



MARK OF HEROES

REFLECTIONS OF THE MULTIVERSE

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INTRODUCTION

This adventure is optimized for 1st-level characters. This means that it's designed and balanced for a group of four to five 1st-level characters. If your group deviates from this size and strength, each encounter features a section titled "Scaling the Encounter" so that you, the Dungeon Master (DM), can create a more balanced encounter. If there are only four of five PCs of the same level it is easy to use this section: just use the level entry that corresponds with the PCs' level (the optimized entry is given in the main adventure text). For groups of mixed levels and groups with six PCs, determine the average level of the PCs, and add increase that average by one for groups of six PCs. Treat that level as the groups level. That said, as DM you have discretion when it comes to fitting the challenges of the adventure. If the PCs are having too hard or too easy of a time, feel free to increase or decrease the level of challenge. The goal is to challenge the PCs, and entertain the players, not to overwhelm or even underwhelm them. The most enjoyable D&D games are ones where failure and character death are possible, but success and reward are attainable through daring and smart play.

This adventure has been designed to be part of the RPGA DUNGEON & DRAGONS: CAMPAIGNS—MARK OF HEROES program. Like all DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS adventures, it's recommended that parties undertaking its challenges have at least one arcane spellcaster, a divine spellcaster (preferably a cleric), a strong warrior, and a rogue. Parties missing these valuable adventuring components may find *Reflection of the Multiverse* very challenging, and the percentages of character death higher. Please warn the players of this before play starts. DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS allow players to "take one for the team;" that is to play a fastplay wizard, fighter, rogue, or cleric in place of one of their characters, and gain experience point for their character. If the group lacks one of these vital four classes, suggest to your players to take advantage of this option.

RPGA-SANCTIONED PLAY

Most likely you ordered this adventure as part of an RPGA even from the RPGA website, or as part of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS retail program. To play *Reflections of the Multiverse* as part of the MARK OF HEROES campaign—a worldwide, ongoing D&D campaign set in EBERRON—you must sanction it as part of an RPGA event. This event could be as elaborate as a big convention, or as simple as a group of friends meeting at the DM's house.

To sanction an RPGA event, you must be at least a HERALD-LEVEL gamemaster. The person who sanctions the event is called the senior gamemaster, and is in charge of making sure the event is sanctioned before play, runs smoothly on the date sanctioned, and then reported back to the RPGA in a timely manner. The person who runs the game is called the table DM (or usually just DM). Sometimes (and almost all the time in the cases of home events) the senior gamemaster is also the table DM. You don't have to be a HERALD-LEVEL GM to run this adventure if you are not the senior GM.

By sanctioning and reporting this adventure you accomplish a few things. First, it allows the PCs participating in play to accumulate experience points (XP) and gold pieces (gp) to advance their MARK OF HEROES characters. Second, it allows the RPGA to track and record what character did during the adventure, and future adventures a written with what the majority of player did in mind—in this way characters' action shape the future of the campaign. Lastly, player and DMs gain rewards for sanctioned RPGA play if they are members of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS REWARDS program. Playing this adventure is worth four (4) points.

This adventure retires from RPGA sanctioned play on July 4, 2005.

To learn more about the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS: MARK OF HEROES character creation and development, RPGA event sanctioning, and DUNGEONS & DRAGONS REWARDS, visit the RPGA website at www.rpga.com.

Players Read No Farther!

If you are planning on playing this adventure, stop reading now. The rest of the information in this adventure is for the DM only. If you read farther than this section, you'll know too much about its challenges, which kills the fun. Also, if you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, reading beyond this point makes you ineligible to do so.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS MINIATURES

To run this adventure it's recommend you have the following miniatures:

From the Giants of Legend™ set:

- 1 Zombie (Human Commoner) (40/72) to represent Beltrudalgald the dusk hag.
- 4 Medium Astral Constructs (20/72) to represent nerra.

From the Aberrations™ set:

- 1 Cleric of Garl Glittergold (14/60) to represent Patron Helcondate
- 1 Longtooth Barbarian (19/60) to represent Shyva the Red
- 4 Silent Wolf Goblins (43/60) to represent goblins

From the Deathknell™ set:

- 2 Half-Orc Chainfighter (22/60) to represent Vrak and Drak.
- 1 Goblin Adept (34/60) to represent Fegriss the Dragon's Eye.

PREPARING FOR PLAY

To get the most out of this adventure, you need copies of the following D&D books: *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, *Monster Manual*, and the *Eberron Campaign Setting*. It is also a good idea to have a copy of the *RPGA Extend Psionics Handbook Primer*, a PDF document that you can find on the RPGA website (www.rpga.com) as it is possible that some character playing in this adventure will be kalashtar utilizing the psionics rules.

This adventure also introduces the Nerra—a group of beings that appeared in the *Fiend Folio*—to Eberron. While it may be helpful to have this book for your own understanding of these strange outsiders, enough background and play information is given in this adventure for play. This is the first published adventure for the MARK OF HEROES campaign, and sets up a storyline with elements that are bound to shape and reoccur in future adventures.

Throughout this adventure, shaded boxes provide player information for you to paraphrase or read aloud when appropriate. Sidebars contain important information for you, including special instruction on running the adventure. Information on nonplayer characters (NPCs) and monsters appear in abbreviated form in the adventure text. Full information on NPCs and monsters are given in a section directly after each encounter, or can be found in the *Monster Manual*.

Attached to this adventure, you'll find a special RPGA Table Tracking sheet tailored for this adventure. If you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, complete and turn in this sheet to your senior GM directly after play.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."
~William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (I, v, 166-167)

Eberron's cosmology is complex, subtle, and at times an utterly mystifying tapestry of relationships. Planar connections wax and wane in a dance so intricate that only the most rigorous academic can accurately track and predict its effect on the world—and not without complicated equations that would frustrate some archmages. Such complexity is bound to breed surprises. In 845 KY the established order of the universe was challenged by the troubled genius, Belental Heirm. A master of planar research in the fledgling Wroat offshoot of Morgrave University, Heirm made a reputation for his complete and utter understanding of the thirteen planar paths and their cryptic movements. In his life's work, the *Deviant Celestia*, Heirm advanced the theory that the Eberron's planes' sometimes-erratic movement could only be adequately explained by the existence of numerous rogue planes lying just outside the paths of the main thirteen in a place he called the Deeper Astral. According to Heirm's controversial theory these rogue planes

interact with the main thirteen, and their courses tug and pull the fabric of the Astral Plane, explaining most of the cosmic complexity observed for centuries. He further theorized that while many rogue plans typically don't directly interact with Eberron, on rare occasions some could, and even proposed that one of these rogue planes may float close enough to Eberron to become conterminous. While the precision of Heirm's mathematical model was remarkable, other academics scoffed at the more exocentric theories proposed in the *Deviant Celestia*. Many could not accept the mind-numbing complexity of Heirm's cosmos, while even others could not accept the source of the theory.

An utter libertine, prone to fits of rage and melancholy, many believed the Belental Heirm was insane at best, and possessed at worse. When he was implicated in a plot to assassinate King Jarot perpetrated by a cult of the Dragon Below, the fears of possession seemed confirmed. Heirm died a traitor's death at the hands of king's agents. Since his disgrace the *Deviant Celestia* and his other works have been ignored by all but a small secretive group of students and professors in Wroat and Sharn.

According to his proponents, Heirm's most controversial theory verges on confirmation by way of dramatic proof.

For the past month Eberron has been in a partial coterminousness state with a realm outside of the known cosmos called Spequlum. During this time the nerra, the main race native to Spequlum, have had tangential contact with a small section of Breland: They've been able to view the world of Eberron throughout the mirrors of central Breland, and have even made contact with a small number of natives. With the help of these allies, the nerra have set the wheels in motion to send a small infiltration force into Eberron.

The link between Eberron and Spequlum is weaker than the link between Eberron's thirteen main planes. To gain access, the nerra must rip a hole in the very cosmos. Thanks to some modification to a cosmic machine created by amateur astrologer Mayus Fellon, they have already created one minor hole and are on the verge of creating a larger temporary hole. When the tear is complete, the nerra can send more minions onto Eberron soil, and complete the first step of their planned invasion. Once in the breach, this small group will be able to work toward a more stable transit device for the main invasion.

To this goal the nerra have a number Breland allies. The first, and chief ally is Beltrudalgald, a dusk hag is strangely linked with the creatures of Spequlum. Dusk hags are creatures intrinsically entwined within the weird and delicate strands of fate. Such weighty knowledge sometimes heralds odd behavior, and Beltrudalgald's behavior is most assuredly odd. For reasons that she cannot fathom, Beltrudalgald was drawn to Mayus Fellon. She trailed with the amateur astrologer for weeks, learning his habits, mannerisms, and secrets, while disguised as a young city goblin interested in the old man's work. When the time was right, her prophetic dreams instructed here to kill the old man, and take on his identity. With the help of misguided academics lead by Mers Vevel, a devotee of Belental Heirm's work, she took over the cosmic machine and made

preparations to greet travelers from a far off world. They modified the *cosmic machine*, and allowed a single nerra sorcerer and his familiar to enter Eberron. But not before a meddling adventurer from the Diggers' Union—a society of PCs' are intimately familiar with—discovered that something was amiss. And while the confrontation with the nerra, Beltrudalgald, and her minions lead to the digger's death, he was able to leave clues to this bizarre mystery even as he expired.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs are plunged into this adventure when they discover the body of Delvron Gaunt, a fellow member of the Diggers Union. The condition of Gaunt's body, and a few objects on his person give the PCs enough to investigate the circumstances around his death.

With physical evidence in tow, the PCs are faced with a number of adventure options. As member of the Diggers Union they find some of the doors of Morgrave University are open to them, while others are strangely shut. With the guidance of Morgrave professors, local Wroat artisans, and one of Gaunt's discarded lovers, the PCs should be able to piece together Gaunt's last days and his current endeavors. They should find their way to either the office of professor Mers Vevel or the home of Mayus Fellon's, and possibly both

locations.

Professor Vevel, always a radical thinker and a bit of maverick, was shunted to a far corner of Wroat's Morgrave School of Cosmology for his belief in the theories of the still controversial Belental Heirm. When Beltrudalgald disguised as Mayus Fellon approached him with the opportunity to prove his hero's theories, he jumped at the chance. Still, Vevel was not one to trust anyone, and Mayus had some very strange requests, like requesting that Vevel hire a pair of sellswords. He approached a contact at the Diggers' Union, a patron who was also a member of his academic society, and hired an investigator: Delvron Gaunt.

Beltrudalgald repaid Vevel's snooping by murdering him and allowing the nerra sorcerer they had just summoned to take over his identity.

By the time the PCs meet Mers Vevel, the professor is dead, his role taken by a nerra name Nur-Zelmor. Still, the PCs can learn much from the faux-Vevel, as Nur-Zelmor's subtle and calculating mind uses the opportunity to "aid" the PCs in investigating Delvron Gaunt's death to further his goals.

If the PCs follow the clues to Mayus Fellon's house, their approach on Fellon's home likely elicits an invitation to tea from his wife. The sweet and unshakable Laile Fellon talks openly about her husband and his hobbies, assuring the PCs that whatever strange evidence brought them here must be

CAST OF CHARACTERS

There are a large number of NPCs that can be encountered during this adventure. The following is a list of each, along with some basic information about each one to help you keep them straight. In true cinematic style, they are listed in order of appearance.

Belental Heirm: A radical and controversial whisper gnome thinker from Wroat's Morgrave University who theorized that there are other planes of existence beyond Eberron's main thirteen in his book *Deviant Celestia*. His theories heralded the events that occur in this adventure. Heirm died hundreds of years ago, and though he is important to the background of this adventure, he does not appear in it.

Mayus Fellon: The former owner of the strange Crook Observatory. An artificer and amateur astrologist, he built the observatory to gaze at his beloved stars. The dusk hag Beltrudalgald tricked and murdered him, and then converted his revolutionary observatory into the conduit that breaks down the barrier between Eberron and the nerra's home realm of Speculum. By the time the PCs start investigating the events in this adventure, Mayus is dead.

Delvron Gaunt: The murdered digger that the PCs discover at the beginning of the adventure. The PCs are responsible for finding out who killed him and why.

Matron Martra: A matron of the Diggers' Union. She tasks the PCs with finding the ways and means of Delvron Gaunt's death.

Patron Helcondate: The Diggers' Union patron that Mers Vevel contacted to aid him in investigating Mayus Fellon. He arranged the meeting between Delvron Gaunt and Professor Vevel. He knows very little about the actual events that have occurred, and is motivated to help Professor Vevel prove the theories of his distant ancestor, Belental Heirm.

Professor Kelmini: The chair of Wroat's Morgrave campuses Department of Antiquities. Coincidentally Kelmini was killed the same night Delvron Gaunt died. Patron Helcondate uses his death as a red herring to stymie the PCs' investigation.

Wenrit: A dwarf assistant to Professor Kelmini who helps the PCs back on the right track.

Professor Mers Vevel: A disgraced academic from Morgrave University and master of the Society of the Deeper Astral, a group devoted to the teachings of Belental Heirm's theories on the multiverse. He was instrumental in helping Beltrudalgald (who he knew as Mayus Fellon until it was too late) convert the cosmic machine to a conduit to Speculum. By the time the PCs meet Professor Vevel his identity has been usurped by Nur-Zelmor.

Nur-Zelmor: A nerra sorcerer who entered Eberron during the first limited test of the cosmic machine. By the time the PCs meet him, he has taken the identity of Professor Mers Vevel.

Nurguk the Barkeep: The hobgoblin barkeep of the Star of Cyre. He was one of the last people to see Delvron Gaunt alive.

Shyva the Red: A shifter and ex-lover of Delvron Gaunt. She was the last person to see him alive and has some information about what he was up to the night of his death.

Gevgol the Mirrorwright: A favored craftsman of the king of Breland, and a former member of the Diggers' Union, this dwarf has some insight to object the PCs discovered, and a strange warning about the state of mirrors in the kingdom.

Laile Fellon: The sweet and doting wife of Mayus Fellon. Beltrudalgald the dusk hag has replaced her.

Beltrudalgald: The prime mover of the events surround Delvron Gaunt's death and the coming of the nerra. She is motivated by mysterious means. When the PCs meet here she is in the guise of Laile Fellon.

Fegriss the Dragon's Eye: Agent of Beltrudalgald the dusk hag, he commands the hag's goblin servants in the Crook Observatory.

Vrak and Drak: The two half-orc mercenaries Professor Vevel hired to guard the cosmic machine. The know nothing of the strange plot, but are roadblocks to the PCs' success.

purely coincidental. There is no way that her good husband would have anything to do with the death of an adventurer. And anyhow he's been out of town on a trip for nearly a week. Through the conversation the PCs have the ability to discover things amiss, either by way of Sense Motive rolls, or through discrete investigation. At this point in the adventure Laile Fellon is Beltrudelgald the night hag in disguise. Much of her work already done, her goal is simple: slow down the PCs investigation and damage them by way of her *nightmare* touch given by way of an unassuming hug; the exact way she killed Delvron Gaunt.

Hopefully the PCs are able to see through the machinations of the dusk hag, and their investigation leads to Fellon's Crook Observatory, on the eastern edge of Wroat.

The observatory is in a sorry state of affairs. A supernatural storm rises around the observatory in preparation for the cosmic conjunction that brings the nerra closer to Eberron. A goblinoid gang gathered by Beltrudelgald and a rather violent duo paid for by the Society of the Deeper Astral guard its interior, slowing down the PCs progress. Fighting their way through the minions and discovering more about the apparatus that makes the nerra leap possible, the PCs enter the observatory proper just in time for the insurgency from Spequlum to commence. It's up to them to stop the nerra and shut down the cosmic machine splitting the thin fabric of reality between Eberron and Spequlum.

TROUBLESHOOTING THE ADVENTURE

The investigation into Delvron Gaunt's murder is a complicated affair. The mystery takes a life of its own as the PCs investigate clues and leads. They probably can't follow up on all the clues and leads present in the adventure, but they appear to give you, the Dungeon Master, options.

Always let the players drive the action. Let them follow up on and discover things that they find important. You'll probably have to think on your feet, and may even have to create small encounters and some side NPCs to give them extra clues and get them on the track that leads to the Crook Observatory. The following are some suggestions on just how to do that.

The Important Encounters

There are two crucial encounters: the discovery of Gaunt's corpse and the final assault on the Crook Observatory. All the other encounters are there to lead the PCs from the first encounter to the last. Don't dismay if the PCs go from the discovery straight to Mayus Fellon's home. In many ways this is the most direct route to their final goal. While other encounters may give hints to what they are bound to discover at the Crook Observatory, this progression moves the plot of the adventure along the quickest. At the same time, if the PCs spend too much time investigating the leads, feel free to

remove the goblin and half-orc foes from the observatory. It is more important for them to find the hints on how the cosmic machine works and to have the opportunity to stop or limit the nerra invasion than it is to participate in every combat encounter.

The Beginning of the Storm

The supernatural storm that heralds the coming of the nerra is an event driven by play. It begins whenever the PCs approach Crook Observatory, and the countdown for nerra coming through the portal begins when the PCs reach area 6 of the observatory. That said, if the PCs leave the observatory after the storm starts and come back, the action passes, and you can assume that all the nerra have entered Eberron.

Important NPCs

It's crucial to further plots that Beltrudelgald escape this adventure alive. The dusk hag is a reoccurring villain in the Mark of Heroes story. Keeping her alive shouldn't be too hard; she is far more powerful than any of the PCs at this point.

Going to the Authorities

Early in the adventure the PCs investigate a crime. Later they come across other crimes. Anytime you run an adventure like this there is one question bound to come up: where is the watch during all of this?

The Diggers' Union, like many organizations in Eberron, tends to police itself. Nobody is going to report Delvron Gaunt's murder except for the Union, and they have "hired" their own inquisitives to look into the matter—the PCs.

Finding the body of Laile Fellon is another matter. If the PCs report that, the Wroat Watch comes, does some investigation, but when the PCs start talking about dusk hag, mirror men, the Society of the Deeper Astral, and convergences of stars that could bring a strange planar conjunction the watch response with blank stares and suggestions that maybe such things are the stuff of adventurers rather than some poor guy trying to make enough coin to pay for his kid's tuition at Morgrave.

In the end, unless an organization or other power directly motivates the watch to look into the strange circumstances of this case, they are going to leave it up to the PCs to solve. And the only organization that really wants to see it solved has already ordered the PCs to solve it.

PART ONE: DEATH MOST PECULIAR

The adventure starts within the Diggers' Union tower in Wroat, the capital of Breland—called the Grea Tower.

Grea Tower, named after the union's founder, Calsuntil Grea, was the first union house for the diggers, and is arguably the most important, though the smaller Xengate Tower in Sharn



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by far more prestigious. Union members from throughout Khorvaire dwell in its expansive dormitories or take residence in the rented flats that lie over taverns and shops around Grea Tower. All ready at a moment's notice for a patron or matron to call them to the service of the union.

At the adventure start, the PCs are either visiting or dwelling within the dormitories—a virtual catacomb of chambers inhabiting the lower and middle levels of the Grea Tower. Nestled in the cramped corridors are scores of small private rooms that Diggers' Union members can rent for very reasonable rates (1 sp a day or 5 sp a week). On one early Zol morning, some or all of the PCs stumble upon a disturbance in the dormitories.

The Door Ajar

The adventure starts when at least one of the PCs notices a dormitory door standing slightly ajar. If that's not enough to lure them, a strong morning draft opens the door open wide enough for the PC to get a glance at the body hunched in the corner on the far end of the room. Use "Illustration 1" to help describe the scene.

The hinges creak as the door opens. Beyond bottles, adventuring equipment, and garbage litter the cell. A solitary figure—shriveled, male, most likely human, with dark but graying hair, and as still as the dead—crouches in the far side of the room, face in the corner.

The man in the corner is dead and has been for a few hours. He is human, probably Cyran, and in his 40s. Just how and why is the mystery for the PCs to solve.

The dormitory is busy early in the morning. Unless the PCs make careful effort to secure the cell within 2 rounds, a crowd of other diggers gathers. This encounter assumes that the PCs don't secure the room and a crowd of diggers watches their investigation. Adjust the information if this isn't the case.

At A Glance: Gossip is a popular pastime among the diggers in the Grea Tower, so the PCs might know of the man. The corpse is that of a digger named Delvron Gaunt (Knowledge [local] or bardic knowledge DC 10). Even if a PC doesn't recognize him, and someone among the growing crowd does, and shares that information as the PCs investigate the room. Even if the room is secure, the PCs can discern this information by finding Gaunt's identification papers among his scattered possessions. PCs who recognize the victim, may know other things about him.

Knowledge (local) or bardic knowledge DC 12

- He's been living in Grea Tower for a little over a month
- He had a vicious temper
- He's a Cyran refugee and veteran of the Last War.

DC 15

- He had a drinking problem that contributes to his ugly temper
- He suffered from nightmares and bouts of sleep

walking

- Lately he expressed an uncharacteristic interest in the weighty subject of planar convergences.

DC 20

- Lately he was working on a project for an unknown Morggrave University professor. He was intensely secretive about the project and his patron.
- He frequents a tavern called the Gold Star Over Cyre, a dive favored by refugees of that land.

The above information can also be gleaned after the fact by way of the Gather Information skill. This takes most of the day and costs 1d4 gp in drinks, gifts, or bribes, and yields the same information for the same DCs listed above.

Physical Evidence: Even with the crowd gathering outside Gaunt's room, the PCs have a full 10 minutes to investigate before higher-ups in the union interrupt the investigation.

- The door has not been forced open.
- While the room is messy (Gaunt was a slob), there is only sign of slight struggle.
- The room's window is nothing more than an arrow slit with a shutter that stands almost seven feet above the ground. It is not large enough for anything but the smallest creature (size Tiny). It is currently shuttered and barred from the inside.

Gaunt's corpse is crouched facing the northwest corner of the room. To view its front, the PCs must move it out of the corner. When they do, they see the following:

- The eyes of Gaunt's corpse are open wide, and his facial muscles are locked in a visage of agony and fright. The front of his shirt is torn open.
- He grips a dagger stiffly in his right hand. The dagger has a bone hilt etched with strange writing
- Carved deeply into the skin and muscle of Gaunt's chest are the words "Aryth in Tiamat they come." Given the dried blood on the dagger, and the angles of the writing, it's obvious that Gaunt carved the message in his own skin, but the cuts are too shallow to be the cause of death. The real cause of can't be determined short of a successful Spellcraft check DC 25 (the effects of a *nightmare* spell).
- There are other wounds on Gaunt's body. He was obviously in a recent scuffle. There's a puncture wound on Gaunt's left thigh, a slash wound on his lower back, and strange bite marks on his right calf.

Knowledgeable examination of the dagger (Knowledge [local], Search with the Investigate feat or Appraise DC 10, or examination by a goblin or hobgoblin character) determines it to be of traditional goblin design. A successful Decipher Script, Knowledge (religion) or bardic knowledge check (DC 10), or use of *comprehend languages* determines that the strange runes on its hilt are religious symbols venerating the Dragon Below, but they are just a jumble of symbols rather than any coherent message.

Scattered around the room are all of Gaunt's worldly possessions, including his adventuring equipment (chain shirt, longsword, buckler, light crossbow, 20 bolts, two sunrods, backpack, 50 feet of silk rope, grappling hook, his identification papers, and a pouch with 15 gp) and many empty whiskey bottles. Among his possessions are the following items of interest (Search DC 10 to find both).

- A small pouch filled with strange, soft, and spongy—almost fleshy—reflective stones.
- A small scrap of paper with the following address: "5a King's Circle on Seccuran." A successful DC 10 Knowledge (local) check recognized the address as part of the Castlevue District, just south of Brokenblade Castle. The district is home to many royal and parliamentary bureaucracies and their bureaucrats.

The scrap of paper is unremarkable, except for the address, which is that of Mayus Fellon. The reflective stones are the remains of a nerra familiar that Gaunt encountered and slew in the Crook Observatory while investigating that site. The stones are as reflective as the clearest mirrors, and unlike anything any PC (including any dwarf) has ever encountered.

Investigate Feat

Characters with the Investigate feat are at an advantage while searching the room for clues. Searching Gaunt's wounds the character might find (Search DC 10) a small shard of metal imbedded into one of the tooth marks on his calf. Analyzing the clue, the investigating character can determine (DC 15) that it's a fragment of a metal tooth, and given the size and shape of the bite mark, it's most likely that from the maw of an iron defender, a specialize type of doglike homunculus designed for combat.

Further analyzing Gaunt's wounds, a character can also determine that the puncture wound on his left thigh is from a spear (DC 15), and the slash on his lower back was made by a short sword (DC 15), and that the angles of the wounds indicate they came from Small opponents. Each wound requires its own check.

If the investigator turns his attention to the self-inflicted writing on Gaunt's check, he or she can (DC 15) determine that "Aryth in Tiamat" refers to a current cosmic conjunction. The Eberron moon Aryth is currently in the house of the constellation Tiamat, with the conjunction reaching it zenith either tonight or tomorrow depending on how one measure the zenith of constellations (see the "Measuring the Zenith" sidebar. This can also be determined with a successful DC 15 Knowledge (arcana) check, by characters who lack the Investigate feat.

Investigating characters with at least 5 ranks of the Heal skill get a +2 synergy bonus for checks involving analyzing wounds, and those with at least 5 ranks in Knowledge (the planes) or Knowledge (arcana) gain a +2 synergy bonus to check analyzing the message on Gaunt's chest.

What Happened: Gaunt expired thanks to a particularly nasty *nightmare* granted by Beltrudalgald the dusk hag. Even before this the Cyran was in bad shape. Last night he entered

Crook Observatory, defeated the iron defender that stood guard at the entrance, but was turned back by goblins in the hag's employ. He retreated back to the Grea Tower to rest and recover, when Beltudalgald's touch did him in. In the horrific dream that end his life, Gaunt caught a brief glimpse of the future and saw when the nerra planned to enter Eberron. He briefly gained consciousness, and in a last-ditch effort to communicate what he saw in the deadly nightmare, he carved the trigger for the planar convergence on his chest.

Measuring the Zenith

Currently academics from Korranberg and Waynard Universities bitterly dispute exactly how to accurately measure a zenith of a cosmic conjunction. Both universities insist that their calculation is more accurate than the other's. For the sake of the adventure, the argument is put in to allow you, the Dungeon Master, to have conjunction start when the PCs enter the inner tower of Crook Observatory. If successful, not only will they help in thwarting a cosmic invasion, they can help solve this academic dispute...if they can only get the academics to listen to and believe their wild tale.



Enter Matron Martra

Whether or not the PCs have avoided a gathering crowd, they are visited 10 minutes after they discover Gaunt. A matron of the dormitories, a Q'Barran woman known only as Martra, enters the room demanding an explanation for Gaunt's state.

"Move aside! Move aside!" A woman's voice resonates with authority and irritation, as she pushes through the crowd. Annoyed, the stout woman looks sternly at the body, and then

to you, while straightening her deep green robes with white-knuckled fists. “What in Xoriat is going on here?”

A large and formidable woman, Martra is as humorless as she is strict, and as wound tight as the blond bun at the back of her head. A powerful enchanter, and secure in her position as a matron of Grea Tower, she is not afraid to use spells to impose her will or keep order within the dormitory.

MATRON MARTRA

CR 7

Female human enchanter 7

LN Medium humanoid (human)

“If you have a question about the rules, feel free to ask me... because I make the rules.”

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4

Languages Common; Draconic, Elvish, Goblin, Orc

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 7th; 1d20+7 to overcome SR)

4th—2 *lesser geas* (DC 20)

3rd—*hold person* (DC 19), *suggestion* (DC 19)

1st—2 *charm person* (DC 17)

Skills Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Spellcraft +16

Matron Martra waits impatiently for the PCs to present the details of their discovery. Unknown to the PCs she already receive a report of the corpse from her familiar, a pseudodragon named Rex (Rex was the one who opened the door a crack before the PCs arrived). Give her pre-intelligence of the matter, she is sure that the PCs had nothing to do with Gaunt’s death, but sizes up their abilities by way of their report.

Smart PCs may attempt to gain the woman’s aid in the gathering of clues. Matron Martra has much higher Spellcraft than any of the PCs, and if persuaded to examine the corpse, she has a good chance of determining (Spellcraft DC 25, her Spellcraft is +16) that Gaunt suffered from the effects of a *nightmare* spell around the time of his death. Upon that realization she shares the following with the PCs.

This is a vicious and rather powerful illusion. It is a favorite of those who like to torment or kill from a distance, and it’s said to be a favorite of hags.

After she’s satisfied that the PCs have reported all they know, she outlines her plans for them.

Excellent. It seems that you have this well in hand, so I shall task you to find how and by what agent Delvron Gaunt found his end. I also task you to assume any assignment or assignments that Gaunt was currently working on. Go to the Chamber of Messengers, and find out what those may be from Patron Helcondante. I believe he was the patron overseeing Delvron’s assignments.

If the PCs scoff at being ordered around by Martra, tell them that a patron or matron’s request is not something refused lightly. Refusing a request from a patron is grounds for suspension of privileges (in game terms the adventure is over for the PC) at the very least. Before evoking a suspension, Martra attempts arcane coercion, starting with *lesser geas*—she’s

not one to take no for an answer.

If the PCs are foolish enough to attack Matron Martra (even after she starts throwing spells around) she expels the PCs from the union (treat as a PC death for reporting). The Diggers’ Union does not tolerate insubordination.

Development: Once the PCs accept Martra’s missive, the can find Patron Helcondante in the Chamber of Messengers on the ground floor of Grea Tower (see Part Two, below).

PART TWO: FOLLOWING CLUES

The PCs have many options in following the clues presented in Part One. Part Two contains many sections detailing how the PCs can gather information and garner help in analyzing the clues they have. First off, the PC should visit Patron Helcondante in Grea Tower’s Chamber of Messengers, though the meeting will undoubtedly muddle their path, at least at first.

After the meeting with Helcondante the path may lead to Wroat campus of Morgrave University (see “Wroat’s Morgrave”), a local craftsman (see “Mirrorwright”), or Delvron Gaunt’s favorite watering hole (see “Star Over Cyre”). Through the course of the investigation the PCs may visit all of these locations. If the PCs decide to check out the address on Gaunt’s note first, see “Part Three: 5a King’s Circle on Seccuran.”

Chamber of Messengers (EL variable)

The Chamber of Messengers is on the first floor of Grea Tower, not far from the Hall of Masters and the tower’s main entrance. Use “Illustration 2” to help describe this chamber.

Beyond an archway with the words crowned with the engraving “Mind the Rule of the Union” is the Chamber of Messengers.

The place is a small sea of enclosed wooden booths, similar to confessionals featured in some churches, only much larger. The circular chamber’s ornate domed ceiling is awash with bold and colorful mosaics detailing the accomplishments of the Diggers’ Union, crowned by its centerpiece, the creation of the union outpost in Stormreach on Xen’drik.

A single pillar encrusted with lapis lazuli supports the hall’s ceiling. At the top of the pillar, facing in the four cardinal directions, are carved heads of Aureon, the Sovereign Host god of law and knowledge, as the majestic blue dragon. Each of the Aureon’s eight eyes glows with arcane fire.

The entrance of the hall is separated from the rest of the hall by a glowing semicircle on the floor.

At the entrance of the hall are almost two-dozen intricately carved Xen’drik teak stands—basically ornate bird perches. On a number of these expeditious messenger homunculi perch and wait patiently. Others fly into or out of the chamber by way of a small opening in the far ceiling (disguised in the mosaic as a porthole of a House Lyrandar Airship), or to and from the various booths around the room.

Hanging from each stand is a wooden nameplate. It doesn’t take long to find Helcondante’s stand, unfortunately his homunculus messenger is absent from it.

The PCs have been at Grea Tower long enough to know the

rules of the Chamber of Messengers. An initiate or journey members (and at this point all PCs are initiate members) can call upon a patron or matron by way of their messenger. If the messenger is absent, they must wait at the entrance for it to return or try to reach the patron later. Initiate and journey members are forbidden from entering the main hall until the matron or patron gives them permission—by way of their messenger—to pass the glowing semicircle. At that point they are directed to the booth the patron or matron inhabits.

All initiate and journey members are warned that they pass the glowing semicircle uninvited at their own peril (that is the “rule of the union” the archway engraving warns them to mind), but none of the matrons or patrons hint to the nature of such peril. The defenses of the room are a constant source of speculation and the subject of wild and even whimsical stories by the lesser members of the union. Almost all the stories agree that Aureon’s Pillar plays prominently in the room’s wards.

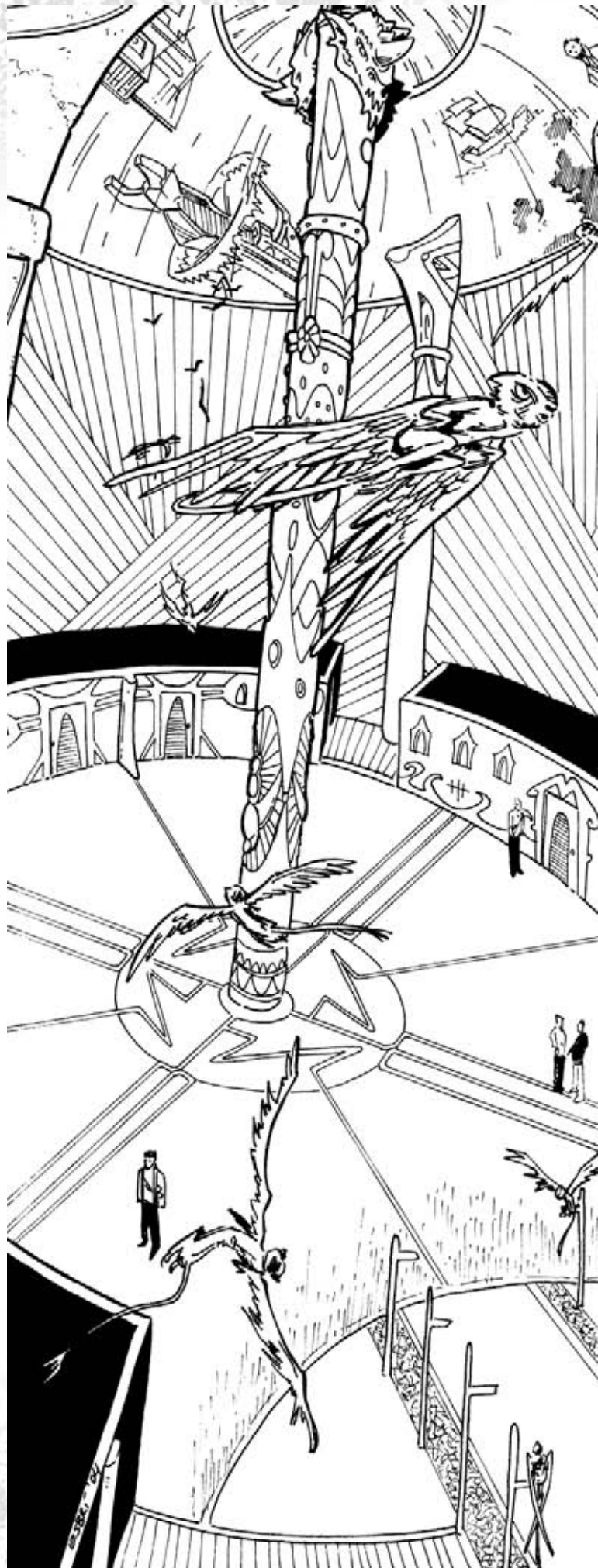
The PCs have a few choices here. They can wait for Helcondate to become available, which occurs no less than four hours later. Impatient PCs could spend that time looking for clues without the patron’s help, but other might attempt to push the matter.

Entering the Hall Uninvited

PCs who decide to disregard the rules involving the Chamber of Messengers are in for a horrible shock. As the move more than 5 feet from the edge of the semicircle, the eyes of the Aureons’ heads begin to glow more intensely, as their magical flames turn green and begin to sputter and spit from their strange sockets. Emanating forth from the pillar comes a deep rumbling growl. The patrons and matrons within the chamber ignore this, confident in the pillar’s ability to take care of intruders. At this point the intruder has a single round to return to the other side of the semicircle. If by the end of the round they are still on the wrong side of the glowing semicircle, a green ray issues forth from the eyes of the closest Aureon’s head. The ray is a *disintegrate* spell as cast by a 13-level wizard (+6 ranged touch attack; Fortitude DC 20; or 26d6 damage; if save still does 5d6 damage; if target is reduced to 0 or fewer hit points he or she is entirely disintegrated, leaving behind only a trace of fine dust; a disintegrated creatures equipment is unaffected, but confiscated by the union.). If there are multiple intruders, multiple rays spring forth (as many as four a round—one from each dragon’s head), and rays shoot forth on following rounds until all intruders have left the restricted area or are dead.

Pushing the matter without the help of another patron or matron by entering the main hall and looking for Helcondate is a deadly matter (see the “Entering the Hall Uninvited” sidebar), but dogged PCs could seek further help from Matron Martra or try to gain help from one of the other advocates in the Chamber of Messengers.

Any attempt to gain aid from another patron or a matron



is fraught with difficulty. Not even Matron Martra wants to break the decorum of the Chamber of Messengers and disturb a fellow patron until he indicates he's free. But the right amount of pleading and good argumentation can change her mind (Diplomacy DC 20). Feel free to grant a +2 circumstance bonus for good roleplaying. Trying to rouse a free patron or matron currently serving in the hall is much harder (Diplomacy DC 30).



Patron Helcondate

By either patience or by rallying allies, the PCs should eventually meet with the elusive Patron Helcondate. The details of the encounter are dependent on the PCs' methods in meeting him.

If the PCs were able to talk Matron Martra or another advocate into guiding them to Helcondate, read or paraphrase the following.

Passing the various booths, sounds of hushed conversations drift out here and there, but the conversation coming from Helcondate's booth is different. It's heated and loud.

"Whatever happens Helcondate, steer the troublesome investigators away from our work. We are too close to the event to have others of your ilk meddling in our matters."

Helcondate is talking to a creature he believes to be his coconspirator, Professor Vevel, by way of his special expeditious messenger homunculus that allows him to speak with clients throughout the city. The only two creatures in the booth are the whisper gnome patron and the construct speaking for the Vevel imposter.

Let the PCs drive the action. Whether they decide to

continue listening or bust down the door, the patron or matron accompanying them follows their lead. If they listen on, they hear the following.

Another voice in the booth, likely that of Helcondate, says, "Master, please lower your voice. I don't want the others to hear."

Continuing to eavesdrop requires a successful Listen check (DC 15 to hear that they are whispering, DC 25 to make out what's being said).

Helcondate: *"I have this under control. More than likely anyone investigating the matter will check with me first. I have a plan to get them off our trail."*

Other Voice: *"What's your plan?"*

Helcondate: *"I will tell him that Gaunt was working for Professor Kelmini. With the rumors surrounding his death, that should keep them busy until Heirm's work can be proven."*

Other Voice: *"Professor Kelmini? Ah...yes...excellent...quite inventive. It should buy us the time we need."*

At this point the conversation stops, as Helcondate's coconspirator is happy with—if not a little confused by—the patron's plan. He is confused because even now the nerra sorcerer, Nur-Zelmor, has assumed the identity of Professor Mers Vevel. And while Nur-Zelmor's ability to assume other's identities has fooled Helcondate, Nur-Zelmor has no idea who Professor Kelmini is. Character's listening to this exchange get a hunch that is the case on a successful Sense Motive check (DC 20).

Characters who succeed a Knowledge (local) check (DC 15) recognize Professor Kelmini as the chair of the antiquities department, but only know that he was found dead this morning if succeeding a much harder check (DC 25). The news is still fresh.

Confronting Helcondate: The patron's reaction is entirely dependent on the PCs' method of confrontation. If the PCs wait for Helcondate to become available, or if they question him without the knowledge of his ruse, he tells the PCs that Delvron Gaunt was working for Professor Kelmini, chair of the Department of Antiquities at Morgrave University. He further lies that the nature of the work was between the professor and Gaunt, but Helcondate believes it had to do with the retrieval of a dragonshard of particular historical importance. Luck for the PCs the gnome is a terrible liar (Bluff –2) and some of the characters may discern (if they succeed their Sense Motive checks that you roll in secret) that he seems nervous when delivering this particular bit of information, and he never makes eye contact with any of the PCs when he tells his lies.

If the PCs believe Helcondate, then go to the section "Morgrave University" below.

If the PCs break down the door to his booth, or confront

him about the lie, the Helcondate panics, and attempts to flee. He first attempts this by casting *baleful transposition*, switching positions with a PC in range that is closest to the exit of the Chamber of Messengers, and then sprinting out of the chamber. If that fails, or it succeeds but the PCs hinder successfully hinder his escape, he *levitates* to the ceiling (some 40 feet above the ground) and casts *spider climb* to flee through the homunculus hole, which is just large enough for a Small creature to squeeze through (see the squeeze rules on pages 48 and 49 of the *Player's Handbook*). If he can get to the streets, he is home free, unless one of the characters has the Urban Tracking feat, or the PCs visit the Star Over Cyre (see below).

Patron Helcondate: hp 16; see "Combat Statistics," below.

If the PCs are able to corner or incapacitate Helcondate, he is quick to turn on his master and tell the PCs all he knows. He talks fast and nervously, squealing and sputtering as he goes.

Neither my master, nor myself had anything to do with Delvron Gaunt's death. We were just as surprised as anyone to hear of his death. My master sent him on errands yesterday. Why he died is anyone's guess!

The PCs are bound to have questions. What follows are likely questions and their answers. Helcondate is bound to Mers Vevel by his love of the theories Belental Heirm, who happens to be a distant ancestor of the Helcondate's.

Q: *Who is this master?*

"My master is a professor at Morgrave University—Professor Mers Vevel, master of the Society of the Deeper Astral."

Q: *What is the Society of the Deep Astral?*

"We are a *learned fellowship* devoted to vindicating the great theories of Belental Heirm. A genius in the fields of cosmology and astrology, and my ancestor."

Helcondate beams at revealing the ancestral link between himself and his hero.

Q: *What are your ancestor's theories?*

"There are more than 13 planes in the cosmos. In the Deeper Astral there are literally scores of lesser planes that interact with the main 13 and affect their complicated interactions with Eberron. His mathematical models for the movement of the planes is more perceives than any created by any other cosmologist, and even explains the movement of the stars, and some of the inconsistencies we see with their movements...."

Helcondate goes on and on in the most longwinded fashion until stopped by the PCs. What he doesn't know is that Heirm's models predict the convergence with Speculum. While he is impressed with his ancestor's theories, he does not understand them. He can only talk about them in the most general ways.

Q: *What errand did Delvron Gaunt run for your master yesterday?*

"I don't know. I met with Delvron yesterday and instructed him to visit Professor Vevel at the university. Like myself, Professor Vevel

Combat Statistics

PATRON HELCONDATE

CR 4

Male whisper[†] gnome diviner 4

N Small humanoid (gnome)

"Oh my...I think I'm in trouble."

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision, darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +4, Spot +4

Languages Common, Gnome; Draconic, Goblin, Terran

AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 11; **AC** 17, touch 13 (17 for incorporeal touch attacks), flat-footed 15 and *magic missiles* cast at Helcondate are negated after he casts *shield*

hp 16 (4 HD)

Fort +3, **Ref** +3, **Will** +6

Spd 30 ft. (6 squares)

Atk melee dagger +1(1d3-2/19-20)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** -4

Combat Gear scroll of *blur*

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 4th; 1d20+4 to overcome SR)

2nd—*baleful transposition** (Will, DC 16), *detect thoughts*[‡] (DC 15), *levitate*, *spider climb*

1st—*comprehend languages*[‡], *erase*, *shield*, *sleep* (DC 14)

0—*arcane mark*, *daze* (DC 13), *detect magic*[‡],

mending, *touch of fatigue* (DC 13)

D: Divination spells. Restricted schools: Abjuration, Evocation

*New spell; see Appendix.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st; 1d20+4 to overcome SR)

1/day—*silence* (centered on the whisper gnome's body),

Abilities Str 6, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 8

Feats Combat Casting, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (conjunction)

Skills Bluff -2, Concentration +9 (+13 cast def), Decipher Script +10, Hide +10, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Move Silently +6, Profession (scribe) +3; Spellcraft +12.

Possessions dagger, scroll of *blur*, 10 sheets of parchment, 3 ink pens, ink, identification papers.

Whisper Gnome Traits: +1 racial bonus on attack rolls against kobolds and goblinoids.

[†]Whisper gnomes are the stealthy and suspicious cousins of normal gnome. The race is fully detailed in *Races of Stone*. The above stat block gives all the pertinent information to run this particular member of that race.

is consumed with searching for proof to vindicate the theories of my ancestor. I help him whenever I can. I can only imagine that the professor needed Delvron's help to reach that ends."

Q: Can you contact Professor Mers Vevel and ask him where Gaunt went yesterday?

"I dare not. I've told him that I would lead you astray. You could go to Morgrave and ask him yourself, but please don't tell him I gave you this information."

Development: If the PCs successfully intimidate Helcondate into getting the information from Vevel, he tries to contact the professor, but the professor no longer takes his message. He tells the PCs that they can likely contact the professor at a small house just off the main Morgrave campus—the meeting hall of the Society of the Deeper Astral. Helcondate refuse to accompany or help the PCs further, calling upon the Diggers' Union higher ups to end any badgering from the PCs. Even Matron Martra supports her fellow patron, and instructs the PCs to investigate without further help from the whisper gnome patron.

Wroat's Morgrave

The Wroat campus of Morgrave University lacks the impressive towers of the Sharn campus and the majesty of Lareth Hall's enormous dome, but it's still an imposing sight. In contrast to its Sharn companion, this campus spreads out rather than up. That's not to say the campus lacks lofty spires: King's Hall is tall enough to be seen from almost any outdoor spot on campus and the southern student "slums." It's gold and glass roof glitters in both sun and moonlight, thanks to special dweomers placed in tribute to the Breland monarch.

The campus typically teems with students, faculty, visitors, and support staff from dawn to dusk. Finding your way around should be as easy as asking a few questions.

Students tend to be curious of adventurers; full of many questions for those who make their living by sword, spell, and wit. Faculty exhibits the opposite reaction, viewing adventurers as a bad element, unsuited to civilized and cultured company. There are, of course, exceptions to these sentiments, but most people the PCs encounter here share in those stereotypical attitudes.

PCs likely are here for one of three reasons: to talk to Professor Kelmini because Patron Helcondate was able to mislead them, they are looking for Professor Vevel and the Society of the Deeper Astral, or they are looking for experts to analyze some of the clues the found in Delvron Gaunt's room. The following sections deal with each in order.

Professor Kelmini: It takes little time to get information about the Chair of the Department of Antiquity. Though depending on whom they ask, they get dramatically different responses.

Asking A Student: Assuming that the characters arrive during daylight hours, there are many students they could ask for directions to Kelmini's office. Whoever they ask, they get a shaken response, sometimes followed by tears.

"Haven't you heard? They found him dead last night in his home. They say he was murdered."

The student then gives choppy directions to the professor's office.

Asking A Professor: Stopping a professor garners an angrier and more elusive answer to the inquiry.

The professor looks you up and down, and shoots a look of deep disdain. "Why, are you here to loot the body?"

Professor Kelmini was indeed murdered, but for reasons beyond plot of the adventure. Kelmini was having an affair with a young student, who happened to be the daughter of a minor member of the Karnathi embassy. The girl's father approached Kelmini last night at the professor's home. And after a bitter argument, the father killed the professor for spoiling the chastity of his daughter.

The PCs eventually find that the murder is unrelated to their mystery, and even that Delvron Gaunt was not working for Professor Kelmini, but it takes hours of waiting and talking to many associates of the murdered professor. Finally, probably late in the afternoon, a particularly helpful member of Kelmini's support staff, a young and extremely polite dwarf named Wenrit, tells the PCs the following.

I'm sorry. Whoever told you that Delvron Gaunt was working for Professor Kelmini was mistaken. I happen to know for a fact that he was working for a professor of cosmology named Mers Vevel. Professor Vevel typically holds his classes at 7r Scribes Road. That's where his office is, in the so-called Society of Deeper Astral hall.

If the PCs question Wenrit about the Society of the Deeper Astral, he tells them something similar to what Patron Helcondate would have (see above), but the dwarf doesn't worship Heirm as genius, but rather believes the thinker was a "a delusional, overstuffed, and overcomplicated charlatan." Wenrit feels sorry for poor Mers Vevel, who he believe is an intelligent and talent academic, who became seduced by the theories of that "possessed gnome traitor." Wenrit knows enough about the writer of the *Deviant Celestia* to give the PCs an overview of the theories, and a brief history of their proponent.

It should be obvious at this point that Patron Helcondate lied to the PCs. If the PCs go and search him out at Grea Tower, they find no hint of him. He is hiding out at the Star Over Cyre (see below).

Society of the Deeper Astral: Either gaining directions from a cowed Patron Helcondate, or from Professor Kelmini's helpful assistant, the PCs can easily find the small ramshackle affair on a lonely corner of Scribes' Road that serves as headquarters for this society of academics and armchair academics interested in the theories and teachings of the Mad Gnome of Wroat. While technically the Society of the Deeper Astral Hall is part of Morgrave University, the building is an

old cobbler's shop only recently converted to lecture hall and residence for its lone faculty member—the recently deceased Professor Mers Vevel.

When the PCs reach the front door they see the following.

A small flight of crooked and creaky stairs leads to an unstable porch. Paint peels from the siding of this building, and boards replaced at least one window. The front door of the building sports a hastily scrawled note that states “Lectures Cancelled Until Further Notice.”

The door isn't locked. Inside is a former workshop converted to a lecture hall. Across the front doorway is a lectern on a small rise, with pair of slate boards attached to the wall behind it. Uncomfortable benches and chairs are scattered haphazardly in the area prior to the lectern.

The slate boards are crammed with equations and diagrams of both planar and astrological moments. One such section of the board will undoubtedly peak the PCs' interest.

Scribed in center of the right-hand slate board, in bold letters, just above a diagram of celestial movements are the words “Aryth in Tiamat they come.”

Further investigation of the surround scribbling yields little else useful to the PCs' investigation. The diagram of the celestial movements under the familiar sentence is of Aryth's movement through the constellation of Tiamat, and some of the mathematics hints at the arguments about the true zenith of the conjunction (see the sidebar “Measuring the Zenith” sidebar, above). The other diagrams are scribbling on other subjects related to celestial and cosmic movement. Still, characters with the Investigate or Research feat can piece together some clues (DC 15) among the scattered notes to discover the sentence “Aryth in Tiamat they come” is quotation taken from a treatise on cosmology called *Deviant Celestia*. Much of the equations, diagrams and other quotations are taken from the same book. All of the information on the boards is intensely interesting to a true academic. The equations are elegant and graceful, while still being complex and provoking. Some of the theories and diagrams are radically complicated; drawing a learned mind in with plays of logic like honey draws a fly.

Assuming the PCs went entered the house without knocking, while they are examining the board, the being masquerading as Mers Vevel makes his way from the upstairs loft. He moves silently (Move Silent +3) trying to get the jump on the party. He doesn't attack, but just wishes to startle them.

“It's fascinating, isn't it? Belental Heirm's work is subtle and delicious. His equations are the finest wine of both mathematics and cosmology.”

The man is tall and thin. He looks haggard with pox-marked skin and a light, patchy beard. He wears a long, black, high-collared jacket favored by young and more fashionable professors, but unlike other faculty you have seen, this man wears a longsword at his side. The hilt of the blade is extremely shiny, and crafted in a fashion like you have never seen.



Nur-Zelmor Disguised as Professor Mers Vevel

Nur-Zelmor guesses why the PCs are here. He knows that meddlers from the Diggers' Union are investigating the death of the adventurer Delvron Gaunt, and figured that fool little gnome that sent Gaunt in the first place was not able to deter their investigation. If the PCs were able to overhear the conversation between Nur-Zelmor and the whisper gnome patron, they have a clear advantage in this encounter, as Nur-Zelmor attempts to “cooperate” and “aid” their investigation. Under such an auspice, he tells the PCs the following:

“I was sad to hear of my friend Delvron Gaunt's death. He was a good man, and I'll miss him. Gaunt was looking for a rare and wonderful copy of Belental Heirm's Deviant Celestia for me. He thought he tracked it down at the home of an amateur astrologist named Mayus Fellon. That was last night. I can give you the astrologist's address.

With that he tries to push the PCs to Fellon's home, trusting Beltrudalgald's ability to deal with interlopers.

If asked about the statement “Aryth in Tiamat they come,” Nur-Zelmor dismisses it as just one of the great Heirm's many theories; the subject of a recent lecture. The problem with Nur-Zelmor is that thought he looks and acts like Mers Vevel, and has been briefed about the man and his life by Beltrudalgald, there are bits of information he lacks. For one thing, other than what the man looks like, and the fact that he killed Nur-Zelmor's beloved familiar, he knows very little about Delvron Gaunt. He constantly refers to the man as “nice, friendly, and hard working” contrary to the disposition of the real Gaunt. He also doesn't know the exact details of Gaunt's

death. He knows the man left the crook observatory beaten and wounded, and that Beltrudalgald's *nightmare* likely did him in, but he does not know that Gaunt etched a clue in his own skin and that same statement just happens to be written on Professor Vevel's slate board.

If the PCs questions turn accusatory, and they confront the faux-Mers Vevel about his lack of knowledge about Gaunt, or his trying to stymie their investigation, Nur-Zelmor panics. He activates his *mirror image* ability, and attempts to flee the house.

Mers Vevel (Nur-Zelmor): hp 15; see "Combat Statistics," below.

Tactics: Never leaving his assumed form, Nur-Zelmor's main goal is to flee the area. If given the opportunity, he lets loose a *sleep*, hoping to debilitate a number of his pursuers. He uses his sword only as a last resort, and will turn it on himself if he thinks the battle is going poorly. It's better to preserve the secret of his people's coming, than to become the target of enchantments and mind-intrusive magic. We he dies, he shows his true form—one alien to any creature currently on Eberron.

Development: If Nur-Zelmor is able to escape, he goes and reports the PCs' assault to Beltrudalgald. Keep track of his damage, as the PCs will encounter the nerra again.

Adventuring with Professor Vevel: There is a possibility that the PCs take the faux-Professor Vevel at face for a long time in the adventure. If they return after discovering the path leads to Crook Observatory, they can even get Nur-Zelmor to accompany them to the place. He stays back in all combats, but

shifts to his true form when the time is right (either when the goblins give away his cover, or the PCs find the body of the real Professor Vevel), in an attempt to finish off the pesky PCs before they can stop the plans of the nerra.

Scaling the Encounter

2nd-Level Characters (EL 4): Nur-Zelmor is a 3rd-level sorcerer (hp 17); see "Combat Statistics," below.

3rd-Level Characters (EL 5): Nur-Zelmor is a 4th-level sorcerer (hp 20); see "Combat Statistics," below.

4th-Level Characters (EL 6): Nur-Zelmor is a 5th-level sorcerer (hp 24); see "Combat Statistics," below.

Tapping Other Resources: PCs can try and find general answers. Use the guidelines of other encounters to given characters wanting to research in the university's library or questioning other professors a chance to get relevant information about Belental Heirm, the *Deviant Celestia*, and the coming astrological convergence. Using the library costs 1 gp a day.

The Mirrorwright

Characters curious about the strange reflective objects found in Gaunt's room may want to search for an expert. Not far from Grea Towers is the workshop of Gevgol the Mirrorwright. Gevgol is a stodgy, hardworking dwarf craftsman who was once a member of the Diggers' Union. Today he is known as the best crafter of mirrors in the Five Kingdoms—at least

Combat Statistics

MERS VEVEL (NUR-ZELMOR)

CR 3

Varrot nerra sorcerer 2

N Medium outsider (extraplanar)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +6, Spot +6

Languages Common

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12; **AC** 19, touch 12 (16 for incorporeal touch attacks), flat-footed 16 and *magic missiles* cast at Nar-Zelmor are negated after he casts *shield*

hp 15 (3 HD)

Resist Cold 5, Electric 5, Fire 5; **SR** *reflective spell resistance* 15

Fort +3, **Ref** +4, **Will** +7

Weakness sonic vulnerability

Spd 30 ft. (6 squares)

Atk melee shard longsword +4 (1d8+2/19-20 plus wounding)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +2

Sorcerer Spells Known 6/5 (CL 2nd; 1d20+2 to overcome SR)

1st—*sleep* (DC 15), *shield*

0—*daze* (DC 14), *ghost sound* (DC 13), *ray of frost*, *resistance*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd; 1d20+3 to overcome SR)

3/day—*disguise self*; 1/day—*mirror image*

Abilities Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 17

Feats Combat Casting, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (shard longsword)^B, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (shard

dagger)^B, Spell Focus (enchantment).

Skills Concentration +1 (+5 cast defensive), Bluff +7, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +7 (+9 acting), Gather Information +7, Intimidate +5, Listen +6, Knowledge (arcane) +4, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +4, Slight of Hand +8, Spot +6.

Possessions shard longsword.

MERS VEVEL (NUR-ZELMOR)

CR 4

Varrot nerra sorcerer 3

N Medium outsider (extraplanar)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +6, Spot +6

Languages Common

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12; **AC** 19, touch 12 (16 for incorporeal touch attacks), flat-footed 16 and *magic missiles* cast at Nar-Zelmor are negated after he casts *shield*

hp 17 (4 HD)

Resist Cold 5, Electric 5, Fire 5; **SR** *reflective spell resistance* 16

Fort +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7

Weakness sonic vulnerability

Spd 30 ft. (6 squares)

Atk melee shard longsword +4 (1d8+2/19-20 plus wounding)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +2

Continued on the next page

Combat Statistics (cont. from page 15)

Sorcerer Spells Known 6/6 (CL 3rd; 1d20+3 to overcome SR)

1st—*color spray* (DC 16), *magic missile*, *shield*

0—*daze* (DC 15), *ghost sound* (DC 14), *ray of frost*, *resistance*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th; 1d20+4 to overcome SR)

3/day—*disguise self*, 1/day—*mirror image*

Abilities Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 18

Feats Combat Casting, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (shard longsword)^B, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (shard dagger)^B, Spell Focus (enchantment).

Skills Concentration +3 (+7 cast defensive), Bluff +8, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +8 (+10 acting), Gather Information +8, Intimidate +6, Listen +6, Knowledge (arcane) +4, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +4, Slight of Hand +8, Spot +6.

Possessions shard longsword.

MERS VEVEL (NUR-ZELMOR)

CR 5

Varrot nerra sorcerer 4

N Medium outsider (extraplanar)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +6, Spot +6

Languages Common

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12; **AC** 19, touch 12 (16 for incorporeal touch attacks), flat-footed 16 and *magic missiles* cast at Nar-Zelmor are negated after he casts *shield*

hp 20 (5 HD)

Resist Cold 5, Electric 5, Fire 5; **SR** *reflective spell resistance* 17

Fort +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8

Weakness sonic vulnerability

Spd 30 ft. (6 squares)

Atk melee shard longsword +5 (1d8+2/19-20 plus wounding)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +3

Sorcerer Spells Known 6/7/4 (CL 4th; 1d20+4 to overcome SR)

2nd—*touch of idiocy*

1st—*color spray* (DC 16), *magic missile*, *shield*

0—*daze* (DC 15), *ghost sound* (DC 14), *ray of frost*, *resistance*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 14)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; 1d20+5 to overcome SR)

3/day—*disguise self*, 1/day—*mirror image*

Abilities Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 18

Feats Combat Casting, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (shard longsword)^B, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (shard dagger)^B, Spell Focus (enchantment).

Skills Concentration +6 (+9 cast defensive), Bluff +8, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +8 (+10 acting), Gather Information +8, Intimidate +6, Listen +6, Knowledge (arcane) +4, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +4, Slight of Hand +8, Spot +6.

Possessions shard longsword.

MERS VEVEL (NUR-ZELMOR)

CR 6

Varrot nerra sorcerer 5

N Medium outsider (extraplanar)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +6, Spot +6

Languages Common

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12; **AC** 19, touch 12 (16 for incorporeal touch attacks), flat-footed 16 and *magic missiles* cast at Nar-Zelmor are negated after he casts

shield

hp 24 (6 HD)

Resist Cold 5, Electric 5, Fire 5; **SR** *reflective spell resistance* 18

Fort +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8

Weakness sonic vulnerability

Spd 30 ft. (6 squares)

Atk melee shard longsword +5 (1d8+2/19-20 plus wounding)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +3

Sorcerer Spells Known 6/7/5 (CL 5th; 1d20+5 to overcome SR)

2nd—*invisibility*, *touch of idiocy*

1st—*color spray* (DC 17), *expeditious retreat*, *magic missile*, *shield*

0—*daze* (DC 16), *ghost sound* (DC 14), *ray of frost*, *resistance*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 14)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; 1d20+5 to overcome SR)

3/day—*disguise self*, 1/day—*mirror image*

Abilities Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 18

Feats Combat Casting, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (shard longsword)^B, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (shard dagger)^B, Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Spell Focus (enchantment).

Skills Concentration +6 (+9 cast defensive), Bluff +8, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +8 (+10 acting), Gather Information +8, Intimidate +6, Listen +6, Knowledge (arcane) +4, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +4, Slight of Hand +8, Spot +6.

Possessions shard longsword.

Varrot Nerra Special Abilities

Nur-Zelmor has the following special abilities no matter the level of play:

Mirror Jump (Su): Nerras can move through mirrored and reflective surfaces at will. The effect is similar to shadow walk, but the nerra travels through their home plane. Unfortunately because of the current tenuous connection the nerra have with their home plane, they cannot take advantage of this ability.

Reflective Spell Resistance (Sp): a spell resisted bounces off and is reflected back to the caster. The caster becomes either the spell's target or the point of origin for the spell's effect, as appropriate.

Sonic Vulnerability (Ex): All nerras take half again as much (+50%) damage as normal from an attack involving sonic energy, regardless of whether a saving throw is allowed, of the save is a success or failure.

Shard Weapon: Nerras' swords and daggers are made out of the substance of their plane. Resembling the shards of a broken mirror that have been set into a shiny hilt, they look deceptively fragile. In the hands of someone with and Exotic Weapon Proficiency in the weapon they are a +2 *wounding* weapon. Those without the feat wield it awkwardly (-4 penalty to attack rolls) and don't benefit from the *wounding* effect.

that's the claim by Breland's upper class. He grudgingly takes time to answer the character's questions about the strange stones as he works on a large 20-foot long mirror for the king. If the PCs show him the rocks he says the following.

"Interesting. This is one of the most fascinating things I've seen in all my years. I've seen reflective surfaces made from silver, polished steel, and even mithral, but this isn't metal despite its appearance. It's some kind of flesh. These things are not from this world."

If the PCs ask whether he has heard of or encountered a creature with flesh like mirrors, he looks worried, and ushers the PCs to a quiet corner.

"Repeat this and I'll call you all liars. And I have the ear of the king, so that's no small threat." The dwarf mops his sweaty, bald head, looks around the corner making sure his apprentices are out of earshot and continues.

"Over the past month I have seen things in mirrors; manlike creatures moving there. They had mirrorlike skin. It makes them hard to see, but I'd capture a glimpse every so often. I thought it was overwork; my mind playing tricks on me.

"One night I was working late on a big mirror—the one I was working on before this one. I began to doze off and then I heard a voice. I called me by name. It said 'Gevgol, we are coming and we could use your help.' It scared the daylight out of me. I wasn't sure it was a dream or some horror calling from Xoriat. I destroyed the mirror. Just to be safe. I didn't think the mirror creatures were real, but after seeing what you've brought I am not sure."

He points to the mirror he was working on. "This new one is my second attempt at King Boranel's mirror, and, if you'll excuse me, I have to get back at it. I'm way behind deadline."

Star Over Cyre

Delvron Gaunt's favorite tavern is a dive called the Star Over Cyre. A basement tavern, it lies under an underused warehouse not far from the docks on the Howling River. It's hard to find, and that's how its regulars—many Cyran refugees or Last War veterans—like it.

Splinters of lights stab through the cracks of shuttered windows and then on through the smoky gloom of this basement tavern. A greasy, fat hobgoblin serves drinks behind the bar. He hardly acknowledges newcomers. A raised lip and a bit of yellow fang are all one gets. Patrons retreat into the shadowy corners of the place, trying hard not to be notice.

If Patron Helcondate successfully fled from the PCs, he'll be found here, drowning his sorrows in Cyran whiskey. Drunk as he is, the PCs should have little trouble getting him to spill all he knows (+4 circumstance bonus to Intimidate or Diplomacy checks; Helcondate starts as indifferent). Use the information from the "Patron Helcondate" section as guidelines to what he tells the PCs.

Nurguk the barkeep knew Delvron Gaunt mostly as the person who paid the rent with his relentless alcoholism. He has little else nice to say about the digger.

"A pretty miserable fellow with a huge chip on his shoulder. But he was steady. He was here at least once a day, and always took a bottle with him."

The only other person in the bar that knows him is a shifter named Shyva the Red, a fiery-haired beasthide with an equally fiery temper. Nurguk tells the PCs that she and Gaunt were once an item.

"Maybe they still were together. It's hard to tell. All they seem to do is fight. She's in the back room. She lives there. Hires herself out as a merc or bodyguard sometimes. You can go see her, but watch how you talk to her. She'll rip your lungs out given half a reason. She has privacy issues."

Shyva's room is around the corner from the bar, past a table of skittish changelings. The door is unlocked, but if the PCs invite themselves in, they are in for a red fury of she-shifter. Shyva rages and does as much damage as possible before killed or subdued. She has severe privacy issues.

Shyva the Red: Female shifter barbarian 2; hp 18; see "Combat Statistics," below.

If the PCs can deal with Shyva with tact and respect they can get good information from her. If she feels insulted or slighted (especially if she feels the PCs are trying to violate her privacy) she attacks without reservation.

Shyva was the last person to see Delvron Gaunt alive. Before the digger collapsed in his Grea Tower cell last night, he came to the Star of Cyre and picked up a bottle. Shyva was gone when Delvron Gaunt came in, but she talked to him



Shyva the Red

before he left. By the time Shyva saw him Gaunt was already very intoxicated. He told the shifter that goblins and an iron defender roughed him up pretty bad on a job, but that wasn't the strangest thing he saw.

"The was a manlike thing with an impish creature that walked out of a mirror. Their skin was shiny, and reflective, like they were made of mirrors themselves. I think there are more of them behind the mirrors, waiting to come through when the stars are right."

Shyva attributed the tale to a drunken imagination and an encounter with some polished warforged. "Gaunt wasn't making a bit of sense," she says. He told her that he killed the impish creature, and he thought it was some kind of familiar from the mirrorish humanoid's reaction to his death. Shyva told him to go home and sleep it off.

The shifter shows little reaction if told of Gaunt's death.

Combat Statistics

SHYVA THE RED

CR 2

Female beasthide shifter barbarian 2

CN Medium humanoid (shapechanger)

"You'll be leaving or you'll be dead!"

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; **Listen** +0, **Spot** +0

Languages Common

AC 16, **touch** 12, **flat-footed** 14

hp 18 (2 HD)

Fort +5, **Ref** +2, **Will** +2

Spd 40 ft. (8 squares)

Atk melee greataxe +5 (1d12+3/x3)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4; **Grp** +4 when raging

Atk Option rage 1/day (lasts for 6 rounds then fatigued), shifting 1/day

Abilities Str 15, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 6

Feats Iron Will

Skills Climb +6, Jump +6, Survival +5, Swim +5

Possessions masterwork chain shirt, masterwork great axe, 5 gp.

Rage (Ex): 1/day—hp 22; AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 12; Grp +6; Atk or Full Atk +7 melee (1d12+6/x3 masterwork greataxe); SV Fort +7, Will +4; Str 17, Con 16; Climb +8, Jump +8, Swim +7; lasts for 6 rounds then fatigued.

Shifting (Su): 1/day—hp 22; AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16; SV Fort +7, Con 16; lasts for 6 rounds.

Power-up Suite (Shifting with Rage)—hp 24; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Grp +6, Atk or Full Atk +7 melee (1d12+6/x3, masterwork greataxe); SV Fort +9, Will +4; Str 17, Con 18; Climb +8, Jump +8, Swim +7; one lasts for 6 rounds, the other lasts for seven rounds. When rage is over Shyva is fatigued.

"Good. He was a bastard. I spent too much time in my life fretting over him."

She actually is really torn up about his death (Sense Motive DC 10), but she is not going to let anyone see it, and if any PCs suggest it, she attacks (the whole privacy thing). She is also surprised the wounds she saw last night killed him. She'd seen Gaunt with worse.

The only other bit of information Shyva has is a hint of the location where Gaunt fought the goblins and the mirror-man.

"He said it was in some tower out of town. A star tower or something like that."

PCs at this point may start looking for observatories. They find the Crook Observatory by late evening. Go straight to Part

Four: Crook Observatory.

PART THREE: 5A KING'S CIRCLE ON SECCURAN

Led by the address found on Delvron Gaunt, or by the prodding of the faux-Mers Vevel the PCs are likely to investigate this address. When they arrive, they find the following.

A simple but nice brownstone belongs to the address on Gaunt's note. This two-story home is crammed among similar houses, which stretch down King's Circle in both directions. Its small front yard is crammed with flowers and kitschy garden statues. Lace curtains grace each clean and sparkling window.

Not far from Hawker Market, affluent members of the royal bureaucracy favor this neighborhood.

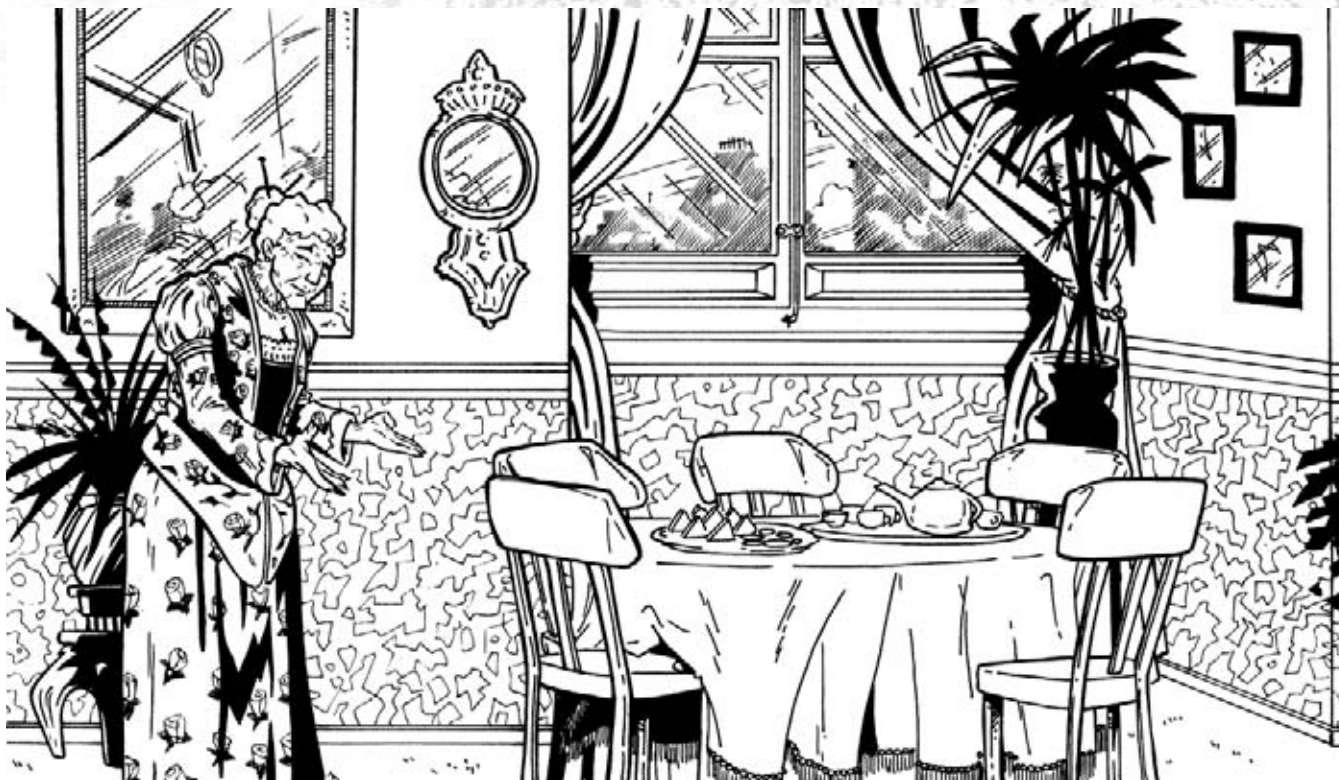
If the PCs knock on the door a small and plump matronly woman wearing a flowery dress greets them. She looks a little shocked when seeing a group of adventurers at her door, but after the initial shock, responds with a gentle kindness.

"Please come in for some tea. You look like such interesting people and I haven't had company for a while."

If the PCs just want to ask their questions, Laile Fellon parlays the offer of tea with the PCs' curiosity.

"Conversations go so much better with tea. Come in and we'll chat all you want."

She escorts the PCs through a hallway crammed with bookshelves and stands filled with ceramic dishes and knickknacks. "Mind your swords," she warns them. "Don't ruin my precious things," she adds with a smile and a little giggle. Around the corner is a study and tearoom. It's a plush affair with a quaint table and dainty but comfortable chairs.



Laile retreats into what must be the kitchen and quickly returns with a tea and sandwich tray. She invites the PCs to sit, and starts pouring tea for all of them. Use “Illustration 3” to help illustrate this scene.

Paranoid PCs may be very suspicious of the tea, cucumber sandwiches, and raspberry scones Laile Fellon serves. There is no need to be, none are poisonous or harmful in any way, and all are actually very tasty.

Throughout the meal Laile answers questions posed by the PCs. She answers them politely, but isn’t very helpful in her answers. This is because the PCs aren’t talking to Laile Fellon. Mrs. Fellon is dead, her body stuffed in a kitchen pantry. The woman acting as tea host is the dusk hag, Beltrudalgald.

The dusk hags main goal in answer the PCs question is to roadblock their investigation. The following are some sample questions and Beltrudalgald’s answers.

Q: *Do you know Delvron Gaunt?*

“I don’t think so. Is he a friend of yours? I don’t know many adventurers. I don’t think I know any, really. Do you live exciting lives? Tell me about it, but keep the details clean, we are eating.”

Q: *He had a slip of paper with your address on it. Do you know why he would have that?*

“My goodness, no! Do you think he’s a thief? Do you think he was ‘casing’ my house...that’s what criminals say, ‘casing,’ right? My goodness, maybe I should lock up all my precious things.”

Q: *Do you live here alone?*

“No, no. My husband Mayus lives here too. But he is out of town right now. He’s visiting his cousin in Sharn. Why, your not thieves are you. Are you going to steal my precious things?”

Q: *What does your husband do?*

“He’s retired. He used to work for the royal bureaucracy, but now he spends his time watching the stars and studying astrology. He has always loved the stars.”

Q: *When does your husband get back?*

“Not for another week.”

Throughout this conversation, the dusk hag lies. Because the PCs have never met Laile Fellon, it’s harder than normal to detect the falsehoods. Throughout the conversation Beltrudalgald’s Bluff bonus is a +8. Roll the PCs’ Sense Motive secretly. If they beat her Bluff for any question, they have an idea that the older woman is not being entirely honest. If a PC beats here roll by 15 or more, they get the hunch that this woman is not who she appears to be.

If confronted about the untruths, or if the PCs even begin searching the house, Mrs. Fellon becomes angry, insisting that the PCs leave. If things escalate, see “Confronting the Hag,” below.

A Hug Before You Go?

If the PCs swallow Laile Fellon’s story, or decide to leave to come back later and investigate further (maybe while Laile is asleep?), Mrs. Fellon attempts to give them each a gentle hug on the way out. As she does, she thanks them for the good conversation and company.

What Beltrudalgald is actually doing is bestowing her *nightmare* touch on each PC. The next time they go to sleep, have them make a DC 16 Will save. Characters who fail take 1d10 points of damage, and a robbed of a restful sleep. They

are fatigued the next morning and can't regain arcane spells for another 24 hours, if they are still living that is.

When Gaunt met Mrs. Fellon, it was actually Beltrudalgald in disguise, and her hug is what killed the digger. It may have the same effects on some PCs.

PCs who would rather keep their personal space personal, aren't pushed by Laile Fellon, though the old woman pouts a little and chides them for their antisocial behavior.



Confronting the Hag

Many adventurers may push the encounter with Mrs. Fellon. They may start poking around her house, or return at night to covertly search the place. If pushed, Beltrudalgald reverts to her true form (use "Illustration 4" to help describe her) and attempts to flee the scene.

Beltrudalgald: hp 39; see "Combat Statistics," below.

Tactics: The dusk hag's main goal is escape. Her first step is to move and then slow down her opponents with a *fog cloud*. Once out of sight she ducks out of sight and uses her *disguise self* ability to appear as a common tradesperson and mix in with

the citizens of Wroat in the nearby Hawkers Market. If she gets this far, she is as good as gone.

Note: If the nerra sorcerer Nur-Zelmor escaped the PCs to warn Beltrudalgald, he pops out of a closet during this fight to help cover the night hag's escape. He fights to the death, and avoids being captured if possible.

Combat Statistics

BELTRUDELGALD THE DUSK HAG **CR 4**

N Medium monstrous humanoid

"I am your worst nightmare."

Int +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +6, Spot +6

Languages Common; Giant, Infernal

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20

hp 39 (6 HD); **DR** 5/cold iron and magic

Immune charm, sleep and fear effects

SR 20

Fort +4, **Ref** +6, **Will** +10

Spd 30 ft. (6 squares)

Atk melee 2 claws +9 (1d4+3)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +9

Special Atk nightmare touch (DC 16)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6 1d20+6 to overcome SR):

At will—*detect magic*; 3/day—*augury*, *disguise self*, *dream*, *fog cloud*, *tongues*, *zone of truth* (DC 13)

Abilities Str 17, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 13

Feats Ability Focus (nightmare touch), Alertness, Iron Will

Skills Concentration +7, Hide +5, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Listen +6, Move Silently +5, Sense Motive +15, Spot +6

Nightmare Touch (Su): With a successful touch attack, can plague enemy with a night of troubled sleep. Save DC 16 Will or victim suffers effect of the nightmare spell when he or she attempts to sleep.

Insight (Su): When a dusk hag dreams, she occasionally and inexplicably gains flashes of insight about past, present, and future events. This ability cannot be controlled and serves as a plot device.

Skills: Dusk hags are perceptive and gain a +4 racial bonus on Sense Motive checks. This bonus has been added to her stats.

Searching the Home

Not only does searching the house turn up the body of the real Mrs. Fellon, a careful search of the place (DC 20) also uncovers Mayus Fellon's private papers, including a title for a bit of land outside town. On that land he built an observatory. The PCs also find a drawn portrait of the couple, which may help the PCs identify the body of Mayus Fellon when they find it in the observatory (area 3).

Searching further through the house, it becomes obvious that Mayus Fellon's real love was astrology and cosmology. His small office, tucked away upstairs, has many volumes on those subjects. The top of his desk is bare except for a schematic

and a single book. The book is a rather ordinary abridged copy of the *Deviant Celestia* by Belental Heirm. It is open to a chapter titled “Conjunctions to Conterminousness.” A quick read by a learned character (at least one rank in Knowledge [arcana] or [the planes]) finds that the chapter insists there are more than 13 planes, and that conjunctions of celestial items are harbingers to times when these rogue planes become coterminous with Eberron. One particular paragraph is of particular interest.

“Such coterminous states with these rogue planes are rare and wonderful events. If my calculations are correct, the next one will occur hundreds of years in the future. What such an event heralds is anyone’s guess, as we have absolutely no idea of what ilk of creature could inhabit the rogue planes. I will just say this: Aryth in Tiamat they come. Then we will know for certain if I am correct in my calculations.”

The schematic is that of the Crook Observatory, Mayus Fellon’s home-away-from-home. A quick overview of the plans notices that it has an interesting way of viewing the stars using a magical machine that filters light through a dragonshard and projects images on a series of mirrors.

PART FOUR:

CROOK OBSERVATORY

By searching the Fellon home, or by virtue of a conversation with Shyva the Red, the clues to the mystery of Gaunt’s death should lead to the Crook Observatory. On a lonely outcrop just east of Wroat, the observatory overlooks the thorps and villages that cling to the Howling River.

As the PCs approach a strange storm begins to swirl around the area. A successful Knowledge (nature) check (DC 10) confirms that it is not a thing of nature, but rather something “otherworldly.” A successful Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 15) confirms that the storm looks similar to some coterminous activities focused on a localized area, but there is no known planar conjunction that should occur here or now.

1. Courtyard (EL 0)

The following text assumes the PCs are approaching the observatory by way of the main path from the west. Coming off the path in a northwesterly direction also give them a glimpse to the west door on the ground level. Use “Illustration 5” to help describe this area.

The strange storm that’s blown in increases and supernatural thunderheads swirl around the Crook Observatory. Hard rain and small chunks of hail pummel the ground, and fall harder by the minute. Sporadically the icy and rainy gloom is cleaved by purple-tinged lightning that reaches down and crackles along the sides to the observatory’s tower, but does no damage to the structure.

The observatory sits atop a steep hill. A door, the only obvious entrance to the structure, stands at the base of the hill, just beyond an overgrown courtyard surrounded by a spiked iron fence. The gateway to the courtyard appears locked with a heavy chain and padlock.



Closer examination of the gate finds the padlock and chain to be broken and useless, but was purposely propped upon the gate to make it seem secure from a distance. The tangle of vines and shrubs that choke the courtyard are difficult terrain, but a clear path leads from the gate to the western door. A search of the area to the left of the northern doors (Search DC 15) uncovers the remains of an iron defender, obviously purposely hidden in the underbrush. Further investigation finds that a shard from one of its teeth are missing, and that the metal shard the PCs may have found in one of Delvron Gaunt's wounds, matches that missing section of tooth exactly—Gaunt was definitely here.

Development: From the courtyard the PCs can enter area 2 from either the western door, or the locked northern door.

2. Goblins! (EL 1 or 3)

Light: A number of continual flame orbs on the ceiling, illuminating this entire chamber.

Auras: faint evil (goblins)

The northern door is locked (average lock, DC 25), and the key is lost. The western door's lock was recently sundered, and the door opens easily. Beyond both doors is a large, nearly empty storage room.

Magical light floods this chamber in stark contrast to the gloom outside. It's almost empty. The only object of note is a statue of Dol Arrah, the Sovereign Host deity of Honor and Sacrifice standing near the western doors. Well that and the goblins standing around the statue.

The goblins have been tasked to guard this chamber. This place is a rarely used storeroom. A DC 12 Knowledge (arcana) check reveals the magic circle as fake. It's just a strange decoration, maybe placed to deter thieves. The statue is marble, very heavy, and rather kitschy.

Goblins (4): hp 7, 6, 4, 3; see *Monster Manual*; these goblins have a variety of melee weapons. One has a spear, two have short swords, and the other has a morningstar. They all have light crossbows.

Tactics: The goblins fulfill their duty as guards to a lackluster degree. If the characters enter by the southern door, most of the goblins seek a degree of cover around the statue, squeezing off bolts with impunity. At least one of the goblins goes to retrieve Fegriss the Dragon's Eye from the study (area 2).

If the PCs enter by the western doors, things become more frantic. Unless the PCs opened the door by extremely noisy means (such as breaking it down) the goblins are surprised at the PCs' entrance through what they thought was a secure egress. Give the PCs a surprise round. Even when the goblins get to act, they make a mad scramble for the study.

Without the aid of their adept, the group is fairly spineless, and hesitates to engage in melee unless forced. Within the presences of Fegriss, they are solid combatants, willing to die then to show cowardly behavior in front of the Dragon's Eye. If Fegriss dies in the midst of combat, the goblins

scatter, attempting to flee the tower by the safest path. While escape is optimal, they choose surrender over death given the opportunity.

Development: After Fegriss is dispatched, captured and questioned goblins can illuminate what's going on in the Crook Observatory. They explain that Fegriss serves Beltrudalgald, who killed the former owner of the observatory. The goblins know about the mirror man, that he is now masquerading as the human professor that once worked with the dusk hag. These were some of the goblins that attack and drove back Delvron Gaunt. The bodies of the others are stacked in the "Reeking Room."

If Mers Vevel has accompanied the PCs to this point, the goblins are cowed and silent. They avoid looking at him, and a successful Sense Motive check (DC 20) gives a PC the hunch that the goblins are deathly afraid of Mers, but it takes nothing short of magical cohesion or pure intimidation (DC 13—the DC is increased due to the goblin's fear of the mirror man) to get a goblin to reveal Vevel as a "mirror man."

Scaling the Encounter

2nd-Level Characters (EL 2 or 4): There are 5 goblins in this room (hp 7, 6, 4, 4, 3); one goblin is armed with a spear, two are armed with short swords, two of the goblins are armed with morningstars, and all have light crossbows.

3rd-Level and 4th-Level Characters (EL 3, 5 or 6): There are 8 goblins in this room (hp 7, 6, 6, 5, 4, 4, 4, 3); two goblin are armed with a spear, two are armed with short swords, and four of the goblins are armed with morningstars, and all have light crossbows.

3. Study (EL 2 or 3)

Light: A number of *continual flame* orbs on the ceiling, illuminating this entire chamber.

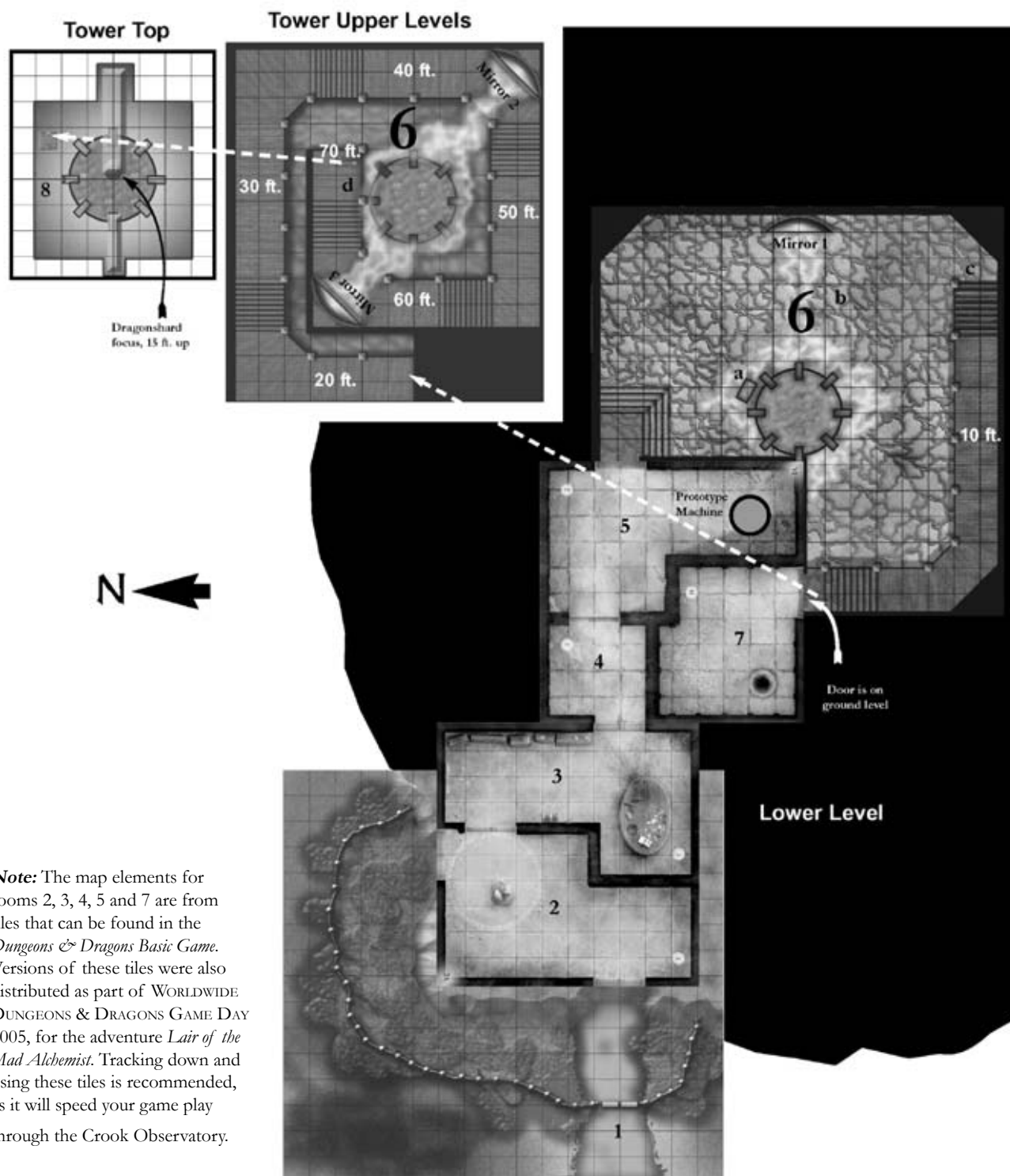
Auras: faint evil (Fegriss)

This large chamber is littered with books that were probably once arranged in its many bookshelves. It also holds a large table, a chest, and 6-foot-tall mirror. Among one particular pile of books is a bright orange goblin, his face decorated in greenish black tattooed symbols, similar to the ones found on the knife in Delvron Gaunt's death grip. His robes are long, black, and rather ornate for goblin's garb. Red and orange embroidered dragons and flames wind their way up the fabric. He wears a pointed hat, decorated with feathers, trinkets and semiprecious stones. He lifts his sickle threateningly, as yellow toothy grin stretches across his leathery face.

Once Fellon's study and workshop this place is now to lair of a goblin adept of the Dragon Below, called the Dragon's Eye by those as revere him, he is an agent of a fiendish dragon of Khyber known as Beruzzul. Fegriss, fashioning himself as an arcane scholar, spends his time paging through Fellon's various books and notes. It was the goblin who scattered the books about the floor and table to better compare their secrets. He is both perturbed and excited to be disturbed, as he enjoys the thrill of combat, and believes he is invincible.

Crook Observatory

1 square = 5 feet.



Note: The map elements for rooms 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 are from tiles that can be found in the *Dungeons & Dragons Basic Game*. Versions of these tiles were also distributed as part of WORLDWIDE DUNGEONS & DRAGONS GAME DAY 2005, for the adventure *Lair of the Mad Alchemist*. Tracking down and using these tiles is recommended, as it will speed your game play through the Crook Observatory.

Fegriss the Dragon's Eye: male goblin adept 3; hp 12; see "Combat Statistics," below.

Tactics: Alone, or joined by the goblins from the entrance to the observatory, Fegriss is a cunning tactician, who uses his repertoire of spells to support his position and dwindle his opponents. He targets the biggest toughest fighter with his *cause fear*. He'll try to foil archers with the *obscuring mist*, and saves his *burning hands* for when it can do the most damage.

Books: The bookshelves are empty. Their former contents litter the floor and table. The many books that litter the floor are on a variety of subjects, from astrology, cosmology, to politics and folklore from far-off lands. Fegriss has them arranged in a pattern that only he can find any reason to. While some of the books are sure to be interesting to the PCs, at this point there is little time to pursue them. There is no copy of the *Deviant Celestia* among the books.

Table: Beside the books, there is a lantern, three flasks of oils, rolls of parchment, pens, some arcane material (enough for an entire spell component pouch), a small vial filled with a fine powder, and some old and moldy bread. A piece of parchment is attached to the neck of the bottle by way of a blue ribbon. "Sprinkle and see," is written on the parchment. The dust in the vial is a single use of *dust of appearance*.

Chest: The chest holds blankest a pillow and a pair of ridiculous looking flannel pajamas. Mayus Fellon stashed these here for late night working. At the bottom of the chest is also a flask of alchemist's spark (see *Eberron Campaign Setting* page 120), stashed here purely for security reasons.

Mirror: With the connection to *Spequlum* being so close, the mirror in this chamber does not function normally. Rather than showing a reflection of the room, it is a visual gateway into the realm of the nerra. Those peering into the mirror see a misty landscape obscured by a mass of mirror-skinned humanoids. These strange reflective people huddle up to the mirror, and look at the PCs and the world beyond intently, almost longingly, as they claw toward the mirror's edge, and press up to the border on the other side. If a PC places his or here ear on to the mirror they can hear faint and indistinct clambering from beyond.

Hitting this glass and silver mirror forcefully shatters it, breaking this mirror's conduit between *Eberron* and *Spequlum*. The shards act like normal mirrors.

Development: The door on the east wall leads directly to the "Reeking Room."

Scaling the Encounter

2nd-Level Characters (EL 3 or 4): Fegriss advances to a 4th-level adept; hp 16; see "Combat Statistics," below.

3rd-Level Characters (EL 4 or 5): Fegriss advances to a 5th-level adept; hp 21; see "Combat Statistics," below.

3rd-Level Characters (EL 5 or 6): Fegriss advances to a 6th-level adept; hp 26; see "Combat Statistics," below.

4. Reeking Room (EL 0)

Light: A *continual flame* orb lights this chamber. Fellon called this place his planning room. Here he drew the

schematics for what would later become the cosmic machine on the plaster walls of this chamber. After Beltrudelgald finished analyzing Fellon's schematics, and marked her own modifications to the cosmic machine, the goblins started using this place as a makeshift morgue. The three goblins Delvron Gaunt killed when he assaulted the observatory are temporarily placed to rest here until it is safe to move their bodies out of the observatory, as is the body of Mers Vevel and Mayus Fallon. They've begun to stink.

When the door opens, a whiff of stale air brings with it the reek of morbid decay. This small chamber is devoid of furniture, but the rotting bodies of three goblins and two humans are piled like cordwood in the far corner.

The stark-white plaster walls of this room are crammed with drawings, bits of text, and mathematical equations, scribed in Common with a deliberate and neat hand—definitely not the work of goblins and their ilk. Here and there are notes in the Goblin alphabet. The drawings detail the observatory tower, and a strange pillar of glass encasing bubbling liquid that shoots up its center. One drawing labels this pillar as "the Cosmic Machine."

PCs knowledgeable in magical devices (Knowledge [arcana] or artificer knowledge DC 15) can learn both the original function of the cosmic machine and—if they can read Goblin—how it has been modified to rend the very fabric of the multiverse. A successful Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 15) or a successful analyzing of this clue by a character with the Investigate feat (Search DC 15) draws the conclusion that such a rend would allow creatures from beyond this world entrance onto *Eberron*.

5. Prototype Machine (EL 0)

Light: A *continual flame* orb lights this chamber.

Aura: Strong conjuration magic (the prototype machine). This room is empty except for a glass cylinder reinforced with iron bands standing in the far corner of the room. The cylinder is filled with a bubbling bluish liquid. It is bolted to the ground, as is a small control panel at its base. That panel has a single lever positioned up.

The cylinder is a prototype of the cosmic machine's power and focus liquid. The PCs can turn it on by lowering the lever on the control panel. When they do, the device glows and crackles with a blue electrical aura. Within moments (less than a round) the aura expands out to the squares adjacent to the prototype machine. Each time a living creature enters or stays within one of those squares it must succeed a DC 12 Fortitude save or be stunned for a round. The character that activated the machine is allowed a DC 15 Reflex saving throw to jump out of the way before the aura engulfs the character.

While the prototype machine holds no real danger for the PCs, it does serve to warn them of some of the danger in the tower (see area 6, below).

6. The Tower (EL variable)

Light: The crackling blue eldritch aura of the cosmic

Combat Statistics**FEGRISS THE DRAGON'S EYE****CR 2**

Male goblin adept 3

CE Small humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2**Languages** Common, Goblin; Draconic**AC** 14, touch 13, flat-footed 11; Dodge**hp** 12 (3 HD)**Fort** +4, **Ref** +4, **Will** +5**Spd** 30 ft. (6 squares)**Atk** melee sickle +1 (1d4-1); ranged light crossbow +5 (1d6/19-20)**Base Atk** +1; **Grp** -4**Adept Spells Prepared** (CL 3rd; 1d20+3 to overcome SR)1st—*burning hands* (DC 13), *cause fear* (DC 13), *obscuring mist*0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *touch of fatigue* (DC 12)**Abilities** Str 8, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 6**Feats** Dodge, Great Fortitude**Skills** Concentration +7, Hide +7, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Move Silently +7, Ride +7, Spellcraft +9.**Possessions** sickle, light crossbow, 10 bolts, holy symbol of the Dragon Below**FEGRISS THE DRAGON'S EYE****CR 3**

Male goblin adept 4

CE Small humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2**Languages** Common, Goblin; Draconic**AC** 14, touch 13, flat-footed 11; Dodge**hp** 16 (4 HD)**Fort** +4, **Ref** +4, **Will** +6**Spd** 30 ft. (6 squares)**Atk** melee sickle +2 (1d4-1); ranged light crossbow +4 (1d6/19-20)**Base Atk** +2; **Grp** -3**Adept Spells Prepared** (CL 4th; 1d20+4 to overcome SR)2nd—*scorching ray*1st—*burning hands* (DC 14), *cause fear* (DC 14), *obscuring mist*0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *touch of fatigue* (DC 13)**Abilities** Str 8, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 6**Feats** Dodge, Great Fortitude**Skills** Concentration +8, Hide +7, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Move Silently +7, Ride +7, Spellcraft +10.**Possessions** sickle, light crossbow, 10 bolts, holy symbol of the Dragon Below, *potion of cure light wounds*.**FEGRISS THE DRAGON'S EYE****CR 4**

Male goblin adept 5

CE Small humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2**Languages** Common, Goblin; Draconic**AC** 14, touch 13, flat-footed 11; Dodge**hp** 21 (5 HD)**Fort** +4, **Ref** +4, **Will** +6**Spd** 30 ft. (6 squares)**Atk** melee sickle +2 (1d4-1); ranged light crossbow +4 (1d6/19-20)**Base Atk** +2; **Grp** -3**Adept Spells Prepared** (CL 5th; 1d20+5 to overcome SR)2nd—*scorching ray* (2)1st—*burning hands* (DC 14), *cause fear* (DC 14), *obscuring mist*0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *touch of fatigue* (DC 13)**Abilities** Str 8, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 6**Feats** Dodge, Great Fortitude**Skills** Concentration +9, Hide +7, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Move Silently +8, Ride +7, Spellcraft +11.**Possessions** sickle, light crossbow, 10 bolts, holy symbol of the Dragon Below, *potion of cure light wounds*.**FEGRISS THE DRAGON'S EYE****CR 5**

Male goblin adept 6

CE Small humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2**Languages** Common, Goblin; Draconic**AC** 14, touch 13, flat-footed 11; Dodge**hp** 26 (5 HD)**Fort** +5, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7**Spd** 30 ft. (6 squares)**Atk** melee sickle +3 (1d4-1); ranged light crossbow +5 (1d6/19-20)**Base Atk** +3; **Grp** -2**Adept Spells Prepared** (CL 6th; 1d20+6 to overcome SR)2nd—*scorching ray* (2)1st—*burning hands* (DC 14), *cause fear* (DC 14), *obscuring mist*0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *touch of fatigue* (DC 13)**Abilities** Str 8, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 6**Feats** Combat Casting, Dodge, Great Fortitude**Skills** Concentration +10 (+14 cast defensively), Hide +7, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Move Silently +9, Ride +7, Spellcraft +12.**Possessions** sickle, light crossbow, 10 bolts, holy symbol of the Dragon Below, *potion of cure light wounds*.

machine lights the entire tower in a eerie light.

Auras: Overwhelming conjuration magic (the cosmic machine).

As soon as the PCs enter this room, the conjunction of Aryth and Tiamat is at its zenith, and cosmic machine

begins its final cycle to bring the nerra to Eberron (you'll want to start keeping strict track of rounds from this point on; see "Development," below). Looking up the characters can see the entire inside of the Crook Observatory tower (use "Illustration 6" to help describe this).



This chamber expands out and up. Beyond a steep flight of stairs leading to the ground level is the entire inside of the tower. The cosmic machine fills the center of the tower, and a wooden walkway winds its way around the tower edges, spiraling up toward the roof.

The tower is 80 feet high to the roof, or 95 feet high, counting the main appendage at the top that holds the dragonshard focus. A wooden walkway winds around the inside of the tower. Each stair or ladder takes the path up another 10 feet. A quick glance at the cosmic machine recognizes that it has four parts.

The bulk of the machine is the large, ironbound, glass cylinder that shoots its way up through the center of the tower. The blue energy that crackles forth from the thing shoots off toward three large mirrors: one on the ground level, and two mounted on sections of the upper walkway.

The crackling energy saturating the tower seems to be powered by the strange storm outside. Its weird electricity strikes the tower and is focused through the large dragonshard at its top. The focused energy enters the cylinder and radiates outward from it.

At the base of the cylinder, and within the blue eldritch field, is a smashed control panel. Obviously it once controlled and regulated the cosmic machine, but it's been deliberately disabled.

The control panel is marked "a" on your map.

The squares with the aura have the same effect as that generated by the prototype machine in area 5: each time a living creature enters or stays within one of those squares it must succeed a DC 12 Fortitude save or be stunned for a round. Stunned creatures drop everything held, can't take action, take a -2 penalty to AC, and lose any Dexterity bonus to AC.

What the PCs don't see until they move deeper into the room are the two half-orc minions of Mers Vevel who guard this chamber, protecting the entrance of the nerra into Eberron. They position themselves at the area marked "b" on the map, waiting for the PCs to approach.

Creatures: Vrak and Drak, the twin half-orcs are mercenary creatures. They are here because they think Professor Vevel will pay them well for their services (the idiots didn't notice his body on the way in). But being mercenaries they are susceptible to bribes. If offered more than 50 gp each and immediately, they gladly look the other way as the PCs attempt to stop the Nerra. A bribe of 100 gp each can even buy their aid.

Vrak and Drak: hp 8, 8; see "Combat Statistics," below.

Tactics: These spiked-chain-wielding brothers know the dangers of the crackling blue eldritch aura, and use it to their advantage. They position themselves just beyond the gap below west of the "Mirror 1" and ready actions to attack those who approach. This way they should get two attacks, the first for the attack of opportunity and the second for their readied action. If some PCs are stunned in the aura, they gladly accept the advantages for attacking stunned creatures in later attacks. They avoid the aura like the plague.

Development: Starting with the PCs' entrance, every 5,

rounds for the next 30 minutes, a nerra comes through one of the mirrors (use “Illustration 7” to help describe such a scene). The first nerra comes through “Mirror 1.” Each entrance after, roll a d6 to determine which mirror the nerra comes through (1—Mirror 1; 3—Mirror 2; 5—Mirror 3). Usually a varrot nerra come through the mirror, but every fourth nerra (every 20 rounds) a larger, more dangerous kalareem nerra enters the observatory. When each nerra enters it has but one goal: to escape this place and into the wider world of Eberron. They only attack PCs if they’re attacked. Despite this, it’s up to the PCs to stop them...or at least as many as they can.

Defeating all the nerra that come through the machine by combat is a daunting—a neigh impossible—task. A much better plan of attack is to affect the machine brining the creatures to Eberron. PCs can attempt to destroy the cosmic machine by brute force. This is easier said than done, and very dangerous too. To do this the PCs must break the thick, reinforced glass of the central cylinder. It has 110 hit points and a hardness of 5, though sonic attacks do twice the damage, but it is immune to fire, acid, and electric damage. Destroying the machine stops the nerra advance. It also floods the lower level of the tower with the strange, bubbling liquid filling the center of the massive cylinder. The acidic liquid floods the bottom of the tower (up to the 10 foot mark) and Fellon’s subterranean workshops for 10 minutes, at which time it drains out. A character touching the liquid takes 2d4 points of acid damage, while character’s submerged in the stuff take 10d4 points of damage each round. PCs that break the cylinder while on the ground level are instantly submerged by the stuff, though you can opt to give those adjacent to the walkway entrance a special Reflex save (DC 20) to scamper up the stairs before the liquid floods the chamber.

The PCs could also attempt to smash the mirror the nerra are coming through, but they will find those mirrors sturdier than they likely imagine. Each is constructed of polished steel (no glass), has 50 hit points, and a hardness of 10.

They can attempt to destroy the focus dragonshard at the top of the observatory. While easier to destroy than the bulk of the machine (it only has 30 hit points, and only hardness 5 for slashing and piercing attacks), it sits some 15 feet over the tower’s roof, attached to one of the tower’s top appendages. While climbing the appendage isn’t easy (30 feet at DC 20—luckily there are some rudimentary handholds build into the appendage), if a PCs successfully navigates the climb they may discover (Spot DC 10) that the dragonshard is attached to the appendage by a simple, albeit not immediately obvious, pin mechanism. A PC at the top of the appendage can simply pull the pin (a standard action), disrupting the flow of the eldritch energy and disconnecting the link to Spequlum.

Lastly, the PCs can attempt to do a rudimentary fix of the smashed control panel. To do this a PC must succeed three Disable Device checks in a row (DC 20), while standing in one of the three squares occupied by the control panel (and thus within the eldritch aura field). Parts found in the storage chamber (area 7, below) grant a +4 circumstance bonus to these checks.

Once the PCs stop the nerra from coming through the

portals created by the cosmic machine, the adventure is over. The PCs have accomplished what Delvyn Gaunt failed to do. See “Conclusion.”

Scaling the Encounter

2nd-Level Characters (EL 3+): Vrak increase to a 3rd-level warrior (hp 20); see “Combat Statistics,” below.

3rd-Level Characters (EL 4+): Vrak and Drak increase to 3rd-level warriors (hp 20, 20); see “Combat Statistics,” below. Also, nerra exit the mirrors every four rounds.

4th-Level Characters (EL 5+): Vrak and Drak increase to 3rd-level warriors, and are joined by their near-identical cousin, Hrak (hp 20, 20, 20); see “Combat Statistics,” below. Also, nerra exit the mirrors every three round.

7. Storage Chamber (EL 1)

Beltrudelgald booby-trapped this place, but not well. A very simple search (DC 10) discovers signs of a trip cord leading from the door to a glass vat placed precariously at the edge of one of the worktables in this chamber. Those who discover the “trap” can easily disable it as a standard action—no check is required.

If a hasty PC opens the door and trips the trap, read or paraphrase the following.

Before it opens, the door snags. A cord attached to the door at one end pulls down a large glass vat at the other. The container sits precariously at the edge of a table. With a loud and glassy crash, the vat spills its strange thick, purple liquid on to the ground. Within moments the liquid coalesces into a moving ooze. It leaches forward, obviously drawn to a nearby food source—you!

Creature: The ooze is a living *sleep*. It attacks any creature venturing too close until the ooze is killed. If the PCs don’t set off the trap, it stays harmlessly trapped in the enclosed glass cylinder.

Living Sleep: hp 8; see “Combat Statistics,” below.

Under the table with the makeshift trap is a small iron box.

Treasure: The iron box is locked (Very Simple lock DC 20) and is filled with replacement parts for the smashed control panel in area 6. An artificer or someone with knowledge in arcane equipment can figure this out easily (Knowledge [arcana] or artificer knowledge DC 10). A skilled PC can take the parts and attempt to fix the control panel (see above).

Combat Statistics

VRAK AND DRAK

CR 1/2

Male half-orc warrior 1
 CN Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Common, Orc
AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16
hp 8 (1 HD)
Fort +4, **Ref** +1, **Will** +1
Spd 20 ft. (4 squares)
Atk melee masterwork spiked chain +5 (2d4+4)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +4
Abilities Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 8
Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain)
Skills Intimidate +2
Possessions splint mail, masterwork spiked chain.

VRAK (AND MAYBE DRAK AND HRAK)

CR 2

Male half-orc warrior 3
 CN Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Common, Goblin; Draconic
AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16; **AC** 19, touch 13, flat-footed 18 after Vrak drinks potion of *shield of faith*.
hp 20 (3 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +2, **Will** +2
Spd 20 ft. (4 squares)
Atk melee masterwork spiked chain +7 (2d4+4)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +6
Abilities Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 8
Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain), Power Attack
Skills Intimidate +4
Possessions splint mail, masterwork spiked chain, *potion of shield of faith* (+2).

VARROT NERRA

CR 1

N Medium outsider (extraplanar)
Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +6, Spot +6
Languages Common
AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12
hp 5 (1 HD)
Resist Cold 5, Electric 5, Fire 5; **SR** *reflective spell resistance* 13
Fort +3, **Ref** +4, **Will** +3
Weakness sonic vulnerability
Spd 30 ft. (6 squares)
Atk melee shard dagger +3 (1d4+2/19-20 plus wounding)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +1
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st; 1d20+2 to overcome SR) 3/day—*disguise self*, 1/day—*mirror image*
Abilities Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 17
Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency (shard longsword)^B, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (shard dagger)^B, Improved Initiative.
Skills Bluff +7, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +7 (+9 acting), Gather Information +7, Intimidate +5, Listen +6, Knowledge (arcane) +4, Sense Motive +6, Slight of Hand +8, Spot +6.
Possessions shard dagger.

Mirror Jump (Su): Nerras can move through mirrored and reflective surfaces at will. The effect is similar to shadow walk, but the nerra travels through their home plane. Unfortunately because of the current tenuous connection the nerra have with their home plane, they cannot take advantage of this ability.

Reflective Spell Resistance (Sp): a spell resisted bounces off and is reflected back to the caster. The caster becomes either the spell's target or the point of origin for the spell's effect, as appropriate.

Sonic Vulnerability (Ex): All nerras take half again as much (+50%) damage as normal from an attack involving

sonic energy, regardless of whether a saving throw is allowed, of the save is a success or failure.

Shard Weapon: Nerras swords and daggers are made out of the substance of their plane. Resembling the shards of a broken mirror that have been set into a shiny hilt, they look deceptively fragile. In the hands of someone with and Exotic Weapon Proficiency in the weapon they are a +2 *wounding* weapon. Those without the feat wield it awkwardly (-4 penalty to attack rolls) and don't benefit from the *wounding* effect.

KALAREEM NERRA

CR 3

N Medium outsider (extraplanar)
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +8, Spot +8
Languages Common
AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15
hp 19 (3 HD)
Resist Cold 10, Electric 10, Fire 10; **SR** *reflective spell resistance* 15
Fort +5, **Ref** +6, **Will** +5
Weakness sonic vulnerability
Spd 30 ft. (6 squares)
Atk melee shard longsword +9 (1d8+2/19-20 plus wounding)
Full Atk melee 2 shard longsword +5 melee (1d8+3/19-2 [1d8+2/19-20 in off hand] plus wounding)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +4
Attack Options shard spay—3/day
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th; 1d20+12 to overcome SR) 1/day—*mirror image*
Abilities Str 13, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 13
Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency (shard longsword)^B, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (shard dagger)^B, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (shard longsword)^B
Skills Bluff +7, Diplomacy +6, Disguise +7 (+9 acting), Hide +9, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcane) +6, Knowledge (the planes) +6, Listen +8, Move Silently +9, Sense Motive +7, Spot +8
Possessions two shard longswords.

Mirror Jump (Su): Nerras can move through mirrored and reflective surfaces at will. The effect is similar to shadow walk, but the nerra travels through their home plane. Unfortunately because of the current tenuous connection the nerra have with their home plane, they cannot take advantage of this ability.

Reflective Spell Resistance (Sp): a spell resisted bounces off and is reflected back to the caster. The caster becomes either the spell's target or the point of origin for the spell's effect, as appropriate.

Sonic Vulnerability (Ex): All nerras take half again as much (+50%) damage as normal from an attack involving sonic energy, regardless of whether a saving throw is allowed, of the save is a success or failure.

Shard Spray (Su): 3/day—a kalareem can release a 30-ft. cone of mirrorlike shards from it hands that do 3d4 points of damage to all within the cone area. All within the cone get a DC 16 Reflex save for half damage and to avoid further effect. Those who fail their save suffer another 2 points of damage each round, as the wounds persistently bleed. Multiple wounds from this type of attack are cumulative. The bleeding can be stopped with a successful Heal check (DC 10) or the casting of any *cure* spell on the wounded creature.

Shard Weapon: Nerras swords and daggers are made out of the substance of their plane. Resembling the shards of a broken mirror that have been set into a shiny hilt, they look deceptively fragile. In the hands of someone with and Exotic Weapon Proficiency in the weapon they are a +2 *wounding* weapon. Those without the feat wield it awkwardly (-4 penalty to attack rolls) and don't benefit from the *wounding* effect.

Combat Statistics

LIVING SLEEP

CR 1

N Medium ooze

Init -1; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 8 (1 HD); **DR** 10/magic

Immune gaze attacks, visual effects, illusions, mind-affecting spells and abilities, poison, sleep effects, paralysis, polymorph, stunning, critical hits
SR 11

Fort +4, **Ref** +4, **Will** +6

Spd 20 ft. (6 squares)

Atk melee slam +1 (1d4 and *sleep* [DC11])

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +1

Atk Options *sleep*, engulf

Abilities Str 11, Dex 8, Con 11, Int —, Wis 8, Cha 11

Sleep (Su): A creature with 4 Hit Dice or less hit by a living *sleep*'s slam attack or engulfed by it is put to *sleep* for a minute by the spell unless they succeed a DC 11 saving throw.

Engulf (Ex): A living *sleep* can engulf as a standard action. It cannot make a slam attack the round it engulfs. To engulf, a living spell moves over the opponent, who can make an attack of opportunity against the living spell; those who do so are not entitled to a saving throw. Those who forgo the attack of opportunity can attempt a Reflex save (DC 10) to avoid the engulfment. If successful they are pushed back or aside (opponent's choice) as the living spell moves forward. Engulfed creatures are subject each round to the sleep effect on the living spell's turn. They are considered grappled.

is carved in the shape of a rampant bulette, the symbol of the Diggers' Union. "Keep this token with you at all times. With it I can track you and call for your aid when I find more about the matters around your adventure."

Give each character the Story Item: Knowledge of the Nerra.



8. Tower Roof

By the time the PC reach the roof of the observatory, the storm is whipping up a like a frenzy. While it does not affect the characters actions rules-wise, describe the PCs actions as hampered by the weather.

Climbing up and down the observatory is a base DC 15 climb check.

CONCLUSION

If the successful, the PCs should be able to succeed where Delvron Gaunt failed: minimizing the nerra incursion into Eberron, if not stopping it outright.

When they are done Matron Martra expects a report. If you have time, let the player roleplay this, explaining to Marta what they have found. After they are done, Matron Marta tells them the following.

"Fascinating. I can scarcely believe everything you've told me. I had no idea that investigating Delvron Gaunt's murder would uncover such a spectacular chain of events. Let's keep the details of this operation secret. I will share your findings with the union's masters, but talk with no one but me or a Diggers' Union master about these events."

She takes out a number of small necklaces. Each necklace is attached to a small charm made of Eberron dragonshard. Each

ADVENTURE QUESTIONS

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS (of which MARK OF HEROES is part of) tracks character progress digitally. At the adventure's end, you report what the characters did, by answering a number of questions. The answers to those questions are tallied, and determine not only what happens in the campaign, but also the experience points (XP) and gold piece (gp) value increase each character gains.

At the end of this adventure, you'll find the RPGA Session Tracking form, tailored for this adventure. On the section titled "Adventure Questions" fill in the bubble that corresponds to the best answer for the questions below.

Many times the questions ask whether or not the PCs defeated an encounter. Defeating doesn't necessarily mean killing all enemies, but many times such an event suffices as defeating an encounter. Sometimes PCs merely bypass an encounter. Through luck or circumstance a group of PCs can avoid encounters unscathed. Does bypassing an encounter earn the XP that defeating it would? No. The reward for getting past an encounter without actually interacting with it is having extra resources to bear in the next encounter. Where is the line? You are going to have to make that decision, because you are the DM.

For traps, PCs get experience points just for encountering them, whether or not they have been disabled.

Sometimes the PCs' actions don't really fit the actions of a particular adventure question perfectly. This especially happens when you play the adventure using the "Scaling the Encounter" options. In these cases find the answer that best fits the spirit of their results.

1. How well do you think the group investigated the Delvion Gaunt's death?

- a. Really well. The collected clues and set out a reasonable path for following leads.
- b. They did okay. The engaged in most of the mystery, but were anxious to get to other parts of the adventure.
- c. Not well at all. They were really not into the mystery and would rather of spent that time fighting something.

2. Did the PCs discover that creatures were impersonating Mers Vewel or Mrs. Fellon before they reached the Crook Observatory?

- a. Yes
- b. No

3. Did the PCs defeat the goblin and half-orc guardians in the Crook Observatory? (Answer with "b" if you as the DM decided to skip these encounters because the investigation took too long)

- a. They defeated all of the guardians in the observatory.
- b. They defeated two of the three encounters of guardians in the observatory.
- c. They defeated only one encounter involving guardians in the observatory.
- d. They didn't defeat any of the guardians in the observatory.

4. By the end of the adventure ho many nerra escaped into Eberron? (Nur-Zelmor counts in this total)

- a. None
- b. One
- c. Two to five.
- d. Five to 10
- e. Over 10.

5. Did the PCs disable the cosmic machine? And if they did, how did they do it?

- a. They didn't disable the cosmic machine (if you chose this answer, your answer for question 4 must be "d.")
- b. They disable the cosmic machine by destroying the bulk of the machine.
- c. They disable the cosmic machine by shattering or dislodging the dragonshard focus at the roof of the observatory.
- d. They turned off the cosmic machine by fixing the control panel.

6. Rate the group's roleplaying.

- a. Fantastic. Everyone had interesting and engaging characters the interacted with the adventure in very fun ways.
- b. Good. Most everyone had interesting and engaging character that interacted with the adventure in very fun ways.
- c. Okay. There was some roleplaying.
- d. None. They treated the adventure only as a set of objectives. There was no roleplaying.

New Spell

Baleful Transposition

Conjuration (Teleportation)

Level: Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. +5 ft./2 levels)

Targets: Two creatures of up to Large size

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

Two target creatures, of which you may be one, instantly swap positions. The creature must be connected by a solid object, such as the ground, a bridge, or a rope. Both targets must be within range. Objects carried by the subject creatures (up to the creatures' maximum load) go with them, but other creatures do not, even if they are carried. The movement is instantaneous and does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

If either creature succeeds on its Will save, the spell is negated.



Illustration 1

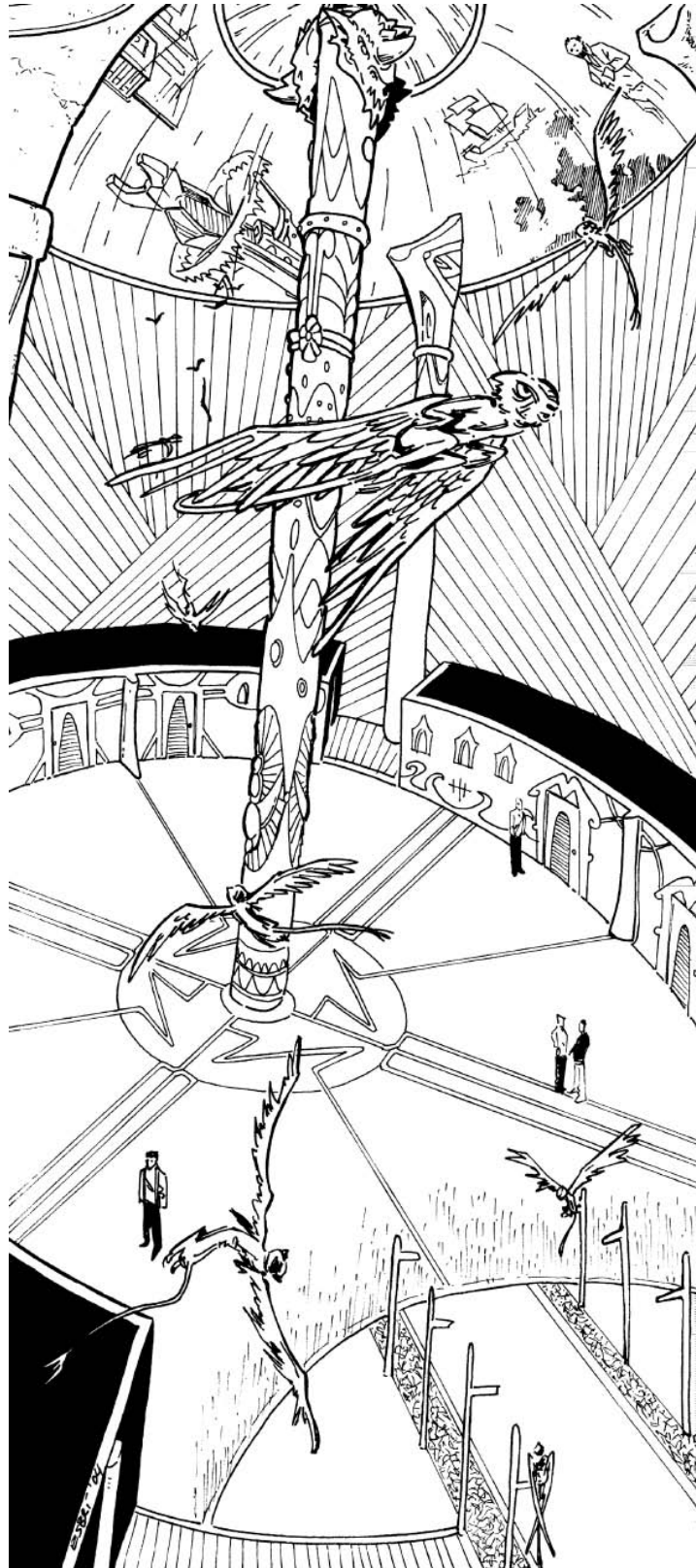


Illustration 2

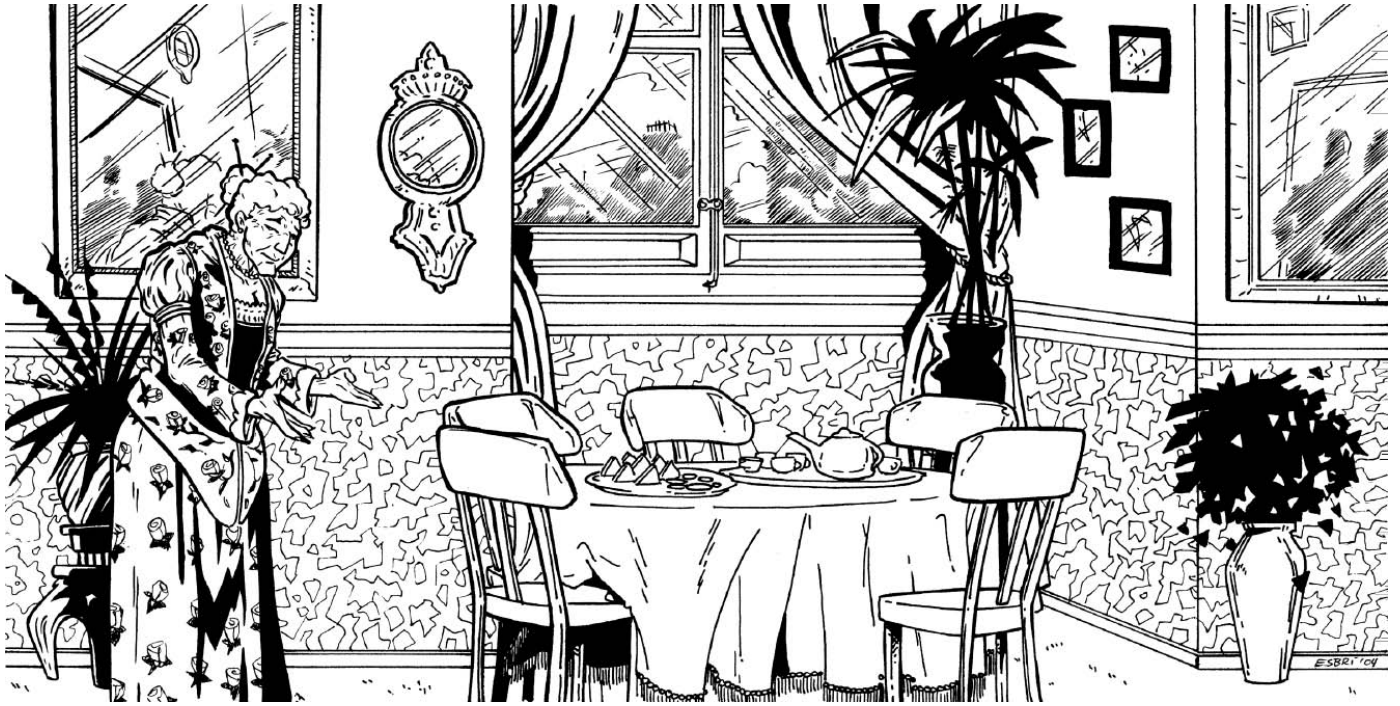


Illustration 3



Illustration 4



Illustration 5

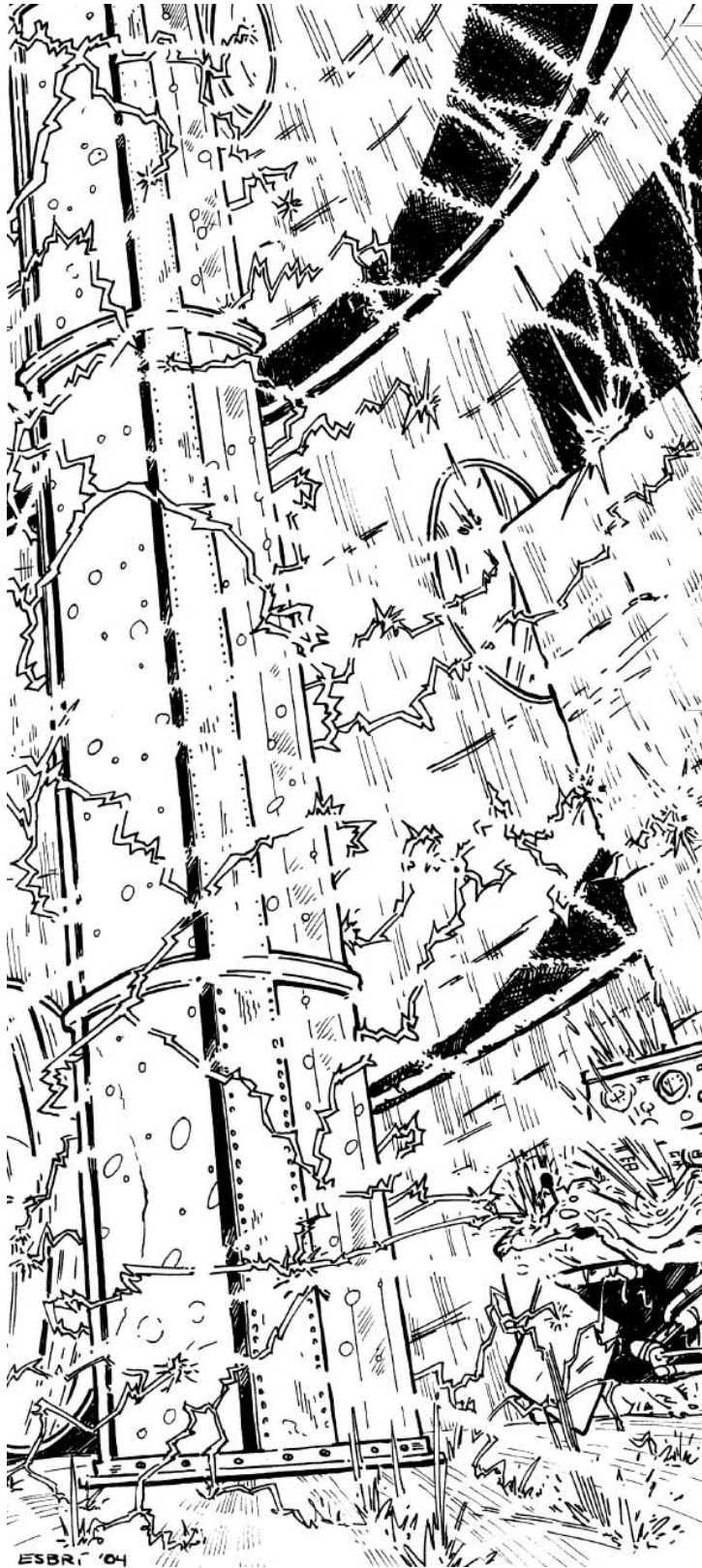


Illustration 6



Illustration 7



Matron Martra



Patron Helcondate



Professor Mers Vevel



Shyva the Red



Story Object: Knowledge of the Nerra

You know of and have encounter a strange—until recently, unknown—outsider race called the nerra. You have helped thwart their plans to send a number of minions from their realm of Speculum to Eberron. Matron Martra of the Grea Tower has asked you to keep this knowledge to yourself, and to only talk about it with herself and the masters of the Diggers' Union. She has warned that she may call upon you if she finds out more concerning the nerra plot. To this ends she has given you a necklace. Attached to a slight gold chain is a charm in the shape of a rampant bulette—the symbol of the Diggers' Union—carved from a piece of Eberron dragonshard. With it she can locate you and contact you, no matter where on Eberron you may be.

While the necklace does radiate faint divination magic, it does not take up your necklace slot. It is too small and its magic is rather inconsequential, as you just need to have the necklace on your person, not around your neck for it to be affective.



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