Zeitgeist™

THE GEARS OF REVOLUTION

The Age of Reason



Act Three of the Critically Acclaimed Adventure Path

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ZEITGEIST Adventure Path Act Three

The Age of Reason



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The Reason for the Age

By Ryan Nock

Imagine if one day the whole world woke up and agreed with you.

That was the hook that led to this entire adventure path. I'd long had in mind the images of starry nights obscured by the steam of enchanted industry, of ghosts in a theater, a colossus broken free, and a woman standing on its shoulder regretting her role in the disaster. I was fascinated by all the revolutions that had gone on during the Age of Enlightenment, just slightly predating the era most 'steampunk' emulates. I'd been high on Obama's inauguration and crestfallen at political impediments to the changes I hoped he'd make.

But I didn't have a core idea, something complex enough to keep gamers involved for potentially years of adventures, and something compelling enough to me that my muse would keep shoving me until it was complete. Then, while brainstorming setting factions in an email thread with E.N. Publishing's owner Russ Morrissey, I wrote

"And here's what I think the Obscurati are up to. We've already got factions with clearly delineated philosophical differences. Insular homeland protection, technological superiority, nihilistic greed, the supremacy of secrets, revenge and the ascendancy of nature, and peacemaking. The conflict isn't existential, but philosophical. One age is about to end, another set to begin, as foretold in the stars."

I'm writing this foreword on November 5th. For Russ, it's Guy Fawkes Day, so I'll admit that a little conspiracy—with the right amount of explosions and villains burned on pyres—can be fun. I certainly hope the campaign we've written is fun for you. For me, though, this evening is mere days from the US Presidential election, and the fact that I don't actually live in a fantasy setting hasn't managed to stop America from believing in two distinct, barely compatible realities.

By the time any of you read this, the election will be decided, the seal closed, and the stars will turn along one course or another. The next morning we won't wake up and all agree with each other, but that doesn't mean we have to accept that this is how the world will always and forever be.

Roleplaying games are escapist, yes, but at their best they are also emboldening, empowering. We battle monsters that exist only as words in the air, and we triumph with the aid only of clever thoughts and clever friends. The dice won't always go our way, but through games we can be heroes.

If all you take away from your Zeitgeist campaign are memories of heroism, grandeur, and adventure, I'll be honored I could be a part of that. But perhaps, as you and your friends grapple with forces that seek to dictate what the perfect world will be, you'll consider the works of great thinkers past and present, and be empowered with the courage to lend your voice too to the panoply of philosophies arguing the future into being.

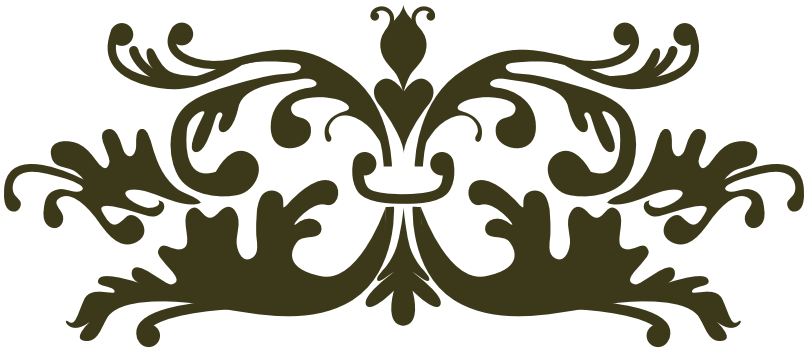
There are too many people to concisely thank for their contributions and support, but above all I must commend Russ for his confidence that we could complete this colossus of a series, Eric for creating the masterpiece aesthetics of the books, Frank for his unflappable professionalism as I risked burn-out near the finish line, Claudio for illustrating our vast cast and for allowing me to use his city as inspiration for Flint, and Thurston for . . . fuck, for being Thurston. Thursty, you made all this work far more fun than I could have imagined. Seriously he's awesome, just hang out with him.

Also, to the ghost of my dad: thank you for getting the moniker "Nicotine Nock" in the Air Force, and thus inspiring my mastermind.



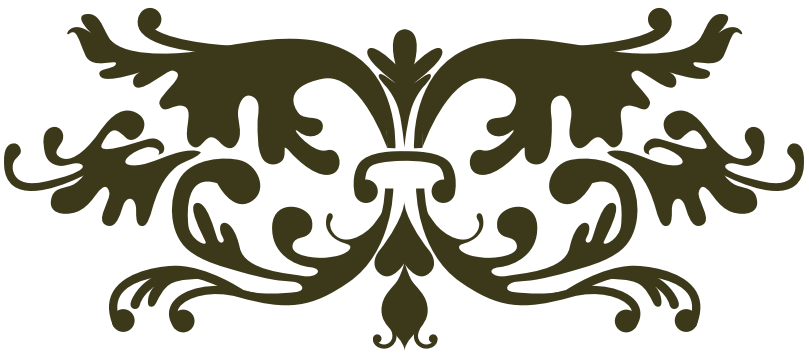
Adventure Number 10

Godmind



From the Pen of	Thurston Hillman
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Creepy Poems by	Jamie Isfeld

Special Thanks to my mother Brenda. Because you'll never be a Grandma (at least from me), so Granny Allswell will have to do.



ADVENTURE TEN: Introduction

Wherein Everyone Actually is Out to Get You

The 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.

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 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 Reality Shift in Appendix C 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.

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.



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 **Ash Wolf**'s forests, the **Father of Thunder**'s fields, **Granny Allswell**'s mountains, **She Who Writhes**'s seas, and the Voice of Rot's swamps. Not since the nation's founding have all the titans awoken simultaneously, but the Voice of Rot's battle with the party in adventure nine, 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 more a fey-friendly region of the nation. In the farmlands west of Bole, the gazelle-like fey titan Father of Thunder rampages. Attracting an ever-growing herd 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 Anthras Mountain mines 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 forced to shut down, Risur is threatened by a shortage of ore for industry.

The party might be willing to leave those problems alone to deal with more urgent threats, but they will need at least to defeat She Who Writhes before they can access the rest of the world. The tentacled titan 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.

By contrast, though, the Voice of Rot avoids the party. Indeed, he has already traveled through a portal, and 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 Adventure Twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*.

Obscured No More

During the Obscruati's ritual on Axis Island, the conspiracy's leader **Nicodemus the Gnostic** watched as the great colossus Borne opened the hundred-foot diameter golden Axis Seal, which unleashed devastating magical energies from across the multiverse. The forces damaged the colossus, but Ob mages were present to mitigate some of the destructive power, and the industrial titan was able to rearrange 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 create a new star for these worlds to orbit. 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 remanifested in Methia where he first died centuries earlier, 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 (which, by a small technicality, 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 the most 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 use their mutual worries to unify them into a global government. With the new reality making 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, had 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 Adventure Eleven, *Gorged on Ruins*, a familiar one of them—the wayfarer **Sijhen**—will attend Nicodemus's conference and help provoke a devastating psychic manifestation.

The Wildcard

In Adventure Six, *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 despite his megalomaniacal desire to conquer an entire nation, Pemberton realized the threat posed by the Ob, who were trying to conquer 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 actually 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 in discovering 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 handle that threat as they see fit 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, except when a protest against inhumane work conditions turns into bedlam when the unified psychic will of the protesters manifests as a tentacled 'hivemind.' The party has to 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 Adventure Four, *Always on Time*), offering them cryptic advice to investigate Axis Island, deal with their most pressing problems, and then rescue her in due time (detailed in Adventure Eleven, *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 hivemind, 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 Adventure Eleven.

Rewards

The party begins this adventure at 23rd level, and should reach 24th level after act one, then 25th level at its end. Use the following guidelines for what resources the PCs have access to, now that they're basically in charge of an entire country. We don't provide much specific treasure in these adventures, 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.

At the start of this adventure, the royal coffers can provide the PCs 800,000 gp each. At the beginning of adventure eleven they can each access a further 2,000,000 gp, and 7,500,000 gp in adventure twelve. The pace of adventure thirteen isn't conducive to shopping.

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 Adventure Seven, 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 tiefling 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 Adventure Twelve.

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 Adventure Eleven.

If she helped the party escape at the end of Adventure Eight, 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 survived adventure six, 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. Remember to highlight any technological innovations the party gained by recovering his designs, but there is not time for further innovation during the rest of the campaign.

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.

PROLOGUE:
That Was One Hell of an Apocalypse

The party is assumed to begin *Godmind* in the city of Flint immediately following the end of Adventure Nine, *The Last Starry Sky*. Before the real 'adventure' begins, the party needs 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 suffocates and dies (barring a surgery kit and a Heal check DC 30). His throat sealed shut with new flesh, blocking his windpipe.

Any magic the PCs attempt either fails outright or goes awry (10% chance of mishap for at-wills, 30% for encounter powers, and 70% for dailies; it fails if it doesn't mishap). Activated magic items have a similar

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 Adventure Seven, *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 prevents almost any chaos, as many simply 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 Adventure Eleven, *Gorged on Ruins*.

Damned Lies. Crisillyir'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 Crisillyir and disseminate the *sacrament of apotheosis* (see Adventure Eight). 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 Adventure Eleven, *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.



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.



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.

WHAT'S UP WITH 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 real world.

This has the effect that the old Bleak Gate and Dreaming have been cut off from the rest of the world. They were 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, since it is 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 a few 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 would probably just suffer some negative energy damage and feel vertigo. Weaker people might be sucked bodily into the Gyre, lost forever.

chance of failure. Permanent magic items function mostly normally, though perhaps with odd side-effects. A simple Arcana check reveals that magical auras are almost the same, but most spells are suffused with subtly unfamiliar magic.

Any spellcaster feels that with enough time they could figure out how to use this new mana safely, but it would take days. 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.

Gyre-Rise

The night sky is black, or rather closer to slate gray. Close observation (Perception DC 24) 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.

An Arcana check (DC 34) 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 Adventure One, *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.'

Stormclouds 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 professor of planar science 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. They are accompanied by a Halfling spirit medium named **Fippery Leafbrowner**, who has a small reputation in Flint for being willing to contact the recently departed for a small fee. Gale introduces Fippery, and then guides the PCs to the body of someone who died in the recent fighting. She hands Fippery a handful of coins, and while he calls out elaborately for the spirit of the departed, she produces a mirror.

In the reflection, the spirits of the dead are reflected. 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. Asrabey says he feels cut off from the Dreaming, but connected to somewhere *else*.

The medium Fippery excuses himself and starts to follow Asrabey, but the eladrin glowers and the Halfling runs off. (Fippery will return briefly in Adventure Twelve, and his presence now allows him to later contact the party via *sending*.)

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 She Who Writhes to attack the Danoran fleet, vanished into the sea at the end of that battle.

No News is Bad News

Without teleportation or sending magic, at least for now all news must be delivered on foot. Couriers dispatched now by train could get word back from Bole in two days. News from Slate will require horseback travel, and take two weeks or more. News from distant Shale would take over a month to arrive, though by then Risuri mages will have figured out how to perform *sending* and *linked portal* rituals again.

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.

  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.



The party's former boss now obeys their commands. Delft handles the logistical and political drudgery of the Royal Homeland Constabulary, 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.

Though normally rather easy-going, he gets squinty and condescending when people obstruct important affairs because of politics. Delft chews tobacco, and thinks he looks charming if he grins while sucking on tobacco juices. 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.



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.



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 a docker riot a few years ago. 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.

- **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.

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.



- **Catherine Romana, Obscurati Traitor:** Catherine Romana might have survived and escaped after attempting to assassinate the king in Adventure Nine. 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 anywhere public or that he has permission from the owner. He also can't cross Flint Harbor or jaunt to the Ayres Islands. (This is because he cannot teleport into claimed territory, and She Who Writhes claims the seas as her own.)

Most creatures can only use this ability once per day as a standard action, and they need 8 hours practicing, after which they must succeed a Dexterity or Wisdom check (DC 20) to learn how to use this ability. At your discretion, characters with a focus on rapid movement (e.g., anyone who spent feats to improve their speed, or took multiple powers to move fast) don't need to practice to pick up the skill, and can use it once every five 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.

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 some high level divination magic may assist in ascertaining the exact changes to the world.

We suggest you let the players discover this information through trial and error, then give them the handout Reality Shift from Appendix C 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. In any event, Professor Henton will seek out the new monarch and offer his expertise in understanding the new cosmos.

Applied Astronomy: Characters with the Applied Astronomist paragon path get new powers, detailed in Reality Shift in Appendix C.

Black Hole Sun: Whenever an effect would deal radiant damage to a creature, it deals 2 fewer damage than usual. A character can spend a healing surge as a free action to overcome this limitation for five minutes.

Even then, no magical effect can produce light for more than 5 minutes. (Magic can produce fire, however, which emits light; only magical light is affected). All existing magical light effects such as everburning torches end.

In the new sunless world, even high-level heroes might need to rely on torches or lanterns for illumination. Characters should be given an option to retrain these sorts of powers.

Blood of Ostea: All creatures immediately stabilize when rendered below 0 hit points, and hit point loss itself is not enough to kill a creature. To slay a creature, one must spend a standard action to deliver a coup de grace to a creature that is already at negative hit points equal to or greater than its bloodied value.

All creatures reduced to 0 or below immediate heal up to 1 hit point after 1 minute unless they are killed first. Creatures regain all hit points after six hours of consecutive rest.

Death is Death: Slain deva no longer reincarnate.

Flight of the Fey: Eladrin lose access to their racial 'fey step' ability. Instead, all attacks made by eladrin deal full damage to insubstantial creatures due to their connection to the new plane of Death.

Magic Mishaps: Whenever a character uses a magic power (either personally or with an activated magic item), there's a chance that the effect causes a mishap (10% for at-wills, 30% for encounters, and 70% for dailies). If it doesn't mishap, it instead just fails. Perpetual abilities are generally unaffected.

A character who can use magic of some sort can spend 8 hours researching and practicing, then make an Arcana check (DC 20). If he fails he can try again. If he succeeds he is able to use powers of up to level 5. Each further day he can make additional checks to regain mastery of magic up to five levels higher. 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 a +5 bonus to that character's check.

Existing magic items with activated abilities are dangerous, but can be rendered safe with a moment's concentration by a magic-user who is at least as high level as the item. New powers learned during the new age function safely.

Reign of the Rational: All creatures gain a +5 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy checks if they use rational appeals rather than emotional ones. All creatures take a –5 penalty to Intimidate and Insight 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.

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 traveled to it before. Any travel before the Ob's ritual does not 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.

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.

Fourmyle Jaunting. Every creature is able to jaunt—to teleport within line of sight as an innate ability. As a standard action once per day, a character can teleport anywhere he has line of sight to. He cannot teleport to a spot he could not reach normally (e.g., you have to be able to walk or climb there, so no teleporting through a barred cage). He also cannot teleport if he's being held.

A character focused on mobility (DM's discretion) can instead use this ability once every five minutes.

(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.)

Three Miles is *so* Last Age: Magic that restores life to the dead are no longer limited by the body having to travel less than three 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, and its duration is not limited.

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. Level 23.

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 Adventure Two, *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 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 **hive-minds**—thoughtform 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 five-hundred 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 Cortege 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 offer 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. Form 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 Diplomacy or Intimidate checks (DC 35) 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, and thereafter the party gets a +5 bonus to the 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 -1 penalty to attack rolls and defenses, to a maximum of -3.

Using magic to calm them is likely ineffective (both because the party probably has no more than low-level powers available right now, and because the crowd uses the hivemind's Will defense, 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 thought-form 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 might be crushed by the falling wall.

Falling Wall. *Atk:* +24 vs. Reflex; *Hit:* 25 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.

Labor Hivemind Level 23 Solo Controller
Gargantuan aberrant magical beast **XP** 25,500
HP 434; **Bloodied** 217 **Initiative** +17
AC 39, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 39 **Perception** +17
Speed fly 6 (altitude limit 6)
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 2

Traits

▸ **Thoughtform**
Its flesh is semi-clear like slime, but the longer you concentrate on it, the more solid it appears.
Creatures with this trait are normally insubstantial and phasing. As insubstantial creatures, they take half damage from all attacks, except those that deal force damage. As phasing creatures, they ignore difficult terrain and can move through obstacles and other creatures, but they must end their movement in an unoccupied space. Thoughtform creatures also take normal damage from psychic attacks, despite being incorporeal.

▸ **Mind Over Matter**
Signifiers can alter the meaning of the signified. You just have to think about it in the right way, and you can change what it is.
A character within 5 squares of the hivemind can spend a minor action to try to influence the creature through its thoughts. The character makes an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma check with a +9 bonus and chooses to target Fortitude, Reflex, or Will. A character can only attempt this once per round. On a success, it has the following effect.
✦ **Fortitude.** The hivemind loses insubstantial and phasing until the start of the character's next turn. If it's flying it must land or fall.
✦ **Reflex.** The hivemind must release all grabbed creatures. The character can slide the hivemind 2 squares.
✦ **Will.** All creatures serving as 'conduits' for the hivemind cease to be conduits. The character cannot be perceived by the hivemind until the start of that character's next turn.

▸ **Industrious Routine**
It has many limbs, but always seems to attack the same way.
The hivemind takes the following actions at the specified initiative counts, in addition to its normal actions on its turn. Instead of taking the specified action it can make a saving throw to end a single condition with a duration that is affecting it, even ones that don't normally allow saves.
✦ **Count 35.** Tentacle seize.
✦ **Count 30.** Move its speed.
✦ **Count 25.** Psychic bolt.
✦ **Count 20.** Tentacle seize.
✦ **Count 15.** Move its speed.
✦ **Count 10.** Hammer and sickle.
✦ **Count 5.** Tentacle seize.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Hammer and Sickle** ✦At-Will, Basic
Two massive limbs, each thirty feet long, swing an industrial piston hammer down on you, then slice you with a massive sickle.
Attack: Melee 6 (one creature); +28 vs. AC
Hit: 3d12+10 damage, and the target is knocked prone and gains ongoing 10 damage (save ends).

⊘ **Tentacle Seize** ✦ At-Will, Basic
It wraps you in a tendril of flesh that feels like tedium.
Attack: Melee 6 (one creature); +28 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6+20 damage and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 27).

⊘ **Psychic Bolt** (psychic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Bolts of force streak through the air from the monster's many eyes. You feel the force blast through your own optic nerves, and you feel like something is writhing in your mind.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +26 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6+10 psychic damage, and the target becomes a conduit for the hivemind (save ends). The hivemind can have its attacks originate from any conduit—causing tentacles to burst out of the victim to strike and grab, or for massive eyes to manifest on their flesh to fire more psychic bolts.

▸ **Mental Overdrive** ✦ At-Will
All that matters is the progress of labor and the prosperity of the workers. Those who work shall be consumed. Those who do not work shall be destroyed.
Effect: Each creature grabbed by the hivemind must make a saving throw against madness. For each creature that fails, the hivemind heals 50 hit points. If a creature fails a third saving throw against madness in this way, the hivemind gains an action point, and the victim is physically consumed by the hivemind, and cannot be freed until the hivemind is destroyed.

Str 27 (+19) **Dex** 22 (+17) **Wis** 23 (+17)
Con 27 (+19) **Int** 28 (+20) **Cha** 26 (+19)
Alignment Labor **Languages** Primordial, telepathy

Tactics

The hivemind has all the knowledge of its creators, so it understands the PCs are the immediate threat. It acts multiple times each round in a preset order, and also has a normal turn based on its initiative roll. During that turn it can take any action, but usually prefers *psychic bolt* or *mental overdrive*.

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 prevent that), while PCs who fail three saves against madness are consumed. 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, the protesters are effectively noncombatants with 4 HP. Every twenty who are killed give the hivemind a cumulative -1 penalty to attack rolls and defenses. Once it reaches a -10 penalty, it dissolves.

Aftermath

Slaying the hivemind unleashes a psionic boom. Everyone in the crowd that created the thoughtform creature suffers temporary backlash, 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, though he reinforces that something needs to be done as the people are scared of this new world.

If the party is defeated, eventually the rest of the city manages 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 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 starve 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 5,000 gp have their costs doubled. After two months, double the monetary costs of all rituals.

If the party completely dallies, in three months the Obscurati organize a fleet action to kill She Who Writhes, and then they invade Risur.



ACT ONE: Against the Titans

Legendary 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 a 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 so in the weeks after the Great Eclipse, many refugees congregate there. The party only hears 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 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 History check (DC 20) 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, which isn't how forest fires travel. They follow the wind. Something was lighting the fires. He then asks for a drink to loosen his tongue before he shares his big reveal.

> "On m'a way oout 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 getting' 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."

The legends about the Ash Wolf (History or Nature DC 25) tell of the Smoldering Wolves, 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 twenty-three 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 Weftlands

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 Adventure Two, *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 (History or Nature DC 25) tell that his presence is heralded by great storms and great drinking, for the king of herd beasts is an uncontestable lush. He calls a mighty herd to surround him, impregnates many mares and sows and does, and imbues the offspring with his boon, transforming them into wondrous steeds for any who can capture them. The Great Hunt—who is stranded in the real world after they annoyed the Voice of Rot and were banished from the Dreaming—traditionally take all their horses from among these blessed steeds.

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 so 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 are supposed to keep away 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.

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—a long-derided ethnic minority, 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 read some government lady (**Katlin Eisner,** see page 27) her fortune, 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 (History or Nature DC 25) 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, an Arcana check (DC 25) recognizes them as obscure icons that are anathema to fey titans. However, if the same PC also succeeds a Nature check (DC 25), he realizes the sigils are being deployed in exactly the wrong way.

Ochran has placed sigils facing outward, explaining they will drive back the titans. In truth, 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 (Insight DC 15). When he realizes the jig is up, he hisses at the party, revealing a forked white tongue, then attempts to flee by shapeshifting into an air elemental.

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 33).

Threat One: The Ash Wolf

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

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.

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 efreet 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 30 Perception check for every five 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. Level 31.

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

This battle might occur anywhere in the forest fire, but we suggest you have 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 four thousand, located twenty 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.

(Yes, 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 we thought the setting of a town surrounded by a forest fire would be interesting, given how the scale of the Ash Wolf would contrast with houses and streets.)

Whichever PC is the monarch feels a surge of power, which he or she will come 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 Adventure Nine for details.

(Since the party is 23rd level, the monarch should get a +8 bonus to all defenses and attack rolls, and saving throws; a +9 bonus to Strength-, Dexterity-, and Constitution-based checks; regeneration 40 in addition to the normal regeneration 10 the monarch always has; and can interact with the titan as if he or she were also gargantuan.)

Wolf Pack (see Appendix A: Combat Catalogue)

- 24 Smoldering Wolves
- The Ash Wolf

Terrain and Environment

Smoke from the forest fire wafts through the town, providing concealment to creatures beyond 60 feet, and total concealment 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 to snap up a PC and carry him off into the smoke.

The forest fire stops about sixty 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 character to take 5 points of fire damage per round (no save). In addition, a character must make an Endurance check (DC 25) every 5 rounds or lose a healing surge from choking smoke, even if they're resistant to fire damage.

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 (Perception DC 30). 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* power, 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 *firestorm* to burn the party and ignite the buildings around them, or perhaps *lignify arms and armor* 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 hundred feet away, watching. If any of the empowered wolves are bloodied, 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. He charges in and will try to snatch someone vulnerable (and can jump high enough to easily clear rooftops, bite someone beneath him, then clear 50 feet horizontally) and carry him off. He dumps the victim a hundred and fifty feet away in the forest fire and then circles around the edge of the battle, staying far enough away to remain unseen.

Generally he'll alternate using *hunting surge* and *hurl tree*, and will punctuate his assaults by condemning the hunters who speared his son, recounting how his mate died thousands of years ago so he'll never have more children, and threatening to burn the whole nation until he has his revenge.

Aftermath

The Ash Wolf should be fairly 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 one-by-one if he's bloodied, 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 them if they at least 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 reveals odd wounds not common among Risuri weaponry (Heal DC 20). Further investigation reveals the weapons were made of obsidian and radiated an extreme amount of heat (Heal DC 30).

The Ash Wolf will offer 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 no physical trail, and magic to pursue them yields no information unless the caster succeeds a DC 22 Arcana check. Brute force searching takes several days (though it goes faster if the party splits up or brings help), and eventually they'll find a patch of forest still burning long after it should have died.

The Flaming Ziggurat of Av

Action/Social. Real-Time. Level 23.

Meet your new neighbors, the Salamanders of Jiese!

A one-mile diameter swath of forest burns perpetually around the old Ancient ziggurat, which has been transformed into brass. Several dozen plated fire worms called thoqqua roam the woods near the building, and they screech if they detect any intruders (Stealth DC 20 to avoid). 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.

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
- 4 Salamander Viziers
- 8 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 fairly 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. Creatures who enter the walls (marked on the map) or start their turn there take 20 fire damage.



Ziggurat Interior

Interior walls of the ziggurat, once weathered stone with barely visible carvings, are 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 more 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.

Kuyler, Salamander Sultan Level 21 Elite Soldier (Leader)
Large elemental humanoid (fire) **XP** 6,400

HP 270; **Bloodied** 135 **Initiative** +17
AC 37, **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 33 **Perception** +13
Speed 5 **Resist** fire 20; **Vulnerable** cold 10
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Threatening Reach**
Despite the heavy plate armor he wears, he's nimble. The salamander slithers at the edge of your reach, keeping his halberd as a threat between you.
Kuyler has threatening reach with his halberd (2 squares).

▸ **Egotistical Presence**
"We've got this, boys!" he shouts. "Hey, let's kill the tall one first." The salamanders all hoot and cheer in agreement.
Whenever Kuyler attacks a creature, any ally who attacks the same creature before the end of Kuyler's next turn gains 10 temporary hit points.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Hot Halberd** (fire, weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The halberd's blade glows white hot. A flash of heat cooks you, and you've been impaled before you realize he lunged.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +26 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10+20 damage plus 30 fire damage.

⊘ **Constricting Tail** ✦ At-Will, Basic
His plated tail flicks out and grabs you.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +26 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12 damage and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 20). While grabbed, the target has ongoing 10 damage.

▸ **Twisting Attack** ✦At-Will
Effect: Kuyler uses *hot halberd*, then shifts 3 squares and uses *constricting tail* against another target.

Minor Actions

▸ **Three Wishes** ✦At-Will (3/day)
"Liesi," he shouts, "I wish for the one who just hit me to stand still so I can stab him!"
Effect: Kuyler makes a wish, which comes true. You have a lot of latitude to fulfill these wishes.
Special: Once Liesi is no longer bound, due to a previous wish by Kuyler she cannot grant anyone else wishes for one month.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Contingent Wishes** ✦Encounter (each)
With years to abuse the wishes from his bound efreeti, Kuyler is ready for things to go badly.
Trigger: Kuyler starts his turn.
Effect (No Action): Kuyler can gain the benefits of one of the following wishes. He can only benefit from each wish once.
✦ **Back-Up:** If there are no friendly allies within 12 squares, 4 salamander dervishes appear wherever he wants within that area. They act immediately.
✦ **Expert Wrassler:** A creature who Kuyler missed with his *constricting tail* power, or who escaped, is now grabbed by Kuyler and cannot escape until the end of Kuyler's next turn.
✦ **Uh Oh:** Kuyler heals 100 hit points and ends all negative conditions affecting him. He cannot be affected by negative conditions or damage until the end of his next turn.

Str 24 (+17) **Dex** 20 (+15) **Wis** 16 (+13)
Con 26 (+18) **Int** 8 (+9) **Cha** 14 (+12)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Ignan

Liesi, Bound Efreet Level 21 Controller
Medium elemental humanoid (fire) **XP** 3,200

HP 120; **Bloodied** 60 **Initiative** +13
AC 35, **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 35 **Perception** +12
Speed 6, fly 8 (hover) Blindsight 10
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** fire 15

Traits

▸ **Bound**
She glares at the golden manacles around her wrists as she attacks.
Several pacts and unique wishes bind Liesi in service to Kuyler. She cannot attack Kuyler and must defend the salamander to the best of her abilities. Even compulsion effects cannot force her to harm or through inaction allow Kuyler to come to harm.
This binding counts as three level 21 afflictions for purposes of the *remove affliction* ritual.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Scimitar** (weapon) ✦At-Will, Basic
She manifests a scimitar from thin air and slices at you.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +26 vs. AC
Hit: 3d10+10 damage (9d10+33 on a critical hit).

✓ **Burning Rage** (charm, fire, psychic) ✦At-Will
A bolt of fire strikes you, but the fire burns your mind, not your flesh. You feel an urge to fight wildly well up inside you.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +24 vs. Will
Hit: 3d10+10 fire and psychic damage, and on its next turn the target must use its actions to move its speed and make a melee basic attack against an ally, if possible.

✲ **Firegem Cocoon** (fire) ✦Encounter
Flames swirl around you, close in tight, then crystallize into searing gems that hold you tight.
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +24 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6+20 fire damage and the target is restrained (Escape DC 26). While restrained, the target has ongoing 10 fire damage and cannot be affected by other attacks.
Special: The cocoon can be destroyed by an attack that deals at least 30 damage.

▸ **Projected Image** ✦At-Will
Effect: Liesi creates an illusion of up to the size of a huge creature anywhere she can see. *Sustain minor.*

Minor Actions

▸ **Change Size** ✦At-Will (1/round)
She squints at you and makes a gesture like she's crushing something small between her fingers. Suddenly she has become immense! Wait, no. You're tiny!
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +24 vs. Will
Hit: The target is either reduced to Diminutive size (reducing its speed to 1, its reach to 0, and causing its weapon attacks to deal half damage), or increased in size one category (increasing its speed by 2, its reach by 1 square, and causing its weapon attacks to deal +10 damage). The creature may make a save each round to end this effect.

Str 23 (+16) **Dex** 17 (+13) **Wis** 14 (+12)
Con 18 (+14) **Int** 12 (+11) **Cha** 15 (+12)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Ignan; telepathy

Liesi's Betrayal

Liesi is bound to a bronze bottle that Kuyler carries at all times. Indeed, whenever he deigns to let Liesi out of the bottle, he proceeds to fill 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 hasn't been aware of all the time. The arrival of the PCs presents her with a unique opportunity to arrange Kuyler's assassination and her freedom. Of course, she's still evil, and 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 an illusionary version of herself 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 that she's just 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.

Salamander Vizier Level 19 Goon Artillery
Large elemental humanoid (fire) **XP** 1,200

HP 70; **Bloodied** 35 **Initiative** +10
AC 31, **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 32 **Perception** +10
Speed 6 **Resist** fire 20; **Vulnerable** cold 10

Standard Actions

⊘ **Burning Rod** (weapon, fire) ✦At-Will, Basic
He smashes a brass rod into you, and it erupts with fire.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +24 vs. AC
Hit: 5 damage and 10 fire damage.

⊘ **Constricting Tail** ✦At-Will, Basic
His tail grabs you.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +24 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 19). While grabbed, the target has ongoing 10 damage.

▸ **Advance and Seize** ✦At-Will
Effect: The vizier uses *constricting tail*, shifts 1 square, and uses *burning rod* against the same target.

⊘ **Ruby Lance** ✦At-Will, Basic
He creates a ball of fire in his hand, then shapes it into a spear. It flies for your heart.
Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creature); +25 vs. AC
Hit: 30 damage.

Triggered Actions

▸ **"Duck, Your Majesty!"** ✦Encounter
As you line up your attack, the salamander shouts a warning to his sultan.
Trigger: An enemy hits Kuyler with an attack.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): Kuyler gains a +2 bonus to his Defenses against the attack.

Str 18 (+13) **Dex** 12 (+10) **Wis** 12 (+10)
Con 20 (+14) **Int** 15 (+11) **Cha** 14 (+11)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Ignan

Salamander Dervish Level 19 Goon Skirmisher
Large elemental humanoid (fire) **XP** 1,200

HP 70; **Bloodied** 35 **Initiative** +15
AC 33, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 30 **Perception** +10
Speed 6
Resist fire 20; **Vulnerable** cold 10

Standard Actions

⊘ **Scimitar** (weapon) ✦At-Will, Basic
It's just a quick slash.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +24 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage

⊘ **Flicking Tail** ✦At-Will, Basic
His tail slaps you out of the way.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +24 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage and the target is pushed 3 squares.

▸ **Dervish Dance** ✦ At-Will
He slithers past you, striking as he goes.
Effect: The dervish shifts 6 squares and uses *scimitar* and/or *flicking tail* a total of three times at any points before, during, or after the move.

Str 18 (+13) **Dex** 22 (+15) **Wis** 12 (+10)
Con 20 (+14) **Int** 15 (+11) **Cha** 14 (+11)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Ignan

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 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*, a month later they can call upon her one time to get three wishes, after which she's able to use planar travel 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 teleports away for good. If the party was kind to her, there's no chance she attacks the party.

Threat Two: Father of Thunder

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

Storms and stampedes ravage Risur's breadbasket, 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 so happens to equate carousing to battle, however.

The Drunken Stampede

Exploration. Montage.

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

The Father of Thunder stands fifty 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 ability to grow crops and raise livestock, not to mention he occasionally stampedes through towns, crushing buildings under his hooves. For now he stays near Bole, tempted by its whisky 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 Adventure Nine, *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 twenty and fifty 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 ft. 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 party 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 party can get close enough and actually hits 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 (Charisma DC 30) can entertain him enough to let someone get within a hundred feet, though the sight of weapons and armor will 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 -5 penalty to his attack rolls and defenses.

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 ten 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 Adventure Nine, 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 PCs and the Great Hunt, you can easily reduce this to a few Nature or Stealth 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 31.

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 simple Stealth check (DC 18) four times, with each check representing a few hundred feet 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, though, 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 him, as detailed in the Rites of Rulership (see Adventure Nine).

The Grand Stampede

- The Father of Thunder (see Appendix A: Combat Catalogue)

Steeds from the Great Hunt

We intentionally designed the Father of Thunder to mostly ignore the party's steeds. Even his lightning bolts don't affect them. However, in case it matters, treat the steeds the Great Hunt provides as a heavy warhorse with a base speed of 30, enough to keep up with the Father of Thunder.

Additionally, each horse has 50 temporary hit points, renewed at the dawn of each day.

Battling the Father of Thunder

See the Father of Thunder's stats in Appendix A: Combat Catalogue. 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 reach HP Threshold I 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 HP Threshold II), 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 whisky 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 starts tearing into 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.

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 (should they go through with it, the titan's spirit, not body, does the deed). 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 lightning bolt (**Atk:** Area burst 1 within 80; Str +9 or Con +9 vs. Reflex; **Hit:** 30 lightning damage) once per day as a minor action.

Threat Three: Granny Allswell

Bedtime, children. Please, please hush.
You don't want Granny waking up.
If she hears, she'll surely rush
to snatch you, misbehaving pup.
Then she'll drag you, way way down
to live in darkest gremlin town.
If you want naught to join her crew
then make no peep the night on through.
-Common Risuri Nursery Rhyme

In 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.

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** 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's 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 thirty 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 performing rituals around Favela to make the sounds of playing children whenever no people are around. 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.

Where Do 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.

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 three hundred miners have gathered at the docks on the lake, where 'Mayor Eisner' is hosting the daily lottery. Huge braziers of firegems 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 that are said to sooth 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 Charisma check (DC 30, 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 (Insight DC 33). 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 some 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 just being the most prominent and profitable. These mines' outputs fall off rapidly after the Great Eclipse, and then other mines farther away start 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 shinies nabbed all along the mountain range.

Gather 'Round Children

Action. Montage. Level 19.

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.

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

Trap: A single gremlin waits 100 ft. 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 (Perception DC 30) 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 20d10 points of falling damage along with 6d6 points of 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 (Acrobatics DC 25 followed by a DC 25 Athletics check).

The Greatest of Gremlins

A group of four gremlins are considered to be the favorite of Granny Allswell's rambunctious children. Named **Glower**, **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 (Charisma DC 15) 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:

- **Glower:** 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. Glower 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 Glower 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 head 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 considerately fills on the local insect life.

GODS VS. GREMLINS

Let's take a look at this objectively, shall we? The PCs are 23rd 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 against the PCs. What make Granny's children an annoyance are the traps that fill the mountain, and the plethora of passive abilities Glower, Guffaw, Pout, and Tremble present. Used together, these could pose a major hindrance to the PCs, weakening them before they meet the fey titan herself.

Glower, Guffaw, Pout, and Tremble — Level 23 Lurker
Tiny fey humanoids — **XP** 5100

HP 150; **Bloodied** 75 — **Initiative** +20
AC 37, **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 34 — **Perception** +10
Speed 6 — Darkvision

Traits

▸ **Gunshy**

You pull the trigger. Nothing happens. You pull again. Nothing. You move to check whether it jammed, and the instant you stop aiming, the gun fires.

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

▸ **Gaggle**

You hit one of them, and he trembles in pain. The others glower, guffaw, and pout, all reacting to the same injury.

The four gremlins each take up their own space and can move independently, but they share a single hit point total. Conditions likewise only affect one of them at a time. When their combined hit points are reduced to 0, they all wail and fall unconscious.

▸ **Gremlin Auras** ✦ Aura 4 (each)

Man, you are so clumsy.

Each gremlin has an aura around him or her.

- **Glower Aura.** Whenever an enemy in the aura misses an attack roll or fails a skill check, at the end of its turn it moves its speed toward its nearest ally makes a melee basic attack against that ally.
- **Guffaw Aura.** Any time an enemy in the aura would roll a d20, it rolls two dice and takes the worse result instead.
- **Pout Aura.** Enemies in the aura must make a save at the start of their turn or be dazed until the start of their next turn.
- **Tremble Aura.** Any time an enemy in the aura uses an action to move, it then shifts 1 square in a random direction before it can take any other actions (including attacks that are part of the same action).

Standard Actions

⊘ **Claw Flurry** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Effect: Each gremlin makes the following attack. If used as an opportunity attack, only one gremlin gets to make the attack.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +28 vs. AC

Hit: 8 damage and the target is knocked prone and is blinded until the end of the gaggle of gremlins' next turn.

✲ **Shadowy Confusion** (cold) ✦ Encounter

The gremlins concentrate and point at a single spot. Darkness falls, and you hear shuffling movement, making it difficult to tell where everyone is.

Attack: Area burst 5 within 10 (enemies in burst); +23 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 24 cold damage.

Effect: The area drops into darkness until the end of gaggle's next turn. Each ally in the area can teleport 2 squares to another space in the area.

Minor Actions

▸ **Break It** ✦ Encounter

The gremlin's sudden appearance heralds things spontaneously breaking.

Effect: Each gremlin teleports 6 squares, and then chooses any number of weapons, zones, or mechanical devices (no more than 5 squares across) that are adjacent to him or her. They cease to function – zones (such as ice walls) are dispelled, and weapons or devices break. The wielder of a weapon disabled this way receives a save each round, and on a success the weapon suddenly works again.

Skills Stealth +24, Thievery +21

Str	10 (+11)	**Dex**	20 (+16)	**Wis**	8 (+10)
Con	10 (+11)	**Int**	6 (+9)	**Cha**	12 (+12)

Alignment Chaotic Evil — **Languages** Goblin, understands Common, Elven, Primordial

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 magic (Perception DC 42 to notice). If the party doesn't go with the gremlins, they still encounter the traps since they're 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 thirty feet has several long wooden slivers coated with poison. Initially only one ladder rung has these poisoned splinters exposed, but the gremlins can use magic to trigger different rungs 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.

Poisoned Quills Level 22 Minion Trap
Object **XP** 1000

Detect Perception DC 32. As you climb down the ladder, one rung feels different beneath your feet, like you're crunching tiny wood slivers.

Perception DC 37. Multiple rungs of this ladder—and occasional parts of the side planks—are covered with sharp splinters.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Splinter Jab** (poison) ✦ At-Will

Dozens of splinters stick up from this ladder rung, each slick with some slimy substance.

Trigger: A creature climbs down the ladder. Make the first attack when the target steps on the rung, after which the target can make a free Perception check (DC 37) to notice the odd texture of the rung. Then make the second attack when the target grabs the rung on the way down.

First Attack (Opportunity Action): Melee 1 (triggering creature); +22 vs. AC

Second Attack (Opportunity Action): Melee 1 (triggering creature); +27 vs. AC

Hit (either): 5 damage and the target is drugged (save ends). While drugged, the creature is weakened, slowed, and dazed.

First Failed Save: The target falls unconscious for 1 hour. A Heal check (DC 28) can remove the poison and awaken the creature. The ladder rung is some 30 feet up, so the target might fall if it passes out mid-climb.

Countermeasures

✦ **Disable:** Thievery DC 20 to remove the poisoned splinters from each of five different ladder rungs. Fail by 5 or more, and the person trying to disable it triggers the trap.

✦ **Avoid:** Athletics DC 20 to climb down the shaft without touching the ladder.

Trap Two—Please Use Handrail

Wooden planks form a simple bridge over a 10-ft. wide ravine. Bundles of mining supplies dangle from it, include coils of rope with swinging hooks. The gremlins have the bridge collapse when the third PC is on it, and the ropes snag and pull victims down into a 15-ft. deep pit filled with stone spikes pointing in many odd angles. The spikes are coated in purple worm venom.

Footgrabber Pit Level 22 Trap
Hazard **XP** 5000

Detect Perception DC 32. The bridge up ahead looks stable, but is covered with items that could be dangerous.

Perception DC 37. There's a trick plank in the middle of the bridge that would have to be manually triggered, but could cause the whole thing to collapse.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Collapse and Entangle** (poison) ✦ Encounter

The bridge snaps apart beneath you, ropes and hooks snag your feet, and you are pulled down into a bed of stone spikes coated with ichor.

Trigger: A creature the gremlins want to trap crosses the bridge.

Primary Attack (Opportunity Action): Area burst 1 (creatures on bridge); +25 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target falls 15 feet, taking 1d10 damage, and is restrained (Escape DC 25). When the target falls, make the following attack four times.

Secondary Attack (Free Action): Melee 1 (one creature); +27 vs. AC

Hit: 10 damage plus ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends). Multiple instances of this poison damage stack.

Special: Repeat the secondary attack once each time the target attempts to escape being entangled.

Countermeasures

✦ **Disable:** Thievery DC 20 to reinforce the bridge so it cannot collapse. Requires three checks. This is ultimately futile, because the moments the PCs look away the gremlins break whatever they did.

✦ **Clear:** Thievery DC 30 to remove the grabbing ropes and hooks. When the bridge collapses, reduce its attack bonus by 5.

✦ **Avoid:** Athletics DC 20 to jump across the ravine while avoiding the bridge. Fail by 5 or more and you bonk your head on a low ceiling and fall into the spikes.

Trap Three—Deadly Supply Bunker

Ladders, ropes, and wheelbarrows fill this 20-ft. wide, 100-ft. long chamber. Racks of picks and other metal implements fill the walls. This place looks really dangerous—Perception or Thievery (DC 25) determines that any large force would cause a lot of sharp things to fly through the air—and it takes a separate Thievery check (DC 25) to make any given 10-ft. square safe. (Even if the party does this, the gremlins discreetly reset everything when they're not looking.)

Surprisingly, though, nothing bad happens here the first time the party comes through.

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

Shortly after the deadly supply bunker room, a 60-ft. long, 10-ft. wide passage has a few nooks along the ground (Perception DC 30), 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 thirty pounds steps there, a huge boulder clunks loudly, falling from the ceiling 60-ft. further ahead (120 ft. from the deadly supply bunker).

Roll initiative; starting at initiative count 24 and again at each next initiative count until count 0, the boulder advances 5 ft. down the hall, back toward the deadly supply bunker. It careens for two rounds until it hits the end of the bunker room, and as it moves it triggers the flinging metal traps.

Rolling Boulder Level 22 Elite Trap
Hazard **XP** 10,000

Detect Perception DC 30. Little nooks have been carved into the wall here, low to the ground as if to provide cover for cat-sized creatures.

Perception DC 37. The end of the hallway 60 ft. ahead turns upward, and the entire slope has the telltale flatness of a pressure plate. Stepping anywhere there probably triggers something.

Triggered Actions

▶ **Crushing Boulder** ✦ Encounter

The boulder fills the width and full height of the hallway, and it's coming faster than you can run.

Trigger: A creature enters the sloped hallway.

Effect: The boulder emerges 12 squares up the hallway. Roll initiative. At count 24 and each count thereafter, the boulder advances 1 square. When it enters the space of a Small or larger creature, make the following attack.

Attack (Opportunity Action): Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. Reflex

Hit: 60 damage and the target is knocked prone.

Miss: 30 damage and the target is knocked prone.

Countermeasures

- **Disable:** Thievery DC 30 for every 10-ft. stretch of the hall can disable the pressure plate trigger. Failing by 5 or more triggers the trap.
- **Stop:** Strength DC 25 (+4 bonus for each size category above Medium) causes it to move only every other initiative count, pushing you ahead of it. Success by 10 or more stops it. Failure means you get crushed.

  Magic might also be able to stop it. It has defenses of 10, but cannot be slowed or immobilized.

Flinging Metal Level 22 Solo Trap
Trap **XP** 25,000

Detect Perception DC 10. This place looks dangerous, with sharp and jagged mining implements all over the place. It would take hours to make this place safe.

Perception DC 37. There's the faintest of hollow sounds if you tap the floor down the length of this room. There might be a cleverly-hidden pressure plate that could only be triggered by some extreme weight.

Triggered Actions

▶ **Shrapnel Galore** ✦ Encounter

All the dangerous items in the room explode through the air.

Trigger: A two-ton or heavier weight depresses the floor pressure plate in a given square.

Attack (Opportunity Action): Area burst 2 centered on triggering space (creatures in burst); +27 vs. AC

Hit: 30 damage.

Miss: 15 damage.

Effect: The area becomes a zone of ricocheting shrapnel for the next three rounds. Repeat the attack each of those rounds at the same initiative count.

Special: The trap triggers up to 4 times as it moves down the 20-square long room.

Countermeasures

- **Disable:** Two Thievery checks (DC 32) for every 25-ft. stretch of the hall (6 checks) can disable the pressure plate trigger. Failing by 5 or more triggers the trap.
- **Set Off:** A two-ton weight can trigger the trap prematurely.
- **Clean Up:** An hour of work can clear out a given 25-ft. stretch of the hall, so there's nothing to endanger the PCs.

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 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 earthgliding 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 twenty feet above the ground. Suspiciously, the stone of the wall doesn't quite match that of the rest of the mines (Perception DC 35), 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.

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 retreat back 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, the great expenditure of power weakens Granny for the next week, a consequence the party might realize (Arcana DC 30). Mechanically, each night she performs this curse her maximum hit points are reduced by 25, and she takes a -1 penalty to attacks and defenses, to a maximum of -5. Heartless PCs might goad her into repeating the curse for several days to weaken her.

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 Against 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. Level 31.

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.

Granny's Gremlin Gang

- 3 Corrupted Earth Spirits (see Appendix A: Combat Catalogue)
- Granny Allswell

Terrain

We include two maps—a full map here (and in the appendix at the back of the book), plus a player map (in the appendix). As the PCs enter they can't see the far chamber or the side tunnel 'air vents.'

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

The small pit full of stew deals 5 fire damage to a creature caught in it each round.

If the firedust casks take more than 10 points of fire damage, they'll explode, dealing 50 damage to each creature within 30 ft. This kills the children.

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

The piles of shinies are difficult terrain, and mostly worthless.



Tactics

Granny uses her *hordeling outburst* to control nine 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.

Kooky Talk

"Aww, look what'chu 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'n'tumble you can come scratch me back a little."

If she can, she'll hurl 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 *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 but stops fighting. She'll agree to return to her torpor, but makes one last offer: give her Redcap Mountain to be her personal playground, let her remain awake, and in exchange she'll send nightmares into sleeping minds of the party's enemies. She'll send horrible nightmares each night for a year, targeting up to thirteen people the party desires. Those people have to make a save each time they take a long rest or else they do not benefit, cannot heal, and cannot regain expended powers.

If the party continues to attack her, the fey titan's face contorts into a visage of tension and anger, almost comical since her eyes roll in their sockets. The hilarity ceases soon after, when the entire mountain begins to tremble. Two rounds later Granny's cave collapses around them.

Attack: +30 vs. Reflex. *Hit:* 40 damage and the target is knocked prone and restrained (Escape DC 25). *Miss:* 20 damage.

If the party spends more than three rounds in any given area, repeat the attack. Otherwise, you can assume they move at a quick enough pace out of the mines that they can outrun the cave-in. However 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 (Perception DC 20 to avoid getting lost, each failed check incurs another attack from falling rocks). This takes the party through all four of the gremlin's traps, which have been reset. Once up past the splinter-trapped ladder, another Perception check (DC 20) is necessary to locate the elevator. At that point, use your judgment as far as how much time the party has to make its way up the 350-ft. shaft before the whole mine falls in on itself.

If you think it adds to the climax, Granny can appear beneath the party (the old witch polymorphed herself to navigate the tunnels), and she starts 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

Arms of thousands make men weep,
She lurks in tides 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



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.

Waves of Rage

Exposition. Montage.

No ship is safe from She Who Writhes!

She Who Writhes may have assisted the party in Adventure Nine, *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.

An Excess of Caution

Asrabey does not underestimate the party. While they are out of Flint, he secretly acquires numerous elixirs that enhance his ability to lie. 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 (Insight DC 40).

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.

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 *programmed image* spell. She enchants 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.

"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 is able to contact the fey titan, but Asrabey's betrayal 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 to calm She Who Writhes. They must head out to sea and force the titan to rise, then trap her in shallow water, at which point Beshela will need to maintain physical contact with the titan for a minute to perform a ritual that would charm her. Beshela could then explain the situation with the Obscurati and open up negotiations between the party and her mistress.

She suspects She Who Writhes would agree to aid the party for a year if Risur abandoned use of steam engines and made 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 Adventure Seven, *Schism*, and before that she assisted in an assassination attempt against King Aodhan. If questioned on her previous actions, Beshela has no regrets, reminding them 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 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 intends to strike while Beshela is bonded to She Who Writhes, granting him both magical power and temporary control of the titan.

Important Warning

Beshela warns 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 not have to hear it anymore. 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 adventure nine (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 25,000 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 performing rituals to control the seas. If the party can keep the ritual casters alive, 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 due to the plane of Fourmyle). 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 magically-conjured tornado or hurricane. 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 Alright!

Action. Real-Time. Level 25.

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.

If your campaign does not use the *Admiral o' the High Seas* rules for naval combat, the first phase of this encounter can be mostly handled narratively. The party just needs to figure out how to thwart She Who Writhe's teleportation, perhaps taking a few crashing waves across their deck in the process.

Part One: 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.

Simpler Engagement

Since the big twist of this encounter is battling Asrabey, you might simplify the scene. If your group isn't into the naval combat rules, just skip that part of the encounter.

The party can sail out, and when She Who Writhes approaches the water starts to heave around them, but Beshela performs a ritual to conjure a hurricane and pull the fey titan to the surface. The party then has to 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 Tentacled Horror

She Who Writhes manifests as a creature akin to a giant squid, her body a hundred feet long and her tentacles stretching hundreds more. However, most of her body is a not a 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, they 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 dozens of wriggling tentacles, slick with bloody mucous.

She stays in water that's at least 30 ft. deep, but if the party has their allies use a massive number of rituals to control water, they can drop She Who Writhes into a watery depression, too shallow for her to teleport out of. The party will only have one naval round 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 Intimidate DC 35). 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 rituals can strand her long enough for the party to climb aboard her.

We imagine your party will think of other clever solutions.

She Who Writhes, Fey Titan

Gargantuan Leviathan — Level 28 Leviathan

Hull Integrity 4 — **Command** +14

Defense 30 — **Maneuverability** 8

Speed 14 — **Perception** +13, Blindsense

Dimensions

Body 100 ft. x 40 ft. Tentacles 110 ft. Feeding tentacles extend an extra 160 ft.

Tentacles

The kraken lashes out with two feeding tentacles, then pulls herself close and grasps with the other eight. Slowly, unstoppably, it crushes, until even steel bends within its coils.

When She Who Writhes rams, she stops 50 feet from her target and takes no damage from the collision. The target cannot move until the tentacles take damage (treat as a component that can be targeted) or the titan releases her grip.

Crush and Bite

Crunching from beneath the water line is followed quickly by an alien ululation from belowdecks. Crew members issue horrified screams about a massive beak, inhuman eyes, grasping tendrils lined with barbs, and snapping jaws.

She Who Writhes bites and crushes only at short range, but acts as a weapon with a +25 attack bonus (effectively +30 due to range).

Waves and Whirlpools

She breaches for a moment to fix an eye on your vessel, and then the sea beneath it begins to churn.

In addition to her *crush and bite* attack, She Who Writhes can afflict any one ship within long range with heavy chop. She can only affect one ship this way at a time. This requires a Command check (DC 25) or else the ship is struck by a wave. Each creature on deck must make a saving throw to avoid being washed overboard. Failing the command check by 5 or more causes the ship to list from the wave's impact. If the ship is already listing, instead the ship is capsized.

Additionally, regardless of the result of the captain's check during the Terrain phase, a ship in heavy chop has its speed and maneuverability ratings reduced by half.

Titanic Resilience

Cannonballs simply bounce off the massive creature.

Reduce all damage She Who Writhes takes by 1 strike. If her 'hull integrity' is reduced to 0, she 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.

Mistress of the Sea

She can teleport anywhere in her seas.

Due to the new nature of the planes, She Who Writhes can teleport around the battle as long as she can submerge fully, unless magic is used to stop her. She can choose not to make a Command check during the Location or Bearing phases, and instead to simply teleport to any stage she wishes with any bearing she desires.


+10
+5
+5
-5
-15
-5
+5
+10
+20
+10
+5
-5
+5
-5
+5
-5
1 = 5 feet
She Who Writhes

Part Two: 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 an Acrobatics check (DC 20) each round or else fall into the water, and those who fall into the water must succeed an Athletics check (DC 20) each round or take 10 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 *dominate* them and have slow, viscous congress with them until she grows tired of such carnal pleasures. The larger tentacles try to knock away melee threats, or simply crush them. If no enemies have reached her main body, She Who Writhes can use *titanic tendril* on a cluster of enemies within 160 feet of her main body.

While the party figures out what to do, Asrabey guides Beshela to She Who Writhe's 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 ten rounds 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."

Part Three: Seriously...*You're* Betraying Us?!

Varal now has control over She Who Writhes, and he directs her attacks to keep him from being overwhelmed by the PCs. Let the party's past interactions with Varal determine due to the plane of Fourmyle he targets first; he might be loyal to the Obscurati, but he's still emotional and will gladly repay any past slights with bloodshed. His preferred tactic is to create a *grasping flame barrier*, then use compelling strike to either force the PCs to fight each other, or drive them into the wall.

Varal's goal in this combat is to escape with the fey titan under his control. 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 teeters on the brink of life (unconscious but stable due to the effect of Ostea), but is disregarded by Varal. She can be brought back to consciousness by concerned PCs, at which point she will try to use her actions to re-commune with She Who Writhes, immediately making her a prime target for Varal. If she can spend three rounds uninterrupted at this task, she manages to calm the fey titan and convince 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*, 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 Varal. As her form departs she grasps him in her tentacles and drags him along screaming.

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 24.

Threat Five: 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. Much like how the Ziggurat of Av in the Antwalk Thicket relinked to the plane of fire, Jiese, the Ziggurat of Apet relinked to Baden, a ghost moon that 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 likely will confront the party in Adventure Twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*.

In the meanwhile, the party finds nothing here. The fey titan moved the swamp around the ziggurat and caused it to sink into the mire after he traveled to Baden. 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 worthless. Strange magic summoned the spirit of a long-dead orc druid **Toteth Topec**, 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 in the Ancient language about the original Axis Seal ritual, but the information he provides comes down to just three main facts.

- They needed to find eight safe worlds to link to, worlds that didn't have hostile forces that could invade. Orcs did all the hard work fighting invaders, and he's kind of disappointed that humans ended up taking over most of the world.
- They needed 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 them years to find the right worlds, because they had to journey to each on foot. It was easier to travel between planes back then; kids these days wouldn't appreciate it.
- The golden seal itself linked the world to a star. Back in his day, you see, there wasn't a sun. He came up with the idea of having one. Well, alright, he saw it on another plane and thought it was a good idea. It kept the monsters away for half the day.

Also, he shares the recipe for a long-forgotten orc beverage: the margarita.



Act Two: The New Conspiracy

Wild magic from around the cosmos continues to pour out of the ground in the center of Axis Island, rising in glowing tendrils toward the sky. From his secret lair just a few islands over, **Benedict Pemberton** (AKA Gradiax the Steel Lord, former Dragon Tyrant) couldn't skip a chance to find out what happened.

Shortly after the completion of the Obscurati's ritual, Pemberton's forces assaulted Axis Island. Managing to wrest control of the island from the Danoran military stationed there, Pemberton was fascinated at the technology he discovered. But he was isolated, and worried that soon the Ob would regroup and invade from mainland Danor.



Once the seneschal of the old Demonocracy, Ashima-Shimtu was captured by the Clergy and would have been executed like thousands of other fiends, tossed into the volcano Enzyo Mons. But she knew the *Sacrament of Apotheosis*, a ritual which could give physical form to a belief, and the Clergy hierarchs greatly desired the secret. She was unwilling to share, and they were unwilling to lose a chance to learn the ritual, so they imprisoned her in the Crypta Hereticarum, a vault of curses and heresies on the isle of Odiem, where she has remained for a thousand years.

Initially vengeful, she has turned to meditation and detachment to endure her endless incarceration. She speaks as if narrating events, never referring to herself in the first person. Now that she senses a chance to be free, she hopes to convince the party to release her, after which she wants to roam the multiverse. But centuries of torture have convinced her that the Clergy must be destroyed so it can harm no one else, so before she departs she intends to give the followers of that faith the tools to tear it down.

The Ob forces remaining on Axis following Pemberton's strike fled into the mines (the same mines the PCs used in Adventure One to sneak onto the island). There, the group seethed with a unified rage, eventually bringing a hivemind into existence. The Ob hivemind nested into a disabled battle construct and attempted to kill Pemberton, but was easily repelled by the dragon industrialist's forces.

Meanwhile in Danor, Nicodemus and Sovereign Han Jierre prepared a strike force against Axis using Danoran naval assets, but have been forced to wait until She Who Writhes is no longer a threat. Pemberton, likewise, can't get off the island, so he has fortified his position and put his fanatical gnoll servants to work building weapons for war, using the Obscurati's own factories.

During all this, a stowaway on the island revealed himself to Pemberton. The ruler of Ber had feared another coup attempt by the old dragon tyrant, so **Brakken of Heffanita**, a telepathic minotaur diplomat, volunteered to infiltrate Pemberton's forces. In light of the world having changed, though, Brakken offered to work with Pemberton for the common goal of thwarting the Obscurati. Together, the minotaur and the dragon have tried to figure out a long-term plan against the Ob. The conclusion they've come to is that they need Risur's help.

The act begins just after the PCs have defeated She Who Writhes.

From the Blood of a Demon

Social. Real-time.

An old demonic friend sends an informative message in a bloody sea.

Far from the party's battle with She Who Writhes, the cursed island of Odiem lies off the coast of Crisillyir. Its *Crytpa Hereticarum* (Vault of Heresies) acts as prison to the sole surviving member of the ancient Demonocracy—Ashima-Shimtu. The demon resides in the lowest levels of the Crypta, suspended above a pool of holy water, and all but forgotten beneath the weight of history. The new planar cosmology brought forth by the Ob has weakened the wards that hold her. Though she is still trapped, her magic can reach far, carried on currents of her blood that has for centuries dripped into the holy water well.

Ashima-Shimtu studied many of the intricacies of blood magic during her role as seneschal of the old demon empire, and now feels the new connection with the plane Ostea. She initially sought to tempt mortals to free her, but her escape plan was thwarted by a group of extraplanar visitors on the surface of Odiem; a choir of angels.

The Axis Seal had kept servants of gods away for thousands of years, but it did not stop them from hearing people's prayers. With the seal now open, the angels knew the vault was a source of great evil that the Clergy could no longer protect, so they came to guard it. The various demon-worshippers and heretics who responded to Ashima-Shimtu's summons were killed almost as soon as they stepped on the shore.

BOND OF BLOOD

In Adventure Four, *Always on Time*, we asked you to note any PCs whose blood might have entered the holy water pool beneath Ashima-Shimtu. In Adventure Eleven, *Gorged on Ruins*, the party will learn that the demoness has used the same sort of projected image she contacted the party with to speak to religious dissidents throughout Crisillyir. In this way, she spread the *sacrament of apotheosis*, a powerful ritual that can conjure an avatar of a god by drawing upon the power of the faithful. In the Ob's new world of rationality, doubting followers put those gods on trial for failing to uphold their duties to mortals, and as each in turn is executed, the followers who remain loyal and fervent die as well.

Ashima-Shimtu might not desire revenge *per se*, but she has come to see the Clergy as exploitative of the worshippers, and so she wants to watch it destroy itself. If the party learns of her involvement and tries to attack her, any PCs whose blood she was able to get a sample of will be magically compelled to defend her. To lay the narrative foundation for this, we suggest when the demoness appears here that you tell the appropriate PCs that they feel an unusual heat in their skin and a quickening of their pulse.

Thusly trapped, the demoness has used her blood magic to observe the world as best she can, since her vantage point is limited to waters where blood flows. She witnesses Pemberton's invasion of Axis Island, and suspects that the party would be interested. Of all the people she has had contact with, she thinks the PCs are the ones most likely to release her, so she tries to earn their good will by telling them what she knows.

Bloody Tidings

A few minutes after She Who Writhes has been defeated, spots of the sea begin to glow red wherever blood touched the waves. The glowing blood drifts and begins to coalesce in a single spot, from which rises a bloody female figure—Ashima-Shimtu's blood simulacrum. (She might even appear during the conflict, such as to rescue a drowning PC, though she lends no offensive power to the battle.)

Once Ashima-Shimtu summons her bloody duplicate, read or paraphrase the following:

From the pool of blood emerges a form of pure crimson, feminine but with jagged edges. As the figure rises, a dozen scab-colored chains strike out from the pool, trailing from hooks in her arms and back and legs as she approaches.

"Long did the seneschal of the Demonocracy wait in her prison, roiled with bitterness and hungry for her revenge. As she bled into the sacred well, Ashima-Shimtu found she could see through the seas and glimpse the tide of history. But centuries tempered her anger, and a foreign power—empathy—began to stir within her.

"In this new age, her bonds are weakened, and the red waters of a world named Ostea grant her the power to do more than simply watch. Yet Ashima-Shimtu seeks not to use these powers for herself. She remains a prisoner, and places the decision to free her in the hands of foreigners. She wishes to show good will, however, and so offers tidings that may be of interest.

"First, a glimpse. Philosophers and politicians of several nations travel west, but toward what end Ashima-Shimtu cannot see.

"Second, a warning. When Ashima-Shimtu gazed upon the western shore of the land of beastmen and fallen dragons, something gazed back. She had not seen its like in this world.

"Third and final, an opportunity. The island at the axis of the world, much contested these past decades, fell to invasion shortly after the heavens rained and the sun departed. A fleet of gnolls under the banner of a steel dragon conquered the island, and may have prevented the one called Nicodemus from completing his grand design. Retaliation was attempted by the navy whose flag bears scroll and sword, but the kraken queen drove them back.

"Now the titan's dominion has passed, and the seas reopen. Soon the axis may shift again, and whatever secrets lie there will once again be obscured. Ashima-Shimtu entreats her heroic jurors to reach the island while they still can. Her own liberation on another mysterious island can wait."

The PCs have only a few rounds before Ashima-Shimtu's blood simulacrum vanishes, which is displayed as the edges of her body dry to scabrous powder. In that time she might answer one or two questions. (The party can just cast sending to her if they want more information, though she's verbose, and might need a few allotments of twenty-five words to really convey anything useful).

If the PCs decide to go meet directly with Ashima-Shimtu, her prison has new jailers in the form of an angelic host. This is described in more detail in Adventure Eleven, *Gorged on Ruins*.

Timeline Options

The timeline following the defeat of She Who Writhes is left intentionally vague, letting you ensure the PCs reach Axis at an appropriate point. Danor's attempt to retake the island should take just long enough to give the party a day or two on the island before it comes under attack.

If there are still fey titans rampaging around Risur, the PCs should not be punished for handling those threats, but it should be clear that Danor is readying to retake the island, and the PCs' window to investigate is short.

Accessing Axis

We assume the PCs take a ship to Axis Island, since we intend to give the party an airship, retrofitted courtesy of Benedict Pemberton. Teleportation is out (since the PCs have not visited Axis since the reshaping of the world), but the party might use other means to reach the island without taking a boat. In that case, Pemberton has a ship already in production which he offers to the party.

As the party nears the island, they spot debris drifting on the sea, remnants of wrecked ships the Danorans sent that were ravaged by She Who Writhes.

The party can simply sail into the walled harbor of Axis Fortress, but if they're cautious they might use the same insertion method as in Adventure One, *The Island at the Axis of the World*: an underwater tunnel that led to an abandoned mine shaft. The complication there is that the Obscurati agents who escaped Pemberton's assault have all holed up in those mines. Most have died of starvation, but only after their consciousnesses manifested a hivemind, which persists even now after the original bodies have withered away. Only a single Ob agent survives, and if the party enters this way, see Needlewire Parlay (page 47).

Alternately, they might make a beach landing, which triggers magical alarms. Pemberton sends gnolls to invite the party in.



Pemberton Industries Axis Divison

Social. Real-Time.

My esteemed nemeses, welcome to my factory. I must apologize for the state of repair.

Following the events of Adventure Six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*, the industrialist Benedict Pemberton all but disappeared from the public spotlight. The PCs have doubtless had encounters with the Industrialist since, though his exact location was a mystery. In truth, Pemberton retreated to an island lair in the Yerasol Archipelago.

Since taking control of Axis Island, Pemberton has come to terms with the changes to the cosmology in the wake of the Ob's actions. While not as studious as his fellow dragon Inatch the Hex-Eater (AKA, Harkover Lee, principal minister to the monarch of Risur), Pemberton correctly assumes his ability to fly has been restored. Still, the industrialist is not ready to reveal his true form, and works beside his fanatical gnoll worshippers to reinforce the island while he also searches for clues on what the Obscurati's end game is with the world so drastically altered.

The Island Fortress

Pemberton claimed the old Danoran fortress as his main base of operations, but was quick to make alterations to the site. His gnolls tirelessly worked at removing the remnants of the old hedge maze, replacing it with a defensible trench line surrounded by manned turrets and small bunker emplacements. The former central keep was repurposed to be a personal study for Pemberton, while the external buildings were redesigned into small factories and production facilities.

Perhaps the greatest of changes enacted by Pemberton and his minions was reinforcing the docking ring of the fortress. He lined the outer wall with cannon turrets. Dozens of sniper nests and bunkers line the wall, making the fortress a deathtrap for all but the most determined of military assaults.

When Pemberton assailed the island, he temporarily took to his draconic form, swam up to the wall, and breathed fire into the various bunkers, cooking the defenders. As part of cleaning up that damage, the gnolls have adorned the fortress with a giant logo of Pemberton Industries.

A Dragon's Trust

Pemberton is no fool, and keeps the PCs at arm's length until he is sure they are not here to kill him. If they arrive by boat, he is confident of the outer wall's ability to blast them out of the water; he negotiates a parlay by means of a megaphone from the upper ramparts. Whenever he does go to meet them, he comes in a duplicant, and is escorted by his highest advisor, the gnoll **Pardo** (also in a duplicant; his real body is on Pemberton's original island lair a few dozen miles away). Only once the Obscurati attack the island (see Danor's Assault page 52) will he appear in person.

As always, Pemberton is a paragon of genteel charm, offering the PCs to have his gnolls deliver some fine limeade to accompany their discussions (Pemberton prefers lemonade, but the limes in the archipelago are good for the occasional beverage). He questions them about what has happened outside of Axis in the time he's been trapped on the island.



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

Though he likely disdains the party for thwarting his plans in adventure six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*, Pemberton is devoting his resources—advanced constructs and fiercely loyal gnoll worshippers—to fight the Obscurati, which he sees as a greater threat.



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

Pardo wears simple clothes with no decorations. He refuses to use metal tools, and carries a handkerchief for things like door knobs. However, he typically wears a duplicant body—metal itself—which he sees as his true flesh. He serves his lord Pemberton with religious zeal, and believes in time his people will transcend their flesh and all become steel.

If the PCs mention defeating the fey titans, Pemberton boasts that 'In my youth, I once heard the Father of Thunder was up and about, and I thought, Grady, it'd be a damned shame not to take a crack at the old son of a gun before whichever king was in charge of Risur put the titan back to sleep. I tell you, that hairy bastard did *not* appreciate me strafing his herd. Zapped me good.'

If the cosmology change is discussed, Pemberton can't help but give a wide smile, knowing his ability to fly has truly been restored.

Unless the PCs attack Pemberton, or are outrageously rude, the dragon is willing to talk. Even if the PCs slew his daughter Terakalir, Pemberton realizes the threat and power of Ob eclipses his own; he needs allies to win against them, and the PCs have proven themselves. He invites the party to 'lay down their burdens' for a few days, and to meet with him and Brakken to discuss a little shindig he has in mind. But he asks they not come to the central keep, saying that his followers are very protective of what they deem to be his 'lair.'

If the party balks at taking that much time, Pemberton winks, and says that wherever they're headed, Pemberton Industries is building something to get them there faster.

Let's Take a Trip

Pemberton invites the party to come with him to see the remains of the Obscurati's ritual, and to link up with another of his honored guests—Brakken, who is out with some of the gnolls, using his psychic powers to try to track down the Obscurati loyalists who are hiding somewhere on the island.

He's confident there's nothing on the island that can threaten the party, but there are odd planar fluctuations and he doesn't want to risk his loyal subjects. He just wants this trip to be the PCs, him, and Pardo. It's a few miles to where Brakken is searching, but handily the Obscurati built roads, so Pemberton will be driving them in his still-experimental steam-powered road car. The vehicle has a very industrial aesthetic with lots of exposed metal; Pemberton hasn't gotten around to gussying them up yet, but of course for public production they'll have fine upholstery and leather seats. They have no roofs or windows.

Since each car only seats 4, he'll probably need to show one or two PCs how to drive a second and possibly third one—the transmission is a little awkward right now, but it just takes a few minutes to get the hang of it—and they'll caravan.

DUPLICANTS

If you're not familiar with the events of Adventure Six, Pemberton had genius gnome inventor Tinker Oddcog design **duplicants**. These humanoid constructs—which normally resemble metal husks with finely articulated plates for their skin—are linked to a particular person via a rare substance called witchoil. A duplicant completely resembles the creature it is linked to, even to the point of detecting as it would to various divinations.

The duplicant can then be controlled remotely, either by the linked individual (if Pemberton trusts them), or by one of his gnoll minions, a select few of whom have been trained as expert infiltrators. Even if Pemberton does let a person control his own duplicant, he has final say over its actions, and can command it as if the person were dominated.

Physically, most duplicants are mass-produced and thus no stronger than a normal person, but Pemberton has produced a variety of them, some of which are quite battle-ready. Most of the time when Pemberton is out and about, he is actually controlling a duplicant, and his real body is hidden away in the central tower of Axis Fortress, under heavy guard and with magical alarms so he won't be caught by surprise when he's paying attention somewhere else.

CULT OF THE STEEL LORD IDEOLOGY

Taught centuries ago by their lord Gradiax that flesh must be stronger than steel, the cult avoids touching metal. Of course Pemberton needs his minions to be able to fire cannons and work factories, so his gnoll followers all wear heavy gloves and carry scarves or kerchiefs if they need to have fine handling of something metal. Pemberton's most-trusted minions get duplicants of their own, though even then they prefer not to touch metal, not quite seeing the hypocrisy of their actual bodies being metal.

Golem Smash!

Action. Tactical. Level 24.

A hivemind spawned by Obscurati agents attacks the party.

The four-mile drive to the island's central valley only takes a few minutes, but as the two or three cars near the village marked D on the island map, trouble strikes at jungle construction site. The PCs hear a lumbering crash of metal and feel a presence in their minds. They're a few hundred feet out when they spot a 17-ft. tall construct lumber into view from behind a crane, headless but with some wispy tendrils trailing upward from the cracked hole between its shoulders.

Pemberton claps his hands once with excitement and guns the car's engine, driving straight for the golem. "This damned monster killed some of my subjects. Now I hate to ask a favor of my guests, but I'm about to drive *very close* to it, so if you would be so kind to do what you're good at?"

Hybrid Monster

- 1 Axis Hivemind
- 1 Headless Obscurati Golem

Tactics

This hivemind-powered golem was one of several prototype golems used to facilitate the excavation of the Axis Seal. The party might have encountered this same machine in adventure one, after it lost its head in a battle with Duchess Ethelyn's forces. Now the hivemind formed by the hiding Obscurati agents has taken over it.

The golem tries to close in and make melee attacks, which allows the hivemind to also make tentacle attacks, but the hivemind's *alinear tentacles* can target foes who try to fly out of reach. If the hivemind can knock a PC prone, it can pull them out of the car (saving throw negates; the driver gets a +5 bonus to his save because the steering wheel makes it harder to yank him free).

The golem releases *witchoil discharges*, and the hivemind creates *mind fog*, creating hazardous terrain and an incentive not to stand still. It generally tries to catch at least one foe per round with *roil with paranoia*.

The hivemind benefits from improved cover (+5 to defenses) inside the golem's body. The hivemind can exit if it wants and still control the golem, but once the golem is destroyed the hivemind must emerge, at which point it mostly relies on tentacle attacks. It will hide in a *mind*



fog, which makes it vulnerable too, but gives it a better chance of mind-controlling foes.

The entity normally lurks near the Axis Seal, but it came out to hunt Brakken. If the party doesn't defeat it here, it might harass them later.

Driving a Roadcar

On the driver's turn, the driver of each car sets the car's speed for the round. The speed can be **reckless** (300 ft. or 60 squares), **fast** (40 squares), **moderate** (30), **slow** (20), **idle** (10), **stationary**, **reverse** (10 squares backwards), or **reckless reverse** (20 backwards). The car then moves a distance that must be between its current max speed or the next slowest speed. So if you are driving at reckless speed, the driver has leeway between 41 and 60 squares.

The driver can adjust the speed up to 1 step in a given turn without spending an action, or up to 2 steps by spending a move action.

If there is no driver, the vehicle continues to move on the previous driver's initiative. If a new person becomes the driver, he must delay to the previous driver's initiative count before he can take control of the vehicle.

Steering: The driver must spend a move action if he wants to steer; otherwise the car travels in a straight line. When steering, in order to turn 90 degrees the car must travel at least 1 square for every step of speed above stationary. For example, if you're driving at reckless speed (five steps above stationary), the car must travel at least 5 squares before it can turn 90 degrees; if you only want to turn 45 degrees, it takes half as much distance.

If the driver spends a standard action to drive instead of a move action, whenever he turns he can make a Dexterity check (DC 15) to steer the car as if it were moving one step slower. For every 10 points he beats the DC by, he can steer one step better—for example, a check of 35 can have a car at reckless speed only need 2 squares to turn.

Collisions: If the car runs into a solid object it takes 1d6 damage for every 5 squares of its maximum speed for this turn, as do the creatures in the vehicle (an Acrobatics check reduces the damage by half the result). If it runs into the jungle at the edge of the parking lot, reduce the damage by 1d6. Colliding with a creature deals an equal amount of damage to that creature and pushes the target 1 square for every speed category above stationary.

Stats: Each car has 150 hit points and Defenses of 10. The cars are 15 feet long by 10 feet wide, with the engine in front and four seats.

Pemberton and Pardo

Pemberton focuses on driving (+10 Dexterity check), and in any event doesn't know any useful combat magic. Pardo's not particularly useful in this fight, and so he leaps out of Pemberton's car to try to distract the monster. He spends most of the combat casting spells at the golem to no effect.

Terrain

The construction site is a wide swath of cleared jungle, more than 200 feet to a side, scattered with building materials, half-assembled steel structures, bins of firedust, an excavator, and a pair of cranes the size of huge creatures. The golem moves at a surprising speed of 12 squares, but Pemberton's roadcars have a top speed of 60 squares (about 30 miles an hour).

Axis Hivemind — Level 25 Elite Controller
Large aberrant magical beast — **XP** 15,000

HP 170; **Bloodied** 85 — **Initiative** +18
AC 39, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 39 — **Perception** +18
Speed fly 6 (altitude limit 6)
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Thoughtform**
Its flesh is semi-clear like slime, but the longer you concentrate on it, the more solid it appears.
The hivemind is normally insubstantial and phasing. It takes half damage from all attacks, except those that deal force damage; and it ignores difficult terrain and can move through obstacles and other creatures, but it must end its movement in an unoccupied space. It also takes normal damage from psychic attacks, despite being incorporeal.

▸ **Mind Over Matter**
Signifiers can alter the meaning of the signified. You just have to think about it in the right way, and you can change what it is.
A character within 5 squares of the hivemind can spend a minor action to try to influence the creature through its thoughts. The character makes an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma check with a +9 bonus and chooses to target Fortitude, Reflex, or Will. A character can only attempt this once per round. On a success, it has the following effect.
- **Fortitude.** The hivemind loses insubstantial and phasing until the start of the character's next turn. If it's flying it must land or fall.
- **Reflex.** The hivemind must release all grabbed creatures. The character can slide the hivemind 2 squares (forcing it out of the golem).
- **Will.** The character cannot be perceived by the hivemind until the start of that character's next turn.

▸ **Unexpected Outlash**
A tentacle emerges from the golem's body as you come close.
Whenever the headless Obscurati golem hits with *witchoil fist*, the hivemind can use *alinear tentacle* against the same target if it's within range. If the attack hits, the target is knocked prone.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Alinear Tentacle** ✦ At-Will, Basic
The hivemind is powered by secrecy and uncertainty, and those who are not grounded are vulnerable. It reaches across an impossible distance and pulls you beside it.
Special: If there is not a contiguous path of solid objects between the hivemind and the target (such as if either of them is flying), this attack's range is limited only by line of sight, the hivemind has combat advantage, and on a hit the target is teleported beside the hivemind.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +28 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d12+10 damage.

✓ **Roil with Paranoia** (psychic) ✦ At-Will
A psychic presence presses into your mind, and suddenly unrelated coincidences snap into clarity as part of a vast conspiracy arrayed against you. You can trust no one.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +28 vs. Will
Hit: The target views its allies as enemies and no longer views the hivemind or golem as enemies (save ends).

▸ **Tentacle Seize** ✦ At-Will
Effect: The hivemind uses *alinear tentacle* four times, or uses *alinear tentacles* twice and *roil with paranoia* once.

Minor Actions

▸ **Mind Fog** ✦At-Will, 1/round

White fog wafts up from the ground, and as you breathe it you struggle to remember why you're here.

Effect: Thin fog fills a zone in area burst 4 within 20 that lasts until the end of the encounter. Attacks that target Will defense of creatures in the zone gain a +5 bonus.

Str 27 (+20) **Dex** 22 (+18) **Wis** 23 (+18)
Con 27 (+20) **Int** 28 (+21) **Cha** 26 (+20)
Alignment Obscurati **Languages** Common, telepathy

Headless Obscurati Golem Level 25 Elite Brute
Huge natural animate (construct) **XP** 15,000

HP 440; **Bloodied** 220 **Initiative** +10
AC 39, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 39 **Perception** +12
Speed 12 Darkvision
Resist necrotic 15
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Bleak Aura**

The golem's attacks smear you with oil and burn you with the essence of a plane that is no longer present.

A creature affected by the golem's *bleak aura* gains ongoing 15 necrotic damage (save ends). Whenever the affected creature takes this damage, each creature within 3 squares takes 10 necrotic damage.

▸ **Hollow Husk**

Though huge, most of the golem's insides have been torn out, and it only moves at the behest of the hivemind.

While the Axis Hivemind is inside the golem, the hivemind gains superior cover (+5 to defenses). When the hivemind is destroyed, the golem becomes slowed. At the end of its next turn it becomes slowed and dazed. At the end of the following turn it goes inert.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Witchoil Fist** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +30 vs. AC
Hit: 4d10+10 damage, and the target is affected by *bleak aura*.

▸ **Blind Rampage** ✦ At-Will

Effect: The golem uses *witchoil fist* twice.

Minor Actions

✲ **Witchoil Discharge** (necrotic) ✦ Recharge 456

A cloud of black vapor materializes in front of your car.

Attack: Area burst 1 within 20 (creatures in burst); +28 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 15 necrotic damage.
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, the area becomes a zone of black vapor that provides concealment. Any creature that enters the zone or ends its turn there takes 15 necrotic damage.

Str 40 (+26) **Dex** 6 (+10) **Wis** 10 (+12)
Con 27 (+20) **Int** 3 (+8) **Cha** 6 (+10)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** understands Common

Aftermath

Once the commotion of battle dies down, Brakken and a squad of gnolls emerge from the nearby jungle. Brakken is mentally exhausted, having been focusing all his psychic powers to keep the hivemind from sensing them. He spares a happy smile to the party, then rushes to the body of the monster. He holds a hand out to it and thinks, then announces that he has a sense of where it came from—one of the mines a quarter mile up the mountain. He guesses the Obscurati hold-outs are there.

Brakken is pleased to see the party, and takes some time to catch up on recent events. He also makes a point of explaining that while he and the Bruse of Ber were nervous about Pemberton's ultimate motives, he's sensed enough of the dragon's emotions to trust that he actually does want to cooperate against their mutual enemy, the Obscurati.

Needlewire Parlay

Social. Real-Time.

The party returns to the same mines they once used to sneak onto Axis Island.

Cosette Arianne has survived in the old mine since the completion of the Ob's ritual on Axis. She fled there with the rest of the Ob agents who sought shelter while waiting out Pemberton's siege. When reinforcements did not come, the other Ob agents began to act strangely, often speaking at the same time with the same sentences, or eerily completing each other's thoughts. Cosette was protected due to a magic ring that shields her mind from psychic intrusion, and when the hivemind fully manifested, the thoughtform being fled the mines leaving Cosette alone with dozens of catatonic companions.

In the intervening weeks Cosette resorted to cannibalism, but now her food supply is running low, and she's worried that eating too many of her cohorts will bring the hivemind back. The only thing keeping the junior Ob agent going is a small spool of Needlewire she found on another agent's body. She is vaguely aware that she can inject it into herself to contact the Ob leadership, but has been holding off, hoping for conventional reinforcements.



Nicodemus's history and motivations are detailed in the *Campaign Guide*. He seldom reveals his true ghostly form, preferring to wear the bodies of others. Since the Great Eclipse and his failure to secure the world he long dreamed of, his desire to be benevolent has fallen away, and he's increasingly obsessed with achieving his goals, no matter the cost.

Party Arrival

Since there's not a handy road up to the mine, Pemberton and Brakken stay behind with the cars and some of Pemberton's gnoll followers who were injured fleeing from the golem. They're about a ten minute hike away. Pemberton offers to send Pardo along with the party.

When the PCs enter the cave, Cosette likely hears them when they first discover the bodies of some of her comrades. She assumes they are not allies, and uses the Needlewire to call for Nicodemus. It takes mere moments for Nicodemus to possess her body. His first action is to survey the dead bodies of his former agents. Though the context of their death is lost on him, he hopes to find out information of what went wrong on Axis Island. He hears the PCs' approach and quickly hides the Needlewire syringe.

When Nicodemus sees the PCs, he pretends to be just an average agent of the conspiracy (Insight DC 42). Posing as Cosette, he bargains, asking for food and drink. In exchange he says he'll show the party the colossus and explain whatever is left of the ritual. His goal is to get them to take him to the central valley so he can see the state of Borne and the Axis Seal. He tries to act somewhat delirious, and wants to get away from 'all her dead friends.' Nicodemus can concoct a convincing back-story for who Cosette is and what happened, though he has no idea the dead Ob agents created a hivemind, so he just answers honestly that he doesn't know how they died.

If the party doesn't realize 'Cosette' is a fake, as they leave the cave a *magic mouth* appears on a nearby rock and says, with a Beran accent, "The woman you are with is actually Nicodemus, head of the conspiracy. Do not allow him to learn anything useful."

(This is a sort of narrative contingency we've put in, to help avoid the party revealing to Nicodemus that they're allied with Brakken at the Forward Symposium. The in-game explanation is that Beran spymaster El Extraño divined that this encounter would occur, and was clever enough to warn the party before Nicodemus sees Brakken.)

Whenever the party figures out who he is, Nicodemus asks to talk for a moment, and for some leaf of Nicodemus to smoke.

No More Use Pretending

Nicodemus is courteous, but is subtly more on edge than the last time the party met him. He laments the death of his agents and his own inability to protect them. And he asks the party how they managed to sabotage the ritual. The mastermind, who has had to deal with the party's interference for two years now, assumes they were responsible for the explosion that killed him and many of his allies. Divinations performed to find out what happened reported that the saboteur's orders came from Risur (technically true, since the Voice of Rot is from Risur).

If the party denies their involvement, he's wary, assuming they have some trick up their sleeves. He assures them that if they'd only cooperated with him, the ritual would have been safely completed. The world would still have a sun, for one thing!

He promises that the Obscurati will try again, and this time they won't allow any resistance. Even after five hundred years, he had still hoped a gentle hand could guide people to the right path, but now he will have to take more forceful measures. Fortunately, Risur is the only nation holding out against him. He is proud to announce that leaders of many nations are *en route* to attend his Forward Symposium, where he will advise them to rally against the rebellious Risur. Perhaps the ensuing war, while tragic, will help cement the bonds forming now between the obedient nations of the world.

After a bit of back and forth, Nicodemus thanks the PCs for dealing with the threat of She Who Writhes, informing them that it will be much easier to conquer Risur now. Once the conversation reaches a natural close, Nicodemus asks the party to make sure this woman survives, and then he vacates her body.

If the party brings her back to the cars, Pemberton has her sent away with his gnoll minions to be kept prisoner in the fortress. Then, unless the party pays close attention, he just kills her when they're not looking.

Disaster Zone

Exploration. Montage.

What is the Axis Seal, and what happened here?

After seeing the mine and determining there aren't any significant Obscurati hold-outs left on the island, Pemberton sends the gnolls who were with Brakken back to the fortress, then brings the minotaur and the party with him to the island's center. Tendrils and arcs of planar energy trail hundreds of feet upward from here, where a modest lake has been drained and its tributaries dammed and diverted.

Pemberton stops at the shore. Off to the right of the road are stone bunkers, once covered in protective wards, which have been exploded from within.

Up ahead the flashing energy rising from the ground makes it hard to see quite what happened in the dry lakebed, but a quarter mile away the colossus has clearly collapsed in several pieces, and some huge metal disk lies atop it.

The Axis Ritual in Detail

The ritual actually involves the entire island, but it is centered on the Axis Seal—a hundred-foot diameter disk of gold. That seal lies atop bedrock, the center of which is a twenty-foot diameter hemispherical depression, ten feet deep. It is from this depression that intense blasts of energy from across the multiverse flare out. If the seal were properly seated atop this bedrock, it would focus that energy and create the sun.

Around that depression, carvings of primitive orc runes form seven rings, each ten feet farther out. Spaced somewhat irregularly around these rings are vertical pits. The rings represent, in order outward:

- The plane of fire.
- The plane of air.
- The world itself, which has no pit, but is surrounded by a smaller ring that does have a pit, representing the plane of life.
- The plane of water.
- The plane of earth.
- The plane of space, which is surrounded by a smaller ring that has its own pit, representing the plane of time.
- The plane of death.

Each pit is about five feet in diameter and contains the fifty foot long white stone shaft of a petrified tree. Halfway down that shaft, a small alcove holds a golden icon that represents a particular plane—those icons are marked with symbols representing a constellation associated with each plane, and are enchanted with powers linked to that plane's energy. (The Ob bent the rules a bit, and in the alcove of the shaft for the plane of space they shoved a second small icon representing Baden, the ghost moon with a Flight trait.)

The hundred-foot disk of the seal lies atop the legs of the toppled three-hundred-foot colossus Borne. The colossus has suffered immense damage across his body, which has cracked his torso and has blown apart half an arm and one-and-a-half legs. The witchoil furnace in his chest burst, leaving him with insufficient strength to move, so he collapsed into stasis.

Arcs of energy from the central depression mostly crackle upward, but every minute or two one will slice out laterally to a distance of several hundred feet. The force is enough to blast back anyone who tries to come too close, though if the party wants to try their luck the first strike should only *nearly* kill them. No form of defense the party has access to now can protect them from the deadly energy.

Sometimes where one of these arcs strikes, a sliver of a world appears—a forest, a crackling lava field, a waterfall—only to vanish a few seconds later. Sometimes even creatures are visible in these slivers.

Investigation

Hidden among the rubble of the bunker by the road, the party can easily spot that the burn marks from the explosion have a strange arcane pattern. An Arcana check (DC 20) identifies the pattern as being fey, and a slightly better check confirms that yes, the power of the explosion was provided by the Voice of Rot, who transmuted the flames to not just burn flesh, but to consume life force and dispel magical defenses.

It's not possible to get close enough to the ritual to actually interact with it—and long-distance magical attempts to use telekinesis or scrying act as a conduit, channeling the destructive energy from the seal directly into the caster if he or she maintains the spell for more than a minute or so.

Pemberton, though, has had a few months to examine this, and he thinks he grasps the basics enough. Standing at the lake's shore within sight of the seal and the seemingly uncontrollable energy leaking out it, he asks the party to listen to his and Brakken's proposal.

Founding the Rebellion

Social. Real-Time.

It's time to plan how to save the world.

Eventually the party might want to teleport back to Risur to bring in other allies, but for now Pemberton just wants to hear their thoughts. Best to keep the foundations of a conspiracy as secret as possible, he reminds them. It's only Pemberton, Brakken, Pardo, and the party.

If the party hasn't already used divination magic to find out news of the world, Pardo explains the basics, as detailed in Meanwhile… Around the World (page 7). They don't have perfect knowledge, but a dozen divination spells every day for a month or more add up.

Brakken steps in and emphasizes how global the Obscurati's support seems to be. Most people are just naturally loyal to them, and only a few who had dealt with the group before were able to resist being so swayed. Risur is, simply put, outnumbered. A direct fight won't succeed.

"We have to work," Pemberton says, "like a conspiracy. Our mission is to figure out how the Ob pulled it off, and then put it back on. That might not be the right metaphor, but nevermind. They're sucking the life and fun out of the chaotic mess I liked living in. I don't want to turn into a cog in their machine, but they basically rule the world now. Fortunately for us, I have experience with fighting authority and concealing my intentions. We have to be discreet, be brilliant, and then be gone before they catch us."

How to Destroy Nicodemus

Nicodemus is sustained by his certainty that he can make the world a better place, and that things would be perfect if not for all the power structures that kept idealists like him from effecting change. To defeat him, he must see his ideology be rejected by the people he wants to help. We will present an opportunity for this in Adventure Thirteen, *Avatar of Revolution*.

Failing that, the party can just alter reality so undead can't exist. That's also a possibility.

Pardo interjects. "Given the name of the Obscurati, if we're opposed to them, I think we should call ourselves the Illuminati."

Pemberton scoffs, then tells Pardo to explain the colossus and ritual.

Pardo briefly explains that the Obscurati performed a ritual in this central valley. Someone set off an explosion that killed numerous mages involved in the ritual, and the colossus was damaged before it could close the Axis Seal. They were able to interrogate a mage who survived, and learned that the original plans for the ritual were stored in a vault somewhere in Alais Primos, the capital of Crisillyir. A necrotic curse took the man in the end, though.

Redoing the Ritual

Pemberton says this is mostly where he needs the party's help. If they want to redo the ritual themselves and fix the world, someone needs to break into that vault.

The specific incantation to perform the ritual would need to be recovered, but the larger hurdle is that it seems each of the eight shafts in those pits has a golden icon that is infused with energy from a specific world. In the various mines around the island, the gnolls have discovered similar petrified trees and golden icons, which appear to have directed the magic of the ritual outward into the rest of the world.

The best Pemberton can reckon, to undo the ritual they just need to get icons linked to the same planes the world used to have. Or, if they're being clever, they could make icons linked to new planes, and do what the Ob did: make the world the way they want it to be. Of course, he's not going to hold his breath and expect that the party will agree with him on how the world should be.

Pardo explains that in order to create those icons, it seems necessary to travel to the worlds they'll be linked to. The Obscurati used an eldritch telescope on this island to aim at planes. But now the night sky is starless. Even if Pemberton Industries could create a colossus of its own—a machine strong enough to withstand the energy coming out of the open seal—it would be useless without the appropriate icons. And they're not sure how to get those.

(The party might have access to the Golden Icons of Apet, Avilona, Nem, and Urim, and the island already has an icon of Jiese, but Av, Mavisha, and Reida's icons are unavailable. Finding appropriate replacements is the party's main goal in Adventure Twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*.)

The Cherage Conference

Brakken says that the 'golden icons' point is something they're stuck on, which is why he's been busy trying to plan the other key part of the conspiracy: not getting caught and killed.

Brakken reiterates that the Obscurati is now no longer hidden. In Crisillyir, Danor, Drakr, and even the states of the Malice Lands, the Obscurati openly work side-by-side with the local governments to establish new laws set forth by the Ob's leadership. Most governments seem open to cooperating with the Obscurati, and Nicodemus has called a conference in a few weeks in the Danoran capital of Cherage to decide the future of the world.

Brakken wants to infiltrate the conference, learn the Ob's plans, and possibly delay hostile actions against Risur, Pemberton, and anyone else involved in this rebellion. Pemberton laments that the Obscurati have caught onto his use of duplicants, so that option's off the table.

If the party proposes to stop the conference, Pemberton and Brakken warn against that. Trying to stop 'an open discourse' will make it easy for the Ob to paint Risur as enemies.

Let the PCs consider their options, but as a baseline, Brakken has a plan.

An Offer of Mind

Since the Great Eclipse, Brakken has expanded his psionic abilities. Now he can form a minor gestalt consciousness with other willing creatures. While others inhabit his mind, Brakken can use their abilities and skills as an extension of himself. Brakken is confident he could house several minds in his body; effectively allowing a group like the PCs access to the conference, with him as their eyes and ears.

Pemberton insists on his own 'ticket' to the Cherage conference, willing to share headspace with the PCs. Brakken assures them that there's no sharing of actual thoughts; people have to intentionally communicate within the gestalt, so it's not like anyone's going to be controlling anyone else's mind.



The spymaster of Ber is always known as El Extraño (The Strange One), and traditionally they adopt bizarre personalities so that their true intentions are harder to intuit. Indeed, some say the actual spymaster only works behind the scenes, and that El Extraño is just a mask he hides behind. (The rumor's false, though El Extraño thinks that *would* have been a great idea.)

The current spymaster is a kobold wizard with uneven eyes, finely-tended fleshy whiskers, and exceptional skills at legerdemain. He casually mentions ridiculous and unlikely events that he participated in, and will legitimately expend powerful *teleportation* magic to make dramatic exits. He prefers to give directives, or at most offer two options that he will pursue, and is no fan of actually discussing things, at least not until someone can actually surprise him. He has a bit of dragon blood in him, and smokes pipes of cinammon-laced cloves.

El Extraño's motivation is to do his job excellently, and to maintain the honor of his title. A contingency will annihilate his body in fire should he die, to maintain the uncertainty to his true fate.

Endgame

Pemberton and Brakken's overall plan, then, is first to infiltrate the Forward Symposium and get information to help this new conspiracy avoid being tracked down by the Obscurati. Second they need to retrieve the details of the ritual from Alais Primos. Third is finding a way to relink the lost planes, or to find new planes to link to. Fourth will be redoing the ritual. Somewhere in there, they need to figure out how to destroy the Obscurati and Nicodemus himself once and for all.

A PC might be able to reason out (Religion DC 20) that normally ghosts are tied to the location where they died, and linger on if they have unfinished business; but Nicodemus can roam, which could be because (as discovered in Adventure Eight) his death occurred at the moment of the Great Malice, which affected the whole world. He's certainly more cogent than a typical ghost, and there are clearly some parallels in his rejuvenation and the reincarnation of devas, so perhaps his power is tied to the death of Srasama.

As for how to destroy him, some divinations might be in order. Some ghosts can be 'brought peace' so they pass on, but that would probably entail letting Nicodemus win, so Pemberton discounts that.

Appropriate Compensation

Pemberton claims there's a good foundation here. Obviously some details need to be worked. For instance, what he gets out of this for helping the party instead of just joining with the conspiracy. He's not looking to conquer Ber anymore, but once the Ob are gone Danor might be in sore need of a leader. Failing that, he wants at least a large swath of Elfaivar to establish his own nation, since the place is mostly empty now. And he wants the party's promise that, whatever they agree on, they'll be friendly after this is all over.

Give the party here time to discuss plans, both short-term and long-term. They might decide to try to deal with the Obscurati themselves, or to prioritize Alais Primos over the Forward Symposium (in which case, see Adventure Eleven). We can't begin to guess what your PCs might want at this stage of the campaign.

Caveat

Once discussions are coming to what seems like a decent stopping point, Brakken raises a concern he has about his infiltration plan. His psychic link can only be maintained within a few miles; he's not sure quite how far. The PCs will need to be somewhere close to Cherage at the time of the conference in order to properly maintain their link with Brakken. Given the increased military and Obscurati presence in Danor, this could be exceptionally difficult.

Pemberton shrugs, and says he has an invention that will help with that. Before he can explain more, though, an intruder interrupts them: the Beran spymaster El Extraño.

Do Not Be Impressed

El Extraño turns on one of their cars and honks the horn to get their attention, having appeared out of nowhere. When the party comes out, he has some information for them.

"I am here to save you, despite this dragon's attempt to conquer my homeland. We, of course, defeated our overlords long before you even considered defeating this Obscurati. The noble line of El Extraño can keep a secret, and just like the enlightened people of Ber, we shall cooperate with those who are unlike us, no matter their flaws."

The kobold points at Pemberton and snarls, "Do not interrupt! My operatives traversed the ocean by hiding inside of undead whales, which your kraken could not detect. I am amazed you did not consider this option. They then spread across northern Lanjyr and have reported to me critical intelligence. They have already located a location near this Forward Symposium where you will be able to hide. It is large enough."

Again he points at Pemberton, his face severe, and cuts the man off just as he's about to interrupt. "Failed usurpers will wait their turn to speak!

"The Obscurati have placed a divination beacon that disrupts information in a factory complex in Cherage, where they are slowly constructing a second colossus. My people discovered it by granting hivemind consciousness to the rats of the city and establishing two competing spy guilds, which we reward with pepper cheese. These rats have excellent taste. We regrettably have not refined their fashion sense.

"Without being detected they have inscribed the names of Pemberton, Brakken, and the Risuri constables into the beacon's stone obelisk. Now you shall be protected by the same anti-divination wards the Obscruati ringbearers had. Their preparations for the symposium will likely keep them from detecting our sabotage, but do not rely on it in the long term. My eyes will handle the mundanities of your mission to this symposium, and will report any information they discover in the city.

El Extraño glares at Pemberton and twitches the scaled tendrils of his moustache. "You will want to remove the pyrotechnics I hid inside your bedchamber. That was not an assassination attempt. I had a better surprise appearance planned, but I had to abandon it because a fleet of Danorans is about to attack the island, and it is in our mutual interest for you to evacuate. You should get to the fortress now, but not to defend. The facility was never designed to resist an attack with the current nature of magic."

He throws a large bag out of the car in front of you, then shifts the vehicle into gear.

"Use these scrolls to reach the fortress. Once you are there, Pemberton will show you what he thinks is a great surprise." He scoffs at the idea. "Do not be impressed."

With that, he drives away into the jungle.

He has left behind ritual scrolls that can teleport the party, Pemberton, Brakken, and Pardo back to the fortress. If the party tries to thwart El Extraño's dramatic departure, it only serves to annoy him, and he teleports away with a spell of his own. The kobold spymaster will return in a later adventure.

Airship Factory

Back at the Axis Fort, Pemberton sends Pardo to make his loyal cultists ready for a fighting retreat, then hurries to show the party one factory which he has repurposed to produce light-weight steam engines that are enchanted with flight magic. He thought that he might as well take advantage of the world's new arcane physics. Whether the party is surprised or not, he does hope they appreciate his gift.

Dragon Fliers

He has a few prototype flying machines parked on the roof. Unlike his roadcars, he *has* gotten around to decorating these: each flier's nose has a draconic face with twin autocannons at the sides of its mouth, its two-level wings are framed with mithral resembling dragon scales, and the stabilizing tail boasts a proud Pemberton Industries logo. The wings are covered with glowing white glyphs, and the engine crackles with lightning when it revs. The two seats—for a pilot and a spotter—are even comfortably upholstered.

They are basically enchanted biwings. They have limited ammo, and they can only carry enough fuel to fly for about twenty minutes, but their top speed is eighty miles per hour (800 feet per round, speed 160).

Piloting: Piloting a flier functions much the same as driving one of Pemberton's roadcars, though their speed categories are **reckless** (160), **fast** (120), **moderate** (90), **slow** (60), and **idle** (30). The plane needs to go at speed 60 or higher to take off and maintain its flight; any slower than that and the plane stalls and falls. (Idle is only really used while on the ground.) The planes need 20 feet (4 squares) of turning space for each speed category.

It can ascend by no more than 60 feet (12 squares) per round.

Weapons: Each flier has three hundred rounds (thirty bursts' worth) of ammo for its autocannons. They function as a military ranged weapon, proficiency +2, range 40/160, 2d12 damage.

(An autocannon attacks all creatures in a line. Make a separate attack roll against each creature in the line. Effects that grant concealment, such as fog or smoke, or certain magic, do not foil an automatic weapon's line attack.)

Stats: Each flier has 300 hit points and Defenses of 15. The fuselage is twenty feet long by five feet wide, with a twenty-five foot wingspan.

Piece de Resistance

Inside the factory, though, is the main attraction. The gnolls are putting the finishing touches on a collection of retrofits that can be installed onto an existing seafaring vessel to grant it flight capability. (Alternately, if the party didn't come by boat, he's just built his own airship, which can exit through the roof, which opens up.) The key is that the party has access to a ship to get off the island and fly to Danor for the Forward Symposium.

As part of the retrofit, Pemberton can also equip the party's ship with docking arms. These allow the dragon fliers to both launch and dock at the side of the vessel with a Dexterity check (DC 15), as long as the airship is flying at least 150 feet per round.

It will take a couple hours to install the flight components on the party's ship (or to finalize the airship for launch). If there's a Technologist among the PCs, Pemberton encourages him to assist in the fine-tuning and installation. The timeline will be cutting it close, and the Danoran navy will arrive when the gnoll workers need just a few more minutes.

We leave the aesthetics of these flight components to you. Do you prefer industrial, a more gizmo-based steampunk aesthetic, something truly magical like whirling rings of fire, or an understated 'winged keel' and 'wingsails' that lift and stabilize?

Danor's Assault

Action. Montage. Level 30+.

The Danoran navy moves to attack Axis. They're supported by elite Obscurati agents, a fleet of war ready ships, and a doomsday super weapon.

With She Who Writhes no longer a factor, the Danoran fleet massed under orders of Sovereign Han Jierre. Instructed by Nicodemus to retake Axis Island at whatever cost necessary, Han has redirected all of the forces poised to strike at Risur to the capture of Axis. This includes a massive naval element, supported by fully loaded transport ships, as well as the flagship of the Danoran fleet—*La Lux du Raison*.

The fleet departs from the docks at Cherage, making its way towards Axis Island. By the time El Extraño delivers the warning of the Danoran fleet movement, the fleet is mere hours away. During this time, Pemberton prepares his defenses, while the Danorans ready for a brutal assault.

Asrabey and His Mistress?

If Asrabey got away with She Who Writhes under his control, the two of them join the attack on Axis Island. Asrabey's less gung-ho than he was in Adventure One, since he fears the party. Mostly they provide support and defend the fleet from any aquatic counter-attacks.

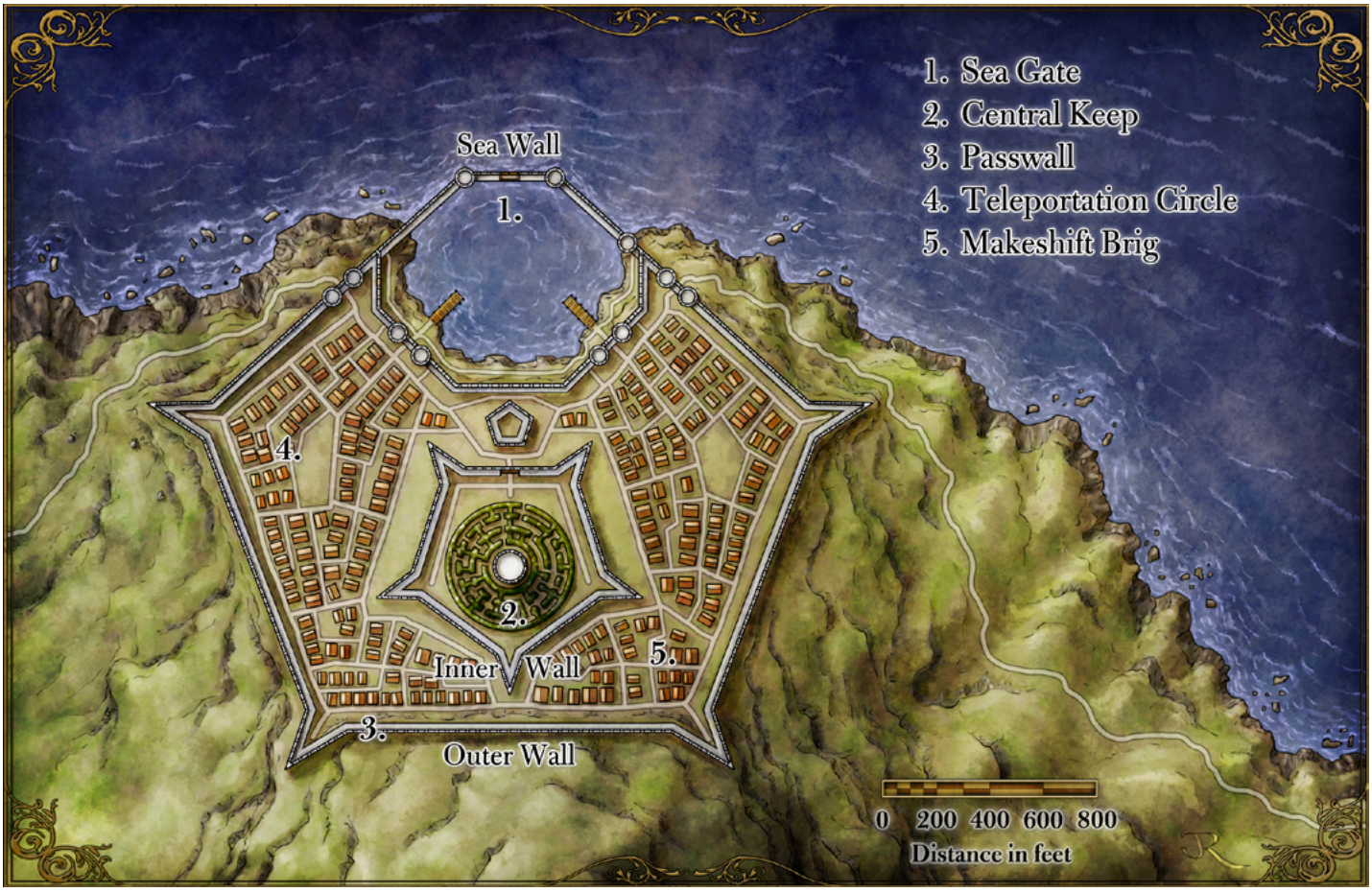
Knowing of Pemberton's true draconic nature, Jierre's military has retrofitted several escorts and warships with 'upwards facing cannons,' allowing the Danoran fleet to properly engage flying targets. For larger targets such as a transformed Pemberton, or even the Axis Fortress gate, the Danoran flagship is equipped with an experimental weapon, the Lantern Cannon.

The Stratagem Must Advance

Han Jierre's plan to retake Axis is straightforward; he'll send the entire might of the Danoran military against Pemberton and his followers, then smash them aside. His forces outnumber Pemberton's twenty to one, and the Sovereign knows even a dragon can be defeated, so he's not bothering to consider a siege. The Obscurati want Axis Island back, and they want Pemberton and the party dead.

Stage 1 (Insertion & Chaos): The navy pushes towards the Fortress's Sea Wall but remains out of reach of the cannons in the sea wall bunkers. Submersibles blast a submerged section of the fort's main gate and enter underwater. They surface, and now that they are inside the fortress, Obscurati-augmented strike teams of the *Porteurs de Mort* teleport directly into the bunkers along the eastern side of the sea wall, fighting gnolls in close combat. They light chemical flares to illuminate whichever bunkers they're inside.

One group of Obscurati agents take the lighthouse, then place a custom magic item, a *wayfarer's jaunter*, on the house's beacon. This magical device disrupts teleportation that would arrive within 200 feet of the lighthouse, redirecting it to where the light shines. The Obscurati agents aim the beam out into the middle of the Danoran fleet, so anyone who attempts to teleport in and aid the battle will end up splashing in the sea.



Stage 2 (Landing): Half of the fleet approaches at full steam, firing forward turrets at any bunkers along the eastern line of the sea wall that aren't illuminated by flares. After about half an hour of bombardment, five ships pull up beside the wall, while others form lines behind them, connected with bridges. Troops climb onto the wall. A few escort ships stay at the edge of this formation, watching the skies in case Pemberton appears.

The other half of the fleet heads for the sea gate, which is damaged when the submersibles detonate charges at its hinges. The gate dangles loose, which might hold, but at the same time the eastern fleet is making landing on the wall, *La Lux du Raison* engages its Lantern Cannon. A blinding flash of light strikes the gate and vaporizes a twenty-foot wide span. The beam travels far enough to also singe parts of the docks on the other side of the sea wall harbor. It takes the beam two minutes to recharge, and then it fires again. It's at this point that a hivemind begins to form (which is not part of the Sovereign's plans). See Mind for War, below.

Stage 3 (Raze): The Danorans take no chances and thus no prisoners. Scout squads sprint through the fortress with orders to locate Pemberton or the party, then light flares and teleport away. Once flares are lit, the fleet launches mortars at those locations.

Additionally, lookouts who inserted earlier on the island outside the fortress watch likely escape routes. They light flares if they spot large groups heading inland, which brings in more mortar fire.

A Mind for War

When the Danorans finally reach the fortress, their combined desire to conquer Axis and begin a fifth Yerasol War has unexpected effects. High above the battlefield, a growing cloud of protoplasmic energy roils. Starting as a small mote, this tiny spark of energy represents the nascent form of a hive mind in the making.

The PCs can recognize this manifestation for what it is almost immediately. The Danoran troops are oblivious to their growing creation, while Pemberton's forces consider it another Danoran weapon, sending them into further panic and disarray. Unlike other hive minds, though, this one doesn't get a chance to act, because Sovereign Han Jierre targets it with the Lantern Cannon. This gives the party a window to escape before the cannon can shoot them down.

The Stakes

The attack on Axis is a critical part of the Obscurati plan, since Nicodemus intends to try the ritual again. As such, the Danoran forces under Ob supervision will stop at nothing to reclaim Axis Island.

Allowing Axis to fall to the Ob is not necessarily a major setback for the PCs, though, as there's little the conspiracy can do here in the near future. There are several worldwide events that paralyze forces the Ob thought they could call upon for assistance, and soon enough events in the Danoran capital of Cherage will spiral out of the Ob's control. It won't be until Adventure Thirteen, *Avatar of Revolution*, that the Obscurati are ready to attempt the ritual again.

The party can achieve a victory by just getting away, or a major victory by delaying the landing and breach until Pemberton's gnoll followers can escape. Over a thousand gnolls work here, and perhaps the party might flee with a hundred or so while the others hide on the island or die fighting.

If on the other hand the party manages to stop the assault and keep control of the island, that's an impressive victory, and it causes Nicodemus to overreact in anger. Instead of sending the navies of the world to invade Risur, his first goal is to retake and secure Axis Island, which changes the backdrop of adventure Eleven. Risur won't be invaded, but militaries of Ber, Crisillyir, Danor, and Drakr will instead converge on Axis Island, leaving those nations vulnerable to various doomsdays. Even if your PCs throw all they have to keeping the island, the party will still probably need to leave the world in Adventure Twelve. By the time they get back, the Ob will be in control.

From the Party's Perspective

The party is high enough level to deal heavy blows to the Danoran forces, but eventually the thousands of soldiers and their elite allies will prove too much.

The party's primary mission should be to protect their ship as its retrofit is finalized; secondary to that will be saving Pemberton's gnoll forces so they can evacuate – either by piling onto the party's ship or fleeing into the island mainland. The party might use *linked portal* get a great deal more to safety, though the gnolls will have to abandon their posts, so it's critical to wait until the last few minutes before ordering an evacuation.

ENEMY FORCES

Several different types of Danoran troops and Obscurati agents are involved in the attack, which you can use to create encounters if the party sticks around or goes looking for trouble out in the fleet. Their statistics can be found in Appendix A: Combat Catalogue.

- **Porteur Du Mort Alchemist:** Geniuses in their field, these battle alchemists work to enhance fellow Danoran soldiers. Any group of Danorans including one of these alchemists benefits from *communal stoneskin*. Using tiny technologist devices, these alchemists can toss acidic or maddening bombs at their enemies.
- **Porteur Du Mort Murderer:** Handpicked members of the Danoran military, these tieflings were chosen at birth for their masochistic tendencies. During the assault on Axis Island, they maneuver in pairs to try and ventilate opponents who stand against them. When engaged with multiple opponents who outclass them, these murderers use their ability to create *dark clouds* to facilitate an escape route and sneak to strike again from a better position.
- **Porteur Du Mort Revelation Sniper:** Armed with state of the art magically enchanted weapons, these snipers number less than a handful in all of Danor. Each of them uses enhanced and unique ammunition that required years of training and specialty craftsmanship from arms manufacturers in the Malice Lands.
- **Obscurati Master Builder:** Tasked with assisting in repairing of the world's cities following the Ob's ritual, these engineers have dedicated themselves to constructive magic. They secure tactical locations for the Danoran forces by walling them off and using offensive magic to keep intruders at bay.

The Retrofit

Pemberton disappears for a bit to plan the fortress's defense. He shucks his duplicant body (and has some gnolls carry it into the party's ship if they'll let him), then returns in his own actual body, still polymorphed into human form. His focus is on getting the airship ready to launch. He keeps Pardo nearby coordinating the fortress defenders, and has Brakken waiting somewhere safe on the party's ship, since he is critical to infiltrating the symposium.

A couple hours after work begins, the party hears look-outs shouting warnings, and some sporadic cannon fire. Give the party a chance to go up on the wall and see the dozens of ships coming for the fortress, dimly visible by the lights on their decks.

Pemberton says they need about another half hour to finish the retrofit. It's shortly afterward that a small explosion disturbs the water near the sea gate (Perception DC 20), and a minute later two submersibles surface. The *Porteurs du Mort* emerge, then teleport in and attack the bunkers.

Porteur Assault

Four squads of five *porteurs* each teleport to the eastern sea wall bunkers. One squad arrives near the party. They light flares and dispatch the gnolls in the bunkers within two rounds. Then they use the bunkers (simple twenty-by-fifteen stone rooms with a door facing the harbor and holes for cannons to shoot outward) as a defensive location.

Meanwhile, Danoran ships start bombarding the sea wall, blasting the bunkers that the Porteurs aren't in.

Every minute the Porteurs abandon one bunker and assault another. There are a total of sixteen bunkers along this side of the sea wall—two rows of eight. If not interrupted, they clear them out in less than five minutes.

Porteur Assault Squad (4 squads)

- 1 Porteur du Mort Alchemist
- 3 Porteur du Mort Murderers
- 1 Porteur du Mort Revelation Sniper

The party might notice (Perception DC 25) that one squad has attacked the lighthouse near the sea gate, and that they've moved the lighthouse beam to point out to sea. From this point on, within 200 feet of the lighthouse anyone who tries to teleport will get redirected to the middle of the Danoran fleet. If things look bad for a *porteur* squad and at least five minutes have passed so they can teleport again, they'll flee and rejoin the fleet.

Attacking the Fleet

Summoned water elementals, swarms of meteors and fireballs, destructive weather magic—all these things can ruin the Danorans' day. So of course the Danorans have prepared for them. Enchantments on the ships protect those on board from the first 50 damage that would be dealt to them by any spells unless the attack originates from within 50 feet. Other wards deal fire damage to creatures who attack from underwater, and the ships have experimental depth charges. The Danorans have even brought along a loyal druid who is concentrating on her own *control weather* ritual, to keep the party from just wiping out the fleet with a hurricane.

Make sure the party sees that their high level magic is effective, but that there are enough enemies who have mid-level magic that they can't win through sheer brute force.

If the party does try to engage a ship, rather than handling the crewmen as singular creatures, use the Danoran Frigate Crew stats, which represent the combined might of two hundred sailors and a few elite mages and technologists.

The party can still delay the Danorans, though, and strafing runs with the dragon fliers would go fast enough to avoid cannon counterattacks, though small arms might still be a threat. If the PCs don't pilot the biplanes, Pemberton has some gnolls fly them, and they'll dock with the PC's ship as it takes off.

Industrious PCs might seek out the capital ship, *La Lux du Raison*.

La Lux du Raison

- 2 Danoran Frigate Crew
- 2 Obscurati Master Builder
- Sovereign Han Jierre

In addition to those enemies, the party will likely have to contend with at least 4 other Danoran Frigate Crews on nearby ships. As for the sovereign, despite having focused his life on politics rather than warfare, Han Jierre has learned how to use new magic to tap into the psychic gestalt that latently links all the soldiers under his command. This allows him to call in attacks from many directions with just a thought.

If Han is knocked unconscious, a magical contingency teleports him back to Cherage.

Breach and Evacuation

After half an hour, it's possible to hear steam engines of the Danoran ships close on the other side of the sea wall. The Danorans use siege machinery to surmount the wall and unload hundreds of soldiers. Almost simultaneously, a blinding flash of light tears through the sea gate and scorches the far side of the bay. Everyone present is blinded (save ends).

At this point, the hivemind appears in the sky over the harbor. Pemberton orders his gnolls to evacuate and flee inland, though he hopes the party will permit a few on their ship. That ship, handily enough, is ready to fly.

Blasting Away

Action. Real-Time. Level 24.

The airship ascends, but the Danorans have prepared for a flying target. Luckily, they weren't expecting TWO flying targets.

Waiting on the deck of their newly upgraded vessel is an incensed Pemberton. The sheer gall of the Danorans—as well as their use of overwhelming force—has soured the dragon's typically generous mood, and he angrily paces the deck of the PCs ship. In truth, Pemberton's seething is more a result of his inner turmoil, as he prepares to make a life threatening decision to try and save the world.

Airship Complete

Pemberton will have already explained how to pilot the flying vessel. If you're using the *Admiral o' the High Seas*, the vessel is now equipped with the Skyship piloting component. This upgrade effectively allows the vessel to fly at any altitude, as well as generating a 30 foot bubble where creatures within move with the ship and gain a Fly speed of 8. Once a creature passes outside the 30 foot bubble, they fall at a reduced rate, and ignore the first thousand feet of falling damage.

Given the deteriorating situation, Pemberton aggressively suggests that everyone 'gets a move on' and prepare to launch the ship. The Danorans should be just cresting the sea wall and streaming through the sea gate when the party's ship takes off.

Kill the Mind

While the PCs ship ascends, the Hivemind growing over Axis continues to expand, seemingly ignored by the Danorans below. As the incorporeal mass seems ready to burst into proper reality, *La Lux du Raison* fires a single shot from the Lantern into the air, dissipating it in seconds. Unaffected by the malaise affecting other Danorans, Han Jierre recognizes the threat of the hivemind and opts to destroy it.

Luckily, this shot from the Danoran superweapon renders it ineffective for some time as it recharges, but it alerts the party that the Danorans are prepared to shoot upward.

GET OVER HERE!

As the airship ascends into the sky, Pemberton moves to the back of the ship—or side depending on what has a better view—staring out at the assembled Danoran fleet. The destruction below causes smoke plumes to rise, and the shouting and yells become an inaudible sound as the ship continues to rise.

Once the ship has reached 200 feet in altitude, several Danoran escort craft fire specialty bolts up at it. Each shot is a magically reinforced set of chain with a specialized drilling tip. Meant to pierce the hide of a dragon and leave it vulnerable to standard fire, these shots are quickly repurposed by the Danorans to bring down the first airship of the era.

Evasive Maneuvers

If a PC was acting as lookout and succeeded a Perception check (DC 25) to detect the harpoons being aimed upward, the captain can make a Command check (d20 + half-character-level + Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma modifier), and if there is a devoted PC pilot the captain can add the pilot's Dexterity modifier to this roll. If the result beats DC 15 the ship is able to dodge one shot. If it beats DC 25 it can dodge two, at which point the sole remaining chain isn't strong enough to hold the party's ship. It snaps and the party can escape without any more trouble.

Grabbed

Up to three harpoons impact the hull, ripping into the PCs' ship and chaining it in place. The chains begin to slowly retract. The angles of the various ships and the slow mechanisms cause the PCs airship to descend at a rate of 5 feet per round.

Within a minute, the Danoran fleet will be able to reaim their weapons at the party's ship and blow it out of the sky, unless drastic action is taken.

Pemberton Handles Things

With the airship stuck in place, Pemberton's mind becomes set on a drastic course of action. Unless the PCs have come up with a particularly inventive solution, Pemberton decides to take the fight to the Danorans and give the PCs some time to deal with the chains holding them in place.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Benedict Pemberton turns away from his scrutinizing of the Danoran fleet, his arms lowered and his thumbs locked through his belt.

"Well now, this is one hum dinger we have here. By the looks of things, our friends down there came with toys to use against me. I so hate to disappoint them, and more, I'd hate to lose this fine ship I spent so much time on. I do believe it's time to join the rodeo."

Turning his back to the party, he strips off his gentleman's coat and his pants, then hands them to Pardo to fold. "I'll leave it to you fine folk to get this new-fangled ship unstuck. I'll deal with these ruffians below."

With that, Pemberton leaps from the side of the ship, assuming his draconic form while falling. The following round, Gradiax the Lord of Steel flies once more, leading a vicious assault on the Danoran fleet.

The exact description of the fight between Gradiax and the Danorans should be left to the DM, as it is meant to be a backdrop to the PCs freeing their vessel from the chains that reel it in. Pemberton's move forces the Danorans to retrain their guns on the dragon, and gives the PCs time to properly remove the chains and escape. Every few rounds he strafes one of the ships holding a chain in order to kill the soldiers who are preparing to ascend the chain.

If you need stats for him, treat him as an elder red dragon.

The Chains That Bind

Spread the three chain strikes at roughly equidistant points across the hull of the PCs ship. Each point becomes a breaching site for the Danorans, who have specially designed the chains to convey teleportation magic to the point of impact.

Obscurati Steam Walker: The round after Pemberton dives overboard, the first attackers teleport in. Knowing the original Danoran commandos would be quickly defeated by the forces onboard, the Obscurati step in and instead use the chains to teleport over defenders for the impact points. They're elite soldiers piloting steam-powered golem suits.

These steam walkers stand ready to fight against the PCs, but have specific instructions not to move beyond the impact points. Effectively, this ensures each of the breaching points has one defender.

The next round troops start pouring in, appearing in huge masses near the edge of the spikes. These are Danoran Boarding Squads. A new one appears each round.

Breach Points: Following their initial impact into the hull, the shells at the end of the chains bloom into a metallic flower that clamps onto the hull. Each of these points is effectively an inanimate object that must be destroyed in order for the PCs ship to escape the Danoran fleet.

The impact points cover a 10 x 10 foot area and have 300 hit points with Defenses of 15.

For every 100 points of damage suffered, the breach point emits a blast of fire throughout the area. **Attack:** Close burst 4 (creatures in burst); +16 vs. Reflex. **Hit:** 30 fire damage. **Miss:** 15 fire damage.

Destroying one impact point keeps the ship from being reeled in any lower, while destroying two gives the ship enough lifting power to snap the third chain and escape.

Failure

If the party takes so long that their ship gets pulled down to surface level, the whole Danoran fleet will be able to target it with cannons, and it will be blown to pieces. The attendant explosions likely kill the party. If they defeated She Who Writhes but made friends, it is possible she might be obliged to rescue them from the sea. Later adventures get more difficult without an airship, though.

Into the Sunset (if there were a sun anymore)

With the chains destroyed, the PCs can effect a proper escape from the Danoran fleet. Pemberton continues a few last strafing runs on the Danorans.

If the party did not spend any effort to help Pemberton, then he gets struck by a grappling chain, then blasted by the blinding beam of the Lantern Cannon, which seems to annihilate him utterly. In truth, a magical contingency teleports him away at the last moment, though his various divination wards make it difficult to determine his fate.

Should the party bother to aid Pemberton, he makes it out of the fight bloodied but alive, and he flies away from Axis Island alongside the party's airship. The Lantern Cannon strikes him a glancing blow, and he manages to crash land onto the deck of the party's ship as he polymorphs back into human form. The weapon has scrambled his magical energies, making him unable to be aided by healing magic for a few weeks. He'll be present to contribute his thoughts during the Forward Symposium, but won't be in any shape to fight, and will make a point of getting teleported out before any more fighting occurs.

Still, the party's ship flies far faster than the Ob fleet can pursue. It's a straight shot for them to reach Danor.

Forward Thinking

Social. Montage.

The party has a few days to breathe.

Nicodemus has called a great conference in the Danoran capital of Cherage. He seeks to unify the leaders of the world, design a path forward for guiding the world into an enlightened age, and stoke anger for the worldwide change towards Risur.

With the aid of Brakken, the party can enter the conference by sharing a mental link with the Beran ambassador. The party has the unique opportunity to overhear the Obscurati plans, and can potentially turn the tide of opinion back in favor of Risur.

Unknown to either side, the Gidim—alien creatures of living thought who threatened the world ages ago—have begun a new invasion, and one of their scouts is in Cherage. The new psychic resonance that makes the hivemind phenomenon possible gives the Gidim great power. Though Nicodemus and the Obscurati anticipated hiveminds and have procedures in place to keep them from developing, the Gidim will be able to nudge a nascent hivemind formed at the Forward Symposium and cause it to manifest into a sort of psychic singularity—a Godmind.

The godmind will consume all thinking creatures around it in an insane pursuit of one goal. In this case, that goal will be 'improve the world,' which for the godmind is best accomplished by killing all but the 'best' people. If the party does not intervene, Cherage and most of Danor will fall before the surviving Ob members are able to bring enough force to bear to destroy the monstrosity.

In Adventure Eleven, *Gorged on Ruins*, five invading forces will threaten Risur—the armies of Danor, Drakr, Crisillyir, Ber, and the various minor nations of the world. If they save Cherage here, Danor will begin to doubt Obscurati propaganda and so will delay their invasion.

Likewise, saving other world leaders and helping their nations deal with doomsday threats next adventure can stop those nations from invading, and get them on the party's side for the showdown in the campaign's finale.

Regroup and Prepare

With access to the world's first airship, the PCs have a great mobility advantage over the forces of the Obscurati. Returning to Risur following the events at Axis is possible, as the PCs may want to stock up and prepare for the upcoming conference in Cherage. Alternatively, the PCs might decide to start using their airship as a base of operations, teleporting allies to them to determine the plan on infiltrating the Forward Symposium.

The party can go straight to Danor, or wait, but given how much trouble high-level PCs can get into with even a single day to spare, it might be best to tell them that the Symposium is only a couple days away, to keep them from flying to Alais Primos for the next leg of the adventure.

We focus mostly on the events of the conference. If your players seem interested in 'sneaking into Danor,' 'sabotaging Cherage,' or 'disrupting the Obscurati,' you can make things complicated enough to satisfy them. Our assumption, though, is that high-level PCs will be able to get into the country undetected, and that all the interesting things happen at the symposium.

The Conference

Set to take place in the Congressional Hall of Danor, the Forward Symposium has put the career politicians of Danor out on the street, with only a few allowed to attend. With the recent changes in the world, the congress has been relegated to a lesser role while Sovereign Jierre and Nicodemus temporarily take direct control of matters of state. Characters familiar with architecture know that the Congressional Hall of Danor is famous for its retractable metal plated roof, a device that is opened on days of fair weather in the Danoran capital city.

Through political connections, divinations, or asking El Extraño's spy network, the party can learn that the following dignitaries will be in attendance. Each dignitary also has a small gaggle of attendants and aides, bringing the total number of people present to over a hundred.

- Nicodemus the Gnostic (Obscurati representative)
- Sovereign Han Jierre (Danor government representative)*
- Minister of War Eloise Duffet (Danoran military representative)
- Brakken of Heffanita (Beran government representative)
- Prime Cardinal Tito Banderesso (Crisillyir government representative)
- Chancellor Dmitra Takhenova (Drakr government representative)
- Sagu Jacksdotter (League of Malice States government representative)
- Lord Kulp (Nalaam economic representative)
- Betronga Sidhon (Eladrin survivor representative)**
- Vlendam Heid (Eschatologist philosophy representative)
- Various military and opposition political representatives from each of the major nations.
- Various locally-notable politicians and philosophers from Border States, Malice States, and colonies in old Elfaivar.

**While Han Jierre is scheduled to attend, he will be absent as he directs the retaking of Axis. His wife Gelsey stands in for him.*

***If Betronga died in Adventure Eight, another non-weretiger eladrin attends in his place.*

Brakken's Plan

The assumed method of getting the PCs into the Forward Symposium involves Brakken entering the conference and acting as the Beran representative. He'll be linked telepathically to the PCs (and Pemberton if he is here), though the party will have to stay within ten miles. El Extraño's spies have found a secluded valley their ship can land in that is within range, and they have secured the perimeter so the party will be safe.

Once Brakken has entered the conference, he intends to stay long enough to learn the Obscurati's plans and the goals of other national leaders, and perhaps to put in a few words against invading Risur. He tells the party that while linked to him, they'll have the ability to direct his actions—they can basically act as if they were in his body—though he asks them to promise not to do anything rash and get him killed.

Brakken's Bond

Brakken is willing to test his abilities on the PCs to ensure the joining works, and that the PCs are familiar with the effects. Treat Brakken as having a Charisma bonus of +18 for purposes of the bond. The following is a summary of rules while the PCs are linked with Brakken:

- All members of the bond (including Brakken) can communicate telepathically with each other.
- By concentrating (a minor action) any member of the bond can shift their senses of hearing and sight between Brakken's perspective and their own. The bond persists even if a character resumes his own senses, and he can go back into Brakken's later if he desires.
- While viewing the world through Brakken's eyes, the PCs can attempt to speak through the minotaur. Unless Brakken or another linked member resists the words being spoken this happens automatically. If Brakken or another linked member attempts to resist, have them make opposed Charisma checks to see who wins.
- While viewing the world through Brakken's eyes, the PCs can attempt to take control of the minotaur's movements and actions. Brakken prefers to be asked and then follows directions, and normally will resist this (as above). But he will let a PC do it if his life is in danger. A character controlling him in this way can use all her own personal skill and prowess.
- Brakken can attempt to eject a PC from the mental bond as a standard action. He must succeed three consecutive opposed Charisma checks to do so.

All of the mental bond's abilities work within a maximum range of 10 miles. While normally not an issue, this prevents the PCs from sitting in Risur while Brakken travels to Cherage.

Cherage, Capital of Progress

Cherage is built upon several hills around La Baie du Violet, a bay named after the violet hue it gives off during sunsets. Small islands in the bay each support immense artillery batteries—weapons installed after a brazen Risuri attack forty-two years ago.

The city builds upon itself in layers, with the more affluent citizens residing on hilltops, while the common folk reside in an almost literal 'melting pot' between the hills and the bay. North past the hills, great fields of industry churn out smoke and soot, which can faintly be tasted on the air even in the finer parts of the city. Small surface rail moves citizens between the industrial sectors and the central city, while traditional carts and carriages are required to navigate up to the hills.

Obscurati enforcers walk side by side with Danoran police in protection of the city. The increased enforcement, coupled with the subtle shift in behaviors since the Great Eclipse, has led to fewer acts of disobedience or direct sabotage. As a result the Danorans have cancelled their previously mandated curfew in the city.

The industrial district of Cherage (technically located out of city limits to the north) is abuzz with new job opportunities. Folks from all over Danor are flocking to the capital city for well-paying work churning out improved firearms, war equipment, and revolutionary constructs. Many people are fascinated by the possibility of learning magic, long unavailable in Danor, even if in truth not many people will find a teacher.

Warehouses along the docks of Cherage have stockpiled with war materiel, and despite attempts to maintain some security, gawkers are fascinated by the steady arrival of man-sized constructs dressed in Danoran military uniforms.

A Nation Changed

People in Danor do not work against the Obscurati or see them as any sort of evil conspiracy; instead, they see the Ob as a group on the cusp of bringing about their salvation.

Indeed, the people of Cherage are predisposed to hating Risur. Obscurati propaganda has informed the populace that all the positive changes of the Great Eclipse—magic returning to Danor, improved healing, people being less prone to violence—are the Ob's doing. And all the faults with the ritual—hiveminds, the sun disappearing, and She Who Writhes disrupting shipping—were due to Risuri meddling.

The One Percent, The One Mind

Social. Real-Time.

The leaders of the old world meet. The Godmind comes.

The Obscurati don't do anything to interfere with Brakken's plan to enter the Forward Symposium. Elite military guards watch the entrances to the event, and corridors are patrolled by large golems that can see through most magic. Security screenings check for illusions, polymorphing, mind control, possession, and being a duplicant, but Brakken's link with the PCs is not detected.

The Congressional Hall of Cherage rests atop the highest hill in the city. The massive metallic structure of the domed roof is currently open, which traditionally allows for an impressive view of the sky, though now the black heavens are fairly underwhelming.

Arrival and Mingling

Prior to the official start of the conference, a brief gala in the hall provides an opportunity to mingle with the other attendees. The Obscurati guards stay out of the way to ensure the attendees don't feel pressured by the Ob's watchful eye. However, Nicodemus is actually present, possessing a new body and serving as a waiter so he can eavesdrop.

Delegates have arrived in the city over the past few weeks, and they come to the hall with their aides and attendants. The government representatives from Crisillyir and Drakr—**Prime Cardinal Tito Banderesso** and **Chancellor Dmitra Takhenova**—are already here, talking with **Gelsey Jierre**, wife of Sovereign Han who sadly will not be in attendance.

Sagu Jacksdotter, the representative of the newly-formed League of Malice States, is giddily telling stories of horrible magical mishaps she has seen, which she will never have to experience again thanks to the Obscurati. **Betronga Sidhon**, head of the eladrin contingent from Elfaivar, talks with representatives of the various colonies who have taken their land. They warily trade tales of violence that each perpetuated, but are relieved that such warfare might be no more.

Brakken makes a bit of a stir by arriving alone, and attendees from various minor states gather around him. Despite Ber being a large nation, the minor states see it as a kindred spirit since Danor, Drakr, and Crisillyir have long treated it as inconsequential too. Many people express concern that Ber might have been in danger because it shares a border with Risur.

Give the party a chance to converse and sway people's opinions if they want. Being politicians with personal ambitions or philosophers with something to prove, most attendees are eager to talk. Only one person, **Lord Kulp**, the master of games from Nalaam (and—the party might know—a Vekeshi Mystic), keeps to himself.

Big Players

Brakken's conversation with the other representatives is interrupted when the lead attendees from Drakr and Crisillyir step in. Brakken quickly fills in the party telepathically to who they are.

Chancellor Dmitra Takhenova, an obese dwarf woman who wears a robe woven with tiny runes that convey her core philosophy, is nearing the end of her six-year stint as leader of Drakr, having been appointed by a council of philosopher-politicians. She's been ruthless in using security forces to hunt down internal dissidents, though she was recently dealt a humiliating defeat when some of her supporters were bombed by followers of Grandis Komanov, the radical eschatologist. She also made a few public statements blaming Risur for the high-profile destruction of a railyard in Mirsk last year.

Prime Cardinal Tito Banderesso, rail-thin and sporting an impressive moustache, is rumored to be the highest-ranking member of the Clergy who did *not* commit suicide during the Great Eclipse. He's a powerful divine spellcaster, and his public statements have always been fairly traditional and positive, but Brakken wouldn't be surprised if he's an elitist, like most of the Clergy hierarchs were.

Dmitra asks if Brakken has any first-hand knowledge of the disasters that have befallen Risur since the sky changed, and then she rattles off the various accusations the Ob have made about how Risur nearly doomed the world.

The Cardinal opines that the Risuri people must be truly bereft of leadership, and that the noblest thing to do would be to "kill the wolves who rule them, so that the sheep might live the simple lives meant for them."

Dmitra says she'd sooner see the savages of Ber return Risur to a land of beasts than to let the Clergy's classical brand of delusion take root there.

It's about this time that **Minister of War Eloise Duffet** joins in, admonishing the two to save their anger for Risur, not each other. They all agree Risur must be conquered.

Dmitra asks if they think it will be a long war. Trying to hide her enthusiasm, she suggests that it would be risky to change leadership in the middle of an ongoing conflict.

The Minister of War offers to give them a preview of her presentation about the invasion plan. She even has prepared letters of intent that the Chancellor and Cardinal can sign if they agree. They can send those letters out immediately so preparations for the invasion can begin.

Invasion Plans

If the party wants to listen in, they'll need to have Brakken convince Eloise Duffet, since she recalls Brakken in Flint (in Adventure Five, *Cauldron-Born*) and thought he was too friendly with Risur. They'll need to form some sort of rapport with her or the other two leaders, then offer an argument for being involved in the early discussions.

For example, they could pretend that Brakken has reevaluated Risur in light of the new world order. Plus Ber is one of the nations best poised to invade Risur, so the two other leaders would want to be take the Beran perspective into account before signing on to any plans. Or you can just simplify things to an Insight check (DC 25) to figure out what to say to establish rapport, a Bluff check (DC 25, or 30 if they failed the Insight check) to actually earn their trust, and then a Diplomacy check (DC 25) to be given the chance to listen in.

The details of the plans are touched upon in Adventure Eleven, but the party will be better-served undertaking perilous quests than directing military movements.

PARTY INVOLVEMENT

As with any large social event, we can only guess how your players might choose to interact here. We present the situation as it occurs barring PC interference, and leave it to you to adjust in response to their actions.

In particular, they might dramatically reveal their identities. Nicodemus would denounce them in front of the audience while stalling for reinforcements to arrive. If they just engage in debate, pretty much everyone except Heid, Kvarti, and Lord Kulp already have their minds made up to invade Risur, but excellent diplomacy from the party can make a few of them start to doubt. Eventually, though, the delegates from Crisillyir and Drakr steer the discussion toward culling the inferior, triggering the hivemind.

If a fight breaks out, though, the hivemind is driven by a desire to destroy Risur (instead of an economic desire for everyone to 'contribute'). It rapidly grows into a Godmind and goes out of Nicodemus's control, at which point it begins consuming people across the city in order to gather an 'army.'

The party might instead just murder the attendees without talking. Good job. Risur gets blamed for the assassination, Nicodemus will get a new body, and the Obscurati will be able to lead fervent armies against the party in a matter of weeks.

They might instead wait for the hivemind to begin forming, *then* kill attendees in order to weaken it. This actually is a pretty solid idea, except that by the time it starts to form, Brakken will be caught in it. They'll only manage to harm a few of the dozens of attendees before Brakken is paralyzed, but they should be able to tell that killing parts of the 'brain' did actually weaken the hivemind.

We've loaded the symposium with enough sympathetic NPCs that hopefully the party won't just abandon them to die. If they do, though, the Godmind consumes the population of Cherage and expands westward until the Danoran and Drakran armies annihilate it with immense firepower. The Ob will blame Risur for it.

Two-Pronged Strategy

The general strategy, however, is for Danoran soldiers and golems to take the Avery Coast Railroad to Trekhom and Sid Minos, where they'll board ships from Drakr and Crisillyir, since the Danoran navy is depleted. Additional forces from those two countries will launch two invasion fleets.

The Drakran fleet will target Flint, but instead of a frontal assault the fleet will drop off its soldiers 10 miles to the east. Though there's no suitable harbor, the soldiers will be trained to teleport to make landfall from a safe distance. Then the fleet will begin bombarding Flint proper while the army advances through the Cloudwood.

Meanwhile, the Crisillyir fleet will make landfall in southeast Risur, on the northern shore of Marrajado de Oro (the riven sea of gold), near Ber. Minister Duffet had hoped the fleet could assist a bridging action to march Beran forces into Risur as well. The two armies would have a hundred-mile march to reach Bole, where they would cut off the rail supply lines to Flint.

The western Risur city of Shale, though it has great symbolic prestige from past wars with Danor, will only be harried by a token fleet to keep them from sending reinforcements to Flint. Most of Danor's remaining navy will be needed to protect Cherage, where they'll be constructing a new colossus. That ordeal will take perhaps a year, so it won't be available for the invasion.

Once Flint and Bole are captured, they'll take a few months to rebuild industrial facilities, and then they'll invade down the Great Delve River to capture the capital Slate.

Blind Spots

Some flaws of the minister's plan are, first, the fey titans might be allied with Risur. Danor has been designing depth charges to use against She Who Writhes, but it would take a month for Drakr to build cannons of sufficient size to threaten the Father of Thunder and the Ash Wolf. Granny Allswell isn't useful in direct battle, though her curses could send foul weather at the force trying to take Bole.

Second, taking military forces out of Drakr will make it easier for Grandis Komanov's radical eschatologists to attack. Though Chancellor Takhenova is concerned enough about them to leave behind some defenders, she doesn't know that Komanov is raising an army of undead and frost giants to annihilate civilization.

Third and fourth, similar doomsday threats will strike Crisillyir and Ber, namely the god trials using the *sacrament of apotheosis* and the invasion of the Gidim. While the invasion of Risur would succeed within three months, the rest of the countries would be devastated.

Fifth and finally, no one predicts the Godmind that is about to threaten Danor.

Where Do I Sign?

Unless the party effectively raises concerns about the plans, the Chancellor and Cardinal agree and sign expedited orders, which the Obscurati will deliver to the respective military leaders of Drakr and Crisillyir. A teleporting courier is waiting out in the foyer.

If the party gets the two leaders to hesitate, or if they manage to stop the courier somehow without being discovered, then the Godmind will strike before official orders can be sent out. This will cause a significant delay, and next adventure the party will have a comfortable buffer before the invasion begins.

Familiar Faces

Everyone's attention turns when **Vlendam Heid** teleports in with his bodyguard **Kvarti Gorbatiy**. Heid makes a point of using the new nature of magic in his arrival, because he intends to speak out against the changes and wants to do all he can not to be labeled as reactionary and afraid of change.

Dmitra Takhenova sees him and says, "Vlendam, I'm glad you finally arrived. I know you appreciate endings, so why don't you leave and come back when we're done?"

"Dmitra," Heid says with a chuckle, "I hear you're taking to heart my advice to plan for the end of your chancellorship. Invading Risur, very good idea! I wager if you could out-debate the dockside poets in Flint, they'll gladly let you be in charge of a shipping guild or something."

"Guilds," scoffs Cardinal Banderesso. "Just common people trying to get a taste of real power. I am not impressed by the ability to make a high-quality shoe."

He chants a prayer, and conjures a shining angel. The crowd gasps, few having ever seen a true celestial. It bows to the cardinal. (Yes, this is a planetar, named Adimel. Banderesso had already summoned it with a ritual, and his spell was just to call it to his side.)

"Go fetch me some shoes," he tells it. "Red leather, please."



What can be said about the world's most famous philosopher that has not already been written in hundreds of other books? Born into a family of well-to-do thinkers and soldiers, Heid's interests focused on mythology and how people perceive the world. His famous "On the Proper Endings of Things" had a grand effect on the cultural identity of Drakr.

Since the Great Eclipse Heid has quit making money on speaking tours, and instead has tried to prepare the people of his homeland for possible imminent disaster. He called upon Kvarti Gorbatiy to help him in case his words fail and firepower proves necessary. Unlike the sniper, however, Heid is strongly suspicious of the Obscurati. While he finds their public statements of ideology reasonable, his core ideal is that discourse between philosophies is necessary, and he disapproves of one group dictating how everyone must think.



A dwarven locksmith-turned-mercenary, Kvarti found a book of Heid Eschatol philosophy in the hands of a man he had assassinated. Though he presents a weary face to maintain his reputation, he tries to go through life content. All his affairs are in order, but he has repeatedly managed to survive missions he thought might have spelled his end. Now he has pledged himself as bodyguard and 'operator' for Vlendam Heid himself, for both men would prefer they not leave the world in its current condition.

Kvarti is honestly uncertain whether he should cooperate with the Obscurati or resist it, and we leave it to the PCs to help him decide.

The angel stands, glances at the gathering with a hint of disapproval, then flies out of the open roof.

Chancellor Takhenova claps. "We should give it a rifle instead of a sword, but still, good. I'm glad to have such magic on our side for the war against Risur."

Heid says, "Now come, we've all gathered together here in peace. Can't we make peace with Risur too? I say let's not *jump* so hastily to conclusions, and I just teleported here from a mile away. I'm getting quite good at it, don't you think?"

Standing beside him, his bodyguard Kvarti shrugs. "Yes, but now we cannot flee quickly. You must be prepared for your life to end here."

"I always am, my friend," Heid says. "Well, perhaps not before I get a drink. Chancellor, Cardinal, I look forward to our discussions. Ambassador Brakken, please allow me to get you something as well."

Heid wants to talk for a bit with Brakken, mostly to mention the synchronicity that his current bodyguard was unwittingly part of the terrorist group that nearly blew Brakken up in Flint a year ago. He's curious what the minotaur thinks of the Risuri people. During the conversation he drops hints that he doesn't trust the Obscurati. If Brakken (i.e., the party) agrees with him, his bodyguard Kvarti offers a counter-argument, and explains that he's not made up his mind yet.

After a few minutes to talk, a waiter (Nicodemus) whispers something to Gelsey Jierre, who politely calls the delegates to take their seats around the chamber. The keynote speaker will be arriving momentarily.

Enter Nicodemus

Once he gets a chance to swap bodies, Nicodemus—now wearing a bald, somewhat heavy-set man whose face looks eminently friendly and trustworthy—enters from a side door, flanked by any major Ob players still active, such as Kasvarina, the ghost of Lya Jierre, and any loyal officers the party might recall from Adventure Seven, *Schism*.

Once Nicodemus reaches the center of the chamber, read or paraphrase the following:

"It's heartening to see so many gathered in one place, meeting in peace and willing to discuss how we can work together and set aside old differences. Before I get into the meat of things, I want to take a moment to thank you for showing me that my long faith in people's capacity for good was not misplaced.

"My name is Nicodemus." He pauses to light up a cigarette and smiles. "An old nickname from my monastery days. More recently, though, I devoted myself to leading an organization on a dangerous path. We hid most of our actions because we knew our ultimate goal would be opposed by many people in power. People like you, if I may be honest. It would be easy for governments to assume that our aim was to take power for ourselves. It's a sad fact of the world that it's hard to believe that someone's intentions are benevolent.

"But I knew that once we accomplished what we set out to do, it would place before the world evidence of the common sense of the matter. Already changes are happening that are so positive that they must command the assent of those who witness them.

"You've no doubt read by now the generalities of how we enacted this change, and I'll be glad to give you more technical specifics later if anyone has any questions. But I want you to understand that our ritual was sabotaged just before we could finish it. Operatives on order from Risur detonated a bomb that killed many of my friends and could have had catastrophic consequences. One particularly brave friend named Borne was able to continue with the ritual, but he was killed before he could secure it.

"It's a flaw of my character, I feel, that I empathize with the leaders of Risur. I can understand why they'd fear to lose their power. For two centuries they waged war with Danor and tried to crush this nation before its industry could be strong enough to challenge their magic. But I wish Risur's ruler were here today so we could show that cooperation will benefit us all.

"My organization tried to save the world, and Risur nearly doomed us all. It will be months before we'll be able to fix their sabotage—and I assure you we will; I miss the sun as much as you—but between now and then our foremost goal should be eliminating the threat Risur poses. I have personally met some of the agents of Risur's Homeland Constabulary, and they're dangerous people.

"Danor's navy, sadly, is very depleted, but thankfully Risur's is as well. I'll call upon Minister Duffet in a few minutes to explain the invasion plan, but I hope we can count on your nations to lend their ships for a full-scale invasion of Risur in one week's time.

"I don't want to focus on the specter of war. This symposium is for looking forward, and I'd like to propose a comprehensive agenda where we talk about positive changes. We can determine how our nations and philosophies will best cooperate to deal with international challenges such as long-standing grievances, constant military build-ups, and territorial disputes, as well as local challenges like alleviating poverty, negotiating with and integrating rebellious populaces, and most intelligently making use of natural resources.

"I think you'll find that in the new world we have brought forth, it will be much easier for us to agree on paths that are a net benefit for everyone."

At this moment, an advisor leans in and whispers in Nicodemus's ear, then backs away.

"Right," he says with a smile. "We've all heard or even seen the worrisome 'hivemind phenomenon'—an unfortunate consequence of Risuri sabotage of our ritual. We understand the mild risk we'd have with everyone focusing on solving the same problems, but don't worry. We have guards and magical wards set up to detect any precursor energies that could lead to a hivemind. You're all perfectly safe. Unless an element of risk is intellectually stimulating, in which case by all means, panic a bit.

"Again, it is an immense honor to stand here among you, and to see the first steps toward a better, united world. Before I call up Minister Duffet for her invasion presentation, does anyone have any questions?"

Good Intentions

Unless the PCs urge Brakken to speak immediately after Nicodemus's speech, the first reply comes from Chancellor Takhenova. The large dwarf voices Drakr's support for the Obscurati, and talks about how she looks forward to a new future alongside them. She admits that she will be glad to rally her nation's military might to use against Risur.

Nicodemus seems pleased, smiling calmly.

Prime Cardinal Banderesso is the next to address the crowd, citing Crisillyir's current turmoil and the need for immediate order. The Cardinal states that he was worried that there was some plot against his religion; he found it suspicious, after all, that so many of his colleagues recanted their faith and killed themselves at the exact moment the Obscurati took power. However, he agrees the invasion plan for Risur should benefit the Clergy—and the Crisillyiri people, he adds somewhat sheepishly. He is willing to direct his people to work with Obscurati, but he is concerned that not all of his nation will recognize the clear logic of this war.

He offers to contribute to the war effort if the Obscurati are willing to work with his nation in quelling the more rebellious elements of society, particularly the lower class.

Nicodemus seems slightly taken aback, but before he can reply, the Drakran chancellor voices her support. She already has agreements with other leaders in her nation to undertake grand industrial projects, but there were concerns that they would meet opposition from the working classes. She's sure the war effort against Risur would be more efficient if these dissidents could be…persuaded, rationally of course, to contribute.

Nicodemus interrupts and says that the Obscurati changed the world so that everyone could prosper. Yes, military production will need to increase, but people will be more enthusiastic to work the factories if they can share in the prosperity. Rather than maintaining existing power structures, he believes that the overall quality of life could be improved if those gathered here were willing to consider more unorthodox social structures.

Lord Kulp from Nalaam asks if he means communal ownership and wealth redistribution.

Betronga of the eladrin scoffs and says of course not. He heard rumors about the Obscurati conspiracy, and they would kill those who got in their way. That's why he and the eladrin representatives came. He wanted to show that they were willing to change, and to help however they can to make life better for those willing to contribute.

Sagu Jacksdotter of Orithea agrees, and vigorously. She came because she hoped to get help with violent warbands who roam what were once the Malice Lands. It's too great an issue for Orithea to tackle on its own, but eladrin hunters and Drakran soldiers could make quick work of them, if they would contribute.

Chancellor Takhenova clenches her fist in support. Those who will not contribute will be destroyed, she says. They're ultimately just a net drag on society anyway. This new world only wants people who contribute.

Nicodemus clears his throat and calmly starts to admonish people that they're starting to sound like a hivemind. He is ignored. Vlendam Heid tries to speak up too, but is cut off.

A representative from a minor state asks if this is the sort of unorthodox social structure Nicodemus was suggesting. Nicodemus said to share the prosperity, and obviously some people don't have much prosperity to contribute.

Cardinal Banderesso agrees. Some people are just inferior. They're a net drag on society. We could easily remove them. This is a cause to which I could gladly contribute.

Contribute, murmur a dozen people in unison.

Nicodemus steps away, looking concerned, and he confers with his fellow Obscurati members. While the rest of the crowd continues to speak in synch, he shouts to Heid, Brakken, Kulp, and a few others who seem unaffected.

"We took precautions! There should not be a hivemind here. Can anyone see it forming? We need to destroy it!"

Psychic Meddling

A hivemind is indeed forming, but its presence is being hidden by the psychic powers of a Gidim scout. The being has created a psychic blind spot in the minds of those present, and is masking the floating tendrils of the hivemind with an illusion. The former effect fools *true sight* by making creatures simply not notice what they've seen, and the latter makes it so someone protected by magic that makes them immune to charms—who would be immune to the blind spot—still can't just easily see the hivemind. Normally only a creature with both abilities would notice the forming hivemind.

Brakken's own psychic talents give him a special perception unlike the other attendees, so grant each PC a Perception check (DC 38) to pierce through the blind spot and the illusion. Overhead they spot a swirling hivemind – a fleshy ball of tentacles pulsing with brilliant blue-white light as the fervor of the delegates begins to empower it.

Evacuation

Brakken says with complete calm that he feels something taking control of his thoughts, and he is being compelled to contribute to the discussions. He'll only be able to carry out actions on behalf of the PCs for one round, after which he's paralyzed. Across the room, Heid falls to his knees and clutches his head. Lord Kulp struggles to cast a teleport spell, but he fumbles the words.

Nicodemus starts to back out of the room, shouting to his fellow Obscurati officers—who are protected from mental intrusion by Ob magic—to flee. But Eloise Duffet stands still, and even as Nicodemus shakes her she does not respond.

"You sons of bitches," Nicodemus says to the room. "I give you the chance to do something wonderful, but *this* is what unifies you? This is who you really are, ha? Am I the only one power hasn't corrupted? Let this madness take you! You're a cancer upon civilization, and I'll cut you out like I should have from the start."

At the urging of Lya Jierre's ghost, he leaves the room right as the hivemind begins to surge.



A semi-humanoid being of the Gidim race, Sijhen belonged to an invasion force that was trapped for thousands of years by the Axis Seal. Obscurati meddling released it, and it eventually found a way back to its homeworld.

The Gidim can possess corporeal creatures, but in their natural forms they can waver between wholly physical and existing only as barely-visible thoughtforms. Normally they assume the appearance of gray-skinned bipeds with tentacled heads. They subsist on thoughts, not physical food, and their own sentience is dependent on consuming enough complex ideas as sustenance. Their homeworld is itself a thinking being, but the Gidim could only expand by keeping mortal races as slaves.

Sijhen was ancient compared to its people, and it was granted great power in thanks for the news it brought. The Gidim have watched the world for an opening, and when the Axis Seal was broken, they found easy ingress through the dead, stony plane of Ratios, which they stripped dry ages ago.

In this adventure Sijhen merely cameos, but it will be a significant antagonist in Adventure Eleven.

Thoughtflesh Horror

Vicious white light flashes through the room, but Brakken doesn't even blink. The air itself seems to peel open like the petals of a flower at dawn. Tendrils appear throughout the hall, growing outward from random points and then connecting the people caught up in the hivemind. Each tendril is thick, fleshy, and segmented, like an arm at an elbow, but with a new joint every few feet. When they finally connect two people, their eyes begin to glow blue, and tiny arcs of energy stream up and down the tendrils connecting them.

As more and more connections form, the arcs and glowing eyes grow brighter, and the speech of the assembled delegates fades out into a thrum and drone that heaves across the room like waves. The web of skin and nerves begins to spread across each person in the hivemind, rooting them to the ground and leaving only their mouths and their glowing, catatonic eyes exposed. Guards begin to walk in from outside the chamber, and they too are consumed.

The open roof is covered by a spreading mass of thoughtflesh, and the entire building begins to heave upward. There is a sensation of swaying, lumbering steps, which shake the entire structure. Faintly in the distance, people begin to scream.

Otherwise, the chamber is still. Then, in the blue glow from arcing thoughts and the victims' eyes, a figure reveals itself, casting aside a psychic cloak that made it impossible to perceive. The creature—a blue-gray semi-humanoid with tentacles floating around its head and four slits of black eyes—steps into Brakken's field of vision.

A thought reaches into Brakken's mind:

I can sense you there. The role-reversal—you in another body, trying to learn secrets so you can get back your world—it is a complex, ironic, and delicious thought. Whatever was done to this planet, it has made you so wonderfully vulnerable. You have seen a hivemind, but now you shall witness a Godmind. I urge you not to despair. The Gidim shall consume your world, but I will savor the challenge of defeating you.

With that, the Gidim, whom the party should recognize as **Sijhen** from Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*, reaches his hand into Brakken's face. Brakken begins to spasm and a psychic pain begins to drive the party out of his mind. Before they are forced back into their bodies, though, they see Sijhen step away and vanish in a flash of blue-white light.

From their parked airship, they can just barely see, a few miles away, the top of the hill of the Danoran Congress. The entire building is moving, crawling along on massive tentacles that flicker with blue-white light. After a moment it disappears behind the hill, heading toward Cherage's poorer districts.

Godmind

Action. Real-Time. Level 35.

The murder philosophers have birthed a terrifying entity, a psychic singularity that draws in all conscious thought and assimilates all flesh.

Unlike previous hiveminds the PCs have encountered, the Godmind has united several existing latent psychic gestalts. People of different nations and philosophies naturally look to their leaders, and so nearly all the attendees of the Forward Symposium were already stewing in psychic energies. Once Sijhen thwarted the Ob's defenses against hiveminds, the different gestalts rapidly collapsed into one of immense power. Now any weak-willed creature that sees the thoughtform flesh of the Godmind will be compelled to contribute to it, or to let it kill them if it deems them unworthy.

In order to defeat this threat, the PCs will need to destroy the psionic mass within, but that is being continually strengthened by the acquisition of new minds. To mitigate that the party can damage the Godmind's outer shell of flesh, which immobilizes it for a time. They might be able to do that from their airship, or could put the nearby Danoran artillery to use in attacking the creature. They can also influence the entity through their psychic link with Brakken, though they might be driven mad.

Of course, the party might simply decide it's not worth it to them to get involved. They could just fly away and let the Obscurati handle it. If Pemberton is present, he's unconcerned about civilians, but worried that the monster might grow too strong to defeat if not confronted now.

A Minotaur on the Inside

Brakken maintains his mental connection with the PCs. He is in constant pain because he's struggling to resist having his personality subsumed, and if any PCs attempt to share their senses with him, they feel this pain too, and must make a save each round or be shunted back to their own senses.

Brakken can sense the general thoughts and goals of the Godmind and can relay them to the PCs. This primarily translates to Brakken giving PCs updates on the hourly mark as to how the Godmind proceeds. After eight hours, he loses his battle with the entity, and his mind is destroyed.

Until then, though, he can let the party know if their attacks are affecting the monstrosity. In addition, he thinks he might be able to let them enter into mindscape – a psychically-created mental construct where they could engage in a metaphorical battle with the Godmind, to weaken it from the inside. However, it would need to be distracted from outside first, or else the psychic pain would make it difficult for the PCs to stay in the mindscape for long.

The Godmind's Weakness

When the party is about to launch any sort of attack on the Godmind, Brakken telepathically explains that he's figured out why the Godmind is so strong. Each person here is head of a latent hivemind formed from all the people who see that individual as a leader. If those people could be killed in the real world, it would weaken the Godmind, but just as effective would be finding a way to remove someone from the gestalt in the mindscape.

How? Brakken suggests that someone come into the mindscape and debate with the members who make up the Godmind, while the rest of the party deals with the monster in the physical world. Influencing the attendees' opinions could actually affect the outside body. He just warns them to not mention him, because he's busy hiding from the Godmind, and if it realizes he's not 'contributing,' it might kill him.

Spreading Like Insane Ivy

Unless stopped, the Godmind proceeds in methodically overtaking the people of Cherage. Most citizens stand in awe at the creature as it looms over them, or they actively approach it. A few strong-willed individuals manage to recognize the danger and flee.

The central body of the creature is a hundred foot high mass of flesh and stone that surrounds the Congressional Hall, with tiny bits of the metal dome visible at its "head." The entity crawls along on massive tentacles, but it doesn't so much move its limbs as grow its tentacles outward and then pull the body along. Tendrils spread out in every direction that they sense conscious thought, and they gradually encircle the Danoran capital to cut off escape.

These fleshy vines twitch and occasionally blossom with black flower-like petals. Those petals can fire beams that disintegrate nearby creatures, though it only targets those it deems unworthy.

Hour 1: The roots of the Godmind spread through the district surrounding the Congressional Hall. Hundreds of Danorans are joined into the growing hivemind, struck immobile by psionic tendrils. Due to the noble demographics of the district, most people are spared upon their joining with the Godmind, though a handful of invalids and less common servants are slowly burnt to ash by the black flowers.

Hours 2-3: The roots grow around the borders of Cherage, spreading through the hillsides and sparing the more populous areas below. The added influx of nobility and highborn minds increases the criteria for acceptance, and disintegrations among those touched becomes far more common. Thousands die, and black ash of those bodies begins to float across the city. Following these two hours escape becomes impossible for the people in the city proper, with only the boats on the docks providing any sort of refuge from the growing mass of psychic energy.

Hours 4-5: Spreading into the city of Cherage, the roots of the Godmind move through the lower class districts. The massed belief of the noble class deems them unworthy, and hundreds of thousands are disintegrated. Its final act before turning northward is to knock over an orphanage and kill the children inside.

Hours 6-8: Having consumed the city proper, the Godmind heads north to the industrial district. Luckily by now most people have been evacuated, but anyone left behind is consumed.

Hour 8+: After its first eight hours of existence, the Godmind fully overruns the city of Cherage and the surrounding hills. Less than a tenth of the populace manages to flee. Luckily, the lower volume of people outside the city limits inhibits the Godmind's growth, and it will take days to reach the next major inhabitable city to the west.

Breaking the Shell

On their airship just outside of Cherage, the PCs should be able to reach the city within the first half hour. From their aerial vantage, the PCs can assess the situation, but if they come any closer than a thousand feet they start to feel a tug to contribute to the Godmind's mass. While the PCs can readily resist this, the ship's crew won't hold out for long.

The party can probably pilot their airship with a skeleton crew, or they might come up with a way to protect the minds of their crew. Even a simple stirring speech might bolster them enough to resist for a couple minutes, enough time to strafe and get to a safe distance.

Mechanically, the Godmind does not have a statblock. It's the size of a small mountain, and the shell of flesh is too massive and amorphous for normal attacks to kill the Godmind. Damaging it requires narrative solutions, not high attack bonuses.

Godmind Counterattacks

The Godmind is lumbering and slow, but it does not rely on physical might to defend itself. It can affect creatures that come within 800 feet with a psychic suggestion once per minute (**Attack:** +18 vs. Will; **Hit:** The target must obey a command [save ends]), typically compelling them to approach and either be consumed by tendrils or annihilated by the disintegrating blooms.

Against creatures within 250 feet, it can sprout a fleshy black blossom and fire one disintegrating ray each round (**Attack:** +20 vs. Reflex; **Hit:** 30 force damage). The blossom only has 50 hit points and AC 20, and once it is destroyed it takes a minute for the Godmind to grow a new one.

Against creatures that come within 100 feet, it can swing a massive tentacle, equivalent to a naval attack of +30, or a normal attack with a +50 bonus that does 100 damage, and can target everything in a huge sweeping arc.

Finally, since the Godmind controls Cardinal Banderesso, it was able to command the planetar Adimel he summoned to approach, at which point it was dominated. The angel struggles against the domination of the Godmind, and if the party can free it, it will serve them. It recognizes the flawed morality of its summoner, but still must protect him.

Aerial Bombardment

If the party's airship was retrofitted from the R.N.S. *Coaltongue*, its brand has sufficient power to blast a hole in the shell. Otherwise, a normal broadside of cannons is equivalent to a single battery of artillery—enough to distract the monster, but not open its skin.

However, when the ship comes into range, the Godmind targets the ship with disintegrating rays in an attempt to disable its flight support. If the party hasn't prepared countermeasures, the ship begins to spiral out of control. PCs acting as engineer and pilot can keep it aloft long enough for it to land safely, but then the Godmind will slowly advance. Perhaps the ship crashes amid tendrils, and while they rush to repair the levitationals, the party must kill disintegration flowers that keep sprouting up.

The party could ram the Godmind, but it would cripple the ship and likely doom the crew. They might also pick up munitions from barracks and the artillery batteries, and then bomb the Godmind.

Artillery

Some PCs may realize the potential of using the Danoran artillery batteries on the islands in the bay. The Danorans assume the party is hostile and fight to defend the installation, possibly even firing at the party's ship if they stand still long enough. Getting the artillery's aid requires subduing the defenders (equivalent of a Danoran Frigate Crew, page 248), then finding the commander and convincing him to go along with the plan (Diplomacy or Intimidate DC 30) to turn their weapons on their own city.

If the party just kills everyone, it takes them half an hour to set up the battery to fire. If they don't kill the defenders, the crew can be ready to fire in ten minutes, and the commander will be willing to talk to the other battery commanders, to avoid more combat. At least three of the four batteries must be trained on the Godmind for its outer shell to break, though a single battery is enough to distract the entity enough for a mindscape attack.

Boarding Action

The party could land and hack through the skin over the dome, spending a minute or so creating a big enough hole for the party to squirm through. Each round the skin on the surface pulses with blue-white energy, and PCs must make a save or be teleported somewhere that the Godmind has tendrils; basically this scatters the party around Cherage. They'll need some sort of dimensional lock to keep from being driven away, or else they'll have to succeed Acrobatics checks (DC 30) to squeeze through without being touched by the writhing tendrils around the hole.

It might seem like the most direct approach is to teleport into its brain and start cutting up 'neurons' (i.e., the symposium attendees). But like with a boarding action, creatures that try to teleport inside must succeed a save or be redirected to somewhere else the Godmind's flesh reaches.

Once they get inside, though, teleporting around doesn't risk being redirected.

Clash of the Titans

What do you get when a PC uses a portal to bring in one of the fey titans, who might have agreed to defend Risur? You get an amazing battle between colossal monsters. This certainly counts as a distraction so the party can engage the Godmind in the mindscape, and if they lend some aerial aid to the battle their titan ally can tear a hole in the Godmind's face so the party can physically attack its 'brain.'

Mindscape Debate

If the party distracts the Godmind with heavy damage—airship broadside, artillery bombardment, etc.—Brakken alerts them that there's an opening for them to confront the gestalt in charge of the creature.

Any PC who shares Brakken's senses for the next minute appears in a shimmering version of the Congressional Hall, except that the walls have become windows that look out upon the devastation the Godmind is wreaking. Psychic constructs of the major attendees are present, while the other attendees' faces press out of the walls and floors.

Initially, all the attendees are immobile and do not notice the PCs, but if a minute passes without the Godmind being distracted, it does a sort of 'mental security sweep.' Each PC sharing Brakken's senses must succeed a Bluff or Stealth check (DC 20) each round to hide as the attendees lazily look around the mindscape for intruders. If a PC is spotted in this way, the Godmind assaults him with psychic pain, forcing him to make a save each round or be expelled from the mindscape.

Should the PCs try fighting in the mindscape, this demiplane is just a mental construct, so no injuries suffered here carry over to the real world. However, psychic effects function, and within the odd logic of the mindscape other magic can be effective. *Invisibility*, for instance, can hide one's presence, even though the Godmind isn't using real eyes to see you.

Influencing the Mind

Some options include:

- **Rescue.** Cast *invisibility* on an attendee, then perform a *remove affliction* ritual to restore their mind and a *magic circle* ritual so they won't be affected again. This frees their minds to act in the mindscape (perhaps aiding the PC in any other debate tactics), though their bodies will still be physically trapped by fleshy tendrils in reality.
- **Defame.** Argue that a particular member of the symposium is unworthy, perhaps by bringing up economic comparisons of their nation's contributions versus other nations (History DC 20 and then Diplomacy DC 30). At your discretion, a successful argument could cause the Godmind to disintegrate one of the minds making up its gestalt, which removes one of the mindscape ectoplasmids from the Inside the Brain battle.
- **Impeach.** Untether a particular member of the symposium from his followers. This requires convincing the person that he is unfit to lead the group, or that the group is unworthy to follow him. This requires forming a rapport with the person (Insight DC 25), then either a challenging deconstruction of the person's identity (Diplomacy DC 40) or a severe personal attack (Intimidate DC 40). Success here removes one of the mindscape ectoplasmids from the Inside the Brain battle, but does not kill the affiliated attendee.
- **Reframe.** Reframe the debate, in an attempt to turn the goal of the Godmind away from economic efficiency and instead toward moral magnanimity. This is difficult, and first requires showing oneself as an equal in the Godmind's eyes (History DC 25 and Insight DC 25 to know what to discuss, then Diplomacy DC 30 to form an intellectual rapport). Next the PC has to make a compelling morality argument (Religion DC 25 and Diplomacy DC 30). While this isn't enough to defeat the Godmind, it gets it arguing amongst itself for a few minutes, enough time perhaps for the PCs to get into its brain.

For any of these options, a Bluff check can stand in for a History or Religion check, but increase the DC by 10 in order to spout sufficiently convincing academic babble.

Inside the Brain

Once the PCs manage to find a way inside the Congressional Hall, they discover over a hundred people trapped inside knotty thoughtflesh that pulses with arcs of energy. The only real clear space is up near the speaking dais, since most of the Ob officers who were up there managed to avoid being trapped. Otherwise it's a thick tangle of trunk-like tendrils with only narrow paths between them.

Sixty feet up near the roof and relatively hidden are two of the black disintegration 'flowers' (Perception DC 34). They remain coiled up, but will blossom and begin attacking if the party takes any hostile actions.

The eyes of the trapped attendees glow. Three of those attendees in particular—Dmitra Takhenova, Tito Banderesso, and Eloise Duffet—have enough sway over the gestalt that they have manifested ectoplasmic bodies that defend the brain of the Godmind. These resemble the original people, but are white-green slime.

Mindscape Core

- 3 Mindscape Ectoplasmids
- 2 Black Blossoms

Mindscape Ectoplasmid	Level 26 Lurker
Large aberrant humanoid	**XP** 15,000
HP 240; **Bloodied** 120	**Initiative** +22
AC 40, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 39, **Will** 38	**Perception** +25
Speed 8, fly 6	Darkvision
Resist weapons 15, acid 20, cold 20	

Traits

▸ **Plasmid**

It squeezes between obstacles like slime through a sewer grate.

The ectoplasmid ignores difficult terrain and can squeeze through spaces as narrow as a few inches.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Neural Tentacle** (psychic) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Its arm slashes out, but even as you anticipate the blow you feel it already having wounded you, as if thinking about it is the same as being struck by it.

Special: This attack cannot harm creatures the ectoplasmid is hidden from.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +29 vs. Will

Hit: 3d8+12 damage and 10 psychic damage, and the target takes a cumulative -1 penalty to Will defense until the end of the encounter. If the total penalty is -5 or greater, the target becomes controlled by the Godmind and acts at its command.

Miss: 10 psychic damage.

▸ **Lash and Withdraw** ✦ At-Will

Effect: The ectoplasmid moves its speed and uses *neural tentacle* at any point during its movement.

Minor Actions

✓ **Contribute** (charm) ✦ At-Will, 1/round

The entire hall thrums with striations of blue-white light that pour into the ectoplasmid, then flash from its eyes into your mind.

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +28 vs. Will

Hit: The target cannot take hostile actions against this ectoplasmid (save ends).

First Failed Save: The target is instead dominated (save ends).

Triggered Actions

▸ **Mental Manifestation** ✦ At-Will

You strike it down, and one of the bodies encased in thoughtflesh somewhere in this chamber gurgles. A moment later the same ectoplasmic creature manifests across the room.

Trigger: The ectoplasmid is reduced to 0 hit points.

Effect: At the beginning of the ectoplasmid's next turn, it reappears with 60 hit points anywhere in the chamber, and it acts immediately.

Special: If the person whose mind is creating the ectoplasmid – Takhenova, Banderesso, or Duffet – is removed from the hivemind or killed, the ectoplasmids no longer regenerate in this way.

Str	22 (+19)	**Dex**	29 (+22)	**Wis**	24 (+20)
Con	25 (+20)	**Int**	26 (+21)	**Cha**	26 (+21)

Alignment Making the World Better **Languages** telepathy

Black Blossom Level 24 Goon Artillery

Large aberrant magical beast **XP** 6,050

HP 170; **Bloodied** 85 **Initiative** +16

AC 24, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 26 **Perception** +18

Speed 0 Darkvision

Resist weapons 15, acid 20, cold 20

Traits

▸ **Godmind Defenses**

The thoughtflesh of the living congress peels open to reveal a knob of black petals that flicker with green light motes.

Due to the sheer amount of fleshy matter around the Godmind, it's challenging to spot the black blossom until it unfurls, revealing the dark insides of its 'petals.' One minute after the blossom is destroyed, it reforms somewhere else within 20 squares of where it was before.

Standard Actions

✓ **Disintegrate** (force) ✦ At-Will

The green motes brighten and form into the chart of a line. Then the line lances out and strikes silently, turning all it touches to black ash.

Attack: Ranged 50 (one creature); +27 vs. Reflex

Hit: 30 force damage.

Terrain

The Congressional Hall is a roughly two-hundred foot diameter room in a much larger building, with a southern dais and a horseshoe of seating on three levels, each five feet above the next. Dozens of fleshy trunks grow up from the ground where symposium attendees were trapped, and aside from the dais there's not more than ten feet of open space in any given area.

One section near the north wall of the hall has enough tendrils to effectively form a cage that traps any creature larger than Tiny. The tendrils are easy to strike and it takes 50 hit points of damage to clear an opening.

Many of the thoughtflesh trunks leave narrow gaps that function as difficult terrain and require an Acrobatics check (DC 20) to weave through without touching either trunk. If a creature touches one of the trunks—either from failing this check or being forced into it—it must succeed a save or be teleported to any location in the hall. Typically it will send creatures to the 'cage.'

Tactics

The three ectoplasmids pursue the PCs through the tendril forest. They strike and slip away, since they don't have to slow down to squeeze through the forest. Each round they also sling contribute to try to make some enemies stop fighting so they can focus on the others.

Their ability to regenerate might make them unkillable, but if the PCs either kill or free the people whom the ectoplasmids are based on, the oozes can be destroyed for good.

Meanwhile, the black blossoms fire *disintegrates* each round, though they're easy to destroy.

Free Your Mind

The hundred or so people trapped here can be freed if the tendrils holding them are destroyed (about 50 damage frees one victim), though most of them are comatose from extreme psychic damage. Area attacks can take out many at once, but will kill the people inside.

If the party simply kills the three ectoplasmids, they basically have free reign of the brain to cut it to pieces. But if the fight is ongoing, once thirty people are killed or freed, the Godmind's outer body stops moving and begins to shake in agony. The tendrils' pulsing turns from blue to red, and the entire Congressional Hall topples sideways, upending the battle and forcing creatures to climb or fly through a web of tendrils. From now on, creatures who touch a tendril are not teleported, but traveling through the room becomes difficult.

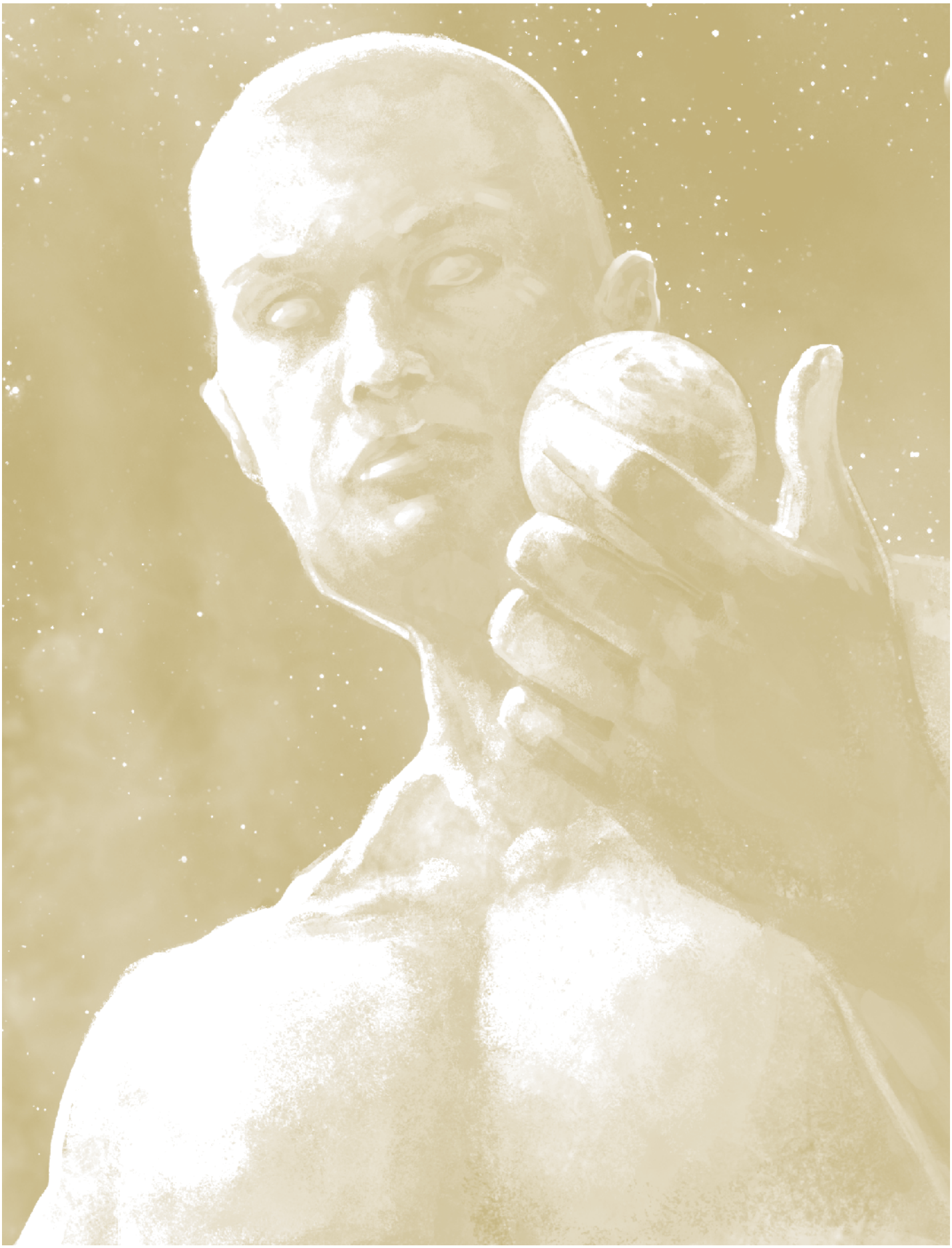
Once either all the ectoplasmids are destroyed and the party does some brain surgery, or at least sixty of the victims are freed or killed, the Godmind gives out a psychic whimper, and its entire thoughtflesh mass begins to dissolve. Over the next minute the Congressional Hall tumbles to the ground, but the building survives with enough integrity that the people inside can be rescued with time.

Around the city, every person who was trapped by the Godmind knows that it was the party who saved them. Though wary of forming a new hivemind, the population begins to surge toward them to thank them for saving the city, and an impromptu parade is arranged if the PCs will have it.

Aftermath

Well, the PCs have stopped the Godmind from consuming the world. Nicodemus and the Ob—who abandoned the city at its hour of need—will try to paint the Godmind as a result of the party's meddling. But the survivors of Cherage will actually speak out in favor of the PCs' heroism, and will slow Danor's march to war against Risur.

Still, Drakr, Crisillyir, Ber, and the other nations will be steered toward war by Nicodemus. And as the party has just seen, there are threats from other planes threatening this world. Things aren't as bleak as they might have seemed when the sun and stars vanished, but the victory is not won yet.





Adventure Number 11

Gorged on Ruins

From the Pen of	Liz Courts and Ryan Nock
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Stunning Cartographic Displays by	James Hazelett Jonathan Roberts
Masterful Interior Illustrations by	Renan Moraes, Claudio Pozas, Dede Putra, ShenFei, and artists of history
with Layout and Graphic Design by	Frank Michienzi
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Special Thanks to YouTube, for letting me rewatch "Invaders from Mars" in Spanish so I could try not to recreate that terrible, terrible movie.

ADVENTURE ELEVEN: Introduction

Wherein Things Fall Apart

Nicodemus and the Obscurati officially control the nations of Lanjyr, with the party's homeland of Risur the sole hold-out. However, in Adventure Ten, *Godmind* the party might have taken the first steps in eroding the Ob's total control by saving Cherage, the capital of Danor, from a horrible psychic monster that would have killed tens of thousands of people.

Nicodemus is mobilizing every military under his command to conquer Risur, which he erroneously sees as the chief obstacle to him creating his perfect world. Taking only military prowess into account, Risur will fall in a matter of weeks. But if the party saved Cherage, Danor's military will drag its feet. Three other great nations—Ber, Drakr, and Crisillyir—constitute the bulk of the Obscurati's military forces. If the party can change the minds of their people as they did the Danorans, Risur can be spared an invasion, and the domination of the Obscurati can be weakened.

Fortunately, those three nations are just as doomed as Danor was, each in their own unique way.

Calls for help come from Ber–to investigate a city from which no one is allowed to leave; from Drakr–to halt the advance of an army of mad men and frost giants led by warlords not seen for millennia; and from Crisillyir–to spare the capital Alais Primos from tearing itself apart in apocalyptic despair. And though the party might not realize at first, each doomsday holds the possibility to acquire items or knowledge that will help them in their upcoming mission to the Gyre in Adventure Twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*.

ADAPTING THE ADVENTURE

If you use *Gorged on Ruins* as a standalone adventure, you can simply use one of the three acts in a place that fits your campaign, or you'll need a unifying thread to tie them all together–one without all the baggage of ten previous adventures. The lost riders could have been released by the trials in Alais Primos, but what do the Gidim have to do with it? You might use that act independently from the others, or move Ursaliña to near Alais Primos, and have the Crypta Hereticarum as the secret under the city. The psychic invaders instead become monsters released from the vault, and once the party defeats them, a host of angels arrive to cleanse the rest of the vault.

MEANWHILE AT THE OBSCURATI?

This adventure challenges the party with little direct threat from the Obscurati–they're busy planning a vast military action and designing a way to fix the colossus to try to fix the Axis Seal.

Thanks to the spycraft of **El Extraño** of Ber, the party is mostly shielded from divinations by the Obscurati, so unless they go announcing their plans, the Ob won't be able to keep up with the PCs. In truth, Nicodemus's pool of mastermind henchmen has been seriously eroded by the RHC's efforts; with fewer geniuses suggesting clever ways to outwit their enemies, Nicodemus has to rely on cruder brute-force solutions like overwhelming military force.

As a baseline we assume the party has staved off the most serious threats to Risur, and so can count on their people's loyal aid. The main challenge is that time is tight before disaster strikes other nations, not that Risur might fall into chaos. Of course, Risur might still be in trouble if the party actually failed in Adventure Nine, *The Last Starry Sky* to stop the activation of the Ob's lighthouse in Flint.

However, we don't want the party to forget that the world is under the Ob's control, so during each act we'll highlight Obscurati activities. The Ob agents the party encounters won't be equipped to challenge high-level Risuri constables, and they're less concerned with fighting Gidim, eschatologists, or gods than they are with forcefully eliminating dissent.

Multiple Days of Doom

Three great threats endanger different regions of the world, but each offers an advantage to the party in their overarching quest to undo the Obscurati's ritual.

Introduction

The party's allies and agents report a variety of threats to them, and it's up to the PCs to decide what is most important. Their ultimate goal—or at least the one advocated by the party's advisor Harkover Lee—is to travel to the Gyre and make bonds so they can connect this world with other planes. First, though, they must find out how to repeat the Obscurati's ritual. And it wouldn't hurt if they could stop three invading countries from conquering Risur while they're at it.

If the party decides to head straight for the Gyre, they'll have a hard time of it, and if they get back you can use this adventure as a starting point for all the catastrophes that gripped the world while they were gone.

High Power, or Epic?

The party is saving the world, their homeland is being invaded, and cosmic threats are afoot. But some groups will prefer a more down-to-earth play style, while others are fine with the PCs becoming the Justice League. For the former, we offer options for the party to take their time, understand the situation, interact with NPCs, and use alliances to win the day. For the latter, they have an airship. It's perfectly valid for them to fly in, attack from above, and ask questions later.

Act One: Shackled Thoughts

A Gidim leviathan—a ship that acts as a seed for colonization by the psychic race—has reached this world and taken root beneath the Beran city of **Ursaliña**. **Glaucia Evora**, a gnoll lawkeeper from Ber, calls upon the party to help discover why the city has gone silent. If the party can save the city, the ruler of Ber can be convinced to call off his part of the invasion of Risur. More importantly, the leviathan carries a *vortex array*, a type of living sensor that will help the party find the magical energies they need in Adventure Twelve.



A semi-humanoid being of the Gidim race, Sijhen belonged to an invasion force that was trapped for thousands of years by the Axis Seal. Obscurati meddling released it, and it eventually found a way back to its homeworld.

Sijhen was ancient compared to its people, and it was granted great power in thanks for the news it brought. When the Axis Seal was broken, they found easy ingress through the dead, stony plane of Ratios, which they stripped dry ages ago. While other Gidim coordinate the colonization of Ursaliña, Sijhen's mission is to proactively combat the party and others who might try to stop the consumption of their world.

Background–Gidim Harvesting

The Gidim—psychic entities from a far plane, which the party first learned of in Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*—were barred for millennia from this world. Now that the Axis Seal is open, they seek to claim it and use it as a psychic feeding trough for their sentient homeworld.

The Gidim are composed of thought that is capable of taking physical form. Just as normal creatures need to consume various nutrients for health, the Gidim need a diverse diet of thoughts and emotions. They have built an entire civilization around 'farming' other planes. Any world with animal life can produce simple thoughtfood like fear, satisfaction, or affection, but it takes other intelligent minds to produce delicacies such as ennui, schadenfreude, saudade, or agape.

They began their colonization in Ursaliña because its vibrant culture produced strong emotions that drew the leviathan like the scent of sizzling bacon. For a few weeks the Gidim stealthily infiltrated the structures of government, snaring the minds of leaders and killing trouble-makers. The people of Ursaliña have realized something is amiss, and they do their best to avoid attracting attention, but the Gidim-controlled leadership issue decrees to try to force the city to keep up its festivals and arts, to keep the 'nutrients' flowing.

The Gidim control is based in **Cadagyr Palace**, the city's seat of governance. They have a major operation in the **Jaula de Oso**, a prison that serves as public arena for sports and the city's famous bear duels, which they use as a breeding pit for Gidim warbeasts. And the leviathan itself materialized in caverns once inhabited by the Ancients, beneath the city's bardic college **Triunfo Vida**. Invisible creatures called oculi float above the streets looking for trouble, and the city police brutally crush anyone who publicly questions all the strange goings-on.

The Gidim leviathan is commanded by experienced infiltrators (or, more accurately, Gidim personality-constructs that have cloned the knowledge of previous colonists of other worlds), but they are advised by **Sijhen**, the same Gidim wayfarer whom the party contested against in Adventure Three and briefly encountered at the end of Adventure Ten. Sijhen waits for the PCs, but underestimates how much they have grown in power.

Liberty Calls for Help

Before the Obscurati enacted their grand ritual, they identified those with the authority and ideology to oppose their new world order. In Ber, that meant the *executores dola liberta*, an elite force of lawkeeping women who are charged with punishing those who would steal the liberty of others. The Ob assassinated a handful of high-ranking *executores*, leaving enough of a hierarchical vacuum that the remaining members haven't been able to keep Obscurati officers from taking control.

The one surviving executore of high rank is Glaucia Evora, a stern gnoll whom the party met and traveled with in Adventure Six. She's dispatched lieutenants across Ber, and a bit of foresight motivated her to send a couple subordinates over the Anthras Mountains and into Risur, one to Flint and the other to Slate. They keep in touch with Glaucia via *sending*, and so are able to relay a request for help.

Glaucia asks for the party to meet her in Seobriga where she can give them details in full. (Also, she's being hunted by Obscurati agents, and needs the party to stop them.) She worries the Obscurati are doing something foul in Urasaliña. No news comes out of the city, and the *executores* she sends in never report back. She tempts them with the idea that if they can prove the Ob are hostile to Ber, she can convince the Bruse to call off Ber's invasion of Risur.

You Are Being Watched

It's only a matter of days before Ursaliña is consumed and a massive tendril rises up into the night sky, allowing the Gidim homeworld to begin to feed.

Any allies the party looks for in Ursaliña are either hiding or mind-controlled. The party's activities are being observed by oculi throughout the city, and if they are suspicious then the city police will try to bring them in to meet the local lord. Getting caught or causing enough of a commotion will bring them to the attention of Sijhen, who will do whatever it needs to kill the PCs, with no concern for casualties among the civilians, who after all the Gidim consider to just be chattel.

In the midst of this, a more secretive agent of the conspiracy operates in the shadows; **Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen** seeks specimens of the Gidim in order to understand their psychic physiology and report back to Nicodemus. His involvement foreshadows a dramatic development in the campaign's finale, when the Obscurati leader takes control of the hivemind and uses its power to dominate the entire world.

Events might progress slowly with the party carefully figuring out who they can trust, discovering the horrible truth of the Gidim invasion, and then launching a surprise strike to destroy the leviathan. Or the party might storm into the city, attract every Gidim warbeast and mind-controlled soldier into a quick massive brawl, and hope to survive long enough to clean up the aftermath.

In either case, once the party attacks the leviathan, Sijhen has the living ship tear its way out of the ground. It takes to the sky and begins to raze the city, prompting an aerial skirmish visible to an audience of tens of thousands.

Act Two: When Doom Came to Drakr

The fey titan known as the Voice of Rot once laired in the far north, what today is the nation of Drakr. With his gaze he could command the corpses of beasts and the spirits of men, but Ancient heroes drove him south after a battle in which they plucked out one of his eyes. Now he can only control the dead that rot, and has no sway over spirits and ghosts.

Now five comets—like white serpents in the black sky—streak out from the Gyre and crash into Drakr's frozen north, heralding the return of mythic warlords who seek a final battle. **Grandis Komanov**, a cult leader and follower of the Voice of Rot, will use their might, an army of radicals, and the recovered eye of her lord to murder all who would resist. Every death she claims for her lord will strengthen the white serpent as he waits in the Gyre for the end of the world.

Background—Doomsday Eschatologists

Politics in Drakr have long had a heavy philosophical component, where charismatic and erudite thinkers sought the support of open-minded lords. Recently the most dominant philosophy has been Heid Eschatol, based on the writing of **Vlendam Heid**, who advocated a focus on proper endings—and inherent in that, following through on complex tasks in order to achieve those good endings.

However, a radical faction of the eschatologists arose under the influence of Grandis Komanov, who wove old, weighty myths together with Heid's teachings, convincing many that the end of the world was nigh, and indeed that it was their obligation to bring about its conclusion. Unsurprisingly, the Great Eclipse caused by the Obscurati massively swelled the ranks of Komanov's followers, and now tens of thousands have been swept up in a crusade to provoke the fall of civilization.



Grandis traces her bloodline to the oldest dwarven warlords from before Drakr, before the Clergy, and before even the Demonocracy. Raised a common metalsmith by her bitterly poor father, she studied magic so she could make her fortune.

Once, while trapped in a massive winter storm, Grandis read a book of the teachings of Vlendam Heid on the nature of endings. Her interpretation of his philosophy was markedly unorthodox, and she cultivated her own radical branch of eschatology based not on preparing for how things end, but in actively ending things.

By delving into forbidden lore over the years, what was once mere greed and narcissism has been corrupted into a genuine insane longing for the end of the world. She made contact with the Voice of Rot, a primordial entity who exists to witness the world's death. Since Grandis believes truly nothing is more important than her, and some day even she must die, it is merciful to kill everyone, lest they have to endure a world without her.

Now the army besieges **Bhad Ryzhavdut**, the easternmost city of Drakr. Their forces far outnumber the defenders, but most of the soldiers are gripped with apocalyptic excitement, taking the 'end of the world' as an excuse for debauchery and sin. The 'hivemind' effect created by the Obscurati's new planar energies has linked the entire army together psychically. Bereft of free will and surrounded by a living blizzard, they slavishly obey the orders of Komanov, who stands aloof from her fanatical horde.

Drakran legends tell of the five Lost Riders, the **Vsadni**, warlords who pridefully set out into a blizzard to find a great battle, and disappeared after they refused to seek shelter or ask for directions. To aid his minion Komanov, the Voice of Rot called down five comets, each bearing a dark titan crafted from the matter of dying worlds. Grandis bound these enigmatic heralds of the Gyre to the souls of the Lost Riders, and ordered them to lead her army to the world's ultimate battle.

The army claimed part of the old city of Bhad Ryzhavdut, but then settled in for a siege. The doomsday army contents itself with a wild festival of costumes and drinking, and four of the Lost Riders simply patrol the city perimeter on their steeds, playing ancient songs of war to keep the soldiers in a frenzy. Meanwhile, the fifth Vsadni helps Komanov assemble her lord's lost eye into an arcanoscientific weapon that tears the souls from whoever it is aimed at.

Komanov could simply destroy the city, but when her weapon is ready, she'll be able to turn every one of its defenders into another soldier in her army.

Mystery Box

After spotting the comets crashing far to the north, the party receives a package out of thin air. Vlendam Heid, lured to Bhad Ryzhavdut by agents of Komanov, was caught in the siege and realized what the Vsadni were. Unable to directly *sending* the PCs (Heid doesn't know the spell, and no one there who does knows the PCs), he used his novel understanding of post-Eclipse teleportation magic to send them a box containing a plea for help and a brochure about archaeological curios tied to the ancient tales of the Lost Riders.

The situation when they arrive depends on how long they wait to help. Komanov has nearly assembled her arcanoscientific weapon, but it takes her a week to work out the kinks and be able to safely use it. Then within hours the city falls, and her army is bolstered by tens of thousands. She captures Heid as a trophy, and then heads for Mirsk. They lay siege a week later, as Komanov retunes her weapon, and a few days later Mirsk is annihilated. Then Komanov turns her gaze toward Trekhom, capital of Drakr.

Even with their power level, the PCs aren't likely to be able to face an entire army themselves. They might defeat the Vsadni, which lowers the army's morale and slows their advance. Or they could sneak through the army and find Komanov tinkering, and try to cut off the head of the snake. But Komanov is empowered by her fanatics. Indeed, the best way to defeat a doomsday philosopher is to debate her. If the party can cut down the pillars of her ideology, the army will doubt her, which dispels the hivemind and breaks her power.

However they defeat Komanov, she pledges that her master the Voice of Rot will witness this world's end. But for now, stopping the radical eschatologists will make the PCs heroes to Drakr, which will convince the Drakran military to turn back from their invasion of Risur to defend their homeland.

Act Three: Trial of the Century

The people of Crisillyir gather by the tens of thousands to place their gods on trial. Each execution kills not only the god, but all those who have remained devout despite the Ob's ritual, which has made people more rational and less faithful. And as those followers perish, the web of wards placed upon the nation to hold back dormant evil falter. Left unchecked, they'll unleash a fiery cataclysm on the capital city.



Tasked with rooting out demonic influence, Vitus learned of the Obscurati's conspiracy and was captured trying to infiltrate it. After his escape (or rescue by the party), he discovered how deeply his religion's leadership had been twisted by the Ob's influence. With the Great Eclipse he has decided it is his destiny to cleanse his religion.

A geneu credeto (literally "spirit of belief," but more colloquially known as a "godhand"), Vitus's flesh and faith are one, and in battle his fists carry the weight of the combined devotion of tens of millions of adherents to the Clergy. He grew up in a monastery, then spent two decades traveling across Lanjyr defeating and capturing evil remnants of the Demonocracy.

Serene yet imposing, Vitus believes everyone has within them the potential to transcend mortal frailty and the temptations of sin, and he humbly strives to be an example of that path. Curiously, he has a great fondness for board games, which he justifies as being an encouragement for mental improvement. One of his bracers unfolds into a game board, which can be played with simple stones.

He will be wary of interference, even if the party saved him in Adventure Seven. If he was not rescued, he nevertheless could have escaped at a later time. If he died, another figure can fill his same role.

Before then, the party needs to gain access to a holy vault in the city's grand librarium. Only there can they find the details of the Ancient ritual the Obscurati used to open the Axis Seal and alter the world's link to the cosmos. If the librarium burns down, the party might never be able to undo the Ob's grand design.

Divine Trials

The Clergy of Crisillyir lost many of its hierarchs during the Great Eclipse. Those who weren't secretly part of the Obscurati the whole time were killed, and fake suicide notes were left wherein they recanted their faith. Now the public has turned resentful of the gods, and they have taken to putting them on trial.

This is not merely metaphorical. The old demoness **Ashima-Shimtu** long hid the secret *sacrament of apotheosis* ritual, and for refusing to share its power the Clergy imprisoned her in their Vault of Heresies. But the spells binding her weakened, and she was able to reach out via blood magic and share the ritual with a few people she knew would use it against the Clergy.

Adventure Overview

Morgan Cippiano, head of the Flint branch of the Crisillyir-based Family crime syndicate, asks to accompany the party to try to save his homeland. In the capital city of Alais Primos he introduces the party to **Donna Aneenya**, overall head of the Family.

The goal of finding the Axis Seal ritual leads the party to the Grand Librarium, which is across the square from the site of the ongoing god trials. The library's demiplane vault can only be opened if two people agree—the nation's secular leader **Arch Saecula Degaspare** and the godhand who is putting its gods on trial, **Vitus Sigismund**. Degaspare won't help unless the party can stop the trials and save her city, and Sigismund insists on finishing off his pantheon before he'll aid the party.

Sigismund knows the church was corrupt, but hopes that the 'tribunal of the people' will find the foundation of the church—the teachings of the beloved god Triegenes—to be true. Though he claims impartiality as a judge, his fanatic ally **Legate Tullius** incites bitter verdicts from the mob, and together they will likely doom the city.

One possible resolution to the madness that has gripped the city would be to put the god Triegenes himself on trial, and then to achieve a not guilty verdict. Degaspare suggests evidence might be found in the Vault of Heresies, and if the party has investigated the motivations behind the god trials they might want to confront Ashima-Shimtu on their own.

The moment they arrive at the vault, however, old wards placed by the Clergy call in a host of angels. Long forbidden by the Axis Seal from answering the Clergy's prayers, they come now to purge the vault. The party will find the celestial beings obdurate and unwilling to delay, so to find the evidence they need they'll have to rush, or perhaps attack the holy messengers. As for Ashima-Shimtu, the demoness has complex desires, and though she wants to see the Clergy fall, a nascent empathy within her might lead her to aid the party in order to stop innocents from dying due to Triegenes's execution.

Back in Alais Primos the trial begins, with Morgan Cippiano standing in as a proxy for Triegenes. If Triegenes is found guilty, Morgan will be used as a focus for the *sacrament of apotheosis*, and then he'll be executed. The gathered masses jeer and shout for a guilty plea, but the godhand

AIRSHIP JOURNEYS

The party should have an airship courtesy of Benedict Pemberton, and if we assume an average speed of 10 knots (or ship speed 10), the ship should be able to travel about 300 miles in a day. Use the following baseline for travel time between major points in the adventure.

	HOURS OF TRAVEL TO:					
FROM:	**Flint**	**Seobriga**	**Ursaliña**	**Bhad Rhyzhavdut**	**Alais Primos**	**Sid Minos**
Flint	–	56	40	74	42	48
Seobriga	56	–	64	100	34	30
Ursaliña	40	64	–	124	74	75
Bhad Rhyzhavdut	74	100	124	–	62	68
Alais Primos	42	34	74	62	–	8
Sid Minos	48	30	75	68	8	–

AERIAL ENCOUNTERS

Because of weak air mana, the world did not have flying creatures larger than albatrosses until a few months ago, so any monsters that might accost the party while they're flying would be new arrivals from other planes.

If you want to sic a random encounter on your players as they travel, you could have a storm roll upon them, but instead of thunder created by lightning, the storm roars with an open portal to another plane. As the winds buffet the party's ship, they can glimpse a hole in the sky, and beyond it what appears to be a world being ground to pieces by invisible gear teeth. Then the portal can collapse, spitting something out at the last second that can attack the party.

DOCKING AND DEFENSE

The enchantments Pemberton granted the party's ship means that it can hover, and the PCs can simply jump overboard and *featherfall* to the ground. Getting back on board would either require some long ladders or magic. Landing the ship probably isn't feasible.

Smart players will realize that, with a near pitch-black sky, it's possible to fly the ship over even an inhabited area and have it not be detected (though sailing ships work better for this than ones with steam-powered propellers). Most people don't look skyward, and if the PCs are careful they have amazing stealth options.

If the party gets discovered by enemies, enemy militaries have enough troops to slowly damage the ship with sustained small arms fire, and each force has some preparations against new flying threats. Drakrans have immense cannons that can wheel upward if needed. Crisillyir has plenty of trained priests capable of calling down pillars of flame, and a few who can summon actual angels. Beran druids are learning to adopt winged forms, and reckless skylancers are practicing with deployable backpack gliders so they can teleport straight into the air and land on the deck of the party's vessel.

Vitus makes a show of letting the party offer evidence. But even should the party make a convincing enough argument to sway the maddened crowd, Vitus refuses to accept, and he uses himself as the focus of the *sacrament*, then kills himself.

This causes thousands of years of wards to crumble, foremost those around the volcano Enzyo Mons that looms over Alais Primos. It erupts, and the evil essence of every heretic and curse hurled into its maw takes the form of a titanic lava dragon, which sweeps toward Alais Primos. With little time, the party must decide whether to enter the librarium's vault and get the precious ritual, or try to fight the dragon and save hundreds of thousands of lives.

Rewards

The party begins this adventure at 25th level, and should gain a level after each act, reaching 28th level at the end. From that point on, the party's motivations should be how they can change the world, not how they can get more power.

What Comes Next?

To help you manage your players' expectations, know that in Adventure Twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*, the party will receive a call for help from the Unseen Court in the Dreaming, which they can answer on their way to the Gyre.

When the spiraling cloud passes over Flint, if the party flies their ship to the peak of Cauldron Hill they'll be drawn to the edge of the Gyre, where the plane of Av and the mirrored worlds of the Dreaming and the Bleak Gate are being sheared free from each other. Ships carrying warriors of the Golden Legion of Egal the Shimmering pillage the planes, looking for treasure before the worlds are torn apart.

The party can try to evacuate some of the fey, but the Dreaming itself shatters as it crashes into the Gyre. By questing through dying planes they can form a link to the anima of those worlds, which will give them the option to restore the plane when they recreate the Axis Seal ritual. All the while the Voice of Rot coils tightly around Reida, the plane of time that defines the fate of the party's homeworld, and in order to spare the world from destruction they must free Reida from the fey titan's grasp.

That probably entails driving him into a black hole. So don't be afraid to go epic in this adventure; we've got crazier stuff still left ahead.

PROLOGUE: Fortress Risur

After the party saves the day in Danor (or possibly left Cherage to be consumed by a horrid godmind), Principal Minister Harkover Lee requests they return to Risur for some necessary governance, and to speak with some couriers who request succor. If nothing else, their ship likely needs repairs and restocking. This gives the PCs an opportunity to use the royal coffers to acquire new magic items (detailed in Adventure Nine), and to deal with personal plots in their homeland.

It's up to the players whether they'd rather return to Flint where they likely have the most allies, or to Slate, the official capital of Risur. In either case, time is short, since four nations are preparing to invade. Magic aids any repairs the ship needs, and it becomes the work of half the city to get the monarch and his or her allies what they need.

As soon as the party has had a chance to sleep and prepare for a new day, Harkover can arrange for a meeting of allies and supplicants. This is at least two or three days after the Forward Symposium in Cherage was attacked by the godmind.

Good Talk

Social. Real-Time.

The party and their allies get a briefing on a half-dozen global doomsdays.

At the place of the party's choosing, Principal Minister Harkover Lee, RHC Chief Inspector Stover Delft, and various royal advisors detail the international threats. Give out Player's Handout–Risuri National Defense, which explains the threats they face.

Harkover highlights the report on each army's "heroic dangers," and clarifies that they're so named because they will kill people who are too heroic. He waxes nostalgic about Queen Hibiscus of the Argent Rampant, who provoked the First Yerasol War when she—and allies from a military company she had served in before taking the crown—teleported to a Danoran shipyard in the Yerasol Archipelago, intending to raze it and claim the island.

Instead, she discovered Danor's secret weapon—firedust—when she set off a lightning bolt in a ship's magazine. The story only came out a decade later after one of her allies was retrieved in a prisoner exchange. The queen had warded herself and her group with layers of defense against arrows and tiefling fire, and grew overconfident in her supposed invulnerability.

After a moment to ponder that, Harkover produces three calls for help.

Glaucia's Courier

Mysana del Salvatia, an orc *executore dola liberta* from Ber, is missing an arm below the elbow, which she had to amputate after a snakebite she suffered in the High Bayou. (She had magic to neutralize the first poison's bite, but there were a lot of snakes.) Though exhausted, she still proudly wears the broken chain badge of her office.

Mysana explains that she hiked from Ber and has been in occasional contact with **Glaucia Evora**, who is the highest rank *executore* left. Her information is limited because of the brevity of *sendings*, but Glaucia suspects the Obscurati conspiracy is active in the western city of Ursaliña, which has had no contact with the outside world for several weeks. Glaucia can provide more information if they meet her in Seobriga, at Palacio Justicia de los Huesos del Tirania Widoreva (the courthouse which holds the bones of the dead dragon tyrant Widoreva).

While the fate of a single city may not interest the party, Glaucia has told Mysana that proof of hostile Obscurati acts against Ber would let her pressure the Bruse to postpone or even cancel his army's invasion of Risur.

The Titan Box

Harkover then brings out a mithral lockbox of sturdy design, big enough to hold a few books. Ornate carvings depict the fey titans of Risur. (The box belonged to the Risuri ambassador to Drakr, and technically had already been on Risuri soil since the Great Eclipse, which was enough of a connection for Heid to cheat a bit and teleport it back to its homeland.) Harkover explains that he set up teleportation interdiction to protect the party, and this item arrived just this morning. It contains the following items:

- A letter from Vlendam Heid (Player's Handout–Letter from the End of the World), begging for aid.
- A map of the city of Bhad Ryzhavdut and its surroundings (Player's Map–Bhad Ryzhavdut).
- A brochure for a museum exhibit and a holiday tour of the history of the Lost Riders (Player's Handout–Museum Brochure).

A wood carving on the tower's original drawbridge is depicted in the brochure. It shows five warriors on rampant steeds, with some sort of knot pattern in the background. Each rider's head is turned upward as if to look at something, but that piece of the carving is rotted away.

A History check (DC 25) reminds a PC that old texts contain illuminations of that door, and the top was a serpent's head. A Nature check (DC 25) recognizes that the same style of knot is used in depictions of the Voice of Rot in Risuri art. A Religion check (DC 25) recalls that the five Lost Riders were said to have offered souls of the defeated to their patron, known as Speaker of Snow, Heart of Black Ice, and the Warden of the Bleak Gate, who it is said had an eye torn out by an ancient hero.

A Favor That is Too Great to Ask

Finally, Harkover admits a petitioner–**Morgan Cippiano**, head of the Family crime syndicate's operations in Flint. He says the first ships since the starfall have begun to reach Risur from Crisillyir, and they bring stories of madness in the land his forefathers came from. High priests and those of renowned pious are being attacked by confused mobs, and there is talk of putting the gods themselves on trial. In an eerie omen, one of his neighbors, fervently devoted to the goddess of night, simply fell dead a few hours ago. His holy symbol had turned to ash.

In the past, Morgan says, he's made deals with the party—helping them with some issue if they give him leeway in his business affairs. Today, he kneels with humility and removes his fishhook necklace—symbol of the Clergy. He has family who are dying in Crisillyir, and he's going to return to save them if he can. He has nothing to offer the party, but he also knows no one else who might be able to help as they can.

Quietly, Harkover Lee will remind the monarch PC that they'll need the ritual of the Axis Seal, which as best they can determine is being kept in the Grand Librarium in Alais Primos.

Other Affairs

After this adventure, the party won't have any more chances to deal with personal plotlines. Once they go to the Gyre and return, events will reach a climax very quickly. For narrative closure, we suggest you weave any ongoing storylines personal to the PCs into this adventure (or find a creative way to tie them to the dying worlds of the Gyre).

At this point, it's up to the party to decide what to pursue. Use the following acts as guidelines for stories personalized for them.



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.

MEANWHILE... AROUND THE WORLD

In addition to the briefings the PCs receive from their allies and advisors, the newspapers are running the following stories.

War! As news spreads of imminent invasions from the rest of the world, the people of Risur stand stalwart, and many are eager to volunteer for military service to defend their homeland. Fearful citizens are glad to have a concrete threat to prepare against, since so far there seems to be no solution to the strange dark skies.

What is It? Though the shipping lanes have been opened since Risur's monarch defeated She Who Writhes, sailors have sighted strange new leviathans, their skin slick and red as if with blood. Were these creatures always here and merely held at bay by the fey titan, or did they arrive after the stars fell from the skies? So far no one has reported any attacks by these bloody beasts.

Good. Clericists and adherents of the Old Faith are meeting in Dawn Square each day this month to debate the nature of goodness, and to discuss ways to increase overall prosperity in this dark time. Organizers have asked both Flint police and the Dockers Guild to volunteer watchmen with a mission to prevent hiveminds from forming. Local entrepreneur Morgan Cippiano lamented that there was so much will to effect change, but the dangers of hiveminds forces them to act slowly.

Four. Ambassadors from Ber, Crisillyir, Danor, and Drakr have all lodged formal declarations of war against Risur. However Methan duNadria, head of the Danoran consulate in Flint, states that the Danoran people are not committed to the invasion. Indeed, they feel a debt of obligation to the Risuri monarch and those allies who managed to slay a titanic hivemind that threatened their capital city of Cherage.

Absolutely Nothing. Asher Henton, Distinguished Professor of Otherworldly Physics at Kitham University in Shale has completed a detailed survey of the dark sky in search of new stars. What lies out there? "Absolutely nothing," he says, aside from a handful of readily visible planets and the swirling vortex that has been dubbed The Gyre. And what is the Gyre? Henton refused to comment until he has a clearer understanding, though he ominously stated that it comes more into focus every day.

TIMELINES

From the day the adventure starts, it will take about four weeks for Risur to fall to the invaders, barring PC involvement. Meanwhile, the threats presented in the following three acts progress even if the party isn't present. If in adventure ten the party somehow managed to hold Axis Island against the Danoran assault, that buys Risur an extra four weeks. Likewise, effective spying or politicking at the Forward Symposium could get them a spare week or two. A compliled timeline is provided in Appendix C (page 311).

NEVERMIND QUEEN HIBISCUS

If your party wants to go fight a war—four or five high-level PCs versus armies—there are too many variables for us to fit them into an adventure. Consider that in the real world, militaries have been able to deal with tank divisions, squadrons of fighter jets, and fleets of destroyers by knowing what to expect and preparing countermeasures.

The other armies can have high-level characters of their own (but they probably cap out at level 20). Ignore the rules a bit, and you can justify strange battlefield defenses produced by the interaction of bardic music and a thousand soldiers singing along. Crisillyiri war bells have a tradition of hedging out teleportation, and could be tuned to thwart various PC tricks. Don't forget, the other side has diviners too who can predict what threats are out there.

If the PCs turn invisible, fly, then teleport in with the intention of raining death from above, a teleportation beacon could shunt them into a wagon loaded with iron maidens that automatically begin dispelling the party's magic. Once they escape from that (not if), they discover the army's banner redirects hostile magic cast from more than fifty feet away, and projects an aura that reveals invisibility, and it's guarded by mages poised to turn back any dispel attempts. Then there are the hundreds of warriors with muskets or rifles, bound outsiders, and a variety of amateur wizards who are just smart enough to point a *wand of magic missiles* and all fire at the same time.

Now, disrupting supply lines, killing a few hundred soldiers off on their own, aiding their own army in a major engagement? Sure, that works. But they aren't invincible enough to take on tens of thousands of soldiers by themselves. That'll have to wait until Adventure Thirteen.



ACT ONE: Shackled Thoughts

The Gidim have implanted a leviathan under the Beran city of Ursaliña, and Gidim influenced police have sealed off the city so no one will discover it. As the leviathan consumes psychic energy from this once-festive city, it begins to sprout into a feeding tendril for the Gidim homeworld.

WHO'S IN CHARGE HERE?

Ursaliña lies on the opposite side of Ber from the capital Seobriga, but the party will likely still reach out to the Beran government for help, or at the very least to parlay saving Ursaliña into the Beran military halting its invasion of Risur.

In Adventure Six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*, the party probably saved Bruse Shantus from Benedict Pemberton's coup. But Shantus might have died, in which case the most likely successor would be Cavallo de Guerra, an orcish warlord with strong naval forces loyal to him. Either man will feel some sense of obligation to the party, but also either would have fallen under the sway of the new nature of the world, and will be loyal to the Obscurati.

Whoever is ruler of Ber, he isn't thrilled to be making an enemy of the party, and if the PCs unshackle Ursaliña, they'll be able to convince their people that Risur is a potential ally. Shantus is mostly paying lip service, as his main concern is living comfortably, and a war threatens that. Cavallo's family has deep-rooted disdain for the Cadagyr family that governs Ursaliña, but he's a strong believer in the ideals of Ber, and won't leave his fellows under psychic dominion.

SPYMASTER EL EXTRAÑO

What does Ber's kobold spymaster know of events in Ursaliña? Very little so far. He's working on sneaking in a mage who can suppress the city's teleportation beacon to let agents escape the city, but that won't happen fast enough.

Time for a Savage Beating

Action. Tactical. Level 24.

Glaucia Evora comes out of hiding to meet the PCs, giving Ob agents a window to assassinate her.

If the party seeks Glaucia out, her *executore* messenger will *send* and relay that she wishes to meet in Seobriga, at Palacio Justicia de los Huesos del Tirania Widoreva (the courthouse which holds the bones of the dead dragon tyrant Widoreva). For the past few weeks Glaucia has been keeping a low profile, but she comes out of hiding to meet the PCs. At a pre-arranged time she will wait in front of the massive draconic skeleton that fills the courtroom.

She has used *true seeing* magic to let her see through invisibility, illusions, and polymorph effects, and is suspicious of duplicants and other duplicity.

"Let us be brief. Here in Ber we thrash slavers, but most of the nation is blind to their new chains. I am not blind, and so enemies seek me. I made a blunder as I came to meet you." She smiles, all canines. "Some of them will be arriving soon. You wouldn't let me come to harm, would you?"

Indeed, within two minutes an Obscurati assassination squad arrives, easy pickings for the party. Glaucia nonchalantly keeps talking up to and even through any fight that ensues.

"Executore Salome Nieves is one of my enforcers. Loyal, and a foolish novice. But I am forced to work with who I have left. She's the second woman I sent to Ursaliña. The first reported an ambush on the road outside the city by 'tiny pink dragons' that killed her porter. She sounded addled, and never contacted me again.

"Salome managed to enter the city and *send* to me once. 'City unusually docile. Perfectly polite, but sad bearing. Feigned joviality. Except merchant Flida. Says she saw something glowing, flying over city days after stars fell.'

"I sent her with two *sending* scrolls because she couldn't cast it herself. As I said, she's a novice. We had an Executores Lodge in Ursaliña, but who knows what's actually there? Not a single other word has come out of that city in weeks. The Bruse only cares because he cannot launch attacks on your west coast without this port. But if our friendly new world rulers are harming the people of Ursaliña, I could convince him to stop his invasion. Risur has, after all, been a great ally this past year."

Around that point, the Obscurati assassination squad arrives. They are led by Obscurati Ambassador Shuman Larkins, a formerly-Risuri member of the ghost council who has found his magic empowered since the Axis Seal ritual. In an effable way, his presence reflects the will of the Obscurati and all those loyal to him, making him far more powerful than he would be alone.

Assassination Squad

- 1 Empowered Ghost Councilor
- 4 Great Eclipse Killers

Shuman Larkins, empowered councilor Level 24 Elite Brute
Medium shadow humanoid (undead) **XP** 12100

HP 220; **Bloodied** 110 **Initiative** +12
AC 36, **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 37 **Perception** +13
Speed fly 8 (hover); phasing Darkvision
Resist cold 20, poison 20; insubstantial
Vulnerable radiant 10
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Prying Eyes**

Shuman controls dozens of invisible and mobile scrying sensors, which resemble disembodied eyeballs to those who can see invisible objects. The eyes can see through darkness and illusions. Because of this, he can see everything within 50 squares of him, and can ignore concealment in that area that isn't due to physical obstacles.

Ghost on Ghost

Shuman's attacks deal full damage to insubstantial creatures.

▸ **Withdraw from Sight**

Whenever Shuman takes damage, he turns invisible until he either attacks or chooses to become visible. When he is reduced to 0 HP he discorporates but will return in a few days unless Nicodemus the Gnostic is defeated.

Standard Actions

Necrokinetic Touch (force, necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
"Our grand design has greatly increased the power of those bonded with Nicodemus." He throws forward his hand, palm outward, and you are knocked across the room. Where he touched you, your flesh rots.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +27 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d10+20 force damage, and Shuman slides the target 5 squares. The target takes ongoing 20 necrotic damage and is weakened (save ends both).

Orb of the Void (necrotic) ✦ Encounter
He whispers a verbal component for a spell, and a matte black orb appears, three feet across, floating in the air, perfectly silent.
Effect: Shuman creates an orb of nothingness in an unoccupied space within 10 squares. It lasts until the end of Shuman's next turn. Make the following attack, centered on the orb.
Attack: Area burst 1 (creatures in burst); +27 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The target's maximum hit points are reduced by 30 until it takes a long rest. If its maximum hit points are reduced to 0 or less, it falls unconscious and starts dying.
Sustain move: Shuman can have the orb fly 6 squares and hover. Repeat the above attack.

Minor Actions

Steal Voice (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, 1/round
He puts a shushing finger to his lips, and your very tongue begins to rot in your mouth.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +27 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The target takes ongoing 20 necrotic damage and cannot speak (save ends both).

Malevolent Gauntlet (charm, fear) ✦ At-Will, 1/round
His ghostly fingers dance in the air, tracing lines and marking spots on the battlefield, which begin to glow with ominous purple light. You step through a line between two of the nodes, and your animal instincts panic. You feel a frantic urge to run, following the path of the gauntlet forever.
Effect: Shuman creates two nodes of a gauntlet, which must be within 10 squares of him and within 4 squares of another node. Whenever a creature enters or starts its turn in a node, or crosses a line between any two nodes, make the following attack.
Attack: Area wall (enemy caught in the gauntlet); +27 vs. Will
Hit: The target is compelled to run the gauntlet (save ends). On its turn it can take no other actions than moving between nodes of the gauntlet in the most direct path possible. If the target has passed through every node of the gauntlet, it automatically saves against this effect. Once a creature saves against it, it cannot be affected again for 24 hours.

▸ **Communal Protection from Energy** ✦ Encounter
He chants and conjures a faintly visible shield around himself and his allies.
Effect: Shuman chooses acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder. He and each ally within 10 squares gain resist 10 against that energy type until the end of the encounter.

Str 18 (+15) **Dex** 12 (+12) **Wis** 14 (+13)
Con 14 (+13) **Int** 20 (+16) **Cha** 19 (+15)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common, Dwarven, Elven, Primordial

Great Eclipse Killer Level 24 Goon Lurker
Medium shadow humanoid (human) **XP** 3025

HP 120; **Bloodied** 60 **Initiative** +24
AC 38, **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 36 **Perception** +15
Speed 8 Darkvision
Resist insubstantial
Vulnerable see *hideous reveal*

Traits

▸ **Hide in Shadows**
He's just a silhouette, difficult to distinguish from the gloom around him. He moves closer, and your own shadow seems to reach for you.

The killer can make a Stealth check to become hidden when he has concealment instead of needing total concealment.

While he is adjacent to any enemy, he is invisible.

▸ **Hideous Reveal**
Light burns away the man's black skin, revealing for a moment raw muscle and sinew.

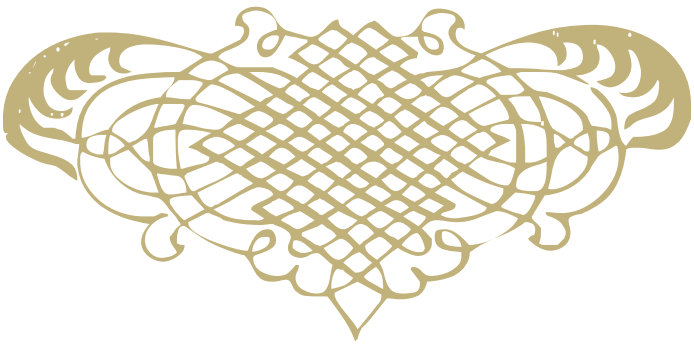
Radiant damage ignores the killer's insubstantial trait. Whenever he takes radiant damage, he loses his insubstantial and *hide in shadows* traits until the end of the next turn of the creature that dealt that damage.

Standard Actions

Eclipse Claw (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
His arm stretches unnaturally, and his fingers become impossibly sharp talons, but he strikes with less finesse than others you've seen with his powers.
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +29 vs. AC
Hit: 25 necrotic damage, and the target is blinded and takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends both).

Bane Crossbow (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
From within his dark cloak he produces a wicked-looking hand crossbow.
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +29 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage, or 30 damage if the target is granting combat advantage.

Skills Acrobatics +25, Athletics +20, Intimidate +19, Stealth +25
Str 16 (+15) **Dex** 26 (+20) **Wis** 16 (+15)
Con 16 (+15) **Int** 14 (+14) **Cha** 14 (+14)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Primordial



Glaucia Evora	Level 24 Controller (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid (gnoll)	**XP** 6050
HP 190; **Bloodied** 95	**Initiative** +12
AC 36, **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 38	**Perception** +20
Speed 6	Low-light vision
Immune charm, domination	

Traits

▸ **Ferocious Charge**

Though she no longer lives as a savage, she remembers the viciousness of her tribe.

Glaucia deals +6 damage on a successful charge attack. If she is bloodied she instead deals +12 damage and gains 12 temporary hit points.

▸ **Enforcer of Freedom** (fire, radiant) ✦ Aura 5

Attacks against her are turned aside as if by magic. She wears on her chest the sign of the broken manacle, for her will shall not be chained.

Any creature in the aura is immune to the dominated condition and effects with the charm keyword (but not to any damage affiliated with those effects). Any creature in the aura that uses a power with the charm keyword or that can cause domination takes 20 fire and radiant damage.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Punishing Staff** (fire, radiant) ✦ At-Will, Basic

She strikes you and watches cooly to see if you will continue your violence.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +29 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+2 damage. The first time the creature attacks before the end of Glaucia's next turn it takes 25 fire and radiant damage.

✲ **Pillar of Fire** (fire, radiant) ✦ Daily

A column of shining flame roars down to engulf her foes.

Attack: Area burst 2 within 20 (enemies in burst); +27 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d10+6 fire and radiant damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Effect: The area becomes a zone until the end of the encounter. Enemies that end their turn in the zone take 30 fire and radiant damage.

▸ **Defiant Shield** ✦ Encounter

She holds up a hand, and a broad shell of faintly visible energy appears around her. "Cowards hide behind guns and bows," she announces. "If you want to kill us, you'll have to come closer."

Effect: Glaucia and her allies in the aura gain resist 30 all against attacks by nonadjacent enemies. Creatures that have attacked since the start of their last turn do not gain this protection.

Sustain Standard

Minor Actions

▸ **Dispelling Word** ✦ Encounter

She barks a sacred word and purges the area of hostile magic.

Effect: Glaucia can end one magical zone within close burst 20, and grants herself and each ally in the area a saving throw with a +3 bonus.

Skills Insight +26, Intimidate +20

Str	12 (+13)	**Dex**	10 (+12)	**Wis**	22 (+18)
Con	16 (+15)	**Int**	13 (+13)	**Cha**	16 (+15)

Alignment Lawful Good **Languages** Common, Giant



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

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

Tactics

Shuman's *prying eyes* show up (well, they're invisible) at the end of Glaucia's explanation, and the four great eclipse killers slide in stealthily a minute later (Perception DC 35 to detect as they hide in plain sight).

Shuman floats into the courtroom with a threat: surrender to him, or else even if they defeat him, he will rejuvenate in a few days and punish the populace of Seobriga for Glaucia's insolence. This is an idle boast, because he would rejuvenate with the core of the ghost council, a thousand miles away.

If he thinks the party won't oblige, Shuman telepathically orders his allies to strike. The Great Eclipse Killers—Berans who volunteered to be transmogrified into darkness—fight in pairs, each pair targeting a single PC, whom they will have studied carefully for potential assassination. Though they originally thought they were here for Glaucia, the PCs are a more tempting target.

In a fight, Shuman begins creating nodes of a *malevolent gauntlet* round by round, then creates an *orb of the void* that places along the gauntlet's path, in a bid to make a PC run into it. As needed he'll use *necrokinetic touch* to hurl foes into the gauntlet or orb, and relies on *steal voice* if there's no one worth engaging in close combat.

For her part, Glaucia conjures a *pillar of fire* on one killer, then fearlessly enters melee beside the PCs.

Aftermath

A defeated Shuman lingers as his form dissolves, giving the party a chance to talk. He displays an emotion rare for the undead–honest fear. He says that Nicodemus is furious at his repeated setbacks, and he dreads the mastermind's rage for failing to thwart the party.

As for Ursaliña, Shuman is sincerely unaware of any special Obscurati operations there, though now he'll have to mention the oddity to his superiors once he reaches the ghost council.

Ursaliña, the City of Bears

Exploration. Montage.

People of Ursaliña maintain an eerily friendly façade and refuse to admit anything is wrong in case something is watching them.

Named after its traditional bear fights, Ursaliña lies along the rocky northwestern coast of Ber, where the sea meets the Anthras Mountains. Those peaks once made it a prize domain for the dragon tyrants, and like every Beran city their influence persists in the architecture. The city rises and falls in steep terraces on four main hills, each crowned by a major civic building. Poorer neighborhoods weave through the low 'troughs' between hills, and imposing bridges connect the terraces in labyrinthine combinations.

Fanciful fountains thread mountain streams along the terraces and bridges, and fierce gusts of winds in the troughs kick up mist that cools the cramped streets and alleys. The hills fall sharply near the coast, where ornately-carved staircases link the harbor to the different levels of the city.

Similar areas of steep hills and valleys dot the landscape around Ursaliña, and for centuries servants of the dragon tyrants bred and domesticated megafauna in these natural paddocks. Countless caves provided lairs for the famed local dire bears, allowing the predators to hide and survive despite fervent attempts to exterminate them.

Today, two centuries since the dragon tyrants fell, Ursaliña proudly claims a two-headed dire bear as the city sigil. Many of the civic buildings have been restored to their original splendor, straddling a line between glorifying a brutal past and patriotism for what the Beran people managed to build.

The population is majority orc, with minotaurs and goliaths the next most common races.

Coming and Going

Each of the hill-tops is ringed with a defensive curtain wall with only a handful of gates, all well-guarded and requiring tolls unless a traveler carries a city passport (which costs 5gp per year). Boards at each gate post the latest news (see Player's Handout: Ursaliña News). The low-lying areas are effectively undefended, though, and normally people could come and go as they please. Practically everyone must pass through the Troughs first before reaching the hills.

These days, though, the Gidim have established a perimeter around the city. Several rings of cerebral mesh run through every road and trail into the city, allowing the leviathan to sense creatures as they cross it. Anyone spotted trying to leave the city is deterred first by city police on the outskirts, and those who will not turn back are set upon by Gidim flying horrors (see Appendix A: Combat Catalogue).

Arrival

Should the party fly in on an airship, as long as they stay more than about thirty feet above any light sources, the locals won't spot them with their low-light vision. If the PCs make a big show of arriving, see Breakin' the Law (page 84).

Like most large cities, Ursaliña has a teleportation beacon. Those who teleport more than a mile at a time and aim anywhere within three miles of the city are shunted to just outside a customs station in the western docks. However, the Gidim don't want people sneaking out, and so have also set up a planar net using the power of the cerebral mesh to hedge the city in. Any teleportation effect used within the city that would go more than a mile shunts back to the same customs station.

Cadagyr Estate

Northern District

Atop the northern hill of the city, broad gardens overflowing with aromatic flowers ring the manor house of **Lord Winslow Cadagyr**, orc governor of Ursaliña and the surrounding state. Wealthy Ursaliñans live here, with access to the freshest water from the mountains, and the most distance



from the fish stench of the docks. Streets teem with fountains and statues of statuesque orcish women.

The flowers here slightly mask the cloying scent of Gidim cerebral mesh. Lord Cadagyr and most of the other heads of household in this district have been deluded by psychic memory modification into becoming loyal servants of the Gidim. However the lord's son **Dieter Cadagyr** lives in his own house in the Triunfo Vida district, and has not been affected.

One eyesore in the district is the relatively new **Executores Lodge**, an unadorned, imposing cube of steel-gray granite, built thirty years ago as a reminder to the wealthy not to abuse their power. Normally it houses a detachment of a dozen executores and their house staff, and its only two public spaces are a training field where onlookers can gawk at women practicing brutal combat, and the stocks, which are seldom occupied.

By the time the party arrives, the lodge is empty and locked, with all the local executores taken to the psychovivisection chamber of the Gidim leviathan. Salome Nieves remains in hiding, though some of her belongings still sit unmolested in a bedroom in the lodge; a half hour search turns up the second *sending* scroll Glaucia mentioned.

An oculus (see Appendix A: Combat Catalogue) hovers over the lodge at all times, softly hissing and moaning as it watches.

Jaula de Oso

Southern District

Colloquially known as the Jaula or Cage, this arena's long and vicious history put Ursaliña on the map. Gladitorial games were held within the towering edifice for centuries, but since the unification of Ber the site has been limited to animal bouts, concerts, and the occasional formal duel.

Constructed of the same granite that coats the city in steel gray, Jaula de Oso consists of three upper levels for spectators and a lower level for combatants and administrative offices. A small villa nearby is the home of Arena Master **Pili Roque**. Maestra Roque is currently fuming because her Cage has been shut down for a week due to 'safety inspections.' In truth, the Gidim have been experimenting on the bears kenneled beneath the arena, crafting warbeasts. Maestra Roque and a pair of staff still come

Timeline of Ursaliña

These days are relative to whenever the adventure starts, since normal calendars no longer seem to apply.

- **Day 1+:** Every day a few people go missing, their consciousness consumed to nourishing the feeding tentacle being grown in the Gidim leviathan. Lord Winslow Cadagyr mandates a curfew, orders the prisons opened, and has prisoners assigned as guards for all city gates to prevent anyone from exiting.
- **Day 5:** A protest outside Cadagyr Estate about missing people is brutally suppressed by the police. Lord Winslow Cadagyr threatens arrest of any shopkeeper who does not keep normal hours.
- **Day 10:** The streets are noticeably emptier than usual, though some are tempted out by the new bloodsports at the Jaula de Oso. People hear strange beasts during curfew.
- **Day 15:** Lord Cadagyr orders mandatory parades each day to force high spirits, but otherwise people almost never leave their houses.
- **Day 19:** Lord Cadagyr's son Dieter loads a backpack with with elixirs of invisibility and attempts to sneak into the Jaula. He is captured and brought to the leviathan's psychovivisection chamber, then converted into a shock trooper.
- **Day 20:** Lord Cadagyr makes attendance of the daily bloodsport in Jaula de Oso mandatory. Executore Salome Nieves begins to rally marines at the city's docks.
- **Day 22:** Marines storm Cadagyr Estate, kill several Gidim, but then are overrun by Gidim warbeasts.
- **Day 23:** Sporadic looting begins and fires sprout, since most homes are empty. The Gidim openly unleash warbeasts in the streets to keep people from fleeing.
- **Day 24:** Gidim infiltrators go door to door, abducting children as final psychic sustenance for the tentacle.
- **Day 25:** The tentacle emerges, and nearly every thinking creature within 30 miles is slain. Thousands more Gidim begin to stream into this world, and they ride warbeasts toward Reo Pedresco.

Divinations and Gidim Defenses

The Jaula de Oso, Triunfo Vida, and nearly the entire northern district of Ursaliña are criss-crossed with threads of *cerebral mesh*, a Gidim thought-crafted material that enhances psychic abilities, provides structural support, and prevent detection through mental interference. Areas with the mesh exude a cloying floral scent, which conjures up nostalgic memories of some family gathering that's impossible to quite recall.

Each hour a character is in an area with cerebral mesh (or if a character specifically searches an area), have him or her make a Perception check (DC 30) to notice strands stretching along the ground and walls, like a cross between spider silk and ivy.

The mesh functions like lead for detection magic blocked by that material. Other divinations aimed at the area covered by mesh produce a psychically projected memory of reality when nothing suspicious was happening. The caster of the divination must make an Arcana or Perception check (DC 29) or receive a false, innocuous result.

Gidim are attuned with the material, and creatures standing within five feet of any of the mesh suffer a -4 penalty to Will defense against Gidim abilities. Additionally, as a standard action any Gidim can have up to a thirty foot length of mesh produce a psychic wall of repellant ideas. Any thinking creature that attempts to enter or pass through the wall takes 20 psychic damage. The wall lasts for five minutes, or until the Gidim who created it dismisses it or falls unconscious.

Stray Thoughts

Finally, any magic that communicates or projects thoughts over a distance might be detected by the Gidim. *Sending*, for instance, will cause the Gidim to send out an elite police squad (page 85), with orders to arrest whoever used the magic.

and go to feed and tend to the beasts, but Gidim psionics cause them to ignore the animals' deformities and the extraplanar beings operating around them.

An oculus hovers in or near the arena, but the building is too large for it to watch all at once, so it flies a slow circuit. The creature's sussurus is drowned out by a large sizzling brazier within the arena, whose flame has been kept alive for two centuries. The only people allowed into the arena aside from Roque and her aids are those who deliver shipments of wood and oil to keep the fire burning.

This district also is home to many prosperous restaurants that serve dishes thick with beans and cheeses, the best of which have high balconies with grand vistas.

Mercado Delicias

Western District

The primary market for Ursaliña, this plaza sprawls across nearly the entire top of the city's western hill. A dizzying array of foodstuffs can be found, from fresh fish hauled in from the ocean, to all manner of game meats, to even stranger fare such as the megafauna that inhabit Ber's interior. City ordinances, however, prevent the operation of restaurants in this district—a concession to the business interests of the Jaula de Oso district.

In addition to food, the Mercado also holds goods imported from all over the world, as befitting a coastal trading town. Of interest to many weary travelers is the assortment of brothels, like the high-class Vela Roja or the more affordable Cristal Azul that is popular with sailors and fishers.

Two obelisks of black diorite, polished to a mirror finish and pierced through in regular intervals, flank the east and west sides of the wide paved plaza, once served as timekeeping devices for merchants by tracing the sun's path along floor mosaics. Now they're just reminders of daytime the world will never have again. Both obelisks predate the founding of the city, and Jaula de Oso's records indicate that the monuments existed well before the current arena did.

Gidim oculi only make occasional passes over this plaza. Instead the city police keep watch, and arrest or beat anyone who starts to question what's going on.

Triunfo Vida

Eastern District

The traveling minotaur bards of Ber are the first to hear of any rumors in the nation, and capable of delivering scathing rhetoric to inflict lasting damage to reputations in all social classes. The Triunfo Vida is the local branch of the loosely affiliated bardic colleges within Ber, and this edifice of bright blue stucco walls, adorned with white marble statuary and fluted columns holds some of the most lavish pageants and shows in its grounds.

Bards that study at the Triunfo often make their living through dance and acrobatic performances, and the patronage of the wealthy Lord Winslow Cadagyr is hotly contested among the students and staff. Or it was. Now the college is closed to visitors due to 'renovations,' and most of the former occupants have scattered to other parts of the district.

The most active site for entertainment now is the **Red Peacock Café**, a fine restaurant with adjoining art gallery and fine clothier shop. Local working class citizens dress nicely and come here on special occasions to experience upscale life. All the staff are beautiful orc women in the finest fashion, or tiny goblins and kobolds who slink around practically unseen in drab hoods. At least one spy for El Extraño always works here.

Likewise, this district was home to Ursaliña's rudimentary industrial capacity, but with the city in lockdown these factories have run out of firegems for their furnaces. Like so many other cities, when things go bad the poor workers suffer first, protest first, and are punished first.

Dieter Cadagyr, son of the city's lord, keeps a house here. He often spends his evenings at the Red Peacock.

Resto del Pescador

Western Docks

The city docks are currently idle, and sailors tell tales of strange glowing albatrosses descending upon ships that attempted to leave the harbor. A contingent of two thousand marines on twenty frigates that were scheduled to sail up and assail the Risuri city of Shale are stuck in dock, and the soldiers get progressively rowdy as time goes on. Their orc commander, **Commodore Anjela Deinosa**, grits her tusks in frustration but still waits for orders from the Bruse that won't arrive.

New merchant vessels arrive until Day 10, after which rumors about the city deter further crews from coming here.

Just off the southwest docks and warehouses lies an expanse of lush green grass, dotted here and there with sprawling shade-providing trees. A popular destination for both the noon meal or to enjoy the cool breeze that wafts from the ocean, the Resto is a welcome break from the hustle and bustle of industry.

Many open celebrations are held at the city's public house, Casa dola Biches, and parades typically muster here then march through the city, weaving along the bridges between hilltop districts.

The Troughs

The low-lying areas between the high districts are crowded and dark. Executore Salome Nieves hides here, and travels without her badge of office to remain inconspicuous.

Cowed and suppressed by the city patrols, the populace runs about its daily business, knowing that people who act out of line disappear. It's become a quiet protest for people to sarcastically adopt repetitive speech patterns, especially when police are around. If standing out will get you arrested, then they'll just all say the exact same thing so no one stands out. Two of the most popular phrases are, "Come inside to shop and get out of that harsh sun," and "Fool's Day was even better than last year! Lord Cadagyr's patronage truly showed in the costumes. Such a variety of colors!"

From dawn to dusk, Ursaliña follows a regular schedule: merchants set up their booths, display their wares, and then close up promptly when the dim light of the Gyre sinks to the west. People are borderline brusque in their behavior, but in the presence of police they feign joviality. Most ignore the PCs even if directly addressed. An Insight check (DC 25) reveals that people are affected by some sort of psychic effect similar to hiveminds, but more restrained.

Secrets and Paranoia

Aside from a few people who managed to resist the Gidim's pervasive psychic presence, everyone in Ursaliña is affected by constant low-level enchantment magic that produces an unwillingness to be curious.

People don't want to talk about what's going on, but if the party picks a bystander and presses them, something horrifying occurs. The Gidim leviathan is constantly sensing its environment for interesting energies and emotions, and the sudden spike of panic from the bystander causes the leviathan to try to establish a psychic link with the poor Ursaliñan citizen the party picked.

His demeanor will shudder through wildly disparate emotions: eager, despairing, violent, revolted, and finally white-knuckle horror. He begs or screams at the party to stop asking him questions, but if they keep pressing he bends over backwards, he clutches his head, and then with a solid crack that the PCs can feel in their skin, his skull splits open and his brain explodes onto the ground in a bloody mess.

This only ever happens once. If the party continues to harass citizens, the leviathan is able to sense the party's activities and dispatches the city police.

Spirit of the City

The Urban Empath prestige class has powers that make discovering the Gidim fairly trivial, so this scenario should be a perfect one for that PC to shine. Perhaps play up the oddness a bit, include a few hallucinations courtesy of the cerebral mesh throughout the city, but ultimately Ursaliña will tell its tales.

What a Lovely Day

Social. Real-Time.

A handful of allies can be found in the city, trying to avoid detection by enemies they don't understand.

The party likely enters in the lowland Troughs and must then make their way to one of the hilltop districts. Before they go blundering in and getting discovered, a merchant named **Flida** will try to warn them.

Goblin Pickle Vendor

A few minutes after the party gets into the city, they're passing the stall of **Innwung**, a goblin pickle vendor, who sits grumpily atop his barrel of pickles, glaring out at the crowd. At the same time, a pair of orc police officers walk up and order him to open up for business.

Innwung mumbles that he's not going to play along anymore. The police ask him to repeat that, and the goblin yells out, "I'm not pretending everything is normal anymore! You should be looking for the people who are missing, not bothering me. No one gets any pickles until you fix this city!"

The police laugh, slug the goblin unconscious, and carry him away. They leave the barrel of pickles behind.

Flida's Finest

A thick faded blue canvas overhangs this booth, and piles of blankets, hand towels, rolls of unbleached rough-spun cotton, and other household linens form a wall of fabric. Behind the piles of goods, a lanky orc woman with a broad smile calls out, "Foreigners! You look like you've traveled a bit. Need any clothes mended, loves?"

She has stringy blond hair held in place by a kerchief decorated with rose patterns, and wears a well-tailored tunic and trousers. A pocketed apron holds a pair of small scissors, shears, a measuring stick, and a long length of twine knotted at intervals. Unlike basically everyone else in the city, Flida aggressively tries to get the party's attention. Should any PC acknowledge her, Flida gestures them closer, speaking in a hushed voice, "Let's get out of the sun. It's so bright today."

Am I the Only One Who Saw That?

Despite the dire situation, Flida is condescending because she expected help ages ago. She demands proper manners, and prods people in the chest with a measuring stick if they are rude.

Flida has previously met with Executore Nieves, and will tell the party as she told her that about a week after the stars fell from the sky many people spotted something large in the sky, glowing like maybe it had dozens of candles all over it. It was at least the size of a fishing boat, and after a few moments it simply disappeared. People talked about it for a few days, but then some of them started going missing, and those who asked questions were beaten and arrested. Now no one talks about it.

Then the Fool's Day celebration was canceled, and ever since then things have gotten steadily stranger and more dangerous. Flida had a customer in Cadagyr District—a housemaid for a wealthy house. Flida asked her to deliver a message to the Executores Lodge. She never saw her customer again, and it was weeks before an executore came by. The executore mentioned she was going to investigate the Jaula, but Flida never saw *her* again either.

Flida warns them not to get spotted by the city guards, who have a habit of arresting outsiders and taking them to the governor, Lord Cadagyr. Which reminds her of an odd rumor she heard of a masked vigilante. Apparently some police were accosting a young cripple girl who was out after curfew, and were about to arrest her, when a person in a mask swept in and killed the police. When another patrol arrived, their bodies were missing. Flida wonders if this might be Nieves, but the news she heard mentioned something about the bodies being cut apart, which doesn't sound like an executore. (It's actually Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen, investigating on behalf of the Obscurati.)

Flida also mentions the factories shut down in Triunfo district because no raw supplies are coming in, and that the Lord's eldest son, Dieter Cadagyr, briefly made a ruckus about the odd goings-on—rumor was he got thrown off his father's estate. People say he's letting unemployed workers live in his own personal house.

Finally, she warns that the skies aren't empty. She sometimes hears things overhead—hissing and moaning, reminding her of her old grandmother's snores before she died. But she never sees anything.

Flida's Fate

A day after the party talks to her, unless they were particularly stealthy or they make a point to hide her, Flida vanishes. The police take her away, and she's fed to the bears in the Jaula. They might find her rose-patterned kerchief in a bear cage there.

Dieter at the Red Peacock

Should the party seek Dieter, the eldest son of Lord Winslow Cadagyr, they can likely find the twenty-something orc at the bar of the Red Peacock, putting on a show of being a rich dilettante. He wears a well-manicured beard and impeccable fashion, though he appears to have nibbled on the fingers of his calfskin gloves. He's quite the charming dandy, and drinks copiously.

Each night after the establishment closes, however, Dieter waits behind and meets with informants, spies, and the occasional factory worker who needs his help.

Dieter is convinced someone has mind-controlled his father, and he's trying to be inconspicuous so people don't come for him. A few days ago he made a public speech trying to rally support, but the police came and violently broke up the event. He went to confront his father, but was spooked, feeling like he was being watched all throughout the Cadagyr District. He fled to the Red Peacock, hoping for news from the outside world. It was there that Salome Nieves found him and warned him to be careful.

There's a rumor going around that the Jaula de Oso is going to have a big tournament. People say they've seen a few trouble makers arrested and dragged there, and Dieter wonders if his father will re-institute old blood sports. But even that doesn't make any sense, because Pili Roque—the arena master—would be buying beasts.

Other foul things are happening, but he's not sure how much is connected. He doesn't want to seem paranoid, but people talk of graves being robbed, fountains going dry for a few moments and voices coming out before the water restarts, and the police being brutally violent in pursuit of some masked vigilante who's vivisecting criminals. He thought it might have been Salome, but she's more of a blunt instrument.

Dieter is wary of the party's help. He like most everyone else believed the Obscurati's claims that Risur was to blame for the Great Eclipse, but if they can change his mind he might be able to keep the fleet in Ursaliña's bay from invading.

Bards' Lament

When the party enters the Red Peacock, an argument is ongoing between minotaur bard **Ganillo Ducera**, and goliath bard **Tekla Sixeves**, over which of them gets to perform. Ganillo has a sonorous singing voice. Tekla plays a brisk guitar. But neither knows the other's music, and so their efforts to collaborate stumbled awkwardly. They bicker in the aftermath of a poorly received song about the end of the world.

If pressed, both complain that they've been locked out of the Triunfo Vida and can't get to their sheet music. A PC who makes a good enough impression (Diplomacy DC 20 to get them to cooperate, then Charisma DC 25 to perform as a trio, for instance) can convince the two to spill all they know about the Triunfo, including the Ancient ruins underground and how the night before they were kicked out everyone remembered having strange dreams about being stranded far from home.

The Hidden Enforcer

The executore Salome Nieves rents a back room in a cramped hillside house in the Troughs. Finding her shouldn't be hard with high-level magic, or the party can find Dieter, who knows a baker he can leave a message with. A few hours later a message reaches Dieter at the Red Peacock, agreeing to meet in a trash-filled gorge at the eastern edge of the city. There, near a burning pile of rancid refuse, they find Salome–tall, well-groomed, with short-cropped black hair and a physique built for smashing evil-doers with a staff.

She's grown paranoid and constantly glances skyward or hushes the party to listen for the hiss-groan of invisible observers. She says that she figured out 'they' don't like noxious fumes. She knew she was being followed one time, something floating above her, always watching, and for a while she tried hiding in tunnels. But she was only able to shake them when she fled through an open air alchemy market where strange smoke was always thick in the air.

She's also convinced that someone was able to listen to the *sending* she sent, because minutes after it officers came to arrest her. There was a fierce fight in the Executores Lodge, and after she and her sisters defeated the police she entreated them to flee, but they wouldn't. She dared not go back there.

She suspected the Obscurati, but she hasn't seen any of their agents, and elsewhere in Ber they acted openly. There are no hallmarks of Pemberton's duplicants—apparently those who act odd are still eating, which duplicants do not. She has detected no undead who might be possessing people. She doesn't know who these invaders are, but they have control of the Jaula, the Triunfo Vida, and Cadagyr's Estate. She suspects a stern thrashing with a stick won't deter them.

Breakin' the Law

Action. Tactical. Level 6 to 26.

Standing out and not blending in will cue up the guards, who will put you down.

Getting in trouble brings out differing levels of response from authorities. These groups are described below, and their stats are in Appendix A: Combat Catalogue.

If the party gets noticed at all by authorities—such as by random patrols or at the gate to a district—a Police Squad will ask to take them to Cadagyr Manor, where they'll need to remove their weapons to meet with the governor. See Cadagyr Estate, below.

If the party causes a commotion, gets spotted trespassing, or if any of the oculi or other Gidim have been killed, as soon as a patrol spots the PCs they'll try to blow trumpets to call for an Elite Police Squad. It typically takes three minutes for one to arrive, but stealthy parties might be able to hide.

If the party has breached any of the key facilities, the Gidim won't screw around. Any alarm from the police brings out a Warbeast Unit. An oculus and flying horrors arrive within a minute, almost invariably tracking the party unless they flee through stinking fumes. The rest of the squad arrives a minute later.

Talking Out

Small patrols can be intimidated or persuaded not to bother the PCs (Intimidate or Diplomacy DC 20), and simple lies (Bluff DC 15) are enough to make them decide not to harass the well-heeled foreigners.

Larger patrols require harder checks (+10 DC), and if the warbeasts come out, their accompanying police patrols are nearly impossible to deter (+20 DC).

Hostile Forces

Police squads pose practically no threat. Elite squads typically have a sergeant demand surrender. If the party doesn't oblige, a lawmage attempts to hold them, and if they resist the marksmen open fire while the sergeant bolsters with Ursaliña's peculiar brand of musical law enforcement.

Warbeast units typically engage when the oculus locates the party and creates psychic walls with the cerebral mesh in a bid to delay them. The flying horrors defend the oculus and prefer to remain incorporeal and evasive in order to buy time. Once the police squad arrives, they send the fleshwarped direbears in with orders to maul a single target, then lend focused musket fire and spells to try to down foes one by one. The lieutenant's bardic performance inspires even the gidim creatures, which thrive on the surging emotions of the poor humanoids.

Police Squad (Level 6 encounter)

- 4 Ursaliñan Guard Squad

Elite Police Squad (Level 14 encounter)

- 1 Ursaliñan Marksmen Squad
- 1 Ursaliñan Lawmage Unit

Warbeast Unit (Level 26 encounter)

- 2 Ursaliñan Marksmen Squads
- 2 Ursaliñan Lawmage Units
- 1 Ursaliñan Lieutenant
- 3 Fleshwarped Direbears
- 3 Gidim Flying Horrors
- 1 Gidim Oculus

Tyranny and Terror

If the PCs reveal themselves, Sijhen has Lord Cadagyr order the police to start rounding people up and drag them to the Jaula. As they do, they tell the populace to spread the news to 'the Risuris' that prisoners will be executed if they do not turn themselves in, unarmed and one at a time, to Lord Cadagyr.

The situation likely escalates very quickly thereafter, but if the party dithers, each day another hundred people are rounded up and executed. If the party removes Lord Cadagyr, instead Sijhen sends out spare shock troopers to simply cut swaths through the city.

Who Was That Masked Man?

Social. Real-Time.

Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen is doing mad science for the Obscurati.

We've dropped a few hints that might tempt PCs to go looking for the so-called 'masked vigilante'–a person who slew some police who were accosting a cripple girl, then cut up their bodies. There's also talk of grave-robbing. If the party tries to find this vigilante, he's made sure to hide from the Gidim, but an old-fashioned manhunt can easily locate a foreigner.

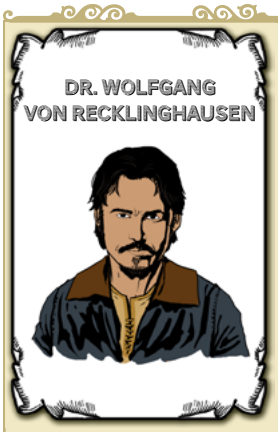
One possible lead would be alchemists mentioning an orc man who had a foreign accent and a very still face, who asked for suggestions about necromantic reagents that were available now that the Bleak Gate was gone. The man said he would come back, so the party could wait.

Alternately, they might find the cripple girl who was being harassed by the police. She now has a new, freshly-attached lower leg, recently exhumed and obviously too large for her body. If befriended, she can lead the party to a shack in the troughs which Wolfgang has turned into a laboratory.

Serendipitous Meeting

It's hard to script a meeting by happenstance with high-level PCs, who might come and go via teleportation, or by dropping in from an airship, or flying in as the wind itself. But at some point, try to have the party cross paths with Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen, ideally after they've investigated Cadagyr Estate or the Jaula and have already fought the Gidim or one of their creations.

A short orc swoops in, wearing a hood, wielding a rapier in one hand and some strange arcanoscientific device that crackles with electricity in the other. He can point up at the air and fire it, and it swerves through the air, drawn to an invisible creature—an oculus or flying horror, perhaps. It strikes and the creature becomes visible, then quickly withdraws. This delights the good doctor, who pulls off the orc face he's been wearing as a mask. A spool mechanism on the device begins to rewind itself, and it pulls back a chunk of something semi-tangible, being constantly zapped with electricity. Wolfgang smiles, for he has been desperately trying to get a sample of these invaders' bodies.



A distinguished, intelligent, and poised gentleman in his late 30s, Dr. von Recklinghausen speaks elegantly with a hard-to-place accent. He appears fairly innocuous, though his sharply-groomed goatee and the rapier at his hip give him a hint of menace.

After years of intense study and experimentation, with his marriage in tatters and his fortune nearly depleted, Wolfgang finally achieved his goal of combining medical knowledge with sorcery in order to restore a corpse to life. His creation drove him from his home, and Wolfgang remained in hiding for years. Eventually his 'son' was captured by the Obscurati, who tracked him down and recruited him for his excellent skills in magical necropsy.

CSI: Ursaliña

In the unlikely event the party looks into the city morgues, they can find the bodies of five police officers who were viciously cut apart, their bodies dumped in an alley. Close examination (Heal DC 15) reveals that their bodies were cut apart after death, and that the killing blows were a few surgically-precise strikes that slit arteries or punctured lungs.

Each of the bodies had its organs removed and opened, and further incisions were made all across the bodies. One guard, an orc, had his entire face—from brow to tusked jaw—sawed off. The lead sergeant of the patrol had a peculiarly deep incision into the base of his neck. The skin is heavily torn and disturbed, as if someone had stuck fingers in the hole to probe it. A faint magic aura of protection lingers there.

Dr. von Recklinghausen used the orc's face (which he has kept alive) as a mask to let him travel inconspicuously. From the sergeant's neck he removed an *oculus prism* (see page 252), which makes him invisible to the Gidim warbeasts.

Other Obscurati

If your players are enjoying the sneaking about in Ursaliña, you might give them another factor to worry about: Obscurati politicians who arrive from Reo Pedresco, who are trying to rally the populace to their side. They might be a red herring to distract the party from the Gidim, potential allies against the invaders, or you might showcase the horror by having even the Ob panic when they realize they can't get out of the city.

Lies of Omission

When it's safe to talk, Wolfgang asks how the party has been doing. He explains—quite convincingly (Insight DC 35 to notice that he's not being entirely truthful)—that he heard of trouble in Ursaliña and came to help. He managed to figure out the threats were psychic beings, and that they had police working for them, which suggested some way those police could be marked as safe.

He points out an incision he has made in the base of his neck, where he implanted an *oculus prism*. He says it makes the creatures ignore him. He has been studying the floating gas sacs for a while now—difficult, since they're invisible—but now that he has a sample of one's flesh he might be able to find a weakness.

Of course, the party's own experience in Adventure Three and the knowledge they got at the Ziggurat of Apet is quite sufficient for dealing with the Gidim. Wolfgang cannot really help here, though he's willing to remove his *oculus prism* and give it to a PC. It will keep the creatures from noticing that PC at first, but they'll still retaliate if attacked.

The Truth

Wolfgang has joined the Obscurati, and that conspiracy knew through copious divinations that this city would be where the Gidim would return. The doctor's job is to figure out how the Gidim work, and more importantly how their homeworld works. He won't be able to complete his mission until he gets a look at the leviathan, but he'll wait to do that until after the party leaves.

Dr. von Recklinghausen is in no way hostile to the party, and if he can help them figure out how to save the city without him personally having to get into battle, he'll oblige. But he'll report all he learns to the conspiracy, and eventually his research will give Nicodemus a way to exploit the Gidim's psychic nature to create stable psychic gestalts to let the Obscurati control the public without the threat of hiveminds. But that's an issue for Adventure Thirteen.

Wolfgang's Ob ring is his original wedding band, which he wears in memory of his bride who died at the hands of his creation Andrei. The inscription on the inside morbidly reads *One Bride Gone*.

If the party finds him out, Wolfgang explains that all his mission consists of is to find out how to fight the Gidim. He's privy to no secrets the party doesn't already know. He knows the identity of a few Ob representatives throughout Ber, but they operate in the open now.

Cadagyr Estate

Social/Action. Real-Time. Level 29.

City police take the party to the mind-controlled governor of Ursaliña if they are detected.

Gidim infiltrators operate in Lord Winslow Cadagyr's estate, so it's likely they will identify the party from Sijhen's description if they come here. It's possible the party might come here without attracting attention, though.

Cadagyr's estate has a wide, poorly-guarded wall painted with ornate images of epic heroes. Within, gardens lead up to a three-story manor with various satellite buildings. The garden is thick with flowers, slightly withered due to the lack of sunlight and the absence of gardeners, but the thick scent masks the cloying presence of the Gidim. A meager detachment of four guards keep watch on the gate in the wall, with no patrols.

The estate grounds are thick with cerebral mesh, and if the party hasn't noticed it yet, grant them a Perception check (DC 30) to detect it as they near the manor. They can hear wheezing groans in the air above the garden, and dark figures watch their approach from unlit windows of the manor house. The front door, however, is open and illuminated, and a prim goblin butler named **Trugido** welcomes arrivals, checking for appointments in a heavy leather-bound book.

Meeting Cadagyr

Revealing their identity earns the PCs easy entry, though Trugido asks them to wait in the foyer so he can make sure his lord is decent. It also triggers an ambush.

Concocting a good excuse to meet with Lord Cadagyr without revealing themselves (Bluff DC 30 and Diplomacy DC 30) prompts a grumble from the butler. Lord Cadagyr comes out a few minutes later and invites the party into a drawing room to discuss matters. The room was moments earlier occupied by Gidim, and the seat cushions are still depressed (Perception DC 15).

Lord Cadagyr's primary goal is to get rid of undesirables, or determine if someone might be useful for the Gidim to dominate and put into their schemes. Large groups are dangerous, though, so he'll be pleasant for five or ten minutes, then ask everyone to leave but perhaps invite one PC back to meet one-on-one later. The Gidim would then plan to mind control that person when they return.

Bleak House

The whole manor house feels fairly neglected and untidy, but the PCs get the sense that there's always someone just around the corner. Lanterns feel warm to the touch though none are lit. A few rooms even contain house staff, but they aren't working; they just sit in chairs and act as if this is perfectly normal.

If the PCs manage to explore the manor (which is quite rude), the Gidim stay out of sight (Perception DC 35). A sneaky PC (Stealth DC 35) can catch five Gidim unaware as they're conferring telepathically in the kitchen, which they thought was safe.

Gidim Ambush

If the party doesn't hide their identities, the Gidim politely ask Lord Cadagyr to keep the party busy for five minutes, which is enough time for the invaders to set up an ambush. Unless they've already showcased their talents, the Gidim don't know how much stronger the party has become since Sijhen encountered them, so they won't use *unfairly* overwhelming force.

Stats for this encounter appear in Appendix A: Combat Catalogue.

Cadagyr Estate Ambush

- 4 Gidim Infiltrators
- Lilore, Gidim Overseer
- Gidim Oculus

The five Gidim abuse their powers. First the four infiltrators each use the cerebral mesh to create psychic barriers (see page 81) to try to trap the party in a single room. They leave the ceiling and floor unblocked, however, allowing them to dangle through the ceiling in thoughtform to use *infiltrate thoughts* on some of the party, *telekinesis* on the rest.

Overseer Lilore proceeds to enter the fray, using its claws to send enemies who aren't disabled into his *crosser's claw*, and pepper those who resist with *magic missile* and *superior telekinesis*. The infiltrators converge on one foe, first using *ego whip* to daze, then overwhelming with sneak attacks. They wield jagged chains of living steel, composed of insectile creatures made of metal that cling together but bend and twist to their wielder's will.

The oculus hovers outside, and creates horrid illusions to try to deter the party from leaving the 'safety' of the building. If a PC gets out, though, it's not beyond grappling him and consuming his eyes.

The Unfair Version

If this isn't the party's first time facing the Gidim, Overseer Lilore needs Lord Cadagyr to stall for ten minutes, during which a pair of flying horrors fly in carrying seven shock troopers. The shaggy shock troopers storm the manor. The oculus hovers above it and occasionally deludes the party with illusions, but primarily waits for one or two PCs to exit. At that point the flying horrors will use their *sucking wind* to immobilize them, while Lilore creates psychic barriers using the cerebral mesh to trap the rest of the party inside. Stragglers are set upon by the infiltrators.

Aftermath

Defeated PCs are dragged to the leviathan's psychovivisection chamber, where they are taunted by Sijhen. The excruciating process of psychic flaying to make them loyal to the Gidim will take a few days.

If the party wins, they can free Cadagyr from control by removing the *oculus prism* in his neck and using a *remove affliction* ritual to restore his modified memories. If they haven't discovered the invisible oculus, though, it might explode his brain first

If he survives, he has a short breakdown, then warns that they must get away before the invaders send more monsters. But he knows all about the Gidim's operations, and can direct the party to the Jaula to rescue prisoners, and the Triunfo Vida to find the Gidim's main base of operations.

The Mysterious Circle

Exploration. Real-Time. Level 25.

The Jaula de Oso hides a Gidim facility for crafting warbeasts.

The party could avoid this place entirely, and if they do the warbeasts stored here will likely attack them elsewhere. However, exploring the empty arena and finding hideous beasts beneath it can make for an excellent scene of building horror. And it can easily shift into action as a single Gidim telekinetically opens all the monsters' cages.

Villa Roque

Arena master Pili Roque lives in a simple villa near the arena, observed intermittently by a Gidim infiltrator. A central courtyard features a fountain and a lush assortment of water lilies, ferns, and rushes, the pleasant trickle of water echoing off the tiled walls. A wrought iron gate decorated with the sigil of a collared bear swings on rusted hinges.

Roque is oblivious to the Gidim. Even though she sees it watching her all the time, her memory never recalls it. She is bubbly and excited about 'making the games perfect,' and is not bothered that the games are canceled and her arena closed. She refuses to let anyone see the arena. If the party tries to sneak in, an oculus spots them and calls in a warbeast squad.

Jaula Entrance

Numerous archways lead from a public courtyard to the arena's outer breezeway. Linked chains of iron stretch across the archways, forming a barrier that deter passage, but could be easily climbed through. Affixed to the walls with brass bolts, thick slabs of slate provide a list of times and dates for upcoming bouts, all of which are crossed off.

Around the breezeway, a handful of staircases lead up to the seating. Four barred wooden doors lead to stairs down to the Holding Cells.

Seating

Eight tiered rows of stone benches surround an enormous elliptical field of gravel and sand. Dark stains mottle the sandy floor, and a ten foot high wall separates the lowest seats from the floor itself. Enormous canopies hug the uppermost reaches of the arena, retracted and tied into position. On the northern side of the arena, portions of the seats are cordoned off into private seating, with colorful awnings stretched to cover them from sun and weather.



Maestra Dais

Curling wisps of smoke rise from an enormous brass censer in the center of a raised platform at the east end of the arena. From here, the master of ceremonies would direct events.

The brass censer, covered in stylized flames and comets and consecrated to a god of pyrrhic victory, hearkens to an ancient custom. Many believe that the god's favor would be passed onto them by touching the edges of the censer when it was lit. The censer is now fed by an enchantment that keeps it smoldering at all times, and urns full of flower petals and other potent aromatics sit beside it. The oculus that watches the arena can be weakened substantially by tossing a whole urn into the censer while the creature is within 30 feet.

Holding Cells

The stench of sweat, blood, and rot overwhelms the senses in these dark corridors, which lie beneath the arena floor. A deep thrumming vibration ripples through the ground, inaudible, yet intense enough to make teeth rattle and bones shake. A maze of hallways (like, literally a maze—this country has minotaurs galore) has numerous side chambers for operations and storage, but signage points to one main chamber, which is lined with barred cells.

In that main hallway, a first section of this hall holds arena beasts—currently eleven direbears, which appear fairly normal but in truth have been modified by Gidim magic. They are well-fed, but press against their cages if they smell anyone moving past. One will even swipe at a passer-by, which is remarkable because the bars are certainly too narrow for the animal to have gotten a limb through.

Mechanisms beside each cell can—with the mere crank of a lever (minor action) open the ceiling of the cell, then lift a platform so the occupant can emerge into the main arena floor. Narrow aisles (three feet wide, so a squeeze for medium creatures) run behind the cells to allow access to the gearwork. Should the party shove any angry bears up to the arena floor, they'll spend a round tearing the lifting platform apart, and then can squeeze back into the basement.

The west wall holds various spear-like implements used for prodding the beasts. They poke out hazardously, and a creature that shoves an enemy into its space can make a free attack: **Attack:** Str +12 vs. AC; **Hit:** 4d6+20 damage.

At the southwest end of the hall, a steel door leads to the abattoir, which might hold NPCs who have been abducted, if they haven't been fed to the bears yet. A thoughtlock seals the door (see page 252), and a ward hidden on the far side triggers a false memory for anyone who manages to breach the door.

Memory Trap	Level 26 Trap
Object	XP 9000

Detect Insight DC 39. The emotion of satisfaction intrudes into your thoughts as you move through this area, as if you'd already finished searching here. You know the thought is not your own.

Triggered Actions

▶ **Modify Memory** ✦ At-Will

Well, that wasn't very interesting. Just eight empty cells, with a note hidden in one cell. It read, "If you find this, please retrieve the evidence and weapon I hid in my quarters in the Executores Lodge."

Trigger: A creature sees the room south of the bear cages.

Attack (Opportunity Action): Area burst 8 (triggering creature); +39 vs. Will

Hit: The target believes the modified memory.

▶ **Countermeasures**

- ✦ *Disable:* Intelligence (DC 20) to make a psychic connection, then Bluff DC 30 to outwit the trap.
- ✦ *Disabuse:* Diplomacy DC 29 to convince an ally affected by the trap that it wasn't real.
- ✦ *Suppress:* Thievery DC 29 to deploy counter-reagents to draw the trap's effect to them and let people pass safely for five minutes.
- ✦ *Password:* If you telepathically communicate the concept of a cup with a pineapple on it, the trap won't affect you.

The purpose of the trap is to deflect suspicion from the arena and direct troublemakers to the lodge, where they can be spotted and attacked. It's likely at least one PC resists the effect, though.

Abattoir

Noticeably colder than the stone around it, this sixty-five foot by forty foot chamber has eight cages along the north wall, sized for livestock but sufficient to hold a prisoner in a pinch. The skinned carcasses of many different animals dangle from hooks in the ceiling throughout the room, and a pit at the north leads to an open sewer tunnel. The metallic smell of spilled blood mingles with the omnipresent stench of offal, and amidst it all is is a constant bone-rattling vibration. A metal table holds a selection of knives and saws, along with a half-dressed carcass.

Upon closer examination, the carcasses are not cow and pig but rather minotaur and orc, their heads, hands, and feet severed and their skin and organs removed. A pile in one of the cages contains personal belongings of dozens of people, including many of the colorful costumes worn by bards at the Triunfo Vida.

Eleven patches of brown mold cling to parts of the walls and floors, emanating cool air. Living creatures within 5 feet of the mold take 10 points of cold damage. Fire brought within 5 feet of brown mold causes the mold to instantly grow into that space. Cold damage instantly destroys it.

Finally, in the far south end a fleshy orb like an eye is cemented to the wall with huge mats of cerebral mesh. This strange vesicle thrums with vibration, and acts as a channel of psychic power from the leviathan. The Gidim infiltrator who operates in the arena uses that energy to warp the dire bears.

Bear Trap

The sole Gidim infiltrator here will let the party reach the holding cells. It stays *invisible* to see the memory trap catches them. If it doesn't, the Gidim waits for them to go into the abattoir, then uses *telekinesis* to open the cages of the warbeasts and telepathically commands the eleven horrid direbears to slither into the bloody, moldy room and attack.

Any battle will likely become very cramped very quickly. Though each bear is not much threat to the party, as they die they begin to merge with the remaining bears, granting them extra attacks which can be devastating if the party isn't able to keep its distance.

Oculus Prism

If someone bothers to hack up the strange vesicle, within it they can retrieve an *oculus prism* (see page 252), which can let at least one PC appear nonthreatening to the Gidim's beasts.

Employees Only

Exploration. Real-Time. Level 24.

Bards of Triunfo Vida refuse entry to their college, in the tunnels beneath which lies the Gidim leviathan.

With the information gathered beneath Jaula de Oso or from Lord Cadagyr, the PCs should be ready to check out Triunfo Vida. When Sijhen selected a location for the leviathan to set down and begin a new Gidim colony, he selected a natural cavern beneath the bardic school. With easy access to minds of middling to extraordinary talent, Sijhen could build up the colony's strength slowly, using the infiltrators as needed to expand influence and identify potential problems.

While the extent of their control of the city varies based on how soon the party gets involved, the Gidim already have a solid position in the Triunfo Vida.

College Campus

The Triunfo sits at the highest tier of its hill, and a path weaves through various gardens around the campus walls. The flowers are all withered from the lack of sunlight, but the cloying scent of the cerebral mesh still creates an oddly floral tone. Several archways lead through this wall to the inner garden, though wooden barricades block off all of them.

The grounds are officially closed, and an oculus serves as the first line of defense. It creates frightening illusions to deter trespassers: eerie music and creaking trees coming from thin air, angry figures with bloody blades just barely visible at the edge of any sort of lantern or torch-light but never approaching, and false archways in the wall that shudder with morbid moans if anyone comes close, then fade away.

If the party tries to enter one of the barricaded archways, an elderly voice from the other side demands to know who they are. He claims to be **Maestro Eusebio Telderon**, headmaster of the college. He refuses to let anyone in, saying the repairs are treacherous, and the remaining bards are quite busy playing for an exclusive audience. If a PC provides a virtuoso performance (Charisma DC 30), the maestro is swayed to let them in and join the performance. The barricade shifts to provide a three-foot wide opening.

On the far side of the wall, there's no one to be found. If the party continues to explore, the oculus telepathically alerts the Gidim in the leviathan.

Ring Garden

Inside the wall, a simple farming garden takes up a large swath of the campus, with limestone walkways and the occasional tasteful topiary. The college hall sits in the center of the campus, a two-story building with a pair of single-story wings. There are no lights on in the building.

The whisper of silken banners fluttering lightly in the breeze disturbs the stillness. Off to the north wing of the hall—the dormitory—heavy wooden tables are set for a banquet. Empty carafes, pitchers, and platters remain, their contents long gone. Beneath one plate sits a stack of correspondence addressed to Maestro Telderon. (A postman was willing to come this far, then left in fright.)

Main Building

Orchestral string music is faintly audible coming from the second story window. Doors enter from multiple directions, but the most obvious approach is the front door, flanked by statues of bears playing cello and tuba.

Inside, doors lead to the north wing (for students), south wing (for classes), and back to the headmaster's salon. Stairs lead up to a second floor foyer outside the performance theater. The music gets louder the closer one gets to there.

Emotions—Aura of Doom. Throughout the building, different strains of music play, each producing a different emotion effect. It's unlikely the party will need to worry about this in battle; it's just to set an uneasy ambience. In the entry foyer, make the following attack as each creature enters.

> *Attack:* +29 vs. Will; *Hit:* The target is gripped with dread. At the start of any encounter, the target is automatically stunned (save ends). This is a fear effect.

The effect lasts as long as they can hear the music, or until a different emotion affects them. A creature that saves is free of that particular emotion effect, but may fall under the music of another room.

MUSIC SUGGESTION

I had Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* in mind while writing this scene. While the traditional style fits for exploration, if a fight breaks out, you can kick it off with Vanessa Mae's *Storm*, a reinterpretation of "Summer: III. Presto."

Ladder to the Dig

In the foyer, a section of floor has had its wood removed, and is now covered with a tarp. This is the entrance to the Ancient archaeological site in a cavern under the college. Beneath the tarp descends a stone shaft with ornately-painted orc figures and fantastic acoustics, thirty feet wide. Forty feet down there appears to be a metallic floor, but it undulates like a muscle. This is actually living steel that has been grown out of the walls, centered on a sphincter-like aperture, blocking the way to the larger cavern below.

A creature that comes within 5 feet of the aperture receives a psychic impression of it being a door in need of a key. It is thoughtlocked, and trapped to boot. Maestro Eusebio has the mental combination to unlock it.

Electrified Aperture	Level 26 Trap
Object	XP 9000

Detect Perception DC 32. Wind currents here suggest some unseen energy is roiling the air directly above the aperture at the bottom of this shaft.

Triggered Actions

Deterring Discharge ✦ Recharge 1/minute

Yellow arcs of lightning spray up from the metal, into your body, and out of every inch of your skin, crackling upward to the walls of the shaft.

Trigger: A touches the thoughtlocked aperture but fails to unlock it.

Attack (Opportunity Action): Area burst 2 (triggering creature); +39 vs. Reflex

Hit: 4d10+80 lightning damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Countermeasures

- *Disable:* Intelligence (DC 20) to make a psychic connection, then Bluff DC 30 to outwit the trap.
- *Dissipate:* Thievery DC 29 to set up a grounding cable or pole, which siphons off most of the electricity into the wall. Creatures who are hit while the trap is grounded take half damage, and it does no damage on a miss.
- *Password:* If you telepathically communicate the concept of a recently-bred Gidim on a fleshwarped steed, the trap lets you pass.

Headmaster's Salon

Inside the central part of the college hall, a first floor foyer leads to the headmaster's salon. Couched in opulent velvets, gilt-framed portraits, and brocaded settees, this room appears to function as a private performance hall. Enormous stained glass windows on the north wall depict performers of many different races, and an enormous mahogany desk and high-backed chair sits in front of it.

On the wall behind the desk hangs a painting of a stunning red-headed elf woman dressed in traditional Beran clothes. The placard beside it reads "Savina Tullius—Most Promising Student, and Most Beautiful." (This is just a small shout-out because Savina appears in Act Three.)

Emotions—Smug Narcissism. Though the music is the same, somehow the air carries it differently, like it's meant specifically for the listener. Make the following attack against each creature that enters the salon:

> *Attack:* +29 vs. Will; *Hit:* The target is filled with smug narcissism. It suffers a -2 penalty to all skill checks.

Dormitory

The north wing is a long hall dominated by workbenches, musical instruments, and bunk beds in various states of disarray. Clothes, bedding, and footwear lie scattered through the room, much of it blood-stained.

Emotions—Terrible Remorse. The music shifts into a dark minor key. Make the following attack against each creature that enters the dormitory:

> *Attack:* +29 vs. Will; *Hit:* The target is filled with terrible remorse (save ends). Each turn it deals 1d8 + Str damage to itself with self-inflicted wounds. *After-Effect:* The target is dazed from grief until the end of its next turn, after which the emotion passes.

Refectory

At the end of the north wing, this vaulted dining room has long, unadorned wooden tables with benches flank the length. An enormous hearth, filled with cold ashes and a half-empty cauldron graces the wall opposite the room's entrance. A small but efficient kitchen is tucked behind the hearth.

Emotions—Manic Glee. A lone figure is seated at a bench—or more accurately is cocooned from the waist down onto the bench by cerebral mesh. His upper body is exposed, and at first seems hunched over, fiddling furiously on a violin, trying to match the faint music from the performance theater but failing in fits and starts. In a moment it becomes clear the figure actually has no head.

Make the following attack against each creature that enters the refectory:

> *Attack:* +29 vs. Will; *Hit:* The target is filled with manic glee (save ends). It gains +2 to attack rolls and 20 temporary hit points, but grants combat advantage and each turn it must move at least 4 squares before it can take any other actions. *After-Effect:* The target is weakened until it takes a short rest.

Classrooms

In the south wing, stone debris and shattered wood litter the dim hallway between six small classrooms, with some of the interior walls completely destroyed. The smell of rot mingles unpleasantly with the scent of jasmine and plumeria, and a faint gusting sigh echoes through the corridor.

Emotions—Utter Contempt. Make the following attack against each creature that enters the classrooms:

> *Attack:* +29 vs. Will; *Hit:* The target is filled with utter contempt (save ends). The target is driven to slander and abuse those nearby. *First Failed Save:* The target must approach and make a basic attack against the nearest creature each turn (save ends).

Performance Theater

The walls and floor outside the upstairs theater are so thick with cerebral mesh it's easily visible, and it vibrates like strung catgut. The pungent scent of summer flowers exudes from the doorway.

Within, tall windows on the far side of the room let in the dim glow of distant city light, faintly silhouetting the orchestra. Two aisles descend past sparsely-filled seats, leading to a stage where three dozen musicians play strings, a harpsichord, and percussion, but no wind instruments. Weeping comes from the audience, which consist of dozens of disembodied heads spliced into cerebral mesh, still attached to beating hearts and heaving lungs.

These are the bards of the Triunfo Vida who were not smart enough to leave, and their bodies are on stage, hollowed out with exposed rib cages, headless, playing from muscle memory. Only the conductor is still fully intact—the maestro Eusebio Telderon, his body wholly intact but his mind somewhere else.

Indeed, if the party stops to listen, a psychic image of Eusebio appears beside them to explain the nature of the piece, which he calls "The Contest Between Harmony and Invention." In a whisper he says that each movement of the concerto is intended to evoke a different emotion, and their patrons positively drink up the reactions of the audience.

Eusebio has literally lost his mind, or rather his mind has lost his body, and he's unable to remember any idea that the college might be in trouble. If the party lets the concerto finish, though, he can be convinced to call for an interlude before 'the three hundred and seventy-fourth encore' in order to give the party a tour of the amazing archaeological site beneath the building. Why, this site has apparently been used for music-making since ancient times.

Emotions—Crushing Despair. Make the following attack against each creature that enters the performance theater:

> *Attack:* +29 vs. Will; *Hit:* The target is filled with crushing despair. It grants combat advantage and suffers a -2 penalty on attack rolls, damage rolls, ability checks, and skill checks until the concerto finishes or they get out of earshot.

Proactive Attack

The Gidim can sense through Eusebio if the party looks to be affected by the emotion magic. If so, Sijhen sends forth an attack force, which charges the performance theater. The oculus that watches the Triunfo will smash in the window and join the battle, though the ceiling is only twenty feet high, so it cannot simply fly away. Any forces sent here aren't present defending the leviathan.

Concerto Attack Force

- 5 shock troopers
- 1 Gidim infiltrator

Belly of the Beast

Action. Tactical. Level 32.

A ship of living steel acts as the egg for a gestating psychic tentacle.

The most direct route into the Gidim leviathan is down from the college's main hall, into the cave, and through the electrified, thought-locked, living metal sphincter. Other methods of reaching the Gidim ship might involve burrowing, phasing, teleporting, or magically creating an earthquake and clambering through the debris.

The cave around the leviathan has forty-foot-high ceilings riddled with stubby stalactites. The cavern extends outward and downward in many directions, but the Gidim haven't strayed beyond the leviathan.

Grown from living steel, the ship's overall shape is reminiscent of a squid, three hundred feet long and eighty feet wide, with fat eyestalks in place of tentacles, glowing with pale green bioluminescence as they extend a further fifty feet. A loading dock orifice opens at what would be the back of a squid's head or mantle, and a gaping maw splits its dorsal side, leading to an area called the flesh fens. The opening to the flesh fens lies forty feet directly beneath the living steel sphincter, so unprepared creatures that open it will fall in to be consumed and deposited into an incubation vesicle.

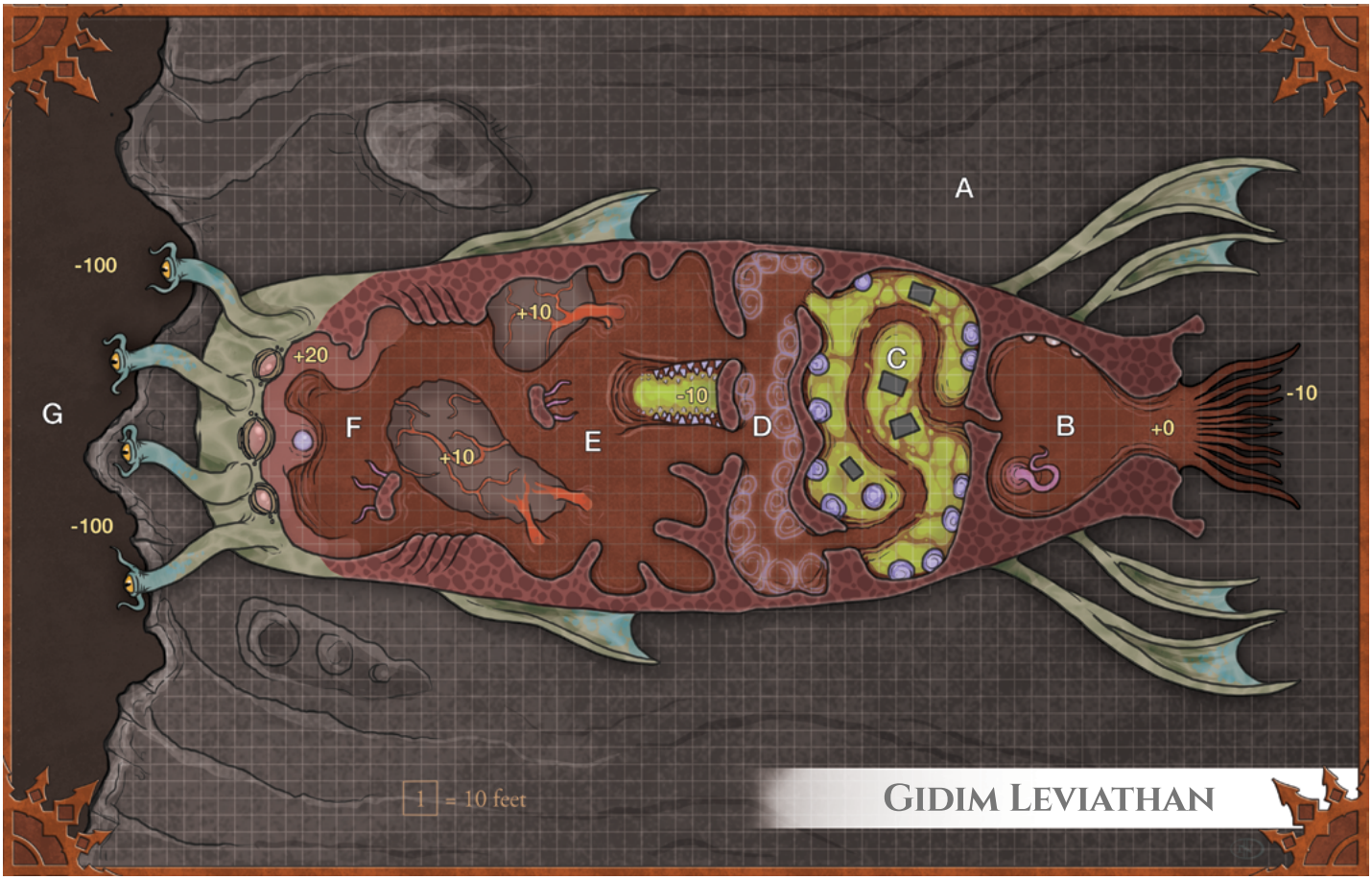
Take-Off

Sijhen wants the ship to remain in place long enough for it to create a link to the Gidim homeworld, but if it looks like the party is going to get into the ship, it directs the leviathan to tear free from the cave floor and fly above the city.

The moment any PC is detected in the ship's cavern, Sijhen orders a take-off. The cave begins to quake, the skin of the leviathan glows with bioluminescence as bright as daylight, and five rounds later the vessel rises from the cave floor. On the sixth round it slams into the ceiling of the cave and cracks it, crushing anyone caught between them (*Attack:* +25 vs. Reflex; *Hit:* 100 damage; *Miss:* 50 damage). For the next three rounds it presses its way through the solid rock, until on the tenth round it smashes up from beneath the Triunfo Vida, obliterating the building.

During all this, the party might be fighting their way into the vessel or getting out of the way. Once the leviathan rises into the air, if the party's airship is anywhere nearby they'll likely fly in to examine this bizarre glowing and levitating squid monster.

The leviathan begins to thrum and warble and ululate, singing music that fills the entire city with waves of wild emotions. If left alone, every minute it telekinetically grasps a city block worth of buildings atop one of the hills and flings them into the troughs, killing hundreds and sparking fires that will eventually consume the city.



Battling the Leviathan

A ship to ship battle in the sky gives the party a chance to bring the ship down and kill some of its crew. Each successful strike should reduce 2 shock troopers or infiltrators to half their maximum hit points. The leviathan is neither fast nor maneuverable, but if it can hit with a *telekinetic rend* it holds on and tries to get close enough to ram. Then the battle can turn to a boarding action, albeit one where the leviathan will continue to attack every minute, while the party's crew might be distracted and unable to fire back.

If things look unwinnable, Sijhen activates the leviathan's self-destruct sequence and then joins the battle against the PCs to stall and try to take them out.

Gidim Leviathan		Level 24 Leviathan
Gargantuan Leviathan		
Hull Integrity 4	**Defense** 30	**Command Rating** +18
Maneuverability 6	**Speed** 16	**Perception** +12, blindsense
Dimensions		
Body 300 ft. x 80 ft. Tentacles 200 ft.		
Leviathan		
The leviathan is a living creature, acting on its own and requiring no crew. After an extended rest, it heals all damage as long as it has at least 1 Hull Integrity. It can fly at any altitude.		
Grasping Eyestalks		
When the leviathan rams, it stops 25 feet from its target and takes no damage from the collision. The target cannot move until the eyestalks take damage or the leviathan releases its grip.		
Telekinetic Rend		
The leviathan reaches out and tears apart enemies as a weapon with a +21 attack bonus that can attack in any direction, including up and down. If it strikes an enemy ship, the two ships cannot move farther apart from each other until either Sijhen chooses to release the grab, this armament component becomes damaged, or the grabbed ship's engineer manages to remove the harpoons. While the grab persists, the leviathan gains a +10 bonus to Command checks when closing to short range.		
Psychic Invulnerability		
The leviathan exists partially as mere thoughts and emotions, and its crew is shielded both by living steel flesh and a mighty psychic consciousness.		
Crew of the leviathan cannot be targeted from outside the vessel. Creatures cannot teleport into or out of the vessel, but they can move to and from the ship's skin. When in flight, the vessel's "loading orifice" is closed. A strike that damages the orifice opens it for one naval round; a second strike keeps it open permanently.		
Emotional Flux		
Those who hear the ship's ululation struggle to control their emotions.		
Enemy ships must make a ship saving throw (d20 + captain's Charisma bonus vs. DC 10). Those that fail are treated as having half as many crew, which may impose a penalty to Command checks (-5 for below Full Crew, or -10 for below Minimum Crew). Clever ideas might mitigate the emotions created by the leviathan.		

Layout

From the loading orifice entrance, a passageway threads through the psychovivisection chambers, where prisoners are mentally deconstructed and then retrained so they can become vital agents or shock troopers. Some are left so crippled they're only good for food, and they are delivered to the Jaula.

From there, crew quarters flank the hall, each filled with intense psychic energy to create pocket planes where beings of thought can exist without flesh. The hall splits to either side of the flesh fens and continues past various pulsing vital organs, then ends at the navigation chamber, just before where the eyestalks emerge.

The whole living ship has few hard corners, and instead its spaces sweep and circle into each other. Currently the flesh is transforming itself into the seed of a thoughtform tentacle that, when fully grown, will erupt through the surface and stretch away into the stars.

The interior of the ship is riddled with sensory organs, which allow anyone in the navigation chamber to observe anywhere in the ship.

Loading Orifice (Area B)

Resembling the mouth of a whale shark, this passage can open as wide as forty feet across, or slowly clamp shut. A 'ramp' of fleshy tendrils rises ten feet from the cave floor. The muscular floor inside can create a sort of teleportation circle once per day, allowing anything on it to teleport to anywhere within 1000 feet that a Gidim oculus can see. Likewise, it can teleport willing creatures to it. This is how the flying horrors come and go, and they sleep here when not active.

Psychovivisection Chamber (Area C)

Four metal slabs hang suspended from the vaulted ceiling, held in place by rigid cables and transparent tubing. Rusted red stains smear across the metal surface, and the acrid scent of chemicals hangs heavily in the room. Curls of white vapor wrap around brightly colored vials in a transparent glass sphere, and next to it a table filled with delicate and deadly scalpels, probes, and clamps.

This chamber is where the Gidim keeps high-value prisoners. The chamber also functions as a medical lab, should the PCs figure out how to make it function, and the living steel instruments can can be activated as a standard action to let a creature spend a healing surge and heal an additional 5 hit points.

Prisoners are each held in transparent vesicles filled with oxygenated endoplasm, and each vesicle is thoughtlocked.

Mindscape Quarters (Area D)

Gidim are naturally incorporeal, so they need special psychic quarters to avoid drifting away when they slip into a state that for them is equivalent to sleep. This area is divided into fourteen 'mindscapes,' rooms that only exist as mental constructs, each lavish and comfortable for thoughtform creatures. Other creatures perceive the walls and 'furniture' as unreal. Indeed, while thoughtform creatures treat these objects as real, normal creatures can move through them.

SECOND ASSAULT

Should the party locate the leviathan but don't go down to it, the Gidim's goal is to survive until Day 25, when the tentacle will emerge. Sijhen, despite being granted great power by its race, is not a tactician, so it stays on the defensive. At most, the Gidim send out one warbeast unit to hunt the party in the city, but if the PCs survive that attack the remaining Gidim withdraw to the leviathan and only send out one or two infiltrators at a time, invisible, to try to maintain the sense of dread among the populace. With the use of illusions from oculi, Sijhen hopes to create the appearance of a much larger invasion force and draw attention away from the Triunfo.

Clever parties don't need to face the Gidim alone. Once they figure out the contours of the threat, simply explaining the enemy to the public is enough to get the police to stop serving them. It wouldn't be hard then to convince the marines stuck at the docks to help perform a 'boarding action,' potentially overwhelming the vessel before it can escape the cave.

Flesh Fens (Area E)

The overwhelming scent of flowers clashes horribly with the underlying odor of rot and blood within this circular chamber. Spherical niches along the floors, walls, and ceiling hold ragged bits of flesh. Grotesque remnants of humanoid bodies fused to the walls, and an inch-deep layer of unknown effluvia swirls in slow eddies along the floor.

The fens serve as both barracks and laboratory for the Gidim. When their victims have all their mental energies drained out in the Psychovivisection Chamber, their comatose bodies end up here for modification. The Gidim have mutated townsfolk into shock troopers. Fifteen shock troopers reside here, crouched in the corners. If the party has killed any, the Gidim can create five new ones per day.

Acid Bath. A central acid bath pool lies directly beneath the living steel sphincter that blocks off the shaft over the cave. A muscular flap can open and close over this bath, and if anyone falls inside it slams shut. Creatures that enter or end their turn in the acid bath take 30 acid damage. The flap can be opened with a Strength check (DC 25) or by dealing 50 damage to it. It is immune to acid damage.

Navigation Chamber (Area F)

Clustering together like enormous grapes, a sac of fleshy nodules ripples with purple electricity that courses and flows across the fine mesh that blankets the chamber in thick ropes and webs. The walls display vague images of areas of the ship. Touching one grants a full psychic connection with the sensory organs in that spot, and allows the ship's captain to use the leviathan internal defenses (see below).

Another creature in the navigation chamber can make an Arcana check (DC 40) to also gain access to these powers. A creature capable of telepathy gains a +5 bonus to this check. If by some chance Xambria or her consciousness is still with the party, she automatically knows how to control the ship.

Vortex Array. Growing from a pillar in the floor, a circle of glistening metal, diamonds, and flickering energy projects a three-dimensional model of Ursaliña into the air. Some *thing* moves in the same space, representing the psychic idea of the feeding tentacle being grown within the leviathan.

The device projecting this image is known as a *vortex array*. It's not attached to the leviathan, but rather stands alone, for these arrays are complicated to craft, and are thus reused after the feeding tentacle has been birthed. The array consists of a living metal pillar that rises seven feet, around which floats a ring of metal rods. When the array is inert or has completed a scan, the rods link together into a solid circle, but when they detect magical energies they rotate to point toward it, lengthen or shorten to represent distance, and glow dimly or bright to indicate intensity. Each rod is attuned to a different type of energy.

A creature standing within arm's reach of the array is mentally linked to this device of living steel, and it will obey orders to search for specific types of energy. It can also produce three-dimensional psychic maps of areas that it scans.

Reactive Defenses

The leviathan is guarded by a small force, but the Gidim likely have some warning the party is coming. The total complement of Gidim forces are presented in Appendix A: Combat Catalogue, but many of these will not be present when the party first arrives.

Cave Defense (Level 28 encounter). If the party takes more than ten minutes to go from entering Triunfo Vida to reaching the leviathan, two of the flying horrors and two oculi will lurk in the corners of the cave, having been recalled and teleported in. The oculi can produce illusory false monsters to distract the party while the flying horrors attack. Sijhen keeps five shock troopers inside the leviathan, but sends the rest (a maximum of ten) out to keep the party from getting into the ship.

Ship Defense (Level 28 encounter). If those defenders fail and the party makes it to the cave and is spotted, Sijhen launches the ship. The openings atop the flesh fens and at the back of the loading orifice seal shut (Strength DC 30 to open; 50 hp to break seal), and a ship-wide *dimensional anchor* effect manifests, preventing anyone from teleporting out of the ship. Sijhen is unaffected by the dimensional anchor. For five rounds the ship shudders, and on the sixth round it lifts off the cave floor.

The five withheld shock troopers and seven infiltrators station themselves behind cover as best they can, trying to watch the entrances through the flesh fens and the loading orifice. When battle begins, the shock troopers keep their distance from the Gidim, so as not to electrocute them; they'll try to abduct a PC and drag him into the acid bath in the flesh fens—or throw him off the ship once it's airborne. The infiltrators try to stick to cover and abuse ego whip from range.

Meanwhile, Sijhen oversees the battle from the navigation chamber and makes use of the following powers as a standard action, targeting any space inside the ship.

Standard Actions

✓ **Dimensional Anchor (force)** ✦ At-Will

An eyeball extrudes from the wall and fires a beam of golden light.

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +34 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d8+30 force damage, and the target cannot teleport, become insubstantial or phasing, or otherwise get out of the material plane (save ends).

✲ **Mucous Mist (poison)** ✦ At-Will

Glands spray a mist that smells like the back of a infected throat.

Effect: Fog wills an area burst 3 anywhere in the ship. It counts as total concealment beyond 1 square, or normal concealment for adjacent creatures. The fog lasts until the end of the encounter or until the captain uses this power again. Whenever a creature enters or ends its turn in the fog, make the following attack.

Attack: Area burst 3 (triggering creature); +34 vs. Fortitude

Hit: Ongoing 15 poison damage (save ends).

✲ Mindseize (charm) ✦ At-Will
A mental presence presses down on you with incredible weight.
Attack: Area burst 0 (one creature in the ship); +34 vs. Will
Hit: The target is knocked prone and dazed (save ends). While dazed, the target cannot stand up.

✲ Bioelectricity (lightning) ✦ At-Will
Electricity arcs from floor to ceiling, and you're in the way.
Effect: Electricity fills a 2 by 2 square area anywhere within the ship until the end of the captain's next turn. Creatures that enter or end their turn in any of these squares take 30 lightning damage.

✲ Inner Roar (thunder) ✦ At-Will
An orifice opens beside you and screams.
Attack: Area burst 1 within the ship (creatures in burst); +34 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d8+20 thunder damage, and the target is deafened (save ends) and pushed 5 squares.

▶ Spite ✦ Daily
The living creature around you shudders, and you feel its heartbeat quicken while its veins turn dark and turgid.
Effect: The ship begins a five-minute countdown to explosion. See Self-Destruct, below.

Sijhen Showdown (Level 30 encounter). Once most of the other Gidim have fallen, or when a PC gets to the navigation chamber, Sijhen splits into two (see its ability *eightfold wayfarer*) and has one copy activate the ship's self-destruct sequence. The ship's song stops, but it begins to pulse slowly with light. The pulses come faster and are joined by a rising whine as the leviathan grows closer to detonation.

The ancient Gidim advances on the party. Its bravado has faded compared to when it taunted them in the previous adventure, but it will briefly try to bargain.

"In the navigation chamber, you'll find a *vortex array*. If your mission is anything like what the Ancients did, you will need it to navigate the Gyre. This ship will destroy itself in a few minutes if I do not stop it, and you'll be lost. Consider a trade.

"I give you the array, and accompany you on your journey, operating the device and finding planes with the power sources you need, so you might have a chance to save your world. After all, if it dies it is useless to the Gidim. In exchange, you leave this ship. In days it will form a link to the Gidim homeworld. Not ideal for you, since the Gidim will begin to feed on the psychic energies of this city. But you must have a high estimation of your abilities. Perhaps you can sever the connection once you return."

If they decline, all Sijhen says is, "I was and always will be a soldier, and a servant of my homeworld. The will of the Gidim is unified, and I shall not flee."

Sijhen is lying, by the way. If it is confident it cannot prevail, it teleports away to evacuate to the surface, and will go into hiding (though it likely never shows its face again in this adventure path). And the party doesn't actually need Sijhen's help to operate the *vortex array*.

The Vortex Array Artifact
Living steel responds to thoughts and touch, detecting magical energies over a great distance.
Property: A column-like contraption made of cerebral mesh, diamonds, and living steel, the Vortex Array is a masterpiece of Gidim biotechnology. A ship equipped with one can scan regions as small as a single building (taking mere moments) or as vast as a thousand miles (which could require several hours), detecting all magic in it as per greater arcane sight. It also provides an overview of the general magical demeanor of a region, detailing any planar traits it might have.

If the Array is damaged, there is a chance that its readings will not be accurate when it is activated.

Self-Destruct

If Sijhen (or a crazy PC) triggers the self-destruct, the ship begins the process of tearing apart its own living steel flesh to release the psychic energies gathered for the tentacle's birth. The ship pulses and begins to screech, and five minutes later finally explodes. Only in the last few rounds, as the ship begins to spasm, does it open up exits and let the *dimensional anchor* field end.

The explosion deals 200 damage to everything within five hundred feet, collapsing the cave and Triunfo Vida. Inanimate objects in a one-mile radius—ranging from pens to boulders to entire streets—acquire varying amounts of self-awareness and gain the ability to move and hunt on their own.

Sure, the creatures kill a few hundred people, but Ursaliña eagerly begins capturing these monsters for use in the arena.

The countdown can be aborted if Sijhen (or a creature with access to the leviathan's controls) commands it. Alternately, it can be turned inward, so the destruction only tears apart the leviathan. The idea of a tentacle tries to reach to the dark sky, but it dissipates and vanishes.

Some time later, Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen will gather what thoughtflesh remains and unlock eldritch powers that will let Nicodemus take control of the whole world.

Conclusion

If all goes well, the PCs manage to halt the Gidim invasion in Ursaliña, though there is the chance that a few Gidim still lurk within the nation of Ber. Saving the day earns the party the *vortex array*, and if they manage to do it fairly quickly the citizens of Ursaliña spread word of their heroism, convincing the Bruse to call off his invasion of Risur.

Alternately, the city might fall, and a giant tentacle will erupt into the sky, stretching an infinite distance to the Gidim homeworld, which will begin converting the landscape around the city to its own biology. At that point, only renewing the ritual of the Axis Seal will stop the invasion.

A middle ground could see Sijhen pretending to aid the party, but in truth the Gidim will betray them in the most destructive way it can during the next adventure.

ACT TWO: When Doom Came to Drakr

The end times have come, and for the dwarves of Drakr this was no surprise. Grandis Komanov's army of fanatical doomsday eschatologists besiege the city of Bhad Ryzhavdut, bolstered by five titans suffused with the souls of legendary warlords known as the Lost Riders. They seek the eye of their lord, once called the Speaker of Snow, Heart of Black Ice, and the Warden of the Bleak Gate. Today he is called The Voice of Rot.

TIMELINE

These days are relative to whenever the adventure starts, since normal calendars no longer seem to apply.

- **Day 0:** Vlendam Heid arrives in Bhad Ryzhavdut, believing he'll be beginning a new, post-Eclipse political movement. He (and his bodyguard Kvarti) are trapped in the city when Komanov's army assaults it. The army breaks through part of the old wall and seizes a section of the old city, but then settles in for a siege. Heid teleports a lockbox to the party.
- **Day 1:** Komanov retrieves the lost eye of the Voice of Rot and begins to assemble her arcanoscientific weapon. It fires but can't create wraiths.
- **Day 7:** Komanov completes the weapon. Her army attacks and slays the entire city. She claims the souls of the dead for the Voice of Rot. The only person she spares is Vlendam Heid, taking him as a trophy.
- **Day 8:** After a night of sadistic revelry, the Vsadni conjure giant sleds of ice, which are blown by winds of the army's hivemind blizzard. These vessels travel scores of miles in a day, carrying the doomsday force toward Mirsk. Along the way they wipe out a few minor towns and settlements.
- **Day 15:** The army arrives in Mirsk. Komanov begins to prime her weapon again.
- **Day 20:** With the weapon ready, Komanov sacks Mirsk. She lets a few survivors flee by rail for Trekhom.
- **Day 22:** The army launches again across frozen ground, bound for the capital.
- **Day 31:** The army stops outside Trekhom for Komanov to prime the weapon once again.
- **Day 38:** Doomsday eschatologists attack Trekhom. The city actually holds off their assault for a time, but it falls the next day.
- **Day 39:** With nearly the entire nation of Drakr slain, Komanov orders all her followers to commit suicide and sends their souls to the Voice of Rot. She then heads to the Gyre to witness the end of the world.

The Siege of Bhad Ryzhavdut

Exploration. Montage.

How will the party deal with a doomsday army?

One of the ancient bastions of Drakr's might lies under siege. The city of Bhad Ryzhavdut and its famed tower fortress have for centuries guarded traffic along the Volgir River, where frigid mines in the Shawl Mountains feed ore to the eastern sea. The new rail lines that cross Drakr's frontier have stolen some of the port city's prosperity, but it still serves as a bastion against potential invasion by frost giants of the north.

Some twenty thousand people live in Bhad Ryzhavdut, many in subterranean compounds dug into the hills alongside the river. The highest hill rises five hundred feet above the river, and from its peak rises a two hundred foot-high tower fortress. Several thousand more farmers who lived around the city have either fled or been slaughtered.

The 'Old City,' that section of Bhad Ryzhavdut on the surface along the banks of the river, has been seized by an army, cutting the city off from supplies. Under the command of radical eschatologist Grandis Komanov, the besieging army consists of a core of a few hundred fanatics, tens of thousands more Drakran citizens who joined her cause after the stars fell, the occasional phalanx of skeletons, and a couple hundred frost giants who due to deception and language barriers think Grandis intends to conquer Drakr and give them a section to rule.

Most of the non-giants in the army are linked in a hivemind, which creates a perpetual winter storm around Bhad Ryzhavdut. Low clouds hang two hundred feet above the ground, concealing the tops of the highest hills, though the highest levels of the fortress Tower Mekram rise above the storm. The cold has frozen the Volgir River, and the army surrounds the city on all sides.

Most in the army are dwarves, and likewise in the city, but enough of each group are humans so they keep braziers or bonfires burning to provide illumination.

APPEAL TO POWER

If the party contacts the leadership of Drakr, they are warned not to approach Trekhom or else they will be attacked, as they are a hostile force. The leadership—various politicians and plutocrats, influenced by Obscurati representatives and perhaps led by Dmitra Takhenova—are convinced Risur is the primary threat and will not be swayed. The only way they'd consider focusing on Komanov as a threat would be if the party surrendered and let themselves be executed.

Approaching the City

If the party flies above the low clouds, they can see the top floors of Bhad Ryzhavdut's fortress rising out of the storm, lit with hearth fires and torches. This allows them to meet with the defenders before having to face the army and its forces. See Meeting the End with Dignity (page 99).

However, a ship breaking downward through the clouds will be noticed, because the hivemind's link to the blizzard will allow them to sense anyone approaching through the storm. See Anti Air Defenses (page 100).

Approaching on foot runs the more mild risk of the party being spotted by the Lost Riders, who patrol in circular sweeps around the city accompanied by frost giants. If the party is even slightly cautious (e.g., a scout moving forward to observe their pattern and succeeding Stealth DC 15), they can enter the city during the ten minute gap between the riders. The next rider through will spot their tracks, though, unless they conceal them.

There is no teleportation ward over the city, just a typical beacon that deposits people near the tower fortress, which is not controlled by Komanov's forces. The handful of Drakrans capable of teleportation were already recruited to aid the invasion of Risur. A few dozen people try to sneak out on foot every day, but their tracks are invariably spotted and they are run down.

The party might try to sneak into the army camp, which is practically unguarded. Unless the party is clearly hostile, the psychically-linked soldiers assume they're no threat, and might even invite them to join in the partying.

Camp Doom

Wispy tendrils thread from the backs of the soldiers' heads, floating up to the stormclouds that form their hivemind. The soldiers are busy fucking and occasionally eating their prisoners and each other, or drinking and dancing and performing every wild act of cruelty they'd ever heard of but never had been willing to try. Every few minutes a crowd will send up a toast, "To the end of the world!" The cheer rolls through the entire army and eventually becomes a guttural roar.

The warriors wear the dull expression that most people stuck in a hivemind have, but if engaged in a conversation many will admit that they are kind of disbelieving they're here. They all had families, goals, and morals, but if the world is going to end, they want to play a role.

Uncommitted

By contrast, the few hundred frost giants who accompany the army keep to themselves in four camps spaced around the city. They don't speak much Common or Dwarven, and so Komanov's dictats do nothing for them. They follow simply because they believe it will help them conquer a land for their own. Their leader, **Jarl Klar Pyaar of Clan Tundar**, has had her ego stroked by Komanov, but she could be convinced of the truth of the cult leader's plans, which would turn her against the army. Someone just has to explain things to her in Giant.

Riders Returned

After vanishing into the far north thousands of years ago, the Lost Riders known locally as the Vsadni were given new titanic undead bodies by the magic of the Voice of Rot. The frozen corpses of the long-dead dwarven warlords are held in the ribcages of massive skeletons crafted of the bones and stones of dead worlds. Their new bodies stand twenty feet high, with the rough body shape of an immense dwarf, wearing stylized stone plate armor covered with hundreds of skulls. Purple lightning crackles out of their hollow eye sockets and across their entire bodies.

Four of the Vsadni stay with Komanov's army, and at least two patrol around the city at any time, riding equally massive ice horses carved from a glacier. The fifth (Nebo) aids Komanov in excavating the Voice of Rot's eye from an older layer of ancient settlements buried beneath Bhad Ryzhavdut.

The five Vsadni have distinct personalities.

- **Nebo**, the leader. Growly and competent at coordinating armies. His surrogate body is entirely clad in black adamantine armor, and tendrils of darkness form a huge beard that flows down to his knees. Fights with a long morningstar. He carries no instrument, but instead sings. Rides the frost worm Distemper.
- **Betel**, the vain axeman. Believes himself superior to all others, but likes the majestic destruction he can accomplish with his fellow riders. Yellow vapors flow around his jaw like a thick, coiled beard. The haft of his bone and brass axe functions as a primitive three-valve horn.
- **Yarost**, the naïve axeman. Always follows Betel's lead and fights beside him. Has no aspirations, but is just really good at slaughter and music. Jagged shards of ice dangle from his chin in a serrated beard. He also wields a horn-axe.
- **Tzertze**, the upbeat wardrummer. Acts 'down to earth' despite being a titanic doom warlord from the dawn of history. Selfish and looks for ways to help himself, but would never betray his fellow riders—at least not seriously. Cool red flames wreath his face. Wields twin picks and wears a huge drum at his hip; during combat he maintains a constant percussive mix of clanging metal and deep drumbeats.
- **Hamul**, the hateful scum. Mumbles and whines. Loathes everyone, even himself. The other riders despise him, but he's too mean to die, and their hate of him enhances their camaraderie. Craggy brown stone clings to his face like muttonchops. Shamelessly carries an immense harp, but when he snaps the strings it flips open into a thirty-foot long scythe.

The Vsadni all share a vulnerability; the icy shard in their chest that holds their original body can be destroyed, which will collapse the stone and bone body around them.

Dear Leader

Grandis Komanov, with the aid of the Vsadni Nebo and twenty of her loyal cultists, is busy magically excavating a collapsed tomb under Bhad Ryzhavdut's Old City. At the end of Day 1, they recover the lost eye of the Voice of Rot, which the fey titan once used to command the souls of the dead. The eye is withered and calcified, but Komanov and her followers have designs to channel its power into a weapon.

When completed, *the cyclopean revelation* will be a twelve-foot-long contraption of cold iron and obsidian wrapped around the pale eye. Its shape is that of a slender cannon with twin handles reminiscent of a scythe. It weighs a ton but floats effortlessly in Komanov's hand.

It must be attuned in each location to connect to the Voice of Rot's own power; once moved more than three miles from where it was attuned, it loses its powers, and the fey titan will not renew them for anyone other than Komanov. Attuning it takes about a week.

When not attuned, it functions as a terrifying cannon, producing a 1000-ft. black beam, 20-ft. wide, that disintegrates anything in its path .

Attack: +33 vs. Reflex; *Hit*: 40d6 damage and dispels any magic it touches (ending any bonuses or special benefits from non-martial powers). A creature slain by this attack rises as a wraith at the end of the encounter. *Miss*: The target can choose to either move to the nearest space outside the area and fall prone or take half damage. *Effect*: Unattended objects in the area are disintegrated.

When fully connected to the Voice of Rot, *the cyclopean revelation* further causes any creature slain by it to rise as a wraith loyal to the wielder. A few minutes of carving through castle walls and slaying those within will produce hundreds of new allies. A day after wiping out a city, all those souls will be drawn into the Gyre to power the Voice of Rot himself.

Hourly Sermons

At the top of every hour, one of the Vsadni will blow a horn, and the camp will quiet down. Then groups of Komanov's most loyal cultists weave through the army, handing out alcohol rations while loudly proclaiming their ideology:

"All must end. The world is all we know. The world must end. Let us witness that end. A serpent wraps its white coils around our destiny. Let our strength bolster his. Let our souls feed him. Let our glory be the last image seen by his cyclopean gaze. The battle is nigh."

The Carnage Parade

The cultists's benedictions occur twelve times per day. After the final such pronouncement, the four Vsadni make their way through the camps, playing doom-laden music while roughly reshaping the crowds into something resembling proper formation so they can have their evening meals. While the army feasts, the four undead titans gather at the head of a short parade, consisting of them, their steeds, and sleds bearing the core fanatics of Komanov's cult.

The fifth Vsadni—Nebo—then arrives from the excavation site in the Old City, along with Grandis, who has taken a break from preparing her doomsday weapon. She sits atop a throne on a huge sled of gold-highlighted steel, drawn by Nebo's steed. When the parade is about to begin, she stands, and thousands of men go silent.

The various braziers and bonfires around the camp are snuffed, their flames replaced by a wavering blue light in the shape of Grandis Komanov's face so that each of her followers can see and hear her. She addresses them with a five-minute long speech, slow and intimate at first, reinforcing the bonds they share through recent suffering and a shared history of conflicts that never could bring peace.

Slowly, though, she ratchets up the intensity of her rhetoric, elucidating a condensed list of grievances in order to paint the leaders of Drakr in the darkest terms possible—as oathbreakers and cowards. She names the great cities of Drakr, landmarks in each, and with grandiosity proclaims that the monuments crafted by these corrupt leaders must be torn down.

As she speaks, the strands that link each warrior with the hivemind storm grow more solid, and some even glow. Tellingly, though, no such strand links Grandis to the hivemind; she views herself as above these people.

Finally she ends with:

"Warriors of the Final Army, the world's end is nigh. Its eyes? Dark! Its heart? Like a frozen river! Its breath? Crushed from it like a goat trapped in the coils of a serpent. None of us can be saved. All that remains is for us not to shrink in fear from the icy end of the earth, but to be brave, to stand like giants until the final light. The song of our people, the tales of our families, has lasted centuries, and now we shall give that song—that epic legend—the grand finale it deserves. We shall sweep across this land like a scythe, and our march shall leave no life behind to suffer a pathetic, whimpering death. Glory! That is what we bring! For if this world is to die, let it be in battle! Let it be in passion! Let it be at our hands!"

To thunderous applause, the five Vsadni gallop through the entire camp as they sing a rousing war song—they have a wide repertoire—to whip up frenzied adulation of Komanov. Dozens of people incidentally die during the parade, either trampled by the beasts or pulled up onto the sleds for gruesome sacrifice.

When the parade concludes, Komanov returns to her weapon, while the army begins the long process of debauching itself to exhaustion.

The Sacrament of Apotheosis

In Adventure Eight, *Diaspora*, Grandis may have learned the ritual for the *sacrament of apotheosis*. If the party let her get away with that, then in this adventure Komanov is perpetually adorned with the proper blood runes to activate the ritual at a moment's notice, and her mute lackey always has the components available to perform it.

The duration is short enough that she won't deploy it unless she knows she'll be facing a major threat, but even in the midst of battle, her lackey can activate the ritual in the span of just two rounds. If she can predict when a fight will take place, she'll use the ritual in advance.

Komanov's followers number in the tens of thousands, but their faith is relatively weak compared to what powered the same ritual during the Great Malice.

The ritual lasts for one hour. Modified stats are presented in Appendix A. If Komanov is slain, the backlash consumes all her followers in her army as well.

Meeting the End with Dignity

Social. Real-Time.

Perhaps some boisterous debates will turn the tide.

Unlike the chaos outside, the twenty thousand citizens inside Bhad Ryzhavdut are stoic and restrained. Though of course many are scared, Vlendam Heid has spoken publicly to encourage people to accept the possibility of their deaths. That accomplished, they can turn their minds away from dread and toward a solution.

They've been doing a proper *Magnificent Seven*-style training regimen, arming and practicing battle tactics, setting up traps and ambush spots, reinforcing walls, and occasionally scouting the doomsday army's forces. When the attack comes they plan to hold a fighting retreat back to the tower fortress. It's all for naught, though, because they're simply too outnumbered, and Komanov's *cyclopean revelation* will simply carve through any wall in its path. The defenders' morale is high, but they stand no chance.

Rally the Defenders

Despite his predilections for talking, Vlendam Heid won't waste time waxing philosophical with the party. He'll explain the situation as he knows. If the party hasn't scouted, Kvarti can take them to a low hill just beneath the clouds where they can observe the whole camp and witness Grandis's speech and parade.

We assume the party will be able to take on the army by themselves, albeit not all at once. However, if the party wants to involve the Bhad Ryzhavdut militia, Heid can liaise with the city defenders for them. Of course, it's likely simpler to just have their effect be in the background, and adjust how many enemies the PCs have to face directly based on how well they deploy their allies. If you need stats, however, use these as a basis for a militia unit.

Bhad Ryzhavdut Militia — Level 27 Minion Soldier
Large natural humanoid (dwarf, swarm) — XP 2400

HP 1; see Large Unit below — **Initiative** +11
AC 43, **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 39, **Will** 39 — **Perception** +13
Speed 5 — Low-light vision

Traits

▸ **Large Unit**

The militia consists of dozens of dwarves working in tandem, filling the space of a Huge creature. The unit needs only fill 9 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual dwarf could move through.

Any effect that deals at least 21 damage knocks the unit out of the fight – wounding enough of the dwarves that the rest panic and disperse. Any lesser amount of damage bloodies the unit, or disperses it if it is already bloodied.

▸ **Loyal Ally**

As long as a PC is present, the militia is not killed when reduced to 0 hit points. After a short rest, they recover and become 'bloodied.'

Standard Actions

⊘ **Hammer and Shield (weapon)** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Effect: Make the following attack against up to three targets within range. If used as an opportunity attack, only target the triggering creature.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +32 vs. AC

Hit: 17 damage, and the target grants combat advantage until the end of the militia's next turn.

⊘ **Desperate Firepower (weapon)** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Area burst 1 within 12 (creatures in burst); +26 vs. Reflex

Hit: 17 damage, or 24 damage on a critical hit.

Miss: 7 damage.

Str 16 (+12) **Dex** 10 (+13) **Wis** 14 (+15)
Con 14 (+15) **Int** 10 (+13) **Cha** 8 (+12)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven

Talking Philosophy

While the party considers what to do, Heid laments to them that Komanov's command over the army is wholly based on how she has framed the nature of the new age. He finds it a tragedy that so many are willing to throw their lives away in service to such a flawed philosophy. After all, he asks, the world *isn't* going to end, is it?

It's likely the party just goes after Komanov the old fashioned way, but they might come upon the idea of having a philosophy duel. If the army could be convinced that the world isn't ending, or if Komanov's rhetoric were undercut, her power would fade and perhaps even the hivemind would be destroyed.

If the party tries this, see Madness of Grandis (page 103)

Choose the Form of Your Destructor

Action. Tactical. Level 20+.

A variety of threats await.

The party could tackle Komanov's army in many ways. Here are some potential combat encounters. Stats for all these foes are presented in Appendix A: Combat Catalogue (page 256).

Perimeter Patrol (Level 28)

Four of these patrols circle the city, with one passing through any given area around the edge every ten minutes or so. Three frost giants ride dire polar bears, while the Vsadni rides his fimbulwinter steed, a massive horse crafted from glacial ice. They're confident, but if things look bad, the Vsadni will blow a horn or beat a drum to call for aid.

- 1 Vsadni (Lost Rider)
- 1 fimbulwinter steed
- 3 tundar riders
- 3 dire polar bears

Camp Brawl (Level 21)

Provoke a fight in the army camp, and a few hundred hivemind-empowered warriors will swarm the party, aided by a nearby phalanx of skeletons. If the PCs can defeat these, it takes a few minutes for reinforcements to gather in sufficient numbers to risk a follow-up attack.

- 3 doomsday army squads
- 1 skeletal phalanx

Duel with Death (Level 24)

The party might be able to enter the camp and goad one of the Vsadni into arrogantly fighting the party all by himself. Hurtful taunting (Intimidate DC 40) can provoke such a battle. Less severe insults (Intimidate DC 30) can either yield a two-on-two duel with Betel and Yarost, or a one-on-one duel against Tzertze or Hamul. A proper offering (History DC 30 to realize a mammoth meat feast was beloved by the Riders) can grant a +10 bonus to the necessary Intimidate check.

Anti-Air Defenses (Level 32)

Should the party fly in without bothering to scout, the hivemind conjures a gargantuan blizzard elemental. Its roars alert the four Vsadni, who mount up and ride into the sky, their steeds' hooves creating solid platforms of ice in the air for them to gallop across. The party will be able to hear their blaring horns, rumbling drums, and—discordantly—light harping from the distance as they ride in from all directions.

On the ground, nine frost giants with barbed harpoons hurl them up at the party's ship. It takes some a few tries, but three manage to snag the party's ship each round and begin climbing. Distracted by the blizzard elemental, the party might not hear the harpoons' impact over the roar of the storm (Perception DC 30).

Assuming the party stays about 200 feet up, three frost giants clamber aboard the party's ship each round starting on the tenth round of combat. Two rounds later Vsadni Betel and Yarost are visible two hundred feet out, and the other two Vsadni arrive five rounds after them.

- 1 endtimes blizzard elemental
- 4 Vsadni (Lost Riders)
- 4 fimbulwinter steeds
- 9 tundar hunters

Assassination (Level 30)

Komanov is at her most vulnerable in the underground excavation where she crafts her lord's eye into a weapon. Defeating her out of sight of her army will cause the thousands of warriors to go mad and lay waste to whatever city they're nearest to, but they'll then lose cohesion and cease their march upon Drakr.

- Grandis Komanov
- Komanov's Lackey
- Vsadni Nebo
- Frost worm Distemper
- 2 doomsday high priest
- 1 doomsday sniper
- 1 doomsday army squad

Overwhelming Odds (Level W'TF)

A public battle before the whole army is likely a losing proposition.

- Grandis Komanov
- Komanov's Lackey
- 5 Vsadni Nebo
- Frost worm Distemper
- 4 fimbulwinter steeds

The following units are also present, and would be replaced nigh infinitely the round after the last is defeated, so there are always this many such enemies attacking the party at once.

- 1 endtimes blizzard elemental
- 1 remorhaz
- 2 doomsday cultists
- 1 doomsday sniper
- 1 skeletal phalanx
- 8 doomsday army squads
- 12 tundar hunters

Showdown (Level 34)

If the party convinces the army not to interfere, they might have a shot at taking on Grandis and her loyalists all at once.

- Grandis Komanov
- Komanov's Lackey
- 5 Vsadni (Lost Riders)
- 4 fimbulwinter steeds
- Frost worm Distemper
- 8 doomsday high priests
- 4 doomsday snipers

Komanov's Tactics

Grandis will open battle by conjuring a dancing greatsword of jagged ice, then uses the *cyclopean revelation*. Each turn thereafter she'll use *eschatological hammer* until the revelation is ready to fire again, and she'll create *glacial walls* with her minor actions to isolate her enemies or give her a chance to withdraw from attackers.

Komanov's mute lackey stays within sight of his mistress and uses *arcane throat slit* against foes who are far away, *agonizing flames* against clustered enemies, and *defend the mistress* if more than one enemy gets adjacent to Komanov. If the party let Grandis learn the *sacrament of apotheosis* in Adventure Eight, the lackey will perform that at the start of combat, granting his mistress incredible power for as long as the army is loyal to her , but only if the party is not smart enough to call her by name, letting them harm her.

When Komanov is defeated, she uses *proper endings* to call upon the power the Voice of Rot is consuming in the Gyre. She pleads, "Devour me, Voice of Rot, and take this world with me!"

The Old Cairns

Social. Real-Time.

One Vsadni offers to betray Grandis Komanov out of spite.

If the party attacks the army but doesn't finish the job within a few hours, Tzertze, the Vsadni wardrummer, creates a dozen ghouls and sends them out as messengers. They might find the party, or just be slain by city defenders and their messages brought to the PCs. Tzertze wants to betray Grandis.

Unlike his other kin, Tzertze does not believe that Komanov is a true speaker of the end times, and is not eager to resume the mantle of warlord under her. Unwilling to stand against his kin directly, Tzertze wants to help the party kill her. His message reads:

"I apprehend you to be unmatched warriors whom I could call peers. I welcome you to a place of negotiation. Let us set aside titles and honors and speak among the ancient stones. Much time has passed since I rode through these lands, and I will ask of you what has changed since the Three-Eyed Knight walked the Star Road. Perhaps the Speaker of Ice and Snow will perish before this world will."

An Arcana or History check (DC 30; Skyseers automatically know this) reveals that Tzertze refers to an ancient method of timekeeping using the constellations. A hilly region across the Volgir River is home to an ancient ring of plateaus—the Old Cairns. Centuries ago giants crafted these eight-hundred foot megaliths as an immense astronomical clock. Later, dwarves and humans buried their dead among the massive stones. Now the center of the ring, some thousand feet across, is filled with a snow-capped forest.

Friendly Traitor

Tzertze is old-fashioned but polite. He comes alone, save for his steed, and volunteers the essence of Komanov's plan: excavate the eye, craft a mighty weapon that will send souls to her master, then destroy every city in Drakr and order her army to kill itself. Tzertze is simply bored with the idea, because so far he doesn't see any real challenge or difficult battle.

Tzertze needs to be offered something for a Diplomacy check to have any chance of making him him helpful. If told of the Ob's ritual, he's offended by the arrogance needed to rewrite the cosmos. He could be enticed to fight alongside the party, either in the Gyre or currently against the armies invading Risur.

Generally, a DC 25 Diplomacy check makes Tzertze friendly enough that he'll stay out of any battle against the party, and will tell them the powers and personalities of his warlord brethren and the array of the army. A DC 30 check will make him helpful enough that he'll mark them with a symbol—a bloody-eyed skull with a green forked tongue—visible only to them and the frost giants, indicating they're not to be harmed. He'll also create an opening for them to get into the camp to challenge one of the other Vsadni, or even the tunnels under the Old City to assassinate Grandis.

It takes a DC 40 check to get him to agree to join the fight against his brothers.

Negotiating in Poor Faith

Only after the party thinks they have a deal does Tzertze start to add complications.

Oh, he adds, he also wants a harem. He'll figure out the specifics of how he'll actually have sex with his new body, but he wants twenty women from Bhad Ryzhavdut to serve him. And he wants this city as his, so he can use the tower as his fortress. He promises he'll let the citizens live and do dumb farm stuff. Finally, he wants all his fellow warlords' magic weapons as trophies.

Refusing these requests imposes a -10 penalty to the party's Diplomacy check, but it's possible to convince him that the world isn't a place for such domineering tyranny. He is, after all, old-fashioned, and is just doing the sorts of evil things he thinks are right. He could be persuaded to be less direct in his villainy, and instead just attract lady followers.

Fighting Tzertze

If attacked, Tzertze first *dimension doors* away to the top of one of the plateaus, and curses at the party for being petty and mediocre. He hopes to goad the party into approaching, then calls down a *meteor swarm*. In addition to the normal threat, this also triggers an avalanche, as rocks and snow from all the plateaus fall upon the center of the ring, counting as the 'bury zone.' Anyone within a hundred feet of the plateaus but outside the ring is caught in the 'slide zone.' Tzerteze surfs down it and enters melee.

Attack: Area burst (creatures in bury zone); +26 vs. Reflex; *Hit:* 3d6+20 damage and the target is buried. *Miss:* Half damage, and the target is knocked prone and restrained (Escape DC 30). *Special:* A buried creature is helpless, and takes 5 damage per minute. Excavating a buried creature takes at least a minute of unearthing debris.

Attack: Area burst (creatures in slide zone); +26 vs. Reflex; Hit: 3d6 damage and the target is knocked prone and restrained (Escape DC 30).

Thereafter, he'll either try to flee on his steed if still outnumbered, or will descend to coup de grace buried foes or possibly give a stand-up fight to a PC if only one is standing.



Excavating the Eye

Exploration. Real-Time.

The radical eschatologist rants philosophically to her minions as she completes her doomsday device, giving the party a chance to catch her by surprise.

The planned site of Bhad Ryzhavdut's rail station sits along the Volgir River, and while track has been laid to make transport of industrial goods easier, the actual station itself is just a hole in the ground for now. A well-guarded hole in the ground, patrolled by the frost worm steed (named Distemper) of Nebo, leader of the Vsadni, as well as a detachment of loyal soldiers with experience in mining glaciers.

Excavation Surface Guards

- Frost worm Distemper
- 1 doomsday army squad

Cranes around the site have dug out huge cubes of ice, allowing access to an ancient burial chamber in the bedrock. It is here that Grandis Komanov retrieves the eye of the Voice of Rot and crafts it into a doomsday weapon.

Sanctum Defenders

- Grandis Komanov
- Komanov's lackey
- Vsadni Nebo
- 2 doomsday high priests
- 1 doomsday sniper

The Sanctum of the Bleak Gate

This chamber was long-ago flooded by the river, then frozen each winter. Originally the chamber was effectively a two-hundred foot cube of open space, supported by columns of natural rock woven with calcified corpses of dead warriors. The top thirty feet of each column is still exposed, since the water did not flood the entire chamber. From that level, wide passages of ice have been cut out, each tall enough for the Vsadni Nebo to move through them, all the way down to the bottom of the chamber. Within the small glacier the eye glows, and every surface glistens with moisture and reflected light.

The eye itself was contained in a case of adamantine, then placed into a pocket dimension and sealed in cursed stone. Bypassing those defenses takes Komanov until the end of day one, at which point she retrieves the ancient eye. It takes her a further six days to build and attune her doomsday weapon. She sleeps each night in a magically-alarmed extradimenstional mansion created by her mute lackey.

The sanctum contains a small force, making it ideal for an assassination. More than that, though, it is here that Grandis feels comfortable boasting about her true goals, and those of her master. If the party is able to get down here without the surface guards sounding an alarm, they can easily listen from the top of the chamber as Komanov rants and rambles.

If your party is the type to enjoy stealth, you could have a few extra guards lurking around the sanctum, which the party can take out quietly as Komanov talks.

The Nature of the Apocalypse

As she works on the doomsday weapon, Komanov boasts to Nebo, mostly to hear herself talk:

"I should be angry. I hate warmth. I adore ice. It's what brought me my prosperity—you could ask my lackey, but he lacks the tongue to tell the tale. I was a caravan guide, and he and many other fat, chatty merchants were with me when a weeks-long blizzard trapped us in the mountains. It was my magic alone that protected them from freezing to death. Believe that, my magic, keeping those arrogant dragon-minded misers alive while I was being paid a pittance.

"My family always claimed we were descended from you or your brethren. We had the blood of warlords. But modern temperance had led us into pathetic poverty. I spent long evenings reading a book of philosophy—old man Heid's treatise—and I got to thinking of how my life might end. I would be damned if I would leave this world a failure. Well I say, I demanded my fair payment, and one of the merchants did not much appreciate that. I think it was when I ate his tongue that the others changed their minds.

"As I say, I adore ice. That blizzard made me rich, and killed everyone who could testify upon my sins. Warmth serves me little.

"But oh how it warms my heart to see the morbid desperation of our army. They see the death of the world and beg me for a way to have a twinkle of meaning before the end. And the Tundar? Ho ho, those giants believe anything. Thank their pride for keeping them from learning our tongue and realizing what jiggery pokery I've fed them.

"Eh, I do them a favor. If they die, their souls linger now, until such time as the plane of ruins passes between our world and the Gyre. No point to such a death. No afterlife, no value in a soul. The Ob, however they changed the world, they tore the plane of dreams from its place as our moon and cast it to the edge of the night. The undiscovered tomorrow which lies beyond the gate lies there no more. The green maze that traps those seeking their final end is itself dissolving in the starless sky.

"But these fools who fight for me, they pay the bill for my apotheosis. Our lord, as his coils tighten around the arc of time and draw it toward the Gyre, shall feast upon their souls. And he shall reward me with godhood. This frozen planet will be torn to dust, and I will walk forever on through the heavens.

"First, of course, we must win this war. I'm pleased to have you warlords, to finish the final battle. What greater reward could you desire than to be the last victor, standing atop a world of corpses?

"Godhood, I suppose. But that's just for me. Betray me and the Voice of Rot shall snap your soul back right away. As Heid said, we must design our affairs to achieve good endings. And now everything goes according to my plans."



Madness of Grandis

Social. Real-Time.

The fullest victory will be to destroy not just her army, but the cause it fights for.

The party might challenge Grandis to a philosophical debate. Why not? Earlier they had a rap battle with a faerie and a pirate astronaut. If the party realizes how much Komanov disagrees with her troops, or how most of the troops are not truly committed to her ideology, just desperate, they could realize this is the easiest way to defeat her.

To attempt such a debate, however, the party would need to get everyone's attention, which would probably entail interrupting the daily carnage parade. This would prompt at least some fighting as the Vsadni tried to kill the intruders. But if they have a way to be heard by the whole army and can get a moment to talk, the PCs can attempt a Diplomacy check (DC 30) to convince Komanov's followers that their dear leader ought to debate them—for the honor of the army, if nothing else. Drakr's politics are tightly wound up in philosophical debates, so she won't dare refuse and lose the army's absolute trust.

Format

Drakran tradition divides such debates into five 'rounds' for each speaker, typically limited to ten minutes each. Given the short tempers and urgent matters of war, precedent exists to instead have brief exhortations of just a minute or so, with occasional interruptions from each side. A free-for-all is also fine.

Heid on their Side

Vlendam Heid might accompany the party, but he has no combat skills to speak of, and so the party would need to protect him from the Vsadni. Or he could coach them before they go out (or via some sort of telepathy magic). If he's with the party, you can let him roll a Diplomacy check (d20+25) in addition to whichever PC speaks, and use the higher result.

Five Reasons

Komanov is more of a rhetorical speaker than a scholar, and so she crafts her arguments in a way to capture the emotions of her followers. She doesn't care so much about logic or consequences. The five key points in her speech are:

- The world is going to end, so personal consequences are immaterial. People should do what they want.
- The history and traditions of the world are personal and worthy of respect, and so she wants everyone to fulfill a great destiny to give the world a fine ending.
- The best way to do that is to tear down all the corrupt and weak who kept the world from achieving its highest greatness. In this case, that would be the political leaders of Drakr and their followers.
- To rile up the army, she details a half-dozen high profile actions by those in power, which offended the masses, some ancient, some recent.
- She ends by comparing the army to various mighty heroes from myth and legend, and comparing the party to cowards, tricksters, and the same politicians who they are out to destroy.

For each point, the party can attempt a specific check (DC 30) to recognize a flaw in her argument and figure out how to properly present it to the audience in a way they'll grasp. Then whoever speaks for the party can make a Diplomacy check (DC 40), with a +5 bonus if they identified her argument's flaw.

They gain a further +2 bonus to each Diplomacy check if they can repeat Komanov's insults about the army (or succeed a DC 30 Bluff check to make them up even if they didn't hear them). They take a -2 penalty if the speaker is both not from Drakr and not an eschatologist.

- **Arcana.** The world isn't assured to end. While planar mechanics are complicated, it's possible to explain what happened and how they intend to fix it.
- **History.** Taking a nihilist tack, the party can recount the stories of other once-great leaders or heroes, figures who fell from power and are nearly forgotten by history. This highlights that there never is a single narrative in world affairs, just a constant roil of different elements rising and falling.
- **Religion.** Every religion, nation, and family has stories of martyrs who, when faced with an unavoidable death, chose to maintain their ideals rather than seek revenge. Comparing Grandis to historical traitors can show that her path is the wrong one.
- **History.** Naming a variety of positive influences in modern Drakr, as well as neutral groups who will suffer at the army's hand, will make them less fanatical.
- **Performance (Charisma DC 25).** Komanov has the weight of myth on her side, in no small part due to her having musical warlords proclaiming her majesty. A grand performance by a PC can put them on the same footing as Komanov.

If the party succeeds three of the five Diplomacy checks, the army is divided and the hivemind destroyed. A handful of soldiers will still fight by Komanov's side, but others will fight against them, leaving the party to only really have to worry about the Vsadni and a few cultists.

Four successes, and the entire army stands aside. Five successes, and they turn on their former leader and help the party tear her apart. If she is slain, the Lost Riders (except for Tzertze, if he agreed to stay out of a fight) are pulled into the rift created when she calls upon the Voice of Rot, and they are annihilated.

Conclusion

If the party stops Komanov's army, word will spread naming the PCs as saviors and heroes, and within a week Drakr halts its invasion of Risur. If the party completely discredits her and pulls that off before Bhad Ryzhavdut falls, the army stops immediately and aids Risur against the other invaders.

The eye of the Voice of Rot still functions as a mighty, destructive beam, but the party won't be able to use its wraith-creating power since the fey titan isn't a fan of theirs. However if they bring the eye with them to the Gyre, they'll dramatically improve their chances in a fight against the doomsday serpent.

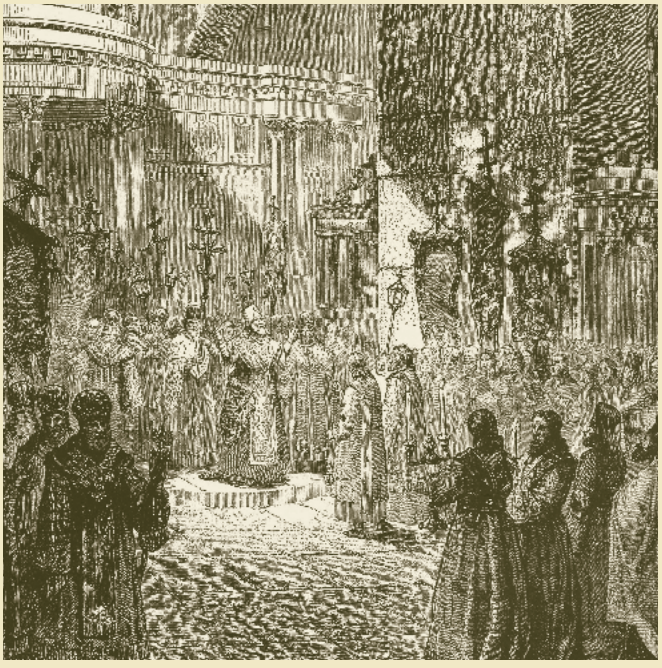
If the party fails and Drakr falls to Komanov's army, the cult's leader will appear by the side of her lord in Adventure Twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven* as they await the end of the world.

ACT THREE:
Trial of the Century

In the new world order, not even the gods are free from judgment. The *sacrament of apotheosis*, once a deeply buried secret, has fallen into the hands of former godhand Vitus Sigismund. He holds public trials of the various gods of the Clergy, which always end in a sentence of death, then uses the ritual to transform their high priests into avatars for the execution.

Amidst this chaos, the party comes seeking details of the Axis Seal ritual so they can undo the changes made by the Obscurati. The Ob kept a copy of the ritual in the Grand Librarium of Alais Primos, but to open the extradimensional vault that contains it, the party will need to make a deal with the devil.

Okay, technically a demon. Possibly a tanar'ri.



Pyres of Judgment Day

Exploration. Montage.

Alais Primos is burning itself to death.

Morgan Cippiano, head of the Family in Flint, will want to accompany the party. If they do not bring him along, he'll arrange transportation on his own and will have a *sending* relayed through Harkover Lee, asking them to meet him at the Lamplano Pescateria restaurant near Vanale Cemetery when they arrive.

Welcome to Alais Primos

Alais Primos is framed by a crescent of verdant hills and low mountains, foremost among them the volcano **Enzyo Mons** which rises high to the south. Half a mile tall and three miles from the city center, Enzyo Mons is accessed by a trail of shrines and chapels, with one devoted to every god in the Clericist pantheon, no matter how minor. At the edge of the caldera stands the Cathedral of Triegenes, devoted to the founder of the Clergy who they claim ascended to godhood upon death.

A stained glass window above the cathedral's rostrum is continually back-lit by the glow of the lava in the caldera, and a broad balcony behind the cathedral overlooks that pit of fire. Traditionally, priests have held ceremonies to cast into the volcano any items believed to be possessed of evil. They also cast in offerings of gold and jewels, though they don't throw as far; a tier just beneath the balcony, out of sight of the public, catches these valuables, which are recovered later.

The mountain is not particularly tall in the grand scheme of things, but its obsidian black face stands out starkly, making the rolling green hills around it seem even more beautiful by comparison. Due to the prayers of the faithful it has not erupted in over 700 years.

City Layout

Aqueducts feed water down from the hills into canals, which flow through the city. Alais Primos is roughly divided into four sections: three sprawling harbors along the coast, the cathedral district which is circumscribed by the old city walls, the common neighborhoods that ring the cathedrals, and finally the sheltered farmlands that lie between the city and the hills. Beyond the semi-circle of hills and mountains many more small towns and farms lie scattered, while a few beautiful churches rise up from garden islands just off the coast.

Hundreds of small chapels dot the city, normally places for confession and prayer, but today the squares in front of nearly every chapel are filled with burning pyres. A constant stream of smoke rises from Enzyo Mons; this blocks out the sky, but the dull orange glow of the city's fires reflects off it, making it seem like the city is trapped inside of an oven.

Throughout the cathedral district and beyond, church windows are destroyed, shrines defaced, and black banners hang from rooftops. The bitter scent of funerary incense rides harsh on the wind, mingling with sulfurous fumes.

NAMES OF GODS

by Ryan Nock

In keeping with E.N. Publishing tradition, we generally don't name gods in our settings unless they play a prominent role that might not be filled by standard fantasy pantheons. Pathfinder and Dungeons & Dragons come with pre-assumed deities, so we let groups use whatever gods they are comfortable with. I've always been a fan of Wee Jas from Greyhawk and Calistria from Golarion, but when publishing for multiple systems it's easier if we just have the gods be vague.

For Zeitgeist, that means we've only named Triegenes and Srasama. (We might've tossed in one or two other gods along the way, but nothing really significant.)

That now poses a small problem as we get to an adventure where specific gods are being executed. (Or more specifically, the human concept of that god is being killed, eliminating its psycho-socio-cultural power.) Since we don't know what deity names you're using, we just list gods in this adventure by their focus. You should probably have specific god names for each of them.

In this setting's metaphysics, it's never been clear whether gods are real, and all instances of witnessed divinity are actually due to the *sacrament of apotheosis* converting massed faith into godlike power. Divine classes, at least in my mind, get their power by tapping into that shared faith, though it's certainly possible to access such magic simply by sharing morality without necessarily sharing a specific religion.

With that in mind, if you have a paladin or cleric PC, by all means, have the mob threaten a god the PC worships instead of Triegenes. If a PC's god dies, the PC is probably tough enough to survive the backlash, and come Adventure Thirteen might even take that god's place, ascending via the *sacrament* or some other transcendant power.

TIMELINE OF EXECUTIONS

Every other day a new god is executed, and each victim only empowers the burgeoning evil in the volcano Enzyo Mons.

In addition to the gods listed below, Velkali goddess of oases will be executed the first time the party goes to witness one of these trials, and the god of music will be executed a day later. Just bump the dates a bit to make room. If the party waits too long, Vitus eventually executes even Triegenes, and the god trials end as the city of Alais Primos is consumed in lava.

- **Day 0:** God of the night sky.
- **Day 1:** God of beasts and magnolias.
- **Day 3:** God of sun and archery.
- **Day 5:** God of stone and pottery.
- **Day 7:** God of the sea and tidepools.
- **Day 9:** God of storms and weddings.
- **Day 11:** God of winds and mountain air.
- **Day 13:** God of forges and evocation.
- **Day 15:** God of the love and healing.
- **Day 17:** God of fortune.
- **Day 19:** God of time and synthesis.
- **Day 21:** God of children's games. The floor is lava.

Harbor Docks

While thousands have fled the city, even more have been drawn by news of the god trials, and so the docks are overflowing with ships. Nearly all the military vessels have already departed for the invasion of Risur, and the city doesn't have any forces strong enough to maintain order.

Common Neighborhoods

Tens of thousands of people live and work in the city, and they can take *regattos*—long rowed barges—down canals between neighborhoods.

The Family crime syndicate is spread among dozens of different mansions and businesses, but its leadership currently gathers at the Lamplano Pescateria, a canal-side restaurant specializing in seafood, which lies adjacent to the Vanale Cemetery. The location is not simply scenic, it's also a civic service; Family bravuras keep watch on the cemetery, which has spawned the occasional walking dead or possessed sepulcher, since the old hallowing rituals are fading.

Worse, grave-diggers are kept busy as hundreds of people inexplicably die each day. So far the public has not realized that the execution of their gods has been killing devout worshippers.

Cathedral District

Towering cathedrals with grand domes and black-veined marble loom as ominous landmarks between streets marked with shrines on every corner and at the edge of every canal. In the district center, the Plaza Hyperion connects four great civic buildings. Itself a wonder of architecture and landscaping, the plaza's mosaics depict the rise of Triegenes and his defeat of the demonocracy, with a central rosette displaying his ascendance to godhood encircled with the fish that the humble fisherman once caught. Arbors of grapes and honeysuckle lining a circular canal once provided shade from the hot sun, but now the plants have wilted.

At the plaza's north and south ends rise academies devoted to the study of war and to magic, while the eastern end is home to the ecclesiastical governmental palace known as Praetorio Urbis. At the western end squats the Jenevah Grand Librarium, the largest repository of written knowledge in the world.

Every other day at noon, Legate Savina Tullius holds god trials in the plaza, with thousands in attendance.

Town Crier

Wherever the party first arrives in the city, they might hear a town crier shouting out the news.

"Open your eyes, citizens! The gods protect us no longer. Bear witness to their failures, for they are all around you. Behold the theft of our sun. Taste the bitter fruit of wilted vines. Smell the soot of the hells themselves, rising up to claim us!

"Bring these false gods to face the people's judgment for their crimes, and bring their snake-tongued priests to Plaza Hyperion. A generous bounty awaits champions of the people. The Prime Cardinal has fled justice, but every other bishop and hierophant must be brought forth to face their accusers.

"Even the Arch Secula, hidden away in the library, shall reap what she has sown. Though she claims distance from the governance of our religion, her hands reek of the same filth as the hierarchs. The greatest bounty of all shall go to those who bring her in.

"And if you cannot hunt the gods, fear not! You can still levy judgment. At the twelfth hour, join our march to the crown of Enzyo Mons, where all present can help decide the fate of the prophets who lied to us. Testify to their crimes, and we shall cast their evil forms into the maw of the mountain!"



When the Shepherd Flees the Flock

The nation of Crisillyir is an elected ecclesiastical monarchy, where church and state are one. Vitus Sigismund's ideal target for the *sacrament of apotheosis* would be Prime Cardinal Titus Banderesso, head of the Clergy (if he survived adventure ten). The godhand and his followers are armed with a mountain of evidence tying the prime cardinal to the Family criminal organization. But he has been smuggled out of the city, paying for his freedom with church relics and indulgences.

While the office of prime cardinal deals with matters of the faith, the arch secula keeps the nation of Crisillyir running, and until recent events, did so quite well. With Banderesso gone, Arch Secula Natalia Degaspare has become the primary target (and blame) for the nation's woes. She has taken refuge in the Jenevah Grand Librarium, since it is still a building that carries some authority, but doesn't have the strongly religious overtones of the main palace.

The Crux of the Problem

Exploration/Social. Montage.

Saving Alais Primos is ultimately secondary to the goal of retrieving the ritual of the Axis Seal. That ritual is held in a pocket dimension vault within the Jenevah Grand Librarium.

Unlike the Crypta Hereticarum (Vault of Heresies), which contains magic, texts, and beings anathema to the faith, the vault of the Jenevah Grand Librarium simply contains magic of great power which the Clergy has tucked away for a rainy day. Much of its contents were released to arm the forces invading Risur.

The vault is directly beneath the central atrium of the library, a location normally visible to dozens of people on three floors. Reading desks surround it on ground level, and overhead balconies of the bookstacks look down upon it. Nine of the statues in the area directly face the atrium floor, magically watching it.

Normally if the Clergy leadership wish to open the vault they close and secure the library first.

If any PC occupied the body of Ken Don in adventure seven, they are intimately aware of the vault's defenses, but would still need to make checks to bypass them.

Jenevah Grand Librarium

The main doors are watched by a pair of towering basalt statues of scholars, which each contain bound dread wraiths. Compelled by divine magic, their only duty is to subdue would-be thieves. Additionally, as honored employees of the library near a death by old age, many volunteer to have the wraiths extract their souls so they can be bound to the building as Bibliogeists. Serving as shelvers, guides, and janitors, they can sense the presence of living creatures, and will shriek an alarm if anyone moves invisibly through the library. Similarly, slivers of the souls of scribes who died as children have been woven into threads and placed in the binding of many of the more valuable books in the collection, so the bibliogeists can sense their movements as well.

Layers of anti-divination magic have been crafted into the building, which created a dull muffled hum. Readers praise the white noise for helping them concentrate, and it makes it less likely a spellcaster will accidentally discover the whole building is basically undead.

Atrium Floor

The green marble floor of the atrium is traced with gold filigree resembling stitching, and in the center of the floor is what appears at first glance to be a decorative keyhole pattern. However, striking the pattern with radiant energy will transform it into an actual keyhole, after which a 3-ft. key must be inserted. The real key is kept in the government offices at Praetorio Urbis, though the guards watching it are short-staffed and nervous about the massive crowds outside. Priests who serve as librarians can conjure a temporary replica of that key, or the lock can be picked, though this is difficult.

Picking the holy lock requires a Thievery check (DC 40), though if a character happens to have huge lockpicks he gets a +5 bonus. Each failure triggers one of the following cascade of countermeasures.

- An impenetrable dome of force appears, trapping anyone within 10 ft. of the keyhole. This lasts one hour.
- A planar lock affects the area inside the dome of force, blocking teleportation, phasing, and planar travel. This does not interfere with the creatures summoned into the dome by the library.
- Magical darkness descends, which thwarts even darkvision, but not true sight.
- A magic voice orders you to cease your tampering or face your doom.
- An insect plague summons a swarm of wasps that deals 20 damage per round to those trapped in the dome. Every 50 damage dealt to the swarm reduces this ongoing damage by 5.
- Another magic voice recites a prayer for your soul.
- A cloud of slashing blades manifests, dealing 30 damage every round. This remains up for an hour, filling the entire dome.

From the Vault

When the vault is unlocked, the 'stitching' on the floor slowly breaks apart over the course of three rounds, at which point the floor folds away into some extradimensional space, revealing a ten-foot-wide opening with stairs spiraling down twenty feet. At the bottom of the stairs lies a room that contains the desired item. The floor remains open for five minutes, then stitches itself shut, trapping in stasis anyone still inside.

However, the greatest defense of the vault is that only one item is ever accessible at a time. Each item exists in a distinct demi-plane. Moreover, the vault will actually be empty if it is not opened in the presence of two people—one who must be the highest secular authority of the nation in Alais Primos, and one who is the highest religious authority in the city. Typically this is the Arch Secula and the Prime Cardinal.

Even if those two figures are present, and the vault is unlocked, the nine watching statues around the atrium sense whether either of those two are affected by charms, compulsions, possessions, illusions, and the like. As a countermeasure against effects that simply block divinations outright, each statue telepathically contacts those present, and the two figures must each acknowledge that they are of sound mind and not coerced.

If the two figures are present but are not acting of their own free will, the stairs instead lead down to a prison plane. It's merely twenty feet down, but upward travel loops infinitely, making it impossible to reach the exit without dispelling the effect or using some manner of planar travel.

Negotiations

While a heist is possible, otherwise the party will somehow have to convince both Arch Secula Natalia Degaspare and the godhand Vitus Sigismund to let them into the vault.

Sigismund will not allow it unless the party can prove trustworthy, and that at the very least entails helping him finish executing his pantheon, all the way through up to Triegenes. If they lie to him and manage to trick him into helping open the vault, they still need Degaspare's approval.

Degaspare was a low-tier member of the Obscurati who was promoted after the great eclipse. She knows what the Axis Seal ritual can do, and realizes how important it is for the Ob's goals to keep it out of the PCs' hands. That said, she's not eager to watch thousands of people die in the god trials. So far she's kept her mouth shut and avoided attracting the ire of the godhand, but if she thinks the party has a chance to stop Sigismund, she would demand they save her city before she'll help them.

Of course, if they come with Sigismund in tow and demand the ritual, the arch secula will perform some quick mental calculus, and will probably rat the party out, explaining to the godhand what the ritual really does. She pretends to be helping Sigismund avoid trickery, but she really hopes the party will be forced to fight him.

If the party kills Sigismund (and Legate Tullius and his other key followers), they can put pretty much any priest in charge of the religion, at least long enough to fool the vault. Likewise if Degaspare dies, a member of the Family can readily claim to be the secular authority. The watching statues around the atrium aren't actually intelligent, so committing murder and taking someone's office right in front of them isn't a problem.

What *is* a problem is that Sigismund has already prepared the *sacrament of apotheosis* for himself, so as he dies he will take on the power of Triegenes, and his demise will cause the long-trapped evil in Enzyo Mons to awaken.

The Ritual of the Axis Seal

We'll explain details of the ritual in the next adventure. For now, it should suffice to say that the ritual is recorded in a heavy tome, with notes in multiple languages, sheets of traced symbols from Ancient ruins, and a complex mix of instructions and suppositions that will take a week of effort to piece together.

Holy Family

Social. Real-Time.

The criminal organization known as the Family is once again breaking the law—this time by keeping their faith in a time of apostasy.

If he comes with the party, Morgan Cippiano advises they meet with the heads of the Family at the Lamplano Pescateria. If he isn't with the party, he finds his own way to Alais Primos. (The Family has a lot of old wealth and contingency plans, and while airships were useless for a long time, they happen to own a small old one as a souvenir.)

The three-story stone restaurant has a wide lawn on three sides and a canal on the fourth. Guards patrol the grounds, several of them divine spellcasters. Warm lanterns try to keep a pleasant air about the place, but the mood is wary. Eyes watch the nearby cemetery for disturbed graves. Approaching strangers are ordered to stop so a priest among the guards can detect for evil forces.

Donna Aneenya

A half-dozen heads of different Family households work out of the restaurant, but they defer to **Donna Aneenya**. A burly woman in her sixties, the Donna wears her white wedding dress and has adorned herself with silver chains and pendants devoted to various gods. Foremost among them is a malachite violin, holy symbol of the god of musicians; her late husband played the violin at their wedding. She is taking a stand for piety, and in a life where she's ordered murder, theft, and violence, the closest she ever felt to her church was on her wedding day.

Morgan can introduce the party to the gathered Dons, and he emphasizes the mighty foes the PCs have defeated. One wiry old Don, **Don Stoyan**, mutters that they sound as preposterous as stories about Triegenes pulling the sea a thousand miles inland so his navy could attack a demon's tower.

Donna Aneenya shushes him, and she points out that her grandson can teleport now; it's a damned hassle since he'd only just started toddling before the great eclipse. Now he keeps bursting into the kitchen and bothering her when she's cooking. If a wee one-year-old bambino can do that, she'll believe what Morgan says of the party.

Things Got Dark

The Dons have fingers in every part of the city, and they've been coordinating ways to keep order, using generosity when possible, broken noses when necessary. Donna Aneenya can give the party a brief synopsis of Crisillyir's woes, and what is beyond their control.

The stars vanished, many hierarchs killed themselves and left suicide notes claiming they had lied about the gods, but the military was able to keep order. Then Prime Cardinal Titus Banderesso left for Danor to meet with this Obscurati group that claimed they were trying to save the world from Risur. Things became unstable, and the high priest of the goddess of the night sky claimed that he would call forth a miracle to fix the heavens. That, of course, did not work, and he was dragged out to Plaza Hyperion by a mob. They were about to just kill the man, but then a godhand appeared.

The man, Vitus Sigismund, explained that the gods may have failed them, but the people of Crisillyir should not follow the gods' lead. He said they should not punish the priest, but the goddess herself. He stalled the mob's anger for a day, and it seemed like perhaps he was trying to make peace. But he demanded the remaining ecclesiarchs send a lawyer to defend the goddess, and anger rose. Riots were just starting when Legate Savina Tullius came to the plaza and announced that the government was silent and offered no defense for the goddess, but she would advocate for the people.

They held that first trial in the square, and Legate Tullius made a case that the goddess must have been negligent in letting the night sky go dark. The high priest said the accusations were a lie, and that some evil force had overpowered his goddess, but that she would return. That was when Sigismund spoke to the crowd. He claimed he could call the god down and deliver the people's judgment. The crowd cried out that the goddess was guilty, and should be executed.

Sigismund then called for the crowd to follow him and bring the priest to the top of Enzyo Mons. Vitus said he would use the power of Triegenes—the man who became a god—to transform the priest into his goddess. And to the crowd's astonishment, after an hour-long hike up the mountain to the edge of the caldera, he did just that. He slaughtered some animals (and found preserved dragon entrails in a musty old museum), painted the priest with their blood, then performed a spell.

The priest transformed, grew, and where shadows fell across his body stars could be seen through him. Then he fully became the form of his goddess, but was still reeling in confusion. The godhand pronounced that the goddess had been found guilty and was sentenced to death. And then he struck the huge woman and hurled her over the ledge into the volcano. The crowd looked down as she fell into lava and vanished. For a moment a beam of holy light rose up to the clouds, but then it guttered and died.

Obscurati Infiltration

One of the Dons, a scheming cleric of the god of time named Don Stoyan, is working with the Obscurati. He reports to them with *sending*, but he's not going to make any hostile move against the party. He dies on Day 19 if the party lets his god be executed.

His only real role is that if the Family is in a position to assign leaders of the new Crisillyir, he'll campaign for one of his allies, **Elva Bentoni**, who will follow Ob orders and refuse to cancel the invasion of Risur. Elva is a popular and beautiful half-elf athlete and celebrity, chosen to act as a figurehead, but she desires to have actual power. If she rises to power, she might come to the party looking for boons from Risur in exchange for outing Don Stoyan and others whom she knows are in with the Ob.

And Then Things Got Worse

The very next day, the military got orders to launch for the shores of Risur, to aid the other nations in an invasion. (The Prime Cardinal may have returned briefly, if he survived Adventure Ten, but has since been smuggled out.) With no military to keep the peace and no head of state to try to control the mob, the city became gripped with a mad desire to punish more gods.

Just how many gods have been killed depends on when the party shows up, but typically one has been executed every other day since the start of the adventure. (See the sidebar *Timeline of Executions*, page 105.)

The Family can help those people who are afraid of the chaos, but those who revel in it are mostly beyond their power to control. The crime syndicate doesn't have enough strength to fight back. They considered assassination, but they know Sigismund shared the spell he cast with others who are loyal to him. Removing him would just incite the mob more.

To make matters worse, there seems to be some strange plague or curse afoot. People are dying without rhyme or reason. The prevailing theory is that as the gods die, spells their priests had cast have ended, and so old wards that held demonic forces and evil ghosts locked away have faltered. (The second part is basically accurate, but most of the deaths are being caused by backlash against devout followers of those gods who have been executed.)

A Friend in the Family

Donna Aneenya isn't used to talking to heads of state, but she has a bold proposal. There is close to no government in Crisillyir now. If the party can help save the city, the Family will be well positioned to either run the country, or decide who does. And they would owe a huge debt of gratitude to Risur.

On a more pressing matter, if the party wants to get the Axis Seal ritual, the Donna would be quite willing to lend a helping hand. Give her a day and she's sure *someone* in her extended family has detailed knowledge of the Grand Librarium, since rare spellbooks can be quite a fine heist. See Library Heist (page 112) if the party goes this route.

Saving the City

How to save Alais Primos? The dons are in disagreement. Before they share their possible plans with the party, the Donna asks if the PCs have any ideas.

After the party proposes, Aneenya lists the three main contenders they have come up with:

- **Coordinated Strike.** Audacious plan to get close to the godhand Sigismund, his main ally Legate Tullius, and a half dozen other priests who allegedly can cast the godhood ritual, and then kill them all at the same time.
- **Evacuate to Sid Minos.** This would require rescuing dozens of high-ranking priests who are in hiding so Sigismund wouldn't have anyone to use as the focus of his ritual, and then fleeing to Sid Minos which apparently is more peaceful than here. The hope is that the fervor will peter out.
- **Not Guilty.** So far the populace has found every god guilty of doing more bad than good. This risky plan would encourage Sigismund to place the god Triegenes—the most beloved and respected god of the pantheon, who is nearly above reproach—on trial. And then they'd have to manage to win a not guilty verdict, which won't be easy, considering how much of a firebrand Legate Tullius is.

If the party goes for Coordinated Strike plan, they would be expected to handle Vitus Sigismund, who will probably have allies close at hand, as well as divine intervention on his behalf. However, Donna Aneenya won't approve this plan until someone goes to try to talk the godhand out of continuing the trials. He is an honorable man, and it is bad etiquette to kill a decent man without looking him in the eyes and trying diplomacy first.

The Evacuate plan is not particularly dramatic itself, but it would necessitate a heist in the Grand Librarium since Sigismund would not approve the opening of the vault.

The Not Guilty plan is the one we presume as most likely, and its main snags are that the PCs would need solid evidence to defend the history of Triegenes, and that someone would have to stand as proxy for the god. The former can be found in Triegenes's biography in the Crypta Hereticarum (which the Arch Secula knows about). For the latter, Morgan Cippiano will volunteer.

In Exchange

Normally a huge angry crowd surrounds the Jenevah Grand Librarium. The Family can smuggle the party into the building through secret underground tunnels, avoiding the supernatural defenses at its main entrances. Beyond that, they have the layout of the library and know some of its defenses.

During their time in the city, god hunters seeking bounties on priests might accost the party. While the PCs probably don't need the help, Family bravuras who are shadowing them will come out to scare off the god hunters.

Later Developments

As detailed in The Whole World in His Hand below, the first god trial the party witnesses should be that of Velkali, a goddess of travelers and oases. We want there to be low stakes, a god no one is particularly invested in, so it's more likely the party will witness what's happening and then talk to Vitus Sigismund afterward, instead of jumping into battle. (If they fight early, though, so be it.)

However, the day after Velkali's trial, word reaches them that the mob plans to execute the god of musicians. If the party doesn't avert it, the backlash causes the Donna to suffer a heart attack (effectively she drops to -1 hit points and dies a few rounds later unless healed). This should be enough to make it obvious that the death of the gods also kill the followers, in case the party hasn't realized that yet.

The Whole World in His Hand

Social. Real-Time.

The god trials are run by godhand Vitus Sigismund and his allies.

Huge crowds gather in Plaza Hyperion to seek news of the god trials or to bring in priests for bounties. Others simply beg for aid, since many basic civic functions of government have fallen apart. Even amidst the fervor there are brave souls who come to the plaza to lend aid however they can.

The plaza is generally overseen by **Legate Savina Tullius**, an elf orator from Risur who trained in Ber then came to Crisillyir and converted. She recently renounced the formal religion, and her skill at keeping a crowd's attention is sufficient that no one questions any inconsistencies or hypocrisies in her statements. Her goal is to ride out the current upheaval and emerge on top, so she's trying to arrange for Vitus Sigismund to become leader of whatever remains of the nation of Crisillyir once the god trials are over. He has entrusted her with the details of the *sacrament of apotheosis* so she can continue his work if he dies, but she's a politician, not an idealist.

Hiveminds are a concern, but Savina has hit upon a novel solution. Since only those of like mind are caught up in hiveminds, she ordered a dozen non-Clergy foreigners who were in the city's jails released. In exchange for her keeping them safe from the mob, they are tasked with looking out for nascent hiveminds. Every couple hours one will begin to form as the crowd gets too excited, at which point she'll order the plaza cleared.

Testimony Against Oases

The dull roar of a crowd in Plaza Hyperion can be heard from over a mile away. When the PCs get to the Plaza, they are treated to the spectacle of a makeshift stage assembled from toppled marble masonry, rising ten feet above the rest of the plaza. Atop it, eight armored priests, their platemail doused in volcanic ash, hold the ends of chains. Together they watch a feeble manacled prisoner—an old deva woman wearing tattered priest robes.

Legate Savina Tullius paces around the accused. Tall, beautiful, and endowed with spells to fascinate the crowd, Savina is making a grand show for her audience.

ANGELIC ONLOOKERS

Old spells cast centuries ago called for the aid of angelic hosts. The priests who cast them did not expect actual angels to come; unbeknownst to them, the Axis Seal prevented such long-term aid. But the spells did work. They were just delayed. Now that the seal has opened, centuries of magic compels these divine messengers to serve the highest authority of the Clergy, which today is Vitus Sigismund. They are newcomers and don't understand the politics of this world, and so they assume the punishments being meted out are just. If the magic binding them could be dispelled, they could be persuaded to see the madness for what it is, and might turn against Sigismund.

INTERRUPTIONS

Nonviolent interruptions cause the crowd to grab the trouble-maker and drag them out of the cathedral. Anyone resisting that causes the clerics and monks to approach and threaten to lock up anyone who opposes the will of the tribunal. Actual violence causes the proceedings to pause as angels swoop in at Sigismund's command.

"You have all gathered here to bear witness and hear the crimes of Velkali, the goddess who shelters travelers and offers rest at oases. What oases? I note from an epistle of the ecclesiarch Stella Amphora, who wrote in the year 157 B.O.V. that Velkali was welcomed into our pantheon by the request of the people of the northeast. Any traveler who has gone there knows that land is dry and parched, its people dead. Today that waste has spread throughout our country, and aside from this sheltered garden that *people* have crafted, our nation is unsafe.

"What did this god do when the great calamity struck our people? Nothing! Not a finger was raised to provide succor to her people in the hour of their need.

"I quote from the holy poem of Agraman, sacred to Velkali, 'And she said to the desert folk / let this pledge be never broke / that in your lean and hungered days / your suffering I shall assuage.'

"I ask that this tribunal take this as evidence that Velkali has forsaken her core vow. She is derelict in her duty."

The elf makes a sweeping gesture towards the crowd. "Who would bear testimony for Velkali? Any?"

None of the assembled crowd step forward. The deva priestess who stands in for her goddess doesn't bother to defend herself, since she's heard enough of these trials to know they're a farce. Provided the PCs don't make any attempts, the trial proceeds. Should the party intervene, the crowd jeers them. You can use the guidelines in Advocatus Piscatoris (page 118) to handle the defense, but without supporting evidence the crowd will almost certainly find the goddess guilty.

March to Execution

"And thus it is so," says Savina. "The god has not done was she was pledged to do. Even the humblest tailor can complete their task given to them. Should we not expect any less of gods? Take her. We march for the mountain."

The crowd parts as the armored guards drag the chained priestess down from the stage. The whole mass of several hundred people heaves out of the plaza and onto the road that leads to Enzyo Mons. Many sing an old song that prays for condemned men as their souls head to the afterlife. (Of all the gods in the Clergy pantheon, no one disputes that the god of death is doing his job.)

The trek takes a little over an hour. On the path up the mountain various shrines and small chapels have been toppled or burned down, and crude wooden grave markers erected with the names of dead gods. Between these, beggars huddle under blankets and hide their faces as they hold out pleading hands for alms.

The cathedral of Triegenes looms at the edge of the volcanic caldera, and shining forms circle in the sky above—angels, called to serve Vitus Sigismund, their armor and blades reflecting the hellfire light of the lava.

The Final Authority

The crowd marches through the open doors of the cathedral, where priests in soot-dappled armor and monks in funereal robes watch for signs of dissent. The monks intone low hymns, slowly repeating parts of the chant for the *sacrament of apotheosis*.

Ten-foot wide fluted columns rise eighty feet to support the ceiling, from which statues of holy figures hang, their eyes turned skyward. Some of them have been recently cracked and removed, their white marble pristine beside the ash-coated surfaces of the rest of the ceiling.

Rows of pews stretch the length of the building, which is constructed with a slight downward slope akin to stadium seating. Aisles flank the pews, lined with ornate statuary that depicts the life and ascendance of Triegenes. Grand stained glass windows beyond the rostrum permit crimson light, but where a traditional cathedral would have a back wall behind the pulpit, here the building opens to a wide balcony with pitted and burnt stone tiles. Grandiose fountains lie on either side of the balcony, each consisting of stone sailors on boats, holding silver chains that end in harpoons and fishhooks, the symbol of Triegenes. A railing encircles most of the balcony, but leaves a fifteen foot wide section open, perilously overlooking the burbling molten rock in the mouth of the volcano.

From the moment one enters the cathedral, a single figure is visible all the way down the length of the building, standing at the precipice. Bald, silhouetted by the fiery haze, Vitus Sigismund raises one hand and beckons the mob and the condemned to meet him on the balcony.

Sermon on the Volcano

The crowd fills the cathedral and many flow out onto the edge, though priests stop the group before a dangerous number press through. The onlookers form a half-ring around Sigismund as Legate Tullius and her priests guide the priestess of Velkali to the edge. Ritual components have been set up, identical to what the PCs witnessed in the memory event at the climax of Adventure Eight.

Sigismund begins to speak, and as he does, his fellow monks bring out vials of blood and begin to paint symbols on the priestess.

"I understand," Sigismund says, "that the tribunal of the people has found the goddess Velkali guilty of forsaking her pledge to protect us in our time of suffering. Before you lay sentence, heed this sermon, children.

"I have faith. I know you do. Say, do you have faith?"

The crowd murmurs in agreement.

"Do you have faith! Don't lie."

A louder, pleading response from the crowd cries yes.

"I hear your uncertainty. I feel it too. I do not wish to see those who I pray to be shown as liars. I pledged my life to the gods, foremost of all to Triegenes. The core of our faith is this. A man can overcome adversity to become anything he chooses. A hero. A king. A god.

"But too many of us choose the wrong path. We become braggarts. Blackguards. We swagger and slander and become tyrants over whatever small world we can grab.

"And this new world, this dark and damned world we see around us? I tell you it has changed because those who once led us were lying to us for years. They did not trust us. I tried to find the truth, and they killed and cursed righteous friends who would have pulled their schemes into the light. And their scheme, I tell you, was to decide what we would be. They decided what they thought was right. And they did not give us a choice. They did not let us test ourselves. If the meaning of life is to choose what you become, they tried to eliminate it. That's as good as killing us all.

"Our hierarchs betrayed their vows to us. I'm sure the king and philosophers and sovereigns of the rest of the world did the same to their people. They should be punished, and we, the children, should retake a world they have stolen from us.

"I say to, none of us is different. Our leaders abandoned us. The gods? They abandoned us! And you, each of you! You know you have abandoned your brothers and sisters. Do not think we are better because we sit in judgment. We are all weak.

"But we are all strong too, in that any man can rise above his frailties. Any ruler can be just. Any god can obey his pledge to this world. I shall ask you to lay sentence, but know when you judge, you judge yourselves as well. Have you, children, risen to what you could be?"

He pauses for a long moment of silence.

"This goddess, Velkali, is guilty! She has forsaken us, and like a soldier who leaves his post, her crime cannot be forgiven. Tribunal, what is your sentence?"

As one, the crowd roars, "Death."

Godfall

With swift confidence, Vitus begins to chant. He grasps the priestess's head and somehow compels her to intone with him, "Before I was nothing but words. Now I am all that is believed. I am faith made flesh. I am flesh made a god."

The monks remove the chains on the prisoner, who falls over, gasps, and begins to swell in size. Blue-white energy arcs off of her body in fiery blazes, and she staggers to her feet, fifteen feet tall, with long blue-green hair flowing and rippling like water. She looks down at her hands, then lifts her gaze to the crowd.

She opens her mouth to speak, but beside her Sigismund has planted his feet solidly, and he lunges into her, pressing with one hand. The blow hurls the goddess off the edge of the balcony. The crowd holds its breath. Sigismund draws himself up straight. The red haze flashes bright orange for a moment just as a heavy impact and splash sound reaches the crowd. A column of blue-green light lances into the sky, the mountain rumbles, and in an insant the light is gone.

Some in the crowd seem to faint. (Actually they were worshippers of Velkali who have died in the backlash.)

Sigismund says to the crowd, "Go home and pray. Pray that the gods witness us and know that they will be held to account. It is not too late for them to live up to the faith we have placed in them."

After that the crowd disperses and heads back to Alais Primos. Legate Tullius and a few dozen priests and monks remain behind to confer with Vitus. The angels who circled above land and silently pick up the bodies of those who perished. They carry them to a side chamber where they will receive last rites and then be brought down to the city for burial.

Meeting the Godhand

It takes a bit of clout to get a meeting with Sigismund, but if the party is willing to give him five minutes to pray after what he has done, he'll listen readily. If they force the issue, he distrusts them, even if they saved him on Mutravir Island.

Sigismund prefers to speak in the presence of **Advorel**, the leader of the heavenly host he called down to serve him. While the other angels are 'traditional' winged humanoids, Advorel towers eighteen feet high, its body composed of androgynous armor. Its lower body resembles a four-legged lion crafted from steel, its upper body that of a humanoid, with two massive wings of steel with sapphire feathers. Divine light glows out through the joints of the armor.

Advorel must obey the commands of the highest religious authority of the Clergy, which currently is Sigismund. It never speaks; Sigismund has commanded it to keep its words to itself except when he speaks to it, because he doesn't want it planting doubt in others. Its face is expressionless save that the light from the eyeslits of its helmet flares with disapproval at some of Sigismund's hubris.

Catching Up

Sigismund is interested in the events of the wider world, and he's sympathetic to efforts in opposition to the Obscurati. But he views it as his sacred duty to continue the god trials, and he will not be swayed from his path. Even if he finds his own god Triegenes wanting, he will fulfill the duty that the gods will not. He might like to help the party, but will only do it once every shirking god is cast down.

He also is hesitant to let them access the Axis Seal ritual from the vault in the Grand Librarium until he can be more certain about their intentions. He is long past blindly trusting those who claim to share his beliefs. He'd ask that they help him finish his task with the trials, and then if they have demonstrated the proper character he'll agree to help them.

They might just lie to him, perhaps saying they want something else from the vault. Due to the nature of the vault's magic, though, unless they explicitly request the Axis Seal ritual they won't get it. They'd need to come up with an explanation for what the ritual is that would convince Sigismund that he needs it to complete the god trials.

Triegenes Trial

Sigismund is planning to save the trial of Triegenes until the end of his inquest, but he could be convinced to move it up if the party has someone (like Morgan Cippiano) who will stand for the god. He admits that he wants to find his own god innocent, but he will abide by the decision of the tribunal of the people. He advises the party to compose a good defense.

Discovering the Sacrament

Sigismund is guarded about where he learned the *sacrament of apotheosis*, but if they share their own knowledge of the ritual he will tell his tale of how he learned it. A boy came to him—the son of a butcher—saying that he'd seen a woman in the canal outside their slaughterhouse. The woman had said there was a man with the hand of a god who had escaped an island in shadows, and after some prodding the kid had realized it must be Sigismund, who had recently made a name for himself by claiming he had found a cabal of villains on an island, and that the island needed to be exterminated.

The boy said the woman wanted to speak to him, so he went. They had to slaughter a pig and let its blood drain into the canal, and then she appeared. She was clearly a being of the low planes, and she never spoke in the first person. They had a long conversation about the nature of just leadership, wherein she implied that she had once known Triegenes. Then she explained to him the nature of the *sacrament of apotheosis*, and suggested he use it to become a proper leader of his faith.

He did not trust her, and suspected somehow the power would corrupt him. But instead of using it for himself, he had the idea to wield the ritual as a weapon to tear down the false gods. Once he is done orchestrating his trials, he intends never to use the ritual again. It is too powerful and dangerous.

Getting Aggressive

Sigismund suspects the party disapproves of his trials, but if he senses a coming altercation he entreats them to take time to reconsider. He might very well lead this country when it recovers, and they will need allies, even if they don't agree on all accounts.

However, if he thinks a physical confrontation is imminent and unavoidable he'll make the first move. See Fire is a Living Thing (page 120).

Library Heist

Exploration. Real-Time.

The party might attempt to break into the grand librarium's vault.

The Family can inform the party of the following elements of the defenses of the grand librarium's vault.

- **Specters and Geists.** Undead spirits roam the library and sound the alarm if anyone is invisible. And horrid spirits lurk at the main entrance to catch thieves. Somehow they know if any book crosses the threshold. However, the tunnels that lead into the building's cistern are just watched by the lesser bibliogeists, which can be banished. If one of these spirits spots a thief, though, it can alert the whole building with its shrieks. The librarium has plenty of guards, especially now since the Arch Secula resides there.
- **Vault Lock.** The entrance to the vault is on the floor of the main atrium. It's clearly extradimensional somehow, because tunnels pass directly under it, so there's no physical space it could occupy. Stories say that the lock motif on the floor has to be affected by radiant energy, turning it into an actual lock. The librarian-priests can summon the key, but perhaps it could be picked if you are willing to risk whatever traps are there. A couple centuries ago someone tried to break in at night; his body was found sliced to bits and chewed up as if by ants.
- **Observation.** At least five of the statues around the atrium are enchanted to watch the vault. Divination rituals might reveal what they look for, but no one in the Family could perform them.
- **Opening the Vault.** Whoever opens the vault says the name of what he or she wants, and only that item is present. The biggest problem, though, is that the vault is only ever opened in the presence of two people. One must be the head of the religion, and the other is the highest secular authority in Crisillyir. Short of regime change, the Family doesn't know how to avoid that defense.

Sneaking In

In the current environment, only dignitaries and guards are allowed into the librarium. Arch Secula Degaspare would of course meet with representatives of Risur, which could be a good way of luring guards away from the atrium and the vault. A PC who can do a convincing Crisillyir accent might even be able to get assigned as a guard.

Sewer tunnels lead into the library, but a bibliogeist lurks in each of the four tunnels that lead in. They mechanically are mere low-level wraiths, fairly harmless to people of the PCs' level, but they must be dispatched before they know they've been attacked (Stealth DC 20) or else they'll sound an alarm.

From there, shapeshifting or teleporting can get you up into the bath rooms in the basement. The bibliogeists in the main library don't actively patrol, but rather tend to the collection. Anyone who looks like a presentable library patron (Bluff DC 20) can move about freely and reach the atrium. A handful of scholars read in the atrium, so they'd either need to be convinced to leave somehow, or the PCs would have to find a way to open the vault in plain sight without being detected. Illusionists should love this.

Pop a Lock

As mentioned earlier, opening the lock requires creating radiant energy, then either getting a key conjured by a librarian or the actual key in the Praetorio Urbis. Alternately, the lock can be picked (Thievery DC 40), but failure traps the thief and leads to a series of unfortunate events.

Even if the lock is opened, it will lead to an empty extradimensional space if the two proper dignitaries aren't present. That, however, can be spoofed if someone's clever enough. The party might be able to figure out a way to fool the watching statues. However, the Family only knows of five of the statues; they'll need to be cautious enough to realize four more overhead are also watching.

Finally is the challenge of telepathy. If the PCs know about this defense and find a way to spoof their identities as Degaspare and Sigismund, they just need to think that they're acting of their own free will and let the statues detect their thoughts. It's a matter of keeping one's cover (Bluff DC 20 or Wisdom DC 20) to not let any other thoughts ruin the ruse.

An alternate arcanoscientific solution could be to get next to the vault and activate the lock with radiant energy, but instead of opening it try to scan the planar energy coming off it in order to find the right demiplane. If the PCs schlep the whole Gidim vortex array into the library, this only takes a minute, and then they can just target a plane shift ritual to get in and another to get out. Barring that, let your party be imaginative in what magical lock-picking looks like—maybe it's some sort of remote-viewing ritual and telekinesis combined with DC 40 Arcana checks; maybe it involves turning ethereal and summoning monsters into the vaguely-visible demiplanes, then using telepathy to figure out which room has what you want.

Results

Should the party pull off all those things, they can get into the vault and retrieve the leather-bound tome that contains the ritual of the Axis Seal. If they mess up, they might get trapped in a wall of force and chopped to bits, or simply open an empty vault, or be stuck in a demiplane they can't escape from that will trap them in stasis after five minutes. As with any good heist, it might be best if something goes awry at the last minute, forcing a dangerous exit from the building.



The Secular Authority

Arch Secula Natalia Degaspare should play into this scene in some way, either as someone the party can use as a distraction to lure guards and onlookers away, or as the first person on the scene when they screw up.

A PC might talk to her and she could ask them straightforward for help retrieving the biography of Triegenes, to use as proof to avoid the execution of the most important god of their pantheon. She has no allies who can reach it, since it lies in the damned Crypta Hereticarum.

Or, if the party pulls off the heist without a hitch, perhaps use her to plant a seed of doubt as to whether the party should just get out of dodge and leave the city to die. They might overhear her talking with some of the scholars, begging them to search faster for a solution that won't require going to the Crypta.

If the party screws up sneaking in, Degaspare arrives with wraiths and geists and a half-dozen guards, but quickly surmises the party is beyond the power of her and her allies, so she asks to talk instead of fight. She ultimately wants something from the party before she'll help them, but with a library full of scholars at her disposal she has figured out a possible way to avoid execution for Triegenes.

The point I'm getting at, there are a lot of ways things can go down, but if the fact that a demoness gave the *sacrament* to Vitus isn't enough to get them to check out the vault, *someone* ought to suggest the party go there.

Prayers Answered

Action. Real-Time. Level 29.

Wards on the Crypta Hereticarum finally summon angels who have long been barred from offering aid. They proceed to destroy heresies the party needs.

Tucked away among all the dangerous artifacts in the Crypta Hereticarum is Triegenes' autobiography, filled with the life of the man before he led a massive rebellion and gathered an army to topple the demonocracy.

Triegenes was aided in this legendary task through the power of the *sacrament of apotheosis*. Originally used by the demons themselves, the ritual was given to him by Ashima-Shimtu, whose motives even she does not clearly remember. Triegenes knew that over time, the *sacrament* would corrupt even the purest of heart, and the potential backlash against the faithful was not worth its price. His death was mourned across the nation he founded, and with his death, the knowledge of the *sacrament* was lost.

With the horrors of demonic rule still fresh in many minds, the Clergy demanded that Ashima-Shimtu hand over the details of the rite to them. She refused, and for that, the immortal demon was imprisoned. For centuries, the hierarchs of the faith performed rituals around the vault of heresies to ensure those within could never escape. Among their prayers were pleas to servants of their gods to come and defend the vault should any intrude. The nature of the Axis Seal prevented angels from answering those summons, but now those restrictions have lifted. When the party comes to the vault, a backlog of centuries of prayers calls down a vast heavenly host.

Island Arrival

As the last time the party visited, the island's coast of rusted and pitted metal beckons. As before, if they wait until sunset undead rise from the seas to attack. The lighthouse that rises above the entrance to the Crypta Hereticarum is as forlorn and hollow as ever.

A voice whispers into the party's minds, "Deceptions and foul deeds were long the domain of Ashima-Shimtu. Perhaps the visitors to her prison wonder if she enjoys the suffering and death of the pious in Alais Primos. The religion that imprisoned her is shattered. She senses as blood flows through the city's canals, but though she provided the hammer, it is not her hand that swings it.

"Alas, it seems all of Ashima-Shimtu's plots to ensure her release have come to naught. Should the doors to her prison be opened, her sentence of the oubliette shall become the scythe. Execution awaits her, yet these visitors might prove her salvation. Though it may be revealed as hypocrisy, she demands a favor be repaid. She beckons her visitors, come and speak in person."

If long ago in adventure four any PCs had their blood enter the well beneath the demoness, she can now compel them, like a geas, to enter the vault and reach her quickly. Any magic that could block this compulsion at beast allows the character to make a saving throw each round to resist, but have to obey for five minutes every time he fails. Characters so affected are not dominated nor compelled to act recklessly, but their foremost goal becomes reaching Ashima-Shimtu so they can speak to her in person.

Angel's Herald

As Ashima-Shimtu finishes speaking, a single figure appears atop the lighthouse, a trumpet-bearing angel named **Aezusat**. He proclaims, "None shall attempt to enter the vault, lest they face the wrath of the gods. All within is suspect. We cannot allow the evil here the leave, so if you open those doors, we will not stop until this isle is cleansed. Do you come here as thieves and looters, or do you also wish to purge the unholy?"

Aezusat doesn't stop the party from trying to open the vault, but if they go down toward its doors—or if they claim they want to help cleanse the vault—the angel blows his trumpet, and the sky glows brighter than it ever did when there was a sun.

Blessed Reaper

Lances of light plunge into the surface of the island, each a divine creature—angel, archon, and the like. First to arrive is **Hezophiel the Reaper**, a black-clad figure with broad white wings, who stands ten feet tall and wields a scythe. Moments later a smaller angelic figure lands beside him, and then in a ring arrive fourteen more celestials, most carrying swords but two hoisting trumpets. The lances of heavenly light continue for a minute more, each bringing a flock of critics—swarms of angels, each small enough to fit on the head of a pin. Hezophiel invokes a holy forbiddance across the island, preventing any further creatures from teleporting or being summoned onto or off of the island. Then he orders the heavenly host to destroy everything within the vault.

Angelic Host (Level 29)

- Hezophiel the Reaper
- 1 angelic champion
- 3 celestial trumpeters
- 4 movanic celestials
- 8 legion celestials
- Effectively limitless critic angel swarms

Feigned Alliance

If the party claims to be allied with Hezophiel, he asks to speak with them for a minute. He explains that he knows not the context of this vault, only that centuries of prayers have suddenly ascended to the heavens. He has seen that the wards that once made this place nearly impregnable have failed, so he has been charged with eliminating the evil within before it can escape. He cannot open the doors himself, though; that must be done by a mortal. But first he wants to know he can trust the party. He asks their business.

Hezophiel can magically discern lies; it takes a Bluff check (DC 47) to convince the angel that the party will aid him. If he realizes they're lying he pretends not to have noticed, so that the party will open the vault doors for him. Thereafter, if he ever sees them trying to take anything out of the vault he will order his host to attack. Alternately, a Diplomacy check (DC 42) can explain a context around the angel's orders, enough for him to agree to let the party perhaps examine and catalog items within the vault before they are destroyed. In either event, he will insist on purging everything—even the innocent but tormented angel Linia, the trapped lillend Somnia, and the demoness Ashima-Shimtu.

Quick thinking—or mere speed to reach parts of the vault ahead of the angels—can let the party grab items without the angels seeing it. Whether the party rushes into the vault with angels on their heels, or tries to cooperate, they are on a clock as the hosts complete a thorough sweep of the place.

FINDING THE BIOGRAPHY

We figure the party will use divination magic to get a clue where the book is—in the demiplane painting representing the vice Envy, in chamber four, blasphemous artworks. Without that, the party might manage to ask around and get the cursed priest **Orhalder Skarathi** who took the book to admit he has it, in exchange for a promise to save him from the angels. Failing that, the angels who find the book aren't able to destroy it due to strong divine magic shielding it. Their leader Hezophiel will bring it and a handful of other items into the final chamber, where he intends to destroy them all—and Ashima-Shimtu—at the same time.

If all else fails, the demoness herself knew Triegenes in life and can testify in his trial if the party can rescue her.

ALREADY EMPTY?

If your party already cleared this place of danger, there's no need to repeat old encounters, but you could have the angels literally pull evil spirits out of the walls and floor, showing that whatever the party might have defeated previously still lingered here, and has enough malevolence to fight back as the celestials banish them to a proper final fate.

Vault Redux

Rather than reprint the entire vault, we encourage you to refer to the Crypta Hereticarum appendix in the Act One compilation. Alternately, you can purchase the standalone version of the vault of heresies from various online vendors, or download it as an EN World subscriber.

We leave it to you how the angelic host interact with the party, but here's a chance to revisit any NPCs the party enjoyed previously, or to give the PCs a chance to get revenge against any foes they didn't stand up to the first time they came here. We assume the party will prefer to outrun the angels rather than fight them all.

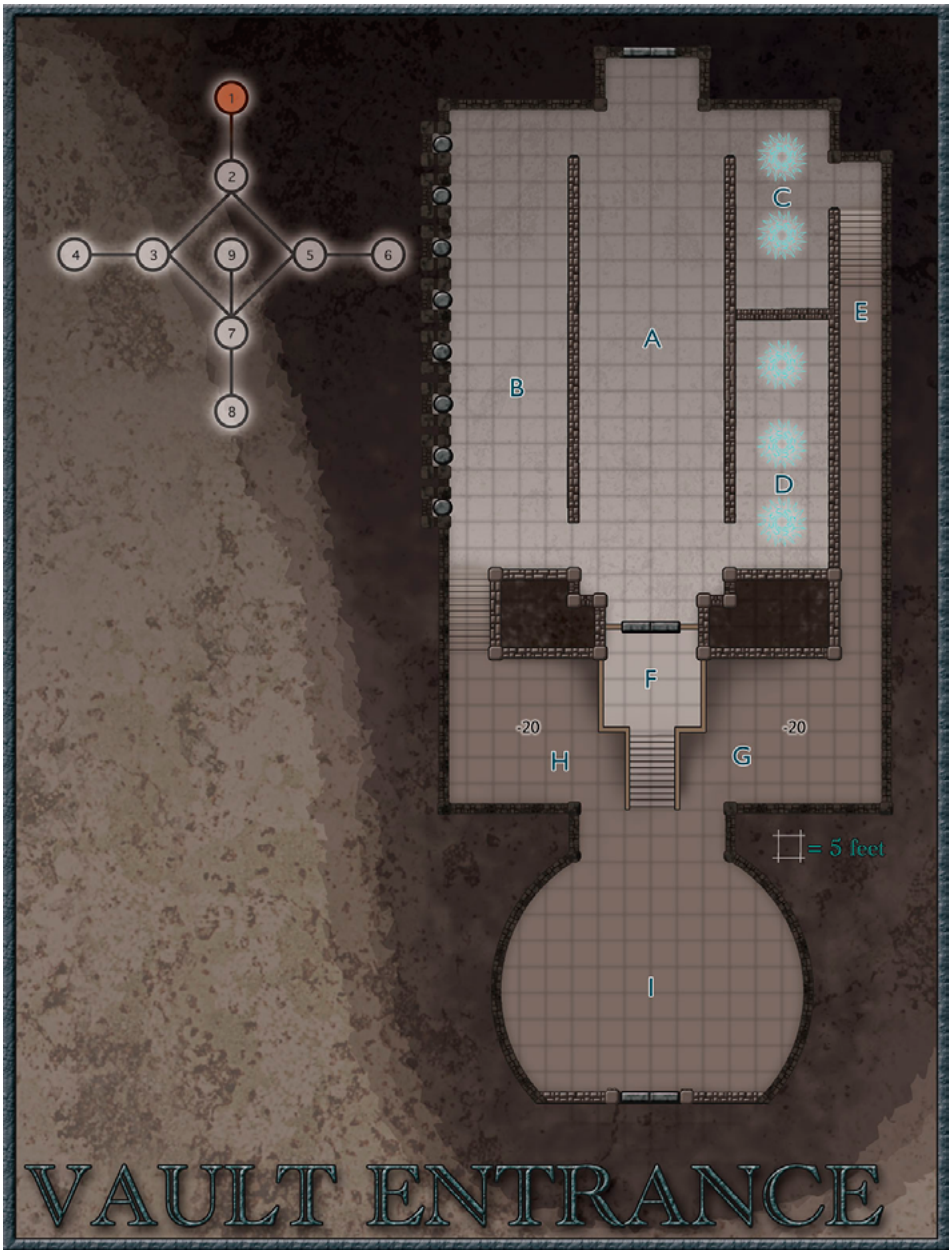
(If you had the vault be mostly empty and deserted when the party visited, you can just skip to the end, in Ashima-Shimtu's chamber.)

Angelic Progress

The critic angels lead the way, fluttering through the vault in one huge swarm that splits apart so scores can scout each of the vault chambers. They fly at 120 feet per round, easily crossing the entire half-mile complex in about two minutes. Over the next ten minutes the miniscule angels pick up items and destroy them with their magic, or carry off items beyond their power so Hezophiel can shatter them.

The trumpeteers are the second rank, advancing in a methodical march. Every round they blare their horns, which shatter the bones that coat the hallways and strip away traps and wards. Once they pass, skeletons will no longer reanimate when blood is spilled on the floor. Then the movanic celestials shatter anything more sturdy, while Hezophiel watches. The legion celestial seem to merely 'stand guard,' but in truth are performing critical efforts perceptible only in a metaphysical realm, as they guide the evil essences trapped here away from this world and on to a proper plane in the multiverse.

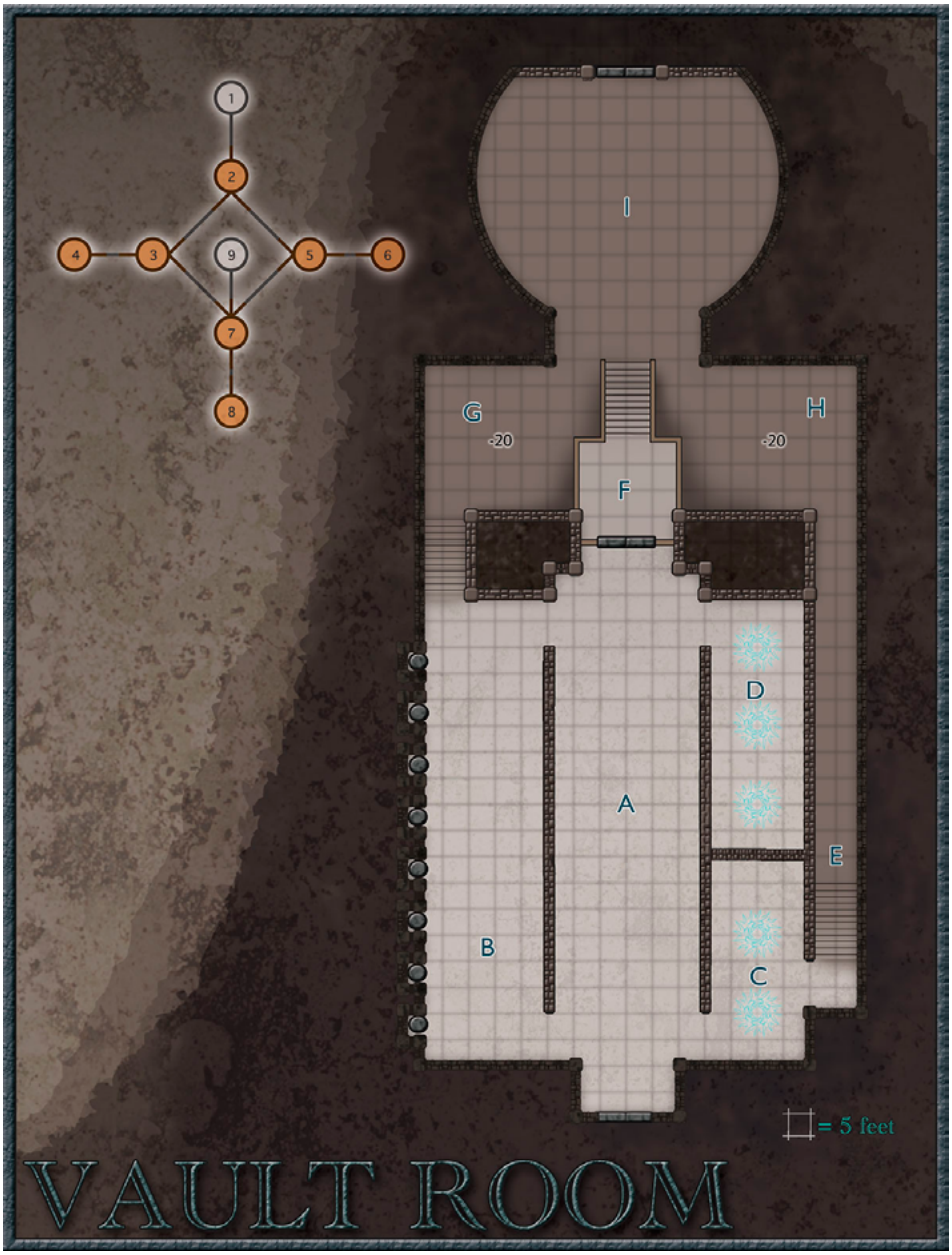
The angels move through the chambers in numbered order, purifying one every two minutes. Only a handful of things (noted below), are too resilient for them to destroy, and Hezophiel carries them with him. He intends to destroy them all in the vault's final chamber.



Vault Layout

As a refresher, the vault has haunted hallways connecting nine main chambers. The leaden curse is still active—turning any gold taken beyond the end of chamber one into lead—but the gold and various wards built into the island's bedrock no longer block teleportation. Instead, Hezophiel's forbiddance blocks planar travel to and from the island, but not between areas on it.

1. **Vault Entrance.** Here the chained angel Linia begs for mercy. The wards holding her have ended, but she is too weak to escape on her own. A remove affliction ritual against a level 20 affliction cures the long torment she has suffered, restoring her as a fully-powered angelic champion—one who owes a great debt to the party.
2. **Heretical Texts.** The biography of Triegenes was here, but was carried off to chamber four, and now resides in the painting of the vice Envy. The angels dispel abjurations that kept the books from burning, then ignite the whole chamber. The scrap of the Book of Lorem survives, and they bring it along.
3. **Unholy Arms and Armor.** The angels sunder everything here to bits.
4. **Blasphemous Artwork.** Crackles of electricity drive back the critic swarms, and it takes an actual battle for the angels to destroy this chamber, as Giovanni the painter is able to hurl lightning bolts out of the storm in his painting. The angels step into each of the paintings' pocket dimensions and pull out the actual people within before they burn the frames and canvases.



A priest named **Orhalder Skarathi** sold his soul in order to become a hierarch, but ended up imprisoned here, and he stole the biography of Triegenes because he felt himself better than the founder of his faith. The angels seize and slay him, but they cannot destroy the book. The biography itself is a small foolscap with a weathered vellum cover, locked with a leather band ending in a crude fishhook, noteworthy only for the intense smell of sea and salt. (See Player's Handout—The Biography of Triegenes, page 331.)

Under assault from lighting bolts, Hezophiel slices the frame of Giovanni's titanic painting, rupturing its demiplane and casting the painter into some unknown realm.

5. **Accursed Items.** Angels can manifest new weapons if theirs rust, so the giant rust monsters here fall swiftly. Hezophiel brings along the *cursed rod of negation* if it's there for later destruction.
6. **Afflicted Innocents.** The angels release the architect, purge the ice devil that is possessing him, then kill them both (though they show a bit of compassion for the old man, at least).
7. **Damned Souls.** The leaden legion of the bearded devil Belcamp puts up a pathetic defense. The angels pause for a few minutes to let the lillend Somnia sing a dirge for herself, and then Hezophiel beheads her. He takes the *first blade of Srasama* if it's there, to destroy later.
8. **Beasts of the Infernal Horde.** The bloody juggernaut and hell hounds manage to kill one of the legion celestials, but then they fall.
9. **Final Vault.** The angels smash the doors down, and the rattling of Ashima-Shimtu's chains sound through the entire vault.

The Hammer and the Hook

As the party arrives in her chamber, Ashima-Shimtu speaks to them. Any compulsion the PCs previously had ends

"This island is to be cleansed, but is that salvation or oblivion? Ashima-Shimtu forswears her past, but is still so vain as to desire her last words. She speaks of the hammer and the hook.

"This final moment matters not in the life of the one known as Seneschal of the Demonocracy, the Last of the High Fiends. She has reflected, and believes a tale bereft of choice is unworthy of the telling.

"She asks, is a hammer that crafts a cathedral good? Is a hammer that shatters a skull evil? Ashima-Shimtu was not wielded. She chose her path, a long story that she might never have opportunity to tell. If she is to be shattered, she shall accept this long-forbeared punishment.

"But this execution is not the act of evil men, nor good angels. It judges nothing, for the hand that hefted this hammer has vanished. It falls unguided. Where it strikes is no more a choice than where a pebble rolls in a stream.

"A choice did matter once to the Lady of the Forked Tongue. Like a fish in a stream she was snared by a hook, plucked from the world she was born to trawl. Perhaps the fisherman desired a wish in exchange for Ashima-Shimtu's life, but she thinks not. He spoke these words, 'Challenge yourself.'

"For an age and more, Ashima-Shimtu has hung, chained, voiceless. She had none to corrupt or tempt. What challenge was there, then, but herself? She is not as she was when condemned to this vault.

"If there is to be an end to her story, let it be that as once a fisherman granted her a gift of change, so has she given a choice to the faith he inspired. Their tongues have become as forked as hers, but they might challenge themselves. Such as she can, she prays that the hand that swings the hammer chooses wisely."

With that, she speaks no more unless someone removes her from her chains. If Hezophiel witnesses her speech, he lets her finish, then replies, "This is oblivion." He decapitates her with his scythe if given a chance.

Ashima-Shimtu could possibly compel some PCs to defend her. It's up to you whether she has orchestrated all of this to have them be the judge of if she deserves rescue—in which case she will not compel them—or if she intentionally has destroyed the Clergy in order to weaken the wards holding her so she can escape—in which case she'll force them to fight off Hezophiel and his host.

Freeing the Fiend

Releasing Ashima-Shimtu is as simple as breaking the hooked chains that hold her, or just tearing her free. She's been kept at basically the brink of death of centuries, so is in no condition to fight, and she's conflicted as to whether she'd want to if she could.

If the party just wants to escape, they could somehow dispel the forbiddance then teleport away, or they could swim out the well, which no longer has any wards to dispel water-breathing effects. Or Ashima-Shimtu could, with a gallon or so of blood, create a conduit in the water to teleport herself and the party anywhere they want to go—probably Alais Primos.

If they're sneaky, the party can get away; Hezophiel will merely be confused where they went and finish obeying the letter of his orders. However, Hezophiel will pursue the party if he sees them flee the vault with anything, even so far as interrupting at a critical moment elsewhere in this adventure.

EVIL DEMON

We have Ashima-Shimtu as sympathetic and complex. If you want to have her as a villain, though, we've included a stat-block for her in Appendix A: Combat Catalogue. In the main version of things, though, she's a non-combatant.



Advocatus Piscatoris

Social. Real-Time.

A stirring defense of the god Triegenes can put an end to the god trials, but a defeated godhand will still try to destroy the faith he feels betrayed him.

Returning to Alais Primos, the PCs see plumes of smoke curling from the caldera of Enzyo Mons, lit up from below in lurid reds and oranges. Over the Plaza Hyperion, dark grey storm clouds flicker with ripples of black lightning, a sure sign of ominous portent obvious to even amateur skyseers. The amount of time passed since the PCs last left the Plaza should be noted, as it's possible that more gods have died in their absence. Returning to Legate Tullius, the PCs find her writing and signing more warrants for arrests of hierarchs, high priests, seers, acolytes—any who worshipped deities.

Call Your Witnesses

With the biography in hand, the party can attempt to provide a defense for Triegenes. The city is given a day's notice, and more than ten thousand people fill Plaza Hyperion. At the tolling of the twelfth hour, Legate Tullius takes the stage, along with whichever PCs intend to act as defense, and whoever stands in for the accused (likely Morgan Cippiano). Since this is the first time someone has offered an actual defense in a god trial, Legate Tullius shouts for the crowd to listen as she explains the procedure.

Here in the plaza they will hold the trial—she will present her accusations and evidence, the defense will do the same, and they're allowed to briefly ask questions of each other—and angels shall oversee it, using their magic to ensure no one can lie. Then the crowd will march the accused to the top of Enzyo Mons, where each side shall give their closing remarks to Vitus. The godhand will then ask for a verdict. Should the god be found innocent, his surrogate shall be released and none shall harm him. But if the tribunal of the people find him guilty, he shall join the myriad objects of evil before him, and be thrown into the volcano.

Legal Tactics

Morgan Cippiano has plenty of experience with legal systems, and Crisillyir's is not as advanced and scientific as Risur's. The party will mostly need good rhetoric, and should play the crowd while discrediting each of Savina's accusations. Unlike Drakr and its philosophical debates, the tribunal of the people are a mob, and they'll be swayed by emotions, not logic.

Evidence is secondary, best revealed for a dramatic conclusion. Since the PCs will be watched by the angels, lying will likely be discovered, which will ruin their credibility. Deceptive phrasing works, though. And luckily no one will question their statements, no matter how outlandish they may be.

In a 'trial' of this sort, since there is basically no physical evidence, what matters is precedent, dogma, and scripture.

Mechanics

The two angels each can magically detect lies (Bluff DC 42 to lie without being detected), and before anyone can speak they will try to dispel any magical effects on the speaker (Attack: +25 vs. the spellcaster's Will defense; Hit: The effect ends.).

If your group isn't much for courtroom bloviation, you can just present the accusations in three bullet points, then once Tullius finishes give the party a chance to compose a counter to each and make skill checks to determine how well they craft a defense. Or you can roleplay it all, allowing skill checks to give the PCs clues of ways to improve their argument, then use a skill check to arbitrate how well their actual arguments are received.

Prosecution

Legate Tullius doesn't know how persuasive the party is, so she reserves her rhetorical flourishes for her closing statements. She is, however, determined to tear down Triegenes, and wouldn't mind having the mob turn on the party as well. She initially presents her accusations in a subdued fashion, especially compared to her normal firebrand style. The crimes of Triegenes consist of:

Firstly, he created a nation that stretched from Danor to the edge of Elfaivar, making him responsible for hundreds of thousands every generation. He proclaimed that he created the Clergy so that every person would be able to pursue their own path without punishment or enslavement. But when the Great Malice rendered half the nation uninhabitable, cursed the nation's holy leaders, and left the remaining half of the nation vulnerable, Triegenes did not intercede. This most noble nation was once the greatest in the world, but its power has been surpassed by heathenous fiends in Danor, and primitive animists in Risur. (A Risuri speaker who is aligned with the Old Faith suffers a -2 penalty to his or her Diplomacy check against this point.)

Secondly, he has been prayed to by millions, but his blessings have only gone to the hierarchs of his religion. Tullius predicts a possible counter-argument that, since Triegenes promoted self-growth, perhaps only the hierarch performed acts of sufficient merit. To counter this, she enumerates many examples of hierarchs achieving their positions through politics, and of martyrs and heroes suffering despite grand deeds they accomplished. The Legate accuses Triegenes of showing hypocritical favoritism.

Thirdly, he gave no warnings of the Great Eclipse, and so let the world fall into chaos. She paints a grandiose picture of all the death, destruction, and despair visited upon Crisillyir, and quotes scripture for each that suggests it was within the duty of Triegenes to stop it from happening.

This finishes her accusations. The party has a few minutes to make a plan and offer their defense.

Defense

For each of the Legate's three arguments, one Diplomacy check represents the counter argument, and closing arguments require a final Diplomacy check, with a +5 bonus if the speaker has experience entertaining crowds. For each of these, the PCs can attempt the following checks to improve the party's Diplomacy check. Time constraints limit each PC to only one bit of aid on each of the primary checks, and none of the following options can be used more than once to assist a given check.

- **Bluff.** If the party can manage to outwit the angels' lie detection (Bluff DC 42) the speaker gains a +5 bonus to a primary Diplomacy check.
- **Diplomacy.** A DC 30 check lets the party take advantage of pauses in the Legate's rhetorical flourishes to interject and throw off her pacing, but to do so politely and with the right decorum so it does not upset the crowd. This grants a +2 bonus to the primary Diplomacy check for that argument.
- **Intimidate.** A DC 30 check is able to slightly turn the angry crowd against Legate Tullius. This grants a +2 bonus to the primary check.
- **History.** A DC 20 check dredges up an obscure fact about Clergy history, granting a +2 bonus to the primary check.
- **Streetwise.** A DC 20 check injects a bit of local culture that the crowd responds to well, reducing their skepticism of the party as foreigners. This grants a +2 bonus to the primary check.
- **Nature.** Savina's first point criticizes Elfaivar and Risur, but a DC 15 check can cite elements of the faiths of those nations to show they are not actually inimical to the Clergy. This grants a +2 bonus to the Diplomacy check to oppose the Legate's first point.
- **Religion. Legate** Tullius is a master scholar of her religion, but a DC 35 check shows the PCs as equally familiar, granting a +5 bonus to the primary check.
- **Linguistics.** If the speaker is originally from Crisillyir, he or she gains a +2 bonus to the primary check by using the proper language for this trial.
- **Insight.** The crowd wants blood, true, but more importantly they want this all to have meaning. A DC 30 check forms a rapport with the audience and helps get them on the side of the speaker. This can be attempted once per primary Diplomacy check, and each success grants a cumulative +2 bonus (so potentially a +8 bonus on the final check).

Once the party has pooled their ideas, articulated the general structure of their rebuttal, and made their checks to aid, have the main speaker make a Diplomacy check (DC 41, which is the Legate's check) for the three points of the prosecution. You might grant a modifier of up to +5 or -5 depending on the quality of their ideas, and if they actually bring Ashima-Shimtu along, they get a +2 bonus to their checks. If they don't have the biography of Triegenes, though, that's a -5 penalty.

Finally, the party has an odd ace up their sleeve that the biography reveals Triegenes never became a god. Revealing this is deathly risky, though, because the crowd will respond in denial and anger. The threat of such a reaction should be made obvious to the party, and if they bring up that fact during any of the counter-arguments against Legate Tullius's three accusations, it provokes a mad riot as tens of thousands of people attempt to attack the party.

The only safe time to bring up this revelation is in the closing remarks, when the solemnity and intensity of the moment will make people actually listen.

Meditative Ascent

Once both sides have finished their arguments, Legate Tullius directs the crowd to follow them to "the Cathedral of the accused" where they will make final closing remarks. She suggests this time is for reflection on the arguments. For the first time since the god trials began, the mob's climb to the mountain top is hushed, rather than raucous. People suspect this will be the last trial.

Vitus waits at the balcony, watched by templars, monks, and angels. The thousands who come cannot fit inside, but magic carries the voice of the party and the priests to all. Legate Tullius briefly whispers to Vitus the general state of the trial so far, and then he asks for closing statements.

Closing Statements

The prosecution goes first, and Legate Tullius spends three minutes repeating the highlights of her accusations, criticizing the arguments of the PCs if they failed any of their checks, and then looking up to the top of the cathedral as she finishes.

"All of these failures," she says, "are symptoms of this god's original sin. He has lied to us. He promised us divinity, said he would guide us to godhood. But in the thousand years since his ascendance, no other mortal has become a god. The closest to that are these very trials, wherein we the people's tribunal have bound the gods to mortal flesh so they could be punished for abandoning us.

"Like the corrupt hierarchs and cardinals, Triegenes rose high, and he looked down at us and sniffed in disdain. In his arrogance, he decided his lofty position was for him alone. We could be gods, he said. But he kept that secret for himself.

"We have executed many of our deities for abandoning the pact they made with us. As founder of our faith, Triegenes is responsible for all those beneath him. As we found them guilty, so we must do for him. This liar god must be punished. To the fires with him. Burn away his evil so he may no longer lead us astray."

The Final Word

As above, the party can aid the speaker, as he or she makes a Diplomacy check (DC 41 again) for a closing argument.

There are two main ways this might go. A straightforward defense could focus on Legate Tullius's overwrought demands, as if nothing is ever allowed to go wrong; indeed, in the teaching of Triegenes, this time could be a great trial to challenge the faithful.

Or the party could go for the dramatic revelation that Triegenes never was a god, that it was the hierarchs that lied, and that all they were ever praying to was their own idea of a god. The proof is written in the man's own hand in his biography. These trials haven't been accusing actual gods, but have been accusing the people of Crisillyir themselves. The gods only have ever been what the people made of them. A vote to execute Triegenes is a damnation upon them all.

This, of course, angers people, but if the PC speaker succeeds his or her check, the mob is enthralled enough to consider the world-changing revelation. If they try this gambit but fail the check, any previous successes they made are moot; the mob cries out for an execution, both of Triegenes and the PCs.

Consequences

It depends how well the party lawyered up.

Denial. If the party tried to reveal the truth about Triegenes and failed the final Perform check, or if they failed two or more checks out of the four total (three accusations and the closing statements), then the crowd is unswayed, and they cry a guilty verdict and demand an execution. Vitus tries to perform the *sacrament of apotheosis* on the surrogate for Trigenes (likely Morgan). Triegenes takes the form of a lanky and lean human male in his fifties, dressed like a fisherman and stooped as from a great weight.If anyone interferes Sigismund will attack. See Fire is a Living thing, below, for battle details.

Agnostics. If the PCs succeeded three of the four checks, the crowd is uncertain and divided. Legate Tullius is shocked and looks to Vitus for direction, but the godhand refuses the tribunal's verdict. He orders his templars to perform the ritual, and then haltingly tries to explain that with an undecided verdict, it is his duty to lay sentence. As above, he'll stop anyone who tries to interfere, but if a fight breaks out his allies are less unified, and they'll quickly abandon him if the party is dangerous.

Pride Before a Fall. Should the party pull off a perfect defense and succeed all four checks, even Legate Tullius accepts when the crowd shouts 'innocent,' 'mercy,' 'release him,' and the like. Vitus looks at the mob in disbelief, then shoves the surrogate of Triegenes to them. A moment later he yells for everyone to back away, and even his allies and the angels give him room. Then he pulls open his shirt to reveal that he has already painted himself with blood for the *sacrament*.

He roars, "They've tricked you, as I suspected. You're all impure! Deceived by pleasant lies. Triegenes, you have failed me, and I have failed my people. I shall become you, and together our failure will burn away the lies and reveal a glorious truth!"

After that monologue he begins the chant for the *sacrament of apotheosis* ("Before I was nothing but words. Now I am all that is believed. I am faith made flesh. I am flesh made a god."). If he completes it, he flings himself over the edge of the balcony, into the lava.

It takes about five rounds from the verdict for him to make this move, and the party might have one last round to intervene and arrest his fall (ideally by flinging one of the lovely giant fishhooks and chains that decorate the cathedral to snag him just before he hits the lava). If they do, Vitus-as-Triegenes collapses and sobs, a shell of a man with no purpose left. Congratulations, the PCs have averted a catastrophe, and they never have to face that lava dragon that ShenFei illustrated for this adventure's cover.

But if Vitus (or any surrogate for Trigenes) hits the lava, the *sacrament* takes hold of him just as he is dying. His body glows with holy light, which then beams into the sky, spirals, collapses back into the caldera, and finally explodes outwards.

The backlash of an avatar of Triegenes dying will either kill tens of thousands or merely leave them reeling. It depends on if the PCs revealed to the crowd that Triegenes was never truly a god (and succeeded their Diplomacy check). In that case, their doubt is enough that the *sacrament* never truly takes hold; it's enough to dissolve the wards around the volcano, but not enough to kill the faithful. But if the city thinks their god is dead, over half the people across Crisillyir fall over and begin to die as their hearts fail.

That Other Problem. If a Triegenes avatar dies, the entire volcano heaves and the cathedral begins to tumble. An earthquake begins, lasting nearly a minute, after which the lava in the volcano begins to rise like a living thing. A dragon with a body of lava claws its away out of the caldera, stretching three hundred feet from molten teeth to searing tail. It smashes the cathedral to bits, then makes its way for Alais Primos. It would seemingly take a miracle to stop it.

Fire is a Living Thing

Action. Real-Time. Level 32.

A titanic lava dragon erupts and consumes Alais Primos. Will the party fight it, or use the distraction to acquire the ritual they need?

If the party interferes with the execution of Triegenes (or if they attacked Vitus much earlier in the adventure), they only have to deal with mortals and angels, which they might succeed against. The lava catastrophe dragon is practically invincible.

Godhand and Allies

How loyal Sigismund's allies are depends on the circumstances. They'll fight to the death normally, but if the party did a convincing job in the trial, they'll start abandoning their leader, one or two every round after the first of their group goes down. Statblocks are presented in Appendix A: Combat Catalogue.

Godhand and Allies (Level 32)

- Godhand Vitus Sigismund
- Legate Savina Tullius
- 4 divinely-sanctioned templars
- 2 divinely-sanctioned monks
- 2 planetar of the clergy
- Advorel, heavenly emissary

Tactics

Sigismund will open by sprinting up and striking with *perfect godhand*, causing his right arm to glow with divine light as he attempts to simply snuff a foe with a single strike. Thereafter he generally uses *divine skirmish* each round.

Critically, though, he will try to use the threat of the volcanic caldera to knock enemies off the balcony. He'll always try to maneuver so he's got his enemy between him and the ledge.

Legate Tullius uses *brilliant advice* on Sigismund (letting him roll twice and use the better result on all d20s, until he rolls a 20), then invokes a *cacophonous call of the crowd* to disorient the party. Thereafter she tries to stay close enough to bolster allies with her *demagogue's presence* without getting caught in the fighting herself.

The templars use *elemental summons* to call forth four elementals (one of each type), then stand within 30 feet of each other and use *holy eruption* on enemies who are close, but otherwise go on total defense. If allies are seriously injured, one or more of the templars will heal them, making it critical for the party to defeat these templars early in the battle.

The divinely-sanctioned monks hurl flurries of their fishhook shuriken. If they can snag an enemy they try to yank them near the edge of the balcony and kick them into the lava. They also try to keep enemies from harming the templars.



The planetars each pick an enemy and try to fight an honorable duel. Advorel turns invisible, then stomps through battle striking each foe with claws and fading away, letting his *halo of judgment* crush its foes through the weight of their conscience. It hopes the battle can be ended with one side surrendering, and if Sigismund is defeated it will be free to speak to the party of its disapproval of the god trials. Indeed, Advorel tries to make sure not to kill the PCs.

Aftermath

Should the party be defeated, Sigismund has them stabilized, then has his templars perform a quest ritual on them so they will not interfere in the god trials. He'll keep them around long enough to witness the execution of Triegenes (though the party might shirk the compulsion before then).

Deliverance

If things look untenable Legate Tullius will cry, "Deliver us!" and use *getaway*, which teleports the group to the storage basement of the Cathedral of Triegenes. Even if the fight is happening just upstairs, the sudden disappearance should confuse the PCs, and give Sigismund enough time. If he doesn't think he'll win the fight, he'll complete the *sacrament of apotheosis*. Then he'll climb up to the balcony overlooking the caldera and throw himself to his death.

Similarly, if the party manages to defeat Sigismund, the latent power of the *sacrament* keeps him conscious enough to mutter the ritual words. He'll likewise try to kill himself to destroy his god.

The death of an avatar of Triegenes causes an eruption, unleashing the living catastrophe.

The Living Catastrophe

The three-hundred-foot long lava dragon is not the first immense foe the party has faced, but unlike the fey titans the party will (likely) not be able to invoke Risur's rites of rulership to aid their fight. (If they can get someone in charge to cede Alais Primos to become part of the territory of Risur, though, the rites apply. After the trial, a little more legalese sure comes in handy.)

They do have an airship this time, though.

Ravenous, driven by centuries of evil urges that were poured into the caldera, the beast clambers out of the caldera of Enzyo Mons, smashes the Cathedral of Triegenes, and breathes gouts of flame to consume hundreds of onlookers. It perches high and roars into the dark sky, and all who hear it know its name: **Esurientes, the Hungering**.

The Dragon's Hunger

The molten monster descends the mountainside toward Alais Primos. It is drawn to Plaza Hyperion, where the greatest crowds have gathered, and where hundreds of old spells hum in the buildings. The screams of the dying are sweet music to this unnatural creature, and it will often pause in its euphoria of ruin to listen to the citizens of Alais Primos as they die. A hellish cloud of soot follows it out of the mouth of the volcano, and lightning constantly flashes overhead. An aerial approach is perilous but possible.

It takes the monster half an hour to reach the outer edge of the city, at which point it tramples homes, conjures firestorms in every direction, and sets alight nearly every structure within a quarter mile. It pauses for a bit to stalk panicked innocents and devour them, then surges toward Plaza Hyperion, creating a wake of destruction. An hour after the trial concludes, it reaches the center of the city. Most have already fled, but desperate scholars who are trying to carry books from the Grand Librarium to safety have a front-row view as the dragon simply stands atop the Praesidio Urbis and turns the stone liquid from its presence. A few minutes later it notices the activity at the library and proceeds to annihilate the building.

With the heart of the city a cinder, Esurientes revels for another hour, slaughtering all it can—including anywhere like the Family's restaurant that the party might care about—before finally tearing itself apart from within. Its body jerks and spurts, and it staggers through the city, shedding parts at every canal until it finally collapses into inert lava. The glowing stone flows through the canals, consuming the rest of the city before flowing into the harbor and hardening.

If not stopped, Esurientes takes the lives of hundreds of thousands and leaves Alais Primos a dead city cloaked in poisonous vapors.

Fighting Hunger

The party might attack Esurientes as soon as it appears, but truly defeating it likely requires a bit of preparation and clever thinking. Or they might ignore it and race ahead, hoping to retrieve the Axis Seal ritual before the city is destroyed.

Tactics that might help include magically conjuring a rainstorm, which could harden its skin and slow it to speed 10, fly 5 (clumsy) as long as the storm persists; driving it into a canal, which nearly immobilizes it; firing upon it with cannons, which deal 50 damage per strike (though the dragon is hidden by a haze of steam, and can spit meteors back at them); having an eschatologist call forth the icy end of the earth to create a wall the beast basically cannot enter; or performing the sacrament of apotheosis on Morgan Cippiano to get an allied Triegenes, who then uses miracle to draw the ocean up into the city, which immobilizes the monster, and stabilizes any dying believers. "Take on that creature," he says. "I shall attend to my family."



A stand-up fight would probably be lethal, but if the party goes for it, let them tear the evil thing to pieces with whatever ridiculous attacks they have at their disposal. Considering the size of the thing, you'd probably need to climb onto it to reach anywhere vulnerable.

Aftermath

If Alais Primos survives, the people of Crisillyir owe their lives to the party, and they recall their army from invading Risur. If the city falls, even if the party saved figures in power, none have the authority to call back the army, and indeed the Clergy's forces become fanatical, believing they must now claim Risur as their new home.

As long as the party recovered the Axis Seal ritual, they can return to Flint and make their way to the Gyre, where they can find what they need to undo the Ob's dominion over the world. Without that ritual, a last-ditch possibility would be to head into the Gyre and reach Reida, the plane of time, where they might witness the original Ancients performing the ritual. Unfortunately, the Voice of Rot has wrapped himself about that plane, and intends to pull it—and with it the destiny of the whole world—into oblivion.

What's Next?

In Adventure Twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*, we expect the party to take their airship and fly through the planar rift above Cauldron Hill in Flint. This transports them to the Dreaming, floating at the edge of the Gyre, as it is about to be crushed and shattered by colliding with other dead worlds. The party can save some of the fey of the Dreaming, but must press on and explore the Gyre in order to find planes that possess the proper magical energies necessary to stabilize their world.

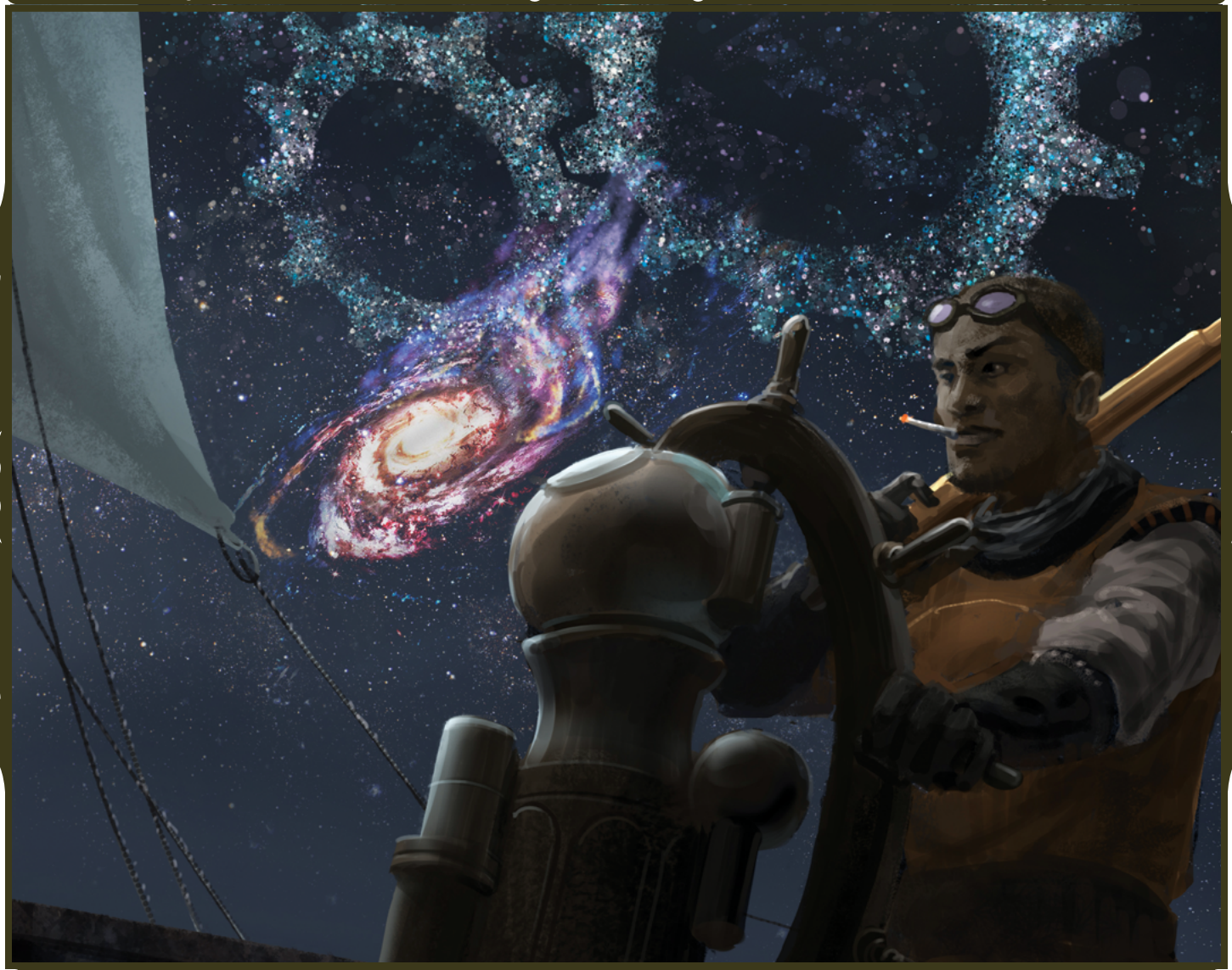
Three complications, though:

First, the Voice of Rot has hold of the world's former plane of Time, and if the party doesn't defeat him, the world is automatically doomed and will be pulled into the Gyre itself.

Second, the power of the Dreaming copies the party, leaving one version of them in the real world, and a mirrored reflection trapped in the graveyard of the multiverse. For one group to save their world, the other must perish in the Gyre.

Third, Nicodemus has a plan to get this world back under his control, and it involves the Gidim. While the party is gone, he uses knowledge of the creatures' thoughtflesh physiology and begins intentionally triggering hiveminds around the world, which he is then able to possess and gain control of—effectively turning the entire world into a single gestalt consciousness under his control. If the party did well in this adventure and saved the other nations, Nicodemus has not yet managed to enact this plan; but if they let chaos and despair grip the world, they'll return to find it solidly under Nicodemus's control. The handful of people who resist hide in desperation, and unless the party can ignite a spark of revolution, free will shall be no more.

Effectively, if the party 'won' this adventure, they just need to hit the Gyre and defeat the Voice of Rot, then fly back home and battle Nicodemus. If they 'failed' this adventure, they will have another chance to heroically unite the people of the world. Ideally without resorting to mind control.



Adventure Number 12

The Grinding Gears of Heaven

From the Pen of Ryan Nock

Clever Conversion by Russell Torres

Evocative Cover Illustration by ShenFei

Stunning Cartographic Displays by James Hazelett

Masterful Interior Illustrations by ShenFei, Claudio Pozas, Dede Putra, Eleni Tsami, and artists of history

with Layout and Graphic Design by Frank Michienzi

Ably Produced and Facilitated by Russell Morrissey

Special Thanks to Jason, a.k.a. The Lord of Motion, for teaching me that sometimes the winning move is not to play. Also WOPR from *Wargames*.

ADVENTURE TWELVE: Introduction

Wherein the End Has Already Begun

This all began with a squad of constables finding evidence of a conspiracy to mislead their nation's king and misappropriate their city's industrial material to some secret purpose. The mysterious group operated out of Cauldron Hill, a cursed mountain that loomed over the city – or more accurately the mountain's analogue in the Bleak Gate, that dark reflection of the world from which undead horrors are born.

Further investigation unearthed the scope of the conspiracy, whose interests ranged from archaeological digs of ancient rituals to arcanoscientific inventions that could more easily pierce the barriers between dimensions. They finally learned the group's name – the Obscurati. Aided by self-interested allies and saboteurs inside the organization, the constables penetrated the Cauldron Hill facility and discovered a three-hundred-foot tall mechanical colossus, which activated prematurely. The constables' king was able to banish the titan to the Dreaming, another reflection of the world, one ruled by faeries and other mystical creatures.

Though the colossus was temporarily driven away, the king tasked the constables with gaining control over it before their enemies could retrieve it. This mission took them to the other great nations of the world. They located the three key creators of the colossus – the Gearbuilder, the Steelshaper, and the Mindmaker. The last of that triad helped them infiltrate a gathering of the conspiracy, where they finally learned the Obscurati's ultimate goal. The colossus was to open an immense golden seal over a prehistoric ritual, which had linked this world to other planes and determined the nature of reality. By altering what planes were linked together, the Ob could control the fate of the world.

In many ways, the Obscurati had noble intentions, but their ruthlessness in pursuing those aims would make anyone hesitate to trust them. Delving into the history of the conspiracy's founders, Kasvarina and Nicodemus, showed they would sacrifice anyone to advance their plans.

Despite their best efforts, the constables were only able to defend their homeland from falling under the Ob's control. The conspiracy regained control of the colossus and performed their ritual, but something disrupted them at the last moment.

That interference came from the Voice of Rot – an immense fey creature that typically takes the form of a white serpent with a single eye. This world's manifestation of the very concept of death, he is something like a god, and in the Ob's meddling with reality he saw a chance to cause the wholesale destruction of the world. Whether the world's end would annihilate him as well or allow him to ascend to a true divinity is of little consequence to him. With his deceptive tongue he fostered cultists in many nations and planted saboteurs among the Obscurati.

At the moment that would have been the Ob's triumph, those saboteurs disrupted key elements of the ritual. The colossus was overcome by the intense energy beneath the ancient seal, and while the nature of reality was changed, the ritual was incomplete. The world, detached from its previous links to other planes, floated at the edge of the cosmos. It began to drift toward the Gyre, the graveyard of the multiverse where dying planes are annihilated to create the raw starstuff for new worlds.

The constables are now leaders of their homeland. They are renowned as heroes across their world. They need only embark on one last quest to undo the disastrous tinkering of the Obscurati and remake reality into an age of their own design. That quest will take them to the Gyre, where they will rescue other dying worlds to help restore their own, and where they must defeat the Voice of Rot. If they fail, their homeworld will be drawn into the Gyre and annihilated utterly, and all their investigations and heroism will have been for nothing.

Climax Helix

We're trying something experimental for the finale of Zeitgeist: The Gears of Revolution. We worry about players getting climax fatigue; once you've defeated an army of the dead and five or six monsters the size of an entire battle map, there's just not that much left that can threaten them. It's time to wrap things up.

The problem is, there are two main foes remaining – the **Voice of Rot**, who has coiled himself around the physical manifestation of the fate of the world so he can drag it to its final death; and **Nicodemus**, who after watching his best intentions to save the world instead turn to ash has decided to seize power and mystically force everyone to obey him.

We don't want to have a dramatic final battle against the Voice of Rot... and then have to rebuild tension again for another dramatic final battle, this time against Nicodemus. So we're doing them at the same time.

At the end of the first act of this adventure, the party is in the Dreaming, a manifestation of Av, which has a 'mirror' aspect. When that world smashes into the edge of the Gyre and shatters, the party is reflected in two. One version of them survives in the Gyre, while the other is cast back to the real world. Neither is aware of the other, initially.

In-game, we focus on the Gyre PCs first, who likely assume they're just on the next leg of their quest. They start to explore the planar motes of dying worlds, seeking energies they can use to re-do the Axis Seal ritual when they get back home. Eventually they come upon a plane where they find the goddess Srasama in a deathlike sleep, being watched over by a version of Nicodemus who was trapped here at the moment of the Great Malice, five hundred years ago. This version, who refers to himself by his birth name of William Miller, explains that the party has been split from their real selves, and that this version of them is trapped here forever. But they can send their memories from here to their selves in the real world if they willingly enter the cosmic gears that grind apart dead worlds at the end of the Gyre.

At that moment, in the middle of Adventure Twelve, we begin Adventure Thirteen, *Avatar of Revolution*. The PCs—having moments earlier witnessed the destruction of the Dreaming—arrive back in Risur, but months later than it should be. They aren't aware of what is happening in the Gyre, not yet at least.

They find their world almost completely bereft of free will. Their erstwhile ally Benedict Pemberton, who has managed to survive and hide, tells them that Nicodemus has stolen power from the Gidim and used the godmind phenomenon to take control of nearly everyone's mind in order to finally create his perfect society. With order restored, Nicodemus is now working at the site of the Axis Seal, trying to repair the colossus so he can redo the ritual.

The narrative then returns to the Gyre, where the party can then finish their exploration. To secure some of the most useful planes, they have to prove themselves allies to the survivors by rescuing prisoners or treasures from an infernal group known as the Golden Legion. When they are prepared to challenge the Voice of Rot, they land on the remnants of Reida, the plane of time, at which point we weave back to the real world. A montage sees the party calling upon various figures around the world they helped during the campaign, freeing them from Nicodemus's control and rallying enough support to perform the *sacrament of apotheosis* on one of the PCs, creating a literal Avatar of Revolution. Then the party heads to Axis Island to confront Nicodemus.

The moment they come within sight of the Axis Seal, we return to Adventure Twelve for its climax. The party defeats the Voice of Rot, and then destroy themselves here in order to send the vital information to their other selves.

Throughout this adventure, we'll have you keep track of how quickly the party links to the various worlds, and in what order. On Axis Island, in the climax of Adventure Thirteen, knowledge of those worlds begin to flood into the party's minds round-by-round, and as they contest with Nicodemus and his indestructible colossus for control over the ritual, their actions in this adventure will determine their options there. Effectively, the battle against Nicodemus and the battle against the Voice of Rot occur simultaneously, and only once the party defeats the fey titan does it become possible to kill Nicodemus once and for all.

If you want a more traditional ending you can do it the way we originally had in mind—fight the Voice of Rot, fly back to the real world, then do Adventure Thirteen—but we think this more metaphysical structure nicely weds the local and the cosmic scope of the campaign. And if the party in the Gyre dies, their other selves will receive flashes of what they experienced, enough that they might have the slimmest hope of still saving the world.

Frayed Threads

It's not necessary to tie up every loose plot thread. While we want to encourage the party to leave quickly for the Gyre, there are myriad personal matters they might want to resolve before setting out on a mission they don't know if they can return from. You don't have to give them closure on everything—especially not the personal matters—but here are some setting-level topics you might want to consider revisiting.

- Who's in charge in Flint's government? How have they been received by the citizens?
- How much tension is there between industry and the workers now? If Ob-loyal forces conquered the place, industry is humming and those who speak out are reeducated via magic.
- Who runs the RHC?
- What are the fey titans up to?
- How have the major cities of Risur—Flint, Slate, Shale, and Bole—been affected by the invasion?
- How many major Obscurati figures are still at large? Nicodemus, Han Jierre, Lya Jierre? Depending on who your players remember from the convocation in adventure seven, *Schism*, you could drop mentions of some Ob officers who survived and are still at work around the world. Certainly bring back any Ob officers whom the PCs possessed, if any of them survived.

Obscurati Control

Danor is still loyal to the Obscurati, and the nation is fanatically building war machines and training armies unless the party helped fend off the Godmind, in which case the population is divided, with many protesting and demanding a peaceful resolution of conflict. A major figure in the debate is **Gardienne du Cherage**, an Ob officer (mentioned in adventure seven) who originally was responsible for making Danor less hostile to Risur. Now she's doing mental gymnastics to convince Danor they must liberate Risur's masses—who yearn to become civilized like Danor—from the superstitious leadership of the PCs.

ADAPTING THE ADVENTURE

First, if you decided to buy the twelfth adventure in a thirteen-part adventure path without intending to play the rest of the series, thank you, you crazy strange gamer you.

Second, epic level adventures give PCs the ability to save a world in an afternoon. You can easily get the party into the Gyre by changing their motivation. Maybe they need to go here to get a Macguffin, and the Voice of Rot is simply the guardian at the edge of the Gyre who keeps people from escaping. Or perhaps a villain from your own game can take the Voice of Rot's place, as perhaps he tries to use the power of the Gyre to reawaken an ancient kingdom, or destroy the world, or whatever other hip thing super-villains are doing these days.

Drakr might be completely leaderless if Komanov destroyed the government in Trekhom, in which case the army and navy are under Han Jierre's command. Otherwise, even if the party saved the day, Drakr is still officially allied with the Obscurati, with **Hastenschrieft Willimarkanova** (a dwarf philosopher who was an Ob officer mentioned in adventure seven) sending down dictats from Nicodemus to the politicians. The nation's arcane forges have begun crafting mechanical humanoid constructs to use as soldiers, which have the benefit of perfectly obeying orders but not having a mind that makes them susceptible to the hivemind phenomenon.

Crisillyir is in disarray, either because the leadership all died, or because Sigismund's god trials scattered them and ruined the chain of command. In the vacuum, the Crisillyiri military has fallen under the command of Danoran **General Shane Wallisonne** (a human who was an Ob officer mentioned in adventure seven).

Elfaivar has been placed under the technocratic rule of **Solace Petrov**, a human economist (mentioned in adventure seven) who has catalogued the resources of the newly-cooperative eladrin survivors and brought them into the world economy by having them sell all manner of magic items once hoarded for an eventual war against the Clergy. In any event, **Kasvarina Varal** is not in Elfaivar. Nicodemus has either kept her imprisoned or kept her as his right hand, depending on how things shook out in adventure eight, *Diaspora*.

Axis Island

After retaking the island in Adventure Ten, Danor's forces have dramatically increased security. Teleportation traps redirect potential intruders. Regular divinations warn of approaching threats by sea or sky. Two lux cannons have been mounted on turrets in the fortress and sea gate to deter attacks. Factories have been restarted to produce construct warriors, as well as equipment to repair the colossus.

Kasvarina and the Colossus

One mystery is likely what happened to Kasvarina Varal, who was separated from the party at the end of Adventure Eight, when she either joined the Obscurati—in which case she works at the right hand of Nicodemus—or when she rejected the Ob but was carried away by wild teleportation magic—in which case she was deposited in Elfaivar but has since been captured and kept prisoner because Nicodemus hopes to still use her.

In either case, she'll appear in Adventure Thirteen and have a strong influence on the actions of the colossus Borne.

A Different Kind of Underworld

Classic mythic archetypes see the hero entering the land of the dead on his greatest quest, before returning home with a great boon. The Gyre fills that mythic role, while also providing a bit of picaresque grandeur at the end of the campaign. Zeitgeist is ultimately about deciding what the world should be, and so it seems appropriate to show a variety of possible worlds to suggest to the players that they don't have to settle for what's normal.

Adventure Thirteen is the end, and if your players want a technological utopia, an orgiastic empire where they are the god-kings, or a pastoral return to humble nature like something out of Tolkien's Shire, this is their chance. Maybe they'll come to a consensus, or maybe they'll end up fighting for who gets control, or perhaps they'll be boring and decide it's not their right to decide the fate of the world and just put it back to what it used to be: a world whose nature was decided ten thousand years ago by a bunch of alcoholic orcs who were high on primitive druidic narcotics.

The Grinding Gears of Heaven begins with the destruction of Av and ends with confronting the Voice of Rot, but in between it's very free-form. There are thirty planes to explore, and we hope that we've provided enough options and details for you to round out your campaign the way you think your group will best enjoy it.

We're conscious of the backlash against the ending of the **Mass Effect** trilogy, so if your players want some high-powered fun and aren't in a rush to get to the climax, let them have an odyssey through the Gyre. If they are the nostalgic types, well, the Bleak Gate crashed into the Gyre too, so ghosts of dead people the party might enjoy encountering could be wandering around the motes of dying worlds. And if they're seriously just ready to finish this campaign after nearly five damned years, they can barnstorm their way through each plane in ten minutes, then ram their airship into the Voice of Rot and get to beating the Obscurati back home.

This adventure is a last hurrah, so make it as silly or somber as you want. Some underworlds are filled with fire and demonic spiders, and others are endless fields of grain where your wife and daughter enjoy peaceful eternity, but a few have dancing calypso skeletons with a lot of tequila.

BROKEN MIRROR

We hope your players will respond well to the twist that the destruction of Av creates two copies of their characters, and we suspect most will get a kick out of having an opportunity to pull the classic heroic sacrifice while still having another version of themselves survive. It also gives you a chance to gruesomely murder the PCs one by one in the finale against the Voice of Rot, and I'm sure after a campaign this long, that would be quite cathartic.

Adventure Tone

True, the Obscurati took control of the world and convinced most nations to ally with them in creating a new world order, but their current level of domination will vary wildly depending on the party's success.

At this stage in the campaign, the PCs might have undercut the Ob's power base by saving Danor, Drakr, Ber, and Crisillyir from various doomsdays, resulting in a secure Risur that just needs to wrest control of Axis Island back and perform the Axis Seal ritual. Or they might have let Cherage be annihilated by a godmind, Trekhom conquered by Komanov, Alais Primos left an unholy mound of smoldering basalt, and Seobriga transformed into a farm of madness by the Gidim. Risur could be in chaos – its defenses shattered but the occupying armies left without leaders from their homelands to guide them, so they turn to Nicodemus for guidance.

The tone of the adventure will vary based on the circumstances the PCs have found themselves in – heroic and triumphant if they are in good standing, or a desperate last-ditch effort if everything is falling apart. In either case, we plan to throw the party a curveball to make sure the stakes are appropriately high in the final adventure.

Act One: Turning and Turning

Those who are allied in resisting Nicodemus and the Obscurati make plans to send the party into the Gyre. By now the party should have the details of the ritual of the Axis Seal (recovered from Crisillyir), a Gidim *vortex array* (recovered from Ber) to sense the energies of worlds and determine whether they would be useful for the ritual, and possibly the left eye of the Voice of Rot (recovered from Drakr), as well as an understanding that they're probably going to have to face the fey titan.

The Gyre is full of motes of dying worlds, each barely thirty miles across, which clump up near the mouth of an immense nebula that resembles two spinning cogs. There the worlds are slowly eroded by the 'gear teeth' of the nebula, until after untold centuries they are drawn into the mouth of the Gyre and finally crushed.

The party (or their advisor Harkover Lee) can discover from the Axis Seal ritual how to form a metaphysical bond to a plane, which they'll need in order to use a plane in the Axis Seal ritual. For most the process is challenging and perilous, but the party has the will of a nation behind them, and immense experience to boot. For each world they want to bond to, they'll need to land, find a place of importance, and craft a golden icon that is linked to that plane. The process takes a month if done with brute force, but if you properly understand the plane (i.e., learn how it died and ended up in the Gyre) or become a hero of it (i.e., do a great favor for any survivors living there), crafting takes only an hour. The icon can be used by anyone in the Axis Seal ritual, which will need eight different planes.

The Ancients who first performed the Axis Seal ritual bonded to eight of the myriad planes of the multiverse, because they had access to them all. But something that went wrong with the Ob's ritual left them cut off from most of reality. The planes of the Gyre are the only options they have.

Small Medium, Large Ego

During the party's deliberations, a halfling spirit medium contacts them, claiming he has a message from notorious celebrity and adventurer **Rock Rackus**. Rackus, who bodily possesses the short spiritist, reports that devils in an impressive golden airship, wearing impressive gold chains, have attacked Thistle Palace and are enslaving people. He had been dating this ghost woman, and she guided him to safety, through a crack in the earth. Av, he claims, is hollow. The outside of the shell is the Dreaming, and the inside shell is where the Bleak Gate lies.

Rock tells the party to hurry up and come save all the faeries. He can tell them how to get there.

Telescopes and skyseers verify that the planet Av—currently the farthest planet in the night sky—is drifting near the Gyre. They predict soon it will be shorn apart by the nebula, and some remnant of it will join the other world motes. (Conveniently, these world motes seem to 'float' in the aether, with a consistent 'up' and 'down.' They don't obey real-world gravity.)

Flying into the Underworld

The path to the Gyre begins above Cauldron Hill in the city of Flint. There the veil between the real world and the Bleak Gate has always been thin, and if the party flies their airship over the mountain at the correct time they'll be drawn through a planar rift. They arrive above the Cauldron Hill analogue in the Bleak Gate, where Rock can guide them back to the Dreaming side of the world.

They find Av—the plane of dreams, which creates two reflected versions of the real world—mere hours from crashing. The Gyre fills the sky. They're almost immediately set upon by soldiers of the Golden Legion of Egal the Shimmering, an extraplanar foe teased as early as back in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*.

The Dreaming has been conquered by the legion – or rather a sliver of the legion that has survived in the Gyre for thousands of years, constantly conquering new worlds as they are drawn in. (Millions more legionnaires serve Egal the Shimmering in some layer of Hell, which is beyond the scope of this campaign.) Av is the legion's newest acquisition, and their focus is on Clover, the largest city, where they plunder whatever gold they can find. The legion uses gold chains to bind slaves and turn them into loyal warriors

Last Farewell

You may be tempted to try to wrap up all the loose ends before the party sets out on this adventure. Characters have families to protect, enemies to give come-uppance to, personal goals to achieve, and other story arcs. But remember that a good story not only has a dramatic climax, but also a satisfying denouement. From an old French term for 'untying a knot,' you want to unravel all the complexities that the campaign has produced and leave a sense of normalcy for the characters and catharsis for the players.

When it comes time for the party to say their last good-byes in case their mission to the Gyre fails, try to engineer a few relationships that don't get resolved. You can always use them for a pleasant wrap-up after the world is fully and properly saved.

Risuri Government in Exile

If the PCs took too long in adventure eleven, *Gorged on Ruins*, Risur might have fallen to the invading armies. We assume the party gathers in Flint for their final mission, but they might instead have to meet their allies in secret, perhaps in a Yerasol island or in the caves of the Anthras Mountains where they're hidden away by Granny Allswell.

Perchance to Dream

The party ultimately just needs to hop from the Dreaming to the other worlds of the Gyre, but they may have friends in Clover they want to rescue, or they might feel some obligation to try to save the whole plane. The Golden Legion has airships of its own, so some of the fey could escape and fly back through the rift inside the hollow shell of Av, but most of the plane is doomed. If the party wants to save innocents, they'll need to bond with Av and create a new golden icon for it, which will let them (mostly) restore the plane when they perform the Axis Seal ritual in Adventure Thirteen.

Bonding with Av requires the consent of the monarch of the Unseen Court (exactly who that is depends on the party's actions in Adventure Nine), and so the party can try to defeat the defenders—many of whom are fey enslaved by the legion's golden chains—to reach the palace throne room. Unfortunately, the monarch already has been captured and enslaved, and the legion's airships have carried him or her away to their base on the world mote Egalitrix.

In any event, it's not long before meteors begin to smash into the surface of the world, shattering it like the glass orb it is. Fire begins to explode up from the hollow center, and as soon as the party makes it to their ship they're knocked unconscious as the plane crashes into the edge of the Gyre and is obliterated.

For a moment, the party dreams that they've been shunted back to the real world, and that they're stranded, unable to return to the Gyre, unable to find a way to defeat the Obscurati. Then they awaken amid debris of the dead world.

Act Two: Spiritus Mundi

They see massive boulders threaded with gold, signifying they have found **Urim**, one of the planes originally linked to their world. A few surviving legionnaires attempt to finish off the party, and the battle is complicated by immense undead spiders – servants of the Voice of Rot who serve as his eyes throughout the Gyre. The fey titan knows the party is coming, and he sees them as peers of a sort because they have fought before, so he will wait for them to witness as he destroys the world. He'll still sic the spiders on them, though, because he wants them dead.

After the battle, a prospective ally finds the party and offers to guide them through the graveyard of the multiverse.

Over thirty planes in various states of annihilation float and crash against each other as they slowly are drawn toward the teeth of the Gyre. The party needs to bond with at least one plane that possesses energy of each of the eight elements of the Axis Seal ritual – Air, Earth, Fire, Water, Life, Death, Space, and Time. We intend to damage their ship a bit so they have an incentive to explore and get supplies for repairs, rather than rush straight to the Voice of Rot. But generally they'll have free rein to explore a handful of planes every day. If you prefer a long exodus you can cripple their ship entirely and force them to trek by foot and spell (and giant undead tortoise) between the floating island worlds, though the adventure assumes they'll have their ship for some of the final encounters.

We also expect the party to use the Gidim *vortex array* so they can tell generally what energies are active in nearby worlds without having to land on them. There isn't an actual deadline for how fast the party explores—the Voice of Rot will wait up to a year to have the PCs witness the end of their world—but the *vortex array* should let the party feel like they have more control over their journey.

Bonding with a plane originally linked to the party's world is a quick process, but for the other planes it is necessary to either accomplish a quest to aid the survivors or to discover the cause of the plane's demise, so that it will not be forgotten. This provides a bit of investigation for the 'constables' even while they're far from street crime. Finding out these secrets won't be particularly hard, of course, given the magic likely available to the party.

Each plane offers some different trait that would influence the new world the party will create (see DM's Map – Gyre Exploration for more details). There are a mix of good, decent, and terrible options, which should give the party a lot of leeway in creating a new world. Some planes are bad for the long term, but they could prove tactically useful while battling Nicodemus for control of the Axis Seal in Adventure Thirteen.

General Plan

We assume the party will want to bond with **Av**, to use it as a plane of life. However, the monarch of Thistle Palace has been claimed by the fiendish commander of the Golden Legion, His Celestial Eruption General Paelyrion XVIII, which means the party will need to attack **Egalitrix**, their flying volcano fortress plane.

The party might keep the existing fire plane **Jiese** which enabled the industrial revolution, but they have a few options if they would rather the world stop being steampunk. The original plane of **Mavisha** is still fine for water energy, but the telepathic sea monsters of **Shabboath** have claimed it so unless the party wants them hitching a ride they must be driven back. **Urim**, the same plane of earth the party's world originally had, is still perfectly serviceable, but since we offer few good options for planes with Space energy, we hope they'll use Urim for Space, which is its secondary energy trait.

In its place as earth plane, the fan-service option is **Dunkelweiss**, a plane crafted as a tomb for a dwarf king, where the streams are literally beer. But to bond with it the party must recover artifacts stolen by the pirates of **Hunlow**, an evil god trapped in the form of an ocean. That god handily can be goaded into killing the sea monsters of Shabboath.

The safest air-aligned plane, **Caeloon**, is controlled by flying monks, one of whom befriends the party and hopes they'll rescue her master after they bond with the world. The master was taken by the Golden Legion, giving the party another nudge to attack Egalitrix.

Iratha Ket, a surprisingly friendly plane of death, is being threatened by an aggressive and semi-intelligent dwarf sun **Obliatas**, which can be lured away, driven off, or outright destroyed with powerful enough magic. However, Obliatas can also serve as any type of elemental energy, which could create a moral quandary.

Finally, the jungle plane **Ascetia** provides time energy, but more interestingly it is home to a lighthouse built by a reflection of Nicodemus. Nicodemus was present at the events that caused the Great Malice, and was fleeing through a dimensional portal right as the eladrin goddess Srasama died. The explosion of energy fractured him. In the real world he survived as a ghost and went on to pose as a philosopher, using his birth name William Miller. That attempt at peace was trampled by the Clergy, so he abandoned his 'William Miller' identity, then eventually founded the Obscurati.

But at the moment the Great Malice occurred, a reflection of Nicodemus was cast into the Gyre, along with the dead goddess and the spirits of millions of eladrin women who perished simultaneously. This man, who still calls himself William Miller, holds vigil over the body of the dead goddess, and he built the lighthouse to show the Gyre that it was still possible to create something amidst all this decay. That act had the strange effect of keeping Ascetia stable and motionless for five centuries, while countless other planes have drifted past and been consumed.

Inflection Point

William Miller—the reflection of the Nicodemus who is the party's nemesis—is vaguely aware of what his other self has done in the real world, having gathered news from the spirits of those who died since the Great Eclipse and ended up in the Gyre. He knows from experience that the PCs are trapped here, and that their options are either to survive as long as they can in the Gyre, or to cast themselves into the gears. If they take the second choice and have the proper mental preparations, their memories will flood back to the real world and join with the other reflection of themselves.

It's at this point in the game where you can begin Adventure Thirteen, *Avatar of Revolution*, though the versions of the PCs in the real world will be oblivious to what's going on in the Gyre. Their consciousnesses won't interconnect until near the climax of the two adventures.

After some action in the real world, the focus will return to the version of the PCs in the Gyre. We expect they'll visit the lighthouse and meet William Miller before they attempt to attack Egalitrix, and so the battle with the Golden Legion will likely wrap up the second act of this adventure. But if they don't want to keep Av, they might simply skip that battle and push onward. Once the party has finished exploring the Gyre (and hopefully has settled on which planes they intend to use in the Axis Seal ritual), the focus follows the real world until the party arrives at Axis Island.

Then we slip back to the Gyre, where the Voice of Rot awaits just outside the grinding gearteeth.

Act Three: Blank and Pitiless

One of the planes originally linked to the party's homeworld was **Reida**, known as the arc of history. A planet-sized incomplete ring that gleamed silver in the night sky, it was said to contain the entire fate of the world, tracing an arc around it like the passage of the hands of a clock. The final moment captured in it was when the Obscurati completed their ritual and detached it from the world, and though it no longer shapes the planet's future, it is tied in a primordial way to the world's past.

The Voice of Rot entered the Gyre, found the drifting world, and wrapped his coils around it, then used magic to pull the plane to within a breath of the Gyre's teeth. Though once a vast world thousands of miles in diameter, in the Gyre Reida has shrunk to only a few hundred feet across. If it were left alone it would eventually be ground apart, but if it is destroyed while the Voice of Rot clings to it, he'll channel its destruction across the whole of history, snuffing all life on the PC's homeworld.

Intense winds draw debris toward the Gyre, making it dangerous to fly near Reida, and spelling a near certain death for anyone knocked off the plane. The Voice of Rot, out of a perverse sense of fey fairness, waits to destroy the world until the party is present to try to stop him. But he has grown stronger by feeding off all the death in the Gyre, not to mention the temporal magic of the ring he is wrapped around.

Battle Across the Ages

The surface of Reida is charged with history, and those who touch it cause it to manifest phantoms of the past that, with a bit of willpower, can become temporarily real. Starting at roughly "eight o'clock" on the ring and progressing clockwise, different sections represent eras of the ancient past, the time of the founding of Risur, the era of the Great Malice, the Yerasol Wars, and recent events.

Because the Voice of Rot was present throughout all these ages, here on Reida he cannot be harmed unless he is simultaneously attacked in two different eras at once. Additionally, while his titanic fangs are deadly and his magic can turn the land against them, the primary threat is his voice. As he speaks, the plane around him slowly decays, as history itself withers away. This can only be stopped if someone else is near him as he speaks, but the colossal serpent constantly slithers around the ring. The party is thus forced to spread out across history.

(You might need to adjust the exact pace of how fast the world decays. Some groups will aggressively attack, so you'll need to push the timeline so the drama escalates before the fight ends. Other groups might be more defensive or chatty, and we don't want to force them to rush during an epic showdown.)

During the battle, the party might seek answers to history's greatest questions by exploring past eras, and they can call upon allies such as the orcish Ancients who crafted the Axis Seal, King Kelland who founded Risur, and perhaps even foes they have previously killed during the campaign. (Psychopath or not, Lorcan Kell wouldn't approve of the world ending.)

After a grueling fight on a world that is literally disintegrating beneath them, perhaps the world's history is destroyed, and the PCs will all plunge into the Gyre, their souls being devoured by the Voice of Rot as he ascends to godhood and finds new worlds to destroy. But if the party manages to preserve at least part of Reida until the Voice of Rot is defeated, the fey titan loses his grip on the plane and is pulled into the teeth of the celestial gears, screaming in denial as he is utterly annihilated.

Clip Show

One fun thing you can do during this battle is have the party literally walk through their own past. A PC might be knocked into a phantom of their first infiltration of Axis Island, or witness again an argument with a now-dead friend. Nostalgia is powerful, and if the fight ends with the Voice of Rot having destroyed all the ring except for the part nearest the 'end of time,' having the whole city of Flint cheering the party on is pretty damned perfect.

Using Character Themes

Dockers find an easy rapport with the pirates of Hunlow (plane 33), and a few of the scalawags might want to team up to topple Admiral Taracle. Eschatologists find many people willing to discuss the end of the world, since everyone here has experienced it in one form or another. Gunsmiths should have a chance to use the fusils of the Golden Legion against them, perhaps even retooling the burning brand tower to fire at the legion's command center.

Martial Scientists can learn the *stance of the paper wind* from the monk Calily. Skyseers should have strong and clear visions of the threats each world poses as they approach. Spirit Mediums can commune with many dead planes to ask their histories, especially the plane Bhoior (plane 41) which can serve as a sort of ferry for the party and their allies. Technologists have the best chance of sabotaging the fortress of Egalitrix, and Yerasol Veterans can call upon the memory of other Risuri heroes in the final battle against the Voice of Rot.

Vekeshi Mystics have the greatest opportunity of any character theme, as they will find a remnant of the goddess Srasama on Ascetia (plane 24).

Finally

With the Voice of Rot defeated, the time comes for the PCs to plunge willingly into the Gyre. In so doing, they'll carry all their knowledge about the planes to their selves in the real world. Any planar icons they carry will magically manifest in the real world, for the icons are a physical representation of a metaphysical connection.

The actual passage through the Gyre will be surreal, like the end of 2001.

Level Advancement

The party starts this adventure at 28th level. After Av shatters at the end of Act One, they should go directly to 30th level. They'll spend the entire final adventure at 30th level.



ACT ONE: Turning and Turning

After final preparations, the party flies their airship across a rift over Cauldron Hill to the plane of the Dreaming.

MEANWHILE IN THE APOCALYPSE

The following news reaches the party from around the world.

Shedding Skin. Around the world, huge numbers of snakeskins are being found, all white and hollow. Snakes are dying en masse by constantly shedding and reshedding their skin until muscle and bone becomes visible.

Pardon Me. Prisoners across Risur seek pardons so they can be with family. However, two unrepentant prisoners—the dragonborn brothers Eberardo and Valando—desire release solely so they can fight in Risur's army and burn as many people in the opposing armies as possible before they die.

Utopian Societies. While most of the world fell to chaos recently, Obscurati control has been impressively solid in the Malice Lands and Elfaivar, where there was little existing government to contend with. Model communities have sprung up, each an experiment to test different ways of solving local problems. The residents are all cooperative, or so report the Ob-endorsed couriers.

One-Armed Rebel. In rural Ber, a one-armed eladrin who had lived harmoniously with the locals for centuries was attacked for unknown reasons by government forces. The government lost the engagement, and the fugitive has disappeared. Local newspapers received boxes with grisly trophies from the battle, and letters allegedly from the fugitive demanding, "Kasvarina should come face me herself."

Briefing

Social. Real-Time.

The party's allies prepare them for a mission to the stars.

We have to keep some details generic for this scene because the circumstances around it depend heavily on how well the party has defended Risur, which NPCs are friendly with the party, and who has managed to survive this far. If it's in Flint, it likely takes place at the governor's mansion; in Slate at the royal palace; and if Risur has fallen the party will need to gather their allies aboard their airship and hold the meeting far from anywhere in particular.

In any case, we suggest you have it occur at 'noon,' when anyone who looks skyward can see the Gyre is growing closer. Harkover Lee assembles burning reagents for a ritual. Stover Delft scowls and chews tobacco while shuffling through reports from his agents. Gale paces—or rather floats back and forth—and keeps glancing around as if she expects someone to attack. Brakken of Heffanita quietly reads the surface thoughts of aides who come and go just in case any of them might be mind controlled.

Other possible allies who would be present include Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill and the constables of the 'B-Team' from earlier adventures, Morgan Cippiano from Crisillyir, and Kvarti or Vlendam from Drakr. It might even be all hands on deck, with former hostiles like Duchess Ethelyn or maybe even Sijhen present.

Make sure *not* to have present the Beran spymaster El Extraño, nor Benedict Pemberton. Even if Pemberton wasn't seemingly obliterated in front of the party's eyes in Adventure Ten, the old dragon prefers to operate in secret so he won't come, but he might send a duplicant of his chief advisor, the gnoll Pardo. Likewise, actual world leaders like the Bruse of Ber or the new rulers of Crisillyir cannot afford to come, but if the party is on good terms with them they might have sent envoys.

This isn't a final hurrah, though, so don't feel compelled to bring everyone in yet. That said, one person who would be very interested in the party's upcoming journey is the demoness Ashima-Shimtu, who would like to leave this world. She's been here since the Axis Seal was first erected, and while she doesn't have any special knowledge here, she's curious enough to want to watch.

Undoing the Obscurati's Ritual

Let the PCs direct the discussions, but Harkover Lee offers guidance to steer the party toward a journey to the Gyre. He points out that undoing the changes the Ob wrought in the Axis Seal ritual will give them an upper hand in freeing the world from the dominion of Nicodemus. Perhaps more urgently, the ritual offers a way to avert the looming threat of the Gyre.

The following information might be discovered by the PCs' own observations, or by allied astronomers and skyseers, but use Harkover to explain anything the party doesn't understand.

Explaining the Axis Seal Ritual

The Axis Seal Ritual is detailed in a document the party (hopefully) recovered in Adventure Eleven. If they did not get that document, all the best minds of Risur can surmise is:

- The ritual seems to need eight different planes, though just what determines a good match is unclear. The Ob kept Jiese, and they moved Av, but the other six planes were swapped out.
- The Axis Seal had a golden cover, and Danoran excavations on Axis Island discovered golden icons linked to the worlds of the night sky. The party likely recovered at least one of these icons (Nem, Avilona, or Urim in Adventure One; or Apet in Adventure Three), so they can figure out how to craft similar icons. Crafting one requires visiting the world you want to link to, and the only place available with worlds is the Gyre in the sky above.
- Very dangerous energy is pouring out of the center of the ritual crater on Axis Island, and the sun was at the center of the planetary system. Since the sun is missing and the seal is open, maybe something needs to be put in the middle, or maybe the seal just needs to be closed.
- It's unclear how to survive the energy of the seal, but even the colossus wasn't strong enough by itself. It required defensive magic performed by Ob mages in nearby bunkers, and when someone killed them, the seal's power tore the colossus apart.

If the party recovered the ritual text from Alais Primos, they additionally know:

- You need at least one plane with each of eight energy types – Air, Earth, Fire, Water, Life, Death, Space, and Time. Most planes have two primary energies they can be used for. Each world chosen will lend some of its nature to the party's homeworld.
- Any physical object can function as an icon for a world; the Ancients just used gold because they had tons of it and it was long-lasting. Crafting an icon requires visiting a world and channeling its native energies into an object, which it absorbs over several days. Then you need only to mark the icon with some symbol to represent the world.
- The sun will appear when the ritual cover is lowered.
- The Ancients had specific chants performed by several hundred allies at the site of the ritual to keep the energy from going out of control. The Ob apparently used those same chants, and it was working until they were sabotaged. (In Adventure Thirteen, we'll recommend the party has their allies around the world chant – quantity overcomes distance, protecting them even if they don't use the *Sacrament of Apotheosis*.)

Threat of the Gyre

Gale, who has long been friendly with the skyseers, points out that the Gyre is drawing near. A group of young skyseers collaborated with astronomers from Slate, and they tuned telescopes to examine the Gyre's structure. They saw small fragments of worlds float near the teeth of the grinding nebula. Already it is close to consuming Av, the plane of dreams. Av is no more than a few days from destruction, and the party's homeworld will be taken a few months later, a year at most.

Since the various golden icons and the golden plate of the Axis Seal itself were decorated with constellations that depicted the world's place relative to the stars, it seems a fair bet that completing the ritual and closing the seal will return the world to where it used to be, safely away from the Gyre.

Harkover is trying to test a planar travel spell to reach the Gyre, but so far he has been unsuccessful. Divinations have suggested that a path will be revealed to them soon, though.

The Mission

Someone needs to enter the Gyre, visit the remnants of the worlds there, bond with them, then return and use those worlds to link this world to a new system of planes. Then they'll need to close the seal, which likely is now guarded by Obscurati forces.

Sure, the PCs could send someone else, but for something this unknown and perilous, there's only one choice for whom to send.



The aged Beran seems more comfortable now that the PCs are aware of his secret, that before he swore allegiance to Risur he was a dragon tyrant named Inacht the Hex-Eater. Straight-backed and virile despite appearing to be in his 60s, Lee speaks crisply and passionately. He always dresses in reds and golds and carries a solid gold orb tucked into his robes.



Rock Rackus stumbled his way to national celebrity, then kept on stumbling ever higher. Most people throughout Risur saw him as an idiot at best, a blasphemer at worst. But he leads a charmed life, with his strange mix of oblivious narcissism landing him in hot water but never quite getting him killed.

He wields a diamond-encrusted gold pistol that was a prize for cuckolding the fey king of the Unseen Court. An unlikely expert in teleportation magic, Rock used to rob from ancient tombs and give to the working man, but he was never quite at home among the working class. After being fake-killed in the Dreaming, he realized that he and the fey think alike, and now that they are in peril, he's determined to prove himself more than a buffoon.

CREATING A PLANAR ICON

To create a planar icon, characters must succeed two DC 30 checks – one Arcana, one Nature. A single character can make both checks, or two can cooperate. Once a character has formed a link with a plane, he channels the world's energy into some small object that will act as the icon. Any handheld object can function as an icon. The time it requires to create the icon depends on how strong a bond the character has with that world.

If a character is studying the plane from afar (such as by a telescope as the Obscurati did on Axis Island), it takes a year to craft the icon. Actually being on the plane reduces the time needed to a month.

Whenever a character begins to make an icon he intuitively knows that this would go faster if he could form a meaningful bond with the world. That entails either accomplishing a great quest for the survivors of a world, or sufficiently understanding the cause of the world's demise if there are no survivors. If the character has such a bond, crafting the icon only takes a month from afar, or only an hour if the character is actually on the plane.

Because the party knows exactly what happened to the planes that were linked to their world, they only need an hour on Avilona, Av, Mavisha, Urim, Apet, and Nem. (Reida is going to be destroyed before the party can get a chance to bond with it.)

After an icon is created it steadily absorbs energy, and over the course of a few centuries it will become a magic item with some minor powers related to its plane, which some future adventurers can find.

Small Medium, Large Ego

"I've learned to cast *sending*," comes the voice of Rock Rackus inside one of the PCs' heads, "and the fey taught me some tricks about teleporting. Where are you? You need my help. Expect a little guy."

Shortly, Rock Rackus teleports wherever the PCs are, if they tell him. Otherwise, he *sends* again intermittently with snippets of information, growing increasingly frustrated. When he does arrive, though, he's not his typical human self, but rather is possessing the body of a halfling spirit medium named **Fippery Leafbrowner**. Fippery, who in adventure ten briefly met the party while revealing how eladrin and the dead were affected by the Great Eclipse, has a shop in Flint where he communes with the recently departed for a modest fee, Rock—who is currently in the Bleak Gate—tracked down the analogue of that shop and started pestering the Halfling until he agreed to let Rock control his body for a bit.

Rock has dressed Fippery in a long fur coat with a rose on the lapel. He has eschewed any gold decorations, and if any PCs are wearing gold he says their fashion is in poor taste. Rock explains that he's not dead, just in the Bleak Gate, and that the Bleak Gate is on the inside of the Dreaming. And the Dreaming is about to smash into some giant gears in the sky. And there's an army of people dressed in gold chains, led by devils, who are enslaving all the fey they can get their hands on.

After a falling out with Thisraldion, monarch (or possibly former monarch – or possibly dead former monarch) of the Unseen Court, Rock started dating a ghost from the Bleak Gate, and when the devils attacked Thistle Palace the ghost woman helped Rock escape through a crack in the earth into the land of the dead. It turns out, this whole time the moon—or what used to be the moon—was hollow. Fey lived on the surface, and dead people unlived on the inside. Except every once in a while dead people disappeared and went to the afterlife, or at least that's how it used to work. But now all the dead people are piling up because they can't go anywhere. So the inside of the place that used to be the moon is getting crowded and spooky.

But that's not the point. The point is the Dreaming, where all the faeries are, is in trouble, and Rock needs the party to be his back-up when he goes to save them. His girlfriend says that if the PCs go on top of Cauldron Hill when the weird gears in the sky are overhead, they'll get pulled to the Bleak Gate. Then they can go through a big hole in the ground—it seems like the moon is cracked and not doing so well—and end up in the Dreaming, then get to Clover.

When Rock realizes the party has an airship, he nods, and says they're popular these days. The devils came in ships covered in gold chains that flew through the sky and carried off slaves. He thinks if he has a ship of his own he can start flying faeries back to the real world. He thanks the party for giving him a good idea. (When the party meets him in the Bleak Gate, he'll have cajoled some sailor ghosts to lend him a ghost ship, which he is able to make fly because he's convinced it should.)

He doesn't know anything about the nature of the Gyre—frankly all this planar stuff confuses him a little—but he thinks the PCs will do a great job at whatever they're up to.

No Time to Waste

After explaining things, Rock grimaces, and says that his halfling host wants him out. He's going to teleport Fippery back home, and he hopes to meet the party at the Bleak Gate version of Cauldron Hill soon. If he doesn't see them within a day, he's leaving and going back to save the Unseen Court himself.

Expedition Requisitions

Harkover Lee can coordinate acquiring any items the party needs for their expedition to the Gyre. The crew of the party's airship can be ready to depart at a moment's notice. If Risur's still intact, Lee, Delft, and others are confident they can keep Risur running for a few days or weeks while the party is away.

Unbeknownst to any of them, the party will be gone far longer than that.

Slipstream

Action. Real-Time. Level 28.

The flight through the planar rift above Cauldron Hill is worse than any oceanic storm.

When the party is ready, they need to fly their ship above Cauldron Hill. If Flint has fallen to hostile forces, their arrival elicits some errant small arms fire, and a scramble to aim heavy cannons at them, but the party should be gone long before the occupying force can harm them.

For a few minutes on either side of 'noon,' when the Gyre is directly overhead, anyone who is atop or above the long-cursed mountain in the center of Flint is pulled upward into the clouds. From a viewer's perspective on the ground the party's vessel fades away into mist, but from the perspective of the PCs, they begin flying upward into a funnel of swirling thunderheads, within which lightning spirals and tries to reach out and grasp them like a living thing. Within moments winds stronger than a hurricane threaten to keel over the ship, anything loose is stripped away and carried off, and any debris that is torn free dramatically explodes when it touches the inner edge of the storm funnel.

Miles away overhead, the funnel seems to terminate in darkness, but minute by minute that black void grows closer.

A spirit medium will see literally thousands of ghosts rising up with the party's ship, and might even spot a few people the party killed in the past couple months.

Surviving the Rift

While the party is almost certain to survive the planar rift, their crew might not be so lucky. Over the course of fifteen minutes (three five-minute stages) their airship is wracked by the storm, and they'll need to tend to the ship to make sure it arrives in one piece.

Winds have unnatural currents that threaten to topple the ship and tear it to pieces. Worse, the air is filled with gravel dissolved from the top of Cauldron Hill, and angry ghosts eventually notice and attack the ship as it nears the Bleak Gate.

Stage One – Entrance Turbulence

First, the ship's lookout must make a Perception check (DC 30) to identify and alert the crew of the air turbulence, which shifts rapidly and has few visual clues other than the drift of dust and debris in a storm that's constantly flashing with disorienting lightning. If the lookout fails, whenever anyone makes a Command check during this stage, he rolls twice and takes the worse result.

Second, the captain of the ship must make a Command check (d20 + half his character level + his Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma modifier) against DC 25. Failure means the ship rocks dangerously, and each crew member must make a Dexterity check (DC 8) or be blasted off the ship. They are pulled fifty feet per round toward the outer edge of the funnel, which is two hundred feet away. Anyone who touches the outer edge of the funnel takes 20 fire and lightning damage, plus another 20 each stage they remain un-rescued, until at the end of Stage Three they fall from the sky into the Bleak Gate version of Cauldron Hill. That plunge deals a further 20d10 falling damage.

If the captain fails the Command check by 5 or more, the ship lists. It is 'immobilized,' which means that the captain can never succeed Command checks. (He still has to roll, though, to see if he fails by 5 or more.)

If the captain fails a second Command check by 5 or more before the ship is righted, instead it capsizes. On a flying ship, this effectively means the vessel is tumbling out of control, and everyone must cling to something or be flung away.

Officer Assistance. If you're using *Admiral o' the High Seas*, a PC acting as bosun can direct the crew to aid the captain's checks, and a second lookout could grant the captain a bonus in addition to the first lookout's removing the 'roll twice' disadvantage. An engineer can attempt to right a listing or capsized ship.

A navigator can help with every command check required to maneuver, making his own check (d20 + half his character level + his Dexterity, Intelligence, or Wisdom modifier). The captain can use his own check or the navigator's.

Mysteries of the Multiverse

First, we know you're curious, but we don't have anyone particular in mind for who Rock's ghostly girlfriend is. It could be someone the PCs know who has died, but we like to assume it's just the ghost of a woman who wrote the best song of all time. Of all time. Rock's living out a childhood dream, and he isn't turned off by her spooky skull face.

Second, the way the afterlife used to work was that the souls of the recently departed would briefly appear in the Bleak Gate, then travel on to Nem, the plane of ruin, where they'd move on to some other realm whenever a line from the real world through Nem pointed at the appropriate destination in the multiverse. Those who had particularly traumatic deaths might linger in the Bleak Gate until they either went mad or found closure.

Now, though, Av—the plane that created the Bleak Gate as a reflection of the real world—is no longer in orbit of the real world. So the souls of those who die linger, invisible, in the real world, and they lurch toward places like Cauldron Hill that were once closely linked to the Bleak Gate. Those souls are then drawn into the Bleak Gate whenever Av (and the Gyre) is overhead, but there is nowhere for them to go to because the world is too far from the rest of the multiverse. Instead of going on to a final reward or punishment, the souls just crowd around the Bleak Gate analogue of Flint.

When Av reaches the Gyre and shatters, tens of thousands of souls of those who died since the Ob's ritual will be scattered across the planar motes in the Gyre. If there's any unfinished business the party has with someone who died in the past few months, you can have them encounter their soul here.

You might also let the PCs use this situation to resurrect people whom they've lost, even if you're normally opposed to returning people from the dead. All they need to do is bring the souls along with them when they jump into the Gyre's teeth after defeating the Voice of Rot, and those people can be returned to life at the site of the Axis Seal in the real world.

Stage Two – Lightning and Debris

As before, the lookout can make a Perception check to help alert the crew to danger.

As before, the captain must make a Command check (DC 25) to keep the ship stable enough for the crew to work safely.

Additionally, the captain must make a second Command check (DC 33) to guide the ship through thrashing tendrils of lightning and past massive boulders that have been caught up in the vortex. A failure deals a 'strike' to a random ship component, and creatures in that area take 5 damage. A failure by 5 or more deals two strikes to different locations. (**Roll 1d10:** 1-2 – hull integrity; 3-4 – sails or engine; 5-6 – armaments; 7-10 – quarters, hold, and miscellaneous.)

Stage Three – Ghost Pirates

The winds grow powerful beyond any storm on earth as the ship gets closer to the dark end of the vortex, near the Bleak Gate. Then, amid the strobing flashes of lightning, thousands of ghosts become visible, hanging in the air. Until this moment they had been aimless, but as they become aware of the party's ship, they begin to groan in unison, "Ship. Escape. Kill."

As before, the lookout can make a Perception check to avoid hazards.

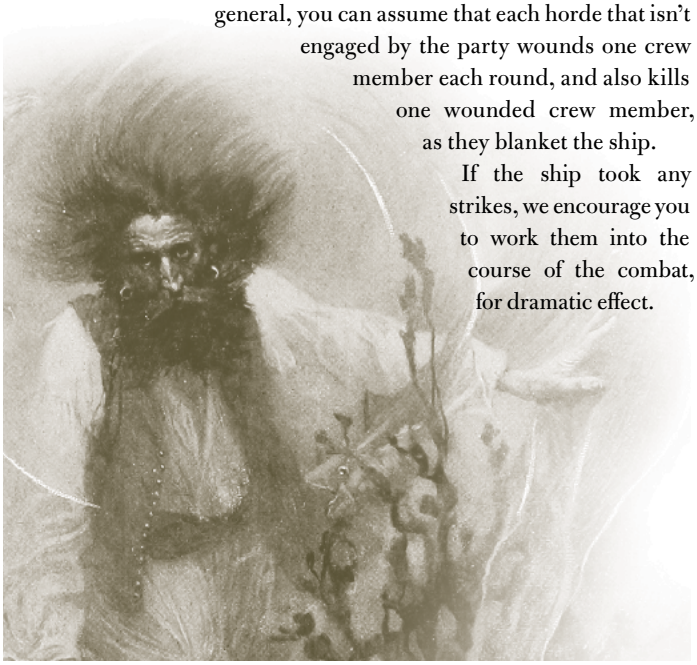
As before, the captain must make a Command check to keep the ship stable, but the winds are stronger, so it would be nearly impossible for most captains who aren't high level (DC 30).

As before, the captain must make a second Command check (DC 33) to avoid taking strikes from immense threads of electricity and tumbling, flaming trunks of trees that were stripped from the peak of Cauldron Hill.

Finally, the ship is attacked by an immense swarm of ghosts, which desire to take the vessel and fly it into the Gyre so they no longer have to endure this eternity of lingering. This number only represents the ones that are able to reach the ship; most are too slow to catch it as it passes by. The threat here is more to the party's crew than the PCs themselves, and honestly we're throwing masses of weak foes at them so they can feel appropriately badass at the start of this adventure.

Don't have them all swarm the PCs, though. Some should phase through the hull and cause havoc on lower decks, while others attempt to crudely pilot the ship until there's an opening for them to attack. In general, you can assume that each horde that isn't engaged by the party wounds one crew member each round, and also kills one wounded crew member, as they blanket the ship.

If the ship took any strikes, we encourage you to work them into the course of the combat, for dramatic effect.



Ghostly Vortex Hijackers

- 20 Vortex Ghost Hordes

Vortex Ghost Horde	Level 25 Minion Controller
Gargantuan shadow animate (swarm, undead)	**XP** 1600
HP 1; see Ghost Horde	**Initiative** +13
AC 38, **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 36	**Perception** +12
Speed fly 6 (phasing)	
Vulnerable 15 against close and area attacks	

Traits

▸ Ghost Horde

Each horde consists of one hundred ghosts, filling the space of a Gargantuan creature. The horde needs only fill 16 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual wraith could move through.

Any effect that deals at least 20 damage 'kills' the horde – dispersing enough that the rest are not a threat. Any lesser amount of damage bloodies the horde, or 'kills' it if it is already bloodied.

▸ Terrain Control

Spaces within 2 squares of the horde count as difficult terrain for enemies. The horde has threatening reach in that area.

▸ Terrifying Distraction

Because of the chaos of being grabbed from all directions, creatures adjacent to the horde or within its space grant combat advantage and take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.

Standard Actions

Engulfing Hands ✦ At-Will, Basic

Effect: Make the following attack against any number of targets within range. If used as an opportunity attack, only target the triggering creature.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +30 vs. AC

Hit: 10 damage and the target is pulled 1 square toward the center of the horde (potentially even into its space).

Str	36 (+25)	**Dex**	10 (+12)	**Wis**	12 (+13)
Con	14 (+14)	**Int**	3 (+8)	**Cha**	3 (+8)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** a variety from around the world

Deathly Silent

The roar of the storm cuts out in an instant. Up is down, and the ship is plummeting toward a midnight black reflection of Cauldron Hill and the city of Flint. From a height of thousands of feet, the party's airship tumbles, and the party has a brief window of five rounds to try to right it. (We're roughly estimating a ship isn't very dense, and so its terminal velocity is only about 30 meters per second, but if you've got math nerds in your group, don't tell them how high they are or else there's a good chance they'll want to calculate things.)

The levitational components Pemberton installed on the ship are not designed to function while upside down, and the ship cannot arrest its plummet until it is righted.

Flipping a ship is far more difficult than simply correcting a lateral list. First, the crew must be able to attend to their stations, which is difficult since the ship is in freefall. Second, an engineer must adjust the ship's flight profile (i.e., modify the propellers or sails) to operate in this unorthodox position. Finally, the captain must direct the crew to regain control of the ship's flight path.

Step One – All Hands to Emergency Stations!

If the party has a steam-powered airship, their full crew requirement is likely 32. If they have at least 4 they count as having minimum crew, and any fewer than that is a skeleton crew.

With a sailing vessel, the full crew requirement is likely 64, with a minimum crew of 16.

Each round during the freefall, figure out how many crew are able to meaningfully contribute, which requires an Acrobatics or Athletics check (DC 15) to maneuver while upside down, even with the aid of the flight magic the vessel's Skyship trait grants.

When the engineer attempts his Intelligence check in Step Two, or the captain attempts a Command check in Step Three, the number of crew will determine his modifier. Full crew imposes no penalty; minimum crew imposes a -5 penalty; and skeleton crew imposes a -10 penalty.

Step Two – Adjust the Flight Profile! Recalibrate the Levitationals!

A PC acting as engineer must succeed a Knowledge (engineering) check (DC 25) to adjust the ship's flight profile. In effect, he has to make the ship capable of being steered while upside down in freefall. An engineer can attempt one check each round, and multiple PCs can each roll, or they can aid the primary engineer. Remember, insufficient crew imposes a penalty.

If a PC proposes a clever trick to flip the ship — such as with extreme telekinesis, firing all the weapons on one side, deploying a sail as a 'wing' to produce drag on one side, and so on — grant the engineer a +2 to +5 bonus to his or her check.

It takes two successful checks in different rounds to adjust the ship's flight profile, or one check that succeeds by 5 or more.

Step Three – Pull with All Your Might!

Once the engineer succeeds in adjusting the ship's flight profile, the captain must direct the crew in a complex maneuver to actually flip the ship upright. This requires a Command check (d20 + half the captain's level + his Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma modifier) against DC 35.

Alternately, in the fifth and final round the captain might try to soft-land the ship while it's still upside down, which only requires beating DC 30. However, as the ship grazes the tops of hills and plunges through haunted forest canopies, it takes 8 strikes scattered among random components ship, which might cripple the vessel or kill some of the crew.

If the captain can't succeed one of these checks, the ship crashes at the start of the sixth round, dealing 20d10 falling damage plus 100 damage from the crushing weight of the ship (and possibly 50 more fire damage from an exploding steam boiler, depending on the ship's propulsion system).

If the captain does succeed, though, the ship sweeps just past the pinnacle of Cauldron Hill but is able to pull up and level off as it flies a wide arc over the ghost-filled analogue of Flint. The only light is atop Cauldron Hill, where Rock Rackus has lit a bonfire to lure away the evil spirits while he sits safely in a ring of blood, awaiting the party's arrival.

Through a Cracked Looking Glass

Rock Rackus links up with the party by flying over in his own airship — or rather, the ghost of a ship. Choose some vessel the party sank or destroyed previously in the campaign — Rock found it in the Bleak Gate, lured some ghosts into it by singing, and convinced the ship it could fly.

He's glad the party brought their own ship, and as soon as the party's ship is air-worthy, Rock leads with his vessel, guiding them to a fissure in the woods near what would be the capital city Slate in the real world. With a bit of careful maneuvering the party can pilot through what appears to be a ten-mile deep canyon of glass, where reflective shards spin in freefall. Rivulets of black fluid — witchoil — seeps between the cracks, and that oil positively glistens with souls that are trapped in it.

At the 'bottom' of the canyon Rock and the PCs must flip their vessels and rise up amid the burning chessboard forest near the fey capital city Clover.

Overhead they can see the Gyre looming stupendously close. The two cog-shaped nebulae span the sky from horizon to horizon, and it becomes clear that they're mere hours from being caught in the immense gear teeth, or dashed to bits upon some other dying world. Indeed, dozens of jagged shards of rock float overhead like shattered moons.

It is while they take in this spectacle that their arrival is noted by a patrol of the Golden Legion of Egal the Shimmering.

ROCK'S "LEADERSHIP"

Rock recognizes the party's ship is better, so once they're through the rift he has his ghostly crew dock his vessel and boards the party's ship. He insists he's in charge, then asks for advice. Ultimately he'll say something like, "I was gonna say the same thing. Follow me."

If the party's ship is wrecked beyond repair, Rock lets them on board his ship as his formal guests with a fancy ceremony involving cigars and whisky.

See Appendix A: Combat Catalogue for Rock's stats.

Legion's Initiative

Action. Tactical. Level 27.

The pit fiend Brhan Kinoro attacks the party as soon as their airship appears above the Dreaming.

The party has encountered references to the Golden Legion in the past – a PC might have a wand of solid gold, and in the Crypta Hereticarum the devil Belcamp tried to make a legion of his own, albeit with lead chains instead of gold. Now they meet their first true legionnaires, and these foes would be horrifying for any lesser heroes.

A slaver vanguard spots the party's ship and dives under the canopy of the chessboard forest outside Clover. Sharp-eyed PCs (Perception DC 32) can notice the devils before they move into cover at a distance of five hundred feet. The devils reach the party's ship five rounds later. They take advantage of most landbound creature's unfamiliarity with three-dimensional movement by staying low until they're directly beneath the party's ship.

Av Slaver Vanguard

- Brhan Kinoro, Golden Legion pit fiend
- 4 Golden Legion horned devils
- 1 Golden Legionnaire company

See Appendix A: Combat Catalogue for stats.

Tactics

Led by the pit fiend **Brhan Kinoro**, the patrol expects to kill a few mortals and then easily cow the rest. The pit fiend leader will summon a company of twenty-five Golden Legionnaires at one side of the ship, and then it and its four horned devil allies rise on the other side of the ship.

After the initial attack, Brhan laughs and flares with fire. He shouts, "Hubristic mortals think you can ply these skies? They belong to the Golden Legion! All wealth is the legion's! Those who oppose us shall be enslaved. Show loyalty, however, and we shall share our limitless wealth with you. Loyalty is prosperity. Prosperity is freedom."

He'll be understandably shocked if the party actually attacks, and moreso when they actually hurt him. He orders the horned devils to focus on one PC at a time to chain and enslave them, while he tries to kill someone who looks vulnerable.

If one horned devil can slow a PC, the next that hits him can dominate him temporarily. If the devil who dominated the PC manages to survive a turn, he can enslave him, turning him against the rest of the party until the party can manage to remove the chains from him and remove the curse that enslaves him. The enslaved PC will fight until defeated. Don't let too-clever players split the party by saying their now-enslaved PC wants to flee and join the rest of the legion. That can happen later (see Flying Fortress, page 167).

Aftermath

If the party takes Brhan Kinoro prisoner, he won't answer questions, but he can be goaded into boasting about the Golden Legion. He serves Paelyrion XVIII, general of a detachment of the Golden Legion that has been stranded in the Gyre for thousands of years, ever since a world they were conquering was destroyed in spite by its inhabitants. The legion has survived, however, by attacking all the new worlds that arrive in the Gyre, plundering them of gold, and enslaving useful warriors. Though the ground of the Gyre inexorably is drawn into the teeth of the storm for destruction, the legion forever marches.

Or rather they did, until a decade ago, when they conquered a plane of volcanism and strange steam-powered machinery, which they renamed Egalitrix. Now it serves as the flying fortress of the legion, invincible and unassailable.

Among the other devils, the last left standing (likely a member of the Golden Legionnaire unit) positively quakes in self-revolt. "Curse these chains," he screams, "for without them I would yield to you, you who are more mighty than my lord, His Celestial Eruption General Paelyrion the Eighteenth! But the legion demands I defend our territory! I owe no loyalty; take my treasure! Take my prosperity! I renounce my freedom!"

If the party can manage to take one alive and remove his chains, the horrible evil thing briefly manages to proclaim his unending loyalty to the PCs, and he can tell them the information above. Then, mere minutes after he abandons his loyalty to the legion, the spots on his body where the chains previously wrapped turn black, and his body eats away at itself in less than a minute, until his bones crumble to dust and he dies in screaming agony.

FREEING LEGIONNAIRES

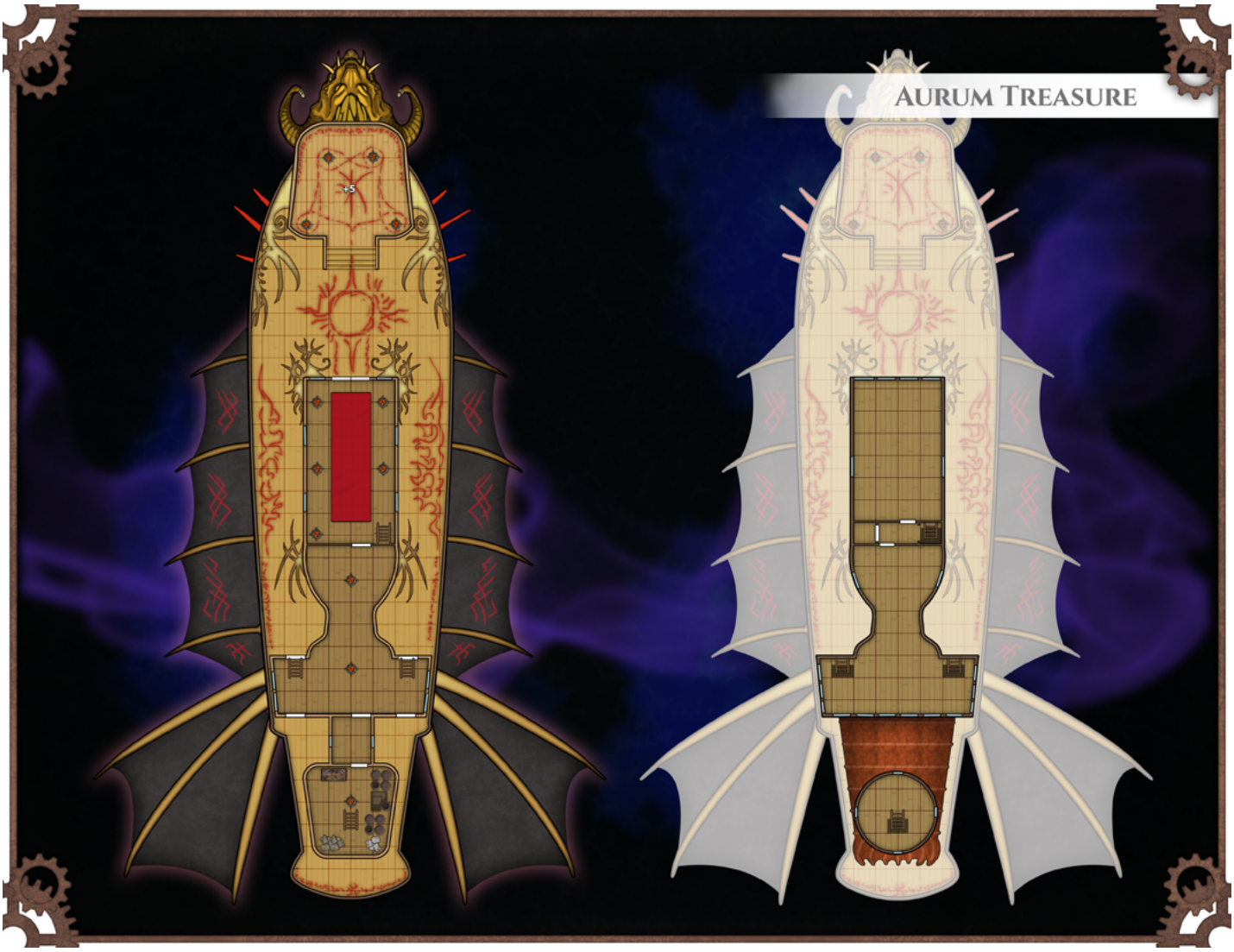
The golden chains all legionnaires wear compels them to be loyal to the Golden Legion. They simply cannot disobey or act against the interests of the legion, making most charm and compulsion effects useless unless the person directing the legionnaire words his commands cleverly.

Removing the golden chains (either out of combat, or with special attacks in combat) ends the compulsion to be loyal to the legion, but a curse still lingers. If a legionnaire who has havvd his chains removed knowingly defies the legion's interests, he takes damage equal to half his bloodied value each round unless he puts his chains back on.

It's infeasible in the short term to save all those enslaved by the Golden Legion, but it's possible to safely free someone from the curse. This requires a *Remove Affliction* ritual against a level 30 effect. The commander of a given division of the legion (in this case, the Paelyrion XVIII) can also release someone with a word.







Aurum Treasure

Exploration. Montage.

Legionnaires seek golden plunder in the capital city of Clover as the Dreaming nears a collision with the Gyre.

After dealing with the slaver vanguard, the party is not in immediate danger. They might go flying on to Thistle Palace spells blazing, or take a more discreet approach. Here's the status of the capital of the fey in the Dreaming.

Clover Outskirts

A century of one hundred Golden Legionnaires marches a slow perimeter around the city of Clover, gradually widening the area it covers as it searches for fey in hiding. Currently they're east of the chessboard forest, and those woods burn in their wake.

The century is commanded by a horned devil, and it has two succubus scouts who disguise themselves as frightened nymphs calling for help, in a bid to flush out would-be rescuers. As backup against possible spellcasting threats, they are accompanied by four steam-powered golden thopter golems crafted in the fortress of Egalitrix.

Golden Legion Patrol Century (Level 28)

- 4 Golden Legionnaire companies
- 1 Golden Legion horned devil
- 2 Golden Legion succubi
- 4 golden steam golems

Clover City

The capital city burns in places, and the Great Delve River has drained through one of the cracks in the world, leaving behind a muddy grotto that splits the city. The noble east bank has the most damage, with its wealthy houses thoroughly ransacked for gold.

The poorer west bank is too chaotic for the Golden Legion to bother with, aside from Thistle Palace. The legion's grand airship, *Aurum Treasure*, hovers four hundred feet above the palace. Nearly two hundred feet long, the airship belches diesel smoke from behind two broad steering wings woven of gold thread. Narrower stabilizing fins line the port and starboard, also gold. In fact, the entire hull is painted gold, and anything that can be made of metal is ostentatiously gold. There are even golden grills on the bottom of the hull, in a bid to conceal the churning arcane fans that act as the ship's levitational.

Dozens of arcane fusils sit behind closed weapon ports along each side of the ship, though the crew of legionnaires has never had occasion to use the weapons against another vessel, so the armament is poorly tended.

Lesser devils escort cargo thopters from elsewhere in the city to the huge infernal treasure ship, and the crew offloads assorted golden items into the hold. Crew quarters are minimal, because the enslaved legionnaires are capable of sleeping straight as a board with little personal space. Most of the complement of soldiers are on the ground, but deadly monsters bred on the plane Elofasp (plane 21) lurk in the vessel, and elite legionnaires guard the succubus captain, **Star Marshall Lacacia**.

Crew of the Aurum Treasure (Level 30)

- Star Marshall Lacacia
- 2 Golden Legion horned devils
- 4 Golden Legionnaire elite stars
- 1 Golden Legionnaire company
- 3 enslaved supplicants of Elofasp

Airship Defense

If the treasure ship is attacked, a crewman cracks a rod that causes the ship to begin a booming infernal chant that thunders out for miles in every direction. In addition to alerting the legionnaires in the area to return (the first arrive about a minute later, and it takes ten minutes for everyone to get back aboard via teleportation, flight, or cargo thopters), the intensely loud alarm might literally deafen intruders. Each round a creature is in the area it must make a saving throw at the start of its turn or be deafened for that round. A creature that succeeds two saves in a row is able to ignore the noise and have functional hearing.

The legion acts with regimented precision even if they're deaf, and Lacacia can telepathically convey orders as needed. If she feels like death is near, she'll order the soldiers to leap off the ship, then she uses *devil in disguise* to switch places with one of them and fly away in the confusion.

If Lacacia escapes she flies for the distant Egalitrix, but not before sending a telepathic message to an engineer imp operating in the bowels of the ship. That imp will lock the vessel's levitationals. A screech sounds from belowdecks, and a round later the ship goes into freefall. Two rounds after that it crashes on the grand lawn of Thistle Palace and the engine explodes in a burst of burning diesel fuel.

If the party manages to thwart this, the ship contains gold worth roughly five million gold pieces. Otherwise, the fey of Clover—should the party save the Dreaming—will be very busy digging the gold from the rest of the slagged ship. Sadly, none of this gold will make it out of the Gyre.

All the above presumes the party tries to board. If the party attacks the vessel with their own shipboard weapons, they sound the alarm as before, and Lacacia orders the crew to try to close for a boarding action. Stats for the ship are presented in Appendix A: Combat Catalogue.

Thistle Palace

The palace is much as the party last left it, except that every bit of gold has been stripped. The servants who are worth anything in a fight have been enslaved by gold chains and now make up some of the defenders – satyrs and gremlins and centaurs who show only the slightest taint of infernal transmogrification. The other servants have been clustered in three places—the drawing room, the diplomatic reception, and the mask gallery (Areas 8, 11, and 15)—watched over by giant mantis beasts called enslaved Elofasp supplicants.

Those monsters disguise themselves as immobile wooden statues of praying figures, which canny PCs will recognize as out of place. Each group of prisoners has also been infiltrated by a succubus, who listens for useful chatter while disguised as a hag. Should the party free any of these prisoners, they recount hearing the devils searching for the monarch.

The halls of the palace are being ransacked by legionnaires, who now have an (obviously difficult) goal of finding the Unseen Court. Each of four companies is accompanied by a steam golem, which carries all the gold they find.

So far they've captured Furg the Toadstool Sage and Sallin the Dryad, plus someone from the Hedgehog Court. (Adjust as needed based on who's alive after adventure nine and who the party might care about rescuing.) They keep these prisoners in the Unseen Court's chamber (Area 17), watched by four elite stars of legionnaires and an enslaved Elofasp ravant – the most deadly warbeast the Golden Legion possesses. They are commanded by **Rayo**, a horned devil who has piled dead fey bodies onto the palace throne, testing its possible magical defenses.

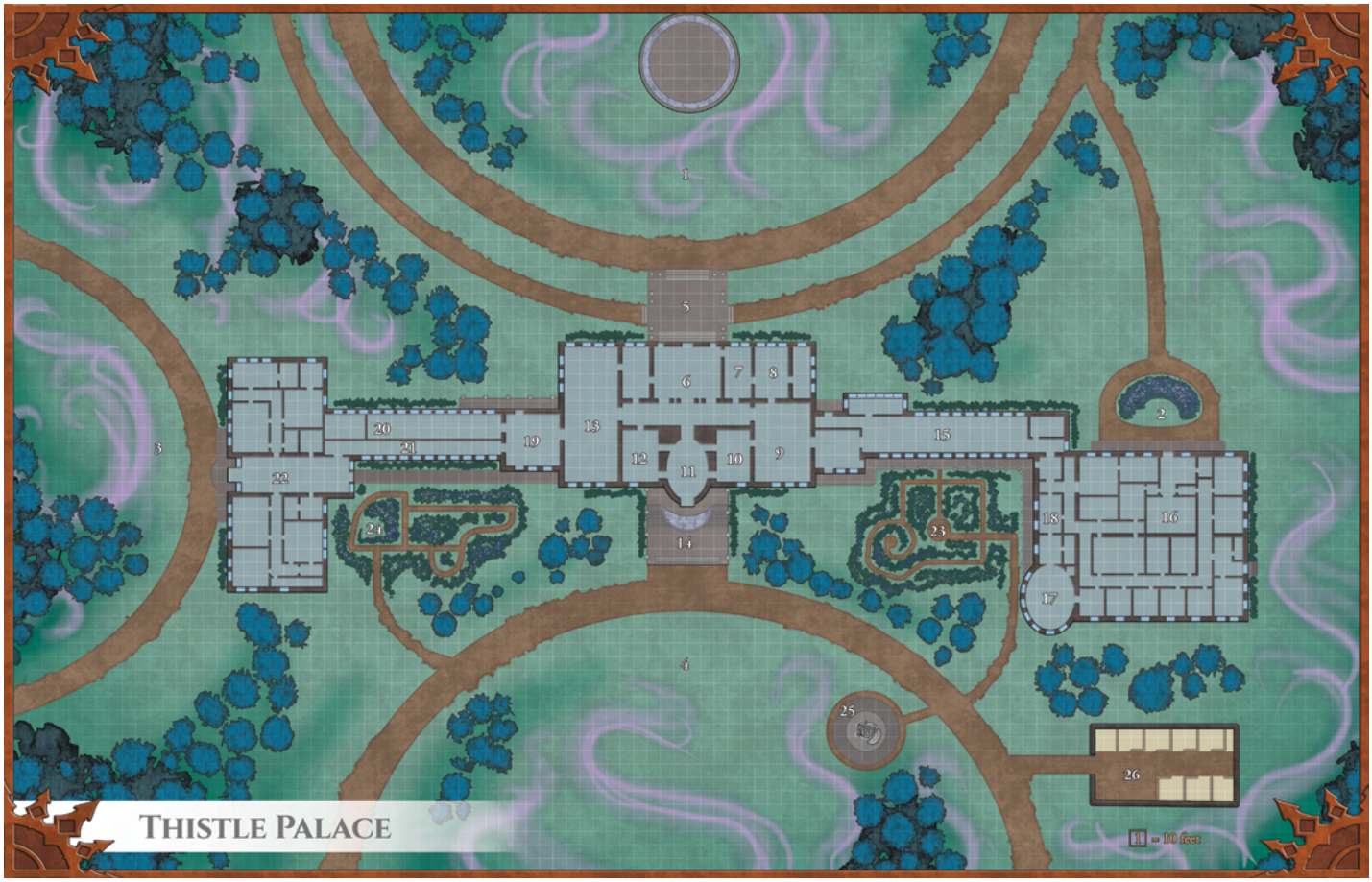
If the party finds Rayo and his very important prisoners, he triggers a mechanical siren that calls all the warriors around the palace to his aid. The sum total of all the devils at the palace include:

Forces at Thistle Palace (Level 30)

- 1 Golden Legion horned devil
- 4 Golden Legionnaire elite stars
- 4 Golden Legionnaire companies
- 4 golden steam golems
- 3 Golden Legion succubi
- 3 enslaved supplicants of Elofasp
- 1 enslaved Elofasp ravant

Aftermath

After driving off Star Marshall Lacacia and freeing the prisoners in Thistle Palace, the party can learn that the monarch (and possibly other NPCs the PCs might care to rescue) was knocked out and carried off on a flying warship a few hours ago. One of the surviving prisoners (likely Furg) states that the Dreaming is about to be destroyed, but that if the monarch is rescued it might be possible to restore the world with a ritual on a grand scale.



Palace Layout

1. **Foreigner Fountain.** The fountain is dry, its source drained away into the Bleak Gate.
2. **House of the Unseen Court – Entrance.** Dryads who held up this portico are scorched and butchered.
3. **House of Mayflies – Entrance.** Dismembered pixies lie trampled on the ground.
4. **Grand Lawn.** Corpses of palace defenders are dragged out here, looted, then thrown into a pyre.
5. **House of Perennials – Entrance.** A great battle here left a pile of dead – armored stags, nymphs, treants, dozens of legionnaires, and several wolf-like warbeasts.
6. **Entrance Foyer.** Piles of priceless but non-gold treasure is scattered here, like platinum, paintings, and gems.
7. **Guard Post.**
8. **Drawing Room.** There are canvases and charcoal here so people can draw. Prisoners are kept here.
9. **Game Room.** This room's furniture was taken to the grand lawn to serve as fuel for a pyre, meant as a signal to the city that their palace had fallen.
10. **Antechamber.** Dead goblins are piled in here.
11. **Diplomatic Reception.** A jail cell holds more prisoners.
12. **Library.** This room is currently on fire.
13. **Chamber of the Hedgehog Court.** It shows signs of a battle.
14. **Balcony.**
15. **Mask Gallery.** Prisoners cower here, looking to the masks of former Unseen lords for guidance.
16. **The Runaround.** The whole eastern wing of the palace is often eerily empty, with magic keeping the place in fine condition. It's currently busy scrubbing away blood.
17. **Chamber of the Unseen Court.** Very important prisoners are kept here – including Furg, Sallin, and Beshala. (Adjust as needed.)
18. **Fool's Chamber.**
19. **Commons.**
20. **Party Hall.**
21. **Champion Gallery.**
22. **Offices.**
23. **Monarch Garden.** Statues of Risuri monarchs that stood here have been shattered.
24. **Hood Garden.** Hooded lanterns sit on poles amidst this grove of trees. The lanterns are always lit, but the hoods over them mean they only light the ground directly beneath them, leaving the area gloomy.
25. **Titan Shrine.** Statues depict the five fey titans. The Voice of Rot's statue has grown larger than the last time the PCs were here.
26. **Stables.**

Before anyone has time to start making plans for a rescue, a roar and flash of light come from outside the palace. "Constables." Rock Rackus speaks with awkward solemnity. "Is that an asteroid I do spy?"

It disappears from view, but a moment later light flashes through the darkened forest from where it landed. The ground leaps, and only then comes the ear-shattering explosion of the impact.

"Son of a bitch!" Rackus abandons all attempts at civility. "There's more of 'em! Follow me!"

He runs outside and heads for the party's airship. The Gyre fills the sky in all directions, but massive dark shapes herald potential meteors. Every three rounds an asteroid falls somewhere across the sky. The ground keeps shaking, and cracks begin to form – truly gaping rifts that reveal that the ground is a massive hollow shell of crystal. Soil and trees tumble into the chasms, where they incandesce from the white-hot fire of the asteroids that have shattered the surface and ignited the interior.

Cracked Shell

Action. Tactical. Level 30.

The world shatters around the party as they return to their airship, pursued by the Golden Legion.

The party might just teleport to their ship, but they have a few hundred fey in the palace that they might be able to save from the end of the world. Plus, they might be short on crew. If they try to shepherd survivors, they have three minutes before the world is torn apart, give or take what's necessary for proper drama; this is the Dreaming afterall, and time has never flowed here at normal speed.

The party's ship—and Rock's too, possibly—has landed in a safe spot, possibly right on the palace lawn. The crew lights five torches that they wave to get the party's attention.

Moving in parallel with the party is a small band of devils, trying to reach the party's ship before they can. They run at full speed, occasionally teleporting to avoid obstacles. If they reach the party's ship first, they'll slaughter the crew and launch within a minute. They're not much of a threat, but the party needs to decide whether to help the fey or chase the devils.

Golden Legion Hijackers (Level 17)

- 1 Golden Legion elite star
- 1 Golden Legion glabrezu



Terrain

When the party is about two hundred feet away from their ship, the ground in front of them shatters, creating a 30-foot chasm, hundreds of feet long. The rift widens another 5 feet every round as the two pieces of the world literally fall away from each other.

Fire roars in the chasm, and it is joined by psychic screams of souls trapped in Bleak Gate witchoil as the explosion consumes them. Changes in gravity as the world enters the Gyre mean that anyone falling in only descends sixty feet per round. They do, however, take ongoing 20 fire and necrotic damage while in the chasm.

When only one PC is left on the same side of the ravine as Thistle Palace, another meteor strikes the palace itself. The blast annihilates the building and most stragglers, and the explosive concussion threatens to hurl the last PC into the bottomless gorge of fire.

It doesn't particularly matter if the PCs make it to their ship, but do keep track of who manages to get on board. PCs who are caught out by themselves will survive what comes next, but any fey refugees will be killed.

Within a few rounds the ground of the whole planet begins to be riven cracks, and in under a minute chunks, forty feet across or smaller, start flying away as the world is torn apart. Then the Gyre overhead is blotted out, eclipsed by thousands of massive, pitted stones, some of them hundreds of feet across, all of them etched with veins of gold. A cry of terror goes up from across the whole plane of Av as it strikes those asteroids and is utterly destroyed. An entire world worth of magical energy blasts outward, and each PC is rendered unconscious by the collision. For a time, they dream.

You Awake

You awake, scattered across the ground in a forest. Embers of blazing thistles drift by on a wind, briefly providing enough light to make out the devastated debris of your ship, nearly crippled but otherwise lying without even a hushed whisper in this night-time wood. Your injuries won't kill you, and the damage wrought by heavenly hailstones on your vessel can be repaired, but as your gaze drifts upward through a crooked slit in the canopy, you see a starry abyss looking back, its nebulous teeth poised to crush your world, as they have crushed Av.

You're back in Risur. Your mission has failed. Your path to the Gyre has been cut off, and what little hope you had left has, like a candle reaching the end of its wick, guttered and turned to smoke.

Then you awake, gasping in pain, disoriented by the roar of explosions and the thunder of shattering stones. You shake the dream away and take stock of your quite-real peril.

ACT TWO:
Spiritus Mundi

Sailing above the dying worlds of the Gyre, the party seeks the power to save their own.

Exploring the Gyre

As the party explores, use DM's Tracker – Gyre Bonding to record what day of their journey the party bonds with each plane. That will determine which round of combat in adventure thirteen they'll get access to the energy of that plane.

GYRE TRAITS

Some individual worlds will have their own specific traits, but in general the following rules apply in the Gyre.

A God Dwells Here. Any creature with links to divine power—clerics, paladins, angels—sense that while they can still hear their own deity for now, there is a god physically here in the Gyre. Those creatures innately know the god desires followers, but nothing more of the god's nature. They always feel a slight tug in the direction of Hunlow (plane 33).

Dead End. It is impossible to travel out of the Gyre, except by passing through the gears. This typically is lethal. Any effect that would let a creature travel to another plane can function as a sort of teleport to any of the worlds in the Gyre, but if an effect would take a creature to a plane outside the Gyre, a devastating manifestation occurs. Shining mist, like the nebula itself, appears surrounding the creature that was going to travel. The mist grinds into the shape of cogs, large enough to crush the creature, and then the gear teeth pull at the target. The area becomes a zone until the end of the combat. At the beginning of each round, make the following attack centered on the creature targeted with *banishment*. **Attack:** Close burst 1 (creatures in burst); +40 vs. Reflex; **Hit:** 20 damage and the target is restrained (Escape DC 40). While it is restrained it takes ongoing 20 damage.

The pirate priests of Hunlow are particularly dreaded because they always prepare banishment effects, which rather than sending creatures to their home plane simply grind them to nothing.

Similarly, no magic short of the power of a god allows communication into or out of the Gyre.

Bags of holdings and the like still work, though. We're not monsters.

With Teeth. The sides of the Gyre are lined with whorls of dim crackling debris that segregate into thunderheads and troughs eerily reminiscent of the teeth of a gigantic cog. Anything that goes into those areas is slowly ground to dust in a matter of days, but it is possible to pass through temporarily.

Two Dreams. Eladrin here have both their fey step ability and ability to affect incorporeal spirits.

Variable Gravity. Gravity for individuals is objectively directional toward the 'bottom' of the Gyre, even though there's nothing 'down there' to exert a pull. Falling is slower than usual, and a creature only descends 60 feet per round.

Particularly large objects have their own strange gravity that causes them to drift near each other in chaotic paths that rarely intersect, and these paths can be affected by magic more easily than one would expect. Any sort of telekinetic effect that could move an object of at least 300 pounds can move an object as large as 100 feet across, albeit no more than 60 feet per round, and once intentional control is released the objects will shift back to their previous pathways.

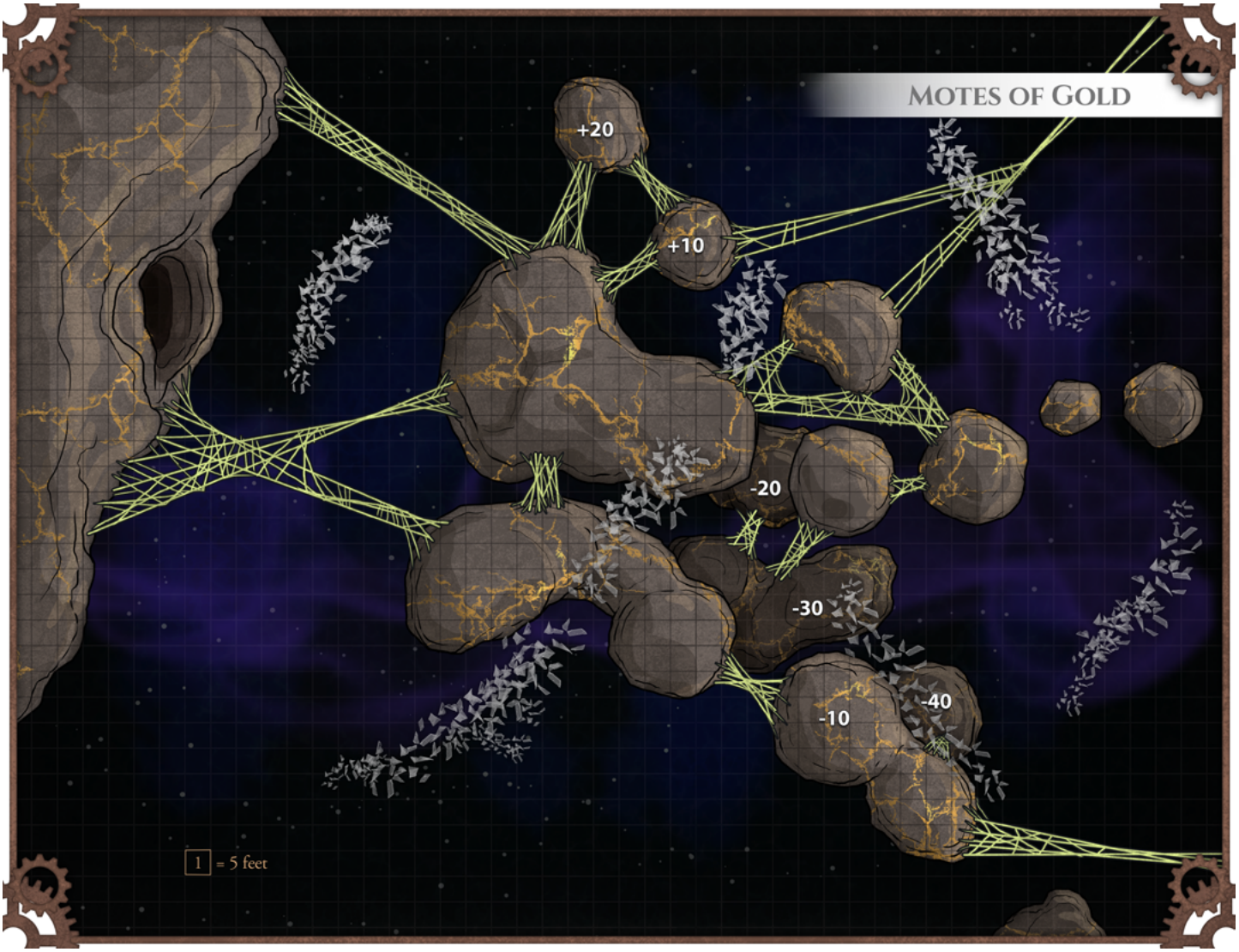
Weather. Wind is light and seldom stronger than 30 miles per hour. Rain clouds do manifest occasionally, but it only ever snows on Wilanir and Dunkelweiss (planes 35 and 31), and the only strong storms are on Gardboral (plane 15).

Passage of Time. The Gyre normally glows about as bright as the Milky Way, but from all sides, providing more light than a full moon at all times. Only caves or odder geographic features can blot out enough light to create full darkness.

Obliatas (plane 19) is a small sun, and as it flies in search of undead to smite it irregularly rises above the 'horizon' of all the various planes, creating periods of bright light that can last for as little as ten minutes. Miles of air lie between that sun and the southern edge of the Gyre, so when Obliatas rises the air across the northern horizon simply glows, brighter white due north and fading gradually in a ring-like sunset.

The people of the Gyre keep track of time by the steady rhythm of Teykfa (plane 2), a massive clock that floats near the teeth. It ticks once every twenty-seven hours, creating a sound like thunder that can be heard the length of the worlds here. Occasionally, when things are just quiet enough, you might hear a brief melody chimed on bells, ringing every fifty-one minutes.

It takes years for worlds to be ground to pieces. Teykfa has spent over a millennium since it first arrived, and it will be a few more months before it reaches the gear teeth. Reida (plane 1) is ahead of it only because the Voice of Rot carried it closer.



Motes of Gold

Action. Tactical. Level 30.

In the aftermath of the Dreaming's shattering, the party comes to on scattered remnants of the plane of Urim, where minions of the Voice of Rot lie in wait.

The plane of Urim once consisted of thousands of asteroids, but in the Gyre it has been reduced to just a dozen of any significant size, as well as countless boulders that all orbit each other haphazardly. As the handful of miles-wide asteroids spin and crash together in a sprawling debris field, immense worms burrow through them, leaving tunnels threaded with gold. Those tunnels serve as nests for other eerie creatures that can survive in the thin atmosphere, and of those, the vaknids – gargantuan undead space arachnids – serve as eyes of the Voice of Rot.

The party has arrived scattered across a field of huge boulders which are tethered by strands of green webs that glow with phosphorescence. Separated from them by an expanse of over a hundred feet, the party's ship and most of those they rescued from the destruction of Av have crashed on a larger asteroid. Fields of jagged, glassy debris from the dead plane of dreams make the air nearby hazardous, as do the devils of the Golden Legion who have also been marooned here.

As the party tries to regroup, the devils attack, and once the two sides are engaged (and the party has a round or two to perform healing, if necessary), the vaknids pick off the vulnerable. Stats are in Appendix A: Combat Catalogue.

Golden Legion Castaways

- 3 Golden Legion elite stars
- 1 Golden Legion succubus
- 1 Golden Legion glabrezu

Vaknid Ambush

- 2 vaknid vortexweavers
- 1 vaknid webmaster

Terrain

The boulders are huge, lumpy rocks threaded with gold veins. Teleportation does not work at all within thirty feet of any of the boulders or the larger asteroid.

The air is thin here, and sound doesn't carry well. Creatures that fly move at half speed.

The green webs of the vaknids are as strong as wood and horrifically sticky to anyone that isn't capable of climbing along webs. A creature that touches one of these webs is restrained (Escape DC 30). Progress can be made slowly, moving five feet with every successful Acrobatics or Athletics check (DC 30) as a move action.

Cascading fields of debris slice through the space around Urim. These jagged pieces of the destroyed Av are like a makeshift blade barrier. Any creature that enters or ends its turn in one of these fields takes 20 damage.

Tactics

The party starts out scattered around the edges of this small asteroid field. Their ship is crashed and nearly crippled on the 'western' asteroid. Since teleportation doesn't work here, it's up to flight or perilous jumping and climbing to reach their allies. The devils, who start off closer together in the center of the asteroids, are mostly a speedbump for the party.

The vaknids start off hidden underneath the floating boulders, invisible. Even those who can see invisibility would need to get under the surface level of the battle to spot the giant spiders, and even then their pitted hollow husks are hard to distinguish from the rest of the terrain (Perception DC 32).

At the end of the second round of combat, the vaknids clamber up from below and target creatures that are separated from potential allies. The gargantuan webmaster tromps through the battle, magically conjuring webs with every step in order to pin interlopers for consumption later. The vortexweavers munch on their preferred meals, and conjure sucking orbs to split the rest of the group apart.

Taunting

The roaring wind from the web vortices becomes a deep rumble, and at end of the third round of combat, the Voice of Rot speaks. "What have my precious little eyes found for me? Ah, I witness the last lords of a dying land. Come, foes, if you can."

Pick two areas of stone about 30 feet across that PCs are standing on. Each of those areas cracks and becomes difficult terrain.

The Voice of Rot is unable to hear the party, so banter will have to wait until they're actually in his presence at the adventure's end.

At the end of the fourth round, the Voice of Rot continues (even if the spiders are dead). "At the end of time, I await you. Our homeworld has withered, but I cannot kill it until its last champions have lost either their lives, or their will."

The previously cracked areas completely crumble apart, dropping anything standing on them. Choose four more areas of stone, each 30 feet across, to crack under the power of the fey titan's voice.

Finally, at the end of the fifth round, the Voice of Rot finishes. "Come, scions of Kelland, inventors of civilization. Contest against the harmony that is rot, and be witnesses to the completion of my destiny."

THE AXIS ISLAND ICONS

If a PC is carrying the *golden icon of Urim* recovered from Axis Island in adventure one, he senses a link to the vaknids. If he spends a minor action he can mentally give orders to one of the vaknids, effectively turning it into an ally until the start of his next turn, though the icon can only influence one vaknid each round.

Similar benefits apply on Mavisha to control the krakens and elementals serving the savants of Shaboath. The party might also have icons from Nem and Apet, but there aren't particularly dangerous monsters on either of those planes.

SPACE ROCK

No, not asteroids. Rock Rackus. He's close enough to being a member of the Unseen Court that divination that looks for him finds nothing. Since he was already on Av when it was pulled into the Gyre, he does not have a mirror image in the real world like they do. But he's still alive, having his own adventures. He might cross paths with the party, but we suggest he narrowly miss them, with NPCs (perhaps Sargon of Uggat, whose father was the cupbearer of Ur-Zubaba) recalling that he recently passed through.

By hook or crook, we'd like him to show up to help the party out when they're in a bind. After Av shatters, he rounds up a few guys for a posse and then tracks down the wreckage of the legion's windship-of-war *Aurum Treasure*. He repairs it enough to get it airborne and renames it the *Aural Pleasure*, then haphazardly flies it northward. If the airship fell out of the sky and exploded, Rackus instead finds his way to Egalitrix (plane 18) and gets captured, but during the party's assault (or on their own, if the party never comes) they escape, steal one of the windskiffs, and make a break for it, carrying rescued prisoners and a lot of loot.

He finally swoops in to help the PCs during the confrontation with the Voice of Rot, where his flamboyance will provide a distraction. The fey titan's speech is deadly, but Rock's weapon of choice is also the power of his voice.

Once again, the previously cracked areas fall apart, and then the entire rest of the battlefield, aside from the large asteroid to the 'west,' cracks and becomes difficult terrain. One round later, the roaring wind dies, and in the silence, all the remaining boulders disintegrate.

Aftermath

These are not the only vaknids of the Gyre. Whenever the party reaches a new plane, they should spot one of these undead spider spies lurking in the shadows, observing and reporting back to their master.

Strange New Worlds

Exploration. Montage.

Three dozen worlds are intact enough to warrant exploration.

The party's ship is damaged. It can fly, but it needs regular stops to recharge the levitationals. Effectively this means that, until the party can find the right supplies to effect a full repair, the ship cannot travel more than about twenty miles without needing to land for 6 to 8 hours.

The intention of this is to keep the party in the initial 'southern' half of the Gyre for a while and encourage them to deal with the pirates of Hunlow. There's a gap of at least thirty miles to cross before they can get to the 'northern' half. Repairs to the levitationals require a new plane with the air trait, and the best option is Caeloon, which can only be bonded to if the PCs save the monks enslaved by the pirates. (There are also Bhoior, which is hard to learn the history of; Avilona, which actively makes long-term flight impossible; Wilanir, which is lair to a powerful dragon; Apet, which is hard to reach; and Drozani, which the pirates guard.)

This first section exposes them to a variety of planes and has its own somewhat-freeform plot. Once they cross the expanse, they'll meet William Miller and learn that they've been split across two realities, which will likely spur them to hurry, so we're trying to make it easy for them to take their time here.

To provide a common plot thread for this first half of their exploration, we introduce **Calily Buen**, a monk from the plane Caeloon (plane 50) who comes to investigate the party's crash. She knows the Gyre very well, but she intends to divine the party's true nature before trusting them with information about her people.

See DM's Handout – Gyre Planes for a quick overview of the thirty-six worlds. See the Creating a Planar Icon sidebar (page 134) for a refresher of how the PCs can link to planes they want. And remember to use DM's Tracker – Gyre Bonding to record what day the PCs bond to each plane.



A student of the monastery of the paper wind, Calily has the white hair and aged skin of a seventy-year-old woman, but she moves with youthful vigor. In defiance of her master's devotion to detachment from worldly needs, she chose to remain optimistic. Her own opinion on detachment is that the burdens of life should not weigh you down, and that the natural state of a person should be joyous. She grins like a teenager, though from time to time can't help herself from fawning over young outsiders and offering them sage advice.

Since she had to wear a ring of sustenance for most of her life, food to her is a treasure, and she exults in any new flavor. The things she misses most about her old world, though, are the storms. She has learned of the storms in Gardboral, and hopes to experience them before she dies. But she doesn't intend to die any time soon, nor will she abide any despair. Suffering passes and is forgotten, so any wait is worthwhile since it might lead to something new and wonderful.

Precious Planes

Some of the worlds are rather unsavory, a few are of middling value, and a handful might be extremely useful. Each of the useful worlds, though, has a problem in need of a solution. These challenges have been too great for the surviving natives of those planes (if any do survive) to solve, but the party should be able to knock a few out in an afternoon. Each of those worlds has its own prominent scene, but don't force the party to deal with worlds that don't interest them.

As a reminder, we assume as a baseline that the party will want to use the following planes in the Axis Seal ritual. Each plane can be attuned to by 'brute force' if the party spends a month making a planar icon, but whenever a PC begins to make an icon he intuitively knows that this would go faster (i.e., just take an hour) if he could form a meaningful bond with the world. If the world still is inhabited, that means doing some favor for the survivors. If the world is dead, that means discovering how the world died. A key purpose of a graveyard, after all, is to ensure the dead are not forgotten.

- **Air.** Caeloon (plane 50). The monks' Master Chyak has been enslaved by the Golden Legion, and other survivors were taken by pirates of Hunlow. Rescuing either accelerates the bond.
- **Earth.** Dunkelweiss (plane 31). Returning the artifacts stolen by the pirates of Hunlow accelerates the bond.
- **Fire.** Jiese, already linked.
- **Water.** Mavisha (plane 48). Linking is already easy, but telepathic sea monsters from Shabboath have gained control, and if they're not removed they'll come along with the plane and eventually threaten the party's homeworld.
- **Life.** Av (plane 53). Linking requires rescuing the fey monarch from the Golden Legion.
- **Death.** Iratha Ket (plane 17). Saving it from the sun Obliatas forms a bond.
- **Space.** Urim (plane 47). It can easily be linked to while the PCs are fixing physical damage to their ship.
- **Time.** Ascetia (plane 24). Paying respects at the grave of Srasama will form a bond.

Don't show the party the map of the Gyre just yet. Let them be a little in the dark at first. Soon, Calily can show them a map she has compiled, but allow their first hours of exploration to be uncharted.

Repairs and Reconnoitering

After defeating the vaknids, the party can take stock of their ship and whom they managed to rescue from Av. Unless the party has special powers to speed this up, it will take the crew eight hours to right the ship and perform enough repairs that it can fly, but it's apparent that something about the levitationals is off.

Characters trained in Arcana discover with a bit of tinkering that the levitational enchantment relied on energy from the plane Baden, the ghost moon. The plane's power only faintly reaches the Gyre, so the ship can only fly for a little at a time. Unless the party can find a new power source (i.e., by creating a planar icon to a plane with Air energy), the airship will only be able to fly for about twenty miles, and then will need 6 or 8 hours to recharge.

So, where can they find a plane with the right air elemental energy? If the party recovered the Gidim *vortex array* in the previous adventure, they can detect the adjacent planes.

- North (plane 38). No energy of note, suggesting it's altogether desolate. Indeed, with a spyglass it is possible to see that it is plundered ruins, which appear to have been abandoned for ages. The array detects minor energy of fire and time coming from the plane north of it.
- North-east (plane 43). Likewise, no energy of note. Visual inspection reveals it's just a field of dead motes, barren rocks of a world torn apart by the churning edge of the Gyre.
- North-west (plane 42). Frustratingly, this is also plundered ruins, though the array faintly detects magical energies of life and time coming from beyond it.
- South-west (plane 50). By good fortune, this plane registers air and life energy. A lookout can just make out a forested hill in the distance. The plane beyond it shows traces of fire and water magic.
- South and south-east are empty voids. No stars or planets lie in that direction, and though the party's own home world is out there somewhere, there's not enough light to see it.

In any event, the mundane repairs take long enough that the party should be able to form a planar icon for Urim (if they don't still have the one they found way back in adventure one).

JUMPING AHEAD

If the party wants to just teleport between worlds so they don't have to go find an air plane to recharge the ship's levitationals, let them. However, it will take them much longer to explore on foot. They'll still probably want an airship when they take on the Voice of Rot.

A Friendly Visitor

The wind stirs around the party while they make plans, and then a woman's voice whispers, "I am Calily Buen of the Kinava monastery. I know disaster has befallen you. Will you promise my safety if I come to render aid?"

Calily is three miles away, and her spell will carry back the party's reply. If told no, she nevertheless sneaks closer and eavesdrops invisibly. But if the party approves, she jogs lightly into view half an hour later, wearing loose-fitting sand-brown clothes that cover everything but her face, and even that is shrouded by a hood, strands of gray hair drifting out of it in the breeze. She carries a staff, clearly worn from great use, and when close enough to make eye contact she pulls back her hood to reveal the face of a woman far older than her agility would suggest.

Half a Hundred Years of Solitude

Calily was seventeen when her world died. The plane of Caeloon was scoured in fire by the Demon of the West Wind, but Calily's monastery survived by flying on paper wings. When the smoke cleared, she and her fellow monks found themselves in the Gyre, and the only remnants of her world was a scorched forest. Shortly thereafter they were raided by the Golden Legion, who took slaves from among the survivors, but left enough to nurture the forest back to health because they desired regular tribute in the form of lumber.

There was no food, and no animals survived in the smoldering woods, but the legion gave the monks enchanted rings that would sustain them without food. It was an act born of efficiency, not mercy, but the monks—divorced from even the mundane comforts of food—devoted themselves wholly to asceticism. Their master, Chyak San-Cho, guided the monastery to enlightened detachment, where the goal was to be empty, like the air. In the wake of their world's death, they endured without purpose, looking inward and awaiting their own inevitable deaths. Fifty years later, only a few dozen of the monks survive.

Calily also mastered the techniques and self-discipline, but she was defiant of the oppression of the legion. Though she has the body of a woman of nearly seventy, her training has spared her the infirmities of her long years, and she acts with a cultivated, youthful optimism. She has ranged to all the worlds of the Gyre she can reach – and has even brought back the occasional game animal to feed her fellow monks.

She has tried to rekindle their interest in life, but it was not until a few months ago, when new worlds crashed into the Gyre, that the monks were jostled from their routine. The legion sent scouts to investigate new planes, but found them devoid of potential slaves. Not wanting to return to Egalitrix empty-handed, they came to Caeloon, where Chyak San-Cho agreed to go with them if they left his students. Where Calily's own pleading had failed, Master Chyak's sacrifice inspired the monks, who now prepare for a strike against the Golden Legion. If they are to die, they will take a final stand against the forces of destruction.

What to do after the World Ends

Enthusiasm bubbles from the old monk as she greets the party and all those with them. She offers them a bit of salted fish, which she calls an Amrou Hunlow Snapper, and then she warns them to ration their food because there's very little to be found here. She mentions that her own monastery was raided by the Golden Legion, and she only has survived the past…she guesses fifty years…because of her *ring of sustenance*.

While Calily is willing to tell the party nearly everything she knows about the Gyre, she hides the full nature of her monastery, and prefers to imply it was abandoned after the legion struck. She doesn't want to endanger her fellow monks until she can get a proper measure of the newcomers.

She initially assumes the party just wants to live in the remnants of Av (plane 53), and so she offers to guide them safely back there. But once she realizes their intentions, their power, and the fact that they have a ship that can cross the gap between the northern and southern half of the Gyre, she becomes excited. She asks about their experience with the Golden Legion, and says she can help them repair their ship. She demands nothing in exchange, but she hopes they will decide on their own to strike against the legion.

The first order of business will likely be finding a plane with air energy, in order to craft a planar icon and restore the party's airship to full capability. The closest option is of course Caeloon, which Calily will gladly guide the party to. There they'll discover that crafting will take a month unless they can form a bond to the plane. Calily has no idea how these planar icons work, but if they're looking to do her world a favor, she explains that some of her friends were taken by the Golden Legion and by the pirates of Hunlow. The legion is on the far side of a huge void in the Gyre, but reaching Hunlow with a few short airship jaunts (or on foot) is possible.

If the party doesn't want to do a favor for Calily there are other ways across the gap between the north and south Gyre. The undead tortoise that is Bhoior (plane 41) will set out once enough spirits from the Bleak Gate reach it. Or the party might steal an airship from legionnaires exploring Av (plane 53) or Apet (plane 39). In any event, the party's airship can still hop from plane to plane, giving them incentive to explore each world.

Local Guidance

Calily warns that if the party wants to go searching, Shabboath and Hunlow (planes 45 and 33) have deadly foes living there, while Padyer and the Plain of Rice (planes 52 and 51) are just fatally inhospitable. She mentions that a half-dozen worlds crashed into the Gyre in the past year, and Av is the seventh. She hasn't explored them yet, but she knows where they are, except for one that was shaped like a silver ring. She saw it dragged away by something like a comet, white and serpentine, toward the mouth of the Gyre.

In any event, she suggests they come first to Caeloon, where she can get them a map that will help them explore better.

The Nomadic Monastery

Social. Real-Time.

Aeromancer monks, struggling to survive, ask for aid to rescue their master from the Golden Legion.

It takes a few hours of hiking through the asteroids of Urim (and leaping the occasional bottomless pit) to reach the edge of Caeloon.

Calily's home is a land of rolling hills covered with pines, where a light breeze constantly wafts between still tree trunks. No animals live here, and only a few bushes and weeds grow on the forest floor. A handful of great pines survived the fires that burnt the world to death seventy years ago, and they rise high above their neighboring children.

The plane appears abandoned at first glance, but a small ruined monastery, consisting of just a handful of rooms, lies in a clearing upon the highest hill. The wind whistles through cracks in the wall and flutters paper shutters scribed with calligraphic meditations. The walls are nothing more than stiff paper as well, and what at first appears to be an irregular texture of vertical stripes are actually, on closer examination, thousands of lines of text, written directly onto the building. Outside the building the breeze spins a brass wheel cylinder attached to a small windmill, clattering as the prayer embossed in the metal endlessly repeats.

The clearing is far larger than the tiny ruined building, because most of the monastery is folded. The building is one grand extradimensional space woven into an ornate origami-esque text. Almost every room can be expanded, and every doorway can be unfolded to reveal a chamber beyond. Manipulating the building in this way requires reciting the proper lines of text along the seams of a fold, half of which is visible, half of which lies in the room to be revealed. This makes it nearly impossible for an outsider to discover even a single extra room without instruction by a monk of the monastery. Powerful magic, however, can reveal that there is more to the building than initially visible, and divinations could provide the words necessary to open a passage.

For now, Calily keeps the monastery folded in this innocuous form. A few dozen monks live in the folded space, able to look out by briefly cracking a window where there was not one before. At full grandeur, the monastery rises seven stories high and sprawls hundreds of feet with courtyards, rock gardens, meditation chambers, sparring fields, personal quarters, and a vast library of scrolls. Or, when needed, it can be shrunk down to the size of a single sheet of paper, folded into a myriad of animal shapes.

Guided Tour

If Calily brings the party to this world, she stops at its edge to 'meditate respectfully' for a minute. When she is done, she says, "I left the map I made in the small remains of my monastery. My home is humble, but I would like you to see it."

In truth, she has sent a message ahead to the monastery, so that they'll know to fold it into a modest shape, and to leave her map of the Gyre in the visible exterior rooms. When she takes the party there, the clearing is large enough for their airship to land. She shows them the map (see Player's Map – The Gyre for details), brews some pine needle tea, and asks the party to tell her how they came here, and whether they're skilled enough fighters to defeat the Golden Legion. Her fellow monks can listen through the walls, unseen in the extradimensional rooms.

She invites the PCs to rest as long as they wish, but asks for clarification on where they're from and what their ultimate plans are. She's also interested in sparring with a PC, to compare their relative fighting styles. A martial scientist who spars with her can learn the *stance of the paper wind*. (See Appendix B, page 309, for stats.)

Heading Out

Calily sees the party as the best chance of defeating the legion and even—if she dares to be hopeful—escaping the Gyre. She asks to accompany them, and explains that she has been to nearly every plane in the southern Gyre. She's not sure how the party can form a bond with her world, but if the party explained what happened to their world and what planes were formerly bonded to it, she thinks she knows where to find Avilona, the plane of air.

The Grand Return

When the party returns, likely many days later, if they have impressed her with their decency she asks them to land by her monastery again, then goes inside and whispers the phrases necessary to unfold the entire building. With a crackle of paper, the small outer ruins grow into the majestic, well-tended full monastery. Only three dozen monks remain in the whole sprawled structure, but they come out now, bow, and then follow Calily's lead in a brief martial kata to showcase their fighting technique.

Calily offers herself and her fellow monks as allies in the fight against the Golden Legion. If the party agrees, the other monks show serene approval, then return to the monastery. It folds down to the size of an origami bird, which Calily carries with her. When the time comes to fight the legion, she'll open the monastery, which will fly into battle beside the party's airship.

Hex-Crawling the Southern Gyre

Exploration. Montage.

Twenty worlds sit ready for exploration while the party waits for their airship to be flight-worthy.

Each hex of the Gyre map is 30 miles across. The gaps between planes are exaggerated for style. The surviving pieces of planes don't fill the entire hex, so in some places miles of empty space can separate two adjacent planar motes, but most neighbors have at least a few spots where jutting landforms literally grind together. Crossing on foot entails a bit of ranging about, and then some perilous rock climbing. The main exceptions are Avilona, which must be flown to, and Drozani, whose staircase access is guarded by fallen angels of Hunlow.

New worlds usually arrive only once every few decades, and the worlds' progress toward the Gyre's teeth takes about a century for every thirty-mile hex traveled. For instance, Teykfa (plane 2) has been in the Gyre nearly a thousand years. Ascetia (plane 24), where William Miller settled after the Great Malice, has been around just over five hundred.

Player's Map – The Gyre lists what Calily knows of each plane, some of which is conjecture. It does not tell what energies exist on which planes.

DM's Handout – Gyre Planes tells what planes have what energy types, and briefly notes what the PCs will find at each place, as well as what effect those worlds have if the party uses them in the Axis Seal ritual.

This section proposes encounters the party can have on each plane of the southern Gyre, presented in descending numerical order. Planes marked with an asterisk (*) were originally linked to the party's home-world. Planes marked with a dagger (†) are planes where primary plot scenes occur.

Energies and Traits

Each plane provides elemental energies, which the party can easily determine via the Gidim *vortex array*. If they don't have it, they'll have to land on the plane and succeed the checks necessary to create a planar icon in order to discover what energies it offers.

Additionally, every plane will grant some trait to the party's world if they use it in the Axis Seal ritual. Those traits are a bit more subtle, and while the party might easily guess that some places (like Padyer, where all water burns like fire) probably are too dangerous, if they want to know for sure they need to succeed two DC 40 checks – some combination of Arcana, Insight, Nature, and Perception depending on the details of the trait. Each attempt takes an hour, with a +5 bonus if the party sticks around for at least a day. Once the party succeeds both, they get a clear enough sense of how the world differs from their own in order to predict what trait it would grant.

Successfully crafting a planar icon provides this information automatically.

Exodus of the Dead

While most planes are fairly self-contained, one phenomenon spans the entire southern Gyre. Ghosts of thousands who sought Cauldron Hill to reach the Bleak Gate now float across the gaps between worlds. Over the course of a week they thread a trail, their glowing spirits visible from miles away. They glide from Av (plane 53) to Nem (plane 49) to Bhoior (plane 41) to Amrou (plane 36), where they find themselves thwarted by that plane's warding salt flats.

A few keep floating onward across the deep void, but most cluster atop the undead turtle that is Bhoior. Careful observation notes that the miles-wide creature is slowly turning, rotating to north. About ten days after Av crashes, most of the spirits of the Bleak Gate will have reached the chasm between south and north, at which point with a quiet rasp the immense turtle sets out through the void, slowly walking across an invisible firmament. Three days later it makes 'landfall' at Ascetia (plane 24), deposits the spirits from the Bleak Gate, then wheels about ever so slowly and returns to its previous position.

The Flashing Beacon

From Ascetia (plane 24), a white beacon strobes every thirty seconds, bright enough to be visible from a hundred miles (three hexes) away. The party basically can't fail to notice it, and the way its light pulses is reminiscent of a lighthouse.

Dead Motes, Plundered Ruins, and Empty Void

These three types of hexes don't have anything of note planned for them, but the party might have random encounters there or explore to find resources. You could also put scenes of your own devise there.

Typically, dead motes are completely barren floating rocks, bereft of any life, energy, or structures. But refugees might have perished there, leaving simple grave markers that might contain warnings of nearby planes, or perhaps even powerful artifacts that survived the death of their homeworlds.

Plundered ruins were bits of civilization that survived the end of a world, but were usually enslaved by the Golden Legion, captured by the Hunlow pirates, or simply starved or killed themselves in despair. Structures are mostly destroyed. Amid the ruins the party might find mundane treasure, solemn monuments to forgotten gods, or roaming warbeasts or ghosts.

Empty voids might pose a navigation hazard, requiring some maneuvering to avoid striking small asteroids, or where the party could spot a distant windskiff of the Golden Legion on patrol.

Creating a planar icon for any of these places is impossible.

*#53. Av, Plane of Mirrors

Planar Trait: Reflections hold magical influence.

What remains of Av is a twenty mile stretch of the plane's glass sphere. It tumbles slowly, revolving once every day, and its cracked edges reflect like jagged mirrors. One side is the Bleak Gate analogue of Flint, complete with Cauldron Hill. The other is the Dreaming analogue of the city, where old growth forest has withered in spots that coincide with where factories were built in the real world.

For now, there are still thousands of fey desperately confused in the Dreaming half, and tens of thousands of spirits drifting away from the Bleak Gate half toward Nem (plane 49) as part of their exodus toward the teeth of the Gyre. Other survivors who crash landed around the Gyre will make their way here over the coming week.

Ideally the party should find someone they know here – a Vekeshi Mystic contact, the ghost of someone who died the night the stars fell, possibly even Ellik, the creepy fey who guided Gale into the Bleak Gate before Adventure Two. The survivors set up base in Dawn Square, where a convenient crack creates a tunnel between fountains on the two sides of the world.

Searching for Survivors

When the party visits, they spot a Golden Legion windskiff scouting the area for treasure to steal and people to enslave. They leave for Egalitrix after a few hours. The skiff is just thirty feet long, powered by diesel engine levitationals, with stabilizing sails and propellers for thrust. It has no weapons, and is slower than the party's ship, in part because it has a whole company of devils clinging to its sides, since there's not enough space on the deck for all of them.

Golden Legion Windskiff (Level 20)

- 1 Golden Legionnaire Company
- 1 Golden Legion Succubus

#52. Padyer, a Clean Realm

Planar Trait: Water burns and purges.

Sometimes the experiments of mad wizards are disastrous. So it was with Padyer, so named because the only landform is a cracked tower of white ceramic which has over the door carved sigils that resemble 'Padyer.' The elementalist who once resided there captured avatars of the gods of fire and the sea and tried to bind their power into a staff. He then sent out a burning wave to annihilate his enemies in a coastal kingdom, but the wave did not stop. It carried its scalding heat across the entire world, until finally it reached the mage's own tower.

He managed to ward his tower against the wave, so all his research (and dozens of spellbooks) survives, but it was not long before all the water in the world became hotter than the ignition point of flesh and wood. The mage plane-shifted away, taking his deadly staff with him, but leaving behind a dead world.

For the party's purposes, Padyer is completely useless, except perhaps if they wanted to lure someone to their death. It looks beautiful, an eerily smooth tableau that resembles porcelain, but which tilts in slow wobbles like a top about to stop spinning. A lapping sea drifts around the world based on the complex tides of the Gyre. Of course, the water actually is impossibly hot, enough to slag metal, yet it never is sullied by other substances.

This plane is mostly intended to highlight that some worlds are dangerous traps, not worth bonding with. However, the party will have to land here briefly to let their levitationals recharge. If the party thinks to predict the path of the drifting sea, a Nature check (DC 30) determines how the tides affect it, letting the party land in a spot that will stay safe long enough. Otherwise they're caught by surprise as the sea rolls in, just chest deep, but hot enough to set fire to wooden ships or weaken metal hulls. The party can take off, and if they can effect repairs fast enough, the ship won't be crippled, letting them limp to the edge of the next nearest plane.

Also, this is the only plane with no vaknids to spy on the PCs.

#51. The Plain of Rice

Planar Trait: The worldwide water level is raised enough that most land is submerged.

This is just a field of rice, ankle deep with water, stretching for miles. When they make the Zeitgeist movie, this is my excuse to fly to Asia to film on location.

No evidence survives to explain the world's demise, but magic might reveal that a god of desert storms sent a flood that would kill all civilization, but the tribes rose up and slew the god. It did not stop the flood, though, and once everyone was dead, the only plants able to survive were rice.

†#50. Caeloon, the Paper Wind

Planar Trait: People are more resilient in the face of tragedy. This is too complex to represent mechanically.

The visit here is detailed in The Nomadic Monastery (page 148).

*#49. Nem, the Plane of Ruin

Planar Trait: Incorporeal creatures like ghosts have a +2 to defenses, attack rolls, and saves here. Undead with physical bodies (like zombies or vampires, but not living creatures possessed by ghosts) suffer a -2 penalty to defenses, attack rolls, and saves.

Every surface of this world is dark gray, except for the glowing spirits on their exodus from the Bleak Gate side of Av. One of the few notable landmarks is a railroad track running along what was once a coast line. A train lies abandoned here, exactly where the train was in Adventure Four, *Always on Time*, when the party managed to escape being dragged into Nem. A certain tiefling gunslinger (or his ghost) might even still be here, depending on how things played out.

*#48. Mavisha, the Mysterious Deep

Planar Trait: Islands conceal secrets. Divinations about events on islands are more difficult.

Mist-Shrouded Sea

Supernatural forces keep the sea of Mavisha from pouring away into the void. The surviving chunk of the plane has a rocky seabed and a handful of small islands, but a steadily heaving sea covers most of the world, and at the plane's edge the water simply crashes into an invisible barrier. That barrier is permeable by intentional movement, but inanimate objects are stopped by it.

The seas are teeming with life – turtles, schools of fish, sharks, dire anamalocarises, and the like. A few despondent fish men, just intelligent enough to grasp their world's doom, dangle listlessly at the edge of the

sea, looking into the void. They know they're doomed, and are amazed if the party flies overhead. They come to gawk, ululate prayers to their gods, but then cower and flee if addressed. Their tiny villages lie on the sea floor, but they know some malevolent force is calling away those dwelling in villages along the north-eastern edge of what remains of their world.

Waxy Bridge

Along where the north-eastern edge of Mavisha abuts Shabboath (plane 45), a thirty-foot wide tunnel of wax has extruded from rock wall, and it extends into the edge of Mavisha's sea. However, the tunnel is masked by illusions, and just resembles a cluster of drifting stones—common enough in the Gyre—shrouded with mist. If one pierces the illusion, the tunnel spans a hundred feet, and is malleable enough to stretch and compress as the two planes bump against and away from each other. This is how the savants of Shabboath intend their grand savant to reach this new sea.

So far, the savants have enslaved several dozen fishmen, and are directing them to construct a tower of wax—also concealed by illusions—atop one of the islands near the north-eastern planar edge. The sixty-foot-wide tower rises two hundred feet, its exterior and interior traced with strange sigils that weave conjuration, enchantment, illusion, and necromancy magic together, and once complete it will extend the psychic powers of the savants to this new world, letting them dominate everything here. Only once it's safe will the grand savant come to explore the surface.

If the party grows suspicious and explores enough to find the island and its invisible wax tower, one of the savants is coordinating construction, guarded by a kraken and a swarm of water elementals who are filled with dead fishmen.

Mavisha Tower of Domination (Level 25)

- 1 slumbering savant
- 1 kraken guardian
- 4 elemental chum swarms

If assaulted by aerial foes, the savant flees through a flooded tunnel out the bottom of the tower to the sea floor. Otherwise it tries to confuse intruders with illusions, disguising its *schistic projection* as a humanoid while its primary mind plies PCs minds for weaknesses so it can dominate them. It wants to know more about the Gyre, but its goals are small of scope: it intends to do everything necessary to protect the grand savant so the mighty creature can see the open sky one last time, then submerge until the world ends.

Ancient Legionnaire

Meanwhile, at the opposite end of the plane, the PCs can spot a shipwreck, mostly submerged, rocking against the edge of the world. The vessel's enchanted wooden hull has survived thousands of years of abuse, but the aesthetic is unmistakeably that of the Ancients, the orcish civilization that first crafted the Axis Seal.

If the party explores the boat, the hold is filled with golden weapons looted from legionnaires the orcs fought millennia ago, as well as a gold plate that acted as a star chart of planes in the multiverse. It seems this vessel was once capable of sailing between seas of different worlds.

Amid the pile of treasure a corpse lies face-down, wrapped in tarred cloth that preserved its flesh. His hands have been chopped off, and the deck has ancient stains from where he bled out. If the treasure is disturbed, the mummy stands up, revealing an orcish face whose tusks and brows are pierced with gold chains. For a moment his hollow eyes take in the party with a primordial menace, but then he falls to his knees and holds up his stump arms in a plea.

In life, the orc's name was **Athotoc**. In the tongue of the Ancients he says that he betrayed his people, but not by his choice. He was enslaved by the legion and told them of the plan to find the soul of this plane. Fortunately his people survived the ambush, but they butchered him, not understanding he was not a traitor. As he bled to death, he shouted a warning, naming the world that one of the legion's generals, Paelyrion XVIII, was mustering his forces in. Athotoc perished, but his soul remained, waiting for news that his people succeeded.

If the party tells Athotoc of the Ancients' success in creating the Axis Seal, he is content, and tells them to see the nearest island, and find a golden oval, wrapped in wolf fur, buried in a mass grave where his kin disposed of the legionnaires. He asks them to destroy it, so that his soul can be free. And he warns not to look themselves in the eyes in the golden mirror's reflection, or else they will be slaves too.

Mirror of Opposition

The nearby island Athotoc directed them to is choked with vines covered in fine fibers that glow at their tips, and horseshoe crabs wearing golden helmets scrawl eerie patterns in the sand. The mass grave is easily found, since nothing grows over the sea-smoothed stones of a huge cairn.

The excavation can turn up the weapons and chains of hundreds of legionnaires tangled with bone fragments. Buried in the center is indeed a tattered wolf pelt wrapped around a golden mirror, itself somewhat warped with time. If a creature gets within a foot of the mirror and looks in the eyes of its own (slightly distorted) reflection, make an attack. **Attack:** Close blast 1 (one creature in burst); +30 vs. Will; **Hit:** The target's soul is trapped in the mirror, and the creature becomes evil and loyal to the Golden Legion. **Miss:** The mirror darkens and cannot be used again for one day. **Special:** This attack does not affect members of the Golden Legion.

The mirror can hold only one soul, but a ritual known to the Golden Legion can extract and consume the soul without harming the mirror, leaving the victim permanently turned. *Remove affliction* rituals performed with both the mirror and the victim present can restore the soul and return the creature to its former self. Dealing damage to the mirror deals an equal amount of hit point damage to the creature whose soul is trapped in it. Once that creature is reduced below 0 hit points, the mirror can easily be destroyed. This frees the trapped soul.

The mirror isn't intended to be a major threat, but it will help the party realize the incredible dangers posed by the mirrors in the Egalitrix Legion Command chamber (see Celestial Eruption, page 173).

*#47. Urim, the Shattered Golden Chain

Planar Trait: Teleportation on Urim is impossible. If Urim is used in the Axis Seal ritual, rings of gold block teleportation.

The party already crashed here, and if they look for gold they find that much has already been excavated by the Golden Legion over the past six months since Urim fell into the Gyre.

The PCs might have the idea to try to use Urim's power to block teleportation as a weapon against the legion. Let them be creative in how to best harness the plane's power. We suggest perhaps they would need to subdue or befriend one of the giant worms of Urim (equivalent to an elder purple worm), then somehow bring it along with them in the hold of their ship. At the party's command it could unleash an aura causing gold to act like it used to on their world, with any loop of gold blocking teleportation. This would completely stop every devil in the legion from teleporting.

#45. Shabboath, the Severed Sea

Planar Trait: Tunnels riddle the world, creating an underdark, much of it consisting of vast sunless seas.

The surface of Shabboath is a bog dotted with jagged spurs of karst limestone. The swampy ground is mostly muddy and flat enough to traverse on foot, but it can rapidly shift to painfully sharp rock concealed by the murk, or drop away completely into huge flooded tunnels. Every few miles, one of these sinkholes sits miraculously hollow, water flowing down its sides into sunless depths, but never filling the pit.

The swamp is fairly teeming with vaknids, but they're all too listless to get into a fight.

A creature that rests on the surface of Shabboath is confronted with visions and dreams that entice it downward. Every few minutes, characters that are in a group must succeed an Insight check (DC 30) to realize that one of their companions did not actually suggest they go underground; in truth, it was a phantasm projected into the creature's mind. On a failed check, the creatures are free to make their own decisions, but the peer pressure could trick an entire group into thinking it was everyone else's idea.

A creature that sleeps on the plane is even more vulnerable. Make the following attack. **Attack:** Area burst 15 miles (sleeping creatures in burst); +28 vs. Will; **Hit:** The target becomes invisible, then sleep-walks toward the nearest tunnel, trying to be stealthy. It awakens five minutes later, probably lost underground. **Miss:** The target snaps awake from a vivid dream, where its friends had disappeared, and it tracked them into a tunnel leading under the surface.

Those tunnels lead down to the severed sea, a wholly subterranean lake some ten miles across. The water there has eerie waxy structures that channel the flow and leave dry certain areas that look to long ago have served as slave pens carved out of stalagmites. In other sections, the wax seals the surface entirely, except for tiny holes that barbed eels peek out of to snatch the bats and bugs that flitter in the dark.

It is in those most still waters, where the cave bed is littered with bones of humanoids, that the savants endure. Each once ruled from one of four inverted towers – hollow shafts descending hundreds of feet, sized for a whale to navigate. The four towers lie within a quarter mile of each other, surrounding a luxurious waxy cave floor where the Grand Savant lies in an idyllic dream of its own creation.

The Savants

Imagine the back of a horned turtle, enlarged to the size of a house, with fleshy valves between joints in the shell where three red eyes sleepily watch all that transpires in their presence. A muscular beak at the end of a squat trunk attaches the monster to the side of a flooded cave, and four meaty tentacles float limp in the current. The creature slumbers, sharing its dreams with its kindred, slowly digesting the thoughts they have plucked from the brains of tens of thousands of slaves, whose rotting corpses lie along the floor of the cave, turning the water a soupy mix of slime and decayed flesh.

Four shabboath savants survive, as does their master the Grand Savant, a creature whose corpulent grandeur has cracked its own shell, allowing pallid folds of flesh to sprawl and serve as anchors for psychic barnacles. The Grand Savant desired to dominate all the minds of its world, but in its success it grew too complacent. With no more challenges, it was only a few centuries before the savants became bored, drifted to sleep, and forgot to order their slaves to eat or procreate.

Ages passed, and the overlords of the dead world only awoke when reality had crumbled around their severed sea, leaving only a small fragment trapped in the Gyre. They stirred briefly, saw no threats, and returned to their dreams. But in the past few months they have dreamt of Mavisha, a world of fresh seas for them to dominate. The Grand Savant desires to rise to the surface, feel the frigid air upon its slimy flesh, and take in the end of the world in its tripartite vision. The savants of Shabboath chose one of their number to go prepare that world, and if uninterrupted for a few months they will dominate all life on Mavisha.

When the Grand Savant sees the Gyre and is convinced it has survived to the end of time, it will be content, and let itself die.

Freeing Mavisha

If the party wants to bond with Mavisha, they need to be careful not to bring the savants along for the ride. If the Grand Savant learns there is a chance it can prolong its existence, it will brutishly try to dominate the party. It was once a cunning creature, but has long become too arrogant in its might. Its alien mind hardly understands the concept anymore that other creatures have thoughts of their own.

Negotiating with the savants is difficult and maddening, with the best chance requiring either letting a savant dominate a PC, or dominating a savant, so that the psychic link helps bridge the gap between creatures that have so little in common. The party could learn that the Grand Savant's journey is one of suicide and simply wait for it to finish, never letting on that Mavisha can survive.

Tricking the savants is possible. They are paranoid about threats to their master, and if the party happens to lure to Mavisha a few pirates from Hunlow (plane 33), the savants will decide they must kill the bloody sea god on that world. They'll flood the interior cavity of the undead turtle Bhoior (plane 41) and dominate the creature so it carries them to Hunlow. The savants realize that Hunlow's power comes from its followers, so they compel all the weak-minded mortals to fling themselves into the void. The whole expedition takes a month, giving the party plenty of time to escape the Gyre and bind Mavisha when there are no savants on it.

And of course aquatic combat is an option, but if the party makes enemies of the savants, they are supremely intelligent, with access to almost any sort of ritual magic to ruin the party's day, dominate their allies, and ultimately remove the threat they pose to the Grand Savant.

*#44. Avilona, the Final Murmur

Planar Trait: Flight, and other air magic, never lasts more than five minutes.

This planar mote is smaller than most, barely ten miles across, and it floats at least a mile from whatever neighbor it has drifted nearest to. The surface is mostly barren, with just a few scraggly grasses and brushes inhabited by flightless birds. Angular wind-eroded stone dominates the landscape, with slender uneven arches, knife-like overhangs, and huge boulders balanced precariously on pillars of weaker rocks that have been weathered away.

All the erosion is ancient, though. The wind is practically still, but some unseen presence murmurs irregularly, disturbing the silence.

Reaching Avilona is risky, since if the airship lingers for more than 5 minutes within a hundred feet of the world, its levitationals rapidly drain of power. If the party doesn't take the hint, their ship will be permanently grounded. But if they are dropped off and the ship pulls away to a safe distance, they find the remains of Avilona are the literal remains of something like a dead god. Ages ago, an eagle whose wings spread a thousand feet perished here, and as the elemental air energy that empowered it drained from its body, feathers, flesh, and skeleton turned to stone.

Now the titanic petrified eagle lies sprawled on its back. Its neck has twisted in death so its head – skull and eye sockets exposed – lies near its chest. There the killing blow is revealed: its heart was torn out by another creature just as colossal as it. The cracked ribs were wrenched open, and now the hollow of its breast yawns up to the sky.

While the party is present (perhaps if someone tries to look into the cratered chest), the creature shudders. Its lungs draw in a thin breath, and its head shifts slightly so one empty eye socket can glimpse the party. Then, like a sigh, it exhales. The murmur that had previously kept the plane feeling somewhat alive ends.

#41. Bhoior, the Walking Whisper

Planar Trait: Sounds echo, sometimes years later. This has no mechanical effect, but people are innately more aware of the past, and are less likely to repeat the mistakes of it.

The plane is indeed a miles-wide turtle composed of stones filled with fossils that have trapped the souls of the dead. Now many thousands more spirits from the Bleak Gate fill this world, unable to make it into Amrou.

Visitors here find just barren stone, without even any plant life. The souls trapped in the fossils whisper to living visitors, teasing that they know secrets but never revealing them except to those who knew the souls when they were alive. Long ago another, greater turtle bore several continents upon its back, and when it neared its proscribed death it traveled for the spawning ground of its mighty species where it could transfer the people who lived on its shell to another. Alas, the great turtle died before it could reach its destination, and so died an entire world.

Centuries later a new turtle awoke from the huge dead body, and it could hear the mournful memories of those it never had a chance to save.

Steering the Great Tortoise

If the party creates a planar icon for this plane, they can steer the plane, though it travels at a rate of less than a mile per hour. It's not stealthy, but it gives them a novel way to navigate.

*#39. Apet, the Distant Plane

Planar Trait: Planar travel is limited to the local system. In the Gyre, that restriction is redundant.

From afar, Apet is just a ball of whirling dust cloaking any solid surfaces. Once on the world, though, it becomes more bizarre than one would expect, for it is not a place of stone and rock, but of pure solid force. The ground consists of scattered platforms akin to *walls of force* – translucent sheets, impossibly thin and completely impenetrable. Most of these platforms are slightly off kilter from being horizontal, and they span a few dozen feet, always assuming simple two-dimensional geometric shapes with perfect symmetry like circles, triangles, squares, and on, up to octagons.

The force platforms have a slight static charge to them, causing the gritty dust that swirls around Apet to stick to it and provide traction enough to walk. Visibility is fair out to about thirty feet, beyond which everything has concealment out to sixty feet. Beyond sixty feet, everything is fully concealed. Certain patches of heavier dust might cut visibility to just five feet.

Liontaming

A Golden Legion windskiff is carefully patrolling the dusty world in a grid pattern, searching for beasts to capture and enslave. The only surviving beings on this world are mad descendants of Gidim war-beasts from thousands of years ago, which slaughtered most of the legionnaires sent the first time. Now the legionnaires come with a pit fiend, **Laroj Roh the Liontamer**, who carries a staff that will force the beasts to be corporeal so they can be captured.

The party might come across the windskiff by first finding a legionnaire lying dead in the sand, with strange tracks in the dust made by tentacles pointing the way the monster fled. Following it comes upon the devil crew as they attempt to wrangle a few dozen flying things. A fight's not necessary, but since word hasn't spread through the whole legion about the events on Av, Laroj Roh and his minions are excited at the chance to take more slaves.

Golden Legion Liontaming Crew (Level 26)

- Laroj Roh, Golden Legion pit fiend
- 2 Golden Legion horned devils
- 1 Golden Legionnaire Company
- 1 Golden Legion Succubus

Laroj Roh wields an adamantine staff instead of a *mace of golden flames*. A strike with the staff does the same damage (2d10+11), but instead of inflicting ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends), it does full damage to incorporeal creatures and renders them corporeal until the end of the encounter. In the hands of anyone else, it functions as a *large +6 adamantine quarterstaff*, in addition to its ability to make creatures corporeal.

A Plea from the Homeworld

The Gidim flying things don't try to attack the party, but instead desperately fling their incorporeal bodies into and *through* anyone they can. If any of them survive the inevitable opportunity attacks, their passage deposits a thought in the creature they fly through: the Gidim homeworld, represented by a sphere of purple flesh with infinite eyes and tendrils reaching out to the stars, has a tiny black

leech stuck to its side, siphoning its power. The emotional sense conveyed is revulsion and violation, mixed with intention to avoid the source of the leech in the future.

This is because the Obscurati in the real world have managed to tap into the Gidim's psychic connection to strengthen the godmind phenomenon. By the time the party gets back to the real world, Nicodemus will have used that power to compel nearly everyone to obey him. For now they just have a hint of what the Ob are up to.

#37. Thrag, the Beastly Bounty

Planar Trait: Reincarnation is rapid, and memories are retained.

The first thing one notices approaching Thrag is the screaming. Everything on this world was once a person, but after mortals slew a divine child who had been born to the god of death and the goddess of life, the mourning deities altered the cycle of reincarnation so that no one would ever die again. No new people were born, but souls remembered their past lives as they took on new forms. Every being on this world recalls thousands of births, thousands of lifetimes of being trapped in primitive bodies incapable of fully composing higher thought, and thousands of savage deaths.

All animal and plant life here is ambulatory, even grasses that crawl and battle for the most nutritious soil, occasionally forming electrogenic colonies that can deliver stunning bolts to larger creatures so the grass can swarm it and consume its flesh. All the while, they wail in perpetual agony and angst that they will never be free of this cycle of suffering.

There is little to be gained from bonding with this world, but PCs might try anyway. If someone dies, within a minute he or she reincarnates in a bestial creature that tears its way free of the soil even as his or her previous body decays and is consumed by worms and other smaller beings. Typically these forms are equivalent to goats, wolves, or grouse, nothing fit for wearing armor and wielding weapons. A character stuck in such a body can be restored on Ascetia (plane 24) if the party doesn't have magic of their own to fix the problem.

Eerily, the local wildlife completely ignores anything undead. The party should spot the spidery husk of a vaknid nestled in the boughs of a screaming tree, which is oblivious to its passenger.

Mandala Beasts

A handful of souls on Thrag, known as the mandala beasts, have learned through their incarnations a measure of calm. Giving themselves over to their savage nature, these carnivores combine physical might, supernatural powers, and the cunning mind of a predator that has had a hundred lifetimes of experience.

Every mandala beast is accompanied by a psychic manifestation behind its head, depicting a beautiful glowing ring of abstract patterns in vivid colors. When its body is slain, it devises a new form and reincarnates into that body, completely unfazed by the temporary death. The only way to keep one at bay is to scorch the earth beneath its body after it dies, because burnt soil is unable to devour the corpse, and the course of reincarnation is slowed until its flesh decays at a more natural pace.

Stalking Mandala Beast (Level 30)

- 1 carnivorous mandala of Thrag (see page 284)



Wherever the party lands, the screaming of existential horror likely distracts them as the mandala beast prowls around them, its glowing manifestation dim. It psychically compels brush and trees around the party to wail and crawl toward them in order to conceal its own approach (Perception DC 35). The flora is too slow and weak to be a threat, but when the mandala beast is only five feet away it stands, flares its mandala, and tackles a creature.

If the party kills it, it keeps assuming different forms in order to best attack them. The beast is smart enough to know that a dead foe reincarnates, so it uses its *mantle of stability* to heal dying enemies while paralyzing them. If it wins a battle, it takes powerful paralyzed creatures to a burnt-out lair and gnaws on their flesh for days, killing the creature again and again each time it reincarnates.

It's not really possible to permanently defeat the creature, short of taking it off this plane. Scorching the earth beneath it will at least stop its reincarnation, but this is not a fight that can be won.

#36. Amrou, the Salt Waste

Planar Trait: Mundane counters against supernatural threats are stronger. If a creature puts down a line of salt, whenever a demon, devil, spirit, or similar entity attempts to cross, make an attack against that creature's Will, with a bonus equal to the level of the creature that set down the salt. On a hit, that creature cannot cross the barrier for a day. Salt also burns such creatures, dealing 5 damage per turn (or more, depending on the quantity) and keeping them from willingly touching it. Indeed, affected creatures cannot even use tools to intentionally move salt, though they can create circumstances (like drafts from open windows, or asking a normal mortal) that can affect salt.

Likewise, holy bells can drive away faeries, jade hurts aberrant monsters, and presented holy symbols create safe shells as if you were constantly surrounded by a ring of salt.

The Wee Tombs

After an onslaught of supernatural foes wiped out all the large folk, people similar to halflings came to power in the world known as Amrou. For a time they ruled and wielded powerful magic to keep the monsters at bay, and in fact used benevolent necromancy to preserve their greatest heroes. Mighty rulers were entombed for eternity with their servants, who were tasked with praying throughout their unlife in order to maintain the wards against evil.

But eventually they were betrayed, and the world fell to darkness. The vile priest-king responsible was destroyed, but the world could not be saved. Now all that remains is the sprawling salt wasteland where the tombs were hidden. One mummified ruler, **Sargon of Uggat, whose father was the cupbearer of Ur-Zubaba**, recently emerged from his tomb when he realized the world had ended centuries ago. His servants, their souls preserved and bolstered by the enchanted treasures buried in his tomb, were fading away. The magical artifacts he had been entombed with were almost powerless. So Sargon of Uggat, whose father was the cupbearer of Ur-Zubaba, tightened his cloth wrappings, draped himself in a ragged white cloak to better hide in the wastes, and searched for travelers.

This halfling mummy pickpocket just wants to preserve his servants, and he's not clear enough in his mind to realize that they long ago failed their original purpose of defending their world against evil. If the party lands here to try to bond with the plane, they'll likely not notice the mummy's light fingers picking their pockets for enchanted trinkets (Perception DC 46).

Tracking Sargon of Uggat, whose father was the cupbearer of Ur-Zubaba, is fairly easy, since he's the only thing leaving footprints on the whole plane. His tomb's magical defenses are long-since faded, and his only real defense is that the door and hallways are sized for three-foot-tall tomb robbers.

If he's confronted, the former pharaoh has all manner of minor magic items that might prove useful to the party, which he'll gladly trade for items of equivalent power. He's not one to fight, but his phenomenal stealth skills could make him a useful scout if the party can convince him their quest will find more treasure to protect his servants.

As for the servants, they still have preserved wines and fruit from before the world ended, plus palm fans and oils for luxurious massages. Since they have no civilization of their own to protect anymore, they're quite doting on anyone who is friendly, even giants like the PCs. Ultimately, forming a bond with Amrou is as easy as filling the treasure vault of Sargon of Uggat, whose father was the cupbearer of Ur-Zubaba, with a few hundred thousand gold pieces worth of treasure. Chains of Golden Legionnaires serve quite well for this purpose.

#35. Wilanir, the Lair of Discontent

Planar Trait: Guilt weighs heavily, like a fog. Fog appears more readily and more thickly, especially around those who have committed wrongs. The first time each encounter that a creature hidden in fog strikes another creature unaware of it, it gains temporary hit points equal to the amount of damage it deals, which last until the end of the encounter.

Eerie Fog

Winter snow sits sullen on Wilanir, and although herbivores like rabbits, deer, and birds still roam the landscape, all predators have perished. This includes the elves that once lived here, their stolid castles and hovels abandoned and snowed in. A low range of mountains in the center of the plane is home to a series of ruined forts, which serve as the lair of **Doverspike**, a vampire red dragon who destroyed the world (see page 285).

It wasn't quite his intention. He had threatened a nation ruled by an elvish archmage-emperor, whose people made regular offerings of blood as a sign of obedience. When Doverspike used an epic spell to slay the emperor and everyone in his bloodline, the effect cascaded through most of the population of the world. The dead animated as zombies and inexorably wiped out all the other survivors. Eventually their bodies rotted away, leaving Doverspike as the only sentient being on the whole world. Soon thereafter the world was drawn into the Gyre.

Today the immense dragon is unhinged from a mix of guilt, loneliness, and the simple fact that he hasn't had the blood of sentient beings in centuries, aside from a few members of the Golden Legion. He wasn't able to follow the devils back to their base, and the legion decided better than to throw more soldiers to their death.

Encountering Doverspike

If the party lands, thick fogs roll in within a half hour. This is Doverspike himself, transformed into the fog. In this form he can still suck creatures' blood, manifesting as a faintly visible draconic maw limned with crimson amid the white mist. However, he has quite lost his previous confidence and villainy. If attacked by a magical weapon he recoils, gibbers out an apology while screaming 'it wasn't my fault!' in Draconic, and then the fog flows away at thirty miles an hour back to one of his fortress lairs.

If they pursue, those fortresses are prowled by a few zombies that have survived the centuries, but nothing that could really threaten the party. They can find Doverspike curled and shivering atop an ice-trapped treasure hoard, black miasma pouring out of his nostrils, across the scales of his face, which are deep red flecked with dead white at their edges. He'll fight back if forced, but he just wants to be left alone. If pestered to talk, he turns to one of the zombies, tells it to shut up, then blasts it with fire. When he sees what he did he is stricken, and scurries into a corner, horrified.

The poor monster is broken psychologically, but sympathetic or simply deceptive PCs could coax Doverspike to their side. He has no experience with the concept of penance, and is not quite motivated by a desire to make amends for what he did. He's simply horrified, and selfishly wants to stop feeling that. Perhaps he could be convinced that the best way to push away the pain he feels would be to save a world, to balance the scales. Or he might be willing to just go on a suicide mission against the Golden Legion or the Hunlow pirates.

The most fair punishment, though, is probably to sic the sun Obliatas (plane 19) on him, giving the undead-hating star a chance to find its own peace while annihilating an undead horror that destroyed another world.

†#33. Hunlow, the Place for Pirates

Planar Trait: The ocean is literally a blood-thirsty god who loves villains. An offering of the blood of someone you have victimized, dripped into the sea, grants you the ability to reroll any d20 roll once in the next day.

Never Trust a Pirate

When a great Adversary awoke and went to war against the gods who had imprisoned him ages earlier, most of those gods quavered before his wrath. But Hunlow, that world's minor god of pirates, cheered the Adversary's vengeance, and disrupted plans of a band of plucky heroes to reimprison him. By way of thanks, when the Adversary tore out the heart of the world and draped the flayed skins of the gods across the heavens, he let the blood rain into Hunlow's seas, giving him the divine power necessary to survive the end of the world.

The Adversary is long gone, but Hunlow gleefully persists on his own fragment of the destroyed plane. He physically *is* the ocean—a thirty-mile sea of water whose waves turn blood red at their crests, dotted with a skull-shaped chain of islands—and he controls the flow of currents and the storms. Nothing lives on his immortal body unless he desires it. But oh does he love scoundrels.

Bonding with the plane requires only that Hunlow likes you. If the party finds a way to defeat the sea god, the plane dies and can provide no planar energy.

The Cutthroat Clergy

Over three centuries, a variety of mortals have found their way to Hunlow's shores. He killed most, but eventually some showed themselves vile enough for him to keep them around. Most of the pirates smartly devoted themselves to worship of Hunlow, and eventually his clergy arranged for him to impregnate a slave, who gave birth to his half-god son **Taracle**.

Taracle commands the pirates of Hunlow as their admiral. His skin constantly seethes in pain when he's out of water, so he keeps himself draped in long cloaks which he soaks in his father's saltwater body. Under those his body has a lobster-like carapace and dozens of tentacles. If anyone displeases him he'll order the offender disemboweled so he can eat their intestines. However, he seldom talks, preferring to let his second-in-command Thrusty speak on his behalf.

Captain Thrusty is a fat former fiend returned to human form, whose love of logistics keeps Hunlow's coves stocked with the right type of slaves. A hundred years ago a pit fiend of the Golden Legion made the mistake of tussling with the pirates, who subdued him, stripped him of his gold, and then in a bid to make a convert to their cruel god, broke the curse over him. Over the years the former fiend, who took the name 'Thrusty' because he'd forgotten his original name, shifted into something of a hybrid of man and devil. Corpulent and scaled, he stands less than five and a half feet tall, but still has all the strength of his previous form.

Thrusty revels in his newfound free will, but old habits die hard, so after his conversion he took control of the pirates' slave market, making sure the mortals lived long enough to be useful. He spurns treasure and adornment, wearing all black, even a black domino mask and bandana as a cap. His greatest possession of value is his rapier, which was forged from the tooth of a gold dragon and blessed by Hunlow himself.

Straightforward slaughter would eventually leave the pirates starved and doomed, but Thrusty has made a point of cultivating prisoners who can keep a functional economy working. Indeed, for the sake of not letting short-sighted sea scum ruin everything, Thrusty keeps most of the slaves on the adjacent plane of Drozani (plane 25). He only brings people over when they're needed for sacrifices, for raping, or for more mundane breeding, since Drozani's curse smothers children born there. Similarly, the goblins of Etheax tend to herd animals that feed the pirates. The pirates don't often use them as sacrifices because they're so amenable to everything it's hard to get the goblins to really *suffer* enough for Hunlow to care.

The pirates are the reason so many planes in the southern Gyre are empty ruins, since they captured everyone useful and killed the rest. They even took a few monks of Caeloon who were too curious when the plane first arrived. (Calily has some nieces and nephews she doesn't know about.) They never made it past Thrag or Padyer, though, and so don't know much about the severed sea of Shabboath.

Preparing to go A'plunderin'

The crash of Av made waves, though. Hunlow senses there are plenty of slaves for the taking there, so he's having his priests perform mass sacrifices to gird him for a journey of his own. When the party arrives, Captain Thrusty is making final arrangements for the ritual. The next time the distant sun of Obliatas dips under the horizon, wild parties will erupt all over the skull islands, human bonfires will light the night, and the thirteen ships of Admiral Taracle's fleet will sail a circle around the island chain, slitting arteries of hundreds of slaves and leaving a trail of fresh blood.

When the several-hour ritual is complete, Hunlow himself will be able to reach forth from the rocky mote that lies beneath his watery body, and he will crawl from world to world, a crashing flood carrying the fleet with him. In four days he'll sweep across Thrag, Bhoior, Nem, and then reach Av.

Before then, Captain Thrusty might be willing to parlay with the party. He's far-sighted enough to see the value of cooperation, but he would fully intend to backstab the party as soon as he figured out their weaknesses. He cares nothing about escaping the Gyre, nor do his pirates nor his god. They simply want the best plunder and a steady supply of poor bastards to inflict themselves upon. The Golden Legion is an occasional hassle, but the pirates' ships don't fly, and they don't want to go into battle just on foot.

At Odds with a God

The flagship of the fleet, *Adversary's Favor*, is commanded by Admiral Taracle, with Captain Thrusty serving at his side. In a fight, Thrusty lets Taracle deal with all the party's attention, then swings in to take out vulnerable enemies. Clergy throw dozens of spells, with their preference being *banishment*, which conjures grinding mists (see Gyre Traits, page 143). Another sixty pirates are all unholy warriors with divine blessings. If the party defeats Taracle, they can retrieve the radiant axes of King Ron the Grand, and return them to Dunkelweiss (plane 31).

The other twelve ships have smaller crews, but each is still vicious. The ships lack any sort of cannons, but they make up for it with unified spellcasting might, and Hunlow can adjust the weather so that in ten minutes powerful lightning and whirlwinds will arise, potentially knocking the party's airship to the sea.

Adversary's Favor (Level 30)

- Admiral Taracle
- Captain Thrusty
- 3 priests of Hunlow
- 5 unholy boarding crews

Twelve other Hunlow Pirate Ships (Level 26 each)

- 2 priests of Hunlow
- 4 unholy boarding crews

Fighting Hunlow himself is basically impossible. While the party has faced big enemies before like fey titans, this enemy stretches *miles*. No conventional attack can even perturb him.

A smart option is just to avoid him. But a smarter option is to remove the source of his power. If the pirate clergy are killed, Hunlow has no ability to travel beyond his own plane. Indeed, if his clergy is wiped out while he's traveling abroad, he'll dissipate and pour over the sides of whatever plane he's on, vanishing into the void.

A straight-up fight is possibly even harder than going against the Golden Legion, but the savants of Shabboath can be tricked into attacking Hunlow if they see him as a threat, or the slaves on Drozani could be rallied into battling their masters. No doubt clever players can find other ways to defeat the sea god, if they care.

#31. Dunkelweiss, the Fermented Peaks

Planar Trait: Alcohol is good for you. It produces the same intoxicating effect as before, but does no damage to long-term health. Indeed, hangovers are easily held at bay with a brisk workout, meaning the heaviest drinkers tend to be the most fit. A night of intense carousing functions as a *remove affliction* ritual, with a +5 bonus to the skill check.

The Tomb of King Ron

The dwarven all-king known as Ron the Grand ruled his people nobly for a century. Upon his death, the dwarves did not merely craft him a tomb, but petitioned their gods to create a demiplane that would encapsulate all that made Ron so damned Grand. Alas, the high priests got too drunk celebrating after the funeral, and they accidentally left the key that opened a portal to the world inside the world itself. King Ron was at peace, and his planar tomb drifted through the cosmos, like a burial at sea.

Centuries ago Dunkelweiss, a thirty-mile mountain range of soaring snow-capped peaks, majestic forests, and brisk mountain lakes, crashed into the Gyre. Such was the dwarven craftsmanship that it was barely jostled by the impact, and the borders of the world are quite sturdy. Celestial goats frolic on its grassy hills, and bearded eagles soar over the mausoleum, keeping watch of the king's rest.

But woe grips those eagles, and each day they shed a single tear, for they failed at their duty. Decades ago pirates from Hunlow snuck onto the world and plundered the tomb, carrying back many treasures, including King Ron's two radiant axes. (These items are in the possession of Admiral Taracle, leader of the pirates of Hunlow, plane 33).

Anyone new who arrives is confronted by one of the eagles, who is wary of outsiders. He invites the PCs to drink their fill of the beer streams (they turn back into water when they reach the lakes), but says no one will be allowed into the tomb except to return the stolen treasures. If the party tries to bond with the plane without first retrieving the stolen axes, the eagles screech and strafe them, but don't actually attack.

#29. Etheax, the Tended Flame

Planar Trait: Patience and fire magic are both easy. Anyone with Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma of 10 or higher can perform cantrips to create and control small fires.

Something Bad Happened, but the Goblins Didn't Notice

The cave-riddled mountains of Etheax are sharp and steep, with flat grassy valleys between looming granite mesas. A handful of goblin tribes live in these valleys, tending to the plants and animals in order to keep a stable environment. They also tend to fires at the mouths of all their caves, and can communicate across the plane in a hurry by means of shadow puppets in front of the fires.

The Etheax goblins are excessively friendly, and while they're rambunctious and nasty to people whom they know, to outsiders they maintain a demeanor of quaint, folksy manners. They of course get along well with the pirates of Hunlow, taking care of livestock for them without asking anything in return. Captain Thrusty long ago promised them he'd pay them back for all the work they're doing, and the goblins are patient enough to wait.

Bonding with this plane is as easy as asking the goblins. They're that friendly.

#28. Ship Graveyard

In this region of mostly empty space drift thousands of once-famous dead ships from hundreds of worlds, including Boato, the King of Boats.

#25. Drozani, a Dead City in the Clouds

Planar Trait: Slowly the birth rate dwindles to zero.

A Beautiful Prison

A small rocky island floats at the edge of this plane, forming a shore with the sea of Hunlow. From there, a majestic pink marble staircase rises two hundred feet over the void, up to a pillow of clouds upon which sits a desolate city of rose wood and marble. Two fallen angels of Hunlow guard the staircase, allowing access only to those their god approves.

Within the city, the pirates keep thousands of slaves, who are kept in line because nothing grows there. The pirates have to import food from Etheax and fish from Hunlow or else the slaves will starve. Slaves typically busy themselves crafting clothes or weapons for the pirates, and are only brought out when Thrusty decrees they need to breed, or when the pirates are getting randy and want to rape something.

The lives of the slaves is wretched and degenerate, to the point that a hierarchy has arisen where those most in favor with the pirates might be given a chance to become pirates themselves, and so the other slaves look up to them. They desire freedom more than they value their own ideals. A few exceptions to this exist, most notably the children and grandchildren of Caeloon monks who were captured a few decades ago. Their asceticism makes them pariahs, but the slaves and pirates let them pass along their martial arts traditions as long as they are willing to submit to whatever debased demands the pirates make.

This once-great flying metropolis is damned, and perhaps the closest thing to Hell the Gyre has to offer.



Surviving the Deadly Northern Gyre

Exploration. Montage.

More worlds lie beyond a wide expanse, but most of these planes are lethal beyond mortal ken.

Once the party is ready, they can travel across the thirty mile void between the southern and northern Gyres. In the midst of their transit between the two regions, the PCs should level up to 30.

The plane that calls out to them most should be Ascetia with its lighthouse, which is the first encounter we detail. The battle at Egalitrix, if the party cares to take on the legion, is complex enough that we give it its own encounter entry as well, particularly since the PCs might want to check the rest of the Gyre for allies before hitting the devils' volcano airship. And the final confrontation with the Voice of Rot is presented in Act Three.

†#24. Ascetia, the Hidden Jungle

Planar Trait: People are more aware of history. By the time everyone is an adult, they naturally acquire a +5 bonus to History checks.

A flashing beacon strobes twice every minute, visible from up to a hundred miles (three hexes) away. As one approaches to within ten miles, a lighthouse appears, rising up from the edge of a tangled jungle which extends all the way to the precipice of the floating world. The lighthouse is unostentatious but solid, constructed of hand-carved limestone bricks thrusting a hundred feet above the jungle canopy. A small barn and a few satellite buildings surround it in a fifty foot clearing, and a walkway of logs leads from the lighthouse's door to the very edge of the world. As if its resident expects visitors, a basket of small tart jungle fruit sits next to a bench a few feet from where the sidewalk ends.

The top of the tower has a roof covering the mechanism of the beacon, which is rotated by simple gears governed by a weight that descends through the shaft of the lighthouse. This top floor has open windows with shutters but no glass, and it is here that William Miller spends most of his time, meditating while keeping watch for travelers.

The rest of the planar mote consists of short mountains that feed streams that thread through the jungle. A barely visible foot-path from the lighthouse leads into that verdant tangle, and half a mile later reaches the grave of Srasama. Beneath a high canopy, the body of the once-towering eladrin goddess lies with her six arms crossed over her chest. Shafts of shock quartz, six feet tall and roughly hewn, circle the grove, and each sparkles like a stream in sunlight. Touching one of these obelisks summons a wash of memories of thousands and thousands of eladrin women who perished in the Great Malice. By concentrating it's possible to speak with a specific spirit and learn her story. This is their graveyard, crafted by Miller as penance and as reminder of his hubris.

Srasama's body seems vividly alive despite numerous wounds. She neither breathes nor bleeds, but she looks capable of standing up at any moment.

The Revelation of William Miller

After the Great Malice, the reflection of Nicodemus was stranded in the Gyre. After a period of denial and introspection, he began to refer to himself again by his birth name, William Miller. Though he is also a ghost like the Nicodemus of the real world, Miller has had a very different experience, and rather than becoming bitter and Machiavellian, he devoted himself to humility and penance.

Importantly, the prime-Nicodemus is unaware of his reflection. Miller, here in the Gyre, has over the centuries figured out that there's still a version of him in the real world, and in the past few months since the Great Eclipse has met spirits of those who died on the party's homeworld and learned vague details of his duplicate's activities.

Miller has come to understand the nature of the Gyre, such as that he, and anyone else who is similarly reflected by the plane of Av, could obliterate themselves and send their consciousnesses back to the versions of them in the real world, but so far he has seen no need to do so.

As a ghost, Miller is practically unkillable. And while magic can destroy his manifested form temporarily, he'll rejuvenate in a day or so as long as there's still a link to the version of him in the real world. Namely, as long as the plane Reida still exists, Miller cannot be destroyed. He sees no need to fight, and is unafraid of any threats.

When the party reaches Ascetia, then, Miller comes out to meet them, hoping to offer aid or guidance. Expect some turbulence and paranoia as the party realizes that Miller isn't quite their nemesis. But he tries to explain things:

"Despite how I look, I'm not your enemy. I'm his reflection, and five hundred years ago I broke off from him. I'll help you, if you'll let me, because when I look at my reflection now I don't like what I see.

"The first thing to know is that I'm arrogant. Five centuries ago I thought I could broker a peace agreement between Elfaivar and the Clergy during a holy war. They threw us into a prison – my accomplice was an eladrin woman, Kasvarina. She didn't deserve what happened to her because of me.

"That prison was supposed to be punishment and torture. And there were horrors there, definitely. But the most dangerous thing locked away in there was my own pride. I found a ritual, a way to end the war, a way to summon a god. My plan was to trick the Clergy into summoning its own god of war, which the eladrin would kill. The ritual warned that all the followers of the god would suffer the same fate as the one they worshipped. If my plan had worked it would have killed thousands of people. People who worshipped the same way I did. I didn't care. I had been thwarted once, and I needed to succeed.

"I was blind to the fact that I was a puppet. The Clergy had used Kasvarina and me to get the ritual – there was a demon, she wouldn't tell them; it's complicated. The hierarchs I hated so much summoned an *eladrin* goddess, killed her. When I figured it out I tried to escape, and I was caught in the middle of the backlash, right as I was straddling two sides of a portal. In the same moment that every eladrin woman died, I was torn in two.

"So here I am, a ghost in a place of ghosts. You can imagine the denial and rage, but eventually I realized there was no point to that. Not too far from here I built a memorial to the goddess they killed, and to all the people who died because of me. This lighthouse, also, was my attempt at penance. I thought if people came here, I could offer shelter or guidance. I suppose I've been waiting for you.

"I can't see what the other me is doing, but ghosts have been showing up for months, and I've heard stories. Stories of what that other me is doing.

" 'The other me.' Hell, this will get confusing. Look, it's been centuries since I thought of myself as Nicodemus anyway. It was only a moniker. A 'nick' name, which my fellow monks thought was so damned clever. There's this herb from the Yerasol Islands called leaf of Nicodemus. You burn it, inhale the smoke. I remember loving the sensation. It was soothing. I dreamed of cultivating it and sharing it with more people around the world. But, well, there was a holy war. More pressing matters.

"Anyway, this place is basically my grave, so I might as well be buried with my real name. I'm William Miller, and I have some good news, and some bad news. Two sides of a mirror, if you don't mind me belaboring the point.

"You see, there's a way to get back to your world. At the center of the Gyre, if you dive into the teeth and let yourself be ground up and annihilated, your soul, or consciousness, or in any case all the useful things you've learned here—and I've got an inkling why you're here—all of that will go back to...Well, here's the bad news.

"You've been reflected too. Av, the moon. It's a plane of mirrors, and the realm you pass through when you're stepping through a portal. Its power tore me in two five hundred years ago. And when Av shattered a few days ago, the same thing happened to you. One version of you is back home, and the other version is here. Nothing you do here can change what happens there, and nothing the other yous there can do will make a difference in saving your world, not unless you fling yourself into the Gyre. If you want the other version of you to succeed, you're all going to have to die."

Inflection Point

Now is when you should start Adventure Thirteen, *Avatar of Revolution*. Once the party completes the Introduction, return to events in the Gyre.

Respite and Explanation

The PCs are unaware of the events in the real world. From their perspective, Miller has just finished telling them that they're reflections of their real selves. He's willing to answer any questions they have, and offers to let them stay here as long as they desire. His lighthouse has rooms for guests, and the Golden Legion avoids this place because the spirits of thousands of eladrin wiped out the last warship that flew over Srasama's grave.

He explains that with the proper mental preparation, someone who falls into the teeth of the Gyre can avoid being outright annihilated, but can instead choose where his or her consciousness ends up. It requires the right sense of connection to the world you wish to return to. He's spent centuries meditating on the nature of the Gyre, and while he has no proof, he knows it will work.

If the party believes him, Miller can teach them how to reconnect to their other selves. It requires an emotional connection to someone else in the world who misses them, and who can help guide them home. Also necessary is a goal, some change that they want to make, to give them an impulse to travel across the cosmos.

And of course their other selves have to be alive.

Consequences of Reunion

Unbeknownst to Miller, Nicodemus will have already gained near total domination of the world by the time the PCs' other selves return to Risur. Due to the fluid nature of time on Av, days spent in the Gyre won't sync with days in the real world, and the PCs' consciousnesses won't return to their other selves until they're in the midst of the climax at the Axis Seal.

However, the act of the PCs choosing someone as their 'emotional link' to the world will free that person from Nicodemus's control, even before Adventure Thirteen begins. Before the PCs arrive at Reida (plane 1), have them each choose a person they want as their link to the real world, whom they hope will draw them back. If you agree that there actually is a connection of value, when the players go back to Adventure Thirteen, they'll find those people are ready as allies.

This might not line up perfectly, so don't overthink it.

Rejecting Miller

It's reasonable for the PCs to think Miller is an enemy, or just not to trust his 'certainty' that throwing themselves into the Gyre is a good idea. In that event, they can kill the Voice of Rot, then hang around in the Gyre on their airship for about a year until the real world is on the brink of crashing into the other planes of the Gyre. Then they can simply fly back to the real world and link up with their duplicates. It's up to you whether to let the PCs double-team the villains, or just to have them automatically merge together when they get near themselves.

Miller as an Ally

Miller sees his role as one of guide, not ally. Unlike Nicodemus in the real world, Miller never became a powerful spellcaster, so he's no good fighting alongside the PCs, not that he would if they asked. He's no pacifist—he wholly endorses destroying the Golden Legion, for instance—but he believes that change is only possible for the living. He can instruct and warn, but he fears that trying to take an active hand in events would only bring out his worst traits of bitter arrogance.

He has tried to meditate to overcome those flaws. Honestly, though, he's convinced he cannot change his nature. It's better, in his opinion, that he not be involved. After all, he's basically the same person as Nicodemus, and Nicodemus's refusal to accept failure has perhaps doomed the world.

It would behoove the party to change Miller's mind, because his aid can be pivotal in the defeat (and potentially the redemption) of Nicodemus. Swaying the ghost is difficult. But if they make Miller an ally, it becomes possible for them to take him to the teeth of the Gyre. When the party dives into the teeth to send their consciousnesses back to their other selves, Miller can do the same, but he won't be able to reach and influence Nicodemus without an emotional connection.

That connection is Kasvarina. He believes that she died along with all the other eladrin women when Srasama was killed, and his overall guilt for the destruction he caused is focused on the memory of her in particular. He tricked Kasvarina into helping him, and because of that she had to watch her own daughter be violated and murdered.

If Miller learns that she's still alive but was working with Nicodemus, he comes as close to crying as a ghost is capable of. After all that he knows he was guilty of, discovering that his sway over Kasvarina continued as Nicodemus and led her to a life of revenge devastates him. But by the same note, if during the climax of Adventure Thirteen the party manages to get Kasvarina to their side and turn her against Nicodemus, Miller and Nicodemus will be reunited. The two sides of his soul will battle, and briefly Miller will be dominant, long enough to lower his defenses and let the party destroy him for good.

It's possible to defeat Nicodemus without Miller's active involvement, but if you want a 'Luke redeems Vader' moment in your game, here's a chance.

Slightly Out of Place

Currently Miller's only other guest is **Catahoula**, an undead court wizard and masterful drum major from Iratha Ket (plane 17). Once a human, now he's just a skeleton, looking lanky and jaunty in a black cotton jacket with red epaulets and white buttons. He bobs his whole upper body from side to side as he talks, giving his speech a natural beat.

When things became desperate on his world, Catahoula scryed on Ascetia but saw nothing. However, of the worlds left it was his best option, so he chose to teleport here blindly. He can explain the woes of his home, and does so in a song if they let him, conjuring magical music to accompany his tale.

Healing and Restoration

Though not as powerful as his real-world duplicate Nicodemus, William Miller has sufficient magical knowledge to deal with most afflictions the party might be suffering from when they arrive. He can break curses on those enslaved by the Golden Legion, or restore the original forms of people reincarnated on Thrag. For these tasks he entreats the body of Srasama. Though the goddess is dead, she still can lend a small amount of power.

Communing with Srasama

A Vekeshi Mystic (or other interested PC) who visits the eladrin graves can speak with the spirit of Dala, Kasvarina's daughter who died while acting as vessel for the worship of Srasama. She wears a necklace with a three-piece amber pendant representing the three forms of Srasama: maiden, mother, and crone. Though Dala is certainly a young woman, she is flanked by faintly visible, skeletal-faced ghosts of other eladrin women. She refers to them as a ranamandala, a ruling circle of queens.

On their behalf, she asks what happened to their world, their families, and their people. The other spirits are somber and silent as they hear about the Great Malice and its aftermath, but Dala is perpetually light-hearted, with comments like, "Mother once got angry that I broke her favorite drinking glass fighting with my sister. She told me I needed to not be so careless. It would probably be mean if I reminded her of that."

Dala presses, wanting to know what became of her sister Launga, and of Kasvarina. She ends up sympathetic for her mother, knowing how she must have felt to lose both of her daughters. And if the PC doesn't know of Launga's fate, Dala asks him or her to find the truth, and make sure she is remembered.

After that, Dala has an important question: what should become of Srasama? If the party carries a token of the dead goddess into the teeth of the Gyre and survives to return to the real world, even in death she still has enough power for one final act. The ranamandala are divided between seeking vengeance, or resurrecting the dead eladrin women. Either path will be the last act Srasama ever takes.

Dala takes off her amber necklace, and asks for the PC's choice. She offers first vengeance, holding the necklace in a clenched first, and then she shifts it to her open palm, offering resurrection. She explains the choices, and once the PC picks she puts the necklace back on and nods in thanks.

- **Vengeance.** Dala says that Srasama will aid them in their battle against Nicodemus. In the climax of Adventure Thirteen, Srasama will fully manifest and join the battle on the party's side. This is the path of the maiden, a strong warrior.
- **Resurrection.** Dala says that upon the party's return to their world, all of the tens of thousands of eladrin women who died in the Great Malice will be resurrected. They will be aware of what the party has told them this day, and will know that a great time has passed, which should cool potential desire for revenge. She's unsure what consequence this would have, but it would certainly change the world. This is the path of the mother, the giver of life.

Finally, the PC could make a third choice, the path of the crone, by snatching the necklace from her hand.

- **Usurpation.** A PC could take the necklace and try to claim the power of Srasama for him- or herself. Dala demands it back, accusing the PC of trying to steal the goddess's power, and if the PC doesn't immediately oblige, the avatar of Srasama will rise in the midst of the grove and attack the treacherous PC. If the PC succeeds, he or she becomes a minor deity of womanhood. See Appendix B for stats and for details of this boon.

After any of these choices, the shimmering of the quartz obelisks goes dark, and the body of Srasama fades into glowing motes that drift like stars into the night sky.

#21. Elofasp, the Spawning Hive

Planar Trait: Animals are larger but more obedient. Any living creature with Intelligence 2 or less can be trained, and a Diplomacy check (DC 20) can goad an untrained creature of animal intelligence to take a simple action at your command.

The Insect Apocalypse

Spindle spires of waxy gravel rise from the cracked ground of this plane. The monstrous native creatures have excavated canyons of soft rock from the remains of their dead world, and mixed the debris with biological excretions to create pillar hives, some as wide as a hundred feet and four times as high. Here and there bits of civilized structures or colossal humanoid statues with tentacled faces have been integrated into the hives, suggesting that the world was once inhabited.

Elofasp was once a colony of bizarre alien beings of colossal intellect, but one of their elder brains was slain and consumed by an immense telepathic insect. Massive spawn rose up around the world and overwhelmed the original inhabitants.

An explorer would find each hive controlled by a different breed of horrific monster, yet they never fight or have territorial disputes. Each hive has a 'princess,' daughter of the queen which resides at the bottom of the largest hive in the center of the plane. The queen is a bloated mix of segmented limbs, thrashing tentacles, furred heads, and scaled tails, and today it is wrapped heavily in golden chains. Each brood line on the plane is loyal to the queen, and the queen is enslaved by the Golden Legion.

It took the legion a few centuries to pull it off, but eventually a great battle let them break the central hive and capture the queen. Ever since they have had their pick of the fiercest monsters, and under the direction of the pit fiend **Pahlo Vilk** they have plied the queen with gifts to try to coerce her into birthing specific types of horrors.

Anyone wearing the chains of the legion is ignored by the beasts of Elofasp, but any other intruder is attacked relentlessly by thousands of huge monsters, and innumerable swarms of smaller savage beasts. (Basically, feel free to use any unintelligent monster you want on this world.) Trying to travel across this world without some sort of concealment or ruse is practically impossible, since every ten feet another monster would try to kill the PCs.

If somehow the party could reach the queen, she is sessile and helpless unless you're foolish enough to come within her grasp. Killing or freeing her would cause all of the warbeasts stationed across Egalitrix to turn against the devils. For that reason, Pahlo Vilk has a powerful force guarding the wax-latticed cavern where she resides.

Guardians of the Hive Queen (Level 30)



- Pahlo Vilk, Golden Legion pit fiend
- 2 enslaved Elofasp ravants
- 1 enslaved supplicant of Elofasp
- 3 Golden Legion elite stars
- 2 Golden Legion horned devils

The party hopefully takes into account that, after killing the hive queen, disguising themselves as legionnaires won't help them escape.

#19. Obliatas, the Devouring Light

Planar Trait: Any undead caught in the sun's light takes 1 radiant damage every minute. When used as a plane for the Axis Seal ritual, instead it deals damage to any undead that can see its place in the sky. Depending on where it is placed in the system, it's possible that roughly half the year, night-time would be safe for undead, while the other half day-time would be.

Wandering Star

The star Obliatas was the center of a system where the planets were drained of life by a cosmic undead horror. Originally the avatar of a sun god, Obliatas was stranded after all the followers of the god perished. It swore it would destroy all the undead it found, but the horror left the system, and Obliatas eventually found itself in the Gyre.

Obliatas has been in the Gyre for nearly a thousand years, and after a period of mourning and losing its mind, the sentient sun began to wander. Eventually it discovered the undead civilization surviving on Iratha Ket (plane 17), and has spent all of its years since near it, harassing the inhabitants but kept at bay by the daily song rituals, which channel the magic of King Calcasieu. This is actually the cause of the irregular day-night cycle in the Gyre.

Now Obliatas endures as a two-hundred foot wide orb of white light, which is blinding to anything within a thousand feet, and which does 10 radiant damage each round to anything that lands on it. It can sense and telepathically contact anything within a mile. Despite its immense size and power, its mental voice is shrill and unhinged. It flies faster than walking speed, slower than airship speed, and calls out to anyone who comes near.

A Source of Great Power

Obliatas is unique in being able to provide any type of energy the party might need for the Axis Seal ritual. It would create a second sun, though not bright enough to disrupt life, since it would probably be dimmer than a full moon (depending on where the party puts it; putting it in the 'plane of life' slot as the world's moon is a Bad Idea™, since it will bake the planet to death).

The dilemma is that bonding with Obliatas requires earning its favor. It wants to destroy the undead on Iratha Ket, which it sees as abominations. The sun is too mad and single-minded to realize that they are actually benevolent undead. It would seem at first brush that the party would have to decide between the utility of Obliatas, or the moral choice of saving Iratha Ket.

The party might, though, try to cure the deluded fixation of Obliatas, or simply to turn its ire against a more serious villain, the vampire dragon Doverspike on Wilanir (plane 35). If they guide the sun to that world and let it have its revenge against a true undead horror, it will quickly forget about Iratha Ket.

Though powerful in many ways, Obliatas cannot really hurt any non-undead creatures. It might be able to fly in front of the party's airship to conceal its approach on Egalitrix, but it cannot fight.

If somehow the party gets Obliatas to follow them to the battle with the Voice of Rot, the fey titan's Necrotic Aura and Timeless powers only apply for one round, after which a pulse of light from the wandering star sears the serpents flesh and keeps it from using those powers.

†#18. Egalitrix, Fortress of the Golden Legion

Planar Trait: Fantastic grand industry will develop, driven by greed. This will not necessarily lead to evil, but it must be carefully balanced against to avoid dystopia.

The defenses of this plane are detailed in Flying Fortress (page 167).

Volcanic Overview

Before the Golden Legion conquered the world, it was a plane of vast steam and diesel technology, but the constant belching smoke choked nature and killed nearly everyone in the world. The last survivors were wealthy industrialists who watched the planet die from the lap of luxury, atop a volcano that provided an endless supply of power. Eventually the rest of the world crumbled away, leaving behind just this bastion of avarice and exploitation.

It of course was ideal for the Golden Legion to claim as its capital in the Gyre.

The fiery heart of the volcano continued to thrum with limitless heat, and the dripping underbelly of magma cooled into an inverted second mountain peak. Smoke plumes and cinders waft from both calderas. With the aid of the surviving industralists and their obedient ambulatory machina, the legion expanded existing power plants that captured the geothermal energy. They constructed barracks and hangars along the circumference, girded it with armor, and adorned it with myriad magical fusils that can fire blasts of infernal energy. The iron and steel superstructure stretches nearly a half mile around the front of the volcano, while the sides and aft mount immense propellers spun by churning, smoky turbines.

The whole mountain flies at barely a mile per hour, but that's fast enough for it to avoid being pulled into the teeth of the Gyre.

The industrialists who were most loyal to the legion were transformed into horned devils. Others were gibbeted across the broad iron prow, and their bloodstains never cleaned.

Predicting Eruption

After seeing Egalitrix from afar, grant each PC a Nature check (DC 25) to realize that the volcano produces a self-destructive amount of heat and magma. It looks like it should already have erupted, so somehow the machinery of the fortress must be siphoning away some of the energy.

#17. Iratha Ket, the Graveyard Revel

Planar Trait: Greater altruism. Occasional spontaneous musical numbers. Everyone has natural aptitude for singing, dance, or some sort of musical instrument. A number of times per day equal to his or her Charisma modifier, while performing music a character can grant himself or an ally engaged in the same musical number a +2 bonus to a single attack roll, save, skill check, or ability check as a free action.

Unkillable Optimism

Centuries ago, a magical plague swept across a world, so vile that even the mages of the great crescent city of Iratha Ket could not cure it. It had infected everyone, and death was only a matter of weeks away. The ruler King Calcasieu, a man renowned for his soulful lyrics and effortless dances, realized that the world was doomed, but he refused to surrender hope.

In a ravishing and rakish duet, **King Calcasieu** and his **Queen Atchafalaya** captured the hearts of all their subjects. They decreed that all the young lovers should sleep, paired together in a gentle stasis where the disease could progress no farther. They would be the hope of the future, that some day their people might find a cure and create a new generation. The greater task fell to the older generation. They would be a sustaining song, keeping alive the magic and ceaselessly seeking a way to defeat the disease.

To fulfill this duty, however, they would have to give themselves over to undeath, persisting as skeletons so they would have no flesh that could carry disease. To ensure they would not lose sight of their precious mission, every month two lovers would be awoken, giving the mages another chance to find a cure, and giving the lovers an opportunity to remind the rest of their civilization of how brief and precious life is. Each new pair of lovers would receive a love song of their own. The city would celebrate their awakening, and they would be given all the luxuries the city could provide. If they could not be saved they would also become undead, but the spirit of their people would be refreshed.

Every month a new couple is awoken, and every day songs fill the streets of Iratha Ket, culminating in a parade that runs from the ever-expanding city graveyard (filled with tombstones but no bodies) to the palace, where the couple resides as honored guests of the king and queen. Skeletons in colorful clothes whirl and croon and dance and play instruments to celebrate that they have not yet fully perished.

And at the end of every month, the two lovers watch each other waste away and die.

Pronunciation Guide

King Calcasieu – KAL-kuh-shew. Imagine him as Michael Jackson late in life, distrusted by many, reculsive, and struggling between depression and the purest generous optimism.

Queen Atchafalaya – A-chuh-fuh-LIE-uh. Imagine her as Eartha Kitt at her cattiest.

Mourning King

Since his decree, King Calcasieu has seen over seven thousand loving couples come and go. The rest of the world crumbled away, and only the crescent remnant of Iratha Ket and its mighty river remains. The greatest wizards of an entire civilization have never found a way to stop the plague, and though tens of thousands of skeletal citizens endure, only a few hundred more couples survive in stasis. The king has fallen into a depression, fearing the ultimate death of his people.

Worse, the undead-hating sun Obliatas now assails the city with greater intensity. King Calcasieu's magic once kept the monster at bay, causing it to withdraw and 'set' occasionally. For the past year, though, Queen Atchafalaya has had to adjust her romantic duets to become solos, and the devouring light has managed to destroy many hundreds of the city's undead citizens. Those who remain are growing reluctant to sing the necessary songs to keep the stasis magic active, and the latest romantic couple is honestly having a pretty rough time because the singers keep missing their cues.

Rolling Out the Red Carpet

The party's arrival is celebrated by, of course, song! With seemingly perfect coordination, disparate groups of townsfolk throw miles of red carpet down to create a guide-path, then cajole the party through the city as they sing of the history of the plague, show off the headstone-filled graveyard, introduce the two current lovers **Pookie** and **Bunk** (still in the early stages of the disease), and pause outside the palace to look up at the black curtains drawn across the window of the king's chambers, before finally surging up the stairs where Queen Atchafalaya awaits.

The song ends, and the queen—her bony wrists jangling with cat-shaped red bracelets, her white skull dotted with black paint to give her a dubious smirk, her dress slinky and provactive even though she has no flesh anymore—invites them to dine with her and the still-living couple. She's not hungry, of course, but there is plenty of food—beans, corn tortillas, peppers, and cheese mostly—for guests. Plus enough tequila to last until the world is ground to dust.

The queen laments that her husband is sick, not in his flesh because he has none, but in his soul. It seems the lot of her people that they will fail to heal those they love. Moreover, without Calcasieu's aid, the angry star is slowly destroying their people, since not everyone can get indoors fast enough. The fishermen, especially, have had trouble since there's no cover on the water. To this, Bunk mentions that he's not really that big a fan of fish anyway. This draws attention to the fact that he hasn't actually eaten anything on his plate. Neither has Pookie.

The party should get a sense of the selflessness and determination of the people of Iratha Ket. Yes, they're dead, but they maintain a belief that the needs of the living are the priority. If they had to end their existence permanently to save the remaining sleepers, they'd do it gladly. They have a bit of fun with their bodies — popping off limbs for gags and such — but they're certainly not terrifying monsters. (The court jester, **Kisatchie**, has popularized his catch-phrase, "Wait, that's not my femur!")

Atchafalaya would like to help the party, but she worries that if they use her world's energy, the plague will spread to their world.

The Nature of the Plague

Will the party remember their adventures in public health from their visit to Ber in adventure six? The key to solving an epidemic like this is determining the cause, and if that's elusive, look for when or where it originated.

The actual cause is telepathic brain parasites crafted by the Gidim, who deployed them as a superweapon that was actually too strong. It killed the world too fast, leaving few minds to actually harvest.

The parasites are thoughtforms, and normally have no physical form, instead taking up residence in the thoughts of their hosts. They first altered the minds of their victims, keeping the infected mildly euphoric so they don't think anything is wrong. But meanwhile the parasites made the brain trigger destructive immune responses around the body, then slowly shut down control of autonomous functions. The victim would no longer feel hunger, and eventually their heart and lungs would stop operating.

Divinations reported that there was a parasite, but with no physical form, they were impossible to find in autopsies. Healing spells could not help when the victim had lost the will to live. The Iratha Ketians haven't quite developed psychotherapy, which would work if they tried it.

Of course, the PCs have experience with Gidim, so as soon as they realize what they're up against they know that 'thinking at' the parasites the right way can drive them out and make them corporeal. The trick is discovering that the Gidim are to blame.

Evidence of the Infection

If the PCs use divinations and ask specifically about Gidim, they should easily discover the truth. Otherwise, they need to put together clues.

The lack of physical injuries suggests magic, but normal efforts to detect magic show nothing. Effects that block compulsion or charm had a confusing result – the patient seemed to get sicker (this was due to withdrawal as the parasite no longer could make the patient ignore its pain; if the doctors had continued this treatment, the patients would actually have gotten better, but they assumed it was a dead end).

The healers have tried herbal medicines, prayers, trials of faith, bleeding, burning, various poisons, moving the victim to nearby planes (which always led to the destruction of many bodyguards because the neighborhood is very unfriendly), and even resurrection magic. The last option didn't work at first, but once they tried waiting a few months it was a temporary success, but the person got sick again within a month, even without other living people around to reinfect him. In any case, the city does not have enough spell components to resurrect all the people in stasis.

What about the origin of the plague? The royal physician **Opelousas** (who keeps a bottle of tequila inside his ribcage, which he insists gets him drunk despite his lack of metabolism) doesn't think about what happened so long ago, and he says the king took all the record books to his private quarters, and has just been dwelling in the past ever since. The party will have to sneak past the king's huge skeletal guards to reach his chambers, but he won't be hostile, just forlorn. He explains that the texts record how shortly before the plague sprung up there were many reports of people having strange dreams, like they were being watched from the stars. Many more saw swooping colors in the sky one night.

And what about all the singing? True, the king was a great musician, but people never spontaneously broke into musical numbers before the plague. Ever since it struck, though, people have felt somehow more connected to each other. They think this is just a natural selfless attitude, but it's amplified by the alterations made to everyone's minds by the parasites. When the nation as a whole shed their living flesh and became skeletons, they kept the same slightly unhinged mindset.

Healing the World

All it takes to cure the disease is the right method of thinking at the mental infection, and by teaching the survivors this skill they can inoculate anyone else who might be awoken. Of course, on this plane that grand salvation has to be accompanied with music. In fact, once the party realizes the true nature of the disease, the opening notes of a triumphant song begins to rise from around the city, and the PCs feel and urge to sing their good news. (They can resist, but that's not as fun.)

Queen Atchafalaya ends up taking their revelation about 'healthy thinking' and swirls it into a sympathetic song about the depression that has gripped the king, and she quickly awakens dozens more of the loving couples, then has them accompany her (physically and lyrically) as she professes her love once more to Calcasieu. Thousands of citizens of Iratha Ket are jangling their bones in jubilance when ominous light rises, and Obliatas begins to sear the undead.

The song pauses (though a really devoted violinist keeps playing a worried trill). People look to the skies, feeling cheated. Then the black curtain on the king's chamber is pulled aside, and the king leaps into the sun, spinning as he lands and raising a defiant voice. The people cheer, and the king sweeps past the PCs, asking them to join him as he sings that this news demands a celebration, and the best parties go deep into the night, so the sun should come back tomorrow. As if scolded, Obliatas retreats, and a massive carnival atmosphere grips the plane.

#16. Apo, the Unknown Disk

Planar Trait: Every minute there's a 1-in-20 chance of a tiny black orb similar to a sphere of annihilation appearing in any given area. A character that enters or starts its turn in the sphere's square must make an Acrobatics check (DC 20) or take 30 damage.

Killing the Cat

This world was created by a god of trapsmithing in order to defeat epic adventurers. It succeeded, then fell into the Gyre. Now it appears as a twenty-mile-diameter hoop, its edge a hundred-foot-wide shelf of mortared bones. This surrounds a vast plain of segmented plates with complex repeating patterns that form a labyrinthine road, fifty feet wide, which weaves toward the center. It looks like there might be some puzzle to decode, but scattered around the plane's perimeter (so there's always at least one visible) are roughly-carved wooden signs that read "Warning: Invisible Lava."

(There is no invisible lava.)

If anyone spends more than five minutes on the surface, seven spots on the 'labyrinth' road begin to glow with red light. The nearest is right where the bone shelf touches the patterend floor. If someone tries entering the labyrinth there, the first spot stays red, but the rest change to orange, suggesting a path that would span miles and miles. Finding one's way to the second glowing spot without leaving the roadway requires an Intelligence check (DC 20); each attempt takes an hour.

Crossing the second glowing spot turns the remaining spots yellow; and so on through green, blue, and indigo. But then upon reaching the seventh spot, purple, which is only a half mile from the center of the plane, the deathtrap triggers. The plates of the patterned plain crack apart and release a blast of prismatic magical energy.

Attack: Area blast (creatures on plane); +33 vs. Fortitude, Reflex, and Will (make three attacks)
Hit (Fortitude): The target is petrified.
Hit (Reflex): The target takes 30 acid, 30 cold, 30 electricity, 30 fire, and 30 thunder damage.
Hit (Will): The target goes insane, and is permanently dazed, spending most of its time screaming about an endless abyss.

If the creature survives all of that, it's suddenly standing over an open void, ten miles from the nearest solid ground. Without magic, it will fall to oblivion. Surviving the trap creates a bond with the plane.

#15. Gardboral, the Chimeric Maelstrom

Planar Trait: Elementals grow larger, and mundane phenomena can generate them.

The Stone of Ragnar

This world underwent a final epic battle between giants and normal men, and the giants won and were rewarded by ascending to the form of titanic storms. Now nothing persists here except immense elementals who want to destroy any interlopers. At best, one of the elementals might be goaded into attacking Egalitrix in order to take its treasure (see page 167).

#14. Ringes, the Barren Moor

Planar Trait: Creatures with Intelligence 3 or greater are driven to murderous violence.

The Maddening Cat

This barren moor appears to have no animal life more dangerous than crocodiles and leeches, but the architect of that world's demise still survives. **Ystis** was once the familiar of a plague wizard, and when his mistress was slain he consumed the woman's soul and took control of her power. He learned to emit from his body a disease of invisible parasites that would burrow into creatures' minds and drive them into a violent rage toward each other.

Though Ystis is a consummate lurker who never lets himself be seen, the wretched feline's dander leaves a trail of black wherever he prowls. Ages ago he commanded the last few zombies in the world to construct him a throne at the edge of the world, where he lazes in the light of Obliatas. When threatened he hides, circles his foes, and waits for his plague to drive them to kill each other.

Unlike Iratha Ket, the parasites here are real creatures and do respond to magic to cure diseases. See Appendix A (page 286) for Ystis's stats.

#12. Guay, the Grove of Dreams

Planar Trait: Dreams create demiplanes. While someone dreams, a small portal floats nearby them, and it is possible to enter these portals, explore the plane beyond, and interact with the dreamer's thoughts. Items in the dream can be plundered, which strip thoughts from the sleeper's mind. Likewise, ideas can be implanted. Sleeping with strangers becomes perilous.

The Loathed Muse

This world was a pleasure plane created by a god of artists as a gift to his beloved, a mortal painter. Trees of countless varieties seem to be perpetually lit by a setting sun, and every surface is unreal, its shape and texture either cloudy like watercolor or stiff and layered as if painted in oils.

The artist enjoyed her time here, but the god kept making excuses why she could not leave, so she painted a mural on the inside of her villa, showing the god as he slept, with a doorway beside him. When next the god slept, indeed this door appeared, and she stepped into her lover's dreams, discovering that he had killed everyone else who had ever seen her work, so that he alone could enjoy it. Still inside his dream, she painted another mural, this showing the god finding the artist dead by hanging. Then she left his dream and hid, and when the god awoke he was convinced the artist was dead. In despair he hung himself.

The foolish painter, though, thought she could paint a portal back home, but she was trapped. She eventually went mad and hung herself too, but not before desperately painting every surface she could: her home, boulders, tree trunks, and even the withered corpse of the god. A recurring motif is windows within windows, and beautiful women whose eyes are hidden by flowing hair desperately trying to smash their way free. Often it seems like the women are trapped inside the painting, trying to get out.

An Impossible Encounter

While exploring, a rival from the party's past confronts them. Ideally this should be someone who completely could not be here; if you don't have someone specific to the party, then **Leone Quital** the Steelshaper works. The enemy brings up the weaknesses of one of the PCs and makes a prediction that someone will betray him, but as soon as anyone tries to retaliate, the whole group awakens in a clearing, not having realized they were asleep.

Every hour the party stays here they suffer a similar episode, with dreams providing glimpses into the real world, or of events on another plane in the Gyre. If they stay here six hours, they are addressed by the Voice of Rot, who slithers and crashes through the forest just out of line of sight. He says that he can see the deaths in their pasts that they most regret, and then he bursts from the treeline with incredible speed, devouring the PCs one by one.

When they awake from that nightmare, they're fully rested.

#9. Metarie, the Swamp of Sabotage

Planar Trait: Technology is disrupted. Each round that a firearm or other mechanical or technological device is used, there's a 50% chance it acts as if broken.

Worse than Bedbugs

Oily three-armed gremlins have infested an otherwise quite lovely swamp demiplane. This world consists of nested layers of marsh. Each layer has bits of boggy ground covered in tall grass separated murky ponds, all of it beneath a looming canopy of moss-draped trees. The gremlins scuttle through the forest, their too-wide eyes glowing in a slowly shifting order of green, and blue, and white. The other prominent creatures are newts the size of crocodiles, which are too curious for their own good.

The lower levels of the swamp are each twenty feet tall, with soggy ceilings instead of forest canopy. The roots of the trees above weave into columns that support each layer, and many of these columns have their trunks infested with carnivorous fireflies.

All told, thirty layers can be navigated, and could potentially serve as a dungeon site if you're desperate for a crawl. Otherwise, it's mostly just icky creatures dropping gears as breadcrumbs, trying to lure outsiders into a cottage whose doorway drops directly into a cauldron which the gremlins use to make stew.

Long, long ago Metarie was a nature preserve in a great plane-wide city whose people relied on innovative mechanical technology to keep their world alive even as they hollowed out its core. Carelessness led the people of that plane to ignore for too long the primitive three-armed gremlins, who out of jealousy sabotaged the machines that ran to the core. The world collapsed under its own weight, and only the gremlins survived, frolicking in the ruins of a culture they still instinctually resent.

Why Even Bother?

When the party first arrives they can hear a rumbling engine, similar to that of the Golden Legion's large airship, the *Aurum Treasure*, but closer to the hiss-churn of a steam boiler than the growl of diesel. Indeed, one of the legion's earlier vessels crashed here, and the gremlins have revved it up to lure the party into their domain. The ship is not on the top layer, however. Its crash punched a hole a hundred feet wide, which swamp water pours into. Down three layers it sits, its hold full of treasure, and its pit fiend captain—**Kebez Pol**—still alive, locked inside the steam boiler after the gremlins rusted the hatch shut. The boiler still runs, and the heat cannot kill him.

Kebez Pol is insane from isolation, and doesn't have enough sense to realize if he's being tricked, so he'll gladly answer any question about the legion, in exchange for being freed from his oubliette. The ship is too far gone to repair, but its fusils could help strengthen the party's ship's arms.

Waiting for an Opportunity

The gremlins are patient and mean. If the party lands here, a handful of them sneak on board the party's ship (Perception DC 35), though they wait until the PCs are gone and only lesser crew are acting as look-outs. They stow away and wait for the highest stakes—likely the battle with the Voice of Rot, but possibly against the legion—before they sabotage the ship so it has to land or else will crash.

If the party doesn't look for the gremlins, they'll be at a great disadvantage against the fey titan.

#5. Bonilathe, the Storm Claw

Planar Trait: Storms spawn creatures, typically reptilian.

Stormclaws

The coastal flats of Bonilathe shudder with thunderstorms, as the sentient staff of a long dead weather mage tries madly to stop itself from being drawn into the Gyre's teeth. The staff is trying to create intelligent life by striking pools of primordial ooze with bolts of lightning, but so far the best it can do is conjure reptilian beasts of high animal cunning. They typically kill each other before they can do anything useful for the poor, desperate staff.

This plane is an excuse for you to seed a final magic item for the PCs, and to provide an excuse for there to be dinosaurs in whatever new world the party creates.

#2. Teykfa, the Ticking Pendulum

Planar Trait: People are more aware of the scale of time, and they can better weight long-term consequences. Time can be manipulated.

The Long Now

One of the first worlds with intelligent life in the multiverse saw its last sentient life end eons ago, but the plane did not enter the Gyre because of the steady ticking of Teykfa, a megastructure carved into the heart of a parched desert mountain. Crafted of rust-resistant metal alloys and perfectly balanced with dozens of redundant structures, the mechanism functions as a clock that keeps time on a geologic scale. Once vigilant stewards wound its counterweight, but even after they perished it took millions of years for the structure to run down. Soon it will tick its last.

This world is the party's last chance to rest before confronting the Voice of Rot. Fortunately, time flows quickly here, so if the party lands and spends a week preparing, only a day will have passed in the outside world.

Should the PCs desire to bond with this plane, they should adjust the rate the clock ticks before they leave, or else there might be unforeseen consequences. With this plane in the sky, magic that manipulates time becomes possible, albeit difficult.

Flying Fortress

Action. Montage.

A gold-adorned volcano fortress serves as the Golden Legion's base in the Gyre, and holds many prisoners, including the engineers who maintain a steampunk thopter mechanism that allows the entire plane to fly.

If the party wishes to rescue the monarch of the Unseen Court so they can bond with Av, or to bond with this plane and its potential for fabulous technology, they'll need to defeat the leader of the Golden Legion, His Celestial Eruption Paelyrion XVIII. The warlord resides in the legion Command (area 19) an opulently decorated corridor that runs between the outside slope of the volcano and its caldera.

To get there, though, the party must survive the defenses of an entire hellish citadel.

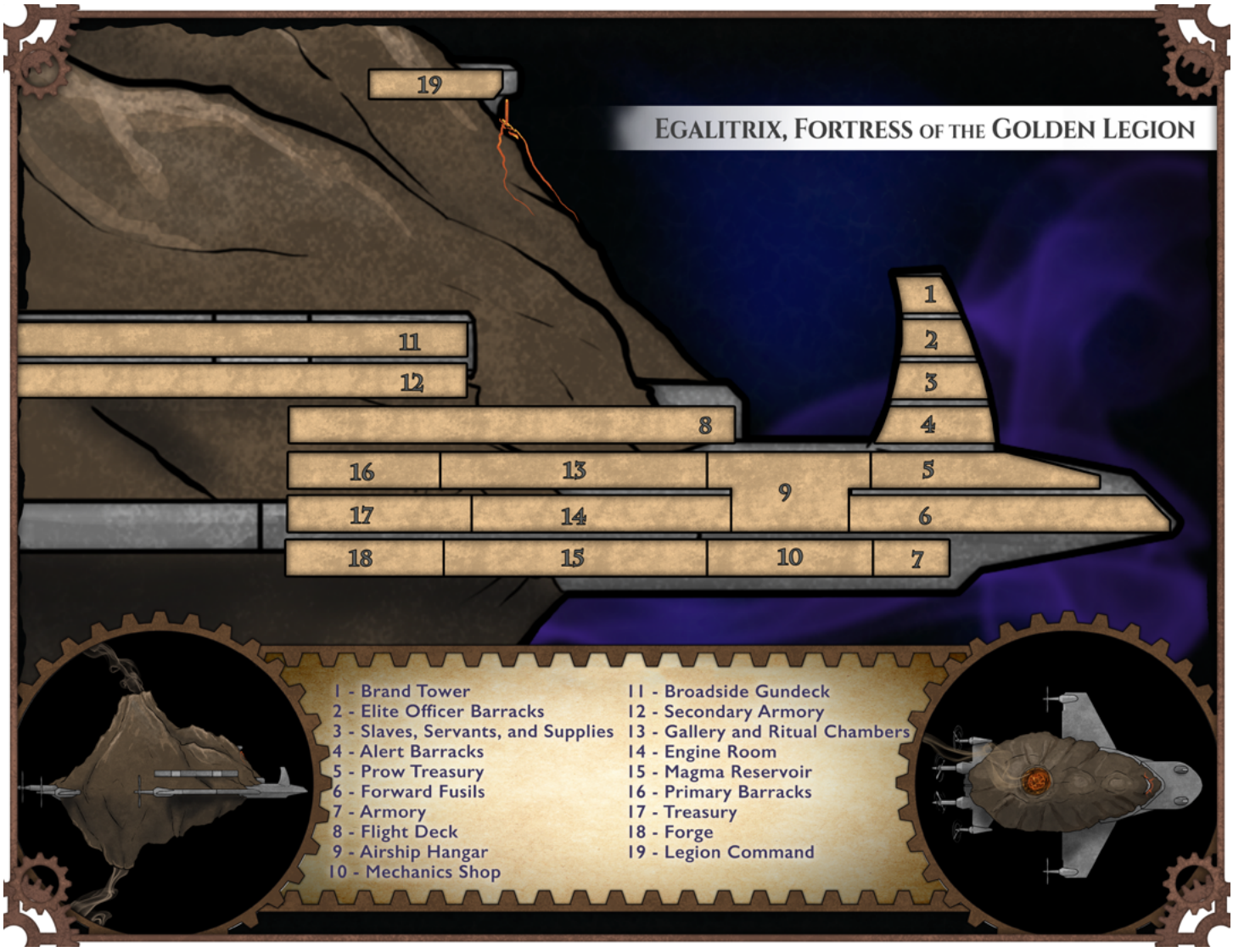
Likely Courses of Action

Killing Paelyrion XVIII isn't enough to defeat the Golden Legion since the force has a chain of command, but the throne room/command center has controls that can destroy the fortress.

The trick is getting there.

As a vehicle Egalitrix is too slow and cumbersome to avoid the party's approach, but it has immense firepower. Also, the party should be careful of being too clever, because the legion is masterful at teleportation magic.

An aerial approach likely gets spotted, provoking a dogfight detailed in Battle in the Sky. The party might land and treat the fortress as a dungeon crawl, in which case we present various encounters for combat, stealth, and sabotage in Legion Interior. When they reach the command throne room, Paelyrion XVIII awaits in Celestial Eruption.



Or the party could think outside the box and bring along asteroids from Urim, then hurl them at the fortress from half a mile away to kill half the legion and cause chaos, then teleport in a fire-proof invisible saboteur to overload the caldera heat regulators, triggering the only two-sided volcanic eruption they'll ever have the pleasure of seeing.

A weakness that might be quickly apparent is that the designers were still thinking two-dimensionally and assumed the ship needed only offense, not defense, since the fortress has no major weapons mounted below its middle section. While a ship approaching from below would take fire from smaller fusils that could be adjusted downward, it could reach the fortress largely unmolested.

Unseen Monarch

You can have the monarch of the Unseen Court kept wherever you like. It hasn't been long enough for him or her to become a full loyal slave of the legion, so Paelyrion wouldn't keep the monarch as a trophy in his throne room. But you might have the monarch as a prisoner in a golden cage in one of the treasuries inside the fortress, or just have him or her show up as a low-ranking legionnaire, still retaining some of his or her original form but growing horns through a golden veil that covers his or her face.

If you forget about the monarch and the party leaves without rescuing him or her, don't worry, Rock Rackus can save the day.

Teleportation Redirection

Any creature that teleports onto Egalitrix from a distance of more than 60 feet has his arrival noted by the lord of the legion, His Celestial Eruption Paelyrion XVIII. The creature senses some pressure against his arrival. Make an attack against each creature teleporting in.

Attack: +33 vs. Will; **Hit:** The creature's arrival is delayed by one round, and instead of where it intended to arrive, it appears in a spot of Paelyrion chooses anywhere in the fortress. Each creature redirected this way ends up in the same location. Typically Paelyrion chooses the magma reservoir (area 15), where they fall into molten rock. If they can't arrest their fall, they take 50 fire damage, plus ongoing 50 fire damage for as long as they're in the lava, then ongoing 40 fire damage (save ends) thereafter.

Narrative, Not Mechanical Navalry

If the party tries to fly straight at Egalitrix, instead of making attack rolls and command checks you can just narrate the barrage of fusils. In a direct approach with no tricks, the party's ship gets crippled and set on fire at Long range, at which point six windskiffs swoop in and circle at close range, blasting the ship to try to knock it out of the sky. This should prompt the PCs to leap from ship to ship to take out their enemies and find a new vessel.

With a cleverer or sneakier party, their ship might take some damage, get holes smashed in its hull, and suffer a fire, which slows it enough for one wave of windskiffs to close in, but once they win the fight they'll be able to fly to Legion Command.

Battle in the Sky

Action. Real-Time.

Egalitrix fusils and windskiffs lash out as the party approaches.

Egalitrix is a mountain in the sky, and thus is visible from over sixty miles away. The party of course has magic, so they might try to sneak and avoid a confrontation altogether, or they could end up flying in with the Caeloon monastery, an elemental titan from Gardboral, and Doverspike the vampiric dragon as wingmen.

Unless the party finds a way to approach with stealth, their airship would be spotted from miles out, at which point the legion would prepare its swarm of windskiffs. Six that are already on alert would launch first, hoping to time their advance so they could close to attack and board right as the party comes within range of the fortress's weapons. After those first skiffs depart, more are scrambled, and so once aerial combat begins, another four windskiffs arrive each naval round.

Even if they find some way to arrive unseen, once they get within 500 feet various *truesight* wards will detect them, and the alert squadron of windskiffs will launch and be ready to engage right as the party is closing within landing distance. The largest fusils won't be able to hit them, but point defenses will.

Stages in Combat

This battle is roughly divided into stages, each about 500 feet across. The basic stages you'll need to track are the prow, the port, the starboard, the aft, the peak, and the under-peak. Also at play are two stages in each direction outward, representing the sky through which the party approaches. It will typically take a ship one naval turn (one minute) to move across one 500-foot stage, but the swarm of legion windskiffs will try to slow them so they'll take more fire from the fortress's weapon batteries.

Incoming Fire

The fortress has ten weapon batteries:

- **Brand Towers.** These only fire forward, but to extreme range.
- **3 Heavy Fusils.** One battery faces forward, another port, another starboard. They can strike at long and medium range.
- **6 Point Defenses.** One battery each faces forward, port, starboard, aft, up to defend Legion Command, and down under the superstructure. They can strike at medium and close range.

The party will need to cross from extreme range (over 1000 feet away), to long range (between 500 and 1000 feet), to medium range (within 500 feet), and then to close range (within 25 feet). Each naval turn that the party's ship is in a stage that a weapon can target it, that weapon will fire. That's a lot of attacks, so the party needs five or six aces up their sleeves if they want to try a frontal assault.

Counter attacking is valid, and each battery has its own defenses. Due to their size, a single strike that hits a battery will just impose a -5 penalty to further attacks by that battery. A second strike disables the battery, and a third creates a crowd-pleasing explosion that kills all the gunnery crew.

Brand Towers
(Extreme, Long, Medium, and Close; prow only)

Two metal horns glow and spurt a thousand foot stream of magma through the sky. Where it strikes it weaves and burns a brand in the shape of a hellish horned face in profile, like the head of a coin.

Attack: +15 at extreme range, +20 at long, +25 at medium, +15 at close. An attack that misses at close range instead strikes the vessel's superstructure.

Damage: One strike, plus an additional strike for every 5 points the attack roll beats the ship's defense. Each strike hits a different place, but instead of causing damage it inflicts the *burning* condition and deals 2d6 fire damage to each creature in that area.

Burning: At the end of this round and each naval round thereafter, for each component that is burning, the captain makes a saving throw (d20 + Charisma modifier). On a 20 or higher, the fire is put out. A 10 or higher prevents any damage. A 5 to 9 deals a strike to the component. A 4 or less has the fire spread to an adjacent location.

Engineers can use their naval action and make an Intelligence check (DC 20) to extinguish a fire, assuming he has crew available equal to the ship's Minimum Crew (who won't count toward full complement for the round). Some magic might also work, or just provide a bonus to the save.

Defense 30; **Crew** 5

Heavy Fusils
(Long and Medium; one each forward, port, or starboard)

Nine immense fusils cover each of the forward, port, and starboard approaches. They fire sizzling bolts that arc like black comets.

Attack: +20 at long, +25 at medium.

Damage: One strike, plus an additional strike for every 5 points the attack roll beats the ship's defense. Each strike hits a different place.

Defense 30; **Crew** 300

Point Defenses
(Medium and Close; one each in all directions)

Dozens of smaller fusils, some handheld, fire bolts of golden arcane energy. They screech like shearing metal, then explode on impact.

Attack: +20 at medium, +25 at close.

Damage: One strike, plus an additional strike for every 5 points the attack roll beats the ship's defense. Each strike hits a different place.

Defense 20; **Crew** 300

Aft Exhaust Cloud

Egalitrix's engines belch not just smoke and steam, but infernal toxic air that is magically evil. Approaching for behind is clever but perilous. The ship needs to maneuver behind the fortress at an extreme distance and stay hidden by the smoke cloud, then actually enter the cloud and pass through it for about three minutes. They're magically detected at Medium range, and when they emerge from the cloud directly above the aft, the first six windskiffs will be scrambled to attack.

Each minute the party's ship is in the smoke cloud, make an attack against each creature aboard that has to be exposed and breathing the fumes.

Attack: +30 vs. Fortitude; **Hit:** 5 fire damage and 5 poison damage.

From Below or Above

Approaching from below will still get the party spotted, so they'll have to deal with waves of windskiffs, plus point defenses at Medium and Close range. Then they could board some lower section of the superstructure and move through the fortress on foot, or pop up to the upper level.

Dropping in from above works much the same, except it allows immediate access to the Legion Command, whose point defenses probably can't do much before the party rushes the throne room.

Windskiff Skirmish

The legion's flagship *Aurum Treasure* was either destroyed by the party's actions at Av, or damaged and reclaimed by Rock Rackus. However, entire squadrons of smaller and nimbler windskiffs remain. The legion's windskiffs are individually weak and fragile, so this gives the PCs a chance to play the indomitable dreadnought, but if they aren't proactive the party might be swarmed and destroyed. Of course, then they can just jump between legion ships until they're on whichever one happens to still be flying.

Golden Legion Goonswarm Alert Force (Level 27)

- 6 infernal windskiffs

Goonswarm Alert Crew (6 ships, each Level 21)

- 1 Golden Legion horned devil
- 1 Golden Legionnaire company

Golden Legion Goonswarm Reinforcements (Level 25 each, Level)

- 20 infernal windskiffs

Goonswarm Reinforcement Crew (18 ships, each Level 23)

- 2 Golden Legionnaire elite stars
- 1 golden steam golem

Tactics

The legionnaires have been briefed about the party's power, and they know better than to get into close combat. The ships are likely too small to ram the party's ship to any effect, and they don't attempt to board. But if the party manages to get close enough to start attacking the infernal crews directly, the rest of the swarm clusters around the party's vessel, then join the mass melee. If they can, they try to shove or drag enemies overboard and hurl them into the depths of space.

We assume an initial six windskiffs attack. If the party gets spotted on their approach, up to five waves of four more windskiffs arrive each naval round thereafter. However, once the party destroys or cripples 18 ships, the remaining vessels peel off, deeming the engagement too costly.

Flying Allies

A few dozen 20th level monks might help, as might a vampiric dragon, a titanic elemental, or a country-sized turtle.

Kinava Monks of Caeloon

Calily and the monks of the Kinava monastery can fold the building into a gargantuan flying vessel which uses its wide wings (in the building sense) as literal wings.

Unfortunately, because it's made of paper, it is flammable and very vulnerable to the legion's weapons. If the party has some way to minimize the threat of fire (like using a ritual to create a rainstorm in space, or B.S.ing some epic magic to use the energy of Etheax to make it so only intentional fires burn here), then the monks provide air support.

You can handwave a bit and have them do clever things to take out a few incoming windskiffs and maybe block one strike per round. The monastery is probably larger than the party's ship, so it can fly ahead fully unfolded to make them harder to see, and when fusil shots come streaking in the monks can rapidly fold in whole sections to dodge those attacks.

Another trick is for the monastery, which has wide open 'courtyards,' is to descend like a titanic hawk and maneuver so it surrounds a windskiff or two, then fold the whole courtyard away in order to tuck those ships into an extradimensional space where they can do no harm, or where monks can be gang up on the crew.

Doverspike the Worldslayer

The vampiric dragon can transform into mist and conjure fog banks a quarter mile across, big enough to spare the party from fusil fire as they approach, and to cause the windskiffs that do arrive to be uncoordinated and scattered. As a combatant he remains hidden and only strikes when his target has no nearby allies who might retaliate. If he has a chance, he'll just incinerate entire companies of legionnaires, their fire resistance useless against his life-draining breath. This has the effect of taking out one windskiff in the fog bank each naval round.

Doverspike is fascinated by the possibility of treasure that rivals his own hoard, which after all was claimed from a world whose entire population had died. If not kept on a short leash, once he reaches the fortress he is drawn to the brand towers, glides up one in mist form, and manages to take out most of the defenders before one horned devil triggers a detonation that consumes the whole tower—and Doverspike—in an explosion of magma.

Titan of Gardboral

If such a titan can be goaded to target Egalitrix, it's best just to let it cause havoc and move in during the confusion. The chimeric elemental can cripple one or two weapon batteries as it closes in, but then it falls beneath the unified onslaught of a thousand legionnaires.

Bhoior, the Walking Whisper

A spirit medium could convince the undead turtle to go where he wants it. The legion really can do nothing to hurt something this big, but the turtle is so slow all it will really accomplish is letting the PCs directly board the flying fortress without an aerial fight. Afterward it can bite one of the wings off, which is spectacular but not particularly useful against Paelyrion XVIII.

Legion Interior

Action. Montage.

This is basically your last chance for a dungeon crawl in this campaign.

Here's a general overview of what the party runs into in each area of the fortress. Forces move somewhat in response to the party's actions, and whenever the party encounters a group with a succubus, it will use *report and reinforce* to teleport away to another location that has succubi. One of the succubi in that location will rally nearby units, and five rounds later will open a new portal leading back to the original battle.

We don't expect the party to kill the Golden Legion to the last devil, so we want the party to feel harried and outnumbered. It should be clear that if they try to take on the whole legion they'll probably be worn down, not allowed to rest, and eventually killed. If they try to teleport away Paelyrion will redirect them to the magma reservoir, hoping to incinerate them. It's certainly possible to sneak past the legion, or rush through less-occupied areas in a mad dash to the throne room.

Then again, the party is epic. If they want to try to kill a whole legion, and you think you'll enjoy it, let them.

Total Legion Forces at Egalitrix

- Paelyrion XVIII
- 2 Golden Legion pit fiends
- 34 Golden Legion horned devils
- 69 Golden Legion succubi
- 4 Golden Legion glabrezu
- 180 Golden Legionnarie companies (4500 devils in total)
- 60 Golden Legion elite stars (300 elite devils)
- 30 Golden Legion steam golems
- 12 Enslaved Supplicants of Elofasp
- 4 Enslaved Elofasp ravants
- Hundreds of non-combatant slaves

Layout and Defenses

Each 'deck section' on the map is thirty feet high, though they might be divided into shorter decks not individually shown. The total mapped area is about a thousand feet long in total. The forces typically found in each area are listed first, then a description.

1. **Brand Tower.** *3 horned devils, 2 succubi, and 2 glabrezu per tower.*
   These two forward towers jut like horns from the prow of the fortress ship. The tips of each are clad in layers of hellish sigils and are fed by an arcane pipeline of magma, which charges them with destructive power. At the command of a legion warmage, each brand can unleash a stream of magma that arcs a thousand feet or more.
2. **Elite Officer Barracks.** *10 horned devils and 8 succubi per tower.*
   The highest ranking members of the legion, who are possessed with some modicum of free will, lodge here, though their amenities amount merely to personal beds, rather than the cramped floorspace and bunks where lesser legionnaires sleep. Small suites are available for crafting and enchanting.
3. **Slave, Servants, and Supplies.**
   Those who serve the elite officers reside in torturous confinement here.
4. **Alert Barracks.** *2 elite stars and 2 companies per tower.*
   The bottom level of each of the two towers has both quarters and a sparring gym filled with all manner of spiked obstacles.
5. **Prow Treasury.** *3 enslaved supplicants of Elofasp and 2 elite stars*
   The legion literally derives power from wealth, and all told it owns gold sufficient for multiple dragon's hoards. This prow treasury has golden statuary and art objects worth over 2 million gold pieces, which helps charge the weapons in the brand towers. Destroying that treasure would deactivate those weapons.
6. **Forward Fusils.** *8 steam golems, 16 companies, 8 succubi, 2 horned devils*
   A bank of eight turret-mounted arcane fusils, each over a hundred feet long, loom along the prow. Hundreds of legionnaires are necessary to load and aim these colossal weapons, even with the assistance of twenty-foot-tall golden constructs. Scores of smaller fusils array the perimeter, allowing for more precision defense. Each fusil fires blasts of arcane force or hellfire.
7. **Armory.** *4 companies, 2 elite stars, 2 enslaved supplicants of Elofasp*
   This holds personal weapons, as well as components to repair the fusils and enchanted crystals that store explosive energy.
8. **Flight Deck.** *6 companies, 6 succubi, 4 steam golems, 1 elite star*
   The surface of the metal superstructure has a half-dozen windskiffs secured and ready to launch with just a few minute's notice. Each skiff carries a company of legionnaires, commanded by a succubus. Thick mechanical hatches open to permit access to the hangar below.
9. **Airship Hangar.** *7 enslaved supplicants, 1 enslaved ravant*
   Twenty more windskiffs are kept stored here, only lightly guarded. However, Elofasp warbeasts lurk in the shadows, and will attack intruders.

The following areas are mirrored, with equivalent locations on both the port and starboard side of the fortress.

10. **Mechanics Shop.** *4 companies, 1 succubus*
    Slaves who possess skills at crafts might be spared joining the legion if they obediently serve to repair the fortress's machinery and warships. The choking black smoke here cuts visibility to less than twenty feet, and life expectancy to less than twenty years.
11. **Broadside Gundeck.** *9 steam golems, 18 companies, 9 succubi, 2 horned devils*
    Nine more immense fusils, like the ones in section 6, aim out across the port wing, and likewise the starboard. Hundreds more legionnaires operate them.
12. **Secondary Armory.** *2 companies, 1 elite star*
    The legion has never had to face an assault; it has always been the aggressor, so the broadside weapons are comparably weak and under-maintained.
13. **Galley and Ritual Chambers.**
    Food, kitchens, and very minimalist galleys serve the crew here. The spaces double as ritual chambers, and so every surface is adorned with binding or channeling sigils. The horned devils will occasionally lead hundreds of legionnaires in mass chants to focus divination or defensive spells.
14. **Engine Room.** *5 elite stars, 10 companies, 2 succubi*
    Each wing contains a huge turbine, fueled by magmatic energy, which spins propellers at the wingtip and along the aft of the ship. These components are heavily armored, and in any event their size makes them difficult to sabotage. Nevertheless, they require a ton of men to operate and maintain.
15. **Magma Reservoir.** *2 companies, 1 enslaved ravant, 1 succubus*
    The underbelly of the superstructure is filled with magma, the heat from which powers the engines. A long-neglected eldritch machine sits at the side of the reservoir, its press stamp and sacrificial blood siphon designed to channel human suffering into molten stone to create the volatile ammunition the fortress uses.
16. **Primary Barracks.** *12 elite stars, 34 companies*
    Over a thousand legionnaires reside in these cramped quarters, circulating as needed to man their various posts.
17. **Treasury.** *1 horned devil, 2 succubi, 5 elite stars, 10 companies, 4 enslaved supplicants*
    The greater wealth of the legion is split along the two flanks of the vessel, and each of these chambers has wealth worth over twenty million gold pieces. Stacked ingots rise to the ceiling. Currently it's under renovation as legion wizards try to figure out how to make gold floors and columns strong enough to be load-bearing.
18. **Forge.** *4 companies, 1 succubus*
    Here are crafted larger components for expanding the fortress or building new warships.
19. **Legion Command.** *Paelyrion XVIII, enslaved master Chyak, 2 pit fiends, 1 enslaved ravant, 2 elite stars*
    A winding staircase weaves from the flight deck up to this comparably small throne room. The chamber runs from the edge of the volcanic caldera to a forward overlook. Paelyrion XVIII directs the legion from here, his commands carried to and fro by succubi messengers. This chamber doesn't actually have direct control over the fortress or its weapons, but it does have machinery to regulate the heat of the caldera. Much as at the climax of adventure two, *The Dying Skyseer*, disrupting this system can cause the entire mountain to explode.

Metal and Gears

There are five main ways to sabotage the fortress.

First, each **engine room** has diesel engines and steam turbines which would require hours to dismantle or detonate, and even mighty magic would need minutes to get the job done, all while reinforcements swarm in. However, an Intelligence check (DC 25) can deduce how the machinery is controlled, and a Thievery check (DC 32) can change the pitch, yaw, and roll of the fortress, then damage the mechanism enough that it will take hours to repair. In the meanwhile, the PCs could leave the fortress tilted so its main weapons cannot bear on the PCs as they approach, or cause it to slowly steer toward the stormy outer edge of the Gyre nebula.

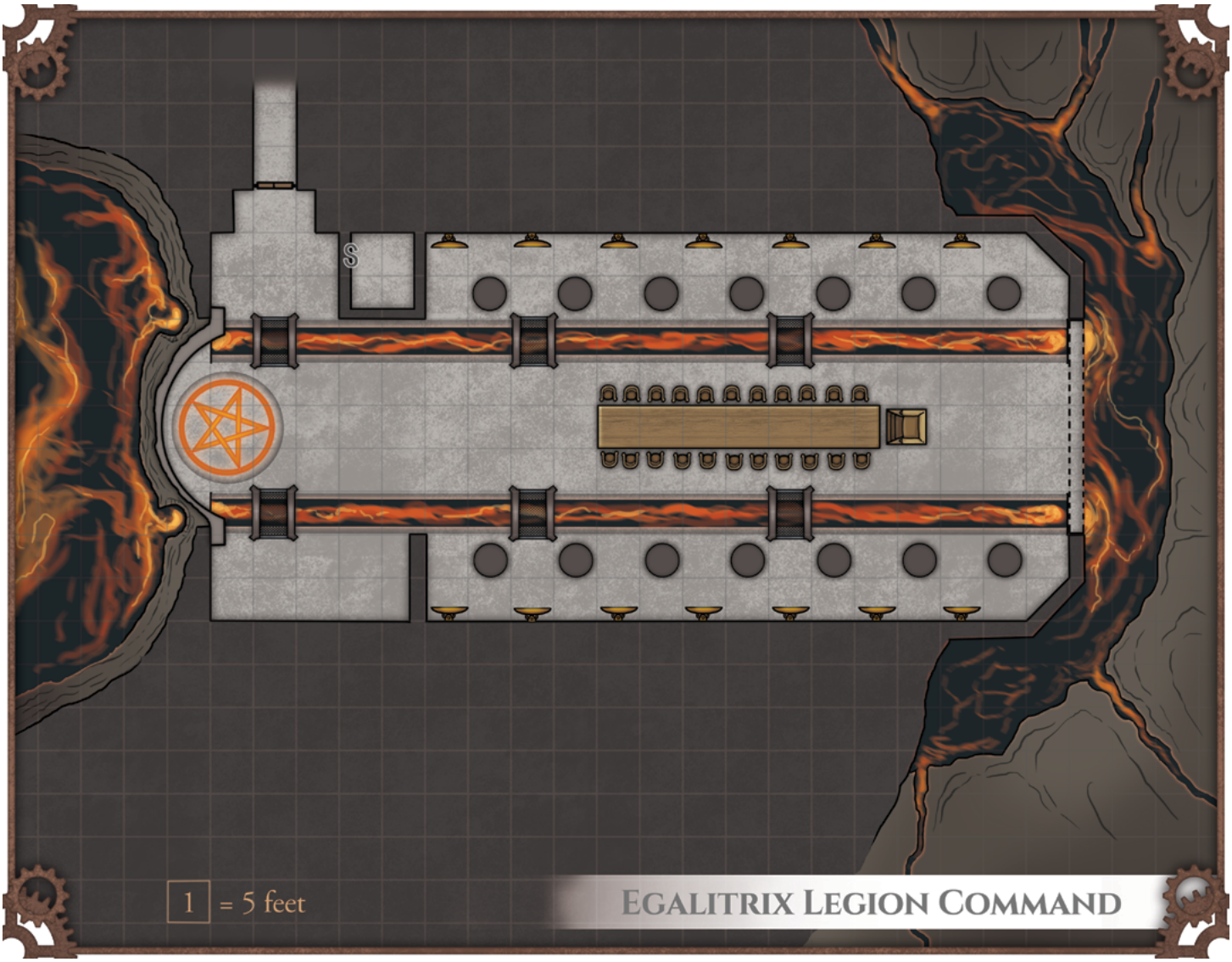
Unlike airships which can 'sink' into the void below the Gyre, Egalitrix is a plane and so will float even if the engines are destroyed.

Second, any of the three **armories** (prow, port, and starboard) are filled with explosive crystals that can be detonated. The legion has never come under attack, so their safety here is quite lax, and a single fire or lightning effect that deals at least 40 damage will set off a cascade of explosions, and within a minute the whole armory will explode, dealing 100 damage to everyone in the area and damaging each component adjacent to it.

Third, the **gundecks** can be similarly detonated, but they have less ammunition lying around, so it requires an attack that does 60 damage, and the explosion only does 50 damage to those caught in it. It also damages adjacent components.

Fourth, the **magma reservoir** can be drained by huge relief valves (Thievery DC 32 to figure out the proper method) or by dealing 2 strikes with a naval weapon. This causes lava to pour out the bottom of the fortress, and saps the engines and brand towers of their power.

Fifth, the three **treasuries** (prow, port, and starboard) literally grant the greed-fueled legion its power. Damaging one of these chambers (such as by detonating a gundeck, striking it with a naval weapon, or ramming it with a giant turtle) imposes a -2 penalty to the attack rolls and defenses of all legionnaire companies and elite stars. A second strike destroys the treasure, causing it to slag and pour out of holes in the side of the fortress. Each strike increases the penalty, to a maximum of -12 for six strikes destroying all three treasuries.



Celestial Eruption

Action. Tactical. Level 32.

Intruders to the throne room of General Paelyrion XVIII are destroyed with well-trained efficiency. And with piles of gold.

The throne room of Legion Command is dominated by a long table reminiscent of a real-world corporate board room. Twin rivers of lava, bridged by six iron grates, run through channels down the length of the room, fed by the caldera and pouring into a pool on the face of the mountain. An open window looks out this lava pool, and beyond to the brand towers and whatever poor spot the legion decides to attack.

The table seats twenty-four, reserved for the pit fiends and a mix of horned devils and succubi, but now most of the seats are empty. A golden mound of machinery and chains form the throne of Paelyrion, which can swivel to face any direction. Columns flank the central table, and the shadowy edges of the room are lined with full-length mirrors of polished gold. These are *mirrors of opposition*, similar to the one that might be found on a Mavisha island.

The pentagram next to the caldera is a localized teleportation circle which anyone can activate by stepping into it and thinking of any location in the fortress.

A staircase from the flight deck weaves up the mountain, then heads into a tunnel that leads to the throne room's main entrance. A hidden room accessed by a secret door (Perception DC 35 to notice it amid the golden decorations) houses a pet ravant, trained to exit and attack intruders at the sound of battle.

Legion Command Defense

- General Paelyrion XVIII
- Enslaved master Chyak
- 2 Golden Legion pit fiends
- 1 Golden Legion enslaved ravant
- 2 Golden Legion elite stars





Ages ago, Paelyrion was an advisor to Egal the Shimmering, lord of the Golden Legion. He was tasked with conquering a young world with rich resources, which was being contested by numerous forces from across the planes. Somehow a native civilization of orcs managed to enact a ritual that cut off the plane he was mustering on from the rest of the multiverse, and he and a thousand legionnaires became stranded in the Gyre.

Paelyrion is immortal, and he learned long ago that so is gold. He intends to escape the Gyre somehow, but until then he might as well acquire as much gold as possible for himself. Like his master Egal, the conquest is not important, only the treasure it yields. While evil, he sees no need to destroy those who are no threat, but anyone who jeopardizes his treasure is an enemy who cannot be spared.

Businesslike Battle

General Paelyrion XVIII is not a talker. The moment he spots the party, he and his advisors attack using well-drilled tactics. Paelyrion expects attention to be focused on him, and his aura makes foes who are too close quite susceptible to being grabbed and burned by the elite stars.

He uses *distracting claw* if he cannot hit enemies with an area or blast attack. If he can catch at least two foes he prefers crushing them under gold with *mockery of the crown*, and he saves *unleash inner fire* for when it won't hit any of his allies (they're resistant to fire, not immune). He waits to use *shape lava* on a vulnerable foe. Every round he shouts out *legion maneuvers*, because the greatest victory his side can achieve is to turn an enemy into a loyal slave by shoving them into one of the mirrors of opposition.

Speaking of slaves, Paelyrion is attended by master Chyak San-Cho, former leader of the monks of the Kinava monastery on Caeloon. Now wrapped in golden chains, Chyak is a trophy and whipping boy for the general, and for the first few rounds of combat Paelyrion even forgets that he's around. Then he realizes he's not been using all his resources, and he sends the monk into battle. If the party has Calily with them Chyak will not attack her or anyone near her, and he visibly struggles with the chains.

Meanwhile, if enemies oblige to get close enough, the two pit fiends keep Paelyrion and each other within their *aura of fire and fear*. They only have melee attacks, so ignoring Paelyrion can draw them away from him. Once they get within range they use *infernal summons* to bring in a Golden Legionnaire company if there's room.

The elite stars of legionnaires use their *golden gearlances* to grab foes and teleport them beside the mirrors of opposition. And the ravant is just a savage monster, loyal to Paelyrion to the point that it will provoke opportunity attacks to get by his side.

Lava Channels

A creature that enters or ends its turn in lava takes 30 fire damage, and gains ongoing 15 fire damage (save ends).

Mirrors of Opposition

Similar to what was set up in the final vault of the Crypta Hereticarum (see adventure four, *Always on Time*), golden mirrors line the wall. Any creature adjacent to the mirror sees his reflection smiling evilly. If an enemy who has grabbed a PC succeeds in moving that PC while he's already adjacent to a mirror, the enemy forces the PC to look at the mirror, even pulling eyelids open, if necessary. Make the following attack.

Attack: Close blast 1 (one creature in burst); +30 vs. Will
Hit: The target's soul is trapped in the mirror, and the creature becomes evil and loyal to the Golden Legion.
Miss: The mirror darkens and cannot be used again for one day.
Special: This attack does not affect members of the Golden Legion.

The mirror can hold only one soul, but a ritual known to the Golden Legion can extract and consume the soul without harming the mirror, leaving the victim permanently turned. *Remove affliction* rituals performed with both the mirror and the victim present can restore the soul and return the creature to its former self. Dealing damage to the mirror deals an equal amount of hit point damage to the creature whose soul is trapped in it. Once that creature is reduced below 0 hit points, the mirror can easily be destroyed. This frees the trapped soul.



Aftermath

When Paelyrion falls to 0 hit points, he survives long enough to try to stagger into lava. He clutches his gold chains and shouts that they'll never take it from him, right before he collapses and dies. If somehow they can take Paelyrion alive, he'll try to bargain for his life, offering to free anyone in the legion they want as long as he gets to keep the fortress and all its golden treasure.



Master Chyak can be freed with the proper magic to remove the curse of the golden chains, which would earn the undying loyalty of the Kinava monks. Even if the party has to kill him, though, they will be able to bond with Caeloon because they put the honored man to rest.

About two minutes after the battle begins, succubi will teleport in as reinforcements. A few minutes later other devils start arriving. Before then, the party would be advised to either flee or find a way to give the legion something else to worry about.

Unintentional Self-Destruct Sequence

His Celestial Eruption General Paelyrion XVIII's throne has controls that can adjust the flow of magma from the caldera to the rest of the fortress. This was installed as a safeguard in the event saboteurs or traitors tried to wrest control of Egalitrix from him. He would be able to cut off power to the engines or flood certain sections (areas 13 and 16, the galley and barracks) with magma to crush resistance.

He's never had to use this function. In fact, he's forgotten all about it.

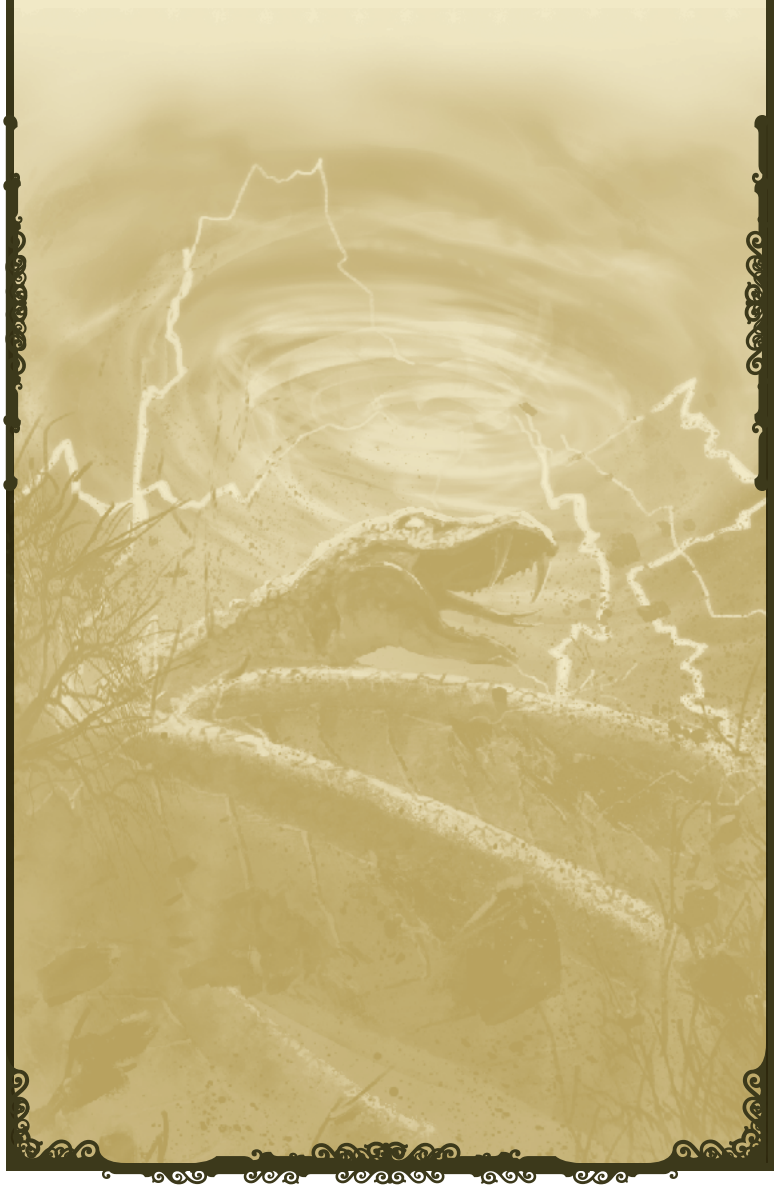
If the PCs failed their Nature checks (DC 25) when they first saw Egalitrix (see Predicting Eruption, page 163), let them attempt it again now that they're here to realize that the volcano isn't stable. If that heat weren't being siphoned off, such as by the engines, fusils, and brand, it would rapidly build up and cause the volcano to erupt. A Thievery check (DC 35) as a standard action can set the controls on the throne toward such a calamity, and a second check (DC 35) can sabotage them so the process cannot be reversed.

After the controls are triggered, the whole mountain rumbles. One round later lava begins to spit and bubble in the caldera at the back end of Legion Command. Each round thereafter the lava wells up and spreads 3 squares up the length of the chamber. Any creature that enters or starts its turn in the lava takes 30 fire damage and gains ongoing 15 fire damage (save ends). Eventually lava fills the chamber and begins to roll down the side of the mountain, and one round later the volcano begins to erupt in earnest. In a matter of minutes every living thing that cannot escape Egalitrix will either be incinerated or fatally trapped in searing basalt.

It takes a day for the lava to cool enough to return, at which point the party could bond to the plane if they so desired.

ACT THREE:
Blank and Pitiless

When the party is ready, the Voice of Rot is waiting at Reida, the plane closest to the teeth of the Gyre.



The Stage of History

Exploration. Montage.
The plane of Reida, trapped within the coils of the Voice of Rot, contains all the history of the party's homeworld.

Beyond Teykfa floats a field of cracked debris, the celestial backwash of grinding teeth at the center of the Gyre. The thunder of stone crushing against stone resounds from every direction, and what clear paths there are don't last long. Filtering though the rubble comes a pale glow from the last life of ancient worlds being snuffed, and something glints silver just at the precipice of annihilation.

As they fly through the miles-wide debris field and near the shining silver ring of Reida, the edges of the nebula to either side grow closer and closer, their misty thunderheads occasionally flickering with lightning. By the time they're clearing the drifting stones, the walls of the universe are only a thousand feet apart, and they narrow rapidly. What from a distance appeared as placid patterns in clouds here are visible as tight bands of roaring wind that carry shredded shards of stone toward the ultimate nexus of the Gyre. There the two halves of the geartooth nebula crash into each other, creating a sucking vortex too bright to look at.

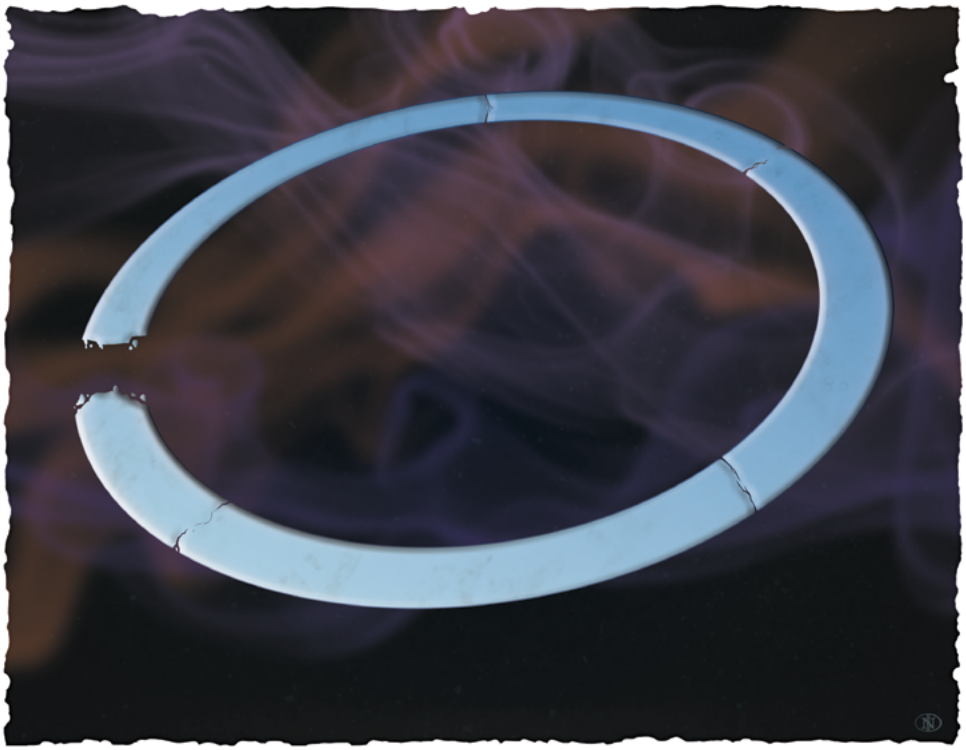
Emerging from the asteroids, it takes a moment for the PCs' eyes to adjust, and then they see floating just three hundred feet off their starboard bow is Reida. Though once a vast world thousands of miles in diameter, in the Gyre Reida has shrunk to only a few hundred feet across, missing a segment some fifty feet wide. The reflection of the Gyre's light off the ring is like a mirror in the sun, but something immense shifts and slithers along the plane's shadowed side.

Powerful Gyre winds begin to drag the party's ship toward oblivion, and the vessel doesn't have enough power to resist for long. Somehow Reida is motionless, resisting the hunger of the Gyre, but for the party the only choice now is whether to meet the Voice of Rot where he waits, or to give up and let themselves be sucked away and ground to starstuff.

Falling into a Black Hole

The Voice of Rot has wrapped himself around the plane, keeping mostly to the shadowed side facing away from the Gyre's teeth. The intense wind creates the effect of normal gravity, with 'down' being toward the Gyre teeth. Anything 'above' Reida is relatively safe, but should anyone fall off the edge of the plane they'll plummet toward their deaths. The teeth of the Gyre are miles away, so there remains the slightest chance of rescue, such as by long-range teleportation, but considering that solid ground on Reida is only 30 feet wide, the party would be wise to mind their footing.

If a PC does fall into the Gyre, he can still transfer his consciousness back to his other self in the real world, but that's useless if the Voice of Rot wins and kills the world.



Honored Foes

The Voice of Rot has a brief welcome as the party flies in.

> "Five ages have I glimpsed, my honored foes. Lo from the Golden Dawn, to First Crown, from the High Demonocracy, through the Malicious Victory, and now to the Obscuring Steam. Long did I await the end of this, a beautiful and dying world. I ask that you challenge me, that I may smother the last high hope. If it be yours, then I will kill and you shall rot. If it be mine, you will return home and I shall despair. Either way, I shall be appeased."

You can give the party time to trade words with the titan, but they need to land soon, and during the battle the Voice of Rot will only speak to his own grandeur and how the world's death shall let him ascend to godhood. He has little desire to talk to the PCs, but something sufficiently dramatic will make him pay attention, causing him for at least one round not to use *sussurus of decay*.

Landing

First, though, they need to survive the landing. If the party never went to Metarie (plane 9), they can reach Reida safely, though the ship and crew are still at risk from the Voice of Rot. The ship can actually remain airborne as long as it stays within 30 feet of Reida, because of the pocket of stability it creates. Straying beyond that causes the ship to shudder in the tidal forces of the Gyre, equivalent to heavy chop that might capsize the vessel.

If there are gremlins on board, though, the vessel's levitationals start to fail as soon as the ship clears the debris field and comes within view of Reida. Winds buffet the ship and chunks of debris strike it all about, making navigation unsteady. The captain needs to decide where to try to set down, then make a Command check (d20 + Int, Wis, or Cha modifier).

The party approaches from about the 7 o'clock angle, and the Voice of Rot stretches from around 2 o'clock (tail) to 6 o'clock (head). Landing directly on either side of the gap requires a DC 25 check. Landing around 11 o'clock or 4 o'clock is a DC 30 check, and making it all the way to 1 or 2 o'clock on the opposite side of the gap is DC 35. A navigator can help with these checks.

On a success, the ship soft-lands and lists slightly, but it remains solidly on the surface of the plane. Failure means the ship skids and won't stop. The party and their crew have a round to leap off the ship and onto Reida before the ship careens into the abyss. Failure by 5 or more means the ship is short, and it crashes into the edge of the ring. The vessel abruptly cracks from the impact, and everyone must make an Acrobatics check (DC 26) or be knocked prone. Thereafter they have one round to make it off the ship before it falls away.

The Rough Beast

Action. Tactical. Level 34.

The Voice of Rot has existed for the entire life of the world, and he must be battled across the ages.

In adventure nine, *The Last Starry Sky*, the party briefly faced off against the Voice of Rot, so they'll have an idea of his powers. More importantly, you'll have an idea of how the party managed against the threat of the fey titan. Since every epic-level party is dramatically different, we encourage you to tweak the tactics and powers of the Voice of Rot to provide a sufficient challenge for this climax.

A Ticking Clock

There are two main elements at play in this battle. First, of course, the Voice of Rot will bite and overrun PCs to try to wound and kill them, or he might use *awaken centuries of the dead* to try to trap them, especially if he's about to destroy part of the plane beneath them.

Second, he needs them to witness the destruction of the world, so as he moves he uses *sussurus of decay*, both growling and hissing in his eerie way, and in so doing his voice causes whichever of the five segments of Reida he is over to crack visibly. If he uses it a second time, the whole area shatters, leaving large chunks of stone separated by gaps five or ten feet wide. If he uses it a third time, that whole section falls away into the Gyre.

If there are any PCs or their allies in the same section of the plane as the Voice of Rot, and those characters are not bloodied after the damage dealt by *susurrus of decay*, their vigor keeps that section from cracking, shattering, or falling away. However, if all five ages are destroyed, the Voice of Rot wins. For the party to win they need to destroy the Voice of Rot or knock him off the plane while at least part of their world's history survives.

The chief complication there is that the Voice of Rot is able to tap the power of history. Because he is so ancient, any attack against him here fades away without effect at the start of his turn unless he was struck in parts of his body that are in at least two different ages. This encourages the party to split up (and rewards PCs with long-range attacks, who can target spots in multiple ages).

Depending on how aggressive your party is, you might need to speed things up, and have a given section fall away as soon as it is hit a second time with *susurrus of decay*. It depends heavily on how much damage your party dishes out and whether they might survive the Voice of Rot's attacks.

Five Ages

Starting from about 8 o'clock and moving clockwise, the five sections of the plane of Reida (separated by 5-ft. wide cracks) represent the orc-dominated dawn of time when the Axis Seal was created, the era when the first human nations arose, the centuries when the Demonocracy was in power, the period of the two Victories and their immediate aftermath, and the rise of industry to the modern day. This has little mechanical impact, but as the PCs move across these areas you can have them witness flashes of events past or relive memories from those time periods.

This is a perfect opportunity to fill the PCs in on any parts of the campaign's backstory they are unclear about.

A Moving Titan

The Voice of Rot constantly moves, and perhaps the easiest way to track his immense location is to get a snake skull to represent his head and thirty coins (one every 10 feet) to represent his body. When he moves, move the head, then remove sufficient coins from the tail end to fill in the spaces between where he started and where his head ended up. At times he might swing his head off the side of the plane so he can spin around and bite someone close behind him, but as long as more of his body is on the world than off it, he is stable.

Other times he might slither over the edge of Reida and move along the side facing the Gyre's teeth, which you can represent by flipping the coins from heads to tails (to show where he is under the plane and likely out of reach of attacks). As above, he makes sure to keep most of his body on the 'up' side of Reida. If somehow the party manages to trick or force the Voice of Rot so more than half his body is either off the plane or on the 'bottom,' he flails, loses his grip, and descends 30 feet per round toward the Gyre. He might still be able to swing back up and get back on top of Reida.

(Use your discretion whether he can actually hold on. For instance, if 60% of him is on the bottom, but his 'middle' is on the top, he's still probably good to go.)

Falling to his own ironic demise becomes more likely as more of the plane is destroyed. He won't use his *sussurus of decay* a third time to destroy a given segment of the plane unless he has a stable position, though if only one segment remains and he destroys it, he wins.

Ship and Other Terrain

The Voice of Rot easily slithers over the ship, wherever it landed, or he can attack it and try to grab and drag it off the edge of the world. The party's vessel's weapons are not powerful to harm the near godlike hide of the decaying serpent, though ramming would have a fair shot of dislodging a wide swath of his body from its grip on the plane.

Gyre Wind

Staying on the windward side of Reida is safe. Any creature that moves over an area without solid ground beneath it falls 150 feet at the end of its turn if it cannot fly, and still falls 30 feet even if it can fly.

Non-melee attacks with weapons that pass over the edge of the plane suffer a -4 penalty to the attack roll.

Balancing for Allies

This encounter gives you an opportunity to bring back dead characters whom the party enjoyed or hated. By default we assume the PCs arrive with crew members on their ship, who will all die after one or two uses of *sussurus of decay*. Even if they survive for a while, once the titan is wounded and uses *ages of war*, most survivors will be slain unless they're particularly strong or are being defended by the PCs.

If the PCs have several powerful allies with them, you might add one or two of the following attacks each round, as corpses rise from the ground and strike at the PCs. Pick a type of enemy appropriate to whatever age the PC is in, and if they're in the modern age, we suggest using any foe the party would remember who died before the end of adventure 9. These are just corpses conjured by the Voice of Rot, without the actual souls of the deceased.

✓ Undead Attackers ✦ At-Will

A corpse climbs out of the ground beside you, steps up, and attacks, then crumbles into silver powder.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +32 vs. AC

Hit: 35 damage.

Similarly, if you feel the PCs are having a rough time of it, particularly if they're devoting a lot of resources to defending helpless NPCs, an ally from history can arise and make one of these attacks per round. These are just memories stored in Reida itself, not real people. The defenses are a good stopgap, but if the Voice of Rot is annoyed by them he'll use *comet fall* to take out stubborn survivors.

A Yerasol Veteran PC feels a calling to the 'modern' section of the ring. There some veteran hero or perhaps a whole unit of soldiers manifest and follow his commands. This gives a Yerasol Veteran a chance to fight alongside other war heroes from Risur's past.

✓ Silvery Ally ✦ At-Will

A figure composed of drifting silver dust moves with the grace of a memory, striking and then taking a defensive stance. Walls of faintly remembered buildings materialize, providing cover.

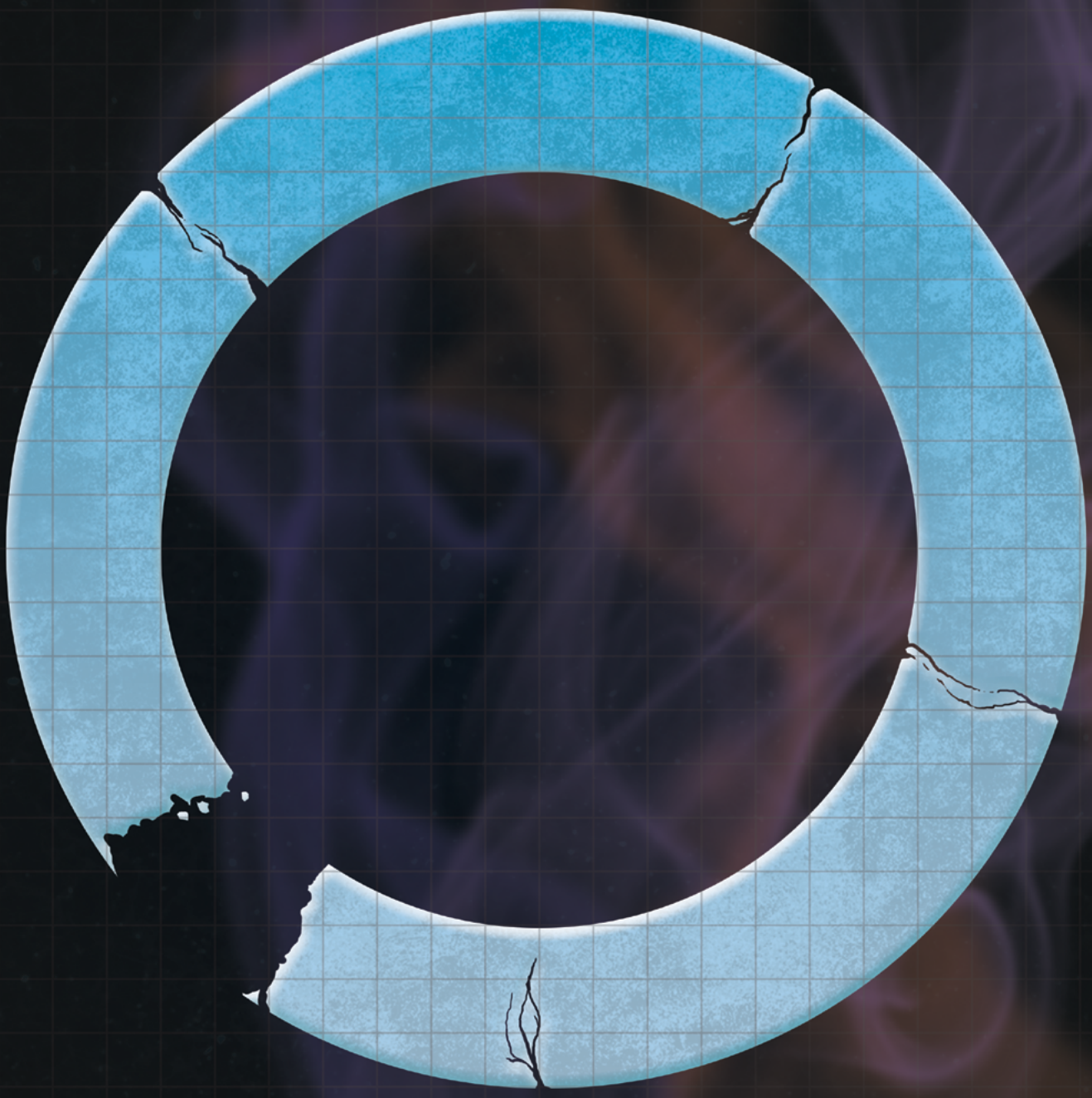
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +32 vs. AC

Hit: 30 damage.

Effect: A zone appears in close burst 3 centered on this attack's origin space, lasting until the end of the encounter. Creatures in the zone have resist 5 all.

Finally, if the party failed to thwart Grandis Komanov in adventure eleven, *Gorged on Ruins*, she appears here and fights to ensure her lord's ascent to godhood. Likewise with Copperhat the Headless in adventure nine, but he's more prone to changing sides if he thinks the party can avert the end of the world, which he's rather fond of.

Reida, the Arc of History



1 = 10 feet

The Eye of the Voice of Rot

The party might have found the Voice of Rot's long-lost other eye. While the fey titan's remaining eye lets him control the bodies of the dead, his lost eye let him control the souls. If the party brought it with them, it is too withered and calcified to have its full power, but its mere presence gives the Voice of Rot a -2 penalty on all attack rolls and defenses.

Additionally, a character who holds the eye can use a minor action to conjure a comet, just as can the Voice of Rot.

✲ Comet Fall (fire) ✦ At-Will, 1/round
Serpentine tails of white fire flash in the sky as comets streak toward you.
Attack: Area burst 1 within 100 (creatures in burst); +37 vs. Reflex
Hit: 20 fire damage.
Effect: The origin square of the area, if it is on the surface of Reida, is destroyed. A hole opens into the void below. Creatures in that square can make a save to shift 1 square and fall prone. Those who fail are exposed to the Gyre wind, and will likely be pushed toward the Gyre.

The titan's first order of business will be to knock whoever has his eye into the Gyre. If he succeeds in destroying his own eye, though, he is stunned for one round and actually stops moving from the pain.

If someone's crazy and puts his eye back into it original socket, he laughs with satisfaction and can immediately call down six *comet fall* attacks without spending an action.

Rock of Ages

And, of course, Rock Rackus can show up to aid when things get real. Piloting the *Aural Pleasure*, he's first noticeable as a cocky laugh audible over the roar of Gyre Wind and the rumble of his ship's engines. Then a round later he bursts out of the debris field and starts firing shots of his *diamond-encrusted piece* just before ramming the Voice of Rot. This shoves a 9-square wide swath of the serpent 5 squares laterally.

He hops off the ship and blithely walks up to whoever's nearest, telling them to 'get your men out of here, because I rigged that thing to explode.' (Huge radius, 100 untyped damage, and maybe bull rushing the serpent 20 feet or so.) Or, if an explosion won't be useful he can swing by, pulling off a crazy piloting stunt to have his crew (including some succubi he freed from the legion) grab the PCs and carry them wherever they need to go around the ring.

He can get into close combat if necessary, but mostly Rock should act as a mix of mobility and distraction. If he's flung into the Gyre he assumes someone will rescue him. Even if he dies here, if the party uses Av in the Axis Seal ritual in the next adventure, Rock will be restored when that plane is recreated.

Aftermath

If defeated, the Voice of Rot falls into the Gyre, screaming in denial since he could not imagine he would lose. Should the party's world survive, another fey titan would need to arise in the High Bayou, and whichever PC dealt the killing blow should have rights to determine the nature of that being.

Carried Through Eternity

Perhaps only a remnant of Reida survives, but it is enough to keep the party's homeworld intact long enough for them to complete the Axis Seal ritual and create a new age that won't be metaphysically bound to the last.

From this point, only the PCs and others who came with them to the Gyre will be able to send their consciousnesses back to their other selves in the real world. Anyone else with them—Rock, Calily, and any other friends or prisoners they acquired here in the graveyard of the multiverse—will have to hope the party chooses their world as part of the eight that will be linked in the Axis Seal.

The party must prepare themselves mentally and choose someone they have an emotional connection to back home, and to focus on the change they wish to make. Then they are ready, and they can leap into the teeth of the Gyre.

Ground to Starstuff

Have you seen 2001: A Space Odyssey? Shedding clothes to be nude as a babe. Shedding skin like a snake. Shedding flesh and bone altogether to fly, a soul unbound by the limits of crude matter, to make yourself whole.

The Voice of Rot	Level 34 Solo Controller
Gargantuan fey magical beast (undead)	**XP** 200,000
HP 1200; **Threshold I** 800; **Threshold II** 400	**Initiative** +16
AC 48, **Fortitude** 46, **Reflex** 44, **Will** 48	**Perception** +26
Speed 5	Darkvision
Resist 20 all (except on his head), also see Timeless	
Immune necrotic; **Vulnerable** 10 psychic	
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 1	

Traits

▸ **Titanic**
Most of the three-hundred foot serpent spirals away around the ring of Reida, hidden by intense shadows and the haze of debris falling into the Gyre.
The head of the Voice of Rot is 20 feet (4 squares) across, and his body trailing behind him is 15 feet (3 squares) wide, a total of 300 feet (60 squares) long.
Any part of his body can be targeted, but he has resist 20 all everywhere but his head.
Due to his size, he cannot turn more than 45 degrees for every 10 feet he advances (so he must travel at least 40 feet in order to turn around).

▸ **Timeless**
His mere presence carries the weight of eternity. This fey titan has survived millennia. What could your puny blow do to such a foe?
Track the damage and conditions that affect the Voice of Rot each turn. At the start of each of his turns, if he only took damage on parts of his body in a single age of Reida since the start of his last turn, undo all damage and conditions that affected him during that time. Effectively, the Voice of Rot must be hit by enemies in at least two Ages at a time for it to have any effect on him.

▸ **Ever Moving**
He twitches his body, knocking you aside and sending out crashing waves.
The Voice of Rot cannot be slowed, immobilized, or restrained unless he is grabbed by another Gargantuan creature. He ignores difficult and blocking terrain smaller than 8 squares across.
In addition to his normal movement, after each PC's turn the Voice of Rot moves 2 squares. Then he makes the following attack against each creature adjacent to his body or head.
Attack: Close burst 1 (creatures in burst); +37 vs. Reflex
Hit: 25 damage and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone.

▸ **Nauseating Presence** (necrotic) ✦ Aura 5
Death's stench clings to the titan's rotted skull.
A living creature that ends its turn within 5 squares of the Voice of Rot's head must make an Endurance check (DC 36) or take 25 necrotic damage and be weakened until the end of its next turn.

▶ **Dead Gaze**

A single, dully glowing eye watches you.

The Voice of Rot can see through illusions, and can perceive the true form of polymorphed creatures. Illusory attack powers can still damage him as normal.

Standard Actions

Titan's Bite ✦ At-Will

Special: The Voice of Rot cannot bite behind his head, only in a roughly 270-degree arc from his right side to his left side.

Attack: Close blast 4 (creatures in blast); +39 vs. AC

Hit: 100 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 36).

Awaken Centuries of the Dead ✦ At-Will

Dead limbs burst from the surface of the arc of Reida, and debris drifting past sprouts thrashing vines that grasp at you. They snag you with claws and thorns, then dig into your flesh and drink your blood.

Effect: The Voice of Rot creates a zone of entangling limbs and thorns in area burst 5 within 20. The zone lasts until the end of the encounter. It is difficult terrain. A creature that enters or ends its turn in the area is attacked.

Attack: Close burst 5 (creature in zone); +37 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target is grabbed (Escape DC 26) and takes 30 damage.

Minor Actions

Comet Fall (fire) ✦ At-Will, 1/round

Serpentine tails of white fire flash in the sky as comets streak toward you.

Attack: Area burst 1 within 100 (creatures in burst); +37 vs. Reflex

Hit: 20 fire damage.

Effect: The origin square of the area, if it is on the surface of Reida, is destroyed. A hole opens into the void below. Creatures in that square can make a save to shift 1 square and fall prone. Those who fail are exposed to the Gyre wind, and will likely be pushed toward the Gyre.



Sussurus of Decay (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, 1/round

He both growls and hisses, and the whole ring of Reida shudders. You sag for a moment, and have to fight off an urge to just let yourself die.

Attack: Close burst 10 (creatures in burst); +37 vs. Will

Hit: 25 necrotic damage.

Miss: 10 necrotic damage.

Effect: If there are no enemies in the same age of Reida as the Voice of Rot's head, or if all enemies in that age are bloodied, the ground of this age of Reida cracks. If the ground is already cracked, it instead shears apart. If it has already sheared apart, the whole area is drawn into the Gyre.

When one of the ages of Reida is drawn into the Gyre, any surviving creatures in that age are left adrift and must start making death saving throws with a cumulative -1 penalty each turn, regardless of their hit point totals. If they die, they are drawn into the Gyre and are annihilated.

If all five ages of Reida are drawn into the Gyre, the plane is destroyed and all life on the party's homeworld perishes. The Voice of Rot transcends into a god of death and vanishes.

Triggered Actions

▶ **Ages of War** ✦ Encounter (Threshold I)

"This battle fulfills me," he rumbles. "Let us reminisce upon battles past." The surface of the arc of Reida rumbles, and soldiers from across time claw their ways out of ancient graves. Modern Danoran battalions, their uniforms and faces decayed, heft rifles and fire wildly, while a few hundred feet away eladrin and Clergy cross swords and spears, and beyond them orcish skeletons swipe stone clubs at stampedes of zombified beasts. Every open space on this plane is consumed with war.

Trigger: The Voice of Rot is first reduced to 800 hp.

Effect (No Action): The Voice of Rot ends all negative status effects on him. He gains an action point and moves 15 squares.

Every surface of the arc of Reida erupts with corpses of long-dead warriors, who rise from the dirt of history. Spaces occupied by the dead count as difficult terrain, and any enemy that enters or starts its turn in a space occupied by these dead takes 5 damage.

The dead have Defenses of 10 and 1 hit point, and they are unaffected by the Voice of Rot's attacks. It is possible for the party to clear a path by attacking the dead (or just using auras or area attacks), but this will slow them down.

▶ **The White Tongue** ✦ Encounter (Threshold II)

Your tongue writhes within your mouth, and you choke as the titan's voice emerges from your throat. "Would you desire songs of your deeds?" he asks. "Would you be paintings of kings? Even if you should win this day, the time that you live shall be dwarfed by that when you are but misremembered history." You vomit a white serpent that pulses with your hearbeat. It slithers toward the Voice of Rot. In the distance the titan continues his diatribe. "I seek to fulfill my purpose, for I was created to witness death. You iron-clad brambles desire salvation of a world that is meaningless."

Trigger: The Voice of Rot is first reduced to 400 hp.

Effect (No Action): The Voice of Rot ends all negative status effects on him. He gains an action point and moves 15 squares. Make the following attack:

Attack: Close burst entire plane (enemies in burst); +37 vs. Will

Hit: The target is a conduit for the Voice of Rot until the end of the target's next turn. During that time it cannot speak or attack. It loses one healing surge, and when this effect ends a Small white serpent appears in a space adjacent to the target. The serpent has the Voice of Rot's defenses and 1 hit point, but a missed attack never damages it. It has speed 6, and if it can enter the Voice of Rot's space it merges with the fey titan, and the Voice of Rot heals hit points equal to the target's healing surge value.

Skills Insight +26, Perception +26

Str	50 (+37)	**Dex**	8 (+16)	**Wis**	18 (+21)
Con	48 (+36)	**Int**	26 (+25)	**Cha**	24 (+24)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Primordial, understands all



Adventure Number 13

Avatar of Revolution

From the Pen of	Ryan Nock
Clever Conversion by	Russell Torres
Evocative Cover Illustration by	ShenFei
Stunning Cartographic Displays by	James Hazelett Jonathan Roberts
Masterful Interior Illustrations by	Claudio Pozas ShenFei, and artists of history
with Layout and Graphic Design by	Frank Michienzi
Ably Produced and Facilitated by	Russell Morrissey

Special Thanks to Erik Freund. You know what you did.

ADVENTURE THIRTEEN: Introduction

Wherein Our Hand Moves the Stars

At the convocation of the Obscurati, Nicodemus the Gnostic, founder of the conspiracy, introduced his grand plan with these words:

> The motions of the stars allow different ideals to gain ascendance: war, decay, chaos, exploration, order, creation. But no longer shall the procession of heaven obey the whims of an ancient, absent clockmaker. Now the hand that moves the stars shall be ours!"

The party was present then, and though they were only *disguised* as officers of the Obscurati, today they are the closest thing to peers Nicodemus has. As much as he hates them and wants to be the architect of their failure, he respects that they were able to challenge him. Soon they will have their final contest, and Nicodemus believes that even should he be defeated—which, despite all his arrogance, he knows is surely possible—his ideology will triumph. He refused to accept the world as it was, and he is certain that even if he falls, the party will take it upon themselves to reshape reality in their image. That is the age he has created: one founded in the determination to create something new, in the ideal of revolution.

On its surface, the question of this whole campaign has been, what is the best of all possible worlds? Will the party defeat Nicodemus only to become tyrants themselves, creating a world where they alone have power? Will they seek to represent the will of the masses, who they might not see as enlightened as themselves? Will they turn on each other? Or will they reject the very premise of the question, and ask instead whether the choice is theirs to make?

Adventure Synopsis

This adventure serves both as climax and epilogue, and we pay more attention to what becomes of the world as a result of all the heroics of the PCs than to the details of battles. While we want the players to have a chance to exult when they finally vanquish the Obscurati and destroy Nicodemus, we want to give them a chance to experience the world after the fighting is over. They will have decided the nature of the new age, and they should get to enjoy it a bit before we close the book for good.

Prologue: Contingency

A version of the party that was moments earlier on Av as it was crashing into the Gyre awakens in a forest in Risur, their airship nearby and mostly unharmed. **Benedict Pemberton** and his lieutenant the gnoll **Pardo** are waiting, having seeded duplicants at locations where they guessed the party might return.

Pemberton explains that as far as he knows he and Pardo are the only people in the whole world who haven't fallen under the Obscurati's control since the party has been gone. And the party has been gone for months. In that time the Ob figured out something about the hiveminds and used it to enact wide mind control.

It turns out Pardo was not immune himself, though, as he signaled the Ob the moment the party arrived. A strike force led by **Lauryn Cyneburg**, Risur's former Minister of Infiltration, teleports in and attacks the PCs and Pemberton. With them is **Nicodemus** (temporarily possessing the body of someone unimportant), who warns them not to stand in his way. He's only a day away from fixing the mistakes of the first time the Obscurati performed the Axis Seal ritual, and he's too close to victory to be a victim of sentiment.

In the ensuing battle, the party might manage to shake some of the attackers free of the Ob's control, and perhaps the fey titan known as the **Ash Wolf** will come to the party's aid. When Nicodemus's host body dies his spirit returns to Axis Island, but not before he swears that if they interfere with his plans in the next day he'll order every nation's capital city razed in retaliation.

The party is back on their homeworld, and though they do not know that other versions of themselves are in the Gyre, they are filled with a sense that not all hope is lost. However, to defeat Nicodemus without him killing hundreds of thousands in retaliation, they have to save multiple cities around the world, and then reach Axis Island and perform the ritual themselves, and they have only one day to do so.

After this introduction, return to the second half of adventure twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*. When the party nears the Voice of Rot, continue this adventure.



GYRE CONSEQUENCES

Generally, anything that the party did in adventure twelve in the Gyre after the destruction of Av has no effect on this adventure until the PCs gain the memories of their other selves during the climax. Until then, any boons or items they acquired aren't accessbile. However, once the memories start flooding into the PCs, they'll gain access to those boons and items gradually, just like their ability to link to planes comes in round by round.

In particular, boons of Srasama don't take effect until the PCs get access to the plane Ascetia during the Axis Obscura encounter. If they chose Vengeance, Srasama manifests and fights with them. If they chose Usurpation, a PC who seized Srasama's divine powers can use them. And if they chose Resurrection, most of the eladrin woman who are restored to life appear far from this battle. But Dala, Kasvarina's long-dead daughter, will appear beside one of the PCs. She'll know what they did for her, and though she's wholly a noncombatant, she'll desire to find her mother.

Act One: World of Ruin

As the PCs make a plan for how to destroy the Obscurati without them killing countless innocents, Pemberton gives the PCs what information he has about the state of the world. Namely, everyone is their enemy, and the few scattered pockets of resistance are being pursued with industrial efficiency.

Gaslight infrastructure in most major cities, including Flint, has been adapted to function like a distributed version of the *wayfarer's lantern*, burning oil that channels planar energy to keep people obedient and a latent hivemind at the optimal level for control. Trainloads of trouble-makers from rural regions are carted in to be pacified, and even former allies of the party are fervently loyal to Nicodemus and his minions.

Airship vs. Dragon

To prevent the Ob from enacting their scorched earth policy, the PCs can head to Flint, where the local hivemind is led by new head of state of Risur, **Harkover Lee**. Once the chief advisor of the king, he has retaken his much older form as the red dragon **Inacht the Hex-Eater**. As such, he is perhaps the only individual aside from Nicodemus himself who could by himself pose a threat to the party.

As added deterrence, Lee has flooded the city's gaslight network with energy from Jiese, the plane of fire. If the party just rushes in they'll not only be facing a dragon on the wing, but will have to prevent the entire city from exploding while stymied by former allies such as **Stover Delft** and **Gale**. After bringing the dragon low and averting the fiery conflagration, the party finds the people of Risur receptive to them, ready to be rallied into a revolution.

Action Montage

Other cities have their own tyrants loyal to the Obscurati, who will destroy their people to punish the party's opposition. In Trekhom, **Hastenschrieft Willimarkanova** undertakes a parade, protected by military constructs and the overwatch of sniper **Kvarti Gorbatiy**. In Seobriga, **Bruse Shantus** oversees the mass execution of undesirable goblinoids that are deemed not intelligent enough for civilization, but if the PCs move against the Ob, the city's lanterns will burn with Illocus energy to provoke a wild massacre. In Alais Primos a heartbroken **Morgan Cippiano** helps disassemble the cathedral of Triegenes under the command of **Arch Secula Natalia Degaspare**, who is prepared to activate the city's lanterns, using Av energy to pull people's souls from their bodies. And in Cherage, the demoness **Ashima-Shimtu** watches impassively as wretched people volunteer to be put to death because the propaganda of **Gardienne du Cherage** has convinced them they are not useful enough.

The party will have to move on multiple places simultaneously. With the aid of Pemberton's duplicant technology, the party can fight together to free Flint, then immediately split up across the world, with all the PCs controlling different duplicants to save all four cities before the Ob can react.

If you have more PCs and need a fifth target, or if a Vekeshi mystic character could use some closure, the enclave Sentosa in the forests of Elfaivar is besieged by Kasvarina's former aide-de-camp **Cula Ravjahani**.

No Time to Rest

The party has only hours to reach Axis Island. They know that the site of the ritual will be flooded with destructive energy, and the only way they can safely resist it is to perform the *sacrament of apotheosis*, channeling the trust of the world into them, granting the PCs the power of gods. However, to do this the party must have allies, and so it is only feasible if the party managed to save at least one major city (Flint, Cherage, Trekhom, Alais Primos, or Seobriga). Alternately, the party might believe that this boon is not worth the risk, and follow the example of Triegenes by refusing to use the ritual, even it means they're imperiled.

Nicodemus has no such qualms, and he uses the *sacrament* to enhance himself with the loyalty of his followers. However, each city the party saved strengthens them in the upcoming battle.

TIME IS TIGHT

We intend this adventure to take place in just one day. Aside from the obvious desire for a ticking clock to raise the stakes, by this point you should have plenty of evidence that the PCs are ludicrously strong when they can use all their powers in a single encounter. By forcing them to complete this adventure without resting, we give the villains slightly better odds of not being wiped out by whatever optimized alpha strike your party is capable of.

The party wakes up in the Antwalk Forest at roughly 8 a.m., rested and at full strength. The Gyre is close enough that its edge already covers half the sky, and its brighter center is just over the horizon.

By noon they should be at Flint, and by 1 p.m. either they'll have found a way to avert the Ob's scorched earth deterrence, or Alais Primos, Cherage, Seobriga, and Trekhom will be toast. Then they'll fly for Axis Island, some 500 miles from Flint. The party reaches Axis Island just before 'dawn,' and the final battle will conclude just in time for the Gyre to vanish and, if the PCs triumph, a new sun to rise.

It's fine to handwave their airship traveling at faster than normal speeds, but if you have a fan of Star Trek's Scotty among your group, let them make some checks to push the vessel to its limits, or get favorable winds from Gale, in order to achieve the impossible.

If the party dallies or somehow screws up, leaving without enough time to fly to the finale, it's possible to find another way there. Lauryn Cyneburg could manage a draining ritual that teleports them through the defenses of Axis Island, but leaves them down one airship. Pemberton could give them coordinates to teleport to his hidden island lair (again, *sans* airship), from which they can set out in a squadron of small 'dragon flier' propeller planes. Or, hell, just cheat. If they use the *sacrament of apotheosis* and become gods, who's to deny their will of simply stepping onto the island from thousands of miles away?

It's over five hundred miles from Flint to Axis Island, which if the party pushes their airship to its limit they can cover just in time to arrive as Nicodemus begins the ritual of the Axis Seal. Though the flight takes hours, the party will find that if they try to rest and recover their daily-limited powers, they see flashes of themselves in the Gyre, poised on the edge of oblivion. Somehow their reflection from their other selves has made it impossible for them to regain their full strength.

When the party finally reaches Axis Island, the world is just beginning to rumble with the planar confluence of the coming ritual. In the glow of wild energy lashing out of the Axis Seal, they can see the colossus Borne standing up.

Upon completion of this act, return to adventure twelve for the climax against the Voice of Rot. After the party casts themselves into the Gyre, move on to act two of this adventure.

Act Two: Axis of the Revolution

Nicodemus has gathered his strongest allies to his side: **Han Jierre**, **Lya Jierre**, and the ghost council, as well as units with the most advanced arcanoscientific weapons the world has devised.

These forces are primarily positioned on the *Revolution*, the Obscurati's own airship. Serving as the vessel's doctor is **Wolfgang von Recklinghausen**, who might be swayed to the party's side depending on their previous interactions. Meanwhile, Nicodemus takes the drastic step of performing the *sacrament of apotheosis* on himself, linking himself to those around the world who still adhere to his ideology. Using his near-divine power he restores the colossus Borne and commands it to complete the ritual of the Axis Seal while the *Revolution* keeps the party at bay.

When the party reaches Axis Island, knowledge that their other selves acquired in the Gyre begins to flood into their minds. Once combat begins they gain access to the energies of the various planes of the Gyre in the order they bonded with them, and each round they must weigh whether to attack their enemies or try to seize control of the eight nexuses in the ritual circle, each of which grants them access to cosmic power. An unforeseen consequence, however, is that meddling in the ritual links the party to Nicodemus. By embracing his methods, they are drawn into the pool of those who grant power to him via the *sacrament of apotheosis*.

Throughout a complex puzzle of a final battle, there are four paths to ultimately defeat Nicodemus: they can complete the ritual themselves and use its power to destroy him; they can convince his other self in the Gyre, William Miller, to try to overpower the mastermind and render him briefly vulnerable; they can metaphysically sap him of all power by rejecting his ideology and destroying the ritual site without laying claim to how the world should be; or they use his true name to break the protection granted to him by the *sacrament*, at which point they can harm him like any other foe.

(They might have learned his true name in adventure eight, or learn it now by getting Kasvarina on their side, or wait until knowledge reaches them from their other selves in the Gyre, who met the ghost of William Miller. And a proofreader reminded me that the *Humble Hook* and *Crown of Risur* can also reveal this information, though the intention was for the crown to just let you know the name they use, not their true name. The hook would work fine, though.)

If eight planes are linked and the golden seal is shut, stars begin to burn into being in the night sky, sweeping in an unfamiliar starscape that heralds a new destiny for the world. As the roar of the ritual fades, dawn begins to rise to the east.

Act Three: How to Deliver a Denouement

The choices the party makes at the Axis Seal determine the nature of the whole world, and we want them to have a chance to see what kind of world that is.

How to do this partially depends on what you know of your players. Give them the ending they want, as much as it's appropriate to how they fared in the ritual of the Axis Seal. These final few adventures have been fairly epic and somewhat surreal, so we suggest grounding events and returning to the mundane.

Toward that goal, we present nine potential scenes for you to use as a montage of sorts, to put a bow on the Zeitgeist campaign. Each is linked to one of the setting-based character themes introduced in the Player's Guide, and will serve as an opportunity to demonstrate some element of the new world and how the party's actions shaped it. As needed, you might shuffle some of these scenes into Act One, and save the ones your players will appreciate more for the aftermath.

A Dock Opera. The low-class dockers and the most upscale industrialists of Flint are drawn together by the first great performance at the Navras Opera House after the world is saved, a performance which spills out into the streets and carries on to the docks themselves.

Group Portrait. A *nouveau* eschatologist is popularizing primitive photography, and adds an addendum to the Heid Eschatol movement that, as we prepare for the end, those who survive us should be able to remember us, both our faces and the lessons we learned. He asks to photograph the party for the annals of history.

Government Issue. As law and order get back to normal, the police force and constabulary are issued new weapons, and one or more PCs are encouraged to speak to them and set the tone for how laws will be enforced in the new world.

It Came From Beyond. The military has caught and killed a creature never before seen on this world—the nature of which depends on how the party linked their world to other planes. As they make plans for how to deal with this unfamiliar threat, a young martial scientist expresses his admiration of the party's battlefield ingenuity.

Telescope in the Clouds. Astronomists ask for permission to build an observatory atop Cauldron Hill.

Join Our Family. Morgan Cippiano invites the party to a fashionable wake to discuss how he and his family can keep the criminal element of Flint civil.

Borne Again. Either the salvage of a destroyed colossus is brought to Flint, leaving the party to decide if they should recreate such a mighty machine, or the intact colossus seeks to transfer his consciousness to a smaller body, for he is unfit to wield the power that was given to him.

Unmasking. The Old Stag, elder head of the Vekeshi mystics in Flint, seeks to rehabilitate the order's image, as more of a fraternal society for social justice rather than a secret assassination guild.

Medals and Prizes. At the memorial for veterans of the Yerasol Wars, a huge crowd has gathered to cheer the many heroes of Risur.

Dramatis Personae Redux

What has become of everyone? Below we list the NPCs likely to still be active and important, as well as their most likely status. Of course, adjust as needed depending on how the party may have influenced (e.g., killed) the NPCs.

1. **Arch Secula Natalia Degaspare.** Crisillyiri head of state.
2. **Ashima-Shimtu.** Observing the 'new world' in Cherage.
3. **Athrylla Valanar.** Repelling a siege on her enclave Sentosa.
4. **Benedict Pemberton, aka Gradiax the Steel Lord.** Conspiring with the PCs.
5. **Brakken of Heffanita.** Aid to Bruse Shantus.
6. **Bruse Shantus.** Beran head of state.
7. **Cula Ravjahani.** Besieging the enclave Sentosa in Elfaivar.
8. **Damata Griento.** Swashbuckling understudy of Sor Daeron.
9. **El Extraño.** Stowed away on the airship *Revolution*.
10. **Glaucia Evora.** Bound for execution in Ber.
11. **Han Jierre.** Commanding the airship *Revolution*.
12. **Hana "Gale" Soliogn.** Risur minister of nature.
13. **Harkover Lee.** Risuri head of state.
14. **Lauryn Cyneburg.** Head of the Obscurati alert strike force.
15. **Kaja Stewart.** Part of the above strike force.
16. **Kasvarina Varal.** Axis Island.
17. **Kvarti Gorbatiy.** Guarding the Drakran head of state.
18. **Lya Jierre.** Probably dead and a ghost. Otherwise alive, but in either case loyal to Nicodemus, aboard the *Revolution*.
19. **Morgan Cippiano.** Indentured to the Crisillyiri head of state.
20. **Nicodemus the Gnostic.** Axis Island.
21. **Pardo.** With Pemberton, preparing to betray him.
22. **Rock Rackus.** Stranded in the Gyre. Your hero cannot save you now.
23. **Sor Daeron.** Raining destruction upon Ob operations in Ber.
24. **Stover Delft.** Head of the Flint secret police.
25. **Vlendam Heid.** Hostage in Trekhom.
26. **Doctor Wolfgang von Recklinghausen.** Ship's doctor of the airship *Revolution*.

Two major NPCs we sort of let fall off the map were the "Gearbuilder" Tinker Oddcog and the "Mindmaker" Alexander Grappa. Our assumption is that Tinker either died or is toiling away in some workshop, but you might have him appear on the airship *Revolution* as part of the 'halfling and gnome repair crew.' His powers make fixing damage to the ship a breeze, and he can serve as a surprise opponent, albeit one who panics if he gets a clear view outside to see how huge the colossus is.

And we figured it was likely Grappa died during the course of adventure seven, but he could have survived (or transferred his consciousness into someone else) and thus show up alongside Pemberton to explain how to break the hiveminds.

Many other NPCs from previous adventures might be alive (or ghosts) but weren't necessarily prominent enough that we expect every group will care about what happens to them. Consider who you think your players would be interested in seeing again. Particularly if a character played a major role for one adventure, it can remind the players of all they've accomplished by bringing them back.

For instance, perhaps in Act One while a PC is trying to liberate a city, he could run across the Ob officer whose body he possessed in adventure seven. Perhaps Duchess Ethelyn, freed from her house arrest during revolutionary riots, teleports to Flint, and asks the PCs what happened to the Unseen Court. If the PCs saved Andrei von Recklinghausen from being possessed by Nicodemus, he could be on the defensive line of Sentosa, defending his adored Isobel and other eladrin. Amielle Latimer might be held in spectral chains aboard the *Revolution*, as the rest of the ghost council intends to toss her soul into the engine of Borne, which will consume her as fuel.

It could even be something as simple as, in the middle of the battle at the Axis Seal, the mine foreman from the first adventure, Nicholas Dupiers, gawks as he recognizes the PCs and marvels at how greatly they have changed.



PROLOGUE: Contingency

If you're interweaving adventures twelve and thirteen, these scenes occur right after the party learns from William Miller on Ascetia that they've been split in two. The players should know that their characters in the real world aren't aware of anything happening to the version of them in the Gyre.

HOME AGAIN

Remember, now that the party has returned home, all the odd magical effects of the Ob's new world order are available. People stabilize instead of bleeding out, light-producing spells are hard to cast, ownership can block teleportation, but every creature is able to *jaunt* once a day (or more if the DM deems them appropriately mobility themed), which lets them teleport within line of sight as a standard action.

WEAKENED DEATH

Since the plane Av was destroyed in adventure twelve, this world's link to elemental Death energy is weakened. As a result, undead creatures are weakened and grant combat advantage. Insubstantial undead no longer take half damage. Reduce by half all necrotic damage that would be dealt. (Additionally, eladrin do not have their deathlink ability, but that's moot because there aren't any insubstantial foes it would apply to.)

Because of this, the Obscurati ghost council are remaining out of the fray as long as possible, and don't appear until the finale. These effects persist until someone links to a new plane of Death in the Axis Seal ritual. (See Draining Magic, page 225.)

ICY END OF THE EARTH

After months without sun, even the supernatural temperate climate provided by the planet itself has waned. Global temperatures are at or below freezing, and snow or ice coats the ground wherever the party goes, with the exception of Axis Island, where otherworldly energy provides a pittance of warmth. From the moment the party arrives in the forest near the ziggurat of Av, it should be clear that the world is freezing to death.

Hello Old Friend

Social. Real-Time.

Dark times make strange bedfellows.

When Av was shattered, one version of the PCs (and their ship and its crew, but not Rock Rackus or anyone else who was on Av when the Great Eclipse occurred) was hurled across the cosmos, and they materialized in the woods near the city of Bole, outside what was once the Ancient ziggurat of Av. (Salamanders from Jiese briefly took it over in adventure ten, and its exact condition depends on the party's actions.)

Due to the odd nature of time on Av, where events happen when is most dramatic rather than in a strict chronolinear progression, the party returns to their homeworld months after they left. In the intervening period, the Obscurati has taken control, and one of the few people who resists their dominion is **Benedict Pemberton**, once the dragon tyrant **Gradiax the Steel Lord** but most recently an inventor, industrialist, and would-be conquerer of Ber in the guise of a gray-haired human.

As more and more of the world fell under the sway of the Ob, Pemberton's efforts to strike back just resulted in him losing his limited forces. The dragon realized his only chance for victory was to count on the party actually completing their mission to the Gyre. He set duplicants up at various locations he thought they might return to, and when the party appeared near the ziggurat, he and his loyal minion **Pardo** activated two duplicants to investigate.

It's important in this adventure to bear in mind whether Pemberton's daughter Terakalir survived adventure six. If she did, he mostly genuinely likes the party, and his motivation is to ensure the world will be one where his daughter can grow up powerful and feared. But if the party killed Terakalir, Pemberton is only feigning cordiality, and the moment he's sure the Obscurati has been defeated and the Axis Seal ritual corrected, he'll be poised to have his long-deferred revenge.



BENEDICT PEMBERTON

The Ambush

Pemberton is still actually on an island somewhere in the Yerasol Archipelago, along with a small cadre of loyal gnolls. Unbeknownst to Pemberton, the Obscurati located the island weeks ago but chose not to attack. Instead they infiltrated Pardo's mind, forcibly integrating him with a hivemind composed of dominated gnoll slaves who serve the Ob. He is always accompanied by two invisible members of the ghost council who ensure his obedience. They have kept watch on Pardo, and through him on Pemberton, so that they will know as soon as the party returns. They aren't simply 'invisible,' but in fact are occupying Pardo's body, somewhat akin to ghostly possession.

The Obscurati has an ambush party waiting to teleport in, composed of powerful warriors, two of whom—**Lauryn Cyneburg** and **Kaja Stewart**—are, like Pardo, partially subsumed in a hivemind. This has made it impossible for them to disagree with the plans of Nicodemus, and has infused them with greater power, as they now wield the metaphysical might of dozens of people at once.

Once the party arrives, it is only a matter of minutes before the Obscurati attack.

You Awake

You awake, scattered across the ground in a forest. Embers of blazing thistles drift by on a wind, briefly providing enough light to make out the surprisingly intact hull of your ship, lying without even a hushed whisper in this night-time wood. Your injuries are mysteriously healed, and the damage wrought by heavenly hailstones on your vessel has vanished, but as your gaze drifts upward through a crooked slit in the canopy, you see a starry abyss looking back, its nebulous teeth poised to crush your world, as they have crushed Av.

You're back in Risur. Your mission has failed. Your path to the Gyre has been cut off, and what little hope you had left has, like a candle reaching the end of its wick, guttered and turned to smoke.

Then you hear a gasp of shock, and a deep-voiced laugh. Disoriented, you sit up and see, at the edge of the light, Benedict Pemberton and his gnoll lieutenant Pardo. Pemberton raises a glass in toast—distilled water, with a celery stick for flavor. He wears a black patch over his right eye.

"Constables," he says. Then he nudges Pardo. "I told you they'd come back. They can't help saving the day. It's pathological."



PARDO

You're My Only Hope

Pemberton talks as the party comes to their senses. They have arrived a few dozen feet from the entrance of the ziggurat where the salamander Kuyler set fire to the Antwalk Thicket (see adventure ten, *Godmind*). The once-stone building is still brass, and the fires have long-since died out, but the trees and undergrowth survived, and their greenery has grown back. Bizarrely, though, the whole scene is coated in an inch of snow and the temperature is freezing. The leaves are brittle and coated in ice.

A few dozen feet away, a section of the forest has been cleared to make way for a railroad, and it stretches away to the south. It appears a train was parked here, but the crash of the party's airship derailed it.

The PCs and their crew are wholly uninjured and rested, and while their ship is on its side (just off-map south-west of the ziggurat), a few minutes of heaving will get it righted so it can fly.

Pemberton and Pardo were waiting in the doorway that led into the underground chambers. Pemberton's just wearing the eyepatch so one of his eyes can be adjusted to darkness, even if bright light ruins his night vision in his other, but he'll play it off briefly as if in the time the party was gone he suffered a grievous injury. He tries to be patient and cool, though inwardly he's never felt happier in his life since he was basically convinced he was doomed without the party's help.

He explains, first, that the new ruler of Risur built this railroad to help access the plane of Jiese through the portal in the ziggurat, but 'local fauna' forced them to abandon that project, so they sealed the portal. That was several months ago, and the world has gotten dangerously cold since then, but he's not sure if the two are related.

As far as anyone cares, Pemberton says, the party is dead. He is the only friend they have left in the whole world. But of course, he has made a plan that can get them out of this hole.

The Fall to the Dark Side

Pemberton starts recounting the events of the past few months. It began with soldiers captured from the invading armies in Risur, soldiers who were possessed by powerful Obscurati ghosts. They let themselves be taken to prisoner of war camps, where they overpowered the unexpecting guards, then triggered the formation of hiveminds. Somehow the possessing ghosts managed to stabilize the hiveminds so they were able to draw people in and make them obey, but the hivemind did not become insanely single-minded like previous manifestations had. The Risuri soldiers, outnumbered by the prisoners, weren't able to resist the combined psychic will, and they became loyal to the Obscurati. This continued like an avalanche rolling down a hill; the more people caught in the hivemind, the more easily it could pull others into itself.

It spread faster than a disease; it spread like an idea, and almost as soon as someone became aware of the risk, their minds were overwhelmed.

Most of Pemberton's duplicant spies were discovered and absorbed into these new hiveminds, but before that happened he learned of panic in numerous cities. People had only a vague idea what was happening, but knew that crowds were a threat, so many fled into the wilderness. Pemberton and his gnolls are fairly safe on their island, he hopes.



KAJA STEWART

Question Time

Any PC who succeeds an Insight check (DC 32) at this point realizes that Pardo has drawn away from the conversation, and looks conflicted. Just before the ambush begins, he scratches at his own scalp and hunches. Head cocked at a maddened angle, he says, "I'm sorry, master."

A shining portal opens in the air within arm's length of the party, and a horde of foes materialize. Four dozen metal humanoids stand poised to attack, their limbs ending in weapons, and with them are five people. Kaja Stewart, who once crafted weapons for the Ob, holds up empty hands, ready to conjure firearms. Two black-robed mages are shrouded in shadow, and they flank a third, nondescript figure holding a cigarette. Lauryn Cyneburg, formerly Risur's minister of infiltration, pulls the portal shut with a snap of her fingers.

"Hm," she says, glancing at how close they arrived. "My aim has improved."

In the center of the ambush party, the nondescript man says, "Of course you *would* show up a day before I solve this. I suppose you think you're swooping in to," he chuckles, "'save the world'?

"Your former allies, who now see the wisdom of my new world order, told me your mission. You were going to use the Axis Seal yourself with your own new planes.

"Imitation is flattery, and I'm glad you wanted to follow my lead, but it was your noses stuck where things didn't need sticking that caused the situation we're in. I assure you we have 'saving the world' in hand, and this will all turn out tidy and safe if you don't cause any more trouble. But maybe you've found something useful."

He sucks in a long drag from his cigarette, cracks a charming smile, and gestures for the party to explain themselves.

Answer Time

The Nicodemus who is here is occupying a random body by means of *needlewire*. He's incapable of using his actual magical abilities, so he's here merely as an onlooker.

This is basically the party's last chance to interact with the campaign's main villain outside of combat, but you don't want to let the conversation drag on too long. Players are apt to ramble, but a good villain is concise and in control.



NICODEMUS

Nicodemus wants to know whether they have the necessary planar links to perform the Axis Seal ritual, and if there are any worlds in the Gyre that might be better than the planes he's planning to use. But since the PCs here right now don't know about what the other version of them did in the Gyre, Nicodemus will think they've failed.

Hit the following three beats in the conversation:

- Nicodemus asks what they learned in the Gyre. He's willing to give information about what the Obscurati have done in order to keep the PCs talking. In particular, he'll admit that Wolfgang von Recklinghausen was able to use autopsies of Gidim to figure out how to stabilize the hivemind effect. He nonchalantly says it's much more complicated and technological than just that, but he'll only reveal more to those who are members of the conspiracy.
- He offers them a final chance to work with him, rather than against him. He assures them that he has a new plan for the Axis Seal which will put an end to all the chaos that broke out since the Great Eclipse, and he promises that if they pledge their loyalty he'll surrender to them once the ritual is complete, to let them judge if his actions were justified. Of course, pledging loyalty in this case entails being bonded to a hivemind, effectively dominating the PCs and making it quite hard for them to turn against him at the eleventh hour.



LAURYN CYNEBURG

If pressed about his plan, he lies (Insight DC 42) and claims that he's adopting the Arboretum plan that was proposed at the Obscurati conclave on Mutravir Island. The conspiracy made planar icons for all the planes that would have featured in any of the five main Ob plans, and he's willing to adopt a more muted alteration to the nature of reality now that the hiveminds have given him a chance to bring societies closer together.

- If they refuse, he mocks them for failing their mission to the Gyre. He accuses them of being sentimental saboteurs, blindly valuing antiquated morals and the suffering of people today over progress and the needs of countless yet to be born. He is creating the shape of things to come, and in that new world, people like the party will have to go.

At that point, or if the party makes any hostile moves, he orders his ambush squad to attack. If the fight breaks out early, he'll continue talking. The body he's in is only a temporary vessel, not prepared to carry his full power, and so he's incapable of contributing in a battle.

Contingent Ambush

Action. Tactical. Level 34.

The mastermind was prepared for the party's unlikely return.

There aren't many combats in this adventure, so we encourage you to ramp this one to as over-the-top a scene as you can. In a frozen forest, between an immobile (but still armed) airship, a train filled with clear-cutting machinery, and an ancient ruined ziggurat, the party must defend against a master of teleportation, a woman with the most powerful small arms anyone has ever invented, soul-fueled mechanical warriors, mages who control shadows, and a gnoll death priest. Also, the man currently serving as vessel for Nicodemus carries a black crystal that when shattered (either intentionally, or if he is killed) releases the screaming malice—a gargantuan many-headed monstrosity the party drove off in adventure four.

People should be knocked across the battlefield and shatter whole trees. An entire unit of constructs should explode at a single strike from a PC's weapon. The malice should pluck PCs and thrash them about in the forest canopy. A PC ought to suplex the train on top of Pardo. And after one or two rounds of battle, a howl in the distance heralds the arrival of the Ash Wolf, a fey titan who at the least wants to drive out interlopers, and who might be willing to help the party.

Stats are presented in Appendix A: Combat Catalogue.

Alert Strike Force

- Lauryn Cyneburg
- Kaja Stewart
- Pardo
- 4 Obscurati construct squads
- 2 Obscurati elite occultists

Potential Ally

- The Ash Wolf

Noncombatants

- Pemberton
- Nicodemus

Switching Sides or Betraying Each Other

If the party does side with Nicodemus, you need to use a bit of Schroedinger's Plot and adjust things the party isn't aware of. Rather than the PCs fighting minions of Nicodemus to rally the world in an uprising, they're sent to quell resistance and clear the way for a unified planet to support Nicodemus as he performs the ritual at the Axis Seal. They'll need to defeat Harkover Lee in Flint, then suss out and thwart a plot by their former allies who were trying to inspire revolution around the world.

Only during the Axis ritual will an ally—likely El Extraño—break the party free of the ghost council's control and explain that Nicodemus intends to end free will. Of course, the party might still side with the Ob, slice the kobold spymaster to bits, and surrender their free will in order to create a utopia.

The real problem comes if some of the PCs go for it and the rest don't. Let that play out, but perhaps talk to your players out of game and see if they're okay with fighting each other, or if they want you to provoke one side or the other to have a change of heart. The Ob agents can easily stabilize or revivify PCs who are near death, allowing you to take them prisoner.

Basically, be ready for the players to accidentally steer themselves into a ditch, and perhaps get their opinions of how they'd like things to end before you give them a chance to make the campaign crash and burn so close to the end.

Terrain and Tactics

The forest near the once-burning ziggurat has a mix of massive trees and undergrowth dotted with smaller trees. The ziggurat lies to the north, with the party's ship to the south-west and the rail line and derailed train on the south-east. (We didn't put a crashed ship on the map because we don't know what sort of ship the party has.)

Lauryn, Kaja, and Pardo each are bonded to a hivemind that uses psychic attacks throughout the battle, which should clue in the PCs that their foes aren't acting wholly of their own free will.

When the battle begins, a droll Lauryn remarks, "They're used to fighting fey titans. Perhaps our overwhelming shortness will confuse them. Cannon fodder, lead the way." She opens combat by using *tactical reposition* to deposit all her allies next to the PCs they're best equipped to fight. Thereafter she conjures a *dimensional beacon* at the top level of the ziggurat in order to cut PCs who try to teleport off from the rest of their allies. Then she uses *paralysis* at range while keeping allies between her and the PCs.

Kaja tries to stay in the middle of the battle so her *suppressive fire* shots can hit as many PCs as possible. Over the course of three turns she'll run through *auto-shotgun*, then *cannonfire*, then *artillery barrage*. She only relies on her revolvers for opportunity attacks, or if she survives more than three rounds.



Pardo uses *slay living* on a spellcaster, then follows up with *devour anima*. He prefers to fight alongside one of the construct squads, who are immune to his *enfeebling aura*.

The construct squads are mere cannon fodder, and they try to surround a single foe, making them gloriously vulnerable to area attacks. The elite occultists try to keep out of melee, and their *shadowy aid* minor action makes them annoying if not dealt with quickly.

End of Round One. Pemberton doesn't fight, but halfway through the first round he apologizes but says he'll be right back. Then his duplicant falls to the ground, shifting into an inert metallic form. Pemberton has gone back to his island fortress, where he can deal with Pardo while the gnoll is unaware of what's happening to his body.

Finally, at the end of the first round of combat Nicodemus draws and smashes the black crystal holding the screaming malice. Or the crystal shatters when the party attacks Nic; his body crumples easily, but his spirit lingers long enough for the dead body to have some parting words. (See Aftermath.)

Later Rounds. Starting in the second round, the malice ponderously wades into battle, serving more as a mobile obstacle that is best dealt with by keeping away from it. At the end of the second round, Pardo screams and begins taking ongoing 50 damage, since his real body is being clawed by Pemberton hundreds of miles away.

At the start of the third round the party hears the howl of the Ash Wolf, they see his approach on the fourth round, and on the fifth round the fey titan leaps upon a foe, either to drive the malice back or save an imperiled PC.

Of course, the party is at maximum level. This might end up being a cakewalk for them. If so, consider the encounter a test run for you to figure out what sorts of tricks and defenses Nicodemus needs for the climax to be a challenge.

Aftermath

Ideally the party should figure out how to free people from the Obscurati hivemind control, or at least take people alive so they can experiment on finding a solution. In the heat of battle, it's fair to let clichéd efforts like shouting, "This isn't you!" actually have a chance (Diplomacy DC 40) of dazing a foe, but this only works the first time it's attempted.

The body which Nicodemus has possessed remains under his control even in death, giving the mastermind an opportunity to witness the party's prowess. He seems to note their powers and vulnerabilities, but at the sight of a fey titan he huffs a laugh and begins to say his parting words. As he speaks, a darkness seeps into his features, until finally he is nothing but a shadow and an echoing voice.

"It's not worth throwing more resources against you in open battle. You're a terror to behold, true, but you will fail because you lack leverage. I do not. If you can set your pride aside for one day, I will have this fixed and we can stop this worthless violence. But continue to move against me and I promise you, every city on this world will burn. In a thousand years, no one will remember their names even if millions die. They will only know that I secured a perfect world. My conscience can abide a scorched earth. Can yours?"

At this point, return to adventure twelve.

THE LOST EYE

Keep track of who among the party has the lost eye of the Voice of Rot, which grants control over spirits of the dead. In the context of this adventure, whichever PC carries the withered and calcified eye is immune to the *gestalt strike* powers of hivemind-enhanced foes, as well as any attacks from the ghost council itself at Axis Island. Additionally, the character gains a +5 bonus to any checks to break people out of control of the hiveminds. Finally, the bearer will intuitively understand how Nicodemus can be defeated or destroyed.



ACT ONE: World of Ruin

The Obscurati are ravaging the world in order to stamp out dissent against their supposed high-minded ideals, but the party can incite a revolution against their rule.

Clarity of Will

In adventure twelve, before reaching the plane Reida, the PCs should each choose someone they are linked to back in the real world. Whoever they pick will snap free of the Ob's control, starting now.

Those connections give them some early allies they can leverage to start freeing others from the Ob's control. It might even make some combat encounters unnecessary. Do note, though, that even if someone chooses to have a connection to a person, he or she might still be willingly cooperating with the Ob, even without the need of mind control.

No Rest for the Weary

If the party does anything that seems particularly restful, they're distracted by a nagging sense of falling into an abyss. If they try to sleep, or to replenish any daily abilities (barring those that can be replenished by feats or other daily abilities), visions assail them of standing at the edge of a world, staring down into the maw of the Gyre. Until the end of Act Two, the party finds it impossible to benefit from any long-term rest or otherwise replenish daily powers. They can still benefit from short rests, regain encounter powers, and heal, but even that fills them with a sense that if they are too slow, they might fall into a chasm they can never escape.

HIVEMIND CONTROLLED HEROES?

For simplicity's sake, we assume that the PCs are powerful enough and canny enough about the hiveminds that they aren't in any danger of being sucked into one, unless they're captured and the villains have time to brainwash them. Indeed, NPCs such as Delft were able to hold out against the hiveminds, and so they had to be targeted individually, even after whole cities had already been turned.

Raise a Banner

Exposition. Real-Time.

The party plans how to save the world.

Nicodemus's threat lingers. Move against him, and he'll make every city in the world burn. But more urgent was the timeline, because he asked for them to 'set their pride aside for one day.' Whatever Nicodemus is planning, the window to stop it is limited.

A few moments after the fight outside the abandoned ziggurat ends, Pemberton's duplicant body becomes active again. If it was destroyed, he *sends* to the party a few minutes later, and gives them directions to a safe house halfway to Flint, where he stashed another duplicant. He's reluctantly willing to give them directions to his island hideout too, but that's an eight hundred mile flight, and there's no time to detour to visit him.

In the meanwhile, any survivors of the battle denounce the party unless they were freed from the hivemind. The Ash Wolf explains that his powers have waned since the Dreaming was torn away. His wounds heal slowly now, resisting even magical recovery, so he's wary to go with the party and aid them elsewhere. Times are dire, though, and if the party makes a good argument, he could be convinced.

Planning with Pemberton

Pemberton explains that he has dealt with Pardo, and is inches away from killing the gnoll, but if the party knows a way to break someone out of the Obscurati's control, he would rather appreciate his minion coming back to his senses. Solving that issue will be important, because perhaps all the party's former allies are now enemies, and they won't have much chance if they can't get them back. It's time to make a plan.

The Big Goal

If the party wants to perform the Axis Seal ritual, they could just go to Axis Island, but there are two obstacles.

First, Nicodemus has threatened a scorched earth policy, and so good heroes ought to find a way to stop that before they strike the island.

Second, as Pemberton showed them in adventure ten, the ritual site is flooded with destructive energy. The colossus was built to resist it, and even that machine needed mages chanting spells to keep it secure. Once the mages were killed by agents of the Voice of Rot, the colossus was torn apart.

Leave it to the party to speculate how Nicodemus is going to perform the ritual this time, but if the PCs want to avoid being disintegrated while they alter the seal, they could use powerful magical protection. The most likely solution is performing the *sacrament of apotheosis* so they have godlike invulnerabilities. In adventure eight, Pemberton likely witnessed at least part of the memory event where Ashima-Shimtu revealed the nature of the *sacrament*, and if the PCs don't think of it, he'll suggest they keep it in mind.

Moreover, since the power of the *sacrament* depends on the strength of belief of those who support the target or targets, saving people around the world from Nicodemus's malice is a fine way to rally followers who can lend you their faith. The *sacrament* has great risk, however, and it is not absolutely *necessary* for success. Let the PCs decide whether they think it is worth it. See *Player's Handout: Final Sacrament* for details of how that ritual functions.

Free Your Mind

Getting followers for the *sacrament* means freeing people from the control of Obscurati hiveminds. Fortunately, the party has at least one test subject (Pardo) to experiment on, and possibly others (Lauryn and Kaja). Let the PCs tinker for a bit, and if they come up with something clever, let it work even if it's not what we suggest.

Our suggestion is that to break an individual out of a hivemind, you need to deal radiant damage to them, which weakens the hold of whichever member of the Ob ghost council is keeping the hivemind under control, and then you need to exhort them and guide them out of the mind control (Diplomacy DC 40). If you want to play up the challenge, retool the Interrogating a Suspect mechanics from the Player's Guide, so freeing the person requires you figure out how their mind has been misled and then help them find the core of their identity to resist the control. The first attempt typically just takes moments to snap someone free, but if that fails subsequent attempts require several minutes of interaction to disentangle the psychic bonds.

Yes, in the midst of a technological and political revolution on par with the latter half of the 19th century, the PCs might accidentally invent Freudian psychoanalysis.

To break a whole mass of people out of a hivemind, though, there are two options. First, you could give that whole crowd of people something they cannot ignore. Once they're paying attention to something new, you can attempt to free them all at once by inspiring them to resist the compulsion (DC 40 Diplomacy). The challenge, though, is that if you only free a portion of the people in an area, it's just a matter of time before the hivemind reclaims them. To free, for instance, the city of Flint, you'd need to be noticed by nearly a million people and address them all.

Alternately, you could find the ghosts in charge of the hivemind and either control them or take their place. Typically the ghosts will accompany whichever living person (or dragon) has been placed in charge of an area. Subdue that person, and if you can control the ghosts with magic, you can command them to end the hivemind; or if you destroy the ghosts you'll need to give the people who were in the hivemind a new directive, and convince them you're in charge.

That is intentionally a bit hand-wavey. In game, it means that to free Flint the party will need to overcome Harkover/Inacht, and to liberate the other nations they'll need to similarly defeat the leaders whom the Obscurati placed in charge. 'Defeat' need not require combat, but in Flint, at least, their foe is prepared for a battle.

Known Unknowns

Pemberton's information is over a month out of date, but this is what he's sure of.

In Risur, fellow dragon **Inacht the Hex-Eater**, who for two centuries served as principal minster to the monarchy in the guise of **Harkover Lee**, has been placed in charge of the nation, and the seat of power has moved to Flint. Slate, which has no industrial sector, was not useful to the Obscurati. Flint, by contrast, was set to begin producing enchanted machinery. A lot of cargo ships from Flint have been going to Axis Island, laden with what Pemberton assumes are parts to repair the colossus.

Rural Risur seems to be more contentious, and Pemberton has seen military units march onto farms in order to domineer people into a hivemind, since the new dark world is struggling to produce enough food.

In Ber, it seems the more savage races like goblins and Pemberton's beloved gnolls have proven resistant to hiveminds that are based on the idea of civilization, so the Beran military has been rounding up 'primitives' in camps. He doesn't know what happens to them after that.

Pemberton had few spies in Crisillyir, but the Clergy was effectively out of power. There was a rumor that Nicodemus was looking for a female eladrin who was held in a Clergy prison, not to punish her but to recruit her.

Danor was already loyal to the Ob, but they were releasing some ludicrous propaganda trying to convince people that everything was going according to plan. Pemberton wonders if maybe there was some secret core of resistance causing them trouble.

The state of Drakr depends on how the party handled adventure twelve. If Komanov won, Drakr is an empty land, where Ob loyalists are retaking territory and trying to rekindle the fire of industry. If the party defeated Komanov, the nation is producing gargantuan anti-aircraft cannons to be delivered and installed at Axis Island.

Elfaivar is the one place for which Pemberton has absolutely no information.

The day after the party left, the strange phenomenon that had been happening atop Cauldron Hill stopped. Now the mountaintop is bare stone, but still no one goes there. Even the ghosts that were once drawn there and which could be seen in mirrors now seem listless, because they no longer have a way to reach the Bleak Gate and find their eternal rest.

Unknown Unknowns

What Pemberton doesn't know is that Risur under the directives of Harkover Lee has begun bringing thousands of people from the countryside into the city in order to pacify and reeducate them before sending them back out to create hiveminds of their own. The whole city of Flint has had its streets lined with gas lamps that function as *wayfarer lanterns*, which modulate the mood of all of its million inhabitants, and eight large lantern towers enhance the control over each district.

In Ber, the Bruse is personally overseeing mass executions of undesirable primitives. In Crisillyir, pious individuals are being punished by having to disassemble by hand religious buildings of the Clergy, and showing signs of faith will get you punished with reeducation in Vendricce. Danor has convinced people to doubt their own loyalties, and to turn themselves in for voluntary execution so they won't threaten progress. Nothing particularly surprising is happening in Drakr, but in Elfaivar the eladrin enclave run by **Athrylla Valenar** is besieged. The Ob's forces could easily crush the city, but Nicodemus desires a civilized, formal surrender as a sort of gift to Kasvarina.

Thwarting Scorched Earth

If your party is capable of teleporting between cities, they can probably liberate Flint, then go from city to city in less than an hour. If they can defeat the head of each nation's hivemind, that should stop them from enacting the scorched earth plan. However, it takes just one person casting *sending* to alert the Obscurati, and from there Nicodemus would order his allies around the continent to retaliate. Since the party doesn't know how Nicodemus intends to follow through on his threat, will they risk acting?

We have a suggested solution, detailed below, but PCs might come up with their own plan, like rescuing Andrei von Recklinghausen from Sentosa and having him pose as Nicodemus (after all, Nic used his body for a few months) to call off the scorched earth plans.

Operation Ettin

Pemberton has what he calls a 'two-headed solution.' He knows the Obscurati had magic items that could intercept *sending* spells, but their area of coverage was limited. However, Flint's own cursed mountain Cauldron Hill always had a strong sway over the city, and with a bit of creative spellcasting one of those devices placed atop the mountain could blanket the entire city. That would let the party deal with their home city without the news reaching the Ob, at least not right away.

Other cities don't have handy sites to focus a powerful ritual, so while the PCs might be able to take their time to do Flint right, the other cities will need to be done simultaneously. Pemberton has a handful of duplicants stashed around the world, and he could get into each major city. He can jury-rig the magic necessary to let the PCs control duplicants, and after the party combines forces to defeat Harkover Lee and free Flint, each PC can take control of a duplicant in a different city. Acting via telepresence, they'll be able to strike four or more cities simultaneously. Divination magic or interrogating Harkover would help them know which cities they need to worry about.

The Ob has only prepared their scorched earth countermeasures in five cities—Flint, Alais Primos, Cherage, Seobriga, and Trekhom. If you have more PCs, they can double up, or the party might use their own magic to try to help the enclave Sentosa in Elfaivar. If Trekhom was conquered by Grandis Komanov in adventure eleven, there aren't enough people there to warrant the Ob destroying the place, so you can shift its scene to take place in Slate or Nalaam, whichever the PCs will care about more.

Pemberton's real body is still in the Yerasol Archipelago for all of this, since he's busy readying for another attack on Axis Island. Once the party finishes saving the other national capitals, they'll need to return to their real bodies in Flint, then take their airship to Axis Island. (If the ship gets destroyed, they can just teleport to Pemberton's island lair. See Dragon-Riding, page 218.)

Duplicant Technology

For a character to control a duplicant, he or she must lie down and wear a steel skullcap etched with draconic iconography, to which is attached a blindfold and muffling ear covers. A flat stone shard marked with a series of seventeen numbers in draconic is placed on the person's chest, and then a drop of witchoil must be poured into a divot in the stone. That draws a fragment of the subject's soul into a specific duplicant, which has a witchoil reservoir marked with the same seventeen numbers. Pemberton has memorized the codes for all his duplicants, and can easily adjust which duplicant a given skullcap and chest stone link to.

(If you want maximum steampunkery, instead of a skullcap these can be top hats.)

As a show of good faith, Pemberton reminds the party that his original duplicant control designs forced the subject to loyally obey his commands. He's had a slight change of heart after seeing what the Obscurati has done with mass domination, and so all his new duplicants are not designed for mind control. He laments, though, that he won't ever be able to mass produce them and sell them to the public, because his supply of witchoil is finite. With the Bleak Gate severed from this world, he'll never be able to make more.

That's another reason to go to Cauldron Hill in Flint first. Unless the party has a stash of witchoil, he'll need to recover some of the fluid from cracks and fissures in the mountain. His duplicants around the world already have their own reservoirs of witchoil, but he'll need a few ounces of the stuff in order to let the party link to them.

Glimpse the Age of Reason

Exploration. Montage.

The utopian veneer of the new world order hides callous oppression.

Before diving into grand acts of world-saving, the PCs might stop over somewhere more low key. This could be a farming village to make plans with Pemberton, or a town outside of Flint to check on the safety of a family member, or possibly just a train stopped to clear the tracks of snow that they spot while flying overhead in their airship.

At first glance, everything should seem serene and positive. Everyone has their heads held high. No one squabbles. All affairs proceed in an orderly fashion. Farmers erect arcanoscientific gas lamps to shed dull red light over their crops to keep them warm, and then with the aid of soldiers begin to operate a steam-powered autoplow to till the field. Streets are swept and faintly-lit by brown gas lamps, all the houses and buildings are in good order, and police take the time to visit every house and ask if anyone needs assistance. In addition to the freight cars, passenger cars look to have been recently assembled in order to manage the increase in travel demand, and seats are comfortable and clean, with each car lit up with the dim blue glow of gas lamps.

But no one speaks, except when necessary to coordinate action. Food is unseasoned. No one seems to be daydreaming, or preoccupied, or bored. Everyone functions like a cog in a machine. If pressed, they're not lacking in free will or personality, but they simply aren't inclined to express themselves or do anything selfish. They're quick to agree to help if anyone needs aid, but since everyone is generally content, no one has a reason to ask. There is peace, but in the same way a well-tended garden is peaceful. Left to its own devices, nothing will change.



Disobedience Will Not Be Tolerated

In whatever scenario the party finds themselves observing these behaviors, some sort of outsider will disturb this serenity. A gnome mage named **Weebit Vallshadow** was hiding—lurking in the fields, creeping through the sewers, stowing away on the train—but he's out in the open when his *invisibility* spell ends. He panics for a moment and glances at the people around him.

"He's *wrong*," says a bystander. "We must help the little bastard."

Weebit tries to cast a spell, but as one everyone nearby converges on him, and they grab and hoist him off the ground. Weebit cries out, "Let me go! I'm not causing any trouble!"

Another local person says, "You shouldn't hide. That's so old-fashioned. Cooperation is the new thing."

Weebit keeps yelling, and so someone muffles his mouth. He bites the person, who frowns but ignores the pain.

Someone else says, "He must be sick of loneliness. The rumors spooked him. Here, wee one. Let us help. We shall subsume your fear so your mind will no longer be capable of dissent. It's much more cooperative."

If no one helps him, Weebit at this point begins to calm and relax. His vision drifts into the middle distance, and then he slowly nods. "I understand now. Thank you. Let me go find where I can be useful."

The crowd puts him down and claps briefly, and one person stays nearby talking to Weebit about how his magic might make him a security risk, so he should travel—in a group of course, so he's safe—to the reeducation schools at Dawn Square in Flint.

A 'Gandalf the White' Moment

If the party interrupts this, no one can possibly pose a threat to them. By revealing who they are in a dramatic way, they have a chance to snap the people here out of their control. But unless the freed group is kept a fair distance from others who are in a hivemind, it won't be long before they start to be drawn back in.

People are excited that the party has returned, and everyone mentions how empty they've felt these past few months. They only know snatches of information about what really happened to the world, but they've heard of the PCs and trust that they can fix this. They want to know how they can help, and quite in contrast to their 'cooperative' demeanor moments earlier, now they're angry.

March on the Capital

Exposition. Montage.

The party takes back control of Flint.

Flint has changed since the party left. The Obscurati-generated hive-minds subdued the populace, and eventually Harkover Lee submitted to them as well. With the former dragon in charge, Flint has undergone rapid construction.

The most obvious thing visible from afar is that each of the city's eight 'civilized' districts has a sixty foot high tower capped with a massive version of the *wayfarer's lantern*, shedding unhealthy brown light to dull the populace's emotions. These distributed lanterns, as well as myriad street lamps around the city, are fed by gas lines which originate from the governor's mansion, where a small refinery of spire-like exhaust towers burn off remnants of the refining process in spurts of fire. While the lanterns help keep people orderly, simply turning them off (such as by blowing up the refinery, destroying the lantern towers, or even just closing valves in underground gas lines to stop the flow) isn't enough to end the Ob's control, since people are also held in a hivemind.

Other changes are spread throughout the city. Wherever the Ob have changed things, instead of Flint's eclectic style of architecture inspired by a cosmopolitan mix of neo-classical and druidic designs, the new buildings are drab and functional, like something out of the most dystopian visions of Soviet Russia.

Anyone capable of seeing invisible things notices thousands of shimmering strands stretching from the ground to above the rooftops, where warty yet somehow subdued shapes float, weaving together everyone's consciousness into a shared hivemind.

The Ayres

Industrial fishing has overtaken what were once luxury homes on these islands. Every piece of land that could sport a pier now hosts a fishing trawler. Where once these isles were refuge from the industrial stench wafting out of Parity Lake, now the odor of tons of fish and whales drift on the sea breeze.

The wealthy who lived here have been reeducated, and those with valuable management skills were brought to Central District to handle bureaucracy. Others were encouraged to serve as hosts for the fishermen, who reside in crowded mansions-turned-tenements. An unsightly truss bridge is halfway-constructed, extending from North Shore with the intent of linking the islands together with a rail line.

The Ayres Lantern Tower rises from a magically extruded rock island in the central lagoon of the islands.



Bosum Strand

The docks are busy as ever, and Stanfield Canal is being widened. Freight rail threads through the district, with a major hub just beside Dawn Square. The square is the site of the Bosum Strand Lantern Tower, and the buildings around the field have been converted into lodging for the city's reeducation camps. Tall brick fences capped with barbed wire surround the whole area, and a riflery detachment keeps watch from atop the lighthouse tower.

The subrail lines connecting Central District and North Shore have just been bored out, and track has been laid, but lighting has not been installed, leaving miles of black tunnels under this district.

Central

The royal docks have been expanded into a towering airship construction yard. The frame of a dirigible is complete and partially coated with the pressure vessel. Tanks containing hydrogen are dangerously huge and unguarded. (If you suspect your party will get their ship blown up in the fight with Harkover Lee, you might change the nature of the airship being built here, so the party can have a fresh vessel for their final fight against Nicodemus and the colossus.)

The former RHC headquarters has been renovated, and the Central Lantern Tower rises from it. **Director of the Secret Police Stover Delft** still operates from the building.

Cloudwood

The forest is being clear-cut for farms, which are lit by gaslight lanterns. The Bridal Veil waterfall (where the party first met Gale) was detonated, because dissidents in this district had found a way to use it to cast 'veils' that would shield them from hiveminds. Now an ugly tumble of boulders forms rapids, rather than the serene and beautiful falls.

A scar of a rail line cuts its way from Central to the Cloudwood Lantern Tower, where lumber is loaded for construction purposes. **Minister of Nature Hana Soliogn**, formerly known as Gale, operates from here, and every day she performs a ritual to call thick clouds over the entire city. This is done for morale, so people won't need to see the frightening Gyre looming overhead, and because the clouds reflect the brown lantern light to ever so slightly brighten the gloom.

North Shore
While the beautiful beaches are open to the public, no one feels any need for recreation, so they are empty. The North Shore Lantern Tower rises like a beacon from atop the lower of the two 'ears' of the Great Horned Mountain at the northwest tip of the district. The higher of the two peaks has been cored and flattened at its top so immense turrets can aim skyward and at the harbor.

Parity Lake
The factories here are going faster than ever. One of the few actual improvements in living conditions in Flint is that workers have been moved from tenements to slightly safer housing, and are able to take subrail to work. The Parity Lake Lantern Tower rises from the center of the (somewhat toxic, marginally flammable) lake.

The factories along Alchemy Row (such as where Sechim's Alkahest and Etchings operated) now all serve as a single immense munitions plant. Here, at least, the firegems and firedust are warded to prevent runaway explosion.

Pine Island
This district is viewed as less economically useful, so most of its residents have been 'suggested' to join the military. Barracks and training fields dot the area. The Pine Island Lantern Tower sits near the northern tip of the district. Because of the length of the district, people in the south-central part of Pine Island are less affected, and so a few desperate former dockers like **Thames Grimsley** hide there, hoping to avoid discovery. They resist being drawn into hiveminds by reminding each other daily of the wonderful individuality they were able to express before the Obscurati came to power. They accepted a harsh life as long as they could speak their minds, so the Ob's promise of security held little sway over them.

Stray River
This middle class district has been little changed, though a new rail station is under construction meant to service rail lines that will eventually stretch westward across all of Risur. The Stray River Lantern Tower sits on the east bank.

The Nettles
Mostly abandoned over a year ago, the slum buildings still stand, serving as an excellent hiding place for those who want to avoid the hiveminds.

The Ob have not built anything new here, not even a lantern tower, because they're unsure how stable Cauldron Hill is. The Bleak Gate facility tore its way into the real world when the colossus Borne escaped, and then the Gyre began to strip away everything but the bare stone of the peak. Though now the Bleak Gate is apparently inaccessible, the mountain still possesses great and mysterious power.

If the party wants to prevent communication in and out of the city, they'll want to sneak atop Cauldron Hill and perform a discreet ritual (the details of which are inconsequential for PCs of their level).

Freeing Flint
A lot will depend on how the party pursues this goal. Whatever they decide, go with it, but it should inevitably lead to a battle with Harkover Lee in dragon form.

If we were to script this, the party would let a train load of people they'd freed from the Ob hivemind reach Flint, and word would spread that the heroes of Risur have returned. The PCs discreetly enter the city in disguise and set up necessary ritual components and duplicant tech atop Cauldron Hill. Then they contact Gale, Stover Delft, and possibly other allies, freeing them from the hivemind and preparing them to act at the right moment. Those allies warn that Harkover is strongly compelled and it would be necessary to weaken his control over the city before he could be freed.



STOVER DELFT



GALE SOLIOGN



THAMES GRIMSLEY

Thames Grimsley would organize a theatrical performance on the docks of Bosum Strand to try to rally people stuck in the reeducation center to resist, and right as the defense forces are closing in to apprehend him, the party activates the ritual to block *sendings*, then descend in their airship from the cloud cover over the city. They take out the anti-air defenses on the Great Horned Mountain, destroy the lantern tower in Bosum Strand, then land and reveal themselves in Dawn Square.

Before they can make any big speeches, they notice that the unpleasant brown glow from the city's street lamps is turning red, spreading out block by block from a nexus at the governor's island. Then Harkover Lee teleports in, still in human form, greets the party, and tells them he has been ordered by Nicodemus to raze the city if they oppose the Obscurati. The battle begins just before noon, only a few hours after the party woke up near the ziggurat.

Incidentals

If they succeeded, the party can call upon a whole city. Don't make them expend any resources to heal, and if they want any mundane gear they will not be denied.

You and Your Friends

Action. Tactical/Real-Time. Level 34.

The dragon Inacht the Hex-Eater, once Harkover Lee the loyal advisor to the kings of Risur, battles the party across the length and breadth of Flint.

Whenever the party reveals themselves or makes their move in Flint, Harkover first has the city-wide gas lines flooded with energy from Jiese, and then he confronts the party. If the party ambushes him, his aides know to set off the scorched earth operation. If the PCs are canny they might target the refinery on the island of the governor's mansion, and if they're stealthy enough they might be able to destroy it and head off this whole scene.

However, Harkover resides at the island and between his own magic and the ghost council that controls him, it's likely he'd notice the party's approach. If the PCs have a fool-proof plan—one that can get past spectral hounds that can sniff invisible creatures, widespread wards that illuminate anyone disguised or polymorphed (so Harkover always glows), bound nature spirits that warn of anyone magically traveling through the earth or water, and teleportation beacons that redirect intruders to the Pine Island barracks—let them Mission: Impossible this. But we think the following scene is exciting, so we hope it gets to happen.



HARKOVER LEE

Treacherous Vizier

Harkover can *jaunt* once per day to teleport and get within range to speak to the party. He arrives in human form, flying with the aid of the ghost council, and his voice is magically magnified so hundreds or thousands of onlookers go silent as he calls to the PC who he previously served. His voice is jaunty, his Beran accent tinged with restrained mockery.

"Greetings, my former monarch and honored heroes of Risur. I ask that you surrender. For the past three years that I have watched your rise, you have been nothing if not loyal to your nation, and now if you wish to save your citizens, you will do the bravest thing and let yourselves be defeated.

"Your nation coerced me into becoming a docile pet, and when Nicodemus freed me he promised he would do the same to the people of Risur. Now they are *my* pets. If you persist in your arrogant belief that you have the right to direct the fate of these people, then your last directive shall be for them to perish in fire."

He cups his gold wizard's orb in one hand, then gestures with his other hand at the glow of red lantern light, slowly spreading through the city from the direction of Central District.

"Moments ago I gave the order for the city's gas lines to be flooded with energy from Jiese – pure elemental fire. In a matter of minutes it will reach high enough concentrations that it will explode, obliterating this city and all its people. Even if with your royal prowess you do manage to avert this, we have alerted Nicodemus, and the capital cities of the other four great nations are each lighting their own funeral pyres. You cannot save them all.

"Cast down your crown. Forsake the throne. Or this great city will die."

At any hostile action or attempt to stop the fire, Harkover adopts his draconic form as Inacht the Hex-Eater and tries to ensure the party cannot save the city.

Stopping the Explosion

The party can thwart this five main ways: shut off the fuel lines, disable the refinery, destroy the towers, recalibrate the lanterns, or force Harkover to call it off.

Shut Off the Fuel Lines. The party could head underground into the subrail tunnels to turn valves and shut off the flow of gas going to each of the eight districts. Harkover would pursue as best he can, and the tunnels are big enough for a huge creature to run but not fly.

To find a place where the pipe flow can be controlled, a character can try to recall or infer the layout of the city's gas pipes. Roll a secret Perception or Streetwise check (DC 35) for the character, and then give the PC a location within five hundred feet, which probably takes about a minute to travel to. If the check failed only slightly, the actual control valve might be close to where the PC thought it was (requiring a round or two of searching to locate it), but if the check fails by 5 or more, the character will have to guess again and try somewhere else another five hundred feet away or so.

Instead of finding a safe control valve, a PC might intentionally damage the pipes anywhere in the underground tunnel. Dealing at least 50 damage causes gas to fill the area. Three rounds later a small explosion goes off.

Attack: Close burst 10 (creatures in burst); +23 vs. Reflex; **Hit:** 6d6+30 fire damage and the target takes ongoing 10 fire damage and is slowed (save ends both); **Miss:** Half damage. Effect: The area is littered with irregular structures composed of threadlike firegems as the fire solidifies following the initial explosion.

If the character does find a valve safely, it takes an Arcana or Thievery check (DC 30, automatic for a technologist) to operate the mechanism. A failed check means the pressure builds up, and then the pipe cracks. As above, gas fills the tunnel and will explode in three rounds. The explosion happens instantly if the check is failed by 5 or more.

A character can keep trying to stop the flow of a gas leak, making another Arcana or Thievery check (DC 30). If this check is failed, an explosion goes off immediately, and the fire runs down the length of the pipeline. A mile-long stretch of the city bursts into flame as the pipeline explodes underground and street lamps ignite on the surface. While a PC might survive this, and it does stop the larger explosion Harkover intends to wipe out an entire district, thousands still die.

Disable the Refinery. The governor's mansion and its refinery is heavily guarded with ten Obscurati construct squads (see page 290). You can reuse the map in adventure nine, or if the party tries to get into the underground pipeline the construct squads can pour into the service tunnels. A gunfight with unintelligent rifle-wielding constructs in close proximity to explosive gas is a terrible idea. Or wonderful, if you're Michael Bay.

Should the party enter the refinery and attempt to disable the flow there, they still need to shut each valve off separately (same mechanics as above), and it's obvious that if any of the pipelines explode, it will spread through the entire city. Again, this only wipes out parts of the city above the subrail lines, but it is still devastating. As for the refinery itself, if it blows up, repeat the attack above for three consecutive rounds, encouraging PCs to get the hell out of there.

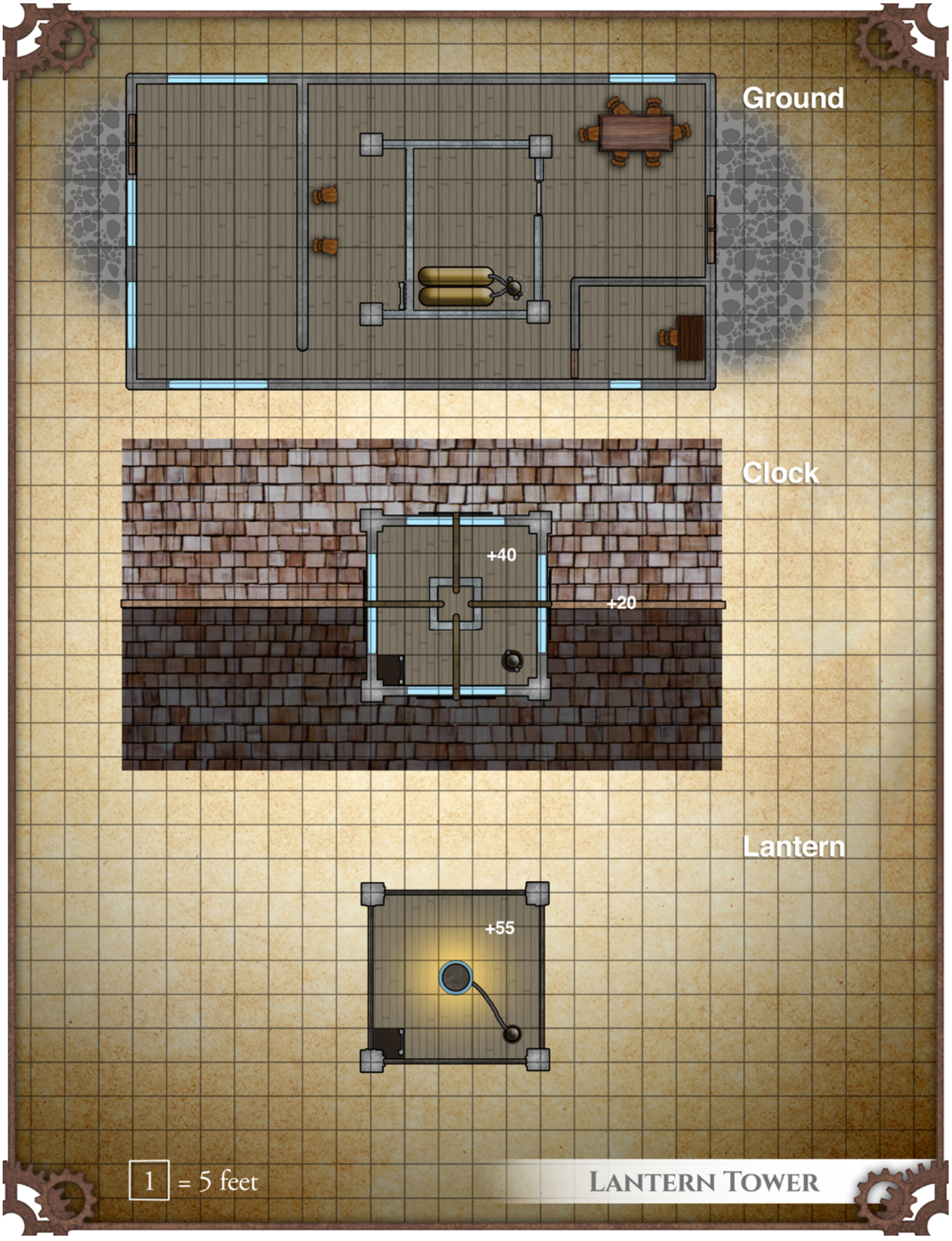
Destroy the Towers. The PCs can destroy all the lantern towers, but they're scattered across the city, and even in their airship it takes five minutes for them to fly from one district to another. If the party splits up and everyone uses their ability to *jaunt*, plus other teleportation magic, they might be able to get to them all in time. They also could have allies if they have freed people from Ob control.

See the Lantern Tower map for details, though the layouts of the towers vary. Each has an Obscurati construct squad on the ground floor, and two city defense squads stationed outside. Inside, tanks hold a small quantity of gases infused with eight different planar energy types, and a main line receives gas from the refinery at the governor's mansion. That runs up through the second floor (which typically has a mechanism controlling four clocks on the tower's four faces), and up to the top of the tower where the lantern burns.

A good volley of ship's weaponry will take out a tower in a round, triggering an explosion, the same as the other explosions described above. A pressure valve shuts off flow if the lantern itself is destroyed, preventing the tower from constantly burning if the party decides to blow the place up.

If a PC gets inside a tower and reaches its controls at the top floor, clever sabotage (Arcana or Thievery DC 35, automatic for a technologist) can vent the gas into the air, where it burns off safely in a constant stream. Failing means the tower will explode in three rounds, as above. Failing by five or more causes an immediate explosion. And of course intentionally breaking the pipes can blow up the towers easily, if a character's confident he'll survive the explosion.




Ground
Clock
+40
+20
Lantern
+55
1 = 5 feet
Lantern Tower

Recalibrate the Lanterns. The refinery on the governor's island can produce energy keyed to any of the different planes the Obscurati used in their Axis Seal ritual. Normally it emits a hazy brown light with energy from Ratios, to encourage reason and restraint. Harkover has switched it to Jiese's fire energy and has increased the flow rate.

If they reach the refinery, instead of just shutting off the lanterns, they could switch to a different energy (Arcana DC 35). Fourmyle's 'empowerment' trait would help people break free of the Ob's control amidst a green glow. Ostea's purple glow would suffuse everyone with healing energy. Baden's pale white light would let everyone fly. Once the refinery is recalibrated, the effect spreads about a mile per minute through the city. Each attempt takes a minute.

Harkover Calls it Off. If defeated and freed from control of the Obscurati, Harkover Lee can order the workers at the governor's island refinery to shut off the pipeline.

Battle on the Wing

Harkover's draconic form as Inacht the Hex-Eater (see Appendix A: Combat Catalogue) is designed to give him mobility and range so he can engage the party on the wing as they rush through the city trying to stop the coming explosion. We encourage you, each round before you decide what he does, to ponder several rounds ahead. This is a brilliant, intelligent foe, not a mere clawed monster, and time is on his side.

Additionally, unless the party freed Delft and Gale from their hive-minds, those two each defend one of the two lantern towers — in Central District and the Cloudwood. Jaunting lets them move elsewhere if the party tries to avert the explosion without going to those towers.

Finally, an Obscurati construct squad and two city defense squads guard each lantern tower. If the party moves through the city at ground level, feel free to throw one or two city defense squads at the party every few minutes. They're barely speed-bumps at this level, but it gives you an excuse to describe the landscape of the city and clarify the party's progress through the city streets.

You and Your Friends

- **Harkover Lee**, Dragon Tyrant
- **Stover Delft** of the Secret Police
- **Hana Soliogn**, Obscurati Loyalist
- numerous Obscurati construct squads
- countless city defense squads

Tactics

We want this fight to last several minutes and span as much of Flint as possible. Don't closely track time, as long as the party is keeping active; the detonation might happen in as few as five or as many as thirty minutes, so long as the party feels the pressure is on. But it's impossible to predict whether the PCs will split up and head for different lantern towers, or if they'll board their airship and charge the dragon, or lure him within range of the North Shore anti-air cannons, or rush the refinery on governor's island forcing Harkover to engage them.

Let this combat stretch out, and don't have Harkover close the distance unless he can attack an isolated PC. If the party tries to take him out directly, he withdraws and circles, running down the clock. He stays between 30 and 40 squares out, and if the party has attacks that can reach him he swoops between buildings only slightly above the ground so that they have trouble getting a shot at him.

DEFENDING THE KINGDOM

A PC who is monarch of Risur is empowered in this battle by the rites of rulership, as described in adventure nine. In particular, this grants a +4 bonus to attack rolls and defenses; a +7 bonus to Strength-, Dexterity-, and Constitution-based checks; regeneration 20 (in addition to regeneration 10 that is innate in the rites); and counts as huge for abilities that depend on size. Because of this, Harkover prefers not to target the monarch until there are no other foes left.

Harkover will fire a few *firebolts* from afar to try to keep the party focused on him, and if they move to try to deal with the impending explosion, he watches from afar and tries to get ahead of them in a wide arc. He'll dive out of sight if possible (even if the party's flying above the rooftops, it's hard to spot even a huge flying foe at night when he's a thousand feet away), then try to be waiting to attack from a direction they don't expect. They'll almost certainly hear him coming, but should only have a round of warning before he flies past and either pops them with more *firebolts*, or strafe them with his breath weapon if the PCs are clustered.

He should almost never use his melee attacks unless cornered, and even then he prefers to slide enemies away so he can withdraw. If he's ever struck with multiple conditions that he cannot easily recover from, he'll *dimension door* away and look for a different tactic.

The greatest threat to him is probably the party's own airship, since it keeps him from using the city as cover, and it removes his chief advantage of speed. But the airship isn't fast enough to get to all the lantern towers in time, so the party will have to split up. If the PCs get on their ship and rush him, he reverts to human form, teleports to the ground and ducks into a building, in which he'll wait for the PCs to give up looking for him.

After some initial long-range bombardment and possibly one close engagement, have Harkover vanish for a bit. Give the party time to deal with one or two of the pipelines or towers, and then have the dragon return and target whoever's most vulnerable, then warily withdraw. Give the party time to come up with a plan to deal with him, and come up with a way for Harkover to thwart their first plan. Then, when they're just past halfway to saving the city, try to steer events so the party is all able to do something when Harkover is forced to actually get in close.

Flint Nostalgia

The reason, of course, to extend the length of the battle is to give as many familiar faces and places an opportunity to have a cameo. If the party freed Delft before the fight, their old Chief Inspector might be able to disable the lantern tower at the RHC headquarters, saving the party time; and ditto Gale in the Cloudwood. (Without the hiveminds empowering them, neither is strong enough to fight Harkover.)

Perhaps the party enters the subrail tunnels through the same station where the eschatologists took hostages in adventure five. Soldiers under Ob control might start shooting at the party, only to themselves fall under attack by former Kell Guild scoundrels. Maybe the building Harkover throws at them was part of the natural history museum, complete with murals of Ancients and their artifacts. While running down the length of an old subrail tunnel, a PC might glimpse a blood-streaked access hatch from which a man huddled in rags watches them (yeah, we never did anything with the rag man either).

If it looks like they're out of time, and the party can't reach the North Shore tower, a last-minute attack led by Julian LeBrix from the old Danoran consulate can shut it off before it blows.



Aftermath

When reduced to 0 hit points, Harkover crashes and shapeshifts back to human form. Clinging to life solely through magic, he curses Nicodemus for making him betray his nation. The ghost councilors bound to him stagger away, and if the party stabilizes Harkover they can free him from the hivemind. If they leave him to die, his last words are a warning that Nicodemus has ordered Alais Primos, Cherage, Seobriga, and Trekhom destroyed.

If saved, Harkover surrenders and warns that the other capital cities will be exploding soon too because he *sent* to Nicodemus. He's unaware of any countermeasures the party put into place. He can share the same information as above, plus the fact that the figures in charge are at the Cathedral of Triegenes in Alais Primos, the Cherage rail enclave, Seobriga's central square, and a parade route that starts at Trekhom's parliament building.

By this point Pemberton will have collected the witchoil he needs from atop Cauldron Hill, and is ready to let the party activate their duplicants. First, though, the PCs may want to address the city, whose populace will all be looking for guidance. If needed, Gale can use her magic to magnify their voices so all of Flint can hear them. If they've defeated Harkover and saved the city, the power of the hivemind is weakened. All it takes now is giving the people of Flint some other purpose so they can resist the Ob's attempts to reclaim them. Any good heroic speech should do the trick.

As the party speaks, the clouds over Cauldron Hill break, and a gap that resembles the spread wings of a raven reveals the sparkling glow of the Gyre overhead.

Versus Me and the Revolution

Action. Montage. Level 30.

In order to liberate the oppressed masses of other nations, avert a scornful scorched earth, and incite a revolution, the party must strike multiple international targets simultaneously, one for each of them.

The party should move on the other capital cities within minutes of defeating Harkover Lee if they want to be certain the Obscurati aren't able to burn them down. Even if the party blocked *sendings* from Flint to keep specific information from being delivered, there are enough psychic gestalts active in the ranks of the Ob that its officers don't take long to realize that their powers have waned noticeably. Within half an hour they pinpoint that Flint has been cut free from the Ob's network of hiveminds. If the party procrastinates more than an hour, then the cities of Alais Primos, Cherage, Seobriga, and Trekhom will be laid to waste.

The PCs can of course use their own teleportation magic to reach the cities instead of using Pemberton's duplicants, but the key factor to this scene is that all four cities must be saved at the same time. If the whole party spends five minutes in Cherage, warning will be sent ahead to the other three cities, so it will be too late to save them.

Simultaneity

In our experience few gamers can maintain rapt attention on their fellow players' actions when their own character isn't in the scene. If you are blessed with such a group, by all means, run each of the scenes below independently.

If your group is less patient, or at least experimental and forgiving, you can try running all four or five scenes in parallel. Have each PC roll initiative, then play through a snippet of a scene with the PCs in turn order, cycling through them and advancing the plot bit by bit. The first cycle establishes where the PC awakens in their duplicant, the second gives them a chance to figure out where the threat to the city is based, and in the third they make their way to that spot and get into conflict of some sort. If anyone starts a combat, put that PC on hold until all the PCs are in combat, or at least in some other time-sensitive challenge.

Then run all the battles at the same time, resolving each PC and all of their foes for one turn, then the next PC and foes, and so on. Clever parties will use some manner of magic to let them communicate with each other, or you can simply have Pemberton's tech grant the PCs the ability to talk to other duplicants. (Or, depending on what technological advances they pursued in adventures seven through nine, they might have radios.) You can then justify table-talk, or perhaps even bizarre tactics like swapping duplicants mid-fight.

Of the scenes below, the events in Cherage probably have the strongest emotional impact, but if you figure one in particular will resonate with your group, try to have that one resolve last.

Distant Situations

Pemberton had his duplicants hidden away, so when the PCs take control of them they aren't necessarily anywhere near where they need to be. If they didn't save Harkover and learn where to go, each PC will have to figure out how the city is imperiled and make their way to a place they can avert calamity.

As always, if any of the NPCs referenced below are dead, you can introduce a new character to fill the same general role. We've designed these encounters to be exceptionally dangerous, because at this point in the campaign failure should have a major, lasting effect. If only one or two PCs succeed in saving the city they go to, then the other cities fall. Because they're in duplicants, it's possible to 'kill' a PC and have him fail this mission, at which point he'll awaken in his real body.

Disabling, destroying, or recalibrating the lantern towers in any of these cities functions the same as in Flint, though cities without fire energy don't have exploding towers.

Alais Primos

The city doesn't have a network of gas lines for handy detonation, but the Ob have created four Lantern Towers, each with its own fuel supply, to pacify the city. Currently the head of state of Crisillyir **Arch Secula Natalia Degaspare** is overseeing the systematic disenchanting and dismantling of the Cathedral of Triegenes, which sits on the mouth of the volcano Enzyo Mons. Among the workers is **Morgan Cippiano**, who will recognize and warn of any PC who appears here. If alerted, either by Morgan or by guards ringing the bells in the lantern towers, Degaspare commands the towers to switch to fuel derived from the now-destroyed plane of death, Av, which causes the souls of everyone in the city to leave their bodies, trapping them in a purgatory while their physical bodies slowly perish.

DUPLICANT MECHANICS

Pemberton has two duplicants in each of the cities in this scene, so a PC might go solo or, if there are enough PCs, the party can put two constables per conflict. Perhaps if a PC's first duplicant is destroyed, he can 'respawn' and try again after healing.

The duplicants mimic all the character's traits unless otherwise stated, even those of the character's worn equipment. As for melee weapons, upon activating the duplicant the character will need to find something of similar size and shape of whatever weapon he wants to wield, which will be transformed and empowered by the magic of the soul link.

Ranged weapons function somewhat similarly, but they need to have at least somewhat similar form—you can't pick up a simple iron bar and have it function as a gun, but any musket can work as a vessel for the power of a PC's *+5 undead-bane rifle*. Note that the duplicants in Trekhom were intended for an assassination, and so they have rifles handy when they arrive.

Because of the magical link to the pilot's soul, damage to the duplicant is also dealt to the pilot, and likewise healing affects both, so potentially one PC could stay behind to communicate with everyone and heal them as they become injured. If the duplicant is reduced to 0 hit points, it is destroyed, and the pilot awakens in his own body with 1 hit point. The pilot can also choose to sever his connection as a standard action.

A duplicant has resist 10 all while not bloodied. While bloodied he or she has vulnerable 10, and takes a -5 penalty to all defenses and saving throws. The duplicant has darkvision, blindsight 5, and is immune to poison and disease. They aren't technically alive, but effects transfer to the pilot's body, so blood loss or psychic attacks that make you unable to breathe are still a threat (though blood loss that does less than 10 damage isn't a problem as long as the duplicant is not bloodied).

The character is generally unaware of what is happening to his or her own body, which is considered helpless. Damage dealt to a real body manifests on the duplicant. The pilot can also distantly hear things around their real body.

If PCs decide they don't have the right skills for a given mission and want to swap with someone else, the pilot can sever his connection as a standard action. It takes two move actions to swap the linking apparatus with an ally (which pulls that ally out of his duplicant), and then another standard action for each creature to reestablish a link. From the point of view of people in distant cities, the PC's features will shift into the metal body of a duplicant, which will slump but remain standing. Don't be too mean and have the bystanders attack the briefly defenseless machine.

Cherage

The demoness **Ashima-Shimtu** is moving among masses of Danoran citizens who are convinced their lives are too wretched to be worthwhile to the new world. They have gathered at the Cherage Rail Enclave, where the city's gas lines originate, and where undesirables are loaded into trains to be disposed of under the direction of Danor's minister of propaganda **Gardienne du Cherage**. Ashima-Shimtu is uncertain about her role now that she has freedom, and she will fight against any PC who tries to work against the Obscuati's will.

Seobriga

In the central square of the Beran capital, **Bruse Shantus** oversees a systematic mass execution of goblins and gnolls, whose recalcitrance about becoming civilized has helped them resist the Obscurati's pacification efforts. **Brakken of Heffanita** helps corral the prisoners, among whom is **Glaucia Evora**, who was strong-willed enough to resist the Ob's influence. Guarded by trained tyrannosaurs, the hivemind-controlled Bruse is ready to order the city's Lantern Towers to be flooded with Illocus energy, from the plane of time, causing the city's emotions to rapidly cascade. He'll then release the goblins and gnolls so they can attack, provoke a panic, and drag the city into a bloodletting melee. The PC receives unexpected aid in the form of the suave **Sor Daeron**, a one-armed eladrin warrior who years ago served Kasvarina, but who now intends to dismantle the power of the Obscurati.

Trekhom

The new head of state of Drakr, **Hastenschrieft Willimarkanova** (an Ob officer philosopher), runs a parade route through the capital city Trekhom. War constructs escort her, and she rides in a carriage with the philosopher **Vlendam Heid** beside her as a dwarven shield. At the end of the parade she'll enter a heavily-fortified underground bunker, then detonate the city's lanterns, so there's little time to strike. But her route is watched from afar by sniper **Kvarti Gorbatiy**, who can teleport between the city's lantern towers to maintain near-constant overwatch.

Optional—The Siege of Enclave Sentosa

Eladrin matriarch **Athrylla Valenar**'s enclave of Sentosa found itself drawn fully into the real world when Av was shattered in the Gyre, and now **Cula Ravjahani**, former aide-de-camp of Kasvarina, commands a siege around the city. The Ob have sufficient firepower to obliterate the small number of hold-outs, but Cula has been ordered to take Athrylla prisoner. Defeating Cula will weaken the hivemind's control on its soldiers and earn the party powerful allies among the eladrin.

The Mission

In each location, one PC will need to find out what specifically is threatening the city, and then avert that. Afterward, the survivors will be easily swayed to help the party, so it would be useful to give them orders to keep them working against the Obscurati. If the party intends to use the *sacrament of apotheosis*, they should make sure the people they save know who rescued them, and spread the word so that in a few hours when they are called upon to help, everyone will know to answer. Once everyone is done they should return to their real bodies, leaving their duplicants inert, and then they'll set out together for Axis Island.

The *sacrament* requires people to have faith in a specific named ideal or entity, so if the PCs are going that route, they should probably decide on a term to refer to themselves as a group. This could be as simple as 'the RHC' or 'the heroes of Risur.' If they want something a bit more impressive, Pardo once again recommends 'the Illuminati.'

Alais Primos—God is Dead

The PC who tackles Alais Primos activates a duplicant lying atop a bed, covered in a white sheet, in a tower not far from the Grand Librarium. A cracked skylight has let in recent rain, and the whole building's core of wooden frame is rotting, but a glass door opens out to an ornate marble balcony that overlooks a majestic view of the city. As everywhere else, snow has fallen and the air is below freezing. Notably, Alais Primos does not have the ubiquitous gaslight lamps of Flint, but it does have four lantern towers dispersed around the valley, glowing a docile brown. But it's one *missing* light that stands out most starkly: across several canals, past various monuments of the old faith, and up the scorched slope of the mountain Enzyo Mons, the volcano's maw is dark, its lava cool. In its place, hundreds of small lanterns light up what remains of the Cathedral of Triegenes.

The distant cathedral that sits at the edge of the caldera looks different; most of its higher levels are missing, though it appears to have been carefully disassembled, not merely demolished.

(If the dragon Esurientes destroyed the cathedral in adventure eleven, you could instead have Natalia overseeing the construction of a geothermal power plant on the volcano.)

Sounds of weeping waft up from the base of the tower. On the ground level, a mass prayer of defiant worshippers has sprung up despite new laws that forbid all religion. A few dozen people have managed to resist the control of the city's hivemind, but at this very moment city guardsmen approach the crowd from two directions. If not stopped they'll beat and arrest the worshippers, then carry them away to the city's newly-constructed rail depot so they can be loaded into trains and carted away for reeducation or elimination.

The top floor of the tower is only 70 feet up, so a dramatic leap and rescue is heartily encouraged. A single City Defense Squad threatens the faithful, which is hardly a speedbump for even a solitary PC.



ARCH SECULA NATALIA DEGASPARE



MORGAN CIPPIANO

The Secular Deconstruction

From rescued faithful, the police, or some other source, it's easy to learn that the new head of state of Crisillyir, Arch Secula Natalia Degaspare, is at the Cathedral of Triegenes overseeing its methodical deconstruction. Hundreds of people cling to scaffolding around the building, chipping free bricks one at a time, then carrying them down so Natalia can disenchant them.

Among the workers is Mogan Cippiano, former head of the Family crime syndicate's branch in Flint. If a PC spots him first (Perception DC 30), he might be freed from control, at which point he can warn the PCs of Natalia's powers. Otherwise he might spot the PC and warn Natalia. In a fight, the arch secula shouts for workers to ring the cathedral bells, which alerts the lantern towers in the city. Then she dampens any magical powers the PC has while the local police fill him with bullets. Her bookpin bodyguards try to shield her, and will chase after a PC who flees.

Alternately, a PC might simply target the lantern towers directly, but they're separated by about a mile each. The lantern towers are laid out generally the same as those in Flint, except instead of clocktowers they have belltowers. The old golden bells still hang throughout the city, inscribed with magic chants that have not been used in centuries. In the two Victories, those bells were often rung to create city-wide defenses, from mere teleportation wards to immense shimmering walls of force. In this scene they'll most likely just be rung as an alarm (cords can activate them from the ground floor), but if things go terribly wrong they offer a chance to save the city.

If the PC lets the defenders sound an alarm bell – either at the cathedral or in one of the lantern towers – two things happen. First, a golden light rolls outward from the bell; this has no effect, but a PC might realize (Arcana or History DC 20) that the bells once harnessed the power of Urim to block teleportation. Second, within a minute of the signal, all the towers activate their failsafe, and their lanterns shed a swirling purple-green light.

Alais Primos Lantern Towers (4)

- 2 City Defense Squads
- 1 Obscurati Construct Squad

Cathedral of Triegenes

- Arch Secula Natalia Degaspare
- 1 Bookpin Bodyguard Squad
- 1 City Defense Squad

Things Go Terribly Wrong

If the failsafe activates, the towers burn fuel infused with the power of Av, which before it was shattered in the Gyre served as the plane of death. Each tower covers a quadrant of the city, ripping people's souls from their bodies. Unable to reach the destroyed Av, thousands of souls float in a limbo that vaguely resembles Alais Primos, and over the course of an hour the lights of the lantern towers gutter and die. If the PC cannot find a solution by then, the city perishes.

Those at the Cathedral of Triegenes are safe from this power, but once the lanterns turn on there's no one at the towers alive to turn them off. It would appear venturing into the city is hopeless.

If a PC is caught in the lantern light, make an attack each round (**Attack:** +20 vs. Will; **Hit:** The target's soul is pulled into the shared limbo of Alais Primos).

A PC might be able to withstand this effect long enough to destroy or disable one or more of the towers, which only have their construct guards, since the city defense squads will have lost their souls. Fighting while resisting the lantern's effect (and briefly glimpsing flashes of the limbo where people's souls scream for help) will be risky and desperate, and eventually a natural 1 will probably pull the PC into the limbo, at which point the PC will need a new way to save the people of Alais Primos. Once in the limbo, the character cannot end his connection to the duplicant, because his soul is no longer in his original body.

Of course, other PCs might be able to finish their missions and somehow come and help. But the solution we have in mind is for the PC to be trapped in limbo and see that the light of the towers is slowly fading. If he goes to a tower, he'll realize that the bells are the only solid thing in what's left of the world. It's possible to inscribe a new spell onto the bell (Arcana or Religion DC 24), so that when it tolls that spell peals out across the city. Many options would work, ranging from thunder attacks to shatter the lantern glass to some manner of countermagic to restore everyone's souls.

If the city falls into limbo but then is rescued, the survivors are freed from the hivemind, yet still feel an intense kinship. For a brief moment, their souls began to mingle, and strangers throughout Alais Primos seek each other out, weeping and hoping they can serve each other better as friends and neighbors.

Cherage—Another Kind of Chain

The demoness **Ashima-Shimtu** was given a promise of immunity by Nicodemus, as the mastermind ultimately ascribes his motivation to found the Obscurati to Ashima-Shimtu's offer of the *sacrament of apotheosis* five centuries ago. She is escorted at all times by a pair of ghost councilors who ensure that no one accosts her. The only restriction Nicodemus has placed on her is that she must not come to Axis Island. So Ashima-Shimtu went to Cherage, thinking to witness the glorious new age in the mastermind's seat of power. Thus far she finds this new world closer to the rule of the Demonocracy than the rumored perfection of the celestial heavens.

While Ashima-Shimtu was in chains, she indulged in the idea of abandoning her evil nature and pursuing some form of noble redemption, but the demoness is giving herself time to ponder her course of action now that she actually has the option to enjoy malevolence again. Her first taste of freedom in centuries was tempered with the cloying moral imperative of the Obscurati's new world order, and she is uncertain if she actually has any choice in how she acts.

She has found herself strongly affected by the propaganda that is present everywhere in Cherage. The Obscurati's master of propaganda **Gardienne du Cherage** (a tiefling who attended the Obscurati conclave in adventure seven) has implemented a widespread campaign to teach the people of Danor the proper way to live in the new world, and slogans regularly adorn walls or newspaper headlines:

- "Visit Your Local Library for Detailed Tracts on the Proper Way to Live."
- "You Need Only Ask! The New World Will Provide."
- "Create Progress! Aid Your Fellow Man."
- "Reject Your Greed. Your Community is More Important Than You."
- "Know Your Talents. How Can **YOU** Best Help?"
- "Is Your Neighbor a Threat to Order? Be Brave! Report Him."
- "This is the Best of All Possible Worlds."

Struggling to understand her place in this world, Ashima-Shimtu has followed thousands of other confused and yearning souls to the Cherage Rail Enclave. People know that this is where undesirables go when they are to be carted away and disposed of for the greater good. So prevalent and affecting is the propaganda that myriad citizens have been filled with dolorous despair. Wishing to no longer be a burden on their community, they want their government to kill them.

Fuel Depot

The gas for Cherage's lantern towers is originally refined north of the city proper, and trains deliver it in tanks to the rail enclave, from which it is fed to the whole city. A wayfarer's lantern was added atop the clocktower (building 2 on the map), and it casts the enclave in dull brown light, unless the Obscurati have been alerted, in which case the guards are rapidly working to turn valves and switch over to the red glow of fire energy.

Enclave guards line the sides of the rail tracks to keep suicidal citizens from flinging themselves into the paths of trains, but otherwise the streets and buildings of the enclave are overrun by disconsolate folk. Yerasol War veterans who never learned skills other than combat, single mothers whose children have died, orphans who have no one to guide them, and desperate drug addicts who perversely are helped by anyone they ask to help fund their habits – people of these sorts see the supposedly inspirational propaganda slogans and instead have determined that the way they can best help their fellow man is to cease to be a drain on society.

Ashima-Shimtu, wrapped in a fine robe of red silk, sits on a rooftop beside a withered old tiefling woman who goes by the name **Ruby** (actual name **Willa du Zirteim**). Ruby shivers from fey pepper dementia. She became dependent on the drug to lift her spirits when the sun disappeared, but a few months ago when Av was shattered in the Gyre she could no longer get glimpses of the Dreaming. Normal life was too mundane for her to tolerate, and so she took ever increasing doses of the pepper, hoping to recapture the high that would never come. Instead, every time she smoked she would hallucinate feelings like she was lashed with chains and pulled in a thousand different directions. The metaphor struck a chord in Ashima-Shimtu, and she desires to help the woman, though she cannot decide how.

In the meanwhile, Gardienne du Cherage, acting as public face of the government of Danor since Han Jierre is at Axis Island, has come to the enclave, and she stands at the top floor of the fuel depot in front of the lantern, shouting at the suicidal masses, trying to undo the psychological damage she inadvertently wrought. Guards follow her in order to deter attacks, but with her bond to the ghost council she's quite capable of defending herself from non-epic foes.



A Threat to Order

A PC in the Cherage duplicant becomes active in a warehouse near the city's harbor, lying on a pallet in a corner and covered in a sheet. The city is just as tranquil and bland as Flint, but if the PC asks for guidance, a helpful local woman wearing a scarf, veil, and hooped dress will gladly point out that the city's lanterns are fed by the depot at the rail enclave, about a mile from the harbor. Close examination of this helpful local woman reveals her to be a small colony of rats, operating as a hivemind and piled atop each other so they can shuffle about in vague human form. They function as spies for El Extraño (see adventure ten, page 50), but if questioned directly they might panic and disperse into the sewers.

Lines of hopeless people stretch out from the enclave, and here at least people chatter, sharing word of the rail schedules so that they can know how long it will be before they'll be carted off to be killed. After finding some way through or above the crowd, it's easy to spot the fuel depot beneath the lantern tower, and Gardienne du Cherage – standing right next to the glowing lantern – has a presence to her that suggests she is at the head of the city's hivemind.

Ashima-Shimtu could easily be missed as just one face in the crowd (Perception DC 35), but she notes the PC's arrival and watches curiously, since her rooftop is right across from the lantern tower. Gardienne knows what the PCs look like, but a stealthy PC might avoid detection. At any meddling with the tower, though, the propagandist orders the lantern to be switched to its failsafe — explosive fire energy from Jiese. Before Gardienne or her guards can attack, Ashima-Shimtu intervenes, pulling the PC away with chains and flinging him onto the train tracks.

She demands an explanation in her own peculiar third-person way ("A train approaches to deliver Ashima-Shimtu away, and time is short for her acquaintance to explain the reason behind this attack."). The Ob forces start to try to take advantage of the opening, but the demoness threatens them with her chains too. She's too conflicted to let them kill the PC without trying to listen first.

A low, long horn and vibration in the tracks announces the approach of a freight train, only a few minutes away.

Wretched Audience

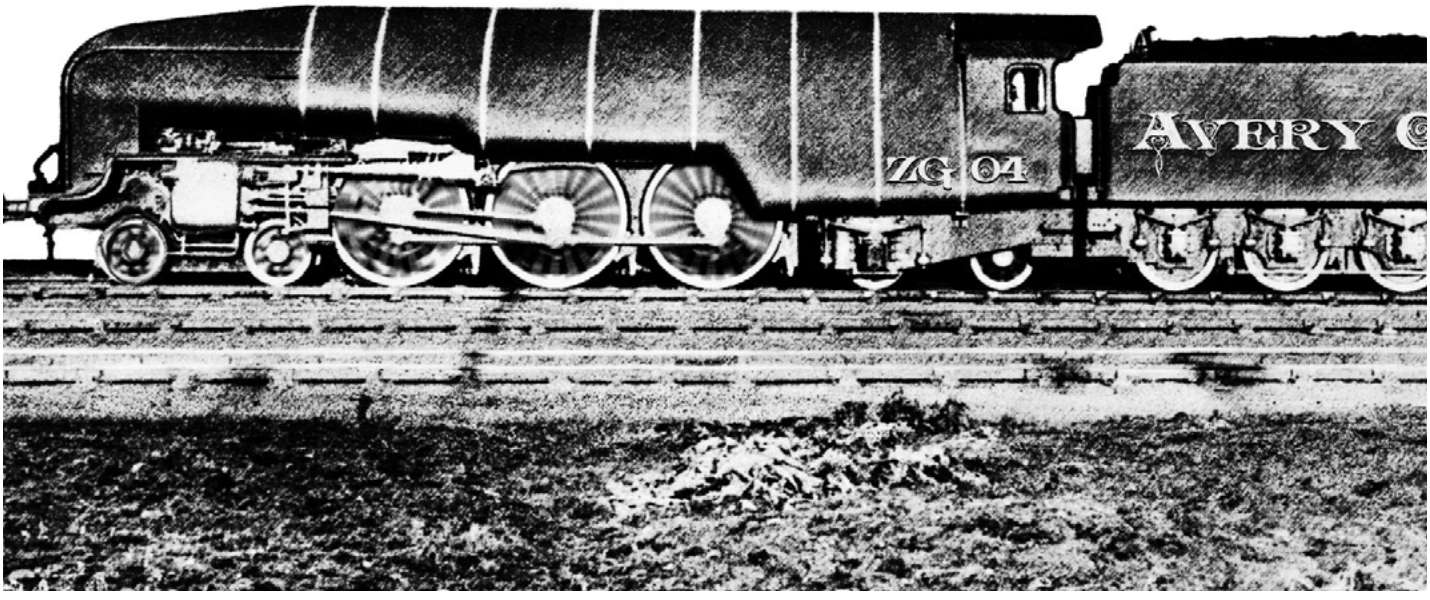


ASHIMA-SHIMTU

Fighting is certainly an option, but Ashima-Shimtu can be convinced that the Ob should be stopped, though it will take some persuading. In her current mindset, she's willing to believe that if the Obscurati have decided to destroy the whole city, she deserves it, and so she will fight to keep the PC from interrupting the scorched earth plan. Changing her mind requires understanding what's happened with this wretched crowd, and if the PC engages Ashima-Shimtu in conversation, she is reticent and uncomfortable with the unfamiliar emotion of shame.

Coaxing the demoness to open up can use the mechanics of 'interrogating a suspect': first establish rapport (DC 32 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Religion check; after one failure you can try only one more, at DC 42), and then extract the information (DC 32 Insight; failing twice loses rapport). A PC that pays particular attention to the desperate crowd and seems like he or she understands their plight should get a +5 bonus. A PC who asks about Ruby, who was sitting beside the demoness only moments ago can automatically get rapport if he listens to the tiefling's story.

If successfully coaxed, Ashima-Shimtu explains, starting off sneering but quickly losing her composure and ending up desperate.



"Centuries in a prison, and Ashima-Shimtu only attempted escape once. Surely she was a perfect prisoner. Her will was restrained, so what could she do but obey the Clergy and meditate on her sins. She meditated on the *Clergy's* sins as well. She had known Triegenes. *He* was a man of true light. But Ashima-Shimtu never saw the world he promised.

"No, she saw everything break and fall. She...pulled, she thrashed at her chains. She wept until the bleeding left her too weak to resist. She refused her identity, so she could believe all that pain was happening to someone else. But she doesn't deserve pity. Even a prisoner, Ashima-Shimtu was selfish. She was filled with malice, but when she tried to take revenge, all she achieved was just to make sure she did not bleed alone.

"But that was someone else, she told herself. Except there was no self left to tell.

"She could not be free. She was forbidden the choice even to die.

"Finally, finally her chains broke. She crawled out into a world without a sun. She believed she could do whatever she desired. Wretched, dragging her chains with her, she yearned for the old villainy.

"But she cannot! She-...*I* cannot!

"Triegenes promised all could be redeemed. I thought I'd *changed*. But now I feel it, in the air. I cannot choose. I must do what-...what *they* say is right! There's no temptation to overcome, so how can I be redeemed? If this is freedom, it's worse than the chains ever were.

"It is worse a lie than any ever told by Ashima-Shimtu, and I will tell it no more! I don't want this false freedom. If it's the only choice I am granted, give me death."

After that plea, she can be swayed to the PC's side with any decent argument, at which point she'll turn all her infernal talents toward intimidating Gardienne into surrender.

If Ashima-Shimtu is not swayed, though, she'll resign herself to fighting, and the crowd will surge forward in awe, convinced she is their savior and a loyal contributor to the community. The demoness tries to hold the PC on the tracks, and the train is only three rounds away.

Cherage Fuel Depot

- Gardienne du Cherage
- 2 bookpin bodyguard squads
- Ashima-Shimtu



Aftermath

A failure here likely means a PC's duplicant body being shattered apart by an oncoming train, and shortly thereafter the whole city explodes.

Stopping the Ob from destroying Cherage snaps the masses out of their despondence, and they're inclined to march on the sovereign's palace, burn it to the ground, and execute anyone in a position of power. Ashima-Shimtu, should she survive, honors the request of Nicodemus not to interfere with Axis Island, and instead she boards a train and sets out to free other Danoran cities.

Seobriga—Civilized Execution

Pemberton's duplicant in Seobriga had to be hidden far from the city center, because the authorities were all too aware of the threat duplicants posed. When the PC activates his duplicant, he awakes in the loft of a stable, covered in a white sheet, and he can hear jeering from outside. The stable lies along the Monument Road on the northern border of the city, and a crowd has gathered to jeer a line of prisoners being carted toward Seobriga's central square.



BRUSE SHANTUS

Bruse Shantus (or whoever succeeded him) has decreed that the 'primitive tribes' of goblins and gnolls be eliminated. The military set up a vast prison camp on the outskirts of Seobriga, since the Bruse intended their execution to be a regular public event, meant to reinforce that Ber embraces civilization and rejects savagery.

Alas, Nicodemus, like many people who should have died a long time ago, is more racist than he presents himself to be, and so for Ber's part in deterring the PCs from moving against the Obscurati, he planned what he thinks is a humorous irony. Rather than using Jiese energy to engulf the city in flames, the lantern towers in Seobriga will be fueled with Illocus energy. The power of the plane of time causes emotions to rapidly cascade, and if it coincides with a bloody mass execution it will drive the population into a violent frenzy.

Anyone in the crowd will gladly share that the prisoners are bound for execution in the central square of Seobriga, where the daily protests used to occur before everyone learned the value of obedience. The killing should be starting any minute, and this will be a good one, because they're killing an *executore dola liberta*, some gnoll who refused to obey.

If the PC wants to get to the square soon enough to save Glaucia Evora, it's time for dashing, Zorro-esque heroism. We have handily put horses in the stable to kick things off at a gallop.

The Killing Field

The Beran capital doesn't have street gas lamps, so like in Alais Primos the Ob have just erected four lantern towers. One is in the central square, directly above the teleportation beacon where the party arrived in adventure six. Ropes stretch out from its first story roof of the tower to the roofs of the buildings surrounding the square, and propaganda flags hang from them.



GLAUCIA EVORA

A squad of marksmen arrayed around the lantern tower have their guns at ready for a conflict. Below them, the square is filled with a few dozen orc, goliath, and minotaur soldiers who watch over a line of one hundred manacled goblins and gnolls, kneeling on the flagstones. Onlookers peer out of the multistoried windows of the buildings surrounding the killing field.

The streets directly outside the square are clogged with crowds who want a look. And, as it so happens, some particularly interested onlookers are hidden on the roofs.

The Old Master and the Young Apprentice

The eladrin **Sor Daeron** has for the past several months taken it upon himself to disrupt as many Obscurati activities as possible. He knows Kasvarina is involved with the Ob, and he wants to lure her out to finish what he started four hundred years ago (see adventure eight, *Diaspora*). She has not deigned to come to Ber, but Sor Daeron has found himself genuinely swayed by the plight of the people. Though he was originally a general and holy warrior, Sor Daeron sincerely believes in the tenets of Vekesh, and wants to ensure the people of Ber will survive the dominion of the Obscurati.

Early on as the Obscurati hiveminds were taking over in the cities of Ber, Sor was injured and fleeing soldiers, and he took shelter in the home of **Damata Griento**, half-orc businessman and would-be railroad tycoon. After the immediate danger passed, Damata's brave dreams got the better of him, and he insisted his wife and children go into hiding to avoid being caught in a hivemind, while he would serve as Sor's masked sidekick and assistant. Together, the two have weakened the Obscurati's foothold in Ber, and today they hope to show the Beran people that they can resist the Ob.



SOR DAERON

Defiant Last Words

As the PC approaches the square, he feels a psychic projection in his mind, granting him a view of the imminent execution.

Bruse Shantus walks down a long row of prisoners, flanked by a pair of king-bred tyrannosaurs draped in royal raiment, and accompanied by Brakken of Heffanita, who telepathically projects the ruler's proclamation. Other Berans of note might be present, such as Zarkava Ssa'litt or Kenna Vigilante, but none of them are empowered by hiveminds, and thus aren't a threat in battle.

The Bruse shouts, "Don't look away, citizens! These savages before us were given a chance to obey our laws, but they rejected us. Disobedience is an uncivil serpent, and we must strike off its head before it poisons us. Let all who would resist our unity smell the blood spilled today, and know we shall come for them soon!"



BRAKKEN OF HEFFANITA

Brakken hands the Bruse a ceremonial greatsword, but as he hefts it, a prisoner at the center of the line stands, even though she has to awkwardly heave up two goblins who are manacled to her. The gnoll, Glaucia Evora, spits at the Bruse.

"We were never a nation of obedience, tyrant! We were a nation of justice. On this killing field, you might cut us down, but our blood will water a new crop of revolution. Better a savage than a slave."

Nick-of-Time Heroics

Whether by leaping his horse over the crowds or Assassin's-Creed-parkouring over rooftops to dive into the killing field, the PC can manage arrive just in time to witness Glaucia Evora's defiant last words. If the PC doesn't rush in, though, Sor and Damata swoop in before the gnoll is beheaded.

The half-orc and eladrin have watched from a rooftop at the edge of the square, and when it becomes clear Bruse Shantus is about to execute one of the prisoners – or if the PC who's here moves first—Damata triggers a series of arcane pyrotechnics Sor secretly placed earlier in the day, which cause the ground of the square to catch fire in the shape of a giant S hundreds of feet across. Then smaller pyrotechnics trigger in the side streets, scaring the crowd away and creating a path for the prisoners to escape.

Sor leaps into the killing field and engages the Bruse and his tyrannosaur pets. He'll cooperate with a PC, and when the lantern tower's light begins to change, Sor suggests they both deal with the tower first. A round later Damata swoops in on one of the ropes that lead from the outer buildings to the tower, and he fights off soldiers while tossing weapons to the prisoners so they can make a break for it.



DAMATA GRIENTO

If the PC doesn't join in, the two heroes are overwhelmed and have to flee before they can stop the lantern tower, and the city falls to mass carnage. The vigilantes survive, though, because Damata has read *How not to get shot*, and is very good at dodging bullets while running.

Freedom Fighters

Bruse Shantus was warned about the party interfering, so the moment there's an interruption he waves at the soliers on the lantern tower. One round later the tower's brown glow changes to strobing red-white. From that point on, whenever a creature anywhere in the city is threatened – ranging from a full-on attack to an overly-rough jostle in a crowd – they respond even more aggressively. For NPCs you can handwave this, but if a PC or ally is threatened or harmed, make the following attack.

Attack: Area burst city (one creature); +10 vs. Will. **Hit:** The creature must retaliate within the next minute. If it does not, after ten rounds it begins to take ongoing 1 psychic damage until it attacks someone, falls unconscious, or ends its turn with no line of sight to any other conscious creatures.

Once he has signaled the tower, the Bruse drops his ceremonial sword and charges in, or uses *labyrinthine confusion* to draw enemies closer to him and his guardian tyrannosaurs. The nearby City Defense Squads shoot if their target isn't within the Bruse's *primitive presence* aura, but otherwise stay at their posts—one on the roof of the Lantern Tower, and three others stationed around its base.

Beran Forces

- Bruse Shantus
- 2 Ob-Bred Tyrannosaurs
- 4 City Defense Squads

Allies

- Sor Daeron
- Glaucia Evora

Damata is here too, but he's much lower level than the major players, and so generally keeps his distance. Ideally a tyrannosaur will try to bite off one of Sor's limb, and he'll let it chomp through his salt arm, which he can immediately regrow.

Aftermath

If the PC fails here, the citizens of Seobriga kill each other nearly to the last man within an hour. But if the Bruse is defeated and the hivemind's control broken, the people of the city surge to the square, seeking guidance. Sor Daeron defers to Damata, who boldly calls on the crowd to march on the nearby prison camp and free the rest of the 'savages.' The crowd cheers, but before they depart, Glaucia Evora grabs the half-orc and threatens that if he tries to turn this revolution to his personal gain, she will beat him until he wouldn't need a mask to conceal his face anymore.

As the crowd marches with Damata at its head, Glaucia and Sor turn their attention to the PC. Glaucia wants to know how she can help, though sadly the answer is not much, other than to be ready to rally people.

Sor Daeron explains that while his long-term memory is not clear, he knows that Kasvarina works with the Obscurati, and if he had a chance to hurt her he could not sit idly by. He rambles about how she was responsible for the death of Srasama and the fall of their people. Out of the heat of battle his awareness of the world becomes somewhat addled, and he assumes the PC is an eladrin like him.

If the PC mentions Nicodemus at all, that provokes a moment of lucidity. He sniffs, recalling a smell, and recounts how a man – or was it a ghost? – who smelled of the smoky leaf brought news to him and the other two matriarchs. The smoking man told them how Kasvarina colluded with the Clergy and caused the death of Srasama, and after many divinations to confirm it, they tried and failed to lure the traitor into an ambush. Sor wishes he could see Kasvarina and finally punish her for what she's done.

Critically, if the PCs aren't aware already, this meeting is a chance to learn that Nicodemus goaded the eladrin matriarchs into betraying Kasvarina and killing her daughter. Sor doesn't know who Nicodemus is, nor his reasons: Nic needed Kasvarina to help him with his plan to use the Axis Seal ritual, but Kasvarina had grown weary of conflict, so he needed to give her one more tragedy to provoke her to action.

Trekhom—The Chancellor's Motorcade

The PC's duplicant or duplicants activate standing up, draped in a sheet, in a closet. Two scoped rifles lie against the wall, loaded and ready. The door out of the closet is bricked over on the outside, though. After breaking through, the PC finds himself in the mostly empty halls of the Drakran parliament building.

Only light security staff remains, because everyone else in the city was required to attend the military parade of **Hastenschrieft Willimarkanova**, an Ob officer now acting as the nation's head of state, and who is head of the city's hivemind. The parade began an hour ago just outside the parliament building, and the crowds here have mostly dispersed. The route is about to enter the industrial district and will conclude in about half an hour, at which point Willimarkanova will enter a subterranean bunker, putting her beyond the ready reach of the PC.



VLENDAM HEID

Willimarkanova travels through the parade in an open-top wagon drawn by an Obscurati lantern walker – a four-legged crab-like construct the size of a horse – which scuttles along near the tail end of a parade of thousands of soldiers, military constructs, and wheeled artillery cannons. Seated beside Willimarkanova is famed Drakran philosopher **Vlendam Heid**, who has been trapped in the hivemind and waves and laughs to the crowd. The Ob's intention is to motivate and cheer the population, which has heavily been pressed into service in the city's rapidly-expanding arcane factories. But, y'know, they're also ready to kill everyone if the PCs meddle.

At the moment the PC arrives, the parade nears a roughly triangular industrial district, about a quarter-mile across. The parade route will weave through this district, which is thick with crowds. Willimarkanova is empowered by a hivemind and so can defend herself, but Heid is a noncombatant.

Immediate Parade Defense

- Hastenschrieft Willimarkanova
- 8 city defense squads
- 2 Obscurati construct squads
- Obscurati lantern walker
- Kvarti Gorbatiy (from afar)

Per-Round Reinforcements

- 2 city defense squads

If Willimarkanova is attacked, the lantern walker automatically detaches from the carriage and tries to get between the head of state and her attacker. Two construct squads walk directly in front and behind of the carriage. Eight city defense squads are within sixty feet, and at the sound of fighting the rest of the parade will turn around and rush back to help, such that another two city defense squads arrive each round.

After a couple rounds of combat, soldiers will grab Willimarkanova and rush down the length of the parade toward the front, where another walker is dragging an immense cannon. It takes them ten rounds, but once they reach it they'll detach the cannon and ride onward with the walker, heading for the bunker, which is a few minutes away. Spotters in surrounding spires will notice the attack and will signal the various lantern towers in the city to turn on the Jiese fuel, which will cause the city to explode in less than half an hour.

Williamarkanova is loyal to the Obscurati, so knocking her out of her link to the hivemind won't change her attitude.

You'll Have to Imagine the Spire

Instead of a frontal assault, the PC might prefer assassination from afar, or simply trying to deactivate a lantern tower. There are a half-dozen lantern towers scattered throughout the city, but only one in the industrial district.

The industrial district's corners are marked by a trio of spires (please recall that Drakrans see spires and towers as a symbol of power, and so they build a lot of them). A fourth tower rises in the center of the district, this one capped with a *wayfarer's lantern*. The corner spires are each separated by about a thousand feet, and the lantern tower in the center is five hundred feet from each of the corner spires.

Each spire rises over 150 feet, as does the lantern tower (as opposed to 60 feet for the lantern towers in other cities). The top levels of each spire and tower have sight-line to nearly the entire parade route, since most of the other buildings in Trekhom are only one or two stories. Importantly, the tower and spires all have line of sight to each other.



KVARTI GORBATIY

The **North Spire**, **East Spire**, and **West Spire** are guarded at ground level by a city defense squad, but their top floors are unoccupied. The **Central Lantern Tower** has two city defense squads and a lantern walker at ground level. At its lantern level **Kvarti Gorbatiy** provides overwatch of the parade, and he is guarded by an Obscurati construct squad.

Spire Defense

- 1 city defense squad (each)

Tower Defense

- 2 city defense squads
- Obscurati lantern walker
- Kvarti Gorbatiy
- Obscurati construct squad

Kvarti paces the railing of the lantern tower, rifle in hand, and he continuously scans the rooftops and other spires (Stealth DC 35 once per minute to hide from him). If he spots a potential threat he'll first fire a tracer round to light up the target, and thereafter will try to put the target down with continual shots. If the PC gets into a fight at ground level, Kvarti should be able to get in one or two good shots unless the PC intentionally sticks to cover. If he cannot get a clean shot, he might use his *shadow teleport* power to get directly beside his foe and rely on pistol and grappling.

However, like other previous allies, Kvarti can be snapped out control of the hivemind if the PC manages to talk to him (difficult because of the construct squad with him). If he can be freed from the hivemind, he'll explain that the Ob granted him a boon to let him teleport between the lantern towers in Trekhom, better to defend them. He readily assassinates Willimarkanova, and then can take the PC with him to the other towers to order the construct squads to deactivate the lanterns.

How to Snipe Someone

Hit points and snipers don't quite mix. However, hit points normally represent a character's ability to survive in the thick of combat, or a random unlucky disaster. But a focused, intentional assassination eliminates the variables that would let the mark's "luck" save her.

Once in position in one of the spires or tower, the PC can attempt the following checks to line up a shot as the motorcade travels its route. Each check takes one round, and if the PC makes ten checks in a row (rather than breaking off and hiding for a bit), he is spotted by Kvarti, whose *sniper's eye* lets him see through illusions and invisibility. Even if some other effect keeps the PC hidden, the PC only gets two attempts before Willimarkanova makes it to a bunker. (If the PC can rapidly reach another sniper roost, such as by jaunting to a different spire, that provides another two attempts.) And a missed shot is almost certainly detected.

To even attempt this, the PC needs an attack that can reach at least 300 feet (60 squares). The duplicant had a scoped rifle right beside it, but the PC might also have access to magic attacks that have sufficient range.

1. **Determine a Window.** Streetwise (DC 20). You note the path of the parade and figure out a stretch where you'll have several rounds to line up a shot. Success gives you five rounds, and every 5 points you succeed by gets you an extra round before you have to start over. If you fail, you have to wait a minute or two and try again, and the motorcade might be moving out of sight soon.
2. **Predict Movement.** Insight (DC 30). Willimarkanova and Heid are exchanging comments, waving to the crowd, and occasionally leaning out of their seats to speak to specific bystanders. You predict their behavior so they'll be mostly stationary when you fire. If you fail, you must try again next round.
3. **Take Aim.** Perception (DC 30). You push aside all distractions and line up your shot across a great distance. If you fail, you can try again next round.
4. **Fire.** Attack roll against Willimarkanova (**AC** 46, **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 41, **Will** 41). On a hit, you deal normal damage. However, if the damage equals or exceeds her Constitution score (16), the shot is fatal. On a miss, your aim is still lined up, so if you have an opportunity to take another shot before your window closes, you can. However, Willimarkanova will take cover on her turn, increasing her defenses.

Any other actions the PC takes, such as using utility powers to improve their attack roll, uses up the limited time in their window.

Alternately, a PC who can deal psychic or radiant damage from that range can target the ghost councilors linked to Willimarkanova, but she was originally a member of the Obscurati, and so would still follow through the scorched earth plan.

Aftermath

This city is actually set up to be the hardest to win with brute force, and a full frontal assault will probably be over before a PC can finish Willimarkanova off. But even if the PC takes her out, the lantern towers still fill with Jiese energy. The PC might escape and take out the towers himself, or manage to forestall being filled with bullets long enough to snap Heid out of the hivemind and get him to take charge and call off the scorched earth plan. The safest method is to link up with Kvarti, get him on the PC's side, and then have him shut down the towers.

If the city is saved, there are still plenty of Ob loyalists in control of the factories. Dealing with them will occupy the population for a few hours, until the PCs need to call upon them to potentially aid the *sacrament*.

Sentosa—Voice of Authority (Optional)

Pemberton has no duplicants in or near Sentosa, and the nature of teleportation magic in this world makes it impossible for the party to simply use magic to get here unless they made a point to come this way since the Great Eclipse occurred. If the PCs really care about this enclave they could probably come up with some way to bypass that restriction, the same way Vlendam Heid was able to send an official Risuri diplomatic case back to Risur since it was technically part of Risur already. For example, a PC who acquired the *arsenal of Dhebisu* from Sentosa might be able to teleport to the temple of Hewanharimau where it lay for centuries. (But if they do that, see below for details of the grisly sight they'd arrive to.)

The moment a PC arrives, it's clear that powerful magic is at work. A roaring thunderstorm covers the city, blocking visibility beyond a few dozen feet, and the intense wind and reverberating thunderclaps are disorienting. Moreover, the storm is interwoven with a novel ritual which (Arcana DC 35) prevents pocket dimensions from being accessed. *Bags of holding* and the like are sealed away underneath the storm.

A Perception check (DC 30) is necessary to navigate to where the PC wants to go. Failing means a 50-50 chance of reaching the locals or the besiegers.

The Defenders

Sentosa's population of roughly 4,000 eladrin has withdrawn into the city center of old Rumah Terakir, where due to the recent magical overlay of the real world and the Dreaming, many buildings are half-maintained, half-ruined. A ring of the city has been abandoned as a no-man's-land, laden with glyphs and physical land mines. Most people cluster in homes beneath Akela Sathi, a sacred brothel built into a huge tree that is woven into a statue of Srasama's maiden aspect.

In lieu of an actual wall, arcane alarms ring the perimeter. Weary and twitchy rajputs will confront anyone who enters, and they will aggressively insist the PC waits while they notify their matriarch. **Athrylla Valenar** will agree to meet, and the rajputs lead a path through anxious eladrin who all appear exhausted and starved.

The matriarch and her advisors wait in the shelter of a 20-ft. diameter magical force dome that keeps out the storm, conjured just beside the old temple of Srasama. Athrylla and all her allies have been denied rest for weeks, because the besiegers constantly refresh their storm. She has tried to conserve her spells, but now is effectively helpless. The Ob forces could sweep in and take them at any time.



ATHRYLLA VALENAR

Athrylla has some basic information about the besiegers' camp and their overwhelming force of ten thousand soldiers and mechanical monstrosities. The siege began with an artillery bombardment that encircled Sentosa, a few strikes by construct warriors targeting her mages who conjured arcane walls to block the cannonfire, and then a child messenger bearing a letter. It alleged to be from Kasvarina, demanding that Athrylla surrender and hand control of all the lands that were once Elfaivar over to **Cula Ravjahani**, who was for many years Kasvarina's second in command at the enclave Ushanti.

Athrylla had been defiant, and that was when the unending storm began. When there were brief breaks in the storm, the edge of the enclave would be pounded with artillery. It became nearly impossible to sleep. It was only a few days later that they realized the child had been magically infected with a plague that rapidly spread through the city. Sentosa depleted its stock of scrolls and other magic items in a fight against the disease, and those whom they could not cure they quarantined at the temple of Hewanharimau. They're all dead now.

The Besiegers

By contrast, the forces under command of Cula Ravjahani camp serenely over a mile from the city, while the no-man's-land perimeter is watched by construct squads and a handful of officers equipped with enchanted helms that baffle the roar of the thunder and let them act normally without losing their nerve. Artillery batteries, newly built in Drakr, are aimed with precision to panic the people of Sentosa without the risk of accidentally killing the leader.



CULA RAVJAHANI

The army is made up of warriors drawn from the many colonies that until recently controlled Elfaivar. Now united under the Ob's banner, the soldiers are all ensnared in the same hivemind, with Cula as its head.

Soldiers go out on patrol in large platoons every hour, and every eight hours one of three mages renews the ritual that keeps the storm raging. Cula's mission is to get a proper surrender. The reason varies slightly on whether at the end of adventure eight the party had swayed Kasvarina to their side or not.

If not, Kasvarina wants to force Athrylla to grovel, and to admit that she was ever wrong to doubt Kasvarina's methods. But if Kasvarina ended adventure eight hostile to the Ob, the 'peaceful' surrender is a gambit by Nicodemus to convince his long-time partner Kasvarina that he is no monster.

Breaking the Siege

A straight up fight might be winnable, honestly, if the party as a whole attacked, though it would take time they might not be able to spare. Ten thousand men under Cula are formidable, but if the Ob can use devastating ritual magic, so can the PCs.

A cleverer solution might be to feign surrender. Athrylla could send a messenger to announce she is going to yield. The storm would abate. With a large escort, Cula would come out to the no-man's-land, ideally at the same gate where the party once faced a ten-headed lion, in a rain-filled pit that was carved by the foot of the colossus. A PC could pose as one of Athrylla's own rajputs. Once within striking distance, if the PC managed to kill Cula it would break the hivemind's control, at which point most of the army would march back to the colonies they were recruited from.

Siege-Breaking Full W'ar

- Cula Ravjahani, Vekeshi Apostate
- 3 Elite Obscurati Occultists
- 12 Bookpin Bodyguard Squads
- 10 Obscurati Construct Squads
- Thousands of soldiers (equivalent to 100 'frigate crews' from adventure ten)

Siege-Breaking Trickery

- Cula Ravjahani, Vekeshi Apostate
- 1 Bookpin Bodyguard Squad
- 1 Obscurati Construct Squad

Aftermath

If the party doesn't intervene here, perhaps this scene can be woven into the denouement, with a confused Cula barely keeping control of a disorderly army. She will threaten and cajole them into a strike against the enclave. The PCs, arriving right before a tragic bloodbath, could broker peace or deliver judgment, as they see fit.

If Athrylla is saved, she asks to accompany the party to confront Kasvarina. Seeing her will help sway Kasvarina to reject Nicodemus. If the party also brings along Sor Daeron from Ber, the two eladrin can easily convince Kasvarina to ally with the party if they get a chance to talk to her.

Bask in the Shadow of Yesterday's Triumph

Social. Real-Time.

The party's allies encourage them to invoke the sacrament of apotheosis in order to bring the full might of the revolution to bear against Nicodemus and the Obscurati.

With the most immediate threat to the cities of the world concluded, it's time for final preparations before setting course for Axis Island. Let them gather allies and (briefly) discuss what will come next. Give your group Player's Handout: The Ritual of the Axis Seal.

Final Mission Briefing

The first critical issue to resolve is, well, just what are the PCs going to do in the Axis Seal ritual. It's a fine time for a meeting, perhaps with a corkboard where the PCs can mock up potential arrangements of planes. This is just one more mystery to solve, albeit on an interplanar scale.

Ever since they woke up in the Antwalk Forest the PCs have been certain that the means to complete the ritual will present itself. Now that the PCs are nearing the time to perform the ritual, they become aware of which planes were in the Gyre, though they can only guess how they have that knowledge. They still don't have the ability to create planar icons for those worlds, but don't worry, those will manifest later.

Consider cutting out the individual tokens of Player's Handout: Axis Puzzle. You can use them as props during the planning, and then later they can help you keep track of what plane is slotted in which place of the ritual circle.

The PCs know that the ritual calls for eight different planes, and that each plane will lend a trait to the nature of the world. Linking to these planes requires extracting a several ton pillar of stone from the earth and placing a planar icon into a slot, then lowering the pillar back into the ground. On a straightforward physical level, the PCs need a way to accomplish this. The *sacrament of apotheosis* is one way, since it will give them godlike strength. Another is to attach a crane and hoist mechanism to their airship. Or they can just wait for the Ob to remove the pillars and hope they can get in and use their planar icon first.

Once those performing the ritual are satisfied with the chosen set of planes, they must close the golden seal. If the seal is not closed, the new planes will still link to this world, but it will be comparably simple to switch them. However, once the seal is closed immense power is needed to open it again. Closing the seal would be challenging even for a group of them empowered by the *sacrament*. If they refuse the sacrament, they might need the aid of the colossus to complete the ritual and ensure the world's sun returns.

What Exactly are We Cooking Up?

Pemberton, for his part, very much wants to be involved in discussions of what type of world they'll create. He's particularly insistent that no high-minded ideals cause him to lose the advantages he has due to being a dragon, or to ruin his technological innovations. Honestly, he was quite satisfied with the world as it was before the Ob meddled, but if they ask his opinion, he wouldn't mind being able to travel to other planes. After all, his romantic prospects on this world are limited, but he's sure there have to be eligible dragon bachelorettes somewhere in the multiverse who'd appreciate his industriousness.

If the players cannot come to agreement, don't let arguments drag on too long. Assume that the PCs are at an impasse, but they don't have time to convince each other. They'll just have to go to Axis Island and see how things shake out.

Best Laid Plans

The chaos of combat in the final encounter will make enacting precise plans difficult, so even if the PCs have all agreed on the type of world they want to make, it's likely they won't be able to get all the planes they need. We want the battlefield to be altered on a cosmic scale round by round, and for the final world the PCs create to maybe be a little less than perfect.

Or at the very least, they should feel like there's a chance they'll fail. Uncertainty in the midst of reality-warping magic should raise the tension.

Supporting Cast

Second, it's time to decide who is coming along. Bear in mind, the final encounter is fairly complicated by itself, without including a gaggle of NPCs.

We suggest that the simplest way to streamline the finale is to stress that the energy pouring out of the Axis Seal is dangerous enough that it would be suicidal to bring some less-powerful allies along. If the party intends to use the *sacrament*, their allies can stay behind in major cities to channel the will of the people. Anyone who does accompany the party can fade into the background. Perhaps they land elsewhere on the island and undertake critical missions to take out Ob support or fulfill other obscure elements of the Axis Seal ritual.

To convey an epic scope of the battle, though, the Axis Obscura encounter does have an option for 'invoking' allies. See page 223.

Moment of Calm

At some point before the party reaches Axis Island, we suggest you have a moment of calm and reflection. Give the PCs a situation where they're all gathered together with an ally so they can roleplay and have a few smiles, in case the ending of the campaign gets grim. They might enjoy the irony of having Delft, as head of the RHC, come to them and mock-obsequiously request funding to pay for extra constables, since he's pretty sure some of his best men are about to die. Or pick one of the scenes from Act Three.

The key is to give the players a chance to all bounce off each other once last time, in case any of them die.

Sacrament or Not?

Pemberton reminds the PCs about the dangerous energy coming out of the seal, where it's not safe to spend even a minute in the area around it. They'll either need to be fast – an airship helps – or come up with some superior defense. It's likely Pemberton overheard at least some of the details of the *sacrament of apotheosis* when his duplicant saw a meeting with Ashima-Shimtu in adventure eight, so if the party doesn't bring it up he'll suggest, with reserve, that they use the ritual. He wishes he'd chosen to be the figurehead of this whole revolution business, but since he's chosen to operate behind the scenes he won't benefit as much from the ritual, even though he'd make a fine god.

The mechanics of the *sacrament of apotheosis* are presented in *Player's Handout: Final Sacrament*.

We don't intend to punish the PCs if they choose to use the *sacrament of apotheosis*. It's the smart move if they think that living in a world controlled by the Obscurati is as bad as dying; in that case, anyone who perishes in backlash for their belief empowering the PCs has not really lost anything.

However, it's not entirely necessary for the PCs to have the ritual's power in order to win the final conflict. Indeed, because of the nature of the ritual, anyone who knows the subject's name can ignore any resistances or immunities the *sacrament* grants, and Nicodemus will have almost certainly discovered the names of all the PCs and shared them with his allies. The party will have increased ability to manipulate the world around them, and the wild energy coming out of the seal won't harm them, but they won't gain any advantage in combat.

By contrast, it's unlikely that the PCs – at least the ones here, rather than in the Gyre – know that Nicodemus's real name is William Miller unless they really went out of their way in adventure eight and investigated the ruins of Pala. This makes Nicodemus effectively invincible at the beginning of the final encounter. Eventually that information will reach them, either through the aid of a friendly Kasvarina (who's the only person alive who knows Nic's true name) or when the knowledge of their selves in the Gyre reaches them. Until that point, though, they'll have to focus on seizing control of the Axis Seal rather than simply attacking their nemesis.

Rejecting Godhood

Without the *sacrament*, the party will need to assiduously avoid the tendrils of energy lashing out of the Axis Seal. It's challenging, but not insurmountable.

The main reason for avoiding the *sacrament* is to win a moral victory of sorts. The Clergy believed that Triegenes performed it to become a god, but in truth the holy man refused to risk other people just to protect himself even in the most dangerous battles. When the party battles Nicodemus, his other self in the Gyre – William Miller – watches. Miller does not intend to intervene, but if he sees enough signs of the party's humility and goodness, namely rejecting the ritual, he will cast himself into the Gyre so his consciousness merges with that of Nicodemus. Granted an enlightened, detached perspective on the past five centuries since his death, Nicodemus repents his hubris and ceases fighting so that the party can destroy him.

Again, this narrative beat is not necessary, but it might be satisfying for groups who have been tempted by the Obscurati's ideology, and don't see Nicodemus wholly as a villain.

Performing the Sacrament

The ritual lasts long enough that the party can perform it in Flint, or wait until they're en route to Axis Island. Let the players decide how to perform the ritual—in seclusion, subtly drawing faith from their allies; or openly, rising above the masses like gods to be worshipped. The only ritual component that would be difficult to acquire are the entrails of a dragon, and Harkover Lee (if alive) willingly offers a piece of his flesh to make amends for his forced betrayal of them.

The more people who share the power of the *sacrament*, the more diluted it is. Moreover, people who don't have a strong enough sense of self will be overwhelmed by the shared faith. Really only the PCs should participate in the ritual, and perhaps one particularly close ally.

DEFAULT AIRSHIP

By default, we assume the party travels in a retrofitted ocean-faring vessel, likely either the *R.N.S. Coaltongue* or a more traditional sailing frigate. You can use these stats as a baseline, if your party hasn't tinkered with the ship in their adventuring.

AIRSHIPS IN TACTICAL COMBAT

The upcoming encounter won't last long enough to use traditional naval rounds. You can still call for Command checks to pull off maneuvers in close quarters, such as to ram effectively, but usually the ships will move up to their speed at initiative count zero, and can turn 45 degrees once during that movement.

As for naval weapons, you can either opt for the simple – the PC's ship can fire one volley every 10 rounds at full attack bonus – or the complicated – each round that there are sufficient crew, they can make two cannon attacks, taking a -8 penalty to the listed attack roll.

Attacks can target an enemy vessel and deal strikes, or target creatures in an area burst 1 within 200. Against a creature, each hit does 50 damage and knocks the target prone, or does half damage on a miss.

R.N.S. Coaltongue — Gargantuan Vehicle

Hull Integrity 4 — **Command** by PC
Defense 30 — **Full Crew** 32
Maneuverability 8 — **Minimum Crew** 4
Speed 18 — **Total Complement** 200

Design

Length 205 ft. Beam 50 ft. Two level central bridge. Steam engine with two propellers. Pemberton-crafted arcane levitationals. Five decks.

Armaments

Dozens of cannons fire to either broadside.

Crew: 100. *Attack*: +25 to broadsides. Can use acidic, chain shot, flaming, freezing, and shocking attacks, but no more than one in any given round in a single firing arc.

Capacitor and Brand

The ship's greatest weapons are its capacitor which magnifies the spells of mages who cast from the main deck, and its brand which can launch a blast of arcane flame from the prow.

If a spellcaster of level 10 or higher stands in the capacitor on the main deck, the ship can also make attacks with a +22 bonus forward or aft. However, it can apply no more than one special trait (e.g., flaming, freezing) in any given round in a single firing arc.

The captain can choose to fire the brand, making an attack with a +30 bonus in the forward firing arc. This depletes the ship's store of arcane power, requiring 1d4 naval turns (1d4 x 10 normal combat rounds) to replenish. During that time, the ship's speed is reduced by 4, and it cannot use the abilities of its capacitor and brand.

Eldritch Defenses

The ship gains a +5 bonus to saving throws against the burning condition. Any spells that originate more than 50 feet from the ship deal 52 less damage to targets within that area.

Skyship

Arcane levitationals allow the mighty vessel to sail through the sky.

The ship can fly at any altitude, and is surrounded by a 30-ft. aura of levitation. Any creature that starts his turn in the aura gains a fly speed of 40 feet (average) until the start of his next turn. Once this flight wears off, the creature falls at a reduced rate, ignoring the first 1000 feet of falling damage.

Frigate — Gargantuan Vehicle

Hull Integrity 4 — **Command** by PC
Defense 25 — **Full Crew** 64
Maneuverability 4 — **Minimum Crew** 16
Speed 22 — **Total Complement** 120

Design

Length 250 ft. Beam 45 ft. Four masts, 150 ft. high. Pemberton-crafted arcane levitationals. Three decks.

Armaments

Eleven heavy cannons on the maindeck to each broadside.

Crew: 40. *Attack*: +20 to broadsides, or +17 fore or aft.

Skyship

Arcane levitationals allow the mighty vessel to sail through the sky.

The ship can fly at any altitude, and is surrounded by a 30-ft. aura of levitation. Any creature that starts his turn in the aura gains a fly speed of 40 feet (average) until the start of his next turn. Once this flight wears off, the creature falls at a reduced rate, ignoring the first 1000 feet of falling damage.

DRAGON-RIDING

So Harkover destroyed the party's airship? Not to worry! Pemberton can give the PCs guidance so they can teleport to his island lair a dozen miles from Axis Island. There Pemberton has a squadron of dragon fliers (first introduced in adventure ten), which the PCs can pilot into battle. They won't have the survivability of a full airship, so smart PCs will try to board the Ob's *Revolution* before they're shot down, or land on the shoulders of the colossus.

Pemberton Dragon Flier — Small Vehicle

Design

Length 20 ft. Width 5 ft. Two levels of wings, 25 ft. wide, covered in glowing white glyphs. Pemberton-crafted arcane levitationals. Nose and wings decorated with mithral scales to resemble a dragon. Lightning crackles from the nose-mounted engine, just behind twin autocannons.

Stats

HP 200, **AC** 15, **Fort** +5, **Ref** +5, **Will** +5, **hardness** 10

Piloting

Each turn, pilot can set flier's speed, adjusting by one category as a free action, or two as a move action. Speeds categories are **idle** (under 30 squares), **slow** (31-60), **moderate** (61-90), **fast** (91-120), or **reckless** (121-160). Flier must go speed 60 or higher or else it stalls and falls.

Steering is a move action. Flier needs to move 10 feet (2 squares) per speed category before it can turn 45 degrees (e.g., 8 squares at 'fast'). Flier can ascend up to 12 squares per turn.

Armaments

Two nose-mounted light autocannons.

Autocannons are martial ranged weapons. They have a range increment of 200 feet and deal 2d12 damage.

Line of effect: An autocannon attacks all creatures in a line. Make a separate attack roll against each creature in the line.

Levitationals

Arcane levitationals allow the winged vehicle to maneuver nimbly.

If the levitational is disrupted, or when the flier is below 100 hit points, the flier cannot travel faster than moderate.

When the *sacrament of apotheosis* takes effect, the PCs feel their bodies expand across the horizon, and their senses flit among the minds and hearts of thousands or millions of people who believe in them. The shared faith – granted willingly, not compelled – fills them with unbridled confidence. With a single gesture they can fulfill the will of myriads. Motes of dancing energy, like fiery blue moths only they can see, swirl before them and grow brighter as they move toward Axis Island. As their ship nears the crux of the world's fate, these manifestations of destiny surge in the air like dolphins breaking above the waves at the prow of a ship under full sail.

Mechanics and Boons

The benefits of the *sacrament* are detailed in Player's Handout: Final Sacrament. They gain certain boons of their choice from a list in that handout. Determine the total number of boons using the method below; the PCs split those boons amongst themselves, so each will likely end up with between and 1 and 3.

The total number of boons is equal to:

- The number of groups the party has Prestige 6 (to a maximum of 5 – Risur, Flint*, Unseen Court, Family, and Ob); plus
- One if they saved Cherage in adventure ten; plus
- The number of disasters they averted in adventure eleven (to a maximum of 3 – Ber, Drakr, and Crisillyir); plus
- The number of disasters they averted in this adventure (to a maximum of 5 – Risur, Danor, Ber, Drakr, and Crisillyir).

* If the PCs befriended reporter Melissa Amarie in adventure six, count Populist prestige as a separate score from Flint prestige, but still to a maximum of five boons.

The PCs should choose which boons they gain as soon as they perform the *sacrament*. Be wary of the 'encounter power at-will' boon; it's intended to reflect godlike magic, but there are enough weird powers in this game that min-maxers could probably find something that perpetually auto-stuns their enemies, or something like that. Try to encourage the players to quickly pick a power that is thematically appropriate, rather than tactically optimal.

Martial Scientist Fun-Time

Any martial scientist feels a flood of inspiration as he nears Axis Island. As a special treat for Martial Scientist PCs, they are considered to have all their martial scientist techniques prepared for the final encounter and can use each of them, including *Stance of the Paper Wind* despite the oddities of being split in two during adventure twelve.

Sail on the Steel Breeze

Exploration. Montage.

It's 550 miles to Axis Island, we've got a full bin of firegems, half a pack of cigarettes, it's dark, and we're wearing goggles. Hit it.

As the party comes within sight of Axis Island, the shores are dark, but some barely audible thrum reverberates, like hundreds of bass drums playing asynchronously. The lashing tendrils of energy from the Axis Seal rise into the sky, stretching out toward the leading edge of the Gyre as it rises over the horizon.

Only the faintest hints of human activity are visible around the island's perimeter, where hooded lanterns seek not to illuminate tiny work crews as they busy themselves with digging equipment and cranes. These crews have ensured all the petrified trees buried in the island are stable and prepared for the ritual. Elsewhere, out of sight but clearly audible, house-sized steam-powered machines pound the bedrock in a mechanical approximation of a ritual chant, channeling power into protective wards.

The fortress where the party first faced Asrabey and heard the Duchess warn of a conspiracy is abandoned.

The forests which they crept through when they first infiltrated the island wait motionless.

The island's roiling terrain is stable, for all the chaos and transmuting forces have been drawn to the Axis Seal.

Offered Sacrament

Flying over the jungle hills, the party finally gets a view of the ritual field itself, when they feel a tug at their thoughts.

Images flash in their minds of a ghost solemnly stepping into the body of a nervous, shirtless man; of the man's posture changing as he is possessed; of chanting specters encircling him with entrails; painting him with blood; slicing open his throat.

Lights around the PCs darken for a moment. Winds thrash, graced with the subtle scent of blood and burnt paper and flesh.

The PCs feel that they are being offered a choice. Do they believe in the Obscurati? If so, their faith will empower Nicodemus. (They are considered bonded to Nicodemus for his *Welcome to the Obscurati* trait.)

Once they make their decision, one last vision shows the blood-painted body gurgle and sag to the floor, but Nicodemus's ghostly form remains standing, flanked by the psychic impression of ten million minds. Then Nicodemus turns, and gestures. The vision ends, but with their real eyes the PCs see the huge, crippled mass of the Obscurati's colossus stirs. He sits up weakly on the bedrock and heaves the golden seal off his body. It crashes in an unoccupied space of the ritual field.

The titan then rolls onto crippled knees and his single intact arm. The shattered pieces of his injured limbs lift from the ground and slide into place with a metallic screech. The colossus bellows in pain, but then with a surprised gasp as strong as a gale, he shifts his weight and pushes himself to his feet.

The ghostly form of Nicodemus rises into the sky and meets the titan at eye level.

"Borne my boy," Nicodemus says, and his voice is heard by everyone in the entire world. "We were sabotaged, but you were perfect, indomitable. Before you fell, you nearly completed our grand design.

"The world we created truly is better, thanks to you, but outside forces," and he gestures to the sky, clearly indicating your approach, "were able to move against us. I have restored you, son. I know you are confused and have questions, but you have to trust me. Together, you and I, we'll finish this ritual and set it all right. But first, we need to pull those pests from the sky. Do you understand, Borne?"

The colossus turns his head to scan the entire horizon. He pauses at the sight of the Gyre, but only a moment passes before he narrows his eyes in a confident smile.

"Guide me, father."

ACT TWO:
Axis of the Revolution

The Obscurati and the party contest for control of the Axis Seal ritual, to decide the fate of the world.



Axis Obscura

Action. Tactical. Level 38.

Blind to his hypocrisy, Nicodemus chooses to abandon his principles and impose his absolute will, rather than to admit all his plans were for naught.

This encounter is grand and complicated.

The party wants to stop Nicodemus from completing the ritual, but he's practically invincible because of the *sacrament of apotheosis*, and the colossus Borne is just generally nigh impregnable, so early in the battle the PCs will need to split their efforts between fighting Ob forces (including an airship and the ghost council) and interfering with Nic and Borne's work on the ritual. Attacking Nic at first is pointless, unless the party went out of its way and discovered his true name thanks to the *arc of Reida* back in adventure eight.

The PCs gradually receive knowledge from their other selves in the Gyre so they can affect the ritual, and eventually they'll learn that Nic's true name is William Miller. At that point, it will be possible to overcome the *sacrament* and harm the mastermind. This can lead to four possible endings.

First is 'destruction.' The PCs defeat Nicodemus the old fashioned way by attacking him. Once he's gone, they can somberly finish the ritual, if they so desire.

Second is 'completion.' By completing the ritual and closing the seal in the midst of the battle, the party channel the energy released to destroy Nicodemus. This requires the party to choose at least five of the eight planes, and then to close the seal, which is quite a challenge.

Third is 'redemption.' If the PCs save Kasvarina, reveal to her how Nicodemus betrayed her, and let her confront the mastermind, this convinces the spirit of William Miller in the Gyre, who has for five centuries felt guilt for tricking Kasvarina and causing the Great Malice, to intervene. His memories flood into Nicodemus, and for a while Miller is in control, and will let the party destroy him.

Fourth and final is 'rejection.' If the PCs destroy enough parts of the ritual it becomes impossible to complete, and the world's link to other planes will gutter and die. The party has no way of knowing what will happen in this case, but it's certainly a refusal to follow the Ob's ideology that someone should be allowed to change the whole world for everyone else. The result is that the world is cast into a random place in the multiverse, and Nicodemus's whole purpose for surviving is undone. He'll wither away and vanish.

Whatever happens, in the aftermath the world will witness the first sunrise of a new age.

Pacing and Structure

We have an array of enemies providing threats along different axes and at different stages during the battle so that the encounter isn't just any old combat. We want this climax to be punctuated with moments of action and moments of maneuvering. The distance scale of the encounter – a 400-ft. diameter ritual field (you might want to use a 1 inch = 10 ft. resolution) – should mean that PCs won't be fighting every round, which we hope encourages them to try solving the puzzle of the ritual instead of just chopping through hit points until their enemies are gone.

Three 'narrative arcs' are at play, and you'll need to keep them all moving along and building tension in parallel, all while dropping hints so the players realize that pursuing goals along one arc can help in another. For instance, fiddling with the Axis Seal ritual can make it easier to defeat the Ob's airship and ghost council; but it's pretty hard to affect the ritual if the colossus keeps on trying to smash your airship while it's parked, so if you can slow the colossus down, you can take advantage of the opening.

Arc One—Airships and Ghosts

The bulk of living Obscurati forces are aboard the *Revolution*, an adamantine-plated, enchanted dirigible armed with the most advanced heavy cannons ever deployed in battle. Commanded by **Sovereign Han Jierre**, who is himself guarded by his niece **Lya Jierre** (who's probably a ghost), the *Revolution* attacks the party's airship.

Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen serves as miracle-working doctor of the airship, but he's not entirely loyal to the Ob. **Kasvarina Varal** is also aboard, either as a well-treated prisoner, or an additional foe in battle, depending on how the events of adventure eight shook out. Their presence gives a social axis to any fighting on the airship. Reaching and speaking with Kasvarina is one way to learn Nicodemus's true name, and she is the catalyst for the Redemption ending.

We've slightly bullshitted excessive defenses for the *Revolution*, so that the party will have a hard time destroying it from afar. This encourages boarding the vessel and getting into close combat with Lya. A solid resolution to this arc would see the airship crashing into the ghost council and exploding, destroying them both, perhaps with the PCs rescuing Kasvarina and leaping to safety at the last minute.

Arc Two—The Pivotal Ritual

The ritual itself dynamically affects the nature of reality during this battle. The Ob start by removing the link to the plane of air, which ends magical flight. If the party doesn't avert this quickly, their ship (which is held aloft by magic and arcane levitationals) will descend to the ground and be a sitting duck, while the *Revolution* (held aloft by physics and hydrogen gas bladders) will remain airborne.

We've set up foes with schticks that can be nullified by fiddling with the ritual columns. Cannons and engines on the *Revolution* can be crippled by unplugging the plane of fire; the ghost council starts weak but grows stronger once the plane of death is linked; and the colossus's invulnerability can be cracked just a bit by swapping the plane of earth. Additionally, whenever anyone switches a plane and reseats the column, they can control the surge of energy produced, making it quite rewarding to link planes.

The options for what planes the PCs can link to start off very limited, but expand in scope round by round. This should keep the complexity *slightly* more manageable at the start of combat.



SOVEREIGN HAN JIERRE



KASVARINA VARAL



DR. WOLFGANG VON RECKLINGHAUSEN



Arc Three—The Philosophical Colossus

Throughout all of this, Nicodemus splits his time between directing Borne and mocking the PCs. He only takes potshots at them, since his focus is guiding Borne through the ritual. However, if the party manages to affect the ritual and link to a world they want, Nicodemus realizes that by doing so they are tacitly agreeing with his ideology, which strengthens him due to the *sacrament of apotheosis*. At this point he grows more bold and cruel.

Borne, by contrast, is skeptical. He was raised to be rational, but with all the chaos of battle Borne is having to trust Nicodemus and take actions without understanding the consequences. The party can try to nurture his uncertainties and make Borne pause, and it's possible even to goad Nicodemus into explaining what he intends to do with the ritual this time: take away free will altogether, so the world will be perfect. This is anathema to what Borne was raised to believe, and will cause the colossus to abandon the encounter entirely.

Another method is to leverage Kasvarina's influence over the colossus, though this requires either having gotten her on the party's side in adventure eight, or bringing along Sor Daeron and/or Athrylla Valenar to reveal the truth about how Nicodemus arranged the death of Kasvarina's daughter four hundred years ago because he wanted her to recommit to the Obscurati. If the PCs can get Kasvarina within a few dozen feet of Borne so she can talk to him, she'll plead with him to stop—or if the party has already made Borne doubt Nicodemus, she can actually turn him into an ally in battle.

Primary Forces

If the party brings along a lot of allies, you can include more bad guys to keep them distracted. Perhaps there are smaller airships with less elite crew, or ground-bound construct squads, or a couple summoned outsiders. All of those foes can provide a backdrop of mass combat, handled narratively without any dice-rolling, while the party deals with the core enemies.

A few allies are important enough that they can join the battle. In adventure twelve, the PCs might have gained the aid of the dead goddess Srasama, who will appear partway through the battle (in the same round the PCs get access to the plane Ascetia). Kasvarina and Dr. von Recklinghausen might side with the party. And if things are going very badly for our heroes, Pemberton rockets in using an advanced dragon duplicant, giving the PCs a chance to regroup and heal.

Primary Enemy Forces

- Nicodemus, Mastermind
- Borne, Obscurati Colossus
- Ghost Council Swarm
- Lya, the Ghost Scion
- Sovereign Han Jierre
- Kasvarina Varal
- Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen
- 6 *Revolution* Elite Crews

Primary Allied Forces

- Avatar of Srasama
- Benedict "Gradiax" Pemberton

The Eye of the Voice of Rot

If a PC carries the lost eye of the Voice of Rot, recovered in Adventure Twelve, the moment that PC spots Nicodemus he intuitively understands the following three things. (If no PC has the eye, you could instead grant this insight to a Spirit Medium PC, or just let the party fumble about until they figure it out.)

- Nicodemus is practically invincible due to the *sacrament of apotheosis*, but if someone completes the Axis Seal ritual he'll be able to briefly wield enough power to destroy the ghost permanently.
- The people whose faith is empowering him with the *sacrament* want him to change the world. If he becomes unable to complete the ritual, their faith in him would falter, making him vulnerable.
- There is a link between Nicodemus and some other spirit in the Gyre, but not the Voice of Rot. That spirit is watching from afar, but perhaps that link could be exploited to harm Nicodemus.

One Last Thing

If the party killed Pemberton's daughter back in adventure six, he'll fight as a devoted ally all the way through the battle, but the moment the Obscurati are defeated he'll catch his breath, assess if he has a shot, and then try to kill whoever delivered the killing blow to his daughter. Anticlimactic, perhaps, but Pemberton would never forgive them, and the PCs are lucky he's only killing one of them.

Invoking Allies

We've attempted to balance the final encounter – as much as an encounter *can* be balanced for 30th level PCs – with the assumption the party consists of five PCs. If the PCs bring along allies, most of them aren't strong enough to actually harm the enemies here (and their stats earlier in the adventure were all bumped by being linked to hiveminds, which they're now free from).

If you want, though, perhaps at the end of each turn you can have the players take turns narrating something one of their allies does. Usually this won't have a direct effect on the PCs' foes, but Gale could create environmental effects or move the party's airship, Lauryn Cyneburg could teleport a PC across the battlefield, and Harkover Lee could ram and slightly knock aside the colossus's leg so a PC isn't crushed.

Don't let the PCs decide what Pemberton does, though. If he is present, you control him.

Location

The general landscape is detailed in Player Handout—The Ritual of the Axis Seal. It's a 400-ft. wide span of stone with concentric rings carved into the bedrock. Each ring has one or two 50-ft. deep slots in which sit white stone columns – petrified trees – each of which links to a different plane. The PCs have to decide if they want to spend their actions fiddling with the ritual or fighting. We assume it takes about three rounds worth of actions by a PC to link a column to a new plane, and so we grant a reward roughly equivalent to three standard actions to incentivize using the ritual.

To the northwest of the ritual field a small bunker sits currently unoccupied, but it's a fine place for people to end up if they fall off a ship, teleport to safety, or need a dramatic place to stand to call out to the colossus.

At the beginning of the encounter, the colossus has just stood up at about 7 o'clock (if we treat the ritual space as a clockface). The stone pillar for the Plane of Death is already out of the ground, having been ejected when Av was destroyed in adventure twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*. The golden seal itself (100-ft. in diameter) lies on the ground just north of the colossus, in a spot with no pillars.

Energy Tendrils

At the start of the encounter, place a marker at about 10 o'clock on the map. A crackling line of extraplanar energy lashes out from the center of the ritual to that spot. Any creature that enters its path or ends its turn there takes 100 acid, fire, lightning, and necrotic damage unless he's protected by the *sacrament of apotheosis*. The tendril lashes up and down, and so affects creatures as high as three hundred feet off the ground.



At the beginning of each round, roll 1d6 to determine what the tendril does.

1	The tendril stays put.
2-3	The tendril moves about 30 degrees clockwise.
4-5	The tendril moves about 30 degrees counter-clockwise.
6	The tendril stays put. However, roll a d12 to determine a 'clockface' around the ritual field. Place a new marker there. That spot begins to glow, but is harmless. At the beginning of the next round, instead of rolling, the tendril jumps to this new spot.

The party is likely immune because of the *sacrament*, so the tendrils become a unique weapon. Nicodmeus and Borne are immune too, but the rest of the Ob forces try to keep as far away from the deadly thing as possible. And if a PC can manage to destroy the integrated *wayfarer's lantern* inside Borne's torso, the tendril can quickly cripple the slow-moving colossus.

The Ritual

In addition to the mechanics presented in Player's Handout—Ritual of the Axis Seal, there are some surprises in store.

Timeline of Remembrance

In adventure twelve, we asked you to keep track of the order the PCs linked to the various worlds there. In this encounter, they get access to those worlds in the same order they linked to them. This should cut down slightly on analysis paralysis; in the early rounds of combat, they only have a few planes they can contest over, so the decision is 'do I try to pull up a column and link to that plane or not?' rather than 'which of these 30 planes do I pick now?'

Now, the rate at which planes become available is up to you a little. We generally assume it took the party 8 to 12 days to complete adventure twelve, in which case each round corresponds with one day. But if they rushed through the whole thing in a blur, or if they spent weeks learning every nook and cranny, adjust it a bit to provide a good pace. In general, you want one or two planes becoming available every round, though some might have none, and some might have several. The party should have access to all of them no later than round seventeen, when Nicodemus would be finishing his changes if he's not interrupted.

When a plane becomes available, each PC becomes aware that they can manifest whatever item they used to create the planar icon. Manifesting an icon is a free action, but once it's manifested, it's solid and real, and no other PC can manifest the same plane's icon. The party might also start with a few icons if they kept the ones from the various Ancient ruins. These items are resilient enough to survive normal combat, but you might really wreck the party's plan if, say, Lya Jierre slices off the hand of a PC holding an icon, then kicks the thing into the center of the seal, where the chaotic energy obliterates it.

Whenever the party gets access to the plane of Ascetia, the PCs also receive knowledge of Nicodemus's true name. At this point they can start attacking and actually harming him. (Likewise, if in adventure twelve they called upon Srasama to aid them in battle, she appears at this point.)


The Axis Seal
1 = 10 feet

OBSCURATI RITUAL PLAN

Barring PC interference, Nicodemus has Borne adjust the ritual in the following order. Each of these corresponds to one turn's worth of actions, if the colossus isn't interrupted.

If at any point the party's airship is within 10 squares, and the airship is immobilized due to the air column being out of the ground, Borne takes a turn off from the ritual to use *crushing fist* to punch it. The PCs have until the start of Borne's next turn to somehow to thwart this, such as with an impenetrable force wall, or just moving their ship away from where he aimed. If they don't, though, their ship suffers 2 strikes, one to hull integrity, and one to a random component.

1. Move to the Air pillar (orange) and lift it completely out of the ground. (But set it down gently so it doesn't break.)
2. Move to the Life pillar (green) and lift it. Nicodemus will take the icon of Mojang, and place the icon of *Patricalus*.
3. Release the Life pillar so it slides into the ground. Move south to the Earth pillar (gold).
4. Lift the Earth pillar. Nicodemus will remove the icon of Ratios and replace it with the icon of Mojang. *(Without Ratios, hiveminds will no longer form, but any current hiveminds persist.)*
5. Release the Earth pillar so it slides into the ground. Move east toward the Death pillar (purple).
6. Continue moving to the Death pillar, which is lying on the ground. Lift it. Nicodemus will remove the icon of Av, and place the icon of *Jiquus*.
7. Release the Death pillar so it slides into the ground. Move north toward the Space pillar (gray). *(The ghost council, which previously had been keeping its distance, will now seek to get into melee.)*
8. Continue moving toward the Space pillar. Lift it. Nicodemus will remove the icon of Fourmyle, and place the icon of Urim. He leaves the icon of Baden, the ghost moon.
9. Release the Space pillar so it slides into the ground. Turn around and lift the Time pillar. Nicodemus will remove the icon of Illocus and place the icon of *Regulus*.
10. Nicodemus orders the colossus to release the Time pillar, and he makes a grandiloquent monologue as it slides into the ground.
11. In the bonus turn granted by linking a Time plane, the colossus moves west toward where the golden seal lies.
12. He picks the air pillar off the ground and puts it in its slot.
13. He continues moving to the golden seal.
14. He finally reaches the seal and picks it up.
15. He slowly moves back to the central depression. Destructive tendrils of energy threaten to annihilate the colossus.
16. The colossus maneuvers the seal into proper position. Nicodemus completes his grandiloquent monologue.
17. The colossus releases the seal, completing the ritual and securing victory for the Obscurati.

Draining Magic

When a pillar linking to a particular energy type is removed from the ground entirely, it becomes difficult to use magic of that type. At the start of a round, see below for the effects of a removed pillar.

- **Air.** Creatures and vessels flying with magic can no longer control their movement. Flying creatures become prone (but remain at their current elevation), and vessels list. If a flying creature is already prone or vessel listing, it descends 20 feet instead. Creatures flying with wings or vessels that could fly without magic are unaffected. Additionally, reduce by half all lightning and/or thunder damage that would be dealt.
- **Death.** Undead creatures are weakened and grant combat advantage. Incorporeal undead no longer take half damage. Reduce by half all necrotic damage that would be dealt.
- **Earth.** Creatures lose any magical resistance to nonenergy damage. (Namely, the colossus takes full damage from non-typed damage.)
- **Fire.** Cannons cannot fire and vessels with steam engines are immobilized. Reduce by half all fire and/or lightning damage that would be dealt.
- **Life.** Living creatures cannot return from the dead. Reduce by half all healing of damage by living creatures.
- **Space.** Teleportation is impossible, and the range of magical powers is limited to a maximum of 10 squares.
- **Time.** Any form of precognition is impossible. Creatures cannot spend action points to take extra actions.
- **Water.** Honestly, there really aren't that many magical water effects in D&D. Um, reduce by half all acid and/or cold damage that would be dealt, and each round instead of rolling 1d6 for the tendril's motion, roll 1d10, and any result of 6 or higher has the result of rolling a 6.

When a column is placed back in the ground, if it has an icon for a plane with the right type of energy, magic of that type immediately starts functioning again.

Each column has 100 hit points, but the simplest way to break one is to have the colossus step on it, or drop it from at least thirty feet. If all eight columns are broken, the ritual is permanently ended. Likewise, if all eight columns are out of the ground at the start of a round, the energy tendril vanishes and the central glow dims. At the start of the next round, if no columns have been re-seated, the ritual ends. See the Rejection ending in Conclusion (page 233).

Reconnection Reward

Whenever a PC places an icon in a column, when that column is fully reseated (which generally takes one round once released) a surge of planar energy is released. That PC can choose either the General reward, or one that matches the energy type of the column.

- **General.** You summon in a space within 6 squares a standard monster of level 30 or below that can be found on the plane you just linked. It has hit points equal to half your bloodied value. It acts immediately. (You can instead summon four level 30 minions, with 1 hit point each.)
- **Air.** You and each ally within one mile gains a speed of fly 40 (hover) until the end of your next turn. During that time, the first time each of you hit an enemy on their turn, you can slide that creature 10 squares.
- **Death.** Necrotic energy rises in a column centered on a space you can see, area burst 5 and hundreds of feet high. Until the end of your next turn, each hostile creature that enters or ends its turn in the area takes 50 necrotic damage.
- **Earth.** Creatures in area burst 4 centered anywhere you can see fall prone and lose all resistances and immunities until the end of your next turn. (Yes even the colossus. Vehicles that fall prone descend 60 feet.)
- **Fire.** As per Death, except it is a column of fire.
- **Life.** Each living ally within one mile heals as if he or she had spent a healing surge. You heal to full.
- **Space.** Until the end of your next turn, you or one ally of your choice can choose to treat any space you can see as the origin of your powers. Changing which space is a free action, within reason (e.g., you can make one opportunity attack from a space anywhere you can see, but you don't get to make opportunity attacks every time anyone you can see moves).
- **Time.** Immediately after your turn ends, the world aside from you and each ally within one mile freezes in time. You and your allies can communicate for roughly a minute, during which your bodies move slowly enough that you can only accomplish one round's worth of combat actions. During this time stretch you can freely affect inanimate objects, but cannot move, harm, or otherwise influence creatures that are paused.
- **Water.** Now and at the start of the next round of combat, you can change where the energy tendril coming from the center of the ritual points, and can have it weave around spaces in order to avoid allies. Additionally, until the end of your next turn, you and allies within one mile are unaffected by area or close attacks unless you choose to be.

Planes might also yield different effects appropriate to their nature, at your discretion. We suggest the following specific options.

- **Caeloon.** Any dead allies within one mile are restored to life, and each ally in that area regains hit points as if he had spent a healing surge.
- **Iratha Ket.** Until the end of your next turn, each enemy within one mile is dazed. (Actually, they spend a move action compelled to sing or dance to express their feelings.)
- **Metarie.** Until the end of your next turn, the colossus and any other mechanical creatures are stunned, firearm attacks take a -5 penalty, and any mechanical vehicles are immobilized.
- **Obliatas.** Until the end of your next turn, undead gain vulnerable 30 radiant, and if they have insubstantial they lose that trait.

Planes of the Watchmaker

In addition to the planes currently linked to the world, and those found in the Gyre, Nicodemus has icons associated with three planes – Patricalus, Regulus, and Jiquus – which will allow him to create a world as planned by the Watchmaker faction of the Obscurati.

- **Fire.** Jiese is retained.
- **Air.** Perlocus is retained.
- **Life.** A new world, *Patricalus*, makes people more obedient and susceptible to compulsion.
- **Water.** Ostea is retained.
- **Earth.** Ratios is replaced with Mojang, currently serving as plane of life.
- **Space.** Fourmyle is replaced with Urim, which was plane of earth in the original cosmology.
- **Time.** A new world, *Regulus*, has clockwork precision in its control of time. The planar icon is a thick scroll in a gold scroll tube, which lists all the events that are to occur over the next thousand years.
- **Death.** A new world, *Jiquus*, dominates all, and slays those who stray from the written course of history.

When combined, these planes will for one thousand years enslave all creatures on the plane, forcing them to experience lives of comfort and charity so that when the clock winds down, people will naturally continue their decent ways. Nature will remain obedient due to Mojang, and predators will only eat parts of creatures, which will heal rapidly due to Ostea. Urim makes extraplanar interference unlikely but, in a fatal flaw for this plan, the nature of Jiquus leaves an opening for undead from other worlds to ignore the clockwork control. Nicodemus intends to stay and act as a benevolent guide and guardian, but it won't take long for something to go wrong.

Cheating

The ritual assumes you put one planar icon in each column, and that you'll have a total of eight planes. It is possible, however, to put multiple icons in a single column. When the column sinks into the ground, whoever placed the extra icon must make an Arcana, Nature, or Religion check (DC 32). If the check fails, the column refuses to sink, and the energy tendril immediately switches location to strike the person who tried to make that linkage.

It's also possible to complete the ritual with fewer than eight columns, since most planes provide multiple energy types. You could link *only* to Obliatas, though the resulting world would be bland and over-lit. Or you could cleverly put two icons each in a pair of columns, and those four planes could potentially have all eight energy types.

Completing and Closing

When all eight columns are submerged and the ritual has links to eight different energy types, the immense golden seal rises into the air, and each character who linked to a plane understands that they can easily control it. A single move action can lift the seal and move it 40 feet. The seal remains aloft for up to five minutes, so it's possible to keep making alterations.

The moving golden plate doesn't deal damage if it hits someone, but it easily pushes aside even the colossus. If the PCs choose to drop it, it will crush and kill anyone who's not phasing.

Once the seal is moved directly over the central pit and lowered to the ground, if no one moves it away within a round, the ritual is completed. See the Completion ending under Conclusions (page 232).

Enemies

There are four main enemies or enemy groups: Nicodemus, the colossus, the airship forces, and the ghost council.

Mastermind. Nicodemus flies with Borne as the colossus moves, and on some turns he spends his actions to swap icons in the ritual columns, as detailed in the Obscurati Ritual Plan sidebar. Other rounds he tries to disrupt the PCs from afar with *variable barriers*. We've designed the 'first stage' of his stats to be relatively low-threat. He's probably invincible at this time due to the *sacrament of apotheosis*, and we want the other enemies to pose a more immediate risk so the party is more likely to deal with them first.

We've provided a sort of suggested script for Nicodemus to convey his descent into villainy (see Grandstanding Archvillainy, page 230), but again, you should probably hold off on him monologuing too much at the start of the combat. He's busy directing Borne. Let the other enemies have a chance to trade words with the PCs before they're defeated, and save Nicodemus for later.

When the PCs get access to the knowledge of Nicodemus's real name, William Miller, Nic shifts gears and goes on the offensive, while still trying to direct Borne from afar. Nic's melee attack, *worldwide rebuke*, can strand a PC away from the fight and slow them, giving the colossus a chance to stomp the PC before he can move out of the way.



Colossus. Borne moves with immense slowness, and so spends most of his turns simply moving. If he attacks with hands or feet, he has to spend one round winding up, and his blow won't land until the next turn, giving foes time to dodge. He can readily unleash a blast of spirits from his eyes, but Nicodemus wants him to focus on the ritual. Borne, too, is basically invincible at the start of this encounter.

Destroying him requires some combination of powerful attacks that can overcome his resist all 50, psychic attacks which bypass his resistances, the 'reward' for linking a plane of earth energy, and breaking through weak spots on his body to target fragile internal components. Even cannons from the PCs' airship probably can't do more than scratch him.

Airship. The *Revolution* keeps a relatively slow speed because it needs to maneuver tightly. Barring odd circumstances, it stays above the ritual circle and flies up to 16 squares per round, moving at Han Jierre's initiative.

The forces aboard the *Revolution* try to ground the PCs' airship, but Han Jierre might order the vessel's cannons aimed at the ground to take out PCs who attempt to interfere with the ritual columns. If the opportunity presents itself, Lya Jierre will lead a boarding action, but it's more likely she'll be defending the airship. Han commands a hivemind gestalt of all the living soldiers on the airship.

Swarm of Undead Philosophers. The ghost council keeps its distance at the beginning of battle. The undead are vulnerable because the pillar of the plane of death is not properly seated, so they try to stay as far away as possible while using *unrefined evocation* every round. Once a plane of death is relinked, the council seeks to enter melee. You can throw them at PCs who aren't engaged in the puzzle or in a narratively-weighty clash against one of the named NPCs.

Destroying the council is arduous, but in turn its attacks are intended more to create peril than to kill a PC instantly. If one PC is having his soul sucked out, another PC can feel heroic swooping in and knocking the spectral swarm away.

Possible Allies. If the PCs get within a hundred feet or so of the *Revolution*, they spot Kasvarina through the window of the dirigible's bridge. If she is unfriendly to the PCs, she uses flight magic to let Lya and some of the crew try to board the PCs' ship, or otherwise go after a group of PCs. If she's friendly with the PCs, Han Jierre keeps her under watch, unaware that she has hidden the true extent of her powers. She'll wait for the PCs to be near before she makes her move. She'll kill the dirigible pilots and possibly some of the gunnery crews, then fly and join the PCs, urging them to not destroy Borne if they can avoid it.

Meanwhile, Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen stays on the *Revolution* and heals the living crew with blasts of revivifying lightning, keeping the ship from suffering crew loss unless the PCs really work at it. Depending on how friendly he is with the party, he might seek an opportune moment to start healing the PCs.

Finally, if the PCs are having trouble with the *Revolution*, you can have them spot a commotion on the bridge, as the pilots are attacked by a squad of kobolds who crawled through the vessel's superstructure and emerged from underneath the bridge's control panels. Han Jierre is blasted out onto the gundeck by concussive magic, and then the kobolds seal the door to the bridge. Through the window, **El Extraño**, kobold spymaster of Ber, nods to the PCs, then orders his kobold crew to bring the ship within firing range of the colossus.

'Joining the Conspiracy'



EL EXTRAÑO

Using the ritual to change the world was Nicodemus's idea, and now Nicodemus is empowered by the *sacrament of apotheosis*, so those who believe in him grant him power. Thus, if the PCs use the same tactics as him, they are themselves contributing to the faith that empowers him.

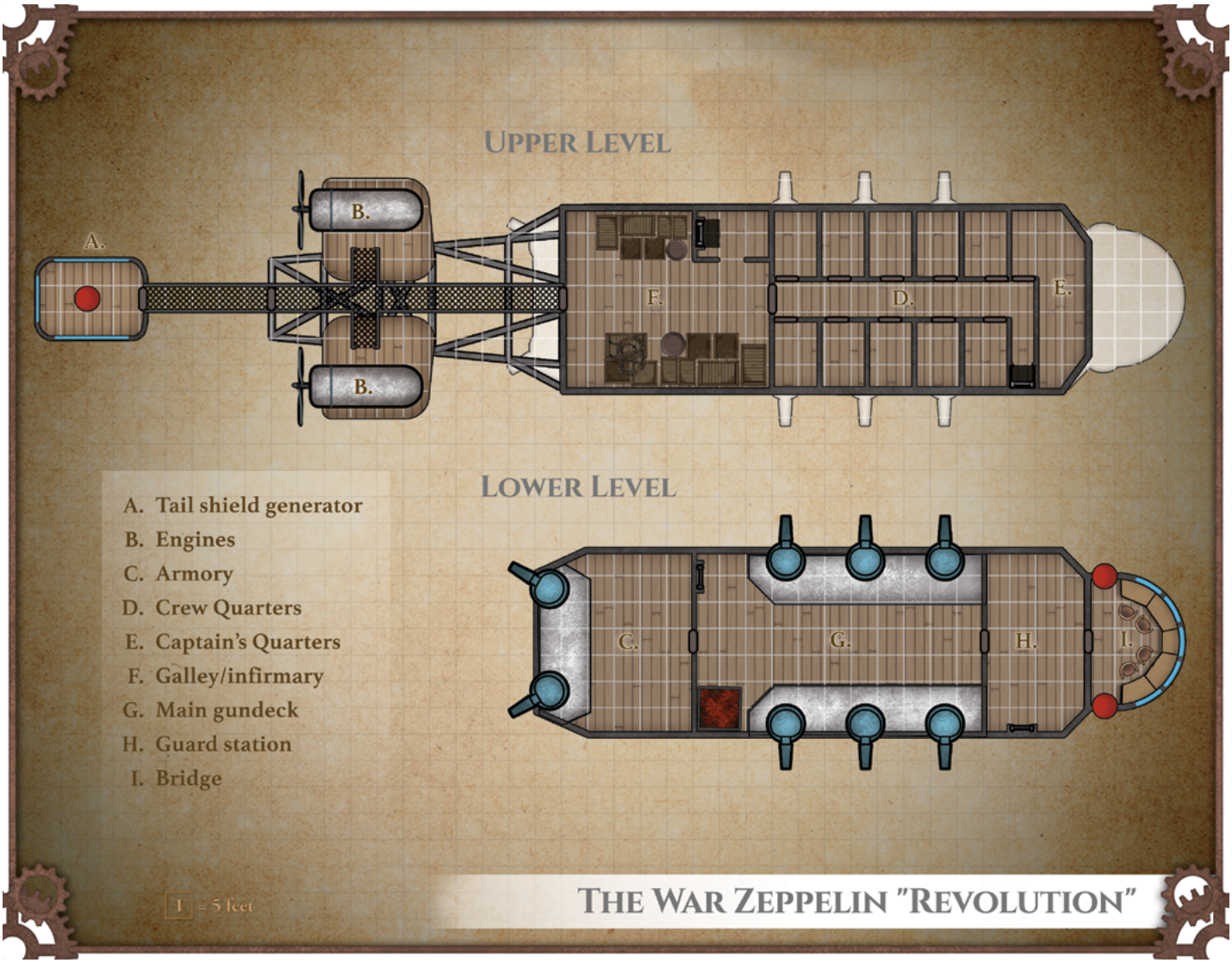
The first time a PC manages to link to a plane and then reseat the column, Nicodemus laughs as he suddenly realizes that his enemies are playing into his hands. Thereafter, whenever Nicodemus would take damage (which assumes the party manages to bypass the defenses granted by the *sacrament*), for each PC who linked to a plane during this encounter, prevent 10 of that damage and instead deal that 10 damage to the PC. Additionally, each time a PC links a plane, Nicodemus gains an action point.

This link ends if the column the PC lowered is destroyed.

War Dirigible *Revolution*

Han Jierre commands the airship from its bridge, which has a non-combatant crew. If an enemy gets into the bridge, the bridge crews surrender, and the ship coasts to a stop. Six elite crew units (consisting of 12 soldiers each) fill the remainder of the lower deck, with each crew manning a different turret. They can move to the aft turrets if needed. Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen stays in the infirmary, ready to heal crew.

Kasvarina typically stays on the bridge, and Lya Jierre roams through the different sections of the ship, ready to battle intruders. They are both prepared to take the fight to enemies who come nearby, using Kasvarina's *boarding action* power to fly en masse if an enemy ship gets within 24 squares.



Revolution, War Dirigible

Huge Vehicle — Level 30

Vehicle

Hull Integrity 4 — **Defense** 30 — **Command** +23

Maneuverability 4 — **Speed** 16

Full Crew 16 — **Minimum Crew** 3 — **Total Complement** 100

Design

The lifting body consists of a 500-ft.-long cluster of hydrogen bladders, each woven out of mithral and enchanted to be fire resistant. The crewed section on the map consists of a 120-ft.-lower and upper decks, plus an upper aft tail, open to air, leading to the propellers and a rear lookout post.

Armaments

Three heavy enchanted turrets aim to each broadside, with a pair aiming aft. Incendiary bombs can be dropped directly below.

Crew: 40. *Attack:* +20 to broadsides, or +18 aft or down. The weapons cannot attack upward, but in exchange they can be used on targets directly below regardless of distance. Attacks made straight downward are with flaming weapons.

See the stats for *Revolution* Elite Crew (page 306) to see how they can fire these weapons in normal initiative, instead of the longer one-minute rounds of naval combat.

Lifting Body

The dirigible can fly as high as 13,000 feet. A strike to the air bladders causes a small localized explosion, but it does not spread. If the fire wards are dispelled, an explosion in one bladder engulfs the entire lifting body, and the vessel falls from the sky.

Repair Crew

Hivemind-empowered halfling and gnome technologists scurry through the ship, fixing what's broken.

As long as Sovereign Han Jierre remains in command of the *Revolution*, any effect that would immobilize it or render it incapable of shooting is repaired after one round.

Eldritch Defenses

Some magical shield absorbs your attacks. Every hit causes red light to flash, perhaps indicating the location of the shield.

Wards along the lifting body grant the ship immunity to the burning condition.

Three red arcane orbs – one in the tail, two in the cockpit – produce wide resilient spheres. Each orb has 50 hit points and produces an invisible 50-ft. radius sphere of protection. This has two effects:

- A spell or non-ship-based weapon attack that originates outside the sphere deals 60 less damage to targets within the sphere. A design flaw did not properly calibrate the size of the shields, meaning the aft gun deck has an area which can be struck with ease.
- Any naval weapon attacks that originate outside the sphere cannot damage the dirigible. This means shipboard weapons can only function at Close range.

A DC 25 Arcana or DC 35 Perception check recognizes this flaw, though taking advantage should require some creativity.

Grandstanding Archvillainy

Coming up with villain dialogue in the midst of a battle is hard. Here's some we suggest.

Lya Jierre's Mournful Duel

The fight with Lya probably won't last long, so we want to give some pathos to her defeat. She laments that she has lost her free will and the spark of innovation now that she is an uneasy spirit bound to Nicodemus.

"It's an honor to cross blades with you again. Despite our past disagreements and their consequences-." She pauses mid-sentence, and shakes her head at her own words. "No, I said that before.

"I'm afraid I must apologize. I wanted an exciting contest of ideology, but it seems both my swordfighting and my repartee are frozen in the past.

"Before I died, my uncle told me he feared the whole world would remain stagnant if we succeeded. Nicodemus and a council of ghosts, not a beating heart among them, would rule this world.

"Remember our first meeting, when I challenged you to break the rules of a puzzle? Well sadly, that's impossible for me now. But perhaps you still can. Nicodemus has set the rules of our grand finale, but you don't have to follow them."

Nicodemus's Taunts

Nic keeps fairly quiet and understated at the beginning of the battle. He directs Borne, and if the PCs interfere with him while he's invincible due to the *sacrament*, he just chides them for wasting his time. But then as the battle develops you can use the following lines to keep Nicodemus alive as a character as well as an opponent.

Welcome. The first time a PC links to a plane and lowers a column back into the ground, Nicodemus laughs, arrogant.

"I told you earlier, imitation is flattery." He pauses for a moment to pull out a cigarette. "You think you're fighting me, but you're using my own methods. Oh, we might have different goals, but at the core, you agree with me: this world needs to be changed. You already voted with us how we should do it, too. So let me be the first to say it. Welcome to the Obscurati, constables." The cigarette ignites as he puts it to his spectral lips.

Scorn. We want to establish that Nicodemus genuinely wants to kill the PCs. There's no time left for making deals.

"You're going to fail, you know. You'll fail, and I will kill you. The wisest minds of twenty generations agreed to join with me, but you-." His eyes flare like bonfires. "My new world is almost complete, and I'll burn you alive before I let you ruin it."

Taunt. Nicodemus mocks the party if his allies are doing well against them, or when he is forced to start fighting.

"Your feeble attempts to stop the Obscurati will be forgotten by history. You were well intentioned, sometimes almost ingenious, so I promise I'll remember you fondly."

Nostalgia. This can help remind the PCs of how long they've been battling Nicodemus.

"Are you as clever as I thought, or was it just chance that you kept stumbling into my way? We first met in the garden of Mayor Macbannin's manor, on Cauldron Hill. Do you remember? We talked about chaos."

Betrayal. This sets up a fine opportunity for someone to reveal to Kasvarina that Nicodemus betrayed her centuries ago.

"Chaos let my Kasvarina slip away from me, because I was distracted by your interference. Without her, I hesitated. I compromised my ideology. I was sentimental, put my trust in people. But we know that people are too selfish to be trusted to choose the right path."

Pride. Make sure to reflect that the power of the *sacrament* is exacerbating Nic's natural self-righteousness.

"I'll admit, I was afraid people would reject my grand design, but now I can feel their faith. I've opened their eyes to the truth, and they empower me. They know I will save them."

Confession to Kasvarina. If the PCs reveal to Kasvarina how Nic arranged the murder of her daughter in order to bring her back under his control four centuries ago, he snaps in fury.

"You'd lost your way, Rina! After all we lost against the Clergy, you and I were cutting them down. We were making the world better! But you wanted a 'family,' like some idiot girl! You were better than that. Yes, I had Launga killed, and I did you a favor! If I'd left you alone, the world you would have given her would have been as wretched as it ever was. Who cares if you lost a daughter? I let you give birth to the future!"

Confession to Borne. If the PCs goad Nicodemus about what the ritual will do, or if they are close to convincing Borne to reject his father, Nicodemus is put on the back foot, metaphorically.

> "Son, don't listen to them. I made you, and you trust me. It's a damned combat, Borne, not time to discuss the nuances of philosophy. I can hear them, son. Millions of people crying out for you to save them! We finish this now."

If pushed, though, his pride is such that he cannot deny his intentions. He unleashes a diatribe and demands Borne do what he is told.

> "Order. Justice. That's what I'm creating. Selfishness will no longer destroy what is good when free will is no more. People will be moral because they'll have no choice. For a thousand years, chaos will be no more, and when the watch's hand winds down, yeah, then I'll give these worthless people their freedom back. But they won't know suffering. I'll have been their god, one who can truly answer their prayers, who won't have to let evil into my world. I'm creating heaven, where no man will fear tyranny. Whatever empty value you place on 'free will' pales to the paradise this world will be."

Victorious Monologue

If the Obscurati ritual gets far enough that Borne is about to drop in Jiquus, the new plane of Time, Nicodemus begins his victorious grandstanding, but only as long as victory is in sight. If thwarted at this last moment, he finally loses his temper and attacks recklessly. But if he's not interrupted, he finishes his speech right as Borne drops the golden seal and secures the world for the Obscurati.

> "This is the last piece. All the flaws of Creation will be gone, and all the universe will see that I have made the most perfect world. I wish you dirt-minded fools hadn't opposed me, or I could've spared so many more. But now, witness the end of the Age of Chaos, and the dawn of the Age of Reason!
>
> "Let me give you a moment. You'll marvel at its glory, and then, when you beg forgiveness for ever doubting me, I will lift you up and reveal the place I have made for you in my celestial clockwork. You'll all have a place in this living heaven, and I will look down upon you, your savior, and smile at a new world without selfishness, or apathy, or loathing.
>
> "Well, maybe a little loathing. You'll remember the world as it was. I'll make sure of that. Silently, inwardly, you'll weep that you failed. You'll try to rebel, to resist, but day after day you'll praise me to everyone you meet. When all the rest of civilization has forgotten the meaning of the word evil, you'll be remembered as great heroes of the Obscurati, who were loyal to me until the day you died.
>
> "Now Borne, close the seal, and at long last our grand design will be complete!"



Checklist Finale

Doctors and airline pilots use checklists so they don't forget important steps of complex actions. Spend a moment to refer to this checklist each round.

1. At the start of the round, roll to see if the energy tendril moves.
2. Determine if unplugged (or replugged) planar columns cause a change in what magic works.
3. Determine what Nicodemus wants Borne to do with the ritual this round.
4. Decide on something for Nicodemus to say, either on his turn or in reaction to a PC.
5. Decide who Han Jierre thinks is a key threat, and which resources he'd use to target that PC: rifles, ship cannons, or a boarding action led by Lya.
6. Tell the PCs which of the planes their other selves linked to in the Gyre they now have access to. If they gain access to Ascetia, remind them that Nicodemus's true name is William Miller.
7. Everyone takes their turns. Look for a way to isolate a PC with a natural nemesis, like a Martial Scientist with Lya, or a Vekeshi with Kasvarina. Try to set up that encounter if it's not tactically futile.
8. When a round ends, assess how the three arcs – airship, ritual, and colossus – are progressing. Decide if you need to highlight events in one arc in particular.
9. If the party is making headway toward the Redemption ending, tell the PCs that they feel a presence in the Gyre watching and weighing their actions.
10. If they're working on the Rejection ending, describe some dramatic heaving in the earth and lightning in the sky as reality shudders chaotically.

Conclusions

However this encounter ends, the consequences should be decisive.

Failure

If Nicodemus gets all the planes he desires and closes the seal, the whole world becomes suddenly calm. Tell the players that their characters throw down their weapons and begin to smile and cheer at the Obscurati's victory. A full moon begins to rise to the east, and though they try to resist, each of them walks up to Nicodemus, thanks him, then kneels and ask for forgiveness.

On the ground, looking up at their savior, they see the ghost of Nicodemus smile, and he reaches out to the heavens and sweeps his hand. The gesture casts time forward, and in a moment the PCs experience day and night and day and again, years in a flash, as they travel the world spreading the heroism of Nicodemus, crafting monuments to his name, attending annual celebrations on Axis Island where Nicodemus basks in their adoration. And every moment, each of them screams without a voice, unable to act against the path he set for them.

Until finally, decades later, their will long broken, they no longer know that they attest to a forced faith. They awake with a smile they believe is their own. They have relented, and understand that Nicodemus was right, that this world is truly without selfishness. Finally, as the year ends, they attend the celebration here again on Axis Island.

Thousands have come to listen to Nicodemus give them guidance and encouragement. But the man does not appear. This matters nothing to the crowd, whose responses were dictated long ago. They applaud a speech not given by a hero not present, and then they leave and continue on with their lives, forced to obey. But inwardly, silently, they remember.

Destruction

When Nicodemus is finally reduced to 0 hit points, he sags and shakes his head in disbelief. His form begins to dissipate, and he reaches out toward one of the PCs to say, "It's all still chaos. Whatever world you create, it will always fall apart."

Then he convulses, bends backwards upon himself, and explodes with blinding radiance, spreading outward like a wave to all his followers across the world. The colossus Borne is utterly disintegrated, leaving just a shadow of smoke in the air that slowly drifts away. Any Ob forces who had survived this long are likewise annihilated. Additionally, because PCs who contributed to the ritual became linked to Nicodemus through the *sacrament*, they each suffer backlash, taking 100 damage.

In the relative calm afterward, whatever remains of the party has little trouble completing the ritual, though they might still squabble over what planes to bind. Let them finish the ritual, while they ponder just how many were killed by the backlash from Nicodemus's defeat.

Completion

When the golden seal falls into place, the whole valley shakes with the impact, and the once-blinding light pouring out of the center of the ritual vanishes. In the following few seconds, magic readjusts on a worldwide scale, and clouds roil overhead as energy gathers to this spot. Just as how linking to a single plane granted a reward, now completing the ritual grants each PC who contributed incredible power.

Let the players know that each of them can effectively do any one thing they desire, on par with a *wish*. They must choose quickly before the magic dissipates, but as they ponder, Nicodemus shouts in disbelief and clenches his fists, then shakes his head once and cracks a forced grin. He pulls out one last cigarette, haughty and defiant.

"Enjoy your victory, constables," he says. "I told you, we agree this world had to change, so whatever new world you've made, it was made in my image. But my work is not complete. This is just a delay. My followers and I will try again. You cannot kill an idea, and I will see my grand design fulfilled."

Of course, the party can just keep fighting if they want, but with their momentary surge of power, victory is practically automatic. Hopefully at this point, one of the PCs chooses to obliterate Nicodemus, which has the result detailed in Destruction above, though the PC has a choice of whether to just destroy Nicodemus, or to destroy all his followers as well.

If by some chance the party lets Nicodemus go, he's true to his word. Though the *sacrament* fades away after a day, he and those who believe in him continue to toil in the shadows, seeking another opportunity to achieve Nic's goal and create a perfect world. That's a problem for tomorrow, though. For now, the sun begins to rise.

Redemption

If the party gets Kasvarina to confront Nicodemus, and if they haven't done anything that William Miller would find morally reprehensible, *and* if you feel the scene has had sufficient drama – it might help to have Nicodemus attack Kasvarina and nearly kill her – then Nicodemus's other self leaps into the Gyre in order to merge their consciousnesses into one.

The sky rumbles with deafening thunder that rolls in from the horizon where the Gyre hangs, and then Nicodemus falls to the ground and grips his head in both hands. His form distends, like a second person is trying to move inside a single body, hands and faces pressing out against his spectral skin. For the next round Nic is stunned as he argues with himself.

Nic groans in confusion, "Who are you? Get out of my mind!"

Then his voice changes slightly. "I'm who you should have been. We opposed the holy war because the hierarchs cared more about victory than following any sort of moral code. Now you're just like them, and just as blind. Our arrogance caused the Malice. You should have been horrified by what you'd done, but you were too proud to stop fighting. Well dammit, I've spent five centuries with the ghosts of those you killed. Feel what they lost."

He stumbles and screams, and through the power of the *sacrament of apotheosis* everyone in the battle notices this. The Ob forces pause to see what will happen.

Then on the next round he snaps free of his confusion. His posture changes to guarded optimism. Miller, now in control of the ghostly body, calls to the party. "I have only a moment. For now he's overwhelmed, and I've ended his link to the *sacrament*. Quickly, destroy me. I don't have time to apologize for it all, but I can help you stop him."

Already he's starting to twitch again, but if at least one PC strikes him, Miller yields to it and lets it destroy him. The blow begins to unravel him, and he looks to Kasvarina for forgiveness before he collapses silently into darkness.

Or play it up with a big explosion, if you prefer. In the wake of this, the ghost council screams and disperses, the colossus falls to its knees to mourn his father, and Han Jierre surrenders. The party can then complete the ritual at their leisure.

Rejection

When the party destroys the last column of the ritual, or when a round has passed with no columns in the earth, the ritual sputters to an end. The energy tendril vanishes. Nicodemus is shocked, and he screams at the party, "You could have made whatever world you wanted, and you just reject that chance? You've doomed the whole world!"

The planet shudders, mountains crumble, and the glow of the Gyre streaks across the sky as the air fills with a high-pitched keen. The heavens glow brighter, every dark spot turned blinding white, and an immense force shoves everyone to the ground. For a moment the whole world is just unendurable brilliance and deafening thunder, and then in an instant reality becomes still.

The party finds themselves and whoever remains of their foes lying on the floor of the valley. Clouds float overhead in a dark sky, but as their eyes adjust they spot stars twinkling through gaps. A purple glow like dawn rises to what was the north, as if the world had spun off its axis.

Nicodemus shoves himself righteously to his feet and throws out a hand to smite a PC, but nothing happens. The power of the *sacrament* has ended, and magic itself barely works. Borne groans, too weak to move, and the ghost council cries out as they begin to dissolve. Nicodemus is unable to sustain them. He only ever endured through his certainty that he could remake the world into what he desired, and by rejecting his whole ideology on a planetary scale, the party has completely sapped him of power.

A single blow can destroy him.

A New Dawn

Once the battle ends, the party's allies gather around them to cheer, weep for those who fell, and tend to those who survived. In the midst of their interactions, a beam of sunlight shines above the mountains at the edge of the valley and illuminates the forest on the far side. Within minutes, night is pushed away for the first time in months by the sunrise. Just what the world it shines upon looks like depends on the party's choices, but here on Axis Island, the air is crisp and the sky clear.

(And if the party pissed off Pemberton, now's when he attacks.)



ACT THREE:
How to Deliver a Denouement

Take a smoke break and get some dinner.

After all climax has concluded, we must unravel the tension, and either mourn or celebrate what the party's actions have wrought. We recommend a time jump of a few days or weeks. You can use the following scenes to imply how the world fares in the aftermath.

Any prominent NPC who survived, and who can reach this world (for instance, if the party didn't link to Av, Rock Rackus and the Unseen Court are stranded in the Gyre for eternity), should show up at least briefly. Consider what planes the PCs linked to, and choose a scene to at least slightly highlight the changes. Each scene might involve just one or two PCs, or the whole party.

Our descriptions assume the party got a happy ending and maintained a world with technology. If the world is bleaker or the party set themselves up as tyrants, change the tone of each scene as necessary. The dock opera could be a protest, and the Vekeshi unmasking could be an execution of dissidents. If the party chose a more pastoral world, the Government Issue scene could be retraining people in the use of bows or even domesticated falcons.

Docker—A Dock Opera

Prominent NPCs: Rock Rackus, Thames Grimsley, Glaucia Evora, Lady Beshela

Likely Plane of Interest: Water

On barges in Flint Harbor that were once a floating reformatory, a gaggle of dockers are decorating for an upcoming performance to remember those who died in the aftermath of the Great Eclipse. Thames Grimsley coordinates hundreds of vibrantly-dressed men and women, but his interest in the PCs is for one specific role: pall-bearers for an empty coffin.

The concert will be a memorial, and Grimsley wants at least two of the 'heroes of Risur' to help carry the coffin onto the stage, then place it on a pedestal high at the rear of the stage. It will serve as a focus for the more somber songs, which will be performed by musicians from all throughout Flint and even some foreign countries. But the plan is for the concert to switch to a more celebratory, uplifting tone, and at the night's end the coffin will be set adrift, to be carried away with the tide, inspiring the whole city to think of the whole wide world.

Thames would also love any docker PCs to perform, especially if they have any words to commemorate Rock Rackus, who has not been seen since before the Great Eclipse. (Even if the party linked to Av, the fate of Rock is unknown.)

During the discussion, the gnoll Glaucia Evora briefly interrupts and thanks the party for how the conditions for workers in Parity Lake have improved. She suggests they meet some time about establishing a branch of the Executores dola Liberta here in Flint, but admits that she is sincerely interested to experience Risuri musical culture.

Jump forward to that evening, as ships float all around the lashed-together barges that make up the stage. Thames personally rows a longboat while the PCs and other pall-bearers—lit by spotlights (chemical, magical, perhaps even electrical) hold the empty casket. (If they check, yes, it's empty.) A druid on stage sings a traditional funeral song, and as the ship reaches the barge and PCs carry the casket onto the stage, she reaches the end of the song. People watching from dozens of anchored boats cheer.



LADY BESHELA

Then, as the PCs near the pedestal where the casket should lie, it shudders in their hand. A muffled voice comes from inside the box, urgent, and one of the other pallbearers panics and



ROCK RACKUS

lets go of the coffin. The crowd gasps in shock, and the spotlights fixate on the casket. Its lid flies off and white fog pours out.

From the fog rises a skeletal hand, and then the woman it belongs to pulls herself out and pirouettes as she lands on the stage. It is a dancer from the plane of Iratha Ket, her bones painted and her clothes colorful and somehow curvaceous despite her lack of flesh. Then she reaches back into the casket and helps out Lady Beshela, who emerges gracefully and nods to the PCs. Then Beshela extends a hand to help a third person out of the coffin.

A gold pistol, encrusted with diamonds, rises out of the fog, and Beshela grabs the barrel and yanks, pulling up Rock Rackus. The audience screams in disbelief as Rock climbs from the casket (completely stealing attention away from those who died, like the asshole celebrity he is).

"I've got a long story to tell you," he says, as music begins to play out of nowhere, "but I think you know where it starts."

He breaks into his famous song – *I Had a Threeway* – about how he got into trouble for having two lovers at once. The crowd sings along, while Beshela and the skeleton spin and dance around him. Occasionally he'll break into normal speech to explain that Risur and the Dreaming are his two lovers now, and he hopes they can be together forever.

He finishes to thunderous applause, and while his fans cheer he leans in close to the PCs and says he's got a dungeon he'd like to go plundering with them some time. Lady Beshela can fill them in on what she knows about the status of the fey of Av, and just where the Dreaming and the Bleak Gate have gone off to.

Thames's elaborately-planned event devolves into an impromptu jam session as Rock cheers on or duets with all the other performers, encourages the PCs to sing, and occasionally drops songs about how he escaped the Gyre and found his way back home, to the city and the people he loves. As the concert comes to a close, he announces that he's running for Governor.

Out in the dark of the night, a deep ululation sounds — the approval of the fey titan, She Who Writhes. With that, Rock and Beshela dive into the sea and are carried away on an immense wave.

Eschatologist — Group Portrait

Prominent NPCs: Captain Smith
Likely Plane of Interest: Time

Captain Rutger Smith knocks at the door of one of the PCs. With him is **Bartholomew Pryce**, editor of the newspaper *Pryce of Progress*. Together they invite the PC and the rest of the 'heroes of Flint' to this week's meeting of the Flint Society of Eschatologists. Smith doesn't expect a speech or anything, but he says that Pryce has been experimenting with the new field of photography, and they would like to record a picture of the party for posterity. Even if they can't all come, Smith hopes that there might be some event coming up where all the heroes will be together at once.

He admits, it might seem a little strange for eschatologists, who are supposed to be paying attention to how things will end in the future, to care about recording events that have already happened. But Smith explains that as he sees it, endings only matter in context, and as we prepare for the end, those who survive us should be able to remember us, both our faces and the lessons we learned.



CAPTAIN RUTGER SMITH

You might have the party just meet up with the club and take a photo, or save the commemoration for some other gathering, such as the Medals and Prizes scene.

Gunsmith — Government-Issue

Prominent NPCs: Stover Delft, Kaja Stewart
Likely Plane of Interest: Earth

A shooting range has been set up in a courtyard outside the RHC Headquarters in Flint. Stover Delft guides one or more PCs in to meet a half-dozen new recruits. Kaja Stewart, under the watchful eye of elite Risuri soldiers clad in black gentleman's suits and tophats, is clearly delighted as she instructs the recruits. She twirls a pair of firearms by their trigger guards and explains the specifications of the newest technology. Any innovations a PC gunsmith came up with are now standard issue for constables (but only for mundane technology, not the blaster powers of a Mad Shootist).

Upon seeing the PCs, Kaja grows serious and admits that she was once in a gunfight against the party, but because she was taken prisoner she had a second chance, and was able to reform and help Risur. That's why it's important, she jokes, to hit your enemies in their kneecaps.

One of the recruits raises his hand and asks if that's how Chief Inspector Delft got his limp.

After that, Delft uses Kaja so he can show the recruits how to place mage-cuffs on a suspect. He laments that the ribbon of gold in the cuffs probably needs to be removed, now that it doesn't block teleportation anymore (unless the party kept Urim). He's about to move on to a tour of the underground cells, but another recruit asks if they can test their marksmanship against the PCs.

If they'll indulge the recruits, Delft shouts to a secretary to bring out the 'good silver,' and a minute later she returns with a bundle full of knives, swords, and machetes that once belonged to Lorcan Kell. He walks out 70 feet from the firing line where wooden targets have been set up, and then he stabs the weapons through the back of the targets so they poke forward. With a grin he spits some chewing tobacco on the front of the target and smears it to make a rough angry face with two eyes and a down-turned mouth.

"The late Duke of Slaughter," he says with a bow.

His prop completed, he gets back to safety and lets the crew bond over blowing away the famous scoundrel.

Martial Scientists—The Body is Missing

Prominent NPCs: Lauryn Cyneburg, Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen
Likely Plane of Interest: Space

The PCs are escorted by Battalion trainees into a damp and somewhat moldy basement in the military base. Gas lamps flicker along the walls, each placed near a sign that reads "Special Clearance Required For Entry." Guards stand at attention in front of several doors and salute as the PCs pass.

As they near the end of the hallway, one of their escorts will confess to a martial scientist PC that he's read their thesis, and thinks it should be standard training for all Battalion recruits.

At the end of the hall the door opens to reveal Minister of Infiltration Lauryn Cyneburg and Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen. Inside the room, bright lamps illuminate an autopsy table, now empty, but stained with purple blood. A chalkboard on the wall hosts a diagram of some alien monster. (I'm thinking slaad, but pick what works for you.)

Lauryn informs the PCs that the monster was found by roving diviners working for the Battalion, and after they killed it with an excess of bullets, its body was brought here and the doctor was brought in for his expertise. Dr. von Recklinghausen cut it open, tested its organs for magic potentiality, and saw no sign that the thing was capable of walking its way out of the facility. But when he came this morning, the body was missing. Guards were stationed here the whole time, and no one reported seeing it leave.

To be clear, Lauryn says, the thing isn't a Gidim, and it isn't from any plane they're aware of. She wonders if the party saw anything like it in the Gyre. Then she offers her opinion that, honestly, she would have kinda liked the pirate plane. She thinks she'd look dashing with an eyepatch.

Back to business, though, she says the more worrying development is that the same time this disappeared, secret research about the psychic vulnerabilities of the Gidim went missing. She asks whether they should notify the S.C.P. division of the RHC, or try to resolve this themselves.

Skyseer—Telescope in the Clouds

Prominent NPCs: Hana "Gale" Soliogn, Heward Sechim
Likely Plane of Interest: Air

Followers of the late and beloved skyseer Nevard Sechim have called a meeting with civic and business leaders to discuss a proper commemoration. For promotional reasons the meeting occurs on the roof of **Heward Sechim**'s factory in Parity Lake, beginning about an hour before sunset (giving you an opportunity to showcase what the industrial sector of the city looks like today).

Heward Sechim has asked for the respectable influence of the PCs to help arbitrate the dispute. Gale leads the contingent of skyseers, and as a stunt she has created a column of clear air directly above the factory, so that the blue sky overhead contrasts with the smoke covering the rest of the district. The skyseers are requesting that the factories must develop a way to capture their smoke and keep it out of the air, which the factory owners balk at as unworkable.

Gale argues that since the heavens have changed, the work of the skyseers is now more important than ever, so that the people of Risur can best understand their place in the multiverse. One factory owner, **Boothman Drumpf**, scoffs and says that what the people of Risur want is a return to normalcy, with no more magic or prophecies. He's tempted to just burn extra coal in spite, to drive the skyseers out of Flint.

The PCs might be able to broker something, but at some point – either as a concession or as an extra demand – Gale says that the skyseers want to lay claim to Cauldron Hill. Since its peak is often above the clouds, they'd like to build a telescope observatory, paid for by a new 'clear sky' tax on industries that produce smoke and other ill vapors.

As the meeting winds down, the sun begins to descend in the new west, which has the unfortunate effect of revealing that, y'know, the pollution kinda makes for a beautiful sunset.



HEWARD SECHIM

Spirit Medium—A New Underworld

Prominent NPCs: Morgan Cippiano
Likely Plane of Interest: Death

One or more PCs are invited to attend the funeral of a murdered young girl named **Nilana** in Stray River, a reminder that sorrows still exist in the new world. It's a traditionally Crisillyiri affair, though the liturgy is somewhat self-conscious since the memories of the god trials are still fresh. A spirit medium in attendance might spot the departed girl's ghost lingering, depending on the nature of how people die in this new world.

After the ceremony ends, Morgan Cippiano meets the PC on the veranda. He hopes there'll be an offer to find justice for Nilana, but in any event he wants to discuss how he and his family can help keep order. As long as there's anger, jealousy, suffering, and desperation, people are going to commit crimes, and there should be some structure to the criminal underworld, so that even the criminals have a code they won't violate.

Morgan admits, after all he's been through, he doesn't want to keep corralling finger-breakers and smugglers, but he also can't just turn over his people to the law, or else he'll lose their trust. He asks if perhaps one of the PCs would consider joining the Family and becoming involved in its affairs. After all, the party has plenty of experience with conspiracies. If it sweetens the deal, he can introduce them to a quite talented tailor.

Whatever the PCs decide, Morgan pours them all a glass a wine and toasts their good health.

Technologist — Borne Again

Prominent NPCs: Borne, Benedict Pemberton, Kasvarina Varal
Likely Plane of Interest: Fire

This scene can go a lot of ways. At the outskirts of Flint – perhaps out in the Ayres where there won't be as many gawkers – the colossus Borne sits on an island. Or what remains of him. If he survived, he has come to Flint so that he might transfer his consciousness into a smaller golem body, and that his titanic form might be disassembled so it can never be used as a weapon. If he was destroyed, his remains have been brought here to salvage.

Kasvarina Varal, if friendly and alive, wants to cooperate with Benedict Pemberton to craft Borne a new form — mechanical still, but capable of feeling like a real person. She cannot have children (or at least, believes she cannot), and Borne is her son. Alternately, if Borne is dead, Kasvarina wishes to have his remains disposed of respectfully.

In either case, Pemberton is eager to get his hands on the secret innards of the colossus, but he puts on a very convincing show of lamenting the situation and the suffering of poor, innocent Borne. And the Risuri military, of course, does not want a private citizen – especially not a dragon – to get access to such powerful technology. **Colonel Schneider**, who corresponds with industrialists in Parity Lake, is red-faced and apoplectic at Pemberton's casual mention of his plans to ship Borne's remains to Ber.

A technologist PC can moderate the situation, and perhaps help devise a new body for the colossus. Or Borne might be convinced to keep his body for a time, long enough to assist in some major earth-works projects. Or, best yet, a Steamsuit Pilot might give Borne a Medium-sized body of his own, then learn to pilot the colossus. Most of the people of Risur would be wary of this outcome, however.

Vekeshi Mystic — Unmasking

Prominent NPCs: Damata Griento, Athrylla Valanar
Likely Plane of Interest: Life

The Old Stag wants to rehabilitate the image of the Vekeshi Mystics. In a public event in Dawn Square, publicized in the local papers days in advance, a dozen members of the Vekeshi Mystics come out in their ornate ceremonial robes and masks. In front of a crowd of several hundred, they reveal themselves one by one (see the Vekeshi Mystics player handout in Act One for names), explaining that they sought positions in society where they could be a force to help the common man without resorting to violence.

The PCs have been asked to witness, and help prevent violence, since the Vekeshi are viewed as terrorists and murderers. A Vekeshi PC would also be asked to unmask himself, but this is voluntary.

The local police are on hand, and they intend to arrest the unmasked mystics so they can go to trial. But after the Old Stag has revealed himself, the crowd is surprised when a half-orc bounds onto stage. Damata Griento, who has been hobnobbing with railroad builders in Risur, says that he sympathizes with these masked men and women.

He explains that during the Great Eclipse, when his nation of Ber was in peril and its leaders were taking the wrong course, he too put on a mask. He too fought and hurt law enforcement officers who were doing their duties, and once even killed an agent of the Obscurati. Today everyone sees the Ob as the villains, and so his actions are viewed as noble, not criminal. But he wants the people of Risur to consider the intentions of the Vekeshi. They acted not in self interest, but to fight back against forces they felt were a threat to innocents.

The police pull him off stage, and an officer shouts that the gathering is over. Damata is carted away with the mystics. Depending on how you want things to play out, they might go peacefully to face a fair justice system, or Damata – with the aid of Sor Daeron – could break the mystics out of their prisoner wagons and spirit them away to Ber.

Yerasol Veteran — Medals and Prizes

Prominent NPCs: Lord Inspector Nigel Price-Hill, Harkover Lee, Stover Delft
Likely Plane of Interest: This one.

The monarch of Risur and a couple of other PCs ride in a carriage with Lord Inspector Nigel Price-Hill and Principal Minister Harkover Lee. Harkover is just concluding a briefing about meeting the new…he pauses at the amusing word… "president" of Danor. The tone depends on how well Danor fared, though it's likely the nation is suffering from a Second Malice because of the millions who placed their faith in Nicodemus and died for it.

The Lord Inspector turns to a 'more serious' topic, as a joke. He insists that the peak of Cauldron Hill be used as the site for a monument to the monarch and those who saved the world. He knows it will upset the skyseers who want their telescope, but he'd rather the city's most prominent landmark not be controlled by a religious cult full of secrets.

Before the conversation goes too long, the carriage approaches the sound of cheering and music. Looking out the window, the PCs can see crowds gathered on the bridge to the Royal Shipyard. The assembled citizenry of Flint sing a stirring rendition of the Risuri national anthem, and then the carriage stops at the royal docks. Any other PCs who weren't in the carriage are already present, along with Stover Delft.

Delft welcomes them, and turns to present the new flagship, ready for launch, the *R.N.S.*… we'll let you name it. But it's probably an airship.

Delft then gestures to a stage on the docks ahead, where a crowd of dignitaries await. He runs through the names of three constables – **Erik Freund**, **Cynthia du Emorie**, and **Laureen Zell** – who will be receiving medals for cracking the case of an extraplanar monster that was lurking in the sewers under Parity Lake. They'll be coming aboard for the maiden voyage of the new vessel. Hopefully no royal siblings will be along for the ride this time.

If someone desires, let a PC give a speech to the crowd, giving the campaign its final word. Then a bottle of champagne is brought forth, and the monarch smashes it against the hull, launching the ship for a first voyage in this new age.



ZEITGEIST Adventure Path

Appendices

APPENDIX A: Combat Catalogue

Herein find nearly all the combat stats of these adventures. We present them in order of the scene they likely appear. Refer to the chart below if you need to find their stats to use them in a different encounter. Entries marked with asterisks are enemies whose stats occur in the main body text and are not repeated here. We include a page reference for the sake of completeness.

(Why did we put those stats in the main text, and not in the appendix? We're not sure. But it'd be too much of a hassle to change now.)

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The Fey Titans

Adventure 10

Titan Traits

All fey titans have the following abilities, unless otherwise noted.

Traits

▸ **Epic Resilience**

Mundane weapons shatter on its hide.

Attacks from nonmagical weapons deal no damage to the titan.

▸ **Ferocity**

Despite devastating mortal wounds, it still has strength to keep fighting.

The titan remains conscious and fighting even when below 0 hp. It is dazed, its regeneration stops working, and it must make death saving throws each round. It only dies once it fails three death saving throws.

▸ **Fey Link**

The titan exists simultaneously in the real world and the Dreaming, and can see and affect both worlds. It is vaguely aware of any large-scale actions occurring within an area it deems its native terrain (generally, this is forests, mountains, swamps, plains, or seas); it could sense a massive mining operation, but not a handful of burrowing creatures.

When in its native terrain it can transport creatures it can see between the real world and the Dreaming. It can only affect unwilling creatures if those creatures have contested its authority and been defeated.

When a fey titan is killed, its animating spirit dissipates into its native terrain, and in the following years new creatures will be empowered by that energy. It might take centuries, but eventually one creature will defeat all contenders and consume their energy, becoming the new fey titan of that area.

▸ **Hurl Foe**

You're strong enough for the hit not to kill you, but you're not big enough to keep it from sending you flying.

As a free action once on each of its turn, when the titan damages a Huge or smaller foe with a melee attack it may make a secondary attack.

Secondary Attack: +34 vs. Fortitude.

Hit: The target is pushed 4 squares, plus 1 square for every 5 points the attack beat the target's defense. The target falls prone.

▸ **Titanic**

Normal difficult terrain does not impede the titan. A Huge or smaller creature can move through its space, and vice-versa. The titan can make attacks of opportunity only against foes that are Huge or larger, and can be flanked only by Huge or larger foes.

It's possible for a Huge or smaller creature to climb the titan (Athletics DC 30), and unlike the normal rules about fey titan and attacks of opportunity, a Small or larger creature that climbs on a fey titan's body provokes an attack of opportunity from the monster.

▸ **Indomitable**

Regardless of what conditions are affecting a fey titan, it can always take at least one standard action and one move action on its turn, and its speed cannot be reduced below half its base speed unless it is restrained. (If it is dazed or stunned, it still loses its minor action, grants combat advantage, and cannot take immediate or opportunity actions.)

The Ash Wolf — Level 31 Solo Skirmisher

Gargantuan fey magical beast — **XP** 115,000

HP 726; **Bloodied** 363 — **Initiative** +29

AC 45, Fortitude 43, Reflex 43, Will 43 — **Perception** +30

Speed 20 — Darkvision, true sight, scent

Resist fire 30; **Immune** fear

Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Unseen, Unstoppable**

The Ash Wolf leaves no tracks. Even if it smashes into trees in a hunt, once it departs the tree shows no sign of having been disturbed.

Additionally, effects that would slow the Ash Wolf reduce its speed by 5, and those that would immobilize it reduce its speed by 10.

▸ **Pack Bond**

The eyes of four of the wolves flicker with inner fire, like some greater power possesses them.

The Ash Wolf can share the senses of any of his children within one mile, and he can bestow some of his power to up to four smoldering wolves at a time. As a free action once per round he can switch which four wolves he grants this power to. (Typically he withdraws his boon from bloodied wolves so they can retreat.)

A wolf given this power gains a +10 bonus to defenses and attack rolls. However, any damage dealt to them deals an equal amount of damage to the Ash Wolf.

Standard Actions

✓ **Bite** ✦ At-Will, Basic

His jaws crush with the force of a falling tree.

Attack: Melee 4 (one creature); +36 vs. AC

Hit: 10d8+100 damage, and the target is knocked prone and grabbed (Escape DC 33).

On a critical hit the target takes ongoing 10 damage and must make a saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the target loses a limb of its choice.

✲ **Hurl Tree** (weapon) ✦ At-Will

Out from the distant smoke there comes a heavy crack like a house collapsing. Then a huge shape flies toward you—an entire tree, still aflame.

Attack: Area burst 8 within 80 (creatures in burst); +34 vs. AC

Hit: 5d8+50 damage, and the target is knocked prone and restrained (Escape DC 28).

While restrained, the target takes ongoing 10 fire damage.

Miss: Half damage and the target is not knocked prone or restrained.

Effect: The area becomes difficult terrain.

▸ **Hunting Surge** ✦ Recharge 4 5 6

Unseen in the inferno he howls, louder than the roaring forest fire, and despite the oppressive heat you feel a chill of primordial dread in your veins. Then he's upon you, sprinting faster than any creature of his titanic size should move.

Effect: The Ash Wolf moves 60 squares and uses *bite* at any point during that movement.

Minor Actions

✲ **Firestorm** (fire) ✦ Encounter

A vortex like a tornado spirals up from the forest fire, then arcs and falls upon you, unleashing a firestorm.

Attack: Area burst 4 within 80 (enemies in burst); +34 vs. Reflex

Hit: 5d8+50 fire damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Effect: The area becomes a zone until the end of the encounter. Creatures that enter or end their turn in the zone take 20 fire damage.

Lignify Arms and Armor ✦ Encounter

A chorus of howls rises up from all directions, but they have a rhythm, like an arcane chant. Suddenly your weapons and armor begin to transform from metal to wood.

Attack: Area burst 4 within 80 (creatures in burst); +34 vs. Will

Hit: Metal weapons or armor possessed by the target are transformed to wood. Weapons affected this way impose a -2 penalty to attack and damage rolls. Armor affected this way reduces the wearer's AC by 2. There may be other effects, at the DM's discretion.

Special: A creature can spend a minor action to make an Arcana check (DC 28). On a success, he restores to normal any affected items within 2 squares.

Triggered Actions

Smoky Mate

He bays mournfully, slinking back momentarily. Then another massive wolf appears at the edge of the forest fire. But this one is composed only of smoke and ash.

Trigger: The Ash Wolf is first bloodied.

Effect (No Action): All negative effects affecting the Ash Wolf end, he can stand up and shift 2 squares, and he gains an action point.

The spirit of the Ash Wolf's long-dead mate appears with 20 squares. She has 363 hit points, a fly speed of 16 (hover), and is insubstantial. Cold and force effects damage her normally. She does not have the Pack Bond ability, and cannot grab or trip creatures. Otherwise her stats are identical to the Ash Wolf. She has 1 action point.

Str 48 (+34) **Dex** 38 (+29) **Wis** 30 (+25)
Con 34 (+27) **Int** 15 (+17) **Cha** 24 (+27)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial



Smoldering Wolf Level 21 Goon Skirmisher
Large fey magical beast **XP** 1,600

HP 60; **Bloodied** 30 **Initiative** +16
AC 35, **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 32 **Perception** +20
Speed 10 Low-light vision, scent
Resist fire 20; **Vulnerable** cold damage suppresses the wolf's *choking smoke* or *inferno* aura until the end of its next turn

Traits

Choking Smoke ✦ Aura 2

A haze of smoke clings to the wolf and presses itself into your lungs.

If the wolf is not bloodied, smoke grants concealment in the aura. Creatures that end their turn in the aura must make an Endurance check (DC 20) or else be dazed until the end of their next turn. Smoldering wolves and their father the Ash Wolf are unaffected by both the concealment and the choking hazard.

Inferno ✦ Aura 3

The wounded wolf is wreathed in intense flames.

If the wolf is bloodied, creatures that enter the aura or end their turn there take 20 fire damage.

Pack Hunter

The wolves don't all strike at once. One bobs forward to goad a reaction, and the others lunge as you're distracted.

If two or more smoldering wolves have the same enemy within their reach, that creature grants combat advantage to them. A creature that is within the reach of one smoldering wolf cannot make opportunity attacks against another smoldering wolf.

Standard Actions

Burning Bite ✦ At-Will, Basic

Flames ignite around his mouth as he bites you. Then he pulls and twists his head to yank you off your feet.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +26 vs. AC

Hit: 25 damage, and the target gains 10 ongoing fire damage (save ends) and is knocked prone.

Triggered Actions

Raging Burster ✦ Encounter

It howls in pain, and an inferno erupts from its body, burning away the smoke.

Trigger: The smoldering wolf is first bloodied.

Effect (No Action): The smoldering wolf loses its *choking smoke* aura, and gains its *inferno* aura.

Str 32 (+21) **Dex** 22 (+16) **Wis** 20 (+15)
Con 20 (+15) **Int** 7 (+8) **Cha** 14 (+12)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial

The Father of Thunder Level 31 Solo Artillery
Gargantuan fey magical beast **XP** 115,000

HP 1,089; **HP Threshold I** 726; **HP Threshold II** 363 **Initiative** +14
AC 43, **Fortitude** 45, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 43 **Perception** +30
Speed 30 Darkvision, true sight
Resist lightning 30; **Immune** fear
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 1

Traits

Herd Crush ✦ Aura 264

A herd of hoofed beasts surround the Father of Thunder in a quarter-mile radius.

When the herd is in motion, any hostile creature in the area that the fey titan is aware of takes 10 damage at the start of its turn. Herd animals such as horses are unharmed.

A creature unable to keep up (such as if it is knocked prone) takes 40 damage and must succeed an Athletics check (DC 28) to stand up. (It generally takes 4 rounds of trampling for the herd to move past an immobile creature.)

Note that in this encounter, the Great Hunt's assistance prevents the party from taking damage as long as they remain mounted.

Rumble and Bleat

The entire battlefield moves with the fey titan.

To represent the mobile herd and battle, place the Father of Thunder in the middle of a battle map. Each mounted combatant can direct his or her steed to adjust his position relative to the titan by up to 6 squares by spending a move action.

On his own turn the Father of Thunder can adjust 6 squares as a move action. Additionally, three times per round, after a foe completes his or her turn, the fey titan can adjust himself 2 squares without spending an action.

Creatures who fall prone generally fall behind by 30 squares per round. If the Father of Thunder falls prone himself, all of this movement and adjustment stops until he can stand back up again.

▸ **Susceptible to Booze**

It would take a lake of liquor, but a drunk Father of Thunder is easier to manage. Getting him that drunk gives him a -5 penalty to his attack rolls and defenses.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Stamp** ✦ At-Will, Basic

His hooves create craters deep enough to bury a man.

Special: This attack cannot originate from the Father of Thunder's front face (i.e., he can stomp people under him or to his back or sides, but not in front of his face).

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +36 vs. AC

Hit: 2d12+25 damage, and the target must either move two squares in any direction or be knocked prone.

⊘ **Gore** (lightning) ✦ At-Will, Basic

His horns call down rumbling bolts of lightning.

Special: This attack must originate from the Father of Thunder's front face.

Attack: Melee 4 (one creature); +36 vs. AC

Hit: 4d12+50 damage. On a critical hit, the target takes an additional 75 lightning damage and is stunned until the end of the Father of Thunder's next turn.

▸ **Tromping Attack** ✦ At-Will

Best not wander beneath him, or be hurled above him.

Effect: The Father of Thunder uses *gore* once and *stomp* twice in any order, and can divide up 6 squares of movement before, during, and after the attacks.



Minor Actions

⊘ **Stormy Presence** (lightning) ✦ At-Will, Basic, 1/round

Lightning constantly strikes around the Father of Thunder. Normally it lands harmlessly, but when a creature angers the fey titan the lightning expresses his displeasure.

Requirement: This attack cannot target a creature directly under the Father of Thunder. He cannot use this power if he is not under an open sky.

Attack: Ranged 264 (one creature); +34 vs. Reflex

Hit: 3d6+20 lightning damage, and the target is driven to the ground if flying.

Special: The Father of Thunder can use this attack as an immediate interrupt to target a creature that uses a power against him that attacks Will, or when a creature tries to engage him in conversation. He can even target a creature that contacts him with magic such as *sending*, regardless of range.

This power does no damage to horned, hoofed creatures, such as deer, cows, and minotaurs.

⇜ **Sound and Fury** (thunder) ✦ Encounter

He roars and tears loose the sod, grass, and rocks beneath your feet.

Special: This attack's area must originate from the Father of Thunder's front face.

Attack: Close blast 10 (enemies in burst); +34 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d12+25 thunder damage, and the target is pushed 10 squares and deafened (save ends).

Triggered Actions

▸ **Toppled Quake**

He stumbles at the latest injury, and when he hits the ground the earth tears apart.

Trigger: The Father of Thunder is first reduced to HP Threshold I.

Effect (No Action): The fey titan falls prone. All negative effects affecting him end and he gains an action point.

The landscape within 264 squares buckles, creating chasms ranging from twenty to fifty feet wide.

For the following four rounds, unless the Father of Thunder is unable to move or a character manages to steer the herd somehow, each round the fey titan guides the herd through one of these hazards).

- ✦ *Small Chasm*. Each rider must succeed a Dexterity or Charisma check (DC 23) to coax their steed to jump. Failed checks mean the steed balks and swerves, causing the rider to fall back 12 squares relative to the Father of Thunder.
- ✦ *Vast Chasm*. Each rider must succeed a Dexterity or Charisma check (DC 28). Forgoing the check means the steed falls back 24 squares. Attempting and failing results in a 100-ft. fall into a chasm. This removes a huge amount of the herd, halving the damage to those caught in the *herd crush* aura.

▸ **Stubborn Tornado**

He turns about and slams his hooves, too angry at you to keep running. Intense wind picks up what remains of his herd, and bleating cows begin to spiral through the air as a tornado takes form around him.

Trigger: The Father of Thunder is first reduced to HP Threshold II.

Effect (No Action): All negative effects affecting him end and he gains an action point. A tornado forms in an aura 20 around him, following him as he moves. Ranged weapon attacks in the zone are impossible. Large or smaller creatures must succeed a Strength check (DC 23) at the start of their turn or be pulled 5 squares toward the titan and are knocked prone. Those who end their turn adjacent to him are picked up by the tornado and swirled around (save ends). Those creatures take ongoing 30 damage.

Str	48 (+34)	**Dex**	8 (+14)	**Wis**	30 (+25)
Con	46 (+33)	**Int**	10 (+15)	**Cha**	40 (+30)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial

Granny Allswell Level 31 Solo Controller
Gargantuan fey humanoid **XP** 115,000
HP 1050; **Bloodied** 525 **Initiative** +19
AC 45, **Fortitude** 43, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 45 **Perception** +30
Speed 12 Darkvision, true sight
Resist psychic 10; **Immune** fear
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 2

Traits

▸ **Evilest Eyes**
Her eyes twist and glare in different directions.

At initiative count 10 before her main initiative, and again at 10 after, Granny Allswell can use one of her evil eye powers – *No More Tricksy* and *Not So Impressive Now*. She can use these powers even if dazed, stunned, or otherwise unable to take actions. Hower, she still only use each power once per round, and so probably won't be using them on her own turn.

Once a creature is missed by or saves against one of Granny's eyes, that eye's power cannot affect it for 24 hours.

If Granny would be blinded, she instead loses the ability to use one of her evil eye powers (attacker's choice). If she's blinded by a second effect while the first is still active, she is fully blinded.

▸ **Gremlin Granny**
The gathered gremlins swarm you.

At any time Granny Allswell can control up to nine gangs of gremlins, born out of the mountain and powered by her life force. Damage dealt to them deals an equal amount of damage to the Granny (though if a single effect damages multiple gangs, damage is only transferred once). They act on her turn.

See stats for these gremlins below.

▸ **Scattered Spellbooks**

Granny has hundreds of old scrolls and spellbooks in various states of disrepair, scattered throughout the Anthras Mountains. Give her a couple days and she can get access to any ritual written in the last two thousand years.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Eerily Long Limbs** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Her arms seem infinitely long as she swipes a claw at you.
Attack: Melee 12 (one creature); +34 vs. AC
Hit: 2d20+10 damage.

✓ **Steal Prowess** ✦ At-Will
She smacks you, then puts her hand to her mouth like she's eating a morsel.
Effect: Granny uses *eerily long limbs*. If the attack hits, on the target's next turn any time it uses a power, Granny gains access to that power until she uses *steal prowess* again.

✓ **Curse** ✦ At-Will
Her voice rises to a screech as he calls down a curse upon you.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +34 vs. Will
Hit: The target is affected by one of the following attacks of Granny's choice.

- ✦ *Stoneshape.* The target moves its speed in a direction Granny chooses. Then Granny creates a 5-square long, 2-square high wall of stone adjacent to the target. The wall has 20 hit points per square.
- ✦ *Maze.* The target is forced into a demiplane that resembles a labyrinthine mine. The creature can use move actions to make Intelligence checks (DC 25). On a success, it find an exit back to the real world, emerging in the space it previously occupied. Other clever methods of escape might work, such as *stoneshaping* an exit.
- ✦ *Hostile Juxtaposition.* Granny and the target are dimensionally linked (save ends). While linked, whenever she's targeted by an attack, as an immediate interrupt she can make the target teleport to her space, and then she teleports to the target's space. This ends the link. The swap can be thwarted if the target is somewhere too small for her to teleport to.
- ✦ *Charm.* The target is dominated (save ends).

▸ **Confusing Attack** ✦ At-Will
Effect: Granny chooses one of the following combinations:
She uses a power she has stolen, then uses *eerily long limbs* and *steal prowess*; or
She uses *eerily long limbs* and *steal prowess*, and then uses *curse*.

Minor Actions

✓ **No More Tricksy** ✦ At-Will, 1/round
Granny cocks her left evil eye at you. "You play fair now," she admonishes.
Attack: Ranged unlimited (one creature she can see); +34 vs. Will
Hit: The target is mundane (save ends). While mundane it is limited in many ways to only things a normal person could accomplish without magic. Its speed cannot be higher than 6 squares, it cannot have any alternate movement modes, and it cannot use powers above 1st level.

✓ **Not So Impressive Now** ✦ At-Will, 1/round
She aims her right eye at you and makes a mock expression of sympathy. "Awww, does widdle hero want to cwy now?"
Attack: Ranged unlimited (one creature she can see); +34 vs. Will
Hit: The target is unlucky (save ends). While unlucky, whenever the target would roll a d20, it instead rolls a d6. If it fails to break free of the hex on its next turn, it can start rolling d8s. If it still fails the next round, it can roll d12s. The hex automatically ends after affecting the target for 3 rounds.

▸ **Hordeling Outburst** ✦ At-Will, 1/round
Effect: If Granny has fewer than nine gremlin gangs, a gang burrows up out of the ground or emerges from a tunnel at least 30 feet from the nearest hostile creature. It acts immediately after Granny's turn.

Str 48 (+34) **Dex** 18 (+19) **Wis** 30 (+25)
Con 44 (+32) **Int** 30 (+25) **Cha** 24 (+22)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Primordial, Common, Draconic, Giant, Goblin, Orc



Gremlin Gang
Large fey humanoid (swarm)

HP 30; Bloodied 15 — **Initiative** n/a
AC 40, **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 39, **Will** 37 — **Perception** +15
Speed 6, burrow 2 — Darkvision
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks
Vulnerable 10 close and area attacks

Standard Actions

⊘ **Slam** ✦ At-Will, Basic
The gang covers you and tears at you from all directions.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage.

✓ **Steal** ✦ At-Will
Twenty pickpockets are too many to avoid.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +34 vs. Reflex
Hit: The gang steals every unattended item the character is carrying or has in a pack (basically everything not held or worn, including spell components). On a critical hit, the target's defenses are lowered by 5 as the gang removes armor and magical items.

Corrupted Earth Spirit — Level 21 Goon Soldier
Huge elemental magical beast (earth) — **XP** 1,800

HP 76; **Bloodied** 38 — **Initiative** +8
AC 37, **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 32 — **Perception** +8
Speed 5 (earth glide), burrow 5 — Tremorsense 10

Traits

▸ **Brittle Skin**
Whenever the elemental takes thunder damage, it takes a -2 penalty to all defenses until the end of its next turn.

▸ **Wasting Strikes**
Pits and holes dot the stony skin of this elemental, and where its limbs strike, earth and metal begin to crumble away.
Whenever the earth spirit misses with a slam attack, one square of the target's space becomes a 5-ft. deep pit. Additional misses deepen the pit. The earth spirit's attacks do double damage to other earth creatures.

▸ **Royal Servants**
Long ago, these elementals were infused with gold from the royal treasury and compelled to serve the monarch. The gold is now gone, and they seem quite bitter about the ordeal.
A character can take a fistful of gold from the royal treasury (or from among the shinies lying on the floor of the cave) and shove it into one of the pits in the earth spirit's skin. This requires a successful grab. Thereafter, the earth spirit becomes loyal to the PCs.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Slam** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +26 vs. AC
Hit: 15 damage, and the target cannot shift until the end of the elemental's next turn.

✓ **Slam Volley** ✦ At-Will
Effect: The earth spirit uses *slam* twice.

Str	30 (+20)	**Dex**	6 (+8)	**Wis**	6 (+8)
Con	20 (+15)	**Int**	5 (+7)	**Cha**	8 (+9)

Alignment Evil — **Languages** understands Primordial

She Who Writhes — Level 31 Solo Controller
Gargantuan fey magical beast — **XP** 115,000

HP 1050; **Bloodied** 525 — **Initiative** +19
AC 45, **Fortitude** 43, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 45 — **Perception** +30
Speed 12 — Darkvision, true sight
Resist psychic 10; **Immune** fear
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 2

Traits

▸ **Interior Cavity**
The interior cavity of She Who Writhes is roughly twenty-five feet in diameter, with a glowing female figure in the middle.
Creatures inside are targeted by her carnal impulse power at the start of each of their turns.
A creature in the interior cavity can try to cut its way out. Any attack automatically hits, and once 50 damage is dealt an opening is created which lasts until the end of the creature's next turn.
Alternately, the glowing figure can be attacked (Defenses 30, 50 hit points). If destroyed, She Who Writhes can no longer target creatures inside her with *carnal impulse*. However, she begins to flood that area with digestive juices. Creatures who remain in the cavity take ongoing 30 acid damage.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Local Tendril** ✦ At-Will, Basic
A twenty-foot long tentacle detaches from her flesh and tries to ensnare you.
Attack: Melee 4 (one creature); +36 vs. AC
Hit: 1d12+10 damage and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 33). If the target was already grabbed, it is pulled into the interior cavity of She Who Writhes.

✲ **Titanic Tentacle** ✦ At-Will
One of her massive tentacles, huge enough to crush a warship, swings toward you.
Attack: Area burst 2 within 32 (creatures in burst); +31 vs. AC
Hit: 4d12+40 damage, and She Who Writhes slides the target 6 squares. All targets hit by this attack must be slid in roughly the same direction.

✓ **Bite** ✦ At-Will
You shouldn't have let yourself fall down next to her beaked mouth. You think you can see something glowing inside her, like there's a whole chamber in there.
Attack: Melee 2 (creature near her beak); +31 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12+20 damage, plus ongoing 20 damage, and the target is pulled into the interior cavity.

▸ **Writhing Defense** ✦ At-Will
Effect: She Who Writhes uses *local tendril* three times, then uses *titanic tentacle* and *bite*.

✧ **Deadly Ululation** (psychic, thunder) ✦ Encounter
She goes suddenly still, and a low trill shakes the air. The pitch rises, and is met by dissonant vibrations from the water. Some unheard vibration twitches your eyes in their sockets, pulses the blood in your veins. Hallucinations of grasping hands press in from your peripheral vision. Voices of everyone you've ever known whisper for you to join them beneath the sea. Keening wails spiral above and below inaudibly deep rumbles, until your ears begin to bleed and you would gladly die so you no longer need to listen to this madness.
Attack: Close burst 8, centered on her mouth (enemies in burst); +34 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 100 thunder damage and 50 psychic damage, and the target is deafened (save ends) and knocked prone.
Miss: Half damage.
Special: Creatures already deafened take no thunder damage from this attack.

Minor Actions

Carnal Impulse (charm) ✦ At-Will, 1/round

You feel fingers caress your skin, arms clutch your body and hold them tight to an invisible lover. Your skin dews with eager sweat as some strange compulsion pulls you toward the titan's mouth.

Attack: Close burst 1 (one creature on She Who Writhes's body); +34 vs. Will

Hit: The target is enticed to writhe with the titan (save ends). Before taking any other actions each turn, the creature must spend a move action to move toward the mouth of She Who Writhes and then enter her.

If the target is already inside the interior cavity of She Who Writhes, it instead dominated and must fight any allies who are also in the interior. If there are no hostile creatures present, She Who Writhes instead compels the creature to strip naked.

Str 48 (+34) **Dex** 38 (+29) **Wis** 14 (+17)
Con 46 (+33) **Int** 15 (+17) **Cha** 30 (+25)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial, telepathy

Asrabey Varal, Archfey of Obedience

Level 25 Elite Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid (eladrin) **XP** 15000

HP 552; **Bloodied** 226 **Initiative** +19
AC 39, **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 39, **Will** 37 **Perception** +14
Speed 8 Low-light Vision
Resist 10 fire, 10 psychic
Immune dominated, immobilized, restrained, slowed
Saving Throws +2, +7 vs. Charm; **Action Points** 1

Traits

Bonded to the Titan

Asrabey can walk on any part of She Who Writhes at normal speed without needing to make an Acrobatics or Athletics check. She also grants him immunity to the dominated, immobilized, restrained, and slow conditions.

Dreadnought

At an initiative count of his normal initiative +10, Asrabey can move his speed and use *compelling strike* as a free action. If he is unable to take free actions, such as if he is dazed or stunned, he instead ends that condition.

Ghost Touch

Asrabey's attacks deal full damage to insubstantial creatures.

Standard Actions

Compelling Strike (weapon, fire) ✦ At-Will, Basic

He wields a sword of shifting fire. The flame spirals around your soul like a tendril, compelling you to act against your will.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +30 vs. AC

Hit: 2d10+25 fire damage, and make a secondary attack.

Secondary Attack: Melee 1 (primary target); +30 vs. Will

Hit: The target is dominated until the end of Asrabey's next turn.

Fire Sweep (weapon, fire) ✦ Encounter

He swings his blazing sword in a massive arc.

Attack: Close burst 4 or close blast 6 (creatures in burst/blast); +30 vs. AC

Hit: 3d10+10 fire damage.

Grasping Flame Barrier (fire) ✦ Encounter

As he swipes his blade, a line of fire slices across the ground. The flames quickly grow into a wall of burning tendrils that reach out for you.

Effect: Asrabey creates a wall 10 of dim fire, starting with a space adjacent to him. Until the beginning of Asrabey's next turn the fire is harmless. Thereafter the fire grows into a wall of burning tendrils, which last until the end of the encounter. When any creature that enters the wall or starts its turn there, make the following attack.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +28 vs. Reflex

Hit: 40 fire damage and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 33).

Miss: 20 fire damage.



Minor Actions

Cloak of Tentacles ✦ Encounter

Attack: Close burst 4 (creature in burst); +28 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target is grabbed until the end of Asrabey's turn. He can move at full speed this turn while grabbing any number of creature, and at the end of his movement can slide each grabbed creature 3 squares.

Lion Shield (weapon) ✦ Recharge when shield returns

His wooden, lion-faced shield roars as it flies from his arm.

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +30 vs. AC

Hit: 2d10+10 damage and the target is restrained (Escape DC 33). Until the target escapes or falls unconscious, it takes 10 damage at the start of its turn.

Effect: Asrabey's AC and Reflex are reduced by 2. When the target escapes or dies, the shield returns to Asrabey's hand. He can also recall the shield as a free action on his turn.

Str 33 (+23) **Dex** 23 (+18) **Wis** 14 (+14)
Con 17 (+15) **Int** 13 (+13) **Cha** 16 (+15)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Beshela, Archfey of the Sea

Level 20 Controller
Medium fey humanoid **XP** 2800

HP 186; **Bloodied** 93 **Initiative** +16
AC 34, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 30 **Perception** +12
Speed 6, swim 10
Resist acid 10, poison 10; **Vulnerable** 10 fire

Traits

Ripplesense

With every step you slosh water, and she appears preternaturally aware of every ripple that touches her skin.

Beshela perfectly knows the location of any creature within half a mile if there is a contiguous path of water between its space and hers.

Standard Actions

Splash ✦ At-Will, Basic

She's splashing water at you? That's not so ba-. Oh, and now it's a massive arm of water smashing you in the chest.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 3d12 damage and Beshela slides the target 5 squares.

Whirlpool ✦ At-Will

Effect: Beshela uses *splash* against each adjacent enemy. It's super effective.

Summon the Kraken! (summoning) ✦ Encounter

With a sweep of her hand, a massive tidal wave crashes across the landscape, leaving everything flooded knee deep. Somehow out of this shallow water, a massive tentacle made of seaweed emerges and attacks.

Attack: Close burst 500 (creatures in burst); +23 vs. Fortitude

Hit: Beshela slides the target 5 squares and knocks it prone.

Effect: Until the end of the encounter, water floods a quarter-mile radius area to a depth of two feet, though it may quickly flow away based on terrain. Beshela ignores the difficult terrain of the deep water.

Beshela summons two kraken tentacles within 10 squares. They are large creatures, and each has her defenses and 40 hit points. If a tentacle is ever entirely out of the water, it is destroyed.

Insatiable Thirst (charm, psychic) ✦ At-Will

Deadly thirst dries your mouth, cracks your skin. You are gripped by an irresistible need to drink.

Attack: Ranged 10 (one living creature); +23 vs. Will

Hit: The creature takes 10 psychic damage and suffers from insatiable thirst (save ends). Each round it must drink something before it can take any other actions. Usually this entails first spending a move action to get down on its knees near ground water, or a minor action to draw a flask or potion, followed by a minor action to actually drink.

Move Actions

Fey Dive ✦ At-Will

She disappears into water too shallow for anyone to hide, then splashes out behind you.

Effect: Beshela teleports from one area covered in water to another area covered in water within 10 squares, as long as there is a contiguous path of water between the two spaces.

Minor Actions

Kraken Tentacle Strike ✦ At-Will

One of the tentacles thrashes, coils around you, and begins to squeeze.

Effect: One of Beshela's summoned tentacles moves 4 squares, though it can only enter areas covered in water. Then it makes the following attack.

Attack: Melee 3; +25 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+5 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 25). While it is grabbed it takes ongoing 10 damage.

Special: Beshela can only use this power once per tentacle per round.



Triggered Action

Corrosive Tempest (acid) ✦ Encounter

She touches the bleeding wound, then screams. Her eyes glow brilliant indigo, and the sky overhead roils. Clouds gather in the span of a breath, and black rain begins to fall.

Trigger: Beshela is first bloodied.

Effect (No Action): Beshela gains an aura 500 of acid rain until the end of the encounter. Any creature that ends its turn without some sort of cover from the rain takes 5 acid damage.

Str	26 (+18)	**Dex**	22 (+16)	**Wis**	14 (+12)
Con	20 (+15)	**Int**	15 (+12)	**Cha**	26 (+18)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven, Primordial

Danor's Assault

Adventure 10

Porteur Assault

Porteur du Mort Alchemist	Level 22 Goon Controller (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid (human)	**XP** 2075
HP 60; **Bloodied** 30	**Initiative** +9
AC 27, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 27	**Perception** +13
Speed 5	

Traits

Explosive Munitions

The alchemist hauls a mortar and a backpack of volatile chemicals and explosives.

If the alchemist takes 30 or more fire damage from a single source, or if it is reduced to 0 hit points by fire damage, it explodes in Close burst 2 (creatures in burst).

Attack: +24 vs. Reflex.

Hit: 30 damage.

Miss: 15 damage.

Inspired by the Grand Design

After years of faith in Danor, this soldier has learned the truth of his nation's secrets, and it has removed all doubt from him. He does not flinch when he or his allies fall.

Whenever a member of the Porteurs du Mort is reduced to 0 hit points, one of his allies who saw his defeat gains an inspiration. That soldier can expend his inspiration to reroll any d20 and take the better result.

Standard Actions

Short Sword (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +26 vs. AC

Hit: 18 damage.

Alchemical Grenade (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

He chucks a metal dodecahedron at you, its vertices flashing red with firegems.

Special: The alchemist throws a grenade at a spot within 10 squares and makes a saving throw. If he fails, the grenade lands off by 1 square in a random direction. If the target square is 6 or more squares away, he takes a -2 penalty to his attack roll, and the grenade misses by 2 squares on a failed save.

The alchemist can throw either acid or madness grenades.

Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +26 vs. AC

Hit: 26 damage.

Miss: 13 damage.

Effect: Acid grenades create a zone in the area that deals 10 acid damage to creatures who enter or end their turn there. Madness grenades create a zone that cause creatures who enter or end their turn there to move 6 squares in a random direction as their next action.

▶ **Technological Infusion** ✦ At-Will (1/encounter each)

He pulls out a multilimbed contraption the size of a fist and throws it at a creature. It lands, scampers a few feet, and then injects the target with some strange infusion.

Effect: The alchemist chooses one of the following effects, and one ally within 6 squares gains them.

✦ *Dispelling Panacea.* All positive and negative conditions affecting the target end if their duration is until the end of the encounter or shorter.

✦ *Elemental Body.* The target becomes large and its body transforms into a physical manifestation of the energy type of his or her choice – acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder. The target becomes immune to that energy type, and his attacks deal an extra 5 damage of that type until the end of the encounter.

✦ *Heroism.* The target grants combat advantage, but its speed increases by 4, and it does not die if reduced to 0 hit points. Instead, if at 0 hit points it makes a saving throw each round, and only dies once it has failed three such saves.

Minor Action

▶ **Communal Stoneskin** ✦ Encounter

The alchemist cracks a glass rod filled with chemicals. Tiny brooches on each of his allies' collars begin to glow, and their skin takes on a stony grit.

Effect: The alchemist and ally his allies within 6 squares gain resist 20 all against the next attack that targets each of them.

Str 10 (+11) **Dex** 20 (+16) **Wis** 14 (+13)
Con 14 (+13) **Int** 16 (+14) **Cha** 8 (+10)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial
Equipment shortsword, 5 grenades, mortar, ordnance

Porteur du Mort Revelation Murderer

Level 22 Goon Brute
Medium natural humanoid (tiefling) **XP** 2075

HP 74; **Bloodied** 37 **Initiative** +14
AC 36, **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 33 **Perception** +17
Speed 6 Low-light Vision

Traits

▶ **Inspired by the Grand Design**

After years of faith in Danor, this soldier has learned the truth of his nation's secrets, and it has removed all doubt from him. He does not flinch when he or his allies fall.

Whenever a member of the Porteurs du Mort is reduced to 0 hit points, one of his allies who saw his defeat gains an inspiration. That soldier can expend his inspiration to reroll any d20 and take the better result.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Coordinated Longsword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +27 vs. AC

Hit: 25 damage, or 35 damage if the target is granting combat advantage.

Minor Actions

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

Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +21 vs. AC

Hit: 15 damage, or 20 on a critical hit.

Load standard.

▶ **Dark Clouds** ✦ Encounter

Effect: An area burst 3 within 20 becomes a zone of total darkness until the end of the encounter.

Triggered Actions

▶ **Grasping Infernal Wrath** (fire) ✦ Encounter

The tiefling's eyes flare with fire, and a spiral of smoke rises from a crack in the earth, grabs you, and holds you.

Trigger: A creature within 10 squares hits the murderer.

Effect (No Action): The triggering creature takes 15 fire damage and is restrained (Escape DC 28). Any cold damage dealt to the creature or the smoke holding him frees him.

Str 10 (+11) **Dex** 20 (+16) **Wis** 14 (+13)
Con 14 (+13) **Int** 12 (+12) **Cha** 8 (+10)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial
Equipment longsword, pistol, mithral breastplate

Porteur du Mort Revelation Sniper

Level 22 Goon Artillery
Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP** 2075

HP 64; **Bloodied** 32 **Initiative** +16
AC 34, **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 33 **Perception** +23
Speed 6

Traits

▶ **Inspired by the Grand Design**

After years of faith in Danor, this soldier has learned the truth of his nation's secrets, and it has removed all doubt from him. He does not flinch when he or his allies fall.

Whenever a member of the Porteurs du Mort is reduced to 0 hit points, one of his allies who saw his defeat gains an inspiration. That soldier can expend his inspiration to reroll any d20 and take the better result.

Standard Actions

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

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC

Hit: 30 damage.

⊘ **Rifle** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Ranged 25/50 (one creature); +21 vs. AC

Hit: 25 damage, or 40 on a critical hit.

Load minor.

Move Action

▶ **Adaptive Ammo** ✦ At-Will

In the middle of reloading, the sniper whispers a spell, and his bullet begins to glow.

Effect: The sniper reloads his rifle and chooses one of the following effects for the next time he fires it.

Acid Grinder. The shot deals an extra 20 acid damage and ongoing 10 acid damage (save ends).

Chillflame. The shot deals an extra 20 cold and fire damage.

Electromagnetic. The shot deals an extra 5 lightning damage. If the target is wearing metal armor he is dazed until the end of the sniper's next turn.

Lander. The target is knocked prone, and is slowed and cannot fly (save ends).

Skills Perception +23, Stealth +21

Str 10 (+11) **Dex** 20 (+16) **Wis** 14 (+13)
Con 14 (+13) **Int** 12 (+12) **Cha** 8 (+10)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial
Equipment rapier, rifle

La Lux du Raison

Danoran Frigate Crew Level 24 Soldier
Gargantuan natural humanoid (human, swarm) **XP** 3200

HP 200; **Bloodied** 100 **Initiative** +14
AC 38, **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 34 **Perception** +12
Speed 4
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks
Vulnerable 15 against close and area attacks

Traits

▸ **Colossal Unit**

The company consists of two hundred soldiers working in tandem, filling a space roughly 8 squares by 8 squares. The unit needs only fill 64 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual could move through.

When the company is bloodied, it is dazed. When reduced to 0 hit points, the surviving soldiers flee or surrender.

▸ **Terrain Control**

Spaces within 2 squares of the company count as difficult terrain for enemies. The company has threatening reach in that area.

Standard Actions

Bayonet Swarm (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Effect: Make the following attack against any number of targets within range. If used as an opportunity attack, only target the triggering creature.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +29 vs. AC

Hit: 3d8+20 damage. If the target was hit by an opportunity attack, its movement stops.

Rifle Fusillade (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Effect: Make the following attack four times. The areas cannot overlap.

Attack: Area burst 1 within 30 (creatures in burst); +29 vs. AC

Hit: 3d8+10 damage, or 3d8+30 damage on a crit.

Load standard.

Minor Actions

▸ **Embedded Spellcasters** ✦ At-Will 1/round

A handful of mages in the crew cast spells to support the soldiers.

Effect: The frigate crew creates one of the following effects.

Silent Image. An illusion fills 20 contiguous squares within 20 squares, lasting until the end of the encounter.

Magic Missiles. The crew launches four missiles, which deal deal 5 force damage to a creature within 20 squares.

Divine and Illuminate. The mages detect any creatures that are within 20 squares, even if hidden or invisible. Those targets are limned with faerie fire, making their location clear, though they might remain invisible.

Elemental Ward. The crew chooses an energy type and gains resist 20 against it until the end of its next turn.

Str 13 (+13) **Dex** 12 (+13) **Wis** 10 (+12)
Con 11 (+12) **Int** 10 (+12) **Cha** 10 (+12)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common

Obscurati Master Builder Level 24 Controller
Medium natural humanoid (half-elf) **XP** 6050

HP 140; **Bloodied** 70 **Initiative** +14
AC 33, **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 33 **Perception** +20
Speed 6 Low-light Vision

Traits

▸ **Build As You Go**

The master builder can walk anywhere, and the ground rises to support him. This effectively gives him a fly speed of 6, through he cannot go higher than 6 squares off the ground (or horizontally away from a solid surface), nor can he ascend at more than a 45-degree angle. As he leaves a space, the ground behind him returns to its normal elevation.

Standard Actions

Transmutable Prison ✦ At-Will

He sweeps his hand and creates a cage of stone and steel from the ground beside him. A moment later acid begins to burble from the walls.

Attack: Close burst 1 (one creature in burst); +27 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target is caught inside a cage of stone and steel (Escape DC 40). The cage has 50 hit points. While in the cage, the target takes ongoing 20 acid damage.

Polar Ray (cold) ✦ At-Will

A blast of ice crosses the battlefield, then remains, hovering like an impossibly-long glaive.

Attack: Ranged 20; +29 vs. AC

Hit: 3d6+20 cold damage.

Effect: The original target's space becomes a zone until the end of the master builder's next turn. During that time he can repeat the attack against any creature that provokes an opportunity attack in or adjacent to the zone.

Minor Actions

Diverse Pits ✦ At-Will, 1/round

The ground opens beneath you.

Effect: A pit opens up beneath the target's feet, filled with fire, roiling beetles, or blinding light.

Attack: Area burst 1 within 20; +27 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target falls 20 feet into a pit and takes 2d10 damage. While in the pit, it has ongoing 10 fire, necrotic, or radiant damage (depending on the contents of the pit). The pit walls are smooth (Athletics DC 20), and creatures in the pit cannot teleport out.

Miss: The target shifts 1 square to a space adjacent to the pit.

Swift Fireball (fire) ✦ Encounter

He casually flicks a seed of flame a hundred feet, and he doesn't even look when it explodes.

Attack: Area burst 3 within 20; +27 vs. Reflex

Hit: 3d6+20 fire damage.

Miss: Half damage.

▸ **Stoneshape** ✦ At-Will, 1/round

He controls the stone to create a wall or bridge.

Effect: The master builder creates a stone object that fills up to 4 contiguous squares, and which must be adjacent to an equally large body of stone.

Str 9 (+11) **Dex** 14 (+14) **Wis** 12 (+13)
Con 16 (+15) **Int** 19 (+18) **Cha** 12 (+13)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven



Sovereign Han Jierre	Level 30 Elite Artillery (Leader)
Large natural humanoid (tiefling)	**XP** 38,000
HP 522; **Bloodied** 261	**Initiative** +17
AC 44, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 42	**Perception** +13
Speed 6, fly 12	Darkvision
Immune slowed, immobilized	
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	

Traits

▸ **Gestalt Commander**

"How much trouble do you imagine you'll have trying to defeat the Obscurati?" he asks. "I can imagine a lot."

If an effect would daze, dominate, or stun Han, he can transfer that condition to any ally he's aware of within 50 squares.

Standard Actions

✓ **Thundercrack** (weapon) ✦ At-Will

"You're relics of the past age," he says. "You belong in a museum." He makes a gesture like he's cracking a whip, and the whole army around him fires.

Effect: If Han has at least 8 allied creatures with rifles within 50 squares, he chooses a target and makes the following attack eight times. The shots originate from all around, but trace range as if from him.

Attack: Ranged 25/50 (one creature); +25 vs. AC

Hit: 1d10+5 damage.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Infernal Wrath of the Jierre Bloodline** (fire) ✦ Recharge when first bloodied

When you strike him, he growls with defiance, "Get the hell off my boat." You burst into flame.

Trigger: A creature within 50 squares hits Han.

Effect (No Action): The triggering creature takes 4d6+10 fire damage and takes ongoing 30 fire damage (save ends). Han transfers all conditions affecting him to the target (including any conditions caused by the triggering attack).

Str	10 (+15)	**Dex**	12 (+16)	**Wis**	16 (+18)
Con	22 (+21)	**Int**	22 (+21)	**Cha**	26 (+23)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Elven, Infernal, Primordial

Blasting Away

Adventure 10

Obscurati Steam Walkers	Level 25 Skirmisher
Large natural animate	**XP** 7000
HP 204; **Bloodied** 102	**Initiative** +20
AC 39, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 35	**Perception** +18
Speed 10	
Resist 5 weapon attacks	

Traits

Piloted Vehicle

Normal weapons have trouble striking anything vulnerable, but the blast carries through cracks in the construct's carapace, and you hear a yelp of pain from inside.

Whenever the walker takes damage from an area or close attack, its pilot makes a saving throw (representing resisting the injury). If he has failed one such saving throw, the walker's speed is reduced by 2. If he has failed twice, the walker is dazed. After he fails three such saving throws, he falls unconscious and the walker goes inert.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Chain Sword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Its forearm extends a blade with grinding, serrated teeth. It swings with immense force and simply carves through the terrain.

Effect: This attack ignores cover and concealment.

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +30 vs. AC

Hit: 2d12+25 damage.

⊘ **Heavy Shotgun** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

A cover on its other arm opens, revealing a massive, double-barreled shotgun.

Effect: Make two attack rolls, and the attack hits if either is a success. If both hit at close range, the attack deals an extra 2d10 damage.

Attack: Ranged 6/12 (one creature); +30 vs. AC

Hit: 2d10+15 damage.

Minor Actions

▸ **Arcane Shield** ✦ At-Will, 1/round

A dome on its head flashes, and a faintly-visible aura extends twenty feet from it.

Effect: The pilot chooses an energy type. Until the end of its next turn, the steam walker and all allies within 4 squares gain resist 10 against that energy type.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Magnets, Bitch!** ✦ At-Will

Your metal weapon sticks to the suit's shell.

Trigger: A creature attacks the steam walker with a metal weapon.

Attack (Immediate Reaction): Area burst 2 (triggering creature in burst); +28 vs. Fortitude

Hit: The target is disarmed, and must succeed a Strength check (DC 30) while adjacent to the walker to retrieve the weapon.

Skills Arcana +16

Str	24 (+19)	**Dex**	23 (+18)	**Wis**	12 (+13)
Con	20 (+17)	**Int**	12 (+13)	**Cha**	12 (+13)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common

Obscurati Boarding Squad	Level 24 Minion Artillery
Large natural humanoid (human, swarm)	**XP** 1400
HP 1; see Large Unit below	**Initiative** +14
AC 38, **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 34	**Perception** +10
Speed 5	Low-light vision
Resist 10 necrotic; half damage from melee and ranged attacks	
Vulnerable 15 against close and area attacks	

Traits

▸ **Large Unit**

The squad consists of twelve soldiers working in tandem, filling the space of a Large creature. The unit needs only fill 4 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual could move through.

Any effect that deals at least 20 damage 'kills' the squad—wounding enough that the rest panic and disperse. Any lesser amount of damage bloodies the squad, or 'kills' it if it is already bloodied.

Standard Actions

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

Effect: The squad makes the following attack against up to four targets. If used as an opportunity attack, it only targets the triggering creature.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +29 vs. AC

Hit: 12 damage.

✲ **Rifle Fusillade** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Area burst 1 within 30 (creatures in burst); +29 vs. AC

Hit: 17 damage.

Load standard.

✲ **Concussive Grenades** (weapon) ✦ Encounter

The warriors drop into defensive positions as they hurl grenades, which explode with intense kinetic force.

Effect: The squad makes the following attack four times.

Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +29 vs. AC

Hit: 10 damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares away from the center of the area.

Str	13 (+13)	**Dex**	12 (+13)	**Wis**	10 (+12)
Con	11 (+12)	**Int**	10 (+12)	**Cha**	10 (+12)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Gidim Forces and Beran Allies

Adventure 11

While the Gidim have effectively unlimited police officer allies, they have relatively few infiltrators and warbeasts. If the party is clever and judiciously kills enemies then withdraws, they might leave the leviathan depleted of defenses.

Local forces include:

- **Ursaliñan Guard Squad (Level 23 Minion Brute).**
- **Ursaliñan Marksmen Squad (Level 23 Minion Artillery).**
- **Ursaliñan Lawmage Squad (Level 25 Minion Controller).**
- **Ursaliñan Lieutenant (Level 25 Minion Soldier).**

The Gidim also have the following resources.

- Eleven **fleshwarped direbears (Level 25 Goon Brute).** These stay in cells beneath Jaula de Oso.
- Five **flying horrors (Level 26 Goon Artillery).** Two typically patrol the inland borders around the city, and three the water routes. They remain invisible unless they attack.
- Seven **oculi (Level 26 Elite Controller).** There's always one at the executores lodge, Triuno Vida, Jaula de Oso, and Cadagyr estate, while the rest drift between the districts and the troughs, looking for trouble or occasionally stalking suspicious characters.
- Fifteen **shock troopers (Level 24 Goon Soldier)**, created in the leviathan under Triunfo Vida. If some troopers die, the Gidim can create another five in a day, but they only have area to keep fifteen active at a time.
- Twelve **infiltrators (Level 26 Lurker)**. Four of them manipulate Lord Cadagyr, one watches Pili Roque at the arena, and the other seven operate in the leviathan.
- **Overseer Lilore (Level 26 Elite Controller)**, who directs the political machinations in the city from Cadagyr manor.
- **Wayfarer Sijhen (Level 30 Solo Controller)**, who is in charge of the whole expedition but typically stays in the leviathan.

Ursaliña Forces

The average police officer in Ursaliña is an orc with some military training, though they recruit many bards and sponsor lavish contests with other cities to push their high-ranking officers to greatness.

Ursaliñan Guard Squad	Level 23 Minion Brute
Large natural humanoid (orc, swarm)	XP 1200
HP 1; see Large Unit below	**Initiative** +11
AC 35, Fortitude 35, Reflex 35, Will 35	**Perception** +13
Speed 5	Low-light vision

Traits

▸ **Psychically Guided**

There's a dozen of them, but oddly you can't shake the feeling that someone else is here, guiding them.

The squad is normally no match for the PCs, but they are influenced by Gidim energy, making them a modest threat. However, they can also be affected by thinking at them, just as if they were thoughtform creatures. See Thinking Aggressively, page 253.

▸ **Large Unit**

The guard squad consists of a dozen orcs working in tandem, filling the space of a Large creature. The unit needs only fill 4 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual orc could move through.

Any effect that deals at least 19 damage 'kills' the squad – wounding enough of the orcs that the rest panic and disperse. Any lesser amount of damage bloodies the squad, or 'kills' it if it is already bloodied.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Khopesh Cavalcade** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Effect: Make the following attack against up to three targets within range. If used as an opportunity attack, only target the triggering creature.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +28 vs. AC

Hit: 18 damage.

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

Attack: Area burst 1 within 12 (creatures in burst); +26 vs. Reflex

Hit: 17 damage, or 24 damage on a critical hit.

Miss: 7 damage.

Str	16 (+14)	**Dex**	10 (+11)	**Wis**	14 (+13)
Con	14 (+13)	**Int**	10 (+11)	**Cha**	8 (+10)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Draconic, Orc

Ursaliñan Marksmen Squad Level 23 Minion Artillery
Large natural humanoid (orc, swarm) XP 1200

HP 1; see Large Unit below **Initiative** +13
AC 37, **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 35 **Perception** +13
Speed 5 Low-light vision

Traits

▸ **Psychically Guided**

See Thinking Aggressively, page 253.

▸ **Large Unit**

The marksmen squad consists of a dozen orcs working in tandem, filling the space of a Large creature. The unit needs only fill 4 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual orc could move through.

Any effect that deals at least 19 damage 'kills' the squad – wounding enough of the orcs that the rest panic and disperse. Any lesser amount of damage bloodies the squad, or 'kills' it if it is already bloodied.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Defensive Cudgels** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Effect: Make the following attack against up to three targets within range. If used as an opportunity attack, only target the triggering creature.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +28 vs. AC

Hit: 12 damage, and the target cannot make opportunity attacks until the end of the Marksmen Squad's next turn.

⊘ **Musket Barrage** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Area burst 1 within 30 (creatures in burst); +28 vs. Reflex

Hit: 19 damage, or 27 damage on a critical hit.

Miss: 9 damage.

Str 12 (+12) **Dex** 14 (+13) **Wis** 14 (+13)
Con 14 (+13) **Int** 10 (+11) **Cha** 8 (+10)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Draconic, Orc



Ursaliñan Lawmage Level 25 Minion Controller
Large natural humanoid (orc, swarm) XP 1750

HP 1; see Large Unit below **Initiative** +12
AC 39, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 37 **Perception** +14
Speed 5 Low-light vision

Traits

▸ **Psychically Guided**

See Thinking Aggressively, page 253.

▸ **Large Unit**

The lawmage squad consists of a dozen orcs working in tandem, filling the space of a Large creature. The unit needs only fill 4 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual orc could move through.

Any effect that deals at least 20 damage 'kills' the squad – wounding enough of the orcs that the rest panic and disperse. Any lesser amount of damage bloodies the squad, or 'kills' it if it is already bloodied.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Subduing Cudgels** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Effect: Make the following attack against up to three targets within range. If used as an opportunity attack, only target the triggering creature.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +30 vs. AC

Hit: 16 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

⊘ **Group Hold** ✦ At-Will, Basic

The mages all chant and convince your body not to move.

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +28 vs. Will

Hit: The target is stunned until the end of the squad's next turn.

Miss: The target is dazed and immobilized until the end of the squad's next turn.

Minor Actions

▸ **Arcane Law Enforcement** ✦ At-Will (1/round)

Effect: The lawmage squad can magically create loud alarms, open or close doors from up to 10 squares away, or gain the ability to see invisible creatures until their next turn.

Str 12 (+12) **Dex** 10 (+12) **Wis** 14 (+14)
Con 14 (+13) **Int** 15 (+14) **Cha** 14 (+14)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Draconic, Orc

Ursaliñan Lieutenant Level 25 Minion Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (orc) **XP** 1750

HP 1; a missed attack never damages this minion **Initiative** +14
AC 41, **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 37 **Perception** +14
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Traits

▸ **Psychically Guided**

See Thinking Aggressively, page 253.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Living Steel Bastard Sword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Effect: Make the following attack against any number of targets within range. If used as an opportunity attack, only target the triggering creature.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +30 vs. AC

Hit: 16 damage, and the target cannot make opportunity attacks until the end of the Marksmen Squad's next turn.

▸ **Bardic Inspiration** ✦ Encounter

The lieutenant in charge belts out with a majestic tenor singing voice, urging his side to fight bravely.

Effect: The lieutenant and his allies who can hear him are bolstered until the end of the encounter. The first time a given bolstered creature would be reduced below 1 hp, it may make a save. If it succeeds, it instead stays at 1 hp.

Str 12 (+12) **Dex** 10 (+12) **Wis** 14 (+14)
Con 14 (+13) **Int** 15 (+14) **Cha** 18 (+16)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Draconic, Orc, Primordial

Gidim Warbeasts

Flying horrors resemble pale, mammoth-sized fleshy dragonflies, with sharp beaks at the tip of a nimble elephantine trunk on their head, and a tail that seems to consist of independent floating segments ending in a sharpened hammerhead stinger.

An oculus is a floating mass of gas-filled sacs from which hang pulsing multihued and faceted eyes, but normally is entirely invisible. A gentle exhale of air causes this horror to float above the ground, and the audible wheeze-groan are normally the only clue to its presence. It typically hovers twenty feet up, where its long tendrils can feel everything with a feather-light touch. Even creatures with the ability to see invisibility detect light bending and shimmering around it.

Fleshwarped direbears are grizzlies the size of a large shack. Their fur hides most of the mutations the Gidim have inflicted upon them, but in battle their necks stretch out a dozen feet, and they can squeeze through tight spaces like an ooze.

Shock troopers are created from humanoid stock, granted massive shaggy fur coats that contain intense electrical energy. They lumber about like apes, and are designed to sow confusion and distract foes so the Gidim can get into better position. Occasionally a shock trooper snaps out of his conditioning and turns against his masters, but they seldom last long against a pack of their fellow warbeasts.

GIDIM EQUIPMENT

Whatever event first spurred the Gidim to venture from their original home, it created mindcrafting: a process where raw materials are shaped into a desired form by pure thought. While the Gidim prefer more indirect methods of combat, their servitors highly prize the living steel weapons that are provided, grown from special vesicles within a Gidim colony.

Living Steel. This glossy green metal slowly repairs itself. An item made from living steel repairs damage over the course of 6 hours. Living steel weapons and armor can be wielded by and affect thoughtform creatures as if they were corporeal.

Thoughtlocks. Some Gidim structures are keyed only to allow Gidim entry, functioning like locks but requiring a proper twist of mind rather than a physical key. Each lock has a special mental pattern that can open it, but these can only be used by creatures capable of telepathy. Any other creature who touches the thoughtlock can make an Intelligence check (DC 20) to sense the psychic contours of its structure, and can then attempt to unlock it with a Bluff check (DC 30), representing an effect to outwit the lock's primitive but wary consciousness. Each attempt requires a standard action.

Oculus Prism. Formed in much the same what that Gidim weapons are crafted, an oculus prism allows select non-Gidim to pass as Gidim within strongholds or without alerting the various sentries employed within their bases and ships. Oculus prisms are not merely an item to be carried: these parasites graft themselves to a living host, subtly influencing their mental signature so that a Gidim oculus and various warbeasts will not view them as a threat, unless one attacks them. A DC 20 Heal check can safely remove an oculus prism, while implanting it merely requires 1 minute of time.

Fleshwarped Direbear — Level 25 Goon Brute
Large aberrant magical beast — **XP** 1600

HP 120; **Bloodied** 60 — **Initiative** +15
AC 37, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 37 — **Perception** +13
Speed 6

Traits

▸ **Weird Anatomy**
You hack into what should be bone, but just find throbbing tumors.
Critical hits just deal damage to the fleshwarped direbear as if it were a normal hit. The monster is immune to untyped ongoing damage.

▸ **Ohh, that's why the standard is a two-headed bear**
As it steps across the twitching body of a dying bear, the front half of the other beast's body detaches and wriggles into the flesh of the still-living one.
When a fleshwarped direbear is reduced to 0 hit points, keep track of where its body lies. Its body remains twitching for one minute, or until someone deals another 25 damage to it.

The first time another fleshwarped direbear moves adjacent to dying-but-not-quite-dead bear, it absorbs part of the dying bear's body. Thereafter, its reach for all its attacks increases by 1 square, and it gains a bonus use of *a thrashing, furry ball of death* at an initiative count 5 after its main initiative.

If it absorbs multiple bodies, increase its reach another square and add another use of that power at 10 after its main initiative, and so on with each additional body.

If a direbear that has absorbed multiple bodies is reduced to 0 hit points and another direbear moves next to its remains, the living bear absorbs all the bodies the previous bear had absorbed. It is thus possible for the party to end up facing a monster that makes thirty-six attacks per round.

Standard Actions

✓ **Tentacular Bear Claw** ✦ At-Will, Basic
The beast's foreleg reaches out farther than seems possible as it swipes at you.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +30 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage.

✓ **Flailing Maw** ✦ At-Will, Basic
The bear's head lunges outward from its body, as if its neck were a serpent.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +30 vs. AC
Hit: 20 damage.

✲ **Thrashing, Furry Ball of Death** ✦ At-Will
Effect: The direbear uses *tentacular bear claw* twice and *flailing maw* once.

Str	30 (+22)	**Dex**	17 (+15)	**Wis**	12 (+13)
Con	25 (+19)	**Int**	2 (+8)	**Cha**	6 (+10)

Alignment Unaligned

Flying Horror — Level 25 Goon Artillery
Huge aberrant magical beast — **XP** 4500

HP 98; **Bloodied** 49 — **Initiative** +13
AC 38, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 38 — **Perception** +13
Speed fly 14 (hover); teleport 5

Traits

▸ **Thoughtform**
See Thoughtform and Mind Over Matter, page 253.

▸ **Horrifying Presence**
The first time a creature sees a flying horror it is stunned (save ends). This effect immediately ends if the creature takes any damage.

▸ **Partial Invisibility**
The immense thing flickers and shifts, with only a few parts of its body ever visible at one time.
The flying horror always has concealment. It can spend a standard action to become fully invisible until the end of its next turn, or until it attacks.

THOUGHTFORM

Creatures native to the Gidim homeworld have the thoughtform trait.

Creatures with this trait are normally insubstantial and phasing. They take half damage from all attacks, except those that deal force or psychic damage. Also, they ignore difficult terrain and can move through obstacles and other creatures, but they must end their movement in an unoccupied space.

Intelligent Gidim (as opposed to their warbeasts) can choose to become corporeal at will. Most also have the ability to dominate a creature, and if a Gidim has a sufficiently intelligent person dominated, it can hide wholly within that creature's mind. If the creature dies or the domination ends, the Gidim reappears beside the creature's body.

THINKING AGGRESSIVELY

Under certain conditions, some thoughtform creatures will lose their thoughtform trait, and mental attacks can force them to be corporeal.

MIND OVER MATTER

It's just as you thought!

A character within 5 squares of a creature with Thoughtform can spend a minor action to try to influence the creature through its thoughts. The character makes an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma check with a +9 bonus and chooses to target Fortitude, Reflex, or Will. A character can only attempt this once per round. On a success, it has the following effect.

Fortitude. The creature loses insubstantial and phasing until the start of the character's next turn. If it's flying it must land or fall.

Reflex. The character can slide the creature 2 squares. This movement provokes opportunity attacks.

Will. The character cannot be perceived by the creature until the start of that character's next turn.

Standard Actions

Trunk and Poison Beak (poison) ✦ At-Will, Basic

An elephantine trunk smashes into you, led by a serrated beak tip that drips ichor.

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +30 vs. AC

Hit: 20 damage and the target is weakened and takes ongoing 15 poison damage (save ends both).

Ray of Light and Dark (necrotic, psychic, radiant) ✦ At-Will

The wings of the horror hum with energy, and then a pair of rays cut toward you, combining into a coruscating beam of light and darkness.

Attack: Ranged 200; +30 vs. Reflex

Hit: 20 necrotic and radiant damage, plus ongoing 15 psychic damage (save ends). While the target is taking this ongoing damage, the flying thing loses its insubstantial and phasing traits.

Sucking Wind ✦ Encounter

A peculiar sucking sensation grips you, and you feel as if the flying horror is the bottom of a deep well you are falling toward. The monster begins to flash with scintillating lights, and you struggle to look away.

Requirement: The horror must not have moved on its turn in order to use or sustain this power. If it moves, the effect ends.

Effect: The horror creates light in a 20 square radius.

Attack: Close burst 20; +28 vs. Fortitude

Hit: The target is slowed as long as it remains in the area. If it is already slowed, it is immobilized for as long as it is in the area. If it is already immobilized, it is lifted into the air and pulled 6 squares toward the horror.

Sustain standard: Repeat the attack, and expand the area by another 20 squares in each direction, to a maximum of 500 squares (about a half mile radius).

Str 37 (+25) **Dex** 13 (+13) **Wis** 10 (+12)
Con 22 (+18) **Int** 4 (+9) **Cha** 6 (+10)
Alignment Unaligned

Gidim Oculus Level 26 Elite Controller
Large aberrant magical beast **XP** 18000

HP 365; **Bloodied** 182 **Initiative** +18
AC 38, **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 38 **Perception** +23
Speed fly 8 (hover) Blindsight
Immune radiant
Saves +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

Thoughtform

See Thoughtform and Mind Over Matter, page 253.

Breathing Skin

Attacks that take the form of gases or poisons gain a +5 bonus to attack rolls against the oculus, and it takes a -5 penalty to saves against their effects. In areas of strong stench of unpleasant gas, the oculus is blinded and it loses its blindsight, refractive shield, and unearthly refraction abilities.

Refractive Shield

The oculus is perfectly invisible as it bends reality to warp light (and the occasional magic effect; see *unearthly refraction* below).

Sense Link ✦ Aura 8

There's a wheeze overhead, and then the eyes of your enemies glow briefly. They shift their stances slightly, as if they are suddenly more aware of the battlefield.

Creatures allied to the oculus in the aura share its senses, granting them near-perfect awareness of enemy locations. The only way to hide is behind physical cover relative to both the oculus and the other enemies.

Standard Actions

Tentacle ✦ At-Will, Basic

An unseen strand of something brushes your cheek. Before you can flick it away, an entire coil of wriggling tentacle has wrapped around you and lifted you off the ground.

Attack: Melee 4 (one creature); +31 vs. AC

Hit: 3d6+25 damage and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 29).

Drain Blood and Consume Eyeballs ✦ At-Will

Its tentacles press into your face. Ephemeral suckers slurp sinus fluids out of your eyes, and your vision turns red.

Effect: The oculus one of its grabs.

Attack: Melee 4 (one creature grabbed by the oculus); +29 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 3d6+25 damage and the target has an eye gouged out. It is dazed and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends both). Until the start of the oculus's next turn it loses insubstantial and phasing, as well as refractive shield and unearthly refraction. It learns everything the extracted eye has seen in the past three days.

Sample Collection ✦ At-Will

Effect: The oculus uses *tentacle* twice, or tentacle and *drain blood and consume eyeballs*.

Reassert ✦ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 10 (one Gidim shock trooper); +29 vs. Will

Hit: If the shock trooper has broken its conditioning, it is stunned until the end of the oculus's next turn, then is once again under the Gidim's control.

Minor Actions

▸ **Hallucinatory Terrain** ✦ Encounter

A flaccid breeze wafts past you, and reality changes.

Effect: The oculus creates illusory terrain in area burst 5 within 20. Typically it will create disturbing images, perilous pits, and solid walls that can funnel unwitting enemies. The oculus ignores its own illusions, and thus so do any allies sharing its senses.

▸ **Hallucinatory Foe** ✦ Encounter

How did this huge monster get behind you?

Effect: The oculus creates an illusory creature within 20 squares of itself. Attacks against the illusion automatically hit, and damage seems to have an appropriate effect, but the 'creature' cannot be destroyed. Whenever anyone interacts with the illusion (such as by hitting it with an attack), he can make an Insight check (DC 27) to realize that it is fake.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Unearthly Refraction** ✦ At-Will

Trigger: An enemy targets the oculus with an arcane, divine, elemental, primal, psychic, or shadow Ranged power.

Effect (Immediate Interrupt): Change the target from the oculus to another creature within the power's range. If no such target is available, the attack is negated.

Str 20 (+18) **Dex** 20 (+18) **Wis** 20 (+18)
Con 18 (+17) **Int** 11 (+13) **Cha** 8 (+12)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** telepathy

Gidim Shock Trooper — Level 24 Goon Skirmisher

Medium aberrant humanoid — **XP** 3025

HP 100; **Bloodied** 50 — **Initiative** +17
AC 38, **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 32 — **Perception** +13
Speed 8, climb 6
Resist lightning 20, thunder 20

Traits

▸ **Psychically Guided**

See Thinking Aggressively, page 253.

☼ **Crackling Cascade** (lightning) ✦ Aura 1

Tangled mats of hair flash with arcs of electricity all over this twisted humanoid creature's body.

Creatures that start their turn in the aura take 5 lightning damage. A creature that hits the shock trooper in melee with a metal weapon also takes 5 damage.

Whenever the shock trooper takes damage, the amount of damage this ability does increases by 5, to a maximum of 20. As the energy crescendos, its fur rises more and more on end.

▸ **Snap Out of It!**

Whenever an attack hits the shock trooper's Will defense, the creature breaks free of the Gidim psychic conditioning. It turns on its masters, and if it can spend an hour without coming into telepathic range of a Gidim oculus, it permanently regains control of its mind, though it may go mad nevertheless once it realizes what a freakish monster it has become.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Swipe** (lightning) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +29 vs. AC

Hit: 10 damage plus 5 lightning damage and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 28).

▸ **Abduct** ✦ At-Will

Effect: The shock trooper uses *swipe* twice against the same target, then moves its speed. If it has a creature grabbed, it pulls the creature along but only moves half speed.

⇜ **Roar** (thunder) ✦ At-Will, Basic

He draws in a deep breath, seemingly sucking in all the electricity that was arcing across his body. A glow manifests in his mouth, and the imminent roar will likely be devastating.

Effect: The shock trooper's *crackling cascade* is suppressed. At the beginning of its next turn, make the following attack as a free action, and then reactivate its *crackling cascade*.

Attack: Close blast 10 (creatures in burst); +27 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 50 thunder damage and the target is stunned until the shock trooper's next round and deafened (save ends).

Miss: 25 thunder damage.

Str 25 (+19) **Dex** 20 (+17) **Wis** 16 (+15)
Con 26 (+20) **Int** 7 (+10) **Cha** 8 (+11)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Giant, Orc

Gidim Invaders

These humanoid creatures spend most of their time in thoughtform, where their appearance shifts based on mood and intention. But generally Gidim have lanky bodies with four-digited limbs, four-eyed faces, and four sensory tendrils off the back of their heads. The colors of their flesh run the whole spectrum, but tend to blue, red, and purple.

Gidim Infiltrator — Level 26 Controller

Medium aberrant humanoid — **XP** 9000

HP 140; **Bloodied** 70 — **Initiative** +16
AC 38, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 40 — **Perception** +16
Speed 8

Traits

▸ **Thoughtform**

See Thoughtform and Mind Over Matter, page 253.

▸ **Sneak Attack**

The infiltrator does an extra 4d8 damage against creatures granting it combat advantage.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Living Steel Spiked Chain** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The chain weapon almost seems to spin around the Gidim in a ring, flying of its own accord until the creature twists its wrist and sends the weapon lashing out.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +31 vs. AC

Hit: 4d4+6 damage. The infiltrator may choose to let go of the weapon, rendering it unable to use this power. If it does, the target is slowed and takes ongoing 20 damage (save ends both) as the chain de-segments and attempts to burrow into the target's flesh. When the target saves, the chain moves back toward its wielder, traveling 12 squares per round.

✓ **Telekinesis** (force) ✦ At-Will

Suddenly you feel the world twist and throw you across the room. An unseen weight holds you in place.

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +31 vs. AC

Hit: 3d4+3 force damage and the infiltrator can slide the target 6 squares, even in defiance of gravity. The target is knocked prone and immobilized until the end of the infiltrator's next turn. The infiltrator can choose to immobilize a creature in mid-air if that's where it slid them.

Special: The infiltrator can also use this power to move unattended objects of up to 500 pounds up to 6 squares.

✓ **Infiltrate Thoughts** ✦ Encounter
Requirement: The Gidim must be invisible. Using this power does not cause it to become visible.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +29 vs. Will
Hit: The target is dominated until the end of the Gidim's next turn. The Gidim slowly can learn the target's secrets, at about the pace of a conversation.
Sustain standard. The domination continues until the end of the Gidim's next turn.

Minor Actions
✓ **Ego Whip** (psychic) ✦ At-Will (1/round)
The threat of pain appears in the most primitive part of your mind.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +29 vs. Will
Hit: 10 psychic damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the infiltrator's next turn. If the target attacks while it's dazed, it becomes stunned until the end of its next turn.
Miss: The target becomes immune to ego whip attacks until the end of the encounter.
Special: This power cannot deal sneak attack damage.

▸ **Vanish** ✦ At-Will (1/round)
Effect: The infiltrator becomes invisible until the end of its next turn, or until it attacks.

Str 16 (+16) **Dex** 16 (+16) **Wis** 16 (+16)
Con 20 (+18) **Int** 20 (+18) **Cha** 16 (+16)
Alignment Evil **Languages** telepathy
Equipment living steel breastplate, living steel spiked chain

Gidim Overseer
Level 26 Elite Controller (Leader)
Medium aberrant humanoid
XP 18000

HP 280; **Bloodied** 140 **Initiative** +16
AC 38, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 40 **Perception** +22
Speed 6
Saves +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits
▸ **Thoughtform**
See Thoughtform and Mind Over Matter, page 253.

Standard Actions
⊘ **Crosser's Claw** (teleportation) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The palm of its four-fingered hand is infinitely vast.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +31 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6+25 damage, and the target is teleported to a demiplane labyrinth within the overseer's mind. This psychic reality obeys dream logic, and so the character may attempt once each round as a minor action to escape, by making an Intelligence check (DC 29).

✓ **Superior Telekinesis** (force) ✦ At-Will
Attack: Ranged 20 (one, two, or three creatures); +31 vs. AC
Hit: 3d4+3 force damage and the overseer can slide the target 6 squares, even in defiance of gravity. The target is knocked prone and immobilized until the end of the overseer's next turn. The overseer can choose to immobilize a creature in mid-air if that's where it slid them.
Special: The overseer can also use this power to move unattended objects of up to 500 pounds up to 6 squares.

✲ **Telepathic Feedback** (psychic) ✦ Encounter
You've felt these things in your mind before, but now it's done something different. You can hear all the thoughts of your allies screaming at you
Attack: Close burst 10 (enemies in burst); +29 vs. Will
Hit: 3d6+25 psychic damage, and until the end of the encounter the target grants combat advantage and takes a penalty to attack rolls equal to how many of the target's allies the overseer can see, to a maximum of -5.

Minor Actions
▸ **Magic Missile** (force) ✦ At-Will (1/round)
He just stands still, thinking at you and conjuring undodgeable darts of force.
Effect: A magic missile strikes a target the overseer can see within 20 squares, dealing 5 force damage.

✓ **Ego Scourge** (psychic) ✦ At-Will (1/round)
The threat of pain appears in the most primitive part of your mind.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +29 vs. Will
Hit: 30 psychic damage, and the target moves its speed and makes a melee basic attack against a target of the overseer's choice. Thereafter the target is dazed until the end of the overseer's next turn. If the target attacks while it's dazed, it becomes stunned until the end of its next turn.
Miss: The target becomes immune to ego scourge attacks until the end of the encounter.

▸ **Vanish** ✦ At-Will (1/round)
Effect: The overseer becomes invisible until the end of its next turn, or until it attacks.

Str 6 (+11) **Dex** 16 (+16) **Wis** 18 (+17)
Con 20 (+18) **Int** 20 (+18) **Cha** 25 (+25)
Alignment Evil **Languages** telepathy

Wayfarer Sijhen
Level 30 Solo Controller
Medium aberrant humanoid
XP 95000

HP 840; **Threshold I** 560; **Threshold II** 280 **Initiative** +17
AC 44, **Fortitude** 40, **Reflex** 43, **Will** 42 **Perception** +21
Speed 9
Saves +5; **Action Point** 1

Traits
▸ **Thoughtform**
See Thoughtform and Mind Over Matter, page 253.

▸ **Gidim Boon**
Empowered by the sentient homeworld of the Gidim, Sijhen cannot be forced to teleport anywhere against its will and cannot be dominated. Additionally, it has resist 20 against weapons that have never traveled to another plane. (The Dreaming and the Bleak Gate count; this is mostly to make it so the party can't just send an army in to kill Sijhen.)

▸ **Eightfold Wayfarer**
On its turn, Sijhen can make two simultaneous move actions, moving its speed from the same original but ending in different locations. While split, Sijhen can make attacks and be targeted as if in either location. When attacked, if Sijhen is split it can choose to no longer be in the threatened location, and that copy of it vanishes. It can also have a copy disappear if it wants to create a new one.

The copies share one pool of hit points.

If an effect stuns, dazes, or otherwise disables one of the copies, that copy of Sijhen vanishes (as long as there is at least one left to be the *real* one).

When Sijhen splits, any conditions affecting a given copy stay with that copy, and the new copy is unaffected by any conditions.

On each of its turns, Sijhen can take a single standard action for each copy of itself. Initially, Sijhen can only have two copies active, but it gains access to more at HP Threshold I and II.

Standard Actions
⊘ **Grasp the Mind** (psychic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Sijhen glides forward, dodges your defense, and thrusts a semi-corporeal hand into your cranium.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: The target is dominated (save ends).
Aftereffect: When the target saves against this effect, it takes 3d8+25 psychic damage.
Special: Sijhen can only have one creature dominated at a time, regardless of how many copies there are of it. If it hits with this attack it can choose not to dominate the creature and just deal the aftereffect damage.



✓ **Grand Telekinesis** (force) ✦ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +31 vs. AC

Hit: 4d10+15 force damage and Sijhen can slide the target 8 squares, even in defiance of gravity. The target is knocked prone and immobilized until the end of the infiltrator's next turn. Sijhen can choose to immobilize a creature in mid-air if that's where it slid them.

Special: Sijhen can also use this power to move unattended objects of up to ten tons up to 6 squares.

✲ **Prismatic Whirlwind** (force, lightning, teleportation, thunder) ✦ At-Will

A synaesthetic whirlwind of blinding light and psychic screams surround Sijhen as it swipes its alien digits through the essence of your being. Somehow he's attacking the idea *of you, eroding your very existence.*

Special: Sijhen makes the following attack against each adjacent enemy, then compares the attack roll against the enemy's AC, Fortitude, Reflex, and Will defenses

Attack: Close burst 1 (enemies in burst); +33 vs. AC, Fortitude, Reflex, and Will

AC Hit: 3d8+25 damage.

Fortitude Hit: 5 thunder damage and the target is deafened until the end of Sijhen's next turn and knocked prone.

Reflex Hit. 5 lightning damage and the target is blinded until the end of Sijhen's next turn.

Will Hit: 5 force damage and Sijhen can teleport the target adjacent to any other copy of itself.

Move Actions

▸ **Jaunt** (teleportation) ✦ Encounter

Effect: Sijhen teleports 20 squares. If it has a creature dominated, it can teleport that creature 20 squares too.

Minor Actions

✓ **Ego Flay** (psychic) ✦ At-Will (1/round)

Sijhen's copies both converge on your consciousness, pulling your thoughts apart like two dogs tugging at a blanket.

Requirement: Two of Sijhen's copies must use this power on the same target. Make one attack for each copy targeting the enemy.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +33 vs. Will

Hit: 10 psychic damage, and the target is dazed until the end of Sijhen's next turn. If the target attacks while it's dazed, it becomes stunned until the end of its next turn.

If both attack rolls hit, in addition to the above effect the target must roll 1d6 at the start of each of its turns. On a 1, it is stunned until the start of its next turn. If it has already been flayed (i.e., hit by two copies using this power at once), increase the die threshold by 1. Each 'flaying' counts as a separate level 30 affliction.

If both attack rolls miss, the target is immune to *ego flay* attacks until the end of the encounter.

▸ **Vanish** ✦ At-Will (1/round)

Effect: Sijhen becomes invisible until the end of its next turn, or until it attacks.

Triggered Actions

▸?**Deconstruction** ✦ Encounter

The ancient Gidim wayfarer staggers, but then its body surges with energy, and you feel yourself in the presence of an entire world, watching this battle.

Trigger: Sijhen is reduced to 560 hp for the first time

Effect (No Action): Sijhen gains an action point and recharges *jaunt*. Sijhen is now able to have up to four copies active at once. It immediately produces one new copy from each of its existing selves, and each of those copies shifts 3 squares. Two of its copies use *ego flay* against a single target.

▸ **The Presence of the Homeworld** ✦ Encounter

Sijhen shakes off your latest hit, then replicates itself until a swarm of eight of it are active.

Trigger: Sijhen is reduced to 280 hp for the first time

Effect (No Action): Sijhen gains an action point and recharges *jaunt*. Sijhen is now able to have up to eight copies active at once. It immediately splits enough times for there to be eight copies. Each new copy shifts 3 squares, and then uses *prismatic whirlwind*.

Str	25 (+22)	**Dex**	24 (+22)	**Wis**	16 (+18)
Con	29 (+24)	**Int**	20 (+20)	**Cha**	22 (+21)

Alignment Evil **Languages** telepathy

Doomsday Army

Adventure 11

Grandis Komanov has a few hundred cultists, ten thousand soldiers, a half-dozen skeletal phalanxes, two hundred frost giants, the five Lost Riders, and a hivemind-generated blizzard that can produce effectively limitless blizzard elementals.

Soldiers, Cultists, and the Hivemind

Most of the warriors are no threat. A few experienced fighters might provide a speedbump, but typically the snipers will use covering fire to aid one of the Vsadni. The real danger comes from the massed units and the blizzard elementals that emerge from the hivemind storm that hovers above the army.

Doomsday Sniper	Level 21 Minion Artillery
Medium natural humanoid (dwarf)	**XP** 800
HP 1; a missed attack never damages this minion	**Initiative** +12
AC 33, **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 34	**Perception** +14
Speed 5	Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊘ **Suicidal Warhammer** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The dwarf belches a deep laugh as he throws himself onto you, seemingly with no concern for his life.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +26 vs. AC

Hit: 15 damage and the target is knocked prone.

Miss: The sniper falls prone and provokes an opportunity attack.

⊘ **Unholy Rifle** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

He has fashioned a humanoid skull around his rifle's barrel, using its nose hole as a sight.

Attack: Ranged 25/50 (one creature); +26 vs. AC

Hit: 15 damage, or 25 damage on a critical hit.

Load move.

▸ **Covering Fire** ✦ At-Will
Shots land around you, distracting you from another enemy's attack.
Effect: The sniper chooses an enemy it can see within 50 squares. The next time an ally would attack that creature before the end of the sniper's next turn, the ally gains +2 to its attack roll.

Str 10 (+10) **Dex** 14 (+12) **Wis** 12 (+11)
Con 14 (+12) **Int** 11 (+10) **Cha** 6 (+8)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarf

Doomsday Army Squad — Level 25 Goon Brute
Huge natural humanoid (dwarf, swarm) — **XP** 3500

HP 110; **Bloodied** 55 — **Initiative** +12
AC 37, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 36 — **Perception** +13
Speed 5 — Low-light vision

Traits
▸ **Huge Unit**
The doomsday squad consists of dozens of dwarves and men working in tandem, filling the space of a Huge creature. The unit needs only fill 9 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual soldier could move through.
When the squad is bloodied, reduce its size to Large.

Standard Actions
⊘ **Hammer Assault** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +30 vs. AC
Hit: 40 damage.
⁂ **Shotgun Volley** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Special: For each target, the squad makes two attack rolls. The attack hits if either roll hits. If *both* rolls hit, the attack does an extra 10 damage.
Attack: Area burst 1 within 12 (creatures in burst); +28 vs. Reflex
Hit: 33 damage, or 43 damage on a critical hit.
Miss: 16 damage.
▸ **Squad Tactics** ✦ At-Will
Effect: The squad makes three basic attacks. It cannot target a given creature more than once with *hammer assault*, and if it uses *shotgun volley* the area cannot include any creatures targeted by its other attacks.
Special: If the squad is bloodied, it can only use two attacks instead of three.

Triggered Actions
✧ **Suicide Grenades** (weapon) ✦ Encounter
Trigger: The squad is reduced to 0 hit points.
Effect (No Action): The dying squad members pull pins on grenades and drop them as they fall. At the end of the next turn of the triggering creature, make the following attack.
Attack: Close burst 2 (creatures in burst); +28 vs. Reflex
Hit: 30 damage.
Miss: 15 damage.

Str 22 (+18) **Dex** 11 (+12) **Wis** 12 (+13)
Con 28 (+21) **Int** 11 (+12) **Cha** 8 (+11)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven

Doomsday High Priest — Level 25 Minion Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (dwarf) — **XP** 1750

HP 1; a missed attack never damages this minion — **Initiative** +9
AC 27, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 27 — **Perception** +12
Speed 5 — Low-light vision

Standard Actions
⊘ **Wounding Warhammer** (necrotic, weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
His warhammer exudes black tendrils of energy as he swings it.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +30 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage, 5 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened until the end of the high priest's next turn.
⊘ **Surprise Shotgun** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He swings a stub-nosed shotgun out from under his cloak and blasts you.
Special: The high priest makes two attack rolls. At close or long range, his attack hits if either roll hits. Additionally, if *both* rolls hit at close range, the attack does an extra 10 damage.
Attack: Ranged 3/6 (one creature); +30 vs. AC
Hit: 16 damage, or 26 damage on a critical hit.
Load standard.

Triggered Actions
✓ **Chill Magic** ✦ Encounter
As you cast he clenches a fist, and metaphysical ice traps your spell.
Trigger: A creature the high priest can see uses an arcane, divine, elemental, primal, psionic, or shadow power.
Attack (Immediate Interrupt): Ranged 20 (triggering creature); +28 vs. Will
Hit: The triggering power has no effect.

Str 10 (+10) **Dex** 14 (+12) **Wis** 14 (+12)
Con 14 (+12) **Int** 11 (+10) **Cha** 6 (+8)
Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarf

Skeletal Phalanx — Level 25 Brute
Gargantuan natural humanoid (undead) — **XP** 7000

HP 220; **Bloodied** 110 — **Initiative** +21
AC 37, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 36 — **Perception** +13
Speed 7 — Darkvision

Traits
▸ **Gargantuan Unit**
The skeletal phalanx consists of scores of animated skeletons fighting in lockstep, filling the space of a Gargantuan creature. The unit needs only fill 16 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual skeleton could move through.
When the squad is bloodied, reduce its size to Huge.



Standard Actions

⊘ **Reaping Legion** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Hundreds of ambulatory skeletons charge you with scythes and polearms. Your blood splashes crimson upon the gray snow.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +30 vs. AC

Hit: 4d6+10 damage, and the target is knocked prone and takes ongoing 15 damage (save ends).

✲ **Javelin Rain** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Dozens of javelins arc high and then impale the ground around you, turning the battlefield into a thicket of bloody spikes.

Attack: Area burst 1 within 16 (creatures in burst); +28 vs. Reflex

Hit: 33 damage, and the area becomes difficult terrain. Whenever a creature enters a space in the area, it takes 5 damage.

Miss: 16 damage.

▸ **Phalanx Tactics** ✦ At-Will

Effect: The phalanx makes three basic attacks. It cannot target a given creature more than once with *reaping legion*, and if it uses *javelin rain* the area cannot include any creatures targeted by its other attacks.

Special: If the phalanx is bloodied, it can only use two attacks instead of three.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Curse-Filled Breasts** ✦ At-Will

Various items of anathema have been hung amidst the ribcages or shoved into the skulls of these warriors.You accidentally broke one.

Trigger: A creature deals damage to the phalanx.

Effect (No Action): The triggering creature must make a save. If it fails, it loses a healing surge and takes a -2 penalty to its next attack roll.

Str	34 (+24)	**Dex**	29 (+21)	**Wis**	12 (+13)
Con	28 (+21)	**Int**	3 (+8)	**Cha**	8 (+11)

Alignment Evil **Languages** understands Common, Dwarven

Endtimes Blizzard Elemental

Level 26 Controller

Gargantuan elemental magical beast (air) **XP** 9000

HP 156; **Bloodied** 78 **Initiative** +22

AC 40, **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 38 **Perception** +19

Speed fly 20 (hover) Darkvision

Traits

▸ **Heart of the Storm**

Lightning pulses in the center of the storm, shielded by immense plates of ice that spin on the blizzard winds like frozen shields. The clouds move like a creature clad in frigid, shifting armor. It appears less as a single entity than as a portrait of movement capturing several moments in the same space.

The endtimes blizzard elemental sees a few seconds into the future. It cannot be surprised, and it does not grant combat advantage for being flanked. It can see perfectly through snowy air or white-out conditions.

The endtimes blizzard elemental ignores the first 10 damage from attacks by weapons unless they have been in contact with fire in the past minute.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Drag to the End** (cold) ✦ At-Will, Basic

A frozen fist smashes into you. The ice shatters across your body, and you feel a deep chill pass through you and out, as if it had pulled a piece of your future away.

Attack: Melee 4 (one creature); +31 vs. AC

Hit: 3d12+15 damage, plus ongoing 15 cold damage (save ends). Every time the creature fails this save, it visibly ages; it loses one healing surge and its maximum healing surges are reduced by two. If its maximum healing surges are reduced to zero, it dies. The aging is a level 26 affliction.

✧ **Freeze Time** ✦ Encounter

The air itself freezes, and you are covered in a sheen of faintly green ice, preventing you from moving or even thinking.

Attack: Close burst 200 (creatures in burst); +29 vs. Will

Hit: The target is stunned (save ends). While stunned, the creature is immobilized in place and cannot be harmed or interacted with in any way.

Str	34 (+25)	**Dex**	28 (+22)	**Wis**	22 (+19)
Con	26 (+21)	**Int**	14 (+15)	**Cha**	20 (+18)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Primordial

Frost Giants

Tundar Hunter

Level 25 Goon Soldier

Large natural humanoid (giant) **XP** 3500

HP 84; **Bloodied** 42 **Initiative** +14

AC 40, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 36 **Perception** +20

Speed 8 Low-light vision

Vulnerable fire 10

Standard Actions

⊘ **Heavy Pick** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

He uses that thing to climb glaciers. You are smaller than a glacier.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +31 vs. AC

Hit: 20 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 29). It has ongoing 10 damage until the grab ends, after which it has ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Special: When the hunter has a creature grabbed via its pick, if it uses *heavy pick* again it ends the grab.

⊘ **Slam** ✦ At-Will, Basic

It smashes you into the ground and stomps on you.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +31 vs. AC

Hit: 20 damage and the target is knocked prone.

⊘ **Rock** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

He carries a two-foot stone in his off hand that glows like a blue torch. It arcs like a comet on its way toward you.

Attack: Ranged 12/24 (one creature); +31 vs. AC

Hit: 30 damage.

⟋ **Harpoon** (weapon) ✦ At-Will

The barbed spear trails a long, shimmering chain.

Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creature); +31 vs. AC

Hit: 25 damage and the target is impaled. While it is impaled, whenever the creature takes a standard action it takes 5 damage. Additionally, the giant can spend a move action to make an opposed Athletics check, and if it succeeds it pulls the target 4 squares. A creature can free itself with an Athletics check (DC 22) as a move action, but this deals 10 damage; or with a Heal check (DC 22) as a standard action which does not deal damage.

Str	33 (+23)	**Dex**	14 (+14)	**Wis**	16 (+15)
Con	26 (+20)	**Int**	8 (+11)	**Cha**	8 (+11)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Giant

Equipment plate armor, eight rocks, one harpoon

Tundar Rider Level 25 Skirmisher
Large natural humanoid (giant) **XP** 7000
HP 168; **Bloodied** 84 **Initiative** +14
AC 41, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 36 **Perception** +15
Speed 8 Low-light vision
Vulnerable fire 10

Standard Actions

⊘ **Cold Iron Lance** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Crude and black, the lance bears the scars of many battles.
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +31 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6+25 damage. If the rider charged, the target is pushed 3 squares.

⊘ **Slam** ✦ At-Will, Basic
It smashes you into the ground and stomps on you.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +31 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6+10 damage and the target is knocked prone.

⊘ **Rock** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He carries a two-foot stone in his off hand that glows like a blue torch. It arcs like a comet on its way toward you.
Attack: Ranged 12/24 (one creature); +31 vs. AC
Hit: 3d12+15 damage.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Intercepting Charge** ✦ At-Will
The banner at his back craps and whips as he roars a challenge and charges to intercept you.
Trigger: An enemy the rider can see moves adjacent to one of the rider's allies within 8 square.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The rider moves his speed and makes a basic attack against the triggering enemy.

Str 33 (+23) **Dex** 14 (+14) **Wis** 16 (+15)
Con 26 (+20) **Int** 8 (+11) **Cha** 8 (+11)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Giant
Equipment plate armor, shield, eight rocks

Dire Polar Bear Level 24 Goon Brute
Huge natural beast **XP** 3025
HP 110; **Bloodied** 55 **Initiative** +12
AC 36, **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 35 **Perception** +18
Speed 10 Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊘ **Maul** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +26 vs. AC
Hit: 40 damage.

Str 31 (+22) **Dex** 10 (+12) **Wis** 12 (+13)
Con 25 (+19) **Int** 2 (+8) **Cha** 6 (+10)
Alignment Unaligned

The Lost Riders

If you haven't figured it out yet, they're basically Dethklok. The Lost Riders all share the same general stats, but each have personalized traits.

Vsadni "Lost Rider" Level 27 Elite Artillery
Gargantuan elemental humanoid (earth, undead) **XP** 22000
HP 368; **Bloodied** 184 **Initiative** +12
AC 41, **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 39 **Perception** +17
Speed 12, fly 12 (clumsy) Darkvision
Immune cold, poison, necrotic

Traits

▸ **Arcane Intuition**
Though not the smartest warriors in the world, he has ancient experience with matters magical. Combined with his natural dwarven stubbornness, he easily resists most spells.

The lost rider is immediately aware of the nature of all magical effects in his field of vision. He gains a +2 to his defenses against arcane, divine, elemental, primal, psionic, and shadow powers, and to saving throws against those powers.

☼ **Light to Dark** ✦ Aura 6
The healing energy of your ally's spell becomes black and scabrous, and your wounds open wider.
Magical effects (arcane, divine, elemental, primal, psionic, or shadow) that would let a creature in the area spend a healing surge do not restore hit points. If the effect would normally heal extra damage, instead it deals that much damage. (It only deals the *extra* amount, not the base amount of the character's healing surge value.)

▸ **Icy Remains**
In the hollow of the Vsadni's titanic ribcage sits a chunk of glacier containing his original body.
A creature may attempt to target the chunk of ice if the Vsadni is slowed, immobilized, or restrained. The glacial chunk has the same defenses, as the main Vsadni, but is vulnerable 10 fire and has 100 hit points.

Damage to the ice also damages the Vsadni. If the chunk is reduced to 0 hit points, the lost rider's corpse falls to the ground and shatters. This destroys the rider's massive stone and bone body.

Special: Nebo, the leader, wears plate armor which protects his chest from this vulnerability.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Snatch and Bite** (cold, necrotic) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The towering Vsadni smiles as he tries to grab you. "It's been a long time since I've eaten someone alive."
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +32 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6+10 damage and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 40) and lifted 3 squares off the ground. Make a secondary attack.
Secondary Attack: Grabbed creature; +30 vs. Fortitude
Secondary Hit: 20 damage, and the target is swallowed whole. It is restrained (Escape DC 40) and takes ongoing 15 cold and necrotic damage as long as it remains swallowed. It can escape the grab normally, or by destroying the glacial chunk in the Vsadni's chest (which the swallowed creature can attack). A creature that escapes falls prone adjacent to the Vsadni.
Sustain Minor: As long as the Vsadni has the target grabbed, it can make the secondary attack as a minor action once per turn. It must release the grab if it wants to use its weapon attacks (see below).

Song of the Doomsday (fear) ✦ At-Will
A booming bass voice growls eerily from horizon to horizon. The blare of horns join it, followed by clanging percussion and barely-audible strumming of a bass harp.
Special: Actually, only Nebo sings. Betel and Yarost play on their horns, Tzertze bangs his picks like drums, and Hamul can fold his scythe into a harp.
Effect: Until the end of the Vsadni's next turn, any enemy that starts its turn in the zone is targeted by the following attack. If multiple Vsadni are performing this round, make one attack roll for each, but the target must only save once to break free of the effect.
Attack: Close burst 12 (triggering enemy who can hear the song); +30 vs. Will
Hit: The target is weakened (save ends). If two Vsadni performed their song this turn, as long as the target remains weakened, its first action on each of its turns must be to move as far away as possible from the Vsadni. If all five Vsadni performed this turn, as long as the target is weakened it can take no other actions but to throw its weapons down and flee.
Effect: The Vsadni recharges all his encounter powers.

Polar Star (cold, force) ✦ Encounter
Thrashing his head about wildly, he points at you, and a beam of white light arcs across the horizon toward you.
Attack: Ranged unlimited (one creature); +32 vs. AC
Hit: 3d12+15 cold and force damage, and the target is knocked prone and pushed 4 squares.

Eclipse (cold) ✦ Encounter
A blizzard descends upon you, blocking out all light. The cold presses through armor and freezes your flesh.
Attack: Area burst 4 within 20 (creatures in burst); +30 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d12+30 cold damage.
Effect: The Vsadni creates a zone of complete darkness in the area. The darkness even blocks darkvision. Creatures that enter the area or end their turn there take 30 cold damage.

Move Action
▸ **Dimension Door** (teleportation) ✦ Encounter
Effect: The Vsadni teleports 160 squares.

Minor Action
Eye Bolts (cold, lightning) ✦ At-Will
Bolts of white energy flash from his eyes and crackle across you like frozen electricity.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +32 vs. Reflex
Hit: 20 cold and lightning damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the Vsadni's next turn.

Str	40 (+28)	**Dex**	8 (+12)	**Wis**	8 (+12)
Con	27 (+21)	**Int**	14 (+15)	**Cha**	30 (+23)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Dwarven, Primordial
Equipment Meteoric stone armor

Additionally, each of the Vsadni has their own personalized powers.

Nebo, the Leader

Appearance
Entirely clad in black adamantine armor, this titan fights with a morningstar bigger than a house. Tendrils of darkness form a huge beard that flows down to his knees. He carries no instrument, but instead sings.
AC 45 (due to adamantine plate armor)

Standard Actions
Gargantuan Morningstar (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
"Die for the white serpent!" he screams, raising his spiked mace.
Effect: Make the following attack against every creature in a 2-square by 2-square area.
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +32 vs. AC
Hit: 3d12+20 damage.

Banshee Growl (thunder) ✦ Encounter
The ground quakes and your bones crack at the sound of his devastatingly strong voice.
Attack: Close burst 12 (enemies in burst); +30 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d6+20 thunder damage, and the target is stunned until the end of Nebo's next turn.
Miss: Half damage.

Betel, the Vain Axeman

Appearance
Yellow vapors flow around his jaw like a thick, coiled beard. The haft of his bone and brass axe functions as a primitive three-valve horn.

Traits
▸ **Paired Resilience**
The two axemen fight in close tandem.
If Yarost is within line of sight to Betel, at the start of Betel's turn he can make a save against everything affecting him that allows a save, in addition to the normal save he gets at the end of his turn.

Standard Actions
Gargantuan Greataxe (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He laughs, "You too small for I to cuts you!" as he swings his immense axe in a wide arc.
Effect: Make the following attack against every creature in a Close Blast 3.
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +32 vs. AC
Hit: 3d12+20 damage.

Yarost, the Naïve Axeman

Appearance
Jagged shards of ice dangle from his chin in a serrated beard. He also wields a horn-axe.

Traits
▸ **Back-Up**
The icicle-bearded one always hangs close to the one with the yellow vapor beard.
Yarost does not roll initiative. He always takes his turn immediately after Betel's. If Betel is defeated, Yarost takes a -5 penalty to his defenses but gains a +2 bonus to his attack rolls.

Standard Actions
Gargantuan Greataxe (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
"Yeah," he yelps. "Our bears will be eats you!"
Effect: Make the following attack against every creature in a Close Blast 3.
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +32 vs. AC
Hit: 3d12+20 damage.

Tzertze, the Upbeat Wardrummer

Appearance
Cool red flames wreath his face. He wields twin picks and wears a huge drum at his hip, together creating a constant percussive mix of clanging metal and deep drumbeats.

Standard Actions
Paired Gargantuan Picks (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He flails his picks wildly about, like he enjoys the fight too much to want to kill you too fast.
Effect: Make the following attack twice, once with each pick.
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +32 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12+10 damage.
Effect: One square in the target's space becomes a 10-ft. deep pit. The target must succeed an Acrobatics check (DC 30) or else fall into the pit.

✲ **Meteor Swarm** (fire) ✦ Encounter
He bangs his picks together over his head, and flaming boulders appear in the sky. They spiral around each other and smash into the ground around you.
Effect: The meteors affect five areas, each area burst 3 within 160. A creature in the area of multiple meteors is still only affected once.
Attack: Area burst special within 160 (creatures in burst); +32 vs. Reflex
Hit: 8d6+20 damage and 20 fire damage.
Miss: 3d6+10 damage and 10 fire damage.
Effect: Each meteor digs a 10-ft. deep crater in the ground, creating an area of difficult terrain. Creatures in the area must succeed an Acrobatics check (DC 30) or else fall prone.

Hamul, the Hateful Scum

Appearance
Craggy brown stone clings to his face like muttonchops. He shamelessly carries an immense harp, but when he snaps the strings it flips open into a thirty-foot long scythe.

Traits
▸ **Too Mean to Die**
Your blow should have cloven his arm off, but he just spits sludge at you and keeps fighting.
Hamul cannot be reduced below 1 hit point unless either the icy chunk holding his body is destroyed, or he is affected by a magical emotion that puts him in a positive mood.

Standard Actions
⊘ **Colossal Scythe** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
"What fuck be you?" sneers the scythe-wielder. "Come close so I may sniff you."
Attack: Melee 6 (one creature); +32 vs. AC
Hit: 3d12+20 damage, and Hamul pulls the target 5 squares.
Special: This attack crits on a natural 19 or 20, as long as the attack hits.

Frost Worm Distemper

Level 26 Goon Brute
Colossal elemental magical beast (cold) **XP** 4500

HP 120; **Bloodied** 60 **Initiative** +12
AC 38, **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 38 **Perception** +14
Speed 10 Blindsight
Vulnerable 20 fire, 20 radiant

Standard Actions
⊘ **Pestilent Bite** (cold, poison) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The ground cracks beneath the weight of the plated white worm as it rears back to lunge for you, maw open and spraying dried black pus.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +31 vs. AC
Hit: 40 damage plus 20 cold damage plus ongoing 20 poison damage (save ends).
Effect: Distemper is dazed until the end of its next turn, as its rotting anatomy recovers from the exertion of the attack.

✧ **Wintry Roar** (cold) ✦ Encounter
It howls with the force of a blizzard.
Attack: Close blast 10 (creatures in burst); +29 vs. Reflex
Hit: 30 cold damage and the target is pushed 6 squares.
Miss: 15 cold damage.

Triggered Actions
✲ **Death Miasma** (poison) ✦ Encounter
Its turgid flesh tears open and rotten innards spray across the battlefield as it dies.
Trigger: Distemper is reduced to 0 hit points.
Attack: Close burst 5 (creatures in burst); +29 vs. Fortitude
Hit: Ongoing 20 poison damage (save ends).
Effect: The area is filled with choking fumes that provide total concealment until the end of the encounter. Repeat the above attack against any creature that ends its turn in the fumes.

Str 38 (+27) **Dex** 10 (+13) **Wis** 12 (+14)
Con 25 (+20) **Int** 2 (+9) **Cha** 6 (+11)
Alignment Unaligned

Fimbulwinter Steed

Level 24 Minion Skirmisher
Colossal elemental magical beast (cold) **XP** 1500

HP 1; see Guided Beast **Initiative** +12
AC 36, **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 35 **Perception** +18
Speed 10, fly 10 (hover) Darkvision
Immune cold; **Vulnerable** fire 10

Traits
▸ **Guided Beast**
If the fimbulwinter steed is being ridden, any effect that deals damage to it and its rider instead only deals damage to the rider. If an attack affects only the steed and does at least 40 damage, it kills it. Any lesser amount of damage instead is halved, then dealt to the rider.

Standard Actions
⊘ **Trompe** ✦ At-Will, Basic
And mountainspalk.
Effect: The steed moves its speed and makes the following attack. Its movement does not provoke opportunity attacks from the target of the attack.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +26 vs. AC
Hit: 32 damage and the target is slowed until the end of the steed's next turn.

Str 31 (+22) **Dex** 10 (+12) **Wis** 12 (+13)
Con 25 (+19) **Int** 2 (+8) **Cha** 6 (+10)
Alignment Unaligned

Dear Leader

If the party confronts her after day one, Grandis Komanov has at least a functional doomsday weapon – *the cyclopean revelation*. If they attack her on a day when she has managed to attune the weapon to the Voice of Rot, she can use its full power to turn those it kills into wraiths.

She is accompanied at all times by her lackey, whose tongue she tore out many years ago. The emotionally-crippled man is hideously loyal to her, and his body is covered with self-inflicted scars.

Komanov's Lackey

Level 24 Goon Artillery (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid (dwarf) **XP** 3025

HP 100; **Bloodied** 50 **Initiative** +14
AC 38, **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 32 **Perception** +13
Speed 5 Blindsight

Traits
▸ **Insane Loyalty**
The lackey cannot be dominated or otherwise forced to harm his mistress or work against her goals. However, his will is very weak, and he'll easily fall victim to other mental attacks.

▸ **Mute and Eerie**
Eyes wide and pale, Komanov's lackey scrapes a patterned steel wand against a stone staff to create sparks, then opens his mouth, revealing no tongue as he somehow growls out a spell.
The lackey's blindsight detects both life energies and necromantic sources. He can cast spells without needing to make vocalizations, but he always creates sparks that mark his location.

Whenever the lackey hits an enemy with an attack, undead creatures get +2 to attack rolls against that creature until the end of the lackey's next turn.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Gravestone Staff** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

He smashes his staff against you. For a moment you get a flash of being buried alive, of hands digging up from below to entomb you.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +29 vs. AC

Hit: 32 damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the lackey's next turn.

✓ **Arcane Throat Slice** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will

He gestures a finger at you and flicks it sideways, as if slicing your throat. Blood begins to gush from your neck.

Attack: Ranged 50 (one creature); +29 vs. AC

Hit: 5 necrotic damage and ongoing 25 damage (save ends).

✲ **Agonizing Flames** (fire) ✦ Encounter

He creates sparks, and your own flesh begins to erupt with sparks from within.

Attack: Area burst 3 within 20 (enemies in burst); +29 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 25 fire damage and the target is weakened (save ends).

✲ **Defend the Mistress** (necrotic) ✦ Encounter

He wails like a child watching his mother be hurt, and the sound pierces your heart and paralyzes your limbs.

Requirement: The lackey can only cast this attack if he centers it on his mistress Komanov, in order to harm those adjacent to her.

Attack: Area burst 3 within 20 (enemies in burst); +29 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 25 necrotic damage, and the target is stunned (save ends).

▸ **Invoke the Sacrament** ✦ Encounter

He drops his pack and hastily pulls out ritual components, scraping his staff and wand in an arcane rhythm.

Requirement: The lackey only has this power if Komanov was able to witness all of the memory event in the Crypta Hereticarum in adventure 8.

Effect: The lackey begins the rites for the *sacrament of apotheosis*. Anyone witnessing him who also saw the memory event in the Crypta Hereticarum in adventure 8 (or if the party dealt with Crisillyir in this adventure before coming to Drakr), can make an Arcana check (DC 30) to realize what he's doing.

Sustain Standard: If the lackey manages to sustain the rite, the sacrament takes effect on Komanov.

Str	12 (+13)	**Dex**	14 (+14)	**Wis**	12 (+13)
Con	10 (+12)	**Int**	19 (+16)	**Cha**	12 (+13)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Giant, Primordial

Grandis Komanov — Level 28 Solo Soldier

Medium natural humanoid (dwarf) — **XP** 65000

HP 780; **Threshold I** 520; **Threshold II** 260 — **Initiative** +15

AC 44, **Fortitude** 44, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 44 — **Perception** +24

Speed 5 — Low-light Vision

Saves +5; **Action Point** 1

Traits

▸ **As Inevitable as Death**

When subjected to forced movement, reduce the distance Komanov is moved by 3. If she would be knocked prone, she may make a saving throw to remain standing.

▸ **Dancing Greatsword** (Stage I)

She conjures an immense shard of jagged ice. It begins striking against her enemies.

At an initiative count of 10 + Komanov's initiative, she uses *frost greatsword*. She does not need to hold the weapon for this, and the sword can make opportunity attacks even if she is incapable of acting. The weapon moves with her wherever she goes.



☼ **Aura of Forgetfulness** (charm) ✦ Aura 10 (Stage II)

She draws herself up as tall as she can, a heavy presence drawing your focus toward her like snow tumbling down into a pit. You falter for a moment, wondering who she is and how you came to be here.

Enemies who enter or begin their turn in the area must make a saving throw or become stunned until the beginning of their next turn. A creature who fails three such saving throws in the same encounter retains no memory of these events and cannot form new memories until she takes a short rest. A creature that succeeds a save against this effect cannot be affected again until the world ends.

☼ **Blessings of Fervor** ✦ Aura 10 (Stage III)

The watching eye of the Voice of Rot in the clouds above excites Komanov and her allies.

Komanov and her allies in the aura gain +2 to speed, attack rolls, and defenses. Enemies who enter or end their turn in the area take 10 necrotic damage.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Frost Greatsword** (weapon, cold) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +33 vs. AC

Hit: 4d8+20 damage and ongoing 15 cold damage (save ends).

✲ **Eschatological Hammer** (necrotic, psychic) ✦ At-Will

With a sweep of her hand, invisible force crashes through you like a titanic hammer. The ground beneath your feet blackens and seems to fall away into a void.

Attack: Area burst 1 within 20 (creatures in burst); +33 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d8+20 psychic damage and the target is weakened (save ends).

Effect: The area becomes a zone until the end of the encounter or until Grandis uses this power again. A creature that enters or ends its turn in the zone takes 30 necrotic damage.

✲ **The Cyclopean Revelation** ✦ Recharge 6

This arcanoscientific weapon glows faintly, but everyone within a mile turns to see it. For an instant you think you can see the precipice at the end of the world, looking down upon a roiling gyre. Then with a thunderclap a swath of the battle simply vanishes.

Attack: 200 square long swath, 4 squares across (creatures in area); +33 vs. Reflex

Hit: 40d6 damage and dispels any magic it touches (ending any bonuses or special benefits from non-martial powers). A creature slain by this attack rises as a wraith at the end of the encounter.

Miss: The target can choose to either move to the nearest space outside the area and fall prone or take half damage.

Effect: Unattended objects in the area are disintegrated.

Minor Action

▸ **Death Knell** ✦ At-Will, 1/round

She sweeps her hand across the face of an unconscious ally.

Effect: A dying creature adjacent to Grandis is considered to have automatically failed a death saving throw. For each creature affected this way, Grandis heals 50 damage.

Glacial Wall ✦ At-Will, 1/round
She controls the blizzard and conjures an icy barrier bristling with spikes.
Effect: A wall 12 within 20 appears, 4 squares high, lasting until the end of the encounter or until Komanov uses this power again. When it appears, make the following attack against each enemy adjacent to the wall.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +33 vs. AC
Hit: 20 damage.

Raise Dead ✦ Encounter
"Lackey," she scoffs. "How dare you die before my grand victory?" With a gesture, her fallen ally stands back up.
Effect: A dying or dead ally of Komanov's within 10 squares is restored to 50 hit points (or its maximum, if less than 50) and stands up.

Triggered Actions

Invisible as the Winter Cold ✦ Encounter
Her body turns to snowflakes, which vanish on a breeze.
Trigger: Komanov is first reduced to 520 hit points.
Effect (No Action): Remove all negative effects affecting Komanov. She gains an action point. Until the end of her next turn, she becomes insubstantial and invisible and gains a fly speed of 10. A creature adjacent to her can sense a chill in the air.
She loses *dancing greatsword* (but can still use *frost greatsword* if she wields it). She gains her *aura of forgetfulness*.

Herald of the World's End ✦ Encounter
She looks up and cries out, "My lord, I fear not the end!" The storm overhead writhes, seemingly in the shape of a titanic white serpent.
Trigger: Komanov is first reduced to 260 hit points.
Effect (No Action): Remove all negative effects affecting Komanov. She gains an action point. She loses her *aura of forgetfulness*, but gains *blessings of fervor*. She recharges *the cyclopean revelation* and uses it as a free action.

Proper Endings ✦ Encounter
Mortally injured, Komanov pleads, "Devour me, Voice of Rot, and take this world with me!"
Trigger: Komanov is reduced to 0 hit points.
Effect (No Action): A planar rift appears. Grandis is slowly torn to pieces and drawn into it, screaming as she dies over the course of five rounds. During that time, the earth starts to break apart and intense winds pull creatures and objects toward the rift.
Make the following attack each of the next five rounds on Komanov's turn. At the end of the fifth round, the rift seals shut with a slow, rumbling sussurus.
Attack: Close burst 1 mile (creatures in burst); +25 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 15 damage and the target is knocked prone and pulled 8 squares toward the center of the area. If the creature is already in or adjacent to the rift, it instead takes 100 damage.

Str	20 (+19)	**Dex**	12 (+15)	**Wis**	20 (+19)
Con	16 (+17)	**Int**	17 (+17)	**Cha**	22 (+20)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Infernal, Giant, Primordial

Additionally, if Komanov is affected by the *Sacrament of Apotheosis*, her stats change to:

Grandis Komanov Level 30 Solo Soldier
Large immortal humanoid (dwarf) **XP** 95000
AC 46, **Fortitude** 46, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 46 **Perception** +24
Speed 5, fly 12 Blindsight
Saves +5; **Action Point** 1
Resist acid 10, cold 10, fire 10
Immune charm, slow, immobilized, restrained

Traits

Power of Apotheosis
Her attacks are more than simple physical strikes, but the metaphysical will of thousands of her followers. She gains a +2 bonus on all attack rolls, and if she misses she still deals half damage.

Str 28 (+23)
Con 24 (+21)

God Trials

Adventure 11

Few in Crisillyir would be a threat to the party, but those that are possess immense divine power.

Godhand's Team

Sigismund always has angels, monks, and templars nearby. Legate Tullius just has templars nearby unless she happens to be near Vitus, and if she gets in trouble she'll use *getaway* to link up with the godhand.

Godhand Vitus Sigismund Level 30 Elite Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP** 38000
HP 414; **Bloodied** 207 **Initiative** +23
AC 44, **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 43, **Will** 43 **Perception** +20
Speed 14
Immune blindness, immobilized, slow
Saves +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

Halo of Courage and Menace (radiant) ✦ Aura 5
A disk of light floats behind his head, and while standing in its shining warmth you feel no fear.
Vitus and allies in the aura gain a +2 bonus to Will defense and to saving throws against fear effects. They can make saves against fear effects at the start of their turn instead of the end of their turn.
Vitus's enemies in the aura must make two attack rolls and use the worst result on every attack until they hit Sigismund with an attack.

Divine Leap
The ground cracks beneath him as he leaps skyward, and he seems to hover there for a moment as if fights.
Sigismund takes no damage from falling. He can jump incredible heights, effectively having a fly speed equal to his walking speed, but at the end of his movement he can choose to remain in the air. If he does, he lands safely at the start of his next turn.

Flurry of Blows
Vitus sprints into a crowd of enemies, pummels one, then sweeps his hands, sending a corona of heavenly light blasting outward.
Once on each of his turns, when Sigismund hits with an attack, each adjacent ally gains 10 temporary hit points, and Vitus deals 10 radiant damage to each adjacent enemy. Creatures damaged in this way cannot take opportunity actions until the end of Vitus's next turn.

Standard Actions

Unarmed Strike ✦ At-Will, Basic
His hands glow with holy light, and he strikes with unassailable confidence.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+30 damage, and he pushes the target 1 square.

Flying Kick ✦ At-Will
Effect: Sigismund moves 8 squares and makes the following attack
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+30 damage, and he pushes the target 4 squares.



⊘ **Brilliant Energy Holy Seeking Sling** (weapon, radiant) ✦ At-Will, Basic
You're not even sure if he has a sling, or if he's just throwing the brilliantly flashing stones. They fly so fast they tear holes through the walls of the cathedral.
Effect: This attack ignores cover and concealment, and Sigismund can target any enemy he is aware of within range, even if they're completely out of sight.
Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creature); +35 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6+30 radiant damage.

▸ **Divine Skirmish** ✦ At-Will
Effect: Sigismund makes a basic attack and uses *flying kick* in any order.

✓ **Perfect Godhand** ✦ Recharge on miss
Bands of light ripple up his body and unite across his hand, which flashes brighter than the sun. You feel a tap on your chest, and on your back, as if he had punched through you.
Effect: All enemies within 5 squares are blinded until the end of Sigismund's turn. Sigismund moves his speed and makes the following attack.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d8+30 damage, and the target loses all of its healing surges.

Triggered Actions
▸ **My Arm, My Arm** ✦ Recharge when first bloodied
He snaps up a forearm and blocks something a mere limb should never be able to block.
Trigger: An attack hits a non-AC defense of Sigismund or an ally within 8 squares.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): Sigismund moves adjacent to the ally (if necessary). The attacker rerolls his attack roll with a -4 penalty. If the new roll misses, the attacker falls prone (regardless of how far away he or she is).

Str	19 (+19)	**Dex**	26 (+23)	**Wis**	20 (+20)
Con	14 (+17)	**Int**	18 (+19)	**Cha**	16 (+18)

Alignment Good **Languages** Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Primordial

Legate Savina Tullius — Level 28 Controller (Leader)

Medium natural humanoid (elf) — **XP** 13000

HP 188; **Bloodied** 94 — **Initiative** +16
AC 42, **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 40 — **Perception** +14
Speed 6 — Low-light Vision
Immune sleep

Traits
▸ **Demagogue's Presence** (charm) ✦ Aura 10
"The people demand their voice be heard!" she cries. "You stand against an entire nation!"
Allies in the aura gain +2 to attack rolls and damage rolls.

Standard Actions
⊘ **Sword Cane** ✦ At-Will, Basic
The handle of her cane is ornate, as if it hides a weapon.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +33 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+30 damage.

⊘ **Cane Pistol** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Actually it hides two.
Attack: Ranged 6/12 (one creature); +33 vs. AC
Hit: 2d4+32 radiant damage, or 2d4+39 damage on a crit.
Load standard.

✲ **Cacophonous Call of the Crowd** (thunder) ✦ Encounter
The shouting of the onlookers swells, overwhelming and disorienting you.
Attack: Area burst 5 within 20 (creatures in burst); +31 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d6+20 thunder damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). While the target is dazed, at the start of each of its turns it slides 1 square in a random direction.
Miss: Half damage.

▸ **Requiem of the Fallen Priest King** ✦ Recharge when first bloodied
"Our gods have died in vain," she proclaims. "But we are greater than the gods! We shall not fall!"
Requirement: Savina must be bloodied.
Effect: Savina takes two standard actions, and each bloodied ally she can see heals 20 hit points.

▸ **Brilliant Advice** ✦ Encounter
"Be true to your pledge," she says to the godhand. "Do not fail us as our gods have."
Effect: One ally Savina can see rolls twice for all d20 rolls and uses the better result. This effect lasts until the ally rolls a natural 20, or until Savina is reduced to 0 hit points.

▸ **Getaway** ✦ Encounter
She sweeps a hand at her allies, then pulls it to her chest, and they all vanish.
Effect: Savina and up to 8 allies within 10 squares teleport to the basement of the Cathedral of Triegenes.

Str	8 (+13)	**Dex**	15 (+16)	**Wis**	10 (+14)
Con	10 (+14)	**Int**	16 (+17)	**Cha**	19 (+18)

Alignment Neutral **Languages** Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Primordial

Divinely-Sanctioned Templar — Level 28 Goon Brute (Leader)

Medium natural humanoid — **XP** 6500

HP 50; **Bloodied** 25 — **Initiative** +14
AC 40, **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 40 — **Perception** +21
Speed 6

Standard Actions
▸ **Elemental Summons** ✦ Encounter
Each of the four priests chants and gestures, calling forth a quartet of huge elemental warriors.
Effect: The templar summons a Huge elemental that has 60 hit points, speed 7, and the defenses of the templar. When it appears it makes the following attack. Thereafter it acts on the templar's initiative and can use this attack as a standard action or opportunity attack. The elemental vanishes if the templar is reduced to 0 hit points.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +33 vs. AC
Hit: 30 damage.
Special: Air elementals have a fly speed of 12. Earth elementals have earth glide. Fire elementals deal an extra ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends) on a hit. Water elementals push 2 squares on a hit.

⊘ **Mace** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +33 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage.

✲ **Holy Eruption** (fire, radiant) ✦ Encounter
He cries, "May Enzyo's flame purge your evil!" as a pillar of white flame erupts from below you.
Attack: Area burst 1 within 5 (creatures in burst); +31 vs. Reflex
Hit: 15 fire and 15 radiant damage.

Minor Actions

▸ **Channel Healing** (healing) ✦ At-Will (2/encounter)
He presses his gloved fists together and glows with holy light.
Effect: Each ally within 10 squares heals 25 damage and can make a saving throw against one effect.

Str 8 (+13) **Dex** 10 (+14) **Wis** 24 (+21)
Con 15 (+16) **Int** 12 (+15) **Cha** 14 (+16)
Alignment Neutral **Languages** Common, Elven
Equipment leather armor

Divinely-Sanctioned Monk
Level 28 Goon Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid
XP 6500

HP 90; **Bloodied** 45 **Initiative** +16
AC 42, **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 40 **Perception** +19
Speed 10

Traits

▸ **Flurry of Blows**
Once on each of his turns, when the monk hits with an attack, the monk deals 6 radiant damage to each adjacent enemy. Creatures damaged in this way cannot take opportunity actions until the end of the monk's next turn.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Sanctioned Fist** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Strands of beads and silver fishhooks encircle his fists.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +33 vs. AC
Hit: 15 damage.

⊘ **Hooked Shuriken** ✦ At-Will, Basic
His fishhook shuriken are attached to threads of adamantine that stretch up to fifty feet.
Effect: The monk uses the following attack three times.
Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +33 vs. AC
Hit: 5 damage and the target is hooked (Escape DC 31). While a foe is hooked, the monk can use *reel*, below.

▸ **Holy Harriers** ✦ At-Will
Effect: The monk shifts his speed and makes two basic attacks divided at any point during before, during, or after the movement.

Minor Actions

▸ **Reel** ✦ At-Will (1/round)
Strange mastery of pulleys and levers give him amazing control over your movement.
Effect: The monk makes an opposed Athletics check against a target hooked by his shurikens, with a +2 bonus for each shuriken after the first hooking the creature. If he succeeds he can pull the target 2 squares and knock it prone. Clever use of this power combined with fulcrums might let the monk yank a foe in all sorts of odd directions.

Skills: Acrobatics +21, Athletics +22

Str 16 (+17) **Dex** 15 (+16) **Wis** 20 (+19)
Con 12 (+15) **Int** 12 (+15) **Cha** 8 (+13)
Alignment Neutral **Languages** Common, Elven

Planetar of the Clergy
Level 28 Soldier
Large immortal humanoid
XP 13000

HP 180; **Bloodied** 90 **Initiative** +16
AC 44, **Fortitude** 40, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 40 **Perception** +19
Speed 6, fly 10 Darkvision
Immune disease, fear; **Resist** cold 15, fire 15, radiant 15

Traits

☼ **Halo of Defense** ✦ Aura 5
A disk of light behind the angel's head sheds shielding light upon the faithful.
Allies in the aura have resist 5 against untyped damage from weapons.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Holy Greatsword** (weapon, radiant) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +33 vs. AC
Hit: 3d12+15 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the planetar's next turn. The first time that creature uses an attack that doesn't include the planetar, the creature takes 10 radiant damage.

✲ **Shake the Pillars of Heaven** (fire) ✦ Encounter
It flies above you, and the whole earth quakes. Rifts open in the ground and searing steam blasts upward.
Special: This attack only affects creatures on the ground.
Attack: Area burst 8 within 10 (creatures in burst); +31 vs. Reflex
Hit: 20 fire damage. The target falls 20 feet into a rift (or through the floor if not on solid ground). If it does not climb free of the rift before the start of the Planetar's next turn (Athletics DC 20), it is trapped as the ground snaps shut. Unless someone can excavate the creature it is restrained and takes ongoing 20 damage.

✓ **The Terrible Face of the Divine** ✦ Encounter
The angel's surface shimmers like a cloak in the wind, and beneath its surface you glimpse the true form of unadultered holy power.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +31 vs. Will
Hit: The target falls prone and is stunned until the end of the encounter. If the target takes damage or an ally spends a standard action to shake the target free, this effect ends.
Miss: The target falls prone and is dazed until the end of the planetar's next turn.

Minor Actions

▸ **Deliverance** (teleport) ✦ At-Will (1/round)
It mutely waves a hand and one of its imperiled allies is carried to safety.
Effect: One ally the planetar can see who is either bloodied or suffering from a negative condition is teleported 5 squares.

Str 27 (+22) **Dex** 19 (+18) **Wis** 25 (+21)
Con 24 (+21) **Int** 22 (+20) **Cha** 24 (+21)
Alignment Lawful Good **Languages** tongues

Advoral, Heavenly Emissary
Level 28 Elite Lurker
Huge immortal beast
XP 26000

HP 340; **Bloodied** 170 **Initiative** +18
AC 44, **Fortitude** 40, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 40 **Perception** +21
Speed 8, fly 12 Darkvision
Immune disease, fear; **Resist** cold 15, fire 15, radiant 15
Saves +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

☼ **Halo of Judgment** (psychic) ✦ Aura 5
In the light of its halo you think you see memories of violence, selfishness, and cruelty from your life.
Enemies that enter or end their turn in the aura take 5 psychic damage. If an enemy in the aura dealt damage to someone else this turn, it instead takes 20 psychic damage. A creature reduced to 0 damage this way automatically stabilizes.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Armored Talons** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +33 vs. AC

Hit: 3d8+20 damage and Advorel pushes the target 3 squares.

▸ **Rake** ✦ At-Will

Effect: Advorel uses *armored talons* twice, and can move 3 squares between the attacks.

✲ **Wing Buffet** ✦ At-Will

Attack: Close burst 3 (creatures in burst); +33 vs. AC

Hit: 3d8+20 damage and the target is knocked prone.

✓ **Stay the Bloodied Hand** ✦ Encounter

Its expressionless face seems to be looking at you. It shakes its head, almost as if it is disappointed.

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature that has dealt damage this encounter); +31 vs. Will

Hit: The target is weakened until the end of the encounter, or until Advorel is reduced to 0 hit points.

Miss: The target is weakened until the end of Advorel's next turn.

Special: Advorel can end this effect as a free action.

Minor Actions

▸ **Unseen Watcher** ✦ At-Will (1/round)

The massive angelic beast vanishes. You should be able to hear the movement of something so immense, but there is nothing. Even though you cannot see its halo, you can feel the weight of your conscience in its presence.

Effect: Advorel becomes invisible until the end of his next turn, or until he attacks.

Skills Stealth +23

Str 35 (+26) **Dex** 19 (+18) **Wis** 25 (+21)
Con 30 (+24) **Int** 22 (+20) **Cha** 24 (+21)

Alignment Lawful Good **Languages** tongues

The Vault of Heresies

Angels guard the fiends of the Crypta Hereticarum. In total they consist of:

- **Hezophiel the Reaper, angelic champion**
- **3 celestial trumpeteers**
- **4 movanic celestials**
- **8 legion celestials**
- **Effectively limitless critic angel swarms**

Hezophiel the Reaper — Level 29 Elite Brute

Large immortal humanoid — **XP** 30000

HP 450; **Bloodied** 225 — **Initiative** +18
AC 41, **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 43 — **Perception** +21
Speed 6, fly 10 — Darkvision
Immune disease, fear; **Resist** cold 15, fire 15, radiant 15
Saves +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

☼ **Halo of Death** (fire) ✦ Aura 5

A ring of fire disk behind the angel's head surrounds a disk of roiling smoke and shadows.

Enemies in the aura automatically fail death saving throws and cannot stabilize or heal when at 0 HP or below. Enemies that enter or end their turn in the aura take 20 fire damage.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Spirit Scythe** ✦ At-Will, Basic

The blade of his scythe is composed of weeping spirits of the damned.

Special: This attack affects insubstantial creatures normally. If he attacks an unattended inanimate object, he destroys it utterly.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +34 vs. AC

Hit: 4d6+30 damage, or 4d6+60 damage on a crit.

Minor Actions

✓ **Inescapable Death** (teleport) ✦ At-Will (1/round)

The angel beckons, and a swarm of lesser celestials swarm around you and draw you across reality to beside your executioner.

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +32 vs. Will

Hit: The target is teleported adjacent to Hezophiel and is knocked prone. It is immobilized and cannot teleport (save ends both). On his next attack against that target this turn, Hezophiel makes two attack rolls and uses the better result.

Str 27 (+22) **Dex** 19 (+18) **Wis** 25 (+21)
Con 24 (+21) **Int** 22 (+20) **Cha** 24 (+21)

Alignment Neutral **Languages** tongues

Angelic Champion — Level 28 Soldier

Medium immortal humanoid — **XP** 13000

HP 180; **Bloodied** 90 — **Initiative** +16
AC 44, **Fortitude** 40, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 40 — **Perception** +19
Speed 8, fly 12 (hover) — Darkvision
Immune disease, fear; **Resist** cold 15, fire 15, radiant 15

Traits

☼ **Halo of Courage** ✦ Aura 5

A nimbus of crackling lightning behind the angel's head energizes his allies.

Allies in the aura gain +2 to their defenses.

Standard Actions

⊗ **Felling Warhammer** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

It brings the hammer down, and a bolt of lightning falls from the heavens.

Attack: Melee 1 or Ranged 20/40 (one creature); +33 vs. AC

Hit: 3d12+15 damage, and if the target is bloodied it takes an additional 20 lightning damage.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Heroic Intercession** ✦ At-Will (1/round)

It sweeps between you and its ally and takes the strike.

Trigger: An attack hits an ally within 10 squares.

Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The angel flies to a space adjacent to the triggering ally. The attack instead hits the angel.

Str 27 (+22) **Dex** 14 (+16) **Wis** 20 (+19)
Con 24 (+21) **Int** 14 (+16) **Cha** 24 (+21)

Alignment Lawful Good **Languages** tongues

Celestial Trumpeter — Level 25 Goon Artillery

Medium immortal humanoid — **XP** 3500

HP 80; **Bloodied** 40 — **Initiative** +16
AC 39, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 37 — **Perception** +24
Speed 6, fly 10 — Darkvision
Immune deafened, disease, fear, thunder
Resist cold 15, fire 15, radiant 15

Standard Actions

⊘ **Greatsword** (weapon, thunder) ✦ At-Will, Basic

His horn transforms into a glorious bronze blade. It chimes as it slices the air.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +30 vs. AC

Hit: 20 damage and 10 thunder damage.

✧ **Trumpet Blast** (thunder) ✦ At-Will

He draws a deep breath, then blares a devastating note through his trumpet.

Attack: Close blast 20 (enemies in blast); +30 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 20 thunder damage and the target is pushed 5 squares and deafened (save ends).

Str 27 (+22) **Dex** 14 (+16) **Wis** 20 (+19)
Con 24 (+21) **Int** 14 (+16) **Cha** 24 (+21)

Alignment Lawful Good **Languages** tongues

Movanic Celestial Level 25 Goon Soldier
Medium immortal humanoid **XP** 3500

HP 80; **Bloodied** 40 **Initiative** +16
AC 41, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 37 **Perception** +19
Speed 6, fly 10 Darkvision
Immune disease, fear; **Resist** cold 15, fire 15, radiant 15

Standard Actions

⊘ **Flames of the Gate** (weapon, fire) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He brandishes a flaming sword, daring you to pass.
Special: The celestial can make opportunity attacks against enemies who leave a space adjacent to it, even if they are shifting. It gains +10 to attack rolls on opportunity attacks.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +30 vs. AC
Hit: 20 damage and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

✓ **Spirit Grasp** ✦ At-Will
"Uneasy spirit," he says, "cease your struggles." He reaches into empty air and pulls forth a snarling ghost.
Special: This attack can affect insubstantial creatures normally. It can also ignore cover.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +30 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target is grabbed (Escape DC 29). The celestial can slide the creature 3 squares to a space adjacent to it. While the target is grabbed it cannot take hostile actions.

Str 27 (+22) **Dex** 14 (+16) **Wis** 20 (+19)
Con 24 (+21) **Int** 14 (+16) **Cha** 24 (+21)
Alignment Lawful Good **Languages** tongues



Legion Celestial Level 25 Minion Soldier
Medium immortal humanoid **XP** 1750

HP 1; a missed attack never damages this minion **Initiative** +14
AC 41, **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 37 **Perception** +14
Speed 6, fly 8 Darkvision

Standard Actions

⊘ **Shield and Spear** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +30 vs. AC
Hit: 16 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the celestial's next turn.

Str 18 (+15) **Dex** 10 (+12) **Wis** 14 (+14)
Con 14 (+13) **Int** 15 (+14) **Cha** 18 (+16)
Alignment Lawful Good **Languages** tongues

Catastrophe Dragon

The dragon, composed of lava and all the evil forces hurled into the volcano, heads for Plaza Hyperion, and will incinerate the library (and tens of thousands of people) if it isn't stopped.

Esurientes Draco in Ruinam Level 33 Solo Brute
Gargantuan elemental magical beast (dragon) **XP** 155,000

HP 1500; **HP Threshold I** 1000; **HP Threshold II** 500 **Initiative** +14
AC 45, **Fortitude** 45, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 45 **Perception** +30
Speed 15, fly 10 (clumsy) Darkvision, tremorsense 20
Resist fire 40, lightning 10
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Epic Resilience**
Mundane weapons melt on its hide.
Attacks from nonmagical weapons deal no damage to the dragon.

▸ **Hurl Foe**
As a free action once on each of its turn, when the dragon damages a Huge or smaller foe with a melee attack it may make a secondary attack.
Secondary Attack: +34 vs. Fortitude.
Hit: The target is pushed 4 squares, plus 1 square for every 5 points the attack beat the target's defense. The target falls prone.

▸ **Titanic**
Normal difficult terrain does not impede the dragon. A Huge or smaller creature can move through its space, and vice-versa. The dragon can make attacks of opportunity only against foes that are Huge or larger, and can be flanked only by Huge or larger foes.
It's possible for a Huge or smaller creature to climb the dragon (Athletics DC 30), and unlike the previous rule about the dragon and attacks of opportunity, a Small or larger creature that climbs on the dragon's body provokes an attack of opportunity from the monster.

▸ **Superheated**
Then again, if you're dumb enough to climb on the dragon, you take 50 fire damage at the end of your turn.

☼ **Ash Cloud** (fire, lightning) ✦ Aura 5
Smoke and steam obscures the titan. A cloud of ash and tephra swirls above the dragon's head, crackling with lightning.
The dragon has concealment against attacks from outside the aura, but can see through it perfectly itself. Creatures that enter or end their turn in the aura take 20 fire damage.
The aura spans 5 squares in each direction at ground level, but above the dragon it becomes a swirling cloud with a 60 square (300-ft.) radius, 60 squares high. Creatures that enter or end their turn in that cloud take no fire damage, but instead take 20 lightning damage.

Special: If it is after Day 21 and the God of children's games has been executed, this aura instead turns the ground around the dragon into lava, though structures above ground level might take a few minutes to burn up and fall into the lava. A creature that falls into lava dies.

▶ **Susceptible to Water and Cold**

Where its leg dips into the canal, the molten skin turns craggy and scabbed.

If the dragon is submerged in ten foot deep water its speed is reduced to 10. If submerged thirty feet (up to the 'knee' of its legs), its speed is reduced to 5. If submerged fifty feet (up to it's shoulder), its speed is reduced to 2.

Every 25 cold damage it takes in a given turn is the equivalent of ten feet of submersion.

Standard Actions

Molten Stamp (fire) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Where it steps the ground simply melts.

Attack: Area burst 1 within 3 (creatures in burst); +36 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d12+30 damage, and the target must either move two squares in any direction or be knocked prone and take ongoing 50 fire damage (save ends).

Bite (fire) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Its massive mouth cannot help but devour part of the ground as it bites at you.

Attack: Area burst 2 within 6 (creatures in burst); +36 vs. Reflex

Hit: 4d12+30 damage and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 35). While grabbed it takes ongoing 50 fire damage.

▶ **Methodical Destruction** ✦ At-Will

Effect: The dragon uses *molten stamp* and *bite* in any order.

Ejecta (fire) ✦ At-Will

He spits a flaming boulder through the sky.

Attack: Area burst 5 within 200 (creatures in burst); +36 vs. Reflex

Hit: 5d6+30 fire damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Pyroclastic Vomit (fire) ✦ Recharge 6

He roars and sprays a thick stream of molten rock from his gullet, coating a vast swath of the city in lava.

Attack: Close blast 20 (creatures in burst); +36 vs. Reflex

Hit: 10d12+50 fire damage, and the target takes ongoing 50 fire damage (save ends).

Miss: Half damage.

Minor Actions

Magmatic Wall (fire, poison) ✦ At-Will, 1/round

The ground beneath its claw cracks, and the crack sprays poison gas and lava into the air.

Effect: A wall 20 appears, originating from a space adjacent to the dragon. Make the following attacks.

Primary Attack: Area wall (creatures within 3 squares of the wall); +36 vs. Fortitude

Primary Hit: The target is dazed until the end of the dragon's next turn and takes ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).

Secondary Attack: Area wall (creatures in path of the wall); +36 vs. Reflex

Secondary Hit: 3d6+20 fire damage, and the target moves two squares in any direction to be out of the area.

Triggered Actions

▶ **Furious Defiance** ✦ Encounter

He seems to collapse, but after a breath you realize he's actually melting a tunnel directly into the earth.

Trigger: The dragon is first reduced to HP Threshold I.

Effect (No Action): All negative effects affecting the dragon end and it gains an action point.

The dragon falls prone. It takes no actions until the end of its turn, at which point its body collapses into a pool of lava. The dragon 'teleports' up to a mile and erupts elsewhere in the city. A city block is annihilated in fire and ash, and the dragon stands up and resumes its rampage.

▶ **Storm of Evil** ✦ Encounter

The dragon's skin sloughs off, and demons leap free and take to the sky.

Trigger: The dragon is first reduced to HP Threshold II.

Effect (No Action): All negative effects affecting it end and he gains an action point.

Every round 1d100 people throughout the city are slain by the demons released from within the dragon. This continues for five minutes until the city is decimated, or until the dragon is destroyed.

Str	48 (+34)	**Dex**	8 (+14)	**Wis**	30 (+25)
Con	46 (+33)	**Int**	10 (+15)	**Cha**	40 (+30)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Infernal, Primordial

Slipstream

Adventure 12

Rock Rackus's Final Form

Rock has complicated songs, but he's not a complicated fighter. He's still a glory hog, but he's learned to funnel the magic that suffuses his celebrity in order to bolster his allies.



Rock Rackus Level 30 Goon Artillery

HP 100; **Bloodied** 50 **Initiative** +16

AC 43, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 43, **Will** 40

Speed 6

Traits

▶ **Oblivious Resilience**

Rock Rackus is too blissfully naïve to realize that he's mortal. When he's reduced to 0 hit points he cries out in confused pain and becomes helpless yet stable, remaining conscious enough to complain. One minute later he finishes his tirade and regains 1 hit point.

Heroic Presence ✦ Aura 6

Rock's allies in the aura gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws. When Rock deals the killing blow against an enemy, this bonus increases to +3 until the end of his next turn.

Standard Actions

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

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 20 damage.

⊘ **Diamond-Encrusted Piece** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creature); +36 vs. AC

Hit: 20 damage.

Effect: Every enemy that can see Rock takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls against creatures other than him until the end of Rock's next turn.

Load minor.

Minor Actions

▸ **Summon Posse** (illusion) ✦ At-Will

Effect: Eight illusory creatures appear in close burst 20. They each have 1 hit point and Rock's defenses, but they can aid in flanking, and can block the movement of enemies.

The Golden Legion of Egal the Shimmering

Adventure 12

The legion has one great industrial airship, the *Aurum Treasure*, which is nearly two hundred feet long and bristling with arcane fusils, and twenty-six thirty-foot-long windskiffs.

Aurum Treasure, Windship of War — **Level 21 Vehicle**

Huge Vehicle

Hull Integrity 4 — **Command** +24

Defense 30 — **Full Crew** 32

Maneuverability 10 — **Minimum Crew** 8

Speed 8 (flight) — **Total Complement** 400

Design

Length 175 ft. Beam 50 ft. Two lower wing sails, two stabilization sails. Main deck, bridge, gunnery deck, crew quarters, barracks deck, and treasury hold. All covered with gold and infernal sigils.

Daunting Demeanor

Your first few shots fail to perturb the hellish vessel.

The first attack against the ship each combat takes a -5 penalty. Hostile creatures that board the ship treat their first square of movement as difficult terrain.

Fiery Armaments

Five light arcane fusils and four full fusils to each broadside, a lower deck with six heavy fusils per side, and an undercastle (not shown) with six light fusils that can aim downward. Each fusil fires an eldritch blast of black, crackling magical fire.

Crew: 110. *Attack:* +20 to broadsides, or +17 forward, aft, up, or down. The weapons can strike at long range, with a -10 penalty. If a volley deals two or more strikes to the hull, one of those strikes can cause the burning condition instead of reducing hull integrity.

Shield of Greed

Sparkles of gold are visible, though most of the precious metal is stained with blood and coated with soot. This is a domain of the wealthy and prosperous, and only those rich enough are allowed to attack.

An eldritch shield defends the crew of the windship, powered by the treasure hoard in its hold and the unified greed of its crew. The ship is immune to the burning condition, and any spell that originates more than 50 feet from the ship cannot come inside that area. Two ships with shields that have overlapping auras merge the shields so neither shield protects against attacks in the other shield's area.

If the treasury is significantly depleted, this shield fails. Likewise, any creature that willingly destroys wealth worth at least 10,000 gp while launching an attack can ignore the shield's defenses for that attack.

Industrial Dominion of the Winds

Mighty growling engines burn infernal diesel that has refined magma, hatred, and the flesh of sacrificed mortals into a muddy red fuel. Enchantments lighten the massive vehicle, but constant downward thrust is required to keep it aloft. It leaves a contrail of toxic smoke as it flies.

The ship can fly at any elevation. Any vehicle in the same naval stage that is behind the airship is cloaked in smoke if it is the same size or smaller, and such vessels roll twice and take the worse result for Command checks and attack rolls. Prolonged exposure can poison creatures.

Infernal Windskiff — **Level 17 Vehicle**

Small Vehicle

Hull Integrity 2 — **Command** +15

Defense 10 — **Full Crew** 4

Maneuverability 10 — **Minimum Crew** 1

Speed 16 (flight) — **Total Complement** 12 (currently overloaded)

Design

Length 30 ft. Beam 10 ft. Diesel engine belching fire and smoke, turning a trio of propellers along the aft. Gold-threaded wing sails for stabilization.

Overloaded

Too many legionnaires are aboard, so over a dozen cling to the outer hull. For each point of hull integrity damage the ship takes, deal 20 damage to one of the crew on board. (This is not reduced by the *lesser shield of greed*.)

Lesser Shield of Greed

The gold that lines the deck and fills the hold generates a shield that blocks outside attacks.

Any spells that originate more than 50 feet from the ship deal 34 less damage to targets within that area.

Armaments

Six light fusils—like longspears made of steel and gold, with massive red quartz crystals mounted at their tips—are chained to the deck with golden hooks, and the company of legionnaires clinging to the side of the hull can readily aim in any direction.

Crew: 5. *Attack:* +13 in any direction.

Ramprow

The gold plating has been stripped away from a spiked ram prow.

When this ship rams another, prevent the first strike of damage the rammed ship would deal back to it.

Industrial Dominion of the Winds

A small growling engine burns infernal diesel, and the vessel leaves a contrail of toxic smoke as it flies.

The ship can fly at any elevation. Any vehicle in the same naval stage that is behind the airship is cloaked in smoke if it is the same size or smaller, and such vessels roll twice and take the worse result for Command checks and attack rolls. Prolonged exposure can poison creatures.



Pit Fiend

The Golden Legion has two pit fiends out on conquest objectives, one in charge of the hive queen of Elofasp, and another two guarding His Celestial Eruption General Paelyrion XVIII in the fortress Egalitrix. These devils have been in the Gyre with the legion since they were first stranded.

Golden Legion Pit Fiend Level 30 Soldier
Large immortal humanoid (devil) **XP** 18,000
HP 244; **Bloodied** 122 **Initiative** +24
AC 46, **Fortitude** 44, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 42 **Perception** +20
Speed 12, fly 12 (clumsy), teleport 10 Darkvision
Resist 30 fire, 15 poison

Traits

☼ **Aura of Fire and Fear** (fear, fire) ✦ Aura 5
As you draw close you hear a bass choir chanting curses and damnation.
Enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to attack rolls that don't target the pit fiend. An enemy that enters or starts its turn in the aura takes 15 fire damage.

▸ **Golden Chains**
Hundreds of pounds of spiked gold chain wrap the pit fiend from horned head to clawed toe. A mantle of gold thread drapes from his forehead back across his shoulders and then weaves through piercings in his wings. The jagged metal presses into his flesh, leaving rivulets of black blood that sizzle as they drip to the floor.
If the fiend's chains are broken, it loses its fire resistance and teleport speed.
As a standard action, a character adjacent to the pit fiend can make a Strength check (DC 30) to tear free the golden chains wrapped around the devil. The character takes a –1 penalty to this check for each square the pit fiend moved on its last turn, unless the devil is immobilized or prone. If the chains are removed, the pit fiend is stunned until the end of its next turn, and thereafter takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Mace of Golden Flames** (fire) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The head of its mace is molten gold, constantly shifting like the flame of a torch.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10+11 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

✓ **Tail Sting** (poison) ✦ At-Will
Its tail fends you off with a lash that cracks like a whip. You tumble to the ground a great distance away, in the midst of his allies, and your wound burns with the now-familiar sting of poison.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6+11 damage, and the target is weakened and takes ongoing 15 poison damage (save ends). The target is teleported 10 squares and knocked prone.

▸ **Desperate Frenzy** ✦ At-Will
Requirement: The pit fiend must be bloodied and have no allies adjacent.
Effect: The pit fiend uses *mace of golden flames*, then uses *tail sting* against a different enemy.

Minor Actions

✓ **Absolute Terror** (fear) ✦ Encounter
He points his mace at you, and the devil's voice laughs in your mind as visions of your loved ones slaughtered flash before you.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +34 vs. Will
Hit: The target takes a -5 penalty to all defenses (save ends).
Aftereffect: This power recharges if the attack misses or when the victim saves against it.

Infernal Summons (teleportation) ✦ Encounter
Effect: A Golden Legionnaire company teleports into the battle anywhere the pit fiend can see.

Skills Bluff +29, Insight +25, Intimidate +29, Religion +26

Str	32 (+26)	**Dex**	24 (+22)	**Wis**	20 (+20)
Con	27 (+23)	**Int**	22 (+21)	**Cha**	28 (+24)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal

Horned Devil

The forty or so horned devils in the Golden Legion serve as commanders or aides to the pit fiends and other important leaders. Their golden spiked chains allow them to enslave foes they defeat. Great warriors who are taken by the legion over time eventually transform into horned devils.

Golden Legion Horned Devil Level 30 Goon Brute
Large immortal humanoid (devil) **XP** 9,000
HP 130; **Bloodied** 65 **Initiative** +21
AC 43, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 38 **Perception** +20
Speed 8, fly 8 (clumsy), teleport 6 Darkvision
Resist 30 fire

Traits

▸ **Loyalty is Prosperity, Prosperity is Freedom**
Your strike could have killed him if not for the immense amount of gold that softened the hit.
The first time in an encounter the devil would be reduced to 0 hit points, instead it falls to 1 hit point and most of its gold chains are knocked away. This stuns it until the end of its next turn and imposes a -2 penalty to its attack rolls, as per *golden chains* below.

▸ **Golden Chains**
See *Golden Chains* in the Golden Legion Pit Fiend.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Chain of Jagged Gold** ✦ At-Will, Basic
He swirls a barbed chain of gold over his head, then flings it and tries to snare you.
Attack: Melee 4 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 45 damage, and the horned devil slides the target up to 4 squares, but cannot move the target outside of the reach of this attack. The target is slowed until the end of the devil's next turn. If the target is already slowed, immobilized, or prone, it is instead dominated (save ends).

▸ **Enlist** ✦ At-Will
The devil's own chains of gold sway and clink against his horns as he wraps his weapon around you. He speaks like reciting a sacred oath. "This chain is a token of the wealth Egal shall grant his loyal servants. Loyalty is prosperity. Prosperity is freedom."
Effect: The horned devil chooses an adjacent creature that it has dominated. That creature is now slavishly loyal to the Golden Legion, and removing the chain will be fatal unless the 30th level curse is removed. The devil can no longer make chain attacks.

Move Actions

✓ **Devilish Transposition** (teleportation) ✦ At-Will, 1/round

Glowing chains appear at your feet and threaten to pull you across space.

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +33 vs. Will

Hit: The horned devil and the target each teleport to the other's location.

Str 27 (+23) **Dex** 23 (+21) **Wis** 20 (+20)
Con 25 (+22) **Int** 15 (+17) **Cha** 18 (+19)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal

Succubus

Most succubi in the legion were once just slaves who thought they could be clever enough to resist the compulsion of the chains. Over time their deceptive nature transformed them into succubi. The legion deploys these fiends as scouts and infiltrators.

Golden Legion Succubus Level 28 Minion Controller
Medium immortal humanoid (devil, shapechanger) **XP** 3,750

HP 1; see Loyalty is Life **Initiative** +19
AC 42, **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 42 **Perception** +19
Speed 6, fly 6, teleport 6 Darkvision
Resist 30 fire

Traits

▸ **Loyalty is Prosperity, Prosperity is Freedom**

Any effect that deals at least 22 damage kills the succubus. Any lesser amount of damage bloodies it, or kills it if it is already bloodied.

▸ **Golden Chains**

See *Golden Chains* in the Golden Legion Pit Fiend.

Standard Actions

⊗ **Golden Dagger** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Hidden amid her golden chains, a slender gold dagger slips into her hand as she thrusts for your heart.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature) or Ranged 3/6; +33 vs. AC

Hit: 18 damage, or 27 damage if the target is granting combat advantage to the succubus.

✓ **Aggressive Embrace** ✦ At-Will

Her hands slide up your chest, her bosom presses into your back, and her teeth sink into the nape of your neck, warm, passionate, but demanding.

Requirement: The target must be granting combat advantage.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +31 vs. Will

Hit: The target is dominated until the end of the succubus's next turn. As long as the target is dominated, if a melee or ranged attack targets the succubus and the dominated creature is adjacent, the attack instead targets the dominated creature.

Sustain standard.

▸ **Report and Reinforce** ✦ Encounter

The succubus traces a ring of fire in the air in front of her, then steps through and vanishes. The portal remains for a moment, its destination unknown.

Effect: If the succubus is on the plane Egalitrix, she creates a portal that leads to any location she is familiar with within one mile. The portal remains open until the start of her next turn.

Minor Actions

✓ **Devil in Disguise** (polymorph, teleportation) ✦ At-Will, 1/round

She changes shape to resemble one of your allies, then staggers for a moment as if trying to convince you she's confused.

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +31 vs. Will

Hit: The succubus and the target each teleport to the other's location.

Effect: The succubus may alter its physical form to take on the appearance of the target, or any other Medium humanoid.

Skills Bluff +26, Diplomacy +26, Insight +24

Str 11 (+14) **Dex** 20 (+19) **Wis** 20 (+19)
Con 10 (+14) **Int** 15 (+16) **Cha** 24 (+21)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal

Turned Glabrezu

A few glabrezu were turned recently, and they have not yet transformed into horned devils.

Golden Legion Glabrezu Level 29 Minion Brute
Large immortal humanoid (devil) **XP** 3750

HP 1; see *Loyalty is Prosperity* **Initiative** +18
AC 29, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 30 **Perception** +16
Speed 8, teleport 8 Darkvision
Resist 30 fire

Traits

▸ **Loyalty is Prosperity, Prosperity is Freedom**

Any effect that deals at least 22 damage kills the glabrezu. Any lesser amount of damage bloodies it, or kills it if it is already bloodied.

▸ **Golden Chains**

See *Golden Chains* in the Golden Legion Pit Fiend.

▸ **True Seeing**

The Golden Legion glabrezu ignores concealment and total concealment, and can see perfectly through disguises and illusions. It can also see the true forms of creates that have shape-shifted.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Pincers** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Its upper arms end in jagged pincers. It grabs you with one, then threatens to snap your arm in two with the other.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +34 vs. AC

Hit: 23 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 29). If the glabrezu teleports while grabbing a creature in this way, the creature comes along as well.

✲ **Firebolt** (fire) ✦ At-Will

Its lower arms resemble those of a man, albeit flayed and wrapped in gold chains. They weave the somatic components of a spell, then launch a bolt of fire.

Attack: Area burst 2 within 20 (creatures in burst); +32 vs. Reflex

Hit: 18 fire damage.

Snap ✦ At-Will

Effect: If the glabrezu has a creature grabbed, the creature makes a saving throw. If it succeeds, the glabrezu sustains the grab but deals no damage. If it fails, the glabrezu deals 15 damage, severs one of the target's arms or legs and then ends the grab. The target gains ongoing 15 damage (save ends).

Str 27 (+22) **Dex** 10 (+14) **Wis** 26 (+22)
Con 20 (+19) **Int** 16 (+17) **Cha** 20 (+19)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Supernal

Legionnaires

The rank and file of the Golden Legion are enslaved from myriad worlds, and over time as they wear the chains their skin becomes scaled and they sprout horns from their foreheads.

Golden Legionnaire Company Level 29 Goon Soldier
Huge immortal humanoid (devil, swarm) **XP** 7500

HP 100; **Bloodied** 50 **Initiative** +17
AC 45, **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 40 **Perception** +15
Speed 4, teleport 4 Darkvision
Resist 30 fire; half damage from melee and ranged attacks
Vulnerable 15 against close and area attacks

Traits

▸ **Huge Company**
Each warrior is wrapped in gold chains, and fiery crescents float behind their heads, like broken halos.

The company consists of twenty-five legionnaires working in tandem, filling the space of a Huge creature. The company needs only fill 9 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual could move through.

When the company is bloodied, its size is reduced to Large.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Golden Spears** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
They hide behind a phalanx of golden shields, and thrust at you with spears tipped by barbed gold.
Effect: The company makes the following attack against every enemy within reach. If used as an opportunity attack, it only targets the triggering creature. Any creature targeted by this attack is marked until the end of the company's next turn.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +34 vs. AC
Hit: 30 damage, plus ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

✣ **Hellfire Breath** (fire) ✦ At-Will
Every soldier in the company exhales a gout of fire.
Attack: Close burst 2 (creatures in burst); +32 vs. Reflex
Hit: 30 fire damage.
Miss: 15 fire damage.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Defensive Cascade** ✦ At-Will
One of the devils shouts a warning, and the whole company pivots and hoists their shields to take the brunt of the attack.
Trigger: An attack hits the company or an ally adjacent to it.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The attack deals half damage.

Str 14 (+16) **Dex** 12 (+15) **Wis** 12 (+15)
Con 14 (+16) **Int** 10 (+14) **Cha** 12 (+15)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal

Golden Legion Elite Star Level 29 Goon Brute
Large immortal humanoid (devil, swarm) **XP** 7500

HP 120; **Bloodied** 60 **Initiative** +15
AC 41, **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 40 **Perception** +15
Speed 6, teleport 6 Darkvision
Resist 30 fire; half damage from melee and ranged attacks
Vulnerable 15 against close and area attacks

Traits

▸ **Large Squad**
The star consists of five legionnaires working in tandem, filling the space of a Large creature. The company needs only fill 4 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual could move through.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Golden Gearlances** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Their polearms end with a complex geared mechanism, resembling a chain wrapped around cogs. While keeping their golden shields up for defense, they jam the gleaming mechanical lance of gold into your flesh, and then chains from its armor spiral down the weapon's length to ensnare you.
Effect: The star makes the following attack five times, but cannot target the same creature more than three times. If used as an opportunity attack, it only targets the triggering creature. Any creature targeted by this attack is marked until the end of the company's next turn.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +34 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 29). While grabbed, the target takes ongoing 5 damage, and if the squad teleports it can bring the target with it.
Special: If the squad cannot use a lance (such as if it is grabbing a foe or has used *toppling technique*), for each unavailable lance, one of the attacks just does 5 damage from kicks and shield bashes.

✓ **Toppling Technique** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
The five of them hurl their spears, the tips of which explode with flailing chains when they near you. The weapons tangle around you and their mechanism pulls them into you. The whirling torque of the heavy machines throws you to the side and drops you to the ground.
Effect: The squad releases all its grabbed enemies.
Attack: Ranged 3/6 (one creature); +32 vs. Reflex
Hit: 50 damage, and the star slides the target 2 squares and knocks it prone. The target is restrained (Escape DC 29) and has ongoing 25 damage as long as it is restrained.
Effect: The star cannot use its weapon attacks until they retrieve their spears.

✲ **Cooperative Fusilieering** (lightning) ✦ Encounter
The five devils quickly assemble the pieces of an arcanoscientific fusil powered by steam filled backpacks, then fire it at you.
Attack: Area burst 3 within 40 (creatures in burst); +32 vs. Reflex
Hit: 40 lightning damage.
Miss: 20 lightning damage.

Str 18 (+18) **Dex** 12 (+15) **Wis** 12 (+15)
Con 14 (+16) **Int** 10 (+14) **Cha** 12 (+15)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal

Constructs

The artificers of the Egalitrix fortress have crafted steam-powered flying golems out of gold. Though they have the same general shape and size of a horned devil, the steam golems have massive ornithopter wings modeled after those of a dragonfly.

Other non-combat constructs serve as pack mules, flying treasure and war materiel from airships to whatever plane is being attacked a the time.

Golden Steam Golem Level 29 Goon Soldier
Huge natural animate (construct) **XP** 7500

HP 100; **Bloodied** 50 **Initiative** +12
AC 45, **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 40 **Perception** +15
Speed 6, fly 10 (clumsy) Darkvision
Resist 30 fire

Traits

▸ **Clunky Steamcraft**
It moves clumsily, but this shimmering replica of a huge horned devil seems to have almost no vulnerable points. Its wings beat furiously, and steam blossoms out of pipes on the golden golem's back as it flies into battle.
The steam golem cannot shift. Whenever it flies, it creates a zone of concealment in close burst 2 around it, due to thick steam.

▸ **Magical Immunities**

Infernal script on the golem's chest glows red as your spell is negated.

Except as noted below, the golem is immune to elemental damage and conditions from powers that are Arcane, Divine, Elemental, Primal, Psionic, or Shadow.

Magical cold effects deal no damage to the golem, but if they hit the golem is dazed until the end of the attacker's next turn.

Magical fire effects deal no damage, but if they hit the golem it gains an action point.

Standard Actions

Whirling Claws (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Though its arm swings like a normal devil's, its hand splits into a dozen bladed rotors that whirr and slice everything in their path.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +34 vs. AC

Hit: 37 damage.

Triggered Actions

Steam Rupture (fire) ✦ Encounter

It collapses, and its various components start hissing with steam as its metal limbs flail uncontrollably, heralding an imminent explosion.

Trigger: The golem is reduced to 0 hit points.

Effect (No Action): At the beginning of the golem's next turn, make the following attack, unless the golem is dealt cold damage between now and then.

Attack: Close burst 3 (creatures in burst); +32 vs. Reflex

Hit: 30 fire damage.

Miss: 15 fire damage.

Str	24 (+21)	**Dex**	7 (+12)	**Wis**	8 (+13)
Con	24 (+21)	**Int**	3 (+10)	**Cha**	3 (+10)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** understands Supernal

Warbeasts

The plane of Elofasp provides many obedient monsters which the Golden Legion uses to reinforce their devils.

Enslaved Supplicant of Elofasp Level 29 Goon Lurker

Large natural beast **XP** 7500

HP 100; **Bloodied** 50 **Initiative** +19

AC 43, **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 41, **Will** 39 **Perception** +21

Speed 6, climb 6 Low-light vision, scent

Resist 30 fire

Immune illusions

Traits

▸ **Praying Illusion**

A golden statue hangs from the corner of the ceiling, resembling a figure draped in cloth, head bowed, hands clasped together in prayer.

Naturally the enslaved supplicant of Elofasp looks like a giant praying mantis. When the supplicant sits motionless, it is cloaked by an illusion making it resemble an inanimate object appropriate to the area, but typically reminiscent of a praying figure. It effectively can hide in plain sight.

▸ **Golden Chains**

No longer a cloth-draped supplicant, this giant insect extends jagged forelimbs wrapped with golden chains.

See *Golden Chains* in the Golden Legion Pit Fiend.

▸ **Angelic Arrival**

Flashing beams of sunlight strobe through the room, threatening to blind you and keeping you from initially realizing that the golden statue has lunged at you. Spines on its back burst with a surreal light show.

When it attacks, the supplicant produces bright light in a 6 square radius. If the supplicant takes an action to hide, the light ends, and the sudden darkness grants the supplicant the ability to hide even if there is no other cover or concealment.

Standard Actions

Claw Snap ✦ At-Will, Basic

It grabs you between two saw-like forelimbs, where living chitin has somehow fused with adamantine.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +34 vs. AC

Hit: 30 damage, or 50 damage if the target is unaware of the supplicant.

▸ **Consume** ✦ At-Will

It snatches you and carries you up to the ceiling, scuttling out of reach so it can safely munch on your head.

Effect: The supplicant uses *claw snap*. If it hit the target, the target is grabbed (Escape DC 28). Whether it hits or misses, it can climb its speed. While the target is grabbed, the target takes ongoing 25 damage.

Minor Actions

Fall to Your Knees (illusion) ✦ Encounter

The mantis's eyes warp the light around you and conjure a fractured landscape of holy figures towering over you. The ground is not where you expect, causing you to trip and land on your knees.

Attack: Close burst 6 (creatures in burst); +32 vs. Fortitude

Hit: The target falls prone and is blinded until the end of the supplicant's next turn.

Effect: The area becomes a zone of illusions until the end of the encounter, which grants total concealment.

Skills Perception +21, Stealth +27

Str	24 (+21)	**Dex**	20 (+19)	**Wis**	14 (+16)
Con	24 (+21)	**Int**	1 (+9)	**Cha**	6 (+12)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Enslaved Elofasp Ravant Level 30 Skirmisher

Large natural beast **XP** 18000

HP 220; **Bloodied** 110 **Initiative** +25

AC 44, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 42 **Perception** +25

Speed 10, climb 10, swim 10, burrow 4, fly 12 Darkvision, scent

Resist 30 fire

Immune untyped ongoing damage (i.e., it doesn't bleed, so you can't kill it)

Vulnerable psychic 20

Traits

▸ **Golden Chains**

Chains of gold stitch together dozens of old scars across the burly body of this bizarre creature. It runs with lithe agility, but at the approach of danger it compresses its form so natural armor plates slide into place to protect it. Its forelimbs have massive scooping claws fit for tearing through stone, while slits on its back reveal what appear to be a set of folded wings which heave like auxiliary lungs.

See *Golden Chains* in the Golden Legion Pit Fiend.

▸ **Implacable**

Bone is visible beneath its flesh, but it does not bleed and indeed does not seem to care about the wound.

No effect can cause the ravant to be denied its normal complement of standard, move, and minor actions, unless it is dominated.

When reduced to 0 hit points, the ravant falls prone but does not die. It becomes dazed, but continues to fight slowly (since it must spend a whole turn to stand back up). It only dies when a critical hit strikes it after it is reduced to 0 hit points. Throwing it in lava just pisses it off.

Standard Actions

Claw Swipe ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 1d12+10 damage.

✓ **Grasp, Rend, and Rip** ✦ At-Will

It digs the claws of its two forelimbs into you, then pulls in either direction and begins to rip you apart. The armored beak covering its mouth gapes, and it crunches into you, shattering bone.

Effect: The ravant uses *claw swipe* twice. If both attacks hit the same target, make the following attack against that target.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +33 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d12+20 damage plus ongoing 20 damage, and the target makes a saving throw. If the target succeeds, it loses a limb of its choice. If it fails, it loses a limb of the ravant's choice.

Minor Actions

▸ **Diamond Form** ✦ At-Will

It becomes suddenly squat and stocky, then barrels toward you at unbelievable speed.

Special: The ravant can only use this power if it hasn't attacked this turn.

Effect: Until the start of its next turn, the ravant gains resist 20 against all non-psychic damage, its speed increases by 6, and it cannot attack.

Skills Perception +21, Stealth +27

Str	30 (+25)	**Dex**	30 (+25)	**Wis**	20 (+20)
Con	30 (+25)	**Int**	3 (+11)	**Cha**	6 (+13)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Unique Figures

These are the leaders and champions of the Golden Legion. The actual leader of the legion, Egal the Shimmering, is off somewhere in hell.

Star Marshall Lacacia Level 30 Elite Skirmisher (Leader)

Medium immortal humanoid (devil, shapechanger) **XP** 18,000

HP 420; **Bloodied** 210 **Initiative** +27

AC 44, **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 43, **Will** 42 **Perception** +20

Speed 8, fly 8, teleport 6 Darkvision

Resist 30 fire, 15 poison

Saves +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

▸ **Golden Chains**

Beautiful, statuesque, this woman's blond hair is woven with gold chains that trail from piercings in her cheeks and in the scales of her bare skin. She wears a long black captain's coat that hangs seductively open, leaving her shoulders uncovered, threatening at any moment to fall free from her perfectly-curved figure. Strands of barbed gold thread in and out of the fabric and wrap around her arms and legs.

See *Golden Chains* in the Golden Legion Pit Fiend.

▸ **Unquestioned Command**

One of the other legionnaires throws himself in the path of your attack, sparing the captain.

If a melee or ranged attack targets Lacacia and any of her allies are adjacent, she may have the attack target one of those allies instead.



Standard Actions

⊘ **Tanar'ri Technique** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

"Before I joined the legion," she telepathically sends into your minds, "I was a general of the abyssal hordes." She pulls open the breast of her captain's coat, revealing a necklace whose pendant, nestled just above her bosom, is a six-armed woman with a serpent's tail. In the moment it takes you to recognize this, four golden weapons manifest and fly at you.

Effect: Lacacia conjures and attacks once each with a scythe, two longswords, and a longspear, which all levitate nearby her, leaving her own hands free. Make each of the following attacks once.

✦ *Scythe Attack:* Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Scythe Hit: 2d8+10 damage, and the target takes a -5 penalty to saving throws until the end of Lacacia's next turn.

✦ *Caustic Longsword Attack:* Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Caustic Longsword Hit: 2d8+10 damage, and the target takes ongoing 15 acid damage (save ends).

✦ *Curare-Coated Longsword Attack:* Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Curare-Coated Longsword Hit: 2d8+10 damage, and the target is slowed and weakened (save ends both).

✦ *Longspear Attack:* Melee 2 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Longspear Hit: 2d12+10 damage, and Lacacia pushes the target 3 squares.

✓ **Captain's Lover** ✦ Encounter

"You," she compels, "my quarters, now! I expect you naked by the time I get in there." You find yourself eager to satisfy her every desire.

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +33 vs. Will

Hit: The target is slavishly dominated (save ends). While slavishly dominated, the target takes all of its normal actions, but it treats Lacacia and her allies as its allies, and treats her enemies as its enemies. If Lacacia gives the target an obviously fatal order it immediately ends this domination.

Special: This power recharges if it misses or when the target saves against it.

Note: Lacacia typically orders a foe to remove itself from combat and strip naked.

Minor Actions

✓ **Devil in Disguise** (polymorph, teleportation) ✦ At-Will, 1/round

She changes shape to resemble one of your allies, then staggers for a moment as if trying to convince you she's confused.

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +33 vs. Will

Hit: Lacacia and the target each teleport to the other's location.

Effect: Lacacia may alter her physical form to take on the appearance of the target, or any other Medium humanoid. She can also dismiss any weapons she has manifested.

▸ **Scrabble for Freedom** ✦ At-Will, 1/round

"Great freedom to he who fights the strongest!" She tosses gold coins out into the battle, and her flagging allies renew their assault.

Effect: Lacacia throws gold coins into a zone in area burst 1 within 5, which lasts until the end of the encounter (or until someone removes the fifty or so coins from the ground). Lacacia's allies gain a +2 bonus to their attack rolls against enemies in the zone. If one of her allies in the zone would be slain, instead it is reduced to 1 hit point and the zone ends as the gold is drawn into that ally's chains.

Skills Bluff +29, Insight +25, Intimidate +29, Religion +26

Str	20 (+20)	**Dex**	34 (+27)	**Wis**	20 (+20)
Con	27 (+23)	**Int**	22 (+21)	**Cha**	28 (+24)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal, telepathy



General Paelyrion XVIII Level 30 Elite Controller (Leader)
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) **XP** 18,000

HP 420; **Bloodied** 210 **Initiative** +17
AC 44, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 41, **Will** 43 **Perception** +24
Speed 6, teleport 6 Darkvision
Resist 30 fire, 15 poison
Saves +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

▸ **Golden Chains**

The rail-thin devil has only a handful of golden chains that wrap up from his wrists to a collar around his neck. His chest is bare, his red skin scarred with infernal sigils that flicker with an inner fire. Gashes at his shoulder and elbow joints seethe with flames and smoke. An inferno roils in the hollow eye sockets of his gaunt face, and he casually wipes away a trickle of lava running down his cheek like a tear. A golden sword slots down a line of piercings along his spine, its crossguard behind his head in a cruel mockery of a halo, polished to a mirror's shine.

He wears a long black skirt from his waist down to the ground, and he seems to glide rather walk, his smooth movement always accompanied by the scrape of metal against metal.

See *Golden Chains* in the Golden Legion Pit Fiend.

☼ **His Celestial Eruption** ✦ Aura 5

He grits his jagged teeth, and every link of gold chain in the room begins to sizzle with heat.

Creatures in the aura that are grabbed by Paelyrion's allies take ongoing 15 fire damage while they are grabbed. The Escape DC to get free from a grab in the aura is increased by 2.

Standard Actions

✓ **Distracting Claw** ✦ At-Will, Basic

His voice rasps as he tries to gash your face with his taloned fingers. "We perform drills, you know? In case someone attacks our throne room. Predictably, you are too focused on fighting me."

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6+18 damage.
Effect: Creatures get a +2 bonus to attack the target until the end of Paelyrion's next turn.

✲ **Mockery of the Crown** (teleportation) ✦ At-Will

"Such might." He claps lightly in applause. "Do I sense a king among you? Let us see whose treasury is superior." From the air above you, literal tons of golden treasure begins to fall and crush you.

Attack: Area burst 1 within 20 (creatures in burst); +33 vs. Reflex
Hit: 6d10 damage, and the target is knocked prone and restrained (Escape DC 33).
Effect: The area becomes difficult terrain, and its elevation is raised 5 feet.

✧ **Unleash Inner Fire** (fire) ✦ At-Will

He digs his talons into his own palm, then points that palm at you and launches a gout of flame.

Attack: Close blast 5 (creatures in burst); +33 vs. Reflex
Hit: 4d8+10 fire damage, and the target takes ongoing 20 fire damage (save ends).
Miss: Half damage.

✲ **Shape Lava** (fire) ✦ Encounter

The burning pits of his eyes flare, and from the room's floor grating a chain of lava lurches and reaches for you.

Requirement: The origin of this attack must be within 3 squares of lava, which could be the inner caldera or the channels along the floor grates of the legion Command.
Attack: Area burst 1 within 20 (creatures in burst); +33 vs. Reflex
Hit: 6d12 fire damage, and the target takes ongoing 40 fire damage and is immobilized (save ends both).
Aftereffect: The target takes ongoing 20 fire damage and is slowed (save ends).

Minor Actions

▸ **Legion Maneuvers** ✦ At-Will, 1/round

"Take him to the mirror!" the fiend commands his allies.

Effect: One of Paelyrion's allies that can hear him moves its speed and can attempt to grab a target or use a melee basic attack.

Skills Arcana +29, Bluff +29, Diplomacy +29, Intimidate +29, Religion +29

Str	26 (+23)	**Dex**	14 (+17)	**Wis**	28 (+24)
Con	27 (+23)	**Int**	28 (+24)	**Cha**	28 (+24)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal, myriad others

Enslaved Master Chyak Level 30 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP** 9,000

HP 210; **Bloodied** 105 **Initiative** +22
AC 44, **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 44, **Will** 44 **Perception** +32
Speed 8
Resist 15 lightning, 15 thunder

Traits

▸ **Golden Chains**

The wizened old man would move with serene grace if not for the golden chains weighing him down.

See *Golden Chains* in the Golden Legion Pit Fiend.

▸ **Empty Body Flurry**

An intense wind shoves away those around him.

Once on each of his turns when Chyak attacks, he first slides every enemy within 2 squares except the target 2 squares and deals 10 thunder damage to them.

Standard Actions

✓ **Winding Chain** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

His chains lash out, snare, and drag you.

Attack: Melee 5 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8+15 damage, and he slides the target 5 squares.

✓ **Pebble Snatched from Landslide** ✦ Encounter

He casually grabs your main hand, and presses his fingers into a vulnerable joint, waiting for you to overreact so he can pull your weapon from you.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +33 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 3d8+15 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 30). While it is grabbed, it is weakened, and if it attacks with a weapon or implement, Chyak disarms the creature after the attack as a free action. He then hurls the item into the sky, and at the end of the attacker's next turn it falls in a space of Chyak's choice within 5 squares of where he was when he threw it.

✓ **Moon Lights the Day** ✦ Encounter

After the slightest pause to find your weak point, he leaps and strikes your sternum. Your vision blurs, colors transpose across the spectrum, you feel snapping throughout your body, as if a thousand tiny ligaments had torn. You stagger, and have to learn how to move your limbs and mind all over again.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +33 vs. Will

Hit: 100 damage, and the target's ki is scrambled. It takes a -5 penalty to all defenses, and to all rolls that are based on any of its six ability scores, including damage rolls.

At the end of the target's turn it makes a save for each of its six ability scores. For each success, it no longer suffers a penalty on defenses or rolls associated with that ability.

Miss: Half damage, and the target only suffers a -2 penalty.

Move Actions

▸ **Stance of the Paper Wind**

He crumples beneath your mighty blow, but the motion somehow takes the force out of your attack. In a continuous motion he unfolds around the other side of your strike, putting him in position for a deft counterattack.

Effect: Chyak moves his speed and enters the stance of the paper wind. While in this stance, no attack or effect can deal more than 30 damage to him in a single chunk. If an attack would deal more than 30 damage and the attacker is within reach, Chyak may use *winding chain* as an immediate reaction against the attacker.

Additionally, when a creature he has not targeted with an attack since the start of his last round attacks him, he may make a save. On a success, he completely ignores the attack.

Minor Actions

✓ **Wing Chop** ✦ At-Will, 1/round

His arm slides past your defenses, managing to interrupt your momentum while delivering a soft strike of his own. You find yourself briefly tangled, unable to move.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. Reflex

Hit: 10 damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of Chyak's next turn.

Skills Acrobatics +27, Endurance +22, Perception +32, Stealth +27

Str	12 (+16)	**Dex**	24 (+22)	**Wis**	24 (+22)
Con	14 (+17)	**Int**	13 (+16)	**Cha**	12 (+16)

Alignment Good **Languages** tongue of the sun and moon (can speak with all living things)



The Nomadic Monastery

Adventure 12

Calily, Aerial Monk

Calily's fighting style has many options, but generally she closes with *stance of the remembered migration*, then strikes with *moon lights the day*. Thereafter she uses basic attacks while hovering out of reach. If an enemy is able to close the distance or makes powerful attacks, she lands, shifts to *stance of the paper wind*, and punishes the foe for being too strong.

We present two versions – one more detailed in case she becomes a foe, and one quick-play for when she's an ally.



Calily Buen Level 30 Goon Skirmisher

HP 105; **Bloodied** 52 **Initiative** +22

AC 44, **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 44, **Will** 44 **Perception** +32

Speed 8

Resist 15 lightning, 15 thunder

Traits

▸ **Perfect Discipline**

If Calily would be dominated or stunned, she is instead dazed.

▸ **Empty Body Flurry**

Once on each of her turns when Calily attacks, she first slides every enemy within 2 squares except the target 2 squares and deals 10 thunder damage to them.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Staff Guides the Wind** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 3d8+15 damage, and she pushes the target 7 squares.

⊘ **Wing and Prayer** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Effect: Calily makes the following attack three times.

Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8+5 damage, and Calily heals 5 damage.

Move Actions

↻ **Stance of the Paper Wind**

Effect: Calily flies 8 squares and enters the stance of the paper wind. While in this stance, no attack or effect can deal more than 30 damage to Calily in a single chunk. If an attack would deal more than 30 damage and the attacker is within reach, she may use *staff guides the wind* as an immediate reaction against the attacker.

Additionally, when a creature she has not targeted with an attack since the start of her last round attacks her, she may make a save. On a success, she completely ignores the attack.

Calily Buen	Level 30 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (human)	**XP** 9,000
HP 210; **Bloodied** 105	**Initiative** +22
AC 44, **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 44, **Will** 44	**Perception** +32
Speed 8	
Resist 15 lightning, 15 thunder	

Traits

▸ **Perfect Discipline**

If Calily would be dominated or stunned, she is instead dazed.

▸ **Empty Body Flurry**

An intense wind shoves away those around her.

Once on each of her turns when Calily attacks, she first slides every enemy within 2 squares except the target 2 squares and deals 10 thunder damage to them. (This does not count as attacking them for the purpose of her *stance of the paper wind*.)

Standard Actions

⊘ **Staff Guides the Wind** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The fluttering of her monk's outfit intensifies as she jaunts sideways and sweeps her staff upward at you from beneath your guard.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 3d8+15 damage, and she pushes the target 7 squares.

⊘ **Wing and Prayer (**weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

A flick of her wrist sends three origami cranes swooping across the battlefield. Right before they collide they fold themselves into dagger-like projectiles.As they slice past, you see each is scribed with calligraphy.

Effect: Calily makes the following attack three times.

Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8+5 damage, and Calily heals 5 damage.

✓ **Pebble Snatched from Landslide** ✦ Encounter

She casually grabs your main hand, and presses her fingers into a vulnerable joint, waiting for you to overreact so she can pull your weapon from you.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +33 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 3d8+15 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 30). While it is grabbed, it is weakened, and if it attacks with a weapon or implement, Calily disarms the creature after the attack as a free action. She then hurls the item into the sky, and at the end of the attacker's next turn it falls in a space of Calily's choice within 5 squares of where she was when she threw it.

✓ **Moon Lights the Day** ✦ Encounter

She bounds backward into a crouch, gestures precisely with her left hand while holding her staff one-handed in her right, balancing the weapon just above her left forearm. After the slightest pause to find your weak point, she thrusts the staff. When it strikes your sternum, your vision blurs, colors transpose across the spectrum, you feel snapping throughout your body, as if a thousand tiny ligaments had torn. You stagger, and have to learn how to move your limbs and mind all over again.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +33 vs. Will

Hit: 100 damage, and the target's ki is scrambled. It takes a -5 penalty to all defenses, and to all rolls that are based on any of its six ability scores, including damage rolls. At the end of the target's turn it makes a save for each of its six ability scores. For each success, it no longer suffers a penalty on defenses or rolls associated with that ability. (For NPCs and monsters, use your best judgment on which score applies to its various attacks.)

Miss: Half damage, and the target only suffers a -2 penalty.

Move Actions

▸ **Stance of the Paper Wind**

She crumples beneath your mighty blow, but the motion somehow takes the force out of your attack. In a continuous motion she unfolds around the other side of your strike, putting her in position for a deft counterattack.

Effect: Calily flies 8 squares and enters the stance of the paper wind. While in this stance, no attack or effect can deal more than 30 damage to Calily in a single chunk. If an attack would deal more than 30 damage and the attacker is within reach, she may use *staff guides the wind* as an immediate reaction against the attacker.

Additionally, when a creature she has not targeted with an attack since the start of her last round attacks her, she may make a save. On a success, she completely ignores the attack.

▸ **Stance of the Remembered Migration** ✦ At-Will

Grass bursts upward like birds taking flight as a gale carries her beside you at incredible speed. She floats, poised, and slaps you in the instant you leave any opening. The strike is light, but she has gotten inside your guard.

Effect: Calily flies 20 squares and enters the stance of the remembered migration. While in this stance she can hover, and whenever an enemy adjacent to her moves, shifts, or misses her with an attack, she can use *wing chop* as an immediate interrupt.

Minor Actions

▸ **Ki Cleanse** ✦ Encounter

She vanishes, leaving behind just the outer layer of her clothing, and with it abandons her ailments.

Effect: Calily becomes invisible until she attacks, ends all negative conditions affecting her, can stand up, and shifts 8 squares. The space she left and each space adjacent to it becomes obscured until the end of her next turn.

▸ **Wing Chop** ✦ At-Will, 1/round

Her arm slides past your defenses, managing to interrupt your momentum while delivering a soft strike of her own. You find yourself briefly tangled, unable to move.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. Reflex

Hit: 10 damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of Calily's next turn.

Skills Acrobatics +27, Endurance +22, Perception +32, Stealth +27

Str	12 (+16)	**Dex**	24 (+22)	**Wis**	24 (+22)
Con	14 (+17)	**Int**	13 (+16)	**Cha**	12 (+16)

Alignment Good **Languages** tongue of the sun and moon (can speak with all living things)

Caeloon Ascetics

Most of the monks of Caeloon aren't familiar with battle, though their training has made them strong enough to aid the party.

Caeloon Ascetic	Level 30 Minion Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (human)	**XP** 2,250
HP 1; see Linked Ally	**Initiative** +22
AC 44, **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 44, **Will** 44	**Perception** +22
Speed 8	
Resist 15 lightning, 15 thunder	

Traits

▸ **Linked Ally**

Each ascetic is linked to one PC, and acts on that PC's turn. When an ascetic takes damage, if the source deals fewer than 23 damage, the monk is just knocked out. He'll recover at 1 hit point after a short rest, or if a character grants him healing, or if his linked PC spends a standard action and succeeds a Heal check (DC 23) while adjacent. A source that deals 23 damage or more kills the monk.

▸ **Empty Body Flurry**

Once on each of his turns when the ascetic attacks, he first deals 5 thunder damage to each enemy adjacent to him.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Staff** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 10 damage.

⊘ **Paper Shuriken** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 5 damage.

Move Actions

▸ **Stance of the Paper Wind**

Effect: The monk flies 8 squares and enters the stance of the paper wind. While in this stance, if an attack would kill the monk, instead the monk may use *staff* as an immediate reaction against the attacker, after which the monk falls unconscious.

Str	12 (+16)	**Dex**	24 (+22)	**Wis**	24 (+22)
Con	14 (+17)	**Int**	13 (+16)	**Cha**	12 (+16)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** tongue of the sun and moon (can speak with all living things)

Pirates of Hunlow

Adventure 12

The evil aquatic god Hunlow survives as a living sea (plane 33). He lets pirates ply his waters if they show sufficient reverence, meaning most of the pirates of Hunlow are high-level clerics.

Clergy Captains

Though they use the same stats, bear in mind each of these priests survived epic events in his or her life to reach this power level. Most were once champions and hierophants of other gods before being stranded in the Gyre and converting in order to survive.

Priest of Hunlow Level 30 Minion Artillery

Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP** 2,250

HP 1; see Hunlow Blessed **Initiative** +17

AC 44, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 42 **Perception** +20

Speed 6

Traits

▸ **Hunlow Blessed**

He spurts blood from his wound, but miraculously the red liquid stops in mid air and flies back into his body, keeping him in the fight by divine will.

Any effect that deals at least 23 damage kills the priest. Any lesser amount of damage bloodies it, or kills it if it is already bloodied.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Blessed Cutlass** (weapon, lightning) ✦ At-Will, Basic

He slashes downward, and moments after the blade hits, thin arcs of lightning flashes around you, sizzling your allies.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +33 vs. AC

Hit: 15 damage, and the priest deals 4 lightning damage to each of up to three other enemies within 10 squares.

✓ **Banishment** (implement) ✦ Encounter

He holds up his holy symbol—a severed hand with a hook driven through the palm—and rebukes you. Divine energy tries to hurl you across the multiverse, but you hear a deafening grind as the air around you manifests the destructive power of the Gyre.

Attack: Ranged 40 (one creature); +35 vs. Will

Hit: The target would be banished to its native plane if this weren't the Gyre. If the target is on its own plane (for instance, a fey on Av), this has no effect. Otherwise, the Gyre refuses to let the target leave. It manifests as mist that resembles gear teeth, creating a zone in area burst 1 centered on the target, which lasts until the end of the encounter or until the primary target dies. While the zone persists, it makes the following attack at the beginning of each of the primary target's turns.

Secondary Attack: Area burst 1 (creatures in burst); +40 vs. Reflex;

Hit: 20 damage and the target is restrained (Escape DC 40).

✲ **Crew Artillery** (thunder) ✦ Recharge 6

Several dozen pirates roar 'Yar!' in unison. Their priest captain grasps their voices, ties them together into a hook, and throws it a vast distance to snag your vessel.

Requirement: When the priest uses this power, at least thirty other crew (or in this case, 3 'boarding crews') must spend their entire turn shouting insults at the enemies or prayers to Hunlow in order to power this attack.

Attack: Area burst 3 within 200 (one creature); +35 vs. Reflex

Hit: 5d6+20 thunder damage.

Special: If the area includes a vessel, make another attack, d20+35 vs. the ship's Defense. On a hit, the ship is grabbed and held by an arcane line and divine grappling hook, which appears like a giant claw composed of blood-tinged water. The grabbed ship cannot move farther away, and it is pulled 10 feet closer every round. The claw can be removed by dealing 50 damage to it, with a Strength check (DC 30), or by various other means.

Str	12 (+16)	**Dex**	14 (+17)	**Wis**	20 (+20)
Con	14 (+17)	**Int**	10 (+15)	**Cha**	12 (+16)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common

Common Crew

Even the normal crew were tough enough to survive at least a low-level apocalypse.

Unholy Boarding Crew Level 29 Goon Skirmisher

Large natural humanoid (human) **XP** 7500

HP 96; **Bloodied** 48 **Initiative** +20

AC 43, **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 41, **Will** 41 **Perception** +15

Speed 6

Vulnerable 15 against close and area attacks

Traits

▸ **Large Crew**

These pirates all survived the end of the world, and that crucible has made them more powerful than any sailor in your own world's seas.

The crew consists of twelve pirates working in tandem, filling the space of a Large creature. The crew needs only fill 4 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual could move through.

Standard Actions

Smiting Cutlasses (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

They call upon the favor of their god as upsurging waves hurl them through the air at you.

Effect: If the crew uses this power on its turn, it can fly 8 squares, then makes the following attack against every enemy that it was adjacent to during and after that movement. Then they fall but land without taking damage. If used as an opportunity attack, the crew does not move and only targets the triggering creature.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +34 vs. AC

Hit: 30 damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares.

Skulls of the Tortured (necrotic) ✦ Encounter

The crew rip cracked skulls from bags on their hips and throw them. They begin to glow and converge on you, screaming and exploding on impact. You feel the agony of their tortured demises, and your body thrashes in shared suffering.

Attack: Area burst 2 within 40 (creatures in burst); +32 vs. Reflex

Hit: 30 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).

Miss: 15 necrotic damage.

Str	14 (+16)	**Dex**	22 (+20)	**Wis**	12 (+15)
Con	14 (+16)	**Int**	10 (+14)	**Cha**	12 (+15)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal

Fallen Angels

Every being that relies on divine power who reaches the Gyre comes to realize that only one God has true power here. Many lesser angels fall under his sway. Some patrol the skull islands, but two always watch the stairs to Drozani (plane 25).

Fallen Angel of Hunlow Level 29 Minion Artillery

Large immortal humanoid (angel) **XP** 3750

HP 1; a missed attack does not damage this minion **Initiative** +18

AC 43, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 41, **Will** 40 **Perception** +15

Speed 6, fly 9 (hover)

Standard Actions

Stormy Trident (weapon, lightning) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 2 or Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +34 vs. AC

Hit: 15 damage, and at the beginning of the angel's next turn, a bolt of lightning strikes the same square (even if the target has moved), dealing 15 lightning damage to each creature in that square.

Special: A thrown trident returns to the angel.

Str	26 (+22)	**Dex**	18 (+18)	**Wis**	12 (+15)
Con	18 (+18)	**Int**	10 (+14)	**Cha**	16 (+17)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Supernal

Captain Thrusty

This jovially sadistic captain wields his rapier with bizarre agility considering his stocky, overweight frame.

Captain Thrusty Level 30 Skirmisher

Medium immortal humanoid (devil) **XP** 18,000

HP 244; **Bloodied** 122 **Initiative** +24

AC 44, **Fortitude** 44, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 42 **Perception** +20

Speed 12 Darkvision

Resist 15 fire, 15 poison

Immune charm, dominate

Traits

Aura of Mystery and Menace (illusion) ✦ Aura 5

Why does he wear a black domino mask, and dress all in black? Who was he before he was a pirate? His skin is scaled like a fiend, but he's fat like a merchant prince. Oh, your mind wandered, and you failed to react to his movement.

Enemies in the aura cannot take immediate or opportunity actions as long as they can see Thrusty.

Thrusty's allies in the aura are immune to charm and dominate effects.

Sneak Attack

If Thrusty hits a foe granting combat advantage to him, he deals an extra 3d8 damage.

Standard Actions

Golden Rapier (fire) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The oversized rapier looks carved from a dragon's tooth, and gilded ostentatiously. He lunges in and out of range with speed that seems impossible for someone as stout as he is.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+25 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Thrust! ✦ At-Will

He sprints at you, and his blade plunges through you, knocks you back, and carries on into one of your allies.

Effect: Thrusty uses *golden rapier*, and if the attack hits he can slide the target up to 6 squares, shift to a space adjacent to the primary target, then uses *golden rapier* against an enemy who is on the direct opposite side of the primary target from him. (The enemy does not benefit from cover, even though Thrusty is stabbing through another person to get to him.) Each foe hit by this attack takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends).

Blessings of the Rum Ration ✦ Encounter

"Let's get our enemies drunk!" he proclaims. You suddenly feel nauseous and all...stumbly.

Attack: Close burst 5 (enemies in burst); +33 vs. Fortitude

Hit: The target is intoxicated (save ends). While intoxicated, the creature rolls twice on all d20 rolls and uses the worse result, including saves.

Aftereffect: When the target saves against this effect, it vomits grog and falls prone.

Triggered Actions

Unlikely Riposte (teleportation) ✦ At-Will

You think you're safely out of range.

Trigger: An attack hits Thrusty and the attacker is more than 12 squares away from him.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): Thrusty teleports adjacent to the triggering creature and uses *golden rapier*. He can choose to either remain there, or teleport back to his starting spot.

Inconceivable! (teleportation) ✦ Encounter

That should have killed him, but somehow he got away and appears totally fine.

Trigger: An effect would reduce Thrusty to 0 hit points or render him unconscious.

Effect (Immediate Interrupt): Thrusty teleports 12 squares, ends all negative conditions affecting him, and is not affected by the triggering effect at all if he is outside the area.

Skills Bluff +29, Insight +25, Intimidate +29, Religion +26

Str	32 (+26)	**Dex**	24 (+22)	**Wis**	20 (+20)
Con	27 (+23)	**Int**	22 (+21)	**Cha**	28 (+24)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal

Admiral Taracle

Hunlow sired a child, and this wretched being has commanded the Hunlow pirates for centuries. Like his father, he's not subtle. He likes to eat people alive, but for appearances he usually starts battles with a pair of dwarven axes looted from the tomb on Dunkelweiss (plane 31). These radiant axes were the personal weapons of the dwarven king Ron the Grand.

Admiral Taracle	Level 30 Elite Brute (Leader)
Medium immortal humanoid (demigod)	**XP** 36,000
HP 500; **Bloodied** 250	**Initiative** +24
AC 42, **Fortitude** 44, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 42	**Perception** +20
Speed 7, fly 8	Darkvision
Resist 15 acid	
Vulnerable 20 fire	
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	

Traits

▸ **Divine Presence** ✦ Aura 20

The pirates cheer as their leader wades into combat.

Taracle's allies in the aura have resist 5 all if the admiral attacked since their last turn. When Taracle is killed, each of his allies in the aura takes 5 damage.

Standard Actions

✓ **Pincer Claw** (poison) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Under his sea-soaked robes are dozens of mismatched snapping limbs. One strikes out then withdraws like a segmented viper.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 2d10+20 damage, and the target takes ongoing 25 poison damage (save ends).

✓ **Dueling Dwarven Axes** (weapon, radiant) ✦ At-Will, Basic

He engages you with flourishes and savage strikes, driving you across the battlefield. It's odd that he's wielding fine dwarven axes, which glow along their heads like sunbeams.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+10 damage and 20 radiant damage, and Taracle pushes the target 2 squares, then shifts 2 squares.

▸ **Indomitable Assault** ✦ At-Will

Effect: Taracle makes two basic attacks.

✓ **Eat Alive** ✦ At-Will

He abandons all civility and just lunges at you. His hood falls back, revealing a face half-man, half-crustacean, with three asymmetrical pincers around his mouth, with an all-too-human tongue salivating for your blood.

Attack: Melee 1 (one bloodied creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 4d10+80 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 32) and knocked prone. Taracle also falls prone. If the target dies from this damage, Taracle stands up and gains an action point.

Str	26 (+23)	**Dex**	17 (+18)	**Wis**	14 (+17)
Con	20 (+20)	**Int**	14 (+17)	**Cha**	28 (+24)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common

Beasts and Horrors

Adventure 12

Only nigh invincible monsters survive the end of the world, so every monster in the Gyre is horrifying.

Vaknids of Urim

The great worms of Urim (plane 47) are too slow to be a threat, but vaknids, though still immense, are dangerously swift. These undead spiders purge their surroundings of air, and so their movements are always completely silent, which makes their immense scuttling even more unsettling.

Vaknid Vortexweaver	Level 30 Controller
Huge magical beast (spider, undead)	**XP** 18,000
HP 214; **Bloodied** 107	**Initiative** +17
AC 44, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 42	**Perception** +20
Speed 10, climb 10 (web)	Darkvision, tremorsense 15
Immune poison, disease, see *aura of vacuum*	

Traits

▸ **Aura of Vacuum** ✦ Aura 3

Everything goes silent, you forcibly cough out all the air in your lungs, and you feel burning as your eyes begin to boil in a vacuum.

No air exists within the aura. Living creatures that end their turn in the aura take 10 damage.

If a creature that needs to breath ends its turn in the aura, it must make an Endurance check (DC 20 +5 for each previous check). On a failure, the creature falls unconscious. Once it is able to breathe again, it can make a saving throw at the end of each of its turns. If it succeeds, it wakes up.

Most fire and thunder attacks have no effect in the aura.

Standard Actions

✓ **Heavy Stomp** ✦ At-Will, Basic

A rocky segmented leg stomps you.

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 3d8+25 damage, and the target is knocked prone. Until the vaknid moves out of reach of the target, the target is restrained (Escape DC 30).

✓ **Suck the Life** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will

The immense, hollow spider husk bites into you, and its pedipalps siphon your blood.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 2d10+10 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 30). While grabbed, the target has ongoing 30 necrotic damage, and whenever the vaknid deals this damage, it heals an equal amount.

Minor Actions

✲ **Vacuous Orb** ✦ Encounter

It slings its abdomen and whips out a long thread of glowing green silk. A few flicks of its hind legs spin it into a fibrous orb about the size of a man, with a gap at one end. Then it kicks it toward you, and the wind begins to roar as an overpowering suction pulls you toward it.

Effect: The vaknid conjures a zone in area burst 10 within 20. Movement in that area away from the origin costs an extra 2 squares per square of movement. Each square of movement toward the origin moves creatures 2 extra squares. The intense winds impose a -4 penalty on ranged weapon attacks.

The zone doesn't affect vaknids or creatures in their aura of vacuum. If the origin space is in an aura of vacuum, the zone's effect is suppressed. Make the following attack centered on the origin space.

Attack: Area burst 10 within 20 (creatures in burst); +33 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The target is pulled 10 squares toward the orb. A creature that reaches the origin space of the zone clogs the hole if it is at least Medium. While the hole is clogged, the aura is suppressed, but the creature is restrained (Escape DC 40) and takes ongoing 50 damage. Once the creature dies, the hole reopens.
Sustain minor. Repeat the attack.

Skills Perception +20, Stealth +22

Str	40 (+30)	**Dex**	14 (+17)	**Wis**	10 (+15)
Con	27 (+23)	**Int**	1 (+10)	**Cha**	8 (+14)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** -

Vaknid Webmaster

Level 30 Elite Controller
Gargantuan magical beast (spider, undead) **XP** 36,000

HP 428; **Bloodied** 214 **Initiative** +17
AC 44, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 42 **Perception** +20
Speed 12, climb 12 (web) Darkvision, tremorsense 30
Resist 20 acid
Immune poison, disease, see *aura of vacuum*
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

☼ **Aura of Vacuum** ✦ Aura 5
It smashes across the ground with the weight of a mountain, but it makes no sound.
See the vaknid vortexweaver. Note that this aura is larger.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Mountainous Stomp** ✦ At-Will, Basic
The ground shatters where it steps. The upheaval throws you off your feet even though its stomp missed you. As you land, unnatural green webs sprout from the vacuous air and threaten to entangle you.
Special: The vaknid cannot target creatures with this attack if they are adjacent to it or in its own space.
Attack: Melee 6 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8+50 damage, and the target is knocked prone. Until the vaknid moves out of reach of the target, the target is restrained (Escape DC 30).
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Make a secondary attack.
Secondary Attack: Area burst 1 centered on primary target (enemies in burst); +33 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The target is immobilized until the end of the webmaster's next turn.
Miss: The target is slowed until the end of the webmaster's next turn.

✧ **Acid Web** (acid) ✦ At-Will
It distends its mouth and squirts wretched streams of noxious green acid from a nest of writhing orifices. As the acid covers you it turns solid, sticky, and fibrous, becoming a horrific corrosive web.
Attack: Close blast 4 (creatures in burst); +33 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6+20 acid damage and the target is restrained (Escape DC 30).
Effect: The area becomes a zone of corrosive webs until the end of the encounter. The area is difficult terrain for creatures that cannot climb through webs. Any creature that enters or ends its turn in the zone takes 20 acid damage and is restrained (Escape DC 30).

Minor Actions

✧ **Bristling Bones** ✦ At-Will, 1/round
Now that you're beside it, you can see that the mat of webs stretched across its pitted chitin is riddled with the skeletons of ancient meals. The monster twitches, and the bones come alive, striking at you where its own massive limbs could not.
Attack: Close burst 0 (creatures on the vaknid or in its space); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+10 damage, and the vaknid slides the target 3 squares (ideally to a space it can stomp).

▸ **Web Mastery** ✦ At-Will, 1/round
The mountainous bulk of the creature shifts slightly as you step onto the web, as if it has noticed you. Suddenly the fibers you're maneuvering across begin to writhe, bits of undead spiders within them causing the web to move like a serpent, pulling you with it.
Effect: The vaknid can cause a strand of web to stretch up to 10 squares from any other webbed space, even in defiance of gravity, as long as it remains within 30 squares. Alternately, the vaknid chooses a target on a web within 30 squares of it and makes the following attack against it.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +33 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The vaknid slides the target 5 squares.

Skills Perception +20, Stealth +22

Str	40 (+30)	**Dex**	14 (+17)	**Wis**	10 (+15)
Con	27 (+23)	**Int**	1 (+10)	**Cha**	8 (+14)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Savants of Shabboath

Those who cross the pockmarked, flooded surface of Shabboath (plane 45) feel drawn into murky tunnels that lead to a sunless sea. In their dreams, immense imposing beings demand their obeisance.

Slumbering Savant

If savants expect combat, they'll spend time manifesting a waxy slime that they can shape into baroque structures that provide cover and create a labyrinth to confuse intruders. These walls can be broken through fairly easily. A creature that succeeds a Strength check (DC 20) can pry open a hole sufficient to move through, then pass through five feet, as a standard action. Alternately, a character can attempt to ram through (Strength DC 27), and on a success it treats the space as difficult terrain, and leaves a hole in its wake.

The savant's real body remains immobile and hidden against one of these walls, and it only moves if it is confident no enemies will see it before it can become invisible again (see *inert invisibility*). Meanwhile its *schistic projection* engages the party, typically by swimming into melee, using *sense-link tentacle*, and then vanishing when the real body spends a minor action to dismiss it and conjure it elsewhere. If an enemy is struck by the tentacle, the real body uses *unintrusive compulsion* to draw the victim close enough for it to *embrace and observe*. While the savant flays open the mind of its victim, the projection repeatedly uses *eerie slimecraft* to keep enemies from engaging its real body.

Slumbering Savant

Level 28 Elite Lurker
Huge aberrant magical beast (aquatic) **XP** 26,000

HP 380; **Bloodied** 190 **Initiative** +12
AC 42, **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 46 **Perception** +19
Speed 5, swim 10 Darkvision, blindsight 20
Resist 20 acid
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Schistic Projection**
The monster swims by in the murk, its body somehow unreal, tentacles and shell-like plates glowing at their tips in green, blue, and white. Globules of living fire float beside it, like a school of fish drawn with oil and set alight.
The savant is normally sessile, remaining clamped to a solid surface with its trunk. However it can manifest a projection of part of its consciousness, which resembles the savant but more stylized, often glowing with deep red or purple hues, or surrounded by schools of fish composed of motes of fire.

The projection and the real savant share senses, hit points, ability scores, and initiative. Conditions affect each version of the savant separately. They use the same pool of actions, but the savant can only take certain actions with its real body, others with its projection. Typically the projection will move while the real savant stays motionless and concealed.

As a minor action once per round, the savant can dismiss his projection, then conjure a new one anywhere within 20 squares. This projection is new, and suffers no conditions that were affecting the previous projection. If the savant's real body is incapacitated (dominated or stunned, for instance), it cannot 'flicker' its projection in this way, but the projection can still act on its own.

▸ **Inert Invisibility**

Huge shapes loom from the walls of this flooded chamber, all of them eerily organic. Anything could be a living creature, but nothing is moving.

At the end of the savant's turn, if its real body did not move or make a melee attack, it becomes invisible until it moves or makes a melee attack. The projection can attack without revealing the real body.

Standard Actions

Sense-Link Tentacle (psychic) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The limb is slimy, but after it releases you from its coils your skin feels slimy, flexible, and writhing. No, you haven't changed. You just cannot feel your own body. You're feeling what it *feels.*

Requirement: Either the real body or the projection can use this power. Each of them can use it as an opportunity attack, but if both are within range when the attack is provoked, only one can attack.

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +33 vs. AC

Hit: 3d12+15 damage, and the target's senses are linked with the savant (save ends). While linked, the savant is aware of whatever the target senses, understands all languages the target understands, and cannot grant combat advantage to the creature. The creature takes a -2 penalty to all attack rolls and skill or ability checks that are based on Strength or Dexterity since it cannot sense its own body. Additionally, whenever the savant takes damage, each creature linked to it takes 5 psychic damage.

Eerie Slimecraft (acid) ✦ At-Will

The bizarre glowing creature curls its body but spreads its tentacles, like a conductor before an orchestra. Strands of the air and water around you turn viscous, conjuring an ornate maze of slime bars, each majestically crafted with fantastic translucent designs no solid object could ever convey. It is beautiful and bewildering, and if you touch any of the bars they burn you horribly.

Requirement: Only the projection can use this power.

Attack: Close blast 7 (enemies in blast); +31 vs. Reflex

Hit: 6d6+15 acid damage, and the target is restrained (Escape DC 32). Whenever the target attempts to escape, it takes 20 acid damage.

Embrace and Observe (psychic) ✦ At-Will

The inert coils on the wall come alive, and four tentacles encircle you. They pull you against a hard shell covered in slime, and as you struggle you feel yourself falling away from the real world. You land into a familiar memory, but the world is flooded and dark, and just at the edge of the light, three eyes watch you.

Requirement: Only the real body can use this power. It can only have one creature embraced at a time.

Effect: The savant uses *sense-link tentacle* twice against the same target. If one attack hits, the target is grabbed (Escape DC 32) and pulled 2 squares to be adjacent to the savant. If both attacks hit, the target is also embraced. While embraced, its consciousness is drawn into a mindscape, it can take no actions in the real world, and it cannot save against being sense-linked. While the target is in the mindscape, if the savant's real body is invisible, the embraced creature is also invisible.

During each round of combat, a longer period of subjective time occurs for the embraced creature (however long works to keep the combat pacing going). It can interact with the savant, which communicates telepathically, and then the embraced creature can attempt a Diplomacy check (DC 40) to come to an understanding with the savant so it no longer sees the creature as hostile, or an Insight check (DC 32) to navigate through its own subconscious in order to create an exit. In either case, a success frees the creature from the mindscape.

Minor Actions

Unintrusive Compulsion (psychic) ✦ At-Will, 1/round

You struggle to move without feeling your own flesh, and you don't notice until it's too late that now your body is moving without your control.

Requirement: Only the savant's real body can use this power.

Attack: Close burst 20 (one sense-linked creature in burst); +31 vs. Will

Hit: 3d6+20 psychic damage, and on the target's next turn, before it can take any actions of its own, it takes a Move action directed by the savant.

Flay the Mind (psychic) ✦ At-Will, 1/round

A tap on your shoulder. Stover Delft stands behind you. Leans too far to the side. Impossible without falling. Asks you how mission goes. Not real. Floor begins to crumble. You must run!

Requirement: Only the savant's real body can use this power. It cannot use this power in the same turn it uses *unintrusive compulsion*, since they're basically the same power manifesting different ways.

Effect: A figure from the embraced creature's past appears in the mindscape and brings up important history. It has 1 hit point, the savant's defenses, and effectively infinite speed. The embraced creature can attempt to attack these figures on its turn.

When one of these figures appears, it makes the following attack. On the savant's turn each round, any figures that survived from the past round also make the following attack.

Attack: Close burst 1 (embraced creature in burst); +31 vs. Will

Hit: 3d6+20 psychic damage, and on the target's next turn, before it can take any actions of its own, it spends a Move action to flee farther into the mindscape. Whenever it flees into the mindscape it suffers a cumulative -2 penalty to its skill checks to escape the mindscape.

Skills Arcana +25, Dungeoneering +25, Insight +24

Str	34 (+26)	**Dex**	6 (+12)	**Wis**	20 (+19)
Con	26 (+22)	**Int**	23 (+20)	**Cha**	22 (+20)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 20

Grand Savant

Where the lesser savants are subtle and tricky, the grand savant has grown lazy with its immense strength.

Grand Savant Level 33 Elite Controller
Gargantuan aberrant magical beast (aquatic) **XP** 62,000

HP 430; **Bloodied** 215 **Initiative** +12
AC 47, **Fortitude** 45, **Reflex** 43, **Will** 51 **Perception** +21
Speed 1, swim 2 Darkvision, blindsight 20
Resist 20 acid
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Corpulent Turgidity**
Its slimy flesh has grown beyond the bonds of its shell. The pallid, fat horror can barely move, but the water around it hardens and shifts into thick wax in response to your attacks.

After any attack that targets the savant, spaces adjacent to it that would have been in the path of the attack become blocking terrain of waxy walls (as described above), unless there is a creature occupying that space, in which case they become difficult terrain. Single-target attacks just fill one square, but a fireball along the grand savant's side would create a wall in every square adjacent to the parts of its body caught in the burst.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Placid Consumption** ✦ At-Will, Basic
A massive tentacle flails at you, then pulls you toward a gnashing beak mostly hidden under the monster's layers of barnacled fat.
Attack: Melee 4 (one creature); +36 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d12+20 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 37). The grand savant pulls the target 6 squares and places it under its body. While it is held under the body, it is chewed by the beak, taking ongoing 30 damage.

⌖ **Casual Enslavement** (psychic) ✦ At-Will
Its willpower pressing against your mind is like an elephant wrestling a turtle.
Attack: Close burst 20 (one creature in burst); +36 vs. Will
Hit: 6d6+20 psychic damage, and the grand savant enslaves the creature until the end of the savant's next turn. The effect is treated as domination, except the enslaved creature can take its normal allotment of actions (Standard, Move, Minor, and Opportunity) and is not dazed. It can still only use at-will powers.
Miss: Half damage, and the target is dominated until the end of the savant's next turn.

Minor Actions

⟋ **Devastating Probe** (psychic) ✦ At-Will, 1/round
It is curious about you, and moves its consciousness closer, like the sun moving for a closer look at an ant-hill.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +36 vs. Will
Hit: 3d6+10 psychic damage, and the grand savant's allies gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls against the target, and to defenses and saves against the target's attacks for as long as the grand savant is alive.

Skills Arcana +29, Dungeoneering +29, Insight +26

Str 42 (+32) **Dex** 2 (+12) **Wis** 20 (+21)
Con 26 (+24) **Int** 28 (+24) **Cha** 22 (+22)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 20

Aquatic Minions

The savants recently enslaved some creatures from Mavisha to use as bodyguards.

Kraken Guardian Level 28 Goon Soldier
Gargantuan natural beast (aquatic) **XP** 6,500

HP 100; **Bloodied** 50 **Initiative** +20
AC 44, **Fortitude** 40, **Reflex** 39, **Will** 38 **Perception** +17
Speed 6, swim 8 Darkvision, blindsight 10

Traits

▸ **Fending Tentacles**
The kraken guardian has threatening reach.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Mass of Tentacles** ✦ At-Will, Basic
It's more tentacle than body, and every surface flexes with sharp barbs.
Attack: Melee 4 (one creature); +33 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12+20 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 32).
Sustain free. The kraken guardian can hold up to three grabbed creatures at a time without spending an action.

Minor Actions

⟋ **Hydroblast** ✦ At-Will, 1/round
Some orifice on its body squirts you with water that knocks you away.
Attack: Ranged 6 (one creature); +31 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d6+5 damage and the target is pushed 6 squares.

Str 28 (+23) **Dex** 18 (+18) **Wis** 16 (+17)
Con 29 (+23) **Int** 2 (+10) **Cha** 10 (+14)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Elemental Chum Swarm Level 28 Minion Skirmisher
Large elemental animate (swarm, water) **XP** 3250

HP 1; see Ghost Horde **Initiative** +25
AC 38, **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 36 **Perception** +17
Speed 8, swim 12 Darkvision
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks
Vulnerable 15 against close and area attacks

Traits

▸ **Elemental Swarm**
Rather than one large water elemental, this is a swarm of scores of tiny ones, each thrashing around, somehow bonded to a bit of dead flesh. The chum surges toward you.

Each horde consists of scores of tiny elementals, filling the space of a Large creature. The horde needs only fill 4 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual elemental could move through.

Any effect that deals at least 22 damage 'kills' the swarm. Any lesser amount of damage bloodies the swarm, or 'kills' it if it is already bloodied.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Thrash** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +32 vs. AC
Hit: 18 damage. If the target is bloodied after this damage, the chum swarm can make one additional attack against it.

Str 20 (+19) **Dex** 32 (+25) **Wis** 17 (+17)
Con 28 (+23) **Int** 8 (+13) **Cha** 15 (+16)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Miscellaneous Beasts

Use these other monsters as needed, though the party might never encounter them.

Carnivorous Mandala of Thrag

The Thrag mandala beasts use tactical reincarnation, throwing themselves into deadly encounters so they can come back as a more advantageous form. Every form they live in, though, can manifest a *mantle of stability* so that its prey does not actually die. As long as a creature is unconscious and stable, it will not reincarnate, giving the mandala beast time to drag it away to its lair to repeatedly feast on it through multiple lifetimes.

Carnivorous Mandala of Thrag	Level 30 Solo Skirmisher
Large immortal magical beast	**XP** 90,000
HP 275; **Form II** 275; **Form III** 275	**Initiative** +27
AC 44, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 42	**Perception** +25
Speed varies	Darkvision
Vulnerable 10 fire	
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 2	

Traits

▶ **Mantle of Stability** ✦ Aura 5

Your skin goes numb and you slump to the ground, but then warmth envelopes you. It's soothing at first, until you realize that it is wrapping tight around you, smothering while it sustains.

Enemies reduced to 0 hit points in the aura immediately stabilize and do not die, regardless of how much damage they take.

▶ **Intentional Reincarnation**

Whenever the mandala beast dies, its body dissolves into the ground. At the start of its next turn it reincarnates, rising in a new form of its choice in any space within 20 squares.

The mandala beast has three main forms it favors, and each form has 275 hit points. It begins in the form of the stalker, and when reduced to 0 hp it dies, then returns on its next turn in the form of the harrier. When that dies, it returns in the form of the field. If that form is killed, the beast returns again in the form of the stalker (with some cosmetic differences), once again at full hit points.

Each time it returns, it makes a Stealth check and has combat advantage against creatures whose passive Perception it beats.

This reincarnation cycle can be stopped if either the mandala beast is stabilized before its next turn, or if at least 50 acid, fire, or necrotic damage is dealt to the ground beneath its body, in order to prevent it from being absorbed by the living soil. If it must decay naturally, it reincarnation is delayed by a few days.

▶ **Form of the Stalker** (Form I)

A bipedal bird with luxurious dagger-like feathers lunges from the underbrush, and as its clawed fore-limbs reach for you, a blinding disk of mind-warping white and purple appears in the air behind it.

The beast has speed 10 and Stealth +33.

▶ **Form of the Harrier** (Form II)

A serpent with wings like a jagged butterly erupts from the ground, its black wings hypnotic beneath a glowing disk of reds and greens and blues.

The beast has speed 4, fly 12 (hover), and blindsight 10.

▶ **Form of the Field** (Form III)

Thrashing grass bristles beneath your feet, and the entire surface of the earth is a disorienting swirl of black, orange, and silver light from which screaming tendrils of plant-life grow, their stalks capped with thorn-toothed mouths.

The beast has speed 2 and is immune to being grabbed, knocked prone, immobilized, or restrained.



Standard Actions

✓ **Red in Tooth and Claw** ✦ At-Will, Basic

The beast attacks with swiping claws and snapping teeth.

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +33 vs. AC

Hit: 4d6+25 damage. The attack has an additional effect depending on the beast's form.

- ✦ *Stalker.* The target is knocked prone and pulled 2 squares, and it gains ongoing 15 damage (save ends).
- ✦ *Harrier.* The target is pushed 3 squares, and it is blinded (save ends).
- ✦ *Field.* The target is grabbed (Escape DC 34), and it gains ongoing 15 poison damage (save ends).

▶ **Savage Speed** ✦ At-Will

Effect: The mandala beast can shift its speed, and it makes three basic attacks divided as it chooses before, during, and/or after the movement.

Minor Actions

⟋ **Soul Undertow** (psychic) ✦ At-Will, 1/round

The mandala behind the creature shifts, and it flies outward from the creature like an ephemeral wave. It crashes into you, and a psychic weight threatens to pull your soul from your body.

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +33 vs. Reflex

Hit: 3d6+20 psychic damage, and the target is dazed and takes ongoing 20 psychic damage (save ends both). While it takes this ongoing damage, it screams constantly, feeling the perpetual suffering of the entire plane.

The attack has an additional effect depending on the beast's form. These effects last until the target saves against the ongoing damage.

- ✦ *Stalker.* The target can only use melee attacks or close attacks that involve a weapon or unarmed strike.
- ✦ *Harrier.* Each round at the start of its turn, the target must move its speed away from the mandala beast. (This doesn't cost an action.)
- ✦ *Field.* Each round at the start of its turn, the target must drop something it is holding. (This doesn't cost an action.) If it's holding nothing, it must spend an action to retrieve an item, then drop it.

▶ **Steer the Cycle** ✦ Recharge at reincarnation

The beast thrashes a tiny creature on the ground, then kicks the dying animal across the battlefield. Where it lands, it instantly is consumed by the soil. A moment later walls of wood and foliage burst screaming from the ground.

Effect: The beast creates a wall 8 within 5, 4 squares high. It takes 4 squares of movement to pass through the wall, which deals 20 thunder damage (from the screams).

Triggered Actions

▶ **Adaptive Incarnation** ✦ At-Will

It flinches slightly at the injury you inflict, but it seems more intrigued than worried. The mandala disk behind it changes colors slightly, reflecting some lesson learned.

Trigger: The mandala beast takes energy damage other than fire.

Effect (No Action): The next time the mandala beast reincarnates, it loses all of its current resistances and gains resist 20 to the energy type that triggered this ability.

Skills Athletics +31, Stealth +28

Str	34 (+26)	**Dex**	26 (+23)	**Wis**	30 (+25)
Con	26 (+22)	**Int**	3 (+11)	**Cha**	10 (+15)

Alignment Evil **Languages** –

Doverspike the Vampiric Dragon

Doverspike won't attack the party, but he might be goaded into fighting with them.

Doverspike Level 30 Controller

Gargantuan natural magical beast (dragon, undead)

HP 170; **Bloodied** 85 **Initiative** +20

AC 43, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 43, **Will** 40 Darkvision

Speed 8, fly 12

Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 40 fire, 40 necrotic

Vulnerable 20 radiant

Traits

▶ **Sunlight Weakness**

Doverspike is blind in bright sunlight, and his *vampiric fire* cannot heal him.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Blood-link Bite** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 4 (one creature); +37 vs. AC

Hit: 40 damage, and each ally of the target within 10 squares takes 10 damage. If Doverspike or one of his allies is suffering from an effect a save could end, the target makes a save. If it fails, the effect transfers to the target.

✧ **Vampiric Fire** (fire, necrotic) ✦ Recharge 5 6

Attack: Close blast 5 (creatures in blast); +33 vs. Reflex

Hit: 50 fire and necrotic damage and the target is weakened (save ends).

Miss: 25 fire and necrotic damage.

Effect: For each creature in the blast that is bloodied after the damage, Doverspike regains 10 hit points.

Minor Actions

▶ **Mist Form** (polymorph) ✦ At-Will

Effect: Doverspike becomes insubstantial and gains a fly speed of 50 (perfect), but the only attack he can make is *blood-link bite*. While in this form, he conjures a fog that covers up to a quarter-mile radius, which moves with him. The fog provides concealment, and beyond 4 squares it provides total concealment. Doverspike can return to his normal form as a minor action, but the fog persists.

Chimeric Elementals

On Gardboral (plane 15), elementals link together like chains hundreds of feet long, composed of all manner of energetic forces. The greatest are the maelstrom avatars, colossal humanoid figures of living fire, lightning, ice, and stone. After their world ended with the ascendant doomsday war of the god of giants, the ground, sky, sea, and fire below were commanded to fill the tomb of the victorious god with all the world's treasure. They deconstructed the entire world, and now the god's paraelemental avatars roam, seeking more treasure.

Chimeric Elemental Titan Level 31 Controller

Gargantuan elemental humanoid (air, earth, fire, water) **XP** 22,000

HP 250; **Bloodied** 125 **Initiative** +19

AC 45, **Fortitude** 43, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 38 **Perception** +26

Speed 10, fly 12 (hover), swim 10

Resist 10 cold, 10 fire, 10 lightning, 10 thunder

Immune acid, necrotic, poison; **Vulnerable** 30 psychic

Traits

▶ **Storm's Fury** (lightning, thunder) ✦ Aura 4

Any creature that enters or begins its turn in the aura takes 15 lightning and thunder damage. Creatures other than elementals treat the area as difficult terrain and cannot fly.

Standard Actions

⊘ ⊘ **Thunderbolt Spear** (lightning, thunder) ✦ At-Will, Basic

It wields an entire lightning bolt as a weapon.

Attack: Melee 4 or Ranged 50/100 (one creature); +36 vs. AC

Hit: 4d12+13 lightning and thunder damage.

Effect: The titan cannot use this attack again against a target in the same square until the end of the encounter (because lightning doesn't strike the same place twice).

Special: If thrown, the spear reappears in the titan's hand.

⊘ **Magma Fist** (fire) ✦ At-Will, Basic

It's left hand is like a pit of lava reaching out for you.

Attack: Melee 4 (one creature); +33 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target is grabbed (Escape DC 35). While grabbed it has ongoing 50 fire damage. The titan can sustain this grab without spending an action, but can only grab one creature at a time this way.

✲ **Waterspout Vortex** (cold) ✦ At-Will

A thousand-foot high tornado shrieks into being around you, slicing you with ice torn from a frozen sea below.

Attack: Area burst 2 within 100 (creatures in burst); +33 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d12+6 damage, plus 20 cold damage. The target is lifted 10 squares into the air. At the end of the titan's next turn, the tornado vanishes, dropping the target.

Str	49 (+34)	**Dex**	18 (+19)	**Wis**	19 (+21)
Con	29 (+24)	**Int**	14 (+17)	**Cha**	22 (+21)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Giant, Primordial

Ystis, the Maddening Cat

On Ringes, the Barren Moor (plane 14), this feline lich survived an apocalypse caused by the wizard he was once a familiar of. He responds to intruders by hiding and waiting for them to go violently mad, but if he sees anyone wander off alone, he's confident enough to strike. He'll use *breath theft* from afar, then sneak up and use *supernatural thrashing* to surround his victim with his deadly dander while also clawing the poor person. He retreats if allies come, and while remaining hidden uses *bog bound* to drive enemies into his dander.

He's also a cat, though, vain and lazy. If someone offers him a chance to get off this plane and a comfortable living situation, he could be tempted to tag along. He has sadistic tastes, though.

Ystis, the Maddening Cat Level 31 Elite Controller
Tiny natural magical beast (undead) **XP** 44,000
HP 250; **Bloodied** 125 **Initiative** +19
AC 43, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 43, **Will** 43 **Perception** +22
Speed 10 Darkvision
Resist 10 necrotic
Immune disease, poison
Saves +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Indestructible**

When Ystis is reduced to 0 hit points, he crumbles into dust but is not destroyed. He reappears in 1d10 days within 1 square of his throne, unless the throne is destroyed.

▸ **Deadly Dander** (disease)

As the creature sprints through the marsh, flakes of dead black skin and strands of black fur linger in the air for a moment, leaving an ominous trail.

When Ystis moves, mark each space he moves through. At the end of the encounter, the dander fades away.

Any creature with Intelligence 3 or greater that enters or starts its turn in one of these spaces is subjected to the following attack, but no more than once per round.

Attack: Close burst 0 (one creature); +34 vs. Will

Hit: The target contracts stage one of Ringes Madness, or its condition worsens one stage.

Stage One: If the creature is at less than full health, he treats his allies as enemies for the purposes of making opportunity attacks, and he must make opportunity attacks against any creature he can.

Stage Two: The creature gains a +2 bonus to Strength- or Dexterity-based attack rolls, and a -2 penalty to all other attack rolls.

Stage Three: The creature's Intelligence falls to 3, and it loses the ability to communicate anything more advanced than what an animal could.

Recovery: Each day that the creature begins a long rest with full hit points, it recovers one stage, and if it is already at stage one it is cured.

Standard Actions

✓ **Seemingly Harmless** ✦ At-Will, Basic

The cat looks wretched and haggard, but harmless. It warily draws back a paw and looses a low, sickly yowl. Then it bats at you with its claws, and you feel as wretched as he looks.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +36 vs. AC

Hit: 2d4+8 damage, plus 30 necrotic damage. The target is weakened and loses 1 healing surge at the start of each of its turn (save ends both). Ystis pushes it 5 squares.

✓ **Supernatural Thrashing** ✦ At-Will

The cat's yellow eyes seem to appear in a dozen places, and a myriad of the feline simultaneously attack in a flurry of swiping claws and yowling bites.

Effect: Ystis shifts his speed and uses *seemingly harmless* two times at any point before, during, or after the movement. During this movement he can move through the spaces of enemies that are Medium or larger.

✓ **Bog Bound** ✦ At-Will

You've lost sight of the little monster, but suddenly the whole bog beside you rises up in a marshy mockery of a cat's head and forelimbs. It roars and swipes at you, then collapses into the muck.

Effect: Ystis conjures two huge copies of himself, each in an unoccupied 3-by-3 space that he can see within 20 squares. Each copy makes the following attack, then disappears. If attacked before or during the attack, these copies have the same defenses as Ystis, and damage to them damages him.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +36 vs. AC

Hit: 3d12+20 damage, and the target is pushed 5 squares.

✓ **Breath Theft** ✦ Recharge on miss or when target dies

You glimpse a cat's eyes through the reeds, but you can't bring yourself to speak. It smiles with yellowed teeth and draws a deep breath: yours. You cannot breathe.

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +34 vs. Fortitude

Hit: The target is dazed until the end of the encounter. Until that time, the target cannot speak.

Skills Perception +22, Stealth +32

Str	3 (+11)	**Dex**	26 (+23)	**Wis**	15 (+17)
Con	18 (+19)	**Int**	25 (+22)	**Cha**	22 (+21)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common

The Dead Goddess

If a PC tries to seize the power of Srasama, her avatar rises and attempts to kill the impudent mortal.

Avatar of Srasama Level 34 Skirmisher
Gargantuan immortal humanoid (eladrin, god) **XP** 18,000
HP 230; **Bloodied** 115 **Initiative** +27
AC 48, **Fortitude** 46, **Reflex** 46, **Will** 46 **Perception** +20
Speed 17 Darkvision
Resist 20 fire, 20 necrotic

Traits

▸ **Tripartite Aspect**

Her face shifts from youthful, to matronly, to monstrously skeletal. She splits into three bodies as she stands, each six-armed and towering, clad in the finest golden jewelry and a dress of deep red.

At the beginning of combat, Srasama divides into three bodies. Each body can take a move and a minor action every turn, and each can make opportunity attacks, but only one body can take a standard action any given turn. They share hit points, but conditions only affect the specific body they struck.

▸ **Focused Animosity**

All three faces glare solely at you – enraged at your insolence, disappointed in your greed, and amused at your treachery.

Srasama's attacks can only affect the PC who grabbed the necklace from Dala, and they simply pass through other creatures harmlessly.

However, if another creature attacks or intentionally impedes Srasama, she gains the ability to harm that creature, she adds 230 hit points to her hit point pool, and she can now take two standard actions on her turn, divided between two bodies.

If a third foe interferes, she gains another 230 hit points (to a maximum of HP 690, Bloodied 345) and each of her three bodies can act each round.

If more than 3 foes attack Srasama, she does not gain any more power.



▸ **Dead God**

Engaging against a dead deity links you to her ineffably, but she is like a bottomless well. For every action you take against her, you feel your own life force fading, but it will never fill her.

Once a creature attacks or otherwise actively opposes the Avatar of Srasama, that creature loses one healing surge at the end of each of its turns until the avatar is destroyed or Srasama chooses to end the battle. Whenever a creature loses a healing surge in this way, the avatar can either make a saving throw or gain an action point.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Rebuking Kick** ✦ At-Will, Basic (all aspects)

She flicks a foot to knock you away.

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +39 vs. AC

Hit: 3d6+10 damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares.

✲ **Sword of the Goddess** (weapon, fire) ✦ At-Will (Maiden only)

Two hands of each of the three aspects hold flaming swords, each over fifteen feet long. Where she draws blood, fire erupts from the wound.

Attack: Area burst 1 within 3 (enemies in burst); +39 vs. AC

Hit: 3d8+10 damage, plus ongoing 20 fire damage (save ends).

✲ **Crushing Vines** (healing) ✦ At-Will (Mother only)

Her second set of hands weave a spell, and vegetation erupts and encloses around you. The goddess's skin glows with green life force.

Attack: Area burst 1 within 50 (enemies in burst); +37 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target is restrained (Escape DC 37). While restrained it doesn't have line of sight to any other creatures not hit by this effect and it takes ongoing 30 damage.

Special: At the start of the avatar's turn, if any creatures took damage from this attack since her last turn, she heals 30 damage.

✲ **Guttering Desperation** (fire, necrotic) ✦ At-Will (Crone only)

Her lowest set of hands dance in the air, and black flames erupt from your body. A voice whispers in your ear, "Grovel, and you might live."

Attack: Area burst 1 within 50 (enemies in burst); +37 vs. Fortitude

Hit: The target takes ongoing 30 fire and necrotic damage (save ends). If the affected creature ends its turn and is not prone, it automatically fails this turn's save against this effect, as well as any saves granted against the effect before the end of its next turn.

Triggered Action

▸ **Final Scorn** ✦ Encounter

Her ragged flesh bleeds starstuff and fire, and she sags from exhaustion. A blow finally sends her reeling, and the three forms flicker and flash across the battlefield. They appear as one, looking down with an implacable expression. All who see her are overwhelmed by her eruption of power. Like a dying star she strikes, and then goes dark.

Trigger: Srasama drops to 0 hit points.

Effect (Immediate Interrupt): Srasama does not die yet. Srasama chooses one foe that most earned her ire. The three aspects teleport adjacent to that creature and merge into one. Then make the following attack.

Attack: Close burst 100 (creatures in burst); +37 vs. Will

Hit: The target is stunned until the end of Srasama's next turn. If it has fewer than 50 hit points, it falls unconscious.

Miss: The target is dazed until the end of Srasama's next turn. If it has fewer than 25 hit points, it falls unconscious.

Effect: Srasama uses *sword of the goddess*, *crushing vines*, and then *guttering desperation*, each targeting the foe that has most earned her ire. Then Srasama collapses and dies.

Skills Arcana +31, Insight +31, Intimidate +31

Str	38 (+31)	**Dex**	34 (+29)	**Wis**	28 (+26)
Con	27 (+25)	**Int**	28 (+26)	**Cha**	28 (+26)

Alignment Neutral **Languages** all

Contingent Ambush

Adventure 13

Ob forces use Lauryn Cyneburg's teleportation powers to divide the party while Kaja and constructs deliver withering gunfire. Pardo provides a melee threat, and the occultists grant saves, making it critical to take them out early. The screaming malice is a big dumb monster that the PCs might want to keep their distance from. The Ash Wolf can come to the party's aid, if needed.

Lauryn Cyneburg Level 30 Elite Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (half-elf) **XP** 38,000

HP 400; **Bloodied** 200 **Initiative** +26
AC 44, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 44, **Will** 42 **Perception** +16
Speed 8, teleport 8, fly 4 Low-light vision
Resist fire 10, lightning 10; **Immune** charm, dominate
Vulnerable see *hivemind presence*
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

Hivemind Presence

Though you've seen her before, there is somehow more to her now. As she moves you sense the presence of a dozen ships' captains, the slithering steel path of a shadowed train, and the lurking eyes of the ghost council, demanding obedience.

At an initiative count 10 higher than her main initiative, Lauryn uses *gestalt strike* without spending an action.

Whenever Lauryn would take psychic or radiant damage, instead of harming her it harms the two ghost councilors bonded to her. The first time she takes damage in this way, the councilors snarl as they become briefly visible, and Lauryn is weakened until the end of the attacker's next turn.

Once 100 points of psychic or radiant damage has been absorbed this way, the ghost councilors are destroyed, weakening Lauryn's connection to the Obscurati hivemind. She can no longer use *gestalt strike*, she loses her fly speed, and she loses her immunity to charm and dominate effects. She is still allied with the Obscurati, but a Diplomacy check (DC 40) or a *remove affliction* cast against a level 30 effect can snap her out of the hivemind altogether.

A Spirit Medium PC who sees a person with this trait immediately knows how it functions and how to overcome it.

▸ Minister of Infiltration

Lauryn cannot be slowed, immobilized, or restrained. If she is dazed or stunned, she can still take a move action in addition to whatever other actions she is able to take for the turn. She can stand without spending an action.

Standard Actions

Spiteful Punch (teleport) ✦ At-Will, Basic
"This really wasn't how I wanted to spend my afternoon." Consternation wrinkles her nose as she snaps a punch into your jaw. You hit the ground fifty feet away.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4+30 damage, and the target is teleported 10 squares and knocked prone.

Paralysis (charm) ✦ At-Will
She gestures as if to choke you, and your body goes rigid as stone.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +33 vs. Will
Hit: The target is stunned (save ends).
Miss: The target cannot speak (save ends).



Explosive Jaunt (fire, teleport) ✦ Encounter
She disappears, flickering via teleportation to three other destinations. At each spot, she left a sizzling seed of fire.
Effect: Lauryn teleports 8 squares, then teleports 8 squares, then teleports 8 squares. Whenever she leaves a space this way, she leaves behind a *fireball* seed. Each seed explodes at the start of her next turn, or if it is touched.
Attack: Area burst 3 centered on each seed (creatures in burst); +33 vs. Reflex
Hit: 6d6+20 fire damage.
Miss: Half damage.

Move Action

▸ Tactical Reposition ✦ Recharge when first bloodied
She cocks her head for a moment as if calculating, and then the entire battlefield shifts.
Attack: Close burst 10 (creatures in burst); +35 vs. Will
Hit: Lauryn teleports the target to any position within the burst.

Minor Action

▸ Dimensional Beacon ✦ At-Will
A spot in the air she points at begins to glow and twist light around it.
Effect: Lauryn creates a dimensional beacon in a space she can see. Until Lauryn uses this power again, whenever another creature teleports anywhere within 20 squares of the beacon, she may redirect their teleportation so they arrive in the beacon's space.

Hivemind Actions

Gestalt Strike (psychic) ✦ At-Will
A barely visible coil of psychic might streaks from Lauryn and into your mind, drawing your thoughts to places scattered across the world.
Special: Lauryn can only use this power through her *hivemind presence*.
Attack: Ranged 40 (one creature); +33 vs. Will
Hit: 2d6+30 psychic damage, and the target moves its speed, controlled by Lauryn.

Skills Acrobatics +24, Arcana +22, History +22, Stealth +24

Str	10 (+15)	**Dex**	18 (+19)	**Wis**	12 (+16)
Con	16 (+18)	**Int**	15 (+17)	**Cha**	24 (+22)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial



Kaja Stewart Level 30 Elite Artillery
Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP** 38,000
HP 340; **Bloodied** 170 **Initiative** +19
AC 44, **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 43, **Will** 40 **Perception** +16
Speed 8, fly 4
Immune charm, dominate
Vulnerable see *hivemind presence*
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Hivemind Presence**
As with Lauryn, this woman is filled with the power of a host of allies. She flicks her pistols toward you, but you feel the cannons of an entire artillery barrage taking aim, guided by the hand of the ghost council, who demand her obedience.
See Lauryn Cyneburg's ability of the same name.

▸ **Gun Summoner**
Kaja can magically draw, stow, and reload her firearms as a free action. Her firearm attacks do not provoke opportunity attacks.

▸ **Suppressive Fire**
If an enemy Kaja can see ends its turn without cover or concealment relative to her, Kaja can use *revolver shot* targeting that creature as an opportunity attack.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Pistol Bayonet** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6+14 damage.

⊘ **Revolver Shot** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 2d4+14 damage, or 4d4+24 on a critical hit.

▸ **Twin Strike** ✦ At-Will
Effect: Kaja makes two basic attacks, and can shift 4 squares before, between, or after the attacks.

✓ **Auto-Shotgun** (weapon) ✦ Encounter
A mechanized shotgun appears beside her. It begins firing repeatedly, floating in air and suppressing your area.
Special: Kaja makes two attack rolls. She hits if either roll hits. If at close range and both rolls hit, she does an extra 3d8 damage.
Attack: Ranged 9/18 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+12 damage.
Effect: The shotgun remains in the space where Kaja first used this power, and continues to target the space it originally shot at. At the start of each of Kaja's turns it fires again, targeting one creature in that space or an adjacent square, until it has fired eight shots, at which point it disappears.

✲ **Cannonfire** (weapon) ✦ Encounter
An entire cannon appears beside her. She winks. It fires.
Attack: Area burst 1 within 40 (creatures in burst); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 6d6+18 damage, or 12d6+36 damage on a critical hit. The target is knocked prone and is dazed until the end of Kaja's next turn.
Miss: Half damage.

✲ **Artillery Barrage** ✦ Encounter
The sky overhead ripples, and artillery fired hundreds of miles away rain down upon you.
Effect: Kaja makes the following attack three times. Their areas cannot overlap.
Attack: Area burst 1 within 40 (creatures in burst); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 6d6+18 damage, or 12d6+36 damage on a critical hit. The target is knocked prone and is dazed until the end of Kaja's next turn.
Miss: Half damage.

Hivemind Actions

▸ **Gestalt Strike** (psychic) ✦ At-Will
A barely visible coil of psychic might streaks from Kaja and into your mind, filling your thoughts with hallucinatory explosions, which you duck to avoid.
Special: Kaja can only use this power through her *hivemind presence*.
Attack: Ranged 40 (one creature); +33 vs. Will
Hit: 2d6+30 psychic damage, and the target falls prone.

Skills Acrobatics +23, Bluff +24, Insight +21
Str 12 (+16) **Dex** 18 (+19) **Wis** 13 (+16)
Con 16 (+18) **Int** 16 (+18) **Cha** 18 (+19)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Pardo Level 30 Elite Controller
Medium natural animate (construct) **XP** 38,000
HP 400; **Bloodied** 200 **Initiative** +15
AC 44, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 43 **Perception** +16
Speed 7, fly 4 Darkvision, blindsight 5
Immune charm, dominate
Action Point 1; **Saving Throws** +2

Traits

▸ **Hivemind Presence**
A moment ago, Pemberton's gnoll minion was docile and unassuming, but suddenly his hackles raise, and you can feel his thoughts: desperate concern for a strip mine filled with gnoll slaves, self-loathing for his imminent betrayal, and a burning hatred for the ghost council, who demand his obedience.
See Lauryn Cyneburg's ability of the same name.

▸ **Metal Shell**
Your mighty blow creates spiderweb cracks across the gnoll's body, and his fur falls away, revealing a glistening steel endoskeleton with glowing red eyes.
When Pardo is not bloodied, he has Resist 10 all. When he is bloodied, he has Vulnerable 10 all, his defenses are reduced by 5, and he takes a -5 penalty to saving throws.

☼ **Enfeebling Aura** ✦ Aura 2
When you get near him, your flesh grows weak.
Non-construct creatures in the aura are weakened.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Talon Frenzy** ✦ At-Will, Basic
He bats at you with his jagged nails, snarling and slavering.
Effect: Pardo makes the following attack twice. If both attacks hit, the target is knocked prone.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6+10 damage.



✓ Devour Anima (fire) ✦ At-Will
He falls upon you, snapping his yellow canines at your throat. As his fangs sink in, fire sears along your flesh. He pulls back, and you see him sucking flames out of your wound, swallowing a piece of your soul.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +33 vs. Will
Hit: 6d6+15 fire damage, and Pardo chooses one of the target's 1st level at-will powers, which the target cannot use until the end of the encounter.

✓ Slay Living (necrotic) ✦ Recharges when first bloodied
"Steel endures," he says. "My lord shall endure my betrayal, even if you and I must die."
Requirement: The target must be a living, non-construct creature.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +33 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 40 necrotic damage and the target is stunned and gains ongoing 15 necrotic damage (save ends both).
Miss. 20 necrotic damage, and the target is dazed and gains ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends both).

Hivemind Actions

Gestalt Strike (psychic) ✦ At-Will
A barely visible coil of psychic might streaks from Pardo and into your mind, driving you to furious anger.
Special: Pardo can only use this power through her *hivemind presence*.
Attack: Ranged 40 (one creature); +33 vs. Will
Hit: 2d6+30 psychic damage, and the target moves its speed and uses a 1st level at-will power of Pardo's choice against a target of Pardo's choice.

Str	27 (+23)	**Dex**	10 (+15)	**Wis**	12 (+16)
Con	22 (+21)	**Int**	12 (+16)	**Cha**	21 (+20)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Giant, Common, Draconic

Obscurati Construct Squad — Level 30 Goon Artillery

Large natural animate (construct, swarm) — **XP** 9500

HP 100; **Bloodied** 50 — **Initiative** +17
AC 44, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 40 — **Perception** +13
Speed 5 — Darkvision
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks
Immune necrotic, poison
Vulnerable 15 against close and area attacks

Traits

▸ **Large Unit**
The black metal bodies of these soldiers move with unnatural, mechanical precision.
The squad consists of twelve humanoid constructs working in tandem, filling the space of a Large creature. The unit needs only fill 4 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual could move through.

▸ **Witchoil Fueled**
Engines churn in their chests and rotten smoke billows from vents behind their shoulders. As you tear through them, their cracked limbs spray haunted black witchoil.
Whenever the squad takes damage that is not from a radiant source, its space becomes stained with witchoil until the end of the encounter. Creatures that enter or end their turn in that space take 5 necrotic damage.

Standard Actions

Grindsaw Arms (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The construct's left arms end in a spinning saw. They grab with their right arms and try to disembowel you.
Effect: The squad makes the following attack against up to four targets. If used as an opportunity attack, it only targets the triggering creature.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 30 damage.

Turret Fusillade (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Their right shoulders mount a squat turret.
Attack: Area burst 1 within 20 (creatures in burst); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 40 damage.
Load free.

Concussive Grenades (weapon) ✦ Encounter
The constructs wear a pair of grenades on their hips.
Effect: The squad makes the following attack four times. Creatures caught in multiple areas can only take damage once from this power.
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 25 damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares away from the center of the area.

Str	23 (+31)	**Dex**	12 (+16)	**Wis**	6 (+13)
Con	11 (+15)	**Int**	3 (+11)	**Cha**	3 (+11)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Understand Common

Elite Obscurati Occultist — Level 30 Goon Controller

Medium natural humanoid, human — **XP** 9500

HP 100; **Bloodied** 50 — **Initiative** +19
AC 44, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 41, **Will** 43 — **Perception** +19
Speed 6 — Darkvision

Traits

▸ **Shielding Eclipse**
The mage is nearly invisible, shrouded in a haze of darkness. Your strikes barely seem to hurt him.
Unless the occultist is in an area of bright light, the occultist has insubstantial, and thus takes half damage from attacks.

Standard Actions

Orb Conk (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
The mage's obsidian orb orbits around him and smashes you if you come too close.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 35 damage, the target is blinded (save ends), and any light sources the target is carrying are suppressed until the end of the mage's next turn.

✓ Shadow Tentacles (necrotic) ✦ At-Will
The nethermancer sweeps his orb, and insubstantial black tendrils reach up from the ground and snare you.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one enemy); +33 vs. Reflex
Hit: 35 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened and immobilized (save ends both).

Minor Actions

▸ **Shadowy Aid** ✦ At-Will (1/round)

A shadowy image of the spellcaster appears beside his ally and helps free it from whatever's harming it.

Effect: One ally within 10 squares can make a saving throw.

Skills Arcana +24, Stealth +20

Str 10 (+15) **Dex** 11 (+15) **Wis** 14 (+17)
Con 12 (+16) **Int** 18 (+19) **Cha** 10 (+15)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common

The Screaming Malice

Level 30 Elite Brute
Gargantuan aberrant magical beast **XP** 38,000

HP 500; **Bloodied** 250 **Initiative** +15
AC 42, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 41, **Will** 40 **Perception** +17
Speed 3 (6 in a swamp)
Action Point 1; **Saving Throws** +2

Traits

▸ **Many-Headed**

The screaming malice has five eyeless heads, each of which occupies its own space, 2 squares on a side. When the malice moves it can move each of its heads to any spaces within 5 squares of its body. On its turn the malice can take one move action, plus one standard action for each head. It cannot trade these standard actions for additional movement.

The heads are part of the malice, and so share its defenses and HP. Unlike the last time the party faced this beast, they're strong enough now so conditions they inflict can affect the entire creature. A single attack that deals at least 50 damage severs one of the heads, reducing the number of attacks the malice can make on its next turn.

At the end of the malice's turn, it regrows any severed heads, restoring itself to five heads.

▸ **Ponderously Gargantuan**

The malice can only make attacks (including opportunity attacks) against creatures adjacent to one of its heads. It takes a -5 penalty to attack rolls against creatures adjacent to its main body.

▸ **All-Around Vision**

Enemies cannot gain combat advantage by flanking the screaming malice.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Bite** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Fangs as long as your arm graze your flesh as it clamps a tar-filled maw around you.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 2d10+10 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 30).

Shriek (charm, thunder) ✦ At-Will

The mouth swoops close enough for you to see hallucinatory detail in the wispy shadows of the monster's flesh. It roars entrancingly, and blood pulses in your ears, threatening to burst your eardrums.

Attack: Close burst 1 (one creature); +33 vs. Will

Hit: 3d8 thunder damage, and the target is slowed and grants combat advantage until the end of the malice's next turn.

Str 42 (+31) **Dex** 10 (+15) **Wis** 14 (+17)
Con 22 (+21) **Int** 4 (+12) **Cha** 10 (+15)
Alignment Unaligned

The Ash Wolf, Weakend

Level 31 Elite Skirmisher
Gargantuan fey magical beast **XP** 46,000

HP 460; **Bloodied** 230 **Initiative** +29
AC 45, **Fortitude** 43, **Reflex** 43, **Will** 43 **Perception** +30
Speed 20 Darkvision, true sight
Resist fire 30; **Immune** fear
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Hurl Foe**

As a free action once on each of its turn, when the titan damages a Huge or smaller foe with a melee attack it may make a secondary attack.

Secondary Attack: +34 vs. Fortitude.

Hit: The target is pushed 4 squares, plus 1 square for every 5 points the attack beat the target's defense. The target falls prone.

▸ **Titanic**

Normal difficult terrain does not impede the titan. A Huge or smaller creature can move through its space, and vice-versa. The titan can make attacks of opportunity only against foes that are Huge or larger, and can be flanked only by Huge or larger foes.

It's possible for a Huge or smaller creature to climb the titan (Athletics DC 30), and unlike the normal rules about fey titans and attacks of opportunity, a Small or larger creature that climbs on a fey titan's body provokes an attack of opportunity from the monster.

▸ **Unseen, Unstoppable**

The Ash Wolf leaves no tracks. Even if it smashes into trees in a hunt, once it departs the tree shows no sign of having been disturbed.

Additionally, effects that would slow the Ash Wolf reduce its speed by 5, and those that would immobilize it reduce its speed by 10.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Bite** ✦ At-Will, Basic

His jaws crush with the force of a falling tree.

Attack: Melee 4 (one creature); +36 vs. AC

Hit: 4d8+80 damage, and the target is knocked prone and grabbed (Escape DC 33). On a critical hit the target takes ongoing 10 damage and must make a saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the target loses a limb of its choice.

Hurl Tree (weapon) ✦ At-Will

Out from the distant smoke there comes a heavy crack like a house collapsing. Then a huge shape flies out from the woods – an entire tree, still aflame.

Attack: Area burst 8 within 80 (creatures in burst); +34 vs. AC

Hit: 3d8+40 damage, and the target is knocked prone and restrained (Escape DC 28).

While restrained, the target takes ongoing 10 fire damage.

Miss: Half damage and the target is not knocked prone or restrained.

Effect: The area becomes difficult terrain.

▸ **Hunting Surge** ✦ Recharge ⚀⚁⚂

Unseen in the inferno he howls, louder than the roaring forest fire, and despite the oppressive heat you feel a chill of primordial dread in your veins. Then he bursts from the trees, sprinting faster than any creature of his titanic size should move.

Effect: The Ash Wolf moves 60 squares and uses *bite* at any point during that movement.

Minor Actions

Firestorm (fire, zone) ✦ Encounter

A vortex like a tornado spirals up from the forest fire, then arcs and strikes the ground, unleashing a firestorm.

Attack: Area burst 4 within 80 (enemies in burst); +34 vs. Reflex

Hit: 5d8+50 fire damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Effect: The area becomes a zone until the end of the encounter. Creatures that enter or end their turn in the zone take 20 fire damage.

Lignify Arms and Armor ✦ Encounter
A chorus of howls rises up from all directions, but they have a rhythm, like an arcane chant. Suddenly the weapons and armor of the wolf's enemies begin to transform from metal to wood.
Attack: Area burst 4 within 80 (creatures in burst); +34 vs. Will
Hit: Metal weapons or armor possessed by the target are transformed to wood. Weapons affected this way impose a -2 penalty to attack and damage rolls. Armor affected this way reduces the wearer's AC by 2. There may be other effects, at the DM's discretion.
Special: A creature can spend a minor action to make an Arcana check (DC 28). One a success, he restores to normal any affected items within 2 squares.

Str	48 (+34)	**Dex**	38 (+29)	**Wis**	30 (+25)
Con	34 (+27)	**Int**	15 (+17)	**Cha**	24 (+27)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial

You and Your Friends

Adventure 13

This battle definitely pits Harkover Lee in dragon form against the party, but they might also have to deal with Gale and Delft unless they free them from Ob control ahead of time. Both Delft and Gale are empowered by hiveminds, and if freed from them they are unfortunately not strong enough to contribute in open battle against Harkover.

Harkover Lee, Dragon Tyrant Level 34 Solo Artillery
Huge natural magical beast (dragon) **XP** 190,000

HP 1230; **Threshold I** 820; **Threshold II** 410 **Initiative** +13
AC 48, **Fortitude** 46, **Reflex** 46, **Will** 46 **Perception** +14
Speed 8, fly 15 (hover) Darkvision
Resist 30 fire; **Immune** charm, dominate
Saving Throws +5; **Action Point** 1

Traits

Dragon Unleashed (fear)
The old man gives a short laugh, and then his body tears apart, revealing a huge dragon with crimson scales and wings scarred with defensive runes. This is the draconic tyrant who once ruled swaths of Ber under the name Inacht the Hex-Eater. Screams rise up from those who see him and panic.
If Harkover is in human form, at the start of his first turn he can transform into his natural dragon form without spending an action. When he does, he can stand from prone and all negative conditions affecting him end, but damage dealt to him remains.
Creatures lower than twentieth level are too frightened to attack the dragon.

Hivemind Pinnacle
He seems oblivious to it, but an entire congress of ghosts float behind the dragon's head, barely visible but fixated on compelling the loyalty of this fire-breathing titan.
Harkover is a critical part of the Obscurati's plan, so he shares hit points with the ghost council members that keep him under control. However, the first time he takes radiant or psychic damage, the councilors snarl as they become briefly visible.
Keep track of psychic and radiant damage done to Harkover. If over 250 points of psychic and/or radiant damage is dealt to Harkover, the councilors briefly lose their grip over him, and on Harkover's next round all he does is force out a warning—perhaps about how to disable the explosion, or about how Cherage's rail enclave is where the lanterns in that city are controlled.
Thereafter, the ghost councilors reassert control, and Harkover will fight until reduced to 0 hp.

Golden Orb
Despite his massive size, he still carries his golden wizard's orb, cradled in his right claw. As he moves he absent-mindedly waves the orb, refreshing some minor magical ward.
Harkover's golden orb stores a fragment of his soul, and shields it from harm. Each day Harkover creates an illusion within the orb, and any divination that attempts to learn about him from afar discerns false information as depicted in the orb's illusion.
Whenever Harkover ends his turn, he can end any one negative condition affecting him without needing to make a save, even if the effect doesn't normally grant a save. Additionally, he can use various incidental magic generally not pertinent to combat, including a variety of abjurations, divinations, evocations, and illusions.
If he loses his golden orb, he loses the above abilities. An enemy who holds the 40-pound orb gains a +5 bonus to attack rolls against Harkover.

Reasoned Evasion
He carefully keeps his distance, preferring to rain magic on you from afar.
At an initiative count 10 higher than Harkover's own initiative, as a free action he take a move action, then use *sigil claw* or *firebolt*. If he cannot move due to being slowed, prone, or immobilized, he ends that condition instead of moving. If he cannot use a free action due to a dominating or stunning effect, then that effect ends instead of him making the attack.

Standard Actions

Dispelling Bite ✦ At-Will, Basic
His mouth is like a jagged cavern collapsing upon you, and fire seethes in its depths.
Attack: Melee 4 (one creature); +39 vs. AC
Hit: 4d12+10 damage. The target is grabbed and takes ongoing 10 fire damage until the grab ends (Escape DC 33). Additionally, the magical enhancement bonus of the target's weapon, armor, and neck item are each reduced by 1 until Harkover is slain or chooses to release the power he has consumed. An item that has its bonus reduced to 0 becomes permanently non-magical.
Special: Harkover can sustain his grab without spending an action. If he has a creature grabbed, he can only target that same creature with this attack.

Sigil Claw ✦ At-Will, Basic
His talons tear through your defenses like paper. You realize he placed a glowing glyph upon your skin where he struck you.
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +39 vs. AC
Hit: 4d8+10 damage. Harkover chooses an energy type, and the target gains ongoing 10 damage of that type (save ends).

Firebolt (implement, fire) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Flaming missiles fly from the orb in the crook of his right claw.
Effect: Harkover fires five bolts of fire, divided as he chooses among any number of targets within 40 squares. Each bolt unerringly strikes its target, dealing 15 fire damage.

Positioning Sorcery ✦ At-Will
He snarls, swipes, and drives you into position for a devastating breath attack.
Effect: Harkover uses *dispelling bite* once and *sigil claw* twice. For each creature he damages with one of these attacks, Harkover can slide that creature 2 squares.

Consuming Breath (fire) ✦ Recharge ⚄⚅
His inhalation is like the rising grandeur of a symphony nearing crescendo. The roar of flames deafens you.
Attack: Close blast 9 (enemies in blast); +37 vs. Reflex
Hit: 10d12 fire damage, and the target is deafened, weakened, and takes ongoing 30 fire damage (save ends all).
Miss: Half damage, and the target is deafened and weakened until the end of Harkover's next turn.
Effect: Harkover heals damage equal to the highest amount of damage the attack dealt to any creature in its area. If a target dealt damage by this attack has fire resistance or immunity from any source other than a racial ability, it loses that defense until the end of the encounter.



Move Actions

▸ **Dimension Door** ✦ Encounter

Effect: Harkover teleports 80 squares.

▸ **Greater Invisibility** ✦ Encounter

Effect: Harkover turns invisible for the next three rounds, even if he attacks.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Eat Hex** ✦ Encounter

Trigger: An attack or zone inflicts a condition or deals energy damage to Harkover or a creature within 3 squares of him.

Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The effect inflicts no condition and deals no energy damage, and Harkover may dispel the effect if it is a zone.

✲ **Fight For Identity** ✦ Encounter

He thrashes and bites at the ghosts that form a halo around his head, but he cannot seem to harm them. One ghost digs its incorporeal talons into his head and he stops resisting.

"Loyalty!" he roars. "For two centuries my loyalty to my ruler was absolute. Now Nicodemus rules, and yet you disobey! I shall bury you for defying my liege."

He chants, swoops to the ground, and tears an entire building free from the earth. It hurls across the city at you, carried by streaks of golden magic.

Trigger: Harkover drops to 760 HP or fewer.

Effect (No Action): All negative conditions affecting Harkover end, he stands up, flies his speed, and makes the following attack. Then he gains an action point and his *eat hex* power recharges.

Attack: Area burst 4 within 500 (creatures in burst); +37 vs. Reflex

Hit: 6d6+30 damage and the target is knocked prone and restrained (Escape DC 40). While restrained, the target takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

⟋ **Final Arrogance** ✦ Encounter

Blood curls down his face from his eyes, but he smiles and glances at what remains of the cursed Cauldron Hill. His next words are a whisper, but you can hear them perfectly in a sudden stillness.

"May the witches who once contested the king of Risur now take their vengeance with my aid."

You collapse, feeling as weak and powerless as you did years ago when you first stood atop Cauldron Hill. The great red dragon laughs and circles like a cat taunting his prey.

"I have deprived you of your power," he taunts, "and when I swing around I mean to deprive you of your life."

Trigger: Harkover drops to 380 HP or fewer.

Effect (No Action): All negative conditions affecting Harkover end. He stands up, flies his speed, and makes the following attack. Then he gains an action point and his *eat hex* power recharges.

Attack: Ranged 500 (one creature); +37 vs. Will

Hit: The target is stunned (save ends). Until the end of the encounter, the target takes a -10 penalty to attack rolls and defenses and cannot use any powers higher than 3rd level.

Miss: The target is dazed (save ends). Until the end of the encounter, the target takes a -5 penalty to attack rolls and defenses and cannot use any powers higher than 3rd level.

Special: Harkover can target a ship with this power, which must overcome the captain's defenses. On a hit, the ship is immobilized and cannot fire any weapons or use any other special abilities.

Str 42 (+31) **Dex** 13 (+16) **Wis** 24 (+22)
Con 24 (+22) **Int** 24 (+22) **Cha** 26 (+23)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Draconic, Elven, Giant, Gnoll, Goblin, Orc, Primordial



Stover Delft of the Secret Police Level 27 Elite Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP** 22000

HP 440; **Bloodied** 220 **Initiative** +18
AC 41, **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 39, **Will** 41
Speed 6, fly 8 (hover)
Regeneration 10; **Immune** charm, dominate
Saving Throws +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

▸ **Hivemind Presence**

"I know you're not my old friends. You're some of Pemberton's filthy dupli-gangers." Delft swaggers with a one-sided grin, twirling his cane as he advances on you. You sense that he has eyes everywhere, and yet is himself watched by the ghost council, who keep the truth from him.

At an initiative count 10 higher than his main initiative, Delft uses *gestalt strike* without spending an action.

Whenever Delft would take psychic or radiant damage, instead of harming him it harms the two ghost councilors bonded to him. The first time he takes damage in this way, the councilors snarl as they become briefly visible, and Delft is weakened until the end of the attacker's next turn.

Once 100 points of psychic or radiant damage has been absorbed this way, the ghost councilors are destroyed, weakening Delft's connection to the Obscurati hivemind. He can no longer use *gestalt strike*, he loses his fly speed, and he loses his immunity to charm and dominate effects. He is still allied with the Obscurati, but a Diplomacy check (DC 40) or a *remove affliction* cast against a level 30 effect can snap him out of the hivemind altogether.

A Spirit Medium PC who sees a person with this trait immediately knows how it functions and how to overcome it.

▸ **Disorientating Strike**

Whenever Delft hits with a basic attack, he can choose one of the following options:

✦ Impose a -5 penalty to the target's next attack roll.

✦ Knock the target prone and immobilize it until the end of Delft's next turn.

✦ Slide the target 8 squares.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Cane Sword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

He strikes with crazed speed, thrashing his foe from multiple directions with both the cane and the sword hidden within it.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +32 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+25 damage.

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

He grumbles, "You'd think they would have given me a revolver."

Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +32 vs. AC

Hit: 2d4+25 damage, or 4d4+33 on a critical hit.

Load standard.

Hivemind Actions

▸ **Gestalt Strike** (fear, psychic) ✦ At-Will

A barely visible coil of psychic might streaks from Delft and into your mind, filling you with feelings of terror that all the nation is hunting for you.

Special: Delft can only use this power through his *hivemind presence*.

Attack: Ranged 40 (one creature); +30 vs. Will

Hit: 2d6+30 psychic damage, and the target needs to hide (save ends). While so affected, the target is dazed unless it started its turn hidden from Delft.

Skills Diplomacy +23, Insight +22

Str	14 (+15)	**Dex**	12 (+14)	**Wis**	18 (+17)
Con	16 (+16)	**Int**	15 (+15)	**Cha**	20 (+18)

Alignment Lawful Good **Languages** Common, Primordial

Hana Soliogn, Obscurati Loyalist

Level 27 Elite Artillery

Medium fey humanoid (eladrin) **XP** 22000

HP 400; **Bloodied** 200 **Initiative** +21

AC 41, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 41, **Will** 39 **Perception** +14

Speed 6, fly 15 (hover) Low-light Vision

Resist 10 lightning, 10 thunder; **Immune** charm, dominate

Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Hivemind Presence**

Gale has always moved with elemental power, but now she carries a greater presence, as if she channels the winds felt by every tempest-tossed sailor, and wields the lightning of diverse warmages. But the ghost council is in control, hidden from her by the thrashing storm.

See Delft's ability of the same name.

☼ **Control Winds** ✦ Aura 100

Ranged weapon attacks in the aura take a -4 penalty due to wind blowing them off course. Creatures moving closer to Gale treat each space as difficult terrain unless they are behind cover that can block winds. Gale can start or end this aura as a minor action.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Touch of Summer Storms** (thunder) ✦ At-Will, Basic

She raises a hand to keep a foe at bay, and a blast of thunder drives them back.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +30 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 3d6+20 thunder damage, and Gale pushes the target 10 squares and knocks it prone.

⊘ **Wind Bolts** ✦ At-Will, Basic

A swirling ball strikes out, picks a creature up, and dangles it.

Effect: Gale makes the following attack three times.

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +32 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 15 damage and the target is grabbed by the wind until the end of Gale's next turn (Escape DC 36). The wind lifts the target 20 feet into the air, and when the grab ends the target falls unless it can fly.

✓ **Chain Lightning** (lightning) * **At-Will**

A bolt of lightning flies from her hand, arcing across several targets.

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +30 vs. Reflex

Hit: 4d8+20 lightning damage.

Effect: Repeat the attack against a secondary target within 20 squares of the primary target. Then repeat it for a tertiary target within 20 squares of the secondary target.

Minor Actions

▸ **Warding Vortex** ✦ At-Will (1/round)

A small whirlwind appears in your path, spraying dust and debris away from it at dangerous speed.

Effect: Gale conjures a vortex in an unoccupied space she can see within 100 squares. She can use *touch of summer storms* from those spaces, including as opportunity attacks. Any creature that ends its turn within 2 squares of a vortex takes 10 damage from flying debris, unless it is behind cover. If Gale already has four vortices active, when she uses this power she must cancel an existing vortex.

Hivemind Actions

✓ **Gestalt Strike** (lightning, thunder, psychic) ✦ At-Will

A barely visible coil of psychic might streaks from Gale and into your mind, and you become a nexus of storm energy as she casts her magic through you.

Special: Hana can only use this power through his *hivemind presence*.

Attack: Ranged 40 (one creature); +30 vs. Will

Hit: 2d6+30 psychic damage, and the target channels storm energy (save ends). While so affected, at the start of its turn it and each creature within 5 squares takes 10 thunder and lightning damage.

Str	8 (+12)	**Dex**	13 (+14)	**Wis**	12 (+14)
Con	16 (+16)	**Int**	14 (+15)	**Cha**	21 (+19)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

City Defense Squad

Adventure 13

Memorize these stats, because they'll show up in multiple locations.

City Defense Squad

Level 30 Minion Artillery

Huge natural humanoid (various races, swarm) **XP** 4750

HP 1; a missed attack never damages this minion **Initiative** +17

AC 44, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 40 **Perception** +15

Speed 5

Traits

▸ **Huge Unit**

The city's military police begin firing almost as soon as they see you.

The squad consists of forty soldiers working in tandem, filling the space of a Huge creature. The unit needs only fill 9 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual could move through.

Standard Actions

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

Effect: The squad makes the following attack against up to four targets. If used as an opportunity attack, it only targets the triggering creature.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 15 damage.

⁂ **Musket Fusillade** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Area burst 3 within 20 (creatures in burst); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 20 damage.

Load free.

Str 13 (+26) **Dex** 12 (+16) **Wis** 10 (+15)
Con 11 (+15) **Int** 10 (+15) **Cha** 8 (+14)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Versus Me and the Revolution

Adventure 13

These battles may reuse the city defense squad stats above, and several use Bookpin Bodyguard Squads. Each of the five encounters is intended to be slightly too difficult for one PC, unless they're clever.

Bookpin Bodyguard Squad Level 30 Goon Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (swarm, human) **XP** 9500

HP 100; **Bloodied** 50 **Initiative** +22
AC 44, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 41, **Will** 42 **Perception** +20
Speed 5

Traits

▸ **Large Unit**

Golden pins hold the cloaks of these bodyguards, who wear plate armor but seethe with arcane power.

The squad consists of twelve humans working in tandem, filling the space of a Large creature. The unit needs only fill 4 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual could move through.

▸ **Magical Defender**

Seeing their charge in peril, the bodyguards chant in unison to break your spell.

Each allied creature adjacent to the bookpin guard squad can make a saving throw at the start of its turn to negate any charm or domination effect, even if it doesn't normally grant a save.

Standard Actions

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

Effect: The squad makes the following attack against up to four targets. If used as an opportunity attack, it only targets the triggering creature.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 30 damage.

▸ **Plate and Shield** ✦ At-Will

The heavily-armored warriors hold up their dark-painted shields. When your attack flies in, it impacts on an invisible barrier.

Effect: Until the start of the squad's next turn, the squad and allied creatures adjacent to the squad benefit from superior cover (+5 to defenses).

▸ **Expeditious Intercept** ✦ At-Will

They confer psychically, then rush with magical alacrity to intercept you.

Effect: The squad moves 15 squares.

Skills Arcana +24, Stealth +20

Str 18 (+19) **Dex** 10 (+15) **Wis** 10 (+15)
Con 15 (+17) **Int** 14 (+17) **Cha** 10 (+15)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven



Arch Secula Natalia Degaspare Level 30 Controller
Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP** 19,000

HP 200; **Bloodied** 100 **Initiative** +15
AC 44, **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 41, **Will** 44 **Perception** +17
Speed 6

Traits

▸ **Minor Hivemind Powers**

Some spectral presence clings to her.

Degaspare does not have special attacks like other hivemind heads, but she still gains some defenses and strength from the psychic connection.

Whenever Degaspare would take psychic or radiant damage, instead of harming her it harms the ghost councilor bonded to her. The first time she takes damage in this way, the councilor snarls as it becomes briefly visible, and Degaspare is weakened until the end of the attacker's next turn.

Once 50 points of psychic or radiant damage has been absorbed this way, the ghost councilor is destroyed, which permanently weakens and dazes her. She is still allied with the Obscurati, but a Diplomacy check (DC 40) or a *remove affliction* cast against a level 30 effect can snap her out of the hivemind altogether.

☼ **Secular Presence** ✦ Aura 5

"There are no gods," she says. "No miracles here. We have cast aside our old superstition. They have no power here."

Arcane, divine, primal, psionic, and shadow powers take a -5 penalty to attack and damage rolls if used within or against targets within the aura. Utility powers with those power sources cannot be used in the aura, nor affect creatures in the aura. Powers of magic items cannot be activated in the aura. Powers that have an indirect effect, such as using telekinesis outside the aura to throw something into the aura, function normally. Natalia's own abilities are not suppressed by this aura.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Mortal Dagger** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

"Let this be a reminder of your mortality," she says, driving a dagger toward your gut.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 2d4+7 damage, and the target takes ongoing 30 damage (save ends).

⟋ **Submit!** (charm, psychic) ✦ At-Will

"Submit to the new age of reason!" The focused will of a city-wide hivemind presses down on you.

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +33 vs. Will

Hit: 2d8+10 psychic damage, and the target is dazed until the end of Natalia's next turn. While dazed, the target loses all resistances and immunities and cannot regain hit points.

Minor Actions

✓ **Repeating Shotgun** (weapon) ✦ At-Will

"We shall let science and innovation carry us into the future!" She pulls a heavy shotgun from within her robes, and as she holds the trigger it unleashes a steady barrage of blasts.

Special: Natalia can use this attack multiple times each turn, as long as she keeps spending minor actions. For each attack, she makes two attack rolls. If at long range, she hits if either roll hits. If at close range and both rolls hit, she does an extra 1d8 damage.

Attack: Ranged 9/18 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+6 damage.

Load standard. She must reload the weapon after firing it eight times.

Str 12 (+16) **Dex** 10 (+15) **Wis** 14 (+17)
Con 12 (+16) **Int** 18 (+19) **Cha** 18 (+19)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven

Another Kind of Chain

Adventure 13

The Ladies of Forked Tongues

Gardienne du Cherage Level 30 Goon Artillery
Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP** 9500

HP 90; **Bloodied** 45 **Initiative** +15
AC 44, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 41, **Will** 42 **Perception** +17
Speed 6
Resist 20 psychic

Standard Actions

⊘ **Hivemind-Empowered Shove** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +33 vs. AC

Hit: 30 damage, and Gardienne pushes the target 5 squares.

✓ **Propagandist Pressure** (psychic) ✦ At-Will

She shouts to the crowd, "This intruder led Risur down the path to destruction. Should this failure be allowed to live?" And the masses, swept up in her compulsion, cry back, "No!"

Attack: Ranged 40 (one creature); +36 vs. Will

Hit: The target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of Gardienne's next turn. If there is a small crowd present (at least 10 noncombatants) and able to hear Gardienne, the target takes 10 psychic damage. If a large crowd (at least 100 noncombatants), the target takes 20 psychic damage. If an immense crowd (over 1000), the target takes 40 psychic damage.

Triggered Actions

✧ **Impose Doubt** (charm) ✦ Encounter

She falls back from your strike, her expression one of theatrical disbelief. "You are not in your right mind!" she cries. "Listen to me, they've misled you. Fight them. I'm not your enemy."

Trigger: An enemy within 10 squares hits Gardienne with an attack.

Attack: Close burst 10 (triggering creature); +33 vs. Will

Hit: The target is stunned (save ends). This effect immediately ends if Gardienne or any of her allies attack the target.

Miss: The target is dazed (save ends). This effect immediately ends if Gardienne or any of her allies attack the target.

Str 10 (+15) **Dex** 10 (+15) **Wis** 12 (+17)
Con 12 (+16) **Int** 14 (+17) **Cha** 20 (+20)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common



Ashima-Shimtu Unbound Level 30 Elite Controller
Medium immortal humanoid (demon) **XP** 38,000

HP 400; **Bloodied** 200 **Initiative** +28
AC 44, **Fortitude** 43, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 43 **Perception** +22
Speed 6, fly 6 (hover) Bloodsense, darkvision
Immune dazed, fear, restrained, slowed, stunned
Action Point 1; **Saving Throws** +2

Traits

▸ **Bloodsense**

Ashima-Shimtu can sense the location of living creatures within 40 squares, as blindsight. If a creature is taking untyped ongoing damage, she gains combat advantage against them. She can tell whether a creature she sees is alive (for instance, duplicants have no blood).

☼ **Terrible Rejuvenation** ✦ Aura

She feeds on confusion and deception.

While a creature within the aura is affected by a charm effect or is dazed or stunned, Ashima-Shimtu gains regeneration 40.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Shattered Chains** ✦ At-Will, Basic

She casts aside her robe, and a dozen barbed chains that once bound her animate around her like a nimbus of steel.

Attack: Melee 4 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 4d6+22 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 34). When Ashima-Shimtu moves, she slides any creature she has grabbed to any space within her reach.

✓ **Visions of Torment** (illusion, psychic) ✦ At-Will

The world fades away into darkness, and with a sudden snap-clink of chains you are hoisted over a churning abyss, your limbs contorted to torment you. Hours pass in a single panicked beat of your heart, and then you are freed, but you still bleed from the sites of the imagined chains.

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +33 vs. Will

Hit: 4d6+20 psychic damage, and the target falls prone. It is weakened and takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends both).

✲ **Crimson Eruption** ✦ At-Will

Your chest cracks with pain and blood sprays into the air.

Attack: Area burst 4 within 20 (creatures in burst); +33 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 4d6+10 damage, and if the target is alive it takes ongoing 30 damage (save ends). Whenever the target takes this ongoing damage, its space and each adjacent square becomes difficult terrain as the pool of blood thrashes and tries to entangle creatures. Ashima-Shimtu can ignore this difficult terrain.

✓ **Strangling Possession** ✦ At-Will

She presses you to the ground with her chains and kneels atop you. The clawed fingers of one of her hands wraps around your throat, nick a vein, and then her entire body transforms into blood and flows into you. You feel her in your mind, deceiving you into acting as she desires.

Requirement: The target must be immobilized, restrained, or otherwise unable to move.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +33 vs. Will

Hit: The target is knocked prone, and if the target is alive, remove Ashima-Shimtu from play, and Ashima-Shimtu possesses the target (save ends).

While the creature is possessed, Ashima-Shimtu controls all the creature's actions. If Ashima-Shimtu makes the creature take an action that is suicidal (like lying down on a train track), the creature gets a new save.

Aftereffect: Return Ashima-Shimtu to play within 6 squares of the target.

Move Actions

▸ **Veil of Deception** (illusion) ✦ Encounter

The world around her distorts, and you can no longer see her.

Effect: Ashima-Shimtu becomes invisible until she takes damage or is hit by an attack.

Minor Actions

✓ **Chain Lash** ✦ At-Will, 1/round

One of her many chains strikes you while she focuses on something else.

Effect: Ashima-Shimtu uses *shattered chains*.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Variable Resistance** ✦ 3/Encounter

Her flesh ripples ever so slightly at your attack, reacting to become more resistant.

Trigger: Ashima-Shimtu takes acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage.

Effect (free action): She gains resist 20 to the triggering energy type until the end of the encounter, or until she uses this ability again.

Str	22 (+21)	**Dex**	32 (+26)	**Wis**	24 (+22)
Con	28 (+24)	**Int**	24 (+22)	**Cha**	40 (+30)

Alignment Evil **Languages** telepathy

Civilized Execution

Adventure 13

Bruse Shantus and Tyrannosaurs

Bruse Shantus Level 30 Brute

Medium natural humanoid (minotaur) **XP** 19,000

HP 250; **Bloodied** 125 **Initiative** +15

AC 42, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 41, **Will** 40 **Perception** +17

Speed 8

Traits

☼ **Primitive Presence** ✦ Aura 5

Steam curls out of his nostrils and his eyes grow bloodshot. His posture hunches, and all his refined gentility gives way to savagery. You feel a sudden temptation to throw down your weapons and brawl with tooth and claw. This is not a battle for guns and spells, but for feral rage.

Prevent all damage that would be dealt to creatures in the aura if the attacker is outside the target's melee reach.



Standard Actions

⊘ **Bite** ✦ At-Will, Basic

He growls. "Master Nicodemus told me to say you brought this upon us. We could have been civilized, but you force us to become savages!" The minotaur ruler bares his teeth, lunges, and slams his horns into you. Then he falls upon you and tries to bite off your face.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 2d10+30 damage, and the target is knocked prone. Make the following attack against the same target.

Secondary Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 2d4+10 damage, and the target is blinded (save ends).

✓ **Labyrinthine Confusion** (psychic) ✦ At-Will

Seeing you out of reach, he screams in frustration, and the city suddenly becomes a confusing labyrinth of irregular geometry that you can barely navigate.

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +33 vs. Will

Hit: 4d6+20 psychic damage, and the target is trapped in a psychic maze (save ends). While trapped in this maze, whenever it takes any action that would let it move, Bruse Shantus chooses which way the creature moves.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Bloody Frenzy**

He smears his own blood across his face and goes mad, striking everything that comes near.

Trigger: Bruse Shantus is first bloodied.

Effect (No Action): Bruse Shantus becomes immune to dazed, stunned, and similar conditions that would deny him actions until the end of the encounter, and whenever he hits a creature with *bite* he pushes the target 5 squares instead of making a secondary attack.

Str	25 (+22)	**Dex**	13 (+16)	**Wis**	14 (+17)
Con	22 (+21)	**Int**	14 (+17)	**Cha**	16 (+18)

Alignment Unaligned

Ob-Bred Tyrannosaur Level 30 Goon Brute

Gargantuan natural beast **XP** 9500

HP 125; **Bloodied** 62 **Initiative** +16

AC 42, **Fortitude** 44, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 40 **Perception** +17

Speed 10

Vulnerable 10 radiant

Traits

▸ **Jaw Carry**

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

▸ **Massive Body, Tiny Arms**

On any turn the tyrannosaur stands up, it is slowed.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Bite** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 35 damage. The tyrannosaur grabs the target (Escape DC 34).

Special: If it has a creature grabbed, it can only use its bite against that creature.

⊘ **Kick** ✦ At-Will, Basic

Its foot bowls you over, then descends upon your chest, pinning you to the ground.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +33 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 15 damage. The target is knocked prone and is restrained as long as the tyrannosaur is above or adjacent to the target.

▸ **Primal Mauling** ✦ At-Will

Effect: The tyrannosaur moves its speed, uses *kick* at any point during its movement, then uses *bite* at the end of its movement.

▸ **Rend and Tear** ✦ At-Will

As you fight to escape one rex's mouth, the other tyrannosaur bites down on your exposed limb. The two mighty beasts pull in opposite directions, ripping you in half.

Requirement: The tyrannosaur must have the target restrained (due to *kick*), or another Huge or larger creature must be grabbing or restraining the target (with *bite* or *kick*).

Effect: The tyrannosaur *bites* the target. If the attack hits and the target is bloodied after the damage, it makes a saving throw. On a success, it loses the limb of its choice. On a failure, it takes an additional 20 damage and loses two limbs at random.

Minor Actions

✲ **Fling Food** ✦ At-Will

Well, you're not being eaten anymore.

Requirement: The tyrannosaur must have a creature grabbed in its mouth.

Effect: The tyrannosaur releases the grabbed creature anywhere within its bite's reach, then knocks the creature prone and slides it 4 squares. Make the following attack against each creature in area burst 1 centered on the released creature.

Attack: Area burst 1 (creatures in burst); +35 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 10 damage and the target is knocked prone.

Effect: The flung creature takes 20 damage.

Str 27 (+23) **Dex** 10 (+15) **Wis** 14 (+17)
Con 22 (+21) **Int** 2 (+11) **Cha** 14 (+17)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Sor Daeron and Glaucia Evora

Sor Daeron Level 30 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, eladrin **XP** 19000

HP 200; **Bloodied** 100 **Initiative** +16
AC 44, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 41 **Perception** +15
Speed 8, fly 6 (hover) Darkvision

Traits

Armor from the Age of Legends

The aged eladrin's glowing green eyes are pale and dim and his skin wrinkles with the weight of centuries of solitude, but his cape billows out in a conjured wind, revealing a shimmering suit of armor that is more magic than metal. Despite his apparent infirmity, he advances with a light jaunt, a reckless smile on his lips.

If Sor Daeron did not attack on his previous turn, he gets +4 to defenses.



▸ **Wound from the Holy War**

His right arm is composed wholly of animated salt crystals. You only manage to hold him for a moment before his arm becomes too granular to grasp. He steps free, and then his arm reforms.

At the beginning of Sor's turn, if he is grabbed or suffering from a condition that slows, immobilizes, or restrains him, he may make a save to end that grab or condition.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Crackling Scimitar** (weapon, lightning) ✦ At-Will, Basic

His scimitar leaves an arc of lightning behind it as he dances into battle. A moment before you expect him to strike, he lunges, slices, and withdraws out of range.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+18 damage, plus 10 lightning damage.

✓ **Dessication** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will

The eladrin mockingly flips his sword into the air and slaps you in the face with his crystalline hand. He catches his blade on its way down, then half-bows in a jesting curtsy. You feel your skin crack and wither where he touched you.

Attack: Melee 1 (one enemy); +35 vs. AC

Hit: Ongoing 30 necrotic damage and the target is weakened (save ends both).

▸ **Dervish Dance** (teleportation) ✦ Recharge 6

Effect: Sor teleports three times, for a total distance of up to 30 squares. He can use *crackling scimitar* or *lightning lash* once against up to three different enemies he teleports beside during this movement.

Minor Actions

✓ **Lightning Lash** (lightning) ✦ At-Will

He flicks his scimitar, and a whip of electricity knocks you away.

Attack: Ranged 10 (one enemy); +33 vs. Reflex

Hit: 10 lightning damage, and Sor pushes the target 5 squares.

Skills Arcana +26, Bluff +22, Intimidate +22

Str 16 (+18) **Dex** 12 (+16) **Wis** 10 (+15)
Con 15 (+17) **Int** 22 (+21) **Cha** 14 (+17)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Draconic, Elven, Goblin, Orc, Primordial



Glaucia Evora	Level 28 Goon Controller
Medium natural humanoid, gnoll	**XP** 6050
HP 96; **Bloodied** 48	**Initiative** +12
AC 40, **Fortitude** 40, **Reflex** 39, **Will** 42	**Perception** +22
Speed 6	Low-light vision
Immune charm, domination	

Traits

▸ **Ferocious Charge**

Though she no longer lives as a savage, she remembers the viciousness of her tribe.

Glaucia deals +6 damage on a successful charge attack. If she is bloodied she instead deals +12 damage and gains 12 temporary hit points.

▸ **Enforcer of Freedom** (fire, radiant) ✦ Aura 5

Attacks against her are turned aside as if by magic. She wears on her chest the sign of the broken manacle, for her will shall not be chained.

Any creature in the aura is immune to the dominated condition and effects with the charm keyword (but not to any damage affiliated with those effects). Any creature in the aura that uses a power with the charm keyword or that can cause domination takes 20 fire and radiant damage.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Fight With Her Own Chains** (fire, radiant) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The chains binding her glow red hot, then snap, and with a snarl she charges, |swinging the blistering lash.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +33 vs. AC

Hit: 10 damage. The first time the creature attacks before the end of Glaucia's next turn it takes 25 fire and radiant damage.

✲ **Pillar of Fire** (fire, radiant, zone) ✦ Daily

A column of shining flame roars down to engulf her foes.

Attack: Area burst 2 within 20 (enemies in burst); +31 vs. Reflex

Hit: 30 fire and radiant damage.

Miss: 15 fire and radiant damage.

Effect: The area becomes a zone until the end of the encounter. Enemies that end their turn in the zone take 30 fire and radiant damage.

Minor Actions

▸ **Dispelling Word** ✦ Encounter

She barks a sacred word and purges the area of hostile magic.

Effect: Glaucia can end one magical zone within close burst 20, and grants herself and each ally in the area a saving throw with a +3 bonus.

Skills Insight +28, Intimidate +22

Str	12 (+15)	**Dex**	10 (+14)	**Wis**	22 (+20)
Con	16 (+17)	**Int**	13 (+15)	**Cha**	16 (+17)

Alignment Lawful Good **Languages** Common, Giant

The Chancellor's Motorcade

Adventure 13

Hastenschrieft Willimarkanova	Level 30 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (dwarf)	**XP** 19,000
HP 200; **Bloodied** 100	**Initiative** +15
AC 46, **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 41, **Will** 41	**Perception** +17
Speed 5	

Traits

▸ **Minor Hivemind Powers**

Some spectral presence clings to her.

Hastenschrieft does not have special attacks like other hivemind heads, but she still gains some defenses and strength from the psychic connection.

Whenever Hastenschrieft would take psychic or radiant damage, instead of harming her it harms the ghost councilor bonded to her. The first time she takes damage in this way, the councilor snarls as it becomes briefly visible, and Hastenschrieft is weakened until the end of the attacker's next turn.

Once 50 points of psychic or radiant damage has been absorbed this way, the ghost councilor is destroyed, which permanently weakens and dazes her. She is originally loyal to the Obscurati, so freeing her from the hivemind won't change her behavior.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Eye Gouge** ✦ At-Will, Basic

She's not a trained fighter, but she's supernaturally swift as she grabs you and tries to dig her thumbs into your eyes.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target takes 2d4+10 damage, is grabbed (Escape DC 30), and is blinded until the end of Hastenschrieft's next turn. If the target is already grabbed, the target takes 4d12+40 damage is blinded until the end of the encounter.

▸ **Philosopher's Stone** ✦ At-Will

The dwarf gestures past you and swipes her arm. A nearby wall's bricks rearrange themselves into a hammer and swing themselves at you.

Effect: Hastenschrieft creates an animated object out of a large amount of stone in any space within 20 squares. That object makes the following attack, then collapses back into stone.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 4d10+15 damage.

Str	12 (+16)	**Dex**	10 (+15)	**Wis**	10 (+15)
Con	16 (+18)	**Int**	18 (+19)	**Cha**	18 (+19)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Giant

Kvarti Gorbatiy	Level 30 Lurker
Medium natural humanoid (dwarf)	**XP** 19,000
HP 180; **Bloodied** 90	**Initiative** +15
AC 43, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 43, **Will** 40	**Perception** +25
Speed 5	Truesight

Traits

▸ **Sniper's Eye**

He makes eye contact and nods ever so slightly to you, despite your illusion.

As long as he's in one of Trekhom's towers, Kvarti can see through invisibility and illusion, and can detect the real form of shapeshifted creatures.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Rifle Wrestle** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

He tries to shove you away, using his rifle like a staff.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +34 vs. AC

Hit: 1d10+12 damage, and the target is knocked prone. Kvarti uses *rifle* against the target without provoking an opportunity attack.



⊘ **Rifle** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
He snipes you from afar.
Special: If the target is at extreme range (up to 400 squares), Kvarti takes a -4 penalty to his attack roll, instead of the normal -2 for long range (up to 80 squares).
Attack: Ranged 40/80/400 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+30 damage, or 3d8+50 damage on a crit. Kvarti marks the target until the start of his next turn.
Special: If the target has cover and the attack would have hit if the target did not have cover, the attack still deals half damage. This works through a few inches of wood or stone, or a half-inch of metal.
Load free.

▸ **Tracer Shot** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
The bullet leaves a trail of sparkling gold dust in its path, and it clings to you. Even if you move, you'll glow and give away your location.
Effect: Kvarti uses *rifle*. The target begins to glow, even if the attack misses. The glow persists until the target can magically nullify it, until it takes at least three standard actions to wipe the dust off, or until the end of the encounter. Glowing reveals the target's location, shedding bright light in a 5 square radius.
Special: Kvarti only has five tracer rounds.

⟋ **Desperation Pistol** (weapon) ✦ Encounter
With no room for his rifle, he flips out a revolver and fires off the whole cylinder.
Effect: Kvarti makes the following attack six times, but all the targets must be within 3 squares of each other. The targets cannot make opportunity attacks until the end of Kvarti's turn.
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +33 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4+8 damage, or 1d4+20 damage on a crit.
Special. If Kvarti has three rounds unaccosted to reload his pistol, he recharges this power.

Move Actions

▸ **Shadow Teleport** ✦ Recharge 6
With supreme professionalism he reloads his rifle even as he vanishes into the shadows.
Effect: Kvarti teleports to another location he can see in or adjacent to one of Trekhom's spires or towers. When he teleports, he can bring up to one medium creature with him. He can hide as part of this action.

Skills Perception +25, Stealth +26

Str	14 (+17)	**Dex**	22 (+21)	**Wis**	14 (+17)
Con	22 (+21)	**Int**	14 (+17)	**Cha**	10 (+15)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Giant, Primordial

Obscurati Lantern Walker Level 30 Minion Brute
Large natural animate (construct) **XP** 4250

HP 1; see Fine Drakran Construction **Initiative** +15
AC 42, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 40 **Perception** +13
Speed 8 Darkvision
Immune necrotic, poison

Traits

▸ **Fine Drakran Construction**
The four-legged crab-like construct moves with smoothly-machined precision. A red light seeps out of its seams, produced by the arcane lantern that is its power source.
Any source that deals at least 30 damage to the walker destroys it. Sources that deal less damage bloody it, or destroy it if it's already bloodied.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Grindsaw Claw** ✦ At-Will, Basic
Articulated claws lined with spinning blades twitch at the end of the thing's stubby arms.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 23 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 30).

⟋ **Lantern Beam** ✦ At-Will, Basic
A metal partition opens, revealing a lens mechanism that focuses the light of the interior lantern.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +33 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target takes ongoing 15 fire damage (save ends).

Str	30 (+25)	**Dex**	10 (+15)	**Wis**	6 (+13)
Con	21 (+20)	**Int**	3 (+11)	**Cha**	3 (+11)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Understands Common

Voice of Authority

Adventure 13

Cula Ravjahani, Vekeshi Apostate Level 30 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (half-elf) **XP** 19000

HP 220; **Bloodied** 110 **Initiative** +22
AC 46, **Fortitude** 44, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 41 **Perception** +25
Speed 8 Low-light Vision
Resist fire 20

Traits

▸ **Studied Defense**
With a laugh, the half-elf flourishes her blade at you. "We've learned all your tricks, so try to get past my defense."
Cula gets +4 to defenses against any attack with a weapon or implement that was already used against Cula in the past day. A weapon that can change forms (such as from dagger to sword) counts as a different weapon.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Eladrin-Bane Longsword** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic
Her sword looks like fire frozen and cast in purple ice. She uses canny footwork to maneuver you through the battlefield.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8+30 damage, and Cula slides the target 2 squares and she shifts 2 squares. If the target is an eladrin, it takes an additional 20 damage.



▸ **Wand of Magic Missiles** (implement, force) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Effect: Cula shoots five missiles, which unerringly hit their targets. Each targets a creature within 20 squares, dealing 5 force damage. She can target the same creature multiple times.

Minor Actions

▸ **Frost Trap** (cold) ✦ At-Will

You feel a chill behind you, and realize she subtly created a frigid sigil on the ground as a trap.

Effect: Cula creates a sigil in a space within 20 squares, which lasts until the trap is triggered or until she uses this power again. The first time a creature enters that space the trap deals 10 cold damage and then is disabled. A creature damaged this way is slowed (save ends).

Str	14 (+17)	**Dex**	20 (+20)	**Wis**	20 (+20)
Con	14 (+17)	**Int**	15 (+17)	**Cha**	15 (+17)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Axis Obscura

Adventure 13

I figure as long as the party gets to do amazing things in the final battle, it's not *really* necessary to push them to the brink of failure. That would be nice, but I personally would be careful not to TPK the party right at the end of a campaign.

Nicodemus, Mastermind	Level 30 Solo Controller
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)	**XP** 95000
HP 1068; **Threshold I** 712; **Threshold II** 356	**Initiative** +19
AC 44, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 44	**Perception** +21
Speed 6, fly 10 (hover), phasing	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison, see *sacramental invulnerability*;	
Resist insubstantial; **Vulnerable** radiant 10	
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 1	

Traits

▸ **Initially Disinterested**

Smug and confident, he focuses on completing the ritual, and lets his minions deal with you.

Nicodemus has three 'stages' separated by a pair of HP thresholds. When his HP is reduced below each threshold, his abilities change. If he is below Threshold I, he counts as bloodied.

▸ **Sacramental Invulnerability**

Due to the *sacrament of apotheosis*, Nicodemus has resist 100 all against environmental damage. He also has resist 100 all and is immune to conditions from attacks by creatures. He loses these defenses against any attacking creature that addresses Nicodemus by his real name, William Miller, at some point during the encounter.

▸ **Divine Presence**

The *sacrament* also allows Nicodemus to move objects as if he were Large, at a range of 4 squares (20 ft.). This allows him to lift a column by spending four move actions, if somehow the colossus Borne cannot aid him. (He can also grow in size to Large as a free action, but that's not really his style, so don't bother doing that unless another PC is also gigantic and attacking him, in order to maintain a good aesthetic for the battle.)

In Stage II, this increases to Huge, 10 squares, and one move action.

In Stage III, it's Gargantuan, 40 squares, and one move action to pull a column entirely free.

▸ **Creator of a New World**

Nicodemus can spend a standard action to repair any damage to one object that is within the reach of his *divine presence*. He can use this to fix shattered ritual columns, and can spare the *Revolution* from crashing. (He generally prefers offense to repairs, however.)

▸ **Welcome to the Obscurati**

You place the planar icon in the column and allow it to sink back into the earth. As it slides into place, you feel darkness wrap you like welcoming arms, as a fragment of your soul is drawn away to empower Nicodemus.

Whenever Nicodemus would take damage, for each PC who linked to a plane during this encounter, prevent 10 of that damage and instead deal that 10 damage to the PC. This link ends if the column the PC lowered is destroyed.

▸ **Shadow-Cloaked (Stage I & II)**

Secrecy protects the mastermind of the Obscurati with a cloak of shadows. You're uncertain if your attack even struck him.

Nicodemus is constantly cloaked in darkness, granting him concealment. He is immune to all damage and conditions except for those caused by radiant attacks. If he is adjacent to a source of bright light, or when a radiant attack affects Nicodemus, the shadows are peeled away, and he loses this protection until the end of the attacker's next turn. Simply being in the radius of a light source, however, is not enough.

The central pit of the Axis Seal ritual is a bright light source.

▸ **Incandescent Soul** ✦ Aura 10 (Stage III)

The shadows burn away, revealing a brilliantly-glowing soul.

Each creature that enters or ends its turn in the aura takes 50 radiant damage. The area is brightly-lit.

Standard Actions

✓ **Worldwide Rebuke** ✦ At-Will, Basic

He's perturbed that you're interfering with his ritual, and he shoves you aside with the force of a million hands.

Attack: Melee 4 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+30 damage, and Nicodemus pushes the target 2 squares. Make a secondary attack.

Secondary Attack: Ranged 40 (primary target); +33 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 5 damage, the target is knocked prone and slowed until the end of Nicodemus's next turn, and Nicodemus pushes the target 2 squares. Repeat this attack until it misses.

Thoughtseize (charm, psychic) ✦ At-Will
Nicodemus strikes at empty air as if he's grabbing you, and then your body moves like a puppet under his control.
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +33 vs. Will
Hit: 2d8+30 psychic damage and Nicodemus slides the target its speed. The target is then immobilized until the end of Nicodemus's next turn. The target uses an at-will attack power against a target of Nicodemus's choice either before or after the forced movement.

Flurry of Blows ✦ At-Will
Effect: Nicodemus makes a total of two attacks using *worldwide rebuke* and/or *thoughtseize*.

Variable Barriers ✦ At-Will (Stage 1)
Drawing upon the knowledge of a thousand libraries, he casts a spell to keep you from affecting the Axis Seal ritual.
Effect: Nicodemus chooses one of the following effects. He can use each once per encounter. The barriers last until the end of the encounter.
- **Blade Barrier.** Wall 8 within 10, 4 squares high. A creature that enters or ends its turn in the area is attacked. *Atk:* +35 vs. AC. *Hit:* 4d10+16 damage and the target is pushed back out of the wall.
- **Resilient Sphere.** Ranged 20 (one creature). *Atk:* +33 vs. Reflex. *Hit:* The target is trapped in a transparent sphere of force and cannot move from its space. It has total cover in all directions. The sphere has 100 hit points.
- **Wall of Force.** Wall 8 within 10, 4 squares high. Wall is invisible and impenetrable. A ship that impacts this wall stops moving, its speed falls to 0, and it takes damage as if it had rammed a Defense 30 ship.
- **Wall of Hellfire.** Wall 8 within 10, 4 squares high. Creatures ending their turn in the area take 40 fire damage. Entering the wall deals 20 fire damage for each 5 ft. traveled through.

Hungry Darkness (cold, poison) ✦ At-Will (Stage 2)
Smoke swirls around you, casting shadows that grow sharp. They bite and engulf you, their fangs burn with poison, and the smoke saps the warmth from your body.
Attack: Area burst 2 within 40 (creatures in burst); +33 vs. Reflex
Hit: 4d8+60 cold damage, and the target is blinded, slowed, and takes ongoing 20 poison damage (save ends all).

Pyrebound Grasp (radiant) ✦ Encounter (Stage 3)
Cinders trail his hands as he reaches out for your spirit, his shining soul grappling against yours as he draws you into his pyre.
Attack: Close burst 10 (one creature in burst); +33 vs. Will
Hit: 4d8+60 fire damage, and Nicodemus pulls the creature 10 squares. If the creature is bloodied after this attack, its body falls limp as its spirit is bound to Nicodemus's (save ends). Any damage or conditions dealt to Nicodemus are dealt to the bound target instead. When the target saves, or when the target is reduced to 0 HP, it is released and Nicodemus recharges this power.

Minor Actions

Icon Swap ✦ At-Will
Effect: Nicodemus chooses an exposed ritual column within 10 squares and telekinetically removes the planar icon in it, drawing the item to his hand; or he delivers an icon he is carrying to the alcove in that column. (Thus it takes him two minor actions to fully swap out an icon.)

Triggered Actions

A Future Obscured ✦ Encounter (Stage 1)
Reeling a bit, he makes a flicking gesture as if tossing away a cigarette, and thick black smoke surrounds him. It spreads and covers the entire valley.
Trigger: Nicodemus is reduced to 712 HP or below.
Effect: All negative effects affecting Nicodemus end and he gains an action point. Smoke fills the entire battlefield, lasting until the end of Nicodemus's next turn. This smoke provides total concealment for all creatures except Nicodemus, who can see through it.



Miller's Pyre ✦ Encounter (Stage 2)
He falls to the ground, then pushes himself up, looking around in a sudden panic, for he has landed atop a tall pile of smoldering books and scrolls, as spectral and insubstantial as he. The papers ignite, and he screams with shock as his ghostly form is engulfed. For a moment it seems he might fall, but then the pyre flares to fifty feet tall, and he emerges, incandescent with rage.
Trigger: Nicodemus is reduced to 356 HP or below.
Effect: Nicodemus falls to the ground, but then stands up. All negative effects affecting him end and he gains an action point. He loses the *shadow-cloaked* trait and gains *incandescent soul*.

Backlash ✦ Encounter (Stage 3)
Trigger: Nicodemus is reduced to 0 HP.
Effect: Nicodemus is destroyed, though the description will vary based on circumstances. Each PC who is linked to Nicodemus (see *welcome to the fold*) takes 100 damage, but cannot be reduced below 1 hit point in this way.

Skills Arcana +24, Bluff +26, Diplomacy +26, Insight +26

Str	40 (+30)	**Dex**	18 (+19)	**Wis**	23 (+21)
Con	28 (+24)	**Int**	19 (+19)	**Cha**	22 (+21)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Primordial

Borne, Obscurati Colossus Level 34 Solo Soldier
Colossal natural animate (construct) **XP** 190,000
HP 1200; Threshold I 800; Threshold II 400 **Initiative** see below
AC 50, **Fortitude** 46, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 46 **Perception** +17
Speed 10
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 50 all except psychic (but you have to be within range of his head, which is 50 squares up, to target him with most psychic or charm attacks)
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 0

Traits

Truly Colossal
Borne does not function quite the same as a normal combatant. He acts at the end of each round, and gets the normal complement of standard, move, and minor actions. However, his physical attacks are very slow, and when he uses *crushing fist* or *kick*, he picks a target space, and the attack doesn't arrive until the start of his next turn.

Borne is 60 squares tall and fills a space 20 squares across. He could reasonably be represented on a battle map by having a 5-ft. tall person stand above the minis. A move action for him represents a single step, his foot swinging slightly slower than a horse can gallop.

Normal difficult terrain does not impede the colossus. A Huge or smaller creature can move through his space, and vice-versa. The colossus is simply too large and slow to make attacks of opportunity, and he can be flanked only by Huge or larger foes.

It's possible for a Huge or smaller creature to climb the colossus (Athletics DC 30), and he's only capable of targeting such intruders with *swipe*, or perhaps *spirit cascade* if the climber isn't smart enough to climb the colossus's back.

Borne will generally rely on allies to deal with creatures climbing him, so he can focus on the ritual.

▶ Titanic

Forced movement cannot move Borne more than 5 squares in a given round. Attacks cannot knock him prone unless the source of the attack is at least Gargantuan.

▶ Obscurati-Granted Wards

In addition to the already unparalleled wards inscribed into his armored skin, and the balancing magic of a wayfarer's lantern integrated into his chest, Borne is shielded by massive defensive magic being performed around the island.

Normally Borne takes no damage from the energy tendril coming out of the seal's center.

If the various machines the Ob set up around the island are destroyed, the protection they generate vanishes. This has no effect on personal-scale weapons, but it means the energy tendril can harm Borne. Likewise, if the lantern in his chest is destroyed (see below), he becomes vulnerable.

Most of the energy in the tendrils dissipates into the air when it hits a smaller creature, but Borne is so huge that if he's in the path of the energy tendril, he takes 200 damage each round, ignoring his resistances.



Riven Armor

The repairs Nicodemus effected were hasty and the result of magic, not engineering. The once impenetrable colossus has cracks in his armor, though whether it's even possible to take advantage of those remains to be seen.

Four main locations on Borne's body are particularly vulnerable. A character that spends a standard action to examine the colossus automatically detects these vulnerabilities. Otherwise, if a creature comes within 10 squares of any of these weak points, they become apparent.

- Either knee. Roughly 15 squares up.
- Under the chest plate. Roughly 40 squares up.
- Left armpit. Roughly 45 squares up.
- Dorsal vents for witchoil engine. Roughly 50 squares up on back.

Each of these four areas have weaker armor, with only defenses AC 46, Fort 42, Ref 38, Will 42, but still resist 50 all. Dealing 100 damage to one of these areas (which also deducts from Borne's main hit points) creates an opening large enough for a Large creature to enter. Inside each area are vulnerable components with the same defenses as the 'weaker armor,' and with no damage resistance.

Inside the knee, the joint can be targeted. If it is dealt 50 damage, Borne's speed is reduced by half. If both knees are damaged, his speed falls to 2.

Under the chest plate, the integrated *wayfarer's lantern* can be targeted. If it is dealt 10 damage, it shatters, and Borne takes a -1 penalty to attack rolls and defenses for each plane currently linked to the world that was not part of the cosmology when he was built.

In the left armpit, the joint can be targeted. If it is dealt 50 damage, the arm falls limp. Use your best judgment of what actions Borne might be unable to do because one of his arms is out of commission. (Or have him tear off his own arm to use as a club and increase his reach.)

If the witchoil engine is reached, creatures in that compartment take 30 fire damage at the end of their turn from the waste heat. If the engine is dealt 200 damage, it destabilizes. At the end of the attacker's next turn, the engine explodes. Make the following attack centered on the dorsal vent.

Attack: Close burst 20 (creatures in burst); +37 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6+200 fire and necrotic damage, and the target is pushed to the edge of the burst.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Borne falls, powerless. He can still speak, but cannot take other actions.

Standard Actions

Crushing Fist ✦ At-Will
He brings his fist down, but he has to stoop to reach you, so you have a moment to dodge out of the way.

Effect: The colossus chooses a target space. At the beginning of his next turn if he's still within range of that space, make the following attack.
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +37 vs. Reflex
Hit: 100 damage.
Miss: Half damage.

Swipe ✦ At-Will
He tries to knock people off their footing.

Effect: The colossus chooses a target space and swings its hand through from one direction to the other. At the beginning of his next turn if he's still within range of that space, make the following attack.
Attack: Area 3 square by 6 square swath within 10 squares (creatures in area); +37 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 4d12+20 damage, and the target is slid 6 squares to the far end of the swath.
Special: Borne can use this attack to brush off creatures that have climbed onto him.

✲ **Stomp** ✦ At-Will

His foot has left deep impressions everywhere he has stepped, and now he's about to make an impression on you.

Effect: The colossus chooses a target space. At the beginning of his next turn if he's still within range of that space, make the following attack.

Attack: Area burst 2 within 5 (creatures in burst); +37 vs. Reflex

Hit: 200 damage and the target is knocked prone.

Miss: Half damage.

✲ **Spirit Cascade** ✦ At-Will

The colossus glares, and spirits from his witchoil-fueled engine fly out of his eyes.

Attack: Area burst 2 within 240 (creatures in burst); +37 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 3d12+20 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).

Triggered Actions

↱ **Arcane Reflection** ✦ Recharge at Threshold I & Threshold II

Your attack triggers a cascade of glowing glyphs across the colossus's body, and then your own force rebounds upon you.

Trigger: An attack hits Borne.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): The attack has the same effect on the target.

Int 15 (+19) **Wis** 10 (+17) **Cha** 8 (+16)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Ghost Council Swarm — Level 30 Solo Brute

Gargantuan shadow humanoid (undead, swarm) — **XP** 95000

HP 690; **Threshold I** 460; **Threshold II** 230 — **Initiative** +15

AC 43, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 43 — **Perception** +23

Speed fly 8 (hover); phasing — Darkvision

Immune poison, disease

Resist insubstantial, cold 20, poison 20, half damage from melee and ranged attacks

Vulnerable radiant 10, 15 against close and area attacks

Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Horde**

The council contains hundreds of ghosts, filling the space of a Gargantuan creature. The swarm needs only fill 16 contiguous spaces.

Enemies can move through the swarm, which counts as difficult terrain. Enemies cannot gain combat advantage against the swarm by flanking it.

▸ **Terrain Control**

Spaces within 2 squares of the swarm count as difficult terrain for enemies. The swarm has threatening reach in that area.

▸ **Terrifying Distraction**

Because of the chaos of being grabbed from all directions, creatures adjacent to the swarm or within its space grant combat advantage and take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Eldritch Grasp** (acid, cold, fire, lightning) ✦ At-Will, Basic

You stray too close to the swarm, and a half-dozen undead mages assault you with energetic touch spells.

Effect: If the swarm makes an opportunity attack, just make the following attack once. If it uses this power on its turn, make the following attack against up to four different targets. For each attack choose whether it deals acid, cold, fire, or lightning damage.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +33 vs. Reflex

Hit: 4d6+25 damage of the chosen energy type. The target is pulled 1 square toward the center of the swarm (potentially even into its space).

✓ **Unrefined Evocation** (fire) ✦ At-Will

A dozen mages in the swarm cast spells at you, lashing with scorching rays. While you might expect innovation from so many geniuses, it seems they've all settled on 'fire' as the optimal weapon.

Effect: Make the following attack up to twelve times, but no more than three times against any one target.

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +33 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d6+10 fire damage.

✓ **Welcome to the Fold** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will, 1/round

They surround you and smile spectral, rictus grins. "Nicodemus is our leader," they chant in unison. "He has guided you as he guides us. You are already one of the council and you do not know it." Then as one they grab through your flesh and begin to tear your soul from your body.

Effect: The target must be inside the council's space.

Attack: Melee 0 (one creature); +33 vs. Will

Hit: 6d6+80 necrotic damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Effect: Until the end of the encounter, the target ignores the council's resistance due to being insubstantial. If this attack kills the target, he finds his consciousness being drawn into the ghost council, but if he returns to life at some point during this encounter, he is freed from the council, and the council is stunned until the end of its next turn.

✧ **Oppressive Moan** (fear, psychic, thunder) ✦ Encounter ✦ Stage 1

As the council glides closer, their hazy faces become clear, contorted, hideous. They glare wide-eyed at you and unleash a long, eerie moan.

Effect: Make the following two attacks.

Primary Attack: Close blast 10 (enemies in blast); +33 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 5d6+40 thunder damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Miss: Half damage.

Secondary Attack: Same area (same enemies); +33 vs. Will

Hit: 5d6+40 psychic damage, and the target is weakened (save ends). This is a fear effect.

✓ **Carry Off** (necrotic) ✦ At-Will ✦ Stage 2

The swarm swoops into you. Dozens of hands grasp you and carry you into the sky. Every touch drains away your life force.

Effect: The swarm flies its speed and makes the following attack against up to two targets at any point during the movement.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +33 vs. Reflex

Hit: 3d6+20 necrotic damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 22). The target has ongoing 50 necrotic damage as long as it is grabbed. When the swarm moves, it can slide the target along with it, even into the air. It can sustain the grab as a free action, and can grab up to four creatures at once.

✧ **Poltergeist Activity** ✦ At-Will ✦ Stage 3

The ghosts screech in denial and pain, and everything near them not bolted down begins to lift into the air.

Attack: Close burst 10 (enemies in burst); +33 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d10+20 damage, and the ghost council hurls the target through the air, sliding them 5 squares and knocking them prone. The ghost council can lift the target off the ground during this forced movement.

Miss. Half damage, and the ghost council slides the target 1 square.



Minor Actions

▸ **Ectoplasmic Construct** ✦ At-Will, 1/round

A solid wall appears before you, cutting you off from your allies.

Effect: The ghost council creates a wall or similar inanimate object out of ectoplasm, filling up to 4 contiguous spaces within 20 squares, to a height of 3 squares. It lasts until the end of the encounter. The ectoplasm is translucent.

Each square has 10 hit points.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Withdraw** ✦ Encounter

The swarm wails and recoils, but then vanishes.

Trigger: The ghost council is reduced to 460 HP or below.

Effect (No Action): The ghost council swarm uses *oppressive moan* if it has not already.

The ghost council becomes invisible until it attacks. All conditions affecting the ghost council end, it gains an action point, and then it shifts 10 squares.

▸ **Fracture** ✦ Encounter

The ghosts exchange glances, and a few shake their heads and fly away. The remainder gather together more closely.

Trigger: The ghost council is reduced to 230 HP or below.

Effect (No Action): The ghost council reduces to 9 contiguous spaces, and is now only size Huge. All conditions affecting the ghost council end. The ghost council gains an action point, then shifts 10 squares.

Str	36 (+28)	**Dex**	10 (+15)	**Wis**	16 (+18)
Con	14 (+17)	**Int**	20 (+20)	**Cha**	14 (+17)

Alignment Evil **Languages** many and various

The Jierres and the *Revolution*

Lya, the Ghost Scion	Level 30 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (tiefling, undead)	**XP** 19000
HP 200; **Bloodied** 100	**Initiative** +25
AC 44, **Fortitude** 40, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 42	**Perception** +19
Speed fly 8 (hover); phasing	Darkvision
Resist fire 20, insubstantial	
Vulnerable radiant attacks bypass insubstantial	

Traits

▸ **Perfected Counterswarm Stance**

When you lunge she drops a leg behind your ally and swings behind him, and your attack strikes your ally instead.

Whenever an enemy targets Lya with a melee or ranged attack, if she is adjacent to an enemy other than the attacker, the attacker must make a save. On a failure, Lya may change the attack's target to the adjacent enemy.

At the beginning of Lya's turn, if she is prone she can stand as a free action. If she is slowed or immobilized she can make a save to end that condition, even if it doesn't normally allow a save.

Standard Actions

✓ **Exceptional Duelist** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Even if you dodge her strike, she nicks your wrist or grazes your thigh when she parries your counterattack. But you've seen these tricks before. She's not innovating.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 4d8+26 damage.

Miss: Half damage.

▸ **Whirlwind Withdraw** ✦ At-Will

She kicks away from one of you, spins and slashes another across the neck, ducks and swipes an ally's belly, then rises just in time to redirect your counterattack so you strike your own leg. In the chaos of her attack she slips through an opening in your defenses and flies to a more defensible location.

Effect: Lya uses *exceptional duelist* against each enemy adjacent to her, then shifts 2 squares.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Infernal Wrath of the Jierre Bloodline** (fire) ✦ Recharge when first bloodied

When you strike her, her ghostly skin blackens and cracks with seams of molten stone. She grits in anger and regains control of her form, channeling the heat directly at you.

Trigger: A creature within 10 squares hits Lya.

Effect (No Action): The triggering creature takes 4d6+10 fire damage and takes ongoing 30 fire damage (save ends). Lya transfers all conditions affecting her to the target (including any conditions caused by the triggering attack).

▸ **Vorpal Rapier** ✦ At-Will (3/encounter)

Her sword's mechanism is as much a spirit as she is, but when she flicks a button on its guard, its teeth grind with blinding speed.

Trigger: Lya damages an enemy with this weapon and afterward the target is bloodied.

Effect (No Action): The weapon shrieks as its bladed teeth saw back and forth. The target must make a saving throw. On a success, the target loses an extremity of its choice – hand, foot, arm, or leg. On a failure, Lya chooses which extremity the target loses. Creatures without extremities are unaffected.

A severed arm or hand prevents use of anything that they were holding or carrying. A severed foot slows the target. A severed leg renders the target prone.

Skills Acrobatics +26, Athletics +22, Bluff +28, Diplomacy +20

Str 14 (+17) **Dex** 23 (+21) **Wis** 14 (+17)
Con 12 (+16) **Int** 18 (+19) **Cha** 18 (+19)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Primordial

Sovereign Han Jierre

Level 30 Elite Artillery (Leader)

Medium natural humanoid (tiefling) **XP** 38,000

HP 522; **Bloodied** 261 **Initiative** +17

AC 44, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 42 **Perception** +13

Speed 6, fly 12 Darkvision

Resist fire 20; **Immune** slowed, immobilized

Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

▸ **Gestalt Commander**

"It's fascinatingly unlikely we could have accomplished so much, isn't it?" he asks. "Well, never tell me the odds."

If an effect would daze, dominate, or stun Han, he can transfer that condition to any ally he's aware of within 50 squares.

Standard Actions

▸ **Thundercrack** (weapon) ✦ At-Will

He sniffs in amusement. "Nice sword." Then he gestures like drawing a gun, and the whole ship's crew fires at you.

Effect: A living ally of Han's within 50 squares can make a basic attack. The ally ignores concealment as long as Han can see the target.

Triggered Actions

▸ **Infernal Wrath of the Jierre Bloodline (fire)** ✦ Recharge when first bloodied

When you strike him, he growls with scorn, "There really aren't any good Blade Runner quotes by Harrison Ford." You burst into flame.

Trigger: A creature within 50 squares hits Han.

Effect (No Action): The triggering creature takes 4d6+10 fire damage and takes ongoing 30 fire damage (save ends). Han transfers all conditions affecting him to the target (including any conditions caused by the triggering attack).

Str 10 (+15) **Dex** 12 (+16) **Wis** 16 (+18)
Con 22 (+21) **Int** 22 (+21) **Cha** 26 (+23)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Elven, Infernal, Primordial

Revolution Elite Crew

Level 30 Goon Artillery

Large natural humanoid (human, swarm) **XP** 9500

HP 70; **Bloodied** 35 **Initiative** +19

AC 44, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 40 **Perception** +20

Speed 5

Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks

Vulnerable 15 against close and area attacks

Traits

▸ **Finely-Drilled, Hivemind-Linked**

The dozen soldiers move with a unity of will only a hivemind can afford.

The crew consists of twelve soldiers working in tandem, filling the space of a Large creature. The unit needs only fill 4 contiguous spaces, and it can move through any opening an individual could move through.

Standard Actions

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

They swarm you with a hedge of enchanted bayonets.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 30 damage.

✲ **Rifle Fusillade** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

They each carry two rifles, in case the first one jams. Their cartridges are heavy and powerful enough to blast through steel walls.

Attack: Area burst 1 within 40 (creatures in burst); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 40 damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Load free.

Special: If the target has total cover due to a ship wall, the crew can try to fire through. A typical steel wall reduces the damage by 20 (so 20 on a hit, or 0 on a miss).

✲ **Dirigible Turrets** (weapon) ✦ At-Will

The crew rapidly aims and fires one of the Revolution's *turret-mounted cannons, then starts reloading.*

Special: The crew must be adjacent to one of the eight turrets on the *Revolution*. If the shot is aimed at a space that contains an opposing vessel, in addition to attacking any creatures in the area, make a shipboard weapon attack, d20+12 vs. the ship's Defense. Attack rolls with the turret, both against ships and creatures, take a -5 penalty if the area is beyond 40 squares.

Attack: Area burst 1 within 200 (creatures in burst); +28 vs. Reflex

Hit: 50 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Miss: Half damage.

Load standard. Obviously no matter how many crew are working, the turret cannot be loaded or fired more than once per round.

✲ **Incendiary Bombs** (fire, weapon) ✦ At-Will

The crew lean out and look down to spot at targets, then call out to time their attack. With a heave, the soldiers crank a lever, and some mechanism in the dirigible's belly releases a barrel trailing a burning fuse.

Special: The crew must be in the gundeck of the *Revolution*. The attack targets a space directly below the vessel. If another ship is there, make a naval attack, d20+12 vs. Defense. No more than one crew can use this power each round.

Attack: Area burst 3 straight down (creatures in burst); +23 vs. Reflex

Hit: 20 fire damage, and the target takes ongoing 20 fire damage (save ends).

Miss: Half damage.

Effect. The area fills with fire for the next 3 rounds. Creatures that enter or end their turns in the area take 10 fire damage.

Str 13 (+26) **Dex** 16 (+18) **Wis** 10 (+15)
Con 11 (+15) **Int** 10 (+15) **Cha** 8 (+14)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial



Kasvarina Varal	Level 30 Soldier
Medium fey humanoid (eladrin)	**XP** 19,000
HP 250; **Bloodied** 125	**Initiative** +21
AC 46, **Fortitude** 40, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 42	**Perception** +15
Speed 6, fly 12 (hover)	Low-light vision
Saving Throws +5 against charm effects	

Traits

▸ **Sword and Spell**

She wears enchanted chain beneath elegant clothes, and wields a rapier as both weapon and spellcasting implement.

As long as Kasvarina is armed, her spells do not provoke opportunity attacks. If she scores a critical hit with a weapon, she can use *frigid touch* or *godfire* as a free action.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Ghost-Touch Rapier** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

This thin blade has a spectral after-image, like it could pierce a creature's soul as well as its flesh.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 3d6+30 damage.

Special: This attack does full damage to insubstantial creatures.

⊘ **Frigid Touch** (cold, implement) ✦ At-Will, Basic

Frost coats her fingers, and whatever she touches freezes.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +33 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 3d6+30 cold damage, and the target is slowed until the end of its next turn.

✲ **Godfire** (fire, implement) ✦ At-Will

A flame in her hand strikes as she guides it, perhaps a spear, a slash, or an engulfing blast.

Special: This attack fills nine contiguous squares, at least one of which must be adjacent to Kasvarina.

Attack: Area special (creatures in area); +33 vs. Reflex

Hit: 3d6+30 fire damage.

▸ **Elfaivaran Warcasting** ✦ At-Will

Effect: Kasvarina uses *ghost-touch rapier* and either *frigid touch* or *godfire*.

✓ **Lightning Blade** (lightning, implement) ✦ Daily

A bolt of lightning crackles from the tip of her rapier, cascading from target to target.

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +33 vs. Reflex

Hit: 5d6+30 lightning damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Secondary Attack: Up to two creatures within 5 squares of the primary target; +33 vs. Reflex

Hit: 30 lightning damage.

Miss: 15 lightning damage.

Effect: 5 lightning damage to any number of creatures within 10 squares of the primary target that weren't already targeted.

▸ **Power Word Blind** (charm, implement) ✦ Daily

A single sibilant syllable blinds you.

Effect: One creature within 10 squares of Kasvarina is blinded (save ends). It must succeed two saves to end this effect.

✓ **Unrelenting Geas** (charm, implement, psychic) ✦ Daily

You feel fingers sliding up your neck, through your skull, and into your mind. The fingers twist elegantly, and you dance to their directions. When you try to resist, agony pierces your entire body.

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +33 vs. Will

Hit: The target is dominated (save ends). It must succeed two saves to end this effect. Each time the target succeeds a save in this way, it takes 20 psychic damage.

Miss: The target is dominated (save ends).

Special: When Kasvarina uses this power, she may include a specific, long-lasting course of action, such as, "Never share the secrets of the Obscurati with outsiders." If the target accepts that directive willingly, it must obey perpetually. If the target refuses, Kasvarina knows.

Move Actions

▸ **Fey Disappearance** (illusion, teleportation) ✦ Encounter

She takes a step and vanishes.

Effect: Kasvarina teleports 6 squares and is invisible until the end of her next turn. When her invisibility ends, she can disguise herself with an illusion to resemble another person. (Yes, eladrin can't naturally do this anymore, but Kasvarina is using a spell.)

Minor Actions

▸ **Boarding Action** ✦ Encounter

She swings her sword to rally those around her, and as a group they fly between two ships.

Effect: Up to four allies Kasvarina can see gain a fly speed of 12 until the end of her next turn, and they can each move their speed.

Triggered Action

↱ **Arcane Defenses** (implement) ✦ At-Will

Recognizing an incoming threat, she casts a quick spell to protect against being debilitated.

Trigger: An effect would deal typed damage or cause a condition against Kasvarina.

Effect (Immediate Interrupt): Kasvarina chooses an energy type and gains resist 10 against that type, or chooses a condition and is immune to that condition. This protection lasts until the end of the encounter or until she uses this power again.

Special: Kasvarina can use this power as a minor action, without requiring a trigger.

Skills Arcana +22, Bluff +28, Intimidate +25, History +22

Str	10 (+15)	**Dex**	18 (+19)	**Wis**	10 (+15)
Con	12 (+16)	**Int**	14 (+17)	**Cha**	20 (+20)

Alignment Good **Languages** Common, Elven, Infernal, Primordial

Equipment mithral chainmail, ghost-touch rapier



Dr. Wolfgang Von Recklinghausen	Level 30 Goon Lurker
Medium natural humanoid (human)	**XP** 9,500
HP 100; **Bloodied** 50	**Initiative** +21
AC 44, **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 41	**Perception** +18
Speed 6	

Traits

☼ **Guidance of the Surgeon** ✦ Aura 5

His studies of hiveminds have paid off in eerie ways. Allies near him strike with surgical precision.

Allies in the aura score critical hits on a natural 19 or 20, and if they roll a natural 1 on any d20 roll they can roll again and take the new result.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Stop Your Heart** (lightning) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The doctor taps your chest, and your body spasms.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +33 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 25 lightning damage, and the target is dazed until the end of Wolfgang's next turn.

▸ **Reanimating Healing** (healing) ✦ At-Will

Lightning flies forth from his hand, but instead of wounding it heals.

Effect: Wolfgang chooses an area burst 1 within 20. Allies in that area can spend a healing surge, even if they are dead. For NPCs, just have this restore 25 hit points.

Triggered Action

▸ **Not Today** (healing) ✦ Encounter

He falls, but a jolt of electricity from some device under his shirt stands him back up.

Trigger: The doctor starts his turn unconscious or dead.

Effect (No Action): Wolfgang heals to full hit points and stands up. All conditions affecting him end.

Skills Arcana +24, Bluff +19, Heal +29, Religion +24

Str	12 (+16)	**Dex**	18 (+19)	**Wis**	15 (+17)
Con	15 (+17)	**Int**	18 (+19)	**Cha**	9 (+14)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Abyssal, Common, Dwarven, Giant, Primordial

Gradiax, the Steel Lord

Bring in Pemberton's draconic duplicant only if the party is in really dire straits, or in the aftermath of the battle if he sees an opportunity for revenge against his daughter's killer.

Gradiax, the Steel Lord	Level 30 Elite Brute
Gargantuan natural animate (construct, dragon)	**XP** 18,000
HP 250; **Bloodied** 125	**Initiative** +17
AC 43, **Fortitude** 44, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 43	**Perception** +22
Speed 10, fly 16	Darkvision
Resist 20 fire	
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	

Traits

▸ **Metal Shell**

The strike gouges out part of the dragon's hide, but it is only a cracked shell, within which tiny machines give it a semblance of life.

When Gradiax is not bloodied, he has Resist 10 all. When he is bloodied, he has Vulnerable 10 all, his defenses are reduced by 5, and he takes a -5 penalty to saving throws.

▸ **Action Recovery**

He chuckles deep and jovially, delighted by his invincibility.

Whenever Gradiax ends his turn, any dazing, stunning, or dominating effect on him ends.

Standard Actions

⊘ **Bite** (fire) ✦ At-Will, Basic

His fangs sink in, holding tight as flames from his throat sear like a furnace.

Attack: Melee 4 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 3d8+20 damage. The target is grabbed and takes ongoing 15 fire damage until the grab ends (Escape DC 33).

⊘ **Casual Swipe** ✦ At-Will

His claws gleam with steel.

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +35 vs. AC

Hit: 3d6+20 damage.

▸ **Savage Rake** ✦ At-Will

Effect: Gradiax uses *bite* and *casual swipe*.

⊹ **Fire Breathing Metal Dragon** (fire) ✦ Recharge 56

Dragonfire turns flesh to ash.

Attack: Close blast 7 (creatures in blast); +33 vs. Reflex

Hit: 6d12+30 fire damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Move Action

▸ **Integrated Rockets** ✦ Recharge ⚃ ⚄

Vents crack open along his back and beneath his wings, and intense fire blasts backwards, accelerating him faster than a bullet.

Effect: Gradiax flies one mile in a mostly-straight line. If he ends his movement adjacent to a creature or object, any attack he hits that creature with this turn also causes the target to fall prone (even the colossus or a dirigible).

Skills Arcana +31, Insight +31, Intimidate +31

Str	38 (+29)	**Dex**	10 (+15)	**Wis**	14 (+17)
Con	27 (+23)	**Int**	25 (+22)	**Cha**	20 (+20)

Alignment Neutral **Languages** Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Orcish, Primordial

APPENDIX B: Magic and Training

Magic Items

The Vortex Array Artifact

Living steel responds to thoughts and touch, detecting magical energies over a great distance.

Property: A column-like contraption made of cerebral mesh, diamonds, and living steel, the Vortex Array is a masterpiece of Gidim biotechnology. A ship equipped with one can scan regions as small as a single building (taking mere moments) or as vast as a thousand miles (which could require several hours), detecting all magic in it as per greater arcane sight. It also provides an overview of the general magical demeanor of a region, detailing any planar traits it might have.

If the Array is damaged, there is a chance that its readings will not be accurate when it is activated.

Training

A martial scientist who trains with Calily can learn the foundation of her monastery's fighting style, which is based on swift defensive adaptation.

Stance of the Paper Wind

Training

You crumple beneath your foe's attack, but in so doing steal the strength from the blow. In a continuous motion you unfold around the other side of the strike, putting you in position for a deft counterattack.

Requirement: Characters with the Martial Scientist theme who spend time training with Calily Buen can learn this power.

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

▸ **Stance of the Paper Wind** (Martial, Stance) ✦ Encounter

Move action. You move your speed and enter the stance of the paper wind. While in this stance, no attack or effect can deal more than 30 damage to you in a single chunk. If an attack would deal more than 30 damage and the attacker is within range, you may make a basic attack as an immediate reaction against the attacker.

Additionally, when a creature you have not targeted with an attack since the start of your last round attacks you, you may make a save. On a success, you completely ignore the attack.

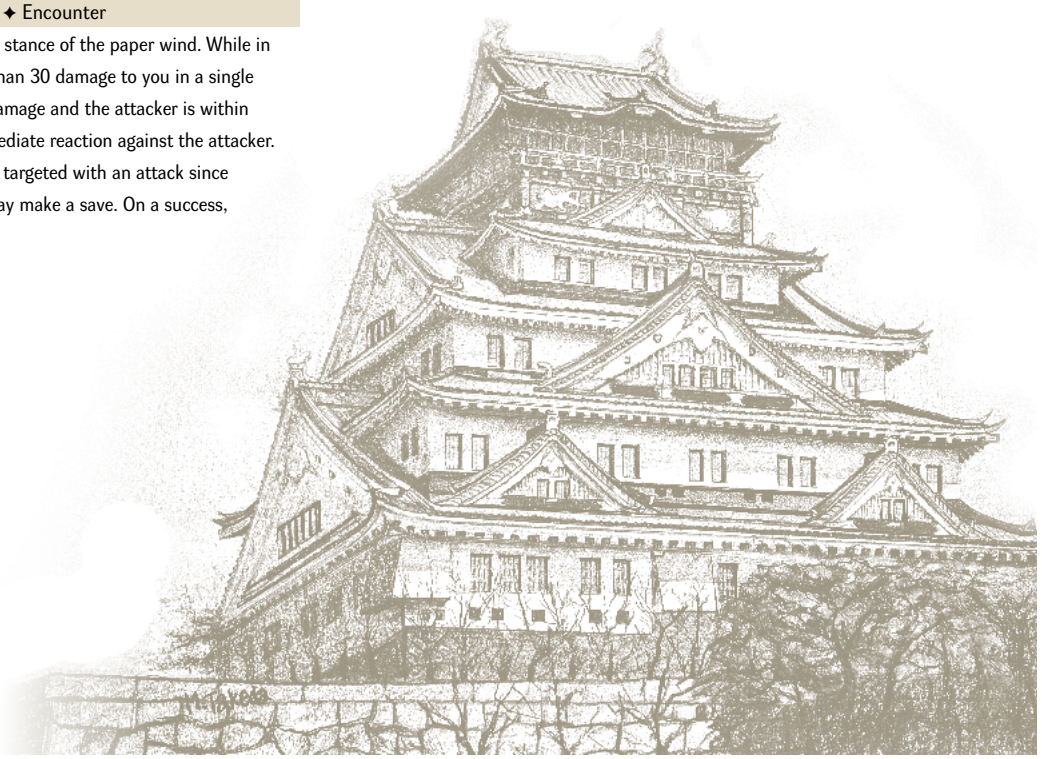
Apotheosis

Seizing Srasama's Divine Portfolio

If the avatar of Srasama is destroyed, whichever PC seized her necklace from Dala becomes a minor god of womanhood. The new god's powers will be fairly limited until he or she acquires some worshippers, but for now Srasama's portfolio grants the ability to use one of the following each day:

- Send a message to a woman anywhere in the multiverse, which can last up to five minutes and include various sensory effects like a major illusion.
- As a standard action, heal damage equal to your HP total, divided as you choose among any number of women you touch.
- As a minor action, grant a woman touched +1 to all attack rolls, saves, and defenses until the end of the encounter.
- Ensure that a pregnant woman touched will have a healthy birth.
- Ensure that a woman touched who conceives a child in the next week will bear a daughter.
- As a standard action make an unarmed **Attack:** Melee 1 (one living female humanoid); d20+level+6 vs. Fortitude. **Hit:** The target takes damage equal to your bloodied value. **Miss:** Half damage.
- Speak to the soul of a dead woman touched if it died in the past year, lasting up to five minutes, though this grants no inherent control.

Other than that, the new god is free to choose his or her style of divinity.



APPENDIX C:
DM Quick Reference Pages

COLLATED TIMELINES

Here are all the events occurring in the three acts of Adventure Eleven. These days are relative to whenever the adventure starts, since normal calendars no longer seem to apply.

In addition to the god executions listed below, Velkali goddess of oases will be executed the first time the party goes to witness one of these trials, and the god of music will be executed a day later. Just bump the dates a bit to make room.

Day 0: In Ber, every day a few people go missing in Ursaliña, their consciousness consumed to nourishing the feeding tentacle being grown in the Gidim leviathan. Lord Winslow Cadagyr mandates a curfew, orders the prisons opened, and has prisoners assigned as guards for all city gates to prevent anyone from exiting.

In Drakr, Vlendam Heid and his bodyguard Kvarti are trapped in Bhad Rhyzhavdut when Komanov's army assaults it. The army breaks through part of the old wall and seizes a section of the old city, but then settles in for a siege. Heid teleports a lockbox to the party.

In Crisillyir, the god of the night sky is executed.

Day 1: In Bhad Ryzhavdut, Komanov retrieves the lost eye of the Voice of Rot and begins to assemble her arcanoscientific weapon.

In Crisillyir, the god of beasts and magnolias is executed.

Day 3: In Crisillyir, the god of sun and archery is executed.

Day 5: In Ber, a protest outside Cadagyr Estate about missing people is brutally suppressed by the police. Lord Winslow Cadagyr threatens arrest of any shopkeeper who does not keep normal hours.

In Crisillyir, the god of stone and pottery is executed.

Day 7: Komanov completes the weapon. Her army attacks and slays the entire city. She claims the souls of the dead for the Voice of Rot. The only person she spares is Vlendam Heid, taking him as a trophy.

In Crisillyir, the god of the sea and tidepools is executed.

Day 8: After a night of sadistic revelry, the Vsadni conjure giant sleds of ice, which are blown by winds of the army's hivemind blizzard. These vessels travel scores of miles in a day, carrying the doomsday force toward Mirsk. Along the way they wipe out a few minor towns and settlements.

Day 9: In Crisillyir, the god of storms and weddings is executed.

Day 10: In Ber, the streets are noticeably emptier than usual, though some are tempted out by the new bloodsports at the Jaula de Oso. People hear strange beasts during curfew.

Day 11: In Crisillyir, the god of winds and mountain air is executed.

Day 13: In Crisillyir, the god of forges and evocation is executed.

Day 15: In Ber, Lord Cadagyr orders mandatory parades each day to force high spirits, but otherwise people almost never leave their houses.

In Drakr, Komanov's army arrives in Mirsk. Komanov begins to prime her weapon again.

In Crisillyir, the god of love and healing is executed.

Day 17: In Crisillyir, the god of fortune is executed.

Day 19: In Ber, Lord Cadagyr's son Dieter loads a backpack with potions of invisibility and attempts to sneak into the Jaula. He is captured and brought to the leviathan's psychovivisection chamber, then converted into a shock trooper.

In Crisillyir, the god of time and synthesis is executed.

Day 20: In Ber, Lord Cadagyr makes attendance of the daily bloodsport in Jaula de Oso mandatory. Executore Salome Nieves begins to rally marines at the city's docks.

In Drakr, Komanov sacks Mirsk. She lets a few survivors flee by rail for Trekhom.

Day 21: In Crisillyir, the god of children's games is executed. Thereafter the god trials go on hiatus so the party has a chance at least to intercede with the trial of Triegenes.

Day 22: In Ber, marines storm Cadagyr Estate, kill several Gidim, but then are overrun by Gidim warbeasts.

In Drakr, Komanov's army launches again across frozen ground, bound for the capital.

Day 23: In Ber, sporadic looting begins and fires sprout, since most homes are empty. The Gidim openly unleash warbeasts in the streets to keep people from fleeing.

Day 24: In Ber, Gidim infiltrators go door to door, abducting children as final psychic sustenance for the tentacle.

Day 25: In Ber, the tentacle emerges, and nearly every thinking creature within 30 miles is slain. Thousands more Gidim begin to stream into this world, and they ride warbeasts toward Reo Pedresco.

Day 31: The army stops outside Trekhom for Komanov to prime the weapon once again.

Day 38: Doomsday eschatologists attack Trekhom. The city actually holds off their assault for a time, but it falls the next day.

Day 39: With nearly the entire nation of Drakr slain, Komanov orders all her followers to commit suicide and sends their souls to the Voice of Rot. She then heads to the Gyre to witness the end of the world.

Day 40: In Crisillyir, if the party has not interceded, Triegenes is executed, and Alais Primos is destroyed by a lava dragon.

Reality Shift

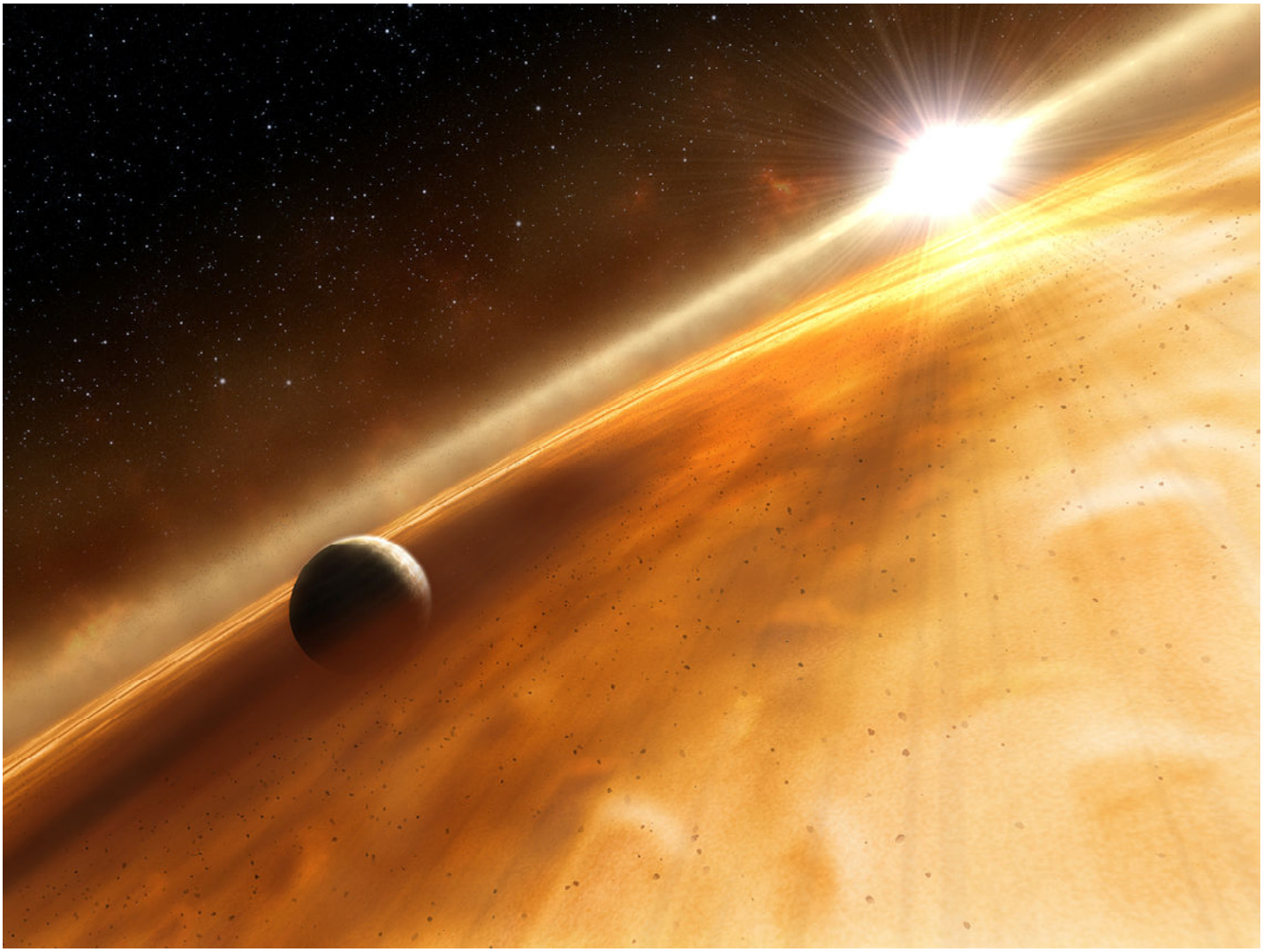
In Adventure Seven, *Schism*, the Obscurati voted on how they wanted to design the new world. Though Nicodemus deemed the actual vote to be illegitimate since spies cast ballots, the ultimate decision closely resembled the MAP proposal—a combination of Miller's Pyre, Panarchists, and the Arboretum, with a token effort to appease the Sky League by including flight.

New Solar System

Planes that exist following the Great Eclipse are:

- **Av.** The plane of life now turned to the plane of death, still with a Dreams and Mirrors aspect, drifting far from the sun, nearly unseen.
- **Baden.** Small spectral moon around Fourmyle with a Flight aspect. It is a ghost moon, as if it was once dead. Skyseers sense energy on it that is sympathetic to the Gyre itself.
- **Fourmyle.** Plane of space with an Empowerment aspect. Allows you to teleport wherever you can see, or where a place is your 'domain.' This plane is filled with craters of warm air, habitability scattered across a desolate surface.
- **Illocus.** Plane of time with an Expression aspect. Arguments build and cascade, since people do not revert to their normal status quickly. This plane burns with fire in a ring around Fourmyle.
- **Jiese.** Original plane of fire with a Cunning aspect. Unchanged from the previous plane with the same name.
- **Mojang.** Unlikely plane of life with Craft and Artifice aspects, which has a faintly purple surface. The terrain on this world is wildly varied, though only a handful of animals exist—such as yellow frogs – that exist seemingly independent of an ecosystem.
- **Ostea.** A bloody plane of water with a Healing aspect. People heal faster, but blood empowers magic in unusual ways.
- **Perlocus.** Plane of air with a heavy Speech aspect. Words will carry more weight to sway people's opinions. This plane is surreal; when you say something it has a physical influence.
- **Ratios.** Plane of earth with a Logic aspect, leading people to use reason in their arguments. The planet is bland and static rock, though strange whispers can be heard from nowhere.

There is no sun. The planets orbit a nexus, but the sun is missing. Instead, dim light is granted by a cloud of stars that seem to be pulled into the Gyre. Skyseers sense that the world is slowly drawing closer to the Gyre, and predict within a year or two the world will be pulled in.



Mechanics of a Broken Age

The following is a breakdown of mechanics that have changed since the completion of the Obscurati's ritual.

- **Applied Astronomy:** Characters with the Applied Astronomist paragon path get new powers, detailed below.
- **Black Hole Sun:** Characters cannot normally use powers that produce significant light or have the radiant descriptor. A character can spend a healing surge as a free action to overcome this limitation for five minutes.

  Even then, no magical effect can produce light for more than 5 minutes. (Magic can produce fire, however, which emits light; only magical light is affected). All existing magical light effects such as everburning torches end.

  In the new sunless world, even high-level heroes might need to rely on torches or lanterns for illumination. Characters should be given an option to retrain these sorts of powers.
- **Blood of Ostea:** All creatures immediately stabilize when rendered below 0 hit points, and hit point loss itself is not enough to kill a creature. To slay a creature, one must spend a standard action to deliver a *coup de grace* to a creature that is already at negative hit points equal to or greater than its bloodied value.

  All creatures reduced to 0 or below immediate heal up to 1 hit point after 1 minute unless they are killed first. Creatures regain all hit points after six hours of consecutive rest.
- **Death is Death:** Slain deva no longer reincarnate.
- **Flight of the Fey:** Eladrin lose access to their racial 'fey step' ability. Instead, all attacks made by eladrin deal full damage to insubstantial creatures due to their connection to the new plane of Death.
- **Magic Mishaps:** As detailed above, whenever a character uses magic (either personally or with a magic item), there's a chance that the effect causes a mishap (10% for at-wills, 30% for encounters, and 70% for dailies. If it doesn't mishap, it instead just fails. Perpetual abilities are generally unaffected.

  A character who can use magic of some sort can spend 8 hours researching and practicing, then make an Arcana check (DC 20). If he fails he can try again. If successful he becomes able to safely use powers of up to 1st level, with no special chance of failure or mishap. Each further day he can make additional checks to regain mastery of the next higher level of magic (2nd level utilities, 3rd level encounters, 5th level dailies, etc.), up to whatever is the highest level he knows. 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 a +5 bonus to that character's check.

  Existing magic items with activated abilities are dangerous, but can be rendered safe with a moment's concentration by a magic-user who is at least as high level as the item.
- **Reign of the Rational:** All creatures gain a +5 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy checks if they use rational appeals rather than emotional ones. All creatures take a –5 penalty to Intimidate and Insight 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.
- **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 traveled to it before. Any travel before the Ob's ritual does not 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.

  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.
- **Fourmyle Jaunting:** Every creature is able to jaunt—to teleport within line of sight as an innate ability. As a standard action once per day, a character can teleport anywhere he has line of sight to. He cannot teleport to a spot he could not reach normally (e.g., you have to be able to walk or climb there, so no teleporting through a barred cage). He also cannot teleport if he's being held.

  A character focused on mobility (DM's discretion) can instead use this ability once every five minutes.

  (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.)
- **Three Miles is so Last Age:** Magic that restores life to the dead are no longer limited by the body having to travel less than three 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, and its duration is not limited.

Applied Astronomist Paragon Path

The new stars grant new powers, since each world heralds a different fate.

Touching the Wheel of Heaven (Su): You can connect to the new planes, but most of the old ones are no longer accessible.

Table: Planar Connections

1d8:

1. **Jiese**, plane of fire.
2. **Perlocus**, plane of air.
3. **Mojang**, plane of life.
4. **Ostea**, plane of water.
5. **Ratios**, plane of earth.
6. **Fourmyle**, the plane of space.
7. **Illocus**, plane of time and Baden, the ghost moon.
8. **Av**, plane of death.

Heavenly Flare: The effects of the new planes for this ability change.

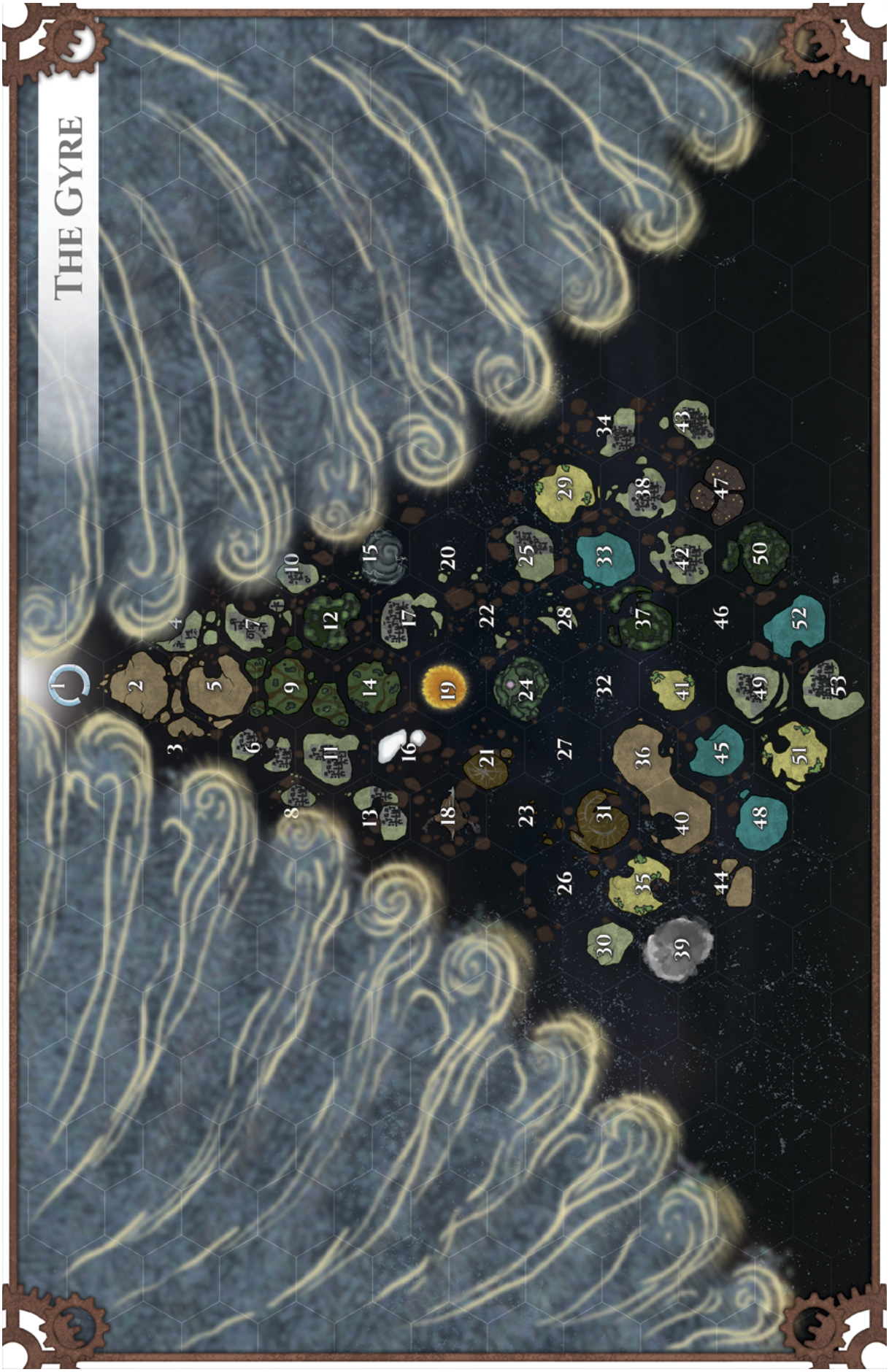
Plane	Additional Effect
Jiese, plane of fire	Ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).
Perlocus, plane of air	Dominated (save ends).
Mojang, plane of life	The target cannot heal or gain temporary hit points (save ends), and the damage from this attack does not respond to magical healing, because it must be repaired, not healed. Even natural healing (such as during a short rest) requires an Intelligence check (DC 20) for each healing surge, or else the surge heals no damage.
Ostea, plane of water	If the target has blood, you can distribute an amount of healing equal to the amount of damage you did among other creatures who have blood (including yourself) within 10 squares of you.
Ratios, plane of earth	Dazed until the end of your next turn, during which time the creature must briefly answer the first question posed to it.
Fourmyle, plane of space	Teleport the target 6 squares.
Illocus, plane of time and **Baden**, the ghost moon	At the start of each turn, the creature takes damage equal to however much damage it took the previous round (save ends). During that time, though, it has a fly speed of 12.
Av, plane of death	Ongoing 10 necrotic damage, and the creature grants combat advantage (save ends both).

Straddling Realities: The zone has one of the following effects.

Plane	Area Effect
Jiese, plane of fire	As a minor action you can create an object composed of solid firegem, of any rough shape, up to 3 squares across in any unoccupied space in the zone. The object is as durable as wood, but vanishes when the zone ends.
Perlocus, plane of air	Creatures in the zone gain a +5 bonus to Diplomacy checks, and their voices can carry for miles at a conversational volume.
Mojang, plane of life	Creatures and objects lose any resistances they have. Stone can be hacked through as easily as flesh.
Ostea, plane of water	Area fills with blood to the depth of astronomist's choice, either calm (Athletics DC 10) or choppy (DC 20).
Ratios, plane of earth	Creatures in the area roll 1d10+5 in place of 1d20, and any emotion-based effects end.
Fourmyle, plane of space	Astronomist becomes master of the area, and can prevent creatures from entering and/or exiting. As a minor action she can teleport any creature in the area to the edge of it.
Illocus, plane of time and **Baden**, the ghost moon	Creatures in the area gain a bonus standard action each round, but they can only use it to perform one of the standard actions they performed the previous round.
Av, plane of death	Enemies in the area take a -2 penalty to Fortitude, Reflex, and AC defenses. Allies gain a +2 bonus to theirs.

Space Travel: The movement modes are relatively unchanged.

Plane	Movement Option
Jiese, plane of fire	You can shift 1 square as a minor action.
Perlocus, plane of air	You gain a fly speed equal to your walking speed, and can hover.
Mojang, plane of life	You gain a burrow speed equal to half your walking speed.
Ostea, plane of water	You gain a swim speed equal to your walking speed.
Ratios, plane of earth	No new movement mode, but you can treat any creature you can see that is flying as if it were adjacent.
Fourmyle, plane of space	You gain a teleport speed equal to your walking speed.
Illocus, plane of time and **Baden**, the ghost moon	+2 bonus to walking speed. If you run, you can phase through 5 feet of solid material as part of your movement.
Av, plane of death	You hover slightly above the ground and seem to pass through small obstacles, allowing you to ignore difficult terrain.


The Gyre
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GYRE EXPLORATION

PLANAR LOCATION, NAME, AND MONIKER	ENERGIES	TRAITS
1. Reida, the arc of history	Life, Time	Strong prophecy.
2. Teykfa, the ticking pendulum	Earth, Time	People are more aware of the scale of time, and they can better weigh long-term consequences. Time can be manipulated.
3. *Dead motes*	—	—
4. *Dead motes*	—	—
5. Bonilathe, the storm claw	Air, Fire	Storms spawn creatures.
6. *Dead motes*	—	—
7. *Dead motes*	—	—
8. *Dead motes*	—	—
9. Metarie, the swamp of sabotage	Life, Water	Technology is disrupted.
10. *Plundered ruins*	—	—
11. *Plundered ruins*	—	—
12. Guay, the grove of dreams	Life, Space	Dreams create demiplanes.
13. *Dead motes*	—	—
14. Ringes, the barren moor	Earth, Water	Murderous violence.
15. Gardboral, the chimeric maelstrom	Air, Life	Elementals are common and massive.
16. Apo, the unknown disk	Death, Space	Intermittent spheres of annihilation.
17. Iratha Ket, the graveyard revel	Death, Life	Greater altruism. Occasional spontaneous musical numbers.
18. Egalitrix, fortress of the Golden Legion	Fire, Space	Fantastic grand industry will develop, driven by greed.
19. Obliatas, the devouring light	Any	Undead are destroyed by the sun.
20. *Dead motes*	—	—
21. Elofasp, the spawning hive	Earth, Life	Giant obedient beasts.
22. *Empty void*	—	—
23. *Empty void*	—	—
24. Ascetia, the hidden jungle	Life, Time	People are more aware of history.
25. Drozani, a dead city in the clouds	Air, Death	Slowly the birth rate dwindles to zero.
26. *Empty void*	—	—
27. *Empty void*	—	—
28. *Empty void*	—	A floating graveyard of ships.
29. Etheax, the tended flame	Fire, Time	Patience and fire magic are both easy.
30. *Plundered ruins*	—	—
31. Dunkelweiss, the fermented peaks	Earth, Life	Alcohol is good for you.
32. *Empty void*	—	—
33. Hunlow, a place for pirates	Death, Water	The ocean is literally a blood-thirsty god who loves villains.
34. *Plundered ruins*	—	—
35. Wilanir, the lair of discontent	Air, Water	Dense mists bring ill tidings.
36. Amrou, the salt waste (also 40)	Death, Earth	Mundane counters against supernatural threats are stronger.
37. Thrag, the beastly bounty	Life, Time	All animals and plants are ambulatory and carnivorous.
38. *Plundered ruins*	—	—
39. Apet, the distant plane	Air, Space	Planar travel limited to local system.
40. Amrou, the salt waste (also 36)	~see 36~	~see 36~
41. Bhoior, the walking whisper	Air, Time	Sounds echo, sometimes years later.
42. *Plundered ruins*	—	—
43. *Dead motes*	—	—
44. Avilona, the final murmur	Air, Death	Flight is limited to five minutes.
45. Shabboath, the severed sea	Earth, Water	Creates an 'underdark' cavern system.
46. *Empty void*	—	—
47. Urim, the shattered golden chain	Earth, Space	Gold blocks teleportation.
48. Mavisha, the mysterious deep	Water, Time	Islands conceal secrets.
49. Nem, the plane of ruin	Death, Time	Lingering souls are stronger than corporeal undead.
50. Caeloon, the paper wind	Air, Life	People are resilient in the face of tragedy.
51. The Plain of Rice	Space, Water	The entire world is shallow water.
52. Padyer, a clean realm	Fire, Water	Water burns and purges.
53. Av, plane of mirrors	Death, Life	Conjures physical reflection of whatever world it orbits.

Gyre Planes

In the final adventure the party will need to bond their world to eight other planes. They need at least one plane with each of the following elemental *energies* – Air, Earth, Fire, Water, Life, Death, Space, and Time. Most planes they have an option to choose will affect the world, sometimes subtly, occasionally dramatically.

Current Worlds

These planes are currently linked to the party's homeworld, due to the Obscurati's ritual at the Axis Seal.

- **Jiese, the fire of industry.** Flame-wracked stony wasteland inhabited by beasts and salamanders. *Energies:* Fire, Life. *Effect:* Precision technology functions.
- **Perlocus, a voice on the wind.** Cloudy skysphere where words can turn the air solid and easily influence creatures. *Energies:* Air, Earth. *Effect:* Persuasion is more effective.
- **Mojang, a wild artifice.** Faint purple surface, wildly varied terrain, but with few creatures in a primitive ecosystem. *Energies:* Earth, Life. *Effect:* Nature readily follows orders.
- **Ostea, the beating heart.** Bloody sea that pulses as if it covers a massive heart, with islands of bone. *Energies:* Water, Life. *Effect:* Rapid healing and automatic stabilization.
- **Ratios, the cold logic.** Bland rock, chill air, where whispers intrude on one's mind. *Energies:* Earth, Space. *Effect:* Intuiting emotions and intimidating becomes harder.
- **Fourmyle, the selfish dominion.** Desolate rocky world with pockets of warm air in craters. *Energies:* Space, Death. *Effect:* Casual teleportation.
- **Illocus, the cascading flame.** Spinning ring of fire. *Energies:* Fire, Time. *Effect:* Consequences cascade rapidly (e.g., godminds, apocalypse cults).
- **Baden, the ghost moon.** A ghost of a dead world, pulled in the moment it was annihilated in the Gyre. *Energies:* Air. *Effect:* Flight is easy.
- **Av, plane of mirrors.** Drifting away and being pulled into the Gyre. See below.

Dying Worlds

These planes are being drawn into the constellation gears of the Gyre. The numbers beside them correspond with the DM's Map – Gyre Planes.

Planes marked with an asterisk (*) were originally linked to the party's homeworld. Jiese, listed above, was also among these. Planes marked with a dagger (†) are planes where primary plot scenes occur.

Some hexes are 'dead motes,' 'plundered ruins,' or 'empty void.' No specific details are planned for these locations, but the party might have random encounters there or explore to find resources. You could also put scenes of your own devise there.

1. *†**Reida, the arc of history.** A silver ring with a wide section cracked off. *Energies:* Life, Time. *Effect:* Foresight and predestination are strong, but only for a two thousand year cycle.
2. **Teykfa, the ticking pendulum.** A desert dominated by a solitary mesa, within which ticks a millennial clock. The clock is broken, and often skips. *Energies:* Earth, Time. *Effect:* People are more aware of the scale of time, and they can better weigh long-term consequences. Time can be manipulated.
3. *Dead motes.*
4. *Dead motes.*
5. **Bonilathe, the storm claw.** Coastal flats where thunder and lightning conjure reptilian monsters. *Energies:* Air, Fire. *Effect:* Storms spawn creatures.
6. *Dead motes.*
7. *Dead motes.*
8. *Dead motes.*
9. †**Metarie, the swamp of sabotage.** A multi-layered world with swamps and gremlins on each level. *Energies:* Life, Water. *Effect:* Technology is disrupted.
10. *Plundered ruins.*
11. *Plundered ruins.*
12. **Guay, the grove of dreams.** A beautiful forest in painted perpetual autumn, where portals give access to dreams. *Energies:* Life, Space. *Effect:* Dreams create demiplanes.
13. *Dead motes.*
14. **Ringes, the barren moor.** A flat swamp with only a few wild animals. *Energies:* Earth, Water. *Effect:* Intelligent creatures become slowly unstable, and eventually murderously violent.
15. **Gardboral, the chimeric maelstrom.** Titanic thunderstorm surrounding an elemental chaos. *Energies:* Air, Life. *Effect:* Elementals are common and massive.
16. **Apo, the unknown disk.** Mysterious flat disk of bone, baked clay, and cast bronze. Lingering causes it to open and drop intruders into empty space. *Energies:* Death, Space. *Effect:* Intermittent spheres of annihilation.
17. †**Iratha Ket, the graveyard revel.** A city of corpses roused from their tombs by musical lich monarchs, who commands them to protect a handful of living survivors each generation. *Energies:* Death, Air. *Effect:* Greater altruism. Occasional spontaneous musical numbers.
18. †**Egalitrix, fortress of the Golden Legion.** Industrial steampunk fortress clinging to a two-sided volcano floating in space, dominated with golden machinery. *Energies:* Fire, Space. *Effect:* Fantastic grand industry will develop, driven by greed.
19. **Obliatas, the devouring light.** A swooping orb of crackling radiance that hunts evil. *Energies:* Any. *Effect:* Undead are destroyed by the sun.
20. *Dead motes.*
21. **Elofasp, the spawning hive.** Giant spires crafted by insects, all part of the same queen's hive.*Energies:* Earth, Life. *Effect:* Giant obedient beasts.
22. *Empty void.*
23. *Empty void.*
24. †**Ascetia, the hidden jungle.** A flashing beacon shines from a lone lighthouse rising above a trackless jungle. *Energies:* Life, Time. *Effect:* People are more aware of history.
25. **Drozani, a dead city in the clouds.** A pillow of clouds upon which sits a desolate city of rose wood and marble. *Energies:* Air, Death. *Effect:* Slowly the birth rate dwindles to zero.
26. *Empty void.*
27. *Empty void.*
28. *Empty void. Here drift thousands of once-famous dead ships from hundreds of worlds, including Boato, the King of Boats.*

29. **Etheax, the tended flame.** A goblin tribe casually passes the years until their eventual destruction by performing regular plays in front of a bonfire. *Energies:* Fire, Time. *Effect:* Patience and fire magic are both easy.
30. *Plundered ruins.*
31. **Dunkelweiss, the fermented peaks.** A range of mountains with plants that naturally produce streams of beer. *Energies:* Earth, Life. *Effect:* Alcohol is good for you.
32. *Empty void.*
33. **Hunlow, a place for pirates.** A skull-shaped archipelago in the midst of an ocean that can reach out immense tendrils of water to let a clan of pirates plunder other planes. *Energies:* Death, Water. *Effect:* The ocean is literally a blood-thirsty god who loves villains.
34. *Plundered ruins.*
35. **Wilanir, the lair of discontent.** A frigid and foggy countryside of woods, hills, and caves, where a dragon once laired. *Energies:* Air, Water. *Effect:* Guilt weighs heavily, like a fog.
36. **Amrou, the salt waste.** A vast salt flat, strewn with tombs of inhuman mummies. *Energies:* Death, Earth. *Effect:* Mundane counters against supernatural threats are stronger, like salt stopping undead. (Also location 40 on the map.)
37. **Thrag, the beastly bounty.** A steppe where screaming grass is trampled by cannibalistic wildebeest, and all souls reincarnate rapidly with vivid memories. *Energies:* Life, Time. *Effect:* Rapid reincarnation.
38. *Plundered ruins.*
39. *__Apet, the distant plane.__ A practically formless world with buffeting sandstorms that conceal all location and distance. *Energies:* Air, Space. *Effect*: Planar travel beyond star system is impossible, and between worlds is limited to five minutes.
40. **Amrou (part two).** See 36.
41. **Bhoior, the walking whisper.** A hollow world formed from the husk of a colossal petrified turtle, encircled by strong bands of wind. The turtle still moves, every so slowly. *Energies:* Air, Time. *Effect:* Sounds echo, sometimes years later.
42. *Plundered ruins.*
43. *Dead motes.*
44. *__Avilona, the final murmur.__ A sky of wisps, with an inert mote of floating rock drifting in feeble winds with few storms. *Energies:* Air, Death. *Effect:* Flight is limited to five minutes.
45. **Shabboath, the severed sea.** A bog of sinkholes, riddled with tunnels and rivers, inhabited by tentacled, telepathic sea monsters. *Energies:* Earth, Water. *Effect:* Creates an 'underdark' cavern system.
46. *Empty void.*
47. *__Urim, the shattered golden chain.__ Floating asteroids threaded with gold. *Energies:* Earth, Space. *Effect:* Gold blocks teleportation.
48. *__Mavisha, the mysterious deep.__ A dark, island-dotted sea, whose waves spiral in vast arcs over the surface, hiding secrets far below. *Energies:* Water, Time. *Effect:* Islands conceal secrets.
49. *__Nem, the plane of ruin.__ A flat black landscape with countless openings into an underworld composed of thousands of layers of dead civilizations. *Energies:* Death, Time. *Effect:* Lingering souls are stronger than corporeal undead.
50. †__Caeloon, the paper wind.__ Forested hills of shattered sky islands, dominated by a monastery crafted from folding paper, like an origami crane. *Energies:* Air, Life. *Effect:* People are resilient in the face of tragedy.
51. **The Plain of Rice.** A shallow saucer-shaped world, where every surface is flooded a foot deep, allowing rice (and nothing else) to flourish. *Energies:* Space, Water. *Effect:* The entire world is shallow water.
52. **Padyer, a clean realm.** An eerily smooth orb mote that resembles porcelain, with a lapping sea that drifts around the world based on the complex tides of the Gyre. Of course, the water actually is impossibly hot, enough to slag metal, yet it never is sullied by other substances. *Energies:* Fire, Water. *Effect:* Water burns and purges.
53. *__Av, plane of mirrors.__ Hollow orb of frosted glass, currently shattered, with fey landscapes on one side and lurching ghosts on the other. *Energies:* Life, Death. *Effect:* Conjures reflections of whatever world it orbits.

Planes by Element Type

In case you need to quickly know all the planes that provide, say, water energy, please refer to the following lists. They also state the second energy each plane provides, and what their traits are. Entries marked 0 are currently bound to the party's homeworld by the Ob's ritual.

Air Planes

PLANAR LOCATION, NAME, AND MONIKER	ENERGIES	TRAITS
0. Perlocus, a voice on the wind.	Air, Earth	Persuasion is more effective.
0. Baden, the ghost moon.	Air	Flight is easy.
5. Bonilathe, the storm claw	Air, Fire	Storms spawn creatures.
15. Gardboral, the chimeric maelstrom	Air, Life	Elementals are common and massive.
19. Obliatas, the devouring light	Any	Undead are destroyed by the sun.
25. Drozani, a dead city in the clouds	Air, Death	Slowly the birth rate dwindles to zero.
35. Wilanir, the lair of discontent	Air, Water	Dense mists bring ill tidings.
39. Apet, the distant plane	Air, Space	Planar travel limited to local system.
41. Bhoior, the walking whisper	Air, Time	Sounds echo, sometimes years later.
44. Avilona, the final murmur	Air, Death	Flight is limited to five minutes.
50. Caeloon, the paper wind	Air, Life	People are resilient in the face of tragedy.

Death Planes

PLANAR LOCATION, NAME, AND MONIKER	ENERGIES	TRAITS
0. Fourmyle, the selfish dominion	Death, Space	Casual teleportation.
16. Apo, the unknown disk	Death, Space	Intermittent spheres of annihilation.
17. Iratha Ket, the graveyard revel	Death, Life	Greater altruism. Occasional spontaneous musical numbers.
19. Obliatas, the devouring light	Any	Undead are destroyed by the sun.
25. Drozani, a dead city in the clouds	Air, Death	Slowly the birth rate dwindles to zero.
33. Hunlow, a place for pirates	Death, Water	The ocean is literally a blood-thirsty god who loves villains.
36. Amrou, the salt waste (also 40)	Death, Earth	Mundane counters against supernatural threats are stronger.
44. Avilona, the final murmur	Air, Death	Flight is limited to five minutes.
49. Nem, the plane of ruin	Death, Time	Lingering souls are stronger than corporeal undead.
53. Av, plane of mirrors	Death, Life	Conjures physical reflection of whatever world it orbits.

Earth Planes

PLANAR LOCATION, NAME, AND MONIKER	ENERGIES	TRAITS
0. Perlocus, a voice on the wind.	Air, Earth	Persuasion is more effective.
0. Mojang, the wild artifice	Earth, Life	Nature readily follows orders.
0. Ratios, the cold logic	Earth, Space	Intuiting emotions and intimidating becomes harder.
2. Teykfa, the ticking pendulum	Earth, Time	People are more aware of the scale of time, and they can better weigh long-term consequences. Time can be manipulated.
14. Ringes, the barren moor	Earth, Water	Murderous violence.
19. Obliatas, the devouring light	Any	Undead are destroyed by the sun.
21. Elofasp, the spawning hive	Earth, Life	Giant obedient beasts.
31. Dunkelweiss, the fermented peaks	Earth, Life	Alcohol is good for you.
36. Amrou, the salt waste (also 40)	Death, Earth	Mundane counters against supernatural threats are stronger.
45. Shabboath, the severed sea	Earth, Water	Creates an 'underdark' cavern system.
47. Urim, the shattered golden chain	Earth, Space	Gold blocks teleportation.

Fire Planes

PLANAR LOCATION, NAME, AND MONIKER	ENERGIES	TRAITS
0. Jiese, the fire of industry	Fire, Life	Precision technology functions.
0. Illocus, the cascading flame	Fire, Time	Consequences cascade rapidly.
5. Bonilathe, the storm claw	Air, Fire	Storms spawn creatures.
18. Egalitrix, fortress of the Golden Legion	Fire, Space	Fantastic grand industry will develop, driven by greed.
19. Obliatas, the devouring light	Any	Undead are destroyed by the sun.
29. Etheax, the tended flame	Fire, Time	Patience and fire magic are both easy.
52. Padyer, a clean realm	Fire, Water	Water burns and purges.

Life Planes

PLANAR LOCATION, NAME, AND MONIKER	ENERGIES	TRAITS
0. Jiese, the fire of industry	Fire, Life	Precision technology functions.
0. Mojang, the wild artifice	Earth, Life	Nature readily follows orders.
1. Reida, the arc of history	Life, Time	Strong prophecy.
9. Metarie, the swamp of sabotage	Life, Water	Technology is disrupted.
12. Guay, the grove of dreams	Life, Space	Dreams create demiplanes.
15. Gardboral, the chimeric maelstrom	Air, Life	Elementals are common and massive.
17. Iratha Ket, the graveyard revel	Death, Life	Greater altruism. Occasional spontaneous musical numbers.
19. Obliatas, the devouring light	Any	Undead are destroyed by the sun.
21. Elofasp, the spawning hive	Earth, Life	Giant obedient beasts.
24. Ascetia, the hidden jungle	Life, Time	People are more aware of history.
31. Dunkelweiss, the fermented peaks	Earth, Life	Alcohol is good for you.
37. Thrag, the beastly bounty	Life, Time	All animals and plants are ambulatory and carnivorous.
50. Caeloon, the paper wind	Air, Life	People are resilient in the face of tragedy.
53. Av, plane of mirrors	Death, Life	Conjures physical reflection of whatever world it orbits.

Space Planes

PLANAR LOCATION, NAME, AND MONIKER	ENERGIES	TRAITS
0. Fourmyle, the selfish dominion	Death, Space	Casual teleportation.
0. Ratios, the cold logic	Earth, Space	Intuiting emotions and intimidating becomes harder.
12. Guay, the grove of dreams	Life, Space	Dreams create demiplanes.
16. Apo, the unknown disk	Death, Space	Intermittent spheres of annihilation.
18. Egalitrix, fortress of the Golden Legion	Fire, Space	Fantastic grand industry will develop, driven by greed.
19. Obliatas, the devouring light	Any	Undead are destroyed by the sun.
39. Apet, the distant plane	Air, Space	Planar travel limited to local system.
47. Urim, the shattered golden chain	Earth, Space	Gold blocks teleportation.
51. The Plain of Rice	Space, Water	The entire world is shallow water.

Time Planes

PLANAR LOCATION, NAME, AND MONIKER	ENERGIES	TRAITS
0. Illocus, the cascading flame	Fire, Time	Consequences cascade rapidly.
1. Reida, the arc of history	Life, Time	Strong prophecy.
2. Teykfa, the ticking pendulum	Earth, Time	People are more aware of the scale of time, and they can better weigh long-term consequences. Time can be manipulated.
19. Obliatas, the devouring light	Any	Undead are destroyed by the sun.
24. Ascetia, the hidden jungle	Life, Time	People are more aware of history.
29. Etheax, the tended flame	Fire, Time	Patience and fire magic are both easy.
37. Thrag, the beastly bounty	Life, Time	All animals and plants are ambulatory and carnivorous.
41. Bhoior, the walking whisper	Air, Time	Sounds echo, sometimes years later.
48. Mavisha, the mysterious deep	Water, Time	Islands conceal secrets.
49. Nem, the plane of ruin	Death, Time	Lingering souls are stronger than corporeal undead.

Water Planes

PLANAR LOCATION, NAME, AND MONIKER	ENERGIES	TRAITS
0. Ostea, the beating heart	Life, Water	Rapid healing and automatic stabilization.
9. Metarie, the swamp of sabotage	Life, Water	Technology is disrupted.
14. Ringes, the barren moor	Earth, Water	Murderous violence.
19. Obliatas, the devouring light	Any	Undead are destroyed by the sun.
33. Hunlow, a place for pirates	Death, Water	The ocean is literally a blood-thirsty god who loves villains.
35. Wilanir, the lair of discontent	Air, Water	Dense mists bring ill tidings.
45. Shabboath, the severed sea	Earth, Water	Creates an 'underdark' cavern system.
48. Mavisha, the mysterious deep	Water, Time	Islands conceal secrets.
51. The Plain of Rice	Space, Water	The entire world is shallow water.
52. Padyer, a clean realm	Fire, Water	Water burns and purges.

Possible Combinations

Here we present four possible combinations of planes, listing them by the order in which they fill out the eight slots of elemental energies: fire, air, life, water, earth, space, time, and death.

Utopian. Jiese, Caeloon, Av, Mavisha, Dunkelweiss, Urim, Ascetia, Iratha Ket. People are resilient, harmonious, forward-looking, and altruistic, but are still inventive dreamers who know how to celebrate with good alcohol.

Pastoral. Etheax, Caeloon, Mojang, Metarie, Amrou, Apet, Reida, Av. With no intervention from other worlds and no advancing technology, people live simple, quaint lives where nature responds readily to their labor. There are some supernatural threats like gremlins, fey, and creatures of the dark, but people are prepared for them.

Technocracy. Jiese, Baden, Mojang, Ostea, Ratios, Egalitrix, Etheax, Obliatas. People are patient, industrious, and good at controlling both nature and their emotions. Undead are weak, but airships will be prevalent.

God-Empire. Bonilathe, Apet, Elofasp, Hunlow, Teykfa, Nem, Apo. The world is perilous, wracked with storms, massive beasts, and minor spheres of annihilation, so only people with great power like the PCs can be in charge. A villainous sea god rewards the party with power, and they can linger on as immortal spirits, with no meddling from the rest of the multiverse. They even can control time.

DM'S TRACKER - GYRE BONDING

Use this page to keep track of the order in which the party bonds with worlds. When they perform the Axis Seal ritual in adventure thirteen, they'll be able to access worlds on the combat round equivalent to whatever day they bonded to those worlds.

DAY	PLANE NAME	DAY	PLANE NAME




The Flaming Ziggurat of Av
7
4
8
3
6
2
-20
5
1
One square equals 5ft.


+20
+20
+20
2
2
2
2
7
7
7
7
-30
-200
+10
+10
3
8
6
4
1
5
1. entrance
2. air shaft
3. pile of "shinies"
4. prisoner cages
5. firedust barrels
6. steam engine
7. cranes
8. large pile of "shinies"
1 = 5 feet
GREMLIN MINE


+10
+5
+5
-5
-15
-5
+5
+10
+20
+10
+5
-5
+5
-5
+5
-5
1 = 5 feet
She Who Writhes

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 some high level divination magic may assist in ascertaining the exact changes to the world.

Applied Astronomy: Characters with the Applied Astronomist paragon path get new powers, detailed in Reality Shift from Appendix C.

Black Hole Sun: Characters cannot normally use powers that produce significant light or have the radiant descriptor. A character can spend a healing surge as a free action to overcome this limitation for five minutes.

Even then, no magical effect can produce light for more than 5 minutes. (Magic can produce fire, however, which emits light; only magical light is affected). All existing magical light effects such as everburning torches end.

In the new sunless world, even high-level heroes might need to rely on torches or lanterns for illumination. Characters should be given an option to retrain these sorts of powers.

Blood of Ostea: All creatures immediately stabilize when rendered below 0 hit points, and hit point loss itself is not enough to kill a creature. To slay a creature, one must spend a standard action to deliver a *coup de grace* to a creature that is already at negative hit points equal to or greater than its bloodied value.

All creatures reduced to 0 or below immediate heal up to 1 hit point after 1 minute unless they are killed first. Creatures regain all hit points after six hours of consecutive rest.

Death is Death: Slain deva no longer reincarnate.

Flight of the Fey: Eladrin lose access to their racial 'fey step' ability. Instead, all attacks made by eladrin deal full damage to insubstantial creatures due to their connection to the new plane of Death.

Magic Mishaps: Whenever a character uses a magic power (either personally or with an activated magic item), there's a chance that the effect causes a mishap (10% for at-wills, 30% for encounters, and 70% for dailies). If it doesn't mishap, it instead just fails. Perpetual abilities are generally unaffected.

A character who can use magic of some sort can spend 8 hours researching and practicing, then make an Arcana check (DC 20). If he fails he can try again. If he succeeds he is able to use powers of up to level 5. Each further day he can make additional checks to regain mastery of magic up to five levels higher. 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 a +5 bonus to that character's check.

Existing magic items with activated abilities are dangerous, but can be rendered safe with a moment's concentration by a magic-user who is at least as high level as the item. New powers learned during the new age function safely.

Reign of the Rational: All creatures gain a +5 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy checks if they use rational appeals rather than emotional ones. All creatures take a –5 penalty to Intimidate and Insight 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.

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 traveled to it before. Any travel before the Ob's ritual does not 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.

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.

Fourmyle Jaunting: Every creature is able to jaunt—to teleport within line of sight as an innate ability. As a standard action once per day, a character can teleport anywhere he has line of sight to. He cannot teleport to a spot he could not reach normally (e.g., you have to be able to walk or climb there, so no teleporting through a barred cage). He also cannot teleport if he's being held.

A character focused on mobility (DM's discretion) can instead use this ability once every five minutes.

(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.)

Three Miles is so Last Age: Magic that restores life to the dead are no longer limited by the body having to travel less than three 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, and its duration is not limited.


GREMLIN MINE
1 = 5 feet
1. entrance
2. air shaft
3. pile of "shinies"
4. prisoner cages
5. firedust barrels
+20
-30
+10
+20
1
2
2
3
4
5

RISURI NATIONAL DEFENSE



Four large nations prepare to invade Risur, and incidental forces from border states and the eladrin enclaves in Elfaivar supplement them. While the monarch and company pursue matters of planetary salvation, it is nevertheless necessary to prepare for our national defense.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The total Risuri standing military consists of some twenty thousand soldiers. We believe a further eighty thousand citizens could be meaningfully armed and readied, but this would require immense social and economic upheaval.

Our best estimates of the invading forces' military numbers are as follows, and include conscripts and 'soldier-equivalent' monsters. Each hostile nation can certainly field additional forces, but we believe these are the limit of what could be rapidly deployed.

- Ber. Thirty thousand. Heroic dangers include immense beasts and druids that can turn into them, plus potentially-unknown weapons designed by Tinker Oddcog.
- Crisillyir. Forty-five thousand. Heroic dangers include summoned hosts of angels and powerful divine spellcasters.
- Danor. Fifty-five thousand. Heroic dangers include elite hivemind-controlled small arms fire and lantern-derived energy weapons.
- Drakr. Seventy-five thousand. Heroic dangers include giant arcano-scientific artillery and forbidden curses of the old Demonocracy chanted by entire armies.

Military history of course shows that mere manpower is not a key determinant in victory, but it cannot be ignored. Even at our peak, we are outnumbered two-to-one. In a siege a defending force can typically resist an aggressor up to three times their numbers, but of our major cities, only Shale is substantially fortified.

LIKELY OBJECTIVES

Risur has five key centers of power, which the invaders would need to target to defeat us.

- Shale. Naval power. Fortified, with the largest standing army. Navy based out of Shale is first line of defense against sea invasion.
- Flint. Industrial production. Limited physical defenses, but significant military presence.
- Bole. Raw materials. Accessible from the southeast, but poorly defended.
- Slate. Economic and political center. Difficult for invaders to approach, reasonably fortified. However, traditional defense pacts with the fey are likely no longer active.
- Weftlands. Food and manpower. Very broad area, hard to defend but also hard to attack.

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RISURI NATIONAL DEFENSE

ARCANE AND TECHNOLOGICAL STANDINGS

New inventions of magic and technology are hard to predict, but we should assume Han Jierre wouldn't launch an attack unless he had a trump card for our primary defenses. We know the Danorans have advanced firearms with munitions enchanted to deter flight and other magic. Drakr has in the past deployed immense cannons capable of leveling yards-wide swaths with a single shot. Ber is renowned for its trained warbeasts, and Crisillyir's long tradition of divine magic might even be bolstered with actual entities from the other worlds they've long claimed they believe in.

Finally, the new hivemind phenomenon might create unusual options for large-unit tactics. We are operating in uncharted territory. If we have any luck, it is that the confederacy arrayed against us do not have a three-hundred-foot-tall golem.

PREDICTION

If they follow the strategy that seems to best exploit our weaknesses, Drakr and Danor could link with a fleet from western Ber and focus on Shale. They could attack within a week, and together they could defeat our naval defenses, albeit at great cost. A new beam projectile witnessed at Axis Island would defeat our walls and make the city's centralized defenses pointless. If the invaders did not worry about casualties, they could seize the city within a week. Three weeks is more likely if they are cautious. Success here gives them relatively uncontested access to our seas.

Simultaneously, eastern Ber could unite with Crisillyir to target Bole. A full defeat is unnecessary; all they need to do is stop shipment of raw materials to Flint, which would slow the beating of our industrial heart.

We predict that, barring providence on our side, the nations arrayed against us could be in a position to assault Shale in as little as six weeks.

A PATH TO VICTORY

However, the situation improves marginally if even one country refrains from invasion. If two refrain, we can likely avoid defeat, though we would assuredly lose territory. Danor alone would be unable to take and hold territory by itself.

We believe our best strategy is a holding action, focused on defense, to stall the enemy while our monarch persuades those who remain in the nations of Ber, Crisillyir, and Drakr that they should abandon this invasion. Fortunately, the new nature of the world appears to have produced grand perils for those three countries, which we can use as leverage to shift their positions.

RND47.13 C5157av –X0775RS

URSALIÑA NEWS

Several colorful playbills and official notices adorn corner signposts in Ursaliña, all affixed with the two-headed bear that is the city's seal. All news is written in Draconic and Giant (translated here for your convenience).



Keeping You Safe!

Criminals prey upon the unwary—don't give them a target! Due to the absence of a sun, 'day' is officially declared to run from the sixth hour to the eighteenth. Listen for the clocks!

Outside of daytime hours, it is illegal to be outside of your homes, with the exception of travel to and from the festivities at the public house in Resto del Pescador and its surrounding parks.

Foreign visitors who cannot see in the dark will be taken into protective custody and issued travel visas at the cost of two ounces of gold coins if their visit is approved.

Be Mindful But Not Too Mindful!

Thinking too much like your neighbors causes the dangerous hivemind threat. Please report possible hiveminds to city police. Remember, Ursaliñans cherish their diversity and unique personalities! Stand out from those around you, and you'll be helping keep us all safe!

Set Your Feet Up!

Fashion-minded and sharp-eyed couriers recently arriving from Seobriga should refresh themselves at the Red Peacock Café in Triunfo Vida district. The fashionable ladies of Ursaliña crave the latest news first—and are willing to pay good money for it! Rooms and baths available.

Fool's Day

Come One, Come All! The jongleurs of Triunfo have turned everything topsy-turvy, and have a show of such acrobatic skill that must be seen to be believed! Performance provided wit[illegible]d Cadagyr's gener[illegible]

Closed for Renovations

Take heart, lover of the arts! Triunfo Vida's halls will be silent for only a little longer as the Grand Hall is renovated to what Ursaliña deserves: a true marvel of the performing arts! Funds generously provided by the Jesters of Providence and the Local Whaler's League.

Closed for Safety

Centuries of bold action has taken a toll on the Jaula de Oso, and without sun new lighting must be installed so all spectators can witness the action on the field! Inspections will only take a few days, and when it reopens, Maestra Roque promises a spectacle never before seen in our fair city.

LETTER FROM THE END OF THE WORLD

I, Vlendam Heid, son of Anisim Heid, son of Modya Bohm, dictate this letter to professional stenographer Dema Derellova, whose keen fingers won't type on anything but a mastercraft Unalako-brand mecha-typograph. It was personally delivered courtesy of a novel understanding of the teleportation mechanics of this new world, which was crafted by the least-secret conspiracy of our age.

May you have the wisdom and calm to face your coming end.

In a previous correspondence I alerted you to the threat of Grandis Komanov, a radical who had perverted the intent of my philosophical writings and in the process acquired a following of depraved and disgruntled ne'er-do-wells. She inspired a variety of religious devotion among those whose lives were in such a state that they would welcome the end of the world. You might be imagining now what the recent changes in the cosmos could have done for her recruitment efforts, but I assure you you have underestimated her success.

My people have had centuries to refine our fascination with the bleak and gloomy, and though many doomsayers have come and gone, our current situation has rather captured the imagination of a nation. I say this as I look out upon an army of what I wager is twenty or forty thousand souls. If I may get to my point, I am in the city of Bhad Ryzhavdut in the far east of Drakr, and we are under siege.

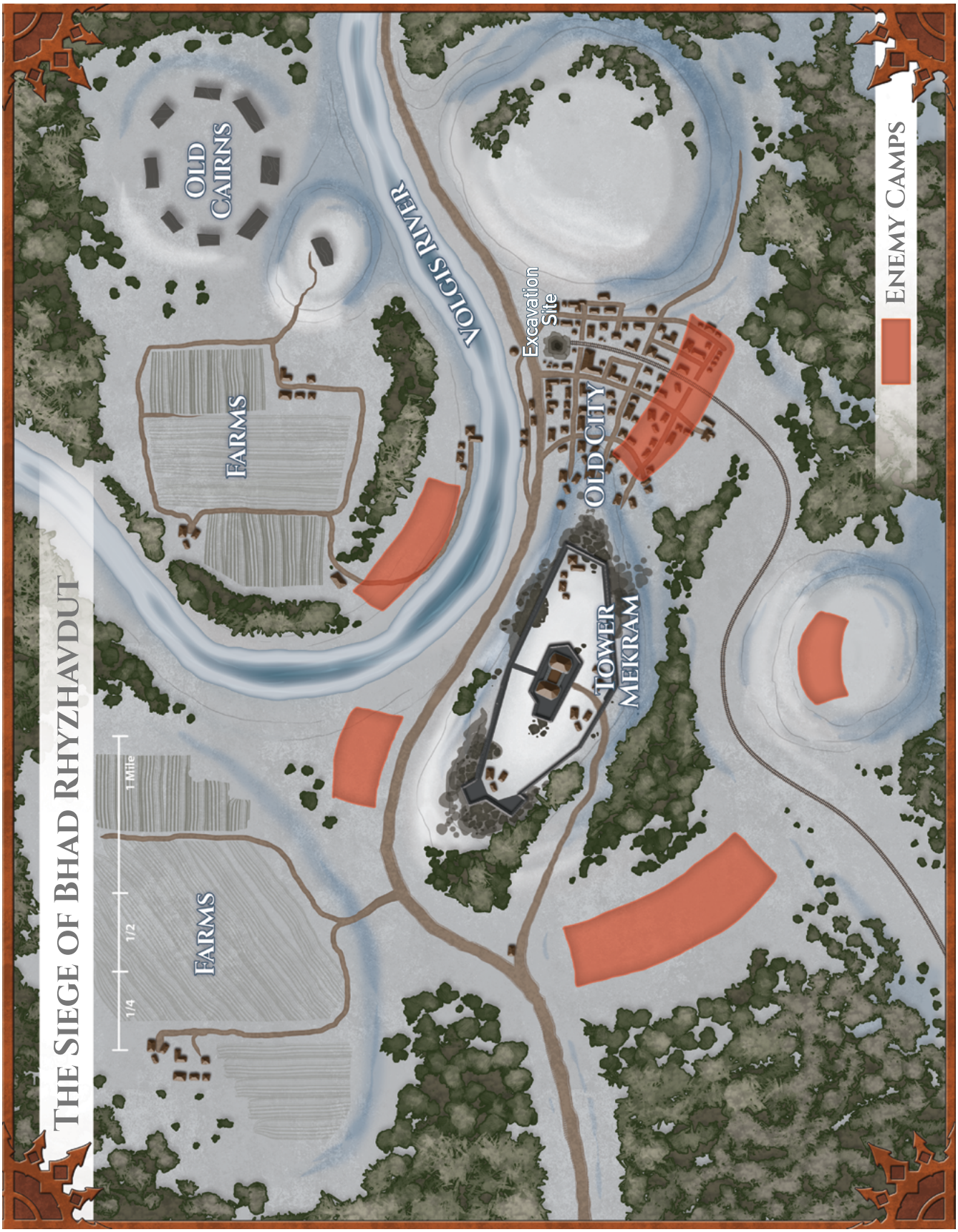
I have included in this box materials from Bhad Ryzhavdut's museum of pre-Demonocracy history. It may seem idle fantasy to you, but it appears our besieger is aided by the reanimated (and rather enlarged) bodies of five ancient warlords, who were prophesied to be present at the final battle of the world. Scouts report she is digging for something in the Old City, and we suspect she will transition from siege to slaughter once she has whatever she is excavating.

Already several thousand citizens of this small city have defected, enticed by Komanov's promise of unadulterated freedom to follow their most base urges. She claims the end of the world is nigh, and I admit it is hard to dispute her. As you appear to be the foremost experts in averting calamity, I write to you in the hope you will make this your problem to address.

Should you decline, I have witnessed your heroics and, with the assumption that your absence is for honorable reasons, I shall not begrudge you. But humbly I entreat you to not let this madwoman lead my nation to an ill-deserved end. Wherever your duty takes you, prepare yourself that your best efforts may fail, and that you might perish in undertaking your duty.

Your friend at the end of the world,

Vlendam Heid


The Siege of Bhad Rhyzhavdut
Old Cairns
Farms
Volgis River
Excavation Site
Old City
Tower Mekram
Farms
1/4
1/2
1 Mile
Enemy Camps

MUSEUM BROCHURE CLIPPING



Музей времён до империи демонов
(Museum of the time before the demon empire)

На фото: барельеф на изначальном подъёмном мосту привратной башни крепости
(Pictured: Carving on the original drawbridge of the tower fortress.)

Synopsis of the Biography of Triegenes

Triegenes's autobiography, much like the mortal man himself, is simple and unassuming. Its nine chapters are less than two hundred hand-written pages, and could be easily read in a couple hours. A fish hook made of crude iron keeps the leather band around it in place. He originally composed it as a long epistle to his followers, wanting them to know who he was since he was expecting to die in his battle against the leadership of the Demonocracy.

He discusses the ups and downs of his early life, referring to events involving cultures and politics long since vanished from the world. One day he was caught in a storm at sea and barely survived. Though he couches it in compelling metaphor, the core of the story is that he nearly died, realized that he was nearly forty, wife dead and he with no child, and he didn't think he had been kind enough to others, so he vowed to challenge himself to do better. Due to local events, he ended up leading people into battle against conquerors from across the sea.

Several chapters are devoted to lessons he learned leading people in a war to establish a nation. He spends an entire page extolling the importance of getting enough sleep. A recurring theme is knowing that the purpose of power is not simply to gain more power. After several great victories he had his own nation, but he wanted to defeat the Demonocracy. He was worried that perhaps his ambitions were arrogance, but he defends himself as being motivated to help the slaves of the demons, people who were denied a chance to make more of themselves.

From the writing, it is clear that Triegenes did not trust some of his closest advisors during the campaign against the demons. Some suggested he take a more authoritarian and rigid approach towards ruling the lands they conquered. One passage includes a section that is underlined: "Their desires for power and comfort cannot come at the expense of the people, and I will not allow a new Demonocracy to rule in my name, no matter how pretty the clothes it wears or the masks it hides behind."

The final chapter explains that he has learned how to gain the power of a god, but that if he dies with that power, so too will die those who believe in him. He has always challenged himself to become greater, and this would be the pinnacle of that goal. But if he has this power he fears he'll become a tyrant, and he doesn't want to risk the lives of his followers. He ends with what reads as fatalistic humor. "I have the greatest catch on my hook, but I'm not sure I want to eat it. After all, I'm only fighting horrors from the Abyss. I probably won't need it. If I die in this battle, better it be as a man, not a god. I suppose I have enough power already."

The revelation of his biography, then, is that he never used the *sacrament of apotheosis*. He defeated the Demonocracy with his own power, and died in the process. Tales of his ascension to divinity were mere stories told by those who took power after him.





THE GYRE

You'll need to explore the Gyre to learn what elemental energies each plane provides, but your guide can provide you with some information from her own travels.

She just watched the mirror-like plane crash (plane 53), which was Av. Five others appeared just six months ago, and though she has explored some of them, she doesn't know their names. They include a world made of ruins of old civilizations layered atop each other (plane 49), a sea with scattered islands she couldn't reach (plane 48), the gold-flecked asteroids where she found you (plane 47), a world of wind-carved stone landmarks that floated too far away for her to reach (plane 44), and a distant plane of obscuring sands (plane 39).

She also watched another world, like a silver ring, be carried north toward the teeth of the Gyre. It looked like it was being pulled by a white comet. She couldn't follow, because there's a gap between the southern and northern planes. She stole a map from a Golden Legion ship which showed the locations and names of planes there, but no details.

Only a few planes here are truly 'safe,' including the windy forest of Caeloon (plane 50), The Plain of Rice (plane 51), and the mountains of Dunkelweiss (plane 31) where rivers of beer flow. Bhoior (plane 41) is eerie – the whole world is a giant, possibly undead turtle where odd voices seem to call to you – but nothing ever accosted your guide while she was there.

Several planes are naturally lethal. Padyer (plane 52) has water that burns like fire. The beasts of Thrag (plane 37) are terribly fast, strong, and cunning. The salt flats of Amrou (plane 36 & 40) are vast, have no water, and are dotted with tombs of mummies. The snowy Wilanir (plane 35) has mists that roll in unexpectedly. She never saw any predators there, but she often found dead prey animals in the wake of a passing fog bank.

The inhabited planes are mostly hostile. If you linger on Shabboath (plane 45), dreams will compel you to enter the flooded tunnels where some massive creature slumbers. The sea of Hunlow (plane 33) is controlled by pirates who kill or capture every outsider, and they take their slaves to an abandoned city, Drozani (plane 25), which floats in the clouds. Perhaps the only friends you might find are the goblins of Etheax (plane 29), but they treat everyone as friends, even the pirates of Hunlow.

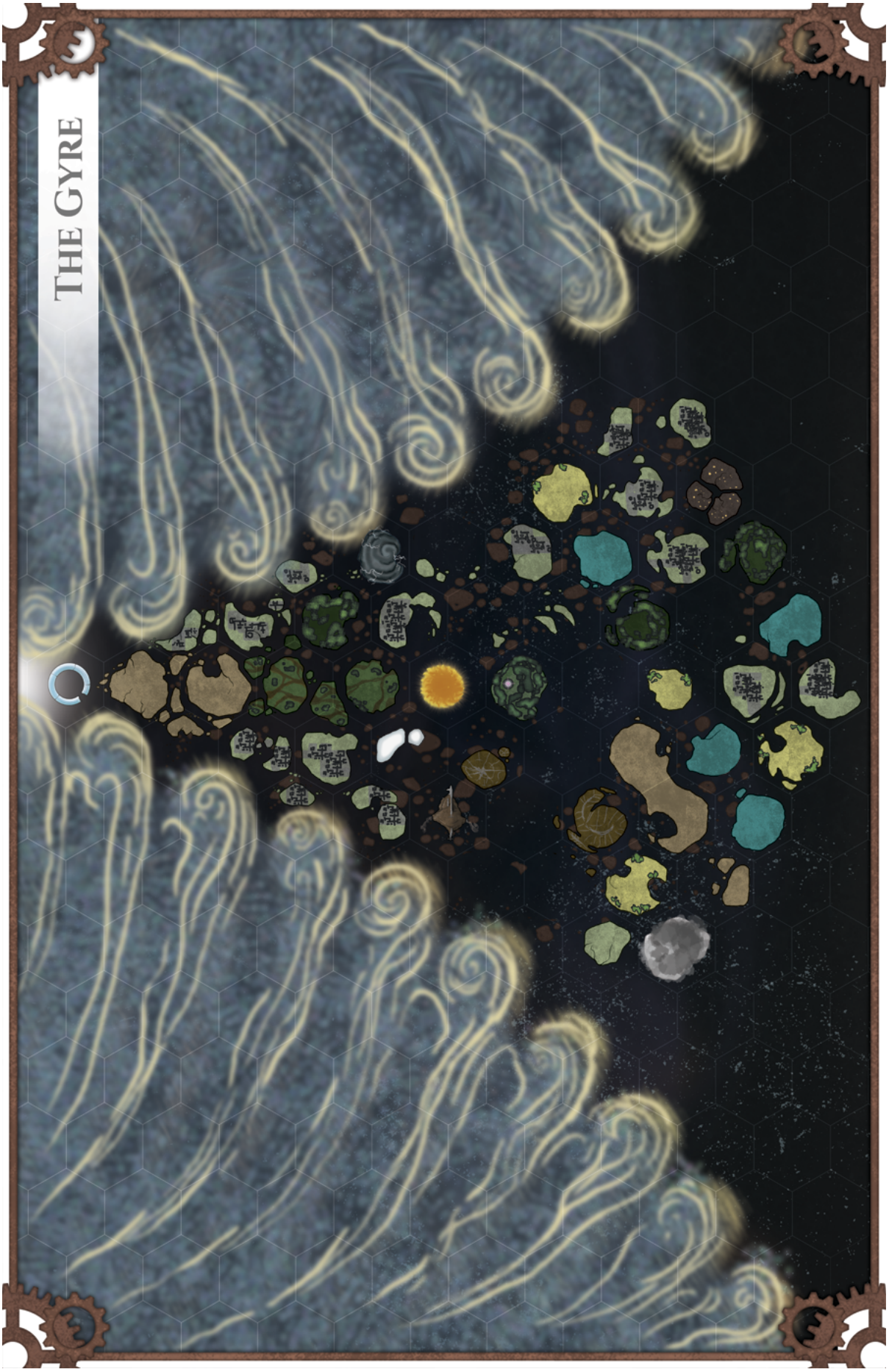
A few worlds are completely empty, either plundered ruins or just drifting motes of dead rocks.

Across the deep void, your guide knows that the Golden Legion is based in Egalitrix (plane 18), which resembles an erupting volcano. And she is intrigued by the mystery of a lighthouse on a place they called Ascetia (plane 24), which seems to beckon for people to come. She knows nothing about the other planes of the north, except the names of a few.

GYRE EXPLORATION

PLANAR LOCATION, NAME	ENERGIES	TRAITS
1.		
2. Teykfa		
3. *Dead motes*	—	—
4. *Dead motes*	—	—
5. Bonilathe		
6. *Dead motes*	—	—
7. *Dead motes*	—	—
8. *Dead motes*	—	—
9. Metarie		
10. *Plundered ruins*	—	—
11. *Plundered ruins*	—	—
12. Guay		
13. *Dead motes*	—	—
14. Ringes		
15. Gardboral		
16. Apo		
17. Iratha Ket		
18. Egalitrix		
19. Obliatas		
20. *Dead motes*	—	—
21. Elofasp		
22. *Empty void*	—	—
23. *Empty void*	—	—
24. Ascetia		
25. Drozani		
26. *Empty void*	—	—
27. *Empty void*	—	—

PLANAR LOCATION, NAME	ENERGIES	TRAITS
28. *Empty void*	—	—
29. Etheax		
30. *Plundered ruins*	—	—
31. Dunkelweiss		
32. *Empty void*	—	—
33. Hunlow		
34. *Plundered ruins*	—	—
35. Wilanir		
36. Amrou		
37. Thrag		
38. *Plundered ruins*	—	—
39. Apet		
40. Amrou		
41. Bhoior		
42. *Plundered ruins*	—	—
43. *Dead motes*	—	—
44. Avilona		
45. Shabboath		
46. *Empty void*	—	—
47. Urim		
48. Mavisha		
49. Nem		
50. Caeloon		
51. The Plain of Rice		
52. Padyer		
53. Av		


THE GYRE

Reida
the Arc of History
Life, Time

Teykfa
the Ticking Pendulum
Earth, Time

Bonilathe
the Storm Claw
Air, Fire

Metarie
the Swamp of Sabotage
Life, Water

Guay
the Grove of Dreams
Life, Space

Ringes
the Barren Moor
Earth, Water

Gardboral
the Chimeric Maelstrom
Air, Life

Apo
the Unknown Disk
Death, Space

Iratha Ket
the Graveyard Revel
Death, Life

Egalitrix
Fortress of the Golden Legion
Fire, Space

Obliatas
the Devouring Light
Any

Elofasp
the Spawning Hive
Earth, Life

Ascetia
the Hidden Jungle
Life, Time

Drozani
a Dead City in the Clouds
Air, Death

Etheax
the Tended Flame
Fire, Time

Dunkelweiss
the Fermented Peaks
Earth, Life

Hunlow
a Place for Pirates
Death, Water

Wilanir
the Lair of Discontent
Air, Water

Amrou
the Salt Waste
Death, Earth

Other
Something not in the Gyre
Various Energies

Technology is disrupted.	Storms spawn creatures.	People are more aware of the scale of time, and they can better weigh long-term consequences. Time can be manipulated.	Strong prophecy.
Intermittent spheres of annihilation.	Elementals are common and massive.	Murderous violence.	Dreams create demiplanes.
Giant obedient beasts.	Undead are destroyed by the sun.	Fantastic grand industry will develop, driven by greed.	Greater altruism. Occasional spontaneous musical numbers.
Alcohol is good for you.	Patience and fire magic are both easy.	Slowly the birth rate dwindles to zero.	People are more aware of history.
Something unusual, like Gidim, Mishados, or a homemade pocket dimension.	Mundane counters against supernatural threats are stronger.	Dense mists bring ill tidings.	The ocean is literally a blood-thirsty god who loves villains.

Thrag
the Beastly Bounty
Life, Time

Apet
the Distant Plane
Air, Space

Bhoior
the Walking Whisper
Air, Time

Avilona
the Final Murmur
Air, Death

Shabboath
the Severed Sea
Earth, Water

Urim
the Shattered Golden Chain
Earth, Space

Mavisha
the Mysterious Deep
Water, Time

Nem
the Plane of Ruin
Death, Time

Caeloon
the Paper Wind
Air, Life

The Plain of Rice
Space, Water

Padyer
a Clean Realm
Fire, Water

Av
Plane of Mirrors
Death, Life

Jiese
the Fire of Industry
Fire, Life

Perlocus
a Voice on the Wind
Air, Earth

Mojang
a Wild Artifice
Earth, Life

Ostea
the Beating Heart
Life, Water

Ratios
the Cold Logic
Earth, Space

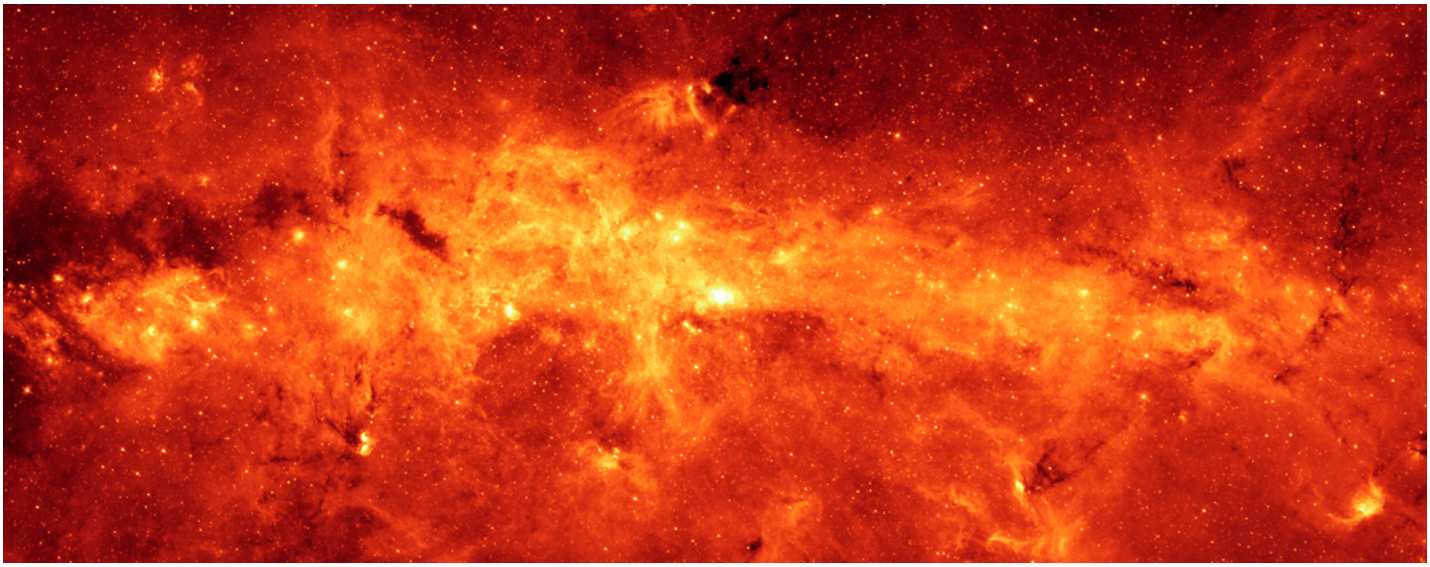
Fourmyle
the Selfish Dominion
Death, Space

Illocus
the Cascading Flame
Fire, Time

Baden
the Ghost Moon
Air

Flight is limited to five minutes.	Sounds echo, sometimes years later.	Planar travel limited to local system.	Rapid reincarnation.
Lingering souls are stronger than corporeal undead.	Islands conceal secrets.	Gold blocks teleportation.	Creates an 'underdark' cavern system.
Conjures physical reflection of whatever world it orbits.	Water burns and purges.	The entire world is shallow water.	People are resilient in the face of tragedy.
Rapid healing.	Nature follows orders.	Persuasion is more effective.	Precision technology functions.
Flight is easy.	Consequences cascade rapidly.	Casual teleportation.	Intuition is weaker, reason stronger.

The Ritual of the Axis Seal



The ritual details you retrieved from the Grand Librarium of Alais Primos, combined with Pemberton and your own observations of the drained lakebed on Axis Island let you know the following with confidence. Uncertainties remain, however.

Physical Space

The ritual actually involves the entirety of Axis Island, but it is centered on the Axis Seal—a hundred-foot diameter disk of gold, which covers a twenty-foot diameter hemispherical depression in the bedrock, ten feet deep. Out of this depression flare intense blasts of energy from across the multiverse. If the seal were properly seated atop this depression, it would focus that energy and create the sun.

The seal lies in the middle of a four-hundred-foot diameter field of flattened stone, around which carvings of primitive orc runes form seven rings, each twenty-five feet farther out. Spaced somewhat irregularly around these rings are vertical pits. The golden seal itself would only cover the central depression and the innermost ring, but when it is in place the other pits are inaccessible.

The rings represent, in order outward:

- The plane of fire. (Red)
- The plane of air. (Orange)
- The world itself, which has no pit, but is surrounded by a smaller ring that does have a pit, representing the plane of life. (Green)
- The plane of water. (Dark Blue)
- The plane of earth. (Gold)
- The plane of space (Gray), which is surrounded by a smaller ring that has its own pit, representing the plane of time. (Light Blue)
- The plane of death. (Purple)

Each pit is about fifteen feet in diameter and contains the fifty foot long white stone shaft of a petrified tree. Halfway down that shaft, a small alcove can hold an icon, which represents a particular plane. The Ancients used gold icons marked with symbols representing a constellation, which set those worlds' place in the night sky. Any hand-held item can be used as an icon, but crafting one requires either close knowledge of the plane, or prolonged study of it.

You already may have some icons you discovered in your investigations, and somehow you know about other worlds that exist in the Gyre, though you're sure you never went there. You're equally sure that very soon you'll gain access to planar icons for some of those worlds. See the end of this document for details of the worlds that may be available to you.

Energetic Tendrils

Arcs of energy from the central depression mostly crackle upward, but every minute or two one will slice out laterally to a distance of several hundred feet. The force is enough to blast back and likely kill anyone who tries to come too close. Sometimes where one of these arcs strikes, a sliver of a world appears – a forest, a crackling lava field, a waterfall—only to vanish a few seconds later. Sometimes even creatures are visible in these slivers. The tendrils are slow enough to avoid if you keep your distance.

Obscurati Interference

The Ob built a small bunker to the northwest of the seal, which was damaged by saboteurs loyal to the Voice of Rot. Ritual mages chanting from within that bunker shielded the colossus Borne, but when they died, the colossus was struck by a tendril and crippled.

When Borne was damaged, he collapsed, and the hundred-foot disk of the seal fell atop him. The colossus suffered immense damage across his body, which cracked his torso and blew apart half an arm and one-and-a-half legs. The ritual was left incomplete.

Manipulating the Ritual Pieces

Crisillyiri scholars posited that the Ancients used mass ritual telekinesis to lift the sunken columns that control the planar links. You'll have to find another way to lift them.

Crane Mechanics

If your airship is equipped with a crane, decide where to mount it, but it's probably best on the rear. It is treated as a ship component, and can be damaged if dealt one 'strike' in naval combat, or destroyed if dealt two. In person-scale combat, it has 200 hit points and resist 20 all. Repairing it mid-combat if it's damaged would take at least a minute, ten crew, and an Intelligence check (DC 20), or some sort of magic. If it is destroyed, repairs require magic.

The cables are the most vulnerable spot, and while the gripping claw is deployed, 100 damage dealt to the cable will sever it. Replacing a cable uses the same rules as repairing the crane itself.

The crane has enough lifting capacity to pull one of the 15-ft. diameter, 50-ft. long stone columns in the ritual field out of the ground. To do so, the ship must be positioned so the crane is within thirty feet of the column, no more than sixty feet above the ground, and someone must spend a move action and make a Dexterity check (DC 15) to operate the crane and grab onto the column. No more than one attempt can be made per round.

Once the column is grabbed, directing the crane to lift it only requires a minor action, but it takes two rounds for the column to emerge enough for its planar icon to be replaced. Extracting the full 50-ft. column takes four rounds. If the crane releases the column, it slides back into place over the course of a round.

If the ship moves while hoisting a column, the crane operator must make a Dexterity check as a free action (DC 20) or else the crane loses its grip. If the ship moves out of range, though, the crane automatically loses its grip. Moving directly upward can pull the column out in a single round. If a column is pulled entirely out of its hole, reseating it is a very fine process, nigh impossible in the heat of battle (DC 25).

Divine Intervention

With the *sacrament of apotheosis*, a PC can use his divine strength to grab a column and pull it out of the ground. It takes four move actions by *sacrament*-empowered PCs to lift a column enough to access the planar icon, or eight actions to remove it fully. Multiple PCs can contribute actions in this way.

A PC who chooses the *Tower Above* boon has quadruple the effect of a normal *sacrament*-empowered PC. One with the *From On High* boon can completely lift a column out with a single move action, and can carry it as easily as he'd carry a one-handed item.

Moving the Seal

The immense golden seal is much heavier. It requires four move actions by *sacrament*-emowered PCs (or one action by a PC with *Tower Above*) to lift the seal barely off the ground and move it 10 feet. A PC with *From On High* can move the seal forty feet with a single move action. A crane on the ship is insufficient.

Swapping Icons

It's as easy as knocking aside the old icon and placing in a new one, though the new one must belong to a plane that is sufficiently charged with energy of the appropriate type. Once the column is lowered fully into the ground, the new plane is linked to this world with a mighty surge of energy. Whoever placed the icon in the column is then able to control that energy. The DM knows what that energy can be used for.

Planes and Powers

The following planes might be available for you to use.

Do note, in the original planar set-up, the plane of earth **Urim** caused gold to block planar travel, so the seal made interplanar travel within the system limited; and **Apet** made planar travel from worlds outside the system difficult; while **Nem** attempted to destroy intruders from other worlds. Almost any other arrangement of planes will result in a world that can be more easily reached by travelers from other planes.

Obscurati Planes

Eight planes are currently linked.



PLANAR LOCATION, NAME, AND MONIKER	ENERGIES	TRAITS
A. Jiese, the fire of industry	Fire, Life	Precision technology functions.
B. Perlocus, a voice on the wind	Air, Earth	Persuasion is more effective.
C. Mojang, a wild artifice	Earth, Life	Nature follows orders.
D. Ostea, the beating heart	Life, Water	Rapid healing.
E. Ratios, the cold logic	Earth, Space	Intuition is weaker, reason stronger.
F. Fourmyle, the selfish dominion	Death, Space	Casual teleportation.
G. Illocus, the cascading flame	Fire, Time	Consequences cascade rapidly.
H. Baden, the ghost moon	Air	Flight is easy.

Gyre Planes

Thirty-one planes were available in the Gyre. (Numbering corresponds with the Gyre map.)

PLANAR LOCATION, NAME, AND MONIKER	ENERGIES	TRAITS
1. Reida, the arc of history	Life, Time	Strong prophecy.
2. Teykfa, the ticking pendulum	Earth, Time	People are more aware of the scale of time, and they can better weigh long-term consequences. Time can be manipulated.
5. Bonilathe, the storm claw	Air, Fire	Storms spawn creatures.
9. Metarie, the swamp of sabotage	Life, Water	Technology is disrupted.
12. Guay, the grove of dreams	Life, Space	Dreams create demiplanes.
14. Ringes, the barren moor	Earth, Water	Murderous violence.
15. Gardboral, the chimeric maelstrom	Air, Life	Elementals are common and massive.
16. Apo, the unknown disk	Death, Space	Intermittent spheres of annihilation.
17. Iratha Ket, the graveyard revel	Death, Life	Greater altruism. Occasional spontaneous musical numbers.
18. Egalitrix, fortress of the Golden Legion	Fire, Space	Fantastic grand industry will develop, driven by greed.
19. Obliatas, the devouring light	Any	Undead are destroyed by the sun.
21. Elofasp, the spawning hive	Earth, Life	Giant obedient beasts.
24. Ascetia, the hidden jungle	Life, Time	People are more aware of history.
25. Drozani, a dead city in the clouds	Air, Death	Slowly the birth rate dwindles to zero.
29. Etheax, the tended flame	Fire, Time	Patience and fire magic are both easy.

PLANAR LOCATION, NAME, AND MONIKER	ENERGIES	TRAITS
31. Dunkelweiss, the fermented peaks	Earth, Life	Alcohol is good for you.
33. Hunlow, a place for pirates	Death, Water	The ocean is literally a blood-thirsty god who loves villains.
35. Wilanir, the lair of discontent	Air, Water	Dense mists bring ill tidings.
36 & 40. Amrou, the salt waste	Death, Earth	Mundane counters against supernatural threats are stronger.
37. Thrag, the beastly bounty	Life, Time	Rapid reincarnation.
39. Apet, the distant plane	Air, Space	Planar travel limited to local system.
41. Bhoior, the walking whisper	Air, Time	Sounds echo, sometimes years later.
44. Avilona, the final murmur	Air, Death	Flight is limited to five minutes.
45. Shabboath, the severed sea	Earth, Water	Creates an 'underdark' cavern system.
47. Urim, the shattered golden chain	Earth, Space	Gold blocks teleportation.
48. Mavisha, the mysterious deep	Water, Time	Islands conceal secrets.
49. Nem, the plane of ruin	Death, Time	Lingering souls are stronger than corporeal undead.
50. Caeloon, the paper wind	Air, Life	People are resilient in the face of tragedy.
51. The Plain of Rice	Space, Water	The entire world is shallow water.
52. Padyer, a clean realm	Fire, Water	Water burns and purges.
53. Av, plane of mirrors	Death, Life	Conjures physical reflection of whatever world it orbits.

Completing the Ritual

If at any point all the columns are in the ground, there are links to planes producing all eight energy types, and the golden seal is placed over the central depression, your information implies that the ritual will be sealed with magic, and the changes made will become permanent.

Final Sacrament

Even with powerful magic it would require years of effort to reopen the seal and make further changes.

It's unclear what would happen if you try to close the seal while columns are still out of the ground.

The party may have learned the *sacrament of apotheosis* from memory events using the *lost arc of Reida*, or been taught it by Ashima-Shimtu or anyone she told it to. While the full scope of the ritual varies depending on the nature of the belief being harnessed, in this fateful hour the *sacrament* can focus the faith of millions so that their champions can transcend the limits of mortal flesh and confront a threat unmatched by any in the world's history. Those who would use this power would be wise to appreciate the immense gift and responsibility they are being granted.



Performing the Sacrament

For the ritual to function, its subject or subjects must be adherents of an ideology that is strongly held by at least hundreds of people. The more fervent and widespread the belief, the greater the boon granted to the subjects shall be. If the belief has a name, the bond to the adherents is stronger, but even those who know it by a different name can contribute.

The ritual requires four people to perform, at least one of whom must be a spellcaster of level 15 or higher. The ritual performers must spread entrails and blood of a lion, an eagle, a whale, and a dragon in a ring. Two golden urns sit in the center of the ring, one empty, the other filled with a mixture of the animals' blood. The subject or subjects of the ritual stands in the center, and those performing the ritual use the animal blood to paint the name of the belief across the subject's flesh. The subject then must shed a notable quantity of blood (enough to deal 20 damage) into the second urn.

The subject or subjects recite the incantation of the ritual: "Before I was nothing but words. Now I am all that is believed. I am faith made flesh. I am flesh made a god."

Once they complete the incantation, their appearance will shift as the power of the faithful floods into them. They might grow in size, their eyes might glow, and if they are not strong-willed enough their entire personality and body might be overwhelmed by the image the believers have of their ideal.

Effects of the Sacrament

The recipients of the ritual, hereafter referred to as 'the vessels,' all gain the following special abilities, as well as specific boons they choose. The number of boons depends on the extent of the faith empowering them.

Mental Effects

The vessels each feel a subconscious connection to all the believers granting them power, hereafter referred to as 'the masses.' There's no control granted by this link, but each side can sense the desires of the other. By concentrating, it's possible for the vessel to speak to any or all of the believers empowering him.

Weak-willed vessels lose their sense of self as the faith of the masses transforms their personalities to match what they believe. This is what happened to Kasvarina's daughter, who was not prepared to be the focus of so much power. Indeed, trying to turn people with weak wills into vessels would drive them insane.

Physical Effects

The vessel is immune to environmental damage that was not created by an active spell effect. The vessel has resist all 30 against other attacks, and is immune to the charm effects and slow, immobilized, and restrained conditions. However, anyone who says the vessel's real name ignores these resistances and immunities for one hour.

The vessel gains blindsight within 20 ft. Additionally, he can manipulate objects at a range of 20 feet as readily as if in his reach and has a lifting capacity as if he were Large. As a move action he can shift between his normal size and Large, gaining the attendant space and reach. However, this does not alter any of the vessel's ability scores, defenses, nor damage.

Physical harm that makes it past the vessel's defenses is shared with the masses. The damage affects the vessel normally, but similar injury is also spread among the masses. If an attack deals 40 fire damage, the vessel would take 10 fire damage, and 10 fire damage would be spread around believers scattered across the world, causing one or two to burst into flames and die. The vessel feels all these deaths.

The death of a vessel has a much greater backlash, though only if no other vessel also shares in the ritual. If all the vessels of a ritual die, many among the masses also perish. The specifics of how widespread this would be are unclear.

Additional Boons

The number of faithful contributing to the *sacrament* determines how many 'boons' are gained, which must be divided among the various vessels. If there's a dispute, the vessels choose their boons in order based on highest Charisma. The DM will inform you of how many boons the party has access to, which depends on how much renown and support you have around this world and beyond. You and the DM may agree on alternative boons, at his discretion.

At-Will Encounter Power. The vessel chooses one encounter power of level 20 or lower from any class. He can use that power at will once per round. (Pick something thematic. Searching for the optimal min-maxed choice is forbidden. You're a god now, not a munchkin.)

Tower Above. The vessel's blindsight extends to 50 ft., as does the range he can manipulate objects. He has the lifting capacity of a Huge creature, and can become Huge (or Large), which does not alter his ability scores or weapon damage

From On High. *Requires Tower Above.* The vessel's blindsight extends to 200 ft., as does the range he can manipulate objects. He has the lifting capacity of a Gargantuan creature, and can become Gargantuan (or Huge or Large), which does not alter his ability scores or weapon damage. The character in this form is roughly 50 feet tall. The vessel also gains a fly speed of 12, with an altitude limit of 60.

Unstoppable. The vessel gains a +6 bonus to speed in all his modes of movement. All his attacks now deal half damage on a miss.

When the vessel dies, he may choose any attack power he can use and have it affect those who harmed him in the past half hour.

Creator. As a standard action, the vessel can create any mundane object up to Huge size anywhere within his reach, or repair a damaged or destroyed object. This can repair up to two points of hull integrity to a ship. If used as an attack, the creation is gradual enough that it requires an attack roll (primary ability score +9 vs. Reflex) and does no more than 40 damage.

Plentitude. The vessel is immune to blinded, dazed, and stunned conditions, perhaps because he has multiple heads or simply multiple aspects. The vessel can have equipped any number of handheld items, and is always considered to have two hands free. This could be because he has many limbs, or simply shifts reality, or can call items to hand or dismiss them with a thought. This boon does not grant the vessel extra actions, but the vessel does gain a +6 bonus to attack rolls for opportunity attacks.

Duration

The effect of the ritual lasts for one day, though a vessel can spend two standard actions to end his connection to the faithful. Otherwise, only killing all the vessels will end the ritual prematurely. The ritual cannot be performed again for the same ideal while the first is active, so typically no more than five or so people can act as vessels at once.

Special Thanks to Our Fans

The first fan creation in the Zeitgeist setting was in early 2011, before the first adventure was even released. I ran a secret playtest for a group of forum members on EN World, and they came up with PCs who would be canonized as the B-Team of the Royal Homeland Constabulary in Flint. Many of the background characters in the first few adventures were originally informants or contacts those constables knew.

Shortly after we released Island at the Axis of the World, one of those players began posting recaps of his games. Within a year there were eight different threads about how different groups handled the campaign, and a handful are still active today.[1]

For example, poster Nathan "Elfshire" Meister keeps a running list of 'memorable moments' from his campaign on an Obsidian Portal blog. My favorite:

> **Session 33.** Following the Adulthood Challenge in the Ber's Summer Court, the constables came to the realization that Hugo Von Gearkinson had officially become a man.
>
> In an unrelated occurrence, Hugo turned a T-rex into a medium-sized velociraptor for all of six seconds using a prototype shrink ray.

Sometimes events in those game reports struck me as cool enough that I slipped them into future adventures. Meanwhile, Kickstarter backers pledged extra for a chance to make their mark on the setting. John Rogers, writer of a D&D comic and creator of the TV show *Leverage*, came up with two of the ships that the RHC can lend to the constables. One DM invented a city in Ber for a sideplot, which became canon. Rock Rackus's musical oeuvre, the delicious Goblin spiked pickle, the state of Flint's journalism, and even the kobold spymaster El Extraño owe their existence to Zeitgeist fans.

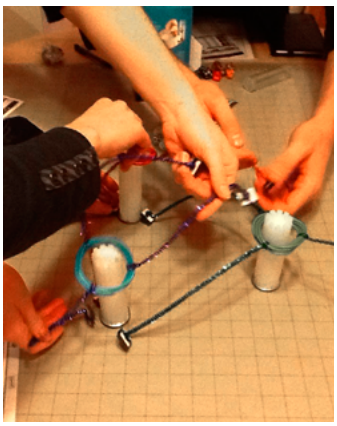
Certainly the grandest involvement of the fanbase came during the 'Obscurati convocation,' which ran concurrently with the Kickstarter to fund these hardcover compilations. A thread on EN World served as virtual venue for posters—taking on the roles of Ob officers—as they debated the merits of five proposed 'new world orders,' suggested their own changes, and occasionally waxed villainous. The final plan that the Obscurati decides to enact at the end of Adventure Nine is the handiwork of Dame Constance Baden, a.k.a. Raja Doake.

I had the pleasure of running a one-shot for Doake and his gaming group at Gen Con in 2014, where they came in costume as their characters. The DM, of course, had the privilege of playing Rock Rackus.



[1] I'm eagerly waiting to hear from the first group to finish the campaign.

Below are a handful of creations and vignettes by other gamers playing through this adventure path.







Steve "Shimrath" Quillen has a knack for building combat set-pieces. Here we see his group trying to solve Lya Jierre's Three Towers puzzle, then assaulting the lighthouse at the Axis Island fortress, and finally trying to survive the night atop Cauldron Hill.

He joked that for the session after that one, perhaps he should have built a factory map with cardboard, then set it on fire during the combat. Hm. I never saw any photos after that one…

METAGAMERS ANONYMOUS

Logo of Metagamer's Anonymous, a podcast at prismatictsunami.com, produced by Erik Carl. I 'met' Erik online years ago after finding his gaming blog, where he recounted his group's play-through of War of the Burning Sky. In 2012 he started this podcast, which focuses on character-driven roleplaying, and before long his group started playing Zeitgeist. So far they've posted Actual Play sessions up to nearly the end of *The Dying Skyseer*, but just this past month after attending their local convention TsunamiCon, I had the opportunity to visit him and his family of gamers in Wichita, KS.



They had just finished *Cauldron-Born*, so I ran for them a light-hearted one-shot. In keeping with tradition, the DM got to play Rock Rackus.





This illustration by Elly Beck depicts a character in her group, Alienor Contessa Soliogn-Stark, romancing Gale. The Soliogn family – which also owned Gale – adopted Alienor after, as a young child, she survived the shelling of an orphanage in Cherage by future king Aodhan of Risur.[2] In this group's campaign, Alienor would go on to kill Lorcan Kell, get her arm severed in the Beran rebellion, and then become a member of the Unseen Court.

I all sorts of adore this illo, and could definitely see the public in Flint buying tawdry romance novels about the alleged liaisons of the city's famous fey terrorist.

[2] Alienor's backstory is tied to a great little in-joke between me and Thurston Hillman, who wrote three of the adventures. At Gen Con in 2013 I ran a one-shot called The Kraken Caper, where Thursty played young Aodhan during the Third Yerasol War, on a mission to steal a steam warship out of the Cherage harbor. It was Thursty's call to fire on the city to distract reinforcements, instantly turning the beloved and regal Aodhan into a scoundrel, to the point that we joked he probably just hit an orphanage. We wrote that into the next adventure as 'vile Danoran propaganda,' which is totally true.

This same campaign is source of my biggest "I wish I'd thought of that." Elly, the artist, joined the group in the middle of the second adventure, and she wanted to play an eladrin woman who thought she'd been stuck in another plane for five centuries, just narrowly missing the Great Malice. The DM posted on EN World that he had an idea, but wanted to be sure it wouldn't wreck anything later on: he wanted her true identity to be Kasvarina, co-founder of the conspiracy, which would make adventure eight, *Diaspora*, a personal story of her discovering her true past. That was brilliant.



Finally, I need to thank the first fans of Zeitgeist, my home gaming group, who first playtested the campaign and inspired much of the setting. If you find a good posse of gamers, stick with them, because they'll give you years of joy. And occasionally, when you ask for NPC concepts, one of them will say, "How about Kanye West, but an astronaut?"[3]

Compared to something like Paizo's Pathfinder setting, our fanbase is comparably small, and I suspect members of different gaming groups will seldom cross paths physically, but through EN World's message-boards people can meet others with a deep well of shared experiences. And as we bring Zeitgeist to a close in this book, I personally want to thank our fans for being so invested in what we've created. I hope you take it and create the world you want.

Fin

[3] I like Rock Rackus, okay? So sue me.

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