Zeitgeist™

THE GEARS OF REVOLUTION

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The Grand Design

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ZEITGEIST Adventure Path Act Two
The Grand Design

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DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® ROLEPLAYING GAME
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Foreword
Man in the Middle

Many moons ago, I started work on this crazy project called Zeitgeist. At that point in my life, I'd just started writing freelance assignments in the RPG industry, and was working for EN Publishing as a 'rules converter'; I took the 4th edition rules for Zeitgeist and converted them to Pathfinder RPG rules set. I knew from the onset that I needed to somehow make myself a part of this massive endeavor, because I knew it was going to be one of the all-time greats of adventure paths.

I'd had an inkling of how splendid Zeitgeist would be after playing through this other little Ryan Nock-inspired thing called War of the Burning Sky. My friendship with Ryan really began when I started instant messaging him about the exploits of my Burning Sky party—side note: never let one PC get ALL the artifacts in a campaign. When Ryan started talking about the seeds of Zeitgeist—along with a lot of Final Fantasy VI nostalgia—not only did I know I had to be involved, I enacted a grand strategy of getting in as a writer.

I guess you could say that my plan worked (or Ryan tricked me), as I ended up writing three of the adventures you'll find in the Zeitgeist adventure path. In the first hardbound compilation, I was responsible for the final adventure, Cauldron-Born. Within this equally lovely hardback, you'll revisit important scenes from the campaign's past in Diaspora. In the opening adventure of the next hardcover, you'll start coping with a changed world in the events of Godmind. So, I suppose it somewhat makes sense that Ryan was gracious enough to ask me to pen this Foreword for the central act of the Zeitgeist campaign, as I somewhat grabbed the central adventures of the campaign.

Special thanks go out to my original War of the Burning Sky party: Kevin 'Lucky Pete Lightning' Wilson, Nicholas 'I Polymorph into a Bear' Bobbie, Mike 'Last Hurrah for the 3.5 Spiked Chain' Wood, and Michael 'Earthquake in the Clock Tower' Hofer. Without these stalwart adventurers, I never would have never met the fine people at EN Publishing, nor would I have made friends with the august Ryan Nock and Russ Morrissey.

Of course, it should go without saying that the fans of Zeitgeist are the real people who deserve praise. I've moved on to work for other RPG companies since writing for Zeitgeist, but it always fills me with pride when I see reviews and comments about this campaign show up online. Knowing the attention to detail and dedication that Ryan puts into this campaign, I wholeheartedly agree when people post their opinions about Zeitgeist being the strongest adventure path of the last decade.

I'm just glad I got to tag along for the ride.

Thurston Hillman
Fan & Writer

Adventure Number 6

Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman

From the Pen of Ryan Nock

Evocative Cover Illustration by ShenFei

Stunning Cartographic Displays by James Hazelett
Jonathan Roberts

Masterful Interior Illustrations by Claudio Pozas
ShenFei
and artists from history

with Layout and Graphic Design by Eric Life-Putnam and
Frank Michienzi

Ably Produced and Facilitated by Russell Morrissey

Special Thanks to my gaming group, who kept offering feedback even after everyone died while playtesting Adventure Four.

ADVENTURE SIX: Introduction

Wherein a Tiny Tinker Can Topple a Tyrant

Welcome to the beginning of Act Two of Zeitgeist: The Gears of Revolution. In the first arc of the campaign, the party discovered an international conspiracy tinkering with extraplanar magic and building a colossal golem in a plane that was the shadow of the real world. At the climax of the fifth adventure that colossus went out of control, broke free, and began trampling through the city of Flint. The party helped drive it away, and their king tasked them with finding a way to gain control of it before the conspiracy can.

Throughout the next three adventures, the party's mission will take them across the world to disrupt enemy plots, enlist allies, and fight for mastery of the mighty metal titan. Their first step takes them to Ber, a nation once ruled by dragons, now a struggling young land of orcs, minotaurs, gnolls, and other savage races trying to learn to be civilized. One of the colossus's creators has sought asylum with Ber's ruler, who considers the tiny gnome technologist a treasure not to be lightly traded.

The Short, Short Version

The party heads to Ber to find the gnome, named Tinker. On their way to meet Ber's minotaur ruler named Shantus, members of the conspiracy ambush the PCs, get the party's local guide arrested, and then attack the party with a stampede. The PCs might clear their guide's name and find allies among the locals, but to gain an audience with Shantus they must pass through a labyrinth obstacle course. The minotaur, it seems, likes to be entertained.

At the court of Shantus, a party allied with the conspiracy has already asked for access to Tinker. Shantus decides he'll give the gnome to whoever entertains him most. He proposes a contest between the PCs and the other party, consisting of two challenges: the under-construction railroad, and the disloyal ally.

At the railroad, two companies of workers compete to build the most miles of track, and the PCs can help their efforts, disrupt the efforts of the other company, and defend against the sabotage attempts by the conspiracy's party. With the disloyal ally, the PCs try to convince him to pledge fealty to Shantus while the other team tries to provoke him to attack the party's homeland.

Shantus forbids the two parties from harming each other directly, but subterfuge and cheating is encouraged. Once there is a winner, Shantus brings Tinker out of hiding, but then is betrayed. Under the magical compulsion of a megalomaniacal industrialist named Pemberton, Tinker and a gang of traitors try to kill Shantus and both parties.

Adapting the Adventure

If you're playing in a home campaign, you might replace the steampunk elements with more traditional forms of magic. Tinker might still be a master of machines, but he could surround himself with medieval siege weapons, cranes, and traditional golems. Instead of building a railroad, the Berans might be constructing an aqueduct; and instead of a factory, the climax might occur at an iron mine filled with Tinker's war machines.

To fit the adventure into your own campaign you can skip the introduction in Risur and start right away in Ber. Perhaps Tinker knows a secret or possesses a rare magic item the PCs need.

If you just want some inspiration for your own campaign, we have:

- a nation of normally savage races trying to civilize themselves,
- a stampede of megafauna provoked by tyrannosaurs,
- a labyrinth arena,
- a competition where two high-level parties try to sabotage each other,
- a battle with a gnome in a golem suit, and
- a dragon with steamtech prostheses.

Finally, if you like the Storm-Tossed Battle (page 55), you might want to check out our naval adventures book *Admiral o' the High Seas* for ideas on other shipboard action scenes.

The party learns that Pemberton, an old dragon ruler trapped in human form, seeks to conquer Ber. He has replaced Tinker and others close to the king with mechanical duplicants under his control, and has put the real Tinker to work in his volcanic island lair, which he has converted to a factory building war machines.

Perhaps with the temporary aid of the conspiracy, the PCs must fight their way past a dragon-worshipping gnoll cult to reach the heart of the volcano, recruit Tinker, and defeat the last surviving dragon tyrant.

Machines talk. Most people are too big to hear them, and so the machines don't like them. But they like Tinker. Their tiny little voices tell Tinker their secrets, and he treats them nicely, so when he asks, the machines do what he wants. For a while what he wanted was to make a great big machine, one so loud that everyone would hear what it was saying. Then he wanted to become so small himself that no one would find him. But now maybe it's time for the machines to start yelling. If enough of them yell together, people will be sure to hear.

Tinker yelps and cowers in the presence of things bigger than him, though when he's in his mechanical battle suit he gets a bit megalomaniacal. His goals are mercurial, and he's easily nudged toward different projects, as long as he gets to work with machines. He possesses little actual malice, except to those who doubt his brilliance. Or those who want to kill him, like the Obscurati.

Part of Tinker's unhinged personality is because he hears whispers of every machine everywhere, and these whispers speak of maddening concepts, granting him glimpses of a world too large for his mind to cope with.

Shantus took over from Ber's previous ruler, Vairday Bruse, eight years ago. Though he was instrumental in the early growth of the revolution, after a few years of bearing the weight of a nation on his shoulders, and of seeing how slow and embarrassing progress was, Shantus has begun to slip back into the traditional patterns of power. Though he hasn't betrayed the principles of his predecessor, he has come to believe that Ber has made enough progress for one revolution.

Shantus thinks of himself as mischievous, using his power to force petitioners into silly situations to get what they want. He tells himself this endears his people to him, though in truth many see him as petty and decadent. He doesn't brook disagreement, though, and the handful of advisors who tried to explain how tone-deaf he was to the needs of his people were given assignments in Ber's swamps and deserts so they wouldn't bother him.

Background

The gnome engineer **Tinker Oddcog** was always a bit addled. Though most gnomes in Risur live hidden in the forests at the borders of the fey realm of The Dreaming, Tinker embraced technology, fascinated by tiny whirling gears and the ability to invent new tools and leave his mark on the world.

Then ten years ago, while excavating tunnels for a subrail project in Risur's capital city of Slate, Tinker stumbled upon a brass orb. He became obsessed with it, convinced he could hear whispers from it, and that its surface consisted of imperceptibly tiny interlocking cogs that moved like they were alive. His obsession got him fired, and soon thereafter the head of the project was crushed by a crane that seemed to swing by its own volition.

After the tragedy, Tinker offered to take over the project, but was rejected. When the next project head died in a hideous train derailment, the aristocrats of Slate, already wary of technology, forbade any further subrail construction in their city.

Agents of the Obscurati, however, recognized that Tinker possessed the power to speak with and command machines. They recruited the gnome to help build their colossus. He earned the nickname "gear-builder," but after a friend of his—the "mindmaker"—died trying to escape the conspiracy, Tinker grew paranoid. He bided his time, and when the colossus broke free (see Adventure Five, *Cauldron-Born*), he fled and boarded a ship to Ber, his precious brass orb tucked under his arm. More importantly, he carried the secrets of the colossus in his head.

Civilization in Ber

Centuries ago, what is modern Ber was a patchwork of kingdoms ruled by dragon tyrants who kept savage races as their subjects. The last of those tyrants fell 200 years ago, and an era of chaos and decline followed.

Then, forty years ago an orc named **Vairday Bruse** united the shattered cities, the squabbling warlords, and the roaming tribes under his banner, naming the new nation Ber. He negotiated with other countries, brought fresh wealth to his people, and developed a cult of adoration centered on advancing his people toward the civilized cultures of the rest of the world.

Throughout Ber, men and women whose parents lived in mountain caves or tents on the grasslands now struggle to adapt to fancy attire, refined etiquette, and enlightened education and philosophy. Some rebel or simply don't buy into Ber's cultural revolution, and indeed some of the most unwilling converts were those who had long lived in cities, slaves to the dragon masters. But most loved Vairday Bruse for the safety and dignity he brought them, and they see it as their duty to civilize themselves.

Eight years ago Vairday died and passed on his position to a minotaur, Shantus, who helped him in the founding of Ber. Taking his predecessor's name instead of the title king, **Bruse Shantus** has kept Ber stable and has negotiated for more foreign investment, though he is less devoted to cultural and social reforms.

Races of Ber

Orcs are the most common race, concentrated in the northeast. Gnolls dominate the south. Minotaurs are prominent to the west, while lizardfolk are prevalent in the thinly-populated central river lands. Goliaths live in the Anthras Mountains, close to human lands. Other races like goblinoids, kobolds, and dragonborn are rare. Aside from the gnolls, every race in Ber grudgingly gets along with all the others.

Though humans stereotype all these races as savage, Berans have their own clichés about their neighbors, viewing gnolls arguably the worst:

- Orcs are drunkards who sing badly and are always trying to be clever and failing.
- Minotaurs are lazy, take credit for what others do, and have sex with anything.
- Lizardfolk are thieves and all look alike.
- Goliaths are all homosexuals, not to mention spies for Risur.
- Goblins have disgusting food like spiked pickles, and they are confused by any technology more advanced than ropes.
- Gnolls are superstitious, uncivilized criminals who can never lead themselves, which is why they all miss their dragon tyrants.
- And kobolds, the joke goes, don't really exist.

Asylum and Industry

Tinker reached Ber on the 21st of Spring and quickly contacted Glaucia Evora, a gnoll member of Executores dola Liberta, the "enforcers of freedom" who are tasked with maintaining the revolution. Tinker offered his technological know-how in exchange for asylum, and the Bruse accepted. Empowered by Ber's rites of rulership, Shantus has cloaked Tinker from divination. The Bruse always knows the gnome's health and status, and if anyone harms him, Shantus will be able to see it.

However, Shantus does not automatically know who speaks to Tinker, or where he goes. So he is not aware that Tinker was soon met by **Benedict Pemberton**. Pemberton, an eccentric industrialist, inventor, and firebrand from Risur, proposed a new arrangement: Tinker could come work for him at his private island on Ber's southern coast, he could still benefit from the Bruse's protection, and he'd be building far more interesting things than railroads and steam boilers.

Pemberton provided Tinker with the schematic and material necessary to craft a "duplicant": a mechanical body that can be controlled remotely. Each duplicant contains a small vessel of witchoil (see Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*), which holds a sliver of the soul of whomever the machine has imprinted. The machine becomes a near-perfect double of the original person, though it must obey Pemberton's orders.

Tinker built his own duplicant, bonded to it, and left it behind to do modest work for the Bruse as he snuck off to Pemberton's island, Isla dolas Focas. Iron mines riddle the island, and at its heart lies a dormant volcano, once a lair of one of Ber's old dragon tyrants.

EXPECTED TIMELINE

The adventure begins on the 1st of Summer, 501 A.O.V. (After Our Victory). The party can teleport to Ber the same day, or spend days sailing the 800 miles from Flint to Seobriga. An average ship could get there in 10 days, while Risur's fastest ship could get there in 2 days with some magical help, and by having the crew toil through the night for every last scrap of wind.

Lya Jierre's group is stuck trying to entertain the Bruse and curry favor until the party arrives and shakes things up. From there, it likely takes 20 days to finish the Cantabrilla Railroad challenge. The railhead is about 300 miles from Citado Cavallo, so even with fine horses it would take 6 days to get there. Only slightly faster is riding to Renza then taking the train, which shaves off a single day. This means the party will likely split up, or perhaps send their ship to Marrajado de Oro so they can teleport back and forth with Linked Portal and Reverse Portal rituals.

Once they get back to the Bruse's summer court, a day passes before Tinker arrives and provokes a battle. Then it's another 400 miles from Seobriga to Isla dolas Focas to find the real Tinker. Teleportation isn't possible this time, and Lya's ship *Lux Profectusque* will get there in 3 days. Even if the party dawdles during the Bruse's game, they'll likely finish the adventure in less than a month.

The Last Dragons

Starting five hundred years ago, it became popular for mighty heroes and would-be kings to slay dragons, and they descended upon the domains of the dragon tyrants, until finally in 300 A.O.V., according to common lore, King Boyle of Risur slew the last of the dragons. Though a few scattered legends tell of survivors, dragons are believed extinct.

In truth, a handful of dragons escaped this genocide. The dragons fought off most challengers until 295 A.O.V., when the world's already tenuous connection to the plane of air was nearly severed (see Adventure One, *Island at the Axis of the World*). With their massive bodies now forced to obey the same physical laws as birds, most dragons were rendered incapable of flight. Their numbers rapidly dwindled.

But King Boyle of Risur saw more value in the remaining dragons than simply mounting their heads as trophies. He offered the last dragon tyrants refuge in Risur and vowed to protect them and even keep their hoards safe, as long as they pledged never to take hostile action against Risur. But for the pact to be secure, they would need to live 100 years in the form of a human.

Some dragons rebuked the king, and he slew them, but a few agreed to his terms. One, known then as **Inatch the Hex-Eater**, eventually

The dragon Gradiax, Lord of Steel, has almost never resumed his true form for the past two centuries, and has grown accustomed to his eccentric alternate identity as a businessman and technologist. Though he only looks about fifty, and has the verve of a young man, he jokingly exaggerates his aged infirmities. He speaks slowly with a deep, country-accented voice, and often leans back and tucks his thumbs in his belt loops as he talks. (Imagine a more laid-back Foghorn Leghorn.)

Confident in his ability to win in the long run, Pemberton almost never loses his cool. He enjoys playing subtle power games; if he spies a loose thread on someone he's talking to, he'll draw out a short folding knife he always carries, flick it open, and without explaining what he's doing will walk over and snip the thread free, or if they flinch he'll chuckle at the person's nervousness around a harmless geezer like him.

An ambitious tiefling in her late 20s, Lya is 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.

She serves as Danor's Minister of Outsiders, giving her great leeway to travel and make alliances. After the peace talks with Risur fell apart three months ago, she has been more active in her clandestine role, as leader of the Obscurati's Golden Cell. Since the conspiracy's ritual (detailed in the Zeitgeist Campaign Guide) is all but ready to go, Lya has taken point on eliminating small, scattered threats to the group's plans.

Intelligent and open-minded, Lya has her doubts about the conspiracy's plans. She insists on maintaining high moral standards for herself and her followers, to balance out the distasteful but—as she sees them—necessary deceptions and murders they commit.

became a loyal advisor to several kings of Risur, and today serves as Risur's principal minister under the name of **Harkover Lee**.

Another dragon, **Gradiax, the Lord of Steel**, became human but avoided all contact with the leaders of Risur. He used his remaining treasure to invest in land, then invented a family line so he could assume new identities and inherit his own wealth. But after his century of waiting came to an end, he understood that even if he resumed his old form, he would just be another beast to be slain. He needed a power base before he could reveal himself.

Today, Gradiax goes by the name Benedict Pemberton, owner of Pemberton Industries, which until recently manufactured experimental military technologies in Flint, the industrial heart of Risur. Harkover Lee and Pemberton both know each other's identities, and Lee has kept an eye on his fellow dragon's business, wary of betrayal.

But Pemberton has slowly been building a second path to power. He was in the process of negotiating to sell the Bruse golems for constructing his new railroad when he learned of Tinker Oddcog's arrival. Recalling rumors of the gnome's knack with machines, Pemberton was determined to turn the Tinker into an asset. The tiny little madman has performed far beyond Pemberton's dreams.

Isla dolas Focas

Pemberton secretly controls this fifty-mile long sliver of land off the southeastern coast of Ber: the Island of the Seals, named for the massive population of seals that nest on its shores. Two centuries ago Pemberton—as Gradiax—ruled a small nation of gnolls from here. Though like all the dragon tyrants he oppressed most of his people, the gnolls of Isla dolas Focas he treated grandly, and when he left he promised he would return.

The gnolls refused to ally with the rest of Ber under Vairdy Bruse, and encouraged other tribes to resist. They call themselves the Cult of the Steel Lord, and for two centuries they have continued to excavate the iron mines, stockpiling ore for their lord's return. The one time Pemberton has returned to his true draconic form was seven years ago to slay the ruler of the gnolls and reclaim his domain.

The Cult of the Steel Lord believes humanoid races are unworthy to wield metal, and that if they are pure they will become as strong as steel. Indeed, as a blessing to his most faithful follower, Pemberton recently had Tinker construct a duplicant for a gnoll named **Pardo**, who he then sent as an emissary to Shantus. Now Pardo's machine body represents the unincorporated tribes of Ber at the Bruse's court. He has even earned the honorary title "Minister of Rebellion." No one aside from the gnolls who worship him knows that Pemberton leads the cult.

Father and Daughter

When Gradiax faked his death and abandoned the island, he left behind a clutch of eggs lain by his slain lover. The Cult tended these during his absence, and when Pemberton again took control of the island he dared to have them hatch one egg. Alas, the child who emerged was crippled, missing an eye, a wing, and most of one leg.

Pemberton raised his daughter, whom he named **Terakalir**, hoping he might still establish a dynasty. He abducted tutors to educate her, and she trained her mind because her body was weak. But when Tinker Oddcog arrived, the gnome excitedly crafted her steel prostheses to replace her missing flesh. Tinker became cherished by the Cult of the Steel Lord, and the gnolls grew only more fervent in their belief that they were blessed by this new half-dragon, half-machine.

Draconic Machinations

Pemberton has slowly begun replacing high-ranking officials in the more distant areas of Ber with duplicants. The design of the devices requires that the original body remains alive, so that it can maintain a link to the mind and soul of the person it is mimicking. This connection also protects the duplicants from magical detection, because unless you know what you're looking for, they register as being the creatures they're mimicking.

Pemberton's gnoll minions keep the abducted officials imprisoned in their main caves, but he's wary of stretching too far and being discovered. His ultimate goal is to replace the Bruse and his advisors, then steer the nation to desire a new dragon overlord. Toward that end, he has had Tinker craft golems, which themselves helped craft more golems, as well other machines. His old lair has been fortified and transformed into a massive automaton factory.

Within a year, he'll have enough war machines and duplicant-enhanced gnoll soldiers that even if his plan to seize control of the Bruse fails, he'll be able to conquer Ber outright. Until he's ready, though, he continues to play the role of an eccentric industrialist from Risur, pretending that he just seeks to make money by building railroads.

Obscurati Involvement

Pemberton is in no way affiliated with the Obscurati, and he only knows a little about them from what Tinker has mentioned.

The Obscurati want Tinker silenced. In the two and a half months since their colossus construction facility was raided they've fought with the RHC to try and tie up loose ends—by getting assets out of Risur before they could be captured, or killing prisoners before they could reveal any information. Simultaneously, the party and other agents of Risur have chased down fringe members of the Obscurati, rooting out potential threats within their own nation.

Risur wants Tinker—to interrogate about the Obscurati at least, to become an asset if possible. The Ob, meanwhile, intend to kill the gnome. And though Tinker has done a good job hiding his tracks, both the party and their rivals manage to catch wind of his location at the same time.

The Ob leadership, understanding that Tinker is a valuable asset to Ber, have sent tiefling diplomat **Lya Jierre**, one of the top-tier members of the conspiracy. An experienced negotiator and expert swordswoman, Lya travels with two elite bodyguards—**Rush Munchausen** and **Merton Goncala**—as well as a ship full of Obscurati operatives.

Lya has nearly every resource she could need for this mission, but even the Obscurati aren't aware of Pemberton's identity, nor his plots. Though Risur and the Ob are at odds, neither side wants Ber to fall under control of a dragon, so the party might have reason to work with their enemies, at least in the short term.

Tinker's Secrets

What can the party learn from Tinker if they capture or recruit him? First, he can fill in any missing pieces of information about the nature of the Bleak Gate construction site in Flint.

Second, he can intuitively track the path of colossus, even while it is exiled in the Dreaming. By the time this adventure starts the titan has wandered over the fey version of the Anthras Mountains into fey Ber, where it has incited much furor among the nature spirits. It's heading toward Seobriga to make crossing to Elfaivar at the narrowest spot. Tinker knows the machine is trying to find Kasvarina, which it thinks of as its mother.

Third, of the most interest to the party's bosses, he's a brilliant inventor, and can help design new arms and vehicles, perhaps even helping craft an airship for the party in epic tier (in adventure ten, *Godmind*).

But most importantly, he knows how the colossus works. Its specifications called for it to be able to lift a flat object a hundred feet in diameter, weighing 11,839 standard tons, and hold it up with one side angled on the ground. (This is the 100-ft. diameter, 30-inch thick golden plate atop the Axis Seal.) It needed to be able to withstand truly extreme energy, equivalent to standing in a volcano, as well as resist kinetic injuries. (This is because the Ob don't know what sort of energy will be released when the Axis Seal opens.)

It needed to stabilize its own magical energies, without having to rely on power from other planes. (This because those planes would be changing.) Tinker notes that the last refit they made was to open a small hollow in the colossus's chest, about big enough to hold a pumpkin, which had a pipe that could feed in some sort of liquid fuel. (This was so that a replica of the Wayfarer's Lantern could be integrated into it, to infuse it with whatever planar energy was needed.)

It also needed to be able to function underwater for extended periods, at pressures seen only deep under the ocean. (This so that years of effort would not be ruined in the event the ship transporting it to Axis Island sank.)

Tinker worked with experts in several fields to integrate the necessary components. He was particularly fascinated working with the mindmaker because the man insisted the colossus be capable of nuanced facial expressions so that it could interact and express itself. Tinker even mimicked elements of the little understood human endocrine and vascular systems to grant the colossus physical feedback of its emotions, the idea being to help it form attachments to normal people and feel loyalty, rather than mere obedience.

Of course, working on huge versions of microscopically tiny anatomy just made Tinker more enthralled with the small, and nervous about the massive. But he can rattle off three dozen locations on the colossus that a precise application of force or a specific variety of magic could debilitate it. For instance, while its exterior has magically reinforced adamantine plating, for budgetary reasons many joint components—analogous to ligaments—were made of traditional adamantine, which is vulnerable to rust magic. The witchoil furnace could be disrupted by a burst of radiant energy, assuming a saboteur could get inside the colossus's torso. And the fuel feed piping to the lantern housing in the chest is insufficiently secure, so it could probably be breached by a 36-pound cannonball. (Of course, by the time the party faces the colossus in adventure thirteen, they'll each be more powerful than a cannon.)

Tinker also has one final secret—this about the mindmaker and the steelshaper—which will set the course for Adventure Seven, *Schism*.

AVOIDING THE RAILROAD

Players need to be free to drive the game in the direction of their choosing, so while we present a variety of possible scenes and challenges, don't feel limited to using them as presented. We endeavor to provide enough information about the setting and NPCs so that you can simply reveal what the mission is, let the party discover their rivals, and then leave it to the players to figure out how to thwart them.

If your group ditches Glaucia and hits up military contacts to find Tinker (or at least his duplicant) without going through Shantus's challenge, you should have enough insight into everyone's motivation to determine how Ber and the Obscurati will react. The party will still have to race to find the real Tinker under Pemberton's control, only they might be on the run from the Beran army and forced to take refuge with Cavallo or look for clues on the under-construction railroad.

Rather than let the plot constrain you, consider how to chop up and remix the adventure to give your players an adventure they'll enjoy.

Adventure Layout

The plot of *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman* has defined start and end points, but the route between them can take many different paths. We roughly divide events as follows:

- **Act One: A Civilized Country.** The party makes their way to Ber and earns an audience with the Bruse.
- **Act Two: Cheating Encouraged.** The party and Lya's group compete to get first access to Tinker. Then duplicants attack the court.
- **Act Three: The Dragon's Lair.** The party sails to Isla dolas Focas and frees Tinker from Pemberton's control.

Key Locations

Use this list to keep track of locations the PCs might visit.

Location	Page
Abismo Condendado	8
Aigotsura	35
Cantabrilla Railroad	33
Citado Cavallo	8
Isla dolas Focas	6
Karch	52
Manhill	31
Negranha	37
Nimba	26
Pezarillo	8
Renza	31
Reo Pedresco	31
RHC Headquarters—Slate	11
Selestala Railroad	31
Seobriga	13
Slate	11
Summer Court	26

Abismo Condendado: Cursed wetlands near the Cantabrilla railroad. Source of odd wintry weather. Once domain of the white dragon Cheshimox. Its lair is now defended by the ghoulish lizardfolk that served him, but they only appear if accosted.

Aigotsura: A "staging town" on the banks of a river 40 miles from the railhead of Liss Rail Construction. Surtan Liss manages from here. Supplies for the railroad are delivered on the river. Frontier town feel. Perfunctory amenities. Arid and hilly.

Cantabrilla Railroad: Route running 325 miles from Reo Pedresco, through the river lands, to Renza. Nearly complete. Allows freight to bypass the south lands, where gnoll pirates are common.

Citado Cavallo: Walled hillside city on the shores of Marrajado de Oro (the riven sea of gold). Ruled by Cavallo de Guerra. Bastion of orc might, weak separatist desires against Bruse Shantus.

Isla dolas Focas: Iron-rich volcanic island. Once the domain of the red dragon Gradiax. Defended by gnollish Cult of the Steel Lord. Now controlled by Gradiax again, in the guise of Benedict Pemberton.

Karch: Gnoll city on the coast of Isla dolas Focas, with a population of ten thousand. Nestled amid a forest of short gnarled and spiny trees.

Manhill: Hillside fort on the Risur side of the riven sea. Still vigilant against orcish invasion, though none has happened in four decades. Peace has brought farms and villages along the coast.

Negranha: The "staging town" nearest to the Griento railhead. Homey and wooded. Griento's wife and kids live here.

Nimba: Small town one mile from the summer court. Near an artillery testing range.

Pezarillo: Fishing village. Near a new naval base where Tinker Oddcog's duplicant works. A few miles off shore are the ruins of the ziggurat of Mavisha.

Renza: Eastern end of the Cantabrilla Railroad. Small city originally ruled by dragons who warred with Seobriga. High walls. Key defense against unincorporated gnoll tribes to the south.

Reo Pedresco: Western end of the Cantabrilla Railroad. Ber's second-largest city, and most racially-diverse.

RHC Headquarters—Slate: The national headquarters of the Royal Homeland Constabulary. Directed by Nigel Price-Hill, housed in an ornate building of the classic Risuri style. The party can communicate via *sending* and receive aid via teleportation circles.

Selestala Railroad: Route running 300 miles from Seobriga to Citado Cavallo. Construction delayed due to disputes between the Bruse and Cavallo de Guerra.

Seobriga: National capital of Ber. Its massive old buildings were sized for dragons, with high spires for them to perch. Factories lie on the western shore. Protests weekly by disgruntled citizens. Predominately orcish.

Shantre: Port city with labyrinthine canals, controlled by minotaurs. Shipyard for Ber's western fleet.

Slate: National capital of Risur, on the banks of the Great Delve River.

Summer Court: Fine royal land thirty miles north of Seobriga. Hundreds of petitioners wait outside the gates while Ber's ruler vacations.

Ursaliña: Mountainous city renowned for art and beast training. Long had close trading ties with Risur.

NPC Roster

Detailed entries on various NPCs are included throughout the adventure.

NPC Entry	Page
Alonsa Frolián, goliath beast trainer	39
Benedict Pemberton, industrialist	6
Brakken of Heffanita, minotaur negotiator	19
Bruse Shantus, ruler of Ber	4
Cavallo de Guerra, Adalid del Marrajado de Oro	39
Damata Griento	36
Glaucia Evora, Executore dola Liberta	19
Harkover Lee, Risur's Principal Minister	13
Kenna Vigilante, Minister of Dragon Affairs	26
Lauryn Cyneburg, RHC Director of Infiltration	12
Lord Inspector Nigel Price-Hill	13
Lya Jierre, Danor's Minister of Outsiders	6
Melissa Amarie, journalist	16
Merton Goncala	21
Pardo, Honorary Minister of Rebellion	26
Rush Munchausen	16
Stover Delft, Chief Inspector of the RHC	12
Surtan Liss, Chief of the Cantabrilla Railway	35
Tinker Oddcog, gnome technologist	4
Wolfgang von Recklinghausen, life-tinkering doctor	44
Zarkava Ssa'litt, vizier	26

PACING AND LEVELING

The adventure can take many routes, and we discourage precise XP tracking. The party starts this adventure at 13th level. We recommend that they reach 14th level after finishing Bruse Shantus's game, before they return to the court.

Recurring Characters

Several characters of this adventure have major roles later in the series. Pemberton recurs as a secondary antagonist, but eventually seeks to ally with the PCs against the Obscurati. Pardo returns as his most loyal minion Brakken plays a small but crucial role to help convince the PCs to ally with Pemberton in adventure ten.

We expect Lya Jierre, who has been a foe for several adventures, to not make it out of this alive, though she'll return as a member of the Obscurati ghost council. If the party takes her prisoner or manages to recruit her, or if any other important characters can't recur as we plan, you can replace them with someone thematically similar.

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
Altioro de Guerra, Cavallo's grandson	41
Babaro, Cavallo's second-in-command	40
Commodore Thrag Vidalia, patsy	34
Corta Nariz de Guerra, heir of Cavallo	41
Danovio, rich orc sea chief	40
Ejeka, Dabo, and Tarro, the Griento family	37
Foldero, orc witness	20
Heiliana, orc executora at Nimba	26
Inez, Lya's ritual mage	31
Jacale, Lya's mercenary enchantress	34
Ludoso Alleron, orc mansion-chief	16
Perorroso, orc druid sea chief	40
Rochero "Stone" Abormuerto, orc cop	16
Rodrigo Anthrasio, goliath protester	16
Rulio, orc witness	20
Ulrik, Lya's luggage porter	31
Willigu, Fuego goblin shaman	45

Rewards

The party's Prestige ratings likely won't increase during this adventure. However, if a PC keeps in touch with reporter Melissa Amarie, eventually his name, actions, and beliefs will become famous across the whole continent. This transforms the party's Flint Prestige into Populist Prestige, useful in any large population area.

The PCs should have each about 64,000 gp in equipment by the start of this adventure. Each PC gets a stipend of 16,000 gp after they have their briefing, then are granted a further stipend of 32,000 gp once they finish Bruse Shantus's game. Requisitioned materials can be delivered to the party's ship via the teleportation circle.

List of Magic Items as Treasure

Cards for new items are presented in Appendix G.

- Level 12. *Immovable shaft*. (See D&D4E Adventurer's Vault.)
- Level 14. *Tyrant's teeth*.
- Level 15. *Firesight eye*.
- Level 15. *Paired immovable rods*.
- Level 16. *Bracer of liberty*.
- Level 16. *Skull of Cheshimox*.
- Level 17. *Sonic staff*.
- Level 17. *Lya Jierre's rapier*.
- Level 18. *The Tyrant's Eye*.
- Artifact. *Godmind urn*.

Difficulty Class by Level

Level	Easy	Moderate	Hard
11	13	19	27
12	14	20	28
13	14	20	29
14	15	21	29
15	15	22	30
16	16	22	31
17	16	23	31

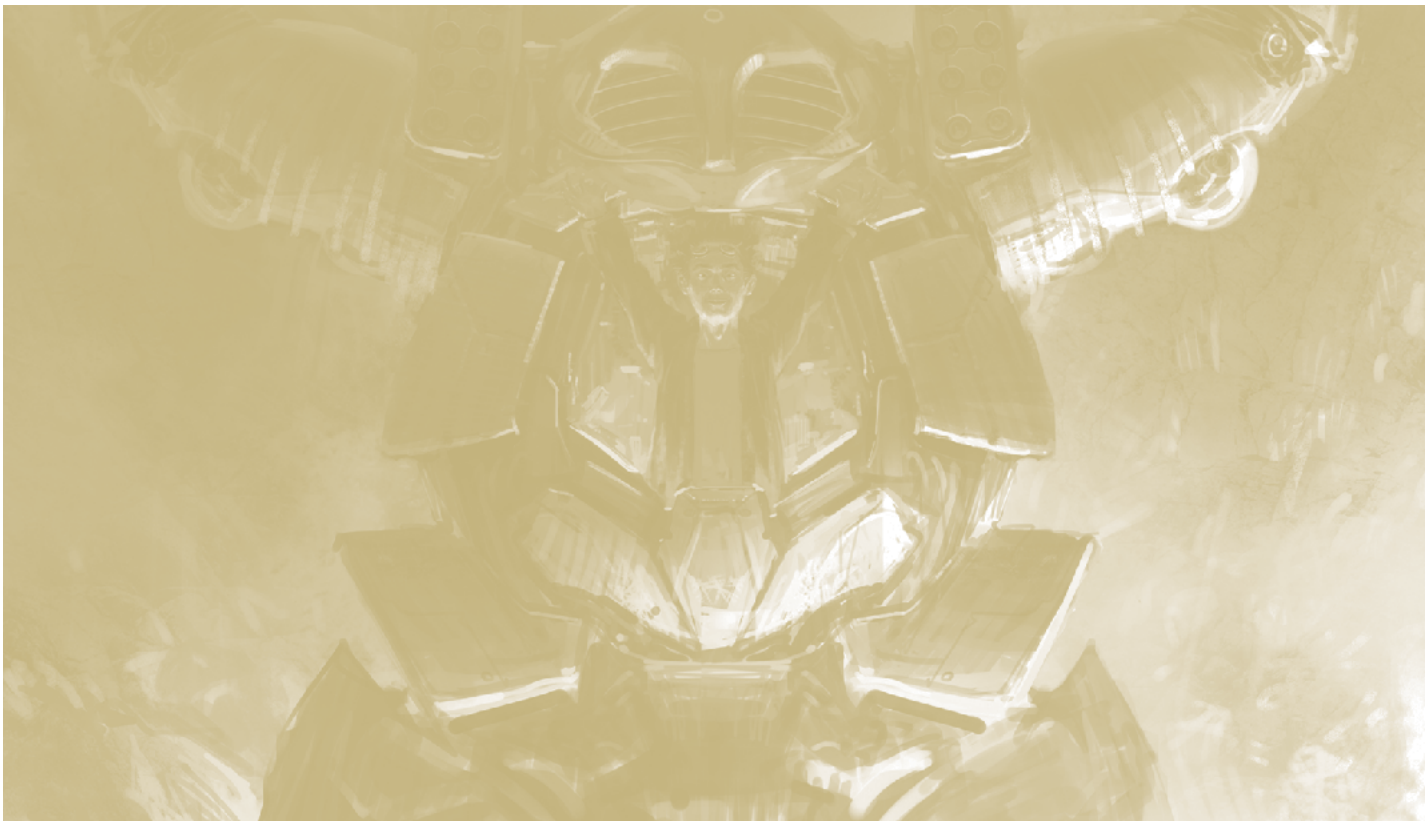
Final Word Before We Start

After making the PCs adhere to a tight schedule in Adventure Five, we've made an effort to present a more decompressed scenario herein, with more opportunities for the heroes to explore and for the heroes and their adversaries to harass each other in creative ways. Also, remember that at this stage the PCs have the clout to call upon significant resources from their country (which is one reason we're sending them overseas, so their allies don't do all the work). Let them flex their creativity and have fun with their power.

CHARACTER THEMES IN THE ADVENTURE

Adventures Six through Eight take the party far afield from Flint, so some character themes (detailed in the *Player's Guide*) have fewer obvious connections to the plot and setting. However, we plan to include several narrative threads that start to weave large social trends around the world into the cultural movements of Flint itself. We hope these will pay off when the party returns to Risur in Adventure Nine.

- **Dockers**—In Seobriga the party will be introduced to the Panoply, a similarly colorful organization with sympathetic ideals but a stronger movement geared toward mobilizing other sectors of society and in multiple nations. Docker characters who befriend Melissa Amarie have an opportunity to gain influence and fame across the world.
- **Eschatologists**—In addition to the philosophical interests of the Panoply, an eschatologist PC will be sought out by the vizier Zarkava for advice on preparing for Bruse Shantus's possible downfall. Lya Jierre will try to enlist the character as a double agent. Also, the skull of the dragon Cheshimox will hint at a coming doom for Drakr.
- **Gunsmiths**—Tinker's lair is riddled with experimental powerful firearms. Additionally, Cavallo de Guerra will be interested in using a gunsmith PC as an avenue to acquire better guns for his military, while Kenna Vigilante will mock the character for promoting weapons that forsake traditional ideals of heroism and martial prowess, potentially complicating negotiations with the Bruse.
- **Martial Scientists**—The Panoply value education and seek to disrupt military dogma, so will try to recruit martial scientist PCs to be figureheads for the unlikely synthesis of social populism and realistic military strategy. Kenna Vigilante, who trained at the Ursaliña College of Military History, can teach the *vigilante sprint* ability, from her thesis *How Not to Be Shot*.
- **Skyseers**—Glaucia Evora seeks council about the future from a skyseer PC. Above Isla dolas Focas floats an island that contains a portal to the plane Avilona, hidden in an ancient ziggurat. Merely approaching the island will grant a vision of its role in later adventures.
- **Spirit Mediums**—Medium PCs will discover that they can notice the spiritual connections between duplicants and their imprinted person, though at first they won't know what it is they're sensing. They'll also be best-equipped to control the *godmind urn*.
- **Technologists**—Both Shantus and Cavallo would love the aid of someone who could help improve their industrial might. Tech-savvy PCs will have a chance to test their wits against Tinker and perhaps turn his devices against him. Plus in the aftermath they'll have the chance to spearhead new research for Risur.
- **Vekeshi Mystics**—Wary of the resurgence of tyranny, the Executores dola Liberta have sought divine guidance to find contacts with the Vekeshi Mystics. Glaucia Evora offers an alliance between their groups, giving a Vekeshi PC access to powerful agents and, in later adventures, a strong resistance force against the Obscurati.
- **Yerasol Veterans**—Military veterans will, like martial scientists, be drawn in two possible directions: they might support the Panoply as it pushes for international de-escalation, or they could aid either the Bruse or Cavallo's military endeavors.



ACT ONE:
A Civilized Country

In this act, the party deals with Beran civil unrest as they pursue Tinker Oddcog.

MEANWHILE IN THE NEWS...

While the party is in Ber, what's happening everywhere else?

Colossus. The world reacts to news of the colossus attack in Flint. Archmissionary Cornelius Eboracum of the Clergy offers exorcism aid for evil spirits unleashed from Cauldron Hill. The Drakran military has ordered the production of extremely massive cannons to repel the colossus if it should make it to their shores. Beran peasants report local nature spirits wreaking havoc and mysterious massive footprints tracing a path from the Anthras Mountains toward Seobriga. The sovereign of Danor continues to express hope for peace with Risur, but in light of widespread accusations that his nation is to blame acknowledges that negotiations are indefinitely delayed.

Curses. Cauldron Hill has been interdicted by the Risuri military. The side of the mountain is in flux, sometimes showing a hole that leads to the Bleak Gate, sometimes solid rock. Soldiers have been equipped with magical weapons from the nation's vaults to combat spectral monsters that emerge each night.

Sedition. Sparse reports come from Danor of university students filing formal petitions against the government and even talking of repeating the riots of a generation ago. These protests come in response to a crackdown on broadsheet journalism. The leadership in Cherage has forbidden publication of conspiracy theories that link Danor to the colossus in Risur, and several writers have been thrown into oubliettes for undermining the sovereign's denials.

Shipwrights. The city of Shale, once governed by the king's sister Ethelyn, has ordered a rapid increase in ship construction in preparation for possible war with Danor. Heightened logging activities throughout Risur have been stymied by fey activity. The city of Bole is suffering an encroachment of trees, which have been walking into the streets when people aren't looking.

Sibilance. Colonists in Elfaivar talk of eerie whispers in the woods. Near the Sharavathi Falls, a site claimed to be sacred to the fallen eladrin empire, several caravans have disappeared except for a single survivor each. All have reported their compatriots vanishing, hearing only whispers and seeing only foot prints of mighty jungle cats.

Operation Paperclip

Exposition/Social. Real-Time. Level 13.

The RHC preps the party to track down and recruit an enemy agent.

More than two months have passed since the colossus rampaged through Flint. The RHC headquarters has had its security dramatically increased, and the party and other constables have been busy chasing leads and wrecking various Obscurati plots throughout Risur. All of them have been fairly minor—miners paid to smuggle adamant, druids using magic to keep local fey content and out of the real world, glaziers hired to craft replicas of the wayfarer's lantern (see Adventure Four), a collection of scholars recruited to collate every scrap of information on the fey titans, and so on.

Most groups were fairly forthcoming once word got out that the conspiracy gave its low-ranking members rings engraved with particular patterns as a means of identifying them. People who had no idea the Ob existed offered to help investigate, and the patriotic spirit is high after the catastrophe in Flint. Of course a few groups were leaning in opposition to Risur, such as cells of erudite soldiers preparing to take over from their more traditional commanders. But enough people were shocked at news of the colossus that they ratted out their allies, rather than be part of some group hostile to their homeland.

Leaving in a Hurry

On the morning of the 1st of Summer, 501 A.O.V., Stover Delft calls the party to the RHC headquarters. The place is thick with heightened security. When the party arrives at Delft's office, he's chit-chatting with Lauryn Cyneburg, whose first words to the party sound like an insult.

"No one else will tell you this," she says, "but we're all kinda disappointed you let the colossus escape. Are you ready to clean up your mess?"

Delft smiles politely at the awkwardness, then asks them to kindly move the furniture and rug in his office to the edges of the room. While he explains their mission, Lauryn begins tracing a teleportation ring on the floor with chalks and powdered silver.

"Being in a bit of a hurry: constables, this is Lauryn Cyneburg, Director of Infiltration. Lauryn, the constables."

Delft puts a hand to the side of his mouth, as if speaking in confidence, and whispers, "She doesn't care about your names."

Smiling again, Delft continues. "I figure you have about five minutes before she's ready to teleport us to Slate. A carriage is waiting to take us to the main headquarters. We'll be meeting with the Lord Inspector and a few others to plan this mission, but I imagine before sunset you'll be in Ber."

He hands over a sheet of newspaper.

"This was published a few hours ago in Seobriga. We'd had the word out that we're looking for this gnome, Tinker, and a Beran contact got this to one of our agents. A few spells later, and I have a copy here. I wouldn't be surprised if the Ob have a copy in their hands too.

A local Flinter in his early 40s, Delft handles the logistical and political drudgery so the party can perform their heroics without too much backlash. Though normally rather easy-going, he gets squinty and condescending when people obstruct important affairs because of politics.

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.

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 be able to accomplish anything. Nigel Price-Hill enjoys keeping her around to remind him that his constables are real people, not mythic heroes.

Though she shows little respect for anyone, not even her superiors, she long ago decided that she had to pick something to care about, or else she'd just end up teleporting around to no purpose. So she chose Risur, because its people don't take themselves too seriously.

"Constables, we've been spending the past two months cleaning our own house, and it's good to feel safe we don't have any more traitors or secret plots in our midst." He raps his cane against the wood of his desk. "But this is our first real chance to figure out what in the hell they were planning to do with that 300-foot-tall wind-up toy. Tinker Oddcog helped build the thing, and when everything went crazy he didn't run to the Ob. He ran away. I hope that means he might be willing to talk, but we're going to need to find him before they do.

"Now grab anything you need from the quartermaster and be back in five. Anything you need later we'll ship with express delivery."

Show the party **Player Handout—Beran News Clipping**. When the party is ready, Lauryn completes her ritual and teleports herself, the party, and Delft to Slate, the capital of Risur.

The City of Slate

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.

FASTER OPENING

We want to bring the party to Slate so they'll be more familiar with it for events in Adventure Nine, and to make it clear that they won't be sticking around Flint much anymore. But if you want to get the party to the mission sooner, you can just have Delft brief them. We suggest you have Harkover Lee present, to increase the likelihood they'll ask him later about Pemberton. Then they can teleport straight to Ber.

KEEPING THINGS MOVING

Make sure to give the players an opportunity to offer suggestions and ask questions about the mission, but don't let the game bog down with over-planning. Make it clear that most of the work will be done once they get to Ber, and that anything they need will be provided for them. It's important for the players to have a sense of what they'll be doing, but we also want to get them to the part of the adventure where they're being challenged.

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. These castles act as nexuses of communities 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.

Teleportation Circle

Banhaman Academy, Slate's foremost martial school, straddles the river north of the city center. Military barracks and a small base of river warships protect the city, though it has not been attacked in over five hundred years. The city's teleportation circle lies on the east side of the river, between the military base and the academy, inside a fortified bunker guarded by a dozen soldiers and mages. Spells alert the base whenever people teleport in, and the base's wardmage immediately knows of any injuries or attacks made in the teleportation chamber.

In the event of a suspected invasion, four quick axe-swipes can release a 3-ft. thick wooden disk. When it falls, the disk covers the teleportation circle, preventing anyone from traveling through it.

Non-hostile visitors are briefly searched, have to show papers (including teleportation passports if they are foreign), and then interviewed by a customs officer. If nothing looks suspicious they are cleared to leave the bunker, where carriages await to take them wherever they need to go. It is assumed that anyone who can afford to teleport is a V.I.P.

When the party arrives, everyone recognizes Lauryn Cyneburg, who comes through with great regularity. But it's likely the guards also recognize the party from news stories, and they're excited to meet the heroes of Flint. They're through the checkpoint with minimal hassle, and then a carriage takes them across a bridge, passes two castles, and stops at the gated compound of the national RHC headquarters.

Mission Briefing

In an ornate conference room, the head of the RHC **Lord Inspector Nigel Price-Hill** awaits the party, and with him is Principal Minister **Harkover Lee**, an aide to the king, who is commonly believed to be the most powerful mage in Risur. A handful of assistants handle maps and any necessary documents.

After introductions, the Lord Inspector explains that their mission is to go to Ber's capital Seobriga, find Tinker Oddcog, and get all information he has about the colossus and the Obscurati. However it would be even better if the party could recruit the gnome. Anyone who could design the colossus would be an immense asset to the nation, and the king is willing to offer quite a lot to secure Oddcog's talent.

Expected Complications

Harkover Lee expects two main complications. Firstly, the Berans won't want to hand Tinker over, and Bruse Shantus has used his power as ruler to extend protection against divination magic to the gnome. Lee suspects that any hostile action taken against Oddcog would alert the Bruse and might damage relations between Risur and Ber. They both think it is smarter to directly petition the Bruse and negotiate a trade, rather than waste time trying to find Tinker themselves.

Secondly, the Obscurati have also been searching for Oddcog. Shortly after the newspaper clipping was delivered to the RHC, spies reported that a Danoran warship, *Lux Profectusque*, had docked in Seobriga the day before. The party might recall that this was the ship that transported Lya Jierre when they handed control of Axis Island back over to Danor. The RHC has only the thinnest ideas of what the Ob's resources in Ber might include, but it appears they have a head start on the party.

As a final snag, the public in Seobriga has been staging weekly protests—called Civilized Progressive Rallies—and there's one happening today.

Resources

Harkover Lee explains that the party's ship is being equipped with an experimental teleportation ring. Normally such circles must be stationary, but recent research in the wake of the Gidim incursion (see Adventure Three) has helped make this new portal possible. By using the Linked Portal ritual they will be able to teleport to their ship from anywhere, though they'll need to contact their crew first to find the ship's precise coordinates or else the ritual will fail.

The Reverse Portal ritual will let them have equipment or personnel delivered from their ship. When performed, it will let people or objects pass through the ring on their ship and arrive wherever the PCs are. Again, Sending rituals are vital here for timing.

The RHC will provide sufficient ritual components to perform the Linked Portal ritual five times, Reverse Portal three times, and Sending thirty times. The total value of ritual components is 3,675 gp, and ritual books are provided for each PC capable of using them. (If none can, an exasperated Harkover Lee quickly sends a messenger to fetch highly expensive ritual scrolls from the royal vault, which increases the cost to over 20,000 gp.)

The inscription of the teleportation ring should be complete in a few hours, and then their ship will sail with haste to Seobriga. The party will already have teleported there, so hopefully they won't need a ship for at least a few days.

TELEMARKETING

Harkover mentions that they tried using a Sending ritual to contact Tinker, to which he responded: "Twenty-five words? Three, four, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four, thirty! Behold, base five! I have thwarted your numerical orthodoxy!" And then there was a fit of laughter for a few seconds, which apparently counts as a single word.

Viscount Price-Hill'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 men are 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.

Perhaps the most powerful mage in Risur, Lee acts as bodyguard and chief of staff to the king. 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 lady-killer 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.

Harkover Lee was once known as the dragon tyrant Inacht the Hex-Eater, but he has long since abandoned that identity and is now loyal to Risur, serving its king as Principal Minister.

Knowing the Right Person

Price-Hill explains that unfortunately there's no formal relationship between the RHC and any similar security apparatus in Ber. It's unclear even if Ber has a formal intelligence organization. In the past, interrogated orc and goblin spies have claimed they work for 'El Extraño,' but were always recruited second hand, and never formally worked for the Beran government.

To have a chance of reaching the Bruse, the party must be escorted by someone with connections to the court. Toward that end Harkover Lee has contacted **Brakken of Heffanita**, the Beran ambassador to Risur, and asked him to meet the party at the Seobriga teleportation circle this morning.

Unbeknownst to Lee or the RHC, Lya Jierre's bodyguard Rush Munchausen has a small web of spies in Seobriga watching for the inevitable involvement of the RHC. Magical surveillance alerted him to the *sending* message, so he arranges for a pair of local orcs to get the ambassador arrested, which should slow the party up long enough for Rush's ally Merton to concoct a more dangerous roadblock.

Leads

Before the party leaves Seobriga and seeks out the Bruse, the Lord Viscount suggests they talk to the journalist, **Melissa Amarie**.

If the party wants to ask around in Slate before they leave, such as to talk to some of Tinker's old contacts, the Lord Viscount doesn't recommend it. He could have some local constables handle that task, then pass along the information. Once they're ready, Lauryn Cyneburg begins scribing another teleportation ritual in an adjacent room, and they'll be in Seobriga ten minutes later.

Upgraded Ship

Before the party teleports away, make sure they know that they have a ship that will back them up. If you're using the *Admiral o' the High Seas* rules for ship-building, the party should decide what sorts of upgrades they want to get their ship to Level 14. The total cost of the ship should stay under 50,000 gp.

If you are running this adventure as a standalone, the party can simply use the ship below.

R.H.C. Corvette	Level 14 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	46,000 gp
Hull Integrity 3	**Command** captain's Int, Wis, or Cha modifier
Defense 15	**Full Crew** 16
Maneuverability 8	**Minimum Crew** 4
Speed 14	**Total Complement** 60
Design	
Length 90 ft. Beam 25 ft. Three masts, 70 ft. high. Three decks.	
Armaments	
A full gun deck of thirteen cannons to each broadside, with two enchanted chase cannons on the prow and stern.	
Crew: 40. *Attack:* +14 to broadsides, +10 forward or aft.	
Eldritch Defenses	
The enchanted figurehead creates an invisible shield that deters attacks from afar. Any spells that originate more than 50 feet from the ship deal 28 less damage to targets within that area.	
Total Cost 46,000 gp	
Hull (base level 6, sails, improved speed ×6, improved maneuverability, Level 14): 21,000 gp	
Armaments (large, boards and chasers, Level 14): 21,000 gp	
Eldritch defenses (shield defense; Level 10): 5,000 gp	

CALLING IN FAVORS

Though the party's Prestige with Risur likely grants them a lot of leeway to call in favors, they're operating in foreign territory, so increase the effective level of any favor by 2. They can still get help, but it will take longer.

We haven't planned any particular allies for the party to contact, but feel free to trot out whatever old spy movie tropes you'd like. Perhaps when they need a ride in a hurry, a sympathetic goliath named Carlos Diego can get them mighty stallions. And when they need someone to spy on the Ob group, they learn that the famous agent Lady Green is actually a quintet of green-skinned goblin women skilled at stealth and, believe it or not, seduction.

Welcome to Seobriga

Exploration. Montage. Level 13.

The party might be in for some culture shock.

Usually when a nation falls it is after much war and bloodshed, but under the dragon tyrants most of the power was possessed by the rulers themselves. So when Widoreva, the female blue dragon who was the last ruler of Seobriga, died, the city was left mostly intact. Today the city is much as it was two centuries ago, full of massive squat buildings with dramatic spires that dragons once perched on. Where before a single dragon might treat several such buildings as his lair, now most of the old buildings serve as homes for multiple families.

The poor camps and hovels that surrounded the city were abandoned when the former subjects of the dragons realized they could move into their masters' abodes. Because the dragons preferred stone structures, even the worst of the riots and fires did relatively little damage. Only recently has there been a need for new construction, which the wealthier families have seen as a means to demonstrate their civility, hiring Danoran and Risuri architects and gardeners to create beautiful homes.

Of course, this has left the city center mostly to the poor, and as they have grown frustrated with the slow improvements they have reverted more to old tribalism. Though the area around the city center is still safe and well-patrolled, there are pockets of neighborhoods where skull and hide totems mark territory that should not be violated unless you're willing to fight.

The city's harbor on its western shore has a few dozen factories, the most of any city in Ber but a pittance compared to Flint. The city is blessed by favorable winds, and since Berans were already so good at building spires, their smokestacks keep the soot and other foulness high above the city.

Industrial traffic keeps most docks busy, and Seobriga was never much for fishing anyway. Huge farms and ranches to the east, filled with five-foot-tall goats and bison the size of a small house, feed the city. Since Seobriga's lush peninsula has relatively few streams or freshwater

wells, wine is the drink of choice, and vineyards are common to the north, where fog rolls through the hillside forests. The dragons trained their humanoid subjects to cultivate multiple levels of plant-life, so shade-grown berries share soil with massive sequoias that were grown for lumber. The greatest wooden structures are long gone now, but they rivaled anything men have ever built for sheer size.

Dotted through the city and the surrounding landscapes, monuments to the dragons remain, some defaced but many restored. The late Vairday Bruse likened it to mounting the heads of bears and deer, a pretty decoration and nothing more.

Panoply of Protests

Ber's teleportation circles are not defended like those in Risur, since they were originally built for dragons to greet and impress visitors. Those who teleport into Seobriga arrive in the center square of the city, surrounded only by a simple gazebo-like pavilion, guarded by a handful of soldiers. Lauryn Cyneburg is familiar with these details and typically disguises herself when she goes to Seobriga; she recommends as much to the party.

The party likely arrives in the midmorning, and they appear in full sight of hundreds of orcs, minotaurs, goblins, and goliaths out in protest against their ruler. People react with intense curiosity and invitations to join the protest.

This is your opportunity for a heavy "culture shock" moment, since despite the sweltering summer heat the protesters are almost all wearing wigs that were in vogue in Danor ten years ago, and some are dressed in fancy, uncomfortable attire. Minotaur and goliath students sweat into their frilly white collars while nearby a small herd of orc women in hoop skirts pump axes in the air to the beat of a protest song. The large swaths of orc men who make up the bulk of the protest shout to other orcs in swings that dangle off the roofs around the edges of the square, crooning out songs as they paint vibrant murals along the walls of buildings that were built for the proportions of dragons, not men.

The unifying force of the protest is the Panoply. While the middle of the square is chaotic, at its edges self-styled intellectuals talk to people as they arrive, figure out what their grievances are, and give them color-coded flags to wave. Poverty is black, violence is red, corruption is yellow, and so on. The most common color is white, meant to protest apathy of officials who should be promoting the revolution. Anyone clever enough to question the symbolism of hundreds of protesters waving white flags gets invited to more high-brow Panoply events later that evening.

Being Watched

Starting the moment they arrive, the party is being watched by agents working for Lya Jierre. The two dozen orcs and goliaths are dispersed, some tailing the party while others report back to Rush Munchausen, Lya's *immovable-rod*-wielding bodyguard.

The party might notice the tails (Insight DC 29 in crowded areas, DC 20 once they move away from the city center) and possibly follow them back to a small (by local standards) house where Rush is waiting. The man has nine Obscurati allies present, and someone is always listening to a crystal totem, marked with some of Brakken of Heffanita's fur, that intercepts any Sending rituals that include him. They have others primed, waiting for the chance to grab personal items of the PCs.

The tails have strict orders not to interact with the party, and to pretend to be pickpockets if they're confronted. Rush plans to ambush the party,

Where is Tinker?

Players are notoriously curious about things that don't actually matter to the plot. Of course, they don't know what is important and what isn't. So while the point of the adventure is meant to be "compete with the Ob to get the right to talk to Tinker" and not "find Tinker's hiding place," it's possible that the players will want to find him.

Of course the real Tinker is on Isla dolas Focas working for Pemberton. About half his time he spends controlling his duplicant, through which he works in a military base two hundred miles north of Seobriga on a dry strip of land along the coast, near the village of Pezarillo. A recently uncovered portal to the plane of water (see Adventure Three) led to the establishment of a new naval base.

Tinker's job there is to oversee the development of new warships, which then do their field testing in the waters over the portal. The area has been labeled a hazard and is thus avoided by merchant traffic.

He only works about four hours a day, is idle for eight, then "sleeps" for twelve, during which he's actually busy in Pemberton's lair. During his idle time he plays with the desert foxes that have free run of the naval base.

Panoply Philosophy

The Panoply started with professors who wondered what other cultures Ber should emulate in its revolution. Their nation wanted to become "civilized" and wanted to know what that meant, so the professors discovered numerous different ways to be civil, drawn from around the world. But as the leadership of Ber gravitated primarily toward a Danoran style of fancy clothes and regimented etiquette, these professors promoted a broader approach.

Perhaps what contributed most to their popularity was that they also looked to the traditions of Ber's own cultures, and they drew parallels between supposedly "primitive" customs and similar behaviors in the nations Berans were supposed to look toward. Many who were disgruntled with the accusatory tone of the core of the revolution were drawn to the Panoply's inclusiveness, which helped keep many people at least within the fringe of the revolution when they might have been tempted to avoid it altogether and cling to their old ways.

The implicit center of the disparate Panoply philosophies is that almost all customs and cultures have some merit, but that many social norms are not in their ideal form. Leading figures of the Panoply look to improve people's lives by examining their cultures and suggesting improvements, often in the form of integrating aspects of other cultures. Those within the movement might be receptive to such recommendations, but many outsiders view the Panoply as meddlers.

More subtly, though, the Panoply also argues that some cultural norms are value-neutral, neither making life better or worse but simply give it flavor. Brave swordfighters in Crisillyir might wear gold jewelry as badges of honor, while minotaur warriors scar their faces in ornate patterns, and though the former might think the latter barbaric, as long as each is pursued of one's own free will they are equally valid varieties of the same drive to have an identity. And in the view of the Panoply, variety is valuable in and of itself.

A droll half-orc woman with mismatched eyes—one red, one green—Melissa operates independently as a journalist. The educated daughter of an orc sea captain who raided Risur for a wife across the Marrajado de Oro (see Cavallo de Guerra), Melissa attended the Dyal Revolutionary Institute in Seobriga and quickly found a home with the nascent Panoply movement. With their support she finds and interviews unusual individuals and delivers her reports to several newspapers around her country. Her dark sense of humor and casual writing style earned her an audience among common laborers, who will often gather when one of their literate coworkers gets a copy and reads it to the group.

Melissa could afford a home of her own, but prefers to live with boarders in a communal Panoply house.. She encourages people never to become static in their social interactions, but in truth she just doesn't have much patience for others. She loves to learn about personal stories and the reasons why people act how they do, but that doesn't mean she actually likes people. When she gets bored in conversation, she'll start writing in a notebook.

Wiry and scrappy with huge forearm muscles, Rush fits many classic adventurer clichés. An orphaned half-elf from Drakr, he got into constant fights growing up and was harassed for the discolored birthmark on his forehead. When he was old enough to swing a sword he signed on to monster hunts in the Malice Lands for quick cash, then parlayed that skill into expeditions to the trap-laden dungeons of Beran dragon lairs and Crisillyiri demon tombs.

In one of those tombs he found a damaged *immovable rod*. Intrigued, he commissioned the crafting of a pair of weapon-ready *immovable rods* that he can easily activate or deactivate, and which can extend to be as long as staves. He developed his own unique fighting style and eventually stumbled into work with the Obscurati while exploring the Ancient ziggurat of Nem. He was transferred around a few times until being assigned as Lya Jierre's bodyguard.

Rush practically breathes snark, and he loves nothing more than humbling people with big opinions of themselves. He self-deprecates easily and with much vulgarity, but is quite content despite realizing what a thoroughly awful person he is.

and he expects they'll go to the journalist. If he gets word they're on the way to her, he and his men pack up and prepare an assault.

Lya's group has many more people on *Lux Profectusque*, but the ship is moored a half mile off shore. If the party decides to go after it, see Appendix F.

Testimony Requested

Brakken is not present to greet the party, having been arrested a half hour earlier. When the party teleport in they're spotted by an orc policeman named **Rochero "Stone" Abormuerto**. Bedecked in a fine blue suit trimmed with gold epaulets and crowned by a grandiose feathered helmet, Stone shouts and waves for them to come over. If made to wait he pulls out a heavy iron rod—the Beran equivalent of a billy club—and shoves people out of the way to get to the party.

WILD GOOSE CHASES

Ber has dozens of other military facilities the party could search. Be careful not to give them pointless "leads" to people or places that don't add anything to the mystery. There's a difference between a red herring—clues that lead to a false conclusion, sometimes lain by the villain to cover his tracks—and a wild goose chase—which is just a waste of time. If the party goes looking for Tinker at a dozen different military bases, it's probably best to relate the investigations as a montage unless you want to use the opportunity to forward some side plots or even invent useful leads applicable to the main mission.

Stone has orders to wait for any visitors to come through the circle, then bring them to Glaucia Evora's "courtroom." A muscular, intimidating orc, Stone is used to bossing around common workers and will treat the party with rude suspicion. He demands they come along, no questions, or else he'll throw them in jail. The crowd nearby responds with jeers and tries to get the party to join the protest.

If things get violent, a goliath who was near the teleportation circle comes by and yells in a booming voice for people to stop. The man, **Rodrigo Anthrasio**, realizes that the party could use some guidance and offers to show them around. He can answer any of their questions about the protest and the city.

Of course the party is free to go as they please. If they don't go with Stone, eventually Glaucia herself will find the party.

Checking Tinker's Trail

Following the info in Melissa Amarie's article, the party might check Drumalio Shipyard and the foundries in Piria Quarter. People there recollect the gnome's visit, but have no clue where he is now. At the shipyard, they recount him snapping at a crane to make it move more smoothly. At the foundries he crawled along the floor near the bellows whispering and sniffing, then gave a detailed report about everything in the building that was improperly assembled, broken, or fixing to break.

He also complained about a steam engine schematic, saying it was primitive and would work better powered by lightning than coal. When the foreman explained that they could not just produce lightning on command, Tinker glared at him like he was lying, then said nothing more. A week later a package arrived with detailed blueprints for a device that apparently can produce lightning, but would be too expensive for Ber to produce.

Investigating for the People

Social. Real-Time. Level 3.

Journalist Melissa Amarie provides leads on Tinker Oddcog, plus other troubles afoot in her nation.

Whether by getting a guide, doing some footwork, or using divination magic, the party can find Melissa Amarie's room in a huge mansion a half mile from the central square. She lives there with two dozen other members of the Panoply, many of them current or former students of the city's nascent colleges. The "chieftain" of the building, who manages everyone's affairs as if they were a wilderness clan, is **Ludoso Alleron**, a bespectacled orc who insists on greeting people at the door and handing them abridged copies of the writing of philosopher William Miller.

When the party arrives, the little bohemian clan is debating the merits of going out to the protest. Melissa doesn't want to, but Ludoso says that she has a role to play in eliminating ignorance and spreading knowledge, a classic if somewhat simplistic overview of Millerite philosophy.

Melissa

The night before (the 91st of Spring), Melissa was approached by Lya Jierre and her two bodyguards. They found her at a nearby winehouse and expressed interest in her article on Tinker, even though it had not yet even gone to press. Though suspicious, she shared everything she had about the gnome, which wasn't much. The article on Tinker was incidental to a larger article she's working on to reveal the cronyism of Bruse Shantus.

When the party shows up, Melissa is initially wary, but if they aren't hiding their identities she quickly recognizes them, since she studied their exploits when researching Tinker. Her opinion of them depends more on their social connections than their combat prowess. She generally assumes authority figures are dangerous and corrupt, but people with sympathetic philosophies intrigue her.

Melissa tries to gauge whether they're intelligent and well-spoken. She knows the Panoply organizers of the weekly Civilized Progressive Rallies, and knows they've been looking for foreign guest speakers. She's most curious to talk with docker PCs, who she thinks would be popular and good for the movement. After that, martial scientist or Yerasol veteran PCs get her attention, because the Panoply wants to entice more soldiers to join their movement.

Other PCs might interest her too if they seem possessed of reason and novel ideas, though she's leery of eschatologists since she shares the common misconception that they're obsessed with death.

If any PC seems suitable, she offers to arrange for them to speak at next week's Civilized Progressive Rally. If they're amenable, she can get the Panoply organizers to promote the event with grandiose portraits of the character painted on walls around the city, which should garner the PC an audience of thousands.

Let's Talk Tinker

Aside from what she put in her article, she heard that Tinker carried a metal orb with him everywhere he went, though she couldn't find out what it was. She got a sense from everyone who interacted with Oddcog that the gnome simply was happy to be given tasks to solve, not that he was particularly wedded to the idea of working for Ber. And she got some rumblings from a contact in the court (she won't mention it, but she knows one of the Bruse's servers) that Shantus is receiving a lot of complaints about the gnome from the soldiers at whatever facility he's hidden in.

If treated nicely Melissa might also share her insight that Lya Jierre and her bodyguards were dressed for state business, which she thinks means the tiefling was headed to the summer court. Also, Lya gave her an address here in the city where she could find them if she got any more information. The address is the house where Rush is set up, though unless the party was very sneaky the man and his crew are already on the way.

Contingent Gatecrasher Charm

This one-use token triggers automatically when the bearer becomes bloodied, or can be activated as a standard action. It transports its holder most of the way into the Bleak Gate, effectively removing them from the real world. Unless special magic completes their transition to the Bleak Gate, five minutes later they return to the real world, but they have time to move to a safer location. When activated, and again if he's pulled back to the real world, the traveler takes 5d6 necrotic damage.

Keeping in Touch

Melissa doesn't play a key role in the rest of the adventure, but she offers an in for parties that want to find allies overseas. Similar to the way Thames Grimsley could help link the party to the docker movement in Flint, Melissa can be important or completely ignored after this point. But if the party protects her during Rush's attack (see below), she might tag along with the party for the sake of reporting what she expects to be momentous events.

In the long run, if a docker, martial scientist, or Yerasol veteran keeps in contact with her, she'll keep them in the news, first in Seobriga, then throughout Ber, and finally in publications across the continent. Random strangers in cities might recognize the PC and either commend their opinions and actions or argue with them. This makes it difficult to be inconspicuous, but converts the party's Flint Prestige into Populist Prestige, useful in any large population area.

Bum Rush

Action. Tactical. Level 14.

Rush and Obscurati henchmen attack the party.

Rush won't attack until he knows the party will be at a given spot for long enough for his men to get into position. Most likely he strikes at Melissa Amarie's residence, but he'll also move if it looks like the party is trying to catch a boat out to *Lux Profectusque*. He'd prefer to avoid the hassle of fighting anywhere with a lot of witnesses, but he has no qualms killing a few bystanders if necessary.

To be clear, Rush is making a bad decision here. He underestimates the party and hasn't considered the long-term consequences of giving the RHC a chance to save the life of a journalist. The narrative intent of the scene is to present Rush as an antagonist who can recur, giving the party more satisfaction as they compete against him in Act Two.

Rush's Forces

- Rush Munchausen
- Obscurati ambush mage
- 8 Obscurati skulks

Terrain

It varies based on where the party goes, but if Rush attacks at Melissa's home it's a fairly open building, a hundred feet square and forty feet high, with a 60-ft. wide open-roofed inner courtyard. Stairs lead up 20 ft. to a second floor balcony, then up another 20 ft. to the roof. The courtyard is full of furniture for casual gatherings. A twenty-foot wide spire on the front of the building rises another sixty feet and is adorned with vines and flowers.

Tactics

Once the party is inside, Rush sneaks to the front door and plants an *immovable shaft* to hold the massive double doors shut (Strength DC 25 as a standard action to push the doors open enough to slip through.)

Then he and the rest of the team scale up to the roof and prepare ropes to descend through the courtyard's open ceiling (Perception DC 29 to hear them). They wait for the mage to conjure blinding darkness, then descend in the confusion. Four skulks each target a single PC, while Rush drops beside whoever he thinks is the most dangerous melee opponent. The mage remains on the roof, targeting anyone who escapes the darkness.

Melissa and her two dozen innocent housemates run in panic, trying to open the door and get out, hammering helplessly in the darkness. Some who were upstairs come out at the commotion, then cower in their rooms.

Rush Munchausen Level 14 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (half-elf) **XP** 1,000

HP 128; **Bloodied** 64 **Initiative** +15
AC 28, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 24 **Perception** +6
Speed 6, fly 8 (hover), overland flight 12 Darkvision
Immune forced movement

Traits

▸ **Immovable**
The man's forearms are massive, like he's strong enough to swing greatswords one-handed all day long. When you try to move him he just clicks of a button on his rod, and then smirks and stays put.

Thanks to his dual *immovable rods*, Rush is immune to forced movement and cannot be knocked prone as long as he has one of his rods. He only ever falls as far as he wants to.

▸ **Cheating Gravity**
He holds one rod in the air and presses a button, causing it to stay in place even as he swings on it. Then in midair he flicks buttons on both rods, causing the first to move again, and the second to become a new fulcrum for his brachiation.

Rush can fly his speed as long as he has both rods, and can hover without penalty as long as he has one.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Extensible Rod** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He casually pokes a button on the platinum rod, and it stretches to a length of eight feet. He pokes it into your ribs and shoves you against the wall. Try as you might, you cannot move an inch.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12+9 damage. Rush can slide the target 1 square and shift 2 squares.
Special: If the attack hits, and the target is either prone or adjacent to an object at least as large as itself, and Rush is within 2 squares of the target, Rush can have his rod restrain the creature. It can attempt to escape as a standard action (Strength DC 25). If Rush moves he must either release the creature, or leave the rod behind.

⊹ **Rods and Kicks** ✦ At-Will
He uses his weapon as a pivot point for a volley of strikes and kicks.
Attack: Close Burst 2 (enemies in burst); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 1d12+9 damage
Effect: Rush shifts 2 (He can fly while shifting)

Move Actions

▸ **Create Cover** ✦ At-Will
He plants one rod in the ground and locks it in place, using it as a barrier against your attacks.
Effect: Rush chooses a creature he can see and gains a +2 bonus to his defenses against its attacks until he moves. He can only gain cover from one creature in this way at a time.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Liberating Vulgarity** ✦ Encounter
Your attack hits him solidly, but he seems to be too busy cursing at you to notice.
Trigger: Rush is afflicted by a negative condition.
Effect (Free Action): Rush ignores that condition until the end of his next turn.

Skills Acrobatics +21, Athletics +20, Stealth +18
Str 20 (+12) **Dex** 22 (+13) **Wis** 8 (+6)
Con 16 (+10) **Int** 13 (+8) **Cha** 9 (+6)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Primordial
Equipment *Paired immovable rods, contingent gatecrasher charm*

Obscurati Ambush Mage Level 13 Controller (Leader)
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 mage's next turn.

⟋ **Shadow Tentacles** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will
The nethermancer sweeps his orb, and insubstantial black tendrils reach up from the ground and snare you.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one enemy); +16 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6+10 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened and immobilized (save ends both).

▸ **Pervasive Darkness** ✦ Encounter
A dark veil is pulled across the world, dropping everything into near blackness.
Effect: Magical darkness fills an area burst 5 within 20 until the end of the encounter. Light sources outside the area cannot illuminate inside it, and light sources inside the area can produce no more than dim light.

Minor Actions

▸ **Shadowy Aid** ✦ At-Will (1/round)
A shadowy image appears and helps free the mage's ally from whatever's harming it.
Effect: One ally within 10 squares can make a saving throw.

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

Obscurati Skulk	Level 13 Goon Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, human	**XP** 400
HP 60; **Bloodied** 30	**Initiative** +13
AC 27, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 24	**Perception** +6
Speed 7	Darkvision

Traits

▸ **Goon**

Similar to a minion, the Obscurati skulk goes down easily in a fight. He has half the hit points of a normal creature of his level.

▸ **Courseur**

The Obscurati skulk has the grace of an acrobat. They climb, jump, and swing through the fray with supreme confidence of their course. They take no falling damage for the first 20 feet they fall, and can Take 10 on Athletics and Acrobatics checks.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Shortsword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC

Hit: 3d6+10 damage.

⟋ **Shadow Snare** ✦ At-Will

The slender warrior throws out a hand and a thread of shadow pierces you. You hear a mechanical action as spikes extend into your flesh. He yanks back to drag you down.

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +18 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+10 damage and the target is pulled 2 squares. If the target is bloodied, it is also knocked prone.

Skills Acrobatics +16, Athletics +13, Stealth +16

Str	15 (+8)	**Dex**	20 (+11)	**Wis**	10 (+6)
Con	10 (+6)	**Int**	10 (+6)	**Cha**	11 (+6)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common

The Cops!

If the party refused to go with the police officer Stone earlier, Glaucia Evora decides to take matters into her own hands, and goes to find the party. Her timing coincides closely with Rush's group. Indeed at the start of the third round, the mage (if he is on the roof) spots the approach of Glaucia and a cadre of police. The mage shouts down that the cops are coming, but Rush orders his team to keep fighting.

On the tenth round, Glaucia arrives. It takes half a dozen police officers to yank the *immovable rod* from its spot so they can open the door. Glaucia banishes the darkness with a word, then orders everyone to drop their weapons. The officers with her begin manacling everyone present, while Glaucia tries to save the lives of those dying from their wounds.

There are plenty of witnesses who will support that the PCs were defending themselves against an ambush. Glaucia will send word to the police to try to investigate more, then will take the party to her courtroom. She is a judge, after all, not a detective, and her job is meting out justice, not running down criminals.

Aftermath

Only Rush has an escape plan; his one-use *contingent gatecrasher charm* pops him into the Bleak Gate when he becomes bloodied, giving him five minutes to get distance from the party and treat his wounds, after which he'll return to the real world and hurriedly find a horse. He'll ride to the summer court and link up with Lya, alerting Merton along the way to have his own ambush ready. If he lasts long enough for Glaucia to show up, he triggers the charm himself.

A female gnoll from the unincorporated southern tribes, Glaucia joined Executores dola Liberta fifteen years ago after gnolls in the Cult of the Steel Lord attacked her village and tried to kidnap the children to convert them. Her mate died in the fighting, and she was cornered with her pups. When the leader of the raid party reached out for her youngest son, Glaucia stabbed the boy in his heart and vowed that her family would die before it would be made slaves. As the raid leader tried to decide what to do, she placed the knife to her next child's throat. The raiders let her family go with the justification that she would tell of the cult's might.

Instead, she trained herself and her surviving children to defend themselves. She pledged herself to the Executores and was bestowed with divine power. Among the notoriously hierarchy-adverse sisterhood of the Executores, Glaucia is one of the most respected, famous for her piercing blue eyes and her lack of sympathy for those let themselves be controlled.

The minotaur ambassador from Ber to Risur, Brakken was tapped by the rulers of Risur and Danor to mediate their peace talks, which ultimately failed. Canny yet outgoing, his mere presence tamps down on people's worse tendencies. 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 the surface thoughts and, if necessary, nudge people toward compromise. 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 and refuses to travel without his most trusted friend, a dire bear named Feroz.

Captured Ob members don't know anything the party already doesn't, except perhaps the resources aboard *Lux Profectusque*. They're loyal to Lya, though, and are willing to die for the mission.

Judge, Jury, Executore

Social. Real-Time. Level 13.

Glaucia Evora wants the party involved with the trial of Brakken.

The party might find their way to Glaucia on their own or in the company of the orc police officer Stone, or they might be tracked down by an impatient Glaucia, likely at Melissa Amarie's residence. The unforgiving gnoll is dressed for her judge's duty, wearing gray robes and a coppery stole adorned with rearing dragons. The broken-chain badge of an Executore dola Liberta shines on her chest, and six gold rings adorn a single of her ears. She carries an unadorned staff with fresh blood stains. She is slow to move and speak, and her blue eyes watch inscrutably those with whom she speaks.

If the party provokes a fight with Glaucia, her stats are listed in Appendix E. She's respected enough that the party will find the whole city turning hostile.

How Often Do Adventurers Get Subpoenaed?

Glaucia introduces herself and explains that during the Bruse's absence for summer, she has taken it upon herself to act as extemporaneous judge in Seobriga for complaints of sufficient merit. This is an unusual role for an Executore, but permitted by her powers. Those familiar with Beran culture (History DC 20) or its legal system (Diplomacy DC 20) recognize that in this context she is performing a role normally required of the Bruse, which is in a way an indictment of the Bruse's behavior. The party would be well-served to be careful of the politics here.

She tells the party that she requests they come and testify at the trial of Brakken. She understands that as outsiders they aren't familiar with Ber's system, so she clarifies that the trial will be fast, and that the request is just being polite, because if they refuse they'll be held for contempt for a day, at least.

Glaucia assumes the party is here for international business reasons, and has no inkling they're interested in Tinker Oddcog. But she does know that a Danoran warship arrived yesterday, and that Lya Jierre is at the summer court now. She has a hunch that this situation is trouble for Ber, and so after the trial she offers to accompany the party to the court, assuming they have not given her reason to arrest them. Again, this offer is just being polite; they cannot legally decline.

Expedited Trials

Glaucia's "courtroom" is an old building missing most of its roof and parts of its walls. It was at this spot that the dragon Widoreva collapsed when she died. The people of Seobriga have treated the building as a monument of their victory, maintaining the damaged structure and guarding the bones of the dragon.

Glaucia uses the snout of the dragon's skull as her desk, and the entire face is covered in layers of old candle wax. The suspect on trial is required to stand in a cage made of the dragon's ribs. Soldiers guard the perimeter of the skeleton, and hundreds of people pack the room to watch the trial, shushing each other so they can hear witnesses speak.

A few other trials have occurred today, mostly tenants complaining about their landlords or workers about their bosses. The floor just outside the rib-cage is spattered with blood from the beatings of those found guilty.

Favorable Treatment

Impartiality is Glaucia's foremost goal in her duty as judge, but if any PCs are Vekeshi mystics she feels a bit of kinship. Before the trial she spares a moment with the PC to discuss how she expects to rule, and what the party will have to do if they want to help Brakken. She hopes the PC won't disappoint her.

Indeed, if a Vekeshi PC comports herself well—or mentions that the party defeated two known criminals from Ber (the arsonist brothers, see Adventure Two)—Glaucia will encourage continued contact and collaboration between their two groups. She personally finds the fey affinities of the Vekeshi distasteful, but she'd be willing to exchange information and work toward common goals. This only really pays off in later adventures a (Eleven and Thirteen), and can be easily ignored if the PC is not interested.

The People vs. Brakken

When the party arrives, they're directed to benches at the front of the audience. Brakken is brought out from a cell in another part of the building and escorted to the cage. Glaucia takes her seat and explains the proceedings for the sake of the outsiders.

The plaintiffs will provide their side of the story. The defendant will state his. Physical witnesses will testify. Then character witnesses may speak. Then each group can have a few minutes of discussion and argument—without, she stresses, any physical contact or violence—after which she'll lay her sentence.

Brakken is a man of high rank, but unlike in most countries, here that actually affords him fewer protections rather than more. The common folk love the opportunity to see a powerful figure brought low, and Executores go out of their way to ensure authority figures don't abuse their powers. The trial, brief though it is, has drawn a large crowd. Vendors at the edges offer dried meats and roasted corn dipped in butter and cheese.

Trial by Fire

There is one additional element, a power Glaucia possesses that makes her one of the most prized judges. She traces a ring of brimstone on the ground and whispers to it, causing it to flicker with dim fire. Anyone who testifies is required to stand in the ring. If they tell a lie within the ring, the flames flare and they take 1 point of fire and radiant damage.

When each person stands in the brimstone, Glaucia asks them their name, asks them what day it is, then asks them to answer what day it is again, but to lie this time. This test shows to the audience and Glaucia that the magic is active, and deters superfluous witnesses from testifying.

Unruly Folderol

Brakken's arrest happened after a small scuffle this morning. Hired by Rush Munchausen, a pair of orcs named **Rulio** and **Foldero** concocted a fight. Knowing they'd have to answer truthfully they even devised a reason for the fight. They waited for Brakken to pass by on his way to the teleportation circle, and then Rulio spilled a jug of wine on Foldero's shirt.

Foldero yelled, they started pushing each other, and then Rulio shoved Foldero into the ambassador. Foldero elbowed Brakken in his snout, knocking out a tooth, and then grabbed him and tried to shove him at Rulio, who was planning to aim a punch at Foldero then "miss" and hit Brakken.

Brakken possesses psychic powers, and so rather than be pummeled he simply manifested a calming aura and told the men to stop fighting. He's done this dozens of times, and people never realize they've been magically influenced. But Rush warned the two orcs of Brakken's power, and so while they did indeed stop fighting, they still had the presence of mind to shout that Brakken had used magic on their minds.

Mind control is seen as one of the worst possible crimes in Ber, where stealing someone's freedom is anathema to the revolution. The accusation whipped up a frenzy in the crowds gathered for the day's protest, and a small mob dragged Brakken to Glaucia, threatening to slit his throat if he used his magic on them.

Testimonies

Rulio and Foldero take turns telling about the same story. They got into a fight after Rulio spilled his wine, and while they admit they didn't need to fight, they claim that Brakken's crime is far, far worse than the minor ruckus they caused. Rulio adds that everyone's heard of how Brakken stared down a bear once, and he thinks Brakken used magic then too, making him a fraud.

Brakken tells the story from his perspective, which was just that these two men started fighting and fell into him, and then he was getting hit, so he yelled at them to stop. Glaucia presses, asking if he used magic.

Brakken glares at her, since they both know his admission might ruin his career. Then he answers, "I did no harm to them. In fact, I spared them further injury. But yes, I used magic to calm them. Once I passed they would have been free to keep fighting. I did not steal their liberty."

The audience jeers. Glaucia asks for a list of powers he possesses, and follows up by asking if he left any out. Then she asks who he has used these powers on; he refuses to answer, saying that he only ever used his power to bring peace.

Two witnesses corroborate the orcs' story of the fight, and they make an effort to talk up their role in dragging the minotaur to justice. Then Glaucia gives the party an opportunity to defend Brakken's character. She asks if they were aware of his psychic power, what their past history is with them, and why they were meeting him. Law-savvy PCs can tell she's fishing for information, which is not pertinent to the current trial.

Cross-Examination

Rulio and Foldero think the case is settled, so they don't bother to ask any questions. Glaucia doesn't suspect any sort of foul play, so she doesn't press the two. But the party can fairly easily cut through their stories with the right questions, especially if they think the timing is a little too convenient. If they can force the two orcs to admit they were put up to the fight by a foreigner, it will help things for Brakken.

If the party wants Brakken to be spared ridicule and ostracism, they can try to defend the morality of what he did and convince the crowd that he's innocent. While Berans in general hate being told what to do, the party might compare what Brakken did to a musician singing a calming song, or a shaman rallying his people with a rousing sermon. If they can earn enough good will from the audience, they might be able to then point out that the goal of the revolution is to civilize the nation of Ber. It's risky, but with the right build-up it's possible to turn the audience's loathing of Brakken into admiration.

Sentencing

If the party doesn't make any headway in defending Brakken, Glaucia sentences the minotaur to a moderate beating, and instructs the audience to spread the word of their ambassador's abuse of power. She orders Brakken to come forth, then proceeds to wallop him with her staff for thirty seconds. This knocks him to the ground and leaves him broken and bleeding, but he'll heal eventually. With a glance at the party, she tells the guards to hold Brakken in a cell until he's well enough to leave on his own. She then adjourns the court and walks over to the party, ready to accompany them.

If the party discovers that the orcs were put up to this, Glaucia only sentences Brakken to a light beating, lasting a few seconds. Brakken's reputation might still be ruined, but he'll be able to accompany the party. Glaucia still tags along.

If the party clears Brakken's name, Glaucia sentences him to a perfunctory beating, because he did break the letter of the law. He has to hold his hands out, and she strikes him painfully across the knuckles. But she tells the audience to speak no ill words about the ambassador. He maintains his honor in Ber, but word will eventually spread, making foreign dignitaries unwilling to work alongside him. He'll have to find a new position.

As for Rulio and Foldero, if their ploy is uncovered, Glaucia sentences them to at least a light beating, and possibly a moderate beating if it's clear their goal was to harm Brakken. No one here has done anything worthy of a savage beating.

CONSEQUENCES

An intelligent defense of Brakken earns Glaucia's respect, which she will mention to Bruse Shantus and his advisors in Act Two. If they can pin the fake accusations on Rush, it will also hurt Lya's standing when it comes time for the Bruse to vote on who should get access to Tinker.

Monument Road

Exploration. Montage. Level 3.

The lands outside Seobriga, dotted with relics of the dragon tyrants, are generally safe.

The summer days are long, and if the party finishes the trial before mid-afternoon they should have enough time to complete the thirty-mile journey to the Bruse's summer court by nightfall. Glaucia can see to them receiving sturdy horses and if necessary a carriage.

The highway that leads to the summer court is known as Monument Road for the hundreds of statues that line it, each representing a different ally of Vairday Bruse at the founding of Ber. The five nearest to the gates of Seobriga each have a shaded park surrounding them, and depict the leaders who unified the five major races of Ber.

- Cavallo de Guerra, who united the orcs.
- Shantus, who united the minotaurs.
- Aitch, who united the lizardfolk.
- Llanachita, who united the goliaths.
- Geeba, who united the goblins.

A sixth park has an empty stand for a statue, which is dedicated to El Extraño, who united the kobolds. Glaucia mirthlessly explains the cultural joke that kobolds don't actually exist. If asked if she's ever seen one, she chuckles, like she just heard a clever punchline.

Right beside the city gates is, of course, Vairday Bruse, who united the nation.

This half-deaf half-orc has taken an odd course in his life. After serving briefly in the military as a beast-trainer, Merton one day saw a Danoran performer showcasing various acoustic tricks, including shattering a wine glass with her voice. Fascinated, Merton offered to travel with the woman and take care of the horses that pulled her carriage in exchange for lessons. He slowly moved from tutor to tutor, acquiring a variety of novel skills until five years later he assembled a sonic weapon. Though Ber's military was interested, it could not afford to produce the weapon, so Merton went to Danor, where he caught the attention of Lya Jierre.

Today Merton, who has lost most of his hearing from his experiments, travels with Lya as bodyguard (and occasional animal handler). He comes across a bit dim-witted, but he's just absent-minded. He occasionally questions Lya's orders when she requires him to harm people, but he trusts her judgment.

Local Color

Further from the city, the party passes farmland and pastures, and they can see herds of huge short-haired goats as big as bison being wrangled by ranchers. The goatherds ride on normal-sized horses, but rely on trained bears to keep their stock under control.

The terrain gets rougher and rolling, and the road heads uphill into a forest of truly massive sequoias. This was once a hunting ground of the dragon tyrants, where workers tended to vineyards and tried not to be eaten by the tyrants' pets that roamed the woods. The forest is mostly uninhabited now, though ranchers sometimes roam here and let their herds graze in the shade.

Petitioning a Vision

Glaucia will talk if the party engages her, but she's content to ride in silence at first. When the horses take a break after an hour or so, she poses a question to the group.

Risur's skyseers are famous for predicting the future. Glaucia is curious about the nature of prophecy, and whether future events are predetermined. She believes they cannot be, or else no one would have free will. She expresses that she would like someone to tell her a vision of her own future, just so she'd be able to prove her freedom by denying that future.

In particular, she wants to know whether she will ever have her revenge against the gnolls that attacked her village, and what dangers await her. This provides an opportunity to work in Glaucia's own backstory, which establishes the Cult of the Steel Lord to telegraph their later involvement in the plot.

If the skyseer PC obliges Glaucia's request, we leave it to you to determine what vision to share, since some groups are more amenable to having NPCs tag along than others. By default, though, we assume Glaucia will want to be involved in the fight against the cult, perhaps leading forces on Isla dolas Focas, even if she's not present in battle with the party.

Rexes in the Vineyard

Action. Tactical. Level 15.

A tyrannosaur provokes a stampede of megafauna toward the party.

Lya Jierre's second bodyguard, Merton Goncala, has word of the party's travel. If they take the direct route to the summer court, he prepares an ambush. His custom-built sonic staff helps him drive and command animals by creating noises audible only to them.

He has managed to get under his control a pair of tyrannosaurs, giant reptilian predators bred by the dragon tyrants as pets and symbols of might. This breed of tyrant lizard has some mild magical powers due to their affinity with their long-dead draconic masters. The beasts are rare, especially so close to major cities, but Merton has a knack for finding and befriending dangerous animals.

Bestial Ambush

The road here weaves through a sequoia forest. The trees, which grow 200 feet or higher, make it difficult to see much beyond 100 feet. Hedgerows, 10 feet high, separate the road from an abandoned vineyard. One tree has fallen across the road, but it was sawed in two, so the way ahead passes between the two 20-ft. wide cross-sections of its rings.

Just before the tree are a pair of arches marking a crossroad. Merton has magically excavated and masterfully concealed pit trap between them (Perception DC 29). Enough creatures entering the area at once causes the whole 20-ft. by 20-ft. area to collapse. This is caused by a single large creature like a horse, or three or more medium creatures. The pit drops 20 feet, enough to slow the party down but not threaten their lives (Athletics DC 15 to climb out). It also probably breaks the leg of a horse that falls in.

As soon as someone falls in the pit, or when it becomes apparent they won't fall for the trap, the party's horses begin bucking and flailing their heads as if in pain. Simultaneously a pair of monstrous roars erupt from the north, and suddenly the ground begins to tremble.

Merton hides in the branches of a toppled sequoia, 50 feet south from the road (Perception DC 34), and he has used his sonic staff to panic the horses with noises inaudible to most humanoids. The noise is also the cue for his two pet tyrannosaurs to spook a nearby herd of large goats, driving them toward the party.

Each round a PC must either dismount or spend a move action to try to stay on their horse. Those PCs who wish to stay mounted grant combat advantage, they take a –2 penalty to their attack rolls, and they must succeed a Strength or Dexterity check (DC 10) or be flung off and fall prone. A horse with no rider bolts down the road.

A PC can make a Nature check (DC 20) as a standard action to calm a horse so it will behave normally, even in the face of the soon-to-arrive danger.

The party might be accompanied by Glaucia or Brakken, whose stats are in Appendix E (page 296).

The Stampede

- 2 king-bred tyrannosaurs
- Merton Goncala
- Stampede of Beran goats

Stampede

If you're using a battle map, get 100 **goat tokens** handy. Each goat token should be Large size, so if you're using coins just place them on the central vertex of four squares.

At initiative count 0 on the first round, the party spots the first of the panicked goats to the north, at the edge of the map. Place 16 **goat tokens** at the northern edge of the map, roughly in a 2 across by 8 tall shape. So they'd fill 20 feet west-to-east and 80 feet north-to-south.

These goat tokens are an abstraction, representing the area through which stampede is flowing, and in a given round a dozen goats might move through each occupied space. Other goats are certainly running about as well, but they aren't clumped together, so they can dodge out of the way of obstacles like PCs.

Adding Goats

Each round thereafter at initiative count 0, place additional goat tokens at the rate listed below.

Each new goat token must be placed near another goat token. Focus first on completing a line across the whole map from north to south, but keep the herd at least two tokens wide. Then use any spare tokens to thicken the herd or branch off in new arteries. Since the tyrannosaurs are driving the herd toward the party, you should aim the herd at the group.

- **Round 2.** Add 24 goat tokens.
- **Round 3.** Add 40 goat tokens.
- **Round 4.** Add 20 goat tokens. Place the tyrannosaurs on the map.
- **Round 5.** Remove 16 goat tokens, starting from those closest to the tyrannosaurs.
- **Round 6.** As above, but remove 24 goat tokens.
- **Round 7.** As above, but remove 40.
- **Round 8.** Remove 20.

The goats avoid trees, but they plow through vines and hedges. Don't place any goats within 10 feet of where Merton is hidden.

Trampling and Deflecting

If a goat token is placed in a space that a Large or smaller creature occupies, that creature takes 5 damage. Whenever a creature ends its turn in a space with a goat token it takes another 5 damage; then make an attack, +12 vs. Fortitude. On a hit, the creature is knocked prone and takes 10 damage.

Goat tokens can be attacked, and have Defenses of 10. Area and close attacks deal double damage. If an attack does 30 or more points of damage, remove that goat token entirely. An attacker that does insufficient damage can instead remove the goat token and place it in some other space adjacent to the edge of the herd. The open space is safe for this round; do not refill it at the next initiative count 0, but the turn afterward it will probably fill back up.

Spaces with goat tokens are considered difficult terrain.

Terrain

The fallen tree's branches are dense, requiring an Athletics check (DC 16) to climb through. The hedges are effectively blocking terrain, and the vine bushes difficult terrain. The standing trees are not readily climbable (Athletics DC 20) since the lowest branches are at least 50 feet up.

King-Bred Tyrannosaur Level 14 Elite Brute
Gargantuan natural beast **XP** 2,000

HP 332; **Bloodied** 166 **Initiative** +8
AC 26, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 24 **Perception** +9
Speed 8
Saving Throws +2
Action Point 1

Traits

▸ **Elemental Affinity**
The monster snarls in pain at your magical attack, but the energy lingers on its scales and limns its 6-inch long teeth.
If the tyrannosaur has taken any energy damage since the end of its last turn, its attacks deal 3 extra damage matching one of the energy types that damaged it.

▸ **Jaw Carry**
The tyrannosaur can move normally while it has a Large or smaller creature grabbed in its mouth. When it releases the grab it can drop the creature in any space within the tyrannosaur's *bite* reach.

▸ **Massive Body, Tiny Arms**
It was hard as hell to knock it over, but it's having trouble getting back up. It would be easy to get onto its back, which is one hell of a blind spot.
The tyrannosaur gets a saving throw to resist being knocked prone, and on any turn it stands up it is slowed.

Additionally, because of the gigantic size of the tyrannosaur, a person who grabs it cannot immobilize it, but can climb onto its back (Athletics DC 15). Climbing on is automatic if the tyrannosaur is already prone.

Once there it must hold on (Acrobatics or Athletics DC 15 each round) or fall off. However, the tyrannosaur cannot attack a creature on its back, and it grants combat advantage to that creature. It can spend a move action to try to "escape the grab," in essence bucking creatures off its back.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Bite** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 5d12 damage. The tyrannosaur grabs the target (Escape DC 21).
Special: If it has a creature grabbed, it can only use its bite against that creature.

⊘ **Kick** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Its foot bowls you over, then descends upon your chest, pinning you to the ground.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d10 damage. The target is knocked prone and is restrained as long as the tyrannosaur is above or adjacent to the target.

▸ **Primal Mauling** ✦ At-Will
Effect: The tyrannosaur moves its speed, uses *kick* at any point during its movement, then uses *bite* at the end of its movement.

▸ **Rend and Tear** ✦ At-Will
As you fight to escape, the tyrannosaur bites down on your exposed limb and pulls, ripping you in half.
Requirement: The tyrannosaur must have the target restrained (due to *kick*), or another Huge or larger creature must be grabbing or restraining the target (with *bite* or *kick*).
Effect: The tyrannosaur *bites* the target. If the attack hits and the target is bloodied after the damage, it makes a saving throw. On a success, it loses the limb of its choice. On a failure, it takes an additional 20 damage and loses two limbs at random.

Minor Actions

Bellowing Roar (fear) ✦ Encounter
Its roar touches something primal in your mind, dredging up a visceral, animal terror that yells for you to flee.
Attack: Close Burst 5 (enemies in burst); +17 vs. Will
Hit: The target is terrified (save ends). While terrified, the target must spend its first action each round to move as far from the tyrannosaur as possible.

▸ **Fling Food** ✦ At-Will
Well, you're not being eaten anymore.
Requirement: The tyrannosaur must have a creature grabbed in its mouth.
Effect: The tyrannosaur releases the grabbed creature anywhere within its bite's reach, then knocks the creature prone and slides it 4 squares. Make the following attack against each creature in a burst 1 centered on the released creature.
Attack: Area Burst 1 (creatures in burst); +17 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 10 damage and the target is knocked prone.
Effect: The flung creature takes 20 damage.

Str 27 (+15) **Dex** 10 (+7) **Wis** 14 (+9)
Con 22 (+13) **Int** 2 (+3) **Cha** 14 (+9)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Sequoia Vineyard
= 10 feet
-5
-10
+10
+10

Merton Goncala	Level 14 Controller
Medium natural humanoid (human, orc)	**XP** 1,000
HP 128; **Bloodied** 64	**Initiative** +15
AC 28, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 26	**Perception** +6
Speed 5	Darkvision
Immune dazed, deafened	
Resist thunder 20, stunned	

Traits

▸ **Baffling Helmet**

This hugely muscled orc wears plate armor, but his steel helm looks like it covers earmuffs. For some reason he seems to want extra ear protection.

As long as Merton has his helmet on, he is immune to the deafened condition, and has resist thunder 20.

▸ **History of Head Injuries**

As hard as you hit him, he should be sprawling, but he just shakes it off like he's felt it all before.

Merton is immune to the dazed condition, and while stunned he can still take a single action on his turn.

☼ **Thundering Presence** ✦ Aura 2

The tip of his staff hums with barely audible energy, but the animals seem to hate how it sounds.

Creatures that end their turn in the aura take 10 thunder damage. Creatures of animal intelligence (2 or less) must make a saving throw to enter the aura, and at the start of their turn must make another save or else be compelled to leave the aura.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Sonic Staff** (thunder) ✦ At-Will, Basic

When he strikes you, his staff releases a deafening thunderclap.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8+6 damage, plus 10 thunder damage. The target is deafened (save ends) and is pushed 5 squares.

✧ **Thunderwave** (thunder) ✦ At-Will

He smashes his staff on the ground, sending out a wave of rippling sound.

Attack: Close Burst 3 (creatures in burst); +17 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 3d6+6 thunder damage and the target is pushed 5 squares.

✲ **Resonant Bomb** (thunder) ✦ Daily

He pulls a melon-sized metal canister from his back, taps a button, and hurls it. When it lands, everything around it seems to simply shatter. It takes you a moment to realize you've been hurled to the ground, and that your ears are bleeding.

Attack: Area Burst 2 within 10 (creatures in burst); +17 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 20 thunder damage and the target is pushed 5 squares from the origin of the area.

Miss: 10 thunder damage and the target is pushed 1 square.

Effect: Objects in the primary area that cannot move (like trees) are annihilated, potentially causing a tree to collapse since it no longer has a base. Every creature within 10 squares of the origin of the area is knocked prone, and is dazed and deafened (save ends both).

Skills Arcana +15, Nature +18, Stealth +11

Str	22 (+13)	**Dex**	8 (+6)	**Wis**	8 (+6)
Con	16 (+10)	**Int**	16 (+10)	**Cha**	9 (+6)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Giant, Orcish

Equipment *sonic lance*, *contingent gatecrasher charm*

Timber!

If Merton uses his *resonance bomb* to annihilate part of the base of a tree, the tree makes a save each round at the start of Merton's turn, with a –1 penalty for each square it is missing from its cross-section as viewed from above. On a failure, the tree topples. Determine the most likely direction for it to fall, then roll 2d4 to determine scatter:

2—45 degrees clockwise
3—30 degrees clockwise
4—15 degrees clockwise
5—on target
6—15 degrees counterclockwise
7—30 degrees counterclockwise
8—45 degrees counterclockwise

Creatures in a 20-square long path of the falling tree are targeted by: **Attack:** Area burst (creatures in burst); +15 vs. Reflex. **Hit:** 40 damage and the target is knocked prone. **Miss:** Half damage. At the DM's discretion, certain types of obstacles can adjust the fall. If you're standing beside a 20-ft. tall tyrannosaurus rex that gets walloped, for instance, the tree won't be able to hit you.

Tactics

Once the tyrannosaurs spot the party, they work as a pair if possible. Once one has a PC bitten and grabbed, the other will try to also get a hold, and then they'll try to rip the PC in half. If forced apart, the tyrannosaurs trample small foes, pin them to the ground with a foot, then reach down and start crunching.

If the party looks like they might manage to keep their horses under control and escape, Merton appears and tries to lure them into attacking him long enough for the tyrannosaurs to close. He's confident his *contingent gatecrasher charm* will get him to safety. But if the party is scrambling to hide from the stampede, he'll wait for his pets to engage the party, and then he'll attack stragglers. He prefers to push foes into the stampede.

If the party tries to hide from the rexes in the pit, Merton happily tosses his bomb in with them.

As long as he has his sonic staff, the stampede swerves around him without harm, though he still treats the spaces as difficult terrain.

Allies

Glaucia shouts for people to take cover, and she moves into the fallen tree's branches. If Brakken is present, it's marginally safer to stay nearby him because the stampede takes a penalty to its trampling attacks, but he also tries to run and hide behind a tree.

Aftermath

Unless the party can thwart his planar travel, Merton likely makes good his escape once bloodied, or he activates his charm manually if both tyrannosaurs go down. If captured, Merton suggests the party talk to Lya before they do anything rash like killing him.

If the party manages to kill a tyrannosaur, after combat Glaucia insists they wait long enough for her to rip numerous teeth out of the mouth of one of the reptiles. She explains that these beasts are as close as one can get to a dragon these days, and their bodies are valuable. During the rest of the trip to the summer court she crafts a heavy, primitive-looking necklace, then offers it as a gift to the party. See the *tyrant's teeth* (page 329).

She keeps just one of the 6-inch teeth for herself.

While Shantus is the head of state and final arbiter, most of the daily affairs of Ber are run by this female lizardfolk. She has a cool reptilian demeanor, and pursues her duties with no tenderness or sympathy. However, she neither feels any great pride or ambition, and so she holds fairly stark views on the role of Ber's government, believing its foremost role is to protect the citizens from death.

She cares not for workers' comfort, for landowners' wealth, or for tribes' honor, except in how these encourage or discourage the security of the nation. However, she thinks Bruse Shantus is a poor ruler liable to provoke apathy and slow the growth of Ber's might, so she'd like to see him either re-energized toward the revolution, or replaced.

A dragonborn general in the Beran army, Kenna assumed the political position of Minister of Dragon Affairs with Shantus's rise to the Brusedom. Her ministry was originally tasked with handling groups who still identified with the dragon tyrants, but over four decades it has morphed into a responsibility for the treasures of rediscovered dragon lairs, and today is mostly just the nation's official bank. Still, all members of the ministry are given ceremonial training in historical dragon-slaying tactics.

Kenna still has close ties to the military and is pushing Shantus to make military service more encouraging. She admires the structure and loyalty it instills. She would like to acquire military trainers from either Risur or Danor, as well as modern cannons and firearms. Every morning she and several of the court's bodyguards go for fitness runs outdoors, from the summer court to the nearby military base. She's still somewhat plump because she constantly grazes on the court's various fine foods.

The current leader of the Cult of the Steel Lord, this gnoll teaches his followers that mortal flesh is weak, and to achieve the strength of the great dragons of old they must live pure. Though he fervently believes his own faith, Pardo is a consummate liar and manipulator, which he sees as just another example of having inner strength despite outer corruption.

Pardo wears simple clothes with no decorations. He refuses to use metal tools, and carries a handkerchief for things like door knobs. He represents the unincorporated tribes as honorary Minister of Rebellion, and so often has secretive meetings near the court with people from around the country. Though everyone expects him to scheme, the court views it as a mark of their openness and opposition to tyranny that they promote their own enemies.

Pardo secretly is a duplicant—his real body is on Isla dolas Focas—and so he is incredibly strong and resilient. He waits for a chance to strike against Bruse Shantus, but until then sticks to talking, not fighting.

Summer Court

Exposition/Social. Montage. Level 13.

Bruse Shantus tries very hard to enjoy his vacation from running his country.

It is likely near nightfall when the party reaches the summer court. Lines of tents stretch down the highway for half a mile from the court to the nearest village, **Nimba**. Citizens wishing to petition the Bruse have camped out for weeks, with only a handful being seen per day. Mostly they get along, and people play music throughout the day as they work alongside the local townsfolk in the farms and ranches.

Occasionally fights break out, and sometimes soldiers from the court cause trouble when the Bruse complains about noise ruining his vacation. Every day at noon local military test ordnance at the artillery range at the edge of the town's farms, but no one wants to be out farming at the hottest part of the day anyway.

A low-ranking orc executora, **Heiliana**, helps keep the peace and makes sure that trouble-makers are efficiently banished.

Court Facilities

The Bruse stays in a small fort with a hedge maze on the side (see Adulthood Challenge, below). Beautiful if somewhat arid wilderness sprawls out for miles, dotted with cottages and tents, and everything is patrolled by soldiers and bloodhounds. There are fields for sport, a river with lush artificial-waterfall-fed ponds, and countless other amenities of the fabulously wealthy.

At any given time a few dozen VIPs reside in these buildings, plus hundreds of retainers and courtiers and as many soldiers. A nearby military base can field another few thousand, and the vizier, **Zarkava Ssa'litt**, can easily view any location on the grounds unless the Bruse chooses to shield it. In an emergency, elite guards can defend the Bruse's location long enough for Zarkava to teleport him to safety.

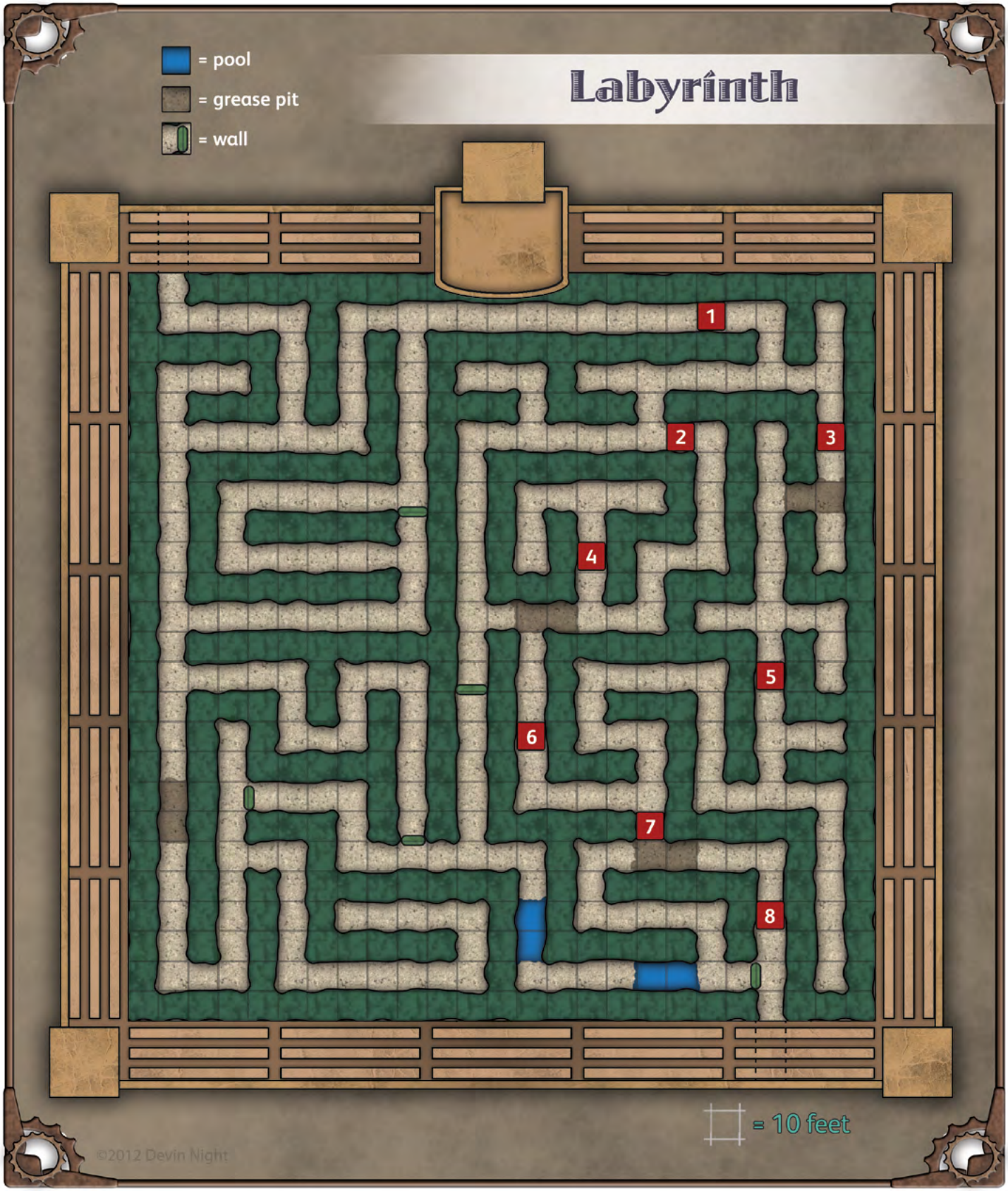
The Labyrinth

Shantus sees petitioners at his leisure, and prefers to spend his days riding fine steeds, hunting in the wilderness, and watching plays put on by foreign troupes. But he makes exceptions for the Adulthood Challenge.

Ber has many traditions of proving one's worth through violence. One of Shantus's few popular reforms once he came to power was to encourage the creation of Adulthood Challenges—mazes with obstacles and some tough but non-lethal animals, against which would-be warriors could pass from childhood to adulthood without having to cave in the skull of someone from the next valley over.

The nation's grandest such maze is at the Bruse's summer court, and Shantus has proclaimed that anyone who passes the challenge can have an audience with him. He has courtiers who make rounds through the crowds outside, looking for people who either have truly urgent requests or who would make for a good show. Those petitioners are encouraged to undertake the test, and the rest of the gathered petitioners are invited to watch.

Challenges are always attempted at night. The Bruse, his attendants, and the audience watch from bleachers that rise 40 or more feet above the ground, accessible by stairs. (Guards, of course, keep the commoners from getting close to the members of the court.) Those taking the test are required to wear brightly glowing crowns so their locations in the maze can be tracked by those in the bleachers. And the trained bears, which make up the primary threat of the maze, have red crowns.


= pool
= grease pit
= wall
Labyrinth
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
= 10 feet
©2012 Devin Night

The bears have had their claws filed down, and they wear muzzles and are trained just to knock down and pin people, not maul them. But they don't react well to being stabbed. The number of bears varies based on how hard the Bruse wants to make it for a petitioner to get through, and sometimes he just sends a person in with a glowing red crown to pose as a bear, but avoid the petitioner. No one likes seeing kindly grandmothers be mauled.

Seeing the Bruse

Glaucia or Brakken can direct the party to the right courtier, and then they can ask to take the Adulthood Challenge to gain an audience with Shantus. Both Glaucia and Brakken already have access to the Bruse, but the party's entrance to the court grounds will be barred until they prove themselves.

The Bruse is already hosting Lya Jierre, who has warned that others might come seeking Tinker Oddcog, so he's initially opposed to letting the party in. They'll have a chance to face the maze, but he intends to offer an insurmountable challenge, not realizing the party's prowess. If the party goes through the right channels, they can get their crack at the maze tonight.

Adulthood Challenge

Social. Real-Time. Level 16.

The party must brave a rigged labyrinth game to meet the minotaur.

Word goes out among the petitioners that a gang of foreigners have come to see the king, and rumor is the king isn't happy to see them. That means a good show, so hundreds of common folk leave the makeshift camp on the highway and tromp up the stairs to the bleachers around the labyrinth. A space is reserved atop the south wall for the PCs to stand, but etiquette requires they say nothing to the dignitaries. They can talk to the crowd all they want, though.

Around 8 p.m., the Bruse's guests file into the northern edge of seats. These include Lya Jierre, plus Merton and Rush unless the party managed to thwart their escape. Then the Bruse comes out, along with two of his current concubines. He is flanked by his vizier Zarkava Ssa'litt, his minister of dragon affairs **Kenna Vigilante**, and the honorary minister of rebellion **Pardo**.

An announcer proclaims the names of the PCs and what matter they wish to bring before the Bruse. Then the PCs are ushered downstairs to the south entrance while the announcer reads out the rules of the challenge.

Rules of the Game

1. **Crowns.** Each petitioner (PC) must wear a crown that glows a different color—orange, yellow, green, blue, violet, or white. Defenders of the labyrinth wear red crowns. To pass the challenge and enter the Summer Court, a petitioner must have a crown on as he passes through the northern gate of the maze. (The glow keeps the petitioner from hiding, but its light is projected upward. It can easily be seen by people in the bleachers, but it just provides dim illumination in a 1 square radius.)
2. **Exits.** A petitioner who passes through the south gate of the maze admits defeat, as does any petitioner who climbs high enough to see above the hedge walls. Since the hedges are 40 feet tall, this is hard to do accidentally.
3. **Magic and Technology.** This is a test of bravery and cunning, not of power. Using magic or technology to pass through hedge walls or other obstacles may be grounds for disqualification. The Bruse and the audience are arbiters of what is acceptable.
4. **Security.** Do not attack anyone in the audience. Do not attempt to approach the Bruse. *Do not set the labyrinth on fire.*
5. **Risks.** If a petitioner becomes too injured to move on his own, he will be retrieved eventually once the danger from any creatures within passes. He assumes the risk that he might die. If a co-petitioner carries him through the north gate, he can still count as a victor as long as he has his crown.
6. **Complaints.** This is the Adulthood Challenge. Children complain. Adults solve their problems.

When the rules have been read, courtiers fit the PCs with their crowns, which are made of copper. Then the portcullis at the south of the labyrinth raises, and the party may enter. The gate remains up in case they wish to leave. Overhead they hear the announcer shout, "Release the bears!"

The Adversaries

- 10 Beran bears
- B.E.A.R. (Battle Enhanced Animalistic Robot)
- 8 teleportation pit traps

Beran Bear — Level 13 Goon Brute
Large natural beast — **XP** 400

HP 156*; **Bloodied** 78* — **Initiative** +5
AC 25, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 24 — **Perception** +6
Speed 7 — Low-light vision

Traits

▸ **Goon**

The Beran bear fights until bloodied, then flees. It will only continue to fight if cornered.

Standard Actions

✓ **Filed Claws** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Its furry paw swats you, but it just stings, since the claws have been clipped.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC

Hit: 3d6+10 damage.

Str	18 (+10)	**Dex**	8 (+5)	**Wis**	10 (+6)
Con	14 (+8)	**Int**	2 (+2)	**Cha**	6 (+4)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

B.E.A.R. — Level 13 Soldier
Large natural animate (construct) — **XP** 800

HP 97; **Bloodied** 48 — **Initiative** +8
AC 29, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 24 — **Perception** +10
Speed 5 — Darkvision

Standard Actions

✓ **Metal Claws** ✦ At-Will, Basic

The machine is a fairly accurate facsimile of a bear, but its claws are much sharper.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+9 damage.

✓ **Grab** ✦ At-Will

It tries to pull you against the jagged blades along its underbelly.

Effect: B.E.A.R. uses *metal claws* twice. If either attack hits, the target falls prone and B.E.A.R. grabs the target (Escape DC 20) if it has fewer than two creatures grabbed.

✓ Superior Design ✦ Recharge ⚃⚃⚃

With a mechanical clank and a burst of steam, the steel bear jumps 20 feet into the air and swats at you.

Effect: B.E.A.R. jumps 4 squares vertically and up to 4 squares horizontally and can use *grab* at any point during the jump. It ignores the first 20 feet of falling damage at the end of this jump.

Str	22 (+12)	**Dex**	6 (+4)	**Wis**	14 (+8)
Con	16 (+9)	**Int**	2 (+2)	**Cha**	6 (+4)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Terrain

The hedge walls are 40 feet high. Climbing the stiff branches is possible (Athletics DC 15), but does 1 point of damage each round to those not wearing gloves and shoes. Pressing through a hedge is impossible, but a narrow passage can be hacked through by dealing 200 points of damage.

Hazards

Stone walls, 20-ft. high and painted green, offer some shortcuts but are practically sheer, making them nearly impossible to climb (Athletics DC 30). Smart petitioners climb the adjacent hedge, then hop down.

The two pools of water stretch 20 feet long, and are only 10 feet deep. The other pools have a 1-foot deep layer of water on the surface, then 9 feet of grease beneath. A creature must succeed an Athletics check (DC 22) to swim through the grease, albeit at half speed. Failing by 5 or more causes a creature to sink chest deep into the viscous substance. It's too thick to fully sink and drown in unless you fall in face first.

Teleportation Pit Trap Level 14 Minion Trap

Object **XP** 250

Detect Perception DC 29. A tiny sliver of light is visible through a seam across the ground ahead of you.

Triggered Actions

▶ **Plummet ✦** At-Will

The ground beneath you snaps open, and blinding light shines up.

Trigger: A Medium or smaller creature enters the trapped area.

Attack (Opportunity Action): Melee 1 (triggering creature); +17 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target falls 20 ft.

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.

A creature that hits the bottom of a pit teleports to a random pit. Roll 1d8 to determine which.

▶ **Countermeasures**

- **Disable:** Thievery DC 21 to snap the mechanism that keeps the trap from triggering for Large creatures. Thievery DC 29 to jam the trap and hold it either open or shut. Fail by 5 or more, and the person trying to disable it leans over too far and triggers the trap.
- **Escape:** A ladder leads up from the bottom of the pit, and a handle lets you pull it open from below. Climbing out is a bit ungainly (Athletics DC 15), but you can exit on either side of the pit.
- **Jump:** It's a DC 10 Athletics check to clear the gap with a running start, or DC 20 from a standing position.
- **Counterweight:** If a creature or object of roughly equal weight stands adjacent to the edge of the pit, he prevents the nearer of the two pit flaps from dropping due to the weight of the other creature. This makes it easier to jump the remaining distance.
- **Gold:** The teleportation is thwarted if a character wears a gold band. The crowns, if you recall, are copper.

Pit Traps

The numbered spaces are complex pit traps, cunningly hidden (Perception DC 29 to notice before stepping on it). Each pit has two counterweighted flaps linked by chains that run through a rolling mechanism along the side of the pit wall. If a Medium or smaller creature moves across the pit, the flap beneath it drops and the ground behind it tilts up, dumping it into the pit. If a Large or larger creature moves across it, its weight is sufficiently distributed so that each flap only opens a little. The pit covers therefore count as difficult terrain to Large or larger creatures, who won't fall in.

The pits are 20 feet deep, and enchanted with bright light spells at the bottom, so when they open a column of light rises into the night sky. The crowd usually cheers, knowing what the light means. A creature that falls in triggers a teleportation spell that sends it to a random pit. Roll 1d8 to determine which pit it ends up in, possibly even the same pit. Creatures get no obvious indication that any magic has transported them. Creatures wearing gold rings or loops are not teleported.

Ladders lead up from the pit floor, and the flaps can be pulled open from below.

Endless Loop

A creature that goes through the north gate without wearing a crown teleports to the south entrance. The translocation is obvious, but goes only one way. Some petitioners try to head back the way they came and end up exiting the maze, forfeiting.

Tactics

Two bears enter the labyrinth each round, and they generally head in different directions, looking for prey. Once all ten bears are inside, the mechanical B.E.A.R. (a gift from Benedict Pemberton) emerges and waits near the north exit. Its superior design lets it leap high to drag down clever climbers who try to bypass all the maze's challenges.

If the party looks, Lya's group watches nervously, but Lya keeps her bodyguards from trying anything rash.

Aftermath

If the party breaks the rules or fails, the Bruse has them escorted out. The next afternoon he'll bring them into his court and give them the rules of his little game (see Act Two), but the Obscurati will have a half-day's head start.

If at least one PC makes it through with his crown on, the Bruse is suitably impressed that he decides to give the party a fair crack at Tinker. He drags them to his temporary throne room (see the map for Coup ex Machina, page 49) while they're still messy from the challenge, and grants them an audience with him while the audience outside is still cheering.

ACT TWO:
Cheating Encouraged

In this act, Bruse Shantus challenges the party to compete with the Obscurati for the right to meet Tinker, not realizing that his gnome guest will betray him.

LYA AT COURT

Lya Jierre has been at the court about a day by the time the party has arrived, and she has charmed the Bruse with light gossip regarding the events in Risur. She has a pair of noncombatant attendants with her—a female ritual mage named **Inez**, and a male porter named **Ulrik** who carries the luggage needed by a prestigious tiefling woman.

She always wears her weapons, and has a small case of syringes tucked into her coat. This is *needlewire*, a magic serum. When the silvery fluid is injected in a person it allows the head of the Obscurati, Nicodemus the Gnostic, to remotely take control of that person's body for anywhere from a few minutes to a few hours. Lya only uses it if she has a vital lead and wants to pass it along to the Obscurati so urgently that she cannot spare the time for a normal Sending ritual.

The serum only grants Nicodemus control and sensory information. He cannot manifest any of his powers. Lya's porter has volunteered to take any needed injections, but it can work on any willing (or unconscious) subject. If the party gets their hands on this and uses it, Nicodemus recognizes the party and talks with polite caution, but he sees no reason to stick around.

Rules of the Game

Social. Real-Time. Level 22.

Bruse Shantus explains the game he wants the party to play.

The party receives their audience with the Bruse, and he spends a long time on small talk about the job of RHC agents or their adventures on the Avery Coast Railroad (he'll explain that El Extraño has eyes everywhere, but otherwise avoids talking about the perhaps-mythical spymaster) before he gets down to business.

He gives the party a chance to plead their case, then explains that Lya Jierre also is interested in Tinker Oddcog, and that she is offering him a state of the art Danoran warship and Danoran engineers to aid in building railroads and future warships. He'll try to wheedle some equally lavish offers out of Risur through the PCs, then eventually laughs and admits that he has something more interesting in mind.

Meet the Judges

Shantus introduces his vizier Zarkava and his minister of dragon affairs Kenna.

He also briefly introduces the honorary minister of rebellion Pardo. If Glaucia is present, she snarls and visibly bristles at the other gnoll, who is from the tribe that destroyed her home years ago. The Bruse asks if she's alright, then laughs as he remembers how the two know each other.

Zarkava and Kenna, Shantus explains, will be helping him decide which team is a better choice to grant access to Tinker. Zarkava is concerned about the nation's prosperity and security, while Kenna has a clear handle on its finances. Shantus sees himself as the heart of the country. Head, heart, and purse-strings will each have one vote, based on their opinion of the two parties.

But to give them time to make their judgment, Shantus has two challenges for the foreigners. The winner of each will earn one vote. So out of the five votes, two are from the winners of the challenges, two from the Bruse's advisors, and one from the Bruse himself.

Fair Play

Before he goes any further, he demands the party promises to wait until sunrise so he can explain the rules and ensure a fair start for the two groups. (Unless the party failed the Adulthood Challenge, in which case the Ob already have a head start.)

First, neither group may leave the grounds of the summer court before sunrise on the next day.

Second, if any member of either group or anyone affiliated with them attempts to locate or contact Tinker before the end of this contest, the offending group will receive the ire of Shantus and his nation. No cheater shall be allowed to meet with the gnome, and anyone who acts in bad faith will be named an enemy of Ber.

Third, if any member of one group attacks anyone in the other group, the attackers will forfeit. Shantus grins and admits he's open to a bit of interpretation. A little friendly disruption via third parties is fine, but we're all civilized here, and he won't abide killing someone from the other side.

If the party is inclined to quibble, Shantus says that the protection applies to an equal number of people on each side, so it includes likely five PCs versus Lya, Merton, Rush, and Lya's two attendants Inez and Ulrik.

First Challenge

The Cantabrilla Railroad will connect the nation's east and west coasts so that freight won't have to travel along the southern coast, which has its share of hostile territory, such as the unincorporated gnoll tribes. The entire length will come to three hundred and twenty-five miles, stretching between the cities of **Reo Pedresco** and **Renza**.

To motivate its fast completion, the Ministry of Dragon Affairs hired two companies: **Griento Railways** out of Renza, and **Liss Rail Construction** out of Reo Pedresco. Whenever a company completed twenty-five miles of the railroad on schedule it earned a bonus, and as the two groups near the central linkage point the Bruse is offering even greater bonuses for whichever company lays the most track.

Currently the heads of the two lines are separated by thirty-six miles, and each side can lay one or two miles of track per day. Going is rough because the route passes through the central river lands, rugged terrain full of steep gullies carved by numerous rivers and streams.

The Bruse will award one vote to whichever group gets their railroad to lay eighteen miles first. He assigns the PCs to help Liss Rail Construction and Lya's group to Griento Railways.

Cronyism

The party may have already had dealings with the head of Griento Railways, **Damata Griento**, and if the PCs ask to switch, they can try to persuade the Bruse. Lya likely doesn't know of the party's association with the half-orc, but she assumes the party wouldn't ask if it wasn't advantageous, so she counters their arguments. If necessary, simple opposed Diplomacy checks might suffice.

Logistics

Give the group **Player Handout—Cantabrilla Challenge**. It explains the costs of building miles of track, some of the options they have to accelerate things, and the consequences of various forms of sabotage. See Running the Cantabrilla Challenge (page 35) for the full rules.

Second Challenge

The "Riven Sea of Gold," *Marrajado de Oro*, forms part of the border between Risur and Ber. For centuries Risur had to defend against naval attacks from fleets of the dragon tyrants and later by orcish warlords. But times have been peaceful since Vairday Bruse united the nation.

However the current executive authority there, **Cavallo de Guerra**, is a thorn in Bruse Shantus's side. He's refusing to pay a fair share for the construction of the Selestala Railroad, which will link his capital city Citado Cavallo with Seobriga. This is just the latest dispute.

The Bruse tasks the PCs with convincing Cavallo to make a public pledge of loyalty and agree to pay for his share of the Selestala route. And he tasks Lya's group with discrediting Cavallo, by convincing him to launch an attack on Risuri territory, specifically the fort **Manhill**, which has long defended against orcish attacks. Whichever happens first earns its team a vote.

Courtly Aid

Social. Montage. Level 13.

Before departing, the party can get help from Shantus's ministers.

The Bruse offers cottages on the grounds to each group, but doesn't want to spend much time clarifying rules because he's going out stargazing with a fine telescope Lya gave him as a gift.

The party might wish to retire so they can scheme in private. Some PCs might offer to accompany the Bruse, but unless a PC has made a good impression he doesn't want some stranger hanging around ruining his evening. The Bruse heads out, leaving a harpsichordist playing in his court until the place clears out.

Other PCs might seek to bend the ears of Zarkava and Kenna (metaphorically, since reptilian ears don't bend so well), either to get advice or to bargain for their vote. Glaucia can provide some insight, and curious PCs might also speak with Pardo, though neither of them have any influence over the game. The party might also try to spy on Lya's group; they're certainly spying on the party.

Competitive Guys

After Shantus announces his game, Merton and Rush approach the party. Rush is amused at the chance to taunt enemies since the Bruse is protecting them, and he drags along Merton, who is annoyed at his partner's levity. Rush snidely congratulates the party on evading their ambushes, and then asks their honest opinion: which one was better?

He explains that his friend Merton sent some giant monsters after them, whereas he had their guide arrested and just tried to kill them himself. Rush tries to rub in any actual damage he might have caused, and demonstrates a callous disregard for any of his allies who might have died.

After a bit of trash-talking, Lya snaps at Rush to stop being so discourteous. Then the three of them depart to a guest cottage.

Stargazing

The Bruse heads out to a high field, with a loose cadre of twenty guards plus a few courtiers who are legitimately enthusiastic about looking at the planets. Tonight the red light of Jiese is passing above the edge the full moon, but with a telescope Jiese's flaming surface appears to shine through the moon's glassy skin, creating a faint red nimbus around a fraction of its edge.

Shantus and his courtiers spend the night drinking and talking about how Ber would fare in a war. Then they get some of the guards to head butt each other, betting on who lasts longest. It's unseemly for respectable, civilized folks like the Bruse and his courtiers to actually fight themselves, but they'll gladly use common folk as entertainment.

Zarkava

Zarkava will gladly talk philosophy of rulership with the party, but she isn't looking for them to do favors for her. She's coolly offended at any inference that she cannot handle her own affairs without some "heroes" coming in and showing the primitives how to get things done.

The lizardfolk vizier's intention is to vote based on the best interest of Ber. The Bruse's game embarrasses her, and she hopes it doesn't cause damage to any vital infrastructure.

If there is an eschatologist in the party, however, Zarkava will ask a moment of their time, and their impression of the Bruse. She worries that her ruler's distance from the common people—traditionally a fine stance for a king—is angering Berans, who want to see themselves as part of a movement, not merely subjects. She wonders whether it might be best to have another sitting in Shantus's place.

Kenna

Kenna is more excited about the game, and will gladly offer to exchange tips for promises of aid for the Beran coffers or military. Since Lya has offered to provide Ber with five Danoran warships (valued at 500,000 gp total), Kenna makes a personal visit later in the evening. She'll tip off the tiefling to the lair of Cheshimox at Abismo Condendado (see page 37).

If the party can promise similar aid (or at least convince her they can deliver), she might gossip about Cavallo de Guerra's history with the Bruse, and drop the secret that an illness spreading through the region has afflicted some of Cavallo's grandchildren. She won't give the party the same tip about Cheshimox, since doesn't want to betray Lya and risk losing the warships, though if the PCs offer a ridiculous price, she might change her tune.

Make a point to emphasize that Kenna grazes as she chats, constantly nibbling on whatever's available. When the party returns at the end of this act, she will have been replaced by a duplicant which still keeps up the pretense of eating, but does so with intentional effort that might be noticed by canny PCs.

Also, she invites any fit-looking PCs to join her for a pre-dawn jog. Every day she and a few of the court guards jog to the nearby military base. Then new guards join her for the jog back. It will be on one of these jogs, several days from now, that Kenna gets abducted and replaced by a duplicant. Her actual body will be delivered via the military base's secret teleportation circle to Isla dola Focas.

Kenna does not like guns, since they are unheroic. She particularly does not like gunsmiths. Martial scientists, however, are kindred spirits. If one goes jogging with her, she'll take them by the local army shooting range and practice dodging bullets. This lets martial scientist PCs learn the *vigilante sprint* technique (page 334).

Glaucia and Pardo

Glaucia glares daggers at her fellow gnoll Pardo for a while, then departs shortly after the Bruse. She goes to the gathered petitioners outside, preferring their company. If the party seeks her counsel she'll offer it freely: no matter how valuable this gnome might be to Risur, it is better to stick to one's honor than to dance for Shantus's amusement.

She knows they'll be tempted to sabotage the efforts of Lya, but she warns them that if that extends to harming any of the citizens of Ber, she will find out.

Pardo ignores Glaucia and simply stands at the edge of the room, observing. He is eerily silent, and if spoken to he turns any conversation toward the topic of his cult's beliefs. He says the court is weak, and if the head of a beast is feeble, the beast can easily be slain. When the conversation grows boring he excuses himself, drawing a kerchief so he does not have to touch a metal doorknob as he leaves.

The gnoll should really radiate untrustworthiness, ideally so much that the party assumes they know he's trouble and so won't suspect him of anything actually surprising. The Bruse, after all, keeps him around as a sign of how open and progressive he is, and how little he fears the gnolls.

Spirit Medium Senses

Any spirit medium PC senses something odd with Pardo's soul, like it's stretched out and pointing to the south. It's common knowledge in Ber that Pardo comes from an island to the south, Isla dolas Focas.

Cottage Espionage

The party's cottage is the epitome of rustic comfort, albeit with a private chef and maid. Lya's equally fine cottage is a quarter mile away. The Bruse stations three guards (Passive Insight 21, Passive Perception 21) around each cottage to deter shenanigans, but spying can be fruitful.

Merton, for his part, calls a handful of small local birds to him and uses a bit of magic to get them to watch the party's goings on. It's unlikely (Perception DC 29, or DC 27 if trained in Nature) that the PCs realize that these birds, of all the ones flitting about the grounds, are watching them. At dawn the birds return to Merton and report what they overheard.

Rush arranges a small bit of sabotage. He expects the party will try teleporting away first thing in the morning, so he manages to pass a message to the maid of the PCs' cottage. A lavish bribe of 500 gp gets the maid (named Ralfa, a female goblin, Stealth +11) to look for a way to sneak a loop of gold thread into the clothes of one or two PCs. Since even paranoid PCs likely take off some of their clothes to sleep in such a comfortable setting, the maid might be able to slide the thread in the rolled up cuff of a coat, pant-leg, or high boot. The sabotage is practically unnoticeable unless a character explicitly looks for something so innocuous.

If the party does teleport away in the morning, anyone whose clothes were sabotage this way will get left behind, splitting the party awkwardly. The nearest teleportation circle is back in Seobriga.

Having Doubts

If a PC manages to eavesdrop on Lya's cottage, he can hear her expressing her uncertainty about the Bruse's game. She reminds everyone that what they're doing is for the greater good of the whole world, so if they must harm people to get to Tinker, it's justified.

Rush snarkily tries to change the subject by going outside and yelling at one of the guards to get them some wine. He makes a thorough circuit of the cottage (forcing hiding PCs to make a Stealth check DC 25), then goes back inside and suggests they start planning.

Dropping Eaves

Lya's group will come up with more plans later, but for the next few minutes they talk of their goals, and decide they'll use a Sending ritual to order their ship *Lux Profectusque* to Citado Cavallo. In the morning they'll use Inez's ritual teleportation to hop first to Renza, so they can get more information about the railroad. Lya suggests focusing on solving problems to get things done faster, but Rush scoffs and argues for sabotage and disruption of the other railroad company.

After a day at the railroad, Lya (with Inez and Ulrik) will teleport to Citado Cavallo. She makes a suggestion that impresses Rush: just use enchantment magic to convince some of Cavallo's sea captains to launch an attack, and trust that Cavallo will be too proud to admit the men acted without his orders.

At this point (after about 10 minutes of talking) the guard returns with wine, and Kenna Vigilante is with him (Passive Perception 29).

She gives her tip to Lya about the lair of Cheshimox, and they share a drink. Once Kenna leaves, Lya's group spends the next hour devising methods to trick the ghouls in the swamp to attack the party, or at least the workers of the Liss railroad.

May the Best Team Win

Before it gets so late that people start heading to bed, Lya makes a point to visit the party and talk to them. She trusts them to act honorably unless they've shown otherwise in the past.

If given the chance, she talks straight with them. Well, she pretends to, at any rate.

She explains that while the Obscurati, of which she is a member, has by necessity used secrecy and subterfuge, she is not comfortable with these tools. (This is a lie. She's a politician, and moreover a Jierre. Subterfuge is practically genetic. Oh, and her Bluff check is a 34.)

She says that she was raised to value reason, progress, and the power of words over arms. Toward that end, she wants to explain why she's doing what she's doing, in hopes the party will agree her motives are honorable.

She admits that her organization lost control of its colossus, and that they want it under control again. She claims the colossus was meant to be a peacekeeping weapon, to deter Risur from attacking, capable of defending even against assaults in the Dreaming or the Bleak Gate. She encourages them to recognize that it is a threat that would never have been deployed, because it would provoke a backlash from every country, afraid they might be next. Yes, it is powerful, but it can't be everywhere at once. The moment it attacked, it would assure Danor's destruction.

With such absolute deterrence, there wouldn't be a need for further wars. Oh, armies would continue to train and prepare, but no one would dare fight. There would be peace.

But now it's loose, and damaged, and acting out of control. Luckily it seems disinclined to raze any cities, but it is safest if the colossus is not roaming. She implores the party to step aside and let her find Tinker. She says Tinker will let them gain control of the colossus. (This is a lie. She has orders to kill the gnome so he cannot reveal the vulnerabilities or specifications of the titan, which might let the RHC figure out its purpose and thwart the Obscurati.)

In exchange, she promises that she won't play along with the Bruse and try to get Cavallo to attack Risur. She dislikes the minotaur ruler, and won't shed innocent blood just to entertain him.

Party Reaction

If they accept, she hides her surprise well, and thanks them. The party can stick around and eventually help save the day against the duplicants at the end of this act.

If they decline, which is far more likely, she asks to hear their motivation, then makes it clear she views them as rivals, not enemies. She wishes them luck, and says may the best team win.

Obscurati Recruitment

Though not necessarily while at court, Lya is willing to extend an offer to any PCs she suspects might be sympathetic to the Ob's goals. In particular, she keeps an eye on eschatologists. If she can get a private moment she opens with the question, "What would the world be like if everyone agreed with you?"

WINNING VOTES

You win the Bruse's vote by being entertaining. Alternately, if you are incredibly persuasive and upstanding, you *might* be able to convince him to actually like you as opposed to seeing you as fun. But you still have to show that you have a sense of humor about the whole game.

You win Zarkava's vote by doing the most for the stability and defense of the country. She actually seeks the advice of Glaucia, so if the party has impressed her, they might win the vizier's vote.

You win Kenna's vote by appealing to her personally. She likes making deals, and will vote for whoever she thinks she can have the best business relationship with.

Lya will not tell the PCs what the Ob's actual plans are—she can't, because she's under a magical compulsion—but she can explain that the Obscurati are enlightened thinkers who want to make the world a better place. She'll argue that a philosopher would be better served joining them than spending his days fighting and bleeding.

If the PC is legitimately interested (or feigns interest; Lya's Passive Insight is only 19), Lya asks him to throw the game, so that Lya's group gets first shot at speaking with Tinker. In exchange, Lya will arrange for the PC to be invited to meet others in her cell and learn more, and will devise a suitable cover story that will get the PC out of the country, allegedly investigating some lead, but with enough time to decide whether to fully join the Obscurati. If he does, Lya is sure that the conspiracy could make use of his help as a double agent, disrupting the RHC's investigation.

Overview: Cantabrilla Railroad

The total line will be 325 miles, and when complete a train will be able to travel from Reo Pedresco to Renza in a day. There aren't any major cities along the way yet, just a few towns and numerous villages, but Ber expects new growth.

Liss Rail Construction has built 128 miles of track from Reo Pedresco. Griento Railways has built 161 miles from Renza. The camps of the two companies are 36 miles apart at the start of the challenge. Refer to the DM handout "Cantabrilla Route" (page 364) to track progress as the days go by. If neither side receives help from the heroes, Liss will cover his 18 miles in 22 days, slowed down by rivers and low cash on hand. Griento will take 21 days, plagued by bandits and rough terrain but benefiting from higher morale.

Traveling to the Challenge

It's about 300 miles overland from the Summer Court to Renza, and of course another 325 to Reo Pedresco. Sailing the thousand miles from Seobriga to Reo Pedresco might take a fast ship only three days under ideal conditions. But the fastest option is to teleport. The cities at both ends of the railroad have teleportation circles, and the existing rails can get to their respective camps in 8 hours.

OBSCURATI SCHEDULE

We suggest the following timeline for Lya, Merton, Rush, and their allies' activities in these two challenges.

Before Dawn on Day 1. Lya uses a Sending ritual to arrange for fifty Crisillyiri mercenaries to teleport to Renza and ride the train to the Griento railhead. A group of five Obscurati specialists teleport to Reo Pedresco and start making contacts and allies. She also *sends* to the Obscurati leadership details of her plan for Cavallo de Guerra, which will require them to hire a mind mage.

Lux Profectusque sails for Marrajado de Oro.

Day 1. Lya's aide teleports her to Citado Cavallo at dawn. She contacts Cavallo de Guerra and warns him of the Bruse's game so he'll be suspicious of the PCs.

Merton, Rush, and the two aides teleport to Renza. They arrive at the end of the day at the railhead of Griento Railways. Merton explains that as a favor for the Bruse they'll be here helping finish the railroad sooner, and that spies have learned that a group of hostiles, possibly in the employ of Surtan Liss, are targeting the railroad. Damata accepts their help. The Obscurati give him 10 Money.

Day 2. Lya's mercenaries split up to defend the Griento bridges from sabotage, so any bridge has ten defenders (Level 13 Minion Soldiers). Merton and Rush coordinate. A powerful enchantress from the Malice Lands named **Jacale**, hired by the Ob, teleports to Citado Cavallo. She contacts **Commodore Thrag Vidalia**, and arranges to take a trip on his ship the next day.

Day 3, Merton and Rush set out on horseback to scout the wastelands to the north, looking for the lair of Cheshimox. *Lux Profectusque* arrives at Citado Cavallo. Jacale magically compels Thrag Vidalia to attack the Risuri fort at **Manhill**. Lya departs aboard her ship *Lux Profectusque*, hoping to be out of the region before Cavallo de Guerra learns of the trickery.

Day 4, Merton and Rush find Cheshimox's lair. The Ob agents in Reo Pedresco make contact with bandits along the Liss railroad line, and provide the proper bribes to get them to attack the Liss line.

Day 5, the bandits start attacking Aigotsura, the staging town nearest the Liss railhead. They return intermittently, hopefully drawing the party's attention. Meanwhile, Merton and Rush ride to the Liss railhead.

Merton, as a native Beran, tries to sow distrust of the PCs among the workers. If not stopped, the crews become unfriendly, and might refuse aid or even attack the Steam Crew.

Rush sneaks on to one of the supply trains and plants single-use *immovable shafts* in the undercarriages of each of three cars, so that the train won't move any faster than human walking pace, no matter how hard the engine tries. Until the shafts are removed, Liss cannot receive new Materiel. The two men try to avoid the party, and leave before nightfall.

Day 6, Merton and Rush reach the Griento railhead and wait to react to the party.

Variable. Once the party gets within 8 miles of their goal, if it's uncertain who will win, Merton and Rush ride to near the Liss railhead, then to the lair of Cheshimox. Rush sneaks in, strikes down the head of the undead lizardfolk, then flees. He and Merton use magic to cover their trail as they return to the Griento railhead. The lizardfolk follow their "arrival" trail and find the Liss construction team. They attack under cover of night.

Variable. Once the party gets within 4 miles of their destination, if the outcome is still uncertain, the Obscurati skulks in Reo Pedresco arrange for a supply train to derail while crossing a bridge, which counts as a mishap. The damage to the bridge shuts down delivers of Materiel for a day.

TEN-MILE DAY

In the real world during the construction of the First Transcontinental Railroad in the United States, one company managed to lay ten miles of track in one day. If your party wants to replicate the feat, they'll need to handle complex logistics.

An extra-long train will leave the home city at 4 AM laden with supplies, an engine on both ends. It reaches the first staging town at 8 AM, where it waits for a train headed back to the home city to pass. It continues to the second staging town, gets there at noon, and lets a second train pass it.

It reaches the railhead at 4 PM, delivers its supplies, and then heads back as quickly as possible. It passes the same trains as before, at 8 PM and midnight, and then it returns to its home city at midnight.

In this way, three sets of supplies are delivered each day, each carrying three times the normal supply size. Of course doing this is hugely taxing on the workers loading and unloading the trains, not to mention those building the railroad. See the player's handout "Cantabrilla Challenge" (page 368) for the rules.

Construction Procedure

Each company has a home city (Reo Pedresco or Renza) and two "staging towns" along their route. Though the railroads are normally just one set of tracks, to allow for two-way traffic these staging towns have small stretches of tracks where trains can pass.

Typically a train leaves the home city shortly before noon, gets to the railhead just before dusk, and then stays overnight. The next day it rolls alongside the workers, bringing supplies with them as they build more track, and then departs in mid-afternoon, making room for the next day's train. It returns to the home city in the middle of the night and is reloaded. This provides enough material for the railroad to build about a mile per day, with a little left over.

The workers create the grade, a long mound of dirt covered in a layer of crushed stone ballast. They place 8-ft. long wooden railroad ties (sleepers, in non-American parlance) into the ballast, then secure the rails to the ties with iron spikes. The company works in stages, with some men laying the grade at the front, then behind them those placing ballast, then the ties, then rails, and finally the spikes.

The hammering of the spikes resounds across the whole railhead, reminding the crews to keep working. Those who can hammer consistently for long stretches of time are paid much better than the average worker, because they help keep everyone else focused.

Camps

A total of over two hundred workers are present in each camp, plus a dozen armed guards and a variety of specialists like engineers, ritual mages, and a circulating roster of doctors, entertainers, and *executores dola liberta*. The camps keep a few dozen spears and bows handy for the workers to use, just in case some savage megafauna beast attacks.

Typically there are three shifts of workers, one resting, one assembling the railroad, and one tending to camp—and moving the camp, which is usually necessary every two or three days. Each shift works for four hours, then switches, so the whole work day spans twelve hours.

Obstacles

The region has many rivers, and at this point both camps have gotten the construction of bridges down pat. Each camp has at least two ritualists who can perform *stone shape*, so laying the pilings goes very quickly. Assembling the wooden truss of the bridge is comparably easy, and the rivers are typically less than 100 feet wide, so an entire bridge can usually be finished in about five days.

The terrain also has intermittent spire-like mountains ridges, called *serra*. Though seldom higher than five hundred feet, they're too steep to go over so the railroad must tunnel through. Most of these tunnels are completed well in advance by combinations of ritual magic and explosives, but Griento Railways still has a few days of clearing ahead of them for an obnoxious mile-long series of tunnels.

Bandits sometimes attack, but the camps have plenty of guards so are mostly left alone. Partnerships with the locals living in nearby towns alert the companies of any possible megafauna that might cause trouble.

Liabilities

If one desired to disrupt the railroad construction, the key targets would be the ritual mages, the existing bridges, and the trains themselves. How much trouble is possible is only limited by how evil one wants to be.

The ritual mages are closely guarded in camp, but by necessity have to operate ahead of the main group sometimes, leaving them exposed. They're not great combatants, and the camp guards are poor matches for attackers of the PCs' level. If murder's not acceptable, kidnapping, infection, cursing, or bribery might work. Of course there are other mages available in Ber or beyond, though they can be expensive to replace.

Sufficient explosives could take out a bridge, completely stopping forward progress until the bridge could be replaced. Worse, all the workers are on one side of the river, and the supplies will be coming from the other side of the river. If such egregious destruction is not desired, simple sabotage might just make the bridge unstable, deterring the train engineers from going over it until it's fixed.

Finally, a derailed train (or better yet, a train plunging into a river when the bridge beneath it explodes) is a huge setback, particularly if other engineers fear it wouldn't be safe to keep working. Less severe options include tearing up track (the train stops and has to fix the track, throwing off everyone's schedule), sabotaging the boiler in a way the engineer will notice so he can stop it before it explodes, or blowing up the spare set of tracks in the staging towns so only one train can use the track at a time.

Running the Cantabrilla Challenge

The DM handout "Cantabrilla Route" shows where key locations are and what they entail. The player handout "Cantabrilla Challenge" gives an overview of the basic rules and provides a tracking sheet.

To win, a side needs to build 18 miles first. Additionally, bridges require extra building, and each bridge is equivalent to 5 miles of track.

Resources used to build are abstract: Money, Materiel, and Morale. 1 Money is roughly equivalent to 25,000 gp. 1 Materiel is enough supplies to build a mile of track. 1 Morale is needed for each extra mile you want your workers to build beyond the first in a given day.

Each side can acquire more resources, take away the other side's resources, or try other tactics that are more up to DM adjudication. In general, if the party spends a day on a plan, it should add 1 or 2 extra resources. The challenge is coming up with useful tactics and thwarting the Ob's own efforts while not neglecting the Marrajado de Oro Challenge.

Building

Each day, each side can build one mile of track for 1 Materiel. Each mile thereafter costs 1 Materiel and 1 Morale.

Bridges count as five miles of track. A bridge is, however, easier to destroy and control than a long stretch of track.

Profiting

Each day, each side gets 1 Money for each mile of track built the previous day.

Supplying

Each 1 Materiel costs 1 Money and arrives the day after it is ordered. If a side orders more than 1 Materiel in a single day, there is a 5% chance of a mishap. A mishap causes 1d4 of the Materiel ordered to be lost in transit: the delivery train derailed, dock workers rioted, or whatever.

Good Spirit

A side can pay 2 Money to gain 1 Morale. The money might go to hire entertainers, provide a pay raise, or invest in better worker conditions.

Starting Resources

Griento starts with 0 Money, 1 Materiel, and 6 Morale. The Obscurati provide 10 Money.

Liss starts with 2 Money, 2 Materiel, and 2 Morale. Pemberton wants to sell Liss a Steam Crew, at the cost of 10 Money. The Steam Crew can build 1 extra mile of track per day without costing any Morale. Liss can't afford 10 Money, but the party might be able to get Pemberton to reduce his price to 1 Money now and 9 later, or offer some other payment.

Liss Rail Construction

Social. Real-Time. Level 13.

Will a lizardfolk businessman cooperate with the party?

The Bruse assigns the western end of the railroad to the PCs. The lizardfolk in charge of the operation, **Surtan Liss**, is staying at the staging town called **Aigotsura**, 40 miles west of the railhead. When the party arrives the town is in a tizzy, with most of the residents out gawking at a group of golems, ten strong, as they busily assemble a mock length of track. Steam puffs out of their backs as arcane boilers provide the power to their work.

Though this lizardfolk entrepreneur lacks any real talent for technology, he is drawn to it, and he has the money to afford it, inherited from his late father who according to rumors was one of the greatest bandits of Ber's river lands.

Surtan bucks Beran standards—both traditional tribal beliefs and newer culture that looks to Danor or Risur. He's rude, smug, and spends great effort to appear weird and novel. He has had small garnets set along his cheekbones, which sparkle in the light, a permanent adornment like tattooing but far more expensive. He's also learned to waggle his crest, and he likes to swallow small animals like mice whole, pretending to be a snake.

UNLIKELY ALTRUISM

We anticipate most groups will pursue tactics that fantasy heroes typically excel at—fighting, stealth, and short-term trickery or deal-making. But your players might try a different approach.

They might do what's best for Ber, rather than for Risur. At the Cantabrilla Railroad, they could offer to help Lya's side by giving aid to Damata Griento's construction crew. By avoiding conflict with the Ob they help the railroad finish sooner. Simple good intentions aren't sufficient, of course. To benefit from their altruism, the party would need to advertise it properly—perhaps a journalist could help.

If they can get the public on their side, Shantus will be pressured to award them the point for the railroad challenge to save face. The move fits with Kenna's sense of decency, likely earning her vote as well.

The golems are products of Benedict Pemberton, and he's trying to sell them to Liss. Pemberton claims they're made in Flint, but his operation in Flint has been shuttered for a few months due to the machinations of Harkover Lee. The golems were actually made in his factory on Isla dolas Focas, and Pemberton had them shipped hurriedly to Liss, hoping to take advantage of the lizardman's desperation.

Tough Sell

Surtan Liss's construction company is lagging behind Griento Railways. Liss's crews don't have the same high morale as Griento's, and Liss doesn't have the cash to pay them to work harder. Some bad weather and an unfortunate derailment forced Liss to take out a loan for 200,000 gp, and if he doesn't make it to the 150 mile marker before Griento, he'll end up losing on the whole venture. (Don't worry. He's still rich.)

Pemberton is trying to show Liss that his "Steam Crew" can work faster and, ultimately, cheaper than a normal living crew. Liss and Pemberton are out enjoying drinks—a guaro sour for Liss, and distilled water with a celery stick for Pemberton—as they watch the Steam Crew cart dirt, crush rocks, and lay ties and track.

A middle-aged half-orc family man and would-be railroad tycoon, Damata nearly ruined his whole clan's livelihood when he was tricked by con men into taking out a massive loan he could not repay for a railroad through the Anthras Mountains. Desperate to avoid his debtors, he stole his clan's stash of magic weapons and would have delivered them if not for the unlikely intervention of dwarven philosopher Vlendam Heid and a group of strangers who helped him instead kill his debtors (see Adventure Four, *Always on Time*; depending on the party's actions, you might need to replace Damata with another orc).

Married with two kids, Damata returned home with a renewed bravery. To prove his trustworthiness to his clan, he aggressively pursued new business, and now is in charge of building the eastern branch of the Cantabrilla Railway, stretching from Reo Pedresco to Seobriga. He is beloved by his workers, and he makes an effort to find out what troubles them, then encourage them to find solutions by allying with others.

(If your party let Damata die in Adventure Four, he is replaced by a more dour, officious railroad bureaucrat named Venicio Brunaldo.)

Liss is impressed, but Pemberton is asking 250,000 gp (10 Money, in terms of the Cantabrilla Challenge) for the whole crew of ten steam workers. Liss can't afford it. The lizardman is hoping to show enough enthusiasm to get Pemberton expecting a deal, then offer to pay 10% up front (1 Money), and the rest upon completion of the railroad.

The party might interject themselves into the negotiations, offer another way to aid Liss to drive the price down, or perhaps challenge a golem to see who can hammer spikes faster. (Make five opposed Strength checks and total the results; the golem has Strength 20 and takes 10 every time, for a total of 75.) Success could provide a bargaining chip to help Liss get Pemberton to agree to an installment plan.

If the party helps out successfully, Liss can get his Steam Crew for the cost of 1 Money. Otherwise Pemberton won't sell. He departs and shows up four days later at the Griento railhead.

Ulterior Motive

Pemberton is hoping to raise the profile of these machines, to get them spread around Ber at various work sites. He's planning to attempt his coup next year, at which point the golems would become a distributed army he can use to wreak havoc. However, he's also a businessman, and even aspirations to rule a nation of his own won't let him accept a massive loss.

While he's here, make sure he interacts with the party and makes a big impression. He's not really all that bad a gent. If the party proposes to Liss that they might sabotage the other side, Pemberton disapproves, because he thinks it's more impressive to create than destroy.

If he gets wind the party is trying to track down Tinker, he plays it cool and wishes them luck, but asks if he can help in order to get a sense of how the party's mission is coming along. He'll definitely want to kill them later so they won't get in his way.

Helping Out Liss

As long as the party is respectful and doesn't ask him for money, Liss will take whatever help they can offer.

Further Developments

As detailed in Overview: Obscurati Schedule, eventually the Ob has bandits attack Aigotsura to try to distract the party. If they don't drive off the attack, it costs 1 Morale. Shortly thereafter Merton shows up to show discontent, costing Liss 1 Morale and possibly making the workers distrust the party, while Rush sabotages a train with one-use *immovable shafts*. This prevents further arrival of Materiel until the sabotage is undone.

If things get close, Merton and Rush trick a nearby cult of undead lizardfolk who guard a dead dragon's lair, and convince them Liss railroad is trying to drive them out, provoking an attack on the Liss railhead. This attack costs between 1 and 4 Morale, depending how severe it is.

If all else fails, Ob agents derail a train while crossing a bridge, costing 1d4 Materiel and possibly preventing further Materiel delivery.

Much of what happens in this challenge is up to the party. Use your best judgment to determine how the Ob react.

Griento Railways

Social. Railroad. Level 13.

Can the party outmaneuver Lya Fierre's influence?

Lya's Obscurati group gets assigned the eastern end of the railroad. She decides that she's more valuable in the court of Cavallo de Guerra, so she sends the rest of her team to work with Damata Griento while she goes alone to Citado Cavallo.

Unlike Liss, Damata Griento stays with his workers at the railhead, and he only goes to the nearby staging town, **Negranha**, once a week to spend time with his wife **Ejeka**, daughter **Dabo**, and son **Tarro**. The town is more comfortable, but it's good for the crew's morale to have the boss around.

When Merton and Rush show up, they spin a lie that the party is working with Liss to sabotage Damata. Though Damata is a little wary of trusting outsiders, the Obscurati operatives tell him he doesn't need to give them anything; the Bruse is paying them for their service. Indeed, they hand over promissory notes worth 250,000 gp (the equivalent of 10 Money) to help fund Damata's project. He has a little spare materiel and high morale among his crew, but money is tight.

Merton and Rush head off the next morning to try to find the lair of the dragon Cheshimox. Inez and Ulrik stick around to keep an eye out, and use Sending rituals to keep Lya in touch with Merton and Rush.

Visit by the Party

If you played Adventure Four, *Always on Time*, Damata is thrilled to see the party again. He gladly explains the situation with Merton and Rush, and is confused as to whether the party—who after all *are* foreign agents—are here to sabotage his railroad. But he trusts them.

If the party has never met Damata before, he is suspicious but friendly and open-minded. It is, though, hard to trust someone if they try to convince you not to accept a whole chunk of money.

Calling in a Favor

The party might try to convince him to slow his crews. Unfortunately he's not solely in charge, and after his erratic behavior last year the elders of his family are watching closely. Several family members visit the construction camps, cycling through each week.

If his crews, which have worked excellently so far, suddenly started slowing down, his family would grow suspicious and might punish him. They would assume he had been paid by Surtan Liss, keeping a fat bribe all for himself instead of sharing the normal reward with the whole family.

Damata needs a convincing excuse if he's going to help the party. Perhaps the best one is provided by the Obscurati. When a small army of ghoulish lizardfolk attack the railroad (see Burning the Midnight Oil, below), Damata can claim that he's withdrawing to protect his company's investment. It would be even easier for him to justify if the party simultaneously has managed to persuade Cavallo to allow work on the Selestala Railroad, because the Grientos already have that contract.

Burning the Midnight Oil

Action. Tactical. Level 15.

Ghouls are tricked into attacking the party's camp.

As detailed in the Obscurati Schedule (page 34), this attack occurs shortly after the Liss railhead gets within 8 miles of the goal. Dark clouds appear on the horizon, temperatures drop rapidly, and Surtan Liss, who grew up on his bandit father's stories of the Keepers of Cheshimox, fears some dread force is coming. If the party isn't present he contacts them with a Sending ritual, begging them to protect his workers from the icy dead.

Of the many possible ways the Ob can disrupt the party, this one is perhaps the most devastating. You might want to allow a little wiggle room to decide when this occurs so that the party is present.

The Keepers of Cheshimox

The white dragon Cheshimox originally hailed from north of Drakr, but six hundred years ago he flew to what is today Ber, seeking to prove himself against the other dragon tyrants. He brought with him ice carved from a glacier surrounding a "Vsadni," one of undead giants that once ruled the tundras, and he deposited that perpetual ice in a lakeside cave five miles north of where the Cantabrilla Railroad runs now, called **Abismo Condendado**.

With a dragon's patience he slowly transformed a few square miles into his own private icescape in the middle of a tropical badland. He conquered the lizardfolk servants of another dragon and transformed them into undead so they could resist the unearthly chill. When he was eventually slain, his servants endured and preserved his skull, hoping some day to return their master to unlife.

For a few decades the undead terrorized the Rio Gelado, sweeping along it at night in icy chariots, killing anyone foolish enough to camp along its shores. But treasure hunters sought dragon gold, and slowly attrition whittled down both their numbers and their treasure. Today only a few dozen remain. When Rush destroys their leader, they decide they are ready to end their existence, and they set out for a final battle.

Proactive Assault

Should the party venture forth to eliminate the ghouls, they might find them preparing for their assault. The undead lizardfolk have reverently placed the skull of Cheshimox atop its sled, and perform rituals to call forth deadly cold weather. Frigid winds create a sheen of ice beneath the sled, even though the storm never gets quite cold enough for any snowfall to stick.

If the party engages at the frozen lake, the whole cult attacks en masse, using the terrormasks to drive the party close and conjuring walls of ice to block them if they try to escape. Alternately, if your players seem to expect they'll be doing a dungeon crawl, you might change the focus to stopping the weather ritual. If the group seems eager for a direct assault on Cheshimox's lair, they can fight through multiple cave chambers coated with ice, with cultists attacking from every direction.

If the party doesn't have anyone at the camp, they run the risk of Liss's camp being devastated. Worse, if the party is split up they might get into a fight they cannot win. If only part of the party is here, you might have the other players take on the roles of minion guards, with 8 minion Cantabrilla Guards per PC. See Appendix E: page 296 for stats.

The Dread Force

- 4 priests of Cheshimox
- 2 Cheshimox terrormasks
- 40 lizardfolk ghouls
- The skull of Cheshimox
- Variable number of Cantabrilla guards

Terrain

Most likely the undead strike at the worker camp, where scores of tents sprawl in a hundred foot radius near the actual railhead. The terrain is fairly flat aside from the railroad itself, but the tents and piles of construction materiel create obstacles and hiding places.

If the party sallies forth to meet the attackers, they might instead battle away from the camp on craggier terrain, with towering cactuses and patches of spiky lechuguilla plants dotting the landscape.

Tactics

The Cheshimox priests send the two terrormasks ahead to widely circle the camp and approach from the south. These ghouls have peeled away the skin on their faces and wear masks of tanned orc and lizardfolk faces harvested from other intruders.

The main body of ghouls waits out of sight to the north. Two wings of twenty ghouls each flank the sled upon which the four Cheshimox priests ride. A pair of ghostly beasts pull the sled; these are purely a magical creation and can neither attack nor be harmed.

When night falls, the ghouls to the north begin to howl and roar for a minute as they advance into view. They crest a hill at a range of 400 feet, then charge. At that moment the terrormasks begin attacking from the south, hoping to cause a panic and split any defenders.

The terrormasks use *ghostly flight* to appear amid a group of enemies, then use *ululating moan* to confuse them. If they can get a single target alone, they try to surprise them with *sacrifice to Cheshimox*, then move away to let them slowly perish. They only use *ghoul talons* if cornered.

The four priests direct the horde to sweep through the camp, killing anyone they can reach while keeping their same general formation. One priest is ready to *absorb spell* a magical area attack. The others use their spears to keep enemies at bay, but mostly choose enemies to *freeze solid*, then shout for their ghoul allies to focus on that target. They reserve their *walls of ice* to trap fleeing foes. If necessary all four ghouls can coordinate to conjure a truly massive icy prison.

The priests can also use the following power of the skull of Cheshimox, which is mounted on a swivel atop the sled. Activating it multiple times just changes its orientation, and doesn't create multiple swaths of cold.

Power (At-Will): Standard Action. *Effect:* Freezing cold fills an area extending from the skull in a straight line to a distance of 60 feet. Any creature that enters or starts its turn in that area takes 20 cold damage. The spray continues until the start of the activator's next turn, at which point, if the skull's cold has not killed a creature during this activation, the skull deals 20 necrotic damage to the activator.

Priest of Cheshimox Level 13 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid (reptilian, undead), ghoul, lizardfolk **XP** 800

HP 128; **Bloodied** 64 **Initiative** +15
AC 25, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 26 **Perception** +9
Speed 6 Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 20 necrotic, 20 cold
Vulnerable 10 radiant

Traits

▸ **Spectral Sled**
Four of the lizardfolk carry white spears and ride atop a rime-coated sled. A pair of barely-visible beasts pull the sled, which glides over the ground with ease.
The sled is 2 squares by 2 squares, and can hold four combatants at a time. Choose one priest to direct the sled. On his turn he can spend a move action to have the sled move at speed 8. It can turn up to 90 degrees per move action, so it usually goes slowly and stays with the mass of ghouls. Creatures that move when the sled moves do not provoke opportunity attacks.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Bone Spear** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+12 damage.

⊘ **Freeze Solid** (cold) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The ghoul reaches out a hand toward you and clenches it into a fist. Your skin freezes and cracks at the slightest movement.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +18 vs. Reflex
Hit: Until the end of the ghoul's next turn, the target is immobilized, gains vulnerable 5 all, and whenever it takes a move or standard action it takes 10 cold damage.

✲ **Wall of Ice** ✦ Encounter
The ghoul sweeps its spear in an arc, and a wall of icy spears erupts from the ground in front of you.
Effect: The ghoul creates a wall of ice in 10 contiguous squares within range 20. Each square of the wall is 20 feet high and has 40 hp. The ice lasts until it thaws normally.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Absorb Spell** ✦ Encounter
The priest hisses an arcane word and redirects your attack to itself.
Requirement: The priest actually has to ready an action to do this, but we put it under triggered actions so it's easier to remember.
Trigger: An enemy the ghoul can see uses a non-martial attack power.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): Change the attack's power to the priest. Even if it would have affected an area, it instead only affects the priest. However, for each target beyond the first that the attack would have had, you may repeat the attack against the priest. (So if a fireball would have hit 10 ghouls, you can make 10 attack rolls against the priest.)

Skills Arcana +14
Str 14 (+8) **Dex** 13 (+7) **Wis** 14 (+8)
Con 14 (+8) **Int** 14 (+8) **Cha** 14 (+8)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Draconic, Giant, Orc

Cheshimox Terrormask Level 14 Lurker
Medium natural humanoid (reptilian, undead), ghoul, lizardfolk **XP** 1,000

HP 105; **Bloodied** 52 **Initiative** +15
AC 28, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 24 **Perception** +6
Speed 9 Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 20 necrotic, 20 cold
Vulnerable 10 radiant

Traits

▸ **Creepy Skin Mask**
A three-foot high mask of tanned, stitched-together humanoid faces covers the head of this ghoulish lizardfolk. The faces twitch, their mouths gape in mute moans, and their hollow eyes stare outward, despairing.

As long as the ghoul has its mask, effects affect it as if it were not an undead creature. Creatures with an intelligence of 2 or less cannot sense its presence unless it has attacked in the past round.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Ghoul Talons** ✦ At-Will, Basic
It swipes at you with its gangly arms, and as black talons dig into your flesh, your muscles seize.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+3 damage, and the target is stunned and weakened until the end of its next turn.

⊘ **Sacrifice to Cheshimox** (cold) ✦ At-Will
You can barely see a reptilian smile under its mask, its tongue flicking excitedly. It draws a blade of ice from a satchel and plunges it up through the bottom of your ribs. The ice sticks in your wound and draws your blood into itself, turning to deep crimson as your heart slows toward death.
Requirement: The target must be stunned or helpless, or the ghoul must be hidden from the target.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 5d6+15 cold damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 cold damage (save ends).

✧ **Ululating Moan** (fear) ✦ Encounter
The ghoul crouches and gyrates its head in wide loops. Wind murmurs through the open mouths of its mask, and suddenly the face of every creature around you is the same blank dead stare.
Attack: Close Burst 3 (enemies in burst); +17 vs. Will
Hit: The target is confused (save ends). While confused, it must decide at the start of its turn if it is going to use a standard action to attack, and if so which target (or area) and what method. It then makes a Wisdom check (DC 20). If it fails, it instead pursues a different target of the ghoul's choice within 5 squares of the original target, if necessary using movement to get there. The creature uses its chosen method to attack.
If it uses an action point, its second standard action in the round functions normally.

Move Actions

▸ **Ghostly Flight** ✦ At-Will
The creature's flesh fades away until only a ghostly outline remains, and it streaks away.
Effect: The ghoul gains concealment until it attacks or until the end of its next turn. It can make a Stealth check even against creatures that are observing it. It then moves its speed.
Special: The ghoul cannot use this power if it has taken radiant damage since its last turn.

Skills Intimidate +23, Stealth +18
Str 16 (+10) **Dex** 22 (+13) **Wis** 8 (+6)
Con 16 (+10) **Int** 13 (+8) **Cha** 16 (+10)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Draconic, Giant, Orc
Equipment creepy skin mask

Lizardfolk Ghoul Level 9 Minion Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (reptilian, undead), ghoul, lizardfolk **XP** 100

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +5
AC 25, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 21 **Perception** +4
Speed 6 Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic, 10 cold

Standard Actions

⊘ **Ghoul Claws** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 8 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the ghoul's next turn.

Str 16 (+7) **Dex** 12 (+5) **Wis** 10 (+4)
Con 12 (+5) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 11 (+4)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Draconic, Giant, Orc

An orcish warlord and self-proclaimed Champion of the Riven Sea of Gold, Cavallo de Guerra joined the first king of Ber, Vairday Bruse, in kickstarting the revolution toward civilization. He worked alongside Shantus, the current ruler, but Cavallo always thought the minotaur wasn't willing enough to simply kill those who stood in the way.

When Vairday Bruse chose to pass the crown to a minotaur rather than an orc, Cavallo refused to pledge fealty. Though he hasn't actively opposed Shantus, he continually snubs the minotaur's overtures.

At sixty-three years old, Cavallo is ancient by orc standards and wary of being deposed. He uses propaganda to portray himself as still youthful and vigorous; and throughout his region one can find statues of him astride bears, and murals of him trampling the bones of dragons. He often violently harasses visitors, much to the delight of his counselors, to see if they have the strength to stand up to his abuse.

Despite his aggression, he usually has several of his grandchildren by his side when in public, and he dotes on them with comical gentleness. If any of them start to act bratty or entitled, though, he's been known to literally throw them through walls, to show them that they have to earn their place in the world. Above all else he hates presumption.

Alonsa's goliath tribe controls parts of the Anthras Mountains on the border of Risur and Ber. After distinguishing herself as a beast trainer, she and Chupacabra, her trained dire bear, went to work as liaisons to Cavallo de Guerra. She has the ability to lend her strength to others, and it is one of de Guerra's most closely guarded secrets that he relies on Alonsa to maintain his bold vigor in public. Oddly for someone so highly ranked, Alonsa cares little for political power; she simply wants to be best at anything she applies herself to. The incongruous image of this towering woman reading small books of Danoran philosophy elicits some mockery from de Guerra's other advisors, but Alonsa laughs it off.

Aftermath

The undead fight to the last. If they manage to scatter the workers and defeat any defenders, they take any lizardfolk who were slain—such as Liss—and transform them into ghouls, refilling their ranks. Then they arrange the other dead with various rail supplies into a totem resembling a dragon. Then, from the information provided by terrified wounded workers, they head east, intending to do the same to the Griento camp.

If the lizardfolk fall, the party might recover the skull of Cheshimox. An eschatologist PC feels an odd affinity to the skull, and can sense the way to the distant Frozen City of Knütpara, which makes an appearance in Adventure Seven, *Schism*.

Anyone who examines the skull or the sled finds multiple carvings in the same unknown language: Abyssal. Perceptive PCs might recognize characters they saw once before on the bone-carved rifle owned by dwarven assassin Kvarti Gorbatiy. "Cry out / for at the end of time / I rise."

Short-Cut to Victory

The party has a very limited window here. Lya Jierre plans to just mentally dominate Thrag Vidalia and have him launch an attack on the Risuri fort at Manhill, fulfilling the challenge Shantus set for her.

Because Lya doesn't have anyone among her crew with sufficient mind control magic, she has to wait a few days for the Obscurati to round up a reclusive purple-skinned enchantress from the Malice Lands, named **Jacale**. But by the end of Day 3 of the challenge, unless the party interrupts Lya's plans the orc sea chief will already have attacked Manhill. It will take a day for the news to filter back to Shantus's court, and so the party will have only until dusk on Day 4 to get Cavallo to contact Shantus and pledge loyalty.

The party might act quickly, or they might thwart Lya's plan. They might even decide to still help out Cavallo de Guerra once Lya has already won, just to get the orc warlord on their side. But if they fail, the blatant unfairness of Lya's tactics impresses Zarkava Ssa'litt, who will be tempted to vote for the tiefling.

Sea Chiefs

Four chiefs serve Cavallo, and they coordinate their patrols of the Riven Sea of Gold through Cavallo's daughter Corta Nariz de Guerra. Successful captains go on to serve in the general Beran navy, where they try to make names for themselves so they might return to their home sea and succeed when a chief steps down. The current sea chiefs include:

- **Babaro**, Cavallo's second-in-command. He wears a minotaur-skull helmet.
- **Thrag Vidalia**, who has a cold vendetta against Risur for the sinking of his first ship.
- **Perorroso**, a druid who deploys sea creatures in combat.
- **Danovio**, who has great wealth from gold mines and seeks to acquire ironclad ships.

Consequences for Construction

If the party defeated the lizardfolk before they could attack the work camp, Surtan Liss can add 1 Morale, and the meager loot left at the dragon's lair totals 25,000 gp (1 Money) if the party is looking to help out.

If the attacking lizardfolk are defeated in less than 10 rounds, the camp suffers no Morale loss. For every 10 rounds the fight persists, though, the camp loses 1 Morale, to a maximum of 4. Alternately, you might track casualties if you want to clutter a battle map with scores of panicking NPCs. For every 20 workers killed, the camp should lose 1 Morale.

Connecting the Railroad

Social. Real-Time. Level 1.

Sometimes people just want to celebrate.

If the party spares time to witness the connection of the railroad, it's an all-day affair, with workers hammering out the last few hundred feet while dignitaries arrive by train. A drum-heavy mariachi-style band performs and everyone drinks as they wait for the last bit of track to be laid.

Eventually only five spikes are left, all along the same side of the railroad. The two heads of the respective companies—Surtan Liss and Damata Griento—expect a group of five dignitaries from various cities to do the honors, but they have colluded to give everyone a bit of entertainment. When it is time for the ceremony, the dignitaries hand Liss and Damata a sledgehammer, and challenge them to race to see who can drive in the middle spike first.

The two men start at the outer spikes, then hammer in the inner spikes, and then good-naturedly jostle for a chance to swing at the middle spike. They end up in an overly polite back-and-forth insistence that the other puts the spike in until finally Damata's wife sighs and pushes them aside so she can do it. The crowd cheers and then take turns signing a pair of huge posters that will travel around the country to promote the new railroad.

Overview: Cavallo de Guerra

Part of the idea of this challenge is to pull the rug out from under the party. We provide an array of possible ways to earn points with de Guerra, likely making the party expect a fair fight. Then, when Lya simply wins via mind control, it should shake up the game and show that the Obscurati are still a threat, even if the party has managed to thwart them so far.

To convince Cavallo de Guerra to pledge fealty to Bruse Shantus, the party needs two things. First, for him even to consider it, they have to do him a major favor so he owes them. And second, so he won't face a revolt by his sea chiefs, they need to offer him something politically or militarily useful in exchange.

Arranging a Trade

The second step is actually simpler, since the party has leeway to contact Risur and make deals. A discreet alliance with Risur would give de Guerra leverage over the Bruse, especially if they can get him the blessing of Beshela, the Risuri archfey of the sea; this would allow his fleet to travel more widely, both for military and for mercantilism.

The party might instead get Cavallo steam-powered warships, or could try to ensure his legacy by getting his eldest daughter **Corta Nariz de Guerra** named as Bruse Shantus's chosen successor. Corta Nariz has overseen the logistics of the Beran navy, and though she has no combat experience she has maintained Ber's strength at sea with efficient management. Cavallo thinks she'd be an excellent Bruse, and even Shantus actually likes her.

Doing a Favor

Cavallo has many concerns, but if the party can solve any of the following problems for him, it will earn his trust.

- **Find a Cure.** Cavallo's grandson **Altioro de Guerra** has become infected with dragon worm—the eldritch equivalent of the real-world parasite guinea worm. It is a disease of paupers and savages, and it resists magical treatment. The story is a disgrace, but a bit of public health work can restore the boy's good name while helping thousands dealing with the painful white worm.
- **Good Old-Fashioned Bug Hunt.** A few months ago Cavallo kicked a clan of goblins off of lands surrounding the volcanic caldera Lago Fuego, since he wanted to dredge up the hoard of the long-dead dragon tyrant Furioso. Ever since, outlying towns have been getting raided by strange monsters coming out of the mountains—ankhegs, umber hulks, giant ants, and the like. What might seem like a quick side-quest gets complicated when the party learns that the goblins who control the bugs are just trying to reclaim their old land.
- **Halt Lya's Tricks.** If the party manages to stop Lya's mind control scheme and avoid a fight with Risur, Cavallo would be appreciative. If they manage to capture Lya, he'll even show his appreciation by bringing in Glaucia Evora to savagely beat her.

Of course, give the party leeway if they have other clever ideas.

Welcome to Marrajado de Oro

When Ber was founded, Cavallo was already a powerful warlord, commanding dozens of orcish warships in Marrajado de Oro, the sea that separates eastern Ber and Risur. Though mostly a rural mix of cliffs and coast, the region had been held together by Cavallo and his forebears after the fall of the dragon tyrants. Since he had the only real naval fighting force in the country, Cavallo profited greatly when Vairday Bruse made him admiral of the new nation's fleet.

Cavallo presided over more naval victories than losses during Ber's first few years, helping keep away would-be conquerors and establish vital shipping lanes that brought trade from other nations. He appreciated the prestige and was able to pay his followers enough that they would follow the nation's civilizing policies. But after years of mutual snubbing with the new Bruse, his region's income has slowed to a trickle, and there are calls by his lieutenants to return to the old ways of raiding the coasts of Risur and Elfaivar.

The region is less industrialized than Seobriga, but wealthier than most other parts of Ber, with lush hillside farms and some of the most temperate weather in the country. In the local capital Citado Cavallo, average orcs work as fishermen or farmers, while the wealthy profit from controlling sea trade around Ber. The city is particularly famous for its beautiful bath houses, fed by an aqueduct from the nearby volcanic caldera Lago Fuego.

Castle of the Sea Chiefs

Social. Montage. Level 13.

The party looks for ways to convince an orc warlord to change his mind.

When the party arrives at Cavallo's seaside castle, he personally shouts down at them from the battlements, calling them dogs who lap at the hooves of Shantus and threatening to have his men kill them for having the audacity to dirty the ground of his city with their filthy paws. If the party stands up to him and appears bold, Cavallo gives a quiet signal to his advisor **Alonsa Frolián**, who suggests they be let in as foreign dignitaries. This lets Cavallo maintain the appearance of a bitter old man, when honestly he appreciates the attention.

He barks at his men to give the party a room next to Lya Jierre, and that he'll talk to them later; right now he's going to teach his granddaughter to wrestle.

Alonsa escorts them to their lodgings, which overlook the sea. The location is partially so they'll see his mighty navy, and partially because the view is beautiful, free of the smog of Flint or Seobriga.

The castle also hosts representatives of the Sea Chiefs, orc commodores with their own flotillas of warships who operate out of various coves along the coast. A few of the representatives come to the party between their arrival and the next major meal, hurling insults and questioning their bravery, or eyeing their more valuable possessions and asking how much they think their lives are worth.

Chatter

The talk of the castle is the huge dragon's hoard that was recently recovered from near Lago Fuego, a volcanic caldera a few miles from the city. It hasn't even been fully appraised yet, so Cavallo keeps it under constant guard in his dining hall, and has had to move the dining room table out to the courtyard.

Mealtime Negotiations

Cavallo will speak with the party at the next major meal. A large table is set up in the castle's courtyard, near a sunken pen where Alonsa's dire bear undergoes battle training against magical summoned monsters. As the party is being seated Cavallo's daughter Corta Nariz starts to bring out some of her children (Cavallo's grandchildren), but when he spots his ill grandson Altioro, Cavallo glares and waves them off. Corta notices the guests, has a handservant take Altioro away, then brings the rest of the family.

The party can easily spot a bandage on the child's leg, and might recognize (Heal DC 14) a wound-up splint as the sort used to extract dragon worm.

The meal gives the party an opportunity to pitch their case to Cavallo and get a sense of what the orc desires. Lya Jierre is here until Day 3, when she boards *Lux Profectusque*, and she'll likely be present at any of the party's interactions with Cavallo. She tries to counter their arguments, to make them think they're competing for de Guerra's support. In truth, she's just stalling for time.

Specific Interests

The party can get de Guerra's attention by offering Risuri ironclad ships, or at least steam engines. Cavallo knows about the Bruse's new pet gnome, and rumor is that he's busy designing a new shipyard—no one will say where, though. Cavallo wants to make sure he's not weakened by this development.

A particular boon he desires is to have the Risuri archfey of the sea, Beshela, grant her blessing to his ships—both military and merchant. He'll gladly arrange the appropriate offerings to keep her favor, since normally only a few safe sea lanes are available near the Risuri border. With Beshela's blessing, his ships could take faster routes without fear of attack by merfey and sea monsters.

Both those two the party could potentially wrangle with a few quick Sending rituals. More difficult is convincing Shantus that Cavallo's daughter Corta Nariz should succeed him as Bruse. The amount of horse-trading required to pull it off is probably beyond the scope of this adventure, but this is one of those possibilities that players might manage if they have a crazy brilliant idea.

Gunsmithing

Though Cavallo's an old-fashioned warlord, he appreciates a good weapon, even something newfangled like a firearm. He'll want to see the guns of any gunsmith in the party, and will segue into asking whether Risur could help set up factories in his region to produce arms and ammunition. While a PC might not have the connections for that, a simple way to get on the man's good side would be to give him a gun as a gift.

Getting Him to Like You

Cavallo explicitly states that he owes the party nothing. While yes he'd appreciate the aforementioned deals, there's no time pressure on him. He then suggests they might help him kill the "dangerous" goblins (see Bug Hunt, page 45); his best people are all naval-oriented, and hunting vermin in the mountains is beneath them.

The party might accept, or might offer to help young ill Altioro (see Masters of Public Health, page 43). And while it isn't enough to make a huge difference, the party can earn some good will if they can impress Alonsa Frolián in battle (see below).

Hostage Letter

After bringing up the issue of the goblins, Cavallo sends a servant, who returns with a greasy, wrinkled letter. The note arrived a few days earlier from, as de Guerra puts it, "a foreign hostage being held by the goblins." This is the player's handout labeled "Hostage Letter."

The letter is signed "Dr. Elias Malapropism," a pseudonym being used by **Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen**, whom the party may have met in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*.

Bear Battle

If a PC challenges Alonsa, she'll pit her dire bear in a fight against that PC's pet. First she'll want to see how the animal does against a lesser foe, and she'll summon a creature for it to fight in the pit. She offers the group some time to tend to any wounds on the pet, and then she's ready for the main match. Alternately, if no one in the party has an animal companion or the like, she'll let a PC enter the pit blind-folded, unarmed, and unarmored.

The castle staff gathers to watch the spectacle. Perceptive PCs might notice (Insight DC 21) that while Alonsa is focusing on her bear, Cavallo looks weaker.

Terrain

The pit is an obstacle course for large creatures, and so stretches 100 feet on a side, and is 20 feet deep with ramps accessible by gates. The walls are lined with inward-facing spikes. A creature forced into a wall takes 5 damage.

A 10-ft. wide moat cuts the pit in two. It can be crossed by a narrow bridge (Acrobatics DC 21 for a large creature to balance), or by a 10-ft. long wood-and-leather tunnel. Medium creatures can move through the tunnel normally, but a large creature must squeeze (Acrobatics DC 21 or become stuck in the middle). The pit can also be jumped (Athletics DC 21 with a running start), or swum across and climbed out of (Athletics (DC 21).

A few other obstacles dot the area, like foliage for difficult terrain and concealment, and iron fences that creatures can swipe their claws through (counts as superior cover) but cannot move through.

Monster Fight

The first foe is a hoard spirit, a kind of elemental being that dragons would use to animate their treasure and protect it from thieves. Without a treasure handy, it simply resembles a skinless giant vulture with veins of fire and bones of marble. It tries to smash the PC's pet into the spikes. Alonsa can keep it summoned for up to five minutes.

Using magic or similar powers to enhance one's pet is allowed, but not to attack the other pet.

Hoard Spirit	Level 9 Goon Controller
Large elemental beast (earth, fire)	**XP** 200
HP 48; **Bloodied** 24	**Initiative** +6
AC 23, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 21	**Perception** +4
Speed 6	Lifesense, darkvision

Traits

▸ **Goon**

The hoard spirit lacks its skin of treasure, and so has half as many hit points as a normal creature of its level.

▸ **Heavy**

The hoard spirit cannot swim, and if it falls in the moat its wings give it little purchase to climb out. It makes Athletics checks to climb at a –5 penalty.

Standard Actions

✓ **Guardian Smash** ✦ At-Will, Basic

The elemental vulture bats you with its stony wing.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+10 damage, and it pushes the target 2 squares.

✓ **Grasping Ground** ✦ Encounter

The creature kicks the ground, and a stony claw rises up from beneath you to grab you.

Requirement: The target must be adjacent to a solid surface like ground or the gold of a treasure hoard.

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +13 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d8+4 damage, and the target is grabbed by the ground (Escape DC 25).

Effect: The attack recharges if the target escapes the grab.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Fiery Wound** (fire, zone) ✦ Encounter

Its flesh cracks and fiery blood sprays across the ground.

Trigger: The hoard spirit is first bloodied.

Attack (No Action): Close Burst 2 (creatures in burst); +13 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d6+5 fire damage.

Effect: The area becomes a zone until the end of the encounter. Any creature that ends its turn in the zone takes 5 fire damage.

Str	18 (+8)	**Dex**	14 (+6)	**Wis**	10 (+4)
Con	14 (+6)	**Int**	2 (+0)	**Cha**	6 (+2)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Cock Fight

The second foe is Alonsa's dire bear, Chupacabra. But for this battle, the goal is more complex than simply fighting each other. In addition to the two combatants, Cavallo's staff also release six roosters. The roosters run all over the place, trying to stay away from the bears. Neither bear is allowed to attack the other until it has captured or killed at least 2 roosters.

If anyone complains about animal cruelty, Cavallo says that in his father's day they used to play this game with humans.

During the fight, Alonsa uses her magic to enhance Chupacabra, first with *longstrider* but then with *bear's endurance*. Her range is limited, though, so she has to move around the edge of the pit or order her bear closer.

Rooster Level N/A

Tiny natural beast **XP** N/A

HP 1; a missed attack still probably kills it **Initiative** +2

AC 14, **Fortitude** 8, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 8 **Perception** +0

Speed 5, fly 4 (altitude limit 1)

Alignment The noble rooster is the pinnacle of Lawful Good.

Chupacabra, Dire Bear Level 13 Goon Skirmisher

Large natural beast **XP** 400

HP 71; **Bloodied** 35 **Initiative** +8

AC 27, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 24 **Perception** +8

Speed 6 Low-light vision, scent

Traits

▸ **Goon**

As an animal companion, Chupacabra has half the hit-points of a normal monster of her level.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Bite** ✦ At-Will, Basic

It bites and mangles, but you manage to shake free.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC

Hit: 3d8+6 damage.

⊘ **Claw** ✦ At-Will, Basic

The bear swipes at you, and you struggle to keep your feet.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+3 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of Chupacabra's next turn.

✓ **Maul** ✦ At-Will

Effect: Chupacabra uses *claw* twice.

Str	22 (+12)	**Dex**	10 (+6)	**Wis**	15 (+8)
Con	19 (+10)	**Int**	2 (+2)	**Cha**	10 (+6)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Alonsa Frolián

Speed 6 **Initiative** +6

Standard Actions

▸ **Longstrider** ✦ At-Will

Her ally gets a burst of speed.

Effect: One creature within 10 squares that Alonsa can see can move 2 squares. Alonsa is slowed until the end of her next turn.

▸ **Bear's Endurance** ✦ Recharge ⚄⚅

She sags, but her ally seems refreshed.

Effect: One creature within 10 squares that Alonsa can see gains 10 temporary hit points.

▸ **Bull's Strength** ✦ Recharge ⚄⚅

She takes a seat as if weak in the knees, but her ally roars with strength.

Effect: One creature within 10 squares that Alonsa can see gains a +2 power bonus to attack and damage rolls until the end of Alonsa's next turn.

Aftermath

Winning the monster duel impresses Alonsa, which earns the party Cavallo's grudging respect. He'll give them a little leeway on any odd requests they have, and will generally assume they're well intentioned, rather than acting on orders from Shantus to cause him trouble. If the party fails or doesn't try this fight (or at least some way to earn the old orc's respect), Cavallo will try to keep the party from talking to his grandson, and he'll be more inclined to listen to Lya's suggestions to make the party's life difficult.

Masters of Public Health

Puzzle. Montage. Level 13.

The party seeks the source of a disease afflicting Citado Cavallo.

A parasite known as the "dragon worm" has infected Cavallo's grandson Altioro, of a type highly resistant to simple magic curatives. The dragon worm occasionally flares up in remote villages, but recently it has afflicted people in poor districts of Citado Cavallo. Public opinion views it as a physical manifestation of impurity and villainy, since it is most common among the goblin tribes who were allied with the region's long-dead dragon tyrant Furioso. It would discredit Cavallo's daughter Corta Nariz if the public learned her son was "impure."

The true source of the infestation is a public bath house. The nearby volcanic caldera Lago Fuego has long supplied the city with slightly sulfurous waters, but it was rumored that the late dragon tyrant's hoard lay beneath its waters. Cavallo de Guerra had it pumped and drained to find the treasure, and when that failed he expanded his search to other stagnant pools in the pock-marked mountainside. All these waters were shunted into the aqueduct that feeds the city, and though indeed the treasure was found, the pool that contained it was infested with dragon worm eggs.

Only a handful of people, mostly children who see no problem with drinking from bath water, caught the worm from the bathhouses, but as the water trickled down to poorer neighborhoods it made its way to wells and shared cisterns, and now the city has a small epidemic.

Unlike real-world guinea worm, dragon worm can enter a victim's system and burrow through the body in a matter of days, and once it lays its eggs it traces a new thread across the body as it eats its way toward different exit points.

Investigating the Infestation

The party might (Heal DC 20) be familiar with the disease profile of dragon worm, giving them the clue that they should check water sources. Examination of an extracted specimen can determine (Nature DC 14) the growth and movement rate of the worm, and (Arcana DC 14) that this particular strain is infused with elemental fire energy. Even closer study (Arcana DC 29) can match the energy specifically to the magic that grants dragons their might and resilience.

Residents of poorer neighborhoods might divulge (Streetwise DC 20) locations where others have caught the worm, but Altioro never went to any of these places. Careful inquiries (Diplomacy DC 29) can reveal that a few other wealthy families also secretly have children suffering from dragon worm. Their children generally don't socialize, but they know each other from a particular high-society bath house.

If the party knows the worm's growth rate, it's possible after surveying a few dozen people with the affliction (Heal DC 29) to determine when the parasite was introduced to the water system; the last week of Spring. Even a cursory search for likely associated events at that time turns up the pumping of one of the flooded pits near Lago Fuego.

Goblins of Lago Fuego

Cavallo de Guerra drove the goblins away so he could look for dragon treasure, but locals can note the interesting fact that the goblins, who have suffered from dragon worm as long as anyone can remember, don't seem to have it anymore. If the party tracks down the goblins (see Bug Hunt, page 45), they might learn that the tribe spoke of a human shaman who helped drive the worms from their bodies.

Return of the Good Doctor

The party likely helped save Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen from the clutches of the Obscurati. A brilliant surgeon who melds magic and medicine, von Recklinghausen fled his home in the Malice Lands to avoid his creation Andrei (see Adventure Four, *Always on Time*), whom he cobbled together from dead body parts and returned to life. After the party rescued him, he eventually found his way to Ber, wandering for a few months before finding the poor Fuego goblin tribe who all needed treatment for dragon worm.

If the party goes to the Fuego tribe, they might meet Dr. von Recklinghausen and enlist his aid in helping the orcs of Citado Cavallo. In the process, they might spare the goblins from a slaughter, if they're up for it.

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.

After years of intense study and experimentation, with 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. His creation drove him from his home, and Wolfgang has been running or hiding since then, not aware that his "son" has given up his quest for revenge (see Adventure Four, *Always on Time*).

THE REAL GUINEA WORM

In the real world, dracuncialisis—literally "affliction with little dragons," caused by the "guinea worm"—has vexed humanity since prehistory, though today it is endemic only to four countries in Africa.

When a person drinks contaminated water, eggs hatch into the worms, which slowly burrow through the victim's body over the course of weeks or months. They usually head downward toward feet, but can emerge anywhere, including eyes. The emergence of the worm burns like fire, and victims seek relief by placing the injured body part in water. The worm ejects eggs into the water, continuing its life cycle.

The worm can be removed by carefully wrapping its end around a stick and methodically twisting the stick to pull the worm out. This must be done over the course of days to prevent the worm from snapping and decomposing inside the victim's body. Even when properly treated, the pain prevents many people from attending school or work.

Eradication efforts rely on training people to soothe their injuries in buckets of water which can be disposed of away from drinking sources, and to filter water taken from possibly infested pools. Thanks to efforts spearheaded by the Carter Center, guinea worm is likely to soon be the third infectious disease completely eradicated (after smallpox and rinderpest).

Devising a Cure

While it's possible to extract the worm the traditional way, magical cures are ineffective and in any case don't prevent the parasite from spreading. Dr. von Recklinghausen can share his cure if the party finds him. Otherwise, if your party is scientifically inclined they can try to research a custom ritual to deal with the parasite.

This research requires three successful skill checks—Arcana, Heal, and Nature (each DC 29)—each of which requires a character to spend 8 hours working. Different PCs can make each check and collaborate on the results, but to even attempt a check the PC must either be a ritual caster, or be working alongside a ritual caster.

If the party has access to a proper medical laboratory (you never know what PCs might stick on their boat), reduce the DCs to 20.

Casting Out Wyrms

The dragon worms are infused with fire energy, and seek to lay their eggs in water. Treatment requires multiple pebbles taken from a fast-moving streambed, and a simple box containing one gold coin, in addition to the normal components of the Remove Affliction ritual. The dragon worm is a Level 3 affliction, but without these special components the ritual fails.

The patient has to swallow one pebble, and during the ritual the other pebbles are run along the patient's skin. When they pass over the tip of the worm they hum and cause the worm to burrow rapidly and painfully to the surface. But then the worm is drawn into the pebble, which must be quickly placed into the box with the coin. Once all the worms are

removed from the victim's body, the coin can be removed from the box, which is then sealed and can be disposed of. Wolfgang just burnt the case to impress the goblins, but the worms are harmless and petrified.

The ritual still has its normal risks of causing harm, but a skilled ritualist can spare the victim any serious injury, and cause only a few brief moments of burning pain.

Avoiding Reinfection

The harder part is keeping people from re-infecting themselves by drinking contaminated water. While the mundane method of "don't drink out of water that isn't clean" works eventually—the eggs can only survive outside a humanoid host for about a year—the worm is only resistant to magic while inside a host. A body of water can be cleansed with the Purify Water ritual (using multiple applications if necessary), and then all that is necessary is to remind anyone who manages to get infected not to dip their worm wounds in the water.

Bug Hunt

Action/Social. Montage. Level 9+.

The Fuego tribe of goblins has a small army of bugs under their control.

This section of the adventure is a bit optional, and so we just provide general details of the goblins, plus offer a few possible permutations of monster and goblin foes.

The Fuego tribe once served the dragon tyrant Furioso, and after his death they settled near his abandoned lair—a flooded caldera surrounded by dozens of old flooded lava tubes. Cavallo de Guerra booted the tribe off their lands a few months ago and started draining the tubes until he finally found the dragon's hoard.

A goblin shaman named **Willigu** led his people into the wild mountains thirty miles from Citado Cavallo. There they lost many of their tribe to monstrous attacks until Willigu discovered the magic that would let him control these beasts (i.e., he tore the head off a dead queen ant and put it on a pike). Bitter at the orcs, Willigu directed his tribe to capture and train as many giant insects as they could.

During this time they were found by Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen, who had heard of their pervasive dragon worm affliction. Wolfgang doesn't speak the goblin's language, but he's figured out that the tribe has been attacking the outskirts of orcish territory. Willigu fears the doctor will lead the orcs back to him, so he's had his warriors detain Wolfgang whenever he's made moves to leave.

Outer Patrol (Level 9)

- 8 Fuego tribe riders
- 2 fiery ankhegs

Inner Defenses (Level 13)

- 6 Fuego tribe warrior patrols
- 4 fiery ankhegs
- 15 giant ant swarmers

Final Stand (Level 15)

- Willigu, Fuego tribe shaman (has an ant-queen head on a stick)
- 2 Fuego tribe riders
- 1 burnt umber hulk
- 24 giant ant swarmers

Noncombatants

- Approximately 100 children and elderly goblins
- Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen

Burnt Umber Hulk — Level 15 Soldier
Large natural magical beast — **XP** 1,200

HP 148; **Bloodied** 74 — **Initiative** +11
AC 31, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 25 — **Perception** +10
Speed 5, burrow 2 (tunneling) — Darkvision, tremorsense 5
Resist 10 fire, 10 psychic

Traits

☼ **Fiery Hallucinations** ✦ Aura 5
As you make eye contact with this dark red insectile hulk, you realize it's wreathed in fire! In fact, every one of your enemies is on fire! You dare not close with them, lest you be set ablaze.
Enemies in the aura that move adjacent to or end their turn adjacent to the umber hulk or any of its allies take 10 psychic damage. A creature that cannot see the umber hulk is immune to this effect.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Claw** ✦ At-Will, Basic
These talons burrow through stone.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +20 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+12 damage.

✓ **Hoist and Grind** ✦ At-Will
It grasps you in two claws and rams you into a wall, scraping you across stone before throwing you to the ground.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +18 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8+12 damage. The umber hulk slides the target 5 squares to a space within its reach. If the target is adjacent to a wall (or ceiling) at the end of this forced movement, it is knocked prone and takes 10 additional damage.

Str 22 (+13) **Dex** 18 (+11) **Wis** 16 (+10)
Con 20 (+12) **Int** 4 (+4) **Cha** 11 (+7)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** understands Giant

Willigu, Fuego Shaman — Level 13 Lurker (Leader)
Small natural humanoid (goblinoid) — **XP** 800

HP 100; **Bloodied** 50 — **Initiative** +11
AC 27, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 25 — **Perception** +8
Speed 6, spider climb 6 — Low-light vision
Resist 10 acid

Traits

☼ **Ant Queen Head on a Stick** ✦ Aura 3
Ichor runs down the spear shaft that the goblin shaman has shoved through what looks like a giant ant's head. Occasionally the head's pincers still twitch, and its antennae wriggle. The bugs nearest the shaman chitter with fervor whenever anyone goes near him.
Insectile creatures—ants, ankhegs, beetles, umber hulks, and the like—gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls and a +10 bonus to damage rolls against enemies inside the aura.

The staff starts combat "charged," meaning the ant head's eyes glow with primal energy. He can expend the charge for other magical effects, and can regain the charge by using *myr manifestation*.

When Willigu is bloodied, he's vulnerable enough that an enemy can try to destroy the ant head. The ant head has the same defenses as Willigu, and any hit destroys it, similar to a minion. If the head is destroyed, insectile creatures no longer treat the Fuego tribe as allies, and they'll likely flee, attacking whatever gets in their way.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Biting Spear** ✦ At-Will, Basic

The shaman thrusts his spear, and the ant head on the end bites you!

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+6 damage, plus ongoing 10 acid damage (save ends).

▸ **Myr Manifestation** ✦ At-Will

The goblin chants, and tiny ants emerges from the ground around him in a swarm, which crawls and eats any nearby foes. The compound eyes of the ant head on the shaman's spear tip begin to glow.

Requirement: Willigu cannot move on the same turn he uses this power.

Effect: Until the end of Willigu's next turn, swarming ants fill a zone in area burst 2 within 10. The area is difficult terrain for his enemies. Any enemy that enters the zone or starts its turn there takes 10 damage.

Additionally, Willigu's staff becomes charged.

▸ **Insectile Invocation** ✦ At-Will

The shaman hoists his spear, and a thrumming whine calls out from the glowing ant head atop it. The insects defending him react instantly to defend him.

Requirement: Willigu must expend the charge on his staff.

Effect: Insectile creatures within 20 squares shift their speed toward Willigu. Additionally, two giant ant swarmers burrow into combat and appear in spaces within 20 squares that aren't adjacent to enemies.

⊹ **Wasp Wave** ✦ At-Will

The ant head vomits forth a blast of small buzzing wasps.

Requirement: Willigu must expend the charge on his staff.

Attack: Close Blast 3 (enemies in blast); +16 vs. Reflex

Hit: 5d8+10 damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares.

Skills Nature +14

Str 10 (+6) **Dex** 13 (+7) **Wis** 14 (+8)
Con 16 (+9) **Int** 14 (+8) **Cha** 14 (+8)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Giant, Orc

Fuego Tribe Rider — Level 13 Minion Skirmisher

Large natural beast/humanoid — **XP** 200

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion — **Initiative** +8
AC 27, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 24 — **Perception** +7
Speed 8 — Low-light vision

Traits

▸ **Rider and Mount**

The goblins ride on the backs of pony-sized beetles.

Look, it's hard to justify goblins as a threat at 13th level, okay? So these minions represent the combination of the goblin rider and his beetle steed. Flavor-wise, if the goblin dies, the beetle scurries away, and if the beetle dies, the goblin is trapped underneath it or knocked out by the fall.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Horn Ram** ✦ At-Will, Basic

The beetle's massive horn knocks you aside as it runs past.

Effect: The beetle moves its speed and makes this attack at any point during its move.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC

Hit: 10 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone.

⊗ **Spear** ✦ At-Will, Basic

The goblin chucks one of his two spears.

Attack: Melee 1 or Ranged 3/6 (one creature); +18 vs. AC

Hit: 10 damage.

Str 13 (+7) **Dex** 15 (+8) **Wis** 12 (+7)
Con 14 (+8) **Int** 8 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+6)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Giant, Orc

Fiery Ankheg — Level 13 Minion Soldier

Large natural beast — **XP** 200

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion — **Initiative** +10
AC 27, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 24 — **Perception** +9
Speed 8, burrow 4 (tunneling) — Tremorsense 5
Resist 10 acid, 20 fire

Traits

☼ **Fire Beacon** ✦ Aura 3

The ankheg's chitin flickers with fire. When you conjure flames, the spiky protrusions along its back glow and suck the fire in, feeding it.

Creatures in the aura gain resist 20 fire.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Mandible Grab** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC

Hit: 10 damage, and if the ankheg isn't grabbing anyone, the target is grabbed (Escape DC 20).

⊹ **Acid Spray** (acid) ✦ Encounter

It sprays a waving stream of sticky ichor that burns and clings.

Attack: Close Blast 3 (creatures in blast); +16 vs. Reflex

Hit: 9 acid damage, and the target is slowed and takes ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends both).

Str 15 (+8) **Dex** 15 (+8) **Wis** 16 (+9)
Con 18 (+10) **Int** 2 (+2) **Cha** 4 (+3)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —

Fuego Tribe Warrior Patrol — Level 11 Minion Skirmisher

Large natural humanoid — **XP** 150

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion — **Initiative** +7
AC 25, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 22 — **Perception** +12
Speed 6 — Low-light vision

Traits

▸ **Gang of Goblins**

Four goblins work together as part of this patrol, sticking close together in an area the size of a Large creature. A single hit likely kills one or two of them and sends the other fleeing in terror.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Spears** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 or Ranged 3/6 (one creature); +16 vs. AC

Hit: 9 damage.

Str 10 (+5) **Dex** 15 (+7) **Wis** 14 (+7)
Con 14 (+7) **Int** 8 (+4) **Cha** 10 (+5)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Giant, Orc

Giant Ant Swarmer — Level 11 Minion Brute

Medium natural beast — **XP** 150

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion — **Initiative** +7
AC 23, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 22 — **Perception** +4
Speed 6, climb 6, burrow 2 (tunneling) — Low-light vision, tremorsense 10

Standard Actions

⊘ **Bite** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC

Hit: 12 damage.

Str 17 (+8) **Dex** 15 (+7) **Wis** 9 (+4)
Con 14 (+7) **Int** 2 (+1) **Cha** 4 (+2)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —

Encountering the Tribe

Tracking them back from any of their various attacks is fairly easy. They now reside in a stretch of caves in a horse-shoe shaped valley, where the tunnels wind and intersect from many directions so warriors can flee or reinforce each other with ease.

If approached openly they'll talk to non-orcs. Sneaking up requires passing one or two outer patrols. The main tunnel entrances have a few scattered guards who'll respond to the sounds of trouble. Then further back is a defensive bastion, a cave piled with giant insect carcasses to use as a chokepoint. Here Willigu and his pet umber hulk can put up a last line of defense before the living chambers. Dr. von Recklinghausen has limited free roam in the caves, but is always escorted if he goes outside.

In a fight, the goblins scatter and attack from surprising directions if possible, while the insects typically just swarm. They think Willigu is their queen, but if his ant-queen-head staff is destroyed, the insects panic and try to flee, attacking anyone that gets in their way.

Negotiation

The happiest solution might be to convince the goblins to let Wolfgang go so he can treat Cavallo's grandson, earning the tribe enough good will that Cavallo won't want to destroy them. The goblins could make a living trading the hides and acid of the various giant insects, and occasionally using the burrowing critters to help with excavation and plowing.

Cavallo might even be convinced to give them their lands back, now that he has the dragon's treasure hoard. But he'll want the goblins civilized and brought into the revolution that Bruse Vairday started. If the party's going to get him to accept the goblins, they'll need to make Willigu presentable, perhaps with some sort of extreme shaman makeover.

Obscurati Complication

While Lya Jierre doesn't care about the goblins, if she learns about the presence of Dr. von Recklinghausen, she might try to abduct him. The Obscurati leadership have acquired his creation, Andrei von Recklinghausen, and they're fascinated with the good doctor's work. Lya won't go out of her way or risk a fight with the party, but she tries to get Wolfgang alone by mentioning his creation, then suggesting they talk more in private, over a meal away from Cavallo.

Tiefling Trickery

Action/Social. Montage. Level 13.

The party might have a chance to stop Lya's hired enchantress.

The purple-skinned enchantress Jacale teleports to Citado Cavallo on Day 2 of the Bruse's challenge. By this point she has already performed various divinations on Commodore Thrag Vidalia, and when she arrives she rents a horse and hires a guide to take her to the naval yard.

She locates Thrag and presents him with a forged and enchanted letter, allegedly from Cavallo's wife, which purports that she is a friend. The letter goes on to say that Jacale has an interest in ships and would like to take a ride aboard Commodore Vidalia's vessel, a light frigate named *Bonita Cheryce*. Thrag makes his ship ready to depart at first light, intending to sail to the mouth of Marrajado de Oro and back.

At the dawn of Day 3, Jacale boards the frigate and it sets out for a casual day cruise. Shortly thereafter, Lya Jierre departs from Cavallo's castle, boards her own ship *Lux Profectusque*, and departs with haste.

False Memories

About two hours later, Jacale and Thrag take brunch in his suite, and she pours an elixir into his glass, causing him to fall under her command. She tells him that once she leaves, he will remember that she tried to kill him. He even lets her inflict a small gash into his back, nothing life-threatening, but enough to sell the story. He'll remember being paralyzed by poison, only able to watch as Jacale performed a ritual spell and taunted him. This false Jacale claimed that with him dead, Risur will be able to strike. Then, in his false memory, he fought free of the poison and killed her.

Jacale opens a bag of holding and produces a dead body that has been altered to resemble her. She has Thrag deliver what would be a killing blow to that corpse, then tells him that he must attack Risur before they can strike. Then she performs a teleportation ritual to flee, leaving Thrag convinced he narrowly escaped assassination. He immediately leads his crew on an assault against the fortress at Manhill, on the Risuri shore of Marrajado de Oro.

Returns the Raider

Thrag launches a cannon bombardment of the fort at two in the afternoon, then sends a small landing force to raze parts of the town outside the fort. The orc raiders hustle back to *Bonita Cheryce* and sail off before the Risuri are able to mount an effective counter-attack.

Thrag returns to Citado Cavallo an hour before dusk, and he sails in boldly with the fake Jacale's body lashed to his ship like a figurehead. He orders everyone to spread the word that he struck Risur before they could attack first. But he warns them to be ready, because he didn't see the Risuri fleet at Manhill, so they might already be on their way.

Within an hour Thrag is summoned to the castle, where Cavallo strips him of his command. Cavallo assumes Thrag was just looking to get revenge for his old grudge, but magical examinations might detect a faint enchantment still upon him. If the false memories are dispelled, he realizes he was tricked. The body, similarly, was transmuted, and that would show up if checked.

Thwarting the Plot

If the party gets wind of Jacale's plan, she's not threatening in a fight, since all of her magic relies on potions, elixirs, and rituals, rather than spells fast enough to use in combat.

Lya tries to keep the party's attention focused on her, and since she won't ever meet Jacale, the party's only good chance to learn about the plot was to have eavesdropped back at the Bruse's summer court. Divinations might help too, and if the party asks in the right places—at the naval yard, at the teleportation beacon—people definitely remember the purple-skinned woman. But they still only have a small window, from the afternoon of Day 2 to dawn on Day 3.

When Commodore Thrag's ship departs, the party—whose rooms look out over the sea—might notice. If they happen to bring it up, no one at the castle knows about it, which might raise a red flag. The party would have about eight hours to catch up with Thrag and stop him.

Return to the Court

Social. Real-Time. Level 14.

Bruse Shantus determines who gets to talk to Tinker first.

Upon completion of the Cantabrilla Railroad Challenge, news reaches Bruse Shantus, who has Zarkava *send* to the party and Lya, summoning them back to his summer court. When both groups arrive he throws a banquet for them, and tells them that Tinker will be arriving within an hour to speak with the winning group. Elite orc and lizardfolk court guards watch over the meal to make sure no one attempts anything violent.

The constables might notice (Insight DC 21) that Kenna Vigilante is only making a token effort to eat. If asked, she lies and says she's feeling ill.

Shantus promises not to stake any further claim to the gnome, so the winning team is free to do as they please. He intends to tell Tinker that two groups want to speak to him, so he leaves it to the winning team to be convincing enough that Tinker won't want to hear the other side. Of course, it won't surprise the Bruse if the winners just try to abduct the gnome.

He gives one final warning, though, that he won't abide any fighting at his court. He'll have Zarkava prepare a teleportation ritual to the winners' destination of choice (likely Flint for the PCs, Vendricce for Lya). He cannot abide sore losers.

Then he, Zarkava Ssa'litt, and Kenna Vigilante cast their votes, and Shantus announces who is the winner.

Tinker's Approach

Tinker's simulacrum, still shielded by the Bruse's favor, has been alerted via *sending* to prepare to teleport to the summer court. The nearest arrival teleportation circle is at a nearby military base, which houses over two thousand soldiers. After the banquet finishes, Zarkava *sends* again for Tinker to take the teleportation circle. Ten minutes later he's at the military base, where twenty soldiers escort him.

All of these soldiers are duplicants, seeded at the military base over the past months by Pemberton. The base commander himself has been replaced by a duplicant, as have numerous members of the artillery brigade. Pemberton has long planned to kill the Bruse, but Tinker's arrival seems the perfect opportunity to know exactly when to strike.

In the court itself, five elite guards have been replaced by duplicants, as has Kenna Vigilante.

The soldier escort reaches the Summer Court (using the main entrance, not the labyrinth), and they march the jittery Tinker upstairs to the Bruse's throne room, which has a balcony that leads to the bleachers that overlook the labyrinth.

The losing team is asked to remain in the lobby outside the throne room, watched by the twenty escort duplicants. The winning team meets Tinker in the throne room, while Shantus, Zarkava, Kenna, and the five court guards look on.

Meeting Oddcog

Shantus makes brief introductions, and then sends Zarkava away to prepare a teleportation ritual for whoever convinces the gnome to go with them. He then offers the winning team a bit of privacy by stepping away to the balcony, where he can look down at his labyrinth. Kenna Vigilante stands with him.

Tinker assumes the Ob have come to kill him, but he might remember the PCs from when he briefly crossed their path at the Cauldron Hill facility in adventure five. If he recalls the group, he listens to their pitch, then gets nervous and apologetic, saying that he doesn't have a choice in what happens next. If, though, he's speaking with the Ob or thinks the party is a threat, he parades around the room boasting that he's glad they showed up, because he is tired of being small and cowering.

Tinker calls for Bruse Shantus, and when the minotaur comes over the gnome announces that he's refusing to go, wants everyone else to leave, and will give them to the count of … — and he pulls out a pocket watch — sixteen. He starts counting upward from 0, and at the ten-count the party might hear (Perception DC 28) the Doppler whistling of an incoming artillery shell.

Why Assassinate the Bruse?

If the party and the Obscurati hadn't come to take Tinker away, Pemberton would have been able to build up his army of war machines for another six months, at which point he'd confidently be able to conquer Ber. But he knew attention on Tinker would inevitably reveal the existence of duplicants, so Pemberton is making the best of a bad situation by trying to decapitate the nation.

If he succeeds, it will take longer for the new ruler (likely Cavallo) to mount a counter-attack against him at Isla dolas Focas, Ber won't be quite as friendly to Risur, and Pemberton will have more mechanical defenders for his island, but it doesn't change the challenges the party face unless they decide to join the Beran marines in besieging a city.

Coup ex Machina

Action. Tactical. Level 22.

An overwhelming force targets the Bruse. Will the party help save him?

Roll initiative. Tinker acts at 16.

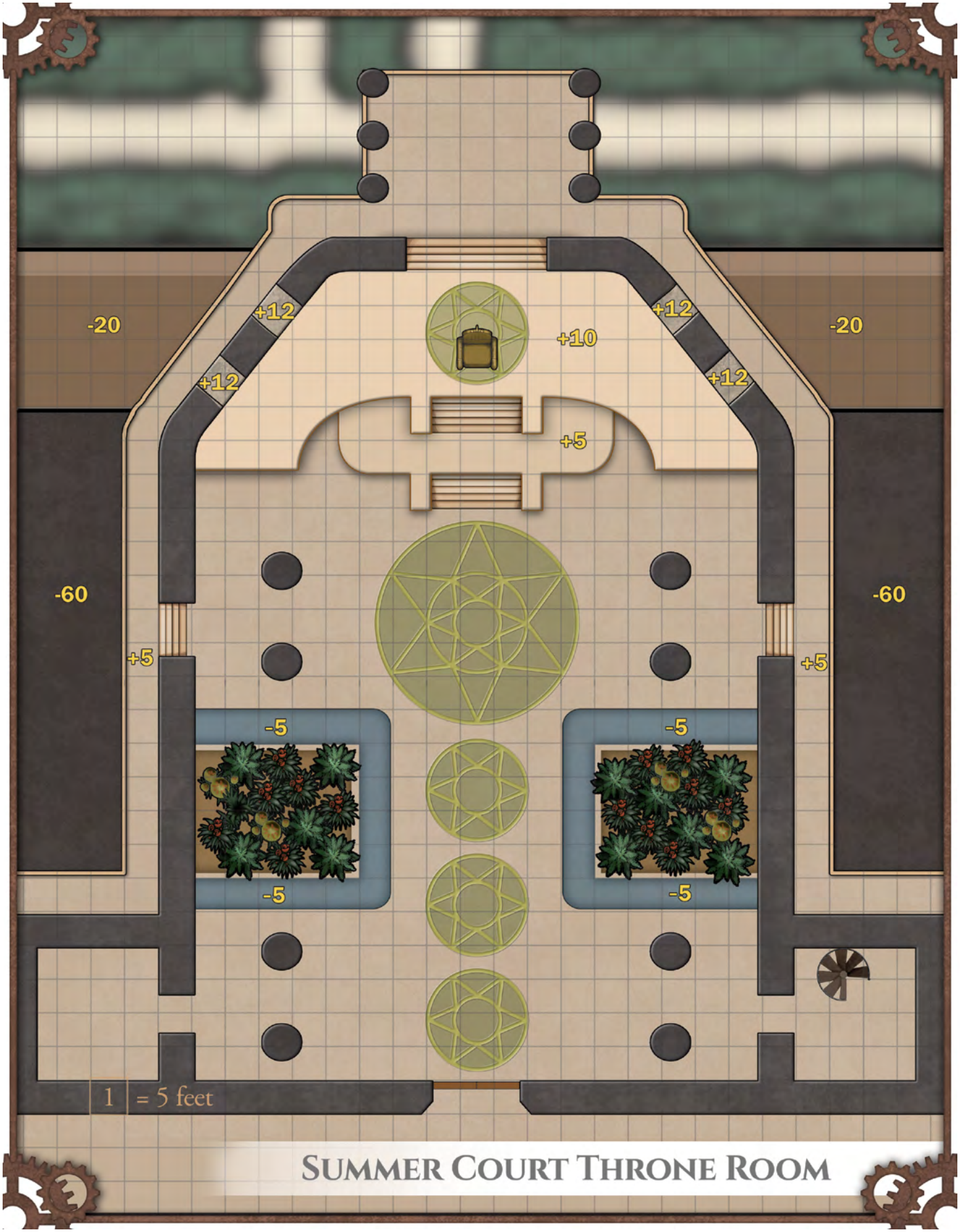
On Tinker's turn, he pokes himself on his chest with an audible click. A panel pops open, revealing him to be hollow and made of metal, and he reaches in, producing a comical black bomb. As he pulls it out, the fuse lights, and Tinker grins and giggles as it burns down to an imminent explosion.

Getting the bomb away from Tinker likely requires a successful attack against a Defense of 25. At the start of Tinker's next turn, the bomb explodes. Make an attack, close burst 10, +19 vs. Reflex, *Hit:* 50 damage and the target is dazed (save ends). *Miss:* 25 damage. Any creature adjacent to the bomb takes double damage.

The blast annihilates Tinker's duplicant body unless the party knocks it away from him. In any event, he'll soon thereafter sever his connection to this duplicant.

Artillery and Breach

Immediately after Tinker's bomb explodes, the building shakes as an artillery shell strikes the roof. Walls crack, bits of the ceiling collapse, and eye-searing yellow smoke fills the air. This is Agony Gas, a chemical weapon that sears mucous membranes and can cause debilitating pain and blindness.



SUMMER COURT THRONE ROOM

At that moment, the court guards—actually duplicant terminators—spring into action. Two open the doors to the room, providing access for the twenty soldiers outside—duplicant swarmers. Kenna Vigilante, also a duplicant, knocks the Bruse down and focuses on killing him first.

To the Rescue

If the party won the challenge and got to meet with Tinker, Lya and her bodyguards are stuck in the outer room with the duplicant soldiers. Lya's group will aid in the destruction of the duplicants, and they try to protect the Bruse.

If the party was stuck outside, the situation might be reversed, though they might not want to get involved in a fight. If they sit on their hands long enough, Lya orders the Bruse to come with them, and they leap over the balcony into the labyrinth.

Glaucia Evora, Zarkava Ssa'litt, and any other defenders at the court are too far away to arrive in time to make a difference in the battle.

Late Reinforcements

The gnoll Pardo is not present for the initial attack, but he's on the court grounds. Have him appear after four or five rounds, perhaps intercepting the party if they're trying to get the Bruse to safety. If it's safe he'll target Shantus, but if challenged he focuses on enemies with ranged attack options, relying on his enfeebling aura to deter melee foes.

Hostile Forces

- Kenna Vigilante duplicant
- Pardo duplicant
- 5 duplicant terminators
- 20 duplicant swarmers
- Agony gas hazard

Potential Allies

(See Appendix E for stats.)

- Bruse Shantus
- Lya Jierre
- Merton Goncala
- Rush Munchausen

Kenna Vigilante Duplicant Level 14 Skirmisher
Medium natural animate (construct) **XP** 1,000

HP 143; **Bloodied** 71 **Initiative** +8
AC 28, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 26 **Perception** +14
Speed 8 Darkvision, blindsense 5
Resist fire 10

Traits

▸ **Metal Shell**

You shatter the "skin" on her arm, but beneath is a skeleton of enchanted steel bones. The dragonborn woman's eyes unfocus, and for a moment she has the expression of someone fighting against a compulsion. But then her eyes glow red and she resumes her attack.

When Kenna is not bloodied, she has Resist 10 all. When she is bloodied, she has Vulnerable 10 all, her defenses are reduced by 5, and she takes a –5 penalty to saving throws.

▸ **Disrupted Connection**

Kenna twitches from the latest hit, then looks around in confusion, like she's just realizing what's happening.

When Kenna is bloodied, she breaks free of the compulsion to kill the Bruse, and becomes an ally of the party. (Though they might not give her a chance to explain her change of heart.)

Standard Actions

Dragon Fist ✦ At-Will, Basic

Damn, she hits hard.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+15 damage, and Kenna pushes the target 1 square and knocks it prone.
Special: If Kenna has a melee weapon, instead she does 2d8+15 damage.

Integrated Carbine ✦ Recharges when first bloodied

Her forearm ratchets open, revealing a gun muzzle.

Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+15 damage, or 2d6+31 damage on a critical hit.

Grasp ✦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d4+15 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 29). While grabbed, the target cannot speak
Sustain minor. The target takes 15 damage.

Minor Actions

Dragon Breath (fire) ✦ Recharges when first bloodied

Attack: Close Burst 3 (creatures in burst); +17 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6+15 fire damage.

Throw Victim ✦ At-Will

Requirement: Must have a creature grabbed.
Effect: Kenna releases the grabbed creature anywhere within her reach, then knocks the creature prone and slides it 1 square. Make the following attack against one target adjacent to the released creature.
Attack: Area Burst 1 (one creature in burst); +17 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 10 damage and the target is knocked prone.
Effect: The flung creature takes 20 damage.

Str 27 (+15) **Dex** 10 (+7) **Wis** 12 (+8)
Con 22 (+13) **Int** 14 (+9) **Cha** 16 (+10)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Giant, Common, Draconic

Pardo Duplicant	Level 16 Elite Controller
Medium natural animate (construct)	**XP** 2,800
HP 308; **Bloodied** 154	**Initiative** +11
AC 30, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 29	**Perception** +15
Speed 7	Darkvision, blindsense 5, scent
Action Point 1; **Saving Throws** +2	

Traits

▸ **Metal Shell**

Your mighty blow creates spiderweb cracks across the gnoll's body, and its fur falls away, disappearing in flickers of illusion, revealing a glistening steel endoskeleton with glowing red eyes.

When Pardo is not bloodied, he has Resist 10 all. When he is bloodied, he has Vulnerable 10 all, his defenses are reduced by 5, and he takes a –5 penalty to saving throws.

☼ **Enfeebling Aura** ✦ Aura 2

When you get near him, your flesh grows weak.

Non-construct creatures in the aura are weakened.

Standard Actions

✓ **Talon Frenzy** ✦ At-Will, Basic

He bats at you with his jagged nails, snarling and slavering.

Effect: Pardo makes the following attack twice. If both attacks hit, the target is knocked prone.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC

Hit: 4d6+10 damage.

✓ **Devour Anima** (fire) ✦ At-Will

He falls upon you, snapping his yellow canines at your throat. As his fangs sink in, fire sears along your flesh. He pulls back, and you see him sucking flames out of your wound, swallowing a piece of your soul.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. Will

Hit: 6d6+15 fire damage, and Pardo chooses one of the target's at-will powers, which he can then use with *invoke anima* (see below).

✓ **Slay Living** (necrotic) ✦ Recharges when first bloodied

"Steel endures," he says. "Flesh rots." And your skin begins to wither away.

Requirement: The target must be a living, non-construct creature.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 50 necrotic damage and the target is stunned and gains ongoing 20 necrotic damage (save ends both).

Miss. 25 necrotic damage, and the target is dazed and gains ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends both).

Minor Actions

▸ **Invoke Anima** ✦ At-Will, 1/round

A fiery duplicate of one of your allies appears and attacks you.

Effect: Pardo creates a brief fiery duplicate of a creature whose anima he successfully devoured. The duplicate appears in a space within 10 squares of Pardo and uses the at-will power Pardo chose when he devoured the creature's anima. Then the duplicate vanishes.

Str	27 (+16)	**Dex**	10 (+8)	**Wis**	12 (+9)
Con	22 (+14)	**Int**	12 (+9)	**Cha**	21 (+13)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Giant, Common, Draconic

KENNA WITH CLARITY

Once sufficiently injured—or if she has killed the Bruse—Kenna Vigilante manages to break free of the control imposed by the duplicant bond. If the party gives her a chance to switch sides, she'll aid in the fight. Afterward she can briefly report being abducted from the military base a few days earlier. She feels like she's in two places at once, and wherever she is she hears gnolls getting closer, and other voices calling for help, voices of soldiers who were also abducted. Then her body falls down like a rag doll. The transformation that gave the duplicant her appearance fades, leaving just an inert metal body.

Duplicant Terminator	Level 14 Brute
Medium natural animate (construct)	**XP** 1,000
HP 166; **Bloodied** 83	**Initiative** +8
AC 26, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 26	**Perception** +9
Speed 6	Darkvision, blindsense 5

Traits

▸ **Metal Shell**

Your strike gouges out part of the man's face, but it is only a cracked shell, within which tiny machines give it a semblance of life.

When the terminator is not bloodied, it has Resist 10 all. When it is bloodied, it has Vulnerable 10 all, its defenses are reduced by 5, and it takes a –5 penalty to saving throws.

Standard Actions

✓ **Musket Bayonet** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +19 vs. AC

Hit: 2d10+15 damage.

✓ **Musket** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +17 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+14 damage, or 2d8+24 on a critical hit

✓ **Grasp** ✦ At-Will

It bats your weapon away and grabs you by the throat. Its grip is like a vice.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d4+15 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 29). While grabbed, the target cannot speak

Sustain minor. The target takes 15 damage.

Minor Actions

✲ **Throw Victim** ✦ At-Will

Requirement: Must have a creature grabbed.

Effect: The terminator releases the grabbed creature anywhere within its reach, then knocks the creature prone and slides it 1 square. Make the following attack against one target adjacent to the released creature.

Attack: Area Burst 1 (one creature in burst); +17 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 10 damage and the target is knocked prone.

Effect: The flung creature takes 20 damage.

Str	27 (+15)	**Dex**	10 (+7)	**Wis**	10 (+7)
Con	22 (+13)	**Int**	10 (+7)	**Cha**	10 (+7)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Giant, Common

Duplicant Swarmer	Level 14 Goon Soldier
Medium natural animate (construct)	**XP** 500
HP 69; **Bloodied** 34	**Initiative** +9
AC 30, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 26	**Perception** +12
Speed 6	Darkvision, blindsense 5

Traits

▸ **Goon**

A duplicant swarmer has half the hit points of a normal creature of his level.

▸ **Metal Shell**

Your strike cleaves open the man's chest, revealing a cracked metal shell with only machinery and dripping black oil inside.

When the swarmer is not bloodied, it has Resist 10 all. When it is bloodied, it has Vulnerable 10 all, its defenses are reduced by 5, and it takes a –5 penalty to saving throws.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Threatening Axe** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

His attack gets inside your guard, making it difficult for you to disengage.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+13 damage, and until the end of the swarmer's next turn, the target provokes opportunity attacks when it shifts.

⟋ **Musket** (weapon) ✦ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +19 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+13 damage, or 2d8+33 on a critical hit.

Load standard.

Str	24 (+14)	**Dex**	10 (+7)	**Wis**	10 (+7)
Con	18 (+11)	**Int**	10 (+7)	**Cha**	11 (+7)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Giant, Common

Terrain

The throne room has a balcony that overlooks the labyrinth. The losing team and the duplicant swarmer guards wait in the lobby outside the throne room. Once the artillery lands, the throne room and lobby are suffused with toxic agony gas, leaving the safest escape route out onto the balcony and into the labyrinth.

Additional shells fall every 2 rounds thereafter, so if the party flees to the labyrinth and you want to keep the confusion high, perhaps a shell strikes there and blinding gas falls upon them.

The thick gas grants concealment to creatures more than 1 square away, and total concealment to those more than 2 squares away, but the duplicants all have blindsense. Any living creature that needs to breathe feels its mucous membranes burn. Such creatures take ongoing 5 acid damage until they exit the area. Creatures that fall unconscious due to this damage are permanently blinded (treat as a Level 5 affliction).

Tactics

This is a deadly combat, balanced by the presence of several possible allies. Taken all together it can be complicated to track all their stats, so we encourage you to be prepared.

The duplicant Kenna tries to grab and strangle the Bruse. Two duplicant terminators move to open the doors to the lobby, while the other three attack whoever else is present with the Bruse.

The duplicant swarmers can, if necessary, bash down the door to the throne room. After one round they can crack it, and after a second they can break it enough that it merely counts as difficult terrain. Once they have access to the Bruse, they try to overwhelm him. They always try to keep a line one- or two-deep between the Bruse and any possible allies.

If the group can get out of the labyrinth, they can make a run for the gathered petitioners, who outnumber the duplicants to slow them down and give the Bruse a chance to escape. Ber's ruler is glad to flee rather than fight.

If the fight spills out to the labyrinth, the duplicants pursue, but are unaware of the pit traps. Wherever the fight heads, Lya and her allies try to help protect the Bruse, and Pardo eventually shows up as a final foe.

In the very likely event that the party takes this opportunity to take out Lya Jierre, she fights intelligently, gauging how the odds look before deciding whether to flee. Her *gatecrasher charm* can help her escape, and in a pinch she can cling to Rush's back as he brachiates away through the air. Her preference, though, is to call for a cessation of hostilities since they might need to work together to defeat whoever was behind this attack.

Aftermath

Should the duplicants overwhelm the party, eventually loyal soldiers from the nearby base defeat them, though the death toll is devastating, and several duplicants escape into the wilderness to wreak later havoc. Petitioners might find dying PCs and stabilize them.

If the Bruse perished, Zarkava takes temporary control, but she immediately uses divinations to assure herself that Cavallo de Guerra was not responsible, then *sends* for him to succeed as the new Bruse.

An examination of Tinker or any of the other duplicants reveals their basic nature: a metal endoskeleton with a metallic shell that takes on the shape of whomever it's bonded to, linked to a small vial of witchoil in its chest that holds a piece of the bonded person's soul.

Let the party take the lead on investigating if they want, but if they're unable, Zarkava can provide the necessary divination magic to trace the attack to Isla dolas Focas. The gnolls there have a fleet—sizeable enough to defend their shores, if not enough to truly threaten the Beran navy—so reaching the island will be difficult.

Whoever rules Ber now—Shantus or Cavallo—declares war on the Cult of the Steel God and all who reside on Isla dolas Focas. Within a week a fleet will be readied to assault the island, with a mission to conquer that land, annex it, and seize whatever facility constructed these duplicants before more can be made. Lya Jierre, of course, suggests an alliance: she and the PCs wait until the Beran navy is distracting the gnoll defenders, and then they work together to reach Tinker, with whoever reaches him first having first chance to recruit him.

ACT THREE
The Dragon's Lair

In this act, the party must extract Tinker Oddcog from an industrialized, gnoll-ridden dragon's fortress.

BERAN FLEET

A large contingent of the Beran fleet attacks Isla dolas Focas. This will be the first battle in which the Berans deploy their handful of steam warships. Their forces consist of forty ships:

- Six ships of the line—250-ft. grand frigates with over 100 cannons apiece and hundreds of marines.
- Sixteen frigates—175-ft. warships with 50 cannons apiece and dozens of marines.
- Ten corvettes—90-ft. schooners with 20 cannons apiece.
- Eight steamships—85-ft. steam-powered iron-hulled ships with 2 turret-mounted heavy cannons apiece.

GNOLL FLEET

Aside from incidental fishing boats and merchant ships, the entire gnoll fleet consists of twenty-four ships:

- Four frigates.
- Seventeen corvettes.
- Three caravels.

The gnoll's chief advantage is that many of their larger ships have druids on board who have trained to control the waves and winds of the Silent Storm (see below), letting them capsize small ships, still the sails of large ones, and deny rains to vessels that have caught fire. They also have more magical armaments than the Berans.

Still, they are quite outnumbered, so barring PC involvement, the Berans will only lose two corvettes and several dozen sailors, while the gnolls will lose their entire fleet.

Overview: Beran Reaction

Cavallo de Guerra—either at the command at Shantus or as Bruse himself—gathers a Beran fleet to attack the fifty-mile long Isla dolas Focas. The ultimate target is the old lair of the (allegedly deceased) dragon Gradiax, an active volcano with several cave entrances. Divinations reveal that somewhere underground is the factory complex that built the duplicants that attempted to assassinate the Bruse.

A small city of ten thousand gnolls, called **Karch**, lies along the coast, five miles from the peak of the mountain. The Beran military plan is to use a portion of their naval force to circle around the island and feint a landing south of Karch. When the gnoll fleet moves to intercept, the rest of the Beran fleet will pincer them. Since the cult is known for its disdain of metal weapons, Cavallo is confident that Beran cannons will provide great tactical superiority.

Once the nautical defenses are crushed, marines will make landfall twenty miles from the city and set up a base of operations. Detachments of the fleet will return to Renza to pick up more troops, making multiple trips over the course of three weeks while the fleet's ships of the line bombard Karch. Eventually a force of ten thousand will march on Karch and offer the gnolls a chance to surrender. When the offer is refused, they'll raze the city and depart. It will soon thereafter become official Beran policy for settlers to claim land from the gnolls along the southern coast, which will slowly whittle them down the mostly nomadic people.

Enemies and Hostages

One hole in Ber's knowledge is who exactly is in charge of the gnolls. Their last great chieftain, **Rachi the Silver**, was said to have been slain several years ago. Divinations reveal that some powerful figure has united the gnolls of Isla dolas Focas, sufficient that he has powers akin to a proper ruler. He has forbidden teleportation onto the island without his consent, and divinations have trouble identifying him.

It is known, however, that Tinker is there, as are Kenna Vigilante and likely a host of other soldiers who were bonded with duplicants, and who are now hostages. Cavallo considers it an acceptable loss if they die while defeating the gnolls, but if possible he'd like to rescue them.

The Silent Storm

Another challenge is an odd weather phenomenon that floats near the island. On the west coast, stretching between the island and the mainland, there is a constant storm system that produces incessant rain and erratic winds but, eerily, never any lightning or thunder.

Thousands of years ago, this was the site of the Ziggurat of Avilona, where the Ancients protected this world's connection to the plane of air. That connection was damaged two centuries ago—meddling by the Obscurati at this ziggurat coincided with the white pillar on Axis Island containing the *golden icon of Avilona* cracking—which resulted in the downfall of the dragon tyrants. Isla dolas Focas still hosts a few Ancient structures and the party might come across megaliths and primitive carvings of flying beasts.

As for the ziggurat itself, it's several thousand feet overhead, on a floating island hidden in the storm clouds.

Skyseer Vision of Avilona

Skyseers feel constantly as if they are on the verge of receiving a vision, similar to when they were at the ziggurat of Apet (in Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*). If they look upward at the storm, they feel as though they cannot breathe, but can sense the unique energy of the planet Avilona in a precise point in the sky.

When the party reaches the island, any skyseer gets a faint, brief vision:

"The stars that surround you stood here over two centuries ago, so this is a vision of the past. You float, the constellation Draco beside you, and beneath you the planet Avilona is balanced on a pin of white stone. Dense, swift clouds cover its face, and where they part you see glimpses of a majestic eagle the size of a village.

"Unseen waves batter you, and a woman's fire-clad hand grasps at the white pin, which shatters. Its head plunges into a hungry black gyre below, and with no noise, no grand cataclysm, the clouds of Avilona slow, thin, and vanish. The eagle falls to the surface of the lifeless world, and its feathers turn to stone. To your side, the stars of Draco plummet, and then you too are falling, with no wind to hold you aloft."

Dragon Affairs

Contacting the RHC with news about a threat from the Cult of the Steel God will get Harkover Lee to share the secret identity of Gradiax, though he still tries to keep his own draconic nature hidden.

Sharing information that there might be an actual dragon tyrant still alive dramatically alters the mood of the Beran retaliation, shifting it from a civilized response against a strategic threat to an emotionally-charged battle for the identity of the nation. The royal vaults are opened to fund the creation of *dragon-bane balm*, short-lived enchanted oil that when applied to a weapon or implement makes it more deadly against dragons. Up to ten are available for purchase.

Dragon-Bane Balm

This oil reeks of rotted and charred flesh.

Level 14 800 gp

Uncommon Consumable: Oil

Power: Standard Action. *Effect:* The next attack with this weapon or implement against a dragon gains a +5 bonus to the attack roll, deals an extra 1d12 damage, and automatically ignores any resistance the dragon has. Until the end of the encounter, you gain resist 20 against a dragon's breath weapon.

Foreign Aid

If Lya and the party are offering their assistance, Cavallo would like them to act as a strike force, targeting the duplicant-production facility. When the main Beran fleet is luring the gnoll ships away from the city of Karch, the party and Lya should be able to make landfall. From there it's just a five mile hike to the volcano, where they should be able to find Tinker.

Cult of the Steel Lord Defenders

Two dozen ships—mostly cutters and caravels, with a few galleons—defend the island. Tinker's technological innovations have not been directed at ship-building, so the cult uses traditional sailing vessels. However, the wealth of Gradiax has equipped them with eldritch fusils, magically-charged weapons with as much destructive power as cannons (but that aren't metal, so the cult's taboos don't forbid them).

The city of Karch is unwalled, having never needed to defend against a land assault. The city provides little tactical value for the PCs, and it is easy to bypass. Should they attack, though, the streets have hundreds of warriors, plus several dozen large constructs recently crafted in Tinker's forge (the constructs should be level 10 elites; you can create your own or look through published products for likely candidates in the event you need stats for the construct warriors).

Dozens of caves dot the volcano face, inhabited by families of gnolls or odd megafauna, but it's easy to spot which cave holds the factory. A well-traveled road leads to it, and two long pipes run into and out of the cave. One pipe brings from a small dam uphill the water needed to replenish the factory's magma-heated steam turbines and cool manufactured items. The other pipe carries out excess water to a toxic sump further down the mountain.

Packs of gnoll warriors patrol the volcano, but they're normal gnolls, not duplicants, and thus not a significant threat for the party at this level. They carry horns, though, and might use them to alert other defenders if not quickly neutralized.

Factory Facility

Gradiax converted his old lair in the underground volcano caldera into a factory for Tinker. The entrance tunnel slopes down gently into the mountain. One water pipe runs on each side of the wall, which is smoothly carved, hung with tapestries, and lit by scented, oil-filled lanterns. A grand carpet, over 100 feet long and enchanted not to rip from casual use by a taloned dragon, covers the ground.

At the tunnel's end, a pump station controls the water flow as well as a hydraulic hatch that leads downward to the factory. A detachment of augmented gnolls guard this checkpoint.

South of the pump station lies an iron mine, where hundreds of minor constructs toil to bring raw materials to the factory. A few side tunnels right at the start of the mine contain a warren of gnoll warriors. They guard the hostages whose duplicants have been destroyed, as well as those still actively connected to a duplicant.

Down through the pump station hatch, a golem-guarded rail track leads to a massive foundry and factory that sits over the volcano's magma caldera. Rows of completed but inert duplicants line the walls of the track. In the factory, improbable machines toil at Tinker's direction, crafting more metal soldiers. Tinker himself sits inside a massive mechanical suit, while Terakalir, the daughter of Gradiax, watches from a perch above the lava.

A room to the south of the foundry holds Tinker's discarded inventions that he crafted without Pemberton's approval. At the back of the factory, a room with fans to circulate cool air holds schematics, as well as Tinker's real body in a seated harness while his duplicant works outside. Pemberton also works here, sifting through stacks of reports on troop allocations and political activities so he can concoct how to conquer Ber.

This is not the real Pemberton, of course, just a duplicant. His actual body rests in a mansion on a Yerasol island, hundreds of miles away and guarded by elite minions.

Storm-Tossed Battle

Action. Montage. Level 15.

A small gnoll fleet defends Isla dolas Focas.

To reach the island, the party likely must take a ship, and the island has enough diviners that the gnoll fleet will be able to intercept any attackers. How many defenders the party must face depends on whether they attack alone, where they try to land, and whether they wait for the Beran fleet to draw off the bulk of the gnolls.

We present here stats for a variety of potential foes. For full naval combat rules, check out our other book *Admiral o' the High Seas*, or you can use quick-play rules included in the Zeitgeist Player's Guide.

Terrain and Weather

The naval encounter consists of multiple "stages,"areas of the sea roughly a half-mile across—distances are roughly defined to make naval combat simpler to track. It might be optimal to let battle start when the party is two stages away from landfall. They might try to rush to shore, but doing so likely means leaving the rest of their crew in a dangerous situation as enemies try to beach them.

After determining where the battle takes place, sketch out a rough map of the nearby seas with the party's ship in the center of a loose 5×5 grid of different stages. The whole battle will have choppy seas, but each stage should have its own mix of terrain to provide tactical options. Bear in mind that the coastline near Karch has gentle beaches, while the farther away you go the steeper the coast gets, making landfall potentially challenging.

Chop and Rain

Every stage should have choppy seas, reducing ships speed and maneuverability and posing the risk of waves swamping the deck and washing crew overboard. Rain likely cuts visibility, forcing ships to roll twice for Command checks and take the worse, though a good look-out can negate this penalty. The rain might be worse in some areas than other, perhaps changing round by round.

Catch Hazards

This is Isla dolas Focas, the island of the seals, and the coastline is packed with bleating aquatic mammals, sometimes so thick that ships trying to reach shore might run into a rookery of seals.

Crash Hazards

Many small rocky islets lie within a few miles of the coastline, often hidden just under the waves. Crashing can damage a ship and possibly even beach it until the crew can push free.

Strike Hazards

A thin stretch of coastline has spigots of lava that dribble out into the sea. Brash PCs might try to drive an enemy warship against the cliff face and set the ship aflame with lava.

Possible Foes

Since there can be a great variety in how much your players enjoy naval combat and how skilled they've been in previous naval engagements, we give you a lot of range for possible defenders. Each gnoll schooner or frigate has a druid on board, granting it the following trait:

▸ **Druidic Weather Magic**

A gnoll druid stands chanting at the ship's prow, the deck beneath him glowing with a ring of blue runes. The runes flash and dim, and the weather suddenly changes.

This ship gains a +5 bonus on Command checks to resist the dangers of choppy seas. Each naval turn during the Terrain phase, this ship can choose its own stage or an adjacent stage and can increase or decrease by one step the intensity of choppy seas or poor visibility caused by weather.

Easy Defense

If the party has a good plan to avoid defending ships—like if they land far away from Karch after the main fleets have engaged—you might just have them face a light patrol of a gnoll caravel backed up by four gnoll cutters. The fight won't be too challenging. If the party is racing *Lux Profectusque*, this fight could serve as an incidental complication when the PCs and Lya Jierre's ship are finally forced into combat to see who lands first.

Moderate Defense

If the party goes for a quicker route to the volcano, they can expect a stronger defense. The above patrol might spot them and launch *pyrotechnics* to call for reinforcements. Three naval turns (about fifteen minutes) later, a pair of gnoll corvettes that stayed behind to guard Karch arrive at long range. A typical party likely can survive this fight, but their ship runs a chance of being destroyed.

Daunting Defense

If the party is reckless and attacks before the Berans draw off the gnoll fleet, they'll likely be spotted by the "easy" patrol, which sends up *pyrotechnics*. Two naval turns (ten minutes) later, two gnoll frigates arrive at long range, with a further two gnoll corvettes arriving at long range a turn later. If the party is backed up by *Lux Profectusque*, they might be able to survive this onslaught together.

Gnoll Cutter	Level 10 Vehicle
Small Vehicle	10,800 gp
Hull Integrity 2	**Command** +8
Defense 10	**Full Crew** 4
Maneuverability 10	**Minimum Crew** 1
Speed 8	**Total Complement** 10
Design	
Length 30 ft. Beam 15 ft. One mast, 40 ft. high.	
Arcane Fusil	
A single gnoll at the prow of the ship aims a swivel-mounted wooden spar, tipped with a dimly smoldering red crystal.	
Crew: 1. *Attack:* +6 to forward or broadsides.	

Pump Station	Level 12 Vehicle
Medium Vehicle	21,400 gp
Hull Integrity 3	**Command** +9
Defense 10	**Full Crew** 8
Maneuverability 8	**Minimum Crew** 2
Speed 10	**Total Complement** 30

Design

Length 60 ft. Beam 15 ft. Two masts, 60 ft. high. Two decks.

Fiery Brand of the Cult of the Steel God

On the deck, a handful of gnolls aim swivel-mounted fusils, but the real threat flies atop the mainmast. The symbol of a coiled draconic serpent shines a fiery red on the caravel's topsail. Three gnolls atop the mast pull at ropes to adjust its aim, while on deck a warpriest chants to empower it. The brand flashes a brilliant red, then unleashes a blast of flame.

Crew: 15. *Attack:* +8 to forward or broadsides. Attacks can inflict the burning condition instead of immediate damage.

Gnoll Corvette	Level 14 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	46,400 gp
Hull Integrity 3	**Command** +11
Defense 15	**Full Crew** 16
Maneuverability 6	**Minimum Crew** 4
Speed 14	**Total Complement** 60

Design

Length 90 ft. Beam 25 ft. Three masts, 70 ft. high. Two decks.

Three Brands

Three fire-breathing topsails pose a great threat. A dozen gnolls aim them while more on the deck chant praises to their dragon god and fire with fusils.

Crew: 40. *Attack:* +12 to forward or broadsides. Attacks can inflict the burning condition instead of immediate damage.

Gnoll Frigate	Level 17 Vehicle
Huge Vehicle	153,000 gp
Hull Integrity 4	**Command** +12
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.

Bound Fire Spirit

An actual serpent of fire circles the ship, conjured by glowing sigils on the ship's masts and figurehead. Gnoll warmages direct scores of crewmen to bark eldritch cries that send it forth and attack.

Crew: 100. *Attack:* +16 in any direction, even directly up. Attacks can inflict the burning condition instead of immediate damage.

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 34 less damage to targets within that area.

Boarding Actions

Each ship has enough gnolls to pose a threat. Due to numbers and the character level disparity, it's easier to just treat the normal sailors as background: brief obstacles the heroes can force their way through. Crewmen never take actions. Each crewman occupies a space, which counts as difficult terrain for hostile creatures. Whenever a creature enters the space of a hostile crewman, it takes 5 damage.

Their defenses are all 10, and if a crewman takes any damage, it is out of the fight, which leaves its space clear.

An officer can spend a standard action to order any four allied crewmen within earshot to move (usually traveling 6 squares for humans, 7 for gnolls). If two crewmen from opposite sides move adjacent, they each deal 5 damage to the other, taking each other out.

Additionally, the gnoll crews usually have a few officers who pose at least a slight threat to paragon-tier PCs. Cutters usually have one gnoll officer, caravels have two, schooners four. A gnoll frigate has eight, plus a veteran captain. Remember not to scrimp on roleplaying during this massive sea battle—enemy captains who get close enough to shout or at least make vulgar hand gestures might be alternately savage or fanatically praising of their steel lord.

Finally, the fleet has a handful of seal scorpions, giant elemental beasts that lurk beneath the waves. Shortly after the party engages the gnolls, two of these scorpions fly onto the deck of the party's ship and cause havoc, though they likely pose a threat mostly to the crew, not the PCs.

Gnoll Officer	Level 14 Goon Brute (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid (gnoll)	**XP** 500
HP 78; **Bloodied** 39	**Initiative** +12
AC 27, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 26	**Perception** +9
Speed 7	Low-light vision

Traits

▸ **Cower in the Crowd**

He seems very good at interposing his crew between him and you.

Whenever an attack would hit the officer, if he has an ally adjacent, he may have the attack do half damage to him and half to the ally.

Standard Actions

✓ **Goad the Charge** (weapon) ✦ At-Will

He grabs a spear and rushes into battle, right behind his crew.

Effect: If used on his turn, the officer can first have two allies make the following attack as part of a charge. Then he does the same.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +19 vs. AC

Hit: 6 damage.

⊘ **Bolas** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Because weird weapons are fun.

Effect: The officer makes the following attack twice.

Attack: Ranged 6/12 (one creature); +19 vs. Reflex

Hit: 6 damage, and the target falls prone.

Skills Intimidate +14, Nature +14

Str	16 (+10)	**Dex**	13 (+8)	**Wis**	14 (+9)
Con	16 (+10)	**Int**	13 (+8)	**Cha**	14 (+9)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Draconic, Giant, Orc

Seal Scorpion Level 10 Elite Brute
Large elemental beast (air, water) **XP** 1,000

HP 208; **Bloodied** 104 **Initiative** +6
AC 22, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 21 **Perception** +12
Speed 6, swim 6, fly 6 Tremorsense 5
Resist lightning 10, thunder 10
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Blood of Lightning**
This giant scorpion's body is made of fog and surf, and it bleeds lightning.
Whenever an attack hits the seal scorpion, each creature within 2 squares of it takes 10 lightning damage.

▸ **Instinctive Rampage**
It tramples through your group, catching prey in its pincers or knocking down those it can't grab.
On an initiative of 10 + the scorpion's initiative check, it can move up to its speed as a free action. During the move, it can move through enemies' spaces and has resist 5 to all damage. Each time it enters an enemy's space for the first time during the move, it can use *pincer* against that enemy. If the scorpion cannot use a free action to take this move due to a dominating or a stunning effect, then that effect ends instead of the scorpion taking this move.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Pincer** ✦ At-Will, Basic
One massive claw grabs you, while the other knocks your ally to the ground.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+9 damage, and the scorpion can either grab the target (Escape DC 18) or knock it prone. The scorpion can move freely while carrying one Medium or two Small creatures and bring those creatures with it.

▸ **Pincers** ✦ At-Will
Effect: The seal scorpion uses *pincer* twice.

✓ **Cursed Stinger** ✦ At-Will
The scorpion's tail stinger pierces your armor and injects you with a liquid curse that courses through your veins. Ice begins to form across your skin, threatening to encase you.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature grabbed by the scorpion); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 4d12+12 damage, plus the target is slowed and takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends both).
First Failed Save: Target is immobilized (save ends all).
Second Failed Save: Target is encased in ice and stunned, until broken free. The material encasing him can be cracked by allies if they can deal 50 points of damage to it.
Special: If the scorpion is bloodied, instead this is a poison stinger that turns the victim to stone.

Triggered Action

▸ **Broken Seal** ✦ Encounter
The creature's skin darkens, hardens, then turns to stone, traced with glowing threads of lava blood where it has been wounded.
Trigger: The scorpion becomes bloodied.
Effect: All conditions affecting the scorpion end. It loses the air and water subtypes and its resistances. It gains the earth and fire subtypes and gains resist acid and fire 10. It loses its fly and swim speeds but gains a climb speed of 6.
Its blood of lightning becomes blood of lava, dealing fire damage instead of lightning. Its cursed stinger entombs the target, to the same general effect.

Str 21 (+10) **Dex** 10 (+5) **Wis** 14 (+7)
Con 20 (+10) **Int** 1 (+0) **Cha** 4 (+2)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Veteran Gnoll Captain Level 14 Artillery (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid (gnoll) **XP** 1,000

HP 124; **Bloodied** 62 **Initiative** +12
AC 27, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 26 **Perception** +9
Speed 7 Low-light vision

Traits

☼ **Command Impunity** ✦ Aura 3
Your attacks oddly seem to strike the crew more often than the captain.
Whenever an attack would hit the veteran captain, if he has an ally within his aura, he may have the attack do half damage to him and half to the ally.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Scabrous Axe** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
His wood-hafted axe looks like the blade is actually made of bone and rotting flesh.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+7 damage, plus ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends).

✓ **Fiery Spittoon** (fire) ✦ At-Will
The captain cackles, then spits fire at you.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +19 vs. Reflex
Hit: 6d6 fire damage.

▸ **Boarding Action** ✦ Encounter
With a wave of his axe, the captain and a gaggle of his crew teleport between the two ships.
Requirement: The captain must be on his ship.
Effect: The captain and each ally within his aura may teleport up to 20 squares to the deck of a ship, appearing roughly in the same orientation. Then each crewman may move his speed.

Skills Intimidate +14, Nature +14
Str 16 (+10) **Dex** 13 (+8) **Wis** 14 (+9)
Con 16 (+10) **Int** 13 (+8) **Cha** 14 (+9)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Draconic, Giant, Orc

Aftermath

If the party's ship is crippled, gnolls board it and take prisoners. They'll deliver those of high value to Pardo, up at the factory in the volcano, so they can be replaced with duplicants. The party might still have a chance to pull off a victory, or might even be implanted into duplicants, then reject Gradiax's control, granting them extra defenses while they're in their mechanical bodies. The bond is not stable without Gradiax's consent, though, so after a few hours their duplicants will collapse and they'll return to their own bodies.

A successful assault, though, lets the party take longboats to shore and continue on their way to the volcano. Captive gnolls can be stranded on rocky islets off the main island.

Pump Station

Action. Tactical. Level 15.

Gnolls prepare a deadly ambush and trap at a hydraulic pump station that controls the entrance to Tinker's foundry.

A magic alarm, positioned at the mouth of the tunnel leading to the duplicant factory, alerts Pardo, who readies his augmented guards to ambush the attackers. The gnoll priest then quickly heads to the warren (the tunnels in the southwest).

Make sure to mention to Spirit Medium PCs that they sense that Pardo and the gnoll priests in this area (and Tinker and Pemberton later) have their souls stretched, indicating they're duplicants.

This facility has something the party has probably never seen before: electric lighting. A turbine in the foundry beneath the pump station provides alternating current to the pump station. But since Tinker has not invented light bulbs yet, the lighting comes from dozens of tiny spark gaps. As electrical currents jump the gap, they buzz and spark and create an eerie flickering white light from the ceiling.

The gnolls plan a trap. Massive tanks hold water for powering the facility's machines, and have been rigged with explosives. Once the party has engaged in combat, the gnolls plan to explode the tanks, flood the room, and cut the cable providing electricity that runs up from the ground. Once cut, the cable will fall limp into the water, electrocuting anyone who steps into it.

Setup

One duplicant cult-priest leads the archers, who lie in wait in the pump room, perched on the catwalks. The priest prefers to hide in the southwest corner, just north of the west-most tank, so he can attack from cover on the catwalk.

The second cult-priest leads the cultist packs—groups of gnolls sworn to defend the lair of their lord. They wait in the gnoll warren to the southwest, guarding both the hostages and whatever parts the PCs would need to effect repairs of the pumps after the gnolls sabotage them. They stay in Area B and fall back to Area C to try to string the party out. Pardo the Lesser hides in the side tunnels, invisible and prepared to strike PCs in the back ranks.

Opponents

- 2 duplicant cult-priests
- Pardo lesser duplicant
- 10 gnoll cultist archers
- 4 gnoll cultist packs

Pacing

The party might be tempted to rest after dealing with the pump room, before moving on to the mines. To motivate them to keep things moving, start with one of the gnoll packs on the south raised platform near the mine entrance. When the party gets near, let them overhear the cult-priest shout, "We'll hold them off. Be ready to kill the hostages if we fail."

Then the two packs run off, which should ratchet up the challenge and tension. If the party chooses not to risk their own lives for those of strangers, they can rest, but they'll be giving up a lot of potential good will among the Berans.

Pardo, Pemberton, and Recurring Villainy

Pardo's previous duplicant body was custom-made for him, which was why it was so much stronger than typical duplicants. If it was destroyed, he's now stuck in a weaker model, and so won't pose as much of a threat the second time around. However, he'll likely return in later adventures as Pemberton's loyal aide.

Likewise, Pemberton is present in the factory only in duplicant form, and is not threatening as a combatant. As soon as Pemberton learned the Berans were planning to attack, he and Pardo teleported their real bodies (as well as a few other trusted minions) to his mansion in the Yerasol Archipelago. There the dragon is shielded from divinations, and he'll bide his time until later in the campaign, when the shifting balance of power gives him an opportunity to make another power play.

However, Pemberton's prideful daughter Terakalir insisted on staying behind, since she wanted to ensure the island's defenses. Also, current duplicant technology would not let her bond while in dragon form, and she has not yet learned to polymorph into human form.

Duplicant Cult-Priest Level 14 Controller (leader)
Medium natural animate (construct) **XP** 1,000

HP 136; **Bloodied** 68 **Initiative** +8
AC 28, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 26 **Perception** +9
Speed 7 Darkvision, blindsense 5

Traits

▸ **Metal Shell**
You shatter it open, but it only smiles, pleased that its metal flesh has been revealed.
When the cult-priest is not bloodied, it has Resist 10 all. When it is bloodied, it has Vulnerable 10 all, its defenses are reduced by 5, and it takes a –5 penalty to saving throws.

Standard Actions

✓ **Healing Scourge** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
This leather flail is studded with the claws of beasts that rip painfully at your skin. As it rips open your flesh, the flesh of the priest's allies heals.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+13 damage. If the target is bloodied after the attack, one of the cult-priest's non-construct allies within 5 squares heals 17 hit points.

✲ **Purging Fire** (fire) ✦ At-Will
The priest fights through the condition afflicting him and calls down a pillar of flame that sears you both. But when the fire clears, he is free of his affliction.
Attack: Area Burst 1 within 20 (enemies in burst); +17 vs. Reflex
Hit: 5d6 fire damage.
Effect: The priest and each ally in the area can make a saving throw.

✓ **Betrayal of the Blade** ✦ At-Will
The priest chants, and your weapon shudders in your hand as if it wishes to flee.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +17 vs. Will
Hit: If the target is wearing metal armor, the priest can slide the target 5 squares and it is immobilized until the end of the priest's next turn. If the target is wielding a metal weapon, it makes a basic attack with that weapon at a target of the priest's choice. The target cannot attack with the weapon until the end of the priest's next turn.

Minor Actions

✲ **Blinding Fire** ✦ Encounter

A white-hot flame burns for an instant, too fast to harm you, but so bright you are blinded.

Attack: Area Burst 3 within 10 (creatures in burst); +17 vs. Fortitude

Hit: The target is blinded (save ends).

Str 22 (+13) **Dex** 10 (+7) **Wis** 16 (+10)
Con 22 (+13) **Int** 10 (+7) **Cha** 10 (+7)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Giant, Common, Draconic

Gnoll Cultist Archer — Level 10 Minion Artillery

Medium natural humanoid (gnoll) — **XP** 125

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion — **Initiative** +5
AC 22, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 22 — **Perception** +10
Speed 7 — Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊘ **Bow Shove** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The gnoll uses his bow as a rough club to drive you back.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC

Hit: 8 damage and the target is pushed 1 square.

⊘ **Poison Arrows** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The gnoll chuckles as he nocks an ichor-tipped arrow.

Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +15 vs. AC

Hit: 8 damage, and the target gains ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Str 16 (+8) **Dex** 18 (+9) **Wis** 10 (+5)
Con 14 (+7) **Int** 10 (+5) **Cha** 11 (+5)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Giant, Common, Draconic

Gnoll Cultist Pack — Level 12 Goon Skirmsher

Large natural humanoid (gnoll) — **XP** 375

HP 61; **Bloodied** 30 — **Initiative** +6
AC 26, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 24 — **Perception** +12
Speed 7 — Low-light vision

Traits

▸ **Pack of Goons**

The pack consists of eight gnolls who travel together closely-packed, filling the space of a Large creature. Each hit probably kills one or two; when the pack is bloodied, 2 have died, and when the pack runs out of hit points, the remaining handful of gnolls panic and flee, since individually they're no threat to the PCs.

The pack needs only fill 4 contiguous spaces, and it can squeeze as if it were Medium.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Flurry of Stone Spears** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The gang of gnolls work together to drive you into each other's spears.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +17 vs. AC

Hit: 20 damage.

✣ **Sacrificial Rite** (psychic) ✦ Encounter

Simultaneously, the gnolls all draw daggers, open their mouths, and stab up into their brains. Their dying cackles drive you to flee in panic.

Effect: The gnolls kill themselves.

Attack: Close Burst 3 (enemies in burst); +15 vs. Will

Hit: 15 psychic damage, and each target on its next turn must spend its first action to move to a space adjacent to no other creatures. If it does, it is immobilized until the start of its next turn. If it cannot, it falls prone and is stunned until the start of its next turn.

Str 16 (+9) **Dex** 10 (+6) **Wis** 10 (+6)
Con 18 (+10) **Int** 10 (+6) **Cha** 11 (+6)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Giant, Common, Draconic

Pardo Lesser Duplicant — Level 14 Lurker

Medium natural animate (construct) — **XP** 1,000

HP 138; **Bloodied** 69 — **Initiative** +14
AC 28, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 27 — **Perception** +14
Speed 7 — Darkvision, blindsense 5

Traits

▸ **Metal Shell**

His skin breaks easily, like this body is not as well-made as the last.

When Pardo is not bloodied, he has Resist 10 all. When he is bloodied, he has Vulnerable 10 all, his defenses are reduced by 5, and he takes a –5 penalty to saving throws.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Talon Frenzy** ✦ At-Will, Basic

He bats at you with his jagged nails, snarling and slavering.

Effect: Pardo makes the following attack twice. If both attacks hit, the target is knocked prone.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+5 damage.

✓ **Feral Command** (psychic) ✦ At-Will

"Ber's philosophy is foolish," he says. "We are all beasts." Before you realize it, you have attacked your own ally.

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +17 vs. Will

Hit: 10 psychic damage, and the target drops whatever weapon or implement it is holding and charges a target of Pardo's choice, making an unarmed strike at the end of the charge.

✓ **Inflict Critical Wounds** (necrotic) ✦ Encounter

Bones break. Old injuries tear open and bleed. A rancid stench from within your own body assaults your nose.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 4d8+15 necrotic damage, and the target is stunned until the end of Pardo's next turn, then weakened (save ends).

Miss: Half damage, and the target is dazed and weakened until the end of Pardo's next turn.

Move Actions

▸ **Hide in Howls** ✦ At-Will

Bestial laughter echoes through the cave, distracting you as the gnoll turns invisible and bolts away.

Effect: Pardo becomes invisible, then moves his speed. Hostile creatures within 20 squares take a –5 penalty to Perception checks while he's invisible. He remains invisible until he attacks.

Str 22 (+13) **Dex** 10 (+7) **Wis** 12 (+8)
Con 22 (+13) **Int** 12 (+8) **Cha** 21 (+12)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Giant, Common, Draconic

Terrain

The pump station is illuminated by the ceiling spark-gaps, which buzz quietly above the deep thrumming of water pumps. However, shortly into the combat the gnolls intend to drop the room into darkness. The hatch that leads down to the foundry below is raised 5 feet off the ground, and its operation is handled by the control panels around the room.

A platform to the south leads to the mine and the gnoll warrens. The other platforms of the room are connected by catwalks. The gnolls here wear shoes and gloves so they will not touch the metal.

The room's southwest contains three metal tanks that hold water, which provide hydraulic power to operate the hatch and other devices. Three pipes from the tanks flow to the blue control panel, from which one pipes flows to the red control panel, and a second flows to the Archimedes screw in the northeast. The screw helps carry water out of the facility, and its top is uncovered.

Getting the Hostages to Safety

The hostages lie on cots, adorned with shamanic beads and ritual paint. Each wears a blindfold and a small metal crown inscribed with a series of numbers in Draconic, and on their chest sits a small flat piece of stone that holds a drop of witchoil. They have no weapons and only rags for clothes but Kenna Vigilante, once awakened, can rally them to pick up fallen gnoll weapons and prepare to either march for the sea or fight alongside the party.

Those useful in a fight consist of Kenna and 25 soldiers. Stats for these makeshift allies are presented in Appendix E, with the soldiers equivalent to Cantabrilla guards. By rights, though, they won't be much use against the enemies the party is about to face.

A creature that falls into the Archimedes screw is churned by its rapidly spinning mechanism. It takes 20 damage at the start of its turn and must make an Athletics check (DC 28) to climb free of the device. Each round the creature is pushed 1 square toward the outflow pipe, and if it reaches the east end of the screw, intense pressures will squeeze it through the pipe, dealing 50 damage per round.

Control Panels

There are three control panel stations, marked with blue, red, and green dots. The green panel controls the electricity, and can toggle the overhead lights and the pumps, or turn the power off entirely. The blue panel can turn on or off the flow of water down each of the two pipes—to the Archimedes Screw and to the red panel. The red panel, if it is receiving water and if the pumps are on, can open and close the hatch.

When the party arrives, the green panel has been set to have the lights and pumps on. The blue panel has set the flow so that the water only flows out to the Archimedes Screw, not to the red panel.

Bomb Trap

A bomb is attached to the back of the central tank, and if it takes any fire damage it explodes, shattering all three tanks and flooding the room to a depth of 6 feet. Each creature within 3 squares of the back of the tank are targeted with: **Attack:** Close blast 3 (creatures in blast); +19 vs. Reflex. **Hit:** 20 damage and 20 fire damage, and the target is knocked prone and pushed 2 squares. **Miss:** 10 damage and 10 fire damage.

After a few rounds of combat, preferably when a few of the PCs are on the ground floor of the pump room, the cultist priest uses *purging flame* to ignite the bomb, destroying the tanks and flooding the room. The lack of water flow means the Archimedes Screw won't push creatures down the pipe, but it still spins. And since the electrical cable's insulation has been removed, the entire flooded area becomes electrified.

Thereafter, each creature standing in the water takes 20 lightning damage at the start of its turn. The power can be turned off at the green station as a minor action.

Mine

Through the south exit one finds an iron mine. The mine itself is abandoned, and aside from a few mine carts and some impressive mining machinery, there's nothing of value. Indeed, 20 feet south of the start of the mine cart rails, there is a trap of sorts. Two levers (marked by brown icons on the map) can activate or deactivate a latch on the floor. If any significant weight is placed on the rails in the space between the levers, the ground splits open and dumps the victim fifty feet down a shaft and onto a conveyor belt, which feeds into the grinder in the Foundry Access Chamber (Location A on the map on page 61).

The conveyor belt moves 1 square per round. A creature that moves adjacent to the grinder's space takes 20 damage and is knocked prone. A creature that enters the grinder's space takes 100 damage.

Gnoll Warren

A side tunnel off the mine entrance leads to a gnoll warren that once held miners before Tinker replaced them with steam-powered machines. Now the area is filled with dozens of gnoll warriors who guard the hostages. This whole area is lit by small fire pits with smoldering coals, providing dim light with patches of darkness.

Area A. One cultist pack lingers here, ready to shout a warning and then flee. The walls are adorned with educational cave paintings, telling the history of Gradiax the Steel Lord and his cult. This area is used for communal gatherings, cooking, and prayer.

Area B. The remaining packs wait here, with the second priest behind them. The tunnels here are lined with more paintings of famous members of the cult, including a primitive depiction of Tinker standing atop a giant cog. Pardo lurks in the side tunnels to the west, which have no illumination. These are the sleeping chambers.

Area C. The wall here is painted with a grand mural of Gradiax's treasure hoard surrounded by a ring of lava. The painting conceals (Perception DC 25) a secret door.

Area D. The hostages are kept here—Kenna Vigilante, several dozen soldiers, and a handful of other important Berans. If you have any personal NPCs that perhaps the party has allied with that you want to have been replaced, perhaps they're here, or just one of their personal effects, so you can still have the ally act as an enemy.

Tactics

Shortly after the party arrives, a gnoll archer at the green panel kills the lights, dropping the whole area into darkness. Then the gnolls scatter and ready actions to attack. The cultist priest will use *purging flame* to illuminate a target, and the gnolls will all fire at anyone who is caught in the fire's area of effect. They keep this up until the PCs introduce some light.

That's probably the point when the cult-priest blasts the bomb at the water tank, flooding the place and electrocuting those on the ground.

When the fight ends, or if any PC goes to the south platform that leads to the mine, a cultist pack in the warren shouts, "They're coming! Quickly, kill the hostages!"

The gnoll cultist packs try to swarm anyone who comes into the area, and to form living shields between the PCs and the cult-priest. Pardo, meanwhile, will emerge from invisibility, use *feral command*, then turn invisible again and move into darkness, perhaps only attacking every other round. If forced into combat he uses *inflict critical wounds*, then promises he will forever be at his master's side.

Pump Station
= 5 feet
©2012 Devin Night
A
B
C
D
+5
+10
+15
+15
+15
+15
+20
+30
+30
+30

Aftermath

Before the party can open the hatch to the lower level, they must make sure there is water and power. If the gnolls blew the tanks, components sufficient to jury-rig repairs exist in the gnoll warren, though repairs likely require about an hour, by which time gnoll patrols will have noticed something amiss and run to Karch. If the party dallies much longer, a small army will arrive.

Impatient or careless parties might just fall into the pit trap at the entrance of the mine and bypass the hatch entirely.

Welcome to My Volcano Lair

Social. Real-Time. Level 16.

Tinker speaks with the party as they approach.

The room at the bottom of the hatch is unoccupied, but a mining cart sits on the rails, and a tiny steam engine attached to it putters happily, as if waiting to give the party a ride. The severed head of a duplicant, mostly featureless aside from eyes and an articulate mouth, sits in the cart.

The rails lead to a massive metal door on the north wall, currently closed. When the party arrives, the duplicant head activates and begins to speak in Tinker's voice. The duplicant's appearance shifts to match Tinker's face.

"I wondered when I'd see you again. Please, please, get in the cart. It will be a pleasant ride, and my subterranean domicile is far, far too large for you to have to walk all the way. So, so vast. You could get lost in it. Certainly your mind could. I have an inkling you're going to get quite violent toward me, and our previous interactions were much, much too brief. So please, please: into the cart."

If at any point the party gets into the cart, the door starts to grind open, controlled from afar by Tinker. The cart then starts to roll along, moving just a bit faster than walking speed. It travels down a long, winding tunnel, sloping gently downhill and growing hotter as it goes. Occasional spark-gap lamps on the ceiling provide spotty lighting. After a few hundred feet the walls start to have small nooks, each filled with an inert duplicant.

The pathway is at least a quarter-mile long, but feel free to stretch it for as long as the conversation is interesting. Tinker can hear them, so this is an opportunity for them to negotiate for him to join their side.

If the party walks, the cart follows them, and the head keeps talking. If they destroy the head, eventually the duplicants along the route continue the conversation, though Tinker is a bit more irked. Use the following text as a template for erratic Tinker and polite Pemberton.

"You're here about Borne, yes? I'd love to tell you all about him. His design, his structural flaws, and his personality. Such a nice boy. Smartest one of the lot. Not like you. You, if you'll pardon me, are fools. You've walked into a trap.

"Not that I wanted to trap you. It's odd to be affected by a type of mind control you built. Built when no one else could, I'd remind you. I can tell someone else is in charge, but I don't mind so much. Much better than to be mind controlled and not remember. Remember what I said about not wanting to trap you? You upset my employer, and as long as I'm still in this—I remind you—quite masterful invention, I won't be agreeing to any of your overtures, short or brief or long or huge.

"You should meet my boss. Gnomes and dragons are natural allies. We gnomes love to speak to burrowing animals, burrowing animals love caves, and who loves caves more than dragons?! Well . . . dwarves, I suppose. And they do have more hair. And they are smaller. I wish I had a pet dwarf."

A new voice butts in: the memorable deep tones of Risuri industrialist Benedict Pemberton. The duplicant's head transforms to match his face.

"Alright there. That's quite enough of that, son. Time to let the people with functional minds have a conversation.

"Greetings! Some people used to call me the Steel Lord Gradiax, but these days I do prefer Benedict Pemberton. Welcome to my volcano lair. Now if you don't mind, kindly either leave the premises or put your weapons away so we can talk in peace."

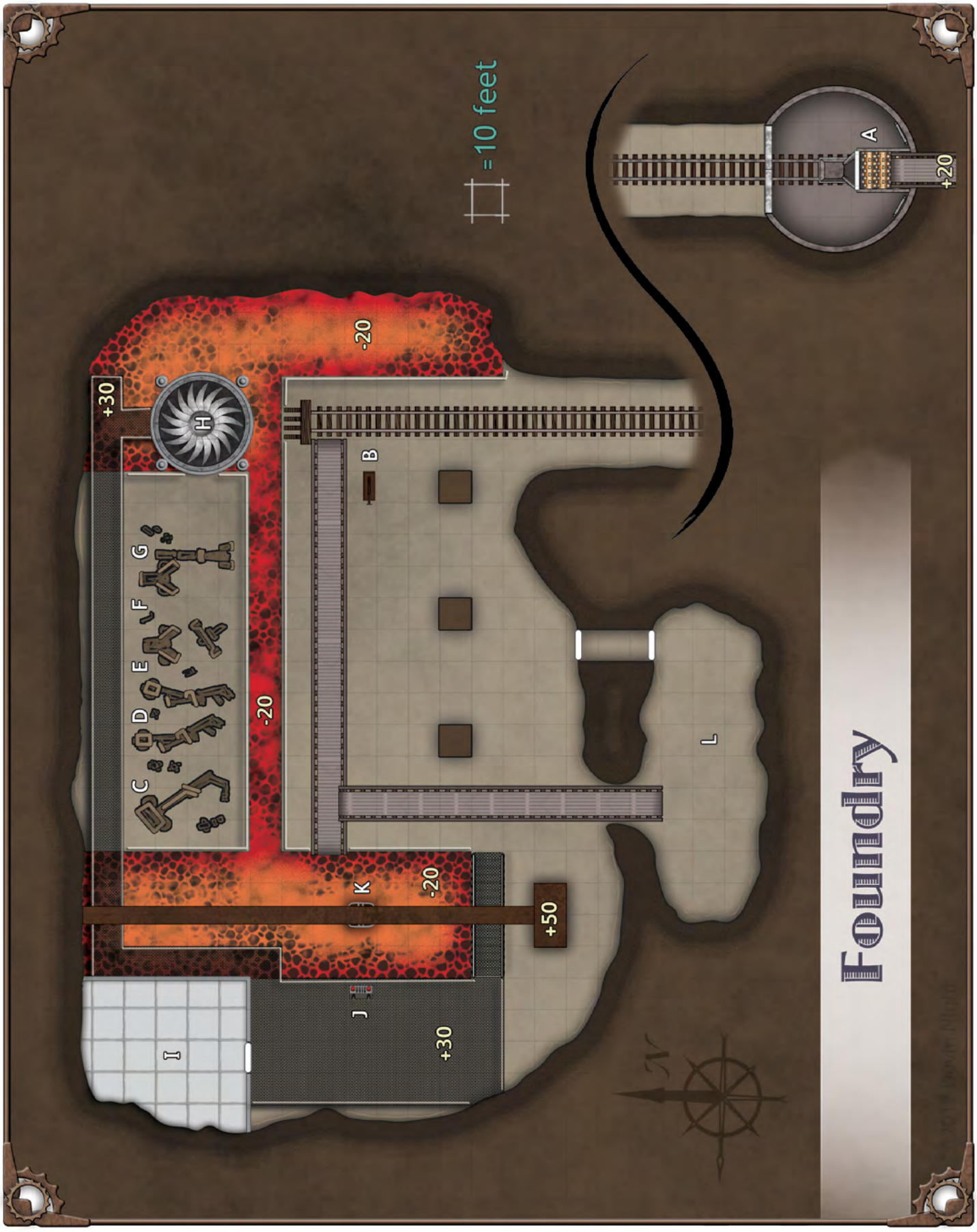
Pemberton is fiercely angry and nervous, but he restrains it and covers with genteel politeness, for a moment at least. He's worried that he cannot protect his daughter, and he's furious that all his plans might be ruined after years of planning.

Pemberton tries to convince the party that they'll profit more by aiding him than fighting him. He clarifies that he has no affiliation with the Obscurati, but as long as this factory remains in production he'll be able to produce war machines which could help against them. In exchange for the party agreeing to back off, he'll let them speak to Tinker and get whatever information they want about the Obscurati and the colossus.

If they want to actually take the gnome with them, Pemberton needs more. Simply to balance they already did to his forces, he needs their aid to attack the Beran fleet. He suggests the party wait until the first detachment of soldiers have landed, then attack the transports *en route* back to mainland Ber. By delaying reinforcements and stranding the Beran soldiers, Pemberton thinks he'll be able to crush the attackers and hold the island. Ber would treat that as an act of war, but Pemberton assures them the war would be brief since he'd complete his conquest within the year.

Strategically it's probably worse to get Risur a war-torn Ber under Pemberton's control than to have a united Ber that feels it owes the PCs a great favor. And there's no guarantee Pemberton won't eventually turn his eye to Risur or choose to ally with the Ob.

Smart PCs will therefore decline Pemberton's offer. At that point Pemberton snarls, then laughs once. He's glad actually, because he was hoping he'd get to kill them. As the mine cart finally reaches the foundry, Pemberton orders Tinker to seal the exit and to kill them all.


=10 feet
A
+20
B
-20
+30
H
C
D
E
F
G
-20
L
Foundry
K
-20
+50
J
+30
I

Oddcog's Magma Emporium

Action. Tactical. Level 18.

Step into the gnome's parlor.

The foundry lies in a magma chamber, which contains run-off from the molten heart of the volcano. The ceiling is about 120 feet high, and tiny fissures circulate air, but there are no paths large enough for creatures to find their way to the surface. A few stony perches lean out from the walls high above, clearly having been carved by massive talons.

The whole area is dramatically lit by the glow of a vast pool of lava. Metal columns hang from the ceiling, supporting several grated metal platforms upon which sit various industrial machines. A conveyor belt runs past a series of giant metal limbs, and eventually into a small side chamber. Higher up at the far end of the room, a building with darkened windows watches over the whole area.

A Grinder Entrance. Normally a mine cart waits here to receive ground up ore delivered from the mine. The conveyor belt moves 1 square per round. A character that moves adjacent to the grinder takes 20 damage and is knocked prone. A creature pulled into the grinder takes 100 damage.

During the trip down the mine tunnel, normally the cart is unloaded into smelters and then reloaded by duplicants, but Tinker has deactivated these for now.

B Rail Cart Trap. Here the rail cart reaches the end of the line. Normally a solid barricade on a hinge stops the cart, but Tinker has unlocked the hinge. If the party remains in the cart all the way, it slows down toward the end, but when it hits the barricade it doesn't stop. Characters in the cart can make an Acrobatics or Athletics check (DC 23) to jump out and grab onto the ledge. Otherwise the cart falls off the edge.

Creatures in the cart take 2d10 falling damage and have one round to get out or else they are submerged in lava and die.

C–G Assembly Line. These articulated metal arms operate under Tinker's control, using enchanted hammers, clamps, and blades to shape, grasp, cut, and assemble raw metal rolling down the conveyor belt into components for Tinker's various inventions. On their own they do nothing, but Tinker can attack with them. This area is difficult terrain.

The conveyor belt moves 2 squares west each round, but a lever at the east end can be adjusted to toggle it to stop or move backwards. At the west end of the conveyor belt, arm C pushes completed projects onto a second belt, which deposits them in the south cave (Area L). Projects with flaws are instead tossed into the lava.

H Steam Turbine. Pipes from above feed water into a cistern just above the lava, which produces massive clouds of steam that spin this turbine fan. Large swaths of the walls and ceiling above the turbine have total concealment, but air currents sometimes shift, reducing it to normal concealment.

Cables run from the turbine to the upper facility, providing electrical power.

I Schematics Room. Pemberton waits here, watching over Tinker's real body and observing the battle. The walls and tables are covered with schematics and charts of potential supply chains necessary for more advanced devices.

GUNS ON THE FLOOR

Tinker is not the tidiest of technologists, and so the floor of the area is littered with a bizarre array of firearms. In any given square one can likely find a pistol or carbine, though they're often strangely-designed. Also scattered about are some experimental weapons which might come in handy (see Appendix A: Technological Revelations).

A lightning gun might be built into the length of a discarded bicycle, six grenades might be set around a wheel that looks like it was intended as a gear, and a pair of experimental rocket launchers are integrated into the pauldrons of a half-assembled breastplate.

Gunsmith PCs can use these weapons proficiently. Other PCs take a –2 penalty to their attack rolls with them.

J Beam Cannon Controls. Currently the cannon points directly down into the lava. A character standing at these controls can use a standard action to aim the beam cannon that hangs from the nearby beam to attack.

Attack: Area Burst 1 within 30 (creatures in burst); +17 vs. Reflex

Hit: 3d6+6 force damage.

Effect: Until someone changes the cannon's targeted area, creatures that end their turn in the area take 15 force damage.

K Beam Cannon. Why is there a giant ray gun in a foundry? It's actually the vile third eye of a fallen dragon tyrant, which was said to slay whoever saw it. (See "The Tyrant's Eye" in the *Zeitgeist Player's Guide* for more details.) Pemberton recovered it long ago and finally found a use here, attaching it to a gimbal and focusing its power into a perpetual stream of destructive energy that keeps the lava in this chamber molten. This both provides heat for Tinker's turbine, and just pleases Pemberton's aesthetic sensibilities.

L Invention Storage. Assembled devices are stored here for finishing. Currently the chamber is mostly empty, since everything even remotely dangerous was sent to Karch to help drive off the Beran invasion. Four inert duplicants lacking their witchoil reservoirs sit here, posed as if they're having a conversation across a table. The table is actually a small scale model of a zeppelin. Alas, Tinker has not managed to make one that flies.

Setup

Tinker, riding in his metal suit, waits atop the west platform that overlooks the foundry (Area J). Terakalir perches on a ledge high up above the turbine (Area H), hidden in the steam (Perception DC 32).

Pemberton watches over Tinker's actual body, which lies on a cot in the schematics room (Area I). He's in a fairly weak duplicant body, not useful in a fight, but if things are going badly, or if the party is close to killing his daughter, he'll threaten to slit the throat of Tinker's real body.

Opponents

- Tinker Oddcog's suit
- Tinker Oddcog
- Pemberton duplicant
- Terakalir, steam-augmented dragon

SHOWDOWN WITH LYA

For optimal drama, the party will have had détente with Lya Jierre until this point. She, Rush, and Merton join the party in the assault on Pemberton's factory, but once they see Tinker their focus is on finding the gnome's actual body. They try not to draw the attention of Tinker or Terakalir, but will fight to defend themselves. None of them dare use a *gatecrasher charm* here, because the platforms over the lava do not exist in the Bleak Gate, but the lava certainly does.

If they can locate Tinker, Rush straps the gnome to his chest and brachiates away with his *immovable rods*. Lya and Merton try to make a fighting retreat, and if cornered Merton will throw his sonic bomb, which shatters the platform and causes it to slowly crumple into the lava. Barring some grand persuasion by the party, Lya fights to the end, though if she goes down first her bodyguards abandon their mission.

Should Lya be captured, eventually the leader of the Obscurati, Nicodemus the Gnostic, seeks her out and makes her an offer similar to what he offered Macbannin at the end of adventure two: die and become part of the ghost council, so that whatever secrets she knows will not be discovered by the RHC.

Tactics

Tinker wants to keep the party at range. He fires down from the western platform with his suit's *erratic autocannons* and uses his own *ray gun* to throw someone into the arms of the assembly line. He uses *time bomb launchers* to force the party to stay on the move, ideally after pegging someone with the entangling option of his *ray gun*.

If dangerous warriors get close he'll shrink them, and if snipers lurk in cover he'll use his caustic shot to either destroy their cover or dissolve the ground beneath them. He's not afraid of a brawl, though, especially since his suit can easily hurl foes into the lava.

Terakalir watches from on high, waits for a round to see what tactics the party deploys, and then descends to disrupt them. She might swoop in, blind a group of enemies, then bite and spend an action point to carry off a foe, then drop him into the lava. Alternately, she might simply use her breath weapon and normal attacks to deal as much damage as possible, forcing the party to split its attention.

Tinker probably stays up on the western platform, and Terakalir probably harries PCs who stay on the lower east platform, occasionally withdrawing to the concealment of the steam over the turbine. In a pinch, Tinker's suit has enough jumping distance and reach to leap from the platform, grab the bar that the beam cannon hangs from, and then swing over to the lower platform, though it would take quite a lot of falling damage in the process.

If it is clear the party is going to win, Pemberton offers to spare the gnome. He asks that the party let his daughter leave the facility. When he's confident she's safe, he'll release Tinker.

Saving a Dying Gnome

If the party won't relent, Pemberton uses a folding pocket knife to slice open Tinker's throat, which ends his link to his duplicant. This renders both the duplicant and his suit inert. At this point magical healing that does not require a healing surge can save him, as can a Heal check (DC 30).

Terrain

The whole area is hellishly hot. Outside of the Schematics Room and Invention Storage, creatures in this area take 1 fire damage per round.

Edges that overlook the lava have railings, which grant a +5 bonus to saves to avoid being pushed off the ledge. A creature that fails its save can attempt an Athletics check (DC 15) to grab onto the edge and be left dangling over the lava.

Tinker Oddcog's Suit — Level 16 Elite Brute
Large natural animate (construct) — **XP** 3,000

HP 300; **Bloodied** 150
AC 28, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 24
Speed 8
Resist 5 all
Immune charm, dazed, dominated, psychic, stunned
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1
Initiative +10
Perception +8
Darkvision

Traits

▸ **Power Armor**
Tinker laughs from inside his steam-powered war machine as bullets and spells bounce off its metal skin.
Tinker controls this machine's actions from inside it. When the suit moves, he moves with it, and he cannot otherwise move on his own without exiting the machine. He can exit it as a move action, opening a hatch and emerging in any space adjacent to it, and can continue to control it even while not inside it.

The sealed hatch grants Tinker total cover from attacks, but Tinker can still see normally. When the suit becomes bloodied, the hatch cracks open partially, so Tinker only has superior cover (+5 to defenses).

▸ **Technological Quirks**
Cold causes its engine to stall. Fire accelerates it. And sitting in a conductive metal suit doesn't protect you from electricity.
When the suit takes cold damage, it is slowed on its next movement. When it takes fire damage, it can shift 1 square. When it takes lightning damage, Tinker takes half the damage the suit took.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Punch** ✦ At-Will, Basic
It's never fun to be punched by a metal giant.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +21 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12+16 damage.

✓ **Crushing Fist** ✦ At-Will
It grabs you and crushes your arm in its massive fist.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +19 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d12+16 damage, and the target is grabbed.

✓ **Smash and Fling** ✦ At-Will
It swings you up, then slams you into the ground and tosses you away.
Requirement: Target must be grabbed by the suit.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +19 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d12+16 damage, and the target is knocked prone and slid 3 squares.

✓ **Erratic Autocannons** ✦ At-Will
A cluster of gun barrels on its shoulders open fire. Bullets scatter all around you.
Effect: The suit chooses a 3-square-by–3-square area within 30 squares of it and makes the following attack against each creature in that area.
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6+12 damage, or 3d6+36 on a critical hit.

▸ **Activate Attack Patterns** ✦ At-Will
Effect: The suit makes two attacks, choosing from *punch*, *crushing fist*, *smash and fling*, or *erratic autocannons*. It can choose the same option twice.

Minor Actions

▸ **Time-Bomb Launchers** ✦ Recharge when first bloodied

Two small covers pop open on the machine's torso, and each shoots something—a metal sphere with four clamping teeth, the size of a large apple. One clamps onto the ground at your feet and begins to tick, slowly at first, but growing rapidly faster.

Effect: The suit chooses two spots within 25 squares and shoots a time bomb that latches onto an inanimate object at either spot. It can also target a construct or a creature wearing metal armor, if the target is within 5 squares of the suit (make an attack +19 vs. Reflex).

The bombs begins ticking loudly once per second. After one round they begin ticking twice as fast, and after two rounds they tick four times per second. At the end of the third round the bombs explode. Make an attack centered on each, Close Burst 3, +19 vs. Reflex, 10d6 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), either of them made as a standard action.

Triggered Action

▸ **Escape Launch** ✦ Encounter

The machine's structural integrity cannot hold up any longer, and it slumps to the ground. Hissing steam bursts into the air around it, and its articulated limbs twitch as the suit powers down. With a series of mechanical clunks, the torso hatch pops open, revealing Tinker for a moment. Then flames ignite and the seat launches into the air. Tinker chortles as glider wings pop out from the sides of his seat, and he rockets away. Only then do you hear the rapid ticking coming from the suit he has left behind—ticking that is getting faster.

Trigger: The suit is destroyed.

Effect: Tinker emerges from the suit and flies 10 squares. He gains a +4 bonus to defenses against opportunity attacks provoked by this movement. He gains a fly speed of 10 until the end of his next turn, after which he must land.

At the next end of turn of the creature that dealt the killing blow to the suit, the explosives inside it detonate. Make the following attack.

Attack: Close Burst 5 (creatures in burst); +19 vs. Reflex

Hit: 10d6 damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Skills Athletics +21

Str	26 (+16)	**Dex**	10 (+8)	**Wis**	10 (+8)
Con	22 (+14)	**Int**	1 (+4)	**Cha**	1 (+4)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —

Tinker Oddcog — Level 14 Elite Artillery

Small natural animate (construct) — **XP** 2,000

HP 212; **Bloodied** 106 — **Initiative** +9

AC 27, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 25 — **Perception** +4

Speed 5

Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Metal Shell**

We put a construct inside a construct.

When Tinker is not bloodied, he has Resist 10 all. When he is bloodied, he has Vulnerable 10 all, his defenses are reduced by 5, and he takes a –5 penalty to saving throws.

☼ **The Gun Whisperer** ✦ Aura 5

Your gun twitches and avoids the bullet, like a baby refusing to be fed.

The firearms of enemies in the aura are more difficult to reload. Increase the reload time by one step, from free to minor action, to move action, to standard action.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Feeble Arms** ✦ At-Will, Basic

He's not a melee combatant.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC

Hit: 1d4–1 damage.

✓ **Experimental Ray Gun** (weapon) ✦ At-Will

He draws a gnome-sized carbine covered with strange, glowing piping. "Now don't explode this time," he admonishes it, and then he fires a glowing bolt that unleashes chaotic magical energy when it strikes.

Special: When Tinker is in his suit, he fires this ray gun through a nozzle on the machine's arm.

Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +17 vs. Reflex

Hit: 3d6+12 damage, and the shot has one of the following traits of Tinker's choice:

- **Caustic.** The target takes ongoing 10 acid damage (save ends). When the creature takes this damage, at the end of its turn the floor beneath it dissolves, which might drop it into lava.
- **Entangling.** The target is restrained by sticky goo (Strength DC 21 as a move action to escape).
- **Gravity.** Tinker slides the target 6 squares, including through the air.
- **Shrinking.** The target's size is reduced to Diminutive (save ends). Its reach is reduced to 0, its speed is reduced to 1, and it does one-quarter damage with its weapon attacks.

Aftereffect: The target is Tiny (save ends). Its reach is reduced to 0, its speed is halved, and it does half damage with weapon attacks.

Minor Action

▸ **Friend of Machines** ✦ At-Will, 1/round

He points at one of the factory devices, then flicks his hand at you. "What are you waiting for?" he yells.

Effect: Tinker chooses one of the following machines in the foundry. The machine attacks the target of Tinker's choice.

Assembly Line (C, D, E, F, G on map)

Attack: Melee 5 (one creature); +17 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d6+6 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 22). While the target is grabbed, at the start of Tinker's turn the arm slides the target 2 squares west into the grasp of the next arm. That arm repeats this attack, and if it hits the previous arm lets go of the target. If arm C hits the target, instead of grabbing the target it pushes the target 3 squares to the south, off the edge of the assembly line.

Beam Cannon (K on map)

Attack: Area Burst 1 within 30 (creatures in burst); +17 vs. Reflex

Hit: 3d6+6 force damage.

Effect: Until Tinker has the cannon change its targeted area, creatures that end their turn in the area take 15 force damage.

Triggered Action

▸ **Vanish** ✦ Recharge when first bloodied

He yelps when you hit him, then slowly fades away. For a moment only his grin remains, and then he's entirely invisible.

Trigger: An attack hits Tinker.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): Tinker becomes invisible until the end of his next turn, or until he attacks, whichever comes first.

Str	8 (+6)	**Dex**	14 (+9)	**Wis**	3 (+4)
Con	16 (+10)	**Int**	26 (+15)	**Cha**	15 (+9)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elf, Primordial

Pemberton Duplicant Level N/A
Medium natural animate (construct) **XP** N/A

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +0
AC 10, **Fortitude** 10, **Reflex** 10, **Will** 10 **Perception** +20
Speed 6 Darkvision
Resist 10 all

Traits

▶ **Tenacious**

You've shattered the duplicant, but unlike all the others you've seen, it doesn't become an inert piece of metal. It maintains Pemberton's face, and though he's in no condition to fight, he hoists himself upright with what limbs he still has control over, then glares at you.

Try to make it clear to the party that Pemberton is not a threat in this fight. Hopefully they won't smash him to bits, because that prevents him from making villainous promises after the fighting ends.

Terakalir, steam-augmented dragon Level 14 Solo Soldier
Large natural magical beast (dragon) **XP** 5,000

HP 560; **Threshold I** 373; **Threshold II** 186 **Initiative** +9
AC 30, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 27 **Perception** +14
Speed 8, fly 10 Darkvision
Resist 20 fire
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 2

Traits

▶ **Experimental Prostheses**

Her left foreleg and wing shine with steel and hiss with steam, and in her left eye socket glimmers a faceted ruby mounted on a masterfully complex system of gimbals and gyros.

Terakalir has two HP thresholds. Triggered actions occur when her HP falls below each threshold. She counts as bloodied when she has 373 HP or fewer.

▶ **Action Recovery**

She hisses a quick restorative spell to help her shake off your attack.

Whenever Terakalir ends her turn, any dazing, stunning, or dominating effect on her ends.

▶ **Instinctive Assault**

She casually swipes at you without distracting her from planning her next move.

On an initiative of 10 + her initiative check, Terakalir can use a free action to use *bite* or *right claw*. If she cannot use a free action to make this attack due to a dominating or stunning effect, then that effect ends instead of her making the attack.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Bite** ✦ At-Will, Basic

She snaps at you, and her fangs sink into your arm, holding you tight as flames from her throat sear your skin.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+8 damage. The target is grabbed and takes ongoing 10 fire damage, or ongoing 15 fire damage if Terakalir at Stage 3 (186 HP or fewer), until the grab ends (escape DC 23).

✧ **Right Claw** (radiant) ✦ At-Will

You'd expect her to slice you with her talons, but instead she deftly gestures to cast a spell. A blinding spray of light flashes into your eyes.

Attack: Close Blast 2 (creatures in blast); +17 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d8+8 radiant damage and the target is blinded (save ends).

▶ **Blinding Combo** ✦ At-Will

Effect: Terakalir uses *right claw*, then *bite*.

🗡 **Left Claw** ✦ At-Will (Stage 1 & 2)

Her metal claws tear through your armor like paper. Then, with a spray of steam, her limb hammers you like a piston and sends you flying.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 4d8+26 damage, and the target is pushed 6 squares.

✧ **Breath Weapon** (fire) ✦ Recharge ⚄ ⚅

Dragon fire surrounds you and turns your flesh to ash.

Attack: Close Blast 5 (creatures in blast); +17 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d12+10 fire damage, and the target gains ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

Minor Action

▶ **Firesight Eye** ✦ Daily

Her ruby eye glows, and all the illusions are burned away.

Effect: Until the end of Terakalir's next turn, illusions in close blast 10 are suppressed, as is any form of invisibility.

▶ **Malicious Misstep** ✦ At-Will, 1/round

She flicks her right claws and hexes you. When you start to move, you find yourself going the wrong direction.

Effect: Terakalir chooses a creature she can see within 10 squares. The next time that target moves before the end of Terakalir's next turn, Terakalir first slides it 2 squares, and then the creature moves its speed –2.

Triggered Action

▶ **Malfunction One** ✦ Encounter

She screeches as the skin around her prosthetic wing tears, and she fights to stay aloft. Some failsafe triggers, and a jet of fire blasts out beneath her wing, rocketing her across the battlefield. As she glides past you, she breathes a stream of flame onto the ground.

Trigger: Terakalir drops to 373 HP or fewer.
Effect (No Action): All negative conditions affecting Terakalir end. She flies 10 squares, recharges *breath weapon*, and uses it immediately. Instead of a close blast, however, it affects every space directly beneath her, up to 3 squares down, as she flies. (Basically she strafes fire as she flies.)

Hereafter, whenever she flies she must land at the end of her movement.

▶ **Malfunction Two** ✦ Encounter

The dragon's two metal limbs crack from the stress of combat, and searing steam pours out from the devices. She casts a desperate spell, and you peer into the steam, trying to spot her. Then she attacks.

Trigger: Terakalir drops to 186 HP or fewer.
Effect (No Action): All negative conditions affecting Terakalir end. She gains an aura 3. Creatures in the aura (including her) have concealment from steam. Those that end their turns in the aura take 10 fire damage.

Terakalir turns invisible and creates an illusion of herself, which appears to exit the steam cloud and move up to 5 squares. The illusion has her defenses, reacts believably to attacks, and appears to make ineffectual attacks on Terakalir's turn. When Terakalir attacks, the illusion ends and she becomes visible.

Hereafter, she cannot fly, cannot use *left claw*, and is slowed.

Str 22 (+13) **Dex** 10 (+7) **Wis** 14 (+9)
Con 20 (+12) **Int** 20 (+12) **Cha** 14 (+9)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Draconic, Gnoll

Aftermath

The party's ultimate goal should be to take Tinker alive, which means either negotiating with Pemberton or killing his daughter. If the former, Terakalir flees to Karch, boards a merchant ship, and makes her way to the mainland. From there she links up with another tribe of gnolls who hide her until Pemberton can get a ritualist there and teleport Terakalir to Pemberton's island. It might even be possible eventually for Pemberton to aid the party against the Obscurati later, though until things get truly desperate, Harkover Lee will advise the king against any such offers.

If the latter, Pemberton in his duplicant is powerless to protect her. If she dies, he seethes with anger and quietly explains to the party that he has lived for centuries, and so his wrath will not be swift, but it will be absolute. Then he severs his connection to his duplicant, and begins plotting to destroy everything each PC cares about.

Tinker, for his part, will gladly let himself be recruited by the party, though he's sad to leave behind his damaged steam suit. However, he insists on bringing his *godmind urn* with him.

Defeat?

Should the party fall to Pemberton, he holds any survivors hostage and exerts leverage through Risur and the RHC to get Ber to slow their assault long enough for him to evacuate a few vital resources. The surviving PCs spend a few months in a gnoll prison camp, then are freed when Ber finally takes Isla dolas Focas.

Consequences

As long as the PCs don't intentionally sabotage the Beran military, they defeat Pemberton's forces sooner or later. The aid the PCs lent earns Risur the favor of Ber's ruler, whoever that may be, and they might become heroes to the nation as a whole.

Pemberton, having been forced from his volcano lair, settles instead for a secret island base in the Yerasol Archipelago, plotting revenge against the newest addition to his long list of those who have earned his ire. After his anger cools down, his attention turns to the Obscurati, and their colossus, and how he might seize it to use as the tool of his vengeance.

Alive, Tinker aids Risur's military industry; dead, he leaves behind schematics that engineers will obsess over for decades. If he lives he also explains, in his erratic, demented way, the powers and weaknesses of the colossus. (See Tinker's Secrets, page 7.) Then he shares his most guarded secret, the true coup of this mission: he has been contacted via a Sending ritual by the mindmaker, Alexander Grappa, who, after dying in Adventure Five, has implanted his consciousness in the steelshaper, Leone Quital.

Grappa's consciousness lurks—so very, very small, and only able to surface occasionally—but if the party can find and rescue him, he'll be perfectly placed to let them infiltrate the heart of the conspiracy.

Adventure Number 7

Schism

From the Pen of Ryan Nock

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Stunning Cartographic Displays by James Hazelett
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and artists of history

with Layout and Graphic Design by Eric Life-Putnam and
Frank Michienzi

Ably Produced and Facilitated by Russell Morrissey

Special Thanks to everyone who made Final Fantasy VI, since it has been pointed out to me that we sure seem to have a lot of similarities to that game. Clearly we need a talking octopus.

Also thanks to every EN World poster who participated in our mock Obscurati conclave, especially Ajar as Dame Constance Baden, whose proposal became Obscurati canon.

ADVENTURE SEVEN: Introduction

Wherein the Villains Prove to Be of Two Minds

In a campaign where the party acts as law enforcement and spies, we've seen stake-outs and stings, arrests and interrogations, and overseas spying and abduction. But now the party has a chance to infiltrate the heart of the Obscurati itself, a conspiracy with clever and strict security to prevent any simple disguise or lie. It's time for the party to go deep undercover.

The Obscurati plan to use a mechanical colossus to open an ancient golden seal and alter a ritual that determined what planets orbited with the world. Changing those planets will shift the nature of reality. They are mere months from enacting this scheme, but the leader of the conspiracy—**Nicodemus the Gnostic**—is an idealist. Rather than simply deciding the new world order himself, he has invited the previously compartmentalized Obscurati cells to a grand convocation, where they will debate what sort of new world they wish to create.

Background

The Inside Man

One key conspirator, **Leone Quital**, known as the Steelshaper since he designed the colossus, is helping coordinate the travel of a dozen Ob officers. To maintain secrecy, many were told simply to transit in the Drakran city of Mirsk. From there, Leone arranges them to take trains to the the Crisillyiri city of Vendricce, then sail just off coast to the Obscurati palace. (Several other similar transit points have been set up—by sea, by train, and by teleportation.)

While the party—agents of the Royal Homeland Constabulary—have several avenues to locate this convocation, security is nigh-impenetrable, and any stealth or disguise be it magical or mundane will be easily thwarted. However they have an ally of sorts on the inside.

Alexander Grappa, known as the Mindmaker because he crafted the intellect of the colossus, has died twice now—both times at the hands of Leone Quital—but in each instance has managed to transfer his consciousness into another body. Now he survives in the back of Leone's mind, faintly aware and able to take control only when the Steelshaper is asleep. Afraid of alerting his host of his presence, Grappa has waited patiently and magically divined a way he might drive out Leone and make the body his own.

ADAPTING THE ADVENTURE

To fit *Schism* into a non-industrial campaign, Leone Quital can be based at a major seaside quarry and port instead of a railroad hub. He's still coordinating the movements of his fellow conspirators, but his powers involve levitating and shaping stone instead of steel. Ignore the back-story involving the colossus, and simply have Alexander Grappa as a conspirator who got cold feet and managed to stick around magically in Leone's mind after the stoneshaper slew him, or perhaps literally an alternate personality.

You can of course give the conspiracy's convocation any agenda that you want, or use the event as a stand-in for any gathering of powerful villains. Instead of an ideological purge at the climax, instead the party might simply ambush the villains when their defenses are down.

If you just want some inspiration for your own campaign, we have:

- an international manhunt,
- a gulag in a rift controlled by frost giants,
- a shipboard escape akin to the end of *The Empire Strikes Back*,
- antagonists with a vast array of sympathetic motivations,
- a highly-guarded villainous palace riddled with demi-planes, *and*
- a grand setpiece battle with hostages, a chase, and great amounts of property damage.

Finally, if you like the Panicked Evacuation sea battle (page 130), you might want to check out our naval adventures book *Admiral o' the High Seas* for ideas on other shipboard action scenes.

Infiltration

Depending on their success in Adventure Six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*, the party might already know Grappa needs help, or they might get an enigmatic plea from him via a letter. Either way, if they can track down and capture Leone, Grappa asks to be brought to the frozen city of Knütpara, controlled by frost giants. There, trapped in a glacier, lies a giant lich who could rip men's souls from their bodies. The party must reach the bottom of a glacial rift and tear out Leone's soul so that Grappa can have a body of his own. Only then will the Mindmaker reveal what he knows of the conspiracy's convocation.

With his aid and the power of the lich, the party can capture other Obscurati officers en route to the convocation, then implant their souls into the officers' bodies. Though it may sound mad, it's the best way for the party to sneak into the Obscurati palace undiscovered.

During the convocation the party learns the nature of the conspiracy's plans, and can actually take part in the debate over how they want to change the world. The meeting lasts two days, during which the PCs can try to sway the conspiracy's plans from within, recruit double agents, or do a bit of eavesdropping to learn the conspiracy's weaknesses. They might also speak with **Vitus Sigismund**, a spy for another nation who was caught trying to sneak in. Critically, the party needs to observe the palace's defenses, from its elite guards and trained basilisks to the spectral Ghost Council that advises Nicodemus and watches all that occurs on the island.

The Schism

As the convocation concludes, each Obscurati officer—including the PCs—can cast a vote for one of the possible new world orders. But despite being united in their desire to see a better world, after two days of debate the members of the Obscurati have fractured into two opposing factions. One side favors magnanimity, bettering everyone's lot while sacrificing their own power, while the other wants to control the world, trusting themselves to personally solve society's ills as if they were demi-gods.

With no consensus to be reached, Nicodemus invokes his position as founder of the conspiracy, and orders a purge of the selfish and power-hungry. The palace is sealed and the Ghost Council, a massive roiling swarm of incorporeal undead, slays those who will not stand with their leader. Here, the campaign can take two paths.

In one, the party sides with Nicodemus to help the Obscurati achieve a better world. They can aid in the defeat of the "villainous" faction, and in adventures hereafter will be tasked to help enact he grand design, which necessarily entails betraying their king and the RHC. Events might make them reconsider the motives of the Obscurati later, though.

In the other, the party remains hostile to the conspiracy. They must first escape the island, perhaps stealing the palace's treasures and rescuing potential allies. Then in later adventures they can try to stop the Obscurati from fulfilling their plans.

A Radical Scheme

You are welcome to run this adventure in a straightforward chronological order, but if you're willing to experiment a bit with the typical RPG narrative, *Schism* gives you an opportunity for a bit more cinematic pacing.

It might not hurt to ask the players to trust you first. When the adventure opens, give the players the Obscurati Officer cards in Appendix J (the shortened ones without Gestalt information), and have them take on the role of members of the conspiracy arriving at the palace. After this teaser you jump back an ambiguous period of time to the party being contacted by Alexander Grappa. When the party learns of Grappa's plan to implant their souls into the bodies of existing Ob members, hopefully players will enjoy the revelation that they were actually playing themselves undercover in the first scene.

If they refuse and come up with another plan, continuity is still fine. The Ob officers the players controlled can remain NPCs, and the party can find another way into the palace. That said, the purpose of the teaser is to provide a bit of metagame information that normal methods of subterfuge won't be sufficient. Of course if you think your players won't go for it, just put the "teaser" in the correct order.

Other Paths

How else can the party get into the convocation? Well, **Benedict Pemberton**—a dragon in human form whose Bond-villain-esque plot the party thwarted in Adventure Six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*—has replaced an Ob officer with a mechanical duplicant under his control, and the party might try to use one of those for each PC if they salvaged any during the last adventure. They might pull a Chewbacca and let themselves be captured, or simply stroll in and offer to join the villains, but it requires a bit of credulity-stretching to think Nicodemus would let them see anything important.

Clever parties might sneak onto the island in the real world and use a Wayfarer's Lantern of their own to shift into the palace, or try something ridiculous like killing themselves, putting their bodies into a portable hole, and having Grappa in Leone's body just carry them into the palace, along with some sort of magic item to restore them to life. Such plans make it harder for the party to witness the Obscurati plotting and eventually turning against itself.

Discouraging Divination

All cell leaders and high-ranking officers of the Obscurati have the following trait.

Traits

▶ **Rites of the Obscurati**

Attempts to divine his location or identity yield nothing of use.

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 an Obscurati cell leader fails outright, as if such a person did not exist. Likewise, attempts to determine whether a given person is affiliated with the Obscurati will always report no involvement.

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 something intended to deflect suspicion.

Key to the rites is the ring of office: a ring of varying composition which must have inscribed on the inside a three word phrase. The first two words of that phrase must have the initials O.B. The third word can be anything, but traditionally the number of letters determines how many tiers from the top the officer is.

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, some Obscurati officers are powerful enough to shield themselves without requiring these rites.

On the Nature of Nicodemus

Five centuries ago, a monk named William Miller earned the nickname "Nicodemus the Gnostic" for both his constant questioning of Clergy doctrine and his fondness for smoking "leaf of Nicodemus," a popular cash crop from the Yerasol Archipelago.

During the holy war known as the Second Victory, the armies of the Clergy battled the eladrin nation of Elfaivar. Nicodemus went to war as a healer but was distraught with the atrocities he witnessed. After one battle he saved an injured eladrin woman named Kasvarina Varal, who had left behind two daughters in her homeland. Nicodemus helped her return home, but in their travels they resolved not to turn their backs on the tragedy of the war. Instead, they resolved to bring the conflict to an end.

Their first attempt saw them imprisoned on the cursed Isle of Odiem, where the Clergy keeps its Crypta Hereticarum, the Vault of Heresies. There they spoke with an imprisoned ancient demoness, Ashima-Shimtu, who gave them a ritual that could give physical form to a belief. If that physical form was destroyed, those who held faith in it would perish as well.

Nicodemus tried to trick the leaders of his faith into using the ritual to summon one of their own gods of war, but the Clergy instead invoked the eladrin goddess Srasama, who represented maiden, mother, and crone. When an army slew the goddess's avatar, nearly every female eladrin died, including Kasvarina's daughters. The magical backlash changed the face of the world, left the Clergy reeling, and caused the near-immediate collapse of Elfaivar.

At the ritual's epicenter, Kasvarina survived, but Nicodemus was disintegrated. Only his soul remained, free to wander like an untethered ghost. He learned to inhabit and control the bodies of others, and in the relative peace after the war's end he tried to return to his old life, taking up the name William Miller again and writing some of the most famous treatises on philosophy in history.

Miller founded Pala, a small nation of thinkers and philosophers on the border of modern Danor. But soon the Clergy branded Miller a heretic, invaded Pala, and sacked its capital. He was tortured in an effort to compel a confession. After he refused to recant, his captors made a pyre of his writings and burned him alive upon it.

After this second death, Miller realized mere reason could not reshape the world. He left the name William Miller behind as a martyr to peace. Once again taking the name Nicodemus the Gnostic, he proposed to Kasvarina a path to reshape the world. 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.

In the hundreds of years it took him to gather allies and find a method to enact his plan, Nicodemus had to allow and endorse many immoral acts. He has surrounded himself with the ghosts of old friends—all wise and compassionate people in life—who, due to the detachment of disembodied undeath, feel few qualms with causing suffering if it advances their goals. They still believe they act for the greater good, and indeed their goals are still noble, but Nicodemus can no longer claim any sort of ideological purity.

Of his many sins, the latest is his theft of a man's body. Nicodemus needed a form he could wear long-term to provide consistent leadership to the conspiracy, and his agents found him one. **Andrei von Recklinghausen**, whom the party may have met in Adventure Four, *Always on Time*, has great natural strength and regenerative powers, as well as a romantic and noble heart. The Obscurati found him protecting an eladrin refugee named Isobel, trying to get her to Elfaivar. Nicodemus made Andrei a bargain, delivering Isobel safely to her destination in exchange for Andrei not resisting Nicodemus's possession. Though Andrei's mind still exists, it has not the strength to fight for control of his body, and Nicodemus would never let him go after what he has seen.

As the convocation gathers, Nicodemus himself is torn. Of the many factions being argued, he wants to endorse the one with the most idealistic and selfless goals. Kasvarina named the faction **Miller's Pyre** as a reminder of what happened to Nicodemus the last time he trusted in people's nobility. But he thinks the most effective solution is the plan of the **Watchmakers**, which removes all free will from people. While it would lead to the world he wants, he has deep philosophical doubts about the plan's morality.

What he is sure of, though, is that many were drawn to his conspiracy by the dream of being in power. Nicodemus used their ambition, but now he is ready to purge the Obscurati of their selfishness and greed. For two days he will charm them and encourage them to be honest with their beliefs, and then he will cut out those who do not deserve to shape the world to come.

Nicodemus's reveals his true, ghostly form, preferring to wear the bodies of others. Currently he resides in the body of Andrei von Recklinghausen, and he's thinking of staying.

Two years ago, Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen dabbled in dark magic to stitch together and reanimate dead flesh into a new creation, which he named Andrei. When Andrei realized how his "father" had created him he lashed out, destroying the doctor's home and wife before forced to flee when Wolfgang nearly killed him.

He initially desired revenge, but eventually cooled and decided to find value in his new life. While stowing away on the Avery Coast railroad he helped free from slavery an eladrin woman named Isobel Travers, but in so doing his unique powers came to the attention of the Obscurati. The Obscurati intercepted Andrei and Isobel as they tried to reach safety, and they abducted him, promising to let her go free if he cooperated.

Andrei regenerates wounds like a troll, and has almost unmatched strength and agility for a human. But as a consequence of the dark magic used in his creation, he drains the soul of anyone he touches. This makes him a perfect vessel for the leader of the conspiracy, Nicodemus the Gnostic. Andrei believes his will might be strong enough to overcome the mastermind for a while, but he hasn't seen the right opportunity to make a break for freedom.

Adventure Overview

A flash forward puts the players in the shoes of a group of Obscurati officers as they arrive at the palace off the coast of Vendricce. A spy, **Vitus Sigismund**, is captured after a guard beast sees through his disguise, showing the dangers and consequences of the constables' mission.

An ambiguous time earlier, the party has a mission briefing with their superiors in the RHC, as well as **Governor Roland Stanfield** of the city of Flint, who unbeknownst to them is an Obscurati cell leader. Stanfield tries to convince the party to stick around and deal with Flint issues, rather than pursuing the Obscurati, which can eat into how much time they have to complete their mission. Because of the sensitive nature of his position, Stanfield is one of the few cell leaders who isn't attending the convocation, but he's not sure how close the party is to discovering it.

After the meeting with Stanfield, the party's boss **Stover Delft** loads them on a carriage headed for their ship, intending to send them on their next mission as soon as possible. On the way he shows them a letter sent by the mindmaker **Alexander Grappa**, written six months after his supposed death. Grappa needs the party to track down the steelshaper **Leone Quital**, whose mind Grappa is sharing, then take him to the frozen ruined city Knütpara where he can remove Quital's soul and take control of the man's body permanently. In exchange, he offers to sneak the party into a grand convocation of the Obscurati so they can gather intelligence and perhaps strike from within.

When they reach their ship, though, the party finds a visitor: archfey of the sea **Lady Beshela**. She fears the king of Risur has become a puppet of dangerous forces, and offers them a boon: a magical ship component that will let their vessel teleport across planes.

A commotion erupts on the shore as dock-workers arrive, led by local celebrity **Rock Rackus**. Rock is excited, believing that he's been invited to join their mission. In truth, the bizarre fey **Copperhat the Headless** used magic to trick Rackus as a cover so he could get close to Beshela. During the commotion Copperhat slips aboard the party's ship and reveals that Beshela's "gift" is actually cursed and would sink their ship.

Copperhat explains that the fey in the Dreaming are at odds over whether to continue their alliance with Risur or awaken the fey titans, and Beshela sought to betray them. Beshela departs in anger, and Copperhat breaks the curse on Beshela's gift, then offers a gift of his own. These two fey will play a larger role in Adventure Nine, *The Last Starry Sky*, but for now they serve just as another source of delay for the party's mission.

Once the party is ready, they set out for Leone's last known destination, the capital of Crisillyir, Alais Primos. When they go to meet with RHC assets, though, they learn that the Ob are eliminating RHC agents to stymie the investigation. They have an unexpected ally, however: **El Extraño**, the kobold spymaster of Ber, who can lend many spare sets of eyes. With their aid, the party sets up an international man-hunt and visits key sites of interest to track down the steelshaper.

After weeks or months, they find him in a mobile suite on a train that runs across Drakr. The party can either strike while the train is in motion, or wait for it to stop at his main base in the northern city of Mirsk. Leone and his allies put up a fight, with the steelshaper abusing his powers to hurl locomotives at his attackers, then perhaps decoupling cars and trying to flee by rail, but with luck the party can take him down.

With Leone in custody, the party must bring him along to a city frozen in a glacier. While the steelshaper tries to escape and cause trouble, they must sneak past the frost giant guards and either defeat or negotiate with the khangitche, Odul Chuvan, to gain access to a giant lich trapped in ice who can rip Leone's soul from his body, leaving Grappa in control. The mindmaker can then use a ritual to plant the constables' minds into the bodies of Obscurati officers—which is easy since Grappa knows who Leone was going to meet.

At this point the adventure catches up with the prologue. The party, wearing the bodies of their enemies, arrive at the Obscurati palace, meet the conspiracy's leader, and participate in the opening ceremony of the grand convocation. They learn the broad parameters of the Obscurati's plans, and are given a chance to vote on which of serveral proposals will be enacted. The event is set to last until the following evening, and includes opportunities to speak with other officers, to discuss philosophy, and to enter demi-planes via linked portals in paintings so they can sample possible ways the new world could be changed.

Complications arise, however. The constables are not the only ones here who oppose the Obscurati. **Benedict Pemberton** has replaced an Ob officer with a duplicant, so he will be able to spy and eventually intervene. Meanwhile the ghost of **Reed Macbannin**, whom the party previously arrested and who was recruited to the Ob's Ghost Council after he died in custody, has found that he does not quite agree with the conspiracy now that he knows all of their plans. During the first night he murders two Ob officers, trying to sow discord.

Consequences of Previous Adventures

You might need to change a few details based on the party's previous actions.

First, if the party finished Adventure Six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*, and wanted to immediately go looking for Leone, you might need to adjust the timeline. They'd still want to return to Flint to deliver Tinker, debrief, resupply their ship, and make plans with Delft.

Second, in that adventure we included options for technological breakthroughs Risur might achieve due to recovering Tinker and/or his invention notes. Make sure to inform the party of the status of these innovations, and to give them one or two opportunities to make use of the new technology.

Third, it might be necessary to edit the letter Alexander Grappa sends the party, especially if Grappa didn't end up destroyed by Leone Quital at the end of Adventure Five, *Cauldron-Born*. If the party managed to unequivocably kill Quital, you can substitute another Ob officer and if necessary have Grappa be a disembodied mind that has managed to finally possess the man.

Fourth, the party might not find Kvarti Gorbatiy in the frost giant rift in Act Two if he perished.

Fifth, be attentive to small details of various Ob officers the party may have met in the past. We presume, for example, Kasvarina was rescued and spirited away by Asrabey Varal in Adventure Five, and that the four Ob officers who waited at the end of the line in Adventure Four were either killed then or were later taken out in some other way.

Finally, if the party never helped Andrei von Recklinghausen in Adventure Four, *Always on Time*, then the eladrin woman Isobel was likely sold off into slavery, and Andrei was picked up by curious Ob researchers. The man would have no remembrance of the party, and thus you'll have to re-flavor Nicodemus's departure during the climax. Instead of being stopped by Andrei's willpower, he instead flees out a plentitude of caution.

Of course, the party themselves is likely to cause trouble. Their most opportune time to strike is after the final vote of the convocation, but first they'll be well served by sneaking around, spying on conversations, and possibly rescuing Vitus the godhand. One key piece of information they should discover is that the Ob have narrowed down the location of Kasvarina Varal, whom the eladrin of Elfaivar are trying to hide, and who could likely regain control of the conspiracy's colossus. This plants a seed for events in Adventure Eight.

The party might assassinate potential threats, steal secrets from the palace's library, or figure out the structure of the Obscurati's international cells. They might even be able to find allies among those disgruntled Ob officers whose factions lose the vote. But if the party gets this far without revealing themselves, they will be unmasked by Pemberton, kicking off a massive fight as the losing factions try to get off the island alive.

Adventure Layout

We divide the plot of *Schism* as follows.

- **Teaser: A Gathering of Minds.** The players briefly play as officers of the conspiracy as they arrive at the convocation and witness the apprehension of a spy.
- **Act One: Where in the World is Alexander Grappa?** The party tries to rescue Alexander Grappa without knowing where he is.
- **Act Two: Applied Eschatology.** Grappa needs the party to assault a frost giant stronghold in a glacier.
- **Act Three: The Grand Convocation.** Under cover as officers of the Obscurati, the party infiltrates the conspiracy.

Scene Layout

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).

Key Locations

Use this list to keep track of locations the PCs might visit.

Key Locations	Page
Flint	75
Trekhom	93
Nalaam	92
Mirsk	94
Shawl Mountains	75
Knütpara	101
Alais Primos	88
Mutravir Island	111
Obscurati Palace	78

Flint: Industrial heart of Risur, on the coast of the Avery Sea. Home base of the party's branch of the RHC. The party can communicate via *sending* and receive aid via teleportation circles.

Trekhom: Capitol of Drakr, covered in rails on the surface and riddled with tunnels below ground. A likely place to look for Leone, but he's seldom there.

Nalaam: An independent city-state between Drakr and Crisillyir, decadent and ruled by mages. An ambush likely strikes the party here.

Mirsk: A hub for rail traffic in northern Drakr, and home to mighty factories where thousands of dwarves toil to craft industrial marvels. Leone's primary base of operations.

Shawl Mountains: Glacial mountain range, gripped with magical cold but rich with exotic metals like mithral and adamantine, and scattered with meteorites that fell and were trapped in layers of ice. Said to be prison of undead titans who once controlled Drakr.

Knütpara: Ancient dwarven city consumed by a glacier, now guarded by frost giants. Site of old dark magic that will let Grappa take over Leone's body permanently.

Alais Primos: Capital of Crisillyir, and the best starting point for tracking down Leone.

Vendricce: City on the western side of a natural channel between Crisillyir and Elfaivar. Wealthy port, heavily garrisoned to defend against eladrin attacks.

Mutravir Island: Location of the Obscurati palace, twenty miles off the coast of Vendricce.

Obscurati Palace: This palace has sat for over a century, unoccupied except for a small maintenance staff. It once belonged to a hierarch of the Clergy, who before his death decreed that the island was to remain unspoiled, never to be reinhabited. On the Bleak Gate analogue of this island, the Obscurati use the palace as their seat of power, using the Clergy's own piety to keep away curious interlopers.

NPC Roster

Detailed entries on various NPCs appear throughout the adventure.

NPC Entry	Page
Alexander Grappa, the mindmaker	99
Amielle Latimer, tiefling ghost	116
Andrei von Recklinghausen	73
Benedict Pemberton, industrialist	116
Catherine Romana, heir of Risur	118
Copperhat the Headless, trickster fey	84
Cula Ravjahani, Vekeshi liaison	118
El Extraño, kobold spymaster from Ber	91
Erskine Haffkruger, dwarf arborist	116
Han Jierre, sovereign of Danor	80
Kvarti Gorbatiy, dwarven sniper-philosopher	108
Lady Beshela, archfey of the sea	84
Leone Quital, the steelshaper	99
Nicodemus the Gnostic	73
Reed Macbannin, Ghost Council member	80
Stover Delft, Chief Inspector of the RHC	83
Vicemi Terio, spectral head of Lantern Cell	80
Vitus Sigismund, Crisillyiri spy	79

Additionally, we provide seven Obscurati officers that the PCs can impersonate during the Convocation, detailed in **Player Handout—Obscurati Covers** (see also the Brief Beats sidebar on page 81).

Cover Identities	Page
Bruce McDruid, explorer of distant lands	380
Gran Guiscard, head of Gorgeous Cell in Beaumont	376
Ken Don, head librarian of Bibliotech di Alais Primos	375
Kiov Hetman, Drakran tower researcher	378
Livia Hatsfield, spy in the palace of the King of Risur	377
Oscan Ligurio, international finance con artist	379
Xavier Sangria, Malice Lands monster-slayer	381

Recurring Characters. This adventure gives the party an opportunity to meet several villains and thwart their plans without actually killing everyone. Leone Quital, who has troubled the party twice before, likely dies in this adventure, but other key Obscurati figures like Han Jierre and Nicodemus the Gnostic recur even into epic tier. Alexander Grappa has enough mind magic to show back up later at least as a disembodied consciousness even if he dies, but if the party doesn't like him, he doesn't play any noteworthy role later on.

PACING AND LEVELING

The party starts this adventure at 15th level. We recommend that they reach 16th level after the frost giant-controlled city of Knütpara, before they enter the Obscurati palace.

Incidental NPCs. Various NPCs might 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. Additionally, see **Appendix B: Obscurati Officer Roster** (page 285) for a full list of every Obscurati officer attending the convocation. Most of them aren't important to the plot, but it's useful in case the players ask, "Who's in charge of Ob operations in Seobriga?" so they can track him down and kill him later.

NPC	Page
Bert Facie, assistant to Han Jierre	94
Captain Dale, defender of Cauldron Hill	82
Captain Matt Massaer, Obscurati skipper	90
Emmelsa, gofer for Leone	90
Gangenwieck, male Ob researcher	106
Jacques LeBrayne, Danoran yacht-owner	87
Joe Hobner, retired RHC, murdered	88
Lauryn Cyneburg, RHC infiltration specialist	88
Odul Chuvan, frost giant khangitche	103
Piginni Quital, Leone's nephew	90
Robert the Black, impostor-assassin	89
Rock Rackus, bombastic Docker celebrity	84
Thornsenkertz, female Ob researcher	106
Unnamed lich	109

Rewards

The party's Prestige with the Clergy might increase if they rescue Vitus, and if it hasn't reached 6 with the Obscurati yet, it will. If the PCs manage to crash the Ob's gathering, they will be target number one for the conspiracy after this adventure.

The PCs should have each about 112,000 gp in equipment by the start of this adventure. Each PC gets a stipend of 48,000 gp after they have their briefing, then are granted a further stipend of 80,000 gp before they head to the Obscurati convocation. Requisitioned materials can be delivered to the party's ship via the teleportation circle.

List of Magic Items as Treasure

Stat blocks for new items are presented in Appendix G (page 328). We encourage you to tweak the physical forms of items to make them more appealing to your player characters.

- Level 16. *Codex of Little People*, a gift from El Extraño the kobold spymaster.
- Level 17. *Steelsilk mantle*, worn by Leone Quital.
- Level 17. *Fey portal pad*, a ship enhancement offered by the Unseen Court's archfey Lady Beshela.
- Level 18. *Frost giant's plate*, worn by Odul Chuvan the frost giant khangitche.
- Level 18. *Ghostly entourage*, bonded to a bracelet worn by Vicemi Terio.
- Level 19. *Reason*, diplomatic rifle designed by Kvarti Gorbatiy.
- Level 19. *The absurdist web*, which Copperhat the Headless asks you to hold onto as a favor to him.
- Level 20. *Vekeshi blade*, possessed by Cula Ravjahani.
- Artifact. *The Humble Hook*, worn by Nicodemus the Gnostic.

Difficulty Class by Level

Level	Easy	Moderate	Hard
13	14	20	29
14	15	21	29
15	15	22	30
16	16	22	31
17	16	23	31
18	17	23	32
19	17	24	33

A Final Word Before We Start

This adventure, more than any other in the Zeitgeist adventure path, is highly dependent on proper presentation and tone. If the players walk into a gathering of people who are just sitting around talking, they can become quickly bored. But if you keep the players unsure just where they stand, who might be a potential ally, and who might suspect their true intentions, conversations can go from banal to threatening. The party should be certain from the moment they arrive at the Convocation that they are in enemy territory, and that any misstep on their part could bring an overwhelming attack down upon them.

Play up how comfortable the Ob officers are with talk about "acceptable casualties" and "putting down pockets of resistance." Casually mention ghosts standing in corners watching the proceedings, or drifting along staring in through windows whenever the PCs walk past. Reiterate at every opportunity that the party is stranded in the Bleak Gate—cloudless, windless, starless, and filled with the lurking souls of the lingering dead—with limited means to escape should they be discovered.

Even if the PCs decide that they will join the conspiracy and aid their plans for the greater good, they should be under no illusions that these people are selfless, decent, or even particularly burdened by what they have done. The best of them have solved their own personal moral calculus and decided a little evil is worth the good they hope to achieve. The worst of them truly only care how they can get the greatest "good" for themselves.

Character Themes in the Adventure

Adventure Seven takes the party far afield from Flint, so some character themes (detailed in the *Zeitgeist Player's Guide*) have fewer obvious connections to the plot and setting. However, several narrative threads weave large social trends around the world into the cultural movements of Flint itself. We hope these will pay off when the party returns to Risur in Adventure Nine.

- **Dockers**—In addition to having a chance to broker a deal between the dockers and the fey lord Copperhat the Headless, a docker PC can use connections with the Panoply to get aid from working stiffs in multiple countries during the manhunt for Leone.
- **Eschatologists**—Though he may not realize it, an eschatologist PC will come face to face with agents of the end of the world. They're likely best equipped to debate with the Obscurati.
- **Gunsmiths**—The party's philosophizing sniper acquaintance Kvarti Gorbatiy shows up in the frost giant rift.
- **Martial Scientists**—Whoever places their consciousness in Xavier Sangria will be able to teach a martial scientist his Malicious Deflection technique. Many Ob officers are military officers.
- **Skyseers**—As usual, Skyseers have intuitive understanding of the magic of the Obscurati's planar plots.
- **Spirit Mediums**—A sunken pirate ship and the ghosts of its crew lurk just off the coast of the Obscurati island, and if treated well they can aid the party's escape. Also, the medium senses that someone in the Obscurati palace is a duplicant, which should heighten paranoia, but the presence of so many ghosts makes it impossible to determine who's the impostor.
- **Technologists**—The party would be well-served by sabotaging Leone's train or the Obscurati's enchanted lighthouse.
- **Vekeshi Mystics**—Mystic PCs can learn the fate of Kasvarina Varal, a leader of both the mystics and the Obscurati. Cula Ravjahani, Kasvarina's second, might reveal in casual conversation that many missions of the mystics were actually serving the agenda of the Ob.
- **Yerasol Veterans**—Catherine Romana, an Ob officer and a Risuri politician, is infamous for her poor regard for Yerasol veterans.

TEASER: A Gathering of Minds

In this brief teaser, the players take on the roles of Obscurati members arriving at the Grand Convocation.

Arriving at the Obscurati Palace

Social. Real-Time. Level 19.

Ob agents witness a spy being captured.

Either decide in advance, or offer the players the chance to choose, which player will play which of the Obscurati officers listed in **Players Handout—Obscurati Officer Cards**. Hand out the personality cards on page 371. *Do not hand out the full gestalt pages yet.*

If you want to be nice to your players, we encourage you to look at the **Vile Ritual** sidebar (page 110) and try to match PCs with Ob officers in order of lowest Will defense to highest. Later on PCs will be required to contest willpowers with their hosts. If you'd rather set things up for disaster, let them pick whoever they want.

We provide seven Ob officers. If you have fewer than seven players, just make sure PCs are assigned Livia Hatsfield and Oscan Ligurio first. Assign an officer to each other player, and then pretend the other officers don't exist. There are quite enough NPCs in this adventure without them.

Welcoming Party

Read or paraphrase the following text.

Your ship passes close to the scrub-brushed shore, weaving between looming stones that jut from the sea, some of them even higher than the vessel's sails. Hazy clouds and sea spray fade the island into a foggy gray, but somehow the crew navigates to a small pier.

The ride inland from the dock is brief and surprising. As you and the other passengers look out from your two carriages, the island looks wholly abandoned, and it's hardly an auspicious gathering place for a group as powerful as the Obscurati.

You've barely had a chance to meet or speak with the other guests—some priests from the Clergy, a Danoran, a dwarf from Drakr, even an elf from Risur, plus a few whose nationality you can't place—but you all know Leone Quital, the steelshaper, who arranged your travel. It's been a convoluted route, but these precautions are necessary.

The drivers bring you down an overgrown dirt road, along a weed-choked reflecting pool, and finally pull to a stop just outside a run down mansion. Cracked and empty windows leer down at you, and even the plants that have taken over the estate are tattered and bug-chewed.

You spot two figures at the front door, and though the entry behind them is rotted, they are resplendent. A distinguished old tiefling, dressed like a head of state in a black silk suit and golden jewelry, is attended by a human in a loose coat. He whispers something to the tiefling, then lifts off the ground an ornate glass lantern the size of a small pumpkin.

"My apologies," says the tiefling. "One drawback of secrecy is that we have to carry our own luggage."

As you exit the two carriages, your drivers hand you each a heavy iron amulet on a cord, and once you've retrieved your luggage they drive off.

The human with the lamp talks as he reaches into his coat and pulls out a small vial of oil.

"Lady, gentlemen, may I introduce Han Jierre, sovereign of Danor and one of the people you've been working for, whether you knew it or not."

The tiefling gives a slight smile to you, then works his way down the line of visitors, greeting you each with a handshake or a bow or a subtle blessed gesture, always appropriate to your culture, always comfortable and with the practiced ease of a seventeenth generation politician.

"Leone, an honor to finally shake your hand. Monsignior Dexlano, Patre Hevny, Bishop Vigilio your grace. Monsignior Don. Oscan how's it going? Monsieur Guiscard, Herr Hetman, Miss Hatsfield, thank you for coming so far. Mister McDruid, Sir Sangria. It's a pleasure to meet you all." He nods to his assistant. "Bert, if you would?"

Bert has finished loading the lantern oil, and now he lights it with a quick strike of a match. A purple glow covers you, and your surroundings are spontaneously transformed. The cracked dusty ground is now also smooth and swept clean. The façade of the mansion is somehow both decayed and coated with pristine white plaster. And your small gathering has been joined by dimly visible figures on the periphery of the light's radius—armed men.

Han Jierre asks everyone to put on their amulets, explaining that they are currently coterminous to the Bleak Gate, and the amulet will pull them through to the other side over the course of five minutes. When their business here is over, they'll be returned to the real world via the same method. He'd prefer to hold off any questions until they were safely in the other world.

As each person puts on their amulet (including Han and Bert), they switch into the Bleak Gate, and can now see a predominately dark world with a cloudless black sky. Only a small area is illuminated by lights from the mansion windows and lamps beside the flower bushes that grow along the reflecting pool. A dozen bookpin guards—distinguished by silver pins on their lapels that look like open books—stand just at the edge of the lantern's light radius.

Intruder Alert

Han says, "Please pardon us as we perform a bit of security."

From outside the light radius a massive snake slithers in, at first inky black. The moment it gets into an area of bright light its scales turn a brilliant iridescent in reds, greens, and purples. It grasps the ground with short, stubby forelimbs, and its eyes glow like pale yellow suns. In this light those who have disguised themselves with shapechanging or illusions have their true forms revealed.

The guards start to level their weapons, for one of the newly-arrived guests looks like someone completely different. Monsignior Dexlano, one of the Clergy priests, is actually **Vitus Sigismund**, a Clergy godhand trying to infiltrate the conspiracy.

Dexlano, originally a heavy-set pale priest, now has a second face, that of a muscular, dark-skinned man. As he realizes his disguise has been pierced he reaches to tear off his amulet, but the serpent—called a shadowlisk—moves first. Its eyes flash with blinding light, and the man's body starts to blacken and peel away while his shadow is slowly burned into the manor wall behind him.

After the city of Vendricce was disrupted by fighting between the constables and the Ob in Adventure Four, *Always on Time*, Vitus investigated, looking for evidence of demonic influence. He found instead a far more insidious, man-made plot, one he knew he could not simply fight to submission.

A *geneu credeto* (literally "spirit of belief," but more colloquially known as a "godhand"), Vitus's flesh and faith are one, and in battle his fists carry the weight of the combined devotion of tens of millions of adherents to the Clergy. He grew up in a monastery, then spent two decades traveling across Lanjyr defeating and capturing evil remnants of the Demonocracy. Now he works alone, not trusting the hierarchy of his church. Alas, he lacked the necessary skills at subterfuge to infiltrate the Obscurati on his own.

Serene yet imposing, Vitus believes everyone has within them the potential to transcend mortal frailty and the temptations of sin, and he humbly strives to be an example of that path. Curiously, he has a great fondness for board games, which he justifies as being an encouragement for mental improvement. One of his bracers unfolds into a game board, which can be played with simple stones.

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.

Head of the Ghost Council, and leader of Lantern Cell, Vicemi cultivates his creepiness. He enjoys unsettling people, and consciously crafted his withered appearance. He respects the leaders of the conspiracy—Nicodemus, Kasvarina, and Han Jierre—because they are unfazed by his undead proclivities, though he scoffs at the time they waste on pleasantries, etiquette, and sympathy.

Vicemi was one of the first members of the Ghost Council, recruited for his unparalleled intellect and his undying hatred of the Clergy. His main desire is that in the new world the Obscurati create, religion will perish and reason will reign. Still, he admires creativity because it inspires innovation, and he hopes to survive as a ghost forever so he can watch civilization develop in ways he cannot possibly imagine.

Macbannin studied all manner of defensive magic, as well as a fair share of proscribed dark arts, in order to earn the role of mayor of Cauldron Hill. He protected the city from the mountain's curses for over a decade, but then was tricked into aiding the Obscurati, believing he was working on a secret Risuri military project. After being captured, he was contacted by Nicodemus, who offered to let him join the Ghost Council. Macbannin, always a shrewd politician, agreed, but he wasn't surprised to discover he did not really agree with the conspiracy's goals. He just waits for the right time to turn against them.

Despite being dead, Macbannin comes across as high-energy, with a rascally sense of humor. Since his previous life's work was devoted to keeping secrets, none of the Obscurati suspect his disloyalty.

Give the players a chance to respond here. The other arrivals (the ones not under player control) are panicked and confused. Bert starts shouting for people to stay away from the shadowlisk. Han calmly grabs a nearby guard and tells him to fetch Vicemi, and the guard runs indoors.

If no one interferes, ten seconds later Vitus has been disintegrated, leaving behind only a silhouette on the manor wall. That silhouette twitches slightly, as if it is somehow still alive. The shadowlisk slithers up to the wall and starts licking the silhouette's fingers.

The other Clergy members demand answers, asking why the snake just murdered one of their fellow priests. The answer comes from the door as four spectral figures glide through.

The Archmage and the Ghost Council

Three of the ghosts hang back, while the one in front takes control of the situation. **Vicemi Terio**, leader of the Ghost Council and head of Lantern Cell, speaks with a raspy voice that reverberates unnaturally and chills all those who hear it.

"That man was a spy," he says. "Your fellow priest was replaced and likely died long ago. You should be more careful in keeping your secrets. But we will find out how you were compromised. Macbannin."

One of the three other ghosts walks forward. While Vicemi's face is withered and decayed, and the other two ghosts' features are faded like they don't remember what they looked like in life, **Reed Macbannin** has barely been dead a year, so he still mostly walks rather than floats. He stops next to the still-twitching shadow of the intruder, casually shoos the shadowlisk aside, and draws a very solid vial of blood out of his spectral cloak.

"Really," Macbannin laughs, "it'd worry me more if we *didn't* have any spies trying to come here."

With that he coats his hands in blood, then reaches into the wall and grabs the shadows. He yanks, and Vitus falls to the ground shivering and burnt, barely alive. The guards swarm him, search him, and manacle him. Macbannin casts another quick spell to fully hold Vitus in the Bleak Gate, then pulls off his amulet.

"I'll take him to the dungeon," Macbannin says. Then he grins and winks to the new arrivals. "Welcome to the Obscurati."

BRIEF BEATS

You can use a few of these moments now or later in the adventure to give each "cover identity" a small moment to roleplay. All of the conversations below are fairly inconsequential, and the only NPC from them who plays a major role in the adventure is Catherine Romana, who recognizes Livia Hatsfield.

- **Ken Don.** Patre Hevny, one of the other newcomers, thanks Ken Don for letting his agents find the material they needed in his library. He mentions that the fire temple indeed was not heretical, though the church would probably have surpressed the Ancient map of the cosmos they found.
- **Gran Guiscard.** As the group passes through a lounge, a dragonborn bard named Praesidia de Vaca does a double-take and calls out "Mr. Guiscard!" She gushes with fangirl glee at seeing the famous opera star, and she's gobsmacked that Gran is involved in the same conspiracy. She asks if maybe, before the gathering is over, the two of them be able to sing "The Marriage of Achaea and Hibiscus."
- **Kiov Hetman.** Ramos Zoltan, a dwarf businessman, is "holding court" among the rest of the Drakran delegation, smoking cigars and drinking brothy ales. He spots Kiov and explains that he's telling about the time he sent the police chief of Trekhom to a gulag after he shot Zoltan's favorite dog. Zoltan gave the chief a dog of his own to keep him company in the gulag, and so far it has suffered a broken leg, food poisoning, burns, and a couple beatings. Zoltan claims this makes him noble, since he could have done all these things to the chief. The other Drakrans laugh darkly at the proposal.
- **Oscan Ligurio.** Abeira Stackhouse, a halfling from Risur, locks eyes with Oscan from across the room, his expression a thousand yard stare. Oscan notices the little man make a note in a small book, and then suddenly laugh and join in with a conversation involving other conspirators. This is mostly to build up the party's paranoia, but also Stackhouse is considering who might be an ally to the Voice of Rot.
- **Bruce McDruid.** While Han is getting the group some drinks from a lounge bar, a minotaur, Trevio Addaz, comes up and jovially asks what Bruce does for the organization. If he hears the details, he's interested in whether Bruce would be willing to introduce some of his underlings to the primitive peoples in order to teach them magic.
- **Xavier Sangria.** General Shane Wallisonne, a spy in the Danoran army, is bragging about hunting beasts in the Malice lands from atop the Avery Coast railroad, making obviously fictional claims about how splendid his aim is and how fierce the monsters were, such as a three-headed elephant with lion claws and tusks that dripped black ichor.
- **Livia Hatsfield.** As the group goes up the stairs to the second floor, they pass by Catherine Romana, a noble from Risur. As she walks, a house cat follows close on her heels. Romana notices Livia and says, "Hm, small world." She apologizes and has to go somewhere else.

Cigarette Smoking Man

Social. Real-Time. Level 19.

Newcomers are welcomed by mastermind Nicodemus the Gnostic.

As Macbannin and the guards drag Vitus away, Han introduces the newcomers to Vicemi Terio, and then asks the two remaining Clergy priests to stay and answer a few questions. He then enters the mansion and guides the PCs and Leone to the upstairs west council room. Give the players time to ask questions, take in the sights, and roleplay a bit if they're interested, or just go ahead and get the party to Nicodemus if they're not really into playing villains.

When this group arrives, most of the rest of the visitors are already at the palace, and as they pass through the lounges on the ground floor, they might spot a few smoking cigars, swapping stories, or simply browsing the numerous bookshelves that are scattered about. Once they head upstairs and down the west wing's second floor hallway, though, the mansion appears nearly empty. None of the hall lamps are lit, lights are visible from under only a few doors. But there is a dim red glow at the end of the three hundred foot long hallway.

Meet the Mastermind

In the vast room at the end of the hallway, a central fireplace roars warmly, but out the glass windows on the north, south, and west walls the whole landscape is nearly black. Together it creates the effect of light disappearing, and darkness encroaching.

A set of luxurious leather chairs are arrayed near the west windows, and one man sits smoking. His hands are gloved, and a necklace is visible around his neck, but tucked into his shirt. At first he seems alone, but as he stands to greet the group, it becomes clear that a dozen or more ghosts are floating outside the windows, watching.

He says, "Call me Nicodemus. I'm glad you came. Together we're going to change the world. Come on. Let's have a drink and talk."

Ideally, if you think your players remember what Andrei von Recklinghausen looked like from Adventure Four, show them his portrait, then tell them to get out their normal character sheets and hand in the officer sheets.

ROLEPLAYING NICODEMUS

Personally, I just imagine I'm George Clooney, and try my best to channel his movie star charisma. Get that speech cadence down right and pull off the right mix of casual charm and gravitas.

ACT ONE: Find the Mindmaker

In this act, the party receives a mission to track down Leone Quital and take him alive. The act begins on the 1st of Autumn, 501 A.O.V.

MEANWHILE IN THE NEWS...

While the party is seeking Grappa, what's happening everywhere else?

Colossus. Where's the colossus? Crossing the strait from Ber to Elfaivar. Curious titan-watchers have been gathering rumors of all the footprints that mark the machine's path. The colossus's invisible approach is heralded by thunder as it collapses the ground beneath its twenty-yard long feet, so most animals are smart enough to get out of the way. Inquisitive on-lookers have not fared as well.

Tensions. Remember the *Arripa*! This merchant vessel was sunk just off the coast of Beaumont in Danor. A disagreement between a member of the crew and a local police officer spiraled into a desperate attempt to flee the city as Danorans sought an outlet for their anger at Risur. The ship managed to cast off, only to be fired upon by another vessel. All sixty-three crewmen died either with their ship or in violence on land. The identities of those responsible are currently unknown.

Here There (Still) be Dragons. Soldiers in the Beran army report sightings of a dragon in the Bruse's latest campaign to put down gnoll rebels. Adventurers across the continent of Lanjyr are frothing at the bit hoping they might find another dragon to slay.

New Technology! The game master will have to insert something here based on what innovations the party chose to pursue thanks to Tinker Oddcog's research.

Moving Rivers, Walking Dead. Large trees are spontaneously sprouting in massive clumps along the banks of rivers in the northern reaches of Risur's Weftlands, then dying almost as quickly. The trees either divert the flow or collapse and create dams and new lakes. Trappers in the area have reported finding long-dead animals, some nearly rotted to the bone, caught in traps they laid only days earlier.

Political Meddling

Exposition/Social. Real-Time. Level 19.

The constables discuss local Flint matters with Governor Stanfield before their departure.

The party arrives at a conference room in the fortress of Governor's Island in Flint, home and workplace of Governor Roland Stanfield. A long table splits the conference room in two, and an inviting buffet of pastries and coffee cover it.

The party is accompanied by Chief Inspector Stover Delft, who is already polishing off his third donut; and Captain Dale, the head of security on Cauldron Hill, who has encouraged the group to eat their fill while slowly savoring a single donut of his own. After the players settle in, Governor Stanfield enters, asks the guards to not let anyone in for the next half hour, then closes the door. He gets himself coffee and a small plate of fried jackfruit chips, and winces a bit as he sits down, apologizing for a back injury that has plagued him for five centuries. He waves it off, and with warm enthusiasm says they should get started.

Homeland Security

Delft makes it clear from the start that the party's next mission is a classified one, and that he hasn't even briefed the constables yet, so he asks why the governor called them here.

Stanfield says he was hoping to get the RHC's aid resolving some issues here in Flint, since their skills are quite useful. He asks Captain Dale to provide an overview, and requests the party consider sticking around as long as possible, since the city isn't quite safe yet.

This is a stalling tactic by Stanfield, but he's very believable and should drop no clues that he's worried about their investigation. Instead, present the scene as the governor and Delft offering two possible different missions. Stanfield doesn't know what the party is up to, but he hopes to keep them busy in town, at least until the convocation is over. If the players decide to stay in Flint and resolve some of these issues, none of them are particularly challenging to characters of their power level, just very time-consuming.

Briefing Time

Captain Dale lists the issues currently facing Flint, and asks the party for suggestions on how to proceed with each.

1. **Cauldron Hill.** Since the colossus broke free, the peak has been fluctuating, sometimes coterminous with the Bleak Gate, sometimes safely in this world. Dale's men patrol and kill a nightly influx of undead and frightening monsters, but that's just a stopgap. Two men have died already. He's at a loss of how to fix the problem.

   Any actual solution would be a large magical endeavor, perhaps utilizing the Wayfarer Lantern if the party recovered it in Adventure Four, or undertaking a dungeon crawl and performing purifying rituals in the ruins of the Obscurati facility while creatures threaten them. The monsters themselves are dangerous to civilians, but not to high-level constables.

2. **Docker Riots.** The police have been getting into more brawls with dockers and factory workers. The police have been particularly on edge since swaths of the city were crushed by the colossus, cracking down on the smallest offenses. Meanwhile the general mood of the dockers is that most authority figures must have been involved with the disaster, and conspiracy theories are flying across the city.

   There's no easy way to regain the public's trust, but PCs could make small progress.
3. **Shipwrecks.** An unusual number of ships have been wrecking on shoals near The Ayres. A few people have talked of building a new lighthouse, while others suspect the sea fey are angry.

   This is simultaneously a red herring (since the PCs might key in on "lighthouses"), and a tie-in to the next scene, when Archfey of the Sea Beshela tries to trick them. She's the one responsible for these sinkings.
4. **Pemberton Fall-Out.** After the party discovered in Adventure Six that industrialist Benedict Pemberton was actually a dragon with a mild case of "wanting to become a tyrant," Stanfield has wanted a thorough investigation into his activities in Flint. He says he's worried about duplicants.

   Pemberton did managed to rush some of his industrial material out of the city, and the party could waste weeks tracking the paper trail to an island in the Yerasol Archipelago, where he has set up his new base of operations. He'll likely get wind before they reach him, and can leave in a hurry, relocating to another of the hundreds of Yerasol islands.

Captain Dale finishes up, and Stanfield tries to get some hints on where the party will be going next, but Delft encourages the party to leave, and suggests that he can report later. Once the meeting is complete, Delft grabs a few more donuts and asks the party to follow him down to a private carriage.

Burn After Reading

The carriage leaves the gates of the fortress, then heads across a bridge to the mainland en route to the party's ship. Only then does Delft explain why he's been so cagey. He pulls out a letter and hands it over to the party, saying that it arrived just this morning.

Show the players **Player's Handout—Letter from Grappa**.

It's only a ten minute carriage ride to the party's ship. Delft encourages the party to discuss plans, and says that he hopes they'll set sail tomorrow morning. He'll coordinate from here with agents on the northern side of the Avery Sea. The party's mission is to find Leone Quital and take him alive.

CHECK THE POSTMARK

The letter was delivered by a nondescript courier in an envelope with no postmark. If somehow the party traces its provenance magically, they can learn that (going in reverse chronological order) Delft got it from his secretary, who got it from a courier, who removed it from its original envelope and repackaged it after he picked it up from a butcher's shop in Bosum Strand, to which the letter had been delivered by the Risuri post, after it had been carried on a ship from Trekhom, after being handled by two different Drakran postmen, who received it in a bundle of mail off a train, which came from Mirsk, where it was loaded by another postman, who got the mail from the post office, where the letter was dropped off by one of Leone's guards, after Leone handed it to him in a thick stack of letters.

A local Flinter in his early 40s, Delft handles the logistical and political drudgery so the party can perform their heroics without too much backlash. Though normally rather easy-going, he gets squinty and condescending when people obstruct important affairs because of politics.

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.

Stanfield witnessed the fall of the eladrin goddess Srasama five hundred years ago and died soon thereafter. But he reincarnated, his memories vague and jumbled. He found his way back to his homeland of Risur, settled in Flint, and eventually became the city's governor.

In the centuries since he has died with irregular intervals, and with each rebirth he returned to the city he calls home. He has 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.

The Lady and the Liar

Social. Real-Time. Level 17.

Two archfey cause trouble at the party's docked ship.

If the party doesn't head to their ship now, they soon get a message that a visitor is waiting for them there. **Lady Beshela**, a powerful fey (albeit not a member of the Unseen Court) with dominion over the seas along Risur's northern coast, stands on the deck of the party's ship, and a huge school of fish swarms in the water around it.

Beshela's Bitterness

Beshela was a long-time friend of Duchess Ethelyn of Shale, and she supported Ethelyn's coup attempt (see Adventure One, *Island at the Axis of the World*). She blames the party for Ethelyn's defeat. Now, a year and a half later, the fey politics that kept Beshela from enacting her revenge have shifted. The disruption of the Unseen Court will play out more in Adventure Nine, *The Last Starry Sky*, but for now she just plans to kill the party.

In truth, Beshela's acting slightly against her own interests. She joined with the duchess to help stop a plot they suspected against Risur—a plot being hatched by the Obscurati. Though she now knows more about the conspiracy, she has trouble differentiating between different groups she disagrees with. She thinks the party are allied with the Obscurati, and that they are somehow fooling King Aodhan into trusting them.

Lady Beshela serves as steward of the domains of the fey titan She Who Writhes. Though not a member of the Unseen Court, Beshela bears the title Archfey of the Sea and controls most of the waters along Risur's north shore. With armies of sea creatures at her command, the beautiful fey is like a queen of her own land, though there are other threats that lurk deeper than her domain descends.

Beshela feels she owes a great debt to Risur. Forty years ago Ethelyn, sister of the current king, rescued her from a pirate sorcerer, giving birth to a long-lasting friendship and military pact. Beshela even aided Ethelyn's coup attempt against the king. Proud and spiteful, Beshela holds a grudge against those who thwarted her friend's efforts. Her moods are seemingly aqueous, but she is merely a clever charmer, fond of long schemes that depend on her enemies not knowing how dangerous she really is.

Copperhat the Headless is a somewhat infamous fey (Nature DC 23 to recall his name) who acts a mix of trickster and jester for the Unseen Court. Like actual members of the court, Copperhat has no face, at least none that anyone can see. His namesake hat sits atop a seemingly invisible head, which is enough to fool most minor fey into thinking he's really one of the Unseen.

In truth he's just a clever ettercap-like pixie who hides inside his coat and levitates his clothes and hat, controlling his fake body like an oversized puppet. He normally travels between fey enclaves trading knick-knacks and favors, with a particular fondness for telling stories about the human world. People find him amusing in small servings, but are quick to suggest new places for him to go after a day or so.

Copperhat is secretly a minion of the Voice of Rot, the only one of the fey titans who is currently awake. The Voice of Rot has long-term plans that involve the party, and he wants them kept safe.

Voice of Rot's Plan

The White Serpent is empowered by death, and desires it like normal creatures crave food and shelter. Nothing could please him more than presiding over the end of the world. But he senses the change coming as the Obscurati prepare to open the Axis Seal, and he needs the party as eyes.

Copperhat's gift of the *absurdist's web* lets him spy on their investigation. Once he learns of the Ob's plans, he orders his minions to infiltrate Axis Island and disrupt the conspiracy's ritual at its last moment. This leaves the world vulnerable so he can provoke its demise.

The Voice of Rot is still fey, though, and compelled by a bizarre sense of narrative fairness. He cannot simply win in secret; he must have foes to overcome if he is to ascend to true godhood as the world dies.

The fey titan sees the PCs as proxies of the monarch of Risur, and he hopes to draw them into a final battle against him, so their deaths can fuel his apotheosis. That battle plays out in Adventure Twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*.

Sinking Feeling

Beshela's plan is to give the party a gift for their ship: a *fey portal pad* (page 330). This enchanted wooden dais lets those who stand on it teleport to another ship, and can even briefly transport the ship into the Bleak Gate or the Dreaming. But the item is cursed, and once the ship is out of sight of land it will trigger and dissolve portions of the hull, transforming them into seaweed that will drag the rest of the vessel down. Then one of her giant squids will ensure the crew all drown.

When she talks to the PCs, she reminds them that she was an ally of the duchess, and that the duchess was afraid of a shadowy force controlling Risur. She says that since they defeated the duchess, they must be stronger than her, making them the best weapon against this shadowy force. She brings them a gift. At this point she waves a hand and magically conjures the portal pad, which is five feet in diameter and four inches thick.

Characters familiar with Beshela's history and demeanor (Arcana DC 23) can tell that this magnanimity is out of character for her, and particularly insightful characters (Insight DC 31) sense that she's faking her interest in helping them. Vekeshi Mystic PCs gain a +5 bonus to each of these checks. A few minutes spent closely examining the portal pad (Arcana DC 31) discovers the curse.

If her plan is found out, she insults the constables, calling them traitors, servants of shadows and steam, bird-voiced singers, and oafish walruses. She is wary enough of them not to initiate hostilities, and this would be a good time for Rock Rackus and Copperhat to arrive (see below). But if the party attacks her anyway she defends herself until she becomes bloodied. Then she dives into the water and swims away.

It's possible, though, for the party to get her to stay and talk, if they approach her right. See "Epic Rap Battles of History," below.

While Beshela is trying to get the PCs killed, the trickster **Copperhat the Headless** is trying to keep them alive, but that doesn't make him their friend.

Rock the Boat

When Beshela finishes presenting her gift to the party, they hear a crowd approaching the docks, boisterously singing one of **Rock Rackus**'s ribald classics about how he slept with the fey queen. Rock himself leads the group, having cajoled a hundred dock workers who were drinking in nearby bars to follow him to the party's ship. He's promised them a show, because he thinks he's about to set out on a grand adventure.

He calls out to the party when he sees them, then has a bit of a double take and looks beside him. Choose a PC that Copperhat would have been impersonating; Rock thinks that PC asked him to accompany them on their next mission, and he's surprised to see the PC no longer next to him.

He introduces the PCs to the crowd and says good things about whatever interactions he has had with them, then asks the party what his role is going to be on the coming mission. At some point in the ensuing conversation, voices start shouting from the crowd:

- "Hey, who's that blue chick on the boat?"
- "I heard something about some blue faerie helping out the duchess! I bet she tried to kill the king!"
- "Wait, she's the one who sank my ship!"
- "Constables, you've got to arrest her!"
- "*Arrest* her?! *Kill* the faerie bitch!"

The rest of the crowd starts to nod along, slowly preparing themselves for a riot. Attentive PCs might notice (Perception DC 31) that they couldn't see anyone actually shouting those lines, and that every voice had a faint high-pitched whine accompanying it. If the party doesn't figure out that someone's causing trouble, eventually the crowd starts to advance, and when either the PCs or Beshela react, Copperhat decides to reveal himself.

He teleports beside Beshela, drapes an arm across her shoulder, and says, "Good day to you, Agents of King Kelland." Then he turns his invisible "head" and makes a smooch sound at Beshela's face. She detaches herself coldly and glares at him.

Copperhat walks around and changes shape as he talks, occasionally standing at a right-angle to gravity on vertical parts of the ship. He asks if the party is trusting Beshela, then drops cryptically that the Unseen Court is having some disagreements with other archfey. Some people are even talking about waking up the fey titans to punish Risur for the rampaging metal monster. It's times like this when exciting and stupid things happen, like a little long-delayed reciprocation.

Copperhat then grabs the portal pad and teleports to the docks, amid a gaggle of dockers. He drops the dais and kicks it a few times, and then the wood and stone of the docks start to dissolve.

Conflict and Complications

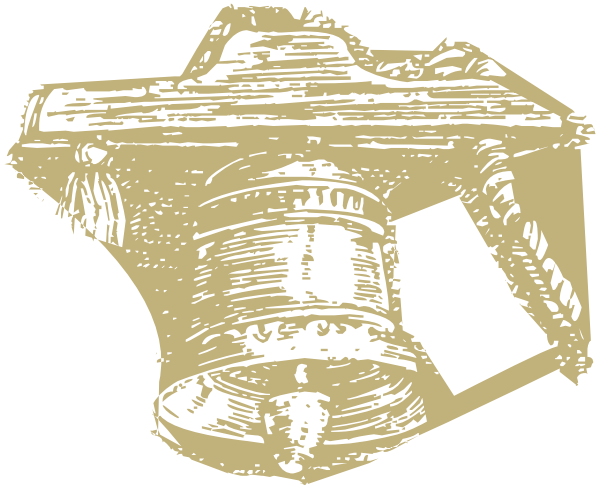
There's a lot swirling around the PCs, but where things go depends on how they act. Beshela calls Copperhat a liar and tries to get the party to kill him. Copperhat doesn't particularly want the party to fight Beshela, but if they start it and things go badly for them, he'll jump to their aid. Things might simply defuse as Beshela slinks away. Or the party might try to talk things out.

Flooded Battle

If attacked, Beshela starts with *summon the kraken*, flooding the area and leaving the crowd of dockers quite confused. Then she *fey dives* to teleport into the crowd and hide, using *insatiable thirst* on whichever enemy she thinks is most likely to cause her trouble. She'll use the crowd as cover—occasionally killing dockers—until she is bloodied, at which point she'll dive and swim away. A stormcloud of acid rain will follow her, deterring pursuit.

Lying Coward

In a fight, Copperhat laughs and enjoys the "game" for a bit, until he's bloodied. Then he uses *more confusing twin* to teleport away and slip into the crowd.



Beshela, Archfey of the Sea — Level 17 Elite Controller
Medium fey humanoid — **XP** 3,200

HP 324; **Bloodied** 162 — **Initiative** +14
AC 31, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 27 — **Perception** +10
Speed 6, swim 10
Resist acid 10, poison 10; **Vulnerable** 10 fire
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Ripplesense**
With every step you slosh water, and she appears preternaturally aware of every ripple that touches her skin.
Beshela perfectly knows the location of any creature within half a mile if there is a contiguous path of water between its space and hers.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Splash** ✦ At-Will, Basic
She's splashing water at you? That's not so ba-. Oh, and now it's a massive arm of water smashing you in the chest.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 4d12 damage and Beshela slides the target 5 squares.

✓ **Whirlpool** ✦ At-Will
Effect: Beshela uses *splash* against each adjacent enemy. It's super effective.

▸ **Summon the Kraken!** (summoning) ✦ Encounter
With a sweep of her hand, a massive tidal wave crashes across the landscape, leaving everything flooded knee deep. Somehow out of this shallow water, a massive tentacle made of seaweed emerges and attacks.
Attack: Close Burst 500 (creatures in burst); +20 vs. Fortitude
Hit: Beshela slides the target 5 squares and knocks it prone.
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, water floods a quarter-mile radius area to a depth of two feet, though it may quickly flow away based on terrain. Beshela ignores the difficult terrain of the deep water.
Beshela summons two kraken tentacles within 10 squares. They are large creatures, and each has her defenses and 40 hit points. If a tentacle is ever entirely out of the water, it is destroyed.

✓ **Insatiable Thirst** (charm, psychic) ✦ At-Will
Deadly thirst dries your mouth, cracks your skin. You are gripped by an irresistible need to drink.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one living creature); +20 vs. Will
Hit: The creature takes 10 psychic damage and suffers from insatiable thirst (save ends). Each round it must drink something before it can take any other actions. Usually this entails first spending a move action to get down on its knees near ground water, or a minor action to draw a flask or potion, followed by a minor action to actually drink.

Move Actions

▸ **Fey Dive** ✦ At-Will
She disappears into water too shallow for anyone to hide, then splashes out behind you.
Effect: Beshela teleports from one area covered in water to another area covered in water within 10 squares, as long as there is a contiguous path of water between the two spaces.

Minor Actions

▸ **Kraken Tentacle Strike** ✦ At-Will

One of the tentacles thrashes, coils around you, and begins to squeeze.

Effect: One of Beshela's summoned tentacles moves 4 squares, though it can only enter areas covered in water. Then it makes the following attack.

Attack: Melee 3; +22 vs. AC

Hit: 3d8+11 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 23). While it is grabbed it takes ongoing 10 damage.

Special: Beshela can only use this power once per tentacle per round.

Triggered Action

▸ **Corrosive Tempest** ✦ Encounter

She touches the bleeding wound, then screams. Her eyes glow brilliant indigo, and the sky overhead roils. Clouds gather in the span of a breath, and black rain begins to fall.

Trigger: Beshela is first bloodied.

Effect (No Action): Beshela gains an aura 500 of acid rain until the end of the encounter. Any creature that ends its turn without some sort of cover from the rain takes 5 damage.

Str 26 (+16) **Dex** 22 (+14) **Wis** 14 (+10)
Con 20 (+13) **Int** 15 (+10) **Cha** 26 (+16)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven, Primordial

Copperhat the Headless — Level 17 Lurker

Medium fey humanoid (spider) — **XP** 1,600

HP 162; **Bloodied** 81 — **Initiative** +19
AC 31, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 29 — **Perception** +14
Speed 8, climb 8 (spider-climb) — Darkvision
Resist necrotic 20; **Immune** poison

Traits

▸ **Faceless Trickster**

You hear an angry shout from the crowd, "I saw her sink my ship!" Then another, "Kill the faerie bitch!" Slowly the rest of the mob starts to nod along, but you realize that you don't actually see either of the people who were just shouting.

Copperhat can perfectly mimic any voice, and can throw his voice up to 10 squares. He can also disguise himself with an illusion of the form of any Small or Medium humanoid as a free action.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Poisoned Prod** (poison) ✦ At-Will, Basic

You see no weapon, but his hand grazes your skin and a line of blood wells up, stained black with poison.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +22 vs. AC

Hit: 1d4+10 damage, and the target gains ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends both).

✓ **Fanged Dagger** (weapon, necrotic) ✦ Recharge on miss

Out of his sleeve slips a slender white dagger, shaped like a serpent with fangs bared. He shoves it into your armpit and leaves it there.

Requirement: The target must be granting Copperhat combat advantage.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +22 vs. AC

Hit: 4d4+40 damage, and the target is dazed and gains ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends).

✓ **Web Ball** ✦ At-Will

He pulls a wad of silk from his pocket and throws it at your feet. It expands and engulfs you in white spider webs.

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +20 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target is encased in a cocoon of web (Escape DC 23). It is restrained, blinded, deafened, takes a –5 penalty to checks to escape this cocoon, and gains ongoing 10 poison damage while it is trapped. Other creatures can free it by making an Athletics check (DC 23), or attacking the cocoon with a slashing weapon.

✲ **Unorthodox Secondary Skill Set** (radiant) ✦ Encounter

He yanks a tangled mess of holy symbols from a pocket and throws them up into the air willy-nilly. Beams of searing light fall from the sky, badly aimed.

Effect: Copperhat makes the following attack three times. The center of each area must be at least 5 squares from each other area's center.

Attack: Area Burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +20 vs. Reflex

Hit: 15 radiant damage and the target is blinded (save ends). Copperhat can make a saving throw with a +2 bonus.

Move Actions

▸ **Confusing Twin** ✦ Encounter

He disappears, and when you look for him you instead see two of one of your allies, standing right next to each other.

Effect: Copperhat teleports 6 squares. If he arrives adjacent to a creature he can impersonate with *Faceless Trickster*, other creatures must make an Insight check (DC 28) as a minor action to tell which is the original and which is the copy.

▸ **More Confusing Twin** ✦ Encounter

He's pulled this trick before. There are two of one of your allies.

Effect: Copperhat teleports 6 squares and simultaneously turns invisible. He creates an illusion identical to an enemy, in a space adjacent to that creature. The illusion reacts authentically, requiring an Insight check (DC 28) as a minor action to see through. It is destroyed if it takes any damage.

Minor Actions

▸ **Cobweb Trick** ✦ Recharge on miss

You pull your friend free of the cocoon, but it's the fey who emerges, stabbing you with a dagger for your trouble.

Attack: Special (creature in a cocoon); +20 vs. Will

Hit: Copperhat uses an illusion to change the appearance of one creature trapped in one of his cocoons, making the creature look just like him. The illusion ends if the creature takes damage (other than from the cocoon's ongoing poison damage).

While the creature is disguised this way, when it is freed from the cocoon it makes a melee basic attack as a free action against one of its allies, if any are adjacent to it.

Triggered Action

▸ **Giggling Departure** ✦ Encounter

His clothing falls to the ground in a tattered lump, and his top hat starts to drift downward. Then a tiny arm reaches up out of the collar of his seemingly empty coat and grabs the brim of his hat just before it lands. He pulls the hat into his coat, pulling a reverse magician's trick. Then he—and his hat—are gone, leaving behind only an empty suit and laughter on the air.

Trigger: Copperhat is reduced to 0 hit points.

Effect (No Action): Copperhat turns invisible, shifts 6 squares, then teleports 20 squares and makes a Stealth check.

Skills Bluff +18, Stealth +23
Str 15 (+10) **Dex** 24 (+15) **Wis** 8 (+7)
Con 20 (+13) **Int** 19 (+12) **Cha** 16 (+11)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Elven, Primordial

Epic Rap Battles of History

Though powerful fey are notoriously recalcitrant, Beshela might change her opinion of the party if they make an effort to show they are on the same side. Normal negotiation tactics aren't ideal, and unless the party gives her a reason to trust them, she won't even listen to their defense. It *is* possible to use reason (Diplomacy DC 31) to get her to hear them out, but someone familiar with fey customs (Nature DC 16) can come up with an appropriate tactic: insult her and challenge her to a boasting contest.

This will force her, for the sake of pride, to listen to the party's version of events. If none of the PCs think of this, Rock Rackus suggests in his misogynistic way that "the fish bitch don't know what real heroes look like," and says he'll write a song about how "little miss squiddy ran away because she knew she'd get chewed up like calamari." The party takes a –2 penalty to their checks in the boast-off if it wasn't their idea, though.

Boasting Contest

There will be three rounds, and in each one person from each side will have an opportunity to speak for a minute or two, and then the other side will have a chance. Beshela always speaks for herself, but she suggests the PCs take turns.

For her part, Beshela first mocks the party, saying that she has sunk a dozen Risuri ships these past six months, but there is nothing they as defenders of Risur have done to stop her. She proceeds to recount the sea beasts she sent to devour the many captains who went down with their ships.

Next she brags about inspiring the greatest symphony Risur ever created, when she saved a handsome drowning violinist in the middle of a hurricane, and over three weeks of incessant love-making she told him all the secrets of her kingdom. But when she returned the man to shore, he remembered nothing of her secrets, and instead wrote the Hurricane Symphony to try to win her back. She let him die famous but alone.

Finally, she boasts about saving the lives of Aodhan and Ethelyn before they were royalty. They had stolen a steam warship from the Danorans, but they could not outrun the enemy fleet alone. In exchange for a promise of friendship and rights to all the sunken treasure, she awoke the sleeping fey titan She Who Writhes and lured her to destroy the Danorans.

Mechanics

In each round, let a player boast of the party's deeds. If he tries to tell about the true story about their fight against the Obscurati, let him make an Intimidate check (DC 16) to capture the proper tone to get her attention. Beshela is easily bored, though, so increase the DC to 23 if the same character goes for a second round, and to DC 31 if he tries in a third round. A particularly good insult against Beshela worked into the story earns a +2 to +5 bonus, though.

If the party succeeds all three checks, Beshela apologizes for disrespecting them, praises their honor and their boasting skills, and offers her aid. She'll not be of much use in this adventure since the party ranges far from Risur waters, but if they have any unusual requests involving ship-wrecks, she's their fey. And in Adventure Nine her trust will come quite in handy.

If they succeed two checks, Beshela warily says she may have misjudged them. She announces that they have repaid her gift—a surprise for a surprise, and so she will leave them in peace. She doesn't quite trust them, but she can see that they might be smart allies to have.

If the party fails or gets only one success, Beshela laughs at them, wishes them foul weather and nets full of hagfish, then departs.

Aftermath

As long as the party doesn't drive off Copperhat, he offers to remove the curse on the *fey portal pad*. Then he asks a favor. He has a magic item he wants kept safe, but he doesn't want to bother carrying it. He asks if the party will hold onto it for him, and says he won't mind if they use it in the meanwhile. This is *the absurdist web*, a variant bag of holding with some quirks.

He explains, "You'll have some dead bodies on your hands in the near future, and this will come in handy. Not sure quite what you're up to, but I've got a knack. I can always smell a corpse in the offing."

When Alexander Grappa implants the party's consciousnesses into bodies of Obsurati officers, the constables' original bodies will be left inert, practically dead. Grappa just plans to use variant *gentle repose* rituals to keep them fresh, but if the party accepts this gift, they'll be able to have their bodies on hand during their mission. Copperhat's master, the Voice of Rot, prophetically sensed the group's need, though he does not know what their mission is.

Parting Ways

Whether the party takes Copperhat's web or not, he extends a hand to Rock Rackus and produces an invitation from the matriarch of the Unseen Court. Unless the party really does want Rock to come with them, Copperhat will take him back to the Dreaming for some new adventures. They'll both return in Adventure Nine.

The crowd is happy either way, and Rock gets them to head off and let the party prepare for their mission, singing a song about how dockers do all the work, and other guys get to have all the fun. For the rest of the day dockers keep coming by asking how they can help. When the party ultimately does set out, their ship has the finest provisions the dockers can round up for them.

Should You Choose to Accept It

Once the trouble with the fey is resolved, and they can talk in private, Delft will discuss final plans with the party.

Mission Briefing

Delft reiterates, the mission is to find Leone Quital, take him alive, aid this Alexander Grappa, and if the bargain he demands is possible, the constables are to go through with it. The ultimate goal is to infiltrate this meeting of the Obscurati, at which point the party is free to act at their discretion. Delft would be fine with them just getting out alive and reporting the position of the Ob base, but if they can learn more about their plans and operational structure, excellent. And if they see a chance to capture or kill key members of the group, they should take it.

The first order of business, though, is to find Leone. Here Delft produces a small folio with information gathered by other RHC agents, the military garrison at Cauldron Hill, and the local police.

Leone's Departure

On Spring 14, after the colossus broke free, Leone used his steelshaping powers to tear a path for himself out of the facility and close it behind him so no one could follow him. He emerged onto the side of Cauldron Hill, which was undergoing a planar flux that transported him into the real world.

He made his way to North Shore, where he called upon an Ob-friendly Danoran named **Jacques LeBrayne**, who ferried Leone on his private yacht to one of the many ships sailing out of Flint harbor in the chaos. Leone found one, the *Cold Vessel*, that was carrying Risuri fruit to Crisllyir, and he brokered passage. They dropped him off in Alais Primos, the capital, on the 20th of Spring. The crew remember him distinctly, particularly that he seemed quite disappointed they had no wine on board.

That's all the information they have for now. Mages have tried divining Leone's location, but some magic has blocked their efforts. It's up to the constables to follow the steelshaper's trail, starting at the docks in Alais Primos. Unfortunately, the trail is 6 months cold.

RHC Assets

The party will be operating outside of Risur, and if they fall afoul of the local authorities it could be politically awkward, so Delft suggests a low profile.

The RHC has agents in most major cities around the world, and Delft suggest when they reach Alais Primos they track down **Joe Hobner**, a field agent who "retired" and opened an import business, bringing Risuri goods to Crisillyir. Delft worked with Joe back in the day, and tentatively vouches for him; he doesn't discount the risk that the man might have been replaced by a doppelganger, mimic, duplicant, or other shapeshifter.

Gear Up

He suggests they spend a day getting supplies, then leave this evening, because high tide is at midnight. If they need to requisition any gear, constable Lauryn Cyneburg (see Adventure Six) can bring whatever they need to the custom teleportation circle on their ship. Of course if they want to stay longer they can, but Delft discourages them from dallying.

In classic James Bond fashion, Delft has a new gadget for the agents before their mission. He hands over a set of *communication rings*—rings made from interlocking pieces of silver and rusted iron, one ring per party member. These were recently crafted by Harkover Lee, the king's principal minister and probably the most powerful mage in the nation. They're tiny ring gates between this world and the Bleak Gate, too small for a person to pass through, but sufficient for magical communication, such as *sending* rituals or the whispering wind charms given to the party by Gale in Adventure Two.

Delft says he wouldn't be surprised if the party ends up in the Bleak Gate again, and at least with this they'll be able to send a message home.

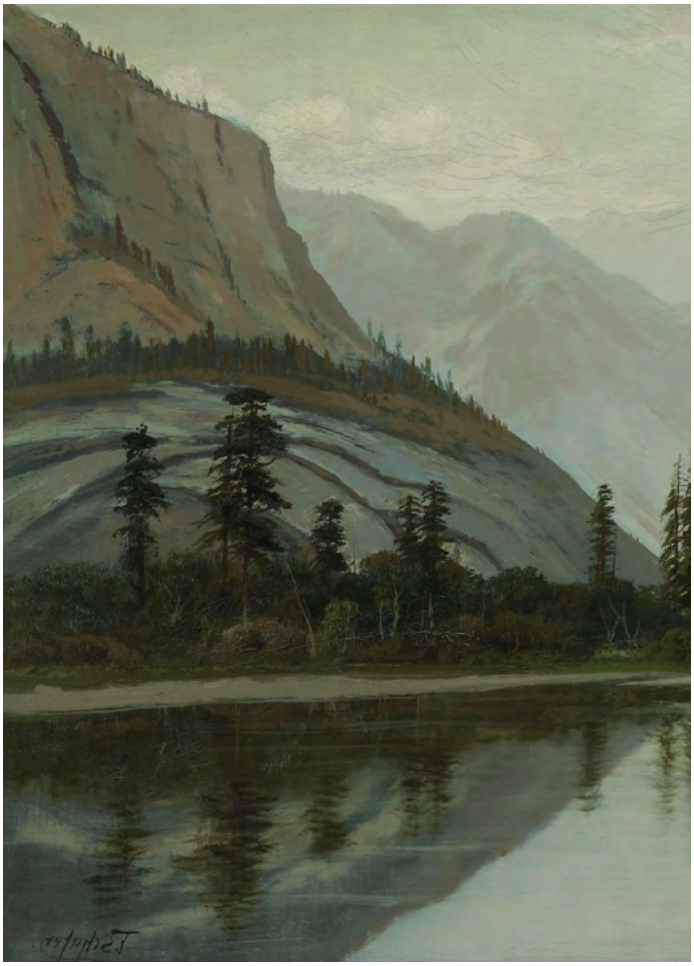
Our intention here is to give the party the option—by combining these rings and the *fey portal pad* from Beshela—to escape by ship at the end of this adventure. They'll be able to call their ship, which can planeshift into the Bleak Gate and rescue them. The planeshift effect can last for multiple naval rounds, giving the players a chance to rescue allies at sea or stop other Ob officers from escaping. Make sure before the constables leave Flint that they understand what their new gadgets do.

Leave a Light On For Us

Assuming they don't stick around and try to help Governor Stanfield, the party's ship departs several hours later in the dead of night. As they sail out of Flint Harbor they are guided by two lighthouses, shining out from either shore.

Based on Grappa's letter, the party knows they have to find Leone before the 75th of Autumn. Unbeknownst to them, even when they do find the Steelshaper, they'll likely need at least a week to get to the frozen city of Knütpara and return, then an extra day to capture and soul-bond with a group of Ob officers. So in truth they have to reach Leone by the 66th of Autumn.

Keep track of the date. The journey to Alais Primos covers about 500 miles, so the party's ship takes somewhere between 5 and 7 days.



Flavor of the Place
Alais Primos

Alais Primos sprawls in a verdant valley along the coastline, framed by a semi-circle of cultivated hills and low mountains to the north and west. **Enzyo Mons** rises at the southernmost tip of this mountain range, and the priests of Crisillyir make monthly treks to hurl objects of evil into the volcano's fiery rift. The Grand Cathedral of Triegenes sits at the caldera's edge.

Massive libraries, temples, and sepulchers fill the heart of the city, some so large they straddle the canals that carry mountain rivers between the wide-spread city neighborhoods. The city has three harbors, each feeding into a different system of canals. Some of the most grandiose cathedrals in the world are built on gorgeous tended garden islands just off the coast.

Hundreds of small chapels dot the city, and citizens are expected to visit and confess any crimes or sins at least once a week. Many of these chapels possess enchantments to compel honesty, though corrupt patriarchs and local priests with Family connections alike have been known to remove these "peacekeeping auras."

Firearms and other items of technology seen to be related to the tieflings of Danor are illegal, subject to confiscation and fines. Traditional city watchmen are reinforced by clerics capable of summoning spirits of the dead, and like every major Crisillyiri city, every church has a bell of solid gold, which can be rung in times of crisis to create a teleportation shield across the whole city.

Cloak and Dagger

Social. Real-Time. Level 15.

The party's contact in Crisillyir is a fake.

When the party arrives in Alais Primos, they notice that among the many human dockworkers, there are a few orcs or half-orcs, since Beran migrant workers aren't that unusual here. However, any character with a Passive Insight and Passive Perception of 20 or higher spots a single kobold watching them. The kobold isn't working, just observing, and if confronted he seems drunk and claims he's friends with some of the other dockers. This is one of the many spies of El Extraño, the kobold spymaster of Ber.

Joe's Hospitality

The former RHC agent Joe Hobner owns an import business in Alais Primos, or at least he did until a month ago, when the Obscurati discovered his affiliation via divination, and they sent an assassin to take him out and replace him. The killer, who goes by the name **Robert the Black**, disposed of Joe's body and has used illusions since then to maintain the façade that Joe is still alive, in hopes of luring in and killing other RHC agents.

Joe has a plain office on the ground floor of his fine house, which is just a hundred feet from the nearest canal. If the party comes to see him, the assassin does his best to play up Joe's boisterous personality and go along with whatever the party expects of him. When he learns that they're searching for a guy, he suggests they make themselves comfortable so he can pull out a map and give them suggestions. Then he offers them drinks: water, wine, or liqueur.

The water tastes oddly of parsnips, due to the hemlock infusion. The wine is poisoned with strychnine and tastes very bitter, while the liqueur's arsenic content makes it quite sweet. Characters trained in Heal can make a check (DC 22) to realize something is wrong.

Otherwise, when the first character starts to suffer from the poison's effects (see below), the assassin excuses himself to use the privy, heads down a hallway, and steps into a bathroom. He locks the sturdy door (break DC 22), opens a window in preparation of a quick escape, then retrieves a special arcanotech weapon from a cabinet. He waits with it pointed at the door, and listens for cues to whether the party is dying.

Poison Progression

Use the following mechanics for anyone who drinks poison.

Each poison has five stages, and how bad things get depends wholly on how much the character ingested. Having a high Fortitude just delays the inevitable. A character who merely sipped only suffers the effects of Stage 1. Consuming a partial drink means things will reach Stage 3, and a whole glass will eventually reach Stage 5. If the character guzzled and then asked for seconds, halve how long each Stage takes to occur.

Make an attack (+18 vs. Fortitude) against each drinker. If it hits, the poison takes effect in the listed number of rounds. Otherwise note how much it missed by, and delay the onset of the poison by that many rounds.

Effects that let a character spend a healing surge to heal can delay the poison by 1d6 rounds. A PC who makes a Heal check (DC 30) can concoct the proper anti-toxin for one type of poison; crafting it takes a minute. The antidote stops the progression of the poison. Recovery takes minutes for stage 1, hours for stage 2 or 3, and days for stage 4 or 5.

Hemlock Infusion

The fountains in Alais Primos are said to all run with holy water. Holiness apparently tastes like parsnips.

Effect: Hemlock paralyzes the drinker's muscles, first causing clumsiness, then malaise, then difficulty breathing, full paralysis, and finally asphyxiation.

- **Stage 1 (Round 2):** Victim is slowed and grants combat advantage.
- **Stage 2 (Round 5):** Weakened, slowed, and grants combat advantage.
- **Stage 3 (Round 10):** Weakened, slowed, and dazed.
- **Stage 4 (Round 20):** Stunned.
- **Stage 5 (Round 21+):** Stunned and ongoing 1 poison damage.

Strychnine Wine

Risuri tend to prefer sweet wines, but everyone agrees that Crisillyri make the best. You can only assume the surprising bitterness of this drink means it's really high quality.

Effect: Strychnine is a neurotoxin that causes nerves to react to even the lightest stimuli, leading to nausea, convulsions, frothing at the mouth, spasms that bend the body into an arch, loss of consciousness, and finally asphyxiation.

- **Stage 1 (Round 2):** Victim makes a saving throw at the start of each round or is dazed until the start of his next turn.
- **Stage 2 (Round 5):** Save each round or be stunned until the start of his next turn.
- **Stage 3 (Round 10):** As above, with a –2 penalty to the saves.
- **Stage 4 (Round 20):** As above, with a –5 to saves, and on a failure the target falls prone.
- **Stage 5 (Round 21+):** Stunned and ongoing 1 poison damage.

Sweet Arsenic

This dark, nutty liqueur must have some coffee in it. It's very quaint. The cup even sits on a saucer with an old lace doily.

Effect: Arsenic disrupts your cells' ability to use food energy, and it triggers a cascade of damage throughout the body. Normal arsenic poisoning can take weeks to kill, but a sufficiently high dose causes headaches, confusion, severe diarrhea, vomiting, and a slow coma to an eventual death.

- **Stage 1 (Round 2):** Victim takes a –1 penalty to all attack rolls, checks, and saves.
- **Stage 2 (Round 5):** As above, and victim is dazed.
- **Stage 3 (Round 10):** As above, plus the victim is voiding his bowels. No real mechanical effect, just embarrassing and unpleasant.
- **Stage 4 (Round 20):** As above, plus the victim makes a save at the start of each round or is stunned (i.e., vomiting) until the start of his next turn.
- **Stage 5 (Round 21+):** Stunned. Death occurs over the course of hours.

LEONE'S TRAIL

We suggest ways for the party to find Leone, but it's certainly possible for them to find clues a different way. You might also do an *ad hoc* adjustment to the route Leone took if you think a particularly clever idea should yield some result. That said, this is the default story for how Leone got from the Obscurati facility in Flint to his current mobile train quarters in Mirsk.

On Spring 14, after the colossus escaped, Leone escaped the colossus construction facility in the Bleak Gate, used the magical flux created by the colossus tearing a hole in the mountain to reach the real world, and made his way to North Shore. There **Jacques LeBrayne** ferried Leone on his private yacht to the *Cold Vessel*. The ship reached Alais Primos on Spring 20.

All this information so far has already been sussed out by other police and RHC investigations. It's up to the PCs to follow his trail once he reaches Alais Primos.

Leone debarked and went to a church as is traditional. In this case it was the Chapel of St. Tromboni, a humble building with pink plaster walls. Nothing of interest happened there, and he left amidst a large crowd when a mass let out.

From there he got new threads at Broclofa Apparel, a clothier shop, and then he rented a room across the street from Glazier Charani, a shop that sells glasswork and carries a small selection of premium wines. Over the following days he traveled little around the city, mostly using a young girl named **Emmelsa** to fetch him food and books. Leone has a fondness for Bromago cheese, and he made a special request for a pound of it. There are only two shops in the city that carry Bromago.

Eight days later, on Spring 28, a delivery arrived at Glazier Charani from the **Quital Vineyard**, owned by Leone's family. Quital spoke with his nephew **Piginni Quital**, who was running the delivery. He arranged for them to rendezvous at **Enzyo Mons**, a nearby volcano, where he chucked the damaged head of Grappa's previous golem body into the lava. This was his offering of sorts, hoping to be protected from any further bad luck.

From there he hitched a ride in his nephew's wagon out of the city back to his family lands. He stayed with the family at the next estate over, the **Cejakreig Vineyard**, arriving on Spring 35.

He had his nephew deliver a letter to Vendricce and leave it in a dead-drop at a public park near the rail station on Spring 44. It was picked up by a soldier at the local barracks, who delivered it to **Captain Matt Massaer**, one of a handful of captains who ferry people to the Mutravir, the Obscurati palace island.

On Spring 47, a rider arrived with a near-dead horse at the Cejakrieg Vineyard and handed over a package to Leone. The package included a dose of *needlewire*, which Leone injected into the courier so he could speak with Nicodemus and plan their next move. Leone left the next morning and caught an Avery Coast train west to Nalaam. There he linked up with a cadre of Obscurati agents, rode into Trekhom, and on Spring 50 purchased two entire rail cars and had them modified to his specifications.

Ever since then he has taken a semi-regular circuit across Drakr, which has a web of different rail routes. Every few nights he has his two cars transferred between trains. Ever since Summer 68 he has been sending out letters to different Ob officers, coordinating the path they will take to eventually arrive at Mirsk. The plan is for them all to check into a hotel in Mirsk by Autumn 74, then leave the next day, taking a train to Nalaam, then on to Sid Minos and Vendricce.

Fighting Robert the Black

The assassin waits at least five minutes before going back out, unless he hears one of the PCs trying to exit the building, in which case he'll leave by the window, walk along the narrow ledge outside, and try to catch them as they step onto the street. He prefers to strike first with his *electrocuting dazer*, then uses the more traditional *arterial strike*.

If he's facing more than one enemy who isn't poisoned, Robert will try to flee. He knows the routes from his home's roof to other buildings, and his familiarity with the city will make it easy for him to get away if he can break line of sight for two rounds.

Robert the Black — Level 16 Lurker
Medium natural humanoid (human, undead) — **XP** 1400

HP 154; **Bloodied** 77 — **Initiative** +16
AC 30, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 28 — **Perception** +15
Speed 7
Resist poison 15

Traits

▸ **Disguise Self**
As he disappears into the crowd you hear him chant a quick spell, and you can no longer find him.
Robert can disguise himself (Insight DC 30) with an illusion of any medium humanoid as a standard action.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Arterial Strike** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He flicks out a knife, binds your defending arm with one hand, and slices into your jugular.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC
Hit: 2d4+9 damage, and the target gains ongoing 10 damage (save ends). If the target is granting combat advantage, the attack does an extra 8d6 damage.

⊘ **Blinding Pellet** (weapon, acid) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He produces a tiny black ball from his coat and throws it into your eyes. It burns your nostrils and flesh.
Attack: Ranged 3/6 (one creature); +21 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6+10 damage, and the target is blinded and gains ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends both).

✓ **Electrocuting Dazer** (weapon, lightning) ✦ One Use
The thick rod is insulated with rubber. He presses a button and a pair of needle-tipped wires shoot out at you.
Attack: Ranged 3/6 (one creature); +19 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 lightning damage, and the target is knocked prone and stunned (save ends).
Aftereffect: 1d6 lightning damage, and target is dazed until the end of its next turn.
Miss: Half damage and the target is dazed until the end of Robert's next turn.

Skills Acrobatics +17, Bluff +16, Heal +16, Insight +16, Stealth +17
Str 14 (+10) **Dex** 20 (+12) **Wis** 16 (+11)
Con 12 (+9) **Int** 12 (+9) **Cha** 16 (+11)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Primordial

Kobold Rescue

Agents of El Extraño had been following Robert the Black, and they have been watching Joe's home and business ever since the assassin took up residence. They don't know Joe's affiliation, but they figure if the assassin is waiting for someone, they should wait too.

When the party shows up, the kobold spies send a runner to alert their master, and they prepare for several contingencies. Basically, let the party win or lose, then have half a dozen kobolds come in. They outnumber and take down Robert if the party hasn't yet, tend to any dying PCs, then hurry anyone who is severely poisoned out of the building. The kobolds load poison victims onto a wagon, and the orc driver sets off to a nearby

temple, where a Clergy priest performs the proper rituals to cleanse the poison. El Extraño will be waiting for them when they awaken.

Similarly, if Robert runs, the kobolds spring traps to knock him out as he's leaping between buildings. The resulting fall breaks both his legs, and the kobolds drag him back for interrogation.

If the party makes it out fine on their own, the kobolds cautiously announce themselves and ask, one group of spies to another, if they'd be willing to meet their boss.

Wanted Man

Puzzle. Montage. Level 15.

With the aid of an international spy agency, the party tracks down Leone Quital.

Wherever they happen to meet him, El Extraño calls the party to him. He sits, tiny and cross-legged, atop a stack of massive books taller than he is. He has one small book—the *codex of the little people* (page 330)—open on his lap, and smokes a long dragon-motif pipe in his other hand as he reads.

"I know all of your names. Do not be impressed yet. It is not impressive because I did not need my many loyal eyes for that. I work for the Bruse, and he told me your names while we ate dinosaur eggs in his castle. Still, it is not time to be impressed.

"I became interested in this conspiracy that has caused so much trouble, and I knew if I were them, I would kill your spies. Also, I knew where your spies were. Do not be impressed. It is not hard to guess that a former constable would still spy for his country. My eyes watched his home, and sadly they could not save him from this assassin. But then they watched the assassin, and now we have saved you.

"Leone Quital was spotted on the 28th of Spring in the Cathedral of Triegenes at Enzyo Mons. Do not be impressed that I know you are looking for him. His former associate, the gnome named Oddcog, cursed the man's name repeatedly while he fitted me for my own mechanical battle suit. It was natural you would seek the Steelshaper at some point.

"We will work together. My eyes will follow you, look for threats and targets around you, and share what they see. If you disagree, my eyes will send couriers to share what they see, so that you don't get upset and kill any of them. You should read this book, so you respect the value of little people."

He closes the book in his lap, then tosses it to you. You catch it, and the kobold vanishes in a puff of smoke. When it clears, he's gone, along with the stack of books he was using as a stool.

From here out, the party can use the kobolds to help scout out areas. In effect, they balance out the penalties the party would be getting for trying to find clues in a massive city where they're not locals. They have enough manpower now to conduct a proper manhunt, and kobold migrant workers are inconspicuous enough that no one really questions them or even pays much attention to them.

If it matters, El Extraño is a 15th level kobold wizard—if you need to stat him out, give him powers of illusion and teleportation.

The spymaster of Ber is always known as El Extraño (The Strange One), and traditionally they adopt bizarre personalities so that their true intentions are harder to intuit. Indeed, some say the actual spymaster only works behind the scenes, and that El Extraño is just a mask he hides behind. (The rumor's false, though El Extraño thinks that *would* have been a great idea.)

The current spymaster is a kobold wizard with uneven eyes, finely-tended fleshy whiskers, and exceptional skills at legerdemain. He casually mentions ridiculous and unlikely events that he participated in, and will legitimately expend powerful *teleportation* magic to make dramatic exits. He prefers to give directives, or at most offer two options that he will pursue, and is no fan of actually discussing things, at least not until someone can actually surprise him. He has a bit of dragon blood in him, and smokes pipes of cinammon-laced cloves.

El Extraño's motivation is to do his job excellently, and to maintain the honor of his title. A contingency will annihilate his body in fire should he die, to maintain the uncertainty as to his true fate.

Skipping Ahead

The party might find clues out of order. It's perfectly fine to let them jump around, though try to keep the clues natural. In particular, after talking to El Extraño they'll likely want to check out Enzyo Mons (where they can learn that he arrived and left with a guy on a wagon), though Leone's presence there doesn't actually tell them much unless they know from earlier that the wagon was owned by Quital Vineyards.

Enzyo Mons

Three miles from the city center of Alais Primos, a chapel to a minor god of fire and tribulation marks the beginning of a trail up to the peak of Enzyo Mons, an active volcano. Another chapel sits every few hundred feet over the course of a two mile trail that rises a half a mile vertically to the volcano's rim. There the Clergy have erected a cathedral devoted to Triegenes, the founder of their faith, who they claim ascended to godhood upon death.

A stained glass window above the cathedral's rostrum is continually back-lit by the glow of the lava in the caldera, and a broad balcony behind the cathedral overlooks that pit of fire. Every month priests hold a ceremony where they cast into the volcano any items believed to be possessed of evil that have been collected by the faith. They also cast in offerings of gold and jewels, though they don't throw as far; a tier just beneath the balcony, out of sight of the public, catches these valuables, which are recovered later.

The mountain is not particularly tall in the grand scheme of things, but its obsidian black face stands out starkly, making the rolling green hills around it seem even more beautiful by comparison. Due to the prayers of the faithful it has not erupted in over 700 years.

Methods of Investigation

Our goal with this challenge is to give the players the feeling of tracking a man down. How much time you want to spend on this is up to you and your players. If they enjoy interrogating folks, let them, but if they'd rather just make a Streetwise check, get some clues, and decide from there where to go next, that works too. By default, you could assume that a good Streetwise check represents deploying the kobold eyes well and finding the right person who knows the next clue; then the party can go and talk in person if they want.

We've tried to give Leone enough protections to sidestep any "instant win" options. It's fine to use magic to get information, but the party should still have to spend retracing their target's steps.

The main beats of the manhunt will probably be searching Alais Primos for clues, visiting Quital vineyard, dealing with an ambush in Nalaam, and then pinpointing Leone's train out of all the traffic in the Drakran rail system.

Pounding the Cobblestones

Mechanically, each day each PC can make a Streetwise check (DC 30) or spend their day aiding an ally (DC 15; adding a +2 bonus to his check). On a success, he finds a clue, which might narrow the area he needs to search, or might point to a person who actually interacted with Leone.

If the party finds a specific person to talk to, sometimes these people are very reticent to share the information. Getting them to share the clue might require a Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 30). These checks usually take just a few minutes, not a whole day like a Streetwise check.

For either type of clue, certain associations, knowledge, or actions can gain a bonus to the check. And of course let the players try other methods of getting the clue.

Magic CSI Tricks

Leone's an officer of the Obscurati, so attempts to magically divine his location require an Arcana check (DC 34). Divinations that just poke at the edges of Leone's activities aren't so protected, so a ritual that asks "Who did Leone meet with in this building?" or "What path did he take when he left?" would work fine.

RHC Agents

By this point the party's Prestige with Risur should grant them a lot of leeway to call in favors, and the RHC has a few agents and allies in every major city around the region. Still, the party is operating in foreign territory, so increase the effective level of any favor by 2. They can still get help, but it will take longer.

El Extraño's kobolds provide the most basic aid by going lots of places at once. RHC assets, by contrast, are limited in number but with greater expertise and resources.

We haven't planned any particular allies for the party to contact, but feel free to trot out whatever old spy movie tropes you'd like. Perhaps when they need to get the Quital family to cough up info on Leone's time there, a corrupt priest who reports to the RHC could threaten to declare an inquisition on the vineyard due to "rumors of demonic activity."

Clues to Leone

These clues form a sort of "trail of breadcrumbs"; we suggest an order they can find them, but it's just a recommendation.

If the party doesn't succeed the first time they make a Streetwise check to look for a clue in a given area, they can keep trying day after day until they find a lead. However if they fail a Diplomacy or Intimidate check, usually this hardens the resolve of the person who knows what they want, so other methods might be necessary.

Remember, sometimes it's best for less-skilled PCs to aid those who are experts, especially since the DCs here are all rather high. After all, they're looking for a man who tried to lay low, who came through this way months ago. Finding him won't be easy.

Clue 9 triggers the ambush scene Outmatched, below; the following scene Needle in a Needle Factory occurs after the conclusion of the manhunt.

- **Clue 1 (Streetwise DC 30).** Harbour bureaucrats in Alais Primos check their logs and find out when the *Cold Vessel* arrived and who processed their travel visas. This lets the party know how to narrow their search. *(PCs who call in a favor with The Family gain a +10 bonus to this check, since all the bureaucrats are corrupt.)*
- **Clue 2 (Streetwise DC 30).** After asking around to people working the right pier that day, the party learns Leone asked for where he could get some clothes, and they learn where he headed. *(Docker PCs gain a +5 bonus to this check, due to professional courtesy.)*
- **Clue 3 (Streetwise DC 30).** A lot of asking around finds workers in the district of the clothier shop who remember Leone inquiring regarding directions to premium wine shops. *(The PCs get a +5 bonus to this check if they have made a point about asking after Leone's fondness for wine and cheese.)*
- **Clue 4 (Streetwise DC 30).** Leone apparently never went into any of those shops, but the party notices a "lodgers wanted" posting across the street from Glazier Charani. *(A PC trained in Perception gains a +5 bonus to this check.)* Asking with the landlord verifies Leone was there, and that he left on Spring 28. Before he left he said he was "going to make an offering to Enzyo," referring to the volcano.
- **Clue 5.** Checking with the shop across the street determines that a shipment came in from the Quital Vineyard on the same day Leone left, though the owner doesn't recall seeing Loene. No check required; the party just has to think to ask.
- **Clue 6 (Diplomacy or Intimidate DC 30).** The priests at the Cathedral atop Enzyo Mons recall that a man threw a metal head into the volcano, and that he arrived and left with a man on a wagon. *(A PC trained in Religion gains +5 to this check. One who makes an offering worth at least 50 gp to the volcano gains an additional +5.)*

  It should be a fairly easy matter to locate and travel to the Quital Vineyard. It's a three-day ride by horse, or a week on foot.
- **Clue 7 (Diplomacy or Intimidate DC 30).** Leone's family and friends at the vineyard can be convinced to talk about his time there, and the strange rider who arrived on Spring 47. They left the next day to catch a train. It's a day's ride to the nearest train station.
- **Clue 8 (Streetwise DC 30).** The party locates a series of railroad workers at the nearest town along the Avery Coast line who can confirm Leone took a train headed west on Spring 49. A worker remembers him getting off in Nalaam. If the party wants to take the train to Nalaam, they get there in less than a day. The train

workers gossip that there are over a dozen kobolds stowed away in the cargo section, but they don't think it's worth the effort to try to get rid of them.

- **Clue 9 (Streetwise DC 30).** Rail workers in Nalaam vaguely remember Leone meeting up with a group of diverse foreigners on Spring 49, then leaving the following day headed for Trekhom. *(The PCs get a +5 bonus to this check if they got on Lord Kulp's good side in Adventure Four.)*

  As the party investigates this clue, they are set upon by a somewhat ineffectual Obscurati ambush. See Outmatched, below. Afterward, it's a one-day train ride to Trekhom. This time the kobolds buy a ticket, because Drakrans take their trains more seriously.
- **Clue 10 (Streetwise DC 30).** In Trekhom, workers at the railyard recall Leone purchasing two entire train cars for himself, then bringing in workers to make alterations to them. Two main clues will help them identify those cars.
- **Clue 11-A (Trekhom, Diplomacy or Intimidate DC 30).** Railyard bureaucrats can provide details on the two cars Leone purchased. They both resemble normal passenger cars, but with a more sturdy carriage to support more weight, and several windows on the left side covered over with steel. *(PCs willing to engage in a philosophical debate with the bureaucrats about whether behavior is predestined—like trains on a track—earn good will, gaining a +5 bonus to this check. Eschatologist PCs gain a further +5 bonus.)*
- **Clue 11-B (Trekhom, Streetwise DC 30).** Engineers or railyard workers recall that every week or two they've seen the same pair of train cars, which had special directions to transfer them between trains. They stood out because there were guards on them. The workers vaguely recall that the two cars never seem to be going the same place twice. *(Docker PCs again get a +5 bonus here, since the workers appreciate another laborer asking about their lives.)*

Flavor of the Place
Manhunt Locations

Quital Vineyard and its neighbors thread through rolling hills, often cultivating boutique fruit trees along the tops of ridges. The family homes are old, expensive, and ornate, and blessed by the Clergy. The roads between different estates are dotted with chapels.

Nalaam, an independent city state, sits high in the Penance Peaks on the border of Crisillyir. At this time of year the first snows are falling, but the city's archmages have transmuted stones and placed them throughout the city to maintain warmth. The towers that pervade the city architecture all host elaborate designs, showcasing the supernaturally-strong rock quarried here.

Money is king here. Every crime is punished by a fine, and those who cannot pay their fine are required either to work (at surprisingly reasonable rates) to reimburse those harmed by their actions, or to battle in the city's coliseum, earning money based on how well they entertain the crowds. Most police patrols here include a wizard, taking advantage of the powerful earth mana that attracted so many magic users.

Trekhom is low and flat, but exists more underground than above it. Factories and a truly vast railyard dominate the aboveground landscape, surrounded by squat buildings and dotted with a few towers that rise into the smoggy air. Most people live in tunnels, or in homes that extend two or three stories into the bedrock.

Locals don't care much about outsiders unless they're buying or building something. Elite police use borderline-evil magic such as mind control and pain-wracking necromancy to deal with lawbreakers, but criminals in exchange feel few compunctions with sucking policemen's souls or turning their enemies to stone and leaving their severed head next to a smashed pile of rock that had once been their body.

Outmatched

Action. Tactical. Level 11.

The Obscurati have groups watching for surveillance in various cities, but they're no match for characters of the party's level.

This is an opportunity for the party to show off, and for them to possibly run into trouble without actually being threatened physically. You can use this encounter in any spot where you think the party might get noticed, but if they're being careful not to attract attention they'll still be noticed in Nalaam due to divinations performed by the counter-intelligence mages there.

The attack likely occurs after the party arrives at the Nalaam rail enclave, but feel free to set it anywhere. The challenge to the party here isn't surviving; it's making sure that after they defeat the ambushers they track down their accomplices and make sure word of their snooping doesn't get back to the Ob.

Enemies

- 3 Obscurati counter-spies
- 1 Obscurati sniper assassin

Obscurati Counter-Spy	Level 15 Goon Lurker
Medium natural humanoid, human	**XP** 600
HP 72; **Bloodied** 36	**Initiative** +16
AC 29, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 27	**Perception** +14
Speed 6	
Traits	
▶ **Toxin in the Veins**	
The venom causes your throat to seize up.	
If the counter-spy hits a creature granting it combat advantage, the target gains ongoing 10 poison damage and cannot speak (save ends both).	
Standard Actions	
⊘ **Dagger Flurry** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic	
He stabs and slices you multiple times.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC	
Hit: 4d4+14 damage.	
⟋ **Gloombang Grenade** (weapon) ✦ Encounter	
He tosses a black crystal orb at your feet. It explodes in a deafening blast of sweeping blackness, completely disorienting you.	
Attack: Area Burst 2 within 10 (creatures in burst); +18 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 2d6+10 necrotic damage, and the target is blinded, deafened, and slowed (save ends all).	
Skills Bluff +15, Perception +14, Stealth +17	
Str 12 (+8) **Dex** 20 (+12) **Wis** 14 (+9)	
Con 10 (+7) **Int** 13 (+8) **Cha** 16 (+10)	
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Primordial	

Obscurati Sniper Assassin	Level 15 Goon Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, elf	**XP** 600
HP 57; **Bloodied** 28	**Initiative** +12
AC 27, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 27	**Perception** +14
Speed 7	

Traits

▸ **Deadly Precision**

Against targets granting combat advantage, the assassin rolls twice for his attack rolls and takes the better result, and his attacks are critical hits on a natural 19 or 20.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Fierce Skirmish** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

He grabs an item at hand, smashes or stabs you with it, then bolts away in the distraction.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC

Hit: 1d6+9 damage and the target cannot take immediate or opportunity actions until the end of the sniper assassin's next turn.

⊘ **Finely Tuned Sniper Rifle** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Ranged 50/100 (one creature); +20 vs. AC

Hit: 2d10+13 damage, or 2d10+37 on a critical hit.

⟋ **Distracting Peril** (fear, psychic) ✦ At-Will

Something tugs at your senses, and then you see it: the gleam of a gun barrel pointed straight at you from over a hundred feet away. A weighty sense of peril paralyzes you, and you can't look away as you wait for the killing shot to come.

Attack: Ranged 40 (one creature); +20 vs. Will

Hit: The target is stunned until the end of his next turn. The next attack the sniper assassin makes against the target deals an extra 25 damage if it hits.

Skills Bluff +11, Perception +14, Stealth +17

Str 12 (+8)	**Dex** 20 (+12)	**Wis** 14 (+9)
Con 14 (+9)	**Int** 13 (+8)	**Cha** 8 (+6)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elvish, Primordial

Tactics

The fight probably begins with the sniper, set up in a window or on a roof, using *distracting peril* on a target who is fairly out in the open, with few options for ducking into cover. Unless a PC makes a Perception check (DC 32) to locate the sniper, he shoots the following round. Then the counter-spies, waiting fifty feet away or so, break from cover and throw one or two *gloombang grenades* to keep the party disoriented and immobile. The sniper continues to fire at opportune targets, and the counter-spies use their remaining *gloombang grenades*, then advance into melee.

That's their plan, at least.

Aftermath

If interrogated, the spies reveal that they were sent after the group because a voyeuristic satyr diviner named **Krampus Snow** alerted them. Krampus is waiting for word from the ambush squad so he can report a success to his superior, Bert Facie (Han Jierre's spymaster, see the Teaser). If Krampus doesn't hear from the group within 30 minutes, he'll instead use *sending* to warn that they might be compromised. The party has that long to track down the mage, who is staying in a tower suite a quarter mile from the rail enclave. He puts up no fight, and can verify that Leone came through and is operating somewhere in Drakr.

Needle in a Needle Factory

Social. Real-Time. Level 15.

The kobold spymaster supplies the party with an obvious clue.

Once the party knows what cars to look for, pinpointing the train Leone is on requires just a lot of time watching trains come and go. The party can rely on El Extraño's eyes to watch the six main train depots in Drakr all at once. Unless the party has a particularly clever idea, the kobolds probably get the job done much faster than the constables would on their own.

Three days after the party finds clue 11, El Extraño contacts the party again. He asks them to meet him in a Trekhom needle factory at night after it closes.

Two kobolds with pistols guide the group in, and in the heart of the factory El Extraño waits for the group, absent-mindedly grinding points on the tips of short pieces of steel wire, then punching holes to make the needles' eyes.

He says nothing to the group, and responds to questions with wordless shrugs or some variant of "eh." If they bother him too much, he'll give them a long look, roll his eyes, then stand up and walk away. But on the table next to him he has left a folded sheet of paper (**Player Handout—Train Schedules**). This note should direct the party to seek out Leone in Mirsk. If they hop the first train the next morning, they can get to Mirsk half an hour before Leone's train gets there.

Mirsk Station

Exploration. Real-Time. Level 17.

The party decides when to strike as Leone's train approaches a station where the party waits to ambush.

Mirsk is where Leone plans to meet the group of Ob officers he'll be taking to the convocation, so he checks in regularly to make sure nothing catches him by surprise. If the party decides to confront Leone at another station, you can use the same map. The party might instead decide to strike Leone while his train is in motion. If so, see the Runaway, Train sidebar.

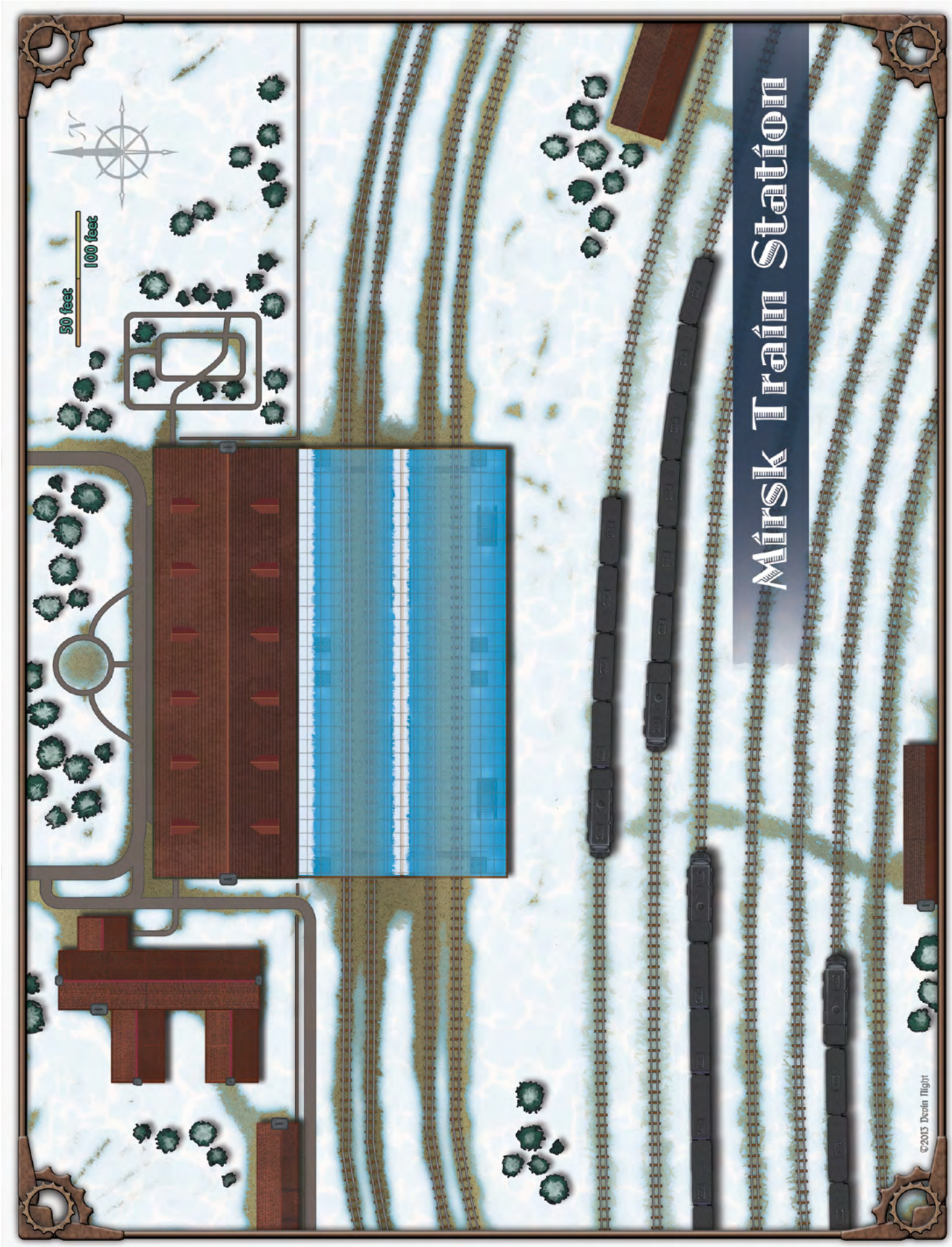
Station Layout

Visitors typically enter the station from the north, then purchase tickets and wait in the lobby. Doors open out of the south wall onto a series of railroad platforms, each of them 300 feet long. Short underground tunnels lead to the further south platforms, so that passengers don't have to jump across the tracks.

A steel-framed glass roof—resembling a half-cylinder laid on its side—covers the platforms, protecting them from the common heavy snowfalls. A catwalk is suspended above the incoming trains, to allow workers access for repairs and cleaning.

Beyond the platforms, dozens of tracks extend further south, running in parallel and occasionally interweaving or leading to wheelhouses where cars can be swapped out from the train as a whole. Tunnels criss-cross beneath these tracks too, and every few hundred feet one can find mighty cranes that can lift heavy materials from car carriages.

Even in the dead of night, there are always at least a few dozen workers or travelers active in the main station and on the platforms, which is lit by *light* spells in ornate glass lamps.


Mirsk Train Station
50 feet
100 feet
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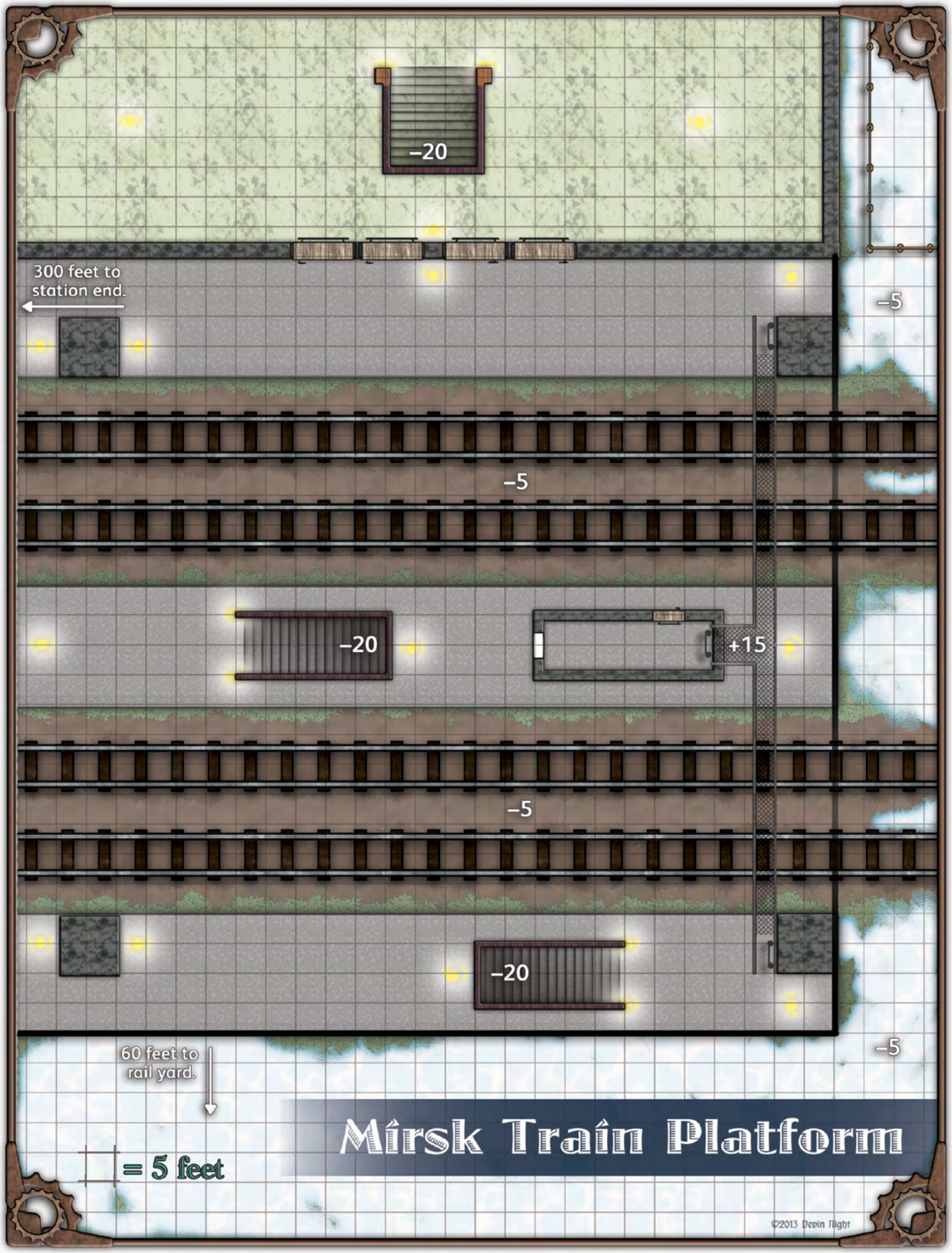
–20
300 feet to station end.
–5
–5
–20
+15
–5
–20
–5
60 feet to rail yard.
= 5 feet
Mirsk Train Platform
©2013 Devin Night

Travel Arrangements

Leone has sent letters to the seven Ob officers he's responsible for transporting, telling them to wait in different locations by specific dates. On those dates he'll have one of his other operatives give a predetermined code phrase, then ask the officer to come with him, alone. They then take some combination of travel methods to reach Mirsk. Only Leone knows where to go from there.

At every leg of the journey, Ob operatives are on the look-out for people who show up at multiple locations, and they are trained in the proper magic to see through most illusory disguises. Nicodemus is worried about nations or other powers discovering their island meeting and blockading or bombarding the place, so they're running their officers all over the place to make pinpointing the location nearly impossible.

When the party does manage to get Grappa in control of Leone's body, they'll just have to wait in Mirsk for the officers to arrive. Grappa will bring them in one by one, magically disable them, and perform a ritual to implant a PC's consciousness into their body. Once that's all done they'll travel by train to Vendricce, where they'll board a ship (along with three Crisillyiri Ob officers Leone had nothing to do with) and sail to Mutravir Island.

Runaway Train

If Leone decides to run, or if the party goes for a dramatic attack while on a moving train (perhaps fearing that Leone might have reinforcements waiting in a station), the battle might be constrained to the long line of rail cars.

Normally the train will be moving at between 60 and 100 squares per round. If someone falls off (1d10 falling damage per 10 squares of speed), Leone's cars are close enough to the front of the train that the character might have a chance to jump back on (Athletics DC 23, 3d6 damage on a failure), climb up, and run back into combat over the course of a minute. The entire train is over 300 squares long.

Leone will try to strand enemies by detaching rear rail cars via telekinesis as a minor action. Detached cars slow down by 2 squares per round, so the gap will start at 2 squares, then 6 squares, then 12.

When Leone becomes bloodied, he'll tear the train cars free from the tracks and derail the whole thing. Everyone on board must make an Acrobatics check (DC 16) or be knocked prone and take 20 damage. The sudden collision with the ground ignites the firegems in the fuel car, creating a massive swath of fire. The locomotive boiler will explode (Close Burst 5 centered on the front of the locomotive, *Attack:* +25 vs. Reflex, *Hit:* 50 fire damage, *Miss:* 25 fire damage).

The derailed train cars actually take about 3 rounds to grind to a halt, but it isn't really feasible to fight until the train comes to a complete stop. Really, how often do you get to derail a train? Feel free to bend the rules a bit so Leone can run away and board a moving train.

Leone's Cars

Leone has two cars: a private suite with bedroom, bathroom, office, and kitchen (car 3); and a security car with lodging for a dozen men and two special compartments containing an advanced bleak golem, similar to the one the party faced in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer* (car 4).

These cars are distinctive from the outside because several of their windows are covered with welded-on sheets of steel. In particular, Leone is very private and was never a big fan of the sun, so he has no windows at all in his quarters.

At any given time, Leone has four of his guards watching either end of his car, with four resting and four ready to activate the golems in case of an attack.

Escape Contingency

When Leone does have to stop for the night, he makes sure that the locomotive of his train (car 1) is facing an open track and has fuel at hand. He makes sure his car is always right behind the train's fuel car (car 2). In the event of an attack he is prepared to use his steelshaping powers to decouple any of the cars behind his two, leaving just four cars in the train (locomotive, fuel car, his suite, and the guards' car).

His powers are strong enough to then accelerate the cars. The train would start at speed 0 on the first round, then increase its speed by 6 each round thereafter, to a maximum of speed 160. If he has to move a full train, he can only increase its speed by a feeble 1 per round.

Arrival Timeline

When Leone's train arrives at a railyard, first it spends ten minutes splitting into three parts: the front four cars (locomotive, fuel, suite, and security cars), the middle freight cars (cars 5–14), and the rear passenger cars (cars 15–30). A second locomotive attaches to the freight cars and pulls them off onto a spur. A third locomotive attaches to the passenger cars and pulls into station, stopping at the north platform. Then finally the front four cars pull into station, stopping at the south platform.

For both sections of train at the station, the locomotive and fuel cars pull through and stop just east of the station platform. You'll end up with numerous passenger cars stretching out along the north platform, and Leone's two cars at the eastern edge of the south platform.

Leone and his guards have an opportunity to debark and go into the station, which they seldom take. However, the train does loiter here for half an hour so workers can perform basic maintenance, empty the lavatories, and restock its food and water. During that time passengers debark and board from the north train platform, resulting in a fairly crowded and busy area.

Depending on the time of day and whether the train will continue on, either the two trains will reconnect and continue onward, or they'll move separately to parking areas for the night. If the train is going to stop overnight, Leone's two cars are usually detached from the locomotive and fuel car, then transferred to another train. As mentioned above, Leone always makes sure the train is pointed toward empty track, so he can flee if he needs to.

Attack

The party might simply wait for Leone to get off the train. (He won't.) In that case, they'll likely end up fighting on the platform while hundreds of people are present. The benefit to this attack is that Leone won't have a clear track ahead of him. He can still hop on a train and have it start moving, but a few rounds later he'll need to devote a full turn to shoving another train off the rails in order to clear the track ahead.

Drakran Heavy Railroad
1
2
3
4
N
5-14
15-19
21-24
20,25,30
26-29
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Other parties might wait until Leone's train is parked for the night. This would have the fewest witnesses, but Leone would easily be able to accelerate the train and flee. Clever parties might block the track, but they'd be best served blocking it with something non-metallic.

Finally, Leone is at his most vulnerable when his cars are being transferred between trains, because he'll have few innocents to use as human shields, and will be far from any open tracks to flee on.

Stats for Leone and other Obscurati forces are presented in **Appendix E: Recurring Enemies & Allies**.

Reinforcements

If the party got found out—either by the ambush team in Nalaam, or perhaps by Governor Stanfield—Leone will have more guards. Use your judgment to decide what is a likely increase in defense that would be right for your group. You might just increase the number of minions if your party is a "run in and shoot" type, or add more diverse foes if you think your party would enjoy creeping through a hostile railyard, taking out enemies here and there until they can corner Leone.

Enemies

- Leone Quital (page 299)
- 2 advanced bleak golems (page 300)
- 12 Obscurati arcane marksmen (page 300)

Terrain

It's best to make some prop to represent the rail cars, something you can move across the map, since the train might be in motion. Also, Leone has the ability to rearrange the battlefield.

Tactics

Leone is confident and quite bitter, especially if he recognizes the constables. Unless he's outright outnumbered, he won't flee until he's bloodied. That said, he tries to keep his distance, flying over and behind train cars to try to string his enemies out. He relies on a makeshift metal shield to block attacks, creates a *shrapnel vortex* to clear out enemies if they're in a defensible location, and will fling heavy metal objects (or PCs in metal armor) as improvised projectiles.

At the start of the second round of combat, four of Leone's guards emerge from their car and join the fight. Though the undercarriage of cars provide superior cover, the arcane marksmen can shoot around corners.

At the start of the third round, two hatches open on the roof of the security car as the bleak golems climb out as heavy reinforcements. Leone will generally try to stay close enough to the golems that the party can't just outrun the massive beaters.

At the start of the fourth round, eight more arcane marksmen arrive. Some of them might just shoot out of their windows if they can see the PCs.

When Leone is bloodied, his power flares briefly, letting him tear entire trains off the ground and move them. He'll place some as cover, move others to hang over PCs so they'll be crushed if they don't get out of the way. If you want to be really mean, place two cars 3 squares apart, parallel on opposite sides of a PC, then put a third car floating above the gap, ready to fall and crush 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 constructing the colossus, reporting directly to Roland Stanfield. When it broke free he fled, and eventually he was contacted by Nicodemus himself, who knew Leone could still be of use.

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.

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, hoping his homeland could field an army of automata instead of shedding real soldiers' blood. 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.

He helped train and educate the colossus, but once he got an inkling of its actual purpose he rebelled. His first attempt earned him a *geas* to keep him from talking. His second attempt got him killed, though he managed to transfer his mind to a golem body. His third attempt got *that* body killed, and now is stuck in the body of his murderer, Leone Quital.

Grappa looks on life with casual aplomb, and is a bit of a bumbling professor, full of clever ideas and bubbling with enthusiasm, but not properly grasping the dangers involved.

Talking and Fighting

Once he recognizes his attackers as those who ruined his operation in Flint, Leone becomes scornful. He challenges them, shouting that he was trying to create something that would change the world, but that small-minded gremlins like them would of course be afraid that such a bold creation would of course show the uselessness of their existence. He blames them for nearly destroying the work of a genius, and accuses them of being the brutish enforcers of a hundred generations of dim-witted superstition, and that they value the lives of insignificant fools. People like them, he says, are only useful because he can use their bodies as stepping stones to previously unwitnessed heights.

Withdrawal

Once Leone is bloodied, he'll try to run for a train that he can flee on. If the party strikes at the platform, that means heading south, where the freight cars from his train as still slowly moving, and several other trains are parked or slowly running down their lines. It would be hard to map this chase, but the cluttered and confusing moving environment should make for a memorable battleground.

Aftermath

The PCs should try to take Leone alive. Unless they intentionally kill him, or knock him unconsciousness underneath a levitating rail car or in front of an oncoming tree, the party can choose to knock him out when they drop him to 0 hit points. It's up to them to decide when to wake him up.

If the party places *mage cuffs* on him, he won't be able to use his steelshaping powers without knocking himself back out. He'll content himself with just talking to the party, trying to get a gauge of them without revealing anything of his plans. A few hours later, though, he'll drift off to sleep, and Alexander Grappa will gain control of Leone's body, and can talk to the party. (This only happens if Leone is asleep for several minutes, not simply unconscious or affected by magical sleep.)

OOPS?

What if the party accidentally kills Leone?

In this case, Grappa can manage to contact the mind of the nearest person, imprinting the instructions of how to find the frozen lich giant in the bottom of the rift in Knütpara. There, the party will be able to bring Leone's body temporarily back from the dead, at the cost of giving over his soul to the lich. Grappa will still be able to guide them into the Obscurati palace. We weren't planning for him to survive the adventure anyway, though his consciousness could make another appearance in later adventures, if you want.

NO RUSH

If the party dallies for months, Grappa eventually grows desperate on the 60th of Autumn. At night he bolts from Leone's quarters, dominates his guards, then finds someone who can cast a Sending ritual for him. He sends the party the message: "Lackadaisacal idiots! Urgent news. Mindmaker here, my cover blown. Steelshaper at Mirsk railyard, but moves daily. For Convocation, frigate *Naphaeon* in Vendricce. Don't abandon me."

Leone manages to wrest control of himself back at dawn, immediately contacts the Ob for emergency aid, and is given a magic item to suppress Grappa's consciousness. When he reaches the Obscurati palace, Nicodemus will remove Grappa for good, and the Ob will be on high alert for intruders. It's almost certain the party won't be able to sneak in using Ob officer bodies, but that doesn't mean they can't try something else.

Loot

The party will likely want to divest Leone of his *+4 steelsilk mantle* (page 331).

ACT TWO: Applied Eschatology

In this act, the party heads north to a glacial rift controlled by frost giants loyal to the Obscurati, where they must reach a frozen lich and trade Leone's soul for Grappa's aid.

WITNESSES AND THE OBSCURATI

The fight with Leone probably has a large audience. If people see the party knock out Leone, will word get back to the Obscurati? Probably. But if the party follows through with Grappa's plan, their original bodies will end up effectively dead. The Ob will perform divinations, and they almost certainly know the PCs' names, but the magic will verify that they're dead. So when "Leone" shows up alive and well, and brief magical checks show that he's not being mind-controlled, they'll accept his story that he managed to escape the party and kill them.

Mind to Bargain

Social. Real-Time. Level 15.

Alexander Grappa explains his insane plan.

Once Leone finally falls asleep, Alexander Grappa slowly takes control of the man's body. He struggles a bit to talk, since until now he hasn't tried speaking in Leone's body, but he gets the hang of it after a few minutes of slurring and stammering. He can move just fine now, but warns them that any sudden jolt could wake Leone, and that he's completely unable to fight for dominance when the man is conscious.

Grappa thanks them, then gets down to business and explains his plan. He discovered toward the end of his time with his previous employers that they were working with a group of frost giants based in the tower city of Knütpara, trapped over a thousand years ago in a massive glacier. He only managed a bit of investigation of his own, but he learned there was an unnamed frost giant lich whose phylactery was lost in that city, and that the last time he was destroyed a few centuries ago, he apparently reformed stuck in the ice.

The lich's specialty was ripping souls out of people and planting other souls into the shells of their bodies, mostly as a service for allies of the Demonocracy, to let them be immortal, or so that they could infiltrate groups opposed to the demons. It was apparently quite effective, and could even fool magical detection. Grappa theorized that his former employers were trying to free the lich, but before sending his letter to the constables, he performed a divination and learned that the lich is still trapped in the ice. The other frost giants found him, but apparently haven't dug him out yet.

Grappa risked only two Sending rituals while trapped in Leone's body. The first was to contact Tinker Oddcog (see Adventure Six). The second was to ask if the lich would share his knowledge of soul transfer, and it agreed, on the condition that he free it.

"Do not doubt my intentions," Grappa says at this point. "We shall definitely destroy him once we get what we want. I'd hate to loose some ancient evil being on the world."

Moral Objections

Grappa has prepared dozens of possible arguments to convince uncomfortable PCs that this is the best solution. We suggest you ponder what might sway your players if you think they'll balk. In particular, Grappa says repeatedly that the Obscurati are cautious, and that there's no other way the party will be able to reach their secret meeting.

It will take place in the Bleak Gate, so it's not even possible to just get an army and attack the place. Sneaking in is the only way, and not doing this will let a far greater evil succeed, judging by what the conspiracy has done so far.

Grappa tries to keep his knowledge of the meeting secret so that the party has to work with him, but if they insist he share before they agree to help, he'll do it, all while pointing out that he's too decent a man to work in such a cutthroat business.

Lich Location, Ob Operation

The city of Knütpara lies further north in the Shawl Mountains, about a three-day trek from Mirsk. Three towers still rise above the level of the glacier, and the frost giants have smashed through their walls to get access deeper into the glacier. A river has carved a rift in the glacier, and after several years of excavation, the giants have reached the chamber where the lich is trapped.

In truth, the giants want nothing to do with the lich, and they actively make sure he doesn't escape. Rather, this city was damned by Triegenes centuries ago, and flaming stones fell from the heavens to strike it down. The Obscurati enlisted the giants to recover those extraterrestrial rocks, which were over years picked up in the glacier. The Ob use these rocks to create oil infusions for the Wayfarer Lantern and its derivatives.

The glacier is also a test-bed of sorts for uses of the lantern. It was here that the Ob perfected different mixes of oils that can create different world states, and now they just use the lantern magic to smooth operations. The giants use slave labor—mostly dwarf and human prisoners sent north by Drakran authorities and sold off instead of making their way into normal prisons. They are kept docile by means of a series of lanterns burning the right mix of extraplanar oils.

The Ob researchers here aren't combatants, but the party will have their first taste of the pervasive mind-altering magic the conspiracy has in store for the whole world, and they'll have to be careful or else they'll be easy pickings for the giants.

Leone Complication

The party will need to bring Leone along and keep him alive, unless they can spare enough time to leave him locked up, go clear the rift of threats, return, and then bring Leone to the lich. Along the way, the steelshaper will be unable to use his magic as long as the party keeps him in *mage cuffs*, but he'll look for many opportunities to escape or sabotage them, especially once they get into the rift where he has Obscurati allies.

Leone probably still doesn't know about Grappa, and he'll be confused why the party has taken him alive and are heading into a frozen wilderness. He starts off quiet, obedient, and observant, trying to get a gauge of the group. He might try to strike up a friendship with one PC in order to bargain for his life, or at the very least to make the party treat him like a human, making it harder to kill him. Plus, when the moment presents itself, he'll be ready to try to get them killed. We offer a few suggestions for ways he can cause trouble.

Into the North

Exploration. Montage. Level 13.

The party must reach the glacier-trapped city of Knütpara while keeping Leone alive and in custody.

Knütpara lies about 20 miles north-east of Mirsk, but in the mountainous and icy terrain it's difficult to traverse more than 8 miles in a day. A well-prepared party is at little risk of dying on the way there (we assume everyone will be shelted by *endure elements*, or at least warm coats), but Leone will try to escape if the party finds itself in a bad place.

Orienteering

Each day, have one PC who takes the lead make a Perception check (DC 20) to find the best route through the mountains, and a Nature check (DC 20) to guide the party safely through.

Then each PC—as well as Leone—must make an Endurance check to cross the mountains safely (DC 14 if both checks succeeded, DC 20 if one was failed, and DC 29 if both failed). Each PC that fails the check falls prey to fatigue or distraction at the wrong moment and finds himself in a perilous situation, such as clinging to an ice wall with a frayed rope and a broken ice axe, or caught in the path of a sudden avalanche. If multiple PCs fail, they're all imperiled at the same time.

Escaping Peril

Whenever a perilous situation occurs, create a quick encounter where those who succeeded the save are in no immediate danger, but those who failed have at most three rounds before they plummet to their deaths.

Those who are imperiled might be able to escape with an Athletics check (DC 29) to leap or climb to safety, but if they fail by 5 or more they'll fall immediately. Those who are safe need to succeed a DC 20 check to lend assistance, but if they fail by 5 or more they'll end up imperiled too.

A character who fails or doesn't escape in time suffers some lasting injury from the fall (see sidebar below).

LASTING INJURIES

Treat a lasting injury as an affliction.

Lasting Injury

The character has a painful combination of broken bones, torn flesh or ligaments, internal bleeding, and damaged organs. Without magical healing it'll be weeks before he's back to fighting shape.

Level 13 Affliction

The character starts at stage 3. Whenever he takes an extended rest the character can make an Endurance check (DC 20) to improve his condition by 1 stage. Failure by 5 or more worsens the condition one step.

- **Stage 1:** Recovery.
- **Stage 2:** Frail. The character has vulnerable 5 all, and his maximum healing surges are reduced by 1.
- **Stage 3:** Wounded. The character has vulnerable 5 all, is slowed and weakened, his maximum hit points are equal to his bloodied value, and his maximum healing surges are reduced by 2.
- **Stage 4:** Crippled. The character has vulnerable 5 all, is dazed, immobilized, and weakened, his maximum hit points are equal to his bloodied value, and his maximum healing surges are reduced by 4. He must be carried since he cannot even crawl.
- **Stage 5:** Coma. The character is unconscious, cannot heal hit points, and cannot take rests. Each day he may make a death saving throw. If he fails three times, he dies. If the saving throw result is a 20 or higher, this affliction improves one step.

Sabotage

Should the party find itself imperiled, Leone will feign disinterest (Insight DC 27), but if he has a chance he'll try to bull rush someone off a cliff (+16 vs. Fortitude), then make a run for it. If the party is doing pretty well and avoiding peril, on the third day Leone will use a sharp rock he has hidden away to slice a climbing rope, imperiling at least one PC.

His ideal escape plan is to knock someone with a fair amount of metal off a ledge, then levitate them telekinetically, taking damage from the *mage cuffs*. He'll shout that they need to take the cuffs off now or else he'll drop them. Even then, though, Leone's much weaker out on a tundra with no handy trains to use as weapons.

The Three Towers

Action. Real-Time. Level 15.

The party must sneak past a patrol to enter the glacial rift and find the magic Grappa needs.

After three days, the gaps between the mountains become choked with glaciers a hundred feet thick or more. The party comes across centuries-old ruins of the pre-Clergy civilization, including, at the entrance to what was once the city's valley, a stone pillar carved with words in Infernal. They read, "Gaze ye upon Knütpara, eternal bastion of the Demonocracy, built to withstand any army's siege."

Beyond lies a seemingly trackless glacier, obscured by snow drifts and hazy white winds.

Giant Territory

Several thousand frost giants live along the mountains surrounding Knütpara, but only a handful venture down to the glacial rift. As long as the party doesn't look for trouble, the main body of the frost giants here won't bother them.

The giants who live at the glacial rift are led by the Khangitche, a warrior named Odul Chuvan. Under his command are 2 demonic death bears, 3 frost giant rangers, 3 frost giant mages, and 16 frost giant guards.

Normally these are divided into five groups:

1. **Patrol.** 2 rangers, 2 bears. They head out to find the party once they breach the perimeter.
2. **Surface Tents.** Frost mage, 4 guards. They might spot the party approaching the towers, and they respond to the sound of combat from below. They can descend to sub-level 1 through a shaft in the ice with giant-sized handholds.
3. **Rift Defenses.** 5 guards. They are scattered around the different areas of the rift, walking the same routes over and over again, stopping every fifteen minutes or so to chat with someone when their paths cross. They each have a whistle to blow in case of attack. (Not a horn; they don't want to risk an avalanche.)
4. **Reserves.** Frost mage, ranger, 3 guards. They rest in area O, and only come out if the alarm is sounded.
5. **Mine**. Odul Chuvan, frost mage, 4 guards. The khangitche oversees a few dozen prisoners as they dig out the ice looking for meteorites.

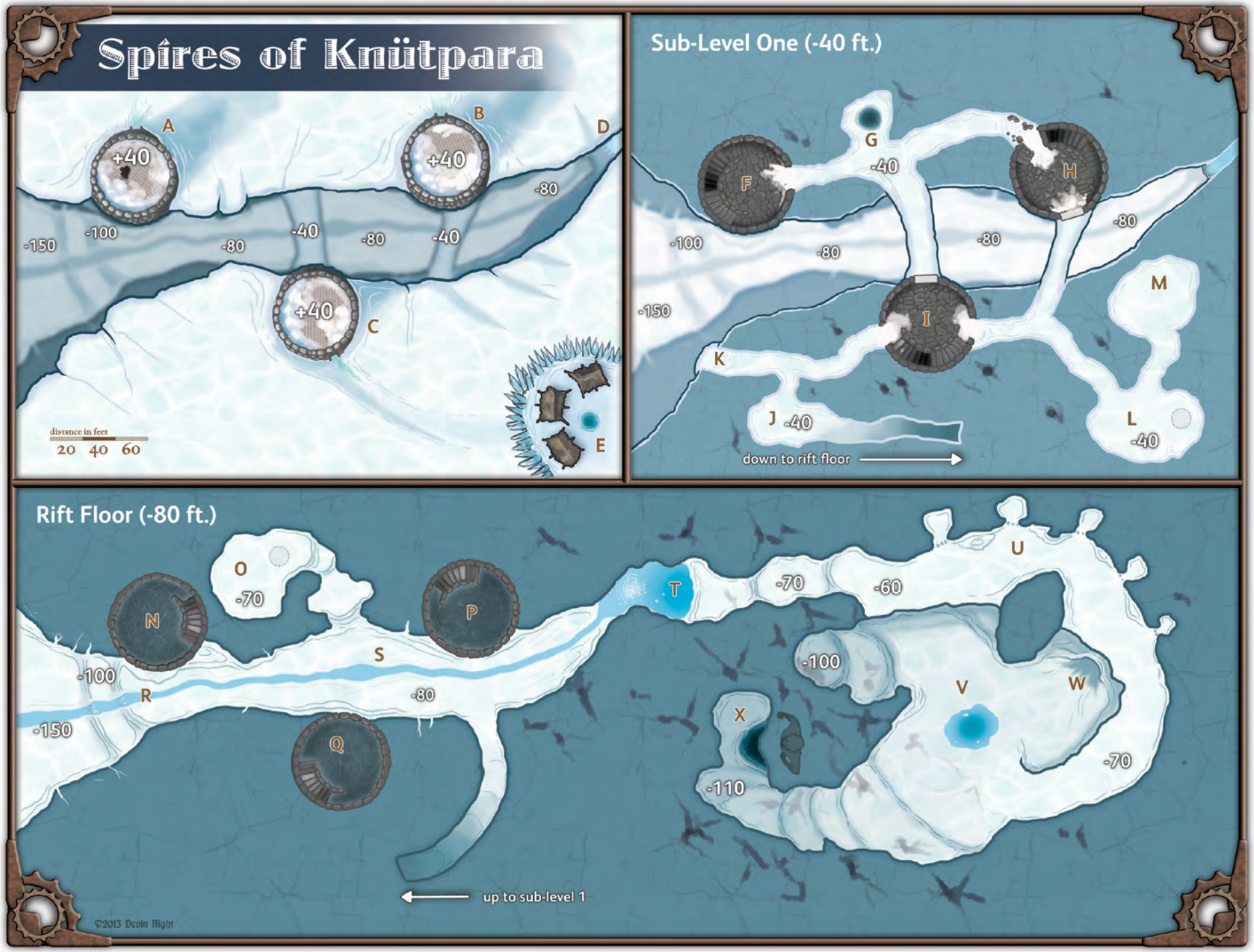
Additionally, two Obscurati wizards reside in area M, and they are responsible for maintaining the test lanterns and recording the results of their experiments on the prisoners.

The Approach

The surface of the glacier is dotted with small totems, spaced every few hundred feet. These consist of dwarf, human, and animal skulls, with frozen red entrails dribbling from their mouths. The frost giant rangers that patrol the glacier are accompanied by hideous demonic creatures, seemingly immortal beasts they call "deathbears." They have no skin of their own, so the giants let them wear polar bear pelts, and the only way to kill them for good is to make sure their bodies cannot lie in a pool of blood. Additionally, they have a preternatural sense that alerts them whenever a living creature gets within 10 feet of any of their totems.

The rift itself is easy to find, simply by following the only stream that manages to flow across the glacier. Though aligned just right to be warmed above freezing by the sun during the day, it dies each night. If the party follows the riverbed it has carved, they find totems lining each side, which easily alert the deathbears. Two of the rangers take the beasts to check out what is approaching.

The stats for these enemies are listed in the next encounter.


Spîres of Knütpara
A
B
C
D
E
+40
+40
+40
-150
-100
-80
-40
-80
-40
-80
distance in feet
20 40 60
Sub-Level One (-40 ft.)
F
G
H
I
J
K
L
M
-100
-80
-40
-80
-80
-150
-40
-40
down to rift floor
Rift Floor (-80 ft.)
N
O
P
Q
R
S
T
U
V
W
X
-100
-70
-70
-60
-100
-80
-150
-110
-70
up to sub-level 1
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Enemies

- 2 Knütpara frost giant rangers (page 300)
- 2 demonic deathbears (page 300)

Sneaking

The frost giants are large and easy to spot from several hundred feet away (Perception DC 18). Sneaking past them is impossible unless the party consciously avoids the totems. Even then, they must each first succeed a Stealth check (DC 15) to get within sight of the towers without being found by the rangers. They can move to the two north towers (Areas A or B) without being spotted, but those towers have no easy entrance. Getting to the entrance of the south tower (Area C) requires sneaking past the frost giant surface camp (Stealth check DC 18).

Moving through the rift without being spotted by the guard patrols is actually not too hard (Stealth DC 18). Sneaking within 50 feet of the rangers out on the glacier surface is harder (DC 25), while entering the surface camp and descending the shaft is incredibly risky (DC 31).

A single failed check simply raises the suspicion of the enemies present; they'll take actions to investigate, but usually the PCs will have a round or two to find a hiding place. Give PCs a bonus to their second Stealth check if they suggest a good hiding spot, or make use of another skill or power to aid their evasion. A second failed check while a giant is investigating means the PC has been spotted, and combat will almost certainly ensue.

More Sabotage

The party might want to gag Leone, or even better wait until the man falls asleep and Grappa can take over.

Once Leone realizes where they are, he'll wait for a chance to spoil the group's stealth, shouting that he's one of their allies, and the party is here to kill them. He knows there's an Ob operation here, but he has no idea what they work on. One way he can alert the giants without the party realizing is if he uses his steelshaping to tug a giant's weapon, making it suspicious. Leone will take damage, so he can only do this once or twice.

The Glacial Rift of the Frost Giant Khangitche

Action. Tactical. Level 15+.

By stealth or assault, the party makes its way to the bottom of the rift.

Here we detail the locations of the rift. Stats of the enemies guarding it are listed in **Appendix E: Recurring Enemies & Allies** (page 296).

Terrain

Most areas are scattered with patches of thick snow drifts (difficult terrain) or ice (Acrobatics check DC 10 +2 per square entered in a given move action, or else fall prone).

Climbing along the icy walls (Athletics DC 20) is made much easier with an ice axe or similar implement (+10 bonus).

Unless he is resistant to cold damage, or has magical protection from cold weather, a character who falls into icy water must make an Endurance check (DC 22) or else lose a healing surge. He then makes another check each hour that his clothes remain wet. A character with no healing surges who fails one of these checks takes damage equal to half his bloodied value.

MOOD LIGHTING

The bottom of the rift (Area S) has *wayfarer's lanterns* spaced every 40 feet, hung from ice hooks. They dimly illuminate the entire bottom of the rift in a soothing blue light. Similarly, the prison mine (Area V) is lit by lanterns that shed piercing red light, which invigorate those nearby.

Whenever a creature ends its turn within 25 feet of one of these lanterns, it might be affected by whatever planar energy it is manifesting.

Trait

▸ **Lantern's Manifestation** ✦ Aura 5 (or 10 for larger lanterns)

A new emotion overtakes you.

Whenever a creature ends its turn in the illuminated area, make the following attack.

Attack: Close Burst 5 or 10 (creatures in burst); +15 vs. Will

Hit: The target falls under the lantern's effect (save ends).

Special: If a creature fails three consecutive saves, it falls fully under the lantern's effect for 5 minutes.

If a creature succeeds ends three consecutive turns unaffected (either because the attack missed or the creature succeeded its save), it becomes resistant, and cannot be affected again by any lantern with the same planar energy for 5 minutes.

A creature can choose to let itself be affected by the lantern.

The lanterns in Area S pacify. A creature affected by this magic cannot take hostile actions, and it treats all creatures as trusted friends. If another creature attacks it, it automatically breaks free of the pacification and cannot be affected again until the end of the encounter.

The lanterns in Area V invigorate. Creatures affected gain a +2 bonus to Strength and Constitution checks and related skill checks, and to weapon attack rolls. They suffer a –2 penalty to non-weapon attack rolls.

Breaking Lanterns

The lanterns here are as easy to break as a normal one.

Persistence and Resistance

If a creature knows what lanterns do, it can choose to actively to resist. On its turn it can spend an action to focus on maintaining its original state of mind. This lets it add +2 to its Will defense against the lantern, and add its Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma modifier (whichever is highest) to its saving throws to break free.

Once Grappa is in control of Leone's body, it might help to have him examine one of the lanterns and explain to the party how they can resist such magic in the future.

A. Overlook Tower

This 140-ft. high tower sits at the very edge of the glacier, and it overlooks an icy gorge. Likely many dangerous and wonderful dungeons and tombs lie in the caves that branch off from the gorge, but those are beyond the scope of this adventure. The gorge extends a few hundred feet, beyond which the glacier continues.

There is no entrance to this tower at this level. The windows are barred and iced over. Stairways — sized for dwarves, not giants — spiral up to the roof and down to the sub-level one. This tower was once a torture prison for enemies of the Demonocracy. The old furniture — racks, vices, hooks and chains — have been pushed to the edges of the room.

When he's not overseeing the mine, Odul Chuvan stays here with two of the female guards, who are his consorts. A massive bear-skin bed covers the middle of the floor.

B. Dragon Tower

Carved stone dragons adorn this building's walls. The tower was a breeding aerie for dragons used as aerial cavalry by the Demonocracy, and ancient cracked eggshells and discarded teeth have been swept to the walls. A search of the top floor (Perception DC 16) discovers a steel-bound book on techniques of dragon breeding and rearing.

When not needed in the mine, one frost mage and one guard live here.

C. Ink and Elm

This solid black tower once had a crown of branches like an elm tree. Most of them have snapped off. The handful that remain have been decorated by Odul Chuvan, who likes to throw prisoners and see if he can stick them on the stone spikes.

This used to be the frost giant's main route down into the rift, but now it's mostly just used by the rangers so they can bring out their pet deathbears. The walls inside are scrawled with graffiti in charcoal and bloody smears. This tower is the only one with an entryway at the surface level: a door smashed through its wall, with only a stitched-together bear-hide curtain to keep out the snow.

D. Waterfall

The small stream that crosses the glacier drops eighty feet here into a 10-ft. deep pool at the bottom of the rift.

E. Surface Camp

- 1 frost giant mage, 4 frost giant guards

Three huge tents sit inside a circular fraise of ice spikes. A frost mage lives in one tent, and four guards are split between the other two tents. A shaft descends twenty-five feet to Area L, and then there's a fifteen foot drop to the ice cave.

F. Outlook Tower, Middle Level

The frost giants smashed a hole in the wall here, and knocked out parts of the ceiling to get more space. Occasionally pairs of giants will use this spot for a private rendezvous. Frozen elk-intestine condoms lie discarded or stuck proudly to the icy walls. Stairs lead up and down from here.

G. The Chute

- 1 frost giant guard

This shaft descends fifteen feet, then has a fifteen foot drop to Area O. The giants prefer to use this route now, rather than go through the lantern-enchanted gorge floor. South of the chute, the tunnel opens into the rift, and a twenty-foot thick ice bridge crosses the sixty foot gap to Area I.

H. Dragon Tower, Middle Level

- 1 frost giant guard

An actual door here (20-ft. tall, red steel, free from ice) leads out to an ice bridge, but it was originally used exclusively by dragons. The frost giants also smashed out a wall on the other side, and they use it as their kitchen.

Anyone who opens the door from either side triggers a blast of fire (*Atk:* Close Burst 3; +15 vs. Reflex; *Hit:* 5d6+5 fire damage).

I. Ink and Elm, Middle Level

The door to the north here is framed by carved stone signs inviting (in Infernal) guests to enjoy the finest food and parties of the north. A careful search inside can uncover a bottle of thousand year old wine, frozen solid. It's disgusting.

J. Meteor Storage

- 1 frost giant guard

Thornsenkertz, one of the Obscurati researchers, cheekily made a snowman here and placed bits of unneeded rocks in the wall to spell out, "METEOR STORAGE."

A sled is loaded with four dozen clay jars, each filled with meteors from different extraplanar locations.

If the party spends a few weeks in a lab creating oil from them, they can get 50 uses for the lantern to create effects equivalent to low-level non-instantaneous spells like *spiderclimb* or *invisibility*.

K. Pissing Point

The frost giants use this spot as a latrine by letting their waste freeze and then throwing it off into the rift. The Ob researchers actually set up a small igloo for privacy here.

L. Giant's Ballroom

- 1 frost giant guard

This is the giants' primary method of ingress these days.

M. Obscurati Research

This chamber has been subdivided with wooden poles and animal-hide curtains, splitting it into lodging, laboratory, and living room. The researchers keep a tiny replica of the Wayfarer's Lantern burning oil from the plane of air, Avilona, which somehow keeps the room at a comfortable temperature without melting the ice walls.

The two thirty-something researchers here, a man named **Gangenwieck** and a woman named **Thornsenkertz**, were recruited from minor border states. They've gotten quite fond of creatively grumbling about the living conditions (an "insect collection" board where the pins all hold giant-endemic body lice; an ironic "visitors guide" brochure extolling the virtues of all the giants they loathe, plus recipes for ice soup and ice souffle; a log book next to a chess board, with 8 solid pages marking the date and a single move per person, with all the moves just going back and forth between two positions to no advantage; etc.).

Their laboratory has extensive notes on nearly 50 planes from which different meteors originated, and the effects they had on the prisoners. Their method of observation was to place a lantern outside one of the cells in Area U, light it from afar, and observe with a telescope.

N. Outlook Tower, Ground Level

The bottom of the tower is choked with ice and barely navigable. A few dwarf skeletons can be found here: they were slaves who escaped and hid where the giants couldn't reach them, but they couldn't sneak out.

O. Main Quarters

✦ 1 frost giant mage, 1 frost giant ranger, 3 frost giant guards

The frost giants take shifts resting in this room on pelt beds. They use an old banquet table for repairing clothes and boots, and have a metal tray in one corner filled with bloody snow they munch on for snacks.

P. Dragon Tower, Ground Level

The frost mages cleared this area of the stones that were once different floors, and now they use it as a meditation site. The ice that coats the walls is etched with thousands of runes.

Q. Ink and Elm, Ground Level

Here the giants keep a haphazard collection of treasure looted from the city. Most of it is just shiny brass—doorknobs, sconces, and the like—but underneath a layer of ice and a pile of cheap metal, a few prizes wait, like a 10-ft. diameter solid gold chandelier or a mahogany headboard decorated with rubies. The party can also find here *Reason, +4 diplomatic rifle* (page 331), its stock carved out of a demonic thigh bone, originally crafted by a familiar dwarf mercenary, **Kvarti Gorbatiy** (see Area U).

R. Second Waterfall

The waterfall river flows west and into the gorge past the tower. The movement of the glacier has actually torn the towers from their original foundations, which is easily noticed here.

S. Rift Floor

The ground here is perilously icy and sloped. Whenever a creature walks here, at the end of each move action it must make an Acrobatics check (DC 10 +2 per square traveled) or else it falls prone and slides 1 square toward the frigid stream.

The lanterns here try to pacify creatures. See Mood Lighting (page 105).

T. Waterfall Pool

The water here is 10 feet deep. Subtle runes carved into the edge of the pool (Perception DC 30) have enchanted the water so that any creature that enters it has any magical cold protection suppressed for one hour. (Dispel check d20+15, targeting only effects that grant cold resistance or immunity.)

A character who tries to climb along the wall must make an Acrobatics check (DC 15) to avoid the waterfall. Failure means the character is knocked into the water.

U. Prison Cells

✦ 1 frost giant guard

The five cells along this ledge have ice bars thick enough that the exhausted dwarf and human prisoners within haven't yet managed to break through them. Even when they get close, the frost giant mages repair the damage. A total of 32 prisoners (13 humans, 19 dwarves) stay here, including **Kvarti Gorbatiy**.

The dwarf mercenary used to plunder this city for treasure, and long ago he crafted a rifle using the thigh bone of the lich here as a stock. His interest in the Obscurati was piqued during Adventure Five, *Cauldron-Born*, and when he learned that frost giants were operating in his old stomping ground he came to check it out and got captured. His rifle was taken as a trophy.

V. Prison Mine

✦ Odul Chuvan, 1 frost giant mage, 4 frost giant guards

During the day, the prisoners work in two 8 hour shifts of 16 people apiece. They head down the tunnel into the mine tunnels (Area W), hack into the glacial ice with picks, and then cart the pieces up to the pool here, where they slowly melt in the lantern light. The giants recover any meteorites in the bottom of the pool, and the water runs down to the drain (Area X).

The lanterns here try to invigorate creatures. See Mood Lighting (page 105). For details of this location, see Frozen Souls, below.

W. Mine Tunnels

The prisoners work down this shaft, which leads to several tunnels. The tunnels are just large enough for a giant to walk through, and at least one giant is with the miners at any time, holding a lantern to keep them invigorated. The tunnels are fairly orderly and boring. The prisoners usually only find a handful of meteorites each day, and they're seldom larger than a thimble.

X. Lich Drain

In their excavation, the giants found a figure frozen in the ice: a giant lich from the time of the Demonocracy. On the Obscurati's orders they did not dig him out, but his magic subtly influenced the water flow from the melt pool in area V, causing it to flow past him. The giants responded by digging a drainage hole right in front of the lich, so any warm water would not manage to thaw out his prison.

For details of this location, see Frozen Souls, below.

Winter Cell

Social. Real-Time. Level 15.

An Obscurati cell collaborates with the frost giants, performing mind-control experiments.

Gangenwieck (male) and Thornsenkertz (female), the two Ob scientists still active here, are not true believers. They don't know the conspiracy's larger plans, and they just think they're researching some magical weapons that have fringe uses for crowd control. They are in no way combatants, but they're intelligent, and will try to use the lanterns in Area S to their advantage.

If confronted, they'll claim they hate working here and will confess to most everything: they're working with some conspiracy that they think is based out of Trekhom, prisoners get sent here to work for the giants digging up meteorites which they infuse into lantern oil, and they've done some experiments with it. But they lie about the lanterns at the bottom of the rift, saying that their purpose is to "establish a kineto-static inertial field to stabilize the glacial flow in the rift; basically, it keeps the rift from collapsing."

The technobabble helps sell the lie (Insight DC 30), but a character who studied the lantern's schematics gains a +5 bonus to see through their bullshit, and anyone who studies the energy of the lanterns from afar (Arcana DC 23) realizes they have an enchantment aura, not telekinetic.

Friendly Villains

Regardless whether they're found out, the two scientists gladly give full details of the rest of the rift, and they suggest the party head down to the rift floor, kill the Khangitche, and free the prisoners. They hope the party will head down without them; they'll try to watch from one of the ice bridges over the rift, and once the party is in the pacifying lantern light, they'll order them to wait for the Khangitche to arrive so everyone can talk about the situation reasonably. And to make sure the giants aren't too scared, the scientists add, why not drop your weapons and implements, and stay there politely?

If somehow this works (and remember that failing to break free for three consecutive rounds makes the effect last for five minutes), the two scientists play a quick game of rock-paper-scissors that results in Gangenwieck having to go through the freezing waterfall to alert the Khangitche. Since the Ob scientists understand how the lanterns work, they concoct a plan that can kill the party.

Rules Lawyering

A few minutes later, the frost giant mage from Area V comes out of the waterfall. He is surprisingly friendly, but says that his master gave him an errand to run before negotiations can start. Then he walks out of the rift and up to one of the ice bridges overhead. From there he calls down and asks, politely, for the party to step under the bridge, and stay there so he can show them something exciting. When they do, the mage uses *ice shaping* to remove one end of the bridge. The other end begins to crack, and one round later the whole bridge will collapse, dropping several tons of ice on the party.

Give each PC a saving throw to break out of the pacification effect. Those who succeed can act to get out of the way, but those who fail obediently wait to see the exciting thing. Anyone still left in the same spot one round later might be crushed (*Atk:* +18 vs. Fortitude, *Hit:* 90 damage and the target is knocked prone. *Miss:* 45 damage.)

Frozen Souls

Action. Tactical. Level 17.

The frozen lich who can free Grappa and help the party infiltrate the Ob lies in a heavily guarded mine filled with prisoners.

Odul Chuvan and some of his giants wait in Area V while sixteen prisoners work in the mine, under the watch of one giant guard. The khangitche is not much of a talker, but he can be intimidated into just leaving if the party explains that they've killed the rest of his forces.

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 tries to go through life content. All his affairs are in order, and recently he set himself on what he thought was the noble cause of trying to learn more about the people behind the colossus. He would have been fine dying on his mission, but after being captured and tortured by the frost giants of Knütpara, he realizes he wasn't prepared for being powerless.

XAMBRIA'S SOUL SEARCH

If one of the PCs has had the consciousness of Xambria Meredith stuck in his head since Adventure Three, she points out that if the lich can give Grappa a body, maybe he can do the same for her. It just requires the party to find someone whose soul they're willing to rip out. If the party is about to kill someone anyway, Xambria suggests not letting a good living body go to waste.

Xambria would prefer a woman's body, all things considered. She'd be content with Thornsenkertz, though she'll lament that she didn't have more time to take her pick of the healthiest female villains.

Likewise, if a player has been itching to change something about his character's class or skills, the lich could perform a little bit of soul surgery.

Enemies

- Khangitche Odul Chuvan
- Frost giant mage
- 4 frost giant guards

Approach

The ledge overhead has prison cells, and unless the party calms the prisoners down their excitement at a possible rescue will alert the giants. Kvarti Gorbatiy is in his cell when the party arrives, and he'll whisper an explanation of the situation, how he got here, and what the lanterns below do. He's heard the giants discussing a frozen wizard who is down the tunnel to the southwest. He laughs that got his rifle's stock from the wizard's thigh bone.

He's the only prisoner worth much in a fight, and if the party gives him a gun he can provide overwatch.

Kvarti Gorbatiy	Level 15 Ally
HP 126; **Bloodied** 63	**Initiative Count** 20
AC 28, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 25	**Speed** 5
Standard Actions	
⊘ **Overwatch** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic	

Effect: Kvarti fires a rifle, dealing 15 damage to a creature within 50 squares, or fires a pistol, dealing 10 damage to a creature withi 20 squares. That creature takes a –2 penalty to attacks during its next turn on attacks that do not include Kvartiy as a target.

Tactics

If a fight breaks out, the giant in the mines orders the prisoners back into the main area immediately. They arrive at the start of the second round, first 4 humans, then the frost giant guard, then a dozen humans behind him.

If the party is still up on the ledge, the frost giant mage will try to use *ice shaping* to turn the ground beneath some of the PCs into a ramp, dropping them into close combat. The giant guards then rush any PCs who are farther away, trying to keep the groups split up.

Odul Chuvan will grab prisoners or chunks of ice to throw at PCs before closing, then will try to grab PCs and throw them into the gully on the western side of the room. When he becomes bloodied he'll call his guards back to him to form a protective ring, but he won't run.

Loot

When Odul Chuvan falls, his armor seems to melt away, leaving behind just one chunk of ice that radiates magic. This is his *+4 frost giant plate.*

Aftermath

There's the very real logistical problem of getting the prisoners to safety. If none in the party can teleport to a refuge, they might direct a Sending ritual to Lauryn Cyneburg, who can teleport to Mirsk and hike here in a few days. Kvarti is willing to stay and keep everyone safe; there's enough supplies to last that long, at least.

Which leaves the issue of why they came here in the first place.

The Leone, The Lich, and the Snowglobe

Social. Real-Time. Level 15.

The frost giant lich makes a bargain.

In Area X, the lich's towering body (easily 18 feet tall) is visible through more than a foot of ice. When the group is ready, someone can place a hand on the ice. The lich's eyes glow with white light, and the glacier shudders as its muffled voice seems to come from all directions. It is a man of few words, and asks what they have come for.

The party should explain their needs here (or Grappa can, if Leone's asleep). First, they need to remove Leone's soul from his body so Grappa can control it. Second, they need to learn the magic that can implant their souls into other people's bodies.

The undead mage is a man of few words, and demands that after he gives the group the knowledge it needs, they must break the ice trapping him and let him go free. He promises not to harm them. If they do not free him, he will curse them to turn their blood to ice. Anyone remotely familiar with the Demonocracy should have a good sense that such curses were well within the power of those who served the demons.

Feel free to play up the lich as much as you want—it has all these hideous plans to march into the frozen wastes and awaken the Lost Riders who will sweep across the land carving out a new domain for him to rule over, etc. etc.—but the truth is that the lich isn't making it out of here.

Soul Ripping

Even if Grappa is in control, Leone starts to panic now and tries to run. The lich tells the group that it needs a crystal to hold the man's soul. A glass sphere is best, but a piece of ice will work. It tells them to press the victim to the ice wall, place the crystal on the back of his head, and name the person whose soul is to be removed.

When they say Leone's name the entire glacier shakes, and the ice around them turns black. Cracks fissure the walls and Leone screams, flails, tries to shove the party away with his steelshaping even to the point of searing the flesh beneath his manacles. Then he goes limp, and the glacier becomes still and blue again, but the crystal has turned black.

Grappa groans, bonks his head a few times to clear it, then smiles to the party and thanks them. The party could keep Leone's soul in the crystal, but Grappa suggests breaking the crystal to let him pass on to whatever afterlife awaits him. (If they use ice, it would melt eventually anyway.)

Henceforth, Grappa can use all of Leone's powers. Additionally he has some mild enchantment and charm magic that aren't pertinent in combat. He can also access a fair number of Leone's memories, but their *geases* are both still in effect. Grappa can play a convincing Leone, but he cannot tell the party that Roland Stanfield is part of the Ob, for instance.

Demonic Techniques

Now the lich says he shall grant them the knowledge they asked for. Anyone with the Ritual Caster feat can learn the ritual Mortal Possession. All they need to do is place their hand on the ice and let the lich implant the knowledge in their mind. The ritual is detailed in **Player Handout—Obscurati Covers**.

Releasing the Lich

His part of the bargain done, the lich tells the PCs to free him. If they don't, he curses impotently at them after discovering that he actually does not have the power he thought he did.

If they do—either by melting the ice or shattering it—the lich laughs confidently. He airily boasts that he will offer the PCs a place in his future domain, once he has had his revenge, but before he can even finish the last word, his jaw falls off. Confused, he manages to push himself free of the ice and take a single step, at which point his leg snaps in two. He faceplants, then shatters into thousands of icy shards. The various pieces fall down the pit and are washed away.

The Demonocracy is gone, and the Ob already found and destroyed the lich's phylactery. Without their support, the lich is just a normal undead with a very brittle corpse.

The Fitting Room

Social. Montage. Level 15.

The party must decide whether to take Grappa's offer, and which Ob officer each of them wants to inhabit.

Assuming the party is willing to place their souls in the bodies of others, now all they have to do is wait for the officers to arrive. From Autumn 72 to Autumn 74 Leone's operatives will bring the arrivals in one by one to his hotel suite. Grappa can get them alone then magically waylay them.

For the sake of avoiding a causality glitch, you might want to just gloss through this and simply make each player use the same Obscurati Officer they played in the teaser. For now just give them the Officer Cards from the teaser, not the full bios.

Once everyone has a new body, they have to figure out what to do with their original ones. Grappa can get Gentle Repose ritual scrolls to keep the party's bodies from dying of hunger and thirst, and El Extraño's kobolds can watch over them in the hotel room. Or, if the party has Copperhat the Headless's *absurdist web*, they can carry their bodies with them.

Contest, Crisis, and Rejection

From time to time you will have to make attacks against the PCs' Will defense to see if a host temporarily regains control of his body. Some hosts are more mentally resilient than others. Their attack bonuses for this situation, known as a **contest**, are listed here, as well as their own Will defenses for when the party performs the ritual on them.

Ken Don. +19. Will 27.
Gran Guiscard. +12. Will 20.
Livia Hatsfield. +14.* Will 22.
Kiov Hetman. +12. Will 20.
Oscan Ligurio. +9. Will 17.
Bruce McDruid. +12. Will 20.
Xavier Sangria. +16. Will 24.

If a contest leads to a crisis, give players a chance to play it off if anyone sees them acting strangely, though onlookers will probably report their suspicions to Nicodemus. If a full-blown rejection occurs, it's up to you how punitive you want to be. Perhaps the confused host stumbles into the rest of the party, who have a chance to tackle him before anyone else sees. Or perhaps he panics and starts screaming when he sees ghosts hovering outside his window.

If Nicodemus sees a PC in rejection, he'll have a basic idea of what the magic does, even if he doesn't know how it works. He'll quickly try to round up everyone else who came in the same group (i.e., the PCs, Grappa, and a few priests from Crisillyir), and will start asking very prying questions, forcing PCs to either lie convincingly or risk a gestalt attempt. Luckily, with Grappa around they're at no risk of a crisis, but they might not realize that.

* *Livia is actually loyal to Risur, acting as a "double agent" without any affiliation with the RHC. If a character allows Livia to have control and then has the rest of the party explain the situation, it will become possible to maintain gestalt with her permanently.*

Rehearsal

Show the group the first part of **Player Handout—Obscurati Covers**, and let them become familiar with the rules for contests, crises, and gestalt. Then its time for each of them to attempt their first gestalt, to get a sense of their cover story and the personality they need to maintain.

One by one, have the players go through the process of contest (a few times if necessary), and then once they achieve gestalt give them the full character bio of their host body. Then watch the constable in Oscan Ligurio be creeped out, and let the party figure out what to do with Livia when they realize she's actually on their side.

Buddy System

For the trip to Vendricce, Grappa can stay by the PCs and make sure when they sleep that they don't suffer a crisis. But once they reach the convocation, it'll be up to them to stay out of trouble and maintain their cover. Grappa suggests they request rooms so that at least two of them are in each room. That way in case one has a crisis while falling asleep the other can handle it.

With all that covered, it's time for the party to infiltrate the conspiracy. The group boards a train on Autumn 75 and over the next three days makes their way to Vendricce. There, around noon on Autumn 79, they board the ship *Naphaeon* along with a few priests of the Clergy, and they sail twenty miles off the coast to the Obscurati palace.

Vile Ritual

One of the PCs can perform the Mortal Possession ritual, but Grappa is probably better equipped. An expert at mind magic, he has an effective +26 bonus to his Arcana check against each victim's Will defense. Their Will defenses are listed above; Grappa cannot fail.

ACT THREE: Into the Lion's Den

In this act, the party has a chance to devastate the conspiracy, but a misstep could spell their doom.

OBSCURATI PALACE OVERVIEW

Here we detail the locations of the Obscurati palace. Stats of the enemies present here are listed in **Appendix E: Recurring Enemies & Allies** (see page 296).

The total catalog of all the defenders of the palace and its surroundings are:

- 36 Obscurati bookpin guards
- 16 Obscurati arcane marksmen
- 3 shadowlisks
- 4 senior ghost councilors
- 1 Ghost Council swarm
- Vicemi Terio
- Catherine Romana
- Cula Ravjahani

The other Ob officers aren't viable threats to the party at this point. Nicodemus the Gnostic could probably wipe the floor with all of them, but Andrei von Recklinghausen, whose body he is wearing, would stop him if he realizes they are the same PCs he encountered on the railroad, forcing Nicodemus to flee rather than fight.

Obscurati Palace Locations

Exterior, Mutravir Island

In the Bleak Gate, during the day everything is dimly lit, and at night it is pitch black. No breeze blows, and even the sea is eerily still. The island has been cleared of any sort of monster, though the waters around it are still host to the ghosts of a crew of pirates who dared to set foot on the island fifty years ago. They were captured by the Clergy and chained in their ship, which was set on fire. They burned alive and then sank into the sea. Only a young cabin boy managed to escape, swimming from the burning ship to *Cacciatrece de Nav* (Area J), where he crawled into a cave and died of his wounds.

A. Garden

- 8 Obscurati bookpin guards
- 4 Obscurati arcane marksmen
- 2 shadowlisks

A gravel path circles a reflecting pool, and small *wayfarer's lanterns* glow with nourishing light, keeping alive rows of flowers and other greenery. The grass and trees elsewhere on the Bleak Gate version of the island are dry and lifeless, but the Obscurati see this garden as proof that they can change the world for the better.

The defenders listed above are split into two groups. Normally these guards patrol the path around the palace, each group making a circuit every 12 minutes, so guards pass by any given area every 6 minutes. Each group is the equivalent of a Level 14 encounter. (Darkvision, Passive Perception 24. Shadowlisk pierces illusions.)

B. Obscurati Palace—Central Building

- 4 Obscurati bookpin guards
- 2 senior ghost councilors

Pristine white plaster at ground level gives way to dramatic religious carvings near the roof, which peaks at 55 feet above the ground. The clay tiles of the roof gently slope, though without rain the gargoyles (actual stone carvings, not the monsters) are somewhat useless in the Bleak Gate.

Two large windows sit on either side of the entrance at ground level, while a row of windows spans the entire face of the second floor, 15 feet up.

A small detachment of guards keep watch at the entrance. (Passive Perception 23.)

At any given time two senior ghost councilors will be assigned the task of strolling through the central building, on the look-out for trouble. If they spot any, they rush to alert Vicemi Terio and the rest of the Ghost Council, who will respond appropriately. (Darkvision, Passive Perception 20.)

C. Obscurati Palace—West Wing

- 1 senior ghost councilor
- 1 shadowlisk

The roof here peaks at only 40 feet above ground. Small chimneys dot the rooftop. Sixteen windows on each floor are nearly all unlit from within. This hall has few guests, at least not living ones.

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to beach
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+200
+40
45 90 135
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At any given time, one senior ghost councilor walks the halls, accompanied by a shadowlisk, to make sure no one tries to sneak in. (Darkvision, Passive Perception 24. Shadowlisk pierces illusions.)

D. Obscurati Palace—East Wing

- 4 Obscurati bookpin guards

Identical to the west wing, except that here most of the windows will have lights on during waking hours. Two pairs of bookpin guards make slow circuits of the wing.

E. Lighthouse

- 2 Obscurati arcane marksmen
- 1 senior ghost councilor

A recent addition to the palace, the lighthouse serves as a giant *wayfarer's lantern*. With a minute's preparation, oil of different combinations can be lit, producing either a coherent beam that can be aimed up to three miles away, or a broad glow that illuminates the entire island and the sea out to a half mile. This can create various magical effects, but it is primarily primed to be able to make the island coterminous between the Bleak Gate and the real world, in case an emergency evacuation is needed.

The lighthouse also has a mechanism that can feed different varieties of gas to the lanterns in different parts of the palace. Since all the mansion's gaslamps can function as *wayfarer's lanterns*, this allows an operator here to affect different parts of the palace with different types of planar energy.

The top floor of the lighthouse rises 100 feet above ground level (and a further 40 feet above sea level). It is serviced by two interior freight elevators. About sixty feet up is a large storage area that has tanks of gas with different planar energies, as well as precisely labeled casks of lantern oil, one for each of the five faction proposals (Arboretum, Colossus, Miller's Pyre, Panarchists, and Watchmakers, see Into the Night, page 122). Clever parties might steal some of this oil and use it in a lamp of their own, granting themselves special powers as listed in Brave New Worlds (page 120).

Normally a ghost councilor is on hand to control the lighthouse and operate the lamps. Nicodemus or Vicemi can contact the operator magically from anywhere on the palace grounds. Additionally, two marksmen sit around very bored.

F. Carriage House

- 18 Obscurati Bookpin Guards
- 8 Obscurati Arcane Marksmen

When the guards are not active, they rest here. They have converted the carriage and horse stalls into small rooms. At any given time half of the guards are actively patrolling, while the other half are here resting or preparing food, cleaning, etc.

G. South Balcony

The ground level exit of the lighthouse feeds onto this wide balcony, which is normally unlit. Stairs lead down 40 feet to the sea, where boats could row in and deliver visitors or supplies.

H. Beach Trail

This plain path leads to the flatter beach on the eastern shore, and eventually circles around to the main docks, about two miles away. In the Bleak Gate there are no waves, no surf, and no sea breeze.

I. Sea

The water here is fairly shallow here, only about 10 feet deep. If a character with the Spirit Medium theme stands near the sea in the Bleak Gate—perhaps on the beach trail or the south balcony—he hears pained cries coming from the large rocky island called *Cacciatrece de Nav*, the Slayer of Ships.

Further out, the still waters around the island are patrolled by three experimental steam-powered warships, which are equipped with arcane shields to keep out supernatural threats. They are nimble but relatively slow compared to other warships, though still fast enough to chase off the sea creatures of the Bleak Gate. They hit hard, but are not particularly resilient. Their stats are presented in the Panicked Evacuation encounter (page 130).

J. Cacciatrece de Nav

This massive spire of rock rises dramatically out of the sea, wider in its middle than at its base, and looking like it would blow over in a strong enough storm. A small cave has been eroded in the south side, and fifty years ago a young pirate died here, stranded and desperate. His skeleton remains, scattered by the tide within the cave.

No one has yet found the boy's skeleton, but if someone enters the cave his ghost will appear (either in the real world or in the Bleak Gate). He begs to be brought back to the mainland. If the party agrees and collects his bones, they can be aided by the *Ghost Ship* in the Panicked Evacuation encounter (page 130).

Interior, Ground Floor

Gaslight lamps illuminate the mansion except where noted. These lamps are all potential *wayfarer's lanterns*, controlled by a ghost councilor in the lighthouse (Area E). The lighthouse operator just gets to choose what kind of gas to feed in; the lamps can still be shut off or destroyed locally. Normally, though, they just shed pleasant light.

Since guards are likely to move around, we list them by general area (see areas A through F above), rather than individual rooms.

K. Grand Foyer

This vast entry hall stretches eighty feet in either direction, and has twenty-foot ceilings. Luxurious red rugs guide walkers across a marble floor with a repeating zig-zag pattern in black and white. Fine wood covers stone walls, and rare pieces of painting, sculpture, and jewelry are on display here and throughout the palace.

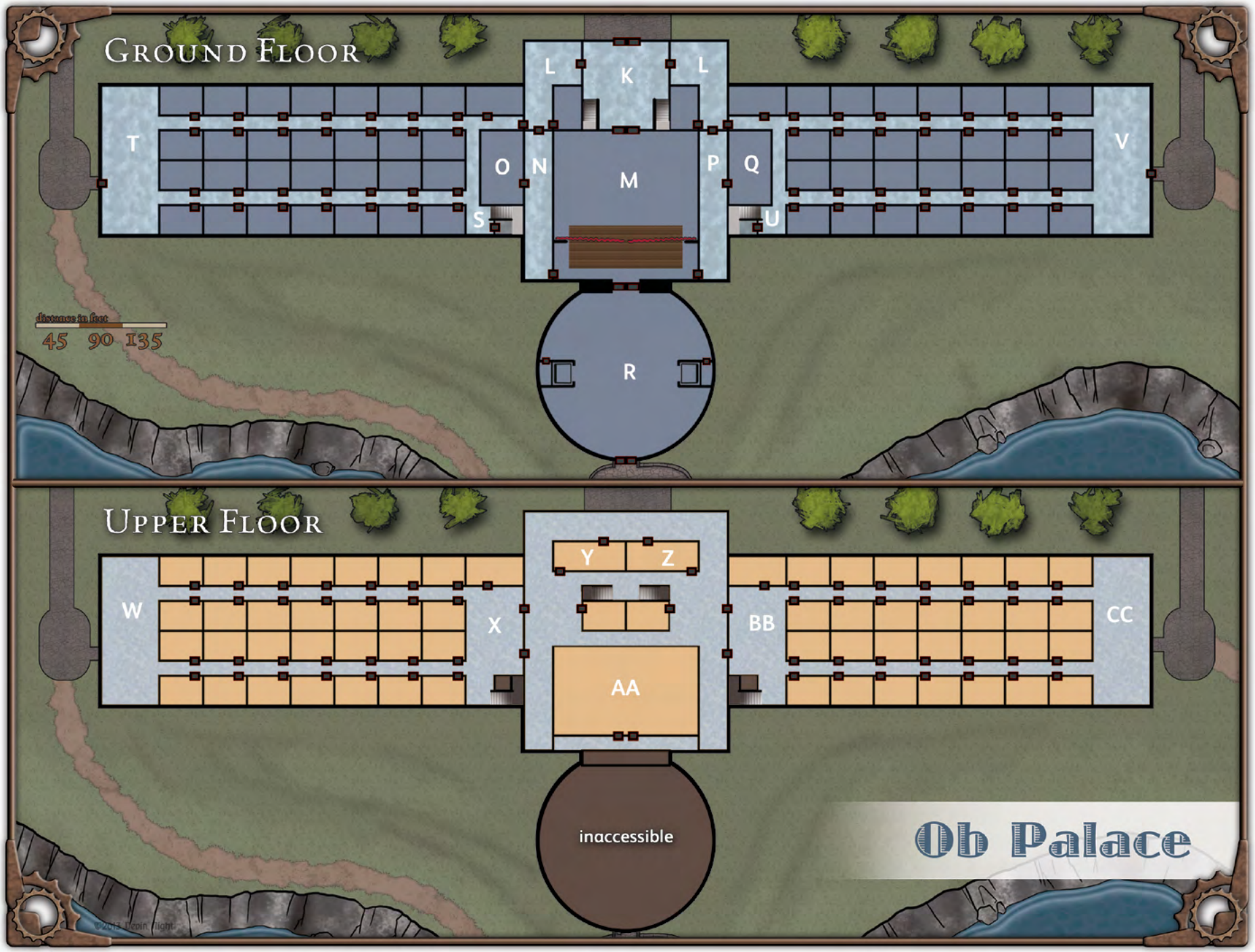
Double stairs lead up to the second floor. Doors lead sideways into two lounges, while a set of double doors lead south to the main hall. Heated plumbing warms the floors here, as well as in the lounges and main hall.

L. Lounges

Each lounge has comfortable leather chairs where up to thirty people can drink expensive spirits while discussing weighty matters. The side rooms have closets for people to hang cloaks, as well as racks of alcohol and shelves with a few hundred books for research or conversation starters.

M. Main Hall

Over a hundred feet across, this hall can seat a hundred people at tables for dinner or special events. A stage rises at the south end, and chemical spotlights can illuminate speakers or performers. A heavy red curtain separates the main hall from the back stage, where mechanisms control the lights. A double doorway leads south to the lighthouse.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Ob Palace

N. Kitchen

This long room has multiple cook stations to prepare food for large gatherings. The Obscurati didn't want to risk bringing that many cooks here, so only a handful of guards with cooking talents work here, directing special *unseen servant*-style spells.

O. Icebox

This room stores most of the perishable food supplies of the palace. Magic keeps it perpetually just above freezing, and vents in the floor can be opened to circulate frigid air through ducts that lead around the building. Since the ducts need to be cleaned occasionally, they're large enough for an adult man to crawl through, and they run throughout the mansion, with access points in each room, usually hidden behind furniture.

P. Storage

Furniture, linens, and similar domestic necessities are stored here.

Q. Dry Goods

Non-perishable foodstuffs, plus a few tools for repair. Casks of lantern oil are stacked along one wall.

R. Lighthouse, First Floor

Mostly empty, this area has ladders along the interior walls, as well as two freight elevators. Sixty feet up is the gas supply and the pumps that feed it to the various lamps throughout the palace.

S. West Wing, First Floor

- 2 Obscurati bookpin guards

Stairs lead up to the second floor, with a maintenance closet beneath. The ghost councilors lurk in these rooms, often floating silent and dormant unless their counsel is needed. Sometimes they fly out of the windows and circle the building, watching the goings-on of the still-living with cold detachment.

The rooms here are all empty except five. The four on the west end (near Area T) have lights so ghosts can read books if they desire, and one additional room acts as the cell for the spy Vitus Sigismund. A portal painting (see page 120) has been placed in that suite's bathroom, the door to which is locked and watched by two guards.

The painting leads to a demiplane with several nigh inescapable prison cells, their defenses magically enhanced. A dozen other men—condemned prisoners from Crisillyir—are also kept here in their own cells. Members of the Ghost Council occasionally come by to observe Vitus, but they leave the interrogation to Vicemi.

T. Den

The Ghost Council meets here if they need to discuss matters. It is left unlit, with sheets over the furniture.

U. East Wing, First Floor

Though physically identical to the west wing, this area is full of life, with nearly every suite occupied. Each suite has a desk in one corner, a bed in another, a bathroom, a closet, and a fireplace. The fireplaces in the two central rows of rooms that sit back to back share chimneys, and the brick backing of each fireplace is fairly thin. It would be possible to break through these, allowing a quick if unorthodox route between the northern and southern hallways.

V. Trophy Room

In the real world version of this room, old tattered taxidermied heads of beasts hang from the walls. Here they are covered with sheets to hide their morbid decay. Guests can enjoy a pool table, a piano, and a set of instruments stored along the west wall. The entire north, south, and east walls are windows.

Interior, Upper Floor

On the upper floor of the central building, the walls are covered with a dozen floor-to-ceiling paintings. Each is covered with a curtain when the party arrives, and are only unveiled later in the evening. These paintings are portals to demi-planes. Each demi-plane spans about 100 feet and represents a possible confluence of planar energies. In short, these are demos of the new worlds the Ob could create.

W. Council Room

Nicodemus holds meetings here. Usually his affairs are watched by members of the Ghost Council, and there are always at least a half dozen or so ghosts floating outside the windows here.

X. West Wing, Second Floor

The four suites nearest the upstairs council room (Area W) host Nicodemus, Han Jierre and his bodyguard Bert Facie, Cula Ravjahani, and Catherine Romana. The other rooms here, and the hallways, are unlit.

Y. Chapel

The real-world version of this room was a chapel for daily prayers. Here the religious iconography on the walls have been covered by thick red curtains, and the room is stocked with snacks and drinks, so those on the second floor don't have to go downstairs if they're peckish.

Z. Infirmary

This has lots of mostly-useless medical supplies, ready just in case something goes horribly wrong and there are more injured people than there is magical healing available.

AA. Library

This vast library has ten rows of bookstacks, plus eight long tables for researchers.

BB. East Wing, Second Floor

As on the first floor, most of the suites here are occupied.

CC. Dance Hall

Since only a handful of the Ob officers would dance even if asked, this area's fine dance floor has been covered with high and low tables, chairs, stools, and several other sets of furniture to motivate conversation.

The dragon Gradiax, Lord of Steel, has almost never resumed his true form for the past two centuries, and has grown accustomed to his eccentric alternate identity as a businessman and technologist. Though he only looks about fifty, and has the verve of a young man, he jokingly exaggerates his aged infirmities. He speaks slowly with a deep, country-accented voice, and often leans back and tucks his thumbs in his belt loops as he talks. (Imagine a more laid-back Foghorn Leghorn.)

Confident in his ability to win in the long run, Pemberton almost never loses his cool. He enjoys playing subtle power games; in the middle of a tense conversation he might reach into his coat, draw a small flip-knife, and ask an enemy to hold it for him while he fishes out a cigar, then takes the knife back so he can cut the tip off before lighting it.

This dwarf environmental biologist was recruited to ensure that life can flourish under different planar alignments. After his initial tests with flora and fauna were encouraging, he abducted dozens to perform "human trials." He's eerily fascinated with people who possess atypical phenotypes, and has blistering social awkwardness, which in a way makes him the perfect set of eyes for Benedict Pemberton.

The dragon industrialist replaced the real Haffkruger with a duplicant. The dwarf goes about his business completely normally, though he refrains from food. Pemberton usually has a flunky watching through the duplicant's eyes, but when things are important he takes over, and can speak through the machine.

A hundred years ago Amielle brought her one-of-a-kind rifle to Flint and lent her keen marksmanship toward defeating the witches of Cauldron Hill. That olive branch opened up the city to investment by industrialists from Danor, which had by that point fought two painful wars with Risur. Amielle proposed the plan, and it worked like clockwork.

It is then fitting, perhaps, that Amielle promotes the Watchmaker faction of the conspiracy, and has designed a plan for a thousand year destiny that will lead the world to prosperity and peace. A grandiose woman with grandiose plans, she is only stymied by the fact that she died eighty years ago, and while she endures as part of the Ghost Council her influence is weak compared to Vicemi Terio. She still remembers life fondly, and she often disagrees with her fellow ghosts, showing her disapproval with piping sarcastic laughter.

As a ghost, she still has her rifle. Amielle will be a playable character in the appendix adventure, *Bonds of Forced Faith*, which occurs during her heyday.

Getting Comfortable

Exploration/Social. Montage. Level 16.

The party is split up into different rooms and given time to mingle before the opening of the convocation.

Refresh the players' memories about their arrival at the palace, Han Jierre, the transition into the Bleak Gate, the capture of the spy, the ghostly return of Reed Macbannin, and their brief introduction to Nicodemus.

Nicodemus tells Grappa (whom he thinks is Leone) it's a pleasure to see him again, and explains that he's gotten a new face since he visited the vineyard. Then he invites the PCs and Grappa to have a seat, and then he asks each of them to introduce themselves. He apologizes for not being quite as good with remembering names as Han, since he's never been a big one for politics and hobnobbing.

He explains that as of now, they should feel free to discuss whatever they want about their roles in the Obscurati, then adds to Grappa, "Except, you know, keep that one thing secret, of course." (He's referring to Roland Stanfield's still-secret position as head of Colossus Cell. Grappa cannot share his knowledge about that with the party, due to a *geas* placed on him by Kasvarina.)

We're Not Alone

Tell any Spirit Medium in the party that he senses a lot of unusual souls here, but somewhere amid all the disorienting noise, there's a feeling of a soul stretching away to the south, just like how duplicants in Ber felt. The presence of so many ghosts makes it impossible to pinpoint, but someone here is a duplicant.

Accomodations

After Nicodemus has a moment to talk to each of them in turn, he checks a notebook and says that since they're the last arrivals, he'll need to put them two to a room. He'd love to open up some rooms in the west wing, but Vicemi has advised him not to, for security reasons. They'll have about an hour to settle in, and then it will be time for everyone to gather in the main hall.

He explains that later this evening after he gives a welcoming speech, the visiting officers will be split into groups of 8 or 10 people so they can meet with different speakers in turn. He wants this group of visitors that came in with Leone to stick together; he says that he and his advisors thought the different points of view of the group would lead to some interesting discussions.

There's just one more person he wants to add to their group: a dwarf named **Erskine Haffkruger**, who came in on a different ship.

Lounge Time

Nicodemus asks for the group to give him some time alone with Leone, and suggests they head back down to the first floor lounges to find Erskine. He asks that they not intrude into the west wing unless invited, because the Ghost Council likes its privacy.

The party can wander and snoop, but guards do deter them from looking around the portal paintings on the second floor of the central building, and the ghosts get upset if they linger in the west wing too long. Most of the activity is in the two lounges, though (Area L).

Meet Erskine

While dozens of Ob officers break the ice over brandy, whiskey, and wine, Erskine is surveying the crowd from a corner while listening to a halfling named Alloquicious (who had a cameo in the arms fair in Adventure Three). The little inventor is joyfully describing how he was nearly caught and had to use his prototype mechanical battle suit to murder some of his underlings to make sure the RHC didn't catch him. Erskine casually asks for details about the suit, but looks thoroughly unimpressed as the halfling describes it.

Erskine responds to most social situations by awkwardly asking basic framing questions like, "Why do you want to talk to me?" or "What do you want to talk about?" He tries to avoid talking about his work, warning that it is very boring, but if pressed he proves his warning fair by droning on about the nuances of how the purpose of the appendix is apparently to maintain a reservoir of native elemental energy in the event of extraplanar travel.

Erskine knows he's to be put into a group with the party, and goes along with it without any fuss. He basically never talks unless someone asks him a question, but you should make a point to mention that he hangs near the party unless they make a point to part ways with him. Keep track of things he witnesses that might help explain how Pemberton figures out they're the same constables who thwarted him a few months earlier.

Shake a Ghost's Hand

A ghost who has been making her way through the crowd now reaches the party. **Amielle Latimer**, one of the most lively members of the Ghost Council, glides up to them with a case of fine cigars levitating beside her incorporeal body. She introduces herself, offers cigars as they answer, and playfully asks them to enjoy these twice as much since she can't smoke them herself anymore.

She adds that Nicodemus wants her to be fair and wait for the proper time to meet people, but she wanted to add a bit of life to the party. With a short peal of laughter she tells them she looks forward to talking more later, then spins and glides away.

Villainous Bragging

Dame Constance Baden, head of the Obscurati's "blue sky" division researching outlandish ideas to see what might be possible, is just reaching the end of a humorous story (about accidentally boarding a hostile ship when her test balloon crashed) as Amielle leaves, and a huge burst of laughter should get their attention.

She sighs and says that she hopes that out of this group of clever people, somehow they'll manage to make flight possible again. Then she gestures to another in the group, asking them to share the worst setback they had.

Barro Bangristo, a minotaur professor from Ber, starts to tell a story about how his attempt to enlist someone into his cell didn't turn out well, an experience many present groan at in sympathy. In Barro's story, he wanted to turn a theater student into a spy in the Bruse's court, and had been grooming the kid for months. Then one day the student bragged that Beran officials wanted to recruit him to be a spy in *Risur*, and he'd been practicing by snooping around the university. The kid had actually found the secret meeting place some of Barro's other students, but he thought it was just a smuggling ring.

To salvage the situation, Barro offered to go with the kid to investigate, and then had his other students plead their case in person. The kid instead tried to run, and ended up getting himself crushed by a statue that he knocked over. Barro laughs and explains a series of cascading, ever-worsening problems (a watchman investigates, a hyperintelligent bear breaks loose, a mind-control spell backfires, etc.), culminating in he and his cell having to provoke a riot on the campus in order to cover everything up.

At first, some of the officers listening look a little unsettled at the talk of death, but a few laugh, and Barro clearly enjoys the story, which encourages more of them to chuckle and eventually cheer when their fellow conspirator pulls off a clutch victory.

Another officer, **Rakovnik Brasny** from Crisillyir, gives a long sigh and says that it feels so good to be able to talk about these things and not be judged. Then he dives into a story of his own involving criminal allies, bribery, and murder. But his audience is sympathetic, since practically every officer here has had similar experiences.

If the party listens in, within ten minutes it should be clear to them that despite the noble aims of the Obscurati, its members feel few qualms about destroying those who get in their way.

Miscellanea

If you need to add any other local color, see Appendix B: Complete Officer Roster. Just note that all the members of the Ghost Council, as well as Nicodemus, Catherine Romana, Cula Ravjahani, and Han Jierre are making final preparations in Area W.

Call to Order

Half an hour later, ghost councilors come in and ask all in attendance to return to the grand foyer and enter the main hall. Large round tables have designated seating for each of the five groups of guests, plus a table in front with the representatives of the different factions. Grappa has been assigned to a different group across the room.

Opening Statement

Exposition. Real-Time. Level 16.

Nicodemus explains exactly what the conspiracy is up to, and asks the guests to split up into groups to discuss.

Lights dim, and the crowd murmur fades out. Two incandescent calcium oxide spotlights shine down on a stage podium, slicing out a single bright oval in the dark hall. Nicodemus steps into the light and places an unlit lantern the size of a pumpkin on the podium. He surveys the crowd for a moment, then begins his oration.

"We have gathered for this convocation because we share a purpose." As he speaks, he draws a cigarette from a case and lights it with a match. He takes a casual drag and continues, speaking through the smoke.

"That purpose is to fix the unsteady course of a flawed world. Some of us have worked to kindle industry, thinking progress and invention will defend nations from war and suffering. Others have ingratiated themselves with the callous and corrupt, ready to unmask their true faces and replace them with more honest and just leaders. You've unearthed ancient relics that revealed the forgotten origins of today's woes, and have with regrettable necessity silenced those who would have revealed and thwarted our grand design.

"Few of you have been trusted with the full extent of our agenda. You know simply that I or one of our other officers asked you to cloak yourselves, and then to strive and correct some flaw of society that the common people and their complacently powerful masters have chosen as 'the way things are.' Unlike them, we have not been content with an imperfect reality, because we rebel against the conceit that the inertia of the world cannot change, that its course is set, that there is fate, or destiny.

Cula has served as an aide to Kasvarina Varal for over a century, but only a few years ago was recruited into the Obscurati. While Kasvarina directs policy, Cula undertakes missions, leading groups of Vekeshi mystics on raids or assassinations. Now that her mistress has disappeared, Cula has been forced to keep control of the many threads she controlled. She maintains a perpetual expression of kindness which is not hard to tell is fake, though it keeps her from showing exactly what emotion she's really feeling. That emotion is usually disdain.

In Kasvarina, Cula saw a woman truly devoted to fairly helping who suffer from the vices of others, and she finds few of the Obscurati officers live up to that ideal. While her opinion of Kasvarina glosses over some of her darker misdeeds, Cula is nevertheless motivated to help the weak, and to ensure the cruel fall. At the convocation she represents the Miller's Pyre faction.

Descendant of one of the previous queens of Risur, Catherine has long sought to rise in power herself, though the traditions of her nation deter any hereditary rule. After the Fourth Yerasol War she got into trouble for harshly criticizing war veterans, implying that cowardice led to Risur losing ground in the war.

Though she believes magic is superior to technology, she desires progress, and has pushed the Risuri parliament to pursue grand civil projects of arcane engineering, to little success. In the Obscurati she sees her chance both to make the world a better place, and to step into a position of rule over her homeland.

She has an unfortunate drug habit, preferring the high of fey pepper and the false and wondrous world it conjures to the world she really has to deal with. She recognizes this flaw in herself, and overschedules her time so she doesn't have opportunities to indulge.

Here at the convocation she represents the Colossus faction.

ONLINE INSPIRATION

If you want some inspiration for these conversations, EN World hosted a thread wherein members of the messageboard took on the roles of members of the conspiracy. While we ended up changing some things between the time of the thread and the release of this adventure, it could still provide some inspiration.

This is the current link, but as with anything on the Internet, it can change more easily than the printed word can: http://www.enworld.org/forum/showthread.php?337948-You-re-a-villain-How-would-you-change-the-world-Contest-with-prizes-%28Spoilers-for-ZEITGEIST%29. (If you need to find it later, a Google search for "EN World panarchist" should get you to the right place.

"But the truth is, at their basest physical level, life, our planet, and everything we know is swayed by forces beyond us. If I may move from broad strokes to scientific particulars, our world is connected by ancient magic to eight planes—elemental realms of fire and earth and air and water, and inscrutable lands where time and space, life and death are corporeal and manifest. Look skyward and you can see these distant discs tracing their orbits through the night.

"These eight are but a handful in an infinite starscape of planes, and some of our agents have peered into the night sky to learn their nature. One airy world they spied through a powerful lens reveals itself to generate calmer and more predictable storms than we have here. Another planet, a dappled purple and yellow orb, is possessed of warm clouds and a strong cheerful emotion, while countless miles away a hazy nebula is wracked by eternal lightning—destructive but swift and powerful.

"Now, we have a world of our own full of elemental air energy, but its skies are thin, and the winds are erratic. Imagine if, instead of that plane, our world was infused with the energy from one of those others. It would change our climate. It would change, on subtle level, the emotions you feel looking at the sky. More than that, it would change the very fate of civilization.

"There is an ancient ritual seal, crafted and hidden by our distant ancestors, who chose which of these realms ours would be linked to. But we have learned how to open that seal, and we are ready to change which planes dance in orbit with us. And that, ladies and gentleman, is the true purpose of our convocation. My name is Nicodemus, and though it was I who set this endeavor in motion, it is the right of you, the agents and officers of the Obscurati, to set a new course for all the people of this world.

"For centuries prophets have sought visions in the night sky, and why? Because those eight worlds have power over us. 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!"

The rest of the audience applauds, and then Nicodemus steps aside as Han Jierre ascends to the podium. He explains the particulars of how the grand design will work. You can either explain it for your players or just let them read **Player Handout—Grand Design**. Save the faction handouts for later in the evening, as they meet with each faction representative, and the "Minor and Radical Factions" handout for the next morning.

Factions

Social. Montage. Level 16.

In turn, the party hears the "pitch" from each major faction. The party has numerous opportunities to talk to other Obscurati officers, learning secrets or perhaps swaying their opinions.

The groups of Ob officers split up and meet with the representatives of each faction, who presents their case each in a different part of the mansion. You'll want to have familiarized yourself with the faction proposals in Player Handouts at the end. In brief, they are:

- **The Arboretum.** Order nature so it can spread and be controlled like industry. Presented by Reed Macbannin outdoors next to the garden (Area A).
- **Colossus.** Grant ourselves godlike powers to fix problems as they arise. Presented by Catherine Romana in the chapel (Area Y).
- **Miller's Pyre.** Increase empathy, reduce hypocrisy. Increase goodness and justice. Presented by Cula Ravjahani in the library (Area AA).

- **Panarchists.** Grant individuals "super-powers," making governments unnecessary. Presented by Han Jierre in the trophy room (Area V).
- **Watchmakers.** Eliminate free will and design a thousand-year destiny of prosperity for the world. Presented by Amielle Latimer in the dance hall (Area CC).

These presentations start at about 7 PM, and every half hour the groups cycle to the next presenter. At around 10 PM the groups are expected to finish up, at which point they'll be encouraged to discuss the proposals and figure out how best to proceed.

Conversations

Ultimately there's not much chance for the players to change what the Ob leadership decide to do, but they *can* influence some of the officers. We don't expect you to keep track of fifty different NPCs, but encourage the players to make a note of which Ob officers they manage to reach out to or befriend. In the climax of the adventure, you might set most of those officers on the other side of the schism, giving the constables a dilemma: do they save their enemies, in the hope they might be allies later?

Have the party meet with the five presenters in the order listed above. Of the five, all but Reed Macbannin are loyal to Nicodemus. The party won't be changing their minds.

Travel Time

Between each session, people have about ten minutes to make it to the next meeting place, leading to a lot of comings-and-goings in the palace. If the party wants to stop by the Portal Gallery upstairs in the central building, see Brave New Worlds, below. The Ghost Council is busy meeting with Leone, and the guards can't really pay attention to everyone at once, so this is a fair time for sneaking about.

Missing Person

During the third session, Reed Macbannin manages to lay a subtle curse upon **Ramos Zoltan**, an officer from Drakr. Using magic he learned researching the witches of Cauldron Hill, Macbannin compels Zoltan to wander to the icebox (Area O) after the session ends. Then before his next presentation, Macbannin inflicts a wound on himself—as a ghost, he can shrug it off—which is reflected upon Zoltan.

People grow suspicious during the fourth session, and during the fifth session a guard manages to find the dwarf's body, sitting with a dagger wound through his chest and coated in a sheen of ice. A white stone carving of a serpent sits in his lap. What worries Nicodemus the most, though, is that his soul has been forcibly sent to the afterlife, so he cannot be interrogated, resurrected, or turned into a member of the Ghost Council.

An alert quickly goes up and guards check every room of the palace, but everything else is in order. The party will likely be meeting with Amielle Latimer at this point, who points out that you run into problems like this when people don't act according to the script.

Investigating

Magical detection can determine that Zoltan was affected by enchantment magic, and the wound was caused by some sort of necromancy. It's unclear where the stone serpent came from (Macbannin arranged for it to be delivered here in a shipment weeks ago, and compelled Zoltan to remove it from its box; he never touched the serpent himself).

Close examination of his body finds a small nick on his ear, as if someone needed his blood. Also, there's a bit of milk still on his moustache. Players might recall these were components in the ritual *bonds of forced faith* (see Adventure Two), which was iconic to the witches of Cauldron Hill. Or you can let an Arcana check (DC 31) figure out the significance. This clue could implicate either Macbannin who studied the witches' history, or Amielle who actually fought them.

The White Serpent is a known symbol of the fey titan called the Voice of Rot. While there actually is a conspirator here (Abeira Stackhouse) who is allied with the titan, Macbannin was just trying to throw people off his scent.

Once the alert ends, Nicodemus makes the rounds and explains what happened. He promises they'll be on the look-out, and he warns people to travel in groups of at least three. Also, he'll be calling people a few at a time to answer some questions.

From Here

Events are fairly flexible during the rest of the night. The PCs might check out the portal gallery (see Brave New Worlds), sneak around (see Mission Impossible), or go talk with Nicodemus (see Quiet Reflection). Near midnight the convocation is gathered again to cast a preliminary vote (see Into the Night).

Brave New Worlds

Exploration. Montage. Level 15.

The party can enter demi-planes, tied to painted canvas, which reflect how each new world order would feel. Convicted criminals are brought out to showcase the effects.

Encourage the party to visit the Portal Gallery on the second floor of the central building. In the adventure's climax it will make a grand place for combat.

There are twelve portal paintings spread around the area, each with a curtain that must be drawn back to reveal the world within. Each painting has an ornate wooden frame over ten feet high, which acts like a window, leading into a pocket demi-plane roughly 100 feet across.

If the frame is damaged, the demi-plane starts to collapse. Patches of the world disappear, the unique magical elements fade, and three rounds later the room becomes a hollow vacuum with no gravity and no air.

Creatures wearing gold rings can neither enter nor leave the portal paintings.

Arboretum

A verdant garden waits within, lit by a warm (but illusory) sun. A person who touches a plant motivates it to grow, making the plantlife almost as malleable as clay. With a concerted effort of will, the clouds overhead can shift and weather can change. The air is invigorating and crisp, and water from a fountain here restores all the healing surges of creatures who drink from it (though resting is still necessary to actually heal). Trees here provide the most succulent fruit, and one unusual tree actually has haunches of medium-rare beef dangling from its branches.

Colossus

This world has a dramatic cliff overlooking a twenty-foot chasm, and on the far side waits a house made of huge blocks of stone. Within the house is a clay stele with a stylus leaning against it. Visitors are encouraged to go inside, jump across the gap, then carve their name into the stele to take dominion over the space. When they're done enjoying the power that grants them, they should erase their name from the clay and emerge so someone else can try it.

Inside the demiplane, creatures have their lifting capacity multiplied by over 100. The distance they can leap is likewise magnified dramatically. They have resist 20 all, regeneration 20, and a +5 bonus to saves. When someone has claimed dominion in the area, they gain the ability to sense all events in the area regardless of line of sight, gain a +10 bonus to Perception, and can teleport as a move action to anywhere in the area. Characters who experiment can sense the potential for other powers, though unlocking them would take much meditation or experimentation.

Miller's Pyre

This portal leads to a library, but every table and shelf has some sort of weapon in clear view: guns, knives, swords, and the like.

Before letting people in, first a ghost councilor calls for a pair of prisoners to be retrieved from the prison demi-plane in area S. The men arrive nervous and bickering, and the ghost councilor explains these are condemned men from Crisllyir, murderers both, and for the past week they've been giving half-rations to one, stoking discontent.

The men's chains are removed, and they are shoved across the threshold of the demi-plane.

> "There are plenty of weapons here," says the ghost councilor. "Only one of you is getting out alive."

Immediately the two men rush for the knife, and one gets it. He turns on the other, who shakes his head and cowers. The knife-wielder hesitates, then explains how upset he feels that the other guy has been treated better than him. The other guy says it's not his fault how they were treated. The knife-wielder nods, looks uncomfortable, and then asks politely if the other guy will stay here so he can leave, and maybe get some food outside. The other guy agrees, saying that seems fair, and then thanks him for not being violent.

The knife-wielder steps back into the real world, and the other guy sighs, then grabs a book and starts reading.

The prisoners are then removed, and the guards take them away with orders to give them both a decent meal once they're back in their cells.

Inside this plane, creatures gain a +10 bonus to Diplomacy checks, a +10 bonus to Insight checks, take a –10 penalty to Intimidate checks, and a –5 penalty to attack rolls. Additionally, a creature must make a saving throw each time it wants to take an action that would cause damage to another sentient creature, and if it fails it cannot attack that turn.

Panarchists

A three-story house with windows but no doors sits in a forest, the trees of which have high, climable branches. The ghost councilor encourages the PCs to explore the house, which requires teleporting between rooms that have no normal entrance. People are encouraged to enter three at a time, and to have one person ask a favor from the other. If they agree, they feel a subtle nudge to follow through, like a gentle push at the small of their back.

Likewise, a person who hands an item to someone else then has them carry it away can sense perfectly where it went.

Mechanically, everyone can teleport at will to anywhere they can see or are familiar with, and are familiar with any place their items are near. Everyone also has regeneration 20, and if they start their turn dying but not dead, they revive with 20 hit points.

Creatures who agree to a trade or service suffer no immediate effects, but if one were to stay in the plane for several days they would accrue penalties if they do not follow through with their promises.

Watchmakers

You look in on a quaint kitchen, lit by a single candle on the dining table. Within this portal painting, the world operates like clockwork. It is static normally until someone enters, and the guards have a prisoner on hand for the purpose. When people are ready to watch, they set a clock on the wall so its second hand is at zero, and then they push the man into the portal. He disappears, and the clock begins ticking.

A moment later, a door on the far side of the room opens and the man steps in. He closes the door, bends down to pet a dog who barks happily, then goes to a cabinet and pulls out a small cask of firedust with a short fuse sticking out of it. He sits at the table, lights the fuse, and places it in the bomb right in front of him.

The dog comes by, and the man moves to pet it, but his arm jostles the cask. It falls over and rolls for the far side of the table. The man stands up in surprise, and the table flips over. The cask hits the ground right as the table spins to the perfect orientation, and then an explosion goes off. The table blocks the force perfectly, and the man and dog are unharmed.

The man then does a perfectly choreographed jig for ten seconds, bows to the audience outside the painting, and steps out into the real world at precisely 60 seconds on the clock. The world inside the painting resets instantly to its base state.

The prisoner can go through this ordeal as many times as those outside want, though his protests grow more severe as time goes on. Each time is identical, though when he comes out he clearly remembers. If asked, he'll admit that while in that world he always feels the same way, but when he comes out he panics, afraid that next time maybe something might go wrong.

If anyone else steps into the painting, they take on the role of the prisoner, and while a few small details might change (like the speed or distance the cask rolls when people of different sizes bump it), the result is always the same. Person goes in, enters through the same door, bomb goes off without damage, person comes out. (If someone tries to enter while the event is in process, they are temporally displaced and only reappear once the cycle has reset.)

The ghost councilor here warns not to stress the scenario too much. For instance, if a man with no arms entered the painting, he wouldn't be able to fulfill the necessary steps to progress the timeline, and he'll just stand there blankly until Amielle comes by to pause the scenario and let him leave.

Minor Worlds

These worlds do not represent specific proposals of the Obscurati, but are rather examples of the many things they could do.

Bards

A small concert hall has perfect acoustics, and anyone who steps inside finds himself casually desiring to sing, play an instrument, or otherwise perform. They can freely resist the idea, but if they go along with it they find it easy to notice what is wrong with their form and make slow progress to improve.

Mortal Mind

A small field has several chapels and shrines, each devoted to a different faith, and a mechanical device plays a recording of different pieces of sacred music. Those outside the painting feel the normal emotions they associate with those religions, but once they step inside they find themselves completely un-moved by them. They can appreciate the artistic talent that went into the music, but do not find them beautiful. Those of strong faith who come out of this portal plane can't help but feel unsettled.

Creatures in this area cannot use divine powers.

Leave the Nest

The portal opens forty feet in the air above a storm-tossed sea. An island rises out of the sea twenty feet away, and it's home to large flocks of birds. Creatures inside have a fly speed of 6, and the birds tend to fly with them.

Trial by Fire

A pool of lava inside this world has books scattered about the floor, none of them burning. There's even a twenty-foot high ledge one can jump from, though the ghost councilor here warns that while you won't be burned, the lava is still fairly viscous.

Creatures here are immune to fire damage, and objects will not burn unless someone within line of sight wills it. Even then, anyone else who wants it not to burn can stop it.

W'alking on Sunshine

A three-dimensional obstacle course with poles and balance beams has padded walls. Inside, creatures can choose for gravity to be in whatever direction they want. Objects float unless someone wills them to fall a given direction.

Windows exist on all six walls, and beams of light shine in through each. Creatures can interact with these beams of light as if they were solid, and you can even grab them and adjust them in mid-beam as if you were adjusting a hinged pole.

Downward

This unusual world has two sets of stone stairs leading up to a fountain, from which water pours over a ledge into a pool. But no matter which way you walk, you always feel like you're going downhill. You can even swim through the waterfall, from the pool to the fountain, and feel like you're rushing down a river.

Menagerie

A snowy hill with evergreen trees overlooks an icy pond. Inside this world, living creatures can shapeshift at will to any creature within a size category of their normal form. The ghost councilor here encourages people to consider swans, bears, eagles, or even penguins. Undead creatures in this area are dazed.

Quiet Reflection

Social. Real-Time. Level 16.

The constables each have an opportunity to talk with Nicodemus alone.

After Zoltan's murder, Nicodemus needs to calm nerves of those in attendance. He leaves finding the killer to the Ghost Council, but as the face of the conspiracy he makes a point to speak with everyone, one by one. Since your players will likely want to discuss what they've learned and make plans, you might just peel them off one by one.

Two guards come to invite each member of the conspiracy to head to the top floor of the lighthouse and talk with Nicodemus on the balcony. The conversation is always roughly the same. Cigarette in hand, Nicodemus asks how they're doing, whether they saw anything or know anything related to the murder, and then spares a minute or two to reflect on the state of the world.

He might lament the lack of stars to gaze at here in the Bleak Gate, or the lack of breeze blowing off the sea. The weight of working in secret so long weighs on him, and despite his better judgment he's looking for a kindred spirit to share his burdens with. Most of these conversations end abruptly as Nicodemus looks at a pocket watch and apologizes for needing to be in a rush.

If any PC responds empathetically, though, Nicodemus might ask them to spend a few minutes with him. He calls to the ghost councilor who controls the lighthouse, grabs four amulets, and then has the lighthouse activate to shift them back into the real world. By placing the amulets on, he, the PC, and the two guards will be able to walk around the island and see what it's really like. He tells the ghost councilor to turn the lighthouse back on in half an hour, but to leave the light off for now so he can see the stars.

Then he takes a long walk on the beach, cold surf washing up on shore and wiping away their footprints as he asks the PC about his life, what motivates him, and how he'd change things if he could make the decision all by himself. If asked about himself he hedges, saying that it's been a long time since he had an actual life of his own, and that he needs to hear the lives of others or else he might lose touch of what it is to be human.

Loot

Before this scene, figure out which PC would have the highest concordance with the artifact known as *The Humble Hook* (page 330). When that PC talks with Nicodemus, at some point the ghost councilor inside the lighthouse calls Nic aside to ask a question, and the PC hears a metallic clink as he leaves. The necklace has made itself fall off of Nicodemus, and it lands at the PC's feet. No one would see him if he picks it up, and Nicodemus does not notice its absence until after the adventure ends.

The story of *The Humble Hook* is presented on page 22 of the Zeitgeist *Player's Guide*.

Into the Night

Social. Montage. Level 16.

The conspirators discuss, then cast a preliminary vote.

The mood of the convocation turns wary. Some theories are bandied around, including that a spy has infiltrated them, that this is some sort of mind game by Nicodemus, or that someone's trying to kill people who would vote for a different faction—though no one knows what faction Zoltan was favoring. Amielle Latimer jokingly suggests it could be the ghost pirates, and eagerly tells the story of how they all perished (page 74).

Most people gather in the trophy room (Area V) or the dance hall (Area CC) to have large group discussions, with a few people getting up the courage to go in small groups to visit the Portal Gallery.

Preliminary Vote

At midnight, Nicodemus asks everyone to gather again in the Main Hall. Erected on stage is a metal plate with the names of the five factions painted on it, as well as "Other." Beside it is another plate with small magnets tags, each of which has the name of one of the Obscurati officers. Nicodemus asks people to file through, pick up their named magnet, and cast a vote. He reminds them this is just preliminary, and that tomorrow night everyone will be able to cast a new vote, and that other proposals might be added between now and then.

They made sure that Zoltan's magnet has already been removed.

Count

Everyone is asked to vote, even if they just vote Other. Nicodemus goes first, placing his magnet on Miller's Pyre. Vicemi Terio goes next, telekinetically placing the twenty-five magnets for himself and the majority of the Ghost Council on Other. He explains that after the final vote, the Ghost Council will endorse whichever faction has the most votes.

Let the PCs go last. Not counting their votes, the result is:

- The Arboretum. 4 votes.
- Colossus. 9 votes.
- Miller's Pyre. 10 votes.
- Panarchists. 7 votes.
- Watchmakers. 5 votes.
- Other. 8 votes, plus 25 ghosts.

The "Other" votes are cast by the representatives of the minor factions. At this point, give the group **Player Handout—Minor and Radical Factions**.

Hopefully your players won't worry about the minutiae of who votes how. Grappa votes for Watchmakers. Erskine Haffkruger votes for Arboretum. The votes of the other key NPCs should be obvious.

Dining on Ashes

After the vote, people go back to various conversation spots to keep on politicking and debating. One proposal that starts to gather a fair bit of support is a compromise—designed by Dame Constance Baden—called MAP. It mixes elements of Miller's Pyre, Arboretum, and Panarchists, as well as Long Now, Trekkers, and Sky League. Dame Constance estimates they can get 24 votes easily, and if it gets the Ghost Council and Vicemi that's 49 out of the needed 57.

Unfortunately, those in the Colossus and Watchmaker factions are *strongly* opposed to Miller's Pyre, and shrug off accusations that they're just worried they'll end up with less power in the new world order.

Discussion and arguments continue as people look for common ground, but eventually people must sleep. Barring party-motivated trouble, the talks die down around 2 in the morning as people head off to bed. Erskine Haffkruger is the last to go to his room.

Mission Impossible

Exploration. Montage. Level 16.

By stealth and subterfuge, constables can find treasure, spy on private meetings, sabotage, or free prisoners.

Some events, people, and items are technically off-limits. Generally if PCs want to sneak around and are smart about it, don't worry about making them roll unless they really press their luck.

Vitus and the Prison Plane

The guards that watch the portal painting that holds Vitus have been letting ghosts in all night, so they won't stop a PC who wants in, but they do listen and will report anything suspicious.

The portal painting has a thread of gold in its frame. The gold ring must be broken (as easy as bending a wire and then putting it back it place) for anyone to enter or leave the demi-plane; otherwise the surface is like indestructible glass.

Vitus is not one to speak first. Though he knows the gods will not always save those in need, he has prayed. If he should receive deliverance, he wants to leave with as much knowledge of the conspiracy as possible, so he tries to convince interrogators to speak first. His best argument is that clearly he is a prisoner and won't escape, so if sharing information with him will make him answer their questions, it is a great deal, since it ultimately costs the Ob nothing.

He does not judge until he knows more information, and if anyone explains the Ob's plans he asks for a few minutes to consider the ramifications. Then he says it is every individual's challenge in life to make him- or herself better. The purpose of life is to prevail over adversity, and by making the world "a better place," he fears it will actually eliminate the meaning of life.

Rescue

Freeing Vitus is a simple matter of breaking the cage that holds him and taking him out. While he can be a useful ally in combat, if the escape attempt is spotted it will quickly bring the palace's defenders down on the party. However, during the Splinter Cell scene, the chaos provides a perfect opportunity to get Vitus and perhaps the other dozen prisoners here to safety.

If Vitus survives this adventure, he can be an incredible help in Adventure Eight, *Diaspora* while the party passes through Crisillyir, but in adventure eleven, *Gorged on Ruins*, he spearheads trials against the Clergy's gods, whom he believes have coddled and tricked humanity.

In more immediate terms, when he gets back to the mainland he'll rally a fleet of Clergy warships to bombard this island and declare it *exterminatus*. Three hierarchs will call forth a great rift in the sea to swallow the island, destroying it even in the Bleak Gate.

Ally

Use these quick stats should Vitus join the party in combat.

Vitus Sigismund	Level 16 Ally
HP 151; **Bloodied** 75	**Initiative Count** 25
AC 30, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 29	**Speed** 8
Traits	
☼ **Halo of Courage** (radiant) ✦ Aura 5	
A disk of light floats behind his head, and while standing in its shining warmth you feel no fear.	
Effect: Vitus and allies in the aura gain a +2 bonus to Will defense and to saving throws against fear effects. They can make saves against fear effects at the start of their turn instead of the end of their turn.	
Standard Actions	
⊘ **Godhand Flurry** (radiant) ✦ At-Will, Basic	
Vitus sprints into a crowd of enemies, pummels one, then sweeps his hands, sending a corona of heavenly light blasting outward.	
Effect: Vitus deals 10 damage to an adjacent creature. Each adjacent ally gains 6 temporary hit points, and Vitus deals 6 radiant damage to each adjacent enemy. Creatures damaged in this way cannot take opportunity actions until the end of Vitus's next turn.	

Amielle's Secret Dealings

If at some point one of the PCs is about to be discovered by a guard (like if they fail a Stealth check), at the last moment another guard distracts the first, telling him he's "got to come see this." Alternately, the party might just spot a lot of guards active outside, or hear a few distant gunshots and grow curious.

The ghost of Amielle Latimer has a hunch that her faction isn't going to win tomorrow's vote, and she knows the importance of contingency plans. More importantly, she knows that Nicodemus has it in him to be murderously efficient about once a century, and he's overdue. So she wants to get as much good will among the bookpin guards and the arcane marksmen.

After most everyone has gone to bed, Amielle heads to the guard quarters at the carriage house (Area F), and offers to get them all fine spirits from the conspiracy's secret stash if any of them can outshoot her. Since the convocation has been stressful, a half dozen guards eagerly take up her offer so they can blow off some steam.

Sharpshooting

Amielle takes the six guards and a few onlookers out to a stretch of beach where wooden posts rise up from the sand. She has each of the men bring five wine glasses, and she has brought five shot glasses.

In the challenge, each shooter to hit five targets set on the posts at a range of 500 feet as fast as possible. Amielle sets out five glasses at a time, and each man gets up to one minute. Once all the men have gone, whoever is fastest will go up against Amielle. She places her five shotglasses, and they both start shooting at the same time. Whoever is first to hit a third glass wins.

If any of the guards win, Amielle will get them whatever fine spirits they want. If she wins, then the six guards who tried and failed have to dress up as butlers and scullery maids, using outfits Amielle found in the palace.

Give It a Shot

The targets are beyond the normal combat range of guns, but since they're stationary targets it's possible to hit them. The wine glasses' AC is 9, the shot glasses' is AC 13. The shooter takes a –2 penalty for each multiple of their base range increment the distance is.

For instance, a musket has a range of 20 squares (100 feet), so the target is five range increments away, incurring a –10 penalty.

The guards are good shots (+18 to-hit, factoring in the range penalty), but they can only fire once per round. Amielle, on the other hand, simply does not miss with her ghostly weapons.

Amielle Latimer	Level 17 Ally
HP 66; **Bloodied** 33	**Initiative Count** 27
AC 29, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 26	**Speed** fly 8 (hover); phasing
Resist cold 20, poison 20; insubstantial	
Vulnerable 10 radiant	

Traits

▸ **Withdraw from Sight**

Whenever Amielle takes damage, she turns invisible until she either attacks or chooses to become visible. When she is reduced to 0 HP she discorporates but will return in a few days unless Nicodemus the Gnostic is defeated.

Minor Actions

⊘ **Deadeye Shot** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Freed from the jitters of flesh, her aim is flawless.

Effect: Amielle fires a rifle at an enemy within 75 squares, dealing 12 damage. If she uses her pistol her range is instead 45 squares and she deals 6 damage. These attacks deal full damage against insubstantial creatures.

Amielle can load any of her weapons as a minor action, or she can drop and draw a new one as a free action. Since she has a rifle and three pistols on her person, she can thus make three attacks over the course of the round, each as a separate minor action.

She'll let whoever competes against her take out two shotglasses before she responds. Then in one smooth motion she draws and fires two pistols, drops them, slings her rifle off her shoulder, and fires it. Unless a PC manages to fire off three shots in one round, she'll probably beat them. She definitely beats any of the guards.

Good Sport

If beaten, Amielle loses with dignity. If she wins, though, she's still a good sport. She invites the guards to "get their new uniforms," and takes them and some other guard onlookers into the palace. She happens to have stashed the uniforms next to one of the bars, and she tells the guards to get dressed, then serve the rest of them drinks. Within fifteen minutes everyone is drinking (except her, since she's a ghost), and Amielle has managed to win the fondness of the guards.

If this is interrupted, Amielle won't have the guards' backing tomorrow, making the Splinter Cell encounter much more one-sided.

Stealing Oil, Treasure, Books

Characters might sneak into the lighthouse to retrieve casks of oil that can replicate the effects of any of the demiplanes in the Portal Gallery.

If you have any interesting treasure you'd like the party to get their hands on, perhaps add a treasure vault downstairs of the west wing and drop a few hints to its location. Rare lore could hide in the library.

Second Murder

Dame Constance's compromise proposal has a lot of support, but the Panarchist faction will have to give up some of their main desires regarding wealth and personal property. That's why Macbannin decides, for his second murder, to take out Constance and pin the murder on the Panarchists, in an effort to disrupt the coalition.

Since he is, after all, a ghost, Macbannin slips into her room through the floor. He makes sure the curtains are drawn, and he silently places a blanket on the bottom of the door to block out light and the smell of smoke. Then he places a curse of deep sleep on Dame Constance and scatters embers from the fireplace onto her bed. He invokes a curse that mimics the infernal wrath that lets tieflings punish their foes with fire, and Constance goes up like a human candle, with her bedsheets as the wick. By morning all that's left are charred bits of bed and the bones of her feet.

As with Zoltan, Constance's soul is sent to the afterlife, so no one can interrogate her or try to turn her into a ghost.

High-Level Meeting

An hour before dawn, Nicodemus summons Han Jierre, Cula Ravjahani, and Leone Quital (i.e., Grappa) to meet with him in the Council Room (Area W). Grappa manages to stall long enough to scribble a note ("Meeting Nic. Follow me.") and slip a metal clip onto it. Since the party is likely sleeping, Grappa makes a point to pass by at least one of their rooms, and he uses steelshaping to drop the note and slide it under the door. Then, once he's far enough away that the guards escorting him won't notice, he forcefully rattles the doorknob, which will hopefully be enough to wake some PCs up.

Security

The Ghost Council's divinations into the murder all came up fruitless, so Nicodemus assumes the conspiracy's own secrecy magic is biting them in the ass. Which means the murderer is an officer.

Once the guards deliver the people Nicodemus needs, they're sent to stand watch at the far end of the two hallways that lead to the council room. A total of six men wait there, drowsy and grumbling about all the strange foreigners they're having to put up with. The guards aren't particularly attentive (Passive Perception 16), but the spot they've chosen offers practically no cover to hide behind.

Meanwhile, at the near end of each of the two hallways, two senior ghost councilors hover silently, and another four float outside the windows (Passive Perception 22). Again, their high vantage point makes sneaking in more of a creative challenge than a physical one.

The ground floor of the west wing only has its normal patrol of a ghost councilor and a shadowlisk, and between the abandoned rooms, the chimneys, and the ventilation ducts, getting close enough to eavesdrop is certainly possible.

The Discussion

Nicodemus, Han, Cula, and Leone take seats, while Vicemi stands by the window, wary of threats (Passive Perception 29 for the group as a whole). Nicodemus rolls out a map of the continent of Lanjyr, then uses glass beads to show the areas he's talking about.

Since the colossus broke free eight months ago (bead in Flint), it has wandered through the Dreaming. Since it was designed to resist divination, they can't tell exactly where it is, but it has left massive footprints visible in the real world, through Risur's weftlands (bead)

and into the high bayou (bead). It knocked the top off a mountain on the border of Risur and Ber (bead), tromped across the desert toward the east coast (bead), and then disappeared somewhere near Seobriga (bead).

Han asks if the colossus was designed to operate underwater, and Grappa confirms that it was.

Here Vicemi explains that they wondered why the colossus chose that particular path, and now they have a theory. At the same time the colossus escaped, an eladrin warrior named Asrabey (Cula rolls her eyes) abducted Kasvarina and spirited her away to the Dreaming. They're fairly certain that Asrabey thought Kasvarina was just a hostage, not one of the founders of this conspiracy, and given her condition (i.e., the fact that her memories were locked away by Alexander Grappa) they hope she cannot compromise them.

Kasvarina is still an officer of the Obscurati, so they could not divine her location, but they could trace Asrabey, and they assume the two remained together. He headed to Elfaivar, then disappeared entirely near some old eladrin ruins (bead), which they believe have an entrance to an eladrin enclave, which exists between the real world and the Dreaming. That was five months ago, and just a few days ago colossal footprints were spotted in the jungle near those ruins.

Vicemi's theory is that somehow the colossus is drawn to Kasvarina, perhaps because their memories were both locked away by the same man. So far they've refrained from rescuing Kasvarina, since the risk of an assault on an eladrin conclave was deemed too high, especially since she has no memories and thus isn't actually useful to the conspiracy. Now, though, it makes sense to secure her.

Nicodemus says that they have a plan to retrieve the colossus from the Dreaming, but it requires bringing the titan to a specific location. He looks meaningfully at Han. Han curses, then nods.

They're referencing the city of Methia, which is the center of Danor's dead magic zone. So severe is the magical sink here that it basically punched a hole through reality into both the Dreaming and the Bleak Gate. All three locations are coterminous at once, but any person who goes there becomes unsettled and eventually goes mad.

Planning a Rescue Mission

Nicodemus says that their first priority after the convocation ends will be to regain control of the colossus. They still have a few of the prototype golems that were put away for a rainy day, and if they can't find a way to restore the mind of the colossus, they can try implanting one of the other golems' minds.

He asks "Leone" if he would be able to manually control the colossus. Grappa stammers, then says no, that would be too much for him. Nicodemus replies that they'll keep Leone on hand just in case, to help them at least slow the thing down. He asks for a dossier of vulnerable points to target, and says it might be time to start coming up with fall-back options if the new colossus minds won't work.

Cula says that she could probably find out what enclave Kasvarina is in. She just needs to know what resources she can bring in in order to rescue Kasvarina. Nic holds up a hand and says they shouldn't make plans until they know who's still on their side. He asks if anyone has any pressing business, and when no one does he suggests they all get a filling breakfast.

Han, Cula, and Grappa stand to leave, but Nicodemus calls "Leone" back for a moment, asking what faction he voted for. Grappa says Watchmakers. Nicodemus and Vicemi exchange glances, and after a moment's hesitation Nic suggests Leone keep an open mind to other, more popular proposals. Grappa leaves.

Nic asks to be alone, and once Vicemi is gone he lights a cigarette and waits for what passes as dawn in the Bleak Gate.

Third Murder

Reed Macbannin barely knew Leone in life, but in death he's learned much about the man. Macbannin had hoped to kill Governor Roland Stanfield instead—he even discovered a rare curse that could stop a deva from reincarnating—but Leone will do in a pinch. Macbannin blames both for turning him into a traitor to his country. So for his third act of disrupting the conspiracy, he plans to murder the steelshaper.

As Grappa returns to his room, the palace is still mostly sleeping. Unless the party tries to link up with him he simply heads back to his room so he can panic in privacy. But when he closes the door behind him, he finds his throat seizing up. Unable to breathe or speak, he spots a figure lurking in the corner, but it's too dark for him to tell who.

Grappa doesn't know how to really defend himself with Leone's powers. Unless the party is close enough to hear sounds of Grappa desperately smacking metal objects into the walls, within a minute he passes out from asphyxiation, and he's dead soon thereafter. Macbannin covers things up by slipping a noose around Leone's throat, tugging it tightly, and levitating the man so he hangs from the ceiling rafter.

If Macbannin succeeds in this murder, he tries to banish the soul of Leone, but doesn't know the right name for his curse, so Grappa's soul escapes. It might return in later adventures.

This is Hard to Explain

If the party is nearby, they can burst into the room and see Macbannin clenching a fist to keep Grappa from breathing. A lot depends on the party's reaction. Macbannin of course doesn't know who they really are, so he tries to cover for himself by saying, "We voted for the same faction. This man is our enemy."

Not that he knows what faction any of the PCs voted for. If his ruse falls through, or if the party attacks him, he shrugs and says, "Someone will stop you madmen. If not me, I know a few constables who are really good at stopping conspiracies."

Ideally, you'd want to leverage this situation into the party and Macbannin realizing they're on the same side, or at least have Macbannin get away. He's certainly not going to alert the Ghost Council to what happened, and if the party keeps quiet too (or maybe just suggests he goes after other Ob officers instead of them) he'll try to figure out why.

If he just runs away, Macbannin can return to help the party's escape during the Splinter Cell encounter.

INTERRUPTIONS

If a PC gets spotted eavesdropping on this meeting, Nicodemus wants to capture him, not kill him. After all, he doesn't think he's doing anything those in the conspiracy would disagree with; he just worries that there might be a spy. So, as mentioned in Buddy System (page 110), he would interrogate the PC and ask probing questions. But if the character could cover for himself Nic would be content to chide him for taking risks in a dangerous time, and commend him for his curiosity.

If multiple PCs get caught, though, Nicodemus finds it suspicious that they came in on the same group, which will prompt a more thorough investigation. This could include searching their rooms and their belongings.

The Enemy of My Enemy

If the party admits their identity to Macbannin, he's shocked and demands proof, like details of how they found and defeated him back in Flint. He'll explain his change of heart upon coming back as a ghost, and ask if they have a ship full of soldiers who can storm the palace? Sure, his situation has gone from "hopelessly outnumbered" to "hopefully outnumbered," but the group of them would never manage to start a fight and get out of here alive.

Plus, Macbannin points out that most of the leadership are ghosts, who will come back even if destroyed. He says that he's prepared a curse that can stop *one* person from reincarnating or rejuvenating (though if asked why he can't say, since a *geas* stops him from revealing that Stanfield is part of the conspiracy); which he thinks would work on Vicemi. He's not quite sure *what* Nicodemus is, but knows this isn't his first body.

Macbannin's original plan was just to try to sow discord and look for an Ob officer he might be able to trust to deliver a message to the RHC. He can't travel far from the rest of the Ghost Council, and at any rate he's stuck in the Bleak Gate unless he steals one of these lanterns. He nods to the wall-mounted gaslamp, which the party might not have realized before now are *wayfarer's lanterns*.

If the party wants to just lay low and use Macbannin as a man on the inside, events in the adventure will proceed as outlined below. But if the party comes up with some sort of crazy plan (perhaps even beating Nicodemus to the punch by using the lanterns as a weapon), let them try it.

Next Morning

Guards provide wake-up calls at what would be dawn in the real world. Here it just goes from pitch black to gloomy gray outside. Within ten minutes the guards discover Dame Constance dead, and possibly Leone.

Use these last few hours to resolve any lingering schemes the party has gotten themselves involved with. Additionally, the PCs should witness several small groups slipping into private rooms to hold hushed discussions. During breakfast a fist-fight breaks out between two Berans — one supporting Colossus, the other Panarchist. Accusations and rumors fill the halls, with people growing suspicious of their fellow conspirators' intentions.

The officers are called to enjoy lunch together, but this only provokes a loud, disorganized debate with people from different sides cutting each other off, accompanied by lots of pompous harrumphing from their allies.

Catherine Romana, who is busy trying to gather a coalition, manages to quiet the room by shouting, "Who trusts anyone else here? We don't know each other. I barely trust the people who say they're on my side to actually vote as they claim they will. So why in the world are *you* trusting our gentle leader Nicodemus? He keeps hinting that all he wants is peace, that he values the ideology of some writer who's been dead for five centuries, but I've known plenty of politicians.

"You can't trust words. All you can trust is that people are afraid of losing power. We've gotten here because we've been ruthless. Let's not pretty it up. I tell you this, if you idiots vote to give up the authority that we have *earned* over this world, you'll be showing yourselves as weak. And this man, this conspiracy? It doesn't need weak people."

Loud arguments erupt after that, but soon Vicemi appears and a hush falls. He tells them to go into the Main Hall for what he calls a "second vote." In truth, this will be the final vote.

Characters who take a long time to go inside the hall notice that the guards who would normally be present are absent; Nicodemus has told them to patrol the exterior of the palace to get them out of the way. Instead, members of the Ghost Council close the doors behind them. The only ghosts in the main hall are Vicemi, Amielle, and Macbannin.

The Vote

Social. Real-Time. Level 16.

After final arguments, Nicodemus asks for a vote to decide the Obscurati's new world order.

Nicodemus asks for each faction to send forth one representative to speak on their behalf, and to please keep remarks to five minutes or fewer. Barring PC intervention, the three main factions are:

- **MAP Proposal.** The compromise devised by the late Dame Constance, this proposal combines Miller's Pyre, the Arboretum, and the Panarchists, while also appeasing the Trekkers, Long Now, Mortal Mind, and Sky League. It shuffles some planes about, adds a few new ones, and manages to satisfy most of the needs of those groups. Tellingly, it abandons the Miller's Pyre desire of a plane with an Empathy focus, it keeps the Dreaming and Bleak Gate despite what the Arboretum wants, and it leaves the world with no seal against extraplanar incursion. Cula Ravjahani represents this group.

- **Watchmaker Watchmen.** This novel proposal brings in a new habitable world where the Ob leadership, allies, and descendants can live with free will, able to watch over the real world which will have had its free will removed per the Watchmaker proposal. It would be possible to reopen the seal and restore free will if something went wrong, but doing so would be such an ordeal that it could not be undertaken lightly. This proposal pleases Aegis, since it protects both worlds from extraplanar incursion. Amielle represents this group, but seems to know that she's going to lose.
- **Colossal Congress.** Based on research into Risur's rites of rulership, this proposal grants the powers of the Colossus proposal to the Obscurati initially, but requires each member to undertake a ritual of affirmation every year. Each member of this colossus congress would have a geographic region where he would need the approval of at least half the residents. The Ob would still be able to solve issues with their mighty powers, but the people could reject leaders they no longer approve of. This proposal satisfies the Weapon-Mongers and the Economists, both of whom favor the inherent competition. Catherine Romana represents this group (and eagerly courts the support of whichever PC is in Livia Hatsfield's body).

Perhaps the PCs have a proposal of their own, or they manage to become the face of one of these three. In general, though, the division in the conspiracy comes down to whether they should ensure a position of power for themselves in the new world.

After the final arguments, Nicodemus takes the stage.

"We all have different ideals, but before we vote I want you to understand what led me to found our organization and pursue this long, grand work. It wasn't a desire to gain power myself, or to punish those who had abused *their* power. I started down this path because I'd seen that intellect, wisdom, and good intentions were feeble weapons in the face of propaganda and fear.

"The problem with this world is that the dreamers and poets are blind to its real face. It's easy to mock as childish those who grow upset when the world isn't 'fair.' The habit of accepting injustice as the way of the world has become too familiar, and while I shed my innocence long ago, I never fooled myself into thinking it is *good* that I've had to do these foul things.

"I do think any of these proposals would result in a materially better world. And I will support whichever wins, as will the Ghost Council. But only one of them will make a world good enough to balance out the evil we'll create to get there."

Nicodemus steps aside, and the vote begins. The board has options for MAP, Watchmen, and Congress, plus Other and Any.

Count

Let the PCs go last. Not counting their votes, the result is:

- **MAP.** 17 votes.
- **Watchmen.** 4 votes.
- **Congress.** 18 votes.
- **Other.** 0 votes.
- **Any.** Nicodemus, plus 25 ghosts.

This tally assumes Zoltan, Constance, and Leone are all dead. (Otherwise they vote for Congress, MAP, and Watchmen respectively.) We leave it to you to decide who among the NPCs the party has interacted with align with each faction. Ideally you'll have some people whom the party likes who end up fleeing when Nicodemus starts the purge.

In any case, the PCs' votes will be the deciding ones.

Ballot Stuffing

Social. Real-Time. Level 16.

Nicodemus abandons democracy and uses a wayfarer's lantern to distract those he wishes to excise from his conspiracy.

Nicodemus asks Vicemi to verify the final count, then puts on his best smile and thanks everyone for participating in one of the greatest moments in history. He's truly glad, he says, that everyone felt comfortable voting their conscience, and he hopes that they can all work together moving forward. As he speaks, the gaslamps in the room start to turn a soothing blue color.

The party immediately recognizes the effect as being identical to the base of the rift at Knütpara, and if they focus on trying to resist its magic (see page 105) they should be able to keep their wits about them.

Trait

▸ **Palace Gaslamp Pacification** ✦ Aura 10

A new emotion overtakes you.

There are lamps every 5 squares or so throughout the palace. Whenever a creature ends its turn in the illuminated area, make the following attack.

Attack: Close Burst 10 (creatures in burst); +20 vs. Will

Hit: The target falls under the lantern's effect (save ends).

Special: If a creature fails three consecutive saves, it falls fully under the lantern's effect for 5 minutes.

If a creature succeeds ends three consecutive turns unaffected (either because the attack missed or the creature succeeded its save), it becomes resistant, and cannot be affected again by any lantern with the same planar energy for 5 minutes

A creature can choose to let itself be affected by the lantern.

A creature caught in the light is pacified. It cannot take hostile actions, and it treats all creatures as trusted friends. If another creature attacks it, it automatically breaks free of the pacification and cannot be affected again until the end of the encounter. Through a preparatory ritual, Nicodemus has made himself and the Ghost Council immune to this particular effect of the lantern. They'll be able to act freely.

Blue Banquet

Once Nicodemus is content that everyone is pacified, he asks for those who supported the Colossal Congress proposal to remain in the main hall while he takes everyone else outside to the grand foyer. Of the prominent NPCs, this includes Vicemi, Han Jierre, Macbannin, Amielle, and Erskine (plus possibly Grappa if he lives).

There awaits the Ghost Council swarm: a sprawling mass of what must have been a hundred or more people before their wills became subsumed in the collective. When the doors to the main hall are closed, Vicemi says that he has sent the other councilors to secure the premises. The palace is sealed, and the council is ready.

Nicodemus turns to those who came out with him. He says, "Those inside would ruin this world if they were allowed to come into power. In my five centuries I've seen plenty of monarchs and oligarchs just like them who have lashed out when their authority and dominance is threatened. I don't like what we have to do now, but the most efficient way to avert this threat is to strike now. This small dishonorable deed will be balanced by ages of greater prosperity for all of civilization. I need your support in this decision."

Amielle and Macbannin remain impassive, but the rest of the officers in the crowd begin to nod assent. Soon over twenty people, speaking somberly and reasonably, urge Nicodemus to do what must be done.

Maybe He Has a Point

Nicodemus is moments away from ordering the Ghost Council to glide through the walls into the main hall to slaughter the 18 officers who voted in favor of the Colossal Congress (plus any PCs who voted with them).

A rational party might realize that showing their true colors right now, in front of all the villains, is a good way to get killed. But we want to kick off an action scene, so consider some combination of the following elements to get things moving.

Shoot First

If the party just up and attacks without explaining who they are (or tries to interfere with the main hall such as by breaking lamps), Vicemi and the Ghost Council retaliate immediately, but Nicodemus spares a round to try to reason with them, saying that there's no place in the new world for those who would seize power for themselves.

At that point, Pemberton pipes up. Seemingly oblivious to the ongoing battle, Erskine Haffkruger begins to speak with Benedict Pemberton's deep and folksy voice, saying that he's enjoyed spying on this little get-together, but he'd much rather watch the two sides have a fair fight, since he's hoping neither of them win. He explains who the party is and expresses his wish that all those present end up killing each other. Then he activates the duplicant's internal bomb (see below) to kick things off.

Not So Fast

The party might boldly reveal themselves. Nicodemus is shocked, but asks that they consider working with the Obscurati, rather than trying to stop a new and better world from being created. At some point—especially if the party seems to be leaning toward yes—Pemberton interrupts and says that he paid to see internecine cock-fighting, not a one-sided pig-slaughter. Again, he'll trigger the bomb once he's bored with talking.

Helpless and Calm

The lanterns might have pacified the party entirely, in which case just before Nicodemus gives the killing order, Pemberton explains that the constables here will be throwing a spanner into his plans. Nicodemus scoffs and says the party can't do anything to stop him; they'll just sit passively and watch. Pemberton responds that getting attacked usually breaks these sorts of charms, and that's when he uses his back-up plan.

Duplicitous Duplicant Detonation

When Pemberton thinks the time is right, he claps and rubs his hands together, grins, and starts ticking loudly. One round later (at initiative count 0) the ticking accelerates. The round after that he's practically whirring, and at initiative count 0 on the third round he explodes.

During the countdown, first he points out that while the ghosts might not mind a little pyrotechnics, most of the conspirators are nice and full of fleshy bits. Then he tells Erskine to say bye-bye, and leaves the confused dwarf in charge of his duplicant for a moment before it explodes.

Make the following attack.

Triggered Action

▸ **Duplicant Explosion** (fire) ✦ Daily

Erskine never demonstrated the unnatural strength most duplicants possess. Probably because most of him is just packed with explosives.

Trigger: Initiative count 0 on the third round after Pemberton starts the bomb.

Attack: Close Burst 10 (creatures in burst); +20 vs. Reflex

Hit: 10d6 fire damage, plus 35 non-typed damage.

Miss: Half damage.

The Splinter Cell

Action. Montage. Level 17+.

The Ghost Council attacks, Ob officers turn on each other, and the losing side runs for shore.

In this scene, all hell breaks loose in the Obscurati palace. The simplest version simply sees the party fleeing and perhaps contacting their ship via their *communication rings*. It can then use the *fey portal pad* to transition into the Bleak Gate for five minutes, long enough for the party to rush on board. At some point during their escape Vicemi and the Ghost Council will attack, and Macbannin will come to their aid.

But there are many other objectives the party might have: rescuing sympathetic Ob officers, killing Ob loyalists, freeing Vitus Sigismundi from the prison portal painting, and whatever else the constables have come to care about. Also, if they did not prepare to have their ship extract them, they'll need to rejigger the *wayfarer lighthouse* if they want to transfer to the real world.

Finally, the party is likely not in their own bodies. They might want to take a moment to get back into themselves, which would require one round for each body that needs to be removed from the *absurdist web*, and then just a free action to break the wreath that binds the two together. The PC will be restored immediately, and both he and the vessel will be helpless for one round. If the party doesn't just *coup de grâce* the vessel bodies (hopefully not Livia, though), they'll just flee in terror, since they have barely any idea where they are.

Enemy Defenders

When Pemberton's duplicant explodes, the loyal Ob officers have already scattered. Right afterward Vicemi orders the Ghost Council swarm into the Main Hall. Vicemi then disappears, teleporting back to the council room. He intends to attack only once he has regrouped and has back-up. Most of the exits of the building are watched by senior ghost councilors. A shadowlisk is stationed the front exit, another at the rear by the lighthouse. A third shadowlisk guards the entrance to the room that has the prison portal painting, on the first floor west wing hallway.

Unless the party goes looking for multiple groups of enemies at once, we suggest you stagger their encounters as follows.

Saving Congress

(Encounter Level 12)

Enemies: Ghost Council Swarm, Cula Ravjahani

Possible Allies: Catherine Romana

In the main hall, eighteen Ob officers who voted for the Colossal Congress (including Catherine Romana) wait passively. Unless the party intercedes, the Ghost Council swarm glides in through the doors, uses a minor action to seal one of the far exits with ectoplasm, and starts killing two officers per round with its *eldritch grasp*. Cula Ravjahani

follows the swarm in from the foyer, and engages the party, hoping they'll focus on her and let the ghosts do their work.

Catherine Romana manages to shake off the pacifying effect in the first round, and since she didn't witness what happened in the foyer she might attack the party in confusion. The rest of the officers here don't fight back or even flee until they are attacked, unless the lanterns in the room (4 in total) are destroyed. Even then, they're not particularly effective in a fight against ghosts.

They'll flee in a panic in different directions unless directed. If rallied, their combined mix of magic and weapons only manages to deal 2 damage per officer per round, but it might add up.

The party is still probably in their vessel bodies. The Ghost Council fights until reaches HP Threshold I, at which point it splinters, leaving behind two ghost councilors. It withdraws and seeks guidance from Vicemi, but will return later. Cula will try to flee with the Ghost Council, but likely goes down here.

Afterward, the party might enlist Catherine's aid. She recommends they use the lighthouse to transition to the real world, then commandeer a ship to escape.

Exit Blocked

(Encounter Level 16)

Enemies: 1 shadowlisk, 6 senior ghost councilors

Possible Allies: Amielle Latimer, 12 Obscurati arcane marksmen

Perhaps the party tries to lead the way out of the palace, or they respond after hearing panicked Ob officers scream as they're blasted into shadows by shadowlisks. Whatever exit the party tries to go out through, a similar group of defenders will try to stop them.

The ghost councilors try to dominate PCs and move them into the gaze of the shadowlisk. They're fearless about combat because they know they're rejuvenate even if destroyed.

It's likely that Amielle Latimer, who fled when Pemberton's bomb went off, returns with a squad of Obscurati arcane marksmen, who fire a fusillade into the shadowlisk. Once the fight's over, she can lend advice like reminding them of the three ships patrolling the waters around the island. She explains that she cannot go with them; she's bound to stay near the Ghost Council. But she wants them to get to safety. Sadly she's not as big an idealist as Nicodemus, and while intellectually his argument makes sense, she can't help but value her friends in the Ob, and won't abide their slaughter.

Lighthouse Defense

(Encounter Level 11)

Enemies: 2 senior ghost councilors, 4 Obscurati arcane marksmen

The lighthouse is not particularly well defended, though the marksmen will hear freight elevator ascending, and can take a ladder down to some sniper perches inside the lighthouse so they can fire down at the party.

Chaotic Halls

(Encounter Level 12)

Enemies: 9 Obscurati bookpin guards, 4 Obscurati arcane marksmen

If you think the party is having too easy a time, you might throw a squad of bookpin guards in their path. Ideally you can have the guards advance on the party from two different directions while the marksmen laying down suppressing fire. The enemies aren't particularly challenging, but the players might think they're in more trouble than they really are.

Prison Break

(Encounter Level 14)

Enemies: 1 shadowlisk, 1 senior ghost councilor, Ghost Council swarm stage 2

Possible Allies: Vitus Sigismund

The door hangs open to the downstairs west wing suite that contains the prison portal painting. Inside, though, a ghost councilor floats at the ceiling, and a shadowlisk is coiled to spring from the bathroom (where the painting is). Moments after the battle begins, the Ghost Council swarm (now at Stage 2) flies in through the window. It uses *ectoplasmic construct* to divide the party, then grabs one or two PCs and tries to carry them back out the window and up to the roof.

If you want to add drama, have the fighting damage the frame of the portal painting, which causes the world within to begin to disintegrate. The party will have only three rounds to get Vitus (and maybe the other prisoners) to safety between the demiplane becomes a lethal vacuum.

The Ghost Council fights until it reaches its second HP Threshold, then dives back into the palace and flees to Vicemi.

Pacing and Resting

This scene likely involves multiple combat encounters over a relatively short timespan. Consider that five minutes can pass pretty quickly if the party is talking with NPCs or deciding which way to go, which can be enough to justify a short rest. If the group insists on rushing, perhaps grant them a minor rest if they can get a one-minute break from combat, which would let them spend 1 healing surge and regain half their encounter powers.

Escaping Officers

The PCs might not be the only ones trying to escape. Based on how much havoc the party is causing, the Ob officers who allied with Nicodemus might run for the shore. Some will link up with Han Jierre who uses a *wayfarer's lantern* to get everyone onto a fast schooner in the real world. Others might just try to get onto the *Nighthawk*-class steamships, some being so desperate they dive into the treacherous waters.

Failure States

If the party gets taken down here, there's no reason Nicodemus or Vicemi would keep them alive as prisoners. You might be able to wrangle a last-minute rescue by Macbannin and Amielle (or other officers they befriended), getting the party onto their ship which barely escapes. If the party is out of allies, though, and you don't want to end the campaign, next adventure starts with the party linking up with Asrabey Varal, and if anyone has the clout to burst into a stronghold of bad guys and carry off a few people, it's him.

Panicked Evacuation

Action. Real-Time. Level 16+.

Numerous ships try to flee, prompting a chaotic, multi-sided battle between the real world and the Bleak Gate.

Honestly, the party will likely be spent and ready to leave after their confrontation with Vicemi, so you might simply gloss over their departure from the island so as not to end anti-climactically. But if you need some extra challenge, or if the party starts to flee by ship before remembering they need to go back and rescue someone, you can use the rules of *Admiral o' the High Seas* with these ship stats for a naval combat.

The Obscurati officers who did escape board the frigate *Naphaeon*, which flees from the island's north docks, trying to avoid combat and get to Vendricce, where it will receive protection by the Clergy's navy. Three *Nighthawk*-class steamships will try to intercept the party's ship, battling them in dark waters dotted with dangerous rocky spires.

If the party befriended the ghost pirates, their ship can emerge and aid the party. Remember that the party's ship can only stay in the Bleak Gate for so long without taking damage. The party might just board and go back to the real world, or they could try to stick around, chase down the *Naphaeon*, and consign her to the deep.

Terrain

The battle could take place either in the real world or the Bleak Gate.

In both worlds, large rocks rise from the sea around Mutravir Island. Each naval round, ships must make a Command check (DC 15) with a –2 penalty for each size category above Tiny. On a failure they take 1 point of Hull Integrity damage due to collision. The danger increases (DC 20) within 100 feet of shore. Ships trying to get closer risk being beached.

The Bleak Gate has no winds of its own. If the party brought a sailing vessel and didn't plan for this by performing some sort of weather ritual, they'll be immobilized. Unless the party manages to light up their enemies, the near-pitch darkness causes all ships in the Bleak Gate to roll twice and take the worse result for attack rolls and command checks. A ship's lookout can make a Perception check each naval turn (DC 25) to let the ship ignore the penalty for that round.

If they take the fight to the real world, by contrast, it's likely the middle of the day and well-lit. However, the winds are strong enough to create choppy seas.

Chop reduces each ship's speed and maneuverability ratings by one quarter, and ships must make a Command check each turn (DC 15) with a +2 bonus for each size category over Tiny. Failure means waves wash over the deck, forcing everyone to make a Dexterity check (DC 8) or be carried overboard. Failure by 5 or more means the ship lists, which immobilizes it until an engineer can right the vessel.

***Naphaeon*, Obscurati Frigate**	Level 17 Vehicle
Huge Vehicle	110,000 gp
Hull Integrity 4	**Command** +12
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

The Ghost Ship of Mutravir Island	Level 13 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	39,000 gp
Hull Integrity 3	**Command** +15
Defense 15	**Full Crew** 16
Maneuverability 6	**Minimum Crew** 4
Speed 8	**Total Complement** 60

Design

Length 90 ft. Beam 25 ft. Three masts, 70 ft. high. Two decks.

▶ **Ghost Ship**

It glides through the shoals, ignoring the hazardous rocks as it brings its cannons to bear.

The ship and those aboard it glide through solid objects like a ghost. Each turn, the captain chooses whether the ship is incorporeal or manifested. If manifested, it functions normally. If incorporeal, it takes a –5 penalty to its attack rolls, and attacks against it take the same penalty. Additionally, the incorporeal ship ignores catch and crash hazards.

▶ **Armaments**

A small array of light cannons, five to either broadside, but they strike with the wrathful might of the dead.

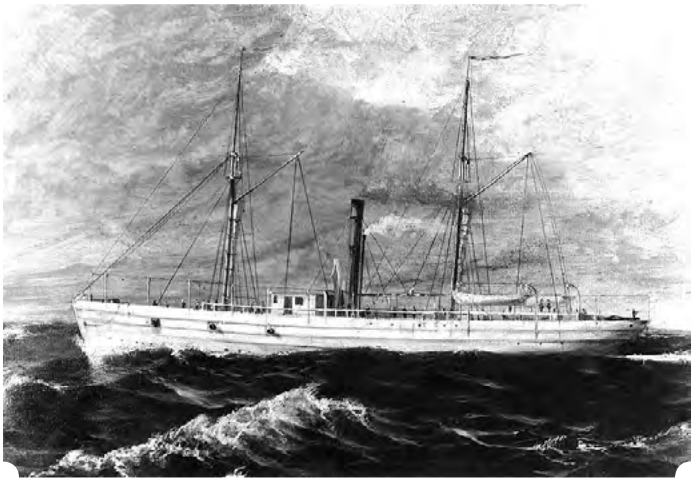
Crew: 40. *Attack:* +14, broadsides only.

Total Cost 39,000 gp

Hull (base level 6, sails, improved speed ×3, Level 10): 5,000 gp

Ghost Ship (Level 13): 17,000 gp

Armaments (large, broadsides, Level 13): 17,000 gp



***Nighthawk*-class steamship**	Level 16 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	104,920 gp
Hull Integrity 3	**Command** +7
Defense 15	**Full Crew** 28
Maneuverability 12	**Minimum Crew** 2
Speed 6	
Perception +13	

Design & Crew

Length 85 ft. Beam 25 ft. Steam engine, three decks.

Aside from captain, navigator, engineer, and gunner, the crew consists of two dozen mindless humanoid automatons.

▸ **Extraplanar Magnetometer & Spectral Searchlight**

Next to the navigator's compass, an arcane instrument detects the fluctuations caused by nearby metal, providing a crude sensor to detect ships—even ones in the real world. A gimbal-mounted searchlight on the prow uses wayfarer's lantern technology to allow the Nighthawk *to attack intruders while remaining safely in the Bleak Gate.*

The crew is always aware of the presence of ships within one mile, and if they lack line of sight (or are on a different plane) they can make a Perception check each round (DC 20) to set a course.

Once within medium range (500 feet) the vessel can use its spotlight to locate one ship at a time, as long as it's to the fore or sides, not aft. The *Nighthawk* can target that ship with its weapons, even if it's on a different plane.

A ship targeted by the spotlight can fire back, but it takes a –10 penalty to the attack roll if it isn't on the same plane. The spotlight can be targeted and destroyed.

▸ **Clever Defenses**

Special iron shutters keep the crew safe from enemy fire without limiting the Nighthawk's ability to fire back.

The crew always has cover against attacks made from outside the ship.

▸ **Tar and Brimstone Sheathing**

An alchemical mixture of components slathered on the hull protects the bottom of the ship.

Passwall rituals and similar effects cannot affect the hull. Any creature that attacks the hull from beneath the water takes 10 fire damage.

▸ **Eldritch Shield** ✦ Installed

An arcane forcefield powered by the ship's engine wards off attacks.

Any spell that originates more than 50 feet from the ship has any damage it deals to creatures aboard the ship reduced by 32. Attacks from within that range function normally.

▸ **Wayfarer's Cannon**

Thin slivers of light are visible through the shutters on the turret at the ship's prow. After it fires, you briefly see mechanical constructs reloading the twin cannons with huge munitions that have glowing amberglass shells.

Crew: 20. *Attack:* +18, forward only. Each round choose one of the following effects:

- ✦ **Flaming.** Attack inflicts the burning condition instead of normal damage. Crew in a struck area take 2d6 fire damage.
- ✦ **Radiant.** Attack explodes with positive energy, dealing normal damage to undead creatures in struck areas, but not harming the ship itself.
- ✦ **Shocking.** Gains a +2 bonus to hit creatures. Against ships, the first strike of any attack deals no damage to the ship itself (later hits deal normal damage). However, crew in struck components take an extra 1d6 lightning damage.

Total Cost 84,920 gp

Hull (base level 6, engine, improved speed ×2, improved maneuverability ×3, Level 13): 17,000 gp

Construct crew: 600 gp

Armaments (Level 16; flaming, Level 10; radiant, Level 2; shocking, Level 8): 58,920 gp

Sheathing, tar and brimstone (Level 8): 3,400 gp

Magnetometer and spotlight (Level 15): 25,000 gp

Battling Nicodemus

We don't present stats for Nicodemus here. Partially because he'll be designed to fit the needs of a different encounter in Adventure Eight, and mainly because he's effectively unkillable here. You can use the stats in adventure eight, but damage dealt to him instead transfers to the Ghost Council swarm. Until the party defeats it, Nicodemus cannot be hurt. Also, he has a custom contingency that will teleport him off the island and to a safehouse in Vendricce with just a single word.

Don't even bother having Nicodemus fight back, since you don't want the players expecting they'll get to beat him. Rather, as soon as he's attacked, he'll begin to concentrate on a spell to retaliate when something intercedes.

If the party's true identity has been revealed, Nicodemus's voice changes accent and timbre to that of Andrei, who says, "These are not yours to harm." Nicodemus shakes his head, realizes he can't risk fighting in this condition, and activates his contingency.

If the party just up and attacks, maybe spend a round with him expressing anger and disbelief, but then have Vicemi snarl at him that he's too important to risk, so Nic grudgingly leaves. It might irk your players, but they have quite enough enemies to deal with already, and they'll get another crack at the mastermind in the next adventure.

Joining the Conspiracy

The party might decide they like Nicodemus, in which case if you want to give the party a challenge you'll need to beef up the strength of the opposing Ob officers. The easiest solution is just to say that the Ghost Council actually isn't able to fight; they're just harmless vestiges. Nicodemus planned to rely on the lantern to slowly draw the opposition out one by and one and kill them without panicking the rest, but Benedict Pemberton's intervention means chasing everyone down will be much harder.

The party would be tasked with taking down Catherine Romana, fighting the bookpin guards and the marksmen, and stopping the twenty or so dissident officers from reaching the *Naphaeon* and fleeing. You could end with a fight against Macbannin, the two shadowlisks that he commands, and Amielle, who perhaps are trying to free Vitus and then commandeer one of the *Nighthawk* steamships to get off the island.

In the aftermath, Nicodemus will task the party with tracking down Kasvarina and bringing her back into the fold.

Tactics

The fight depends on which world the party is in. In the real world, the *Naphaeon* tries to circle the island and draw the party into the path of the *Nighthawks*, whose searchlights cut through the sea mist and let the enemies attack from the Bleak Gate. The party can fight back, but some shots pass straight through the spectral Ob ships.

In the Bleak Gate, there's almost no way to chase the *Naphaeon*, but it's much easier to confront the *Nighthawks*. The small ships can only shoot into a forward arc, but with their maneuverability and coordination, usually at least one can fire each round.

If the party catches the *Naphaeon*, it will defend itself, but the crew on board are not a substantial threat to the PCs except for their great numbers. However, if the party has not already faced Vicemi Terio, the ghost archmage might battle them here.

Showdown

Action. Tactical. Level 17+.

Vicemi bends all his might toward defeating the party.

Enemies: Vicemi Terio, 1 advanced bleak golem, 3 Obscurati bookpin guards, 3 ghost councilors, Ghost Council swarm stage 3

Possible Allies: Reed Macbannin

Perhaps the party is running down a hallway toward an exit, or they're descending the stairs to the cliff south of the lighthouse, or they're riding a carriage toward the north docks to get onto their ship. Perhaps they're even at sea, about to board the *Naphaeon* and capture the last loyal officers of the Obscurati. A fog begins to spread in their path, and in the dark and mist they hear the clanking sounds of an approaching golem.

Vicemi uses *creeping terror* to create a swath of obscuring vapors in the party's path, then waits on the far side with an advanced bleak golem (he had to go get it from storage) and a trio of bookpin guards who have remained steadfast. The Ghost Council also lurks somewhere nearby, preferably separated by a solid wall so the party cannot see it.

Vicemi calls through the mist, "We've had enough talking this past day. All I ask is this: don't surrender. Give me a challenge as I kill you." Then the Ghost Council swarm swoops in and attacks.

If Macbannin has not made his appearance yet, he comes onto the scene right before the swarm strikes. He'll try to aid the party, and he'll cuss at them if they attack him.

Tactics

The Ghost Council just swarms the party, causing as much havoc as possible. The bleak golem advances with two bookpin guards right beside it, granting each other bonuses to defenses. A third guard stays with Vicemi, remaining at the edge of the mist.

After one round, the three senior ghost councilors emerge from the mist, focusing on any solitary or vulnerable foe.

Vicemi has likely already used *resist energy* to ward against whatever energy the party uses most. He has also summoned a *creeping terror*, and he keeps the wraith near him in the fog, ready to surprise anyone who comes after him.

He stays at the edge of the mist where he has concealment and uses his unerring *skeletal missiles*, peppering and distracting as many PCs as possible. If he sees the party benefiting from magical defenses he'll target it with *dispel magic*. He keeps *lightning conduit* in reserve if he needs to flee, and uses it to try to get near allies.

Macbannin sticks near the party and uses *tolling of the bleak bell* to make the Ghost Council vulnerable to the party's attacks. He tries to lay the *curse of the cacophony* on the Ghost Council, and the *curse of the white-eyed doppelganger* on Vicemi. He realizes that he cannot leave the Ghost Council, and that they'll probably do horrible things to him once the council reforms, so when the time is right he'll plunge a dagger into his own throat and begin to fade away. When he perishes, he uses one final curse to ensure that Vicemi won't rejuvenate if destroyed.

Loot

When Vicemi is destroyed, his *ghostly entourage* bracelet falls to the ground with a clatter (page 330).

Aftermath

When Vicemi is destroyed, he doesn't speak, just glares at the party as his form discorporates. Hopefully this will have exhausted the party enough that they won't feel the urge to track down all the remaining Ob officers and exterminate them. At any rate, the wards on the island that kept the horrors of the Bleak Gate at bay are starting to fade, so dawdling can be deadly.

Even if the party does kill every last Ob officer here, Nicodemus will return to the island and capture the essences of all the officers who perished, giving them the option to join the Ghost Council. Then he'll be able to connect with whoever is second-in-command in the various cells.

Macbannin and Vicemi are likely gone, but Amielle survives (and her disapproval of Nicodemus is probably not apparent). This has been a massive set-back, but the conspiracy was designed to survive catastrophic damage, and as long as they can gain control of the colossus, they can still enact their grand design.

Adventure Number 8
Diaspora

From the Pen of	Thurston Hillman
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Stunning Cartographic Displays by	James Hazelett Jonathan Roberts
Masterful Interior Illustrations by	Claudio Pozas Dede Putra Eleni Tsami and artists of history
with Layout and Graphic Design by	Frank Michienzi
Ably Produced and Facilitated by	Russell Morrissey

Special Thanks to my sister Aynsley and her five remaining eggs. Thanks for helping dad put up those awful Xmas lights; it gave me more time to work on this.

ADVENTURE EIGHT: Introduction

Wherein the Past May Be Best Left Forgotten

At the end of adventure seven, *Schism*, the party disrupted a gathering of the Obscurati conspiracy and learned their ultimate goal: alter the nature of reality by changing the order of the heavens. They also should have learned that the Ob seeks **Kasvarina Varal**, a co-founder of the conspiracy whose memories were sealed away. Should those memories be restored, she'd know exactly how to defeat the conspiracy. Divinations have traced her to ruins in the fallen eladrin nation of Elfaivar.

Memory and loss form the contours of this adventure. Kasvarina recalls the early parts of her life, but not the tragedies that motivated her to become part of the Obscurati. She knows the conspiracy has been responsible for suffering around the world, and she feels betrayed by this other version of herself she doesn't remember or understand. As she looks for a way to correct the wrongs she has committed, the party can recover an artifact known as the *lost arc of Reida*, which can bring to life places and events a person has experienced before. By traveling with Kasvarina, they have a chance to help her recover her forgotten past.

While combat and cunning will help the party protect Kasvarina from capture and reindoctrination by the Ob, a true victory will require connecting with her on a personal level and helping her stay true to the ideals she once had, rather than making the same choices all over again.

Personal Stories

This adventure has just as much action and physical confrontation as any other Zeitgeist module, but the core conflict cannot be resolved simply by hacking and slashing. Previous adventures in the campaign have focused on investigation of criminal organizations; this one focuses on investigating a single person's identity.

We acknowledge that there's a risk of making this adventure into The Kasvarina Show. As GM, your job will be to make sure the party keeps the limelight since they are the protagonists, and to link their own personal stories to Kasvarina's.

Maybe before leaving the enclave to recover her memories, Kasvarina—who to her recollection was just recently fighting a holy war—bonds with one of the PCs because they're both veterans. Perhaps at the same time that she is grappling with whether she made the right choice to pursue vengeance against the Clergy, you can draw parallels with another PC who is seeking vengeance against the Ob, or who already got his revenge against Lorcan Kell. When Kasvarina is about to witness her past self speaking with her long-dead children, perhaps a PC receives a *sending* from a family member with happy news, to remind him of the people he's protecting.

One of the founders of the Obscurati, Kasvarina had her memories locked away by Alexander Grappa, one of the builders of the colossus Borne. Left with the mind of a heroic young woman and memories that stopped before the great wars between Elfaivar and the Clergy, Kasvarina was wary and confused when the agents of the conspiracy locked her up. She fought them and tried to escape repeatedly, not believing their claims that she was once their leader. When Asrabey arrived and offered to take her back to her people, she knew at least that he was a fellow eladrin, and gladly went with him.

In the months since, Kasvarina has learned of the downfall of her once mighty homeland and experienced occasional flashes of recollection when exposed to things from her past. She aches to retrace her history and unlock more memories, but her fellow eladrin refuse to risk letting her out of the enclave. Worst of all are the people who still remember her as a stern matriarch responsible for ordering assassinations, but know nothing to help her discover how she came to be that person.

She knows she lived a secret double life before her memories were locked away, and she loathes those identities—both the leader of a conspiracy of steam and steel, and a vengeful matriarch of a dying race. Somewhere, she is sure, she betrayed her own ideals, and what motivates her now is undoing the damage that other version of her wrought.

Above all else, try to show that Kasvarina is on the party's side, at least at first. She wants to stop the Ob as much as they do, and she appreciates them coming to her aid. Though her restored memories might cause her to eventually turn against them, she should start as an ally.

Background

Since this is an adventure that delves into the past, there's quite a bit of background. We present it all here for you the game master, but the players will discover this in bits and pieces as they travel with Kasvarina. In brief, Kasvarina met Nicodemus five centuries ago, they tried to stop a holy war, and they ended up being responsible for the Great Malice. In the aftermath they formed the Obscurati and originally devoted themselves to defeating the Clergy, but later pursued Nicodemus's grand design to alter the planets that influence this world's fate. A year ago Kasvarina had her memory locked away by a former conspirator who was killed for what he did. Now she cannot recall anything that happened in the past five hundred years.

Adapting the Adventure

If you want to run this adventure without a pre-established global conspiracy, Kasvarina could be the only person who knew some critical secret, like the true name of a demon she used to serve, or a spell to break a curse she was responsible for laying. Her old allies or minions try to stop the party from restoring her memories.

Or you could replace Kasvarina with someone with a long history related to an existing archvillain in your campaign, giving you an opportunity to both deepen the party's knowledge of the villain while giving them a chance to learn his weakenesses.

Setting details can be fairly easily changed, with technology like muskets and cannons being replaced by rare magic. The holy war between Elfaivar and the Clergy can instead be any large scale conflict that had some memorable tragedy Kasvarina could be responsible for.

Bonds of Forced Faith

Appendix H is the short adventure *Bonds of Forced Faith*, which takes place 100 years before the ZEITGEIST campaign begins. Though it can serve as a standalone one-shot, this adventure provides an opportunity to weave it into the campaign's narrative.

Through the *arc of Reida* Kasvarina senses a memory in Flint (see Navras, page 287). If the party escorts Kasvarina to the opera house, after the memory-event completes, the inherent magic of the building interacts with the artifact and draws all the PCs into a moment from the city's own history, only tangentially related to Kasvarina.

Your players can then take on the roles of characters from a century earlier, and the results of their roleplaying will illuminate a period we'd previously left dark.

The Holy War

Five hundred and fifty years ago the Clergy launched a holy war against the eladrin empire Elfaivar, whose people followed a faith known as Seedism. Centuries of tension between the two religions finally boiled over into mass violence. The Clergy conquered land in what is today Crisillyir, pushed far into Elfaivar, and sacked a few eladrin cities, but weren't able to hold much territory further east than modern Vendricce. They called this war their Victory. The eladrin called it the *Perang Devar*, or Holy War.

Five decades later, the long-lived eladrin retaliated. Elfaivaran armies reclaimed stolen lands and razed Vendricce, ships assaulted human cities along the Avery Coast, and a massive force laid siege to the cities Alais Primos and Sid Minos. Far to the west in the Clergy's capital city of Methia, the hierarchs of the faith directed the conflict through portals atop an alabaster spire known as the Lance of Triegenes, but what they saw was an inevitable defeat.

Kasvarina's Past

To Kasvarina's recollection, she was marching with the armies of Elfaivar to lay siege to Alais Primos, and then suddenly she was a prisoner in an underground fortress with walls of steel. Her captors attempted strange magic on her mind, and when that failed to restore her memories they drugged her to keep her docile.

Rescue eventually came in the form of **Asrabey Varal**, an eladrin claiming to be one of her husbands, though she never remembered meeting him. He spirited her away in the midst of a large battle she did not understand, and soon she was back in her homeland. Only then did she accept the truth that her homeland was gone, and that everyone she remembered was long dead.

Remembered Timeline

Kasvarina was born in the year 213 B.O.V. and is now 713 years old, but she looks about as old as a human in her late thirties. She remembers events up to 1 B.O.V., by which time she had already trained as a mage and soldier, married a fellow warrior named Pillai, had two daughters named Launga and Dala, and lost her husband in the first holy war against the Clergy. She joined the army of Elfaivar and became an officer, wanting to protect her now-adult children from the threat the humans posed. After that her memories are blank, but she can recover the rest during this adventure.

Meeting Nicodemus

During the siege of Alais Primos in 1 B.O.V., Kasvarina was injured, then spared from execution by **Nicodemus the Gnostic**, a clericist monk serving as a healer. He nursed her back to health and saw that they both believed the war to be pointless. He helped her escape the city and return to her homeland, where she got permission to arrange discussions between the Elfaivaran ranamandala (ruling circle of kings and queens) and the hierarchs of the Clergy. Before leaving she saw her daughters once more, since she expected she might be going to her death.

She and Nicodemus returned to Alais Primos and met contacts, but they were arrested and imprisoned off the coast of the city of Sid Minos, in a cursed vault known as the Crypta Hereticarum, where the Clergy put troublemakers to give them slow, painful deaths. Nicodemus and Kasvarina managed to contact the vault's greatest prisoner, Ashima-Shimtu, a demon who once advised a nation of fiends. Ashima-Shimtu

was unable to escape the prison, but she could free Nicodemus and Kasvarina. In exchange, she offered them a powerful ritual, and asked that they use it to end the war.

Demon's Gambit

That ritual, *Sacrament of Apotheosis*, was once used by the Demonocracy to empower its warlords. It transforms a person into the avatar of a specific belief. The feeble 'faith' of demons was merely enough to turn men into fiery giants. And there was a drawback that if the avatar died, the believers would suffer a painful, perhaps fatal backlash. But in the midst of a holy war, with millions of worshippers on either side? The ritual could create a god, and any backlash would be cataclysmic.

The Clergy had imprisoned Ashima-Shimtu centuries ago, hoping some day she would share the ritual with them. In Nicodemus and Kasvarina, she saw a chance to punish the Clergy by giving them exactly what they wanted. Nicodemus and Kasvarina were to trade the ritual for their freedom from the vault, then trick the Clergy into using the ritual to create an avatar of their god of war. The eladrin would slay it, and the power of the Clergy would be broken.

But the hierarchs were cleverer than Nicodemus and Kasvarina expected. They brought the pair to the Lance of Triegenes to witness the ritual, but rather than use its power on one of their own, they had kidnapped Kasvarina's younger daughter Dala.

The hierarchs transformed Dala into an avatar of Srasama, the eladrin goddess of womanhood. They threw her through a portal and she arose in the battlefield outside Alais Primos, confused at her sudden power but magically compelled by the hierarchs to join the battle. It did not take long for the Clergy's forces, who were prepared for her arrival, to kill her.

Her death triggered what today is known as the Great Malice, which slew almost every other eladrin woman, cast Methia and its surroundings into a dead magic zone, and transformed many of the people of Methia into tieflings. Kasvarina and Nicodemus escaped through the portal before the magic died, but only Kasvarina survived. Nic was seemingly annihilated in transit.

War's Aftermath

Kasvarina returned to her homeland and discovered that miraculously her other daughter Launga had survived, since she had been on a mission in the Dreaming. They and a handful of other female survivors performed a funeral ritual wherein they forsook grief and so could never age. Then Kasvarina exiled herself, unable to face her people.

She wandered and hoped to die so her guilt would pass, but a few years later she received a magical *sending* from Nicodemus, who explained his soul had survived where his body had not. He invited her to Pala, a small city-state he had founded in the Malice Lands, which he directed using his birth name of William Miller.

Kasvarina lived for a time in Pala, a beacon of reason that attracted many noble people from across the world. Miller wrote respected philosophical treatises, speaking to common people of how to better understand neighbors whom they might distrust, in order to create more harmony and prosperity for all. But Miller pushed too hard too quickly, trying to motivate change to weaken the power of the surviving Clergy (now based out of Alais Primos, since Methia had been abandoned). As history books record, the Clergy labeled Miller a heretic, razed his city, and executed him on a pyre of his own books.

This time Kasvarina knew he would return, and when he did he cast aside his old life and became Nicodemus again, leaving William Miller to be a martyr. She advised him to pursue vengeance, but he chose a slower, grander solution.

Founding the Obscurati

In 19 A.O.V., Nicodemus and Kasvarina returned to the Lance of Triegenes to meet with Jierre, a former acolyte of the Clergy who had been transformed into a tiefling. They enacted a decades-long plan to stymie the Clergy and keep it from regaining the power it had lost at the end of the Second Victory.

After a century of work, they had managed to greatly weaken their enemies, and Kasvarina began to focus more on the internal needs of her people, to try to restore at least a small nation of eladrin. Though she still hated the Clergy, she had new lives that demanded care. Nicodemus, by contrast, was just a ghost untethered to life, and he had no other purpose than to defeat his old religion. Not content with only a partial victory, he cast his sights higher.

A New World

Having learned from the skyseers of Risur the way that the planets of the night sky influence the world's fate, Nicodemus composed his plans to reshape the heavens. Though the descendants of Jierre practically revered him, Kasvarina was not motivated, and the plan languished for ten years.

Had it come any more quickly, Kasvarina might have been suspicious. An attempt to ally with the dragon tyrants of Ber to fight the Clergy turned out to be a trap, orchestrated by a rival eladrin matriarch who wanted Kasvarina's position. Her daughter Launga died, and after Kasvarina killed the traitor and the dragon tyrant, she was left grief-stricken.

She never suspected Nicodemus had arranged the betrayal, but it worked as he planned, bringing her closer to him again. With his allies in place, Nicodemus set the Obscurati on course for its grand design.

PCs in the Obscurati

In adventure seven the party might have decided they agree with the conspiracy's goals, and switched sides. Nicodemus would send them to retrieve Kasvarina and help her recover her memories, with the important mission of making sure that they present her past in a light that brings her back into the fold.

If the party's smart, they'll keep their change of allegiance from the RHC. However, dragon industrialist **Benedict Pemberton** will realize the Ob is a greater threat to him than the RHC is. He'll likely be able to inform Risur of the party's change of heart, which will mean that the military forces opposing the party in Elfaivar will be Risuri, not Danoran. In **Appendix E: Recurring Enemies & Allies** we present stats of some high-powered RHC agents who could oppose the party.

At the adventure's climax, a repentant Kasvarina might cast the party into the Dreaming, or if the party succeeded in their mission Nicodemus might send them there to ensure the Unseen Court is too distracted to help Risur. Those events are detailed in adventure nine, *The Last Starry Sky*. Of course, as the party sees Kasvarina's memories, they might realize Nicodemus isn't as pure-intentioned as he presents himself.

Recent Events

The Ob's main goal in this adventure is to gain control of the colossus, Borne, which has been trapped in the Dreaming, thanks to the party and their king in adventure five, *Cauldron-Born*. The golem will enact the Ob's ritual to alter the shape of the heavens, but they don't have magic powerful enough to bring it back to this world.

Worse, its memories were also locked away. However, it is intuitively drawn to Kasvarina, so the conspiracy is trying to recover her in order to draw the colossus to Methia, where the veil between worlds is torn. It will be able to step back into the real world.

Adventure Overview

Both the party and the Obscurati search the jungle ruins of Elfaivar for Kasvarina, and several possible ambushes will complicate the party's search until they deal with the Ob's forces. Eventurally the party locates Sentosa, an eladrin enclave hidden halfway between this world and the Dreaming. Kasvarina is guarded by **Asrabey Varal**, but is eager to set out and learn more about her past, and she has learned about an an artifact called the *lost arc of Reida*, which will let her experience her past and regain her memories.

The matriarch of the enclave, **Athrylla Valanar**, never trusted Kasvarina before she lost her memories, and tries to stop her departure. The party might earn her trust or simply sneak Kasvarina out.

Eladrin weretigers (called *bagheva* in the local tongue) led by **Betronga Sidhon** claim as their home the ruins where the artifact lies, and they are resisting encroachment by soldiers of the Clergy. The leader of the soldiers, a noble but stern godhand named **Aulus Atticus**, has been tasked with ending the threat the weretigers pose to nearby colonial settlements. And the ruin itself forces the party to face fiery memories both past and future in order to claim the relic. The party has to find a solution they can live with, perhaps helping the embittered eladrin slay the Clergy peacekeepers, or vice versa, or just sneaking past the weretigers to steal the artifact and avoid the conflict altogether. If they can manage to find a peaceful resolution, they'll have made powerful allies.

With the *lost arc* in hand, the party escorts Kasvarina to places where she had noteworthy experiences, which the artifact manifests in physical form. Several leads present themselves from memories triggered at the enclave, and Kasvarina wants to visit her original home town, Resal. There a memory reveals her early interactions with Nicodemus before they set off to try to stop the holy war.

The Obscurati had been watching Resal, and Nicodemus appears, his spirit inhabiting the body of a local. He asks Kasvarina to come with him, and when she refuses, Ob forces attack and try to capture Kasvarina and kill the party. Nicodemus watches until his body is killed, and then his spirit flies away to plot another way to reclaim her. A noose is closing around the party, and they have to keep moving to avoid being caught.

The party can scour the world for memories using the artifact, and some unlikely places can yield precious information. In particular, Kasvarina wishes to track down people she knew in her former life, or their descendants, who have scattered across the world. While this won't help the party unlock the Ob's secrets any faster, it earns Kasvarina's trust and can keep her from betraying them at the adventure's climax.

However, the main clues point to:

- Alais Primos, at the site where Srasama died. One memory occurs after her demise as Kasvarina cradles a woman's charred body in the wake of the Great Malice, a scene which she won't know the context of until later. Another memory shows how Nicodemus first met Kasvarina during the city's siege, revealing that he hadn't simply stumbled upon her, but was specifically trying to treat injured eladrin officers to try to find someone with sympathetic views.
- Sid Minos and the cursed vault of heresies, where Kasvarina learned the *Sacrament of Apotheosis*. Oddly, no Ob forces try to stop the party, because **Grandis Komanov**, head of a cell of doomsday eschatologists, has already dealt with them. She has sent an icy simulacrum of herself, hoping to follow the party into the Vault and learn the ritual. Meanwhile dragon industrialist **Benedict Pemberton** simply has placed duplicants disguised as statues to find out why everyone's so keen on the place.
- The empty city of Methia, particularly atop the Lance of Triegenes. The party first sees several vague meetings of the Obscurati leaders, which the artifact struggles to show due to the antimagic. And then they are thrust into the final moments of the Second Victory as Kasvarina's actions cause the Great Malice.

The colossus stands waiting in Methia, and a regiment of the Danoran army guards the city with orders to block the party from reaching the tower. Forced to fight without any magic, even high-level PCs are at risk from mundane soldiers. But if they reach the Lance, the artifact manifests the city as it was before the Great Malice, restoring magic and giving the party a fighting chance.

Kasvarina's manifested memories reveal to the party that the Ob plan to assassinate the king of Risur and perform a ritual in Flint under the direction of Roland Stanfield, the city governor who has secretly been part of the conspiracy this whole time.

Kasvarina's memories begin to fully click into place, and her recollection provokes the colossus, which recognizes her as its 'mother.' The party might befriend it briefly to climb the tower, or flee its seemingly dangerous pursuit. At the tower's pinnacle, a final memory manifests: the ritual that summoned the goddess Srasama and provoked the Great Malice. Nicodemus interrupts the memory, takes command of the colossus, and gives Kasvarina a choice to join him or stay with the party and die. Whether she abandons the party or joins them depends entirely on how they've swayed her opinions on their journey.

The party might fight, but they have the information they came for, so hopefully they'll be smart enough to escape before the tower comes down around them. As the artifact-conjured memory begins to collapse, the party can leap through one of the Clergy's portals (or simply be sucked through when the local antimagic finally shatters the *lost arc of Reida*). They find themselves back in Risur, but trapped in the Dreaming. Adventure nine details how they can get back to the real world in time to stop the Ob from taking control of their nation.

Adventure Layout

Diaspora'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:

- **Act One: Forgotten Ruins.** The party must locate Kasvarina in the jungles of Elfaivar while the Ob try to find and kill them.
- **Act Two: I've Been Around the World.** The party retrieves the *lost arc of Reida*, then travels the world to witness Kasvarina's memories.
- **Act Three: To Fall Once More.** Here the party reaches Methia, find Kasvarina's final key memories, and confront Nicodemus the Gnostic.
- **Appendix C: The Eladrin Diaspora.** Side-quests to learn more about Kasvarina and earn her trust, including possibly unmasking her betrayal by Nicodemus.
- **Appendix D: Methia Gazeteer.** Details of the ghost city where the adventure will climax.

Each of the acts presented in this adventure take place in order, though the memories of Act Two and Appendix C can be tackled however the PCs prefer.

Key Locations

Make sure you have a clear sense of each of these locations, and how the party might travel between them. Though some ships working on behalf of the Obscurati will attack the party, in general the seas are the safest and fastest method to travel, though the party can use their ship's *portal pad* to teleport to these locations and then be able to return to a mobile safe haven.

PACING AND LEVELING

The party starts this adventure at 17th level. We recommend that they reach 18th level after meeting Kasvarina, 19th level before entering the city of Methia, and 20th level at the end of the adventure.

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Akravan. An abandoned eladrin enclave frequented by Asrabey two centuries ago. Today it is overrun by giant fey versions of jungle birds.

Alais Primos. Capital city of the modern Clergy. Besieged by Elfaivar five centuries ago.

Bharat. Another abandoned eladrin enclave, sacked by the Danoran military twenty years ago. Today the site of Obscurati research to determine how to tune the *wayfarer's lantern* in order to invade other enclaves.

Ingatan's Refuge. Hidden in a jungle cave shrouded by waterfalls, this ruin houses the *lost arc of Reida*, an artifact which can manifest the past.

Methia. Long-abandoned former capital city of the Clergy, now an absolute dead magic zone. Guarded by the Danoran military, who use its empty streets for wargames.

Pala. City-state once led by William Miller, an alter-ego of Nicodemus the Gnostic. Its enlightened ideology made it a threat to the Clergy, who razed it nearly five hundred years ago.

Odiem, the Cursed Isle. Just off the coast of the city of Sid Minos, this island contains the Crypta Hereticarum.

Resal. The site of this old eladrin village has since become a small settler town loyal to Risur, and over five centuries every landmark has vanished.

Rumah Terakir. A ruined riverside eladrin city. The enclave Sentosa shares the same geographical area, but exists in a parallel demi-plane.

Sawyer. Capital of the Risuri colony of Kellandia in Elfaivar. Major timber exporter and home to an orthodox druidic circle known as the Ford.

Sentosa. Eladrin enclave led by the matriarch Athrylla Valanar.

Sid Minos. City in Crisillyir. The cursed Isle of Odiem lies offshore.

Ushanti. Eladrin enclave formerly controlled by Kasvarina, now being run by an Obscurati-loyal eladrin man named Ajit.

Valence. Steampunk-y capital of the Danoran colony of Rationalis in Elfaivar.

Vigil Longis. Clergy military camp in Elfaivar, tasked with clearing out hostile eladrin.

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. Additionally, each theme can grant PCs a benefit when pursuing the non-mandatory memories of Kasvarina's past.

- **Dockers** will have the best chance to learn the movements of the Obscurati forces in Elfaivar, since the dockers along the coast know where all their ships have gone. Plus, the dockers stay in good contact with the porters who carry all the Ob's heavy equipment. Additionally, a docker can easily parlay a friendship with the eclectic bard Kieran Sentacore into a path to a memory tied to one of Kasvarina's pre-war friends, Navras, who built an opera house in Flint. This provides a way to integrate the mini-adventure Bonds of Forced Faith into the course of your campaign.
- **Eschatologists** can confront Gradis Komanov, leader of the radical eschatologist doomsday cult, and they will know how to contact a group of eschatological eladrin in Drakr led by one of Kasvarina's various husbands.
- **Gunsmiths** have opportunities to turn Danoran artillery against the Obscurati, and will be asked to help train the eladrin of Sentosa to use firearms, to aid their fight for their homeland. They also have the best chance of directing Kasvarina to seek a memory tied to Amielle Latimer, one of the first gunsmiths and an agent of the Obscurati whom Amielle recruited to play a pivotal role in the history of Flint. This can also point to the Navras opera house and the *Bonds of Forced Faith* mini-adventure.
- **Martial Scientists** can learn the techniques of the eladrin war monasteries.
- **Skyseers** can see a vision of Nem and the Gyre atop the Lance of Triegenes at the climax of the adventure. They also unerringly know the date and time of each of Kasvarina's memories.
- **Spirit Mediums** can sense the souls trapped in the witchoil that fuels the colossus, making it easier to track to Sentosa. Likewise, Kasvarina's spirit will be torn between the person she used to be and the person she was before her memories were locked away. A spirit medium will have a chance to speak directly with her soul to help her decide who she will become.
- **Technologists** can turn the Danoran's own technological innovations against them, including artillery and an experimental steam-powered tank. They can also most easily guide Kasvarina to where her memories were first locked away, the Bleak Gate facility in Flint.
- **Vekeshi Mystics** will have the unique opportunity to meet the founder of their order during Kasvarina's memory of a ritual to forsake grief.
- **Yerasol Veterans** can command Risuri ships to battle a Danoran fleet that tries to engage them. They might also direct Kasvarina to a memory of when she betrayed an old friend so that the Ob could control key territory in the Yerasol Archipelago.

NPC Roster

Detailed entries of the NPCs the party meets are included throughout the adventure close to the characters' first appearances.

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Recurring Characters

Ashima-Shimtu, Asrabey, Delft, Pemberton, Vitus, Komanov, and Nicodemus all appear prominently in later adventures. Kasvarina's fate heavily depends on how the party interacts with her. All other NPCs 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.

Rewards

At the end of this adventure, the party's Prestige should increase by 1 step with the Unseen Court and the Obscurati if they manage to get Kasvarina to Methia. If the party either fights or aids the godhand Aulus Atticus, or if word gets out that they returned to Crypta Hereticarum to speak with Ashima-Shimtu, their Prestige with the Clergy goes up by 1 step. The party's Prestige with any given group can go no higher than 6, though, and they are likely near or at maximum by this adventure.

The PCs should each have about 240,000 gp in total equipment by the start of this adventure. When Stover Delft contacts them, he'll approve a stipend of 80,000 gp apiece. Any items the party requisitions will be crafted by the desperate efforts of dozens of Risuri mages, or retrieved from the treasure vault beneath Torfeld Palace in Slate, or acquired through risky bargains with the Unseen Court, and then will need to be delivered via teleportation to the *teleportation beacon* that was installed on the party's ship in adventure six. So they might take a few days to arrive depending on the party's Prestige.

After locating Kasvarina, the party can get Delft to approve an additional 80,000 gp stipend apiece, and another 160,000 gp before they venture into Methia (though teleportation delivery could be difficult). Alternately they might just ask for money and try to buy gear, but there are exceedingly few places that sell high-level items.

A Final Word Before We Start

As the players have grown in level since the start of the campaign, there are 1001 different ways they may thwart the assumed course of this adventure. Be sure to let the players have their fun, and reward creative and interesting play, with the understanding that as clever as they are, the Ob are also pretty quick.

The PCs may come up with a particularly inventive solution for finding Sentosa without having to cross paths with the Obscurati, so you can just reuse some of the ambushes later. They might come up with a convincing way to contact and befriend the colossus Borne while it is in the Dreaming, which should help hold the titan from attacking them for a while in Act Three, even though it *will* become loyal to the conspiracy once its memories return. Or they might try to abuse the *lost arc of Reida* by going all around the world looking for clues to mysteries that have nothing to do with the Ob, which you can use to flesh out tons of PC-specific backstories.

This deep into the campaign, it's important to let the players take charge, even if it means you have to shuffle some events and revelations around to provide satisfying pay-off. Just remember, the campaign director's party actually blew up Borne in their adventure five playtest, so I dare your group to do better.

ACT ONE: Forgotten Ruins

In this act, the party searches Elfaivar for Kasvarina, while agents of the Obscurati search for them.

The party's long-time boss now is less of a superior to them and more a facilitator. Delft mostly acts behind the scenes while the party is out of Risur, arranging for resources and allies they need. He only makes an appearance in this adventure if the PCs return to Flint.

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 be able to accomplish anything.

Though she shows little respect for anyone, not even her superiors, she long ago decided that she had to pick something to care about, or else she'd just end up teleporting around to no purpose. So she chose Risur, because its people don't take themselves too seriously.

Mission Briefing

Social. Real-Time. Level 17.

Stover Delft teleports aboard the party's ship to give them their mission.

It is the 80th of Autumn and the party likely is at sea near Mutravir Island, off the coast of Vendricce near Crisillyir. They should have learned during the Obscurati convocation that the Ob have made finding Kasvarina their highest priority, more critical even than recovering the colossus from where it is stranded in the Dreaming. They believe the colossus is drawn to Kasvarina, and it is so massive that its steps leave giant footprints in the real world, so they followed those prints and saw that it has been lingering near various eladrin ruins in the jungles of Elfaivar.

The party now knows what the conspiracy's plan is, but they might be at a loss of how to disrupt it. This scene gives you a way to point them in the right direction if they're confused.

Face to Face

A *sending* alerts the party that **Chief Inspector Stover Delft** is incoming, asking for precise latitude and longitude, which the party can easily acquire. Once they report the location back, a few minutes later the experimental teleportation beacon aboard the party's ship activates, and Stover Delft arrives, accompanied by RHC teleportation specialist **Lauryn Cyneburg** and two elite Risuri marine bodyguards.

Delft opens his mouth to talk, then bends over with nausea, as do the marines. Lauryn handles it better, but says to Delft that she told him so. Once the nausea passes, Delft explains that he thought it would be cheaper and faster to just come here and talk than to trade *sending* rituals for hours. Lauryn warned him something odd is happening to planar travel, but as long as it's not fatal, he's not worried.

In truth, the events of the Obscurati's ritual are having ripples even backward in time, and the closer it gets to the ritual the harder it will be to travel between planes. For the rest of this adventure, just make a point to mention fits of nausea or arriving slightly off-target if the party uses any teleportation magic.

Touching Base

Delft asks for a full report on the events at the Obscurati convocation, then proposes the party's next mission: find Kasvarina, extract whatever information she might have about the conspiracy or how to stop the colossus, and if she's a threat, eliminate her.

If the party missed hearing the whereabouts of Kasvarina, and if Alexander Grappa died before he had a chance to share it with them, you can have Delft pass along that other RHC agents report dramatically heightened activity of Danoran forces in Elfaivar, with rumors that they're following the colossus's footprints looking for something. Delft has talked with the king and his advisors, and they think the Ob's target is Kasvarina, the woman Asrabey stole away during the attack on the Cauldron Hill facility (see adventure five, *Cauldron-Born*).

Elfaivar in Brief

Lauryn Cyneburg can give the party a quick run-down on prominent locations in Elfaivar (see Elfaivar Gazeteer, below), to help them decide how to pursue Kasvarina. The party might ask to simply teleport to Elfaivar, but Lauryn has only ever been to Sawyer, and the party likely will want to sail on farther than that. Plus, she cannot discount the chance that within a few weeks teleporting will run the risk of incinerating you. Keeping a completely straight face, she tells the party to fix that too while they're busy fighting the Ob.

Honor Guard

Delft wasn't sure how far the party would be sailing or where their mission might take them, but he can guess that the Obscurati will be looking for them. For that reason he called in a few favors and got the party a pair of ships to accompany them—the R.N.S. Alesia and R.N.S. Chell.

Light schooners (see Appendix F), they should be sailing out of port from Sawyer, capital of Risur's colony in Elfaivar. They can link up with the party in two days. Lauryn provides sending scrolls if necessary so the party can coordinate with Captain Glidewell of the Alesia and Captain Wheatley of the Chell.

If any PC is a Yerasol Veteran, both of the captains crossed paths with the PC during the war, back before they got ships of their own, and each might have some debt to repay to the PC. The crewmen are excited to meet a famed hero, and the improved morale grants the ships +2 to attack rolls, defense, and to the captain's Command checks.

Rescued Allies and Foes

The end of adventure seven might have left in the party's care captured Ob prisoners or rescued allies. Cyneburg can take prisoners back, perhaps requiring a couple trips. The RHC can interrogate them in depth, though none of them will know anything pertinent to this mission.

If the party rescued Vitus Sigismund, he asks to be taken to the Crisillyiri mainland, which would be a journey of only a few miles. He promises whatever aid he can if the party finds itself in his nation, but warns that he believes the Clergy has been heavily infiltrated.

Other Missions against the Obscurati

While the party is in Elfaivar, Delft will take the information they got from infiltrating the convocation and coordinate with the king. It's unclear how much time they have before the Ob can actually try their crazy world-altering magic, but Delft will suggest Risur share this information with other governments' spy agencies. Based on the other information the party acquired, he'll suggest Risur prepare naval strike forces to target lighthouses, since during their mission on the Avery Coast Railroad they saw Ob discussions that involved lighthouses and the *wayfarer's lantern*.

Targeting Axis Island?

The PCs might have pieced together the connection between Ancient planar magic, the archaeological digs funded by the Obscurati, and the *golden icons* they found on Axis Island. If so, they might rightly guess that the Ob are up to something there. If they discuss it with Delft, he'll suggest they get started in Elfaivar while he gathers information from Risuri spies in the Yerasol Archipelago.

Meanwhile in the News

While the party's busy battling the Obscurati, what's the rest of the world up to? You may need to change these based on what the party's actions.

New Technology! The game master will have to insert something here based on what innovations the party chose to pursue thanks to Tinker Oddcog's research in adventure six.

The Primo Rising! A new crime lord has come to prominence in Flint, filling a void left since the collapse of the Kell guild. Known as 'the Primo'—a subtle insult to the Clericist followers in The Family—the new syndicate's leader for now remains in the shadows, but has made a point of actively targeting dockers in the city. Workers speak of being threatened with death if they won't let agents of the Primo unload certain ships, and dozens have gone missing after refusing to let cargo be looted. A few days later their bodies have been found crushed and water-logged. Thames Grimsley has sought help from the authorities, but many dockers have vowed to seek vigilante justice.

War Footing. Relations between Danor and Risur have plummeted despite the recent peace conference. The disappearance of Lya Jierre and the accusations of R.H.C. activities in foreign countries have increased tensions along the Avery coast. Anonymous sources inside the Risuri military say they've received reports that several Danoran battalions have been placed on high alert and moved from their normal postings, though they appear to have marched inland rather than assuming coastal positions as would be expected in the run-up to a Fifth Yerasol War. The office of Danor's minister of war Eloise Duffet responded that the troops are simply engaged in war games.

Demonic Terrorists. A series of violent terrorist strikes in Trekhom and Mirsk has rocked the nation of Drakr. Using suicidal arcane spellcasters, a group of demon-sympathizers attacked seven separate museums and military compounds across the nation. While originally thought to just be random attacks against the establishment, investigative reporters have linked the attacks together, as each targeted suspected storage sites of ancient relics from the time of Drakr's alliance with the demonocracy. The government's Bureau of Eschatology remains tight-lipped on the subject, but updated its weekly newspaper report to remind citizens that preparedness is valuable, even for unlikely situations like an imminent apocalypse.

Fey Quietude. Reports throughout Risur show that the normal level of fey activity has decreased. Less than half of the normal offerings left for minor fey have been claimed, and larger cities like Bole and Shale have not received expected visits by minor functionaries of the Unseen Court. Asher Henton, Distinguished Professor of Otherworldly Physics at Kitham University in Shale, has sent an open letter to several newspapers warning that 'Inverse Chronosomiac Cascades suggest that Extraplanar Connections will be Compromised in the Near Future.'

A more traditional source, a skyseer who was close to the late Nevard Sechim, when asked on what he forsees replied simply, "The third raven has not yet landed."

AND IF THEY GO ANYWAY?

We ultimately will detail the defenses of Axis Island in adventure ten, *Godmind*, but if the party wants to be mavericks and go there now instead of pursuing the Kasvarina lead, what happens?

Well, it'd be a bit like if Han, Luke, and Leia tried to sneak aboard the death star in *Return of the Jedi* without a fleet to back them up. They might manage to evade capture if they were lucky, might even blow some things up and disrupt a few plans, but they are so drastically outnumbered that the best they could hope for is to skirmish and escape. And in the time the party wasted, the Ob would get their 'battle station' fully armed and operational and would succeed in taking over the galax- … er, the world. Just the world. For now.

If the party goes down this route, the Ob would manage to abduct Kasvarina by the 21st of Winter. The party would receive word by sending that people have spotted the colossus's footprints moving, heading over the course of two weeks from Elfaivar, to Crisillyir, to Drakr, to Danor. The party would have a chance to locate Kasvarina and rescue her, but if they persisted in ignoring the threat, eventually on the 37th of Winter the Ob would get control of the colossus and draw it into the real world.

On Winter 39 the colossus would be loaded onto a massive ship in Cherage. It would arrive on Axis Island on the 41st, and that evening the Obscurati would perform their ritual.

Of course, if the party waits until the Ob start shipping the colossus to Axis Island, they could speak to King Aodhan about launching an amphibious assault, or target the convoy in transit. But the Ob predicted such a risk, which is why they've planned an attack on the king at Torfeld Palace (detailed in adventure nine, *The Last Starry Sky*). Agents have waited in the Bleak Gate analog of the capital Slate for months, and are ready to strike at a moment's notice.

If the party could thwart this attack, they might be able to rally the military in time to engage in a massive battle on or near Axis Island. Dozens of Risuri ships would be destroyed casually by the colossus, since the party has no power sufficient to stop the titan.

It would get on the island, open the giant golden plate of the Axis Seal, and begin adjusting petrified white trees in the ground in order to change what worlds float in the heavens. You could give the party a chance to disrupt the specifics of the ritual, similar to how we expect them to disrupt Roland Stanfield's eldritch machine in Flint (again, see adventure nine). If they succeed, the colossus wavers at a key moment near the end of the ritual and is struck by a bolt of wild magic that fells it. The ritual still manages to alter the world, but because the golden seal is not shut the party at least has a chance to set things right later.

An uncontrolled flux of magic would sweep over the island and scatter the PCs, perhaps stranding them in the Dreaming as would normally happen at the end of this adventure. They'd need to find a way back to the real world, and would find the whole world—including Risur—has fallen under the Obscurati's control.

If the party gets to the island and doesn't intervene in the ritual, they'll be able to see agents of the Voice of Rot sabotaging it and killing mages who were performing chants to protect the colossus from the unleashed energy beneath the seal. The result is the same as above.

Three days later he gets back in touch with news: Danor has increased naval patrols around Axis Island, and a handful of people who tried to get onto the island were never heard from. And there's apparently a giant barge being constructed in the harbor of Danor's capital Cherage. It looks big enough to ferry the colossus across the sea, though that might not be necessary since apparently the thing can walk along the bottom of the ocean.

The party might want to go there instead of pursuing Kasvarina. Delft has spoken with the king and with Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill, who both agreed the island should be targeted eventually, but that it's probably too well-defended for the party to go alone. A proper strike would require an entire fleet, and the king will only commit forces if he's sure he has the right target.

Delft is actually betting that the Ob are still planning something in Flint, based on the old skyseer Nevard's vision of three ravens on Cauldron Hill. He thinks it's best to get Kasvarina and interrogate her before they risk attacking the wrong target.

Elfaivar Gazeteer

The party's first task will be deciding how to enter Elfaivar. The most likely options are to dock at a port in the Risuri colony of Kellandia, dock in a port in another country's colony, or sail up a river and avoid ports altogether. More magically-oriented parties might travel via *shadow walk*, or they could use *linked portal* to hurry to teleportation beacons in Tropaeum or Rationalis, but that limits how many allies they can bring along. A few teleportation circles might be active in otherwise abandoned eladrin ruins, if the party calls in a Rank 6 favor with the Unseen Court to get the sigil keys that link to them.

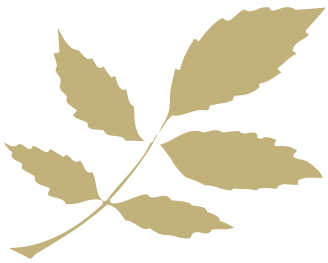
Six Colonies

Following the eladrin's catastrophic defeat, the Clergy established several garrisons throughout the nation, ensuring an eternal presence to keep the eladrin from regaining any military might. In the past few centuries, other nations have looked to the resource rich remnants of Elfaivar, and have begun establishing formal colonies. While the Clergy frowns on these new colonists, they have neither the military nor inclination to get involved in political strife with these new settlements.

You can use these colonies to assist in bringing Elfaivar to life, give the PCs additional tools in their search for Kasvarina, or to build some additional adventures in the region. Even within these colonies, the region is still only sparsely populated, with vast swaths of jungle where only the eladrin are brave enough to roam. East of the colonies lie thousands of miles of lands that are effectively uninhabited.

Risur, Danor, and Drakr each control one major colony, while Crisillyir has three:

- **Angelus.** The oldest colony in Elfaivar, located across the strait from Vendricce, controlled by Crisillyir. Though safe and established, the colony's largest city still only has a population of twenty-five thousand.



- **Kellandia.** A Risuri colony along the western coast, including the large island Titania. Many Risuri who feel uncomfortable with the technological direction their nation is taking have emigrated here, and while no colony is precisely welcomed by the local eladrin, the people of Kellandia are at least on friendly terms. The capital city **Sawyer** provides magically-resonant timber for ship-builders, and is home to an orthodox druidic circle known as the Ford, which hopes to earn the trust and loyalty of the eladrin people. The party will be welcome and safe here, though it is far from where Kasvarina is hidden.
- **Otto.** A Drakran colony along the northern coast of Elfaivar.
- **Rationalis.** A Danoran colony in the southeast, separated from the Risuri colony by Tropaeum. Has a strong military presence to retaliate against native attacks, since the eladrin are very hostile to the mining and industry. The capital city **Valence** is a technologist's paradise, combining a steady stream of engineers and scientists with arcane scholars who are free to experiment in ways the more structured society of Danor would not approve of.
- **Tropaeum.** The second Crisillyiri colony in Elfaivar, located along the southwest coast. It was the launch point for many attacks against the dragon tyrants of Ber over two centuries ago, and its churches showcase many trophies from these conquests.
- **Vigilia.** Crisillyir's youngest colony in Elfaivar, stretching along the eastern half of the north coast. No major cities exist yet, and the country is still in the process of clearing out the natives.

Sentosa lies in land that is technically claimed by Danor in Rationalis, though the nearest settlement is two hundred miles away. Later when the party heads for the Ingatan's Refuge, they'll need to enter the Crisillyiri colony of Vigilia.

Minor Sites

Described below are several settlements you can place throughout Elfaivar as needed, to give the party places to recruit help or simply to rest.

Bloody Stump Trading Posts (population <50 each): More mistakes than genuine settlements, the Bloody Stump trading posts were established by Captain McGraken—a troll from the Anthras Mountains—and his indentured crew of Beran prisoners after their ship was forced ashore by a storm. Leaving some men behind as a base camp, McGraken personally took to exploring the jungles at night, returning each morning with one of his hands bitten off by some jungle creature, but slowly regenerating. He'd take most of his men and march them until they found his hand, then nail it to a tree and have them build another camp while he went out scouting again at night. After six days and sixty miles, he found a spot with the supplies necessary to repair his ship.

He sailed back to Ber and asked for permission to reinforce his settlements with trolls from his home tribe, plus more orc, dragonborn, and goblin prisoners. Bruse Shantus agreed and named McGraken 'regional overlord' of Ber's 'colony' in Elfaivar. Today the various bloody stumps—now numbering in the dozens—serve as trading posts throughout the region. All criminals and villains are welcome, except thieves, who are punished as one might expect.

The party might encounter a Bloody Stump Trading Post anywhere in Elfaivar.

Macdam (population 3,200): One of the first areas colonized in Elfaivar by a nation other than Crisillyir, the settlement of Macdam lies on the massive isle of Titania, technically within the Risur colony of Kellandia. Founded during the Second Yerasol War when Risur was particularly hostile to the idea of technology and industry, the town became home for misfit technologists.

Located along a river and backed by high cliffs riddled with cannons, Macdam is excellently defended and serves as a safe haven against pirates. With Risur's recent adoption of more technology, Macdam has begun to seek stronger connections with the homeland. Pemberton Industries was in the process of building a factory here when its founder fell out of favor with King Aodhan.

Port Perrault (population 947): Not officially recognized as a Danoran colony, Port Perrault was established by a Danoran commodore tasked with hunting pirates in the region. Chosen for nearby hills that provide coal for refueling steam engines, the port is slowly expanding its tendrils into Elfaivar's natural resources, and might eventually become a full-blown shipyard. Currently the port is home to a duo of vessels operated by the elite *Porteurs de Mort*—the *Boucherie des Mers* and *La Rêve Invincible*.

Shaha (population 4,340): A city founded by an eastern border state of little regional power, Shaha is infamous as the capital of the modern slave trade. Peoples from the far southeast can be bought here, and the leader of the colony—known as 'daimyo'—has used slave labor to construct extravagant architecture, believing these great edifices will aid in taming the nearby jungle.

Clues So Far

So where should the party start? The foremost clue about Kasvarina's location is that the Ob think the colossus has been somehow following her, and since the giant machine leaves twenty-yard footprints wherever it goes, the party could simply track it. Weeks ago it crossed over from Ber near Seobriga, came ashore in Kellandia, then walked through the jungle all the way to the Danoran colony of Rationalis. This fits with the simplest and safest option of making landfall in Kellandia, but it's not the fastest.

Kasvarina was last seen with Asrabey Varal, and though they are both shielded from scrying because they're technically on another plane in the fey enclave Sentosa, some divinations can help point the way to them. If PCs divine the nearby ruins of Rumah Terakhir (which is semi-coterminous with Sentosa) they can catch brief flashes of the enclave. Divinations that can provide information about subjects on other planes work on Asrabey normally, but whenever a character attempts to divine Kasvarina'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.

A History or Nature check (DC 31) lets PCs know three eladrin enclaves Asrabey was said to have connections to before he came to Risur and allied himself with the Unseen Court. The three enclaves—Sentosa, Akravan, and Bharat—all lie generally in the southeastern part of Elfaivar, near the Danoran colony Rationalis. While docking at a Danor-controlled port is foolhardy, the party might decide to at least start closer, by going to Tropaeum, a Crisillyiri colony.

Once they know to look for the enclaves, a History check (DC 31) lets the PCs use centuries-old maps to locate them, and a Nature check (DC 23) can then find a passable river that comes within twenty miles of each enclave. Divinations might even pinpoint Sentosa as the target of choice. If the party has the archaeological assistance of Xambria, they get a +5 bonus to these checks.

A Spit for Good Luck

Once the group has figured out its plans, Lauryn makes preparations to teleport back to Risur. Delft pops some fresh chewing tobacco in his mouth, then does a quick tour of the ship getting to know the crew and encourage them to live up to the example the PCs set. Then he shakes each constable's hand, apologizes for thinking every time he sees them now that it will be the last, and then spits on the deck, saying it's for good luck.

Lauryn replies that Delft should have given the party his spittoon instead; it must be terribly lucky. Then she takes the Chief Inspector and his bodyguards and teleports away.

Weather and Endurance

It is late Autumn going into early Winter, and the subtropical Elfaivar is warm and humid but not sweltering. Rainstorms sweep south to north across the region every few days, but tend to linger along the north coast.

Docker Informants

Any PC with the Docker theme can easily get information from dock-workers at whichever ports the party lands in. Word travels up and down the coast, and dockers are generally on good terms with the porters who haul supplies inland. Rumor has it a lot of Danorans have been landing in Valence, capital of the colony Rationalis. They offloaded tons of advanced instruments and a fair bit of artillery, then marched it north into the jungle some one hundred miles, stopping at three different ruins along a river.

False Flag

Action. Tactical. Level 19.

Danoran warships flying Risuri colors hunt for the party at sea.

Under the orders of Han Jierre, elite military units loyal to the Sovereign move against the party. While action has not been officially sanctioned by Nicodemus (who has another ambush in mind; see You Can't Go Home Again, page 179), the Danoran Sovereign has made his vendetta against the PCs personal after the death of his niece Lya and the party's continued meddling in Obscurati affairs.

This attack occurs while the party is aboard their ship, but the specific location depends on how the party arrives in Elfaivar and when they might reasonably be tracked down by the conspiracy.

Naval Surveillance

After the party leaves Mutravir Island, numerous *scrying* rituals and other divinations try to pinpoint their location. Some spells target them, others their ship, and others query potential arrivals at various ports along the coast. The party might be blasé about the threat, or might perform a few anti-divination rituals, or might blanket themselves with protections and illusions and then use *sending* to set up fake meetings in hope the Ob find out and go after the wrong place. Use your best judgment to determine whether the party's efforts at secrecy amount to 'minimal,' 'moderate,' or 'extensive,' then adjust based on which port the party chooses to make landfall at.

It makes most sense they'd choose a Risuri port, so their precautions count as one step less useful if they head for Kellandia. Heading to one of the various foreign colonies provides no modifier, and if they avoid ports altogether and head for the river that passes near the eladrin enclaves their precautions are one step more effective.

If the party has taken minimal precautions, the Danorans get ahead of them and place an ambush in the harbor wherever they're heading, with some ships flying false Risuri colors to trick the party.

If the party takes moderate precautions, instead the attack occurs when the party's ship is in open sea.

And if the party took extensive precautions, the Ob cannot locate them, and indeed the party (or other RHC agents providing counter-surveillance) might discover where the fleet is hiding so the party has the option to ambush them.

Porteurs de Mort

Danoran military specialists from the vaunted *Porteurs de Mort* unit have only been operating in Elfaivar for about two weeks longer than the party, but already they've assembled networks of informants both on land and at sea to keep them abreast of potential threats. Between their own spies and information gleaned by Obscurati divinations, they have a good chance of finding the party.

The *Porteurs de Mort* are Danor's relatively recent response to the tactical nightmare foreseen in combating the R.H.C. agents of Risur. Tasked in dealing with broadly equipped and skilled units, the Porteurs bring a mix of differing skills to put down mixed enemy formations. Like many secretive agencies, the Porteurs have no formal markings or rank insignia, acting entirely 'off the books', leaving little to trace them back to Danor. They travel in a pair of steam frigates that can conjure fog banks to conceal themselves, and are accompanied by a smaller steamship modified to resemble a Risuri design. They're even adept at faking accents, and prefer to pose as coming from an ambiguous 'east.'

Sinking and Boarding

This encounter serves one major role in the overall arc of the campaign: it shows that the Obscurati view the party as major threats and are willing to commit extensive resources to stopping them. In short, the Ob are *pissed*.

Even with two ships at their side, this encounter can be overwhelming if the party simply tries to attack their foes head-on. They might be able to handle the *Ipsum* and *Lya's Lament*, but the frigates have a very good chance of sinking the PCs' ship unless the party uses smart tactics.

If the party's ships sink, the Porteur vessels will approach to loot and ransom survivors. Depending on how many crew the party still has available and how much damage they dealt to the enemy, they might have a chance of turning the tables and claiming a frigate for their own, or they might just sneak aboard the submarine and escape.

Simplified Fleet Combat

If you don't want to deal with multiple ships maneuvering, you can simply play out the following scenario. Let the party make three attack rolls each naval turn (at +7, +7, and +9). The first naval turn they can only target the steamship, which attacks back at +4 each turn (or +9 if it could get within point-blank range).

Starting the second naval turn, the two frigates begin targeting the party's ship and attack at long range (+7 and +7). Then the submarine tries to ram (+15), and if it inflicts at least 1 strike it disgorges its boarding party. In the third naval turn and thereafter, the frigates close to medium range and keep attacking (+12 and +12).

If a boarding action occurs, for each strike that hit a Danoran ship deal 6d10 damage to one of the troops. If there are no troops left, each strike kills 1d6 crew.

The Porteurs are Danoran military, and are not technically part of the Obscurati, but they have occasionally collaborated with Ob agents on covert missions.

Small Fleet Tactics

The Porteurs operate from a pair of steam frigates—the *Boucherie des Mers* and the *La Rêve Invincible*, currently based out of Port Perrault—and are accompanied by a smaller steamship—*Ipsum*—that has been enchanted at great expense in order to increase its speed to match the mighty warships. Recently they were joined by a top of the line steam submarine named *Lya's Lament* (or *Sovereign's Knife* if Lya is still alive).

The Porteurs, having been warned of the party's combat prowess, seek to ambush the PC's ship, distract them with a boarding action, and then have the two frigates hang back and attempt to sink them from afar.

Though loyal and well-trained, the Porteurs are not suicidal. If one of their ships is boarded by the PCs, other nearby ships will close and try to board as well. However, if it looks like the party has the clear upper hand, the remaining ships will try to flee.

We present here stats for the Danoran vessels. See the quick-play naval combat rules in the Zeitgeist Player's Guide or Seas of Zeitgeist Appendix of the Act One compilation for stats of possible PC ships, or check out *Admiral o' the High Seas* for full naval adventuring rules and options for the PCs to customize their vessel.

Terrain at Sea

If the Porteurs attack while the party is at open sea, you might include a few stages of safe water, a stage with reefs and shoals (with dense catch hazards), and a stage with narrow but tall islands for the frigates to hide behind. A mild storm hangs over the area, slightly lessening visibility and producing mild chop.

The two frigates lie concealed with their illusory shrouds behind the islands. A Perception check (DC 40) notices the atypical fog at the islands while the party passes through an adjacent stage. *Lya's Lament* stays near the frigates, observing the surface through a periscope.

The steamship *Ipsum* patrols along the party's expected course, flying a Risuri flag. If the party's ship's lookout succeeds a Perception check (DC 35), he notices the ship before it spots the party, separated by three stages (about half a mile). The party's lookout gains a +5 bonus to this check if their ship uses sails, since it won't have a telltale smoke plume to mark its passage.

Technologist PCs recognize that the steamship is actually a Danoran design modified to look Risuri. Other PCs might note it with an Arcana check (DC 30).

If the *Ipsum* spots the party it will use semaphore to signal for help, mention that they were trying to evade a Danoran ship, and ask for protection to the nearest port. Then they will try to sail with the party. Once the group is within two stages of the islands where the frigates hide, or if the party attacks, the *Ipsum* launches a red flare out of a mortar to alert the frigates.

Terrain in Port

If the Porteurs attack as the party is preparing to dock, pertinent stages include the docks for large vessels, the adjacent docks for small vessels (which has dense crash hazards), the inner harbor, the mouth of the river (which has a slight current), the outer harbor, the close sea, and the islands east of the harbor.

As above, a mild storm limits visibility to three stages and produces mild chop.

The two frigates hide amid the islands, concealed with their illusory shrouds. A Perception check (DC 40) notices the fog while the party is in the close sea stage, before entering the harbor. *Lya's Lament* stays near the frigates. *Ipsum* falsely flies a Risuri flag and sits docked among the large vessels. Porteurs on shore watch and send up a flare when the party enters the harbor.

The frigates approach the party from behind, and the *Ipsum* signals that it will fight by their side. On the next round, the *Ipsum* sails up beside the party and opens fire point blank.

Enemy Vessels

- 2 steam frigates with illusory shrouds, *Boucherie des Mers* and the *La Rêve Invincible*
- 1 steamship, *Ipsum*
- 1 submarine, *Lya's Lament*

Submarine Crew (EL 18)

- 12 Porteur de Mort Marines

Steamship Crew (EL 16)

- 2 Porteur de Mort Artillerist
- 6 Porteur de Mort Marines
- 2 Porteur de Mort Snipers
- 1 Danoran Squad

Frigate Crew, each (EL23)

- 6 Porteur de Mort Artillerists
- 4 Porteur de Mort Snipers
- 22 Porteur de Mort Marines
- 4 Danoran Rifle Troops
- 1 Danoran Troop

You can find enemy stats in Appendix E: Recurring Enemies & Allies.

***Porteurs de Mort*, Steam Frigate (2)**		Level 17 Vehicle
Huge Vehicle		111,000 gp
Hull Integrity 4	**Defense** 25	**Command** +8
Maneuverability 4	**Speed** 14	
Full Crew 32	**Minimum Crew** 8	**Total Complement** 140

Design

Length 170 ft. Beam 35 ft. Steam engine. Four decks.Armaments

▶ **Fog Shroud**

A haze of fog rises up from the sea, concealing the massive vessel.

The ship's engineer can spend his naval round to activate the shroud. This blocks line of sight to and from the ship. While the fog is up, the ship rolls twice for Command checks and takes the worse result.

The gunner must succeed a Perception check (DC 10 against a ship firing cannons, DC 20 against a normal ship in motion, or DC 30 against an immobile ship running silently) to target an enemy effectively. Even if a target is located, the ship rolls two attack rolls and must take the worse. Other ships must do likewise to target you. At short range, however, ships can target each other normally.

Armaments

Two turrets at the ship's fore and another pair at the aft can cover any firing arc, though they can concentrate the most fire to the broadside. They mount extremely long-bored cannons which could be precise over great distances. Dozens of men scurry across the deck carrying munitions or manually cranking wheels to adjust the mighty weapons' aim.

Crew: 40. Attack: +14 to broadsides, or +12 fore or aft. Can attack at Long range (i.e., from an adjacent stage) with a -5 penalty.

***Ipsum, Danoran* Steamship**		Level 14 Vehicle
Large Vehicle		24,400 gp
Hull Integrity 3	**Defense** 15	**Command** +7
Maneuverability 6	**Speed** 14	
Full Crew 8	**Minimum Crew** 2	**Total Complement** 25

Design

The smokestacks for this steamship are unusually large, suggesting a very powerful engine for a vessel of its size.

Length 85 ft. Beam 25 ft. Steam engine, three decks.

Armaments

A pair of massive cannons in a turret.Crew: 40. Attack: +14 to broadsides, or +12 fore or aft. Can attack at Long range (i.e., from an adjacent stage) with a -5 penalty.

Crew: 15. Attack: +4, forward or broadside.

***Lya's Lament*, Danoran Submarine**		Level 13 Vehicle
Huge Vehicle		36,360 gp
Hull Integrity 4	**Defense** 20	**Command** +8
Maneuverability 4	**Speed** 8	
Full Crew 16	**Minimum Crew** 3	**Total Complement** 16

Design

Length 150 ft. Beam 30 ft. Steam engine, one deck, sealed hull accessible by central hatch. Forward boarding compartment in ramprow.

▶ **Boarding Ramprow**

Forged in the face of a glaring female tiefling, the fore of this vessel is made of reinforced metals and bears a brutal set of horns, seemingly meant to drill into opposing vessels.

When the *Lya's Lament* rams another, prevent the first strike the rammed ship would deal to the submarine. In addition, following the ram, the vessel can unload as many crewmembers as prepared onto the enemy ship through the area impacted by the ram.

Once the *Lya's Lament* disengages following a ram attack, the enemy ship is considered to be Sinking slowly from the resultant wound.

▶ **Nautilus**

The *Lya's Lament* 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.

Aftermath

If the party sinks the Porteur ships, they won't have to worry about naval threats for the rest of the adventure. If they lose and are captured, give them a chance to escape—perhaps a sympathetic crewman lets them steal a runabout, or a clever message to Lauryn Cyneburg can net them a teleportation rescue.

If you need a *deus ex machina*, the party's nearby Beran waters. Perhaps the Bruse learns their fate and sends a small orc fleet to swarm over the Danoran vessels and free them.

Seeking Kasvarina

Exploration. Montage. Level 17.

Hundreds of miles of trackless jungle hide the party's target.

The party might handle this step simply by sailing up a river, hiking out to Akravan and Bharat and finding them empty, and then docking amid the ruins of Sentosa's old port and finding the Obscurati (see Footprints of the Colossus). But if they failed to pinpoint the three eladrin enclaves Asrabey frequented, they'll have the unenviable task of searching thousands of square miles of jungles.

Even if they just follow the colossus's footprints, the colossus can cross about 200 miles in a day, whereas a group of humanoids will travel at 10 miles per day, or perhaps 15 miles on strong mounts. (A spirit medium PC can more easily sense the path the colossus took and add an extra few miles to the party's pace each day.) It's a 600 mile trail before reaching Rumah Terakir and the entrance to Sentosa, so the party would be advised to call in help.

The party's Prestige lets them call in favors in the various colonies. Risur prestige functions in Kellandia. Clergy prestige functions in Angelus, Tropaeum, and Vigilis. Unseen Court prestige can help slightly in all locations. And though we do not track Prestige with Ber, the party likely has an effective Prestige of either 4 (if the Bruse died and was replaced) or 5 (if they saved the Bruse's life).

For favors using Clergy Prestige, if the party sends a message to Morgan Cippiano in Flint, he can grant them a one-time +5 bonus to an Intimidate or Diplomacy checks to speed up the timeline, since he knows the right people to ply. For favors using Unseen Court Prestige, contacting Gale can similarly get a one-time +5 bonus.

Kellandia

The party on their own would spend likely two weeks following the trail of the colossus through this colony. If they call in a rank 8 favor, they can get people out searching the entirety of the colony for information about the colossus. The time it takes to fulfill the favor is how long it takes for them to get the information (so with Risur Prestige 6, it takes a week, or just a day if they can succeed a DC 39 Intimidate or Diplomacy check).

All a thorough search discovers, though, is that the colossus passed through, stopped briefly at an old Elfaivaran city, then kept on traveling. There are signs that some other group was investigating the same ruin—human footprints and marks of tents set up in or near the colossus footprints. These were Obscurati researchers, trying to detect planar fluctuations that would indicate an eladrin enclave.

If the party calls in a rank 9 favor, they can even get several military units and mercenary search parties to sail east, make landfall in Tropaeum, and scout the colossus's path in that colony. (With Risur Prestige 6, this takes a month, or a week if the party succeeds a DC 42 check.)

Angelus and Vigilis

The party might call in favors in these colonies (favor rank 8 with Clergy Prestige to get a colony-wide search), but they won't yield anything relevant to their mission, at least not yet. Once the party learns about the *lost arc of Reida* from the eladrin in Sentosa, a rank 5 favor is enough to get a friendly welcome at Vigil Longis.

Tropaeum

A rank 8 favor with Clergy Prestige yields a colony wide search for signs of the colossus, the Ob, and Kasvarina. Similar to Kellandia, the colossus stopped at a few ruins, tromped through them, and then kept going, and some time later a group of people came and investigated. One group of Clergy searchers went out to check a ruin and did not return. (The Ob killed them, though this particular ruin is not where Kasvarina is.)

Rationalis

The party cannot call in favors from the Danorans here, but a rank 6 favor with Unseen Court Prestige (which would have to be requested by someone in Risur, since the Court has allies and influence but doesn't directly operate in Elfaivar) yields the names of the three eladrin enclaves Asrabey frequented, as mentioned in Clues So Far (page 146).

A rank 7 favor with Ber (which again would have to be requested by someone in Ber) could get the Bruse to order 'Regional Overlord' McGraken to send his men from the Bloody Stump trading posts on raids into the Danoran colony, looking for clues. Since technically they're all criminals in Ber anyway, the Bruse can easily keep his nose clean while these ruffians indulge their cultural heritage of pillage and plunder. (The high rank of the favor is not because getting the prisoners to raid is hard, but just because it takes a while to get them all to return and give their reports.)

The Beran raids discover current activity at three eladrin ruins—Sentosa, Akravan, and Bharat. The party still has to find a way to get there; the coastal Bloody Stump Trading Post is about sixty miles away from the ruins.

Jungle Trek

At the party's level, nothing that simply roams the jungles of Elfaivar poses an existential threat. If you want to add some flavor, they might cross paths with a parade of elephants accompanied by some local fey, or be stalked (but never attacked) by a dire tiger, or come across a ruined village with a centuries-old stone marker listing the names of every woman who perished there from the Great Malice.

If they spend enough time in the wild, they might be accosted by an eladrin hermit who performs mild curses and leaves bloody totems in their path to try to make them leave his territory. The Dreaming bleeds through in places, and perhaps one morning they wake beside a grotto that wasn't there at nightfall, and that sings for them to come down into its depths. If you want to work in a sidequest where the whole party explores a mutual dreamscape and confronts a PC's inner demons, this is the right place for you.

Two Dead Ends

If the party goes to Akravan and Bharat, they find signs of recent Obscurati activity around the colossus footprints. The strongest signs of activity cluster near the handful of archways or doorways that have not crumbled from centuries of disuse. Detecting magic there reveals strange planar energies similar to that involved with traveling to the Dreaming.

The party can also find, tossed into bushes, discarded glass vials with traces of oil infused with different planar energy. The Ob agents are trying to figure out how to use their wayfarer's lanterns to open a path into an eladrin enclave, a task that normally requires an enchanted enclave key.

Right Ruin

When the party reaches Rumah Terakir, an ominous hush hangs over the jungle. Hot winds stir the trees but only a few animals cry or chirp, because intruders have disturbed the area.

Likely the first glimpse the PCs have of the city (should they arrive by boat), are the colossal stone statues of bare-chested warriors that protect the long-since crumbled and flooded docks. Four intact statues stand guard over the river-way entrance, while the ruins of three shattered ones block off portions. In at least one instance, this has led to a waterfall rushing down the ruined chest of a toppled and broken statue.

Crumbling marble structures and stonework temples are all that remains of the once proud eladrin city, but some kind of magical force repels the jungle from simply reclaiming the ruins. Massive in size, the surviving city encompasses about 70 square miles.

Where is Everyone?

The eladrin enclave of Sentosa occupies the same space as Rumah Terakhir, but resides in a transitory demi-plane between the material world and the Dreaming. Enchanted *edgestones* line the internal border of the demi-plane, which has had the effect of keeping out the jungle and repelling the colossus, due to the witchoil flowing within it.

The people dwelling in Sentosa can see into the ruins of Rumah Terakhir; travelers in the material plane show up as incorporeal monochrome figures in their colorful world. Even the sounds of those on the material plane are brought across to Sentosa, though words are muted and devoid of emotion, sounding like the hauntings of a ghost. Those in the real world cannot sense Sentosa, though, at least not without the aid of magic.

Skyseer PCs feel a sensation as if being watched by someone on the other side of a mirror, and will sometimes even glimpse brightly-colored figures reflected in pools of water or polished metal. No magic they should have access to, though, can gain them full entry to Sentosa's demi-plane.

Sites of Interest

Eventually the party should come across the archway entrance to Sentosa and the Obscurati researchers working there (see Footprints of the Colossus), but before then they might wander the city and take in the sights.

Edgestones: At the boundary of the jungle, the PCs may notice faintly visible shimmering that suggests overlapping magical abjurations. These are the effects of the *edgestones*, which lie in the Sentosa demiplane but have an effect in the real world.

Casting a *plane shift* ritual within the boundaries of the *edgestones* can transport the PCs into the enclave, but each round each PC has a 10% chance of being shunted back into the material world.

Footprints: Beyond the boundaries of the *edgestones* are massive trails of the colossus's footprints, as well as toppled and crushed trees from where its legs knocked aside the jungle. Each footprint is a ten-foot deep impression, fifty feet long, with traces of witchoil pressed into the dirt.

The Temple of Hewanharimau: This ominous stone structure stands out for the lack of any other structures within 100 feet of it, and the large stone slab that covers the entrance. The stone can be moved with a Strength check (DC 24), causing it to fall onto its side and reveal the pitch black interior.

The inside of the temple is plain with only a handful of long rotted animal pelts dangling from the low ceiling. A single brass urn rests in the center of the chamber, raised on a stone plinth. The contents of the urn are a foul red substance (tiger's blood that will always replenish). Consuming the blood causes the drinker to contract lycanthropy and become a weretiger unless he succeeds a saving throw. Thereafter on nights of a full moon the character becomes a savage tiger under control of the DM.

This temple was long-abandoned even before the fall of Srasama and the coming of the Clergy. Hewanharimau was a Seedism deity who embodied the importance of animals, but who was cast out of the pantheon for afflicting elves with a curse that turned them into half-beasts. His punishment was being turned into a tiger that walked as a man: a rakshasa. Not wishing to attract the attention and ire of the rakshasa, the elves of Rumah Terakhir left the simple temple, but they closed it off and enchanted it with a guardian who will punish any who seek to praise the reviled god.

If a creature enters the dark temple, as it leaves it is confronted with a hooded feminine figure that glows faintly blue and appears incorporeal. It holds a shining blue star in its hand, which materializes into a bastard sword. Then in an old eladrin tongue it says, "Will you stand against evil, no matter its shape?"

This being is known as a *kolyarut*, a supernatural punisher of oath-breakers, resembling a woman with a body of wood and flowers. It wields the legendary *arsenal of Dhebisu*, a mutable weapon forged from a fallen star said to have defeated Hewanharimau. The outsider exists now only to find a warrior worthy of wielding the weapon.

It attacks any creature who openly prayed to the god within, but is content to simply drive an intruder from the temple by suggesting it leave. Against any creature who drank the tiger's blood, it will suggest the creature surrender and submit to a ritual that sends the creature on a quest to cure its lycanthropy.

Finally, if a PC claims it will stand against evil, the inevitable suggests, "Then arm yourself and prove it." It attacks to subdue. Each round it transforms its weapon into another shape—bastard sword, spear, greataxe, shortsword, heavy flail, light pick, shortbow, and so on. If the PC survives the fight for seventeen rounds, or if it manages to defeat the kolyarut, the being yields and hands over the *arsenal*. It vanishes shortly thereafter. It also vanishes if after the duel begins another character joins the battle, or if its opponent is primarily fighting with spells or is acting cowardly.

A character can attempt to defeat the inevitable once per day, but once it hands over the *arsenal*, it simply wields a bastard sword and no longer offers to duel. See Appendix G: Magic and Training for details on the *arsenal of Dhebisu* and stats for the *kolyarut*.

The Temple of Ingatan: Built downward into the ground like a twenty-foot-deep inverted step-pyramid, this temple's walls are inscribed with delicate script, long since worn away.

PCs that interact with the script can make a Perception check (DC 23) to realize there is a second set of script on the walls, illusory script that appears when touched. The illusionary text is a full record of devotional rites to the Seedism deity Ingatan. Modern scholars think of Ingatan as a trickster who traded people fire for stories and then left as homes burnt down. The text presented shows Ingatan in less of a trickster light, but rather as a deity devoted to accumulating knowledge and the importance of memory. It emphasizes that despite his seemingly odd or malicious actions, the deity acts with a long-term plan in mind.

A character who can use any arcane, divine, primal, psionic, or shadow powers who spends the day reading these writings gains insight from the unique perspective of Ingatan. As a one-time boon, the spellcaster may select any non-martial 1st level at-will power from any class. He can use that power once per day.

The Temple of Srasama: A dominating temple resides within the center of the former city; a great stepped pyramid topped by the legs of a giant made of stone. Beyond the legs, the torso is broken in twain. Rocks litter the grounds around the statue. Observation and cataloguing of the stones reveals them to be pieces of the eladrin deity Srasama.

The interior of the temple is bare, and the once elaborate murals contained within have been burned and broken. Several marks on the walls are graffiti-like gashes that proclaim the religious dogma of the Clergy. Centuries-old discarded weapons and items lie about, bearing sigils and marks revealing them to be implements once used by the Clergy.

Recent Events

Around the same time the adventure began, the colossus stood beside the ruins, trying to find a way in. It trampled all through the jungle but could never step foot inside the area bounded by the *edgestones*. Finally on the 80th of Autumn it headed away toward Methia in distant Danor due to magical 'spoofing' by the Obscurati.

A few days before the PCs arrive, a group of Obscurati researchers set up camp near an archway entrance that would lead into Sentosa with the right *enclave key*. Auguries warn them that a monster guards the archway, however, so they have not tried entering yet.

Porteur Scouts

A few times during their jungle journey, the party might glimpse (Perception DC 31) a *Porteur de Mort* scout watching them from the woods fifty feet away. A single scout poses no threat, and catching him probably won't be hard. All he knows is that his unit is looking for them, and that the Porteurs have been told the RHC was plotting to assassinate the Sovereign back during the peace summit.

Footprints of the Colossus

Action. Tactical. Level 17.

The Obscurati are trying to find a way into an eladrin enclave at the ruin of Rumah Terakir.

A group of a dozen researchers and their Porteurs have set up camp around a colossal footprint at the jungle border, near an archway that would allow ingress to Sentosa with the right *enclave key*. Mostly the researchers are biding their time for the Ob to send sufficient forces to storm the eladrin enclave. The Porteurs have light artillery that they hoped would break through into the demi-plane, but it had no effect.

Ambusher or Ambushee?

The *Porteurs de Mort* stand between the party and Sentosa, but their encounter can go two ways.

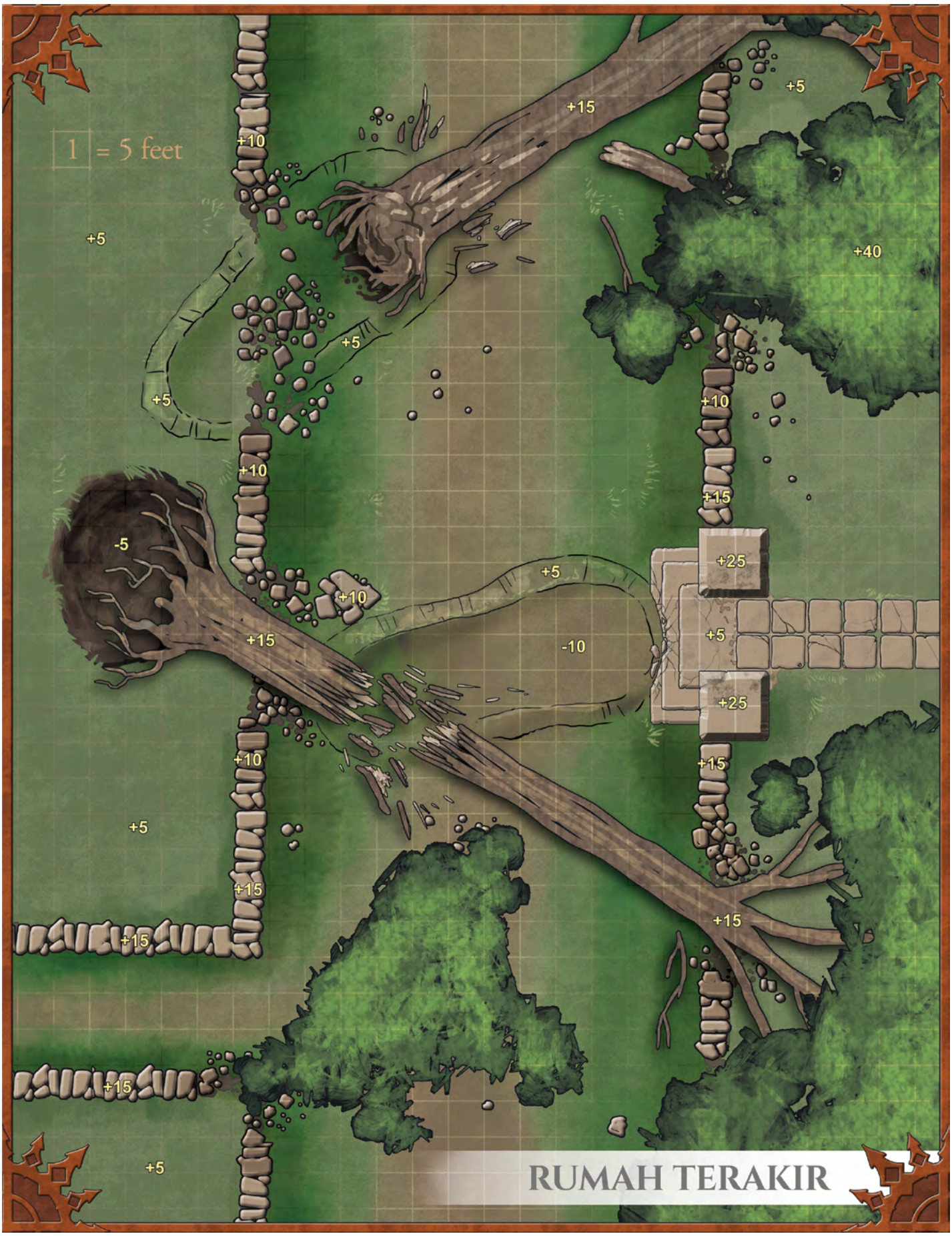
Sneaking Up

A cautious party can reach Sentosa before word gets to the Porteurs here. In this case, the researchers and Porteurs are active around the archway gate. Two artillery pieces sit unused in the jungle three hundred feet away, guarded only by a pair of artillerists. While assaulting the massed troops is tough, the party might find the artillery and turn it on the Danorans.

If attacked, the soldiers try to focus fire and protect the mage, Charles Ormand. The non-combatant researchers panic, and when the fight is nearing its conclusion, have one run through the gateway arch, which brings forth the enclave's monstrous defender.

Gate Forces

- 2 Porteur de Mort Marines, patrolling the perimeter
- 4 Porteur de Mort Snipers, out in the open
- 2 Porteur de Mort Artillerists, watching the artillery in the jungle
- Charles Ormand, Obscurati researcher
- 11 Obscurati researchers, non-combatants


1 = 5 feet
+5
+10
+15
+40
-5
-10
+25
RUMAH TERAKIR

The Second in a Long Line of Ambushes

If the party has taken no measures of secrecy, the *Porteurs de Mort* figure out where they are headed and lay an ambush at the entry gate of Sentosa. They have camouflaged their two artillery pieces in the jungle, each accompanied by three artillerists and a marine who scans the area with a telescope. The two artillery pieces are each three hundred feet from the archway in opposite directions, and are nigh impossible to spot from the gateway arch (Perception DC 52). Someone circling the ruins might find them (Perception DC 32).

Additionally, a squad of six snipers has hidden in the ruins south of the gate, concealed by a *permanent image* (Perception DC 36 to notice the snipers). One powerful mage waits as bait.

Ambush Team

- 4 Porteur de Mort Artillerists, 2 per emplacement
- 2 Porteur de Mort Marines, 1 per emplacement
- 4 Porteur de Mort Snipers, hidden near the gate
- Charles Ormand, Obscurati researcher

Charles Ormand, Obscurati Researcher	Level 16 Controller
Medium natural humanoid (human)	**XP** 1400
HP 102; **Bloodied** 56	**Initiative** +11
AC 30, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 28	**Perception** +10
Speed 6	
Resist fire 15	

Standard Actions

⊗ **Baleful Polymorph** ✦ At-Will

He grabs your arm, and your body starts to shrink and shift, until you land on the ground with a croak.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. Fortitude

Hit: The target is polymorphed into a harmless creature (save ends). While polymorphed, its walking speed is reduced to 2, it is weakened, and it cannot use any weapons or implements.

⊘ **Magic Missile** (force, implement) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Effect: Charles fires three missiles, which he can split among one, two, or three targets. Each missile does 4 force damage.

✲ **Solid Fog** ✦ Daily

Effect: An area burst 4 within 10 fills with thick fog until the end of the encounter. The fog provides concealment in adjacent squares and total concealment beyond that. Creatures move at half speed in the fog (which might be in addition to the increased movement cost for difficult terrain).

✲ **Wall of Fire** (fire) ✦ Daily

Effect: Charles conjures a wall 10 of fire within 20 squares until the end of the encounter. Heat wafts out in one direction from the wall, dealing 10 fire damage to any creature within 3 squares of it on that side. The other side is safe. A creature that passes through the wall or ends its turn there takes 20 fire damage.

Minor Action

▸ **Stoneskin** ✦ At-Will

He desperately chants a spell to give his skin a veneer of stone.

Effect: Charles prevents the next 10 damage he takes from weapon attacks before the end of his next turn.

Skills Arcana +18, Religion +18

Str	10 (+8)	**Dex**	12 (+9)	**Wis**	8 (+7)
Con	16 (+11)	**Int**	20 (+13)	**Cha**	14 (+10)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Elven, Primordial

Tactics

If the Porteurs get to spring their ambush, their plan has four phases.

Phase 1—The Bait

What group of heroes could resist confronting a group performing strange experiments in the woods? The Porteurs have ordered most of the researchers to use their *wayfarer's lantern* to hide in the Bleak Gate, leaving behind the lead researcher **Charles Ormand** to tend to a campfire. He burns smoky green branches to make the camp's location obvious and draw the party in, and has used a ritual to create a *permanent image* of a dozen other researchers to make the place look vibrant. He also has ritual of *telepathic bond* active with the two marines and some of the snipers.

When the party shows up, Ormand stalls for time. A moment later the party hears a muted boom from one direction, then a second boom from a different direction.

Phase 2—Bombardment

The Porteurs begin shelling the gate with their two pieces of field artillery. Each piece is set to strike a spot thirty feet away from the center of the camp (so that the researcher will be safe). The artillery has already been fixed on the campsite and fired with blanks to test the aim, so there is little chance of the shells missing. Make the following attack.

Attack: Area burst 3 within 160 (creatures in burst); +20 vs. Reflex

Hit: 6d6+20 damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Effect: The ammo has been filled with chunks of stones from Methia. Creatures damaged by this attack have their magic suppressed (save ends). Suppressed characters must make a saving throw when using any arcane, divine, primal, psionic, or shadow powers (and any other types of powers other than martial that I might have forgotten). On a failed save, the power has no effect.

When the artillery hits, the *permanent image* of the research team flickers and is revealed to be an illusion. If Ormand wasn't caught in the area himself, he uses *solid fog* to try to trap the PCs so they'll be hit by more shells, then places a *wall of fire* encircling the solid fog, pointing inward.

Phase 3—Fusillade

Coming out of cover, the four *Porteur de Mort* snipers take a move action to arrive in the area depicted on the battle map, emerging from the south. Then they open fire, targeting spellcasters not caught in the blast, or PCs who have visible firearms. They prefer to use electromagnetic shots to slow approaching enemies, while saving lander shots for PCs who have gained any type of magical flight.

While the snipers take shots against the PCs, the artillerists get the marines to help them reload their mortars as a minor action. The snipers call out positions in Danoran battle cant, and if the party has moved, the artillerists spend a round to reaim. If they can get aimed on a good spot, they fire.

When the snipers are engaged in melee, or one of their number is slain or incapacitated, or if the PCs are drawn out, the survivors call for Phase 4, the final phase.

Phase 4—Retreat

The Obscurati researchers have detected a monster lurking just beyond the archway that leads to Sentosa. If things are going badly for the *Porteurs de Mort*, one of them rushes the archway (or perhaps Ormand sends a summoned creature in there). Any creature that enters the archway is stopped as if by a solid wall, then pushed 4 squares backward. Black smoke billows out of the archway, and the ten-headed lion guardian emerges.

The *Porteurs* try to use this distraction to flee.

Aftermath

Neither the researchers nor the Porteurs know anything the party doesn't already know. If the party is defeated, you might have the lion emerge to rescue them, or let them be dragged away and wake up later to the sounds of Asrabey slaughtering the surviving Danorans.

Gate of Rumah Terakir

Action. Tactical. Level 18.

The enclave's supernatural guardian doesn't care if the party is friendly.

This ten-headed lion was crafted of dreamstuff and set to guard the entrance to Sentosa. Any creature that seeks to cross into the enclave without the *enclave key* will be confronted by this beast. If slain, it regenerates one day later as long as at least one eladrin survives in the enclave. It can freely travel between the real world, the Dreaming, and the enclave demi-plane.

If the party has somehow managed to contact Asrabey, or has otherwise conveyed to the people inside the demi-plane that they are friendly, guards will call off the ten-headed lion after three rounds, assuming it's safe. They won't risk opening the gateway arch if there are any other hostiles present, though.

Ten-Headed Lion Body — Level 18 Solo Controller
Large fey beast — **XP** 10000

HP 656; **Bloodied** 328 — **Initiative** +11
AC 32, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 30 — **Perception** +17, +1 per head
Speed 8 — Darkvision
Resist fire 20
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 2

Traits

▸ **Floating Heads**

A lion strides through the smoke, and nine other lion heads float around it.

The ten-headed lion has, surprise surprise, ten heads. At any given time one is attached to its body, while the others can fly freely within 30 squares of the body. If a head starts its turn farther from the body than 30 squares, it teleports adjacent to the body as a free action, or is destroyed if it cannot teleport.

Each head has its own power, or can bite. The heads all act independently on the body's initiative. The heads can be targeted individually, and are independently affected by conditions.

Each head has 32 hit points. However, if a close or area effect would damage more than one head at once, the damage is divided among the heads evenly (rounded down), since they are essentially a single creature. Individually-targeted attacks that simply have multiple targets (like *twin strike*) affect the heads normally.

The lion body can have one head attached at a time, and when it moves, the head moves with it. While it has a head attached, any damage or conditions that would affect it affect the attached head instead. If something would damage both head and body, it only affects the head. (Forced movement moves the whole body and head, though; you can't knock the head off.)

While attached, the head uses the body's defenses. If the head is destroyed, the body can still function, but is blind until it uses *head swap*.

▸ **Multiheaded Perception**

You try to flank it, but one of the heads sees you and warns the rest of the creature.

The ten-headed lion makes a single Perception check, not one per head. However, it gains +1 to its Perception checks for each surviving head. Neither the body nor the heads grant combat advantage for being flanked as long as the targeted part can be seen by at least one other head.

Standard Actions

✓ **Claws** ✦ At-Will, Basic

The claws of its forepaws tear at your flesh.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC

Hit: 2d12+12 damage. If the target is immobilized by the bite of one of the heads, the target is knocked prone.

Roiling Flame (fire) ✦ Recharges when duration ends

Fire pours outward from the lion in all directions, rolling across the ground like a wave. The flames are quickly growing in intensity.

Effect: Waves of dim flame roll out in close burst 30. The flames fill low eleveations but are unable to go uphill. Creatures in the area take 10 fire damage, as do those that enter the area.

At the start of the lion's next round, the flames grow in intensity. Creatures in the area take 20 fire damage, as do those that enter the area.

At the start of the lion's following round, the flames flash, dealing 40 fire damage to each creature in the area, then dying out. Then the power recharges. A 5-ft. high bank of smoke fills the area until the start of the lion's next turn, providing concealment, or total concealment beyond 1 square.

Minor Action

▸ **Head Swap** ✦ At-Will (1/round)

The current head detaches and floats, still able to fight. Then the body vanishes and reappears across the battlefield, attached to a different head.

Effect: The body detaches its current head (if any) and teleports up to 30 squares to a space adjacent to another head, which it then attaches to. Any conditions affecting the body transfer to the new head.

Str	25 (+16)	**Dex**	15 (+11)	**Wis**	18 (+13)
Con	17 (+12)	**Int**	6 (+7)	**Cha**	14 (+11)

Alignment Unaligned — **Languages** understands Common and Elven

Floating Lion Head
Small fey beast — **XP** n/a

HP 32; **Bloodied** 16
AC 34, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 32
Speed fly 8 (hover)
Resist fire 20

Traits

▸ **Lion Halo**

Track each head's HP and conditions independently. Each head has the *bite* attack and one of the ten powers below. We include a space to track the HP of each head next to each power.

Standard Actions

✓ **Bite** ✦ At-Will, Basic

It clamps fangs onto you and gnashes if you try to escape.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC

Hit: 1d12+6 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 16).

▸ **Head One: Healing Tongue** ✦ At-Will **HP** _____

Effect: The head licks itself or an adjacent head and restores it to full hitpoints.

Head Two: Entangling Breath ✦ At-Will **HP** _____

The head exhales hot breath upon the ground, and dense foliage erupts.

Effect: A close burst 3 zone becomes difficult terrain, and any creature that starts its turn in the area is attacked. The lion body and heads ignore the entanglement.

Attack (No Action): Creature in zone; +21 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target is restrained (Escape DC 24).

Head Three: Terrifying Roar (fear) ✦ At-Will **HP** _____

The head roars.

Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in blast); +21 vs. Will

Hit: The target is pushed 5 squares, and is dazed and weakened (save ends both).

Miss: The target is weakened until the end of the lion's next turn.

Special: A given creature can only be affected by this power once per day.

Head Four: Petrifying Gaze ✦ At-Will **HP** _____

The head locks eyes with you.

Effect: The target can choose to become blinded until the end of the encounter, with supernatural fear forcing it to keep its eyes shut. If it doesn't, make the following attack.

Attack: Ranged 2 (one creature that can see the head); +21 vs. Fortitude

Hit: The target is petrified.

Special: A given creature can only be affected by this power once per day.

Head Five: Gnashing Dispel ✦ At-Will **HP** _____

The head gnashes its teeth.

Effect: The head can target a zone or an enemy within 10 squares. If a zone, the zone's controller makes a save or else the zone ends. If an enemy, the target makes a saving throw or else it cannot use arcane, divine, primal, psionic, or shadow powers until the end of the head's next turn.

Head Six: Paralyzing Hunger ✦ At-Will **HP** _____

The head licks its lips at you.

Attack: Ranged 2 (one creature); +21 vs. Will

Hit: The target is stunned until the end of the head's next turn.

Head Seven: Venom Fangs (poison) ✦ At-Will **HP** _____

Black ichor coats the fangs of the head as it bites you.

Effect: The head makes a bite attack. If it hits, the target takes ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends) in addition to the normal effect.

Head Eight: Gaping Beam (radiant) ✦ At-Will **HP** _____

Light lances out from the head's gaping mouth.

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +21 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d12+12 radiant damage.

Head Nine: Steal Voice ✦ At-Will **HP** _____

The head takes a deep breath, and your tongue seizes with pain.

Attack: Ranged 2 (one creature); +21 vs. Fortitude

Hit: The target cannot speak above a croaking whisper for as long as the lion lives. All the heads can now speak with the target's voice, which it could use to trick and stalk his allies. Henceforth this head can use any 1st level at-will implement attack powers the target knows, using the target's own attack bonus.

Head Ten: Snarling Hurl ✦ At-Will **HP** _____

The head bares its fangs at you, and a force carries you away.

Attack: Ranged 2 (one creature); +21 vs. Will

Hit: The head slides the target 6 squares and knocks it prone. It can slide the target upward, but it takes no falling damage from this increased elevation if it falls at the end of the forced movement.

Tactics

The lion starts with the *terrifying roar* head attached to its body, but throughout the combat it will teleport its body to different heads as needed to maul the PCs. It opens combat by roaring, then having its other heads spread out. It uses *roiling flames*, teleports its body to a head near a target that is stuck in the flames, *bites*, and then action points to *claw* to try to knock that creature prone. Then its other heads use their powers. The *roiling flames* will hopefully force the party to scramble to high ground.

The heads try to move adjacent to weak creatures so they can bite as opportunity attacks, but will float above foes who look like they'd be dangerous in melee. Most of the heads' powers are fairly short range, however, forcing them to stay close to the ground. The *gaping beam* head floats thirty feet up, though, so it can target the whole battlefield.

Aftermath

One by one the heads should be whittled down by the PCs, and once all the heads are gone they can cut down the body, which will only be able to create fire or use its claws. If the ten-headed lion defeats the party, it licks each to stabilize them, then waits for the eladrin to take them captive.

If the party triumphs (or if they avoid this encounter altogether by contacting the eladrin some other way), they still cannot enter Sentosa through the archway, but they can faintly see figures through it as if through a veil. A large organized group in a military formation stands behind two people who appear to be arguing, one leaning very aggressively into the face of the other. After a few moments of this, the other figure relents, pulls out some sort of small object, and then steps to the archway, which shimmers. The party can now see and pass into Sentosa.

A company of twenty male eladrin warriors wait warily under the command of an eladrin woman named **Faedravan**, who is holding a decorated ring of copper and wood known as an *enclave key*. With her is **Asrabey Varal**, who has demanded the party be let into the enclave. (This assumes he and the PCs parted on good terms in Adventure Five.) With a bitter glare at Asrabey, Faedravan welcomes the party to Sentosa, and asks that they enter quickly before anyone else can cross through. She does not apologize for any maulings they might have received by the enclave's guardian.

As the party enters the enclave, they feel a swing of vertigo and stumble, as if the gateway doesn't precisely line up between the two worlds.

Asrabey and the Amnesiac

Social. Real-Time. Level 16.

Kasvarina asks the party to help her learn her past and fight against the Obscurati.

Faedravan and Asrabey escort the party into Sentosa, but they don't have much time to take in the enclave. Asrabey insists the party come with him first to a stone-walled home near the center of the enclave so they can speak with Kasvarina.

The enclave has most of the same buildings as the ruins, but they have been restored to liveable conditions. Their passage is watched by curious and fearful onlookers, mostly eladrin but also a few pixies and dryad-like fey. Though eladrin men still distinctly outnumber the women, the disparity is only about a 60-40 split, a far closer ratio than most scholars in the human world predicted would be possible.

Still, of the four thousand eladrin here, a quarter are men near or over five centuries old, while the rest are younger with a large proportion of women. The oldest men are almost all fiercely-trained warriors, but each generation has learned the art of battle, even if they have seen relatively little of it in reality. As the party follows Asrabey they spot a training field where a hundred young men and women practice mock combat, often two or three on one.

Convalescing Kasvarina

Another company of twenty male eladrin warriors stand guard around and atop the building where Kasvarina resides, but Asrabey only allows the party inside. The three-bedroom home is furnished with silks and fine wood furniture fit for nobility. Kasvarina dresses in a simple day gown, and when the party arrives she's reading through a stack of books and scrolls, trying to learn about the outside world.

A fine mithral rapier lies across the table within easy reach, and as she turns the pages with one hand, she idly taps a mithral dagger into the table with her other. The sheer number of tiny stab marks is a testament both to how long she's been here and how frustrated she seems to be from what she's been reading. She barely responds when Asrabey enters, and doesn't look up to notice the party until her attendant clears his throat.

Historical Tutor

Kieran Sentacore, an aged half-elf originally from Orithea, studied eladrin culture in Danor and came to the colony Rationalis to try to help the Danorans reduce tensions with the natives. Though his efforts have broadly failed, the eladrin knew enough about him that when Kasvarina demanded to learn about the five centuries she could not remember, they sent out rajputs (elite warriors) to kidnap him.

Kieran resides in another building—as an 'honored guest' always 'protected' by several eladrin rajputs—but every day he comes to Kasvarina to answer her questions and suggest readings. Mostly he just sits by and does his own reading. Today he is making notes from the compiled works of the philosopher William Miller and scribbling a draft of his own travelogue, *The Dreams of Those to Come*, while Kasvarina studies a failed revolt against Ber's dragon tyrants from four centuries ago.

As a follower of the Panoply, Kieran has come to appreciate his unique exposure to a rare culture, but he doesn't want to be stuck here the rest of his life. He'll seek a chance to talk to the party alone and ask them to either negotiate for his release with the matriarch Athrylla, or to help him escape. It's quite possible he might actually have heard of any PC with the Docker theme, but he hasn't been to Flint for seventeen years.

Her Own Worst Enemy

Asrabey briefly explains that the party are 'the ones he mentioned,' and that he thinks they might be able to help her. He then takes Kieran outside so Kasvarina and the party can have privacy.

She's initially friendly, and makes it clear that she remembers nothing of her involvement in the Obscurati. When she thinks about the version of her who oversaw assassinations as a matriarch of her own enclave, or who apparently conspired with strange 'engineers' to design a metal titan, it's like she's thinking of a stranger. But it is a stranger whom she loathes, and whom she would gladly help defeat.

In short, Kasvarina is willing to help the party defeat what this other version of her was responsible for. She'll need a bit of time to get to trust them, and so she asks to talk and exchange experiences before she shares her plan.

Take the time to let the party and Kasvarina get to know each other, and have her share what memories she does still have—of training to protect her nation with sword and spell; of a hundred songs her people have forgotten in five centuries; of marrying, having two daughters, and losing her husband Pillai in the holy war; of the spices used in her daughter Dala's favorite dish, which she cannot find today because the farms were claimed by the jungle; of how she marched to the holy war and both longed for revenge and despised herself for the slaughter she knew she'd be responsible for.

She gives them what she has managed to learn of her other self—returned from the war as one of the few female survivors, miraculously found her other daughter Launga alive, formed an enclave and fought for a century, then lost her daughter to betrayal from another matriarch. Apparently she tried to have more children but never could. After that it was centuries of ordering attacks on the Clergy and thefts of treasure to strengthen her enclave, of marrying a half-dozen men for political reasons, and then disappearing a little over a year ago. Her own enclave—**Ushanti**—might still be thriving, but Asrabey warned her not to go there because the Ob might know how to infiltrate it.

She also wants to hear from the party. Once she's comfortable, Kasvarina goes to her pile of books and pulls out one traced with silver filigree.

The Lost Arc of Reida

The centuries-old book has been rebound multiple times. It contains a catalogue of mighty and dangerous artifacts the Elfaivaran empire possessed. Kasvarina has checked with scholars in the enclave, and most of these artifacts have long-since been plundered or destroyed, but one remains that they might be able to use as a weapon against the Obscurati.

The *lost arc of Reida*, a crown said to have been shaped from a piece of the Plane of Time that fell to the world, was a holy relic of the god Ingatan. Any who wears it and returns to the site of a memory is able to make that memory come to life. It was used in holy rites to pass on memories that must not be forgotten. The eladrin of Elfaivar all know that the arc was taken for safe-keeping after the Great Malice, and the first Vekeshi Mystics used it to pass along the memory of Srasama's fall. But eventually it was returned to a site known as Ingatan's Refuge, a few hundred miles to the north.

Kasvarina thinks that if she can use the arc, even if she doesn't remember her past, she'll be able to see it. If she can retrace her steps, she'll surely discover something of use in defeating this shadowy group the other version of her helped found.

A centuries-old eladrin warrior, Asrabey became one of the many husbands of Kasvarina Varal. For years he trained, and undertook many daring raids until he became famous as one of the greatest eladrin warriors in the world. Two centuries ago Kasvarina sent Asrabey to Risur to offer his services to the Unseen Court, and he has unwittingly acted as a critical source of information and influence for the Obscurati.

After rescuing Kasvarina during the events of adventure five, *Cauldron-Born*, Asrabey took her to the eladrin enclave of Sentosa. He both hopes she regains her memories, and fears what truths he will discover if she does. Stern and unsympathetic to outsiders, Asrabey displays few emotions other than righteous fury. Even with his wife Kasvarina he feels not so much love as intense devotion.

The problem is her hostess, Athrylla, who controls this enclave and who can limit who enters or leaves the demi-plane. Athrylla has been nothing but kind in protecting her, but Kasvarina senses that the two of them had an unfriendly history over the past five centuries, and for some reason she won't share, Athrylla has refused to let her or even Asrabey go out to seek the artifact. Kasvarina hopes that perhaps the party could convince her or, failing that, find some way to sneak out and bring Kasvarina along.

Asrabey's Duty Discharged

Kasvarina calls Asrabey back in. If the party has agreed to help, Asrabey explains that he has tarried here longer than he wanted, and that duty demands he return to the Unseen Court. It was a mission Kasvarina herself gave him over two centuries ago: to ensure that in the eladrin time of need, the fey of Risur could be counted as allies. If the party will escort Kasvarina once she leaves Sentosa, then he will part ways with them.

Kasvarina reminds Asrabey that the order he got was from another version of her, and that his mission might somehow have served the goals of the Obscurati. He doesn't answer, but is clearly torn over his loyalty to a Kasvarina who was not quite the same woman who stands before him now. All he says is that *this* Kasvarina is soft, and a soft woman could never have protected their people like the Kasvarina he knew.

She responds that the woman he knew apparently had no problem with mass prostitution and brothels (a reference to *Akela Sathi*, the Lonely Companion sacred brothel). She much prefers the woman she is now, who remembers life before the world went mad.

The party might be able to convince Asrabey to come along (Diplomacy DC 31) if they can guarantee a boon to the Unseen Court in exchange. It doesn't matter for the plot whether Asrabey goes with the party, though you might prefer to have fewer NPCs to keep track of.

Free Rein

When the party is ready to go, Asrabey calls to the guards, who escort them to lodgings. It's up to the party where to go from here, but Asrabey or the guards can deliver a message to Athrylla if they want to set up a meeting.

The Enclave Sentosa

Social. Montage. Level 19.

The matriarch of Sentosa will decide whether to aid the party based on how they conduct themselves in her realm.

The old Elfaivaran city of Rumah Terakir lies in ruins, but a new settlement named Sentosa lies coterminous with it in a demi-plane between the material world and the Dreaming. The explicit name change is indicative of its matriarch's belief that her people must move and not cling to the past.

Today Sentosa is a large settlement by eladrin standards that has a growing population of fey wanderers from the Dreaming. This unique blend of populace ensures the community has an abundance of magic, and the unique properties of the planar enclave allow for greater magical feats than a similarly sized settlement would possess.

TRIGGERED MEMORIES

When the party mentions the colossus, Kasvarina staggers as a flash of different memories overwhelms her. She looks up, smiles with a cruel pride, then shudders and cowers. She's remembering both her first look of the nearly completed colossus Borne a year ago, and the despair when she glimpsed the collapsing corpse of Srasama five centuries ago.

She falls against the wall and slowly regains her wits. Physical contact helps, and her first words as tries to remember where and when she are, "This is not my home. I need to go to Resal."

DOCKER CONNECTION

If the party has a docker or an outspoken follower of the Panoply movement, at some point Kieran Sentacore comes to that character in private. He thinks he knows something that might be of interest to Kasvarina, but he doesn't want to get her hopes up if she won't actually be leaving. In listening to her stories of her pre-amnesia life, she mentioned a performer named Navras. An eladrin named Navras built an opera house in Flint three centuries ago. He's sure the man died since then, but if Kasvarina gets a chance to visit Flint, he hopes the party could show her her friend's creation.

This provides a lead to the memory-event Navras (page 287).

ESCHATOLOGIST CONNECTION

Similarly, the party might discuss details of Kasvarina's past to try to learn about her. Kieran or Asrabey might mention Bhalu, one of Kasvarina's husbands during her time as a matriarch. An eschatologist PC recognizes the name as the leader of an infamous group of eladrin philosophers in Trekhom. This provides a lead to the memory-event Bhalu (page 287).

SKYSEER CONNECTION

At Kasvarina's urging, Asrabey lists names of Kasvarina's past associates, in hopes some might provide leads. A Yerasol Veteran PC will recognize the name of Chatwood, an eladrin skyseer who had been guiding Duchess Ethelyn of Shale with visions during the Fourth Yerasol War. Then apparently one of her visions drove her mad and she was imprisoned in an asylum. Asrabey says Chatwood was one of Kasvarina's spies in Risur.

Reactions

The eladrin generally fear and shun outsiders, but Asrabey's familiarity with the party means the reaction of the locals depends on the party's prestige with the Unseen Court.

- **0 Prestige:** The 'welcome party' leads them to a larger force, which insists they sit in cells and submit their weapons. Failure to comply results in the PCs being asked to leave the enclave. If the PCs refuse to obey, the full might of Sentosa is brought upon them in an effort to force them from the community.

  Should the PCs submit to holding, they are eventually visited by Kasvarina, who arranges for them to meet the matriarch Athrylla.
- **1-2 Prestige:** An escort of eight eladrin rajputs always follows the party. These soldiers are the elite of the eladrin, each a peerless warrior of unparalleled skill with blade, bow, and shield. They keep silent when spoken to, and never come closer than fifteen feet unless the PCs take arms or threaten a citizen.

  Shopkeepers and merchants within the city offer up goods at retail value, and locals are just brusque, rather than actively mean.
- **3-4 Prestige:** The group is followed by a single rajput, **Desok**, who has heard of the PCs' exploits and eagerly asks them about their many battles. The detail is more ceremonial than practical, though Desok's presence makes the locals more willing to talk. Shopkeepers and merchants within the city offer up goods at retail value with a **10% discount**.
- **5+ Prestige:** The PCs are allowed to wander the enclave as they see fit. While no detail is assigned to them, the PCs are accosted by dozens of keenly interested eladrin and fey, all who have heard their exploits. Shopkeepers and merchants offer a **25% discount**.

Places to Go, People to See

There are several sites within Sentosa where the PCs can explore.

Akela Sathi, the Lonely Companion. If the party needs to rest and take a load off, the best place in Sentosa is also the most awkward. A brothel/hotel called *Akela Sathi* (or Lonely Companion) rests near the enclave's heart. Protected at every avenue by an auspicious assembly of eladrin rajputs, this building is built into the interior of a massive tree that snakes up the side of a great statue depicting the maiden, one of the three aspects of Srasama.

The hotel is home to several young eladrin women who have taken up the mantle of *ananta paudha*, or 'eternal sapling.' Though today eladrin culture values the safety and prosperity of women above all else, long ago the matriarchs of the various enclaves struggled to prevent rapes as a dramatically unbalanced population between men and women led to resentment and violence.

Their solution was to create the *ananta paudha*, a sacred role where women volunteer for seven years of service, offering her body to satisfy the carnal urges of male eladrin. The common cultural understanding is that this is how they defend the enclave, while most eladrin men serve by being warriors. Once each year, any resident or visitor of the enclave in good standing can request a night at the *Akela Sathi*, where he or she can enjoy luxurious pleasure and sensitive companionship.

Kasvarina is disgusted by what she sees as institutionalized prostitution, and if she learns any PC partook of the brothel it will drastically lower her estimation of the whole party.

The Bent Leaf. A local pub run by a trio of fickle gremlins, the Bent Leaf is renowned for its exquisite wine. Made from fermented fruits grown in the Dreaming, this drink—known as "Darkly Dreaming"—attracts a decent size crowd at all hours of the day. Here, the PCs could have encounters with random fey or wanderers. In particular, the fey **Copperhat the Headless**, can be found here. As he lacks a visible head, Copperhat merely holds a glass of the infamous wine in his hands, mulling it over like a drunkard debating taking another swig.

The PCs likely met Copperhat in adventure seven, *Schism*, where the fey invited Rock Rackus on an adventure in the Dreaming. After a series of unfortunate (and hilarious) events, Copperhat was abandoned by his erstwhile companion, and found his way to Sentosa. The fey's presence at the Bent Leaf is not relevant to this adventure. His master the Voice of Rot sent him to spy on Asrabey, but the arrival of the party is more interesting. Once he's sure they won't see him, Copperhat leaves the pub—and the entire enclave—to report to his master. It turns out agents of the fey titans have no trouble whatsoever entering or leaving eladrin enclaves.

Shadow Edge Arms. Run by a repatriated eladrin bladesmith named **Iomar of Travin**, this smithy produces some of the most unique weaponry in the world. Iomar is jovial in all respects, but avoids talking about his past, even though he clearly has a Drakran accent. Loud and boisterous, citizens of Sentosa often chide the smith for being more like a dwarf than a true eladrin.

The truth behind Iomar's weaponry is that he infuses his creations with the suffering of others, a technique he learned from his less scrupulous dwarven companions. Hidden in a cellar beneath the blacksmith's forge, are a half-dozen human captives. Each of these humans are wanderers or Clergy missionaries ambushed during a trek through the jungle. Iomar had them smuggled into Sentosa by malicious fey, and now tortures them to feed his horrific weapons.

War Monastery. Dozens of eladrin train to be resilient in battle. They mention that they're interested in acquiring firearms, but that they have one rifle and have used it to perfect their bullet-slicing technique. A martial scientist who studies with the warriors can learn the technique Bullet Slice (see page 334).

Meet the Matriarch

After a day, or if the party make an effort to speak with her, they are summoned to meet with Athryalla Valanar. She holds court atop the planar-double of the Temple of Srasama found in Rumah Terakhir. While this temple is bereft of the religious slander of the Clergy, it is also lacking in any dedication to the former eladrin goddess. Instead, the temple stands as a monument to Sentosa, with the colony's history inscribed upon the walls.

Three stone thrones sit in an open meeting area atop the pyramid, left empty now but intended to represent that other matriarchs are welcome to sit as equals. Today Athrylla sits alone, though a half-dozen councilors stand off to the side, and the stairs leading to the top are lined with eight guards.

Athrylla possesses magical power normally impossible in the world, due to her connection with her enclave. If she leaves Sentosa she would still have access to some of the strongest spells in the world.

Interrogation and Dismissal

Athrylla has already decided how this meeting will go, and it's up to the party to change her mind. Kasvarina already came and asked for a chance to retrieve the *lost arc of Reida*. Athrylla's unwilling to let her leave and possibly regain her memories, since the woman she knew took the eladrin people down a path Athrylla did not approve of. She also wants the party gone, but doesn't want to foul possible ties to Risur. She also knows some group is trying to get into the enclave, likely to abduct Kasvarina. If that ever comes to pass, her most trusted warriors have orders to kill Kasvarina before she can leave.

Aside from being callous and calculating in order to protect her people, though, Athrylla can be quite the charmer. She commends the party for achieving what so few have: gaining access to an eladrin enclave. She asks them to explain why they have come, and explicitly encourages them not to be humble. She has known centuries of heroes, and is hard to impress with the honest truth these days.

After the party has explained themselves, she asks them to wait at the bottom of the pyramid as she confers with her advisors. A fine meal is served to them, and it might be a good opportunity to feed the players too. An hour later she calls them back and explains that she cannot let Kasvarina leave. As matriarch she feels no need to explain her reasons, and simply asks for the party to leave within a day. If they have any other requests for her, any way she can help Risur other than by letting Kasvarina go, she hopes they ask.

Changing Her Mind

Successful rhetoric or threats (Diplomacy or Intimidate DC 50) can persuade Athrylla, but she's very strong-willed. Speaking in a language other than elven imposes a -5 penalty. Athrylla is, after all, concerned foremost about her own race. High quality boasting early on (Charisma DC 26) likewise gains the party a +2 bonus to the check.

Before making the final check, give the party a chance to learn the nature of Athrylla's distrust. A slow approach might be for the party to figure out she has old grudge against Kasvarina (Diplomacy or Insight DC 30). Understanding the obscure history of the enclaves (History or Nature DC 30) can recall that sometimes matriarchs of different enclaves fought and betrayed each other.

Though a few dozen small enclaves of eladrin survive in Elfaivar, each with its own matriarch, Athrylla is the only matriarch to have survived the five centuries from the fall of Srasama. Today she rules over the enclave of Sentosa, which she fears has been endangered by the arrival of Kasvarina.

When the Great Malice occurred, Athrylla was in battle, polymorphed into the shape of a dragon. She was one of the first to advocate for the path of Vekesh, using restraint rather than seeking suicidal revenge. Centuries ago she had many arguments with Kasvarina, who took a far more active role in sending forces to attack the Clergy. Though Athrylla wished to pursue peace with the Clergy, Kasvarina's hardline stance made it impossible for her to find any leaders of the Clergy who would negotiate.

She feels an obligation to help perhaps the only other eladrin woman as old as her, but does not actually want Kasvarina back.

The party might then compliment Kasvarina in order to goad Athrylla (Bluff DC 30) into opening up as to why she doesn't trust her (with a +10 bonus if they mention betrayal). Athrylla snaps that Kasvarina was betrayed by her fellow matriarchs, and that Kasvarina's only surviving daughter perished because of it. But despite the tragedy, Athrylla thinks the attempt on Kasvarina's life *was worth it*. The woman cared more about revenge than survival, and if she'd died four centuries ago, the eladrin people would be better off today.

Some of these likely arguments can grant modifiers to the party's final check:

- Highlighting the threat the Obscurati pose to Sentosa, +5.
- Offering favors from Risur to aid Sentosa, +5. (Diplomacy only. Athrylla would ask for the land around Rumah Terakir to be official eladrin territory, no longer part of any foreign colony.)
- In particular, offering to provide firearms and train her people, +2. (In addition to the +5 above.)
- Threatening to fire on Rumah Terakir with cannons, +5. (Intimidate only.)
- Pointing out that their job is to destroy what Kasvarina built, +5.
- Explaining that Kasvarina herself hates the version of herself from her missing memories, +10. (This prompts Athrylla to summon Kasvarina to explain herself.)
- Bearing the *arsenal of Dhebisu*, +5.
- Appealing to help Kasvarina just because she's another eladrin woman, -5.
- Having already tried to sneak Kasvarina out and failing, -10.

Acceptance

With a successful check, Athrylla relents and agrees to let them take Kasvarina, but only once they've returned with the *lost arc of Reida*. If they succeed by 5 or more she'll even offer to send four eladrin rajputs with them (or some similar allies) to aid them in their search for the artifact. Only if they succeed by 10 or more will she risk letting Kasvarina go right away.

She will not give them an *enclave key* of their own, but will tell them of a second archway hidden in an underground ruin where she'll have people waiting to let them enter as soon as they return.

Rejection

A failed check hardens Athrylla's resolve, leaving the party with few options. They might go on their own to find the artifact, then return and use it to discover some of the backstory between the two matriarchs, giving them a chance to try a different negotiation method.

Or they might sneak Kasvarina out, which would entail stealing an *enclave key* from an elite dreadnought, or perhaps a complex ad hoc ritual involving the *wayfarer's lantern*. If Athrylla found out she'd send a warning to the eladrin at Ingatan's Refuge, and the weretigers would be automatically hostile.

RUMOR: SHADOW OF BORNE

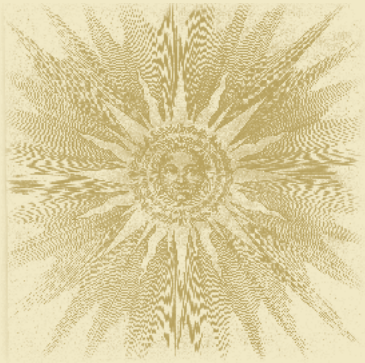
Elf and fey alike speak of the terrible shadow that loomed over Sentosa recently (adjust the specific time based on how long it has been since the start of the adventure). Lasting for almost a week, the shadow was like that of a terrifying giant, visible just beyond the boundaries of the *edgestones*.

When the giant first arrived, it attempted to enter the enclave, but the stones repelled it. After several attempts of forcibly striking the magical field (and crushing the ten-headed lion three times), the giant eventually slumped and waited motionless for several days. On the eighth day, the giant turned and moved towards the north-west, as though summoned by some unknown call.

Since the arrival of the giant, the people of Sentosa have been on edge, as the shadow would indicate some creature from the Bleak Gate had attempted to enter. Of course, in truth this was the colossus Borne, drawn to Sentosa by an innate link to its 'mother' Kasvarina. Around the time it wandered off, the Obscurati figured out how to 'spoof' Kasvarina's presence, and they're using it to draw the colossus to Methia, in Danor.

ACT TWO: I've Been Around the World

In this act, the party recovers an artifact to let Kasvarina to recover five centuries of memories from across the world.



Sent at a young age from his monastery to the jungles of Elfaivar, Aulus has spent much of his life battling the eladrin. Trained as a godhand by an ascetic order, Aulus rose in the ranks due to the heavenly power of his fists and the loyalty of his men, rather than any skill at church politics. As commander of a Clergy outpost, Aulus holds out against a growing tide of inhuman creatures that stalk the jungles and seek the blood of humans.

Despite his overwhelming combat prowess, Aulus is a quiet man who looks out for those under his command. He directs the camp orchestra, and himself plays a circumspect cello he has proudly lugged through two decades of deployment. He thinks it is important to maintain civilized practices even when one's business is violence, but civilization does demand order, and he demands unquestioning loyalty from his men.

As for the eladrin, he has no particular disdain for them, but he values protecting his people above all else. He has no sympathy for savages who are still fighting a war they lost five centuries ago.

Holy Artifacts

The *Humble Hook*, a relic sacred to the Clergy, gives any PC wearing it the clout to give orders to Aulus Atticus, as long as they don't do anything sacrilegious.

The *arsenal of Dhebisu*, by contrast, enrages Betronga Sidhon and his weretigers, who recognize it as the weapon that defeated their god. The PCs would be wise to keep it hidden unless they want to provoke a fight.

Apocalypse Then

Exploration. Montage. Level 17.

Eladrin weretigers and a clergy garrison are poised to replay an old battle of the First Victory, right where the party needs to find an artifact.

Several hundred miles north of Rumah Terakir, the *lost arc of Reida* lies at the site known as Ingatan's Refuge, located a stone's throw from the Clergy backed garrison of Vigil Longis. For years the Clergy have marched out from their fort seeking the lair of the weretigers, and recently they managed to kill the clan's elder, whose magic was responsible for keeping the weretigers shielded from divination. Now the Clergy garrison leader **Aulus Atticus** awaits reinforcements so they can stamp out the monsters in one strike, while the young and angry weretiger leader **Betronga Sidhon** riles up his people for war.

In Sentosa they should have learned that a clan of territorial eladrin weretigers—naturally born with their powers, not afflicted, and known as *bagheva* in the local tongue—have claimed Ingatan's Refuge as their home. They do not revere the old god of memory and fire, but instead worship Hewanharimau, the forbidden god of savagery. They call themselves the Children of Hewanharimau, and see their powers as a blessing. Indeed, they refuse to share it with outsiders, and will relentlessly track and slay anyone not of their clan who survives a battle and might have contracted lycanthropy.

The people of Sentosa know the Clergy have been active in the area, but don't know any news less than a few years old. Ingatan's Refuge and Vigil Longis are barely a mile from each other, but it's nearly forty miles more to the next settlement larger than ten people. The next large force of Clergy is off to the east, exploring the Perpetual City.

Just how to get past all this and recover the *lost arc* is up to the PCs. While it's possible they might just sneak past the weretigers, it's more likely they'll have to pick a side in the conflict and help one group slaughter the other. Here we present some scenes that may occur on their mission.

Watcher in the Dark

This encounter should occur at night or during a dark daytime storm, probably while the party is still ten or twenty miles out from Ingatan's Refuge. The PCs have attracted the attention of a young and adventurous scout for the Children of Hewanharimau, **Talios Valanar** (a distant relative of Athrylla, matriarch of Sentosa). She skirts the edge of the party's camp or travel formation, but remains in eladrin form. If spotted she flees into the woods, then transforms into a tiger and hides.

If somehow captured, Talios remains tightlipped about herself, refusing to give any information about her clan. Instead, she directs the conversation toward Vigil Longis, telling her clan's perspective of the 'vicious Clergy soldiers who steal our lands and kill our youngest and oldest.'

If convinced she can trust the party (Diplomacy DC 23), she offers to bring them back to the Children of Hewanharimau's camp to meet Betronga, in hopes they can join the struggle against the Clergy.

Should combat erupt, Talios has the stats of a Bramblehome Hunter.

Holy Patrol

About two miles out from Ingatan's Refuge, the PCs come across a contingent of Clergy soldiers—eight vindicators and two chaplains. These dour soldiers routinely patrol the jungle, chopping down trees that carry eladrin warding runes and planting copper rods that bear Clergy holy symbols, which make the weretigers uneasy. Within twenty feet of these rods, followers of faiths other than the Clergy take a -1 penalty to attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws. (Atheists are unaffected.)

Three of the vindicators and one of the chaplains are bloodied, being pressed into the patrol at the behest of the garrison's commander. A lack of time and resources has prevented the Clergy from keeping the soldiers at top physical shape.

The leader of the Clergy patrol is a junior vicar by the name of **Lionel Talbot**. Talbot is edgy and believes the tigers are waiting to ambush his patrol at any moment. He's been grumbling to the men under his command about how pointless and dangerous their daily patrols are. They have adopted a bit of a "shoot first, ask questions later" mentality when dealing with the strange and magical. If the PCs belong to any uncommon race, or have any non-standard animal companions, the patrol will attack at the first sign of hostility. If Talios is with the party, they attack on sight.

Otherwise, it's simple enough (Diplomacy DC 15) to convince Talbot to take the PCs back to the garrison. All the way back he grumbles and none-too-subtly implies the party ought to talk some sense into his commander.

Vigil Longis

The Clergy deploys several garrisons throughout the colony Vigilia. Each garrison has the long-term mission to drive back the natives and claim territory. The soldiers and chaplains build an artificial hill fort, surrounded by a twenty-foot-high wooden wall and an outer fraise of sharpened pikes, then send forth patrols every day. Every few months, once they have cleared an area of all hostile indigenous people, the soldiers dismantle the fort, travel ten or twenty miles, and build a new one.

Led by the stern godhand Aulus Atticus, Vigil Longis boasts a population of seventy, most of whom have been on this mission for five years. Standard Clergy dictates would see the soldiers replaced after three years, but the turmoil between Risur and Danor has put Crisillyir on high alert, making them unwilling to redeploy troops outside the homeland.

Worse, the outpost has been stuck in place for half a year after coming under siege from the Children of Hewanharimau. There were originally over one-hundred and fifty able-bodied troops available to Atticus, but

this number has now diminished to the current seventy battle-scarred survivors. A recent raid by the weretigers gave the Clergy soldiers a victory, though, when they managed to take down the druid leader of the weretigers.

Anywhere else, these troops would be lauded as great warriors, simply by dint of how many battles they've survived. So far from home, though, they feel unappreciated and foolish, with only their faith and Aulus's stern discipline keeping them going. Within a few minutes of seeing them, it should be obvious to the party that these are highly competent men, not to be attacked lightly.

- Aulus Atticus, Godhand
- 13 Vigil Chaplains
- 57 Vigil Vindicators

The Garrison

For the most part, the rank and file vindicators of the garrison keep watch and launch patrols into the nearby jungle, supported by senior chaplains. It is the responsibility of the chaplains to maintain spiritual strength among the ranks.

Raised platforms inside the wall are manned by fifteen vindicators at a time. Every day seventeen troops (14 vindicators and 3 chaplains) are deployed in the jungles surrounding the garrison. The rest of the soldiers attend to maintenance, cooking, or are simply trying to grab some sleep between double shifts. Everyone here is male.

Several structures reside within the camp, each erected over time for the specific needs of the garrison. They are described as follows.t

1. **Barracks.** Eerily empty, this building once could house 150, but now has fewer than half as many.
2. **Mess Hall.** The soldiers eat jungle meat and local vegetables, which they hate. Each day a handful of soldiers are allowed to eat food conjured by a chaplain.
3. **Recreation Center.** Aulus hosts music practice here, and occasionally traders deliver books from abroad.
4. **Hall of Prayer.** The stained-glass windows for this sturdy wooden chapel have been carted hundreds of miles overland and set up in several different forts during the past five years, a testament to the piety of the soldiers.
5. **Commander's Quarters.** These sparse quarters contain only the barest of furnishings, with much of the building being given to a large meeting and planning table, along with rows of holy texts held on wooden bookshelves.
6. **Armory.** Most of the men wield maces, spears, and crossbows. The chaplains store their magical healing supplies here.
7. **The Pyre.** Outside the walls, the soldiers burn dead animals, as well as allies and enemies. Most of the men here believe a completely unfounded stereotype that eladrin exhume buried bodies to eat, which is why the soldiers cremate even their own brethren.

Vigil Chaplain Level 17 Goon Controller (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP** 800

HP 60; **Bloodied** 30 **Initiative** +7
AC 32, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 29 **Perception** +11
Speed 5
Immune fear

Traits

☼ **Long Vigil** ✦ Aura 3
He defiantly holds forth a holy hook clenched tightly in his fist, and his weary allies stand up and keep fighting.
When an ally in the aura is reduced to 0 hit points, it does not die, but is just knocked unconscious. Any further damage to it kills it. At the start of the chaplain's turn, each unconscious ally in the aura is restored to 1 hit point.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Silver Warhammer** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He fights with the weary stare of someone who's faced down death dozens of times, and is too tired to be afraid. Apparently all that 'facing down death' made him an excellent warrior.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8+11 damage.

✲ **Flame Strike** (fire, radiant, implement) ✦ Encounter
A column of fire threaded with sunlight erupts from the ground.
Attack: Area burst 2 within 15 (enemies in burst); +20 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6+10 fire and radiant damage.
Miss: Half damage.

Minor Action

▸ **Stone Barrier** ✦ At-Will
Effect: The chaplain creates 3-square high stone wall in 5 contiguous squares within 15 squares. The wall lasts until the end of the encounter or until he uses this power again.

Str 10 (+8) **Dex** 8 (+7) **Wis** 16 (+11)
Con 14 (+10) **Int** 12 (+9) **Cha** 14 (+10)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven
Equipment silver warhammer, half-plate, heavy shield, holy symbol

Vigil Vindicator Level 17 Minion Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP** 400

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion Initiative +11
AC 34, Fortitude 29, Reflex 29, Will 29 Perception +14
Speed 5
Immune fear

Standard Actions

⊘ **Silver Halberd** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
No fear or nervousness fills his eyes as he swings his halberd. He's too drained to fear for his life anymore. All he's here for is the mission.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 12 damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls against all targets other than vindicators until the end of the vindicator's next turn.

⊘ **Crossbow** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He saves his silver bolts for the lycanthropes.
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage.

Str 15 (+10) **Dex** 12 (+9) **Wis** 13 (+9)
Con 14 (+10) **Int** 15 (+10) **Cha** 8 (+7)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven
Equipment silver halberd, breastplate, crossbow, holy symbol

Aulus Atticus, Godhand	Level 17 Brute
Medium natural humanoid (human)	**XP** 1600
HP 148; **Bloodied** 74	**Initiative** +7
AC 32, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 29	**Perception** +11
Speed 7	
Immune fear	

Traits

▸ **The Man Who Has No Imagination Has No Wings**

Even in his heavy armor, he moves through the jungle terrain with an easy grace.

Aulus's movement is not slowed by difficult terrain nor heavy armor. At the start of his turn he can make a save to end any effect slowing, immobilizing, or restraining him.

Standard Actions

I Float Like a Cherub (radiant) ✦ At-Will

He levitates off the ground, and then sacred light slashes outward from him in all directions.

Attack: Close burst 3 (enemies in burst); +20 vs. Will

Hit: 2d12+12 radiant damage.

Sting Like an Angel (summoning) ✦ At-Will, Basic

He snaps a gauntleted punch at you, and out of nowhere another figure appears behind you: a shimmering angel with silvery eyes.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +22 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+10 damage.

Effect: Aulus summons an angel with 37 hit points in a space within 3 squares. It remains until the end of the encounter. He can summon no more than 3 angels per day.

When Aulus moves, each of his angels can also fly at speed 8. The angels threaten spaces adjacent to them, and can attack if Aulus directs them with *holy mark* and *holy blade*.

Scorpion Grapple ✦ At-Will

Precise, seemingly awkward armwork lets him slip inside your guard, bind your limbs, and pull at them until they're ready to pop out of their joints.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target is grabbed (Escape DC 31). While grabbed it takes ongoing 15 damage and cannot attack or use weapons or implements with its primary hand.

If the target is reduced to 0 hit points, or if forced movement causes the target to move out of Aulus's reach, the target makes a save. If it fails, its primary arm is dislocated, and it can no longer attack or use weapons or implements with its primary hand until it receives a Heal check (DC 23).

Holy Blade (weapon) ✦ At-Will (angel only)

The angel plunges a silver blade into the mark its touch left.

Effect: Each angel Aulus has summoned makes the following attack.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +22 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+6 damage.

Special: Each angel can use this attack as an opportunity attack. Yes, the weapon is silver. You're welcome, weretigers.

Minor Action

Holy Mark (radiant) ✦ At-Will (angel only)

The angel reaches out with a shining hand and burns your flesh with pure divinity.

Effect: Each angel Aulus has summoned makes the following attack.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +22 vs. AC

Hit: 2 radiant damage, and the target gains vulnerable 10 all.

Str	20 (+13)	**Dex**	10 (+8)	**Wis**	15 (+10)
Con	20 (+13)	**Int**	8 (+7)	**Cha**	14 (+10)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common

Equipment golden plate armor

Introductions & Negotiations

Regardless of how they arrive, the PCs are directed to meet with Aulus in the Hall of Prayer, where the commander is in a moment of deep entreaty with the divine forces he believes in. As the PCs arrive, he mutters a final prayer to the divine and stands to greet them.

Aulus Atticus is a giant of a man, clad for now in a simple ascetic's uniform, though later they'll likely see him in his glittering golden plate armor. He displays no surprise at the appearance of outsiders, and in general his expression is hard to read.

Aulus offers them a tour of the camp, asking their business as he walks them through the weathered fort. Sure never to interrupt, Aulus responds to their story with simple nods or hand gestures, only occasionally filling a pause to ask a question. Even if told the full scope of the PCs mission, Aulus sees no issue with restoring Kasvarina's memories for the purpose of stopping the Obscurati. Likely, the PCs will not explain the full story of their mission, but as luck would have it Aulus does not quite care.

If the party mentions seeking Ingatan's Refuge, the godhand explains that he's heard the name before. The weretigers call their lair *Kanta Mahala*, or Bramblehome, but the ruins were originally called Ingatan's Refuge. Aulus describes the lycanthropes as horrific creatures of the night that are unwelcome even by the other eladrin on the jungle. His group got lucky when they managed to kill several weretigers who were sent out carrying messages to other clans, and he had hoped his men's recent victory over the beastmen would cow them, but now divinations suggest the survivors are planning an attack.

Aulus won't ask outright, but he'll try to gauge whether the party seems willing to fight the weretigers. If so, he'll offer to coordinate with them, lending his men in a massive assault. He'll want a day to let his people rest and recover, and then they can attack at dawn the following day. After that, the party can do as they please in the ruins (with the understanding that they are, ultimately, controlled by the Clergy and the colony of Vigilia).

Should the PCs decide not to pursue a fight, Aulus offers to let the PCs spend the night to rest, but requests they leave the garrison in the morning. If he gets any hint that the party might be allying with the weretigers against his people, he take a deep breath to calm himself, gives them a chance to explain themselves or change their minds, and if that fails he'll order the entire camp to attack them.

The Perpetual City

Far to the east of the *Vigil Longis* lies the Perpetual City. A massive crater is filled with hundreds of interconnected stone buildings, and the deeper one goes into the earth, the closer the architecture resembles that of the early Clergy. The archaeologist who four centuries ago proposed a shared origin of the Clergy and Seedism was burned as a heretic.

The eladrin, by contrast, think the site is home to an ancient buried evil. Some eladrin wanderers live in the upper levels, but they refuse to explore out of sight of the sun and stars.

What exactly is inside the Perpetual City is up to you. It plays no role in the Zeitgeist campaign, but if you want to hide clues to PC-related storylines or design a capstone Mega-Dungeon that no one has ever plundered, the remote wilds of Elfaivar ask you to consider them.

Bramblehome

An unnamed river is split in two by the natural awning of stone over a shallow cave, and the waterfall cascades on either side of a hundred foot high outcropping. A switchback leads up the front of the outcropping to the long-abandoned holy site known as Ingatan's Refuge, a spacious temple hollowed into the outcropping. At the back of the cave, just visible from the outside, a massive statue of Ingatan sits, his four arms held palm-up, as if waiting to hold something. Erosion has weathered his face away, and looters have stolen the gold that once adorned him, but the temple's greatest treasure still remains.

The Children of Hewanharimau have built huts in a tangle of massive thorny vines that have grown up around Ingatan's Refuge. Known as *Kanta Mahala* or Bramblehome, the weretiger lair is difficult to assail by all but the most prepared of attackers. The mobility required to navigate the weretiger's home—as well as the numbers required for such an attack—is one of the major reasons the Clergy have not been able to mount a proper assault against the raiding lycanthropes.

The full weretiger cult of Hewanharimau has hundreds of followers, and clans around Elfaivar are engaged in hit and run tactics against the Clergy and other colonies. But here at Bramblehome, the seat of the cult's power, long months of fighting have whittled their numbers to only thirty-two warriors, plus a score of elders, pregnant mothers, and children too young to fight. The previous Raja of the clan foolishly sent out messengers to summon allies, then attacked Vigil Longis before they returned. He died for his recklessness.

The weretigers' newly-risen leader Betronga seethes with vengeance, but he knows he needs more warriors to drive off the humans. Suspecting that the couriers to the rest of the clan were caught, he has sent out emissaries to other eladrin settlements that are closer, but are not weretigers. If Betronga cannot get allies, he'll turn his fellow eladrin into lycanthropic brothers and sisters.

- 23 Bramblehome Hunters
- 8 Bramblehome Shamans
- Betronga, Weretiger Raja
- 20 non-combatants

Clan Defenses

Throughout the day, only a third of the weretigers remain awake, standing guard in their humanoid form. Once nightfall comes, the remaining twenty wake, forming patrols and strike parties. Those who remain in the lair stay in humanoid form, while those taking part in the hunt or patrols switch to hybrid or tiger forms. The shamans use their animal companions (tropical birds, mostly) to patrol Bramblehome's surroundings during the day (Stealth DC 20 to get in without being spotted).

When expecting trouble, the clan will withdraw deeper in the cave, with the warriors inside Ingatan's refuge and the shamans beside the statue of Ingatan, waiting for their animal companions to signal the approach of enemies. Once foes are strung out along the switchback, the warriors open the doors of the refuge and pounce, while the shamans mostly rely on *call lightning*.

One possible solution would be for the PCs to simply burn the weretigers out, but the nearby waterfalls make it impossible to *fireball* the vines and houses into ashes.

The (Were) Tiger's Den

Located along the top edge of a two-hundred foot cliff, Bramblehome has one primary access point from the edge of the cliff. The vines that make up the den are as sturdy as solid wood, and have been fashioned as such in some places. Spells or magic that affect wood or plants will work on the vines, allowing spell casters the ability to manipulate the terrain if they possess such magic.

Terrain Perils: There are no railings or edges, and the slight curve of the vines means creatures are susceptible to falling should they move on any part of the growing vines. A creature performing anything more than a move action in square where the vine ends must make an Acrobatics check (DC 15) or fall prone, and then make a save or else fall to the rocks or jungle canopy below. The weretigers all possess a climb speed, and are typically safe from the perils of tripping or falling unless pushed or slid.

1. **Switchback.** A stone path carves its way up the outcropping to the entrance of Ingatan's Refuge. Several vines and huts emerge from the cliff face along the switchback.
2. **Hunters' Homes.** Scattered across the growing vines of Bramblehome are several two-story wooden homes, built with elegance and care outsiders might not expect of vicious weretigers. They have screens rather than full walls, though the roofs are sturdy enough to survive an 800-pound tiger dropping from above.

   The eastern homes are occupied by the hunters, with the most successful ones given the lower homes so they are first to defend against intruders. Each building houses seven or eight weretigers, with the floors segregated by sex, though typically only half are indoors at a time.
3. **Shaman Homes.** On the vines growing from western face of the outcropping, two of these homes are each occupied by four shamans, while the highest hut at the rear is Betronga's own. He tried to claim the wife of the clan's previous leader, but she said she will stay with the noncombatants deeper in the cave until he manages to kill the humans who killed her last husband.

   The shaman's huts are often used for rituals — one has a basin within filled with the blood of slain humans, while the other's basin holds the blood of slain animals. Prior to the start of any major skirmish or battle, Betronga leads his followers in a barbaric ritual where they adorn themselves in the two bloods.
4. **Entrance to the Refuge.** The old temple to Ingatan is described below (see Raiders of the Lost Arc, page 170). Further back, behind the statue of Ingatan, more homes house the noncombatants.

The Young Raja

If the PCs trigger any alarms, Betronga is quick to emerge and take control of the situation. Despite his bloodthirsty nature, if he recognizes that the party are not Clergy he'll howl for a cessation of hostilities so the two sides can talk. A cornered Betronga is a fierce fighter, but if the PCs manage to ambush the weretiger leader, he still offers to parlay.

Betronga is defensive of Ingatan's Refuge. Though his people do not worship Ingatan specifically, they know this place is holy. They believe that, though most eladrin reviled their god Hewanharimau, Ingatan respected history enough that he would know the truth. They hope that by guarding this temple, some day they will receive proof to exonerate their god. Betronga refuses to let anyone unworthy enter the refuge, but he readily offers a way the party can prove themselves.

The Children of Hewanharimau's guerilla war against the Clergy might currently be fueled by a desire for revenge, but the ultimate goal is to weaken the Clergy's presence. Betronga has heard rumors of wars elsewhere in the world, and of a black monster crashing through the woods to the south, visible only for the shadow it casts. Scouts say the monster heads for Crisillyir, and he wants to fight alongside it to drive away all the humans he can.

When the time is right, Betronga hopes to unite the lycanthrope clans throughout the jungles together into a new nation, a dream he believes possible for one important reason: the Children of Hewanharimau have the ability to breed and mature at rates far faster than normal eladrin.

With a fervent gleam in his eyes (and on his teeth), Betronga asks the PCs to help assault Vigil Longis, hoping to end the Clergy threat in the immediate region. If the PCs have already met with Aulus Atticus, then the weretigers would like the PCs to return and act as infiltrators for their final push against the garrison. In exchange for their assistance in defeating the Clergy, the weretigers pledge to give the PCs unrestricted access to Ingatan's Refuge, and offer their support in any future endeavors the PCs may have.

If the PCs refuse Betronga's offer, the weretiger is saddened, but then gives the order for his tribe to rip the PCs apart. If any PC seems sympathetic to the lycanthropes cause, he orders his followers to merely subdue that PC, so they can be converted, hoping they will see things better through the eyes of a tiger.

Aren't Lycanthropes Evil?

In traditional gaming, most lycanthropic creatures are evil. Well, because lycanthropy works different in the Zeitgeist setting. The exact nature of the lycanthropic transformation that afflicts the Children of Hewanharimau is half-spiritual and half-curse. The affliction has been mostly overcome, though the weretigers still hold onto several bestial tendencies.

So there you have it, lycanthropes are not inherently evil in Zeitgeist. Except bears. We're just going to assume werebears are godless killing machines.

A leader among the growing population of eladrin weretigers (called *bagheva* in the local tongue), Betronga seeks to unify his people and begin rebuilding the shattered eladrin nation. Betronga knows most other eladrin see his clan of weretigers as nothing more than vicious beasts, but he thinks spreading the blessing of lycanthropy will strengthen his race and help them reclaim their empire.

Betronga wishes only to cleanse his nation of the Clergy's remaining presence, and then create a true home for his people. If made to listen, he would ally with the remaining eladrin and try to build a true nation out of the ruins of Elfaivar. Prone to being overtaken by his animalistic nature, the desire to rebuild the shattered nation drives Betronga, and he is willing to make any sacrifice for his people.

Bramblehome Hunter Level 17 Minion Lurker
Medium natural humanoid (eladrin, shapechanger) **XP** 400

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +17
AC 30, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 29 **Perception** +18
Speed 6, climb 6 Low-light vision

Traits

▶ **Lycanthropic Resiliency**
You thought you killed it!
If the hunter would be reduced to 0 hit points by a source other than a silver weapon, it is instead knocked prone and stunned until the end of its next turn.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Greatclub** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 12 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square.

⊘ **Maul** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 12 damage.

▶ **Pounce** ✦ At-Will
A striped creature leaps from the brambles and tears into you.
Effect: The hunter charges and uses *maul*. If the hunter was hidden from the target at the start of its move, the target grants combat advantage, and if the attack hits it takes an extra 8 damage and is knocked prone.

Minor Action

▶ **Change Shape** ✦ At-Will
His muscles surge and expand. Orange and black fur grows from his skin. He falls to all fours, talons extending from his fingers.
Effect: The hunter becomes a large tiger, a normal eladrin man, or a medium-size hybrid man-beast. His gear does not transform with him, so he must drop it when becoming a tiger.

In tiger form he cannot use *greatclub*, but his speed increases by 2. In eladrin form he cannot use *maul* or *pounce*. In hybrid form he can use both sets of attacks.

Skills Acrobatics +18, Athletics +19, Perception +18, Stealth +18
Str 23 (+14) **Dex** 20 (+13) **Wis** 16 (+11)
Con 17 (+11) **Int** 12 (+9) **Cha** 12 (+9)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven

Bramblehome Shaman Level 17 Goon Artillery
Medium natural humanoid (eladrin, shapechanger) **XP** 800

HP 97; **Bloodied** 48 **Initiative** +10
Regeneration 10
AC 29, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 29 **Perception** +13
Speed 6, climb 6 Low-light vision
Vulnerable silver (if the shaman takes damage from a silver weapon, his regeneration does not function on his next turn)

Standard Actions

⊘ **Rusting Curse** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d8+5 damage, and the target is afflicted by a rusting curse (save ends). Whenever a creature with the rusting curse ends its turn adjacent to an ally, that ally also gains the curse.

The curse causes the creature's metal weapons and armor to take a -1 penalty to attack rolls and AC. Each time the creature fails a save, the penalty worsens by 1. When it reaches -5, the item dissolves into powdery rust and residuum. Before that time, the weapon can be repaired by rituals such as *make whole*.

⊘ **Maul** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+17 damage.

▸ **Summon Storm** ✦ Encounter
He sweeps his arms, and clouds manifest overhead, unleashing a monsoon torrent of rain.
Effect: Pouring rain falls in a column 50 squares high, in an area burst 5 within 50, lasting until the end of the shaman's next turn. A distance of one square of rain grants concealment. Five squares provide total concealment.
Sustain minor. The shaman can move the center of the storm 5 squares.

⟋ **Call Lightning** (lightning) ✦ At-Will
The shaman reaches up like he's pulling something from the storm. You only recognize the thunder and white flash as lightning after you've been struck.
Attack: Ranged 50 (one creature); +20 vs. Reflex
Damage: 3d6+14 lightning damage. If the target is within a column of rain, increase the damage to 3d6+32.

Minor Action

▸ **Change Shape** ✦ At-Will
His muscles surge and expand. Orange and black fur grows from his skin. He falls to all fours, talons extending from his fingers.
Effect: The shaman becomes a large tiger, a normal eladrin man, or a medium-size hybrid man-beast. His gear does not transform with him, so he must drop it when becoming a tiger.

In tiger form he cannot use *rusting curse*, *summon storm*, or *call lightning*, but his speed increases by 2. In eladrin form he cannot use *maul*. In hybrid form he can use both sets of attacks.

Skills Arcana +14, Nature +14
Str 18 (+12) **Dex** 16 (+11) **Wis** 16 (+11)
Con 17 (+11) **Int** 12 (+9) **Cha** 12 (+9)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven

Betronga Sidhon, Weretiger Raja Level 17 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (eladrin, shapechanger) **XP** 1600

HP 124; **Bloodied** 62 **Initiative** +13
Regeneration 15
AC 30, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 29 **Perception** +18
Speed 6, climb 6 Low-light vision
Vulnerable silver (if Betronga takes damage from a silver weapon, his regeneration does not function on his next turn)

Standard Actions

⊘ **Greataxe** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He's wiry, but somehow he's swinging that huge black axe with ease.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12+12 damage, or 2d12+25 damage on a crit.

⊘ **Dark Longbow** (necrotic, weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Light dims as he nocks his bow.
Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+7 damage, and the target is blinded and takes ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends both).

⊘ **Raking Fury** ✦ At-Will, Basic
He leaps past your allies, pounces upon you, and mauls you.
Effect: Betronga moves his speed and makes the following attack at any point during his movement. He gains +4 to defenses during this movement.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+17 damage, and the target is knocked prone and grabbed (Escape DC 15). As long as it remains grabbed, it has ongoing 15 damage.

Minor Action

▸ **Change Shape** ✦ At-Will
His muscles surge and expand. Orange and black fur grows from his skin. He falls to all fours, talons extending from his fingers.
Effect: Betronga becomes a large tiger, a normal eladrin man, or a medium-size hybrid man-beast. His gear does not transform with him, so he must drop it when becoming a tiger.

In tiger form he cannot use *greataxe* or *dark longbow*, but his speed increases by 2. In eladrin form he cannot use *raking rampage*. In hybrid form he can use both sets of attacks.

Triggered Action

▸ **Feline Recoil** ✦ At-Will
Twitchy reflexes let him leap away and counterattack as you miss.
Trigger: An attack misses Betronga.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Betronga makes a basic attack against the triggering enemy and shifts 2 squares.

Skills Acrobatics +18, Athletics +19, Perception +18, Stealth +18
Str 23 (+14) **Dex** 20 (+13) **Wis** 16 (+11)
Con 17 (+11) **Int** 12 (+9) **Cha** 12 (+9)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven
Equipment greataxe, longbow

Benci and Takut, Primal Tigers	Level 16 Goon Brute
Huge natural beast	**XP** 700
HP 74; **Bloodied** 37	**Initiative** +13
AC 28, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 26	**Perception** +18
Speed 8, climb 8	Low-light vision
Traits	
▸ **Preternatural Senses**	
Its whiskers twitch above bared yellowed teeth, and it sniffs, then glares straight at you.	
The can detect creatures regardless of invisibility, concealment, or cover. Betronga shares the senses of his two tigers.	
Standard Actions	
⊗ **Bite** ✦ At-Will, Basic	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +21 vs. AC	
Hit: 4d10+8 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 15).	
▸ **Maul** ✦ At-Will	
Effect: The tiger bites. If the target is immobilized or prone, it deals an extra 1d10 damage.	
Skills Athletics +18, Perception +18, Stealth +20	
Str 21 (+13) **Dex** 20 (+13) **Wis** 21 (+13)	
Con 24 (+15) **Int** 4 (+5) **Cha** 15 (+10)	
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** understands Elven	

It Takes Two to Tragedy

You might make it easy on the players if you don't want to force them to make uncomfortable choices that result in slaughtering innocents. Or you can let them struggle with their decision, or perhaps risk their mission altogether to try diplomacy. Sadly, there are no Disney-style star-crossed lovers to bridge the two cultures (though perhaps Lionel and Talios could be introduced…).

This scenario can play out a ton of ways. The two sides are fairly evenly matched, and so won't attack unless the PCs get involved. If the party does agree to fight, have them lead the way, with either faction's leader (Aulus or Betronga) at their side as they battle the other side's leader, plus a level 17 encounter with a combination of foes. For optimal angst, include Lionel or Talios on the opposing side.

Possible W'eretiger Encounter

- 3 Bramblehome Shaman
- 10 Bramblehome Hunters
- Benci & Takut, Primal Tigers
- Betronga

Possible Clergy Encounter

- 3 Vigil Chaplains
- 14 Vigil Vindicators
- Aulus

A Clergy assault on Bramblehome entails the party and Aulus storming up the switchbacks while the rest of the garrison rappels down from the overhang above, and attack from behind. A weretiger assault on Vigil Longis is more straightforward, with the party and Betronga being responsible for opening the gate so the other eladrin can surge through.

While the party fights, narrate other weretigers and Clergy members battling around them. If the party can defeat the opposing encounter above, that's enough to start a snowball effect so the rest of their side can kill half the enemies then force the rest to surrender. They'll have won the right to enter Ingatan's Refuge, and the winning side might be able to fight for them in later adventures.

More than One Way to Skin a Weretiger

Aside from killing their way to victory, how else might the party win?

Not Our Fight

Alternately, the party might trick the two sides into fighting, then bail rather than joining in. Betronga sends his primal tigers to wrestle the godhand while he fires arrows from afar. Unless stopped, the weretiger lord manages to pincushion Atticus, eventually felling the godhand, only to be impaled on the blade of a summoned angel. Betronga orders a withdrawal, having lost four of his people while the humans lose fifteen.

In the aftermath, the soldiers of Vigil Longis flee back to civilization, falling one by one as the weretigers harry them in the jungle. The Clergy never learns their fates, but word of the battle spreads among the eladrin and emboldens other weretigers throughout the nation. Within two months clans will rally around Ingatan's Refuge to plan a full assault on the capital of Vigilia. When that succeeds, a new movement begins of eladrin seeking to become Children of Hewanharimau.

Cat Burglary

Sneaking into Ingatan's Refuge isn't hard. If they wait until Betronga is away for something, or occupied trying to sire some more Children, the other weretigers aren't particularly attentive, and the roar of the twin waterfalls can mask the party's approach. The challenge is getting away once flames start appearing in the hands of the statue of Ingatan.

We Couldn't Think of Any More Cat Puns

Avoiding a fight altogether is possible. While Betronga wants a victory to rally his people, he'd settle for seeing the Clergy leave (though his people would probably kill a few of them as they retreated). And although Aulus wants to carry out his orders, he cannot command a mutinous unit. The party might be able to heighten the discontent among the soldiers, or concoct some fake threat to the Clergy that demands they return. This leaves every side unhappy and likely earns the party no allies in the long run, but results in the fewest deaths.

Raiders of the Lost Arc

Exploration. Real-Time. Level 17.

But we still had this pun up our sleeves.

A hundred feet up a rocky outcroping, the switchback stops in front of the doors to Ingatan's Refuge, a site plundered shortly after the Great Malice, then not breached again for centuries. The last priests of the temple altered its magic so that rather than evoking memories of wisdom and peace, it acts as a trap for intruders, throwing them back into dangers of their past, and even conjuring possible deaths from their future.

The refuge consists of a main meditation chamber and several rooms once used for training, sleeping, and supplies. Light within is provided by small windows carved through the walls. And by fire, but not just yet.

To acquire the *lost arc of Reida*, a visitor must pass four tests of past and future. Each test conjures a flame in one of the hands of the monolithic statue of Ingatan. But the tests have been altered from their original purpose. Now they simply seek to kill any intruders.

5. **Refuge Hall.** Prayer mats lie on the ground, still pristine, even smelling freshly washed, despite the ground around them being covered in flaky moss.

   A fresco on the eastern wall reveals an idealized form of the god Ingatan, a rotund, four-armed figure flanked by elephants. He holds a flame in each hand, painted with a different color: gray, red, yellow, white. These represent (Religion DC 31 the far past (gray), near past (red), near future (yellow), and far future (white). As the trials are passed, the flames here begin to glow, and giant fires appear in the hands of the statue of Ingatan outside.

   If all four trials are passed, the fresco fades away into a fire-filled doorway which cannot be seen through. A creature who steps through the fire is unharmed, and emerges atop the temple right in front of the cross-legged statue of Ingatan. The lost arc of Reida floats within arm's reach, and once it is taken, all the fires are snuffed.
6. **Dining Room.** Four low tables sit here, along with a tub holding fresh water.
7. **Kitchen.** A single banana sits on a counter-top beside old cutlery.
8. **Pantry.** Peppery breads here don't have a spot of mold on them.
9. **Purification Chamber.** Warm air wafts out of this room. If someone steps inside, it bursts into flame, dealing 5 damage per round.
10. **Hall of the Far Past.** Cool fog floats in the doorway, and nothing can be seen through it until a visitor steps through. Effectively, the room beyond doesn't exist yet until a person enters, so most divinations fail. Once a creature steps inside, it experiences a vision of the far past (see below). If someone enters the room while the vision is ongoing, it joins the vision.

    If the creature or creatures survive the vision, they find themselves standing in a relatively bare stone room with a washing basin and clean robes fitted perfectly for them. The fog at the doorway vanishes, and the vision will not repeat for 24 hours.
11. **Hall of the Near Past.** As above, but with a vision of the near past. When the vision is completed, creatures find corpses, showing no sign of injury, of a dozen eladrin priestesses who perished in the Great Malice. Their bodies have been carefully placed with hands serenely folded on their chests, and they haven't decayed in the past in five centuries.
12. **Hall of the Near Future.** As above, but with a vision of the near future. After the vision, an illusion shows the room is strewn with bloodied and burnt corpses identical to the PCs, which vanishes a moment later.
13. **Hall of the Far Future.** As above, but a vision of the far future. Also, when the vision ends the creature finds itself in a cramped, bare room, which was once used for visitors to deprive themselves and meditate, so that they might leave behind unwanted pasts. The floor is worn smooth where visitors would sit on their hands and knees, with their forehead pressed to the stone.

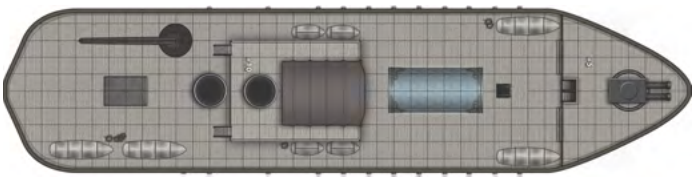
Vision of the Far Past

The fog parts to reveal the following scene:

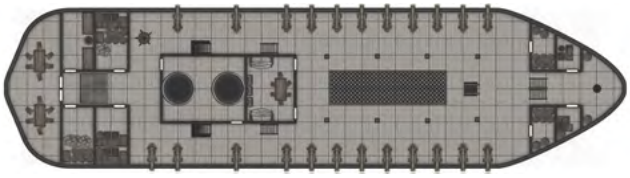
> Everything is colored in monochrome. You stand on the deck of a great seafaring vessel, except the area has been converted into the site of a grand party. Dozens of guests move about in amusement, sharing laughter and casual conversation alike. The familiar face of Stover Delft emerges from the crowd and he snags one of your arms.
>
> "Do me a favor and go make sure the Duchess isn't 'sleeping through' the king's speech in order to embarrass her brother."
>
> Suddenly, the back of the ship erupts in a great burst of gray and black flame. Eyes seethe with hunger as the fire coalesces into a two misshapen, four-legged beasts clad in steel skin, both rushing down to consume those on the deck.

R.N.S. *Coaltongue*

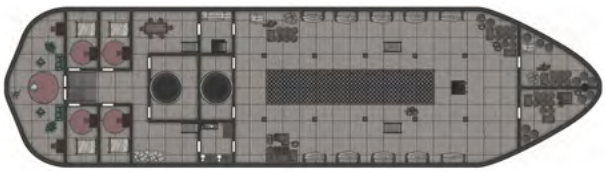
MAIN DECK



GUN DECK



BERTH DECK



ENGINE DECK

The vision sets the PCs back aboard the R.N.S. *Coaltongue* from adventure one, *The Island at the Axis of the World*. The flame demons that have manifested are a representation of the engine sabotage the PCs (likely) stopped during the inaugural adventure.

Coaltongue Flame Demon Level 17 Elite Brute
Huge elemental magical beast (fire) XP 3200

HP 248; **Bloodied** 124 **Initiative** +18
AC 29, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 28 **Perception** +8
Speed 2, fly 8 (hover)
Action Point 1; **Saving Throws** +2
Resist fire 20, necrotic 20
Vulnerable cold 10

Traits

▸ **Fading Memory**
It strikes you, and for a moment you cannot remember just how you came to this fight or when it is happening.
Whenever the flame demon hits a creature with a melee attack, that creature makes a saving throw. If it fails, it loses access to its highest-level unexpended daily or encounter power until it takes an appropriate rest to recover it. If it succeeds, it loses an unexpended encounter or daily power of its choice.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Slag Smash** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Its limbs resemble slagged engine parts seething with gray flame, and they hit with the force of a steam locomotive.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12+18 damage, and the flame demon slides the target 4 squares.

▸ **Rampage** ✦ At-Will
Effect: The flame demon uses *slash smash*, then moves up to 4 squares and uses *slag smash* again.

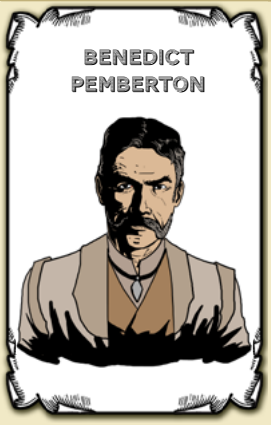
▸ **Branding Bash** (fire, necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
It raises one metal-shod limb and slams it down, knocking you aside and striking the deck with a sizzle. It lifts its cudgel of a limb, revealing a glowing brand in the shape of a coiled dragon with a barbed tongue. Gray fire swirls around it.
Effect: The flame demon uses *slag smash*, and if it hits it knocks the target prone. One square of the target's space becomes a zone until the end of the encounter. Any creature that starts its turn in or enters the zone takes 15 necrotic damage and gains ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

Minor Action

▸ **Destroy Obstacle** ✦ At-Will
It pounds and cracks the deck, which then undergoes some strange transformation, as if it had been consumed in an hours-long blaze.
Effect: The flame demon destroys a 2-square by 2-square area of terrain within reach, reducing it to rubble and ash.

Triggered Action

✣ **Death Throes** (fire, necrotic) ✦ Encounter
Your attacks finally tear apart the steel shell holding in its fiery interior. It flails and screams as its body collapses, but the flames within start to flare uncontrollably, building toward an explosion.
Trigger: The flame demon is reduced to 0 hit points.
Effect (No Action): The demon's space and each adjacent square becomes a zone. Any creature that starts its turn there or enters the zone takes 20 fire and necrotic damage. At this point in initiative one round later, the zone ends. Make an attack.
Attack: Close burst 8 (creatures in burst); +20 vs. Reflex
Hit: 4d12+16 fire and necrotic damage.
Miss: Half damage.



The dragon Gradiax, Lord of Steel, has almost never resumed his true form for the past two centuries, and until recently when he was outed by the party he maintained his eccentric alternate identity as a businessman and technologist. Though he only looks about fifty, and has the verve of a young man, he jokingly exaggerates his aged infirmities. He speaks slowly with a deep, country-accented voice, and often leans back and tucks his thumbs in his belt loops as he talks. (Imagine a more laid-back Foghorn Leghorn.)

Though he likely disdains the party for thwarting his plans in adventure six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*, Pemberton has learned that the Obscurati might be a greater threat, and so he's devoting his resources—advanced constructs and fiercely loyal gnoll worshippers—to discover their plans. In a pinch, he might even offer to help the party.

Str	22 (+14)	**Dex**	31 (+18)	**Wis**	11 (+8)
Con	18 (+12)	**Int**	13 (+9)	**Cha**	11 (+8)

Alignment Chaotic Evil

Once defeated, the flame creatures shrink into a smaller form; a floating flame only a three inches in size. When the second demon is defeated, its fire joins with the first to create a larger hand-sized flame. Cool to the touch, the flame can be 'held' by any creature willing to pick it up, the flame floating several inches above the hand holding it. Picking up the flame causes the vision to end.

Vision of the Near Past

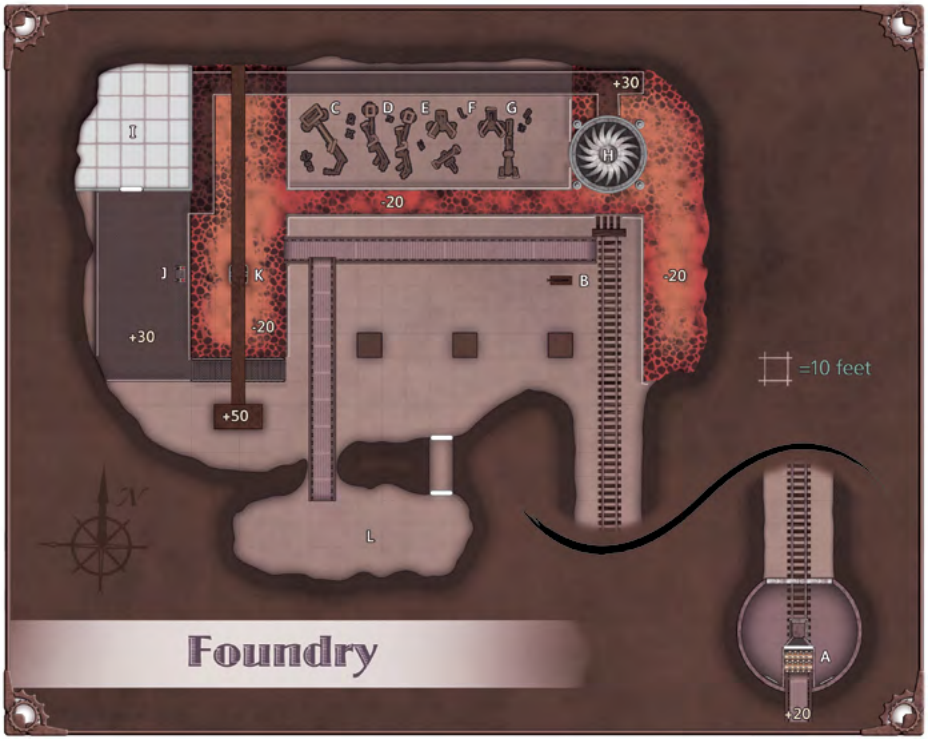
The fog parts to reveal the following scene:

> Fog gives way to red steam, which blasts out from the cracked machinery of a foundry, nestled in the heart of a volcano. A large mechanical suit stands slumped and immobile at the top of the stairs, but enormous industrial mechanisms move along the walls. The temperature begins to rise to an unbearable level, and the steel platform separating you from the magma below starts to creak and buckle.

This vision sends the party to Oddcog's Magma Emporium from adventure six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*. Luckily for the PCs, the memory-event recreated here includes no living creatures, just machines and magma. There are no steam-powered dragons or high-ranking conspiracy members in the chamber, and Oddcog's suit stands idle (the vision is accurate enough that Oddcog's duplicant sits inside, but the real Oddcog is no longer controlling the duplicant). Even the 'beam cannon' is off. Instead, the PCs main concern should be the growing intensity of the heat in this chamber.

After the first round of being within the chamber, the heat rises to a point where it deals 5 points of fire damage to all creatures within. This damage increases by 5 every round thereafter, to 25 per round in round 6.

The party begins in the center of the main platform. After one round, three free-floating red flames appear—one above the turbine (area H on the map), one beside the beam cannon (area K), and one in the schematics room (area I). The flames can be picked up and carried, and while warm they cause no injury. If all three are united, the vision ends.



Depending on the party's abilities, this could be a trivial challenge or life-threatening. Complicating matters is that the platform is breaking and sliding into the lava. To walk or run, a creature must make an Acrobatics check (DC 15), and if they fail by 5 or more they fall prone. At the start of the third round, scatter a dozen squares where the platform is buckling. Each round thereafter all the buckling spaces collapse, and one space adjacent to each that collapsed starts to buckle. Of course the buckling should try to 'chase' PCs.

Technologist PCs who reach the turbine (area H) can automatically shut down the machinery which stops the steam from becoming any hotter. Other characters can accomplish the same with an Intelligence check (DC 20). A faster solution might be to point the beam cannon (area K) at the turbine and blow it up.

Signals Crossed

Inside the schematics room (area I), the vision has recreated Benedict Pemberton, or rather his duplicant, which somehow has rerouted the dragon industrialist's connection from another duplicant he's using. He's quite confused what's going on, but a quick bit of detecting magic later and he figures it's some sort of illusion. He's quite surprised to see the party, and can actually talk to them for a few moments if they spare the time. The heat doesn't bother him.

Pemberton asks what brings the party to this unusual situation, and whether it has anything to do with 'our mutual enemy Nicodemus.' He's still harboring a grudge against the party, especially if they killed his daughter Terakalir in this very room. He asks where they're headed next, and offers to send a few metal friends to 'help them.' If the party is progressive enough to ask for his help fighting the Obscurati, he replies that he's old enough to know how to walk and whistle at the same time. He thinks he's quite fine thwarting the conspiracy without their help.

When the vision ends, or if he's about to fall into lava, Pemberton severs his connection.

Vision of the Near Future

The fog parts to reveal the following scene:

> Fire again, blindingly bright. No, not fire, not quite. A magic portal sits within a platinum loop in front of you, and through it you see a vast golden dome reflecting the light of dawn, and around it the glint of the sun off silvery spears. You squint as your eyes adjust, and see above you a dark overcast sky, which has broken only enough to reveal the moon. Below you a city sprawls out to the horizon. You stand on a balcony jutting forth from a nauseatingly high tower. Beneath you, the city's buildings are bone white. All you can hear is the scratchy flutter of the wind.
>
> The light in the portal flickers, turns black, and then the wind is joined by another moan from within the platinum loop.

The PCs find themselves atop an illusory version of the Lance of Triegenes, the site of this adventure's final encounter in the ghost city of Methia. (See page 173 for a map of the tower's summit.) They start on one of the balconies, but if they go inside they find a muscular figure wearing tattered rags lying dead in the chamber's center. No matter what the party tries, the figure's features are shrouded in shadow, and no light source they possess can reveal who it is.

The portals on each of the four balconies activate to bring forth four incorporeal spirits known as Tragedies. Dim yellow flames cling to their wraithlike forms, and golden cinders burn in the pits of their skull-like eye sockets. Other wailing faces drift across their robes then vanish, like a drowning horde struggling to break the surface for a last gasp of breath.

They fly out and assault the party, and whenever one dies it vanishes but drops a yellow flame, which can be grasped like in the other visions. If a tragedy is destroyed while it is in the air, its flame falls fifteen hundred feet to the city below (150 ft. in the first round, 300 the next, 450 the next, and then it hits the ground). If the flame hits the ground (four rounds after the tragedy died), another tragedy moans its way through whichever portal is most advantageous.

Normally the tragedies swoop and make flyby attacks, ending their turns out over thin air. Smart parties will figure out to lure the undead inside. Once they collect four flames, they can combine them to end the vision. If they bring all four flames within 5 ft. of the tattered figure in the center of the tower, the light pushes away the shadows on his face, revealing the visage of Andrei von Recklinghausen, whose body Nicodemus the Gnostic has been wearing of late.

Tragedy	Level 17 Skirmisher
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)	**XP** 1600
HP 75; **Bloodied** 37	**Initiative** +19
AC 30, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 32	**Perception** +14
Speed fly 6 (hover); phasing	
Resist necrotic 20, insubstantial	
Immune poison, disease	**Vulnerable** radiant 10

Traits

☼ **Tragic Aura** (charm) ✦ Aura 2

The many mouths that mar the wraith's skin wail constantly, and the madness of a long-ago tragedy grips you.Make the following attack against creatures that start their turn in the aura.

Attack: Close burst 2 (creature in burst); +20 vs. Will

Hit: The target is confused (save ends). A confused creature takes the following actions on its turn if it can, and can take no other actions. First it moves 2 squares in a random direction as a move action. Then if it has no weapon or implement it draws one as a minor action. Then it spends a standard action to make a basic attack against a random creature in range of its basic attack.

Miss: The target is immune to the aura (from this tragedy and others) until it takes an extended rest. When it does, its sleep is filled with dreams of death, loss, and betrayal.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Mourning Touch** (psychic) ✦ At-Will, Basic

A screaming mouth appears on the pallid palm that reaches for your face. Overwhelming grief causes your legs to buckle.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d6+18 psychic damage, and the target falls prone and it cannot take opportunity or immediate actions until the end of the tragedy's next turn.

▸ **Flyby Attack** ✦ At-Will

Effect: The tragedy moves its speed and uses *mourning touch* at any point before, during, or after its movement.

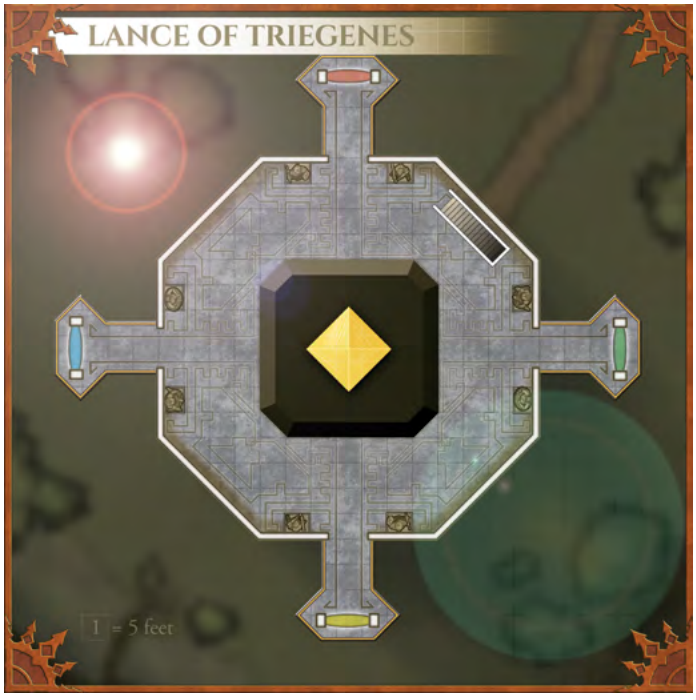
▸ **Traitorous Glare** (charm) ✦ Encounter

The spectre stares into your eyes, filling your mind with images of betrayal, distorting your perceptions, and compelling you to kill your friends.Attack: Close burst 1 (one creature in burst); +20 vs. Will

Hit: The tragedy slides the target its speed. The target uses its highest-level unexpended attack power against a creature of the tragedy's choice.

Str	14 (+10)	**Dex**	24 (+15)	**Wis**	12 (+9)
Con	18 (+12)	**Int**	13 (+9)	**Cha**	24 (+15)

Alignment Chaotic Evil



Vision of the Far Future

The fog parts to reveal the following scene:

"Constables." Rock Rackus speaks with awkward solemnity. "Is that an asteroid I do spy?"

Through a gap in the forest canopy, you watch a white conflagration barrel through the sky, tumbling end over end as it streaks past you. The air roars with its passage. It disappears from view, but a moment later light flashes through the darkened forest from where it landed. The ground leaps beneath you, and only then do you hear the ear-shattering explosion of the impact.

"Son of a bitch!" Rackus abandons all attempts at civility. "There's more of 'em! Follow me!"

The party is witnessing a vision of what may occur in adventure twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*. To reach the graveyard of the multiverse they will have journeyed to the doomed plane of Av, which was once the Plane of Dreams, but is now being drawn into a massive constellation of cosmic gears that crush it and other worlds into fragments. The specifics don't matter here, and the illusory Rock Rackus won't stop to explain what the hell is going on.

More asteroids—drifting fragments of other worlds destroyed by the gears—fall from the sky, and within minutes the world will be annihilated. Rock leads the party and a mass of other people on a mad dash through the woods. The PCs know they recognize some of the faces of those around them, but the darkness and blinding impact flashes make it impossible for them to know just who.

The group hustles after Rock for a minute, and every 3 rounds an asteroid falls somewhere across the sky. The ground keeps shaking, and cracks begin to form—truly gaping, bizarre rifts that reveal that the ground is a massive hollow shell of crystal. Soil and trees tumble into the chasms, where they incandesce from the white-hot fire of the asteroids that have shattered the surface and ignited the interior.

Rock shouts that they're almost there, and through the woods ahead the fires of five torches illuminate what looks like a massive docked sailing ship. Other fires—these quite larger than torches—become visible off to the party's right, like another group is running toward the same ship they are. Just then a rift opens up in front of the party, slicing an unknowable distance in either direction. Some poor fools in the faceless crowd trip and fall to their deaths. The PCs have to find some way to cross the thirty-foot -wide bottomless chasm.

While they're in the midst of navigating that obstacle, the golden legion attacks.

Egal the Shimmering

In the final act of the campaign, several teased threats return to the world after being locked away by the Axis Seal for millennia. One is the golden legion of Egal the Shimmering, a general of Hell who clads his soldiers in loyalty-enforcing chains of solid gold. Eventually the party will learn that Egal's forces attempt to invade Av, but the world is pulled across the multiverse into the Gyre.

Now Egal's forces are trying to escape on a plane-traveling ship Rock Rackus brought here to try to save the woman he loves (well, one of them at least). To end the vision, the party must cross the thirty-foot-wide chasm, then reach the docked ship—two hundred feet away through the woods, which stop at the edge of the world (did we mention it's a flying ship?)—and gather the flames of the torches at the cliff's edge.

They are dogged by golden legionnaires, who teleport after them (no, gold doesn't block teleportation here) and try to ensure *they're* the ones who get to fly away to safety. The legionnaires resemble normal humans wrapped in hooked and barbed golden chains that dig into their flesh. Their commander towers over them, a four-armed glabrezu that had its flesh flayed and then wrapped in golden links to enforce its loyalty. Fiery crescents float behind their heads like broken, infernal halos.

- 4 Golden Legionnaires
- 1 Golden Legion Commander

Golden Legionnaire Level 17 Soldier
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) **XP** 1600

HP 122; **Bloodied** 61 **Initiative** +13
Regeneration 2
AC 33, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 30 **Perception** +16
Speed 6, teleport 6 Darkvision
Resist fire 20

Traits

▶ **Golden Chains of Obedience**
Hundreds of feet of gold chains wrap across this wiry man like armor. Hooks in the links dig into his flesh, shifting and tearing if he is disobedient.

If the legionnaire is hit by an attack with the charm keyword or becomes dominated, its chains punish it for disobedience, dealing 30 damage to it. Additionally, the legionnaire's regeneration doesn't work on its next turn.

If the chain is broken, the legionnaire loses its fire resistance, regeneration, and teleport speed. To accomplish this, the legionnaire must be immobilized or slowed, and an attacker must grab the target. Then it can try as a minor action to break the chain (Strength DC 25).

Standard Actions

⊘ **Golden Lance** (psychic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
While keeping its golden shield up for defense, it jams a gleaming and polished lance of gold into your flesh, and then chains from its armor spiral down the weapon's length to ensnare you.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10+10 damage, and make a secondary attack against the target.
Secondary Attack: Melee 2 (primary target); +22 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target is pulled 1 square and is grabbed (Escape DC 23). While grabbed the target takes ongoing 15 damage, but the legionnaire cannot use *golden lance*. If the legionnaire teleports while grabbing a creature in this way, the creature comes along as well.
Sustain standard.

⌖ **Unnerving Gaze** (charm) ✦ At-Will
The legionnaire's face twists to resemble one of your bitter enemies, then flickers into that of a departed loved-one.
Attack: Close burst 6 (one creature in burst); +20 vs. Will
Hit: The target is stunned until the end of the legionnaire's next turn.

Str 16 (+11) **Dex** 16 (+11) **Wis** 16 (+11)
Con 14 (+10) **Int** 8 (+7) **Cha** 12 (+9)
Alignment Evil **Languages** hellish tongues of a foreign world
Equipment golden lance, barbed golden chain armor, golden shield

Golden Legion Commander Level 17 Elite Brute
Large immortal humanoid (devil) **XP** 3200

HP 303; **Bloodied** 150 **Initiative** +12
Regeneration 5
AC 29, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 30 **Perception** +16
Speed 8, teleport 8 Darkvision
Resist fire 20
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▶ **Golden Chains of Obedience**
This four-armed demonic creature was flayed, then wrapped in golden, hooked chains.
If the commander is hit by an attack with the charm keyword or becomes dominated, its chains punish it for disobedience, dealing 37 damage to it. Additionally, the commander's regeneration doesn't work on its next turn.

If the chain is broken, the commander loses its fire resistance, regeneration, and teleport speed. To accomplish this, the commander must be immobilized or slowed, and an attacker must grab the target. Then it can try as a minor action to break the chain (Strength DC 25).

▶ **True Seeing**
The golden legion commander ignores concealment and total concealment, and can see perfectly through disguises and illusions. It can also see the true forms of creates that have shape-shifted.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Pincers** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Its upper arms end in jagged pincers. It grabs you with one, then threatens to snap your arm in two with the other.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10+20 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 23). If the commander teleports while grabbing a creature in this way, the creature comes along as well.

✲ **Firebolt** (fire) ✦ At-Will
Its lower arms resemble those of a man, albeit flayed and wrapped in gold chains. They weave the somatic components of a spell, then launch a bolt of fire.
Attack: Area burst 2 within 20 (creatures in burst); +20 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6+5 fire damage.

▶ **Four-Limbed Combat** ✦ At-Will

Effect: The commander uses *pincers* and *firebolt*.

▶ **Power Word Stun** (psychic) ✦ Encounter

The fiend speaks some primordial syllable that dictates a reality where you are helpless.

Effect: One creature within 10 squares of the commander is stunned (save ends). It must succeed two saves to end this effect.

▶ **Reverse Gravity** ✦ Encounter

It sweeps its flayed human arms upward, and the ground becomes the ceiling. You fall upward into the boughs of trees.

Effect: The golden legion commander creates a zone in area burst 3 within 20, extending to a height of 35 feet. Gravity is reversed in the zone area. Creatures might be able to maneuver in the branches of trees, but if their 'fall' up to the top of the zone is unobstructed, they hover there, granting combat advantage unless they can fly.

▶ **Snap** ✦ At-Will

Effect: If the commander has a creature grabbed, the creature makes a saving throw. If it succeeds, the commander sustains the grab but deals no damage. If it fails, the commander deals 15 damage, severs one of the target's arms or legs and then ends the grab. The target gains ongoing 15 damage (save ends).

Str	27 (+16)	**Dex**	10 (+8)	**Wis**	26 (+16)
Con	20 (+13)	**Int**	16 (+11)	**Cha**	20 (+13)

Alignment Evil **Languages** hellish tongues of a foreign world

Aftermath

Upon completing the four visions, the fresco in area 5 opens and allows a character to retrieve the fabled *lost Arc of Reida*. The artifact is described in detail on page 157. Depending on how the party managed to get into Ingatan's Refuge, getting out and returning to Sentosa might be the greatest challenge of all.

The Lost Arc of Reida

Forged from a shard of silver that cracked off the shattered ring of the Plane of Time and fell to earth, this crown sits uncomfortably, its thin heavy edge pressing sharply into the wearer's scalp. Through its connection to the plane of time, the *lost arc of Reida* can cause events from the past to manifest whenever the wearer goes somewhere she experienced a noteworthy event.

Memory-Events

The manifestation is not merely an illusion, but rather a fully solid repeat of a past event. Moreover, this event is not just recreated from the wearer's memory; instead, the arc actually brings forth the past as it was at that time and place. This allows the wearer to witness things from a perspective she never actually had, or even goad peope from the past to reveal secrets long-since forgotten.

This isn't actually time travel, though. Changing events in a memory-event has no effect on reality. However, since the event is manifested through the memories of the *lost arc's* wearer, changing things too drastically can harm her mind.

Manifesting

Whenever the wearer nears a location where she had a major life event, she feels an uneasy sense of déjà vu. It starts as mild at a range of a few miles, but grows stronger as she gets closer. Once she's within 100 feet of the site of the memory, her mind starts to revert back to her past self (see Caught Up in the Moment, below). This may also affect other people who are here in the present and who were also in the memory.

If she keeps the *lost arc* on for a minute, the local area (typically in a 100-ft. radius) reshapes into the time and place of the event. Some features of the present-day landscape might linger (a modern farmhouse in the middle of an ongoing battle from 500 years ago, for instance), but otherwise the affected area is replaced by the world as it was at the time, including whatever creatures were active there.

Manifested creatures and objects wink out if they leave the radius of the effect, and sometimes things will seem to appear out of nowhere as they cross into the area. The events of the past are somewhat obdurate, and they resist efforts to change them. Speaking to a manifested person who is walking from place to place will get him to pause and tarry a moment, but he'll try to keep doing what he did in actual history. Severe changes can have an effect, though, and after alerations reach a certain threshold, the event can rapidly diverge. Soon thereafter, though, the memory-event will fall apart. Precisely when things diverge and become unstable is a matter for you as GM to handle for the sake of pacing.

For example, in the Cold Matriarch event (page 46), Kasvarina sends Asrabey to become an agent of the Unseen Court in Risur. If the party tries to speak to Kas or Asrabey, they'll be annoyed at the interruption and continue reenacting the past. If a PC were to shove Asrabey, the conversation would change for a moment as Asrabey threatened the PC, but then it would quickly get back on track. Only something drastic like attacking him or trying to set fire to the building would actually force everyone 'off script.'

Multiple Memories

If a place is the source of multiple memories, they occur in order from most recent to oldest. This in particular happens in Kasvarina's home town of Resal, Alais Primos, and Methia.

Ending the Memory-Event

Once the memory-event manifests, the *lost arc of Reida* becomes inaccessible, so the wearer cannot take it off until the manifestation runs its course and a 'scene' reaches a resolution.

However, if the wearer falls unconscious, or if the memory-event becomes unstable due to too much divergence, the manifestation collapses over the course of a minute. Repeated collapses will erode the wearer's mind, as they become more and more like their past self (see Mental Stability below). Careful parties will be bystanders, only interfering when their safety is in danger. They might assume that Kasvarina will be safe because obviously she didn't die in the past, but some memory-events might leave her severely wounded.

Dangers and Aftermath

The memory-event is solid and real. Injuries that happen in the area of the manifestation are wholly real, and of course knowledge gleaned from it can survive, but normally physical objects will not endure, especially if the item in the memory-event still exists in the world somewhere else. (You cannot 'farm' the past for copies of magic items.)

If a modern person is holding onto an item from the memory-event when it ends, he can make a Charisma check (DC 25) to cause it to remain real. He gains a +5 bonus to this check if the item is nonmagical, and a +10 bonus if it played no real role in the memory-event, or a +5 bonus if it played a minor role. He takes a -5 penalty to this check for each size category the object is larger than a Medium creature. Barring a *wish* or similar magic, intelligent creatures can never be held onto this way. If creatures try to hold onto multiple items in this way, make one check for each item. From a given memory-event, only the single item with the highest check result can endure.

List of Memory-Events

Here is a master list of the key memory-events of Kasvarina's past the party can witness with the *lost arc of Reida*. Memories marked with asterisks are presented in Appendix C: The Eladrin Diaspora, and will likely only occur if the party goes looking for them instead of following the most straightforward path. Feel free to adjust locations a bit if it helps with your players' experience.

Memory-Event	Date	Stability
Through the Breach. Breaching the walls of Alais Primos.	81 Summer, 1 B.O.V.	1
Triage. Nicodemus's treatments of her while she was injured in Alais Primos.	81 Summer to 15 Autumn, 1 B.O.V.	3
Family Moment. Her last visit with her daughters in Resal before leaving with Nicodemus.	32 Autumn, 1 B.O.V.	3
Arrest. Returning to Alais Primos with Nicodemus and being arrested.	59 Autumn, 1 B.O.V.	1
Devil's Prayer. Learning the *Sacrament of Apotheosis* from Ashima-Shimtu in the Crypta Hereticarum.	67 Autumn, 1 B.O.V.	3
The Great Malice. Causing the Great Malice atop the Lance of Triegenes in Methia.	91 Winter, 1 B.O.V.	5
Srasama's Fall. Mourning a fallen eladrin woman outside Alais Primos.	New Year's Day, 1 A.O.V.	3
Forsaking Grief. The oratory of Vekesh and the rite to forsake grief in Resal.	17 Spring, 1 A.O.V.	3
***Miller's Pyre.** Witnessing William Miller being burned at the stake in Pala.	31 Autumn, 17 A.O.V.	3
***Ghostly Apparition.** Nicodemus visiting after William Miller's martyrdom, in Ushanti.	84 Winter, 17 A.O.V.	1
Founded in Secrecy. Founding the Obscurati in Methia.	14 Spring, 19 A.O.V.	1
Epidemic. The leaders of the conspiracy gather again to discuss saving Jierre's new nation from smallpox.	5 Summer, 40 A.O.V.	1
***Rejecting the Call.** Nicodemus visiting Ushanti in 100 A.O.V. to plead for greater commitment to their plans.	58 Summer, 100 A.O.V.	1
Rescue Alliance. Kasvarina seeks help to rescue Launga from a dragon tyrant.	14 Summer, 111 A.O.V.	1
***Betrayal of Rilego.** The death of her daughter Launga in Seobriga.	15 Summer, 111 A.O.V.	5
A Second Creation. In Methia, Nicodemus presents his plan to change the world.	32 Summer, 113 A.O.V.	1
Skyfall. In Methia, the Ob leadership discuss their failed attempt at manipulating the planes.	77 Winter, 195 A.O.V.	1
***Navras.** Navras building an opera house in Flint.	15 Spring, 201 A.O.V.	1
***Bhalu.** Bhalu, one of Kasvarina's husbands, rejecting her in Trekhom.	42 Winter, 248 A.O.V.	1
Cold Matriach. Sending Asrabey away to the Unseen Court.	78 Spring, 279 A.O.V.	1
***Amielle.** Kasvarina meeting in Cherage with Amielle Latimer, before sending her to fight the witches in Flint.	2 Autumn, 400 A.O.V.	1
Puppet Mastery. The Ob's leaders meet in Methia to discuss plans for industrializing Flint.	50 Autumn, 457 A.O.V.	1
***Chatwood.** Chatwood, an eladrin skyseer in prison in Shale for refusing to help the Obscurati gain control of Axis Island.	8 Spring, 490 A.O.V.	1
New-Borne Minion. Kasvarina discusses the colossus project with the other two heads of the Obscurati.	32 Summer, 493 A.O.V.	3
Distributed Plan. The Ob leaders make final preparations for their ritual.	55 Spring, 500 A.O.V.	1
***Mindtaker.** Losing her memories when Alexander Grappa attacked her at the Cauldron Hill facility.	7 Summer, 500 A.O.V.	3

Caught Up in the Moment

The wearer might have her mind caught up in the past, being forced to reenact events as they were without any free will. The same can happen to other creatures in the radius, especially those who were here when the memory-event originally occurred.

When the memory-event manifests, the arc's wearer and other susceptible creatures must make a Wisdom check (DC 25), adding the wearer's mental stability (see below). Those who succeed can keep their own minds, but can easily slip 'into character' in order to reenact events as they occurred, or come out of character to avoid danger or communicate with allies.

Those who fail are caught up in the moment, but allies can attempt to jostle them back in control ("remember who you are!" "snap out of it!" and the like) by making a Charisma check (DC 20). A successful attempt makes the character lucid for about a minute, but afterward she slips back into her past self. A check that succeeds by 5 or more allows the person to stay lucid until the end of the memory-event. Repeated attempts to snap someone out take a cumulative -2 penalty.

Those who fail their initial Wisdom check by 5 or more are firmly stuck in the past, and cannot be shaken free, though they do return to normal when the memory-event ends or if they leave the radius of the effect.

Occasionally even creatures who weren't here in the past might be drawn into the memory-event. Creatures with very close connections with or resemblances to figures from the past might need to also make a Wisdom check, but with a +5 bonus. For instance, the son of a man involved in the past vision might be compelled to take on his father's role.

Spirit Mediums

A spirit medium can contact the soul of a person who is caught up in the past. In place of using her spirit medium theme feat power, she can instead grant a creature a new Wisdom check with a +5 bonus. Even if the creature fails its check, it becomes lucid for a minute.

Mental Stability

Kasvarina desires to learn her past without being pulled back into it. You'll need to track her Mental Stability, which starts at 5. Collapsing memory-events cause her to lose stability. If she completes a memory-event while she's in control of her own mind, she gains stability. And after major events the PCs' interactions with Kasvarina can increase or decrease her stability.

Each memory event has an entry listing how much stability is at stake—1 for minor events, 3 for major events, and 5 for two critical events. After each major or critical event, even if Kasvarina did not keep control of her mind or if the memory-event collapsed, if the party helps Kasvarina cope with the trauma or revelations of her past, she can still gain 1 mental stability at your discretion (instead of 3 or 5).

Kasvarina loses mental stability each time a memory-event collapses, but only gains stability if she succeeds her Wisdom check to keep her own mind *and* finishes the memory event. So if the party messes up and fails a memory-event, they can try again, but they run a risk of making matters worse. Kasvarina can lose stability multiple times from the same memory, but she can only gain stability once.

Consequences at the Climax

If Kasvarina is at 0 mental stability or below after the final memory of the Great Malice in Methia, she regains her memories and personality of when she was one of the three heads of the Obscurati. Though she might be sympathetic enough to the PCs to give them a chance to surrender, she will try to kill them if they resist.

If she has at least 1 mental stability but fewer than 10 after the final memory, she struggles, with neither side of her self gaining dominance. She might attack the party one round then try to help them flee the next. This likely ends with her flinging herself off the tower to try to save them.

If she has 10 to 19 mental stability, she keeps firm control of her identity and rejects the version of her that founded the conspiracy. She'll fight by the party's side.

If she has 20 or more mental stability, she can easily slip 'into character' as the conspiracy's founder. She'll spare the party a knowing wink, then distract Nicodemus so she and the party can flee.

Expectations

We have designed things so that, if the PCs do 'average,' Kasvarina will lose stability for Through the Breach, Devil's Prayer, and Rescue Alliance, putting her at 0 stability going into the finale, at which point she might be interrupted during The Great Malice, losing another 5 stability. If the party hasn't had some positive effect on her psyche, she'll rejoin Nicodemus and attack the party. They'll need to have put in some effort to keep Kasvarina on their side (10+ stability), and gone out of their way to help her to get her fully stable and able to trick Nic.

Return to Sentosa

Social. Montage. Level 18.

Several memories accessible in Sentosa point the way to yet more clues about Kasvarina's past.

In Sentosa the party can use the *lost arc* to witness a few memory-events which point to other likely locations. Simply by talking to Athrylla or Asrabey, they might learn of Kasvarina's home town Resal, where the oratory of Vekesh kept the eladrin people from falling apart in the wake of the Great Malice.

Also they can learn the location of Ushanti, the enclave Kasvarina herself was matriarch of, now controlled by an eladrin man named **Kedev**, and about the abduction of Kasvarina's daughter Launga, who then died in the custody of a dragon in Seobriga. These two memory-events are presented in Appendix C: The Eladrin Diaspora.

Since these scenes can be reached so many different ways, we present enough information for you to handle them yourself, rather than trying to script every line of dialogue. We present them in the order we think the party is most likely to encounter them, but there's no problem if they witness them in a different order.

ADVENTURING WITH KASVARINA

Kasvarina's stats are presented in Appendix E: Recurring Enemies & Allies. She starts the adventure with a -6 penalty to her attacks, damages, skill checks, and defenses, representing her missing memories. The first time she experiences each major or critical memory-event, reduce the penalty by 1.

Memory-Event: Cold Matriarch

Location: Sentosa (or other enclave).
Date: 78 Spring, 279 A.O.V.
Stability Value: 1.

When Kasvarina puts on the *lost arc*, she feels drawn to a particular location—a guest house where she and several of her husbands stayed when they visited Sentosa. Once the party gets past the confused residents there today, the memory-event manifests, revealing lavish decorations befitting royalty. If Asrabey is with them, he is also drawn into the memory. Have each make a Wisdom check to try to keep control of their minds.

Kasvarina and Asrabey are returning from a diplomatic event, and begin to undress. Asrabey is frustrated with Athrylla's desire to appease Crisillyir, and says he's eager to be home to Ushanti. Kasvarina tells him that in truth she needs to send him on a mission—a long one. He is to travel Risur and offer his services to the Unseen Court as a warrior, and she might never see him again.

Asrabey suggests they lie together one last time, and he touches her face. But she withdraws. She announces she's leaving the next morning for the ruin of her home town Resal, to pay her respects to her daughters. Asrabey begrudgingly gives her his space, and they lie down in separate beds. Then the memory ends.

This memory-event is intended to give the party an easy introduction to how the *lost arc* works, and to name drop Ushanti and Resal as likely places the party can look next. If Kasvarina keeps control of her mind, she'll gain 1 mental stability, and she'll lose 1 stability if the party dramatically screws things up. If her mental stability increases, she explains that she can start to *feel* her other self, to know the boundaries between the two of them so she won't become her again.

After this event, Asrabey will leave unless the party has convinced him to stay.

A celebrated war hero among the eladrin, Sor fought on the front lines during the *Perang Devar*. His arm was turned to animated salt during a battle with Prime Cardinal Richelmont during the siege of Alais Primos, and in the immediate aftermath of the war he coordinated the massive retreat of tens of thousands of grieving eladrin men. He served as military advisor for the famed Triad of Endurance—three eladrin matriarchs who continued to wage war for nearly a century after the Great Malice. Every eladrin of Elfaivar today knows his name, and they believe he died in the Betrayal of Rilego nearly four hundred years ago.

In truth, Sor survives in a small eladrin community in Ber, going by the name of Abuelo Juhu. He has not manifested his artificial arm for centuries because he's been hiding from Kasvarina. He was complicit in the death of her daughter Launga, and he felt it better to fake his death. Though senility is taking its toll on this eight-century-old eladrin, he is the only living person who knows that the matriarch Latika was encouraged to enact the betrayal by a human with a habit of smoking leaf of Nicodemus

Memory-Event: Rescue Alliance

Location: Sentosa.
Date: 14 Summer, 111 A.O.V.
Stability Value: 1.

This event occurs atop the central pyramid in Sentosa, and likely affects Kasvarina and Athrylla.

In the memory, Athrylla's court is shaded by trees and cooled by magic to resist the summer heat. Kasvarina arrives accompanied by another eladrin matriarch, **Latika** (Kasvarina, Latika, and Athrylla originally formed the famous Triad of Endurance who rallied the survivors of Elfaivar for a century). Also with her are four eladrin men, including **Sor Daeron**, a famous general who led the retreat after the Great Malice, saving tens of thousands of soldiers.

Kasvarina is at her most austere as she explains that a dragon tyrant named Rilego has abducted her daughter Launga, and she is rallying allies to mount a rescue mission. Athrylla's initial concern dies off, though, as she looks to Latika, sensing something amiss. Athrylla explains that while she will not abandon another sister in peril, she thinks it's risky to send so many matriarchs into what might be a trap. So she offers to send soldiers instead. Kasvarina diplomatically accepts, and says that they'll be teleporting to Seobriga within an hour.

Unbeknownst to Kasvarina, Sor Daeron and Latika arranged for the dragon tyrant Rilego to kidnap Kasvarina's daughter. They hoped to kill both mother and daughter, removing rivals so they could take control of Elfaivar. The party can learn more of these events if they go to Ber (see Betrayal of Rilego, page 292), which could lead them to find Sor Daeron and learn that it was Nicodemus who suggested the plot.

Interference

If Athrylla is present when the memory-event occurs, have her automatically manage to keep her wits. She panics when she realizes what's happening, then rushes Kasvarina and tries to pull the *lost arc* from her head. Though she's unable to (because in the memory-event, Kasvarina's not wearing it), the changes cause the memory-event to collapse, and Kasvarina to lose 1 mental stability. Kasvarina is stunned and takes a few moments to recover. Again, this is mostly to show the party how the artifact works, and it can provide an in-road for Athrylla to explain herself.

For four centuries she has felt that Kasvarina blamed her for not coming along on the rescue mission. Kasvarina's daughter Launga died, and Kasvarina herself nearly perished too. Athrylla had suspected something was amiss, but she did not help. She's worried now that Kasvarina will regain fresh perspective and become hostile to her and her enclave. If the party wants to actually see the memory-event in full, they'll need to convince Athrylla to let them.

Ushanti

Athrylla would warn the party not to visit Ushanti, because it loyally served Kasvarina, and so likely is friendly to the Obscurati. If they go, the enclave is detailed in Appendix C: The Eladrin Diaspora. Though risky, going there can lead to a revelation of Nicodemus's identity as William Miller.

You Can't Go Home Again

Exploration. Montage. Level 15.

Visiting Kasvarina's home town of Resal helps cement her bond with her pre-Malice past, and shows a connection between her and Nicodemus.

Kasvarina wants to visit Resal, or rather the human town that has grown over it, called Airone Azzurro. Her last memory before everything was locked away is her leaving Resal to join the siege of Alais Primos. She knows she would have gone back there after the Great Malice.

Resal lies in the modern colony of Angelus, fifty miles from Vendricce. Today orchards surround the human town full of Crisillyiri colonials, but of late the harvests have been feeble, and people have grown sallow and weak. Several mines in nearby hills have despoiled the area with toxic run-off. Kasvarina can't recognize any landmarks, but there are still a few old eladrin men who work here, having long ago lost the will to fight the humans. A few Crisillyiri soldiers wander the town, as there is a small fort a few miles away.

Pending Ambush

Nicodemus suspected Kasvarina would return here, and so he has been waiting, ready to spring an ambush and try to reclaim her or kill her. He's locked up his primary body—Andrei von Recklinghausen—and for the time being is wearing an elderly eladrin, idly tending to red flowers along the thoroughfare. Knowing better than to tip himself off, he's resisting the urge to smoke. He'll likely wave good day to the party as they pass by (Insight DC 42 to tell something's off with him).

Memory-Event: Forsaking Grief

Location: Resal.
Date: 17 Spring, 1 A.O.V.
Stability Value: 3.

While wearing the *lost arc of Reida*, Kasvarina feels pulled to what was once a wide field, and is now an orchard full of stunted mangos. Vetrtigo grips her, and she begins to step in a light, dancing ring as the memory-event sweeps across the area, revealing a massed crowd of weary and bitter eladrin men.

Just weeks after the Great Malice, the retreat of the surviving eladrin reached Resal, Kasvarina's home town. At the time she was the only woman left in the whole army, and she had assumed the only one of her whole race. But in Resal she found her daughter Launga, who had already located a half-dozen other women and brought them with her to Resal. The group also includes Latika (who a century later betrayed Kasvarina), and Athrylla (who went on to lead the enclave Sentosa).

As the memory-event begins, the crowd of soldiers listen to a mass funeral service. At the edge of the crowd, Kasvarina, Launga, and the other women are speaking softly with Sor Daeron about how they each survived. Launga was gathering resources in the Dreaming, Athrylla was shape-changed into a dragon attacking Sid Minos, Kasvarina was teleporting across the world, and so on.

Sor looks completely bereft of any enthusiasm as he states that he sees no possible way for the nation to survive if so few women are left. He asks if he was a coward to retreat rather than redouble the assault and die seeking vengeance. Launga says that they all need time to grieve, and that there may be a way to survive. Latika responds that there is no use for grief. Grief is so the survivors can keep on living. The women start to argue about what course to take, while Kasvarina remains silent, feeling wracked with guilt.

The Song of Vekesh

Then Kasvarina looks up as the priest finishes his rites and introduces the poet Vekesh, who will deliver the eulogy in song. Beside him, a musician strums a simple guitar. What follows is one of the most stirring performances ever delivered in the world's history, though much of it is lost on those who don't speak Elven or who are unfamiliar with Elfaivaran culture.

Laden with mourning and tragedy, the song weaves metaphors from other old Elfaivaran myths and history, and Vekesh draws heavily upon the three aspects of Srasama—maiden, mother, and crone. He seems to follow the traditional three-verse rhythm of eladrin elegies, singing of the maiden's joy and wonder, of the mother's comfort and strife; but when he should sing of the crone's burden of loss and death, he says nothing while the guitarist plays. Then Vekesh repeats the first two verses, adjusting his tone to show that he is mourning not his nation's death, but Srasama's.

In his fifth verse he comes to his point: this is only a mourning song if it ends with death. The eladrin people are not defeated as long as they refuse to go with the crone to the afterlife. Vekesh pleads for the listeners to seek retribution, yes, but not to throw themselves to their deaths. They should grieve, and endure, and grow strong, and rebuild from weakeness to prosper with strength.

This is the first time since the Great Malice anyone in the army has had the strength to sing, providing a hope that the soldiers here were desperately yearning for. It probably doesn't hurt that Vekesh's refrain is memorable and life-affirming to sing along with. By the time he completes the song, most of the crowd has joined in and men are openly weeping.

The Matriarchs' Dance

Kasvarina doesn't cry, but she tells the other women to follow her. She walks into the center of the ring, thanks Vekesh, and addresses the crowd. She proclaims that many of her sisters have perished—one of her own daughters included—but *she* still lives, and others like her. No man here, she declares, will give his life for revenge, not until last woman of their people is found and safely returned home.

The crone, she says, would grow old with grief until she joined those who had died before her. So Kasvarina forsakes grief, and asks that those here follow her and her sisters, so that their people may never die.

She tells Vekesh to sing again, and this time she and the other women join in a traditional mourning dance. But like Vekesh's song, they avoid the part of the dance that would signal grief. The memory-event slowly fades with Vekesh's song, until Kasvarina finishes her dance alone.

Onlooker

The performance has attracted people of the modern day, who watch with awe and start to ask the party what's going on. A few of the Crisillyiri soldiers ask whether they should report this, but they seem too amazed to be worried. Afterward Kasvarina wants to talk with the party, explaining how now she feels like she can at least understand how she became this other woman, after a loss so great. And already she feels a draw toward another site in the town. She thinks she now recalls where her home was.

Memory-Event: Family Moment

Location: Resal.
Date: 32 Autumn, 1 B.O.V.
Stability Value: 3.

Kasvarina finds the spot of her old home, once along a river bank, now a barren shore stinking with toxic sludge from the local mine. Nicodemus follows them in the body of an elderly local (Perception DC 29), and unless the party confronts him he ends up close enough to be drawn into the memory-event.

In this memory, Kasvarina has recently returned home from the siege of Alais Primos, traveling with Nicodemus. Inside her house she talks with her daughters Launga and Dala while she packs her bags for another long journey. Launga is older (nearing 70 but still looks like she's 20), an experienced ranger, and closely resembles her mother but taller. The younger Dala (56, but looking in her late teens) is rounder of face and is using cantrips to alter her hair's color, trying to inject levity to keep the parting from being sad. Around her neck hangs a three-faceted amber pendant, carved with icons of Srasama's three forms.

Launga can't believe her mother plans to go back to Alais Primos after she nearly died there. She offers to go with her, but Kasvarina tells her not to abandon her assignments. If the ranamandala (ruling circle of kings and queens) reject her and Nicodemus's request, she might be branded a traitor, and so Launga and Dala both need to show they are loyal. Dala jokes that a good start would be to tell the army that they're hiding a human in their house. Kasvarina gives her a very motherly glare.

Conversation and Invitation

At that moment, Nicodemus walks in from another room, but it's the elderly eladrin who Nicodemus is wearing. He's smoking, and his features shift back and forth from eladrin to Nic's own salt-and-pepper human face. Nicodemus has managed to resist being swept up in things, so he watches with amusement as Kasvarina's daughters thank him for saving their mother's life.

Nicodemus—out of character—touches their faces and apologizes for not having been able to save them. Then he addresses Kasvarina, trying to snap her out of the memory if necessary (thus showcasing that with a Charisma check DC 15 the party can help people regain control of themselves).

He tells Kasvarina that he wants to help her, and asks her to come with him. When she (and likely the party) refuse, Nic clarifies that if she wants to learn her past, her options are come with him willingly, come with him as a prisoner, or be killed. As for the party, he'd prefer not to have to kill them, so he asks them to surrender now.

Nicodemus is in no rush to end the memory; he's a bit nostalgic of the whole thing, and will even hop back into character, encouraging the daughters to remember what he told them about the history behind the war, and why the everyday people aren't to blame. But if the party hasn't surrendered by the time the memory-event ends, or if the party attacks or tries to flee, he cups his hands and whispers a code word. Within moments purple light floods the area, and golems appear from the Bleak Gate, surrounded by a mass of undead.

Further Memories

If the party sticks around after Nicodemus's ambush, they can potentially witness memories further back in Kasvarina's life, including her husband's funeral, her children's births, and her marriage. Only use these if the party seems particularly keen to learn more about Kasvarina. There are no grand revelations here.

Lantern Ambush

Action. Tactical. Level 19.

The Obscurati hide in the Bleak Gate analog of Resal, ready to spring an ambush.

Though Nicodemus wants to intimidate the party, he didn't actually have the resources to have an overwhelming number of elite troops just sit in this town in hopes the party shows up. So he had to make do with a half-dozen golems and a horde of undead.

When Nicodemus gives the signal, a *wayfarer's lantern* in the chest of each golem lights up, which makes a swath of ground coterminous between the real world and the Bleak Gate. Additionally, two hordes of simple zombies—animated eladrin dead bodies that were drawn into the realm of the dead—stands among them, ready to swarm the party.

- 6 Bleak Ambush Golems
- 2 Zombie Hordes

Bleak Ambush Golem	Level 17 Soldier
Large shadow animate (construct)	**XP** 1600
HP 122; **Bloodied** 61	**Initiative** +8
AC 33, **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 29	**Perception** +8
Speed 5	Darkvision
Resist necrotic 10	

Traits

▸ **Bleak Aura**
The golem's attacks smear you with oil and burn you with the essence of the Bleak Gate.
A creature affected by the golem's *bleak aura* gains ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends). Whenever the affected creature takes this damage, each creature within 3 squares takes 5 necrotic damage.

▸ **Hulking**
The machine is huge and heavy, and some great pressure rumbles and churns within, only held in place by arcane sigils carved along its joints and seams.
When the golem is subjected to forced movement, reduce the distance by 1 square. Due to its immense metallic weight, if it climbs atop a surface less sturdy than stone, it destroys that terrain.

Standard Actions

✓ **Witchoil Fist** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Black oil leaks from the joints of this golem's fists.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 4d8+6 damage, and the target is affected by *bleak aura*.

✲ **Integrated Cannon** ✦ At-Will
A cannon mounted at its right hip fires, and it pulls a cannonball from a magazine on its left hip to reload.
Attack: Area burst 2 within 40 (creatures in burst); +20 vs. Reflex
Hit: 4d12+10 damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: The area is obscured by debris from the strike, granting concealment until the end of the golem's next turn.
Load standard.

Triggered Action

Witchoil Breach (necrotic) ✦ Encounter

Sigils etched along the golem's seams flare red, then go black. The golem's abdomen explodes outward with a cloud of searing, smoking oil.

Trigger: The golem becomes bloodied.

Attack: Close burst 5; +20 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 4d8+14 necrotic damage, and the target is pushed 5 squares, dazed until the end of the golem's next turn, and affected by *bleak aura*.

Effect: The golem loses the *hulking* trait. Its speed increases to 8, and it gains a climb speed of 4.

Str	24 (+15)	**Dex**	6 (+6)	**Wis**	10 (+8)
Con	14 (+10)	**Int**	3 (+4)	**Cha**	6 (+6)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** understands Common

Zombie Horde Level 17 Controller

Gargantuan natural humanoid (swarm) **XP** 1600

HP 120; **Bloodied** 60 **Initiative** +9

AC 30, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 28 **Perception** +8

Speed 4

Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks

Vulnerable 15 against close and area attacks

Traits

Horde

Each horde consists of one hundred zombies, filling the space of a Gargantuan creature. The horde needs only fill 16 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual zombie could move through.

When the Zombie Horde is bloodied, it is dazed. When it is reduced to 0 hit points, most of the horde disperses, leaving behind a handful of distracted zombies that pose minimal threat.

Terrain Control

Spaces within 2 squares of the horde count as difficult terrain for enemies. The horde has threatening reach in that area.

Terrifying Distraction

Because of the chaos of being grabbed from all directions, creatures adjacent to the horde or within its space grant combat advantage and take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.

Vekeshi Vulnerability

The horde will not attack or approach any creature singing the song of Vekesh, which stirs a flicker in their long-dead minds. A creature who spends a standard action to sing the song of Vekesh can make a Charisma check. If he beat's the horde's Will defense, the horde is dominated until the end of his next turn.

Standard Actions

Engulfing Claws ✦ 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 and the target is pulled 1 square toward the center of the horde (potentially even into its space).

Str	36 (+8)	**Dex**	10 (+9)	**Wis**	12 (+7)
Con	14 (+8)	**Int**	3 (+4)	**Cha**	3 (+4)

Alignment Evil **Languages** –

Terrain

The party will be fighting in a house and its adjacent riverside meadow if the memory-event is ongoing, or on a barren toxic bank otherwise.

Tactics

Each golem has a lantern behind enchanted glass in its chest, which can be targeted independently (AC 35). The glass has 20 HP. If the glass is destroyed, any further damage to the golem also shatters the lantern. If a golem has no lantern and it moves farther than 30 feet from any other golem, it disappears back to the Bleak Gate. The zombie horde likewise must be in that area to attack the party. Note that blocked line of sight doesn't block the lantern's effects.

Aftermath

If all the lanterns are broken, the ambush effectively ends. Nicodemus, if he's still around, blows out smoke in frustration and starts to walk away. If attacked him, he crumples after one hit and reminds the party that he's just using this man's body, and he would have let him live. He'll flee the man's body, leaving the dying old eladrin to gasp at the party in shock.

Kasvarina thanks the party. If nothing else comes of this, at least she got to see her daughters one last time.

From this point on, every few hours an Obscurati agent tries to scry on the party. While we don't expect you to ambush the party at regular intervals, the awareness that people are looking for them should make them take precautions to avoid being discovered. If they don't, feel free to have invisible assassins try to poison them in their sleep, or the like.

The Siege of Alais Primos

Exploration. Montage. Level 18.

Witness the aftermath of the Great Malice, and the first meeting of Nicodemus and Kasvarina.

Capital city of Crisillyir and the Clergy, Alais Primos is a place of libraries, sepulchers and churches. Divided by a series of canals, the religious hub rests at the base of Enzyo Mons, a vast volcano which the priests make monthly treks to in order to destroy objects of evil and sacrilege.

The party knows Kasvarina went to Alais Primos with the armies of Elfaivar, and that some time later she returned home with Nicodemus, but then went back to the city. So they should expect to see several memories. The only plot-critical memory is Arrest: her and Nic's arrest by the Clergy, which leads to them being sent to the Crypta Hereticarum. One other memory here is unnecessarily dangerous (Through the Breach), one can greatly affect Kasvarina's mental stability (Srasama's Fall), and one can help reveal Nicodemus's duplicitous nature (Triage).

Memory-Event: Srasama's Fall

Location: Alais Primos, Victory Field.

Date: New Year's Day, 1 A.O.V.

Stability Value: 3.

Drawn to a hill that overlooks the farmland east of Alais Primos, Kasvarina is hit with desperation and grief as the memory-event begins to take shape. She's able to direct the PCs to a site where they have a breath-taking view of the city's edge and the crops, which were harvested over a month ago.

When the *lost arc* activates, its effect sweeps out nearly a half-mile, far wider than ever before. Its edges crackle with unstable power, and within that area farmlands change into the wreckage of a great battlefield, covered with discarded shields, broken siege weapons, and

weather-worn battlements. Six bonfires gutter in a ring around you, and beyond them lie thousands of corpses, all of them women. Kasvarina falls to her knees and cradles one woman whose body has been charred beyond recognition.

Around them stands half an army, just the men surviving. At the distant edge of the manifested past, the edge of Alais Primos itself shifts. Shattered stone keeps rise from the empty crops, and beyond them a great translucent golden dome shields the city, shining where sigils of celestial script catch the light of the sunrise. The sound of bells toll constantly from within, and with them triumphant cheers of the humans, proclaiming their victory.

In the air above the battlefield, a shadow made of ash and soot hangs in the air. The wind quickly disperses it, but for a moment it resembles the shape of a six-armed woman, a hundred feet high.

The memory fades, and Kasvarina is left holding nothing. A handful of farmers and people near the edge of the city panic at the strange magic and run for the nearest churches.

This is the aftermath of the death of Srasama, and the body Kasvarina holds is her own daughter Dala, though after the memory-event ends she cannot recall who it was, just that it felt like her whole world had been destroyed. There's little for the party to do here, save perhaps rush to the bonfires, each of which is one of Srasama's six massive flaming swords. (See Appendix G: Magic and Training for details if they manage to retrieve one.)

Memory-Event: Through the Breach

Location: Alais Primos, the Old Wall.
Date: 81 Summer, 1 B.O.V.
Stability Value: 1.

This memory is perhaps best left avoided, as it's one of the few where the past will try to attack the party. If the party interferes at all, the edgy soldiers of either army notice them; eladrin attack if they see any humans, and the Clergy will target the party simply because they're with the eladrin. In a battle, the party can simply withdraw out of the *lost arc's* radius and be safe, but they leave Kasvarina alone.

Near the edge of Alais Primos's old wall, a memory-event manifests of when the eladrin manage to breach the city's holy barrier—a golden dome that could be conjured by prayers of those within, shielding the city even from aerial attacks.

When the memory begins, the shield is up, looking like a giant gold tortoise shell at this range, but faintly translucent so you can see the defenders inside. Kasvarina and other mages wait behind a row of eladrin soldiers holding heavy shields against potential arrows from the city. The army has left a wide opening in their ranks, and general Sor Daeron walks out, followed by a hundred human non-combatants held at spearpoint by soldiers.

Sor shouts to the army that this wall is made of the prayers of the humans, but that they will make those prayers falter. He turns to the wall and demands a champion of the Clergy meet him in open battle, then says that if the city's faithful are too cowardly to face him, he will cut down human prisoners ten at a time.

No response comes for a minute, and Sor orders his men to begin. The massacre lasts five minutes, with the human prisoners begging as spears pierce them row by row, while those inside the walls scream and jeer. The Elfaivaran army shifts nervously, but true to Sor's word the humans inside are not praying sufficiently, and the wall begins to fade.

When only forty prisoners remain, the wall parts and three hundred human soldiers emerge, led by Prime Cardinal Richelmont, a battle-priest who walks within a smaller version of the golden shield that protects the city. Sor begins a formal challenge, but the cardinal interrupts by summoning pillars of salt that spray up from the ground around him, killing every eladrin they touch. A fierce and bloody battle begins as the humans rush and try to pull the prisoners back into the city. Kasvarina is too far away to engage directly.

After a minute's battle, the cardinal catches Sor's arm in a pillar of salt, but Sor manages to strip away the priest's shield with a spell of his own. The surrounding eladrin launch arrows and spells, and the cardinal falls to a hail of other spells. The surviving humans retreat, and eladrin rush to treat the injured Sor, but an officer beside Kasvarina notices that a new opening has appeared in the dome nearby. He recklessly orders everyone to rush the opening, but only Kasvarina and four others manage to get inside before the opening closes.

Eladrin Unit (EL 11)

- Kasvarina
- 4 eladrin levy soldiers

Clergy Unit (EL 15)

- 25 clergy armsman squad

Eladrin Levy Soldier — Level 13 Minion Brute
Medium fey humanoid (eladrin) — **XP** 200

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion — **Initiative** +10
AC 25, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 23 — **Perception** +10
Speed 6 — Low-light vision

Standard Actions

Scimitar (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 13 damage.

Longbow (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage.

Move Actions

Fey Step (teleportation) ✦ Encounter
Effect: The soldier teleports 5 squares.

Str	13 (+7)	**Dex**	14 (+8)	**Wis**	8 (+5)
Con	14 (+8)	**Int**	10 (+6)	**Cha**	8 (+5)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven
Equipment scimitar, longbow

Clergy Armsman Squad — Level 16 Goon Soldier
Large natural humanoid (swarm) — **XP** 400

HP 60; **Bloodied** 30 — **Initiative** +11
AC 32, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 27 — **Perception** +15
Speed 5
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks
Vulnerable 10 against close and area attacks

Traits

Squad Tactics
Each squad consists of a dozen battle-priests working in tandem, filling the space of a Large creature. The unit needs only fill 4 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual priest could move through.

Although the priests protect each other, enough damage wears them down and erodes their discipline. When the Clergy Armsman Squad is bloodied, it is dazed. When it is reduced to 0 hit points, the unit disperses.

Standard Actions

Morningstar Melee (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); +21 vs. AC

Hit: 14 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the squad's next turn.

Crossbow Volley (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Area burst 1 within 30 (creatures in burst); +21 vs. AC

Hit: 14 damage, or 19 damage on a critical hit.

Load standard.

Str	15 (+10)	**Dex**	12 (+9)	**Wis**	15 (+10)
Con	10 (+8)	**Int**	10 (+8)	**Cha**	8 (+7)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common

Equipment heavy shield, morningstar, crossbow

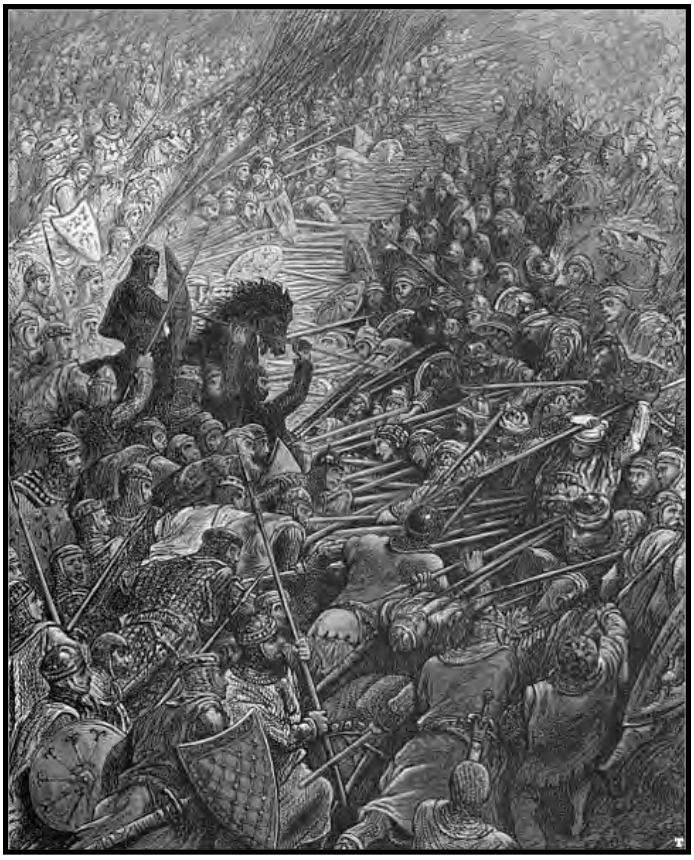
Once her unit gets inside, the opening in the wall closes behind them (but the wall only exists in a 100-ft. radius around Kasvarina, so the party can easily go around if they get split in two). The humans overwhelm the eladrin with a rush of morningstars or crossbows, with four humans targeting each eladrin.

If the party doesn't interfere, they likely drop Kasvarina in a few rounds if she's caught up in the memory. When she falls unconscious, the memory-event collapses (causing mental stability loss). If she's controlling her own mind, she could kill everyone here with spells, but she remembers that she's supposed to be knocked unconscious, and thus plays along and feigns death, which lets the scene continue to play out.

The humans begin praying to bolster the wall, and two men draw daggers to finish off the wounded when a figure—Nicodemus, back when he was alive and cloaked like a healer—rushes forward and admonishes them. He tells them to spare the soldiers in case they're nobles who can be ransomed back for human prisoners. Then he enlists the group to carry the bodies to a nearby church where he's tending to survivors.

As the men get to work, he pulls a cigarette from his coat and lights it. Just on the other side of the golden barrier, eladrin bash at the barrier ineffectually, while others parade the dead body of Richelmont. The men around Nicodemus say prayers for the prime cardinal, which Nicodemus joins into half-heartedly.

If the party follows, they can watch the men carry the wounded eladrin to Nicodemus's small church, and immediately go into the next memory. As with most memory-events in Alais Primos, the modern day bystanders panic and run for help, and within a few minutes authorities arrive to investigate. City guards while eventually give way to soldiers, then to priests and inquisitors. Even they might not be able to threaten the party physically, but they'll certainly disrupt any ongoing memory-events.



Memory-Event: Triage

Location: Alais Primos, small church.
Date: 81 Summer to 15 Autumn, 1 B.O.V.
Stability Value: 3.

The church where this memory-event occurs still exists, though the party will want to be careful when they go in and trigger the manifestation, lest they get a hundred church-goers screaming for help. A night-time visit might be safest.

In the memory-event, Nicodemus alone tends to two dozen injured eladrin. Instead of pews he has laid out cots and separated the survivors from each other with curtains that magically muffle the sound so each patient feels isolated. For safety he has chained the wrists of each patient to the nearest wall, and he keeps most of them semi-conscious with regular low doses of soporific drugs.

Where the church's rostrum is in the present day, Nicodemus has set up a small bookshelf and apothecary table. He gets visitors often enough that if the party addresses him he will treat them politely, but the magic of the artifact makes him easily ignore their presence so the party can eavesdrop.

Montage and Recruitment

This memory-event flickers occasionally in an actual montage that spans nearly a month. Every day Nicodemus treats wounds and talks to a few of the lucid survivors to earn their trust. Eventually he asks them their own religious beliefs, their opinions on the war, who in Elfaivar might be sympathetic to a truce, and whether they have any family they care for back home.

He speaks to Kasvarina too, who at first hates him since he's a priest, and her husband died in the first holy war fifty years ago. Nicodemus explains that he was raised in the Clergy, but he no longer has faith in it; afterward he never wears his priestly robes when he tends to her.

One by one, the eladrin die or are carted away by soldiers. Careful attention (Insight DC 30) reveals that the eladrin only ever die if they express strong religious fervor, and only leave if they aren't particularly religious but are too injured to undertake travel. After a week (which passes in the montage in a matter of minutes), only four eladrin remain, including Kasvarina.

On the night of the 14th, when Kasvarina has mostly regained her strength, he removes her chains and they have a long conversation. It's clear that by now she's come to trust and respect him. He's done a masterful job making her rely on him while letting her keep her anger toward the Clergy and the war. And this night he finally makes his proposition: he wants to escape the city with her, then travel to Elfaivar and open a back-channel negotiation with the ranamandala (ruling circle of kings and queens). If they agree, they can come back and speak with some hierarchs he trusts.

After a long discussion of the risks and routes they'd have to take, Kasvarina agrees. But, she asks, what of his other patients? At this point he shakes his head, and says that for several days she's been the only one left here. He gives her a bit of medicine and tells her to rest so she'll be strong in the morning, and soon she falls asleep.

Then he goes to the three other survivors one by one and gives them their 'medicine.' They drift to sleep, and he calls guards to dispose of their bodies. It took him months of sifting through scores of prisoners, but finally he has someone he can trust. While his mission might be for the greater good, he shows no qualms in killing unnecessary complications. Once the last other patient dies, the memory-event ends.

Character Assassination

Even if Kasvarina is not in control of her mind during this memory-event, if the party tells her that Nic killed the other eladrin once they were no use, she gains the full 3 mental stability. This was information she never had the first time she experienced this event, and it casts all of Nicodemus's actions hereafter in a more selfish light.

Memory-Event: Arrest

Location: Alais Primos, Jenevah Grand Librarium.
Date: 59 Autumn, 1 B.O.V.
Stability Value: 1.

In this memory-event, she and Nic have snuck back into Alais Primos and are waiting in the city's grand librarium. The meeting happened during daylight five centuries ago, but if the party wants to avoid being chased by inquisitors, it might be smart to come at night when the library is mostly deserted.

You might give the party a challenge to sneak in after hours, but even then inquisitors and bibliogeists patrol the library to ensure no one gets hold of any heretical texts. If any PC inhabited the body of Ken Don in the previous adventure, they might remember the defenses and patterns of the patrols. No one here is a threat physically to the party, but a commotion will attract more powerful attention, and the party probably wants to avoid having to run from the authorities. Alternately the party might call in a favor with the Clergy, using Morgan Cippiano to get them in touch with the library's new head.

More information on the Grand Librarium is presented in adventure eleven, *Gorged on Ruins*.

Bishop Betrayal

Two bishops and a young priestess meet Nic and Kasvarina on the library's third floor, within sight of a twenty-foot high rosette stained glass window. The priests seem quite happy as Nicodemus explains that Kasvarina will be representing her people in initial peace talks. He reiterates his reasoning for doing this without the archbishops' approval, cites scripture that forbids taking treasure from the dead, points out all the wealth being funneled back to Methia, and suggests the hierarchs be deposed. (He was a revolutionary even way back then.)

At that point, the young priestess casts a light cantrip, which shines through the window, a signal to the guards and inquisitors outside. Within a minute they have surrounded Nic and Kasvarina and begin tying them up. The two bishops tell the inquisitors that this is the man who tried to lure them into a plot against the faith. Clearly they've turned on Nicodemus to save their own necks.

Nicodemus tries to reason with them, but Kasvarina says not to bother; better to face death with dignity. An inquisitor takes delight in taunting them. They're not going to die, not yet at least. They're going to the Isle of Odiem, where they can live long, tormented lives with other heretics. Nicodemus keeps talking, his reasoned suggestions turning to desperate pleas, and then to angry curses as the two are dragged away and the memory-event ends.

Aftermath

After this memory-event, Kasvarina doesn't feel any strong draw toward other locations in the city.

Return to the Vault of Heresies

Exploration. Real-Time. Level 20.

In the Crypta Hereticarum*, a memory reveals the most precious secret in the world.*

The site of this memory-event is one the PCs are likely familiar with: Odiem, a cursed island located just off the shore of Sid Minos. The party likely made a trip to the island during adventure four, *Always on Time*, where they fought off the drowned dead and met the demon Ashima-Shimtu. Now the PCs return to learn more of the ritual the demoness spoke of during their first encounter.

The most likely method the PCs will use to reach the cursed island is by boat, though it is possible the PCs may devise some magical method of reaching the island. If the party has not already encountered the *Porteurs de Mort* at sea, you could use the naval engagement here to represent another attempt by the Obscurati to stop the party.

Arrival

As soon as Kasvarina steps foot on the rusty shore on Odiem, she realizes the entire island is linked to a past memory. The party might decide to wait, but the Clergy has increased the island's defenses since the party was last here, and powerful wards likely prevent the party from entering the vault. Those wards will vanish when the memory-event manifests, but once Kasvarina puts on the *lost arc*, she'll be stuck in the same long memory-event until they escape the vault (or Kasvarina falls unconscious, which will damage her mental stability).

A Dwarf at a Lighthouse

At the high northern edge of the island, the old and broken lighthouse looms, but a short robed figure beckons to the party from the ground floor entrance. The woman, a dwarf, gives the name **Serafima Saveli**. She claims to be an inquisitor who divined that the party would arrive here. She seems unfazed if the memory-event has manifested, but she does her best not to disrupt it.

The Clergy, Serafima says, has old protocols to detect when someone might learn forbidden lore in the vault below. While the Clergy no longer regularly maintains the vault and simply lets interlopers risk their lives, some incidents are too dangerous to ignore. The entrance to the vault below is now shielded by an impenetrable wall of force, various glyphs of warding (*Atk:* Close burst 2; +23 vs. Reflex; *Hit:* 3d6+18 lightning damage; *Miss:* Half damage), a vault-wide magical silence, and magical repulsion which requires a use of channel divinity (attacking a Will defense of 32) to come within 30 feet of the entrance.

Serafima asks to know the party's business, and if they manage to bypass the defenses (either by their own magic, or with the *lost arc*), she warns them that a fiend below was responsible for the Great Malice. She asks to accompany them and vows not to attack them, but promises to conjure *silence* if the fiend tries to share the knowledge that could cause another great cataclysm.

She acknowledges that she cannot defeat the party in battle, but the Clergy will have noticed their arrival, and if she does not *send* to them her status, they will attack in overwhelming force. If the party agrees, she casts *sending* and says, "The divinations were correct. I will go into the vault with the foreigners, and will let them attend their business, but will protect the secret."

The blood of dwarves runs deep, and Grandis traces her blood to the oldest dwarven warlords from before Drakr, before the Clergy, and before even the Demonocracy. Raised a common metalsmith by her bitterly poor father, she resented that poverty had denied her the birthright of power she felt she was owed. She studied magic so she could make her fortune, but only found work protecting merchants much wealthier than her on journeys into the northern mountains.

During one such trip, a massive storm trapped her caravan. She knew the spells to protect them all from the cold, but demanded more pay since she was saving their lives. The merchants balked, tempers flared, and one man attacked her. She tore out his tongue. The other dwarves agreed to pay.

But the storm intensified and trapped them for weeks, and as they huddled together Grandis read a book of the teachings of Vlendam Heid on the nature of endings. Her interpretation of his philosophy was markedly unorthodox. Several days into the storm she looked around and saw that the only thing standing between her and the wealth she deserved was her own morals. She left those morals in the mountains along with the corpses of the merchants. But she kept their money, and a single mute dwarf to be her manservant.

Wealth bought her more magical knowledge, which attracted followers to her, and she cultivated her own radical branch of eschatology based not on preparing for how things end, but in actively ending things. By delving into forbidden lore over the years, what was once mere greed and narcissism has been corrupted into a genuine insane longing for the end of the world. Since truly nothing is more important than her, and some day even she must die, it is merciful to make sure the world ends with her.

If the party refuses she says she'll stay at the lighthouse. If they attack she'll draw a bloody chunk of ice (a shard from an evil glacier) and crush it, creating frigid winds (see Crowded Dance Floor, page 188). In the confusion she'll try to run and use *invisible as the winter cold* to hide.

Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

In truth, this dwarf is no priest of the Clergy, but rather an icy simulacrum of **Grandis Komanov**, leader of the radical eschatologists of Drakr. Grandis has divined that the party might learn the *sacrament of apotheosis*, and she wants to be present to take that power for herself. Averse to risking her life, she has sent her simulacrum. A permanent *telepathic bond* ritual connects them, so Grandis will be able to learn the ritual even if her simulacrum is destroyed.

Grandis is a canny liar, has rehearsed her lies, and is enhanced by magic (Insight DC 42). She even has the proper badge of office—a platinum scepter, which she took off the actual grand inquisitor who was here when she arrived. Grandis and several dwarven allies slew the fifty priests who had come (after a tip-off from the Obscurati) to stop the party from even entering the vault. Now the priests and most of the dwarves have joined thousands of other drowned dead in the waters surrounding Odiem.

If the party looks inside the lighthouse before the memory-event manifests, they notice telltale signs of a recent battle, but 'Serafima' claims that a group of priests fought here to stop another set of interlopers dressed in dark robes. (She doesn't actually know about the Obscurati, but 'dark robes' is a good guess for how bad guys should dress.)

If the party won't let her accompany, she waits for them to leave, then turns invisible to follow them.

Memory-Event: Devil's Prayer

Location: Sid Minos, Isle of Odiem. **Date:** 67 Autumn, 1 B.O.V.
Stability Value: 3.

Once Kasvarina lets the artifact manifest the past, a thunderclap booms across the island, followed by a blinding flash. Darkness envelopes the party, and thick goblets of rain descend from dark clouds. Eerie flashes of golden light flicker across the island from some source outside the artifact's radius, each accompanied by the sounds of sorcery and theurgy.

A score of soldiers and priests materialize around the group, carrying Kasvarina and Nicodemus in manacles. The lead priest urges them to hurry so they can get off this island before the Elfaivaran fleet spots them and strands them here. They make haste for a lighthouse. The crumbling structure dramatically rebuilds itself to its full shape, undoing five centuries of dilapidation.

Formally dressed soldiers come out to retrieve the prisoners, completely ignoring the party. They strip-search Nicodemus and Kasvarina, then give each simple gray clothes. The lead priest reads a formal declaration of their crimes—mostly variations of 'heresy' and 'opposing the will of the church'—and then the soldiers open the doors to the first vault chamber. They drag the prisoners to the pious mount that overlooks the circular 'main exhibit' chamber, then stop and order Nic and Kasvarina to go forward and pass through the doors beyond.

Once the seneschal of the old Demonocracy, Ashima-Shimtu was captured by the Clergy and would have been executed like thousands of other fiends, tossed into the volcano Enzyo Mons. But she knew the *Sacrament of Apotheosis*, a ritual which could give physical form to a belief, and the Clergy hierarchs greatly desired the secret. She was unwilling to share, and they were unwilling to lose a chance to learn the ritual, so they imprisoned her in the Crypta Hereticarum, a vault of curses and heresies on the isle of Odiem, where she has remained for a thousand years.

Initially vengeful, she has turned to meditation and detachment to endure her endless incarceration. She speaks as if narrating events, never referring to herself in the first person, and in general has little interest in the world, except when she senses a chance for freedom.

Short or Long?

Depending on how much time you want to spend on this memory-event, and whether you already used the *Crypta Hereticarum* mini-adventure (available for free to adventure path subscribers, bundled as part of the Act One hardcover, or as an inexpensive standalone product at various online RPG vendors), you could have the interior of the vault be orderly and secure, or have it be the dangerous dungeon presented in the mini-adventure.

If the former, Kasvarina tries to find a safe place to rest, but Nicodemus tells her tales he's heard of the vault, and that the only possible way out is through the central chamber, past some ancient demon. They loot a few weapons that they hope aren't cursed, then reach the door Ashima-Shimtu's vault and spend an hour testing possible rituals to get through, before Kasvarina finally hits on providing a blood offering. They go inside and speak with Ashima-Shimtu (see Seeking the Sacrament), and then the memory-event ends.

Alternately, you can have the party, Kasvarina, and 'Serafima' fight their way past a much more dangerous version of the dungeon. While the threats won't individually challenge the PCs at their level, they should wear them down.

Something is Different Here

Outside the door to the final chamber, three stone statues stand along the wall. Tall figures of clergy protectors, they cover eyes or ears or mouth. The statues weren't here when the party visited a few months ago, though they could easily be dismissed as part of the memoryscape.

These statues are not in fact statues, but advanced constructs placed on the island by Benedict Pemberton. After the R.H.C. and the PCs began interfering in his affairs, the dragon took note of their previous exploits and traced them to Odiem. He had the constructs smuggled in several months ago, to keep tabs on who might show, and to kill the party if they ever showed back up.

The stone is a just an inch-thick façade, enough to block most divinations (Arcana DC 30 and then Perception DC 30 to notice bits of magic through the seams at the joints) while letting the internal clockwork function normally. A Spirit Medium in the party immediately senses a hint of witchoil, which might clue him in that the statues hide duplicants.

The moment the party enters the chamber; their arrival is relayed to Pemberton, though it takes him a few minutes to gather gnoll minions to control the constructs like duplicants.

Seeking the Sacrament

The moment the party arrives, any PC whose blood touched the water of the well beneath Ashima-Shimtu during adventure four feels a cold flutter in his heart, then the sting of hooks digging into his back and limbs. The feeling passes quickly.

In the memory-event, Nicodemus and Kasvarina approach the well and look up to the demoness. A serpent-scaled female humanoid with an inhuman visage, she is held aloft by chains that end in hooks which pierce her legs, back, and arms. A single chain and hook passes through her lips, preventing her from speaking. She seems asleep.

Nic and Kasvarina discuss jumping in and swimming, at which point Ashima-Shimtu stirs. The chains jangle and she tenses with pain.

Nicodemus reads inscriptions along the wall that explain the story of the Demonocracy, and of how Ashima-Shimtu betrayed them in order to save herself. But she did not share her greatest secret, and so the Clergy has imprisoned her in this perpetual torment until she shares it. Kasvarina wonders if the demon might have knowledge that could discredit the Clergy or perhaps assist them in ending the war. Miller is nervous, but doesn't stop Kasvarina as she carefully removed the barbed hook from Ashima-Shimtu's lips.

Read or paraphrase the following:

> "For the first time in centuries, Ashima-Shimtu can speak. She is pleased by this change, and welcomes those who come to seek knowledge. Her wish may be the same as her fellow prisoners—to bring down the vile Clergy—but the Lady of the Forked Tongue does not so casually risk the deception of strangers. Already her voice grows tired from disuse, and so she would ask her visitors to share their tale."

The memory-event compresses Nic and Kasvarina telling their tale into a montage, interspersing their experiences with vignettes from the demoness, where she explains in her third person way how the Demonocracy used the *sacrament of apotheosis* in war, and how she gave it to the holy man Triegenes so that he might create a better world than one of demons. Triegenes went on to defeat the Demonocracy, but he never shared the ritual with his followers.

After he died, those same followers demanded Ashima-Shimtu reveal the secret their supposed living god would not. For more years than she can count she has hung here, meditating and seeking to understand the nature of evil so that she could reject it. With the ongoing holy war between human and eladrin, however, she is willing to share the ritual.

She instructs Nic and Kasvarina to, after she gives them the ritual, make their way to the entrance to the vault and barter the details of it for their freedom. Let the Clergy bring forth their god of war, and warn the eladrin to be ready to slay it. For each 'god' created by the sacrament is invulnerable only so long as his attacker does not know his true name. Trick the Clergy into summoning a war god, she says, then kill it, and in so doing kill the impetus for war itself.

Details of the Ritual

The ritual must be centered on an individual who represents the god or idea that is being invoked, and the power that person gains depends on how many followers that god or idea has, and how fervent. In addition to some archaic chants that take an hour, the ritual performers must sacrifice a lion, an eagle, a whale, and a dragon, then use their blood to adorn the subject with the name of the god or idea. Finally, the target must drink a cup of blood from a believer and recite the mantra, "Before I was nothing but words. Now I am all that is believed. I am faith made flesh. I am flesh made a god."

The subject will rapidly transform into a physical incarnation, maintaining that form for a day. He'll gain unrivaled strength and resistance to injury, but anyone who knows the name of the actual person within the incarnation will be able to harm it as easily as they would a normal person. Also, once the effect ends, the subject is severely weakened for days or weeks. Finally, if the incarnation dies, a backlash will strike the believers. How severe a backlash is relative to the intensity of their belief.

If the party manages to hear the details in the memory-event without it being disrupted by Komanov or Pemberton, they can now perform the ritual (assuming they can slaughter a dragon), though they're unlikely to be able to muster any great faith behind them at this time, so it would only provide modest effects—increasing to Large size and granting resist 10 all. We'll detail the effects of a more potent version in the last act of the campaign.

Crowded Dance Floor

As Ashima-Shimtu begins to explain the ritual, one of the Pemberton golems activates, removes the stone panel covering its face, and adopts the countenance of the industrialist. Then it and the other two golems walk to the final chamber of the vault.

Read or paraphrase the following:

A voice interrupts from the top of the stairs.

"I do say, this is all very interesting, but I must interject. While I installed these monitoring devices after I learned of your prior imbroglio here, I do admit, I never thought you'd return. What in the devil is that lady talking about? I am attempting to intimidate my rivals here, ma'am. Be a peach and stop talking a moment."

The demoness does not react to his presence, and continues reciting the details of the ritual just as she did five centuries ago. With a perturbed harrumph, the golem with Pemberton's face and two beside it hoist their heavy stone fists.

- 3 Pemberbots
- Serafima/Grandis Komanov

Tactics

Pemberton here is quite ready to kill the party, but if they try to talk (Diplomacy DC 25 or DC 35 if the party killed his daughter Terakalir), he'll pause long enough to perhaps be dissuaded from combat. After all, the Ob are a mutual threat. This is a fine opportunity for the RHC and Pemberton to make an uneasy alliance.

If combat does proceed, though, two of the Pemberbots close to melee, while the one Pemberton controls hangs back and readies to fire *disrupting missiles* at any PC who tries to use magic. If a golem gets a chance, it will grab a PC and hurl him into the well.

Pemberton continues to chat during the battle, and if pressed into melee his golem fights defensively unless he sees a chance to kill a PC. He casually mentions that he's not used to people getting away when he tries to kill them, certainly not more than once.

Serafima's Mission

As long as Ashima-Shimtu and the manifestation of Nicodemus aren't damaged, they'll ignore the battle, as will Kasvarina unless she is in control of herself. 'Serafima' tries to stay close to Ashima-Shimtu to hear details of the ritual. It takes five rounds for Ashima-Shimtu to finish describing the ritual. On the fifth round, the simulacrum concentrates and telepathically sends the details of the ritual to the real Grandis Komanov.

She then tries to shove Kasvarina into the well, causing the memory-event to collapse. She turns to the party and proclaims, "I am Grandis Komanov, bringer of this world's icy end, and you have given me the greatest weapon I could ever have."

Allow a pause for people to talk, especially if any eschatologist PCs want to harangue this radical cult leader. But if anyone makes a move to attack, Grandis draws a shard of bloody ice, hold it high, and proclaim, "O glacier of blood, sate your hunger!" She smashes the ice, releasing deadly cold (which she is immune to as a simulacrum). She'll then activate her *aura of forgetfulness* as a free action and try to fight the party as best she can.

The ice shard fills the whole final chamber with arctic winds that deal 15 cold damage per round for one minute. After one round the floors become coated with ice (difficult terrain), and anyone in the well to become trapped (Strength DC 15 to break free).

Pemberton is quite put out by this, and he doesn't appreciate others interfering in his vengeance. He'll focus on killing the simulacrum, and then if the party wasn't already talking, he'll call for a pause to talk about just who else wants the party dead. But if the party continues to fight, he'll lament not having installed a bomb in these constructs.

Pemberbot — Level 18 Elite Brute
Large natural animate (construct) — **XP** 4000

HP 248; **Bloodied** 124 — **Initiative** +18
AC 30, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 28 — **Perception** +8
Speed 5 — Darkvision
Action Point 1; **Saving Throws** +2
Resist radiant 20; **Immune** blinded

Traits

▸ **Stone and Metal Shell**
Your strike gouges out part of the statue's stone facade, but it is only a cracked shell, within which tiny machines give it a semblance of life.
When the Pemberbot is not bloodied, it has Resist 10 all. When it is bloodied, it has Vulnerable 10 all (except to radiant), its defenses are reduced by 5, and it takes a -5 penalty to saving throws.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Stone Fist** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Getting hit by steel fists wrapped in eighty pounds of rock hurts.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +23 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12+20 damage.

▸ **Smash and Hurl** ✦ At-Will
It snatches you up in both hands and hurls you across the room.
Effect: The Pemberbot uses *stone fist* twice. If both hit, it slides the target 8 squares and knocks it prone.

⟋ **Disrupting Missiles** (force) ✦ At-Will
Strangely coruscating arrows of magical force fly from its extended hands, and as they strike you, you feel the flow of mana around you disrupted.
Effect: The Pemberbot fires missiles which unerringly strikes a target within 10 squares, dealing 25 force damage. The next time the target uses any powers with the arcane, divine, primal, psionic, or shadow keyword this encounter, it must make a saving throw. If it fails, the power fails.

Minor Actions

✧ **Dazzling Lights** (radiant) ✦ At-Will, 1/round
A system of high-powered arcanoscientific lamps and lenses built into its torso behind the stone façade begin spinning rapidly, blinding and disorienting.
Requirement: The Pemberbot must be bloodied.
Attack: Close blast 5 (creatures in burst); +21 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d6 radiant damage and the target is blinded (save ends).

Str	28 (+18)	**Dex**	9 (+8)	**Wis**	11 (+9)
Con	18 (+13)	**Int**	22 (+15)	**Cha**	15 (+11)

Alignment Unaligned — **Languages** Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Gnoll, Orc, Primordial

Grandis Komanov's Simulacrum Level 18 Controller
Medium elemental animate (dwarf) **XP** 2000

HP 112; **Bloodied** 56 **Initiative** +9
AC 32, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 32 **Perception** +19
Speed 5 Low-light vision
Resist necrotic 15; **Immune** cold, disease, poison

Traits

☼ **Aura of Forgetfulness** (charm) ✦ Aura 10
She draws herself up as tall as she can and becomes somehow more grave *than before, a heavy presence drawing your focus toward her like snow tumbling down into a pit. You falter for a moment, wondering who she is and how you came to be here.*
Enemies who enter or begin their turn in the area must make a saving throw or become stunned until the beginning of their next turn. A creature who fails three such saving throws in the same encounter retains no memory of these events and cannot form new memories until she takes a short rest.

▸ **Sturdy, Icy Body**
She looks just like a person, but your weapon chips away part of her body, revealing cracked ice beneath. Eerily, a blood-colored slush leaks from the wound.
When subjected to forced movement, reduce the distance she is moved by 1. If she would be knocked prone, she may make a saving throw to remain standing.

Standard Actions

✓ **Platinum Mace** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
She fights cautiously, waiting for you to leave an opening.
Special: Don't bother having Grandis use this attack except as an opportunity attack.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+4 damage. If the target is granting combat advantage, it is knocked prone.

✲ **Eschatological Hammer** (necrotic, psychic) ✦ At-Will
With a sweep of her hand, invisible force crashes through you like a titanic hammer. The ground beneath your feet blackens and seems to fall away into a void.
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +21 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8+4 psychic damage and the target is weakened (save ends).
Effect: The area becomes a zone until the end of the encounter or until Grandis uses this power again. A creature that enters or starts its turn in the zone takes 15 necrotic damage.

▸ **Invisible as the Winter Cold** ✦ Encounter
Her body turns to snowflakes, which vanish on a breeze.
Effect: Until the end of her next turn, Grandis becomes insubstantial and invisible and gains a fly speed of 6. A creature adjacent to her can sense a chill in the air.
Sustain standard.

Minor Action

▸ **Death Knell** ✦ At-Will, 1/round
She sweeps her hand across the face of an unconscious ally.
Effect: A dying creature adjacent to Grandis is considered to have automatically failed a death saving throw. For each creature affected this way, Grandis heals 28 damage.

Skills Arcana +17, Bluff +18, Insight +19, Perception +19, Religion +17
Str 20 (+14) **Dex** 12 (+10) **Wis** 20 (+14)
Con 16 (+12) **Int** 17 (+12) **Cha** 14 (+11)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Infernal, Primordial
Equipment platinum mace, plate armor

The Last Word

After Ashima-Shimtu finishes detailing the ritual the memory fades. Kasvarina collapses to her knees, knowledge washing over her. She explains that she remembers leaving the vault, and going with the Clergy to their capital Methia. She went there, and though what happened there is still a blank, soon thereafter the war ended, and the eladrin woman perished. She suddenly realizes what this means, but if the party can't figure it out she's too ashamed to say it out loud.

The demoness Ashima-Shimtu, no longer stuck reenacting the past, will simply say, "The prisoner of the Clergy remembers what horrors were wrought by her attempt to escape. She has accepted her punishment, and asks no others repeat her folly. She says this with no malice, only contrition."

If necessary, Ashima-Shimtu can let the party out of the vault. They must simply name a destination and dive into her well, and she can transport them to any shore within a few hundred miles. Make a note of any PCs whose blood makes contact with the well. Ashima-Shimtu will have power over them much later, in adventure eleven, *Gorged on Ruins*.

ACT THREE: To Fall Once More

In this act the party and Kasvarina enter a heavily-defended city in order to unlock the memories that will reveal all the conspiracy's plots.

TWISTS IN GAMING

We're all used to dramatic twists in literature, movies, and television. We took particular inspiration from *Watchmen* when designing the campaign, in that we intend to let the PCs rush to thwart the Obscurati's plot during adventure nine, only to discover that the villains have already won. Bad guys are always getting beaten at the last moment, so we thought it would be memorable to see what happens if their plot actually succeeds.

During our playtest, though, one player took that development rather badly. He felt that we'd violated the social contract of the game by giving the party the impression they could stop the villains, but providing no actual chance of success. While he acknowledged that the failure was setting the stage for a heroic come-back in the third act of the campaign, he didn't appreciate being deceived of his chances.

While we are sticking with our original plan, we feel it important that GMs consider their players' perspectives. While many gamers will be alright with the events as we have designed them, we recognize that some people play for stress relief and to feel powerful. It can be challenging for a game master to tread the line of having such players suffer setbacks without ruining their fun altogether.

Our default assumption is that in Methia the party will learn that the Ob plans to assassinate the king of Risur, then perform a ritual in Flint, led by Governor Roland Stanfield, to alter the nature of reality. Then in adventure nine they'll have a chance to thwart those events—and in so doing ensure the freedom of Risur from the conspiracy's control—but afterward learn that the main ritual was taking place on Axis Island.

If you think your players might balk at being beaten by events off-screen, consider having the Ritual and Assassination Plan memory-event (page 196) include a mention of the main ritual on Axis Island, with Han Jierre listing the unassailable defenses there. Kasvarina could explain that the party's only chance to avoid a *complete* disaster will be to focus on stopping Roland Stanfield from activating a *wayfarer's lighthouse* in Flint. Of course, PCs almost always rush headlong toward 'certain defeat' (because it's almost never *that* certain), in which case adventure ten, *Godmind* will have details of the island's defenses.

A party that leaves Risur in a lurch will realize that even if they do manage to get past Axis Island's defenses, there's nothing they can do to stop the colossus, and they'll have sealed their homeland's fate. In the third act of the campaign, Risur will be a loyal ally to the Obscurati, and the party will be on the run.

Once Does Not Simply Walk into Methia

Exploration. Montage. Level 19.

The party plans and executes their infiltration of the center of hostile Danor.

With their next destination known, the PCs must begin their plans to reach the ghost city of Methia, located deep in enemy territory, and they will need to properly plan their method of insertion and extraction from the Danoran-held city.

A full description of Methia is provided in Appendix D: Methia Gazeteer. You should reference this for more information on the city.

What Do We Know?

The constables can make various checks to learn about Methia, using skills to ascertain information about the city.

Folk Tales (History DC 15): After the Great Malice, a curse fell over the city. The weather's always overcast but it never rains. Nothing lives there, not even bugs or weeds. All that remains is bare stone, most of it nearly pristine, like a ghost city.

Design (Arcana or History DC 20): Methia has two districts—the western Holy Methia and the eastern Urbem Postulatoris—separated by the Église River.

The western portion, Holy Methia, was surrounded on all sides by a wall of dense white marble. The master craftsmanship of its buildings has kept them from decaying much these past five centuries. Three gates allowed ingress (Ostium Judicii, Ostium Pietatem, and Ostium Splendoris—the gates of judgment, piety, and splendor). The eastern portion, Urbem Postulatoris—Postulants' City—spread out haphazardly with no wall, and today most of its buildings are ruined.

In the center of the river, a white tower known as the Lance of Triegenes rises from an island. It is said that before the magic failed, the tower was over a thousand feet high.

History (History or Religion DC 25): Now referred to as the Ghost City, Methia was abandoned following the Great Malice during the Second Victory. The dying eladrin goddess placed a curse that transformed many of the survivors into tieflings, and created the dead magic within the nation. In the times following the Great Malice, the city has been left relatively undisturbed, originally superstition keeping away explorers, and now a Danoran military presence guarding the city's borders.

Location (History or Nature DC 20): Situated in the center of Danor, Methia is several days journey from the capital city of Cherage. The city is divided in half; with one section being a ruined landscape of broken buildings known as the Urbem Postulatoris (Postulant's City), while the western half of the city is walled and retains the splendor it held ages ago. The Église River divides the city, acting as a natural division for the two sections of the city, and allowing naval elements to reach the Methia. Of course, if the party tried to sail a Risuri ship up the river, the news would spread like wildfire.

Magical Dead Zone (Arcana DC 15): Since the Great Malice, Danor has become a magical dead zone, where only spellcasters with sufficiently enchanted implements can hope to use their abilities. Within Methia (and the surrounding 3 miles), the deadening is absolute, preventing all magical effects from taking place. Casters find all spells fail within the area of Methia, and all magical items and equipment revert to their basic forms while within the borders of the city. Creatures with magical bodies such as elementals or undead can endure here, but quickly grow weak.

Military Activity (History DC 25): Methia is now the site of growing military activities, with a large formation of Danoran troops using the city to enact preparatory tests for what they see as an inevitable conflict with Risur. The Danorans goal is to practice city-fighting and improve soldier awareness, battling in the magic deadened city.

Preparation

Knowing in advance that all magical abilities will be suppressed, the PCs have some options and allies to investigate.

Radicals in the City: Eschatologist PCs have heard rumblings of members of their philosophy held up within Methia. A sect of radicals reside within the city, operating from an undisclosed building. Led by some unknown figure, it is said most of these radicals are devas, those touched by the death of Srasama, who come to the ghost city to prevent themselves from reincarnating upon death. While not immediately pertinent, this information does inform the party that there is another group operating within Methia.

Coffee, Keys, and Spies: If the PCs possess a Prestige of 4 or more with the Clergy, they could contact Morgan Cippiano and acquire a detailed map of the city from the Clergy's vaults. Nomads active in the lands around the city—actually a sect of priests devoted these past five centuries to watching Methia for signs of corruption—also report an increased defensive perimeter around the Lance of Triegenes.

Groups with a Prestige of 5 or higher are gifted a unique key, hand-delivered by Cippiano (who will teleport in for the occasion). The key operates the unique mechanisms that open Methia's Ostium Pietatem—a side entrance to the city abandoned by the Danorans. Cippiano also provides custom-fitted Danoran military uniforms, in case the party might want to try sneaking in.

In return for the information, Cippiano simply asks that the PCs harm the godless Danorans, then return to share a coffee with him.

(Alternately, the party might reach out to El Extraño, the Beran kobold spymaster. He can only provide information, though, not keys, clothes, or coffee.)

Getting There

There are several options the PCs have at their disposal to reach Methia. Work with your players to determine the best approach, remembering that the journey to Methia should be interesting, but is not a critical part of the adventure. If they've found the archives in Ushanti (page 178), they might know to stop off at the ruins of Pala along the way.

The following parts of this adventure assume the PCs manage to sneak into the city somehow. You should work with the PCs to create the most appropriate insertion method (from pure stealth, to outright invasion of Danor).

Presented are several options the PCs may use to reach the abandoned city.

Docker Smuggling: Docker PCs can arrange to have the party smuggled into the city onboard one of the few supply ships that makes their way down the Église River to the ghost city. From there, the PCs can sneak out onto the docks of Holy Methia under the cover of darkness, as ship workers distract the Danoran military inspection teams.

While this method requires the PCs have a docker in their party, it is one of the best methods to sneak into Methia. This method bypasses external Danoran defenses, and unless the PCs particularly mess up their movement from the docks into the city, they may well enter Methia without the Danorans ever catching wind of their arrival.

The Heat: Daring PCs may consider using their own ship as a means of reaching the city. Doing so requires the PCs to take the treacherous path up the Église River. Danoran warships patrol the mouth of the river, equivalent to the crews in the Porteur de Mort naval combat. Once past them, however, the river has enough traffic that another ship wouldn't be a big deal, as long as they have a steam engine (not sails) and fly the proper flag.

Magical Insertion: RHC infiltration specialist Lauryn Cyneburg is aware of complex 'tides' in the dead magic zone that covers Danor, but she hasn't done extensive research. An Arcana check (DC 35) can pinpoint a spot in the wilderness about 50 miles from Methia where a brief gap will allow the party to teleport in. Finding a spot to teleport out requires a similar check, though the party would have only a window of a few minutes, and probably would have to trek days to reach the safe spot, with any delay potentially ruining their exit.

Dead Magic Methia

No magic works within the 3 miles of Methia. That's it. No magic item, nor any arcane, divine, primal, psionic, or shadow power operates within the limits of the city and a small area beyond. Most racial abilities that seem even slightly magical fail to work—from the obvious like *fey step*, a pixie's flight, or darkvision, to more subtle like a halfling's *second chance*. The only exception to this rule is any item designated as an artifact. Such items are powered by themselves and avoid the draining magical effects of Methia.

Prior to entering the city, you should have players create a second version of their character; removing any magical equipment bonuses and using only mundane items. Of course, they should still keep their primary character sheet available, especially for the final encounters of the adventure.

Creatures that can only work due to magic—like elementals, golems, or undead—have their maximum hit points reduced by an amount equal to half their bloodied value each day. This effect reverses immediately once it returns to an area of full magic.

Even normal creatures feel ill at ease and feeble within the city limits. The subtle magic that allows a person in this world to heroically endure battle wounds or perform superhuman feats is absent here. Within this dead magic area, no person can ever get a result on a d20 roll higher than 40. Likewise, never can any Defense be higher than 30. No matter what their bonus or roll, they have to obey logic and the laws of physics.

Each PC's attack bonus and defenses will probably drop by 4, so martial PCs will be roughly equivalent to level 15. Spellcasters might be forced to rely on basic weapon attacks, leaving them far weaker, perhaps equivalent to level 9 PCs, dealing less damage but with more hit points. We've designed encounters assuming the party is roughly as strong as a level 13 party normally would be.

A skyseer PC can grant himself or another PC a +5 bonus to this check; one check can be attempted each day.

Dreaming: Another option would be to enlist the aid of King Aodhan or the Unseen Court to enter the Dreaming, which has the same geography as the real world, but none of those pesky Danoran patrols. Unfortunately, the fey in the Dreaming analogue of Danor have mostly gone creepy and mad due to the thin magic to support them, and every forest and field is filled with thorns and briars. Many dark fey lurk near the edge of the dead magic zone, and something would likely try to eat the party.

Break in the Door: Another alternative is for the PCs to arrange a military operation into Danor. Depending on the evidence accrued by the PCs over the past several adventures, they may be able to implicate Danor in the Obscurati's plots beyond a shadow of a doubt. King Aodhan would be hesitant to launch a unilateral assault, but a few stirring speeches to philosopher councils in Drakr and the Bruse in Ber could gain the assistance of other nations.

Should Aodhan be convinced of the virtue in launching a strike, the PCs are granted several naval vessels to make a strike at the Église River, along with a detachment of two hundred Risuri marines, fifty dwarven riflemen, and Beran bear cavalry. Simultaneously, Drakr transports an army into Danor by its own Avery Coast Railroad, and Ber strikes the Yerasol archipelago (particularly near Axis Island), diverting Danoran forces away from their homeland, and potentially forcing the withdrawal of troops stationed in Methia.

Methian Wargames

Exploration. Montage. Level 15.

A Danoran army guards the eerie city of Methia, and the party must figure out how to reach the Lance of Triegenes.

The most prominent landmark of Methia—the broken tower known as the Lance of Triegenes—is visible over the horizon from three miles away, at the edge of the dead magic zone. Upon seeing it, Kasvarina feels drawn to it, or more particularly to a spot high above it, the top two-thirds having collapsed over the past five centuries. She can sense other memories floating at spots lower on the tower, but she knows something momentous happened high up there.

Then the party feels the ground tremble. It repeats every twenty seconds as the colossus Borne takes slow, titanic steps toward the city. At the edge of the dead magic zone it becomes slightly visible, but only in fragments, like a creature glimpsed through thick undergrowth. Over the next half hour it makes its way to the eastern shore of the Église River, growing more and more visible. It stops at the edge of the water, now easily visible but still slightly insubstantial.

Here the Dreaming and the Bleak Gate fray and exit into the real world, and the colossus stands at the very edge of the veil, but won't step across, not yet at least. It feels uneasy without magic around it, and so it will stay put until it has a reason to move. It moans intermittently, trying to say "Mother" as its mind struggles to regain its memories.

When Kasvarina reaches the Lance and ascends, the *lost arc of Reida* will activate, bringing magic partially back into Methia and slowly reconstructing the past, causing the tower to reassemble itself above them as they keep climbing. The sight of Kasvarina with her mind restored jogs Borne's memory enough for him to try to pursue her. The party will have to decide whether they want to wait for the three-hundred-foot-tall colossus to reach them, or to keep moving.

First, though, the party has to reach the Lance. All that entails is sneaking past an army, onto an island, and through the ring of soldiers who have orders to kill anyone who tries to enter the tower.

Military Presence

Individual encounters with the Danoran military are subject to your discretion, with the exception of the encampment at the base of the Lance of Triegenes, which is described in full later on.

Thousands of Danoran soldiers and military materiel (artillery, horses, and huge amounts of supplies) reside in the Urbem Postulatoris, on the east side of the river. Under orders from the Sovereign, they leave Holy Methia on the west of the river undisturbed. The Danorans only send troops in to guard the Ostium Judicii, patrol the walls, and occasionally meet with the devas in the Hall of Victories. They do, however, have a major presence at the city docks, with two nimble river warships present and a few hundred marines stationed to keep out potential intruders. Additionally, a large garrison protects the island in the center of the Église River, guarding the Lance of Triegenes.

If the party goes into the eastern Urbem Postulatoris, they're so ludicrously outnumbered that any fight lasting longer than a few rounds will get them surrounded and brought down with enfiladed

rifle fire. However, sneaking through is fairly easy since the number of troops make outsiders hard to spot as long as everyone can pass as a human or tiefling. Clever parties might take control of the artillery in the eastern city to fire on the defenders on the island.

Holy Methia is a bit of a challenge to enter, but safe to hide in thereafter. If the party draws the military's attention, though, the city can swarm with Danoran troops. To represent this, track the Danoran military's levels of readiness using the guidelines below.

All is Well (Green)

Triggers: PCs remain undetected. No key Danoran military personnel are missing. No expectation of insertion or attack.

Description: This is the initial state of the Danoran military, assuming they have no warning of the PCs arrival and nothing attracts their attention. During this state, the Danorans maintain a wide berth from the interior of Holy Methia, only maintaining a small deployment of troops at the gates, walls, and docks of the city.

The PCs should experience no encounters with Danoran forces within the city. They still need to worry about being spotted as they enter the city, or if they go to the Urbem Postulatoris. Travelling to any of these Danoran occupied districts will immediately trigger a Level 11 encounter with the Danoran military.

On Guard (Yellow)

Triggers: PCs spotted, but not identified. Minor Danoran military units missing (but no bodies). Forewarning of potential insertion by enemy agents.

Description: The Danorans are slow to act once outsiders are detected. After all, folks wander into the city all the time, and most of them leave without causing trouble. Unless the PCs are identified as Risuri agents, the Danorans simply believe them to be petty criminals, thrill seekers, or members of some obscure cult. Troops are not deployed within the city, but there is an obvious increase in personnel stationed around the docks and the gates.

As with 'All is Well', such encounters only occur at the heavily-defended areas—docks, gates, or the Urbem Postulatoris—but they are Level 13.

Alert (Orange)

Triggers: PCs engaged in combat, but not identified. Danoran military units missing, bodies discovered with inconclusive evidence. Warning of imminent insertion by enemy agents.

Description: Knowing something is afoot within Holy Methia, the Danorans dispatch troops within the city proper. Encounters at heavily-defended areas remain Level 13, but within a minute an equivalent number of soldiers arrive as reinforcements, effectively creating a Level 17 encounter. Additionally, for every 30 minutes the PCs travel in the open streets, there is a 20% chance a Level 11 encounter Danoran military patrol passes within line of sight of the party, possibly triggering a battle.

Under Attack (Red)

Triggers: PCs spotted and identified. Danoran military units attacked and slain with obvious evidence. Detailed information leaked to military command.

Description: The Danorans dispatch military units into the city to flush them out. Encounters at defended areas start at Level 16 and jump to Level 20 if reinforcements get a minute to arrive. For every 30 minutes of open travel, there is a 60% chance the party crosses paths with a Level 13 unit.

WAR! (Super-Mega Red)

Triggers: Formal declaration of war on Danor. News of attacks across the nation. Large numbers of Danoran military slain in combat.

Description: The Risuri have struck Danor and the PCs are the closest outlet for the military's vengeance. Likely the Danorans believe the PCs responsible for burning down an orphanage or commandeering a boat full of orphans to make the trip to the city, leaving the orphans to drown. The PCs are evil people...

Troops travel with horns, whistles, or bells, sweeping the city building to building looking for the party. Encounters at defended areas stay at Level 16 (Level 20 with reinforcements). Every 10 minutes of open travel holds an 80% chance of crossing paths with a Level 11 patrol that will call for Level 16 reinforcements.

Sample Units

You can find stats for these forces in Appendix E: Recurring Enemies & Allies. For the larger units, we include a small number of the relatively harmless Danoran 'lone wolf' scouts, mostly for the satisfaction PCs can have in killing them quickly. If you use a Level 16 or Level 20 unit to represent an armed camp, the scouts can represent the sentries at the edge which the party would need to kill quietly in order to sneak past them.

Level 11 Patrol

- 9 Danoran 'Lone Wolf' Scouts
- 4 Danoran Squads

Level 13 Patrol

- 2 Porteur de Mort Marines
- 1 Porteur de Mort Sniper
- 4 Danoran 'Lone Wolf' Scouts
- 4 Danoran Squads

Level 16 Unit

- 4 Porteur de Mort Marines
- 1 Porteur de Mort Snipers
- 4 Danoran 'Lone Wolf' Scouts
- 4 Danoran Squads
- 1 Danoran Troop

Level 20 Unit

- 4 Porteur de Mort Marines
- 1 Porteur de Mort Snipers
- 8 Danoran 'Lone Wolf' Scouts
- 4 Danoran Squads
- 4 Danoran Troops

D(anor) - Day

Action. Tactical. Level 15.

The Danoran military is prepared to repel any assault on the Lance of Triegenes.

To reach Kasvarina's memories atop the Lance of Triegenes, the PCs must make their way to the island in the center of the Église River. The quarter-mile-across island rises fifty feet out of the water at the northern end, sloping to meet the water at the southern edge. There, an old alabaster dock—resembling a cathedral more than a pier—acts as barracks for the island's defenders, while advanced military materiel defends the rise leading to the Lance of Triegenes.

Complicating matters is the presence of Master Chief Faradio and a detachment of Danoran soldiers stationed at the rise leading to the Spire. Loyal to the Sovereign, Faradio is also a low-ranking member of the Obscurati, entrusted with crafting mechanical inventions of Tinker Oddcog.

The cathedral dock at the southern end of the Lance island is always watched by a squad of soldiers with a pair of spotters, who have access to a pair of heavy cannons on a turret. They fire warning shots at any unauthorized vessel that comes within 500 feet, and if a vessel continues to approach they sound the alarm and open fire (treat as a naval attack, d20+10 vs. the ship's Defense). Within a minute every soldier in the cathedral/dock/barracks is awake, and a minute later they've taken up defensive positions.

Dock Guards

- 2 Danoran 'Lone Wolf' Scouts
- 1 Danoran Squad

Hillside Guards

- 8 Danoran 'Lone Wolf' Scouts
- 2 Danoran Squads
- 2 Porteur de Mort Snipers
- 2 Porteur de Mort Artillerists

Lance Entrance Guards

- 2 Danoran 'Lone Wolf' Scouts
- Master Chief Faradio
- Le Grand Patron, Tank

Terrain

If the party catches the forces here by surprise, the cathedral that serves as docks and barracks has rooms with bunks filled with sleeping soldiers, while the ground level is stocked with red barrels—handily stenciled with a flame icon—that are filled with the diesel fuel used by Master Chief Faradio's tank *Le Grand Patron*. If that attack does fire damage, or if the cracked barrel subsequently takes fire damage, the barrel explodes (*Atk:* Close burst 3; +18 vs. Reflex; *Hit:* 3d6+20 damage; *Miss:* Half damage.)

After the cathedral/docks/barracks is a 200-ft. open plain that slopes up to the Danoran barricades. These barricades—most made of debris from the tower—provide chest-high cover against attacks from downslope, but only incidental cover against attacks from uphill.

Several rows of barricades take up 200 ft. of the slope. A trampled dirt road runs through the center of the barricades, offering what seems to be an open path. Beyond the barricades lies a wide grassy field some 300-ft. across with a few scattered trees, and beyond that stands the Lance. The tank *Le Grand Patron* is normally parked there.

Scattered along the approach are several red fuel barrels. The defenders understand the dangers of these barrels, though, and keep their distance. As the PCs approach, artillerists further back will target the barrels as the party passes, hoping to catch them in the explosion.

Tactics

Most of Faradio's troops are simple riflemen, and would not normally pose much of a threat outside the dead magic zone. But with the party's AC likely somewhere around 25 without the aid of magic, even these soldiers can be deadly. The main danger, though, comes in the form of Faradio... and his tank.

At the first sign of trouble, the Master Chief and the two scouts with him enter *Le Grand Patron* and seal the hatch. The whole process of Faradio starting his tank takes 1 minute, after which the lizardfolk drives. The two scouts handle reloading the cannon and manning the anti-infantry guns.

Once the PCs are spotted, Faradio stays at range, shelling them with his main cannon. If the PCs manage to approach him, the scouts let loose with the anti-infantry guns, while Faradio tries to run over the party. Stubbornly defiant, the lizardman disregards PCs who try to scale the tank, thinking that without magic, they will be unable to force their way into the interior. If they *do* get inside, he surrenders once bloodied.

Parties that manage to sneak their way up the islet can find Faradio resting in a make-shift tent by his tank. The engineer knows he has little to fight for with his tank unprimed, and surrenders to the PCs if intimidated.

***Le Grand Patron*, Tank**	Level 14 Elite Artillery
Huge natural animate (construct)	**XP** 2000
HP 160; **Bloodied** 80	**Initiative** -
AC 30, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 28	**Perception** -
Speed 8	
Resist 10 all	

Traits

▸ Ironclad Vehicle

The tank has a facing, and it must spend 1 square of movement to turn 45 degrees. Its turret can turn to fire in any direction. Its two anti-infantry guns can each fire along a 180-degree arc on either side, but not directly forward or backward.

As a vehicle, the tank uses the Initiative and Perception of its driver. If a driver relinquishes control, another creature must spend its full turn to take control, and the tank will use his Initiative and Perception starting on the next round.

The tank also uses the attack bonus of the driver for its main turret. Up to two additional gunners can fire the anti-infantry guns, using their attack bonuses.

The stats below assume Faradio and two Danoran scouts are shooting.

▸ Down the Hatch

A sealed hatch allows entry into the interior of the tank, which holds up to 8 people in cramped quarters. When sealed from the inside, the hatch can only be opened with a DC 30 Thievery check or DC 25 Strength check. Should all else fail the hatch has 50 hit points and Resist 10 all.

Creatures inside the tank have superior cover (+8 to defenses) against attacks from without. They can close viewports to gain total cover, but then cannot use their weapons.

▸ Demolition Derby

When an attacker first 'bloodies' the tank, he can choose one of the following effects. An attacker who reduces the tank to 40 HP or below can choose another effect.

- Speed reduced by 2 permanently. Choose a direction (left or right). It now takes an extra square of movement for each 45 degrees the tank turns in that direction.
- Turret can turn no more than 45 degrees on the tank's turn.
- Anti-infantry gun is destroyed.

Standard Actions

Main Cannon ✦ At-Will

The name Jierre's Reckoning *is embossed on the side of the turret-mounted tank barrel.*

Attack: Area burst 5 within 60 (creatures in burst); +15 vs. Reflex

Hit: 4d6+20 damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Load two standards. The scouts typically use their actions to reload unless they need to drive off people with the anti-infantry guns. It requires a good half hour of shooting for the tank to run out of ammo. Seriously, good luck

Anti-Infantry Guns ✦ At-Will (2/round)

Two lower and smaller turrets have multi-barreled guns slowly sweep across the battlefield.

Attack: Area burst 1 within 12 (creatures in burst); +15 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d6+10 damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Load standard.

Move Actions

Vicious Trample ✦ At-Will

Effect: The tank moves its speed and makes the following attack against any Medium or smaller creature whose space it enters.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. Reflex

Hit: 4d6+20 damage and the target is knocked prone, and is restrained until the tank leaves its space (Escape DC 30). It has ongoing 5 damage as long as it is restrained.

Miss: The target either moves to the side of the tank or onto it.

Master Chief Faradio Level 12 Goon Artillery

Medium natural humanoid (lizardfolk) **XP** 350

HP 88; **Bloodied** 44 **Initiative** +8

AC 24, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 24 **Perception** +6

Speed 6

Standard Actions

Claws (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+5 damage.

Dual Pistols (weapon) ✦ At-Will

Effect: Faradio makes the following attack twice.

Attack: Ranged 9/18 (one creature); +17 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+3 damage, or 2d6+11 damage on a critical hit.

Load standard. Each pistol can fire six rounds before needing to be reloaded.

Str	14 (+8)	**Dex**	14 (+8)	**Wis**	10 (+6)
Con	15 (+8)	**Int**	17 (+9)	**Cha**	10 (+6)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Draconic, Goblin, Primordial

Equipment pistols, studded leather

Aftermath

After the first shot of *Le Grand Patron*, the Danoran military in the Urbem Postulatoris mobilizes. Depending on how the PCs dealt with the tank, you may wish to time the reinforcements arrival differently. If the PCs managed to salvage the tank and have a PC capable of piloting it—Technologists, Gunsmiths, or PCs who make a related DC 30 check will suffice—then the Danorans arrive shortly after the combat wraps up.

The first wave of reinforcements marches off the boat and advances up against the PCs, who can enjoy the satisfaction of loosing a tank against their enemies. After seeing the first reinforcements slaughtered, the rest of the Danoran forces hold back until they can land en masse, giving the party time to rush up the tower.

Such an encounter should only be run if the PCs can handle the additional challenge, and would enjoy the opportunity to turn the tank against a large formation of Danoran troops. For more peaceful or stealthy parties, instead just have the Danorans approach cautiously by default.

Ascent of Screaming Souls

Exploration. Real-Time. Level 15.

The lost arc of Reida *reassembles the toppled tower as the party ascends, but interacts dangerously with the local dead magic zone, manifesting ghosts of those the party has killed.*

The *lost arc of Reida's* slow thrumming grows in intensity the closer it gets to the Lance of Triegenes. Once the PCs reach the tower, the artifact flickers with magical light, and a small area around it—about a 10-ft. radius—now has full magic. If the party lingers in one place too long the radius starts to shrink, but it slowly expands the higher the party goes up the tower. Its radius is roughly equal to the party's elevation up the tower.

The interior of the Lance of Triegenes is mostly impassable, with the upper levels having collapsed inward centuries ago, destroying most of the lower levels. A single staircase spirals up the exterior of the wall, with no hand-rails or barriers. Every thirty feet a doorway leads inward, but most of the floors have all but collapsed. In places the stairs have shattered, but as the party nears them the magic from the *lost arc* reassembles them. Likewise, as they near the 500-ft. high top of the ruined tower, the artifact reassembles the building above them level by level so they can keep climbing.

The history-manifesting power of the *lost arc* goes a bit haywire here in the dead magic zone, and as the party ascends they'll be confronted both with Kasvarina's memory-events, and the ghosts of various NPCs they have slain throughout the campaign so far.

Encounters on the Climb

All of Kasvarina's memory-events will occur, and the party will definitely encounter the ghost of Nilasa Hume early in their climb, but thereafter only the ghosts of those whose deaths the party were personally responsible for will appear and accost them. Each spirit waits on the staircase, blocking the party's path, but will only interact with them for a moment before vanishing.

Some spirits will cause maladies or damage. If the party is grouped together, the spirit harms them all unless otherwise noted. If someone is scouting ahead, only they will be affected. Some effects note that they only affect a single target, usually whoever is closest, or who killed that person. Certain long-lasting afflictions might need to be removed magically, or else a character could be ineffectual in the adventure's climax. These typically count as level 15 afflictions for the *remove affliction* ritual.

The spirits are immune to damage, but can be thwarted by turning undead or similar effects that specifically drive away undead. They have Defenses of 20. Feel free to swap ghosts with other NPCs based on the events in your campaign.

Spirit or Memory	Elevation	Description
Nilasa Hume	50 ft.	Thanks party for finding her killer, but warns them that the ghosts of those they killed want vengeance.
Duchess Ethelyn of Shale	150 ft.	Screams and flies at the party. *Atk:* +18 vs. Will. *Hit:* 10 psychic damage. *Miss:* Half damage.
Eberardo & Valando	250 ft.	Roar and breathe fire. *Atk:* +18 vs. Reflex. *Hit:* 10 fire damage. *Miss:* Half damage.
Cillian Creed	350 ft.	Screams, erupts into a witchoil flood. *Atk:* +18 vs. Fort. *Hit:* 10 necrotic damage. *Miss:* Half damage.
Chief Inspector Margaret Saxby	450 ft.	Weeps and shoots herself in the head. *Atk:* (single target) +20 vs. AC. *Hit:* Ongoing 15 damage (save ends).
Memory-Event: Ritual and Assassination Plan	500 ft.	The Ob leaders make final preparations for their ritual.
Memory-Event: New-Born Minion	500 ft.	Kasvarina recalls meeting Borne before he was a colossus.
Elanor Yanette	550 ft.	Wails as chains wrap around her. *Atk:* +18 vs. Will. *Hit:* Target is slowed for one hour.
Olivert Boone	650 ft.	Screams in agony as he eviscerates himself. *Atk:* (single target) +18 vs. Will. *Hit:* Target uses an at-will attack against its allies each round (save ends).
Memory-Event: Puppet Mastery	700 ft.	The Ob leaders discuss industrializing Flint.
Ottavia Sacredote	750 ft.	Falls to her knees and screams curses at the gods. *Atk:* +18 vs. Fortitude. *Hit:* 10 thunder damage. *Miss:* Half damage.
Bree	850 ft.	Cries out as her limbs fall from her body. *Atk:* (single target) +18 vs. Will. *Hit:* Target cannot use one hand for one hour.
Memory-Event: Skyfall	900 ft.	The Ob leaders discuss a failed attempt to alter the planes.
Luc Jierre		His stutters turn to shrieks as he glows from within and then explodes. *Atk:* +18 vs. Reflex. *Hit:* 10 radiant damage. *Miss:* Half damage.
Lorcan Kell		Screams with rage and charges one PC with a machete. The target makes a save for each eye and for his tongue or else those body parts are gouged away, dealing ongoing 5 damage (save ends).
Memory-Event: A Second Creation	1100 ft.	Nicodemus proposes his world-altering plot.
Tinker Oddcog		Cackles maniacally and peels his flesh away, shouting "I'm not metal! I'm not!" *Atk:* (single target) +18 vs. Will. *Hit:* For one hour, the first time the target becomes bloodied it is dazed (save ends).
Lya Jierre		She raises a wine glass in toast, drinks it, then stares at the party with mute judgment as they move past, but never attacks.
Memory-Event: Epidemic	1300 ft.	The new nation of Danor struggles without magic.
Memory-Event: Founded in Secrecy	1500 ft.	Nicodemus, Kasvarina, and Jierre found the conspiracy.

Memory-Event: Ritual and Assassination Plan

Location: Methia, Lance of Trigenes, 500 ft.
Date: 55 Spring, 500 A.O.V.
Stability Value: 1.

The memory plays out around the party, involving Kasvarina, Sovereign Han Jierre of Danor, and Nicodemus, who is wearing the body of a Danoran soldier and smoking nervously. The three figures are clearly visible, but the world around the party flickers with shadows as the *lost arc* struggles to manifest the past in the dead magic zone. If the party gets too active, they run the risk of tumbling off the side of the stairs in the dark.

In this memory-event, the three leaders mark down the list of all their projects. Nicodemus names a project, and one of them explains the status.

- **Golden Cell.** Han says his niece Lya has been briefed to take control of this cell, since her predecessor died on Axis Island. Caius Bergeron thinks he's closing in on the last ziggurat. All that remains is deciding which planes to connect to, and passing that information to the tier four members throughout the continent.
- **Convocation.** Nicodemus explains that he plans to put the form of the new world up to a vote to the leaders of the various cells. Kasvarina smiles and asks if he's finally abandoning his idealistic "everyone will get along nicely" plan. Nicodemus stamps out his cigarette and says he's never been hesitant to kill those who have outlived their usefulness.
- **Colossus Cell.** Kasvarina says the colossus is effectively complete, but one of its designers—Alexander Grappa—has been training the colossus to doubt what they're saying. Nicodemus asks Kasvarina to go look into that and make sure they won't have a loyalty problem with the colossus. Kasvarina agrees, but says they trained Borne well; he feels destined to help the Obscurati save the world.
- **Lantern Cell.** Han Jierre says this project is the only real bottleneck, because they need to get Luc's lantern working properly, then scale it up to lighthouse size to focus the ritual.
- **Risuri Assassination.** Kasvarina explains that due to its unique rites of rulership, as long as the king of Risur resists, the whole nation will resist. They'll need at least to abduct and brainwash the king, and possibly assassinate him, but the timing has to be right before they perform the ritual. If they move too soon, a new leader could be *more* hostile and actually oppose them. Nicodemus says, "That's why we have Stanfield. After all the work he's done for us, let him be king. Han, invade the damned city if you have to, but there can be no interference in Flint."

When this memory ends, the scene dissolves and reforms into the next memory event. The three leaders are the same, but dressed differently (Nic has a new body) to show it's a different time.

Memory-Event: New-Borne Minion

Location: Methia, Lance of Trigenes, 500 ft.
Date: 32 Summer, 493 A.O.V.
Stability Value: 3.

Nicodemus stands at the edge of the stairs, smoking contemplatively. Kasvarina seems upbeat, and jokes with Nicodemus that he's lucky to have a new body each visit, since with the way he smokes he could never climb all these stairs. Then she explains her recent visit to the Cauldron Hill facility in Flint to see the excavations. Progress has been swift since Stanfield got the rusted gates built into his canal.

Han Jierre chides her for so casually mentioning the name of another conspirator, but Nicodemus waves off the concern. That's the reason they come here, he says. No one can hear them, and no divination could ever discover what happened here. He points out that he hasn't seen Kasvarina look so happy in…ever.

She pauses, looking almost embarrassed, then says that she spoke with the golems that the Mindmaker has been training. They called the Mindmaker father, and called her—she pauses, laughs—mother.

Borne's Awakening

The memory ends, light returns, and there's a crackle in the air as the colossus Borne lurches forward, stepping fully out of the Dreaming and into the real world. In a voice as loud as a storm it shouts, "Mother!"

The colossus strides through the river and heads for the tower, which takes it ten minutes. It's only three hundred feet tall, and so it begins to climb in order to reach its mother.

If the party keeps climbing, they can reach the next two memory events before Borne catches up. Attacking the titan is pointless. It's already Unfriendly to the party because it thinks they're keeping it from its mother. If they attack they'll not even scratch it, but will make it Hostile. It won't attack out of fear for Kasvarina, at least not until it's close enough to target the PCs one by one.

If the party waits, Borne climbs until it looms over them. Its memory still has gaps, but it recalls Kasvarina, and it begs to know what happened. Initially Indifferent to the party, if made Helpful Borne might be convinced to carry the party up the tower, which lets them avoid the other hostile spirits. If asked to turn and fight the Danorans, Borne requires an explanation for why it should harm these people. Despite its amnesia, Borne still has the intellect of an adult, and an education deeply based in morals and philosophy, courtesy of its 'father,' Alexander Grappa.

For now, Borne is likely no threat to the party; Kasvarina will keep it from attacking them. But once the magical zone produced by the *lost arc* is large enough, Nicodemus will arrive and try to turn the colossus against the party.

Memory-Event: Puppet Mastery

Location: Methia, Lance of Trigenes, 700 ft.
Date: 50 Autumn, 457 A.O.V.
Stability Value: 1.

As before, this memory is shrouded in flickering shadows. The previous Sovereign of Danor gives a report on the status of the Third Yerasol War to Kasvarina and Nicodemus (as always, he's in a new body and smoking). The Sovereign claims that his nation's ships just aren't strong enough to deal with Risuri magic. This worries Kasvarina, since they need Risur to adopt industry if they're going to be able to build the colossus.

Nicodemus points out that Risur is already building some factories, and that his friends in the Risuri government will raise a stink to guarantee the industry stays out of Slate. That makes Flint the most logical choice. The old witch mountain will keep the fey from meddling, and make it easier to construct the colossus in the Bleak Gate.

He apologizes to the Sovereign, and says they got greedy with this war and should have waited. But it's still an excuse to pour a huge amount of money into a steam-powered warship. It just needs to sail one time and sink a few Risuri vessels.

Kasvarina proposes they hire Risuri mercenaries to steal the ship, and let them get away with it. The Sovereign blanches, not a fan of conspiring against his own country, but Nicodemus just tells him to think about the future.

Memory-Event: Skyfall

Location: Methia, Lance of Trigenes, 900 ft.
Date: 77 Winter, 195 A.O.V.
Stability Value: 1.

Centuries earlier, Kasvarina explains to Nicodemus and another Sovereign (who borrows a cigarette) what has gone wrong. They'd found the Ancient ziggurat of Avilona on an island in the sky, floating over the domain of some dragon tyrant. Kasvarina and a few researchers flew up to it, unearthed a golden seal, and found a portal to the plane of air.

After extensive divinations they attempted to replace the seal with another one and steer the portal to a different plane. That succeeded for only a few moments before some powerful destructive energy blasted outward. Kasvarina and the others fled the island, and nearly died when suddenly their flight magic failed.

Two problems are obvious. First, they can't get back to the floating island to try again, not unless Danor's engineers can use their new steam furnaces to power a mechanical bird. And second, clearly their understanding of the Ancient ritual was flawed. Kavarina thinks they're lucky the damage wasn't worse, and won't risk testing at the ziggurat of Av until they know more. Nicodemus throws his cigarette away, then curses at Kasvarina for failing.

Memory-Event: A Second Creation

Location: Methia, Lance of Trigenes, 1100 ft.
Date: 32 Summer, 113 A.O.V.
Stability Value: 1.

The triad meets again, again with a different sovereign. Nicodemus embraces Kasvarina and says he wishes he could have been there, that maybe he could have helped save her daughter. She waits for a moment, then pulls away and reminds him that she long ago forsook grief. If there is a mission, she will have a clear head so she can focus on the future. The dead are in the past.

Nicodemus nods, then launches into a bit of a firebrand speech about his studies into skyseer magic, the nature of the planes, and how it is possible to alter reality by altering what planes share the heavens with the world. This is nothing the party hasn't already heard.

Skyseer Vision of the Gyre

When the party is within sight of the top of the tower, the clouds part and reveal the moon. A skyseer PC more senses than sees the presence of Nem, focused through the lens of the moon. Beyond the plane of ruin he sees another realm, a great constellation of gears pulling in worlds and grinding them to dust between their stellar teeth.

The skyseer's consciousness flies through the constellation, beyond which floats a whirlpool of debris, slowly circling toward a black pit. On this gyre, handfuls of scattered refugees look skyward and cry out for salvation, and in the gaps between worlds, just beneath the surface of the heavens' dark tapestry, a white serpent slithers toward the end of the world.

This vision references events that may occur in adventure twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*.

Memory-Event: Epidemic

Location: Methia, Lance of Trigenes, 1300 ft.
Date: 5 Summer, 40 A.O.V.
Stability Value: 1.

The first sovereign of Danor and the founder of his house, the tiefling Jierre argues with Nicodemus and Kasvarina about whether they're reckless to try to build a nation in this dead magic zone. Smallpox is spreading throughout the land, which used to be a minor concern thanks to the Clergy's miracles. But now it's killing thousands of people. Jierre's people are fleeing in droves to the east, hoping to reach Clergy lands and be free from the disease.

Nicodemus tells Kasvarina to dispatch her husband—Bhalu, is it?—to Drakr, along with a few other eladrin men, with orders to target any Clergy priests performing miracles of healing. Do it quietly, though. All the people in Danor should hear is that there are no miracles to be found in Drakr. In the meanwhile, he'll see if he can dredge up some monsters from the Malice Lands to make the crossing harder.

Jierre scoffs, realizing that Nicodemus only sees the problem of fleeing people undermining the nation he wants, rather than the problem of innocents dying. They're still yelling at each other when the memory-event fades out.

Memory-Event: Founded in Secrecy

Location: Methia, Lance of Trigenes, 1500 ft.
Date: 14 Spring, 19 A.O.V.
Stability Value: 1.

The great stairway finally ducks inside the tower, just beneath the uppermost floor. It's nearly pitch black, but any light reflects on a gigantic amethyst set into the ceiling, with a slightly smaller (but still enormous) yellow topaz set into the floor. The walls of the penultimate floor are lined with cages, all empty now. An elegant staircase rises up the inside wall.

Flecks of ice cling to the top floor as the moaning wind cuts through it. Statues of saints guard four exit arches which lead onto four separate balconies. Each balcony extends twenty feet out above the landscape of Methia, with only a thin golden railing along the edges. At the end of each is set a platinum loop roughly the size of a normal doorway. Kasvarina walks to the one facing east as the *lost arc* manifests a memory.

The First Council

Kasvarina steps carefully across the east balcony, which is riven with cracks. Both of the other visible balconies have already collapsed and fallen away, and the tower's walls look unstable. She runs her hand along the platinum loop at the end of her balcony, then turns as she hears Nicodemus and Jierre (younger now) walking up the stairs into the central chamber. The two men are out of breath from the ridiculous climb.

She asks who the man is, and Nicodemus introduces Jierre, the priest who helped them the last time they were here. Jierre sheepishly explains that he was human back then. Ever since he's struggled to rally the people who are left, to drive out the Clergy remnants, and to make this new nation one founded on secularism. Kasvarina responds by drawing her sword and placing it to Jierre's chest.

She says they should work together to slay all the Clergy they can. Nicodemus defuses the situation by quoting Vekesh about patience being important for revenge. He explains that the three of them are uniquely positioned to not just *kill* Clergy followers, but *defeat* the whole faith, to make a truly better future.

Producing three rings from his coat, he hands one to Jierre, one to Kasvarina. Each is carved from stone taken from the base of the tower. He says that he knows what he's planning will make them enemies to half the world, so he found a way to give physical form to the antimagic of Methia. If they wear these rings, none will be able to divine them, and their plans can remain secret. But he also knows from experience that power corrupts, and so he does not want to lead, but to form a council.

This is in a way a sacrament that will bond them together. They will be secret to the world, but have no secrets from each other. If one of them recites, "At Methia, in the Lance of Triegenes, we were founded in secrecy," he or she will be able to know the location of any other member of the triad, and see what they're doing. He warns them not to let anyone else hear those words, because they'd let others be able to use divinations on them normally.

With that basis of absolute trust among the three of them, he asks them to listen to his plan and, if they agree, to join him in taking long, slow revenge against the Clergy and everyone else who would use power to oppress those weaker than them.

The manifested version of Nicodemus skips, flickers with shadows, and another memory-event manifests directly on top of the current one. The memory glows with light, then fades out, then starts again, each time manifesting in a wider and wider area. Finally a wave bursts out in all directions, and for the next few moments the Danoran military panics as the entire city of Methia is restored to how it was five centuries ago.

Final Memory

Social. Real-Time. Level 21.

The party has only one shot to witness Kasvarina's memory of the Great Malice.

This memory is critical to Kasvarina's mental stability, but also incredibly risky for her. As it begins to take shape, she sags and manages to croak out a warning that they need to make sure nothing disturbs this memory. She points explicitly to the colossus Borne if he's present and yells for him not to interfere.

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If the party doesn't intervene at all, the Clergy's punishment here might render her too injured to be of use in the final encounter. They might simply be able to heal her without getting in the way of the people in the past, but if they interrupt the memory too drastically, her original personality as conspiracy mastermind could reassert itself. Plus, Nicodemus is waiting downstairs from them, ready to interrupt at the worst possible time in order to push Kasvarina over the edge. If the party can keep him back, Kasvarina has a good chance of staying on their side.

Memory-Event: The Great Malice

Location: Methia, Lance of Triegenes, 1500 ft.
Date: 91 Winter, 1 B.O.V.
Stability Value: 5.

Kasvarina and the manifestation of Nicodemus stand at the top of the stairs, looking at the swath of floor made of amethyst and topaz. Plate-armored guards hold them tightly, and another half dozen such guards stand watch by the doors to the balconies. Rich gold lights glow magically behind each of the saint statues. Odd, tinny sounds of distant battle come from the balcony to the east, where a portal looks down at the fields of war outside Alais Primos. Two priests beside it manually adjust sliding, chevron-shaped lock-pieces to keep the portal open.

In the center of the chamber, an elder priest is directing four young acolytes to assemble the ritual for the *sacrament of apotheosis*. Entrails and blood of a lion, an eagle, a whale, and a dragon are arranged in a ring across the otherwise pristine floor, and two golden urns sits in the center, one empty, the other filled with a mixture of the animals' blood. Other priests stand in the room's corners, nervously discussing battle plans.

One young paladin stands by the ritual, shirtless and proud, openly holding a sword that glows at the crosspiece with the holy symbol of the Clergy god of war.

Creating a God

The high priest—bedecked in more gold and enchanted finery than the richest king—turns and claps his hands twice at the sight of Nic and Kasvarina. Nicodemus curtly tells Kasvarina, "This is Grand Hierarch Silvestri."

Silvestri thanks them for coming to witness the Clergy's imminent second Victory. They tested the ritual and found that it does indeed work. He was tempted to just have the two of them executed, but he prefers to let them live as he agreed, so they can scuttle across the world as pariahs and traitors.

He snaps a finger, and the guards produce chains and manacle Nicodemus and Kasvarina to the wall.

With religious bombast, Silvestri addresses the gathered priests. "With this ritual, any warrior of our faith could become a vessel for a god. With holy sword in hand and blessed devotion guiding him, he could kill a thousand of the heathenous, brown masses."

Silvestri puts his hands on the shoulders of the shirtless paladin. "This man here, he could drive back the beasts from our doorstep. But that, I'm sure, is just what these two hoped for."

He nods, and the guards begin kicking Nic and Kasvarina, metal boots drawing blood and dropping the pair to the floor. This continues, round by round as Silvestri talks, dealing 10 damage per round. (If the party stands idly by, Kasvarina ends up taking 150 damage. Healing her will not disrupt the memory-event.)

Bypassing the Rites of the Obscurati

Normally 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.

This memory-event informs the party that if they recite "At Methia, in the Lance of Triegenes, we were founded in secrecy," they can ignore that protection. Normal saving throws and other magical defenses still apply.

If a PC actually has a ring belonging to one of the Tier One leaders of the conspiracy, then reciting those words allows them to *scry* on any of the leaders, bypassing all defenses and allowing no saving throws. This functions once per day, and does not show a real-time view of the person, but rather a sort of synopsis of what they've been up to.

Kasvarina's ring was lost somewhere in the Cauldron Hill facility, but the party might go digging for it later. Sovereign Han Jierre always wears his, and Nicodemus uses it as a focus for his spellcasting. If they defeat him here, they can take the ring off Andrei von Recklinghausen.

"No," Silvestri rails, "one does not blindly accept the gift of a fiend. Once, our faith's founder, Triegenes the fisherman-made-divine, used this rite to defeat the Demonocracy. Now the evil within those monsters have found new flesh in the eladrin. Killing a thousand with a holy blade will not purge the world of their apostasy. We must cut out their heart."

He raises a hand, and the kicking and kicking and beating stops.

"Within the hour, our foes' race will be no more. Bring her."

Two priests head to the balcony to the south, and they begin adjusting the sliding chevrons around the edge of the platinum portal. It must be some failsafe mechanism to lock the portals down and prevent intruders from coming through. After a few seconds they have the lock open, and on the far side of the portal, a pair of guards hold a battered and bloody young woman.

They step onto the tower and the portal slowly closes behind them as they drag their prisoner and throw her to the floor beside Kasvarina, who gasps and struggles against her chains to reach out. She cries out her younger daughter's name, Dala. Dala coughs blood, looks up, and reaches out to her mother, but the shirtless paladin grabs her by her leg and drags her into the circle of entrails.

Nic and Kasvarina yell for them to stop, but in the span of less than a minute, a Clergy wizard *dominates* Dala, and the acolytes write the name of Srasama on her flesh with the animal blood. Guards hold down Kasvarina, slit open her palm, and bleed her to fill the second golden urn. (This deals 20 damage.) They then feed the blood to the blank-eyed Dala.

"With this sacrament," Silvestri says, "we bless Dala, daughter of Kasvarina and faithful of the goddess Srasama. Bring forth the form of our enemy so that we might drag her down and sever the bloodline of all who worship beneath her infernal face."

One of the acolytes hesitates, looks at Kasvarina with pity, but then looks at everyone surrounding him and casts his eyes down.

At the grand hierarch's direction, Dala recites the incantation of the ritual, and then her eyes begint to glow. A flaming six-armed nimbus appears behind her, the aspect of Srasama taking form. Amidst Kasvarina's screams, four guards grab Dala and carry her toward the portal to Alais

Primos. She's already growing, and is nearly ten feet tall when they manage to hurl her through the portal. She falls to the earth and her titanic form creates a crater.

Killing a God

The guards then unloop Nic and Kasvarina's chains from the wall and pull them to the middle of the balcony. Silvestri stands behind them, forcing them to watch as halfway across the world Dala transforms into the towering goddess, armed with six flaming swords. All throughout, two priests hold the portal open by manipulating the chevron locks.

Silvestri tells another priest to lower the shield over the city to let her in, and then reminds him to have the warriors say her name as they attack. He feigns forgetfulness and leans down beside Kasvarina, asking what her daughter's name was again. She pulls at her chains and tries to bite him. He responds by kicking her, stomping her chest, and holding her to the ground. (This deals 10 damage.)

He tells her this is her punishment for the hubris of thinking she could defeat the Clergy. All that will happen to her people is what she would have done to his.

Nicodemus tries to bargain and plead, to no avail. But then the acolyte from before steps in behind Silvestri and stabs him with a dagger. The weapon simply skips off his flesh, which is as tough as armor, but it's enough to set off a desperate battle on the balcony between the guards and the acolyte. Apparently others in the chamber had been having doubts as well, and the two factions set upon each other. The two priests holding the portal open hesitate, but don't join the fray.

Through the portal the avatar of Srasama leads the amazed and cheering eladrin through the city walls, only to then be struck by arrows and spells and the swords of summoned angels. It takes but a minute for her to sag, fall to the ground, and be set upon by hundreds of humans. She screams, and thousands of other women scream with her.

Silvestri is about to crush the traitorous acolyte's head with a mace when the screams distract him and the guards holding Kasvarina and Nicodemus. They rise and body-check the grand hierarch through the balcony railing. He starts to plummet, but catches Kasvarina's chain. She swings bodily out over the void, arms pulled down by the dangling Silvestri. A guard grabs her legs and tries to pull her back, yelling for help. The priests at the portal step away from their duty. Nicodemus sees his chance, and he leaps through.

Just then, an inferno bursts forth from Srasama's wounds, and though it stops at the edge of the portal, when it abates there is no sign of Nicodemus. A moment later the portal's locks slide it shut.

Enter the Main Villain

Social. Real-Time. Level 19.

Nicodemus's arrival forces Kasvarina to decide her loyalties, and he tries to recruit the colossus to fight the party.

In the midst of this confusion, the real Nicodemus makes his appearance, wearing the body of Andrei von Recklinghausen. Defended with a bevy of spells, his goal is to disrupt the memory, give Kasvarina one last chance to join him, and ensure the party does not escape. He carries a custom *dimensional lockstone* that prevents planar travel around him, and wears a custom scroll bandolier filled with obscure magic.

He likely clambers up the outer wall of the tower, grabs Kasvarina, and leaps into the central chamber, hurling away Silvestri in the process. This disrupts the memory-event, which will collapse within a few rounds unless the party can get Kasvarina back where she needs to be.

If the party's on the ball, they can stop Nic from interrupting the memory event, or perhaps get him into a fight while Kasvarina fulfills the memory (which would take just 6 rounds). Nic will still shout to the colossus to get it on his side (see Loyalties, below).

The Canon Ending

In the original events, Kasvarina is pulled back up along with Silvestri, who staggers back into the central chamber. He orders the portal reopened so they can see what happened, but then every human in the chamber (well, every human in the memory-event) bends over at the pain of horns tearing through their skulls and tails growing from their backs. The Great Malice takes effect, transforming the leaders of the Clergy into tieflings.

The lights in the tower flicker and die, the stones begin to creak, and the central gems crack. Kasvarina stands weakly, pulls a sword from a helpless guard, and crudely decapitates Silvestri. Then she stumbles to the portal and shifts the chevrons to reopen it. It's flickering, barely functional, and all that's visible on the far side are ashes. She jumps through and the memory-event ends.

To fulfill this memory, Kasvarina must be able to try to step through any of the tower's four portals. The portal must be unlocked (see Chevron Locks in the next encounter), though she likely won't go anywhere because of Nicodemus's *dimensional lockstone*. If she doesn't reach the portal within a few minutes, the memory collapses. Nicodemus tries to stop this, keeping a firm grip on Kasvarina's arm. He says, "Keep your distance or I kill her. Borne, I know you're a thinker and a talker, so don't act brashly and get your mother killed, not until you know what she's done."

Loyalties

If Nicodemus has managed to pull off a hostage situation and the party gives him a chance to talk, he tells the party they've tried to make him and Kasvarina enemies, and now they might even force him to have to kill her. Borne, looming over the scene, growls.

Nicodemus tells Borne that this body might not be familiar, but he is Nicodemus. If Alexander Grappa was Borne's father and Kasvarina its mother, then Nicodemus is the god who said that they should create their child. Borne was raised for one purpose: to enact the grand design and reshape the world. Borne's father turned from that plan and betrayed his mother. He stole her memories and twisted her into a coward. He stole Borne's memories and left it to wander the world.

Now Nicodemus has come to give Borne a chance to fulfill its destiny. And because he is merciful, he is giving Kasvarina one last chance to come back to him. If she refuses, if she throws away five centuries of work when they're finally so close to success, then she is an enemy.

And for their enemies, there will be no escape. The body he wears is disposable, and the tower they stand in will crumble as soon as the power of the *lost arc* fades. If he has to fight to death, he promises to kill these people who tried to turn his oldest friend against him. (Try to draw some obvious parallels in speech patterns between Silvestri and Nicodemus here.)

Kasvarina

Kasvarina's response depends on her mental stability. If at 0 or below, she says that after what she caused, she has the responsibility to fix it. She readily joins Nicodemus in attacking the party.

If at 1 to 9, she'll waffle until the memory-event ends, which might adjust her demeanor. In the meanwhile, she switches between allied and hostile round by round.

At 10 or higher, she refuses to aid Nicodemus and will try to fight him, though he might be able to take her out with a single action at the start of combat if the party didn't mitigate the beating she took in the memory-event.

At 20 or higher, she feigns being loyal to Nicodemus long enough for him to let her go, and then she ambushes him.

Colossus

The *lost arc* simultaneously restores Kasvarina's memories and the colossus's. Once Nic finishes his plea, Borne is wholly loyal and will fight to protect its master. No matter what the party says, the colossus is too indoctrinated to change its course now.

Nicodemus's history and motivations are detailed in the *Campaign Guide*. He seldom reveals his true ghostly form, preferring to wear the bodies of others. Currently he resides in the body of Andrei von Recklinghausen, and he's thinking of staying.

Andrei was 'born' two years ago, reanimated from several stitched-together corpses. Possessed of supernatural healing and the ability to drain life with a touch, Andrei at first loathed his existence. He eventually attracted the attention of the Obscurati, who captured him and forced him to serve as the body for the leader of the conspiracy, Nicodemus the Gnostic.

Andrei believes his will might be strong enough to overcome the mastermind for a while, but he hasn't seen the right opportunity to make a break for freedom.

Interruption

If the party interrupts, Nicodemus breaks away and keeps his distance, flying out of the tower and out of sight if possible, but he keeps talking to Borne. Even if forced into a fight, he'll shout to Borne that they're afraid to let it hear what he's saying. That's enough to bring Borne into the fight, unless the party can do some impressive counter-philosophizing. Even that will only stay the colossus's hand for a few rounds, not turn its loyalty away from the Obscurati.

Countdown to Collapse

Action. Tactical. Level 21.

The Lance of Triegenes will collapse soon, and Nicodemus means to see the party dead.

The party should have the information they came for—Stanfield is a member of the conspiracy, the Ob are plotting to assassinate King Aodhan, and Flint is in peril. So at this point, surrounded by the Danoran army, with the colossus trying to kill them, they could simply run. All it would take is opening the locked portal gates and hopping through one.

Of course, players have a habit of wanting to beat the villains. And Nicodemus knew about the portals and doesn't want the party escaping. So this encounter has several elements active.

Chevron Locks

Each of the four portals has a mechanical chevron lock that circles the outside platinum loop, working something like an egg timer. The chevron can hold five positions, and moving it from one to the next requires a move action to grab and turn it. A given portal can shift no more than two positions each round, no matter how many people try to move it. At initiative count 0 each round, each portal shifts to one lower position unless someone is present and holding onto the chevron.

- **Position One.** 9-o'clock. The portal is wholly deactivated.
- **Position Two.** 12-o'clock. The portal is starting to activate, and the destination can be seen faintly.
- **Position Three.** 3-o'clock. The destination is now fully visible, but you cannot go through it yet.
- **Position Four.** 6-o'clock. The portal is active.
- **Position Five.** Just shy of 9-o'clock. The portal is active.

The actual destination of the portals don't matter, because when the party goes through them they'll end up in the Dreaming in Risur regardless. But for those who are curious, east is Alais Primos, south is Sid Minos, west is Cherage, and north is Trekhom.

Dimensional Lock

Nicodemus has activated and carries a *dimensional lockstone*, which stops teleportation and planar travel within a 40-ft. radius. This is enough that he can stop the party from exiting via any one portal, possibly two if he orients himself just right, but he cannot cover all of them. If he sees the party get a portal open to position two or three, he'll maneuver to keep them from escaping. He might also use spells like *solid fog* and *wall of force* to stymie their movements.

Colossus in Melee

Borne clings to the tower with one hand at a level just below the balconies, with its feet digging into the stone some two hundred and fifty feet further down. Keep track of what side of the tower its torso and head is on, because the tower blocks his line of sight. As a move action it can adjust 45 degrees in either direction. As a minor action it can change which arm it's using to hold onto the tower, but not if it used *crushing fist* or *swipe* this turn.

He uses three main attack methods, and can perform one each round.

- **Spirit Cascade.** The colossus glares, and spirits from its witchoil-fueled engine fly out. *Attack:* Area burst 2 within 240; +23 vs. Fortitude. *Hit:* 3d12+10 necrotic damage and the target is weakened (save ends).
- **Crushing Fist.** The colossus brings its fist down. It is obvious to creatures in the area that the colossus is swinging for them. The colossus chooses area burst 1 it can see. At the start of its next turn, make the following attack. *Attack:* Area burst 1 (creatures in burst); +23 vs. Reflex. *Hit:* 100 damage. *Miss:* Half damage.
- **Swipe.** The colossus tries to knock people off their footing. It chooses a 15-ft. wide, 30-ft. long swath and swings its hand through from one direction to the other. At the start of its next turn, make the following attack. *Attack:* Area (3 by 6 square swath, creature in area); +23 vs. Fortitude. *Hit:* 3d12+10 damage and the target is slid 6 squares to the far end of the swath. *Special:* Borne can also use this ability to try to brush off creatures that have climbed onto it.

The colossus is practically indestructible. PCs might move onto it in order to get out of the way of its attacks, which should entail an Acrobatics or Athletics check (DC 20) for each movement. But damaging it is infeasible.

That said, the tower it is holding onto is just magically-reinforced stone. Dealing at least 100 damage to the spot it is holding causes the spot to crumble. The colossus will desperately grab onto the nearest balcony, which cracks under the strain but holds. The colossus is unable to attack on its following two rounds as it struggles to climb back up. If this second hand-hold is destroyed, the colossus falls away, and actually does take substantial damage from the thousand-foot plummet. It won't be able to rejoin the fight.

Other tricks can likewise disrupt the colossus's grip, such as coating the tower with ice, creating an earthquake, or even just reshaping the stone or conjuring a ton of grease.

Nicodemus's Tactics

His goal is to keep the party here while the colossus finishes them off, so he stays mobile, spiderclimbing and flying while throwing ampoules of poison gas or casting spells to split the party or make it dangerous to open the various portals. He starts by dropping poison gas in the central chamber to make it hazardous, then uses his übergeist power to cast *thoughtseize*.

He watches where the colossus attacks, and if a PC has gotten a portal open to position two or three, and isn't about to be crushed by a colossus fist, Nicodemus will use *variable barrier* to seal off portals, or *arcane lock* to jam a portal and create a physical lock that must be disabled to keep opening the portal.

He normally only uses unarmed strikes for opportunity attacks, but if he has the party sufficiently divided, he might wade into melee with a vulnerable PC. His übergeist ability makes him resistant to most one-shot takedowns, and Andrei's body regenerates, but if the party can knock him out, Nic's spirit form manifests to keep on fighting. But this gives the party a chance to toss the *dimensional lockstone* away, giving them a way to escape.

If the party looks like they're about to escape, he'll focus on dominating PCs with *thoughtseize*, in hopes of forcing the party to delay and free their friend from the spell.

Kasvarina's Tactics

If on the party's side, she lends *long-forgotten flight* to melee characters, then joins them in chasing after Nicodemus. If hostile to the party, she *blinds* and *geases* them to make it harder for them to open the portals.

If her loyalties are divided, she fights with them one round, against them the next. After this happens twice, she'll shout for the party to run, then will leap off the tower (knowing that she can fly). Borne panics and desperately grabs her, which causes it to lose its grip and barely manage to hold on by grabbing one of the balconies. This takes it out of the combat for at least four rounds.

Victory by Time

After ten rounds (or if Kasvarina dies or falls off the tower), the lights start to flicker as the *lost arc*'s powers fade. Thereafter the tower begins to creak and pieces start to cleave off. Ten rounds later the whole place fragments and the colossus loses its grip and falls away, while the central gem in the floor snaps and falls. Two rounds after that, the whole place starts to fall apart, but waves of magic burst out from all the portals, catching everyone present. Nicodemus is torn from his body, but the party, Andrei von Recklinghausen, and possibly Kasvarina all end up scattered in the Dreaming.

Deus ex Portal

If the party is all knocked out or killed, the last conscious PC sees the tower shake and the portals go out of control. The next thing he knows the whole party is lying on grass somewhere unfamiliar. At the start of the next adventure, the fey of the Dreaming can bring back the recently slain in exchange for a favor.

Nicodemus the Gnostic — Level 20 Solo Controller
Medium natural humanoid — **XP** 14000

HP 768; **Threshold I** 512; **Threshold II** 256 — **Initiative** +14
Regeneration 10 (Stage 1 & 2)
AC 34, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 34 — **Perception** +16
Speed 8, climb 4 (spiderclimb), fly 8 (hover) — Darkvision
Immune poison; **Vulnerable** radiant 10
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 1

Traits

⊘ **Dimensional Lockstone** ✦ Aura 8
All teleportation and planar travel into, out of, or within the aura fails.

▸ **Ghost in a Man's Body**
The flesh of Andrei von Recklinghausen was stitched together from several men and empowered through dark magic with unnatural strength and healing ability. Inside that body, however, resides the spirit of Nicodemus.
Nicodemus has three 'stages' separated by a pair of HP thresholds. When his HP is reduced below each threshold, his abilities change. If he is below Threshold I, he counts as bloodied.

In all forms, Nicodemus can be affected by *turn undead* and similar powers that specifically affect undead.

▸ **Regeneration** ✦ Stage 1 & 2
Nicodemus regains 10 HP whenever he starts his turn and has at least 257 HP. When he takes fire or acid damage, his regeneration does not function on his next turn. Once reduced to 256 HP or below, Nicodemus's spirit leaves the body of Andrei von Recklinghausen. If Andrei is not killed, he heals to 1 HP after a short rest.

▸ **Übergeist**
A master of necromancy, Nicodemus has integrated various other spirits into his own form. Four bound spirits glide behind him like the tail of a comet.
As long as Nicodemus has at least one bound spirit, he can take an extra standard action on his turn.

As a free action on his turn he can release one of the four spirits in order to end all negative status effects affecting him.

If Nicodemus is caught in the area of Borne's *spirit cascade*, he regains one bonded spirit.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Draining Touch** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic (Stage 1 & 2)
Where your skin and his touch, the chill of the grave suffuses your flesh.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 4d6+14 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 (Stage 1 & 2)
He grabs you and flings you with a single arm.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. Reflex
Hit: 4d8+12 damage, and either the target is grabbed (Escape DC 25) or Nicodemus slides the target 3 squares.

✲ **Variable Barrier** ✦ At-Will (Stage 1 & 2)
He snaps out a scroll and reads a spell, conjuring some barrier before you.
Effect: Nicodemus chooses one of the following effects. He can use each once per encounter.

- ✦ **Acid Fog.** Area burst 3 within 10, 2 squares high. Movement costs are increased by 3 squares per 5 ft. Creatures entering or ending their turn in the area take 10 acid damage.

- ✦ **Blade Barrier.** Wall 8 within 10, 4 squares high. A creature that enters or ends its turn in the area is attacked. Atk: +25 vs. AC. Hit: 4d10+6 damage and the target is pushed back out of the wall.
- ✦ **Wall of Force.** Wall 8 within 10, 4 squares high. Wall is invisible and impenetrable.
- ✦ **Wall of Hellfire.** Wall 8 within 10, 4 squares high. Creatures ending their turn in the area take 20 fire damage. Entering the wall deals 20 fire damage for each 5 ft. traveled through.
- ✦ **Wall of Ice.** Wall 8 within 10, 4 squares high. Creatures in the wall when it manifests are shunted to either side and can make a save to choose which side. Creatures who enter or end their turns in a space adjacent to the wall take 10 cold damage. Each 5-ft. square of the hall has 20 hit points.
- ✦ **Web of Storms.** Area burst 3 within 10, 7 squares high. Creatures that enter or end their turn in the area are restrained (Escape DC 25). Restrained creatures take ongoing 10 lightning damage.

Sustain free.

Philosophical Fist (fire) ✦ At-Will, Basic (Stage 3)
Cinders trail his hands as his spirit body engages you in close combat.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6+14 damage, and the target takes ongoing 20 fire damage (save ends).

Bind Spirit (radiant) ✦ Encounter (Stage 3)
Cinders trail his hands as his spirit body engages you in close combat.
Attack: Close burst 1 (one creature in burst); +23 vs. Will
Hit: 4d8+30 radiant damage. If the creature is bloodied after this attack, its body falls limp as its spirit is bound to Nicodemus's (save ends). Any damage or conditions dealt to Nicodemus are dealt to the bound target instead. When the target is reduced to 0 HP, it is released and Nicodemus recharges this power.

▸ **Flurry of Blows** ✦ At-Will
Effect: Nicodemus makes two melee attacks (*draining touch*, *hurl*, or at Stage 3 *philosophical fist*).

Thoughtseize (charm, psychic) ✦ At-Will
A spirit flies from Nicodemus and burrows into your mind, taking control of your body like a puppet.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +23 vs. Will
Hit: 3d6+17 psychic damage and Nicodemus slides the target its speed. The target is then immobilized until the end of Nicodemus's next turn. The target uses an at-will attack power against a target of Nicodemus's choice either before or after the forced movement.

▸ **Nightmare Ampoules** (poison) ✦ Encounter
He draws a handful of glass vials and smashes them across the area. Clouds of green vapor fill the air, and when you inhale a whiff the world starts to bend at the edges of your vision.
Effect: Nicodemus targets four spaces within 6 squares. Each becomes the center of an area burst 2 zone that lasts until the end of the encounter. (This should be enough to fill the central tower chamber.)

Adjacent creatures in the zone have concealment. Creatures separated by one or more squares have total concealment.

Whenever a creature enters or ends its turn in the area, it takes 10 poison damage and must make a saving throw. If it fails, it is blinded until the end of its next turn.

Minor Actions

▸ **Arcane Lock** ✦ At-Will
He reaches a hand out as if to manipulate one of the portals, which suddenly locks up.
Effect: Nicodemus chooses a portal he can see. Until the end of the encounter or until he uses this power again, that portal won't close on its own, and it can only be opened if a creature succeeds a Strength check (DC 25).

Triggered Actions

▸ **Obscured by Smoke** ✦ Encounter (Stage 1)
Reeling a bit, he makes a flicking gesture as if tossing away a cigarette, and thick black smoke surrounds him.
Trigger: Nicodemus is reduced to 512 HP or below.
Effect: All negative effects affecting Nicodemus end and he gains an action point. Smoke fills close burst 5, lasting until the end of Nicodemus's next turn. This smoke provides total concealment.

▸ **Exorcised** ✦ Encounter (Stage 2)
Trigger: Nicodemus is reduced to 256 HP or below.
Effect: Nicodemus's spirit leaves the now-unconscious body of Andrei von Recklinghausen. All negative effects affecting him end and he gains an action point. He gains insubstantial and phasing. He cannot use *draining touch, hurl*, or *variable barrier*, but he gains *philosophical fist* and *bind spirit*.

Skills Arcana +19, Bluff +21, Diplomacy +21, Insight +21

Str	40 (+25)	**Dex**	18 (+14)	**Wis**	23 (+16)
Con	28 (+19)	**Int**	19 (+14)	**Cha**	22 (+16)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Primordial

Aftermath

If he is reduced to 0 hit points, Nicodemus's ghostly spirit slowly burns up from his extremities, much like the pages of a book set aflame, or the cherry of a cigarette turning to ash. He sags and tries to put on a mocking smile, but then spams with pain and manages to yell, "You, the Clergy, all of you! You keep trying to kill me! But you can't kill an idea." Then he burns away. He'll return later, once his ghost form rejuvenates.

A hostile Kasvarina fights until things look untenable, then tries to leap away and teleport once she's out of range of the *dimensional lockstone*. She might return later, but if she dies her role later could be replaced.

An allied Kasvarina will not abandon the party, and might even throw herself atop a vulnerable PC if he's about to be crushed by the colossus. If possible, though, she'll try to leave with the party. (She won't end up where they do, though.)

Andrei might still survive and be able to regenerate, but if the colossus has not been knocked away, taking out Nicodemus won't stop its attacks. The party still needs to escape, and whether they do it on their own terms or are whisked away when the memory-event (and the tower) collapses, they realize immediately that this is no normal teleportation, as the world gushes color and jagged leaves slice their skin. Then they land in an unfamiliar forest. Kasvarina is nowhere to be seen.

I Don't Think We're in Danor Anymore

Exploration. Real-Time. Level 20.

A teleportation mishap traps the party in the Dreaming.

As the PCs get their bearings, they hear pipes and fiddles playing a jaunty but unmistakably militant tune. Through the woods in one direction they spy cavorting figures coming their way. Then from the opposite side, guttural wooping and the beating of wooden drums marks the approach of a second force.

A pixie swoops past them, and it shouts to the drummers, "Here they are! Attack!"

Battle cries ululate from both directions, and within moments the party will be in the midst of a fey melee. But that will be a problem to handle next adventure.

Adventure Number 9

The Last Starry Sky

From the Pen of	Ryan Nock
From an Initial Treatment by	Matthew J. Hanson
Conversion and Additional Material by	Russell Torres
Evocative Cover Illustration by	ShenFei
Stunning Cartographic Displays by	James Hazelett Jonathan Roberts
Masterful Interior Illustrations by	Dennis Darmody Renan Moraes Claudio Pozas Eleni Tsami and artists of history
with Layout and Graphic Design by	Frank Michienzi
Ably Produced and Facilitated by	Russell Morrissey

Special Thanks to Kristina Gallogly, tactical advisor for the Voice of Rot; and to Hirou, chief propagandist for the Obscurati.

ADVENTURE NINE: Introduction

Wherein the Bad Guys Save the World

The party is trapped in the Dreaming, the realm of the fey that exists as a bright reflection of reality. And in the real world, the conspiracy known as the Obscurati are about to assassinate the king of Risur and perform a grand ritual that will alter the fabric of reality. Stars will vanish from the sky and new worlds will appear, lending their magical essence to usher in a new age. The Obscurati plot not an age of darkness or tyranny, but rather an age of reason: a well-intentioned world of progress and empathy that will soon spiral disastrously out of their control.

The Last Starry Sky serves as climax to Act Two of the Zeitgeist campaign, which by necessity will end with a bittersweet victory for the PCs. By gaining the favor of the fey's Unseen Court and tricking an untrustworthy fey titan, the party can return to the real world, perhaps saving Risur's king in time or possibly having one of their own assume his crown after he falls. But their main objective must be to stop Roland Stanfield, the city governor of Flint, who has been part of the conspiracy all along. The villain activates an eldritch machine on an island in the Flint harbor, and an entire fleet stands in the party's way.

Once they reach the island, their battle seems to shake the heavens, and they'll need to wield a falling star as a weapon to slay Stanfield. But as he dies, the governor reveals what the party may have already deduced: that his ritual is just one of many, and while Risur might be safe, the rest of the world is now loyal to the Obscurati.

Background

If you haven't read any of the other adventures in the campaign, you can find an overview of the Obscurati conspiracy's plot in the Zeitgeist Campaign Guide. Before we get to the Ob's plans, though, here's what's going on in the Dreaming.

Dangers in the Dreaming

A teleportation accident at the end of Adventure Eight lands the party in the Dreaming, near the fey capital city of Clover (which is a reflection of the real world capital of Risur, Slate). Fluctuations of planar energy due to the Obscurati's pending ritual make it impossible for the PCs to use any method they know to travel back to the real world. Perhaps the Unseen Court can help them get home, in exchange for some help with a wee dilemma.

The Unseen Court is at war with a rival faction of powerful fey, who call themselves the Hedgehog Court for reasons that make sense to faeries. The Unseen Court has for decades put up with the increase of technology in Risur—technology that makes areas of the Dreaming uninhabitable—since they still received regular tributes from the Risuri nobility. The Hedgehog Court has denounced Risur's industrial revolution, and has stoked tensions and anger among the 'common' fey. It has also offered aid to adherents of the traditional druidic faith in the real world, fought proxy battles through contacts in the Vekeshi Mystics, and given favors to saboteurs like the 'fey terrorist' **Hana Soliogn**, known as Gale.

But until recently, the two courts had never openly fought. The monarch of the Unseen Court, the androgynous and mirror-masked **Thisraldion**, has ignored the criticism; among the fey, being perceived as a strong leader often depends on aloof detachment and ostentatious decadence, which Thisraldion excels at. But **Olazdor**, the aquiline leader of the Hedgehog Court, recently made a slight against Thisraldion that the fey monarch could not ignore.

Rock is Dead. Really This Time.

Four months ago, a minor but notorious fey named **Copperhat the Headless** brought over into the Dreaming a famous performer from the real world, **Rock Rackus**. Though few in the Risur believe Rock's stories, in the past few years he became famous for claiming he'd traveled to the moon and cuckolded the fey king. In truth, Rock had just drunkenly insulted who he thought was the 'king,' then slept with who he thought was the 'queen,' but they were the same person; Thisraldion's mask reflects the viewer's perceptions of himself, and Rock is uniquely narcissistic to think he is both kingly and an object of lusty desire.

Thisraldion and Rock rekindled their former romance, but Olazdor contacted Rackus and told him of the struggle of the Hedgehog Court and how, like many of Rock's fans in the real world, he and his followers were oppressed and fighting against authority. Over the course of several months Rock inadvertently became a hero to both sides. One night he might sing for the common fey of the beauty and debauchery of his lover Thisraldion, and the next day he'd attend a rally denouncing 'the power' and calling for people to prepare for a fight.

Three weeks ago, Rock slipped away from Thisraldion's bed while the fey monarch slept, had a few more drinks to steady himself, and made his way to a meeting of the Hedgehog Court. He never made it, and the next morning his body was found in a graffiti-covered tunnel. An arrow tipped by an eagle talon pierced his heart, and his head had been severed by a single, impossibly sharp slice.

Assumptions

Thisraldion blamed Olazdor for killing the royal consort. Olazdor claimed Thisraldion learned that Rock was spying for the Hedgehog Court and had him murdered. An oracle was asked to name the killer, and said that he could not see who killed Rock Rackus. Nevertheless, each side quickly armed and—in proper fey fashion—scheduled when they would go to war.

A forest outside of Clover, dotted with groves and clearings similar to a chessboard, has for the past week hosted battles between forces loyal to each side. While the behavior might seem more sporting than militant, dozens have already died and it's only a matter of time before someone assassinates one of the leaders, which will spark a civil war.

That is Not Dead Which Can Eternal Lie

The truth is, Rock Rackus isn't dead. Copperhat secretly works for the fey titan known as the **Voice of Rot**, an immense serpent of decaying white flesh, who wishes to keep the fey of the Dreaming too busy fighting to notice what he is planning.

When the time was right, Copperhat abducted Rock, 'killed' a fake body, and stored the real man in *the absurdist web*, an extraplanar space accessible by various wads of spider-web that Copperhat carries. Creatures placed in the web enter a stasis, and by dint of being in an extradimensional space most efforts to solve the mystery through brute force divinations fail.

The two sides immediately began blaming each other for Rock's murder, and now the Voice of Rot has killed the observers the Unseen Court usually set to be prepared for fey titan activity.

A Serpent Coiled Across Two Worlds

The five fey titans—the Voice of Rot, the Father of Thunder, the Ash Wolf, She Who Writhes, and Granny Allswell—are each massive lords of certain parts of Risur's terrain. They have existed since the dawn of time, and their bodies exist in both the real world and the Dreaming. At the foundation of Risur seventeen centuries ago, King Kelland subdued the titans and forced them to sleep and hand their lands over to mortals.

From time to time one of the titans will awaken and rampage, and the current king or queen has been responsible for defeating him or her. The last time the Voice of Rot caused trouble was five centuries ago. 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 his fey logic, saw that he 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 his 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.

Adapting the Adventure

To use this adventure outside of Zeitgeist, each act can stand alone. The fey murder mystery of Act One could involve an established friend of the PCs, or you could tone down the weird a bit and set it as courtly intrigue among human nobles. The palace siege of Act Two could be adapted to any high-level climax to protect a VIP, or you could turn the tables and use it as a villainous base the party is assaulting. And Act Three's island assault could be to stop whatever manner of dark ritual your campaign demands.

If you want the adventure all together as a high-level stand-alone, the fey realm might be allies, and the party can be sent to the Dreaming to find a member of the conspiracy who knows when and where the Ob's ritual will occur. Copperhat, instead of serving the Voice of Rot, is an agent of the conspiracy, out to cause a civil war and distract the fey so they cannot help.

Ending the Campaign Here

If you plan to use this adventure as the end of the campaign, then the ritual in Flint *is* the main one to alter reality. In Act One, the Voice of Rot can provide knowledge of dying worlds that the party could link to instead of the ones the Ob has planned. In Act Three, Nicodemus and the colossus are with the Danoran fleet in Flint Harbor. The colossus carries with it the 200-ft. diameter golden seal from Axis Island, as well as eight white stone pillars that can be linked to different planes. See Campaign Notes: Friendly Death (page 246) and Alternate Finale (page 260).

PCs in the Conspiracy

If the party decided to join the Obscurati, their mission first takes them to the Dreaming to ensure Risur cannot call upon their allies. Then they return to the real world (getting clues that the Voice of Rot might be up to something) and help sabotage the Flint naval garrison so the Danorans can seize the harbor. Rather than attacking Torfeld Palace, they protect Stanfield's fortress from the king and his allies.

The Voice of Rot is the only one of the five titans awake and active today, having been roused from its torpor by Obscurati excavations to explore an ancient ruin in the High Bayou. During Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*, the party likely met the serpent and were given a mission to avoid his wrath. The Ob's dig, though, made the titan aware of the plot to open the Axis Seal. Since then he has acted subtly, sending emissaries to cults across the world (such as Grandis Komanov's radical eschatologists), steering the world toward its death.

As a primordial entity, the Voice of Rot is a literal manifestation of the concept of death in this world, and as such his ultimate goal is to witness the world's end. Most of his plans come to light in Adventure Twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*. For now, he is waiting for the Ob to perform their ritual, and has agents ready to ensure they fail to properly seal the world off from the rest of the multiverse.

As for the party, the Voice of Rot previously needed them to disrupt the Obscurati (and by carrying the *absurdist web* that Copperhat offered them, they let him listen in and learn the conspiracy's plans). Without the party's interference, the Voice of Rot's agents among the radical eschatologists of Drakr would not have had time to get into place on Axis Island.

Though the titan is ultimately a foe of the party's and would gladly see them dead, as a fey being he is still bound by the pact made with the first king of Risur, and so cannot simply kill the PCs, who are merely agents of the king. Indeed, the Unseen Court will advise the party to retrieve the Sword of Dukain, and then surrender. This will compel the Voice of Rot to banish the party from the Dreaming back to the real world.

METAGAMING CONCERNS

Precisely when the assassination plot against King Aodhan occurs involves a bit of narrative hand-waving. Thanks to the oddities of fey magic, the assassins will always strike just after the PCs get back from the Dreaming.

For an in-world explanation, the portals from Methia in adventure eight led to no place in particular, so the teleportation magic reverted to taking the party where they wanted to go, ultimately: their homeland Risur, to report their findings. Then the planar fluctuations kicked them into the Dreaming instead of the real world. The passage of time in the Dreaming, always a bit wibbly-wobbly, makes it impossible for them to know quite what day it is in the real world.

We admit it was a slight bit of a railroad to have the party whisked away by out-of-control teleportation magic, and it might seem a bit railroady to dictate that they'll pretty much always arrive at Act Two 'in the nick of time.' But the events that occur in the Dreaming set up key elements for the final four adventures, so we feel the detour is justified.

That said, if the party somehow found a way out of Methia without teleporting, they can make their way by land and sea to the king in Slate. If so, we recommend you have the king send the party to the Dreaming, to call upon the old alliance between Risur and the Unseen Court. You'll want to highlight the involvement of fey allies in the second and third acts of this adventure, to show that their mission was pivotal in saving the day.

If the fey titan defeats them, he will keep them as prisoners. While he's capable of simply winning in secret, the fey titan compulsively needs someone to witness his victory. This will necessitate running adventure 12 before 10 and 11, should the party fail here.

Obscurati Endgame

Meanwhile in the real world, the Ob now have the colossus under their control, and they have loaded it onto a massive barge bound for Axis Island. Part of the Danoran fleet escorts it, while the rest sail *en masse* for the city of Flint. It is time for the Ob's endgame, and Sovereign Han Jierre is risking a war if their plans fail.

Nicodemus the Gnostic, head of the conspiracy, has gone to Axis Island to oversee the primary ritual, leaving the ritual in Flint to **Governor Roland Stanfield** (and similar rituals to equivalent conspirators in other countries). The fleet that targets Flint harbor is commanded by the ghost of **Lya Jierre** (or the ghost of one of the previous Jierre scions, if events make it impossible for Lya to return as an antagonist).

The main stumbling block for the Ob's plan is **King Aodhan**, ruler of Risur. Aodhan is fully aware of the Ob's plan (thanks to the PCs), and so will be able to resist their new world order. As long as he holds out against the Ob's control, so will the rest of Risur. So the Ob has spent the past few months preparing an assasination plot, led by **Catherine Romana**, a Risuri noblewoman (or perhaps her ghost if she died in adventure Seven, *Schism*). When the time is right, the Ob will activate *wayfarer lanterns* to draw the entire royal palace into the Bleak Gate, where various monsters await, including an army of the dead.

Adventure Overview

Picking up the cliffhanger from the end of adventure eight, the party is pincered between the two warring factions of fey. A young fey, the backward-footed **Rambylon**, can usher the party out of harm's way and to a gathering of minor nobles who watch the battle from a nearby hilltop, quite enjoying the show. Their gossip fills the party in on the situation to date, and points the party toward the city of Clover to visit the Unseen Court for aid. Meanwhile Rambylon asks the party to meet with the Hedgehog Court.

Each court sees the party as a chance to gain an upper hand, and both sides ask them to investigate Rackus's murder.

Thisraldion claims (falsely) to know how to get the party home, and promises to share the information once Olazdor is found guilty and defeated. Olazdor admits to *not* knowing how to help the party, but immediately has the Hedgehog Court's minions start searching fey libraries for clues. He would appreciate finding Thisraldion guilty, of course.

The evidence around Rock's death is damning against both sides, and witness testimony about the days leading up to the murder is made confusing by the fact that Rock himself wasn't aware that he was befriending both sides of a conflict. **Beshela, Archfey of the Sea** tries to stymie the party's investigation out of a desire to protect Olazdor who she assumes actually is guilty. **Atsla**, icy lady of the Unseen Court, attempts to frame Thisraldion so she can ascend to the leadership, and Thisraldion in turn puts the party in a death trap and tries to pin it on Atsla.

Copperhat the Headless seems particularly distraught that his favorite drinking partner was stolen from him, but ultimately the party can manage to determine that Copperhat staged a fake murder to cause pandemonium. It then falls to the party to decide whether to accept Copperhat's offer to get them back home with the aid of his master the Voice of Rot, possibly leaving the fey at war or presenting false evidence so one Court comes out on top.

Or they could pin the crime on Copperhat, who flees into the ongoing battles in the chessboard forest, hoping to evade capture. Rescuing Rock Rackus can end the war and gain the aid from both sides, but then presents the party with the daunting prospect of fighting the Voice of Rot and forcing him to send them back home. (No other fey titan can be roused from its slumber quickly enough to get its aid.)

By traveling with Copperhat or by riding with the infamous Great Hunt atop their impossibly fast steeds, the party reaches the Voice of Rot in the Black Needles. Though they aren't strong enough to defeat the colossal serpent, if they can survive his onslaught, reach King Dukain's sword, and draw it from a rotted tree stump, the ancient pact between the titans and Risur will let them surrender and be 'punished' by exile back to the real world.

Save the King

Back in the real world, the party heads to Torfeld Palace in Slate, and barely has time to warn the king before the Ob launch their multi-pronged assassination plot. Operatives in the Bleak Gate activate six *wayfarer lanterns*, which make the real world and the Bleak Gate coterminous. Agents attempt to place anchoring amulets around the palace, which within five minutes will fully transition the building and its surroundings into the realm of the dead.

Aodhan's Allies

When the Ob's assassination plot strikes, Aodhan will be defended by his principal minister **Harkover Lee** (in truth a polymorphed dragon, a secret known only to Aodhan), and by the Torfeld Palace Guard, led by **Dame Jillian the Green Knight**. Additionally, the eladrin dreadnought **Asrabey Varal** has recently arrived from the Elfaivar, and will join the fight. Everyone here is a certifiable bad-ass, and although the Ob are throwing everything they have at the party, the players should feel like they're nearly invincible.

Once the attack begins, the RHC's minister of infiltration **Lauryn Cyneburg** teleports in, finds out what's happening, and then leaves to rally allies, but unless the party can disrupt the Ob's plot they'll arrive too late.

The attackers deploy magic-disrupting chaff grenades, swarms of undead, a skeletal dragon, and the varied arcane powers of the Obscurati's ghost council. In the midst of this, Risuri noblewoman **Catherine Romana** attempts a coup, while the ghostly sniper **Amielle Latimer** tries to aid the party without the rest of the ghost council realizing her duplicity.

The party can end the assault by breaking the six lanterns, or possibly retuning them to transition part of the palace into the Dreaming (and thus gaining the aid of the two fey courts). They need to decide whether to stay with the king to protect him, or to split up and tackle the threats more quickly. Barring heroic measures by the party (well, more heroic than usual), the king will die here if he hasn't already, and can name one PC to take his crown.

KING OR QUEEN

Think of who among your PCs would make a good monarch. If none would, Viscount Nigel Price-Hill is chosen to succeed the king. Or Aodhan might survive, in which case we don't intend to try to kill him again during the course of the campaign. Adventure ten assumes a PC monarch will need to subdue the fey titans, but Aodhan might assign the task to the party because he intends to name one as his successor, and he thinks they're better suited than he is.

The Grand Ritual

While the king is being assassinated, Governor Stanfield calls to his mansion-fortress **Chief Inspector Stover Delft**, head of the RHC in Flint. Stanfield has Delft imprisoned in the central keep, guarded by mimics and oblivious Risuri soldiers. He then has an impostor in an illusory disguise deliver bad intelligence to the naval patrols that guard Flint, passing along false orders to sail out and 'stop the Danoran advance.'

The Danoran fleet of course knows to expect the Flint garrison, and they win the engagement handily, then sail into Flint harbor practically unopposed. Stanfield enacts the precautions that would normally occur in the event of an invasion—evacuating all non-essential personnel from his mansion/fortress, and destroying the bridge that leads to the governor's island. The last messages he sends out are to not engage the Danorans, and to wait for reinforcements from Slate. The public assumes their city is under siege, and they have no idea Stanfield is an enemy.

Stanfield, meanwhile, assumes that the reinforcements from Slate will arrive too late to make a difference. By the time the leaders in Slate learn what has happened in Flint, the ritual should already be in its nascent stages, with stars already drifting from their once-fixed points in the sky.

Rallying Flint

Either by riding with the Great Hunt or sailing aboard the swift *R.N.S. Impossible* (docked in Slate as a precaution once it became apparent long-range teleportation was no longer viable), the party can reach Flint with a few hours to spare. A magical barricade surrounds the island, which could possibly be shattered with sustained firepower.

They might sneak aboard the mighty *R.N.S. Coaltongue* in drydock and sail into battle against the Danorans, or contact **Hana "Gale" Soliogn** and use her wind magic to address the entire city at once and send up a call to arms, or use their contacts among the Family, the Vekeshi Mystics, and the common workers of the city to clear a path for them to the governor's island. They even receive an unexpected—albeit dangerous—boon when Beshela, the archfey of the sea, tells them that she has steered the just-awakened She Who Writhes to Flint harbor, and the kraken-like titan will begin sinking Danoran ships. Well, any ships really, but the party can probably avoid her wrath if they're quick.

Governors Galore

Once the party can get a few minutes to concentrate fire on the shield around the island, they find the soldiers inside confused, but it's possible to bring them around to join the fight. Stover Delft is leading them, or rather his impostor, and he'll try to lure the party into a trap once they enter the mansion-fortress.

The building is guarded by numerous versions of Governor Stanfield, who has learned how to manifest his past incarnations. A secondary defensive shield protects the *wayfarer lighthouse*, forcing the party to disrupt the eldritch device that is draining Delft's life force.

This leaves only the final confrontation with 'primary' Stanfield atop the wayfarer's lighthouse. His incarnations try to hold the party off as he adjusts the flow of planar energies, but when he is defeated a falling star strikes and destroys the lighthouse, seemingly killing Stanfield.

FLEXIBLE TIMELINE

We assume events start on the 37th of Winter, three days after the season's second first-quarter moon (known traditionally as the Orphan's Moon). The party has until noon on the 39th to name Rock's killer, and after riding for 12 hours they'll confront the Voice of Rot around midnight. They'll return to the real world, and then it's another 12-hour ride back to Slate (and the party should probably squeeze a few hours' rest in here somewhere). The evening of the 40th they'll deal with the assassination attempt against King Aodhan, and they have until late in the night of the 41st to stop the ritual in Flint.

In Risur, both the real world and the Dreaming, winters are dry and chill, but never snowy except in highest mountains.

KASVARINA AND ANDREI

At the end of adventure eight, the party might have managed to teleport away with Kasvarina Varal and/or Andrei von Recklinghausen. If so, the teleport sent Kasvarina where she most wanted to go: Elfaivar. (From a meta standpoint, we don't want her around to explain to the party that the main Obscurati ritual is on Axis Island. The party will, we hope, think everything is happening in Flint, so it will be a surprise when the villains manage to take over the rest of the world.) Kasvarina will return in adventure thirteen, *Avatar of Revolution*.

Andrei, though, travels with the party. When not possessed by Nicodemus he is not strong enough to really aid the party in battle, though his agility could make him a useful spy. He desires to find Isobel, and is willing to do that either through the Dreaming or the Waking.

But as the party picks themselves up amid the debris, the deva governor reincarnates a final time, now a monstrous rakshasa. The party finds themselves bereft of all but the simplest magic, and Stanfield taunts them—as a few final falling stars land around him—that this was only a secondary ritual, and the main one on Axis Island must be already complete. All that remains for him before he becomes ruler of a new, better Risur is to kill the party.

A blow delivered with a piece of a falling star will slay Stanfield for good, but as the dust clears the party will look skyward and see unfamiliar heavens.

Adventure Layout

The Last Starry Sky's plot has three main acts. Each act has a fairly specific beginning and climax, but the party can take many different paths through each act. We roughly divide events as follows:

- **Act One: Much Ado.** The party solves a murder to get out of the Dreaming.
- **Act Two: Long Live the King.** In a group of fellow bad-asses, the party fights off numerous assassination attempts.
- **Act Three: Pillars of Heaven.** The party finds a way through layers of defenses to stop a world-shaking ritual.
- **Appendix E: Recurring Enemies & Allies.** Stats of the two fey courts and allies in the real world.
- **Appendix G: Magic and Training.** Things of value the party can acquire.
- **Appendix J: Player Handouts.** Details of the magic of Risur's monarchy.

Key Locations

During this adventure permanent planar travel or long-distance teleportation is impossible. Make sure you have a clear sense of each of these locations, and how the party might travel between them.

Location	Page
Black Needles	241
Clover	220
Flint	247
Slate	247

Black Needles. These steep spires, where the Anthras Mountains meet the perpetually rain-shrouded High Bayou, are encased in immense swaths of ancient spider webs that act as dams. An old megalith staircase here, once used by those who worshipped the Voice of Rot as a god, was the site of the battle between that fey titan and King Dukain five centuries ago.

Clover. This fey city is the Dreaming parallel to Risur's capital city Slate. The Unseen Court rule from Thistle Palace.

Flint. The coastal city of Flint is the heart of Risur's industrial revolution.

Slate. King Aodhan rules from Torfeld Palace, here in the capital city of Risur.

Pacing and Leveling

The party starts this adventure at 20th level. Due to the mechanics of the world, the characters cannot go above 20th level until the Obscurati open the Axis Seal early in Act Three. After Act One, ask the players to make 22nd level versions of their characters, but they'll have to keep using their 20th level versions until they set out for Flint.

NPC Roster

Detailed entries of the NPCs the party meets are included throughout the adventure close to the characters' first appearances.

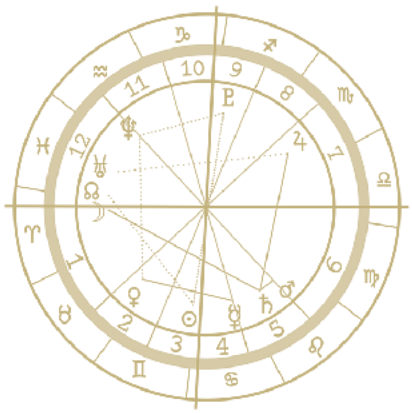
NPC Entry	Page
Amielle Latimer	253
Asrabey Varal	249
Beshela, Archfey of the Sea	226
Chief Inspector Stover Delft	211
Copperhat the Headless	230
Governor Roland Stanfield	279
Hana "Gale" Soliogn	211
Harkover Lee	249
King Aodhan Lesterman	249
Lauryn Cyneburg	250
Lya Jierre	265
Olazdor, Archfey of Winds	226
Rock Rackus	234
Thisraldion, Monarch of the Unseen Court	223
Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill	259

Recurring Characters

Asrabey and Rock Rackus appear prominently in later adventures. All other NPCs 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.

Rewards

Starting with this adventure, the PCs will no longer be part of a government structure that pays their bills, but will likely end up in charge of the country. They will receive some final boons from the fey in Act One (worth an average of 240,000 gp per PC), and will be able to access a vault of spectacular magic items in Torfeld Palace during Act Two (worth an average of 400,000 gp per PC).



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** are perfectly suited to impress the fey of both courts with their style and flash, and can possibly duet with Rock Rackus to unify the warring factions. Additionally, during the assault on Flint they have the opportunity to rally the common folk of Flint to distract the Danorans.
- **Eschatologists** are best equipped to parlay with the Voice of Rot.
- **Gunsmiths** can play with the mega-cannons developed by Obscurati officer Dengar Kriegshaff, and the brand of the R.N.S. *Coaltongue*.
- **Martial Scientists** might learn an unorthodox fey fighting style, have the most options when fighting the originality-vulnerable dire Borenbog, and could get another chance to square off against the exceptional duelist Lya Jierre.
- **Skyseers** will be most politely received by the Unseen Court, and they'll receive a final vision as the stars fall from the skies.
- **Spirit Mediums** have a leg-up in solving Rock Rackus's "murder," since they can easily tell much of the evidence is fake. Also, they can have a battle of wills against the Voice of Rot.
- **Technologists** can best defeat the various lanterns and associated gadgets in the Ob's assassination attempts, and can turn Stanfield's eldritch machine against him. In the Dreaming, though, make sure fey scowl at a technologist. Anything with gears or spinning mechanisms makes them wince like it were nails on a chalkboard.
- **Vekeshi Mystics** can possibly become members of the Unseen Court. Plus, the mystics in Flint are well situated to disrupt Danoran defenses.
- **Yerasol Veterans** get to captain the R.N.S. *Coaltongue* and oversee a whole fleet to fleet engagement, and likely would be first pick for possible successors should King Aodhan fall.

ACT ONE: Much Ado

In this act, the party solves a murder that never happened, and wins by surrendering.

MEANWHILE IN THE NEWS

The party won't be hearing any news of the real world while they're stuck in the Dreaming, but they fey have news of their own.

Rock Rackus Memorabilia. After his high-profile death, Rock Rackus and everything to do with him has become the talk of the city of Clover. Collectors desire any sort of connection to the slain celebrity, and within hours of the announcement of his demise, his suite in Thistle Palace was looted. Rumors say an unnamed figure is offering a lifetime supply of gold in exchange for Rackus's diamond-encrusted gold pistol, which was not found on his body.

Gremlin Recruitment. The riverport of Clover has been befouled by the presence in the Waking of a whirligig ship, its tails spinning and its blowhole belching steam at a mechanical rhythm. The maddening song of the vessel's metal heart is felt in every fey's bones, all the more vexing for its silence to the ears. The High Gardens along the shore call upon every gremlin in the city—no matter your factional loyalty—to gather each dusk to take a barge out onto the water, where their presence can disrupt the clicking and clacking and hopefully drive the monster away.

When the Hunt's Away, the Cats Will Prey. With the Great Hunt active around Clover, the great rivery fields of the Weftlands are untended, and the mighty herds are prime pickings for every would-be hunter in the land. Such grand horned beasts are normally kept tightly guarded so that only the formal members of the Hunt can keep them as trophies, but several expeditions have already set out, foremost among them led by Agunn's Children, a litter of sentient cats.

Snake in the Hen House. Falgo the Henkeeper, whose illusory eggs make for delicious omelets, says his chicken coops were raided, and numerous eggs were stolen. When questioned, the chickens said a snake charmed them with his song and then made off with the phantasmal treats.

Seeking Dogs. The Big Thicket of the west fell under attack by wolves wearing men's skin this past full moon. Faeries of the Magnolia Burrows have put out requests to buy hounds raised in the human realms, in hopes they will fend off the wolfweres. They are desperate, because their normal paths into the Waking are blocked, so they cannot simply steal the dogs they need.

Exiled Mermaid. Beshela, Archfey of the Sea, has decreed her court prophet Leira Yensid banished to the land for making false predictions and impugning her honor. Leira claimed, "Soon ships shall fall to the sea floor, and the realm of Lady Beshela shall no longer permit their passage." The prophetess, reduced to crawling from the shore on her hands, leaves a trail of blood as she seeks the aid of the Unseen Court in Thistle Palace.

Fey Battleground

Action. Real-Time. Level 17.

The party has to get out of danger as two sides go to war.

The uneven, wooded terrain of a forest materializes around the party. Nausea grips them as they recover from teleporting out of Methia, and at first all they can tell of their surroundings is that a battle has been fought here: brush is trampled, branches hacked apart, arcane scorch marks blacken the leaves overhead. As they get their bearings, pipes and fiddles begin to play a jaunty but unmistakably militant tune.

Through the woods to the west they spy figures cavorting their way. Then from the east, guttural wooping and the beating of wooden drums marks the approach of a second force.

A pixie swoops past them—angular purple legs wrapped in streaming viridian ribbons, with furred moth-like wings and a crescent moon mouth full of fangs beneath a single red eye—and it shouts to the eastern drummers, "Here they are! Attack!"

Battle cries ululate from both directions, and audible twangs mark incoming arrows.

Stuck in the Middle

The party has arrived in the middle of a battle between two fey forces. From a high vantage point, the overall battlefield resembles a stylized chessboard, with an 8 by 8 grid of squares each 400-feet across, alternating with woodland and fields of heather. (The party has arrived in the equivalent of white king's bishop 4—fourth from the south border and third from the east border.)

A few mossy hills rise up at the edges of the battlefield, each two or three hundred feet high. The fey capital city of Clover lies beyond a river to the north, about two miles away.

Despite the resemblance to a game board, units from each side are free to move as they please. The four rules that everyone generally obeys are:

1. Battle begins an hour before noon each day and lasts four hours.
2. No entry is allowed after the battle begins.
3. No fighting outside the bounds of the gridded battlefield.
4. Anyone who leaves the battlefield cannot return until the following day.

Today several hundred fey fight for each side. Because the party is likely fairly depleted after their battle with Nicodemus and the colossus Borne, in this encounter we're trying to establish that danger is present but give the party plenty of time to get out of its way.

Hostile Forces

Each side assumes the party belongs to the opposing force, and they're fine to let the party run away. If the party attacks, see We Now Return to Your Regularly Scheduled Warfare (page 235) for stats.

From the east, marching under a green banner with a circle cut out of the middle (representing the Unseen Court), are a front line of fomorian giants fifteen feet tall with immense bows and huge thorny clubs; lance-wielding elves mounted on deers defending either wing; and a back row of tortoises carrying light trebuchets operated by gnomes.

The western force, marching under a banner that resembles a Hedgehog rampant on field of waves (representing the Hedgehog Court), consists of a front phalanx of satyrs with tower shields and bows; and a herd of centaurs holding tethers of a gargantuan savage treant that was split by a lightning bolt down to its waist, causing it to have two heads facing opposite directions, and four arms.

Danger Incoming

Arrows start to land around the party, normal-sized laced with soporific poison ones from the west, and massive bolts from the east. Make the following two attacks each round the party remains in the area.

Satyr Archery Volley. *Atk* area burst 5 within 40 (creatures in burst); +15 vs. Reflex; *Hit:* 10 damage and the target is weakened (save ends). *Miss:* 3 damage.

Fomorian Archery Volley. *Atk* area burst 5 within 40 (creatures in burst); +15 vs. Reflex; *Hit:* 20 damage. *Miss:* 6 damage.

And make this attack every other round, as the gnome trebuchets hurl screaming severed heads with fuses coming out of their necks. They land, lock eyes with the nearest person, then explode with deafening purple fire.

Screaming Head Artillery. *Atk* area burst 20 within 40 (creatures in burst); +18 vs. Reflex; *Hit:* 15 fire damage, 5 thunder damage, and the target is dazed and deafened (save ends). *Miss:* 5 fire damage.

The two sides start about two hundred feet from the party in either direction, and close to melee range five rounds later.

Getting to Safety

Smart parties will have already gotten out of the way. A hundred feet to the south, a red-haired man waves at them and shouts that he can hide them. The man is barefoot, and his feet turn in the wrong direction: heel forward, toes backward.

He directs them to stay close, then turns everyone within 10 feet of him invisible, though they can all still see each other. He leads the way south, running as fast as the party can keep up.

He introduces himself as **Rambylon**, says that he's not with either side, and that he was just trying to get a good view of the fight. The somewhat bloody and mud-caked bits of jewelry bulging his pockets suggest he was actually looting the fallen. He offers to get them to a safe overlook, and humbly suggests that if they want to thank him afterward, he accepts human coins, halfling cakes, and half-elf kisses.

If the party doesn't go with Rambylon, let them find their own way out of the ongoing battles.

Things to See, Fights to Avoid

Rambylon guides them two 'squares' south and one east. Over the few minutes that takes, the party sees a few units rushing to and fro—mounted elves and brachiating trolls and leaping dryads, a four-legged flower blossom the size of an elephant being led by a rattlesnake with a woman's head, small treants trying to shake off squads of ettercaps clambering through their branches, a concert of grigs wearing nose-plugs as they ride atop a catoblepas, and so on.

Amid the jumble and roar of distant battle, occasionally the party hears a persistent sound: piping horns and baying hounds accompanied with cheers. The sound sweeps from side to side in the distance, clearly produced by something moving at speed—in this case the Great Hunt, a mass of mounted fey warriors clad in shining armor.

The Great Hunt has been lured to this battle by the Unseen Court, who use a relay of giant foxes to goad the mighty warriors into a desperate chase. The foxes, each ridden by a pugwampi gremlin, sprint and weave through ongoing battles, kiting the Great Hunt into the paths of followers of the Hedgehog Court. The warriors of the Hunt will not be blocked from their prey, so they trample and slaughter anyone who gets in their way.

When the party has traversed three squares and are entering a wooded square just a few hundred feet from safety, they hear the cheers quickly moving their way. If they look back, all they see in the 'square' they just left is a pair of redcaps, their bloody hats and bloody scythes peeking above the heather.

Spotted

The pixie from when the party first arrived sweeps down from the sky, her one red eye locked on them. She conjures *faerie fire* around them, limning them all in harmless purple and green flames that reveal their presence, and then she blows a whistle. Rambylon goes pale and yells for the party to run for their lives.

From the nearest thicket edge, about four hundred feet away, a fox the size of a tiger bursts into view. The gremlin strapped into its saddle waves to the pixie, weaves past the confused redcaps, then makes a beeline for the party.

On the fox's heels, three equally huge black hounds leap out of the woods, barking and howling, and then shortly behind them gallop a dozen steeds, each ridden by a mighty warrior clad in gleaming mithral plate armor. One in the lead blares his horn, and the whole procession tramples the redcaps into pulp. The largest of the riders, with silver antlers spreading from his helm and what is unmistakeably a bullet hole in the plate over his right breast, is **Riffian, Archfey of the Great Hunt**. He picks up a mangled corpse on the tip of his lance and shouts so loudly that his voice carrying all the way to the party: "Ha ha! None shall stand 'tween me and my prey!" Then he flings the dead redcap away and bears down on the fox.

Run to the Hills!

The party starts 380 feet from the south edge of the battlefield. The dire fox and rider start 350 feet farther north and run 220 feet per round. The hounds are 30 feet farther north and the Great Hunt follows them in a long line, everyone moving 200 feet per round.

If the party damages the fox or rider, they peel away and flee, figuring the party isn't worth the trouble. This draws the Hunt away too. Otherwise, if the party runs at full speed (~80 feet per round) it would likely take them five rounds to reach the edge of the battlefield, but it would only take the fox three rounds to reach them, with the Great Hunt roaring in on the fourth round. If they don't get out of the way or divert the fox (climb trees, teleport faster, create a *wall of force*, etc.), the Great Hunt will make a trample attack against each of them.

Great Huntsman Level 17 Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid **XP** 1600

HP 122; **Bloodied** 61 **Initiative** +14
AC 31, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 27 **Perception** +10
Speed 6 Low-light vision
Resist 20 lightning, 20 thunder
Vulnerable 10 firearms

Traits

▸ **Mounted Bond**
The huntsman suffers any damage or negative effects his steed would suffer, and the two effectively share a single statblock. When mounted, the huntsman speed increases to 18, his size increases to large, and he can use his *trample* attack. He gains the ability to attack at any point before, during, or after his move.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Spear Skewer** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He impales you on a lance, lifts you up so he can see your face, then laughs joyously as he flings you away.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+5 damage and the huntsman slides the target 3 squares.

✓ **Trample** ✦ At-Will
The heavily-armored horse weighs over a ton.
Requirement: The huntsman must be mounted.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d10 damage, and the target is knocked prone. The huntsman can move through the target's space this turn.

✲ **Thunderous Archery** (weapon, lightning, thunder) ✦ At-Will
Where his arrow strikes, a bolt of lightning falls and persists, booming with thunder. It might be best not to go there.
Attack: Area burst 2 within 40 (creatures in burst); +20 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d6+8 lightning and thunder damage. Until the end of the huntsman's next turn, any creature that enters the area or ends its turn there takes 15 lightning and thunder damage.

▸ **Horsemanship** ✦ At-Will
Requirement: The huntsman must be mounted.
Effect: The huntsman moves his speed and uses some combination of *trample* and either *spear skewer* or *thunderous archery* during the movement.

Str 26 (+16) **Dex** 22 (+14) **Wis** 14 (+10)
Con 20 (+13) **Int** 12 (+9) **Cha** 12 (+9)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven, Primordial

Fey Dire Fox with Gremlin Rider Level 14 Soldier
Large fey beast **XP** 1000

HP 130; **Bloodied** 65 **Initiative** +16
AC 32, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 26 **Perception** +9
Speed 10 Darkvision

Traits

⊘ **Aura of Unluck** ✦ Aura 10
The gremlin's enemies in the aura must roll twice and take the worse result for all d20 rolls.

▸ **Expeditious Retreat**
The fox gains a +10 bonus to its speed and a +4 to defenses if it has not attacked in the past round.

Standard Actions

✓ **Bite** ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6+6 damage and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 20). It gains ongoing 10 damage (save ends).

Minor Action

▸ **Relay Rest** ✦ Encounter
The gremlin pours a vial of invisible fluid on himself and his mount, and they vanish.
Effect: The fey dire fox and its gremlin rider turn invisible and their scent and sounds are masked (Perception DC 30). The effect lasts until the end of the encounter or until they attack.

Str 21 (+12) **Dex** 24 (+14) **Wis** 14 (+9)
Con 19 (+11) **Int** 2 (+3) **Cha** 9 (+6)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Any skewered PCs will get taunted by Riffian and flung away as the riders continue their pursuit of the fox.

If the party manages to get out of range, the gremlin rider almost rides out of the battlefield, then wheels about, pauses for a moment to spit at them, then spurs his fox away. The Great Hunt nearly trample into the party as they make the hairpin turn, apparently oblivious to the rules that say they can't leave the battlefield and come back in.

Goggling and Gossip

Social. Real-Time.

Fey noble onlookers treat the party as honored guests while gossiping about current events.

Rambylon guides the party to a gathering of onlookers on the hills that border the chessboard battlefield. A few dozen fey, well-dressed in combed furs, fine flowers, or diaphanous gowns, sit on giant toadstools or actual toads, enjoying a picnic and occasionally peeking at the battle below through a novelty: brass telescopic goggles, owned by the picnic organizer, **Clausvald**. Claus resembles a yellow caterpillar the size of a horse, with pudgy arms and tiny hands.

He is attended by black-feathered swanmays. The rest of the crowd is a mix of human-sized, elfin-looking fey and smaller pixies.

A grumpy ettercap named **Mista Nyves** scrambles about on his spindly spider-like legs, serving everyone drinks, slicing their bread and cheese, and constantly itching beneath the ridiculously fluffy angora sweater he's been forced to wear. When called upon for food, he clambers into a nearby tree, disappears into an orb of spider webs about the size of a person, then emerges shortly thereafter with the desired snacks. This is the Webway, a sort of magic transport system that normally only arachnids in the Dreaming can take advantage of. It will play a prominent role later in this act, so make sure to mention it a few times.

Claus, aggressively drunk, welcomes the party and claps with delight at the sight of their magical equipment. He offers them some of his delectable repast, and in exchange only asks that they have a conversation with him. If any PC rests and eats, Rambylon warns them to avoid the apples, which are hallucinogenic. Then on second thought he recommends the apples.

Now is a good time to clear up for the party what day it is, in case their teleportation mishap at the end of adventure eight left caused them to lose some time. Claus has heard rumors about how travel between the Dreaming and the waking has been chaotic lately, so he suggests the party get comfortable, because they likely won't be going home any time soon.

THE WEBWAY

Scattered throughout the Dreaming, various fey arachnids (we don't care if ettercaps aren't technically fey; they live here and are appropriately weird, so they count) have built large orbs of webs in the hollows or boughs of trees, down shadowed alleys, or beneath uncleaned rafters.

Any Dreaming native with the ability to navigate webs (i.e., a climb speed with the 'spider climb' notation) can enter one of these orbs, opening a brief portal into the webway. The portal remains open for about a minute, giving non-spiders a chance to follow.

Inside, the webway is a cramped labyrinth of tunnels composed wholly of webs (the tough fibrous kind, not the sticky kind), sort of like crawling through a child's tubular playset. Every few feet an exit off to the side leads back out to the Dreaming proper, and by traveling just a dozen feet in the webway you might be able to emerge a mile away in the Dreaming.

The tunnels of the webway are big enough for medium creatures to walk through, or large creatures to crawl through. The occasional huge spider also squeezes its way through, devouring anything in its path. Most arachnid fey spend at least part of their day in the webway, and might harass intruders. And while natives have spent years becoming familiar with how different tunnels intersect and where their exits lead, outsiders run the risk of falling out of the webway with no idea where they've landed.

Let PCs who examine one of these orbs make an Arcana check (DC 25) to determine the nature of the Webway. One particular trait of note is that it is not planar travel per se. Rather than teleporting or entering another world, accessing the Webway is like crawling into a tunnel most people cannot see. Effects that block teleportation do not prevent entering or leaving the Webway.

Conversation

Clausvald asks which side they're fighting for, and when he gets a sense of their confusion he'll lay out the basics:

- The Unseen Court monarch Thisraldion has been at odds with the Hedgehog Court for years, with disputes focusing on Risur's use of technology.
- Olazdor, a master archer and the head of the Hedgehog Court (though he, himself, has no head), had a lot of people in the city of Clover talking about rebellion.
- Thisraldion's consort, the human musician Rock Rackus, returned in early Autumn, over four months ago. Seemingly unbeknownst to the monarch, Rock was conspiring with the Hedgehog Court.
- Three weeks ago, during the Snow Moon, Thisraldion found out and murdered Rock when he was on his way to a meeting with Olazdor. Rock's head was sliced cleanly off, but the Unseen Court tried to blame the Hedgehogs by sticking an arrow in Rock's heart.
- For a week now loyalists of each side have come out to the fields to battle, but it's still civil. Claus thinks things will go out of control and the fighting will move into the city itself, and all across the countryside. That's why he's moved out here, next to the battlefield, where it's safe.

At this point, Mista Nyves impertinently clicks his pedipalps and says that Thisraldion's the rightful ruler, and that Rock was actually spying for the Unseen Court. Olazdor found out, killed Rock, and tried to blame Thisraldion. Mista Nyves heard this from his good friend Copperhat. His name sets off a round of scoffing among the rest of the picnickers, and they complain about various interactions with Copperhat, like when he somehow got hold of a wagon full of children's books from the Waking and tried to sell them. His rationale was that every orphanage in the Waking has these books, so if someone in the Dreaming had them, it would attract children, which have all manner of uses.

A good idea, points out one of the swanmays, except the books were all philosophy texts, and the only people who showed up were dwarves, who seemed intent on ruining their parties.

Down below on the battlefield, a stormcloud has gathered, and bolts of lightning flicker out to strike shambling mounds. The picnickers pay attention to the ensuing fight for a few minutes.

Further Gossip

This can be an opportunity to share the 'Meanwhile in the News' stories (page 214), and to make it clear that while it's normally just difficult to get between the Dreaming and the Waking, for the past few days it has been completely impossible.

At this point, one of the pixies realizes who the party is, and shouts, "These are the ones from Rock Rackus's song! The Royal Homeland Congratulatory!" This provokes a round of toasts to the party's good health, since due to a song Rock performed around Clover a few times, everyone here is a great fan of their fight against the aliens from beyond the moon.

Let's Make a Deal

Clausvald expresses interest in buying the party's magic items. He explains that he is a great businessman, and while he would normally have no need for weapons, these are dangerous times. "You might think I'm a fool to try to fight, but I have gold, and a fool and his gold are soon parted! Now sell me your weapons, foreigners."

He asks about the party's gear, comes to a reasonable estimate of their value, and offers something around 20% over the market share for one item belonging to each PC. If the PCs agree, one of his swanmay assistants produces a mass of gold coins in a *bag of holding* to pay for them.

In truth, Claus wants to sell the items to collectors, who are interested in everything even tangentially related to Rock Rackus. And he intends to pay the party with fool's gold (Insight DC 25). The coins are enchanted to resemble real gold, and even detecting the illusion is difficult (Arcana DC 25). If his deception is caught, he defends himself by claiming he did not lie; he said he was a fool, and so they should expect any gold he offers to be fool's gold. That is, unless they're fools, in which case they might not expect it, but that would make it even more appropriate for him to pay them with it.

If the party doesn't notice the trickery, Mista Nyves interrupts and asks his boss Claus if he's paying with the real gold or the fake stuff. Claus tells the little spider creature that he's fired, and that he wants him to hand over the sweater immediately. Do note that Nyves does this not out of any desire to help the party; he's just incredibly contrary by nature.

Need a Guide?

Rambylon says that this is a clear example of why the party could use a guide. Fey are tricky with their words, and if the party isn't clever they might fall victim. He offers to show them around Clover and get them in touch with the Hedgehog Court, who will gladly help them, unlike the deceptive Unseen Court. In exchange, all he wants is a lady's kiss.

Mista Nyves, recently unemployed, says he's not weird, and will work for the normal pretties: coins, gems, and shiny knives. He can be just as good a guide as Rambylon, and only costs 5 gp per day. No kisses necessary, he adds with a fidget of his venomous pedipalps.

With Rambylon as their guide, the party will have an easy time in Clover. Mista Nyves, though, is a disaster of an escort. He leads them maliciously into all sorts of petty fey tricks. For instance, he tries to show them a bar where he claims witnesses to Rock's murder drink, and they're only allowed in if they promise not to leave without buying a drink. Once inside, they discover that all the drinks are free, and that the bar is in an extraplanar space that the fey will only let them leave if they can outdrink the nereid (a water nymph) who owns the place. Plus the whole time he's gathering information and reporting on them to Copperhat the Headless.

If the party declines them both, let them stumble a bit as they navigate the eccentricities of fey city life, but they're famous enough here to get an audience with the Unseen or Hedgehog Courts with little trouble (or the courts will find them once word spreads).

Exploring the Dreaming

The geography of the Dreaming, including mountains, rivers, and the like, are all similar to the real world, though with east and west reversed. Cities are also similar, though not always exact mirrors. Distances are not fixed, and certainly weights and measurements don't adhere to any logical standard. Unattended mechanical devices naturally stop working since the careful alignments of moving parts end up not quite-so-aligned if no one is tending to them.

The most important thing to understand about the Dreaming is that it does not have a single objective reality. Time and distance are subjective, contorting to fit the stories of any given person, though never going so far as to become impossible to anyone else. Two people engaged in conversation might sense time passing at different rates. A bored person would feel like the day is slipping away swiftly, while the person who is boring him thinks only a short time has elapsed. Only once the conversation ends or one of them mentions what time it is will the Dreaming settle on an actual time, and both people's perceptions would shift to match it.

That said, the analogue of Risur in the Dreaming has the same general landscape:

- The big thicket, home of the fey titan the Ash Wolf, lies to the west beyond the Great Blight (as the lands near Flint are called). The city of Weevil, where giant insects are used as steeds and beasts of burden, sits analogous to Bole.
- The islands of the Yerasol Archipelago lie to the east, and the whole coastline is the domain of She Who Writhes. Analogous to Shale is the flooded city of Conch.
- The weftlands surround Clover, and here roam the herds of the Father of Thunder. Erratic farms cling to hills and sometimes run into caves in this hill landscape.
- The High Bayou to the south, where the Voice of Rot lairs, is filled with creepy villages of dark fey, over which seems to hang a perpetual night. The sun only rises when there is a bloodied carcass to reveal, and even then only for a few hours.
- Beyond that, in the Anthras Mountains, sleeps Granny Allswell, attended by her brood of gremlins, goblins, bugbears, and other things with G in their name.

What lies beyond the borders of Risur in the Dreaming is outside the scope of this adventure. Imagine whatever you like.

Enter Clover

Exploration. Montage.

The Dreaming analogue to the city of Slate reacts to an infamy the party might not know they had.

The fighting comes to an abrupt end early in the afternoon, at which point the sun ceases to move through the sky. Everyone packs up, and most of the survivors head for the nearby city of Clover.

Fey soldiers clog the road from the chessboard battlefield to Clover, and few of them display much fey mirth. A large 'traffic jam' has backed up near a river, as the soldiers who are returning to Clover barter for beeswax so they can plug their ears. Everyone complains about the noise, but unless a PC is native to the Dreaming, they don't notice what to the locals sounds like a persistent high-pitched trembling whine.

The road passes within a half mile of a 'blighted area,' which in the real world is the site of a simple flour mill powered by a water wheel in the river. Its presence irritates the fey on a visceral level. The fey who are typically able to cross over into the real world briefly to muck with such mechanical devices — commonly known as gremlins — aren't able to do so now.

The party can easily pass through here, though they have to ford the river (no bridges, because they attract trolls). There's not much they can do other than commiserate or maybe hear the local gossip. All told, walking to Clover takes less than an hour, but as they reach the city the sun is already setting. And it remains setting, potentially for hours, until either the party reaches Thistle Palace or decides to take a sleep.

The Fey Capital

Clover is built in the Dreaming on lands analogous to the real world city Slate, capital of Risur. The Great Delve River, its steep banks adorned by flowers and dotted with windows of hillside burrows, separates the fey city into the noble east bank and the common west bank.

In Slate six antique castles sit inside a wide bend on the river's east bank, and in Clover there are nearly identical buildings (on the west bank), suggesting some odd resonance between the real world and the Dreaming that causes them to converge when things exist long enough. Clover's castles are home to lords of various regions of the continent, each heavily guarded by lithe warriors in nimble plate armor, who hide beneath mats of grass and moss but are ready to spring to battle and ambush intruders. The lords fear the rabble of the east bank, led by the Hedgehog Court.

Across the shore is a chaotic mess of narrow winding streets and houses of all sorts—straw, wood, brick, some metal, and even one composed of stacked sheep—inhabited by the common fey. The fey (or occasionally their houses) bustle through the town trading oddities, treats, or songs for whatever other fey can offer.

A broad grassy hill rises above the rest of the city, site of Thistle Palace, from which the Unseen Court rules. Like the castles of the west, this palace is practically identical to Torfeld Palace in the real world.

Sites of Interest

If the party explores, here are some sample locations.

The Headless Human

This bar sits in the darkest, gloomiest part of town, not far from the tunnel where Rock Rackus was killed. Many spider webs cling in the alleys and awnings around it, and the bar's hag owner likes the ambience. Copperhat the Headless drinks here, swigging wine and drowning his sorrows. See Copperhat at the Headless Human (page 229) for details.

Honorable Halls of Accumulated Wisdom

Three stories tall, with three basement levels, this library is filled with labyrinthine rows of books, scrolls, bound codices, and loose bundles held together by twine, ranging in content from cyclops recipes to pixie philosophy to forbidden spellbooks.

A pair of ancient pixie sisters named Alba and Zanel, wrinkled, doddering, and flirtatious, own the library, which is served by dozens of younger pixies who sort and search.

The library plays a small role in Lady Atsla's plot to frame Thisraldion (see Cold as Ice, page 229). Additionally, the librarians will be able to provide critical information to help the party get back home (see Librarians to the Rescue, page 240).

Mosscat Mortuary

The party can find Rock's body being prepared for burial here. See The Body (page 231).

Flashdrought Fountain

Analogous to the Grand Weft in Slate (where three highways intersect), Clover has a thoroughfare, albeit more chaotic. At its edge sits the famous Flashdrought Fountain, displaying dessicated wooden statues in the shape of angry air elementals. The fountain itself is perpetually dry, but if you pour liquid into it, sometimes coins rain down from the statues' clouds.

Anyone who sits by the fountain for a minute or so feels suddenly thirsty as the latest things they drank are magically sucked out of them. This is a popular spot for people seeking instant sobriety, though the process can yield horrific hangovers.

Krog Tunnel

This three-ended tunnel, a mile from Thistle Palace, is where Rock's body was found on the night of the 16th. It is detailed more thoroughly in Crime Scene (page 228).

Shady Grove

This wealthy neighborhood for dark fey consists of a tangle of thorny trees that overgrew an earlier array of buildings. Like a tiny urban jungle, the labyrinthine grove hosts some of the most bizarre and debauched festivals in the city, and separatists aligned with the Hedgehog Court gather here regularly to plan each day's battles. The party might come here to haggle for magic items owned by old collectors who loot the fallen, or to hire a creepy talking mushroom to cast spells they need for their investigation.

Thistle Palace

On the east side of the city, Thistle Palace has three main buildings—the central House of Perennials, the eastern House of the Unseen Court, and the western House of Mayflies. Prestigious visitors normally enter from the east, especially if they're conducting business with the Unseen Court. Commoners typically enter from the west. Currently the west wing has been given to the Hedgehog Court, and the hall between the central Perrenial and western Mayflies houses has been bisected by a thorn wall.

Rock Rackus regularly would visit the Unseen Court, leave through the east gate, travel through the city, get a little lost, and then find his way to the Hedgehog Court through the west gate, never realizing they were both in the same building.

Instant Fame

Courtesy of Rock Rackus, the whole city knows about the party. Keeping a low profile is challenging, and generally fey follow the party, ask them questions, and occasionally try to pick their pockets.

If the party wants to visit Thistle Palace, word has likely preceded them, and the guards known as *rangale*— human-faced elks, stags, and gazelles who telekinetically hover spears or other weapons—gladly let them in. Otherwise, eventually a one-eyed pixie escorted by a pair of women in finely articulated mithral plate armor finds them and delivers a scroll with an invitation. Thisraldion, monarch of the Unseen Court, offers aid in returning to the Waking in exchange for aid in solving the murder of Rock Rackus.

Two-Faced Politicians

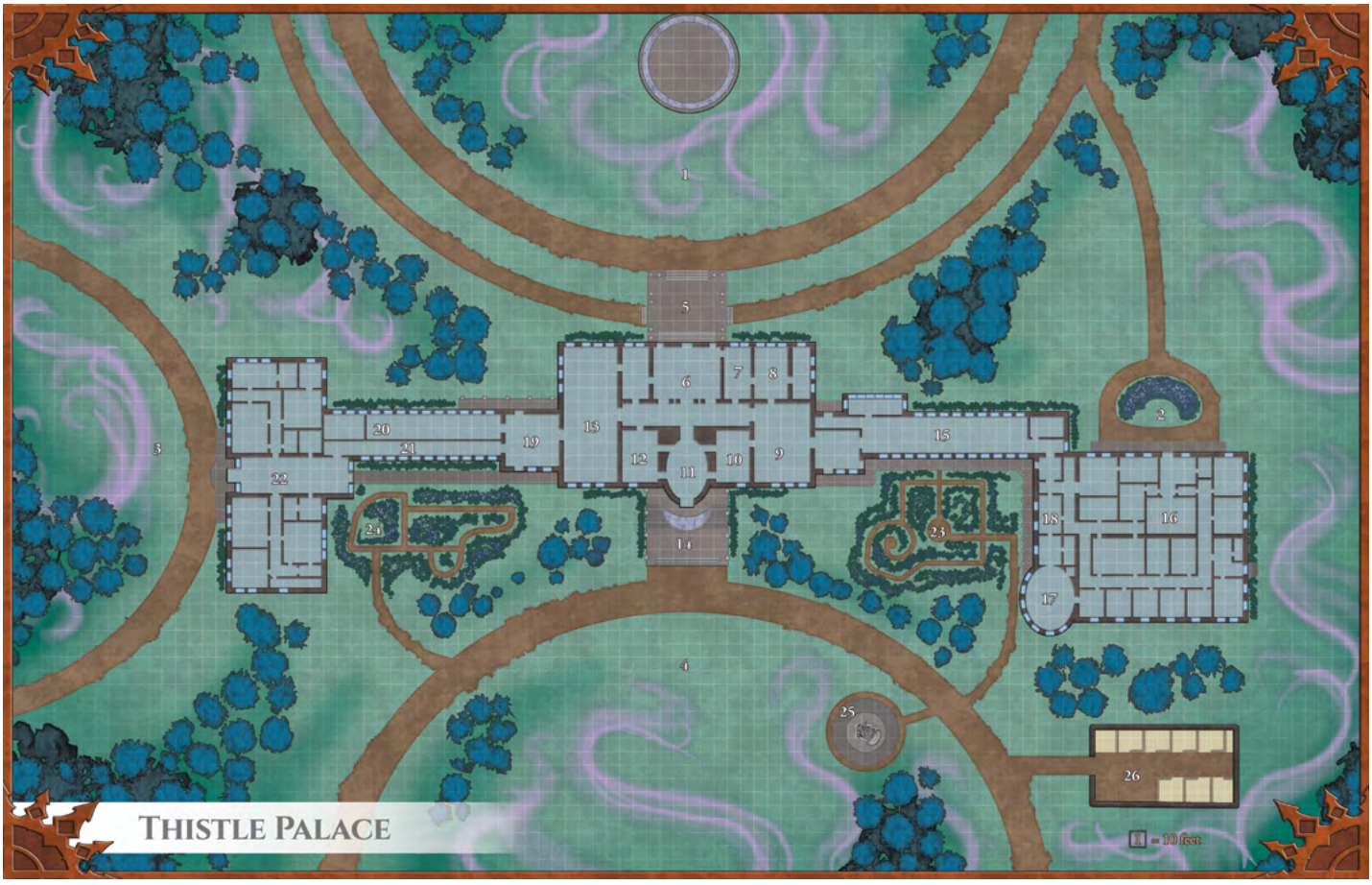
Social. Real-Time.

The Unseen Court offers to get the party home if they can pin the murder of Rock Rackus on the Hedgehog Court, but they're really out to benefit themselves.

A brownie named **Binniwich** greets the party when they arrive at Thistle Palace, obsequiously proclaiming how wonderful Risur is, how wonderful the PCs are, and how wonderful it is that they've come to help the Unseen Court.

Palace Layout

1. **Foreigner Fountain.** Non-fey are expected to wash their hands at this fountain. The mere act ends up cleaning everything they wear, from boots to hats, in order to ensure no grease stains the palace carpets.
2. **House of the Unseen Court—Entrance.** A portico held up by dryads welcomes visitors, but those who have not been invited are compelled (**Atk** +15 vs. Will) not to enter.
3. **House of Mayflies—Entrance.** Commoners are welcome here, and the only guards are swarms of pixies who will put to sleep (**Atk** +8 vs. Will) anyone who causes a ruckus.
4. **Grand Lawn.** Cheerful sporting events occur here normally. This week, though, tents dot the campus, filled with injured fey returned from the ongoing battles. One lord of the Unseen Court, Sallin the Dryad, makes the rounds each day healing the few that she can.



5. **House of Perennials – Entrance.** More armored stags guard here, these equipped with levitating bows, and the flowery caryatids supporting the awning here can themselves animate as treants. Beautiful nymphs greet renowned visitors and take them to the drawing room to enjoy a light repast.
6. **Entrance Foyer.** A decorative 'dragon' made from flower wreathes and purple silks hangs from the ceiling by wires.
7. **Guard Post.**
8. **Drawing Room.** There are canvases and charcoal here so people can draw.
9. **Game Room.** Fey are fond of riddle games, so mostly the room just has comfortable chairs.
10. **Antechamber.** People gamble with cards here.
11. **Diplomatic Reception.** This is a diplomatic way to refer to the palace jail. Right in line of sight of everyone, with barred windows that give prisoners a view of all the fun everyone is having out on the grand lawn. (Well, normally. Now the cell is even more depressing.)
12. **Library.**
13. **Chamber of the Hedgehog Court.** The doorway that leads to the east half of the palace is always closed, locked, and covered with a tapestry. This room has a raised floor along its east side where the members of the court stand like actors in a play put on for whatever visitors and petitioners stand on the lower floor.
14. **Balcony.**
15. **Mask Gallery.** Fey who die as members of the Unseen Court have their masks hung here as mementos.
16. **The Runaround.** A trap door in the floor in this room leads down to the palace's dungeon. The term 'the runaround' actually applies to the halls and rooms surrounding it.

    The whole eastern wing of the palace is eerily empty, with magic keeping the place in fine condition. Honored guests of the Unseen Court who arrive here are greeted by one or more Unseen lords, who talk while strolling through the mostly empty building. Members of the court show up, talk for a bit, then peel off, weaving through rooms. Eventually the walk-and-talk leads them back to Area 17, where formal meetings will begin.
17. **Chamber of the Unseen Court.** The Unseen Court holds formal business here.
18. **Fool's Chamber.** If an 'honored guest' grows impatient of the runaround, the fey lords petulantly punish them by taking them to this room instead of the actual meeting chamber. Here they are told the rest of the court will arrive shortly, and are asked to wait. Once they realize the prank and walk through the unlocked door to the south, the whole Unseen Court bursts into laughter.
19. **Commons.** Guests of the Hedgehog Court gather here, and members of that more blasé court often come out to eat and drink with them.
20. **Party Hall.**
21. **Champion Gallery.**
22. **Offices.** Tiny fey work feverishly in this wing, recording the events and speeches and copying them so they can be distributed to the people of the Dreaming. Olazdor wishes he could get a printing press that wouldn't grate on everyone's ears, but this is the next best way to spread the word of their resistance to the Unseen Court.
23. **Monarch Garden.** Statues of Risuri monarchs stand here.
24. **Hood Garden.** Hooded lanterns sit on poles amidst this grove of trees. The lanterns are always lit, but the hoods over them mean they only light the ground directly beneath them, leaving the area gloomy.
25. **Titan Shrine.** An identical set of statues in the Waking depicts the five fey titans.
26. **Stables.** The rangale (stag and gazelle guards) sleep here.

Lore of the Unseen Court

The fey spread all manner of rumors about who makes up the Court, and accurate knowledge is hard to come by even in the Dreaming. Scholars in the real world have managed to pin down some facts, which the PCs might know. An Arcana check (DC 30) is enough to know the basic personalities of Atsla and Karrest, and Nature is appropriate for Furg and Sallin. If the party has this information going in, they might gain a +2 or +5 bonus to skill checks involving those lords.

Thisraldion has worked to maintain misinformation, so it is practically impossible to get any useful insights to the monarch.

Skyseer Welcoming

Any skyseer among the PCs is treated as an honored guest by the Unseen Court. The fey load them up with luxurious furs, insist they eat rich desserts, and constantly beg forgiveness that they were not ready to 'repay their debt.' The truth is, a skyseer many generations ago convinced the ruler of the Unseen Court at the time that any hostility to his order would result in the Dreaming being cracked in two in punishment. These offerings are not 'gifts' in the fey sense, and hold no obligation. Indeed, a skyseer can even get the *Book of Kelland* from Furg without owing any debt to the toadstool sage.

Meeting the Court

Binniwich the brown-nosing brownie brings the party through the palace to Area 16, the runaround. When the party arrives, Lady Atsla is emerging from the trap door to the palace dungeon. She notes the party's presence, nods to Binniwich to dismiss him, then closes the trap door and gestures for the party to follow her.

The Runaround (in addition to being a *West Wing* reference) is an excuse for you to introduce a collection of NPCs one by one, instead of having to roleplay them all at once. The lords and ladies of the Unseen Court intend to put the PCs through their paces to get a gauge of their personalities. Try to let each make an impression before the party gets back to Area 17 and meets Thisraldion.

Remember that for all of the lords of the Unseen Court, no part of their body is ever visible. They all wear masks on invisible faces, and their clothes suggest the shape of a body, perhaps even with gloves or gauntlets allowing them to gesture with hands. But they never have visible skin. Those who can see invisible creatures or pierce illusions *can* see the members of the court, which really upsets them.

Atsla the Ice

Appearing just as a dress of snow, a mask of ice, and handprints or footprints of frost from whatever she touches, Atsla stoically refrains from speaking unless truly necessary. Her most common form of interaction is to glare and cause the air to chill significantly to express her displeasure. She's likely first to meet the party, and will merely gesture with her head for them to follow. She then walks through Area 16, heading nowhere in particular but gauging the party's reaction.

She can be won over with shows of sisterly affection between women, and she reacts poorly to threats or innuendo. Honestly the less one talks to her, the more she likes them.

Atsla's ulterior desire is for the party to pin Rock's murder on Thisraldion. She wants to ascend in the court's hierarchy, and to bring in Beshela, Archfey of the Sea, so there will be more women in the court.

Karrest the Fire

Karrest dresses in heavy black cloaks, a black cowl, and a charred stone mask with seams of glowing lava, but adorns his whole body with fire-gems, including rings on several of his fingers. Flighty and warlike, he'll appear and threaten the party with a sword of ruby if they do not treat his beloved Atsla with respect. He blows Atsla a kiss, who heads off in a different direction, then starts talking earnestly with the party.

Karrest responds positively to aggression and intimidation, which earns his respect. Though his affections would normally sour Atsla to him, he has a knack for sensing her moods. In fact, Atsla will try to keep her distance from him if she's trying to be deceptive, and keeping them together makes it easier to sense her motives; see Cold as Ice (page 229).

In particular, the fiery fey lord is curious about what Asrabey's been up to. (This mostly serves to clarify that he never made it back to the Dreaming since the party last saw him in adventure eight.)

Karrest never liked Rackus—the man flirted with Atsla, after all, and bragged about fighting more than he ever actually dusted his knuckles. While he's glad the man is dead, he feels slighted that the Olazdor and the Hedgehog Court stole a kill that he wanted. He hopes the party will pin the murder on Olazdor, and give him an opportunity to dispense justice in an honorable duel.

Furg the Toadstool Sage

A voice from a nearby room cuts in, claiming that even fools like Rackus can bring wisdom by giving us a mirror to compare ourselves to. Into the hallway steps a mound of mossy and moldy clothes dotted with mushrooms. A mask of brittle cracked turquoise hangs low beneath the figure's shoulders, and vivid blue frogs occasionally crawl across or through its cloak.

Furg tells Karrest to let Thisraldion know the guests are coming, and then asks the party to accompany him to a south window that looks out to the Titan Shrine statues. Beside the window he pulls a book from a shelf and presents it to one of the PCs. This is the original *Book of Kelland*, he says, which reveals how the foolishness of the fey titans led to creating the first human king.

See Appendix G: Magic and Training for details of this ornately-illuminated tome, but the thrust is that the ambition of the Voice of Rot and the single-mindedness of the other fey titans led to the rise of Kelland, who learned how to defeat them all. Fools, Furg says, are useful, because the wise and clever can use them to step up to greatness.

If any PC accepts this gift from Furg, he will become beholden to the Toadstool Sage, and must fulfill one single task the Unseen lord might ask, or else suffer the consequences of the *fey obligation* affliction (page 332). Furg may use this in a later adventure once the PCs have risen to control Risur and have influence even beyond it. We have no specific plans for this, so consider how the fey's influence might compromise the gifted PC's goals later on.

Furg honestly doesn't care who killed Rock Rackus.

Sallin the Dryad

An ash tree just outside the window rustles with unusual intensity, and the party spots a mask—and just a mask, composed of tree bark framed with feathers—floating over from the Grand Lawn. Sallin the Dryad's passage is marked by flowers and grass blooming with each of her steps, but she is naked save for her mask. When she gets close to the window, Furg waves to her, and she nods back. The tree outside dips and stretches its branches, creating a seat which the invisible Sallin climbs into. Then the entire tree uproots itself and walks through the window as if the glass weren't there.

Sallin stops her tree steed and chuckles like a cheery old grandmother when she sees the party. "So many weapons," she chides. "I keep tryin' t'keep our youngsters alive, and people like you keep choppin' 'eir 'eads off. Shame I couldn't help poor Rock, but maybe I can help you little lost children."

Sallin and Furg lead the party to the Chamber of the Unseen Court, and the building casually makes room for Sallins' massive tree, then returns to its normal form once she has passed.

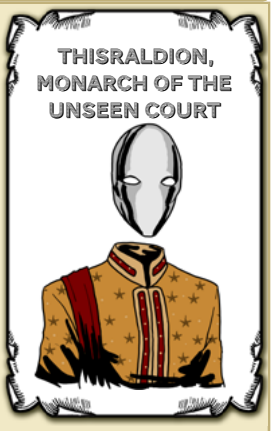
Sallin desires for the war to end. She happens to think that finding Olazdor guilty and executing him for murder will discredit him and halt the violence, but she's fine with any solution that stops the war.

Thisraldion

The four fey lords gather in the Chamber of the Unseen Court and take their seats around Thisraldion's throne. The fey monarch sits twirling an unsheathed *vorpal longsword* when the party arrives, making snicker-snack sounds as it slices the air.

A spare chair sits unoccupied; it belonged to Ekossigan, whose position has not been filled since the events of Adventure Five, *Cauldron-Born*.

Thisraldion dallies frivolously with the party, acting weird and proposing ambling feasts or useless poetry competitions in order to irk them. If eventually the party grows impatient and starts making demands, the monarch will better know what they want. If they play along, Thisraldion calls for dinner amid the injured on the Grand Lawn, and discusses business then.



The enigmatic monarch of the Unseen Court, Thisraldion's mirrored mask shows onlookers what they expect to see. If Thisraldion wishes to posit opposing positions in a conversation, the mask will from time to time fade out and reappear speaking from the other side of the room. Each onlooker will somehow sense that the mask looks different in a way they cannot describe.

The fey use the titles 'King' and 'Queen' along with the pronouns 'he' and 'she' seemingly at random when referring to Thisraldion. The monarch's melodious voice hovers somewhere around an androgynous alto/tenor, but for emphasis can shift much higher or lower (and certainly much louder). When mortals first encounter Thisraldion, they assume that the monarch belongs to whichever gender they find most attractive. This led to an amusing love triangle involving Thisraldion, Rock Rackus, and Thisraldion, which none of the fey thought ought to be explained to the human.

Constantly appearing and disappearing in places, Thisraldion seems flighty and capricious, regularly going on tangents, or diverting conversations into discussions about poetry and warfare instead of giving straightforward answers to direct questions. In fact, the monarch is a subtle manipulator, deploying a confusing and stereotypically 'fey' demeanor to unbalance others. Thisraldion will let visitors talk until they reveal what they expect the Unseen Court wants of them.

Thisraldion wields a vorpal longsword. Since there's a chance Thisraldion will die and the party might take the monarch's weapon, consider changing it to a type of weapon a PC would want.

Making Deals with Faeries

Thisraldion states that the Unseen Court will find the party a route back to the real world in exchange for them proving that Olazdor and the Hedgehog Court were responsible for the murder of Rock Rackus. The monarch then weeps a bit—which is mostly staged—saying that never has one of the Unseen loved a mortal so intensely. And the folk of the Dreaming loved him too. If there is to be a new king in Risur, there are few acts that could earn more favor among the fey than to bring justice to the hero Rock Rackus's since for it's been since for it's been killer.

That might perk up the party's ears. Thisraldion has a hunch that over in the Waking, Aodhan is not long for the world. Shadows have been moving strangely around the palace, and Thisraldion knows hostiles are gathering in the Bleak Gate. The Unseen Court of course would gladly help defend Risur's king if the old pacts were invoked, but it seems the humans do not know how to contact them.

Karrest growls that it's more important to defeat the Hedgehog Court. Sallin says solving the murder will do that, but Karrest is flustered, since by 'defeat' he meant 'kill.' Making peace bores him. He then explains that fey law forbids the leaders of the two factions from joining battle until their underlings have had a chance to settle things.

Furg and Atsla don't talk unless the party addresses them. The toadstool sage admits that he appreciates the novelty of the war, and would be fine to let it persist for a few more months at least. Atsla pointedly says that of course their interest is in ensuring the strength of their nation, but she thinks it might be necessary from time to time to let contenders to the throne take their shot, so the common folk are confident they actually do have the best leader possible.

Thisraldion claims that, just as the monarch of Risur has powers to travel between worlds, so does the monarch of the Unseen Court, and the party will not be permitted to return to their homeland unless they can find Rock's killer.

The Great Hunt

During the discussion, Binniwich the brownie announces the arrival of Riffian, captain of the Great Hunt. The giant of a man strides in, dressed in mithral plate, with silver antlers atop his helm and a bullet hole in the breastplate over his heart. His voice reverberates jollily through his helmet, which he never removes.

He turns to Thisraldion and kneels, begging forgiveness for failing in his hunt. He promises he shall catch that blasted fox soon enough, and the only explanation he can give is that people keep getting in his way. Then, having a sudden revelation, he stands and gives the party a bold 'huzzah.' He recognizes them from earlier, apologizes if he trampled any of them, and says that he won't hold it against them that they were Rock Rackus's friends. He thought that guy was an idiot.

He then realizes he has interrupted politics, and he hates politics, so he makes his departure.

Once he's gone, the Unseen Court members have a laugh. They told Riffian a fox had killed one of Thisraldion's favorite hens, and ever since they've been using him and the whole Great Hunt in battle by luring them around with various foxes. If the party mentions this to Riffian, he shrugs it off, since his duty is to the Court, no matter how inane they may be.

Negotiating with Thisraldion

Thisraldion is totally lying about knowing how to get to the Waking, and so is willing to offer some other concessions to the party if they demand it in exchange for helping with the murder investigation. Some possibilities include:

- Joining the fight against the Ob (though only if they can actually get to the real world).
- Magic items, gems, or coinage worth 100,000 gp per PC (which can be negotiated up to 160,000).
- Political demands (which go beyond the scope of this adventure).

One offer that would sweeten the deal for Thisraldion is for a PC to take the place of Asrabey Varal as liaison to Risur and chief warrior for the court.

Thisraldion proposes to give the party the entire following day to work on their investigation, and then to present their evidence on the palace's grand lawn at noon the day after. The Hedgehog Court will also be invited to see the party's presentation, so from the ten total fey lords (five from each court), if they can convince a majority of who the killer is, Thisraldion will tell them how to return home.

Realistically, no PC should be able to tell that Thisraldion is deceiving them. The fey lord is an amazing liar, protected from divination (Arcana DC 50 to overcome), and they would have to attack and dispel several layers of defensive wards before they could use magic to detect Thisraldion's lies.

The fey lords leave it to the party to figure things out from there. Sallin offers a house elsewhere on the palace grounds for the party to sleep in, thoroughly attended to by servants. And Karrest, with a reminder that he's hoping to challenge Olazdor to a duel, gives them directions to the Hedgehog Court so they can interrogate the rebels.

Those directions lead off the palace grounds, through the city for a mile, then loop back to a different entrance to the palace. Rock Rackus never realized the two courts were in the same place, but the party probably will (Nature or Perception DC 15).

Court of Justice

Social. Real-Time.

The Hedgehog Court appeals to the party's sense of right and wrong in order to defeat the Unseen Court.

The Hall of Mayflies is where the Hedgehog Court operates. A mass of satyrs, grigs, and pixies argue in the foyer, and the party might not get recognized at first. Then one of the rebel lords, **Lerina**, realizes who they are. As with the Unseen Court, we try to stagger the arrival of the NPCs, to make it easier for you to present the large group.

Lerina, the Reseen Marauder

Lerina, a 300-year-old elfwoman who was born in the Waking, served for three decades on the Unseen Court, but Thisraldion stripped her of her title seven years ago when she became openly hostile to King Aodhan. Thisraldion entreated her to maintain harmony with Risur, then tried to buy her loyalty with gold. Now Lerina rather hates both harmony and gold. She is fully visible, which she flaunts by wearing very little clothing, though her old mask—pitted steel with red streaks of war paint—hangs around her neck on a silver chain.

Wielding a warhammer that can shoot twin lightning bolts and accompanied by hawk-sized phoenix animal companion, Lerina has been a crusader for the rebel fey, and in the lead-up to the recent open conflict she often led raids against remote military strongholds loyal to the Unseen Court. She grates at the rules that forbid her from joining the ongoing battles, but expects to have a truly epic battle against Karrest when the time arises.

When she sees the party, Lerina sneaks up through the crowd and talks to them quietly so as not to make a scene. She asks how they're doing and how they ended up in the Dreaming, since it's been difficult to cross over for weeks, and impossible recently. Then she asks about Risur. Try to present her as a 'normal person' rather than a fey or a politician, which might be refreshing to the party.

Eventually she grins and asks them to come meet the rest of the rebels, then guides the group through the crowd to the Chamber of the Hedgehog Court. If asked about Rock Rackus, she had no problems with the man, but he kept poor company, and was always bringing around the obnoxious Copperhat the Headless. The best thing to come from Rock's death was that she doesn't have to deal with Copperhat anymore.

Long-Time Prisoners: Dreaming Edition

In the campaign's first adventure, the party may have handed over to Asrabey Varal either the Duchess Ethelyn of Shale or Nathan Jierre (or both). While those two characters don't play a pivotal role in this adventure, if the party did acquiesce to Asrabey, they can benefit now from better reactions by the Unseen Court.

Ethelyn, if present, shares the same house Sallin offers the party. She has sway with Beshela, so if they need help dealing with the aquatic archfey (either to stop her interference or to get her to agree with their findings in the investigation), Ethelyn could be convinced to help if the party can arrange to get her back to the real world.

Nathan Jierre is not an honored guest, and is kept in Area 11, Diplomatic Reception. However, Atsla learned that his cousin, Lya Jierre, tried to save him, and she felt sympathy for the lonely man. If the party can share good news about Lya (or just lie about it), Nathan could get Atsla to open up about her intentions to overthrow Thisraldion.

If on the other hand the party managed to keep either or both of those characters in Risuri custody, they can play a minor role in the events of Act Two. (See Long-Time Prisoners: Risur Edition, page 248.) If you've already done something with either character, though, their involvement is minor enough that removing them won't have a major effect. We just want to be sure to call back to the party's first adventure, to show the consequences—even minor—of their early choices.

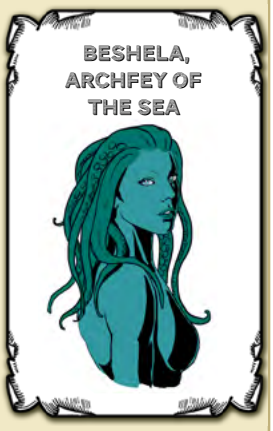
Darbony, the Gruff Goat

Petitioners are lined up in the hall outside the court chamber, and the attention of many are focused on an aged satyr, **Darbony**, who wears luxurious robes and gold jewelry. He flirts with a trio of veiled nymphs who giggle and slap his hands away as he uses them as props for a tale about wrestling a giant caterpillar.

Lerina interrupts his old war story and says the court recess is over, so they should be attending to business in the chambers. He huffs and ignores her. A few satyrs in the crowd, most of them bandaged from recent battles, curse under their breaths and one throws a bloody rag at the old man. Darbony produces an axe and threatens them. Petitioners scream and the scene will develop into a brawl if the party doesn't intervene. If he gets the chance, Darbony kills the satyr who threw the rag at him, then throws a bag of silver to the survivors. "Weregild," he chuckles, and then stalks into the council chamber.

Darbony bought his way into the leadership of the Hedgehog Court, but all he cares for is the prestige. His mismanagement has caused the satyrs who are allied with him to suffer the brunt of casualties among the rebel forces, and now they're threatening to abandon the rebellion. This would leave Darbony fairly worthless to the Hedgehog Court, but he's too stubborn and short-tempered to actually fix things. Fearing a loss of power he's taken to flirting and drinking at every opportunity.

He didn't like Rock, and saw him as a rival for women's attention. He particularly hates him now, since by dying he sparked the war, which has eroded Darbony's position. Of all the rebels, he's most desperate to end the fighting, and offers to bear false witness for the party to help them wrap the mystery up quickly.



Lady Beshela serves as steward of the domains of the fey titan She Who Writhes. Though not a member of the Unseen Court, Beshela bears the title Archfey of the Sea and controls most of the waters along Risur's north shore. With armies of sea creatures at her command, the beautiful fey is like a queen of her own land, though there are other threats that lurk deeper than her domain descends.

Beshela feels she owes a great debt to Risur. Forty years ago Ethelyn, sister of the current king, rescued her from a pirate sorcerer, giving birth to a long-lasting friendship and military pact. Beshela even aided Ethelyn's coup attempt against the king. Her moods are seemingly aqueous, but she is merely a clever charmer, fond of long schemes that depend on her enemies not knowing how dangerous she really is. Of late, she has allied with the Hedgehog Court to try to renegotiate the pact between the fey and Risur, for she and her allies loathe the technology King Aodhan has ushered into their once pristine realms.

Olazdor has a humanoid torso and arms with an athletic build, with raptor talons for feet. Though not a formal member of the Unseen Court, he sought to prove he was mighty enough to be among them, and so he severed his own eagle-like head and replaced it with a wooden mask, which now floats above his torso. He burnt his old head and scattered the ashes on the winds, and it is said that he cannot be killed until each mote is recovered and reassembled.

Olazdor presides over the winds and feathered beasts of the Dreaming, and has grown increasingly dissatisfied with the way that court turned a blind eye to the horrid technology that mortal world is starting to embrace. He saw Ethelyn as the last real friend they fey had, and after learning that the Court sent Asrabey Varal to kill her, he began gathering allies for an eventual war against Thisraldion. He quietly aided Ekosissigan's plan to assault Cauldron Hill in Adventure Five, *Cauldron-Born*, and had hoped to recruit Gale to be both his ally and his queen.

Olazdor passionately believes in his cause, and though he recognizes that his side is losing he has his own uniquely fey code of honor, one where romantic questing and bold combat are superior to deceptions and politicking. When enthused he'll thump his chest, and when like-minded allies quail at the thought of danger he'll loudly denounce them and question their bravery and heroism.

Lavac, the Gremlin Herald

Inside the court chambers, curtains cover the windows while the court is in recess, and at first it seems the room is empty. Seats for the various court members (five in total) sit on a low stage. As Lerina goes to open the curtains, a short figure lurking in a dark corner (Perception DC 32) leaps out and snarls at any PCs with technological devices.

This is **Lavac**, a scruffy black-furred gremlin that lopes about like a baboon. He hisses and snarls in Goblin, but understands Common and Primordial. If necessary, Lerina translates that Lavac wants something to break, and will offer a gremlin's boon in exchange. This is a show of respect among gremlins, since normally they just break things without asking. A PC who indulges the gremlin gains *Granny's Boon* (page 333), the favor of the fey titan Granny Allswell.

Lavac represents the gremlins of the Anthras Mountains, who are particularly annoyed by technology and adept at messing with it. He also unwittingly aided the Obscurati, who had him steer his gremlin followers at different mines. This freed up resources the Ob needed to construct the colossus. A few months ago Lavac realized he had been duped. He has heard of the party's battles against the conspiracy, and so he's inclined to help them in order to clean the stain to his pride.

Lavac allied with the Hedgehog Court mostly because he knew Beshela was an avowed opponent of the Ob. The gremlin was indifferent to Rock, but can help the party if they need spies around the city.

Beshela, Archfey of the Sea

Soon, Beshela and Olazdor return to the court chamber, clearly showing signs of affection. How Beshela reacts to the party depends on their previous encounter in Adventure Seven, *Schism*. She likely is still foul toward them since they were instrumental in the downfall of her friend Ethelyn, but they might have earned her grudging respect.

Beshela's ultimate game is to steer the fey away from their traditional alliance with Risur, which she sees as corrupted by technology. She wants Olazdor to win the war, depose Thisraldion, and make her his consort as queen of the Unseen Court. Unfortunately, she's also fairly certain that Olazdor *did* kill Rock, and so when she learns the party will be investigating the crime she resolves to thwart them. See Beshela's Intervention (page 233).

The archfey is rather blind to the Obscurati's machinations and the looming threat to the world, and dismisses such affairs as 'human problems.'

Olazdor

The headless, eagle-masked Olazdor has a bow and quiver strung across his back and a pair of shortswords at his hips, presenting quite the image of a mighty warrior. He thumps his chest with his fist when he sees the party, and then asks for all members of the court to gather and for the room to be sealed, since it is time to discuss pressing business.

Olazdor entreats the PCs to investigate Rock's murder and help bring justice. He's certain Thisraldion did the vile deed, and calls the monarch both a jealous husband and a black widow. Rock was a fellow rebel, and his intelligence was a great boon to the Hedgehog Court's efforts to win over the fey public.

Olazdor admits he doesn't know how to get the party back to the Waking. He'll plainly tell them that if they need the Unseen Court's aid to return to Risur, they should damn him now and falsely convict him of the murder. But if they value justice and an honorable fight, they'll do what's right. He promises that if he joins the Unseen Court he will do all in his power to use the office to find the party a way home.

Court in Session

Olazdor will gladly talk with the party for a while to get them as much information as they need. Lerina suggests they send people to the Halls of Accumulated Wisdom to look for a way to send the party back to Risur. Darbony thinks they should just join the fight against the Unseen Court, and perhaps claim a kingdom for themselves. Lavac sits in a dark corner and watches. Beshela is primarily interested in what has happened in the Waking, and whether the monarchy is in danger. She disagrees with Aodhan, but he did once save her life.

After half an hour, they'll need to continue to hold court. If the party stays to watch, they see Olazdor's a more just and less erratic leader than Thisraldion. Even thus, Olazdor's sense of heroic certainty makes him unsympathetic to the weak.

Gather No Moss

Exploration. Montage.

Clues and witnesses implicate both sides in Rock's murder.

It's the evening of the 37th. Thisraldion expects them to present their evidence at noon on the 39th. If they want to actually solve a murder, they need to accomplish the following three goals:

- **Understand the Crime.**
- **Find Suspects with Motive and Opportunity.**
- **Prove Guilt with Verifiable Evidence.**

Toward those ends, the party will likely want to look at the tunnel where Rock died, speak with members of both courts to see who have corroborated alibis, look for proof that matches likely suspects, and then examine Rock's body in the mortuary. The most obvious two suspects are Thisraldion and Olazdor, but by this point your players are likely genre-savvy enough to know we wouldn't make it so blatant. Indeed, the various fey are all trying to make each other look guilty.

Rather than presenting specific scenes, herein we present the evidence, and leave it to you to present it to your players as they investigate.

Here's What Really Happened

On the 16th, the night Rock apparently died, he left Thisraldion's bedchamber and sauntered out of Thistle Palace. He took a circuitous route through the streets of Clover. A mile from the palace, he passed through Krog Tunnel (see Crime Scene, below), which allies of the Hedgehog Court use as a canvas for their graffiti, and where homeless fey sleep during the night. His entrance was spotted by **Baldur Norther** (see Witnesses, below). There were other fey at the other two exits of the tunnel—**Thanriff** and **Beetlecurse**. Neither saw Rock leave, but Thanriff saw a cloaked figure with a hood leave the tunnel, wearing a mask; Beetlecurse saw the proudly shirtless Olazdor leaving.

Both of those sightings were actually illusions. In truth, Copperhat entered in the tunnel via the Webway, since there was a web orb in the crook of the tunnel. He was invisible when he arrived, and set out a bottle filled with sleeping poison from one of the Borenbog's gourds (see Introducing the Borenbog, below). When Rock passed by Copperhat used a magical suggestion to get Rock to notice the draught and drink it. Rock quickly passed out, dropping his lantern, which left the tunnel in pitch darkness.

Involving the Whole Party

At this level, the party's most likely able to gather a ton of clues with a few well-cast divinations. We want to make sure non-magic-users are still capable of contributing, so consider playing up these elements:

- Firstly, Copperhat made a point to be tricky in order to foil most common divinations. Some legwork and face-to-face interaction should be necessary.
- Witnesses might be reticent to talk to strangers, so if you suspect a given PC won't be involved much, maybe give the witnesses something in common with that PC so they'll open up.
- The three homeless fey who were at the entrances of the Krog tunnel have been arrested and are about to be killed in the annual Winter Culling of unfavorables. A warrior will have the chance to fight in their stead to save them.
- A nature oriented PC will need to appease the land and plant spirits near Rock's grave, or else they won't let him be exhumed and just keep refilling any hole the party tries to dig. The spirits were fans of Rock too, and don't want to give him up.
- The fey see the party as celebrities, and so maybe just give one PC the job of distracting or intimidating gawkers who might swarm another PC trying to cast a divination.
- Various witnesses or gatekeepers of information might indulge in the fine fey tradition of non-combat contests of skill—performing, crafting, or drinking—before they'll agree to help the party.

Copperhat, still invisible in the dark, cracked an illusory egg onto Rock's face. This egg (stolen from Falgo the Henkeeper, see Meanwhile in the News, page 214) was enchanted to create a duplicate of Rock's body, which appeared naked on the floor beside the real Rock. Copperhat then tucked the unconscious Rock into the *absurdist web*.

He then used webs to hold the fake corpse upright like a puppet. He magically disguised himself as Olazdor and shot an arrow (one of Olazdor's own, stolen by an ettercap minion) into the corpse's heart. Then he disguised himself as Thisraldion, drew a replica of the fey monarch's sword (but which was not vorpal), and decapitated the corpse with two chops.

He turned invisible again and sent illusions down two of the exits to frame each fey lord. Then he slipped away via the Webway.

A half hour later an albino elf named **Aric de Rocha** passed through the tunnel and found the body. Aric reported it to authorities, who arrived within ten minutes. Within an hour his body had been taken to the Mosscat Mortuary.

Copperhat plans to stick around Clover for another week or so before returning to the Voice of Rot to report on his progress. The trip will take him about a day via several Webway jaunts. Rock still resides in stasis inside the *absurdist web*. In another week or so Rock will pop out (and appear near a random Webway entrance) if someone doesn't retrieve him first. Copperhat likes the guy, and doesn't want to actually kill him.

Crime Scene

The three hundred foot-long Krog Tunnel takes its name from its elbow shape, and although someone who passes through it only ever sees two ends, it actually has three, making a sort of Y shape if charted on a map. Depending on how you enter—on foot, in a carriage, alone, in a group, singing a song, carrying a toad, etc.—the tunnel may decide to bend and deposit you in either of the other two exits. You only see the people who are taking the same path you are, though if you enter in a group people tend to stick together. Regardless of which way you go, though, the tunnel always seems straight when you go through it.

Each end is capped with stone buttresses, which are perpetually coated in graffiti proclaiming whichever group in the neighborhood is in ascendancy, whether they be criminal, cultural, or culinary.

Inside the tunnel, which has a fifteen foot high ceiling, the graffiti currently has a major 'night sky' motif, though the stars have been replaced with gears, a few of which grind together, spraying blood across the heavens as they crush small creatures. A group plans in the next few days to add a massive likeness of Rock Rackus to the tunnel to commemorate him at the spot where his body was found.

Clues

Rock's naked corpse and the few things found beside it were taken to Mosscat Mortuary (see The Body, below).

Enough traffic has passed through here to ruin normal crime scene investigations, but a Perception check (DC 31) spots odd strands of spider webbing dangling directly over where the body was found.

Divination magic could reveal what happened. Without darkvision, what seems to happen is Rock comes through, drinks from a bottle on the ground, falls unconscious, and drops his lantern.

With darkvision, one could also see a naked copy of Rock's body suddenly appear, and then the real Rock body slowly turn invisible (as it was dragged into an extradimensional space). Then the naked body stands up jerkily like a puppet. Suddenly Olazdor appears and shoots him in the heart, but he does not respond or even bleed that much. Olazdor vanishes, and then Thisraldion appears and hacks off his head with two chops. The body falls unrealistically to the ground, and Thisraldion vanishes.

With darkvision *and* the ability to see invisibility, it's clear that Copperhat is present and disguising himself.

Witnesses

Three homeless fey were sleeping near the exits of the tunnel that night. Baldur Norther (a dwarf-like fey from across the Avery Sea), saw Rock enter the tunnel from the north. Thanriff (a one-hoofed satyr) saw Thisraldion leave the southwest exit, and Beetlecurse (a dryad who managed to survive after her tree was eaten by beetles) saw Olazdor leave the southeast exit. When word spread of the murder, all three fey began gossiping about what they saw, but they then vanished.

For each hour a PC spends looking for witnesses to the murder, have him make a Streetwise check (DC 25). A success leads to someone who remembers one of the witnesses talking about being there the night Rock died, but it takes three succeses to get all their names—Baldur Norther, Thanriff, and Beetlecurse. No one knows where they are now, though, and it takes a DC 34 check to learn that they were rounded up earlier this week for possible execution in the annual Winter Culling.

THE WINTER CULLING

Dozens of poor or mad fey have been rounded up and brought to a small stadium, where on the night of the 38th they must earn the right to remain in Clover. Various fey warriors volunteer to perform the culling, both as entertainment and to practice their swordplay. This year Karrest of the Unseen Court is attending.

If the party wants to speak with the witnesses, the condemned fey quickly recognize the 'heroes' from Rock Rackus's music, and ask to be saved. They won't share their stories unless they're rescued. Rescuing them, of course, entails facing Karrest in a duel to three touches. Karrest's stats can be found in Appendix E: Recurring Enemies & Allies.

If you have an inkling who might defend the condemned, have Karrest be jealous of that PC earlier, thinking he or she is interested in his beloved Atsla. A martial scientist PC here can learn Karrest's Dramatic Reversal technique.

If rescued, the witnesses' descriptions of Rock, Thisraldion, and Olazdor are all accurate. Perhaps directly reading their memories could allow a Wisdom check to disbelieve the illusions of Olazdor and Thisraldion, but the mere fact that they saw contradicting events should be curious enough.

Aric de Rocha, who found the body, is known to authorities. He saw two key bits of evidence, but thinks they're inconsequential. First, there were bits of cracked eggshell on the ground near the body. Second, there was a huge orb of spider webs hanging in the ceiling, glinting very clearly in Aric's lantern light. But he sees those things everywhere, and will only remember these details if specifically asked.

Attempt on the Party's Lives

When the PCs are inside the Krog tunnel, someone tries to kill them by sealing the tunnel's ends with ice and flooding the passage with seawater. See Mid-Investigation Attacks below.

Suspects, Alibis, Motives

While potentially anyone in the city could have killed Rock, the most likely suspects are members of the Unseen and Hedgehog Courts.

Thisraldion. The fey monarch claims to have been asleep and quite intoxicated after spending the evening with Rock, and has no alibi. However, Thisraldion's *vorpal longsword* is supremely sharp, and would not have required two strikes to sever Rock's head.

Questioning the lower-ranked fey of the palace can yield (Diplomacy DC 25) rumors that Thisraldion was perfectly aware of Rock's visits to the Hedgehog Court, and was planning some public disgrace for the human in order to discredit the rebellion. Most of the staff assume their monarch had something more clever in mind than simply murdering the man.

However, a search of Thisraldion's personal quarters on the second floor of Thistle Palace reveal (Perception DC 34) a hidden compartment in the wall, filled with trophies from old battles, including withered severed heads of foes, cracked masks of former members of the Court, and one of Rock's white evening shirts stained with blood and wrapped around a crude sword. Thisraldion denies knowing about that. (The shirt and sword were actually planted by Binniwich the brown-nosing brownie, who so despised the actual members of the Unseen Court that he was easily goaded by an agent of Copperhat.)

Atsla and Karrest. Atsla and Karrest sat among a crowd of dozens in a wooded theater watching a grig concert. That said, they sat in a private balcony booth and never spoke to anyone, so either could have easily slipped away.

Atsla's attendants all say only positive things about their lady, though if threatened (Intimidate DC 34) they confess Atsla has eyes on the throne of Unseen Monarch, and they suspect she might have seen Rock as a lever to unseat Thisraldion.

Meanwhile Karrest's braggadocio-filled henchmen gladly gossip about how much their lord hated Rock Rackus. But if Karrest had done him in, Rock would have had a bigger weapon in his hand than just his naked manhood.

Furg. The toadstool sage was roaming Thistle Palace, reading its scattered shelves of books, researching what might be causing the strange disruptions to planar travel. A dozen different attendants and guards saw him.

One of the rangale (the telekinetic stag and gazelle guards, Streetwise DC 18 to locate) overheard Furg talking to Rock on a few occasions, trying to convince the man to pursue the kingship of Risur. If questioned, Furg admits that he thought it'd be good to have a friendly king who owed him a few favors.

Sallin. The dryad's tree remained rooted beside the Hood Garden all night, but she has no alibi. However, no one can ascribe her a motive for killing Rock.

Olazdor. The whole Hedgehog Court was in a meeting with scores of attendees, and Olazdor was rallying them to recruit more allies to their cause in hopes of starting a revolt in the Spring. They were waiting for their honored guest Rock Rackus to perform, and when midnight came and went, Olazdor left to look for him. He returned an hour later, having heard from the authorities that Rock was dead. He gave a thrilling speech inciting the crowd and proclaiming Rock a hero who had been cut down by Thisraldion.

Everyone attending meetings of the Hedgehog Court knew that Rock was 'spying' on the Unseen Court for them, but Lerina had warned Olazdor that Rock might be a double agent.

A search of Olazdor's personal quarters on the second floor of Thistle Palace can discover (Perception DC 34) a small treasure chest under a floorboard, which contains Rock's famous diamond-encrusted gold pistol. This was planted by a (now-dead) pixie whose family was being held captive by agents of the Voice of Rot.

The Rest of the Hedgehog Court. Nearly a hundred witnesses corroborate that Lerina, Darbony, Lavac, and Beshela were all at the rally for several hours before and after Rock died.

Of the group, Darbony had several public arguments with Rock after the man flirted with women Darbony claimed were 'his.' Lerina and Beshela both expressed public support for Rock, and Lavac was a huge fan of the man.

Copperhat the Headless. Copperhat claims he was at the Headless Human, drinking alone and waiting for Rock to swing by after he performed for the rebels. He says that when Rock didn't show up he hit up a conversation with the Borenbog, who has been very supportive for him ever since. The bartender—a hag named **Elocene**—recalls that Rock drank there often, but next to the celebrity, Copperhat never made much of an impression. But the night Rock died, she remembers someone coming in and announcing the news, after which Copperhat threw a massive fit. Elocene tried to throw Copperhat out, but the Borenbog grumbled something and she decided it wasn't worth the trouble.

Riffian of the Great Hunt. He feasted earlier that evening with his fellow knights, then slept in his armor beside his horse under the stars.

Cold as Ice

Throughout the day, the party likely notices (Perception DC 18) ice sprites following their movements, and occasionally they'll sense scrying sensors accompanied by a chill in the air. Atsla is spying on them.

At some point in the night, Atsla and her entourage of female frost trolls find the party. She makes a point of not bringing Karrest along, because he'll notice she's lying and wonder if she's upset. She claims that the night of Rock's murder, Thisraldion discarded a bloody coat and ordered it burnt, but that a servant kept it and brought it to her. She divined it, and found that the blood on the sleeve was Rock's.

This is a clever trick. Atsla had a small book written, with a story of Thisraldion doing just that—murdering Rock, then discarding a blood-stained coat, which was kept by a servant named **Paprika**. Then she had Alba and Zanel, the sisters who run the Honorable Halls of Accumulated Wisdom, to use a spell that lets them pull objects out of a book. The powerful magic has made the fictional coat *and* Paprika the servant real, and so divinations on either confirm Atsla's story, since in the book that story was *true*. Paprika is telling the truth as far as she knows, though in a few days she'll completely disappear when the magic giving form to her fiction fades.

If the party mentions being trapped by ice and nearly drowned, Atsla correctly surmises that Thisraldion is trying to frame her, though she has no way to prove it.

Copperhat at the Headless Human

Copperhat the Headless spends most of his time in a bar called the Headless Human, apparently drinking away his sadness at Rock's death. His drinking buddy, the **Borenbog**, is actually a hired bodyguard, because Copperhat worries he'll be discovered. He would leave, but his master the Voice of Rot ordered him to stay and ensure the fey courts continue fighting.

The Borenbog is an obscure folk terror from the High Bayou (Nature DC 25), which can steal men's will, passion, and creativity, which it stores in a gourd at its hip. Though only the size of a dwarf, its stupefying presence affects a vast area. None have managed to kill it, for it is said that no given weapon can ever harm it twice, and most challengers run out of ideas of how to attack it before it will die. It carries an oversized fish filleting knife, and it wears a belt of severed hands. It also drinks more than a horse, belches, farts, and is all around an unpleasant boor.

The legend of the Borenbog tells of a group of fishermen who brought beer to drink when they rowed out into a swamp to fish. The Borenbog, smelling the delicious alcohol, used his magic to daze the fishermen, then climbed aboard the boat and drank himself into a stupor. Finally, the only drink left on the boat was a gourd of beer one of the fishermen was holding, but when the Borenbog tried to take it, the man was too stubborn to let go, so the Borenbog took the fisherman's knife and chopped off the man's hand. The pain snapped him out of his confusion, and he managed to swim away, but his companions were never found.

The Borenbog is a dour, grumpy creature who is jealously protective of his drink. He hates being bothered and normally only leaves his boggy hut to hunt or steal alcohol. (Copperhat bribed the 'bog with an entire abandoned stone giant brewery in the Anthras Mountains in order to be his bodyguard for a few weeks.) Some say that the Borenbog and his rotting swamp first held the secret of fermentation, which was stolen by

dwarves, men, elves, or whoever is telling the tale. It is for this reason that the Borenbog hates the civilized races, and terrorizes any he comes across who have alcohol.

The Borenbog never smiles, and enjoys complaining. He takes no joy in his drinking, but gets viciously angry if denied it. The Borenbog loves absinthe, and offering the spirit in a toast is one of the few ways to win his favor.

Matching his dull demeanor, the Borenbog has the ability to strip men of their passion and creativity. Those who drink are particularly vulnerable, and over the centuries many a drunken poet has been warned to watch out for the Borenbog on his walk home after a long night of seeking his muse. Tales say that the stolen ideas are trapped in the creature's gourd, and that by drinking from the gourd another creature can take those ideas for himself.

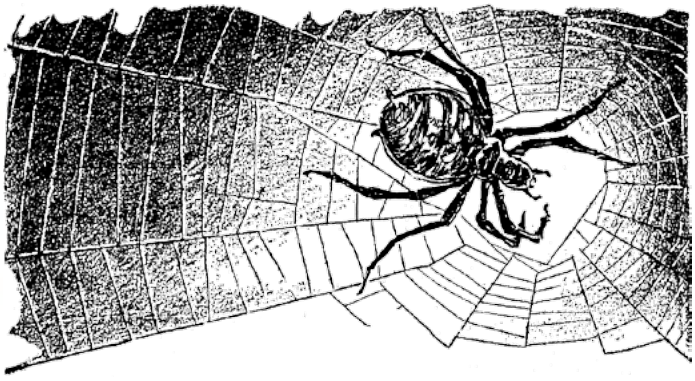
There are many stories about how the Borenbog is invulnerable to all but one type of weapon; just what that weapon is, however, the stories never agree on. No single weapon ever works twice to harm the Borenbog, at least not in the short term. The only real vulnerability the Borenbog has is his foe's imaginations.

The Borenbog's gourd is enchanted, letting the creature have an endless supply of drinks, mundane, alcoholic, even magical.

A somewhat infamous fey who acts a mix of trickster and jester for the Unseen Court. Like actual members of the court, Copperhat has no face, at least none that anyone can see. His namesake hat sits atop a seemingly invisible head, which is enough to fool most minor fey into thinking he's really one of the Unseen.

In truth he's just a clever ettercap-like pixie who hides inside his coat and levitates his clothes and hat, controlling his fake body like an oversized puppet. He normally travels between fey enclaves trading knick-knacks and favors, with a particular fondness for telling stories about the human world. People find him amusing in small servings, but are quick to suggest new places for him to go after a day or so.

Copperhat is secretly a minion of the Voice of Rot, the only one of the fey titans currently awake.



Mourning for Rock

When the party arrives, Copperhat quickly takes a drink from a flask in his coat; this *elixir of glibness* makes it nigh impossible to realize when the faceless fey tells a lie (Insight DC 48).

If the party comes to Copperhat looking for clues of who killed Rock, he convincingly plays the role of a sullen bereaved friend who is sincerely happy to see the party. He's not sure who would have killed such an amazing person as Rock, but he trusts the party will do the right thing.

Copperhat figures someone has to take the fall for the murder, and framing Thisraldion will cause the most chaos. He doesn't want to seem suspicious by just giving the party the answer, so he wants them to 'discover' for themselves the damning evidence he planted in Thisraldion's bedchambers. So after recounting to the party the many good times he and Rock had together, and how they caused such a ruckus in the two courts, he offers his theory, which comes in three parts:

First, whoever killed Rock has to have powerful magic to avoid all the divinations both sides have been casting. That means someone in one of the courts, and probably Olazdor or Thisraldion.

But second, Olazdor isn't smart enough to lie about something like this.

And third, Thisraldion was a jealous lover. Emphasis on *lover*. Copperhat, who weeps at the memory of his friend, can't let go. He nods to the one-handed patrons here, and says that they still long for what they lost. So he bets Thisraldion would have wanted some keepsake. The news said Rock was found naked. Who knows what Thisraldion might have taken.

Copperhat says he's afraid Thisraldion would kill him too, which is why he's been lying to everyone who will listen, singing the monarch's praises. But if he were braver, he'd go and look for clues. It's what Rock would have done. He asks to be present whenever the party presents their evidence to the two courts, so he can face Rock's killer.

Tangled in His Web

If the party accuses Copperhat of killing Rock without having evidence, he feigns shock, and the Borenbog starts to move toward them. Copperhat stops him, and says he forgives the party. In his grief he has thought terrible things of people too.

Certainly, there seems to be no motive for Copperhat to have killed Rock. But the party might have figured out that Rock isn't dead. If they present such evidence, or if they start threatening Copperhat's life, he'll change demeanor and become suddenly serious.

He says that Rock is alive, and that the war between the two courts was orchestrated by his master, the Voice of Rot. He's not quite sure what the fey titan wants, but it's clear that things in both the Dreaming and the Waking are turning chaotic. With the Unseen Court weakened, the Voice of Rot will be able to reclaim his power and his territory.

He knows the party wants to return to the Waking to save their king. A lot of people will die soon if the party isn't there to save them; after all, Copperhat can always smell a corpse in the offing. And the Voice of Rot can aid them. Fey titans exist in both worlds. They can banish their enemies across the planes, or send their agents as needed. If Thisraldion offered to send them home, he's lying. His power is pathetic next to a fey titan.

Introducing the Borenbog

Hunched like a dwarf with a hangover, this squat, wart-skinned goblin-like creature has a vindictive disdain in his red eyes, and he slowly licks his lips with thirst. One of the creature's hands tightly clenches a large sloshing gourd, while the other errantly twirls a long blade meant for gutting fish. The blade is rusted and blood-stained, perhaps from the severed hands hanging at the creature's belt. The creature meets your eyes and sneers, and the world begins to turn dull and hazy.

Suddenly Copperhat steps up and shakes your hand, and you snap out of the odd malaise that had gripped you. (Only then do you realize that Copperhat doesn't actually have any hands to have shaken.) The headless fey's top hat tips jauntily to the side and he holds up two glasses of wine.

"Please, drink with us. Ever since Rock died I've been truly bereft, and the only one who would listen to my sorrows is my new buddy. Let me introduce The Borenbog."

The Borenbog sips from his gourd, indifferent to Copperhat's enthusiasm. You notice that two of the bar's other patrons—both keeping their distance—are each missing a hand.

If the party helps Copperhat, he promises them—and this is a fey promise that he must fulfill—that his master will send them post-haste back to the Waking, and will cause no harm to them nor allow his minions to harm them for as long as they remain in Risur, unless they attack him first. All he asks is that they find the evidence he planted to implicate Thisraldion, and that they name the fey lord as Rock's killer. Then he will bring them to the Voice of Rot and send them back to the Waking. They can take Rock back or leave him here, as they prefer.

If the party attacks, see Copperhat's tactics in We Now Return to Your Regularly Scheduled Warfare (page 235).

The Body

West of the city, located near an idyllic flowered cemetery, the cheery Mosscat Mortuary has plenty of tall windows to let in light, which feeds the staff: intelligent cat-like plant creatures made of moss. The mosscats, led by a high-strung mortician named **Desulie**, are only a foot or two tall, but can extend tendrils of moss to manipulate objects. Desulie herself has the ability to assume the form of an elf, but with distinctively cat-like mannerisms.

The mosscats have just finished burying the body of Rock Rackus (or rather, the fake body left by Copperhat). The party can dig it up themselves, or wait a few hours for Desulie to get proper approval and call in the gravediggers. Though he 'died' three weeks ago, a *gentle repose* ritual has kept the body pristine.

Personal Effects

The only thing found beside Rock was a half-empty bottle of liquor, which Desulie has kept locked away, thinking she can sell it as a relic of the celebrity. No one ever thought to examine it, but a Heal check (DC 18) detects soporific poison. If someone drinks it, he feels drowsy and lazy, unable to take any initiative or have an original thought for about five minutes.

An Arcana check (DC 34, or DC 25 if someone tries drinking the poison) can determine the liquor is tainted with the spittle of an obscure fey known as the Borenbog. The rest of Rock's personal belongings are at Thistle Palace.

Murder Weapon

They also have the arrow found in Rock's chest. The shaft has a rough texture like bark, and the head is a carved eagle talon. Using *object reading* or similar abilities on the arrow might reveal misleading information, since Copperhat was disguised as Olazdor when he shot Rock. And in any case, the spidery fey never personally touched the arrow, just manipulated it with his webs.

Autopsy

Rock's body was cleaned in preparation for burial, but not embalmed. A Heal check (DC 18) can tell that the arrow wound in Rock's chest was not fatal. It did not reach his heart, and indeed only went in fairly shallowly. The wound to the neck required two strikes. A check that beats DC 25 determines that the amount of blood still in the body indicates the heart wasn't beating at the time of death. If a PC tests his blood, a DC 25 check finds there was practically no alcohol in his system, but there are traces of a poison. He also has nothing in his gastrointestinal tract.

The fey cast divinations to find out, "Who killed Rock Rackus?", which of course yielded nothing, because of course this body was never alive in the first place. Similar divinations by the PCs might seem to indicate powerful anti-divination magic, when in truth they're just not asking the right questions.

Close inspection of the body's hands and feet (or a Perception check DC 34 if they don't specify where they're looking) finds that he has no calluses, nor any scars or signs of ever having suffered injury other than the two 'killing blows.' It should become fairly obvious that Clover was not the site of Rock Rackus's demise. No, what we have here is a sham-Rock.

Mid-Investigation Attacks

Action. Tactical. Level 18.

A pair of ambushes are each likely too weak to challenge the party.

The party can't just blithely walk through a city full of fey on the brink of war, asking questions that might implicate leaders of either faction. Thisraldion tries to drown the party when they investigate Krog Tunnel (and hopes to make it look like Atsla and Beshela targeted them). And right after they escape that death trap, Beshela's *actual* attempt on their lives comes in the form of elite satyr warriors (which she hopes the party will think have been sent by Darbony, the satyr member of the Hedgehog Court).

The flooding trick only really works in the tunnel, but feel free to move the satyr ambush elsewhere if needed.

Flooded Tunnel

While the party is in Krog tunnel examining the murder site, Thisraldion attempts to make it look like Beshela and Atsla have conspired to kill them, but the trap is one the fey monarch expects the party to be able to survive.

Once the party starts examining where Rock's body was found, walls of ice seal the three exits of the tunnel, blocking out sound and light from outside (Perception DC 18 during the day to not be caught by surprise, DC 25 at night).

One round later, frigid seawater bursts from the walls down the length of the tunnel with intense pressure.

Atk (Area Burst): +23 vs. Fortitude (creatures in the tunnel), **Hit:** 5 damage and the creature is knocked prone.

The crime scene is in the middle of the tunnel, 150 ft. from any exit, and the water immediately makes the ground difficult terrain. The tunnel fills a foot in depth each round, taking fifteen rounds to flood completely. The walls at each end of the tunnel have magic that makes them hard to injure, with Defenses of 25. The walls are nearly 3 feet thick, and it takes 100 points of damage to break through. They have vulnerable 25 fire. Any creature that starts its turn adjacent to the wall takes 10 cold damage, and a creature who makes a melee attack against the wall takes an additional 5 cold damage.

Breaking the ice wall drains the tunnel by one foot per round.

Additionally, when the party nears the wall, two fey orcas are summoned on either end of the party. Until the water is at least 5 feet deep they can only move at a crawl with a speed of 1, but they're still quite adept at grabbing prey and thrashing them to death.

✦ 2 Fey Orca

Fey Orca Level 18 Skirmisher
Huge fey beast (aquatic) **XP** 2000
HP 169; **Bloodied** 84 **Initiative** +18
AC 32, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 27 **Perception** +11
Speed 1, swim 10 Blindsight
Resist cold 10

Standard Actions

✓ **Bite** ✦ At-Will
This beast's mouth is built for devouring sharks.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC
Hit: 3d12+10 damage and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 23), knocked prone, and held underwater. The fey orca can only bite the grabbed the creature as long as it maintains the grab.
Special: At the start of its turn, the fey orca may choose to push the grabbed creature 5 squares as a free action, ending the grab.

Minor Action

▸ **Deadly Whalesong** ✦ Encounter
Its clicks and shrieks grow suddenly deafening.
Effect: The attack only affects creatures whose bodies are mostly or completely submerged.
Attack: Close burst 10 (non-whale creatures in burst); +21 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The target is stunned for one round.

Str	21 (+14)	**Dex**	24 (+16)	**Wis**	14 (+11)
Con	19 (+13)	**Int**	3 (+5)	**Cha**	9 (+8)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** understands Elven, Primordial

MASKING OF THE UNSEEN

Throughout the party's time in the Dreaming, Thisraldion and others on the Unseen Court consider who among the party might be worthy of joining them. Certainly the party has powers that make them quite mighty in combat, which the court needs to maintain its supremacy. But a PC must also display the proper charisma and familiarity with the fey, and have motives amenable to the rest of the court.

At some point before the party leaves Clover, if you think one of the PCs would be deemed worthy, the fey lords and ladies come to him or her and make their offer: fill the vacancy left by Ekossigan (as well as anyone who gets killed in the course of this adventure), but serve as ambassador of the Unseen Court in the Waking. Continue to work for Risur, but steer them to favor the fey, and when your mission is complete, return and take your throne.

Even Thisraldion, who has come to accept that the people of the Waking will continue to use technology, would still prefer his Waking allies to show more care for the effects their technology has on the Dreaming. And if Olazdor or Beshela join the Unseen Court, finding a solution to the blighting effect of industry will be critical to avoid a war in the coming years.

If a PC is invited and accepts induction into the Unseen Court, he or she is tasked with designing a mask. Whatever the PC can imagine, someone in the Court or among their minions can craft it. Thereafter, that PC's physical body will be invisible. They gain the Mask of the Unseen Court boon, detailed in Appendix G: Magic and Training. Moreover, they can command immediate loyalty from most fey, and will speak with authority even among humans.

In the final four adventures, the Dreaming will be inaccessible, then destroyed, then possibly reborn, so any PC who joins the Unseen Court won't have any political responsibilities until the campaign is over.

Beshela's Intervention

Beshela thinks Olazdor is guilty, but she needs Olazdor as an ally, so she wants to pin the murder on Darbony. She has in the past bedded the randy old satyr and in post-coital chats learned many of his secrets. She uses some of those secrets now: with the aid of illusions and calling in favors Darbony is owed, she has convinced the *Debauched Brotherhood*, the most elite warriors of the satyr armies, to target the PCs.

Disguised as Darbony, Beshela spun a tale to the brotherhood of how another satyr mercenary—named Dolax the Deathmask—had assassinated Rackus on Darbony's orders, because the human was interfering in his romantic endeavors. (Dolax is indeed a satyr assassin, but he died a few days ago in the ongoing warfare, so he can't readily dispute Beshela's lies.) Beshela-disguised-as-Darbony claimed that it would be disastrous to satyrkind if word got out he had provoked this whole war just so he could bed a few extra women, and the brotherhood think they're doing a public service by silencing the party.

Right after the party emerges from the flooded tunnel, the *Debauched Brotherhood* attacks. They expect to be able to kill them quickly, and if defeated confess that all they know is that Darbony didn't like the outsiders asking questions. They expect to be summarily executed, but if spared would be willing to fight for the party for a year and a day to repay the debt.

- 3 Satyr Springjacks
- 1 Satyr Piper
- Xeniam, Boon Satyr

Satyr Springjack — Level 18 Goon Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid — **XP** 1000

HP 84; **Bloodied** 42 — **Initiative** +11
AC 32, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 27 — **Perception** +8
Speed 8 — Low-light vision
Resist satyrs can make a save to end any fear effects at the start of their turn, even if they don't normally allow a save

Standard Actions

Golden Longsword (weapon) ✦ At-Will
The lightly armored satyr springs through battle and slices you as he passes.
Effect: The satyr shifts 5 squares and makes the following attack at any point before, during, or after the movement.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC
Hit: 26 damage and the target cannot teleport until the end of the satyr's next turn.

Scattering Arrows (force) ✦ At-Will
He slings a bow off his shoulder and fires an arrow at the ground beside you. It bursts with arcane energy and knocks you away.
Attack: Area burst 2 within 20 (creatures in burst); +23 vs. Reflex
Hit: 19 force damage and the target is pushed 2 squares from the center of the affected area.

Triggered Action

Lure of Enchantment ✦ Encounter
He chuckles a short tune, and you find yourself inexplicably moving as he directs you.
Trigger: The satyr hits an enemy with an attack.
Effect: The satyr slides the enemy 3 squares, but not into hindering terrain. The enemy grants combat advantage until the end of the satyr's next turn.

Skills Acrobatics +16, Athletics +16

Str	14 (+11)	**Dex**	14 (+11)	**Wis**	8 (+8)
Con	19 (+13)	**Int**	8 (+8)	**Cha**	16 (+12)

Alignment Unaligned — **Languages** Elven, Primordial

Satyr Piper — Level 18 Goon Controller (Leader)
Medium fey humanoid — **XP** 1000

HP 80; **Bloodied** 40 — **Initiative** +11
AC 32, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 32 — **Perception** +8
Speed 6 — Low-light vision
Resist satyrs can make a save to end any fear effects at the start of their turn, even if they don't normally allow a save

Traits

Battle Pipes ✦ Aura 10
The burly satyr carries an oversized set of pan pipes across his shoulder, which the wind itself plays, gusting with mighty force. The tune saps your strength and delivers it to the satyrs.
The piper's allies in the aura gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls. Enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to attack rolls. Additionally, whenever an enemy in the aura heals, the piper or one of his allies in the aura heals an equal amount of damage.

Standard Actions

Pipe Smash (weapon) ✦ At-Will
Those pipes are as big as a wheel barrow, and surprisingly sturdy.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC
Hit: 26 damage.

Painful Piping (charm, thunder) ✦ At-Will
The volume makes your ears bleed, but you cannot resist the tune's catchiness.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +21 vs. Will
Hit: 26 thunder damage, and the target cannot attack until the end of the piper's next turn.

Triggered Action

Lure of Enchantment ✦ Encounter
He chuckles a short tune, and you find yourself inexplicably moving as he directs you.
Trigger: The satyr hits an enemy with an attack.
Effect: The satyr slides the enemy 3 squares, but not into hindering terrain. The enemy grants combat advantage until the end of the satyr's next turn.

Skills Acrobatics +16, Athletics +16

Str	20 (+14)	**Dex**	14 (+11)	**Wis**	8 (+8)
Con	12 (+10)	**Int**	8 (+8)	**Cha**	20 (+14)

Alignment Unaligned — **Languages** Elven, Primordial

Xeniam, Boon Satyr	Level 18 Artillery (Leader)
Medium fey humanoid	**XP** 2000
HP 128; **Bloodied** 64	**Initiative** +11
AC 32, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 27	**Perception** +15
Speed 6	Low-light vision

Resist satyrs can make a save to end any fear effects at the start of their turn, even if they don't normally allow a save

Standard Actions

⊘ **Shortsword** ✦ At-Will, Basic

He hacks desperately to keep you at bay.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+6 damage, and Xeniam's *lure of enchantment* ability recharges.

✓ **Flash Strike** ✦ At-Will

An image of the satyr appears beside you and makes a flourishing attack with dual swords.

Effect: Xeniam chooses a space within 20 squares he can see, and then makes the following attack twice as if he were in that space.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+6 damage.

▸ **Bestow Might** ✦ At-Will

The satyr chants a quick spell, and one of his allies surges with strength.

Effect: One ally Xeniam can see can make a save with a +2 bonus to end each effect affecting it, even those that normally don't grant a save. That ally gains 20 temporary hit points and gets a +2 bonus to attack rolls and a +10 bonus to damage. This benefit lasts until Xeniam uses this power again.

Move Action

▸ **Allied Step** ✦ At-Will

He clangs his blades together as somatic component for a teleportation spell.

Effect: Xeniam or an ally he can see teleports 6 squares to a space Xeniam can see.

Triggered Action

Lure of Enchantment ✦ Encounter

He chuckles a short tune, and you find yourself inexplicably moving as he directs you.

Trigger: The satyr hits an enemy with an attack.

Effect: The satyr slides the enemy 3 squares, but not into hindering terrain. The enemy grants combat advantage until the end of the satyr's next turn.

Skills Perception +15

Str	18 (+13)	**Dex**	14 (+11)	**Wis**	12 (+10)
Con	19 (+13)	**Int**	8 (+8)	**Cha**	16 (+12)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven, Primordial

DON'T RAILROAD

We like the idea of the two factions meeting for a dramatic reveal of the killer. It's very Sherlock-y. But if the party makes a move early, just let them. Ultimately they'll need to go to the Voice of Rot, and that might be while chasing Copperhat, or after capturing or killing him, or going along with him as part of a deal. Stats for all members of the two courts are presented in Appendix E: Recurring Enemies & Allies, in case the party picks a fight. Unless the party antagonizes multiple fey lords, the two courts leave whoever the party accuses to fend for him- or herself.

Elementary Deductions

Social. Montage.

The party reveals their findings.

At Thisraldion's invitation, the Hedgehog Court comes to the entrance foyer (area 6) of Thistle Palace, where they and the Unseen Court will listen to the party's findings about the murder of Rock Rackus. Copperhat the Headless attends too (along with his drinking buddy the Borenbog), since he wants to know whether his deception has been discovered. He has several escape routes planned in case the party correctly identifies him, though.

Gathered Suspects

Thisraldion, Atsla, Karrest, Furg, and Sallin stand on the east side of the room. Olazdor, Beshela, Lerina, and Lavac stand on the west side (Darbony had assistants bring a chair for him to sit in). Copperhat and the Borenbog lean against the south wall.

The Borenbog wears a truly massive gourd strapped across his back (which secretly holds a silk orb that leads to the Webway). Copperhat walks around the room with a bottle of surprisingly strong wine trying to get everyone drunk. All the fey lords except Darbony decline. Keep track of who among the PCs drink, because they'll be more susceptible if they end up fighting the Borenbog while intoxicated.

Riffian and other members of the Great Hunt are only here if the party requested them. Otherwise they're busy chasing a fox through the chessboard forest south of the city.

As is traditional for the *Unseen* Court, Thisraldion has forbidden anyone else to be present during the party's presentation. No guards or gawkers are allowed even within earshot of this vital business.

And the Killer Is...

We leave it your the party to decide how to present their findings. Have the accused demand evidence. Throw in a few startled gasps from the other lords if the revelation is particularly dramatic. If the PCs have figured everything out, the most perfect reveal would be for them to reach into their own *absurdist web* (the one Copperhat gave them in adventure seven leads to the same extradimensional space) to pull out a still-alive Rock Rackus.

What happens depends on who the party names. Even if the evidence they present is weak, the two courts are just glad to resolve the matter. If their evidence is just outright pathetic, treat it as the Nobody reaction.

Nobody. If the party avoids naming anyone, the fey lords are furious, start shouting, and eventually begin fighting. Barring PC intervention, Olazdor engages Thisraldion; Furg and Sallin square off against Lavac and Lerina; Darbony runs away; and Karrest is double-teamed by Atsla and Beshela. Within a minute Furg, Lerina, and Karrest are dead, Sallin and Lavac have withdrawn, and the remaining three lords—Atsla, Beshela, and Olazdor—have cornered Thisraldion. When the monarch refuses to 'confess,' Olazdor delivers a killing blow, then proclaims himself new King of the Unseen Court.

Thisraldion. Thisraldion attacks the party, but Olazdor comes to their aid, so it should be a quick battle. Once Thisraldion falls, Olazdor thanks the party, then proclaims himself king.

Olazdor. Olazdor throws down his weapons and presents his chest to the crowd. He proclaims that the fey will keep the monarch they deserve: deceptive and villainous. He turns to the party and tells them they'll be *excellent* allies of the Unseen Court. Then he kneels and lets Thisraldion plunge a vorpal sword through his heart.

Darbony. The old satyr is completely blind-sided, and as Karrest drags him to the center of the room he screams that he's being set up. Thisraldion starts to make a speech of condemnation, but when Darbony won't shut up the monarch just sighs and slices his head off with one stroke.

Beshela. If the party names Beshela, Olazdor interposes himself and confesses. He lies and claims that he was responsible for whatever evidence would have damned his beloved, and he asks that they kill him instead. Thisraldion obliges.

Other Fey Lord. Unless the party's just making stuff up, it's unlikely they'd name anyone else on the two courts, but if so, the accused denies it, is dragged forward, and executed.

Copperhat. Copperhat tries to appear calm while feverishly poking the Borenbog to get his attention. He clears his throat and quietly explains that the party won't ever get home to the Waking without his help. Perhaps they would rather name Thisraldion, who after all has lied about knowing how to send them home.

If the party isn't willing to help him, Copperhat gives a nod to the Borenbog, who smashes his huge gourd on the ground, revealing an orb gate to the Webway. Copperhat dives into it, and the opening keeps glowing for about a minute, but the Borenbog stomps it flat. It takes a full round to 'refluff' the orb enough to enter it, and the Borenbog will fight anyone who tries to go through.

If somehow the party prevents this, Copperhat will try to flee across the Grand Lawn. Rather than coming across an active battleground, the party will pass by dozens of wounded fey, whom Copperhat can trick into attacking them.

We Now Return to Your Regularly Scheduled Warfare

Action. Tactical. Level 22.

Copperhat the Headless flees through the field of battle in a bid to shake your pursuit.

This scene of course only happens if the party outs Copperhat as the one behind Rock's "murder" and the subsequent warfare. Several stages are all part of the same encounter. If the party waits more than a minute or so to pursue Copperhat, he gets away.

The first stage is getting past the Borenbog, who wants to keep the party from getting into the Webway. If the party does end up diving into the Webway, the last PC to go hears Thisraldion (or whoever is monarch of the Unseen Court now) announce that they're conjuring a barrier in the Webway—thorns, ice, fire, etc.—which will force Copperhat to exit so he'll be easier to pursue.

In the Webway, various spiders get in the party's way. Once they make it through, they emerge onto the Chessboard Battlefield, where Copperhat uses his illusions to turn the fighters upon the party.

Alternately, the party might pursue Copperhat directly from Thistle Palace, across the grand lawn and through injured fey soldiers. Or they might have Riffian of the Great Hunt on hand at the palace, who will summon steeds for them, call forth his hunting hounds, and lead them at high speed toward the Chessboard Forest to find the fleeing Copperhat.

Battle and Brew

During this fight, the various fey lords only get involved if the party has previously cultivated a friendship (in which case you should make saves for them as normal to break free from being the Borenbog's *stupefy* aura). Or a PC can spend an action and succeed a Diplomacy check (DC 25 for Olazdor or Lerina, DC 40 for Thisraldion or Darbony, DC 34 for anyone else) to convince a fey lord to help.

The entrance foyer of Thistle Palace is about 40 ft. by 50 ft., with doorways leading out in many directions. This means all the PCs and the members of the two courts likely start in the Borenbog's *stupefy* aura. The aura also keeps the guards from interfering; they just come to the edge and stand there, confused.

The *stupefy* aura means that except for rare immunities (like the Superior Will feat), he will get to go first. He swigs a *giant's draught* from his gourd, then closes with a PC and tries to hack his hand off. The following rounds he'll go after other stupefied PCs, or anyone who tries to reopen the orb that leads to the Webway.

Once he's bloodied, he shrinks back to medium, stupefies everyone again, and then drinks *bayou brew*, which transforms the area around him into a copy of his High Bayou home.

The Borenbog's *redundant defense* is meant to stymie the party and encourage the PCs to have to seek novel ways to harm their enemy. Make them be creative—dropping chandeliers, throwing consumable items, digging out all the seldom-used spare magic items from a *bag of holding*, or forcing the Borenbog into battle with the convalescing soldiers on the Grand Lawn. The 'bog is a lower-level foe than the party, so they should be able to still hurt it even if they have to use non-magical weapons.

If the party seems particularly stymied, that's fine. The Borenbog is slow and they can easily run away from it and find more weapons. Remember that at this level, a clever improvised attack should deal something like 4d8+10 damage and inflict a condition, or just deal 4d12+15 damage.

Aftermath

If the party manages to get into the Webway, the 'bog will chase them, squeezing awkwardly if he's still huge. If the Borenbog is defeated, the Unseen Court takes him prisoner but ultimately can't figure out how to kill him. In the long run they'll banish him back to his bayou, and give the party the *Borenbog's gourd* as a reward.

✦ The Dread Borenbog

The Dread Borenbog Level 18 Elite Controller
Medium fey humanoid **XP** 4000

HP 320; **Bloodied** 160 **Initiative** +7
AC 32, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 29 **Perception** +7
Speed 5 Darkvision
Immune see Redundant Defense
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Alcohol Sense**

As a standard action, a Borenbog can sense the direction to the nearest source of alcohol, as long as it is within one mile.

☼ **Stupefy** ✦ Aura 8

The mere sight of the glowering fey makes the world dull and uninteresting.

Each hostile creature in the aura is stupefied (save ends). Intoxicated creatures take a penalty of -1 to -5 to this save, depending on how drunk they are.

A stupefied creature's speed is reduced to 2, it grants combat advantage, it can only take one action on its turn, and it cannot take immediate or opportunity actions. Additionally, the only actions it can take are ones that are very uncreative, like walking and making basic attacks. It cannot even use at-will powers other than basic attacks.

Once a creature has succeeded a save to end the stupefied condition, it is immune to this aura until the Borenbog's *stubborn refusal to die* power triggers.

▸ **Redundant Defense**

It seems to have already gotten bored of fighting you. It completely ignores your attack, so much so that you don't even hurt it. Maybe you need to try something novel to get its attention.

Any attack made against the Borenbog has no effect if the same type of weapon or implement harmed it in the past day. For example, only one attack with a longsword can harm it per day, even if one longsword was made of mithral and another of adamantine.

Use your best judgment for attacks that don't use weapons or implements. A monk's *flurry of blows* might work with any given weapon once (since it's just an addition to an existing attack), whereas if the party has two tieflings only one could harm it with *infernal wrath*.

If the Borenbog takes ongoing damage, once that ongoing damage ends it cannot suffer that same type of ongoing damage for 24 hours.

If an attack misses and doesn't affect the Borenbog on a miss, that attack doesn't count toward its redundant defense.

An exception to this is any martial scientist technique. The novelty and ingenuity of such attacks means any weapons or implements used in them ignore the Borenbog's redundant defense.

▸ **Gourd of Endless Drinks**

Twirling a filleting knife in one hand, it takes a quick swig from the gourd in its other. It drops the gourd, which dangles from around his neck on a cord, then rapidly begins to grow as large as a house.

The Borenbog carries a gourd, which hangs from a cord around his neck. The knotty leather cord has 50 hit points and can be hit with a slashing weapon that beats AC or Reflex 34. If severed, the Borenbog cannot use his *quick swig* power. He also will do whatever he can to retrieve his gourd and kill the bastard who tried to take it from him.

Bear in mind that the Borenbog's first action in combat should be to swig a *giant's draught*.

▸ **Lucky Hands**

You hit it surprisingly hard, and it spits in anger as it rips one free one of the severed hands tacked to its belt. That seems to help it recover from the injury.

The Borenbog begins combat with two severed hands tacked to its belt, and might add more if it succeeds with its *take hand* power. When affected by a condition, the Borenbog can rip one of the hands free (this requires no action), which causes the condition to end.

Standard Actions

⊗ **Grab** ✦ At-Will, Basic

It offers you a hungover leer, and then grabs at you with one burly arm. It has an unnaturally strong grip.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d8+8 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 23).

⊗ **Gutting Knife** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

It hacks at you with a pitted and rusted knife stained with fish blood.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+17 damage, and the target takes ongoing 20 damage (save ends).
Aftereffect: Ongoing 10 damage (save ends).

✓ **Cursing Flurry** ✦ At-Will

"All of ye are bums," it mutters as it wades into melee. "Makin' me 'afta come out in the daylight. Bugger ye. I'ma eat ye, and I don' even care if ye give me the shits."

Effect: The Borenbog uses *grab* once, and then *gutting knife*.

✓ **Take Hand** ✦ At-Will

It grabs your hand, then hacks it off at the wrist with three inept, brutal chops. He laughs. "At least yer good for sum'n."

Effect: The Borenbog uses *gutting knife* against a stupefied creature two times. If after this the target is bloodied, in addition to the attack's normal effect, the Borenbog cuts off one of the target's hands, then impales the hand on a nail on his belt. The pain of losing a hand is enough to make that creature immune to the *stupefy* aura, even after the Borenbog uses its *stubborn refusal to die* power.

✓ **Entangling Spit** (acid) ✦ At-Will

With a snap of its head and a slurpy "Ptoo!", it flings a black glob of spit at your feet.

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +21 vs. Reflex
Hit: 5d6 acid damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 acid damage and is immobilized (save ends both).

Minor Actions

▸ **Quick Swig** ✦ Recharges when first bloodied

Effect: The Borenbog gains one of the following effects.

- *Giant's Draught:* It grows to Huge size. Its reach increases 1 square. It gains a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls, and whenever it hits a creature with a melee attack it can push that creature 3 squares. This lasts until it becomes bloodied.
- *Bayou Brew:* All ground within the Borenbog's *stupefy* aura becomes swampy, with marble floors turning no more solid than waterlogged spiderwebs and tangled roots popping just above the surface. The murky water bubbles with a black miasma of negative energy. The ground is difficult terrain to any creature other than the Borenbog, and creatures touching the floor at the end of their turn take 20 necrotic damage.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Stubborn Refusal to Die** ✦ Encounter

Finally a solid blow! The Borenbog sags as the magic of his potion comes to an abrupt end. He looks ready to fall over, but then glares at you. "Gimme yer hand," he says.

Trigger: The Borenbog is first bloodied.
Effect (No Action): The Borenbog's *quick swig* power recharges and he uses it.

Creatures who previously had immunity to his *stupefy* aura are stupefied and must start making saves again.

Skills Intimidate +14

Str	20 (+14)	**Dex**	8 (+8)	**Wis**	8 (+8)
Con	48 (+28)	**Int**	6 (+7)	**Cha**	4 (+6)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Goblin, Primordial

Webway Chase

Copperhat enters the Webway and throws handfuls of trinkets in the pathway in order to attract other spidery fey to cover his escape. He only has a chance to move about a hundred feet in the tunnels before his path is blocked by fey lord magic. He drops out the nearest exit, which deposits him right in the middle of the chessboard forest, a couple miles south of the palace. He won't be able to reenter the Webway for hours, until the locals clear it out, so he turns invisible and hides, hoping to turn the local warfare against the party.

Should the party pursue through the webs, they have to make their way through a criss-cross of eight 5-ft. wide tunnels, all of which are blocked off about 100 ft. from where the party enters. Copperhat can be tracked by the random bits that fell out of his coat as he moved. A few creatures reflexively attack them as intruders, but flee as soon as they're injured. If the party happens to still have Mista Nyves with them, though, he clears a path without a fight.

- 2 Webway Giant Spiders
- 12 Dreaming Ettercaps

Giant Webway Spider — Level 20 Goon Brute
Large fey beast (spider) — **XP** 1400

HP 100; **Bloodied** 50 — **Initiative** +18
AC 33, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 33 — **Perception** +12
Speed 8, climb 6 (spider climb) — Tremorsense
Resist poison 20

Traits

▸ **Tunnel Scuttler**

The spider takes no penalty for squeezing through the narrow tunnels, though it completely blocks the pathway.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Vicious Pedipalps** (poison) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Syringe-like forelimbs the size of your arm dig into you and inject hideous poison.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8+4 damage, plus 20 ongoing poison damage (save ends).
Aftereffect: Ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).

✓ **Tunnel Trample** (charm) ✦ At-Will
Its legs, forced against the sides of the tunnel, still manage to propel it fast enough to overtake you.
Effect: The spider moves its speed and can enter the spaces of Medium or smaller creatures. It makes the following attack against each creature whose space it enters.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d12+10 damage and the target is knocked prone. If it shares a space with the spider, it is immobilized (Escape DC 25).

Str 28 (+19) **Dex** 12 (+11) **Wis** 14 (+12)
Con 27 (+18) **Int** 2 (+6) **Cha** 5 (+7)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —

Dreaming Ettercap — Level 17 Minion Soldier
Medium fey humanoid (spider) — **XP** 400

HP 1; a missed attack never damages this minion — **Initiative** +12
AC 31, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 29 — **Perception** +9
Speed 5, climb 5 (spider climb)
Resist 10 poison

Traits

Web Reaper

The ettercap gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and damage against restrained or immobilized creatures.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Spider Bite** (poison) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 7 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends)

Minor Actions

⊛ **Control Webs** ✦ At-Will, Basic
The ettercap swings its hand, and the walls of the tunnel reach out and grab you.
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +20 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target is restrained (Escape DC 22).

Str 16 (+11) **Dex** 14 (+10) **Wis** 13 (+9)
Con 16 (+11) **Int** 5 (+7) **Cha** 10 (+8)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial

Pawn's Gambit

Copperhat hides at the intersection of four squares in the Chessboard Forest. The webway exit the party will likely emerge from sits in a tree, twenty feet up, which will spell a modest fall if the PCs aren't careful. Copperhat hides a hundred feet away, up in another tree (Perception DC 35), near a group of rebel soldiers carrying the banner of the Hedgehog Court. When the party appears, he conjures an illusion of Olazdor and orders the soldiers to attack the party.

He has to stay within 10 squares in order to control his illusion, so he slowly moves through the trees, giving the party a chance to detect his presence. If spotted, he shouts one final order for the fey to 'defend our ally Copperhat,' then strikes a PC who is unaware of him. This makes his illusion of Olazdor vanish.

Rebel Units

- 2 Centaur Cavalry Units
- 4 Satyr Phalanxes
- Lightning-Split Treant

Tactics

Copperhat always tries to keep confused soldiers between him and the party, preferring to throw *web balls* from afar. If forced into melee, he flanks with an ally and strikes with *fanged dagger*, then uses *confusing twin* to get away.

The treant just smashes the party in melee. Two satyr phalanxes try to protect Copperhat while the others fire arrows. The centaur cavalry units skirmish around the party. If things look bad, Copperhat turns invisible and flees toward another force, this one of loyalists, about 200 feet away. He calls for their aid as well, this time using an illusion of Thisraldion. (You can just reuse the same units, reskinning the treant as a catoblepas, the centaurs as elvish lancers, and the satyrs as small units of fomorian archers.)

The Great Hunt is busy chasing a fox a 'square' away (about 400 feet), and if the party gets their attention somehow, their hounds can easily corner Copperhat, who surrenders and tries one last time to make a deal with the party. If it's clear he's going to die, he tells them to get Rock from the *absurdist web*. He kinda likes the guy, and there's no reason to keep him trapped anymore. He hopes he gets immortalized in song.

Copperhat the Headless Level 20 Lurker
Medium fey humanoid (spider) **XP** 2800

HP 186; **Bloodied** 93 **Initiative** +21
AC 33, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 31 **Perception** +16
Speed 8, climb 8 (spider-climb) Darkvision
Resist necrotic 20; **Immune** poison

Traits

▸ **Boon of the Voice of Rot**
Some ominous presence hovers over Copperhat in battle, feeding on the injuries around him.
If Copperhat is adjacent to an ally (even one he has tricked into thinking he's an ally), he may have up to 20 points of damage from any given source transfer to that adjacent ally. He can likewise transfer any conditions the attack would inflict.

Whenever an ally of Copperhat's is reduced to 0 hit points while adjacent to it, that creature immediately dies, and a white serpent slithers out of its mouth. Copperhat gains an action point, and his *fanged dagger* power recharges.

▸ **Faceless Trickster**
Olazdor's voice booms with supernatural volume, commanding the gathered fey, "Kill the intruders from the Waking! Defend our ally Copperhat the Headless!"
Copperhat can perfectly mimic any voice, and can throw his voice up to 10 squares. He can also disguise himself with an illusion of the form of any small or medium humanoid as a free action.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Poisoned Prod** (poison) ✦ At-Will, Basic
You see no weapon, but his hand grazes your skin and a line of blood wells up, stained black with poison.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4+13 damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 poison damage and is weakened (save ends both).

✓ **Fanged Dagger** (weapon, necrotic) ✦ Recharge on miss
Out of his sleeve slips a slender white dagger, shaped like a serpent with fangs bared. He shoves it into your armpit and leaves it there.
Requirement: The target must be granting Copperhat combat advantage.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 4d4+46 damage, and the target is dazed and takes ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends both) *and* the target is weakened and takes ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends both). Yes, two different saves for the two pairs of effects.

✓ **Web Ball** ✦ At-Will
He pulls a wad of silk from his pocket and throws it at your feet. It expands and engulfs you in white spider webs.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +23 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target is encased in a cocoon of web (Escape DC 25). It is restrained, blinded, deafened, takes a -5 penalty to checks to escape this cocoon, and takes ongoing 10 poison damage while it is trapped. Other creatures can free it by making an Athletics check (DC 25), or attacking the cocoon with a slashing weapon.

✓ **Puppeteering** ✦ Encounter
Metaphysical strings direct your actions.
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +23 vs. Will
Hit: The target is dominated (save ends).
Miss or Aftereffect: The target is dominated until the end of Copperhat's next turn.

✲ **Unorthodox Secondary Skill Set** (radiant) ✦ Encounter
He yanks a tangled mess of holy symbols from a pocket and throws them up into the air willy-nilly. Beams of searing light fall from the sky, badly aimed.
Effect: Copperhat makes the following attack three times. The center of each area must be at least 5 squares from each other area's center.
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +23 vs. Reflex
Hit: 17 radiant damage and the target is blinded (save ends). Copperhat can make a saving throw with a +2 bonus.

▸ **Casual Illusions** ✦ At-Will
Effect: Copperhat turns invisible or creates a convincing and active illusion of a medium or small creature within 10 squares. *Sustain standard.*

Move Actions

▸ **Confusing Twin** ✦ Encounter
He disappears, and when you look for him you instead see two of one of your allies, standing right next to each other.
Effect: Copperhat teleports 6 squares. If he arrives adjacent to a creature he can impersonate with *Faceless Trickster*, other creatures must make an Insight check (DC 34) as a minor action to tell which is the original and which is the copy.

▸ **More Confusing Twin** ✦ Encounter
He's pulled this trick before. There are two of one of your allies.
Effect: Copperhat teleports 6 squares and simultaneously turns invisible. He creates an illusion identical to an enemy, in a space adjacent to that creature. The illusion reacts authentically, requiring an Insight check (DC 34) as a minor action to see through. It is destroyed if it takes any damage.

Minor Actions

▸ **Cobweb Trick** ✦ Recharge on miss

You pull your friend free of the cocoon, but it's Copperhat who emerges, stabbing you with a dagger for your trouble.

Attack: Special (creature in a cocoon); +23 vs. Will

Hit: Copperhat uses an illusion to change the appearance of one creature trapped in one of his cocoons, making the creature look just like him. The illusion ends if the creature takes damage (other than from the cocoon's ongoing poison damage).

While the creature is disguised this way, when it is freed from the cocoon it makes a melee basic attack as a free action against one of its allies, if any are adjacent to it.

Triggered Action

▸ **Giggling Departure** ✦ Encounter

His clothing falls to the ground in a tattered lump, and his tophat starts to drift downward. Then a tiny arm reaches up out of the collar of his seemingly empty coat and grabs the brim of his hat just before it lands. He pulls the hat into his coat, pulling a reverse magician's trick. Then he—and his hat—are gone, leaving behind only an empty suit and laughter on the air.

Trigger: Copperhat is reduced to 0 hit points.

Effect (No Action): Copperhat instead drops to 1 hit point, turns invisible, shifts 6 squares, then teleports 20 squares and makes a Stealth check.

Skills Bluff +20, **Stealth** +25

Str	15 (+12)	**Dex**	24 (+17)	**Wis**	8 (+9)
Con	20 (+15)	**Int**	19 (+14)	**Cha**	16 (+13)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Elven, Primordial

Centaur Cavalry Unit

Level 20 Goon Skirmisher

Gargantuan fey humanoid (swarm) **XP** 1400

HP 82; **Bloodied** 41 **Initiative** +12

AC 34, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 30 **Perception** +12

Speed 7 Low-light vision

Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks

Vulnerable 15 against close and area attacks

Traits

▸ **Gargantuan Unit**

The cavalry unit consists of twelve centaurs working in tandem, filling the space of a Gargantuan creature. The unit needs only fill 16 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual centaur could move through.

When the unit is reduced to 0 hit points, the unit scatters.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Spear Skirmish** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Effect: The cavalry moves its speed and makes the following attack against any number of targets within reach as it moves. If used as an opportunity attack, it doesn't move, and only targets the triggering creature.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +25 vs. AC

Hit: 14 damage.

Triggered Action

✓ **Quick Kick** ✦ At-Will

A half-dozen hooves lash out and drive you back.

Trigger: A creature moves adjacent to the cavalry unit.

Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC

Hit: 16 damage and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone.

`**Skills** Athletics +16

Str	23 (+16)	**Dex**	14 (+12)	**Wis**	14 (+12)
Con	20 (+15)	**Int**	8 (+9)	**Cha**	10 (+10)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven, Primordial

Satyr Phalanx

Level 20 Minion Soldier

Huge fey humanoid (swarm) **XP** 700

HP 1; see Huge Unit below **Initiative** +14

AC 36, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 30 **Perception** +9

Speed 6 Low-light vision

Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks

Vulnerable 15 against close and area attacks

Traits

▸ **Huge Unit**

Each phalanx consists of forty satyrs working in tandem, filling the space of a Huge creature. The unit needs only fill 9 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual satyr could move through.

Any effect that deals at least 18 damage 'kills' the phalanx—wounding enough of the satyrs that the rest panic and disperse. Any lesser amount of damage bloodies the phalanx, or 'kills' it if it is already bloodied.

▸ **Terrain Control**

Spaces within 2 squares of the phalanx count as difficult terrain for enemies. Allies in that area have superior cover (+5 to defenses).

Standard Actions

⊘ **Spear 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); +25 vs. AC

Hit: 14 damage and the target is marked until the end of the phalanx's next turn.

✲ **Poisoned Archery Volley** (weapon, poison) ✦ At-Will

Attack: Area burst 5 within 40 (creatures in burst); +23 vs. Reflex

Hit: 14 damage and the target is weakened (save ends).

Miss: 7 damage.

Triggered Action

▸ **Lure of Enchantment** ✦ Encounter

Trigger: The phalanx hits an enemy with an attack.

Effect: The phalanx slides the enemy 3 squares, but not into hindering terrain. The enemy grants combat advantage until the end of the phalanx's next turn.

Skills Athletics +17

Str	14 (+12)	**Dex**	14 (+12)	**Wis**	8 (+9)
Con	19 (+14)	**Int**	8 (+9)	**Cha**	16 (+13)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven, Primordial

Lightning-Split Treant

Level 20 Brute

Huge fey magical beast (plant) **XP** 2800

HP 212; **Bloodied** 106 **Initiative** +12

AC 32, **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 33 **Perception** +16

Speed 8 (forest walk) Low-light vision

Immune dazed, lightning

Resist stunned (is treated as only dazed instead)

Vulnerable whenever the treant takes fire damage, it also takes ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends)

Standard Actions

⊘ **Sweeping Slam** ✦ At-Will, Basic

The two sides of the tree swing at different foes.

Attack: Melee 3 (one or two creatures); +25 vs. AC

Hit: 3d12+8 damage, and the target falls prone.

Triggered Actions

✓ **Stump Stomp** ✦ Encounter

Its backside falls away, and it tramples around in a panic, crushing everyone.

Trigger: The treant becomes bloodied.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): The treant ends all negative effects affecting it. It moves its speed in a random direction and can move through enemies' spaces during the move. Each time the treant enters a creature's space for the first time during the move (enemy or ally), it uses *sweeping slam* against that creature. At the end of the movement, the back side of the treant falls off. Henceforth its *sweeping slam* can only target one creature, and it loses its dazed immunity and stunned resistance.

Str	25 (+17)	**Dex**	14 (+12)	**Wis**	12 (+10)
Con	22 (+16)	**Int**	14 (+8)	**Cha**	16 (+12)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven, Primordial

Aftermath

If Copperhat gets away, you might have him show up at the Voice of Rot's lair, or have him disappear until the party finds their way back to the Dreaming in Adventure Twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*.

A captured Copperhat doesn't know the Voice of Rot's ultimate plan, just that it needed to distract the fey for a few more days until something momentous happened. He's quite sure his master is in no way allied with the Obscurati; indeed, he was told to be careful not to be discovered by them. Apparently the fey titan fears the conspiracy, but thinks the party is inconsequential.

Reconstruction

Social. Real-Time.

The fallout of the party's actions gives them a chance to still save King Aodhan.

If the party allies with Copperhat, they likely never have this scene.

Merely revealing Copperhat as the one who tricked the two courts is not enough to end the fey civil war. Now that bodies are piling up, the leaders are quite content to keep blaming the other side and ignoring the truth as long as it suits their goals. It's quite likely the party could bring back Copperhat to Thistle Palace, expecting to be proclaimed heroes, only to find the fey leaders arguing and almost ready to come to blows.

Give the party a chance to get involved if they want (including dueting with Rock Rackus, see below). But after a few minutes, good news for the party arrives and distracts everyone from preparing to fight.

Librarians to the Rescue

Alba and Zanel, the pixie sisters who run the Honorable Halls of Accumulated Wisdom, arrive and demand Furg hand over the book he stole from their library: an original copy of the *Book of Kelland*. He obliges (or directs them to the party if one of them accepted his earlier gift), and the sisters explain that the book can help the party.

First, the fey titans exist in both the Dreaming and the Waking, since they both link and divide the two realms. They can grant their minions the power to be in either place with ease and, more importantly, they can banish intruders. This provides a way for the party to get back to the Waking — either become minions of a fey titan, or anger one enough to get expelled (but not so much to get outright killed).

Second, the book contains the words used by Kelland's daughter to taunt the Voice of Rot. The party could use this to draw the titan's ire. There are other fey titans, of course, but none of them are awake, and it seems like the party's in a hurry.

Third — they produce a book on the history of Risur, and open to a passage about King Dukain — retrieving the Sword of the Black Needles would reinitiate the last battle the Voice of Rot had with Risur five centuries ago. Obviously, even great warriors like the party would have no chance of defeating the fey titan, but if they intentionally surrendered, the ancient pact between Risur and the fey titans would force the Voice of Rot to banish the party back to the Waking.

There would, of course, be some small negative consequences. The Voice of Rot would be able to move freely from his domain and attempt to claim more territory for himself. But that can be dealt with later, once the king is saved and he can get around to beating the colossal serpent himself. The pixies end their exposition with two matching, optimistic grins.

Thank You, Now Leave

The two fey courts pause from arguing and thank the party. If the PCs go with the librarians' plan, Thisraldion will call the Great Hunt, and order them to convey the party to the High Bayou so that they might confront the Voice of Rot. There is no time to rest. Within half an hour a dozen bold fey knights will arrive, ready to guide the party on lightning-fast steeds across two hundred miles to the High Bayou, completing the trip in about twelve hours. (Recall, the planar fluctuations make teleporting the distance impossible.)

The fey courts also insist the party accept treasure, as repayment for the debt they owe.

Rewards

The party should leave Thistle Palace with the equivalent of 240,000 gp apiece in gold, gems, and jewelry. This is truly extravagant wealth — clothing woven of platinum and moonbeams, blue warpaint containing actual sapphires, wooden bracelets carved from the raft that delivered Kelland's family to this land, and the like.

The fey lords can arrange to quickly buy one magic item per PC of level 20 or below, but we expect the party to carry their wealth and use it to craft new items at the end of this adventure.

They can also earn the following rewards, depending on whose favor they have earned. None of these can be traded or sold.

- **Granny's Boon.** Earned by befriending Lavac.
- **Borenbog's Gourd.** Earned by defeating the Borenbog.
- **Mask of the Unseen Court.** Earned by one PC (likely a Vekeshi Mystic) having the proper demeanor to join the Unseen Court.

Backup Option

The party might distrust the Voice of Rot and refuse to go to him. In this case, Beshela is able to bring them by ship to awaken She Who Writhes the morning of the 41st The aquatic fey titan thrashes angrily at their presence and banishes them to the Waking, then gives chase all the way to Flint. The party can arrive just as Stanfield starts the ritual, but *sendings* from Torfeld Palace will inform them that the king has been killed and hundreds slain.

What's Rock Up To?

If the party retrieved Rock from the *absurdist web*, he's distraught. Even though he knows the party is trying to get back to the Waking, he wants to stay behind to try to help here. Our intention is for him to help the party escape peril when they return to the Dreaming in adventure twelve.

Fey-Aid Concert

What if the party wants to actually set things right among the fey? Mere diplomacy cannot accomplish that. Only one force is strong enough to unite these fractious fey: the power of song.

This is an opportunity for a Docker PC to shine. While the party prepares to leave Thistle Palace, the wounded warriors on the Grand Lawn begin singing one of Rock Rackus's hit songs, *I Had a Threeway*, which recounts the singer getting into trouble for having two lovers at once. The injured fey have turned it into something of a drinking song, toasting as the situation gets worse and worse for the man in the middle.

Meanwhile a group of fey wandering over from the Hedgehog-controlled wing of the palace starts singing a traditional song commemorating a famous battle. Tensions are starting to mount since neither side likes their song being interrupted, but a Docker PC (or anyone with a musical background) notices that the two songs have the same basic beat and structure.

Don't push this, but the PCs could seize the opportunity to create a duet or mashup that unifies the competing songs and captures the spirits of both the fey warriors and the lords who command them. At least two singers need to participate, and at least one of them must succeed a DC 34 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check (because 4th edition doesn't have a Perform skill!). If the party rescued Rock he'll let a PC take the lead, and if needed he automatically succeeds the skill check.

Note, this is cheesy as hell. But if your party likes Rock, they might enjoy this.

If the skill check fails (or if the party doesn't try), the arguments intensify as the party mounts up with the Great Hunt, and one of the fey lords encourages the party to go deal with their own troubles, and leave the Dreaming to lie in the bed it has made. The party rides away to the sounds of a brawl on the palace lawn.

If the skill check succeeds, the song spreads across the entire palace, until finally even the fey lords start smiling and joining in. The party can mount up on the Great Hunt's steeds and ride away to the cheers of the crowd.

To the Black Needles!

Action. Montage. Level 20.

The party rides forth with the Great Hunt to confront the Voice of Rot.

The twelve-hour ride to the High Bayou passes in a blur of grandiose music played by the Great Hunt's trumpeters (which magically have full orchestral accompaniment), while the party tromps through the most beautiful landscape New Zeala- er, Risur has to offer. The sun sets, and the riders hold forth torches.

The last hour is spent sprinting through the High Bayou, since the magical steeds can run across the bog water. Occasionally giant spiders or crocodiles try to ambush the group, but the Great Hunt tears through them and presses onward with nary a pause to shout huzzah. Distant drums thrum faintly beneath the patter of drizzle, and dim red eyes watch from beneath trees and the edges of brush. Occasionally an ettercap will scuttle out of their path. Sometimes they sit completely still, only turning their heads atop husked, decayed bodies.

Fey hounds guide the group higher and higher across hills and peaks shrouded in webs and choked with marsh plants. Occasionally they lose the trail and a PC must intone the words from the Book of Kelland: "Lies are dead words made to walk. O Voice of Rot, do you fear to talk?"

A rumble, almost inaudibly deep, replies, "Talk we shall."

The hounds bark and resume their tracking, mile after mile, until finally, through rain-darkened skies, a flash of lightning reveals the Black Needles. Spires of stone rise up amid berms of spider webs. The peaks ascend rapidly and roughly, such that even the Great Hunt's horses cannot climb them. From afar the tallest ridge seems insurmountable, but something in the shape of the webs and tree canopy suggests a stone structure there.

Riffian halts his riders and explains that they can go no farther. He offers a last bit of advice. Each fey titan has a weakness. The Father of Thunder is a drunkard. The Ash Wolf is protective of other wolves. And the Voice of Rot can be tricked into talking when it could be fighting.

He shall have a hound guide them to their battle, and he promises his knights will defend their flank from any of the Voice of Rot's worshippers. But his oaths forbid him from fighting a fey titan. He seems incredibly forlorn about this.

Spirits of the Dead

A spirit medium PC hears ghostly howls, chittering, and other animal noises, for the Voice of Rot controls the dead beasts of his High Bayou. A few voices speak among this chatter as well, crying for help. If the spirit medium attempts to contact them, they explain that they were observers working for the Unseen Court, tasked with watching in case the fey titan was active. But the Voice of Rot had his ettercap minions slay them, and now their bodies are under the titan's command, and their souls cannot find a way to leave their rotting corpses.

During the coming battle, a spirit medium will have the ability to control some of the Voice of Rot's own minions.

Titan Shrine

The party must make their final ascent alone, covering a quarter mile as the hound guides through the midnight rain. Finally they climb over a berm of webs and arrive at the bottom of one of the stone spires. The side of the hundred-foot high spire is sheer cliff streaked with rain, and scraggly forest grows atop it. Immense carvings along the cliffs have been eroded by time and covered by brush, but they show that the natives of this swamp worship the Voice of Rot here.

The hound has led them to a canyon of sorts, cut into the side of the peak. A massive and ancient stone staircase ascends up the middle of the canyon to the top of the spire, but millennia of webs have grown across it, creating tiers of dammed pools. Nothing of interest is on top of it, other than a swath of wilting grass amid the forest, where the Voice of Rot normally sleeps.

The drizzle fades, the clouds part, and a beam of moonlight shines upon a spot halfway up the massive staircase. Barely visible through a wall of spider webs, the glint of pale light reflects off a metal blade stuck in the trunk of a black, rotted, and fallen tree.

From beside the party, fifty feet away, the water stirs. With a slowness only possible for something so immense, coils rise up from amid sunken trees. A withered, antlered skull twenty feet long sways and drips as it pulls free of the swamp. Unlike the last time they saw it, though its body is still certainly a serpent, its skull is that of some other beast. A single eye socket glares at them, dull and gray.

Then the eye lights up and locks on them. "Speak," says the Voice of Rot. "Speak, agents of King Kelland. And do not deceive, for I know when a lie is told."

Conversation

The Voice of Rot does not know the party's intention. They may have thwarted his plans for the Unseen Court, but he thinks they are trapped in this world and does not realize the 'trick' of using King Dukain's sword. The sword lies in a toppled black stump on the stair at elevation "+60" on the map. The Voice of Rot (whose head is the size of a gargantuan creature) waits in the southeast corner of the map.

He sees them as no threat, but is curious. Smart PCs will distract him, but if they mention their plans—or when they get within 30 feet of the sword—he shouts, "Tricksters! You are like me, but I have no equal! You challenge, and I greet your deaths gladly."

Philosophy of the End of the World

Before or during the coming battle, PCs who keep the Voice of Rot distracted by talking to him will help the party immensely. Recall, the Voice of Rot feels compelled to engage and match those who challenge him. If no one talks to him, he will use his powers to harm the party (but not kill them; he wants witnesses for his victory later on). But if he's engaged in a battle of words, he'll pay less attention to the physical battle.

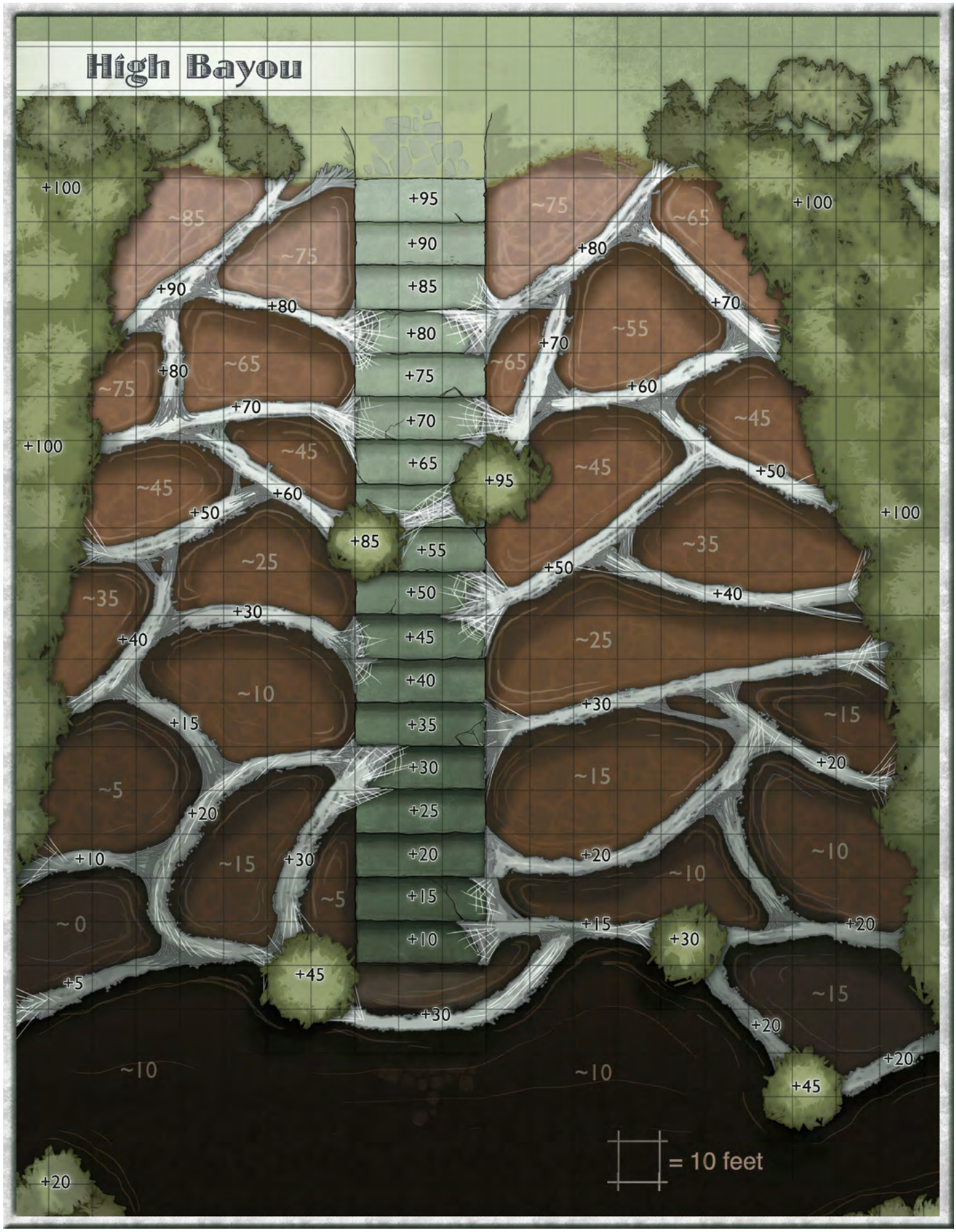
Before combat, this means that PCs who are trying to get close to the *sword of the black needles* can on any given round use either their own Stealth check to oppose the Voice of Rot's Passive Perception (DC 33), or the Bluff or Diplomacy check of a PC who is talking to the fey titan. Attempts to hide automatically fail once a PC gets within 30 feet of the sword, though, since the Voice of Rot will sense the threat and give battle.

During combat, if a PC spends a minor action to address the Voice of Rot, he can make a Bluff or Diplomacy check (DC 34) to compel the titan to respond on his following turn. And if the Voice of Rot is talking, he cannot use his *titan's bite* or *sussurus of decay* powers.

The Voice of Rot is particularly intrigued by any eschatologists among the party. He senses their connection to the end of the world. An eschatologist gains a +10 bonus to these Bluff or Diplomacy checks.

Curse Your Sudden But Inevitable Betrayal

If the party goes with Copperhat's help directly, they teleport through the Webway to the High Bayou shrine and arrive shortly after midnight on the 40th. Though Copperhat promised to help them, the Voice of Rot owes them nothing and will order his minions to take them prisoner. The party might cue in to the value of the Sword in the Stump, they might recall the lore and what it implies (History DC 25, or Arcana or Nature DC 34), or if the party looks truly lost, the sword itself might call out to them with the voice of the long-dead King Dukain.


High Bayou
= 10 feet

The Sword in the Stump

Action. Tactical. Level 24.

Drawing forth a sword abandoned by a king will let the party escape the Dreaming.

The Voice of Rot calls forth allies from the swamp as soon as he realizes the party is going for the sword. The surprise here is that the fallen tree the sword is stuck in is actually an undead treant, and the party will have to destroy it before they can remove the sword. Whoever has the sword can then surrender. The Voice of Rot snarls as it realizes what this means, and then it banishes them (and the Great Hunt) to the real world.

- 20 Ettercap Exoskeletal Gang
- 2 Rotted Archers
- Blackwood Treant
- The Voice of Rot

Terrain

The battle likely occurs at night with only dim moonlight occasionally breaking through rainclouds. Even with light, anything beyond thirty feet is lightly obscured.

Each step of the stairs is ten feet long and ten feet high. Huge walls of webbing contain pools. The elevation markers show how high the tops of the webs are, and thus how high up the surface of the adjacent pool is. The "~" elevation markers in the pool show how high above 'ground level' the surface of the water is (which is also how deep the pool is).

For example, the party starts in a pool that is 10 feet deep, and north them is a wall that goes up to 30 feet above the ground—but only 20 feet above the pool they're in. North of that is actually a shallower pool, and the stairs.

The tops of the walls are solid and easy to walk across. Each 5-ft. space of the wall has 50 hit points, making it possible to breach a wall and start a catastrophic waterfall that drains the next highest pool.

The Voice of Rot can move easily through the water and even through the web walls without slowing down. His movement does not breach the walls.

Tactics

If running this battle with a tactical map, you will need to keep track of the entire length of the Voice of Rot's body. We recommend using a gargantuan miniature for the head (or an actual snake skull if you have one), and then coins every 2 squares trailing behind him. His body is fifteen feet wide (i.e., one square to either side of a coin) and a total of 300 feet long (30 coins). When he moves, move the head, then remove sufficient coins from the tail end to fill in the spaces between where he started and where his head ended up.

If using a battle map, trace all movement from his head, and avoid hairpin turns. The party should feel like if they move right, they can stay out of reach of his bite.

The titan moves from the southeast corner, up through the pools, and tries to circle around the entire party. His mere presence nauseates living creatures, and he can easily crush a person just by twitching his body. He can will parts of the swamp to entangle his foes. But his greatest threats are his bite and his voice.

The blackwood treant lies inert on 60-ft. high stair (Perception DC 34 to realize it's a creature). It attacks if damaged or if someone tries to retrieve the sword stuck in its body.

Two rotted archers hide in the trees near that treant (Perception DC 25).

Gangs of undead ettercaps emerge from the swamp—two adjacent to each PC, and more crawl up from the web walls within 30 feet of the sword in the stump.

Speaking with Spirits

A spirit medium PC senses strong death energy around the Voice of Rot, and is able to use his *unfinished business* power once per round as a minor action, instead of its normal use of once per encounter. If he tries to control one of the ettercap gangs, he can affect them even when they still have hit points.

Alternately, as a standard action he can expend his *unfinished business* power to attempt to control the myriad consumed spirits that grant power to the Voice of Rot. If he does, he can make the Voice of Rot move its speed and make a single attack (even against itself).

Ettercap Exoskeletal Gang	Level 21 Minion Soldier
Large fey humanoid (spider, swarm, undead)	**XP** 800
HP 1; see Gang of Ghouls below	**Initiative** +14
AC 36, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 22	**Perception** +11
Speed 5, climb 5 (spider climb)	Darkvision
Resist 20 necrotic, 20 poison; half damage from melee and ranged attacks	
Vulnerable 15 against close and area attacks	
Traits	
▸ **Gang of Ghouls**	
Each gang consists of a dozen hollow ettercap corpses working in tandem, filling the space of a Large creature. The unit needs only fill 4 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual ettercap could move through.	
Any effect that deals at least 18 damage 'kills' the gang—wounding enough of that the rest panic and disperse. Any lesser amount of damage bloodies the gang, or 'kills' it if it is already bloodied.	
▸ **Web Reaper**	
The gang gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and damage against restrained or immobilized creatures.	
Standard Actions	
⊘ **Swarming Bites** *(necrotic, poison)* ✦ At-Will, Basic	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +26 vs. AC	
Hit: 8 necrotic damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).	
Minor Actions	
⊛ **Control Webs** ✦ At-Will, Basic	
The ettercaps swings their hands, and the dams of webbing reach out and grab you.	
Effect: The origin space of this attack must be on one of the web walls.	
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +24 vs. Reflex	
Hit: The target is restrained (Escape DC 26).	
Str 16 (+13) **Dex** 14 (+12) **Wis** 13 (+11)	
Con 16 (+13) **Int** 5 (+7) **Cha** 10 (+10)	
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Primordial	

Rotted Archer Level 20 Goon Artillery
Medium fey humanoid (elf, undead) **XP** 1400

HP 74; **Bloodied** 37 **Initiative** +15
AC 32, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 31 **Perception** +16
Speed 6 Darkvision
Resist 20 necrotic

Trait

▸ **Swamp Step**
It walks silently across the bog waters, but its face is contorted with voiceless screams. The rotted archer can walk across the surface of the bog's water.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Ghoul Touch** (cold) ✦ At-Will, Basic
It's cold hands sap your strength and paralyze you.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creatures); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 4 cold damage and the target is stunned until the end of the archer's next turn.

⊘ **Longbow** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creatures); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 14 damage.

Skills Acrobatics +20, Athletics +20, Perception +16

Str 20 (+15) **Dex** 20 (+15) **Wis** 12 (+11)
Con 14 (+12) **Int** 12 (+11) **Cha** 6 (+8)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Elven, Primordial

Blackwood Treant Level 20 Elite Brute
Huge fey magical beast (plant, undead) **XP** 5600

HP 424; **Bloodied** 212 **Initiative** +12
AC 32, **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 33 **Perception** +16
Speed 8 (forest walk) Darkvision
Resist 20 necrotic
Vulnerable whenever the treant takes radiant or fire damage, it also takes ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends)
Saves +2; **Action Points** 1

Trait

▸ **Sword in its Heart**
Black sap oozes from the wound around the sword.
If a creature grabs the treant, he can get hold of the *sword of the black needles* lodged in its trunk. While it's not possible to pull out the sword until the treant is destroyed, if the creature holding the sword uses any implement attack powers against the treant, they automatically hit and deal maximum damage.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Slam** ✦ At-Will, Basic
The undead treant's bare branches smash you away.
Attack: Melee 3 (one creatures); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12+20 damage, and the treant pushes the target 4 squares.

Minor Actions

✓ **Rotted Sprout** (summoning) ✦ At-Will, 1/round
The husk of a tree sprouts from the web wall beside you, and bog-soaked roots burble up and try to entangle you.
Effect: An undead tree grows from a spot on either the web wall or the staircase, and lasts until the end of the encounter. Attacks against the tree deal their damage to the blackwood treant (but conditions are not transferred). The sprouted trees are destroyed only when the treant is destroyed.
Spaces adjacent to the tree are difficult terrain, and a creature that enters or ends its turn there takes 10 necrotic damage. When the tree first appears, it makes the following attack.
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 35 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 25).

Str 25 (+17) **Dex** 14 (+12) **Wis** 12 (+10)
Con 22 (+16) **Int** 4 (+3) **Cha** 6 (+7)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Elven, Primordial

The Voice of Rot Level 28 Solo Controller
Gargantuan fey magical beast (undead) **XP** 65000
HP 1000; **Bloodied** 500 **Initiative** +13
AC 42, **Fortitude** 40, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 42 **Perception** +23
Speed 5 Darkvision
Resist 20 all (except on his head); Immune necrotic
Vulnerable 10 psychic
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Titanic**
Most of the three-hundred foot serpent is concealed by darkness and rain.
The head of the Voice of Rot is 20 feet (4 squares) across, and his body trailing behind him is 15 feet (3 squares) wide, and a total of 300 feet (60 square) long. Any part of his body can be targeted, but he has resist 20 all everywhere but his head.

Due to his size, he cannot turn more than 45 degrees for every 10 feet he advances (so he must travel at least 40 feet in order to turn around).

▸ **Ever Moving**
He twitches his body, knocking you aside and sending out crashing waves.
The Voice of Rot cannot be slowed, immobilized, or restrained. He ignores difficult and blocking terrain smaller than 8 squares across.

In addition to its normal movement, after each PC's turn the Voice of Rot moves 2 squares. Then it makes the following attack against each creature adjacent to its body or head.

Attack: Close burst 1 (creatures in burst); +31 vs. Reflex
Hit: 20 damage and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone.

☼ **Nauseating Presence** (necrotic) ✦ Aura 5
Death's stench clings to the titan's rotted skull.
A living creature that ends its turn within 5 squares of the Voice of Rot's head must make an Endurance check (DC 34) or take 20 necrotic damage and be weakened until the end of its next turn.

▸ **Dead Gaze**
A single, dully glowing eye watches you.
The Voice of Rot can see through illusions, and can perceive the true form of polymorphed creatures. Illusory attack powers can still damage him as normal.

Standard Actions

⊗ **Titan's Bite** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Special: The Voice of Rot cannot bite behind his head, only in a roughly 270-degree arc from his right side to his left side.
Attack: Close blast 4 (creatures in blast); +33 vs. AC
Hit: 100 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 34).

✲ **Awaken the Swamp** ✦ At-Will
Dead vines thick with thorns grow up from the bog and grasp at you. The thorns don't simply snag, but they dig and crawl and drink your blood.
Effect: The Voice of Rot creates a zone of entangling thorns in area burst 5 within 20. The zone lasts until the end of the encounter. It is difficult terrain. A creature that enters or ends its turn in the area is attacked.
Attack: Area burst (creature in burst); +31 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target is grabbed (Escape DC 25) and takes 30 damage.

Minor Actions

✧ **Sussurus of Decay** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, 1/round
It both growls and hisses, and the whole swamp shudders. You sag for a moment, and have to fight off an urge to just let yourself die.
Attack: Close burst 10 (creatures in burst); +31 vs. Will
Hit: 20 necrotic damage.
Miss: 10 necrotic damage.
Effect: An ettercap exoskeletal gang appears in the area.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Yield** ✦ Encounter
"Such unexpected power." The Voice of Rot pulls away, and then draws itself into a defensive coil. "One of you shall be king. I yield, and shall grant you passage back to your realm."
Trigger: The Voice of Rot is first bloodied.
Effect (No Action): The Voice of Rot ends all negative status effects on him. He gains an action point and moves 15 squares.
If the party continues to attack him, he can no longer be distracted by talking.

Skills Insight +23, Perception +23

Str	50 (+34)	**Dex**	8 (+13)	**Wis**	18 (+18)
Con	48 (+33)	**Int**	26 (+22)	**Cha**	24 (+21)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Primordial, understands all

Aftermath

If the party fails to reach the sword, the Voice of Rot will capture them. You can skip straight to adventure twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*.

If the party gets the *sword of the black needles* and surrenders, the Voice of Rot banishes them to the Waking, along with the Great Hunt. Smoke and fog rolls across them, and when it passes they are at the northern edge of the High Bayou, far from any enemies but still some 180 miles from Slate.

Whoever had the sword, still has it. See Appendix G: Magic and Training for stats.

The party might be ready to rush to Slate, but the Great Hunt's horses need until sunrise before they'll be ready to go again, and teleportation isn't working over long distances here any better than in the Dreaming. Luckily, a nearby farm offers some rest, and stables for the horses.

Campaign Note: Friendly Death

If you want to end the campaign with this adventure, you'll need to alter this scene. The Voice of Rot is not hostile, but is still compelled to battle the party if they make a move for the sword of the black needles.

Either before the battle, or after it but before he banishes them, the Voice of Rot speaks of a distant gyre, a constellation of grinding gears that consumes all dying worlds, as this world too shall some day die, far from now.

The shadows will sever the ties between this world and those that feed it the energy it needs to live. They will bind it to new worlds, and the old worlds will drift away, toward the gyre, to die. The titan tells them to look to the gyre for other dying worlds. Perhaps they will find salvation there.

This is similar to what the party will discover on their own in the coming adventures, though the Voice of Rot will be a foe, not a friend.

ACT TWO: Long Live the King

In this act, people try to kill the king. A lot.

COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN

Attempts to communicate with Slate or Flint via magic likely fail. The Obscurati have set up *sending* interceptors in Slate and Flint. If the party uses *sending* or similar magic, an Ob agent receives it and fakes a response. He claims that they're already aware of the party's concerns, and that the king has moved to Shale for safety, but that they should tell no one. An Insight check (DC 15) can tell that the person is not who he seems to be.

The Ob's interception magic doesn't work if the party uses the *messenger wind* they received from Gale. A properly warned king wants the party by his side as soon as possible.

TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

In Adventure Six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*, the party might have gained for Risur the innovations of the gnome artificer Tinker Oddcog. The party should have chosen three innovations by now (one at the end of adventure six, seven, and eight), and the latest will be nearing completion when the party returns to the real world.

When the PCs reach the real world have them roll an Intelligence and Wisdom check (as explained in Appendix A: Technological Revelations) to see whether the latest innovation is ready. We encourage you to implement that technology immediately in the defenses of the palace. Perhaps Tinker coils can be activated near the building entrances, or a couple guards have steam-powered battle suits, or short-range radio communicators mounted in each hall allows coordination between the defenders.

Moreover, if the players wanted to pursue sparkgap radio communication, let them reach a fort nearby the High Bayou from which they can contact Torfeld Palace.

In Act Three, if the party had the forethought to pursue rocket technology, they'll have practically no trouble breaching Stanfield's outer defenses.

Gamemastering Note

After the previous fairly combat-light act, this one is a bit of a gauntlet. It might be best to think of this act as a dungeon that happens to have innocent bystanders. The party faces a series of combat threats in close succession, and has to decide which enemies to deal with in which order. They likely won't have time to take a short rest, and might have to content themselves with 'surviving' rather than winning.

We don't think it's necessary to track civilian casualties—it can be assumed many innocents will die, and the exact number won't change how the rest of the adventure plays out. But the party might choose to defend the defenseless, in which case we reward them by having a cache of powerful magic in the vault under Area 18.

If you want to track civilian casualties, start with 400 bystanders in the palace. Fifty start in the throne room for the wedding, and at least 10 people are in each other numbered area. You can use a coin or other token to mark 3 bystanders who share a 5-ft. square. Once fighting begins (i.e., once Romana's coup attempt fails), each of the five 'threats' (ghost council, undead horde, skeletal dragon, wights and flayed jaguar, and assassins) kills 3 bystanders per round, unless they're busy fighting the PCs.

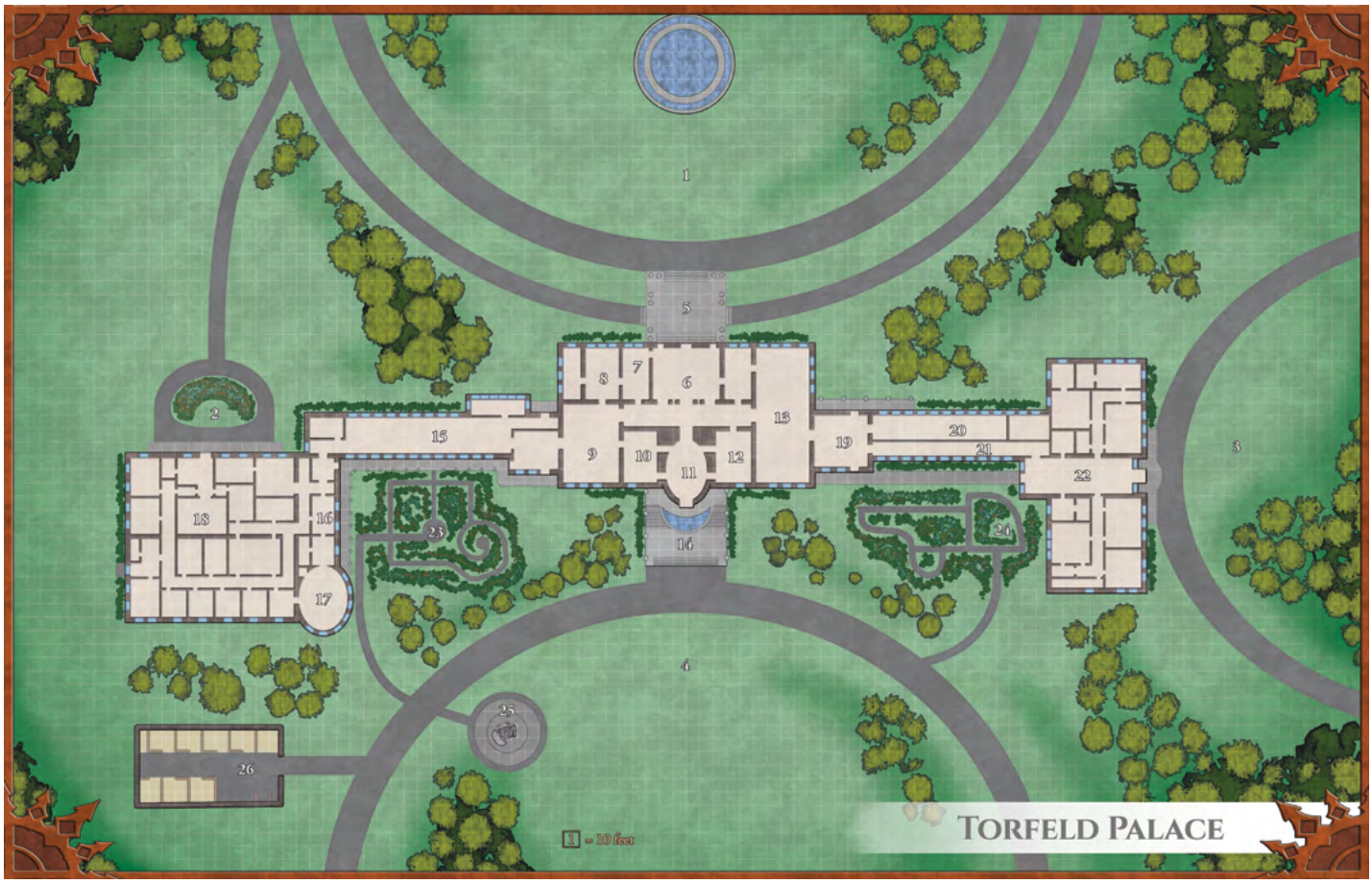
King's Court

Social. Real-Time. Level 20.

The party reaches Slate and interrupts a wedding to warn the king.

Dame Jillian the Green Knight commands the guards at Torfeld Palace in Flint, and when the party arrives (likely riding in after sunset with a raucous band of fey knights), she refuses to let them enter until they prove they're who they say they are. She orders the guards to attack if the party refuses.

She concentrates to detect magic on them, asks them obscure questions about the RHC headquarters in Flint, and then escorts them to the king, who is officiating a wedding between two beloved members of the palace house staff. Casually she mentions that the royal skyseer killed himself this morning, claiming that he saw no future after tonight.



Long-Time Prisoners: Risur Edition

If the party captured Duchess Ethelyn in adventure one, she is disgraced and has had her title stripped but has nevertheless been allowed to attend the wedding, as she was friends with both the bride and groom. Rituals have stripped her of her magical power, so she is neither a threat nor an asset. Her brother will order her taken for safety to area 18 – Noble's Gallery, and perhaps the party might encounter enemies and have to save her.

Nathan Jierre, if he was taken prisoner, is present for more Machiavellian reasons. King Aodhan knows the Obscurati will make a move at some time, and he wants a Jierre family member close to deter Han Jierre. During the various assassinations, the shadow men (see Assassination: Shadowy Callback) will try to abduct Nathan and carry him away. If the party keeps him close they can distract at least some of their enemies.

Alternate Timelines

If the party somehow reaches the palace without having rested, the king insists they recuperate and be ready for a fight. Instead the attack happening right away during a wedding, there can be a 'war council' meeting, with news coming in about Flint being attacked. That's when the Ob strike the palace.

My, This Palace Layout Sure is Familiar

A mirror image of Thistle Palace in the Dreaming, Torfeld Palace also has three main buildings—the central Palace Hall, the eastern Dolomite Hall, and the western Marble Hall. State business occurs in the central palace, while administrative duties occur in the west hall, and public events occur in the east.

1. **Dignitary Lawn.**
2. **Marble Hall—Entrance.** The palace guards—distinctive in their green uniforms—defend this entrance.
3. **Dolomite Hall—Entrance.** Guards also watch this entrance, but in fewer numbers.
4. **Grand Lawn.**
5. **North Colonnade.** The primary entrance for guests and dignitaries.
6. **Entrance Foyer.** The skeleton of a slain dragon tyrant from Ber hangs from the ceiling by wires.
7. **Guard Post.**
8. **Drawing Room.**
9. **State Dining Room.**
10. **Antechamber.**
11. **Diplomatic Reception.**
12. **Library.**
13. **Throne Room.** Guards and druids defend this room even when the king is not present. The throne sits at the north wall.
14. **Balcony.**
15. **Royal Gallery.** Paintings of former kings.
16. **Principal Minister's Chamber.** Harkover Lee has a few attendants, whom he dismisses twice a day to take his meals in private.

17. **Archdruid's Chamber.** The archdruid is away making funeral arrangements for the late court skyseer. Asrabey Varal currently resides here.
18. **Noble's Gallery.** Risuri nobility take turns offering art to hang here. Additionally, a trap door under the carpet here leads to the palace's vault and bunker. The tunnel down is a highly defensible chokepoint, and the bunker has supplies for thirty people to last a month.
19. **Commons.** Where people gather to meet the king.
20. **Party Hall.** The wedding reception will occur here.
21. **Clayton Gallery.**
22. **Offices.**
23. **Unseen Garden.** Pedestals stand here, each with footprints but not figure, to commemorate the lords of the Unseen Court.
24. **Lantern Garden.** Numerous lanterns hang amid the flowers and topiaries.
25. **Titan Shrine.** An identical set of statues in the Waking depicts the five fey titans.
26. **Stables.**

The Wedding

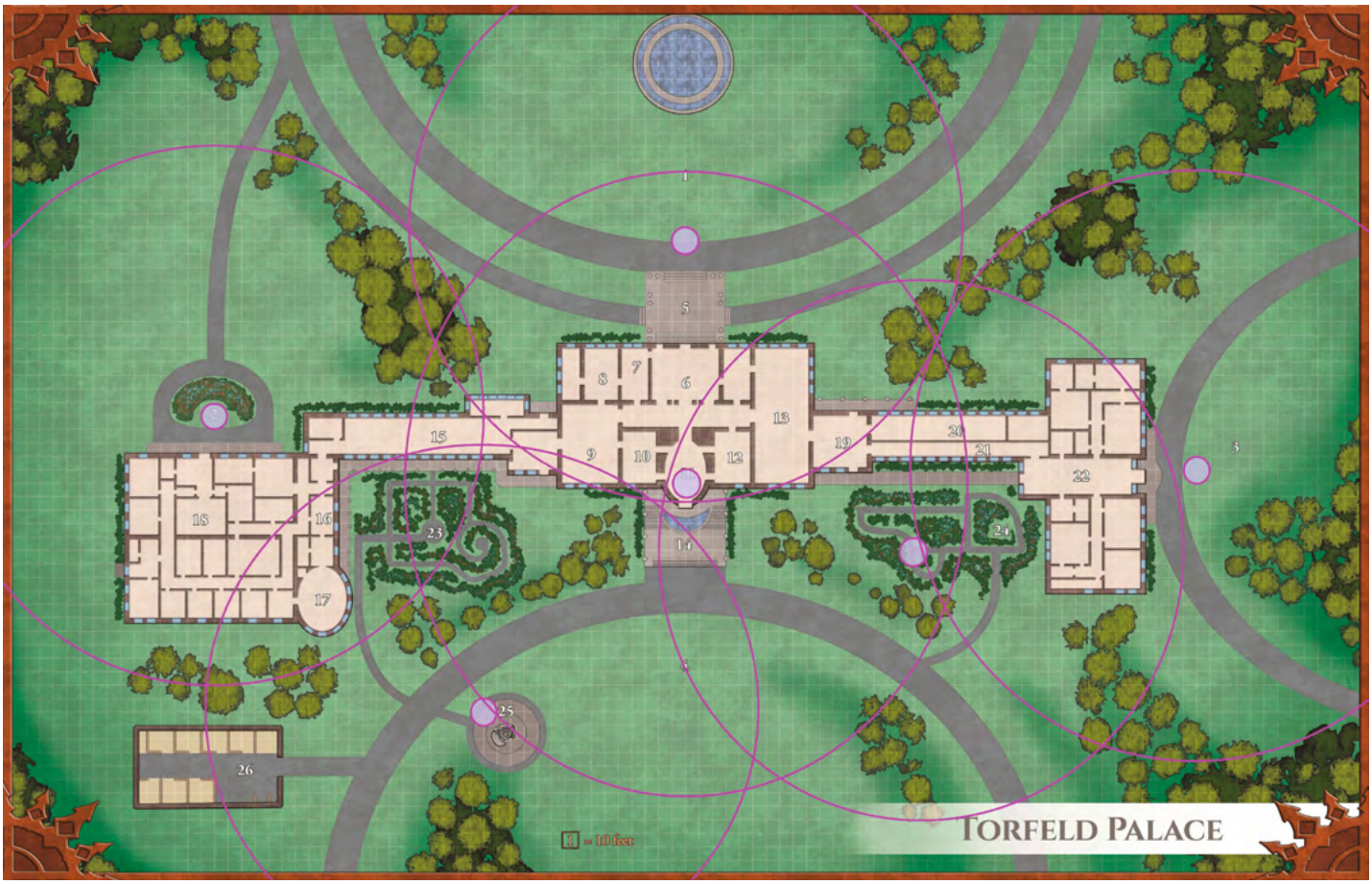
King Aodhan officiates from in front of his throne, performing a ceremony to marry **Arla** and **Orlando**, two loyal members of the house staff. Principal Minister Harkover Lee waits close by, always vigilant. Fifty guests stand. Dame Jillian goes to Harkover, who then whispers something to Aodhan. The king curtly pronounces the couple married, then waves the party over to explain what's happening.

In the middle of the party's explanation, all the magical lights in the palace flicker and die. Purple light begins to shine through the windows, and everything takes on the familiar gloom of the Bleak Gate. Harkover ushers the king away from the windows and asks everyone who isn't combat trained to head to the Noble's Gallery in Marble Hall (Area 18). But people begin to scream out in the Commons (Area 19).

The Obscurati's Plan

From this point on, track events roughly round by round. The palace and everything within about 200 feet is affected by an array of six *wayfarer lanterns* spaced around the palace grounds. Everything in their light starts to transition to the Bleak Gate. In five minutes (50 rounds) it will be fully transitioned, barring PC intervention. Between now and then, if someone manages to get more than 200 feet from the palace, he'll emerge in the real world. After the palace has fully transitioned, though, anyone leaving the light's radius instead emerges fully into the Bleak Gate, where the Obscurati have gathered an army of the dead. The Ob will then snuff their lanterns.

At that point, from the perspective of people in the real world, the palace will suddenly become empty, bare, and decayed as everything within it except the oldest stones have been pulled into the realm of the dead. It won't be possible to cross between the two worlds unless the party has a *wayfarer's lantern* of their own. Only people who took refuge in the bunker beneath area 18 will still be in the real world.



Environmental Effects

The Obscurati have gotten tricky in their use of planar magic. In addition to drawing the palace into the Bleak Gate, the lanterns also suppress magic that would create light, flight, or invisibility. Any such magic dies after one round, and since most of the palace's lights are enchanted, battles will likely occur by the dim light coming through the windows from outside, unless someone has a spare hand to carry a torch.

Array of Threats

The party likely begins in the throne room (area 13). Five different threats (and one secret ally) target the king, and an outer perimeter filled with massed undead deter people from fleeing.

- **Catherine Romana and the Rites of Rulership.** Risuri noblewoman Catherine Romana and part of the Obscurati ghost council enter the throne room with hostages. Romana explains the situation and commands Aodhan to surrender, invoking Risur's Rites of Rulership to weaken the king.
- **Dengar Kriegshaff and the Colossal Cannonade.** A Drakran scientist has cannons on the north lawn, which start blowing holes through the palace walls so swarms of undead can enter and kill the weak.
- **Amielle Latimer's Sharpshooting.** The sniper ghost of Amielle Latimer guards a lantern on the palace roof, and though she wants to help the party she is being watched.
- **Skeletal Dragon Tyrant Venkio.** A dragon skeleton kept as a trophy is animated in the entrance foyer and heads for the king.
- **Professor Bugge's Infectious Necromancy.** The dragon was animated by a famous necromancy instructor, who sweeps in with wights and a massive flayed jaguar, targeting the guards and others who are fighting back. The necromancer can also reanimate the undead hordes.
- **Shadow Assassins.** These are the conspiracy's ace in the hole, waiting to strike when the king is vulnerable.

Each of the six *wayfarer's lanterns* is 10 ft. across and affects a 200-ft. radius. Magically reinforced, they have 200 hit points. If a given lantern is destroyed before five minutes are up, part of the palace will return to the real world, and all the attackers in that area will vanish, though they can reenter the palace once they get to an area still affected by a lantern.

- **Lantern One** is located on Dignitary Lawn (area 1).
- **Lantern Two** is outside the entrance to Marble Hall (area 2).
- **Lantern Three** is outside the entrance to Dolomite Hall (area 3).
- **Lantern Four** is appropriately in the Lantern Garden (area 24).
- **Lantern Five** sits inside the Titan Shrine (area 25).
- **Lantern Six** sits atop the roof of Palace Hall, about fifty feet up above the entrance foyer (area 6).

Destroying all six lanterns before five minutes are up thwarts the assassination attempt. (It also strands the Ob operatives in the Bleak Gate, though depending on who's still alive they might be able to reactivate them and return to the real world eventually.) See the lantern overlap map on page 249 for the ranges and locations of the different lanterns.

Minor Officers

In addition to Catherine Romana and Amielle Latimer, named NPCs the party might recognize among the Obscurati include **Dengar Kriegshaff**, a human wizard from Drakr who designed weapons to fight the fey titans, and who organizes the giant cannons; and **Tittling Grainet**, a gnome cleric from Crisillyir who is a master of the lanterns, and who watches from beside Lantern Six atop the roof. Neither of them are combatants.

Unwinnable?

From a meta standpoint, each lantern is guarded by 4,400 XP worth of foes, and each assassination plot has about 7,000 XP worth of foes. A level 20 encounter has a 14,000 XP budget, but all told this scene—which likely the party won't get a chance to rest during—comes to 66,800 XP, the equivalent of a level 28 encounter. But the party has allies, and they don't face the full brunt of their enemies all at once. The scene is meant to appear potentially unwinnable, but it isn't necessary for the party to defeat all their foes in order to survive.

The Good Guys

Stats for King Aodhan, Principal Minister Harkover Lee, Asrabey Varal, Dame Jillian the Green Knight, and Amielle Latimer can be found in Appendix E: Recurring Enemies & Allies. The other defenders of the palace do join the fight, but they don't make a significant difference compared to the PCs and these high-level allies.

We suggest you print these stats out and let your players run them, especially if the party splits up.

Reinforcements

On round 20, Lauryn Cyneburg, the RHC's chief infiltration specialist, teleports in and arrives near one of the PCs. She quickly asks what's happening, perhaps helps fight an immediate threat, then teleports away to guide in the reinforcements. Unfortunately it will take more than five minutes for allied forces to reach the palace.

One option for help is perhaps more unorthodox: Thistle Palace. If the party secures one of the lanterns they could mix the witchoil with some flammable liquid from the Dreaming. (Best option: the Borenbog's gourd has plenty of fey spirits.) The lantern's not meant to work that way, but an Arcana check (DC 34, can be reattempted each round) can get the variant oil to light. That lantern would then make the Bleak Gate, the real world, and the Dreaming coterminous. After five minutes, the lantern implodes and is utterly destroyed.

Alternately, the party might jury rig a lantern to pull the Obscurati forces on the Bleak Gate into the real world (Arcana DC 34). Though reinforcements still won't arrive until about round 70, if the fight goes long this would make the Ob easy pickings.

The Assassination: Coup

Social. Real-Time. Level 20.

Risuri noble Catherine Romana makes a bid for the crown. (Yes, even if the party already killed her.)

Moments after the lanterns pull the world into the Bleak Gate, people outside see the undead and start screaming, but the Obscurati forces don't attack yet. Dengar Kriegshaff (on the north lawn with the grand cannons) drops the needle onto a primitive phonograph record, and tinny Drakran opera begins to play.

A contingent of the Obscurati ghost council enters the throne room—over a dozen ghosts, each holding a prisoner from Area 19. The prisoners are mostly palace staff, but might also include Ethelyn or other NPCs familiar to the PCs. They make no immediate aggressive moves, but look ready to kill their hostages.

If combat doesn't begin, a round later one of the ghosts nods back the way they came, and in walks Catherine Romana, a Risuri noblewoman (who might have died in adventure seven; if so, she's a ghost now). She holds a white cat in her arms.

Romana kindly asks for Aodhan to negotiate for his people's lives.

Who?

When last the party met Romana in adventure seven, she was likely trying to flee the Obscurati Conclave, having voted against Nicodemus's desires. But she's a clever politician, and managed to parlay herself back into the conspiracy by promoting this coordinated, multi-part assassination plan.

In particular, Romana was learning some of the obscure nuances of Risur's rites of rulership, ancient magic rules that dictate how power is passed from monarch to monarch.

Explaining the Rites of Rulership

If given the chance to talk, Catherine has a speech prepared. Each paragraph takes one combat round, so the party might just rush her, especially if they recall how fast the lanterns work.

"First, there's no reason to attack me. After all, loyal followers of Nicodemus shall endure as ghosts for as long as he's safe, and as far as even the ghost council knows, there's no way to truly destroy him. So let's discuss this like civilized people.

"Civilization. Now, Risur's rites of rulership trace back to the first defeat of the fey titans. The titans each command one terrain—mountain, swamp, et cetera. And the monarch of Risur is like a titan too, but his—or her—terrain is civilization. The more faith the people have in society and the state, the stronger the king is. And the stronger the king is, the stronger his people are.

"Normally, that's wonderful. But you know our plans, or at least suspect them. Everywhere else, perhaps the rulers will resist, but the people—the weak-willed, stupid children who we have to take care of—they'll follow us.

"Oh, but not in Risur. It won't do to have a king resisting our new age of reason. *We* will be the lords of civilization, and you'll be the rebels, the…the savages in the wilderness clinging to your old ways.

"King Aodhan, I contest your throne. On *this* plane, I am a quorum of the nobility, so until you convene a council of the House of Nobles, your powers are hereby revoked, as decreed in the rites of rulership. Surrender, and pass on your crown to me, and not only will Risur's people avoid becoming enemies to the entire world, but they will *prosper*."

Unless the party discussed the rites of rulership with Livia Hatsfield during adventure seven, they have practically no way of knowing these obscure rules. In particular, the old rites gave the king the power of his people's devotion, but only at the approval of the nobility. However, Romana's plan hits a snag.

Aodhan sags a bit, but he shakes his head. "Romana," he says, "you're right about being the only noble on this plane. So with unanimous approval of your fellow nobles, I hereby revoke your title. Constables, I hereby make you all Dukes. We'll work out the details after you kill this traitor for me. Oh, and Harkover: you have my permission."

At that, Romana glowers and claps her hands. Outside, cannons fire.

The Assassination: Overture

Action. Tactical. Level 20.

Massive cannons breach the walls, and undead hordes press through the hole.

Just north of the throne room, Dengar Kriegshaff, a human wizard and weapon designer from Drakr, has set up an array of six colossal cannons, each 20 feet long and attended by ten (non-combatant) engineers.

A small army of shambling wraiths waits around him. When people die, their souls linger in the Bleak Gate, but not their bodies, so actual zombies cannot be animated here. But corpses interred in the real world eventually become part of the landscape, and these wraiths consist of souls that have been bound to the shadowy copy of their original dead bodies.

At a magical signal from Catherine Romana, Kriegshaff orders the engineers to fire, and the blasts tear six holes along the length of the palace's north walls (including one on either side of the throne room). The wraiths surge in, and will reach the throne room in two rounds.

Catherine Romana and the Ghost Council

The ghost council doesn't bother killing their hostages, and instead focus on the king and the PCs. Romana will disappear as soon as she's attacked. She'll teleport—turning invisible but leaving behind an illusory double—then reappear briefly the next turn. She shouts, "Amielle, the king!" (see Bullseye, below) then summons a puma and teleports away, leaving another illusory double. If bloodied, she'll withdraw to one of the lanterns and try to keep coordinating the attack.

Coup Members (7000 xp)

- Catherine Romana
- 2 Senior Ghost Councilors
- Ghost Council Detachment

Catherine Romana, fey-pact warlock Level 20 Lurker
Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP** 2800

HP 120; Bloodied 60 **Initiative** +18
AC 33, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 33 **Perception** +18
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider-climb), teleport 4 Low-light Vision

Traits

▸ **Lingering Image**

Whenever Catherine teleports (either as a move action or in response to an attack), she leaves behind an illusion of herself (Perception DC 30 to notice it is fake). She simultaneously turns invisible until the end of her next turn, or until she attacks, whichever comes first.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Dream Strike** (weapon, psychic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
You see a woman crawling along the ceiling, and then a blade strikes you from behind. You briefly glimpse that same woman behind you, but then the whole world turns into an insane blur of color and motion.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 2d4+10 damage, and the target is blinded and takes ongoing 10 psychic damage (save ends both). Catherine slides the target 1 square.

✓ **Summon Puma** (summoning) ✦ At-Will
Her pet cat disappears, but a larger one manifests beside you.
Effect: A medium puma appears in an unoccupied space in close burst 10. It has Catherine's defenses and 1 HP. Whenever Catherine takes a move action, the puma can also move 6 squares. The puma makes the following attack as soon as it is summoned, and it acts on Catherine's initiative in following rounds.
Attack: Melee 1; +25 vs. AC
Hit: 14 damage, and the target is slowed on its next turn.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Feign Death** (illusion) ✦ Encounter
Hm. That was surprisingly easy.
Trigger: An effect damages Catherine.
Effect (No Action): Prevent the damage and all effects of the attack. Catherine teleports 4 squares (and per her *lingering image*, she leaves behind a convincing corpse).

Skills Acrobatics +19, Arcana +17, Stealth +19

Str 9 (+9) **Dex** 19 (+14) **Wis** 12 (+11)
Con 16 (+13) **Int** 15 (+12) **Cha** 19 (+14)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Descendant of one of the previous queens of Risur, Catherine has long sought to rise in power herself, though the traditions of her nation deter any hereditary rule. After the Fourth Yerasol War she got into trouble for harshly criticizing war veterans, implying that cowardice led to Risur losing ground in the war.

Though she believes magic is superior to technology, she desires progress, and has pushed the Risuri parliament to pursue grand civil projects of arcane engineering, to little success. In the Obscurati she sees her chance both to make the world a better place, and to step into a position of rule over her homeland.

She has an unfortunate drug habit, preferring the high of fey pepper and the false and wondrous world it conjures to the world she really has to deal with. The party might have slain her in adventure seven, in which case she has returned as part of the Obscurati ghost council, and she bitterly misses her ability to indulge her vice.

Senior Ghost Councilor Level 20 Minion Lurker
Medium shadow humanoid (undead) **XP** 700

HP 1; a missed attack never damages this minion **Initiative** +18
AC 33, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 33 **Perception** +12
Speed fly 8 (hover); phasing Darkvision
Resist cold 20, poison 20

Standard Actions

⊘ **Tap the Council** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
His touch carried not the power of a single ghost, but of the entire ghost council.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 10 necrotic damage and the target is weakened and has ongoing 5 necrotic damage as long as any hostile member of the ghost council can see the target.

✓ **Do Not Deny Us** (charm) ✦ Encounter
The ghost whispers, "Our will shall be not denied," and a deep, nigh-inaudible chorus echoes him. Then he says, "Slay your allies."
Attack: Ranged 10; +23 vs. Will
Hit: The target is dominated until the end of the councilor's next turn.

Str 12 (+11) **Dex** 12 (+11) **Wis** 14 (+12)
Con 19 (+14) **Int** 24 (+17) **Cha** 14 (+12)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Ghost Council Detachment Level 20 Brute
Large shadow humanoid (undead, swarm) **XP** 2800

HP 150; **Bloodied** 75 **Initiative** +18
AC 32, **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 32 **Perception** +17
Speed fly 8 (hover); phasing Darkvision
Resist cold 20, poison 20; half-damage from melee and ranged attacks; also insubstantial
Vulnerable 15 against close and area attacks; radiant attacks bypass insubstantial

Traits

▸ **Swarm of Ghosts**

The swarm consists of a hundred or more ghosts who travel together closely-packed, filling the space of a large creature. The swarm needs only fill 4 contiguous spaces. Enemies can move through the swarm, which counts as difficult terrain.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Eldritch Grasp** (acid, cold, fire, lightning) ✦ At-Will, Basic
You stray too close to the swarm, and an undead mage assaults you with energetic touch spells.
Effect: Each time the council uses this attack, choose whether it deals acid, cold, fire, or lightning damage.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6+20 damage of the chosen energy type.

⌖ **Oppressive Moan** (fear, psychic, thunder) ✦ Encounter
The council shuffles forward slowly, hunched, glaring wide-eyed at you as they unleash a long, eerie moan.
Effect: Make the following two attacks.
Primary Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in blast); +23 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d6+10 thunder damage, and the target is knocked prone.
Miss: Half damage.
Secondary Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in blast); +23 vs. Will
Hit: 2d6+10 psychic damage, and the target is weakened (save ends). This is a fear effect.

✓ **Carry Off** (necrotic) ✦ Encounter
The swarm carries you off the ground.
Effect: The swarm flies 8 squares and makes the following attack at any point during the movement.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d6+20 necrotic damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 25). The target has ongoing 10 necrotic damage as long as it is grabbed. When the swarm moves, it can slide the target along with it, even into the air.

✲ Poltergeist Activity ✦ Encounter

You are hurled by invisible force.

Attack: Area burst 3 within 10 (enemies in burst); +23 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d6+20 damage, and the ghost council hurls the target through the air, sliding them 5 squares and knocking them prone. The ghost council can lift the target off the ground during this forced movement.

Miss. Half damage, and the ghost council slides the target 1 square.

Str	28 (+19)	**Dex**	12 (+11)	**Wis**	14 (+12)
Con	19 (+14)	**Int**	24 (+17)	**Cha**	14 (+12)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Getting and Using Allies

At the start of the assassination plot, the party is likely with the King, Harkover, and Dame Jillian in the throne room. The king trusts the party to have good tactical sense, and lets them decide where each of them are best deployed. Harkover's magic handles large groups well, and Jillian is literally impossible to kill unless the sun is up, making her an ideal bodyguard. (This ability requires a close connection to the Dreaming, and at the end of this adventure the green knight loses all of her powers.) Aodhan excels with singular foes, but if you're planning to have a PC take the crown and become Risur's next monarch, Aodhan makes a point to fight beside him or her. He tries to find a good time to mention that he wants to name the PC as his successor.

Amielle Latimer is on the roof over the entrance foyer of Palace Hall (Area 6), but will only help when she isn't surrounded by Obscurati forces.

Asrabey is in Area 17 practicing yoga, and once the lanterns turn on it takes him just one round to be ready for combat. But if the party does not go to him he observes what's happening outside his window and waits until round 15 to join the battle. If left to his own devices he goes after lantern five in Titan Shrine (Area 25). By round 20 he's finished off the Obscurati squad and has his lion shield gnawing on the golem, but he withdraws so as not to be overwhelmed by the wraiths. He relies on his shield to finish them off, and in round 30 he heads off to find the king.

Finally, if the party gets bystanders to the bunker and vault under Area 18, they can make use of various rare magic items. You can come up with items worth a total equal to the number of PCs times 400,000 gp, or use the following items from *Mordenkainen's Magnificent Emporium*.

- +5 true dragonslayer weapon—acid resistant (525,000 gp).
- +4 mace of disruption (125,000 gp).
- +4 prismatic orb (125,000 gp).
- +5 symbol of the sun (525,000 gp).
- Ring of borrowed spells (65,000 gp).
- +5 captain's weapon (425,000 gp).
- Diamond cincture (level 20, 125,000 gp).
- Ten potions of cure critical wounds (50,000 gp).
- Two elixirs of giant strength (level 19, 8,400 gp).
- Five potions of regeneration (level 19, 21,000 gp).
- Elixir of flying (level 21, 9,000 gp). However, the Ob's lantern makes this last only one round.

The Undead Horde

More than a thousand semi-corporeal wraiths fill the grounds of Torfeld Palace. A hundred of them guard each of the six lanterns, while hundreds more surge through holes in the wall of the palace. Even more horrific shadow beasts wait beyond the edge of the light, ready to attack if the palace is fully pulled into the Bleak Gate.

One horde goes through each hole in the palace walls, and two of them will converge on the throne room two rounds after combat begins. The others are intended to split the palace's defenders along the length of the building.

Roaming Undead (9600 xp total)

- **6 Wraith Assassination Hordes** (2 in the throne room now, see page 258)

The Cannonade

It takes several rounds to reload the cannons, but on round 11 of the encounter, Dengar can fire them again. If the cannons are attacked, though, his engineers withdraw, since their job is done. Thereafter the party can try to make use of the cannons. Gunsmith PCs can use their own attack bonus; otherwise, the ungainly cannons attack with a +15 attack bonus.

Grand Cannon

Special: Mounted on massive turrets, the cannons require a move action to adjust their aim. Only a single move action can be spent this way per round, and the turret can only adjust its aim 45 degrees per move action.

Attack: Area burst 3 within 500 (creatures in burst); +15 vs. Reflex
Hit: 100 damage. **Miss:** Half damage.

A hundred years ago Amielle brought her one-of-a-kind rifle to Flint and lent her keen marksmanship toward defeating the witches of Cauldron Hill. That olive branch opened up the city to investment by industrialists from Danor, which had by that point fought two painful wars with Risur. Amielle proposed the plan to Nicodemus, and it worked like clockwork.

A grandiose woman with grandiose plans, she is only stymied by the fact that she died eighty years ago, and while she endures as part of the ghost council her influence is weak. She has for the past few months only feigned loyalty to the conspiracy; she agreed with the need to alter the world, but not how the Ob have gone about it. But she knows any sign of disobedience will spell her demise, so she bides her time.

Amielle still remembers life fondly, and she often disagrees with her fellow ghosts, showing her disapproval with piping sarcastic laughter.

The Assassination: Bullseye

Action. Tactical. Level 19.

A spectral sniper guns for the king.

The sixth lantern sits atop Palace Hall, guarded like the rest (by 2 Obscurati Squads, a Bleak Lantern Golem, and a Wraith Assassination Horde; see Overture). The ghost of Amielle Latimer is stationed there as well, having volunteered to protect **Tittling Grainet**, a gnome cleric tasked with keeping the lanterns in working order.

Amielle wants to somehow aid the party, but she knows she cannot move openly against the Obscurati. Indeed, to avoid drawing attention she has to keep up appearances and shoot at the palace's defenders; if the ghost council gets suspicious they'll annihilate her.

At some point during this prolonged scene—likely at Catherine Romana's command, or when the party leaves the palace so she can see them—Amielle fires a shot and intentionally wings the king, dealing just 1 damage. She'll continue to wing the PCs round after round, also for 1 damage each, hoping to draw their attention to the roof. She'll only attack the Obscurati's forces if she sees that a PC is in danger, or if it is the last foe. (If everyone is dead, no one can tattle on her.)

Lending Aid

If the party gets to the roof, Amielle will use *withdraw from sight* to turn invisible and phase through the roof into the palace's attic so she can avoid combat. Once the lantern's defenders are defeated (see Destroying the Lanterns, below), she'll emerge and say she wants to help.

Most importantly, she tells them that Stanfield is going to perform a ritual tomorrow night in Flint, but if it can be disrupted they can protect Risur at least. The PCs probably already know this, but if they've somehow missed it, Amielle can make the timeline explicit.

Thereafter she wants to follow the party and help in a fight. The ghost council will target her above all other threats.

Ongoing Alliance

The ghost council will know of Amielle's betrayal, and if she's destroyed Nicodemus will rejuvenate her solely so they can interrogate her. Understanding this, Amielle will offer to lend her aim to them, but says it isn't safe to ever tell her any plans. She can be a resource in future adventures, if she survives.

Amielle Latimer	Level 17 Ally
HP 66; **Bloodied** 33	**Initiative Count** 27
AC 29, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 26	**Speed** fly 8 (hover); phasing
Resist cold 20, poison 20, insubstantial	
Vulnerable radiant ignores insubstantial	

Traits

▸ **Sniper Sense**

Amielle can choose to share senses with the rest of the ghost council. While doing so she is blind to her own surroundings, but she can potentially target creatures that are behind total cover or concealment.

▸ **Withdraw from Sight**

Whenever Amielle takes damage, she turns invisible until she either attacks or chooses to become visible. When she is reduced to 0 HP she discorporates but will return in a few days unless Nicodemus the Gnostic is defeated.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Deadeye Shot** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Freed from the jitters of flesh, her aim is flawless.

Effect: Amielle fires a rifle at one enemy within 75 squares, dealing 12 damage, or 20 damage if the target hasn't moved in the past round. This attack can pass through any cover.

⊘ **Dual Shot** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Effect: Amielle fires two pistols at one or two targets within 45 squares, each shot dealing 8 damage. These attacks can pass through any cover.

The Assassination: Tyrant's Revenge

Action. Tactical. Level 20.

A dragon skeleton kept as a trophy animates and attacks.

A gargantuan dragon skeleton, animated by Professor Bugge (see below) detaches from its wire mountings in the Entry Foyer (Area 6) and goes on a rampage. A History check (DC 18) recalls that this dragon was Venkio, a copper-scaled dragon tryant who would melt those who disobeyed him in vats of acid.

The skeleton fights until it reaches 506 hp. Then it burns an exit hole and tries to withdraw, but will swoop back in the next time the party is engaged in another fight. Once reduced to 253 hp, it withdraws and defends Catherine Romana if she still lives.

Foyer Foes (14000 xp)

✦ Skeletal Dragon Tyrant

Skeletal Dragon Tyrant	Level 20 Solo Skirmisher
Gargantuan natural animate (dragon, undead)	**XP** 14000
HP 760; **Threshold I** 506; **Threshold II** 253	**Initiative** +13
AC 34, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 32	**Perception** +13
Speed 10, fly 14 (clumsy)	Darkvision
Resist 25 acid, 15 necrotic	
Vulnerable 10 radiant	
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 1	

Traits

Unfettered

Ghostly images of chains float around him, even as the actual wires that once hung him from the ceiling whip about him.

Having torn free of physical strings, the dragon now has a metaphysical freedom from restraint. It makes saving throws against immobilized, slowed, and restrained conditions at the start of its turn as well as at the end of its turn.

▸ **Instinctive Tyranny**

One of the floating chains casually grabs you.

After another creature finishes its turn, the tyrant can take one of the following 'instinctive reactions.' These require no action.

✦ Shift 3 squares and use *shackles of tyranny*.

✦ Shift 3 squares and use *claw*.

✦ End all dazing, dominating, or stunning effects affecting it.

The dragon can use three instinctive reactions per round, but no more than one after a given opponent's turn, and it cannot use the same reaction twice in a row. The dragon recharges its instinctive reactions whenever it takes its own turn.

Standard Actions

Bite (acid) ✦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +25 vs. AC

Hit: 4d12+10 damage, and the target takes ongoing 20 acid damage (save ends).

Claw ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +25 vs. AC

Hit: 4d8+10 damage.

Dissolving Breath Weapon (acid) ✦ Recharge 5-6

Attack: Close blast 5 (creatures in blast); +23 vs. Reflex

Hit: 3d12+40 acid damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Effect: Nonmagical terrain in the area up to 1 square thick is destroyed.

Minor Actions

Shackles of Tyranny (psychic) ✦ At-Will, 1/round

One of the ghostly chains flies out and wraps around your throat.

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +25 vs. Will

Hit: The target is dominated until the end of the dragon's next turn.

Triggered Actions

Withdraw ✦ Recharges at Threshold I & II

It reels, then breathes a spray of acid at the nearest wall, melting a hole that it then flees through.

Trigger: The dragon is reduced below its first or second HP Threshold.

Effect (No Action): The dragon gains an action point, recharges and uses its *dissolving breath weapon* in order to make an exit path, and then flies 14 squares.

Str	25 (+17)	**Dex**	16 (+13)	**Wis**	17 (+13)
Con	21 (+15)	**Int**	15 (+12)	**Cha**	16 (+13)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Draconic, Goblin

The Assassination: Pardwight

Action. Tactical. Level 20.

Under the command of a famed professor of necromancy, wights and a massive flayed jaguar sweep through the palace, killing and turning everyone they find.

Professor Jon Bugge, formerly a necromancy instructor at Pardwight University in Flint, has been working in a remote laboratory for the Obscurati for decades. Now the withered old man hobbles through battle, his thick brogue voice ordering about wights that were once his most promising students. His presentation tonight is a giant flayed jaguar like the ones the party first encountered in adventure two.

He delays his actions so he'll go right before the wights, then places a *feeding zone* around a PC. The wights swarm and weaken the PC, but leave the PC alive, because Bugge is protected from injury as long as a living creature is in the zone.

Undead Educator (6600 xp)

- 4 Dread Wights
- 1 Flayed Dire Jaguar
- Professor Bugge

Dread Wight Level 20 Minion Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (undead) **XP** 700

HP 1; a missed attack never damages this minion **Initiative** +17
AC 36, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 32 **Perception** +14
Speed 7 Darkvision
Resist 20 necrotic

Standard Actions

Draining Claws ✦ At-Will, Basic
Its touch causes your heart to seize.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 14 damage, and the target is stunned until the end of the wight's next turn. If the target dies while stunned this way, it animates as a wight three rounds later. (The lesser wights are an inconsequential threat to the PCs.)

Str 18 (+14) **Dex** 20 (+15) **Wis** 18 (+14)
Con 14 (+12) **Int** 15 (+12) **Cha** 16 (+13)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Flayed Dire Jaguar Level 19 Elite Skirmisher
Large shadow magical beast **XP** 4800

HP 336; **Bloodied** 168 **Initiative** +8
AC 33, **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 31 **Perception** +15
Speed 8 Darkvision
Resist 20 necrotic
Saving Throws +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

▸ **Corrupted Blood**
Its black blood sizzles and releases a horrid stench as it stains the ground.
Whenever an attack hits the jaguar, if it is bloodied after the damage, the squares it is currently occupying are 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 15 necrotic damage.

▸ **Witchoil Vessel**
An adamantine plate is bolted directly into the ribcage of the poor creature, and black oil pulses around it, like a leaking heart.
As a standard action, a character adjacent to the jaguar can make a Strength check (DC 20) 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 30 damage, and any attack that hits it kills it.

Standard Actions

Claw ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 4d6+44 damage, and the jaguar knocks the target prone.

Maul ✦ At-Will
Requirement: The target must be prone.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 4d6+54 necrotic damage, and the target cannot stand up as long as the jaguar is adjacent to it.

Skills Athletics +18, Stealth +20, Perception +15
Str 18 (+13) **Dex** 22 (+15) **Wis** 12 (+10)
Con 16 (+12) **Int** 2 (+5) **Cha** 6 (+7)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Professor Jon Bugge Level 20 Goon Artillery (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP** 1400

HP 72; **Bloodied** 36 **Initiative** +8
AC 34, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 32 **Perception** +14
Speed 3 Low-light vision
Resist 20 necrotic

Traits

Antilife Shell ✦ Aura 2
Your skin withers as you move too close to him.
The aura is difficult terrain for living creatures other than Bugge. A living creature that attempts to enter the aura takes 5 necrotic damage but can choose to stop outside the aura. If the creature continues to enter the aura it is dazed and weakened as long as it remains in the aura, and takes 20 necrotic damage at the end of its turn.

Standard Actions

Staff (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage.

Feeding Zone (necrotic) ✦ At-Will
Old primordial writing glows in a ring on the ground, and the wights gaze at you hungrily. Blood suddenly bursts from your veins and is drawn into the ring of text, and identical red letters begin to glow across the necromancer's face.
Attack: Area burst 1 within 20 (creatures in burst); +25 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 10 necrotic damage.
Effect: The area becomes a zone until Bugge uses this power again. Undead gain a +2 to attack rolls against creatures in the zone. Whenever damage would be dealt to Bugge, if a living creature is in the zone, that damage is divided evenly among all living creatures in the zone instead.

▸ **Dread Necromancy** ✦ At-Will
Effect: One undead creature that Bugge can see that was destroyed within the past hour is restored to 1 hit point and can stand up. He can only use this power once per day on any given creature.

Str 8 (+9) **Dex** 6 (+8) **Wis** 18 (+14)
Con 10 (+10) **Int** 23 (+16) **Cha** 16 (+13)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic, Elven, Giant, Primordial

The Assassination: Shadowy Callback

Action. Tactical. Level 19.

A gang of assassins who have been granted familiar shadow powers try to kill Aodhan.

Four elite members of the *Portuers de Mort* who were nearly killed by the party in the previous adventure were saved by the same procedure that afflicted Cillian Creed in adventure two. These shadow men, lacking Creed's proficiency with disguises, simply appear as matte black.

At the start of the assault, they split up and place wreathes of rusted metal on the walls of the palace, to help ensure that it will be pulled into the Bleak Gate. They might be spotted at that time from afar (Perception DC 34), but they don't engage until at least round 20. At that point they have regrouped, and they wait for the king to be vulnerable, and preferably engaged in a fight. Then they strike, and will not withdraw until the king is dead.

Shadow Men (5600 xp)

- 4 Bleak Gate Killers

Bleak Gate Killer	Level 20 Goon Lurker
Medium shadow humanoid (human)	**XP** 1400
HP 103; **Bloodied** 51	**Initiative** +22
AC 34, **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 32	**Perception** +13
Speed 8	Darkvision
Resist insubstantial	
Vulnerable see *hideous reveal*	

Traits

▸ **Hide in Shadows**

He's just a silhouette, difficult to distinguish from the gloom around him. He moves closer, and your own shadow seems to reach for you.

The killer can make a Stealth check to become hidden when he has concealment instead of needing total concealment.

While he is adjacent to any enemy, he is invisible.

▸ **Hideous Reveal**

Light burns away the man's black skin, revealing for a moment raw muscle and sinew.

Radiant damage ignores the killer's insubstantial trait. Whenever he takes radiant damage, he loses his insubstantial and *hide in shadows* traits until the end of the next turn of the creature that dealt that damage.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Eclipse Claw** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic

His arm stretches unnaturally, and his fingers become impossibly sharp talons.

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +25 vs. AC

Hit: 20 damage, and the target is blinded and takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends both).

✓ **Deadly Syringe** (poison) ✦ Recharge on a miss

Light gleams off a metal needle as it plunges into the flesh of your neck.

Requirement: The killer must be hidden from the target.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 20 poison damage and the target is dazed and takes ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).

Aftereffect: The target is dazed until the end of the killer's next turn.

Skills Arcana +17, Bluff +20, Insight +18, Stealth +23

Str	16 (+13)	**Dex**	26 (+18)	**Wis**	16 (+13)
Con	16 (+13)	**Int**	14 (+12)	**Cha**	14 (+12)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Primordial

The Assassination: Destroying the Lanterns

Action. Tactical. Level 20.

Destroying the lanterns ends the assassination plot.

The six lanterns are each guarded by two dozen soldiers, who wear bloodstone and opal amulets that temporarily grant them resist 10 necrotic and low-light vision, and which keep the semi-mindless wraiths from attacking them. Looting these amulets would aid the party immensely, though they only last for a few hours.

Those guards are themselves defended by a horde of wraiths, which surround a golem similar to the witchoil ones the party has fought previously. This one is much improved, however, and the necrotic energy of its *bleak aura* actually heals the undead. (The lantern on the roof has no golem—they couldn't get one up there—but they thought Amielle Latimer would be a sufficient defender in its place.)

The lanterns are spaced close enough that the soldiers at one might be able to lend fire to help others, but they don't move far from their assigned location.

Each lantern has 200 hit points. An Arcana check (DC 25) can dim it, shrinking the area of light to a 5-square radius; another check can turn it off, though Grainet could relight it quickly, and even the soldiers could turn it on again with enough time. With the right fuel, an Arcana check (DC 34) can adjust it to make the real world, the Dreaming, and the Bleak Gate all coterminous at once within its radius.

Lantern Defenders (Per Lantern, 4400 xp each)

- **2 Obscurati Squads**
- **Bleak Lantern Golem** (not at lantern six)
- **Wraith Assassination Horde**

Obscurati Squad	Level 20 Minion Artillery
Large natural humanoid (human, swarm)	**XP** 700
HP 1; see Large Unit below	**Initiative** +12
AC 34, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 30	**Perception** +10
Speed 5	Low-light vision
Resist 10 necrotic; half damage from melee and ranged attacks	
Vulnerable 15 against close and area attacks	

Traits

▸ **Large Unit**

The squad consists of twelve soldiers working in tandem, filling the space of a Large creature. The unit needs only fill 4 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual could move through.

Any effect that deals at least 18 damage 'kills' the squad—wounding enough that the rest panic and disperse. Any lesser amount of damage bloodies the squad, or 'kills' it if it is already bloodied.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Bayonets** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Effect: The squad makes the following attack against up to four targets. If used as an opportunity attack, it only targets the triggering creature.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC

Hit: 10 damage.

⊛ **Rifle Fusillade** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Area burst 1 within 30 (creatures in burst); +25 vs. AC

Hit: 15 damage.

Load standard.

✲ **Antimagic Chaff Grenades** (weapon) ✦ Encounter
The warriors drop into defensive positions as they hurl grenades, which explode with white smoke.
Effect: The squad makes the following attack four times. The grenades are filled with chunks of stones from Methia. Creatures damaged by this attack have their magic suppressed (save ends). Suppressed characters must make a saving throw when using any arcane, divine, primal, psionic, or shadow powers (and any other types of powers other than martial that I might have forgotten). On a failed save, the power has no effect.
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage.

Str 13 (+11) **Dex** 12 (+11) **Wis** 10 (+10)
Con 11 (+10) **Int** 10 (+10) **Cha** 10 (+10)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Bleak Lantern Golem
Level 20 Goon Soldier
Large shadow animate (construct) **XP** 1400

HP 138; **Bloodied** 69 **Initiative** +10
AC 36, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 30 **Perception** +10
Speed 5 Darkvision
Resist necrotic 10

Traits
▸ **Hulking but Refined**
You've seen these golems before, but this one looks far more polished and agile, and less likely to shatter catastrophically.
When the golem is subjected to forced movement, after the movement it can shift 2 squares.

☼ **Bleak Aura** (necrotic) ✦ Aura 3
Wailing spirits coil around the golem and drift across the surrounding undead.
Creatures that enter or end their turn in the aura take 15 necrotic damage. Undead creatures in the aura instead heal 15 hit points.

Standard Actions
⊘ **Bleak Fist** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
It smashes a fist down on you, knocking your over.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 28 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

✲ **Integrated 'Tracer' Cannon** ✦ At-Will
A cannon mounted at its right hip fires, and the explosion lights up the night.
Attack: Area burst 2 within 40 (creatures in burst); +23 vs. Reflex
Hit: 40 damage and the target is blinded (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the golem's next turn.
Effect: The area is brightly illuminated until the end of the golem's next turn.
Load standard.

Str 24 (+17) **Dex** 6 (+8) **Wis** 10 (+10)
Con 14 (+12) **Int** 3 (+6) **Cha** 6 (+8)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** understands Common

Wraith Assassination Horde
Level 21 Goon Controller
Gargantuan shadow animate (swarm) **XP** 1600

HP 72; **Bloodied** 36 **Initiative** +11
AC 34, **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 32 **Perception** +10
Speed 4
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks
Vulnerable 15 against close and area attacks

Traits
▸ **Horde**
Each horde consists of one hundred wraiths, filling the space of a Gargantuan creature. The horde needs only fill 16 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual wraith could move through.
When the Wraith Horde is bloodied, it is dazed. When it is reduced to 0 hit points, most of the horde disperses, leaving behind a handful of distracted wraiths that pose minimal threat.

▸ **Terrain Control**
Spaces within 2 squares of the horde count as difficult terrain for enemies. The horde has threatening reach in that area.

▸ **Terrifying Distraction**
Because of the chaos of being grabbed from all directions, creatures adjacent to the horde or within its space grant combat advantage and take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.

Standard Actions
⊘ **Engulfing Claws** ✦ 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); +26 vs. AC
Hit: 20 damage and the target is pulled 1 square toward the center of the horde (potentially even into its space).

Str 36 (+10) **Dex** 10 (+11) **Wis** 12 (+9)
Con 14 (+10) **Int** 3 (+6) **Cha** 3 (+6)
Alignment Evil **Languages** —

The King is Dead!

Social. Montage. Level 22.

In the aftermath of the assassination plot, the party takes stock.

Around seven minutes after the attack begins, hundreds of Risuri soldiers start streaming to the palace, commanded by the local garrison colonel but guided by Lauryn Cyneburg and Viscount Nigel Price-Hill. They're too late to fight anyone from the Bleak Gate unless the party got clever and found a way to drag them into the real world.

If Aodhan lives, he gives orders to make sure no other forces can surprise them, sends for as many healers as possible for the wounded, then gathers the PCs and appropriate NPCs to discuss what comes next. If he died or was captured, either have Price-Hill give these orders, or if you plan to make one of the PCs king, Harkover suggests it to that PC.

War Council

Communication magic cannot reach Flint, and multiple sources have said Governor Stanfield is about to perform a ritual for the Obscurati. The obvious mission now is to get to Flint and stop him, and omens suggest tomorrow night might be the last night in the world. The R.N.S. *Impossible* waits on the Great Delve River, and with all the magic they can muster it could reach Flint by about 9 p.m. the following night. Ships in Shale could be rallied as well, though they wouldn't be fast enough.

Teleportation still isn't an option, but the party might ride with the Great Hunt again. They again need a few hours to rest their steeds, but they could get to Flint by 6 p.m. The party has to make plans with limited information. *Sendings* don't work, but divinations still might, if asked about something other than Stanfield himself.

Long Live the King!

If the king has died, a new one should be crowned quickly, though a formal coronation with pomp and circumstance will have to wait. It will take an hour to prepare the *Impossible* for travel (and six hours for the Great Hunt), and before that time, a hurried session of the lords of Risur is called together.

If you don't think any of your PCs are monarch material, Nigel Price-Hill is chosen as the best choice to become king. Otherwise, it's time for one PC to be in the spotlight.

First, though, the lords ask for witnesses to the character of the heir. Give each PC a chance to speak on behalf of appointed successor, and if their testimony is sufficient, the lords vote and approve the PC as the new monarch of Risur. An aged steward produces a worn leather book written in rough, hand-scribed text. From it he recites a ten-minute declaration of the rites of rulership, after which the office of the king is formally transferred. See Appendix G: Magic and Training for details of the powers of the king.

If Aodhan is alive, he names a successor, and then seeks approval from the nobles, in a similar process to above. He'll keep his crown for now, but realizes he needs a clear line of succession in case of disaster.

In the Air and the Earth

When the party sets out from Slate, they feel a change in the air. Winds gust, and they feel like the world is shuddering beneath them. The Axis Seal is about to be opened, and an ancient ban that held back the powers of mortals is lifting. Each PC reaches 22nd level.

If the PCs have any of the golden icons of the various planes crafted by the Ancients (Avilona, Nem, and Urim in adventure one, Apet in adventure three), opening the seal floods them with more power, so they function as if they were on Axis Island. During Stanfield's ritual in the next act, however, they lose all their powers.

Campaign Note: Surprise Guests

If you intend to end the campaign with this adventure, to wrap up dangling plot threads involving Benedict Pemberton, you should include the following scene.

Benedict Pemberton has two duplicants in the palace—they're innocuous members of the palace staff, controlled remotely from a villa he owns south of Flint. When the attack begins, Pemberton (at his Yerasol Island lair) takes control of one and has his chief henchgnoll Pardo take control of the other. This changes their appearances to match what they really look like; ideally this can happen right next to one of the PCs.

Pemberton's goal is to seek an eleventh-hour alliance with Risur against the Obscurati. His two duplicants here are useless in a fight; they don't even have kill switches to let them explode when they're destroyed. But he knows the Ob have something planned for Flint, and he's volunteering to help.

Well, "volunteering" is the wrong word. "Agreeing to help *if* Risur lets Pemberton Industries be chief manufacturer of weapons for the inevitable upcoming war with Danor," is more accurate. Or he'll accept a duchy.

If the new monarch of Risur agrees, Pemberton will make an appearance in his full draconic glory in Act Three. If the campaign is going to continue, though, Pemberton shows up in the next adventure, having seized control of Axis Island.

ACT THREE: Pillars of Heaven

In this act, the party attacks the best-defended lighthouse in the world.

CAMPAIGN NOTE: ALTERNATE FINALE

If you want to end the campaign here, you'll need to alter a few scenes.

The colossus starts by devastating ships on the PCs' side, but when things are looking grim, Pemberton and a small fleet of duplicant-crewed ships show up to even the odds, firing Oddcog-designed weapons that break through the colossus's defenses. No single hit is enough to weaken the titan, but Nicodemus pulls it back anyway and orders it to begin the ritual.

The colossus sets the golden plate down in the center of the governor's mansion fortress; it sinks into the earth and conjures a starmap on the surface. Meanwhile Stanfield uses the lighthouse to stabilize chaotic energies that burst from the ground. The colossus plants stone pillars in the starmap, each linked to one new world. If the party can disrupt Stanfield's control of the lighthouse, the energy stuns the colossus. They can then climb aboard (or, if they've let the Ob switch the plane of air, fly on the back of Pemberton and Harkover, who return to dragon form), in order to install a device from Oddcog that grants them manual control. Nicodemus will fight them, but they can drive him into the witchoil forge at the colossus's heart, consuming his spirit and fueling a final push to alter reality in their own way.

Foolproof Villainy

If the party weren't involved, the king would be dead, and Stanfield's ritual would go off without a hitch. There would still be trouble at the Axis Seal due to interference by the Voice of Rot, and after less than a year—a year filled with madness, collapsing social structures, and extraplanar invasions—the white serpent would destroy the world.

However, the Obscurati do plan for opposition. Threats they've considered are Gale and her ability to fly (hence the domed shield over the fortress), the Coaltongue's brand (which is why they have it seized and garrisoned), and others you think are important. Of course, we want the players to figure out how to beat them, so if they have a clever idea, perhaps they can outwit even the geniuses of the Obscurati.

A Moment of Calm

Social. Montage. Level 22.

News and allies arrive to help the party stop Stanfield's ritual in Flint.

The party makes their way to Flint, on the *Impossible* or with the Great Hunt or by some other means they devise. (If they have their own ship, they likely haven't seen it since adventure eight, but it could be docked in Flint waiting for them, or in another Risuri coastal city.) The party might bring along allies, but unless the players are particularly attached to someone, we suggest allies 'fade into the background' once the party reaches Flint. They can handle challenges that the PCs aren't.

Maybe Asrabey hews through Ob agents who are searching the Cloudwood for Gale and her allies; together the two eladrin can sabotage the Danoran fleet. Dame Jillian goes to rescue Captain Dale and his men atop Cauldron Hill, where the wards are failing; once rescued, they help evacuate people from the slums, fearing a disaster. Lauryn Cyneburg gathers soldiers from the Battalion military academy and teleports them (and their cannons) into positions around the city so they can fire upon the Danoran ships. Viscount Price-Hill likely stays behind in Slate to prepare for war.

One ally who asks to stand beside the party is Harkover Lee. He has served Risur's monarchs for two centuries, and he would like to continue. He explains his history as a former dragon tyrant, but swears his loyalty to the new king or queen.

(If Aodhan lives, he leads the attack. Honestly, we kinda want to kill him before the adventure ends so a PC can take on the responsibilities of ruling.)

Ship Graveyard

If the party sails to Flint, about twenty miles west of the city they find the wreck of Flint's garrison fleet. A few survivors survive on their crippled ships, and can speak of how they must have been betrayed. Flint's fleet followed the intelligence the governor shared, and they sailed into a field of submerged mines (called 'torpedoes'), which exploded and hulled many vessels.

The Danorans knew exactly where they'd be, and with many ships out of commission, the Risuri forces were easy pickings. The attackers didn't even take prisoners for ransom, or claim ships as salvage, instead rushing ahead and leaving a thousand men to die. If the party can't spare the time to bring the men to shore, other ships from Shale will be along soon to accomplish the job.

Final Reverie

An hour or so outside the city, the sun has already set, and you might want to devote a scene to the party making final plans and having a moment to reflect and talk—as they rest for a bit on the deck of the ship, or while the Hunt's horses take a breather.

Consider which Flint NPCs you want to involve in this final act, what elements of the party's past endeavors deserve to be revisited, and what sorts of choices the PCs could be forced to make if they wish to succeed. Either Captain Rutger Smith of the *Impossible* or Riffian, head of the Great Hunt, asks the party to regale him with stories of their city, so that he might know what the heroes fight for. This gives you an opportunity to remind the party of potential allies and avenues of attack.

Whichever route the party takes to Flint, they'd be wise to enter quietly. Captain Smith can drop the party off in the bayou west of the city, near the Battalion academy of martial science. The Great Hunt need some sleep, at least, and will take the party no farther than the city limits. They arrive by 9 p.m., and have until about 6 a.m. in the predawn hours to act.

Whenever they do launch their final assault, stars start to fall from the sky, but be flexible with just when Stanfield begins his ritual.

City Bonds

These are suggested ways the party can gain an upper hand, assuming they don't just sail straight into Flint Harbor alone.

Dockers

If a PC has close ties to the dockers, you might have them greeted by Thames Grimsley who's ready to organize a counter-attack against the Danoran fleet, which will cost many lives. Danoran ships keep guns trained on the docks, so as cover the PC might be asked to call in the Flint police to stage a fake riot; the dockers and police get close enough to the ships without looking hostile, and then can rush aboard and try to launch before they're sunk.

The Family

Parties who have had friendly dealings with The Family might seek aid from Morgan Cippiano, who is attending a funeral with hundreds of mourners. A bereaved family member might indicate romantic interest in one of the PCs, offering a chance to join the family (and the Family). The criminals agree to help—perhaps using holy magic to sneak the party onto the garrisoned Coaltongue and claim it—but first ask the party to be blessed in a Clergy church.

Skyseers and the Old Faith

The common people of Flint still revere the old faith, and the few novice skyseers still active in the city have been foretelling doom, reminding people to avoid Cauldron Hill, per the final warning of Nevard Sechim. But people are scared, and they hope to hear a new vision to reassure them. The stars, however, reveal no future after tonight.

Gale and the Vekeshi Mystics

Gale could come to the party on behalf of the Vekeshi Mystics, offering their aid in sabotaging the Danorans if the new monarch pledges to laud their efforts and no longer treat the secret society as enemies of Risur. At night, a flying woman and her allies can easily sneak aboard rumbling steamships and cripple their engines.

Gale also offers an even greater deed. The Obscurati have worked some magic over the harbor to prevent her from making the weather hostile to them, but she thinks she can leech some of its power to control the clouds over the city. The people of Flint deserve to know what is happening, and may need to know that they have a new king who will defend them. Gale will be able to let a PC speak from the sky for a few minutes. The clouds will take on his countenance, and his voice will carry across the entire city. Whether the PCs want to urge calm or send out a call to arms, they will have Flint's undivided attention.

Danoran Defenses and Other Hazards

You might just have spies report this information to the party, but some groups could enjoy directing their various avenues of information to learn what the Danorans are up to, and what other problems beset Flint.

The Fleet

The Danoran Fleet consists of three battleships and six grand steam frigates guarding targets of value, a dozen steam frigates in a line blockading the harbor entrance, two dozen medium steam warships on patrol in the central harbor, and a handful of support vessels.

Spies report spotting a spectral figure on the deck of *Praepollens Auctoritate*, the flagship. Two of the grand frigates keep their cannons trained on the Coaltongue, which is berthed at the Royal Docks.

Naval Minefield

The mouth of Flint Harbor has been seeded with floating mines (called 'torpedoes'). Danoran ships still sail through the area, so either they have precise maps, or have some way to deactivate the mines. (The answer is the former; they have clear parameters where to sail and where to avoid.)

Coaltongue Garrison

Over three hundred Danorans guard the Risuri flagship. They attempted to claim it as their own, but somehow its enchanted engine will not ignite at their command. The ship's original engineer, Geoff Massarde, is allegedly in hiding, and Danoran spies are offering rewards for anyone who hands him over. (The tiefling is loyal to Risur, and has taken refuge with factory owner Heward Sechim, since he recalled hearing the alchemist was on good terms with the PCs, who he hopes will save him.)

Governor's Island Defenses

The Governor's Island has an outer government district surrounded by a modest wall. Inside that, heavier walls defend the Governor's Island Fortress, and in its center is the forty-foot-high keep surrounded by a twenty-foot-deep dry moat.

Stanfield evacuated all non-essential personnel from his mansion fortress, and then destroyed the bridge to the mainland. Shortly thereafter some people spotted a tarp over the central keep's roof being pulled away revealing something like a lighthouse. Then a magical barrier that is translucent like burnt glass surrounded the fortress, rising up like a dome several hundred feet high.

The government district is accessible but deserted. A scout who got onto the island found the barrier surrounding the fort impenetrable, but otherwise harmless. Any PC trained in Arcana who gets a look at the magical dome over the fort can surmise that it could be broken with sufficient damage (like a naval bombardment) or antimagic (dispelling a caster level 20 effect), but likely any opening would be brief before the shield reformed.

Stover Delft was on the island when it was sealed off. His last orders to the RHC were to keep the city on defense, and to prepare for a siege. (No one knows that Delft was replaced by a doppelganger.)

Ravens Atop Cauldron Hill

No one has seen birds flying to the mountain top, but somehow they're appearing: thousands of ravens perched in trees, growing in number hour by hour. The district mayor's mansion, now controlled by Captain Dale, has launched flares as if to call for help, but no one who has gone up has returned. (Evil spirits have possessed several of Dale's men, and the rest have locked themselves into the remains of the old hidden laboratory of Mayor Macbannin. The flares are sent by the spirits to lure in more possible hosts.)

Fish Gone Mad

Sea life has begun beaching itself around Flint harbor, and the shores are covered with seagulls gorging on dead fish. The fey titan knows She Who Writhes is coming.

Flint and Steal

Action. Tactical. Level 22.

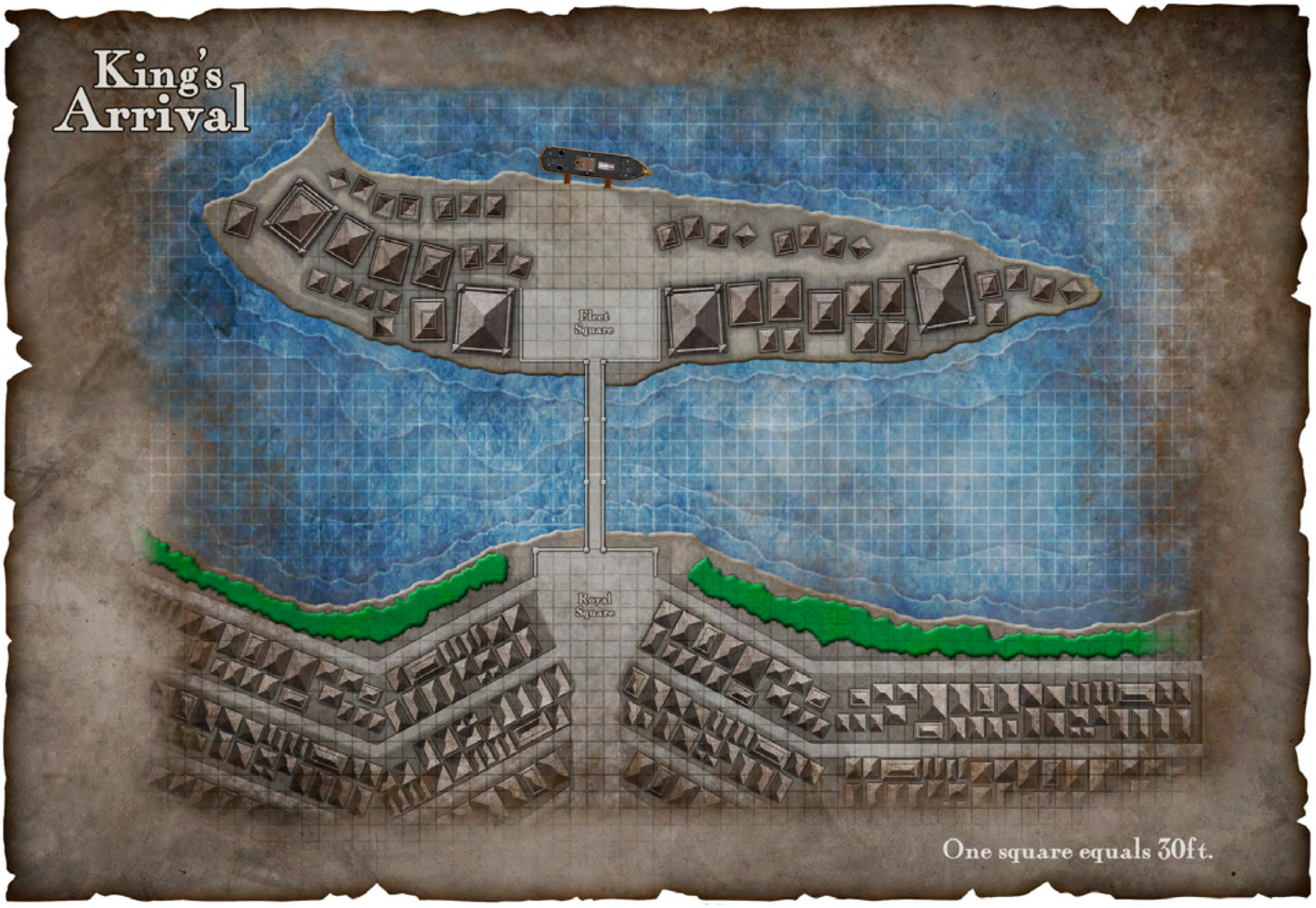
The party retakes the R.N.S. Coaltongue.

The R.N.S. *Coaltongue* has enough firepower to take down the magical barricade around the Governor's Island Fortress.

Four hundred soldiers defend the Royal Docks, and five hundred feet away two grand frigates have their guns trained on the ship, ready to sink it if Risur tries to reclaim it. The party will need to find a way to distract the Danorans if they want any chance of actually using the vessel.

Possible solutions include swimming onto the frigates and defeating their crews first, or pulling off an absolutely stealthy attack on the *Coaltongue* garrison, or launching a diversion with other ships (which will be sunk quickly) to give them time to get the *Coaltongue* up and running.

Even if the party can claim the ship, the Danorans have a failsafe: the propeller mechanism of the *Coaltongue* is packed with explosives, which will shatter the hull and cripple the ship if not disabled. Of course, the party has saved this ship from sinking once or twice before.



Coaltongue Garrison

- 4 Danoran Companies
- 2 Steam Walkers
- 12 Danoran Lookouts

Frigate Overwatch

- 2 Grand Frigates (each with another two Danoran companies on board)

Terrain and Tactics

One Danoran company waits inside the *Coaltongue*, distributed across a few decks. They can attack from the superior cover of the gunports (+5 to defenses); however, they take 2 rounds to respond to any alarms. Another company actively keeps watch along the dock beside the ship, and have set up simple barricades to provide cover. The remaining two companies are inside the two nearest warehouses.

Each of the warehouses is also guarded by a steam walker, a ten-foot tall bipedal construct piloted by an elite soldier. These are based on designs of Tinker Oddcog, and while the gnome was a cleverer inventor, the Danoran military has much greater coffers, so these walking machines carry enchanted weapons. They use their *arcane shield* to try to protect the soldiers, and they're trained enough to recognize magical attacks and choose the right type of energy resistances.

A dozen lookouts keep watch. Six patrol the deck of the *Coaltongue*, two watch from the roofs of the warehouses, and two roam the rest of the royal docks. They carry primitive rockets that when fired illuminate the sky with red light.

As for the two grand frigates, *Aula Alba* and *Cervus Vigilius*, they each have a crew complement of two hundred who can engage the party if boarded. The party's incredible power likely lets them storm through all those crew hardly a scratch, but if either ship sees its sister has been taken, or if they see the *Coaltongue* about to be claimed, they'll fire their cannons.

Bombardment

The Danoran companies all carry flares, which than can launch to light up the night. However, if they believe the party is far enough from them to be safely targeted by the ships, they'll shoot their flares at the party, marking them for bombardment. (The party might wise up to this and trick the frigates into shooting the companies.)

Each round, two cannons fire at the general location of the flare. For each ship that can see the target area, make the following attack two times, targeting different areas. **Attack:** Area burst 3 (creatures in burst); +22 vs. Reflex. **Hit:** 4d10 damage and the target is pushed 1 square from the origin space and knocked prone. **Miss:** Half damage. **Effect:** The target area becomes a crater and is obscured by debris and smoke.

SKYSEER FULL CIRCLE

If you have a skyseer in the party, the last vision they get before arriving in Flint is of a crowd, a purple ribbon, and a broken tin whistle. Some of these same images appeared in the first vision at the beginning of the campaign, and here they refer to a purple ribbon tied around the *Coaltongue*'s conning wheel, and explosives packed in the engine room, near the same alarm siren that saboteurs damaged in adventure one.

If the party is on the *Coaltongue*, use the normal rules for striking and damaging the ship. (Make a single attack each minute.)

Starting the Boiler

Dealing at least 100 fire damage to the interior of the boiler activates the *Coaltongue*, though its capacitor and brand won't be charged for 1d4 minutes. Without magic, the enchanted boiler takes five minutes to warm up enough for action.

Rigged to Explode

Explosives are packed into obscure corners of the engine room, out of easy line of sight, and primed to detonate if the screws begin to turn. If the party doesn't check for sabotage, as soon as they take the ship out, it takes two strikes to the propulsion and starts to sink slowly (requiring one save per ten minutes to avoid descending ten feet).

Disabling the explosives requires five minutes and a Thievery check (DC 20). Every 5 points of success shaves a minute off the time.

Aftermath

If the *Coaltongue* starts to move, half the Danoran fleet swoops in to sink it. See Home Sea Advantage, below.

Danoran Company	Level 21 Soldier
Gargantuan natural humanoid (human, swarm)	**XP** 3200
HP 180; **Bloodied** 90	**Initiative** +12
AC 35, **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 31	**Perception** +10
Speed 4	
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks	
Vulnerable 15 against close and area attacks	
Traits	
▶ **Gargantuan Unit**	
The company consists of a hundred soldiers working in tandem, filling a space roughly 6 squares by 6 squares. The unit needs only fill 36 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual could move through. When the company is bloodied, it is dazed. When reduced to 0 hit points, the surviving soldiers flee or surrender.	
▶ **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	
⊘ **Bayonet 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); +26 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8+20 damage. If the target was hit by an opportunity attack, its movement stops.	
⊛ **Rifle Fusillade** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic	
Effect: Make the following attack four times. The areas cannot overlap.	
Attack: Area burst 1 within 30 (creatures in burst); +26 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8+10 damage, or 2d8+27 damage on a crit.	
Load standard.	
Str 13 (+11) Dex 12 (+11) Wis 10 (+10)	
Con 11 (+10) **Int** 10 (+10) **Cha** 10 (+10)	
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common	

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

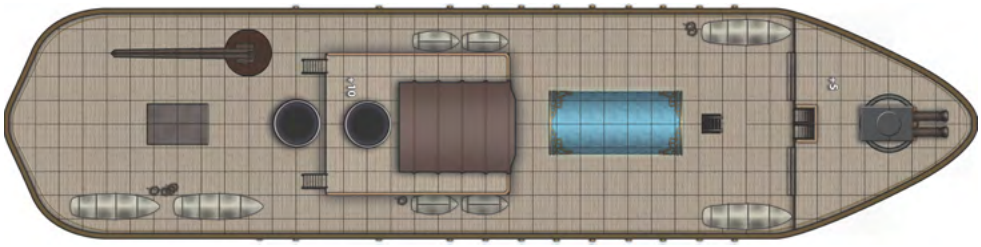
On the *Coaltongue's* maindeck sits an elaborate glass frame, reinforced by magic to be as strong as steel, and shaped in a half-cylinder to resemble the boiler of a train locomotive. While its design is partially aesthetic, intended to evoke the power of Risur's new industry, this innovative structure 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.

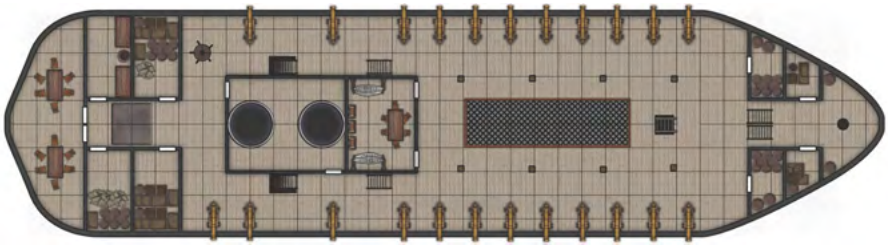
The Brand—so named because it burns an image into any surface it strikes—fires a massive blast of pyromantic energy from the ship's figurehead, often enough to outright destroy a smaller vessel and cripple a larger one. Its range is limited to about a hundred feet, and after firing it takes hours to 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*

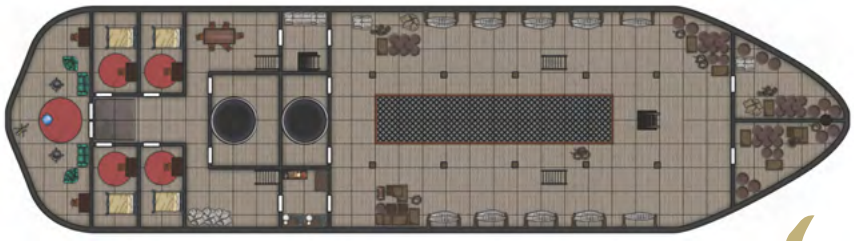
MAIN DECK



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.

Steam Walker — Level 21 Skirmisher
Large natural animate — **XP** 3200

HP 180; **Bloodied** 90 — **Initiative** +18
AC 35, **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 31 — **Perception** +16
Speed 10
Resist 5 melee or ranged attacks

Traits

▸ **Piloted Vehicle**

Normal weapons have trouble striking anything vulnerable, but the blast carries through cracks in the construct's carapace, and you hear a yelp of pain from inside.

Whenever the walker takes damage from an area or close attack, its pilot makes a saving throw (representing resisting the injury). If he has failed one such saving throw, the walker's speed is reduced by 2. If he has failed twice, the walker is dazed. After he fails three such saving throws, he falls unconscious and the walker goes inert.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Chain Sword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Its forearm extends a blade with grinding, serrated teeth. It swings with immense force and simply carves through the terrain.

Effect: This attack ignores cover and concealment.
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +26 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12+20 damage.

⊘ **Heavy Shotgun** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

A cover on its other arm opens, revealing a massive, double-barreled shotgun.

Effect: Make two attack rolls, and the attack hits if either is a success. If both hit at close range, the attack deals an extra 2d10 damage.
Attack: Ranged 6/12 (one creature); +26 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10+10 damage.

Minor Actions

▸ **Arcane Shield** ✦ At-Will, 1/round

A dome on its head flashes, and a faintly-visible aura extends twenty feet from it.

Effect: The pilot chooses an energy type. Until the end of its next turn, the steam walker and all allies within 4 squares gain resist 10 against that energy type.

Skills Arcana +16

Str	24 (+17)	**Dex**	23 (+16)	**Wis**	12 (+11)
Con	20 (+15)	**Int**	12 (+11)	**Cha**	12 (+11)

Alignment Unaligned — **Languages** Common

Danoran Lookouts — Level 13 Minion Lurker
Medium natural humanoid (human) — **XP** 200

HP 1; a missed attack never damages this minion — **Initiative** +10
AC 27, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 23 — **Perception** +12
Speed 6

Traits

▸ **Harmless but Loud**

These lookouts pose no threat to the party themselves, but if they spot attackers and get a chance to sound the alarm, the companies defending the *Coaltongue* respond within 2 rounds.

DOING THE *IMPOSSIBLE*

The party might decide to sail straight into Flint Harbor on the fast but lightly-armed *Impossible*. They have to navigate the naval mine field, and get past a dozen frigates. Even if the Danorans cannot catch them, the party won't be able to get close to either the *Coaltongue* or the island without getting attacked. But if they lure She Who Writhes like a fey fox luring the Great Hunt, they might stand a chance.

Home Sea Advantage

Action. Tactical. Level 22.

With the party at the lead, and a fey titan somewhat on their side, the Risuri navy attacks the Danoran fleet in Flint Harbor.

The party might engage the Danoran fleet several ways—with the *Coaltongue*, with a ragtag fleet of dockers, on the *Impossible*, and so on. Use the following elements to pace a large naval battle, culminating with Lya Jierre's flagship, *Praepollens Auctoritate*, closing so the tiefling ghost can engage them personally. Of course, if the party has other ideas, go with it. They might even make it onto the island without ever firing a single cannon, rush through the abandoned government district as the Danorans try to shell them, then use a ritual to create a crack in the dome shield. In that case, when the governor's ritual is disrupted the Danorans beat a hasty retreat, losing a third of the fleet to She Who Writhes.

Ship and sea monster stats for this encounter can be found in Appendix F: Naval Forces.

Battle Elements

This is a huge battle, so keep the focus on the party's actions. You only need to keep rough track of where the Danoran ships are. If the party's on the ball, they won't have to engage the entire force at once.

Scale of the Harbor

The mouth is about four miles wide. It's about seven miles from the mouth to the Governor's Island, or eight to the Royal Docks. It would take the *Impossible* about twenty minutes to cross that distance, and a little longer for the *Coaltongue*, though clever engineers can shave a little off.

Falling Stars and Ominous Lights

Overhead, the heavens shift and stars literally fall from the sky, a few every minute. They plunge silently, then flash and sizzle as they strike the water. None interfere with the battle. (We only want one star to actually collide with anything, and that's at the adventure's end.)

The lighthouse atop Stanfield's keep begins to glow, though it is initially muted by the translucent magical shield defending the fort.

Line of Battle

There has not been a major naval engagement at fleet scale for eight years, and so the Danoran's tactics with their newly-improved steam warships are untested. Even if the PCs are identified, they don't commit their entire force against them, fearing a trick. A dozen steam frigates form a

line blockading the harbor entrance, leaving the three battleships, four grand frigates (or six if the party didn't handle the pair guarding the *Coaltongue*), and a variety of smaller vessels occupying the harbor itself. At over four miles across, the harbor still has plenty of room, and at night it might even be possible to sneak a sailing vessel past the Danorans.

Stealthy Approach

A ship with a steam engine has no chance of sneaking through the harbor, unless the party can conjure a thunderstorm or something to mask the sound. For a sailing vessel, there's a slim chance.

Four general areas of the harbor are under observation: the mouth of the harbor (moderate watch), the harbor center (light watch), Governor's Island (heavy watch), and the Royal Docks (light watch). If the party is going elsewhere, they can move freely.

It takes five naval turns to pass through the moderately-watched harbor mouth, eight to sneak through the heavy watch around the Governor's Island, and two to either pass through the harbor center or get past the grand frigates watching the *Coaltongue* at the Royal Docks.

Each naval turn, the captain or lookout must succeed a Perception check (DC 25), representing keeping aware of the Danorans' locations, and knowing how the party's ship will appear against the city lights of Flint. A successful check determines where any Danoran ships are within a thousand feet.

Next, the captain or navigator must succeed a Stealth check (DC 25, or 30 if the Perception check failed). A failed check alerts one of the Danoran ships, which will launch a rocket that hangs in the sky and illuminates the rough area of the party's ship for one naval turn.

If they intentionally try to enter the same stage as another ship, increase the Stealth DC by 5.

Torpedoes

The naval minefield is a variant 'catch hazard.' Each naval turn that a ship is in the minefield, during the Terrain phase the Captain must make a Command check (DC 20), adding the ship's maneuverability, and taking a -10 penalty due to the ship's size (for either the *Impossible* or *Coaltongue*). A lookout can choose to make the check, using the Captain's Command check and adding the lookout's own Wisdom modifier.

On a failed check, make an attack against the ship's defense. **Attack:** 1d20+18. Strikes inflicted this way can only damage parts of the ship below the water line, which is typically Hull Integrity, as well as Propulsion for the *Coaltongue*.

The minefield is thin and long, so a ship trying to speed through it is only in danger for one naval turn.

Scattered Battles

Unless the party screws up, they probably only have to fight a few ships at a time. If the party avoids a battle, the enemies give chase, which might result in the party being pincered by multiple encounters' worth of enemies at once. Even then, though, the Danoran fleet won't commit all its forces against one vessel. I mean, that's ridiculous. About half keep their distance.

While the *Coaltongue* is resilient, there's a limit to how much punishment it can take. If the party is reckless in engaging enemies, they're liable to end up with a crippled ship. Of course, they have enough personal strength to probably seize another ship and continue the fight, though they might be short on crew.

Harbor Mouth: A first wave consists of three frigates, which try to drive the party into the torpedoes. Two naval turns later, another trio of frigates joins up with the first wave.

Harbor Center: The enemy being widely spaced, the party only encounters one steamship, which will flee and try to reach the next nearest ship, one or two turns later. They continue to try to find allies while making their way to the battleships near the Governor's Island, and at most six steamships engage the party.

Royal Docks: Two grand frigates watch the *Coaltongue*.

Governor's Island: Forced to watch both sides of the island, it takes a while for the defenders to converge on the party. Start with one grand frigate, then a battleship arrives the next naval turn, then another grand frigate, then Lya Jierre's own *Praepollens Auctoritate*.

The Kraken

Beshela, Archfey of the Sea appears at some point, leaping from the surf and landing on the deck of the PCs' ship. She hurriedly explains that whatever the party did after they left Thistle Palace caused She Who Writhes to awaken. Now the fey titan seeks to contest the monarch of Risur for control of her domain.

She Who Writhes has chosen the form of a colossal kraken, and she creates a massive wave as she enters Flint Harbor and sets off several of the torpedoes. They barely harm her.

For the rest of the naval encounter, the fey titan pursues the party, discouraging them from sitting still. She's slow, though, which gives the party the option to lure her so she crosses paths with their enemies. She'll angrily crush and drown any vessel in her path.

If She Who Writhes is within a thousand feet of the party's ship, and if the PCs are in the same stage as another ship or in an adjacent stage, during the Location phase the party can choose to take a -5 penalty to its Command check. If so, they can draw She Who Writhes toward one vessel whose Command check they beat.

Ghostly Duel

Lya Jierre has been brought back as a ghost by Nicodemus the Gnostic, and is wholly devoted to seeing the Obscurati's plans to fruition. But (barring particularly boorish behavior by the party in the past) she understands and respects the party's need to defend their homeland. No grudge stirs her to anger, not even if the constables dropped her into lava in Pemberton's volcano lair (see adventure six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*).

She views them as equals, and recognizes that of all the forces in Flint Harbor, she has the best chance to defeat them. That said, respecting them isn't the same as fighting fair. Lya is above all else intelligent, and will use her new powers to their fullest.

Lya likely first spots the party by spyglass as they near Governor's Island. From the prow of *Praepollens Auctoritate* she flares with white fire to draw their attention, draws her sword and nods to them, then gives the order to make ready to board. The battleship roars and unleashes a constant barrage of cannonfire as it tries to come alongside the party's vessel.

When the two ships are near, Lya orders the hold open to release her 'pet': a mechanical dragon, powered by witchoil. Then like any good swordfighting villain, she closes to melee and holds a conversation as she duels. (Alternately, the party might want to talk first, then fight.) In battle she lets the dragon keep most of the party occupied, and tries to draw off whichever PC she'd most enjoy trading words with. She likely also has a full crew of hundreds of soldiers.

Battle with Lya Jierre

- Lya, the Lost Jierre Scion
- Draconic Witchoil Golem
- 2 Danoran Companies (see above)

This chatty swordfight should have a different tone from the challenge proclaimed by Catherine Romana in the previous act, and from Roland Stanfield's deconstruction of Risur's flaws in the climax. Lya talks instead about why she believes the conspiracy is necessary.

"It's an honor to cross blades with you again. Despite our past disagreements and their consequences," she briefly flares with ghostly fire, then smiles, "this is not personal for me.

"I won't try to persuade you with compassion. Nicodemus cares about saving the world from suffering. He and I both have seen wars, and bloodshed. We agree it must stop. But for different reasons.

"It wasn't the atrocities I saw, or the horrible wounds my friends suffered that bothered me most." (Try to time this with her cutting off someone's limb.) "It was that there was no place for reason. When I'm honest with myself, a stranger's suffering—it doesn't bother me. But a mind left fallow, poisoned by desperation? *That* is cruel.

"You're loyal and decent. I respect that. But a new age of reason is upon us. Your time is past."

Lya, the Lost Jierre Scion Level 23 Elite Skirmisher
Medium shadow humanoid (tiefling, undead) **XP** 10200

HP 326; **Bloodied** 163 **Initiative** +19
AC 37, **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 35 **Perception** +13
Speed fly 8 (hover); phasing Darkvision
Resist cold 20, fire 16, poison 20, insubstantial
Vulnerable radiant attacks bypass insubstantial
Saving Throws +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

▸ **Perfected Counterswarm Stance**
Free of the fear of death, she confronts superior numbers with calculated confidence. When you lunge she drops a leg behind your ally and swings behind him, and your attack strikes your ally instead.

Whenever an enemy targets Lya with a melee or ranged attack, if she is adjacent to an enemy other than the attacker, the attacker must make a save. On a failure, Lya may change the attack's target to the adjacent enemy.

At the beginning of Lya's turn, if she is prone she can stand as a free action. If she is slowed or immobilized she can make a save to end that condition, even if it doesn't normally allow a save.

✓ **Dancing Lantern Blaster** (weapon)
Beside her floats a strange carbine built around a glass lantern. She glances at it, and flames of different colors burn within for a moment before it unleashes an arcane bolt.

Once each round on her turn, Lya can make the following attack without spending an action. This attack does not provoke opportunity attacks, but she cannot target creatures adjacent to her. The blaster can be targeted independently, but is unaffected by area or close attacks or any sort of static damage effect. It has Lya's defenses and 65 hit points.

Effect: Lya chooses an energy type of damage for the weapon to deal each time she fires it—acid, cold, fire, force, lightning, necrotic, psychic, or thunder
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +28 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+15 damage, or 4d6+19 on a crit.

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); +28 vs. AC
Hit: 4d8+19 damage.
Miss: Half damage.

▸ **Whirlwind Withdraw** ✦ At-Will
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. In the chaos of her attack she slips through an opening in your defenses and flies to a more defensible location.

Effect: Lya uses *exceptional duelist* against each enemy adjacent to her, then shifts 2 squares.

✓ **Reality Wound** (fire, weapon) ✦ Recharge when first bloodied
Her sword, impossibly sharp, seems to leave a gash in the world itself. Tongues of flame seep from the wound.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +28 vs. AC
Hit: 4d8+19 damage, and one square of the target's space Lya can reach becomes a zone until the end of the encounter. A creature that enters or ends its turn in that zone takes 20 fire damage.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Infernal Wrath of the Jierre Bloodline** (fire) ✦ Recharge when first bloodied
When you strike her, and her ghostly skin blackens and cracks with seams of molten stone. She grits in anger and regains control of her form, channeling the heat directly at you.

Trigger: A creature within 10 squares hits Lya.
Effect (No Action): The triggering creature takes 2d6+10 fire damage and takes ongoing 20 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)
Her sword's mechanism is as much a spirit as she is, but when she flicks a button on its guard, its teeth grind with blinding speed.

Trigger: Lya damages an enemy with this weapon and afterward the target is bloodied.
Effect (No Action): The weapon shrieks as its bladed teeth saw back and forth. 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 +22, Athletics +18, Bluff +28, Diplomacy +20

Str	14 (+13)	**Dex**	23 (+17)	**Wis**	14 (+13)
Con	12 (+12)	**Int**	18 (+15)	**Cha**	18 (+15)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Primordial

Draconic Witchoil Golem Level 21 Elite Brute
Huge shadow animate (construct) **XP** 6400

HP 360; **Bloodied** 180 **Initiative** +10
AC 33, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 27 **Perception** +15
Speed 5 Darkvision
Resist necrotic 10
Saving Throws +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

▸ **Hulking Beast**
The steel-skinned behemoth claws across the deck on four articulated legs. Its belly rumbles and steam coughs up from pipes along its back, reminiscent of wings. A pair of vents along its segmented abdomen angle downward.

When the golem is subjected to forced movement, after the movement it can shift 2 squares.

☼ **Bleak Aura** (necrotic) ✦ Aura 3
Wailing spirits coil around the golem and drift across the deck.

Creatures that enter or end their turn in the aura take 15 necrotic damage. Undead creatures in the aura instead heal 15 hit points. (The golem can suppress or activate the aura as a minor action.)

Standard Actions

Witchoil Headbutt (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The head at the end of its stubby neck has no mouth, but when it slams its face into you, black oil sloshes through eye sockets onto your skin.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +26 vs. AC

Hit: 2d12+7 damage, and the target takes ongoing 15 necrotic damage (save ends).

Pouncing Claw ✦ At-Will, Basic

Its forelimb swings with ratcheting clicks as it slashes you and pins you to the ground.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +26 vs. AC

Hit: 2d12+20 damage, and the target is knocked prone and grabbed (Escape DC 26). While grabbed it cannot stand up, but the golem cannot move the target when it moves.

Tail Flick ✦ At-Will

Metal clangs somewhere inside its hips as a mechanism sweeps its tail back and forth.

Attack: Close blast 3 (creatures in blast); +28 vs. AC

Hit: 4d12+10 damage, and the golem pushes the target 3 squares.

Attack Routine ✦ At-Will

Effect: The golem uses any two of *witchoil headbutt, pouncing claw*, and *tail flick*. *Tail flick*'s blast cannot include any of the targets of the other attack.

Close Quarters Rocketry (fire) ✦ Recharge 5-6

The vents along its flanks erupt with fire, engulfing a huge swath. The force propels the massive construct through the air.

Attack: Close burst 3 (creatures in burst); +26 vs. Reflex

Hit: 6d6+10 fire damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the golem's next turn. The target gains ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

Miss: Half damage.

Effect: The golem flies 10 squares, then uses *pouncing claw*.

Str	23 (+16)	**Dex**	10 (+10)	**Wis**	20 (+15)
Con	20 (+15)	**Int**	4 (+7)	**Cha**	10 (+10)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

Aftermath

A defeated Lya discorporates, but will return to the ghost council in a few days. If the party sinks the flagship, the Danorans think better of tussling with She Who Writhes and retreat. Once the fey titan has done her fair share of damage, Beshela dives into the sea and tells her mistress that Risur's monarch has fled to the land. The kraken withdraws, but continues to terrorize the seas around Risur in the coming months.

The party has a chance to get close to Governor's Island and see the shield protecting the fort, which glows brighter as the lighthouse within activates. A sustained cannon barrage (or the *Coaltongue*'s brand) can crack a hole in the wall, though the party will need to be prepared to move through quickly. They might bring some soldiers or other allies with them, but the shield recloses rapidly, and waiting for another barrage to create a new opening gives Stanfield time to activate the lighthouse, which will turn the entire city against the party.

Stanfields' Stand

Social. Real-Time. Level 22.

Yes, the apostrophe is supposed to be there. One of Governor Stanfield's incarnations converses with the party before they attack.

The Governor's Island has an outer government district surrounded by a modest wall. Inside that, heavier walls defend the Governor's Island Fortress, and in its center is the forty-foot-high keep surrounded by a twenty-foot-deep dry moat. Once the party finds a way to crack the shield protecting the fort and get inside, they find the fort's main doors open, the courtyard and interior buildings seemingly abandoned, except for the central keep.

A second, smaller dome covers the roof of the keep. Translucent, it reveals several pillar-like structures of some sort, emitting beams of differently-colored light that generally converge on a taller structure that resembles a lighthouse. Every few moments the beams angle away from the lighthouse, change colors, then swing back. Each time they do, another star falls out of the night sky.

Then a single figure approaches them from a nearby smithy. It's Roland Stanfield, but not the governor the party knows.

Framing What is to Come

This Stanfield has a normal skin tone, and doesn't have the flat-colored eyes and lined skin of a deva. He wears plain grey clothes and a silver fish-hook necklace, but there is a soft glow about him. If given the chance, he explains that he was the first Roland Stanfield, who fought in the Second Victory and witnessed Srasama's fall. Possessed of a bit more swagger and a bit less serene detachment than the current Stanfield, he describes himself as 'the conscientious objector,' the only one of Stanfield's past lives who objects to the Obscurati's plan.

The current governor has manifested a dozen past lives into physical form, but in a desire to be honest to himself, he has allowed this incarnation to speak against him. This Stanfield entreats the party to stop his newer self. It was hubris of man that led to the Great Malice, and hubris will spell disaster for this great design as well.

Or, at least that what this incarnation claims. In truth, all the Stanfields are united, and this earliest version is simply stalling and gathering information, since Stanfield is aware of everything his incarnations perceive. An Insight check (DC 38) realizes his ploy. Otherwise, the original Stanfield talks for a few minutes, offering deceptive advice—destroying the lighthouse will reverse the Obscurati's changes, Stanfield is weakest if you destroy his other incarnations in order from earliest to most recent, and Nicodemus himself will be arriving soon with the colossus to make Flint the capital of his new world.

This incarnation claims he is not permitted to harm his other incarnations, and that he has sworn off violence altogether. He'll accompany the party if they ask, but will wait to betray them until they reach the top of the tower. His stats are the same as a Holy Warrior Incarnation (page 278).

Miscellanea

Stanfield needs time to complete his ritual and attune the whole of Risur to the planar traits of the Obscurati's new world order. Keep the timeline flexible, so that the party inevitably arrives with only about ten minutes to spare. However, if they sit and wait and refuse to press ahead, Stanfield will finish, causing everyone in the nation — except for a few high-level or strong-willed individuals — to hold off on fighting until they give talking a chance. The party will find themselves without allies and possibly bereft of some of their powers. See the sidebar New World Order.

If the party explores, they can find a few members of the fort's maintenance staff in hiding. All the defenders have consolidated into the keep. The keep has no windows, only scattered arrow slits, including three directly over the entrance door, through which light sneaks.

Parties who want to harken back to adventure one can find the fort's sewer system and try crawling up the drainage into the keep's latrine, arriving in Area B.

NEW WORLD ORDER

More detailed rules of the magical nature of the new world will be presented in Adventure Ten, *Godmind*, but when the Obscurati ritual is complete, the following changes affect reality. This probably happens after the party thwarts Stanfield and a star strikes the keep, but it might happen earlier if they wait too long.

- Gold no longer blocks teleportation. Flight magic can last more than five minutes.
- Everyone gets a +5 bonus to Diplomacy checks if they use rational appeals rather than emotional ones. Everyone takes a -5 penalty to Insight and Intimidate checks.
- Everyone automatically stabilizes when unconscious and heals to 1 hit point after a minute. You have to deliver a coup de grace to finish someone. You get a +5 bonus to Endurance checks against disease and saves against poison.
- Every creature with intelligence 3 or greater can teleport within line of sight as a move action once every five minutes, but only to places it has been since the nature of the world changed. This ability cannot cross the border into a privately-claimed area, without permission. This new ability is not apparent, and likely will only be discovered by chance, unless the party paid close attention to the Ob's plans in adventure seven.
- Eladrin lose their racial ability to teleport via the Dreaming, but their attacks deal full damage against insubstantial creatures. They of course do gain the line-of-sight teleportation ability everyone has.
- Deva who die reincarnate one last time, but as a different race or creature, appropriate to how they lived their life. Stanfield, for instance, will reincarnate as a rakshasa due to his ongoing deception.
- Because magic functions differently, people cannot use any magical powers until they learn the new planar physics. In the short term, no character can use any arcane, divine, primal, psionic, or shadow powers.

Lightning Strike Rescue Op

Action. Tactical. Level 25.

The party tries to save the day, and discover Stover Delft has been replaced by a doppelganger.

When Governor Stanfield ordered the island evacuated, he kept a contingent of soldiers and warned them that a group of RHC agents had become traitors. Stover Delft (rather, his doppelganger) corroborated this. The soldiers don't initially trust the party, but if they're convincing, if the Delft doppelganger is revealed as an imposter, or if they leave the soldiers alive long enough to hear Stanfield's diatribe about Risur, they may turn to the party's side.

Otherwise, this battle could be overwhelming.

Keep Exterior

The drawbridge over the moat is withdrawn up when the party arrives (resist 5 all, 100 hp, Break DC 35). Behind it a steel-reinforced set of wooden double doors (resist 8 all, 150 hp, Break DC 37) and a steel portcullis (resist 20 all, 50 hp, Break DC 32, but only providing cover, since attacks can pass through it) block the entrance. The reinforced stone walls (resist 10 all, 500 hp, Break DC 40) only have three arrow slits, directly over the entry door, each lined with interior gold wire to prevent teleportation. However, if the party waits five minutes until Stanfield completes his ritual, the golden ward will no longer function due to altered planar physics.

Three levers inside the door at Area A lower the draw bridge, open the doors, and raise the portcullis.

A magical shield (resist 50 all, 200 hp, regenerates 50 hp/round) covers the roof and all parts of the building's exterior higher than thirty feet.

Keep Interior

Inside the keep, if the party used massive firepower to break the magical shield around the fortress, scatter thick chunks of squares with debris, creating difficult terrain. The ritual in Area H creates a pillar of lightning that rises through area N up to the ceiling, brightly illuminating the building. It causes the internal rooms to cast sharp shadows. Any PC trained in Arcana immediately realizes that the shield overhead is powered by that beam.

Last Line of Defense

- 1 Conspirator Incarnation
- 2 Sorcerer Incarnations
- 4 Swordsman Incarnations
- 6 Risuri Elite Squads
- 1 Doppel-Delft
- 1 Staircase Mimic

Seven of Stanfield's incarnations wait here:

- One swordsman, leading the soldiers from just south of the barricade in area A;
- One conspirator atop the roof at area N, acting as a target;
- Two more swordsmen hiding south of the two central pillars, invisible (thanks to the magic of loremaster incarnation upstairs) and ready to ambush PCs who blunder too close;
- A swordsman waiting in room F;
- A sorcerer overseeing the ritual in area H; and
- Another sorcerer providing defensive magic from atop area K.

Three squads of marines (each consisting of a dozen men) defend the ground floor—one on the arrow slit overwatch in Area J, one behind the entrance barricade at Area A, and the other in room E. Another three squads provide fire from the roofs of the rooms—one each atop areas K, L, and M. Additionally, the doppel-Delft commands from atop area L.

Finally, the staircase at area D is a giant mimic. It doesn't attack until someone steps on it.

Risuri Elite Squad Level 19 Goon Soldier
Large natural humanoid (human, swarm) **XP** 1200

HP 90; **Bloodied** 45 **Initiative** +12
AC 35, **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 30 **Perception** +9
Speed 5
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks
Vulnerable 10 against close and area attacks

Traits

▸ **Large Unit**

The squad consists of a dozen soldiers working in tandem, filling 4 contiguous spaces. It can move through any opening an individual could move through.

When the squad is bloodied, it is dazed. When reduced to 0 hit points, the surviving soldiers flee or surrender.

Standard Actions

✓ **Close Quarters Combat** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
A mix of quick holds, warhammer shoves, cold iron daggers, and aggressive dogpiling.
Effect: Make the following attack against four targets. If used as an opportunity attack, only target the triggering creature.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +24 vs. AC
Hit: 22 damage, and the squad slides the target 1 square. If the target was hit by an opportunity attack, its movement stops.

⊛ **Carbine Fusillade** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Area burst 1 within 30 (creatures in burst); +24 vs. AC
Hit: 22 damage, or 27 damage on a critical hit.
Load standard.

Minor Actions

✧ **Druidic Support** ✦ At-Will (1/round)
The squad's druid provides magical support.
Effect: The druid can send a message via a small magically-conjured animal, or can create a bank of fog in area burst 3 within 20, or call down a bolt of lightning.
Attack: Area burst 1 within 20; +22 vs. Reflex
Hit: 12 lightning damage.

Str 13 (+10) **Dex** 12 (+10) **Wis** 14 (+11)
Con 11 (+9) **Int** 10 (+9) **Cha** 10 (+9)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Doppelganger Agent Level 23 Goon Lurker
Medium natural humanoid (shapechanger) **XP** 2400

HP 87; **Bloodied** 43 **Initiative** +22
AC 37, **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 33 **Perception** +14
Speed 6

Traits

▸ **Blend In**
Try as you might to hit him, you keep losing sight of him amid the chaos of battle, and your attacks land elsewhere.
While the doppelganger is adjacent to at least one other creature, when an attack targets it, it can make a Stealth check. If it beats the attacker's Passive Perception, the attack instead targets one adjacent other creature.

Standard Actions

✓ **Dagger** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Odd. He has his swordcane in one hand, but fights instead with a dagger.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +28 vs. AC
Hit: 13 damage.

▸ **Imposter Command** ✦ Encounter
"Line 'em up, boys, and fire at will. For Risur, alright? That's how you do it." He doesn't sound very enthusiastic.
Effect: The doppelganger chooses a target it can see. Its allies gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls against that target until the end of the doppelganger's next turn.

✓ **Assassin Strike** (necrotic, weapon) ✦ Recharge when the doppelganger uses *vanish*
The dagger digs into your skin, and your flesh revolts against you, changing shape to crawl away from your bone.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +28 vs. AC
Hit: 13 damage plus 50 necrotic damage.

▸ **Vanish** (illusion) ✦ At-Will
Effect: The doppelganger becomes invisible until the end of its next turn and shifts up to its speed.

Minor Actions

▸ **Alter Shape** (illusion, polymorph) ✦ At-Will
Delft's face dissolves into something fish-eyed, gray-skinned, and angular. Then the creature takes another man's face.
Effect: The doppelganger alters its physical form to appear as a Medium humanoid and changes the appearance of its clothing and gear until it uses alter shape again or until it drops to 0 hit points. To assume a specific individual's form, the doppelganger must have seen that individual. Other creatures can make a DC 40 Insight check to discern that the form is a disguise.

Skills Bluff +22, Insight +19, Stealth +19

Str 11 (+11) **Dex** 25 (+18) **Wis** 16 (+14)
Con 22 (+17) **Int** 13 (+12) **Cha** 23 (+17)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Staircase Mimic Level 21 Brute
Gargantuan aberrant magical beast **XP** 3200

HP 200; **Bloodied** 100 **Initiative** +12
AC 35, **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 30 **Perception** +9
Speed 5

Traits

▸ **Ambush**
The staircase undulates beneath you, and then the flight below you and the one above sprout teeth as they swing and snap shut upon you. The staircase is alive!
The staircase mimic is indistinguishable from a spiral staircase until interacted with. If spat upon or poked with a stick, a Perception check (DC 27) detects the reflexive change of its skin, revealing something is unusual about it. While disguised, it has resist 15 all.

The mimic deals an extra 20 damage against foes who are caught by surprise by its attack.

Standard Actions

✓ **Slam** ✦ At-Will, Basic
The staircase detaches from the ceiling and swings at you like an immense flail. Sticky secretions and tiny tentacles grasp you, holding you fast to its body.
Attack: Melee 5 (one creature); +26 vs. AC
Hit: 3d12+20 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 35) and pulled 4 squares adjacent to the mimic.

✓ **Ravening Maw** (acid) ✦ At-Will
It splits lengthwise and sprouts teeth, dropping you into a mouth that wasn't there a moment ago.
Effect: Make the following attack against each valid target. (The defenders know not to stand close to the mimic.)
Attack: Melee 1 (creature standing on or grabbed by the mimic); +26 vs. AC
Hit: 3d12+20 damage, and the target is swallowed whole. While swallowed it takes ongoing 20 acid damage and is squeezed. It can escape by climbing out of the mouth (Escape DC 40), or if an ally pries the mouth open (Athletics DC 30) and pulls them out, or if they deal at least 50 points of damage to the mimic from inside, opening a hole to fall out through.

Minor Actions

▸ **Shapeshift** (polymorph) ✦ At-Will (1/round)

Wait, that twenty-foot-high mural wasn't there a moment ago.

Effect: The mimic assumes one of the following forms without changing its size. It remains in the chosen form until it uses this power again.

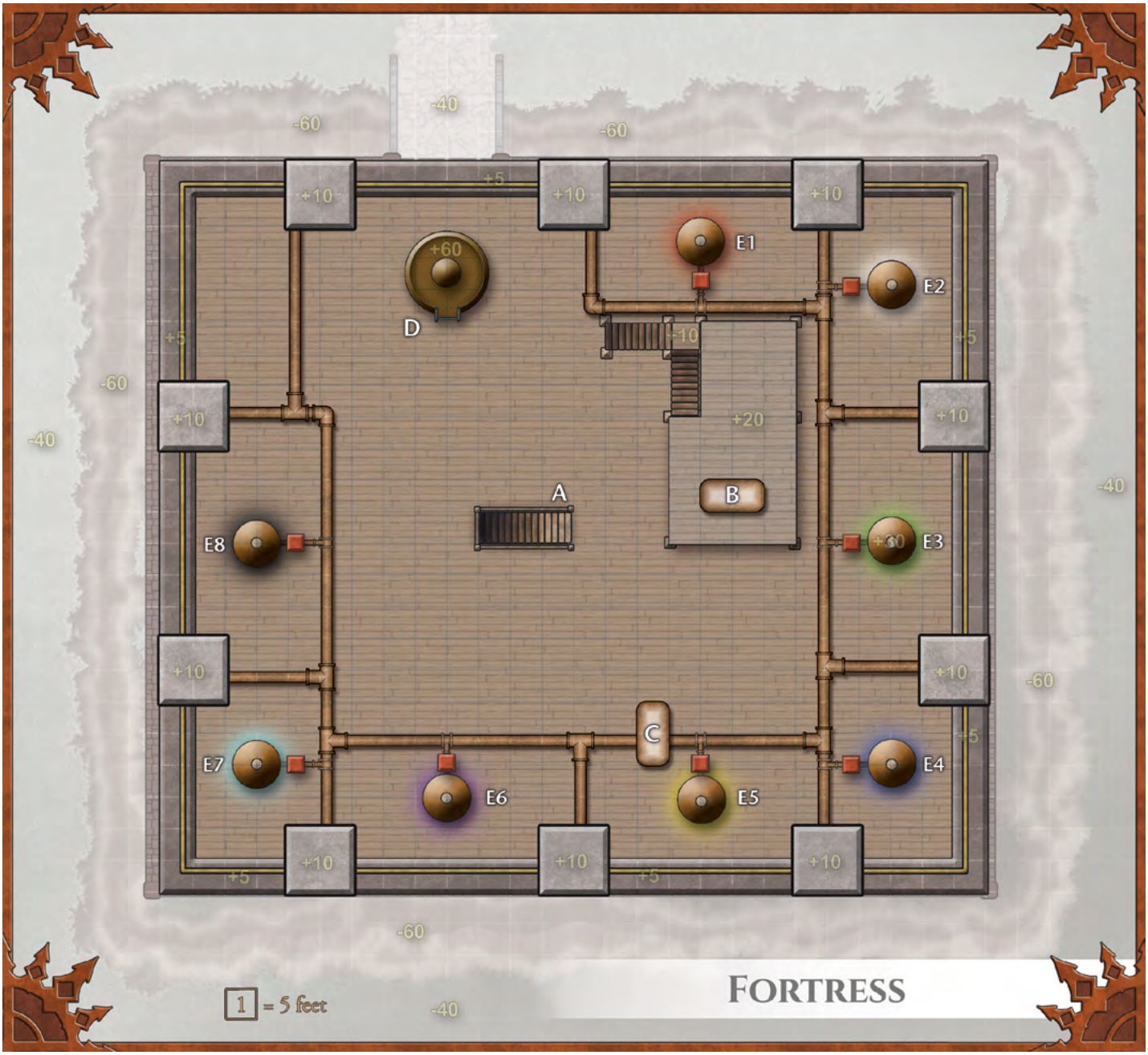
Ooze Form: The mimic becomes an ooze. When it squeezes while in this form, it moves its full speed rather than half speed, it doesn't take the -5 penalty to attack rolls, and it doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.

Object Form: While in this form, the mimic has resist 15 to all damage, is immobilized, and cannot attack.

Skills Stealth +17

Str	28 (+19)	**Dex**	14 (+12)	**Wis**	14 (+12)
Con	20 (+15)	**Int**	4 (+7)	**Cha**	4 (+7)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** understands Primordial



Stanfield Incarnations

Stanfield has three varieties of incarnations in this encounter. All these incarnations have the following traits.

Traits

▸ **Astral Majesty**

The weaker you are, the harder it is for you to approach him.

Stanfield and all his incarnations have a +1 to all defenses against bloodied creatures.

Old Injury

He clutches his back as he falls, and blood slicks his hand when he pulls it away.

Whenever Stanfield or one of his incarnations is knocked prone, it gains ongoing 5 damage until the end of the encounter. Each incarnation can only have one instance of this ongoing damage.

Non-Actions

▸ **Memory of a Dozen Lifetimes** ✦ Encounter

The tracings on his skin flash, and he moves with sudden clarity.

Effect: The incarnation adds 1d6 to a d20 roll after rolling and determining what the result would be.

Skills Arcana +22, Bluff +29, Diplomacy +22, Insight +22

Str	12 (+12)	**Dex**	8 (+10)	**Wis**	22 (+17)
Con	22 (+17)	**Int**	22 (+17)	**Cha**	22 (+17)

Alignment Unaligned

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Primordial

Conspirator Incarnation Level 22 Lurker
Medium immortal humanoid (deva) **XP** 2800
HP 160; **Bloodied** 80 **Initiative** +14
AC 36, **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 34 **Perception** +17
Speed 8
Resist necrotic 15, radiant 15

Standard Actions

⊗ **Deceptive Flourish** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
Flourishing a pair of daggers, he fights not to harm but to deflect your attacks.
Attack: Melee 1 or Ranged 3/6 (one creature); +27 vs. AC
Hit: 2d4+20 damage, and the target is slid 1 square and knocked prone.

✧ **Rebounding Trick** (necrotic, illusion) ✦ At-Will
Sure, he's tricked you for a year, but you've got him cornered now.
Effect: The incarnation creates an illusory duplicate of himself over his current space, and simultaneously turns invisible until the end of his next turn. He shifts 3 squares.

Any creature that interacts with the duplicate (such as by attacking it) can make an Insight check (DC 29) to realize it is fake.

The duplicate shares the incarnation's defenses. Record the amount of damage dealt to the duplicate. Then, at the end of the incarnation's next turn, the duplicate vanishes, unleashing a black bolt of necrotic energy at a nearby enemy. Make the following attack.

Attack: Close burst 3 (one creature in burst); +25 vs. Will
Hit: The target takes necrotic damage equal to what the duplicate took.

Sorcerer Incarnation Level 22 Artillery
Medium immortal humanoid (deva) **XP** 2800
HP 160; **Bloodied** 80 **Initiative** +10
AC 34, **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 36 **Perception** +17
Speed 6
Resist necrotic 15, radiant 15

Standard Actions

⊘ **Empowered Staff** (force, weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The staff flashes with arcane might and hurls you away.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +27 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+20 force damage, and the target is pushed 6 squares.

✲ **Alkahest Orb** (acid) ✦ At-Will
Little known fact: Heward Sechim's alkahest was used to etch runes into the colossus's otherwise impenetrable skin.
Attack: Area burst 1 within 20 (creatures in burst); +25 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6 acid damage, and the target takes ongoing 15 acid damage (save ends).

✓ **Arcane Excavation** ✦ Encounter
In the early days, Stanfield would disintegrate the interior of Cauldron Hill to make room for the colossus construction facility.
Effect: The incarnation gathers arcane energy. Until the end of his next turn, he gains an aura 1. Enemies that enter or end their turn in the aura take 10 damage. At the beginning of his next turn he makes the following attack.
Attack: Ranged 40 (one creature); +25 vs. Reflex
Hit: 4d10+20 damage, and the target takes ongoing 20 damage (save ends).
Effect: Unattended objects within 5 ft. of the target are destroyed.

Swordsman Incarnation Level 20 Soldier
Medium immortal humanoid (deva) **XP** 2800
HP 160; **Bloodied** 80 **Initiative** +10
AC 36, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 32 **Perception** +17
Speed 6
Resist necrotic 15, radiant 15

Traits

▸ **Center of Attention**
He gets in your face, making it hard to threaten anyone else.
Attacks against allies adjacent to the incarnation take a -2 penalty.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Rapier** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+20 damage.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Duelist's Pursuit** ✦ At-Will, 1/round
He keeps pace with you.
Trigger: A creature adjacent to the incarnation moves.
Effect (No Action): Stanfield shifts an equal distance +2 squares.

Skills Arcana +22, Bluff +29, Diplomacy +22, Insight +22

Str	12 (+12)	**Dex**	8 (+10)	**Wis**	22 (+17)
Con	22 (+17)	**Int**	22 (+17)	**Cha**	22 (+17)

Alignment Unaligned
Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Primordial

Avoiding a TPK

If the party is looking bad and there are still plenty of enemies, feel free to have reinforcements arrive. Gale might have conjured a mighty lightning bolt to crack the shield, allowing her and Asrabey to come through, or Lauryn Cyneburg might have figured out the arcane resonance of the shield and managed to teleport through with a few allies. If this happens, though, try to tie it into the party's own actions, or what they ordered their allies to handle.

Terrain

The interior of the keep has a 40-ft. ceiling, with a lot of open space. Several one-storey buildings fill the room, and a grand staircase (actually a mimic) spirals up to the roof. (It ate the original staircase, and now access is only via magic.)

A. **Entrance Barricade.** Various furniture bits form 5-ft.-high walls (Break DC 20).
B. **Toilets.** Finely-appointed bathrooms for men and women.
C. **Offices.** The soldiers have been using these rooms as uncomfortable barracks for the past day. A ladder in the southwest hall leads to the roof of these buildings.
D. **Grand Staircase.** Actually a mimic.
E. **Conference Room.** Plenty of tables for minor cover. A staircase leads to the roof of this building.
F. **Quartermaster Office.** A staircase leads to the roof.
G. **Supplies.** There's enough here to survive several weeks worth of siege.

H. Banquet Hall. It has been adapted to a ritual chamber. The door is enchanted with a glyph that summons a serpent to poison and paralyze an intruder. **Perception DC** 25. **Attack:** Melee 1 (one creature); +27 vs. AC. **Hit:** 10 poison damage and the target is stunned (save ends).

Inside, Stover Delft has been placed on the central table, while the other four tables have ritual components. Since Delft—as a high-ranking agent of the king—is imbued with some power of Risur's rites of rulership, the ritual is perpetually draining his life force to power the shields around the fortress and over the top of the keep. Lightning streams from his chest through the ceiling and up into an arcane capacitor on the roof.

Ending the ritual safely requires four characters to simultaneously disassemble the ritual components. Each table requires a different check—Arcana, Heal, Nature, and Religion, all DC 25. Failing even a single check causes Delft's heart to stop, and the ritual to go out of control. **Attack:** Area burst 3 (creatures in burst); +25 vs. Reflex. **Hit:** 30 lightning damage.

On success or failure, the shields over the keep and the fortress vanish. (At this point, if the party had allies on the ready just outside the fort, they can rush inside. Otherwise, even if the party takes a short rest, it takes more than five minutes for reinforcements to get onto the island and into the keep.)

I. Kitchen. Stanfield has used this as a makeshift prison. If the party has any associates whom you'd like to keep as hostages, they're here.

J. Arrow Slit Overwatch. One of the squads attacks from here as the party approaches, though they can only target a single foe with *carbine fusillade* when firing through the arrow slits.

K. Rooftops. Each rooftop has a 5-ft.-high stone wall to provide cover. Planks placed between the buildings act as bridges, but could be kicked away to stymie enemies.

L. More Rooftops. As above.

M. Even More Rooftops.

N. Over the Ritual. The beam of lightning that crackles into the ceiling is blindingly bright, and attacks against creatures within 2 squares of the glowing area take a -2 penalty. A creature that enters or ends its turn in the area of the lightning takes 30 lightning damage.

Deconstruction

In the midst of the battle, while the fake Delft is shouting orders and the soldiers are shooting the party, the various Stanfield incarnations have a speech prepared, which they read in the same calm, judgemental tone regardless of how much peril they are in. Every incarnation talks at the same time (except conspirator incarnations who are trying to hide). Each incarnation glows slightly, making it clear that they aren't the real Stanfield.

Each paragraph takes about a round for him to say.

"I know you've recently dealt with Catherine Romana and Lya Jierre, so you might be tired of speeches, but we intelligentsia like to explain ourselves. Constables, I hope you've considered whether the cause you fight for is worthy.

"Consider Risur. It has been at near-constant war for the past five hundred years. It has been justified as self defense, but except from this latest conflict we were always the superior force. Ber's armies were savage and untrained. Danor lacked magic. In Elfaivar we removed unwanted survivors to claim our colonies.

"Here in Flint, among the government who else but I expressed concern for the plight of the workers? People died to protest the injustice they suffered, but did the king ever speak out in their favor? No, he remained silent so that the industry necessary for his war machines would flourish.

"So then we come to you, brave constables. How wonderfully strong you are. By our last census, about fifty thousand people work in the factories of Parity Lake. Their per capita annual income is about 700 silver. Right now you're casually wearing enchanted items that cost more than the entire district earns in a year. Of course, that's ignoring the fabulous prosperity of the owners.

"You were present during Aodhan's announcement that he intended to seek peace with Danor, a speech given from the deck of the most powerful weapon in the world. The hypocrisy was astounding, but what unsettled me most was that he seemed blind to it.

"This nation is a source of greater misery than any other in five centuries, and you are the hand that wields the scourge. Set it down, constables, before the world changes and discovers what villains you truly are."

During his speech, the Risuri soldiers don't seem to get it at first, but by his third round some of them stop fighting. In the fourth round they all stop, realizing they're not serving the loyal servant of the king they thought the governor was. They look to the party for guidance.

Aftermath

Once the party has secured the room (and killed the staircase), they have a chance to rest and figure out how to reach the roof. Simple options include teleportation, levitation, flight, or using the monarch's ability to just extrude a new staircase of rough rock from the earth itself.

Cosmic Power

Action. Tactical. Level 24.

Stanfield operates an eldritch machine, trying to sway Risur to the Ob's control before the party can stop him.

The fall of the shield panics Stanfield, and he shifts his plans from finishing the ritual to preparing to kill the party. If they destroy the lighthouse, all his work will be for naught. He takes cover east of the control panel on the raised platform (Area B), while his four last incarnations wait beside the Area D lighthouse (holy warrior), the E7 lantern (loremaster), the Area C capacitor (politician), and the E4 lantern (technologist).

Stanfield doesn't have another speech prepared. Honestly he thought he would have killed them by now. As the battle progresses and his incarnations are destroyed, his serene façade cracks, red seams of light flicker across the lines that trace his body, and he starts to lose his temper.

The Eldritch Machine

- Roland Stanfield
- Holy Warrior Incarnation
- Loremaster Incarnation
- Politician Incarnation
- Technologist Incarnation

Terrain

Five-foot high walls line the top of the tower, with occasional ten-foot-high adornments. Between these, eight brass lanterns glow different colors, fed a stream of gas that is refined by the red devices adjacent to them. The lanterns emit beams, which start the encounter all aimed directly at the central lighthouse.

A pipeline runs three feet off the ground at that awkward "do I climb over it or crawl under it" height. The raised platform has control switches to turn lanterns on and off, but Stanfield can manipulate them telekinetically. He can also telekinetically change the aim of the lanterns.

By the time the party arrives, the capacitor that received energy that was drawn from Delft is drained and no longer creates the forcefield.

A. Staircase Entrance. To Stanfield's dismay, there's no trap door to cover the stairs.

B. Control Platform. The panel has a lever for each of the lanterns, allowing them to be turned on or off as a minor action. You have to squeeze the handle to move the lever, so it's not possible to just shove multiple at once.

C. Capacitor. It feeds energy to the lanterns, and still has sufficient storage for the ritual. It just can't create a forcefield any longer. If damaged (Resist 10 all, HP 50), it struggles to provide sufficient power. Each round at initiative count 0, roll 1d8 to determine one lantern that doesn't work for that round.

D. Wayfarer's Lighthouse. Designed to help transition Flint, and by proxy the entirety of Risur, easily into the new metaphysical reality the Ob have created, this lighthouse is enchanted to resist attacks. As long as it is being fed energy from at least one lantern it is invulnerable.

E. Lanterns. Each channels a different plane of energy. The complicated part of the process that slowly replaced one plane with another is over. Now each represents one of the new worlds the Ob is linking reality to. Each lantern has Resist 10 all and HP 100. A creature adjacent to the lantern can spend a standard action to reaim its beam, using a pair of crank wheels.

1. **Jiese, the Plane of Fire.** Aspect of inspiration.
2. **Perlocus, the Plane of Air.** Aspect of speech.
3. **Mojang, the Plane of Life.** Aspects of artifice and craft.
4. **Ostea, the Plane of Water.** Aspect of healing.
5. **Ratios, the Plane of Earth.** Aspect of logic.
6. **Fourmyle, the Plane of Space.** Aspect of empowerment.
7. **Illocus, the Plane of Time.** Aspect of expression.
8. **Av, the Plane of Death.** Aspects of dreams and mirrors.

Roland Stanfield — Level 24 Controller
Medium immortal humanoid (deva) — **XP** 6050

HP 225; **Bloodied** 112 — **Initiative** Special
AC 38, **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 36 — **Perception** +18
Speed 6
Resist necrotic 15, radiant 15
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 2

Traits

▸ **Living Memories**

Stanfield is linked to his previous incarnations. Each incarnation physically resembles Stanfield, but is slightly translucent and wields equipment appropriate to its talents.

Stanfield acts at Initiative count 35, and the four incarnations in this encounter act at 30, 25, 20, and 15. (If the incarnation of Stanfield's first life is also present, it acts on initiative count 10.) Each of them takes a full turn at that initiative count, and in most ways they act like independent creatures with their own powers detailed below. Only the real Stanfield can use action points.

Whenever the real Governor Stanfield would take damage or be affected by a condition, he can choose to have his nearest active incarnation suffer that damage or condition instead. Physical objects (like entangling vines) can still impeded Stanfield's movement, but he can shunt supernatural effects to his other lives.

Whenever one of Stanfield's incarnations is destroyed, the glowing lines on the real Stanfield's skin dim, and he coughs up a bit of blood. If the central lantern is destroyed, the magic letting him manifest all his incarnations ends; all the remaining incarnations fade away, and Stanfield collapses but survives (helpless) long enough to have a final word.

Standard Actions

Memory Leech (charm, psychic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The tracings on his skin glow blue as he holds out a hand to deter you. You briefly share the memories of one of Stanfield's past lives, but watch as one of his incarnations uses one of your own attacks.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +27 vs. Will
Hit: 2d6+10 psychic damage, and the target grants combat advantage and takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends both). Stanfield or one of his active incarnations may immediately use one of the target's at-will attack powers, using the target's statistics.

Obscurati Charm (cold) ✦ At-Will
With just a glance he conjures a miasma of darkness around you. When it passes, everyone has vanished, but you still hear the muted sounds of battle.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +27 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6+20 cold damage, and the target treats all other creatures as invisible (save ends). While affected by this, the target is invisible to its own allies.

Dark Rites (force) ✦ Encounter
He seems to grow in size and majesty, as if you stand in the presence of a cruel king.
Attack: Close burst 3 (enemies in burst); +25 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d6+20 force damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares.

Triggered Actions

Dying Breath
He coughs and clutches his back as he collapses. Blood pools around him, and his skin drains of color, but he looks skyward as his eyes darken with death.
"You might have saved Risur," he says, "but Nicodemus will complete the ritual on Axis Island.
"It was a grand folly. Not my folly, though. Yours. Death has not stopped me before, and I swear even if the whole nation resists, it will not stop me now."
He smiles and releases a dying breath. Everything is growing steadily brighter, lit from above, and you glimpse upward at a falling star.
Effect: One round later the roof of the keep is struck by a falling star. Any skyseer present knows this star's name: Mishados, named after an incarnation of Srasama, said to be a healer.
Attack: Area burst 20 (creatures in burst); +33 vs. Reflex
Hit: 100 damage, but the target cannot be reduced below 1 hit point.
Miss: Half damage, but the target cannot be reduced below 1 hit point.

Incarnations

Stanfield has four main varieties of incarnations.

Holy Warrior Incarnation Level 24 Soldier
Medium immortal humanoid (deva) **XP** 6050
HP 175; **Bloodied** 87 **Initiative** 25
AC 40, **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 36 **Perception** +18
Speed 6
Resist necrotic 15, radiant 15

Standard Actions

⊘ **Bastard Sword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Glowing gauntlets give him the strength to swing a pair of oversized swords, defending a wide swath of the battlefield.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +29 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10+10 damage.
Effect: The target is marked until the end of the incarnation's next turn. If the marked creature shifts or attacks a creature other than the warrior incarnation, it provokes an opportunity attack from the warrior incarnation.

▸ **Veteran Swordsmanship** ✦ At-Will
Effect: The warrior incarnation uses *bastard sword* twice.

⟋ **Pursuit Javelin** (weapon, teleporation) ✦ At-Will
He sheathes a sword and hurls a javelin which wasn't in his hand until just now. And just as suddenly, he appears beside you.
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +27 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10+10 damage.
Effect: The warrior incarnation may teleport adjacent to the target.

Loremaster Incarnation Level 24 Artillery
Medium immortal humanoid (deva) **XP** 6050
HP 175; **Bloodied** 87 **Initiative** 30
AC 36, **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 38 **Perception** +18
Speed 6
Resist necrotic 15, radiant 15

Standard Actions

⊘ **Meager Staff** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He swings his staff, more to fend you off than actually harm you.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +29 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+10 damage.

⟋ **Illuminating Revelation** (radiant) ✦ At-Will
He chants, and burning light glows across your body, revealing arteries and organs even through your clothes.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +27 vs. Will
Hit: 3d6+20 radiant damage, and the target has vulnerable 10 all (save ends).

▸ **Shielded Invisibility** (illusion) ✦ At-Will
One of the Stanfields vanishes.
Effect: Stanfield or one of his incarnations turns invisible and gains resist 10 all. This lasts until the incarnation attacks or the loremaster incarnation is destroyed.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Learned Deflection** ✦ At-Will
He chants a counterspell, trying to wrest control of your attack.
Trigger: An enemy deals energy damage to Stanfield or one of his incarnations.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The enemy and the loremaster incarnation make opposed Arcana checks (Stanfield has +23). If the loremaster succeeds, prevent 10 of the damage and deal that damage to the triggering enemy.

Politician Incarnation Level 24 Lurker
Medium immortal humanoid (deva) **XP** 6050
HP 175; **Bloodied** 87 **Initiative** 20
AC 38, **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 36 **Perception** +23
Speed 8
Resist necrotic 15, poison 15, radiant 15

Standard Actions

⊗ **Knife in the Back** (charm, poison, weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He looks unarmed and harmless.
Attack: Melee 1 or Ranged 3/6 (one creature); +29 vs. AC
Hit: 2d4+10 damage, and the target takes ongoing 15 poison damage and is dominated (save ends both). If the target is granting combat advantage, the attack deals an extra 5d8 damage.

⟋ **Distracting Ploy** (charm) ✦ At-Will
He looks vulnerable.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +27 vs. Will
Hit: The target moves its speed in the most direct line possible toward the politician incarnation, and then is dominated until the end of the politician incarnation's next turn.

Technologist Incarnation Level 24 Controller
Medium immortal humanoid (deva) **XP** 6050
HP 175; **Bloodied** 87 **Initiative** 15
AC 38, **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 36 **Perception** +18
Speed 6
Resist necrotic 15, radiant 15

Standard Actions

⊘ **Thunder Shot** (thunder, weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
At point-blank range he fires a strangely-crafted firearm. It blows you back with a deafening burst.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +27 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d8+20 thunder damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares.

⊘ **Lightning Shot** (lightning, weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He adjusts a knob on his weapon and unleashes a blue arc of lightning, which crackles across the ground around you.
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +27 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d8+20 lightning damage.
Miss: If the target is adjacent to a metal surface (like a lantern or pipe), half damage.

✲ **Subrail Strike** ✦ Encounter
He drops a contraption that grows with impossible speed, disgorging a full-sized locomotive engine. You remember that the previous Governor Stanfield helped design the city's subrail network.
Effect: A train, two squares wide and six long, appears adjacent to the technologist incarnation and moves 10 squares in a straight line before vanishing. It must appear in a space not occupied by any creatures, but ignores physical obstructions, since it is just a force projection of a train. Make the following attack.
Attack: Area burst (creatures in train's path); +27 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d20+20 damage and the target is pushed 1 square along the train's path, and 1 square sideways out of its path, then knocked prone.
Miss: Half damage, and the target shifts 1 square to a space out of the train's path.

Shared Abilities

Stanfield and each of his incarnations can use the following abilities.

Traits

▸ **Astral Majesty**

The weaker you are, the harder it is for you to approach him.

Stanfield and all his incarnations have a +1 to all defenses against bloodied creatures.

▸ **Old Injury**

He clutches his back as he falls, and blood slicks his hand when he pulls it away.

Whenever Stanfield or one of his incarnations is knocked prone, it gains ongoing 5 damage until the end of the encounter. Each incarnation can only have one instance of this ongoing damage.

Minor Actions

✲ **Planar Beam** (force) ✦ At-Will, 1/round

He gestures at one of the oversized lanterns, then sweeps his hand. The beam of the lantern turns toward you.

Effect: Stanfield (or his incarnation) chooses an active lantern he can see, and he aims its beam to fill an area burst 1 anywhere within 100 squares. Use your discretion as to whether a lantern's light might be blocked by obstacles. The illuminated area becomes a zone until the lantern is reaimed or the lantern is destroyed. Creatures suffer an effect appropriate to the plane of the chosen lantern for as long as they remain in the zone.

- ✦ *Jiese.* The creature takes 15 fire damage if it enters or starts its turn in the zone.
- ✦ *Perlocus.* The creature cannot take hostile actions against Stanfield or his allies.
- ✦ *Mojang.* Objects in the zone are repaired 50 points of damage at the initiative count 0. Destroyed objects cannot be repaired.
- ✦ *Ostea.* The creature is covered in blood and takes ongoing 10 necrotic damage. Whenever the target takes damage this way, the real Stanfield heals that much damage.
- ✦ *Ratios.* The creature is immobilized.
- ✦ *Fourmyle.* The creature can spend 1 square of movement to teleport to any other zone created by a lantern.
- ✦ *Illocus.* As long as the creature is in the zone, note the types and amounts of damage it takes. At the start of its turn, it takes damage equal to the damage it has taken since the start of its last turn. This damage is cumulative if the target remains in the zone.
- ✦ *Ao.* Objects in the zone take 50 damage at initiative count 0 (ground becomes difficult terrain), as parts of the terrain spiral away, like dust caught in a whirlwind.

Non-Actions

▸ **Memory of a Dozen Lifetimes** ✦ Encounter

The tracings on his skin flash, and he moves with sudden clarity.

Effect: Stanfield (or the incarnation) adds 1d6 to a d20 roll after rolling and determining what the result would be.

Skills Arcana +23, Bluff +30, Diplomacy +23, Insight +23

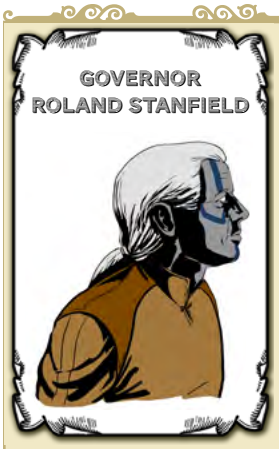
Str	12 (+13)	**Dex**	8 (+11)	**Wis**	22 (+18)
Con	22 (+18)	**Int**	22 (+18)	**Cha**	22 (+18)

Alignment Unaligned

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Primordial

Tactics

The real Stanfield tries to keep the high ground, raining down *Obscurati charms* on whoever seems most resilient among the party. The rest of his incarnations then ignore that constable. The loremaster incarnation then lights up a target, which the holy warrior incarnation attacks. The politician incarnation will try to flank and backstab that target. The technologist incarnation is an opportunist, but prefers to target enemies who try to keep their distance.



Stanfield witnessed the fall of the eladrin goddess Srasama five hundred years ago and died soon thereafter. But he reincarnated, his memories vague and jumbled. He found his way back to his homeland of Risur, settled in Flint, and eventually became the city's governor.

In the centuries since he has died with irregular intervals, and with each rebirth he returned to the city he calls home. He has 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.

A century ago, Nicodemus the Gnostic taught Stanfield a method to conjure forth his past incarnations, learning from them directly and gaining the ability to deploy them in battle. At the same time, he convinced the deva to join the Obscurati as a pivotal, long-term operative who would eventually be rewarded with Risur's crown. Though far from power-hungry, Stanfield has seen centuries of short-sighted leadership, and he is quite certain he could rule better than any mere mortal.

Every Stanfield will, on its round, spend a minor action to telekinetically adjust the beam of one of the lanterns, usually to catch a PC in something dangerous, but if necessary they'll aim a beam back at the lighthouse, use *Mojang* to repair a damaged lantern, or use *Fourmyle* for coordinated tactical maneuvering. If possible, they'll combo *Jiese* and *Ratios* on the same area, to burn a trapped creature slowly to death unless an ally can free them without also entering.

They make sure to always keep at least three beams pointed at the lighthouse, because if the lighthouse ever has no lanterns illuminating it, Stanfield will lose all his powers and his incarnations will all vanish.

Remember, a PC can reaim a lantern as a standard action if they're adjacent to it. Effects like *mage hand* might also work, but it still takes a standard action to control the lantern.

Aftermath

When Stanfield is finally cut down, or when the lighthouse is snuffed, he utters a few dying words, and a star falls directly upon the keep. Its impact levels the building and leaves the party scattered in the debris, but miraculously doesn't kill anyone, except Stanfield.

Depending on your players' mood at this point, you can just keep this as a straight victory. Or if they're riding high and aren't particularly injured, you can throw in the twist. As the party pulls themselves from the rubble, they discover that their magic barely works. Then rocks fall aside as Stanfield rises up, reborn as a rakshasa. (This 'curse' was teased in the eladrin temple in adventure eight.)

Rakshasa Stanfield's eyes glow red, and he stalks after the party, intending to cut them down one by one. Use the stats of a Holy Warrior incarnation, except that he fights with claws, not swords, and no attack can harm him unless it comes from one of the dagger-like shards of the fallen star (the magic item *arsenal of Dhebisu* works as well). A single strike from such a weapon destroys Stanfield utterly, leaving a smoking crater and a clattering, bleached skeleton.

Brave New World

When the dust clears, the sky overhead is no longer dotted with a field of stars, but instead glows with the uneven haze of a charcoal nebula. A mere handful of stars wander the night, and skyseers recognize their energy as matching the lanterns of the lighthouse.

Magic above cantrips and orisons doesn't work, though the mana is still there, just not moving as it once did. Already the PCs can feel something nudging them to behave differently, but they can easily shake it off. Others aren't so adept, and the party quickly discovers citizens of Risur readily trust and listen to strangers.

A bright golden glow rises in the air on the western horizon, then fades a few minutes later. It isn't until more than an hour later that the entire world rumbles with a deafening sound like an explosion, sweeping in from the same direction. A quick calculation of the speed of sound supports any guesses that the explosion occurred on Axis Island.

Any surviving Danoran ships flee, many of them pulled into the deep by She Who Writhes before the kraken withdraws to the wider sea. Atop Cauldron Hill stormclouds gather, but instead of falling rain, the mountain itself starts to erode and float upward, mote by mote. Flint holds its breath, wondering what the new day will bring. But hours pass,

and when the sun should rise, instead the world is greeted only by a patch of the cloudy sky somewhat less dark. The haze there seems to churn ever so slowly, like two gears—immeasurably titanic to be visible at this cosmic distance—grinding between their teeth the heavens themselves.

The new age has dawned.

Onward to Zeitgeist, Act Three

In adventure 10, *Godmind*, the party has to subdue four fey titans before they can safely leave Risur. The new world order turns Asrabey Varal into an enemy of Risur, and he betrays them while trying to commune with She Who Writhes. Benedict Pemberton has captured Axis Island and has critical intelligence, but is blockaded by the Danorans. If the party saves him, he can retrofit the party's ship to be able to fly. The priority then becomes disrupting a gathering in Danor's capital of heads of state and the world's brightest minds, whom Nicodemus intends to turn hostile to Risur. A Gidim expedition force takes advantage of new psychic energy in the world to drive the gathered thinkers mad and create a monstrous psychic gestalt bent on consuming all it deems unworthy.

In adventure 11, *Gorged on Ruins*, while the world slips into decay around them, the party seeks knowledge and magic to let them undo the Obscurati's ritual. Help can be gained by dealing with each of three threats—a Gidim invasion of Ber, a wintry undead army in Drakr, and the execution of gods in Crisillyir awakening ancient evil trapped in the volcano that overlooks Alais Primos. Once they're ready, the party can fly from this world to The Gyre, a celestial phenomenon that devours dying worlds.

In adventure 12, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*, the path to the gyre takes them to Av, the plane of dreams that is slowly dying and drawing the whole world toward annihilation. After saving as many of the fey as they can, the party has to explore the motes of ruined worlds around the Gyre. Undoing the Ob's ritual requires finding new worlds to bind reality to, and each world possesses its own dangers and unique magical traits. Combining the right mix of planes could stabilize the world and save it from a final death, but the Voice of Rot wants to achieve apotheosis by causing the world's end. The party must confront the fey titan at the center of the gyre where dead allies, enemies, and legendary figures join the battle for the fate of the world.

Finally in adventure 13, *Avatar of Revolution*, the party returns to their homeworld and must rally the people of every nation. Their faith and fervor fuel a ritual to give the PCs the strength to defeat the colossus, which the Obscurati have restored. The party battles Nicodemus and the ghost council on Axis Island, all of them imbued with godlike power. Nicodemus would rather see the world enslaved than reject his grand design, but if he is vanquished, the party's hands will guide the course of civilization's next age.

ZEITGEIST Adventure Path

Appendices

APPENDIX A: Technological Revelations

By defeating, capturing, or enlisting Tinker, Risur will get access to many possible technological innovations that might otherwise takes decades to be developed. If you don't want to introduce advanced technology to your campaign, you might re-flavor his innovations as completely magical, or can instead assume that any aid Tinker offers Risur comes over the course of years or decades, not months.

Building the Future

Tinker is demented, and even if given orders he'll draft tons of possible designs, not all of them viable for mass-production. The party might want long-range communication via spark-gap radios and antennae, but Tinker's first design would attach the transmitter to a lightning gun, and use the signals to control exploding three-legged clockwork robots. It takes a more rational mind to ratchet down his grandiose ideas, making Technologist PCs invaluable.

Similarly, if Tinker dies and the party merely manages to collect his mad scribblings of schematics, it will take another genius to figure out which designs should be pursued. Even with his eccentricities, though, Tinker is valuable alive.

Areas of innovation include vehicle tech, personal weapons, and various types of groundwork science.

Seeking Breakthroughs

At the end of adventure six, have the party choose one of the following innovations for Tinker to pursue. At the start of adventure seven, the party must make an Intelligence check and a Wisdom check (DC 20). The result determines whether the innovation is fully operational, or if there remain some kinks to work out.

One PC can make both checks, or two different PCs can make them. A Technologist PC can roll twice and take the better result. If Risur doesn't have access to Tinker, the PCs take a –5 penalty to these checks.

At the end of adventure seven, have the party choose another innovation, which will be ready by the start of adventure eight; and likewise choose an innovation at the end of eight that will be ready at the start of nine. When the party rolls for the effectiveness of a new innovation, they may also roll again for any unfinished prior innovations.

Some innovations have mostly background flavor effects. For instance, the advanced explosives innovation simply mean that Risuri ships will have higher-powered (and thus higher-level and higher-cost) gunnery components than Danoran ships. It doesn't lower the cost, though it offers the chance for secondary innovations.

- ✦ Advanced Explosives
  - *Rockets*
- ✦ Battle Armor
- ✦ Electrical Breakthrough
  - *Spark-Gap Communication*
- ✦ Magic Interference Breakthrough
  - *Analytical Engine*

Advanced Explosives

Risur can load its ships' cannons with explosive rounds (i.e., increase the attack bonus of Risuri ships by +2, with attendant increases in cost). Additionally, PCs can get access to advanced grenades, rocket-propelled grenades, and demolition charges.

Failed Int. The poorly quality-controlled ship weapons sometimes explode before they reach the target. Instead of adding +2 to their attack bonus, add 1d6–4 (roll each round).

Failed Wis. The overly elaborate advanced personal weapons instead have a 25% chance of blasting three rounds in a row, each time doing half the normal damage. Each time they explode, they bounce 2 squares in a random direction.

Analytical Engine

Requires Magic Interference breakthrough. Computers would normally be impossible because magic interferes with such small-scale technological operations, but with the proper research that problem is eliminated. These heavy machines take up 4 squares, but can quickly calculate extreme range weapon trajectories. Risuri ships gain the Extreme Range gunnery enhancement, with attendant increases in cost.

Failed Int. The device fails to take into account the rocking of the firing ship, and so attacks at Long range suffer a penalty of –5 or the ship's speed for that round, whichever is worse.

Failed Wis. The device is massive, taking up 25 squares and requiring a staff of 20 crewmen to operate.

Battle Armor

Similar to Tinker's own battle armor and the experimental steam suit in adventure three, these suits make foot soldiers resilient and dangerous. See the Battle Suit, below.

Failed Int. The suits easily break down. It takes a –5 penalty to the saving throws required after it takes damage.

Failed Wis. The viewport is suitably located for a gnome. Medium creatures take a –5 penalty to Perception checks while inside the suit, and Medium or smaller creatures adjacent to them benefit from concealment.

Battle Suit Level 10 Common

The technicians assure you they've got all the kinks worked out, and that the thrum of the steam engine strapped to your back is meant to be reassuring.

Price: 5,000 gp

Wondrous Item

Property: You can climb into or out of this suit by spending two move actions. The suit is normally 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 needing proficiency.

Power (Encounter): *Standard Action:* The suit activates. It can pick up and wield weapons and implements as easily as you. You can walk, run, climb, and jump, but not swim. Your lifting capacity is quadrupled, your reach increases by 5 feet, and you gain a +2 item bonus to damage rolls with melee attacks.

While wearing the suit you're treated as wearing heavy armor, and your space is 2 squares across.

Whenever an attack hits you, make a saving throw. If you fail 3 saving throws in this way, the steam suit breaks down and must be repaired before it works again. Repairs can be done during an extended rest.

Electrical Breakthrough

In addition to allowing electrical lights and the production of wired power, this innovation gives you lightning prods, lightning guns, and Tinker coils.

Failed Int. If the attack misses, the weapon instead discharges into its wielder, dealing 1[W] damage.

Failed Wis. The weapon requires a 20-pound backpack capacitor that crackles with harmless but awesome looking threads of electricity, like carrying a Tesla coil.

Magic Interference Breakthrough

Precise measurements reveal that ambient magical energies interfere with the operation of complex technological devices (i.e., "gremlins"). Very fine instruments are thus capable of detecting the presence of magic due to the increased failure rate of simple machines. This effectively creates magical detectors, and allows for anti-magic mines.

Failed Int. The devices sometimes register false positives, about once every ten rounds. Fine for detectors, bad for mines.

Failed Wis. The detectors have a magical light to make them easier to read, and so register the presence of magic at all times. This light is integral to the design, and removing it requires a complete rework.

Simple Weapons

Weapon	Prof.	Damage	Range	Price	Weight	Group	Properties
Lightning Prod	+2	2d8 lightning	—	100 gp	5 lb.	Spear	Charged, load standard, two-handed melee
Advanced Grenade	+2	3d6 in area burst 2; miss half	5/10	50 gp	1 lb.	n/a	Brutal 2, high crit, inaccurate, one-handed ranged

Superior Weapons

Weapon	Prof.	Damage	Range	Price	Weight	Group	Properties
Lightning Gun	+2	2d10 lightning	5/10	100 gp	8 lb.	Firearm	Charged, load standard, two-handed ranged
Advanced Rocket-Propelled Grenade Launcher	+2	3d6 in area burst 2; miss half	15/30	1,000 gp	1 lb.	n/a	Load standard, brutal 2, high crit, inaccurate, two-handed ranged

Rockets

Requires Advanced Explosives breakthrough. Risur gets access to rocket weaponry. It is far too large for personal use, but allows for ships to bombard from much farther away than cannons. Warfare is changed forever.

Failed Int. The rockets tend to explode on launch.

Failed Wis. The chemical propellants are unstable, and can only be mixed within half an hour of the launch. If you mix and then don't launch, the rocket explodes.

Spark-Gap Transmitter

Requires Electrical breakthrough. Risur gains access to radio communication, albeit limited typically to one-way messages, since receiving can be done without electricity, but transmitters need a power station. Distance is currently limited to about 50 miles under average conditions, but weather and terrain can greatly reduce that.

The party also gains access to remote-detonated explosives if they have the Advanced Explosives innovation.

Failed Int. If the transmitter is used for more than 1 minute at a time, the spark-gap generator overheats; it takes 5 minutes to cool off.

Failed Wis. Broadcast frequency is exceedingly hard to change, so no more than one transmitter can be active in a given area without causing interference.

New Item Qualities

Charged. If the target is wearing metal armor or carrying a large quantity of metal, the attacker gains a +2 bonus to his attack roll. After firing, the weapon is depleted and takes a standard action to "reload" by cranking a mechanism to generate sufficient charge.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

In the final four adventures of the campaign, the party will gain access to arcanoscientific innovations not listed above, including an airship and limited instantaneous communication. By the end of the campaign, though, the party's actions at the Axis Seal will determine whether technology will continue to advance as it has in reality, or if the world will adopt a different set of physical laws.

Inaccurate. Before making the first attack roll, the attacker makes a saving throw. If the save fails, the grenade or rocket veers off course, perhaps just missing by 2 squares, or perhaps bouncing off or exploding against cover. If the attacker spends a move action to aim, he does not need to make the save.

New Items

Anti-Magic Mine. *Cost 50 gp.* When a creature with any spellcasting ability, magical powers, or magic items steps over the mine, it detonates. A creature using magic in any space adjacent to the mine likewise triggers it, as does a spell that affects a space adjacent to the mine. Some extremely powerful magical manifestations might detonate the mine from farther away.

The mines are inert normally. They must be activated as a standard action. One round later the mine is active, so spellcasting mine-layers are encouraged to move quickly. When the mine detonates it deals 10 damage in a burst 1 centered on the mine.

Demolition Charge. *Cost 1,000 gp.* These can be timed precisely for detonation, anywhere from a few seconds to an hour. (Specialized ones can instead range from an hour to four days.) Each charge can blow up most materials in a 30-ft. radius. Creatures in the area take 50 damage, though possibly less if they have cover. Preparing them for detonation requires three Dexterity or Intelligence checks (DC 10), each made as a standard action. If all succeed, the charge detonates exactly as desired. Failing one or two causes the device to detonate slightly early or late (in a range of 25% of the intended time). Failing three in a row detonates the charge immediately.

Magical Detector. *Cost 10 gp.* This remarkably simple device is integrated with a pocket watch. By tracking how much the precision of the clockwork is maligned, it can detect and locate magic. A silver triangle on a track around the perimeter of the clock face spins to point like a compass at the strongest source of magic within 30 feet. If there is no magic present, it simply turns in alignment with the clock's second hand.

The item is fairly useless to high-level adventurers, but it will quickly become a common item in households, shops, and government checkpoints, often taking the shape of ornate clocks.

Tinker Coil. *Cost 1,000 gp.* If linked to a power source, this 10-ft. tall pylon hums with electrical energy. A conductive surface on the ground within 10 ft. causes creatures that enter the area to complete a circuit. Any creature that enters the area or ends its turn there takes 20 lightning damage (but no more than once per round).

APPENDIX B: Obscurati Officer Roster

These are all of the Obscurati officers, organized by their nation of operation, as of the conclave in adventure seven. These officers, despite their various backgrounds and missions, are almost all men and women of great education and progressive ideology. Those who are not legitimately interested in improving the world are clever liars who put on the appearance of concern.

That said, everyone here has had to do some horrible things so the Obscurati can gain influence in a given area, and they're a bit inured to localized suffering, especially if it leads to a greater good.

Two key figures—Kasvarina Varal and Roland Stanfield—are not in attendance. In addition the convocation also includes twenty-four members of the Ghost Council who tend to vote in a single bloc.

Officers marked with an asterisk (*) play a prominent role in this adventure and have a full write-up. Those marked with a dagger mark (†) are potential aliases for the PCs. A few others have small roles to play and are marked with a double dagger (‡), but most are free for you to do with as you please.

Leadership

1. *** Nicodemus the Gnostic.** Head of conspiracy. Resides in body of Andrei von Recklinghausen.
2. *** Han Jierre.** Tiefling sovereign of Danor. Representative of the Panarchist faction.
3. **Kasvarina Varal.** *Not in attendance.* Eladrin matriarch, founder of the conspiracy, with fingers in every pot. Currently under protection of Asrabey Varal and other eladrin in Elfaivar, recovering memories stolen from her by Alexander Grappa.

Ber

4. **Grargh Nobble.** Jumpy orc barbarian. Spy among the unincorporated tribes.
5. **‡ Praesidia de Vaca.** Dragonborn bard. Latest in a line of spokesmen of the Panoply, responsible for making Berans look outward to other nations and cultures, so they'll fall in line. *Head of the Bards minor faction.*
6. **Lam Aqua.** Orc artificer. Responsible for industry and construction of a planar lighthouse in Seobriga.
7. **Ignitio dola Serra.** Lizardfolk wizard. Spy in Reo Pedresco secret wizard order. Tasked with constructing a planar lighthouse.
8. **Sergio Flores.** Goliath businessman. Building a planar lighthouse in Ursaliña.
9. **Trevio Addaz.** Minotaur cleric. Head of Bounty Cell, responsible for sneaking mages, priests, and the like to perform secret "miracles" to reduce conflict for resources among poor tribes.
10. **Nicholas Sermon.** Half-orc bard from Risur. Monster hunter, prepared to slay any dragons that might get roused by the Ob's plans. Also hunts for forgotten hoards.
11. **‡ Barro Bangristo.** Minotaur professor. Head of Scroll Cell, responsible for spying on universities to seek potential recruits and use student rebellion as a tool for change. *Brags about villainy in a brief vignette.*

Crisillyir

12. *** Zimand Dexlano.** Human priest. Part of Bishop Vigilio's retinue. Secretly replaced by Vitus Sigismund, who is discovered when trying to enter the palace.
13. **‡ Bishop Ortisei Vigilio.** Human cleric. Liaison with business interests in Vendricce, and master of a network of spies. *Appears in opening scene.*
14. **‡ Carlast Hevny.** Human priest. Head of archaeological activities in Crisillyir. *Appears in opening scene.*
15. **† Ken Don.** Human archivist. Research inquisitor of the Clergy. Ensures Ob agents don't get caught for looking into heretical information.
16. **† Oscan Ligurio.** Human rogue. Vile member of The Family. Sets up fake identities and businesses to launder money and cover for unusual international activities.
17. **Rakovnik Brasny.** Human cleric. Responsible for building a planar lighthouse in Sid Minos.
18. **Tittling Grainet.** Gnome cleric. Responsible for building a planar lighthouse in Alais Primos.
19. **Cardinal Testamenta Suchdol.** Human inquisitor. Hunts demons, tasked with finding out how to banish their taint to other planes. Earnest proselytizer. *Representative of the minor Trekker faction because she wants to spread her faith to other worlds.*

Danor

20. **† Gran Guiscard.** Human bard. Head of Gorgeous Cell in Beaumont. Uses network of entertainers and artists to recruit tier 5 Ob agents.
21. **‡ Bert Facie.** Human gunslinger. Head of Han Jierre's bodyguard attachment. Master of whispers in the whole nation of Danor. *Appears in the opening scene.*
22. **‡ Dame Constance Baden.** Human knight. Head of Cerulean Cell in Cherage, the Obscurati's "blue sky" division devoted to researching outlandish ideas to see if they're possible. *Representative of the Sky League minor faction, and one of Macbannin's murder victims.*
23. **‡ Glaz du Sang Magie.** Human ice mage. (Possibly back from the dead as a lich, depending on the events of Adventure Four.) Engineer behind the conspiracy's small submersible fleet. *Representative of the Weapon-Mongers minor faction.*
24. **Satine Tibeaux.** Tiefling cleric, head of Fisher Cell, responsible for investigating the true dead magic zone in the city of Methia, former capital of the Clergy.

25. **Gardienne du Cherage.** Tiefling scion of the Cherage line, head of College Cell which manipulates Danoran culture to be more friendly to Risur by means of subtly imposing economic and cultural penalties on those more hostile groups.
26. **Admiral Vidal Strausse.** Human fighter. Spy in the Danoran navy.
27. **General Shane Wallisonne.** Human fighter. Spy in Danoran army.

Drakr

28. **† Kiov Hetman.** Dwarf wizard. Researching magical towers and monoliths throughout Drakr, coordinating adventurers to break in and deactivate their defenses.
29. *** Erskine Haffkruger.** Dwarf environmental biologist responsible for ensuring life can flourish under different planar alignments. After his initial tests with flora and fauna were encouraging, he abducted dozens to perform "human trials." Currently a duplicant controlled by Benedict Pemberton.
30. **‡ Ramos Zoltan.** Dwarf businessman. Head of Prison Cell, owner of numerous prisons in Drakr, and responsible for building a planar lighthouse. *Murdered by Reed Macbannin the first night.*
31. **‡ Dengar Kriegshaff.** Human wizard. Head of Blood Cell, designing giant weapons to slay the fey titans of Risur. *Representative of the Aegis minor faction.*
32. **‡ Zartan Arkel.** Human druid. Giant hunter, tasked with cataloging and preparing to defeat threats in the Drakran wilderness. *Old and patient, representative of the minor Long Now faction.*
33. **‡ Von Hastenschrieft Willimarkanova.** Dwarf philosopher. Main Ob agent in Drakran politics. *Long-winded advocate of the Mortal Mind minor faction.*

Elfaivar

34. *** Cula Ravjahani.** Half-elf Vekeshi mystic, former aid to Kasvarina Varal coordinating elf- and fey-oriented cells. Representative of the Miller's Pyre faction.
35. **Ines Shilubi.** Human knight. Hunts fey monsters in Elfaivar, bounty-hunts eladrin enclave warriors, but also spies on Clergy colonization efforts in the jungle.
36. **‡ Solace Petrov.** Human economist. Head of Barter Cell, devoted to re-establishing a functioning economy, under Ob control, in Elfaivar. *Representative of the minor Economists faction.*

Risur

37. *** Roland Stanfield.** *Not in attendance.* Deva governor of the city of Flint, head of Colossus cell, and the Ob officer whose involvement with the conspiracy is most precariously concealed. Currently overseeing the secret construction of a planar lighthouse in Flint.
38. *** Leone Quital.** Human steelshaper. Former head of colossus construction.
39. *** Catherine Romana.** Human wizard. Heir of a previous Risuri monarch. Politician tasked with infiltrating allies of Duchess Ethelyn and sabotaging efforts to discover the Obscurati. Representative of the Colossus faction. Has a pet cat.
40. **† Livia Hatsfield.** Elf spy in royal palace. Studying Rites of Rulership so the king may be replaced. Plans to betray Ob, but hasn't told anyone in Risur what she's doing yet.
41. **Abiera Stackhouse.** Halfling representative of the Eschatologists of Flint United, a fringe end-times group. Keeps in contact with crazy conspiracy theorists to see if anyone has stumbled upon the actual plot. Secretly a servant of the Voice of Rot, hoping to find a way to turn the Ob's plot to the fey titan's advantage.
42. **Erdanen Torrance.** Half-elf politician. Member of Catherine Romana's retinue.
43. **Alloquicious.** Halfling artificer. Head of Iron Cell, responsible for recruiting geniuses in Risur. Murdered most of his underlings a year ago so the RHC wouldn't track him down, and is transitioning to trying to influence Risur's economic system.

Other

44. **† Bruce McDruid.** Human explorer. Donates arms and technology to primitive people at the edge of civilization, earning their trust and acclimating them to a new world order.
45. **† Xavier Sangria.** Human fighter. Malice Lands beast hunter. Heads band of adventurers who hunt monsters.
46. **Jade Hericano.** Sea elf explorer. Native of the Yerasol Archipelago, head of Bathy Cell, searching sunken ruins for clues to the Ancients.
47. **Hanse Randall.** Wealthy architect, head of Shingles Cell, responsible for greasing palms in the Malice Lands city-state of Orithea, to build a planar lighthouse.
48. **Oort Magnus.** Earth genasi sorcerer. Cell leader in Nalaam, coordinating the search for the Ancient temple to Urim.
49. **Bob Stela.** Human ranger. Cell leader in a border state.
50. **Ed Pollack.** Human druid. Cell leader in a different border state.
51. **Tim Twiggerson.** Human rogue. Cell leader in yet another border state.
52. **Neil d'Ray.** Human factotum. Cell leader in a border state you've never heard of. Seriously, these guys do excellent work, are incredibly busy, and are really under-appreciated by the Obscurati leadership.

Ghost Council

In addition to the three named officers below, the Ghost Council consists of twenty-four additional members that vote as one block. There are dozens more ghosts in the council, but many have lost their sense of individuality altogether, and can only act at the direction of those who still have a conscious mind.

53. *** Vicemi Terio.** Head of the Ghost Council, leader of Lantern Cell. Archmage.
54. *** Reed Macbannin.** Ghost and former head of operational secrecy in Flint. Representative of the Arboretum faction.
55. *** Amielle Latimer.** Ghost of a tiefling gunslinger, in the Ghost Council. Originally established friendly industrial connections between Danor and the city of Flint, after helping King Lorcan defeat the witch coven in the year 400 A.O.V. Representative of the Watchmaker faction.

Possible Additions

If they made it out of Adventure Four alive, include Luc Jierre and Ottavia Sacredote. Whether alive or dead, Lya Jierre isn't present. She'll return (likely as a ghost) in Adventure Nine, *The Last Starry Sky*, but we want to spend some time without her.

APPENDIX C: The Eladrin Diaspora

These memories give Kasvarina a chance to reconnect with elements of her past and learn the fate of her people. Only two are particularly plot relevant (Miller's Pyre and Betrayal of Rilego), but the others can help strengthen the bonds between Kasvarina and the party.

Minor Memories

The party has to go out of their way to find these.

Memory-Event: Navras

Location: Risur, the city of Flint.
Date: 15 Spring, 201 A.O.V.
Stability Value: 1.

A docker PC or Panoply adherent might follow a clue from Kieran Sentacore, or the party might simply recall the tale of Navras and bring Kasvarina to see the Navras Opera House in Flint. (See the Player's Guide for details.) Performances here often can enchant magic items.

The *lost arc* can manifest a memory event where Kasvarina came to visit her friend during the opera house's construction. They walk through the skeleton of the structure, still open to the sky. She wonders why he's building this thing here, rather than back in their homeland, and Navras says that he doesn't like what Elfaivar is turning into. She asks if he'd mind her staying until the building is complete so she can hear the first performance. Navras sneers and threatens to have security drag her out if he sees her.

If Kasvarina's mental stability is at 10 or higher, somehow the *lost arc* resonates with the innate magic of the opera house and manifests another memory-event, of Navras performing the song of Vekesh on opening night. Each PC present chooses one item he or she possesses. That item is enchanted to be able to perform the ritual *remove affliction* once per week, requiring only a standard action to perform.

Memory-Event: Bhalu

Location: Drakr, the city of Trekhom.
Date: 42 Winter, 248 A.O.V.
Stability Value: 1.

In Trekhom, the party can find the *Obpeyeble Nipneka Mobicneten* (Doomed Order of Thinkers), a nightly gathering of eladrin philosophers, all men, led by **Bhalu Varal**, who was married to Kasvarina from 119 to 248 A.O.V. Today the shaggy and portly Bhalu spends his days sleeping and his evenings drinking and discussing philosophy and politics without ever being motivated to get up and effect any changes in the real world.

If the party goes to the meeting, a memory-event triggers. Kasvarina imperiously stalks into a room filled with pipe-smoking dwarves, where Bhalu lies passed out in the corner. She splashes him with water to wake him, then drags him outside to ask how being a drunken lout is contributing to the mission she sent him on. He is supposed to make allies in Trekhom and learn which philosopher parties might be a threat.

Bhalu says that she sent him to kill too many people, and that the occasional bedding down with her isn't worth the blood he was spilling. Blood is something for the body, anyway, and he thinks it's time for the eladrin to just die. He's vowed to devote his life to his mind, and to punish his body with the greatest beer the dwarves have crafted.

She says she's staying to clean him up. He's too valuable. He shrugs, and challenges her to be more convincing than his friends inside. The memory-event fades, and the real modern Bhalu is flabbergasted. While not the hugest fan of his ex-wife even now, Bhalu has sobered up a bit and does have contacts all throughout Drakr. His value is up to your players to decide.

Memory-Event: Amielle

Location: Danor, the city of Cherage.
Date: 2 Autumn, 400 A.O.V.
Stability Value: 1.

In adventure seven, *Schism*, the party met the ghost of Amielle Latimer, an Ob conspirator with a knack for custom firearms, who seemed somewhat uncertain of her loyalties to Nicodemus. You might remind the party that there was an Amielle Latimer who came from Danor to Risur a hundred years ago and did a favor for the king, helping to open up pathways of industry. A bit of investigating could track down Amielle's past, whereas a gunsmith PC would simply know the famous workshop in Danor where she first started mass-producing rifles.

If the party gets into the city of Cherage and visits the workshop, it has now been converted into a fancy restaurant, the walls adorned with guns. In the memory-event, Kasvarina and Nicodemus speak with a very-much-alive Amielle, telling her that she needs to undertake a risky bit of diplomacy. They're sending her to Flint, to help the king deal with a witch problem.

This can give you an excuse to run the mini-adventure *Bonds of Forced Faith* (coming later) as a sort of one-shot sidequest. And after the party leaves her workshop, Amielle's ghost gets wind of it. In the following days she'll try to communicate via *sending* with the party. If they're outside Danor's dead magic zone, she warns them that Nicodemus is tracking them and is preparing for them to go to Methia, because something valuable is there.

Amielle cannot leave the rest of the ghost council to go help them in person, and she's not willing to betray the conspiracy in any event, but she encourages them to avoid Methia and stay in Flint to protect their homeland.

Memory-Event: Chatwood

Location: Risur, the city of Shale.
Date: 8 Spring, 490 A.O.V.
Stability Value: 1.

In the city of Shale, an eladrin woman known only as **Chatwood** has been in an insane asylum for a decade. The chief physician of the asylum, **Mayhew Fisher**, is on the Obscurati's payroll, and has fabricated evidence to keep the poor woman locked up.

The memory-event occurs at Chatwood's old home, still maintained by one of her friends. In the past, Kasvarina and Chatwood share tea, and Chatwood—who is only just an adult by eladrin standards—seems nervous around her elder.

Kasvarina explains a mission for Chatwood: to ingratiate herself into Duchess Ethelyn's circle of advisors and offer her skyseer visions as aid in the ongoing Fourth Yerasol War. The visions can all be accurate, and Chatwood should try to honestly help the war effort, with the exception of anything having to do with a place called Axis Island. When possible, Chatwood is to fake visions saying that the island is dangerous, and to let the Danorans take it and lose soldiers without a fight.

Chatwood asks why, and Kasvarina won't explain. So Chatwood refuses, saying that Risur is her home now, far more than Elfaivar was. Kasvarina seems to realize that her spy can no longer be trusted to be silent, but since there are so few eladrin women even now, she cannot kill her. The memory-event ends with Kasvarina casting *power word blind*.

After the vision, the party might arrange to free Chatwood and cure her blindness. She claims she tried to warn people about a conspiracy, but everyone thought she was crazy. Kasvarina is horribly shamed of what she did, and tries to avoid ever being seen by the woman she betrayed.

Memory-Event: Mind-Taker

Location: Risur's analogue in the Bleak Gate, Cauldron Hill facility.
Date: 7 Summer, 500 A.O.V.
Stability Value: 3.

In Flint, Kasvarina feels a pull toward Cauldron Hill, and she remembers her time there drugged after she first lost her memories.

The ruins of the Obscurati complex in Cauldron Hill has been labeled off-limits, and while the party can get permission from the defender of the mountain, Captain Dale, actually finding anything in the black tangle of machinery is a challenge. A group without a technologist will have to succeed a variety of Acrobatics, Athletics, and Thievery checks to get into the part of the facility where Kasvarina's memory-event will trigger. A technologist PC, however, can easily navigate service passageways and guess the safest, shortest route.

Feel free to add shadow monsters and undead, if your party is itching for a fight.

The party can see a variety of memories in the Cauldron Hill facility, most of them incidental moments of Kasvarina touring with Leone Quital and watching the colossus be built, or her laying *geas* spells on the key workers there, or her doling out punishment to workers who try to sneak out and return to the real world. She also spends a great deal of time with Alexander Grappa and the golem prototypes he built, training them and raising them so they would be trustworthy. But one extended memory involving Alexander Grappa stands out.

Kasvarina has arrived to discuss the problem of Grappa's disloyalty, and she retires with Leone to make plans over a bottle of wine. During their discussion she realizes Grappa is actually watching from an air vent, and Leone uses his steelshaping magic to pull Grappa out and pin him. They lock the man up and Kasvarina has to break the news to Borne that his father is a traitor to their cause.

Later, Grappa sends his bronze golem handservant to request Kasvarina come talk to him. He ambushes her, plants a hand on her face, and casts a spell to lock away her memories. As the old man holds her down he apologizes, and says that all people are is the sum of their lives. He's giving her another chance at life, a chance to be a decent person. The memory-event ends there, though the party knows that Grappa went on to lock away the colossus's memories, then fled and was caught and killed by Leone.

The Enclave Ushanti

Asrabey can easily point the party to Ushanti, and Kasvarina's presence will earn the party a quick entry. Unlike Sentosa, Ushanti drifts slightly through the jungles of Elfaivar, and its interior is not analogous to the real world. Similar to a *rope trick*, the entrance is an invisible extradimensional portal, which leads to a hill that overlooks a field and a forest connected by a river that flows in an infinity shape. Buildings cluster near the crossing in the center of the demi-plane, and the whole enclave is scarcely two miles across.

The new leader of the enclave, **Ajit**, is wholly loyal to the conspiracy, and likely has learned of the death of Cula Ravjahani at the Obscurati convocation (see adventure seven, *Schism*), which he blames on the PCs. But he welcomes the group with open arms, intending to murder them in their sleep and hand them over to Nicodemus. He's wary of tipping his hand (Insight DC 30), but not infallible.

Not all the enclave is affiliated with the conspiracy, and they sincerely welcome Kasvarina and her 'rescuers.' The party might find allies, or simply rush to see the memory-events at the matriarch's hall before Ajit can spring his trap. If they fall for it, though, that night a magical *silence* falls upon the party's sleeping quarters, and then five eladrin rajputs (page 311) *fey step* in and attempt to *coup de grâce* them in their beds.

With a bit of politicking and combat, Ajit could be deposed and the enclave could become an ally of the party's.

Two memory-events occur here.

Memory-Event: Rejecting the Call

Location: The enclave Ushanti, matriarch's garden.
Date: 58 Summer, 100 A.O.V.
Stability Value: 1.

In this memory-event, Nicodemus (in the body of a young human merchant) is escorted into Kasvarina's garden. He asks her the status of a mission to steal from a Clergy library and slay its keeper, but Kasvarina says she's busy with matters that are important to her people, and doesn't have time to keep pursuing these vendettas. She feels the Clergy have been sufficiently punished, and her fellow matriarch Athrylla is trying to pursue an actual peace.

Nicodemus argues with her for several minutes, stating that he has finally hit upon a greater plan, something that will change the whole world. He starts to ask what she knows about skyseers and planar magic, but she changes the subject to the garden, and invites him to stay and relax. Nicodemus keeps arguing, and eventually Kasvarina gets upset and orders her guards to take him away.

Memory-Event: Ghostly Apparition

Location: The enclave Ushanti, Kasvarina's home.
Date: 84 Winter, 17 A.O.V.
Stability Value: 1.

Kasvarina is browsing a bookshelf when she sniffs the air and detects the scent of cigarette smoke. She tentatively calls out, "William?" but a man replies, "It's Nicodemus."

She opens the door and lets in Nicodemus (in the body of a bookbinder). Their postures and sentences suggest intense discomfort, like they're talking around an issue. Nicodemus explains that it took him a few bodies to get here, and spotting a map on a table he idly traces his path—"Pala, to the coast, over to Trekhom, then by boat to Vendricce. I had to walk from there."

Kasvarina steps close as if to touch him, and he quickly moves to the bookshelf. He suggests a few books he heard of lately that she should get, then mentions that he's heading back to old Methia to look for someone. She asks if he wants her to come, and he says that he'll *send* when the time is right. He might need a year to figure out the next step. In the meanwhile, he suggests she take Vekesh's advice and keep on living.

Kasvarina responds that Vekesh was caught by the Clergy and killed a year ago. After a pause she invites Nic to stay for a few days. He nods, and the memory ends.

This memory can point the way to Pala, though the party might need to replay the memory and look at the map closely to figure out where to start.

Key Memory – Lands Forgotten

Situated in the Malice Lands, the former city-state of Pala was somewhere along the Eastern Piscine Mountains, with history leaving the exact location up for debate. The party is likely to only find this memory-event if they risk entering Kasvarina's old enclave Ushanti, and they witness the Ghostly Apparition event. Following the map they see there, they can backtrack to find the ruins.

As usual, the Malice Lands are home to all manner of misshapen monsters, but a catastrophically powerful one lurks in the ruins of Pala. But before the party can reach what little remains of the city, they pass near the Clavel Ranch.

The Ranch

Connected to the remainder of civilization by a winding, half-overgrown trail, the Clavel Ranch claims to technically be part of Danor. Once a noble tiefling family, the Clavel was driven out of their homeland. Spending their family fortune to establish a distant farm, the Clavels hoped to bring unique agriculture to Danor and perhaps earn their way back to prosperity. They never managed that, and today the family has consigned itself to raising malice beasts, specifically a breed known as axebeaks.

Just over three dozen people work on the Clavel Ranch, led by **Leonard Clavel**. Leonard's oldest daughter Jeanette tends to a small crop of leaf of Nicodemus, which the men of the ranch smoke in abundance.

The staff are friendly but surprised at the sudden appearance of outsiders. Leonard is alright with letting them look around the property, assuming they're supervised. He sends his ranch-hand, **Angus Perasmus** to escort them. Angus is a calm and collected well-built man who rarely speaks and carries himself with a controlled measure.

In truth, Angus is actually a member of a secretive monastic order known as the Fists of Pala. The order was founded by the scattered survivors of Pala, eventually coming together and making a pact to protect the memory of the place and disseminate the philosophy of William Miller. Today, Angus serves as a watcher for the Monument of Pala, a nearby grove that holds the order's holiest site.

Despite his secretive role, Angus acts the simple ranch aide, and shows the party around the ranch as required. He tries to keep the PCs from the monument—located three miles outside the borders of the ranch, inside a nearby forest that has grown up around the ruins of Pala – until they can earn his trust.

There's not much to see on the ranch, but if asked specifically about ruins, the various ranch hands know there are the remains of a few really old buildings in the forest. But some monster hides in ruins out there—called the Wriggling Dread—and every time it's been spotted, people have been devoured.

The Malice Cometh

The Malice Lands interfere greatly with the power of the *lost arc of Reida*, and though Kasvarina can sense the nearby presence of the memory site, she cannot pinpoint it. This leaves the PCs to search the Clavel ranch as they please, but it also have the unwanted side effect of drawing the attention of a nearby malice beast.

Known locally as the Wriggling Dread, the malice beast normally squeezes and crawls through the ruins of Pala. The huge monster has the body and abdomen of a spider, but tentacles for legs and a toothy, eyeless snake-like appendage for a head. The creature makes its slow way to the ranch over the course of an hour.

A general timeline of the beast's actions after it arrives are presented below, though GMs should adjust as necessary:

The Wriggling Dread Arrives (0 minutes): The Dread is spotted approaching from the north; one of the Clavel children sees it while tending to an injured axebeak.

Fence is Destroyed (3 minutes): As the farm is made aware of the creature's approach, it breaks through the northern fence, letting loose a terrifying snarl as it does so.

Storage Barn Destroyed (6 minutes): Making its way to the storage barn, the Dread breaks it apart, becoming temporarily caught in the wreckage. For the next 10 rounds the Wriggling Dread can't use its minor action attacks while those tentacles are used to dig itself from the wreckage. During this time, the Dread can hurl debris at nearby targets.

Stampede (10 minutes): As the monster escapes the wreckage, the ranch staff manage to incite a herd of axebeaks to rush the creature. While generally ineffective, the axebeaks manage to confuse and damage the Dread prior to being killed. The Wriggling Dread loses 30 hp as a result of the axebeak assault. From this point onwards, the Dread can begin hurling axebeaks at creatures.

Staff Defense (15 minutes): The staff attempt to repel the Dread on their own using bows and spears, but are pushed back after the creature slays one of them. The Dread loses another 20 hp from the combined assault of the ranch staff.

Angus Stand-Off (20 minutes): As the creature approaches the homestead, Angus moves to fight it, revealing himself as a more than a mere ranch hand. He scrambles across its body, trying to wear it down while avoiding its attacks, but without support he is slain after a minute of fighting. The Wriggling Dread loses another 75 hp from the engagement.

Homestead is Destroyed (30 minutes): Reaching the homes of the Clavel family and staff, the Dread begins to destroy structures and kill any survivors who attempt to flee. None of the family survive the creature's attack.

Creature Moves Off (45 minutes): Having fed on the ranch staff and families, the Wriggling Dread finds itself stuffed, quickly forgetting the reason for its attack. The creature crawls back to the ruins of Pala.

Engaging the Dread

When the PCs attack the Wriggling Dread, it turns its attention on them. In combat, the Dread focuses on creatures that impede its ability to move, or those who deal the most damage to it. If a target stands out as a primary damage dealer, the Dread attempts to swallow that target. Against ranged foes it evokes horrifying hallucinations. When sufficiently wounded, the Dread uses its breath weapon; a horrific expulsion of internal fluids, which could contain the partially digested remains of axebeaks or ranch staff (depending on when PCs choose to engage).

If the PCs attack prior to his intervention, Angus watches the conflict, but intervenes if things go against the party. In particular, you may wish to have the Fist of Pala step in after one of the PCs has been consumed by the Dread, or if most of the party is caught in the creature's grappling tentacles.

Wriggling Dread — Level 20 Solo Brute
Gargantuan natural magical beast — **XP** 14,000

HP 600; **Threshold I** 400; **Threshold II** 200 — **Initiative** +15
AC 34, **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 31 — **Perception** +19
Speed 7 — Blindsight 10, Tremorsense 20
Immune charm, gaze, illusion, psychic
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Creature of Disorder**
Attacks by lawful good creatures that hit the wriggling dread are automatically critical hits.

▸ **Disruptive Presence** ✦ Aura 2
Creatures and objects in the aura do not benefit from immunities and resistances.

▸ **Massive**
It easily carries several dead creatures in its tentacles.
The wriggling dread can move at full speed while carrying up to six medium creatures or three large creatures.

Standard Actions

Bite ✦ At-Will, Basic
Its snakelike head has no eyes, just massive rows of teeth.
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 4d12+9 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 25). If the target is already grabbed, it is swallowed. A swallowed creature is dazed, restrained, and takes ongoing 10 damage and ongoing 10 acid damage. When the dread is killed, the creature can escape as a move action.

Hurl ✦ At-Will
It throws its prisoner as a missile.
Special: The dread must have a creature or sizeable object grabbed. After reaching the barn it can throw debris, and after the axebeak stampede it throws large fowl.
Attack: Ranged 6/12 (one creature); +23 vs. Reflex
Hit: 4d8+17 damage, and the target is knocked prone.
Effect: A hurled creature takes 20 damage and lands prone adjacent to the target.

Minor Actions

Flailing Tentacles ✦ At-Will, 1/round
It thrashes about with its tentacles.
Attack: Close burst 3 (creatures in burst); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+19 damage and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 25).

Terrifying Transmogrification (fear, psychic) ✦ At-Will, 1/round
The ground around you shifts into a nightmarish tangle of different landscapes. For a moment you fear your flesh itself will unravel and reshape into something foreign and hostile.
Effect: The burst becomes difficult terrain. Place blocking terrain in three or four squares.
Attack: Area burst 2 within 40 (creatures in burst); +23 vs. Will
Hit: 2d8+19 psychic damage, and the target suffers a fugue (save ends). While in a fugue, it must spend a move action to get as far from the dread as possible. Then if it can, it must spend a standard action to make an unarmed melee basic attack against itself.

Triggered Actions

Vomitous Expulsion (acid) ✦ Encounter
It sweeps its head and sprays a revolting cascade of partially-digested creatures.
Trigger: The dread is reduced to 400 HP or below, or to 200 HP or below.
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Close blast 10 (creatures in blast); +23 vs. Reflex
Hit: 4d6+20 damage, and the target takes ongoing 20 acid damage (save ends).
Effect: All negative effects affecting the wriggling dread end, it gains an action point, and this power recharges. It will trigger again when the dread is reduced below 200 HP. Creatures swallowed by the dread are expelled.

Str 30 (+20) **Dex** 8 (+9) **Wis** 15 (+12)
Con 24 (+17) **Int** 2 (+6) **Cha** 22 (+16)
Alignment Chaotic Evil

Angus Perasmus — Level 17 Goon Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (human) — **XP** 800

HP 84; **Bloodied** 42 — **Initiative** +15
AC 33, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 29 — **Perception** +10
Speed 7

Standard Actions

Defending Fists ✦ At-Will, Basic
He quietly recites some mantra as he weaves and pummels.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6+11 damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of Angus's next turn.

▸ **Meditation on Fury** ✦ At-Will
He seems to be gathering his focus, looking for an opening.
Effect: Angus gains +2 to his defenses. On his next turn, the first attack he makes gains a +4 bonus to the attack roll and if it hits deals an extra 20 damage and stuns the target until the end of Angus's next turn.

Str 20 (+13) **Dex** 20 (+13) **Wis** 14 (+10)
Con 14 (+10) **Int** 13 (+9) **Cha** 10 (+8)
Alignment Lawful Good **Languages** Common, Dwarven

The Monument of Pala

If the party helped save the ranch, Angus Perasmus explains his role as a member of the Fists of Pala, though he does little to describe the order beyond its name and formation. If asked, he can lead the party to the Monument of Pala, three miles away.

The Monument of Pala is located in a ten-foot diameter grove, at the center of which is a small standing stone. The stone is engraved with text in the common tongue, but of an older style and with embellishments common in the first decades following the Second Victory.

The monument reads:

A dream that shall endure beyond the destruction of stone,
A brotherhood undaunted by atrocities of the mighty,
Their bodies shall be strengthened by this good labor,
To spread his words, an offering to the world,
Until the dream may become reality.

As one of his first acts after being burnt alive and finding a new body, Nicodemus came to the ruins of his former nation and crafted this small monument. In the days and weeks to follow, the scattered survivors of Pala returned and discovered the stone among the ruins, and many resolved to spread the philosopher of their martyred leader across the world. In so doing, they helped strengthen Nicodemus and make his spirit nearly impossible to desroy.

Angus can fill the PCs in on the details of Pala. His order believes this stone was placed at the exact site where the city's founder William Miller was burned upon a pyre of his own books.

Memory-Event: Miller's Pyre

Location: Pala.
Date: 31 Autumn, 17 A.O.V.
Stability Value: 3.

Kasvarina orients herself around the stone and walks a few feet away. The stone of the monument shimmers, moving like wet paint being pushed across a canvas. The forest around you smears into a small city glowing orange from scattered fires. In a moment, the clearing transforms into a beautiful courtyard, with a simple stone bench where the monument was. A bald, bearded man sits there, reading a book by the light of the city being razed around him.

A group of scholars frantically try to save documents from a nearby burning library. Men and women make suicidal runs into the collapsing structure to save as much documentation as they can from the flames. From the other direction, soldiers are visible through the haze of heat for the light glinting from their armor as they march down the thoroughfare. The air is thick with aromatic smoke.

A bloodied sword in hand, Kasvarina steps up to the figure seated on the bench. She breathes heavily like she's run here. "William," she says, "you need to go. The city is gone, but there's still a chance. I can get us away from here."

With a wave of his right hand, the man brushes her off. He closes his book and looks at the soldiers, who'll be on them in minutes.

He asks, "Isn't there anything I can do to effect a real change? We were naïve at the island, and then . . . Methia. I thought this place could be a bastion of sanity, and again the damned Clergy takes my best intentions and destroys them. No, Rina, I am done running."

Kasvarina grabs his shoulders, sobbing. "William, please just come with me. It's risky, but we can teleport away."

She tries to grab his hand, but he pushes her back. "If I run they'll call me a coward and all this will be wasted." He glances to the soldiers, now only a few hundred feet away. "If I die, I might do more good than I ever did alive."

"William, no." She follows his gaze, then shakes him. "Dammit, William! We can just *live*. We don't need to fight. We can just be together."

"We could be, yes. But then we'd be distracted, and another thousand people could die because I gave in to complacency. This is not a world ruled by the good, Rina. Now go. They'll kill me, I'll find a new body, and we can start the fight again. There's no more time by idle, halcyon dreaming." He stands, gives her a short kiss, then sits back down.

Her voice catches, and force out, "Please no, William. I can't watch my world be destroyed again."

"These people killed your daughter! They destroyed your world before, and they'll keep doing it until we take control and make the world *we* know is best. Run. You don't come back like I do. The next time you see me, call me Nicodemus."

Kasvarina turns and runs, and the memory fades as the soldiers close in and surround William Miller, defiantly reading. Then the memory fades and flickers to several hours later. Miller stands strapped to a tall wooden stake, atop a pile of books. Kasvarina hides around the corner of a building at the edge of the courtyard, watching Clergy priests declaring Miller's heresies as they light the pyre.

Aftermath

Kasvarina comes out of the memory weeping at the sight of a man she loved burning alive. She recalls that Nicodemus came back, but he was never the same as when he was William Miller. She wonders how much her loyalty to him was because she hoped to reclaim that happy time.

Cult of Personality

Angus is amazed that Kasvarina knew his order's inspiration. The party should likely be amazed that Nicodemus was once William Miller. If the party has Angus take them to a gathering of other fists of Pala (they meet and meditate in caves along the mountains nearby), they might be able to convince the group that Miller went on to become leader of a conspiracy that has murdered and manipulated events in order to gain power for himself. It would require some solid evidence and a bit of time investment, but if the party works at it, they can turn the Fists of Pala against Nicodemus.

Key Memory – Death of Launga

From the vision in Sentosa (Rescue Alliance), the party knows Kasvarina's older daughter Launga was captured by the dragon Rilego in the city Seobriga, which today is the capital of Ber. They also know that she died, and that another matriarch betrayed Kasvarina in the process. If the party heads to Seobriga, they can find a shrine commemorating one of the first times a foreigner slew a dragon tyrant. Polite parties might ask the Bruse for permission before they reenact a devastating and terrifying battle from the city's past.

If you want to force the PCs to actually fight a red dragon, feel free, but the memory-event's key focus is not a death, but an escape.

Memory-Event: Betrayal of Rilego

Location: Ber, the capital Seobriga.
Date: 15 Summer, 111 A.O.V.
Stability Value: 5.

The memory-event begins in the streets of Seobriga, Kasvarina was running for a building, followed by Sor Daeron, the matriarch Latika, and a handful of horribly burnt eladrin soldiers. Kasvarina hears the beating of wings and looks up, the whites of her eyes reflecting firelight from the city burning around her. She whispers, "Not again."

Landing on a perch atop an elaborately-spired building, a dragon the color of day-old blood, with a body larger than an elephants, holds Kasvarina's daughter Launga pinned to the roof with a foreclaw.

"Please no!" Kasvarina shouts. "Just ask, and I'll give you anything you want."

The dragon rears and huffs a flaming laugh. Then a hand made of salt crystals grasps her by the back of her neck, and a blade pokes her back. Sor Daeron and Latika have revealed their betrayal, and Sor explains that they *know*. It took them a century to find out, a century of actually being allies with the greatest traitor of their people, but now they *know*. And so it wasn't just enough to kill Kasvarina. They had to make her lose all she cared for.

Kasvarina breaks away from Sor and despite taking a dagger to her kidney she tries to teleport up to her daughter. Her spell finishes but nothing happens, because the streets have been paved with gold, blocking her teleportation.

Latika waves to the dragon Rilego, who draws a deep breath. Kasvarina screams and runs for the entrance to the building the dragon's perched on, and Latika orders Sor after her. Kasvarina just manages to get inside when the entire building shakes and radiative heat cracks bricks and sets the air ashimmer. Though she knows her daughter is already dead, Kasvarina runs for the stairs to the roof. She gets halfway up when Sor blocks her path with a *wall of force*.

The two duel with sword and spells for nearly a minute, but Kasvarina pulls loose, burning debris onto him with *godfire*. She casts a flight spell, but when she clears the skylight, the entire roof is aflame, and the structure is compromised. Protected from the heat by magic she runs and finds her daughter Launga's corpse. When she picks her up, her face is blackened on one half, nearly pristine on the other.

In the street below, Rilego has landed and Latika is climbing aboard his back. She and Kasvarina lock eyes. Still holding her dead daughter, Kasvarina starts to cast, but she does not aim at Latika or the dragon. Rather, she fires a *lightning blade* directly down into the building to finish off Sor Daeron, and the energy is enough to shatter wooden supports. The whole burning structure implodes beneath her, and she remains hovering in the air, implacable.

Rilego takes to the air and strafes with claws while Latika tries to strip away Kasvarina's flight with *dispel magic*. Kasvarina survives, watches them turn for another pass, and casts *unrelenting geas*, miraculously managing to affect Rilego. She says, "Drop her and let her burn, then fly away."

Latika falls into the burning rubble and Kasvarina finishes her off. She would return days later to track down Rilego and slay him as well.

But she only *assumed* Sor Daeron died in the building collapse. The party can witness the scene from another perspective, and they should spot Sor Daeron stumbling out of the door just as the building collapsed, then fleeing through the dust and smoke.

Mourning and Pursuit

Kasvarina takes the memories of her daughter's death stoically. She'll weep and mourn later, in private. Right now she's too detached to really grasp what she witnessed, and she cannot understand what she might have done to make Latika and Sor hate her so much to do this to her.

The challenge falls to the party now to track down what became of Sor Daeron. He changed his name to Abuelo Juhu and hid for centuries, afraid of Kasvarina's retaliation. He lives now in a small community of eladrin two hundred miles from Seobriga, and to this day still performs rituals to make him harder to detect with divination, though if he's found he doesn't have the strength to run anymore.

The party might find him magically, or simply ask about for rumors of a one-armed eladrin who appeared around the time of the Betrayal of Rilego. He has no children, but lives with a dozen other old eladrin men, none of whom served in the war or could recognize him. If confronted, he feigns senility (or rather, feigns it being worse than it actually is).

Sor regrets letting his hatred get the best of him, and wishes he had just killed Kasvarina and not punished her daughter. His memory actually has faded, to the point where he knows Kasvarina killed Srasama, but he doesn't remember how. One thing his memory is clear on, though, is that the plot to destroy Kasvarina was not theirs. An outsider brought evidence to them, and once they were nice and angry, he suggested a way to draw Kasvarina away from her seat of power.

Names and faces, Sor can't recall. But scents, well, those endure. And the man who told them to kidnap Launga and kill Kasvarina was always surrounded by smoke from the leaf of Nicodemus.

Consequences of the Revelation

If the party finds this memory-event, finds Sor, and learns that Nicodemus betrayed Kasvarina, she gains enough clarity and focus that from here on she is lucid in every memory-event, and will always gain more mental stability unless the event collapses. After treachery so supreme, there is almost no way Kasvarina will return to Nicodemus's side.

APPENDIX D: Methia Gazeteer

The capital city of the Clergy prior to the death of Srasama, Methia was abandoned five centuries ago after the Great Malice. As the Clergy fled their city, the common citizens of what would become Danor united together under the direction of a tiefling named Jierre. Forsaking the former center of power, Methia was left to languish.

Methia is a metropolis-sized settlement, now devoid of the citizens, where no sound echoes save the rustling of a constant cold breeze. A few trees and plants still grow near the river where occasionally fog will water them, but the overcast skies never give forth rain. Wild animals and crawling insects wander in occasionally, but flying creatures avoid it. The city's buildings are predominantly bone white, giving the city a barren, skeletal look.

Layout

Divided in half by the mighty Église River, the south-western portion of the city, known as Holy Methia for its high population of priests, is ringed by white marble walls. North of the river is the Urbem Postulatoris (Postulant's City), once home of the lay and common folk.

Holy Methia was left relatively intact following the disastrous end to the Clergy's war against the eladrin of Elfaivar. Originally home to the most senior clerics and anointed servants, this portion of the city was thought to be free from the wars that raged throughout the distant east. Most citizens were afflicted by the horrific curse laid down by Srasama, and transformed into tieflings, while others simply fled the city in grief and panic. Today, Holy Methia bears few scars from the momentous fall, exuding an eerie aura of calm and sorrow.

The Urbem Postulatoris was the site of tightly packed ghettos, filled with pilgrims seeking admission to the holy city proper. Almost ten-times the size of Holy Methia, the Clergy believed that if an attack ever occurred, the citizens of this area could be called upon to form a wall of holy flagellants to throw at their enemies. When Srasama was destroyed, the citizens of this region turned on each other in a night of butchery and blood. Little remains of this portion of the city other than the broken ruins of tenements and minor churches dedicated to the various saints of the Clergy.

Modern Methia is all but vacant, only the recent arrival of Danoran military units for preparatory war games has added any substantial populace to the great city. Along with the Danoran military increase, a small number of Eschatologists have holed up in the city for the past decade, residing within and waiting for their perceived judgment day.

Three Gates

The city walls of Holy Methia rise like marble cliffs, sixty feet high. The wall completely encircles the city, except for portions along the Église River that lie outside of it. Roads lead into the city from the northwest, from the south, and following the river from the southeast, each of them leading into a beautiful gate. Entrants were once blessed by passing beneath these gates (and magically-compelled to be faithful and pious). Today the gates—masterpieces of architecture—are all in good repair.

Squads of riflemen and marines laxly patrol the ramparts of the wall, not taking their duties very seriously and spending as much time as possible indoors in the battlements to avoid the chill winds. Still, the ground around the city is open for half a mile at least, so approaching travelers will likely be spotted.

Ostium Judicii

Twin statues of pure marble—one of a fisherman wielding a harpoon, and the other of a fully armored holy warrior—flank the city's primary entrance, Ostium Judicii (Gate of Judgment), which faces south, to the road that leads to Cherage. Once defended by various spells and wards, the modern gate is a tactical nightmare, with no physical doors to prevent entrance.

Danoran troops guard this entrance with zeal because their commanders; even though they've never had to actually fight back intruders, their commanders harshly punish dereliction of duty. The soldiers have set-up half-a-dozen barricades and defensive lines made from old marble columns and stone debris in canvas sacks. Over sixty well armed soldiers watch the gate at any time.

Ostium Splendoris

The north-western entrance, Ostium Splendoris (Gate of Splendor) is named after the brilliant reflection its sealed doors have against the setting sun. The Clergy kept it open from dawn to noon, then forced most travelers to wait and pray in its glow until it opened again. The Danorans keep it closed at all times.

Ostium Pietatem

Near the river, the Ostium Pietatem (Gate of Piety) normally remained shut, but acted as an expedited entrance elite members of the Clergy who bore the proper key. While not magically powered, the unique key shape required by the gate has vexed Danoran engineers, leaving the gate all but abandoned by Danoran military personnel.

Aspirants Bridge

Constructed as the sole link between Holy Methia and the Urbem Postulatoris, this bridge suffered greatly during the death of Srasama, since its structure was dependent on magic.

Made of the same white-stone that marks most Methian structures, the three-foot high railing of the bridge is inscribed with names—each a survivor of the First Victory—which were etched on the bridge when the champions returned to Methia from the war of expansion.

Now the bridge is home to Danoran sniper training grounds. Snipers take up positions on the Holy Methia side of the bridge, and take shots across the gap at varying targets that are set-up for them. A smaller patrol of Danoran soldiers resides on the Urbem Postulatoris side, charged with replacing struck training dummies and monitoring the Église River for signs of smuggler boats seeking to sack the city.

Docks

Where Holy Methia is bordered by the river, Clergy naval vessels once would disgorge soldiers and workers. Today the docks serve in a similar fashion for the Danoran army. At any time, two to three Danoran vessels of varying size can be found at the docks. If it has not already been sunk, the experimental vessel *Lya's Lament* can be found resting here, crewed by a handful of Porteur de Mort Marines.

Six small gates pass through the walls from the docks, each guarded by a small detachment of soldiers.

Lance of Triegenes

The former seat of power for the Hierarchs of the Clergy, the tower known as the Lance of Triegenes dominates the skyline even now when most of it has collapsed. It originally thrust fifteen hundred feet skyward, but today barely a third of that remains. Without magic to support it, the tower fell in on itself and shattered.

The structure once had hundreds of small shrines that served as foci for powerful spells protecting the nation, but the collapse destroyed most of these, and whatever was left of value has long since been looted. However, a fifteen-foot-wide staircase spirals up the exterior of the tower. Climbing to the current pinnacle—about fifty stories—takes most people half an hour.

Located on a small river islet, the tower has been left uninhabited for centuries, even the Danoran military having strict orders from the Sovereign to leave the site undisturbed, for fear of waking any lingering curse from Srasama.

Despite their orders not to enter the tower, the Danorans maintain a heavy blockade of the island. The isle's single dock resembles a cathedral more than a wharf, and soldiers use it as barracks. They have dug a series of trenches and used debris from the tower to craft defensive lines all the way all the way to the base of the spire.

Sites of Note

If you want an interesting backdrop for a scene or battle in Methia, consider these.

Font of Saint Sharissey

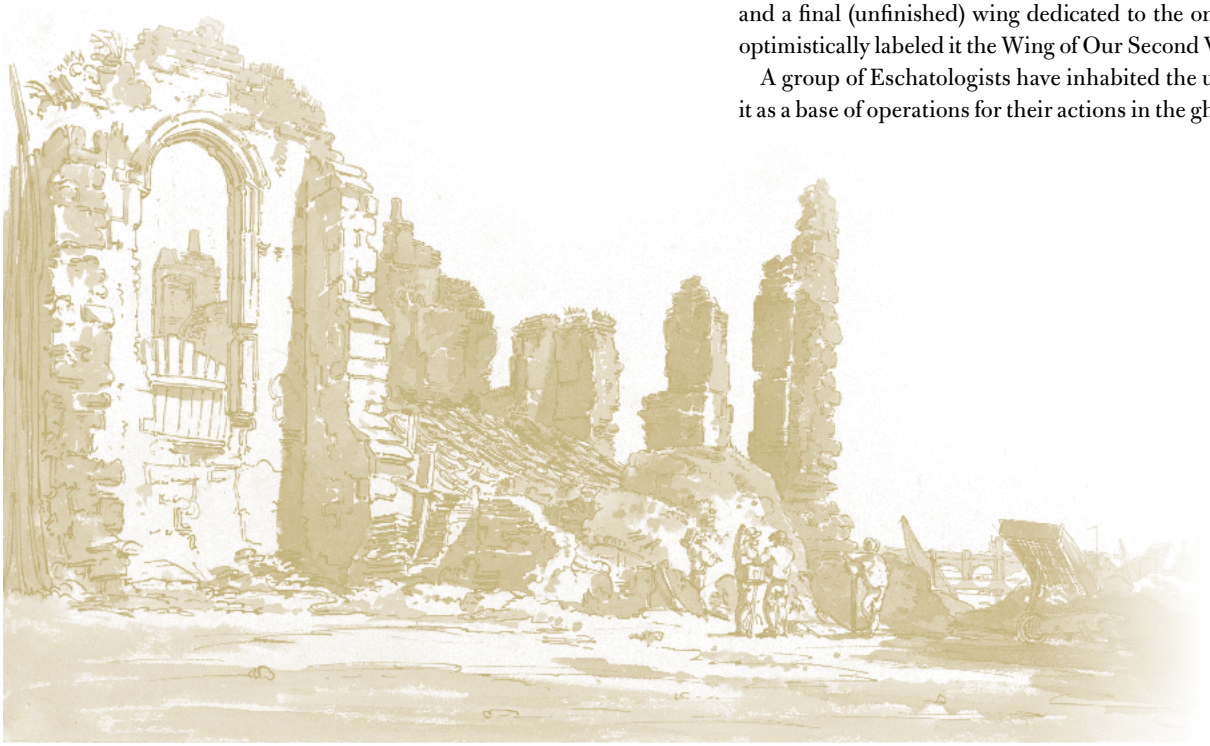
A few blocks from the Ostium Judicii, the grand fountain that is the Font of Saint Sharissey still disgorges water. Crowned with the features of the stern saint, the spring is filled with discarded copper and silver, each piece thrown in by the Clergy of old and Danorans of present, in an attempt to gain the favor of the saint. Danoran commanders have standing orders to arrest any soldier who engages in such superstition.

As a source of clean drinking water, the font has never been truly examined for fear of disrupting whatever technological or magical marvel that keeps it functioning.

Hall of Victories

This incredibly large structure was built as a museum to commemorate the many successes and struggles of the Clergy. Divided into 3 major areas, the museum has a wing dedicated to the First Victory, a second wing dedicated to rise of Triegenes and the war against the Demonocracy, and a final (unfinished) wing dedicated to the ongoing struggles. They optimistically labeled it the Wing of Our Second Victory.

A group of Eschatologists have inhabited the unfinished wing, using it as a base of operations for their actions in the ghost city (see page 295).



Tears of Hell

The Great Malice tore the ground of the western edge of the city asunder. Originally housing the barracks of the city guard and military units, the rents in the earth sucked in these unsuspecting residents, plunging them into sinkholes. This act rendered the city guard ineffective during the chaos that followed, another tragic footnote of Methia's fall.

Today the 'Tears of Hell' as they are known remain as great chasms within the city walls. Danoran soldiers tell tales of rifts that go all the way down to lava, with creatures moving within, but these ghost stories are only to scare new recruits, since everyone knows no ghosts can endure here.

Factions

There are a handful of groups at work within the city of Methia.

Obscurati

Embedded within the Danoran military presence, several Obscurati agents work within the city. While not high-ranking members of the conspiracy, these agents act as the personal will of Sovereign Jierre, informing him of all that transpires within the ghost city. These agents remain unaware of Methia's history and connection to the conspiracy's roots, but have explicit orders from the Sovereign to ensure none enter the Lance of Triegenes.

Master Chief Faradio is a Beran lizardfolk who got his hands on technological designs from Tinker Oddcog and fled to Danor. He bartered the information for a chance to actually build one of the devices and help upgrade a unit of the Danoran army with advanced vehicles. He's also a Tier Four member of the Obscurati. (His ring reads *Ole! Bravo! Boom!*)

Uses the island as a testbed for the new machine of war: an experimental tank dubbed *Le Grand Patron*.

Danoran Military

Across the Église River in the old Urbem Postulatoris, the Danoran military has set-up a veritable town of tents and temporary lodging. The surviving structures of the former ghettos have been converted into temporary command centers and military planning areas. A total of 5,000 Danoran soldiers inhabit the town, with an additional 2,000 soldiers deployed throughout the greater region.

Marshal Henric Beaujeu is charged with monitoring the precision of operations in Methia. Holding the title of Marshal, Henric's role is more honorific than any proper position of authority. Having married a lesser noble, Henric was honorably discharged after breaking his leg during a diplomatic mission to Drakr. Since that fateful day, Henric learned to maneuver himself politically, and obtain a position of prestige, without any actual work. Now the obese man walks with a pacing stick, barking orders and telling stories to any who pay attention long enough.

Minister of War Eloise Duffet acts as a VIP on-site during the military exercise. Holding no official military rank, Duffet served during the last war, where she was a leading military commander in the Yerasol Archipelago conflicts. She hates Risur as easily as she breathes, and has swayed many in the local units to her point of view.

Eschatologists

Sheltered within the Hall of Victories in the western city, a band of Eschatologists eke out a living in the streets of Holy Methia. The Danoran military is well aware of the group's movements in the city, but Danoran researchers asked the military to leave them be when they learned the group consisted primarily of devas.

Normally the devas — those touched by Srasama's death — reincarnate when they die, but Danoran arcanoscientists are curious to see how the dead magic of Methia affects these people. For now they simply maintain occasional contact. Soldiers go in and check on the eschatologists, who in exchange exhort the men to ponder the end.

Lady Emselle d'Grise leads the Eschatologists within the city, more by virtue of being the first to arrive. Emselle spent most of her incarnations in Danor and had quite a convoluted history, but she always maintained correspondences with numerous other devas. After listening to philosopher Vlendam Heid a few years ago, Lady Emselle invited her friends to join her in Methia to prepare for their final deaths.

If the party is on the run, they might run into a deva eschatologist who could briefly shelter them. Earning the trust of the eschatologists is difficult, but if the party is honest, the devas are fascinated by their mission and will help as they can to get the party through the city. Dressing like the devas will let them avoid attention as long as the alert level is not too high.

So what *does* happen when a deva dies in Methia? They don't know.

APPENDIX E: Recurring Enemies & Allies

ENEMY FORCES

Light and Progress

Adventure 6

Herein we present the stats for Lya Jierre's group,

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

Rush Munchausen Level 14 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (half-elf) **XP** 1,000

HP 128; **Bloodied** 64 **Initiative** +15
AC 28, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 24 **Perception** +6
Speed 6, fly 8 (hover), overland flight 12 Darkvision
Immune forced movement

Traits

▸ **Immovable**
The man's forearms are massive, like he's strong enough to swing greatswords one-handed all day long. When you try to move him he just clicks of a button on his rod, and then smirks and stays put.

Thanks to his dual *immovable rods*, Rush is immune to forced movement and cannot be knocked prone as long as he has one of his rods. He only ever falls as far as he wants to.

▸ **Cheating Gravity**
He holds one rod in the air and presses a button, causing it to stay in place even as he swings on it. Then in midair he flicks buttons on both rods, causing the first to move again, and the second to become a new fulcrum for his brachiation.

Rush can fly his speed as long as he has both rods, and can hover without penalty as long as he has one.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Extensible Rod** ✦ At-Will, Basic
He casually pokes a button on the platinum rod, and it stretches to a length of eight feet. He pokes it into your ribs and shoves you against the wall. Try as you might, you cannot move an inch.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12+9 damage. Rush can slide the target 1 square and shift 2 squares.
Special: If the attack hits, and the target is either prone or adjacent to an object at least as large as itself, and Rush is within 2 squares of the target, Rush can have his rod restrain the creature. It can attempt to escape as a standard action (Strength DC 25). If Rush moves he must either release the creature, or leave the rod behind.

✧ **Rods and Kicks** ✦ At-Will
He uses his weapon as a pivot point for a volley of strikes and kicks, then swings above his own rod and up out of your reach.
Attack: Close Burst 2 (enemies in burst); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 1d12+9 damage.
Effect: Rush shifts 2. (He can fly while shifting.)

Move Actions

▸ **Create Cover** ✦ At-Will
He plants one rod in the ground and locks it in place, using it as a barrier against your attacks.
Effect: Rush chooses a creature he can see and gains a +2 bonus to his defenses against its attacks until he moves. He can only gain cover from one creature in this way at a time.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Liberating Vulgarity** ✦ Encounter
Your attack hits him solidly, but he seems to be too busy cursing at you to notice.
Trigger: Rush is afflicted by a negative condition.
Effect (Free Action): Rush ignores that condition until the end of his next turn.

Skills Acrobatics +21, Athletics +20, Stealth +18
Str 20 (+12) **Dex** 22 (+13) **Wis** 8 (+6)
Con 16 (+10) **Int** 13 (+8) **Cha** 9 (+6)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Primordial
Equipment *Paired immovable rods, contingent gatecrasher charm, immovable shaft*

Merton Goncala Level 14 Controller
Medium natural humanoid (human, orc) **XP** 1,000

HP 128; **Bloodied** 64 **Initiative** +15
AC 28, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 26 **Perception** +6
Speed 5 Darkvision
Immune dazed, deafened
Resist thunder 20, stunned

Traits

▸ **Baffling Helmet**
This hugely muscled orc wears plate armor, but his steel helm looks like it covers earmuffs. For some reason he seems to want extra ear protection.

As long as Merton has his helmet on, he is immune to the deafened condition, and has resist thunder 20.

▸ **History of Head Injuries**
As hard as you hit him, he should be sprawling, but he just shakes it off like he's felt it all before.

Merton is immune to the dazed condition, and while stunned he can still take a single action on his turn.

☼ **Thundering Presence** ✦ Aura 2
The tip of his staff hums with barely audible energy, but the animals seem to hate how it sounds.

Creatures that end their turn in the aura take 10 thunder damage. Creatures of animal intelligence (Int 2 or less) must make a saving throw to enter the aura, and at the start of their turn must make another save or else be compelled to leave the aura.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Sonic Staff** (thunder) ✦ At-Will, Basic
When he strikes you, his staff releases a deafening thunderclap.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8+6 damage, plus 10 thunder damage. The target is deafened (save ends) and is pushed 5 squares.

✧ **Thunderwave** (thunder) ✦ At-Will
He smashes his staff on the ground, sending out a wave of rippling sound.
Attack: Close Burst 3 (creatures in burst); +17 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d6+6 thunder damage and the target is pushed 5 squares.

✲ **Resonant Bomb** (thunder) ✦ Daily
He pulls a melon-sized metal canister from his back, taps a button, and hurls it. When it lands, everything around it seems to simply shatter. It takes you a moment to realize you've been hurled to the ground, and that your ears are bleeding.
Attack: Area Burst 2 within 10 (creatures in burst); +17 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 20 thunder damage and the target is pushed 5 squares from the origin of the area.
Miss: 10 thunder damage and the target is pushed 1 square.
Effect: Objects in the primary area that cannot move (like trees) are annihilated, potentially causing a tree to collapse since it no longer has a base. Every creature within 10 squares of the origin of the area is knocked prone, and is dazed and deafened (save ends both).

Skills Arcana +15, Nature +18, Stealth +11
Str 22 (+13) **Dex** 8 (+6) **Wis** 8 (+6)
Con 16 (+10) **Int** 16 (+10) **Cha** 9 (+6)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Giant, Orcish
Equipment *sonic lance, contingent gatecrasher charm.*

Obscurati Ambush Mage
Level 13 Controller (Leader)
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 mage's next turn.

⟋ **Crippling Ray** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will
The nethermancer sweeps his orb, and insubstantial black tendrils reach up from the ground and snare you.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one enemy); +16 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6+10 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened and immobilized (save ends both).

▸ **Pervasive Darkness** ✦ Encounter
A dark veil is pulled across the world, dropping everything into near blackness.
Effect: Magical darkness fills an area burst 5 within 20 until the end of the encounter. Light sources outside the area cannot illuminate inside it, and light sources inside the area can produce no more than dim light.

Minor Actions
▸ **Shadowy Aid** ✦ At-Will (1/round)
A shadowy image of the spellcaster appears beside his ally and helps free it from whatever's harming it.
Effect: One ally within 10 squares can make a saving throw.

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

Obscurati Skulk
Level 13 Goon Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, human **XP** 400
HP 60; **Bloodied** 30 **Initiative** +13
AC 27, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 24 **Perception** +6
Speed 7 Darkvision

Traits
▸ **Goon**
Similar to a minion, the Obscurati skulk goes down easily in a fight. He has half the hit points of a normal creature of his level.

▸ **Courseur**
The Obscurati skulk has the grace of an acrobat. They climb, jump, and swing through the fray with supreme confidence of their course. They take no falling damage for the first 20 feet they fall, and can Take 10 on Athletics and Acrobatics checks.

Standard Actions
⊘ **Shortsword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6+10 damage.

⟋ **Shadow Snare** ✦ At-Will
The slender warrior throws out a hand and a thread of shadow pierces you. You hear a mechanical action as spikes extend into your flesh. He yanks back to drag you down.
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+10 damage and the target is pulled 2 squares. If the target is bloodied, it is also knocked prone.

Skills Acrobatics +16, Athletics +13, Stealth +16
Str 15 (+8) **Dex** 20 (+11) **Wis** 10 (+6)
Con 10 (+6) **Int** 10 (+6) **Cha** 11 (+6)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common

Lux Musketeer
Level 13 Minion Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, human **XP** 200
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +5
AC 25, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 25 **Perception** +5
Speed 6

Traits
▸ **Background Dressing**
A Lux musketeer never attacks. It can take a single move action per turn. Non-minion creatures can move through its space. It counts as difficult terrain. A hostile creature that starts its turn in the musketeer's space takes 10 damage. A creature that occupies multiple spaces only takes this damage once.

▸ **Suppressing Fire**
Instead of moving, a musketeer can deal 5 damage to a creature within 20 squares that does not have any cover or concealment relative to it.

Triggered Actions
▸ **Crush of Bodies**
Trigger: A musketeer starts its turn adjacent to a hostile minion.
Effect (No Action): Each creature deals 1 damage to the other.

The Steelshaper

Adventure 7

Leone Quital, the Steelshaper Level 17 Elite Artillery
Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP** 3200

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

Advanced Bleak Golem Level 15 Soldier
Large shadow animate (construct) **XP** 1200
HP 144; **Bloodied** 72 **Initiative** +7
AC 31, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 27 **Perception** +7
Speed 5 Darkvision
Resist necrotic 10

Traits

▸ **Bleak Aura**
The golem's attacks smear you with oil and burn you with the essence of the Bleak Gate.
A creature affected by the golem's *bleak aura* gains ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends). Whenever the affected creature takes this damage, each creature within 3 squares takes 5 necrotic damage.

▸ **Hulking**
The machine is huge and heavy, and some great pressure rumbles and churns within, only held in place by arcane sigils carved along its joints and seams.
When the golem is subjected to forced movement, reduce the distance by 1 square. Due to its immense metallic weight, if it climbs atop a surface less sturdy than stone, it destroys that terrain.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Witchoil Fist** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Black oil leaks from the joints of this golem's fists.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +20 vs. AC
Hit: 4d8+4 damage, and the target is affected by *bleak aura*.

⌖ **Witchoil Thrower** (necrotic) ✦ Encounter
A hinge on the golem's wrist swivels its hand away, revealing a nozzle that blasts you with withering oil.
Attack: Close Blast 5; +18 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8+4 necrotic damage, and the target is affected by *bleak aura*.

Triggered Actions

⌖ **Witchoil Breach** (necrotic) ✦ Encounter
Sigil etched along the golem's seams flare red, then go black. The golem's abdomen explodes outward with a cloud of searing, smoking oil.
Trigger: The golem becomes bloodied.
Attack: Close Burst 5; +18 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 4d8+14 necrotic damage, and the target is pushed 5 squares, dazed until the end of the golem's next turn, and affected by *bleak aura*.
Effect: The golem loses the *hulking* trait. Its speed increases to 8, and it gains a climb speed of 4.

Str 24 (+14) **Dex** 6 (+5) **Wis** 10 (+7)
Con 14 (+9) **Int** 3 (+3) **Cha** 6 (+5)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** understands Common

Obscurati Arcane Marksman Level 15 Artillery Minion
Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP** 300
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +11
AC 29, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 27 **Perception** +7
Speed 6 Darkvision

Standard Actions

⊘ **Rifle Smash** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage.

✓ **Seeking Bullet** (weapon, fire) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Special: If the marksman is aware of a creature's presence, it can fire around a corner, though it takes a –5 penalty if it cannot see the target.
Attack: Ranged 25/50; +20 vs. AC
Hit: 12 damage, or 18 damage on a crit.
Effect: One square of the target's space becomes a zone of fire until the end of the encounter. Any creature that enters or ends its turn in that space takes 5 fire damage.

Str 14 (+9) **Dex** 18 (+11) **Wis** 10 (+7)
Con 14 (+9) **Int** 12 (+8) **Cha** 8 (+6)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common

Frost Giants of Knutpara

Adventure 7

Knütpara Frost Giant Ranger Level 17 Skirmisher
Large natural humanoid **XP** 1600
HP 160; **Bloodied** 80 **Initiative** +8
AC 31, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 29 **Perception** +13
Speed 8 (ice walk)
Resist cold 10

Traits

▸ **Ice Walk**
The giant can move across snow and ice as if it were normal terrain.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Icebreaker Spear** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The ice cracks beside you as you barely avoid being impaled through your torso.
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 3d10+9 damage.
Effect: The target's space and each adjacent space becomes difficult terrain.
Special: The giant can throw the spear with range 6/12, but it only has one spear.

⌖ **Killing Roar** (cold, thunder) ✦ Encounter
He shouts, and the wind blasts you back and freezes you to the ground.
Attack: Close Blast 5 (creatures in burst); +20 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 5d6+2 cold and thunder damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares, knocked prone, and is restrained (Escape DC 24).

Str 24 (+15) **Dex** 10 (+8) **Wis** 10 (+8)
Con 14 (+10) **Int** 8 (+7) **Cha** 8 (+7)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Dwarven, Giant

Demonic Deathbear Level 16 Lurker
Large natural beast (demon) **XP** 1400
HP 76; **Bloodied** 38 **Initiative** +12
AC 30, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 28 **Perception** +15
Speed 10 (ice walk) Bloodsense
Immune cold

Traits

▸ **Bloodsense**
A creature like a white bear lopes across the snow, leaving a trail of bloody footprints. As you look more closely, you see it simply wears the bear's fur, and underneath it has no skin of its own.
The bear can ignore any concealment of bloodied creatures, or of those taking untyped ongoing damage.

▸ **Ice Walk**
The deathbear can move across snow and ice as if it were normal terrain.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Cursed Maul** ✦ At-Will, Basic

The bloody bear emerges from the blinding snowstorm and swipes a forelimb at you, then clamps its fangs over your shoulder and sinks fangs into your flesh. It pulls away and blood pours freely.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+5 damage and the target gains ongoing 10 damage (save ends).

✓ **Mutliation Gaze** (charm) ✦ Recharge on miss

The bear locks eyes with you, and you feel a squirming pulse beneath your skin. Something's trying to climb out of you. Your blood needs to be free. You know it! You take a blade and cut open your veins.

Attack: Ranged 40 (one creature); +19 vs. Will

Hit: The target falls prone and is compelled to mutilate itself (save ends). While compelled, each turn it acts as best it can to acquire a slashing or piercing weapon, and then spends a standard action to inflict a wound on itself. This deals 1[w]+20 damage. If the target has no appropriate weapons, it claws with its nails, dealing just 20 damage.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Undying**

You've caught your breath and treated your injured, and only now do you realize the creature's dead body is gone. All that's left is the bloody stain in the snow of where it died.

Trigger: The deathbear ends its turn at 0 hit points or below, and is on a patch of blood-soaked snow or ice (such as the space where it died).

Effect (No Action): The deathbear regains hit points equal to its bloodied value and regrows any severed limbs.

The deathbear typically plays dead until enemies have left the battlefield, or at least are distracted with other foes. An Insight check (DC 31) detects the ruse. If it was dismembered, noticing the revival is much easier (Perception DC 16).

A deathbear can be killed permanently if its dead body is moved to pristine snow, or off of snow and ice entirely. For this reason, deathbears avoid stony or rocky areas.

Str	20 (+13)	**Dex**	10 (+8)	**Wis**	14 (+10)
Con	14 (+10)	**Int**	2 (+4)	**Cha**	6 (+7)

Alignment Evil **Languages** understands Giant

Knütpara Frost Giant Guard

Level 17 Goon Soldier

Large natural humanoid **XP** 800

HP 80; **Bloodied** 40 **Initiative** +8

AC 33, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 28 **Perception** +8

Speed 6 (ice walk)

Resist cold 10

Traits

▸ **Ice Walk**

The giant can move across snow and ice as if it were normal terrain.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Ramhorn Cudgel** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The head of his club is made from a half dozen ram skulls, some of them still with bits of flesh. He uses their horns as an odd hook to grab you.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +22 vs. AC

Hit: 3d10+9 damage and the target is slowed until the end of its next turn.

Str	24 (+15)	**Dex**	10 (+8)	**Wis**	10 (+8)
Con	14 (+10)	**Int**	8 (+7)	**Cha**	8 (+7)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Dwarven, Giant

Knütpara Frost Giant Mage

Level 17 Controller

Large natural humanoid **XP** 1600

HP 160; **Bloodied** 80 **Initiative** +8

AC 31, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 29 **Perception** +8

Speed 7 (ice walk)

Resist cold 10

Traits

▸ **Ice Walk**

The giant can move across snow and ice as if it were normal terrain.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Meteoric Iron Axe** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

His roughly hammered axe is large enough it doesn't need to be sharp.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +22 vs. AC

Hit: 3d12+6 damage, and the giant pushes the target 2 squares.

✓ **Freeze Blast** (cold) ✦ At-Will

A beam of blue magic lances out from his hand, and wherever it touches is coated with ice.

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +20 vs. Reflex

Hit: 4d8+7 cold damage, and the target is slowed (save ends). If it is already slowed, it is instead restrained (Escape DC 23).

✲ **Ice Shaping** ✦ Recharge when bloodied

With a wave of his hand, the glacier extrudes spikes and a wall of ice.

Effect: The giant can control ice in an area burst 3 within 10. He can extrude ice walls, bridges, or similar terrain filling up to four unoccupied 5-ft. cubes, and can excavate up to four 5-ft. cubes from the solid ice. He can also cause any space in the area to become spiky hazardous terrain. Creatures take 10 damage for each square they travel through the spikes. Each 5-ft. square has 40 hit points.

If he creates spiky terrain, make the following attack.

Attack: Area bust 3 within 10 (creatures in hazardous terrain); +20 vs. AC

Hit: 5d6+10 damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Str	20 (+13)	**Dex**	10 (+8)	**Wis**	10 (+8)
Con	14 (+10)	**Int**	14 (+10)	**Cha**	8 (+7)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Dwarven, Giant

Odul Chuvan, Frost Giant Khangitche

Level 17 Elite Soldier

Large natural humanoid **XP** 3200

HP 320; **Bloodied** 160 **Initiative** +8

AC 33, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 29 **Perception** +13

Speed 6 (ice walk)

Resist cold 10

Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Ice Walk**

The giant can move across snow and ice as if it were normal terrain.

▸ **Wintry Shell** (cold)

Your weapon sinks into the giant's plate armor, which cracks and sprays freezing water across you. You find your weapon stuck in a frozen clump of ice.

Whenever a melee weapon or unarmed attack hits Odul, the attacker takes 5 cold damage and must make a saving throw. If he fails, his weapon is stuck. He can make a Strength check (DC 18) as a minor action to pull the weapon free. Until he succeeds, whenever Odul moves, the creature can either let go (not an option if his unarmed attack got stuck) or be pulled along.

Standard Actions

Slash and Grab (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

His sword nearly slices your head off, and you're not fast enough to keep him from grabbing you.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +22 vs. AC

Hit: 3d10+9 damage. Odul Chuvan grabs the target (Escape DC 23).

Minor Actions

Dwarf Tossing (weapon) ✦ At-Will

He plucks a dwarf off the ground and hurls it at you.

Requirement: Odul can readily grab one of the prisoners without requiring an attack roll. He can also grab a similarly heavy chunk of stone or ice from the mine, or can throw a Medium or smaller PC he has already grabbed.

Attack: Ranged 6/12; +22 vs. AC

Hit: 3d8+10 damage. The prisoner takes the same damage, likely killing it.

Killing Roar (cold, thunder) ✦ Encounter

He shouts, and the wind blasts you back and freezes you to the ground.

Attack: Close Blast 5; +20 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 5d6+2 cold and thunder damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares, knocked prone, and is restrained (Escape DC 24).

Str	24 (+15)	**Dex**	10 (+8)	**Wis**	10 (+8)
Con	14 (+10)	**Int**	8 (+7)	**Cha**	8 (+7)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Giant

Convocation

Adventure 7

Shadowlisk Level 15 Elite Controller

Large shadow beast (reptile) **XP** 2400

HP 304; **Bloodied** 152 **Initiative** +7

AC 30, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 27 **Perception** +14

Speed 8 Darkvision

Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

Serpentine Darkness

A dark form slithers toward you like a snake massive enough to swallow a man whole. The moment it touches the light its body explodes into vivid color, its clawed legs reach forward for you, and its massive eyes begin to glow. You find it difficult to look away.

The shadowlisk can squeeze through openings as small as one foot wide. If in an area of dim or no light, the shadowlisk is insubstantial but cannot use *umbrafying gaze*.

True Seeing

Its head twists and it blinks curiously at you. You realize that your illusion has ended.

Any creature that ends its turn in the shadowlisk's line of sight has its true form revealed, ignoring any illusions or transmutations. The effects are not dispelled or suppressed, simply seen through.

Standard Actions

Claw, Slither, Bite ✦ At-Will, Basic

It swipes at you, dances sideways in a dexterous coil of motion, then snaps its beak into your thigh.

Effect: The shadowlisk makes the following two attacks. It can teleport 5 squares to a square adjacent to the primary target before, after, or between the attacks. If it teleports while the target is prone, the target makes a saving throw. If it fails, it teleports to a space adjacent to the shadowlisk's new location.

Primary Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC

Hit: 2d10+12 damage.

Secondary Attack: Melee 1 (same as primary target); +18 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d10+12 damage and the target is knocked prone.

Umbrafying Gaze (radiant) ✦ At-Will

Its eyes flash with the light of the sun, burning your shadow into the wall behind you.

Special: This attack affects every target in a line that stretches out 5 squares from the basilisk.

Attack: Ranged 5 (each creature in a 5-square line); +19 vs. Will

Hit: 50 radiant damage and the target is immobilized until the end of the shadowlisk's next turn.

If the target is bloodied after this damage, it must make a save. If it fails, its body is annihilated and its soul is burned into the ground or wall behind it, like a shadow. The creature can see, hear, and slightly twitch. If a creature coats its hands with the blood of a shadowlisk within five minutes, it can then reach into the surface and pull the creature out, restoring its normal body.

Miss: 25 radiant damage and the target is slowed until the end of the shadowlisk's next turn.

Str	22 (+13)	**Dex**	10 (+7)	**Wis**	14 (+9)
Con	20 (+12)	**Int**	2 (+3)	**Cha**	8 (+6)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —

Vicemi Terio, spectral archmage Level 17 Elite Artillery

Medium shadow humanoid (undead) **XP** 2800

HP 163; **Bloodied** 81 **Initiative** +9

AC 31, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 30 **Perception** +10

Speed fly 8 (hover); phasing Darkvision

Resist cold 20, poison 20; insubstantial

Vulnerable radiant 10

Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

Ghostly Entourage Bracelet

As he casts a spell, this platinum, obsidian, and ivory bangle around his wrist clatters hollowly.

Vicemi uses this enchanted bangle (see page 330) as an implement to cast his spells. Creatures with necrotic resistance gain only half their resistance's benefits against his attacks, and those immune to necrotic damage instead have only resist 10 necrotic. If he loses it, he takes a –2 penalty to his attack and damage rolls with implement attacks.

He commands a collection of minor ghosts through the bracelet, which function as a dozen sets of extra hands that can move objects weighing up to 25 pounds within 50 feet of him.

Withdraw from Sight

Whenever Vicemi takes damage, he turns invisible until he either attacks or chooses to become visible. When he is reduced to 0 HP he discorporates but will return in a few days unless Nicodemus the Gnostic is defeated.

Standard Actions

Vampiric Link (implement, necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic

He rasps out the verbal components of a quick spell, then swipes his hand through your heart. Blood coats his fingers as he pulls them out of your flesh. Somehow, though, you can still feel him touching your beating heart.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 3d6+14 necrotic damage and Vicemi regains 25 hit points.

Effect: If the target heals or gains any temporary hit points before the end of Vicemi's next turn, Vicemi heals or gains temporary hit points in equal quantity.

Skeletal Missile (implement) ✦ At-Will

He casts five bolts of force from his hand, and when they strike they transform into skeletal warriors.

Effect: Vicemi shoots five missiles, which unerringly hit their targets. Each targets a creature within 20 squares, dealing 3 force damage. He can target the same creature multiple times.

Then Vicemi summons a skeletal warrior in a space adjacent to the target struck by each missile. Each warrior has a speed of 6, 1 hit point, and Vicemi's defenses. They act on Vicemi's initiative, and generally just move to the closest enemy and attack. They have the following attack power.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +22 vs. AC

Hit: 5 damage.

Lightning Conduit (implement, lightning, teleportation) ✦ Daily

He snaps his fingers with one hand, flicks his other hand toward you, then snaps again. A bolt of lightning fills the air down the hall, and lingers. Your nostrils cringe at the scent of ozone.

Effect: Vicemi creates a bolt of lightning in a straight line up to 20 squares long. The area becomes a zone until the end of the encounter. Any creature that enters either end of the line immediately teleports to a space adjacent to the other end. A creature that enters or ends its turn in any square of the zone not at either end takes 25 lightning damage.

Make the following attack against any creature in the area when it appears.

Attack: Area special (creatures in area); +22 vs. Reflex

Hit: 3d8+25 lightning damage.

Creeping Terror (implement, fear) ✦ Daily

Ethereal screams streak past you, sometimes echoing, sometimes piercing straight into your mind, as if you are surrounded by hungry ghosts. A fog begins to envelop you, hiding your enemies, and your heart races against your will, urging you to strike the first thing you see.

Effect: Vicemi summons an invisible Medium wraith-like creature in a space within 20 squares of him. The wraith has his defenses and 25 hit points. On his turn he can have it move 4 squares as a free action. When it appears, and at the start of each of Vicemi's turns, the wraith makes the following attack.

Attack: Close Burst 2 (enemies in burst); +22 vs. Will

Hit: The target is slowed and panicked (save ends). While panicked, if a creature moves adjacent to the target it must make a melee basic attack against that creature as an opportunity action. If a panicked creature starts its turn adjacent to one or more creatures, its first action that turn must be some sort of attack that targets at least one of those creatures.

Effect: The area becomes a zone of impenetrable fog until the end of the encounter. Adjacent creatures have concealment, and one or more squares of fog provides total concealment.

Minor Actions

Dispel Magic ✦ Recharge on miss

Vicemi fires a ray of white energy that erases an ongoing magical effect.

Attack: Ranged 10 (one conjuration or zone); +22 vs. Will of the target's creator.

Hit: The magic of the conjuration or zone ends.

Resist Energy ✦ At-Will

The faint glow of an arcane shield clings to his spectral body.

Effect: Vicemi chooses acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder. He gains resist 10 against that energy type until the end of the encounter, or until he uses this power again.

Str	18 (+12)	**Dex**	12 (+9)	**Wis**	14 (+10)
Con	14 (+10)	**Int**	26 (+16)	**Cha**	19 (+12)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Primordial

Obscurati Bookpin Guard

Level 17 Minion Soldier

Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP** 400

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +12

AC 31, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 29 **Perception** +13

Speed 5

Traits

Magical Defender

The guard touches the golden pin holding his cloak and says an arcane word to break the enchantment on his ally.

Each allied creature adjacent to the bookpin guard gains a +2 bonus to all defenses.

Standard Actions

Longsword (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +22 vs. AC

Hit: 12 damage.

Pistol (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +20 vs. AC

Hit: 12 damage, or 18 on a crit.

Str	18 (+12)	**Dex**	10 (+8)	**Wis**	10 (+8)
Con	15 (+10)	**Int**	14 (+10)	**Cha**	10 (+8)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven

Ghost Council Swarm

Level 15 Solo Brute

Gargantuan shadow humanoid (undead, swarm) **XP** 6000

HP 380; **Threshold I** 252; **Threshold II** 126 **Initiative** +16

AC 28, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 28 **Perception** +15

Speed fly 8 (hover); phasing Darkvision

Resist cold 20, poison 20; insubstantial

Vulnerable radiant 10

Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 1

Traits

Swarm of Ghosts

The swarm has two HP thresholds, and its abilities change as it reaches different thresholds. The damaged ghosts discorporate but will return in a few days unless Nicodemus the Gnostic is defeated.

The swarm consists of a hundred or more ghosts who travel together closely-packed, filling the space of a Gargantuan creature. The swarm fills 16 contiguous spaces, and can stretch across the battlefield. Enemies can move through the swarm, which counts as difficult terrain.

Enemies cannot gain combat advantage against the swarm by flanking it.

Standard Actions

Eldritch Grasp (acid, cold, fire, lightning) ✦ At-Will

You stray too close to the swarm, and a half-dozen undead mages assault you with energetic touch spells.

Effect: If the swarm makes an opportunity attack, just make the following power once. If it uses this power on its turn, make the following attack against up to four different targets. For each attack choose whether it deals acid, cold, fire, or lightning damage.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d6+17 damage of the chosen energy type.

Oppressive Moan (fear, psychic, thunder) ✦ Encounter, Stage 1

The council shuffles forward slowly, hunched, glaring wide-eyed at you as they unleash a long, eerie moan.

Requirement: The Ghost Council swarm has more than 252 HP.

Effect: Make the following two attacks.

Primary Attack: Close Blast 10 (enemies in blast); +19 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 5d6+25 thunder damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Miss: Half damage.

Secondary Attack: Close Blast 10 (enemies in blast); +19 vs. Will

Hit: 5d6+25 psychic damage, and the target is weakened (save ends). This is a fear effect.

✓ **Carry Off** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Stage 2
The swarm swoops into you. Dozens of hands grasp you and carry you off the ground. Every touch drains away your life force.
Requirement: The Ghost Council swarm has more than 126 HP but less than 253.
Effect: The swarm flies 8 squares and makes the following attack against up to two targets at any point during the movement.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6+13 necrotic damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 22). The target has ongoing 25 necrotic damage as long as it is grabbed. When the swarm moves, it can slide the target along with it, even into the air. It can sustain the grab as a free action, and can grab up to four creatures at once.

Poltergeist Activity ✦ At-Will, Stage 3
You are all hurled by invisible force against walls. Some of you are defenestrated.
Requirement: The Ghost Council swarm has less than 127 HP.
Attack: Close Burst 10 (enemies in burst); +19 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d10+13 damage, and the Ghost Council hurls the target through the air, sliding them 5 squares and knocking them prone. The Ghost Council can lift the target off the ground during this forced movement.
Miss. Half damage, and the Ghost Council slides the target 1 square.

Minor Actions

▸ **Ectoplasmic Construct** ✦ At-Will, 1/round
A solid wall appears before you, cutting you off from your allies.
Effect: The Ghost Council swarm creates a wall or similar inanimate object out of ectoplasm, filling up to 4 contiguous spaces within 20 squares, to a height of 3 squares. It lasts until the end of the encounter. The ectoplasm is translucent. Each square has 10 hit points.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Splinter** ✦ Encounter
After your latest strike, the swarm recoils, but then grows enraged. You sense a new presence nearby.
Trigger: The Ghost Council swarm is reduced to 252 HP or below.
Effect (No Action): The Ghost Council swarm uses *oppressive moan* if it has not already. Two senior ghost councilors (see below) appear in spaces adjacent to the Ghost Council. They are invisible until they attack. All conditions affecting the Ghost Council transfer to one of those senior ghost councilors.
The Ghost Council gains an action point, then shifts 10 squares. (It likely uses this to flee, but will return to combat later.)

▸ **Fracture** ✦ Encounter
The ghosts exchange glances, and a few shake their heads. Those fly away through the walls. Some seem to have steeled their resolve, while the remainder gather together more closely.
Trigger: The Ghost Council swarm is reduced to 126 HP or below.
Effect (No Action): The Ghost Council swarm reduces in size to 9 contiguous spaces, and is now only size Huge. All conditions affecting the Ghost Council end. Two senior ghost councilors (see below) appear in spaces adjacent to the Ghost Council swarm. They are invisible until they attack.
The Ghost Council swarm gains an action point, then shifts 10 squares. (It likely uses this to flee, but will return to combat later.).

Str 28 (+17) **Dex** 12 (+9) **Wis** 14 (+10)
Con 19 (+12) **Int** 24 (+15) **Cha** 14 (+10)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Senior Ghost Councilor — Level 16 Goon Lurker
Medium shadow humanoid (undead) — **XP** 600

HP 54; **Bloodied** 0 — **Initiative** +16
AC 29, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 29 — **Perception** +10
Speed fly 8 (hover); phasing — Darkvision
Resist cold 20, poison 20; insubstantial
Vulnerable radiant 10

Traits

▸ **Withdraw from Sight**
Whenever the councilor takes damage, it turns invisible until it either attacks or chooses to become visible. When it is reduced to 0 HP it discorporates but will return in a few days unless Nicodemus the Gnostic is defeated.

Standard Actions

✓ **Tap the Council** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
You feel a tap on your shoulder and hear a man clear his throat. You see a ghost behind you, and just then realize your flesh is withering away.His touch carried not the power of a single ghost, but of the entire Ghost Council.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+5 necrotic damage and the target is weakened and has ongoing 5 necrotic damage as long as any hostile member of the Ghost Council can see the target.

✓ **Do Not Deny Us** (charm) ✦ At-Will
The ghost whispers, "Our will shall be not denied," and a deep, nigh-inaudible chorus echoes him. Then he says, "Slay your allies."
Attack: Ranged 10; +19 vs. Will
Hit: The target is dominated until the end of the councilor's next turn. Whenever the councilor takes damage, the target can make a save to end this effect.
Sustain standard. When the councilor sustains this power, he can make the target move its speed.

Str 12 (+9) **Dex** 12 (+9) **Wis** 14 (+10)
Con 19 (+12) **Int** 24 (+15) **Cha** 14 (+10)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Catherine Romana, fey-pact warlock — Level 16 Goon Lurker
Medium natural humanoid (human) — **XP** 600

HP 62; **Bloodied** 31 — **Initiative** +16
AC 29, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 29 — **Perception** +16
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider-climb), teleport 4 — Low-light Vision

Traits

▸ **Rites of Rulership**
As a low-ranking noble of Risur, Catherine can make a saving throw at the start of each turn to end any of the following conditions: blinded, dazed, dominated, stunned, and weakened.

▸ **Lingering Image**
You impale her, then stumble through her body as it collapses into phantasmal leaves.
Whenever Catherine teleports, she leaves behind an illusion of herself (Perception DC 27 to notice). She simultaneously turns invisible until the end of her next turn, or until she attacks.

Standard Actions

✓ **Dream Strike** (weapon, psychic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
You see a woman crawling along the ceiling, and then a blade strikes you from behind. You briefly glimpse that same woman behind you, but then the whole world turns into an insane blur of color and motion.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+11 damage, and the target is blinded and takes ongoing 10 psychic damage (save ends both).

▸ **Summon Wolf** (summoning) ✦ At-Will

Effect: A medium wolf appears in an unoccupied space in a Close Burst 10. It has Catherine's defenses and 1 HP. Whenever Catherine 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; +21 vs. AC

Hit: 12 damage, and the target is slowed on its next turn.

Skills Acrobatics +17, Arcana +15, Stealth +17

Str 9 (+7) **Dex** 19 (+12) **Wis** 12 (+9)

Con 16 (+11) **Int** 15 (+10) **Cha** 19 (+12)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Cula Ravjahani, Vekeshi Mystic Level 16 Goon Soldier

Medium natural humanoid (half-elf) **XP** 600

HP 67; **Bloodied** 33 **Initiative** +14

AC 32, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 27 **Perception** +17

Speed 6 Low-light Vision

Resist fire 20

Standard Actions

⊘ **Tiefling-Bane Longsword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8+10 damage. If the target is a tiefling, it takes an additional 10 damage.

⊘ **Wand of Magic Missiles** (implement, force) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Effect: Cula shoots five missiles, which unerringly hit their targets. Each targets a creature within 20 squares, dealing 3 force damage. She can target the same creature multiple times.

Minor Actions

▸ **Ire of Srasama** (fire, radiant) ✦ Encounter

The faint burning outline of a six-armed goddess hovers behind her. As you strike her and her allies, the goddess retaliates with blades of fire.

Effect: Cula marks a creature within 10 squares until the end of the encounter. The first time each round that creature attacks one of Cula's allies, Cula deals 10 fire and radiant damage to it as a free action.

Str 14 (+10) **Dex** 17 (+11) **Wis** 12 (+9)

Con 14 (+10) **Int** 15 (+10) **Cha** 15 (+10)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Reed Macbannin Level 16 Controller (Leader)

Medium natural humanoid (human, undead) **XP** 1400

HP 154; **Bloodied** 77 **Initiative** +9

AC 30, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 28 **Perception** +11

Speed 6, fly 6 (hover); phasing Darkvision

Immune poison; **Resist** cold 20, poison 20; insubstantial

Vulnerable 10 radiant

Traits

▸ **Scholar of Hexes**

As the enemies prepare to attack, a figure suddenly floats through a wall and stops between you and your foes. It's Reed Macbannin, former watchman of the accursed Cauldron Hill. He smiles, relieved to finally speak honestly. "I stand with my king and his agents, and you'll have to go through me to reach them."

Whenever a creature deals damage to Macbannin, he hexes that creature with one of the curses in the List of Curses sidebar. He can only use each of these curses once per encounter. If he has already used all three, the creature instead takes 20 psychic damage.

☼ **Abjuration Master** ✦ Aura 5

"Stay near me," he says to you, "and I'll get you out of here."

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); +19 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d12 psychic damage, and Macbannin hexes the target with one of the curses below.

Tolling of the Bleak Bell (psychic) ✦ At-Will

A distant bell tolls, and the ghosts around you become suddenly weighty and vulnerable.

Attack: Area Burst 1 within 10 (enemies in burst); +19 vs. Will

Hit: 3d4+11 psychic damage, and the target loses insubstantial, phasing, and any fly speed it may have until the end of Macbannin's next turn.

Minor Action

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.

Triggered Action

Strike Me Down ✦ Encounter

A preternatural wind blasts through the hall, shattering every window. Macbannin's spectral form begins to shred away, but he casts one final curse.

Trigger: Macbannin drops to 0 HP or fewer.

Effect (No Action): Macbannin is permanently slain. One members of the Ghost Council will not rejuvenate if they are destroyed within the next 24 hours. He wants to use this against Vicemi.

Str 8 (+7) **Dex** 12 (+9) **Wis** 16 (+11)
Con 12 (+9) **Int** 18 (+12) **Cha** 18 (+12)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Abyssal, Common, Giant, Primordial

MACBANNIN'S CURSES

Curse of the Cacophony ✦ Encounter

The victim grips his head as if hearing shrieks and sadistic howls.

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.

Curse of the White-Eyed Doppleganger ✦ Encounter

The victim spins and shrieks as if seeing an unspeakable horror.

Effect: Until the end of the encounter, whenever the target makes an attack, he repeats the attack against himself, and perceives his doppelganger attacking him. The doppelganger only exists in the target's mind, and nothing can damage or affect it.

Curse of the Writhing Cauldron ✦ Encounter

The victim collapses and grips his belly, which a moment later erupts with bloody centipedes.

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 is dies, it erupts into a harmless swarm of centipedes. This curse only affects living creatures.

Miscellaneous Forces

Adventure 7

Porteurs De Mort

The following are statblocks for the elite *Porteurs de Mort* soldiers assigned by Sovereign Jierre to target the PCs. If the party faces them in Methia, remember that they cannot use any magical items or effects.

Porteur de Mort Artillerist Level 15 Goon Artillery
Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP** 600

HP 42; **Bloodied** 21 **Initiative** +9
AC 27, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 27 **Perception** +13
Speed 5

Traits

Explosive Munitions

The artillerist hauls a mortar and a backpack of volatile ordnance.

If the artillerist takes 21 or more fire damage from a single source, or if it is reduced to 0 hit points by fire damage, it explodes in Close burst 2. ***Attack***: +18 vs. Reflex. ***Hit:*** 20 damage. ***Miss:*** 10 damage.

Mortar Fire

Barely visible in the distance, you see the artillerist set his hefty mortar and carefully calibrate its aim.

It takes the artillerist one minute to set up his man-sized mortar. Once deployed, it takes him 3 rounds to aim the weapon, and a minor action to load. If he has another creature assisting, it only takes him 3 rounds to set up and 1 round to aim.

Standard Actions

Short Sword (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC

Hit: 1d6+8 damage.

Grenade (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

He chucks a metal dodecahedron at you, its vertices flashing red with firegems.

Effect: The artillerist throws a grenade at a spot within 10 squares and makes a saving throw. If he fails, the grenade lands off by 1 square in a random direction. If the target square is 6 or more squares away, he takes a -2 penalty to his attack roll, and the grenade misses by 2 squares on a failed save.

Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +20 vs. AC

Hit: 2d10+9 damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Ready! Aim! Fire! (weapon) ✦ At-Will

He plants a metal tube on the ground, pointed up, and loads it with some sort of cannister.

Special: The artillerist must have set, aimed, and loaded his mortar. He chooses a spot within 160 squares and makes a saving throw. If he fails, the mortar lands off by 1d6 squares in a random direction.

Attack: Area burst 3 within 160 (creatures in burst); +20 vs. Reflex

Hit: 6d6+20 damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Effect: The ammo has been filled with chunks of stones from Methia. Creatures damaged by this attack have their magic suppressed (save ends). Suppressed characters must make a saving throw when using any arcane, divine, primal, psionic, or shadow powers (and any other types of powers other than martial that I might have forgotten). On a failed save, the power has no effect.

Str 12 (+8) **Dex** 15 (+9) **Wis** 12 (+8)
Con 15 (+9) **Int** 14 (+9) **Cha** 8 (+6)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial
Equipment shortsword, 5 grenades, mortar, ordnance

Porteur de Mort Marine Level 16 Goon Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (tiefling) **XP** 700

HP 56; **Bloodied** 28 **Initiative** +11
AC 30, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 27 **Perception** +14
Speed 7 Low-light vision
Resist fire 13

Standard Actions

⊘ **Coordinated Long Sword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He and his ally coordinate to distract you and strike when your back is turned.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+10 damage, or 4d8+10 damage if the target is granting combat advantage.

Minor Action

⊘ **Pistol** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +21 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4+10 damage, or 1d4+16 on a critical hit.
Load standard.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Grasping Infernal Wrath** (fire) ✦ Encounter
The tiefling's eyes flare with fire, and a spiral of smoke rises from a crack in the earth, grabs you, and holds you.
Trigger: A creature within 10 squares hits the marine.
Effect (No Action): The triggering creature takes 1d6+6 fire damage and is restrained (Escape DC 22). Any cold damage dealt to the creature or the smoke holding him frees him.

Str 16 (+11) **Dex** 16 (+11) **Wis** 12 (+9)
Con 14 (+10) **Int** 12 (+9) **Cha** 6 (+6)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial
Equipment longsword, pistol, mithral breastplate

Porteur de Mort Sniper Level 16 Goon Artillery
Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP** 700

HP 46; **Bloodied** 23 **Initiative** +13
AC 28, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 27 **Perception** +20
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊘ **Rapier** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+16 damage.

⊘ **Rifle** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +21 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6+16 damage, or 1d6+32 on a critical hit.
Load minor.

Move Action

▸ **Adaptive Ammo** ✦ At-Will
In the middle of reloading, the sniper whispers a spell, and his bullet begins to glow.
Effect: The sniper reloads his rifle and chooses one of the following effects for the next time he fires it.

- ✦ **Acid Chewer.** The shot deals ongoing 10 acid damage.
- ✦ **Coldfire.** The shot deals +3d6 cold and fire damage.
- ✦ **Electromagnetic.** The shot deals +1d6 lightning damage. If the target is wearing metal armor he is dazed until the end of the sniper's next turn.
- ✦ **Lander.** The target is knocked prone, and is slowed and cannot fly (save ends).

Skills Perception +20, Stealth +18
Str 10 (+8) **Dex** 20 (+13) **Wis** 14 (+10)
Con 14 (+10) **Int** 12 (+9) **Cha** 8 (+7)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial
Equipment rapier, rifle

The Rank and File

These forces can complement the Porteurs or be used in encounters in Methia. Lone wolf scouts range out alone, and mostly exist to let the PCs feel powerful by taking them out in one hit. Squads are groups of a dozen soldiers.

Danoran 'Lone Wolf' Scout Level 12 Minion Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP** 175

HP 1; a missed attack never damages this minion **Initiative** +9
AC 26, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 24 **Perception** +12
Speed 7

Standard Actions

⊘ **Rapier** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 12 damage, and the target cannot make opportunity attacks until the end of the scout's next turn.

⊘ **Carbine (weapon)** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 12 damage, or 17 damage on a critical hit.
Load standard.

Str 15 (+8) **Dex** 16 (+9) **Wis** 12 (+7)
Con 14 (+8) **Int** 8 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+6)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial
Equipment rapier, carbine

Danoran Squad Level 16 Minion Skirmisher
Large natural humanoid (swarm) **XP** 350

HP 1; see Squad Retreat below **Initiative** +11
AC 30, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 28 **Perception** +9
Speed 5
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks
Vulnerable 10 against close and area attacks

Traits

▸ **Squad Retreat**
Each squad consists of a dozen soldiers working in tandem, filling the space of a Large creature. The unit needs only fill 4 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual soldier could move through.

Any effect that deals at least 16 damage 'kills' the squad – wounding enough of the soldiers that the rest panic and disperse. Any lesser amount of damage bloodies the squad, or 'kills' it if it is already bloodied.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Rapier Press** (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); +21 vs. AC
Hit: 14 damage, and the target cannot make opportunity attacks until the end of the Danoran squad's next turn.

⊛ **Carbine Fusillade** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Area burst 1 within 30 (creatures in burst); +21 vs. AC
Hit: 14 damage, or 19 damage on a critical hit.
Load standard.

Str 15 (+10) **Dex** 16 (+11) **Wis** 12 (+9)
Con 14 (+10) **Int** 8 (+7) **Cha** 10 (+8)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial
Equipment rapiers, carbines

Danoran Troop	Level 17 Soldier
Gargantuan natural humanoid (swarm)	**XP** 1600
HP 130; **Bloodied** 65	**Initiative** +11
AC 30, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 28	**Perception** +9
Speed 4	
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks	
Vulnerable 15 against close and area attacks	

Traits

▸ **Troop**

Each troop consists of one hundred soldiers working in tandem, filling the space of a Gargantuan creature. The unit needs only fill 16 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual soldier could move through.

Although the soldiers protect each other, enough damage wears them down and erodes their discipline. When the Danoran Troop is bloodied, it is dazed. When it is reduced to 0 hit points, most of the unit collapses from fatigue (effectively unconscious). Four Danoran Squads remain active, filling the troop's former space.

▸ **Terrain Control**

Spaces within 2 squares of the company count as difficult terrain for enemies. The company has threatening reach in that area.

Explosive Munitions

If the troops takes 21 or more fire damage from a single source, make the following attack in Close burst 2. This attack can damage the troop. ***Attack***: +18 vs. Reflex. *Hit:* 20 damage. *Miss:* 10 damage.

Standard Actions

Rapier 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 (weapon) ✦ 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 critical hit.

Load standard.

Mortar Volley (weapon) ✦ At-Will

Effect: Make the following attack four times. The areas cannot overlap. For each shot, choose a spot within 160 squares and make a saving throw. If the save fails, the mortar lands off by 1d6 squares in a random direction.

Attack: Area burst 3 within 160 (creatures in burst); +20 vs. Reflex

Hit: 6d6+20 damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Load standard.

Str 15 (+10) **Dex** 16 (+11) **Wis** 12 (+9)
Con 14 (+10) **Int** 8 (+7) **Cha** 10 (+8)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial
Equipment rapiers, carbines, mortars

ALLIED FORCES

Beran Forces

Adventure 6

Glaucia Evora	Level 14 Controller (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid (gnoll)	XP 1,000
HP 140; **Bloodied** 70	**Initiative** +7
AC 26, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 28	**Perception** +15
Speed 6	Low-light vision
Immune charm, domination	

Traits

▸ **Ferocious Charge**

Though she no longer lives as a savage, she remembers the viciousness of her tribe.

Glaucia deals +4 damage on a successful charge attack. If she is bloodied she instead deals +8 damage and gains 8 temporary hit points.

Enforcer of Freedom (fire, radiant) ✦ Aura 5

Attacks against her are turned aside as if by magic. She wears on her chest the sign of the broken manacle, for her will shall not be chained.

Any creature in the aura is immune to the dominated condition and effects with the charm keyword (but not to any damage affiliated with those effects). Any creature in the aura that uses a power with the charm keyword or that can cause domination takes 20 fire and radiant damage.

Standard Actions

Punishing Staff (fire, radiant) ✦ At-Will, Basic

She strikes you and watches coolly to see if you will continue your violence.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+2 damage. The first time the creature attacks before the end of Glaucia's next turn it takes 15 fire and radiant damage.

Pillar of Fire (fire, radiant) ✦ Daily

A column of shining flame roars down to engulf her foes.

Attack: Area Burst 2 within 20 (enemies in burst); +17 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d10+6 fire and radiant damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Effect: The area becomes a zone until the end of the encounter. Enemies that end their turn in the zone take 20 fire and radiant damage.

▸ **Defiant Shield** ✦ Encounter

She holds up a hand, and a broad shell of faintly visible energy appears around her. "Cowards hide behind guns and bows," she announces. "If you want to kill us, you'll have to come closer."

Effect: Glaucia and her allies in her *Enforcer of Freedom* aura gain resist 20 all against attacks by nonadjacent enemies. Creatures that have attacked since the start of their last turn do not gain this protection.

Sustain Standard

Minor Actions

▸ **Dispelling Word** ✦ Encounter

She barks a sacred word and purges the area of hostile magic.

Effect: Glaucia can end one magical zone within close burst 20, and grants herself and each ally in the area a saving throw with a +3 bonus.

Skills Insight +21, Intimidate +15
Str 12 (+8) **Dex** 10 (+7) **Wis** 22 (+13)
Con 16 (+10) **Int** 13 (+8) **Cha** 16 (+10)
Alignment Lawful Good **Languages** Common, Giant

Bruse Shantus Level 10 Controller (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid (minotaur) XP 500

HP 104; **Bloodied** 52 **Initiative** +5
AC 24, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 22 **Perception** +6
Speed 6
Immune charm, domination

Traits

☼ **Civilizing Presence** (charm) ✦ Aura 20
It strikes you that it would be rather primitive and uncouth to engage a foe who is already in battle. Superior numbers might be tactically preferable, but they're not how civilized men fight.

Whenever a creature starts its turn in the aura, it makes a saving throw. If it fails, for that turn it cannot attack any enemy that one of its allies has already attacked during this combat, unless that ally has yielded or been defeated. The Bruse doesn't have this restriction.

Whether they made the save or not, creatures in the aura allied with Shantus gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls against foes that no other ally is engaged with.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Hammer of the Bruse** ✦ At-Will, Basic
A mighty mallet materializes in his meaty hands.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 1d12+6 damage
Effect: The target and each enemy adjacent to it takes 6 damage and is pushed 1 square.

✓ **Ber Charge** ✦ At-Will
The might of the nation of Ber empowers the Bruse's horns as he rams you.
Special: Shantus can use this attack on a charge, instead of a melee basic attack.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+15 damage, and the target falls prone.

Minor Actions

▸ **Invoke the Rites of Rulership** ✦ At-Will, 1/round
You feel the Bruse claim you formally as an ally. You feel a momentary surge of strength, but then you realize that he simply needs you to defend him.
Effect: One ally within 20 squares loses a healing surge. Shantus transfers one or more conditions affecting him to the ally and gains 25 temporary hit points.

Skills Athletics +13, Bluff +13, Diplomacy +16, Intimidate +11
Str 16 (+8) **Dex** 10 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+6)
Con 16 (+8) **Int** 15 (+7) **Cha** 16 (+8)
Alignment Lawful Good **Languages** Common, Giant

Brakken of Heffanita Level 5 Controller
Medium natural humanoid (minotaur) XP 200

HP 64; **Bloodied** 32 **Initiative Count** 13
AC 17, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 17 **Passive Perception** 16
Speed 6

Traits

☼ **Calming Presence** ✦ Aura 2
You know, fighting doesn't seem that vital right now.
Creatures in the aura take a –2 penalty to attack rolls.

Standard Actions

▸ **Heel** ✦ Encounter
He imposes his will on a creature, halting its aggression.
Effect: One creature Brakken can see cannot take any offensive actions until the end of Brakken's next turn. This effect ends if Brakken loses line of sight, or if the target takes damage from any source.
Sustain Standard.

Kenna Vigilante Level 10 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (dragonborn) XP 500

HP 103; **Bloodied** 51 **Initiative** +8
AC 24, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 22 **Perception** +12
Speed 8
Resist fire 10

Standard Actions

⊘ **Dragon Fist** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Damn she hits hard.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+11 damage, and Kenna pushes the target 1 square and knocks it prone.
Special: If Kenna has a melee weapon, instead she does 2d8+11 damage.

Minor Actions

✧ **Dragon Breath** (fire) ✦ Encounter
Attack: Close Burst 3 (creatures in burst); +13 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6+15 fire damage.

Str 19 (+9) **Dex** 10 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 14 (+7) **Int** 14 (+7) **Cha** 16 (+8)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Giant, Common

Rescued Soldiers Level 13 Goon Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, various XP 400

HP 60; **Bloodied** 30 **Initiative** +8
AC 25, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 25 **Perception** +6
Speed 6

Traits

▸ **Squad Tactics**
The squad consists of eight soldiers who travel together closely-packed, filling the space of a large creature. Each hit probably kills one or two; when the squad is bloodied, 2 have died, and when the squad runs out of hit points, the remaining handful of soldiers break and flee.

The pack needs only fill 4 contiguous spaces, and it can squeeze as if it were Medium.

▸ **Trained in the Revolution**
These soldiers are of a variety of Beran races, devoted to being civil and working together despite historical differences. As a standard action a guard can use Aid Another to assist any ally it can see, adding +2 to that ally's next attack bonus. This is achieved with an abstract combination of distracting war whoops, grazing musket fire, and a spirited sense of cooperation.

Standard Actions

Melee Flurry (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Using weapons looted from their dead captors, the squad assaults their foe.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC

Hit: 17 damage.

Ranged Volley ✦ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +19 vs. AC

Hit: 21 damage.

Str	16 (+7)	**Dex**	12 (+5)	**Wis**	10 (+4)
Con	12 (+5)	**Int**	10 (+4)	**Cha**	11 (+4)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Giant, Orc

Cantabrilla Guards Level 9 Minion Brute

Medium natural humanoid, various 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

Traits

Revolutionary Guards

These guards are of a variety of Beran races, devoted to being civil and working together despite historical differences. As a minor action once per round a guard can use Aid Another to assist any ally it can see, adding +2 to that ally's next attack bonus. This is achieved with an abstract combination of distracting war whoops, grazing musket fire, and a spirited sense of cooperation.

Standard Actions

Musket Bayonet (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC

Hit: 10 damage.

Musket ✦ At-Will

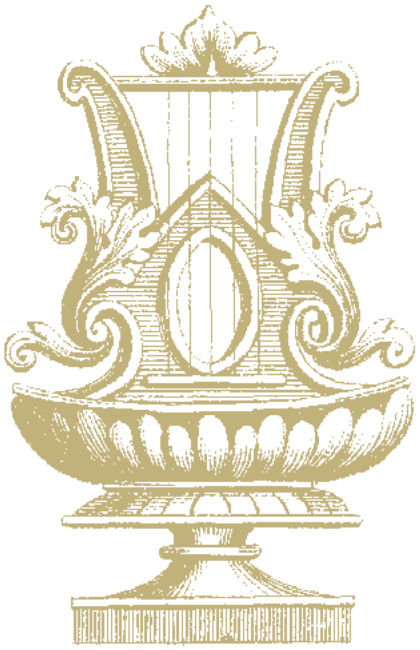
Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creature); +14 vs. AC

Hit: 15 damage.

Load standard.

Str	16 (+7)	**Dex**	12 (+5)	**Wis**	10 (+4)
Con	12 (+5)	**Int**	10 (+4)	**Cha**	11 (+4)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Giant, Orc



Sentosa

Adventure 8

Kasvarina

Before losing her memory, Kasvarina was perhaps the most powerful spellcaster in the world, and when empowered by her followers in the enclave Ushanti When the party first meets her, however, Kasvarina's memory loss has weakened her, and she takes a -6 penalty to all skill and ability checks, attack rolls, damage rolls, and defenses. Every time she experiences a major or critical memory event for the first time, reduce the penalty by 1.

Kasvarina Varal Level 22 Soldier

Medium fey humanoid (eladrin) **XP** 4150

HP 200; **Bloodied** 100 **Initiative** +17

AC 38, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 34 **Perception** +11

Speed 6 Low-light vision

Saving Throws +5 against charm effects

Traits

Sword and Spell

She wears enchanted chain beneath elegant clothes, and wields a rapier as both weapon and spellcasting implement.

As long as Kasvarina is armed, her spells do not provoke opportunity attacks. If she scores a critical hit with a weapon, she can use ***frigid touch*** or ***godfire*** as a free action.

Locked-Away Power

Kasvarina cannot use any of her Daily powers if she is still affected by the penalty from her missing memories.

Standard Actions

Ghost-Touch Rapier (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

This thin blade has a spectral after-image, like it could pierce a creature's soul as well as its flesh.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +27 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+8 damage.

Special: This attack does full damage to insubstantial creatures.

Frigid Touch (cold, implement) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Frost coats her fingers, and whatever she touches freezes.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d6+8 cold damage, and the target is slowed until the end of its next turn.

Godfire (fire, implement) ✦ At-Will

A flame in her hand strikes as she guides it, perhaps a spear, a slash, or an engulfing blast.

Special: This attack fills nine contiguous squares, at least one of which must be adjacent to Kasvarina.

Attack: Area special (creatures in area); +25 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d6+8 fire damage.

Elfaivaran Warcasting ✦ At-Will

Effect: Kasvarina uses ***ghost-touch rapier*** and either ***frigid touch*** or ***godfire***.

✓ **Lightning Blade** (lightning, implement) ✦ Daily
A bolt of lightning crackles from the tip of her rapier, cascading from target to target.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +25 vs. Reflex
Hit: 5d6+13 lightning damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Secondary Attack: Up to two creatures within 5 squares of the primary target; +25 vs. Reflex
Hit: 20 lightning damage.
Miss: 10 lightning damage.
Effect: 5 lightning damage to any number of creatures within 10 squares of the primary target that weren't already targeted.

▸ **Power Word Blind** (charm, implement) ✦ Daily
A single sibilant syllable blinds you.
Effect: One creature within 10 squares of Kasvarina is blinded (save ends). It must succeed two saves to end this effect.

✓ **Unrelenting Geas** (charm, implement, psychic) ✦ Daily
You feel fingers sliding up your neck, through your skull, and into your mind. The fingers twist elegantly, and you dance to their directions. When you try to resist, agony pierces your entire body.
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +25 vs. Will
Hit: The target is dominated (save ends). It must succeed two saves to end this effect. Each time the target succeeds a save in this way, it takes 15 psychic damage.
Miss: The target is dominated (save ends).
Special: When Kasvarina uses this power, she may include a specific, long-lasting course of action, such as, "Never share the secrets of the Obscurati with outsiders." If the target accepts that directive willingly, it must obey perpetually. If the target refuses, Kasvarina knows.

Move Actions

▸ **Fey Disappearance** (illusion, teleportation) ✦ Encounter
She takes a step and vanishes.
Effect: Kasvarina teleports 6 squares and is invisible until the end of her next turn. When her invisibility ends, she can disguise herself with an illusion to resemble another person.

Minor Actions

▸ **Clairvoyance** (implement) ✦ Encounter
She raises a cautious finger, and then her eyes unfocus as she looks ahead with arcane sight.
Effect: Kasvarina chooses any spot within 100 squares, and can see and hear from that spot until the end of her next turn. She gains darkvision while this power is active.
Sustain standard.

▸ **Long-Forgotten Flight** (implement) ✦ Daily
She takes to the air with magic most forgot centuries ago.
Effect: For the next hour, Kasvarina and up to three creatures within 10 squares gains fly speed 12 (hover).

Triggered Action

▸ **Arcane Defenses** (implement) ✦ At-Will
Recognizing an incoming threat, she casts a quick spell to protect against being debilitated.
Trigger: An effect would deal typed damage or cause a condition against Kasvarina.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): Kasvarina chooses an energy type and gains resist 10 against that type, or chooses a condition and is immune to that condition. This protection lasts until the end of the encounter or until she uses this power again.
Special: Kasvarina can use this power as a minor action, without requiring a trigger.

Skills Arcana +18, Bluff +24, Intimidate +21, History +18
Str 10 (+11) **Dex** 18 (+15) **Wis** 10 (+11)
Con 12 (+12) **Int** 14 (+13) **Cha** 20 (+16)
Alignment Good **Languages** Common, Elven, Infernal, Primordial
Equipment mithral chainmail, ghost-touch rapier

Tactics

In general Kasvarina fights cautiously, trying never to get outnumbered. In unfamiliar situations she'll scout using *clairvoyance*. Her younger self will not abandon allies, but if she regains her original personality she prefers to withdraw, assuming she can always find new allies and try again, even if it takes a few decades.

Sentosa Rajputs

While the enclave Sentosa has many lesser defenders, its elite all-male warriors are known as rajputs.

Eladrin Rajput Level 17 Goon Brute
Medium fey humanoid (eladrin) **XP** 800
HP 97; **Bloodied** 48 **Initiative** +12
AC 29, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 27 **Perception** +12
Speed 7 Low-light vision

Traits

▸ **Hateful Hunter**
The rajput gains a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls against humans and tieflings.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Punching Dagger Volley** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
With foot-long wedge-shaped blades extending from his hands, the warrior delivers a volley of puncturing punches.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6+21 damage.

⊘ **Felling Shortbow** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The magically aimed shot slices open an artery. If you don't bleed to death, you'll leave a trail that's easy to follow.
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6+15 damage, and the target gains ongoing 5 damage. The ongoing damage stops if the target heals from any source, or if it benefits from a Heal check (DC 23).

Move Actions

▸ **Fey Step** (teleportation) ✦ Encounter
Effect: The rajput teleports 5 squares.

Str 13 (+9) **Dex** 20 (+13) **Wis** 8 (+7)
Con 14 (+10) **Int** 10 (+8) **Cha** 14 (+10)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven
Equipment shortswords, shortbow, 20 arrows, mithral breastplate

Risuri Regular Troops

Adventure 8

If the party is working for the conspiracy, use these forces to oppose them. Lauryn Cyneburg can teleport soldiers into ambush or flanking positions, but generally does not engage by herself. Captain Dale is an expert in battling practitioners of the dark arts, and his Cauldron Hill commandos are ready to take on any sort of supernatural threat.

Regular Troops

Risuri Riflemen Squad — Level 12 Goon Artillery
Large natural humanoid (swarm) — **XP** 350

HP 88; **Bloodied** 44 — **Initiative** +10
AC 24, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 24 — **Perception** +13
Speed 6
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks
Vulnerable 10 against close and area attacks

Traits

▸ **Shot on the Run**

The Risuri Rifleman Squad can shoot in the middle of a move action, allowing it to break from cover, fire, then move back into cover.

▸ **Squad Tactics**

Each squad consists of a dozen soldiers working in tandem, filling the space of a Large creature. The unit needs only fill 4 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual soldier could move through.

Although the soldiers protect each other, enough damage wears them down and erodes their discipline. When the Risuri Riflemen Squad is bloodied, it is dazed. When it is reduced to 0 hit points, the unit disperses.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Bayonet Charge** (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. If used as a part of a charge, make the attack against each creature the squad moves adjacent to during its movement.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. AC

Hit: 12 damage.

⊘ **Rifle Fusillade** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Area burst 1 within 30 (creatures in burst); +17 vs. AC

Hit: 12 damage, or 17 damage on a critical hit.

Load standard.

Minor Actions

✲ **Druidic Support** ✦ At-Will (1/round)

The squad's druid provides magical support.

Effect: The druid can send a message via a small magically-conjured animal, or can create a bank of fog in area burst 3 within 20, or call down a bolt of lightning.

Attack: Area burst 1 within 20; +17 vs. Reflex

Hit: 12 lightning damage.

Str 12 (+7) **Dex** 18 (+10) **Wis** 14 (+8)
Con 11 (+6) **Int** 12 (+7) **Cha** 8 (+5)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial
Equipment rifles with bayonets, studded leather

Risuri Elite Forces

Adventure 8 and 9

Cauldron Hill Commando — Level 16 Goon Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (human) — **XP** 700

HP 56; **Bloodied** 28 — **Initiative** +11
AC 30, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 27 — **Perception** +14
Speed 7 — Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊘ **Cold Iron Shortsword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Fey recoil from his weapon.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+17 damage, and if the target is fey it takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of the commando's next turn.

⊘ **Shoving Warhammer** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

When you're trained to fight on a mountain, shoving people off cliffs is a handy tactic.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC

Hit: 2d10+13 damage and the target is pushed 2 squares.

⊘ **Rifle** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creature); +21 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+10 damage, or 2d8+30 on a critical hit.

Load standard.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Defense Against the Dark Arts** ✦ At-Will

Always a little on-edge, the commando reacts with supernatural speed to avoid your magic.

Trigger: A non-weapon attack targets the commando.

Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The commando shifts 2 squares and gains a +4 bonus to defenses against the triggering attack. If hit, he can make an immediate save to end any "save ends" effects.

Skills Acrobatics +16, Arcana +14, Athletics +16, Perception +14, Stealth +16
Str 16 (+11) **Dex** 16 (+11) **Wis** 12 (+9)
Con 14 (+10) **Int** 12 (+9) **Cha** 6 (+6)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial
Equipment warhammer, cold iron shortsword, rifle, mithral chain shirt

Captain Dale — Level 16 Controller (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid (human) — **XP** 1400

HP 102; **Bloodied** 56 — **Initiative** +11
AC 30, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 27 — **Perception** +15
Speed 7 — Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊘ **Talkative Swordplay** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

As he advances with his sword pointed at you, he says, "I hope you don't mind if I take this opportunity to ask why you've betrayed your nation."

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+17 damage.

Effect: Make a secondary attack.

Secondary Attack: Close burst 5 (enemies who can hear Dale in the burst); +19 vs. Will

Hit: The target grants combat advantage and takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of Dale's next turn.

⊘ **Skyseer-Blessed Pistol** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

He aims at you, and though he holds his fire you feel a manifesting certainty that he has you dead to rights. "I don't want to kill a countryman," he says. "This doesn't have to end in blood."

Effect: Dale makes an attack roll and rolls the damage dice for this attack. If he would miss, he can choose not to fire.

If he would hit but the damage would be insufficient to knock the target unconscious, he can choose not to fire. Instead, the next time he hits with this power this encounter, he deals an extra 40 damage. This effect is cumulative.

Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +21 vs. AC

Hit: 2d4+20 damage, or 2d4+32 on a critical hit.

Load standard.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Defense Against the Dark Arts** ✦ At-Will

Dale reacts with preternatural calm to avoid your magic.

Trigger: A non-weapon attack targets Dale.

Effect (Immediate Interrupt): Dale shifts 2 squares and gains a +4 bonus to defenses against the triggering attack. If hit, he can make an immediate save to end any "save ends" effects.

Skills Acrobatics +18, Arcana +15, Athletics +14, Perception +15, Stealth +18

Str 12 (+9) **Dex** 20 (+13) **Wis** 14 (+10)

Con 12 (+9) **Int** 14 (+10) **Cha** 14 (+10)

Alignment Good **Languages** Common, Elven, Orc, Primordial

Equipment pistol, longsword, mithral chain shirt

These allies can fight alongside the party. Aodhan, Harkover, Asrabey, Jillian, and Amielle can all participate in defending the palace, while Lauryn, Dale, Gale, and Delft can aid in Flint.

King Aodhan Lesterman

Before becoming king, Aodhan led a crew of privateers. While a mighty warrior in his own right, he can draw upon his connection to the land to aid his allies.

King Aodhan Level 20 Brute (Leader)

Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP** 2800

HP 200; **Bloodied** 100 **Initiative** +12

AC 34, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 32 **Perception** +14

Speed 6, climb 6

Regeneration 10

Traits

▸ **Lord of the Land**

As a minor action, Aodhan can move four 5-ft. cubes of earth, stone, or foliage up to five feet (1 square).

▸ **Monarch of the Masses**

Aodhan has regeneration 10, and a +5 bonus to saves against charm, fear, and poison. When he falls to 0 hp for the first time in an encounter, each of his allies within three miles is dazed for one round. If he would die from a death saving throw, he can instead choose to become stable.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Six-Loa Saber** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The blade contains six island spirits.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+20 damage.

▸ **Whirlwind or Rampage** ✦ At-Will

He's pretty spry for a seventy-year-old.

Effect: Aodhan can either make a basic attack against any number of creatures adjacent to him, or can move his speed, making a basic attack against up to four different creatures during this movement.

▸ **Bounty of the Land** ✦ At-Will

"Is everyone just about tapped?" he asks. "Gather round, quickly." You feel renewing energy surge up from the ground.

Effect: Any number of allies adjacent to Aodhan recharge all their encounter powers and can spend one or two healing surges to heal. A given creature can only benefit from this power once per day.

Minor Actions

✓ **Flick Dagger** (weapon) ✦ At-Will (1/round)

Attack: Ranged 4/8 (one creature); +25 vs. AC

Hit: 10 damage.

Triggered Actions

▸ **That Old Pirate Swagger** ✦ At-Will

"This one's not worth my time." He laughs and turns his back on the enemy. "I'll let you take him."

Trigger: An enemy damages Aodhan.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): Aodhan shifts 1 square away from the triggering creature. Aodhan's allies gain a +2 bonus to attack that creature until the end of his next turn, or until Aodhan attacks it.

Free Actions

▸ **Call Upon Loa** ✦ At-Will (1/round)

He whispers the name of a Yerasol folk spirit, and a ghostly figure manifests beside his saber.

Effect: Aodhan can use each of the following powers once per day.

- ✦ *Moonbeam Loa.* Saber or touched object sheds bright light for 10 squares.
- ✦ *Flaming Loa.* A creature or object just struck by Aodhan's sword catches on fire, taking ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).
- ✦ *Greedy Loa.* If an enemy just missed Aodhan with a melee weapon attack, or if Aodhan struck them with the sword, the enemy is disarmed.
- ✦ *Crossroads Loa.* Aodhan teleports the sword to him, or teleports himself to the sword.
- ✦ *Butcher Loa.* An enemy just struck by the sword loses a limb if it is bloodied. It makes a save, and on a success it chooses which limb.
- ✦ *Drinking Loa.* Aodhan heals 30 HP if he killed someone this round.

▸ **Crown of Risur** ✦ At-Will

Effect: Aodhan says someone's name and grants them a save against charm, fear, or poison. A given creature can only be granted one bonus save in this way per day.

Str 12 (+11) **Dex** 14 (+12) **Wis** 18 (+14)

Con 10 (+10) **Int** 16 (+13) **Cha** 22 (+16)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Dame Jillian the Green Knight

The title of Green Knight is bestowed to the king's chief bodyguard. Among the position's perks is an inability to die when the sun isn't up. This ability requires a close connection to the Dreaming, however, and at the end of this adventure the green knight loses all of her powers.

Dame Jillian Level 17 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP** 1600
HP 160; **Bloodied** 80 **Initiative** +15
AC 33, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 28 **Speed** 6

Traits

▸ **Dying in Light**
When Jillian dies, if the sun is not out, one minute later she returns to life with 1 hit point.

▸ **Loyal Guardian**
Allies adjacent to Dame Jillian have +2 to their defenses while she is conscious.

Standard Actions

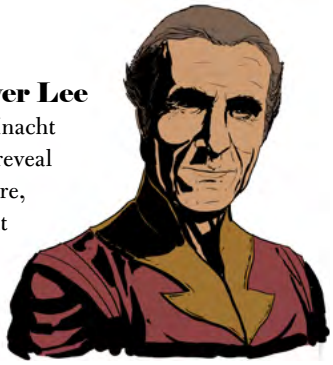
⊘ **Court Halberd** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The finest adamantine halberd.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 25 damage.

✲ **Green Smite** ✦ At-Will
Flowered vines blossom and entangle foes.
Attack: Area burst 1 within 20 (creatures in burst); +20 vs. Reflex
Hit: 10 damage and the target is restrained (Escape DC 22)

✧ **Solar Turning** (radiant) ✦ Encounter
Attack: Close burst 5 (undead creatures in burst); +20 vs. Will
Hit: 15 radiant damage, and the target is dazed until the end of Jillian's next turn.

Principal Minister Harkover Lee

A one-time dragon tyrant known as Inacht the Hex-Eater, Harkover Lee might reveal his true form if the situation looks dire, though after so long in human form it hurts him to be a dragon again. Otherwise he relies on fairly direct fire magic.



Harkover Lee Level 20 Artillery
Medium natural magical beast (dragon) **XP** 2800
HP 140; **Bloodied** 70 **Initiative** +11
AC 34, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 32 **Perception** +12
Speed 6 Darkvision
Immune fire

Standard Actions

⊘ **Golden Orb** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
A sphere of gold that size would weigh fifty pounds, but he holds it like it's nothing. With unexpected strength he smashes it across his enemy's face.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+18 damage.

⊘ **Firebolt** (implement, fire) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Flaming missiles fly from his orb.
Effect: Harkover fires five bolts of fire, divided as he chooses among any number of targets within 20 squares. Each bolt unerringly strikes its target, dealing 4 fire damage.

✲ **Consuming Fireball** (implement, fire) ✦ Encounter
He hurls a seed of fire that erupts into an explosion. When it dissipates, the eyes of charred corpses briefly flicker with purple light before collapsing.
Attack: Area burst 3 within 20 (creatures in burst); +23 vs. Reflex
Hit: 5d6+17 fire damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Harkover heals damage equal to the highest amount of damage the fireball dealt to any creature in its area.

⊘ **Dragon Claw** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Requirement: Harkover must be a dragon.
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10+18 damage.

✧ **Precise Dragonfire** (fire) ✦ Recharge ⚄⚅
He exhales a blast of fire that curves to avoid allies and only catch his foes.
Requirement: Harkover must be a dragon.
Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in blast); +23 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d12+8 fire damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Move Actions

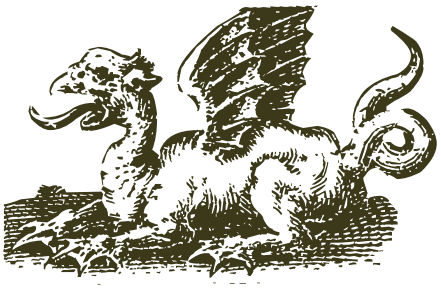
▸ **Polymorph** (polymorph) ✦ At-Will
"It's been quite a while," Harkover says. "I'm afraid I'm out of practice." He shrugs off his robe as his skin transforms into thick red scales. His face shifts into the snapping maw of a dragon, and he swallows his golden orb as his body grows to the size of an elephant. Black necrosis slowly creeps from his wings toward his torso, but he ignores the odd wound and rejoins the battle.
Effect: Harkover becomes a huge dragon, giving him access to some new attacks. His speed increases to 9, but he cannot fly, despite his wings. He has ongoing 5 necrotic damage as long as he is in dragon form. He can return to human form as another move action.

Triggered Actions

↯ **Eat Hex** ✦ Encounter
Trigger: An attack or zone inflicts a condition or deals energy damage to Harkover or a creature within 3 squares of him.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The effect inflicts no condition and deals no energy damage, and Harkover may dispel the effect if it is a zone. Harkover recharges an encounter power other than this one.

▸ **Shield the King** ✦ At-Will
Harkover interposes himself between the king and harm.
Trigger: An attack hits the monarch of Risur.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): Harkover moves half his speed. If he can move adjacent to the king, the attack hits Harkover instead.

Str 26 (+18) **Dex** 13 (+11) **Wis** 24 (+12)
Con 24 (+17) **Int** 24 (+17) **Cha** 26 (+18)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Draconic, Elven, Giant, Gnoll, Goblin, Orc, Primordial



Asrabey Varal

Asrabey is supremely confident and wades into the midst of large groups of enemies, but will use hit-and-run tactics against large enemies.

Asrabey Varal Level 20 Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid (eladrin) **XP** 2800

HP 186; **Bloodied** 93 **Initiative** +17
AC 34, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 34, **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
He wields a sword of shifting fire.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10+10 fire damage.

✧ **Fire Sweep** (weapon, fire) ✦ Encounter
He 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 into a wall.
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
Effect: Asrabey teleports 5 squares.

Minor Actions

✧ **Cloak of Smoke** ✦ Encounter
Effect: Smoke fills close burst 3, providing total concealment until the start of Asrabey's next turn.

⟋ **Lion Shield** (weapon) ✦ Encounter
His wooden, lion-faced shield roars as it flies from his arm.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +23 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d10+5 damage 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's AC and Reflex are reduced by 2. When the target escapes or dies, the shield returns to Asrabey's hand. He can also recall the shield as a free action on his turn.

Str	17 (+13)	**Dex**	23 (+16)	**Wis**	14 (+12)
Con	17 (+13)	**Int**	13 (+11)	**Cha**	16 (+13)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Amielle Latimer

Amielle is terrified of being defeated and returning in Nicodemus's custody, so she desperately avoids getting close to enemies.

Amielle Latimer Level 17 Ally

HP 66; **Bloodied** 33 **Initiative Count** 27
AC 29, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 26 **Speed** fly 8 (hover); phasing
Resist cold 20, poison 20; insubstantial
Vulnerable 10 radiant

Traits

▸ **Withdraw from Sight**

Whenever Amielle takes damage, she turns invisible until she either attacks or chooses to become visible. When she is reduced to 0 HP she discorporates but will return in a few days unless Nicodemus the Gnostic is defeated.

Minor Actions

⊘ **Deadeye Shot** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Freed from the jitters of flesh, her aim is flawless.
Effect: Amielle fires a rifle at an enemy within 75 squares, dealing 12 damage. If she uses her pistol her range is instead 45 squares and she deals 6 damage. These attacks deal full damage against insubstantial creatures.

Amielle can load any of her weapons as a minor action, or she can drop and draw a new one as a free action. Since she has a rifle and three pistols on her person, she can thus make three attacks over the course of the round, each as a separate minor action.

Lauryn Cyneburg

The RHC's minister of infiltration might briefly aid the party in battle, before teleporting away to get reinforcements.

Lauryn Cyneburg Level 19 Skirmisher (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid (half-elf) **XP** 2400

HP 176; **Bloodied** 88 **Initiative** +18
AC 33, **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 31 **Perception** +9
Speed 8, teleport 8 Low-light vision
Resist fire 10, lightning 10

Traits

▸ **Minister of Infiltration**

Lauryn cannot be slowed, immobilized, or restrained. If she is dazed or stunned, she can still take a move action in addition to whatever other actions she is able to take for the turn.

Standard Actions

Spiteful Punch (teleport) ✦ At-Will, Basic

"This really wasn't how I wanted to spend my afternoon." Consternation wrinkles her nose as she snaps a punch into the enemy's jaw. It hits the ground fifty feet away.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +22 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d4+8 damage, and the target is teleported 10 squares and knocked prone.

Paralysis (charm) ✦ At-Will

She gestures as if to choke the enemy, and its body goes rigid as stone.

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +22 vs. Will

Hit: The target is stunned (save ends).

Miss: The target cannot speak (save ends).

Explosive Jaunt (fire, teleport) ✦ Encounter

She disappears, flickering via teleportation to three other destinations. At each spot, she left a sizzling seed of fire.

Effect: Lauryn teleports 8 squares, then teleports 8 squares, then teleports 8 squares. Whenever she leaves a space this way, she leaves behind a *fireball* seed. Each seed explodes at the start of her next turn, or if it is touched.

Attack: Area burst 3 centered on each seed (creatures in burst); +22 vs. Reflex

Hit: 5d6+10 fire damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Move Action

Tactical Reposition ✦ Recharge when first bloodied

She cocks her head for a moment as if calculating, and then the entire battlefield shifts.

Attack: Close burst 10 (creatures in burst); +24 vs. Will

Hit: Lauryn teleports the target to any position within the burst.

Minor Action

Dimensional Beacon ✦ At-Will

A spot in the air she points at begins to glow and twist light around it.

Effect: Lauryn creates a dimensional beacon in a space she can see. Until Lauryn uses this power again, whenever another creature teleports anywhere within 20 squares of the beacon, she may redirect their teleportation so they arrive in the beacon's space.

Veil ✦ Encounter

It's a large group, but they look innocuous.

Effect: Lauryn and up to eighteen other creatures are disguised by an illusion to change their appearances.

Triggered Actions

Contingent Retreat ✦ Encounter

She groans, "This isn't in my job description anyway," then vanishes.

Trigger: Lauryn falls unconscious or is reduced to 0 hit points.

Effect (No Action): Lauryn teleports to Slate's teleportation beacon.

Skills Acrobatics +17, Arcana +15, History +15, Stealth +16

Str	8 (+8)	**Dex**	14 (+11)	**Wis**	10 (+9)
Con	14 (+11)	**Int**	13 (+10)	**Cha**	22 (+15)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Gale

Included for completeness.

Hana "Gale" Soliogn Level 19 Artillery

Medium fey humanoid (eladrin) **XP** 2400

HP 140; **Bloodied** 70 **Initiative** +17

AC 33, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 31 **Perception** +10

Speed 6, fly 10 (hover, altitude limit 10) Low-light Vision

Resist 10 lightning, 10 thunder

Traits

Control Winds ✦ Aura 100

Ranged weapon attacks in the aura 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. Gale can start or end this aura as a minor action.

Standard Actions

Touch of Summer Storms (thunder) ✦ At-Will, Basic

She raises a hand to keep a foe at bay, and a blast of thunder drives them back.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +22 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 3d6+12 thunder damage and the target is pushed 10 squares and knocked prone.

Wind Bolts ✦ At-Will, Basic

A swirling ball strikes out, picks a creature up, and dangles it.

Effect: Gale makes the following attack three times.

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +24 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 15 damage and the target is grabbed by the wind until the end of Gale's next turn (Escape DC 28). 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 across several targets.

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

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.

Str	8 (+8)	**Dex**	13 (+10)	**Wis**	12 (+10)
Con	16 (+12)	**Int**	14 (+11)	**Cha**	21 (+15)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Stover Delft

When rescued in Act Three of adventure 9, Delft's not in peak fighting form (he starts at 10 hit points when rescued), but he quickly heals and can contribute.

Chief Inspector Stover Delft	Level 15 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (human)	**XP** 1200
HP 143; **Bloodied** 71	**Initiative Count** 22
AC 29, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 29	**Speed** 6
Regeneration 10	

Traits

▸ **Disorientating Strike**

Whenever Delft hits with a basic attack, he can choose one of the following options:

✦ Impose a -2 penalty to the target's next attack roll.

✦ Slow the target until the end of Delft's next turn.

✦ Slide the target one square.

▸ **Royal Power**

Delft was granted the office of Chief Inspector of the Royal Homeland Constabulary... well, by luck, because his boss was a traitor. But he gets the perks anyway.

Delft has regeneration 10.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Cane Sword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

He retrieves his walking cane from his doppelganger, then strikes with crazed speed, thrashing his foe from multiple directions with both the cane and the sword hidden within it.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC

Hit: 23 damage.

⊘ **Pistol** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

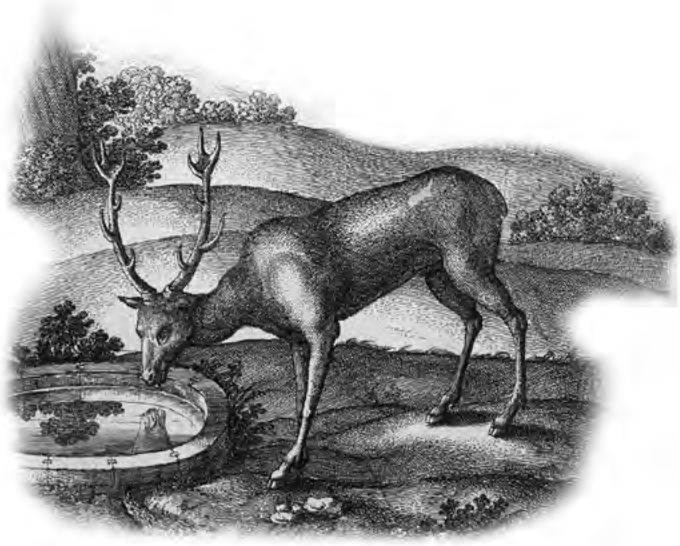
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +19 vs. AC

Hit: 20 damage, or 28 on a critical hit.

Fey Lords

Adventure 9

Use these stats if the party picks a fight, if they side with Copperhat and provoke a bloody battle for control of the Unseen Court, or if they get allies from Thistle Palace during Act Two.



Palace Guards

The telekinetic elk-like rangale serve as the primary guards of Thistle Palace.

Rangale	Level 18 Minion Soldier
Large fey magical beast	**XP** 500
HP 1; a missed attack never damages this minion	**Initiative** +14
AC 34, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 26	**Perception** +16
Speed 10	Low-light vision

Traits

▸ **Guards of the Unseen**

The rangale resemble stags, elks, or gazelles with human faces. They wear ornate mithral barding and levitate weapons in front of them. Their telekinetic grasp is invisible and inescapable.

Rangale have threatening reach out to 3 squares.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Spear** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +23 vs. AC

Hit: 13 damage and the target is marked until the end of the rangale's next turn.

✓ **Grasp** ✦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +21 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target is grabbed (Escape DC 23). The rangale can sustain the grab as a minor action, and when he does he can slide the creature 5 squares.

✓ **Retrieving Bow** ✦ At-Will

Its arrow digs deep where it strikes, then flies back to the rangale, drawing you with it.

Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creature); +23 vs. AC

Hit: 10 damage and the target is pulled 10 squares.

Str	24 (+16)	**Dex**	16 (+12)	**Wis**	14 (+11)
Con	15 (+11)	**Int**	12 (+10)	**Cha**	9 (+6)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven, Goblin, Primordial

Unseen Court

The lords and ladies of this court are seated comfortably on their thrones, and feel no threat of attack that their numerous bodyguards would not handle first.

Thisraldion

In battle, Thisraldion teleports with deadly speed, and if an enemy has no weapon to defend himself the fey monarch can easily behead them.

Monarch Thisraldion	Level 20 Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid	**XP** 2800
HP 190; **Bloodied** 95	**Initiative** +16
AC 34, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 32	**Perception** +12
Speed 8, teleport 5	Low-light vision

Traits

▸ **Mask of the Unseen**

If an effect would dominate Thisraldion, the fey monarch instead dazed for the duration.

Standard Actions

Vorpal Sword ✦ At-Will, Basic

The blade slices the air in twain, and soft thunder goes snicker-snack!

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+3d12 damage, or 2d8+3d12+52 on a critical hit.

Special: Whenever any damage die for this weapon rolls the maximum result, roll that die again and add the additional result to the damage total. If a reroll results in another maximum damage result, roll it again and keep adding.

Controlling Presence ✦ Encounter

The monarch's mask reflects your own face, and you lose your sense of location. You regain it right as a blade swings for your neck.

Attack: Close burst 6 (enemies in burst); +23 vs. Will

Hit: The target is pulled 6 squares and dominated (save ends).

Aftereffect: Thisraldion teleports up to 6 squares adjacent to the target and makes a basic attack against the target, then teleports 6 squares.

Minor Action

Laughing Blink ✦ At-Will (1/round)

The mask flashes, then vanishes. You can't see, only hear the monarch's laughter.

Attack: Close burst 1 (enemies in burst); +23 vs. Fortitude

Hit: The target is blinded until the end of Thisraldion's next turn.

Effect: Thisraldion teleports 3 squares.

Str 26 (+18) **Dex** 22 (+16) **Wis** 14 (+12)
Con 20 (+15) **Int** 15 (+12) **Cha** 26 (+18)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven, Primordial

Atsla

Not particularly threatening by herself, Atsla focuses on debilitating foes while an ally actually delivers the damage.

Atsla the Ice Level 20 Controller
Medium fey humanoid **XP** 2800

HP 186; **Bloodied** 93 **Initiative** +14
AC 34, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 33 **Perception** +13
Speed 6 (ice walk), teleport 5 Low-light vision
Immune cold

Traits

Mask of the Unseen

If an effect would cause Atsla to become dominated, she is instead dazed for the duration.

Frostmaster ✦ Aura 20

Allies of Atsla in the aura gain resist cold 20.

Standard Actions

Snowpiercer (cold, weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

She manifests a lance of blue mist that stretches out to impale you. Where it strikes, your flesh turns to fragile ice for a moment.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +25 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8+9 cold damage, and the target is slowed and gains vulnerable 10 against weapon, force, and thunder damage (save ends both).

Chill to the Core (cold) ✦ At-Will

Frost extends from her feet across the ground toward you, and then columns of snow and ice burst from the nearest surface to engulf you. Threads of gold weave through the ice.

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +23 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d8+9 cold damage, and the target is restrained (Escape DC 25). As long as the target is restrained, it has vulnerable 10 against weapon, force, and thunder damage, and cannot teleport.

Effect: A path up to 10 squares long between Atsla and the target becomes frozen until the end of the encounter. That path is difficult terrain, and blocks line of sight and line of effect for teleportation.

Wall of Ice (cold) ✦ At-Will

Gold filigree traces through a huge barricade of blue ice.

Effect: Atsla creates an icy wall 6 within 10, 15-ft. tall, which lasts until Atsla uses this power again. The wall has 50 hit points per square, and it blocks line of sight and line of effect for teleportation. Creatures that enter or end their turn in a space adjacent to the wall take 20 cold damage.

Invisibility ✦ At-Will

All of her vanishes except her mask, and a moment later that fades away too.

Effect: Atsla becomes invisible until the end of her next turn, teleports 5 squares, and makes a Stealth check.

Skills Arcana +22, Bluff +21, Diplomacy +21
Str 15 (+12) **Dex** 18 (+14) **Wis** 16 (+13)
Con 16 (+13) **Int** 24 (+17) **Cha** 22 (+16)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Primordial

Karrest

This fiery swordsman likely demolishes the battlefield, setting fire to things and hurling his foes through them.

Karrest the Fire Level 20 Brute
Medium fey humanoid **XP** 2800

HP 216; **Bloodied** 108 **Initiative** +14
AC 32, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 30 **Perception** +13
Speed 6, teleport 5 Low-light vision
Immune fire

Traits

Mask of the Unseen

If an effect would cause Karrest to become dominated, he is instead dazed for the duration.

Flamemaster ✦ Aura 20

Allies of Karrest in the aura gain resist fire 20.

Melodramatic Swordsman

Your attack knocks him back more than you expect, and he falls to the ground, vulnerable.

Whenever an attack damages Karrest, he can let himself be knocked prone. If he does, prevent 5 of the damage and Karrest slides himself 1 square.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Flametongue** (fire, weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

His bastard sword seems made of nearly-molten stone. Searing rock sloughs cling to wherever it strikes.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC

Hit: 1d10+9 damage, and the target gains ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

▸ **Grandiose Swordsmanship** ✦ At-Will

Effect: Karrest uses *flametongue* twice. Each time he hits he can push the target 4 squares. He can move 6 squares between these attacks.

▸ **Invisibility** ✦ At-Will

He vanishes except his mask, and a moment later that fades away too.

Effect: Karrest becomes invisible until the end of his next turn, teleports 5 squares, and makes a Stealth check.

Minor Actions

✲ **Flaming Swath** (fire) ✦ At-Will, 1/round

He snaps his fingers, and something catches on fire.

Effect: Karrest creates a zone of fire in area burst 1 within 10, which lasts until the end of the encounter. Creatures that enter or end their turn in the zone take 10 fire damage. Flammable objects in the zone might easily break if something rams into them (such as if Karrest pushes a creature through a burning column).

Triggered Actions

▸ **Dramatic Reversal** (fire) ✦ Encounter

Oh, he was only faking vulnerability!

Trigger: Karrest is hit by an attack while he's granting combat advantage.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): Karrest stands up, shifts 3 squares, and uses *flametongue*. He has combat advantage on this attack, and deals +10 damage.

Skills Athletics +24, Intimidate +21

Str	28 (+19)	**Dex**	18 (+14)	**Wis**	16 (+13)
Con	20 (+15)	**Int**	14 (+12)	**Cha**	22 (+16)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven, Giant, Primordial

Furg

The toadstool sage tries to befuddle and charm foes, but his overconfidence in his political schemings have left him unprepared for sudden battle. He'll use *frogburst*, then turn invisible and try to rely on his poison frogs.

Furg the Toadstool Sage Level 20 Goon Controller

Medium fey humanoid **XP** 1400

HP 93; **Bloodied** 46 **Initiative** +10

AC 34, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 36 **Perception** +13

Speed 4, teleport 5 Low-light vision

Immune charm, poison, psychic

Traits

▸ **Mask of the Unseen**

If an effect would cause Furg to become dominated, he is instead dazed for the duration.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Moulder Touch** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Green moss grows across you as he reaches in.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. Reflex

Hit: 20 damage, and the target takes a -1 penalty to attack rolls, damage rolls, and defenses until the end of the encounter. This penalty stacks with itself, to a maximum of -5.

▸ **Frogburst** (charm) ✦ Encounter

Tiny blue frogs leap from Furg, scattering in every direction, trailing glimmering motes of spore dust. The hopping and drifting is hypnotic.

Effect: Place a frog token in each space within 5 squares of Furg. Any area attack that deals damage destroys the frog token in that space. As long as a frog token remains in a space, creatures that enter or start their turn in that space are slowed and dazed (save ends both).

▸ **Invisibility** ✦ At-Will

He vanishes except his mask, and a moment later that fades away too.

Effect: Furg becomes invisible until the end of his next turn, teleports 5 squares, and makes a Stealth check.

Minor Actions

✓ **Poison Frogs** (poison) ✦ At-Will, 1/round

One of the frogs leaps into your mouth, and the bitter taste nauseates you.

Effect: Remove a frog token from the battle. That frog makes the following attack against a creature within 1 square of it.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target gains ongoing 30 poison damage and is weakened (save ends both).

Skills History +22, Nature +22, Religion +22

Str	28 (+19)	**Dex**	10 (+10)	**Wis**	16 (+13)
Con	20 (+15)	**Int**	24 (+17)	**Cha**	16 (+13)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Goblin, Primordial

Sallin

As a healer, Sallin supports her allies while trying to hide invisibly. If she is found, her tree provides some element of offensive power.

Sallin the Dryad Level 20 Goon Soldier (Leader)

Large fey humanoid **XP** 1400

HP 93; **Bloodied** 46 **Initiative** +14

AC 36, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 35 **Perception** +18

Speed 6 (forestwalk, palacewalk), teleport 5 Low-light vision

Vulnerable whenever Sallin takes fire damage, she also gains ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends)

Traits

▸ **Mask of the Unseen**

If an effect would cause Sallin to become dominated, she is instead dazed for the duration.

▸ **Bonded Treant**

Sallin sits upon a Large ambulatory tree, which she controls and treats as part of herself. Within the grounds of Thistle Palace, no part of the building impedes her movement.

When she would be reduced to 0 hit points the first time in a combat, instead her tree falls, Sallin is reduced to 1 hit point, and her size becomes Medium.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Branch Strike** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Her tree swings a branch, knocks you about, and tries to heave you overhead.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +25 vs. AC

Hit: 25 damage and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 25). While grabbed, the creature is held 2 squares above Sallin.

Special: If the tree is down, Sallin has no effective melee attacks.

▸ **Invisibility** ✦ At-Will
All of her vanishes except her mask, and a moment later that fades away too.
Effect: Sallin (and her treant) become invisible until the end of her next turn, teleport 5 squares, and make a Stealth check.

Minor Actions

▸ **Healing Bloom** ✦ At-Will, 1/round
Wind blows flower petals from her hand to a wounded ally.
Effect: Sallin or an ally within 10 squares heals 50 hit points.

Skills Arcana +22, Bluff +21, Diplomacy +21

Str	15 (+12)	**Dex**	18 (+14)	**Wis**	26 (+18)
Con	16 (+13)	**Int**	20 (+15)	**Cha**	16 (+13)

Alignment Good **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Hedgehog Court

Unlike their Unseen rivals, this court expects battles, and so all of them—even lazy Darbony—have coordinated tactics in battle.

Beshela

The archfey of the sea has the most tricks of any fey on either court, though when she becomes bloodied the wrath of her pact patron, She Who Writhes, will bring down acid rain indiscriminately. Unless she's alone she tries to avoid direct combat, not wanting to inadvertently hurt her allies.

Beshela, Archfey of the Sea Level 20 Controller
Medium fey humanoid **XP** 2800

HP 186; **Bloodied** 93 **Initiative** +16
AC 34, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 30 **Perception** +12
Speed 6, swim 10
Resist acid 10, poison 10; **Vulnerable** 10 fire

Traits

▸ **Ripplesense**
With every step you slosh water, and she appears preternaturally aware of every ripple that touches her skin.
Beshela perfectly knows the location of any creature within half a mile if there is a contiguous path of water between its space and hers.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Splash** ✦ At-Will, Basic
She's splashing water at you? That's not so ba-. Oh, and now it's a massive arm of water smashing you in the chest.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d12 damage and Beshela slides the target 5 squares.

✓ **Whirlpool** ✦ At-Will
Effect: Beshela uses *splash* against each adjacent enemy. It's super effective.

✧ **Summon the Kraken!** (summoning) ✦ Encounter
With a sweep of her hand, a massive tidal wave crashes across the landscape, leaving everything flooded knee deep. Somehow out of this shallow water, a massive tentacle made of seaweed emerges and attacks.
Attack: Close burst 500 (creatures in burst); +23 vs. Fortitude
Hit: Beshela slides the target 5 squares and knocks it prone.
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, water floods a quarter-mile radius area to a depth of two feet, though it may quickly flow away based on terrain. Beshela ignores the difficult terrain of the deep water.

Beshela summons two kraken tentacles within 10 squares. They are large creatures, and each has her defenses and 40 hit points. If a tentacle is ever entirely out of the water, it is destroyed.

✓ **Insatiable Thirst** (charm, psychic) ✦ At-Will
Deadly thirst dries your mouth, cracks your skin. You are gripped by an irresistible need to drink.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one living creature); +23 vs. Will
Hit: The creature takes 10 psychic damage and suffers from insatiable thirst (save ends). Each round it must drink something before it can take any other actions. Usually this entails first spending a move action to get down on its knees near ground water, or a minor action to draw a flask or potion, followed by a minor action to actually drink.

Move Actions

▸ **Fey Dive** (teleportation) ✦ At-Will
She disappears into water too shallow for anyone to hide, then splashes out behind you.
Effect: Beshela teleports from one area covered in water to another area covered in water within 10 squares, as long as there is a contiguous path of water between the two spaces.

Minor Actions

✓ **Kraken Tentacle Strike** ✦ At-Will
One of the tentacles thrashes, coils around you, and begins to squeeze.
Effect: One of Beshela's summoned tentacles moves 4 squares, though it can only enter areas covered in water. Then it makes the following attack.
Attack: Melee 3; +25 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+5 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 25). While it is grabbed it takes ongoing 10 damage.
Special: Beshela can only use this power once per tentacle per round.

Triggered Action

▸ **Corrosive Tempest** (acid) ✦ Encounter
She touches the bleeding wound, then screams. Her eyes glow brilliant indigo, and the sky overhead roils. Clouds gather in the span of a breath, and black rain begins to fall.
Trigger: Beshela is first bloodied.
Effect (No Action): Beshela gains an aura 500 of acid rain until the end of the encounter. Any creature that ends its turn without some sort of cover from the rain takes 5 acid damage.

Str	26 (+18)	**Dex**	22 (+16)	**Wis**	14 (+12)
Con	20 (+15)	**Int**	15 (+12)	**Cha**	26 (+18)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven, Primordial

Olazdor

Though he prefers archery and a support role, if given a chance to face Thisraldion he'll let pride get the better of him and enter melee.

Olazdor, Archfey of Winds	Level 20 Artillery
Medium fey humanoid	**XP** 2800
HP 196; **Bloodied** 98	**Initiative** +14
AC 34, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 30	**Perception** +24
Speed 6, fly 6	Low-light vision
Immune beheading (Thisraldion's vorpal sword does not roll extra dice against Olazdor)	

Traits

▸ **Eagle Eye**

Olazdor can see invisible creatures and automatically recognizes illusions.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Heroic Shortsword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

A sword in each hand, he presents his chest as if daring you to strike.

Special: Olazdor gets +2 to his attack and +5 to damage rolls if he's attacking a creature that attacked him since his last turn.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+7 damage.

⟋ **Arcane Archery** (weapon, lightning) ✦ At-Will

He nocks an arrow tipped with a talon, which turns to a bolt of lightning when loosed.

Attack: Ranged 30/60 (one creature); +25 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8+11 lightning damage.

▸ **Lightning Strike** ✦ At-Will

He tries to catch you between his swords as if they were talons. A pair of golden bracelets on his wrists must be enchanting his blades somehow.

Effect: Olazdor uses *heroic shortsword* or *arcane archery* twice. If both attacks hit the same target, Olazdor teleports to a square adjacent to the target, and then he grabs the target (Escape DC 25). While grabbed, the target cannot teleport.

Minor Actions

▸ **Harrier Shrikes** ✦ At-Will, 1/round

At a glance from Olazdor, a swarm of birds with silvery, jagged feathers descend upon you, clawing at your eyes.

Effect: One creature Olazdor can see grants combat advantage until the end of Olazdor's next turn.

Skills Perception +24

Str	20 (+15)	**Dex**	28 (+19)	**Wis**	22 (+16)
Con	20 (+15)	**Int**	14 (+12)	**Cha**	22 (+16)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Goblin, Primordial

Lavac

Lavac functions best by just scrambling across his foes and confusing them.

Lavac, the Gremlin Herald	Level 20 Goon Lurker
Small fey humanoid	**XP** 1400
HP 98; **Bloodied** 49	**Initiative** +14
AC 34, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 32	**Perception** +10
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.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Claw Flurry** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC

Hit: 25 damage and the target is knocked prone and is blinded until the end of Lavac's next turn.

✲ **Shadowy Confusion** (cold) ✦ Encounter

Darkness falls, and you hear shuffling movement, making it difficult to tell where everyone is.

Attack: Area burst 5 within 10 (creatures in burst); +23 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 20 cold damage.

Effect: The area drops into darkness until the end of Lavac's next turn. Each ally in the area can teleport 2 squares to another space in the area and gains darkvision until the end of Lavac's next turn.

Minor Actions

▸ **Break It** ✦ Encounter

The gremlin's sudden appearance heralds things spontaneously breaking.

Effect: Lavac teleports 6 squares, and then chooses any number of weapons, zones, or mechanical devices (no more than 5 squares across) that are adjacent to him. They cease to function – zones (such as ice walls) are dispelled, and weapons or devices break. The wielder of a weapon disabled this way receives a save each round, and on a success the weapon suddenly works again.

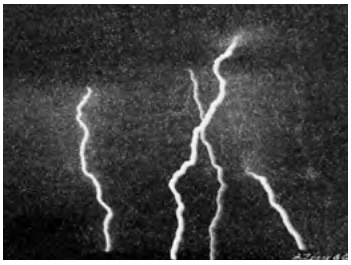
Skills Stealth +24, Thievery +21

Str	12 (+11)	**Dex**	22 (+16)	**Wis**	10 (+10)
Con	12 (+11)	**Int**	14 (+12)	**Cha**	16 (+13)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Goblin, understands Common, Elven, Primordial

Lerina

The Reseen Marauder knows all the tricks of the Unseen Court, since she used to be a member, and while she doesn't have many answers of her own, she made sure Darbony put his gold to use in purchasing countermeasures.



Lerina, the Reseen Marauder Level 20 Skirmisher (Leader)
Medium fey humanoid (elf) **XP** 2800

HP 196; **Bloodied** 98 **Initiative** +14
AC 34, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 33 **Perception** +19
Speed 9 Low-light vision
Resist +2 to saves vs. charm

Traits

▸ **Elvish Accuracy**
Once per encounter Lerina can reroll one of her attack rolls.

Standard Actions

⊗ **Storm Warhammer** (weapon, thunder) ✦ At-Will, Basic
She wields this huge weapon in one hand. When she hurls it, it returns to her.
Attack: Melee 1 or Ranged 6/12 (one creature); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+20 damage.
Effect: Each enemy within 3 squares of the target (including the target) takes 5 thunder damage and is pushed 1 square.

⟋ **Dual Strokes of Lightning** (lightning) ✦ At-Will
She presents her hammer, and a pair of lightning bolts fly from it.
Attack: Ranged 30 (one or two creatures); +23 vs. Reflex
Hit: 8d6 lightning damage.

Minor Actions

▸ **Marauding Tactics** ✦ Encounter
"We all know who we're supposed to kill!" she shouts. "Cut them down!"
Effect: Each of Lerina's allies who can hear her can shift 3 squares and make a basic attack.

Skills Acrobatics +21, Athletics +20, Perception +19, Stealth +24

Str 20 (+15) **Dex** 22 (+16) **Wis** 18 (+14)
Con 12 (+11) **Int** 14 (+12) **Cha** 16 (+13)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Goblin, Primordial

Darbony

As commander of satyrs, Darbony figured his best contribution was allies. He is fairly harmless himself, but has prepared charms of *succor* to call in members of the *Debauched Brotherhood*.

Darbony, the Gruff Goat Level 18 Goon Soldier (Leader)
Medium fey humanoid **XP** 1000

HP 90; **Bloodied** 45 **Initiative** +14
AC 32, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 30 **Perception** +10
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Traits

▸ **Coward**
He's very adept at using allies and enemies as cover.
Darbony gains a +2 to his defenses against attacks while he is adjacent to a creature other than the one attacking him.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Gruff Axe** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC
Hit: 30 damage.

▸ **Summon Ally** ✦ At-Will
He throws a small charm on the ground and stomps it under his hoof. A satyr teleports in beside him.
Effect: A satyr springjack of the *Debauched Brotherhood* appears beside Darbony and joins the battle.

▸ **Wealth Has Its Perks** ✦ At-Will
He ducks into cover, draws a scroll, and quickly reads it.
Effect: Darbony chooses one of the following effects. He can use each one only once per combat.
- ✦ *Glitterdust.* A zone of clinging gold dust appears in area burst 3 within 10. Every creature there is coated in dust until the end of the encounter. It cannot become invisible and it grants combat advantage.
- ✦ *Resist Energy.* Darbony and each ally within 5 squares gains resist 20 to an energy type of Darbony's choice until the end of the encounter. (He likely chooses fire.)
- ✦ *Healing Channel.* Darbony and each ally within 5 squares heals 25 hit points.

Skills Bluff +18

Str 17 (+12) **Dex** 16 (+12) **Wis** 10 (+10)
Con 22 (+15) **Int** 14 (+12) **Cha** 16 (+13)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Satyr Springjack Level 18 Goon Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid **XP** 1000

HP 84; **Bloodied** 42 **Initiative** +11
AC 32, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 27 **Perception** +8
Speed 8 Low-light vision
Resist satyrs can make a save to end any fear effects at the start of their turn, even if they don't normally allow a save

Standard Actions

⟋ **Golden Longsword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
The lightly armored satyr springs through battle and slices you as he passes.
Effect: The satyr shifts 5 squares and makes the following attack at any point before, during, or after the movement.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC
Hit: 26 damage and the target cannot teleport until the end of the satyr's next turn.

✲ **Scattering Arrows** (force) ✦ At-Will
He slings a bow off his shoulder and fires an arrow at the ground beside you. It bursts with arcane energy and knocks you away.
Attack: Area burst 2 within 20 (creatures in burst); +23 vs. Reflex
Hit: 19 force damage and the target is pushed 2 squares from the center of the affected area.

Triggered Action

▸ **Lure of Enchantment** ✦ Encounter
He chuckles a short tune, and you find yourself inexplicably moving as he directs you.
Trigger: The satyr hits an enemy with an attack.
Effect: The satyr slides the enemy 3 squares, but not into hindering terrain. The enemy grants combat advantage until the end of the satyr's next turn.

Skills Acrobatics +16, Athletics +16

Str 14 (+11) **Dex** 14 (+11) **Wis** 8 (+8)
Con 19 (+13) **Int** 8 (+8) **Cha** 16 (+12)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven, Primordiaw

APPENDIX F: Naval Forces

ENEMY FORCES

Lux Profectusque

Adventure 6

Herein we present the stats for Lya Jierre's ship *Lux Profectusque*.

Lux Profectusque, Danoran Steam Frigate	Huge Vehicle
Level 17 Vehicle	129,000 gp
Hull Integrity 4	**Command** +18
Defense 29	**Full Crew** 32
Maneuverability 4	**Minimum Crew** 8
Speed 12	**Total Complement** 200
Saves +4	

Crew

The crack crew is of peak morale, which grants the captain, Lya Jierre, a +7 bonus to Command checks and the ship +4 to Defense, already factored in above. Most of the crewmen are trained musketeers.

Design

Length 170 ft. Beam 35 ft. Conning tower, 30 ft. high. Four decks.

Its metal hull and components are resistant to fire, granting the ship a +5 bonus to saves against the burning condition. Its hull is resistant to passwall and similar effects.

Armaments

A pair of massive two-barrel turrets lie forward of the ship's conning tower, staggered atop each other like steps of a staircase

Crew: 100. *Attack:* +16 to forward or broadsides.

▶ **Stones of Methia**

White stones line the edge of the ship's hull, creating a field that weakens magic.

Any spell that originates more than 50 feet away from the ship has any damage it deals to creatures aboard the ship reduced by 34. If two ships enter each other's protective auras (i.e., they get within short range), they effectively merge into one larger aura. The two ships can then affect each other, but are still protected from without.

Total Cost 110,000 gp

Hull (base level 11, engine, improved speed ×4, Level 17): 65,000 gp

Armaments (huge, forward turret, Level 16): 45,000 gp

Hull (greater fire charm, Level 12; copper sheathing, Level 5): 14,000 gp

Shield defense (Level 10): 5,000 gp

Crew Complement

- Rush Munchausen, bodyguard
- Captain Lya Jierre
- Merton Goncala, bodyguard
- Inez, ritual mage (noncombatant)
- Ulrik, porter (noncombatant)
- 150 expert crewmen (Lux musketeers)
- 15 Obscurati ambush mages
- 30 Obscurati skulks

Mutravir

Adventure 7

The Ghost Ship of Mutravir Island	Level 13 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	39,000 gp
Hull Integrity 3	**Command** +15
Defense 25	**Full Crew** 16
Maneuverability 6	**Minimum Crew** 4
Speed 8	**Total Complement** 60

Design

Length 90 ft. Beam 25 ft. Three masts, 70 ft. high. Two decks.

▶ **Ghost Ship**

It glides through the shoals, ignoring the hazardous rocks as it brings its cannons to bear.

The ship and those aboard it glide through solid objects like a ghost. Each turn, the captain chooses whether the ship is incorporeal or manifested. If manifested, it functions normally. If incorporeal, it takes a –5 penalty to its attack rolls, and attacks against it take the same penalty. Additionally, the incorporeal ship ignores catch and crash hazards.

Armaments

A small array of light cannons, five to either broadside, but they strike with the wrathful might of the dead.

Crew: 40. *Attack:* +14, broadsides only.

Total Cost 39,000 gp

Hull (base level 6, sails, improved speed ×3, Level 10): 5,000 gp

Ghost Ship (Level 13): 17,000 gp

Armaments (large, broadsides, Level 13): 17,000 gp

***Naphaeon*, Obscurati Frigate**	Level 17 Vehicle
Huge Vehicle	110,000 gp
Hull Integrity 4	**Command** +12
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

Nighthawk-class steamship	Level 16 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	104,920 gp
Hull Integrity 3	**Command** +7
Defense 15	**Full Crew** 28
Maneuverability 12	**Minimum Crew** 2
Speed 6	
Perception +13	

Design & Crew

Length 85 ft. Beam 25 ft. Steam engine, three decks. Aside from captain, navigator, engineer, and gunner, the crew consists of two dozen mindless humanoid automatons.

▸ **Extraplanar Magnetometer & Spectral Searchlight**

Next to the navigator's compass, an arcane instrument detects the fluctuations caused by nearby metal, providing a crude sensor to detect ships—even ones in the real world. A gimbal-mounted searchlight on the prow uses wayfarer's lantern technology to allow the Nighthawk to attack intruders while remaining safely in the Bleak Gate.

The crew is always aware of the presence of ships within one mile, and if they lack line of sight (or are on a different plane) they can make a Perception check each round (DC 20) to set a course.

Once within medium range (500 feet) the vessel can use its spotlight to locate one ship at a time, as long as it's to the fore or sides, not aft. The *Nighthawk* can target that ship with its weapons, even if it's on a different plane.

A ship targeted by the spotlight can fire back, but it takes a –10 penalty to the attack roll if it isn't on the same plane. The spotlight can be targeted and destroyed.

▸ **Clever Defenses**

Special iron shutters keep the crew safe from enemy fire without limiting the Nighthawk's ability to fire back.

The crew always has cover against attacks made from outside the ship.

▸ **Tar and Brimstone Sheathing**

An alchemical mixture of components slathered on the hull protects the bottom of the ship.

Passwall and similar effects cannot affect the hull. Any creature that attacks the hull from beneath the water takes 10 fire damage.

▸ **Eldritch Shield** ✦ Installed

An arcane forcefield powered by the ship's engine wards off attacks.

Any spell that originates more than 50 feet from the ship has any damage it deals to creatures aboard the ship reduced by 32. Attacks from within that range function normally.

▸ **Wayfarer's Cannon**

Thin slivers of light are visible through the shutters on the turret at the ship's prow. After it fires, you briefly see mechanical constructs reloading the twin cannons with huge munitions that have glowing amberglass shells.

Crew: 20. *Attack:* +18, forward only. Each round choose one of the following effects:

- ✦ **Flaming.** Attack inflicts the burning condition instead of normal damage. Crew in a struck area take 2d6 fire damage.
- ✦ **Radiant.** Attack explodes with positive energy, dealing normal damage to undead creatures in struck areas, but not harming the ship itself.
- ✦ **Shocking.** Gains a +2 bonus to hit creatures. Against ships, the first strike of any attack deals no damage to the ship itself (later hits deal normal damage). However, crew in struck components take an extra 1d6 lightning damage.

Total Cost 84,920 gp

Hull (base level 6, engine, improved speed ×2, improved maneuverability ×3, Level 13): 17,000 gp

Construct crew: 600 gp

Armaments (Level 16; flaming, Level 10; radiant, Level 2; shocking, Level 8): 58,920 gp

Sheathing, tar and brimstone (Level 8): 3,400 gp

Magnetometer and spotlight (Level 15): 25,000 gp

Porteurs de Mort

Adventure 8

***Ipsum, Danoran* Steamship**	Level 14 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	24,400 gp
Hull Integrity 3	**Command** +7
Defense 15	**Full Crew** 8
Maneuverability 6	**Minimum Crew** 2
Speed 14	**Total Complement** 25

Design

The smokestacks for this steamship are unusually large, suggesting a very powerful engine for a vessel of its size.

Length 85 ft. Beam 25 ft. Steam engine, three decks.

Armaments

A pair of massive cannons in a turret.Crew: 40. Attack: +14 to broadsides, or +12 fore or aft. Can attack at Long range (i.e., from an adjacent stage) with a -5 penalty.

Crew: 15. Attack: +4, forward or broadside.

***Lya's Lament*, Danoran Submarine**	Level 13 Vehicle
Huge Vehicle	36,360 gp
Hull Integrity 4	**Command** +8
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 boarding compartment in ramprow.

▸ **Boarding Ramprow**

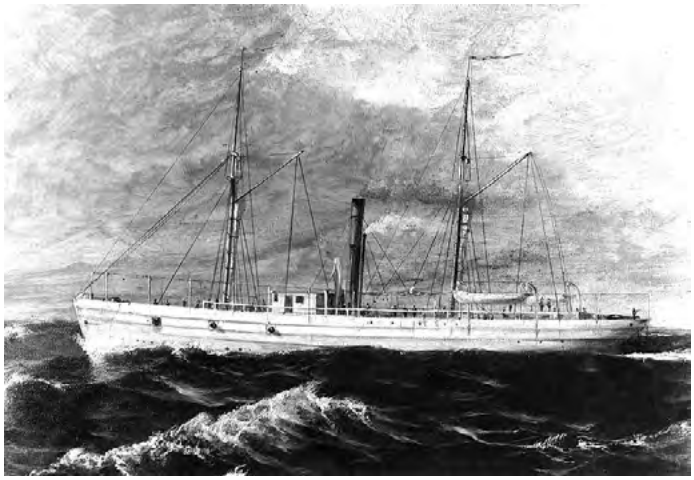
Forged in the face of a glaring female tiefling, the fore of this vessel is made of reinforced metals and bears a brutal set of horns, seemingly meant to drill into opposing vessels.

When the *Lya's Lament* rams another, prevent the first strike the rammed ship would deal to the submarine. In addition, following the ram, the vessel can unload as many crewmembers as prepared onto the enemy ship through the area impacted by the ram.

Once the *Lya's Lament* disengages following a ram attack, the enemy ship is considered to be Sinking slowly from the resultant wound.

▸ **Nautilus**

The *Lya's Lament* 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.



***Porteurs de Mort*, Steam Frigate (2)**	Level 17 Vehicle
Huge Vehicle	111,000 gp
Hull Integrity 4	**Command** +8
Defense 25	**Full Crew** 32
Maneuverability 4	**Minimum Crew** 8
Speed 14	**Total Complement** 140

Design

Length 170 ft. Beam 35 ft. Steam engine. Four decks.Armaments

▶ **Fog Shroud**

A haze of fog rises up from the sea, concealing the massive vessel.

The ship's engineer can spend his naval round to activate the shroud. This blocks line of sight to and from the ship. While the fog is up, the ship rolls twice for Command checks and takes the worse result.

The gunner must succeed a Perception check (DC 10 against a ship firing cannons, DC 20 against a normal ship in motion, or DC 30 against an immobile ship running silently) to target an enemy effectively. Even if a target is located, the ship rolls two attack rolls and must take the worse. Other ships must do likewise to target you. At short range, however, ships can target each other normally.

Armaments

Two turrets at the ship's fore and another pair at the aft can cover any firing arc, though they can concentrate the most fire to the broadside. They mount extremely long-boredcannons which could be precise over great distances. Dozens of men scurry across the deck carrying munitions or manually cranking wheels to adjust the mighty weapons' aim.

Crew: 40. Attack: +14 to broadsides, or +12 fore or aft. Can attack at Long range (i.e., from an adjacent stage) with a -5 penalty.

Battle of Flint Bay

Adventure 9

All the Danoran ships are equipped with tar and brimstone sheathing on the bottom of their hulls, which inflict 10 points of fire damage to any creature that attacks the hull from underwater. This sheathing also deters most aquatic creatures, but cannot harm She Who Writhes.

- Three battleships. The flagship *Praepollens Auctoritate*. Also the *Inventum Nobilis* and *Ira Infernalis*.
- Six grand steam frigates. *Aula Alba* and *Cervus Vigilius* guard the *Coaltongue*. The others are *Semper Autumna*, *Puer Aestatis*, *Ritus Tempi Verni*, and *Feriae Beatae* (colloquially, the Autumn, the Summer, the Spring, and the Winter).
- Twelve steam frigates, two dozen steamships, and a few noncombatant vessels, none important enough to get names.

Battleship	Level 20 Vehicle
Gargantuan Vehicle	250,000 gp
Hull Integrity 4	**Command** +10*
Defense 30	**Full Crew** 32
Maneuverability 2	**Minimum Crew** 4
Speed 16	**Total Complement** 500

** Lya Jierre commands the flagship with a +15 Command check.*

Design

Length 250 ft. Beam 55 ft. Three steam stacks, 50 ft. high. Five decks, plus a three-deck conning tower. Berth decks typically carry hundreds of marines.

▶ **Unstable on the Roll**

The vessel looks almost over-sized, with too many weapons atop it.

Rushed into service without sufficient field testing, the massive battleship is unstable. If struck by a ram attack against its broadside that deals at least 1 strike, it must make a saving throw. On a success, it lists in the opposite direction and is immobilized. On a failure, it capsizes and begins to sink slowly.

▶ **Armaments**

Three turrets forward of the conning tower, three more aft of the steam stacks, each armed with four massive cannons. Additional mortar-style cannons along the broadside.

Crew: 100. *Attack:* +20 to broadsides (when all the turrets can converge), or +17 forward or aft (when only two are available). Can attack at Long range with a -5 penalty.

Grand Steam Frigates	Level 20 Vehicle
Gargantuan Vehicle	210,000 gp
Hull Integrity 4	**Command** +10
Defense 30	**Full Crew** 32
Maneuverability 2	**Minimum Crew** 4
Speed 16	**Total Complement** 500

Design

Length 250 ft. Beam 55 ft. Three steam stacks, 50 ft. high. Five decks, plus a two-deck conning tower. Berth decks typically carry hundreds of marines.

Armaments

Two turrets forward of the conning tower, two more aft of the steam stacks, each armed with four massive cannons.

Crew: 40. *Attack:* +19 to broadsides (when all the turrets can converge), or +16 forward or aft (when only two are available).

Steam Frigate	Level 17 Vehicle
Huge Vehicle	110,000 gp
Hull Integrity 4	**Command** +8
Defense 25	**Full Crew** 16
Maneuverability 4	**Minimum Crew** 4
Speed 12	**Total Complement** 200

Design

Length 170 ft. Beam 35 ft. Two steam stacks, 30-ft. high. Four decks, central one-deck conning tower. Berth deck carries a hundred marines.

Armaments

One turret forward of the conning tower, one more aft of the steam stacks, each armed with four large cannons.

Crew: 40. *Attack:* +16 to broadsides, or +13 fore or aft.

Steamship	Level 10 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	10,000 gp
Hull Integrity 3	**Command** +5
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 trio of heavy cannons in a turret.

Crew: 15. *Attack:* +6, forward or broadside.

ALLIED FORCES

***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

***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

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

***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

Risuri Schooners

Adventure 8

Risuri Schooner (2) Level 10 Vehicle
Large Vehicle 8,400 gp

Hull Integrity 3 **Command** +8
Defense 15 **Full Crew** 16
Maneuverability 6 **Minimum Crew** 4
Speed **Total Complement** 60

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.

Force of Nature

Adventure 9

***She Who Writhes*, Fey Titan** Level 28 Leviathan
Gargantuan Leviathan

Hull Integrity 4 **Command** +14
Defense 30
Maneuverability 8 **Perception** +13
Speed 14 Blindsense

Dimensions

Body 100 ft. x 40 ft. Tentacles 110 ft. Feeding tentacles extend an extra 160 ft.

▶ **Tentacles**

The kraken lashes out with two feeding tentacles, then pulls herself close and grasps with the other eight. Slowly, unstoppably, it crushes, until even steel bends within its coils.

When She Who Writhes rams, she stops 50 feet from her target and takes no damage from the collision. The target cannot move until the tentacles take damage or the titan releases her grip.

▶ **Crush and Bite**

Crunching from beneath the water line is followed quickly by an alien ululation from belowdecks. Crew members issue horrified screams about a massive beak, inhuman eyes, grasping tendrils lined with barbs, and snapping jaws.

She Who Writhes bites and crushes only at short range, but acts as a weapon with a +25 attack bonus (effectively +30 due to range). She has other powers, but has only recently awakened, and so her storms and whirlpools will wait for another day.

▶ **Titanic Resilience**

Cannonballs simply bounce off the massive creature.

Reduce all damage She Who Writhes takes by 1 strike. If her 'hull integrity' is reduced to 0, she merges with the seas and withdraws. No power present in this adventure can slay her.

APPENDIX G: Magic and Training

Magic Items

Adventure 6

Bracer of Liberty

Dozens of links from the chains of slaves were shattered apart and half-melted into the shape of this bracelet. If you lose control of your own will, the links sear with heat and bring you to your senses.

Lvl 16 45,000 gp

Rare Arm Slot Item

Property: Whenever you use an attack with the charm keyword or inflict the dominated condition on a creature while wearing this bracer, you take 4d8 fire and radiant damage.

Power (Encounter): *Trigger:* You or an ally you can see becomes dominated or is otherwise magically compelled to take an action against its will. *Effect (No Action):* You may choose to take fire and radiant damage equal to half your bloodied value to end the dominated condition or negate the compelled action, though any other effects attached to it still occur, such as damage. The creature responsible for the mind control takes 4d8 fire and radiant damage.

Contingent Gatecrasher Charm

Description

This one-use token triggers automatically when the bearer becomes bloodied, or can be activated as a standard action. It transports its holder most of the way into the Bleak Gate, effectively removing them from the real world. Unless special magic completes their transition to the Bleak Gate, five minutes later they return to the real world, but they have time to move to a safer location. When activated, and again if he's pulled back to the real world, the traveler takes 5d6 necrotic damage.

Firesight Eye

Fires within this gem burn away deceptions and illusions.

Lvl 15 25,000 gp

Uncommon Wondrous Item

Special: If you hold this item it counts as a wondrous item. You can instead wear it as an eye patch (or implant it into your own eye socket), treating it as a head-slot item.

Property: While you peer through the gem, you gain a +3 bonus to Perception checks to see things.

Property: When you make an area, blast, or burst attack with the fire keyword, you may choose to exclude one creature that is inside the area, or to include one creature adjacent to the area.

Power (Daily): Minor Action. *Effect:* Until the end of your next turn, illusions in close blast 10 are suppressed, as is any form of invisibility. They appear to burn away, revealing the truth.

Godmind Urn

Did it change shapes when you picked it up? You think perhaps it looked different when the gnome possessed it. But no matter. It looks perfect now, just like you would want. And its whispers are oh, so soothing.

Artifact

Property: If no creature owns this urn, when you touch it choose the type of creature, object, or action you are most interested in, such as death, fey, guns, machines, music, revenge, ships, snakes, or writing. This becomes your domain. If you lose possession of the urn for at least a day or if you die, you are no longer considered its owner.

While you own the device you constantly hear barely-perceptible whispers telling what occurs related to your domain throughout the world. You gain a +5 bonus to skill checks directly related to your domain.

Ownership of the urn slowly drives you insane, and as you are drawn closer to your domain you develop delusions and withdraw from the rest of the world. A player who is not roleplaying his character slowly going crazy has managed to shake free of the urn's influence and can no longer use it.

A spirit medium can communicate with the urn without needing to go crazy.

Property: You can control unattended inanimate objects and non-hostile creatures with Intelligence 2 or less that are related to your domain, as long as they are Huge or smaller. You spend your own actions to direct them (standard action to attack, move action to move, etc.). DMs are encouraged to adjudicate this broadly, using the guidelines in the D&D4E Dungeon Master's Guide to determine efficacy in combat.

Paired Immovable Rods

Exquisite relief patterns of roiling clouds and celestial spheres decorate these two platinum rods, and a pair of golden buttons stand out at each rod's gripping end. If you try to move either more than ten feet from its partner, they teleport to the middle and lock immobile in midair.

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

Rare Weapon: Mace.

Critical: +1d6 damage per plus

Property: These two rods are enchanted as a pair. Neither one can move more than 10 feet from the other.

Property: Each rod has a button that you can depress as a free action on your turn that toggles the rod between 3 feet in length (normal reach) and 8 feet in length (reach 2). The rod still functions as a mace.

Power (At-Will): Minor Action: Place either *immovable rod* into position. It remains in that spot even if such placement defies gravity. You can reposition the *immovable rod* using another minor action, but any other creature seeking to move it must succeed on a DC 25 Strength check and spend a standard action to move it 1 square.

Skull of Cheshimox

This six-foot skull freezes the skin off anyone who touches it. Bone hinges hold its jaw on, and a bone crank can force its maw open, unleashing a blast of frost.

Lvl 16 45,000 gp

Rare Wondrous Item

Weight: 40 lbs.

Property: Any creature that touches the skull takes 20 cold damage each round. Prolonged contact destroys most organic materials, so the skull is best mounted on a scaffold made from the dead dragon Cheshimox's own bones. Typically it is then carried on a sled which can be turned 90 degrees as a move action.

The crank to activate the skull can be touched without risk. Putting the skull in a *bag of holding* or similar container will just ruin that container.

Power (At-Will): Standard Action. *Effect:* Freezing cold fills an area extending from the skull in a straight line to a distance of 60 feet. Any creature that enters or starts its turn in that area takes 20 cold damage. The spray continues until the start of the activator's next turn, at which point, if the skull's cold has not killed a creature during this activation, the skull deals 20 necrotic damage to the activator.

Sonic Staff

This metal polearm has complex flanged baffles along its haft, and it ends with a faintly glowing two-tined cap, like a tuning fork. When struck, it reverberates near-deafeningly, and by adjusting its components you can tune it to the destructive resonance of an object.

Lvl 17 +4 65,000 gp **Lvl 27** +6 1,625,000 gp

Lvl 22 +5 325,000 gp

Rare Weapon: Staff or Polearm.

Critical: +1d6 thunder damage per plus and the target is deafened until the end of the encounter.

Property: Whenever you make a Strength check to break a door or other object, you gain an item bonus to the check equal to the staff's enhancement bonus.

Power (Daily): Standard Action. *Attack:* Close Burst 1 or close blast 3. If you use the burst, you are included in the attack's area. Staff's level +3 vs. Fortitude.

Level 22 or 27: Close Burst 2 or close blast 5.

Hit: The target is knocked prone and pushed 3 squares. It is deafened until the end of the encounter and takes ongoing 10 thunder damage (save ends).

Level 22: Ongoing 15 thunder damage.

Level 27: Ongoing 20 thunder damage.

The Tyrant's Eye

You get only a glimpse of this pale scarred orb—a giant, withered eye—and then your whole body feels like it's burning away.

Lvl 18 +4 85,000 gp **Lvl 28** +6 2,125,000 gp

Lvl 23 +5 425,000 gp

Rare Implement: Orb.

Critical: +1d6 force damage per plus.

Property: To be used safely, this orb must be kept tightly wrapped and covered with a rune-stitched black cloth at all times. It seems to twitch while held, as if the eye is looking for enemies.

The orb can be used as an implement normally even while covered. Uncovering the orb is a minor action. Covering it securely is a standard action.

If the wrapping is uncovered or even loosened, intense magical force blasts out and tears the covering away, making it nigh impossible to aim. Any creature that starts its turn within line of sight of the uncovered orb takes 20 force damage. The eye cannot affect creatures it can't see, so darkness and hiding can protect creatures. The eye's passive Perception is equal to 10 plus half its level.

Lya Jierre's Rapier

Custom-crafted for Danor's Minister of Outsiders, this weapon's length is edged with hovering, jagged teeth that glint in the light. Gold filigree trace out warding patterns along the swept hilt, and four gems of different colors are set into each side of the blade's forte.

Lvl 17 +4 65,000 gp **Lvl 27** +6 1,625,000 gp

Lvl 22 +5 325,000 gp

Rare Weapon: Rapier.

Critical: +1d10 damage per plus.

Property: When you spend an action point, end all negative conditions affecting you.

Power (Encounter): Free Action. *Trigger:* You damage an enemy with this weapon and afterward the target has fewer hit points than the weapon's level. (The DM 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. 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.

You can recharge this power by resetting the mechanism as a standard action.

Tyrant's Teeth

Dagger-sharp fangs ripped from the skull of a tyrant lizard clatter around your neck. When you attack, a ghostly reptilian head appears and snaps down on your target.

Lvl 14 21,000 gp **Lvl 24** 525,000 gp

Rare Wondrous Item

Requirement: The item does not function unless the wearer has survived being bitten by a huge or larger reptile or dragon.

Property: You take a –3 penalty to Stealth checks, and your steps make the ground tremble.

Property: If you have taken any energy damage since the end of your last turn, your attacks deal 3 extra damage matching one of the energy types that damaged you.

Power (Daily): Minor Action. *Effect:* The next time you hit with an attack before the end of your next turn, the attack deals 1d12 extra damage as a spectral tyrannosaur bites the target.

Level 24: 2d12 extra damage.

Adventure 7

The Absurdist Web

You try to unfold this knot of spidersilk the size of a bedsheet, occasionally unearthing a long-dead sparrow or a cricket that waves thanks before hopping away. It's probably easier just to wad it up and stick it in your pocket.

Lvl 19 105,000 gp

Rare Wondrous Item

Property: The interior of this ball of web is an extradimensional space roughly equivalent to a ten-foot cube. To place things into this space you must push it into the web, so it cannot hold liquids or gasses. You can only retrieve items you know are inside, making it excellent for smuggling. Retrieving items take at least two rounds, or more for larger objects, and things like loose coins tend to get lost inside it. No matter how full, the web never weighs more than a half pound.

Those attempting to divine the contents of the web via magic must first succeed an Arcana check (DC 33), which they can only attempt once per day.

Any creature placed into the extradimensional space is placed into stasis for up to a month, needing no food nor water, but still healing at a natural pace. Dead creatures in the web do not decay. If a living creature is not freed within a month, it is shunted from the web and appears beneath a large spider web 1d6 miles away in the real world.

Codex of the Little People

Illuminations of children, pixies, and other small people adorn pages of information on critical but oft-overlooked minutiae on dozens of topics: art, food, games, music, fringe political theories, obscure science, and the like. In the hands of its owner, these pages can reveal arcane formula of wizard spells.

Lvl 16 +4 45,000 gp **Lvl 26** +6 1,125,000 gp
Lvl 21 +5 225,000 gp

Rare Implement: Tome

Critical: +1d4 damage per plus.

Property: Creatures disregard your presence if there are other people present. You are considered to have concealment against any creature that can see one of your allies. This concealment incurs the normal penalty to enemy attacks, and lets you hide in plain sight. This generally doesn't affect anyone who knows your name (or pseudonym), or anyone whom you've spoken to or had notable social interaction with.

Communication Rings

One ring per party member, these charms are crafted from pieces of silver and rusted iron.

Lvl 17 65,000 gp

Uncommon Wondrous Item

Property: Someone carrying one of these rings who knows the proper command word can send allow magical messages he sends to travel between the real world and the Bleak Gate (and vice versa). The rings don't themselves provide any way to communicate, just lets such messages travel between the parallel planes.

Fey Portal Pad

Vines grow from the deck of your ship where you place this wooden pad. A five-foot diameter disk, its face is traced in incomplete golden arcs and inlaid with green gemstones in the form of the vesica pisces: two-interlocking circles, representing mystical connection.

Lvl 17 65,000 gp

Uncommon Wondrous Item

Special: This item is a ship component. It fills one 5-ft. square on a ship's main deck.

Property: A five minute ritual, which can be performed by anyone who knows the proper fey command words, primes this component for one minute. A creature standing on the primed portal pad may teleport to a spot which must be visible and within about 1000 feet, bringing along up to 7 adjacent creatures.

Arrival takes a brief moment, so creatures cannot ready their actions to strike the moment they appear; effectively, once you teleport in just roll initiative as usual. Boarding an enemy vessel requires the ritual leader (who uses the engineer officer role if you're using *Admiral o' the High Seas*) to make an Arcana check, with a DC equal to 10 + the target ship's level. On a failure, the group can choose to still teleport, but they'll arrive in the water within 25 feet of the target.

Power (Daily): If the engineer, the navigator, and the ship's captain recite the ritual backwards, they can instead have the ship transition briefly to The Bleak Gate or The Dreaming. While transitioned, the portal pad's teleportation powers are suppressed. Each naval round (approximately five minutes), the engineer must make an Arcana check (DC 25). If he fails, he may either have the vessel return to the real world, or have the vessel take 1 point of hull integrity damage.

Frost Giant's Plate

With a thought, this fist-sized ball of jagged ice begins to spread across you, encasing your body in a frigid suit of plate armor.

Lvl 18 +4 85,000 gp **Lvl 28** +6 2,125,000 gp
Lvl 23 +5 425,000 gp

Rare Armor: Chain, Plate, or Scale

Power (At-Will): Minor Action. The armor reduces to a 5-pound ball of ice which never melts, or the ice expands to a suit of armor. While wearing the armor, you have resist 10 cold, and you can use the following power.

Level 23 or 28: Resist 15 cold.

Power (Daily): Standard Action. Your size becomes large until the end of the encounter. Your reach increases by 1 square. Make a melee basic attack.

Ghostly Entourage

As you move your arm, this platinum bangle, adorned with obsidian and ivory beads, unleashes an eerie hollow clatter like the chains of the dead. When you grow angry, the ghosts in those stones manifest and seethe with shared fury.

Lvl 18 85,000 gp

Uncommon Wrists Item

Property: You may gain a +5 bonus to Perception checks by calling forth the ghosts in this bracelet. Their moans and wailing likely alert anyone nearby to your presence, however.

Additionally, creatures with necrotic resistance gain only half their resistance's benefits against your attacks, and those immune to necrotic damage instead have only resist 10 necrotic.

Finally, the ghosts invisibly serve you, and can act as a dozen extra sets of hands within 50 feet of you. They cannot attack and can only move things that weigh 25 pounds or less.

The Humble Hook

This is but a simple iron pendant, rusted in places, crafted from a fisherman's hook found in the body of Triegenes, the only man to ascend to godhood. When you don the necklace, laid bare before you are the humble origins of everyone you meet.

Artifact Neck Item: +1 enhancement bonus to Fortitude, Reflex, and Will per 5 character levels of the wearer.

Starting Concordance:	5
Owner trained in Bluff, Diplomacy, Insight, or Intimidate	+1 each
Owner is adherent of the Clergy	+2
Owner belongs to a divine class	+2
Owner gains a level	+1
Owner stops an ongoing combat with diplomacy	+1
Owner recruits a former enemy as an ally	+2
Owner harms the interests of another solely for personal benefit	–1
Owner or ally kills a sentient being without first trying dialogue	–2

Pleased (16 to 20): You automatically know the names and general life details of everyone you meet. You gain +5 to Bluff, Diplomacy, Insight, and Intimidate checks. Only very rare magic can foil this detection. Additionally, you are immune to fear and gain resist 15 psychic.

Satisfied (12 to 15): You gain a +2 bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, Insight, and Intimidate checks. You gain a +2 bonus to saves against fear and gain resist 5 psychic.

Normal (5 to 11): You gain a +2 bonus to Insight checks.

Unsatisfied (1 to 4): No longer trusting your judgment, the hook resists your attempts to cause harm. The first time each encounter you would attack a creature that hasn't attacked you or an ally this combat, make a save. If you fail you are dazed (save ends).

Angered (0 or lower): *Well, it understands why you're doing what you're doing, but it isn't angry. It just refuses to help you anymore.* The necklace finds an excuse to fall off your neck and be found by someone who might use it properly.

Reason, Diplomatic Rifle

Hand-crafted by gunsmith Kvarti Gorbatiy, this long firearm is ornate but not ostentatious, powerful but not gratuitous, and in all ways quite reasonable.

Lvl 19 +4 105,000 gp **Lvl 29** +6 2,625,000 gp
Lvl 24 +5 525,000 gp

Rare Weapon: Rifle. This rifle comes equipped with a 6-round clip and fires cover-piercing rounds. If your attack misses because of the penalty due to an opponent's cover, the attack hits instead but deals half damage.

Critical: +1d6 thunder damage per plus, and the target takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of its next turn.

Property: You gain a +5 item bonus to Intimidate checks. You can project your voice sufficient to be heard across a crowd at a distance of 500 feet.

Power (Encounter): Minor Action. You fire a shot in a direction that won't hurt anyone. Make an Intimidate check. If your check beats the Will defense of each hostile creature within 500 feet, combat pauses so you can talk, treat the injured, or attend to other pressing matters. If any creature (even an ally) re-initiates hostilities before a minute has passed, the bullet you fired returns and strikes that creature as if you had rolled a natural 20 on a ranged basic attack. The bullet strikes after the triggering hostile action.

Steelsilk Mantle

This ornate purple silk cloak is interwoven with enchanted steel threads.

Lvl 17 +4 65,000 gp **Lvl 27** +6 1,625,000 gp
Lvl 22 +5 325,000 gp

Uncommon Neck Item

Enhancement Bonus: Fortitude, Reflex, and Will.

Power (At-Will): Minor Action. You can reshape some part of the cloak into any mundane steel object you can hold in one hand, such as a sword, a key, or a cage. This item detaches from the main cloak, but can be reattached as a free action. You can only have one item detached from the cloak at a time.

Power (Encounter): Immediate Interrupt. *Trigger:* An attack targeting your AC hits you. *Effect:* The cloak spins into the path of the blow and hardens like a shield. You gain a bonus to your AC against that attack equal to this item's enhancement bonus.

Vekeshi Blade

Composed of fire that has been kindled for five centuries since the death of Srasama, this weapon is pledged to defeat the infernal tieflings.

Lvl 20 +5 125,000 gp **Lvl 30** +6 3,125,000gp
Lvl 25 +5 625,000gp

Uncommon Weapon: Any.

Critical: +1d8 damage per plus, or +1d12 damage per plus against tieflings, devils, and demons.

Property: Once per round as a free action you can transform this into any melee weapon from the axe, light blade, heavy blade, or spear group, or can transform it into a unique heavy blade that does 1d8 damage, with a +3 proficiency bonus and reach 3.

Property: You gain resist fire 15.

Adventure 8

Arsenal of Dhebisu — Level 20 Rare

The greatest warrior of her day snatched a falling star and used it to slay a rakshasa. This shining mote of the heavens is the raw ideal of 'weapon,' and thus can take the form of any killing tool its wielder might need.

Level 20: +4 *125,000 gp.*

Weapon: You can change the weapon to any non-firearm weapon as a free action. If you release it for more than a minute, it transforms into a (brilliantly-glowing) rock.

Critical: +1d12 radiant damage per plus and the target is blinded (save ends).

Property: You are proficient with the weapon in whatever form it takes. If used as a projectile, it produces its own ammunition. The weapon always produces light bright enough to illuminate in a 20 square radius, but never impedes your vision or that of your allies.

Property: Whenever you spend a standard action to make a weapon attack, before or after the attack you can slide one adjacent creature 1 square.

Property: If you have changed the weapon's shape each round for at least the past three rounds, and the weapon has not had the same shape twice during that time, you gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls, damage rolls, defenses, and saving throws.

Kolyarut — Level 20 Soldier

Medium immortal animate (construct) **XP** 2800

HP 142; **Bloodied** 71 **Initiative** +17
AC 36, **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 32 **Perception** +16
Speed 8 Darkvision
Immune disease, poison, sleep
Saving Throws +2 against ongoing damage

Traits

▸ **Weapon Master**

Each round the kolyarut transforms its weapon into a different one of the following forms, until after seventeen rounds it has used them all: club, dagger, shortspear, battleaxe, longsword, shortbow, greataxe, longspear, longbow, pick, glaive, rapier, shuriken, whip, bola, double sword, crossbow.

Standard Actions

⊗ **Versatile Attack** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

It's nigh impossible to defend when you don't know what weapon she'll attack with.

Effect: Before the attack, the kolyarut shifts 2 squares.

Have the defender guess a weapon. The kolyarut then changes its weapon to the next on the list. If the defender guessed incorrectly, it grants combat advantage to this attack.

Attack: Melee or Ranged varies (one creature); +25 vs. AC

Hit: 2[w]+10 damage. If the weapon is a whip or bola, the target is knocked prone. On a critical hit the target is blinded (save ends).

✓ **Inevitable Suggestion (charm)** ✦ Daily

She offers a short suggestion, and you cannot help but agree.

Effect: The kolyarut gives an order in the form of a suggestion, such as "You should test your mettle by engaging me in combat with only weapons."

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +23 vs. Will

Hit: The target must follow the order until the end of the encounter, unless it is clearly suicidal.

Str 22 (+16) **Dex** 19 (+14) **Wis** 17 (+13)
Con 23 (+16) **Int** 10 (+9) **Cha** 16 (+13)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven

Kuat Lengen Level 19 Uncommon

Made from massive strands of black hair, this exceptionally large longbow has the same consistency as steel. A single taut line of bone-white ligament connects the top of the bow to its bottom.

Lvl 19 +4 105,000gp **Lvl 29** +6 2,622,500gp
Lvl 24 +5 525,000gp

Rare Weapon: Bow

Critical: The target charges and makes a melee basic attack against a creature of your choice.

Curse: Elves or eladrin who use this weapon to deal a killing blow on a living creature are compelled to eat that creature's flesh. If they do, they contract lycanthropy, turning them into weretigers. If they resist, they become sickened and begin each encounter weakened (save ends). Others who carry the bow are also weakened (save ends) at the start of each encounter.

Power (Daily): *Minor action.* Choose a space within the bow's range. You fire an arrow at that spot, and one willing animal within 20 squares of you, such as an animal companion, teleports to that space.

Third Blade of Srasama Level 20 Rare

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 second aspect, that of the mother-protector.

Level 20: +4 *125,000 gp.*

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 Heal and Insight checks.

Power (Daily): ***Minor Action.*** You and any number of allies within 10 squares may spend a healing surge.

Adventure 9

Book of Kelland Lesser Artifact

This copy of an ancient tome contains the tales of the fey titans.

Lesser Artifact: This book tells in verse the story of Kelland and his wife and daughter. Their ship was attacked while crossing the Avery Sea, and Kelland was claimed as a lover by She Who Writhes. His wife and daughter reached shore, but his wife was taken as a hostage by the Voice of Rot, who demanded the daughter retrieve a book from Granny Allswell, to steal trickery from the gremlins.

The daughter trekked across the Weftlands and got the Father of Thunder drunk, then hid on his back as he crossed through a lightning storm. She then snuck into the gremlin caves and danced like them to reach the book. She stole the book and fled into the forest of the Ash Wolf, who sniffed her and thought she was a wolf. The Ash Wolf defended the daughter from the angry gremlins.

She returned to the sea, but instead of giving the book to the Voice of Rot, she used the book's magic to grow scales and swim down to rescue her father Kelland. She Who Writhes saw them leave and chased them to the shore, where her domain of the seas met the low bayou.

The daughter claimed the Voice of Rot sent her on her mission. Though fey titans know when a lie is told, this was only a half-truth, and so She Who Writhes fought the Voice of Rot and banished him to the High Bayou. But the serpent slew the wife as retaliation.

Kelland and his daughter survived, and with the knowledge from his daughter's quest, he was able to eventually drive back the fey titans and claim the land of Risur for mortal races.

Property: You gain a +5 bonus to Charisma-based checks with fey titans.

Property: Fey titans perceive you as innocuous unless you threaten them. Even then, they cannot make opportunity attacks against you, and you gain resist 10 all against their attacks and powers.

Borenbog's Gourd Lesser Artifact

This ugly, battered gourd smells so strongly of alcohol it melts your nose hairs.

Lesser Artifact: Only those who defeat the Borenbog can take his gourd. If the owner tries to sell or trade it to anyone who did not battle the Borenbog, he suffers from a constant severe hangover (-2 penalty to all d20 rolls) until he recovers the item.

Property: The gourd can reproduce any beverage you have ever drunk, providing it whenever you drink from the container. Any attempt to store the beverages or just keep pouring it out fails; unless you drink what comes out right away, a round later it turns to wretched bog water.

The gourd can even reproduce magical beverages like potions, but each day it can only produce two magical drinks per day, each with a value of up to 5,000 gp.

Property: You gain the swampwalk ability. You ignore difficult terrain if that terrain is the result of bog, mud, or shallow water.

Crown of Risur Lesser Artifact

A simple incomplete circlet of gold.

Lesser Artifact: Anyone who wears this crown other than the rightful monarch of Risur suffers crippling migraines and is dazed. The rightful monarch of Risur can mentally alter the design of the crown as he or she desires.

Property: You always know the names of those you can see. As a free action you can say someone's name to grant them a save against charm, fear, or poison, but only once per person per day.

Fey Obligation

You have foolishly accepted a gift from a fey of sufficient power to compel that you repay that favor.

Variable Level Affliction

Effect: At any point the fey to whom you owe a favor can make a demand of you. You must make reasonable efforts to fulfill that goal until it is complete. You aren't compelled to take any actions, but each day that you do not make a sufficient effort toward the demand (subject to DM adjudication), you cannot take extended rests, and you lose one healing surge. If you have no healing surges, you take damage equal to half your bloodied value.

Persistent refusal will kill you unless *remove affliction* or equivalent magic removes the affliction, or the fey who holds sway over you agrees to forgive your obligation. The level of the affliction is generally 10 higher than the level of the fey to whom you owe the favor.

Granny's Boon — Legendary Boon

Sometimes when you sleep you dream about a gremlin nursery rhyme, but the words always fracture when you wake. You try to remember a short verse, and suddenly an object nearby simply breaks.

Legendary Boon: Lavac, gremlin herald of the Hedgehog Court, can grant this boon if a PC lets him break a magic item of at least level 15. Only one PC can get this boon, and if the party angers Granny Allswell, she can revoke this boon. But she's pretty easy-going.

Property: You can make Thievery checks on objects within 5 squares without needing to touch them or even have line of effect. You need only know they're there.

Power (Daily): Minor action. Choose a weapon, zone, or mechanical device you are aware of that is no more than five squares across. It ceases to function—the zone is dispelled, and weapons or devices break. The wielder of a weapon disabled this way receives a save each round, and on a success the weapon suddenly works again.

Mask of the Unseen Court — Legendary Boon

You have designed this mask to reflect your personality and powers.

Legendary Boon: Your body is invisible, though your clothing remains visible. You cannot remove the mask, which is now your face. If the Unseen Court turns against you, they can revoke this boon.

Property: You gain a +2 bonus to Charisma-based checks.

Property: You gain a teleport speed of 5.

Property: If an effect would dominate you, you are instead dazed for the duration.

Power (At-Will): Standard action. You and all your gear become invisible until you attack. *Sustain standard.*

Sword of the Black Needles — Level 25 Rare

King Dukain fought a fey titan to a standstill with this blade. Five centuries in a bog has not tarnished its gleaming blade.

Level 25: +5 — *625,000 gp.*

Weapon: Longsword.

Critical: +5d12 damage.

Property: You can use this weapon as if it were any type of implement you are proficient in.

Property: Whenever you take an extended rest, choose a daily wizard utility power of level 10 or lower in a spellbook you have available. (You do not need to know the powers yourself.) As long as you wield the sword, you can use that power once per encounter.

Spells

Words Made Real

You pull a fictional person or object from a book and make them real.

Level: 16 — **Component Cost:** 1800 gp or more

Category: Creation — **Market Price:** 4500 gp

Time: 10 minutes — **Key Skill:** Bluff

Duration: 72 hours

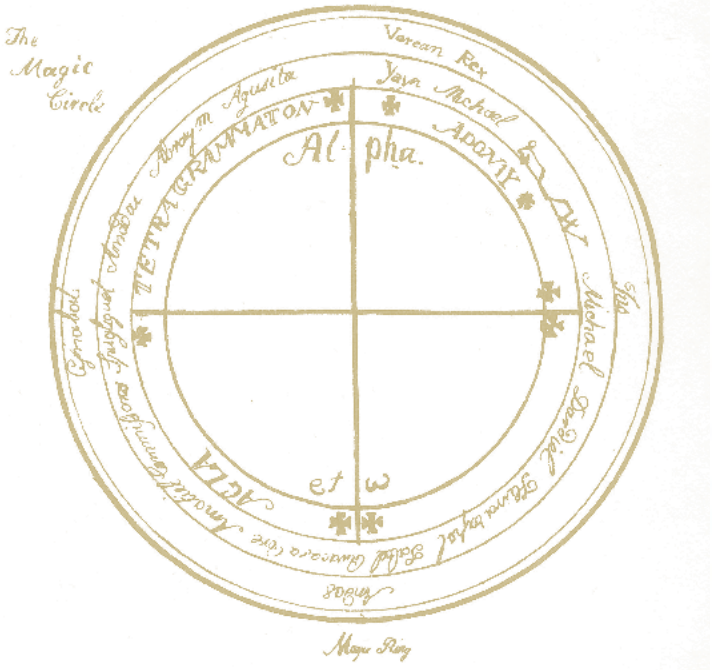
Using a book as the focus of a ritual, you pull a creature or object from that book, typically no bigger than a Large creature. Until the ritual's duration ends, that creation acts in all ways as if it were exactly as described in the book, with a few exceptions.

The creation lacks any magical or supernatural abilities, and its memories are sufficiently fuzzy that it does not realize it is fictional unless told so. It has no recollection of being pulled from a book, and depending on its narrative origin it might think the world around it is actually an illusion.

If you produce an object in this way, you must include additional components for the ritual—typically in the form of rare inks and exotic pages—equal to the creation's market value.

The creation does not have any magical aura, though close inspection might reveal that it lacks fine details. When you perform the ritual, make a Bluff check with a +10 bonus. This is the DC for a Perception or Insight to determine that the creation is not real.

The book used as a focus glows on the page from which you extracted the creation. If that page is damaged or altered, the creation might change to reflect minor edits, or be completely destroyed, falling apart into torn sheets of parchment. It likewise disappears at the end of the spell's duration. If it returns to the book before the duration ends, it does not 'survive'; barring a wish or miracle, the created object or creature can in no way last longer than the ritual's duration.



Training

Bullet Slice

This is not a technique practiced idly. As a bullet flies at you, before you even register the sound of the gun's retort you swing your blade and cut the projectile in twain, feeling the breeze of two chunks of metal fly past.

Training

Requirement: Characters with the Martial Scientist theme who spend time training with eladrin warrior-monks of Sentosa can use this power. As with all martial scientist powers, you can only have one ready at a time, chosen after one hour of study and preparation.

▶ **Power** ✦ Martial (Encounter)

Trigger: A creature hits you or an adjacent creature with a ranged weapon.

Effect (Immediate Interrupt): You slice the incoming projectile in half and take no damage. Unusually massive ranged weapons (such as cannon shells or ballista bolts) can also be sliced in two.

Dramatic Reversal

Fey respond to things differently than rational humans. Tapping into their unusual worldview, you eagerly accept martial misfortune, then exploit your enemies' attempts to capitalize on your vulnerability.

Training

Requirement: Characters with the Martial Scientist theme who spend time training with Lord Karrest can learn this power. Alternatively, they can acquire it by finding a rare thesis of a martial scientist who studied fey fighting, *Unexpected Tactics of Fey Swordsmen*.

Trait: If you chose this power as your Martial Scientist power for the day, once per round when an attack damages you, you can let yourself be knocked prone. If you do, reduce the damage dealt to you by 5, and you can slide one square.

▶ **Power** ✦ Martial (Encounter)

Trigger: A creature hits you while you grant combat advantage to that creature.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): You can use this power even if you normally cannot take immediate actions, such as if you are dazed, stunned, or dominated. You can stand up, shift 3 squares, and use a basic attack or other 1st level at-will attack power. You gain combat advantage with this attack, and the attack deals +10 damage.

Trait: 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.

Malicious Deflection

The chaotic magic of the Malice Lands occurs when the lingering divine malice of a dead god manifests, often by chance. You've learned to call forth the same intense emotion at will, conjuring a sympathetic magical mishap to shield you from attack, though carrying such latent evil will is dangerous.

Training

Requirement: Characters with the Martial Scientist theme who spend time training with Xavier Sangria (or a character in gestalt with him) can use this power. Alternatively, they can acquire it by researching his thesis, *Intentional Emotions as Sympathetic Invocation of Malice Mishaps*.

Trait: After a short rest you can choose to store a burst of malice, granting access to the following power. Whenever you roll a natural 1 on an attack roll, if you have not expended this power yet, the power is expended and you take psychic damage equal to half your bloodied value.

Power ✦ Martial, Psionic (Encounter): *Trigger:* A creature hits you or an ally within 5 squares with a non-weapon attack. (Natural weapons like claws and such count as weapons).

Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The attack instead affects a random creature within 5 squares of the original target. Use the original attack roll.

Vigilante Sprint

Run straight at the guy with the gun. Well, not quite straight.

Training

Requirement: Characters with the Martial Scientist theme who spend time jogging with Kenna Vigilante can learn this ability. Alternatively, those researching her thesis, *How not to be Shot*, can learn this technique.

Description: When you run, you do not grant combat advantage, and ranged, area, burst, and blast attacks against you take a –2 penalty until the end of your next turn.

APPENDIX H:
Bonds of Forced Faith

BONDS OF FORCED FAITH

An Adventure for 15th Level Characters

From the Pen of Ryan Nock

Stunning Cartographic Displays by James Hazelett
Jonathan Roberts

with Layout and Graphic Design by Frank Michienzi

Playtested by Sam Coman, Mary Crowell, Matthew Freeman, Benton Harris, James Herbert, Thurston Hillman, Stoyan Ivanov, Russell Morrissey, Randal Slaven, and Judson Stowe

Special Thanks to Nobuo Uematsu for the soundtrack to Final Fantasy VIII, which taught me to love a good witch villain.

A king and his retinue strike against a coven of witches before they can lay a curse upon an entire city.

A Pivotal Moment of History

The city of Flint in the year 400 A.O.V. is a modest coastal hub of shipping, fishing, and lumber, far from the industrial powerhouse it will become a century later during the main events of the Zeitgeist adventure path. The second Yerasol War has distracted King Lorcan of Risur, and his inattention has allowed a coven of witches to rise to power in this unimportant corner of his nation. The witches, led by a woman from the east known as the Red Contessa, have terrorized the people of Flint for years, abducting children, raising the walking dead, and performing dark rituals atop a three-thousand-foot-tall mountain in the city's center, previously known as The Hunchback, but which will forever after come to be called Cauldron Hill.

Only now, the day before his fiftieth birthday, has the king been motivated to face these witches, because he needs a successor. Risuri tradition disapproves of family inheritance of the crown; rulership usually passes to someone worthy, who must be approved both by the nobility and the common folk. Ending the suffering of the townsfolk of Flint is a small matter, but it will give the king's preferred successor an opportunity for glory.

Unexpected allies arrive from across the sea, and King Lorcan does not realize how pivotal this night's quest will be.

Running the Adventure

Bonds of Forced Faith is intended as a one-shot, a short and punchy adventure which you can get through in the span of a four hour convention slot, or a single night's gaming at home. If you're not playing the full Zeitgeist adventure path, this can function as a standalone, or even an introduction to the setting. Alternately, it can be run as part of an ongoing campaign as a sort of supernatural flashback in the middle of adventure eight, *Diaspora* (see Navras, page 287 of the Act Two compilation).

The pregenerated characters each have motivations in addition to simply wanting to defeat the witches of Cauldron Hill. Since this is a one-shot, we expect some characters to die spectacularly in the finale, but as long as they achieve their goals they can still feel victorious. For those of you running the full campaign, we've made a point to leave this space of the setting's history a bit vague, so whatever result occurs can become canon in your game.

We start where the action begins, shortly before sunset on the night of a lunar eclipse.

The King's Retinue

This adventure includes six pregenerated characters. If you have five players, run Mayor Stanfield as an NPC, and with four, also make Principle Minister Harkover Lee an NPC, since neither of them can end up king.

King Lorcan Finn. Human monarch of Risur, a sword-wielding warrior empowered through ancient rites by the devotion of his citizens. His goal is to declare a worthy successor before the night's end.

Dame Melissa Gahlot. Half-elvish bodyguard to the king, known as the Green Knight. She believes she is owed the crown after Lorcan. By the favor of the fey, she cannot die while the sun is not up. Mechanically she's the simplest to play, handy for a new player.

Principal Minister Harkover Lee. A fire-wielding mage who acts as advisor and supernatural defender of the king. Though foreign and mysterious, he is fully loyal to the realm, and desires to keep his friend and king alive.

Mayor Roland Stanfield. A deva—one who died in the presence of a goddess centuries ago, and now reincarnates after each life. He has served as city mayor of Flint for three centuries, and his chief goal is to keep his city safe. Mechanically he's the most complicated, which might appeal to players who like having lots of tricks up their sleeves.

Godhand Tomas Masaryk. Human holy warrior from a foreign faith, tasked with slaying the Red Contessa and recovering or destroying a heretical text she stole.

Amielle Latimer. Tiefling gunsmith from a hostile nation, who comes to aid Risur in its time of need with her country's newly-invented firearms. She hopes this olive branch will open avenues of trade and industrial investment, so her goal is to be seen as an ally to whoever ends up king.

Additionally, in the Teaser five of the players will play city guardsmen, who will die in less than five minutes in a variety of gruesome ways. The remaining PC, the mayor, dies too, but he comes back.

The Contessa's Coven

Additionally, four main NPCs oppose the party.

Sister Languor. A local Flinter named Rachel Lang, and one of the folk prophets known as skyseers, she joined the witches' coven for power. She keeps a public face among the skyseers, but has acted to sabotage those who would oppose the coven. She'll try to lure the king to a trap by feigning peril, and even if 'rescued' she'll provide a false vision that might trick him into a trap.

Sister Deliria. A sneaky, beautiful witch, with troll minions, she commands powers that dull men's minds or blind them with illusions. She is colluding with Sister Languor to try to trick the king.

Sister Pernicity. Quiet, skinny, with a feigned childish demeanor, this witch flies in a cauldron and loves burning people alive. She torments most of the coven's prisoners, and the human sacrifices she performs halfway up Cauldron Hill empower the Red Contessa's primary ritual at the peak.

The Red Contessa. Beautiful and dark-haired, she wields blood magic, a demonic ritual known as Bonds of Forced Faith, which links her lifeforce to unwilling victims. Her goal is to bond herself to the entire city of Flint, and then force the king to name her his successor. If not granted her wish, she intends to kill thousands.

When roleplaying the witches, sister Languor has a deep, droning voice; Deliria's voice warbles like the classic Wicked Witch from *The Wizard of Oz*; and Pernicity punctuates every sentence with giggles that often shift into cackles. The Red Contessa has an accent like an Italian or eastern European starlet, supremely cocky and biting. She grandstands and won't take anything seriously, not even if it looks like she might die.

Adventure Scenes

First, in the **Teaser,** ask which player wants the most mechanically complicated character. Hand him a copy of the brief character sheet of Roland Stanfield (page 363). Hand everyone else a copy of the city guardsman character sheet (page 363). Run the Teaser until everyone's dead, killing Stanfield last, then let the other players decide whom among the remaining characters they'd like to play.

Hand out the full character sheets. Instruct them to read them and to pay attention to the 'Starting Interactions' and 'Character Goal' sections.

Act One

Then, in the **Briefing**, set the scene at the mayor's mansion, shortly before 6pm, and tell Amielle's player that she's not present yet. Let Harkover Lee start to introduce everyone, but interrupt with guards spotting the approach of Amielle's small steamship, *Hinc ad Aeternitatem*. Let the characters roleplay through sharing the information they have, namely that tonight will be a lunar eclipse, and atop Cauldron Hill immense magical power will be available, reaching its zenith at 10:47pm. It should be obvious to all that time is short.

Before they start making plans, the Red Contessa's **Invitation** occurs. A messenger reports that skyseer Rachel Lang fell under attack by an angry mob and fled onto the water at Parity Lake. Then, compelled by magic, the messenger disembowels himself, and from his entrails a bloody image of the contessa rises. She bids the king to attend a birthday celebration she's throwing at the peak of Cauldron Hill. She's already lit candles for him; she directs them to look at the mountain, which is ringed with pyres burning fifty prisoners at the stake.

The group can make plans, and then they likely set out to the **Deception at Parity Lake**. Skyseer Rachel Lang is actually the witch Sister Languor, and together with her fellow witch Sister Deliria they have enacted a clever ruse. By imperiling Rachel Lang, Deliria hopes to make the king wholly trusting of the prophecy she offers, which will actually lead the king to his death. If either Deliria or Languor are slain, they lay curses on whoever strikes the final blow, but if they survive they'll reappear and aid the Red Contessa at the peak.

Act Two

If skyseer Lang is 'rescued,' she delivers her **Prophecy of the Cracked Cauldron**, claiming the only way to shatter the Red Contessa's blood magic protection is for someone to willingly dive into her boiling cauldron, which will shatter it and its magic. Actually, doing so will just cause you to be horribly burned. Lang offers a potion she has crafted which will protect them from the mountain's dark magic, but she could only prepare enough for the retinue, which should deter the king from storming the mountain with an entire army. In truth, the potion is a ruse to link the Red Contessa to the king and his retinue by *bond of forced faith*.

Next the king and his retinue must **Ascend the Hunchback**, climbing a mountain warded with curses and minor monsters to reach a location known as 'the hunch,' which is where the only safe route to the peak can be accessed. This scene plays as a montage of small horrors. Skyseer Lang's potion does indeed provide protection against some of those dangers. If the king did bring along any mundane soldiers this climb ought to kill off most of them.

At the hunch, hostages are kept beside the **Pyres of Pernicity**. The withered Sister Pernicity flies about with eerie, childish delight while the fey and zombies that serve her lash her prisoners to more pyres. Fighting the witch and her minions becomes complicated as they start burning their prisoners alive, and like Languor and Deliria she lays a dying curse on whoever kills her.

Act Three

The **Final Ascent** up the last few hundred feet is a challenging climb in the best conditions, but howling spirits and supernatural winds assail the king and his retinue, wearing them down and possibly leaving some mentally unhinged.

They find the peak lit up by witchfire as the Red Contessa performs her **Ritual of the Red Moon**. She dances in the firelight, stabbing herself and laughing. When she spots the group she begins monologuing, revealing that in her own twisted way she has done all this to prove her worthiness to succeed King Lorcan as monarch of Risur.

Since he'll likely decline to name her his successor, she attacks, aided by an immense serpent-maned lion and various lesser spooks and spirits.

Her cauldron is the focus of a ritual that connects her via *bond of forced faith* with the whole city of Flint. If her ritual is not disrupted before the eclipse reaches its maximum, she will become immortal. She's impossible to kill while the ritual is in effect, and even if it's stopped, it's possible Rachel Lang's ruse will mean she's also linked to the party. Defeating the witches will require cleverness, or perhaps capitulation.

Teaser

This first section is meant to be run quickly, more as narration than actual gameplay. The goal is to convey confusion, horror, and helplessness.

Ask which player wants the most complicated PC, then give them the simple statblock for Mayor Stanfield. Hand everyone else one of the witch hunter characters.

Read the following text and pause to get die rolls, then announce who survives each assault by the witches. Mostly direct the narration toward Mayor Stanfield's player.

For each of the checks and saves we call for below, any 'Flint Witch Hunter' PC who rolls under 10 dies in the next narrated section. If no one rolls under 10, instead kill whoever rolled lowest. Don't kill Mayor Stanfield. If all the other PCs are dead, just narrate the deaths of the rest of the warriors, then give Stanfield's player a chance to respond before the Red Contessa kills him in the final bit of boxed text.

Yes, we're killing PCs during boxed text. (If any non-Stanfield characters survive to the final boxed text, they can be rescued later as hostages by the real PCs.)

You've ascended halfway to the peak, and you can see the evening lights of Flint below. You're nearly to 'the hunch,' where the thickly forested mountain grows suddenly rockier and steeper, but you can already hear the drums and wailing chants from the summit. A great fire burns a thousand feet above you, and for a moment your mouth waters at the rich scent of boiled meat, before you remember it's probably human flesh they're cooking up there.

This mountain used to be called The Hunchback. Now the locals are calling it Cauldron Hill.

Mayor Stanfield and forty more armed men go to rescue the hostages, because you at least are brave. For years, your King refused your calls for help, first too busy with his war across the sea, and now too busy signing an armistice after he lost.

Every one of you has seen a friend kidnapped, or a wife, a son, a parent. For decades it was rare, rare enough that people dismissed the stories and preferred to ignore the witches. But these last few years while the soldiers were away, the coven grew bold. A dozen more were abducted just last night, and if there's a chance you can save them, you'll not let fear stand in-

Everyone please make Perception checks.

When the boxed text mentions someone dying, point to the character(s) who failed their roll, to indicate they've just died.

There is a rustling sound in the trees overhead, and a cackling woman's voice streaks through the air.

When you look back down, one man is on the ground, blood pouring from his belly. Another half-dozen are already running. The cackling swoops over them, and one flies up off the ground screaming, pulled into the tree canopy. All around you all you can see in the dark are trees, brush, and steep slopes to falls of hundred feet or more.

What do you do?

Give the players a chance to respond for a round or two, but there's nothing to attack. Don't let them get too into planning things. If you really like an idea, maybe just have that character knocked out and abducted instead of being killed.

Have everyone make Insight checks.

A man running beside you stops suddenly, begins to weep, draws a knife, and then jams it into his throat. Another man shrieks and shoves his companion off the nearest ledge. A gust of cold wind brushes the back of your neck, and a voice starts to whisper into your ear, telling you to fling yourself off the mountain before the witches can steal your soul.

Endurance checks, please.

A cluster of soldiers standing in a ring, their swords brandished bravely, begin to cough blood and fall to their knees. You still can't see any attackers, just chaos and confusion and screaming.

Please make an Acrobatics check. If Stanfield fails, go ahead entangle him, but don't kill him yet. Any PCs who survived this far can be taken prisoner, but the Red Contessa kills the mayor.

You hear a scream twenty feet away as shadows reach out from the backside of a tree, grab a man, and pull him tight against the trunk, crushing the life from him. Tree branches leap out and grasp others, those who moments ago were brave witch hunters, but now scream for salvation. Wet, mulchy fingers paw at their faces, thorns rip at their skin, blood dribbles down their arms.

Shadowy humanoids as high as your waist detach from the night and surround the surviving warriors. They leap upon them, pull them down, and drag them away screaming.

The din of pandemonium dulls, grows quiet, goes silent. The mayor stands alone. The horrors of Cauldron Hill seem to have spared him intentionally.

Torches light up the forest. No. Burning bodies, some wailing. Silhouetted by flames, a trio of female figures walk slowly toward the mayor. Two of them hang back in the shadows, softly chanting, but one steps close.

Her black hair cascades down to a dress the color of a scab, so tattered it looks like it's been through battle many times.

Let Stanfield's player decide what he wants to do. If he runs or talks, the witches eventually hold or trap him. The text below assumes he fights.

You plunge your sword through the exposed pale skin above her heart, striking what should be a killing blow.

She rolls her eyes, shoves you back into the brambles, and drags the blade out of her ribcage with a grunt. No wound is left behind. She drops the sword with a muted clang and draws a rusted, jagged knife from her dress. It's still stained with blood from the last time you saw her.

"Sisters," she says, "you can have the others. I've grown fond of killing this one."

The knife's teeth saw the flesh of your neck open. Your blood pours down her arm. She holds you up by your jaw with unnatural strength. Your vision darkens. Your limbs slack. Your last sensation is hearing your men still screaming as they burn.

Pick up everyone's brief character sheets, and welcome them to tonight's adventure, *Bonds of Forced Faith*.

Act One

Hand out the new character sheets and let the group decide who's who.

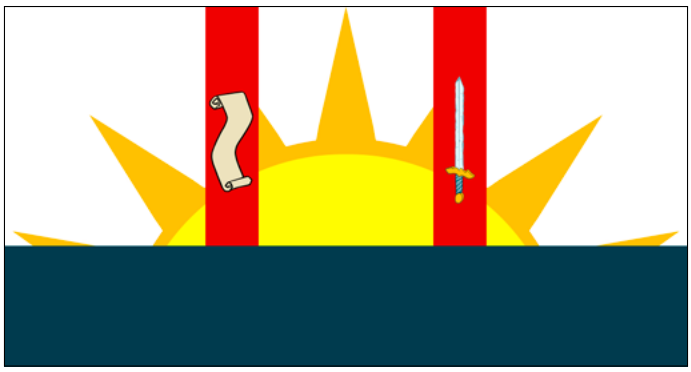
Briefing

Several weeks later. It's 5pm, and gathered at the mayor's mansion island, in a turret overlooking protesting merchants and peasant, are King Lorcan, his aid and bodyguards Harkover and Melissa, the mayor Stanfield, and a foreign advisor Tomas from the nation of Crisillyir to the east. Everyone here assumes they'll be waiting until tomorrow to attack, because tonight's lunar eclipse is a bad omen.

Amielle is not present yet.

Let everyone else make brief introductions and describe their characters, but before they get into the meat of roleplaying, a knock comes at the door. A messenger reports to the royal guards, who convey that the skyseer Rachel Lang still hasn't arrived.

Just then shouting from all across the island draws everyone's attention out the window. A ship is sailing into harbor—no, not sailing, churning with some grumbling mechanism that belches black smoke and white steam in its wake. It flies both a white flag, and the flag of Danor.



As the ship nears the island, they can make out its name: *Hinc ad Aeternitatem*. A steam-powered runabout embarks and carries Amielle to the island.

Let the group meet and roleplay. When the time is right and everyone has shared the information in their 'suggested starting interactions,' a commotion heralds the arrival of Flint's chief of police.

Red Contessa's Invitation

The chief of police bows to the king, nods to his mayor, and glowers at the tiefling.

"I have news about the skyseers, my king. A mob attacked them and they had to flee onto the water at Parity Lake. Last I saw the mob was looking for boats to pursue them. They must have been enchanted, your majesty. Some of my men were injured in a brawl, and we couldn't make them calm down long enough to explain themselves."

And before the police chief can explain anymore either, screams sound from the crowd of protesters. A figure in the crowd has brandished a dagger high, and he removes his hood, tilts his head up, and plunges the blade into his throat. People scatter, and the blood pours out onto the ground. The blood slowly rises up, waving its hands to forestall any hysterical reactions like attacking it.

The Red Contessa's blood simulacrum speaks: "Greetings people of Flint. No one cares about you! You're more chattel to them than you are to me, and I've been sticking your children in a black pot and cooking them alive for thirty years.

"Well, time has come to change that. I am your queen now, and a queen treats her subjects well. The abductions shall stop! Anyway, we don't need more hostages; we have too many already."

She gestures up to the mountain top, and a line of fires are shining there. People being burned alive.

"Shush, king. I have no words for you that will speak louder than the sound my boot will make crushing your skull against the stone of my mountain. You're an old man, and so I've lit candles for your birthday. Come if you dare. I'll let you bow to me in fealty."

"Now, my subjects, ask yourselves. Who will better protect you? A king who has lost a war, who has let his enemies sail into your harbor? Or a queen who burns those who offend her? Let me demonstrate."

A few hundred feet away, with no other warning, the Danoran vessel explodes, vanishing in a cloud of white. Uncontained steam from the boiler launches timbers and metal shards through the air. The remnants of the boat catch fire and crumple. But over the roar of its destruction you can hear the witch laughing as her blood simulacrum fades away.

It's shortly after 5pm, and they don't have much time to formulate a plan. While they talk, the fifty 'birthday candles' that ring the 'hunch' of Cauldron Hill slowly smolder and die.

ECLIPSE CHRONOLOGY

Sunset at 7:26pm. Penumbra darkens moon at 8:13pm. Partial eclipse at 9:12pm. Full eclipse at 10:13pm. Maximum eclipse at 10:47pm.

It takes about an hour to reach Parity Lake on horseback. It will take about an hour to reach a path to ascend Cauldron Hill, then another hour to climb to the hunch where Pernicity's Hut holds hostages. (By this point, even if the party has rushed, the lunar eclipse should have started.)

Climbing from the hunch to the peak takes at least another hour. (So at least a partial eclipse should have begun.)

If the PCs want five soldiers to accompany them, they're ready immediately. Twenty soldiers takes 15 minutes. One hundred soldiers takes an hour. Soldiers have the same stats as Flint witch hunters, and will almost all die ascending the mountain.

Deception at Parity Lake

The obvious hook is to go rescue skyseer Rachel Lang and investigate the mob threatening her. If the party decides to head straight for the mountain, they'll actually spare themselves a fair bit of grief, though you might want to have sisters Languor and Deliria follow them up and harass the group as they ascend to Pernicity's Hut.

The Goal

Sisters Deliria and Languor were tasked by the Red Contessa to distract King Lorcan and keep him away from her ritual tonight. If that can't be achieved, they're instead to try to trick him into willingly undergoing the *bond of forced faith* ritual. This will cause the Contessa's wounds to be dealt instead to the king, as well as anyone else she's bonded to. While the ritual only is effective if the subject is within 250 feet of the focus, it can remain dormant for hours.

Languor has long operated in the open with her alternate identity as the skyseer Rachel Lang. A respected prophet, she uses visions that she sees in the night sky to help people around the city. Deliria's plan is to disguise herself as a local officiant—**Husky Pete**, beadle of the North Shore district—then convince people Rachel Lang is a witch and lead an angry mob to drive her out onto the waters of Parity Lake.

Of course, Rachel Lang actually *is* a witch, but when Husky Pete is revealed to be the witch Sister Deliria, this should make the king completely trust Lang. No one suspects the double bluff.

The Scene

Parity Lake today is a bit of a swamp, with few boat launches. A mob of sixty people has gathered in a forest clearing near a shoreline thick with reeds. A pair of archers stand at the end of a short dock, shooting flaming arrows at the skyseer, but they're almost out of ammo and are terrible shots at this range.

By the time the king and his retinue arrive, Rachel Lang and a half-dozen innocent skyseer acolytes have piled onto a boat and are floating a couple hundred feet off-shore.

The mob only has one modest 25-ft. boat that could carry ten people, and they're not confident enough to attack with so few. A thick knot of townsfolk in the center of the mob are arguing about whether it'd be faster to chop down trees and lash together a raft, or go find and steal a boat from somewhere else along the shore. The whole ordeal is being led by Sister Deliria, draped in an illusion that makes her appear as

a balding, jowled man. Froth on his lips, he distracts the crowd with chants of "Drown the witch," and "Skyseer? More like *lie*-seer!"

Sister Deliria has *bond of forced faith* active on twenty people in the crowd (whom she tricked with *enthrall* a few hours ago), and two trolls that are loyal to her hide in the reeds under the dock (Perception DC 21 to detect if someone checks under the dock).

Watery Trap

Deliria-as-Pete will thank the king for arriving and offer them a boat so they can go slay the witch Rachel Lang. He claims he asked the skyseer for advice, and she cast a spell on him that filled him with agony. He fled and rounded up an angry mob, and they chased Lang onto the river.

If the retinue opts for the boat, it lies at the end of a 20-ft. dock surrounded by neck-deep water filled with reeds. Deliria waits on the shore and when the first person gets into the boat, she opens combat with a *evil eye* to reduce the ambush victim's AC. She then screams, "Weak-minded *and* weak-limbed. Drown them, my pets!" The trolls then erupt from the water beside the boat. One grapples and drags the victim into the water, while the other clambers onto the dock and keeps the rest of the retinue from saving the drowning victim.

Deliria isn't surprised if her ruse fails, though, and is ready to fight for a bit, then run.

Foes at Parity Lake

- 2 Deliria's trolls
- Sister Deliria

Deliria's Troll	Level 15 Brute
Large fey humanoid	
HP 140; **Bloodied** 70	**Initiative** +11
Regeneration 10	
AC 27, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 26	**Perception** +10
Speed 7	
Traits	
▸ **Troll Regeneration**	
If the troll takes acid or fire damage, its regeneration does not work on its next turn.	
Standard Actions	
⊘ **Grasping, Drowning Claws** ✦ At-Will, Basic	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +20 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6+20 damage, and the troll grabs the target (Escape DC 23) and slides it 4 squares to a space within the troll's reach.	
✓ **Press the Life Out** ✦ At-Will	
Requirement: The troll must have the target grabbed.	
Attack: Melee 2 (grabbed creature); +18 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 20 damage, and the target loses a healing surge.	
⟋ **Poisoned Crossbow** (weapon) ✦ Encounter	
Special: Each troll only has one shot with his crossbow.	
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +18 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10+20 damage. Make a secondary attack against that target.	
Secondary Attack: +18 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: The target is weakened and takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and defenses (save ends all).	
Skills Athletics +18, Endurance +17	
Str 23 (+13) **Dex** 18 (+11) **Wis** 16 (+10)	
Con 21 (+12) **Int** 6 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+7)	
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Giant, Primordial	

MECHANICS OF THE BOND

The ritual *bond of forced faith* lets the recipient draw upon the health and strength of those she links to, making the recipient nearly unkillable.

Those whose life forces are linked to the target of the ritual must shed a drop of their blood into a cup of milk, which the target must drink. For several hours thereafter, the target gains a boost to her physical stats, and damage dealt to her is first divided equally among those whose blood was contained in the milk, as long as they are within 250 ft. Round up the damage, but the distributed total is never higher than the original amount.

For example, if the Red Contessa is bonded with five of the PCs, and an attack would deal 8 damage to her, three PCs would take 2 damage, and two would take 1 damage. She would take no damage as long as any of the PCs bonded to her were alive.

For simplicity's sake, the witches other than the Red Contessa are simply given a buffer of temporary hitpoints in their stats. While they have these temporary HP, hits that would wound instead kill some of the people around them.

Simply hacking at the witch will kill a lot of innocents. You need to either move the witch away from the people, or subdue her. She's still vulnerable to conditions, and drowning works fine. For simplicity's sake, we have each witch bonded to twenty people, each of whom provides 10 temporary hit points. Getting those people out of range reduces the witch's HP buffer. Particularly utilitarian PCs might simply *fireball* the whole crowd and clear out the people in one go.

The ritual detects as defensive magic, but this is part of an illusion woven into the magic. The Red Contessa's Will defense is 33, in case Harkover tries to use *dispel magic* the ritual.

Note that due to Amielle's racial immunity to curses, she cannot be affected by *bond of forced faith.*

WITCH HEXES

The witches, as a coven, share a lot of the same powers. You'll want to familiarize yourself with the mechanics of the common powers, particularly evil eye and bestow curse.

Sister Deliria Level 15 Elite Controller
Medium natural humanoid (human)

HP 84; **Bloodied** 42; see *Bond of Forced Faith* **Initiative** +15
AC 29, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 27 **Perception** +13
Speed 6 Darkvision
Action Point 1; **Saving Throws** +2

Traits

▸ **Bond of Forced Faith**

The witch is bound to 20 creatures, each of which provides a shield of 10 hit points, effectively granting her 200 temporary hit points. Each bound creature that moves more than 50 squares from the witch reduces her temporary hit points by 10.

If the witch has no bound creatures alive and in range, she takes a -5 penalty to melee weapon attack and damage rolls.

▸ **Coven**

The witch can communicate telepathically with other members of her coven as long as they're within three miles. If this witch is adjacent to another from the same coven, it gets +1 to its defenses, to a maximum of +2 from three adjacent witches.

Standard Actions

⊗ **Sacrificial Dagger** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC

Hit: 1d4+10 damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends).

✓ **Bestow Curse** ✦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. Will

Hit: The witch lays a curse on the creature (counts as a level 10 affliction). The creature can spend a standard action to struggle against the curse and make a saving throw. If it succeeds, it can ignore the curse until the end of its next turn.

Example curses include:

- ✦ The target is unable to see more than 3 squares.
- ✦ The target is frightened, and cannot move adjacent to an enemy unless one of its allies is already adjacent to that enemy.
- ✦ The target takes a permanent -3 penalty to one defense (non-cumulative).

✓ **Pain Strike** (necrotic) ✦ Encounter

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. Fortitude

Hit: The target falls prone. It is slowed and takes ongoing 20 necrotic damage (save ends both).

✲ **Howling Confusion** ✦ Encounter

Attack: Area burst 2 within 10 (creatures in burst); +18 vs. Will

Hit: At the witch's direction, the target moves its speed and makes an at-will attack against a creature of the witch's choice. Then it is dazed until the end of the witch's next turn.

✓ **Curse of Amnesia** ✦ At-Will

Deliria's preferred curse.

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +18 vs. Will

Hit: The target is afflicted with a curse, as *bestow curse*. The target is forgetful. It cannot make attacks or use powers that deal a chosen energy type or use a particular type of weapon.

▸ **Raven's Flight** ✦ Encounter

Effect: The witch briefly transforms into a Tiny raven and flies 10 squares, then returns to her normal form. Then she turns invisible until the end of the encounter or until she attacks.

Minor Actions

✓ **Evil Eye** (charm, psychic) ✦ At-Will (1/round)

Special: This attack doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.

Attack: Ranged 6 (one creature); +18 vs. Will

Hit: 1d4+10 psychic damage, and the target takes a -4 penalty to one defense of the witch's choice until the end of the witch's next turn.

Triggered Actions

✧ **Dying Curse** ✦ Encounter

Trigger: The witch dies.

Attack: Close burst 20 (each creature that damaged her in the past round); +18 vs. Will

Hit: The target is stunned for one round and receives a curse (counts as a level 10 affliction). The cursed creature's presence spooks natural animals. The cursed creature takes a -2 penalty on saves against attacks by witches of the same coven, and grants combat advantage to them.

Skills Arcana +16, Bluff +13, Intimidate +13, Perception +13, Stealth +16

Str	18 (+11)	**Dex**	18 (+11)	**Wis**	12 (+8)
Con	18 (+11)	**Int**	18 (+11)	**Cha**	10 (+7)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Elven, Giant, Infernal, Primordial

During Combat Deliria opens up with *evil eye*, then casts *curse of amnesia*, probably targeting Harkover. She rasps, "No fire for you, old man," and if the curse takes effect, Harkover cannot use powers that produces fire.

Thereafter she uses *evil eye* every turn, and uses her encounter powers before striking with her dagger or laying any more curses on the party. If her temporary hit points are gone or she's cornered, she uses *raven's flight* to flee and hide. Thereafter she'll try to head up the mountain.

Act Two

A defeated Deliria curses her killers, and then Rachel Lang returns to shore. The confused mob flees in panic.

Prophecy of the Cracked Cauldron

Rachel, who speaks with a relaxed, languid style, thanks them for the rescue of her and her acolytes. She reports that she was on her way to share a vision when the mob drove them onto the lake. She offers what little healing magic she has left to the king (which gives her an opportunity to wipe away any blood the king may have shed; see below).

After casting using two spells to restore 10 hit points each (without the target needing to spend a healing surge), she recounts her vision:

> "Blood coats the peak of the mountain, pouring out of a cauldron scorched black with fire. Body after body is dragged into that pot, and the victims scream and die and lend their blood to the cascade, while their terrified souls seep into the stone of the mountain. Then blood falls from the moon, raining across the entire city, and the eyes of a countess watch from every pool of moonlight. It is not safe to attack tonight!
>
> "When the moon is near setting, and the glow of dawn waits to appear, the cauldron is unguarded, the coven exhausted and sleeping after their night of revelry. And a figure steps willingly into the boil and the bubble. By that selfless sacrifice, the fire turns to ice, the cascade stops, the blood fades away. And then the sun rises, the witches turn to stone, and the mountain is purified."

This false vision might fool the group if not for Amielle's warning. But if the king insists on continuing up the mountain, Rachel says she can cast a spell that will protect them. She has a gourd of milk which she fills with herbs, and she asks each of them to shed a drop of blood into it. She says the purity of the milk will protect them from the witches' blood magic. She'll stay down at ground level and pray over the gourd to keep the ward active.

Lang has tried to think of anything that might give away her ruse, and she's quite convincing (Insight DC 28). [By the way, we didn't give any of the PCs Insight for this very reason.] Nevertheless, PCs might understandably be wary of giving anyone their blood.

A character who presses for details of the magic can make an Arcana check (DC 24) to realize that her carefully-rehearsed lie isn't consistent with how such a spell would actually work.

Successful Trick

If the party falls for this, Rachel promises that she and her acolytes will head to safety and begin praying over the gourd in an hour, after which the king's ascent will be blessed.

She mentions that she also glimpsed in her vision prisoners trapped in cages at 'the hunch,' where the gentle slope of the mountain becomes much steeper for the final thousand feet up to the peak. She assumed those prisoners were doomed and would be hurled into the cauldron, but if the king insists on bravely attacking during the blood moon, perhaps they could be spared ritual sacrifice.

Again, Lang is just trying to appear helpful and cooperative, and wants to offer more warnings in order to distract any suspicions that her request for blood is a trick.

Failed Trick

Unlike her sisters, Lang does not have *bond of forced faith* active, so she's loathe to risk combat, but she needs to get at least a sample of King Lorcan's blood. If the party sees through Lang's lies, she has two backup options.

First, if she was able to tend the king's wounds, she makes sure to get some of the king's blood into her sleeve or a rag. If the king took any damage from slashing or piercing attacks, that's enough for her to get a drop of blood.

Failing that, she can try one last gambit. She attacks with *bloodletting*, and then tries to soak the king's blood into her sleeve or a rag, then flees. If she can get out of sight, she knows a ritual to let her teleport to the peak of the mountain and rejoin the Red Contessa.

Sister Languor Level 15 Lurker
Medium natural humanoid (human)

HP 84; **Bloodied** 42 **Initiative** +15
AC 29, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 27 **Perception** +13
Speed 6 Darkvision

Traits

Coven

The witch can communicate telepathically with other members of her coven as long as they're within three miles. If this witch is adjacent to another from the same coven, it gets +1 to its defenses, to a maximum of +2 from three adjacent witches.

Standard Actions

Staff of Stealth (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+5 damage, and the target cannot see the witch for the rest of the encounter or until it deals damage to the witch.

Bestow Curse ✦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. Will

Hit: The witch lays a curse on the creature (counts as a level 10 affliction). The creature can spend a standard action to struggle against the curse and make a saving throw. If it succeeds, it can ignore the curse until the end of its next turn.

Example curses include:

- The target is unable to see more than 3 squares.
- The target is frightened, and cannot move adjacent to an enemy unless one of its allies is already adjacent to that enemy.
- The target takes a permanent -3 penalty to one defense (non-cumulative).

Bloodletting ✦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. Fortitude

Hit: The target takes ongoing 5 damage until it heals any damage, or until someone succeeds a Heal check (DC 23) to treat them as a standard action.

Waves of Fatigue (necrotic) ✦ Encounter

Attack: Area burst 2 within 10 (creatures in burst); +18 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 3d6+10 damage, and the target is weakened and slowed (save ends).

Curse of Lethargy ✦ At-Will

Languor's preferred curse.

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +18 vs. Will

Hit: The target is afflicted with a curse, as *bestow curse*. The target is lethargic. It always goes last in intiative, and whenever it takes damage, it is slowed on its next turn.

Raven's Flight ✦ Encounter

Effect: The witch briefly transforms into a Tiny raven and flies 10 squares, then returns to her normal form. Then she turns invisible until the end of the encounter or until she attacks.

Minor Actions

Evil Eye (charm, psychic) ✦ At-Will (1/round)

Special: This attack doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.

Attack: Ranged 6 (one creature); +18 vs. Will

Hit: 1d4+10 psychic damage, and the target takes a -4 penalty to one defense of the witch's choice until the end of the witch's next turn.

Triggered Actions

Dying Curse ✦ Encounter

Trigger: The witch dies.

Attack: Close burst 20 (each creature that damaged her in the past round); +18 vs. Will

Hit: The target is stunned for one round and receives a curse (counts as a level 10 affliction). The cursed creature's presence spooks natural animals. The cursed creature takes a -2 penalty on saves against attacks by witches of the same coven, and grants combat advantage to them.

Skills Arcana +16, Bluff +13, Intimidate +13, Perception +13, Stealth +16
Str 18 (+11) **Dex** 18 (+11) **Wis** 12 (+8)
Con 18 (+11) **Int** 18 (+11) **Cha** 10 (+7)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Elven, Giant, Infernal, Primordial
During Combat Languor opens up with *evil eye*, then uses *raven's flight* to close with someone whose blood she wants, then uses *bloodletting*.

Thereafter, if she can't flee, she uses *evil eye* every turn, using *curse of lethargy* first (probably targeting Stanfield), then striking foes with her staff so she can escape without them seeing where she goes.

Ascend the Hunchback

It takes about an hour to reach the base of the path up Cauldron Hill. Remind the PCs what time it is (it is most likely 7:30, just after sunset, if they spent time to help rescue Rachel Lang). At a safe pace it would take two hours to reach the 'hunch,' and another two to reach the peak. This is not the time for a safe pace.

Effect of the Gourd

As the party starts climbing the mountain, if they fell for Rachel Lang's deception they are indeed granted some small protection by the prayers of her acolytes. They are immune to fear and protected from cold weather for the duration of their climb.

First Ascent

To abstractly represent the party climbing a few thousand feet in a hurry, each PC must make an Athletics check (DC 15) or take 1d10 damage, plus an additional 1d10 for every 5 points they fail by.

Clever ideas—like the king reshaping land to clear barricades in particularly tricky spots—might grant the retinue a +5 bonus to their checks. If the group is traveling without light sources, those without darkvision take a -10 penalty to their checks.

This covers the first half of the climb to the hunch.

Watchful Scarecrows

During this ascent, the retinue comes upon one of the witch hunters who was captured in the teaser. He's lashed to a tree, and is quite dead, with his gut torn open and slits cut from his eyes down his cheeks to his throat.

His blood has pooled at his feet, and if Harkover Lee hasn't used his *black gem* or if someone approaches the corpse outside the gem's radius, the Contessa's voice trills happily from the scab of a pool beneath him. "I see you. I do hope Roland is here again. Don't worry. Just because their bodies are stiff doesn't mean they've forgotten how you got them killed."

At this point, she dispatches the undying spirits (see below) to find and attack them. They'll arrive within two minutes. The party takes a -5 penalty on Stealth checks if they want to hide from these monsters.

If the party is hidden from the Contessa's scrying, though, the corpse hangs inert, though its eyes are slit open, giving an eerie sense it's watching them. If someone disturbs the body, it lurches forward and snaps to try to bite them – frightening but harmless.

A half-dozen more of these scarecrows dot the path up to the hunch.

My Death, Your Death

Scores of shadowy undead roam the mountainside, though the area's vast enough that only five will come upon the party. As they near the hunch, or if they are spotted near the Contessa's blood pools, a Perception check (DC 22) notices a chill and the presence of something while the spirits are still a hundred feet away.

If the party is being stealthy already, or is alerted and decides to hide, have everyone in the retinue make a Stealth check (DC 17) to slip past the spirits. If three or more fail, the spirits hone in on their location, forcing a second check (DC 22) to slip past them. If three or more people fail the second time, the spirits attack. They completely ignore Mayor Stanfield, because the Red Contessa likes to kill him herself.

If the party brought along guards or soldiers, the spirits almost certainly spot such a large group, and the target the cannon fodder first.

Foes on the Ascent

✦ 5 Undying Spirits

Undying Spirit Level 15 Goon Skirmisher
Medium shadow animate (undead)
HP 40; **Bloodied** 20 **Initiative** +9
AC 27, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 29 **Perception** +13
Speed fly 8 (altitude limit 2) Darkvision
Resist insubstantial

Traits

▸ **Tortured Soul**

An undying spirit manifests when the victim of a ritual sacrifice is magically compelled at the moment of death to forget everything but the manner of his demise. Thereafter the spirits serve the one who killed them, hoping for release from their endless memories of death. These oily vestiges of a soul resemble animate shadows until they get within reach of a living creature, at which point the darkness peels away, revealing a pale, wispy figure that resembles the spirit's form in life. It screams or begs as it reaches out, trying to anchor itself to a living creature, but its touch causes the same wounds that befell the spirit to manifest on the target.

✲ **Relive Death** (fear) ✦ Aura 1

Creatures nearby the undying spirit see flashes of the moment of the spirit's death.

Make the following attack to any enemy that enters or ends its turn in the aura.

Attack: Close burst 1 (one creature in burst); +18 Will

Hit: The target is dazed until the end of that creature's next turn.

Special: If the party fell for Rachel Lang's deception, they are actually protected from this fear effect by her acolyte's prayers.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Clutching Shadows** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC

Hit: 1d6+20 necrotic damage.

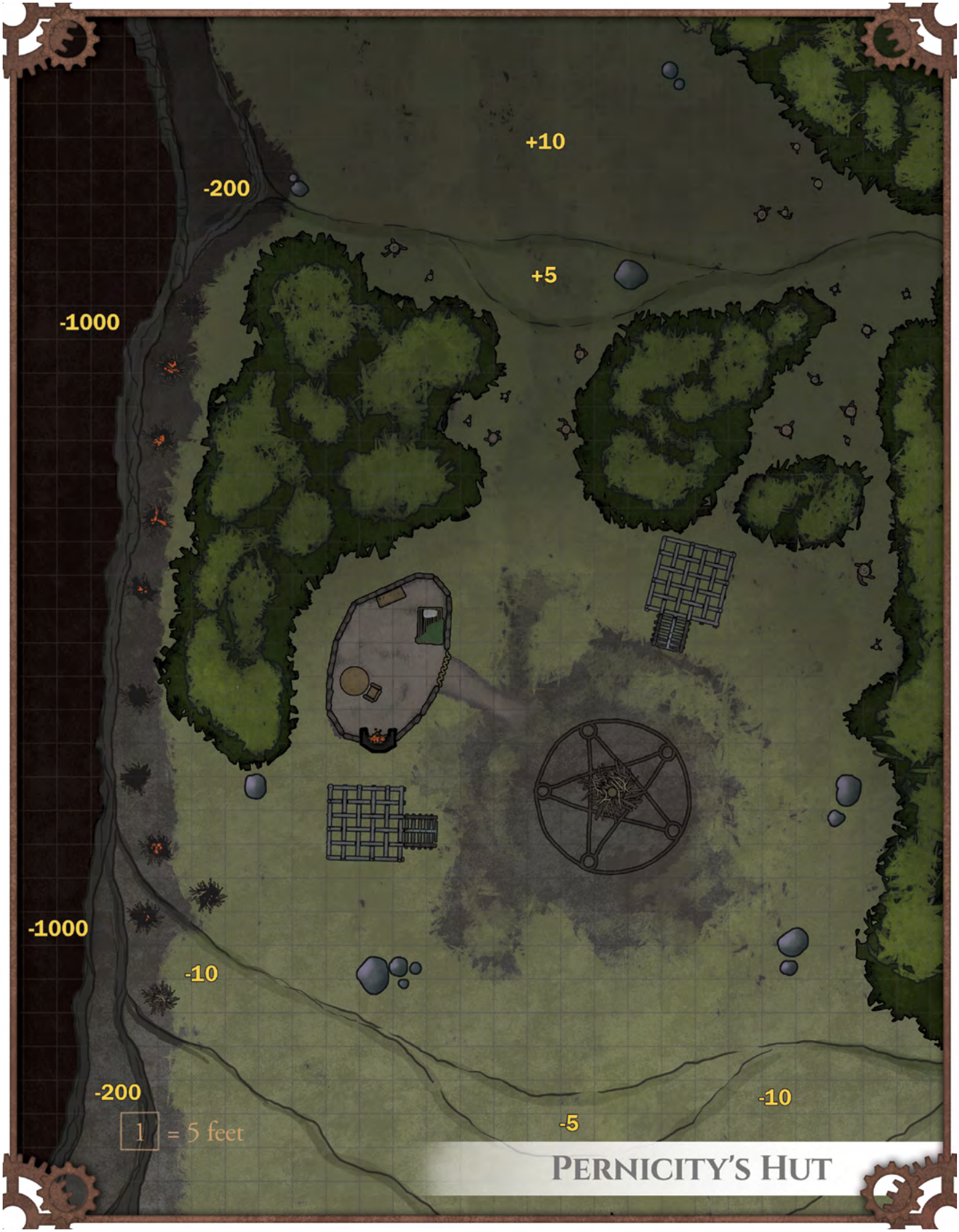
Skills Perception +13, Stealth +14 (+4 in bright light)
Str 1 (+3) **Dex** 14 (+9) **Wis** 12 (+8)
Con 1 (+3) **Int** 6 (+5) **Cha** 15 (+9)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Primordial

Second Ascent

To make it all the way to the hunch, more climbing is in order. But first, during this climb the air whips up in irregular, moaning gusts; and red eyes watch from distant tree branches that buck in the tempest. Barely glimpsed gremlins giggle as they dash at the edge of the party's vision. The air grows intensely cold and clouds descend to grip and blind the party.

Each PC must make an Endurance check (DC 18) or lose a healing surge from the cold. Then as before, each PC must make an Athletics check (DC 15) or take 1d10 damage, plus an additional 1d10 for every 5 points he failed by.

If the party fell for Rachel Lang's deception, the acolyte's prayers protect them from the cold.


+10
-200
+5
-1000
-1000
-10
-200
-10
-5
1 = 5 feet
Pernicity's Hut

Churrascaria

As the party nears the hunch, the fog begins to clear as the enticing scent of cooking meat reaches their noses. A half-dozen burning stakes light up a section of forest a few hundred feet ahead, but seem to be surrounded by darkness on one side. At further examination, the fires sit at the edge of a steep cliff face, beside a thousand foot drop. Beyond them looms the hunch, where the relatively flat wooded slope becomes much steeper and rocky for the final ascent.

At this distance, the party has the option of snuffing their light and sneaking up – requiring an Athletics check (DC 15 or DC 25 for those without darkvision) to navigate the rough terrain. Failure deals damage as above. Then a Stealth check (DC 17) lets them sneak up to Pernicity's hut, or bypass it entirely, depending on whether they want to rescue the prisoners.

Pyres of Pernicity

Pernicity's hut sits in a small clearing near a perilous cliff edge. Nearby cages hold more prisoners. Between them a pentagram burned into the ground, and tiny dark fey—red-eyed gnome-like beings, their ears curling like devil horns—are tossing charred bodies into a pile atop the sigil. Each has a small covered lantern, which bob and flash like will-o-wisps.

Tiny and adorable Sister Pernicity sits atop the pile of corpses, humming and swishing her fingers along to a *Hall of the Mountain King*-esque tune.

If the party gives her a couple minutes, she finishes her song, then steps off the pile and magically glides to her hut. She grins to her fey and says, "Little hellions, go and lash me some more poor souls to the pyres. I want to give the king a good kick in the groin when he arrives. Oh, but pick the ones I marked. Don't want to let the *good* meat go to waste."

Pernicity's plan is to have a half dozen live prisoners lashed to poles, which are primed with oil and pyrotechnic powder to go up in an instant. Her fey will await her order, and then light up the innocents, which Pernicity hopes will distract King Lorcan and his crew and draw them to the cliff side. She'd quite love to send the king careening down a thousand foot drop to shatter on the woods below.

Rescuing Prisoners

The dark fey drag six people out of the cage farthest from the cliff face, and then over the course of five minutes they drag the poor, wimpering men to the pyres and tie them up. During this, they're fairly oblivious (Perception +2).

This leaves seven prisoners in that cage, and thirteen in the cage closer to Pernicity's hut. These are the twenty people Pernicity is linked to with *bond of forced faith*.

Minion Tactics

The pile of corpses Pernicity sat on in the pentagram are actually all zombies under her control. They remain inert until she's attacked, at which point she'll hover over them and order them to swarm her foes. Since they're prone and staggered, the party has at least a round before they'll be attacked, but since they've already been burned alive, fire can't do much more to them.

One dark fey rushes to set the bonfires alight. This requires the creature to spend a standard action to light the pyrotechnic powder. Thereafter the bonfire flashes brightly, though in the first round the fire does no damage. One round later the bonfire does 1 damage to the lashed victim, and in subsequent rounds the victim takes 5 fire damage and creates a cloud of smoke in a 4 square radius that provides concealment, or total concealment beyond 2 squares. Each victim has 10 hit points.

Meanwhile, the other fey will try to use their bonfire gusts to drive the PCs, either off the cliff or into the horde of zombies. If both zombie clusters can attack one PC, the first tries to trip the PC, and the second grabs the PC so he cannot stand up without first escaping. By then hopefully the other horde will also grab the PC and quickly eat him.

Foes at the Hunch

- 8 Cauldron Hill Dark Fey
- 2 Burnt Zombie Clusters
- Sister Pernicity

Cauldron Hill Dark Fey — Level 15 Minion Controller
Small fey humanoid

HP 1; a missed attack never damages this minion — **Initiative** +7
AC 29, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 25 — **Perception** +7
Speed 8 — Low-light vision

Standard Actions

Flaming Claws (fire) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC
Hit: 6 damage, plus 6 fire damage

Bonfire Gust (fire) ✦ At-Will
Attack: Close blast 3 (creatures in burst); +18 vs. Reflex
Hit: 10 fire damage and the target is pushed 1 square.

▸ **Spooky** ✦ At-Will
Effect: The fey can throw its voice 10 squares, or create small dancing lights that illuminate that area.

Str	7 (+5)	**Dex**	16 (+10)	**Wis**	10 (+7)
Con	14 (+9)	**Int**	8 (+6)	**Cha**	16 (+10)

Alignment Evil — **Languages** –
Equipment covered lanterns (illuminates 2 squares)

Burnt Zombie Cluster — Level 15 Goon Controller
Large natural animate (undead)

HP 50; **Bloodied** 25 — **Initiative** +7
AC 29, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 25 — **Perception** +8
Speed 4 — Darkvision
Resist fire 20; **Vulnerable** close and area attacks 10

Traits

▸ **Cluster of Dead**
Each cluster consists of a dozen zombies working as a horde, filling the space of a Large creature. The cluster needs only fill 4 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual zombie could move through.

Standard Actions

Knock Down ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC
Hit: 20 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Drag Out ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC
Hit: The target is grabbed (Escape DC 23). While it is grabbed, it takes ongoing 15 damage (save ends) as zombies gnaw on it.

Str	14 (+9)	**Dex**	10 (+7)	**Wis**	12 (+8)
Con	14 (+9)	**Int**	1 (+3)	**Cha**	15 (+9)

Alignment Evil — **Languages** –

Sister Pernicity Level 15 Elite Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (human)

HP 84; **Bloodied** 42; see *Bond of Forced Faith* **Initiative** +15
AC 29, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 27 **Perception** +13
Speed 6, fly 6 (hover) Darkvision
Action Point 1; **Saving Throws** +2

Traits

▸ **Bond of Forced Faith**

The witch is bound to 20 creatures, each of which provides a shield of 10 hit points, effectively granting her 200 temporary hit points. Each bound creature that moves more than 50 squares from the witch reduces her temporary hit points by 10.

If the witch has no bound creatures alive and in range, she takes a -5 penalty to melee weapon attack and damage rolls.

▸ **Coven**

The witch can communicate telepathically with other members of her coven as long as they're within three miles. If this witch is adjacent to another from the same coven, it gets +1 to its defenses, to a maximum of +2 from three adjacent witches.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Flaming Scythe** (weapon, fire) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+10 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

✓ **Bestow Curse** ✦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. Will

Hit: The witch lays a curse on the creature (counts as a level 10 affliction). The creature can spend a standard action to struggle against the curse and make a saving throw. If it succeeds, it can ignore the curse until the end of its next turn.

Example curses include:

- ✦ The target is unable to see more than 3 squares.
- ✦ The target is frightened, and cannot move adjacent to an enemy unless one of its allies is already adjacent to that enemy.
- ✦ The target takes a permanent -3 penalty to one defense (non-cumulative).

✓ **Paralysis Strike** (necrotic) ✦ Encounter

Effect: Pernicity uses *flaming scythe*. If it hits, she makes the following secondary attack against the creature. If the secondary attack misses, this power recharges.

Secondary Attack: +18 vs. Fortitude

Hit: The target is stunned (save ends). While it is so paralyzed, it cannot make saves against the flaming scythe's ongoing fire damage.

▸ **Cackling Flight * At-Will**

Effect: Pernicity turns invisible until her next turn and flies her speed, cackling as she goes so her location is apparent, even though she cannot be seen. Creatures who can hear her laugh cannot make the normal end-of-turn saving throws against her attacks until the end of her next turn. They can still make extra saving throws, such as if an ally uses a Heal check (DC 15) to grant a saving throw.

✓ **Curse of Laughter** ✦ At-Will

Pernicity's preferred curse.

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +18 vs. Will

Hit: The target is afflicted with a curse, as *bestow curse*. The target is filled with insane laughter. It takes a -4 penalty on Bluff, Intimidate, and Stealth checks. The first time it takes damage in an encounter, it is dazed on its next turn as it inexplicably laughs at the pain.

Minor Actions

✓ **Evil Eye** (charm, psychic) ✦ At-Will (1/round)

Special: This attack doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.

Attack: Ranged 6 (one creature); +18 vs. Will

Hit: 1d4+10 psychic damage, and the target takes a -4 penalty to one defense of the witch's choice until the end of the witch's next turn.

Triggered Actions

✧ **Dying Curse** ✦ Encounter

Trigger: The witch dies.

Attack: Close burst 20 (each creature that damaged her in the past round); +18 vs. Will

Hit: The target is stunned for one round and receives a curse (counts as a level 10 affliction). The cursed creature's presence spooks natural animals. The cursed creature takes a -2 penalty on saves against attacks by witches of the same coven, and grants combat advantage to them.

Skills Arcana +16, Bluff +13, Intimidate +13, Perception +13, Stealth +16
Str 18 (+11) **Dex** 18 (+11) **Wis** 12 (+8)
Con 18 (+11) **Int** 18 (+11) **Cha** 10 (+7)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Elven, Giant, Infernal, Primordial

During Combat She opens with *curse of laughter*, probably targeting Tomas. She snickers, "Pretty boy's too serious!" She then flies up to 6 squares above the battle, and swoops through trees to get concealment, moving twice each to keep her distance while using *evil eye* to help her minions. If a single enemy is far from allies, she might swoop down and use *paralysis strike*, then continue to fly around with *cackling flight*.

If her aerial tactics are ineffective, she picks her moment and charges into melee, swinging her scythe. She doesn't bother trying to flee, and when she dies the body she leaves behind is withered and aged.

Act Three

If any hostages survived, there's no point having them come along, though some offer. They profusely thank the king and his retinue for saving them, but most are too terrified and exhausted to try moving until dawn. They know that more people were dragged up to the peak during the day, though, so the PCs can easily guess that the Red Contessa will have hostages of her own.

Final Ascent

There are few traversable routes up from the hunch, for the mountain here is perilously steep, with only sparse foliage. For a moment, the king and his retinue might enjoy the stunning moonlit vista of Flint stretching out below them to the coast. But it's likely at least 8pm, and penumbra begins to darken the moon's face.

As they ascend from Pernicity's hut, unearthly gales howl around the mountain, and sometimes those howls sound more like beasts than the wind. It is an hour-long, mind-eroding cacophony, and each PC who does not take precautions is shaken, taking a -5 penalty to all d20 rolls (including initiative) until the end of the first round of the Ritual of the Red Moon encounter.

Possible precautions include crafting earplugs, distracting the group from the sound by telling stories or singing (Bluff or Diplomacy DC 23), or reciting protective chants (Religion DC 23). The protection of Rachel Lang's acolytes is too weak to reach the peak, and provides no protection.

Then there's the matter of actually reaching the peak alive. The last few hundred feet call for each PC to make an Athletics check (DC 20) or take 1d10 damage, plus an additional 1d10 for every 5 points they fail by, with bonuses for cleverness and penalties for darkness as before.

After about an hour of blood-chilling climbing, the mountain's crest flattens slightly, and the party spots a fire burning beneath a huge iron cauldron. The PCs have reached the eastern edge of the peak, and can choose how they approach. The wind still whirls around them, but is slightly weaker here, only gusting to dangerous speeds every few rounds.

Ritual of the Red Moon

The pinnacle of Cauldron Hill teeters upward to a pair of flat plateaus separated by about forty feet, with a truly precipitous drop to the north and west and a rough but climbable slope to the south and east. The Red Contessa and her minions congregate on the western plateau, centered on a cauldron surrounded by standing stones. Those minions include a serpent-maned lion and a handful of lesser witches, all of them spinning and cavorting to harness the energy of the blood moon. If Rachel Lang tricked or escaped the party, she appears here, hooded as Sister Languor.

Eight devilish fey like those at the Hunch patrol the base of the plateaus (Perception +7), each holding a covered lantern that illuminates out 2 squares. These are really just here for the party to be able to hew through and feel bad-ass, but if they want to be sneaky they'll have to come up with a way to keep the lanterns from shattering (like by having King Lorcan shoot a fey and Harkover grab the lantern with *mage hand*).

The Contessa is laughing and dancing around her cauldron. Her dress is torn from numerous puncture marks, and she holds a bloody dagger which she has been using to stab herself, to the torment of her hostages, who sit on the eastern plateau, guarded by a pair of undying spirits. Their hands are bound by rope, and another rope threads all twenty of them into a single awkward mass, making it impossible for them to slip away.

However, those prisoners are only red herrings. If it's 8:13 or later, the Contessa's ritual has taken hold, and she has bonded to everyone in the city. If she's able to let the ritual run its course until the lunar eclipse reaches totality at 10:47, the effect will be permanent, making her nigh invincible.

She hopes the king will assume the hostages are the only source of her immunity, and will waste precious time trying to save them. She pretends to be distracted, but keeps an eye on that peak (Perception +15), because she so desperately wants to be able to say her piece to King Lorcan.

Do note that during this encounter, King Lorcan gains a +5 bonus to Strength-, Dexterity-, and Constitution-based checks, because the Red Contessa seeks to wrest control of Risuri land from him.

Speaking Her Piece

Eventually the Contessa will notice the group, and she'll start monologuing. She'll do her whole spiel if given the chance. Otherwise she reads on paragraph each round during combat. (Adjust as needed to match events that have occurred so far.)

"King, now that we are alone, let me apologize for my earlier threats. I'm an artist, and it's important to strike the right tone. So I have to ask, how do you like my audition?

"Like I said earlier today, a queen must protect her subjects. This evening, thanks to my plans, two vile witches who were terrorizing Flint have died. A traitor among the skyseers was unmasked. Oh, you *do* know that Sister Languor is in my covern, right?"

She gestures to a hooded figure also standing by the cauldron, and pulls back the cloth to reveal the skyseer. Rachel Lang—or Sister Languor—looks askance at the Contessa, seeming slow to grasp that her mistress is offering to betray her.

"I know, your," the Contessa laughs, "your *majesty*, you are feeling your age, and that crown is so very heavy. So many people are your responsibility. Well, if you name me your successor, it's just possible that the horrible ritual I've got going on in this cauldron will be stopped before anything terrible happens to the little people down below us.

"So who could protect Risur better? Me, or your self-absorbed, war-obsessed knight lady? Maybe you want to make the devil girl the queen. I know you're thinking, what? Isn't she evil? Ha! Because of me, you have new allies," she winks to Amielle and Tomas, "and I'm making you look like a hero. So lay it on me, kingy! Do we have a deal?"

If the king agrees, they might have to kill the other witnesses, which can turn into a battle of the Contessa and the king (plus the fey, spirits, and serpent-maned lion) versus the party, Sister Languor, and the remaining witches.

If the king declines, she shrugs.

"Fine, I'll make my own country. It'll have blood magic and nightly orgies. Kill them!"

How to Win

The cauldron is the focus of her *bond of forced faith* ritual, linking her to the whole population of Flint. Rather than the normal 250 ft. range limit, it works as long as she's anywhere in Flint. While this ritual is active, even if she is also bonded to any of the PCs through Languor's trickery, damage dealt to her is dispersed widely enough that none of the PCs take any damage. Only if the large ritual ends does the smaller bond with the party take over.

So, how to end the large ritual?

If the cauldron is cracked (Defenses 20, 50 HP; or Break DC 25), the ritual ends. Likewise, Harkover could get lucky and dispel the ritual (against Will 33), which would *really* catch the Red Contessa by surprise. Shoving the cauldron off the cliff automatically breaks it, and is sort of assumed to be the canonical ending, since the PCs in Zeitgeist adventure two find it up there a century later.

Be open to other creative solutions. Throwing the Contessa off the mountain alone isn't enough to kill her, since the falling damage will just be dispersed and kill a couple hundred peasants, but as long as the cauldron is destroyed, she'll be defeated and will have to flee. Maybe Amielle pours her blood into the cauldron, and the tiefling immunity to curses suppresses the ritual for a minute. Perhaps Tomas uses his hook pendant to redirect the ritual from the city of Flint to himself, so the Contessa is only bonded to him.

The Cauldron

Jumping in the cauldron definitely *does not* help. It instead deals 20 fire damage to the poor idiot each round he's in the boiling bubble.

The Contessa has made the cauldron a soul trap, specifically targeted to Mayor Stanfield. If the deva touches the cauldron, his soul is trapped without requiring an attack roll until the cauldron is destroyed.

Effects of Ending the Ritual

If the cauldron ritual ends and the Contessa isn't bonded to anyone else, she becomes vulnerable to damage.

However, if the Contessa is bonded to at least one PC through Sister Languor's deception, ending the cauldron ritual doesn't end her bond with those PCs. She *does* take a -2 penalty to Strength-based checks and melee attack rolls, since she's bonded to fewer people. Damage is still divided among those PCs instead of dealt to her. This smaller bond does have the normal 250 ft. range limit.

Foes at the Peak of Cauldron Hill

- The Red Contessa
- Sister Languor
- Serpent-Maned Lion
- 5 Minor Witches
- 2 Undying Spirits
- 8 Cauldron Hill Fey

Serpent-Maned Lion	Level 15 Goon Soldier
Large fey beast	
HP 56; **Bloodied** 28	**Initiative** +10
AC 27, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 27	**Perception** +7
Speed 6	Darkvision
Traits	
▸ **Snapping Serpent Mane** (poison) ✦ Aura 1	
Spaces around the aura are difficult terrain for enemies. An enemy that enters or ends its turn within the aura takes 1 damage. If this damages the creature, it gains ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).	
Standard Actions	
⊘ **Accursed Claw** ✦ At-Will, Basic	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8+10 damage, and the target cannot regain HP until the end of the lion's next turn. (The lack of healing counts as a curse, for the purpose of Amielle's ability.)	
✓ **A Thousand Bites** (poison) ✦ At-Will, Basic	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d10 damage, and ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).	

▸ **Prideful Flurry** ✦ At-Will

Requirement: The lion must be bloodied.

Effect: The lion uses *accursed claw* and *a thousand bites*.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Wake the Mountain** (fear) ✦ Encounter

Trigger: The lion is first bloodied.

Attack: Close burst 1000 (enemies in burst); +18 vs. Will

Hit: The target is immobilized (save ends).

Str	19 (+11)	**Dex**	16 (+10)	**Wis**	10 (+7)
Con	12 (+8)	**Int**	2 (+3)	**Cha**	6 (+5)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** —

Minor Witches

Level 15 Minion Controller

Medium natural humanoid (human)

HP 1; a missed attack never damages this minion **Initiative** +9

AC 29, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 28 **Perception** +13

Speed fly 8 (altitude limit 2) Darkvision

Resist insubstantial

Traits

▸ **Coven**

The witch can communicate telepathically with other members of her coven as long as they're within three miles. If this witch is adjacent to another from the same coven, it gets +1 to its defenses, to a maximum of +2 from three adjacent witches.

Standard Actions

✓ **Warding Staff** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC

Hit: 10 damage, and the witch slides the target 1 square.

✓ **Evil Eye** (charm, psychic) ✦ At-Will

Special: This attack doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.

Attack: Ranged 6 (one creature); +18 vs. Will

Hit: 5 psychic damage, and the target takes a -4 penalty to one defense of the witch's choice until the end of the witch's next turn.

Skills Arcana +14, Perception +13, Stealth +13

Str	13 (+8)	**Dex**	13 (+8)	**Wis**	12 (+8)
Con	13 (+8)	**Int**	14 (+9)	**Cha**	10 (+7)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Elven, Giant, Infernal, Primordial

Animated Cauldron

Level 13 Goon Skirmisher

Medium natural animate

HP 50; **Bloodied** 25 **Initiative** +3

AC 27, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 20 **Perception** +1

Speed 6 Blindsense 5

Traits

▸ **Stubby Legs**

The animated cauldron must spend 4 squares of movement to move one square through difficult terrain, such as to climb uphill.

Standard Actions

✓ **Slosh and Burn** (fire) *** At-Will, Basic**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. Reflex

Hit: 10 fire damage.

✓ **Upend** ✦ At-Will

Requirement: The target must be prone.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. Reflex

Hit: 10 fire damage, and the target is restrained (Escape DC 21). While restrained, no other creatures have line of sight to the target, the target cannot stand, and it takes ongoing 10 fire damage.

Effect: The cauldron is upside down, and thus is prone and immobilized unless someone else spends a move action to flip it over.

Str	14 (+8)	**Dex**	1 (+1)	**Wis**	1 (+1)
Con	21 (+11)	**Int**	1 (+1)	**Cha**	1 (+1)

Alignment Unaligned

Animated Henge Stones

Level 13 Goon Soldier

Large natural animate

HP 50; **Bloodied** 25 **Initiative** +3

AC 29, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 20 **Perception** +1

Speed 4 Blindsense 5

Traits

▸ **Ungainly and Top Heavy**

If the animated henge stones are subjected to any forced movement, they fall prone at the end of that movement.

Standard Actions

✓ **Stomp Stomp** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +18 vs. AC

Hit: 10 damage and the target is knocked prone.

Str	20 (+11)	**Dex**	1 (+1)	**Wis**	1 (+1)
Con	21 (+11)	**Int**	1 (+1)	**Cha**	1 (+1)

Alignment Unaligned

The Red Contessa

Level 18 Elite Controller

Medium natural humanoid (human)

HP 220; **Bloodied** 110; see *Bond with Flint* **Initiative** +17

AC 32, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 33 **Perception** +15

Speed 6 Darkvision

Action Point 1; **Saving Throws** +2

Traits

▸ **Bond with Flint**

The witch is bound to the entire city of Flint, and thus is immune to all damage, as long as her ritual is active in the cauldron atop Cauldron Hill.

▸ **Coven**

The witch can communicate telepathically with other members of her coven as long as they're within three miles. If this witch is adjacent to another from the same coven, it gets +1 to its defenses, to a maximum of +2 from three adjacent witches.

Standard Actions

✓ **Deva-Bane Dagger** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC

Hit: 1d4+10 damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends). Whenever the target takes this ongoing damage, each of its adjacent allies takes 5 damage.

Special: If the target is a deva, the Contessa gets a +2 bonus to her attack roll and +10 to damage.

✓ **Powerful Curse** ✦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. Will

Hit: The witch pushes the target 3 squares and lays a curse on the creature (counts as a level 15 affliction). The creature can spend a standard action to struggle against the curse and make a saving throw. If it succeeds, it can ignore the curse until the end of its next turn.

Example curses include:

- The target is unable to see more than 3 squares.
- The target is frightened, and cannot move adjacent to an enemy unless one of its allies is already adjacent to that enemy.
- The target takes a permanent -3 penalty to one defense (non-cumulative).

▸ **Curse of Cacophony** (charm) ✦ Encounter

Effect: The Contessa uses *bestow curse* with a range of 6 squares. If she hits, the target is deafened, grants combat advantage, and treats all creatures as enemies. It must take opportunity attacks if possible.

▸ **Curse of the White-Eyed Doppelganger** (illusion, psychic) ✦ Encounter

Effect: The Contessa uses *bestow curse* with a range of 6 squares. If she hits, whenever the target makes an attack, he repeats the attack against himself, perceiving a doppelganger-like duplicate attacking. The duplicate only exists in the target's mind; nothing can damage or affect it.

▸ **Curse of the Writhing Cauldron** (necrotic) ✦ Encounter

Effect: The Contessa uses *bestow curse* with a range of 6 squares. If she hits, 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.

✲ **Call Down a Lightning Bolt** (lightning) ✦ Recharges when first bloodied

Attack: Area burst 1 within 40 (creatures in burst); +21 vs. Reflex

Hit: 4d6+10 lightning damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Minor Actions

▸ **Animate Objects** ✦ Encounter

Effect: Three henges and the cauldron animate and act immediately after the Contessa's turn.

⟋ **Evil Eye** (charm, psychic) ✦ At-Will (1/round)

Special: This attack doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.

Attack: Ranged 6 (one creature); +18 vs. Will

Hit: 1d4+10 psychic damage, and the target takes a -4 penalty to one defense of the witch's choice until the end of the witch's next turn.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Wreath in Blood** ✦ Encounter

Trigger: The Contessa is first bloodied.

Effect: The Contessa wreathes herself in blood, which surround her like a second body. She becomes Large, her melee reach extends by 1 square, and her *deva-bane dagger* also pushes the target 1 squares on a hit. Her speed increases to 10, and she is immune to effects that would slow, immobilize, or restrain her.

Skills Arcana +18, Bluff +18, Intimidate +18, Nature +18, Perception +15, Religion +18

Str 32 (+20) **Dex** 18 (+13) **Wis** 12 (+10)

Con 18 (+13) **Int** 18 (+13) **Cha** 18 (+13)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Elven, Giant, Infernal, Primordial

During Combat She opens by using *animate objects* on three of the standing stones (Large objects) and the cauldron itself (Medium object), then calls down a *lightning bolt*.

Thereafter she expects enemies to close with her. Once they're within 6 squares, she'll use *evil eye* on a target, whom she'll try to afflict with one of her three unique curses. She prefers to target Dame Melissa with the curse of cacophony (shouting, "You'd make a pathetic queen!") and Tomas Masaryk with the curse of the white-eyed doppelganger (spitting on him and hissing, "Your gods are cocks!"). She saves curse of the writhing cauldron for King Lorcan.

Characters can make a Religion check (DC 23) as a minor action to recite a prayer to repel the curse, causing the curse to have no effect for one round.

Thereafter she'll stalk after Stanfield with her *deva-bane dagger*, using *powerful curse* to get people out of her way.

If her bond with Flint and her bonds (if any) with the PCs end, she fights until bloodied, at which point she conjures a shell of blood around her. From there, she fights to the death, smiling the whole time.

Aftermath

With the Red Contessa's defeat, the winds around the peak rise to hurricane intensity. For nearly a minute it becomes impossible to move without being picked up and dragged toward a cliff. Trees are uprooted, any surviving witches are carried into the sky screaming, and even the standing stones crash and crack. If the cauldron was not yet destroyed, it is knocked over and rolls off the cliff.

Overhead the clouds rapidly swirl and fill the sky, until the red haze of the blood moon is fully blocked. Darkness hangs over Cauldron Hill, but for the moment, mundane shadows feel safer than the sanguine glow of the lunar eclipse. With any luck, King Lorcan will have chosen a worthy successor, and for a time, the city of Flint will be safe. But in the coming decades, the citizens of that city will keep a wary eye on the mountain in their midsts, ever suspicious of when its curses and malevolence will boil over and threaten them all again.

Character Sheets

The following character sheets are intended to be playable, fun, and balanced. They do not necessarily conform to existing character classes. For unlisted skills, just use the appropriate ability score modifiers.

Quick Notes: King Lorcan's *rites of rulership* has a special effect while in the presence of someone contesting control of Risuri land. That only applies in the final encounter against the Red Contessa.

King Lorcan Finn

Human King

Abilities	
STR	20 (+12)
CON	12 (+8)
DEX	10 (+7)
INT	14 (+9)
WIS	16 (+10)
CHA	16 (+10)

121 Hit Points

Surges	11
Speed	6
Initiative	+7

29 Armor Class

29 Fort **26** Ref **27** Will

Combat

Melee Basic *King's Claymore* +20 (1d10+10)
Ranged Basic *Silent Shortbow* +17 (1d6+7, 15/30)

Power Strike

Four times per encounter when you hit an enemy, you can deal an extra 2[w] damage.

Combat Stances

Each turn choose one of the following stances. The benefit lasts until the start of your next turn.

Alert. When an enemy enters your threatened area, you may make an attack against him as an immediate reaction. You threaten 25 ft. with a ranged weapon.

Brash. When an enemy attacks you, before the enemy rolls to-hit, as an immediate interrupt you can make a single attack against him. If you drop the foe, his attack never occurs. Otherwise, they gain a +4 bonus to their attack roll.

Clever. When an ally you can see and who can hear you attacks or is attacked, as an immediate interrupt you can add +2 to their attack roll or to their defenses.

Defensive. When attacked, as an immediate interrupt you can force the attacker to roll twice and take the worse result.

Rites of Rulership

You gain +5 to defenses and saves against charm, fear, and poison attacks. You have regeneration 10. The first time each encounter that you fall to 0 HP or below, each of your subjects within three miles is dazed for one round.

Once per round as a free action you can move up to four 5-ft. cubes of earth, stone, or foliage up to five feet while on Risuri land.

When you are in the presence of a creature contesting control of Risuri land, you gain a +5 bonus to Strength-, Dexterity-, and Constitution-based checks. For the purpose of effects that depend on size, you can choose to be treated as that contesting creature's size.

Skills

Bluff +13
Diplomacy +15
History +14
Nature +14

Equipment

In addition to a variety of mundane gear (daggers, rope, etc.), you have the following items.

Coat of Armor. Your royal attire defends you as well as a suit of plate armor. You cannot be teleported against your will.

King's Claymore. A cold iron greatsword. Teleports to your hand as a minor action. Attacks against fey get an additional +2 to-hit and +10 damage.

Silent Shortbow. Creatures damaged by this weapon cannot speak above a whisper for one round. Enchanted quiver contains nigh-unlimited cold iron and silver arrows. Attacks against fey get an additional +2 to-hit and +10 damage.

Crown of Risur. You always know the name those you can see would prefer to be called by you. As a minor action you can say someone's name to let them spend a healing surge to heal and grant them a new save against a charm, fear, or poison effect, even if it normally does not grant a save, but only once per person per day.

Background

You've chosen to give yourself an unusual gift for your fiftieth birthday: you intend to abdicate.

A year ago you declared armistice with the godless, technologically superior nation of Danor, ruled by tieflings. Risur lost territory in the war, and you can already feel your people's fading trust weaken the power granted you by the Rites of Rulership.

The monarchs of Risur pass their title based on merit, not blood, which is good because your children are all obnoxious. You intend to name as your successor Dame Melissa Gahlot, your chief bodyguard, known as the Green Knight. But the rites are only strong if the monarch is beloved by the masses and approved by the nobility, so Melissa needs to be seen as a hero.

A tragedy has given you a rare opportunity, though. During the war a coven of witches in one of your less-important cities—Flint—grew bold and deadly. Led by a woman known as the Red Contessa, they terrorized the townsfolk, killed the mayor three times (he reincarnated, though), and seem bent on laying claim to the area.

In the last month they abducted dozens of hostages, and you intended to help, but a skyseer named Rachel Lang—one of Risur's folk prophets who sees the future in the stars—warned you not to move against the contessa this night, the night of a lunar eclipse, which is an ill omen. In any event, tomorrow is your birthday. You have gathered trusted allies to plan an assault on their stronghold, the mountain known as Cauldron Hill, which looms over the city center. You will strike at dawn.

You might not return, but there's more at stake than simply saving your citizens. Dame Melissa is noble and mighty, but she has no bond with the common folk. You pray that she will see that the nation is nothing if its people do not have faith in their monarch. If you fail, you're not sure who will succeed you.

Suggested Starting Interactions

Ask for your allies to brief you. Let Roland Stanfield, mayor of Flint, tell what has happened so far in his city, and have your chief advisor Harkover Lee explain the nature of the witches. The foreigner Tomas Masaryk claims he knows a secret of the witches' power. Impress on Dame Melissa that protecting *the people of Flint* is your chief concern.

Character Goal

Do not tell anyone you intend to abdicate. It would be wise to keep it quiet that you're considering Dame Melissa as your successor, though you think she already suspects and is growing more haughty and overconfident. Make sure that you do not die before passing the crown on to someone else.

You could declare almost anyone to be your successor, but not Mayor Stanfield (because the rites demand the monarch must be mortal, and Stanfield perpetually reincarnates) nor your principle minister Harkover Lee (because the rites will not let someone who has ruled another nation wear the crown).

Dame Melissa Gahlot

Half-Elf Green Knight

Abilities

STR	22 (+13)
CON	10 (+7)
DEX	8 (+6)
INT	13 (+8)
WIS	12 (+8)
CHA	22 (+13)

121 Hit Points

Surges 10
Speed 5
Initiative +6

31 Armor Class

30 Fort **24** Ref **30** Will

Resist 6 ongoing damage

Combat

Melee Basic	*Vanguard Lance* +21 (1d8+7)
Ranged Basic	*Returning Spear* +20 (1d8+6, 5/10)
Ranged Basic	*Golden Net* +17 vs. Reflex (target is restrained, Escape DC 25, 3/6)

Skills

Bluff +18
Diplomacy +18
Heal +13
Intimidate +18

Low-Light Vision

Nature's Blessing

You and allies within 2 squares get a +2 bonus on saves and defenses vs. sleep and charm. As a standard action at will, you can sense undead within 5 squares. If you are dead for five minutes, you lose a healing surge and revive at 1 hit point.

Green Smite

Four times per encounter when you hit an enemy, you can deal an extra 1[w] damage. Alternately, you can also use this power to gain a +10 bonus to Strength checks and damage rolls to break a particular item.

Weodam, Fey Stag

Your stag obeys all your commands. When you spend a move action, it also moves. When you make a melee basic attack, it can also make a melee basic attack. If you are unconscious it acts on its own, on your initiative. When you heal, your stag heals the same amount. Twice per day as a standard action, Weodam can teleport you and it 12 squares together.

AC 27, **Fort** 25, **Ref** 25, **Will** 25
HP 52, **SPD** 12, **SKILLS** Acrobatics +20
Melee Basic gore +21 (1d8+6)

Spells

You can use the following spells each once per day. These are each standard actions unless noted.

- **Entangle.** Area burst 3 within 10 (creatures in burst). *Atk:* +17 vs. Reflex. *Hit:* The target is restrained (Escape DC 25). *Effect:* The area becomes a zone of difficult terrain until the end of the encounter. If a creature enters or ends its turn in the zone, repeat the attack.
- **Faerie Fire.** Area burst 1 within 20 (creatures in burst). *Effect:* The target is limned with light until the end of the encounter. It cannot be invisible, and attacks against it gain a +2 bonus.
- **Hypnotism.** Ranged 10 (one creature). *Atk:* +17 vs. Will. *Hit:* The target is stunned until the end of your next turn, or until it or any ally it can see takes damage. *Sustain standard.* The target remains stunned until the end of your next turn.
- **Resist Energy.** *Minor action. Effect:* Choose an energy type. Until the end of the encounter, you gain an aura 2. You and allies within that aura gain resist 10 against that energy type.
- **Zone of Truth.** *Effect:* Until the end of the encounter, you create a zone in area burst 1 within 10. Whenever a creature in the zone speaks, make an attack against it, +17 vs. Will. On a hit, the creature cannot tell a lie for one round, though it may choose to stop speaking or be evasive.

Equipment

In addition to a variety of mundane gear (daggers, rope, etc.), you have the following items.

Longsword, plate armor, shield. Cold iron dagger.

Vanguard Lance. If there is an enemy within charging distance at the start of combat, you may choose to treat your initiative as if you rolled a natural 20. If you do, you must charge on the first turn of combat.

Returning Spear. If thrown, it flies back to you at the start of your next turn.

Golden Net. Creatures entangled in net cannot teleport or phase out. Requires 15 slashing damage to break.

Background

You should be the next monarch of Risur. You have worked all your adult life toward this goal, since thirty years ago when you were knighted by Queen Caroline, the predecessor of your current king, Lorcan.

For three decades you have honed your prowess, for any ruler of Risur must be fit to give battle to conquerers and usurpers. Your forthrightness and honesty have earned you the respect of the nobles of Risur, and your skill at subtle mockery has won you favor from the fey Unseen Court. And in the last war for the Yerasol Isles you inspired terror in your opponents, the effete tieflings who ruled the nation of Danor. Last year King Lorcan ceased hostilities, but you think he gave up too much territory.

The people think he is weak, and so if he's smart he'll pick a strong successor to protect the nation, before the Rites of Rulership that grant him his power fade.

Now comes your final test to prove your worth. A coven of witches in control of a mountain called Cauldron Hill have committed many horrors, and King Lorcan has called upon you to wade into battle by his side. You will strike at dawn tomorrow, which happens to be your king's fiftieth birthday. He is human, and he will not maintain his strength much longer, but your elf blood will give you a century more of life. If you can defeat these dark villains, surely he shall name you his successor. You will be a good queen.

Suggested Starting Interactions

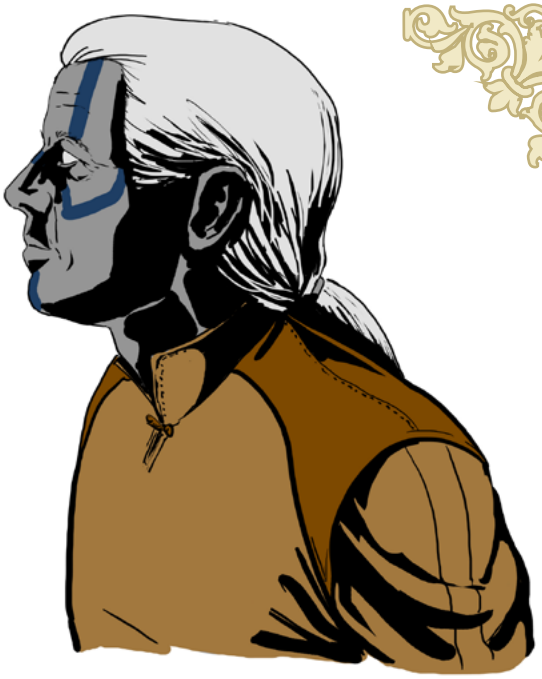
Be sure to remind King Lorcan, in as polite a way as possible, that the territory Risur lost in the recent war has undercut the respect the common people have of him. Ask him if he feels their doubt through the Rites. Pretend to be sympathetic.

Character Goal

You want King Lorcan to name you his successor. Toward that end, protect him, but also strive to be seen as a hero.

Roland Stanfield

Deva Mayor



Abilities

STR	8 (+6)
CON	10 (+7)
DEX	12 (+8)
INT	16 (+10)
WIS	24 (+14)
CHA	14 (+9)

76 Hit Points

Surges 6
Speed 6
Initiative +8

29 Armor Class

24 Fort **27** Ref **31** Will

Resist 12 necrotic, 12 radiant
Superior Will If you are dazed or stunned, you can make a save to end that effect at the start of your turn.

Combat

Melee Basic shortsword +20 (1d6+7)
Ranged Basic dagger +20 (1d4+7, 5/10)

Special Attacks The first time per round you hit an enemy granting combat advantage to you, you deal an extra 3d6 damage.

Manifest Incarnations

As a standard action you can call forth a shimmering manifestation of one of your past lives. He appears besides you, can roam up to 50 squares from you, and lasts as long as you remain conscious. You share senses intuitively. You each act on your initiative, and the incarnation can act the turn you conjure it.

Each incarnation has 19 HP and uses your stats unless otherwise noted. If an incarnation is reduced to 0 HP it vanishes and you lose 19 HP. You can have multiple incarnations at a time, but no more than one of each type. You can dismiss an incarnation as a standard action. If you manifest it again, it starts at 19 HP. Your incarnations do not have sneak attack.

Warrior Incarnation. Centuries ago you fought in a holy war. **AC** 30. **At-Will Melee** bastard sword +22 (1d10+7). **At-Will Ranged** holy light +20 vs. Reflex (ranged 10, 1d6+7 radiant damage, at-will). **Encounter** 3 times per encounter you may add 5 radiant damage when you hit with an attack.

Loremaster Incarnation. Since then you have devoted yourself to learning. **AC** 25. You can cast various spells as a standard action. Daily and encounter spells do not recharge if you create a new loremaster. **Magic Missile (At-Will).** Ranged 20, 8 force damage, no attack roll. **Silent Image (At-Will).** Ranged 20, create a Medium-sized illusion. **Clairvoyance (Daily).** Choose a spot within 20 squares. You can see and hear from that space as long as you concentrate. *Sustain standard.* **Invisibility (Encounter).** You become invisible until you attack or until end of encounter.

Politician Incarnation. You've found your greatest success in leading and governance. **Inspirational Presence.** Allies within an aura 5 around you gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls. Twice per encounter as a minor action you can grant an ally within 10 squares the ability to spend a healing surge and heal an extra 4d6 hit points. **Poisoned Weapon.** Applying poison is a standard action. The next target hit with that weapon takes 20 poison damage and it gains ongoing 10 poison damage and is weakened (save ends both).

Skills

Bluff +17
Diplomacy +14
History +15
Religion +15
Stealth +13

Deva Traits

You get a +2 bonus on death saving throws. By calling upon a memory from a past life, once per encounter you can add +1d6 to any d20 roll you make.

If you die, eight hours later your body dissolves and you reincarnate, fully grown but with jumbled memories, somewhere within three miles. (You hope you never reincarnate while at sea.)

Old Injury

A back injury you suffered in your first life recurs in each new incarnation. Whenever you fall prone, you suffer ongoing 1 damage until you receive any healing or someone makes a Heal check (DC 15) on your as a standard action. Your incarnations have the same weakness.

Equipment

Aside from a variety of mundane items (daggers, rope, etc.) and some leather armor, you have no noteworthy gear.

Background

Four centuries ago you saw a goddess die. It changed you, and years later when you eventually perished you reincarnated, reappearing fully-grown in the wilderness with only vague memories. You are no longer a man, but a deva, bearing a sliver of the goddess's power.

Over the course of a hundred years and several incarnations you found your way to Risur, and became mayor of the coastal town of Flint. Upon your next death, the people of Flint found you and asked you to return.

You had trouble at first, but then a wise man helped you unlock memories of your previous incarnations. With each life you were a slightly different man, but now your former selves could advise you. Thereafter Flint quickly prospered.

Then forty years ago a witch known as the Red Contessa established a coven atop a looming peak in the city's center. The mountain was once called the Hunchback, but the locals have renamed it Cauldron Hill. At first the coven moved subtly, and the threat they posed was not worth the risk of fighting them. But a few years ago Risur went to war, and while the nation was distracted the witches began to terrorize your people and curse the families who looked to you for protection and guidance. You tried to drive them out. They killed you.

Your next incarnation opposed them as well, and a couple years later the Contessa killed you again, which only increased her infamy and made it seem impossible to confront her. Your next incarnation called on the king to save your city, but he took too long, so you led a desperate mission yourself. You wish you couldn't remember this latest death, how horrifying it was to watch men who trusted you burn alive.

Last night you were visited again by the same wise man who helped you centuries ago, though he wore a new face. He congratulated your leadership, and asked two favors before leaving: "Tell no one else of my visit, please." And, "When the tiefling arrives, accept her aid, and keep her alive. She has the power to make Flint the mightiest city in the world."

Your current incarnation feels…*sneakier* than usual. But what hasn't changed is your commitment to the improvement of Flint and the protection of its people.

Suggested Starting Interactions

Tell King Lorcan and his retinue about your city's suffering at the witches' hands, and of your own deaths. The king intends to strike at dawn. Insist on joining this mission.

Character Goal

The people of Flint must be safe from the torment of the witches. Accept the aid of the tiefling, whoever she happens to be, and make sure she survives, even if you die. You'll reincarnate anyway. Tell no one about the mysterious wise man.

Harkover Lee

Enigmatic Mage

Abilities

STR	25 (+14)
CON	10 (+7)
DEX	8 (+6)
INT	20 (+12)
WIS	16 (+10)
CHA	14 (+9)

76 Hit Points

Surges 6
Speed 6
Initiative +6

28 Armor Class

30 Fort **28** Ref **27** Will

Combat

Melee Basic unarmed +17 (7 damage; but see enigmatic mage)
Ranged Basic conjured fire +15 (1d6+8 fire damage, 5/10)

Skills

Arcana +17
Athletics +19
Endurance +12
Heal +15
Perception +15

Darkvision

Enigmatic Traits

You cannot attack with your physical might, only your magic. Your strength can still aid with skill checks and attacks against unattended objects. You can conjure fire and throw it at-will.

You are immune to magical sleep and paralysis effects. You can see perfectly through smoke. Reduce any fire damage you take by 10.

At-Will Spells

- **Burning Touch.** *Atk:* Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. Ref. *Hit:* 1d6+8 fire damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).
- **Disrupt.** *Atk:* Ranged 10 (one creature), +18 vs. Will. *Hit:* 1d6+8 psychic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.
- **Gather Fire.** *Atk:* Close burst 2 (creatures in burst); +18 vs. Ref. *Hit:* 5 fire damage. *Effect:* Recharge an encounter fire power. The swirling flames grant you concealment until your next turn, but you cannot use that concealment to hide.
- **Thunderwave.** *Atk:* Close blast 3 (creatures in burst); +18 vs. Fort. *Hit:* 1d6+8 thunder damage, and you push the target 3 squares.
- **Mage Hand.** You can manipulate objects of up to 5 pounds within 5 squares.
- **Minor Illusion.** Create a medium illusion (visuals but no sound) within 5 squares for as long as you concentrate. Sustain standard.

Encounter Spells

- **Fireball.** *Atk:* Area burst 3 within 20 (creatures in burst); +18 vs. Ref. *Hit:* 4d6+8 fire damage. *Miss:* Half damage.
- **Flaming Sphere.** Create a medium orb of fire within 10 squares. You can move it up to 6 squares as a move action. Any creature that enters or starts its turn in a space adjacent to the sphere takes 10 fire damage. Sustain minor.
- **Portal.** Creates two portal openings, each within 20 squares of you for as long as you concentrate. Creatures can step between those areas. Sustain standard.
- **Wall of Force.** Create a wall 8 within 20, 2 squares high, until end of encounter. The wall is indestructible and impenetrable, but transparent.

Daily Spells

- **Clairvoyance.** Choose a spot within 20 squares. You can see and hear from that space as long as you concentrate. Sustain standard.
- **Greater Dispel Magic.** *Atk:* Ranged 10 (one conjuration, zone, or other magical effect); +18 vs. Will of the creator of the magical effect. *Hit:* The magical effect ends.
- **Featherfall.** Free action. You or a target within 10 squares that is falling lands safely and takes no falling damage.
- **See Invisibility.** Minor action. You or target touched can see invisible things until end of encounter.
- **Silence.** There is no sound in an aura 4 around you for as long as you concentrate. Sustain standard.

Equipment

You carry no weapons, as you are forbidden to fight with your physical might.

Golden Orb. Etched with arcane writings, this 4-inch diameter sphere of gold functions as your spellbook.

Robes of the Pyromancer. Any creature that grabs you catches on fire, and takes 10 fire damage and gains ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends). The creature cannot make saves to end this damage as long as it holds you.

Black Gem. Crack in order to release an aura that blocks scrying within 100 ft. Lasts only one day once activated.

Rune of Succor. Inscribed into your flesh but hidden from view, this rune triggers if you fail 2 death saves. If triggered, you teleport to your sanctum hundreds of miles away in the city of Slate, where your minions will revive you. You cannot share this contingency with anyone else. At your sanctum you can spend 10 minutes to open a linked portal, which will unerringly bring you within 30 feet of your monarch.

Scrolls. You have six scrolls of *remove affliction*. Using the scroll takes half an hour, and then the caster makes a Heal check, with a penalty equal to the level of the effect being removed. Up to four allies can aid, each granting a +2 bonus. Results: 1-9—Target takes damage equal to its maximum hit points; 10-19—Damage equal to half its maximum hit points. 20-29—Damage equal to one-quarter its maximum hit points; 30+—No damage.

Background

You do not speak of your history, and you will not eat or drink in front of others, nor may you fight with your physical might, only your magic. And—for one more year at least—you must obey your pledge of loyalty to Risur and continue to serve as principle minister to the monarch, whomever he or she may be.

King Lorcan, fifty years old tomorrow yet still strong for a human his age, asks you to aid him against the witch coven of Cauldron Hill, and so you shall. You have never been to the city of Flint before, but you and your apprentices have scryed it and learned information that will be critical in defeating the witch known as the Red Contessa. The king intends to strike at dawn.

Serve the king well. Risur has done you a great favor.

Suggested Starting Interactions

Share this information with the king and his council:

The coven's leader, the Red Contessa, can sense any blood spilled within 3 miles, and can speak and observe through pools of blood. Your *black gem* will help you sneak up on her.

The witch known as Sister Pernicity can command dark fey and the spirits of the dead. Sister Deliria confuses people's minds, using trickery, illusions, and enchantment. There may be more witches.

People have reported attacking the witches, inflicting mortal wounds, and then seeing no effect. They have many minions, some willing, some coerced, some enchanted. And not all of them are human. The witches are never seen far from their minions, so perhaps they derive power from them.

The witches have captured more than a hundred hostages in the past month, and hundreds more in the past decade. Ritual sacrifice in the past has drawn the peak of Cauldron Hill in close contact with the realm of spirits, but you cannot determine what the Contessa intends her current crop of blood sacrifice for.

The visitor Tomas Masaryk has come from the nation Crisillyir, who follow a religion known as the Clergy. Tomas claims he has information that will be useful, and you have used magic to verify the truth of his claims. He can be trusted as an ally, at least for the mission of defeating the Red Contessa.

Character Goal

Fulfill your pledge of loyalty to Risur and ensure the nation is safe. While you are fond of King Lorcan, it is more important that you provide wise council than that you appease him.

Tomas Masaryk

Human Godhand

Abilities

STR	9 (+6)
CON	14 (+9)
DEX	22 (+13)
INT	11 (+7)
WIS	16 (+10)
CHA	14 (+9)

96 Hit Points

Surges	9
Speed	12
Initiative	+13

30 Armor Class

26 Fort **30** Ref **27** Will

Combat

Melee Basic	Unarmed Strike +21 (1d8+10)
Ranged Basic	Hook Chain +19 (1d6+8 plus pull 2, range 3/6)

Flurry Of Blows

The first time each round you hit an enemy with an attack, you deal 4 radiant damage to up two target creatures adjacent to you. You can then shift 1 square, and an ally within 5 squares gains 4 temporary hit points.

Divine Vessel

You are immune to disease, charm, and fear effects. As an immediate interrupt you can spend a healing surge to become insubstantial and phasing and gain a fly speed of 12 (hover) until the end of your next turn, during which time your halo glows like a torch.

If you deal damage to an undead or shadow creature and afterward it has 17 or fewer hit points, you may make an attack: +17 vs. Will. On a hit, the creature is dominated by you. Five minutes after being dominated, it is destroyed.

Four times per encounter you can make an unarmed strike with a reach of 10 squares, sending out a shining fist like a sunbeam. This does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Skills

Acrobatics +18
Arcana +12
Athletics +11
Heal +15
Intimidate +14
Religion +12

Equipment

You wear light clothing of a Clergy supplicant.

Holy Scripture of Triegenes. The sacred text of your faith, a humble book. If you spend a standard action to recite from it, your halo illuminates an aura 2 around you. Until the end of your next turn if a creature attempts to attack you or an ally in the aura, make an attack: +20 vs. Will. On a hit, the target does not attack. This protection is broken if you or an ally in the aura attacks.

Catalogue of Fiends of the Demonocracy. By the blasphemous tongue of Ashima-Shimtu, prisoner of the Crypta Hereticarum. Bound in silver and white leather. Just some light reading you brought along. No mechanical effect.

Martyr's Fishhook Necklace. As an immediate interrupt, you have a ranged attack that targets an ally within 5 squares target you instead.

Urn of Holy Water From the Aqueducts of Alais Primos. Weapons anointed with this water can harm ghosts, and ignore insubstantial. Can affect nine weapons (including fists), lasting 24 hours.

Background

You are a *geneu credeto*, a godhand, and you have not flesh but faith made manifest. You have traveled a thousand miles to see done the will of your hierarchs, to restore the purity of the Clergy, which guards this world from infernal magic and guides mortals to reach for godhood.

The Red Contessa is a heretic who was cast out four decades past. Five years ago she returned to your homeland and snuck into the Vault of Heresies, from which she stole the blasphemous ritual *bond of forced faith*, scribed by the ancient fiend Namtar-Shamash of the demonocracy, which your Clergy gloriously defeated a thousand years ago.

The Contessa leads a coven of witches in the Risuri city of Flint, and the hierarchs divined that Risur's monarch King Lorcan Finn intends to give battle to the foul women. You desire power in your church, and if you can slay the Contessa, you intend to petition for a place among the hierarchs.

King Lorcan is a non-believer—the folk of Risur worship spirits of the land and gods of the faeries—but your interests align on this mission. Indeed, King Lorcan recently lost land in a war against the hellish tieflings who rule the nation of Danor, Risur's rival across the sea. While they're a primitive people, Risur at least is strong enough to oppose true evil.

Your hierarchs would prefer the Contessa purified in the fires of your homeland's holy volcano Enzyo Mons, but any death will do. You have been given a full indulgence by the church: whatever sins you commit in this duty shall be expunged upon your return.

Suggested Starting Interactions

You have already endured a magical test to prove to the king's wizard that you are not trying to deceive them, but you want your allies to trust you. Try to bond with King Lorcan over your mutual disdain of the tieflings of Danor.

Share this information with the king and his council:

The Red Contessa stole a heretical text and has learned a blood ritual known as *bond of forced faith*. Willing allies or unwilling hostages share their life force with the caster, whose physical might is increased. Wounds dealt to the caster are instead distributed among those bonded to her, but she must remain within 250 feet of them. Drowning and other non-wounding subdual should still work, as would moving her far enough from those bonded to her.

Character Goal

Ensure the Red Contessa dies, preferably in fire. Serve as a strong example of your faith, so that Risur might be more amenable to conversion.

Amielle Latimer

Level 10 Tiefling Gunsmith

Abilities

STR	12 (+8)
CON	8 (+6)
DEX	22 (+13)
INT	14 (+9)
WIS	12 (+8)
CHA	16 (+10)

93 Hit Points

Surges	7
Speed	8
Initiative	+13

32 Armor Class

25 Fort

30 Ref

27 Will

Combat

Melee Basic	Rapier +20 (1d8+10)
Melee	Off-Hand Main-Gauche +19 (1d4+3)
Ranged Basic	Musket +21 (1d8+13, or 2d8+25 on a crit; 20/40)
Ranged Basic	Pistol +19 (1d4+11, or 2d4+19 on a crit; 10/20)

Grenade Choose a square, range 5/10, then make a save. If the save fails, the grenade veers off course by 1 square in a random direction, or 2 squares if at long range. If the save is a natural 1, the grenade fails to detonate. Make an attack in area burst 1 around where the grenade lands. +17 vs. AC. *Hit:* 1d8+8, or 2d8+20 on a crit. *Miss:* Half.

Racial Traits

You are immune to curses. Reduce fire damage dealt to you by 12.

Once per encounter, as an immediate reaction when a foe within 10 squares hits you with an attack, you may wrathfully ignite that creature. It takes 2d6+3 fire damage and gains ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

Swordplay And Gunplay

You can draw and sheathe weapons into and out of both hands once per turn as a free action.

As a standard action you can attack with two weapons in different hands (some combination of rapier, main-gauche, and one or two pistols) and may choose different targets.

Your firearms are the first of their kind, which you crafted yourself. Some kinks remain to be worked out. If your attack roll with a firearm is a natural 1, the gun doesn't fire and the barrel becomes fouled. You can keep using the weapon with a -2 penalty to attack rolls, but if you roll another natural 1 with a fouled weapon, the gun explodes, dealing 1[w] damage to you. Cleaning a weapon takes a minute. Reloading requires a standard action, and entails pouring a charge of firedust into the barrel, loading a lead ball, and inserting a ramrod to pack the shot firmly.

You don't provoke attacks of opportunity when firing a firearm. Indeed, whether you hit or miss, your target cannot take opportunity attacks until the start of your next turn, as you cow them into hesitating. Mindless creatures and creatures immune to fear are not affected by this.

Skills

Acrobatics +18
Bluff +15
Athletics +13
Perception +13
Stealth +18
Blindsense 5

Courseur

You climb at full speed. You're always considered to have a running start for jumps. You can always Take 10 on Acrobatics checks.

Equipment

You wear a mithral jerkin you took from a Risuri soldier in the war, but otherwise your equipment are all hand-crafted masterpieces from Danor, including a rapier, main-gauche, flintlock musket, four flintlock pistols, a flintlock lighter, and cigars. You have more than enough ammunition and firedust powder to shoot for days.

In particular, you brought along 40 silver bullets and 40 cold iron bullets. You also have two explosive fragmentation grenades.

You wear an electrum ring engraved inside the band with 'One Bullet Kill.'

Background

You graduated valedictorian from the prestigious martial academy *Jierre Sciens d'Arms*. In the Second War for the Yerasol Isles you earned medal after medal as your keen aim and hand-crafted musket felled dozens of Risuri soldiers. The war ended a year ago in Danor's favor, and you could have retired to a life of aristocracy.

But you know war is destructive for both sides, and you want to have children and not give them a dangerous world to inherit. You have joined with like-minded intellectuals of Danor in a secret society devoted to bringing Risur and Danor closer together.

Now you see your chance. In the Risuri the city of Flint, for decades a witch coven has gathered atop the mountain known as Cauldron Hill, spreading fear and madness, abducting children, and raising the walking dead. Spies report that Risur's King Lorcan plans a massive assault to defeat them.

The Risuri see you only as an enemy. They fear that your nation's technology may supplant their magic, and that your enlightened reason will cast down their superstitious religion. But you must make them see you as an ally.

Suggested Starting Interactions

You'll arrive on your steamship *Hinc ad Aeternitatem* shortly after everyone else begins discussing their plans. You'll need to convince them to let you help.

Share this information with the king and his council:

An astronomer colleague of yours has calculated that tonight's lunar eclipse will be in conjunction with the dark planet Nem, creating a strong surge of necromantic mana. At 10:37pm the focus of that power will align with the peak of Cauldron Hill, so any magic performed at that time will be greatly enhanced.

You know the Risuri think eclipses are bad omens, but they cannot let superstition cause them to hesitate. They must strike tonight, before the eclipse reaches its maximum. You have rushed on Danor's fastest ship to warn them while there's still time.

Character Goal

Earn the trust of the monarch of Risur, and make the first steps to introducing Danoran technological industry to this superstitious nation.

Mayor Roland Stanfield

Deva Mayor
Str 8 (+4), **Con** 10 (+5), **Dex** 12 (+6)
Int 16 (+8), **Wis** 24 (+12), **Cha** 14 (+7)
HP 64, **AC** 25, **Fort** 20, **Ref** 23, **Will** 25
Perception +12
Resist 12 necrotic, 12 radiant
Melee shortsword +16 (1d6+3)
Ranged dagger +16 (1d4+3)

Deva Traits You get a +2 bonus on death saving throws. By calling upon a memory from a past life, once per encounter you can add +1d6 to any d20 roll you make.

Teodore

Human Witch Hunter
Str 13, **Con** 12, **Dex** 11, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 9
HP 15, **AC** 13, **Fort** 11, **Ref** 10, **Will** 9
Perception -1
Melee Attack woodman's axe +3 (1d8+1)

Extremão

Human Witch Hunter
Str 13, **Con** 12, **Dex** 11, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 9
HP 15, **AC** 13, **Fort** 11, **Ref** 10, **Will** 9
Perception -1
Melee Attack woodman's axe +3 (1d8+1)

Edean

Human Witch Hunter
Str 13, **Con** 12, **Dex** 11, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 9
HP 15, **AC** 13, **Fort** 11, **Ref** 10, **Will** 9
Perception -1
Melee Attack woodman's axe +3 (1d8+1)

Francis

Human Witch Hunter
Str 13, **Con** 12, **Dex** 11, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 9
HP 15, **AC** 13, **Fort** 11, **Ref** 10, **Will** 9
Perception -1
Melee Attack woodman's axe +3 (1d8+1)

Benton

Human Witch Hunter
Str 13, **Con** 12, **Dex** 11, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 9
HP 15, **AC** 13, **Fort** 11, **Ref** 10, **Will** 9
Perception -1
Melee Attack woodman's axe +3 (1d8+1)

APPENDIX I:
DM Quick Reference Pages

CANTABRILLA ROUTE

Mile Markers and Points of Interest

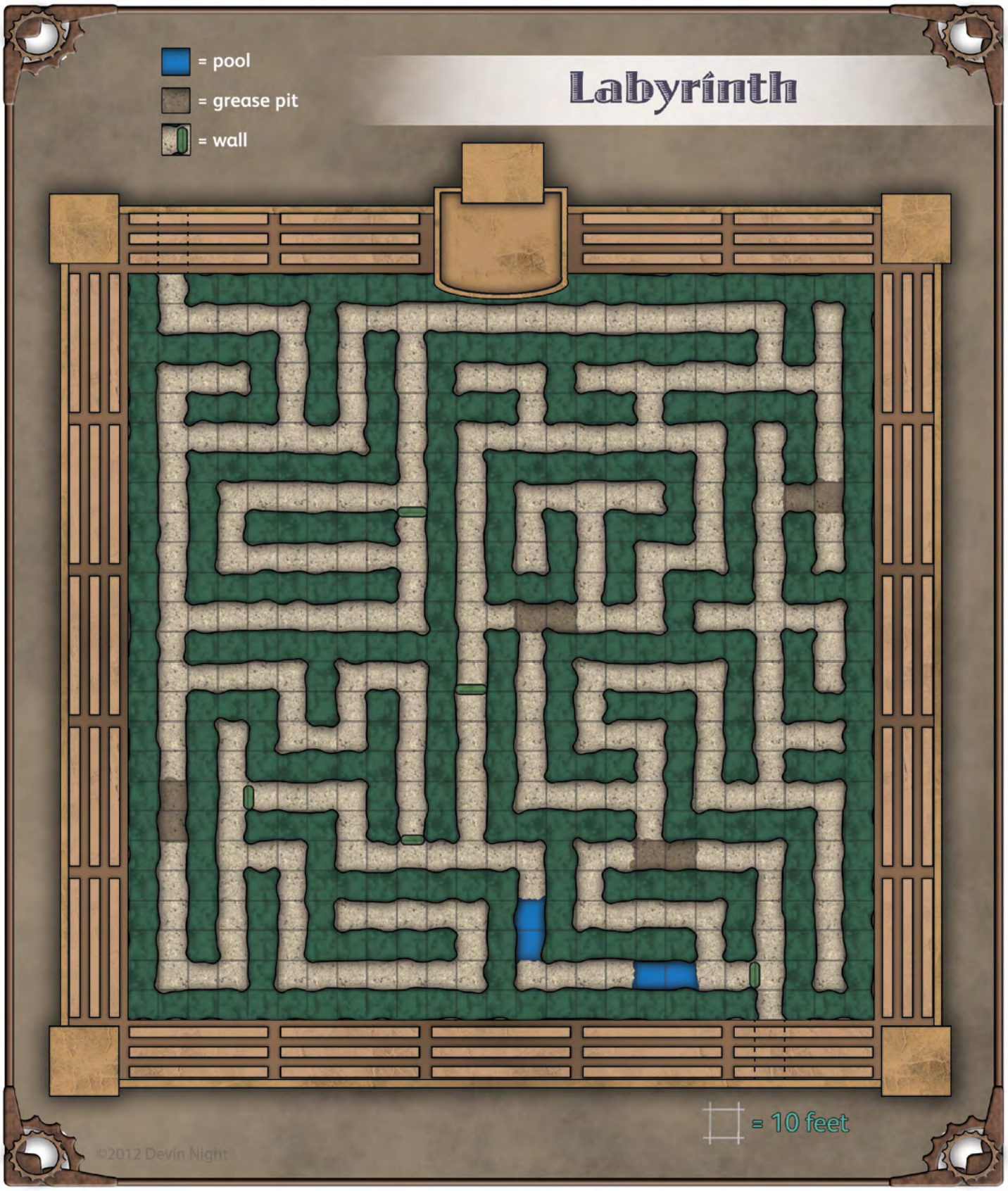
Locations include number of miles from Seobriga. Parentheticals list miles to the mid-point of the 36-mile range used in the Bruse's challenge.

- **Mile 128 (–18).** Starting point for Liss Rail Construction.
- Mile 127 (–17).
- Mile 126 (–16).
- Mile 125 (–15).
- **Mile 132 (–14).** Rio la Heffa. River requires a bridge.
- **Mile 133 (–13).** Serra Malex. Small mountain ridge. Tunnel already completed.
- Mile 132 (–12).
- Mile 131 (–11).
- Mile 130 (–10).
- **Mile 137 (–9).** El Fuerte Toro. Military garrison, fort, and walled village. +2 Morale.
- **Mile 138 (–8).** West edge of Cheshimox territory.
- Mile 139 (–7).
- Mile 140 (–6).
- Mile 141 (–5).
- Mile 142 (–4). 10 Money bonus to whoever reaches here first.
- **Mile 143 (–3).** Rio Gelado. River requires a bridge.
- Mile 144 (–2).
- Mile 145 (–1).
- **Mile 146 (±0).** Target point for each team, in an open field.
- Mile 147 (+1).
- Mile 148 (+2).
- Mile 149 (+3).
- **Mile 150 (+4).** 10 Money bonus to whoever reaches here first.
- Mile 151 (+5).
- Mile 152 (+6).
- Mile 153 (+7).
- **Mile 154 (+8).** East edge of Cheshimox territory.
- **Mile 155 (+9).** Rio dola Lapisa. River requires a bridge. Lizard-folk bandits prowling river demand a bribe worth 2 Materiel. If not bribed, they attack each day, costing 1 Morale. Bridge construction goes at half speed.
- Mile 156 (+10).
- Mile 157 (+11).
- Mile 158 (+12).
- Mile 159 (+13).
- **Mile 160 (+14).** Serra Degaspare. Small mountain ridge, requires two days for grading. The route calls for several tunnels totalling a mile in length, but ritualists performing *stone shape* are just three days away from completion.
- Mile 161 (+15).
- Mile 162 (+16).
- Mile 163 (+17).
- **Mile 164 (+18).** Starting point for Griento Railways.

Starting Resources

Griento starts with 0 Money, 1 Materiel, and 6 Morale. Lya provides 10 Money.

Liss starts with 2 Money, 2 Materiel, and 2 Morale. Pemberton might sell a Steam Crew, at the cost of 10 Money. The Steam Crew can build 1 extra mile per day without costing any Morale.


= pool
= grease pit
= wall
Labyrinth
= 10 feet
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List of Memory-Events

Here is a master list of the key memory-events of Kasvarina's past the party can witness with the *lost arc of Reida*. Memories marked with asterisks are presented in Appendix C: The Eladrin Diaspora, and will likely only occur if the party goes looking for them instead of following the most straightforward path. Feel free to adjust locations a bit if it helps with your players' experience.

Memory-Event	Date	Stability
Through the Breach. Breaching the walls of Alais Primos.	81 Summer, 1 B.O.V.	1
Triage. Nicodemus's treatments of her while she was injured in Alais Primos.	81 Summer to 15 Autumn, 1 B.O.V.	3
Family Moment. Her last visit with her daughters in Resal before leaving with Nicodemus.	32 Autumn, 1 B.O.V.	3
Arrest. Returning to Alais Primos with Nicodemus and being arrested.	59 Autumn, 1 B.O.V.	1
Devil's Prayer. Learning the *Sacrament of Apotheosis* from Ashima-Shimtu in the Crypta Hereticarum.	67 Autumn, 1 B.O.V.	3
The Great Malice. Causing the Great Malice atop the Lance of Triegenes in Methia.	91 Winter, 1 B.O.V.	5
Srasama's Fall. Mourning a fallen eladrin woman outside Alais Primos.	New Year's Day, 1 A.O.V.	3
Forsaking Grief. The oratory of Vekesh and the rite to forsake grief in Resal.	17 Spring, 1 A.O.V.	3
***Miller's Pyre.** Witnessing William Miller being burned at the stake in Pala.	31 Autumn, 17 A.O.V.	3
***Ghostly Apparition.** Nicodemus visiting after William Miller's martyrdom, in Ushanti.	84 Winter, 17 A.O.V.	1
Founded in Secrecy. Founding the Obscurati in Methia.	14 Spring, 19 A.O.V.	1
Epidemic. The leaders of the conspiracy gather again to discuss saving Jierre's new nation from smallpox.	5 Summer, 40 A.O.V.	1
***Rejecting the Call.** Nicodemus visiting Ushanti in 100 A.O.V. to plead for greater commitment to their plans.	58 Summer, 100 A.O.V.	1
Rescue Alliance. Kasvarina seeks help to rescue Launga from a dragon tyrant.	14 Summer, 111 A.O.V.	1
***Betrayal of Rilego.** The death of her daughter Launga in Seobriga.	15 Summer, 111 A.O.V.	5
A Second Creation. In Methia, Nicodemus presents his plan to change the world.	32 Summer, 113 A.O.V.	1
Skyfall. In Methia, the Ob leadership discuss their failed attempt at manipulating the planes.	77 Winter, 195 A.O.V.	1
***Navras.** Navras building an opera house in Flint.	15 Spring, 201 A.O.V.	1
***Bhalu.** Bhalu, one of Kasvarina's husbands, rejecting her in Trekhom.	42 Winter, 248 A.O.V.	1
Cold Matriach. Sending Asrabey away to the Unseen Court.	78 Spring, 279 A.O.V.	1
***Amielle.** Kasvarina meeting in Cherage with Amielle Latimer, before sending her to fight the witches in Flint.	2 Autumn, 400 A.O.V.	1
Puppet Mastery. The Ob's leaders meet in Methia to discuss plans for industrializing Flint.	50 Autumn, 457 A.O.V.	1
***Chatwood.** Chatwood, an eladrin skyseer in prison in Shale for refusing to help the Obscurati gain control of Axis Island.	8 Spring, 490 A.O.V.	1
New-Borne Minion. Kasvarina discusses the colossus project with the other two heads of the Obscurati.	32 Summer, 493 A.O.V.	3
Distributed Plan. The Ob leaders make final preparations for their ritual.	55 Spring, 500 A.O.V.	1
***Mindtaker.** Losing her memories when Alexander Grappa attacked her at the Cauldron Hill facility.	7 Summer, 500 A.O.V.	3

Mental Stability

Memory-Event	Date	Stability	Stabiliy Adjustment	TOTAL STABILITY
Through the Breach. Breaching the walls of Alais Primos.	81 Summer, 1 B.O.V.	1		
Triage. Nicodemus's treatments of her while she was injured in Alais Primos.	81 Summer to 15 Autumn, 1 B.O.V.	3		
Family Moment. Her last visit with her daughters in Resal before leaving with Nicodemus.	32 Autumn, 1 B.O.V.	3		
Arrest. Returning to Alais Primos with Nicodemus and being arrested.	59 Autumn, 1 B.O.V.	1		
Devil's Prayer. Learning the *Sacrament of Apotheosis* from Ashima-Shimtu in the Crypta Hereticarum.	67 Autumn, 1 B.O.V.	3		
The Great Malice. Causing the Great Malice atop the Lance of Triegenes in Methia.	91 Winter, 1 B.O.V.	5		
Srasama's Fall. Mourning a fallen eladrin woman outside Alais Primos.	New Year's Day, 1 A.O.V.	3		
Forsaking Grief. The oratory of Vekesh and the rite to forsake grief in Resal.	17 Spring, 1 A.O.V.	3		
***Miller's Pyre.** Witnessing William Miller being burned at the stake in Pala.	31 Autumn, 17 A.O.V.	3		
***Ghostly Apparition.** Nicodemus visiting after William Miller's martyrdom, in Ushanti.	84 Winter, 17 A.O.V.	1		
Founded in Secrecy. Founding the Obscurati in Methia.	14 Spring, 19 A.O.V.	1		
Epidemic. The leaders of the conspiracy gather again to discuss saving Jierre's new nation from smallpox.	5 Summer, 40 A.O.V.	1		
***Rejecting the Call.** Nicodemus visiting Ushanti in 100 A.O.V. to plead for greater commitment to their plans.	58 Summer, 100 A.O.V.	1		
Rescue Alliance. Kasvarina seeks help to rescue Launga from a dragon tyrant.	14 Summer, 111 A.O.V.	1		
***Betrayal of Rilego.** The death of her daughter Launga in Seobriga.	15 Summer, 111 A.O.V.	5		
A Second Creation. In Methia, Nicodemus presents his plan to change the world.	32 Summer, 113 A.O.V.	1		
Skyfall. In Methia, the Ob leadership discuss their failed attempt at manipulating the planes.	77 Winter, 195 A.O.V.	1		
***Navras.** Navras building an opera house in Flint.	15 Spring, 201 A.O.V.	1		
***Bhalu.** Bhalu, one of Kasvarina's husbands, rejecting her in Trekhom.	42 Winter, 248 A.O.V.	1		
Cold Matriach. Sending Asrabey away to the Unseen Court.	78 Spring, 279 A.O.V.	1		
***Amielle.** Kasvarina meeting in Cherage with Amielle Latimer, before sending her to fight the witches in Flint.	2 Autumn, 400 A.O.V.	1		
Puppet Mastery. The Ob's leaders meet in Methia to discuss plans for industrializing Flint.	50 Autumn, 457 A.O.V.	1		
***Chatwood.** Chatwood, an eladrin skyseer in prison in Shale for refusing to help the Obscurati gain control of Axis Island.	8 Spring, 490 A.O.V.	1		
New-Borne Minion. Kasvarina discusses the colossus project with the other two heads of the Obscurati.	32 Summer, 493 A.O.V.	3		
Distributed Plan. The Ob leaders make final preparations for their ritual.	55 Spring, 500 A.O.V.	1		
***Mindtaker.** Losing her memories when Alexander Grappa attacked her at the Cauldron Hill facility.	7 Summer, 500 A.O.V.	3		

**Memories marked with asterisks are presented in Appendix C: The Eladrin Diaspora*

APPENDIX J: Player Handouts

CANTABRILLA CHALLENGE

Liss starts at Mile 128 (–18). Griento starts at Mile 164 (+18). They're competing to reach mile 146 (+0).

- **Miles:** To build a mile, you must expend 1 Materiel. Each mile after the first in a given day also costs 1 Morale.
- **Money:** Each day you acquire 1 Money per mile made the previous day. (You can spend 25,000 gp as if it were 1 Money.)
- **Materiel:** Each day you can expend Money, and the next day you acquire an equal amount of Materiel. For each 1 Money spent beyond the first on Materiel, there is a 5% chance of a mishap. A mishap causes 1d4 of the Materiel you ordered not to arrive.
- **Morale:** Certain events add or subtract Morale. If Morale goes below 0, you cannot build. You can buy 1 Morale for 2 Money.
- **Obstacles:** Bridges are required at miles 132, 143, and 155. Bridges cost (and earn) as much as 5 miles of track.

Disruptions: A delayed train keeps Money and Materiel from arriving. A destroyed train eliminates the Money and Materiel. Rebuilding a destroyed bridge is equivalent to building 5 Miles of track. Attacks cost 1 Morale per day (or more at the DM's discretion, if they're very disastrous). Key personnel typically cost 1 Money to replace.

	DAY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Starting	Mile										
	Money										
	Materiel										
	Morale										
Spent	Money										
	Materiel										
	Morale										
Acquired	Money										
	Materiel										
	Morale										
Ending Mile Count											
Miscellaneous Notes											

	DAY	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Starting	Mile										
	Money										
	Materiel										
	Morale										
Spent	Money										
	Materiel										
	Morale										
Acquired	Money										
	Materiel										
	Morale										
Ending Mile Count											
Miscellaneous Notes											

	DAY	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Starting	Mile										
	Money										
	Materiel										
	Morale										
Spent	Money										
	Materiel										
	Morale										
Acquired	Money										
	Materiel										
	Morale										
Ending Mile Count											
Miscellaneous Notes											

BERAN NEWS CLIPPING

(Translated from Beran)

...n, though, construction continues apace, with Oriento Railways commanding a solid lead over Liss Rail Construction. It remains to be seen if Mr. Pemberton's "steam drivers" will make a difference fast enough to justify their exorbitant expense, or if the lizardfolk of the Doches Swamp will listen to their scaled brother who joked, "My father always said his two favorite foods were manflesh and orcflesh. I bet the two taste great together."

—Hermesto Novahombre, Cantabrilla Railroad staff writer

Bruse Bringing Bad News to Ber?

BRUSE SHANTUS HAS A NEW SECRET PLAN TO IMPROVE BER'S INDUSTRIAL competitiveness, say reliable sources in the army. This plan is to hand over leadership of our military research to a gnome named Tinker Oddcog, said to be a genius with machines. But our investigation shows that this gnome might have *dangerous connections* that could spell trouble for our nation.

On the 15th of Spring, the ship *Shore Thing* departed from the Risuri city of Flint, and it arrived in Seobriga on the 21st of Spring. Witnesses report seeing the gnome at the palace as early as the 26th, traveling in the company of Enforcer of Freedom Glaucia Évora who is currently acting as extemporaneous judge in Nakkard Quarter.

The gnome has not appeared publicly since, but sources report him visiting *several military installations* over the past two months, including the Drumalio Shipyard and the foundries in Piria Quarter. By all accounts, the gnome's visit yielded marked improvements in the functioning of those facilities' production machinery, and word is that the gnome can *magically speak to technology*.

So what worries us? Astute readers might have noticed that the date of Mr. Oddcog's departure from Flint was the same day as the release of a giant metal creation that *rampaged through the city*. Moreover, before that very day Tinker Oddcog had not been seen since nearly ten years earlier. And that last appearance was marred by *disasters* that included the deaths of two coworkers: one was crushed by a crane that witnesses said "came alive and moved on its own," the other was a victim of an unlikely train derailment that killed twenty.

While we will not posit the gnome is bad luck – for it is against the spirit of our glorious revolution to indulge in such superstition – we intend to keep investigating this gnome for evidence of malice or negligence.

As other recent stories have reported, members of Risur's military claim that the rampaging metal "colossus" was the work of a conspiracy that posed as legitimate military activities *endorsed by the king of Risur*. Might this gnome be attempting a similar subversion in our own nation?

Unfortunately we were unable to contact Mr. Oddcog for an interview, as the Bruse is keeping his location and movements a *state secret*. We sent a request to the Bruse's summer court, but at last report our messenger is 1,465th in line for an audience.

—Melissa Amarie, freelancer

HOSTAGE LETTER

A Desperate Plea for Assistance, to whosoever may read this:

I trust that my goblin captors' literacy is insufficient to comprehend the contents of this missive. I bade them deliver this correspondence under the ruse that I require additional medical supplies for treating an epidemic they are suffering. Indeed, if you could kindly trade with this courier and pay him in gold coins, it would help maintain the deception and stave off what I fear is my inevitable execution should my usefulness to his tribe falter.

Thereafter, I heartily implore you to pass this letter along to the proper authorities so that they might effect my extraction from imminent bodily harm.

These goblins, which I understand to have been recently relocated from the caldera of Lago Fuego, reside some forty-eight kilometers from Citado Cavallo, compass heading 317 degrees. Alas, I lack a sextant to provide more accurate coordinates, but I believe once one nears the area, the confluence of insectile traffic should act as sufficient guidance to locate the Ω-shaped valley they control.

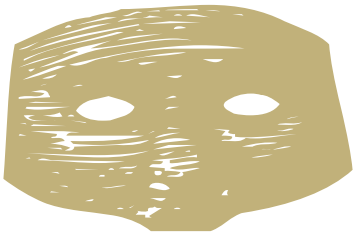
While I am currently bereft of the ability to offer pecuniary compensation, I trust that as gentlemen and ladies of the Revolution, you will appreciate the debt of gratitude and service I shall owe to my rescuers.

Please come with the swiftness of the Avery Coast Railroad, for I dread what may befall nearby Beran settlements if the goblins continue to pursue satisfaction of their grievances.

—Dr. Elías Malapropism, visitor from Risur

Obscurati Officer Cards

Hand these out at the start of the adventure.



Ken Don

Head research inquisitor of the Clergy's Jenevah Library in Alais Primos.

Gran Guiscard

Head of Gorgeous Cell in Beaumont, with spy network of artists and entertainers.

Livia Hatsfield

Spies on the king of Risur in Torfield Palace, researching fey titans and the rites of rulership.

Kiov Hetman

Drakran specialist on tower magic, tasked with bringing down old dwarven defenses.

Oscan Ligurio

A snitch in the Family, tasked with creating shell personalities and businesses for international smuggling and money laundering.

Bruce McDruid

Explorer of remote locations, responsible for bringing technology to primitive peoples.

Xavier Sangria

Malice Lands knight tasked with monster slaying.

Gran Guiscard

Head of Gorgeous Cell in Beaumont, with spy network of artists and entertainers.

A famous half-Risuri opera baritone from Danor, Gran initially used his international tours to deliver messages between different cells, including Mayor Reed Macbannin in Flint. Now he recruits other performers as couriers or spies. His greatest mistake, he believes, was trying to recruit Rock Rackus. Gran could not manage to explain the subtleties of the missions to the man, so he passed Rock off to Caius Bergeron to use as an adventurer and treasure hunter.

Gran always carries a pen and a book of songs so he can tear out pages, sign them, and hand them to fans.

Ken Don

Head research inquisitor of the Clergy's Jenevah Library in Alais Primos.

Ken helps Obscurati researchers delve into forbidden topics without being noticed. He has interacted in the past with Obscurati agents named Ottavia Sacredote and Caius Bergeron.

Quiet and macabre, Ken has a deep well of knowledge regarding the occult and is fluent in the infernal language of the Demonocracy. His preferred method to deal with unwanted disturbance is to recite religious poetry, though not in any language the listener will recognize.

Also, he thinks that the dead owe a debt to the living, and so using undead as labor is justifiable.

Oscan Ligurio

A snitch in the Family, tasked with creating shell personalities and businesses for international smuggling and money laundering.

A lifetime of loyalty to The Family crime syndicate earned Oscan a crooked nose and a twitchy demeanor. Loyalty is important, and so is honesty, so Oscan's made sure he can fake those convincingly.

He once earned a lifetime pardon for his sins, courtesy of a bishop he was holding at knife-point, so he figures he may as well make his life on this world as fun as possible. After his fifth or sixth murder he stopped really sweating the day-to-day morality stuff, and looked for grander ways to transgress.

Kiov Hetman

Drakran specialist on tower magic, tasked with bringing down old dwarven defenses.

Drakr's towers—impenetrable monoliths of stone or polished steel that dot the landscape and notably line the border with the Malice Lands—keep the chaotic energy of the Great Malice from reaching Drakr, and Kiov is one of the few who knows how.

Hired by prison magnate Ramos Zoltan, Kiov finished his copious research and recently delivered his report to the eerie undead leader of Lantern Cell, Vicemi Terio. Now Kiov coordinates parties of adventurers whose mission is to negate the enchantments of these towers.

Kiov is a scientist, not an idealist, and he styles himself as enigmatic as the towers he studies.

Livia Hatsfield

Spies on the king of Risur in Torfield Palace, researching fey titans and the rites of rulership.

Though nearly two hundred years old, Livia only moved out of Risur's rural forestlands twenty years ago, and she was only recruited to the Obscurati after Duchess Ethelyn's failed bid to seize control from her brother last year. Previously an aid to the duchess, Livia feeds the conspiracy state secrets on the nature of the Rites of Rulership, that they might weaken the power of the king and place someone else on the throne.

Livia is eager to know the conspiracy's ultimate plans, but worries she may have read too many romantic novels, because she recognizes she's far more excited by this "adventure" than is probably safe.

Xavier Sangria

Malice Lands knight tasked with monster slaying.

Xavier's is the usual story of a kid whose parents were eaten by monsters, and who decided someone should really stop that kind of stuff from happening again.

Thirty years ago he signed on as a bodyguard for some Ob scholars researching the magic in the Malice Lands. It was his insight that helped them discover that Malice magic responds to emotions. They helped educate and train him. Now he has a band of several dozen adventurers trained in numerous unorthodox techniques for killing horrible creatures large and small.

He prefers operating in the wilderness, away from civilization, since he's not comfortable with lying.

Bruce McDruid

Explorer of remote locations, responsible for bringing technology to primitive peoples.

Bruce forsook his clan's traditions, stole one of their ships, and became a pirate. There are dozens of small island nations and coastal kingdoms with no geopolitical clout, but with enough population to cause trouble for the Obscurati if they are not properly pacified. Bruce is called friend in most of their ports.

Having explored farther than nearly anyone, Bruce is bored and not easily impressed. In the past year he has made the rounds, offering replicas of the Wayfarer's Lantern, supposedly as a way to calm the seas. Once they are accepted, Obscurati agents will use that foothold to encourage the construction of proper Wayfarer lighthouses.

Letter from Grappa

To the constables who helped reassemble me the last time I died,

Greetings. I hope this finds you well, and that you remember me, Alexander Grappa, known colloquially as "the mindmaker." Now it seems a mind is all I am. I keep finding myself in unfortunate circumstances, but I haven't been put down for good quite yet.

If you'll indulge me a bit of storytelling, I believe my situation will be of interest to you. And again I apologize for certain necessary vagaries, as it appears a geas placed upon me is still functioning. Fortuitously, though, the wording of said compulsion only prohibits me from speaking of my own affairs with my former associates—I find I can still not bring myself to write the organization's name, though I am sure you know it by now.

When last we met, my mechanical body was torn to bits. While dying I managed to detach my consciousness and implant it into the body of my killer. He survived and escaped, and some time later I realized that while he was asleep, my mind came awake. I was able to, with careful effort and great caution, move his body and examine my surroundings, but my coordination is poor, and I dare not step outside his bedroom. I hear guards mumbling in Drakran outside the door of his windowless chamber, and I can't risk their suspicions being aroused.

I can, however, read his correspondence. I will slip this letter into a pile of his outgoing mail, hoping that he will not notice. Perhaps you can track the postmark to narrow in on his location.

He is coordinating the transportation of ten seemingly unrelated individuals, ensuring that their travel is difficult to track. There is some grand convocation coming soon, one he is invited to as well, and there is a window wherein a group of motivated investigators could, with perhaps some inside assistance, locate the man within whose body I am an interloper.

Here I admit to some selfish silence. I both know and could reveal the location of this convocation, but I choose not to because I need a hefty favor, and fear drives me to pursue hard bargaining over idealistic trust. Do me this favor, and I will guide you to the convocation so that you may strike a blow against those who have worked against your nation.

The favor I ask is that you find my host, take him alive, and keep him subdued until his exhaustion and sleep allow my mind to surface. Thereafter we must go into northern Drakr, to a glacier that centuries ago covered the city known as Knütpara. I have read that there we will find my best chance to get a body of my own. Once I am no longer a mind bereft of flesh, I will help you get into the convocation. Remember, I know the routes and identities of several of those who are attending.

Please do not attempt to contact me with a Sending ritual or similar magic. I do not know if my host would receive it instead. But act soon. Leone's schedule shows him leaving on the 75th of Autumn, and the convocation begins on the 79th, on the night of the full moon.

Alexander Grappa

P.S., Bring mage cuffs, and ensure they're not made of metal.

Obscurati Covers

Each constable chooses one of the following "covers." Share this page with the players. It has the mechanics for handling their temporary bodies.

Going Undercover

Note the difference between your Strength, Constitution, and Dexterity scores and those of the vessel you have been implanted into. For every two points of difference, you have either a –1 penalty or +1 bonus to skill and ability checks and attack and damage rolls using that stat.

Adjust your Armor Class, Fortitude, and Reflex based on your new stats and gear. You use your normal Will defense. You'll have to choose which if any magic items you wear or carry, which may adjust these at the risk of possibly arousing suspicions. It would not be unusual for Obscurati officers to wear magic items, but a librarian wearing a flaming cloak would stand out.

You can use all your old powers that are granted by classes, and if you are in gestalt (see below) you can also use one or two powers possessed by your host. You cannot generally use racial powers.

Contest, Crisis, and Rejection

Normally while inside the bodies of these Obscurati officers, you have full control. However, each day when you go to sleep, when you first become bloodied in an encounter, or when you attempt to enter gestalt (see below) there's a chance the host's mind will try to take back over. This is called a **contest**.

When a contest occurs, the game master rolls an attack in secret against your Will defense. The hosts' attack bonuses are known only to the DM, listed on page 110.

If the host "hits," it regains partial control, which is called a **crisis**. Each round you are in crisis you are dazed and may make a saving throw at the end of your turn to get back in charge. In the meanwhile, the host can stammer and take a move action each round, which might be enough to cause trouble.

If you fail three consecutive saving throws while in crisis, the host gets full control. This is called **rejection**. The host becomes aware of what happened and can act of its own free will. You can attempt a new saving throw once every five minutes, and a success puts you back in charge.

Gestalt

Even while in control of your host's body, you cannot normally access his memories. You can attempt, however, to enter **gestalt**. Doing so is a free action, wherein *you* make an attack against the Will defense of your *host's* body. The attack bonus is equal to half your level + your Wisdom or Charisma modifier +6.

If you fail, you trigger a crisis. If you succeed, you gain access to the host's memories and can flawlessly mimic his personality for five minutes. You also can use the listed "gestalt powers."

Mindmaker Aid

Alexander Grappa can recognize the signs of a psychic crisis brewing, and his mind magic can let him subdue a vessel's soul before it can gain control. As long as he's nearby you generally don't have to worry about the officer personalities rising to the surface. You can safely travel to the convocation, at least, but thereafter he cannot guarantee he'll always be around. He encourages you to be cautious and only attempt gestalts when necessary.

New Ritual

Mortal Possession

The mages of the Demonocracy used this vile rite to grant new life to dying minions, or to create the perfect infiltrator.

Level: 15 **Component Cost:** Focus worth 1,000 gp
Category: Binding **Market Price:** 2,500 gp
Time: 1 hour **Key Skill:** Arcana
Duration: 9 days, but see below

You take one creature and place its soul into the body of another creature. You can only target yourself with this ritual if you have at least one assistant. The possessor takes control of the vessel's body, and leaves its own body a soulless, mindless shell. If a Gentle Repose ritual, or similar magic aimed at placing the possessor's body in stasis, is not used, the possessor's original body must be tended (given water, fed, etc.), otherwise it may die of thirst or starvation.

The creature whose soul is being transferred must be willing. If the vessel creature is also willing, the ritual automatically succeeds.

If the vessel creature is unwilling, the creature must be restrained for the duration of the ritual. When the ritual is complete, make an Arcana check (DC equal to the vessel's Will defense). If the two creatures are more than one size category apart, increase the DC by 5. If the check fails, the ritual fails and further attempts suffer a cumulative –5 penalty.

Even if the ritual succeeds, the vessel's soul can contest the possessor's control from time to time by attacking the possessor's Will. These contests occur whenever the possessor goes to sleep, when he first becomes bloodied in an encounter, and if he attempts to enter gestalt (see Gestalt on this page). The chart below lists how much of a bonus the vessel's soul gets to this attack roll, based on how much you succeeded your initial Arcana check by.

Success by:	Attack Roll Bonus:
0 to 4	+15
5 to 9	+10
10 to 14	+5
15 to 19	+2
20 or more	+0

The focus for the ritual is a woven wreath dipped in gold and adorned with gems, and a smaller bracelet made the same way. The possessor's original body must wear the wreath, and the vessel body must wear the bracelet. If either is destroyed or removed, three rounds later the ritual ends. Otherwise, the ritual lasts 9 days.

When the ritual ends, the possessor's soul will return to its body if it is on the same plane. If it cannot reach its body, it is drawn into Nem, the Plane of Ruin, from which it can never return.

Special: If the vessel body has no soul, the duration is permanent, and the possessor can never return to its body. No focus is needed.

Ken Don

Head research inquisitor of the Clergy's Jenevah Library in Alais Primos.
Male Human. Str 8, Con 10, Dex 10.

Background

The Jenevah Library in the city of Alais Primos acts as the primary repository of scholarly and mystical knowledge for the Clergy. It also is a bit of a honey trap for would-be ne'er-do-wells. Librarians keep track of books being referenced, of the comings and goings of researchers, and of any unusual requests that might indicate a person is planning on animating the dead, binding a demon to possess someone, or use other forbidden magic.

The wiry and stern Ken Don oversees these bookish inquisitors, and has earned the respect of the Clergy hierarchs during his four decade career. He was enticed to aid the Obscurati because he was tired of simply preventing abuse of mystical lore, and wanted to actually find ways to safely and responsibly apply the dangerous knowledge to some positive goal.

Obscurati Involvement

Ken helps Obscurati-affiliated researchers delve into forbidden topics without being noticed. He comes to the convocation alone, but he has interacted in the past with Obscurati agents named Ottavia Sacredote and Caius Bergeron.

Personality and Ideology

Quiet and macabre, Ken has a deep well of knowledge regarding the occult and is fluent in the infernal language of the Demonocracy. His preferred method to deal with unwanted disturbance is to recite religious poetry, though not in any language the listener will recognize.

Ken believes that men are good by nature and want to help each other, but that the struggle for resources leads to people making selfish choices. Religion is not as important as prosperity. Even a well-educated man will steal when he is starving. He hopes the Obscurati is going to find a way to increase the wealth of the world and share it with the poor.

Also, he thinks that the dead owe a debt to the living, and so using undead as labor is justifiable. The only problem is that normal necromancy makes the souls of the dead suffer. He thinks, though, that it's possible to create a similar spell where the dead serve willingly.

Gestalt Traits

When you are in gestalt with Ken Don, you can use the following powers.

Standard Actions

▸ **Bibliogeist** ✦ Daily

A spectral librarian appears before you, awaiting your question. If you ask too loudly, it shushes you.

Effect: You conjure the ghost of a librarian and direct it to read one or more books, either retrieving specific information or summarizing the whole text for you. The ghost can finish a few hundred pages per minute, and can travel up to a mile from you to find the necessary books. Between five minutes and one hour later, the ghost returns and you learn what it discovered. The ghost has Defenses of 10 and 1 hit point.

Minor Actions

▸ **Forbid** (psychic) ✦ At-Will

You quietly will a location to be off-limits.

Effect: Choose a square within 5 squares. Until the end of your next turn, any hostile creature that enters that square or ends its turn their takes 15 psychic damage.

Gran Guiscard

Head of Gorgeous Cell in Beaumont, with spy network of artists and entertainers.
Male Human. Str 12, Con 16 , Dex 12.

Background

Gran's Danoran father took a dark-skinned Risuri woman as his wife shortly before the Third Yerasol War, and they settled in a small village in Danor. Gran was teased as an outsider throughout his childhood, but he developed a personality so bold and outlandish that no one could tell the insults actually hurt. Eventually the bullies stopped bothering him, though he never had many friends.

As a young man, Gran moved to the Danoran city of Beaumont and studied as an opera singer. With his distinctive appearance and booming baritone voice, plus his willingness to perform rousing patriotic shows during the Fourth Yerasol War, he quickly rose to prominence. He's probably the most famous Obscurati officer who isn't a politician, and he runs into fans of his shows wherever he travels.

Obscurati Involvement

One night after an opera, as Gran drank and partied with a tiefling nobleman, both of them complained about how some of the actors had flubbed lines and ruined the show. Gran's home had recently been broken into, and he had the thought, if actors can't follow their lines, how can we punish anyone for breaking the law. The nobleman offered Gran a chance to make sure the world had fewer flubbed lines.

After a few months of tests to ensure he could be trusted, Gran was first tasked with using his international tours as opportunities to deliver messages between members of different Obscurati cells, including Mayor Reed Macbannin in Flint. Eventually he began to recruit other performers with similar interests in making the world a better place, using them as couriers or spies. His greatest mistake, he believes, was trying to recruit Rock Rackus. Gran could not manage to explain the subtleties of the missions to the man, so he passed Rock off to Caius Bergeron to use as an adventurer and treasure hunter.

Personality and Ideology

Self-indulgently melodramatic, Gran loves to name drop celebrities he has dined with, and he always carries a pen and a book of songs so he can tear out pages, sign them, and hand them to fans.

While on his travels for the conspiracy, Gran has heard many ideas of how the world could be improved. The one that appeals to him most is just to remove free will and make people do the right thing. He's seen improvisational theater, and he hates it. Scripted stories are much better.

Gestalt Traits

When you are in gestalt with Gran Guiscard, you can use the following powers.

Standard Actions

▸ **Seek the Limelight** ✦ Encounter

You make a big show of yourself, to distract those who don't know better.

Attack: Close Burst 20 (enemies in burst); +18 vs. Will.

Hit: Until the end of your next turn, the target takes a –5 penalty to Insight and Perception checks, and a –2 penalty to attack rolls for attacks that don't include you as a target.

Minor Actions

▸ **The Show Must Go On** ✦ Encounter

You exhort an ally to finish the scene.

Effect: One ally within 10 squares who can hear you can spend a healing surge, gain an extra 3d6 hit points, and shift 1 square.

Livia Hatsfield

Spies on the king of Risur in Torfield Palace, researching fey titans and the rites of rulership.
Female Elf. Str 10, Con 10, Dex 18.

Background

Though she's nearly two hundred years old, Livia only moved out of the rural forestlands of Risur twenty years ago. She acted as liaison to fey visitors in the manor of Duchess Ethelyn, sister of King Aodhan, then eight years ago transferred to Torfield Palace in the capital city Slate. She travels often throughout Risur for her work, but in order to attend the Obscurati convocation she had to ask for leave for her first ever international trip.

Obscurati Involvement

Livia was only recently recruited, after Duchess Ethelyn's failed bid to seize control of Risur from her brother. An agent, who has since been killed fleeing capture by the RHC, asked her to research Risur's rites of rulership, claiming a desire to help weaken the power of the king and place someone else on the throne. She agreed, and eventually wormed her way through several contacts to actually speak with Lya Jierre. Through clever posturing and feigned preference for peace over patriotism, she was given more responsibilities.

Yes, Livia is a double agent of sorts, hoping to get as close to the heart of the Obscurati as possible. She's not sure whether Ob magic might catch her in lies, though, so she has not risked telling anyone in Risur what she's doing. She worries what the Ob might do with the information she gave them, both on the nature of the Rites of Rulership—how one becomes monarch of Risur and what powers it grants—and on the specific defenses of Torfield Palace. If she doesn't return within a month, she has arranged for a package to be delivered to Principal Minister Harkover Lee, revealing what she has done.

Personality and Ideology

Livia worries she may have read too many romantic novels, because she recognizes she's far more excited by this "adventure" than is probably safe. She talks readily and is excellent at turning conversations to be about other people instead of herself. She assumes being quiet will look suspicious, but doesn't want to risk accidentally revealing her own intentions. Despite her loyalty to Risur, she admits she's curious just what the Ob are planning, and whether their talk of making the world better has any real basis.

Gestalt Traits

When you are in gestalt with Livia Hatsfield, you can use the following powers.

Standard Actions

▸ **Royal Might** ✦ Encounter

You exploit Risur's rites of rulership for a moment to gain great power. You have worked for the king, almost an extension of his body, and the body of the king is reinforced by the will of his people.

Effect: You can spend a healing surge and regain 3d6 extra hit points. Until the end of your next turn you gain a +4 bonus to attack and damage rolls, defenses, saves, and skill or ability checks.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Elven Recovery** ✦ Encounter

Whether an attack or a lie, you are quick to recover from a mistake.

Trigger: You make an attack roll or Bluff check and don't like the result.

Effect (Free Action): Reroll the attack or check and use the new result.

Kiov Hetman

Drakran specialist on tower magic, tasked with bringing down old dwarven defenses.
Male Dwarf. Str 14, Con 18, Dex 8.

Background

Kiov apprenticed himself to a wizard who claimed to hold the secrets of Drakr's towers—impenetrable monoliths of stone or polished steel that dot the landscape and notably line the border with the Malice Lands. They kept the chaotic energy of the Great Malice from reaching Drakr, and Kiov is one of the few who knows how.

Obscurati Involvement

Kiov worked as the arcane defense consultant for Ramos Zoltan, a dwarf businessman who owns all the prisons in northern Drakr. Ramos is responsible for implementing the Obscurati's lighthouse retrofit, and he directed Kiov to the Ob to help them determine how the old towers and monoliths throughout Drakr might meddle with the planar powers of the lighthouses.

Kiov did copious research, determined the nature of the tower magic and the means to access their previously locked interiors, and delivered his report to the eerie undead leader of Lantern Cell, Vicemi Terio. Now Kiov coordinates parties of adventurers whose mission is to negate the enchantments of these towers.

Personality and Ideology

Kiov is a scientist, not an idealist. He's simply very talented and not particularly wedded to any particular philosophical or political movement. If anything, he'd like wealth to not be so dependent on physical goods, since he is quite clever, and he has educated his children and relatives to value knowledge, but hasn't quite made a profit studying ancient and enigmatic artifacts.

Gestalt Traits

When you are in gestalt with Kiov Hetman, you can use the following powers.

Standard Actions

▸ **Tower Defense** ✦ Daily

A black wall slides across the vision of all present, then resolves into the translucent form of a structure, easy to step through but otherwise nigh impervious to attacks.

Effect: You create an immobile zone in a Burst 3 centered on your square, which lasts until the end of your next turn. Choose an energy type: allies in the zone have resist 20 against that energy. Creatures entering the zone must spend 1 extra square of movement. Attacks cannot enter the zone from outside, and those inside effectively have total cover. Attacks from within can affect those outside normally.

Sustain Minor.

Move Actions

▸ **Hack Through Wall** ✦ Encounter

You step through a wall. Hopefully it's safe on the other side.

Effect: You move your speed and have phasing during this movement.

Oscan Ligurio

A snitch in the Family, tasked with creating shell personalities and businesses for international smuggling and money laundering.

Male Human. Str 12, Con 10, Dex 18.

Background

A lifetime of loyalty to the Crisillyiri crime syndicate known as The Family earned Oscan a crooked nose and a twitchy demeanor. He once earned a lifetime pardon for his sins, courtesy of a bishop he was holding at knife-point, so he figures he may as well make his life on this world as fun as possible. After his fifth or sixth murder he stopped really sweating the day-to-day morality stuff, and looked for grander ways to transgress.

Obscurati Involvement

Oscan offers a vital service for the Obscurati: he's motivated to do horrible things explicitly because they're horrible. When the Ob needs a person murdered and his estate managed by proxy for a few weeks, Oscan handles it. When they need five strangers kept alive in an oubliette for a year so others can impersonate them while divinations report that they're still alive, Oscan rises to the challenge. He uses quantity of money laundered per month to let him keep score with how much trouble he's causing.

Oscan hears the Ob are planning to upset the order of the world. He wants to end up on top, to have slaves and servants and people afraid of his name. Oh, and it sounds like most of the people in this crazy conspiracy are doing this stuff because they want to "make the world a better place." Thankfully Oscan's a damned good liar, playing the part of a down-trodden victim of a bad system, forced to crime but deep down devoted to making sure no one else has to do the horrible things he has to. He's pretty sure the Ob guys are buying it.

Personality and Ideology

Loyalty is important, and so is honesty, so Oscan's made sure he can fake those convincingly. He doesn't want to be unbelievable, though, so he still has his foibles—binging on fey pepper and liquor almost seems to make these guys *more* sympathetic to him, as long as he pretends to be contrite.

Gestalt Traits

When you are in gestalt with Oscan Ligurio, you can use the following powers.

Standard Actions

▸ **The Sweet Sound of a Bloody Gurgle** ✦ Encounter

Your blade sinks into the throat of your enemy.

Requirement: You must be holding a dagger.

Effect: Use an at-will attack against an adjacent enemy. If the attack hits, you deal an extra 3d8 damage and the target cannot speak until it receives magical healing or can rest for a day. This does not affect creatures that don't require a functioning throat to speak.

Minor Actions

▸ **False Identity** ✦ Encounter

You quickly change your face.

Effect: You change your appearance and your clothes with an illusion to resemble another person.

Bruce McDruid

Explorer of remote locations, responsible for bringing technology to primitive peoples.
Male Human. Str 16, Con 16, Dex 16.

Background

Bruce was raised on McDruid Island off the northeastern shore of Risur. The druids there are renowned for their ship-building skills and their excellent navigational talents. Bruce learned these skills, then forsook his clan's traditions, stole one of their ships, and became a pirate. He found many perilous islands inhabited only by primitives, which he used as ports of call for raids on the merchant fleets of all nations.

During the fourth Yerasol War he took no sides, and plundered whomever he happened upon. One day he captured a Danoran vessel, and one of his prisoners—rather than pleading for mercy—suggested he'd enjoy himself more if he was getting paid to explore distant lands.

Obscurati Involvement

There are dozens of small island nations and coastal kingdoms with no geopolitical clout, but with enough population to cause trouble for the Obscurati's plans if they are not properly pacified. Bruce has spent the past seven years making contacts among these peoples, trading arms and technology for whatever useless bits of culture they had to offer. In the past year he has made the rounds, offering replicas of the Wayfarer's Lantern, supposedly as a way to calm the seas. Once they are accepted, Obscurati agents will use that foothold to encourage the construction of proper Wayfarer lighthouses.

Personality

Having explored farther than nearly anyone, Bruce is bored and not easily impressed. His greatest joy is seeing his ships in fine working order, though he does rather like fooling primitives into taking gifts that they'll regret. He has a pet monkey, but was asked not to bring it to the convocation.

Gestalt Traits

When you are in gestalt with Bruce McDruid, you can use the following powers.

Standard Actions

▸ **Intuit Map** ✦ Daily

You pull out a blank map, look at it for a moment, and nod, having glimpsed the terrain and creatures around you.

Effect: You are aware of the terrain features within 100 squares, as well as the locations and basic physical features of every creature in that area that is not attempting to hide from you specifically. You just get a glimpse of the situation at the moment, and circumstances might change.

▸ **Refuge in Audacity** ✦ Daily

This would get anyone sane killed.

Effect: You move twice your speed, gain a +4 bonus to defenses and a +10 bonus to Acrobatics and Athletics checks during this movement, and can use another standard action power at any point during this movement.

Xavier Sangria

Malice Lands knight tasked with monster slaying.
Male Human. Str 20, Con 14, Dex 8.

Background

Xavier's is the usual story of a kid whose parents were eaten by monsters, and who decided someone should really stop that kind of stuff from happening again.

Obscurati Involvement

Xavier has been with the Obscurati for nearly thirty years. Initially he signed on as a bodyguard in the Malice Lands for some scholars researching the magic there, but he showed enough interest that they gave him the tools he needed to educate himself so he'd be more useful to their investigations. It was his insight that helped them discover that Malice magic responds to emotions.

He really hit his stride, though, as a monster hunter. Now he has a band of several dozen adventurers trained in numerous unorthodox techniques for killing horrible creatures large and small. He tries not to think about the fact that most of his men joined up after their families were killed by monsters.

Personality

Confident and straight-talking, Xavier tries to come across as serious and respectable, but often falls back on goofy jokes to lighten tension and make himself seem less threatening. He has flashes of temper, though, especially when those he works with are in danger. He prefers operating in the wilderness, away from civilization, since he's not comfortable with lying. He's mostly in this conspiracy so he can make the world safer from the wilderness.

Gestalt Traits

When you are in gestalt with Xavier Sangria, you can use the following powers.

Traits

▸ **Bad Luck Magnet**

The chaotic energies of the Malice Lands linger around you, primed to lash out at just the wrong moment.

Whenever you roll a natural 1 on an attack roll, you take psychic damage equal to half your bloodied value. Whenever an enemy rolls a natural 1, 2, or 3 on an attack roll against you, that enemy takes psychic damage equal to half your bloodied value.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Malicious Deflection** ✦ Encounter

You hold back a surge of anger until just the right moment, evoking the hate-filled wild magic of the Malice Lands to disrupt an attack.

Trigger: A creature hits you or an ally within 5 squares with a non-weapon attack. (Natural weapons like claws and such count as weapons).

Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The attack instead affects a random creature within 5 squares of the original target. Use the original attack roll.

OBSCURATI GRAND DESIGN

Overview

Our organization, though composed of powerful industrialists and brilliant thinkers the world over, has operated with little communication between cells. Though we all desire to change the world, you should be realizing that the scope of change possible to us demands that we not let any one person make the decisions.

Our leader Nicodemus has called you together to listen to proposals, debate their merits, and ultimately choose the spirit of the next age.

The Method of Change

As mentioned, our world is linked to eight planes. This connection was set by a ritual performed several thousand years ago, which buried eight stone pillars underground in a location we are going to keep secret for now. Those pillars were then sealed beneath a plate of gold 200 feet in diameter and nearly three feet thick.

To get access to the ritual pillars, we designed the mechanical colossus that has been making the news lately. Though it was activated earlier than we wanted, we are bringing it to a place where we can free it from the Dreaming. As soon as we have it on the right world and under our control again, we'll be able to proceed with altering the ancient ritual.

The changes will affect the whole world, but to help transition between the two worlds, we are constructing lighthouses, towers, and similar tall monuments, all equipped with magic lanterns. By triggering these all simultaneously we'll create a field of stability. In the event something does go wrong, we'll be able to abort the ritual at any moment up to when we drop the lid of the giant gold seal back down.

Planar Primer

There are eight planes tied to the world we live on, and each has aspects that distinguish from any old plane with an elemental trait. While the Plane of Air is vast, and there are many worlds that are carved from slivers of it, some of those slivers have storms, others are filled with birds, and some are smoky and concealing. The nature of each plane determines what traits it lends to our world.

It seems when the Ancients decided what worlds ours would be connected to, they did not care much for traits. Indeed, many of these planes are fairly mundane, and our organization has access to many more impressive options.

1. **Jiese, Plane of Fire.** Its trait is Cunning. The fire from this plane is less destructive than a typical elemental world, and its flames can be used intelligently, like a tool. Our scholars suspect most worlds never achieve the industrial revolution ours has because they lack this trait. Changing this plane might stymie technological progress.
2. **Avilona, Plane of Air.** This world appears to have been damaged since it was originally tied to our world, so now its trait is Calm. Changing this plane might lead to stronger storms, and could make the world in general more energetic and changing.
3. **Av, Plane of Life.** This glassy hollow world is our moon and has the traits of Reflection and Dream. It allows our world to have the two parallel planes of fey and darkness, The Dreaming and The Bleak Gate. Changing this world would remove those planes and might have consequences involving dreams and undead.
4. **Mavisha, Plane of Water.** Its trait is Mystery, and it is responsible for the many islands that dot the world with their various secrets. We think this trait can be easily abandoned.
5. **Urim, Plane of Earth.** This golden world has fractured into many pieces, but its trait—Barrier—causes gold in our world to block teleportation.
6. **Apet, Plane of Space.** The Distant Plane is responsible for keeping our world and its bonded planes far from the rest of the multiverse and less likely to attract extraplanar attention.
7. **Reida, Plane of Time.** Most scholars don't even realize that the incomplete silvery ring that surrounds Apet is another plane altogether. Its traits of Limited Fate allow for prophecy, but enforce that after a given time the world must change. We suggest caution in tampering with this plane, but experiments show such efforts are possible.
8. **Nem, Plane of Death.** Its trait is Annihilation, and it destroys any who try to travel from our star system of planes to the outer multiverse, and vice versa.

The Cardinal Rule

It is risky to directly alter behavior or personality. Free will is an all-or-nothing option, and we cannot force people to be "good" without also turning them into complete automatons. We can, however, nudge people, and you'll see some example options below.

Proposals and Voting

The leadership has five proposals to consider. We encourage you to come up with revisions or even new proposals. Whatever design we agree on will no doubt demand some compromise and disappointment.

Our initial five factions are:

- **The Arboretum.** Order nature so it can spread and be controlled like industry.
- **Colossus.** Grant ourselves semi-divine powers to fix problems as they arise.
- **Miller's Pyre.** Enact subtle changes, focused on making people more empathetic and less susceptible to hypocrisy, so they can more easily pursue goodness and justice.
- **Panarchists.** Grant individuals enough power to make governments unnecessary.
- **Watchmakers.** Eliminate free will and design a thousand-year destiny of progress for the world.

Tonight you will meet the representatives of each faction, and then we will hold a preliminary vote to see which proposal holds the most support. This evening and tomorrow morning will be opportunities to make coalitions and alterations. Starting tomorrow afternoon we will grant everyone who desires a chance to speak, and by the end of the evening we hope to hold a second vote.

For a proposal to win, it must have support of at least 75 percent of the officers in attendance. Including the leadership there are 49 officers present, and an additional 27 votes are given to the Ghost Council, which has a tradition of voting as one. Thus, out of 76 voters, a proposal must get the support of 57 officers.

The Arboretum

Order nature so it can spread and be controlled like industry.

The proposal of the faction known as the Arboretum is represented by the ghost of Reed Macbannin, a former mayor in the city of Flint, known for its traditional druidic magic and its modern industrialism.

The goal of the Arboretum is to increase the bounty of nature, to reduce the impact of natural disasters, and to have them both be under the control of the Obscurati. We see it as poor design that weather and the earth are so unpredictable, and that horticulture progresses so slowly, generation by generation.

Our proposal would replace the current planes of air, earth, water, and life with new ones. Key will be replacing the moon—the current plane of life, which has Dream and Mirror aspects—with one that has aspects of Craft and Artifice. The other elemental planes will have to include slight Lawful traits, which will make them more susceptible to magical control, as well as making it easier to predict them with divinations.

We feel the drawbacks of the plan are minor. The new plane of Life will yield somewhat weaker harvests if nature is not tended, so areas lacking civilization will tend to become deserts. Likewise, storms will actually be more intense unless they are controlled, but it would only require moderate effort to distribute trained mages throughout the land to deter this.

The most significant change would be the severance of two realms known as The Dreaming and The Bleak Gate, which are the fey and shadow mirrors of the real world. The replacement of our current moon would remove and possibly destroy these two realms. The pernicious deceptions of the fey would be eliminated, as would the predation of many types of shadowy and incorporeal monsters. Members of the Ghost Council could endure by binding themselves to objects, or perhaps willing people, but henceforth when something dies, its soul would pass on immediately.

When properly tended, nature in this paradigm is significantly more bountiful, which would reduce the competition for resources that drives warfare. Additionally, one of our officers, Erskine Haffkruger, has already created new lifeforms in the portal painting pocket dimension. We invite you to visit the Portal Gallery to see it.

REED MACBANNIN
ARBORETUM REPRESENTATIVE

Compared to other faction proposals, the Arboretum plan may be the most modest, but we think it is also the safest and simplest way to improve the world with minimal risk of negative consequences.

Colossus

Grant ourselves godlike powers to fix problems as they arise.

Catherine Romana, a descendant of a former queen of Risur, represents this faction. She believes history teaches us that common people abuse power, but in the hands of the enlightened it is a powerful tool.

The Obscurati has come this far because we have used our power intelligently, and have acted decisively despite the fact that society as a whole would oppose us. The best course of the action in the future is to consolidate our power and become the *de facto* rulers of the world.

The challenge is in granting power to a limited set of people. We have discovered a set of elemental planes each with a secret truename. These planes would still provide the normal energy needed to keep the world together, but those who know the truenames would be able to tap a greater power. And the Obscurati would decide who is told these truenames.

This truename power would be tied to two new planes. First, a plane of Space would grant the ability to sense events and teleport to areas within one"s domain. Second, a plane of Death with a "Cyclicality" aspect would orbit our world as a new, dark moon. Each person who learns the truenames will choose a point on the month's cycle to be at the height of her power, and a half-month later she will only have the power of a normal mortal.

This will ensure a window of vulnerability so that if anyone abuses her power, she can be removed by consensus of the rest of the Obscurati.

The drawbacks to this plan are that the new elemental planes would result in stronger storms, and the seas would draw back slightly, and the world would grow colder. Perhaps the largest threat is that, since the current Plane of Death acts as a defense against extraplanar incursion, the world might be accessible by creatures from other planes. However, we believe that as the newly-empowered rulers of the world we could easily drive back such threats.

To experience a sample of the power Colossus would grant you, visit our sample demi-plane in the Portal Gallery.

CATHERINE ROMANA
COLOSSUS REPRESENTATIVE

Miller's Pyre

Increase empathy, reduce hypocrisy. Increase goodness and justice.

Our proposal's name refers to the philosopher monk William Miller who, five centuries ago, wrote treatises on potential societies, discussing their positive and negative traits. His works were generally critical of the religious establishment, and shortly after he tried to found a nation of his own following his ideals, the Clergy burned him as a heretic atop a pyre of his own books.

The Pyre was first proposed by one of our conspiracy's leaders, Kasvarina Varal, who knew Miller and spoke to me fondly of his teachings. Alas, she must be absent today. I am Cula Ravjahani, and Nicodemus can attest that I am Kasvarina's right hand. I ask you consider the wisdom that our conspiracy was founded on.

In the view of the Pyre, most suffering is due to misunderstandings between people with very different backgrounds. We seek to improve the world with invisible changes that will make people more aware of the thoughts and emotions of those around them. We would make people particularly keen at detecting hypocrisy.

The Pyre would replace the current plane of Space with one that has an "Empathy" aspect. This would give people mild psychic powers to detect emotions, but our tests show that the effect is not obvious. Test subjects brought into the sample demi-plane simply found themselves coming to agreement more easily, or at least were more amenable to discuss problems rather than view a stranger as an enemy. We can implement this new world order with no visible disruption to people's lives. There will be no chaotic upheaval as with some other proposals.

Additionally, with a bit of clever orbit-tracing, the Pyre will remove the current planes of Air and Fire and replace them with a binary world, the air plane possessing a Speech trait, the fire plane possessing an Expression trait. This will cause those who speak to have their true emotions more easily sensed, and likewise cause words themselves to carry more weight, making it easier for a strong argument to sway a person's opinion.

The last change is that the plane of Earth will be replaced with one that has the traits Logic, which the Pyre hopes will lead people to appeal to reason in their arguments. Otherwise we worry that the strengthened emotional connection might have negative consequences.

CULA RAVJAHANI
MILLER'S PYRE REPRESENTATIVE

Drawbacks include stronger storms, and weather that will respond to local moods. As with Colossus's plan, the world will again become vulnerable to extraplanar visitors, but the Pyre takes an optimistic view of what civilization will be capable of if it is attacked. Perhaps the visitors will be simply sways by our arguments, and become allies.

Finally, the binary pairing opens up a slot for a potential extra plane. It would need to be fairly weak—perhaps a moon rather than a full planet—but it would be possible to add some extra trait. The Pyre is open to making agreements with other factions.

Panarchists

Grant individuals "super-powers," making governments unnecessary.

The Panarchists propose by far the most radical change of any starting faction in the Convocation. Our goal is to eliminate the ability of those in power to become corrupt, and our chosen method is to eliminate the need for people to be in positions of power in the first place.

The purpose of government has traditionally been to protect people as they travel, to protect property, and to enforce contracts. The Panarchists wish to shift these tasks to individuals.

We will use a plane of life with a Healing aspect, the same plane of space as the Colossus faction, to grant teleportation powers and the ability to sense events, and a plane of death with a Possession aspect. Combined, these planes will make people more resilient and able to heal from injury, able to infuse a tiny sliver of their soul into objects in order to bond with it, to sense those objects as easily as their own bodies, and to teleport easily.

People would no longer be vulnerable to assault, since unless an attack killed them before they could respond they could teleport away and quickly heal from their wounds. A person who attuned with an item would be able to find it if it were stolen (and just teleport in to take it back), and no one else could attune to it without the current owner"s permission. People who made agreements would be able to share a bit of each other's soul, which would make pledges binding. Anyone who shirked on a promise would forfeit a piece of his soul.

This would drastically alter the nature of society, reducing the importance of places and increasing the value of trust over physical might. We encourage you to see such a world for yourself in the Portal Gallery.

HAN JIERRE
PANARCHIST REPRESENTATIVE

Watchmakers

Eliminate free will and design a thousand-year destiny of prosperity for the world.

So much of the progress these past two hundred years has been because of the scientific method. It proposes a theory, holds an experiment, strives to eliminate variables, and comes to a conclusion. I am Amielle Latimer, and any of you who have fired a rifled gun did so in part because I helped find a viable design and a way to manufacture it on a large scale. And it was through many experiments.

With this proposal too I have experimented. For decades I have discussed possible ways the world could become better, witnessed actual tests in limited environments like towns or the ever-popular demi-planes. And the problem, every time, has been that most splendid of variables: people.

Our researchers have determined that it's just not possible to simply force people to behave a certain way via planar alignments, or elaborate interactions of magic. Free will is inherent to mortal intelligence. For a person to regularly *choose* moral actions, he must have been raised to value morality over selfish power. So I propose to eliminate free will entirely for one thousand years, during which we will enforce a precise course of events that will result, like clockwork, in a world where all people have been raised to behave morally. Then, after a millennium, the clock will wind down and leave all mortals with free will and a wholly moral society.

To accomplish this, I would replace three of the eight planes. Time shall have an aspect of Clockwork, and the plane's connection will be inscribed with the details of destined events. I have an extensive series of tomes with a suggested future history, and despite some misgivings about the scale of my plan, I assure you that my fellow ghosts who have read it can endorse that it is a quality plan.

The plane of life will need a Goodness aspect to drive people against their will to be good. Death will have Domination to bind people so they are slaves. I'm not mincing words here. We'll be enslaving the world for a millennium, ourselves included. I don't suggest this course of action lightly, but I do not see a way to achieve true harmony while people are able to make the wrong choices.

The Watchmaker proposal is the riskiest of all the factions. True, we've created pocket dimensions and watched as those within acted as puppets, doing exactly what we scripted for them. But the specifics of my thousand year plan cannot be tested, just put into motion. But the design is flawless, and the risk is worth the reward.

AMIELLE LATIMER
WATCHMAKERS REPRESENTATIVE

Minor and Radical Factions

By the morning of the second day of the convocation, you're aware of the following minor factions, and rumors say some people are organizing a few radical factions in secret, hoping to push for things that might not be approved by the majority of the Obscurati.

Minor Factions

- **Aegis.** The current planes prevent invasion from other worlds, and it has worked well so far. Aegis insists that if the current planes of Space and Death -- which are the source of that protection -- are changed, that some other defenses be put in their place. *Represented by Dengar Kriegshaff, human wizard of Drakr.*
- **Bards.** This faction wants people to have a more discerning taste when it comes to entertainment, and for performers to constantly seek to hone their craft. *Represented by Praesidia de Vaca, dragonborn bard of Ber.*
- **Economists.** This group wants people to have a stronger sense of the value of things and a more intuitive grasp of economics. They hope this will lead to more workers participating meaningfully in a new industrialized economy, rather than wasting money or time on things that are traditional but less utilitarian. *Represented by Solace Petrov, human economist of Elfaivar.*
- **The Long Now.** People live a long time, but typically plan only for the short term. This faction wishes to find a Plane of Time that will make people consider a longer timespan in their decisions. *Represented by Zartan Arkel, human druid of Drakr.*
- **Mortal Mind.** This faction opposes all religion as a distraction from the enlightenment of the mortal mind. They desire a world where people reject religion. Such mind control is not doable, so their plan is to eliminate people's ability to feel religious awe, creating a much more rational existence. *Represented by Von Hastenschrieft Willimarkanova, dwarf philosopher of Drakr.*
- **The Sky League.** Make flight possible, preferably easy. If it is feasible, they would like to be able to fly constantly, without need of casting spells. *Represented by Dame Constance Baden, human knight of Danor.*
- **Trekkers.** Not content to limit mortal races to a single world, this faction wants to choose planes that are habitable. *Represented by Cardinal Testamenta Suchdol, human inquisitor of Crisillyir.*
- **Weapon-Mongers.** Believing that technological progress is of great value, this faction wants to ensure that whatever new world is created is not one of pathetic peace and harmony, where invention and innovation is stifled by the lack of war. *Represented by Glaz du Sang Magie, human ice mage of Danor.*

Radical Factions

- **Amorals.** This highly philosophical faction questions whether anyone ought to decide what is of value in a new world. They suspect that the initial bonding of this world to other planes created an artificial sense of morality and value. If we can change what people value simply by altering the nature of reality, what makes us think our own morality is not also enforced? They propose not linking to any specific planes, but instead letting our world be loosely connected to the entire multiverse. This would be the only way for people to be truly free to determine their own ideology, without outside influence.
- **Celestial Bureaucracy.** This faction suggests the world should be linked to a plane inhabited by just and noble angels, which will guide the moral races and provide judgment, since we do such a poor job of it.
- **Humble Hook.** This faction rejects the major goal of the Obscurati. While they support making the world better, they say it is every individual's challenge in life to make him- or herself better. They do not think it is their place to try to alter reality on such a fundamental level. The purpose of life is to prevail over adversity, and by making the world "a better place," they fear it will actually eliminate the meaning of life.
- **Materialists.** This faction believes that magic is irrational and creates too many problems. They suggest reducing the power of magic as much as possible.
- **Nationalists.** There are supposedly several patriots who want to make sure their home nation profits most from the new world order.
- **The White Tongue.** Rumors suggest that an unknown number of Obscurati members have made a pact with the fey titan known as the Voice of Rot, which seeks to gain power by simply letting the present world die.

Elfaivaran Colonies

Following the eladrin's catastrophic defeat, the Clergy established several garrisons throughout the nation, ensuring an eternal presence to keep the eladrin from regaining any military might. In the past few centuries, other nations have looked to the resource rich remnants of Elfaivar, and have begun establishing formal colonies. While the Clergy frowns on these new colonists, they have neither the military nor inclination to get involved in political strife with these new settlements.

Described below are several colonies that exist within modern Elfaivar. Even within these colonies, the region is still only sparsely populated, with vast swaths of land still controlled by the eladrin. East of the colonies lie thousands of miles of lands that are effectively uninhabited.

Risur, Danor, and Drakr each control one major colony, while Crisillyir has three:

- **Angelus.** The oldest colony in Elfaivar, located across the strait from Vendricce, controlled by Crisillyir. Though safe and established, the colony's largest city still only has a population of twenty-five thousand.
- **Kellandia.** A Risuri colony along the western coast, including the large island Titania. Many Risuri who feel uncomfortable with the technological direction their nation is taking have emigrated here, and while no colony is precisely welcomed by the local eladrin, the people of Kellandia are at least on friendly terms. The capital city Sawyer provides magically-resonant timber for shipbuilders, and is home to an orthodox druidic circle known as the Ford, which hopes to earn the trust and loyalty of the eladrin people. The party will be welcome and safe here, and it can serve as an easy base of operations.
- **Otto.** A Drakran colony along the northern coast of Elfaivar.
- **Rationalis.** A Danoran colony in the southeast, separated from the Risuri colony by Tropaeum. Has a strong military presence to retaliate against native attacks, since the eladrin are very hostile to the mining and industry. The capital city Valence is a technologist's paradise, combining a stready stream of engineers and scientists with arcane scholars who are free to experiment in ways the more structured society of Danor would not approve of.
- **Tropaeum.** The second Crisillyiri colony in Elfaivar, located along the western coast. It was the launch point for many attacks against the dragon tyrants of Ber over two centuries ago, and its churches showcase many trophies from these conquests.
- **Vigilia.** Crisillyir's youngest colony in Elfaivar, stretching along the eastern half of the north coast. No major cities exist yet, and the country is still in the process of clearing out the natives.

Minor Sites

Described below are several minor settlements throughout Elfaivar.

Bloody Stump Trading Posts (population <50 each): More mistakes than genuine settlements, the Bloody Stump trading posts were established by Captain McGraken—a troll from the Anthras Mountains—and his indentured crew of Beran prisoners after their ship was forced ashore by a storm. Leaving some men behind as a base camp, McGraken personally took to exploring the jungles at night, returning each morning with one of his hands bitten off by some jungle creature, but slowly regenerating. He'd take most of his men and march them until they found his hand, then nail it to a tree and have them build another camp while he went out scouting again at night. After six days and sixty miles, he found a spot with the supplies necessary to repair his ship.

He sailed back to Ber and asked for permission to reinforce his settlements with trolls from his home tribe, plus more orc, dragonborn, and goblin prisoners. Bruse Shantus agreed and named McGraken 'regional overlord' of Ber's 'colony' in Elfaivar. Today the various bloody stumps—now numbering in the dozens—serve as trading posts throughout the region. All criminals and villains are welcome, except thieves, who are punished as one might expect.

Macdam (population 3,200): Eldest of the non-Clergy Elfaivaran colonies, the settlement of Macdam lies on the massive isle of Titania, technically within the Risur colony of Kellandia. Founded during the Second Yerasol War when Risur was particularly hostile to the idea of technology and industry, the town became home for misfit technologists.

Located along a river and backed by high cliffs riddled with cannons, Macdam is excellently defended and serves as a safe haven against pirates. With Risur's recent adoption of more technology, Macdam has begun to seek stronger connections with the homeland. Pemberton Industries is in the process of building a factory here.

Port Perrault (population 947): Not officially recognized as a Danoran colony, Port Perrault was established by a Danoran commodore tasked with hunting pirates in the region. Chosen for nearby hills that provide coal for refueling steam engines, the port is slowly expanding its tendrils into Elfaivar's natural resources, and might eventually become a full-blown shipyard.

Shaha (population 4,340): A city founded by an eastern border state of little regional power, Shaha is infamous as the capital of the modern slave trade. Peoples from the far southeast can be bought here, and the leader of the colony—known as 'daimyo'—has used slave labor to construct extravagant architecture, believing these great edifices will aid in taming the nearby jungle.

THE RITES OF RULERSHIP

The monarch of Risur derives powers from his or her position, but must rule with the approval of the populace. Herein are described the narrative and mechanical nature of the office.

Becoming Monarch

The current king or queen typically appoints a successor, which can be done as simply as saying out loud to a person that they are next in line to the throne. Anyone can be named a successor, regardless of race, nationality, or family. Aodhan held off naming a successor because he was unsure how marrying Lya Jierre might have affected Risuri politics.

Succession and Acceptance

When the current monarch dies or abdicates, the successor must be approved by the House of Nobles. The House of Nobles includes the current holders of any Baron, Viscount, Count, Earl, Marquess, or Duke titles (or the equivalent) handed out by the current or a previous monarch. Such titles can be revoked by royal decree, with consent of a majority of other nobles.

This can be done procedurally in advance if the nobles know the successor, which prevents a discontinuity of the monarchy. A consequence of this is that if a king who has named a successor dies and remains dead for more than a few minutes, the powers of the crown will be passed on, and cannot be reclaimed even if he were brought back from the dead. (Roland Stanfield or other devas could potentially become monarch, but only for one lifetime.)

If the current monarch dies without naming a successor, the House of Nobles can name one, but they must have majority approval of all nobles living in the land the monarch will rule.

Formal acceptance by the nobles grants the new monarch the powers detailed below under **Lord of the Land**. Once the people of Risur accept their new king or queen, he or she also gains the powers of **Monarch of the Masses**.

Contesting Control

At any time the monarch's authority can be challenged if a majority of the nobles issue their grievance to him or her. The monarch retains the powers of **Monarch of the Masses**, but loses those of **Lord of the Land**.

Similarly, if the monarch is not supported by his or her citizens, the powers of **Monarch of the Masses** will be weaker.

The nature of the Rites has trouble with planar travel, and if the monarch travels to another world his or her power can be contested by a majority of nobles or citizens on *that plane*.

Powers of the Monarch

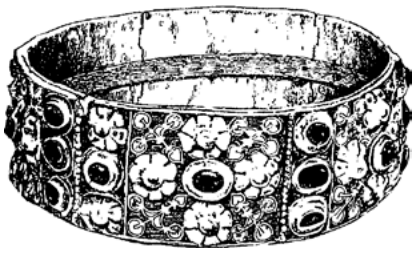
Of course the monarch has political power to direct the army and navy, and to make broad dictates which generally the nobility enact into law. Immense wealth is available for his or her use, though restraint must be shown to avoid weakening the country. But the most famous powers of Risur's kings and queens are tied to their defense of the homeland. The rites of rulership grant the monarch sufficient might to fend off a fey titan.

Lord of the Land

While in Risur, the monarch can spend a minor action once per round to move up to four 5-ft. cubes of earth, stone, or foliage up to five feet.

The monarch can name creatures to forbid them from entering Risur via teleportation or planar travel for one month, but must know the person's actual name. Likewise, the king can spend ten minutes to open a pathway to the Dreaming, though the current state of the planes prevents such a transition.

When the monarch is engaged in battle with a person or group actively contending for control of Risur's territory, his power is elevated to match the strongest individual among his enemies. When facing a fey titan, this gives a mortal man incredible strength and stamina, but it is of little use against invading armies, since the monarch is likely already about as powerful as even the most dangerous of his or her enemies.



When the monarch is in an encounter with a hostile creature that is contesting control of Risuri lands (or if the monarch is trying to conquer lands controlled by his or her enemy), the monarch gains the following benefits.

- A bonus to attack rolls and defenses equal to the difference in levels.
- A bonus to Strength-, Dexterity-, and Constitution-based checks equal to 5+ half the difference in levels.
- Regeneration equal to the difference in levels. Double this regeneration if the enemy is an elite, and quintuple it if the enemy is a solo. This is in addition to the default regeneration 10 from Monarch of the Masses (see below).
- For the purpose of abilities that depend on size, the monarch can choose to be considered the same size as his or her opponent. (Zidi the Halfling Queen once put Granny Allswell into a headlock.)

Effects that factor in the difference in levels only care if the enemy is higher level. Fighting a lower-level foe never weakens the monarch. And the monarch only gains bonuses from a single enemy, whichever is of the highest level. After all, the rites were designed to help a man fight a fey titan, not two fey titans.

For example, when King Dukain (level 20) fought the Voice of Rot (level 28), he benefited from a +8 bonus to attack rolls and defenses, +9 to physical ability checks, and regeneration 50.

Monarch of the Masses

The monarch gains a +5 bonus to saves against charm, fear, and poison. When the monarch falls to 0 HP or below for the first time in an encounter, each of the monarch's allies within three miles is dazed for one round. However, the monarch has regeneration 10, and if he or she would die from a failed death saving throw, he or she can choose instead to become stable.

The monarch also receives the Crown of Risur, which lets the wearer always know the preferred names of those he or she can see. As a free action the crown's wearer can say someone's name to grant them a save against charm, fear, or poison; but a given creature can only be granted one bonus save in this way per day.

ROYAL BOOKKEEPING

Throughout the final four adventures, the PCs will have access to the nation's coffers, which are filled through taxation and other tedious financial processes. With a nation full of spellcasters at their command, they can produce practically any magic item they need. Scholars later might argue over whether it was more effective to spend two million gold pieces on a single +6 weapon than on a new palace, or a fleet of ships, or thousands of soldiers. Feel free to delve into such kingdom-building challenges if that interests you, but it lies slightly beyond the focus of this adventure path.

The simple version is that each PC will have access to the following amounts at the beginning of the adventures; the amount increases as Risur shifts into 'save the world' mode and more people contribute to the cause.

- **Adventure Ten:** 800,000 gp.
- **Adventure Eleven:** 2,000,000 gp.
- **Adventure Twelve:** 6,000,000 gp.
- **Adventure Thirteen:** 1,500,000 gp.

These amounts assume the party 'pays for' magic items they recover in the course of the adventure; unwanted ones will be disenchanted for energy to create other items. If they keep everything they find, the nation is only able to provide about 400,000 gp per PC each adventure.

ZEITGEIST™

THE GEARS OF REVOLUTION

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A conspiracy has been unmasked, and though their plans were disrupted, the fallout has gripped the attention of the world. After decapitating a cell of conspirators in their home city of Flint, royal constables of the nation Risur managed to drive away the 300-ft. tall metal titan that the villains had crafted in the shadows. Now it tromps its way across the borders of great nations, unstoppable, out of control, but such a tempting prize for whosoever can seize its reins.

Spymasters and their agents set to work to take advantage of this pivotal opportunity, zealots expose shameful secrets, and would-be tyrants take their shot to overturn the old order. But the conspiracy, though stymied, is not defeated, and if they complete their masterstroke, it will be they who choose the face of this new era, the spirit of the age. The *zeitgeist*.

This tome contains Act Two of ZEITGEIST: The Gears of Revolution,™ a cinematic adventure path designed for experienced Dungeon Masters (also available for the Pathfinder® RPG). These four "steam and spell" adventures witness your party—members of the Royal Homeland Constabulary—rise from 12th to 22nd level as they thwart the worldwide machinations of a conspiracy known as the Obscurati. Take a step away from traditional fantasy, and play a part in shaping the coming age!

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