



**ENsider Presents:**

# **Godmind**

## **Part One**

**A 5E-Compatible Adventure for 17th-Level Characters**



# Introduction

## Wherein Everyone Actually Is Out to Get You

**T**HE CENTURIES-OLD OBSCURATI CONSPIRACY HAS completed its masterstroke. By altering the world's cosmology they have shifted the nature of reality, and local rituals in each nation have made all of civilization loyal to them. All except the nation of Risur, where the party thwarted the local ritual. While the Risuri populace is still affected by the metaphysical shift – which guides people to be more rational, agreeable, and empathetic – they are still loyal to their homeland, and are the sole bulwark against the Obscurati's global domination.

The great change has created widespread turmoil, however. The sun has vanished, replaced by a gyre-shaped nebula barely brighter than the old moon, and the moon itself is black, visible only for the hole it cuts when it passes in front of the Gyre. Magic functions slightly differently, and it takes weeks of trial and error for spellcasters to regain their previous powers, but even then some magic like teleportation and long-distance communication have to be rediscovered. Nature itself begins to revolt as the fey titans who held sway over Risur in the ancient past awaken and vie for control. And while the citizenry endure all these changes with excellent – almost frightening – calm, psychic manifestations start to appear wherever groups of too many like-minded people gather.

Meanwhile across the sea, Nicodemus, leader of the Obscurati and now tacit ruler of the world, has called the leaders and greatest thinkers of the various nations to gather in Cherage, capital of Danor. He plans to unify them to create his vision of a utopia, and the first step on the agenda is the conquest of Risur. If the party can stabilize Risur in time to reach this gathering, they might have a chance to undo what the conspiracy has wrought, but they'll find that other forces are already eyeing their newly vulnerable world.



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## Background

Three elements are at play in this adventure – the Ob's ritual to change the world, the awakening of the fey titans, and the Ob's efforts to consolidate control of the world.

### The Great Eclipse.

The world is fed by eight planes, providing energies of fire, air, water, earth, space, time, life, and death. The Obscurati's ritual has changed which planes this world is linked to, and so has altered the nature of reality itself.

Two years ago, the Ob's research into the planes accidentally roused the fey titan known as the **Voice of Rot**, and he has plotted ever since. A primordial manifestation of death, the Voice of Rot sensed the approaching reality shift, and realized it would give him a chance to actually witness the world's destruction. He subtly influenced agents and long-dormant cultists around the world to disrupt the Ob's ritual on Axis Island. Their interference prevented the Obscurati's colossus Borne from correctly closing the Axis Seal, which has left the world drifting away from its sun, pulled toward **The Gyre**.

The Gyre is visible in the charcoal-black sky as a churning cloud of flickering stars, moving like a pair of immense gears. Over the coming months it will grow alarmingly close, and within a year the world will be pulled into that vortex. In truth, the Gyre is a graveyard of the multiverse, where dead or abandoned worlds are drawn in, ripped apart, and scattered in order to create new planes. In later adventures the party will have to go there to recover the planes this world was once linked to – or choose new planes from among the dying remnants – in order to undo the Obscurati's designs.

For now, the nature of magic has notably changed. See Appendix: Reality Shift for full details, but the most pressing one for the party's interests likely is that, unless you can see your destination, it's impossible to teleport somewhere if you have not been there since the Ob's ritual occurred. Similarly, long-range communication like *sendings* only can contact people you have interacted with since the world changed. For at least the immediate future, if the party is curious what's going on somewhere in the world, they will need to trek there the old-fashioned way.

### The Fey Titans.

The fey titans have over the centuries since Risur's founding occasionally risen up one at a time to vie for control of their domain – the forests of the **Ash Wolf**, the fields of the **Father of Thunder**, the mountains of **Granny Allswell**, the seas of **She Who Writhes**, and the swamps of the **Voice of Rot**. Not since the nation's founding have all the titans awoken simultaneously, but the Voice of Rot's battle with the party in ZEITGEIST #9: *The Last Starry Sky*, combined with the sudden reality shift, has roused their ire.

Traditionally the monarch of Risur has been responsible for subduing any rebellious titans, typically using some mix of physical might and a canny abuse of fey quirks to trick them into defeating themselves. After any such defeat, the titan is compelled to offer a boon and then return to its slumber.

Much of the first act of this adventure occurs in and around the city of Bole, located south of Flint, in a more fey-friendly region of Risur. In the farmlands west of Bole, the gazelle-like fey titan Father of Thunder rampages. Attracting an ever-growing herd

## Adapting the Adventure.

As a stand-alone adventure outside the ZEITGEIST campaign, you'll want to strip away most of the background of *Godmind* and focus on the present. Have the awakening fey titans be a consequence of the same psychic phenomena that are creating the hiveminds. In this way, the adventure deals with "titans" of forest and field, mountain and sea, and then civilization itself. The Axis Island elements don't fit cleanly into this abridged adventure.

Alternately, if you just want to mine this adventure for your own high-level campaign, the fey titans could show up as reawakened primordial entities or extraplanar invaders. The Axis Island events could be a rescue mission for an inventor who is using the island's strange magic to craft an airship, and who's being pursued by a hostile army. The titular godmind could be summoned by an eldritch ritual, or the result of a person's psychic powers activating and going out of control.

### Keep an Open Plot.

At this point, your players have access to ridiculous powers and resources, and so expecting a particular outcome for any given challenge is foolish. The temporary limits on teleportation and long-distance communication at the beginning of the adventure allow us to at least encourage a starting position, but we expect the PCs to come up with myriad courses after that. Throughout the ZEITGEIST campaign we've enjoyed crafting complex, interlocking series of scenes, but we recognize that at this high level it's best to just throw up interesting obstacles and let the PCs figure out their own path.

We suggest you keep an open mind, and not get worried if they win a few encounters too handily. We'll push them to their limits eventually.

of animals to his side, he devastates Risur's breadbasket and will cause a famine if not dealt with.

In the Antwalk Thicket east of Bole, important lumber-providing forests have been caught in rampant blazes. While locals blame the fires on the Ash Wolf, the truth is more complicated. Salamander hunters from the plane of fire, Jiese, came through a portal and killed one of the lupine titan's pups. The titan mistakenly blamed the loggers, and so the Ash Wolf hunts in the infernos to punish them. The fires themselves are the salamanders' doing, since they hope to claim this land as their own.

In the mines of Anthras Mountain, south of Bole, tremors and quakes herald raids by gremlins, minions of Granny Allswell, who desires children to raise as her own. With the mines thus forced to shut down, Risur also faces a shortage of ore for industry.

The PCs might prioritize more urgent threats, but they will need to defeat at least one fey titan before they can access the rest of the world. The tentacled titan She Who Writhes madly lashes out at any vessel attempting to travel the seas around Risur. Her sheer size, speed, and ability to detect intruders in her waters make any sort of naval travel nigh impossible. While this titan's attacks effectively land-lock the party and the Risuri navy, it also keeps Danor and other nations from attacking. The party might be best-served to deal with all the other titans before confronting the she-kraken.

But the fifth titan, the Voice of Rot, avoids the party. Indeed, he is making his way through the Gyre toward its center, feeding off all the death around him. He will pose a great threat to the party in ZEITGEIST #12: *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*.





## Obscured No More.

During the Obscurati's ritual on Axis Island, the conspiracy's leader **Nicodemus the Gnostic** watched as the great colossus **Borne** opened the hundred-foot diameter Axis Seal, a gigantic golden disc. The opening of the Seal has unleashed devastating magical energies from across the multiverse and damaged the colossus, but Obscurati mages were present to shield him, and the wounded Borne rearranged the enchanted stone pillars buried beneath the seal. This adjusted which planes the world was linked to, bringing about the new world the Obscurati desired.

To complete the ritual, Borne needed to lower the seal back over the ritual ground, which would protect the world from extraplanar incursion. At this critical juncture, though, cultists of the Voice of Rot who had infiltrated the Ob set off explosions that killed most of those present and slew the body Nicodemus inhabited. Borne was blasted by waves of planar energy that tore him apart before he could close the seal. The three-hundred-foot tall colossus collapsed in pieces at the edge of the ritual valley, and the Axis Seal fell upon him, pinning the crippled construct.

Nicodemus's spirit form appeared in Methia, at the place where he first died centuries ago, and it took him several days to find a new host body and reach Cherage, the capital of Danor. Since then he has fumed, not knowing what went wrong with his ritual but suspecting Risur was responsible (and technically, it was). The predations of She Who Writhes thwarted his first attempt to reach Axis Island (and cost him another body), and so he is forced to wait and turn his attention to other affairs.

Recognizing Risur and the PCs as a threat, Nicodemus has sent out word to the leaders and enlightened thinkers of Danor, Drakr, and Crisillyir, as well as the various smaller nations north of the Avery Sea. He has invited them to Cherage for the Forward Symposium, where he will explain what has happened, and play upon their mutual concerns to unify them into a global government. Because the new reality makes people more reasonable, he can actually accomplish this goal with relative ease, after which his plan is to launch a massive invasion of Risur in order to wipe out any resistance. Then he'll turn his attention to fixing whatever went wrong at the Axis Seal.

What he doesn't realize, though, is that one of the planes he chose to link the world to, Ratios, has been assimilated by an extraplanar race known as the **Gidim**. These creatures, formed of psychic energies manifested into physical form, tried to invade the world thousands of years ago, but the Axis Seal cut them off. Now they return, and they find the mix of psionic energies the Obscurati have woven into the new reality a handy tool. While the **Gidim** will play a more prominent role in *ZEITGEIST* #11: *Gorged on Ruins*, a familiar one – the wayfarer **Sijhen** – will attend Nicodemus's conference and help provoke a devastating psychic manifestation.

## The Wildcard.

In *ZEITGEIST* #6: *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*, the party thwarted a plot by **Benedict Pemberton** to conquer the nation of Ber. The former dragon tyrant, long disguised as a human industrialist, might even have lost a daughter to the party. But Pemberton swiftly came to realize the threat posed by the Ob, who were trying to conquer and dominate the *whole world*.

In the immediate aftermath of the Axis Seal ritual, Pemberton and his minions invaded Axis Island and defeated the defenders, who were panicked by the failure of the colossus. Expecting a counterattack by the Ob, he had his minions seize the Axis Fortress. But when no attack came (thanks to defense by She Who Writhes), Pemberton began to repurpose the fortress's factories to produce his own inventions.

More importantly, Pemberton can see the aftermath of the Obscurati's ritual, and while he doesn't have the acumen to undo it himself, he is inspired by the PCs' perspicacity – or at least their tenacity – in discovering and thwarting his own plot. He intends to contact them and propose an alliance against the Obscurati.

## Adventure Overview

The first act is contained to Risur, which the party will likely not be able to leave until they defeat She Who Writhes. If the party does this early without handling the other fey titans, they can return to handle them later. In the second act, an ally encourages them to visit Axis Island, and then they'll have a chance to interrupt an effort of the Obscurati to consolidate power, but the party could deal with these two challenges in the other order.

### Act One: Against the Titans.

The party finds themselves in charge of a changed Risur, where there is no sun and the rules of magic have changed, forcing them to spend at least a few weeks reinventing the wheel, as it were, to regain access to necessary magic. During that time they start to learn about the new nature of the planes, hear reports of the fey titans causing trouble, and witness people's behaviors change toward cooperation and reason.

This last one wouldn't seem so bad, until a protest against inhumane work conditions turns into bedlam when the unified psychic will of the protesters manifests as a tentacled "hivemind." The party must handle these troubles while cut off from news of the outside world.

In order to get beyond Risur's shores they must subdue She Who Writhes, but allies offer to help, including the mighty eladrin dreadnought **Asrabey Varal** and the archfey of the sea **Beshela**, who believes she can convince She Who Writhes to fight for them if the party can get her close enough. But when the party sails out to confront the fey titan, Asrabey betrays them and tries to kill Beshela and take control of the kraken. Swayed by the power of the new reality, he has decided to ally with the Obscurati.

### Act Two: The New Conspiracy.

A blood tide rises after the battle with She Who Writhes. The blood carries a message from the demoness **Ashima-Shimtu** (see *ZEITGEIST* #4: *Always on Time*), advising the PCs to investigate Axis Island, deal with their most pressing problems (as detailed in this adventure), and then rescue her (in *ZEITGEIST* #11: *Gorged on Ruins*).

At Axis Island, the party sees a massive bloom of uncontrolled planar flux erupting into the sky from the island's central valley. Pemberton invites them to explore the Axis Seal for clues on how to undo the Ob's ritual, and if they agree to cooperate on defeating

the new rulers of the world, he offers to share one of his innovations with them – airship technology. They’ll need it to cross the world quickly and round up allies against the conspiracy. In fact, Pemberton styles himself leader of a *new* conspiracy, since after all he and the rest of the party are now the underdogs fighting against the global order.

Divinations and other clues alert the party to the upcoming Forward Symposium, where dignitaries will discuss plans for a world government founded with Nicodemus’s ideology. Pemberton wants to send a sleeper agent in – **Brakken of Heffanita**, a telepathic minotaur and the former ambassador from Ber to Risur. He can form a psychic link with the party so they can see what he sees inside the symposium, and then decide how to respond.

The Ob launch an attack to reclaim Axis Island. Recognizing he can’t sustain a prolonged assault, Pemberton invites the party to board their newly-upgraded airship, blow the joint, and fly the hell out of there. The party can then land and hide out near Cherage, since they need to stay within range of Brakken’s link.

### The Forward Symposium.

Heads of state, military leaders, and great thinkers arrive in Cherage, including familiar faces from previous adventures. Nicodemus espouses a prosperous new world of cooperation, and paints Risur and the PCs as villains who will try to stop them. He succeeds in getting an agreement from several nations to unify and attack Risur, and orders are sent out to begin preparations for an attack within a week. But when Nicodemus opens the floor to discussion of other ways to improve the world with the benefits of newfound cooperation, the group’s aligned thoughts start to manifest a hive-mind, like the one in Flint.

Philosophers suggest ways to improve the quality of life, economists recommend improving labor efficiency, and politicians propose a solution they’ve always secretly wanted but never have been able to voice: kill everyone who doesn’t pull their weight. The normally abhorrent idea is greeted with near-unanimous approval by the assembled group. Possessing a clear purpose, the hivemind grows a tentacle cocoon around the thinkers and sets out to cull the city of Cherage of all undesirables. It has become the Godmind.

Nicodemus flees in horror, but Brakken – trapped inside the cocoon yet able to resist having his consciousness subsumed – is able to communicate with the party and guide them should they try to save the capital of the nation that has long been Risur’s enemy.

While the party can totally sit back and let Cherage be consumed by the psychic vortex of murder-philosophers that value economic efficiency over human life, if they swoop in on their airship and save the day, they’ll have planted the seeds for Danor to break free from the Ob’s control. Now all they have to do is stop every other country’s armies, but that’s for ZEITGEIST #11: *Gorged on Ruins*.

### Rewards.

The party begins this adventure at 17th level, and should reach 18th level after act one, then 19th level at its end. The appendices at the end of ZEITGEIST #9: *The Last Starry Sky* provide guidelines for what resources the PCs have access to, now that they’re

## Campaign Variety.

This far into a campaign, different groups may have very different webs of allies and enemies for the PCs. Consider how each of these NPCs will fit into the campaign from here on.

**Alexander Grappa.** The mindmaker was likely killed in ZEITGEIST #7: *Schism*, though he has enough mind magic to possibly have survived by burrowing into the subconscious of another Obscurati officer. If the party had a close bond with him, he might fill in the role of Brakken of Heffanita.

**Amielle Latimer.** The trefling ghost gunsmith might have flown back to Danor and could be spying on the Obscurati. If she was found out, though, she’ll want to stay in Flint to help protect it. However, she doesn’t want to be privy to any secrets, because if she’s destroyed and rejuvenates among the ghost council, they’ll be able to compel her to talk. It might be best to keep her off-stage until the campaign climax, when she can make a pivotal sniper shot to save an endangered PC.

**Copperhat the Headless.** If he survives, Copperhat remains in the Dreaming, spying for the Voice of Rot and poised to cause chaos in ZEITGEIST #12: *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*.

**Kasvarina Varal.** If she rejoined the conspiracy, she’s with Nicodemus running things. Her focus is on military and defense, and she’ll direct the multi-pronged assault on Risur in ZEITGEIST #11: *Gorged on Ruins*.

If she helped the party escape at the end of ZEITGEIST #8: *Diaspora*, she likely ended up in Elfaivar, where she and Athrylla Valanar prepare the eladrin enclave Sentosa to resist the Obscurati’s world dominion. If the party visits her, they can call upon her loyal dreadnoughts for minor missions throughout the world.

**Lya Jierre.** Likely a member of the ghost council, Lya adopts the role of chief of staff for Nicodemus, which also keeps her by his side as a bodyguard. Nicodemus intends to place her in charge of Risur once the nation is conquered.

**Terakalir.** If Pemberton’s daughter she survived ZEITGEIST #6: *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*, she is present on Axis Island, polymorphed to resemble a teenaged human with a mechanical prosthetic arm and eye. She doesn’t have a significant role, though.

**Tinker Oddcog.** If he lives, either as an ally of Risur or of Benedict Pemberton, it would be smart to get him onto Axis Island in Act Two (he might ask to go along, or stow away—since he’s so, so tiny—on their ship) so he can put the finishing touches on their airship. He could then disappear in the chaos of battle and show up again to help the party deal with the colossus in the campaign’s finale.

**Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill.** Viscount Price-Hill still runs the RHC, but will operate “off-screen” for the rest of the campaign unless your party responded to him favorably. His main role is to provide a foil for the party if they decide to ally with the conspiracy. In that case, he assumes leadership of Risur and tries (likely futilely) to defend the nation.

basically in charge of an entire country. For that reason, we don’t provide specific treasure, though the party can acquire various boons. Any miscellaneous “loot” is probably better used by lesser subjects of Risur, and as usual, count any such gear the PCs keep against their monetary resources.

# Prologue: That Was One Hell of an Apocalypse

**T**HE PARTY IS ASSUMED TO BEGIN *GODMIND* IN THE city of Flint immediately following the end of *ZEITGEIST #9: The Last Starry Sky*. Before the real “adventure” begins, the PCs need time to settle in after the climax of defeating Governor Stanfield and disrupting his ritual. A montage of scenes highlights in what ways the world has changed.

## World of Ruin

### Exploration. Montage.

*The world has been shattered. Things are forever changed.*

While the PCs witnessed the effects of the ritual firsthand during their conflict with the emergent Obscurati forces, only as the adventure begins does the full breadth of the Obscurati's grand

scheme become obvious. The world has changed; the balance of the planar cosmology is upset and new planes of existence align themselves with the world. As the adventure begins, the PCs should have some opportunity to learn about these changes.

### Magical Mishaps.

One of the Risuri soldiers tries to give a healing potion to an injured comrade. The man swallows, coughs and writhes, then dies of suffocation (his throat sealed shut with new flesh, blocking his windpipe).

Any magic the PCs attempt above cantrips either fails outright or goes awry (10% chance of mishap per spell level; it fails if it doesn't mishap). Activated magic items have a similar chance of failure. Permanent magic items function mostly normally, though perhaps with odd side-effects. Simple *detect magic* reveals that magical auras are almost the same, but most spells are suffused with subtly unfamiliar magic.

In general, spellcasters feels that with enough time they could figure out how to use this new magic safely, but it will take days of research and/or practice. Likewise, old magic items could be used safely with a bit of training, but unsuspecting people will suffer a lot of accidents in the coming days.

## Meanwhile... Around the World

Other adventures have started with news of events in Risur and beyond, but now the party is cut off. They might discover this information by divination, but due to She Who Writhes cutting off Risur's sea lanes, the PCs don't get any firsthand news for months.

**Stable Transition.** Unlike Risur, other nations have strong cells of Obscurati agents who made sure their local brands of ancient monsters didn't wake up and start causing trouble (even if the party killed some of the Ob's officers in *ZEITGEIST #7: Schism*, their underlings probably could have taken over.)

Magic now functions normally in Danor and the Malice Lands.

Danor is firmly in league with Nicodemus the Gnostic, who reveals himself and pens letters to several newspapers to explain what has happened (in layman's terms) and encourage cooperation. He does not assume an official government position, but supported by **Sovereign Han Jierre**, Nicodemus lets the people of the world know that he has answers to their many questions, and invites the leaders and most prominent thinkers of these nations—all except Risur and Ber, which cannot be reached because of She Who Writhes.

**I Knew This Was Coming.** The eschatologist movement in Drakr actually prevents almost any chaos, as many Drakrans stoically accept what they've seen as another step towards the End Times. In the far north of Drakr, though, **Grandis Komanov** encourages her radical eschatologist sect to raise an apocalyptic army of the dead to sweep across the world. Komanov's doomsday army is further detailed in *ZEITGEIST #11: Gorged on Ruins*.

**Damned Lies.** Crisillyr's ruling hierarchs have long been subtly swayed by the Obscurati, but the nation sees the greatest turmoil of any. All those who would have resisted were visited in the hour of

transition and killed. They left behind cleverly-forged suicide notes, confessing that their faith was a lie, and that they used myths of gods only so they could hold onto power over the common people.

Meanwhile, the demon **Ashima-Shimtu**, imprisoned for over a thousand years in the *Crypta Hereticarum*, uses blood magic to manifest around Crisillyr and disseminate the *sacrament of apotheosis* (see *ZEITGEIST #8: Diaspora*). As she hoped, desperate people caught in crises of faith use the ritual to call forth their gods and put them on trial. The fallout of the *sacrament of apotheosis* and its use is further detailed in *ZEITGEIST #11: Gorged on Ruins*.

**Wait and See.** The nation of Ber suffers small upheavals as Obscurati agents attempt to seize control, but they are brutally quashed by Bruse Shantus. Sensing the precariousness of his position, he charismatically proclaims that the darkening of the sky heralds that this is Ber's time to prosper. Since many of the Beran races possess darkvision, the nation of recently-savage people actually remains mostly orderly. Bruse Shantus is wary of Nicodemus, but plans to attend the conference in hopes of maintaining his rule without unnecessary war.

**Old Wounds, New Wounds.** Even the eladrin living in the colonies that have overtaken Elfaivar respond positively to Nicodemus and the Obscurati. However, those eladrin who hid for centuries in the fey enclaves—which existed between this world and the Dreaming—begin to stream into colonial cities, telling of their enclaves splitting apart and disintegrating. Thousands died. Only one enclave survived; **Athrylla Valanar**, matriarch of the Sentosa enclave, managed to pull her city back into the real world as the Ob's ritual cut the Dreaming off from the rest of reality. She urges her people not to be tricked, but her voice is mostly drowned out by optimism for reconciliation.





## Gyre-Rise

The night sky is black, or rather closer to slate gray. Close observation with a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a darker disk of pitch black where the moon used to be, and only four stars are visible. Skyseers immediately sense that this isn't the same moon, and recognize that three stars are in the location previously held by the planet Apet (and its ring Reida), while the other is where Mavisha used to be. But they aren't the same planets.

A DC 28 Knowledge (Arcana) check recognizes that the energy of the moon matches an obscure star known as Mojang. This was actually the same purple star that the Danoran telescope was pointed at on Axis Island two years ago (see *ZEITGEIST* #1: *The Island at the Axis of the World*), though that star was only ever a dot, not the size of the moon's disk. The other planets match stars known as Fourmyle, Baden, Illocus, and Ostea.

After a few hours when the sun should rise, instead the Gyre ascends into view. The churning Gyre provides as much illumination as a full moon used to, so the new "day" is bright enough for people to see dimly. Nevertheless, people around Flint panic at the missing sun and start fires. If the party organizes firefighting efforts they can contain most of the blazes, but left alone 10% of the city burns over the next three "days."

Storm clouds begin to form over Cauldron Hill, but when the Gyre is directly over the city, no rain falls. Instead, with cracks audible even from the Governor's Island, trees are torn from the stone and carried into the sky. Any Spirit Medium in the party gets a lurching sense of a lot of spirit energy leaving the long-cursed mountain. A Skyseer looking at those clouds recognizes that they are somehow tied to the planet Av, once plane of Life. Indeed, someone with a telescope might spot a tiny dark speck nearly motionless in front of the Gyre. This is the plane of Av, ripped from its old orbit and planted where Nem, the old plane of death, used to be.

Throughout the rest of the day another three planets wheel across the sky in the positions normally held by Jiese, Avilona, and Urim. Jiese is actually still the same; the others are again obscure stars: Perlocus and Ratios.

If the party doesn't figure out what these stars are, a royal astronomer will eventually contact them in about a week with the information.

## Fey Affairs.

Asrabey Varal and Gale find the party and inform them that it's still not possible to reach The Dreaming, and that their natural eladrin teleportation ability doesn't work anymore. Gale has brought a small mirror with her, and she asks them to attend the body of someone who died in the fighting. She looks in the mirror for a bit, then shows that spirits of the dead are reflected in the glass. Also, she and Asrabey (and any other eladrin) can slightly affect the spirit's reflection by moving their arms through the air where it would be if it were visible.

Gale offers to help the city however the party thinks she can. Asrabey excuses himself, saying he is only useful in battle, and that he will return when his sword is needed again.

Beshela, Archfey of the Sea, who brought the fey titan She Who Writhes to attack the Danoran fleet, vanished into the sea at the end of that battle.

## What's Up on Cauldron Hill?

The cursed mountain once had a close connection to the Bleak Gate, which was a dark reflection of the real world. That reflection was created by Av, the plane of life with traits of Dreams and Reflections. The Obscurati shifted Av to fill the role of plane of death, which put it at the edge of the "solar system" of planes that feed energy into the world.

This has the effect that the old Bleak Gate and Dreaming have been cut off from the rest of the world, pulled into the mass of doomed planes around the Gyre. With no specific plane for the dead to linger in, their spirits remain on the real world and are drawn toward places like Cauldron Hill where they can find passage to Av, the new plane of death. Most of these spirits are invisible, but can be seen in reflections.

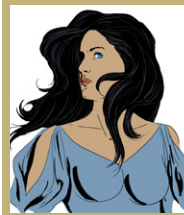
But Av is still metaphysically linked to the Dreaming and the Bleak Gate, and so every time the Gyre passes above Cauldron Hill (and similar places where "the veil is thin"), all the spirits collected there are pulled into their appropriate afterlife. Some pieces of the physical world are also torn away and sucked across the cosmos into the Gyre. Within weeks, the peak of Cauldron Hill is bald, stripped of all its trees.

Going there during "noon" when the Gyre is overhead is perilous. PCs who have levels in the teens would probably just suffer some negative energy damage and feel vertigo. Weaker people might be sucked bodily into the Gyre, lost forever.



**Asrabey Varal.** A centuries-old eladrin warrior, Asrabey became one of the many husbands of Kasvarina Varal. For years he trained, and undertook many daring raids until he became famous as one of the greatest eladrin warriors in the world. Two centuries ago Kasvarina sent Asrabey to Risur to offer his services to the Unseen Court, and he unwittingly acted as a critical source of information and influence for the Obscurati.

Stern and unsympathetic to outsiders, Asrabey displays few emotions other than righteous fury. Even with his wife he felt not so much love as intense devotion. After Kasvarina lost her memories, Asrabey rescued her and protected her. However, his foremost loyalty was to the woman he'd married, and that Kasvarina was co-running the Obscurati. In the new world order, Asrabey decides that he must serve the Obscurati, which means betraying the party.



**Hana "Gale" Soliogn.** An eladrin woman just over 100 years old, Hana can fly at will, control winds, and speak with birds, plus since she received the favor of a member of the Unseen Court she can wield offensive weather magic. Bitter for her treatment by her Danoran "foster family," she originally used her powers to sabotage Danor-owned industry, earning the moniker "fey terrorist." After the Great Eclipse she puts aside her political aspirations in order to help Flint defend itself from the Obscurati, though her ultimate loyalty lies with the common people and the followers of traditional druidic faiths.

## No News Is Bad News.

Without teleportation or *sending*, news must be delivered on foot. Couriers dispatched to Bole by train could get word back in two days. News from Slate will require two weeks or more on horseback. News from distant Shale will take over a month; by then Risuri mages will have figured out how to cast *sending* and *teleport*.



The party likely dispatches a ship, perhaps the swift *Impossible*, to get news. Less than half an hour after the messenger ship leaves port, a fire is visible far out to sea. Gale, likely the only person capable of flight, heads out, and returns a couple hours later carrying a single survivor – the ship’s young cabin boy, the only person she could physically carry. The boy says they were set upon by She Who Writhes.

Any further attempts to sail through the seas of Risur meet with similar fates if the vessels go into water deeper than thirty feet. The fey titan is able to sense intruders into her domain for hundreds of miles, and the new nature of teleportation magic allows her to catch even the fastest ships.

## Who’s in Charge Here?

Roland Stanfield is dead. Depending on the events of the previous adventure, Flint could be left without a governing body. **Principal Minister Harkover Lee**, advisor to the monarch, notices that people are confused who to report to, and suggests that whichever PC is now king or queen name at least an interim governor of Flint.

Possible options for a new governor include:

- **Captain Dale, Guardian of Cauldron Hill:** A likely staunch ally of the PCs, Dale makes for a good military head during the crisis. He focuses on preparing for supernatural threats, and he pursues a personal project of forcibly evacuating squatters from Cauldron Hill, which keep the various monsters in the woods and atop the mountain from causing trouble. However, he neglects more mundane concerns like maintaining infrastructure and paying people.

**Chief Inspector Stover Delft.** The party’s former boss now obeys their commands. Delft handles the logistical and political drudgery of the RHC, and will deploy his constables throughout the nation and world to get the party whatever information they need (though the new world’s changes in magic will make some intelligence slow in coming). He’s damned proud of the party, and is fully confident their heroics will save the nation.

Normally rather easy-going, Delft gets squinty and condescending when politics obstruct important affairs. Delft chews tobacco, and thinks he looks charming if he grins while sucking on tobacco juices. After several unpleasant run-ins with mimics (including losing a chunk of his leg seventeen years ago), he walks with a cane, which he’ll bang against inanimate objects before he gets too near to them, in case they’re waiting to get him.



**Principal Minister Harkover Lee.** Perhaps the most powerful mage in Risur (aside from any PC spellcasters), Lee acts as bodyguard and chief of staff to the king. Straight-backed and virile despite being in his 60s, Lee speaks crisply and passionately in a slight Ber-tinged accent, and was said to be quite the ladykiller in his youth. He always dresses in reds and golds and carries a solid gold orb tucked into his robes. He never eats or drinks in public. He was once known as the dragon tyrant Inacht the Hex-Eater, but he has abandoned that identity and is now loyal to Risur.



The city is safe but the people are discontent, and the imminent refugee flood from the south angers the wealthy since Dale won’t let them shove the newcomers into slums on Cauldron Hill.

- **Stover Delft, Head of Flint Royal Homeland Constabulary:** The PCs have likely grown beyond needing Delft’s guidance, and far outclass him in terms of power. Delft will keep Flint stable and is a good moderate contender for the governor position.

He has a great head for logistics, has been in the streets enough to sympathize with the working class, but has done enough politicking to keep those in power happy. But Delft is just a safe choice, and he has no vision for the city. Nothing gets worse, which might be good enough for now.

- **Thames Grimsley, Head of the Dockers Union:** Thames takes an active role in reorganizing the city and putting more power in the hands of the people. His governing style rubs major business owners the wrong way, but it does keep the citizens content during the crisis. He and a bunch of his friends will become very rich, but eventually he’ll become beholden to the existing power groups, both legal and criminal. During the campaign’s final adventure, Obscurati agents might blackmail him into betraying the party.
- **Hana “Gale” Soliogn, Alleged Fey Terrorist:** Nearly everyone would hate the idea of Gale becoming governor, but that pervasive distrust and fear would motivate her to never waver in pursuing what is best for Flint. She’s sympathetic to working people, but was raised in Danor to handle high society. She has fought for her life a few times and has no fear of organized crime, and her own unexplained magical flight drives her to understand how the magic of the new world could benefit the city.

A Gale governorship would be marred by early protests and conflict, but if the party steps in and offers regular shows of support, she overcomes these obstacles, earns the trust of disparate groups in the city, and pushes for transformative leadership. The city will begin training youths in simple magic (while including more broad education to improve their value to the economy and their understanding of how the world works), and if given enough time the city of Flint will become a progressive beacon.

- **Catherine Romana, Obscurati Traitor:** Catherine Romana might have survived and escaped after attempting to assassinate the king in ZEITGEIST #9: *The Last Starry Sky*. If so she disguises herself with illusions and adopts the identity of **Dextra Adienne**, an orphan noble (who Romana murders as part of her cover story). “Dextra” is firmly on the side of existing power groups, but she promises to keep industrialists and financiers happy so that Flint will cheaply provide supplies for what she expects is an imminent war with Danor. Romana is a consummate opportunist, and only ever joined the Obscurati because she thought it would bring her more power.
- **Other Choices:** The party could come up with a myriad of alternate solutions to the leadership conundrum. Most other NPCs who might be qualified aren’t Flint locals (Morgan





Cippiano is, but would decline if offered.) Appointing an outsider, organizing a council of representatives, or waiting to hold elections don't give the city solid leadership quickly enough, so for a time chaos will grip the city.

If none of the PCs wear the crown, whoever is the monarch chooses Captain Dale.

## And Risur Is My Nation.

Late in the day, a courier named **Gully Foyle** finds the PCs and frantically asks for help. He's been teleporting. A few times when he was in a rush and he tried to weave through a crowd, he found himself simply stepping straight to a spot he could see. He doesn't know if this is safe, but he can't stop doing it.

By doing a bit of testing, the party can find out he can teleport anywhere he could walk or climb to, even across small bodies of water like Parity Lake or the Stanfield Canal (Delft recommends they should probably rename that). He can't teleport through a fence, through bars of a cell, or onto the roof of a stranger's house, but he can teleport to any place that is public or that he has permission from the owner to enter. He also can't cross Flint Harbor or jaunt to the Ayres Islands (She Who Writhes claims the seas as her own, so Foyle doesn't have permission from the owner).

Most creatures can only use this ability once per day as an action, and they need 8 hours practicing, after which they must succeed a DC 17 Dexterity or Wisdom check to learn how to use this ability. Any character with feats for greater mobility (or otherwise with a focus on rapid movement) doesn't need to practice to pick up the skill, and can use it once every 5 minutes.

Most common people hear rumors of this new power but its use takes months to become widespread.

For her part, **Lauryn Cyneburg**, the RHC's minister of infiltration, jokingly offers to give Gully her job, then less-jokingly suggests they lock the man up in a lightless cell so he can't share the secret. She proposes building thin towers across the nation, separated by miles but tall enough to be seen from the next nearest tower, to allow rapid teleportation by approved forces.

## Bakers Gone Wild

That night Delft reports of the first outbreak of violence, which was an odd one. A baker's guild meeting somehow led to two dozen bakers roaming the streets, marching in odd lockstep, breaking into businesses and taking various baking ingredients – flour, butter, sugar, and the like. When police tried to arrest them, the bakers fended them off with exceptional teamwork. The police were forced to withdraw, and they say the perpetrators returned to their guildhouse and have been baking all day.

If the party goes to them, the bakers mostly ignore them unless attacked. The two dozen men and women move with eerie unity, and if asked questions about baking they respond in unison.

The next day, the party will get word of a larger protest forming in Parity Lake, where newly-emboldened factory workers have invited the entire district to come find the factory owners and force them to provide better pay and safety conditions. Delft worries there might be a riot, and thinks the party has the best chance to stop bloodshed.

## Formation of a Hivemind

### Social/Action. Tactical.

*A protest turns riotous, then far more dangerous when a monster appears.*

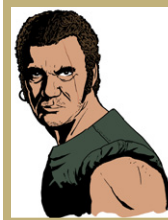
Not one to let a little world-altering-event threaten her profits, factory owner **Jaya Isfeld** has instituted a lock-in. Similar to the events in ZEITGEIST #2: *The Dying Skyseer*, factory workers have been forcibly incarcerated within their workplaces, and only allowed to leave when a replacement staff member comes to take their shifts.

### Unforeseen Consequence.

The Obscurati spent years scanning the heavens for stars that carried the right mix of magical energies. Then they wove magic to pull planets from around that star into orbit with this world, so it could share its energies. The plane of Ratios was selected because it would lead to calmer and more logical discussion. Tests using artificial demiplanes found the world was a barren, lifeless husk, which meant it would be safe to link to our world, though a few researchers mentioned hearing whispers in their mind.

What was left undiscovered by the Ob was a lingering taint of the Gidim, an extraplanar alien race composed of thoughts, which must feed on a diverse diet of sentience to survive. The Gidim had long-since found Ratios and stripped the world bare. Removing its original inhabitants, and siphoning their thoughts away, the Gidim left the world, but also implanted a latent strand of their hive psyche on the world. It lay dormant until the thoughts of large groups began to feed it.

With the new cosmology established, the Gidim have become aware of the presence of a whole civilization of thinking minds, ripe for consumption. It will be a few weeks before the Gidim begin actually arriving on this world, but for now the latent Gidim



**Thames Grimsley.** A grizzled sailor, still with a full head of hair in his early 50s, Grimsley heads the dock workers guild in Flint and advocates for worker interests in general. He took a gash from a policeman's knife on the side of his face in the last big docker riot. A couple of months working at a theater as a child gave him a very stylized public speaking voice, one full of unnecessary, melodramatic pauses.



**Lauryn Cyneburg.** Though over seventy years old, as a half-elf Lauryn only betrays her age with the weariness of her eyes. As the RHC's Director of Infiltration, her expertise in teleportation has seen her delivering agents to missions around the world, and she's tired of seeing them not return when things go wrong.

Lauryn carries herself with an odd mix of stiffness and informality. She'll never let her guard down or expose her own emotions, and she hates jokes because she hates laughing. Though she shows little respect for anyone, not even her superiors, she long ago decided that she had to pick something to care about, or else she'd just end up teleporting around to no purpose. So she chose Risur, because its people don't take themselves too seriously.



## Mechanics of a Broken Age.

The following is a breakdown of mechanics that have changed since the completion of the Obscurati's ritual. Trial and error are the best manner for a PC to discover these mechanical changes, while high-level divination magic may assist in ascertaining the exact changes to the world.

Let the players discover this information through trial and error, then give them the handout Appendix: Reality Shift as a reminder. Alternately, a few weeks after the Great Eclipse the PCs get a report from **Asher Henton**, Distinguished Professor of Otherworldly Physics at Kitham University in Shale. Professor Henton will seek out the new monarch and offer his expertise in understanding the new cosmos.

- **Applied Astronomy:** Characters with the Applied Astronomist prestige class get new powers; see Appendix: Reality Shift.
- **Black Hole Sun:** Any spell that creates light is 1 level higher, and no spell can produce light for more than 5 minutes (magic can produce fire, which emits light; only magical light is affected). All existing magical light effects end.

In the new world, *light* is a 1st-level spell, and even high-level heroes might need to rely on torches or lanterns for illumination.

- **Blood of Ostea:** Though mundane infections rarely come into play for heroic adventurers, throughout history disease has always killed more people than war. Since the Great Eclipse, people have found themselves far more resistant to nonmagical infections, which has led to a small population boom similar to the effect of widespread vaccinations. There are no game mechanics for this; people are simply less likely to get sick and die from most infections.

Whenever you roll a death saving throw because you started your turn at 0 hit points, you succeed on any result of 8 or higher. You get one failure if you roll a 1 to 7, and if you roll a natural 20 you gain 1 hit point. Taking damage while at 0 hit points still causes you to suffer a death saving throw failure.

At the GM's discretion, an attack that drops an NPC or monster to 0 hit points might kill it immediately, or the creature might simply automatically stabilize without needing to roll or having the chance of regaining consciousness during a fight.

- **Death is Death:** Slain deva no longer reincarnate.
- **Flight of the Fey:** Eladrin lose access to Fe Step. Instead, all weapon attacks made by eladrin ignore the damage resistances and immunities of incorporeal creatures due to their connection to the new plane of Death.
- **Magic Mishaps:** As detailed above, whenever a character casts a spell more powerful than a cantrip (either personally or with a magic item), there's a 10% chance per spell level that the effect fails. If it doesn't fail, it causes a mishap of some sort. Supernatural features and innately cast spells function normally.

A character who can use magic of some sort can spend 8 hours researching and practicing, then make a DC 17 Intelligence (Arcana) check (or, at the GM's discretion, an ability check using their spellcasting ability). This check can be attempted multiple times. On a success they become able to safely use magic of up to 1st level, with no special chance of failure or mishap. Each further day they can make additional checks to regain mastery of the next higher level of magic, up to whatever is the highest level they know. A character can only attempt one of these checks per day.

Alternately, a character who has mastered a level of magic can spend 8 hours to aid another character with his or her mastery attempts, granting advantage to the check.

Existing magic items that cast spells are dangerous, but can be rendered safe with a moment's concentration by a spellcaster capable of casting spells of sufficient level.

- **Reign of the Rational:** All creatures have advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks when using rational appeals rather than emotional ones. All creatures have disadvantage on Wisdom (Insight) and Charisma (Intimidation) checks.
- **Impossibly Distant:** Planar travel works to any of the new worlds in orbit, but all other planes are out of range. The Dreaming and the Bleak Gate are inaccessible. The Gyre can be reached from various areas in the world, but travel is perilous and one-way. Summoning spells work normally, though.
- **Fourmyle Jaunting.** Every creature is able to *jaunt*—to teleport within line of sight as if they had innately cast *misty step*. As an action once per day, a character can teleport anywhere they have line of sight to. They cannot teleport to a spot they could not reach normally (that is, you must be able to walk or climb *there* from *here*, so no teleporting through a barred cage). Creatures cannot teleport if they're immobilized or restrained.

A character with a feat or feature that grants greater mobility (or who otherwise focuses on fast movement) can instead use this ability once every 5 minutes.

- **Teleportation and Communication.** Gold no longer blocks teleportation. However, it is not possible to teleport to a location unless you can either see it or you have been there before. Any places seen before the Ob's ritual was completed don't count, and scrying is insufficient, so it won't be possible to teleport around the world for a while, until the PCs travel the traditional way first.

Similarly, magical communication cannot contact any creature unless you can either see it or have interacted with it since the Ob's ritual.

You cannot teleport to a spot that is owned or otherwise controlled by someone who has chosen to bar teleporting intruders (there will be a rash of robberies in the coming weeks until word spreads that all you have to do is *think* and you can bar teleporters from your property).

What constitutes ownership tends to follow social consensus. Streets and forests are public unless signs are prominently posted or fences (or even token lines of rope) are set up. The owner of an area can make exceptions for specific creatures or groups of creatures. This restriction only bars teleporting into an area, not out of an area or within an area.

- **Three Miles Is So Last Age:** Spells that restore life to the dead are no longer limited by the body having to travel less than 3 miles from where it died. However, spirits of the dead are visible in mirrors, standing near their bodies. After a few days, these spirits wander off and might be glimpsed occasionally in reflections.
- **Wings of Liberty:** Magical flight is now possible. Spells such as *fly* and *levitation* have their normal duration and the spell slot level required to cast them is reduced by 1.



consciousness on Ratios has crept into the material world. When large groups of like-minded individuals group together, they start to think in unison. The more focused the thoughts of the group are, the stronger the bond. This is called a **gestalt**, and is mostly harmless.

When emotionally charged, though, gestalts can generate **hiveminds** – physical entities whose powers and strength are commensurate with the number of thinking minds. As the PCs arrive at Parity Lake to deal with the mob, one of these hiveminds manifests.

### Rabble Rabble Rabble.

By the time the PCs arrive, the mob has grown to encompass almost 500 angered workers; including family, friends, and people who just want to shout against the injustices of the new world. The mob is led by Thames Grimsley who is fed up with the governing system and is finally ready to let his mob loose and forcibly enter the factories to free imprisoned workers. He's busy shouting threats of how if the crowd finds the owners, he can't be held responsible for any bloodshed.

A group of several dozen police officers form a loose blockade between the Isfeld Drilling Cortège and the growing mob. As the PCs arrive, the mob is pushing against the police line, and the officers are shaken and firing off repeated warning shots into the sky. Thames Grimsley shouts at the officers to abandon their posts so no one will get hurt.

Unless the PCs take drastic action against the mob, the situation quickly escalates. A stray rock strikes a police officer and as another officer moves to help him up, a second rock strikes. The downed officer responds with a shot into the crowd, which strikes one of the worker's wives in the gut. From here the mob makes a full push against the police officers, only to be repelled by a volley of gunfire.

Immediately, the mob begins to stamp their feet in unison and chant, "*Let our people out! Let us out! Let us out!*" The air feels thick with intention. The people in the mob don't notice anything amiss, but the party can spot something huge moving inside the windows of the drilling factory, which flicker with turquoise light. The mob grabs the officers and start dragging them into the center of their mass, yanking at their limbs and breaking bones as the cops scream in panic.

Three rounds after this, the Labor Hivemind bursts out from the inside of the drilling factory, collapsing the entire facing wall onto the police and mob.

### Calming and Dispersing.

Before the hivemind attacks, the party can attempt DC 29 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) checks to either calm the escalating violence or panic some protesters into fleeing. Specifically focusing on Thames Grimsley and succeeding a check snaps the man out of the psychic gestalt, granting the party advantage on other checks to stop the crowd.

While it's impossible to fully disperse the crowd by talking or intimidation, use of these skills lowers the conviction of the mob. For every success the party has against the mob, the Labor Hivemind takes a cumulative -1 penalty to ability checks, saving throws, attack rolls, and damage rolls (maximum -3).

Using magic to calm them is likely ineffective (both because the party probably has no more than 1st level spells available right now,

and because the crowd uses the hivemind's Wisdom saving throw bonus, below). Attacking the crowd just improves their conviction and causes the hivemind to attack early.

### Mind Strike.

The Labor Hivemind manifests inside the factory. A shell of thoughtform flesh forms around the workers trapped inside, and massive tentacles smash through walls to help the people be free. Afterward the hivemind is driven to find the owners of the factory and kill them, but it will kill anyone who gets in its way.

The mob remains oblivious to their psychic construct, and attempts to convince them of its presence only irritate the mob and its leader, who see the PCs as trying to make them look simple.

Three rounds after the gunshot triggers the hivemind's creation, it smashes through the factory wall in a flash of blue light. Characters standing with the police can attempt to get out of the way with a successful DC 21 Dexterity saving throw or be crushed by the falling wall for 27 (5d10) bludgeoning damage.

The clearing dust reveals the labor hivemind, a translucent blue mass of brain matter with eight tentacles that end in crude, fleshy hammers and sickles. Eyes twitch along the surface of the orb, and where they look, people's flesh dissolves into ash.

### Tactics.

The hivemind has all the knowledge of its creators, so it understands the PCs are the immediate threat. It begins combat by unleashing a series of psychic bolts at any PC it can see, preferring to target those in the middle of the group first. From then on, the hivemind tries to use conduits and its own tentacles to grapple every single PC, then use of its Mental Overdrive ability to consume them.

What the hivemind does not expect is that the PCs might be familiar with its Gidim nature. As the PCs have likely had experience with thoughtform creatures in previous adventures, they may think to use thought against the creature.

Any PCs reduced to 0 hit points are dropped and left to die (though the new world traits for healing prevents that), while PCs who are reduced to 0 in a mental ability score are absorbed. Since the party is likely operating without most of their spells, this fight might be overwhelming, forcing them to fall back and find new ways to deal with the monster – cannons, rifle fusillades, or explosives.

Finally, the party can substantially weaken the hivemind if they're willing to attack the crowd of protesters. In this grim scenario, treat the protesters as noncombatants with AC 10 and 4 hit points each. Every 20 who are killed impose a cumulative -1 penalty to ability checks, saving throws, attack rolls, and damage rolls (maximum -3).

### Aftermath.

Slaying the hivemind unleashes a tremendous psionic boom. Everyone in the crowd that created the thoughtform creature suffers temporary backlash (reducing Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma by 1d6; a creature is incapacitated if this reduces an ability score to 0 but otherwise, the reduction lasts until the creature finishes 1d4 long rests) leaving them dazed and confused for the next several days. After 3 days of rest, Thames Grimsley (if he survived)





approaches the PCs and apologizes to them for the display, but he is adamant upon the point that something needs to be done, because the people are scared of this new world. He predicts that things will only get worse.

## Labor Hivemind

Gargantuan swarm of Medium humanoids, neutral

**Armor Class** 19 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 310 (20d20+100)

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover; no higher than 20 ft. from ground)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	19 (+4)	21 (+5)	22 (+6)	21 (+5)	24 (+7)

**Skills** Acrobatics +10, Arcana +12, Deception +13, Insight +11, Nature +12, Perception +11, Religion +12

**Condition Immunities** blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., truesight, passive Perception 26

**Languages** Common; *tongues* (telepathy 200 ft.)

**Challenge** 17 (18,000 XP)

**All-Around Vision.** The Labor Hivemind can simultaneously look in every direction and has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks.

**Conduits.** On its turn, the Labor Hivemind can do one of the following through all conduits within range of its telepathy:

- Make an attack using one of its tentacles (reducing its normal number of attacks by one), centering the attack on the conduit instead of itself. A tentacle attack from a conduit can still grapple an enemy and acts as though it were from the hivemind, though it falls off if the conduit moves out of range or breaks free of this effect.
- Cast any spell currently available to the conduit. Using this spell does not prevent the conduit from using it during their action, though it still uses a spell slot as usual.

**Flyby.** The Labor Hivemind doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

**Incorporeal Movement.** The Labor Hivemind can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

**Magic Resistance.** The Labor Hivemind has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Mental Overdrive.** Whenever the Labor Hivemind sustains a grapple, it begins rewriting the target's brain. At the start of the Labor Hivemind's turn, any creatures it is grappling must make a DC 21 Charisma saving throw or reduced its Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores by 1d4 each. The target becomes incapacitated if this reduces its Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma to 0. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest. For each incapacitated target

the Labor Hivemind grows a new tentacle, regains 20 hit points, and can make an additional melee weapon attack whenever it takes the Attack action.

**Slavery of Thought.** The Labor Hivemind's attacks are as physical as they are psychic and it ignores the effects of *freedom of movement*. A creature under the effects of *freedom of movement* have advantage on checks to escape the Labor Hivemind's grapple.

**Swarm.** The Labor Hivemind can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the Labor Hivemind can move through any opening large enough for a Medium creature. The Labor Hivemind can only regain hit points using Mental Overdrive and it cannot gain temporary hit points.

**Thoughtform.** Once per round on its turn, a creature within 30 feet of the Labor Hivemind can spend a bonus action to try to influence the Labor Hivemind with its thoughts. The creature makes a DC 12 Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma check and chooses to make the Labor Hivemind make one of the following saves—Dexterity, Constitution, or Wisdom (DC 26 for each).

- **Dexterity:** On a failed save, the creature forces the Labor Hivemind to drop all of its grapples (including those from conduits), and moves the Labor Hivemind 10 feet in any direction.
- **Constitution:** On a failed save, the Labor Hivemind loses the Incorporeal Movement trait until the end of the influencing creature's next turn. If it's flying, the Labor Hivemind must land or fall.
- **Wisdom:** On a failed save, the influencing creature can cause any number of conduits to cease being conduits. Additionally, the influencing creature cannot be perceived by the Labor Hivemind for 1 round.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The Labor Hivemind attacks 8 times.

**Tentacle. Melee Weapon Attack:** +13 to hit, reach 30 ft., one target.

**Hit:** 16 (2d8+7) bludgeoning damage and the target is grabbed (escape DC 21 plus Mental Overdrive).

**Psychic Bolt. Ranged Weapon Attack:** +10 to hit, range 50/100 ft., one target. **Hit:** 12 (2d6+5) force damage and the target makes a DC 21 Charisma saving throw or becomes a conduit. A conduit acts normally but is outlined in a halo of turquoise light. At the end of each round, a conduit can repeat the saving throw to end the effect.

## REACTIONS

**Deflect Missile.** The Labor Hivemind can use its reaction to deflect a ranged weapon attack, negating the damage.

**Many.** The Labor Hivemind can take up to 3 reactions each round.

If the party is defeated, others manage to kill the creature, and any PCs who were absorbed can be rescued, though without magical healing they'll need many days to fully recover.

In either case, people notice a few other incidents of telepathic gestalts linking together groups of people. Without guidance from the PCs, the city suffers a few other attacks by hivemind monsters, and people become paranoid of going out in public or gathering in groups larger than 3 or 4. If the party offers reassurance and explanation, they can convince people not to panic, and can train the public to recognize the early signs of a gestalt and how to break free of it. Nevertheless, police break up groups larger than a dozen (though they realize the problem this causes when prisoners start forming gestalts).

**Morgan Cippiano.** Morgan Cippiano heads the local branch of the Family crime syndicate, based out of Crisillyir. Indeed, he's a devout Clericist, but has to act without guidance from the hierarchs now that communication is cut off. Though gruff-voiced and cocky, Morgan has an unusual fascination with fashion. He rejects trends, but has a good eye for classical styles that people of any culture can appreciate. He hopes someday to be seen as a father figure to his community, but isn't above ordering some throats slit to keep the right people safe.





## Small Things

### Social. Montage.

*Various things that happen in the coming days and weeks.*

Some time after the hivemind rampage, Morgan Cippiano politely requests an audience. In the past he's been used to inviting the PCs to meet him, but he respects their authority. Regardless of whether the party has been friendly or antagonistic with his branch of The Family, he has the same proposal. He suggests that some persistent opposition from the city's criminal element will help keep things unsteady; whoever Governor Stanfield worked for wanted everyone to get along, so perhaps some discord will be good for the soul.

Each of the four fey titans detailed in the next act prevents some part of Risur's economy from functioning right.

The fires in the Ash Wolf's forest starves Risur of lumber, now in high demand as people hope to drive back the perpetual gloom. Wood is also needed for ship-building, paper, and even cooking. The first effects get noticed after two weeks. If the party doesn't deal with the titan within a month, there will be major shortages, and after two months people start chopping down Flint's own forests en masse.

The Father of Thunder's stampede disrupts Risur's crops and harvests. After two weeks there's still plenty of grain and vegetables, but meat basically disappears from shops. After a month people start to hoard food, and after two months famine grips the nation.

Granny Allswell's gremlins wreak havoc with mines in the Anthras Mountains. After two weeks every industry reliant on steel or stone slows to a crawl. After a month people start having to cannibalize existing items to perform basic repairs, and after two months mass riots occur in Flint as factories close and leave families unpaid and unable to support themselves.

All sea trade is blocked by She Who Writhes, so after two weeks prices spike for foreign luxuries like Elfaivaran fruit, high-quality Drakran firedust, or leaf of Nicodemus from the Yerasol Isles. After a month, Risur depletes its own reserves of spell and ritual components, since it imports heavily from Crisillyir; magic items that normally cost under 2,000 gp have their costs doubled. After two months, every spell with a material component costs at least 5 gp to cast.

If the party waits an inordinate amount of time to take any action, in three months the Obscurati organize a fleet action to kill She Who Writhes, and then they invade Risur.

# Act One: Against the Titans

**L**EGENDARY FORCES FROM AGES PAST STIR ACROSS the nation. Awoken by a shared sense of unease at the changes to the world, the Fey Titans of old have each risen from their long torpor and have begun to wreak havoc. All but the Voice of Rot – who is oddly absent – damage the stability of the country, complicating the party’s ability to stand against the Ob.

In this act, the city of Bole is hub of fey titan activity, with the Ash Wolf threatening the Antwalk Thicket to the east, the Father of Thunder tromping through croplands to the west, and Granny Allswell’s gremlins disrupting mining and dams to the south. The party must also deal with She Who Writhes in the seas around Risur, but advisors suggest they wait to subdue that titan last, because at least she’s keeping the Danorans at bay.

Rather than follow a pre-set order, you should read each of the Fey Titan encounters listed below. Each encounter begins with a description of the effect the titan has on Risur. PCs should judge which of the threats they deem to be highest priority, and deal with those encounters in order. Cautious PCs might wait a week or two until their spellcasting allies regain use of their magic, but doing so risks letting the titans run amok.

## Refugee Crisis

### Exploration. Montage.

*News travels slowly once again, and most is delivered by refugees fleeing devastation around Bole.*

The first word of trouble in Bole arrives as the Gyre sets, less than 24 hours after the Obscurati’s ritual. **Tad Hilly**, owner of the Thinking Man’s Tavern in Flint’s Bosum Strand district, has old family ties to Bole, and in the weeks after the Great Eclipse, refugees congregate there. The party hears only vague rumors unless they assign someone to check out the tavern, or if they personally go.

The first night, porters who came in on the railroad spread rumors that Bole’s druids sensed something amiss, that storms of

### Newborn for a New World.

Long-time customer and occasional musician **Jered Lawman** is at the Thinking Man’s Tavern with his girlfriend, celebrating the birth of their daughter Alice. Since the world has suddenly changed, he’s nervous about things that might endanger her, so he gets his band-mates to practice modern versions of classic lullabies that supposedly repel fey. While the party is present he performs a jaunty remake of *All’s Well*, a tune miners drink to after a day with no mishaps in the mines.

Later in this adventure if the party gets the miners of Favela to sing this song, they can weaken Granny Allswell and make it easier to fight her.

unheard-of power are brewing to the west, forest fires were spotted over the horizon to the east, and that a dozen men dressed like miners were found floating dead in the Slywater River, a tributary of the Great Delve River. A DC 17 Intelligence (History) check recalls that the Slywater was dammed upstream in the Anthras Mountains a few decades ago as part of new mining operations.

On the second day, hundreds of refugees arrive. They’d heard rumors that, somehow, Flint still had a sun. In any case, they’re happy to be in a bigger city, away from the eerie woods that surround Bole. Ominously, people actually haven’t seen *any* fey in the forest, as if they knew something bad was coming and fled.

On the third day, the trains from Bole are overloaded with a thousand refugees. The people have no doubt that a great disaster will soon befall their city, though there are only a few eyewitnesses with useful information. By chance – or perhaps by a sympathetic, psionic link – they’ve congregated in Tad Hilly’s tavern.

### First-Hand Accounts.

With a bit of digging into the arrivals, the PCs find a few outspoken refugees telling their stories in the Thinking Man’s Tavern.

### Ash Wolf in the Antwalk Thicket

**Barnaby Krist** is something of a folk legend in Bole, a hunter of repute with a strong stomach for drinking and a stronger mouth for telling stories. Almost seven-feet tall and seemingly made up of scars and body hair, Barnaby speaks with a heavy accent that he says is the byproduct of “true forest folk.”

He explains that he saw distant fires and climbed to an overlook to see the extent of the blaze. From miles away he noticed that the fire was spreading outward in a ring – but forest fires spread with the wind. Something was lighting the fires. He then asks for a drink to loosen his tongue before he shares his big reveal.

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“On ma way oot of de forest, I saw a black pup runnin’ at me. Naw, pup is a bad word, cause it was the size of that stuffed bear I used ta have in me home. I thought it was gettin’ away from dat big fire, cause der was smoke coming off da beast’s back. No flame, just smoke. It was like they may’a been on fire afore, and dem eyes still glowed, ya see? Still burned from within. I hollered at it and it turnt off, but I seen it prancin’ in front o’ dat fire.”

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The legends about the Ash Wolf (known with a DC 22 Intelligence [History or Nature] check) tell of the Smoldering Wolves, creatures akin to dire wolves with an aura of perpetual smoke that follows them. When wounded or enraged, they burst into flame and viciously fight to the death. Some stories say they can speak, but they only ever seem concerned with hunting, or with driving off those who threaten their father. They dance when near flames because their mother was caught in a forest fire and let herself become the flames. Their father only ever stirs when there are mighty blazes, in hopes of seeing his lost mate again.

As a hunter, Barnaby is quite familiar with the local terrain, and can point out the exact area the encounter occurred at on a map – start at Bole, follow the rail line to the east, and when the tracks turn north go another 23 miles east-northeast, in the craggy woods near “dat ol’ layer-cake ruin” (he’s referring to the Ancient ziggurat of Av.)

### Father of Thunder in the Wetlands.

**Slim Chance**, a rancher living fifty miles west of Bole, plays harmonica with the tavern’s band (headed by Jered Lawman, whom the PCs might recall from ZEITGEIST #2: *The Dying Skyseer*). Slim’s dog **Hank** sits with him, howling along occasionally to the music.

Slim was out on a drunken bender in the cattle pasture (Hank had been chewing silage and was a little drunk too) when all the stars fell away a few days ago. He spotted a massive bolt of lightning strike a few miles away, but the bolt didn’t fade. It just kept flashing and rumbling for minutes. The cattle around him all turned and stared at the spectacle, and Slim just enjoyed the light show, too out of it to really worry. An hour later the lightning stopped, and he heard the loudest roar in the world from where the bolts had been striking, and then every single cow around him starting making a ruckus and walking in that direction.

Figuring it was his boss’s problem, Slim kept drinking until morning (such as it was, with only the Gyre and no sun). He woke with a blistering hangover, made worse by Hank barking and snarling constantly. He realized the dog was keeping him from getting trampled; hundreds of cows, some with brands from other ranches miles away – as well as the occasional deer or goat – were all heading in the same direction.

So Slim went the other way as fast as he could. On his way back to the ranch he thought he heard a whole mounted procession of knights in plate armor riding out in the middle pasture, blaring on trumpets, but that *definitely* was his boss’s problem. He got his horse, his leaf of Nicodemus, and enough food for him and Hank and rode like hell toward Bole. He basically kept running until he got to the edge of the sea, and now he’s still drinking.

Legends of the Father of Thunder (a DC 22 Intelligence [History or Nature] check) tell that his presence is heralded by great storms and great drinking, for the king of herd beasts is an incontestable lush. He calls a mighty herd to surround him, impregnates many mares and sows and does, and imbues the offspring his boon, transforming them into wondrous steeds for any who can capture them. The Great Hunt – stranded in the real world after annoying the Voice of Rot and being banished from the Dreaming for it – traditionally take all their horses from among these blessed steeds.

### Granny Allswell in the Anthras Mountains.

**Grandma Goudada**, a hang-lipped crone who isn’t shy about knowing a few hexes, came into town with a gang of Fortunad nomads – mostly half-elves of muddled ethnicity forced to wander because they don’t fit in anywhere except with other misfits. She’s happily terrorizing the various children in the tavern; refugees see an old lady, assume it’s safe to leave their kids with her while they drink, and wonder later why little Timmy is having nightmares.

Grandma Goudada and her gang were at a small mining town in the Anthras Mountains called **Favela**, and she was trying to show some government lady (**Kaitlin Eisner**, see Part Three) to have her fortune read, to know what fate awaited in this starless world. Goudada got as far as pulling three cards before doing the unthinkable – she gave the woman her money back, hobbled away, and told her family they had to get as far from the mountains as possible. Her grand-nephew **Emilian** got them on a train to Bole, then to Flint, which seemed like a good idea until Goudada saw Cauldron Hill.

If properly flattered (or paid), Goudada explains with great portentousness that the cards showed the King wanting to trap and kill a grandmother under a mountain. She glares at the PCs, warning them that if they’re with the king, they should know better than to come after *this* old granny.

Legends of Granny Allswell (a DC 22 Intelligence [History or Nature] check) tell that the grandmother of gremlins was last defeated by Queen Zidi Wheatling in the year 218 A.O.V. After brawling failed, Zidi took some of her royal treasure and buried it inside three elder earth elementals, which left bits of themselves like a trail of breadcrumbs into a deep mountain cave. While the fey titan tried to pull the “owies” from the elementals, Zidi tricked the granny’s gremlin minions into breaking the wooden supports that kept the cave entrance from collapsing, sealing Granny Allswell away for nearly three centuries.

## City of Bole

### Exploration. Montage.

*The RHC branch in Bole is dubious of Risur’s new monarch.*

Bole was capital of its own nation in ancient times, and it still maintains its grandeur today. Historically rich from lumber and from fertile forest gardens cultivated with the aid of fey, in recent years it has boomed as a hub of trade. The **Barret Damworks**, a network of mill dams and locks completed three decades ago, tamed several tributary rivers from the Anthras Mountains, allowing the Great Delve river to flow smoothly westward, all the way through Slate and on to Shale. The concurrent development of steamships fostered traffic of great barges traveling up and down the river, while the railroad linked it to Flint. Today raw materials pass through Bole to and from nearly every corner of Risur.

For the purposes of this adventure, the main features of Bole the party needs to be aware of are the **forest gardens** which stretch out from it miles in every direction, the **logjam** along the Great Delve river where lumber is collected and processed after it flows in from logging sites upstream, and the **theater district** which is home both to the local RHC headquarters and to several famous distilleries and breweries.



## The RHC in Bole

The Chief Inspectress in Bole, a viperous half-elf named **Shaiaila Lundquist**, is uncomfortable with the party's ascent to power, and just a little bitter that no one under her watch had as meteoric a rise in prestige. She can't help but think of the PCs as just normal constables, and in particular she has a deep-seated respect for the fey and Unseen Court, and naturally assumes anyone from Flint would disagree with her.

She'll send a letter asking them to see her before they get personally involved in local affairs. She prefers to meet in her office across the street from a playhouse which has been closed, out of fear that audiences might manifest hiveminds (this is a horrible violation of protocol; indeed, she should be arranging royal accommodations and ensuring the party's safety, meeting them wherever they need her.)

Shaiaila has several theatrical posters hanging on the walls of her office, and a primitive phonograph in the corner is loaded with recordings of several famous opera singers. Her one accommodation to the party's prestige is to offer them some whisky and beer, made just down the street.

## Titanic Problems.

Shaiaila explains that the refugee situation is straining the city, but having fey titans – which most people thought were just tall tales – wreak havoc is at least giving people something immediate to try to deal with, since no one has any idea what the sudden disappearance of the sun and stars means. Her local agents have collected a lot of eye-witness sightings of the Father of Thunder to the west, but only a few of the Ash Wolf in the east, and none of Granny Allswell, though miners to the south report an unprecedented uptick in gremlin sightings, equipment breaking, and items made of metal going missing.

She's looked into the old records, and it's been seventeen centuries since all the titans were active at once. And never before did multiple seem to be focused on destroying one city. Shaiaila pours herself a stiff whisky, throws herself into her chair, and asks what the hell the party intends to do now.

## Personnel Management.

If the party just tries to order Chief Inspectress Lundquist around or if they have a reputation for being hostile to fey interests, Shaiaila agrees to follow whatever orders they give, but then works against them behind their backs. She thinks Bole can solve the fey titan problems on its own, and that the party's plans will spell disaster in the long run. After all, they were the ones who failed to stop the colossus in Flint from being activated, or stop the Obscurati from changing the whole world in one fell swoop. She's

suspicious of them, and thanks to the new world order, her subordinates readily follow her lead.

However, if the party is attentive to the Chief Inspectress's concerns, and if they respect the fey titans or at least don't immediately propose attacking them, she offers her agents to help scout and coordinate any odd plans they might come up with. She'll still second-guess them, but it will be to their face.

## The White Tongue in Bole.

Before the party leaves, the Chief Inspectress advises they speak with **Ochran Eisner**, the city's Minister of Fey Affairs. A classically-trained druid, Ochran's duties include appeasing the fey spirits in the forest gardens and along the railroads to deter attacks. Only a meager few fey are still in the real world – they were stranded when the Dreaming was cut off by the Ob's ritual – but Shaiaila thinks Eisner might have useful information about how to keep the fey titans from attacking Bole directly.

Ochran is not personable, is uncomfortable with eye contact, and only responds to people if directly addressed multiple times; he's usually too involved thinking to himself to pay attention to the outside world. These days he is busy directing a citizen volunteer unit, painting archaic sigils on trees and stones in the woods around Bole. He claims these wards will keep the titans at bay, though he cannot guarantee their minions won't enter the city. If the party examines the sigils, a DC 22 Intelligence (Arcana) check recognizes them as obscure icons that are anathema to fey titans. However, if the same PC also succeeds on a DC 20 Intelligence (Nature) check, they realize the sigils are being deployed in exactly the wrong way.

Ochran has placed sigils facing outward, explaining they will drive back the titans. Really however these sigils will just anger the titans, drawing them toward the city. If the sigils faced the city, any titans who entered would be goaded away and back out into the wilderness.

In truth, Ochran is a servant of the Voice of Rot, who offered the druid eternal solitude on a world bereft of civilization. If confronted with his mistake, Ochran struggles to come up with an excuse (DC 12 Wisdom [Insight] check). When he realizes the jig is up, he hisses at the party, revealing a forked white tongue, then attempts to flee by transforming into a giant eagle.

He's no physical threat to the party, but if not caught he sabotages efforts to protect Bole. He desires to guide the fey titans into the city to destroy it. If interrogated, he'll eventually confess to his allegiance to the Voice of Rot, but say that he hasn't heard from any of his lord's messengers since the sun disappeared. Intense interrogation can also get him to reveal that his sister, **Katlin**, is working at similar purposes in the mining village Favela (see page 27).





## Threat One: The Ash Wolf

SALAMANDERS HAVE LIT FIRES AND KILLED ONE OF the Ash Wolf's pups, but the titan blames Risur.

Either the fey titan or the interlopers from Jiese must go.

*Rise and flicker, red and white,  
A howling fire burns this night.  
Awaken hunter, warrior beast!  
The flames have risen – time to feast!  
– Hunters' chant*



## Flames from the East

### Exploration. Montage.

*When the great forests burn, the Ash Wolf stirs and will reclaim his domain.*

The fires in Antwalk Thicket actually don't burn out of control; Risuri foresters have done a good job of allowing small burns each year to limit the amount of brush for fuel. But day by day the flames advance, and by the third day after the great eclipse, over a thousand people from villages in the woods have fled to Bole.

The truth of the forest fire's origin does not begin with the Ash Wolf, but is actually the byproduct of the Obscurati's reorganization of the planes. Long ago the Ancient civilization built a ziggurat here linking to the plane Av, but the Ob's ritual caused the magic to go awry and link instead to Jiese, the plane of fire.

Jiese itself was once part of the true plane of fire, but was cut off by the Ancients into its own separate world. Only a few families of salamander miners who lived on the frontier of the great efreeti empire came along, and just a single efreeti was trapped on the plane. She was eventually enslaved, and the family who controlled the efreeti's power styled itself after the princes and generals of the

great City of Brass. While lesser salamanders hunted the fierce elemental beasts that roamed Jiese's surface, or mined out precious gems of solid fire, the princes built palaces to celebrate their uncontested dominion.

A century ago the enslaved efreeti tricked the ruling sultan into making a wish that led to the salamander royal family splintering. The factions began constructing massive siege engines and fought horrific wars. Finally one salamander claimed control of the efreeti, and he proclaimed himself **Sultan Kuyler**, though he ruled over only a few thousand surviving salamanders.

In the grand scheme of things, the salamanders are basically inbred yokels – especially the royal family. Supernaturally-powerful, incredibly-skilled-at-battle, able-to-control-fire-with-a-thought yokels. They might have access to arcane siege weapons, but their manners are atrocious.

### Salamander Invasion.

Sultan Kuyler immediately sensed when the Axis Seal opened, and his scouts found a portal that led to the ruined Ancient ziggurat in Risur's Antwalk Thicket. Within a day Kuyler had marched through with his "army" and started burning all the wonderful





trees around him. This attracted the attention of the recently-awoken Ash Wolf, who sent forth one of his pups to investigate. The wolfling came into conflict with the salamanders, who slew it, then magically erased traces of their presence before retreating to the ziggurat.

When the Ash Wolf discovered the death of his son, he went into a seething rage, believing the humans of Risur had committed the act. He has begun hunting on the edges of the forest fires, feeding on villagers to regain his strength after a long sleep. In a few weeks the fires will reach Bole, at which point he intends to slay every child so that he can have his revenge.

Kuyler wants his people to colonize a new bountiful land where there are always things to burn, but he's content to watch the Ash Wolf spread terror through the woods. He sends his men to spread the fires and lure the massive wolf into human territory, using the magic of his bound efreeti to keep his warriors hidden from the fey titan.

## Ancient Ziggurat.

Barnaby and many other woodsmen of Antwalk Thicket know the general location of the old ruins that once were the ziggurat of Av. Due to a wish by Kuyler, the last mile of forest around the ziggurat is still burning, and the trees – though dead – don't crumble away. He likes the aesthetic, and it keeps interlopers away.

## I Dream of Liesi.

Salamanders are not the most intelligent of creatures, and neither Kuyler nor any of his warlords, viziers, or dervishes understand the meaning of the sun's disappearance. But one of his minions does.

**Liesi**, the bound efreeti whom Kuyler's family has controlled for millennia, senses that she could return home finally. She suspects something is amiss with the sky, and has implored her master to *wish* for an explanation. The petty Kuyler prefers to waste the daily wishes she grants on dalliances and frivolous comforts. Already he has wished for the boring ziggurat of Av to be transformed from stone into brass, as befits a sultan.

Liesi knows Kuyler will never release her, and hopes she can warn someone of at least moderate intelligence of the threat she sees in the stars. When she meets the party she'll try to persuade them into finding the *efreeti bottle* that controls her, then releasing her so he cannot use her *wishes* against them.

## The Wolfpack.

The Ash Wolf's long dead mate spawned countless pups as she perished, though normally only a few are active. They guard a great mossy cave where the Ash Wolf slumbered for centuries. Only when forest fires break out do the other smoldering wolves appear, and if the fires are great enough their father awakens so he can go hunt for his lost love in the ashes.

## The Den of the Wolf.

The Ash Wolf's lair lies some forty miles from Bole, in a mossy cave beside a river bank, seventeen miles from the ziggurat of Av. It's practically impossible to stumble upon, but tracking the smoldering wolves (a DC 26 Wisdom [Survival] check for every 5 miles) or using divination magic can lead the party to the fey titan's cave.

The forest fires have cut swaths through the area, though patches of woodland remain unburnt.

If the party intends to fight the Ash Wolf, their best chance is to corner him in this cave so he cannot use his speed to his advantage. But his pack might detect the party's approach.

## Heralds of the Ash Wolf.

The Ash Wolf's strongest children, known as Smoldering Wolves, can share their senses with their father. If the party is exploring the forest on foot, these scouts can sense the touch of greater magic on them. The party might spot one several hundred feet away in the woods, but initially the wolves don't attack, and will flee if approached.

# Pack Tactics

## Action. Tactical.

*The Ash Wolf intends to kill the party, but can be reasoned with.*

This battle might occur anywhere in the forest fire, but it's suggested that the Ash Wolf make its first appearance while the party is near a Risuri town that's endangered by fire.

One such town is **Muleshoe**, population 4,000, located 20 miles east of Bole. It lies in a valley clearing, surrounded on all sides by forest. Many have fled the forest into Bole, but townsfolk plead for help to fight the fires and evacuate those too weak to make the long journey. Lumberjacks are desperately trying to clear the trees nearest the town, and the forest fire is almost upon them when the party arrives.

Whether the party comes here 3 days after the great eclipse or 30, Muleshoe is just lucky that way. If the party doesn't come, the following encounter can happen anywhere in the forest, but the setting of a town surrounded by a forest fire should be interesting, considering how the size of the Ash Wolf contrasts with houses and streets.

Whichever PC is the monarch feels a surge of power which he or she comes to recognize as the sign that a foe of great strength is nearby and about to contest for control of the land. See the Rites of Rulership in *ZEITGEIST* #9: *The Last Starry Sky* for details (since the party is 17th level, the monarch should get a +3 bonus to AC and ability checks, a +6 bonus to attack rolls and saving throws, Regeneration 12, and they can interact with the titan as if they were also Gargantuan.)

## WOLF PACK (SEE APPENDIX: FEY TITANS)

- 12 smoldering wolves
- The Ash Wolf

## Terrain and Environment.

Smoke from the forest fire wafts through the town, lightly obscuring creatures beyond 60 feet, and heavily obscuring anything beyond 120 feet, though the general shapes of trees can still be seen when backlit by the forest fire.

The town's buildings are only one or two stories tall, and the streets are narrow enough that the large wolves could only fit through one at a time. The Ash Wolf treats the town as difficult



terrain, crushing buildings if he walks across them. However he prefers to stay at the edge of town, charge in, and jump *over* the buildings, snapping up a PC and carrying them off into the smoke.

The forest fire stops about 60 feet outside the edge of town, where lumberjacks have cut a firebreak, but a PC might be tricked out into the woods or carried out there by the Ash Wolf. Breathing the air inside the forest fire causes a creature to take 1d6 fire damage at the start of its turn each round (no save). In addition, a creature must make a Constitution saving throw (DC 13 + 1 per previous save) or take 1d4 poison damage. A creature that holds its breath can avoid the fire damage, but not the poison damage. Creatures wearing heavy clothing or any sort of armor have disadvantage on their saving throws. Those wearing metal armor or who come into contact with very hot metal are affected as if by a *heat metal* spell.

The smoke is not thick enough to be debilitating.

### Tactics.

The Ash Wolf approaches within a half mile of Muleshoe and sends his pack of two dozen smoldering wolves out to surround the town. They howl, but the smoke and soot conceals them until they're within 60 feet of the party (DC 26 Wisdom [Perception] check). Any townsfolk would be well-served to flee indoors, but a few remain outside and will be attacked by the pack. These wolves attack at the edge of the PCs' vision in an attempt to split them up.

Four of the wolves are empowered by the titan's *pack bond* trait, and if the party splits up they engage someone at the edge of the group. Otherwise they circle the party through the town streets for about a minute, waiting for their father to give the signal. Before having the pack attack, the Ash Wolf says, "*Risur has slain my child. Burnt my home. By the old rites, I demand blood and flesh.*" His voice seems to come from all directions, as the roaring forest fire itself speaks for him.

The pack then charges in. The Ash Wolf, able to see through their eyes, uses *fire storm* to burn the party and ignite the buildings around them, or perhaps *transmute metal to wood* if the party is at the edge of the town near the fire.

The four empowered smoldering wolves focus their attention on a single target, while the other twenty stay about a 100 feet away, watching. If any of the empowered wolves are reduced below 40 hit points, the Ash Wolf has that child withdraw from battle and shifts its power to another, which then charges in.

After two rounds of this, or if any of his pups is reduced to 0 hit points, the fey titan uses *Hunting Surge*, howling loud enough to shake the ground and trees. With his speed briefly increased to 300 feet, he charges in and tries to snatch a spellcaster (and can jump high enough to easily clear rooftops, bite someone beneath him, then clear 110 feet horizontally) and carry them off. If possible he rips off a leg, dumps the victim 150 feet away in the forest fire, and circles around the edge of the battle, staying at enough of a distance to remain unseen.

Generally he attacks every other round, punctuating his assaults by condemning the hunters who speared his son, recounting how his mate died thousands of years ago and he'll never have more children, and threatening to burn the whole nation until he has his revenge.

### Aftermath.

The Ash Wolf should be terrifying, a predator that can kill any PC in a round or two, but he initially assumes the party is not a threat. He'll try to wound several and scatter the group, and will only focus on killing them if he's reduced below 200 hit points, which triggers the arrival of his long-lost mate (a titanic wolf spirit composed of smoke and ash). If reduced below 0 hit points he will yield, offering to serve the adventurers if they spare his children.

The party might instead convince the fey titan to break off his attack if they offer to find out who slew his son. He'll be distrustful (i.e., you have an excuse to get in a few terrifying strafing runs before he relents), but then he'll agree to give them one day before he resumes his hunt.

### Mourning a Lost Child.

If the party reaches the Ash Wolf's cave – by sneaking in or by parlaying with him, they find the body of a Smoldering Wolf lying on its side, smoke pouring out of various wounds.

Examining the deceased wolf with a DC 16 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals odd wounds not common among Risuri weaponry. Further investigation with a DC 23 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals the weapons were made of obsidian and radiated an extreme amount of heat.

The Ash Wolf offers to have one of his children accompany the PCs to the site where the body was first found. However, due to a *wish* by Liesi, the salamanders left not physical trail, and magic used to pursue them yields no information unless the caster succeeds on a DC 18 spellcasting ability check. Brute force searching takes several days (though it goes faster if the party splits up or brings help) until eventually they find a patch of forest still burning long after it should have died.

## The Flaming Ziggurat of Av

### Action/Social. Real-Time.

*Meet your new neighbors, the Salamanders of Jiese!*

A 1-mile diameter swath of forest burns perpetually around the old Ancient ziggurat, which has been transformed into brass. Several dozen wormlike thoqqua roam the woods near the building, and they screech when they detect any intruders (passive Perception 17). Two falchion-wielding salamanders guard the entrance of the ziggurat, and within Sultan Kuyler and some of his best buddies from Jiese spend most of the day doing nothing.

Kuyler is a foul-mouthed, illiterate alcoholic, who peaked long ago when he took control of Liesi the efreeti. He's been living the easy life on wishes ever since. But with a new world suddenly available – one a damn sight more fun to burn than his own "sultanate" – the salamander sultan sees an opportunity to give his no-good children something they can conquer, so they can be as great as their father.

For now he just has a small expeditionary force, and he's sending out scouts to find out who he'll have to fight to conquer this place. He's only recently seen humans for the first time, and had his men capture a few. He keeps them in a pit in the ziggurat, and is trying to figure out how to get them to fight for his amusement.



## Liesi's Betrayal.

Liesi is bound to a bronze bottle that Kuyler carries. Whenever he deigns to let Liesi out of the bottle, he fills it with fiery alcohol so he can mock her all day long by drinking out of her home.

Liesi has been forced to serve the salamanders for thousands of years, though she's not aware of how much time has passed. The arrival of the PCs presents her with a unique opportunity to arrange Kuyler's assassination and win her freedom. Of course, she's still evil, and she derives pleasure out of tricking people into miswording wishes to their own detriment. Trusting her is a bad idea.

Kuyler has forbidden Liesi from leaving the ziggurat without his permission, but if the party comes inside, she'll seek them out and hide them from the salamanders long enough for her to make her pitch. Alternately, if the party attacks and withdraws, she'll convince Kuyler to

send her out to scout invisibly. He agrees, but forbids her from talking to anyone while she's out. So she bends the letter of the order, and has a *programmed illusion* talk for her.

Liesi probes the PCs with various questions about the world, specifically about the Gyre and whether it's possible to go to other planes. In exchange, she offers detailed descriptions of Kuyler's motivation and his forces. In addition to the pittance here, he has several thousand warriors back on Jiese.

If the party doubts her, Liesi swallows her immense pride and tells the PCs that she merely wishes to leave this world, so she needs the party to free her from Kuyler. She knows she's risking simply trading one master for another, and so she might avoid even mentioning her discontent if she thinks the party is worse than a drunken salamander.

The Jiese-end of the portal is fairly far from his palace, so no reinforcements will be readily forthcoming. For now, Kuyler's forces are limited. Forty or so rank-and-file salamander soldiers scout the woods, while only a dozen guard the ziggurat itself. Since so far they've only encountered panicked, harmless townsfolk, the initial reactions of the invaders from Jiese when they see the party will be reminiscent of a hunter spotting a deer. They're excited, not worried, and will coo at the party like they're talking to a dumb animal that doesn't realize they're about to kill it.

### SALAMANDER INVASION

- Kuyler, Salamander Sultan
- Liesi, Bound Efreet
- 3 salamander viziers
- 6 salamander dervishes

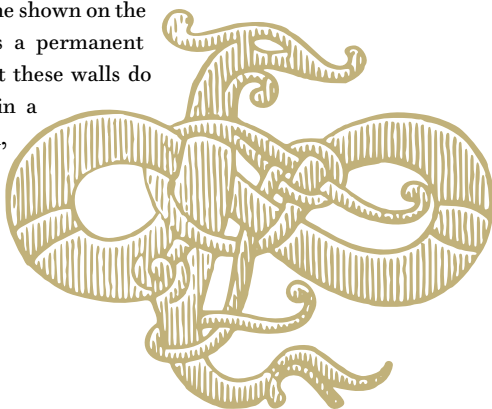
### Environmental Effects.

The immediate area outside the Ziggurat is considered severe heat, while the inside of the ziggurat is considered to be an area of extreme heat. This heat lasts as long as the ziggurat maintains a connection to the plane of Jiese.

### Walls of Flame.

Repurposed by the salamanders, the ziggurat's interior is stark. With a few *wishes* Kuyler created a plethora of permanent walls of fire to break up the monotony of the ziggurat's interior. While harmless to the salamanders, these walls are extremely effective defense mechanisms.

Each area of flame shown on the map is treated as a permanent *wall of fire*, except these walls do not radiate heat in a specific direction, so creatures only take damage from passing through them.



## Ziggurat Interior.

Interior walls of the ziggurat were once weathered stone with barely visible carvings, now transmuted into polished brass. The only light sources are the walls of fire and the portal to Jiese itself. The constant fire actually mutes sound fairly well, and a battle probably wouldn't be heard more than 100 feet away.

### 1. Entrance.

Two dervishes and one vizier guard here, though for them guarding consists of boasting about the monsters they've slain back home.

### 2. Prisoner Pit.

Kuyler keeps a dozen humans down here, and has placed walls of fire at the doors to keep them from leaving. A dervish stands guard outside either entrance.

### 3. Map Room.

An ancient world map on the floor has attracted Kuyler's interest, and he's set up tiny firegem carvings of warriors on shelves here. He expects to plan an invasion, fight maybe a few thousand humans, and conquer the world. He has no idea of the scale of the map.

### 4. Throne Room.

Kuyler and three viziers party here, drinking and dragging in various trophies from outside so they can burn them for fun.

### 5. Bare Halls.

The walls and floor show signs of once having had traps installed in them, which were long ago destroyed or disabled, and then more recently transmuted into brass.

### 6. Dervish Quarters.

The dervishes sleep here on huge stone beds.

### 7. Boring Spot.

Kuyler makes Liesi stand here and do nothing when he's used up his wishes for the day but hasn't finished drinking out of her home.

### 8. Portal to Jiese.

Two more dervishes stand guard here.





# THE FLAMING ZIGGURAT OF AV



One square equals 5ft.



### Kuyler, Salamander Sultan

Large elemental, lawful evil

**Armor Class** 21 (+2 plate)

**Hit Points** 207 (18d10+108)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	18 (+4)	22 (+6)	8 (−1)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Con +11, Int +4, Wis +8, Cha +7

**Skills** Acrobatics +9, Deception +12, Insight +8, Intimidation +7, Perception +13, Stealth +9

**Damage Vulnerabilities** cold

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

**Damage Immunities** fire

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 23

**Languages** Ignan

**Challenge** 16 (15,000 XP)

**Contingent Wishes.** Kuyler has a plethora of *wish*-based personal effects thanks to his genie servant Liesi. Each *wish* effect is a one-time use ability and is described below. Each contingent *wish* counts as though it were a spell effect of 6th level (11th-level caster).

**Back Up.** If there are no friendly allies within 60 feet of Kuyler, the salamander warlord can expend this wish on its turn without requiring any action. Doing so summons 1d4 salamander dervishes or viziers within 60 feet. These salamanders can immediately act and are loyal servants to Kuyler.

**Expert Wrassler.** If Kuyler fails an opposed Strength (Athletics) check against an opponent (such as a grapple) he can immediately re-roll the attempt with a +5 bonus and advantage. If the opponent is under the effects of *freedom of movement* or a similar effect, the effect is suppressed for 1 minute.

**Uh Oh.** When reduced below 100 hit points Kuyler is immediately targeted by a *heal* spell. Any ability that impairs his ability to act (grappled, restrained, stunned, etc.) ends, and he gains the benefit of *freedom of movement* for 1 minute.

**Heated Body.** A creature that touches Kuyler or hits him with a melee attack while within 5 feet of him takes 7 (2d6) fire damage.

**Heated Weapons.** Any metal melee weapon Kuyler wields deals an extra 3 (1d6) fire damage on a hit (included in the attack).

**Power Attack.** When Kuyler makes his first melee weapon attack in a turn, he can choose to take a −5 penalty to his melee weapon attack rolls in exchange for a +10 bonus to melee weapon damage. In addition, Kuyler can use a bonus action to make one melee weapon attack after he uses a melee weapon to reduce a creature to 0 hit points or scores a critical hit with it. Kuyler can only use this feature on his turn.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Kuyler attacks four times with his halberd and once with his tail.

**+1 Cold Iron Halberd.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6+6) magical slashing damage plus 3 (1d6) fire damage.

**Tail.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6+5) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 18). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, the salamander can automatically hit the target with its tail, and the salamander can't make tail attacks against other targets.

### Liesi, Bound Efreet

Large elemental, lawful evil

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 95 (10d10+40)

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Int +4, Wis +5, Cha +5

**Skills** Arcana +4, Deception +5, Insight +5, Intimidation +5, Perception +5, Stealth +6

**Damage Vulnerabilities** cold

**Damage Immunities** fire

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 15

**Languages** Auran, Aquan, Common, Ignan, Terran (telepathy 100 ft.)

**Challenge** 8 (3,900 XP)

**Bound.** Several pacts and unique *wishes* bind Liesi in service to Kuyler. For game effects, she cannot willingly attack Kuyler and must defend the salamander to the best of her abilities. This effect can be dispelled with three successful dispel attempts. The spell level to dispel the associated magical binding is 9th level.

**Elemental Demise.** If Liesi dies, her body disintegrates in a flash of fire and puff of smoke, leaving behind only equipment she was wearing or carrying.

**Heated Body.** A creature that touches Liesi or hits her with a melee attack while within 5 feet of her takes 7 (2d6) fire damage.

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

**At will:** *detect magic*, *scorching ray*

**3/day each:** *enlarge/reduce*, quickened *scorching ray*, *tongues*, *wish* (to non-genies only)

**1/day each:** *conjure elemental* (fire elemental only), *gaseous form*, *invisibility*, *major image*, *plane shift* (willing targets to Jiese or Material Plane only), *programmed illusion*, *wall of fire*

**War Magic.** Liesi has advantage when she is concentrating on a spell and has to make a Constitution saving throw from taking damage, she can wield weapons or a shield in both hands and still make somatic components for spellcasting, and can use her reaction to cast a spell (maximum casting time: 1 action) at a creature that provokes an opportunity attack from her.

#### ACTIONS

**Scimitar.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6+6) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage.

**Hurl Flame.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 60/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (4d6) fire damage.

**Change Shape.** Liesi magically polymorphs into a humanoid or giant that has a challenge rating equal to or less than her own, or back into her true form. She reverts to her true form if she dies. Any equipment she is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (Liesi's choice).

In a new form, Liesi retains her game statistics and ability to speak, but her AC, movement modes, Strength, Dexterity, and special senses are replaced by those of the new form, and she gains any statistics and capabilities (except class features, legendary actions, and lair actions) that the new form has but that she lacks.



**Salamander Vizier**

Large elemental, lawful evil

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 126 (12d10+60)**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	17 (+3)	20 (+5)	20 (+5)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)

**Saving Throws** Dex +7, Wis +7, Cha +5**Skills** Acrobatics +7, Arcana +13, Deception +9, Insight +7, Intimidation +9, Perception +11, Stealth +11**Damage Vulnerabilities** cold**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons**Damage Immunities** fire**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 21**Languages** Auran, Common, Ignan, Terran**Challenge** 10 (5,900 XP)**Empowered Evocation.** The salamander adds +5 to one damage roll of any wizard evocation spell it casts.**Heated Body.** A creature that touches the salamander or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 7 (2d6) fire damage.**Heated Weapons.** Any metal melee weapon the salamander wields deals an extra 3 (1d6) fire damage on a hit (included in the attack).**Overchannel.** When the salamander casts a spell of 1st through 5th level that deals damage, it can deal maximum damage with that spell. The first time it does so between long rests, the salamander suffers no adverse effects. If the salamander uses this trait again before finishing a long rest, it takes 13 (2d12) necrotic damage for each level of the spell immediately after the casting. Each time the salamander uses this feature again before finishing a long rest, the necrotic damage per spell level increases by 1d12. This damage ignores resistance and immunity.**Potent Cantrip.** When a creature succeeds on a saving throw against a cantrip the salamander casts, the creature takes half the cantrip's damage (if any) but suffers no additional effect from the cantrip.**Power Attack.** When the salamander makes its first melee weapon attack in a turn, it can choose to take a -5 penalty to its melee weapon attack rolls in exchange for a +10 bonus to melee weapon damage. In addition, the salamander can use a bonus action to make one melee weapon attack after it uses a melee weapon to reduce a creature to 0 hit points or scores a critical hit with it. The salamander can only use this feature on its turn.**Sculpt Spells.** When the salamander casts an evocation spell that affects other creatures that it can see, it can choose a number of those creatures equal to 1 + the spell's level. The chosen creatures automatically succeed on their saving throws against the spell, and they take no damage if they would normally take half damage on a successful save.**Spellcasting.** The salamander is an 8th level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The salamander has the following spells prepared from the wizard's spell list:**Cantrips (at will):** *fire bolt, mage hand***1st level (4 slots):** *burning hands, detect magic, magic missile, shield***2nd level (3 slots):** *blur, flaming sphere, mirror image, scorching ray, shatter***3rd level (3 slots):** *dispel magic, fireball, haste, lightning bolt, slow***4th level (2 slots):** *confusion, fire shield, wall of fire***ACTIONS****Multiattack.** The salamander makes three attacks: two with its spear and one with its tail.**+2 Spear.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft. or range 20 ft./60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6+4) magical piercing damage, or 13 (2d8+4) magical piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack, plus 3 (1d6) fire damage.**Tail.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6+2) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, the salamander can automatically hit the target with its tail, and the salamander can't make tail attacks against other targets.





## Salamander Dervish

Large elemental, lawful evil

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 90 (12d10+24)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)

**Saving Throws** Dex +8, Int +5, Cha +5

**Skills** Acrobatics +12, Deception +9, Insight +8, Intimidation +9, Perception +12, Stealth +12

**Damage Vulnerabilities** cold

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

**Damage Immunities** fire

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 22

**Languages** Common, Ignan

**Challenge** 10 (5,900 XP)

**Heated Body.** A creature that touches the salamander or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 7 (2d6) fire damage.

**Heated Weapons.** Any metal melee weapon the salamander wields deals an extra 3 (1d6) fire damage on a hit (included in the attack).

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

**At will:** *fire bolt, guidance, true strike*

**5/day:** *command, divine favor, heroism, inflict wounds*

**4/day:** *hold person, see invisibility, spiritual weapon*

**3/day:** *dispel magic*

**Power Attack.** When the salamander makes its first melee weapon attack in a turn, it can choose to take a –5 penalty to its melee weapon attack rolls in exchange for a +10 bonus to melee weapon damage. In addition, the salamander can use a bonus action to make one melee weapon attack after it uses a melee weapon to reduce a creature to 0 hit points or scores a critical hit with it. The salamander can only use this feature on its turn.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The salamander dervish makes four attacks: three with its spear and one with its tail, or four with its longbow.

**+2 Falchion.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d8+7) magical slashing damage plus 3 (1d6) fire damage.

**Tail.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6+5) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 17). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, the salamander can automatically hit the target with its tail, and the salamander can't make tail attacks against other targets.

**+2 Longbow (20 flaming arrows).** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6+6) magical piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) fire damage.

## Tactics and Talking.

The salamanders are well-trained in fighting animalistic monsters, not people. They tend to rely on brute force or cruel tricks rather than actual tactics. Once Kuyler figures out the party won't go down easily, he'll *wish* for Liesi to teleport him and all his allies

in the ziggurat to the top level of the room with the prisoner pit. From there he'll threaten to kill his prisoners unless the party talks.

With a break in the fight, Kuyler tries to figure out whether killing the PCs will let him rule the world. If it becomes clear it won't, he offers instead to get a few thousand of his men to help them kill the giant furry critter that's running amok in these lands. Then he and his people will control this region and sell weapons and magic to Risur. He promises not to try to invade for at least a few years.

At that, Liesi loudly suggests to Kuyler that in a few years the world might not be here, because of that odd thing in the sky. Again she'll suggest he *wish* for her to find out more about it. He yells at her, swigs the last of his ale from her bottle, then orders her back into it, but he'll call her back out if the fight renews, in which case he uses his remaining *wishes* fairly simply, like wanting his halberd to be *human-bane* or to dispel any fire resistance the party has.

## Reconciliation

### Social. Montage.

*Risur might ally with the salamanders, or earn the favor of the Ash Wolf.*

There are multiple ways the PCs can handle the salamander's intrusion. The most likely outcome is that Kuyler is defeated or forced out of the world and back to Jiese. In this situation, the PCs can inform the Ash Wolf what has happened, and the fey titan will have a Smoldering Wolf inspect the ziggurat, then order his pack back into the woods. The forest fires burn out naturally before they reach Bole.

If the Ash Wolf is appeased by having the salamanders driven off, he owes the PCs two boons – one for helping him get revenge, and one for showing him the error of his aggression. For the former, he offers to aid Risur in one battle within the coming year. For the latter, he offers to tell one PC how to find a perfect mate and lover. If a PC accepts, the Ash Wolf instills in that character the identity and general location of someone who would be whatever they want and need in a companion.

In the event that the PCs negotiate with Kuyler, the exact nature of the salamander's offer is met to the letter. If the Jiese natives are allowed to stay, Kuyler brings further reinforcements to secure the eastern forestlands of Risur; standing with the PCs against the Ob should they attack. While Kuyler believes he can eventually take the humans of Risur, he lives a long time and won't be a problem in the near future.

If the party kills Kuyler or drives him away, the salamanders won't risk another incursion.

If the party gets hold of Liesi's *efreeti bottle*, they can call upon her one time to get three wishes, after which she's able to *plane shift* back home thanks to the change in the Axis Seal. Alternately they can keep her around to aid in more mundane ways, though each time they call her there's a 10% chance she simply *plane shifts* away for good. If the party was kind to her, there's no chance she attacks the PCs.



## Threat Two: Father of Thunder

**S**TORMS AND STAMPEDES RAVAGE RISUR'S BREADBAS-  
ket, but with the aid of the Great Hunt the party  
can ride down the fey titan. He's stubborn, and won't  
listen to reason unless someone can defeat him in battle.  
He just happens to equate carousing to battle, however.

*Please bless our land, o Father,  
Give rains and summers warm.  
Grant much in fall, o Father  
And bless with every horn.  
Please bless our herds, o Father,  
That they may graze our fields.  
Please bless our home, o Father,  
And bless our evening meal.  
— Prayer to the Father of Thunder*

## The Drunken Stampede

### Exploration. Montage.

*There's a giant gazelle-bison-rhinoceros running around the coun-  
tryside, trampling all the crops, impregnating all the mares and sows,  
and drinking all our liquor!*

The Father of Thunder stands 50 feet tall at the shoulder, with horns jutting and curling and curving out of his back and head and shoulders in myriad odd angles. His mere presence sires children in female herd animals – horses, cows, sheep, and more – and those children possess supernatural speed, might, and resilience. Harvested grains he sets his gaze upon ferment into alcoholic silage. Massive herds surround him and follow him wherever he goes. The huge horned beast loves nothing more than getting drunk and tromping across the countryside in a constant celebration.

His bacchanalia is ruining Risur's crops and killing livestock, not to mention his stampedes crush buildings under his hooves. For now he stays near Bole, tempted by its whiskey distilleries, but it will be a few months before he's gathered a large enough herd for him to risk entering the city to get at that fine liquor.

### The Great Hunt

During the events of ZEITGEIST #9: *The Last Starry Sky*, Riffian – a bold fey knight clad in silver plate – accompanied the PCs back into the material world, along with the other riders of the Great Hunt. Traditionally the Great Hunt pursues the grandest game, and upon learning that the Father of Thunder had awakened, Riffian led his riders to Risur's heartland so they could hunt the fey titan's magical offspring.

Riffian has bivouacked his riders just outside of Bole. He knows that by themselves the Great Hunt can only manage to get the offspring, but he will gladly aid the party in an effort to bring down the titan himself.



### Do You Hear Thunder?

The Father of Thunder's rollicking herd roams somewhere between 20 and 50 miles from Bole. High-level magic or old-fashioned tracking can pinpoint them fairly quickly, but finding a way to actually deal with the problem will take longer.

Empowered by the fey titan, the stampede moves at a ludicrous speed (300 feet per round, or over 30 miles an hour), utterly destroying everything in its path. The sheer speed of the herd makes it next to impossible to successfully engage or disrupt it. Reckless attempts by the party to close in likely end with the PCs being simply outrun, or trampled into the ground, or shot out of the sky by the Father of Thunder's lightning bolts. Even if the adventurers can get close enough and actually hit hard enough for him to notice, the titan has enough disposable herd animals that he can order a few hundred to knock away any enemies.

If the PCs' plan seems reasonable, give them a chance, but most likely they'll need the Great Hunt's help. The riders can lend fast enough steeds to the party, and will kill creatures of the herd that try to interfere with the party's assault.

### Talking to the Titan.

The Father of Thunder assumes any non-herd animal is a threat, and won't even consider talking unless he's exhausted "attacking" and "running away" as options. Even trying to magically



communicate with him won't turn out well, due to his Stormy Presence ability.

He hates people who interrupt his fun by wanting to talk, though he might respond to a challenge or insult by attacking and trying to trample the offending party-pooper. Exceptionally good music played with a DC 30 Charisma (Performance) check entertains him enough to let someone get within a 100 feet, though the sight of weapons and armor spook him into fleeing.

### The Clever Option.

The Father of Thunder loves drinking, but his binges out in the wild never go deep enough to really slow him down. If the party lures him into Bole's theater district (a mighty challenge itself), they can let him wreck a couple distilleries while chugging to his limit, and he'll be far easier to handle. Getting him that drunk gives him a -3 penalty to ability checks, saving throws, attack rolls, and damage rolls, and reduces his AC by 5.

Alternately, the party might leave a trail of whisky barrel breadcrumbs, lure him into Bole, and then trick him into chasing them across the logjam in the Great Delve River. He can swim, but isn't anywhere near as fast as on foot, and his herd is mostly harmless when they're panicked and trying not to drown.

### Riffian's Camp

Less than 10 miles outside of Bole, Riffian and his assembled riders wait and prepare for their hunt against the Father of Thunder. Mounts are left untethered, allowed to wander the forest gardens as they see fit, with riders having no fear of losing their steeds. Dire mastiffs patrol the edges of the camp. If the PCs rode with Riffian in ZEITGEIST #9: *The Last Starry Sky*, the hounds remember their scent, with some even giving forceful but playful head-butts.

Each rider is humanoid with the stature of an elf, but their whole bodies are hidden beneath supple mithral plate armor. Each knight's mask is decorated with different static expressions, many resembling roots digging into the ground. Few of the riders speak, only performing basic actions like feeding their mounts or sharpening weapons. They save their voices for singing during meals or while on the hunt.

Riffian works at the center of the camp, singing to sooth a pair of colts recently captured from the Father of Thunder's herd. Riffian explains that they're less than a month old, and already are nearly grown to be fit to bear a rider on the hunt.

Riffian's not much for planning, but his advice for subduing the fey titan would be to ride in disguised under bison hides to appear innocuous, get close, then have the party attack while he and his knights keep the herd at bay.

### Cut 'Em Out, Ride 'Em In

Riffian first asks for hides for the PCs and each of his dozens of riders. With the size of the fey titan's herd, and the exceptional skill level of the adventurers and the Great Hunt, the GM can easily reduce this to a few Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks, or Dexterity (Stealth) and Wisdom (Survival) checks, representing cutting off a few bison at a time, or sneaking in and killing a few animals discreetly that will be left behind when the Father of Thunder moves on.

## Ride Out, and Meet Them

### Action. Tactical. Level 25.

*Riding out to take down a fey titan – all in a day's work.*

Riffian's men take a few days to treat the hides and give them minor enchantments. When the party is ready, Riffian offers them each a steed and has everyone bundle under their hides. Disguised as somewhat lumpy bison, the party and a couple dozen fey huntsmen can weave into the midst of the herd. Have each PC make a DC 8 Dexterity (Stealth) check four times, with each check representing a quarter-mile worth of herd they've passed through.

After a single failed check the Father of Thunder sniffs, stands up, and watches where the PCs are, looking for signs of trouble. He drops a lightning bolt nearby, just enough to spook the party. Then he returns to partying. A second failed check, however, causes him to bellow and get the herd moving. If the party gets closer, he likely spots them when they come within 100 feet. Once the titan becomes aware of the threat, the PC who is the monarch feels a great strength flow into themselves, as detailed in the Rites of Rulership (see ZEITGEIST #9: *The Last Starry Sky*).

THE GRAND STAMPEDE (SEE APPENDIX: FEY TITANS)

- The Father of Thunder

### Battling the Father of Thunder.

See the Father of Thunder's stats in Appendix: Fey Titans. His herd is an environmental hazard, which the Great Hunt protects the party against, allowing the PCs to focus on the fey titan.

His likely course of action is to flee while dropping lightning bolts on those who give chase and stomping or goring anyone who rides too close. Once injured enough (to about 2/3 his maximum hit points) he stumbles, which triggers an earthquake and gives him a chance to break away over uneven terrain full of perilous chasms. When he's desperate (reduced to about 1/3 his maximum HP), he stops running and calls down a tornado that draws enemies close for him to crush.

Raucous and bawdy, the Father of Thunder will yell at the party during battle, demanding they let him have his fun and keep bringing him more ale and mares if they don't want him to demolish their cute little cities. If while fleeing he can manage to get at least 400 feet from the party, he'll roar, "*We feast tonight in the woody city! Run fast or there won't be any whiskey left for you!*"

Then he sprints straight for Bole. With speeds fairly evenly matched, he'll slowly draw farther and farther away since rough terrain doesn't slow him down. A huge storm sweeps into the city ahead of him, and he tears open buildings looking for liquor. When the party catches up, he'll call down his tornado and proclaim that he is master of this land. If he wins, his herd ends up trashing the city, and he lingers for a few days and finishes off all the alcohol before heading back into the weftlands with a massive hangover.

### Can't We All Just Get Along?

The Father of Thunder surrenders when reduced to 0 hit points, and the stampede comes to an abrupt halt. Full of braggadocio, the fey titan pretends he was just confused, and that he was game to talk all along.





## Steeds from the Great Hunt.

The Father of Thunder is intentionally designed to mostly ignore the party's steeds. Even his lightning bolts don't affect them. If it matters, treat any steed the Great Hunt provides as a **heavy warhorse** with Speed 150 ft., enough to keep up with the Father of Thunder, and a +20 bonus to Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks to jump (this encounter likely calls for a few long jumps, though the onus is on the PC to direct the steed properly with a Wisdom [Animal Handling] check).

Additionally, each horse has 25 temporary hit points, renewed at the dawn of each day.

A victorious party can simply demand the Father of Thunder return to his slumber, at which point he'll walk out into the wilderness, pull a hillside over himself, and grumpily take a nap for a few centuries.

Or the party can make a deal with him. Like a rowdy neighbor, he'll agree to temper his parties and stay away from farmland that

is marked by fences decorated with lightning bolts. He demands monthly offerings of alcohol – several hundred gallons at least. And he wants to have sex with any women in the party, promising them mighty children (though he can be dissuaded from this). In exchange, he'll provide three favors.

First, he promises to ride into battle to defend the weftlands should the Obscurati dare to tread on Risuri soil (the Obscurati don't have any interest in invading the heartland of Risur, though, so it's kind of useless.)

Second, he'll use his storms and his manure to bless the crops of Risur. For the next year, everyone who eats from those crops gains 5 temporary hit points each day. Individually it's not much, but should war occur thousands will survive wounds that normally would have killed them.

Third, he'll grant one PC unmatched virility (with facial and body hair to match), plus the ability to call down a 5d8 lightning bolt (*per call lightning*) once per day as a bonus action.

## Threat Three: Granny Allswell

**I**N MINES NEAR A MOUNTAIN TOWN, GRANNY ALLSWELL has abducted children and murdered miners. An agent of the Voice of Rot is trying to goad the fey titan into destroying a dam that will kill thousands in Bole, and revealing her tricks might make Granny angry enough at her fellow titan to actually ally with Risur.

*Bedtime, children. Please, please hush.*

*You don't want granny waking up.*

– Common Risuri Nursery Rhyme

## Mountainside Madness

### Exploration. Montage.

*Favela is in turmoil.*

After the great eclipse, earthquakes began to shake Risur's Anthras Mountains, focused around an iron-rich peak known as Redcap. At first the miners waited for the tremors to stop, but then children started going missing in the night, tools and machines started to break, and shiny objects of all sorts disappeared in droves. The Fortunad nomads, normally to blame for such troubles, started doomsaying and fled en masse. The superstitious miners recognized all the hallmarks of the fey titan known as Granny Allswell. Those miners who could afford to leave and who had not already lost their children to the gremlins in the mountains followed the Fortunad, and now only the most desperate remain.

With most of the miners and local officials evacuated, the most respected authority figure left in town was **Katlin Eisner**, illusionist proprietor of a brothel and sister of the druid **Ochran Eisner**





## Where Gremlins Come From.

Folk tales tell of a child who disobeyed his parents and kept breaking plates, windows, and everything else he could. His parents, on the edge of poverty and unable to keep replacing the destroyed property, took their son into the woods and told him to play a game: close his eyes and sing a song about breaking dishes, down from ninety-nine dishes until there were none left.

While the boy counted, the parents snuck away, hoping the boy would die and they'd never have to replace another broken item. But his singing attracted Granny Allswell, who loved his voice and adopted him to sing for her forever, along with all the other children who had been abandoned in the woods. He became a gremlin, and on his birthday the next year, his parents found everything they owned cracked and shattered.

from Bole. Like her brother she is a minion of the Voice of Rot, and she imagines herself as a future sorceress-queen once the serpentine titan destroys most of Risur civilization.

### Town Background.

Favela was once a community of outcast Risuri and former slaves from Ber who lived on the steep hillside outskirts of a long-gone town. When Risur built the Barret Damworks 30 years ago to tame the flow of the Great Delve River, the old town was flooded, but the slums were above the water line. The steadier river flow made the town an attractive central point for mining operations in the area, since ore and precious metals could be easily barged downstream to Bole. More and more settlers came in, crowding into the already-cramped community.

### The White Tongue's Goal.

The Voice of Rot tasked Katlin with directing the malice of Granny Allswell toward a specific purpose. Katlin intends to goad Granny and her gremlins into destroying the massive dam that holds back Favela's lake.

Toward this goal, Katlin has been placing *magic mouths* around Favela to make the sounds of playing children. When the gremlins emerge from the mines at night seeking shinies for their Granny, the sounds attract them. There aren't any children left in the town, so Granny grows frustrated at being unable to find these phantasmal youths. She's considering going out herself, but she still has a few abducted kids to keep her occupied. In the meanwhile, she has her gremlins break everything that can clank, rumble, and squeak so they might better hear where the kids are hiding.

Whenever Granny does emerge, she'll hear children singing from *inside* the dam. If the party doesn't intercede, two months after the great eclipse she'll futilely destroy the dam, thousands in Bole will drown, and each death would provide another small boost in the Voice of Rot's power.

### Bem Vindo ao Favela.

When the party arrives, the town is mostly abandoned, but 300 miners have gathered at the docks on the lake, where "Mayor Eisner" is hosting the daily lottery. Huge braziers of firegums burn throughout the favela – a dangerous fire hazard, but the townsfolk are horribly afraid of the dark.

Everyone is terrified of the gremlins and the fey titan, but since without the mines everyone here would go hungry, the remaining handful of mining foremen have a rule: anyone who wants to stay in the town and not abandon their abducted children must put their name into the lottery, and every evening five people must go into the mines and play folk songs said to soothe Granny Allswell.

The miners believe that the songs keep the gremlins away, so that the next day whatever tunnels they sang in will be free of damage or traps. Those miners whose names come up in the lottery risk their lives at night to make the mines safer during the day for the rest of the men and women.

Katlin draws out names from a hat, eliciting despairing outbursts from those chosen. The mass of people and their combined dismay begins to manifest a small glowing seed of a hivemind over the crowd, which none of them notice. If the group is interrupted, the hivemind fades away. Katlin, not realizing who the PCs are, asks with a stutter if anyone in the party wants to take the place of the lottery winners.

Soothing Granny hasn't actually worked so well, and every day there's a small chance the gremlins snatch one of the miners, either the night-time singers or the day-time workers. But a DC 30 Charisma (Performance) check (including +2 bonuses from each assisting musician) keeps the gremlins from murdering any townsfolk. It won't, however, keep Granny from demanding the children be given to her.

### Royal Aid.

The town is completely unprepared for a royal visit, and Katlin tries not to panic when she finds out who the party is. The miners are both totally obsequious and desperate for help, throwing themselves at the party's feet to beg they rescue their children. Katlin, beautiful but surprisingly timid for the proprietor of a brothel, gingerly suggest the party talk to her indoors. She takes them to her place of business, where the "Oremongers" sign has been hastily covered with one that reads "City Hall."

She discounts people's fears that an actual fey titan is here, and she says she's confident it's just gremlins being bolder because it's darker than usual. She worries for the children, of course – why, one of her employees, **Natalie Distaff**, is due to give birth any day now – but she's confident as soon as the sun comes back people are going to be mining here again, and she's not going to abandon her business just because of some bad weather.

Katlin deals in deception and seduction, so is a much better liar than her brother (a DC 27 Wisdom [Insight] check). If caught, though, she claims that the world is doomed anyway, so why shouldn't she stand highest atop the ruins?

If the party takes more than a couple days to resolve affairs in Favela, young Natalie gives birth, but Katlin forbids her from leaving. That night a dozen gremlins ambush the brothel and steal the baby.

### Local Rumors.

With a few purchased drinks and greased palms, multiple survivors can confirm the existence of "rather polite" fey in the Redcap mines (these are the gremlins Glower, Guffaw, Pout and Tremble, servants of Granny Allswell).



The miners can provide rough and often contradictory maps of the mines, but all of them remember that there's a large section that has been abandoned for a few years. They broke through some debris and found a much older section of tunnels, then went in and started setting up cranes, a rail car, and a steam engine to drive them, but then a representative of King Aodhan showed up and ordered that section of the mine closed. Checking with the bureaucrats back in Slate reveals that they were pretty sure that section of tunnels was where Granny Allswell had been buried.

### Long-Term Gremlinery.

Favela's miners operated in dozens of mines in the area, with Redcap the most prominent and profitable. These mines' outputs fall off rapidly after the Great Eclipse, and then other mines farther away started having trouble. Granny's old joints take a while to limber up, so she hasn't gone out personally, but she's using her witchy magic from beneath the earth to create gremlins all throughout the Anthras Mountains. Given enough time, bands of the little buggers will start marching into Redcap carrying children and shiny trinkets nabbed all along the mountain range.

## Gather 'Round, Children

### Action. Montage.

*Servants of Granny Allswell lure intruders to the mines of the Redcap into traps.*

Unless the party wants to wait for Granny to come out (and endure Risur's mining operations being disrupted for two months), they'll need to enter the Redcap mines and find her.

Granny's witchy magic has given her a general description of each PC, and she has told her favored children to be on the lookout for them. Soon after receiving these instructions, the gremlins had a series of mistaken identity situations, bringing random miners from the Favela lottery to see Granny. The miners that met the fey titan were driven mad and fed to the kidnapped children as stew. The gremlins took the resultant scolding of Granny to heart and opted to craft a series of tests for those who entered the mine.

### Redcap Peak—Above Ground

The entrance to the Redcap mines is a lonely grouping of temporary dwellings spaced between shafts leading into the mountain. The buildings were once the homes of dozens of miners, as well as support shops, meeting areas, recreation, and lavatories. All of the buildings are abandoned; their interiors stripped clean, with goods transported back to Favela or dragged into the mines by the gremlins.

No metal remains here. Doors have hinges crudely removed, fences picked clean save for the wood mounts, and even the handles on the latrines are missing. Each of the entry shafts save one are broken beyond mundane means of repair. Crashed elevators and broken cabling tell stories of destruction for each, while the sole working elevator has a crude wooden sign post erected at the entrance. Written in haphazardly splashed blood is the following:

---

This mountain is ours. Come and play. Play and be ours too.

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A 15-foot square platform acts as the elevator, with support ropes on every corner and a central rope that connects to a pulley 20 feet above the entrance. The elevator can be turned on – sending the cart down at a rate of 30 feet per round – from a lever on the platform. The shaft descends 350 feet into the mountain and ends at a juncture of several horizontal tunnels.

**Trap:** A single gremlin waits 100 feet down the shaft nestled in a small cubby. For the most part, the gremlin spends its days sleeping and lazing about in its hole, but is woken by the sounds of the elevator if it is activated. The creature hides in the darkness (DC 26 Wisdom [Perception] check) waiting for the elevator to pass, at which point it comes out and cuts the support cables.

Creatures on the platform who fall from this height take 70 (20d6) bludgeoning damage along with 21 (6d6) piercing damage from broken debris. PCs on the platform can attempt to grab onto the wall though they need to make a quick jump and find a handhold on the smoothed shaft walls (a DC 25 Dexterity saving throw followed by a DC 17 Strength [Athletics] check).

### The Greatest of Gremlins

Four of the gremlins are considered the favorites of Granny Allswell's rambunctious children. Named **Glomer**, **Guffaw**, **Pout**, and **Tremble**, these gremlins take great joy in acting as ambassadors for those who dare travel into the mines. Having a very twisted sense of diplomacy and proper manners, these gremlins are not immediately hostile and do their best to act as guides for the PCs.

The posse of four waits at the exit of the elevator, expecting visitors the moment the elevator activates. They're initially hostile but feign friendship, unless the party is playing music (a DC 17 Charisma [Performance] check) in which case they're unfriendly. They'll still try to trick the party into danger unless the PCs make a genuine effort to befriend them. If made helpful, they'll explain that there are traps up ahead, but that Granny only wants survivors to make it to her, so they have to endure the traps to prove they're not just more boring miners.

The four gremlins are:

- **Glomer:** A stunted (for a gremlin) blue-skinned creature with a perpetual look of frustration on his face. He wears a finely tailored suit that is clearly sized for a child along with an appropriately sized bowler hat. Glomer spends his time talking about how nothing impresses him, and acts bitter towards everyone and everything that is not him. The inside lining of his jacket is filled with hooks that dangle dozens of tiny children toys, which he occasionally pulls out and plays with to illustrate his ennui. The only time Glomer shows any emotion beyond his irritation is when questioned on the origin of his toys, to which he simply responds with a rictus grin and no answer.
- **Guffaw:** A humorously obese gremlin with orange-tinged flesh riddled with freckles, Guffaw has the drooping ears of a basset hound. He begins every sentence with a chortling "Huh huh huh?" and ends with a simple "Eh?" Guffaw dresses in rags that are a patchwork of quilts and blankets each of which is inscribed with a different name. When mocked by his siblings, Guffaw's most common response is to nervously break wind and begin crying.





- **Pout:** The only female of the group, Pout is garbed in an elaborate crimson dress and acts like a meek teenager talking to her first crush. Her purple hued skin meshes with the dress, but a close inspection of the fabric reveals it to be originally a white dress now covered in blood. Pout rarely speaks, but often has moments of seemingly random disagreements with her siblings. Most of these disputes turn into savage mauling as Pout attacks those who disagree with her after she puts her foot down.
- **Tremble:** A gray-skinned gremlin with a full set of disheveled white hair, Tremble eternally shakes as his name suggests. One of his two eyes is milky white, while the other is slit like that of a cat, constantly blinking open and closed. Tremble is the most talkative of the group, often initiating conversation with an odd twinge of movement, probing newcomers with endless questions about the foods they've eaten, the places they've visited, their favorite color, why they chose the weapons they chose, who their favorite celebrity is (for the record Tremble's is "*Rock Rackus, the greatest of all humans*"), and continual questions about why they've entered the Redcap mines. The gremlin's only other quirk is his need to stab things with his rusted kitchen knife, an addiction he considerably fills on the local insect life.

## Glower, Guffaw, Pout, and Tremble

Tiny fey, neutral evil

**Armor Class** 21 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 72 (16d4+32)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (−2)	22 (+6)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)

**Saving Throws** Dex +9, Wis +4, Cha +4

**Skills** Acrobatics +12, Deception +7, Insight +7, Intimidation +4, Perception +7, Stealth +12

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from weapons not made of cold iron

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17

**Languages** Common, Primordial, Sylvan

**Challenge** 8 (3,900 XP)

**Auras.** Each gremlin has an aura that does not work on animals, or other gremlins.

- **Angry Aura (Glower only):** Glower radiates an aura of anger in a 20-foot radius. Any creature in this area becomes bewildered whenever it misses an attack roll or fails an ability check. This condition lasts for 1 minute, during which the creature uses its action to make a melee attack against a randomly determined creature within its reach. If there is no creature within its reach, the creature does nothing this turn. Once the bewildered effect ends, the creature can be affected by this trait again.
- **Incompetence Aura (Guffaw only):** Guffaw radiates an aura of incompetence in a 20-foot radius. Any creature in this area has disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.
- **Timid Aura (Pout only):** Pout radiates an aura of timidity in a 20-foot radius. Whenever a creature in this area takes a bonus action or action, there is a 20% chance it does not perform that action or bonus action and it is considered spent.

## Gods vs. Gremlins.

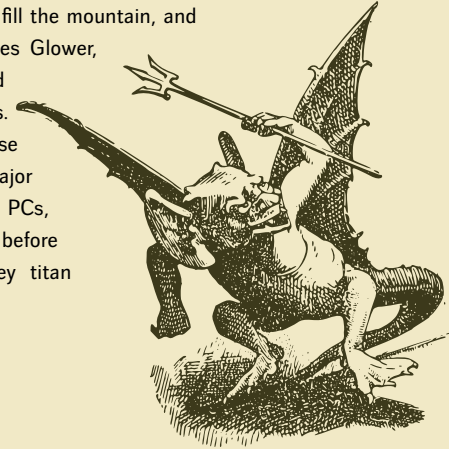
Let's take a look at this objectively, shall we? The PCs are 17th level at this point and have the ability as a group to bring armies to heel with concentrated spell casting and martial prowess. Standing against them in the Redcap mines is a gaggle of disorganized gremlins with only 4 of them having any notable abilities.

Not a fair fight.

Mischievous as they are, the gremlins don't pose a threat to the PCs. What make Granny's children an annoyance

are the traps that fill the mountain, and the passive abilities Glower, Guffaw, Pout, and Tremble possess.

Used together, these could pose a major hindrance to the PCs, weakening them before they meet the fey titan herself.



### • Twitching Aura (Tremble only):

Tremble radiates an aura of uncontrollable shaking in a 20-foot radius. Any creature in this area can

take the Dash action as a bonus action. Anytime a creature moves in this aura, it must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or fall prone.

**Cunning Action.** On each of its turns, the gremlin can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

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

**Innate Spellcasting.** The gremlins' innate spellcasting ability is Charisma. They can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

**At will:** quickened *mage hand*

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

**Sneak Attack (1/turn).** The gremlin deals an extra 21 (6d6) damage when it 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 the gremlin that isn't incapacitated and the gremlin doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The gremlin attacks twice.

**+3 Dagger.** Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +12 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/40 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (1d4+9) magical piercing damage. After being thrown, the dagger reappears in the gremlin's hand.

### REACTIONS

**Uncanny Dodge.** When an attacker that the gremlin can see hits it with an attack, the gremlin can use its reaction to halve the attack's damage against it.



## Trouble in the Dark.

The caverns of the Redcap mines are filled with twisting turns and narrow passages, necessitated by Risur's druid-overseen mining practices, which favor appeasing nature spirits instead of strip mining. Each section of the mine is reinforced with wooden struts and every 100 feet or so there's a secured bunker complex where miners could seek shelter in the case of a collapse. There are no lights, and the winding tunnels are typically 4 feet wide and 5 feet high, with only occasional openings into larger chambers that once contained profitable veins.

Simple wooden tracks for mining carts weave through the mine, though a few sections are missing where the tracks were metal. These are typically nearby dismantled steam engines, which were used to propel heavily-laden carts up slopes.

The nature of the path allows the gremlins to take the PCs through a variety of traps and tricks to "test" them before they meet with Granny Allswell. If the party disarms a trap, the gremlins might reset it using *quickened mage hand* (DC 35 Wisdom [Perception] check to notice). If the party doesn't go with the gremlins, they still encounter the traps along the route to Granny.

The gremlins pretend to be dumbfounded about how all these traps got here, and they blame the miners for having unsafe working conditions.

## Trap One—No Sleeping in Mine.

A ladder that descends 30 feet has several long wooden slivers coated with poison. Initially only one ladder run has these poisoned splinters exposed, but the gremlins can use *mage hand* to trigger different traps for each PC. If any PCs fall unconscious, the gremlins want to strip them naked, scatter their gear in nooks around the mines, and then eat their flesh.

### Sleeping Darts

Mechanical trap

When a creature steps on a hidden pressure plate, poison-tipped darts shoot from spring-loaded or pressurized tubes cleverly embedded in the surrounding walls. An area might include multiple pressure plates, each one rigged to its own set of darts.

The tiny holes in the walls are obscured by dust and cobwebs, or cleverly hidden amid bas-reliefs, murals, or frescoes that adorn the walls. The DC to spot them is 27. With a successful DC 25 Intelligence (Investigation) check, a character can deduce the presence of the pressure plate from variations in the mortar and stone used to create it, compared to the surrounding floor. Wedging an iron spike or other object under the pressure plate prevents the trap from activating. Stuffing the holes with cloth or wax prevents the darts contained within from launching.

The trap activates when more than 5 pounds of weight is placed on the pressure plate, releasing a poison dart. Each dart makes a ranged attack with a +12 bonus against a random target within 10 feet of the pressure plate (vision is irrelevant to this attack roll; if there are no targets in the area, the darts don't hit anything). A target that is hit takes 2 (1d4) piercing damage plus 11 (2d10) poison damage, and must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or fall asleep for 1d4 hours, until the creature takes damage, or someone uses an action to shake or slap the creature awake.

## Trap Two—Please Use Handrail.

Wooden planks form a simple bridge over a 10-foot wide ravine. Bundles of mining supplies dangle from it, include coils of rope with swinging hooks. The gremlins collapse the bridge when the third PC steps onto it, and the ropes snag and pull victims down into a 15-foot deep pit filled with slimy stone spikes jutting upward at odd angles.

### Bridge over Spiked Pit

Mechanical trap

The bridge over this pit is rigged so the gremlins can collapse it whenever they like. When this happens, a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw allows a creature on the bridge to jump away and grab onto one of the sides of the collapsed bridge.

A creature falling into the pit takes 11 (2d10) piercing damage from the spikes, in addition to falling damage, and becomes entangled in ropes (escape DC 17). When a creature attempts to escape from the ropes, it must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or takes 3 (1d6) piercing damage from the spikes.

Any creature that takes piercing damage from the spikes must also make a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or reduce its Strength score 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.

## Trap Three—Deadly Supply Bunker.

Ladders, ropes, and wheelbarrows fill this 20-foot wide, 100-foot long chamber. Racks of rusty picks and other metal implements fill the walls. This place looks really dangerous – a DC 22 Wisdom (Perception) check determines that any large force would cause a lot of sharp things to fly through the air – and it takes a separate DC 22 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check to make any given 10-foot square area safe (and even if the party does this, the gremlins use *mage hand* to reset everything when the PCs aren't looking).

### Flinging Metal

Mechanical trap

When one of the 10-foot panels on the floor is activated, for 1d4 rounds a flurry of metal slivers fills the space above it, dealing 21 (6d6) slashing damage to any creatures in the area that fail a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw.

Any creature that takes slashing damage from the slivers must also make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or reduce its Dexterity score by 1d4. The target dies if this reduces its Dexterity to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest.

## Trap Four—Don't All Miners Stow Giant Boulders at the Tops of Slopes?

Shortly after the deadly supply bunker room, a 60-foot long, 10-foot wide passage has a few nooks along the ground (DC 27 Wisdom [Perception] check, each big enough for a Tiny creature to stand safely in as a boulder rolls past. The end of the passage slopes up, and as soon as anything heavier than 30 pounds steps there, a huge boulder clunks loudly, falling from the ceiling 60-feet further ahead (120 feet from the deadly supply bunker). The boulder bounces about for two rounds until it hits the end of the bunker room, and as it moves it triggers the flinging metal traps.



## Rolling Boulder

Mechanical trap

When this trap is triggered, roll initiative. Starting at initiative count 24, and again at each initiative count until count 0, the boulder advances 5 feet down the hall, back toward the deadly supply bunker.

The boulder can move through creatures' spaces, and creatures can move through its space, treating it as difficult terrain. Whenever the rolling boulder enters a creature's space or a creature enters its space, that creature must succeed on a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw or take 42 (12d6) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone.

As an action, a creature within 5 feet of the sphere can attempt to slow it down with a DC 25 Strength check. On a successful check, the sphere does not move that turn.

## Allswell Down Here

### Social. Real-Time.

*Granny Allswell seems too crazy to be a real threat, but she's as malevolent as the Voice of Rot and cleverer than anyone gives her credit.*

After being suitably led through the mine by their gremlin guides, the PCs hear a murmur of dozens of tiny voices, accompanied by the hearty but somehow off-putting smell of a stew cooking. The tunnel grows taller, and a scaffolding on the left leads up to a small air vent. Beyond it, the passage opens up into a vast chamber, lit only by a dim fire-light emerging from a pit to the north. Magical fire runes around the pit keep warm the stew cooking 30 feet below.

The chamber is filled with various lesser fey gremlins, most of which stand less than a foot tall in height, though their coloration is that of a sickly rainbow. In all there are over a hundred gremlins of differing sizes and shapes who cower in front of the wall at the opposite end of the chamber.

The wall the gremlin horde stands in front of is actually a trio of powerful earth spirits sent under Redcap Mountain by Queen Zidi centuries ago. Zidi had tricked the elementals into absorbing some of her gold royal treasure, which kept them from simply earth-gliding through the stone. Granny Allswell was trapped with them, and she made them her pets, nursing the wounded elementals back to health and extracting all the shiny metal from their owies.

As the PCs enter the chamber, the elementals have taken the form of a wall and only Granny's head is visible, poking out of the stone some 20 feet above the ground. Suspiciously, the stone of the wall doesn't quite match that of the rest of the mines (noticed with a DC 30 Wisdom [Perception] check), and has a lot of tiny holes. At the foot of the wall lies a pile of tons of shiny (and not-so-shiny) metal doodads acquired by the gremlins. The mining cart rails run directly into the pile, but any miner could tell that the tracks seem out of place stopping at the wall (a bit of engineering known with a DC 16 Intelligence check).

On the right side of the room, a mass of makeshift metal cages hold dozens of children, ranging between infants and twelve years old. Behind the cages sits a huge pile of red barrels marked with a fiery icon to warn of explosions; these hold firedust used for blasting. Several of the children have their wrists tied to the bars of the cages with twine, and wooden signs hang around their necks, painted in blood with the word "Naughty."

## Don't Take Granny for Granite!

Tremble steps forward to address Granny, whose eyes – previously pointed in different directions, spin to lock onto the party, then twitch independently to examine each PC.

Granny calls for her children to calm down. At first the gremlins around the chamber don't seem to listen, but a forceful shout of "*BE QUIET NOW!*" causes them gremlins to freeze in their tracks and slowly slink to the edges of the room. Even the four named gremlins recoil in response to Granny's outburst. Once the gremlins are settled, Granny calls for the PCs to come closer so she can "*get a better look at them.*"

Granny Allswell knows the PCs are indeed powerful and tries to gently ply them for information, starting with, "*Why don't cha tell Granny what this is all about now?*"

### Fey Demands.

Hearing about a sunless world makes Granny grin and chortle, but then she demures and coos that Risur's children must be so scared of the dark. At that point she looks into the corner of the chamber that holds the children in cages. "*Look how safe they are in there.*"

Granny wants control of the Anthras Mountains, and she wants a steady stream of children – just the naughty ones, though – to make part of her family. She even has a proposal: have all the miners move out of the mountains, and instead send her all the children old enough to sing a song or swing a pick. She'll keep them until they're twelve, teaching them obedience if she can, or making gremlins out of the ones who won't behave. Then on their thirteenth birthday she'll send them back to civilization with whatever they mined.

Before all that, though, she wants all the children the people of Favela are hiding from her. Her gremlins have heard kids playing, so she knows there are more they're keeping from her, and she does not appreciate the rudeness.

Of course, there are no such children; it's just a trick by Katlin Eisner to get Granny to destroy the dam. It also gives the party an opportunity to avoid a fight, if they're perceptive.

### Think It Over.

If she's denied, Granny suggests the PCs take a night to think about it. Would they rather have her protecting their nation's children, or snatching them away? If the party does leave, overnight Granny weaves a spell – the mountain is limned in red faerie fire, and quakes cause buildings to collapse in Favela. After an hour there's a crescendo of thunder and then a rancid stench wafts outward and covers the entire nation. All the milk that touches the lips of children that night curdles, terrifying thousands of mothers and causing thousands of children to become sick.

However, this great expenditure of power by the fey titan weakens Granny for the next week (simply assign her a -1 penalty to everything), a consequence the party might realize (with a DC 27 Intelligence [Arcana] check). Heartless PCs might goad her into repeating the curse for several days to weaken her further still (the penalty is cumulative).

If the party arranges for a hundred people to sing the song *All's Well* (see page 16), they can stop the grand hex from affecting the nation, but Granny Allswell is still weakened.





### Titan Versus Titan.

If the party finds out what Katlin is up to and drags her to Granny, she compels the woman to speak the truth. Upon learning the Voice of Rot tried to trick her, Granny offers a new deal: Risur can keep its children, but she wants the Voice of Rot's tongue, delivered within a year. Until then, any miners in "her mountains" will need to sing as they dig, or else she'll collapse the tunnels on them.

### Changeling Option.

The party might be able to negotiate her to let miners still operate and leave Risur's children alone if one of them offers his or her own child, who will be raised among the gremlins. Granny then lets the PC pick among Tremble, Guffaw, Glower, and Pout to have as a new child.

### The Old Fashioned Way.

Or the party can fight. Whenever battle begins, a PC who is monarch feels the loyalty of the Risuri people flow in and empower him or her.

## Fighting the Old Hag

### Action. Tactical.

*Granny Allswell is smart enough to have allies of her own – hordes of gremlins and three corrupted earth spirits.*

If the party attacks, the collected gremlins start to swarm in from the edges of the room, and the wall Granny's head emerges from breaks apart, transforming into three huge earth elementals with a bitter grudge against the Risuri monarchy. They attack the party, revealing Granny herself – warty green skin, sixty feet tall, her arms unnaturally long and gangly compared to her body, and her eyes twitching in different directions.

GREMLIN GANG (SEE APPENDIX: FEY TITANS)

- 3 corrupted elder earth spirits
- Granny Allswell

### Terrain.

The "air vents" that run along the north provide a hiding spot, though Granny can send her gremlin gangs in, or just *wall of stone* them shut if she's really annoyed.



## Kooky Talk.

If you need a few strange things for Granny to say during this encounter, you can use the following as is or for inspiration.

- “Aww, look what you gone done now. Those little rocks was just needing a few more kisses from ol’ Granny.”
- “Ho ho, nice spell you cast wee one. Nice, tasty spell. Granny thinks she wants it.”
- “Don’t cha be hurting my children... well, don’t cha hurting them too much, I know kids’ll be kids and all.”
- “Hehehe, dat tickled ol’ Granny a little bit. Maybe after this rough-an’-tumble you can come scratch me back a little.”

The small pit full of stew deals 1d6 fire damage to a creature when it enters the area or begins its turn in the area.

If the firedust casks take more than 10 points of fire damage, they’ll explode, dealing 70 (20d6) damage to each creature within 30 feet (a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw reduces this damage by half). This kills the children.

The steam engine and cranes in the eastern half of the room are all damaged, but *mending* or similar magic could make them available if PCs get clever ideas about dragging Granny into the big pit or something similar.

The piles of shinies are difficult terrain and mostly worthless.

## Tactics.

Granny uses her Hordeling Outburst to control 9 gangs of gremlins at a time, and the little bastards run all across the PCs, trying to disarm or disrobe them. While the earth spirits provide beef and initial melee damage, Granny starts by using her two Evil Eye powers to disrupt the party, then uses her exceptionally long reach to attack. She prefers to focus on spellcasters so she can steal magic they might be using.

If she can, she’ll use her hurl foe ability to knock PCs into the stew pit. If enemies get behind her, she’ll instead throw them into the massive mining shaft.

Once she has used each Evil Eye power on each PC, she starts using her bonus action to cast *bestow curse*, or *Hostile Juxtaposition* (which lets her swap positions with an enemy whenever she’d be attacked or affected by a damaging spell, causing the enemy to become the target instead).

## Bringing Down the Mountain.

When Granny is first reduced to 0 hit points, she’ll spit in defiance and stop fighting. She agrees to return to her torpor, but makes one last offer: give her Redcap Mountain as her personal playground, let her remain awake, and in exchange she’ll send nightmares into the sleeping minds of the party’s enemies, targeting whomever the party desires (13 creatures that will suffer each night for a year).

If the party continues to attack her, the fey titan’s face contorts into a visage of tension and anger, her eyes comically rolling in their sockets. The hilarity ceases, though, when the entire mountain begins to tremble. Two rounds later Granny’s cave collapses around them, dealing 17 (5d6) damage per round (a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw negates this damage). If the party moves at a quick pace out of the mines they can outrun the cave-in, but the four named gremlins – who avoided the previous fight – show up along the way to stymie the party.

Fleeing out of the mountain requires backtracking (a DC 17 Wisdom [Survival] check to avoid getting lost, taking 17 [5d6] bludgeoning damage from falling rocks on each failed check). This takes the party through all four of the gremlin’s traps, which have been reset. Once up past the splinter-trapped ladder, another DC 17 Wisdom (Survival) check is necessary to reach the elevator. At that point, the GM should use their judgment as far as how much time the party has to make its way up the 350-foot shaft before the whole mine falls in on itself.

To add to the climax, the GM can have Granny appear beneath the party (the old witch polymorphed herself to navigate the tunnels) and start climbing up after them. All it takes is one good hit or clever idea to stymie her ascent, and then the shaft collapses on her as soon as the party makes it to the surface.

## Threat Four: She Who Writhes

**Beshela, Archfey of the Sea.** Lady Beshela serves as steward of the domains of the fey titan She Who Writhes. With armies of sea creatures at her command, the beautiful fey was like a queen of her own land, but since the Great Eclipse her kraken mistress has wrought havoc upon those people.

Four decades ago Beshela was saved from captivity by Ethelyn, the sister of Risur’s former king. Her pride and eagerness to help Ethelyn in a coup made her an enemy of Risur for a time, but she has come to realize the real threat was the Obscurati. Now she humbly hopes to aid the party in defeating her mistress She Who Writhes, both to save her own domain and to repay her debt to Risur.



*Arms of thousands make men weep,  
She lurks in depths of murky deep.  
Brave souls gone without a trace,  
Grasping ships with sweet embrace.  
Fishers, merchants, pirates, each  
Will tremble when they see her breach.  
When sailors wail 'neath stormy skies,  
It's time for dinner, She Who Writhes.  
– Risuri Sea Shanty*



## Waves of Rage

### Exposition. Montage.

*No ship is safe from She Who Writhes!*

She Who Writhes may have assisted the party in ZEITGEIST #9: *The Last Starry Sky*, but only accidentally. She sees all intruders on the seas as enemies, and so now no ship can come within thirty miles of Risur's shores without being attacked.

As the PCs race around Risur dealing with threats, Beshela the Archfey of the Sea searches for her fey titan mistress to try to calm her. By the time the PCs are ready to deal with She Who Writhes, Beshela has returned, and has the rough outline of a plan.

Eladrin dreadnought Asrabey Varal offers to aid the party in Beshela's plan to soothe the rampaging fey titan. However, Asrabey – already doubting his opposition to the Obscurati, since it was co-founded by his wife Kasvarina – has decided in light of the Ob's ritual to switch sides. He intends to betray the party and weaken Risur so the Obscurati can more easily accomplish its goals of dominating the world.

### Fey in Water.

At an appropriate point (likely after the other three fey titans are defeated), Beshela makes herself known to one or more of the PCs. She uses an effect similar to a *programmed illusion* spell, enchanting the bathwater at the party's likely residences. The next time one of them bathes or shaves, her image seems to rise out of the water to address them.

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"The fey titans contest with Risur, but none will cause more damage than my mistress, She Who Writhes. When you are ready to grapple with this menace of the seas, you may find me by placing a bouquet of white lilies on the water at your docks."

---

If the PCs contact her, the archfey Beshela rises from the water atop the head of a giant octopus which emerges from the water. As the octopus rises, a half-dozen merfolk mounted on the backs of armored oversized seahorses appear, acting as the archfey's escort. Beshela's demeanor depends heavily on her previous interactions with the party. This time, though, she operates mostly on bluster, and the forces with her are all the aquatic allies she could muster. Most of the marine denizens have fled to deeper retreats.

If the party declines to work with Beshela, about two months after the Great Eclipse Asrabey approaches her, with Gale as back-up. The three sail out in a small ship, and Beshela contacts the fey titan, but Asrabey's betrayal (see below) goes off without a hitch. Gale is horribly wounded but manages to fly away so she can tell the party what happened.

### Beshela's Plan.

Beshela says she knows a way she and the PCs can calm She Who Writhes. They must head out to sea and force the titan to rise, then trap her in a temporary storm, at which point Beshela will need to maintain physical contact with the titan for a minute to cast a spell that will charm her. Beshela can then explain the situation with the Obscurati and open negotiations between the party and her mistress.

## An Excess of Caution.

Asrabey does not underestimate the party. While they are out of Flint, he secretly acquires numerous *elixirs of glibness* (granting advantage and a +10 bonus to Charisma [Deception] checks made to conceal the truth for 1 hour). Unless the party put a tail on him, by the time they come back to deal with She Who Writhes, Asrabey will glibly avoid dropping any hints of his betrayal (DC 27 Wisdom [Insight] check).

The only real hint the party might easily notice is that he has acquired an enchanted crown. This item hides the magical aura of his elixirs, both while they're on his person and after he has drunk one. If asked about it, he claims it makes him more personable, but with the gruff eladrin it doesn't seem to make any difference.

She suspects She Who Writhes would agree to aid the party for a year if Risur abandons the use of steam engines and makes regular offerings of virile men and golden treasure. If the party cannot come to terms with She Who Writhes, at least the titan would be in a vulnerable place so the party could defeat her, driving her back to sleep. Beshela would regret having to betray her mistress in that way, but she recognizes the greater stakes to the world.

Depending on their relationship with Beshela, the PCs may not trust her. After all, Beshela tried to sink the party's ship during ZEITGEIST #7: *Schism*, and before that she assisted in an assassination attempt against King Aodhan. If questioned about her previous actions, Beshela says that she has no regrets, and she posits that had Duchess Ethelyn of Shale been allowed to complete her coup, it is quite possible the Obscurati would have been stopped much earlier.

### Asrabey's Betrayal.

Asrabey offers to stand by Beshela and protect her while the PCs handle subduing the fey titan. In truth, he plans to use an eladrin ritual from the high age of Elfaivar to steal Beshela's powers and become an archfey himself. He plans to strike while Beshela is bonded to She Who Writhes, gaining both magical power and temporary control of the titan.

### Important Warning.

Beshela makes sure to warn the party that She Who Writhes has the power to unleash a deadly ululation that drives people so mad that they kill themselves in order to stop hearing it (in effect, this is the spell *weird*). She suggests that whatever the party decides to do, they be ready for that threat.

### I'm on a Boat!

The first part of Beshela's plan requires luring She Who Writhes from the ocean into shallow water. This should not be difficult for the PCs to arrange, as the fey titan has been attacking pretty much any vessel of notable size that ventures into water deeper than thirty feet. The party's advisors suggest taking the *Coaltongue*, the *Impossible*, and any Danoran ships that were seized at the end of ZEITGEIST #9: *The Last Starry Sky* (since Flint's own fleet was mostly sunk). As for how to get to She Who Writhes, several options are possible.

First, the party can use illusion magic to shout challenges underwater, drawing the titan's attention. They'll linger close to a wide





sandbar that is hidden at high tide, and if possible they'll simply goad the titan into beaching herself.

Second, each ship will have its cannons adjustable so they can aim downward into the sea. Special enchantments will be needed to allow the projectiles to travel more than a few feet through the water, costing 12,500 gp per ship.

If that fails, the third option is to have the other ships harpoon her or drop jagged anchors to try to snag her. If at least three ships get hold they can try to drag her onto the sandbar.

As a back-up, a fourth option is to have several dozen spellcasters on board with *control water* scrolls. If cast simultaneously they can simply pull the water out from under She Who Writhes, even if she won't come into the shallows.

The party will discover that She Who Writhes can teleport (just like everyone else). They might try to break her line of sight, but since she can see through water their best bet would be to churn the seas, such as with a tornado or hurricane created by *control weather*. An unprepared party is liable to lose many ships and perhaps a few PCs just trying to get close enough to She Who Writhes to talk.

## She's Writhing All Right!

### Action. Real-Time.

*The queen of the sea tries to kill intruders to her domain.*

The battle against She Who Writhes is divided into three phases; the first phase being the party's effort to beach the titan so they can climb atop her without her simply submerging and teleporting away. The second phase of the battle has the party defend Beshela for a minute as she attempts to charm her mistress. The final phase of the encounter begins when Varal stabs Beshela, then takes her power to become an archfey himself.

The first phase of this encounter can be mostly handled narratively. The party just needs to figure out how to thwart She Who Writhes's teleportation, perhaps taking a few crashing waves across their deck in the process.

### Battle at Sea

Let the party pick where they want to confront She Who Writhes. There is plenty of nautical terrain within a few miles of Flint harbor, or they might even engage her in The Ayres. Once they set out, it's only half an hour before the waters grow turbulent, and a look-out spies something approaching under the waves.

The first naval round occurs when She Who Writhes reaches long range, and she attempts to make the party's boat list with waves and whirlpools. The following round she teleports (since after all, any creature can teleport now) to the opposite side of the party's fleet and tries to capsize the ship by hitting it with waves again. The party might not be prepared for her amazing mobility, and unless they can stop her from teleporting or have very long-range weapons, she'll keep jaunting around until the party's whole fleet is drowning.

She stays in water that's at least 30 feet deep, but if the party has their allies use a massive number of *scrolls of control water*,

## Simpler Engagement?

Since the big twist of this encounter is battling Asrabey, the GM can simplify the scene if pressed for time or if the players are getting restless.

The party can sail out as written; then when She Who Writhes approaches and the water starts to heave around them, Beshela performs a ritual to conjure a hurricane and pull the fey titan to the surface. The party then must reach the "face" of She Who Writhes, where Beshela needs a minute to commune with her mistress. If the party can keep Beshela alive that long, She Who Writhes stops fighting them. Beshela starts to explain the threat of the Obscurati, but then Asrabey stabs her in the back with his flaming sword. He draws out her power and orders the kraken to destroy the party, while he grimly explains why he has betrayed them.

## True Tentacle Horror.

She Who Writhes manifests as a sort of kraken, a creature akin to a giant squid, her body a hundred feet long and tentacles stretching hundreds more. However, most of her body is a not solid mass of flesh, but rather thousands upon thousands of smaller tentacles—some suckered like an octopus, some scaled like a shark, others leafy like kelp or covered in jagged golden rasps trawled up from ancient sunken treasure.

Her "face" has two massive eyes—capable of charming those she sees and luring them to a drowned death—but those are merely her most prominent. Dozens more eyes probe out from her body attached to pseudopods, granting her near perfect awareness of her surroundings. Masses of tentacles along the crown of her head defend the primary eyes, and if they grapple creatures they pull victims *through* the titan's flesh into her body's interior. Likewise, creatures bitten and swallowed by her are drawn to this churning organ.

Therein, the figure of a beautiful woman glows with bioluminescence, while around her writhe the mindless but still-alive bodies of hundreds of previous victims, their expressions rapt with physical ecstasy. Creatures who can resist the psychic onslaught here can see the true formlessness of She Who Writhes, for even this female figure is just a ruse, like the tempting orb of an anglerfish. Up close she is nothing more than innumerable wriggling tentacles, slick with bloody mucus.

they can drop She Who Writhes into a watery depression too shallow for her to teleport out of. The party will only have one minute to close the distance (which entails piloting into a whirlpool with steep sides), after which She Who Writhes manually crawls her way out of the area of lower water and continues her attack.

The party might instead try to goad her into attacking them and leaving their allied ships alone, though pulling that off is challenging (some appropriate show of force, plus a DC 30 Charisma [Intimidation] check). Or they might have their allies flying for the duration – an expensive undertaking, but possible. In this case, She Who Writhes waits until she capsizes the party's vessel, then closes to devour them, at which point the *control water* spells can strand her long enough for the party to climb aboard her.

No doubt the PCs will think of other clever solutions.



### She Who Writhes, Fey Titan

Gargantuan fey, unaligned

**Armor Class** 19 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 577 (33d20+231)

**Speed** 10 ft., swim 90 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	11 (+0)	25 (+7)	22 (+6)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)

**Saving Throws** Str +18, Con +15

**Skills** Athletics +18

**Damage Immunities** lightning

**Condition Immunities** frightened, paralyzed

**Senses** darkvision 300 ft., blindsight 300 ft., passive Perception 22

**Languages** Aquan, Common; *tongues*

**Challenge** 28 (120,000 XP)

**Feeding Tentacles.** She Who Writhes uses a bonus action to lash out at a creature or object within 160 feet. On a successful hit, she does not deal damage but the target is pulled within 50 feet of her.

**Innate Spellcasting.** She Who Writhes' innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 23). She can innately cast the following spell, requiring no material components.

**At will:** *dominate monster* (creatures within her body only)

**Magic Resistance.** She Who Writhes has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Mistress of the Sea.** While she is submerged in water, She Who Writhes can use a bonus action to *teleport* (as the spell) from one body of water to another body of water she has previously swam in, or to any area in the same body of water she is in.

**Pain Threshold.** She Who Writhes ignores any attack that deals 10 damage or less.

**Regeneration.** She Who Writhes regains 15 hit points at the start of her turn if she has at least 1 hit point and is in the water.

**Waves and Whirlpools.** She Who Writhes uses a bonus action to send a heavy chop at any ship she can see that is in the same body of water. The creature piloting the ship must succeed on a DC 26 Dexterity (vehicle [water]) check or the ship is struck by a wave. Each creature on deck must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw to avoid being washed overboard. On a failure of 5 or more, the ship lists from the wave's impact. If the ship is already listing, instead the ship is capsized.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** She Who Writhes makes one bite attack, one crush attack, and three tentacle attacks, or she makes eight tentacles attacks.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 37 (6d8+10) piercing damage. If the target is a Huge or smaller creature grappled by She Who Writhes, that creature is swallowed, and the grapple ends. While swallowed, the creature has total cover against attacks and other effects outside She Who Writhes, and it takes 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage at the start of each of She Who Writhes' turns. A swallowed creature can escape by running back out of her mouth, but treats her insides as difficult terrain and is moved 20 feet deeper inside at the end of each of her turns.

If She Who Writhes takes 50 damage or more on a single turn from a swallowed creature, she must succeed on a DC 25 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed

creatures, which fall prone in a space within 10 feet of her. If She Who Writhes dies, a swallowed creature can escape from the corpse using 15 feet of movement; the creature is no longer prone.

**Crush.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 49 (6d12+10) bludgeoning damage.

**Tentacle.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 110 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (3d6+10) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 26). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained. She Who Writhes has eight attack tentacles, each of which can grapple one target.

**Whirlwind Attack.** She Who Writhes can use her action to make a tentacle attack against any number of creatures within 160 feet of her, with a separate attack roll for each target. She can still grapple only eight targets.

#### LEGENDARY ACTIONS

She Who Writhes can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. She Who Writhes regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

**Additional Action (Costs 1 Action).** She Who Writhes takes an additional action.

**Dominate (Costs 1 Action).** She Who Writhes casts *dominate monster* on a swallowed creature.

**Swallow Sea (Costs 2 Actions).** She Who Writhes swallows a 30-foot cone of water, including anything within that water. Creatures in the area make a DC 26 Strength (Athletics) check or are swallowed. If the creature has a swim speed, it makes this check with advantage.

### Beshela's Ritual.

Once the PCs have managed to stop She Who Writhes from playing keep-away, they have to climb aboard her. The map is just a static image of her body, but in truth her tentacles are constantly flailing about. Creatures on her outer tentacles must succeed a DC 17 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check at the end of every round or fall into the water, and those who fall into the water must succeed on a DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check at the end of every round or take 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage from mighty waves and more submerged tentacles.

Tentacles sprout all over the titan's body, and these try to pull PCs into her interior where she can use *dominate monster* on them and have slow, viscous congress with them until she grows tired of it. The larger tentacles try to knock away melee threats, or simply crush them. If no enemies are within range of her bite attack, She Who Writhes uses her whirlwind attack.

When She Who Writhes is reduced to 150 hit points, she submerges and teleports away. If she cannot submerge (or is otherwise prevented from teleporting), she is unable to take any actions other than to slowly crawl toward deep water. She heals to her full health after about five minutes.

While the party figures out what to do, Asrabey guides Beshela to She Who Writhes' face. There he readies actions to attack any tentacles that threaten Beshela, but he suggests the party target other parts of the kraken to distract her attention. If Beshela can survive 10 rounds (1 minute) on the titan's face, she completes her communion and the titan stops attacking.









### Beshela's Communion.

Amidst the chaos of battle and the continuing torrent of water, the spot where Beshela touches the titan's face begins to glow. For a moment, the contained storm calms, and the tendrils that make up the face of She Who Writhes part, revealing the interior and the titan's feminine avatar.

"Mistress!" Beshela calls out. "You have awakened to a world in peril. We are not your enemies! We need your aid to save all our lands from the threat of a great power. Please listen to my—"

The moment is shattered. With a single lightning-fast movement of his blade, Varal impales the archfey Beshela through the back. He rapidly intones the syllables of some eladrin curse, and the dreadnought undergoes a hideous transformation.

His skin shifts from its usual brown tan to a blighted green, and his cloak of smoke peels away as shadowy tentacles erupt from his back. He shrugs Beshela's body off his sword, dropping her body into She Who Writhes' interior. Then he sweeps his flaming blade as a challenge to the party and proclaims:

"I am Asrabey Varal, Archfey of Obedience and loyal ally to the rulers of this new age! After centuries of spilling blood in vengeance, now I see the path of justice is one of order and control. We must obey the Obscurati! Champions of Risur, we have been allies, and I respect your devotion, but you walk the wrong path! You shall either abandon your rebellion, or you will taste my blade."

### Seriously...You're Betraying Us?!

Asrabey Varal now has a measure of control over She Who Writhes, and he directs her to defend him from the PCs. Let the party's past interactions with Asrabey determine whom he targets first; he might be loyal to the Obscurati, but he's still emotional and will gladly repay any past slights with bloodshed.

Asrabey's goal is to bring the fey titan under his control and escape. To do so, he needs to get She Who Writhes back into open water so she can teleport them away, after which he'll present the titan to the Obscurati as a new weapon. First though he needs to kill the PCs, or at least knock them off She Who Writhes, and the titan needs a few minutes to crawl into deep enough water. If there are any ships within reach, Asrabey could command She

Who Writhes to grasp the vessel and threaten to kill all aboard if the party doesn't surrender. Mostly, though, his plan is just to defeat them in battle.

Beshela has fallen unconscious from her wound (she is stable at 0 hit points). As long as she is lying unconscious or otherwise doing nothing, Asrabey ignores her. She can be brought back to consciousness by concerned PCs; if she is, she tries to re-establish her communion with She Who Writhes, though doing so immediately makes her Asrabey's target. If she can spend 3 rounds uninterrupted at this task, she calms the fey titan and convinces it to turn against Asrabey. Of course, rescuing Beshela likely entails entering the interior cavity of the kraken, where She Who Writhes can dominate intruders.

### Screaming Titan.

If She Who Writhes hasn't already used her deadly ululation (*weird*), she unleashes it now. Asrabey is immune to this effect, as is Beshela. If the party guesses Asrabey's intention to betray them and stops him, instead have She Who Writhes wail halfway through Beshela's attempt at communion, since it can create a nice moment of desperation.

### Back to the Bottom of the Ocean.

When either Asrabey or She Who Writhes is reduced to 0 hit points, She Who Writhes sags in exhaustion and coughs blood into the sea. She gurgles out that she yields, and asks to be allowed to return to her slumber. A moment later her entire body seems to unravel into millions of smaller tentacles, which dissolve into the sea.

If the titan's retreat was caused by saving Beshela and having her complete her communion, She Who Writhes punishes Asrabey: as her form collapses, she grasps him in her tentacles and drags him screaming beneath the water.

After she is gone, the sea is darkened with blood. The party has a few minutes' reprieve before another challenge presents itself, detailed in Act Two.

### Rewards.

If the party has dealt with the four fey titans – Ash Wolf, Father of Thunder, Granny Allswell, and She Who Writhes – they should go up to level 18.



## Threat Five: The Voice of Rot.

*Whosoever ventures near,  
Be forewarned that Death lives here.  
If you should note the smell of death,  
Then soon shall come your final breath.  
—Sign outside the High Bayou*

The Voice of Rot is not present in the High Bayou. In the same way the Ziggurat of Av in the Antwalk Thicket linked to Jiese, the Plane of Fire, the Ziggurat of Apet in the High Bayou linked to Baden, the Ghost Moon, which was once in the Gyre. The Voice of Rot slithered through the ziggurat and emerged on Baden, and from there found his way to the Gyre. He awaits the end of the world there, and he will probably confront the party in ZEITGEIST #12: *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*.

In the meantime, the party finds nothing here. The fey titan moved the swamp and caused the ziggurat to sink into the mire after he traveled to Av. Barring intense excavation efforts, the party won't be able to get inside the mud-flooded ruin to pursue the white serpent.

However, coming here is not completely pointless. Strange magic has summoned the spirit of a long-dead orc druid named **Toteth Toppec**, the original architect of the Axis Seal ritual. Only a small sliver of his consciousness survives after so long, but the party can find him

near the ziggurat, drinking a citrusy alcoholic beverage while leaning against a tree.

Toteth vaguely answers questions posed about the original Axis Seal ritual, but the information he provides comes down to three main facts.

- The ritual requires eight worlds to link to, hopefully worlds that don't have hostile forces that could invade. Long ago, orcs did all the hard work fighting such invaders, and he's kind of disappointed that humans ended up taking over instead.
- The ritual also requires a proper balance of energies: air, earth, fire, water, life, death, space, and time. A bad mix could have made the world uninhabitable or completely stolen free will. It took years to find the right worlds, because they had to journey to each on foot. It was possible to walk between the planes back then; kids these days wouldn't appreciate it.
- The Golden Seal itself links the world to a star. Back in Toteth's day, you see, the world had no sun; Toteth saw one on another plane and thought it was a good idea, because it kept the invaders away for half the day.

There's not enough of Toteth's consciousness left to permit much conversation about other topics, but he is able to share the recipe for the drink he's enjoying: a long-forgotten orc beverage called the margarita.

