



EN5ider Presents:

The Last Starry Sky

Part One

A 5E-Compatible Adventure for 15th- to 16th-Level Characters



Introduction

Wherein the Bad Guys Save the World

THE PARTY IS TRAPPED IN THE DREAMING, THE realm of the fey that exists as a bright reflection of reality. And in the real world, the conspiracy known as the Obscurati is about to assassinate the king of Risur and perform a grand ritual that will alter the fabric of reality. Stars will vanish from the sky and new worlds will appear, lending their magical essence to usher in a new age. The Obscurati plot not an age of darkness or tyranny, but rather an age of reason: a well-intentioned world of progress and empathy that will soon spiral disastrously out of their control.

Adapting the Adventure.

To use this adventure outside of ZEITGEIST, each act can stand alone. The fey murder mystery of Act One could involve an established friend of the PCs, or you could tone down the weird a bit and set it as courtly intrigue among human nobles. The palace siege of Act Two could be adapted to any high-level climax to protect a VIP, or you could turn the tables and use it as a villainous base the party is assaulting. And Act Three's island assault could be to stop whatever manner of dark ritual your campaign demands.

If you want the adventure all together as a high-level stand-alone, the fey realm might be allies, and the party can be sent to the Dreaming to find a member of the conspiracy who knows when and where the Ob's ritual will occur. Copperhat, instead of serving the Voice of Rot, is an agent of the conspiracy, out to cause a civil war and distract the fey so they cannot help.

The Last Starry Sky serves as climax to Act Two of the ZEITGEIST campaign, which by necessity will end with a bittersweet victory for the PCs. By gaining the favor of the fey's Unseen Court and tricking an untrustworthy fey titan, the party can return to the real world, perhaps saving Risur's king in time or possibly having one of their own assume his crown after he falls. But their main objective must be to stop Roland Stanfield, the city governor of Flint, who has been part of the conspiracy all along. The villain activates an eldritch machine on an island in the Flint harbor, and an entire fleet stands in the party's way.

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OPEN GAME CONTENT

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Once they reach the island, their battle seems to shake the heavens, and they'll need to wield a falling star as a weapon to slay Stanfield. But as he dies, the governor reveals what the party may have already deduced: that his ritual is just one of many, and while Risur might be safe, the rest of the world is now loyal to the Obscurati.

Background

If you haven't read any of the other adventures in the campaign, you can find an overview of the Obscurati conspiracy's plot in the *ZEITGEIST Campaign Guide*. Before we get to the Ob's plans, though, here's what's going on in the Dreaming.

Dangers in the Dreaming.

A teleportation accident at the end of *ZEITGEIST #8: Diaspora* lands the party in the Dreaming, near the fey capital city of Clover (which is a reflection of the real world capital of Risur, Slate). Fluctuations of planar energy due to the Obscurati's pending ritual make it impossible for the PCs to use any method they know to travel back to the real world. Perhaps the Unseen Court can help them get home, in exchange for some help with a wee dilemma.

The Unseen Court is at war with a rival faction of powerful fey, who call themselves the Hedgehog Court for reasons that make sense to faeries. The Unseen Court has for decades put up with the increase of technology in Risur—technology that makes areas of the Dreaming uninhabitable—since they still received regular tributes from the Risuri nobility. The Hedgehog Court has denounced Risur's industrial revolution, and has stoked tensions and anger among the “common” fey. It has also offered aid to adherents of the traditional druidic faith in the real world, fought proxy battles through contacts in the Vekeshi Mystics, and given favors to saboteurs like the “fey terrorist” **Hana Soliogn**, known as Gale.

But until recently, the two courts had never openly fought. The monarch of the Unseen Court, the androgynous and mirror-masked **Thisraldion**, has ignored the criticism; among the fey, being perceived as a strong leader often depends on aloof detachment and ostentatious decadence, which Thisraldion excels at. But **Olazdor**, the aquiline leader of the Hedgehog Court, recently made a slight against Thisraldion that the fey monarch could not ignore.

Rock Is Dead. Really!

Four months ago, a minor but notorious fey named **Copperhat the Headless** brought over into the Dreaming a famous performer from the real world, **Rock Rackus**. Though few in the Risur believe Rock's stories, in the past few years he became famous for claiming he'd traveled to the moon and cuckolded the fey king. In truth, Rock had just drunkenly insulted who he thought was the “king,” then slept with who he thought was the “queen,” but they were the same person; Thisraldion's mask reflects the viewer's perceptions of himself, and Rock is uniquely narcissistic to think he is both kingly and an object of lusty desire.

Thisraldion and Rock rekindled their former romance, but Olazdor contacted Rackus and told him of the struggle of the Hedgehog Court and how, like many of Rock's fans in the real world, he and his followers were oppressed and fighting against authority. Over

PCs in the Conspiracy?

If the party decided to join the Obscurati, their mission first takes them to the Dreaming to ensure Risur cannot call upon their allies. Then they return to the real world (getting clues that the Voice of Rot might be up to something) and help sabotage the Flint naval garrison so the Danorans can seize the harbor. Rather than attacking Torfeld Palace, they protect Stanfield's fortress from the king and his allies.

Ending the Campaign Here.

If you plan to use this adventure as the end of the campaign, then the ritual in Flint is the main one to alter reality. In Act One, the Voice of Rot can provide knowledge of dying worlds that the party could link to instead of the ones the Ob has planned. In Act Three, Nicodemus and the colossus are with the Danoran fleet in Flint Harbor. The colossus carries with it the 100-ft. diameter golden seal from Axis Island, as well as eight white stone pillars that can be linked to different planes. See the sidebars Friendly Death (page 41) and Alternate Finale (in Act Three).

the course of several months Rock inadvertently became a hero to both sides. One night he might sing for the common fey of the beauty and debauchery of his lover Thisraldion, and the next day he'd attend a rally denouncing “the power” and calling for people to prepare for a fight.

Three weeks ago, Rock slipped away from Thisraldion's bed while the fey monarch slept, had a few more drinks to steady himself, and made his way to a meeting of the Hedgehog Court. He never made it, and the next morning his body was found in a graffiti-covered tunnel. An arrow tipped by an eagle talon pierced his heart, and his head had been severed by a single, impossibly sharp slice.

Assumptions.

Thisraldion blamed Olazdor for killing the royal consort. Olazdor claimed Thisraldion learned that Rock was spying for the Hedgehog Court and had him murdered. An oracle was asked to name the killer, and said that he could not see who killed Rock Rackus. Nevertheless, each side quickly armed and—in proper fey fashion—scheduled when they would go to war.

A forest outside of Clover, dotted with groves and clearings similar to a chessboard, has for the past week hosted battles between forces loyal to each side. While the behavior might seem more sporting than militant, dozens have already died and it's only a matter of time before someone assassinates one of the leaders, which will spark a civil war.

That Is Not Dead Which Can Eternal Lie.

The truth is, Rock Rackus isn't dead. Copperhat secretly works for the fey titan known as the **Voice of Rot**, an immense serpent of decaying white flesh, who wishes to keep the fey of the Dreaming too busy fighting to notice what he is planning.

When the time was right, Copperhat abducted Rock, “killed” a fake body, and stored the real man in *the absurdist web*, an extraplanar space accessible by various wads of spider-web that Copperhat carries. Creatures placed in the web enter a stasis, and by dint of being in an extradimensional space most efforts to solve the mystery through brute force divinations fail.



The two sides immediately began blaming each other for Rock's murder, and now the Voice of Rot has killed the observers the Unseen Court usually set to be prepared for fey titan activity.

A Serpent Coiled Across Two Worlds.

The five fey titans—the Voice of Rot, the Father of Thunder, the Ash Wolf, She Who Writhes, and Granny Allswell—are each massive lords of certain parts of Risur's terrain. They have existed since the dawn of time, and their bodies exist in both the real world and the Dreaming. At the foundation of Risur seventeen centuries ago, King Kelland subdued the titans and forced them to sleep and hand their lands over to mortals.

From time to time one of the titans will awaken and rampage, and the current king or queen has been responsible for defeating him or her. The last time the Voice of Rot caused trouble was five centuries ago. The king at the time, Dukain, was a mighty but aged wizard who wielded magic through his sword. He traveled to a mountain ridge overlooking the High Bayou, known as the Black Needles, and there he battled the fey titan, which had taken the form of a towering anaconda of smoke and peat.

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

the titan returned to his slumber, and Risur was saved. However, scholars fear that should the lost Sword of the Black Needles ever be recovered, it would signal a resumption of the battle with the fey titan, and once again threaten the existence of Risur.

The Voice of Rot is the only one of the five titans awake and active today, having been roused from its torpor by Obscurati excavations to explore an ancient ruin in the High Bayou. During *ZEITGEIST #3: Digging for Lies*, the party likely met the serpent and were given a mission to avoid his wrath. The Ob's dig, though, made the titan aware of the plot to open the Axis Seal. Since then he has acted subtly, sending emissaries to cults across the world (such as Grandis Komanov's radical eschatologists), steering the world toward its death.

As a primordial entity, the Voice of Rot is a literal manifestation of the concept of death in this world, and as such his ultimate goal is to witness the world's end. Most of his plans come to light in *ZEITGEIST #12: The Grinding Gears of Heaven*. For now, he is waiting for the Ob to perform their ritual, and has agents ready to ensure they fail to properly seal the world off from the rest of the multiverse.

As for the party, the Voice of Rot previously needed them to disrupt the Obscurati (and by carrying the *absurdist web* that Copperhat offered them, they let him listen in and learn the conspiracy's plans). Without the party's interference, the Voice of Rot's agents among the radical eschatologists of Drakr would not have had time to get into place on Axis Island. But going forward, he does not need the party any further.

Though the titan is ultimately a foe of the party's and would gladly see them dead, as a fey being he is still bound by the pact made with the first king of Risur, and so cannot simply kill the PCs, who are merely agents of the king. Indeed, the Unseen Court will advise the party to retrieve the Sword of Dukain, and then surrender. This will compel the Voice of Rot to banish the party from the Dreaming back to the real world.

Obscurati Endgame.

Meanwhile in the real world, the Ob now have the colossus under their control, and they have loaded it onto a massive barge bound for Axis Island. Part of the Danoran fleet escorts it, while the rest sail *en masse* for the city of Flint. It is time for the Ob's endgame, and Sovereign Han Jierre is risking a war if their plans fail.

Nicodemus the Gnostic, head of the conspiracy, has gone to Axis Island to oversee the primary ritual, leaving the ritual in Flint to **Governor Roland Stanfield** (and similar rituals to equivalent conspirators in other countries). The fleet that targets Flint harbor is commanded by the ghost of **Lya Jierre** (or the ghost of one of the previous Jierre scions, if events make it impossible for Lya to return as an antagonist).

The main stumbling block for the Ob's plan is **King Aodhan**, ruler of Risur. Aodhan is fully aware of the Ob's plan (thanks to the PCs), and so will be able to resist their new world order. As long as he holds out against the Ob's control, so will the rest of Risur. So the Ob has spent the past few months preparing an assassination plot, led by **Catherine Romana**, a Risuri noblewoman (or perhaps her ghost if she died in *ZEITGEIST #7: Schism*). When the time is right, the Ob will activate *wayfarer lanterns* to draw the entire royal palace into the Bleak Gate, where various monsters await, including an army of the dead.

Adventure Overview

Picking up the cliffhanger from the end of *ZEITGEIST #8: Diaspora*, the party is pincered between the two warring factions of fey. A young fey, the backward-footed **Rambylon**, can usher the party out of harm's way and to a gathering of minor nobles who watch the battle from a nearby hilltop, quite enjoying the show. Their gossip fills the party in on the situation to date, and points the party toward the city of Clover to visit the Unseen Court for aid. Meanwhile Rambylon asks the party to meet with the Hedgehog Court.

Each court sees the party as a chance to gain an upper hand, and both sides ask them to investigate Rackus's murder.

Thisraldion claims (falsely) to know how to get the party home, and promises to share the information once Olazdor is found guilty and defeated. Olazdor admits to *not* knowing how to help the party, but immediately has the Hedgehog Court's minions start searching fey libraries for clues. He would appreciate finding Thisraldion guilty, of course.

The evidence around Rock's death is damning against both sides, and witness testimony about the days leading up to the murder is made confusing by the fact that Rock himself wasn't aware that he was befriending both sides of a conflict. **Beshela**, **Archfey of the Sea** tries to stymie the party's investigation out of a desire to protect Olazdor who she assumes actually is guilty. **Atsla**, icy lady

Metagaming Concerns.

Precisely when the assassination plot against King Aodhan occurs involves a bit of narrative hand-waving. Thanks to the oddities of fey magic, the assassins will always strike just after the PCs get back from the Dreaming.

For an in-world explanation, the portals from Methia in *ZEITGEIST #8: Diaspora* led to no place in particular, so the teleportation magic reverted to taking the party where they wanted to go, ultimately: their homeland Risur, to report their findings. Then the planar fluctuations kicked them into the Dreaming instead of the real world. The passage of time in the Dreaming, always a bit wibbly-wobbly, makes it impossible for them to know quite what day it is in the real world.

We admit it was a slight bit of a railroad to have the party whisked away by out-of-control teleportation magic, and it might seem a bit railroady to dictate that they'll pretty much always arrive at Act Two "in the nick of time." But the events that occur in the Dreaming set up key elements for the final four adventures, so we feel the detour is justified.

That said, if the party somehow found a way out of Methia without teleporting, they can make their way by land and sea to the king in Slate. If so, we recommend you have the king send the party to the Dreaming, to call upon the old alliance between Risur and the Unseen Court. You'll want to highlight the involvement of fey allies in the second and third acts of this adventure, to show that their mission was pivotal in saving the day.

of the Unseen Court, attempts to frame Thisraldion so she can ascend to the leadership, and Thisraldion in turn puts the party in a death trap and tries to pin it on Atsla.

Copperhat the Headless seems particularly distraught that his favorite drinking partner was stolen from him, but ultimately the party can manage to determine that Copperhat staged a fake murder to cause pandemonium. It then falls to the party to decide whether to accept Copperhat's offer to get them back home with the aid of his master the Voice of Rot, possibly leaving the fey at war or presenting false evidence so one Court comes out on top.

Or they could pin the crime on Copperhat, who flees into the ongoing battles in the chessboard forest, hoping to evade capture. Rescuing Rock Rackus can end the war and gain the aid from both sides, but then presents the party with the daunting prospect of fighting the Voice of Rot and forcing him to send them back home. (No other fey titan can be roused from its slumber quickly enough to get its aid.)

By traveling with Copperhat or by riding with the infamous Great Hunt atop their impossibly fast steeds, the party reaches the Voice of Rot in the Black Needles. Though they aren't strong enough to defeat the colossal serpent, if they can survive his onslaught, reach King Dukain's sword, and draw it from a rotted tree stump, the ancient pact between the titans and Risur will let them surrender and be "punished" by exile back to the real world.

Save the King.

Back in the real world, the party heads to Torfeld Palace in Slate, and barely has time to warn the king before the Ob launch their multi-pronged assassination plot. Operatives in the Bleak Gate activate six *wayfarer lanterns*, which make the real world and the Bleak



King or Queen?

Think of who among your PCs would make a good monarch. If none would, Viscount Nigel Price-Hill is chosen to succeed the king. Or Aodhan might survive, in which case we don't intend to try to kill him again during the course of the campaign. ZEITGEIST #10: *Godmind* assumes a PC monarch will need to subdue the fey titans, but Aodhan might assign the task to the party because he intends to name one as his successor, and he thinks they're better suited than he is.

Flexible Timeline.

We assume events start on the 37th of Winter, three days after the season's second first-quarter moon (known traditionally as the Orphan's Moon). The party has until noon on the 39th to name Rock's killer, and after riding for 12 hours they'll confront the Voice of Rot around midnight. They'll return to the real world, and then it's another 12-hour ride back to Slate (and the party should probably squeeze a few hours' rest in here somewhere). The evening of the 40th they'll deal with the assassination attempt against King Aodhan, and they have until late in the night of the 41st to stop the ritual in Flint.

In Risur, both the real world and the Dreaming, winters are dry and chill, but never snowy except in highest mountains.

Kasvarina and Andrei.

At the end of ZEITGEIST #8: *Diaspora*, the party might have managed to teleport away with Kasvarina Varal and/or Andrei von Recklinghausen. If so, the teleport sent Kasvarina where she most wanted to go: Elfaivar. (From a meta standpoint, we don't want her around to explain to the party that the main Obscurati ritual is on Axis Island. The party will, we hope, think everything is happening in Flint, so it will be a surprise when the villains manage to take over the rest of the world.)

Andrei, though, travels with the party. When not possessed by Nicodemus he is not strong enough to really aid the party in battle, though his agility could make him a useful spy. He desires to find Isobel, and is willing to do that either through the Dreaming or the Waking.

Gate coterminous. Agents attempt to place anchoring amulets around the palace, which within five minutes will fully transition the building and its surroundings into the realm of the dead.

Aodhan's Allies.

When the Ob's assassination plot strikes, Aodhan will be defended by his principal minister **Harkover Lee** (in truth a polymorphed dragon, a secret known only to Aodhan), and by the Torfeld Palace Guard, led by **Dame Jillian the Green Knight**. Additionally, the eladrin dreadnought **Asrabey Varal** has recently arrived from the Elfaivar, and will join the fight. Everyone here is a certifiable badass, and although the Ob are throwing everything they have at the party, the players should feel like they're nearly invincible.

Once the attack begins, the RHC's minister of infiltration **Lauryn Cyneburg** teleports in, finds out what's happening, and then leaves to rally allies, but unless the party can disrupt the Ob's plot they'll arrive too late.

The attackers deploy magic-disrupting chaff grenades, swarms of undead, a skeletal dragon, and the varied arcane powers of the Obscurati's ghost council. In the midst of this, Risuri noblewoman

Catherine Romana attempts a coup, while the ghostly sniper **Amielle Latimer** tries to aid the party without the rest of the ghost council realizing her duplicity.

The party can end the assault by breaking the six lanterns, or possibly retuning them to transition part of the palace into the Dreaming (and thus gaining the aid of the two fey courts). They need to decide whether to stay with the king to protect him, or to split up and tackle the threats more quickly. Barring heroic measures by the party (well, more heroic than usual), the king will die here if he hasn't already, and can name one PC to take his crown.

The Grand Ritual.

While the king is being assassinated, Governor Stanfield calls to his mansion-fortress **Chief Inspector Stover Delft**, head of the RHC in Flint. Stanfield has Delft imprisoned in the central keep, guarded by mimics and oblivious Risuri soldiers. He then has an impostor in an illusory disguise deliver bad intelligence to the naval patrols that guard Flint, passing along false orders to sail out and "stop the Danoran advance."

The Danoran fleet of course knows to expect the Flint garrison, and they win the engagement handily, then sail into Flint harbor practically unopposed. Stanfield enacts the precautions that would normally occur in the event of an invasion—evacuating all non-essential personnel from his mansion/fortress, and destroying the bridge that leads to the governor's island. The last messages he sends out are to not engage the Danorans, and to wait for reinforcements from Slate. The public assumes their city is under siege, and they have no idea Stanfield is an enemy.

Stanfield, meanwhile, assumes that the reinforcements from Slate will arrive too late to make a difference. By the time the leaders in Slate learn what has happened in Flint, the ritual should already be in its nascent stages, with stars already drifting from their once-fixed points in the sky.

Rallying Flint.

Either by riding with the Great Hunt or sailing aboard the swift *R.N.S. Impossible* (docked in Slate as a precaution once it became apparent long-range teleportation was no longer viable), the party can reach Flint with a few hours to spare. A magical barricade surrounds the island, which could possibly be shattered with sustained firepower.

They might sneak aboard the mighty *R.N.S. Coaltongue* in drydock and sail into battle against the Danorans, or contact **Hana "Gale" Soliogn** and use her wind magic to address the entire city at once and send up a call to arms, or use their contacts among the Family, the Vekeshi Mystics, and the common workers of the city to clear a path for them to the governor's island. They even receive an unexpected—albeit dangerous—boon when Beshela, the archfey of the sea, tells them that she has steered the just-awakened She Who Writhes to Flint harbor, and the kraken-like titan will begin sinking Danoran ships. Well, any ships really, but the party can probably avoid her wrath if they're quick.

Governors Galore.

Once the party can get a few minutes to concentrate fire on the shield around the island, they find the soldiers inside confused, but

it's possible to bring them around to join the fight. Stover Delft is leading them, or rather his impostor, and he'll try to lure the party into a trap once they enter the mansion-fortress.

The building is guarded by numerous versions of Governor Stanfield, who has learned how to manifest his past incarnations. A secondary defensive shield protects the *wayfarer lighthouse*, forcing the party to disrupt the eldritch device that is draining Delft's life force.

This leaves only the final confrontation with "primary" Stanfield atop the wayfarer's lighthouse. His incarnations try to hold the party off as he adjusts the flow of planar energies, but when he is defeated a falling star strikes and destroys the lighthouse, seemingly killing Stanfield.

But as the party picks themselves up amid the debris, the deva governor reincarnates a final time, now a monstrous rakshasa. The party finds themselves bereft of all but the simplest magic, and Stanfield taunts them—as a few final falling stars land around him—that this was only a secondary ritual, and the main one on Axis Island must be already complete. All that remains for him before he becomes ruler of a new, better Risur is to kill the party.

A blow delivered with a piece of a falling star will slay Stanfield for good, but as the dust clears the party will look skyward and see unfamiliar heavens.

Adventure Layout

The Last Starry Sky's plot has three main acts. Each act has a fairly specific beginning and climax, but the party can take many different paths through each act. We roughly divide events as follows:

- **Act One: Much Ado.** The party solves a murder to get out of the Dreaming.
- **Act Two: Long Live the King.** In a group of fellow bad-asses, the party fights off numerous assassination attempts.
- **Act Three: Pillars of Heaven.** The party finds a way through layers of defenses to stop a world-shaking ritual.
- **Appendix (The Rites of Rulership).** Details of the magic of Risur's monarchy.
- **Appendix (Fey Lords).** Stats of the two fey courts.
- **Appendix (Allied Stats).** Stats of allies in the real world.
- **Appendix (Magic and Training).** Things of value the party can acquire.

Key Locations.

During this adventure permanent planar travel or long-distance teleportation is impossible. Make sure you have a clear sense of each of these locations, and how the party might travel between them.

Location	Page
Black Needles	37
Clover	15
Flint	Act Two
Slate	Act Two

Pacing and Leveling.

The party starts this adventure at 15th level. They will reach 16th level just before they set out for Flint.

Black Needles. These steep spires, where the Anthras Mountains meet the perpetually rain-shrouded High Bayou, are encased in immense swaths of ancient spider webs that act as dams. An old megalith staircase here, once used by those who worshipped the Voice of Rot as a god, was the site of the battle between that fey titan and King Dukain five centuries ago.

Clover. This fey city is the Dreaming parallel to Risur's capital city Slate. The Unseen Court rule from Thistle Palace.

Flint. The coastal city of Flint is the heart of Risur's industrial revolution.

Slate. King Aodhan rules from Torfeld Palace, here in the capital city of Risur.

NPC Roster.

Detailed entries of the NPCs the party meets are included throughout the adventure close to the characters' first appearances.

NPC Entry	Page
Anielle Latimer	Act Two
Asrabey Varal	Appendix
Beshela, Archfey of the Sea	22
Chief Inspector Stover Delft	Appendix
Copperhat the Headless	25
Governor Roland Stanfield	Act Three
Hana "Gale" Soliogn	Act Two
Harkover Lee	Appendix
King Aodhan Lesterman	Act Two
Lauryn Cyneburg	Appendix
Lya Jierre	Act Three
Olazdor, Archfey of Winds	22
Rock Rackus	30
Thisraldion, Monarch of the Unseen Court	19
Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill	Act Two

Recurring Characters.

Asrabey and Rock Rackus appear prominently in later adventures. All other NPCs might recur in minor roles, but feel free to do with them as you wish. If anyone important dies, you can replace them with someone thematically similar.

Rewards.

Starting with this adventure, the PCs will no longer be part of a government structure that pays their bills, but will likely end up in charge of the country. They will receive some final boons from the fey in Act One, and will be able to access a vault of spectacular magic items in Torfeld Palace during Act Two.



Character Themes in the Adventure.

Each ZEITGEIST adventure includes one or more scenes that bring the PCs' character themes (detailed in the *Player's Guide*) to the forefront.

Dockers are perfectly suited to impress the fey of both courts with their style and flash, and can possibly duet with Rock Rackus to unify the warring factions. Additionally, during the assault on Flint they have the opportunity to rally the common folk of Flint to distract the Danorans.

Eschatologists are best equipped to parlay with the Voice of Rot, and will experience a fleeting moment of unrivaled power when the Ob's ritual is underway.

Gunsmiths can play with the mega-cannons developed by Obscurati officer Dengar Kriegshaff, and the brand of the R.N.S. *Coaltongue*.

Martial Scientists might learn an unorthodox fey fighting style, have the most options when fighting the originality-vulnerable dire Borenbog, and could get another chance to square off against the exceptional duelist Lya Jierre.

Skyseers will be most politely received by the Unseen Court, and they'll receive a final vision as the stars fall from the skies.

Spirit Mediums have a leg-up in solving Rock Rackus's "murder," since they can easily tell much of the evidence is fake. Also, they can have a battle of wills against the Voice of Rot.

Technologists can best defeat the various lanterns and associated gadgets in the Ob's assassination attempts, and can turn Stanfield's eldritch machine against him. In the Dreaming, though, make sure fey scowl at a technologist. Anything with gears or spinning mechanisms makes them wince like it were nails on a chalkboard.

Vekeshi Mystics can possibly become members of the Unseen Court. Plus, the mystics in Flint are well situated to disrupt Danoran defenses.

Yerasol Veterans get to captain the R.N.S. *Coaltongue* and oversee a whole fleet to fleet engagement, and likely would be first pick for possible successors should King Aodhan fall. Failing that, Dame Jillian might bestow the title of Green Knight upon someone who can defend the new king.



Act One: Much Ado

IN THIS ACT, THE PARTY SOLVES A MURDER THAT NEVER happened, and wins by surrendering.

Fey Battleground

Action. Real-Time.

The party has to get out of danger as two sides go to war.

The uneven, wooded terrain of a forest materializes around the party. Nausea grips them as they recover from teleporting out of Methia, and at first all they can tell of their surroundings is that a battle has been fought here: brush is trampled, branches hacked apart, arcane scorch marks blacken the leaves overhead. As they get their bearings, pipes and fiddles begin to play a jaunty but unmistakably militant tune.

Through the woods to the west they spy figures cavorting their way. Then from the east, guttural whooping and the beating of wooden drums marks the approach of a second force.

A pixie swoops past them—angular purple legs wrapped in streaming viridian ribbons, with furred moth-like wings and a crescent moon mouth full of fangs beneath a single red eye—and it shouts to the eastern drummers, “*Here they are! Attack!*”

Battle cries ululate from both directions, and audible twangs mark incoming arrows.

Stuck in the Middle.

The party has arrived in the middle of a battle between two fey forces. From a high vantage point, the overall battlefield resembles a stylized chessboard, with an 8 by 8 grid of squares each 400-feet across, alternating with woodland and fields of heather. (The party has arrived in the equivalent of white king’s bishop 4—fourth from the south border and third from the east border.)

A few mossy hills rise up at the edges of the battlefield, each 200 or 300 feet high. The fey capital city of Clover lies beyond a river to the north, about 2 miles away.

Despite the resemblance to a game board, units from each side are free to move as they please. The four rules that everyone generally obeys are:

1. Battle begins an hour before noon each day and lasts four hours.
2. No entry is allowed after the battle begins.
3. No fighting outside the bounds of the gridded battlefield.
4. Anyone who leaves the battlefield cannot return until the following day.

Today several hundred fey fight for each side. Because the party is likely fairly depleted after their battle with Nicodemus and the colossus Borne, this encounter serves to establish that danger is present but give the adventurers plenty of time to get out of its way.

Meanwhile, in the News.

The party won’t be hearing any news of the real world while they’re stuck in the Dreaming, but they fey have news of their own.

Rock Rackus Memorabilia. After his high-profile death, Rock Rackus and everything to do with him has become the talk of the city of Clover. Collectors desire any sort of connection to the slain celebrity, and within hours of the announcement of his demise, his suite in Thistle Palace was looted. Rumors say an unnamed figure is offering a lifetime supply of gold in exchange for Rackus’s diamond-encrusted gold pistol, which was not found on his body.

Gremlin Recruitment. The riverport of Clover has been befouled by the presence in the Waking of a whirligig ship, its tails spinning and its blowhole belching steam at a mechanical rhythm. The maddening song of the vessel’s metal heart is felt in every fey’s bones, all the more vexing for its silence to the ears. The High Gardens along the shore call upon every gremlin in the city—no matter your factional loyalty—to gather each dusk to take a barge out onto the water, where their presence can disrupt the clicking and clacking and hopefully drive the monster away.

When the Hunt’s Away, the Cats Will Prey. With the Great Hunt active around Clover, the great rivery fields of the Weftlands are untended, and the mighty herds are prime pickings for every would-be hunter in the land. Such grand horned beasts are normally kept tightly guarded so that only the formal members of the Hunt can keep them as trophies, but several expeditions have already set out, foremost among them led by Agunn’s Children, a litter of sentient cats.

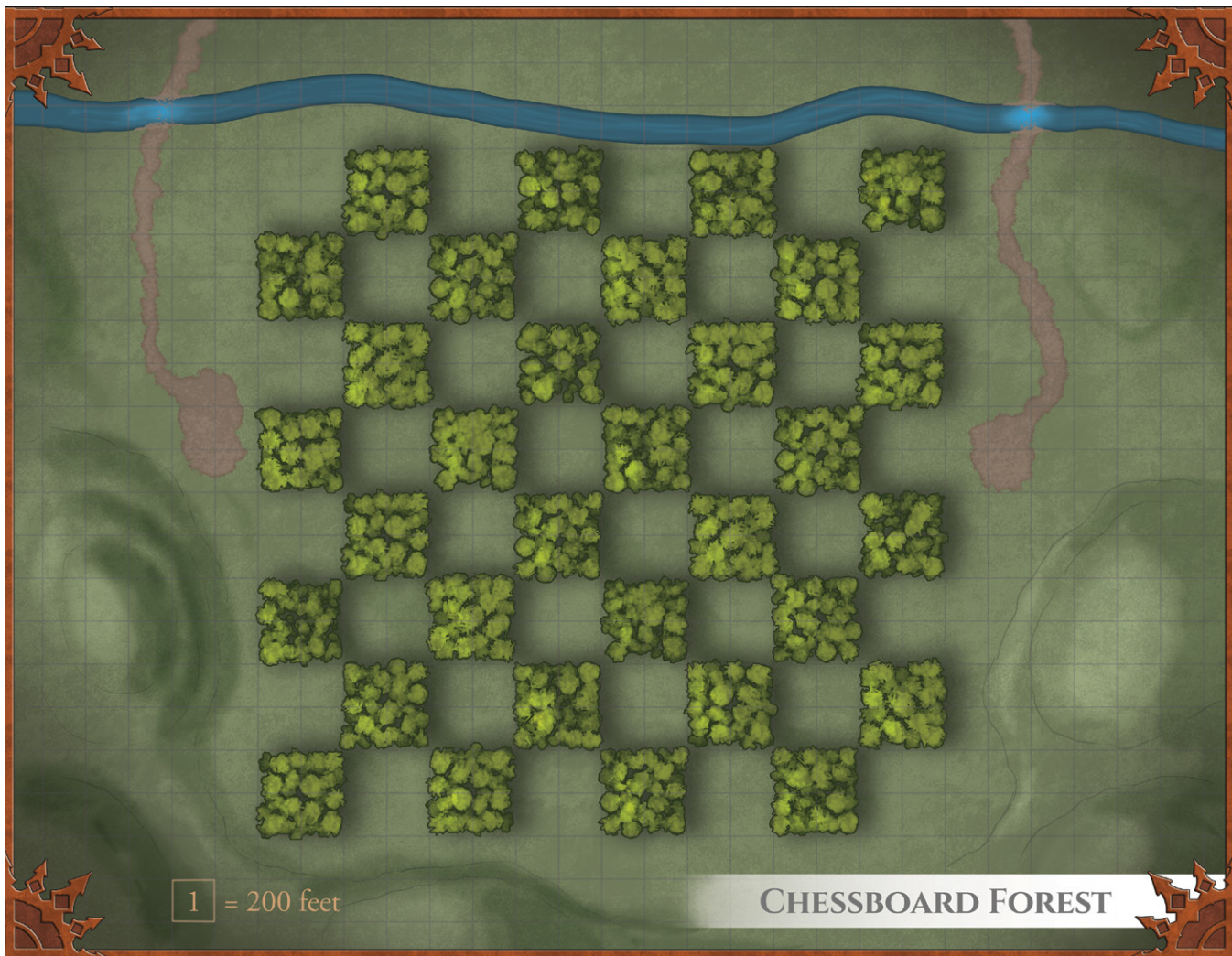
Snake in the Hen House. Falgo the Henkeeper, whose illusory eggs make for delicious omelets, says his chicken coops were raided, and numerous eggs were stolen. When questioned, the chickens said a snake charmed them with his song and then made off with the phantasmal treats.

Seeking Dogs. The Big Thicket of the east fell under attack by wolves wearing men’s skin this past full moon. Faeries of the Magnolia Burrows have put out requests to buy hounds raised in the human realms, in hopes they will fend off the wolfweres. They are desperate, because their normal paths into the Waking are blocked, so they cannot simply steal the dogs they need.

Exiled Mermaid. Beshela, Archfey of the Sea, has decreed her court prophet Leira Yensid banished to the land for making false predictions and impugning her honor. Leira claimed, “Soon ships shall fall to the sea floor, and the realm of Lady Beshela shall no longer permit their passage.” The prophetess, reduced to crawling from the shore on her hands, leaves a trail of blood as she seeks the aid of the Unseen Court in Thistle Palace.

Hostile Forces.

Each side assumes the party belongs to the opposing force, and they’re fine to let the party run away. If the party attacks, see *We Now Return to Your Regularly Scheduled Warfare* (page 31) for stats.



From the east, marching under a green banner with a circle cut out of the middle (representing the Unseen Court), are a front line of fomorian giants 15 feet tall with immense bows and huge thorny clubs; lance-wielding elves mounted on deers defending either wing; and a back row of tortoises carrying light trebuchets operated by gnomes.

The western force, marching under a banner that resembles a Hedgehog rampant on field of waves (representing the Hedgehog Court), consists of a front phalanx of satyrs with tower shields and bows; and a herd of centaurs holding tethers of a Gargantuan savage treant that was split by a lightning bolt down to its waist, causing it to have two heads facing opposite directions, and four arms.

Danger Incoming.

Arrows start to land around the party—normal-sized laced with soporific poison ones from the west, and massive bolts from the east. Each round, the PCs are subjected to the following attacks:

Fomorian Archery Volley. All creatures in a 30-foot radius make a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save a creature takes 18 (3d6+8) piercing damage, or half as much on a successful one.

Satyr Archery Volley. All creatures in a 30-foot radius make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or take 8 (1d8+4) piercing damage. A creature that takes damage must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or poison reduces its Wisdom by 1d4. The target is stunned if this reduces its Wisdom to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest.

The party is subject to this attack every other round, as the gnome trebuchets hurl screaming severed heads with fuses coming out of their necks. They land, lock eyes with the nearest person, then explode with deafening purple fire.

Screaming Head Artillery. All creatures in a 50-foot radius or the severed head make a DC 24 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save a creature takes 10 (3d6 fire) damage and 7 (2d6) thunder damage, and is deafened for 1 minute. On a successful saving throw, a creature takes half as much damage and is not deafened.

The two sides start about 200 feet from the party in either direction, and close to melee range 5 rounds later.



Getting to Safety.

Smart parties will have already gotten out of the way. A 100 feet to the south, a red-haired man waves at them and shouts that he can hide them. He is barefoot, and his feet turn in the wrong direction: heel forward, toes backward.

He directs them to stay close, then turns everyone within 10 feet of him invisible, though they can all still see each other. He leads the way south, running as fast as the party can keep up.

He introduces himself as **Rambylon**, says that he's not with either side, and that he was just trying to get a good view of the fight. The somewhat bloody and mud-caked bits of jewelry bulging his pockets suggest he was actually looting the fallen. He offers to get them to a safe overlook, and humbly suggests that if they want to thank him afterward, he accepts human coins, halfling cakes, and half-elf kisses.

If the party doesn't go with Rambylon, let them find their own way out of the ongoing battles.

Things to See, Fights to Avoid.

Rambylon guides them two "squares" south and one east. Over the few minutes that takes, the party sees units rushing to and fro—mounted elves and brachiating trolls and leaping dryads, a four-legged flower blossom the size of an elephant being led by a rattlesnake with a woman's head, small treants trying to shake off squads of ettercaps clambering through their branches, a concert of grigs wearing noseplugs as they ride atop a catoblepas, and so on.

Amid the jumble and roar of distant battle, occasionally the party hears a persistent sound: piping horns and baying hounds accompanied with cheers. The sound sweeps from side to side in the distance, clearly produced by something moving at speed—in this case the Great Hunt, a mass of mounted fey warriors clad in shining armor.

The Great Hunt has been lured to this battle by the Unseen Court, who use a relay of giant foxes to goad the mighty warriors into a desperate chase. The foxes, each ridden by a pugwampi gremlin, sprint and weave through ongoing battles, kiting the Great Hunt into the paths of followers of the Hedgehog Court. The warriors of the Hunt will not be blocked from their prey, so they trample and slaughter anyone who gets in their way.

When the party has traversed three squares and are entering a wooded square just a few hundred feet from safety, they hear the cheers quickly moving their way. If they look back, all they see in the "square" they just left is a pair of redcaps, their bloody hats and bloody scythes peeking above the heather.

Spotted.

The pixie from when the party first arrived sweeps down from the sky, his one red eye locked on them. He conjures *faerie fire* around them, limning them all in harmless purple and green flames that reveal their presence, and then he blows a whistle. Rambylon goes pale and yells for the party to run for their lives.

From the nearest thicket edge, about four hundred feet away, a fox the size of a tiger bursts into view. The gremlin strapped into its saddle waves to the pixie, weaves past the confused redcaps, then makes a bee-line for the party.



On the fox's heels, three equally huge black hounds leap out of the woods, barking and howling, and then shortly behind them gallop a dozen steeds, each ridden by a mighty warrior clad in gleaming mithral plate armor. One in the lead blares his horn, and the whole procession tramples the redcaps into pulp. The largest of the riders, with silver antlers spreading from his helm and what is unmistakably a bullet hole in the plate over his right breast, is **Riffian, Archfey of the Great Hunt**. He picks up a mangled corpse on the tip of his lance and shouts so loudly that his voice carrying all the way to the party: "Ha ha! None shall stand 'tween me and my prey!" Then he flings the dead redcap away and bears down on the fox.

Run to the Hills!

The party starts 380 feet from the south edge of the battlefield. The dire fox and rider start 350 feet farther north and run 220 feet per round. The hounds are 30 feet farther north and the Great Hunt follows them in a long line, everyone moving 200 feet per round.

If the party damages the fox or rider, they peel away and flee, figuring the party isn't worth the trouble. This draws the Hunt away too. Otherwise, if the party runs at full speed (~80 feet per round) it would likely take them 5 rounds to reach the edge of the battlefield, but it would only take the fox 3 rounds to reach them, with the Great Hunt roaring in on the 4th round. If they don't get out of the way or divert the fox (climb trees, teleport faster, create a *wall of force*, etc.), the Great Hunt attempts to trample each of them.



Pugwampi Fox Rider

Tiny fey, neutral evil ranger (hunter) 8

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 65 (3d4+8d8+22)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-4)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	4 (-3)

Saving Throws Str -1, Dex +6

Skills Acrobatics +6, Animal Handling +6, Deception +0, Perception +5, Stealth +6; thieves' tools +6

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Gnoll, Sylvan, Undercommon

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Defensive Tactics: Multiattack Defense. When a creature hits the gremlin with an attack, it gains a +4 bonus to AC against all subsequent attacks made by that creature for the rest of the turn.

Favored Enemy. The gremlin has advantage on Wisdom (Survival) checks to track beasts, fey, and humans, as well as on Intelligence checks to recall information about them.

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

Gunshy. Firearms aimed at a gremlin will not fire on first pull. If a character holds their aim on the gremlin for a round, the shot goes off at the start of the shooter's next turn. Otherwise the gun fires the moment the shooter stops aiming.

Hunter's Prey: Colossus Slayer (1d8, 1/Turn). When the gremlin hits a creature with a weapon attack, the creature takes an extra 4 (1d8) damage if it's below its hit point maximum.

Innate Spellcasting. The gremlin's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 10). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At will: *prestidigitation, speak with animals*

1/day: *shatter*

Land's Stride. Moving through nonmagical difficult terrain costs the gremlin no extra movement. It can also pass through nonmagical plants without being slowed by them and without taking damage from them if they have thorns, spines, or a similar hazard.

~In addition, it has advantage on saving throws against plants that are magically created or manipulated to impede movement, such as those created by the *entangle* spell.

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

Natural Explorer: Forests. When the gremlin makes an Intelligence or Wisdom check related to forests, its proficiency bonus (+3) is doubled if it is using Animal Handling or Perception. While traveling for an hour or more in a forest, it gains the following benefits: difficult terrain doesn't slow its group's travel, its group can't become lost except by magical means, even when it engages in another activity while

traveling it remains alert to danger, if it is traveling alone it can move stealthily at a normal pace, it finds twice as much food as it normally would when it forages, and while tracking other creatures it also learns their exact number, their sizes, and how long ago they passed through the area.

Quick. The gremlin has advantage on initiative checks.

Ranger Features. The gremlin also has the Primeval Awareness ranger class features.

Spellcasting. The gremlin is an 8th-level spellcaster that uses Wisdom as its spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14; +6 to hit with spell attacks). The gremlin knows the following spells from the ranger's spell list:

1st-level (4 slots): *cure wounds, detect magic, entangle*

2nd-level (3 slots): *pass without trace, spike growth*

Unluck Aura. The gremlin radiates an aura of unluck in a 20-foot radius. Creatures in this area have disadvantage on all d20 rolls. This is a mind-affecting effect that does not work on animals, gremlins, or gnolls. Any character who gains any sort of luck bonus (such as that granted by a *stone of good luck* or *divine favor*) is immune to the gremlin's Unluck Aura.

ACTIONS

Extra Attack. The gremlin attacks twice when it takes the Attack action.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/40 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) piercing damage.

Fey Dire Fox

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 16

Hit Points 95 (10d10+40)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	22 (+6)	19 (+4)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Int -1

Skills Perception +7, Survival +4

Senses passive Perception 17

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Keen Hearing and Smell. The fox has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Nimble Escape. The fox can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

Pack Tactics. The fox has advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of the fox's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The fox attacks twice.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6+4) piercing damage and the creature is grappled (escape DC 15). The fox cannot attack another target while it is grappling a creature.

**Great Huntsman**

Medium fey, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 24 (plate)**Hit Points** 103 (9d8+63)**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	20 (+5)	24 (+7)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	17 (+3)

Skills Acrobatics +9, Animal Handling +6, Insight +10, Intimidation +7, Nature +6, Perception +10, Stealth +19**Damage Resistances** lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 20**Languages** Elven, Primordial, Sylvan**Challenge** 12 (8,400 XP)**Armor Master.** The great huntsman always adds his Dexterity modifier to his armor class regardless of what armor he is wearing.**Feat: Mounted Combat.** When the great huntsman's mount is attacked, he can make herself the target of that attack. In addition, he has advantage on melee attack rolls when his target is an unmounted creature smaller than his mount. Finally, when the great huntsman's mount is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, it instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.**Innate Spellcasting.** The great huntsman's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.**Constant:** *pass without trace***At will:** *fog cloud, minor illusion, phantom steed, sleep***1/day:** *call lightning, freedom of movement***Magic Resistance.** The great huntsman has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.**Regeneration.** The great huntsman regains 5 hit points at the start of his turn. He dies only if he starts his turn with 0 hit points.**Vulnerable to Firearms.** The great huntsman takes 7 (2d6) extra damage from each successful attack with a firearm.**ACTIONS****Multiattack.** The great huntsman casts a spell and attacks twice.**Magic Lance.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (1d12+6) piercing damage. He has disadvantage when attacking a target within 5 feet.**Longbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8+5) piercing damage.

Any skewered PCs get taunted by Riffian and flung away as the riders continue their pursuit of the fox.

If the party manages to get out of range, the gremlin rider almost rides out of the battlefield, then wheels about, pauses for a moment to spit at them, then spurs his fox away. The Great Hunt nearly trample into the party as they make the hairpin turn, apparently oblivious to the rules that say they can't leave the battlefield and come back in.

Goggling and Gossip**Social. Real-Time.**

Fey noble onlookers treat the party as honored guests while gossiping about current events.

Rambylon guides the party to a gathering of onlookers on the hills that border the chessboard battlefield. A few dozen fey, well-dressed in combed furs, fine flowers, or diaphanous gowns, sit on giant toadstools or actual toads, enjoying a picnic and occasionally peeking at the battle below through a novelty: brass telescopic goggles, owned by the picnic organizer, **Clausvald**. Claus resembles a yellow caterpillar the size of a horse, with pudgy arms and tiny hands.

He is attended by black-feathered swanmays. The rest of the crowd is a mix of human-sized, elfin-looking fey and smaller pixies.

A grumpy ettercap named **Mista Nyses** scrambles about on his spindly spider-like legs, serving everyone drinks, slicing their bread and cheese, and constantly itching beneath the ridiculously fluffy angora sweater he's been forced to wear. When called upon for food, he clammers into a nearby tree, disappears into an orb of spider webs about the size of a person, then emerges shortly thereafter with the desired snacks. This is the Webway, a sort of magic transport system that normally only arachnids in the Dreaming can take advantage of. It will play a prominent role later in this act, so make sure to mention it a few times.

Claus, aggressively drunk, welcomes the party and claps with delight at the sight of their magical equipment. He offers them some of his delectable repast, and in exchange only asks that they have a conversation with him. If any PC rests and eats, Rambylon warns them to avoid the apples, which are hallucinogenic. Then on second thought he recommends the apples.

Now is a good time to clear up for the party what day it is, in case their teleportation mishap at the end of **ZEITGEIST #8: Diaspora** left caused them to lose some time. Claus has heard rumors about how travel between the Dreaming and the waking has been chaotic lately, so he suggests the party get comfortable, because they likely won't be going home any time soon.

Conversation.

Clausvald asks which side they're fighting for, and when he gets a sense of their confusion he'll lay out the basics:

- The Unseen Court monarch Thisraldion has been at odds with the Hedgehog Court for years, with disputes focusing on Risur's use of technology.
- Olazdor, a master archer and the head of the Hedgehog Court (though he, himself, has no head), had a lot of people in the city of Clover talking about rebellion.
- Thisraldion's consort, the human musician Rock Rackus, returned in early Autumn, over four months ago. Seemingly unbeknownst to the monarch, Rock was conspiring with the Hedgehog Court.
- Three weeks ago, during the Snow Moon, Thisraldion found out and murdered Rock when he was on his way to a meeting with Olazdor. Rock's head was sliced cleanly off, but the Unseen Court tried to blame the Hedgehog's by sticking an arrow in Rock's heart.



The Webway.

Scattered throughout the Dreaming, various fey arachnids (we don't care if ettercaps aren't technically fey; they live here and are appropriately weird, so they count) have built large orbs of webs in the hollows or boughs of trees, down shadowed alleys, or beneath uncleaned rafters.

Any Dreaming native with the ability to navigate webs can enter one of these orbs, opening a brief portal into the Webway. The portal remains open for about a minute, giving non-spiders a chance to follow.

Inside, the Webway is a cramped labyrinth of tunnels composed wholly of webs (the tough fibrous kind, not the sticky kind), sort of like crawling through a child's tubular playset. Every few feet an exit off to the side leads back out to the Dreaming proper, and by traveling just a dozen feet in the webway you might be able to emerge a mile away in the Dreaming.

The tunnels of the Webway are big enough for medium creatures to walk through, or large creatures to crawl through. The occasional huge spider also squeezes its way through, devouring anything in its path. Most arachnid fey spend at least part of their day in the webway, and might harass intruders. And while natives have spent years becoming familiar with how different tunnels intersect and where their exits lead, outsiders run the risk of falling out of the webway with no idea where they've landed.

Let PCs who examine one of these orbs make a DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check to determine the nature of the Webway. One particular trait of note is that it is not planar travel per se. Rather than teleporting or entering another world, accessing the Webway is like crawling into a tunnel most people cannot see. Effects that block teleportation do not prevent entering or leaving the Webway.



- For a week now loyalists of each side have come out to the fields to battle, but it's still civil. Claus thinks things will go out of control and the fighting will move into the city itself, and all across the countryside. That's why he's moved out here, next to the battlefield, where it's safe.

At this point, Mista Nyves impertinently clicks his pedipalps and says that Thisraldion's the rightful ruler, and that Rock was actually spying for the Unseen Court. Olazdor found out, killed Rock, and tried to blame Thisraldion. Mista Nyves heard this from his good friend Copperhat. His name sets off a round of scoffing among the rest of the picnickers, and they complain about various interactions with Copperhat, like when he somehow got hold of a wagon full of children's books from the Waking and tried to sell them. His rationale was that every orphanage in the Waking has these books, so if someone in the Dreaming had them, it would attract children, which have all manner of uses.

A good idea, points out one of the swanmays, except the books were all philosophy texts, and the only people who showed up were dwarves, who seemed intent on ruining their parties.

Down below on the battlefield, a stormcloud has gathered, and bolts of lightning flicker out to strike shambling mounds. The picnickers pay attention to the ensuing fight for a few minutes.

Exploring the Dreaming.

The geography of the Dreaming, including mountains, rivers, and the like, are all similar to the real world, though with east and west reversed. Cities are also similar, though not always exact mirrors. Distances are not fixed, and certainly weights and measurements don't adhere to any logical standard. Unattended mechanical devices naturally stop working since the careful alignments of moving parts end up not quite-so-aligned if no one is tending to them.

The most important thing to understand about the Dreaming is that it does not have a single objective reality. Time and distance are subjective, contorting to fit the stories of any given person, though never going so far as to become impossible to anyone else. Two people engaged in conversation might sense time passing at different rates. A bored person would feel like the day is slipping away swiftly, while the person who is boring him thinks only a short time has elapsed. Only once the conversation ends or one of them mentions what time it is will the Dreaming settle on an actual time, and both people's perceptions would shift to match it.

That said, the analogue of Risur in the Dreaming has the same general landscape:

- The big thicket, home of the fey titan the Ash Wolf, lies to the west beyond the Great Blight (as the lands near Flint are called). The city of Weevil, where giant insects are used as steeds and beasts of burden, sits analogous to Bole.
- The islands of the Yerasol Archipelago lie to the east, and the whole coastline is the domain of She Who Writhes. Analogous to Shale is the flooded city of Conch.
- The wetlands surround Clover, and here roam the herds of the Father of Thunder. Erratic farms cling to hills and sometimes run into caves in this hill landscape.
- The High Bayou to the south, where the Voice of Rot lairs, is filled with creepy villages of dark fey, over which seems to hang a perpetual night. The sun only rises when there is a bloodied carcass to reveal, and even then only for a few hours.
- Beyond that, in the Anthras Mountains, sleeps Granny Allswell, attended by her brood of gremlins, goblins, bugbears, and other things with G in their name.

What lies beyond the borders of Risur in the Dreaming is outside the scope of this adventure. Imagine whatever you like.

Further Gossip.

This can be an opportunity to share the "Meanwhile in the News" stories (page 9), and to make it clear that while it's normally just difficult to get between the Dreaming and the Waking, for the past few days it has been completely impossible.

At this point, one of the pixies realizes who the party is, and shouts, "*These are the ones from Rock Rackus's song! The Royal Homeland Congratulatory!*" This provokes a round of toasts to the party's good health, since due to a song Rock performed around Clover a few times, everyone here is a great fan of their fight against the aliens from beyond the moon.

Let's Make a Deal.

Clausvald expresses interest in buying the party's magic items. He explains that he is a great businessman, and while he would normally have no need for weapons, these are dangerous times.



"You might think I'm a fool to try to fight, but I have gold, and a fool and his gold are soon parted! Now sell me your weapons, foreigners."

He asks about the party's gear, comes to a reasonable estimate of their value, and offers something around 20% over the market share for one item belonging to each PC. If the PCs agree, one of his swanmay assistants produces a mass of gold coins in a *bag of holding* to pay for them.

In truth, Claus wants to sell the items to collectors, who are interested in everything even tangentially related to Rock Rackus. And he intends to pay the party with fool's gold, a deceit they might see through with a DC 21 Wisdom (Insight) check. The coins are enchanted to resemble real gold, and detecting the illusion requires the ability to see magical auras and a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check. If his deception is caught, he defends himself by claiming he did not lie; he said he was a fool, and so they should expect any gold he offers to be fool's gold. That is, unless they're fools, in which case they might not expect it, but that would make it even more appropriate for him to pay them with it.

If the party doesn't notice the trickery, Mista Nyves interrupts and asks his boss Claus if he's paying with the real gold or the fake stuff. Claus tells the little spider creature that he's fired, and that he wants him to hand over the sweater immediately. Do note that Nyves does this not out of any desire to help the party; he's just incredibly contrary by nature.

Need a Guide?

Rambylon says that this is a clear example of why the party could use a guide. Fey are tricky with their words, and if the party isn't clever they might fall victim. He offers to show them around Clover and get them in touch with the Hedgehog Court, who will gladly help them, unlike the deceptive Unseen Court. In exchange, all he wants is a lady's kiss.

Mista Nyves, recently unemployed, says he's not weird, and will work for the normal pretties: coins, gems, and shiny knives. He can be just as good a guide as Rambylon, and only costs 5 gp per day. No kisses necessary, he adds with a fidget of his venomous pedipalps.

With Rambylon as their guide, the party will have an easy time in Clover. Mista Nyves, though, is a disaster of an escort. He leads them maliciously into all sorts of petty fey tricks. For instance, he tries to show them a bar where he claims witnesses to Rock's murder drink, and they're only allowed in if they promise not to leave without buying a drink. Once inside, they discover that all the drinks are free, and that the bar is in an extraplanar space that the fey will only let them leave if they can outdrink the nereid (a water nymph) who owns the place. Plus the whole time he's gathering information and reporting on them to Copperhat the Headless.

If the party declines them both, let them stumble a bit as they navigate the eccentricities of fey city life, but they're famous enough here to get an audience with the Unseen or Hedgehog Courts with little trouble (or the courts will find them once word spreads).

Enter Clover

Exploration. Montage.

The Dreaming analogue to the city of Slate reacts to an infamy the party might not know they had.

The fighting comes to an abrupt end early in the afternoon, at which point the sun ceases to move through the sky. Everyone packs up, and most of the survivors head for the nearby city of Clover.

Fey soldiers clog the road from the chessboard battlefield to Clover, and few of them display much fey mirth. A large "traffic jam" has backed up near a river, as the soldiers who are returning to Clover barter for beeswax so they can plug their ears. Everyone complains about the noise, but unless a PC is native to the Dreaming, they don't notice what to the locals sounds like a persistent high-pitched trembling whine.

The road passes within a half mile of a "blighted area," which in the real world is the site of a simple flour mill powered by a water wheel in the river. Its presence irritates the fey on a visceral level. The fey who are typically able to cross over into the real world briefly to muck with such mechanical devices—commonly known as gremlins—aren't able to do so now.

The party can easily pass through here, though they have to ford the river (no bridges, because they attract trolls). There's not much they can do other than commiserate or maybe hear the local gossip. All told, walking to Clover takes less than an hour, but as they reach the city the sun is already setting. And it remains setting, potentially for hours, until either the party reaches Thistle Palace or decides to take a sleep.

The Fey Capital.

Clover is built in the Dreaming on lands analogous to the real world city Slate, capital of Risur. The Great Delve River, its steep banks adorned by flowers and dotted with windows of hillside burrows, separates the fey city into the noble east bank and the common west bank.

In Slate there are six antique castles that sit inside a wide bend on the river's east bank, and in Clover there are nearly identical buildings (on the west bank), suggesting some odd resonance between the real world and the Dreaming that causes them to converge when things exist long enough. Clover's castles are home to lords of various regions of the continent, each heavily guarded by lithe warriors in nimble plate armor, who hide beneath mats of grass and moss but are ready to spring to battle and ambush intruders. The lords fear the rabble of the west bank, led by the Hedgehog Court.

Across the shore is a chaotic mess of narrow winding streets and houses of all sorts—straw, wood, brick, some metal, and even one composed of stacked sheep—inhabited by the common fey. The fey (or occasionally their houses) bustle through the town trading oddities, treats, or songs for whatever other fey can offer.

A broad grassy hill rises above the rest of the city, site of Thistle Palace, from which the Unseen Court rules. Like the castles of the west, this palace is practically identical to Torfeld Palace in the real world.



Sites of Interest.

If the party explores, here are some sample locations.

The Headless Human.

This bar sits in the darkest, gloomiest part of town, not far from the tunnel where Rock Rackus was killed. Many spider webs cling in the alleys and awnings around it, and the bar's hag owner likes the ambience. Copperhat the Headless drinks here, swigging wine and drowning his sorrows. See Copperhat and the Headless Human (page 25) for details.

Honorable Halls of Accumulated Wisdom.

Three stories tall, with three basement levels, this library is filled with labyrinthine rows of books, scrolls, bound codices, and loose bundles held together by twine, ranging in content from cyclops recipes to pixie philosophy to forbidden spellbooks.

A pair of ancient pixie sisters named Alba and Zanel, wrinkled, doddering, and flirtatious, own the library, which is served by dozens of younger pixies who sort and search.

The library plays a small role in Lady Atsla's plot to frame Thisraldion (see Cold as Ice, page 25). Additionally, the librarians will be able to provide critical information to help the party get back home (see Librarians to the Rescue, page 36).

Mosscat Mortuary.

The party can find Rock's body being prepared for burial here. See The Body (page 27).

Flashdrought Fountain.

Analogous to the Grand Weft in Slate (where a trio of highways intersect), Clover has a thoroughfare, albeit more chaotic. At its edge sits the famous Flashdrought Fountain, displaying desiccated wooden statues in the shape of angry air elementals. The fountain itself is perpetually dry, but if you pour liquid into it, sometimes coins rain down from the statues' clouds.

Anyone who sits by the fountain for a minute or so feels suddenly thirsty as the latest things they drank are magically sucked out of them. This is a popular spot for people seeking instant sobriety, though the process can yield horrific hangovers.

Krog Tunnel.

This three-ended tunnel, a mile from Thistle Palace, is where Rock's body was found on the night of the 16th. It is detailed more thoroughly in Crime Scene (page 23).

Shady Grove.

This weathy neighborhood for dark fey consists of a tangle of thorny trees that overgrew an earlier array of buildings. Like a tiny urban jungle, the labyrinthine grove hosts some of the most bizarre and debauched festivals in the city, and separatists aligned with the Hedgehog Court gather here regularly to plan each day's battles. The party might come here to haggle for magic items owned by old collectors who loot the fallen, or to hire a creepy talking mushroom to cast spells they need for their investigation.

Thistle Palace.

On the east side of the city, Thistle Palace has three main buildings—the central House of Perennials, the eastern House of the Unseen Court, and the western House of Mayflies. Prestigious visitors normally enter from the east, especially if they're conducting business with the Unseen Court. Commoners typically enter from the west. Currently the west wing has been given to the Hedgehog Court, and the hall between the central Perennial and western Mayflies houses has been bisected by a thorn wall.

Rock Rackus regularly would visit the Unseen Court, leave through the east gate, travel through the city, get a little lost, and then find his way to the Hedgehog Court through the west gate, never realizing they were both in the same building.

Instant Fame.

Courtesy of Rock Rackus, the whole city knows about the party. Keeping a low profile is challenging, and generally fey follow the party, ask them questions, and occasionally try to pick their pockets.

If the party wants to visit Thistle Palace, word has likely preceded them, and the guards known as *rangale* – human-faced elks, stags, and gazelles who telekinetically hover spears or other weapons – gladly let them in. Otherwise, eventually a one-eyed pixie escorted by a pair of women in finely articulated mithral plate armor finds them and delivers a scroll with an invitation. Thisraldion, monarch of the Unseen Court, offers aid in returning to the Waking in exchange for aid in solving the murder of Rock Rackus.

Two-Faced Politicians

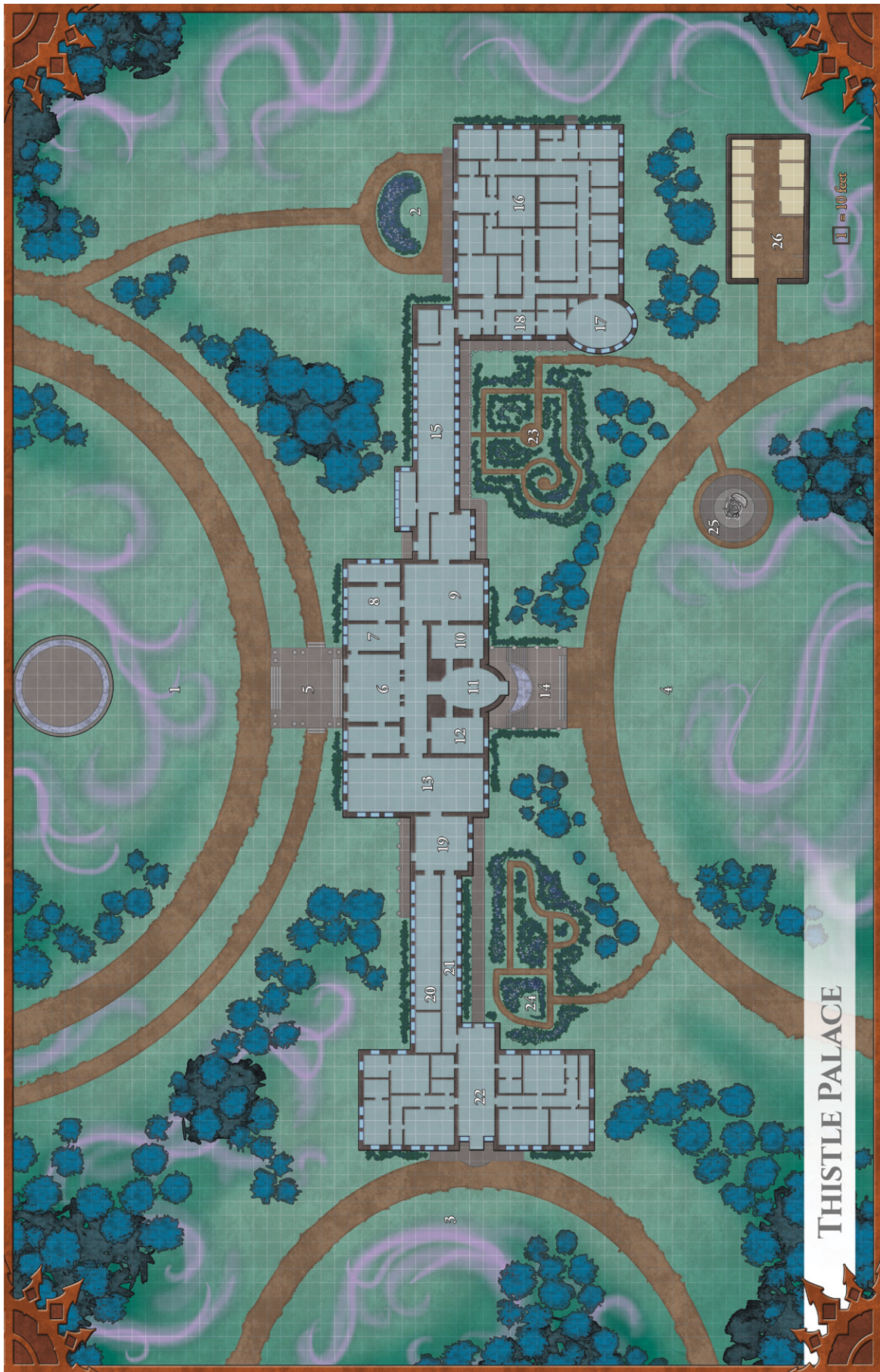
Social. Real-Time.

The Unseen Court offers to get the party home if they can pin the murder of Rock Rackus on the Hedgehog Court, but they're really out to benefit themselves.

A brownie named **Binniwich** greets the party when they arrive at Thistle Palace, obsequiously proclaiming how wonderful Risur is, how wonderful the PCs are, and how wonderful it is that they've come to help the Unseen Court.

Palace Layout.

- Foreigner Fountain.** Non-fey are expected to wash their hands at this fountain. The mere act ends up cleaning everything they wear, from boots to hats, in order to ensure no grease stains the palace carpets.
- House of the Unseen Court—Entrance.** A portico held up by dryads welcomes visitors; those who have not been invited are compelled (DC 21 Wisdom saving throw) not to enter.
- House of Mayflies—Entrance.** Commoners are welcome here, and the only guards are swarms of pixies who will put to sleep (DC 15 Wisdom saving throw) anyone who causes a ruckus.
- Grand Lawn.** Cheerful sporting events occur here normally. This week, though, tents dot the campus, filled with injured fey returned from the ongoing battles. One lord of the Unseen Court, Sallin the Dryad, makes the rounds each day healing the few that she can.



THISTLE PALACE



Lore of the Unseen Court.

The fey spread all manner of rumors about who makes up the Court, and accurate knowledge is hard to come by even in the Dreaming. Scholars in the real world have managed to pin down some facts, which the PCs might know. A DC 25 Intelligence (Arcana) check is enough to know the basic personalities of Atsla and Karrest, and Knowledge (nature) is appropriate for Furg and Sallin. If the party has this information going in, they might gain a +2 or +5 bonus to skill checks involving those lords.

Thisraldion has worked to maintain misinformation, so it is practically impossible to get any useful insights to the monarch.

5. **House of Perennials—Entrance.** More armored stags guard here, these equipped with levitating bows, and the flowery caryatids supporting the awning here can themselves animate as treants. Beautiful nymphs greet renowned visitors and take them to the drawing room to enjoy a light repast.
6. **Entrance Foyer.** A decorative “dragon” made from flower wreathes and purple silks hangs from the ceiling by wires.
7. **Guard Post.**
8. **Drawing Room.** There are canvases and charcoal here so people can draw.
9. **Game Room.** Fey are fond of riddle games, so mostly the room just has comfortable chairs.
10. **Antechamber.** People gamble with cards here.
11. **Diplomatic Reception.** This is a diplomatic way to refer to the palace jail. Right in line of sight of everyone, with barred windows that give prisoners a view of all the fun everyone is having out on the grand lawn (well, normally—now the cell is even more depressing).
12. **Library.**
13. **Chamber of the Hedgehog Court.** The doorway that leads to the east half of the palace is always closed, locked, and covered with a tapestry. This room has a raised floor along its east side where the members of the court stand like actors in a play put on for whatever visitors and petitioners stand on the lower floor.
14. **Balcony.**
15. **Mask Gallery.** Fey who die as members of the Unseen Court have their masks hung here as mementos.
16. **The Runaround.** A trap door in the floor in this room leads down to the palace’s dungeon. The term “the runaround” actually applies to the halls and rooms surrounding it.

The whole eastern wing of the palace is eerily empty, with magic keeping the place in fine condition. Honored guests of the Unseen Court who arrive here are greeted by one or more Unseen lords, who talk while strolling through the mostly empty building. Members of the court show up, talk for a bit, then peel off, weaving through rooms. Eventually the walk-and-talk leads them back to Area 17, where formal meetings will begin.
17. **Chamber of the Unseen Court.** The Unseen Court holds formal business here.
18. **Fool’s Chamber.** If an “honored guest” grows impatient of the runaround, the fey lords petulantly punish them by

Skyseer Welcoming.

Any skyseer among the PCs is treated as an honored guest by the Unseen Court. The fey load them up with luxurious furs, insist they eat rich desserts, and constantly beg forgiveness that they were not ready to “repay their debt.” The truth is, a skyseer many generations ago convinced the ruler of the Unseen Court at the time that any hostility to his order would result in the Dreaming being cracked in two in punishment.

These offerings are not “gifts” in the fey sense, and hold no obligation. Indeed, a skyseer can even get the *Book of Kelland* from Furg without owing any debt to the toadstool sage.

taking them to this room instead of the actual meeting chamber. Here they are told the rest of the court will arrive shortly, and are asked to wait. Once they realize the prank and walk through the unlocked door to the south, the whole Unseen Court bursts into laughter.

19. **Commons.** Guests of the Hedgehog Court gather here, and members of that more blasé court often come out to eat and drink with them.
20. **Party Hall.**
21. **Champion Gallery.**
22. **Offices.** Tiny fey work feverishly in this wing, recording the events and speeches and copying them so they can be distributed to the people of the Dreaming. Olazdor wishes he could get a printing press that wouldn’t grate on everyone’s ears, but this is the next best way to spread the word of their resistance to the Unseen Court.
23. **Monarch Garden.** Statues of Risuri monarchs stand here.
24. **Hood Garden.** Hooded lanterns sit on poles amidst this grove of trees. The lanterns are always lit, but the hoods over them mean they only light the ground directly beneath them, leaving the area gloomy.
25. **Titan Shrine.** An identical set of statues in the Waking depicts the five fey titans.
26. **Stables.** The rangale (stag and gazelle guards) sleep here.

Meeting the Court.

Binniwich the brown-nosing brownie brings the party through the palace to Area 16, the runaround. When the party arrives, Lady Atsla is emerging from the trap door to the palace dungeon. She notes the party’s presence, nods to Binniwich to dismiss him, then closes the trap door and gestures for the party to follow her.

The Runaround (in addition to being a *West Wing* reference) is an excuse for you to introduce a collection of NPCs one by one, instead of having to roleplay them all at once. The lords and ladies of the Unseen Court intend to put the PCs through their paces to get a gauge of their personalities. Try to let each make an impression before the party gets back to Area 17 and meets Thisraldion.

Remember that for all of the lords of the Unseen Court, no part of their body is ever visible. They all wear masks on invisible faces, and their clothes suggest the shape of a body, perhaps even with gloves or gauntlets allowing them to gesture with hands. But they never have visible skin. Those who can see invisible creatures or pierce illusions *can* see the members of the court, which really upsets them.



Atsla the Ice.

Appearing just as a dress of snow, a mask of ice, and handprints or footprints of frost from whatever she touches, Atsla stoically refrains from speaking unless truly necessary. Her most common form of interaction is to glare and cause the air to chill significantly to express her displeasure. She's likely first to meet the party, and will merely gesture with her head for them to follow. She then walks through Area 16, heading nowhere in particular but gauging the party's reaction.

She can be won over with shows of sisterly affection between women, and she reacts poorly to threats or innuendo. Honestly the less one talks to her, the more she likes them.

Atsla's ulterior desire is for the party to pin Rock's murder on Thisraldion. She wants to ascend in the court's hierarchy, and to bring in Beshela, Archfey of the Sea, so there will be more women in the court.

Karrest the Fire.

Karrest dresses in heavy black cloaks, a black cowl, and a charred stone mask with seams of glowing lava, but adorns his whole body with firegems, including rings on several of his fingers. Flighty and warlike, he'll appear and threaten the party with a sword of ruby if they do not treat his beloved Atsla with respect. He blows Atsla a kiss, who heads off in a different direction, then starts talking earnestly with the party.

Karrest responds positively to aggression and intimidation, which earns his respect. Though his affections would normally sour Atsla to him, he has a knack for sensing her moods. In fact, Atsla will try to keep her distance from him if she's trying to be deceptive, and keeping them together makes it easier to sense her motives; see *Cold as Ice* (page 25).

In particular, the fiery fey lord is curious about what Asrabey's been up to (this mostly serves to clarify that he never made it back to the Dreaming since the party last saw him in *ZEITGEIST #8: Diaspora*.)

Karrest never liked Rackus—the man flirted with Atsla, after all, and bragged about fighting more than he ever actually dusted his knuckles. While he's glad the man is dead, he feels slighted that the Olazdor and the Hedgehog Court stole a kill that he wanted. He hopes the party will pin the murder on Olazdor, and give him an opportunity to dispense justice in an honorable duel.

Furg the Toadstool Sage.

A voice from a nearby room cuts in, claiming that even fools like Rackus can bring wisdom by giving us a mirror to compare ourselves to. Into the hallway steps a mound of mossy and moldy clothes dotted with mushrooms. A mask of brittle cracked turquoise hangs low beneath the figure's shoulders, and vivid blue frogs occasionally crawl across or through its cloak.

Furg tells Karrest to let Thisraldion know the guests are coming, and then asks the party to accompany him to a south window that looks out to the Titan Shrine statues. Beside the window he pulls a book from a shelf and presents it to one of the PCs. This is the original *Book of Kelland*, he says, which reveals how the foolishness of the fey titans led to creating the first human king.

See the Appendix (Magic and Training) for details of this

ornately-illuminated tome, but the thrust is that the ambition of the Voice of Rot and the single-mindedness of the other fey titans led to the rise of Kelland, who learned how to defeat them all. Fools, Furg says, are useful, because the wise and clever can use them to step up to greatness.

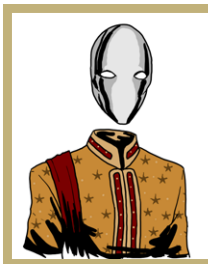
If any PC accepts this gift from Furg, he will become beholden to the Toadstool Sage, and must fulfill one single task the Unseen lord might ask, or else suffer the consequences of a *geas* spell (as if cast using a 9th level spell slot). Furg may use this in a later adventure once the PCs have risen to control Risur and have influence even beyond it. We have no specific plans for this, so consider how the fey's influence might compromise the gifted PC's goals later on.

Furg honestly doesn't care who killed Rock Rackus.

Sallin the Dryad.

An ash tree just outside the window rustles with unusual intensity, and the party spots a mask—and just a mask, composed of tree bark framed with feathers—floating over from the Grand Lawn. Sallin the Dryad's passage is marked by flowers and grass blooming with each of her steps, but she is naked save for her mask. When she gets close to the window, Furg waves to her, and she nods back. The tree outside dips and stretches its branches, creating a seat which the invisible Sallin climbs into. Then the entire tree uproots itself and walks through the window as if the glass weren't there.

Sallin stops her tree steed and chuckles like a cheery old grandmother when she sees the party. "So many weapons," she chides. "I keep tryin' t'keep our youngsters alive, and people like you keep choppin' their 'eads off. Shame I couldn't help poor Rock, but maybe I can help you little lost children."



Thisraldion. The enigmatic monarch of the Unseen Court, Thisraldion's mirrored mask shows onlookers what they expect to see. If Thisraldion wishes to posit opposing positions in a conversation, the mask will from time to time fade out and reappear speaking from the other side of the room. Each onlooker will somehow sense that the mask looks different in a way they cannot describe.

The fey use the titles "King" and "Queen" along with the pronouns "he" and "she" seemingly at random when referring to Thisraldion. The monarch's melodious voice hovers somewhere around an androgynous alto/tenor, but for emphasis can shift much higher or lower (and certainly much louder). When mortals first encounter Thisraldion, they assume that the monarch belongs to whichever gender they find most attractive. This led to an amusing love triangle involving Thisraldion, Rock Rackus, and Thisraldion, which none of the fey thought ought to be explained to the human.

Constantly appearing and disappearing in places, Thisraldion seems flighty and capricious, regularly going on tangents, or diverting conversations into discussions about poetry and warfare instead of giving straightforward answers to direct questions. In fact, the monarch is a subtle manipulator, deploying a confusing and stereotypically "fey" demeanor to unbalance others. Thisraldion will let visitors talk until they reveal what they expect the Unseen Court wants of them.

Thisraldion wields a *vorpal longsword*. Since there's a chance Thisraldion will die and the party might take the monarch's weapon, consider changing it to a type of weapon a PC would want.



Sallin and Furg lead the party to the Chamber of the Unseen Court, and the building casually makes room for Sallins' massive tree, then returns to its normal form once she has passed.

Sallin desires for the war to end. She happens to think that finding Olazdor guilty and executing him for murder will discredit him and halt the violence, but she's fine with any solution that stops the war.

Thisraldion.

The four fey lords gather in the Chamber of the Unseen Court and take their seats around Thisraldion's throne. The fey monarch sits twirling an unsheathed *vorpal longsword* when the party arrives, making snicker-snack sounds as it slices the air.

A spare chair sits unoccupied; it belonged to Ekossigan, whose position has not been filled since the events of *ZEITGEIST #5: Cauldron-Born*.

Thisraldion dallies frivolously with the party, acting weird and proposing ambling feasts or useless poetry competitions in order to irk them. If eventually the party grows impatient and starts making demands, the monarch will better know what they want. If they play along, Thisraldion calls for dinner amid the injured on the Grand Lawn, and discusses business then.

Making Deals with Faeries.

Thisraldion states that the Unseen Court will find the party a route back to the real world in exchange for them proving that Olazdor and the Hedgehog Court were responsible for the murder of Rock Rackus. The monarch then weeps a bit—which is mostly staged—saying that never has one of the Unseen loved a mortal so intensely. And the folk of the Dreaming loved him too. If there is to be a new king in Risur, there are few acts that could earn more favor among the fey than to bring justice to the hero Rock Rackus's killer.

That might perk up the party's ears. Thisraldion has a hunch that over in the Waking, Aodhan is not long for the world. Shadows have been moving strangely around the palace, and Thisraldion knows hostiles are gathering in the Bleak Gate. The Unseen Court of course would gladly help defend Risur's king if the old pacts were invoked, but it seems the humans don't know how to contact them.

Karrest growls that it's more important to defeat the Hedgehog Court. Sallin says solving the murder will do that, but Karrest is flustered, since by "defeat" he meant "kill." Making peace bores him. He then explains that fey law forbids the leaders of the two factions from joining battle until their underlings have had a chance to settle things.

Furg and Atsla don't talk unless the party addresses them. The toadstool sage admits that he appreciates the novelty of the war, and would be fine to let it persist for a few more months at least. Atsla pointedly says that of course their interest is in ensuring the strength of their nation, but she thinks it might be necessary from time to time to let contenders to the throne take their shot, so the common folk are confident they actually do have the best leader possible.

Thisraldion claims that, just as the monarch of Risur has powers to travel between worlds, so does the monarch of the Unseen Court, and the party will not be permitted to return to their homeland unless they can find Rock's killer.

The Great Hunt.

During the discussion, Binniwich the brownie announces the arrival of Riffian, captain of the Great Hunt. The giant of a man strides in, dressed in mithral plate, with silver antlers atop his helm and a bullet hole in the breastplate over his heart. His voice reverberates jollily through his helmet, which he never removes.

He turns to Thisraldion and kneels, begging forgiveness for failing in his hunt. He promises he shall catch that blasted fox soon enough, and the only explanation he can give is that people keep getting in his way. Then, having a sudden revelation, he stands and gives the party a bold "huzzah." He recognizes them from earlier, apologizes if he trampled any of them, and says that he won't hold it against them that they were Rock Rackus's friends. He thought that guy was an idiot.

He then realizes he has interrupted politics, and he hates politics, so he makes his departure.

Once he's gone, the Unseen Court members have a laugh. They told Riffian a fox had killed one of Thisraldion's favorite hens, and ever since they've been using him and the whole Great Hunt in battle by luring them around with various foxes. If the party mentions this to Riffian, he shrugs it off, since his duty is to the Court, no matter how inane they may be.

Negotiating with Thisraldion.

Thisraldion is totally lying about knowing how to get to the Waking, and so is willing to offer some other concessions to the party if they demand it in exchange for helping with the murder investigation. Some possibilities include:

- Joining the fight against the Ob (though only if they can actually get to the real world).
- Magic items, gems, or coinage worth 30,000 gp per PC (which can be negotiated up to 50,000).
- Political demands (which go beyond the scope of this adventure).

One offer that would sweeten the deal for Thisraldion is for a PC to take the place of Asrabey Varal as liaison to Risur and chief warrior for the court.

Thisraldion proposes to give the party the entire following day to work on their investigation, and then to present their evidence on the palace's grand lawn at noon the day after. The Hedgehog Court will also be invited to see the party's presentation, so from the ten total fey lords (five from each court), if they can convince a majority of who the killer is, Thisraldion will tell them how to return home.

Realistically, no PC should be able to tell that Thisraldion is deceiving them. The fey lord is an amazing liar, protected from divination—overcoming it requires a DC 30 Intelligence (Arcana) check—and they would have to attack and dispel several layers of defensive wards before they could use magic to detect Thisraldion's lies.

The fey lords leave it to the party to figure things out from there. Sallin offers a house elsewhere on the palace grounds for the party to sleep in, thoroughly attended to by servants. And Karrest, with a reminder that he's hoping to challenge Olazdor to a duel, gives them directions to the Hedgehog Court so they can interrogate the rebels.



Those directions lead off the palace grounds, through the city for a mile, then loop back to a different entrance to the palace. Rock Rackus never realized the two courts were in the same place, but with a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception or Survival) check the party figures it out.

Court of Justice

Social. Real-Time.

The Hedgehog Court appeals to the party's sense of right and wrong in order to defeat the Unseen Court.

The Hall of Mayflies is where the Hedgehog Court operates. A mass of satyrs, grigs, and pixies argue in the foyer, and the party might not get recognized at first. Then one of the rebel lords, **Lerina**, realizes who they are. As with the Unseen Court, we try to stagger the arrival of the NPCs, to make it easier for you to present the large group.

Lerina, the Reseen Marauder.

Lerina, a 300-year-old elfwoman who was born in the Waking, served for three decades on the Unseen Court, but Thisraldion stripped her of her title seven years ago when she became openly hostile to King Aodhan. Thisraldion entreated her to maintain harmony with Risur, then tried to buy her loyalty with gold. Now Lerina rather hates both harmony and gold. She is fully visible, which she flaunts by wearing very little clothing, though her old mask—pitted steel with red streaks of war paint—hangs around her neck on a silver chain.

Wielding a massive warhammer emblazoned with twin lightning bolts and accompanied by hawk-sized phoenix animal companion, Lerina has been a crusader for the rebel fey, and in the lead-up to the recent open conflict she often led raids against remote military strongholds loyal to the Unseen Court. She grates at the rules that forbid her from joining the ongoing battles, but expects to have a truly epic battle against Karrest when the time arises.

When she sees the party, Lerina sneaks up through the crowd and talks to them quietly so as not to make a scene. She asks how they're doing and how they ended up in the Dreaming, since it's been difficult to cross over for weeks, and impossible recently. Then she asks about Risur. Try to present her as a "normal person" rather than a fey or a politician, which might be refreshing to the party.

Eventually she grins and asks them to come meet the rest of the rebels, then guides the group through the crowd to the Chamber of the Hedgehog Court. If asked about Rock Rackus, she had no problems with the man, but he kept poor company, and was always bringing around the obnoxious Copperhat the Headless. The best thing to come from Rock's death was that she doesn't have to deal with Copperhat anymore.

Darbony, the Gruff Goat.

Petitioners are lined up in the hall outside the court chamber, and the attention of many are focused on an aged satyr, **Darbony**, who wears luxurious robes and gold jewelry. He flirts with a trio of veiled nymphs who giggle and slap his hands away as he uses them as props for a tale about wrestling a giant caterpillar.

Prisoners in the Dreaming.

In the campaign's first adventure, the party may have handed over to Asrabey Varal either the Duchess Ethelyn of Shale or Nathan Jierre (or both). While those two characters don't play a pivotal role in this adventure, if the party did acquiesce to Asrabey, they can benefit now from better reactions by the Unseen Court.

Ethelyn, if present, shares the same house Sallin offers the party. She has sway with Beshela, so if they need help dealing with the aquatic archfey (either to stop her interference or to get her to agree with their findings in the investigation), Ethelyn could be convinced to help if the party can arrange to get her back to the real world.

Nathan Jierre, by contrast, is not an honored guest; he is kept in Area 11, Diplomatic Reception. However, Atsla learned that his cousin, Lya Jierre, tried to save him, and she felt sympathy for the lonely man. If the party can share good news about Lya (or just lie about it), Nathan could get Atsla to open up about her intentions to overthrow Thisraldion.

If on the other hand the party managed to keep either or both of those characters in Risuri custody, they can play a minor role in the events of Act Two (see the Prisoners in Risur sidebar therein). If you've already done something with either character, though, their involvement is minor enough that removing them won't have a major effect. We just want to be sure to call back to the party's first adventure, to show the consequences—even minor—of their early choices.

Lerina interrupts his old war story and says the court recess is over, so they should be attending to business in the chambers. He huffs and ignores her. A few satyrs in the crowd, most of them bandaged from recent battles, curse under their breaths and one throws a bloody rag at the old man. Darbony produces an axe and threatens them. Petitioners scream and the scene will develop into a brawl if the party doesn't intervene. If he gets the chance, Darbony kills the satyr who threw the rag at him, then throws a bag of silver to the survivors. "*Weregild*," he chuckles, and then stalks into the council chamber.

Darbony bought his way into the leadership of the Hedgehog Court, but all he cares for is the prestige. His mismanagement has caused the satyrs who are allied with him to suffer the brunt of casualties among the rebel forces, and now they're threatening to abandon the rebellion. This would leave Darbony fairly worthless to the Hedgehog Court, but he's too stubborn and short-tempered to actually fix things. Fearing a loss of power he's taken to flirting and drinking at every opportunity.

He didn't like Rock, and saw him as a rival for women's attention. He particularly hates him now, since by dying he sparked the war, which has eroded Darbony's position. Of all the rebels, he's most desperate to end the fighting, and offers to bear false witness for the party to help them wrap the mystery up quickly.

Lavac, the Gremlin Herald.

Inside the court chambers, curtains cover the windows while the court is in recess, and at first it seems the room is empty. Seats for the various court members (5 in total) sit on a low stage. As Lerina goes to open the curtains, a short figure lurking in a dark corner (spotted with a DC 28 Wisdom [Perception] check) leaps out and snarls at any PCs with technological devices.



This is **Lavac**, a scruffy black-furred gremlin that lopes about like a baboon. He hisses and snarls in Goblin, but understands Common and Primordial. If necessary, Lerina translates that Lavac wants something to break, and will offer a gremlin's boon in exchange. This is a show of respect among gremlins, since normally they just break things without asking. A PC who indulges the gremlin gains *Granny's Boon* (page 36), the favor of the fey titan Granny Allswell.

Lavac represents the gremlins of the Anthras Mountains, who are particularly annoyed by technology and adept at messing with it. He also unwittingly aided the Obscurati, who had him steer his gremlin followers at different mines. This freed up resources the Ob needed to construct the colossus. A few months ago Lavac

realized he had been duped. He has heard of the party's battles against the conspiracy, and so he's inclined to help them in order to clean the stain to his pride.

Lavac allied with the Hedgehog Court mostly because he knew Beshela was an avowed opponent of the Ob. The gremlin was indifferent to Rock, but can help the party if they need spies around the city.

Beshela, Archfey of the Sea.

Soon, Beshela and Olazdor return to the court chamber, clearly showing signs of affection. How Beshela reacts to the party depends on their previous encounter in *ZEITGEIST #7: Schism*. She likely is still foul toward them since they were instrumental in the downfall of her friend Ethelyn, but they might have earned her grudging respect.

Beshela's ultimate game is to steer the fey away from their traditional alliance with Risur, which she sees as corrupted by technology. She wants Olazdor to win the war, depose Thisraldion, and make her his consort as queen of the Unseen Court. Unfortunately, she's also fairly certain that Olazdor *did* kill Rock, and so when she learns the party will be investigating the crime she resolves to thwart them. See Beshela's Intervention (page 28).

The archfey is rather blind to the Obscurati's machinations and the looming threat to the world, and dismisses such affairs as "human problems."

Olazdor, Archfey of Winds.

The headless, eagle-masked Olazdor has a bow and quiver strung across his back and a pair of shortswords at his hips, presenting quite the image of a mighty warrior. He thumps his chest with his fist when he sees the party, and then asks for all members of the court to gather and for the room to be sealed, since it is time to discuss pressing business.

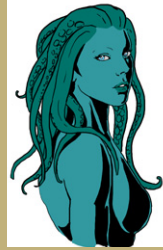
Olazdor entreats the PCs to investigate Rock's murder and help bring justice. He's certain Thisraldion did the vile deed, and calls the monarch both a jealous husband and a black widow. Rock was a fellow rebel, and his intelligence was a great boon to the Hedgehog Court's efforts to win over the fey public.

Olazdor admits he doesn't know how to get the party back to the Waking. He'll plainly tell them that if they need the Unseen Court's aid to return to Risur, they should damn him now and falsely convict him of the murder. But if they value justice and an honorable fight, they'll do what's right. He promises that if he joins the Unseen Court he will do all in his power to use the office to find the party a way home.

Court in Session.

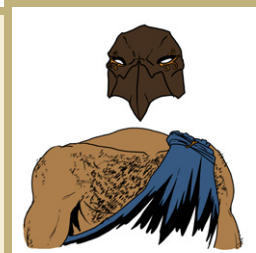
Olazdor will gladly talk with the party for a while to get them as much information as they need. Lerina suggests they send people to the Halls of Accumulated Wisdom to look for a way to send the party back to Risur. Darbony thinks they should just join the fight against the Unseen Court, and perhaps claim a kingdom for themselves. Lavac sits in a dark corner and watches. Beshela is primarily interested in what has happened in the Waking, and whether the monarchy is in danger. She disagrees with Aodhan, but he did once save her life.

Lady Beshela. Beshela serves as steward of the domains of the fey titan She Who Writhes. Though not a member of the Unseen Court, Beshela bears the title Archfey of the Sea and controls most of the waters along Risur's north shore. With armies of sea creatures at her command, the beautiful fey is like a queen of her own land, though there are other threats that lurk deeper than her domain descends.



Beshela feels she owes a great debt to Risur. Forty years ago Ethelyn, sister of the current king, rescued her from a pirate sorcerer, giving birth to a long-lasting friendship and military pact. Beshela even aided Ethelyn's coup attempt against the king. Her moods are seemingly aqueous, but she is merely a clever charmer, fond of long schemes that depend on her enemies not knowing how dangerous she really is. Of late, she has allied with the Hedgehog Court to try to renegotiate the pact between the fey and Risur, for she and her allies loathe the technology King Aodhan has introduced into their once pristine realms.

Lord Olazdor. Olazdor has a humanoid torso and arms with an athletic build, with raptor talons for feet. Though not a formal member of the Unseen Court, he sought to prove he was mighty enough to be among them, and so he severed his own eagle-like head and replaced it with a wooden mask, which now floats above his torso. He burnt his old head and scattered the ashes on the winds, and it is said that he cannot be killed until each mote is recovered and reassembled.



Olazdor presides over the winds and feathered beasts of the Dreaming, and has grown increasingly dissatisfied with the way that court turned a blind eye to the horrid technology that mortal world is starting to embrace. He saw Ethelyn as the last real friend they fey had, and after learning that the Court sent Asrabey Varal to kill her, he began gathering allies for an eventual war against Thisraldion. He quietly aided Ekosissigan's plan to assault Cauldron Hill in *ZEITGEIST #5: Cauldron-Born*, and had hoped to recruit Gale to be both his ally and his queen.

Olazdor passionately believes in his cause, and though he recognizes that his side is losing he has his own uniquely fey code of honor, one where romantic questing and bold combat are superior to deceptions and politicking. When enthused he'll thump his chest, and when like-minded allies quail at the thought of danger he'll loudly denounce them and question their bravery and heroism.



After half an hour, they'll need to continue to hold court. If the party stays to watch, they see Olazdor's a more just and less erratic leader than Thisraldion. Even thus, Olazdor's sense of heroic certainty makes him unsympathetic to the weak.

Gather No Moss

Exploration. Montage.

Clues and witnesses implicate both sides in Rock's murder.

It's the evening of the 37th. Thisraldion expects them to present their evidence at noon on the 39th. If they want to actually solve a murder, they need to accomplish the following three goals:

- Understand the Crime.
- Find Suspects with Motive and Opportunity.
- Prove Guilt with Verifiable Evidence.

Toward those ends, the party will likely want to look at the tunnel where Rock died, speak with members of both courts to see who have corroborated alibis, look for proof that matches likely suspects, and then examine Rock's body in the mortuary. The most obvious two suspects are Thisraldion and Olazdor, but by this point your players are likely genre-savvy enough to know we wouldn't make it so blatant. Indeed, the various fey are all trying to make each other look guilty.

Rather than presenting specific scenes, herein we present the evidence, and leave it to you to present it to your players as they investigate.

Here's What Really Happened.

On the 16th, the night Rock apparently died, he left Thisraldion's bedchamber and sauntered out of Thistle Palace. He took a circuitous route through the streets of Clover. A mile from the palace, he passed through Krog Tunnel (see Crime Scene, below), which allies of the Hedgehog Court use as a canvas for their graffiti, and where homeless fey sleep during the night. His entrance was spotted by **Baldur Norther** (see Witnesses, below). There were other fey at the other two exits of the tunnel—**Thanriff** and **Beetlecurse**. Neither saw Rock leave, but Thanriff saw a cloaked figure with a hood leave the tunnel, wearing a mask; Beetlecurse saw the proud shirtless Olazdor leaving.

Both of those sightings were actually illusions. In truth, Copperhat entered in the tunnel via the Webway, since there was a web orb in the crook of the tunnel. He was invisible when he arrived, and set out a bottle filled with sleeping poison from one of the Borenbog's gourds (see Introducing the Borenbog, below). When Rock passed by Copperhat used a magical suggestion to get Rock to notice the draught and drink it. Rock quickly passed out, dropping his lantern, which left the tunnel in pitch darkness.

Copperhat, still invisible in the dark, cracked an illusory egg onto Rock's face. This egg (stolen from Falgo the Henkeeper, see Meanwhile in the News, page 9) was enchanted to create a duplicate of Rock's body, which appeared naked on the floor beside the real Rock. Copperhat then tucked the unconscious Rock into the *absurdist web*.

He then used webs to hold the fake corpse upright like a puppet. He magically disguised himself as Olazdor and shot an arrow (one

Involving the Whole Party.

At this level, the party can probably obtain a ton of clues with a few well-cast divinations. We want to make sure non-magic-users are still capable of contributing, so consider playing up these elements:

- Firstly, Copperhat made a point to be tricky in order to foil most common divinations. Some legwork and face-to-face interaction should be necessary.
- Witnesses might be reticent to talk to strangers, so if you suspect a given PC won't be involved much, maybe give the witnesses something in common with that PC so they'll open up.
- The three homeless fey who were at the entrances of the Krog tunnel have been arrested and are about to be killed in the annual Winter Culling of unfavorables. A warrior will have the chance to fight in their stead to save them.
- A nature oriented PC will need to appease the land and plant spirits near Rock's grave, or else they won't let him be exhumed and just keep refilling any hole the party tries to dig. The spirits were fans of Rock too, and don't want to give him up.
- The fey see the party as celebrities, and so maybe just give one PC the job of distracting or intimidating gawkers who might swarm another PC trying to cast a divination.
- Various witnesses or gatekeepers of information might indulge in the fine fey tradition of non-combat demonstrations or contests of skill—performing, crafting, or drinking—before they'll agree to help the party.

of Olazdor's own, stolen by an ettercap minion) into the corpse's heart. Then he disguised himself as Thisraldion, drew a replica of the fey monarch's sword (but which was not vorpal), and decapitated the corpse with two chops.

He turned invisible again and sent illusions down two of the exits to frame each fey lord. Then he slipped away via the Webway.

A half hour later an albino elf named **Aric de Rocha** passed through the tunnel and found the body. Aric reported it to authorities, who arrived within 10 minutes. Within an hour his body had been taken to the Mossat Mortuary.

Copperhat plans to stick around Clover for another week or so before returning to the Voice of Rot to report on his progress. The trip will take him about a day via several Webway jaunts. Rock still resides in stasis inside the *absurdist web*. In another week or so Rock will pop out (and appear near a random Webway entrance) if someone doesn't retrieve him first. Copperhat likes the guy, and doesn't want to actually kill him.

Crime Scene.

The 300 foot-long Krog Tunnel takes its name from its elbow shape, and although someone who passes through it only ever sees two ends, it actually has three, making a sort of Y shape if charted on a map. Depending on how you enter—on foot, in a carriage, alone, in a group, singing a song, carrying a toad, etc.—the tunnel may decide to bend and deposit you in either of the other two exits. You only see the people who are taking the same path you are, though if you enter in a group people tend to stick together. Regardless of which way you go, though, the tunnel always seems straight when you go through it.

Each end is capped with stone buttresses, which are perpetually



The Winter Culling.

Dozens of poor or mad fey have been rounded up and brought to a small stadium, where on the night of the 38th they must earn the right to remain in Clover. Various fey warriors volunteer to perform the culling, both as entertainment and to practice their swordplay. This year Karrest of the Unseen Court is attending.

If the party wants to speak with the witnesses, the condemned fey quickly recognize the “heroes” from Rock Rackus’s music, and ask to be saved. They won’t share their stories unless they’re rescued. Rescuing them, of course, entails facing Karrest in a duel to three touches. Karrest’s stats can be found in the Appendix (Fey Lords).

If you have an inkling who might defend the condemned, have Karrest be jealous of that PC earlier, thinking he or she is interested in his beloved Atsla. A martial scientist PC here can learn Karrest’s *Dramatic Reversal* technique.

If rescued, the witnesses’ descriptions of Rock, Thisraldion, and Olazdor are all accurate. Perhaps directly reading their memories could allow a Wisdom check to disbelieve the illusions of Olazdor and Thisraldion, but the mere fact that they saw contradicting events should be curious enough.

coated in graffiti proclaiming whichever group in the neighborhood is in ascendancy, whether they be criminal, cultural, or culinary.

Inside the tunnel, which has a 15-foot high ceiling, the graffiti currently has a major “night sky” motif, though the stars have been replaced with gears, a few of which grind together, spraying blood across the heavens as they crush small creatures. A group plans in the next few days to add a massive likeness of Rock Rackus to the tunnel to commemorate him at the spot where his body was found.

Clues.

Rock’s naked corpse and the few things found beside it were taken to Mossat Mortuary (see *The Body*, below).

Enough traffic has passed through here to ruin normal crime scene investigations, but a DC 26 Intelligence (Investigation) check spots odd strands of spider webbing dangling directly over where the body was found.

Divination magic could reveal what happened. Without darkvision, what seems to happen is Rock comes through, drinks from a bottle on the ground, falls unconscious, and drops his lantern.

With darkvision, one could also see a naked copy of Rock’s body suddenly appear, and then the real Rock body slowly turn invisible (as it was dragged into an extradimensional space). Then the naked body stands up jerkily like a puppet. Suddenly Olazdor appears and shoots him in the heart, but he does not respond or even bleed that much. Olazdor vanishes, and then Thisraldion appears and hacks off his head with two chops. The body falls unrealistically to the ground, and Thisraldion vanishes.

With darkvision *and* the ability to see invisibility, it’s clear that Copperhat is present and disguising himself.

Witnesses.

A trio of homeless fey were sleeping near the exits of the tunnel that night. Baldur Norther (a dwarf-like fey from across the Avery Sea), saw Rock enter the tunnel from the north. Thanriff (a one-hoofed satyr) saw Thisraldion leave the southwest exit, and

Beetlecurse (a dryad who managed to survive after her tree was eaten by beetles) saw Olazdor leave the southeast exit. When word spread of the murder, all three fey began gossiping about what they saw, but they then vanished.

For each hour a PC spends looking for witnesses to the murder, have them make a DC 21 Charisma (Persuasion) check. A success leads to someone who remembers one of the witnesses talking about being there the night Rock died, but it takes three successes to get all their names—Baldur Norther, Thanriff, and Beetlecurse. No one knows where they are now, though, and it takes a DC 23 Intelligence (Investigation) check to learn that they were rounded up earlier this week for possible execution in the annual Winter Culling.

Aric de Rocha, who found the body, is known to authorities. He saw two key bits of evidence, but thinks they’re inconsequential. First, there were bits of cracked eggshell on the ground near the body. Second, there was a huge orb of spider webs hanging in the ceiling, glinting very clearly in Aric’s lantern light. But he sees those things everywhere, and will only remember these details if specifically asked.

Attempt on the Party’s Lives.

When the PCs are inside the Krog tunnel, someone tries to kill them by sealing the tunnel’s ends with ice and flooding the passage with seawater. See “Mid-Investigation Attacks,” below.

Suspects, Alibis, Motives.

While potentially anyone in the city could have killed Rock, the most likely suspects are members of the Unseen and Hedgehog Courts.

Thisraldion. The fey monarch claims to have been asleep and quite intoxicated after spending the evening with Rock, and has no alibi. However, Thisraldion’s *vorpil longsword* is supremely sharp, and would not have required two strikes to sever Rock’s head.

Questioning the lower-ranked fey of the palace with a DC 21 Charisma (Persuasion) check can yield rumors that Thisraldion was perfectly aware of Rock’s visits to the Hedgehog Court, and was planning some public disgrace for the human in order to discredit the rebellion. Most of the staff assume their monarch had something cleverer in mind than simply murdering the man.

However, a search of Thisraldion’s personal quarters on the second floor of Thistle Palace with a DC 26 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a hidden compartment in the wall, filled with trophies from old battles, including withered severed heads of foes, cracked masks of former members of the Court, and one of Rock’s white evening shirts stained with blood and wrapped around a crude sword. Thisraldion denies knowing about that. (The shirt and sword were actually planted by Binniwich the brown-nosing brownie, who despised the actual members of the Unseen Court that he was easily goaded by an agent of Copperhat.)

Atsla and Karrest. Atsla and Karrest sat among a crowd of dozens in a wooded theater watching a grig concert. That said, they sat in a private balcony booth and never spoke to anyone, so either could have easily slipped away.

Atsla’s attendants all say only positive things about their lady, though if threatened with a DC 28 Charisma (Intimidation) check they confess Atsla has eyes on the throne of Unseen



Monarch, and they suspect she might have seen Rock as a lever to unseat Thisraldion.

Meanwhile Karrest's braggadocio-filled henchmen gladly gossip about how much their lord hated Rock Rackus. But if Karrest had done him in, Rock would have had a weapon in his hand.

Furg. The toadstool sage was roaming Thistle Palace, reading its scattered shelves of books, researching what might be causing the strange disruptions to planar travel. A dozen different attendants and guards saw him.

One of the rangale (the telekinetic stag and gazelle guards, located with a DC 15 Intelligence [Investigation] check) overheard Furg talking to Rock on a few occasions, trying to convince the man to pursue the kingship of Risur. If questioned, Furg admits that he thought it'd be good to have a friendly king who owed him a few favors.

Sallin. The dryad's tree remained rooted beside the Hood Garden all night, but she has no alibi. However, no one can ascribe her a motive for killing Rock.

Olazdor. The whole Hedgehog Court was in a meeting with scores of attendees, and Olazdor was rallying them to recruit more allies to their cause in hopes of starting a revolt in the Spring. They were waiting for their honored guest Rock Rackus to perform, and when midnight came and went, Olazdor left to look for him. He returned an hour later, having heard from the authorities that Rock was dead. He gave a thrilling speech inciting the crowd and proclaiming Rock a hero who had been cut down by Thisraldion.

Everyone attending meetings of the Hedgehog Court knew that Rock was "spying" on the Unseen Court for them, but Lerina had warned Olazdor that Rock might be a double agent.

A search of Olazdor's personal quarters on the second floor of Thistle Palace and successful DC 30 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers a small treasure chest under a floorboard, which contains Rock's famous diamond-encrusted gold pistol. This was planted by a (now-dead) pixie whose family was being held captive by agents of the Voice of Rot.

The Rest of the Hedgehog Court. Nearly a hundred witnesses corroborate that Lerina, Darbony, Lavac, and Beshela were all at the rally for several hours before and after Rock died.

Of the group, Darbony had several public arguments with Rock after the man flirted with women Darbony claimed were "his." Lerina and Beshela both expressed public support for Rock, and Lavac was a huge fan of the man.

Copperhat the Headless. Copperhat claims he was at the Headless Human, drinking alone and waiting for Rock to swing by after he performed for the rebels. He says that when Rock didn't show up he hit up a conversation with the Borenbog, who has been very supportive for him ever since. The bartender—a hag named Elocene—recalls that Rock drank there often, but next to the celebrity, Copperhat never made much of an impression. But the night Rock died, she remembers someone coming in and announcing the news, after which Copperhat threw a massive fit. Elocene tried to throw Copperhat out, but the Borenbog grumbled something and she decided it wasn't worth the trouble.

Riffian of the Great Hunt. He feasted earlier that evening with his fellow knights, then slept in his armor beside his horse under the stars.

Cold as Ice.

Throughout the day, anyone with a passive Perception of 15 or higher notices ice sprites following their movements, and occasionally they'll sense scrying sensors accompanied by a chill in the air—Atsla is spying on them.

At some point in the night, Atsla and her entourage of female frost trolls find the party. She makes a point of not bringing Karrest along, because he'll notice she's lying and wonder if she's upset. She claims that the night of Rock's murder, Thisraldion discarded a bloody coat and ordered it burnt, but that a servant kept it and brought it to her. She divined it, and found that the blood on the sleeve was Rock's.

This is a clever trick. Atsla had a small book written, with a story of Thisraldion doing just that—murdering Rock, then discarding a blood-stained coat, which was kept by a servant named **Paprika**. Then she had Alba and Zanel, the sisters who run the Honorable Halls of Accumulated Wisdom, to use a spell that lets them pull objects out of a book. The powerful magic has made the fictional coat *and* Paprika the servant real, and so divinations on either confirm Atsla's story, since in the book that story was *true*. Paprika is telling the truth as far as she knows, though in a few days she'll completely disappear when the magic giving form to her fiction fades.

If the party mentions being trapped by ice and nearly drowned, Atsla correctly surmises that Thisraldion is trying to frame her, though she has no way to prove it.

Copperhat at the Headless Human.

Copperhat the Headless spends most of his time in a bar called the Headless Human, apparently drinking away his sadness at Rock's death. His drinking buddy, the **Borenbog**, is actually a hired bodyguard, because Copperhat worries he'll be discovered. He would leave, but his master the Voice of Rot ordered him to stay and ensure the fey courts continue fighting.

The Borenbog is an obscure folk terror from the High Bayou (known with a DC 20 Intelligence [Nature] check), which can steal men's will, passion, and creativity, which it stores in a gourd at its hip. Though only the size of a dwarf, its stupefying presence affects a vast area. None have managed to kill it, for it is said that no given weapon can ever harm it twice, and most challengers run out of ideas of how to attack it before it will die. It carries an



Copperhat the Headless. A somewhat infamous fey who acts a mix of trickster and jester for the Unseen Court. Like actual members of the court, Copperhat has no face, at least none that anyone can see. His namesake hat sits atop a seemingly invisible head, which is enough to fool most minor fey into thinking he's really one of the Unseen.

In truth he's just a clever ettercap-like pixie who hides inside his coat and levitates his clothes and hat, controlling his fake body like an oversized puppet. He normally travels between fey enclaves trading knick-knacks and favors, with a particular fondness for telling stories about the human world. People find him amusing in small servings, but are quick to suggest new places for him to go after a day or so. Copperhat is secretly a minion of the Voice of Rot, the only fey titan currently awake.



Introducing the Borenbog.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Hunched like a dwarf with a hangover, this squat, wart-skinned goblin-like creature has a vindictive disdain in his red eyes, and he slowly licks his lips with thirst. One of the creature's hands tightly clenches a large sloshing gourd, while the other errantly twirls a long blade meant for gutting fish. The blade is rusted and blood-stained, perhaps from the severed hands hanging at the creature's belt. The creature meets your eyes and sneers, and the world begins to turn dull and hazy.

Suddenly Copperhat steps up and shakes your hand, and you snap out of the odd malaise that had gripped you. (Only then do you realize that Copperhat doesn't actually have any hands to have shaken.) The headless fey's top hat tips jauntily to the side and he holds up two glasses of wine.

"Please, drink with us. Ever since Rock died I've been truly bereft, and the only one who would listen to my sorrows is my new buddy. Let me introduce The Borenbog."

The Borenbog sips from his gourd, indifferent to Copperhat's enthusiasm. You notice that two of the bar's other patrons—both keeping their distance—are each missing a hand.

oversized fish filleting knife, and it wears a belt of severed hands. It also drinks more than a horse, belches, farts, and is all around an unpleasant boor.

The legend of the Borenbog tells of a group of fishermen who brought beer to drink when they rowed out into a swamp to fish. The Borenbog, smelling the delicious alcohol, used his magic to daze the fishermen, then climbed aboard the boat and drank himself into a stupor. Finally, the only drink left on the boat was a gourd of beer one of the fishermen was holding, but when the Borenbog tried to take it, the man was too stubborn to let go, so the Borenbog took the fisherman's knife and chopped off the man's hand. The pain snapped him out of his confusion, and he managed to swim away, but his companions were never found.

The Borenbog is a dour, grumpy creature who is jealously protective of his drink. He hates being bothered and normally only leaves his boggy hut to hunt or steal alcohol (Copperhat bribed the 'bog with an entire abandoned stone giant brewery in the Anthras Mountains in order to be his bodyguard for a few weeks.) Some say that the Borenbog and his rotting swamp first held the secret of fermentation, which was stolen by dwarves, men, elves, or whoever is telling the tale. It is for this reason that the Borenbog hates the civilized races, and terrorizes any he comes across who have alcohol.

The Borenbog never smiles, and enjoys complaining. He takes no joy in his drinking, but gets viciously angry if denied it. The Borenbog loves absinthe, and offering the spirit in a toast is one of the few ways to win his favor.

Matching his dull demeanor, the Borenbog has the ability to strip men of their passion and creativity. Those who drink are particularly vulnerable, and over the centuries many a drunken poet has been warned to watch out for the Borenbog on his walk home after a long night of seeking his muse. Tales say that the stolen

ideas are trapped in the creature's gourd, and that by drinking from the gourd another creature can take those ideas for himself.

There are many stories about how the Borenbog is invulnerable to all but one type of weapon; just what that weapon is, however, the stories never agree on. No single weapon ever works twice to harm the Borenbog, at least not in the short term. The only real vulnerability the Borenbog has is his foe's imaginations.

The Borenbog's gourd is enchanted, letting the creature have an endless supply of drinks, mundane, alcoholic, even magical.

Mourning for Rock.

When the party arrives, Copperhat quickly takes a drink from a flask in his coat; this *potion of glibness* makes it nigh impossible to realize when the faceless fey tells a lie (DC 35 Wisdom [Insight] check).

If the party comes to Copperhat looking for clues of who killed Rock, he convincingly plays the role of a sullen bereaved friend who is sincerely happy to see the party. He's not sure who would have killed such an amazing person as Rock, but he trusts the party will do the right thing.

Copperhat figures someone has to take the fall for the murder, and framing Thisraldion will cause the most chaos. He doesn't want to seem suspicious by just giving the party the answer, so he wants them to "discover" for themselves the damning evidence he planted in Thisraldion's bedchambers. So after recounting to the party the many good times he and Rock had together, and how they caused such a ruckus in the two courts, he offers his theory, which comes in three parts:

First, whoever killed Rock has to have powerful magic to avoid all the divinations both sides have been casting. That means someone in one of the courts, and probably Olazdor or Thisraldion.

But second, Olazdor isn't smart enough to lie about something like this.

And third, Thisraldion was a jealous lover. Emphasis on *lover*. Copperhat, who weeps at the memory of his friend, can't let go. He nods to the one-handed patrons here, and says that they still long for what they lost. So he bets Thisraldion would have wanted some keepsake. The news said Rock was found naked. Who knows what Thisraldion might have taken.

Copperhat says he's afraid Thisraldion would kill him too, which is why he's been lying to everyone who will listen, singing the monarch's praises. But if he were braver, he'd go and look for clues. It's what Rock would have done. He asks to be present whenever the party presents their evidence to the two courts, so he can face Rock's killer.

Tangled in His Web.

If the party accuses Copperhat of killing Rock without having evidence, he feigns shock, and the Borenbog starts to move toward them. Copperhat stops him, and says he forgives the party. In his grief he has thought terrible things of people too.

Certainly, there seems to be no motive for Copperhat to have killed Rock. But the party might have figured out that Rock isn't dead. If they present such evidence, or if they start threatening Copperhat's life, he'll change demeanor and become suddenly serious.



He says that Rock is alive, and that the war between the two courts was orchestrated by his master, the Voice of Rot. He's not quite sure what the fey titan wants, but it's clear that things in both the Dreaming and the Waking are turning chaotic. With the Unseen Court weakened, the Voice of Rot will be able to reclaim his power and his territory.

He knows the party wants to return to the Waking to save their king. A lot of people will die soon if the party isn't there to save them; after all, Copperhat can always smell a corpse in the offing. And the Voice of Rot can aid them. Fey titans exist in both worlds. They can banish their enemies across the planes, or send their agents as needed. If Thisraldion offered to send them home, he's lying. His power is pathetic next to a fey titan.

If the party helps Copperhat, he promises them—and this is a fey promise that he must fulfill—that his master will send them post-haste back to the Waking, and will cause no harm to them nor allow his minions to harm them for as long as they remain in Risur, unless they attack him first. All he asks is that they find the evidence he planted to implicate Thisraldion, and that they name the fey lord as Rock's killer. Then he will bring them to the Voice of Rot and send them back to the Waking. They can take Rock back or leave him here, as they prefer.

If the party attacks, see Copperhat's tactics in *We Now Return You to Your Regularly Scheduled Warfare* (page 31).

The Body.

West of the city, located near an idyllic flowered cemetery, the cheery Mosscat Mortuary has plenty of tall windows to let in light, which feeds the staff: intelligent cat-like plant creatures made of moss. The mosscats, led by a high-strung mortician named Desulie, are only a foot or two tall, but can extend tendrils of moss to manipulate objects. Desulie herself has the ability to assume the form of an elf, but with distinctively cat-like mannerisms.

The mosscats have just finished burying the body of Rock Rackus (or rather, the fake body left by Copperhat). The party can dig it up themselves, or wait a few hours for Desulie to get proper approval and call in the gravediggers. Though he “died” three weeks ago, a *gentle repose* spell has kept the body pristine.

Personal Effects.

The only thing found beside Rock was a half-empty bottle of liquor, which Desulie has kept locked away, thinking she can sell it as a relic of the celebrity. No one ever thought to examine it, but a DC 15 Intelligence (alchemists' supplies) check detects soporific poison. If someone drinks it, he feels drowsy and lazy, unable to take any initiative or have an original thought for about 5 minutes.

A DC 30 Intelligence (Arcana) check (DC 25 if someone tries drinking the poison) can determine the liquor is tainted with the spittle of an obscure fey known as the Borenbog. The rest of Rock's personal belongings are at Thistle Palace.

Murder Weapon.

They also have the arrow found in Rock's chest. The shaft has a rough texture like bark, and the head is a carved eagle talon. Using *legend lore* or similar abilities on the arrow might reveal misleading information, since Copperhat was disguised as Olazdor when

he shot Rock. And in any case, the spidery fey never personally touched the arrow, just manipulated it with his webs.

Autopsy.

Rock's body was cleaned in preparation for burial, but not embalmed. A DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check can tell that the arrow wound in Rock's chest was not fatal. It did not reach his heart, and indeed only went in fairly shallowly. The wound to the neck required two strikes. A check that beats DC 20 determines that the amount of blood still in the body indicates the heart wasn't beating at the time of death. If a PC tests his blood, a DC 21 Wisdom (Medicine) check finds there was practically no alcohol in his system, but there are traces of a poison. He also has nothing in his gastrointestinal tract.

The fey cast divinations to find out, “*Who killed Rock Rackus?*,” which of course yielded nothing, because of course this body was never alive in the first place. Similar divinations by the PCs might seem to indicate powerful anti-divination magic, when in truth they're just not asking the right questions.

Close inspection of the body's hands and feet (or a DC 30 Intelligence [Investigation] check if they don't specify where they're looking) finds that he has no calluses, nor any scars or signs of ever having suffered injury other than the two “killing blows.” It should become fairly obvious that Clover was not the site of Rock Rackus's demise. No, what we have here is a sham-Rock.



Pause for effect.

YEEAAHH

Mid-Investigation Attacks

Action. Tactical.

A pair of ambushes are each likely too weak to challenge the party.

The party can't just blithely walk through a city full of fey on the brink of war, asking questions that might implicate leaders of either faction. Thisraldion tries to drown the party when they investigate Krog Tunnel (and hopes to make it look like Atsla and Beshela targeted them). And right after they escape that death trap, Beshela's *actual* attempt on their lives comes in the form of elite satyr warriors (which she hopes the party will think have been sent by Darbony, the satyr member of the Hedgehog Court).

The flooding trick only really works in the tunnel, but the GM can move the satyr ambush elsewhere if needed.

Flooded Tunnel.

While the party is in Krog tunnel examining the murder site, Thisraldion attempts to make it look like Beshela and Atsla have conspired to kill them, but the trap is one the fey monarch expects the party to be able to survive.

Once the party starts examining where Rock's body was found, walls of ice seal the three exits of the tunnel, blocking out sound



and light from outside (a DC 15 Wisdom [Perception] check during the day to not be caught by surprise, made with disadvantage if at night).

One round later, frigid seawater bursts from the walls down the length of the tunnel with intense pressure. All creatures in the tunnel must make a DC 17 Strength saving throw or take 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone.

The crime scene is in the middle of the tunnel, 150 feet from any exit, and the water immediately makes the ground difficult terrain. The tunnel fills a foot in depth each round, taking 15 rounds to flood completely. The 3-foot thick walls at each end of the tunnel have magic that makes them hard to injure (AC 20, 100 hit points). Any creature that starts its turn adjacent to the wall takes 10 (3d6) cold damage, and a creature who makes a melee attack against the wall takes an additional 3 (1d6) cold damage.

Breaking the ice wall drains the tunnel by one foot per round.

Additionally, when the party nears the wall, two fey orcas are summoned on either end of the party. Until the water is at least 5 feet deep they can only move at a crawl with a speed of 5 feet, but they're still quite adept at grabbing prey and thrashing them to death.

ADVERSARIES

- 2 fey orca

Fey Orca

Huge fey, unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 149 (13d12+65)

Speed swim 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	21 (+5)	20 (+5)	4 (-3)	19 (+4)	8 (-1)

Skills Perception +12

Damage Resistances cold, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing from nonmagical weapons

Senses blindsight 120 ft., passive Perception 22

Languages Sylvan

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Hold Breath. The fey orca can hold its breath for up to 2 hours.

Long Step (Recharge 5-6). The fey orca can use its bonus action to teleport up to 130 feet.

Magical Resistance. The fey orca has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 26 (4d8+8) piercing damage and the creature is grappled (escape DC 20).

Deafening Whalesong. The fey orca unleashes a deafening blast of clicks and shrieks in a 50-foot radius. Any creatures in the area that are mostly or completely submerged in water make a DC 20 Strength saving throw or are stunned for one round.

Beshela's Intervention.

Beshela thinks Olazdor is guilty, but she needs Olazdor as an ally, so she wants to pin the murder on Darbony. She has in the past bedded the randy old satyr and in post-coital chats learned many of his secrets. She uses some of those secrets now: with the aid of illusions and calling in favors Darbony is owed, she has convinced the *Debauched Brotherhood*, the most elite warriors of the satyr armies, to target the PCs.

Disguised as Darbony, Beshela spun a tale to the brotherhood of how another satyr mercenary—named Dolax the Deathmask—had assassinated Rackus on Darbony's orders, because the human was interfering in his romantic endeavors (Dolax is indeed a satyr assassin, but he died a few days ago in the ongoing warfare so he can't readily dispute Beshela's lies.) Beshela-disguised-as-Darbony claimed that it would be disastrous to satyrkind if word got out he had provoked this whole war just so he could bed a few extra women, and the brotherhood think they're doing a public service by silencing the party.

Right after the party emerges from the flooded tunnel, the *Debauched Brotherhood* attacks. They expect to be able to kill them quickly, and if defeated confess that all they know is that Darbony didn't like the outsiders asking questions. They expect to be summarily executed, but if spared would be willing to fight for the party for a year and a day to repay the debt.

ADVERSARIES

- Xeniam, boon satyr
- 1 satyr piper
- 3 satyr springjacks

Xeniam, Boon Satyr

Medium fey, chaotic neutral ranger (hunter) 9

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 136 (16d8+64)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Str +8, Dex +9

Skills Deception +11, Intimidation +11, Nature +9, Perception +11, Perform +11, Persuasion +11, Stealth +9, Survival +7

Senses passive Perception 21

Languages Common, Elvish, Primordial, Sylvan

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Defensive Tactics: Multiattack Defense. When a creature hits the satyr with an attack, it gains a +4 bonus to AC against all subsequent attacks made by that creature for the rest of the turn.

Favored Enemy. The satyr has advantage on Wisdom (Survival) checks to track beasts, fey, and humans, as well as on Intelligence checks to recall information about them.

Hunter's Prey: Colossus Slayer (1d8, 1/Turn). When the satyr hits a creature with a weapon attack, the creature takes an extra 4 (1d8) damage if it's below its hit point maximum.

Innate Spellcasting. The satyr's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.



At will: *charm person, dancing lights, minor illusion, sleep, suggestion*
1/day each: *conjure animals, fear*

Land's Stride. Moving through nonmagical difficult terrain costs the satyr no extra movement. It can also pass through nonmagical plants without being slowed by them and without taking damage from them if they have thorns, spines, or a similar hazard.

~In addition, the satyr has advantage on saving throws against plants that are magically created or manipulated to impede movement, such as those created by the *entangle* spell.

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

Natural Explorer: Forests. When the satyr makes an Intelligence or Wisdom check related to forests or the Dreaming, its proficiency bonus (+4) is doubled if it is using a skill it is proficient with. While traveling for an hour or more in a forest or the Dreaming, it gains the following benefits: difficult terrain doesn't slow its group's travel, its group can't become lost except by magical means, even when it engages in another activity while traveling it remains alert to danger, if it is traveling alone it can move stealthily at a normal pace, it finds twice as much food as it normally would when it forages, and while tracking other creatures it also learns their exact number, their sizes, and how long ago they passed through the area.

Ranger Features. The satyr also has the Primeval Awareness ranger class features.

Spellcasting. The satyr is a 9th-level spellcaster that uses Wisdom as its spellcasting ability (spell save DC 15; +7 to hit with spell attacks). The satyr knows the following spells from the ranger's spell list:

1st-level (4 slots): *hunter's mark, jump, longstrider*

2nd-level (3 slots): *pass without trace, spike growth*

3rd-level (2 slots): *protection from energy*

ACTIONS

Extra Attack. The satyr attacks twice when it takes the Attack action, and can use a bonus action to attack a third time with its shortswords.

Ram. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d4+4) bludgeoning damage.

Magic Shortswords. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d6+7) magical piercing damage.

Longbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8+5) piercing damage.

Satyr Piper

Medium fey, chaotic neutral bard 8

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 127 (15d8+60)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	23 (+6)

Saving Throws Dex +8, Cha +10

Skills Deception +14, Intimidation +10, Nature +9, Perception +9, Perform +14, Persuasion +14, Stealth +12, Survival +5

Senses passive Perception 19

Languages Common, Elvish, Primordial, Sylvan

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Countercharm. As an action, the satyr can start a performance that lasts until the end of its next turn. During that time, the satyr and any friendly creatures within 30 feet of it have advantage on saving throws against being frightened or charmed. A creature must be able to hear the satyr to gain this benefit. The performance ends early if it is incapacitated or silenced or if the satyr voluntarily ends the effect (no action required).

Innate Spellcasting. The satyr's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 18). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At will: *charm person, dancing lights, minor illusion, sleep, suggestion*
1/day each: *conjure animals, fear*

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

Bardic Inspiration 1d8 (6/Short Rest). As a bonus action on its turn, the satyr can choose one other creature within 60 feet who can hear it. That creature gains one Bardic Inspiration die, a d8. Once within the next 10 minutes, the creature can roll the die and add the number rolled to one ability check, attack roll, saving throw, or weapon damage roll it makes. The creature can wait until after it rolls before deciding to use the Bardic Inspiration die, but must decide before the GM says whether a roll succeeds or fails. In addition, a creature can use its reaction when attacked to use the Bardic Inspiration die, adding the result to its AC and possibly causing the attack to miss.

Jack of All Trades. The satyr adds +2 to any ability check it makes that doesn't already include its proficiency bonus.

Spellcasting. The satyr is an 8th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). The satyr knows the following spells from the bard's spell list:

Cantrips (at will): *light, mage hand, prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *disguise self, longstrider, silent image*

2nd level (3 slots): *invisibility, shatter, suggestion*

3rd level (3 slots): *bestow curse, fear, major image*

4th level (2 slots): *compulsion, confusion*

Song of Rest. After a short rest, if the satyr or any friendly creatures who can hear its performance regain hit points by spending one or more Hit Dice, each of those creatures regains an extra 1d6 hit points.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The satyr attacks twice with its longbow or makes three melee attacks: once with its ram and twice with its pipes.

Ram. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4+3) bludgeoning damage.

Pipes. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4+4) magical bludgeoning damage.

Longbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8+4) piercing damage.

Powerful Piping. The satyr focuses and empowers its magic by playing haunting melodies on its panpipes. All creatures within a 60-foot radius make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or are affected by *charm person, fear, or suggestion* (chosen when the satyr uses this trait). A creature that succeeds on its save is immune to Powerful Piping for 24 hours.



Satyr Springjack

Medium fey, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 136 (16d8+64)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	19 (+4)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	19 (+4)

Skills Deception +12, Perception +10, Performance +12, Persuasion +12, Stealth +12, Survival +6

Senses passive Perception 20

Languages Common, Elvish, Primordial, Sylvan

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The satyr's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At will: *charm person, dancing lights, minor illusion, sleep, suggestion*

1/day each: *conjure animals, fear*

Lethal. A weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the satyr hits with it (included in the attack).

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The satyr attacks three times.

Ram. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d4+4) bludgeoning damage.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8+4) slashing damage, or 15 (2d10+4) slashing damage if wielded in two hands.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8+4) piercing damage and the target makes a DC 16 Strength saving throw or is pushed back 10 feet.

Elementary Deductions

Social. Montage.

The party reveals their findings.

At Thisraldion's invitation, the Hedgehog Court comes to the entrance foyer (area 6) of Thistle Palace, where they and the Unseen Court will listen to the party's findings about the murder of Rock Rackus. Copperhat the Headless attends too (along with his drinking buddy the Borenbog), since he wants to know whether his deception has been discovered. He has several escape routes planned in case the party correctly identifies him, though.

Gathered Suspects.

Thisraldion, Atsla, Karrest, Furg, and Sallin stand on the east side of the room. Olazdor, Beshela, Lerina, and Lavac stand on the west side (Darbony had assistants bring a chair for him to sit in). Copperhat and the Borenbog lean against the south wall.

The Borenbog wears a truly massive gourd strapped across his back (which secretly holds a silk orb that leads to the Webway). Copperhat walks around the room with a bottle of surprisingly strong wine trying to get everyone drunk. All the fey lords except Darbony decline. Keep track of who among the PCs drink, because they'll be more susceptible if they fight the Borenbog while intoxicated.

Masking of the Unseen.

Throughout the party's time in the Dreaming, Thisraldion and others on the Unseen Court consider who among the party might be worthy of joining them. Certainly the party has powers that make them quite mighty in combat, which the court needs to maintain its supremacy. But a PC must also display the proper charisma and familiarity with the fey, and have motives amenable to the rest of the court.

At some point before the party leaves Clover, if you think one of the PCs would be deemed worthy, the fey lords and ladies come to him or her and make their offer: fill the vacancy left by Ekossigan (as well as anyone who gets killed in the course of this adventure), but serve as ambassador of the Unseen Court in the Waking. Continue to work for Risur, but steer them to favor the fey, and when your mission is complete, return and take your throne.

Even Thisraldion, who has come to accept that the people of the Waking will continue to use technology, would still prefer his Waking allies to show more care for the effects their technology has on the Dreaming. And if Olazdor or Beshela join the Unseen Court, finding a solution to the blighting effect of industry will be critical to avoid a war in the coming years.

If a member of the party is invited and accepts induction into the Unseen Court, he or she is tasked with designing a mask. Whatever the adventurer can imagine, someone in the Court or among their minions can craft it. Thereafter, that PC's physical body will be invisible. They gain the Mask of the Unseen Court boon, detailed in the Appendix (Magic and Training). Moreover, they can command immediate loyalty from most fey, and will speak with authority even among humans.

Don't Railroad.

We like the idea of the two factions meeting for a dramatic reveal of the killer. It's very Sherlock-y. But if the party makes a move early, just let them. Ultimately they'll need to go to the Voice of Rot, and that might be while chasing Copperhat, or after capturing or killing him, or going along with him as part of a deal. Stats for all members of the two courts are presented in the Appendix (Fey Lords), in case the party picks a fight. Unless the party antagonizes multiple fey lords, the two courts leave whoever the party accuses to fend for him- or herself.

Riffian and other members of the Great Hunt are only here if the party requested them. Otherwise they're busy chasing a fox through the chessboard forest south of the city.

As is traditional for the *Unseen* Court, Thisraldion has forbidden anyone else to be present during the party's presentation. No guards or gawkers are allowed even within earshot of this vital business.

And the Killer Is...

Leave it to the party to decide how to present their findings. Have the accused demand evidence. Throw in a few startled gasps from the other lords if the revelation is particularly dramatic. If the PCs have figured everything out, the most perfect reveal would be for them to reach into their own *absurdist web* (the one Copperhat gave them in ZEITGEIST #7: *Schism* that leads to the same extradimensional space) to pull out a still-alive Rock Rackus.

What happens depends on who the party names. Even if their evidence is weak, the courts are just glad to resolve the matter. If the evidence is downright pathetic, treat it as the Nobody reaction.



Nobody. If the party avoids naming anyone, the fey lords are furious, start shouting, and eventually begin fighting. Barring PC intervention, Olazdor engages Thisraldion; Furg and Sallin square off against Lavac and Lerina; Darbony runs away; and Karrest is double-teamed by Atsla and Beshela. Within a minute Furg, Lerina, and Karrest are dead, Sallin and Lavac have withdrawn, and the remaining three lords—Atsla, Beshela, and Olazdor—have cornered Thisraldion. When the monarch refuses to “confess,” Olazdor delivers a killing blow, then proclaims himself new King of the Unseen Court.

Thisraldion. Thisraldion attacks the party, but Olazdor comes to their aid, so it should be a quick battle. Once Thisraldion falls, Olazdor thanks the party, then proclaims himself king.

Olazdor. Olazdor throws down his weapons and presents his chest to the crowd. He proclaims that the fey will keep the monarch they deserve: deceptive and villainous. He turns to the party and tells them they’ll be *excellent* allies of the Unseen Court. Then he kneels and lets Thisraldion plunge a vorpal sword through his heart.

Darbony. The old satyr is completely blind-sided, and as Karrest drags him to the center of the room he screams that he’s being set up. Thisraldion starts to make a speech of condemnation, but when Darbony won’t shut up the monarch just sighs and slices his head off with one stroke.

Beshela. If the party names Beshela, Olazdor interposes himself and confesses. He lies and claims that he was responsible for whatever evidence would have damned his beloved, and he asks that they kill him instead. Thisraldion obliges.

Other Fey Lord. Unless the party’s just making stuff up, it’s unlikely they’d name anyone else on the two courts, but if so, the accused denies it, is dragged forward, and executed.

Copperhat. Copperhat tries to appear calm while feverishly poking the Borenbog to get his attention. He clears his throat and quietly explains that the party won’t ever get home to the Waking without his help. Perhaps they would rather name Thisraldion, who after all has lied about knowing how to send them home.

If the party isn’t willing to help him, Copperhat gives a nod to the Borenbog, who smashes his huge gourd on the ground, revealing an orb gate to the Webway. Copperhat dives into it, and the opening keeps glowing for about a minute, but the Borenbog stomps it flat. It takes a full round to “repluff” the orb enough to enter it, and the Borenbog will fight anyone who tries to go through.

If somehow the party prevents this, Copperhat will try to flee across the Grand Lawn. Rather than coming across an active battleground, the party will pass by dozens of wounded fey, whom Copperhat can trick into attacking them.



We Now Return to Your Regularly Scheduled Warfare

Action. Tactical.

Copperhat the Headless flees through the field of battle in a bid to shake your pursuit.

This scene of course only happens if the party outs Copperhat as the one behind Rock’s “murder” and the subsequent warfare. Several stages are all part of the same encounter. If the party waits more than a minute or so to pursue Copperhat, he gets away.

The first stage is getting past the Borenbog, who wants to keep the party from getting into the Webway. If the party does end up diving into the Webway, the last PC to go hears Thisraldion (or whoever is monarch of the Unseen Court now) announce that they’re conjuring a barrier in the Webway—thorns, ice, fire, etc.—which will force Copperhat to exit so he’ll be easier to pursue.

In the Webway, spiders get in the party’s way. Once they make it through, they emerge onto the Chessboard Battlefield, where Copperhat uses his illusions to turn the fighters upon the party.

Alternately, the party might pursue Copperhat directly from Thistle Palace, across the grand lawn and through injured fey soldiers. Or they might have Riffian of the Great Hunt on hand at the palace, who will summon steeds for them, call forth his hunting hounds, and lead them at high speed toward the Chessboard Forest to find the fleeing Copperhat.

Battle and Brew.

During this fight, the various fey lords only get involved if the party has previously cultivated a friendship (in which case you should make saves for them as normal to break free from being the Borenbog’s *stupefy* aura). Or a PC can spend an action and succeed a Charisma (Persuasion) check (DC 20 for Olazdor or Lerina, DC 32 for Thisraldion or Darbony, DC 26 for anyone else) to convince a fey lord to help.

The entrance foyer of Thistle Palace is about 40 feet by 50 feet with doorways leading out in many directions. This means all the PCs and the members of the two courts likely start in the Borenbog’s *stupefy* aura. The aura also keeps the guards from interfering; they just come to the edge and stand there, confused.

The *stupefy* aura means that (except for rare immunities), he will get to go first. He swigs a *giant’s draught* from his gourd, then closes with a PC and tries to hack their hand off. The following rounds he’ll go after other stupefied PCs, or anyone who tries to reopen the orb that leads to the Webway.

Once he’s reduced below half his hit points, he shrinks back to Medium, stupefies everyone again, and then drinks *bayou brew*, which transforms the area around him into a copy of his High Bayou home.

The Borenbog’s *redundant defense* is meant to stymie the party and encourage the PCs to seek novel ways to harm their enemy. Make them be creative—dropping chandeliers, throwing consumable items, digging out all the seldom-used spare magic items from a *bag of holding*, or forcing the Borenbog into battle with the convalescing soldiers on the Grand Lawn. The ’bog is a lower-level foe than the party, so they should be able to still hurt it even if they have to use non-magical weapons.



If the party seems particularly stymied, that's fine. The Borenbog is slow and they can easily run away from it and find more weapons.

Aftermath

If the party manages to get into the Webway, the 'bog will chase them, squeezing awkwardly if he's still Huge. If the Borenbog is defeated, the Unseen Court takes him prisoner but ultimately can't figure out how to kill him. In the long run they'll banish him back to his bayou, and give the party the *Borenbog's gourd* as a reward.

The Dread Borenbog

Medium monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 264 (23d8+161)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	8 (-1)	25 (+7)	6 (-2)	9 (-1)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Int +2, Wis +4, Cha +1

Skills Intimidation +7, Survival +9

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Goblin, Primordial

Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

Alcohol Sense. The Borenbog can use a bonus action to sense the direction to the nearest source of alcohol within 1 mile.

Lucky Hands (2). When the Borenbog is affected by a harmful condition, it can rip one of the hands on its belt free (no action required) to end the condition.

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

Quick Swig (2/Short Rest). The Borenbog uses a bonus action to drink from its magical gourd, gaining one of the following benefits. The gourd (AC 18, 50 hit points, double damage from slashing) is attached to a knotty leather cord around the Borenbog's neck. If the gourd is taken, the Borenbog cannot use this trait and does everything its power to both get the gourd back and kill the bastard who tried to take it.

- **Giant's Draught:** The Borenbog becomes Huge size, deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage with melee weapon attacks, and on a successful melee attack it can push its target 15 feet away.
- **Bayou Brew:** All ground within the area of the Borenbog's Stupefy Aura becomes swampy, transforming from hard surfaces into waterlogged spiderwebs and tangled roots suffused with negative energies. All other creatures treat the area as difficult terrain, taking 17 (5d6) necrotic damage at the end of their turn if they are in contact with the floor.

Redundant Defense. Any attack made against the Borenbog deals half damage if the same type of weapon or energy harmed it in the past 24 hours. For example, only one attack with a longsword can harm it normally per day, even if two longsword made from different materials are used to attack it. The GM should use their best judgment for attacks that don't use weapons or energy damage. When the Borenbog takes ongoing damage, once that ongoing damage ends it cannot suffer that same type of ongoing damage for 24 hours.

~Martial scientist techniques ignore this trait.

Stupefying Aura. The mere sight of the Borenbog makes life seem dull and uninteresting. Hostile creatures entering or starting their turn



within a 40-foot radius of the Borenbog must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or be stupefied for one round. A stupefied creature can only use an action or bonus action each round (not both) and can only move at half speed. In addition, the only actions it can take are very uncreative like walking and making basic attacks. A creature that succeeds on its saving throw against this aura becomes immune to its effects for 24 hours.

~When the Borenbog is reduced below half of its hit points for the first time in a day, the aura surges with power. Creatures previously immune to the aura are subject to its effects again until they successfully save a second time.

Take Hand. If the Borenbog successfully pins a grappled creature or reduces a stupefied creature to below half of its hit points with an attack from its gutting knife, the Borenbog also cuts off one of the target's hands, impaling it onto a nail on the Borenbog's belt and increasing the uses of the Lucky Hands trait. Until the target receives magical healing it is poisoned and takes 7 (2d6) damage at the start of each of its turns. A creature that loses its hand becomes immune to the Borenbog's stupefying aura, even after the trait resurges.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Borenbog attacks four times: three times with his gutting knife and once with his slam.

Gutting Knife. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6+5) slashing damage.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6+5) bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 18).

Entangling Spit. The Borenbog spits a glob of black saliva at a creature it can see within 50 feet. The target makes a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or takes 17 (5d6) acid damage and is restrained (escape DC 18). At the start of its turn, a creature restrained by Entangling Spit takes 17 (5d6) acid damage.



Webway Chase.

Copperhat enters the Webway and throws handfuls of trinkets in the pathway in order to attract other spidery fey to cover his escape. He only has a chance to move about a hundred feet in the tunnels before his path is blocked by fey lord magic. He drops out the nearest exit, which deposits him right in the middle of the chessboard forest, a couple miles south of the palace. He won't be able to reenter the Webway for hours, until the locals clear it out, so he turns invisible and hides, hoping to turn the local warfare against the party.

Should the party pursue through the webs, they have to make their way through a criss-cross of eight 5-foot wide tunnels, all of which are blocked off about 100 feet from where the party enters. Copperhat can be tracked by the random bits that fell out of his coat as he moved. A few creatures reflexively attack them as intruders, but flee as soon as they're injured. If the party happens to still have Mista Nyves with them, though, he clears a path without a fight.

ADVERSARIES

- 12 dreaming ettercaps
- 2 Webway giant spiders

Dreaming Ettercap

Medium fey, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 76 (8d8+40)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	21 (+5)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	19 (+4)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Int +4, Cha +5

Skills Acrobatics +11, Deception +5, Intimidation +5, Perception +10, Stealth +11

Damage Resistances cold, lightning

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 20

Languages Primordial, Sylvan

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Evasion. If the ettercap is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, the ettercap instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Innate Spellcasting. The ettercap's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At will: *dancing lights*

1/day each: *entangle*, *faerie fire*

Spider Climb. The ettercap can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Spider Empathy. The Ettercap can speak with arachnids as though under the effects of a constant *speak with animals* spell.

Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the ettercap knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

Web Walker. The ettercap ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The ettercap makes three attacks: one with its bite and twice with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) piercing damage plus 9 (2d8) poison damage. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4+3) slashing damage.

Web (Recharge 5–6). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one Large or smaller creature. *Hit:* The creature is restrained by webbing. As an action, the restrained creature can make a DC 16 Strength check, escaping from the webbing on a success. The effect also ends if the webbing is destroyed. The webbing has AC 10, 5 hit points, vulnerability to fire damage, and immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage.

Webway Giant Spider

Gargantuan beast, unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 165 (10d20+60)

Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	21 (+5)	23 (+6)	1 (-5)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)

Saving Throws Int -1, Cha +2

Skills Athletics +11, Perception +6, Stealth +9

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages —

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Amorphous. The spider can move through a space as narrow as 5 feet wide without squeezing.

Spider Climb. The spider can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the spider knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

Web Walker. The spider ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The spider attacks five times: once with its bite and four times with its talons.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 20 (3d8+7) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature that fails its saving throw by 5 or more is also paralyzed for one round. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 15 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 16 (2d8+7) piercing damage.



Web (Recharge 5–6). The spider spits webbing at a 10-foot radius area within 100 feet. Creatures in the area make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or are restrained by webbing. When a creature is restrained by the webbing, it makes a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature that fails its saving throw by 5 or more is also paralyzed for one round. As an action, a restrained creature can make a DC 18 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webbing around a creature can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 14; hp 15; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage).

Pawn's Gambit.

Copperhat hides at the intersection of four squares in the Chessboard Forest. The Webway exit the party will likely emerge from sits in a tree, 20 feet up, which will spell a modest fall if the PCs aren't careful. Copperhat hides a 100 feet away, up in another tree (DC 31 Wisdom [Perception] check), near a group of rebel soldiers carrying the banner of the Hedgehog Court. When the party appears, he conjures an illusion of Olazdor and orders the soldiers to attack the party.

He has to stay within 50 feet in order to control his illusion, so he slowly moves through the trees, giving the adventurers a chance to detect his presence. If spotted, he shouts one final order for the fey to “*defend our ally Copperhat,*” then strikes a PC who is unaware of him. This makes his illusion of Olazdor vanish.

REBEL UNITS

- • 1 lightning-split treant
- • 2 centaur cavalry units
- • 4 satyr springjacks

Tactics.

Copperhat always tries to keep confused soldiers between him and the party, preferring to throw webs from afar. If forced into melee, he flanks with an ally and strikes with his dagger, then uses *mislead* to get away.

The treant just smashes the party in melee. A pair of satyr springjacks try to protect Copperhat while the others fire arrows. The centaur cavalry units skirmish around the party. If things look bad, Copperhat turns invisible and flees toward another force, this one of loyalists about 200 feet away. He calls for their aid as well, this time using an illusion of Thisraldion (the GM can just reuse the same units, reskinning the treant as a catoblepas, the centaurs as elvish lancers, and the satyrs as fomorian archers.)

The Great Hunt is busy chasing a fox a “square” away (about 400 feet), and if the party gets their attention somehow, their hounds can easily corner Copperhat, who surrenders and tries one last time to make a deal with the party. If it's clear he's going to die, he tells them to get Rock from the *absurdist web*. He kinda likes the guy, and there's no reason to keep him trapped anymore. He hopes he gets immortalized in song.

Copperhat the Headless

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 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).

Centaur Cavalry Unit

Gargantuan swarm of Large monstrosities, neutral

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 152 (16d10+64)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)

Skills Intimidation +5, Nature +4, Perception +10, Survival +6

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses passive Perception 20

Languages Elvish, Primordial, Sylvan

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Chaos of Combat. Any creature that is adjacent to or in the swarm's space has a hard time focusing on magic. A creature casting a spell or concentrating on a spell makes a Constitution saving throw (DC 15 + spell level) or loses the spell.

Charge. If the swarm moves at least 30 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a pike attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 42 (12d6) piercing damage.

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Large creature. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The swarm attacks twice with its pikes.

Pikes. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 29 (4d10+7) piercing damage.

Pike Volley. The swarm uses an action to hurl a volley of pikes that fall in a 20-foot radius area of a point within 50 feet. Any creatures in the area take 100 (8d10+56) piercing damage. A DC 19 Dexterity saving throw reduces this damage by half.

Lightning-Split Treant

Huge plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 186 (14d12+98)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	13 (+1)	25 (+7)	15 (+2)	21 (+5)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +6

Skills Nature +7, Perception +15, Stealth +6, Survival +15

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

Damage Immunities lightning, fire

Senses passive Perception 30

Languages Primordial, Sylvan, Treant

Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The treant's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 18). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At will: *faerie fire*

3/day each: *call lightning, lightning bolt, protection from energy*

1/day: *chain lightning*

Electric Healing. For every 1 point of lightning damage the lightning-split treant would take, it heals 3 hit points instead.

False Appearance. While the treant remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal tree.

Magical Attacks. The treant's attacks count as magical for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks and damage.

Regeneration. The treant regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. The treant dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points.

Siege Monster. The treant deals double damage to objects and structures.

Two Heads. The treant has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks and on saving throws against being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, stunned, and knocked unconscious.

Wakeful. When one of the treant's heads is asleep, its other head is awake.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The treant attacks twice with its slam.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (3d6+8) bludgeoning damage.

Rock. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, range 60/180 ft., one target. *Hit:* 30 (4d10+8) bludgeoning damage.

Animate Trees (1/Day). The treant magically animates one or two trees it can see within 60 feet of it. These trees have the same statistics as a treant, except they have Intelligence and Charisma scores of 1, they can't speak, and they have only the Slam action option. An animated tree acts as an ally of the treant. The tree remains animate for 1 day or until it dies; until the treant dies or is more than 120 feet from the tree; or until the treant takes a bonus action to turn it back into an inanimate tree. The tree then takes root if possible.

Aftermath.

If Copperhat gets away, the GM might choose to have him show up at the Voice of Rot's lair, or have him disappear until the party finds their way back to the Dreaming in ZEITGEIST #12: *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*.

If captured Copperhat doesn't know the Voice of Rot's ultimate plan, but he does know that it needed to distract the fey for a few more days until something momentous happened. He's quite sure his master is in no way allied with the Obscurati; indeed, he was told to be careful not to be discovered by them. Apparently the fey titan fears the conspiracy but thinks the party is inconsequential.



Reconstruction

Social. Real-Time.

The fallout of the party's actions gives them a chance to still save King Aodhan.

If the party allies with Copperhat, they likely never have this scene.

Merely revealing Copperhat as the one who tricked the two courts is not enough to end the fey civil war. Now that bodies are piling up, the leaders are quite content to keep blaming the other side and ignoring the truth as long as it suits their goals. It's quite likely the party could bring back Copperhat to Thistle Palace, expecting to be proclaimed heroes, only to find the fey leaders arguing and almost ready to come to blows.

Give the party a chance to get involved if they want (including dueting with Rock Rackus, see below). But after a few minutes, good news for the party arrives and distracts everyone from preparing to fight.

Librarians to the Rescue.

Alba and Zanel, the pixie sisters who run the Honorable Halls of Accumulated Wisdom, arrive and demand Furg hand over the book he stole from their library: an original copy of the *Book of Kelland*. He obliges (or directs them to the party if one of them accepted his earlier gift), and the sisters explain that the book can help the party.

First, the fey titans exist in both the Dreaming and the Waking, since they both link and divide the two realms. They can grant their minions the power to be in either place with ease and, more importantly, they can banish intruders. This provides a way for the party to get back to the Waking—either become minions of a fey titan, or anger one enough to get expelled (but not so much to get outright killed).

Second, the book contains the words used by Kelland's daughter to taunt the Voice of Rot. The party could use this to draw the titan's ire. There are other fey titans, of course, but none of them are awake, and it seems like the party's in a hurry.

Third—they produce a book on the history of Risur, and open to a passage about King Dukain—retrieving the Sword of the Black Needles would reinitiate the last battle the Voice of Rot had with Risur five centuries ago. Obviously, even great warriors like the party would have no chance of defeating the fey titan, but if they intentionally surrendered, the ancient pact between Risur and the fey titans would force the Voice of Rot to banish the party back to the Waking.

There would, of course, be some small negative consequences. The Voice of Rot would be able to move freely from his domain and attempt to claim more territory for himself. But that can be dealt with later, once the king is saved and he can get around to beating the colossal serpent himself. The pixies end their exposition with two matching, optimistic grins.

Thank You, Now Leave.

The two fey courts pause from arguing and thank the party. If the PCs go with the librarians' plan, Thisraldion will call the Great Hunt, and order them to convey the party to the High Bayou so

that they might confront the Voice of Rot. There is no time to rest. Within half an hour a dozen bold fey knights will arrive, ready to guide the party on lightning-fast steeds across two hundred miles to the High Bayou, completing the trip in about twelve hours. (Recall, the planar fluctuations make teleporting the distance impossible.)

The fey courts also insist the party accept treasure, as repayment for the debt they owe.

Rewards.

The party should leave Thistle Palace with the equivalent of 30,000 gp apiece in gold, gems, and jewelry. This is truly extravagant wealth—clothing woven of platinum and moonbeams, blue warpaint containing actual sapphires, wooden bracelets carved from the raft that delivered Kelland's family to this land, and the like.

The fey lords can arrange to quickly buy one magic item per PC, but the party are expected to carry their wealth and use it to craft new items at the end of this adventure.

They can also earn the following rewards, depending on whose favor they have earned. None of these can be traded or sold.

- **Granny's Boon.** Earned by befriending Lavac.
- **Borenbog's Gourd.** Earned by defeating the Borenbog.
- **Mask of the Unseen Court.** Earned by one PC (likely a Vekeshi Mystic) having the proper demeanor to join the Unseen Court.

Backup Option.

The party might distrust the Voice of Rot and refuse to go to him. In this case, Beshela is able to bring them by ship to awaken She Who Writhes the morning of the 41st. The aquatic fey titan thrashes angrily at their presence and banishes them to the Waking, then gives chase all the way to Flint. The party can arrive just as Stanfield starts the ritual, but *sendings* from Torfeld Palace inform them that the king has been killed and hundreds slain.

What's Rock Up To?

If the party retrieved Rock from the *absurdist web*, he's distraught. Even though he knows the party is trying to get back to the Waking, he wants to stay behind to try to help here. Our intention is for him to help the party escape peril when they return to the Dreaming in *ZEITGEIST #12: The Grinding Gears of Heaven*.

Fey-Aid Concert.

What if the party wants to actually set things right among the fey? Mere diplomacy cannot accomplish that. Only one force is strong enough to unite these fractious fey: the power of song.

This is an opportunity for a Docker PC to shine. While the party prepares to leave Thistle Palace, the wounded warriors on the Grand Lawn begin singing one of Rock Rackus's hit songs, *I Had a Threeway*, which recounts the singer getting into trouble for having two lovers at once. The injured fey have turned it into something of a drinking song, toasting as the situation gets worse and worse for the man in the middle.

Meanwhile a group of fey wandering over from the Hedgehog-controlled wing of the palace starts singing a traditional song commemorating a famous battle. Tensions are starting to mount



since neither side likes their song being interrupted, but a Docker PC (or anyone with a musical background) notices that the two songs have the same basic beat and structure.

Don't push this, but the PCs could seize the opportunity to create a duet or mashup that unifies the competing songs and captures the spirits of both the fey warriors and the lords who command them. At least two singers need to participate, and at least one of them must succeed a DC 30 Charisma (Performance) check. If the party rescued Rock he'll let a PC take the lead, and if needed he automatically succeeds the skill check.

Note, this is cheesy as hell. But if your party likes Rock, they might enjoy this.

If the skill check fails (or if the party doesn't try), the arguments intensify as the party mounts up with the Great Hunt, and one of the fey lords encourages the party to go deal with their own troubles, and leave the Dreaming to lie in the bed it has made. The party rides away to the sounds of a brawl on the palace lawn.

If the skill check succeeds, the song spreads across the entire palace, until finally even the fey lords start smiling and joining in. The party can mount up on the Great Hunt's steeds and ride away to the cheers of the crowd.

To the Black Needles!

Action. Montage.

The party rides with the Great Hunt to confront the Voice of Rot.

The dozen hours riding to the High Bayou pass in a blur of grandiose music played by the Great Hunt's trumpeters (which magically have full orchestral accompaniment), while the party tromps through the most beautiful landscape Risur has to offer. The sun sets, and the riders hold forth torches.

The last hour is spent sprinting through the High Bayou, since the magical steeds can run across the bog water. Occasionally giant spiders or crocodiles try to ambush the group, but the Great Hunt tears through them and presses onward with nary a pause to shout huzzah. Distant drums thrum faintly beneath the patter of drizzle, and dim red eyes watch from beneath trees and the edges of brush. Occasionally an ettercap will scuttle out of their path. Sometimes they sit completely still, only turning their heads atop husked, decayed bodies.

Fey hounds guide the group across hills and peaks shrouded in webs and choked with marsh plants. Occasionally they lose the trail and a PC must intone the words from the Book of Kelland: "*Lies are dead words made to walk. O Voice of Rot, do you fear to talk?*"



Curse Your Sudden but Inevitable Betrayal!

If the party goes with Copperhat's help directly, they teleport through the Webway to the High Bayou shrine and arrive shortly after midnight on the 40th. Though Copperhat promised to help them, the Voice of Rot owes them nothing and will order his minions to take them prisoner. The party might cue in to the value of the Sword in the Stump, they might recall the lore and what it implies with a DC 21 Intelligence (History) check, or a DC 28 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check, or if the party looks truly lost, the sword itself might call out to them with the voice of the long-dead King Dukain.

A rumble, almost inaudibly deep, replies, "*Talk we shall.*"

The hounds bark and resume their tracking, mile after mile, until finally, through rain-darkened skies, a flash of lightning reveals the Black Needles. Spires of stone rise up amid berms of spider webs. The peaks ascend rapidly and roughly, such that even the Great Hunt's horses cannot climb them. From afar the tallest ridge seems insurmountable, but something in the shape of the webs and tree canopy suggests a stone structure there.

Riffian halts his riders and explains that they can go no farther. He offers a last bit of advice. Each fey titan has a weakness. The Father of Thunder is a drunkard. The Ash Wolf is protective of other wolves. And the Voice of Rot can be tricked into talking when it could be fighting.

He shall have a hound guide them to their battle, and he promises his knights will defend their flank from any of the Voice of Rot's worshippers. But his oaths forbid him from fighting a fey titan. He seems incredibly forlorn about this.

Spirits of the Dead.

A spirit medium PC hears ghostly howls, chittering, and other animal noises, for the Voice of Rot controls the dead beasts of his High Bayou. A few voices speak among this chatter as well, crying for help. If the spirit medium attempts to contact them, they explain that they were observers working for the Unseen Court, tasked with watching in case the fey titan was active. But the Voice of Rot had his ettercap minions slay them, and now their bodies are under the titan's command, and their souls cannot find a way to leave their rotting corpses.

During the coming battle, a spirit medium will have the ability to control some of the Voice of Rot's own minions.

Titan Shrine.

The party must make their final ascent alone, covering a quarter mile as the hound guides through the midnight rain. Finally they climb over a berm of webs and arrive at the bottom of one of the stone spires. The side of the hundred-foot high spire is sheer cliff streaked with rain, and scraggly forest grows atop it. Immense carvings along the cliffs have been eroded by time and covered by brush, but they show that the natives of this swamp worship the Voice of Rot here.

The hound has led them to a canyon of sorts, cut into the side of the peak. A massive and ancient stone staircase ascends up the

middle of the canyon to the top of the spire, but millennia of webs have grown across it, creating tiers of dammed pools. Nothing of interest is on top of it, other than a swath of wilting grass amid the forest, where the Voice of Rot normally sleeps.

The drizzle fades, the clouds part, and a beam of moonlight shines upon a spot halfway up the massive staircase. Barely visible through a wall of spider webs, the glint of pale light reflects off a metal blade stuck in the trunk of a black, rotted, and fallen tree.

From beside the party, fifty feet away, the water stirs. With a slowness only possible for something so immense, coils rise up from amid sunken trees. A withered, antlered skull 20 across drips as it pulls free of the swamp. Unlike the last time they saw it, though its body is still certainly a serpent, its skull is that of some other beast. A single eye socket glares at them, dull and gray.

Then the eye lights up and locks on them. "Speak," says the Voice of Rot. "Speak, agents of King Kelland. And do not deceive, for I know when a lie is told."

Conversation.

The Voice of Rot does not know the party's intention. They may have thwarted his plans for the Unseen Court, but he thinks they are trapped in this world and does not realize the "trick" of using King Dukain's sword. The sword lies in a toppled black stump on the stair at elevation "+60" on the map. The Voice of Rot (whose head is the size of a Gargantuan creature) waits in the southeast corner of the map.

He sees them as no threat, but is curious. Smart PCs will distract him, but if they mention their plans—or when they get within 30 feet of the sword—he shouts, "*Tricksters! You are like me, but I have no equal! You challenge, and I greet your deaths gladly!*"

Philosophy of the End of the World.

Before or during the coming battle, PCs who keep the Voice of Rot distracted by talking to him will help the party immensely. Recall, the Voice of Rot feels compelled to engage and match those who challenge him. If no one talks to him, he will use his powers to harm the party (but not kill them; he leaves that to his minions). However if he's engaged in a battle of words, he'll pay less attention to the physical battle.

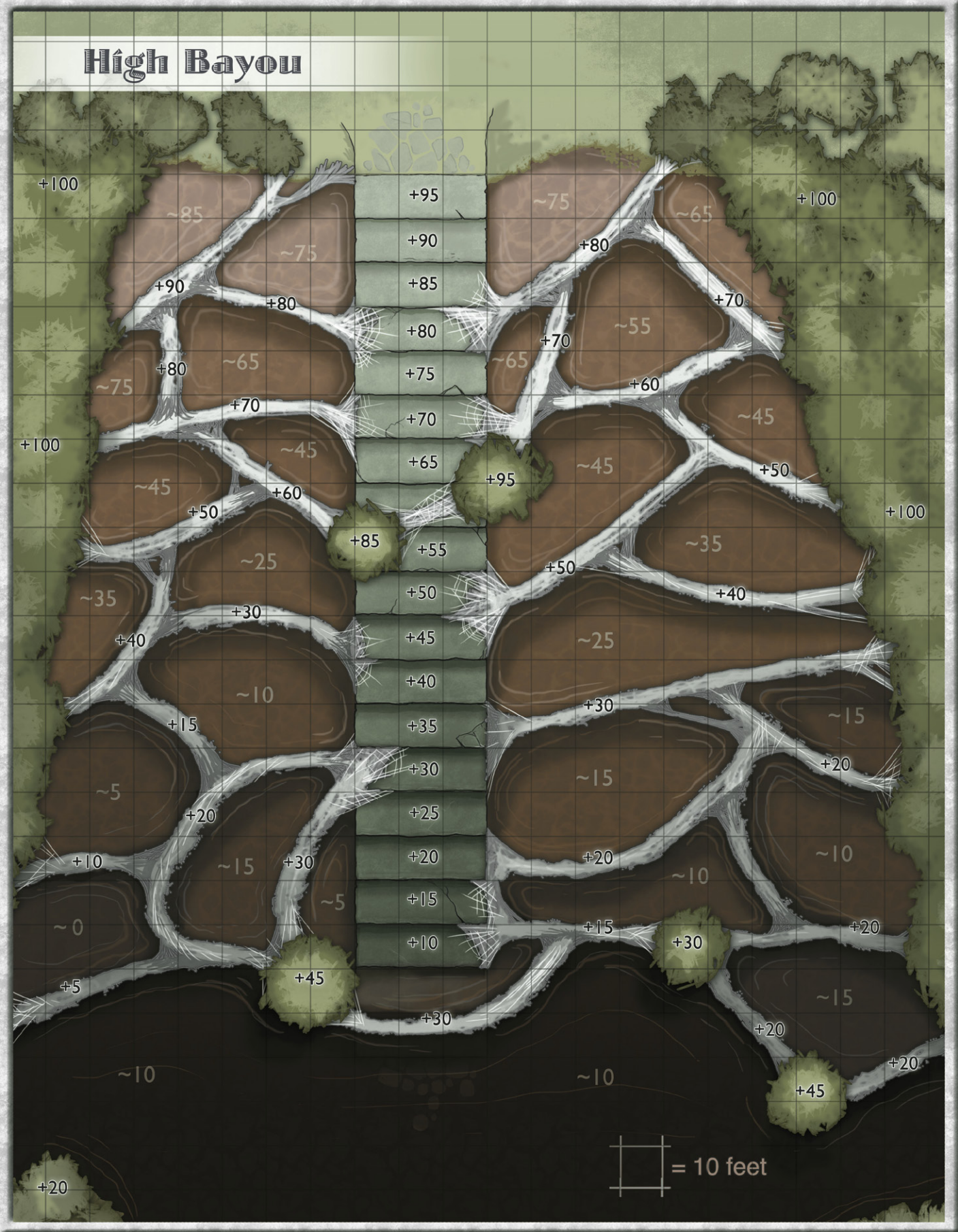
Before combat this means that PCs who are trying to get close to the *sword of the black needles* can on any given round use either their own Stealth check to oppose the Voice of Rot's passive Perception of 26, or the Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check of a PC who is talking to the fey titan. Attempts to hide automatically fail once a PC gets within 30 feet of the sword, since the Voice of Rot will sense the threat and give battle.

During combat if a PC spends a bonus action to address the Voice of Rot, they can make a DC 30 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check to compel the titan to respond on his following turn. And if the Voice of Rot is talking, he cannot use his bite attack, his channel negative energy action, or his innate spellcasting trait.

The Voice of Rot is particularly intrigued by any eschatologists among the party. He senses their connection to the end of the world. An eschatologist gains a +10 bonus to these Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) checks.



High Bayou





The Sword in the Stump

Action. Tactical.

Drawing forth a sword abandoned by a king will let the party escape the Dreaming.

The Voice of Rot calls forth allies from the swamp as soon as it realizes the party is going for the sword. The surprise here is that the fallen tree the sword is stuck in is actually an undead treant, and the party have to destroy it before they can remove the blade. Whoever has the sword can then surrender. The Voice of Rot snarls as it realizes what this means, and then it banishes them (and the Great Hunt) to the real world.

Versus the Voice of Rot.

The battle probably occurs at night, with only dim moonlight occasionally breaking through rainclouds. Under these conditions, every creature treats anything more than 30 feet from it as lightly obscured.

ADVERSARIES

- The Voice of Rot
- 1 blackwood treant
- 2 rotted archers
- 8 ettercap exoskeletal gang

Terrain.

Each step of the stairs is ten feet long and ten feet high. Huge walls of webbing contain pools. The elevation markers show how high the tops of the webs are, and thus how high up the surface of the adjacent pool is. The “tilde” elevation markers in the pool show how high above “ground level” the surface of the water is (which is also how deep the pool is).

For example, the party starts in a pool that is 10 feet deep, and north them is a wall that goes up to 30 feet above the ground—but only 20 feet above the pool they’re in. North of that is actually a shallower pool, and the stairs.

The tops of the walls are solid and easy to walk across. Each 5-foot space of the wall has only an AC of 14 and 50 hit points, making it possible to breach a wall and start a catastrophic waterfall that drains the next highest pool.

The Voice of Rot can move easily through the water and even through the web walls without slowing down. His movement does not breach the walls.

Tactics.

If running this battle with a tactical map, you will need to keep track of the entire length of the Voice of Rot’s body. It’s recommended to use a Gargantuan miniature for the head (or an actual snake skull when possible), and then coins every 2 squares trailing behind him. His body is 15 feet wide (i.e., one square to either side of a coin) and a total of 300 feet long (30 coins). When he moves, move the head, then remove sufficient coins from the tail end to fill in the spaces between where he started and where his head ended up.

If using a battle map, trace all movement from his head, and avoid hairpin turns. The party should feel like if they move right,

they can stay out of reach of his bite.

The titan moves from the southeast corner, up through the pools, and tries to circle around the entire party. His mere presence sickens living creatures, and he can easily crush a person just by twitching his body. He can will parts of the swamp to entangle his foes—but his greatest threats are his bite and his voice.

The blackwood treant lies inert on a 60-foot high stair; a DC 26 Wisdom (Perception) check realizes it’s a creature. It attacks if damaged or if someone tries to retrieve the sword stuck in its body.

Two rotted archers hide in the trees near that treant and can be spotted with a DC 22 Wisdom (Perception) check.

Gangs of undead ettercaps emerge from the swamp—two adjacent to each PC, and more crawl up from the web walls within 30 feet of the sword in the stump.

The Voice of Rot

Gargantuan undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 307 (15d20+150)

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
35 (+12)	8 (–1)	31 (+10)	26 (+8)	19 (+4)	28 (+9)

Skills Arcana +20, Deception +21, Insight +16, Intimidation +21, Medicine +10, Nature +20, Religion +20, Perception +16, Stealth +11

Damage Resistances acid, cold, lightning, fire, necrotic, radiant, thunder, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from magical weapons

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., lifesight, true seeing, passive Perception 26

Languages Primordial

Challenge 20 (25,000 XP)

Ever Moving. The Voice of Rot automatically moves 10 feet after each creature’s turn. At the start of a creature’s turn, if it is adjacent to the Voice of Rot it makes a DC 26 Dexterity saving throw or it takes 21 (2d8+12) bludgeoning damage, is pushed away 5 feet, and falls prone. On a successful save, a creature may allow itself to be pushed away 5 feet without taking damage or falling prone.

Innate Spellcasting. The Voice of Rot’s innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 23, spell attack +15). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

Constant: *freedom of movement, tongues, true seeing*

At will: *bestow curse, create undead, entangle*

3/day each: *circle of death, blight, geas, resurrection*

1/day: *finger of death*

Life Sight. The Voice of Rot has blindsight 60 ft. but the trait only allows it to detect living creatures and undead creatures, and determine whether a creature is living or undead. Constructs and other creatures cannot be seen with this trait.

Magical Attacks. The Voice of Rot’s attacks count as magical for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks and damage.



Regeneration. The Voice of Rot regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. The Voice of Rot dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points.

Stench. Any creature that starts its turn within 30 feet of the Voice of Rot must succeed on a DC 26 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the Voice of Rot's stench for 24 hours.

Titanic. The head of the Voice of Rot occupies a 20-foot square, the body trailing behind it is 15 feet wide, and the creature is in total 300 feet long. Any part of the Voice of Rot's body can be targeted, but its head has vulnerability to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage. Due to its size, the Voice of Rot cannot turn more than 45 degrees for every 10 feet it advances (so it must travel at least 40 feet in order to turn around).

~Because the Voice of Rot is so massive, uneven ground and other terrain features that represent difficult terrain don't hinder the Voice of Rot's movement; instead, it considers areas of forest or developed, settled areas difficult terrain. A Huge or smaller creature can move through any square occupied by the Voice of Rot, and vice versa.

~The Voice of Rot can make opportunity attacks only against creatures that are Huge or larger, and can only be flanked by Huge or larger foes.

~It's possible for a Huge or smaller creature to climb the Voice of Rot with a DC 26 Strength (Athletics) check but unlike normal, a Small or larger creature that climbs on the Voice of Rot's body provokes an opportunity attack if within reach of its head.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Voice of Rot attacks twice.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 20 ft., multiple targets (all creatures in a 20-foot cone; make an attack roll for each target). *Hit:* 38 (6d12+12) piercing damage and the creature is grappled (escape DC 26). When grappling more than one creature with its bite, grappled creatures have advantage on checks made to escape it.

Constrict. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 34 (4d10+12) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 26), and the target makes a DC 26 Strength saving throw or its Strength score is reduced by 1d4. The target dies if this reduces its Strength to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest. For every point of Strength reduced from a creature, the Voice of Rot regains 5 hit points. Until this grapple ends, the creature is restrained, and the snake can't constrict another target.

Channel Negative Energy. The Voice of Rot commands mystical forces to roil outward with baleful energies, dealing 45 (10d8) damage to all creatures within 30 feet. Half of this damage is fire and half is necrotic. A creature that succeeds on a DC 23 Wisdom saving throw takes half damage.



Friendly Death?

If you want to end the campaign with this adventure, you'll need to alter this scene. The Voice of Rot is not hostile, but is still compelled to battle the party if they make a move for the *sword of the black needles*.

Either before the battle, or after it but before he banishes them, the Voice of Rot speaks of a distant gyre, a constellation of grinding gears that consumes all dying worlds, as this world too shall some day die, far from now.

The shadows will sever the ties between this world and those that feed it the energy it needs to live. They will bind it to new worlds, and the old worlds will drift away, toward the gyre, to die. The titan tells them to look to the gyre for other dying worlds. Perhaps they will find salvation there.

This is similar to what the party will discover on their own in the coming adventures, though the Voice of Rot will be a foe, not a friend.

Blackwood Treant

Huge undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 152 (16d12+80)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	15 (+2)	21 (+5)	16 (+3)	21 (+5)	18 (+4)

Skills Athletics +12, Insight +15, Intimidation +14, Nature +13, Perception +15, Persuasion +14, Stealth +7

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities cold, lightning, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 25

Languages Common, Sylvan, Treant

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

False Appearance. While the treant remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal tree.

Siege Monster. The treant deals double damage to objects and structures.

Treespeech. The treant is under the constant effects of a *speak with plants* spell.

Turn Resistance. The treant has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The treant makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (3d6+7) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

Rock. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, range 60/180 ft., one target. *Hit:* 29 (4d10+7) bludgeoning damage.

Animate Trees (1/Day). The treant magically animates one or two trees it can see within 60 feet of it. These trees have the same statistics as a treant, except they have Intelligence and Charisma scores of 1, they can't speak, and they have only the Slam action option. An animated tree acts as an ally of the treant. The tree remains animate for 1 day or until it dies; until the treant dies or is more than 120 feet from the tree; or until the treant takes a bonus action to turn it back into an inanimate tree. The tree then takes root if possible.



Aftermath.

If the party fails to reach the sword, the Voice of Rot captures them. Skip straight to ZEITGEIST #12: *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*.

If the party gets the *sword of the black needles* and surrenders, the Voice of Rot banishes them to the Waking, along with the Great Hunt. Smoke and fog rolls across them, and when it passes they find themselves in the real world at the northern edge of the High Bayou, far from any enemies but still some 180 miles from

Slate. Whoever had the sword still has it. See the Appendix (Magic and Training) for stats.

The party might be ready to rush to Slate, but the Great Hunt's horses need until sunrise before they'll be ready to go again, and teleportation isn't working over long distances here any better than in the Dreaming. Luckily, a nearby farm offers some rest, and stables for the horses. 🐾

Rotted Archer

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 97 (15d8+30)

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	22 (+6)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +6, Wis +4, Cha +6

Skills Intimidation +10, Perception +8, Stealth +14

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Common

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Devour Soul. The rotted archer can use an action to devour the soul of an adjacent dead or dying creature. A dying creature makes a DC 14 Strength saving throw or is instantly slain. Only creatures that have died within the last hour have a soul to be devoured. A creature subjected to this attack cannot be brought back to life via *raise dead* (*true resurrection* and more powerful effects work normally). When a rotted archer devours a soul in this way, it heals 27 (5d6+10) hit points and becomes hasted for 4 rounds (as if affected by *haste*).

Dread Howl (1/Day). The rotted archer can unleash a blood-curdling howl that chills souls within a 30-foot radius. Living creatures in the area make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or become paralyzed for one round. On a successful save, a living creature becomes frightened for one round instead.

Infused Arrows. When firing an arrow, the rotted archer can transform it into bone, dealing an extra 7 (2d6) necrotic damage and possibly paralyzing targets (included in the attack below).

Feat: Superb Aim. The rotted archer ignores half cover and three-quarters cover when making a ranged weapon attack, and it doesn't have disadvantage when attacking at long range. When the rotted archer makes its first ranged weapon attack in a turn, it can choose to take a -5 penalty to its ranged weapon attack rolls in exchange for a +10 bonus to ranged weapon damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The rotted archer attacks twice with its claws or three times with its longbow.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) slashing damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d8+6) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) necrotic damage and the target must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or is paralyzed for 1d4 rounds.

Exoskeletal Ettercap Gang

Gargantuan swarm of Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 86 (9d8+36)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	17 (+3)	19 (+4)	6 (-2)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Perception +8, Stealth +9

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses passive Perception 18

Languages Common, Primordial

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Chaos of Combat. Any creature that is adjacent to or in the swarm's space has a hard time focusing on magic. A creature casting a spell or concentrating on a spell makes a Constitution saving throw (DC 15 + spell level) or loses the spell.

Spider Climb. The swarm can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Medium creature. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the swarm knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

Web Walker. The swarm ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

ACTIONS

Ravenous Assault. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 32 (6d8+5) piercing damage plus 9 (2d8) poison damage. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Web (Recharge 5-6). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 30/60 ft., multiple targets (all creatures in a 10-foot radius area within range; make an attack roll for each target). *Hit:* The creature is restrained by webbing. As an action, the restrained creature can make a DC 15 Strength check, escaping from the webbing on a success. The effect also ends if the webbing is destroyed. The webbing has AC 10, 5 hit points, vulnerability to fire damage, and immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage.