

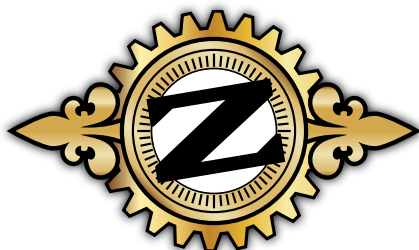


EN5ider Presents:

Schism

Part One

A 5E-Compatible Adventure for 9th- to 10th-Level Characters



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 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.

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SPECIAL THANKS TO
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); to the hundreds of gamers who backed the original release of *ZEITGEIST* on Kickstarter; and to the over one thousand generous patrons of EN World *EN5IDER* whose support has made this Fifth Edition update possible.

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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 Qital – 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.

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 them achieve a better world. They can aid in the defeat of the “villainous” faction, and in adventures hereafter will be tasked to help enact the grand design, which necessarily entails betraying their king and the

Adapting the Adventure.

To fit *Schism* into a more traditional, non-industrial fantasy campaign, you can assume Leone Qital is 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 backstory involving the colossus, and simply re-cast 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.

The GM can of course give the conspiracy’s convocation any agenda that fits the overarching campaign, or use the event as a stand-in for any gathering of powerful villain NPCs. Instead of an ideological purge at the climax, the party might simply ambush the villains when their defenses are down.

For GMs who just want some inspiration for their own campaign there’s:

- 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.

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 (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.



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 high elf 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 high elf 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.

After much searching, they found their way to 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 high elf goddess Srasama, who represented maiden, mother, and crone. When an army slew the goddess’s avatar, nearly every female

high elf 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 brought to Alais Primos, the new seat of the Clergy, where he was tortured in an effort to compel a confession. After he refused to recant, his captors made a pyre of his 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 a high elf 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 the Gnostic. Nicodemus’s history and motivations are detailed on this page. He seldom reveals his true ghostly form, preferring to wear the bodies of others. Currently he resides in the body of Andrei von Recklinghausen, whom the PCs might know as “Mister Mapple,” and he’s thinking of staying in Andrei’s powerful physical form.



Andrei von Recklinghausen. Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen dabbled in dark magic two years ago 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 a high elf 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.

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 try the old ploy of letting themselves be captured, or they might simply stroll in and offer to join the conspiracy, but it requires a bit of credulity-stretching to think that Nicodemus would immediately trust them enough to 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. Reckless parties might 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.

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 length of 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 body Grappa is currently occupying, then take him to the frozen ruined city Knütpara where he can remove Quital's soul and take full, permanent control of his body. 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 dockworkers 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 **Copper-**

Discouraging Divination.

All cell leaders and high-ranking officers of the Obscurati have the following trait, making attempts to divine location or identities into fruitless endeavors.

Rites of the Obscurati. 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 fail.

Divinations that do not relate to 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 a DC 25 spellcasting ability check. On a failed, the magic reports something deceptive, usually in a way to lessen suspicions.

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 their *ring of office*, 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.

hat 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 that its purpose is actually to 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 that Beshela seeks 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 simply serve as another way to delay the party's mission.

At last, the party sets out for Leone's last known destination, the capital of Crisillyir, Alais Primos. When they try to make contact with RHC assets in the city, though, they learn that the Ob are eliminating RHC agents in a concerted attempt to stymie the investigation. They meet an unexpected ally: **El Extraño**, the kobold spymaster of Ber, who can lend many spare sets of eyes. With the aid of the Beran spies, the party sets up an international manhunt and visits key sites of interest to track down the steelshaper.

After weeks or months, they find Leone Quital traveling in comfort 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



Consequences of Previous Adventures.

Depending on the party's previous actions, a few details may need to be changed.

First, if the party finished Adventure Six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman* and wanted to immediately go looking for Leone, the GM might need to adjust the timeline. Remember that as things stand at the end of Adventure Six, they still need time to return to Flint to deliver Tinker, debrief, resupply their ship, and make plans with Delft.

Second, 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 Quital's body is somehow unavailable, the GM can substitute (or introduce) another important Ob NPC and have Grappa exist as a disembodied mind that has managed to finally possess that person.

Third, the party might not find Kvarti Gorbatiy in the frost giant rift in Act Two if he perished in a previous encounter.

Fourth, be attentive to small details of various Ob officers the party may have met in the past. This adventure presumes, for example, that 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 finished off some time later. Consistency is key here—don't roll back the clock on or retcon anything the player characters did or directly witnessed.

Finally, if the party never helped "Mister Mapple," Andrei von Recklinghausen, in Adventure Four, *Always on Time*, then the high elf woman Isobel was likely sold off into slavery, and Andrei was picked up by curious Ob researchers. Andrei would have no reason to remember the PCs at all, and thus the GM will have to change the reason for Nicodemus's departure during the climax: instead of being stopped by Andrei's willpower, he instead flees out a plentitude of caution.

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 spell 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 several proposals the Ob will adopt as its main goal. 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, Macbannin murders two Ob officers, trying to sow discord.

Of course, the player characters are also likely to cause trouble. Their ideal 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 Sigismund, the godhand. One key piece of information they should discover is that the Ob are closing in on Kasvarina Varal, whom the high elves of Elfaivar are trying to hide, because they think she can regain control of Borne, the colossus. This plants a seed for events in Adventure Eight.

The party might assassinate key NPCs, 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, which kicks off a massive fight as the losing factions flee for their lives.

Adventure Layout

The plot of *Schism* is divided 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 begins with its title, keywords, and a one-line summary of the scene's intent. 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	13
Trekholm	24
Nalaam	24
Mirsk	26
Shawl Mountains	Part 2
Knütpara	Part 2
Alais Primos	Part 2
Vendricce	Part 2
Mutravir Island	Part 2
Obscurati Palace	Part 2

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 beacons.

Trekthom: Capital 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 Crisillyr, 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 adamantite, 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 Crisillyr, and the best starting point for tracking down Leone.

Vendricce: City on the western side of a natural channel between Crisillyr and Elfaivar. Wealthy port, heavily garrisoned to defend against high elf 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 hierarchy 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 the various NPCs are included throughout the adventure.

NPC Entry	Page
Alexander Grappa, the mindmaker	30
Amielle Latimer, tiefling ghost	Part 2
Andrei von Recklinghausen	4
Benedict Pemberton, industrialist	Part 2
Catherine Romana, heir of Risur	Part 2
Cula Ravjahani, Vekeshi liaison	Part 2
El Extraño, kobold spymaster from Ber	21
Erskine Haffkruger, dwarf arborist	Part 2
Han Jierre, sovereign of Danor	9
Kvarti Gorbatiy, dwarven sniper-philosopher	Part 2
Leone Quita, the steelshaper	30
Nicodemus the Gnostic	4
Reed Macbannin, ghost council member	11
Stover Delft, Chief Inspector of the RHC	14
Vicemi Terio, spectral head of Lantern Cell	11
Vitus Sigismund, Crisillyri spy	9

Pacing and Leveling.

The party starts this adventure at 11th level and it's recommended that they reach 12th level after the frost giant-controlled city of Knütpara, before they enter the Obscurati palace.

Additionally, we provide seven Obscurati officers that the party can pose as during the Convocation, detailed in **Player Handout – Obscurati Covers**.

Cover Identities	Page
Bruce McDruid, explorer of distant lands	10
Gran Guiscard, head of Gorgeous Cell in Beaumont	10
Ken Don, head librarian of Bibliothec di Alais Primos	10
Kiov Hetman, Drakran tower researcher	10
Livia Hatsfield, spy in the palace of the King of Risur	10
Oscan Ligurio, international finance con artist	10
Xavier Sangria, Malice Lands monster-slayer	10

Recurring Characters. This adventure gives the party an opportunity to meet several villains and thwart their plans without actually killing everyone. Leone Quita, 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 the highest levels. Alexander Grappa has enough mind magic to show back up later at least as a disembodied consciousness even if he dies.

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 One: Complete Officer Roster** 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	Part 2
Captain Dale, defender of Cauldron Hill	Part 2
Captain Matt Massaer, Obscurati skipper	22
Emmelsa, go-fer for Leone	22
Gangenwieck, male Ob researcher	Part 2
Jacques LeBrayne, Danoran yacht owner	22
Joe Hobner, retired RHC, murdered	Part 2
Lauryn Cyneburg, RHC infiltration specialist	Part 2
Odul Chovan, frost giant <i>khangitche</i>	Part 2
Piginni Quita, Leone's nephew	22
Robert the Black, impostor-assassin	21
Rock Rackus, docker celebrity	Part 2
Thornsenkertz, female Ob researcher	Part 2
Unnamed giant lich, feeder upon souls	Part 2

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 party manages to crash the Ob's shindig, they will be target number one for the conspiracy after this adventure.



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 Panoply connections 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.

- ♦ **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.
- ♦ **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.

Each PC gets a stipend of 10,000 gp after they have their briefing, then are granted a further stipend of 10,000 gp before they head to the Obscurati convocation. Requisitioned materials can be delivered to the party's ship via the teleportation beacon.

List of Magic Items as Treasure.

Cards for new items are presented at the end of the adventure. We encourage you to tweak the physical forms of items to make them more appealing to your player characters.

- ▶ *Codex of Little People*, a gift from El Extraño the kobold spymaster.
- ▶ *Steelsilk mantle*, worn by Leone Quita.
- ▶ *Fey portal pad*, a ship enhancement offered by the Unseen Court's archfey Lady Beshela.
- ▶ *Frost giant's plate*, worn by Odul Chuvan the frost giant khangitche.
- ▶ *Ghostly entourage*, bonded to a bracelet worn by Vicemi Terio.
- ▶ *Reason*, diplomatic rifle designed by Kvarti Gorbatiy.
- ▶ The *absurdist web*, which Copperhat the Headless asks the PCs to keep as a favor to him.
- ▶ *Vekeshi blade*, possessed by Cula Ravjahani.
- ▶ Artifact, *The Humble Hook*, worn by Nicodemus the Gnostic.

Final Word Before We Start

This module, 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 to 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.

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.

The players see through the eyes of Ob agents as a spy is 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 from Part Three of this adventure. *Do not hand out the full gestalt cards in Part Three yet.*

If you want to be nice to your players, we encourage you to look at the **Vile Ritual** sidebar (Part Two) and try to match PCs with Ob officers in order of lowest Will save 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, make sure Livia Hatsfield and Oscan Ligurio are assigned first. Assign an officer to each player, and then pretend any other officers don't exist. There are quite enough NPCs in this adventure without them.

Welcoming Party.

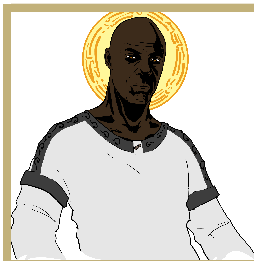
Read or paraphrase the following text.

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 a half-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



Vitus Sigismund. 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 Jierre. 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.

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.



Brief Beats.

You can use a few of these moments now or later in the adventure to give each “cover identity” a small moment of 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 the use of his library. He says that his agents found what they needed, mentions that the fire temple indeed was not heretical, and smugly surmises that the church would probably have suppressed the Ancient map of the cosmos his agents found.
- ♦ **Gran Guiscard.** As the group passes through a lounge, a half-dragon 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 frothy ale. He spots Kiov and explains that he’s telling the tale of the time he sent the police chief of Trekhom to a gulag after he shot Zoltan’s favorite dog. He carries on entertaining his listeners, saying that he gave the chief a dog of his own to keep him company in the gulag, and that so far it has suffered a broken leg, food poisoning, burns, and a couple beatings. Zoltan points out that because he *could* have done all these things to the chief himself, he’s actually to be commended. The other Drakrans laugh darkly.
- ♦ **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 halfling make a note in a small book, after which he suddenly laughs and joins in conversation involving other conspirators. Stackhouse is wondering who might be an ally to the Voice of Rot, but this event is meant to play on the players’ sense of paranoia.
- ♦ **Bruce McDruoid.** 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 an Avery Coast Railroad train, 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.

“Leone, an honor to finally shake your hand. Monsignor Dexlano, Patre Hevny, Bishop Vigilio your grace. Monsignor Don. Oscan, how’s it going? Monsieur Guiscard, Herr Hetman, Miss Hatsfield, thank you for coming so far. Mister McDruoid, 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 5 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. Monsignor 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.

Give the players a chance to respond in character 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 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.



Roleplaying Nicodemus.

Nicodemus effortlessly and always displays movie star quality charisma, the kind that the most revered award winners and the highest-drawing box-office powerhouses alike seem to don as an aura on cue. Nicodemus is a captivating public speaker, but he is also privately supremely compelling, so practice the kind of smooth speech cadence exhibited by your favorite highly charismatic celebrity and aim for an even mix of casual charm and gravitas.

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."

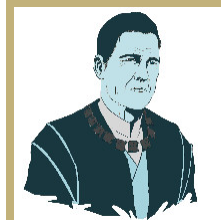
One of the three other ghosts walks forward. While Vicemi's face is withered and decayed, and the other two ghosts' features are faded like they don't remember what they looked like in life, **Reed Macbannin** has barely been dead a year, so he still mostly walks rather than floats. He stops next to 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.



Vicemi Terio. 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



Reed Macbannin. 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.





"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."

Cigarette Smoking Man

Social. Real-Time.

The players' temporary characters are welcomed as newcomers to the cause 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."

Show the players Nicodemus's portrait, then tell them to get out their normal character sheets and hand in the officer sheets. The prologue is over – time to start the adventure.



Act One: Find the Mindmaker

IN THIS ACT, THE PARTY RECEIVES a mission to track down Leone Quita and take him alive. The act begins on the 1st of Autumn, 501 A.O.V.

Political Meddling

Exposition/Social. Real-Time.

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.

Check the Postmark.

Delft received Grappa's letter from a nondescript courier who brought it in an envelope with no postmark. If the party magically traces its provenance, they learn all the following steps in the letter's delivery. Delft got the letter from his secretary, who got it from the courier. The courier had removed it from its original envelope and repackaged it after he picked it up from a butcher's shop in Bosum Strand. The letter arrived in Bosum Strand via Risuri post, having been carried on a ship from Trekhom, after being handled by two different Drakran postmen. The Drakrans received it in a bundle of mail off a train that came from Mirsk, where it was loaded by another postman; that postman got the mail from the post office, where the letter had been dropped off by one of Leone Quita's guards, after Leone himself handed it to him in a thick stack of letters.

...Got all that?

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 and spreading rumors concerning all the footprints that have appeared along the machine's path. The colossus's invisible march is accompanied 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. Certain 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 at last find a genuine dragon to slay.
- ♦ **New Technology!** Tinker Oddcog's research continues, possibly under the direction of the player characters. See Adventure Six for details. Whatever Tinker is experimenting with is probably noteworthy enough to make the news.
- ♦ **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 river's 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.



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 as to 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 brawling more and more with dockers and factory workers. The police have been on edge since swaths of the city were crushed by the colossus, cracking down on the smallest offenses. Meanwhile the dockers believe authority figures were 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 the shoals near The Ayres. There is growing talk among seafaring folk of building a new lighthouse, and many suspect the sea fey are angry.

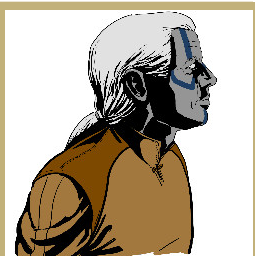
This is simultaneously a red herring (since the PCs might key in on "lighthouses"), and a tie-in to the next scene, when Archfey of the Sea Beshela tries to trick them. She's the one responsible for these sinkings.

Stover Delft. 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. 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.



Roland Stanfield. Governor Stanfield witnessed the fall of the high elf 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.



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 manage 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, but this can weaken some of his sabotage efforts in Adventure Nine, *The Last Starry Sky*.

Captain Dale finishes up, and Stanfield tries to get some hints on where the party will be going next, but Delft encourages the adventurers to leave, and suggests that they can report back in later. Once the meeting is complete, Delft grabs a few more donuts and asks the PCs 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 10 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 Qital and take him alive.

The Lady and the Liar

Social. Real-Time.

Two archfey cause trouble at the party's docked ship.

If the party doesn't head to their ship now, they get a message that a visitor is awaiting 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 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.



Sinking Feeling.

Beshela's plan is to give the party a gift for their ship: a *fey portal pad* (details appear in Part Two). 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.

As Beshela talks to the party, 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.

Adventurers familiar with Beshela's history and demeanor may make a DC 20 Intelligence (Nature) check to tell that this magnanimity is out of character for her, and particularly wise members of the party that make a DC 25 Wisdom (Insight) check sense that she's faking her interest in helping them. Vekeshi Mystic have advantage on each of these checks. A few minutes spent closely examining the portal pad with a successful DC 25 Intelligence (Arcana) check 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 is reduced below half of her hit points. 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 the section "Epic Rap Battles of History," below.

A Tangled Web.

While Beshela is trying to get the party killed, another fey is trying to keep them alive, but that doesn't make him their friend. **Copperhat the Headless** is a somewhat infamous fey who acts a mix of trickster and jester for the Unseen Court, recognized by anyone that makes a DC 20 Intelligence (Nature) check. 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. The Voice of Rot has long-term plans that involve the party, and he wants them kept safe.

The Voice of Rot's Plans.

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. He knows he will have a chance to kill the world, but he doesn't yet know where to go.

In Adventure Nine, *The Last Starry Sky*, the Voice of Rot can broker aid for the party, and in Adventure Ten, *Godmind*, he helps them subdue the other fey titans. All the while he acts quite creepy and ominous. He finally gets his dream in Adventure Twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*, when the party ventures to a graveyard of the multiverse, and he follows with the intention of dragging the world to its destruction. Depending on how much he approves of the party, he may offer them immense power if they let him do it unimpeded.

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 that make a DC 25 Wisdom (Perception) check notice 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 crypti-



cally that the Unseen Court is having some disagreements with other archfey. 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.

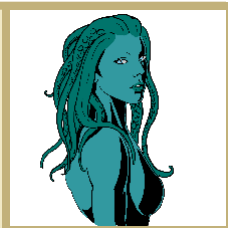
Conflict and Complications.

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 uses *fey dive* to teleport into the crowd and hide, using *cup of dust* 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 reduced below half hit points, at which point she'll dive and swim away. A storm cloud of acid rain will follow her, deterring pursuit.

Lady Beshela. Lady Beshela serves as steward of the domains of the fey titan She Who Writhes. Though not a member of the Unseen Court, Beshela claims the title Archfey of the Sea and controls 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, King Aodhan's sister Ethelyn 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, spiteful Beshela holds a grudge against those who thwarted her friend's efforts. Her moods seem mercurial, but she is actually a canny charmer, fond of long schemes that depend on her enemies being unaware how dangerous she really is.

Copperhat the Headless. A lesser-known fey who acts as a mix of trickster and jester for the Unseen Court. Copperhat's head and face are invisible, like those of Unseen Court members, leading minor fey to think he's part of the Court. He is always seen wearing his namesake top hat.



Copperhat is actually a clever pixie who hides inside a coat and levitates his costume, controlling the whole affair like an oversized puppet. He normally travels between fey enclaves trading knickknacks and favors, with a particular fondness for telling stories about the "human world." Most find him amusing in small servings, but before long find themselves suggesting far-away new places he might visit instead.

Copperhat is secretly a minion of the Voice of Rot, the only fey titan currently awake. The Voice of Rot wants the party kept safe, as his long-term plans that involve them.

Beshela, Archfey of the Sea

Medium fey, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 168 (16d8+96)

Speed 30 ft., swim 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	22 (+6)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	23 (+6)

Skills Athletics +11, Deception +11, Insight +12, Intimidation +11, Nature +7, Perception +7, Persuasion +11

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Resistances acid, cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from weapons that aren't cold iron

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses ripplesense, passive Perception 17

Languages Elven, Primordial, Sylvan

Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

Corrosive Tempest. When Beshela is first reduced below half of her hit points, dark clouds gather overhead and begin spewing forth black rain in a quarter-mile radius centered on her. Any creature that ends its turn without some sort of cover from the rain takes 1 point of acid damage. The clouds move with Beshela and last 5 minutes.

Fey Dive. Beshela can use a bonus action to teleport from one area covered in water to another area covered in water within 50 feet, as long as there is a contiguous path of water between the two spaces.

Innate Spellcasting. Beshela's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 19, +11 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *control water*

3/day: *conjure animals* (aquatic only), *conjure elemental* (water only)

Magic Resistance. Beshela has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Quick. Beshela has advantage on initiative checks.

Ripplesense. 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.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Beshela attacks twice.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d8+6) magical bludgeoning damage and the target is pushed 20 feet away.

Summon the Kraken (1/day). Beshela conjures a massive tidal wave in a quarter-mile-radius centered on herself. All creatures hit by the wave must make a DC 19 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone and pushed away 20 feet. Water floods the area to a depth of 2 feet making it difficult terrain, though it may flow away quickly based on the area.

In addition, Beshela summons two kraken tentacles made of seaweed within 50 feet of her. Each tentacle is a Large creature with Beshela's AC and save bonuses, and 40 hit points. If a tentacle is ever completely out of the water, it is destroyed. Once summoned, Beshela can use a bonus action to command one or both to move up to 20 feet through areas covered in water and make an attack.

Kraken Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (3d6+6) magical bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 19).



Copperhat the Headless

Medium fey, chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 133 (14d8+70)

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	22 (+6)	20 (+5)	19 (+4)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws wis +3

Skills Acrobatics +10, Athletics +6, Deception +11, Perception +7, Performance +7, Sleight of Hand +10, Stealth +10

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from weapons that aren't cold iron

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Primordial, Sylvan

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Giggling Departure (1/day). When Copperhat would be reduced to 0 hit points or killed, he takes no damage from the triggering attack, effect, or spell. Copperhat turns invisible and immediately teleports away as per dimension door. Observers see his clothing fall 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.

Innate Spellcasting. Copperhat's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *disguise self*, *minor illusion*

3/Day: *guiding bolt*, *major image*, *mislead*

Magic Resistance. Copperhat has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Mimicry. Copperhat can mimic animal sounds and humanoid voices. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check.

Sneak Attack (1/turn, 7d6). Copperhat deals an extra 24 (7d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of Copperhat's that isn't incapacitated and he doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Quick. Copperhat has advantage on initiative checks.

Vanish. Copperhat can use a bonus action to become invisible. He remains invisible until he takes the Attack action or casts a spell.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Copperhat attacks three times.

Magic Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d4+8) magical piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage and the target must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature's Strength score is lowered by 1d4. When reduced to Strength 0, it suffocates and dies. The creature recovers all of its lost Strength at the end of its next long rest, or once it is targeted by a *greater restoration* spell.

Web (Recharge 5–6). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target is restrained by webbing. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 17 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 13; hp 10; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage).

Lying Coward.

In a fight, Copperhat laughs and enjoys the “game” for a bit, until he's reduced below half hit points. Then he uses *mislead* to disappear and slip into the crowd.

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 along with a successful DC 26 Charisma (Persuasion) check to get her to hear them out, but someone familiar with fey customs can make a DC 13 Intelligence (Nature) check to come up with an appropriate tactic: insulting her and challenging her to a boasting contest.

This forces 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 are three rounds, and in each one person from each side has an opportunity to speak for a minute or two, and then the other side has 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 6 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 3 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 they try to tell the true story about their fight against the Obscurati, let them make a DC 16 Charisma (Intimidation) check to capture the proper tone to get her attention. Beshela is easily bored though, so if the same character speaks for a second round they have disadvantage, and add a -2 penalty if the same character also speaks in the third round. A particularly good insult against Beshela worked into the story earns a +2 to +5 bonus.

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 in quite 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 Obscurati officers, the constables' original bodies will be left inert, practically dead. Grappa just plans to use spells 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 discusses final plans with the party.

Mission Briefing.

Delft reiterates, the mission is to find Leone Quital, take him alive, aid Alexander Grappa, and if his bargain is possible, to go through with it. The ultimate goal is to infiltrate this Obscurati meeting, at which point the party is free to act at their discretion. Delft would be fine with them 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. 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 Crislyir, 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 beacon 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* spells 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.

Cloak and Dagger

Social. Real-Time.

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 who makes a DC 17 Wisdom (Insight or Perception) check 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

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.

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 a trio of 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.



New Poisons

Hemlock Infusion (ingested). The fountains in Alais Primos are said to all run with holy water—apparently holiness tastes like parsnips. Hemlock paralyzes the drinker's muscles, first causing clumsiness, then malaise, then difficulty breathing, full paralysis, and finally asphyxiation.

A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw 10 minutes after ingesting it, then again at the end of each minute for 6 minutes. On a failed save, the creature's Dexterity score is lowered by 1d6. When reduced to Dexterity 0, the creature suffocates and dies. After two successful saving throws, the creature is cured of the poison. The creature recovers 1d4 Dexterity at the end of each long rest, or once each time it is targeted by a *greater* restoration spell.

Strychnine Wine (ingested). Risuri tend to prefer sweet wines, but everyone agrees that Crisillyri make the best. One can only assume the surprising bitterness of this drink means it's *really* high quality. 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.

A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw 10 minutes after ingesting it, then again at the end of each minute for 6 minutes. On a failed save, the creature's Dexterity score is lowered by 1d3 and its Constitution is lowered by 1.

When reduced to Dexterity 0 or Constitution 0, the creature suffocates and dies. After two successful saving throws, the creature is cured of the poison. The creature recovers all of its lost Dexterity and Constitution at the end of its next long rest, or once it is targeted by a *greater* restoration spell.

Sweet Arsenic (ingested). 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. Arsenic disrupts living 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 this alchemically-strengthened version acts much more quickly. A sufficiently high dose causes headaches, confusion, severe diarrhea, vomiting, and a slow coma to an eventual death.

A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw 10 minutes after ingesting it, then again at the end of each minute for 6 minutes. On a failed save, the creature's Constitution score is lowered by 1d3. When reduced to Constitution 0, the creature suffocates and dies. After two successful saving throws, the creature is cured of the poison. The creature recovers all of its lost Constitution at the end of its next long rest, or once it is targeted by a *greater* restoration spell.

the liqueur's arsenic content makes it quite sweet. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (alchemists' supplies) check realizes that something is wrong.

He'll talk with them for a bit about the city. Then 10 minutes later, when the characters first start 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 bars the sturdy door from the other side (AC 18, 80 hit points; DC 19 Strength check), 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 drink has three doses of poison, and how bad things get depends wholly on how much each character ingests in the course of 10 minutes. A character who merely sips only suffers the effects of one dose. Consuming a partial drink means being subjected to two doses, and a whole glass means all three doses are in a person's system. If the character guzzled and then asked for seconds, double the number of doses.

After 10 minutes, each character makes a Constitution saving throw. For each dose beyond the first he ingested, increase the poison's DC by +2. For those who fail, the poison then takes effect, forcing additional saves each minute to fend off damage until the poison runs its course. Each dose beyond the first increases the duration by 50%.

Magic that neutralizes poison can end the affliction. A DC 25 Wisdom (Medicine) or Intelligence (alchemists' supplies) check

can concoct the proper anti-toxin for one type of poison; crafting it takes a minute. The antidote stops the progression of the poison.

Fighting Robert the Black.

The assassin waits at least 5 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 more traditional sneak attacks or a death attack if he can pull it off.

If he's facing more than one enemy who isn't poisoned, Robert tries to flee. He knows the routes from his home's roof to other buildings, and his familiarity with the city makes it easy for him to get away if he can break line of sight for 2 rounds.

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 a half dozen kobolds come in. They outnumber and take down Robert if the party hasn't yet, tend to any dying PCs, then hurry those who are severely poisoned out of the building. They load them onto a wagon, and the orc driver sets off to a nearby temple, where a Clergy priest performs the proper spells to cleanse the poison. El Extraño will be waiting for them when they awaken.

**Robert the Black**

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (+2 studded leather)**Hit Points 104** (16d8+32)**Speed 30 ft.**

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws DEX +7, INT +5**Skills** Acrobatics +7, Athletics +4, Deception +10, Insight +8, Perception +8, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +11**Senses** passive Perception 13**Languages** Common, Primordial**Challenge 11** (7,200 XP)**Assassinate.** During his first turn, Robert has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit he scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.**Evasion.** If Robert is subjected to an effect that allows him to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, he instead takes no damage if he succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if he fails.**Innate Spellcasting.** Robert's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma. He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:**At will:** *disguise self*, *mage hand***Poison Weapon (4/short rest).** Robert uses a bonus action to coat his weapons with poison. On a successful hit with a poisoned weapon the target must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.**Quick.** Robert has advantage on initiative checks.**Sneak Attack (1/turn, 4d6).** Robert deals an extra 14 (4d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of Robert's that isn't incapacitated and he doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.**ACTIONS****Multiattack.** Robert makes three dagger attacks.**Magical Dagger. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:** +9 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4+5) piercing damage. Immediately after hitting or missing the target, a thrown magical dagger reappears in Robert's hand.**Electrocuting Dazer (1/Day). Melee Weapon Attack:** +7, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) lightning damage and the target makes a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, it falls prone and is stunned for 1d4 rounds.**REACTIONS****Uncanny Dodge.** When an attacker Robert can see hits him with an attack, Robert can use his reaction to halve the attack's damage against him.

Similarly, if Robert runs, the kobolds spring traps to knock him out as he's leaping between buildings. He 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.**

With the aid of an international spy agency, the party tracks down Leone Quita.

When the PCs meet him, El Extraño is sitting, 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* (see Part Two) – open on his lap, and smokes a long dragon-motif pipe in his other hand as he looks up from his reading and calls each of the PCs by name..

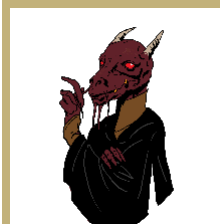
"Yes, I know *all* of your names! But it is not impressive, because I did not even need my many loyal eyes for that. I work for the Bruse, yes? And he told me your names while we ate dinosaur eggs in his castle.

"I became interested in this conspiracy that has caused so much trouble, and I knew if I were them, I would *kill* your spies, yes. Also, I knew where your spies were. Do not be impressed even yet! 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 his assassin. But then they watched the assassin, and now we have saved you, yes. This is all yeoman's work, not impressive.

"Leone Quita was spotted on the 28th of Spring in the Cathedral of Triegenes at Enzyo Mons. I know what you are thinking, yes! But 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...by *this* you may now be impressed. My eyes will follow you, look for threats and targets around you, and share what they see. If you don't think you should meet my eyes, they will send *couriers* to share what they see, also so that you don't get upset and kill them. You should read this book, yes, 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.



El Extraño. The spymasters of Ber are 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 legerdemain skills. He casually mentions ridiculous and unlikely events that he participated in, and he's not above expending powerful teleportation magic if it will make for a suitably dramatic exit. 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 cinamon-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 uncertainty as to his true fate.



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 **Quitall Vineyard**, owned by Leone's family. Quitall spoke with his nephew **Piginni Quitall**, 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 against 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 **Cejakrieg 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. This included a dose of *needlewire*, which Leone injected into the courier so he could debrief 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.

From here out, the party can use Beran kobolds as advance scouts. 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.

If it matters, El Extraño is a 15th level kobold wizard focused on illusions and teleportation.

Methods of Investigation.

The goal of this challenge is to give players the feeling of tracking a man down. How much time the GM wants to spend on this is at their discretion. If the party enjoy interrogating folks, let them, but if they'd rather just make a Charisma check, get some clues, and decide from there where to go next, that works too. By default, the GM can assume that a good Charisma 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 Quitall 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 DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion) check or spend their day aiding an ally (granting advantage). 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 successful DC 25 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check. These checks usually take just a few minutes.

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 a successful DC 26 Intelligence (Arcana) check. Divinations that just poke at the edges of Leone's activities aren't so protected, so a spell 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 Charisma 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 check during an interrogation, 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, and finding him won't be easy.

- ▶ **Clue 1: DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion).** Harbor 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: DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion).** 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: DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion).** 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: DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion).** Leone apparently never went into any of those shops, but the party notices a 'lodgers wanted' posting across the street from Glazier Charani. *(An adventurer proficient with 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 Leone. No check required; the party just has to think to ask.
- ▶ **Clue 6: DC 25 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion).** 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. *(An adventurer proficient with Religion gains a +5 bonus to this check. One*

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.

who makes an offering worth at least 50 gp to the volcano gains a +10 bonus instead.)

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: DC 25 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion).** 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: DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion).** 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: DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion).** 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



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, wealthy, and ornate, each 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. Crime is punished by fine; those who can't pay the 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.

Trekthom 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.

below. Afterward, it's a one-day train ride to Trekthom. This time the kobolds buy a ticket, because Drakrans take their trains more seriously.

- ▶ **Clue 10: DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion).** In Trekthom, workers at the railyard recall Leone purchasing two train cars for himself, then bringing in workers to make alterations to them. Two clues will help them identify those cars.
- ▶ **Clue 11-A (Trekthom): DC 25 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion).** 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 +10 bonus instead.)*
- ▶ **Clue 11-B (Trekthom): DC 25 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion).** 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.)*

The ambush scene Outmatched is next, then the scene Needle in a Needle Factory occurs after the conclusion of the manhunt.

Outmatched

Action. Tactical.

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.

- Obscurati sniper assassin
- 3 Obscurati counter-spies

Obscurati Sniper Assassin

Medium humanoid (elf), lawful neutral

Armor Class 16 (studded leather)

Hit Points 65 (10d8+20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	8 (–1)

Saving Throws DEX +7, CON +5, CHA +2

Skills Acrobatics +7, Athletics +3, Intimidation +2, Perception +8, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +10

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Primordial

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Fey Ancestry. The sniper has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put them to sleep.

Quick. The sniper has advantage on initiative checks.

Superb Aim. The sniper ignores half cover and three-quarters cover when making a ranged weapon attack, and they don't have disadvantage when attacking at long range. When the sniper makes their first ranged weapon attack in a turn, they can choose to take a –5 penalty to their ranged weapon attack rolls in exchange for a +10 bonus to ranged weapon damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The sniper can fire their rifle once, use a bonus action to reload, and fire a second time in the same round.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4+4) piercing damage.

Rifle. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 80/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10+4) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

Fast Reload. The sniper reloads their rifle.



Obscurati Counter-Spy

Medium humanoid (human), neutral

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)

Hit Points 72 (16d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws DEX +6, WIS +4

Skills Acrobatics +6, Athletics +3, Deception +8, Insight +7, Intimidation +5, Perception +7, Persuasion +8, Sleight of Hand +9, Stealth +9

Senses passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Dwarvish

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Evasion. If the counter-spy is subjected to an effect that allows them to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, they instead take no damage if they succeed on the saving throw, and only half damage if they fail.

Poison Weapon (4/short rest). The counter-spy uses a bonus action to coat up to two weapons with poison. On a successful hit with a poisoned weapon the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Sneak Attack (1/turn, 4d6). The counter-spy deals an extra 14 (4d6) damage when they hit a target with a weapon attack and have advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the counter-spy's that isn't incapacitated and they don't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The counter-spy attacks twice.

Dagger (6). *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.

Bead of Force. The counter-spy throws a *bead of force* up to 60 feet. The bead explodes on impact and is destroyed. Each creature within a 10-foot radius of where the bead landed must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 12 (5d4) force damage. A sphere of transparent force then encloses the area for 1 minute. Any creature that failed the save and is completely within the area is trapped inside this sphere. Creatures that succeeded on the save, or are partially within the area, are pushed away from the center of the sphere until they are no longer inside it. Only breathable air can pass through the sphere's wall. No attack or other effect can.

An enclosed creature can use its action to push against the sphere's wall, moving the sphere up to half the creature's walking speed. The sphere can be picked up, and its magic causes it to weigh only 1 pound, regardless of the weight of creatures inside.

REACTIONS

Uncanny Dodge. When an attacker the counter-spy can see hits them with an attack, the counter-spy can use their reaction to halve the attack's damage against them.

Tactics.

The fight probably begins with the sniper, set up in a window or on a roof, using a targeted shot to the head of a target who is fairly out in the open, with few options for ducking into cover. Then the counter-spies, waiting 50 feet away or so, break from cover and throw their *beads of force* to keep the party disoriented and immobile. The sniper continues to fire at opportune targets, trying to force enemies into cover as counter-spies 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 spy-master, 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.

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.

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. Shot 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.

Leone's Cars.

Leone has two cars: a private suite with bedroom, bathroom, office, and kitchen; 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*.

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 is facing an open track and has fuel at hand. He makes sure his car is always right behind the train's fuel car. In the event of an attack he is prepared to use his steelshaping powers to decouple any 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

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 pre-determined 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 spell 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 (1d6 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 with a successful DC 18 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check (3d6 bludgeoning 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 bonus 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 is reduced below half hit points, he tears the train cars free from the tracks and derails the whole thing. Everyone on board must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone and take 4d6 damage. The sudden collision with the ground ignites the firegems in the fuel car, creating a massive swathe of fire. The locomotive boiler explodes and all creatures in a 30-foot radius around it make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 35 (10d6) fire damage on a failure or half as much on a success.

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. But if you take a moment to think about it, how often do you get the chance to derail a train? We hereby grant you GM Immunity to bend the rules a bit so Leone can run away and escape to fight another day.

speed by 6 each round thereafter, to a maximum of 160. If he has to move a full train, he can only increase the speed by a feeble 1 per round.



Arrival Timeline.

When Leone's train arrives at a railyard, first it spends 10 minutes splitting into three parts: the front four cars (locomotive, fuel, and Leone's two cars), the middle freight cars, and the rear passenger cars. 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 reconnect and continue onward, or they 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 about, 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.

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.

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.



Stats for Leone and other Obscurati forces are presented in Appendix Two: Obscurati Forces.

Reinforcements.

- Leone Qital
- 2 advanced bleak golems
- 12 Obscurati arcane marksmen

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.

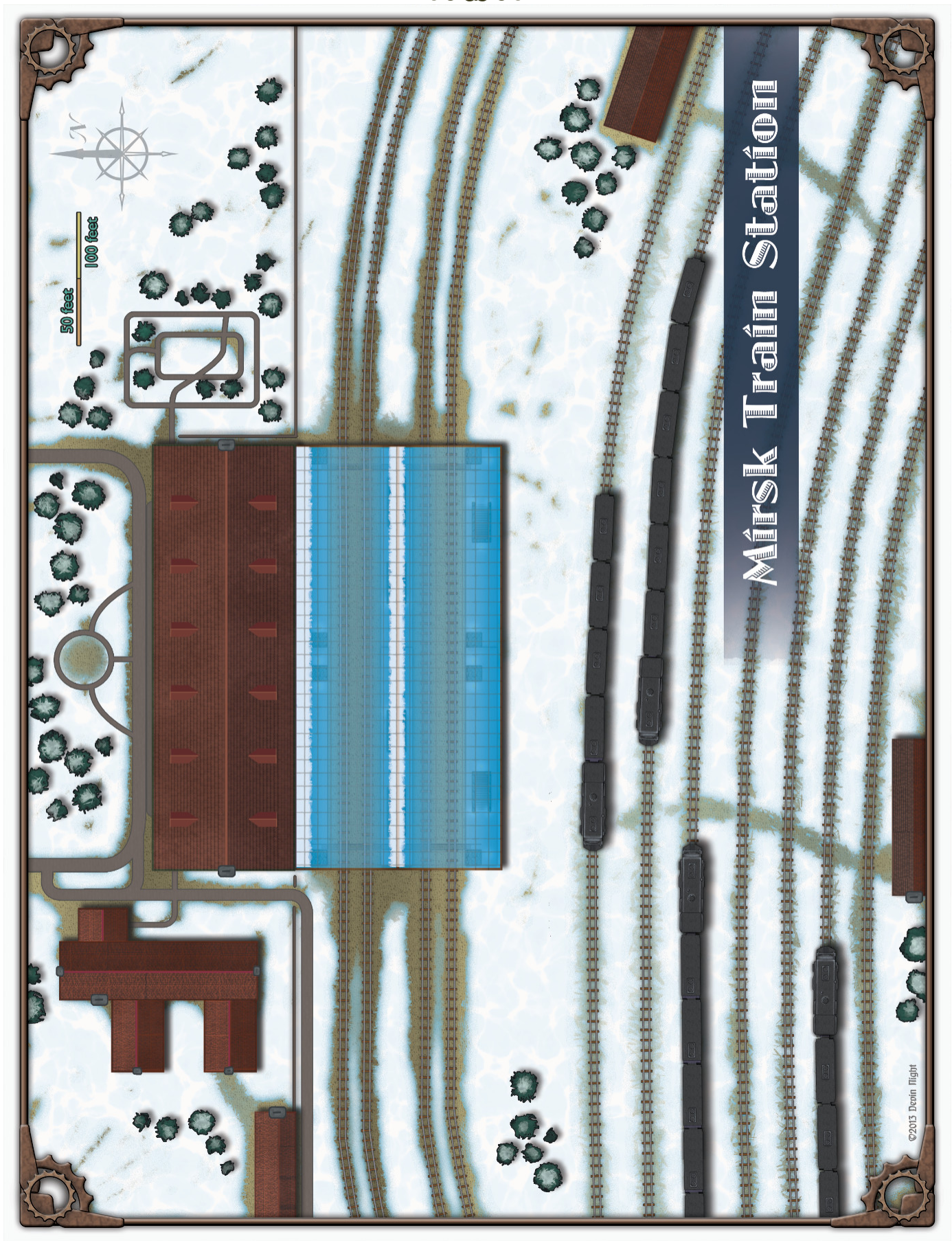
Leone is confident and quite bitter, especially if he recognizes the constables. Unless he's outright outnumbered, he won't flee until he's reduced below half hit points. That said, he tries to keep his distance, flying over and behind train cars to try to string his enemies out. He relies on a makeshift metal shield to block attacks, creates a *shrapnel vortex* to clear out enemies if they're in a defensible location, and flings 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 improved cover, the arcane marksmen can shoot around corners.

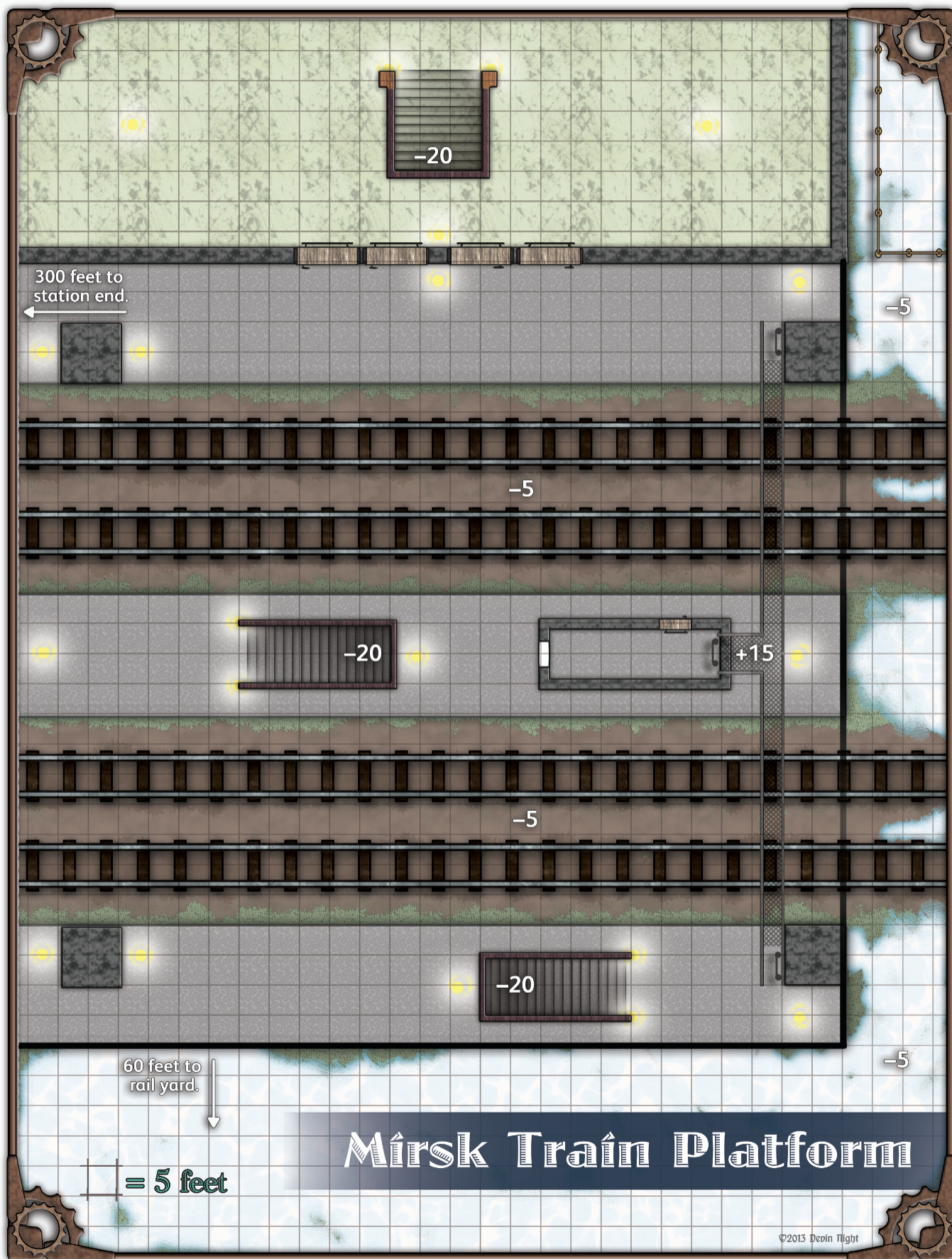
At the start of the third round, two hatches open on the roof of the security car as the bleak golems climb out as heavy reinforcements. Leone will generally try to stay close enough to the golems that the party can't just outrun the massive beaters.

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 reduced below half hit points his power flares briefly, letting him tear entire trains off the ground and move them. He places some as cover, moving others to hang over PCs so they'll be crushed if they don't get out of the way. GMs that want to be really mean should 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.



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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.

Leone Quital.

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.

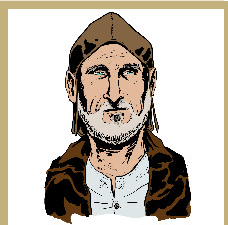


Alexander Grappa.

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.



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, after which Grappa will still be able to guide them into the Obscurati palace. We weren't planning for Leone to survive this adventure anyway, though his consciousness will make another appearance in the last third of the campaign.

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 makes his way to a mage who can cast *sending* 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.

Withdrawal.

Once Leone is reduced below half hit points, he tries 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 train, 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 place *mage cuffs* on him he isn't 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 drifts off to sleep and Alexander Grappa gains control of Leone's body, and can talk to the party.

Loot.

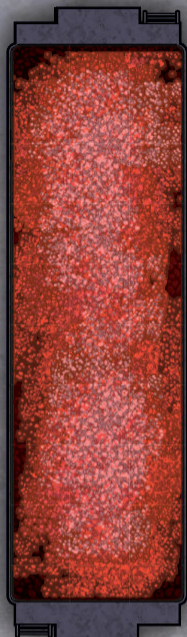
The party will likely want to divest Leone of his *steelsilk mantle* (detailed in Part Two). 



Drakran Heavy Railroad



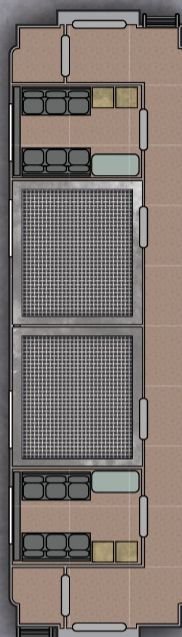
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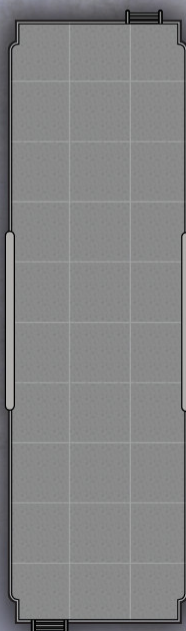
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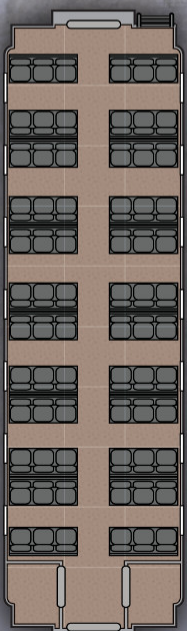
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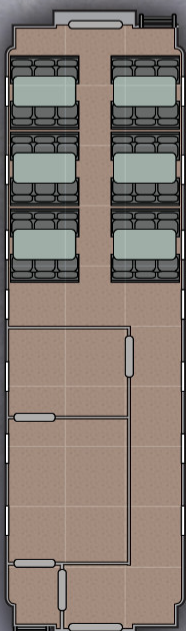
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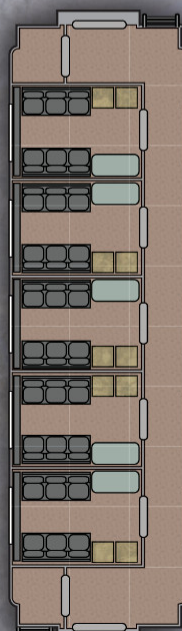
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