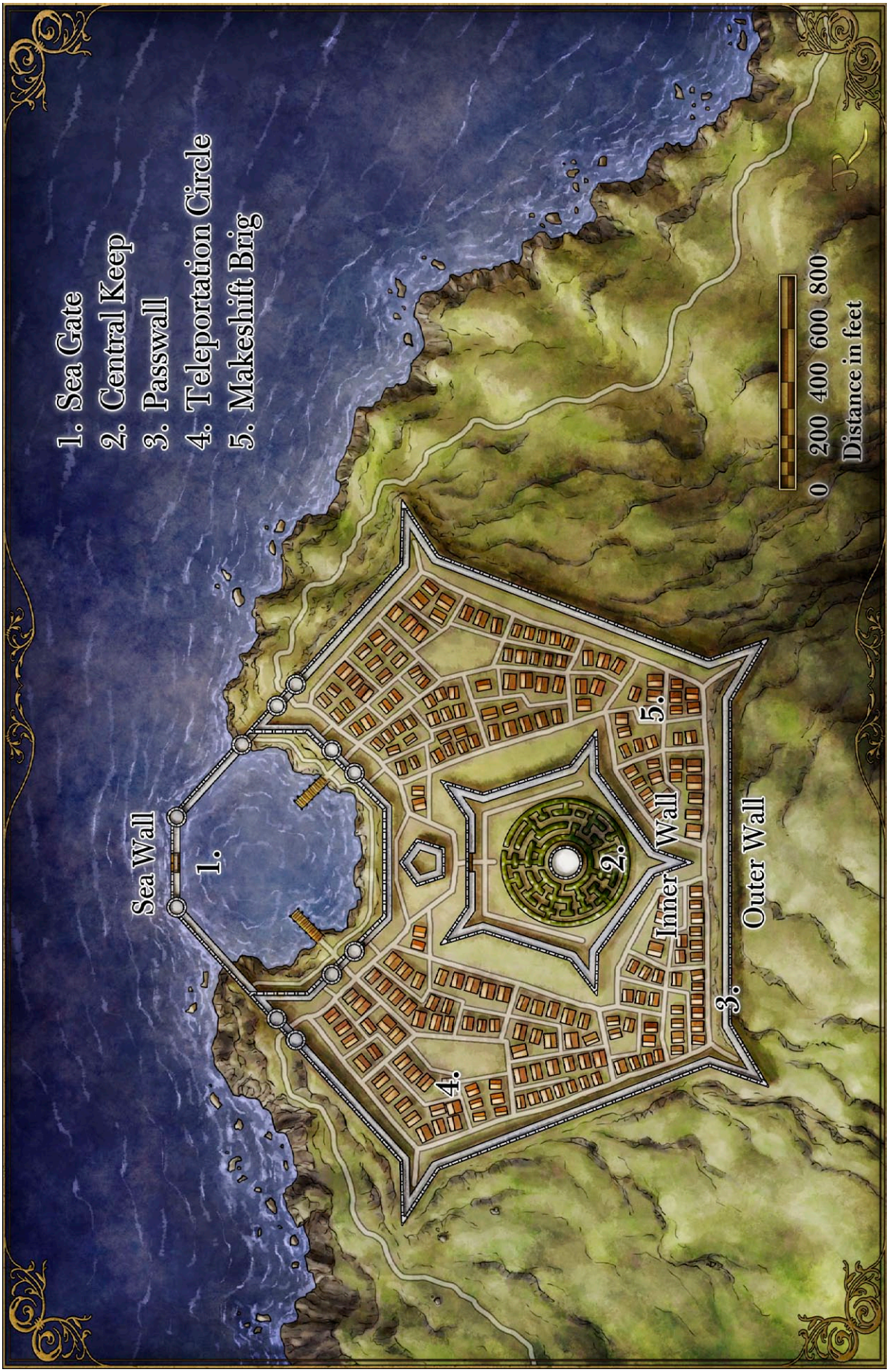


ENGINE DECK.

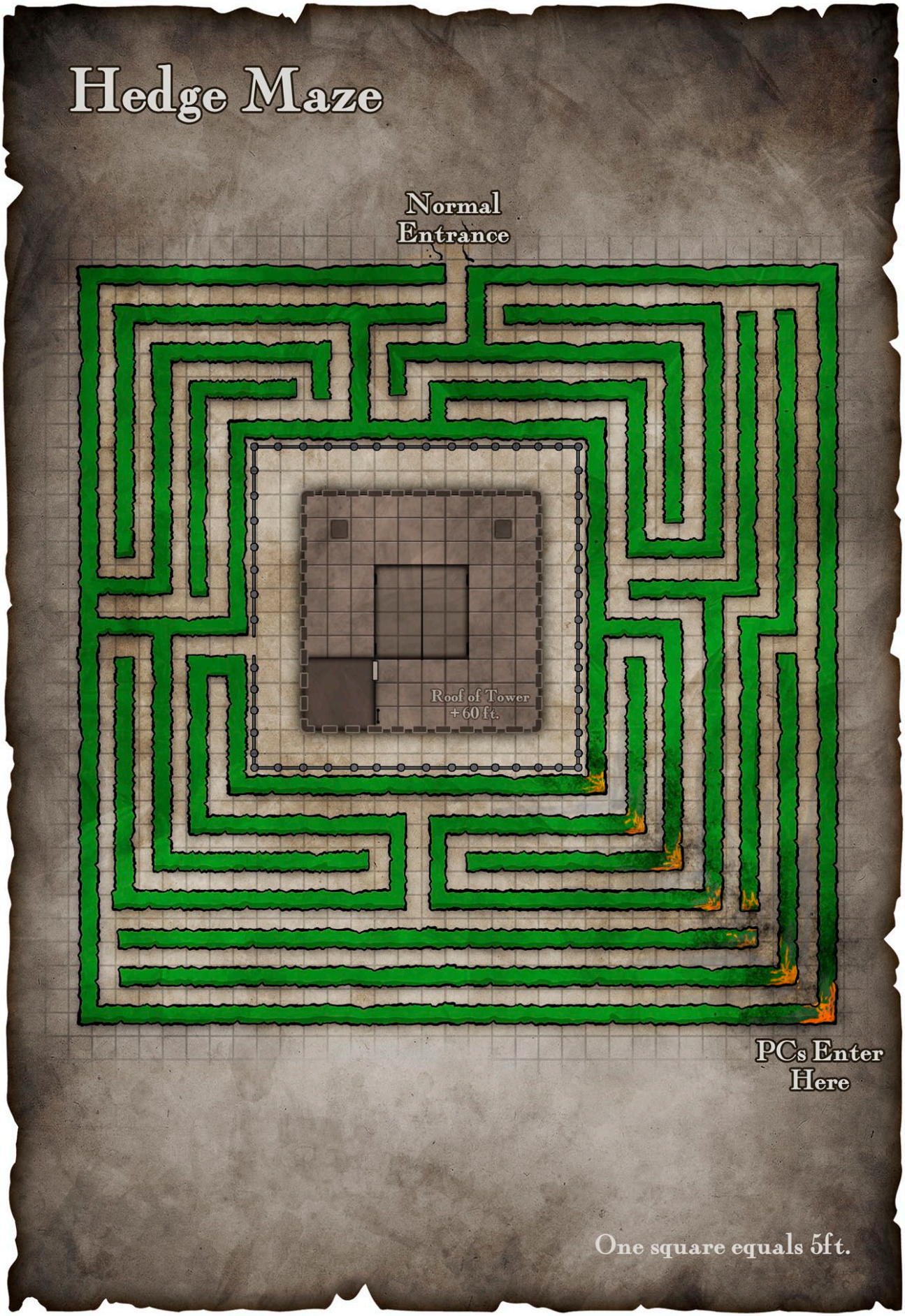



Village
Lookout Tower
Fort
Ruined Temple
Mine
Sea Cave
A
B
C
D
E
0
1
Miles


The Sea Cave
+35
+35
+25
+35
+15
+20
+5
+10
+0
-10
-20
-5
+0
One square equals 5ft.


1. Sea Gate
2. Central Keep
3. Passwall
4. Teleportation Circle
5. Makeshift Brig
Sea Wall
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
Inner Wall
Outer Wall
0 200 400 600 800
Distance in feet


The Docks
+ 0 ft.
+ 35 ft.
+ 40 ft.
+ 50 ft.
+ 40 ft.
+ 50 ft.
+ 90 ft.
+ 20 ft.
+ 40 ft.
+ 5 ft.
+ 0 ft.
+ 70 ft.
+ 10 ft.
+ 20 ft.
+ 0 ft.
One square equals 5ft.


Hedge Maze
Normal Entrance
Roof of Tower +60 ft.
PCs Enter Here
One square equals 5ft.


Hedge Maze Tower
Level 3
To Level 2
Landing
10 ft.
Telescope
30 ft.
Pivots
20 ft.
Stairs up
to Roof
Control Panel
15 ft.
Level 4
(Roof)
To
Level 3
One square equals 5ft.


Two Fronts
1st Floor
+5
+5
2nd Floor
+15
+15
+15
+0
+15
One square equals 5ft.


Bayou Wharf
-10
-10
-15
-15
-10
-15
-10
-5
-15
-5
One square equals 5ft.

Silvo

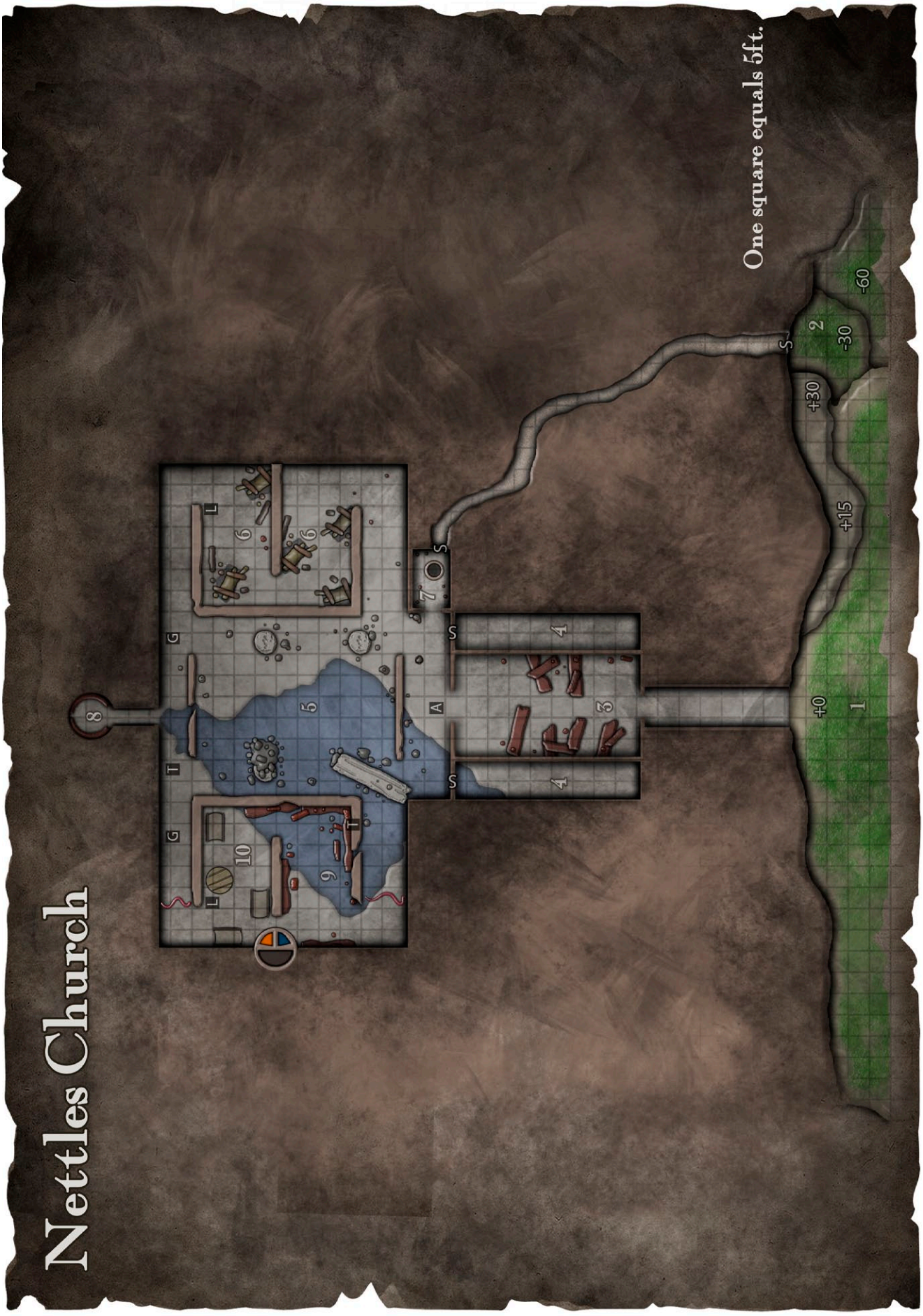


Li Grifoni Grinyande




Cloudwood Switchback
One square equals 5ft.
+45
+40
+35
+5
+0
+45
+45
+40
+35
+5
+0
+50
+45
+45
+40
+30
+25
+10
+5
+0
+50
+55
+45
+45
+25
+20
+20
+15
+40
+35
+30
+5
+30
-10
-20

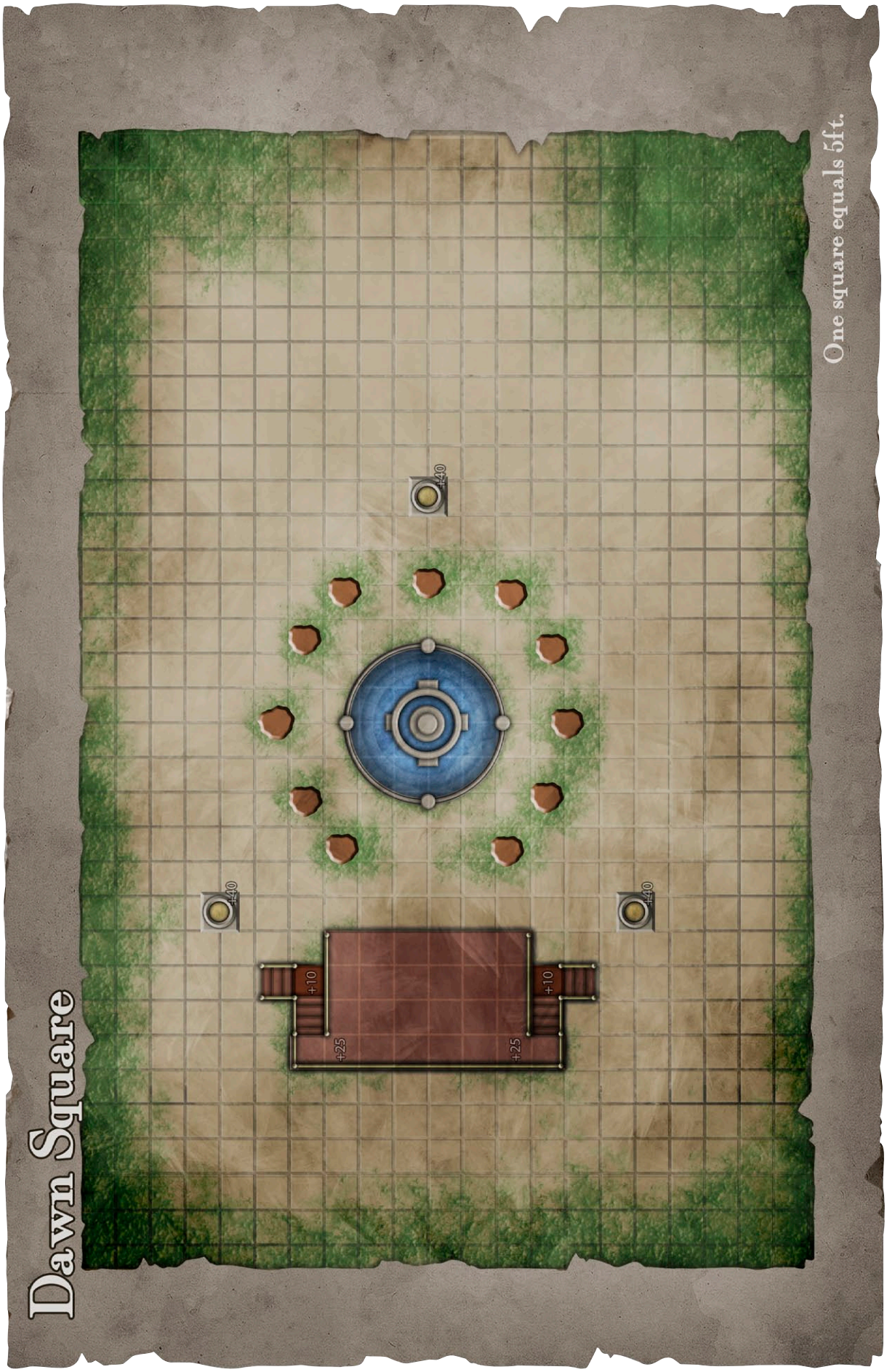

+2100
+2000
+2140
+2110
+2100
+2120
+2130
+2120
+1000
+2140
+2000
+2100
+2000


Nettles Church
One square equals 5ft.
+30
+15
+0
-30
-60
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10


Factory District
One square equals 5ft.
+40
+30
+40
+40
+40
+40
+40
+20

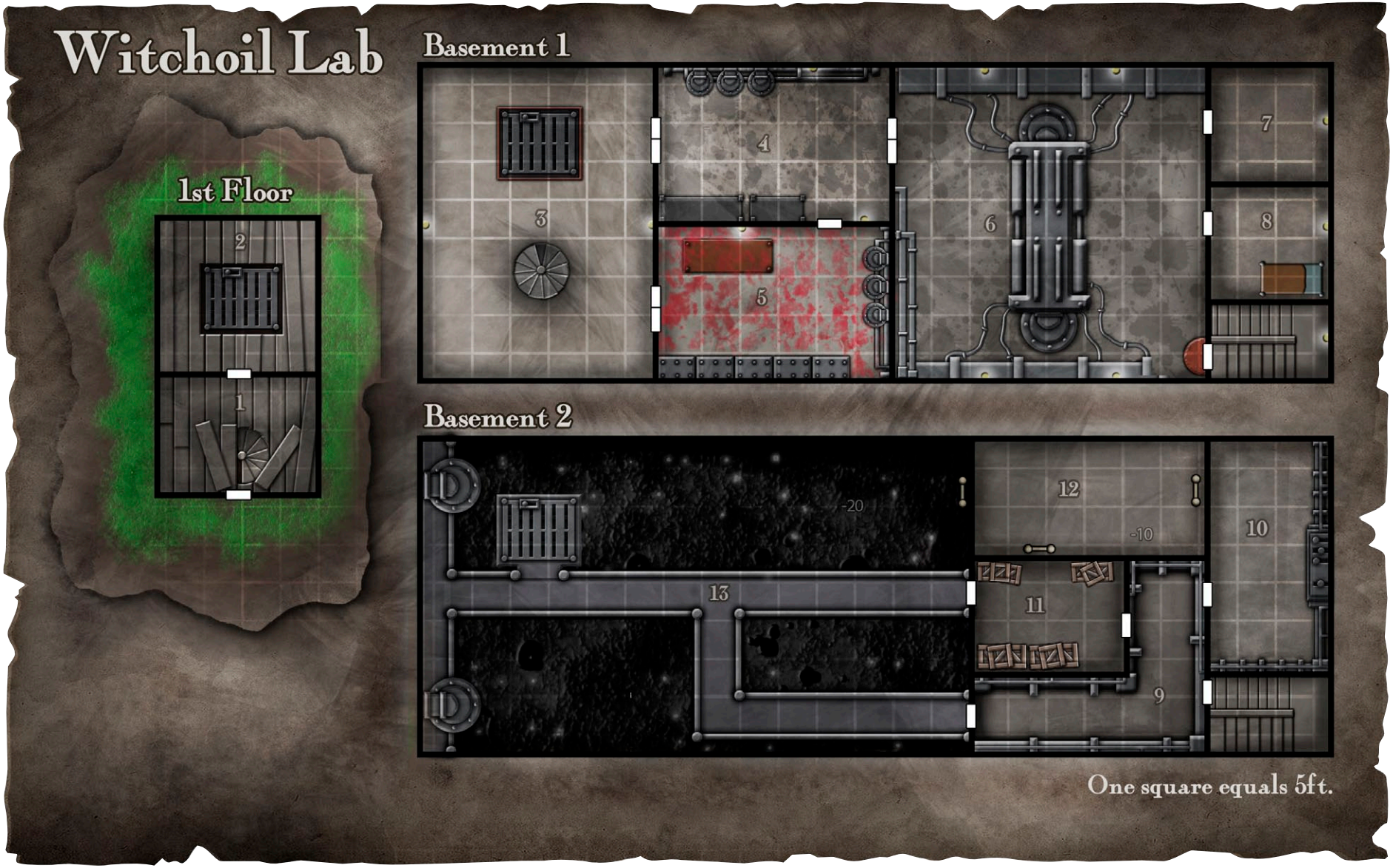
Creepy Warehouse




Dawn Square
One square equals 5ft.
+40
+40
+40
+10
+10
+25
+25

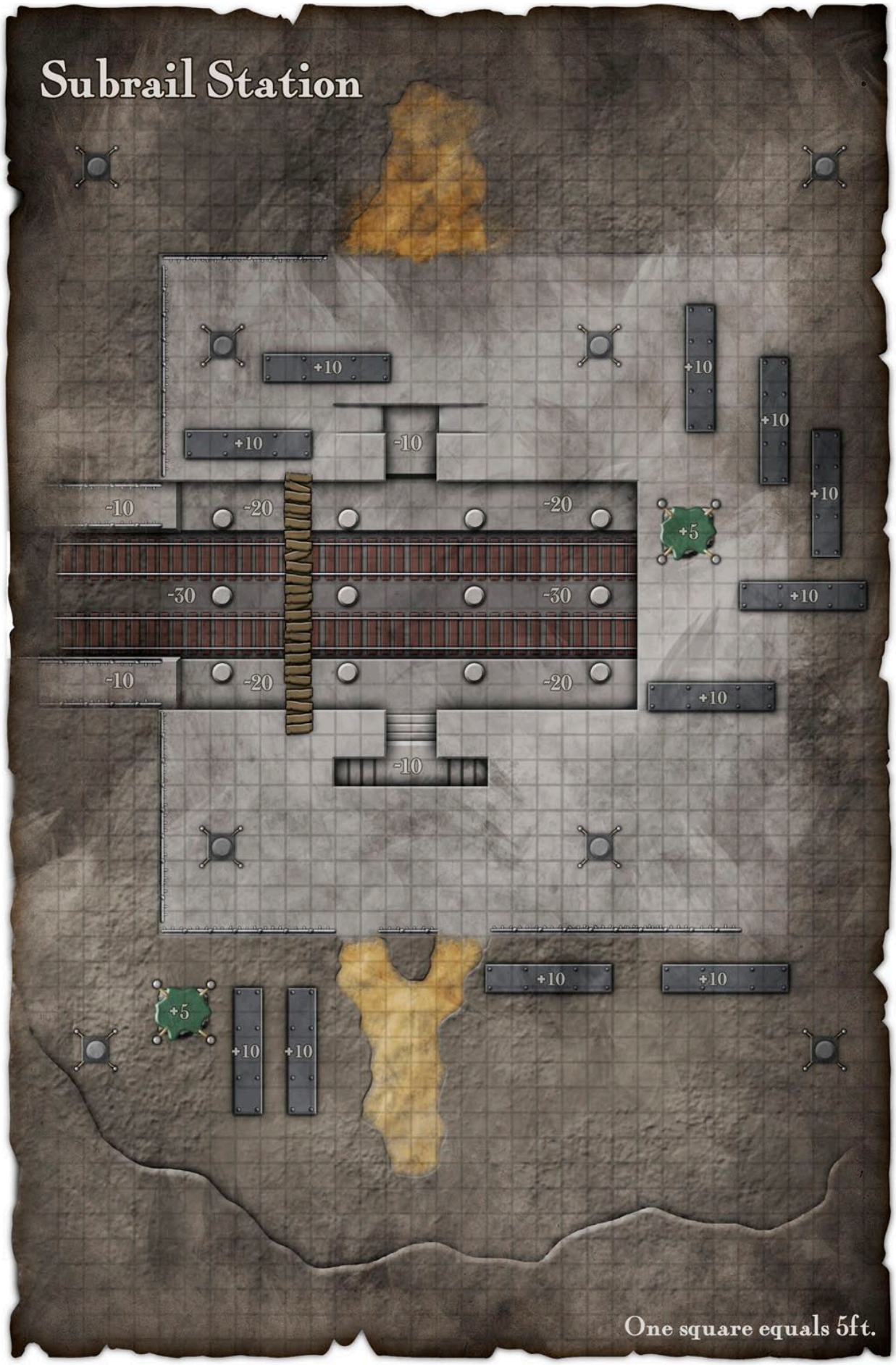

Macbannin's Manor
One square equals 5ft.

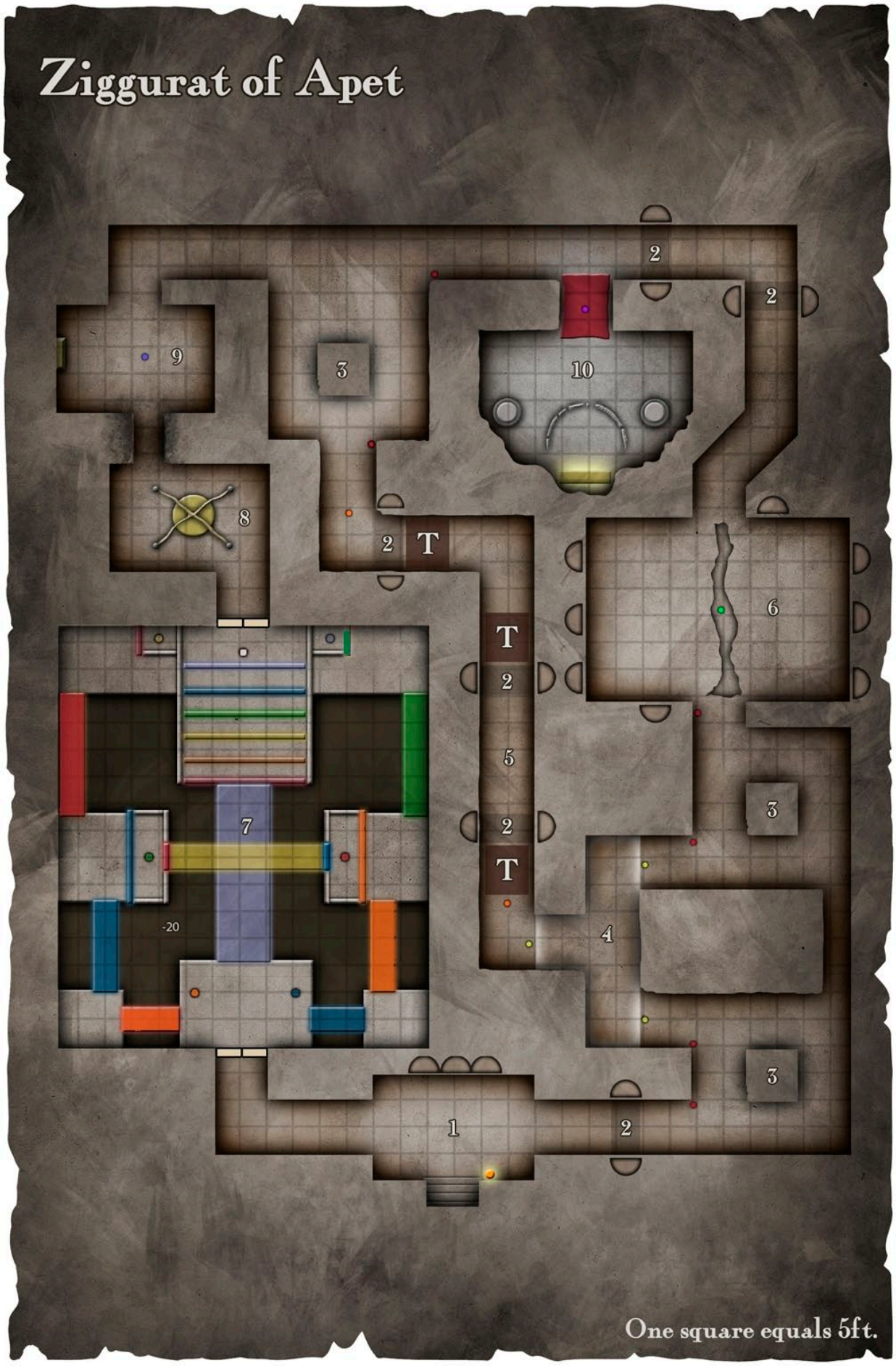
Witchoil Lab



The City of Flint.
1. RHC Headquarters
2. Pardwright University
3. Pardwright Museum
4. Lanternwood Station
5. The Silver Swan
The Ayres
North Shore
Lower Flint Bay
Upper Flint Bay
Pine Island
Bosun Strand
Pinery Lake
The Nettles
The Cloudwood
West Bank
East Bank
Shay River
Flint
Distant
0 1 2 3 4
Miles

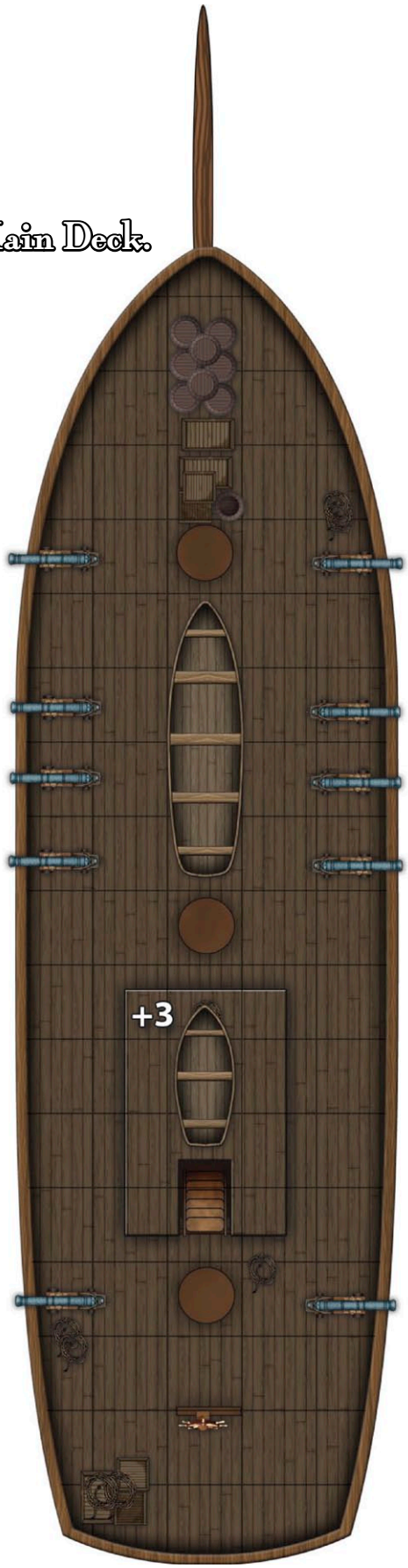

Gun Alley Stage
+15
+10
+5
+15
+10
+5
1
+15
2
+5
+5
+10
+10
3
4
5
6
7
+5
One square equals 5ft.


Subrail Station
+10
+10
-10
+10
+10
+10
-10
-20
-20
+5
-30
-30
+10
-10
-20
-20
+10
-10
+10
+10
+5
+10
+10
One square equals 5ft.


Ziggurat of Apet
2
2
9
3
10
8
2
T
6
T
2
5
2
T
7
3
-20
4
3
1
2
One square equals 5ft.

Il Draçon de Mer.

Main Deck.

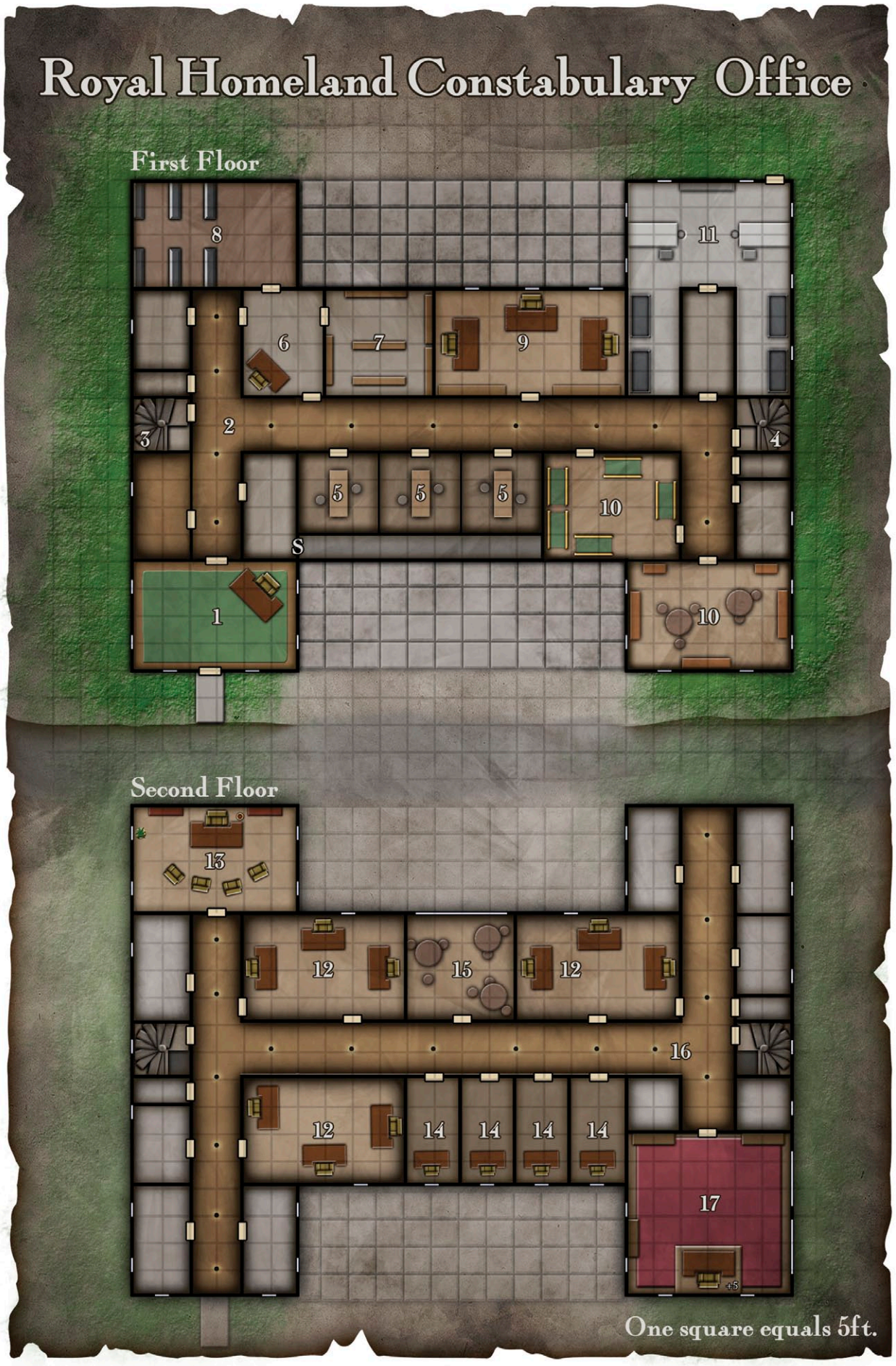


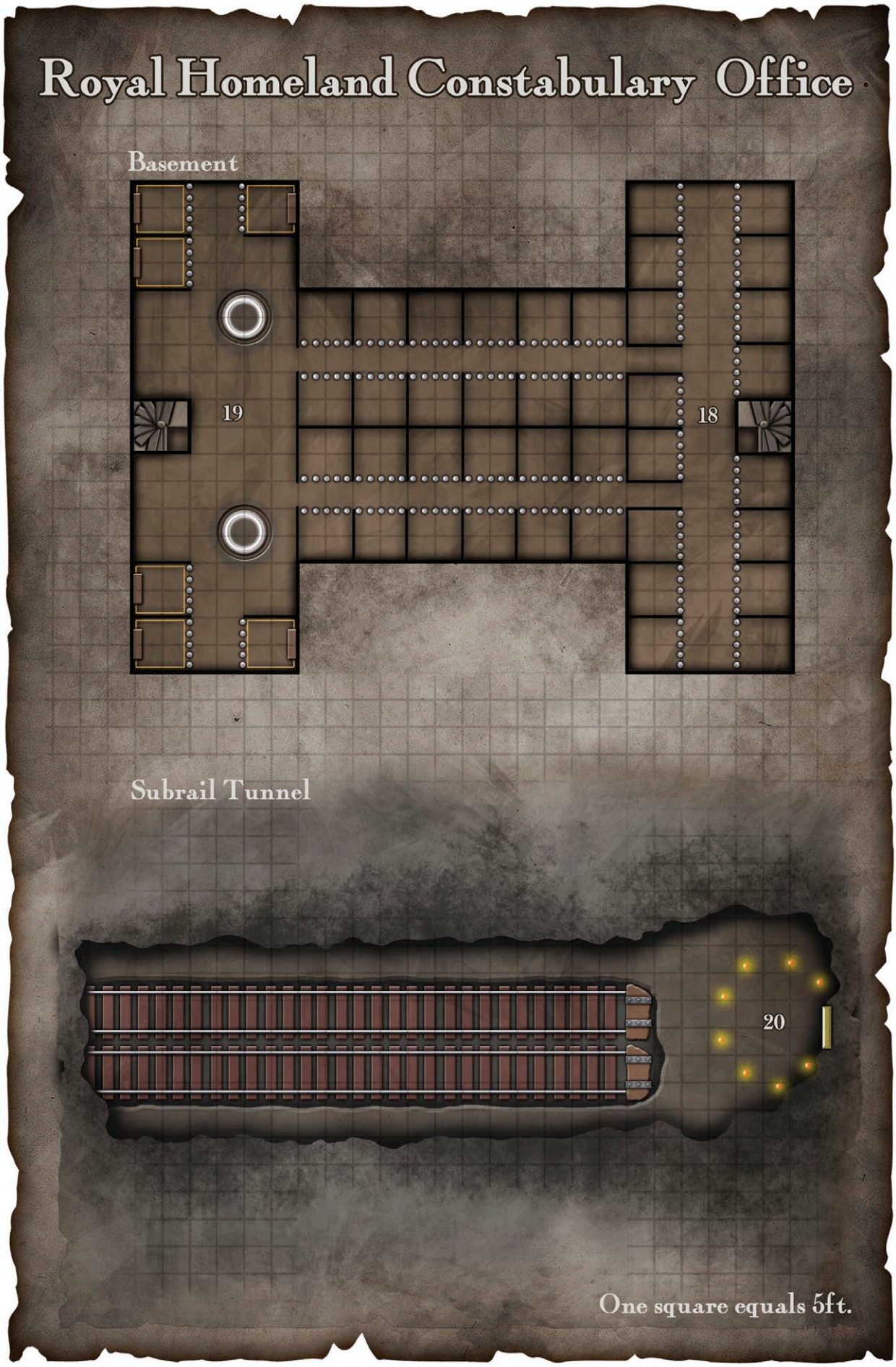
Cargo Deck.




Sunken Dig Site
B
-10
B
B
B
-20
-30
+10
B
B
+10
-25
-20
+10
-10
One square equals 5ft.

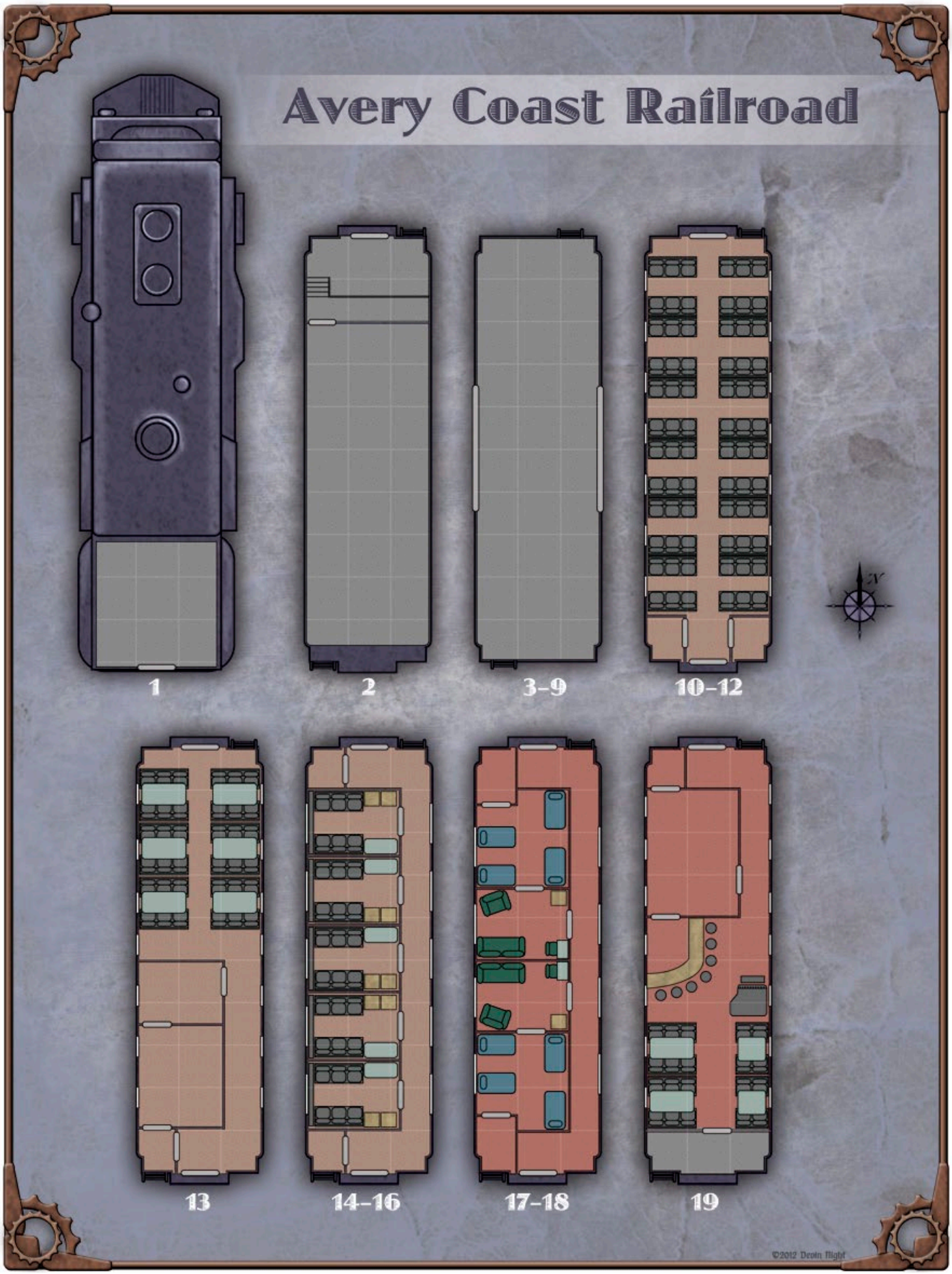

Museum of Natural History
One square equals 5ft.
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
A
B
S

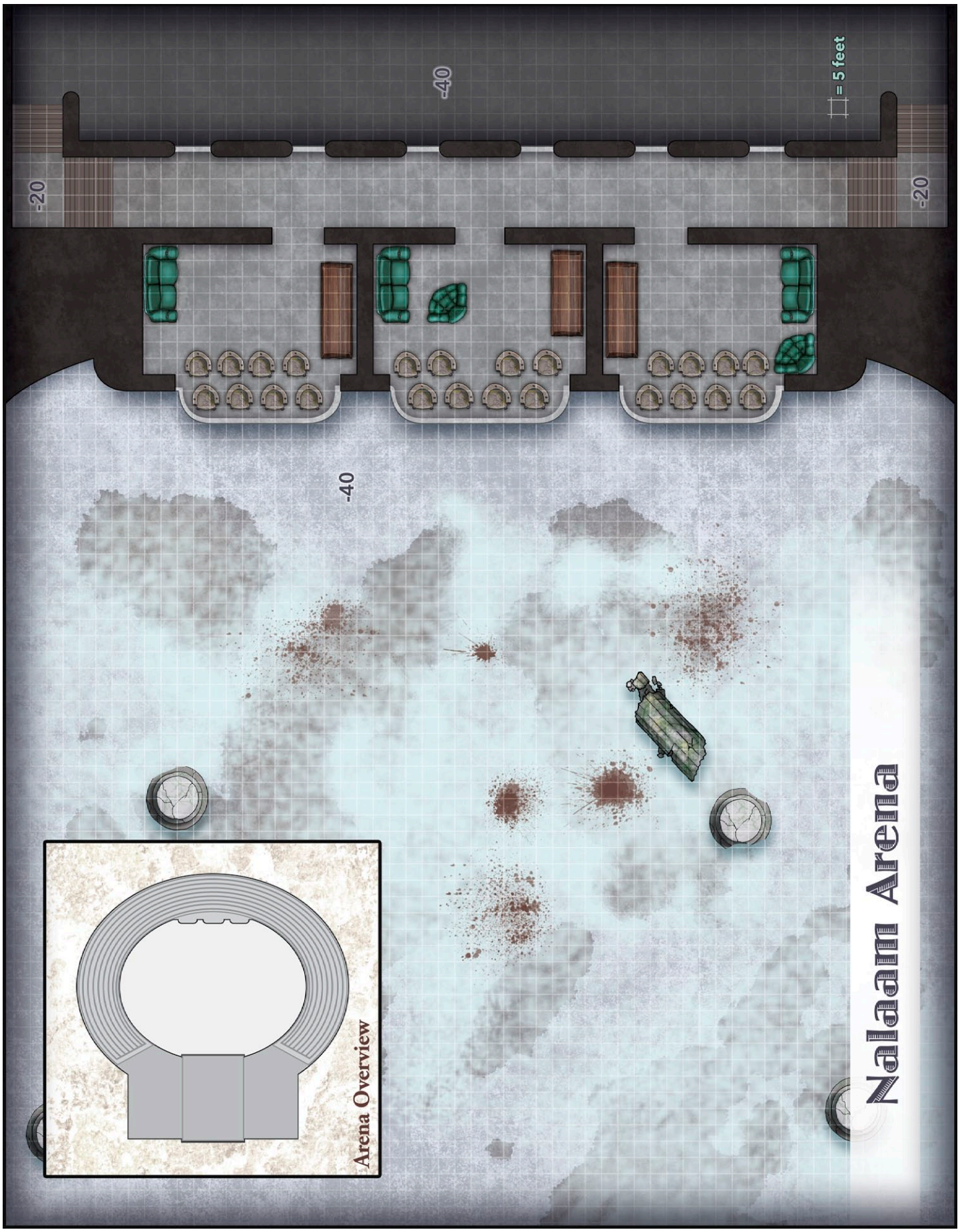

Royal Homeland Constabulary Office
First Floor
8
11
6
7
9
2
3
4
5
5
5
10
S
1
10
Second Floor
13
12
15
12
16
12
14
14
14
14
17
+5
One square equals 5ft.


Royal Homeland Constabulary Office
Basement
19
18
Subrail Tunnel
20
One square equals 5ft.

Adventure Four




Avery Coast Railroad
1
2
3–9
10–12
13
14–16
17–18
19
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-40
= 5 feet
-20
-20
-40
Nalaam Arena
Arena Overview


+30
+30
+30
Lighthouse Tower:
Second floor
Lighthouse Tower:
Third floor
Lighthouse Tower:
Fourth floor
Lighthouse Tower:
First floor
= 10 feet
CURSED ISLAND

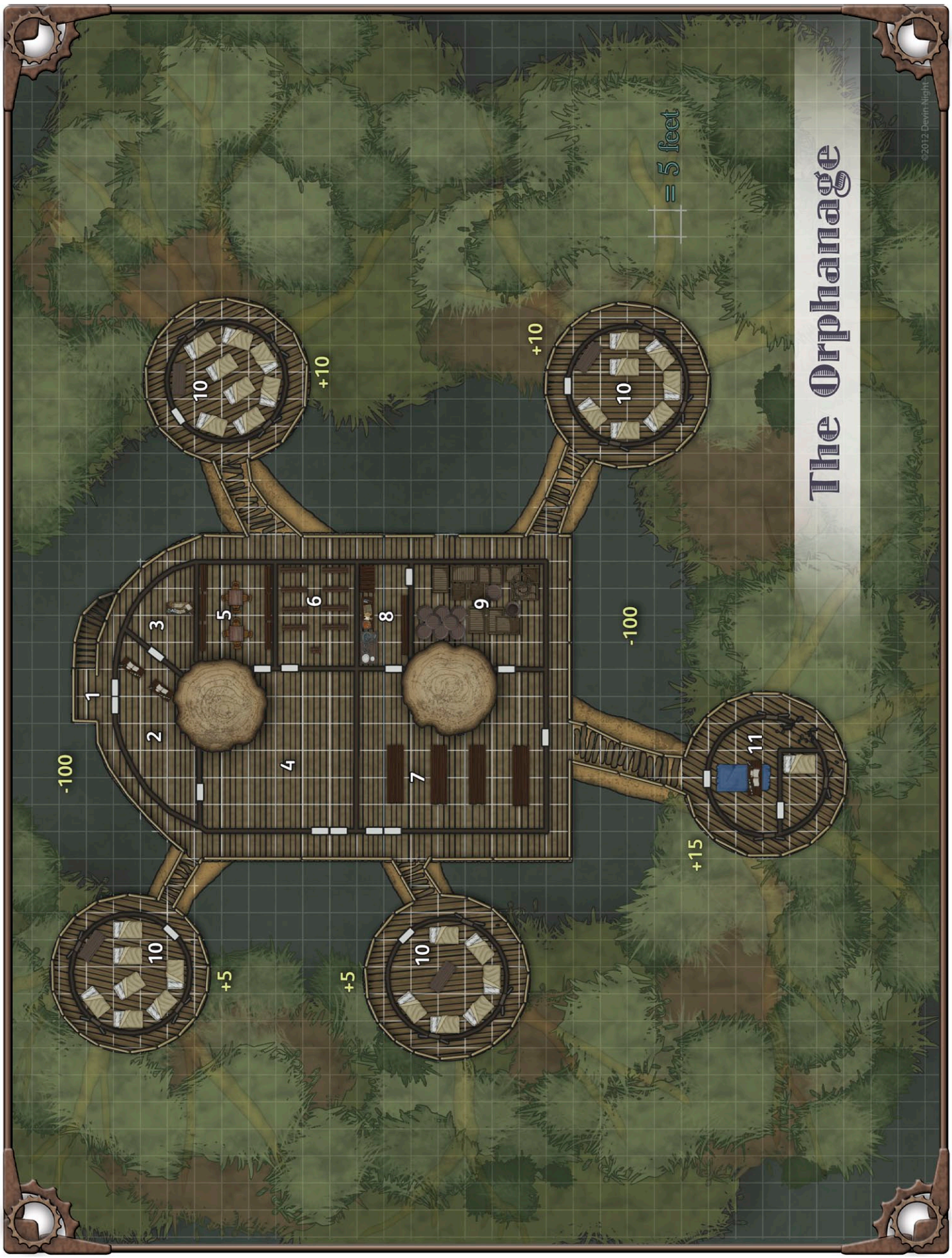

1
2
4
3
9
5
6
7
8
-30
-50
I
G
-20
H
F
-20
D
A
E
B
C
= 5 feet
FINAL VAULT

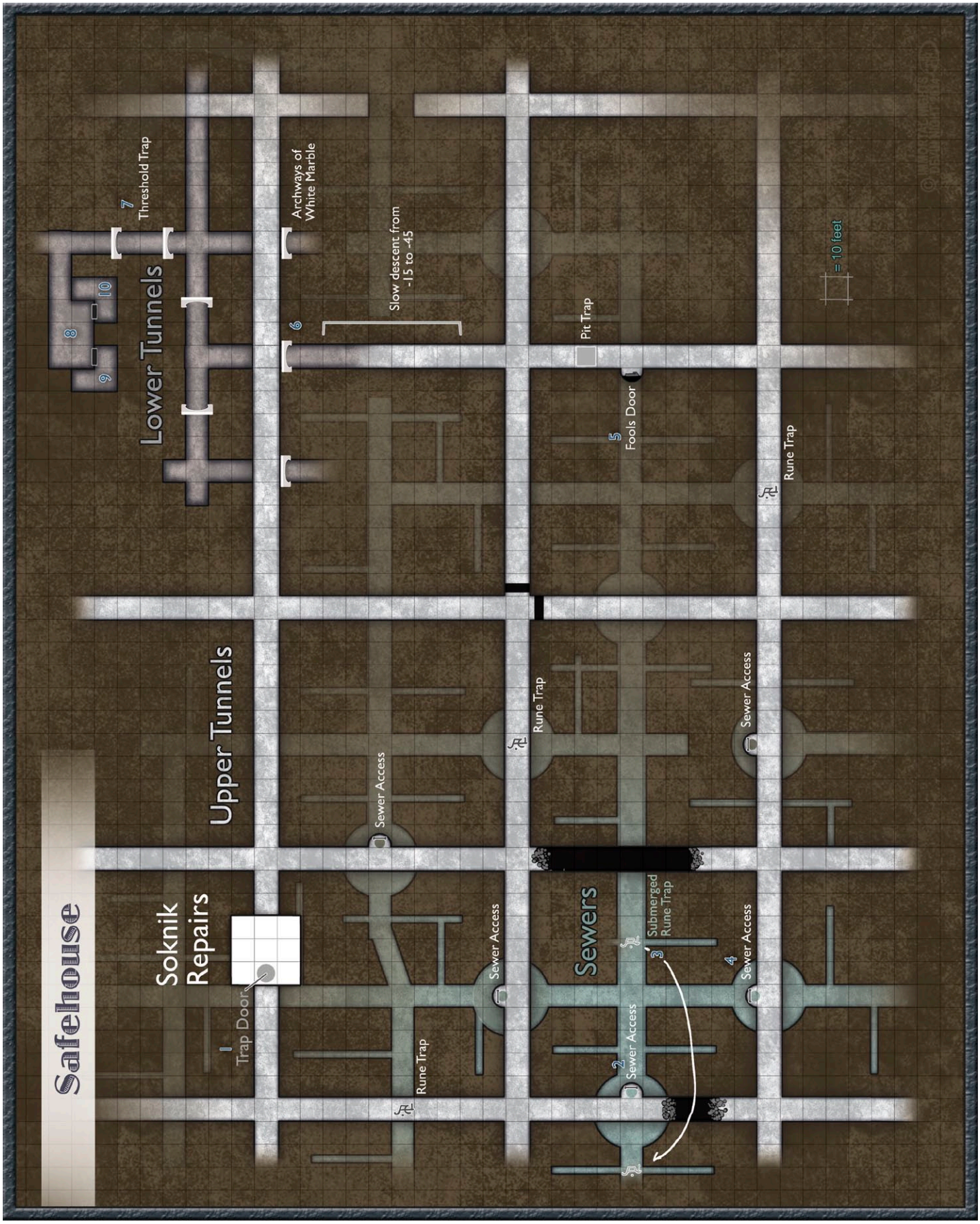

Private Train Station
To Grand Station
To Barracks
+20
+5
+5
+40
+25

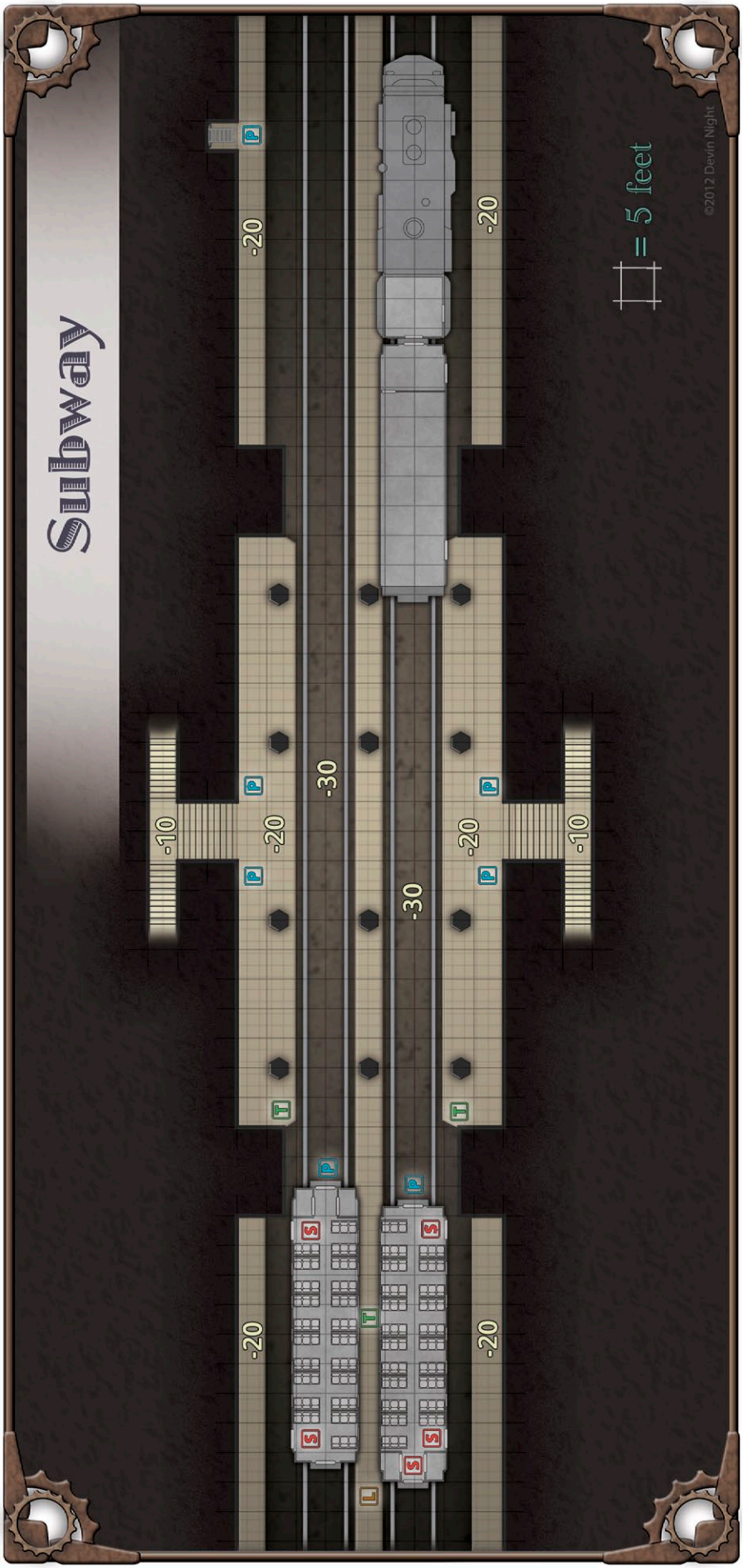
Adventure Five




Pardwight District
1
2
+50
3
4
+50
5
6
+40
+40
7
8
9
Market
10
11
+40
+40
12
13
+60
14
15
16
= 10 feet


The Orphanage
= 5 feet
©2012 Devin Night
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
10
10
10
10
11
-100
-100
+5
+5
+10
+10
+15


Safehouse
Soknik Repairs
1 Trap Door
Upper Tunnels
Lower Tunnels
7 Threshold Trap
8
9
10
Archways of White Marble
6
Slow descent from -15 to -45
Pit Trap
5 Fools Door
Rune Trap
Sewer Access
Rune Trap
Sewer Access
Sewers
2 Sewer Access
3 Submerged Rune Trap
4 Sewer Access
Sewer Access
Rune Trap
= 10 feet


Subway
= 5 feet
©2012 Devin Night
-20
-20
-10
-20
-30
-30
-20
-10
-20
-20
P
T
S
L

Cauldron Hill Complex
Parity Lake Dock Entrance
Canal Entrance
West Nettles Entrance
South Nettles Entrance
= 10 feet
©2012 Devin Night


The Colossus
= 10 feet
©2012 Devin Night
+150
+100
+140
+90
-150
-150
+100
+100
+80
+80
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26

APPENDIX J: Ally Statistics

Kaea, RHC Wizard — Level 7 Artillery
Medium fey humanoid, eladrin — XP 300

HP 42; **Bloodied** 21 — **Initiative** +5
AC 19, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 20 — **Perception** +2
Speed 6 — Low-light vision
Saves +5 vs. charm

Standard Actions

⊗ **Quarterstaff** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8+2 damage.

⟋ **Traditional Magic Missile** (force) ✦ At-Will
You conjure eldritch bolts which you can divide among targets.
Effect: You deal 15 force damage, divided as you choose, among up to three targets within 20 squares.

⌖ **Burning Hands** (fire) ✦ Encounter
You shoot fire from your fingertips in a flaming fan.
Attack: Close Blast 3 (creatures in burst); +10 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6+4 fire damage.

Move Actions

▸ **Fey Step** ✦ Encounter
You step through the Dreaming and reappear across the room.
Effect: You teleport 5 squares.

Skills Arcana +14, Diplomacy +8, History +12, Stealth +10
Str 12 (+4) **Dex** 15 (+5) **Wis** 8 (+2)
Con 12 (+4) **Int** 18 (+7) **Cha** 10 (+3)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Carlao, RHC Knight — Level 7 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, human — XP 300

HP 59; **Bloodied** 29 — **Initiative** +2
AC 23, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 19 — **Perception** +5
Speed 5

Traits

☼ **Knight's Aura** ✦ Aura 1
You have your shield at ready to defend, and your sword poised to punish.
Any creature in the aura that makes an attack that does not include you suffers a –2 penalty to attack rolls. See also *guardian strike.*

Standard Actions

⊗ **Longsword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+6 damage.

Triggered Actions

↙ **Guardian Strike** ✦ At-Will
Trigger: A creature in your knight's aura makes an attack that does not include you.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Make a basic attack against the triggering creature. If you miss you still deal 3 damage.

Skills: Athletics +12, Diplomacy +8, Endurance +11
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 12 (+4) **Wis** 15 (+5)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+3)
Alignment Lawful Good **Languages** Common, Primordial

Dima, RHC Cleric — Level 7 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf — XP 300

HP 59; **Bloodied** 29 — **Initiative** +2
AC 21, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 19 — **Perception** +7
Speed 5 — Low-light vision

Traits

▸ **Stable Footing**
Your black beard wags as you shake your head in disapproval.
Reduce the distance you are moved by any push, pull, or slide effect by 1. If knocked prone, you may attempt a saving throw to avoid falling prone.

Standard Actions

⊗ **Warhammer** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
"Creation and destruction are always at war," you say.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10+6 damage.

⟋ **Fire of Philosophy** (radiant) ✦ At-Will
"And destruction usually wins."
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6+8 radiant damage and one ally you can see may make a saving throw or gain 5 temporary hit points.

Minor Actions

⌖ **Word of Healing** ✦ Encounter
"But victory is only remembered if culture survives to record it. Ergo, the only victory worthwhile is that of creation."
Effect: Close Burst 5 (one ally in burst); the target spends a healing surge and regains 24 hit points instead of its normal surge value.

Skills Heal +12, Insight +12, Religion +9
Str 11 (+3) **Dex** 8 (+2) **Wis** 19 (+7)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 13 (+4) **Cha** 10 (+3)
Alignment Good **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Primordial



Gaethan, RHC Medium Level 7 Brute
Medium natural humanoid, half-elf XP 300

HP 74; **Bloodied** 37 **Initiative** +4
AC 19, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 19 **Perception** +5
Speed 5 Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊘ **Shortsword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6+6 damage.

⊘ **Longbow** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8+5 damage.

▸ **Aggressive Attack** ✦ At-Will
Effect: You make two basic attacks.

✓ **Unfinished Business** ✦ Encounter
With a manipulative whisper, you call up the spirit of a recently slain creature for one last attack.
Effect: Choose a creature killed or destroyed this encounter within three miles of your current location. It must still be at 0 hit points or fewer. You conjure the spirit of that creature in a space within 10 squares. The creature attacks with one of its at-will attacks as if it were alive. You choose the power it uses and make any decisions the power requires, such as targeting or forced movement. The creature gains a +2 power bonus to its attack rolls for this attack, and it deals full damage to insubstantial targets. After the attack, the conjured spirit is removed from play.

Skills Arcana +6, Dungeoneering +10, Insight +10, Nature +10, Streetwise +10
Str 14 (+5) **Dex** 14 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 15 (+5) **Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 14 (+5)
Alignment Lawful Good **Languages** Common, Primordial

Josiah, RHC Marksman Level 7 Lurker
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 300

HP 42; **Bloodied** 21 **Initiative** +4
AC 19, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 19 **Perception** +5
Speed 6

Traits

▸ **Sniper**
The silencer you built is a marvel of modern technology.
When you make a ranged attack from hiding and miss, you are still hiding.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Rifle Butt** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6+2 damage and you push the target 1 square.

⊘ **Rifle** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Ranged 25/50 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10+10 damage, or 1d10+22 on a critical hit.
Load minor.

✓ **Snipe** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
You line up the perfect killing shot.
Effect: Choose a target you can see within 1,000 feet, but more than 100 feet away. At the start of your next turn, you make the following attack against that target if you still have line of sight. Until the start of your next turn, you are considered blind except against targets in a direct line from you to the chosen target.
Attack: Ranged 100/200 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10+22 damage.

Skills Athletics +9, Intimidate +7, Perception +15, Stealth +12
Str 12 (+4) **Dex** 19 (+7) **Wis** 18 (+7)
Con 10 (+3) **Int** 14 (+5) **Cha** 8 (+2)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Serena, RHC Assassin Level 7 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 300

HP 54; **Bloodied** 27 **Initiative** +9
AC 20, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 19 **Perception** +2
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊘ **Lunging Strike** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Your foe assumes he's safe, but then a concealed contraption conjures a rapier out of your sleeve, and the blade digs into your foe's leg.
Effect: You shift 1 square before the attack, and after the attack can shift back to your original space.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+6 damage.

✓ **Garrote** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d4+6 damage and you grab the target. While grabbed, the target cannot speak and takes a –2 penalty to attacks against you.
Sustain Standard: You maintain the grab, and the target takes 11 damage.

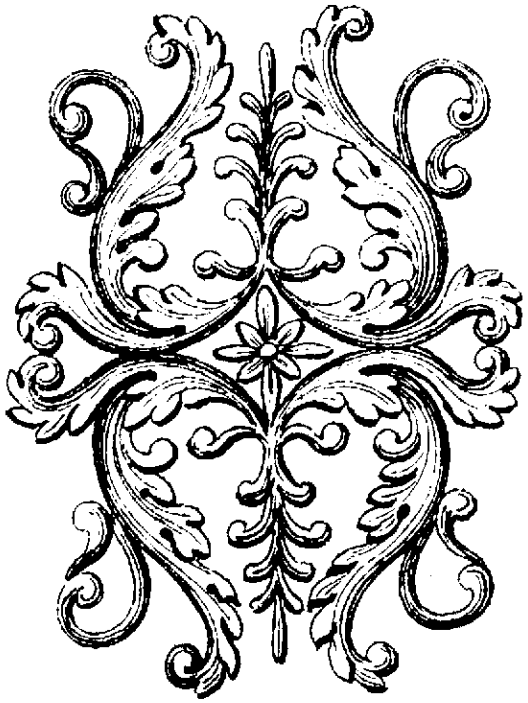
Minor Actions

▸ **Poison** ✦ Daily
You slather a few drams of deadly poison upon your weapon.
Effect: Choose a weapon you or an adjacent ally is carrying. The next time this encounter that weapon damages an enemy, the struck target takes 10 poison damage and is dazed until the end of the attacker's next turn.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Assassinate** ✦ Encounter
With deadly precision, you strike an opening in your enemy's guard.
Trigger: You hit with a weapon attack.
Effect (No Action): You deal an additional 2d10 damage to the target.

Skills Acrobatics +12, Arcana +10, Bluff +11, Stealth +12, Thievery +12
Str 14 (+5) **Dex** 19 (+7) **Wis** 8 (+2)
Con 11 (+3) **Int** 15 (+5) **Cha** 16 (+6)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial



Allied Fey Level 10 Minion Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid XP 125

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +7
AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 22 **Perception** +4
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Traits

▸ **Fey Magic**

Choose one of the following abilities, based on the fey's nature.

- **Flight.** The fey has a fly speed of 6.
- **Gremlin Tricks.** Firearms hang fire when aimed at the allied fey. They go off immediately if the attacker stops aiming at the allied fey; otherwise they fire one round after the trigger is pulled. When the allied fey dies, the nearest mechanical device stops working until repaired.
- **Sylvan Magic.** When the allied fey hits a target, instead of dealing damage it can dominate the creature until the end of the fey's next turn.
- **Wild Might.** When the allied fey hits a target, it deals 12 damage instead of 9 damage.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Melee Attack** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Be it a pixie, gremlin, nymph, or satyr, this fey is compelled to fight.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 9 damage.

Str	10 (+5)	**Dex**	14 (+7)	**Wis**	8 (+4)
Con	10 (+5)	**Int**	10 (+5)	**Cha**	12 (+6)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven, Primordial

Allied Officer Level 1 Minion Controller
Medium natural humanoid, human XP n/a

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** n/a
AC 15, **Fortitude** 11, **Reflex** 11, **Will** 11 **Perception** +0
Speed 6

Traits

▸ **Linked Ally**

Each allied officer is linked to one PC, and only acts at that PC's direction. Whenever a PC uses a move action to move, his linked ally can do so as well. The PC can also spend a move action to have the ally move on his own, or a minor action to have his ally take a minor action like picking up or manipulating an object.

If a PC is unconscious or dead, the player can control the ally independently. It can take two move actions and one minor action per turn.

▸ **Just Got My Wind Knocked Outta Me**

Allied officers are not killed when reduced to 0 HP as long as their allied PC is alive. Instead they are knocked unconscious. They regain consciousness after a short rest and return to 1 HP. If their allied PC is dead, they die when reduced to 0 HP. Likewise they die if someone goes to the effort of delivering a coup de grace.

▸ **Under Arrest**

When an allied officer moves, it may deal 2 damage to one enemy adjacent to it at the end of its movement. If it moves more than once in a turn, it only deals this damage once. A creature adjacent to an allied officer has to spend an extra square of movement to leave its space.

▸ **Pistol**

Once per encounter, a PC can spend a standard action to have his allied officer fire a pistol. This deals 5 damage to a creature within 10 squares, and requires no attack roll.

Str	10 (+0)	**Dex**	10 (+0)	**Wis**	10 (+0)
Con	10 (+0)	**Int**	10 (+0)	**Cha**	10 (+0)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Allied Flint Soldier Level 5 Minion Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, human XP n/a

HP 1 (see *tougher than your average minion*) **Initiative** n/a
AC 19, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 15 **Perception** +2
Speed 5

Traits

▸ **Linked Ally**

Each allied Flint soldier is linked to one PC, and only acts at that PC's direction. Whenever a PC uses a move action to move, his linked ally can take a move action to move as well. The PC can also spend a move action to have the ally move on his own, or a minor action to have his ally take a minor action like picking up or manipulating an object.

If a PC is unconscious or dead, the player can control the ally independently. It can take two move actions and one minor action per turn.

▸ **Tougher than Your Average Minion**

When an allied Flint soldier would take damage from any source, even a missed attack, if that source does less than 7 damage, the soldier takes no damage and instead becomes bloodied. The next time he would take damage from any source, even a missed attack, he is reduced to 0 HP.

Allied minions are not killed when reduced to 0 HP as long as their allied PC is alive. Instead they are knocked unconscious. They regain consciousness after a short rest and return to 1 HP, unbloodied. If their allied PC is dead, they die when reduced to 0 HP. Likewise they die if someone goes to the effort of delivering a coup de grace.

▸ **Follows Orders**

When an allied Flint soldier moves, it deals 5 damage to one enemy adjacent to it at the end of its movement. If it moves more than once in a turn, it only deals this damage once.

▸ **Alchemist Fire**

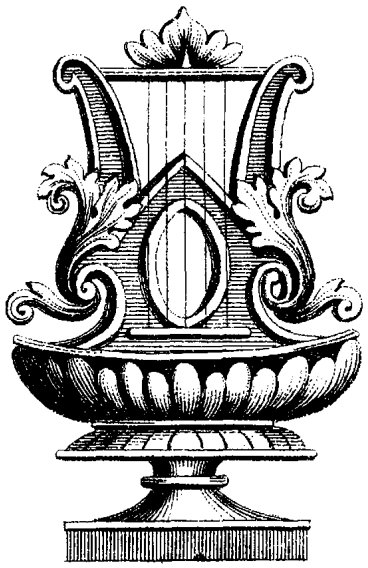
Once per day, a PC can spend a standard action to have his allied Flint soldier throw a flask of alchemist fire. One creature within 5 squares takes 5 fire damage and gains ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends). No attack roll is required.

▸ **Pistol**

Once per encounter, a PC can spend a standard action to have his allied Flint soldier fire his pistol. This deals 8 damage to a creature within 10 squares, and requires no attack roll.

Str	10 (+0)	**Dex**	10 (+0)	**Wis**	10 (+0)
Con	10 (+0)	**Int**	10 (+0)	**Cha**	10 (+0)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial



Allied Unit Level 9 Soldier
Large natural humanoid, various (swarm)

HP 70; **Bloodied** 35 **Initiative** +7
AC 25, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 20 **Perception** +4
Speed 5
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks
Vulnerable 10 against close and area attacks

Traits

▸ **Linked Unit**

Each allied unit consists of twelve soldiers working in tandem, filling the space of a Large creature. The unit fills 4 contiguous squares, and it can move through any opening an individual soldier could move through. The unit is linked to one PC, and acts on that PC's turn.

Although the soldiers protect each other, enough damage wears them down and erodes their discipline. When an allied unit is bloodied, it is dazed. When it is reduced to 0 hit points, most of the unit collapses from fatigue (effectively unconscious); they will recover after an extended rest. Four allied soldiers (see above) remain active, one in each of the unit's four squares.

Standard Actions

⊗ **Short Sword Swarm** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Effect: Make the following attack against up to four targets. If used as an opportunity attack, only target the triggering creature.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 12 damage. If the target was hit by an opportunity attack, its movement stops.

⊘ **Carbine Fusillade** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Area Burst 1 within 30 (creatures in burst); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 12 damage, or 17 damage on a crit.
Load standard.

⟋ **Alchemist Fire Volley** ✦ Encounter

Attack: Area Burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +12 vs. Reflex
Hit: 5 fire damage and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).
Miss: Ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Skills Athletics +10, Endurance +9
Str 13 (+5) **Dex** 12 (+5) **Wis** 10 (+4)
Con 11 (+4) **Int** 9 (+3) **Cha** 8 (+3)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Equipment (per soldier) chainmail, pack, short sword, carbine, one flask of alchemist fire, leaf of Nicodemus

Allied Company Level 17 Soldier
Gargantuan natural humanoid, various (swarm)

HP 110; **Bloodied** 55 **Initiative** +11
AC 33, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 28 **Perception** +8
Speed 4
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks
Vulnerable 15 against close and area attacks

Traits

▸ **Linked Company**

Each allied company consists of one hundred soldiers working in tandem, filling the space of a Gargantuan creature. The unit fills 16 contiguous squares, and it can move through any opening an individual soldier could move through. The unit is linked to one PC, and acts on that PC's turn.

Although the soldiers protect each other, enough damage wears them down and erodes their discipline. When an allied company is bloodied, it is dazed. When it is reduced to 0 hit points, most of the unit collapses from fatigue (effectively unconscious); they will recover after an extended rest. Four allied units (see above) remain active, and they fill the space the company previously filled.

▸ **Terrain Control**

Spaces within 2 squares of the company count as difficult terrain for enemies. The company has threatening reach in that area.

Standard Actions

⊗ **Short Sword Swarm** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Effect: Make the following attack against any number of targets within range. If used as an opportunity attack, only target the triggering creature.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 20 damage. If the target was hit by an opportunity attack, its movement stops.

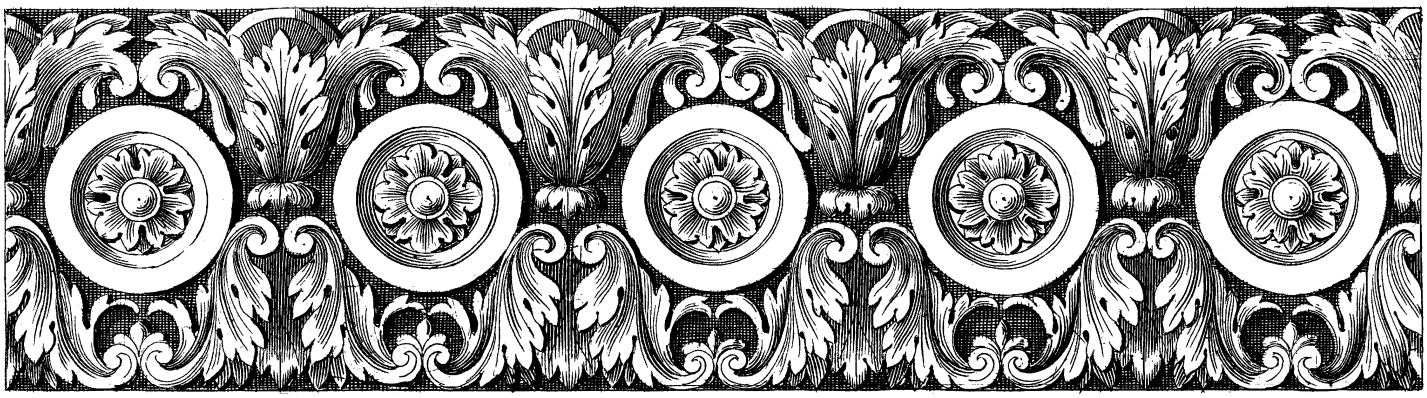
⊘ **Carbine Fusillade** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Effect: Make the following attack four times. The areas cannot overlap.
Attack: Area Burst 1 within 30 (creatures in burst); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 12 damage, or 17 damage on a crit.
Load standard.

⟋ **Alchemist Fire Volley** ✦ Encounter

Effect: Make the following attack four times. The areas cannot overlap.
Attack: Area Burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +20 vs. Reflex
Hit: 15 fire damage and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).
Miss: Ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

Skills Athletics +14, Endurance +13
Str 13 (+9) **Dex** 12 (+9) **Wis** 10 (+8)
Con 11 (+8) **Int** 9 (+7) **Cha** 8 (+7)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Equipment (per soldier) chainmail, pack, short sword, carbine, one flask of alchemist fire, leaf of Nicodemus



Asrabey Varal Level 20 Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid, eladrin XP 500
HP 186; **Bloodied** 93 **Initiative** +17
AC 34, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 32 **Perception** +12
Speed 8 Low-light vision
Resist 10 fire

Traits
▸ **Slippers of Spider Climbing**
Asrabey can walk on horizontal and vertical surfaces at normal speed without needing to make an Athletics check to climb.

Standard Actions
⊘ **Vekeshi Blade** (weapon, fire) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Asrabey's unmatched swordsmanship evades all your defenses. He slices a burning gash in your flesh.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10+10 fire damage.
⊹ **Fire Sweep** (weapon, fire) ✦ Encounter
The eladrin swings his blazing sword in a massive arc.
Attack: Close Burst 2 or Close Blast 3 (creatures in burst/blast); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10+10 fire damage.
✲ **Barrier Slash** (fire) ✦ Encounter
As he swipes his blade, a line of fire slices across the ground. The flames quickly grow, threatening to burn you if you don't move.
Effect: Asrabey creates a wall 10 of dim fire, starting with a space adjacent to him. Until the beginning of Asrabey's next turn the fire is harmless. Thereafter the fire flares, and any creature that enters the wall or starts its turn there takes 20 fire damage. The wall lasts until the end of Asrabey's next turn after it flares.

Move Actions
▸ **Fey Step** (teleportation) ✦ Encounter
Asrabey teleports up to 5 squares. If he teleports into the air, he doesn't fall until the end of his turn.

Minor Actions
▸ **Cloak of Smoke** ✦ Encounter
Effect: Smoke fills a Close Burst 3, providing total concealment until the start of Asrabey's next turn.
⟋ **Lion Shield** (weapon) ✦ Encounter
Asrabey's shield roars and flies from his hand, fangs bared.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +23 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d10+5 and the target is restrained (Escape DC 25). Until the target escapes or falls unconscious, it takes 10 damage at the start of its turn.
Effect: Asrabey grants combat advantage. When the target escapes, the shield returns to Asrabey's hand. He can also recall the shield as a free action on his turn.

Skills Acrobatics +21, Arcana +16, Athletics +18, Endurance +18, Intimidate +18
Str 17 (+13) **Dex** 23 (+16) **Wis** 14 (+12)
Con 17 (+13) **Int** 13 (+11) **Cha** 16 (+13)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Kvarti Gorbatiy Level 10 Ally
HP 84; **Bloodied** 42 **Initiative Count** 8
AC 25, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 20
Speed 5

Standard Actions
⊘ **Sniper Rifle** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Effect: Ranged 20 (one creature); 10 damage.
Load: After six shots, Kvarti has to spend a standard action to reload.

Xambria Meredith Level 10 Ally
HP 103; **Bloodied** 51 **Initiative Count** 12
AC 24, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 22
Speed 6

Traits
▸ **Dungeon Delver**
Xambria gets a +2 bonus to saving throws. She can make Acrobatics and Athletics checks with an automatic result of 23.

Standard Actions
⊘ **Threatening Pick** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Effect: Melee 1 (one creature); 8 damage, and the next creature to attack the target before Xambria's next turn gains a +2 bonus to its attack roll.

Rock Rackus Level 6 Ally
HP 55; **Bloodied** 27 **Initiative Count** 5
AC 19, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 16
Speed 6

Standard Actions
⊘ **Rapier** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Effect: Melee 1 (one creature); 6 damage.
⊘ **Diamond-Encrusted Piece** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Effect: Ranged 10 (one creature); 6 damage, and the target is marked until the end of Rock's next turn.
Load: After each shot, Rock has to use a standard action to reload.

Simon Langfield Level 1 Ally
HP 20; **Bloodied** 10 Initiative Count 0
AC 11, **Fortitude** 11, **Reflex** 11, **Will** 13
Speed 6

Traits
▸ **Accidental Summoning**
Any time Simon Langfield uses *magic missile*, roll 1d6. If the result is a 1, he accidentally summons another flying thing (*q.v.*).

Standard Actions
⊘ **Magic Missile** (force) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Effect: Ranged 20 (one creature); 5 force damage.

Dreaming Badger Ally
Small fey animal XP N/A
Speed 6

Traits
▸ **Tenacious Bite**
The badger won't let go of you until it's dead. Maybe not even then.
The dreaming badger automatically grabs the target you hit when you used the *badger gun's* daily power.
The dreaming badger automatically sustains its grab each turn. A creature that is grabbed by the badger takes 5 damage at the start of its turn and is slowed. If the badger is reduced to 0 hit points, the target no longer takes damage, but it is still slowed until it spends a minor action to shake off the badger's corpse, which then disappears back to the Dreaming.
Lvl 11: 10 damage.
Lvl 21: 15 damage.

Standard Actions
⊘ **Badger Bite** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); Atk vs. AC (uses your attack bonus)
Hit: 1d8+5 damage and the target is grabbed.
Lvl 11: 2d8+5 damage.
Lvl 21: 3d8+5 damage.

APPENDIX K: Seas of Zeitgeist

E.N. Publishing's naval supplement Admiral *o' the High Seas* has a full set of rules for adventures at sea, but herein we present enough rules to handle basic naval combat between two ships. If your group particularly likes ship encounters, your DM can use the additional material in *Admiral o' the High Seas* to spice up nautical engagements.

The Basics

When ships are closing for battle, but still too far away to fight hand-to-hand, action occurs in **naval combat**. Time and distance are a little flexible, but rounds are generally somewhere between one minute and five minutes long, during which a ship might travel hundreds or even thousands of feet. Once within range of boarding actions, the game switches to **tactical combat**, which are the normal 6-second rounds.

Officer Roles.

During naval combat, each PC chooses one **officer role**, which lets them contribute to the battle:

- **Captain** has final authority.
- **Bosun** directs the crew.
- **Navigator** aids maneuvers.
- **Gunner** aids attacks.
- **Engineer** repairs damage.
- **Look-Out** warns of danger.

A character can change his role each round, with some restrictions. *A ship cannot benefit from more than six officers at a given time.* Characters might also spend their turn as an **attacker**, using their weapons or spells against an enemy crew; this doesn't count against the six-officer limit.

The Naval Turn.

A naval turn consists of five phases—**maneuvers**, **location**, **terrain**, **bearing**, and **attack**. Some of these phases require the captain of each ship to make a **Command** check (see sidebar) to determine who gets the upper hand. Officers can choose to handle some of these tasks, rolling in the captain's stead, typically with a bonus. Different tactics and maneuvers can grant a bonus in one stage in exchange for a penalty in another.

Wind and the Weather Gage.

Being upwind of an enemy, known as holding the *weather gage* (or windward gage), is of great value in battles between vessels reliant on sails. While this system tries to keep location somewhat abstract, at the start of each encounter, determine the relative positions along the flow of the wind for each ship.

A ship that holds the weather gage against its opponent gains a +2 bonus to Command checks in the Location and Bearing phases. The captain may choose to instead gain a +5 bonus to Command checks for a round, but in so doing he exchanges positions with his foe, granting them the weather gage the following round.

It is never possible to hold the weather gage against a ship that doesn't rely on sails for movement. If a sailing vessel and a steam vessel engage, being downwind (on the *leeward gage*) is no disadvantage for the steamship, so the sailing ship gains no bonus. However, if the steamship is upwind, the sailing ship's options are limited, so the steamship does gain the bonus for holding the weather gage.

Normally wind is steady during a given naval encounter, but magic might change it, and battles near landforms can mean that in different stages of battle, the wind flows different directions.

Multiple Ships.

If more than two sailing ships engage, resolving weather gage is a bit more complicated. During Location and Bearing phases, each captain rolls normally with no modifier for weather gage. First compare just the two highest results, then apply the bonus for weather gage to whoever is upwind, then let the winner choose the result of his roll. Then compare the next two highest remaining ships, apply weather gage bonus, then resolve. Repeat until all the ships are taken care of.

The Command Check.

Various actions in naval adventuring call for a Command check, to see how well the captain is directing his crew. For a Command check, a captain rolls 1d20 + his Command score.

A captain's Command score is equal to half his level plus the highest bonus among his Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. So a 6th level character with an 18 Intelligence would have a +7 Command score.

A ship with less than full crew but at least minimum crew imposes a –5 penalty to Command checks. With less crew than minimum, the captain takes a –10 penalty. A ship without a captain treats the result of all Command checks as a –10.

Ship Saving Throws.

Some effects call for a ship saving throw. The ship's captain, who has an ineffable bond with the ship, rolls this save: 1d20 + Charisma modifier versus DC 10.

These saves are usually to determine if a ship can weather some danger, like flooding or fire. Often a result of 20 or higher not only prevents the situation from getting worse, but actually improves circumstances.



Initiative.

All ships act simultaneously during a naval round. Damage and negative conditions don't take effect until everyone has acted. The closest thing to initiative is that a ship's look-out can try to determine what maneuver an opposing ship is taking. Whichever ship has a better look-out can react to the other ship, giving it an informational advantage. The maneuvers themselves still occur simultaneously.

Round Phases.

A naval round consists of five phases—**maneuver**, **location**, **terrain**, **bearing**, and **attack**.

Maneuvers.

Each ship's look-out makes a Perception check. The captain of the ship with the lower result has to choose maneuvers first. It is not necessary to choose a maneuver. A captain who wishes to sacrifice the weather gage for a +5 bonus for the turn must choose to do so during this phase.

Basic maneuvers include:

- **Evasive Maneuvers.** You take a –5 penalty to attack rolls this round and gain a +2 bonus to Defense.
- **Full Speed Ahead.** You take a –5 penalty to Command checks for Bearing this round and gain a +2 bonus for checks for Location.
- **Hard About.** You take a –5 penalty to Command checks for Location this round and gain a +2 bonus to checks for Bearing.
- **Steady Aim.** You are less concerned with dodging than letting your crew line up the perfect shot. You take a –5 penalty to Defense this round and gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls.

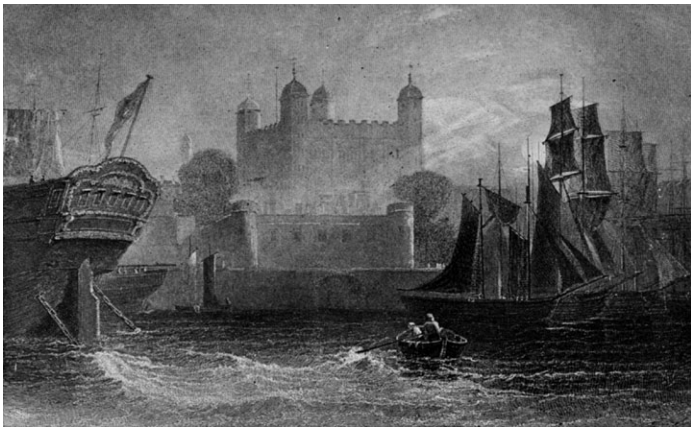
Location.

Naval battles occur over various **stages**, each about 500 to 1000 feet across. If both ships intend to fight, start combat with the ships in adjacent stages. If one flees, see Stern Chases below.

Each captain makes a Command check and adds his ship's **speed** rating. The winning captain chooses one of the following options, followed by the losing captain.

A captain whose ship is leeward (downwind) can choose to take a –5 penalty to his Command check this stage. If he succeeds, he can claim the weather gage from the opposing ship, gaining its benefits next turn.

- **Change Location.** Your ship moves to an adjacent stage.
- **Hold Position.** If you're content where you are, or if you're being blocked, you can stay put.
- **Block Enemy.** Choose one ship whose Command check you beat, either in this stage or an adjacent one. If that ship tries to enter or leave the stage you're in, you can choose to prevent its movement.
- **Approach Enemy.** If you are in the same stage as another ship, and you beat that ship's Command check by 5 or more, you close to short range. If the ship moves to another stage this round, you follow it. In the next round, begin tactical combat with that ship.
- **Drive Enemy.** If you are in the same stage as another ship, and you beat that ship's Command check by 5 or more, you force that ship to either choose to change location to a stage of your choice, or hold position in the current stage. If it moves, you move to the same stage. If it holds position, its captain takes a –5 penalty to his Command check for this round's Bearing phase.
- **Pursue Ship.** If there is a ship in a stage adjacent to you, and you beat that ship's Command check by 5 or more, you enter that ship's stage. If it changes location this turn, you can move to the same location.



Terrain.

Most dangers of sea terrain (if any are present) require the captain to make a Command check and add the ship's **maneuverability** rating. Size and stability may help (+2 per size category above Tiny to resist choppy seas) or hinder (an equivalent penalty to avoid sandbars). Basic terrain options include:

- **Catch Hazard.** Ice, sandbars, kelp, water bubbling with gaseous upwelling, and swarms of marine animals. Make a Command check (sparse hazards DC 15, dense DC 20, and if there are only a handful of safe paths DC 25). Failure means the ship is briefly snagged. Its maximum speed is reduced to 2 during next round. Fail by 5 or more, and the ship is trapped. Until it breaks free it cannot make any Command checks to move. An engineer can free a trapped ship.
- **Chop.** Choppy seas, whirlpools, or kraken thrashing a vessel. Make a Command check (DC 15+). Failure means each crewman on the maindeck must make a Dexterity check (DC 8) to avoid being washed overboard. Failure by 5 or more is as above, plus the ship lists (page 522) from an impact. If the ship is already listing, a further failure by 5 or more capsizes the ship.

  Additionally, regardless of the result of the captain's check during the Terrain phase, a ship in chop has its speed and maneuverability ratings reduced by a quarter, or worse in heavy chop.
- **Visibility.** Fog, darkness, intense rain, or swarms of locusts. Each side rolls twice for Command checks and shipboard attack rolls. Take the worse result.

  A ship's look-out can spend his round to make a Perception check during the Terrain phase. If successful, he lets the ship ignore the penalty. Thin fog might be DC 15, thick fog or starlight DC 20, and complete black-out DC 30, though factors like ambient noise and reference points could adjust the DC.
- **Winds.** High winds typically create chop, and they impose a –2 penalty to attack rolls. Ships that attempt to fire toward a target leeward (downwind) of them take a –5 penalty instead, because the wind tends to rock the ship and point its guns downward, shortening their range.

  Low winds halve the speed of wind-powered vessels. Some areas have no winds at all, immobilizing sailing ships unless they can use oars or kedging to move. Unfavorable winds may provide a –2 to –5 penalty to sailing ships' attempts to avoid other terrain hazards. The lee side of a cliff can often endanger a ship because the only winds are those that blow toward the cliff face.

Bearing.

Relative facing determines what weapons a ship can bring to bear, and what weapons it is vulnerable to in a counterattack. This phase determines the best angle a ship gets on its opponent over the course of the round. Remember, this phase just determines orientation, not distance.

Each captain makes a Command check and adds his ship's **maneuverability** rating. The winner chooses one of the following options, based on how much he succeeded by. Generally you want to point your broadside (strongest weapons) at their aft (typically unarmed).

Partial Success (win by 1 to 4). You can point your bow at their bow or broadside. Or your broadside at their broadside. Or your stern at any edge of their ship.

Success (win by 5 to 9). You can point your broadside at their bow or broadside. Or you can point your bow or stern at any edge of their ship.

Critical Success (win by 10+). You can point any edge of your ship at any edge of their ship.

Attack.

Each ship can make one attack, using only the weapons available in the appropriate firing arc. The captain rolls 1d20 + ship's attack bonus vs. enemy ship's Defense. A successful attack causes one **strike**, plus an additional strike for every 5 points by which the attack roll beats the target's Defense. Attacks that do not cause strikes might still hit the target, but fail to damage anything vital. Even blowing holes in the outer hull doesn't do much if you hit above the water line.

If an attack roll is a natural 20, it is a critical hit. The first location hit takes two strikes instead of one.

Attacks at Medium (same stage) range use the full attack bonus. Attacks at Short (just before initiating tactical combat) range gain a +5 bonus. Most ship weapons cannot fire at Long range (adjacent stages), but those that can take a –10 penalty to the attack roll.

For each strike, roll on the table below to determine the location struck. This table is just a guideline; ship design, environment, and tactics can all change the odds of hitting a given component.

1d10 Roll	Location
1–2	Hull Integrity
3–4	Propulsion
5–6	Armaments
7–10	Miscellaneous (crew quarters, special ship component, etc.)

Most components are damaged after one strike, broken after a second, and destroyed after a third. If the rolled component is already destroyed, or if the ship doesn't have the listed component, the ship takes 1 point of Hull Integrity damage instead. For instance, strikes to weaponry deal Hull Integrity damage if the ship has no weaponry, or at least no weaponry on the side of the ship struck.

Effects of hits are detailed in Ship Damage below.

Aftermath.

If two or more ships have closed to short range, begin a tactical combat encounter with those vessels. Place the ships on the battle map in an orientation determined during the Bearing phase. The ship that won in the Bearing phase determines the starting distance, from adjacent to 25 ft. apart. If the ships begin adjacent, each ship is immobilized on the first round of the tactical combat, due to the grinding together of the hulls.

If ships end up separated by more than one stage, begin a stern chase.

RAMMING.

If you end the Bearing phase at short range with another ship, and your bow is pointed toward that ship, and you beat that ship's Bearing check this round, you can ram during the Attack phase. Even if your bow faces their bow, you can ram them at a slight angle so that they aren't ramming you back. If your Bearing checks tie, however, both ships ram each other.

Ramming requires an attack roll, using an attack bonus equal to the ship's Defense minus 5.

Relative speed is also a factor in the attack roll. If the rammer attacks point to point, add the two ships' speed ratings together. If the attack is point to tail, determine how much faster the ramming ship is than the target (minimum 0). If the attack is point to side, just take the rammer's speed. Then, for every 5 points of effective speed, add +1 to the attacker's roll.

The results of a strike are the same as with normal shipboard weapons, though unless the ships are vastly different sizes, or if one ship can get above another, rams cannot damage rigging.

The rammed vessel makes an identical attack against the rammer, but uses its Defense minus 10 instead of Defense minus 5.



Officer Roles

Each round, a PC can choose a role and provide one of the listed benefits for the ship. NPCs can also fill officer roles. You can have multiple characters in the same role, except for captain. Remember, *a ship can benefit from a maximum of six officers at a time.*

Most roles let characters add to the captain's Command checks for a specific action. A character must choose whether to aid before the captain rolls, so it is ideal for the officers to decide their tactics at the beginning of the naval round, before they start making rolls.

Captain.

The captain's role is to decide maneuvers and order the rest of the crew. His actions are typically limited to those detailed above in the Round Phases section. The rest of the crew augments his decisions by filling in the details and giving the captain more time to focus on the big picture. It's the difference between the captain giving specific orders ("Set a course at 15 degrees North Northeast at twelve knots") and the captain providing general goals and trusting his crew to carry them out ("Cut them off so we can bring our port guns to bear").

Bosun.

The bosun relays orders to the crew and directs them while working alongside them. Once per round, the navigator can choose one of the following:

- Roll a Command check in the Location, Terrain, or Bearing phase, adding his Charisma modifier to the captain's Command score. This replaces the captain's normal Command check for that phase.
- Add his Charisma modifier to a shipboard weapon's attack roll, or to an engineer's check to repair or tweak the vessel.

A bosun trained in Diplomacy or Intimidate can either add 2, or add 1 + his ability score modifier, whichever is higher. So a bosun with an 8 Charisma who has the right training could add +2, while a high-level bosun with a 22 Charisma and the same training could add +7.

Engineer.

Once per round, the engineer can attempt to repair the hull or a damaged component, or can try to tweak the ship's performance. To do so, first he must have a number of crew at his disposal equal to the ship's Minimum Crew rating. Then he chooses one of the following effects, and makes an Intelligence check:

- **Fight Fire (DC 20).** Put out a fire in one section.
- **Repair Component (DC 15).** One damaged component is restored to full order. A check that beats DC 20 can repair a disabled component to being just damaged. A check that beats DC 25 can repair a destroyed component to being disabled. If the component is magical, the engineer takes a –5 penalty to this check if he's not trained in Arcana.
- **Repair Hull (DC 20).** Repair 1 point of Hull Integrity damage the ship has taken. Each success increases the DC of further repairs by 5, even between encounters. The DC only resets if the ship can undergo proper repairs in a safe harbor.
- **Right a Listing Ship (DC 20).** Restore a listing ship to upright.
- **Slow Sinking (DC 15).** Reduce the rate of the ship's sinking by one step, from immediate to quick to slow to stable.
- **Give Her All She's Got! (DC 10).** Increase the ship's Maneuverability or Speed rating by one 1 for this round, plus an additional 1 for every 10 you beat the DC by.

Shuffling Crew.

Certain actions require crew to assist. If the ship has enough men to spare, it might still maintain a Full Crew. Otherwise, the ship will take penalties as if it had Minimum Crew. Sometimes this is a fair trade-off, such as to put out a fire before it spreads.

Gunner.

One PC can act as Gunner per firing arc, as long as the battery has sufficient crew. Once per round, the gunner can choose one of the following:

- Roll for an attack with a shipboard weapon, adding his Intelligence or Dexterity modifier to the normal attack bonus. Similar to with the bosun above, a gunner trained in Perception can either add 2, or add 1 + his ability score modifier, whichever is higher.
- Choose the location of the first hit with shipboard weapons, instead of rolling on the hit chart.

Look-Out.

During the Maneuvers phase, the look-out makes a Perception check to determine the order ships choose their maneuvers for the round.

Additionally, once per round the look-out can choose one of the following:

- Make a Perception check to reduce the impact of poor visibility.
- Roll any necessary Command checks in the Terrain phase, adding his Wisdom modifier to the captain's Command score. This replaces the captain's normal Command check for that phase.
- Grant a bonus equal to his Wisdom modifier to the ship's Defense against one attack from a vessel he can see.
- Grant a bonus equal to his Wisdom modifier to the defenses and saves of the crew against attacks coming from a vessel he can see. This bonus applies to personal attacks, not shipboard weapons.
- Choose one section where the crew takes damage from an enemy's shipboard weapons. Reduce the damage done to each creature in that area by the same bonus as above.

When he would add his Wisdom modifier, a look-out trained in Perception can either add 2, or add 1+ his Wisdom modifier, whichever is higher.

Navigator.

Once per round, the navigator can roll a Command check in the Location or Bearing phase, adding his Dexterity, Intelligence, or Wisdom modifier to the captain's Command score. This replaces the captain's normal Command check for that phase. (Dexterity represents fast piloting as helmsman, while Intelligence or Wisdom fits for plotting courses).

A navigator trained in Nature can either add 2, or add 1+ his ability score modifier, whichever is higher.

Attacker.

Each naval round lasts a minute or more, but sometimes players will want to take actions that can be accomplished in a few seconds. Performing the other officer roles takes the full round, but if a character would prefer to unload a wand or a quiver of arrows, use these guidelines.

Attacker is an officer role, just like captain or bosun, and a character who's busy doing another officer role doesn't have time to fire off a ranged attack against another ship.

Ships spend most of their turn hundreds of feet away from each other, and rocking of waves, gusts and vortices of winds, and the great speeds of ships make it difficult to aim ranged attacks accurately. Likewise,



most ships that expect combat are enchanted with some sort of eldritch defense or mundane countermeasure that ameliorates magical attacks.

An attacker is usually better off waiting for the right opening and making a single attack, instead of futilely watching arrows fly off course, or fireballs be snuffed by an eldritch aura.

Range and Defenses.

Attacks need to be able to reach 300 ft. if the target is in the same stage, or 800 ft. if the target is in an adjacent stage.

As a first mundane defense, most crew on deck have cover thanks to rigging and railing, while those inside have total cover, or possibly superior cover if there's an open cannon port.

Second, look-outs can help the crew avoid some incoming attacks.

Weapon Attacks.

A character who wants to use traditional ranged attacks can, over the course of a naval round, make one tactical round's worth of attacks. This might represent firing a volley of arrows, or waiting for just the right lull in wind to fire a single deadly shot.

Alternately, the character can make ten rounds worth of attacks, but he takes a penalty equal to the target ship's Maneuverability or Speed, whichever is higher. (These penalties do not apply during tactical combat, since the ships are closer.)

Spells.

When confronted by a ship with an eldritch defense, a character can look for a temporary weakness or fluctuation in the magic. He spends the naval round to make an Arcana check (DC 10 + half the target ship's level), and if successful can cast one tactical round's worth of spells that bypasses the target ship's eldritch defense.

As above, there's always the option of taking ten tactical rounds' worth of actions, but suffering the full penalties from the target's eldritch defenses, which typically redirect spells harmlessly to a figurehead.

Damaging a Ship.

Realistically, a couple of arrows won't do much to a 100-ft. long ship. Even a rowboat isn't going to sink just because you shot it a dozen times. Likewise, chopping a greataxe into the deck of a ship isn't going to cause it to take on water. However, with a well-aimed attack that deals enough damage, it is possible for a character to deliver a strike to a ship.

First he must hit the ship in a vulnerable spot, which requires an attack roll against an AC equal to the ship's Defense. His attack takes a penalty equal to the target ship's Maneuverability or Speed, whichever is higher. This penalty does not apply during tactical combat, since the ships are closer.

The ship's eldritch defenses might reduce the damage of a magical attack. Then, unless the attack is specially designed to damage objects, halve the damage it deals. Then, if that damage exceeds the ship's Defense score, it causes one strike on a random location. For each multiple the damage is of the target ship's Defense, it inflicts another hit. Energy attacks might give a component the burning condition instead of causing damage right away.

Therefore, low-level fire damage probably won't set a ship's sails on fire. However, if high-level targeted damage manages to hit the right spot on a Gargantuan ship with respectable Defense, it could deal a strike or two, unless the ship has an eldritch defense.

Stern Chases

When one ship pursues another and they are out of range of each other's weapons, a chase might take hours.

Simple Pursuit.

Track relative distance as a sort of tug-of-war. Each "round," the captains of the two vessels both make Command checks and add their ships' Speed ratings. Whoever wins gets a success. If the other ship already has a success, the winner instead negates one of his opponent's successes. The pursuit ends when one side or the other gets three successes.

The number of successes either side has determines how close the two ships are at the end of that round, and how long the next round is. For instance, if the pursuer has one success at the end of the round, the two ships are about a mile apart, and the next round will represent about 30 minutes of sailing. If during that round the quarry succeeds, you'd move down one row on the table; the ships would end up about 3 miles apart, and the next round would cover an hour of sailing.

Stern Chase Distances.

Successes	Approximate Distance	Next Round Length
Pursuer 3	One stage (i.e., 500 ft.)	1–5 minutes (i.e., naval combat)
Pursuer 2	Quarter-mile	10 minutes
Pursuer 1	1 mile	30 minutes
Tied	3 miles	1 hour
Quarry 1	10 miles	4 hours
Quarry 2	30 miles	12 hours
Quarry 3	Out of sight	n/a

Chase Results.

If the pursuer gets three successes, he manages to catch up. Start a naval combat with the two ships in adjacent stages. The pursuer gets a +5 bonus to his Command checks during the first turn's Location phase (page 517).

If the quarry gets three successes, it manages to sail beyond sight of the pursuer and gets away.

Based on how far apart the ships are at the start of the chase, one side might begin with successes. For instance, if two ships come around an island and spot each other at a distance of a quarter mile, you can start a chase, but the pursuer would effectively start with two successes.

Decisions Matter.

Of course a good chase needs to have decision points, or else it just comes down to who's faster or luckier.

Where To?

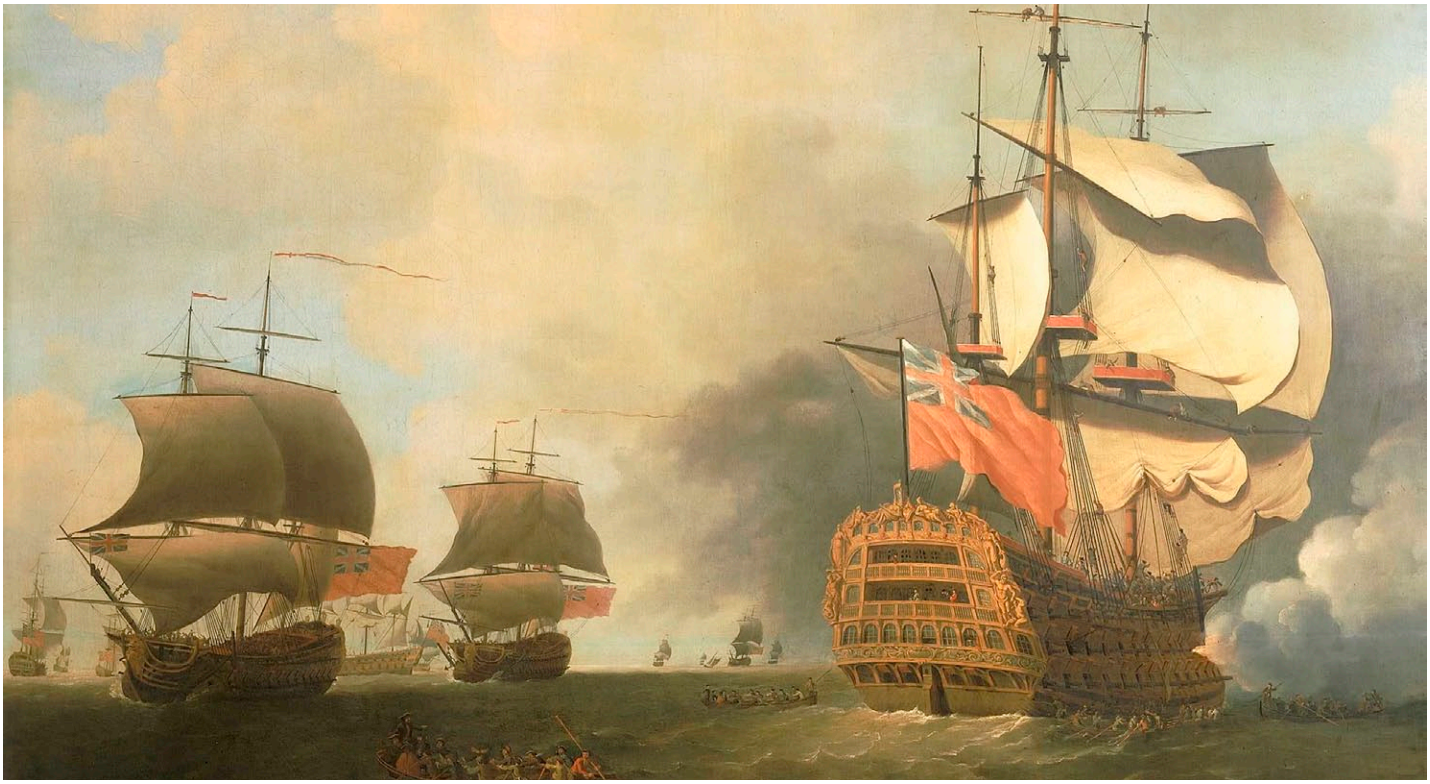
The quarry usually has the benefit of being able to choose where to go. They might head for reinforcements, in which case it's important to determine how far away allies are, and how far the quarry sails per round. Generally you take a ship's speed rating and divide by 2 to get the miles it sails per hour, but this can vary based on factors of wind and currents.

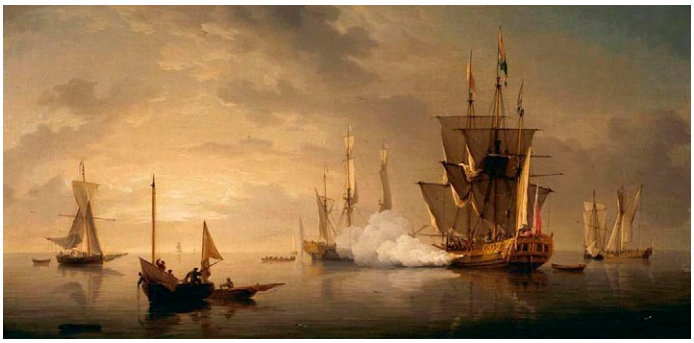
The quarry might choose to head into dangerous terrain, hoping their pursuer gets damaged or stranded (see Terrain, page 517). It might head for terrain that offers a lot of hiding places, and the navigator could make a Stealth check opposing the pursuing ship's look-out's Perception check, trying to get out of sight, and perhaps even set up an ambush. Or it might simply try to keep its distance until it can effect repairs and come about for battle.

Crew vs Crew.

Various crew roles can help during a stern chase, much as they would during naval combat. Bosuns can add their Charisma to the captain's Command check. Engineers can roll each round to squeeze a little more speed out of the sails. Look-outs and navigators can help avoid hazardous terrain.

And of course any number of magical options can change things dramatically.





Ship Damage

Being complex devices, ships do not simply have one pool of hit points. Attacks can damage various components, kill crew, or weaken the hull to the point that the ship is no longer seaworthy. As components are damaged, certain areas might become difficult or blocking terrain. Sufficient hits might even knock holes in walls and floors big enough for creatures to move through, at the GM's discretion.

For most components, a single strike damages it, a second disables, and a third destroys. The rigging of a huge ship technically does take just as many strikes to destroy as a small one, but because larger ships have higher Defenses, it requires more firepower to achieve the same result. Still, with a few lucky shots, a lightly armed ship could take out the sails of a much larger vessel.

Crew Damage.

If the text below says that a strike to a given area causes damage to creatures, those creatures can make a Dexterity check (DC 15) to negate the damage.

GMs should use their judgment to determine how large an area should be affected, but remember often these attacks are made with volleys of cannons or deadly supernatural weapons, so it's not unreasonable for half a deck to be at risk for damage.

Conditions.

Various effects can cause the following conditions.

Burning.

Some attacks can add the burning condition either in place of or in addition to normal damage. Each naval round, for each ship section (hull, propulsion, armament, and miscellaneous) that is on fire, make a ship saving throw (captain's Charisma check vs. DC 10). On a success, the fire doesn't cause any significant damage. On a 20 or higher, the fire either burns itself out or is extinguished, but only for that particular section; fires elsewhere continue.

A failed save means that the burning component takes another hit. If you fail a save by 5 or more, roll an additional location to see where the fire spreads.

Simply having the burning condition is not enough to make a part of the ship unusable. Only once a save is failed has the area actually 'caught fire' to the point of being hazardous. In tactical combat, a burning ship should have scattered areas of flames and large swaths concealed by smoke.

Capsized.

A ship that is completely turned over, usually the result of strong waves, is immobilized and starts to sink slowly.

Campaign Tips, or What Do You Mean, They Both Sank?

Your ship caught fire, but you were too busy performing a boarding action to put it out. Guess what else is flammable? Your enemy's ship, the one you needed to get back home, now that yours has sunk. Nice job breaking it, hero. Do you cling to timbers and paddle for land? Maybe you should have made friends with those locathah instead of chopping them up. Just don't let the sun and isolation drive you mad, okay?

Immobilized.

An immobilized ship automatically fails Command checks. It cannot move or change stages unless physically pushed. Shipboard weapons gain a +5 bonus to hit it.

If some other effect reduces a ship's Speed or Maneuverability to 0, such as damage to propulsion or some special maneuver, it is immobilized.

Listing.

Whenever a ship fails a save to avoid sinking, it has a 25% chance of listing to port, 25% of listing to starboard, and 50% of being stable. A listing ship is immobilized. Attacks might be unable to hit certain components due to the ship's angle.

During tactical combat, a listing ship has one side sloping toward the sea. Any creature that cannot hold onto a railing or other support treats all movement as difficult terrain. A creature that is knocked prone slides 2 squares toward the water.

Sinking.

At regular intervals, a sinking ship must make a ship saving throw to avoid its decks being flooded. A slowly sinking ship rolls every ten minutes. Quickly sinking ships roll every minute, or once per naval round. A ship that is immediately sinking goes under right away during naval combat, or makes a saving throw once per round during tactical combat.

A successful save means the ship is temporarily stable. A roll of 20 or higher means the ship's descent slows one step. If it's only sinking slowly, it stabilizes, and will not sink unless damaged further.

A failed save means the ship goes down about 10 feet, or the depth of one deck. If a deck with open gunports becomes submerged, the ship's sinking accelerates by one step, from slow to quick to immediate.

If a ship has failed any sinking saves, it is immobilized. Once a ship's main deck is submerged, it automatically fails future saves and cannot stabilize.

Hull Integrity.

Strikes that hit in the right spot can reduce a ship's Hull Integrity. Crew in an area at or below the waterline might be injured by this strike, taking 1d6 damage.

If strikes reduce a ship's Hull Integrity to 0 or less, it begins to sink slowly. If it is reduced to –2, it sinks quickly. If reduced to –5, it sinks immediately.

Propulsion.

Whatever it is, there must be something makes a ship move. This can be the rigging on a sailing ship, the engine room on a steam-powered

vessel, oars on a rowed boat, bound elementals, or some other odd power source for magically-propelled vehicles. It can also include rudders, the ship's wheel, propellers, and flippers or wings of a living vessel.

The first strike damages the propulsion, reducing the ship's Maneuverability and Speed by 5 each, to a minimum of 0. Creatures in or near the damaged propulsion component take 2d6 points of damage.

A second strike disables propulsion and immobilizes the ship, and deals a further 2d6 damage to creatures in the area. A third strike destroys the propulsion, often with great collateral damage. Masts collapse, boilers explode with steam, and eldritch engines unleash deadly warping energies. Creatures in exposed areas take 6d6 damage.

Armaments.

When a strike hits armaments, it disables one particular battery and deals 2d6 damage to each creature operating that battery. A second strike destroys the battery, deals another 2d6 damage to creatures in the area, and may, depending on the nature of the battery, cause damage to the ship.

Miscellaneous.

The strike can either hit a component, such as a magical figurehead, a sick bay, or a crow's nest, or just hit an open part of a deck where crew are. When you roll this result, choose any component you're aware of. If you aren't aware of any, the GM may choose one at random.

The first strike to a given area disables any components there—shattering a crow's nest, scattering tools in a sick bay, or knocking a figurehead loose. It also deals 2d6 damage to creatures in the area. A second strike destroys the component and deals another 2d6 damage.

Sample Ships

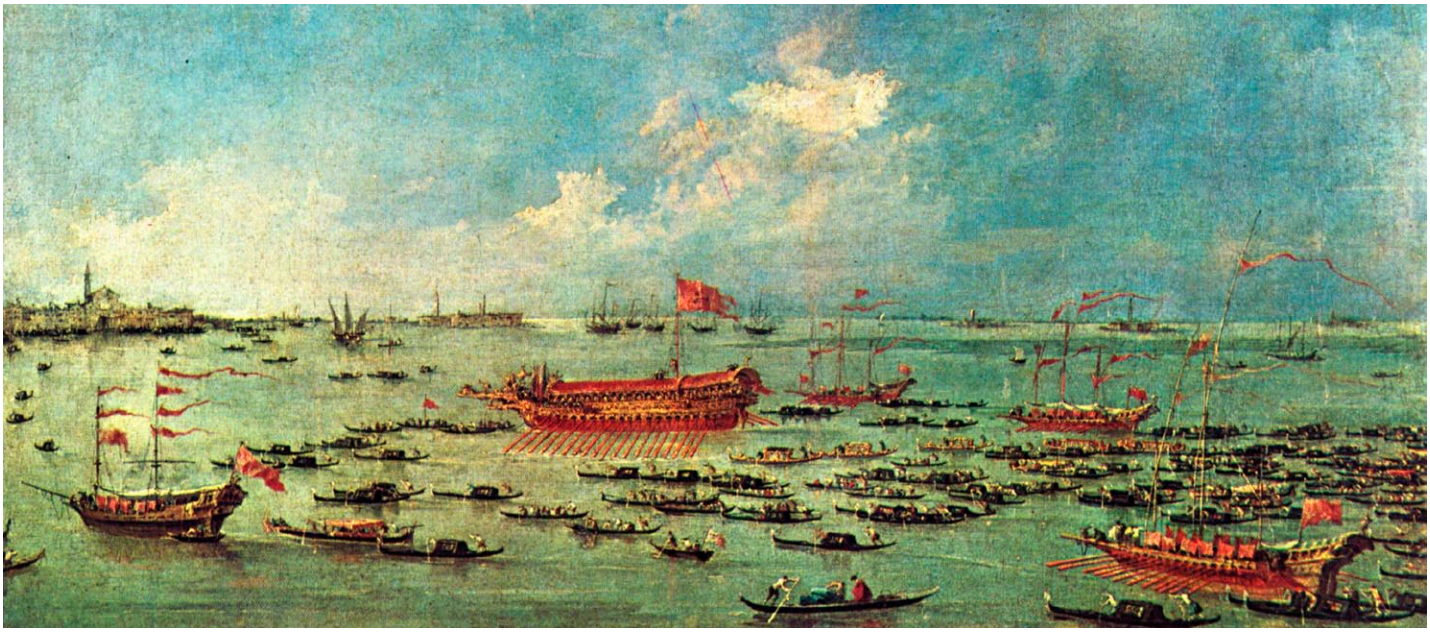
- **Rowboat.** Suitable for dinghies, canoes, and the like.
- **Cutter.** A basic sailing vessel. Including the *Audacious*, a famed and beloved excise cutter.
- **Steam Cutter.** A basic steam-powered vessel. Also the *Inevitable*, a ship whose first crew died in a boiler explosion.
- **Schooner.** The classic large multi-masted sailing ship. Also *Roscommon*, a schooner blessed by a fey queen.
- **Steamship.** A sturdy turret-armed patrol boat. Also *Khalundurrin*, a bold dwarven scout ship.
- **Frigate.** The iconic warship of the golden age of sail. Also the *Impossible*, an extreme clipper faster than anything on the sea.

Rowboat.

No, it's not glamorous, but sometimes you need stats for a rowboat.

Rowboat	Level 0 Vehicle
Tiny Vehicle	50 gp
Hull Integrity 1	**Command** –
Defense 8	**Full Crew** 1
Maneuverability 2	**Minimum Crew** 1
Speed 0–3 (see below)	**Total Complement** 6
Design	
Length 15 ft. Beam 5 ft. Six people can travel safely in a rowboat. Up to twelve can squeeze in, but they cannot effectively fight or defend themselves.	
Oar Power	
The rowboat has a speed rating of 1 for every two rowers, to a maximum of 3. Rowers with the Expert Sailor feat count double.	



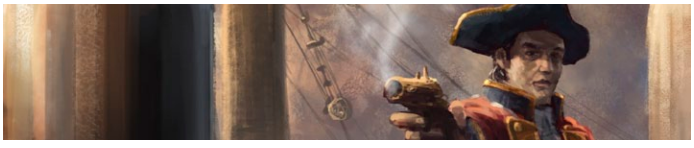


Cutter.

The traditional fore-and-aft rig of a cutter has a single mast supporting a mainsail and two or more headsails attached to a bowsprit. The *Audacious*, an excise cutter used by the Royal Homeland Constabulary to patrol Flint Harbor, uses more advanced rigging and sails.

Cutter	Level 5 Vehicle
Small Vehicle	1,000 gp
Hull Integrity 2	**Command** —
Defense 10	**Full Crew** 4
Maneuverability 10	**Minimum Crew** 1
Speed 6	**Total Complement** 10
Design	
Length 30 ft. Beam 15 ft. One mast, 40 ft. high.	
Total Cost 1,000 gp	
Hull (base level 2, sails, improved speed ×2, Level 5): 1000 gp	

***Audacious*, Excise Cutter**	Level 6 Vehicle
Small Vehicle	2,800 gp
Hull Integrity 2	**Command** —
Defense 10	**Full Crew** 4
Maneuverability 10	**Minimum Crew** 1
Speed 8	**Total Complement** 10
Design	
Length 30 ft. Beam 15 ft. One mast, 50 ft. high.	
Beloved	
While the ship is in full repair, crew on board gain a +1 bonus to saving throws.	
Armaments	
A pair of forward-facing light cannons.	
Crew: 1. Attack: +2, forward only.	
Total Cost 2,800 gp	
Hull (base level 2, sails, improved speed ×3, Level 6): 1,800 gp	
Armaments (tiny, prow, Level 5): 1,000 gp	

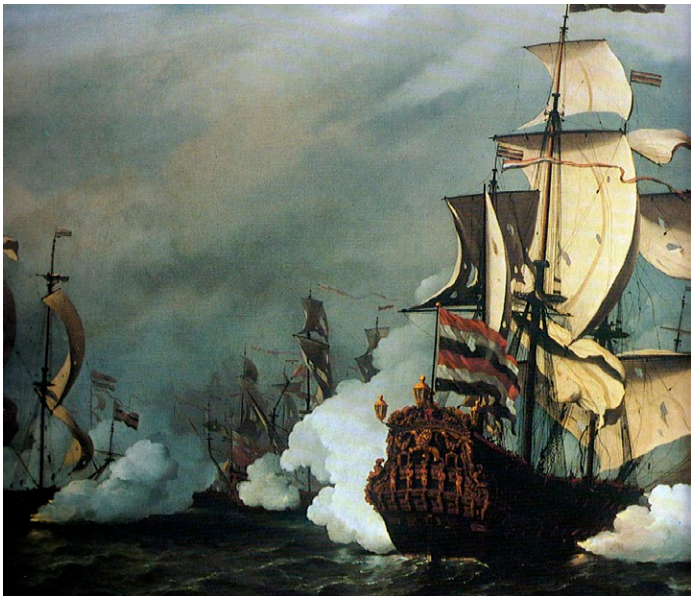


Steam Cutter.

Steam cutters can more easily travel against the wind, but are louder and must rely on fuel, which somewhat limits their long-distance uses. The *Inevitable*, the RHC's other harbor patrol ship, is slower than the *Audacious*, but more heavily-armed.

Steam Cutter	Level 5 Vehicle
Small Vehicle	1,000 gp
Hull Integrity 2	**Command** —
Defense 10	**Full Crew** 2
Maneuverability 10	**Minimum Crew** 1
Speed 4	**Total Complement** 10
Design	
Length 30 ft. Beam 15 ft. Steam engine, single screw. Carries fuel for 500 miles.	
Total Cost 1,000 gp	
Hull (base level 2, engine, improved speed, Level 5): 1000 gp	

***Inevitable*, Steam Cutter**	Level 5 Vehicle
Small Vehicle	2,680 gp
Hull Integrity 2	**Command** —
Defense 10	**Full Crew** 2
Maneuverability 10	**Minimum Crew** 1
Speed 4	**Total Complement** 10
Design	
Length 30 ft. Beam 15 ft. Steam engine, single screw. Carries fuel for 500 miles.	
Daunting	
The first attack roll against the ship each combat takes a –5 penalty. Hostile creatures entering the ship's space treat the first square they enter as difficult terrain.	
Ramprow	
A steel awl can be lowered into the water to pierce enemy hulls beneath the surface.	
When your ship rams, prevent the first strike the rammed ship would deal to you.	
Armaments	
A pair of forward-facing light cannons.	
Crew: 1. Attack: +2, forward only.	
Total Cost 2,680 gp	
Hull (base level 2, engine, improved speed, Level 5): 1,000 gp	
Armaments (tiny, prow, Level 5): 1,000 gp	
Ramprow (Level 3): 680 gp	



Schooner.

The schooner is one of the lightest types of vessels used for oceanic voyages. Its nimbleness makes it ideal for blockade-running and surveillance, but if cornered by an actual warship it must rely on the skill-at-arms of its crew, since it cannot mount many weapons. The RHC fields the *Roscommon*, a schooner blessed by a fey queen.

Schooner	Level 10 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	8,400 gp
Hull Integrity 3	**Command** —
Defense 15	**Full Crew** 16
Maneuverability 6	**Minimum Crew** 4
Speed 8	**Total Complement** 40
Design	
Length 90 ft. Beam 25 ft. Three masts, 70 ft. high. Two decks.	
Armaments	
A small array of light cannons, five to either broadside, more for deterrence than offense.	
Crew: 15. Attack: +7, broadsides only.	
Total Cost 8,400 gp	
Hull (base level 6, sails, improved speed ×3, Level 10): 5,000 gp	
Armaments (medium, broadsides, Level 8): 3,400 gp	

***Roscommon*, Fey-Pact Schooner**	Level 10 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	19,240 gp
Hull Integrity 3	**Command** —
Defense 15	**Full Crew** 16
Maneuverability 6	**Minimum Crew** 4
Speed 8	**Total Complement** 40
Design	
Length 90 ft. Beam 25 ft. Three masts, 70 ft. high. Two decks. Beautiful fey woman figurehead.	
*Beloved but Petulant * Trait*	
As long as the ship and figurehead are in full repair, the ship completes its journeys in 10% less time than usual, and the crew gets +1 to saving throws. If either is damaged, the benefit goes away.	
Armaments	
A small array of light cannons, five to either broadside, enchanted for elven precision. The mounting for each is carved from lightning-struck wood, threaded with white streaks.	
Crew: 15. Attack: +9, broadsides only. Option to fire shocking ammunition, which only damages enemy crew, not the vessel.	
Dryad Figurehead	
The beautiful woman blushes when complimented, and sometimes disappears when mistreated. Occasionally trinkets go missing and are found decorating her wooden locks.	
The figurehead functions as a flagbearer, redirecting hostile spells originating beyond 50 feet away to herself. She has 50 hit points, and ignores the first 10 points of damage from any attack.	
Jaunter	
Once per naval round, the captain standing at the head of the ship can ask the favor of the queen's figurehead. If the captain is in good favor with the fey spirit within the figurehead, the ship teleports a short distance. This can grant a +5 bonus to the ship's Maneuverability for the purpose of avoiding obstacles or for the Bearing phase, but only relative to a hostile ship at short range.	
In tactical combat, this requires a standard action and can be done once every five minutes. The Roscommon and everyone aboard teleports 50 ft. (10 squares) to an unoccupied space. It maintains the same heading and speed.	
Total Cost 19,240 gp	
Hull (base level 6, sails, improved speed ×3, Level 10): 5,000 gp	
Armaments (medium, broadsides, Level 10): 5,000 gp	
Shocking ammunition (Level 8): 3,400 gp	
Figurehead flagbearer (Level 4): 840 gp	
Jaunter fey step (Level 10): 5,000 gp	





Steamship.

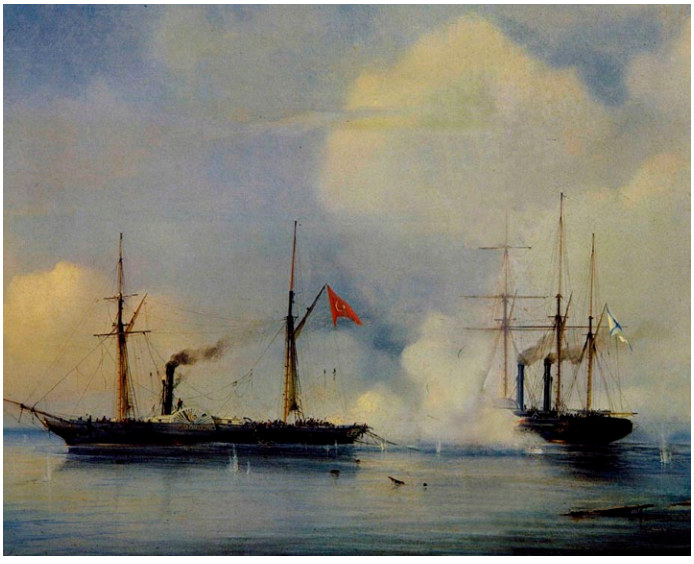
Early steam-powered vessels took a long time to evolve into the modern iteration of a heavily-armored warships traveling in large fleets, each ship having a differentiated role. This early iron-hulled patrol boat was meant to serve as a workhorse: fast enough to chase down tiny smugglers, sturdy enough to keep larger hostile ships busy until reinforcements can close. It mounts a forward turret of two cannons, giving it decent firepower without requiring a lot of crew.

The forward turret is accessed by a hatch on its roof. The roof level of the turret has high protective walls. Normally two sailors load and fire the cannons, a third on top passes down ammunition and feeds them targeting information, while three in the lower deck operate the rotational mechanism. The designers thought larger cannons would be infeasible, but crew find the current guns too weak.

A central bridge rises above the main deck. This is topped by the pilot's cabin, which offers a valuable high vantage despite being exposed at that height. Heavy armor protects the cabin, however, and its size makes it difficult to strike intentionally. In the main bridge cabin, the crew can operate safely behind thick iron walls. A hatch in the ceiling can access the pilot's cabin when it's not safe to go outside.

The lower deck serves as berth and hold. Vents lead up from the engine level, allowing fresh air to circulate, and heat to dissipate. And, of course, the smoke stack rises aft of the pilot's cabin, trailing steam and soot behind the vessel.

The RHC makes use of *Khalundurrin*, a captured Drakran naval steamer. Arcanists who examined the ship postulate that some manner of spirit might inhabit its steam engine. Crew who serve on it sleep easily and speak of dreams filled with bold imagery like something out of a dwarven opera.



Steamship	Level 10 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	8,400 gp
Hull Integrity 3	**Command** —
Defense 15	**Full Crew** 8
Maneuverability 6	**Minimum Crew** 2
Speed 6	**Total Complement** 25
Design	
Length 85 ft. Beam 25 ft. Steam engine, three decks.	
Armaments	
A pair of heavy cannons in a turret.	
Crew: 15. Attack: +4, forward or broadside.	
Total Cost 8,400 gp	
Hull (base level 6, engine, improved speed ×2, Level 10): 5,000 gp	
Armaments (medium, forward turret, Level 8): 3,400 gp	

***Khalundurrin*, steamship**	Level 10 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	19,440 gp
Hull Integrity 3	**Command** —
Defense 15	**Full Crew** 8
Maneuverability 6	**Minimum Crew** 2
Speed 6	**Total Complement** 25
Design	
Length 85 ft. Beam 25 ft. Steam engine, three decks. Runes etched along the hull.	
Bold and Aggressive	
When the ship is sailing toward a foe, its speed increases by 2 and its captain gains a +2 bonus to Command checks during the Location stage. The ship gets a +2 bonus to Defense against attacks from ships at short range.	
Armaments	
A pair of heavy cannons in a turret, inscribed with dwarven battle runes.	
Crew: 6. Attack: +6, forward or broadside.	
Ramprow	
Khalundurrin takes 1 fewer strike when it rams.	
Ironclad, Tar and Brimstone Sheathing	
The crew has cover against attacks made from outside the ship. Whenever a creature within 30 ft. of the hull attacks the underside of the ship, that creature takes 10 fire damage.	
Shield Defense	
A diamond embedded in the ramprow charges runes etched across the hull. These generate a protective shield, and any spell that originates more than 50 feet away from the ship deals 20 less damage to creatures aboard *Khalundurrin*.	
Total Cost 19,440 gp	
Hull (base level 6, engine, improved speed ×2, Level 10): 5,000 gp	
Armaments (medium, forward turret, Level 10): 5,000 gp	
Ramprow (Level 3): 680 gp	
Ironclad (defensible, Level 1): 360 gp	
Tar and brimstone sheathing (Level 8): 3,400 gp	
Shield defense (Level 10): 5,000 gp	

Frigate.

Frigates are the most powerful warships of the age of sail, carrying one or more full gundecks, plus additional cannons on the maindeck. They carried hundreds of sailors to be able to load and fire both broadsides while still sailing.

Roughly equivalent in size is the clipper ship, designed purely for speed. The R.N.S. *Impossible* is an extreme clipper, carrying minimal weapons and only deployed when speed is worth the risk of traveling undefended.



Frigate	Level 17 Vehicle
Huge Vehicle	110,000 gp
Hull Integrity 4	**Command** —
Defense 25	**Full Crew** 32
Maneuverability 4	**Minimum Crew** 8
Speed 14	**Total Complement** 200
Design	
Length 170 ft. Beam 35 ft. Three masts, 100 ft. high. Four decks.	
Armaments	
To each broadside, eleven light cannons on the maindeck and a dozen full cannons on the gundeck. In a chase, the crew moves and turns the cannons on the maindeck to fire forward or aftward.	
Crew: 100. Attack: +17 to broadsides, or +14 fore or aft.	
Total Cost 110,000 gp	
Hull (base level 11, sails, improved speed ×5, Level 17): 65,000 gp	
Armaments (huge, boards and chasers, Level 16): 45,000 gp	

***Impossible*, extreme clipper**	Level 17 Vehicle
Gargantuan Vehicle	234,000 gp
Hull Integrity 4	**Command** —
Defense 25	**Full Crew** 64
Maneuverability 4	**Minimum Crew** 16
Speed 22	**Total Complement** 120
Design	
Length 250 ft. Beam 45 ft. Four masts, 150 ft. high. Three decks.	
Armaments	
Eleven light cannons on the maindeck to each broadside. Useless against a ship of the same size, but enough to deter small foes.	
Crew: 40. Attack: +11 to broadsides, or +8 fore or aft.	
Total Cost 110,000 gp	
Hull (base level 12, sails, improved speed ×8, Level 21): 225,000 gp	
Armaments (large, boards and chasers, Level 11): 9,000 gp	



APPENDIX L: Player Handouts

Elementary Stances.

The five elementary stances are a class feature of the Polyhistor paragon path (see page 29).

Alert Stance

- **Warding Strike.** When a creature enters the reach of your melee weapon, you may expend one die as an immediate reaction to make a melee basic attack against that creature.

  If you are wielding a ranged weapon, when a creature enters a space without cover or concealment from you within 5 squares, you may expend one die as an immediate reaction to make a ranged basic attack against that creature.

Brute Stance

- **Damage.** When you roll damage dice for a basic attack, you may expend any number of dice and roll them, adding the result to the damage roll. If you are wielding either a two-handed weapon, or a weapon in both hands, roll d8s instead of d6s.
- **Forced Movement.** When you hit an enemy with a melee basic attack, you may expend one die to push, pull, or slide the target 2 squares.

Close Stance

- **Grab.** When you hit an enemy you are adjacent to with a melee basic attack, you may spend one die to grab the enemy, even if you don't have a free hand. If you do have a free hand, you do not need to spend a die to grab them.
- **Major Affliction.** When you hit with an enemy you have grabbed with a melee basic attack, you may expend two dice and choose one of the following major conditions. The target gains the condition until the end of your next turn. Major conditions include: blinded, dazed, immobilized, or weakened.
- **Minor Affliction.** When you hit with an enemy you have grabbed with a melee basic attack, you may expend one die and choose one of the following minor conditions. The target gains the condition until the end of your next turn. Minor conditions include: deafened, disarmed, prone, or slowed.

Defensive Stance

- **Guard.** When an enemy hits you or an adjacent ally with an attack, as an immediate interrupt you may spend any number of dice, roll them, and add them to you or your ally's defenses against that attack. If you are wielding a shield, you may an extra +2 to the result of these rolled dice.

Evasive Stance

- **Evade.** When an enemy ends its movement close enough so it could attack you with a melee attack, you may spend a die as an immediate reaction to move your speed.
- **Skirmish.** Once on your turn when you make a basic attack you may spend a die to move your speed. If you combine this with the Two Targets option above, you can move between the attacks.

  If you combine it with the Multiple Targets option for a melee attack, instead of attacking in Close burst 1, you may make a melee basic attack against each enemy you move adjacent to during this movement.

Planets and Planes, Briefly.

Common lore in Risur claim the heavens are a massive distant dome, and that the planets of the night sky move in reaction to the unseen hand of fate. According to the skyseers, each star is a source of magic, and the planets in particular are the source of key elemental powers.

The Clergy, by contrast, believe that the heavens are a black sea, and that every star and planet is a physical world, each with its own people and gods. Danoran astronomers, usually loath to agree with the Clergy, claim that they have seen the surfaces of the planets through their finely crafted telescopes, though they cannot confirm any civilizations.

Meanwhile, **Rock Rackus** (pictured on page 47) tells wild tales of using magic to visit these worlds, meet the locals, and return with treasure. Skyseers dismiss his claims as a fool being tricked by fey, but Rackus's shows sell out as audiences delight at his bawdy and bold adventures.

Below we list the most prominent objects in the sky, along with the myths and theories associated with each. These myths aren't necessarily consistent with each other.

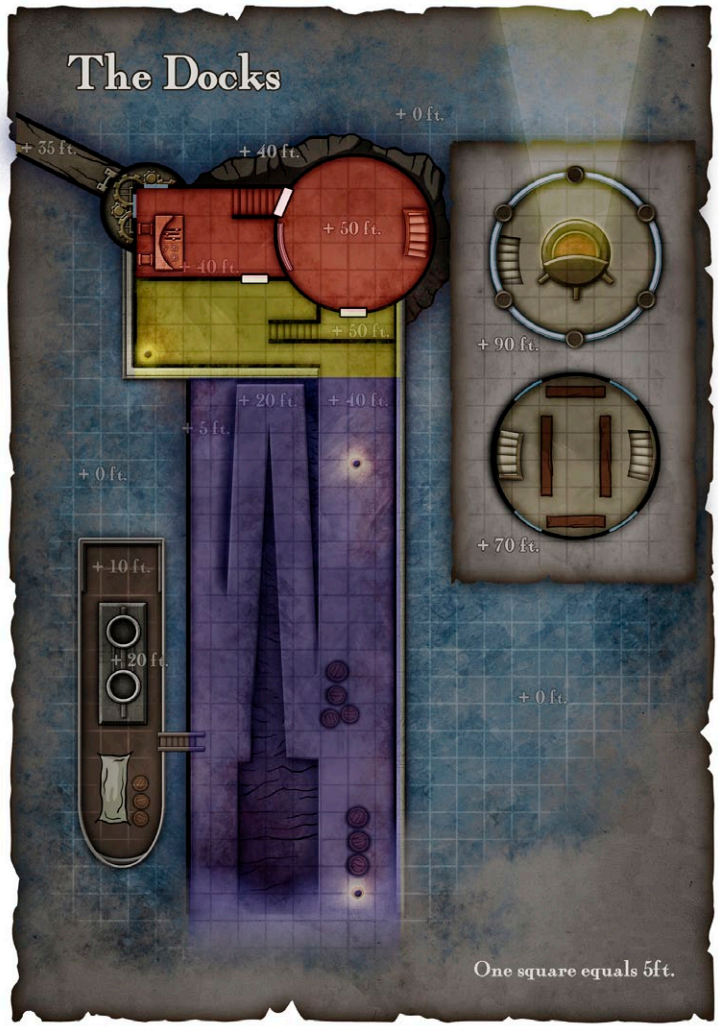
- **Vona.** The sun, source of pure arcane force and magical radiance, but too bright to observe the surface. It influences revelations and discoveries.
- **Av.** This ancient name for the moon comes from a legend about a sleeping queen of the fey, cursed to slumber after her soul was captured in her reflection on a bottomless pool. Influences nothing, but reflects subtle clues of people's desires.
- **Jiese.** The plane of fire, home to serpent men whose skin glow like coal. Ancient myths claimed this was a dragon, which chased Avilona. Influences war and strife, as well as notable births.
- **Avilona.** The plane of air, where desolate islands of rock float amid the clouds, covered in long-abandoned ruins. Ancient myths claimed this world was a titanic eagle, constantly fleeing the ravenous Jiese. Influences weather, notable deaths, and animals.
- **Mavisha.** The plane of water, home to krakens lurking beneath the waters and leviathans swimming rippling liquid columns that writhe above the sea like the tentacles of a living world. Legend states that a drowned bride long ago cursed sailors to join her in the lightless depths of this endless ocean. Influences the seas, great movements of people, and conflicts within families.
- **Urim.** The plane of earth, or rather a scattered, shattered belt of relatively tiny shards of metal, which sometimes fall from the sky bearing precious ores and accursed worms. Influences the earth, the rise and fall of fortunes, and random meetings of strangers.
- **Apet.** The distant plane, said to be a permanent storm of sand and dust on a featureless plane, with the only point of reference being an arc of silver an unknowable distance above. Influences subtle nuances of distance and time, as well as the grand cycle of ages.
- **Nem.** The plane of ruin, this planet is a myth among the skyseers, who say it sheds no light, and can only be seen as it glides silently through the heavens, devouring stars and leaving nothing but a hole in the night. Influences secrets and the dead.

HOLD THE LIGHTHOUSE.

On the Sea Wall (Blue-Tinted Area).
Cannot be barricaded.

Outside Lighthouse (Yellow-Tinted Area).
Can have up to 20 points of barricades.

Inside Lighthouse (Red-Tinted Area).
Can have up to 10 points of barricades. PCs can't enter or leave the area if there are more than 5 points of barricades.



Conducting the Skill Challenge.
Timeline. Each round is one minute. Allies arrive in round 10, and if the sea gate is open, the PCs win. Each round, first all the PCs act, then all enemies act. Enemies that are destroyed still act and are removed at the end of the round. PCs reduced to 0 HP automatically stabilize and do not make death saving throws.

Tracking Locations. Place PC minis in the appropriate area whenever they move. Use coins or dice to keep track of how many enemies are in each area.

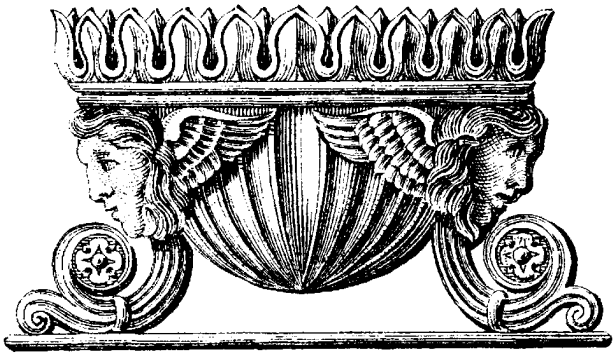
PC Turn. PCs move to an area, then take one action. Suggested actions include:

- *Assemble Barricade.* Athletics DC 18. Create 3 points of barricade inside lighthouse, or 2 points outside lighthouse. On a failed check, create 1 point. Area must have no enemies.
- *Battle.* No check or attack roll required. Destroy 1 enemy you can reach. Spend encounter power to destroy 2, daily for 3.
- *Brace.* Endurance DC 18. Barricade in your area resists first 2 points of enemy action this turn.
- *Set Trap or Ward.* Arcana or Thievery DC 18. When enemies enter this area, destroy 1 enemy. The trap is expended.
- *Stall.* Diplomacy or Intimidate DC 18. Enemies don't advance this turn. +2 DC per round.
- *Other.* PCs can also use non-attack powers without counting as an action, at the DM's discretion. Usually this will be to heal themselves or each other. *Remember that you have second winds.*

Enemy Turn. Enemies move as far as they can toward the lighthouse interior. They stop when they reach a location with a PC, trap, or ward. If there are any barricades in an area, they stop *before* entering that area.

Then for each enemy, act in the following order:

- Remove 1 point of barricade from an adjacent area until there are no adjacent barricades.
- Deal 6 damage to one PC that shares the area with the enemy. PCs can choose which among them takes the damage.
- Deal 3 damage to a PC in another area.



CRIMINAL FILE OF NILASA HUME.

Person of Interest Information Request

Request No.: 3217

Customer: Royal Homeland Constabulary

Name: Nilasa Hume

Birthdate: 26 Spring, 471

Criminal ID #: 24680

Jurisdiction: Flint Division of Peace and Order

Race: Mularbora (human/elf)

Sex: Female

Height: 68 inches

Accent: Flinter

Hair: Black

Eyes: Green

Spellcaster: No

Known Aliases: None

Present Place of Residence: 47 Magazine Street, Parity Lake, Flint. Sechim's Alkahest & Etchings. Factory--workplace and home.

Past Places of Residence: (1) (Alleged) 3.6 miles east on Batata Road. 0.4 miles south on Flogging Lagoon trail. Cloudwood. Greater Flint County. Flogging Lagoon musician commune--transient lodging (departed Spring 499).

(2) 82K Fogwall Street. Parity Lake. Flint. Shared building--mother's home (demolished Winter 495).

Arrest Record: Juvenile Records. Juvenile records forgiven in accordance with Stanfield's Matriculation Act of 328. Juvenile record notes "various petty thefts, confidence capers"; details lost during Parity Lake central office relocation. Supporting Criminal Activities. (Misdemeanor.) Case No. 8176. (85 Spring, 500.) Released on bail, sponsored by Heward Sechim, 47 Magazine Street, Parity Lake. Court date set for 4 Summer, 500. Suspect apprehended in raid on known den of criminals, loc 12 Oxen Street, Parity Lake. Suspect in presence of two men whom the arresting officer recognized as former accomplices Ford Sorghum and Travis Starter. Lack of official records detailing affiliation prevented holding suspect. Alleged accomplices plead guilty to various warrants and were remanded to Goodson's Estuarial Reformatory.



Attached Continuation Sheets: -0-

Additional Locations in Flint



A WARNING NOTE.

An urchin delivers this note to a Yerasol Veteran in Adventure Two, saying it is from a "scary shadow man."

You are a patriot. Already once you have defended our kingdom against enemies within its borders. Know that what you are about to reveal will damage our nation. I cannot tell you more, but if you can convince your companions to abandon this investigation, soon you will understand. I have taken no joy in conspiring to thwart you, so I give you this last chance to leave with your life.

A LETTER.

A letter sent to a Vekeshi Mystic PC shortly after The Incident which occurs at the Kaybeau Arms Fair in Adventure Three.

By Decree of the Old Stag:

You, servant of Srasama, have been chosen to strike a blow for our order. The swine Rock Rackus has insulted us for the last time. At our latest secret gathering, the Old Stag said he thinks the man deserves to die, and we must carry out his desires, because he speaks for the Unseen Court. The pig deserves to die, and you are to do the deed!

Do it however you want, but make sure it makes the news, so we can verify that you did it. Your actions will earn us both favor.

— A Fellow Hand of the Goddess

A STRANGE LETTER.

Hans Weber received this letter shortly after Xambria disappeared near the seal of Mavisha. He can show it to the PCs in Adventure Three.

HANS -
HELP ME
IT FOLLOWED ME FROM THE DIG
IT HAS ME
I ONLY HAVE A MOMENT
IT WANTS THE THREE RELICS
WARN THE CONSTABLES.
IT TALKS IN MY MIND
I KNOW THINGS I COULDN'T
ITS NAME IS SIJHEN
I HEAR THE WORD GIDIM
GIDIM GIDIM? GIDIM
A PEOPLE? A WORLD?
ANOTHER NAME, A NAME IT'S CURIOUS ABOUT
OBSCURATI
OBSCURATI?
OBSCURATI

A Found Note.

A note found within a ritual book aboard *Il Draçon de Mer* during Adventure Three provides insight into the goals of Caius Bergeron and his associates. The following is translated from the Common dialect of Danor.

Memorandum for Finona Duvall,

I was impressed by the flawless professionalism of your clean-up at the High Bayou excavation. The previous expedition was staffed with cavalier fools, but you emerged unscathed from peril, which highlights your intellect and acumen. I think you have the potential to benefit my associates greatly, and if your work continues to be of this masterful caliber, I shall recommend you be brought in more fully.

To wit, I trust you will handle this your fourth dig site with the same skill. However, for your new Drakran bodyguards, this will be their first time opening a seal. I am confident neither is so loutish and disruptive as Master Rackus was at the ziggurat of Jiese. Nevertheless, it is imperative that we avoid a disaster like what occurred at the bayou ziggurat.

The magic and defenses at these ruins are complex and secretive, so while I thoroughly trust your familiarity with the dangers, we need take no unnecessary risks.

Firstly, each of the golden seals were crafted by the Ancients specifically to close a portal to another world. Examination of the relief images on each suggests hostile creatures had been entering our world through these portals, and that the Ancients used the seals to slow an invasion. The creatures were not of any known modern race. Be certain your allies are forewarned, and keep close eye on their mental stability. At least once disaster has struck because someone panicked at the revelation that the world was much larger than their current conception.

Second, the peculiar nature of the seal magic appears to have trapped a small mote of the other world on the far side of the portal. I suspect that this somehow redirected the existing portals to this pocket dimension, and that perhaps simply closing the portal was beyond the skill of the Ancients. Though ages have passed, and we can only assume the invasion forces were stopped somehow, each time we have opened one of these seals, creatures have survived within. Make sure everyone is armed at all times and ready for battle.

Third, the hostile creatures appear to have belonged to different factions, as the seals of Jiese, Nem, and Apet depict distinct sorts of creatures. The Ancients clearly dealt with threats from worlds beyond those known to us today, since the beings that emerged from the ziggurat of Apet do not match any of the current lore of that world. Indeed, the strange beasts were not even the same sort as portrayed on the seals. Do not presume that simply because you are opening a portal to the plane of water that any creatures beyond must share the same elemental affiliation. Use multiple warding circles in your initial explorations; we can afford the expense.

Fourth, either time or magic has had the effect of concentrating the inherent planar energy within the mote beyond the seals. When the Mavisha seal is finally opened, expect intense energy to pour out. This will probably just be elemental water energy, but as always, precautions rule the day. Make sure first to know the nature of the energy, and set up appropriate wards. If possible, do not be nearby when the seal opens.

Finally, while we have endeavored to maintain a certain discretion in our activities, we have attracted the unfortunate attentions of an RHC squad, and I fear we might be being watched by agents of the Unseen Court. Be prepared for attack from without as well as within when you're at the dig. Afterward, maintain the greatest discretion in transporting the golden seal. If necessary, abandon it so you can make sure to reach me with your research. While a ton of gold is valuable in its own right, we're fairly certain any gold suffices for these seals, so your examinations of the abjurations are more valuable than the physical artifact.

Please try to enjoy your journey. Seobriga in Autumn is lovely, and I trust the more rustic charms of the land around the ziggurat of Mavisha will provide a pleasant respite from the stress of avoiding ancient curses and otherworldly carnivores. I await your return with an admitted enthusiasm, and I insist you recount your journey with the utmost detail while enjoying the finest wines from my family's vineyards.

Do be safe, Finona.

Your benefactor and cohort,
Caius Bergeron

P.S., If complications arise, do try to wrap up before Winter. It would be a treasure if you could accompany me by train from Beaumont on the 11th. I have a meeting to attend on the 20th in Vendricce, after which I plan to stay in Crisillyir for a few months. I would love the company of a vivacious young woman, since my host is somewhat too aged and philosophical for my tastes.

Mission Timeline.

This note is received during Adventure Four.

- **85 Autumn, 500.** Your ship departs Flint. Trip to Beaumont should take 7 days.
- **1 Winter, 500.** Your ship arrives in Beaumont. Your ship sails for Trekhom. (You have a ten-day buffer in case of trouble at sea.)
- **11 Winter, 500.** Train departs Beaumont at 7:30 AM.
- **11 Winter, 500.** Train arrives in Cherage by 6:00 PM.
- **12 Winter, 500.** Train departs Cherage at 7:30 AM.
- **12 Winter, 500.** Train arrives in Orithea by 6:15 PM.
- **13 Winter, 500.** Train departs Orithea at 7:30 AM.
- **13 Winter, 500.** Train arrives in Trekhom by 6:30 PM. Your ship will be waiting at the harbor.
- **14 Winter, 500.** Train departs Trekhom at 7:30 AM. Your ship sails for Sid Minos.
- **14 Winter, 500.** Train arrives in Nalaam by 6:00 PM.
- **15 Winter, 500.** Train departs Nalaam at 7:30 AM.
- **15 Winter, 500.** Train arrives in Sid Minos by 5:30 PM. Your ship will be waiting at the harbor.
- **16 Winter, 500.** Train departs Sid Minos at 7:30 AM.
- **16 Winter, 500.** Train arrives in Vendricce by 6:00 PM. Your ship will be waiting at the harbor. Trip to Flint should take 8 days.

Epistle from Heid.

This typewritten letter is received during Adventure Five.

I, Vlendam Heid, son of Anisim Heid, son of Modya Bohm, dictate this letter to professional typist Kimsta Vicked, who uses only the finest Zhugo-brand mecha-typographs. It was delivered by Trekhom-based Mori Couriers.

May you have the wisdom and calm to face your coming end.

I send this in hopes it can help you prepare for whatever end may befall you. While I accept not all who are exposed to my writings and speeches shall interpret them as I would desire, it does not surprise me that some radicals claim the name of this movement I inspired and pervert it to ends inimical to my intentions, and to what I believe any good citizen of this world, man or dwarf, would support.

There is, in the frigid north of Drakr, a dwarf woman named Grandis Komanov whom I cannot in good faith call a philosopher. Rather she is, if I may use a pejorative term, a spiritual leader. One of Komanov's adherents came to me this evening and in a most vulgar fashion bragged of what one of his peers would be doing in your city of Flint. I believe he thought I would show him approval, but his intentions—and moreover his enthusiasm for the methods—repulsed me.

Komanov has taken the volumes of writing I have produced, condensed them to a simple aphorism "Prepare for the end," and then encouraged an interpretation that more closely resembles "Make things end." You may not be familiar with my nation's old history of monsters in the frozen wastes, but we are always putting up with zealots who derive worldly power by preying on the beliefs of those seeking spiritual power from these long-perished entities. Komanov continues this tradition, but appears much more invested in the fiction she has produced.

In short, my visitor this night claims a group of Komanov's followers—who alas have several days' head start on this letter—head now to Flint with the intention of disrupting your peace summit and causing a great tide of mayhem and death. They think peace between your two nations will forestall a doomsday they greatly desire.

I feigned interest in my visitor's claims, and elicited two pieces of information you might value. First, the leader of this group is Grundun Zubov who is not known to me. Second, they have hired a crack marksman for reasons I can only guess, one Kvarti Gorbatiy. His name kindled some recognition, and I pored through old correspondence to find a letter he had written me a few months past. Unless his demeanor has greatly changed in the intervening time, I suspect his involvement is mercenary and not philosophically aligned with Komanov's radicalism.

While I assume you will pursue actions to obviate any disaster they intend, I entreat you first to prepare yourself that your best efforts may fail and that you might perish in undertaking your duty. Nevertheless, I wish you success.

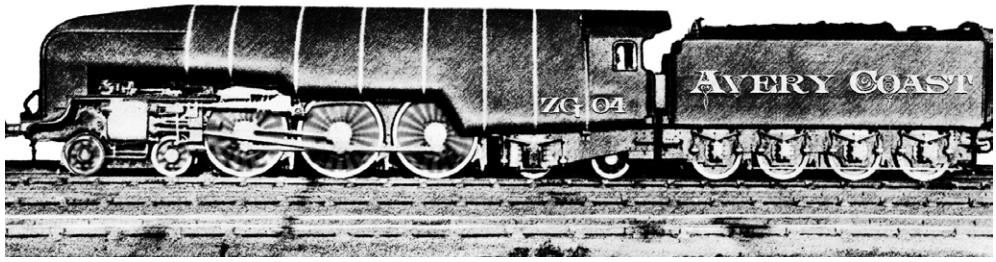
Avery Coast Railroad Brochure (Front)

A copy of this is given to the PCs in Adventure Four.

The Avery Coast Railroad

FEATURING
First Class Accommodations.
Fine Dining.
Scenic Views.

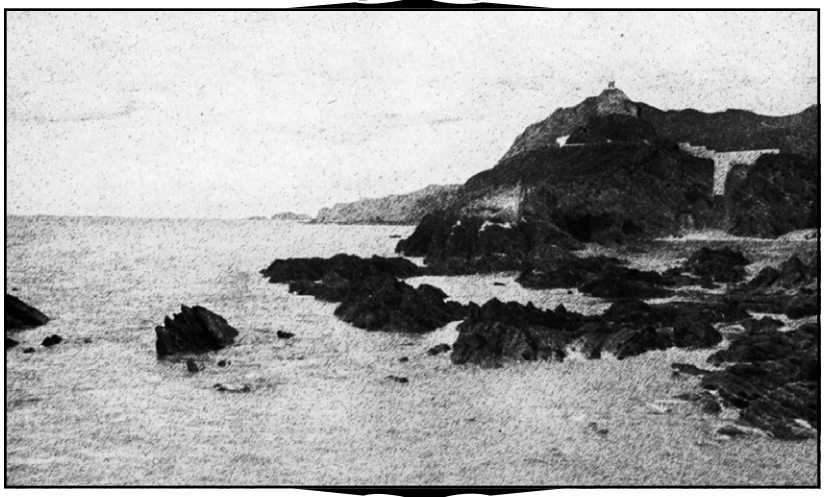
3,000 Mile Route Servicing
Beaumont • Cherage • Oritheia
Trekhom • Nalaam
Sid Minos • Vendricce
in only six days.



Trains Departing Every Day from Every Station.

Our trains' nightly Stop-Overs are in safe, populated Enclaves attended by Experienced Security Professionals.

Our Courteous, Helpful, Experienced Staff always accords Special Attention to traveling Families.



A view from the Avery Coast R.R. as the train nears Nalaam.

Travel the Coast at High Speed in Comfort and Safety.

AVERY COAST RAILROAD BROCHURE (BACK).



A Fancy Invitation.



BAD BOYS, BAD BOYS

Goal.

Dismantle Kell's guild and force him into the open, then take him down. To do this, send the 50 police officers of your task force on missions to acquire leads, take out Kell's support, and eventually attack his strongholds.

Kell's seat of power is the Theater of Scoundrels, in the district Parity Lake. He's known to have three lesser strongholds: a fancy tower called Grand Suites, and a mansion dubbed Casa de Kell, both in Parity Lake; and a gated compound called Machete Hill in The Nettles.

The guild likely has affairs in other districts. The districts of Flint include Bosum Strand, Central, North Shore, Parity Lake, Pine Island, Stray River, The Ayres, and The Nettles.

Mechanics.

Each officer can perform one mission per day, and you have four days, from Spring 9 to Spring 12. You can call in favors for additional aid, and can go on missions yourself, but each mission you join takes 4 hours of your time, and there are other matters that need attending.

For each mission, choose how many men to send and which district to send them to, then roll the officers' skill check (use a default +10 bonus). If you accompany, use your skill modifier instead. This check determines success or failure.

The GM may call for an additional check to avoid a mishap. For instance, the Scout mission requires Perception to see how many thugs are at a location. The GM might ask for a Stealth check to keep the thugs from spotting the surveillance officers and attacking.

Each mission has a Minimum Officer entry and an Optimal Officer entry. Take a –5 penalty to the check for less than optimal, or –10 for less than minimum.

Successful missions can acquire **Task Force Tokens** (TFTs) and **Strikes**. TFTs help on later missions, and Strikes erode the guild's cohesion. Failure wastes time and might cause casualties.

Targets.

- **Front.** Guild-affiliated business. Low resistance.
- **Den of Thieves.** Guild hang-out. Medium resistance.
- **Illicit Transaction.** Major scheduled crime. Medium resistance.
- **Stronghold.** One of three well-defended compounds within the city. High resistance.
- **Theater of Scoundrels.** The guild's seat of power in eastern Parity Lake. Very high resistance.

Missions.

You can trade in a Task Force Token before a mission to get +2 to your roll for that mission.

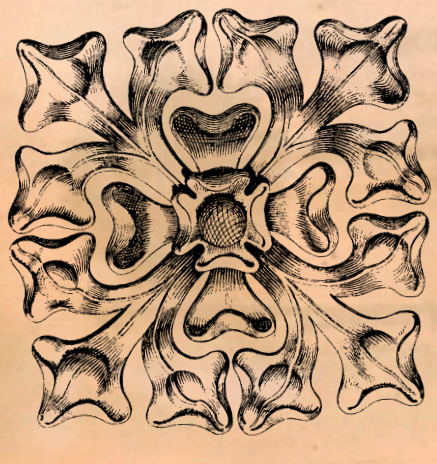
- **Case a District.** *Diplomacy or Streetwise.* Look for fronts, dens, and transactions in one district. Success reveals 1 or more items of interest. Minimum officers 2. Optimal 6.
- **Scout.** *Perception.* Choose a known location and find out about it, including number of defenders. Minimum officers 1. Optimal 3.
- **Bust Up a Joint.** *Intimidate.* Go into a Front or a Den of Thieves to look for information. Success earns 1 TFT at a front, or 2 TFTs at a den of thieves. Minimum officers is equal to number of defenders. Optimal is three times that many.
- **Sting.** *Intimidate.* Swoop in during an Illicit Transaction. Success earns 1 Strike and 1 TFT. As above, you want three times number of defenders, but you cannot scout for a sting, so be careful.
- **Assault.** Attack a stronghold to earn 1 Strike. Attack the Theater of Scoundrels to earn 3 Strikes.

Task Force Tracking.

Enter numbers or hash marks below to keep track of how many officers you have available, how you deploy them each day, and how successful you are.

		Spring 9	Spring 10	Spring 11	Spring 12	Final
Available	Officers					
	Additional Resources					
	Total Manpower					
Deployed	Case a District					
	Scout					
	Bust Up a Joint					
	Sting					
	Assault					
Results	TFTs Acquired					
	TFTs Expended					
	TFTs Remaining					
	Strikes Acquired					
	Casualties					
	Remaining Officers					
	Strikes Total					

BRIEFING DOSSIER.



This dossier is official correspondence of His Majesty King Aodhan's Royal Homeland Constabulary. By the powers of his office, the king has sealed this document, and any unauthorized individuals opening it shall come to the attention of the RHC.

Unapproved opening of this document is an offense against the crown. Let those who transgress be struck down, as established in the Rites of Rulership.

PEACE SUMMIT OF 501 AOV

Spring 8. Mediator Brakken of Heffanita arrives from Ber. Drakran observer Steffan Eberhardt is already in town.

Spring 9. Danoran vessel Freux Rouge arrives, carrying Captain Rosalyn Taylor and Minister of Magic Pierre Riquier. For the Risur delegation, Geoff Massarde and Kian Doherty arrive from Slate.

Spring 13. At 6pm, Danoran vessel Lux Profectusque arrives, carrying Sovereign Han Jierre, Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre, and Minister of War Eloise Duffet. That evening a banquet involving all dignitaries and begins the Peace Summit.

Spring 14. King Aodhan and Sovereign Han Jierre hold private talks.

Spring 20. The talks are scheduled to end with a formal declaration of betrothal between the King and Lya Jierre.

Spring 22. The Sovereign and most of the delegation will depart, while Lya Jierre will begin a nationwide political tour. Life in Flint can return to normal.

In the Risur delegation.

- King Aodhan.
- Principal Minister Harkover Lee.
- Royal Engineer Geoff Massarde.
- Minister of Agriculture Kian Doherty.
- City Governor Roland Stanfield.

And for the Danorans.

- Sovereign Han Jierre.
- Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre.
- Minster of War Eloise Duffet.
- Minister of Magic Pierre Riquier.
- Naval Representative Rosalyn Taylor.

And finally.

- Mediator Brakken of Heffanita.
- Drakran Observer Steffan Eberhardt.



PERSONS OF NOTE

Hereafter labeled as PN#.

- PN1. Danoran Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre. Niece of Sovereign Han Jierre. Witnessed at gathering of Obscurati in Vendricce. Involvement unknown.
- PN2. Nathan Jierre. Cousin of Lya. Researcher at Axis Island, accomplice of Duchess Ethelyn of Shale. Involved in extraplanar observation.
- PN3. Luc Jierre. Brother of Lya. Arcanoscientist, inventor of artifact identified as "Wayfarer Lantern." Delivered lantern to Lya Jierre and PN5 in Vendricce.
- PN4. Sovereign Han Jierre. Ruler of Danor. Involvement unknown.
- PN5. "Nicodemus." Unnamed individual smoking cigarettes (leaf of Nicodemus) at gathering in Vendricce. Appeared to have a leadership role.
- PN6. Duchess Ethelyn of Shale. Sister of King Aodhan. Claimed skyseer vision warned of threat to Risur. Attempted assassination of king. Attacked Axis Island. See attachment PN6a.
- PN7. Reed Macbannin. (deceased) Mayor of Flint district of The Nettles. Operated facility on Cauldron Hill refining substance identified as "Witchoil." Committed suicide in prison cell.
- PN8. Cillian Creed. (deceased) Butler of Macbannin. Infused with Bleak Gate magic, granting shadowy physical form. Performed murder, organized smuggling operation, attempted cover-up, and likely other criminal activities on behalf of Macbannin.
- PN9. Her Majesty Princess Fairy Dust, Hana "Gale" Soliogn. Eladrin refugee from Danor. Hostile to Danoran industrial activity in Flint. Unconfirmed role in murder and arson of industrialists. Sent PN10 Nilasa on spy mission in Danoran consulate in Flint.
- PN10. Nilasa Hume. (deceased) Stole financial documents from consulate, linking Macbannin to various criminal enterprises. Murdered by PN8 Cillian Creed.
- PN11. His Grace the Duke of Slaughter. Lorcan Kell. Crime lord in Flint district Parity Lake, with base of operations in location identified as "Theater of Scoundrels." Renowned for violence and cruelty.

  Examination of stolen financial documents reveal many factories in Parity Lake changed ownership—we suspect by intimidation—and were registered in the names of known members of Kell's guild. Strong certainty that Kell aided Macbannin in smuggling various industrial goods to destination unknown.

  After Macbannin's arrest, Kell's guild apparently accompanied agents of the Obscurati during the attack on the RHC headquarters.
- PN12. "Steelshaper." Unnamed individual who aided PN8 Creed to recover documents at an abandoned church in The Nettles. Demonstrated ability to move and shape metal without obvious spellcasting. Had a Crisillyiri accent.
- PN13. Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby. Former head of the RHC in Flint. Apparently worked to help Macbannin maintain secrecy, believing it was part of an official Risuri military project. Appears to have no direct affiliation with the Obscurati.
- PN14. Kaja Stewart. (deceased) Arcanoscientist in Macbannin's laboratory who stole items identified as "Ancient Artifacts" after Macbannin was captured. Worked with PN11 Kell to fence these items. Dead through possibly faked suicide in cell at RHC headquarters.
- PN15. Caius Bergeron. Alleged patron of archaeology. According to PN14 Kaja, Bergeron brought Ancient Artifacts to Macbannin for examination, to determine their powers and risk. Funded multiple expeditions to Ancient ruins. Killed via exneuralation by Sijhen. Arranged bodyguards for PN3 Luc on Avery Coast Railroad, apparently with intent to accompany to Vendricce.
- PN16. Sijhen. Mysterious being, identified as a "Gidim." See attachment PN16a for details of Gidim. Entity sought to return to its own plane. Believed dead or banished when its portal collapsed. No apparent affiliation with conspiracy.
- PN17. Xambria Meredith. Archaeologist who excavated location identified as "Ancient High Bayou Ziggurat." Recovered Ancient Artifacts, which were delivered to PN15 Bergeron. Possessed by PN16 Sijhen, and shared memories. Provided the name "Obscurati" to identify hostile conspiracy; we suspect the name was gleaned from consumed brain of PN15.

ATTACHMENT PN6A: ETHELYN'S PROPHECY

Duchess Ethelyn of Shale allegedly received this prophecy. It, along with numerous other factors, motivated her treason against the crown.

A globe spins on its axis, and a steel ship sets off to war on a sail of shadows. The world passes into night, and blackness grips all of Risur as the stars fall from the sky. The king's eyes turn a soulless white, and he moves as a puppet, his strings pulled by a man who has already died a thousand times.

Though we are wary of putting excessive stock in prophecy--if for no other reason than the desire to avoid hubristically bringing its predictions to pass in the course of trying to prevent them--we can see some obvious parallels to current situations.

The "axis" likely motivated Ethelyn to target Axis Island. Likewise the "steel ship" suggests the R.N.S. Coaltongue, a prominent Risuri steel warship. The "sail of shadows" could simply be the smoke from its engine, or might be related to the Obscurati's penchant for hiding, particularly in the shadowy Bleak Gate. However, the ship has not set off to war, and indeed the current peace plans will hopefully avoid any imminent war.

We see no obvious correlations in the rest of the prophecy. If it is true, that suggests the events have not yet occurred. Stars falling from the sky could relate to any number of meteor showers, or perhaps the incursion from Gidim, a previously unknown world (see Attachment PN16a), but this is only speculation.

—— Royal Skyseer Cliff Swanland

OBSCURATI INTELLIGENCE

Herein an overview of knowledge about the organization identified as "Obscurati" by Person of **Note 17** (**Xambria Meredith**).

Section the First: Obscurati Organization

The Ob (for short) appear to have a very strong focus on secrecy and compartmentalization. It is possible they have other cells of their organization that we are unaware of simply because the operatives we've interrogated were not privy to the full scope. Indeed, given the conspiracy's assets and international span, it seems likely they are up to more than just operations in Flint.

It is imperative that we trace the chain of command to its top and then work our way down to lower tiers of other cells.

Section the Second: Operations in Flint

In Flint, we suspect **PN12** Steelshaper convinced **PN7** Macbannin to work on a fake Risuri military project. Macbannin operated in our world and helped smuggle materials, we suspect into the Bleak Gate, which are likely being used to construct something that requires a great industrial base. Macbannin also refined witchoil, which likely would be used as fuel for whatever is being created. The Ob want it to remain secret, and have gone to elaborate lengths to keep it so.

The Ob appear to have a base, and likely factory or assembly facilities in the Bleak Gate, and possess means to travel between that world and ours with relative ease.

Section the Third: Wider Operations

The Ob are interested in reaching or manipulating other planes. It is possible **PN15** Bergeron's funding of Ancient expeditions is merely tangential to their main activities, but **PN3** Luc's invention, the Wayfarer Lantern, has the potential to influence planar magic. Additionally, Axis Island had unusual planar fluctuations, and **PN2** Nathan was studying other stars.

Section the Fourth: Goals

Unfortunately, we lack enough information to present anything but baseless speculation.

ATTACHMENT PN16A: GIDIM

Creatures identified as "Gidim Warbeasts" appeared several times, apparently summoned from the planet Apet, also known as The Distant Plane. Apet is source of teleportation and divination magic, and the incomplete silver ring that surrounds it is source of foresight magic. Travel to plane was believed impossible, and no creatures could be summoned from there.

At Ancient High Bayou Ziggurat, a golden plate sealed a portal to a small pocket dimension, which appeared to have originally been part of Apet before being sliced away. Several creatures escaped, including PN16 Sijhen. Based on explanation from PN14 Xambria, the entity was not native to Apet, but rather from the planet/plane/star called Gidim. Alternately, the creature's race might just be called Gidim. We are operating with dubious nomenclature.

Sijhen, like the Gidim Warbeasts, existed primarily as manifested thought, with ability to become solid. Our best guess is that they feed on thought or emotion, either indirectly—like plants requiring intangible sunlight—or physically. After PN16's arrival in Flint, numerous victims were reported having their brains removed through the palates of their mouths. Apparently Sijhen acquired the knowledge of the minds it ate. The warbeasts appear to have been lacking higher intelligence.
Sijhen's possession of PN17 might have been dependent on circumstances, or could be trait of entire species.

Entity attempted to open a portal to its homeworld, though no place called Gidim is known to our skyseers or astronomers, and such travel would normally be impossible. It acquired an ancient artifact known as "Ancient Star Map" which it appeared to use to direct its portal. The possibility of an extraterrestrial race possessed of these powers is greatly concerning, but is beyond the scope of this current investigation. Henceforth, by order of the king, all information about the Gidim is to remain secret, and any previous statements are to be disavowed as a deception perpetrated by unknown fey entities. Until further information is acquired, any additional incursions by the Gidim should be kept hidden from the general public to avoid a mass panic.

Ranyard Muldrate
RHC Slate branch
S.C.P. Division
On behalf of Lord Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill

RADICAL ESCHATOLOGISTS.

COMPONENTS

- 151.416-liter amberglass drum, partitioned into eight chambers, each 18.927 liters. Pour holes to be magically sealed once filled. Tare weight approx 20 kilos.
- Outer casing, de-dweomered steel. (Methian scrap is ideal.)
  - Seventy-two curved plates, 17 cm by 17 cm, sufficient curve to surround drum, attached in the lamellar fashion.
  - Top cover.
  - Base, with central divot and four prongs to stabilize drum.
  - Four threaded rods, attaching base to cover.
- 58 meters of steel wire, 13 gauge.
- Fine alkahest pipette set.
- *Toban's spirit guide*, runic appendix.
- *Tauric's codex of alchemy*, 3rd edition.
- Reagents below, 20 liters apiece.
- Any way to generate lightning. Common magic trick sparkrod works fine, but keep several on hand.

7+6+5+4+3+2+1
Chambers will balance their mixtures, 4% per iteration.

18 x 3.13 x 28 = 1578

3.13 seconds per iteration.
Cascade at 12.5% fire humor.

REAGENTS

- Fire Humor. Triggering agent. Common alchemical.
- Aether. Fills vacuum. Each liter will produce approximate 25% cumulative increase in radius of effect. Stores at Pardwight will be moved after track detonation. Follow and acquire.
- Phlogiston. Liquid elemental fire. Base explosive radius 1.5 meters. Common alchemical.
- Frayed Chronosomia. Fluid time, extruded in threads. Deters divination and foresight. Shipment already acquired, courtesy the Drakran Division of Spycraft.
- Witchoil. Accelerant. Just get some off of Cauldron Hill. Plenty's lying around.
- Blood Infused with Ambergris. Calming agent, stabilizes transmutation. Ambergris can be bought from perfume shops. Blood should be no problem to acquire. Mix until density is 1.08 g/cm^3.
- Serpent's Loop. Scales of a snake that has devoured itself, boiled in venom. Makes fire consume any substance, even stone. Already acquired from Ber.

$0.04Æ^{x(x+b)} = 0.875^{7}{}_{2b}$
18 iterations achieves cascade.

- Frostburn. Transmuted phlogiston that freezes. Really just dash of flavor, so once device activates, all it touches coated in ice. All praise wisdom of Grandis Komanov and her gift of wintry reagent.

Abjurant interferase above 13.2 tachs/hour. First discussion 32 Summer 500 A.O.V. 6048 hours. Round up to 6200.

RECIPE

KEEP ALL LIGHTNING AND SIMILAR MAGIC AWAY FROM THE DEVICE UNTIL YOU READY TO ACTIVATE IT.

1. With each reagent, perform appropriate purifying ritual from Taurić's codex.
2. Fill amberglass chambers in any order. Seal pour holes. Give it good shake to make sure no leaks.
3. Place atop base. Attach top with threaded rods.
4. Separate wire into 28 segments one meter long, and one 30 meters long. Using alkahest, label 28 short wires each with one of possible pairings of ingredients, using runic names.
5. As each is completed, magically thread through amber to appropriate pair of chambers.
6. Label long wire "Black," and attach from interior of top cover. Weave through other wires so touches every one, then leave free on floor. First and last wire it touches must each include ambergris.
7. Attach lamellar plating, leaving Black wire out at bottom. If wire is touching ground, you're somewhat safe. If is inside the case, you're likely doomed. But you are prepared for the end, brothers.
8. Transport device to desired location. When ready to activate, tuck Black wire back into shell so is not touching any other surface, but leave a length exposed. Use lightning magic on exposed surface — will activate device.

~~Why does our cult offer no burly women in afterlife?~~
~~If this will be end, should prepare in this life.~~

~~380 Byrne Street.~~

Dead gods! 81840 tachs! Apiece? Will never work. Target area 500 meters. 2502 pi. But only 240 hours. Will still bankrupt us.
Must suggest bank robbery in addition to doomsday.

APPENDIX M: Item and Power Cards

The cards on the following pages are sized to standard game card dimensions (2½ × 3½ inches).

Surgical Precision
Martial Scientist Attack
Martial, Weapon

Free Encounter

Melee Weapon
Target One creature
Trigger You hit a target granting you advantage with a melee attack.
Effect Choose a limb (or similar body part) of the target to debilitate (save ends). A creature cannot attack with weapons or implements held in debilitated arms, and gain no bonus to defenses from shields in that arm. A creature with a debilitated leg is slowed.
Special You can only have one Martial Scientist power prepared per day.

You've learned to wield your weapon like a scalpel.

Detect Planar Energy

The energy drifts to you like a fragrance on a breeze. You spin and locate the strongest source of the smell, then set out.

Level: 1
Component Cost: 17 gp
Category: Divination
Market Price: 50 gp
Time: 10 minutes
Key Skill: Arcana
Duration: 1 hour

Choose a plane you have visited, or otherwise have had contact with. For the ritual's duration you can sense the direction to and intensity of energies from that plane, to a maximum range of one mile. These energies tend to fade after a few hours or days, but it is possible to track creatures native to other planes by following their trails. The ritual can be foiled by strong sources of energy from the same or other planes. For instance, Cauldron Hill in Flint is a powerful beacon of shadow energy, so you would be unable to pinpoint any sort of foreign energy there, not even fey or elemental energy.

Tentacle Technique
Martial Scientist Attack
Martial

Minor Encounter

Close Burst 5
Target One ally in the burst who is grabbed
Effect The ally makes a basic attack against the creature grabbing it, then makes an Acrobatics or Athletics check to escape the grab. If the attack hits, the ally gets a +5 bonus to the check.
Special You can only have one Martial Scientist power prepared per day.

If a character with the Martial Scientist theme presents a corpse of one of the Gidim beasts to The Battalion martial university, he'll receive this power and a copy of the martial thesis detailing it.

Methods of Extricating Warriors from a Variety of Tentacled and Tendriled Monsters

Focused Severance
Martial Scientist Attack
Martial, Weapon

Triggered Free Encounter

Trigger You hit a target with a melee weapon attack using a weapon that can cut or slice—axe, heavy blade, light blade, or spear—and the target has fewer HP than your level. (The DM should cue you in to this.)
Effect The target must make a saving throw. On a success, the target loses an extremity of its choice—hand, foot, arm, or leg. On a failure, the attacker chooses which extremity the target loses. Creatures without extremities are unaffected.

Field Study of Melee Effectiveness and Foe Debilitation through Focused Limb Severance Techniques Contrasted with Mainstream Opportunistic Techniques

Focused Severance (card 2 of 2)

A severed arm or hand prevents use of anything the victim was holding or carrying. A severed foot slows the victim. A severed leg renders the victim prone.

Special Characters with the Martial Scientist theme who witness Lya Jierre use this technique and later acquire her martial thesis, *Field Study of Melee Effectiveness and Foe Debilitation through Focused Limb Severance Techniques Contrasted with Mainstream Opportunistic Techniques*, can learn this technique.

If you are wielding a *razorburst weapon*, such as the one Lya Jierre owns, add its level to your level to determine the HP threshold of this ability.

Dale Assault

Meditation makes everything cooler.

Training

Requirement: Characters with the Martial Scientist theme who spend time training with Major Dale can learn this ability. Researching his infamous thesis, *Meditation, Coffee and Cherry Pie: Unorthodox Salves Against the Supernatural*, can also grant this technique.

Description: If you have enjoyed a filling and pleasant meal in the past day, you can spend a minute to gain a calm reflection as if you were meditating. While so relaxed, when you would be affected by any fear effect, delay its onset by one round.

You can end this trance to make a feint attempt as a free action against one target in range, making a Bluff check against the target's Passive Insight. If you succeed, the target grants combat advantage against your first attack before the end of your next turn. If the target has the Aberrant, Elemental, Fey, or Shadow origin, you gain a +4 bonus on your Bluff check.

Adventure One

Golden Icon of Avilona — Adventure One

About three inches across, this coin has primitive designs of birds, clouds, and dots that might represent stars.

Lvl 2 520 gp

Rare Wondrous Item

Property When you use an action point, once before the end of your next turn you can fly your speed as a move action.

While on Axis Island, a person holding the icon or wearing it as a necklace gains a jump speed equal to his or her walk speed, and can influence air magic. Most notably, air elementals are drawn to it, and they defend the bearer and obey his or her orders.

Golden Icon of Nem — Adventure One

About three inches across, this coin has primitive designs of shadows, the moon, and dots that might represent stars.

Lvl 4 840 gp

Rare Wondrous Item

Property When you use an action point, you may become insubstantial until the end of your next turn. This effect ends if you attack.

While on Axis Island, a person holding the icon or wearing it as a necklace gains darkvision, and can influence shadow magic. Most notably, shadow creatures are drawn to it, and they defend the bearer and obey his or her orders.

Golden Icon of Urim — Adventure One

About three inches across, this coin has primitive designs of earth, stone, and dots that might represent stars.

Lvl 3 680 gp

Rare Wondrous Item

Property When you use an action point, you can create a wall of stone 2 squares high, which fills 3 contiguous squares within 5 squares of you. The wall lasts until the end of your next turn.

While on Axis Island, a person holding the icon or wearing it as a necklace gains Resist All 5 while not bloodied, and can influence earth magic. Most notably, earth elementals are drawn to it, and they defend the bearer and obey his or her orders.

Adventure Two

Aeriad Bracers — Adventure Two

Made from the shafts and fletching of arrows, these bracers give you slight control over objects in flight.

Lvl 6 1,800 gp

Uncommon Arm Slot Item

Property When you fall, you may land in any square adjacent to where you would normally fall. If you deliberately jump down, you may shift 1 square for every 10 ft. you fall.

Property You gain a +2 item bonus to damage with a bow or crossbow.

Canary in a Coal Mine — Adventure Two

From a gold chain dangles a tiny pendant in the shape of a canary, but it turns black as coal in the presence of danger.

Lvl 3	+1	680 gp	**Lvl 18**	+4	85,000 gp
Lvl 8	+2	3,400 gp	**Lvl 23**	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	**Lvl 28**	+6	2,125,000 gp

Rare Neck Slot Item

Property At the start of each encounter, you get a +5 bonus to all defenses during the surprise round and until the start of your first non-surprise turn.

Power (Daily) Minor Action: You gain a fly speed equal to your speed until the end of your next turn.

Cracked Cauldron — Adventure Two

Crude images in relief of skeletons devouring people ring the lip of this cracked, black cauldron. Its handle hangs loosely on its hinge, and could be easily slipped off.

Lvl 6 1,800 gp

Rare Wondrous Item

Property When you use the cauldron as the focus of a ritual, instead of having the ritual take effect you can store its magic in the handle of the cauldron. You still expend any components used in the ritual.

Power (Daily) Standard Action. The ritual stored in the handle takes effect as if you had just completed the ritual.

Curse The handle's presence is like screeching nails on a chalkboard to wild animals. While you carry the cauldron handle, fey or natural creatures of animal intelligence (Int 1 or 2) can sense you from 100 ft. away, and they gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls against you.

Defender Weapon — Adventure Two

Leather straps around the crossguard hold beads representing your allies, and you can sense their condition as they clack against your fingers.

Lvl 5	+1	1,000 gp	**Lvl 20**	+4	125,000 gp
Lvl 10	+2	5,000 gp	**Lvl 25**	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	**Lvl 30**	+6	3,125,000 gp

Uncommon Weapon Any.

Critical +1d6 damage per plus.

Property During a rest you can attune your weapon to one or more allies. Whenever any of those allies are within 20 squares, you are aware of any conditions affecting those allies, and whether they are bloodied, unconscious, dying, or dead.

Power (Daily) Free Action. *Trigger:* You hit a target with an attack using this weapon. *Effect:* End one condition affecting an ally that the target created. The condition must be one a save can end.

Hat of Hats — Adventure Two

You reach your hand into this simple bowler hat, and your hand brushes something fuzzy. Then you pull out the full outfit of a classic stage magician: white gloves, black suit with tails, black pants, polished white and black shoes. When you glance back at the hat, it's changed into a tophat.

Lvl 4 840 gp

Uncommon Head Slot Item

Power (At-Will) Minor Action. The hat changes shape to any hat that would fit your head, to a maximum of about three feet in any dimension. Even if given a hazardous shape, at best it counts as an improvised weapon.

Power (Encounter) Standard Action. You produce a whole costume of mundane clothes that last for 24 hours, or until you use this power again.

Power (Daily) Standard Action. You produce a small rabbit, bird, or badger from the hat. The creature is harmless and lasts until the end of the encounter.

Hedge Wizard's Gloves — Adventure Two

With a swish and a flick, you float an object across the room.

Lvl 4 840 gp

Uncommon Hand Slot Item

Power (At-Will) Standard Action. As the wizard's *mage hand* power.

Power (At-Will) Standard Action. As the wizard's *prestidigitation* power.

Malice-Wrought Weapon — Adventure Two

Though deadly-sharp, this weapon has no adornments, radiates no magic, and its steel is tarnished and lifeless.

Lvl 7	+2	2,600 gp	**Lvl 22**	+5	325,000 gp
Lvl 12	+3	13,000 gp	**Lvl 27**	+6	1,625,000 gp
Lvl 17	+4	65,000 gp			

Uncommon Weapon Axe, heavy blade, light blade, or spear.

Critical +1d6 damage per plus.

Property This item can never be used as an implement. Its enhancement bonus does not fade in dead magic zones like Danor.

Power (Daily) Free Action. *Trigger:* You critically hit a creature with an origin other than natural while using this weapon. *Effect:* The creature cannot perceive you until the end of the encounter, or until you attack.

Messenger Wind — Adventure Two

You cup an invisible orb of winds in your hand. Five golden feathers spin in tiny eddies and currents, and you pluck one from the tiny miniature cyclone, then release the orb. The winds wait until you whisper to the feather and call upon them to deliver your message.

Lvl 6 1,800 gp

Uncommon Wondrous Item

Property The wind orb can be carried, or it can be left to float at any location, fairly invisible except to those who know to look for it. Five small golden feathers are attuned to the orb, and any person who has a feather can call upon the wind's power as long as they are within thirty miles of the orb.

Power (Encounter) Minor Action. You call the wind of the orb. It flies 10 mph (20 sq/rd) until it reaches you; it will deliver (at 10 mph) a message you give it to any other feather. Each feather can be used once per encounter. If multiple creatures activate feathers, the first resolves before the second begins.

Staff of Arson — Adventure Two

Carved from an ember-glowing beam of scorched wood, this staff desires to spread the flames that formed it.

Lvl 7	+2	2,600 gp	**Lvl 22**	+5	325,000 gp
Lvl 12	+3	13,000 gp	**Lvl 27**	+6	1,625,000 gp
Lvl 17	+4	65,000 gp			

Rare Implement Staff.

Critical None.

Property Critical hits by allies within 3 squares of you deal ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Level 12 Ongoing 7 fire.

Level 17 Ongoing 10 fire.

Level 22 Allies within 5 squares; ongoing 12 fire.

Level 27 Allies within 5 squares; ongoing 15 fire.

Power (At-Will) Minor Action (1/round). Choose a zone that deals fire damage, or a creature suffering ongoing fire damage. A square adjacent to that creature or zone becomes a zone until the end of the encounter. Any creature that enters the new zone or ends its turn there takes fire damage equal to the amount dealt by the fire.

Vendetta Bullet (1 of 2) — Adventure Two

When a man escapes murder or suffers the death of those he cares for, he can etch the name of the ones responsible onto ammunition, giving physical form to his vengeful desires.

Lvl 5	+1	50 gp	**Lvl 20**	+4	5,000 gp
Lvl 10	+2	200 gp	**Lvl 25**	+5	25,000 gp
Lvl 15	+3	1,000 gp	**Lvl 30**	+6	125,000 gp

Rare Ammunition: Firearm bullet.

Property: When you fire this bullet and are targeting the creature whose name is etched on the bullet, if you hit, the attack is a critical hit. If you miss, you instead get a normal hit. If a vendetta bullet has been used against a given target in an encounter, no other vendetta bullets will be effective against the target for the rest of that encounter, even if they're fired by other people.

Vendetta Bullet (2 of 2) — Adventure Two

Vendetta bullets can only be created by someone who owes fierce vengeance to an enemy, and even then that aggrieved person can only create one *vendetta bullet* per enemy, and only if he knows the enemy's name. He can never create a second *vendetta bullet* against the same person, and if he passes the *bullet* to someone else, a given shooter can only ever benefit from one such *bullet* per target. These bullets can be created by people with no magical training; their creation only requires an intense will for revenge.

Wand of Egal the Shimmering — Adventure Two

A foot and a half of simple, pristine gold, this wand is eerily warm to the touch. It bears the profile of an aged man on its handle, his identity unknown.

Lvl 5	+1	1,000 gp	**Lvl 20**	+4	125,000 gp
Lvl 10	+2	5,000 gp	**Lvl 25**	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	**Lvl 30**	+6	3,125,000 gp

Rare Implement: Wand.

Critical: The target is dominated until the end of your next turn.

Property: You cannot teleport or be teleported while this wand is in your possession.

Power (Daily): Free Action. *Trigger:* You hit a target with an attack using this wand. *Effect:* The target is surrounded by arcs of golden energy. It cannot teleport or move to another plane until the end of your next turn.

Amulet of the Ancients — Adventure Three

This stone amulet is engraved with ancient pictograms depicting a tree surrounded by the primal elements of earth, water, wind, and fire. When you are attacked, the amulet turns briefly to gold.

Lvl 8	+2	3,400 gp	**Lvl 23**	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	**Lvl 28**	+6	2,125,000 gp
Lvl 18	+4	85,000 gp			

Rare Neck Slot Item

Property You gain resist acid, cold, fire, lightning, and thunder equal to the amulet's enhancement bonus.

Power (Encounter) Minor Action: You may make a saving throw.

Power (Daily) Free Action. You and each ally within 5 squares gains resist 5 acid, cold, fire, lightning, and thunder until the end of your next turn.

Lvl 12 or 17: Resist 10.

Lvl 22 or 27: Resist 15.

Badger Gun — Adventure Three

You pull the trigger, and a badger springs forth to attack your foes.

Lvl 3	+1	680 gp	**Lvl 18**	+4	85,000 gp
Lvl 8	+2	3,400 gp	**Lvl 23**	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	**Lvl 28**	+6	2,125,000 gp

Uncommon Weapon Any firearm.

Critical +1d6 damage per plus.

Power (Daily) *Trigger:* You hit a target with a ranged attack using this gun. *Effect (Free Action):* A Dreaming badger (page 515) appears in an unoccupied square adjacent to the target, and the target is grabbed by the badger. The badger has your defenses, and hit points equal to half your bloodied value. If it is destroyed, you lose a healing surge. The badger does not take its own actions. When you use a move action, you may have the badger use a move action as well. You may spend a standard action to have it attack. Its attack bonus is equal to your attack bonus with the *badger gun*. Apply the weapon's critical property to the badger's attacks.



Blade of the Ancients Adventure Three

This sword is a macahuitl, a shaft of wood that encased saw-toothed obsidian blades long its edge. Within the crystals, energies from countless worlds crackle. When you attack, the wood turns briefly to gold.

Lvl 7 +2 2,600 gp **Lvl 22** +5 325,000 gp
Lvl 12 +3 13,000 gp **Lvl 27** +6 1,625,000 gp
Lvl 17 +4 65,000 gp.

Rare Weapon Greatsword.

Critical +1d6 acid, cold, fire, lightning, and thunder damage per plus.

Property You gain a +1 item bonus to attack rolls with this sword against creatures with non-"natural" origins.

Power (Encounter) *Standard Action:* You create a zone which lasts until the end of the encounter in an Area Burst 1 within 10. Choose acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder. Creatures that end their turn in the zone take 5 damage of the appropriate energy type.

Lvl 12 or 17: Area Burst 2 within 20, 10 damage.

Lvl 22 or 27: Area burst 3 within 50, 15 damage.

Consciousness of Xambria Adventure Three

As you struggle to pick the lock, Xambria walks into your field of vision, crossing her arms impatiently. "Don't mind me. Take your time." You shift over a bit to give this hallucination room, and she kneels and guides your hand. With a click the lock springs open.

Heroic Tier Legendary Boon

Property You gains +2 item bonus to Acrobatics, Arcana, History, and Thievery checks.

Property You can cast rituals as though you possessed the Ritual Caster feat. If you already possess this feat, you gain a +2 bonus to all skill checks used while performing rituals.

Power (At-Will) You can use the wizard cantrip *mage hand*.

Additional Details See Xambria's Consciousness handout (page 552).

Diamond Encrusted Piece Adventure Three

Your enemies seem dumbstruck at the sight of a gun of solid gold, encrusted with diamonds. Every time you fire one of its 24-karat bullets, you throw away enough money to feed a family for a month. Who but an unrepentant jackass would own such a thing?

Lvl 11 +3 9,000 gp **Lvl 21** +5 225,000 gp
Lvl 16 +4 45,000 gp **Lvl 26** +6 1,125,000 gp

Uncommon Weapon Pistol.

Critical +1d6 damage per plus.

Property When you first fire this weapon in an encounter, every enemy that can see you takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls against any creature other than you until the end of your next turn.

Experimental Steam Suit (1 of 2) Adventure Three

Who wants to be the first to strap a steam engine onto your back and wade into battle in a two ton suit of burnished steel?

Lvl 8 3,400 gp

Rare Wondrous Item

Property You can climb into or out of this suit by spending two move actions. The suit is inert and too heavy to move, causing you to be treated as helpless. However, your armor bonus to AC becomes 10 plus the enhancement bonus of whatever armor you're currently wearing. Even though the suit is effectively super-heavy armor, you can use it without proficiency.

Power (Daily) *Standard Action:* The suit activates. It can pick up and wield weapons and implements as easily as you. You can walk and run, but you cannot climb, jump, or swim. Your lifting capacity is quadrupled, and you gain a +2 item bonus to damage rolls with melee attacks. While the suit is activated, you are treated as wearing heavy armor.

Experimental Steam Suit (2 of 2) Adventure Three

Whenever an attack hits you, make a saving throw. If you fail 3 saving throws in this way, the steam suit breaks down, becoming inert, and it must be repaired before it can be activated again. Repairs can be completed during an extended rest.

Power (Daily) *Standard Action:* You spray oil and ignite it with a primitive flamethrower.

Attack: Close Blast 5 (creatures in burst). Lvl +3 vs. Reflex.

Hit: 5d6+5 fire damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Golden Icon of Apet Adventure Three

This primitive gold medallion has symbols of the planet Apet.

Lvl 10 5,000 gp

Rare Wondrous Item

Property When you use an action point, once before the end of your next turn you can spend a move action to teleport yourself or a creature you can see 6 squares. Unwilling creatures can make a save to resist.

Nock Gun (! of 2) Adventure Three

This gun weighs a good thirty pounds. The blast from the seven barrels tears the target to shreds, but also knocks you to the ground.

Lvl 4 +1 840 gp **Lvl 19** +4 105,000 gp
Lvl 9 +2 4,200 gp **Lvl 24** +5 525,000 gp
Lvl 14 +3 21,000 gp **Lvl 29** +6 2,625,000 gp

Uncommon Weapon Carbine or Musket.

Critical +1d12 damage per plus.

Property This weapon has seven barrels, but must be muzzle-loaded, and cannot use cartridge ammunition. When you attack, you fire all bullets simultaneously.

If you fire more than one bullet, you take a –2 penalty to your attack roll, and for each loaded bullet beyond the first, the weapon's short range is reduced by 1 square, and its long range by 2. For example, firing all seven bullets reduces the range by 6 and 12 squares, respectively. If you hit, you deal +1d6 damage per additional bullet.

Nock Gun (2 of 2) Adventure Three

Whether you hit or miss, make an Endurance check (DC 17, plus 4 per bullet fired beyond the first). If you fail, you drop the weapon and take a –2 penalty to weapon attacks with that arm until you take a short rest. If you fail by 5 or more, you are also knocked prone, and deafened and dazed until the end of your next turn.

Staff of the Ancients Adventure Three

This wooden staff is covered in a spiral of symbols that denote the primal elements of air, earth, fire, and water. When you attack, it turns briefly to gold.

Lvl 9 +2 4,200 gp **Lvl 24** +5 525,000 gp
Lvl 14 +3 21,000 gp **Lvl 29** +6 2,625,000 gp
Lvl 19 +4 105,000 gp

Rare Implement Staff or Totem.

Critical +1d6 acid, cold, fire, lightning, and thunder damage per plus.

Power (Encounter) *Trigger:* You make an attack roll with a power that deals acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage. *Effect (Free Action):* You may reroll the attack roll.

Power (Daily) Standard Action. You use an attack power with the acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder keyword that an enemy you can see used in the last round. You choose the targets using your own space as the origin, but you use the enemy's attack bonus.

Amulet of the Impeccable Spy — Adventure Four

The side of this amulet that faces outward is just a bland copper disk dotted with silver studs, but on the backside is an eye facing inward, not outward.

Lvl 5	+1	1,000 gp	**Lvl 20**	+4	125,000 gp
Lvl 10	+2	5,000 gp	**Lvl 25**	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	**Lvl 30**	+6	3,125,000 gp

Uncommon Neck Slot Item

Property You are always aware when your Bluff checks and Stealth checks fail to conceal your motives or your movements from observers, unless the observer is himself hidden from you.

Power (Daily) Move Action. Choose one of the following: (1) you instantly apply a nonmagical disguise and can change into any outfit you own or have on hand (this can even strip clothes off unconscious foes so you can take their costume); or (2) you make an Athletics or Acrobatics check to escape from a creature or from restraints—you gain a +5 bonus to this roll and treat your result as if you had rolled a 20.

Butcher's Girdle (1 of 2) — Adventure Four

A normal girdle keeps your belly in the shape you want. This does that for your whole body.

Lvl 9 4,200 gp

Rare Waist Slot Item

Property Your healing surge value increases by 2.

Property When you're wearing the girdle, if one of your limbs becomes severed, you can move and control it as if it were still fully functional. Whenever you spend a move action to move, your limb can fly up to your speed (altitude limit 1), though it must remain within 20 squares of you or else it falls inert. You can use your limb to attack, though if you cannot see your target you take a –5 penalty to the attack roll for being blind.

If your limb shares your square, you can spend a minor action to reattach it to your body, restoring full function.

Butcher's Girdle (2 of 2) — Adventure Four

If you wish, you can intentionally sever your own limbs with a blade as a standard action. This does damage to you equal to half your bloodied value. A missing leg makes you prone (even if you can stand up, you can't balance well enough to fight at full effectiveness). If your head is severed and you're not dead from HP loss, you can command your body to pick your head up and reattach it.

Demonic Weapon (1 of 2) — Adventure Four

Though no visual trait betrays its nature, this weapon is frighteningly warm to your skin. As you touch it, for a moment you feel like your hand is submerged in fresh blood. The sensation passes, but you cannot help but long to feel it again.

Lvl 11	+3	9,000 gp	**Lvl 21**	+5	225,000 gp
Lvl 16	+4	45,000 gp	**Lvl 26**	+6	1,125,000 gp

Common Weapon (any)

Critical +1d6 damage per plus.

Property Attacks with this weapon that hit bloodied creatures do an extra 1d6 fire damage per plus.

Curse When you touch the weapon, if it has no living wielder it forcibly attunes itself to you. Once the weapon is attuned, the first time each encounter you attempt to draw or retrieve any item, if you are not already holding the weapon, you draw the weapon instead of whatever you intended to get.

Once per day, you must kill a sentient being and smear the weapon with its blood. If you do not, you

Demonic Weapon (2 of 2) — Adventure Four

suffer a cumulative –1 penalty per day to skill and ability checks based on Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma due to the gun whispering into your mind, compelling you to feed it. If this penalty exceeds your Will defense, you are driven mad and kill yourself with the weapon.

The weapon cannot be destroyed as long as it has a living wielder. The curse can be removed by the Remove Affliction ritual, which requires using the weapon to kill a pregnant she-goat submerged in holy water.

Hands of Heaven and Hell — Adventure Four

These arm-length fingerless gloves are infused with the pugilist training of the Clergy's elite godhands, and tainted by the lightning tongue of a demon.

Lvl 12 13,000 gp

Uncommon Arms Slot Item

Property Once per round when you hit a creature with a melee attack, you may pummel it or another creature adjacent to you, dealing 2 lightning damage. Each time you pummel this way, the *hands of heaven and hell* gain one charge counter, which lasts until the end of the encounter.

Power (Encounter) Minor Action. *Requirement:* The *hands of heaven and hell* must have at least six charge counters. *Effect:* If the next attack roll you make hits, you gain a number of temporary HP equal to the amount of damage you deal.

Headband of Roaming Thoughts — Adventure Four

This thin silver circlet captures your thoughts and lets you send them out into other's minds. You need to be careful to take it off while you sleep, or else you mind wander into someone else's head.

Lvl 10 5,000 gp

Uncommon Head Slot Item

Property You gain telepathy 20, but take a –5 penalty to Bluff checks.

Power (Daily) No Action. *Trigger:* You start your turn dazed, stunned, or affected by a power with the fear keyword. *Attack:* Close Burst 20; level +3 vs. Will. *Target:* One creature within burst. *Hit:* Your turn ends. The target immediately takes an extra turn under your control. *Miss:* The target is affected by the same condition that triggered this power until the start of your next turn.

Lucky Dice Ki Focus — Adventure Four

Keep these two six-sided dice in your pocket. They're good luck.

Lvl 11	+3	9,000 gp.	**Lvl 21**	+5	225,000 gp
Lvl 16	+4	45,000 gp.	**Lvl 26**	+6	1,125,000 gp

Common Implement (ki focus)

Critical +1d6 damage per plus.

Property Any character can use these dice as if he were proficient in ki foci.

Property When you roll these dice, they can yield any number you want. Numbers outside the range of 2-to–12 will be quite suspicious.

Property Pick one d20 you own and only ever use it for attack rolls with this ki focus. Don't let anyone touch it but you. If it rolls badly, you're allowed to make "cleansing" rolls to get the bad numbers out. If you violate these rules, bury the offending die and purchase a new die to replace it. This has no mechanical effect in the game, but trust me, this ki focus is lucky.



Razorburst Weapon (1 of 2) Adventure Four

Pairing Drakran magic and Danoran science, this weapon's blade is edged with hovering, jagged teeth that glint in the light. Upon activation these teeth saw back and forth in a keening blur, liable to sever something vital.

Lvl 12 +3 13,000 gp **Lvl 22** +5 325,000 gp
Lvl 17 +4 65,000 gp **Lvl 27** +6 1,625,000 gp

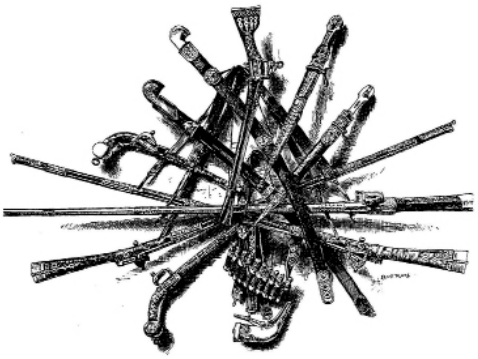
Uncommon Weapon (axe, heavy blade, light blade, \ spear)

Critical +1d10 damage per plus.

Power (Encounter) Free Action. *Trigger:* You damage an enemy with this weapon and afterward the target has fewer HP than the weapon's level. (The GM should cue you in to this.) *Effect:* The weapon shrieks as its bladed teeth saw back and forth as a mechanism near the hilt unspools. The target must make a saving throw. On a success, the target loses an extremity of its choice—hand, foot, arm, or leg. On a failure, the attacker chooses which extremity the target loses.

Razorburst Weapon (2 of 2) Adventure Four

Creatures without extremities are unaffected. A severed arm or hand prevents use of anything that they were holding or carrying. A severed foot slows the target. A severed leg renders the target prone.



The Wayfarer's Lantern (1 of 6) Adventure Four

The eight-faced cap of this lantern depicts symbols of seven planets and the sun. Eight brass arches beneath contain a light that glows without flame, held contained without glass. As the light touches you, reality seems to shift, as if you're in a whole different world.

Lvl 5 1,000 gp

Rare Wondrous Item

Property As a minor action the bearer can adjust the lantern to shed dim (5-square radius) or normal light (10-square radius), or to turn off. It has 10 HP.

The lantern's greater powers require it be fed special fuel—oil attuned to a particular plane by steeping it in some item attuned to that plane. Typically this is some form of meteorite that has been ground to dust. An ounce of this oil burns for 5 minutes.

Each ounce of oil is effectively a consumable item of level 10, 15, or 20 (costing 200, 1,000, or 5,000 gp). The level, based on how much meteor dust the oil contains, determines the strength of the effect. Each

The Wayfarer's Lantern (2 of 6) Adventure Four

given ounce of oil must be attuned to a specific plane.

Power (At-Will) Standard Action. *Effect:* You fill the lantern with oil and light it. The lantern either affects everything it illuminates, or only creatures that you specifically target. To specifically target a creature you either need line of sight to it when you light the lantern, or the creature (or its gear or domicile) must be marked with an arcane sigil prior to lighting the lantern. Targeted creatures that leave the area of the lantern's illumination are no longer affected, but they will be affected again if they return to the area.

The lantern's effects extend 10 squares in every direction, ignoring even total cover or concealment. A creature with total cover or concealment gains a +5 bonus to defenses to resist the lantern's effects because the light is not actually touching him, but the magic can pass through solid objects.

Choose an effect below appropriate to the oil's planar attunement. Each round make an attack against

The Wayfarer's Lantern (3 of 6) Adventure Four

each targeted creature or creature in the area, versus the target's Will defense, with an attack bonus equal to the level of the oil used. A creature that is hit falls under the lantern's effect for 5 minutes. If it later moves beyond the radius of the lantern it is no longer affected, but it will be again as soon as it comes back into the area

The lantern's effect lasts for the full five minutes. It cannot be snuffed prematurely without shattering and destroying the lantern.

- **Any.** Within a minute a random encounter occurs as creatures native to the plane are drawn to the lantern. The total XP value of the conjured creatures is equivalent to the XP value of a single creature of the same level as the oil used. The creatures approach from a random direction. They can affect and be affected by creatures who are affected by the lantern.
- **The Dreaming or Bleak Gate.** Those affected are physically transported to the coterminous spot in either the land of

The Wayfarer's Lantern (4 of 6) Adventure Four

the fey or the land of shadows.

- **Vona.** Affected creatures gain a +10 bonus to Insight and Perception checks. Affected creatures with any sort of vulnerability to radiant energy or sunlight take 5 radiant damage at the beginning of their turns.
- **Jiese.** An affected creature that takes fire damage gains ongoing 5 fire damage if it does not already have ongoing fire damage. Affected creatures take a –5 penalty on saves to end ongoing fire damage. Objects catch fire more easily. Alternately, affected creatures become argumentative and hostile. Any creature that remains under the effect for at least a minute becomes dazed (save ends). While so dazed, if it ends its turn and has not attacked, it must attack or charge the nearest creature. If it succeeds its save against being dazed, it recognizes that its mind is being affected, and is immune from the compulsion for 5 minutes. But if it is still in the radius of the lantern after that time, it can be attacked again.
- **Avilona.** Howling winds blow across affected creatures. At

The Wayfarer's Lantern (5 of 6) Adventure Four

the beginning of your turn roll 1d8 to determine the wind's direction. Whenever an affected creature ends its turn, it is slid 1d4 squares in that direction. Alternately, other types of weather can be called forth, albeit in a limited area.

- **Av.** Any creature under the lantern's effect for at least a minute becomes slowed (save ends). If it fails its save, it falls asleep and has vivid shared dreams. If it succeeds it shakes off the effect and is immune for 5 minutes.
- **Mavisha.** The flow of water within the area obeys mental command of sentient creatures. An affected creature can as a standard action raise, lower, or part water, or increase a vessel's speed by 10 miles an hour, but it's not fast enough to be used as a weapon. Multiple creatures thinking in opposition can rouse the anger of the water, causing it to manifest as a water elemental of a level equal to that of the oil used or slightly lower.
- **Urim.** Illuminated stone, crystal, and metal becomes harder. Affected creatures gain resist 5 all.
- **Apet.** Affected creatures can teleport 10 squares as a move

The Wayfarer's Lantern (6 of 6) Adventure Four

action, but must remain within the radius of the lantern's light.

- **Nem.** Affected creatures are pulled from their bodies into the plane of Nem, a spirit world on the far side of the Bleak Gate. The world resembles reality but is bereft of occupants and slowly fades away as the disembodied creature wanders away from the spot where it died. Even if their body moves, the spot where they entered Nem is an invisible gateway. If they ever stray more than three miles from that gateway, they pass into the afterlife and cannot be resurrected. This is normally not a factor with the lantern because it will not burn long enough. While in Nem they cannot see or be seen by living creatures. They gain phasing. This power can be useful for scouting environments. If their souls leave the area of the lantern, they instantly snap back to the spot where they first entered Nem. If their bodies are moved from the lantern's area, their souls snap back into their flesh.

Alleviating Holy Symbol — Adventure Five

The platinum medallion has three concentric rings. The inner rings float in place, unconnected to the rest of the symbol.

Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	**Lvl 25**	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 20	+4	125,000 gp	**Lvl 30**	+6	3,125,000 gp

Uncommon Implement: Holy symbol.

Critical: +1d4 damage per plus, and any negative conditions created by attacks that creature has made end.

Power (Daily): *Standard Action:* Choose a creature within 10 squares. End all negative conditions affecting that creature. Until the end of your next turn, that creature is immune to negative conditions.

Bleak Gate Ward — Adventure Five

This rusted amulet bears no special inscription or embellishment, only a pressed circle of brass.

Rare Wondrous Item

Property: This amulet twists the deathly energies of the Bleak Gate and transforms them into a temporary protective ward. Once the ward enters the Bleak Gate, it crumbles to dust after 24 hours, or if it leaves the plane, whichever comes first.

Property: While in the Bleak Gate, you gain a +1 to all defenses.

Power (Daily): *Trigger:* You roll a die and dislike the result. *Effect (Free Action):* You reroll the die and make take the new result. The amulet crumbles to dust.

Coat of the Genteel Butcher — Adventure Five

When you pull this coat off Lorcan Kell, a suit of chainmail falls out, as do about a hundred pounds of knives and swords.

Lvl 5	+1	1,000 gp	**Lvl 20**	+4	125,000 gp
Lvl 10	+2	5,000 gp	**Lvl 25**	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	**Lvl 30**	+6	3,125,000 gp

Common Armor: Any.

Property: You may attune this coat to a suit of armor you own. Thereafter, the coat grants the protection, properties, and powers of that armor, but uses the coat's enhancement bonus. The coat can be taken on and off as a move action. You can remove the absorbed armor during a short rest.

Property: You can hide any number of weapons and any amount of ammunition inside this coat. They still count toward your encumbrance, but are not noticeable unless the coat is open, and they can be drawn as easily as a weapon sheathed at your hip.

Distinguished Top Hat — Adventure Five

This fine top hat even adjusts to match the color of your coat.

Lvl 14 21,000 gp

Uncommon Head Slot Item

Power (Encounter): *Trigger:* You become dazed, stunned, or dominated, or are knocked prone. *Effect (Free Action):* You may choose to have the hat fall off. If you do, the condition does not affect you.

Eschatologist's Weapon (1 of 2) — Adventure Five

You cannot lift this weapon easily. Only once you ponder that it might end a life, and you come to terms with that possibility, is it light enough to carry.

Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	**Lvl 23**	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 18	+4	85,000 gp	**Lvl 28**	+6	2,125,000 gp

Rare Weapon: Any.

Critical: +1d8 cold damage per plus, or +1d12 damage per plus against creatures that were once alive but then died (such as undead or resurrected creatures).

Property: This weapon cannot deal nonlethal damage.

Property: While holding this weapon, you gain fire resistance equal to 3 + twice the weapon's enhancement bonus. You may have all untyped damage dealt by this weapon become cold damage.

Eschatologist's Weapon (2 of 2) — Adventure Five

Power (Encounter): *Trigger:* You hit a target with an attack using this weapon. *Effect (Free Action):* The target gains ongoing 10 cold damage (save ends). Whenever it takes this damage, each creature within 3 squares also takes an equal amount of cold damage.

Lvl 23 or 28: Ongoing 15 cold damage.

Power (Encounter): Minor Action. You can extinguish any or all nonmagical fire within 5 squares, and each ally in the burst can make a saving throw against any ongoing fire damage that a save can end.

Figurine of Wondrous Power: Mechanical Carriage

It's not exactly horseless, because it's pulled by mechanical horses.

Lvl 11 9,000 gp

Uncommon Wondrous Item

Power (Encounter): Standard Action. This two-inch figurine grows to a full-sized armored carriage. Instead of being drawn by horses, though, it is pulled by mechanical horse legs that churn along at up to twenty miles per hour, but only over fairly even terrain. It fits up to six people, plus two atop the "driver's seat," but the carriage goes where directed by the figurine's owner, without actually needing a driver. The owner can see whatever is ahead or slightly to the side of the carriage as long as he holds the figurine, allowing him to steer it. Otherwise, the carriage follows general directions but swerves or stops to avoid hazards.

Grappler's Plate — Adventure Five

The joints of this armor can lock at your command, making your grasp nearly undefeatable.

Lvl 12	+3	13,000 gp	**Lvl 22**	+5	325,000 gp
Lvl 17	+4	65,000 gp	**Lvl 27**	+6	1,625,000 gp

Common Armor: Plate.

Property: You can sustain grabs as a free action. If you do, until your next turn you are immobilized and creatures take a –2 penalty to their checks to escape your grab.

Gremlin Gloves — Adventure Five

These patchwork gloves quiver slightly in the presence of machines.

Lvl 13 17,000 gp

Common Hands Slot Item

Property: Firearms, crossbows, and similar technological items that can be held in one or two hands do not function while you hold them. Attacks by such weapons made against you must roll two attack rolls and take the worse result. Larger devices like wagons or engines are unaffected.

Curse: If you eat after midnight and before sunrise while wearing these gloves, you get indigestion and lose a healing surge. If you get the gloves wet, they won't fit, and you have to take them off and dry them before you can put them back on.

Power (Encounter): Standard Action: Make a Thievery check to disable a device that is up to 5 squares away. You do not need line of sight or line of effect to the object, but you must know it's there.

Hammer of the Lost Riders Adventure Five

This hammer shatters those who oppose you like fragile ice. But a blizzard swirls at the edge of your vision, and the longer you tarry from battle, the closer it looms.

Lvl 16 +4 45,000 gp **Lvl 26** +6 1,125,000 gp
Lvl 21 +5 225,000 gp

Rare Weapon: Hammer.

Critical: +1d6 cold damage per plus, and you are stunned until the end of your next turn and blinded (save ends).

Property: The first time on your turn that you attack with this weapon, it deals 5 cold damage to you and each creature within 2 squares. This area grants concealment until the end of your next turn, as it is filled with a snow storm.

If you have completed one combat encounter since an extended rest, the range expands to 5 squares. If two combat encounters, the range extends to 20 squares.

Lvl 21 or 26: 10 cold damage.

Man-Killing Machete Adventure Five

It is a machete, its blade nicked, rusted, and blood-stained. If you're not careful, it will slice your finger when it's still an inch away from the edge.

Lvl 12 +3 13,000 gp **Lvl 22** +5 325,000 gp
Lvl 17 +4 65,000 gp **Lvl 27** +6 1,625,000 gp

Rare Weapon: Heavy Blade.

Critical: +1d6 damage per plus.

Property: This weapon is functionally a longsword. When you have it on your person, you may have every light blade and heavy blade you own share this weapon's enhancement bonus. If you do, whenever you miss a humanoid creature with a weapon attack using a light blade or heavy blade, that creature takes 5 damage.

Lvl 22 or 27: 10 damage.

Shoes of Reliable Style Adventure Five

Everywhere you go, people compliment you on your footwear, though it never looks the same two days in a row.

Lvl 13 17,000 gp

Uncommon Feet Slot Item

Property: You and up to ten people whom you consider to be "in your group" always elicit positive comments about your clothing, especially your shoes. You all can dance with proficiency any type of dance you are invited to join. You are immune to caltrops. This property does not help characters who are barefoot, however.

Power (At-Will): Standard Action: You gain the appearance of any humanoid creature of the same size category as you. You may also have your clothing and equipment physically transform into mundane items for a disguise.

The Hurricane Violin (1 of 2) Adventure Five

Enchanted by the arcane acoustics of the Navras Opera House, this violin has a streak of white passing through its wooden body. A skilled musician can control the wind with a pull of his bow.

Lvl 14 21,000 gp

Rare Wondrous Item

Property: Characters trained to play a violin can use this item as an implement. As an implement, it grants a +3 enhancement bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls. On a critical hit, it deals +3d6 thunder damage.

Property: If a character plays the violin for an hour, he can perform the Control Weather ritual without having to pay its normal cost. This affects weather in a 2-mile radius. His Nature check to determine the weather's duration is modified by Charisma instead of Intelligence. If he stops playing for more than 5 minutes, the effect ends. This power can only be used once per month.

The Hurricane Violin (2 of 2) Adventure Five

Property: When the owner acquires the violin, he may choose one Level 1 at-will implement attack power that deals lightning or thunder damage from any class. He gains that power for as long as he carries the violin.



Xambria's Consciousness

If one of the PCs chooses to accept Xambria's mind, she floats in the back of the character's consciousness, able to sense what he senses and communicate with him mentally. She functions in many was as through she were an artifact that does not take up an item slot. Her attack powers have an attack bonus equal to the PC's level plus 3.

Consciousness of Xambria Adventure Three

As you struggle to pick the lock, Xambria walks into your field of vision, crossing her arms impatiently. "Don't mind me. Take your time." You shift over a bit to give this hallucination room, and she kneels and guides your hand. With a click the lock springs open.

Heroic Tier Legendary Boon

Property: You gains +2 item bonus to Acrobatics, Arcana, History, and Thievery checks.

Property: You can cast rituals as though you possessed the Ritual Caster feat. If you already possess this feat, you gain a +2 bonus to all skill checks used while performing rituals.

Power (At-Will): You can use the wizard cantrip *mage hand.*

Xambria's Goals.

- Discover the secrets of the Obscurati and exact revenge.
- Learn all she can about the nature of the Ancients.
- Get a body of her own.

Roleplaying Xambria.

Free of Sijhen, Xambria's natural personality returns. Intensely curious, she would often put herself in danger, and so she encourages the PC to be bold. She is extremely well read on many topics, including history, magic, and culture, but surprisingly ignorant about others, especially modern technology.

Xambria's long time fusion with Sijhen has left marks on her psyche however, making her prone to rapid mood swings. She is obsessed with bringing down the Obscurati, who she blames for the deaths of her dig team and many others.

Xambria constantly observes her hosts surroundings, and offers advice when she can. She may sometimes ask to take control of the host body, especially when trying to connect to the remnants of her past life. If concordance is low, she may even take primary control of the body by force.

Concordance.

Starting Score	5
Host gains a level	+1
Host is trained in History	+2
Host defeats an Obscurati plot	+1
Host discovers new information about the Ancients	+1
Host carries a bullwhip	+1
Host plunders an archaeologically significant tomb or dungeon	+2
Host destroys historical artifacts	–1
Host aids the Obscurati	–2

Pleased (16–20).

"Together we can defeat the—is that a real Tarkash dynasty vase?"

Xambria has a close bond with her host. Their personalities may start to merge. Even while she is not in primary control, she can aid in a fight.

Xambria flickers before you and shoves the air, sending enemies flying.

Property: The item bonus to Acrobatics, Arcana, History, and Thievery checks increases to +3.

Power (Daily ✦ Force): Standard Action. *Attack:* Close Burst 3 (enemies in burst). Level+3 vs. Fortitude. *Hit:* 3d10 + Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma force damage, and push the target 4 squares. *Miss:* Half damage, and push the target 2 squares.

Satisfied (12–15).

"Yes, there's a voice in my head, but she's very helpful."

Xambria gets along well with her host and has become accustomed to the new body. Xambria's spirit can briefly manifest physically.

Power (Encounter): Free action (use on your turn only). *Effect:* Xambria manifests for a moment within 10 squares. She can take a minor action to manipulate an object or do something similar.

Normal (5–11).

"We're going to spend a lot of time together. It's best we establish some ground rules."

Xambria is still adjusting to her new body, and the personality she shares with it. While she almost certainly prefers the character to Sijhen, she is not entirely sure she can trust her new host.

Unsatisfied (1–4).

"It wasn't me! It was the archeologist in my head!"

Xambria is unhappy with many of the PCs choices, and tries to take control of the body by force. Once per day she attacks the PC:

Attack: Level+3 vs. the PC's Will.

Hit: Xambria takes control of the PC's body. The DM may dictate the PC's actions during this time. Every time Xambria takes a short or extended rest, the PC may attempt a saving throw to regain control.

Angered (0 or Lower).

"I think you're mistaking me for somebody else. My name is Xambria."

The PC's actions so frequently diverge from Xambria's that she tries to permanently wrest control away from the PC. Once per encounter she makes the following attack against the PC.

Attack: Level+3 vs. Will.

Hit: Xambria takes control of the PC's body. The DM may dictate the PC's actions during this time. Every time Xambria takes a short or extended rest, the PC may attempt a saving throw to regain control. If concordance is less then zero, the PC takes a penalty to the save equal to the concordance value.

Moving On.

"Everything's so... quiet."

If Xambria gets along especially well with her host, the two might slowly merge together into they form a single personality that combines elements of both. Alternately, if a host wants to be rid of her, certain rituals make it possible, but Xambria will argue that destroying her is murder. Finally, Xambria may grow tire of living as a passenger in the host's body, and yearn for a life of her own. In Adventure Six she can possibly acquire a construct body, and in Adventure Seven she might be able to implant her consciousness into the body of a living person.

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