



THE PROPHECY OF THE
GRAND AMPLIFIER
CAMPAIGN SOURCEBOOK



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“**S**EE WITH EYES UNCLOUDED BY HATE...”

– HAYAO MIYAZAKI’S *PRINCESS MONONOKE*

*This book is dedicated to my wife Laura,
who never questioned why or doubted I could.
She simply believed.*

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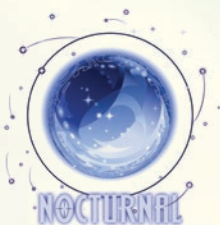
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IN THE AGE OF BROKEN LOGIC, THE GRAND AMPLIFIER WILL APPEAR AND THE LOST RELIC WILL OPEN THE WAY TO THE MIND CHAMBER OF THE PRIMARIES; FOREVER SEALING THE LIGHT FROM THE DARKNESS.

— POSSIBLE TRANSLATION OF THE OPENING LINE FROM THE 587-STANZA MASTERS' INSCRIPTION COMMONLY KNOWN AS *THE PROPHECY OF THE GRAND AMPLIFIER* AND GENERALLY ACKNOWLEDGED AS THE MOST INTELLIGIBLE OF THE ENTIRE EPIGRAPH.

Everyone knows the myth of the Grand Amplifier. A story told by old sailors to skeptical crewmembers and by grandmothers to their wide-eyed grandchildren. A tale of lost science and ultimate Potential, of ancient machines and final hope. The Grand Amplifier was built by the Masters and was their greatest accomplishment — a device that bolstered the least Potential into absolute power. They say whoever finds it first — the Kin or the Children — will burn the other from the skies. Unlike other myths, unlike most old nursery tales, this story is different. This story is true.

THE KNOWN HISTORY

Mentions of the Grand Amplifier appear in several of the oldest legends and stories of the Kin, and the existence of historical references across cultures has lead archaeologists to believe the source of such allusions must predate the DownFall. Though hardly the only tale of lost Masters' science, the story of the Amplifier is the best known, even appearing in children's nursery rhymes.

The inscription, known commonly as the *PROPHECY OF THE GRAND AMPLIFIER*, was first discovered in Cycle 87.3 UC, in an otherwise unremarkable Masters'

cache subsequently named the Archive, on the upwind border of the Dark. The text, burned into an alloy wall, appears to have been written by hand using some sort of powerful arcanoelectrical tool. The bulkhead was eventually cut free of the structure and delivered to the Explorers' Academy for study. For over 70 cycles, definitive translation has eluded the Guild's best minds, and scholars continue to debate the meaning of the engraving. The inscription appears to document the creation of the Amplifier and provides basic instructions regarding its use — or as some translators believe, a dire warning against such activation.

Many Kin scholars have studied the Prophecy and a hundred other cryptic records. Countless archeologists and explorers have voyaged across the skies from high in the Arids to deep into the Dark. Many have died in the pursuit and more have died of old age, with dreams of discovering the Amplifier unfulfilled. The Guild has sponsored a dozen official expeditions over the cycles, and various governments, religious groups and even private individuals have undertaken twice that number. In the end, the wasted effort, expense and lives have only served to convince most everyone that if the Amplifier did exist, it was destroyed long ago, or more likely, it has never been anything other than myth.



— MODERATOR'S EYES ONLY —

If you are not running this campaign, stop reading now!

THE UNKNOWN HISTORY

As described in the *UPWIND* corebook, whatever the world was before, it was demolished when the Ethos, ancestors of the Children of the Dark, rebelled against the Masters of the Wind, sabotaging their greatest invention, the Grand Amplifier. The resulting cataclysm shattered existence, destroyed the Masters and all but eradicated the ancestors of both Kin and Child, scattering them across the broken skies.

A thousand cycles passed — long enough for the truth to be forgotten and for legends to grow in its ruins. The Kin survived and evolved new cultures, eventually coming to believe they had lost everything when the Masters vanished. The Children hid in the Dark, growing ever warier, fearing their overlords' return.

The Grand Amplifier was actually a dispersed array of building-sized machines, and though most were destroyed when the core device was sabotaged by the Ethos rebels, a few remain adrift, scattered and lost, in the deepest parts of the Dark. If even one node could be salvaged and reactivated, it could change the world a second time. Kin legends claim it could be used as a weapon to destroy the Children of the Dark once and for all. The Primaries of the Children fear that it could be used to return the Masters to the world and restore their reign of tyranny.

THIS BOOK

THE PROPHECY OF THE GRAND AMPLIFIER is an ambitious resource for the *UPWIND* roleplaying game and is intended to serve several purposes. This book is:

- A setting spanning and potentially setting altering campaign that takes characters across the skies of Upwind and deep into the enigmatic Dark.
- An adventure that takes new characters from their earliest clocks at the Explorers' Academy through the world-changing events of the Third Incursion and the tale that will make them legends.

- A tour de force of the various kinds of adventures that can be had and stories that can be told in the world of Upwind.
- A resource for pre-generated, airborne encounters and Academy flashbacks, as well as examples of and inspiration for stakes-building in the Q system.
- A sourcebook for the *UPWIND* setting — including new heroes and villains, unique locales, strange Masters' caches, nefarious organizations, powerful relics, pirate crews, dangerous foes and more.

ESSENTIAL APPENDICES

In addition to the general index, there are three appendices at the end of this book. The first contains the Academy Flashbacks that are a conceit of the *Upwind RPG*; moderators planning to include them as part of the campaign should review the guidelines provided at the beginning of that section. The second provides a variety of aerial encounters moderators can insert during any of the many voyages the characters make during the adventure to increase the drama and challenge of these journeys. The third is an index of the setting information “callout boxes” that are found throughout the book — the people, places and things the characters are likely to encounter. Collectively, these boxes offer a wealth of general setting material that moderators can use in their own *UPWIND* adventures. This list is intended to make scanning for specific kinds of information quick and easy.

CAMPAIGN BACKSTORY

It is Cycle 201.3 UC, and many believe the Kingdoms in the Light are on the brink of war — that the Third Incursion of the Children of the Dark may have already begun. Though the Guild has begun a precautionary mobilization, most national governments, either out of ignorance, lack of political will or limited resources, are reluctant to follow its lead.



The Guild fears the delay will leave the realms exposed should another Incursion begin in earnest, so it has initiated a number of contingencies to help close the gaps in its defenses.

One such contingency is secret and unofficial. It involves a small conspiracy within the Guild that is clandestinely working with counterparts among the Children of the Dark to stave off invasion and ultimately bring peace to both realms. Its members refer to themselves as the Embassy. The group has its origins in the unlikely meeting of Guild Captain Abram Doe and the Child warrior Leader of Killers (briefly described in the NPC section of the *UPWIND* corebook). They have managed, haltingly at first, but with more success in recent cycles, to maintain limited communications by means of a dead drop hidden on the same skyland on which they were once stranded together. Marked with a waypoint lodestone, they use the excuse of conducting scouting missions to leave messages for each other.

Though the group consists of several dozen trusted captains, Knights, liegemen and civilians, the leaders of the Kin side of the Embassy are Captain Abram Doe — the group's founder — and Captain Phineas Truk, a noted Guild navigator and longtime mentor of Captain Doe.

Though the Embassy membership has reason to suspect that Doe has at least tacit operational approval from High Captain Fey, Abram staunchly denies the Guild's commander knows anything; thereby maintaining deniability. The members of the conspiracy know they would be charged with treason and likely executed if their secret got out. More importantly, they know the Guild would suffer irreparable political consequences; thus secrecy and deniability have been their watchwords, and most everything they do is managed through carefully chosen proxies.

The singular goal of the Embassy is to establish meaningful diplomatic relations between the Kin and the Children. Every member is convinced this is the only way to assure the survival of both races. Unfortunately, recent communiqués from Leader of Killers indicate the Children are expanding their fleet with a new class of warship and increasing

their upwind patrols, so the Embassy and the Guild are forced to continue preparing for war.

The latest messages have also provided other troubling news. It appears that, despite what most Kin may think about the Grand Amplifier, there are those among the Children who believe it is real and who are preparing a major expedition to find it. Captain Truk, a long-standing believer in the Amplifier's existence, is deeply concerned about this report. Despite the dismissive attitudes of the rest of the Embassy, he has conceived a desperate plan that even he believes may be crazy.

Truk has spent much of his career — and professional credibility — seeking a functioning version of a notable relic: an artifact known as the Eye of the Navigator. The last working Eye was supposedly lost in Cycle 54.8 UC when the Alliance Knights' flagship *DOMINION* went missing with all hands while — ironically — on a mission to establish diplomatic contact with the Children.

Archive records indicate the Eye, when activated by a strong Potential user, provides that adept with a course to wherever he wishes to go, regardless of the user's distance to or lack

COMPLICATING FACTORS

As is the fate of any secret known by more than one person, the Embassy is not quite as secret as its members believe. There are several factions — rival or otherwise — that have discovered that Doe and his associates are engaged in clandestine operations, and have invested resources to discover what Doe and company are up to. To date, no one organization has more than fragmentary information, but it is only a matter of time before the Embassy is compromised. Though moderators are encouraged to use any existing organizations — Guild Intelligence, the Consul Assembly, the Delvers' Society — the Cabal is used to further complicate the lives of the characters.



of familiarity with the destination. Though several components of this rare device have come into Truk's possession over the cycles, he has yet to acquire a working version, or be able to repair the parts he has collected.

Truk's contingency plan — as unlikely as it sounds — depends on acquiring a working Eye and using it to beat the Child expedition to the Grand Amplifier. Not yet crazy enough to believe the stories of ultimate power, Truk is sane enough to know he does not want to risk the Children finding the Amplifier first. In fact, perhaps the crazier part of his plan is not that he wants to use the Amplifier, but rather that he wants to destroy it, denying it to anyone just in case the legends about the artifact are true.

When, through his role as a relic assayer for the Quartermaster's Office, Truk learns of a unique collection of recently salvaged artifacts being auctioned by the Delves' Society in Skyreach, he realizes his plan may not be so desperate after all. More out of fondness for an old teacher than belief in his plan, Doe arranges for the purchase of the salvage lot in question, only to have it stolen in the midst of making the deal. Truk, desperate to recover the salvage, convinces a reluctant Doe to pull

THE CABAL

Once an organization in name only, the Coalition of Independent States (see the *UPWIND* corebook) has, in recent cycles, become a notable political bloc in its own right. Though Guild Intelligence has yet to confirm its suspicions, many believe that the mysterious cabal of operatives that have been collecting intelligence on, and interfering with, Guild operations over the last cycle has been doing both at the behest of the CIS. Something as illegal and politically charged as the Embassy's activities would certainly draw the attention of the Cabal should it come across any evidence of the conspiracy.

THREE BEASTS

Moderators may opt to include Ross Payton's *THREE BEASTS* stretch goal adventure as part of this campaign. The secret faction behind the scenario's plans and the assassins who plague the characters involved in that story would certainly be interested in any attempt to engage in diplomatic relations with other Children of the Dark. In fact, perhaps more than any other rival, they would be motivated to see the Embassy fail.

some strings and have some local ranking journeymen — recent students in fact — sent after the stolen goods.

Enter the player characters...

CAMPAIGN SUMMARY

Assuming the players engage the campaign and work to accomplish its missions as written, the adventure should generally play out in the following sequence:

PROLOGUE: THE LESSON

The campaign opens with a short flash-forward scene of a ship-to-ship battle with a pair of Child of the Dark corvettes, immediately followed by the first Academy flashback — the characters' first combat training experience as Guild Novices.

CHAPTER 1: THE EYE

The first chapter sends the journeyman characters on a manhunt across the Kingdoms in the Light as they attempt to apprehend the hapless smuggler, Igor the Under, as he flees from one unwelcoming refuge to another. The characters voyage from Skyreach to Vault and then to Tempest, challenged all the while by the odd, Potential-powered luck of their quarry. The chapter ends in the open skies of Horizon where the party must extricate Igor from his enemies aboard the Vagabond Fleet; in the process

recovering a priceless relic the thief didn't even know he possessed.

CHAPTER 2: THE MASK

The second chapter sends the newly knighted characters on their graduation cruise, commanding a small but vital salvage expedition into the Twilight Frontier for their mentor, Captain Truk. The goal of the mission is the recovery of a working version of the Mask of the Navigator; that is the easy part. While searching for the Mask, the party must defend the camp from a breeding pair of dark dragons, rescue crew kidnapped by a local dweller tribe and ultimately fend off a deadly ambush by a Child patrol.

CHAPTER 3: THE HELM

The third chapter has the characters returning from recent deployments to the front and being recruited as proxies by the Embassy. In a series of increasingly dubious — and even illegal — activities, they must negotiate with the Metal Man of Hole, extricate his daughter from a naval prison work camp in the Cloud Principality, infiltrate the Principality's secret Masters' cache and finally gain access to what Truk hopes is a working version of the Helm of the Navigator.

CHAPTER 4: THE EMBASSY

In the fourth chapter, the murder of Captain Truk leads to a dangerous manhunt for his killers. There are revelations about Truk's unlikely plan and the involvement of the Cabal. Subsequent orders from Captain Doe bring the party to the front, where they are ordered to play their parts as dutiful patrol officers. After proving their mettle, the characters are fully initiated into the Embassy and sent into the Dark to an unexpected rendezvous with their Child co-conspirators that soon becomes a treacherous rescue mission.

CHAPTER 5: THE AMPLIFIER

In the campaign finale, the new and unlikely allies must infiltrate Harbor, the homeport of the Child navy, and hijack a specially designed exploration vessel known as the

A QUEST

At its heart, *THE PROPHECY OF THE GRAND AMPLIFIER* campaign is an item quest. The classic story structure in which the characters are motivated to seek an object of power — the Amplifier — to achieve a great purpose. As with all quest-type adventures, the structure of this campaign is somewhat linear, with the characters proceeding, more or less, from one location and objective to the next. In addition, due to the ambitious intention of taking characters from their earliest clocks at the Academy to their fate as legendary heroes, only a limited number of side quests and red herrings could be fit into the text. Though ultimately a matter of page limits, this lack should encourage moderators to add their own content, complications and character subplots to the tale.

UNIQUE PLAYS

Throughout this book, there are suggested stakes for likely or key encounters. All moderators know, however, that players seldom follow the script and so should anticipate having to call for plays and offer stakes for events that emerge from the interests, plans and goals unique to their group — plays that resolve what their specific players want to do and accomplish. Creating and negotiating such stakes is a fun part of the Q system; moderators are encouraged to cannibalize from those in the text or just use them for guidance and inspiration as needed.



SUGGESTED STAKES

Throughout this campaign there are suggestions for when, why and how to make specific plays. In most cases, these suggestions are accompanied with sample stakes intended to provide guidance and inspiration, or to be used as written if the participants wish. The notation used to present these suggestions is simple but merits explanation.

Each suggested stakes has two sections — one presenting stakes for the players and one presenting stakes for the moderator. Suggestions marked with a “•” represent basic resolutions for the suggested encounter. Sometimes there are more than one of these, representing parallel elements or alternative basic outcomes. Suggestions marked with a “+” represent additional outcomes that could be included to add complications or raise the stakes, and the associated challenge levels, if the participants wish.

The moderator header includes a notation “(#)” to suggest the challenge level for plays including only the basic • stakes. The moderator is encouraged to increase the challenge level, as well as play higher cards, when additional + or custom stakes are negotiated and included in given plays.

For an example of this notation in use, see the following prologue section and the suggested stakes for resolving the attack on the EGS *FAITHFUL*.

LANCE OF FATE. They must use the *FATE* to penetrate the Wrack Wall, a bizarre Potential obstacle deep within the Dark, beyond which, the Eye tells them, lies the Grand Amplifier. If they manage to steal the ship, survive crossing the Wall and succeed in locating the Amplifier, they discover shocking truths about the history of the Kin and are forced to make choices that could alter the fate of the world. That

is, assuming the Child warships chasing them don't arrive first.

EPILOGUE

The party faces the consequences of their final decision regarding the Grand Amplifier. This section offers several divergent and distinct campaign endings dependent on what the characters chose to do with the ancient device.

PROLOGUE: THE LESSON

The *PROPHECY OF THE GRAND AMPLIFIER* campaign opens *in medias res* with a chaotic ship-to-ship battle taking place in the Twilight Frontier. As moderators begin the game, they should resist providing exposition or explanations, and instead focus only on what's happening in the moment. Describe the situation like any other RPG action scene, and ask the players how their characters respond. If the players balk or insist on answers, encourage them to enjoy the suspense of the storytelling technique, and assure them everything will eventually become clear.

The characters are in command of a small frigate, the *EGS FAITHFUL*, and are being attacked by two Child of the Dark corvettes. The battle is taking place in the dim skies above a small skyland and the Knights are defending an active salvage camp deployed on the island. The Child vessels appeared without warning from the surrounding darkness and have pinned the *FAITHFUL* against the skyland in a withering crossfire.

The dark metal hulls of the Child ships look like fire-spitting predators as they attack. Cannon and arc fire light the sky with brilliant flashes as explosions drown out the screaming of the injured. Warriors crowd the rails of both Child vessels, and it's clear they plan to board the Guild ship after weakening her defenses.

As the ships close the range, a pair of large, spider-like machines leap from their bows to the deck of the *FAITHFUL* and begin rampaging through the defenders. Autonomous war cogs of clearly ancient design, these devices are twice the height of a Kin and equipped with a deadly array of scything blades.

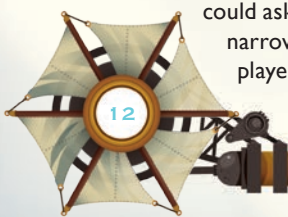
Call for one or more plays to resolve the attack. With four players or fewer, moderators could ask for individual plays with narrow stakes. With more players, or to speed play

along, moderators could ask for one collective play with broader stakes. Since this scene is out of place chronologically — a flash-forward — remember to be careful not to agree to stakes that will likely contradict or apply undue limits on the game to come. At the time of this battle, the characters are recent Academy graduates with full card hands and access to their Knights' caches.

If moderators have players new to the Q system at their tables, they are encouraged to use this encounter as a tutorial to show how the basic mechanics work.

Player Stakes

- A character succeeds in disabling the enemy cannons, preventing a dozen deaths among the *FAITHFUL*'s crew.
- A Knight starts a fire aboard the enemy vessel, granting the next play in the combat a single cache card.
- Using Potential, a character is able to kill one of the Child circuit helmsmen, which forces the vessel to disengage.
- + The Child ships are driven off decisively enough to give the party and crew a bell-long respite to either prepare for another attack or evacuate the skyland.
- + One of the enemy ships disintegrates in a ball of flame when its ammunition magazine detonates.
- + Hand-to-hand fighting with the enemy crew kills enough officers to drive off the Child vessel as its command structure fails.
- + One of the enemy ships is forced down on the skyland and her crew is captured.
- + This battle becomes famous as the Skirmish at Ambush Skyland, and the entire crew earns commendations for their exemplary actions. One of the Knights is even asked to





present a case study as part of the Academy's Advanced Naval Tactics course.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The *FAITHFUL* is forced to withdraw to avoid being destroyed.
- The loser of a luck draw must make a major wound draw.
- The Child ships disable the *FAITHFUL*, which is forced to crash-land on the nearby skyland, stranding the crew and the party.
- Half the *FAITHFUL*'s crew is injured or killed in the battle, and they lose faith in the leadership of the Knights, earning the players a I-card innate challenge cache whenever the crew is asked to do anything risky.
- The loser of a luck draw sees one of his crewmen chopped to pieces by one of the automations, and is so traumatized by the sight that he gains a I-card innate challenge cache whenever he fights similar machines in the future.
- Despite the tactical necessity, the fact they abandoned their charges haunts the party for the rest of its clocks, earning the group

a 2-card innate challenge cache representing said guilt that can be used against any party member when narratively appropriate. However, despite their sense of failure, the Knights all receive commendations for saving their ship in the face of overwhelming odds.

After the play is made, describe the action and immediate outcomes but stop short of resolving the battle entirely and suspend the action, leaving room for it to continue when the narrative eventually catches up. Instead, explain to the players how the scene was a flash-forward happening at an indeterminate time after the opening of the campaign. Again, avoid exposition, but once the players are tracking, explain that the story is now jumping backward, not to the game present, but further into the past, to the characters' first Academy Flashback.

Play through **FB4: Painful Lessons**, page 141.

After resolving the flashback and awarding any bonus or challenge caches that result, tell the players the story is now moving to the game present and continue play with chapter 1.

CHAPTER 1: THE EYE

SYNOPSIS

The characters receive orders to apprehend a notorious Vaultish smuggler known as Igor the Under, who stole a shipment of Masters' salvage as its sale was being negotiated between the Delves' Society and the Guild. The trail begins in a Skyreach jail and leads to the nefarious skyfront of Vault, the battle-scarred hills of Tempest, the bustling gangways of Cliffside and ultimately to the criminal armada of the Vagabond Fleet. Along the way, the journeymen have to chase their quarry, investigate leads, negotiate with criminals and fight their way from port to port. As their hapless fugitive moves from bolt hole to bolt hole leaving a trail of angry, onetime allies in his wake, the question becomes, who will get to the smuggler first: the journeymen or one of Igor's seemingly countless enemies?

This chapter is intended to provide players new to the game with an introductory voyage across the Kingdoms in the Light, as well as

some grounding context within the setting. Though the chapter ultimately sets up the main story, this section could be played as a stand-alone adventure separate from the rest of the events of the *Grand Amplifier*. Alternatively, it could just as easily be dropped from the story with little effect to shorten the overall campaign.

As moderators prepare to run chapter 1, it is helpful to keep a couple things in mind:

- Remember that as ranking journeymen near graduation, the players have full play and Potential hands. They don't yet have their Knights' blades or caches, however, and they don't carry the advantage, confidence and public authority of being full Knights.
- Moderators should be sure that as the players pursue Igor across the realms, they are careful to avoid agreeing to stakes that result in his outright capture until they are ready to end the chase.

PART 1: ONE MAN'S JUNK

The chapter opens with the characters' boat crew in their last quarter-cycle as ranking journeymen, working out of the main Guild House in the city of Sky in the nation of Skyreach. They are called into the office of the local Guild commander, Captain Ana Gorry, and ordered to take over the investigation of the theft of a small lot of Masters' salvage that the Delves' Society of Skyreach was selling to the Guild. She explains that the negotiations had just been completed when the crates containing the salvage went missing from a well-guarded skyfront warehouse.

Suspecting an inside job, local law enforcement quickly apprehended a customs clerk — Renly Wot — who, after some rather hard questioning, admitted to his part in the theft. Based on Wot's claim that the salvage had already left Skyreach, and wanting to relieve themselves of the hassle, the local authorities invoked a clause in the Convocation Treaty concerning international smuggling, and asked the Guild to take over the investigation. Acting under orders from Headquarters, Gorry commands the players' boat crew to track down the fugitive and the missing salvage.



CAPTAIN GORRY

Ana Gorry is a well-respected Knight serving a vital role as the Guild ambassador to Skyreach. She is soft-spoken but strong-willed and not to be underestimated. She is decisive when necessary but does not act rashly. She is an able, if blunt, diplomat and a respected leader. She rose through the ranks the hard way and is famous within the Order for her heroics at the Battle of Fort Alabaster. Given the strained diplomatic relations between Skyreach and most other Kingdoms in the Light, her position is an important one, and it's not a coincidence that Gorry is Skyreach by birth. Though still young, her name is often brought up in conversations about successors to the Guild's current High Captain, Fey.

Gorry is a 13.6 cycle old Wind adept. She has the dark hair and height of her Gale ancestors and dresses conservatively save for her collection of fine — if overworked — Dimmish boots. The captain famously carries her Knights' blade everywhere — even into official meetings and formal social events.

Gorry explains that Guild command has a specific interest in the provenance of this particular lot of Masters' salvage and has made its recovery a priority. It appears that some of the items could prove essential to research being conducted by the well-known navigational technologist, Captain Phineas Truk; he has apparently used his connections to push the recovery order through. She emphasizes that since the player characters were onetime protégés of Truk, he has asked for their help specifically. While the characters should be moved to diligence by his confidence, the players may wonder at the unlikely coincidence. If so, simply remind them that when prophecy is involved, coincidence is usually called fate.

JUSTICARS

The Skyreach Justicars are an effective national police force known for “always getting their man.” Their logistical and intelligence elements are impressive, and given their access to Skyreach technology, so is their equipment and armaments. Most carry bottle wands and wear body armor when on duty. The corps suffers from a reputation for preferential service to the upper class and jackbooted practices among the poor.

Play through **FB19 — Connections**, page 149.

Resume play with the characters arriving at the local headquarters of the Skyreach Justicars, the national police of the wealthy and cosmopolitan nation. As there is a history of professional rivalry between Skyreach and the Guild — one in which Skyreach seems the perpetual underdog — the party should be treated with officiousness and a brittle sense of superiority whenever they interact with local bureaucrats and administrators.

In fact, when they arrive at the Justicar's hall, they are made to wait for no real reason and then asked to leave any weapons outside the holding area. When they are finally admitted to the prisoner's cell it is only under the supervision of a large and humorless Justicar chaperone named Holger. In addition, a representative of the Delvers' society, a severe and skeptical woman named Rakel, observes the interview, taking lots of notes in a small ledger.

INTERROGATING MR. WOT

How the players approach the interview is up to their creativity and roleplaying skills. Renly was a low-level clerk whose ambitions outweighed his sense of self-preservation. An easy mark for a grifter like Igor, his arrest was perhaps inevitable. Renly is small, weaselly and prone to alternating between outbursts of false bravado and pleading. He won't do well in prison and knows it.



THE DELVERS' SOCIETY

The Society is a famous company of salvagers that operates out of Sky. They are second only to the Guild in their success rates and have brought considerable wealth, technology and prestige to Skyreach. With a fleet of only three dozen ships, and perhaps 5,000 salvagers and crew, the Society is tiny compared to the Guild, but their writ of operation is also much narrower. Perhaps unsurprisingly then, that the crews of Delver ships include many smug and swaggering dandies in fancy hats who turn their daring reputations into social clout among the elite of Sky society.

The Society's political capital has grown along with its wealth, and accordingly its operations and administrative decisions have become politically significant. Its leadership has therefore adopted many practices more in keeping with nation-states than businesses. The Delvers now have congressional representatives, municipal investments, internal security personnel and a small cadre of what they refer to as "negotiators" who are given a variety of clandestine jobs and missions.

The Delvers' Society's acquisition of political power has become a point of growing concern for the Congress of Lords — Skyreach's ruling oligarchy. For the time being, their interests align, but the Congress recognizes the growing potential for future conflict.

Renly can reveal the following to successful investigators:

- His accomplice was a Vaultish smuggler of some reputation known as Igor the Under. Renly emphasizes that the plan was all Igor's idea, and that he only went along with it "out of fear."
- Given the Guild's interest in this salvage, Renly assumed it was a particularly valuable lot, and he passed this information on to Igor.
- Igor and the salvage are long gone. Renly provided documents that got the crates cleared by Skyreach customs and transferred to Igor's ship, the *FORTUNE MAKER*. He claims the ship left three clocks ago and the journeymen can verify this by checking with the customs office.
- Igor put about that he was headed to Horizon, but Renly overheard Igor talking to one of his crew about plotting the fastest series of waypoints to the city of Haven in Vault.

Renly may dread going to prison, but he is not stupid. He knows his only hope is to parlay information about Igor into a lighter sentence. Call for a play as the characters roleplay the interrogation.

Player Stakes

- The journeymen convince Renly to give up his accomplice's name.
- Renly also reveals Igor's ship name and when it left port.
- Renly reveals Igor's actual destination.

Moderator Stakes (I)

- Afraid of what they might do to snitches in prison, Renly tells the journeymen Igor's name but convinces them he is headed to Verdant.
- Renly convinces the journeymen he was just a patsy and gets them to pull strings to reduce his sentence.
- Renly plays the journeymen so thoroughly that not only are they the laughing stock of the Justicar's office, but word gets back to Gorry and she sends along a senior and very stoic liegeman named Norrels to babysit the players during the rest of the investigation.

SERGEANT NORRELS

Norrels is the quintessential "liege-man lifer" — well-trained, exceptionally experienced and extremely loyal to the Guild. He is supremely competent in his duties and has the uncanny ability to accurately anticipate what his commanders need before they know they need it. He is aging, but still fit enough, making up for any limitations with dirty tricks and dirtier fighting. He prefers using as few words as possible when communicating with officers, both for the sake of clarity and to minimize the possibility of "expressing an inappropriate level of enthusiasm." Though he actually has a well-developed sense of humor, he long ago cultivated such a stoic exterior that now one could never guess he is often laughing heartily on the inside.

If Norrels is assigned to the journeymen as their "adjutant," he should be used by the moderator to provide periodic comic relief via dry sarcasm, alternating with "insightful suggestions" to help advance the plot.

THE STOLEN LOT

The characters may ask for a manifest of the missing salvage lot, which, after some more artificial delays, can be provided by a clerk at the Delver's Society. The contents mean little to any characters without technical or salvaging attributes. Those with arcanaelectrical knowledge recognize several things on the list, though nothing apparently unique, and realize it represents a small fortune on the open salvage market. The innocuous-seeming items that have drawn Truk's attention, however, are the harness device, the interfacing mask and the glass spheroid, which he believes may be components of an Eye of the Navigator.



DELVER SOCIETY SALVAGE AUCTION LOT 186-A-23

- 80 pounds, high grade, refurbishable Masters' components, conduit and circuits, various
- 6 count, branching conduit splitters — 2 partials and one braided
- 5 count, minor class alloy accessories — unidentified
- 3 count, alignment dividers
- 2 count, malleable conduit adapter rings — one fully discharged
- 1 each, type-3 harness device — with crudely severed actuating conduits
- 1 each, partially melted interfacing mask — with burned out leads and missing lens
- 1 each, dull-blue, elemental glass spheroid — with circumscribing ring of connecting studs

If the journeymen fail to get the truth out of Renly, feel free to imply that they do not really trust everything he said, giving them the chance to broaden their local investigation. Additionally, the Justicars conducted their own interrogation before the journeymen arrived, and if the party panders a little, the officers might even share some of the missing details.

MAKING A FORTUNE

If the characters check with Skyreach customs, a clerk reports that the paperwork lists Verdant as the *FORTUNE's* destination, but the harbormaster's log claims the ship departed on a downwind course in the direction of the Lowlands. Associated plays could involve bureaucratic outmaneuvering, strong-arming or even

SKY

The capital of Skyreach is unique in the Kingdoms. The city is built on and within a single Masters' artifact — an ancient, artificial skyland. Built as it is on the skeleton of some older purpose, the layout is awkward and confusing to foreigners, and many of the buildings, streets and subterranean passageways that make up the metropolis had to be retrofitted to better suit current needs. The extruded, stone-like material of which the city is constructed is dark green, fine-grained and difficult to quarry, cut or shape.

Sky has a deserved reputation for being one of the most sophisticated and technologically advanced cities in the realms, and as the characters move through the metropolis, moderators should emphasize the unique and innovative infrastructure. Cog-driven arc trams provide ready transportation everywhere and the power grids are stable and comprehensive. Audiograph lines crisscross the city, arc lamps illuminate the underground streets and a complex canal and pipe system provides both exceptional water and sewage services to all — assuming, of course, that the recipients can pay.

Sky has a parallel reputation for marked classism, created by the pursuit of wealth, and prizes technological advancements over socioeconomic improvements. Accordingly, there is a wide divide between the small upper class and the large lower class. As a result, the distribution of resources and infrastructure is uneven, and there are parts of Sky that are very dangerous for anyone who is not from the local neighborhood.



bribing officials. Other plays could involve tapping underworld contacts or legwork around the skyfront, talking to chandlers, bartenders and doxies about the crew of the *FORTUNE MAKER*.

If the characters find themselves in a shady part of the skyfront seeking information on Igor or his ship, it is inevitable that they'll run afoul of a local gang of thugs looking to roll some unwary foreigners. Given that they are only journeymen, and don't have Knights' blades with which to identify themselves, the characters will likely have to deter the thugs by more direct means. Given that a deadly altercation between the Guild and local citizens would only add to the political tension between Skyreach and the Guild, and put a big black mark on the characters' careers, it is in their best interests to resolve the encounter without bloodshed. The journeymen are likely therefore to depend on their Potential to intimidate the gang members.

Player Stakes

- The thugs are frightened off without bloodshed.
- The thugs are embarrassed enough that they are unlikely to talk about their encounter with "Guildies" snooping around the skyfront.
- The party is able to interrogate a gang member and confirm the *Fortune Maker* is bound for *Haven*.
- The party also learns there were some local "fixers" — not Justicars — paying well for information about the *FORTUNE MAKER* and Igor the Under. The gang members, and therefore the players, would have no way of knowing this, but these fixers are Delves' Society negotiators.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- Several of the thugs are hurt badly enough that they need immediate medical attention.
- The character with the lowest luck draw suffers a minor wound.
- At least one of the thugs is killed in the skirmish, and the party is forced to report it to the Justicars.

ESPEN AND TOVE

These Delver "negotiators" are experienced and competent, and both are capable Potential adepts — Espen even having been drummed out of the Explorer Knights' Academy for "questions of psychological fitness." They are not psychotic or willingly violent, but they do have a flexible morality that makes them particularly effective in their chosen line of work. They are focused and loyal to the Society, but only because they are well paid.

Tove is a short man with straw-colored hair and bland features who easily blends into a crowd. Espen is a tall, somewhat ugly woman with dark hair and intense, pale-blue eyes that can make her stand out. Both are good at disguising themselves and operating within a variety of cultures. They are always well-armed, and when fighting together, they can threaten even a Knight.

- Word gets back to the Guild via the Justicars about the "reckless incompetents" assigned to the investigation, and if she has not already done so, Captain Gorry assigns Norrels to supervise the boat crew.

INTERESTED PARTY

The Delves' Society of Skyreach has a growing reputation for ability and service, of which they are very protective. Given that this theft occurred right under their noses, they are particularly interested in making an example of Igor the Under. Accordingly, Rakel has sent the Society's own agents after Igor: "Negotiators" Espen and Tove. Despite their euphemistic titles, these agents have no intention of arbitrating anything and are unconcerned about running afoul of inexperienced journeymen. Their plan is to find and interrogate — then make a bloody example of — the smuggler.



PART 2: SMUGGLER'S HAVEN

Upon reporting to Gorry, the Captain orders the party to take command of the small cutter *EGS DECISIVE* and pursue the smuggler. Gorry is soft-spoken and competent, but something about how she delivers her orders convinces the characters they are coming from above and Gorry does not know why this small-time crime is worth so much of her limited resources. She also makes it clear she believes the journeymen are being given far too much responsibility with a ship command.

Moderators who want to add additional action or excitement to the voyage should feel free to insert any regionally appropriate airborne encounters from Appendix 2 along the way.

Play though **FB3 — Introductions**, page 140.

DIRTY SKIES

Haven is a fast, six-clock, downwind sail from Skyreach; given the nation's bandit-ridden skies, this is the perfect time for the party to encounter pirates. In this case, privateers ostensibly in the service of the corrupt Vaultish Parliament.

On the Vaultish border, about a clock out from Haven, the *DECISIVE's* crew catches the sound of sporadic cannon fire on the wind, and a short time later the lookouts report a sighting. Two ships are exchanging chaser fire as the smaller vessel flees toward a dark cloudbank, likely seeking cover. The Explorer Knights' Vow should compel the party to intervene, but if for some reason they decide to sail on and avoid the encounter, so be it. However, the group should earn a 2-card story challenge cache the moderator can use whenever the Knights face a situation involving personal honor or Guild responsibility.

Assuming the journeymen intervene, as they close with the vessels, they discover that the larger is a well-armed frigate flying Vaultish colors and that the smaller ship is a stocky merchantman out of Horizon. The characters also realize they have only two basic options — join the fight on one side or the other or interpose

their vessel between the two and signal for parlay. The *DECISIVE* has good position to intercept, but the party must decide quickly or the whole thing will become even more complicated as the ships enter the looming clouds.

One of the privateer crews the Vaultish Parliament hired to serve in its so-called navy tried to shake down the unsuspecting Horizonian merchantman. Indignant, and fearing the financially crippling loss of his cargo, the merchant captain bolted in hopes of reaching the cloud cover and escaping the other vessel. Enter the *DECISIVE*.

EGS DECISIVE

Poorly armed, but very fast, this small cutter is typically assigned courier duties. She has a standing crew of 25 sailors and stores enough for half a round. Painted with uncharacteristic red and yellow checks along her freeboard, the ship is not readily identifiable as a Guild vessel unless flying the colors of the Order.

Her long-standing commander, Master Bonoval, is a capable but easygoing skyman, well-liked by his crew, but for his Leewardian practice of holding mandatory religious services once a turn to honor the Lady of the Wind. Lark, the first mate and Amil, the bosun, are both experienced and uniquely capable. The rest of the crew is an average collection of liegemen sailors: Frederick the second mate, Young Dell the navigator, Old Dell the quartermaster, Red Jon and Peder the helmsmen, Cookie the cook and so on.

To represent the *DECISIVE's* exceptional speed, moderators should award the party a 1-card innate cache that can be used in plays whenever extra speed could be of value.





If the moderator wishes to promote a diplomatic resolution to the encounter, she should allow the party to intervene before the merchantman reaches the relative safety of the cloudbank. If she wants to instead create a tense and dangerous action sequence, she should allow the quarry to reach the clouds, forcing the *DECISIVE* to enter in pursuit. The chase can then take on a stealthy, cat-and-mouse nature as each ship is forced to slow, and the crews try to acquire sighting using lookouts, listening devices and perhaps even Potential. The situation could get violent or possibly even become a strange, blind negotiation with the captains calling out to each other through the confounding mists.

Any play involving skymanship, tactics, cannons, authority, stealth, intimidation or an appropriate use of Potential would fit the circumstances and any outcomes the players are likely to seek.

Player Stakes

- The *DECISIVE* intervenes, convincing both sides to break off the fighting, preventing further bloodshed.
- ✦ In the cover of the clouds, the Knights cleverly gain a superior tactical advantage and can force either ship to comply with any order.
- ✦ The party earns a I-card story cache for use in a future play involving either one of the crews.
- ✦ The Guild gains significant evidence of the complicity of the Vaultish Parliament in the woes plaguing its skies and is able to leverage the evidence in future political negotiations with the Vaultish authorities.

Moderator Stakes (I)

- The intervention goes poorly, the *DECISIVE* is forced to defend itself, and several people on the Vaultish ships and the *DECISIVE* are killed.



- ✦ In the thick clouds, the *DECISIVE* collides with the larger mercenary ship and is all but crippled. She barely makes it to Haven, ultimately costing the Guild significant money and time and earning the boat crew a black mark on their service records.
- ✦ The altercation embroils the party in several clocks of after-action hearings involving Guild and Vaultish officials once they finally arrive in Haven. Meanwhile, Igor's trail grows cold, earning the party a 2-card story challenge cache the moderator can use in any play focused on tracking down the fugitive.

As detailed in the *UPWIND* corebook, Haven is the capital city of the corrupt and failing state of Vault, and every bit a wretched hive of scum and villainy. There is a large, skyfront Guild House with its own quays known locally as The Grounds. The current focus of its staff is supporting the 5th Fleet elements assigned to combat the rampant banditry in the region. With recent rumors of the capture of the Dread Pirate Margit, the staff is able to offer only limited support in the pursuit of a petty criminal like Igor.

FINDING IGOR

The characters have several approaches they can use to find Igor. They can sail into Haven under a Guild flag, impound the *FORTUNE MAKER* — which currently rests at dock — and interrogate any crew still aboard. They could go through the proper diplomatic channels and liaise with the corrupt local authorities, but that could prove fruitless if someone in the crooked system seeking a payoff warns the fugitive. They could connect with the local liegemen of the Constable Patrol Service and bring an experienced officer into the investigation who might have local knowledge and informants. They could come ashore quietly, put surveillance on the *FORTUNE* and use their own subterfuge skills to stalk the local underworld on their own.

Hunting through Haven is an opportunity for players who enjoy games with stealth, intrigue and high stakes interaction with the criminal element to engage with the setting. The city is rife with opportunities to play out

HAVEN

Haven was once a beautiful, if technologically backwards, city surrounded by bucolic villages and green, mist-covered farmland. The city sits on a series of ancient, Masters-built terraces that rise from a perfect, semicircle harbor and features stout stone and timber buildings, many of which predate even the Kingdoms in the Light. The parliament building is particularly impressive with a 300-cycle-old spire that stands as the tallest structure in the country.

This onetime beauty has faded, however, as Haven's rampant corruption rots the city from the inside. Infrastructure and services are failing, with trash and sewage filling the crumbling streets. Public works, including the city guard, exist in name only, and the arc grid is in such need of repair that service was halted to most parts of the city half a cycle ago due to frequent fires. Corrupt parliament members and local crime lords bleed off any profits, taxes and foreign aid that trickles into the country long before they can benefit the nation's increasingly desperate citizens.

dangerous, quip-ridden negotiations, back-alley deals and murderous ambushes. Moderators can expand this opportunity by adding in encounters and plays that take advantage of these underworld elements and give such players more of what they want.

There is little distinction between the good and bad guys in Haven, as morals rise and fall with the market. It is therefore likely that the party can gather reliable information about the local underworld from just about anyone they might question — sailors, parliament members, shopkeepers, little old ladies — as everyone is connected at least by family, if not by business. One well-known point of contact within the Haven underworld is the Sailors' Benevolent Union.



IGOR THE UNDER

Igor the Underhanded — usually shortened to Igor the Under — came by his dubious honorific honestly — or dishonestly, to be strictly accurate. He is a smuggler and con man of only average skill, but what he lacks in ability he makes up for with unwarranted optimism and a dependence on reckless improvisation. He is known for, and has learned to rely upon, his uncanny ability to talk, lie, sneak, wiggle and simply flee his way out of tight spots. It's as if he can't avoid the bad decisions that lead him into trouble; yet, magically, some kind of untrained Potential gets him out again — but only ever by the skin of his teeth. Unfortunately, such escapes are often at the cost of allies, crew, friends and even family members.

Unbeknownst to even him, Igor is in fact an adept with strong Rain Potential with a very narrow ability. He manifests an uncanny kind of luck — an awareness of threats to his person — and has learned to act on these sudden and inexplicable insights.

He is tall and gaunt, with greasy, black hair, a toothy smile and perpetually sympathetic eyes. Nonetheless, he has an unexpected charisma that allows him to make friends — albeit dubious ones — wherever he goes. Igor is Vaultish through and through, born and raised on the streets of Haven, so he has contacts, family — and plenty of enemies — throughout the city.

SAILORS' BENEVOLENT UNION

As with most institutions in Haven, the Benevolent Union is a thinly veiled racket, this one offering jobs and protection to its members in exchange for “dues and donations.” One of the larger and more successful fronts, the Union actually manages several legitimate — in as much as anything in Haven can be called “legitimate” — businesses as well, mostly involved in shipping and related concerns. The SBU operates out of the Sailors' Hall in the docks district, where it “brokers” contracts with local and foreign vessels as well as actually providing support for the families of sailors lost in the sky. The Hall is run by an officious little man named Kovick. As annoyingly smug as he is, Kovick is well-connected in a city where that means something and little happens on the skyfront of which he is unaware.

However the search is conducted, one or two winning plays should point the characters to Igor's bolt-hole, but failure should alert him to their presence, leaving him poised to run again.

Player Stakes

- The journeymen make a contact that leads them to Igor's bolt-hole.
- + Igor is completely unaware of the journeymen's presence in Haven.
- + Igor still has most of his loot with him.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The contact turns out to be a set-up and the journeymen are ambushed by thugs Igor paid to discourage pursuit. Unfortunately, the thugs were hired blind and have no idea where Igor is.
- + The Delver agents, using large bribes, find Igor before the journeymen.
- + All the attention focused on finding him alerts Igor's creditors to his location as well.

✦ The blunt and haphazard way the party go about looking for Igor undermines current 5th Fleet investigations, allowing several major criminals to slip their nooses and creating a lot of heat for the characters within the regional Guild House.

One of the characters may have a Potential attribute that would allow her to locate Igor with elemental magic. Though Igor is protected by his strange supernatural aura of fickle luck, it is no match for the direct application of journeyman-level Potential; finding him might be as easy as simply discarding a random Potential card.

Igor is only as well-liked as he is flush, and his motivation in returning to Haven was to fence the stolen salvage and pay off a number of violent creditors still angry about some failed business dealings. His uncanny luck, however, has betrayed Igor the Under once again, and the deal he had worked out with Peder the Peddler died in an ally when the fence took one too many knives in the back four stills ago.

Igor is not entirely without friends, however — or at least paid informants — and they are keeping him apprised of some of the undue attention being directed his way. Accordingly, unable to move about freely for fear of drawing attention from his creditors, the Guild or the Delver agents, Igor is having trouble unloading his stolen goods.

IGOR, IGOR AND IGOR

Igor is hiding out at his cousin Igor's flat — Igor is the single most popular Vaultish name, with fully a fifth of all boys bearing the forename. Cousin Igor has an honest job — which makes him a bit of an exception in his family — as a windmill technician, maintaining the arc generating mills that crowd the city's skyline. He lives — squats actually — in a large, officially decommissioned mill in the mostly abandoned industrial district of Haven. In his limited wisdom, Igor the Under decided the mill would be a good place to hide out until he got his creditors off his back.

This particular windmill is mounted on an aging and rickety scaffolding that suspends most of the mass of the large structure horizontally out over the void. Access is

limited to one stout service door at the leeward facing end, and a series of hatch-like windows that open into the sky along its length. At the windward end, the large, downwind facing vanes creak loudly as they slowly turn, adding a sinister element to the tableau. Moderators should emphasize the precarious nature of, and limited access to, the windmill should they become tactically significant.

It is in this mostly deserted part of town, in this derelict structure hanging on the edge of the sky, where Igor the Under is likely to be found when his pursuers — local thugs, the party members or Delver agents — finally track him down.

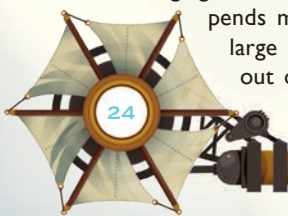
LAST MAN STANDING

If there is one thing that Igor is good at, it's getting into bad situations, and then, somehow, with his uncanny, Potential-powered luck, slipping out again. This encounter should be set up and played out as the perfect example of this recurring element in the smuggler's life.

If the party members identify his hideout, it is likely they will plan a raid of some kind with the intent of arresting Igor. To maximize the interest of the scene, the moderator should contrive the timing so that the thugs employed by Igor's angry creditors, Delver agents Espen and Tove, and any local authorities involved in the investigation, should all converge on the windmill at the same time as the journeymen's raid. If the moderator really wants to maximize the complexity of the situation, she could have a number of Igor's allies — crew or family members — show up to help him as well.

The thugs and Igor's allies approach by land, sneaking out of the empty alleys of the district. The crew of the *FORTUNE MAKER* — assuming the boat has not been impounded — can slip the vessel in close and cover the windmill with her few but ready cannons. The agents likely hang back to see what happens, figuring they'll let the factions murder each other, then sneak in and take Igor after everyone else is dead.

How the party makes its approach is up to the players. They can be as tactical or as blunt as they want, and the moderator could grant them bonus or challenge caches accordingly. It is likely the characters will want to come at the mill from several directions; they may even opt





to use the *DECISIVE*, making ship-to-ship fighting inevitable if Igor's crew arrives in the *FORTUNE*. The encounter could be broken into several individual plays, each addressing a different faction, or it might be the perfect opportunity for a collective play.

Player Stakes

- Igor is apprehended alive but badly wounded.
- + Igor is apprehended unhurt.
- + The journeymen manage to kill or run off the rest of the opposition.
- + The journeymen are able to capture a number of other criminals wanted by the Constable Patrol Service.
- + The journeymen are officially commended for their decisive action and role in breaking up a major Haven crime ring.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- Igor escapes without a trace.
- The characters with the two lowest luck draws are injured in the fighting. The lower

of the two makes a major wound draw, and the higher makes a minor wound draw.

- + One of the Delver agents is killed in the fighting and the Society ultimately holds the Guild responsible for the "irresponsible use of deadly force," creating future complications.
- + The use of ships' cannon or Potential in any fighting damages the windmill's foundation, and the structure topples into the sky, necessitating additional plays to escape or rescue others.
- + Having likely never met Igor, and having a number of family members at hand that look like him, the journeymen lose two clocks sorting out who is who as dead bodies and loyal family don't talk, giving the real Igor a good head start.
- + The characters begin earning a reputation within the Guild as incompetent manhunters.

LETTER OF THE LAW

However the standoff goes down, it is likely that the players will propose stakes including some version of “we want to capture Igor.” But, unless the moderator wants the chase to end here, Igor needs to get away. This situation provides the perfect opportunity to show the players how to take advantage of the meta elements of negotiating outcomes in Q.

Igor’s escape should be easy for the moderator to accomplish by taking advantage of the stakes mechanic. Since Cousin Igor is at the windmill as well, his capture would technically fulfill the letter of the law in any stakes including the “capture of Igor.” The moderator should play this situation up and bask in the glory of his players’ surprised faces and inevitable protests when the ruse is discovered. He can likely only get away with this kind of thing once, but the end result will be much more carefully worded players’ stakes in the future, and that’s great when playing Q.

If their players wouldn’t enjoy this little mechanical trick or would be frustrated by

it, then moderators should simply not bid for stakes that explicitly capture Igor in this scene. Alternatively, if they do play for such stakes, they should play some very high cards — ideally a joker — in the bid.

Play through **FB9 — Down on the Docks**, page 143.

WHICH WAY DID HE GO?

The characters quickly realize they must find Igor all over again; if they haven’t yet realized this is a running theme in this adventure, they soon will. In the end, getting a lead is not difficult, and there are several ways this could be achieved. The easiest is to interrogate Cousin Igor. Cousin Igor is strangely law-abiding considering the rest of his kin, and under a little pressure, he gives up what he knows. Another line of inquiry is to investigate which ships left the harbor after taking on a number of largish crates and a nervous local around the time Igor disappeared. It is also possible, as before, that one of the characters has a Potential ability that allows him to readily determine that the fugitive has fled the skyland.

PART 3: TEMPESTS AND WARLORDS

The first mate of the *RIGHTEOUS WIND*, an old freighter undeserving of the name, owed Igor a favor and the Under — with most of his treasure — slipped out of Haven safely hidden in her hold. The ship is bound for Tempest, a non-Conclave collection of skylands notorious for its contentious warlords. The *WIND* is carrying a shipment of weapons; which will earn a tidy profit in the war-torn region as long as the warlord who struck the deal is still in the position to pay for them, and there is no interference by the Guild along the way. It is therefore a good thing for Igor that the captain of the *WIND* does not know there will soon be journeymen chasing in his wake.

Though knocked around by fate, Igor is a crafty survivor who knows that going to ground on Tempest, though dangerous, is a good way to keep the authorities at bay. Not only is the region outside the

jurisdiction of the Convocation Treaties, but the natives have a well-deserved reputation for violent opposition to any foreign authorities. Igor believes that hiding out here means the Guild — or anyone else following him — will have to get past the local warlords before they can get to him.

Having run guns to Tempest in the past, Igor has a few connections of his own, and he is hoping to exploit these for a place to hide. He has struck a deal with Captain Lamm of the *RIGHTEOUS WIND* to be delivered to the territory of one of his past customers; a temperamental warlord who goes by the unlikely moniker “Queen of Storms.” Her self-proclaimed kingdom is in the mountains above the outsider trading town of Coin. They were once very close, if only for a short time, and Igor is hoping that for some actual coin, she’ll be willing to provide refuge.



TEMPEST

Tempest is a wild place with weather as dangerous and unpredictable, and hinterlands as inaccessible and confounding, as its people. A strange pair of skylands that slowly orbit each other as they drift across the sky, Tempest trails a powerful Potential storm that never really dissipates. A dramatic feature of the region, and a constant reminder of the power of Potential, it can be extremely dangerous to aerial navigation.

The geography of the Tempest skylands is as extreme as its weather, with the majority of the interiors featuring rugged mountains and deep valleys mostly inaccessible by skyship due to the combination of Potential storm and shadow. The vegetation is lush and dense, verging on jungle-like, creating an additional barrier to traveling upcountry. Large predatory land animals are common, as well as a uniquely high population of several species of wind eagles.

Tempest is not a member of the Kingdoms in the Light; it's not even a unified nation. The political structure — if it's even fair to call it that — consists of a variable number of warring clans, the numbers and alliances of which are constantly shifting. Clan allegiance, intermarriage and personal honor are central aspects of culture, and the only thing the clans seem to hate more than each other is outsiders. Accordingly, there are no formal alliances, trade agreements or even embassies between any Tempest clans and any nations of the Convocation. There are three informal trading ports known to daring or desperate merchants from the realms — unimaginatively called Coin, Market and Peddler — but even the status of these settlements depends clock to clock on the whims of whichever warlord controls them at the given time.



COIN

Coin is a strange place. Part port town, part market village and part refugee camp, the crowded and dirty settlement changes layout and leadership almost with the waxing and waning of the Potential storm that forever looms over the near horizon. The town center is a large open-air market that runs around the clock and faces out onto a row of a dozen crude, crowded, multilevel wooden docks clinging to the shoreline. Given its distance from civilization, it seems odd that such a variety of things can be found in the Coin market, until one realizes just how much of the stock is made up of stolen or black-market goods.

Coin sits at the edgefall confluence of two small rivers that usually delineate the everchanging borders of the local warlords' territories — currently an old man named Mountain Arc, a younger contender with the ambitious name of Fate-Bringer, and a cunning woman with proven longevity known as Queen of Storms.

The town is usually quite crowded and space in the market or even in the few ramshackle inns and boarding houses is at a premium. The place is full of local traders and aspiring entrepreneurs; foreign merchants; expats on the lam; fighters in the service to one warlord or the other; refugees sick of the fighting; and other residents, craftsmen and hangers-on trying to make a living off the singular economy. Recognizing its inherent value for the money and goods it brings in, Coin is a valuable prize that frequently changes hands in the ongoing, ritual warfare. Quite intentionally, however, the clans rarely battle anywhere near the town, lest the port or its influx of resources be harmed in the fighting.

RIDING OUT THE STORM

After the 12- to 14-clock voyage from Haven to Tempest, during which the moderator is encouraged to include an appropriate scene from the Aerial Encounters section (see [page 150](#)), the *DECISIVE* closes with the pair of skylands collectively known as Tempest. The namesake storm trailing in their wakes waxes and wanes, but it is particularly large and violent when the characters arrive — a serious risk to any skyship that ventures close to, not to mention tries to pass through, the storm.

Offer the party the choice of braving the storm and sailing directly through, or delaying and sailing around to the fair skies at the leading edge of the islands. Make the choice more interesting by offering bonus and penalty caches to be used when tracking Igor. If they are daring and enter the storm, reward the crew with a 1-card story cache for staying hot on Igor's trail. If they are cautious and delay, assign a 2-card challenge cache for letting the trail cool.

A play to navigate the storm could include any of the following stakes:

Player Stakes

- The ship clears the storm with only minor, easily repaired damage.
- The crew suffers only fright, bumps and bruises.
- + The crew of the *Decisive* gains new confidence in the skymanship and leadership of the party, granting a 1-card innate cache whenever a play relies on the sailing proficiency of the ship's company.
- + The boat crew's action gives them a growing reputation for sailing derring-do that starts to spread around the Guild.
- + Anyone with an attribute that can be related to navigation or meteorology eventually publishes a well-received monograph entitled *TEMPESTS OF TEMPEST — TAMING THE STORM THROUGH SCIENTIFIC ACUMEN AND NAVIGATIONAL PROWESS*.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The ship is wracked during its passage through the storm and limps into Coin on broken spars and tattered sails.
- The crew is suspicious of any future orders that involve even minor risk to the ship.
- ✦ The ship is so badly damaged that it all but crash-lands on the shore of one of the islands and the party has to continue in the launch while the crew stays behind to affect repairs.
- ✦ The crew is traumatized by the experience and suffers a 1-card innate challenge cache whenever given even remotely dubious orders by the party.
- ✦ A crewmember is lost overboard during the passage through the storm.
- ✦ The party gains a growing reputation for negligent recklessness within the Guild

Moderators should be sure to play up the chaos of sailing through the storm — the groaning hull, the shattering masts, the rending sails and the screaming crew. Emphasize the raging wind, torrential rain and scorching lightning, and leave the characters feeling drained, like they truly accomplished something very daring — or very stupid — as the case may be.

FINDING IGOR, AGAIN

There are not many places in Tempest that welcome outsiders (and even that's for a very limited meaning of the word "welcome") but Coin is the largest and most well-known of the three ports. It is therefore not a great leap of logic for the party to track the *RIGHTEOUS WIND* to this infamous trading outpost.

If the players made every narrative effort to reach Coin as quickly as possible, reward them with the fact that the *WIND* is still in port when they arrive. If they dithered, sidetracked in Haven or were slowed down getting through or around the arc storm, tell them that the freighter off-loaded and departed two clocks earlier. Accordingly, they'll have to decide whether to look for Igor on the skyland or chase after the merchant ship.

INTO THE HILLS

If the party catches the *RIGHTEOUS WIND* still in port, they can lean on the crew without making a play and learn that Igor headed upcountry

with a bunch of guns they sold to the Queen of Storms. If the *WIND* is gone when they arrive, the characters have to explore the town and make some new contacts before they can track Igor down.

Player Stakes

- The party learns Igor went upcountry with a shipment belonging to the Queen of Storms guarded by some of the Queen's fighters.
- ✦ The party learns that Igor and the Queen have history; Captain Lamm sold Igor out for the bounty she put on his head after the last time Igor was in Coin.
- ✦ The party is able to intercept the Queen's caravan before it reaches her stronghold.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The party is misled and runs headlong into a confrontation with a band of Fate-Bringer's fighters approaching the town; a skirmish ensues.
- The journeymen catch up to the Queen's caravan just as it is attacked by both Fate-Bringer's and Mountain Arc's fighters, and are caught in the middle.
- ✦ Several of Fate-Bringer's soldiers are potent adepts, and one of the party members suffers a major wound.
- ✦ The characters are attacked from above by arboreal predators, and all take minor wounds fighting them off.
- ✦ Somehow Tove and Espen, the Delver agents, got to the Queen ahead of the party and have already made a deal for Igor to be handed over.

If the characters are delayed, the caravan reaches the Queen's mountain stronghold before the journeymen can catch up, and Igor is much harder to extricate. The party then has three basic options. They can negotiate a trade — money, goods or favors — in exchange for the smuggler, they can sneak in and take him with stealth or they can storm the fortifications and break him out by force.

Player Stakes

- The party secures the release of Igor and finally takes him into custody.



THE QUEEN OF STORMS

The Queen is a respected and feared warlord in this region of Tempest. Her father was a scary, scary man but the locals are even more afraid of her. She is ruthless and coldly violent when needed, and she is also a shrewd guerilla tactician. Her stronghold is a network of cleverly trapped and defended tunnels and chambers dug high into a cliff face above her home village far upcountry. Well-aimed cannon emplacements guard the lower valley and almost 1,000 enforcers, soldiers and scouts make up her army.

The Queen is a tall, handsome woman of about 15 cycles. She has fair control of Rain Potential and is able to, among other things, use it to inspire loyalty among her soldiers. The Queen secretly yearns for a faithful lover who understands her, and thought she had found such in Igor when they first met over a cycle ago. Inconstant as he is, it was inevitable that he would leave — hence the bounty the Queen posted for his capture.

- ✦ The party so impresses the Queen the characters earn a reliable ally on whom they can call in the future.
- ✦ The party is able to recover most of Igor's ill-gotten goods.
- ✦ Igor is actually cooperative with the characters — for the time being — as he fears what the Queen has in store for him.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- ✦ Igor is rescued but badly wounded in the fighting, and most of his treasure must be abandoned.
- ✦ The Queen invokes the longstanding tradition of mutual aid against outsiders, and the party is forced to fight withering skirmishes all the

way down the mountain as they flee for their ship.

- ✦ The Queen is killed in the fighting; her memory becomes a rallying point for all of Tempest against the Guild. The boat crew ultimately receives significant disciplinary action in the form of delayed graduation and remedial training in diplomacy and negotiation.

Play through **FB13 — Master of Arms**, page 146.

FOLLOWING ORDERS

Assuming the Delver agents survived the showdown in Haven, it is unlikely they could get to Tempest before the journeymen, but if having them around would complicate a play in an interesting way, the moderator should feel free to involve them. Perhaps they came on a faster ship, had better winds or had better luck getting past the storm. Given time to plan, they try to take Igor from anyone who has him, even the characters. Subterfuge is their first choice, but they'll fight if it comes to it. Either way, they are not ready to give up.

NOT AGAIN

However the party acquires Igor the Under from the Queen of Storms, when they return to Coin — either with the Queen's blessing or fleeing her wrath — Igor's uncanny luck for getting out of tight places manifests again. At that moment, the young and reckless Fate-Bringer's fighters attack the town in an attempt to acquire their own navy by hijacking several merchant vessels. They begin by shelling the waterfront with mortars, then storming the docks. The explosions and subsequent fighting provide ample opportunity for Igor to slip away from his captors in the resulting chaos.

Unless they have very good cards to play, moderators should not make Igor's escape stakes in a play. They should structure the narrative to cover moderator fiat — something like “when the dust clears and the last of the raiders flee into the forest, you look around and realize Igor is nowhere to be seen,” or, “You realize the person you have been dragging along through the fight is not Igor, but a similarly built local who is scared out of his wits.” If this unduly troubles players, hint at



the clearly supernatural Potential powers Igor's strange luck seems to imply.

Several merchant vessels, in an attempt to escape Fate-Bringer's assault, have cast off and made for the open sky. The moderator should lead the party to assume that the Igor was able to stowaway aboard one of these, and allow them to chase down and search most of them

with the much faster *DECISIVE*. Confounded by Igor's strange potential, the party discovers — either by interrogating the other crews or returning to Coin and questioning local dockhands — that the only ship they missed is a member of the Vagabond Fleet; as far as anyone knows, this was their last stop before heading to the Fleet's current location somewhere in the skies of Horizon.

PART 4: DISHONOR AMONG THIEVES

Igor the Under has fled again, this time to the Vagabond Fleet, where he hopes some old acquaintances will buy what salvage he has left and allow him to hide out for a while. As the players may have begun to suspect, this plan is not going to end well for the hapless smuggler.

CLIFFSIDE

This large, raucous city is a key port within the Kingdoms in the Light, and a favorite of sailors from across the realms. Its location makes it a central waypoint, and its warm and outgoing people make it uniquely welcoming. They are particularly fond of the Guild, and there is not a watering hole in the town where Knights have to buy their own "jot."

The skyland of Bluff on which Cliffside is built is an almost cubical mass of stone and dirt just over a mile across. Founded as a mining town over 100 cycles ago, the skyland was left riddled with tunnels, chambers and galleries, more than tripling the potential living space on the rock. Now every surface is covered in structures — dockyards, factories, forges and other industry — and the interior is packed with active mines, crowded neighborhoods, local markets and the municipal infrastructure needed to support the roughly 50,000 residents.

Before the party can follow him to the fleet, they have to find it first. The Vagabond Fleet is notorious, but it does a good job of staying on the move to avoid national and Guild authorities. The journeymen may have learned in Coin that the Fleet is in Horizon, but that's a big piece of sky and they need to narrow it down. Moderators should leave it to the players to come up with a way to locate the fleet — give them a chance to be proactive in using their attributes and resources. They are, after all, on the verge of becoming Explorer Knights; finding lost things is what they do.

Moderators could suggest several options and clever players will likely come up with a few more. They could go to the Guild House or local authorities in Cliffside — the largest port in Horizon — and request the most recent intelligence on the Fleet. This does, however, risk someone with more authority taking over or telling them to stand down. They could use any criminal contacts or subterfuge attributes in the Horizonian underworld to get a lead on the Fleet's current location. It might result in a few false leads before providing an accurate one, but they could use basic legwork and question random captains in one of Horizon's major harbors. Someone will have seen something somewhere that could lead the party to the Fleet. The players might even be able to come up with a clever use of Potential to provide them with guidance or a location.

Moderators are encouraged to include any of the aerial encounters provided in the appendix to make the 16-clock voyage from Tempest to Horizon more interesting for the players. In fact, feel free to include two.

THE VAGABOND FLEET

The history, nature and behavior of the Vagabond Fleet are detailed in the *UPWIND* corebook.

The Fleet is an armada of sky pirates and criminals notorious across the realms. Often amassing as many as 50 ships at a time, the fleet can become a floating town not unlike Nomad; however, the Fleet is rife with villainy and vice of all kinds.

When in the open sky and unthreatened, the Fleet rafts together into a massive wood and metal ball of ships. The resulting three-dimensional maze of decks, rigging, gangways, underhulls and crow's nests creates an everchanging town as ships join and depart. Finding one's way around is as difficult as it is dangerous. Any vessel rafting with the Fleet must grant "pedestrian right of way" that allows strangers to use one's deck, gangplanks and even rigging to move from one part of the mass to another.

There are half a dozen ships of various designs that make up the core of the ball, serving as its only permanent infrastructure and rarely, if ever, casting off. The *FAIR WIND* is a large mastless hulk that serves as a centralized bazaar and black market. The *TEA ROOM* is an ancient freighter that is now an inn, and the *KIN'S REVENGE* is home to the Veiled Viscountess and the de facto town hall. The *DOCKS* is just that, an old but massive barge that serves as a large pier for those ships staying only a clock or two.

Since it's a tedious and complex job to get a single ship out from inside the rafted mass, only crews planning to stay awhile raft with the larger collection. Short term visitors either moor at the *DOCKS* — paying outrageous "harbor fees" — or go ashore in shifts, leaving watches aboard to manage station keeping duties. Accordingly, from a distance the clustered fleet with its orbiting vessels is reminiscent of a wasp nest.

When threatened with a raid by regional authorities, bells and horns sound throughout the rafting mass, and individual ships cut themselves loose from each other in only moments. The mass can begin breaking apart in the time it takes crews to board, cast off and raise sails, with ships moving off like shrapnel from a slowly exploding bomb.

It is perhaps surprising that a lawless and random collection of pirates, bandits and thugs would have community rules, but they do. Known as the "Mandates of the Fleet," this short but time-tested list of directives carries the weight of religious vows.

Examples include:

- A threat to the Fleet is a threat to all
- Endanger a ship, endanger the Fleet
- Bring the law, pay the price
- Pull a weapon, be ready to use it
- Obey or challenge

There are currently 12 mandates, and most are, perhaps unsurprisingly, open to various levels of interpretation and enforcement. To come aboard the Fleet, however, and not at least be familiar with the list is to risk your life; the punishment for violation in most cases is being made to walk a plank.

Aside from the Mandates, there is no formal governance in the Vagabond Fleet except for what can be imposed by the strongest captains and gang leaders. Three of the currently most powerful are:

The Red Captain: A ruthless dandy of pirate with an overinflated ego, a large crew, a vicious streak and an amazing wardrobe.

Captain Wind: A reclusive and enigmatic information broker with a realms-wide network of spies and informants. Rumor has it that he is a powerful Wind adept who uses his Potential abilities to communicate magically with his network and clients.

The Veiled Viscountess: A notorious pirate queen whose beauty and cleverness are matched only by her vanity and sharp tongue. She is an ironfisted leader with a large crew including many female members. She is an able Arc user with the temper to match, and she is easily insulted. Unfortunately for her enemies, she is prone to exceptionally violent payback.



TELLING TALES

It is likely that, even if they find the location of the Vagabond Fleet by other means, Master Bonoval will use Cliffside as a navigational waypoint and a provisioning stop. If this happens and the party members find themselves in a local watering hole, use the opportunity to demonstrate the warmth of the Horizonian people and their support of the Guild. Have the players draw luck cards. Whoever pulls the highest card is identified as a journeyman and tapped by a group of locals to regale them with a thrilling tale about the Explorers' Academy. By way of recounting the tale, run the following Academy flashback.

Play through **FB8 — Down is Towards the Enemy**, page 143.

Ask for a play or two and reward any creative thinking or roleplaying with information, story caches or even access to a black market sphereometer needle that points to one of the ships in the Vagabond Fleet. Without spending

too much game time in pursuit, a little thinking or clever roleplaying should get the party headed in the right direction.

FLY IT LIKE YOU STOLE IT

Moderators should challenge the players to come up with their own plan to infiltrate the Fleet. They should realize they can't simply sail up as representatives of the Guild because if they did the Fleet would most likely scatter, or perhaps turn on them en masse. The boat crew might therefore consider some form of subterfuge, such as posing as criminals, or at least morally dubious merchants. If they openly come aboard, they are "inspected" as newcomers and asked to pay "docking fees" even if they leave their disguised ship standing off. Bringing any of their liegemen crew with them could complicate matters. At some point as you roleplay out the inspection, ask for a play to resolve their subterfuge.



Player Stakes

- The party makes it aboard the Fleet without immediate complications.
- The party has sold their backstory well enough to earn a 1-card story cache that can be used in any subsequent play involving their cover as criminals.
- Making small talk with the “customs” inspectors, the party gets a lead on a “Vaultish loudmouth going by the ridiculous name of Igor the Under” (see [Last Resorts](#) page 34).
- One of the party is passingly familiar with the Mandates of the Fleet, and can play a free cache card in any play involving the tenets.
- One of the characters knows there is a Guild informant aboard the Fleet, a Horizonian called Gerald the Fat.

Moderator Stakes (I)

- The party is coerced into hiring a “guide” who is clearly a local thug being ordered to keep an eye on the newcomers for a while.
- The *DECISIVE* is recognized by an observant sailor aboard the Fleet and the moderator may break the party’s cover anytime she deems it dramatically appropriate.
- One of the characters — chosen by a luck draw — is recognized by Edwina “Stink Eye” Evans, a petty criminal with whom the journeyman had a run-in a while back. She approaches the character and makes it clear she is expecting a fat bribe to keep his identity a secret. That — and maybe a date.

LAST RESORTS

Igor the Under’s uncanny fortune appears to have finally betrayed him. He did not really want to come to the Vagabond Fleet, but given the necessity of a hasty departure from Tempest, he really didn’t have a lot of choice in the matter. His reticence is not because he does not like the Fleet — in fact, he was once well-connected with its crews. The last time he was here, however, Igor made some poor choices — bad even for him — and left behind many enemies.

The Red Captain backed one of Igor’s cons for a promised cut of the profits, but the untimely involvement of the Constable Patrol Service sank the plan, and the Red Captain wants his investment back. No one knows why Captain Wind wants Igor dead, but the size of the bounty he put on Igor’s head after his last visit implies the Captain is more than a little upset. The Veiled Viscountess is easily the most furious, and the least likely to forgive. She is livid that any man would walk out on her — especially her husband.

Igor had hoped he could buy his way back into various good graces upon returning to the Vagabond Fleet, but since his arrival several clocks ago, everything has gone from bad to worse. Failed negotiations, misinterpreted overtures, screaming arguments, street brawls and running gun fights have all led to the current, increasingly tense, stand-off between Igor and nearly everyone else in the Fleet.

As the party comes aboard, Igor is sitting in one of the storage holds of the *FAIR WIND*, the market ship at the center of the ball of vessels that is the rafted Fleet. He has been awake for almost two clocks straight and is several sheets to the wind as well. He sits on his one remaining trunk of salvage, with a bottle of jot in one hand, a hot-wired spark bottle in the other and an open keg of arc powder at his feet — one of a couple dozen stacked around him. Igor swears he will detonate the powder stash if anyone comes near him or starts casting off ships. The community, taking him at his word, has abandoned the *FAIR WIND* and most of the surrounding vessels. For most of the last clock, he has been shouting various drunken demands through the open hatch in a desperate bid to escape the threats arrayed against him.

Armed, vigilant crew from most of the major gangs aboard the Fleet have surrounded the *FAIR WIND* — albeit at a respectful distance — as Igor is in egregious violation of several of the most important Mandates of the Fleet. In addition, the Red Captain, Captain Wind and the Veiled Viscountess are in attendance with their crews as each wants the chance to kill him — personally.



FINDING IGOR ONE LAST TIME

Lucky for the journeymen, it takes them about as long as a fathom of rope to catch wind of the standoff going on at the core of the Fleet. It might take a little longer for them to learn that Igor's at the center of it, but not much. The focus of this part of the adventure is not finding Igor, but getting the smuggler out alive so they can arrest him and recover the stolen salvage.

If they are still in pursuit, the Delver negotiators, Espen and Tove, have extensive criminal contacts and so could have learned the location of the Vagabond Fleet and arrived several clocks before the journeymen. If the moderator wants to further complicate Igor's plight and the lives of the characters, feel free to have the agents' plans directly conflict with, or otherwise undermine, whatever the party tries to do. The determined agents are the perfect foils for practically any counter stakes proposed by the players.

FROM UNDER THEIR NOSES

At this point in the campaign, even players new to *UPWIND* should have a good understanding of the game's tropes and a solid working knowledge of its mechanics. Moderators should therefore give them every opportunity to devise their own plan, keeping in mind it has to address four things: first, they must retrieve Igor; second, they must recover whatever salvage he still has with him; third, the plan has to give the party an opportunity to safely withdraw; fourth, and perhaps most importantly, any plan needs to minimize the threat to civilians as, unfortunately, there are many spouses and children living aboard the Vagabond Fleet. The deaths of known criminals by their own misadventure is one thing, but the Guild's tenets are clear about avoiding negligent harm to civilians.

Should the moderator be compelled to offer suggestions, she could start by reminding the players about their characters' Academy lessons on the Guild's rules of engagement as described in the *UPWIND* corebook — diplomacy, subterfuge, force — in this order, and only after exhausting all previous options.

Diplomacy: The party could approach one of the more powerful leaders — or a conclave of them — to parlay and negotiate a deal. They

would likely not have enough money to tempt the big players, but the characters could likely offer uniquely valuable services, favors or even information.

Subterfuge: The journeymen could use a clever ruse or distraction to sneak Igor off the Fleet. They could bluff a raid by the authorities or use their Potential in ways the locals would not see coming.

Force: The Guild members could simply draw their weapons, fight their way through the cordon and bust Igor out. They could attack with the *DECISIVE* backed by their offensive Potential. They could take some of the key leaders hostage, and make their own threats until the pirate skippers called off their crews and gave up the smuggler. A final option would be to simply assassinate Igor instantly from a distance with a sniper or Potential ability, thereby preventing him from detonating the powder stores.

Whatever they choose to do, there will likely be a play or two needed to resolve the standoff.

Player Stakes

- The characters manage to get Igor off the Vagabond Fleet mostly unharmed with minor collateral damage and injuries among the party.
- + The negotiations go so well, the journeymen now have a useful underworld contact aboard the Fleet.
- + The party makes good their escape before most of the locals even know they were there.
- + The characters manage to bring most of Igor's remaining stash of salvage out with them.
- + Igor is so grateful for being saved that he cooperates fully in the escape, and does not even try to get away during the voyage back to Skyreach.
- + Captain Gorry is so impressed with the party's actions that she recommends them for commendations, and sends them back to Highstone with a little extra leave before their graduation ceremony.

Moderator Stakes (3)

- The party escapes, but only after a running battle that kills a dozen locals and costs one of the party a major wound.
- The characters are revealed as members of the Guild, and the entire Fleet turns against them.
- The entire party takes minor wounds.
- The party fails to recover Igor's stash.
- The boat crew's actions lead to the detonation of Igor's arc powder — or some other catastrophic damage — killing dozens, crippling the fleet and earning them an armada of dangerous enemies. Thugs and assassins will hound their steps for cycles to come.
- Igor is mortally wounded in the fighting and does not survive the voyage back to Skyreach.
- Captain Gorry is furious at what appears to be a string of failures and recommends that the journeymen's graduation be delayed pending remedial training.

AFTERMATH

One way or another, the characters eventually make it back to the Guild House in Skyreach and report to Captain Gorry. If they succeeded in capturing Igor the Under without too many mishaps or calling negative attention to the Guild, she is pleased with their work, and reports favorably on the journeymen to the Academy. If they somehow botched the manhunt, or caused undue mayhem, she is disappointed, possibly furious; their last round under her command is a slog of menial tasks and remedial training.

If things went bad enough — including any negligent violations of the Knights' Pledge — the moderator should consider a play with stakes that include expulsion from the Academy for the most culpable characters. Such an outcome would, of course, require the introduction of some new PCs, but it would set a clear standard for Knightly conduct.

Igor is eventually interrogated by Guild experts, and then turned over to Skyreach authorities. It turns out that he had

no knowledge of the provenance or nature of the salvage he stole; he assumed only that since the Guild was interested in it, it must be particularly valuable. Any recovered items are passed through channels to Guild experts and assessed; several objects in particular go by special courier directly to the workshop of Academy Professor Captain Phineas Truk — noted navigational technologist.

As moderators know from the campaign backstory, Truk suspects several items from the stolen lot are components of a relic known as the Eye of the Navigator. One is the strange harness-like device, the second is the partially melted visor-like mask of laminated circuits and the third — and most important — is the dull-blue, elemental glass sphere, three inches in diameter and studded with arcanoelectrical leads.

Regardless of the actual outcome of the chase, assume that enough of the artifacts Igor stole were recovered along the way, so that the singular items described above eventually make it to Captain Truk at the Academy. Even if circumstances lead to the loss of all of Igor's stolen salvage, the critical and only functioning component of the Eye — the blue spheroid lens — can still be recovered. Having caught the thief's fancy, he attached the pretty, blue bauble to a thong and hung it about his skinny neck as a keepsake — and as a stashed reserve should he need to flee empty-handed. At a dramatic point during their cruise back to Skyreach, moderators can make sure the characters spot the Eye and make the connection.

COINCIDENCE OR PROPHECY?

It is with the discovery of the components of the Eye that this campaign truly begins — the revelation initiating the series of unlikely events that may ultimately lead to the recovery of the Grand Amplifier. It may appear contrived, however, that the player characters are Truk's protégés and play the central role in beginning this story. Recall, therefore, that this is the tale of a grand prophecy, and in such tales coincidence abounds and the hand of fate is often an uncanny guide.



CHAPTER 2: THE MASK

SYNOPSIS

The chapter opens with the boat crew's long-awaited graduation from the Explorer's Academy. To their surprise, the characters are subsequently assigned to lead a small salvage mission to Rubble Field #43, deep in the Twilight Frontier, with their onetime mentor — and Embassy conspirator — Captain Truk. The characters are asked to orchestrate the mission, including all security measures; this is practically unprecedented for recent graduates. The operation soon begins to suffer a series of increasingly troubling mishaps, and just as Truk locates the ruins he came to find, the situation turns dangerous.

When a liegeman technician disappears, the characters find him while continuing to operate the camp, help Truk with his excavation and fend off a dark dragon attack. The chapter culminates with the discovery of the Mask of

the Navigator, at — thanks to the dramatic timing of plot — the very moment the camp is attacked by a Child of the Dark patrol. The attack and subsequent skyship battle is the very one the characters experience in the prologue of the campaign. Assuming all goes well, the expedition returns to Verdant with a working version of the Mask of the Navigator, and the characters one step closer to joining the Embassy.

This chapter is intended to provide a quintessential *UPWIND* adventure, with a crew of young heroes being given exceptional responsibility and the chance to explore lost mysteries. The scenario connects the characters to Captain Truk, provides one of the story's McGuffins and introduces the Children of the Dark; but at its core, the chapter provides a classic RPG adventure: exploring dark places, fighting monsters and recovering lost treasure — with an *UPWIND* twist. This scenario could also readily be played as a standalone adventure, independent of the rest of the events of the *GRAND AMPLIFIER*.

As moderators prepare to run chapter 2, it is helpful to keep the following in mind:

- Despite the presence of Captain Truk, the characters are in charge of the mission. They have been given a huge responsibility for their experience level; moderators should be sure to emphasize this, offering tough leadership challenges and hard choices at every opportunity. The players should feel their characters are truly in command.
- The chapter introduces the players to their characters' mentor, Captain Truk. It is important that, by the end of the chapter,

FORESHADOWING

As a mysterious, foreshadowing prologue to this chapter and rest of the campaign, the moderator should read aloud the opening text of this book's introduction to the players — up to the section marked **Moderator's Eyes Only**. If players have questions, the moderator can impart that this is the gist of the common Kin lore around the legend of the Grand Amplifier, but she should resist providing any further information or explanation, allowing the characters to think whatever they may about this interlude and the information.

both the characters and the players connect emotionally to the brilliant and kindly old man. Their respect and loyalty to Truk are primary motivators for later parts of the story, so moderators should play him as a

uniquely likable, caring, grandfatheresque teacher, and do everything they can to elicit said loyalty, a need to protect the professor and the desire to make him proud.

PART 1: GRADUATION EXERCISES

Play opens just over a round after Igor the Under's capture, with the boat crew preparing for their long-awaited graduation from the Explorers' Academy. The ceremony is detailed in the *UPWIND* corebook, but moderators should emphasize the excitement and anticipation of the graduates, the solemnity of the event and its significance in the lives of the characters. As happens leading up to every graduation, the mood of the Academy becomes increasingly celebratory, and the energy and pride of the cohort is exceptionally high. Family members and dignitaries from various homelands travel to Verdant to attend the ceremony, and the Academy is crowded with visitors.

PERSPECTIVES

Ask each player to describe any specific preparations or activities his character is engaging in prior to graduation. Are they partying with friends or finishing up some last-moment projects? Seeking a chance for solitary reflection or a last liaison with a lover before shipping out? Celebrating with visiting family or discussing career ambitions with a favorite professor? As each player offers his description, ask the other players around the table to temporarily take on the roles of any NPCs in those scenes and roleplay through short vignettes with the intention of creating the emotional weight of the moment and emphasizing the different personalities of the player characters, their friends and their families.

POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE

The actual graduation scene can be a challenge for moderators to orchestrate, but it can be a fun and worthwhile part of the story.

As presented in the *UPWIND* corebook, page 71, describe the Well of Heroes, the crowd of

spectators, the inner circle of mentors holding newly forged Knights' blades and the suddenly anxious ring of journeymen ready to become Knights. Detail how the wind blows up through the baroque grate of the floor, rustling fine clothes and carefully combed hair. Describe how the cohort sneaks glances at each other across the circle, how they can't believe they're about to finally be knighted.

As important as the ceremony is, the event is quite simple. At a signal from Steward Danforth, a hush comes over the crowd. For a moment, the only sound is the wind rising through the floor. In unison, the inner ring of professors, Knights, parents and other mentors speaks the first line of the Explorer Knights' Pledge, and the waiting ring of journeymen step inward together.

The moderator should ask her gaming group to play along. As she dramatically recites each declaration from the Pledge, the players should respond in unison from around the table with the sacred phrase, "I so vow."

Moderator: *To honor the Guild*

Players: *I so vow*

Moderator: *To seek the Knowledge*

Players: *I so vow*

Moderator: *To defend the Kingdoms*

Players: *I so vow*

Moderator: *To defy the Dark*

Players: *I so vow*

Depending upon the nature of the group, this may feel a little hokey, but since it is a roleplaying game after all, most players will be into it. "Taking the vow" can be a surprisingly solemn way to experience the scene and commit to the premise of being an Explorer Knight.

Play through **Academy Flashback FBI** — **New Students**, page 140.





As the echo of the final vow blows away on the wind, the characters come back to themselves and to the fact that they have become Knights. As the Well erupts into boisterous cheers, tears and heartfelt congratulations

all around, ask the players in turn to describe their characters' reactions to the emotions of the event and how they would express them at the moment.

PART 2: GRADUATION CRUISE

Moderators are encouraged to run whatever post-graduation celebratory antics their particular group cares to roleplay through. Depending upon character concepts, this may range from a sober time of preparation to a raucous celebration. Alternatively, feel free to have any celebrations occur offstage and leave the characters wondering how they woke up in the *EGS DOMINION's* crow's nest, wrapped only in a launch's sail.

There is a long-standing practice at the Academy that the newly Knighted Guild members' first assignments are publicly posted the clock

after graduation. Traditionally called graduation cruises, the Knights are generally aware well in advance of what their assignments will be, as it takes time to work out such logistics. Even so, there is always excitement, and some anxiety, around the announcements; these assignments sometimes change unexpectedly at the last moment.

Whatever their post-graduation states, the party members should be surprised to discover that their various cruise assignments have all changed. The posting simply reads "Command Cadre — *EGS FAITHFUL*. Report to Captain Truk, Navigational



Sciences.” Let the player’s stew over the meaning of this unexpected change of plans, and hint that new Knights are never given command of anything. Imply this is either an uncommon show of faith in their abilities, or some kind of mistake. Encourage them to debate in character the likelihood of either option as they make their way to the Academy workshop of the honorable Captain Truk.

As the party enters the familiar workshop, they are reminded of the countless bells they spent working here — at first only cleaning up after the older students as punishment for some transgression in Basic Navigation class, but later as protégés of the famous Captain Phineas Able Truk. Moderators should emphasize this relationship, making it clear to the players that Captain Truk is a beloved mentor, and their characters owe him much; therefore, they should be ready to do whatever he is about to ask. If the players reflect this understanding in their roleplaying, award the party a 4-card story cache they can use in any play serving Captain Truk’s direct orders.

Captain Truk is detailed in the NPC section of the *UPWIND* corebook.

Play through [Academy Flashback FB5 — Captain Truk](#), page 141.

NO MISTAKE

Truk greets the party like the old friend he is, and — with a glint in his eye — intentionally dithers around getting to the topic of the assignment in order to watch the characters squirm. Finally, he tells them it’s no mistake; they are being given command of the small frigate *EGS FAITHFUL*. With uncharacteristic furtiveness, he then tells the characters the mission is a salvage operation to the Twilight Frontier, and that he will provide them with course details once they are underway. He says a small, handpicked crew is already outfitting the vessel, and that they can leave as soon as the party members have seen to any final, personal preparations.

Truk provides no further details of note, no matter how hard the characters press, but promises to tell them everything they want to know once underway. Any characters with

EGS FAITHFUL

The *FAITHFUL* is an aging but serviceable ship, small for her class at only 110 feet with 48 guns and a crew of 180. She has two sets of main wings, a pair of large keel gates and is painted with a bright red and black checkered waistband. Her only apparent breaks with standard specifications are the arc cannon chaser in her bows and a captain’s skiff in addition to her two launches.

The ship’s master is a surprisingly young Ascentian woman by the name of Ki, and though some on her command crew are twice her age, they clearly respect the thoughtful liege woman. Her first mate, a man known around the fleet as Serious Mr. Beedle, holds the official active duty record for most voyages into the Frontier at 72 and counting. The crew consists primarily of Dimmish, Ascentians, Verdani, and Vaultish sailors — the last perhaps making the party a little skeptical, especially as at least three of them are named Igor.

SHIP AND CREW

For the unique competence of Truk’s handpicked crew, award the party a 1-card innate cache for use when plays depend on that competence. Despite the ship’s name, assign a 1-card innate challenge cache to any plays that involve her reliability or performance, due to the *FAITHFUL*’s age.

appropriate social attributes realize that Truk’s reluctance lacks its typical mischievousness, and instead seems uncharacteristically anxious.





CLANDESTINE COURSE

Allow the party members to make whatever reasonable preparations they wish. Truk swore them to secrecy, so test them with pressing questions about their unlikely assignment from jealous other members of their graduating class. If any of them share the plan, this is just the kind of leak a moderator could use to justify the involvement of the Cabal agents described in the introduction.

Right before the crew begins casting off, Truk meets the party at the docks with two journeymen assistants in tow — Randel and Min. Randel is a tall but tubby son of the *DOMINION*, while Min is a lean Brightlander with an aloof air. At the moment, both are trying very hard to look brave in the face of a voyage into the Twilight Frontier. In addition to their own small kits, they are carrying a large trunk between them containing Truk's personal effects and equipment to maintain his arcanoelectrical body parts. Truk tells the party to sail well upwind and out of sight of any potential observers

before setting a course for the Frontier to “avoid giving anyone the wrong idea.”

Once well away from land Truk provides the party with sphereometer needles, waypoints and charts for their destination — he is one of the Guild's greatest navigators, after all. He explains they are headed to Rubble Field #43, a Masters' site deep in the Frontier, one that most believe to have been picked clean long ago by previous expeditions. Recently, however, he learned from an old colleague in the Delves' Society that there are apparently still secrets to be found there.

Truk reminds the players about recovering some artifacts from the smuggler Igor, produces the small, blue sphere described in chapter 1 from a padded case and passes it around. He explains that he believes it is one of a long-lost group of relics known as an Eye of the Navigator. He stops short of explaining exactly what it does, even if pressed by the characters,



but he does go on to describe how he has been seeking just such a device for much of his career. He claims that the little glass ball is the closest he has gotten in his search, and that its recovery has produced a viable new lead.

He says that, with the help of his contact, he was able to trace the Eye's origin to Rubble Field #43, where it was apparently found by a Delver crew. Despite his waning clout, Truk was able to convince the Office of Salvage Operations to fund this current mission; though, in an effort to husband resources, they authorized only the single ship and a limited compliment. Truk ends his story by claiming a complete and functioning Eye could prove vital to the defense of the Kingdoms in the Light.

Although much of what he said sounds like fairytale, he is so earnest that the party should at least believe that he believes.

If the players have questions, encourage them to ask Truk in character and roleplay the conversation. The old man is torn, and though he trusts the party, he is under oath to keep the Embassy a secret. Let his answers imply there is more to what's going on, but don't give away too much to the players, as some mystery will likely to keep them more interested than full disclosure.

The trip to Truk's target skyland takes nine downwind clocks. Moderators wanting to complicate the voyage should include one or more of aerial encounters during the trip.

PART 3: LEADERSHIP SKILLS

SECURITY CONCERNS

Once the *FAITHFUL* reaches the skyland, ask the players to describe how they want to set up the salvage camp and what security precautions they want to take. Do they want to unship cannons and emplace them to defend the camp directly? How do they want to deploy the ship — have it floating overhead or standing off somewhere in the dimness? Do they set up roving pickets, deploy arc lamps or build defense works? As they describe their plans, award 1- or 2-card story caches for particularly clever plans; if they are lazy or leave obvious holes, assign challenge caches instead.

Assume setting up the camp takes a couple clocks, during which the party is busy supervising and establishing security. Emphasize the nature of working in the cold, dank dimness of the Frontier and try to leave the players feeling oppressed by describing the bleak and ominous nature of the environment. Moderators looking to provide additional drama could have one liegeman injured in a rockfall, requiring medical attention from a Potential healer, and another needing rescue from a pack of meat crickets.

SURVEYING THE SITUATION

Truk and his assistants begin surveying as soon as they

RUBBLE FIELD #43

First surveyed in Cycle 181 UC, excavations at the site were abandoned after only a few turns as productivity quickly tailed off. The skyland is small and roughly peanut-shaped, with an extremely rugged upcountry composed of low hills riddled with twisting gullies. Erosion has exposed countless outcroppings of mostly buried ruins, the majority of which are inaccessible due to structural collapse.

When first discovered, the skyland was notable for two reasons: first, it had a uniquely empty Wind shadow for an island of its small size; second, there was heated debate over whether the site was a natural island with lots of underground structures, or if it was actually an artificial structure of some sort that had accumulated enough dross to become buried.

Periodic privateer operations have revisited Field #43 at various times since its initial excavation, but appear to have produced little of value — until the Delvers visited.



SALVAGE OPERATIONS

Salvage operations are essential to the economy of the Kingdoms and a primary mission of the Explorers' Guild. Though each operation is adapted to specifics of the given Masters' cache, they do share some essential elements.

Standard salvage missions typically include one or more freighters, an equal number of heavily armed frigates and associated crews of up to 200 Kin per ship. The camps are positioned on the edge of the worksite and arranged in defensible rings. Barrack tents are put up in the center, workshop pavilions and stores in the first ring, and industrial equipment, defense works and cannon emplacements on the periphery.

Hundreds of cycles of continual deadfall and the accumulation of dross mean that most operations involve some amount of excavation — either to gain access to buried structures or to expose entire ruins. With powerful Ore adepts, this excavation is fast and accurate, but it risks inadvertent damage to Potential-sensitive salvage. Mundane excavation is hard work — some done with excavators and derricks but most is done with hand tools and backbreaking labor. The cold, wet, dark conditions make the effort even more difficult; the constant vigilance against dangerous discoveries and sudden attacks takes a grueling toll.

Camps are protected by round-the-clock guards, roving pickets and ready gun crews and — if appropriate to the terrain — lookouts, snipers and scouts in the surrounding high ground. Rotating crews man the frigates, which — Wind shadows permitting — closely guard the airspace above the camp against flying predators and Child patrols.

By comparison, Truk's expedition is very small, operating on a meager budget with limited personnel and equipment — only the one old ship and a handful of inexperienced Knights.

disembark. Unfortunately, his reckless enthusiasm and limited mobility make this problematic. He has not been in the field for many cycles; though once a great explorer, Truk is well past his prime, so play up the poignant decline of the once-vital man. Unless one of the party members stays with Truk to keep him out of trouble, assign a 2-card story challenge cache that can be used in any play where an unsupervised Truk could complicate the encounter.

Truk begins surveying the site in an attempt to locate the exact spot where the Delves found the Eye. His contact provided some of the salvager's notes, but they are not as thorough as Guild surveys and so prove problematic, slowing down the process. Three clocks go by as Truk moves from quadrat to quadrat, looking for the right section of ruins in which to begin searching. Almost as soon as this work begins, problems start to plague the camp.

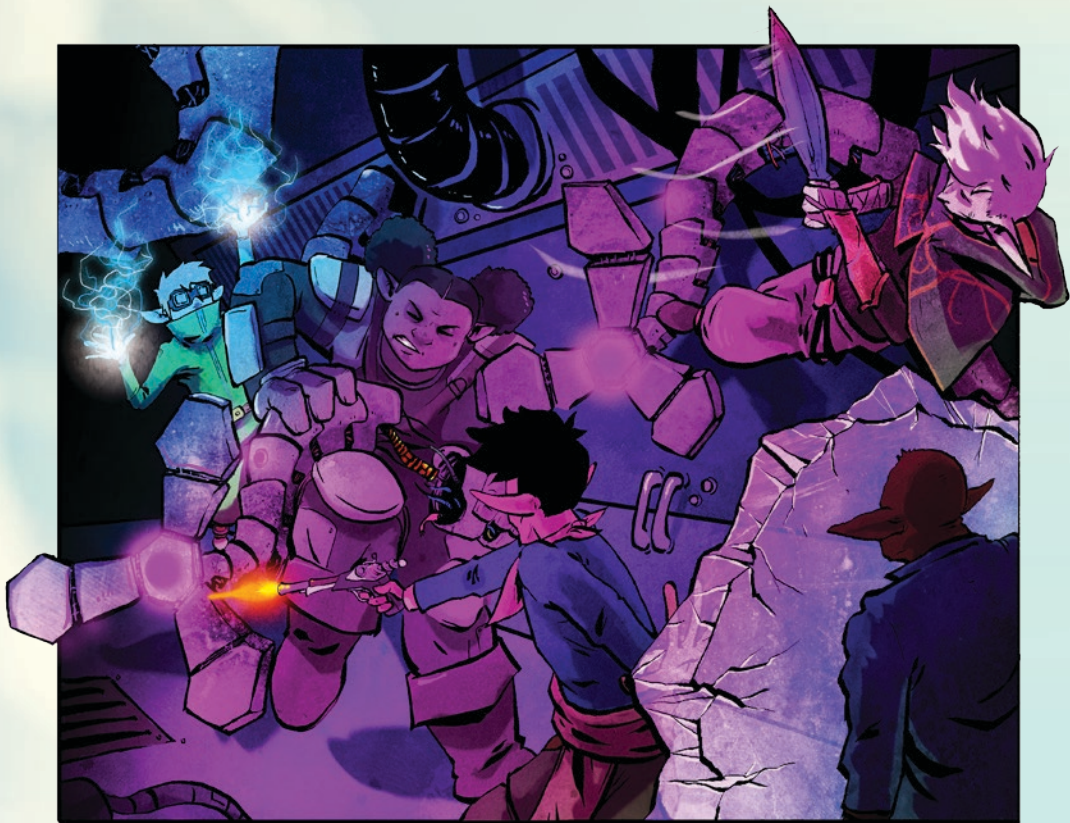
PART 4: ONE PROBLEM AFTER ANOTHER

As soon as the camp is established and work commences, the crew begins to experience a series of encounters, problems and challenges that become increasingly troublesome, worrying and dangerous, until they culminate in dramatic revelations within the ruins and in a lethal confrontation with a Child of the Dark patrol.

RUNNING THE ENCOUNTERS

Each challenge is an independent event, with separate encounters that lead to its resolution. The list below, however, interlaces these separate threads into an intentionally harried narrative, and moderators are encouraged to present them in increasingly





rapid succession so the party is unable to fully resolve the last issue before having to deal with the next. The purpose is to pull the characters in too many directions at once, forcing the players to frantically prioritize threats, manage resources and deal with the ultimate responsibilities of command.

Moderators should call for plays when appropriate, and try to honor any player requests for plays. Use the stakes suggested for the resolution of each event thread either as written or as inspiration for unique outcomes.

To facilitate running these encounters, each event is marked with a two-letter abbreviation indicating the thread of which it is part, and a number indicating its place within that sequence of that thread's events. The series is also listed by clock to help moderators "schedule" the individual occurrences.

TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES — TD

Unbeknownst to anyone on the mission, the target ruins

are far more extensive than previous expeditions discovered. In fact, the ruins are a large section of a wrecked Masters' vessel of some sort that still contains a few intact — and active — systems. Additionally, a sizable tribe of dwellers lives in the wreckage, and the creatures have taken an interest in the salvage camp and crew. Always in search of food, they are immediately attracted to the provisions tent, and aware that their "home" is malfunctioning, they recognize that the strangers have both the tools and the expertise to fix things.

BROODING PARENTS — BP

A pair of breeding dark dragons have established a den in a shallow cave within the ruins, not far from the camp, well within range of any roving pickets. One of the pair is off hunting when the *FAITHFUL* arrives and the other is defending the young. The guarding parent won't stray far from its brood, but should any Kin venture too close, it will kill to defend its nest and carry the unexpected but welcome meal back to its young. When its mate returns, the



GUARDIAN CABLES

This automated, combination tool and defense system is a common and dangerous feature of many Masters' facilities, vessels and machines. Presumably serving dual purpose as derrick-like manipulators and anti-boarding countermeasures, these alloy constructs consist of flexible, segmented limbs up to 300 feet long and strong enough to restrain small ships. Inactive tentacles sit retracted in burrow-like housings within the structures they defend, out of which they can shoot with blinding speed when attacking. The working end of the tentacle can have one of several manipulating or weapon appendages. Most are equipped with three opposed, claw-like prongs that can be used as strong grippers or, when closed, as an armor piercing spearhead that can penetrate the thickest ship's hull.

ARC LENSES

Arc lenses are small, intricate hemispheres of elemental glass and Masters' components attached to the bulkheads of some cache sites. Less common than guardian cables and usually inert, arc lenses sometimes still have functioning power sources and can be lethal defenses when they do. Using some sort of trigger or sensing device (how it works remains a mystery), lenses detect the approach of potential targets, somehow classify them, and then choose to fire or not, accordingly. If a target is rich in Potential — an experienced Knight for example — the lens goes untriggered. If a target is Potential poor — say an average liegemen or salvager — the lens blasts the target with a spray of arc fire that turns the person into ash.

Attempts to salvage and weaponize arc lenses have met with moderate success, but they require a magazine of large spark bottles to generate more than a single blast.

creatures will attack in earnest, in an effort to drive off the interlopers while simultaneously taking as much prey as possible.

ACTIVE DEFENSES — AD

Truk and his journeymen assistants are able researchers, but it's been awhile since Truk has been in the field, and this entire experience is new to Randel and Min; thus, all three are a little out of their depths. Accordingly, their overenthusiastic and incautious actions should make the party anxious, and when it's learned that the subterranean complex they ultimately decide to explore still has active defense systems, escort duty of the three researchers suddenly turns hazardous.

OUT OF THE DARK — OD

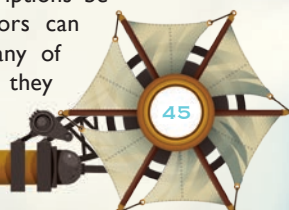
Two Child ships are patrolling this region of the Twilight Frontier, seeking Kin intruders as well as a suitable location for a forward base to

support the pending invasion. When the Children of the Dark discover the ship, camp and crew, they give no warning and attack to kill.

CONTRIVING THE CLIMAX

To create the most dramatic and challenging pacing for the various encounters, moderators should contrive the timing of each of the individual events so that they overlap. Ideally there are characters tracking the dweller intruders, while others are discovering signs of the dark dragon den. Some should be delving after the missing technician while others are chasing after Truk, fighting the dragons or pursuing the Child scouts.

Each series of events ends with a resolving encounter, labeled with the tag "Resolution" in the sequential descriptions below. Though moderators can ask for plays during any of the lead-in encounters, they



should definitely ask for plays to resolve each of these final events. To facilitate these plays, each of the descriptions of these resolving events is followed by suggested stakes.

It is likely that the party will split up, and moderators should encourage them to do so. Accordingly, roleplaying can rotate from sub-party to sub-party to keep tension up and players engaged, ending each event thread and the rotation with final plays.

Though a challenge to orchestrate, finding the Mask and the dark dragon attack should happen at the same time so that the characters have to deal with simultaneous challenges, and the players believe they have reached the dramatic climax. Then, just as the players think they have finally succeeded — or are recovering from various failures — hit them with the real climax of the chapter: the Child patrol attack. Stage it as described under the OD3 heading below, making allowances for however the scene ended in the flash-forward prologue with which the group began the campaign, making any additional plays or narrative segues as needed.

ENCOUNTER SEQUENCE:

Clock 1

TD1 — Several dweller scouts are observing the camp from the surrounding shadowed hill-sides, but they are observed in turn by roving pickets, who report spotting furtive movement in the ravines leeward of camp. Sensing they have been seen, the dwellers quickly flee. If anyone conducts a search, no matter how thorough, all they will find are their own tracks and a number of small or dead-end, cave-like spaces.

BPI — Shortly after the *FAITHFUL* arrives, the brooding parent dragon leaves the shelter of the den and makes a few distant passes around the ship as it begins to unload. Several crewmembers report seeing a large, flying creature on the edge of sight, disappearing in and out of the clouds, but are unable to identify it.

Clock 2

TD2 — Dweller scouts, tracking strange, new food smells to the camp's pantry tent, make off with several sacks of essential provisions. "Cookie," the ship's surly head cook, is irate when he reports to the party that "vital"

food stores are unaccounted for. He swears he inventoried them himself when they came ashore and is now overtly suspicious of the whole crew. A careful examination of the provision tent and the surrounding area reveals strange marks in the dross, but their origin is uncertain.

BP2 — Some roving guards come upon a midden of bones at the bottom of a steep gully, scattering a bunch of mean, toothy scavengers. They are the discards from the dark dragon den that have been washed down the ravine into a pile by the frequent rain.

TD3 — A band of dwellers, feeling threatened by a guard patrol working its way up a ravine, attacks by dropping rocks from above. A couple guards are badly injured and must be carried back to camp for medical attention.

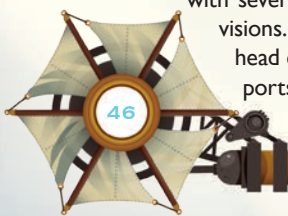
Clock 3

BP3 — While out with the survey team, Randel strays too far from the group and too close to the den. The protective parent silently attacks

MOBILE FORTRESSES

Though rare, there are a number of well-known Masters' caches — such as the Gray Hull and Wreckage #6 — that are not buildings as they seem, but instead the hulks of once-vast vessels or moving fortresses. None of those yet discovered have been undamaged; most are little more than scrap. Of those with some intact sections, many are badly bent and canted, implying either crash landings or ground that has since tilted under their hulls.

Most of these vessels were dark and inert. Some, however, still have functioning systems that suddenly activate when connected to spark bottles or arc generators. A few, drawing from still-energized sources, retain limited power and automatic capabilities to this clock. These sites have proven the most dangerous, as most such systems include lethal defensive armaments.



and kills the unfortunate journeyman, and feeds him to its hungry young. Initially reported as missing, it will not be until the next clock that any search party finds the cave and his remains.

ODI — If the characters were cautious enough to put out a patrolling launch as an early warning picket against Children of the Dark, the Children find it and kill its crew before they can sound the alarm. The characters should suspect something is wrong when the launch is overdue reporting in.

TD4 — Believing they are in need of parts with which to repair their home, several dwellers make off with a case of spare arcanelectrical bits and bobs. Though less outwardly upset than Cookie, it is clear that Chief Technician Ernst is concerned when he reports the missing items. He does not suspect any of the crew, as that does not make any sense to his logical mind. The situation becomes even more curious when several of the missing parts are later found on the ground beyond the leeward perimeter of the camp.

Clock 4

BP4 — A party out looking for Randel comes across the den and are attacked by the aggressive mother. Some of the young dragons and two liegemen are killed in the resulting fighting, but the group manages to escape. If any characters are with the search party, make a play to determine the outcome of the fight with the creature.

ADI — Eventually, after several clocks of careful but frustratingly slow survey work, Truk and his team of excavators expose a large, hatch-like blister on the surface of a buried bulkhead. It takes some time to figure out how to get it open, but when they hook up a large spark bottle to the apparatus, it breaks into four quarters that lift up and back, exposing a wide passage or corridor running at a sharp angle into the dark. Truk insists on immediately descending into the ruins, and his enthusiasm is such that the party is unable to restrain him with only words.

TD5 — Resolution — Convinced that the strangers can fix their “broken” home, the dwellers abduct a liegeman excavation specialist name Lyon, who is reported missing at dinner. If the party investigates his last worksite,

MASTERS’ KIOSKS

“Kiosk” is a general term used by salvagers across the realms; it refers to a broad class of apparatus commonly encountered in the ruins of larger Masters’ caches. Kiosks are always integrated parts of larger devices or structures, and they come in a variety of sizes, designs and functions. They are usually inert when discovered, but a rare few have still had power when first encountered. Technicians can sometimes reactivate them using spark bottles, but such jury-rigged repairs seldom last long.

Active kiosks provide a variety of functions. Some appear to be control or monitoring stations for larger devices. Some provide light, heat or even cooling functions. Some have been discovered that appear to extract water from the air or to process waste into arc. Unfortunately, kiosks usually permanently cease to function when they are removed from the larger structures to which they are attached.

all they find is his hat, some strange tracks and drag marks that lead off into the hills. Following the tracks lead searchers to a nondescript cave that opens into a complex interior structure. Searching the structure takes time and is a tense, suspenseful undertaking. Search parties are attacked by harrying bands of dwellers that are trying to keep the interlopers out of their home, with the resistance growing more desperate the deeper the searchers descend.

The characters can either withdraw and abandon the search, attempt diplomatic communication or use force. If they withdraw, Lyon is lost, as the dwellers won’t let him go. If they succeed in a parlay, or even befriend the creatures, the dwellers eventually lead them to Lyon and the malfunctioning kiosk in hopes they can repair it.

If the party chooses to fight their way through the dweller



defense, the characters do so at a bloody cost to the creatures and their own consciences. When they penetrate the heart of the dweller territory, the characters find a warren packed with young, pregnant, infirm and elderly dwellers, all of whom are terrified by the invaders. Those who can, flee, but many simply cower in fear.

The party find Lyon, a little worse for wear, but otherwise unharmed. In fact, he shares that he believes the dwellers brought him here to fix the ailing Masters' kiosk on which they have been depending for heat and water. Of course, as an excavation specialist, Lyon's technical skills are limited and he has been unable to affect repairs.

The characters can simply rescue Lyon and leave the dwellers to their fate. They can try to befriend and communicate with the creatures, or even make the repairs. They could also decide to chase off or even kill the rest of the dweller tribe as a brutal security precaution. Moderators should not stop them from assaulting the dwellers, but afterwards they should assign a 1-card innate challenge cache for carrying out what amounts to a needless massacre. The cache may be used in any play where the characters' own heavy consciences could be relevant to the outcomes.

Unfortunately, if they succeed in repairing the kiosk and its local systems, the rescuers end up having to fight their way out of the depths of the compound against the newly reactivated complex defenses. Simultaneously, those same systems begin attacking any party members trying to recover the Mask in another section of the ruins.

TD Player Stakes

- The party finds Lyon and rescues him from his predicament.
- + Lyon is rescued without having to seriously injure any members of the dweller colony.
- + The group successfully parleys with the dwellers.
- + Someone in the group is able to successfully reactivate the dwellers' life-support kiosk.

- + The kiosk is reactivated without also activating the ruins' active defenses.

- + Several of the dwellers seem to imprint on the characters and refuse to leave their sides, apparently attaching themselves to the Knights' "tribe."

TD Moderator Stakes (2)

- The rescuers fail to locate Lyon.
- + Lyon is killed in the rescue attempt.
- + The party is forced to kill a number of dwellers to escape.
- + The party members all suffer minor wounds in the fighting.
- + The moderator receives a 1-card innate challenge cache she can use whenever a party member's guilt over the slaughter might influence the outcome of a play.

OD2 — The Children of the Dark may be aggressive, but they are not stupid, and they have their own battle tactics. As soon as the Child commanders discover that there are Kin on the skyland, they deploy their own scouts onto the island with orders to find out what the Kin are up to. At some point, the scouts run afoul of camp guards and there is a loud, bloody skirmish. The guards are killed, and the Children retreat before anyone can come to their aid. By the time the characters get a report and figure out what happened, the Child scouts have rendezvoused with their ships and left the island.

AD2 — The interior of the wreck is a dark, cold maze of corridors, chambers and bays, laced with enigmatic infrastructure and fixtures. Under other circumstances, this new find would be a priceless trove of archeological information and technological artifacts. Truk is focused solely on finding the Mask; however, and hurries the explorers along, ignoring everything else as he urgently traces a specific class of conduit, following it from one section to another, deeper and deeper into the structure.

But for a few dispersed systems, the wreckage of the Masters' fortress is without power, and so most of its active defenses are disabled. Anyone exploring the ruins comes across inactive guardian cable housings on the canted bulkheads, many of which appear damaged or empty, but some still have the lethal tool-weapons in place, despite having sat idle for countless cycles.





Moderators should contrive the timing so that the salvage party with Truk is deep in the ruins if the active defenses are reactivated by the party that went after the missing liegeman. When this happens, Truk's group face added challenges when the guardian cables power up and they have to fight their way through the suddenly lethal maze of corridors.

BP5 — Resolution — The dragon's mate returns to the island and the defensive parents — enraged by the attack on their den — attack the camp in earnest. Ideally, the dragons should arrive after the characters searching for Lyons, and those supporting Truk, have all descended into wreckage. The deep vibrations of the defensive cannon fire can be heard underground and will alert both parties of delving explorers to the attack, forcing them to choose: press on, or race back to the surface to face whatever new danger threatens.

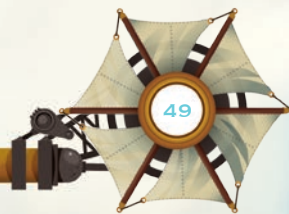
BP Player Stakes

- The characters succeed in driving off the dark dragons.

- The crew takes only limited casualties.
- ✦ The combined efforts of the camp's defenders kill both adult dragons.
- ✦ One of the dragons is captured alive, subdued and loaded in the hold of the *FAITHFUL*, with the intent of bringing it back to the Academy for study.
- ✦ Several of the dark dragon hatchlings are captured alive.
- ✦ The party members gain a 1-card innate cache for use in encounters with any species of sky dragons in the future.
- ✦ The characters are invited to give a workshop at the Academy on the proper way to defend salvage camps from dark dragon attacks.

BP Moderator Stakes (2)

- The dark dragons kill a number of crew equal to a random card draw and injure twice that many.



- As determined by a luck draw, one of the characters suffers a major wound in the fighting.
- ✦ As determined by a luck draw, one of the characters sees a liegeman bitten in half. This causes the character to suffer frequent, terrible dreams of the slaughter ever after.
- ✦ The attacking dragons do so much damage to the *FAITHFUL*, she has to be grounded on the island for repairs. The crew suffers a 2-card challenge cache in any play involving defense of the camp while she's down.
- ✦ As determined by a luck draw, one of the characters loses his Knights' blade as a dragon flies off with it still stuck in its tough hide.

Play through **FB18 — Injured on the Job**, page 149.

Clock 5

AD3 — Resolution — Exploring the interior of the ruins should take as long, and require as many separate forays, as needed to contrive the timing such that the search resolves at the moderator's dramatic moment of choice. Eventually, after having to backtrack repeatedly and find their way past collapsed corridors and blocked hatchways, those exploring the ruins find what Truk is looking for: a small chamber to which countless conduits — like the one they have been following — converge. A large, complicated device fills the space from tilted floor to canted ceiling and appears to have been half-melted by some arcanoelectrical overload.

A cavity in the middle of the machine contains a complex armature consisting primarily of Potential conduits and leads. Dangling from the partially melted harness is a gold-colored device made of Masters' alloy. This is the focus of Captain Truk's obsessed search: the Mask of the Navigator.

Truk oversees the careful disconnection of the Mask, and then inspects the melted harness. He is clearly frustrated by the irreparable damage but is ecstatic about the Mask. Truk has little time to brood, however, for — if the moderator timed things carefully — the Child attack begins at this very moment.

AD Player Stakes

- The party is able to fend off the various automated attacks with only minor injuries.

MASK OF THE NAVIGATOR

This device is an essential component of the relic collectively known as the Eye of the Navigator. The Mask is simple in appearance but complex in design. It looks like a plain, gold-colored visor with only the smooth, abstracted contours of a face. There is a single large hole where the wearer's left eye would be, with a dozen small electrical leads lining the rim of the socket. There are another dozen similar, but larger, leads along the outer edge of the Mask. A complex, flexible metal harness across the back holds the visor on the wearer's head. The Mask has no switches, toggles, lenses or other moving parts.

- The characters find and recover the Mask of the Navigator intact.
- ✦ The team is able to salvage a functioning arc lens.
- ✦ The party learns enough about the technology supporting the Mask that they earn a 1-card story cache they can use in any future play associated with similar technology.

AD Moderator Stakes (2)

- The characters make it to the central chamber containing the Mask, but each must make a minor wound draw.
- The party makes it out again, with the mask, but each must make a second minor wound draw.
- ✦ Captain Truk is gravely wounded by a guardian cable and incapacitated.
- ✦ All the liegemen in the explorers' party are killed by the defenses — including Min.
- ✦ The moderator gains a 1-card innate challenge cache representing claustrophobic dread. It can be used in any future play during which the characters are in a confined, underground space.



OD3 — Resolution — When the Children of the Dark inevitably attack, they try to pin the *FAITHFUL* against the island to cut off her retreat, then blast her with cannon fire to reduce resistance before sending over boarding parties.

It is important to remember when staging this attack that this event is the same one as the flash forward in the opening ship battle of this book's prologue. Accordingly, in anticipation of finally catching up to this event, moderators should contrive to stage the characters in the same positions on the island, in the camp or on the *FAITHFUL* as they occupied at the

beginning of the flash forward scene in their first session. If this is not possible, don't worry. Blame any discrepancies on the "fog of war." Recap the outcomes from any play used to resolve the battle scene in the prologue, then weave them into the ongoing narrative. Role-play through the resolution to the encounter as the characters deal with any ramifications of those original outcomes.

OD Player Stakes

The suggested stakes for this encounter are provided in the campaign prologue, and the play has presumably already been resolved.

PART 5: RETURN TO PORT

BREAKING CAMP

Should the characters succeed in recovering the Mask and defeating the Children of the Dark, it is likely they'll have some mopping up to do. They probably have injured liegemen to care for and casualties to recover. They might have Child prisoners to round up and secure, and they may even have a Child ship needing a prize crew. They have a salvage operation to complete, a camp to break down and a long voyage home. Role-play though any dramatic or poignant parts of the process, and feel free to manage the details with or without plays. If, however, moderators want to make more of a challenge out of chasing down any Children on the island or rooting them out of any captured ship, they should call for tactical plays around these events.

If the party was defeated by the Children, then there will certainly need to be some plays to resolve the dire situations in which the characters find themselves. They might need to survive hiding out on the skyland until the Children leave, they may need to escape captivity or retake their ship. They might need to survive until rescue comes, struggle to repair a damaged *FAITHFUL* or figure out another way to get off the island and back to port. The options are as diverse as the possible stakes for the ship battle, and moderators should base any mop-up plays on the specific outcomes of the fight.

Moderators are encouraged to use any of the appropriate aerial encounters from that

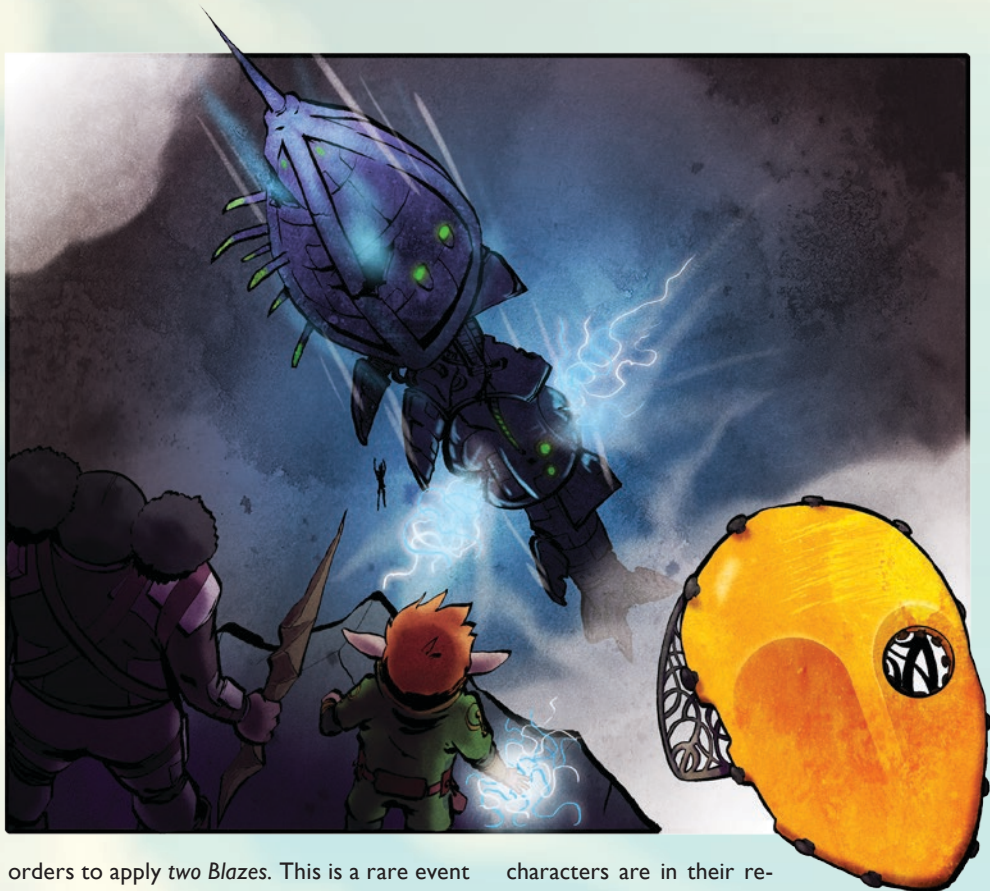
appendix to make the journey home more challenging.

JUST REWARDS

Assuming the boat crew recovered the Mask of the Navigator, during the voyage home Truk appears a new man. He is energetic and excited, rejuvenated even, and barely able to contain his academic enthusiasm or his relief at the operation's success. He stops short of revealing his plans for the Eye of the Navigator; however, the characters should realize that there is something more going on than can be explained by academic vindication. This is confirmed when, just before disembarking, Truk swears the characters to secrecy, making them promise not to say anything about recovering the Mask to anyone — even NPC members of their boat crew. He leaves them with his deepest gratitude, assurances that there is more work to be done and that he will be calling upon them again soon.

As per tradition, after returning from his graduation cruise a Knight's first Blaze of Rank — already outlined upon becoming a journeyman — is filled in with the characteristic iridescent ink as described in the *UPWIND* core-book on page 53. When the party members report to the Guild alchemists responsible for making the rank tattoos, they are surprised to learn that the alchemists have received





orders to apply two *Blazes*. This is a rare event that only happens when Knights perform exceptionally on their first assignments.

If the party asks about the anomaly, they are informed that the recommendation was made by Captain Truk for “exceptional service to the Guild.” Rather cryptically, there are no other details provided with the orders.

At this time, each player should record two *Blazes* — the traditional first *Blaze* for graduation as listed on each character sheet — as well as a second commendation the players should label as “Mask of the Navigator.”

BRAGGING RIGHTS

The uncommon occurrence of being given command of a mission as a graduation cruise, as well as the exceptionally rare second *Blaze* resulting from such an assignment, means the characters’ fellow boat crew members, friends and other acquaintances will certainly have lots of questions. In fact, the more reticent or cagey the

characters are in their responses, the more curious and insistent their friends become.

Roleplay through some of the friendly interrogations, asking the players questions in character, then ask all the players to make luck draws. Make a play with the losing player to determine if her character is able to successfully deflect the probing questions, or if she gives away any secrets.

If the player loses, use this opportunity to put the Cabal agents identified in the introduction on the trail of the Embassy conspiracy, and — more directly — on the trail of the party. Pursuit should give the players a sense of urgency, and make them feel like there is something going on behind the scenes; both will enhance their enjoyment of the campaign. A play like this is the perfect excuse to initiate such pursuit, and so moderators are encouraged to bid to win when resolving this encounter.



Player Stakes

- The character is able to deflect the questions without giving anything substantive away.
- ✦ Through the sloppy questioning of their interrogator, the character learns a rival organization has an interest in Captain Truk.
- ✦ The character manages to create such a convincing alternative version of events as cover for the salvage operation that she earns a 2-card story cache the party can use in any play where misdirection about that salvage mission is relevant.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The character fumbles through his conversation, and leaves his questioner suspicious about what really happened.
- ✦ The character thoughtlessly gives away essential details, including the fact they recovered a rare relic that could be important to the war effort.
- ✦ The character gets drunk, swears his new best friend to secrecy and tells her the whole story.
- ✦ The essential details get back to the Cabal and they begin investigating Captain Truk — and the characters — in earnest.



CHAPTER 3: THE HELM

SYNOPSIS

The chapter begins with the characters returning from separate Guild deployments. It has been a round and a half since they helped Truk recover the Mask of the Navigator, and the boat crew has received orders to return to Highstone and report to the old Knight. During a subdued and secretive meeting, Truk hints at elements of the Embassy's plan and asks the characters to carry out another dangerous — and possibly illegal — mission.

The boat crew travels to the infamous pirates' den of Hole and negotiates with the current "governor," the notorious gang leader known only as the Metal Man. The Metal Man claims to know where a functioning Helm of the Navigator may be found, and Truk wants the characters to find it and use it to activate the Eye they recovered from Igor the Under. Once activated, the party is to return to Truk to report and receive further orders.

The characters learn that, in exchange for the location of the Helm, they must agree to extricate the Metal Man's daughter from

a Cloud Principality work camp where she is being held for piracy — for hijacking salvage shipments from the very site where the Helm is supposed to be located. Though Cloud is not a member of the Convocation, the Guild does maintain separate agreements with the nation's government. The characters need to decide if their trust in Truk is stronger than their reluctance to break these treaties and risk major political backlash. They also need to decide how far they can trust the gang leader and his daughter.

This chapter is intended to highlight some of the interesting people, mysterious places and dangerous things that make up the Kingdoms in the Light. It is also meant to give social characters their moment to shine and sneaky characters their chance to carry the story.

As moderators prepare to run chapter 3, it is helpful to remember that the characters are on their own in dangerous skies in a way they have not yet been in this story, and their challenges and consequences should reflect this.

PART 1: HOMECOMING

Though there has been no formal declaration, and Guild leadership is keeping their specific intentions confidential, scuttlebutt around the Fleet seems to agree that the current distribution of Fleet resources and increased activity on the Frontier means that the Guild is preparing for what many believe may be the beginning of a Third Incursion by the Children of the Dark.

Make it clear to the characters that, officially, all of the various activities are simply the Guild going about its duties, and that dispatches neither confirm nor deny any rumors or broadsheet speculation. Hint, however, that anyone with even rudimentary knowledge of naval strategy and fleet logistics can't help but see meaning in the pattern of individual squadron operations and troop assignments when considered as a whole.



UPMANSHIP

Tell the players that their characters have each been deployed individually over the past round and a half on a variety of assignments, cruises and missions. Tell them to take a moment to decide — based on their characters' concepts and attributes — where and what tasks they had been assigned. Tell them to also think about the rumors of war that they have undoubtedly heard, and whether or not their characters believe these stories.

Open with a roleplaying scene at the Knights' Blade, the famed tavern outside the gates of the Academy frequented by members of the Guild. The boat crew has been apart for longer than any time since their Knights' training began, and the members are eagerly catching up with each other. Instruct the players to carry on this conversation in-character, and challenge them to include the following character information as a part of the discussion.

- Where was your character deployed?
- What was your character doing there?
- Describe the most dangerous thing that happened to your character during the assignment.
- What new nickname did the character earn during the deployment and why?

Call for a collective play. Ask each player to make an opposed bid using the attribute she thinks most applies to the main activity in which her character was engaged during her recent assignment. The character with the highest score may show off a third, still raw, Blaze of Rank; she should explain how she earned it as part of the exchange of stories. She should then record it on her character sheet with an evocative name describing the encounter. The character with the lowest score may show off a gruesome scar, and then explain how he earned it.

Working with the moderator, each character should then devise a new, I-card innate cache that was earned during the circumstances of their deployment. It should evoke any lessons learned during the assignments, and players should record them on their sheets as permanent additions to their characters.

Inform the players that their characters have been recalled from their various assignments by orders instructing them to again report to Captain Truk. Encourage in-character roleplaying and speculation about these orders, but let it go on only for as long as it is fun and the players are engaged. As a way to close out the barroom discussion, ask the players what their individual characters think about the orders and what they think they'll be asked to do next.

NEW ORDERS

A couple of clocks after the gathering at the Knights' Blade — wherever they are and whatever they are doing — each character is approached by a tiny, stone golem which looks more like a terracotta pot with legs than stone. Each golem carries a formal invitation written in Truk's characteristic, hard-to-read scribble, and as soon as it hands the paper to the character, the elemental crumbles into dust.

The card simply reads:

I would be overjoyed if you would accept my invitation to dine at my home at low three, aft-clock. Come as you are, but please no guests as, though an informal gathering, we have work to discuss.

Assuming the characters all attend the dinner, they'll realize they have never been to Truk's home before, despite their role as his protégés. Some members may even have thought he lived in faculty housing at the Academy. In fact, Truk is the last scion from a once-wealthy family, and the stately building in the hills above Highstone to which the address on the invitation leads was once quite impressive. As an only child, and with the death of his young bride and daughter long ago, he is the last member of his family. As the characters make their way through the formerly grand grounds, they realize that the grounds are not being maintained; as they approach the house, the stately impression gives way to one of dilapidation.

Guests are greeted at the door by Orum, Truk's apparently ageless batman, who leads them into the study. Sealed rooms, sheet-covered furniture, empty wall hooks and vacant shelves enhance the impression of neglect and financial troubles.



The characters have heard gossip, but it appears true that Truk has been selling personal items to fund his increasingly obsessive researches.

The characters should be shocked by the noticeable decline in Truk's health since they last saw him. Though aging and increasingly frail, he was energetic with a vital gleam in his eye when they returned him to the Academy with the Mask of the Navigator. Now his face is gaunt and his body bowed, as if a great concern is draining the life out of him. He sits in a large, overstuffed chair surrounded by stacks of books, piles of papers and random map folios scattered across the floor. The electric hearth is sparking with a cherry glow and the wood paneled room is close and overly warm. Despite his physical decline, the characteristic sparkle is still in Truk's eye; though by the end of dinner, the characters may wonder if it's more the spark of madness than wit.

The meal is simple but good, and is accompanied by several surprisingly expensive bottles of Vaultish wine. Though he is clearly happy to see his old students, Truk's conversation is a little distracted and disjointed at first. As the wine flows and he comes to the business at hand, however, he becomes more focused — perhaps even manic. Throughout both dinner and refreshments, including more wine, he shares the following information:

- There are those in the Guild who are convinced that the Third Incursion is already underway and that the Children of the Dark are moving against the realms. Some are convinced that the Guild's defenses won't be sufficient without the aid of the Kingdoms in the Light, and there are those who believe — Truk refers to them only as colleagues — that more drastic action is needed. Truk has promised these colleagues a solution; a plan to defend the Kingdoms, stave off the pending war and establish a permanent peace.
- To do this, he needs a working Eye of the Navigator, and though the Mask and the Eye they have already recovered appear compatible, without a working Helm they are of no use. Truk has invited his old students here to ask them to take on another mission — a particularly

unorthodox task that might necessitate acting outside what is generally considered Guild jurisdiction, or even Guild law.

- Truk has a contact — an ex-pirate turned crime lord and the current gangland governor of the infamous pirate haven known as Hole (both Hole and its ersatz governor are described in the “Periphery” and “NPC, Groups and Factions” sections, respectively, of the *UPWIND* corebook). Truk was well-travelled in his younger clocks and seems to know Kin in every port — even the less reputable ones. Given Truk's and the Metal Man's similar anatomical anomalies — arcaneoelectrical body parts — it is less surprising the two are acquainted.

Knowing that the Metal Man occasionally has access to hard-to-find salvage by dint of his various “business associates,” Truk provided the Metal Man with a list itemizing his particular needs should he happen to ever “come across them.” Items recently “brokered” by the Metal Man convinced Truk that he had a line on salvage that might very well come from a site containing a Navigator's Helm. The Metal Man, however, declined to share any specifics, preferring instead to play the middleman — that is until only a few clocks ago, when a garish, little ship came into Highstone harbor and the first mate hand-delivered Truk a letter from the Metal Man. Written in large, barely legible letters, the note is surprisingly articulate, if a little terse.

Phineas,

You have asked many times for information regarding my sources. To protect my profits I have just as frequently refused such information. Circumstances have changed. If you still wish to know from where I acquire these goods, send able agents willing to do what is necessary, and in exchange you will have your location.

A life hangs in the balance. The HARSH MISTRESS and her crew are both capable, and I put them at your disposal.

I suspect time is against us.

—M

Truk shares the letter with the characters and answers what questions he can, though he claims he knows nothing more about what the





Metal Man may want them to do than is implied by the note. Truk explains that the list of artifacts the Metal Man has recently been selling on the black market has convinced him that the gangster has access to salvage coming from a site similar to one the characters helped excavate at Rubble Field #43 (in chapter 2, [page 42](#)). Truk admits that what he is asking is unorthodox, and though he has official orders detaching the boat crew to his service, sending them off to do a favor for someone like the Metal Man would at best be dubious, and at worst could be seen as a career-ending betrayal of their vows.

Truk promises he'll try to shield the characters from any consequences should things go poorly, but admits that his clout is not what it

used to be and that they could lose everything. The professor earnestly tries to convince the party that the recovery of a working Eye could head off the pending war, and ultimately bring a permanent end to hostilities. Whether the characters believe the unlikely claim or not, it should be clear to them that their old mentor does. More than this Truk refuses to say, claiming that at this point, it is better that the party remain convincingly ignorant of other details.

In the end, given the risk he would be forcing on them, Truk refuses to order the party to undertake the mission. Instead, with a sober, but perhaps more telling plea, he asks them to take on the mission not as an order or even a favor to an old friend, but as a last hope to save the Kingdoms in the Light.



THE HARSH MISTRESS

The *MISTRESS* is one of the Metal Man's fastest and most heavily armed ships. Not only does she have a surprising number of cannons hidden behind camouflaged gun ports, but the old pirate has used his considerable Ore Potential to reinforce her hull with metal ribbing and even armor plating in key locations. She has a pair of salvaged guardian cables mounted fore and aft, retrofitted to the ship's arc grid. Her crew is particularly adept at using them to grapple targets or wreak havoc in the rigging of an enemy ship.

Small and nondescript, the *MISTRESS* has common lines and her crew frequently changes her name plates, paint scheme and sail plan, allowing her to hide in plain sight almost as effectively as if she had sky dragon hide. She also has several cleverly hidden cargo compartments for evading customs inspections, and the crew dutifully keeps counterfeit logs and manifests just in case.

The *MISTRESS* is captained by Simion Gray, a notorious pirate and wanted man in more than half the Kingdoms in the Light. Since no one knows for sure just what he looks like, he and his chameleon ship are able to come and go almost at will. The crew is as competent as it is ruthless, and as loyal to Gray as it is fearful of him. Notable crew members include Din Din, Gray's first mate and a tiny woman no one crosses twice; Red Jake the bosun, a man so large he carries a swivel gun into battle; and the Ruthless Three, a trio of Arc-using, knife-fighting brothers from Tempest who were chased off the island of murdering warlords for being *too fond of murder*.

There are large bounties currently being offered by the Guild and several national navies for the capture of the *HARSH MISTRESS* and her crew. Gray alone is worth a small fortune.

The unique speed, armaments and crew of the *MISTRESS* grant her a 2-card innate cache for plays involving swiftness, battle or skullduggery.

PART 2: DOWN THE HOLE

Assuming the party takes on Truk's dubious mission, they can embark on the Metal Man's "courier," as soon as they are ready to depart. Truk provides them with a stout, metal case containing both the Eye and the Mask and admonishes them not to let the objects out of their sight, protecting the artifacts with their lives if necessary. His emphasis on this last part should help the characters realize they are involved in a very serious undertaking.

Allow the characters to make whatever preparations they wish to before leaving port, but emphasize that given the questionable nature of their intentions, they should probably avoid officially requisitioning any resources from the Guild. Truk gives them a small cash reserve, apologizing for not providing more, but it

should be enough for incidentals and perhaps one significant item or bribe.

GOING ABOARD

The crew of the courier are actually notorious pirates, and the ship is well-known across the realms as the *HARSH MISTRESS*. She is in Highstone Harbor wearing an uncharacteristically garish paint scheme, bright-red sails and an alternate nameplate — the *SLY BIRD* — so it is likely that, unless the characters investigate, they won't even realize they are joining an infamous pirate crew when they first board the ship.

IN PURSUIT

The comings and goings at Highstone Harbor are a matter of interest to intelligence agents from across the Kingdoms, and, accordingly, to members of the Cabal. Moderators who



want to harry their players with pursuit can assume that first, the *SLY BIRD* will ultimately be identified as the notorious *HARSH MISTRESS*, and second, the party will be observed embarking and subsequently leaving with the pirates. The involvement of the *HARSH MISTRESS* quickly connects Truk to the Metal Man, and the Cabal dispatches agents to Hole in hopes of discovering what Truk and his proxies are about.

WINNING FRIENDS

Once aboard and out of port, it quickly becomes apparent to the characters that the crew are not common sailors, and that they have stepped into a potentially dangerous situation. It is clear that the crew has a very different interpretation of the meaning of “at your disposal” and that they are only tolerating the party’s presence because of the Metal Man’s orders. Accordingly, the party has a choice to make. They can meekly stay out of the pirates’ way or they can establish themselves in a way that does not depend on the boss’s orders.

Play through **FB16 — Townies**, page 148.

If the players opt to stay out of the pirates’ way, assign them a 2-card innate challenge cache representing their relationship with the crew; use it in any plays involving interacting with or trying to order about the pirates. If the players opt to assert themselves, roleplay through how they go about winning over or cowing the pirates. As they reach the tipping point in their plan, call for a play.

Player Stakes

- The crew tolerates the party and follows sound orders as long as they do not risk the ship or deviate too far from the goal of delivering the characters to Hole.
- + Captain Gray actually deigns to interact with the party members, though he remains aloof and suspicious.
- + The characters actually befriend a few of the less-surlly crewmembers, learning a thing or two about pirates in the process. This knowledge grants one character a 2-card story cache whenever thinking like a pirate could affect a play.
- + The crew and captain become so impressed — or intimidated — by the Knights, the

party earns a 1-card innate cache for plays involving commanding the *MISTRESS*’s crew.

- + The Knights learn enough about the crew’s habits and bolt holes, that they could easily track them down should they want to apprehend them in the future.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The party is intimidated by the pirates, and gains a 1-card innate challenge cache representing their antagonistic relationship.
- + The pirates hate the Knights, and will betray them as soon as it is narratively.
- + Despite the Metal Man’s orders, one of the pirates picks a fight with one of the Knights. Call for another play as they duel on the deck, and be sure to consider the negative consequences if the Knight embarrasses, injures or even kills the angry pirate.
- + The crew loses it, and despite the Metal Man’s orders, attempt to murder the entire party.

Moderators should feel free to insert an appropriate event from the Aerial Encounters appendix (see [page 150](#)) as part of the 13-clock voyage to Hole. In fact, the characters’ roles in any such encounter could be the basis for whatever play is made to impress the pirates.

Though ships going in and out of Hole are commonly harried by gunboat buccaneers and even a clan of gilder-riding raiders living among the small, surrounding skylands, the *MISTRESS* is well known in these skies and is left alone by anyone not wanting to challenge the Metal Man. An attack on the *MISTRESS* by such a rival, however, is up to the moderator. Such an attack would give the party the chance to impress the *MISTRESS*’s crew, and at the same time, gain the upper hand in their subsequent meeting with the enigmatic gang leader.

HEAVY METAL

Once docked in Hole, the characters can either allow themselves to be escorted to the Iron Castle or strike out on their own.

Almost the moment the *HARSH MISTRESS* is tied to the quay, the Windlass platform meets the ship at her moorings, and if the characters acquiesce, the device unceremoniously conveys them to a meeting with the Metal



HOLE

Hole's general nature and layout are described in the *UPWIND* corebook, page 42, but more details are offered here.

Hole is infamous across the realms as a pirate haven, smugglers' den and criminal warren. Though rivaled by Haven and the Vagabond Fleet, Hole lacks Convocation membership, or even the minimalist rules of the "Mandates of the Fleet," so it is considerably more lawless, unpredictable and dangerous than any other settlement in the realms.

The mine that originally resulted in the eponymous hole through the skyland was played out long ago; now the economy is based solely on trade in stolen and smuggled goods. As testament, Hole's large bazaar is openly — and defiantly — referred to as the "Black Market." Infamous for selling almost nothing that was not obtained by nefarious means, it is widely believed that anything can be found here if the buyer is willing to pay enough. The Market is the only place in the skyland where a tradition of neutral territory is respected, and anyone caught stealing or fighting there is unceremoniously hanged by the governor's crew from the underside of the Windlass, as an object lesson to all.

The skyland Hole occupies is only about a dozen miles across at its widest point. Most of its surface is dedicated to hardscrabble agriculture and ranching, the products of which are insufficient to feed the population of the town, so stolen food cargoes and the occasional import are essential supplements. There is a small population of locals, born and raised on the island — farmers, ranchers, craftsmen and even a few shopkeepers — who pay their protection money but are otherwise mostly ignored by the ebb and flow of gang power. That is, until they are caught in an inevitable crossfire between rivals.

Power and authority in Hole follows a feudal form, with small gangs holding their few blocks of territory in exchange for allegiance and support to larger gangs. These larger gangs are constant rivals, plotting against each other and often fighting bloody skirmishes in attempts to grab territory and resources. Territorial borders are therefore in constant flux; survival depends on knowing where the lines and allegiances lie.

Whether for the money, the pursuit of power or simply for some misguided form of prestige, there has always been a constant and bloody game among the toughest gangs in Hole as each tries to take control of the whole dung heap. In the past, this has meant constant change in the title of *de facto* "governor," to whom the larger gangs must in turn pay their own protection money. Rarely the same person for more than a round or two, the current governor — the Metal Man — has been in power for most of two cycles — a testament to his ruthlessness.

Man. If they leave the ship, they are advised by Captain Gray that they should be careful, as the streets of Hole are "rather dangerous," and that the Metal Man "does not like waiting" — pointing out that he has been waiting for at least 28 clocks already.

The Hard Way

If the characters are determined to go into Hole on their own, Gray sends a few handpicked crewmen to follow after them and intervene if they get into trouble.

If the characters are openly wearing their Knights' blades, the general riffraff give them wide berth. If they have hidden their weapons, their obvious youth and tidy, foreign dress immediately attracts predatory attention. Either way, the party quickly draws attention, especially as they have openly arrived on the Metal Man's prized ship.

The Black Market is a round-the-clock affair, unless the errant party members are focused on a particular goal, it is likely they find their way to the infamous bazaar. Once there,



encourage some roleplaying and embellish the diverse, overwhelming and criminal nature of the Market.

A quick-thinking lieutenant in Captain Mai's gang, knowing the newcomers must be important to one of their rival's schemes, attempts to jam up the gears of whatever the Metal Man has planned. Given that fighting in the Market carries a death penalty the governor is expected to enforce, the lieutenant — a cagy Horizonian named Gul — plans to use practiced subterfuge to make it look like one of the characters started a fight and killed his opponent. With the sacrifice of an unsuspecting stall owner, a sharp knife and several coerced witnesses, Gul is confident he can pull off the ruse.

Ask the players to make a group luck draw. The character with the lowest score suddenly finds himself in a press of bodies near a stall selling cog-mounted weapons. There is shouting and someone screams as someone else groans in pain. The press clears and the character is left standing over a dying shopkeeper, a large, bloody knife lying on the ground at his feet. Call for a play.

Player Stakes

- The player sees the whole thing, and apprehends Gul as he tries to slip into the crowd.
- If the party has a member with healing Potential, she can get to the wounded man before he dies and save him.
- + One of the tailing members of Gray's crew backs up the character's claim that Gul is the actual attacker.
- + The party is quickly cleared of the killing, and Gul is hauled off to the Windlass for execution.

Moderator Stakes (I)

- The character is accosted by the Governor's thugs, and they are convinced he is the murderer.
- The character is dragged to the Windlass to be hanged, and the party must fight to save him from execution.
- + The Metal Man is forced to disobey one of the only laws in Hole and must send out his Ore golems to pacify the other gangs. He is furious with the characters; if he wasn't

MAJOR GANGS

Captain Mai's Crew — Captain Mai is a clever pirate with considerable Rain Potential and a lot of ambition. Her crew is known for hiring out to merchant concerns as privateers and attacking the ships of their rivals. Back in Hole she is as ruthless as the best of them, and she plans on becoming the next "governor."

The wHole — This strange group is more like a cult than a gang. Its members worship the hole itself as some kind of deity or power. They are known to sacrifice rival gang members to it by tossing them into the Pit and the sky below.

The Cutters — The Cutters are a dangerous band of thugs run by a man known only as "The Commodore" and infamous for pirating or "cutting out" other pirates. There are two reasons why they have not yet been wiped out by a coalition of other pirate bands: first, any crew benefits when its rivals are hit; second, pirates are not known for successful coalitions.

The Cannoneers — Famous for their uniform predilection for blowing things up, this gang of pyromaniacal cutthroats is known for its skilled gun crews and its tactic of boarding target vessels with bombs in hand, threatening to blow up everything if the crews don't surrender. The general decisiveness of this tactic is probably unsurprising.

desperate, he would likely kill them all as an example to mollify the other gangs.

- + Several gang leaders put out sizable bounties on the characters' heads.

The Easy Way

If the characters simply board the Windlass on arrival, upon disembarking at the bottom



THE IRON CASTLE

This fortress-like structure is made entirely out of rusty scrap metal and iron plates left over from Hole's clocks as a working mine. The irregular, abstract sculpture of the building appeared one still shortly after the Metal Man took over and was presumably built — and is held together — by his considerable Ore Potential. The Castle sits on the very bottom rim of the hole itself, its irregular windows and crooked balconies looking down into the open sky below. As if the battlements and the limited approach were not defense enough, attempts to take down the Metal Man have several times been repelled when he turned large portions of the Castle into huge Ore golems, and used them to crush the attackers like so many bugs.

of the Pit, well-armed Kin lead the characters into the dark interior of the Iron Castle, which proves as haphazard on the inside as it appears on the exterior. It does, however, appear eminently defensible, and the large numbers of heavily armed thugs everywhere about the place only enhances that impression. The boat crew should therefore be surprised when they are taken to a luxuriously appointed hall with a well-set table and a waiting feast.

The room is heated, lit by expensive, filtered arc lamps and decorated in elegant, if eclectic, furnishings that were undoubtedly handpicked from the best of the Metal Man's ill-gotten gains. A Kin-shaped lump of metal on one wall perhaps gives truth to the rumor that the Metal Man used his Ore Potential to hang the last governor of Hole like a piece of art as a warning to those with whom he parlays. The Metal Man himself, large and intimidating in his half-metal form, sits at the far end of the long table and beckons the party to sit, eat, drink and take their ease while he makes his proposal.

The Metal Man is detailed in the NPC section of the

THE WINDLASS

There is a series of six stout derricks around the upper rim of the old mine crater that used to run the lift and control cables of the massive excavator scoop originally used to dig the Pit. The scoop has long since been replaced with a baroque metal platform that now serves as a huge, omnidirectional elevator that can reach any point in town, from the Rim to the very bottom of the Pit. Typically armed with a number of cannon and ready gun crews, the Windlass is a useful weapons platform from where the governor can bring his power to bear across the settlement.

The Windlass is also essential infrastructure, allowing the movement of Kin and cargoes around the otherwise maze-like goat paths the locals call streets. It is one of the only ways pedestrians can move about Hole without trespassing in rival territories; thus, the governor is traditionally expected to provide access as a "public service." Accordingly, there is a constant stream of passengers being shuttled to all points about the slopes of the mostly vertical settlement.

UPWIND corebook (page 118). Note that given his prior physical trauma and his arcanotechnological replacement parts, the Metal Man is as much cog as he his Kin. He is constantly attended by a mechanic who also acts as a body servant, frequently wiping the Metal Man's mouth and emptying the spittle cup strapped under his metal chin. With a lower jaw made of Masters' alloy he is a sloppy eater, so when he talks, he sounds like he is speaking through a mouthful of spit and marbles.

THE DEAL

The Metal Man is as terse in person as he was in his letter, and gets straight to the point. He knows Truk wants the location of the salvage site from which certain artifacts have been





coming. The Metal Man claims to know where it is because his daughter, Ilea, is the one who has been smuggling those very same items out of the Cloud Principality. During her last “expedition,” however, her ship, the *SNEAKY BASTARD*, was taken by the Cloud navy, and she was captured. He explains that he has a sphereometer needle that will lead to a lodestone secreted on her vessel — one even she did not know about — and therefore he hopes the Cloud authorities may not have found it. He knows she survived the initial capture and that she, her ship and her crew are being held at a Cloud naval outpost, probably awaiting execution.

The Metal Man promises that if the party agrees to infiltrate the Principality, free her from the brig, and ultimately escort her home, he will order her, via a letter he will put in their hands, to take the party to the Masters’ cache in which Truk is so interested. He will even instruct her to put her considerable expertise regarding the site’s security at their disposal.

It’s a simple proposition. Rescue his daughter, find the cache, power up the Eye. Who cares if

it is a legal violation of the Guild charter and a moral violation of the Knights’ Pledge?

Moderators should roleplay through this scene, providing characters with social attributes a chance to play to their strengths. The Metal Man is clearly at a disadvantage, but he also knows he has something the characters need. He is a skilled negotiator, an intimidating crime lord and a master Ore user, so the advantage is not all on the Knights’ side. The Metal Man is savvy and negotiates hard. He won’t give up any more information about the site, let alone the sphereometer needle, without the Knights first swearing on their blades that they will rescue his daughter. As the negotiation goes on, the party should eventually realize they are stuck in a moral dilemma and have only a few options.

Play through **FB2 — Family and Friends**, page 140.

First, the characters could agree, swear to the Metal Man and thereby secure his cooperation. This is the easiest,



but definitely the most dubious, option. It is the immoral choice in the dilemma and a direct violation of Guild laws and their Knights' vow. If the players choose this option call for a play:

Player Stakes

- The characters convince themselves this is for the greater good, and have no moral qualms about their decision.
- + Barring capture or other serious complications that involve the party with Principality authorities, they aren't identified.
- + Word of the breakout or infiltration does not make it back to the Guild.
- + The winner of a luck draw earns a 1-card innate cache that can be used in plays involving future acts of subterfuge.

Moderator Stakes (1)

- The party is plagued by self-doubt and guilt, earning a 2-card story challenge cache that can be used in any plays where authority, certainty or confidence play a role during the rest of the mission.
- + If the possibility of being recognized arises, the party is identified as Explorer Knights by Cloud authorities.
- + The loser of a luck draw eventually becomes so guilt-ridden about the party's actions that should he survive the campaign, he turns himself in to the Guild and admits his crimes.

Second, the characters could use their authority as Knights and attempt to simply apprehend the Metal Man on warrants from various Convocation nations. When he inevitably resists, the characters can attempt to take him and his crew down, and then try to force them to turn over the sphereometer needle. They can track the ship, and hope from there they can find the site. This is the moral middle ground that lets them avoid working with the Metal Man, but still has them violating the sovereign borders of the Cloud Principality.

Player Stakes

- + The party subdues the Metal Man temporarily, and is able to coerce the tracking needle for his daughter's ship from the angry crime lord.

- + The Metal Man's crew is beaten and scattered, and they take a clock or two to regroup.
- + The Metal Man is killed in the fighting and the party is lauded by the general populace of Hole — innocents and thugs alike — as liberators.
- + The party liberates a number of rare and valuable relics and other artifacts from the Metal Man's private stores and confiscates them as "criminal gains." Players and moderators should work together to design any such relics, and characters can subsequently use them in the game.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The characters are forced to flee to and hide out in a rival crime lord's territory until they can figure out a way off the island.
- The party needs to find an alternative means of locating the Masters' cache in Cloud.
- The characters each make a minor wound draw as the Metal Man's Ore golems drive them off.
- + The loser of a group luck draw must make a major wound draw.
- + The volatile Metal Man swears he will track the party to the Sky Beyond if he has to and kill them all. The characters gain a nemesis who plagues their future careers until dealt with.

Third, the party could refuse the Metal Man's offer and approach Cloud authorities through proper diplomatic channels, requesting access to the secret site in question. If the players choose this option, try as they might, the Cloud oligarchy does not acknowledge the existence of a "secret Masters' cache," let alone allow the Guild access. Remember — while not an enemy, Cloud is not a member of the Kingdoms in the Light, and has no obligation to cooperate with such a request. In fact, if the characters attempt this route, when they ultimately realize there is simply not going to be a diplomatic solution, assign the party a 3-card story challenge cache that can be used against them in any play around finding or infiltrating the site. The cache represents the heightening of security around the Masters' cache that results from the characters suggesting to the



Principality authorities that they know about the site.

At this point, the characters either have to agree to the Metal Man's request, abandon the mission and return to Truk empty-handed, or think of another approach to locate the cache. Options could include clever use of a PC's Potential powers, tracking naval patrol patterns to identify a protected region of Principality sky or chasing down members of the local underworld and bribing or intimidating a location out of them. The exact nature of such a plan is up to the creativity of the players; any potential stakes are left up to the moderator.

If the players chose to cooperate with the Metal Man, he once again places the *HARSH MISTRESS* and her crew at their disposal. If the party managed to build a rapport with the crew, this is a good thing and the crew's smuggling expertise — as represented in their caches — will likely prove valuable in the upcoming endeavor. If the party failed to earn the crew's respect — or worse, earned their animosity — the voyage itself may prove a challenging adventure.

If the Knights arrested the Metal Man, they subsequently have to figure out how to get off the skyland. They might commandeer one of his ships, and if they do, they have to somehow coerce its crew. Alternatively, they could hire a ship from one of the Metal Man's rivals, but they must be vigilant against the likelihood of betrayal.

OPPOSITION

If the moderator has decided to complicate the story by having the party pursued by agents of the Cabal or some other clandestine organization, assume they had enough interest, clout and time to arrange a pursuit ship. These oppositional forces then either followed the *HARSH MISTRESS* to Hole or learned from one of her crew in a shoreline tavern that the ship was headed there. Assume, therefore, that any pursuit can arrive in Hold shortly after the characters and that they have the *MISTRESS* under surveillance.

Cabal agents want to know what is going on, but they will also be looking for opportunities to disrupt any Guild plans. Accordingly, the agents decide that the lawlessness of Hole is

OPERATIVES 6, 9 AND 11

The Cabal has a rather fluid stable of agents, fixers and operatives through which it conducts its clandestine activities, and refers to them only by temporary numbers assigned when they are hired for particular jobs. Operatives 6, 9 and 11 are suspiciously nondescript, essentially indistinguishable Kin with decidedly criminal backgrounds and skill sets. They work for a handler they know only as The Marchioness, who in turn is a mysterious power within the Coalition of Independent States.

Operative 6 is a hard woman with little emotion and a baton-shaped relic she calls “the Fade” that manipulates ambient Rain Potential in such a way as to allow anyone touching it to go unnoticed. As long as users do not do too much or otherwise draw attention to themselves, they are essentially ignored. They are not exactly invisible, just unseen.

Operative 9 is a tall, thin, moderately able Arc adept who can use his Potential to electrocute, stun or torture targets, though he is a little squeamish when conducting said torture. On an odd note, to help him concentrate while manifesting his Potential, Operative 9 must whistle aloud.

Operative 11 is a rather doughy man with surprising physical strength and a sociopathic desire to hurt others. He, accordingly, enjoys torture. Operative 11 carries a large pistol, a larger knife and an unbreakable garrote made of Masters' alloy.

a perfect cover for ambushing the party members and stealing whatever it is they came to get from the Metal Man.



AMBUSHED

At some point after leaving the Metal Man, but before departing Hole aboard the *MISTRESS*, the party should be ambushed by the agents. They want to obtain the case containing the Eye and the Mask, and, if possible, kill some of the Knights, in hopes of fouling the Guild's plans.

For a dramatic tableau, try to stage the attack aboard the crowded Windlass as the characters ride from one destination to another above the Pit.

The operatives intend to use 6's Fade relic to go unnoticed in the crowd, and pickpocket the Mask and Eye case from whomever is carrying it. They use the crowd as cover and leave the platform at the next stop; however, not before setting the clockwork timer on a bomb they leave behind with the intent of dropping the platform and its passengers — including the Knights — into the sky below the Pit.

Roleplay through the start of the encounter, and when the agents make their move, call for a play.

Player Stakes

- The party prevents the theft but loses the thieves in the crowd.
- The party learns there is rival interest in their activities.
- + The party kills one of the agents.
- + The characters capture one of the operatives alive and is able to interrogate him.

- + The party prevents the bomb from destroying the Windlass, saving themselves, the operators and any passengers.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- Assuming the party is carrying the case containing their relics, the operatives successfully steal it.
- + The agents manage to get away, and disappear into the crowd with their prize.
- + The agents also steal the sphereometer needle the Metal Man gave them to track his daughter's ship.
- + The bomb detonates and the Windlass begins to plummet toward the open sky at the bottom of the Pit. The party must make a second play to resolve this new crisis.

If the party loses the Eye, Mask or navigation needle, they have to track down the Cabal operatives to get them back. The agents are expert at their jobs and quickly go to ground. They use local informants to keep them apprised of what the Knights are doing in response to the theft, and move to exfiltrate the skyland accordingly. They have arranged several options — a private courier, a tramp freighter and a local smuggler — and choose whichever seems most likely to get them past the Knights. As the characters chase down the agents, moderators should call for plays accordingly.

PART 3: LOST IN THE CLOUDS

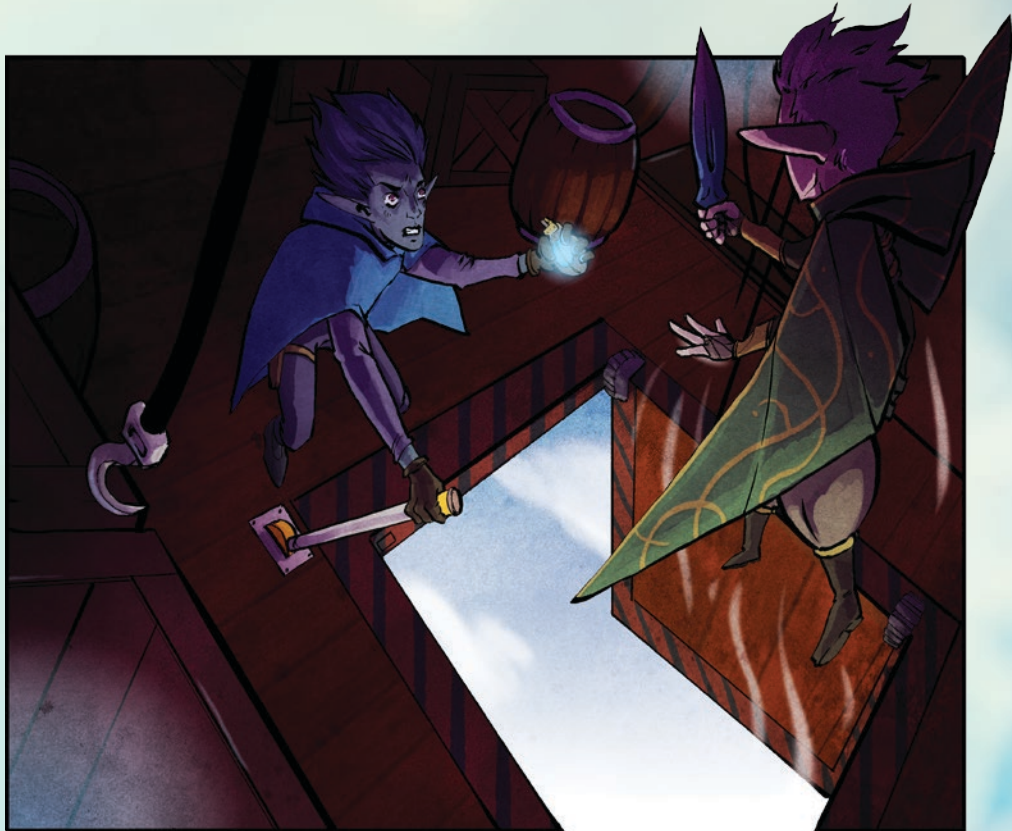
This section assumes that the characters took the easy way and are co-operating with the Metal Man. If they did not, it's up to the moderator to help the players find their way to Cloud and back to the plot. This could be managed by the clever use of Potential abilities; contacts with sailors, freighter captains or even smugglers the characters might know; or by some off-the-books access to Guild intelligence about the Cloud Principality. However, the characters approach it,

success requires clever planning, legwork and social roleplaying.

CREW MORALE

If the party has worked out a deal with the Metal Man, he once again puts the *HARSH MISTRESS* and her crew at his disposal. If the party is still on fair terms with the crew based on a previous play, that is good. If their relationship is strained, this should generate some fun roleplaying opportunities that can lead to plays that either redeem, or further alienate, the characters.





If the party was defeated, arrested the Metal Man, or is on the run from the pirate, the characters have to figure their own way off the skyland, perhaps commandeering or even stealing a ship.

LETHAL STOWAWAY

If she survives an unsuccessful theft attempt, 6 uses her relic to stowaway on the characters' ship prior to its departure for Cloud. Her intention is to hide out, discover where the party is going and what they are up to and perhaps make another attempt to steal the relic case.

Skyships have ample locations in which to hide from an unsuspecting crew; with her training and relic, 6's chances are better than most. Pirates are a paranoid lot, however, and they know their ships well. It is inevitable that, in the course of the journey, one or two of them run afoul of her hiding place, leading to a series of events that draw the attention of the party.

Missing Sailor

Three clocks out from Hole, Captain Gray comes to the characters and reports a missing crew member — a man named Rough Duff — who is nowhere to be found. If they have a strained relationship, Gray all but accuses them of having something to do with the disappearance and makes threats. If they are on good terms, he quietly enlists the party's help in figuring out what happened. Accidents happen and drunk sailors fall overboard, but Duff was young, able and sober, so an accident seems unlikely.

The facts are that Duff stumbled upon 6 in the cargo hold and she killed him. She disposed of his body though one of the hatches in the underhull, and moved to a new hidey-hole. There is simply no evidence of him anywhere, other than his well-used harmonica left lying on the cargo hold deck.

Stolen Case

At some point, the character in charge of the case



containing the Eye and the Mask vacates quarters — leaving the case unattended — and the case goes missing. When this is discovered, it should panic the characters and trigger a ship-wide search. Whether they are on good terms with the pirates or not, the party likely suspects a thief among the crew. Any accusations or searches of personal effects should lead to angry confrontations and hard feelings.

The fact is, 6 stole the artifacts. She doesn't keep them on her, however, but hides them someplace clever in the bowels of the ship as a form of insurance should she be caught.

Dead Body

About halfway through the long journey, shouts from below alert everyone to the discovery of the body of Stinky Erik lying on the closed bay doors of the ships' keel gate. His throat has been slit; it is clear from the blood trail that he was dragged there from somewhere else.

The facts are that Erik ran afoul of 6, but before he could act, she murdered him and dragged him to the gate with the intention of dumping him like she had Duff. She was interrupted by the crewman who ultimately discovered the body, and was forced to flee and hide when he raised the alarm.

Whether at the behest of a well-disposed Captain Gray, or in spite of any search the pirates conduct, the characters are likely to conduct their own investigation. Roleplay through the process, and if they ask clever questions or make accurate deductions, give them a cache representing foresight they can use in any play resolving the search.

At some point, the pirates or the characters may suspect a stowaway, and begin a systematic search of the vessel. When they do, even with the help of her relic, 6 may be unable to remain hidden. If she is found, have her cornered in the hold and begin the encounter with her opening the keel gate in an attempt to dump unwary pursuers into the sky. When she then pulls a grenade and threatens the ship's powder stores, make a play to resolve the resulting negotiation or combat.

Player Stakes

- The characters take down 6 without blowing up the *MISTRESS*.
- The boat crew talks her down and negotiates a deal — 6 doesn't blow up the ship and tells them why she stowed away, and they don't kill her.
- The party is able to recover the hidden artifacts — the Eye and the Mask.
- + The party learns about the Marchioness and that the Cabal operatives are part of a secret effort to foil Truk's plans.
- + Gray thanks the party for their help, and makes it clear he owes them a favor.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- Operative 6 is never discovered, and she continues her mission when the party arrives in the Cloud Principality.
- Operative 6 detonates the grenade, killing herself and crippling the ship, earning the *MISTRESS* a 3-card innate challenge cache until she can be repaired at a fully equipped yard.
- The party can't initially locate the hidden artifacts, and has to negotiate some sort of future favor with the pirates to secure their assistance and guarantee they won't keep them when found.
- + Several members of the crew and one of the characters tumble into the sky when the gate is opened. Another play must be made to rescue them.
- + When the crew finds the artifacts, the party has to fight them to get the relics back.
- + Any character who fails a luck draw is hurt in the explosion and must make a major wound draw.
- + If the party was on good terms with the crew of the *MISTRESS* before this encounter, the deaths and damage lead to a breakdown of trust. The boat crew suffers a 2-card innate challenge cache representing their newly antagonistic relationship.



INTO THE MISTS

The voyage to the Cloud Principality takes the characters across the realms, and lasts approximately 28 clocks. Along the way, the moderator is encouraged to use any of the appropriate events from the Airborne Encounters appendix. The sphereometer needle provided by the Metal Man is linked to a lodestone hidden aboard his daughter's ship, and when the Knights approach the misty skies of the Principality, the needle begins to indicate a steady course.

The following events are unique security measures taken by the Cloud authorities and should be included to complicate the *HARSH MISTRESS*'s infiltration of the mysterious country.

Play though **FB20 — Expertise**, page 149.

FERAL AIR FORCE

The eternally foggy skies of Cloud are home to a clan of feral Kin who live as nomads, travelling from skyland to skyland, living off the islands and the skies between as hunters, gatherers and raiders. Infamous across the region, these Kin — known as Eagle Riders — are legendary for having domesticated large wind eagles and using them as beasts of burden, hunting companions and, of concern to the party, aerial combat forces.

The Eagle Riders have a pact of sorts with the Cloud navy. In exchange for weapons, tools and other useful manufactured goods, the Riders attack any unauthorized vessels that approach the particular region of sky containing the Cascade Cache, harrying them until the interlopers are driven off, captured, or until the navy can arrive. The strategy has proven as effective as it is inexpensive; the Riders have taken well to the role of privateers.

The Eagle Riders' favored tactics include dropping rocks and firebombs from above, slashing rigging and sails and plucking crewmen from decks and dropping them into the sky. They are particularly effective at slowing ships, demoralizing crew and ultimately driving them away.

Player Stakes

- The characters manage to drive off the Eagle Riders without major damage to the ship or injury to the crew.

- + The characters manage to capture and control a wind eagle mount, and can use it during subsequent events.
- + The party so impresses the Eagle Rider chieftainess with their fighting prowess and Potential that, if the characters offer to become allies, she willingly switches allegiances.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The characters must each make a minor wound draw, and the *MISTRESS* loses the swiftness component of her innate cache until she can be repaired in a proper yard.
- + Several of the ship's crew are killed.
- + The loser of a luck draw is taken captive by the Eagle Riders; the party must divert to save the character or abandon him to his fate.

NAVAL INTERDICTION

The Cloud Principality has its own small but formidable navy that has become particularly effective at protecting the nation's closed and misty borders. Once the *HARSH MISTRESS* passes into the skies of Cloud, it is only a matter of time before she is spotted by one of the many watch stations scattered among the small islands of the region, or by one of the fast and nimble patrol ships that continually sail blockade duty between the nation's borders and its protected interior.

The party's destination is four clocks in from the nation's border. Once during each clock spent sailing in Cloud skies, make a luck draw against one designated player. Each time the player loses, the *MISTRESS* is either spotted by a watch station and pursued by a pair of small but very fast gunboats, or spotted and pursued by a patrolling frigate. Once within a single clock's range of the Cascade Cache, the moderator draws two luck cards to the player's one. Each time the ship is spotted, call for a play.

Player Stakes

- The *MISTRESS* manages to evade the pursuit.
- + The boat crew earns a 1-card story cache representing



surprise that can be used when infiltrating the Cascade Ruins.

- ✦ The rapport between the boat crew and the *MISTRESS*'s crew improves, as represented by a 2-card story cache that can be used when they are cooperating in an encounter.

Moderator Stakes (I)

- ✦ The *MISTRESS* suffers considerable damage in the resulting skirmish, and loses her 2-card cache for swiftness until repaired in a yard.

- ✦ Several crewmen are killed in the fighting, and the party earns a 1-card innate challenge cache for any play involving the crew of the *MISTRESS*.
- ✦ The first mate Din Din and several crewmen are killed in the fighting and the crew blames the party. Their antagonism reaches a new level, and if the party loses a luck draw, the crew mutinies maroons the characters on a deserted skyland.

PART 4: JAIL BREAK

Unless she has suffered significant delays, the *MISTRESS* should arrive in the vicinity of the Cascade Cache four or five clocks after crossing into Principality skies. The *HARSH MISTRESS* is not a large ship, but nonetheless, she is in constant danger of being discovered by Cloud naval patrols. The characters, or at least Captain Gray, need to be thoughtful about how and where to hide the ship, and how to signal for extraction if they go ashore. Additionally, the looming presence of the Torrent makes the skies around Cascade a meteorological challenge to navigate; every precaution must be taken by the crew to keep the *MISTRESS* clear of the constant storms, arc and shear winds it generates.

Assuming she is not running from active pursuit, the party should have the opportunity to formulate a plan for infiltrating the site. As they know nothing about the cache, they will likely want to do some scouting first, providing the perfect opportunity for sneaky or socially adept characters to exploit their strengths. This infiltration could be achieved with a launch while the *MISTRESS* stands off, hidden in the clouds. The characters could disguise themselves as workers or even Cloud naval personnel, poke around the site, and perhaps subtly interrogate some of the locals.

Moderators should make sure to ask the players to detail exactly what they do with the case containing the Eye and Mask. Do they leave it on the *MISTRESS*? Do they bring it with them when they infiltrate? How do they keep the bulky object out of sight and secure if they

disguise themselves? How do they plan to keep it safe from desperate prisoners? Make sure they specify their plans and precautions as the disposition of the artifacts is ultimately key to activating the Helm of the Navigator.

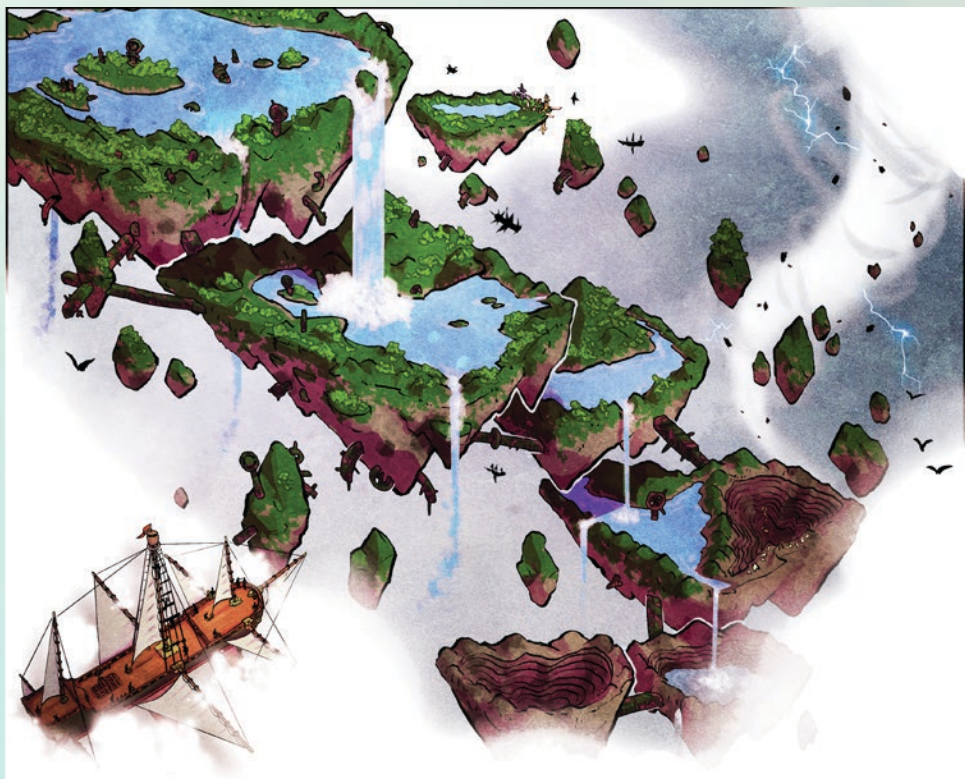
CASCADE ENCOUNTERS

The characters are not only sneaking around a militarized work camp, they are trying to locate and extricate a specific prisoner while also trying to locate and steal a lost and priceless artifact. Accordingly, they are bound to run into any number and variety of complications. Moderators are encouraged to insert any of the following encounters into the narrative as fits the circumstances. They are presented in the order in which a party is likely to confront them; some assume the party is posing as indentured workers, and others assume they are secretly infiltrating the site. Moderators should pick, choose and edit as best fits their story. The single stakes offered for each encounter should be used as starting points for negotiation and to inspire more consequential outcomes.

Suspicious Guards

The infiltrating characters run into a number of naval and prison guards in a variety of circumstances. The guards are not stupid and take their jobs seriously. The characters likely sneak past a few and deceive others but, eventually they'll have to fight some. Though most guards are professional, a few take advantage of their position among the workers. If the party is in possession of the Eye and the Mask, the guards will assume they are attempting to





smuggle artifacts from the dig, and things will go badly for the characters.

Player Stakes

- The party subdues the guards, securing weapons, uniforms and perhaps some information about likely places to look for Ilea or the Helm of the Navigator.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The party is captured, stripped of their gear, interrogated and thrown in the brig.

Ingratiating Inmate

Demick is a shifty, longtime prisoner who says he knows everyone, claims he is able to get anything and promises he's got an in with the guards. He is particularly interested in chatting up any new arrivals as they have not yet had the chance to learn he is full of crap, and is trying to take advantage of them before they figure that out. If the party is carrying

around the Eye and Mask case, Demick is particularly interested in that.

Player Stakes

- A character pegs Demick as a weasel, but before they chase him off, the party learns that most of the crew of the *SNEAKY BASTARD* escaped into the hills.

Moderator Stakes (1)

- Demick convinces the party to give up something valuable in exchange for what proves to be a useless map of the camp.

Bossy Foreman

Mr. Ivan is a no-nonsense foreman with a team of brutish overseers. He is not vicious or violent, but he has no patience for lazy workers or failure to follow orders. He is particularly attentive to procedures and record-keeping. If the characters are caught anywhere they shouldn't be, or doing anything they shouldn't be doing,



CASCADE CACHE

The Cascade Cache is a large Masters' cache deep in Cloud Principality territory, somewhere in the downwind half of the nation. It is eternally wreathed in wet mists generated by the nearby Torrent, creating a fog bank so dense that the site is almost impossible to find without a sphereometer needle, even if one knows it's there.

The ruins consist of half a dozen small skylands and perhaps two dozen tumble downs that appear to have once been a single landmass. This mass was so interlaced with Masters' constructions that when it broke apart during the DownFall, the fragments remained tethered together by the original infrastructure. From a distance, the complex of ruins now looks like a tangled string of stony beads decorated with broken metal structures, shattered foundations and half-exposed tunnels, chambers and pits.

Further complicating the terrain, at some point in the distant past, the upwind skyland of the string became permanently snagged on a larger highland, under the flow of a large edgefall. Consequently, the islands are awash in countless cascades — large and small — that flow, gush or trickle down the interconnected chain, forming lakes, ponds and pools in any structure that holds water. As a result, much of the ground level ruins are partially submerged, and most of the underground spaces are flooded. In fact, a major part of the ongoing salvage operation involves the damming, draining and diversion of various cascades and lakes to allow access to submerged structures.

This site contains vast reserves of Masters' alloy and tons of valuable salvage, while being accessible without the dangers inherent in working in the Twilight Frontier. Cloud authorities have therefore been ruthless in protecting the site since before the Kingdoms in the Light were formed, and have been secretly and systematically exploiting it as an essential element of the national economy.

The site is administered and patrolled from Cascade Base, a small but heavily manned Cloud naval station built on one of the spent skylands in the middle of the chain. There are docks, warehouses, workshops, offices, barracks and other facilities on the island. As many as 1,500 naval personnel and a dozen ships — heavily armed freighters and patrol vessels — are onsite at any one time.

The salvage camp is a combination of excavation site and worker village — a semi-permanent sprawl of derricks, digging machines, smelters, barracks, mess halls, transfer stations and loading docks. As active exploitation taps out on a given skyland, the camp slowly moves upward to the next section and work continues. Currently, the exploitation is about three quarters complete and the work site is nearing the upwind end of the string of skylands.

Though the project is supervised by naval personnel, the majority of the labor force consists of indentured workers. Many of these are criminals working off sentences — not an insignificant number of whom were pirates, thieves and smugglers caught in the act of trying to steal from the site. Much of the salvage work is labor intensive and best done by hand, so this workforce is large.

The Cascade Ruins are vast, and their strange topography only adds to the complexity of the cache. It is not surprising then, given the constant mists and endless places to hide, escaped prisoners have been able to evade even intense searches and have formed what amount to bandit gangs living in the remoter parts of the ruins. They conduct frequent raids for supplies, and though they are eventually killed or recaptured by naval patrols, such bands remain a security and morale problem.

he demands explanations and commands his overseers to mete out punishment. Ivan has even less tolerance for smugglers stealing “his salvage” and sends any characters he catches with the Eye or the Mask straight to the naval station brig to await interrogation and transfer to “a more secure prison.”

Player Stakes

- The characters ingratiate themselves with the foreman and use the relationship to gain essential information about the likeliest location for the Helm of the Navigator.

Moderator Stakes (1)

- The character or characters carrying the Eye and the Mask are detained and the artifacts confiscated. Now the party has to free their friends and recover the relics from secure holding at the naval station before they can continue their mission.

Standard Operating Procedures

From where and when they sleep, to when and what they eat, to where and how they work, the camp laborers’ lives are strictly regulated and supervised. If the characters have infiltrated as naval staff or workers, they inevitably run afoul of procedure, obligations or expectations. Moderators should wait until such a foul-up is particularly dangerous, hilarious or otherwise consequential, then let the party roleplay their scramble to get out of trouble.

Player Stakes

- They party is able to infiltrate a survey crew headed into the surrounding hills and the group is ambushed for supplies by Ilea and her men, providing the unexpected opportunity to parlay with the Metal Man’s daughter.

Moderator Stakes (1)

- The party is misassigned to the laborers’ mess hall kitchen, where they make such a bad meal, the workers riot and several characters end up at the naval station infirmary with major wounds.

Prison Gang

In adverse circumstances, people band together for mutual support and protection, and

the Cascade work camp is no different. Gangs like “The Smugglers,” “Peach’s Crew,” “Damaged Goods,” and others vie for control and resources in the camp, and violence is their only real recourse. New arrivals mean new members and gangs fight over their loyalties — even if it means taking out newcomers before they can join up with a rival gang.

Player Stakes

- The characters — probably due to aggressive use of their Potential — unexpectedly find themselves the dominant “gang” in the camp with the rest of the gangs paying tribute and following their lead.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The party unexpectedly finds itself as the highest profile gang in the camp, and the main target of all the other bands.

Tradecraft

If 6, the Cabal operative who stowed away on the *HARSH MISTRESS*, survives the trip, she also likely tried to infiltrate the work camp to learn what the characters are up to. This is a bold and dangerous move, but so was stowing away; if she doesn’t at least try, that effort will have been for nothing. Once on the skyland, she tries to observe the party as much as possible. She might even attempt to disguise herself as another prisoner, befriending the characters as a way to learn more.

Player Stakes

- The agent inadvertently blows her cover, but does not know the characters have realized who she is.

Moderator Stakes (1)

- She manages to ingratiate herself with the characters, and promises to help them if they promise to take her with them when they escape.

Fugitive Fight

While searching the warren of ruins for Ilea, the party comes across other fugitives hiding out in the wet and foggy hills. Wet Jack and his mutineers are a hungry and desperate crew and they violently ambush the party if given the opportunity. Their



feral state, knowledge of the terrain, effective use of improvised weaponry and some useful combat Potential make them particularly dangerous foes.

Player Stakes

- It turns out Wet Jack is actually a pretty nice guy, if one is not an oppressive jailor, and he knows exactly where Ilea and crew are hiding out.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- Wet Jack is a psychotic Rain adept of Knight-level power who worships the Torrent as a living god and is sworn to kill anyone who does not share his devotion.

Flood Damage

The countless cascading falls, rivers, streams and creeks tumbling downward along the chain of skylands makes for some particularly waterlogged and unstable terrain; drowning and landslides are constant dangers. Not only are any characters running around in the ruins soaked to the skin and chilled to the bone, they run the constant risk of falling, sinking and drowning, or being swept away into the sky by a mudslide. Underground passages, chambers and other ruins may be submerged or flood unexpectedly if unstable dams or structures are disturbed.

Player Stakes

- Flooding water washes away the mud concealing an entrance to ruins, accessing mostly undamaged corridors that connect to the chamber containing the Helm.

Moderator Stakes (1)

- Flooding water exposes the undiscovered entrance, but the corridors are completely flooded with cold, deep water and protected by a dozen active guardian cables.

Natural Potential

The quantity of water and the proximity to the Torrent means there are more wild Rain elementals among the Cascade Ruins than almost anywhere else. Prone to random, violent behavior, they could prove dangerous if the players attract their attention.

Player Stakes

- Any characters with Rain affinity gain 2 cards to their Potential hands while in the region, due to the powerful elemental forces eddying around the Torrent.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- Any characters with Arc affinity lose 2 cards from their Potential hands as the constant, natural discharges and opposed affinity drain their energy reserves.

Play through **FB7 — The Trial**, page 142.

Fish Bait

The skies of Cloud, especially those around the Torrent, are famous for their air fish. This predatory species can grow rather large, and be quite dangerous when they form hunting schools. Though mostly fished out by hungry prisoners, the farther any character gets from the active excavation, the more likely she is to run into a formidable fish foe.

Player Stakes

- A large school of air fish inadvertently leads the party to discover a hidden entrance they had otherwise missed, coincidentally only a few corridors away from the Helm chamber.

Moderator Stakes (1)

- A large school of air fish is attracted by one of the characters, and try as she might, she is unable to shoo them away. Unfortunately, the school makes it impossible for the characters to hide or sneak anywhere as they fly around their heads, swirling in a bright, silvery cloud.

CROSS PURPOSES

The first thing the characters will likely realize is that there is no traditional prison or brig at Cascade Cache; the hardest part of breaking Ilea out will be finding her. Doing so will take some clever infiltration, careful interrogation, specific Potential powers, or simple legwork. When they do finally get a lead on her, they discover that she and some of her crew have already escaped into the surrounding ruins and become raiders.

The second thing the party likely realizes is that, though she could be valuable in helping



pinpoint the location of the Helm of the Navigator, the characters no longer need Ilea to find the cache and so do not need to fulfill their agreement with the Metal Man to complete their mission. Accordingly, they must decide if they are going to break Ilea out, just go after the Helm, or try to do both.

If the party opts to leave Ilea to her fate, skip the following sections and go directly to part 5. Note, however, that if word gets back to the Metal Man that the characters abandoned his only child, not only the party, but the entire Guild suddenly gains the crime lord as a ruthless adversary. In his grief-stricken rage, he will turn his considerable intellect and resources toward vengeance. Though there may not be opportunity in the course of this campaign for him to exercise his wrath — it is coming — and the characters can count on having to deal with it in the future.

SHIP SISTER

If the characters decide to honor their deal with the Metal Man — even if it's only because they think Ilea can help them find the Helm — they'll likely decide to locate her before going after the artifact. Accordingly, they have several options: they can infiltrate the camp posing as workers or naval personnel and try to intercept her when she raids for supplies, they can wait until she raids and follow her into the ruins or they could search the ruins themselves. If they opt for searching, the party could improve their chances by gathering information about where the guards have already looked or think she and her crew might be hiding. Any of these avenues of investigation would require clever use of mental, social or even specific Potential attributes. It is possible that inspired use of Potential could simply lead directly to Ilea the Ship Sister.

Moderators should task the players with figuring out how their characters intend to go about tracking down Ilea, as there are always players who enjoy planning and characters with social skills intended for just this kind of situation. If the group struggles, however, offer the following suggestions.

The party could infiltrate the camp as workers, eavesdropping, gossiping and gently interrogating their fellow laborers. This would

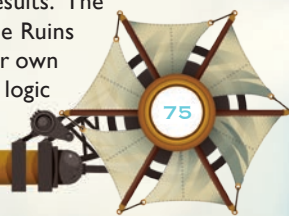
ILEA THE SHIP SISTER

Ilea the Ship Sister is a stunningly beautiful young woman in a wild-eyed, wind-tossed, sailor's tan sort of way. She exudes confidence but has an impulsive streak that, in combination with her ambition, has gotten her in trouble more than once. Though not nearly as ruthless as her father, she is a demanding ship's master and a formidable smuggler.

Ilea was born to sail a skyship, and is only ever truly happy in the air. She is a highly skilled sailor and a capable navigator despite her young age. She is an unorthodox but brilliant tactician, especially when evading authorities; her crew has every confidence in her ability. Ilea is not a born killer, but she fights bravely and has dispatched more than a few enemies. Despite her experience and captain's responsibilities, Ilea has a temper with a cold edge, and the surest way to get her to do anything is to tell her she can't. She does, however, have a soft spot for the truly innocent and loves her ship's cat, Cannon Ball, more than any other living thing.

No one seems to know why Ilea got her strange appellation, but her father the Metal Man has called her that since she first set foot aboard his ship and it stuck. Despite her father's potent Potential powers, Ilea has only average affinity with Ore.

require clever roleplaying, however, as the naval overseers — for obvious reasons — keep careful track of the workforce. The boat crew could pose as naval personnel to get access to worker manifests, schedules, search logs and other records that could provide leads. Doing so would court higher risk but likely gain faster, more reliable results. The party could infiltrate the Ruins and simply conduct their own search based on where logic



and experience says fugitives would hide out. This could prove the most direct route to finding the woman, but it would also risk a bloody skirmish before the party members can identify themselves.

Whether the party takes any of these paths or comes up with its own, moderators should eventually call for a play that could lead them to their quarry.

Player Stakes

- The party connects with a member of her crew in the work camp — a tubby man named Pik — who knows where Ilea is hiding.
- The characters get a look at a map of the ruins that shows where the patrols have already looked for the fugitives.
- The party finds a cave in the hills where it is clear people are currently living.
- + The boat crew convinces Pik they are allies and he agrees to get a message to the Ship Sister.
- + A character overhears a pair of naval officers as they ready to leave on a raid to “finally apprehend that crazy pirate bitch.”
- + The party manages a successful and bloodless ambush of Ilea and her crew as the pirates return to their hideout.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- One or more party members are identified as intruders and are forced to flee into the ruins themselves.
- One of the characters gives himself away, and the party must attempt to escape the naval station as it is locked down and all ships currently in port are grounded.
- The party becomes hopelessly lost among the ruins.
- + One of the characters is captured as the others escape, and is now a second person the party needs to break out.
- + The characters run afoul of some active defenses out in the ruins, and at least one must make a major wound draw.

- + The loser of a group luck draw is cornered in the naval station, and must make a

mortal wound draw as overzealous security personnel attempt to gun him down.

Depending on the style of the players and the approach of the characters, additional plays may be required to resolve any of these new dilemmas.

DADDY’S LITTLE GIRL

It is likely that when the party eventually finds Ilea, she is hiding out in the ruins with a few of her surviving crewmembers, and Ilea either assumes the characters are guards hunting them or other fugitives. If caught off guard by sneaky characters — granting the party a 1-card cache for the skirmish — Ilea and the six remaining members of her crew initially fight, then try to flee at their first opportunity. If given the chance to set up an ambush — granting the moderator a 1-card challenge cache against the party — the smugglers have the high ground, and they drop a slide of mud and rock on the party’s heads, then attack in earnest with improvised weapons and what Potential they can muster. Roleplay through the encounter, allowing the party to blunder into a fight if the players fail to anticipate such a response from their dangerous quarry.

Player Stakes

- The party avoids a fight with Ilea and her crew of cutthroats.
- + Ilea believes her father sent the characters.
- + The Ship Sister is motivated to help the party.
- + Ilea actually trusts the characters.

Moderator Stakes (1)

- The party must fight the smugglers.
- + The party must all take minor wound draws as they fight defensively, trying not to hurt Ilea or damage her potential goodwill.
- + The smugglers successfully flee and hide in the surrounding hills.
- + Ilea is killed in the fighting.

If a clever character tries to make the party’s intention clear at the start of the encounter — shouting something like “we were sent by the Metal Man” or similar, Ilea calls off her crew but remains wary. She suspiciously asks questions; if the party still possesses the letter



from her father, she cautiously cooperates with them. If they don't, she is doubtful, and waits for the characters to prove themselves.

Ilea wants to know why her father sent strangers (or Knights if the characters have revealed that fact), how they got to the skyland and what plan they have for escape. If they reveal they came aboard the *HARSH MISTRESS*, she is excited and wants to leave immediately, and the party has to remind Ilea of her obligation, by proxy, to help them.

Fortunately, Ilea and her crew have become very knowledgeable about the Cascade site, and can tell the crew just about anything they want to know about the camp, the guards, the excavation procedures and many of the actual digs. If the party asks about the Helm of the Navigator, she has no idea what they are talking about; however, if they describe the strange collection of conduit and Potential leads that marked the location of the Mask they possess, Ilea believes she knows where

something like that can be found. Unfortunately, it is in the heart of the current, active excavations and so the party will have to infiltrate the site and activate the helm right under the workers' noses.

Ilea and her crew also know who's who in the camp, and they have an understanding of how the place works. They also know the basic layout of the naval station, having been held there for several clocks after their capture. Therefore, if the characters make allies of the smugglers, moderators should award them a 2-card story cache that can be used when infiltrating the camp or the station.

The party has to decide if they are going to leave the smugglers to their own devices, bring them along on the hunt for the Helm or arrange for their extraction to the *MISTRESS*. Should they choose to send the crew aboard, they'll also have to figure out how to assure that the pirate ship does not simply abandon them.

PART 5: EYE OF THE NAVIGATOR

If the Knights found Ilea and have a working relationship with her, she and her crew can give them a good idea where to start their search for the Helm. If they abandoned the Ship Sister, the party must narrow down the search area on their own, as the Cascade Ruins are simply too vast and well-patrolled for a clandestine grid search to be an option. As with the search for Ilea, the moderator should encourage her players to come up with a viable plan of their own. The characters could attempt to infiltrate the naval station and find logs, maps or other documents that might pinpoint the kinds of ruins and artifacts they are looking for. They could break into a warehouse, review manifests and locate the points of origin for specific items of salvage. They could infiltrate the foreman's office at the dig site and check records or current excavation plans, or they could even abduct the foreman or one of his assistants and coerce the information from their captive. Alternatively, a party member may have a particularly useful Potential power that could lead them more or less directly to the Helm of the Navigator.

Any plays to track down such clues are left to the participants to negotiate. See the "Cascade Encounters" section on [page 70](#) for specific events or inspiration.

THE CONDUIT CONVERGENCE SECTOR

The most likely place for the party to begin searching is a place the survey crews have identified as the "Conduit Convergence Sector." The characters could find mention of it in one of the foreman's files, on an excavator's map, in a warehouse manifest or they could even overhear a couple of technicians talking about preliminary work on the site. As soon as the party realizes the records or maps show an array of arcanoelectrical leads converging on a small central chamber deep in the ruins, they recognize that the layout is similar to the structure in which they helped Captain Truk recover their Mask of the Navigator.

As it turns out, the Conduit Sector is adjacent to the current excavation and is next



on the foreman's schedule. In fact, preliminary work has already begun and water diversion and vegetation removal is underway. As a result, the party have to infiltrate past the round-the-clock work crews and sentries and try to recover the Helm of the Navigator from right under their feet.

Once the party is actively searching the ruins, if the moderator does not think the players have yet had a difficult enough time, she should have them encounter a series of active defenses, from the arc lenses and guardian cables described in chapter 2, to ancient sentry cogs still actively guarding the buried spaces.

Play through **FB17 — Runaway Robot**, page 148.

Player Stakes

- The party gains control of an ancient sentry cog, and can use it to defend themselves with a 3-card story cache for fighting encounters.
- ✦ The party gains control of two sentry cogs, one of which is armed with a powerful arc thrower.

Moderator Stakes (3)

- Half of the party — as determined by luck draws — must make major wound draws as the cog drives them away from the Helm and deeper into the flooded ruin.
- ✦ The party becomes hopelessly lost in the deepest parts of the ruins and must make a play against crippling fatigue and hunger represented by a -2-card Play hand penalties before eventually finding their way out. (Please see **Hand Size Penalties** in the core book, page 191)

TIMELY COMPLICATIONS

At a dramatic moment, moderators should make it clear to the players that the boat crew is likely being followed, and has to hurry if it wants to activate the Helm before the opposition arrives. The pursuit may consist of camp guards or naval soldiers, gang members, more sentry cogs, Agent 6 or — better yet — some combination of these foes.

Their imminent arrival should force the players to act quickly, without asking too many questions, and should coerce

SENTRY COGS

A rare, but infamous form of Masters' defense, these ancient machines are simultaneously dreaded for their lethality and prized for their value as salvage. Of various sizes and designs, most sentry cogs are found inert, damaged and usually in pieces. Occasionally, however, examples of the miraculous technology have survived the DownFall and remain powered up and active for the long cycles since.

Usually about twice the size of an average Kin, most sentry cogs are powered by compact dynamos with high capacity, internal spark bottles. Most have six to ten appendages, used both for locomotion and for combat. They have sophisticated, integrated circuit boxes — the most valuable component when salvaged — and are equipped with formidable melee weapons and arc-casting firearms.

A rare few sentry cogs have been found that have harnesses or even cockpits that allow for riders or pilots. Some are armored, but most rely on swiftness and heavy firepower for defense. Accordingly, Guild anti-cog training emphasizes speed and precision attacks. Over the cycles, the Guild has recovered 13 sentry cogs intact, successfully reactivating and rewiring them to follow Kin orders. Of these, only six survive and remain active in the Guild Fleet.

the characters to take risks as they try to activate the Helm. The encounter should also create a dramatic, exciting chapter climax as some characters fight a bloody holding action in the corridors outside the Helm chamber while the rest work furiously to activate the Eye.

RIGHT IN THE EYE

Once in the cramped chamber housing the Helm, the characters realize the device has no





power and that someone with technical skills needs to provide arc from an alternate source like a spark bottle, a defeated sentry cog or maybe even an Arc adept. The party also realizes that Truk was not entirely clear on what they were supposed to do with the Eye, Mask and Helm once the three were finally brought together — either because he was uncertain himself about exactly how the relics worked together, or because he didn't want to frighten the characters or maybe some of both.

The moderator should describe the Mask, Eye and Helm in detail, allowing the players to use the obvious cues to assemble the components — the Eye goes into the open socket-like hole in the Mask, snapping into the exposed leads; the connectors on the rim of the Mask slot onto the conduits connected to the Helm. Once this happens, anyone holding the Mask notices the Eye lights up with a dull-blue, internal glow, as the Mask begins to hum and quickly warms to the touch.

At this point, the only obvious things left to do are to put on the Mask and toggle what appears to be a large activation switch mounted on the cowl of the Helm. The characters may do either of these things separately, but unless someone is wearing the Mask when the switch is closed, nothing happens. When describing this circumstance, moderators should play up the uncertainty and build some suspense. It should be clear that something dramatic is going to happen to anyone who volunteers to wear the Mask and activate the switch.

As the characters struggle to defend themselves while scrambling to activate the Eye, call for a play.

Player Stakes

- The characters hold off their attackers until they can manage to activate the Eye.
- The characters manage to find their way back to the surface without running afoul of any more ancient defenses.



THE HELM OF THE NAVIGATOR

Counter to the intentional misrepresentation to the players, the word “helm” does not refer to a helmet, but instead to the steering mechanism of a ship. The helm is a bundle of countless conduits and leads that run from throughout the ship into the cramped chamber. They are suspended in a burnished metal cowling with lots of access panels. The bundle terminates in a harness-like apparatus to which is attached a gimbaled bracket clearly intended to hold the Mask of the Navigator. Players likely recognize the device from their explorations of Rubble Field #43 in chapter 1.

Such helms were essential, centralized command centers in most Masters' constructs. From such stations, technicians could direct essential functions, monitor systems, manage communications and run navigation. Most facilities and vessels had several such command cradles, but given their fragility, most did not survive the DownFall.

- ✦ The party is able to salvage essential components from the Helm that prove extremely valuable, and may even allow arcanotechnicians to activate any other Eyes the Guild may find.
- ✦ The party is able to trick one opponent into attacking the other, and slip away unnoticed as their foes fight.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The characters are overrun just as they activate the Eye, and everyone must make minor wound draws.
- ✦ Characters who lose a group luck draw must make major wound draws instead of minor.

- ✦ The members of the boat crew become separated, and emerge from the ruins in different locations, separated by several miles.
- ✦ The party runs afoul of another sentry cog as they try to escape, and must make a play to avoid or fight it.
- ✦ Powering up the Helm somehow reactivated much of the Convergence Sector. When the characters emerge, the work camp is in chaos as newly deployed active defenses are attacking everyone and everything across the dig site. One or more plays must be made to escape.

The Helm is a complex device integrated into what was once a massive vessel and is now the ruins holding together the Cascade skylands. Among its many functions, it provided an interface between a ship's navigator and the Eye of the Navigator artifact, allowing the pilot to determine the bearing to any destination in the Mask's archive. In its damaged state, this particular system long ago defaulted to its emergency mode. When the characters power up the Helm and close the activation switch, the system initiates a survival protocol; instead of simply interfacing the Eye with the volunteer, it implants the relic directly into the character's eye socket, violently and traumatically replacing the character's actual eye, commandeering her optic nerve and various parts of her brain.

This almost instantaneous, brute force surgery is accompanied by a bright flash of light and a hot shower of sparks as the Helm shorts its jury-rigged power supply and burns out. The character screams, takes a major wound draw and is left drained and only semiconscious. Her left eye has been replaced with the arcanelectrical marble — a lidless, blue ball about twice the size of her original organ. The socket is initially very painful and weeps blood and aqueous fluid for the first few clocks after implantation.

As soon as the character receives basic medical care, she starts to come around and realizes that she has gained a new sort of visual sense. Though she can apparently see normally through the implanted Eye, when she closes her biological eye she can also see thousands of tiny, blue lights scattered across her field of



EYE OF THE NAVIGATOR

Narratively, all the user needs to do is think of a specific Masters' location, and a bright thread of blue light forms in her visual perception, coursing off into the distance in the direction of wherever she is seeking. The course thread pans with the movement of her head, and appears to pass through objects and landmasses.

Mechanically, should being able to simply follow the course be insufficient for the user's needs, the Eye also provides a limitless innate cache for any plays involving navigation to destinations that feature identifiable Masters' caches or major artifacts.

- When the characters realize the potential in the Eye, they'll likely be full of questions and ambitions, so moderators need to know the following:
- The Eye provides courses only to significant Masters' sites, and only those that the user can properly name or for which she can visualize sufficient distinguishing details to trigger the Eye, with "sufficient" being at the discretion of the moderator.
- The artifact can't lead the user to a Masters' object unless that object can also reasonably be considered a noteworthy location, as determined by the moderator.
- If more than one cache can be described with the same name or details, the Eye targets the closest location.
- The Eye appears to have no range limit and gives no indication of distance, but with practice and triangulation from sufficiently removed points, the user can gain a relative sense of range — close or distant.
- No one but the user can see the course thread — it exists only in her visual perception.
- Activating the Eye instantly costs the user of all her current Potential energy in a draining outflow that leaves the character momentarily disoriented and weakened. Accordingly, her player must discard all her Potential cards each time she triggers the relic. The course thread remains visible until a new one is selected or the character dismisses it. The user recovers her spent Potential at the normal rate, regardless of how long she maintains a given thread.
- When known destinations have sizable Masters' caches — like Highstone or Sky — the Eye eliminates the need to use traditional navigation, reducing travel times up to 50 percent depending upon the actual difference between the direct and original waypoint-guided routes. This fact alone makes the Eye an exceptionally valuable relic.

view, which all move in parallax as she tilts or turns her head.

Though it takes some guidance from Captain Truk once the party returns to Highstone, the character eventually learns that these dots represent the countless Masters' sites scattered across the skies; with a little practice, she can use them to navigate to any of these locations. The character also soon realizes that she can't blink the oversized, artificial eye and must use a bandanna or eye patch when sleeping.

With her large, distended left eye, the afflicted character is now somewhat monstrous in appearance; any attributes that describe the character's appearance should be edited or interpreted accordingly. For example, "Pretty Girl" might become "Pretty Badass Girl" or "With A Face Like This" might no longer be used as a persuasive, seductive ability but now as an intimidating, coercive attribute.

How the character responds to her new condition and abilities is left to roleplaying, but the moderator should emphasize whatever the player seems most



focused on. Is it the strange new powers or the intense pain? Whatever the character is mumbling in her dazed state, the rest of the party

likely have to drag her out of the ruins with the added burden of having to protect her against the cache's defenses as they do so.

PART 6: UP THE SPOUT

Whether they sneak back to the surface without drawing attention or lead a patrol of attacking guards into an open battle with ancient arcanoelectrical defenses, the boat crew must escape the skyland. If they have been stealthy, the party should have time to use their original extraction plan or to come up with a new one based on the current circumstances. If they are instead skirmishing their way across the dig site, their options are limited. They can somehow signal the *HARSH MISTRESS* to come in for a hot pick up, or they can hijack a Cloud naval launch or even a ship and make a run for it. If the characters steal a ship, they are quickly pursued by a number of naval patrol

boats and have to survive a pitched air battle against overwhelming odds.

If the party finds themselves fleeing the Principality fleet in either the *MISTRESS* or a stolen vessel, an obvious tactic is to evade them in the fog banks and arc storms that surround the Torrent. Its raging, unpredictable winds, thick mists, constant lightning and wild elemental energies make it the perfect place to lose pursuit — assuming one is crazy enough to enter its dangerous environs.

As the characters make their escape from the Cascade Ruins, the Torrent looms ominously over the scene. The moderator should contrive to have the boat crew pursued by a number of fast Cloud naval patrol boats; given their small numbers, and possible unfamiliarity



THE TORRENT

This massive, eternal, arc-wreathed funnel cloud is the source of the everlasting mist that gives the Principality its name; it is a constant, ominous, rumbling backdrop to the Cascade Cache. Guild meteorologists and elementalists argue over the nature of the Torrent, as if whoever is right has purview over the phenomena. In truth, the result is an ancient combination of both elemental power and the subsequent weather effects, the origin of which was part of the DownFall.

As described in the *UPWIND* corebook, the Torrent is a writhing waterspout of impossibly massive proportions that extends from an unknown origin deep in the Dark to a dispersed, evaporating cloud in the lower Arids. It slowly undulates as it drifts along with the skylands, spawning high winds, raging lightning storms, drenching downpours and crushing hail all along its length.

There are many old sailors' superstitions about the Torrent; stories that those who have experienced it close up find hard to dismiss. Many claim it's home to elementals of all sorts — especially Rain — and they believe the water from its constant rains curses any ship it touches. There are some who claim to hear the voices of the damned in its deep, foreboding growl, and are convinced that anyone lost within its twisting, foggy confines is doomed to haunt its mists forever after.

If characters ever approach within a league of the Torrent, they will experience the following environmental conditions. If they approach within two miles, the values for each condition are doubled and if they approach within a mile they are tripled:

- +1 or -1 card to Potential hands due to the powerful ebb and flow of elemental energies. Each player determines whether he gains or loses with a luck draw against the moderator.
- -1 card penalties to Play hands due to the foggy reduction in visibility, the violent pitching of the wind and the constant growling rumble.
- The ship earns a 1-card challenge cache as it is damaged by the violent weather conditions.

with whatever vessel they may have stolen, it should be made clear the characters can't simply outrun pursuit. They must therefore come up with a clever evasion tactic, giving the moderator the chance to suggest the Torrent, with the intent of setting up a dramatic climax to the chapter.

As the characters flee their pursuers, describe the intimidating scale of the Torrent: the howling winds, the constant lightning and the deep, booming growl of the churning mass. Make the characters question the wisdom of approaching the phenomena and raise the tension with evocative imagery. Describe the progression of the environmental factors above and ask the players how close their characters want to get.

Tell them that any play to evade pursuit has a challenge level proportional to the range — meaning that the closer they get, the easier ditching their pursuers will be. Within three miles, ditching the gunboats is a 3-card challenge level, within two miles it's a 2-card challenge and within one it's a 1-card play. Explain to the players that the reduction in hand size is due to the chaotic conditions, which will likely mitigate some of the advantage of the lower challenge level; as the closer they get to the Torrent, the more it becomes about combating nature rather than the navy vessels.

ELEMENTAL RAIN

If you wish to generate additional drama as the boat crew approaches the Torrent,



describe the manifestation of a massive Rain elemental, as described in the *UPWIND* corebook, but larger and more aggressive than anything in the characters' experiences. It forms out of the raging spout and deliberately attacks the oncoming vessels. Using skilled piloting, clever tactics, or even strong Potential, characters could take advantage of the attack by perhaps directing it at their pursuers.

Player Stakes

- The boat crew evades their pursuers, but has to make minor wound draws in addition to the damage done to the ship by the storm.
- ✦ The characters manage to lead the elemental into attacking the Cloud naval vessels and are able to slip away in the chaos.
- ✦ A Rain adept among the crew gains control of the elemental, and uses it to shield their ship from attack. Their growing legend gains them another sobriquet: "The Rain Shepherds."
- ✦ The boat crew escapes unscathed with their stolen ship, which turns out to be equipped well enough to make the journey back to either Hole or Highstone.
- ✦ If she is with them, Ilea is so impressed by the crew that they gain a staunch — though criminal — ally, despite what the crew of the *HARSH MISTRESS*, or her father, may feel about them.

Moderator Stakes (3)

- The characters' ship founders in the storm and is forced to land on the uppermost skyland, but they manage to abandon ship before their pursuers or the elemental arrive.
- ✦ The party crash-lands in the massive edgefall that douses the skyland. Everyone suffers a 2-card Play hand penalty while within the cascade, as they can barely stand under the deluge.
- ✦ Everyone takes a minor wound draw, with the loser of a group luck draw taking a major wound draw instead.

- ✦ Several naval vessels land on the island and continue their pursuit of the characters.
- ✦ The Rain elemental manifests on the skyland and stalks everyone on it — fugitives and naval soldiers alike.

HOLE OR HIGHSTONE

Once they have evaded the Cloud authorities, the party can attempt to make its own way home, or they can rendezvous with the *HARSH MISTRESS* if the vessel was not already part of the escape. They can deliver Ilea to her father, or, if they opted to abandon the smuggler to her fate, they can betray their deal and hope the choice does not come back to haunt their futures. The decision is entirely up the players, but the moderator should help them understand the potential consequences of what they choose to do.

If the boat crew has the means to sail directly home, they have to deal with any of the smugglers who might still be with them. If they meet up with the *MISTRESS*, they could transfer Ilea and crew and be on their way. If they are in a small or badly damaged boat, they could return to the *MISTRESS* and catch a ride back to Hole. If they did not recover Ilea, or she has been lost in the fighting, they should realize returning to the *MISTRESS* — let alone to Hole — without her could have very negative ramifications.

The options depend on the decisions of the players, and so the choice of where to go should be theirs as well. Groups are encouraged to roleplay out as much of the return voyage as they wish, including any scenes of gratitude or vengeful anger involving the Metal Man. The moderator is also encouraged — if she thinks her players have not already had it hard enough — to insert any of the Aerial Encounters entries into the return trip for a little added excitement (see [Aerial Encounters](#) on page 150).

However long it takes to return to the Highstone, and whatever happens along the way, the next chapter begins with the boat crew's arrival at the Academy and the tragic event that shortly follows.



CHAPTER 4: THE EMBASSY

SYNOPSIS

The chapter opens with the characters' return to the Academy, presumably with one of them bearing the Eye of the Navigator. They find Captain Truk ecstatic at their success, however, he is living in his workshop, his health failing and is more confused and paranoid than they have ever known him. Shortly after their return, Truk is found dead, and his man Orum offers evidence that Truk was murdered. Compelled to investigate — or perhaps avenge — the death of their mentor, the party searches Highstone for the killer. After several false leads and a kidnapping attempt, the characters confront the assassins deep in the Warrens, potentially learning essential information about their opposition.

With no further directives, the boat crew is detached from Truk's apparently suspended mission, and reassigned by direct orders from Captain Doe to Point Defiance as part of the general mobilization being orchestrated by the Guild. The characters subsequently experience a montage of military operations in the Twilight Frontier, gaining vital experience and intelligence regarding the potential Incursion.

Satisfied the boat crew is both loyal and able, Doe brings them into the Embassy, asking them to commit treason to save the Kingdoms. The characters subsequently have a final confrontation with the Cabal agents when the operatives again attempt to kidnap the bearer of the Eye to obtain the priceless relic.

The characters depart on a mission into the Dark to deliver a treasonous message to a dead drop that Doe shares with a co-conspirator among the Children — Leader of Killers. Surprisingly, they find Leader waiting for them, bearing urgent news that the Child military is preparing their own mission to recover the Grand Amplifier. She believes the Embassy must act immediately if it has a chance to beat them to the prize. As they debate, Leader's ship comes under attack by a Guild patrol, and she is taken prisoner. The characters are forced by the logic of their situation to free her from their own comrades, compounding their treasonous actions.

The chapter closes with the pending Child mission, forcing the characters to make a hard decision — return to Point Defiance for orders or follow Leader into the deepest Dark.

PART 1: A DEATH IN THE FAMILY

THE TOLL ON TRUK

The chapter opens with the party returning to Highstone and reporting to Captain Truk. Though they have likely been away no more than four turns or so, the party finds Truk sadly changed. Time appears to have caught up to him with a vengeance, and

both his physical and mental states have deteriorated. Truk is an old man who has pushed his broken body and exceptional mind well beyond reasonable limits, and they are both failing. He needs extended

rest and freedom from stress, as his concern over the Third IncurSION, the Embassy and the Grand Amplifier has taken a heavy toll. His abiding concern for the realms has turned from motivation to paranoia, and he is losing his hold on reality.

Though his ravaged body has been slowly failing over the past few cycles, when the party reports to his workshop, they find Truk looking frailer than they have ever seen him. Despite the manic energy in his eyes, he is slower moving, unstable on his feet and his arcano-electrical body parts seem to weigh him down rather than help him. Mentally, Truk appears even more confused. Though he is energized and excited to see the boat crew, he confuses their names as he welcomes them home. His words vary in coherency, and he occasionally trails off as he speaks, as if forgetting what he was saying or losing himself in thought. He mutters almost constantly between speaking to them, as if his mouth involuntarily says aloud whatever he is thinking. Sample phrases include:

“Can’t tell the secret...”

“Embassy must know...must tell...shhh...”

“They’re watching...”

“Now. There’s no time. There’s no choice...”

“Must be the Amplifier...”

“Ask the Captain...he will know”

“The Embassy is lost...”

Perhaps most disturbingly, Truk’s head occasionally turns sharply over his right shoulder, like he sees or hears something behind him, but when he turns to look he only seems confused.

Truk’s man Orum, as always, is in loyal attendance; however, he is looking uncharacteristically worn. Though he would never speak out of turn, if any of the characters take him aside, he confesses his worry over Captain Truk’s state, and warns that “his current concerns are taking a terrible toll.”

Truk is still Truk, however, which means he is still clever, and as he warms to his interrogation of the characters about their mission to the Cascade Cache, he seems — for a while anyway — to become the focused, warm and

clearheaded mentor they have always known. When he realizes they have — presumably — returned with a functioning Eye he is overjoyed at their success and deeply, obviously relieved at finally recovering a working version. He grills them all, but focuses most of his questions on whomever ended up in “possession” of the Eye. He asks countless questions about how it appears to function, and what the character sees or perceives. He begins a series of improvised experiments then and there, testing its abilities and taking copious notes in his ever-present notebook. Truk only reluctantly ceases if the characters claim fatigue, or if Orum finally trundles him off to bed.

VERIFICATION

Another clock or two of experiments, during which Truk all but ignores anyone other than the character bearing the Eye, should leave the boat crew believing two things: one, the Eye is an extremely valuable navigational tool; and two, it is the obsession of an otherwise poignantly confused old friend. However, on the third clock after their initial homecoming and report, Truk suddenly and simply declares, “I am convinced,” and dismisses the party to “await further orders.” If the characters press him with questions, he puts them off with a combination of distracted confusion and promises, saying “I will explain everything as soon as my dispatches are answered.” Truk then buries himself in his notes and can’t be coerced to say anything more about the Eye, beyond a distracted mutter about “we must keep it secret.”

SHADOWED

At this point, the moderator should encourage the characters to pursue their own business in Highstone. It is the largest and most cosmopolitan city in the Kingdoms in the Light; the party members have spent most of their young lives here, essentially growing up at the Academy. As a result, they undoubtedly have friends, maybe family or contacts and certainly favorite places with which to reconnect. Let them attend to their personal lives, projects, research or other plans and maybe roleplay a few encounters with old friends, other members of the boat crew, professors, rivals or old lovers.





As the characters go about their lives, imply to the player who has the Eye that she has a feeling that she is being followed, reinforced by more than a few passing glances from strangers. If the character reacts strongly and decides to confront any of these people, they are surprised, embarrassed or intimidated as they point to her Knights' blade and say something apologetic about "curiosity" or "gratitude." One might even ask if her son can "touch it."

If the character is more suspicious, or the moderator wants to make sure the party knows something is up, make a play for the character to confront or follow their suspected shadow.

Player Stakes

- The character confirms they were being followed, but loses the tail in a crowd or back street.
- ✦ The character is certain the tail was not alone, and despite an effort to look otherwise, the tail was armed and dangerous.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The character believes she is still getting used to the strange visual effects of the Eye, and must be seeing things.
- ✦ Despite any unsuccessful efforts to sort it out, the feeling of being watched occurs every time she goes out in public.

Though the moderator might not want the characters to know this yet, there is more than paranoia at work here. Agents of the Cabal have been watching Truk, and upon the characters' return, have taken a keen interest in them and the strange artifact they appear to have brought back to the old navigator. As a result, not only are they watching Truk, but they have begun to surveil the boat crew members as well.

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES

A few clocks after their last meeting with Truk, one of the party members is on campus when he is offered condolences by an acquaintance



for the news that his onetime mentor, Captain Truk, has passed away. Obviously, this is news to the party, and they learn that an official obituary has been posted through Academy channels.

After an exemplary life of service to the Guild, Captain Phineas Able Truk has passed away. A noted explorer, skilled navigator and beloved professor, Captain Truk will be offered to the sky with full honors at Memorial Point at fore three on clock 378.

Cursory investigation confirms that Truk reportedly died in his sleep, and was discovered by his man Orum.

Assuming the party attends the funeral, the characters may be surprised at the number of mourners who attend on the strangely foggy and cool clock. Hundreds of people — students, professors, fellow Knights, liegemen and many civilians — crowd the honored grounds at Memorial Point. A number of dignitaries speak and High Captain Fey himself offers a moving and surprisingly personal eulogy. The characters should be left with the realization that Truk impacted many lives beyond theirs, and that he was much respected. The ceremony ends — as do all Knights' funerals — with Truk's ashes being released into the wind and the traditional mass recitation of the Explorer Knights' Vow, lead in this case by the High Captain.

Play through **FB10 — Well of Heroes**, page 144.

When the ceremony is over and the mourners begin to disperse, the winner of a group luck draw notices Truk's batman, Orum, standing close at hand, head down, seemingly lost in memories. Under his breath Orum whispers: "Do not react. We are watched. He was murdered. Come to his home at low one." Without another word, Orum walks away into the crowd.

MEETING ORUM

Assuming the characters take Orum at his word, and meet him at the appointed time, they find the old man anxious and distraught — emotions they have never seen on the loyal servant's face before. He begins by asking if they were followed and if they told anyone else where they were going; clearly, he

believes someone has been watching Truk and anyone associating with him.

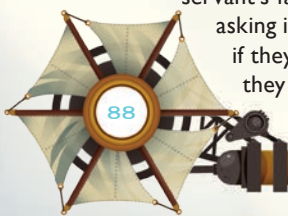
Orum tells the boat crew that, after Truk spent a particularly late still working in the shop, he returned to wake the Captain and found him dead and cold to the touch. At first, Orum had assumed the old man had died peacefully in his sleep, as did the Guild healer who was called in. It was only after the body had been removed that Orum realized Truk's ever-present notebook was missing and he became suspicious.

The characters recall Truk's proclivity for note-taking and the fact that, for as long as they had known him, he always had a small leather notebook in his hands, pocket or on the desk nearby. In fact, the copious notes he recently took while studying the Eye and its bearer were made in that very book. Orum confirms that for as long as he had known Truk, the professor would jot final thoughts in the book before going to sleep, and then set it at his bedside in case inspiration struck in the middle of the still. The fact that it was missing — yet his favorite pen was present — may not be significant to anyone unfamiliar with Truk's habits, but it is convincing to Orum and should be to his protégés as well.

The cause of death was attributed to age and the inevitable complications associated with major prosthetics; the Guild authorities were satisfied with the determination. Not knowing who might be responsible — and therefore trusting no one — Orum decided to confide in the boat crew because of Truk's faith in, and recent reliance on, them.

MURDERERS

Orum's instincts are not wrong; the facts of Truk's death are indeed sinister. Agents of the Cabal, after watching him for some time, decided the return of Truk's minions was a critical event and they decided to gather direct intelligence. A pair of operatives infiltrated the campus and his workshop in the early still, and surprised the old man. Neutralizing his Potential with their own, the frail professor was no match for the skilled agents physically. Their questioning yielded nothing from the stubborn Knight, so rather than have their infiltration discovered, they stopped Truk's ailing heart



with an electrical shock, posed him in bed, searched the workshop and took his notebook. The operatives have since dispatched a

report to their superiors, and are hiding out in the Warrens of the skyland's downside as they await further orders.

PART 2: TRACKING A KILLER

With this revelation, the characters have a choice to make. They can investigate Truk's death — either to assuage Orum's concern or their own — or they can try to reassure the old servant that he is overwrought, mourn their mentor and move on. If they choose to investigate, they are doing so outside the auspices of the Guild as it has ruled Truk died of natural causes. If they choose not to investigate, their new assignments come soon enough, and moderators should skip to the New Orders section below.

LEADS

If the characters decide to investigate, there are a number of leads they can pursue, and the moderator should give her players some time to tease these out on their own. If they struggle, offer hints or perhaps suggest a play, the outcomes of which could identify a lead or two.

Witnesses

The murder occurred on the grounds of the Explorer Knights' Academy, and though hardly the most secure Guild facility, there are over two thousand Kin who work and live on the campus, any one of whom may have seen something suspicious. If the characters are persistent or clever enough in pursuing this line, reward them with an account by a couple of novices — who themselves were out of the barracks after curfew. The novices saw two figures climbing out of the low basement windows of Truk's workshop. If the characters check, the timing corresponds to two foreign scholars checking in and then out of the Academy at the leeward gate. Asking around the neighborhood outside that gate, the characters learn that two strangers were seen entering the Warrens through one of the countless accesses scattered around the city.

Tailing a Tail

The characters may already have a sense they are being followed, and they might turn the table on any such tail by capturing and

interrogating one of them. The better the crew's planning and trickery in their ambush, the lower the challenge level of any associated play should be. Assuming they are successful, the characters learn that their captive is a local Highstone gang member whose crew was hired by some "scary people" to keep an eye on the characters and report their activities. This revelation allows the young Knights to set up a secondary ambush of the gang's employer by tailing the gang members. The killers are using a dead drop in the upper levels of the Warren, and staking out a site in the ancient tunnels is relatively easy.

Potential

It is possible that one of the characters has a Potential ability that is uniquely useful in tracking down lost, hidden or fugitive targets, and utilizing such Potential narratively or using it in a play could easily lead the characters to the agents' bolt-hole in the Warren.

Kidnapped

The Cabal agents are looking for the opportunity to abduct the bearer of the Eye, so they can deliver the functioning relic to their employers. If the character is ever vulnerable during this period in the story — such as moving about the city alone, or staying in non-Guild accommodations by herself — the agents will attempt to subdue her and steal her away from Highstone. They will use hired thugs, Potential and any relics they have in a blitz attack, as they know taking on even a single Knight is dangerous.

Player Stakes

- The Knight is captured, but the fracas leaves a trail of evidence and witnesses that leads to the Warren.
- The character fends off her attackers, but loses them in the aftermath of the fight.



THE WARREN

The Warren is described in the *UPWIND* corebook (see page 24), and is an ancient feature of the Vale — one with a well-known folklore of its own. The Warren was excavated from the bedrock of the skyland long before the DownFall, and runs throughout much of island. Most of the tunnels, shafts and chambers that make up the staggeringly complex network were mapped and salvaged long ago, and they have since been co-opted by Vale residents for alternative uses — warehouses, factories, docks, hideouts and even residential blocks. New passages are, however, occasionally discovered and reports of valuable salvage hauls make the broadsheets. Accordingly, despite the dangers inherent in exploring these dark places — unstable tunnels, unsafe wreckage, criminal gangs, hungry animals and lost Masters' machines — every child in Highstone dreams of discovering treasure. As a result, every cycle several children — and more than a few greedy adults — go missing in the endless ruins. Accordingly, it is illegal to enter undocumented sections of the Warren without official permits; most access points are gated or even sealed.

The Warren honeycombs the skyland and is exposed in thousands of places, both on the upper and lower surfaces of the island. The majority of the upper entrances have either been incorporated into the structures of the city or sealed against unauthorized entry. Those on the underside — due to their relative inaccessibility — are more exposed and less secure. As a result, the lower spaces are often claimed — legally or otherwise — by those seeking extra security or secrecy.

- The character is able to track the agents to the Warren.
- The Knight is able to capture one of the thugs and learns exactly where his accomplices are holed up.

Moderator Stakes (3)

- The Knight is badly wounded — taking a major wound draw — but gets away.
- + The Knight dispatches several of the thugs, yet is ultimately subdued and dragged off to the agent's hideout in Warren.
- + The character is so severely hurt or so expertly restrained that she can't even attempt an escape. She is therefore wholly reliant on her comrades for rescue.
- + The Knight gains a traumatic mistrust in others that manifests as a I-card innate challenge cache; it can be used by the moderator in any circumstances where the Knight's suspicion could complicate otherwise trustworthy circumstances.

KILLER CONFRONTATION

Depending upon the characters' goals — information, justice, revenge — their plans will vary. Ultimately, however, they will likely want to capture, interrogate or even kill the Cabal agents. They may even need to rescue a missing comrade if the kidnapping was successful.

The agents, in specific ways, are as competent as the young Knights, and as such are as tough a challenge as the characters may have yet faced. They are skilled, organized, vigilant and they outnumber the party two to one. They have taken refuge in a vast, empty Warren chamber with several escape routes — including a large, long vertical shaft that connects to several other levels of the subterranean complex. There is a narrower, adjacent hall that is exposed to the sky under the island, and they have hidden a pair of small, fast skiffs here in case they need to make a quick getaway. They have reasonably up-to-date maps of the Warren, and know the immediate environs well.



MORLEY'S MODULAR MOTION MONITOR

The Monitor is a trunk-sized device that can sense movement in a 200-yard radius — even down branching corridors, through stone and brick walls and into the surrounding rock. It is powered by a medium-sized spark bottle, and is actually cobbled together from three unrelated devices; the combined function of which is greater than the parts. Morley was considered an ingenious, if rather haphazard, engineer.

The agents have a couple of technological advantages they use to full effect: Morley's Modular Motion Monitor and the Optical Oscillator. Accordingly, it is all but impossible for the characters to surprise the agents without a well-planned and clever stratagem. Individually, the operatives are armed with swords, poison darts and heavy firearms; one agent is even carrying a fully charged arc thrower as described in the *UPWIND* corebook (page 96). Three of them are skilled Potential adepts: Wind, Ore and Water; the Ore user in particular is formidable, especially considering they are hiding underground and are surrounded by countless tons of bedrock.

By the time characters start hunting the agents, the agents have likely gone to ground to await further orders, and will only leave their hideout to meet with contacts and check their dead drops. They have set up a defensive watch with each approach covered by as many operatives as their numbers allow. They have a small camp arranged in one corner of their commandeered space; it includes the Monitor and Oscillator, food and water, ammunition, various other equipment and their bedrolls. If the bearer of the Eye has been kidnapped, she is secured here, trussed tightly to a convenient fixture protruding from the surrounding walls.

The team is professional and patient, and makes effective use of their artifacts. If the

characters opt for a frontal assault, the operatives will fight and try to kill the Knights, catching them in cross-fires and Potential attacks. Though they fight intelligently and effectively, the agents of the Cabal are not fanatics, so will not choose to die in service to their paymasters if given other options. If they start to lose the skirmish, the team attempts to escape, but will surrender if cornered. If the characters try to negotiate before attacking, the operatives will play for time and try to exfiltrate via their skiffs or an unguarded side passage, taking Truk's notebook — and any potential captive — with them. Ideally, the players come up with a brilliant plan to fool or force the team into surrender, so the characters can arrest and interrogate them. The nature of any ruse or attack plan is up to the players, but the following stakes could be part of any associated plays.

Player Stakes

- At least one of the agents is captured alive.
- ✦ All the agents are either captured or killed in the ambush.
- ✦ The characters recover one or both of the agents' relics intact.
- ✦ One of the agents is successfully interrogated.
- ✦ The characters recover Truk's notebook.

THE OPTICAL OSCILLATOR

The Oscillator shrouds everything within its 50-yard radius in a confusing optical illusion that makes it exceptionally difficult to focus, causing individual objects — friends and foes alike — to look like many, blurry targets. Uniquely tuned goggles allow the users to see normally, but the unnatural effects created by the device causes any other characters within its range a 1-card Play hand penalty.



Moderator Stakes (3)

- The operatives escape, and through Truk's notebook, the opposition gains critical information about the Eye and the Embassy.
- ✦ The characters all take minor wounds in the fighting.
- ✦ The Monitor and Oscillator are either taken by the agents or destroyed in the battle.
- ✦ One of the characters takes a mortal wound.
- ✦ The characters have now identified themselves as central players and become the focus of the Cabal's efforts. They are pursued, and attempts may be made to abduct or assassinate them.

INTERROGATION

Unfortunately, even a successful interrogation only reveals so much, as the operatives themselves are only hirelings — high-priced mercenaries with loyalty to their handlers commensurate with their pay. If suitably coerced, the captured agents could reveal any of the following information, with exactly how much perhaps determined by a play:

- The agents know each other only by numerical designations. Those potentially captured here include numbered operatives ranging between 17 and 29.
- They get their orders from, and report to, a handler they know only as the Marchioness. She operates mostly through dead drops and messengers; the few times they have met, she has always been masked.
- At least one of the agents suspects the Marchioness is actually a cover identity used by different people.
- The Marchioness appears to represent a larger concern than simply herself; additionally, the objectives of that membership are not always aligned.
- Other assignments the agents have worked seemed politically motivated.
- The organization the Marchioness represents may have ties to the CIS Expeditioners (see the *UPWIND* corebook, page 122).

The Expeditioners have provided transport and logistical support for some of the missions in which the captured agents have been involved in the past.

The Notebook

If the characters recover Truk's notebook, the information it provides is tantalizing, yet limited. It is written in the old man's familiar scratch, but the penmanship is tentative and broken, lacking his confident flourishes of clocks past. Though not written in an actual cipher, there are many passages written in a kind of opaque jargon, where the otherwise mundane references make sense only to the writer, thus obscuring their true meanings. It is clearly not a code meant for others to translate, but instead phrasing used by a paranoid mind to protect its own secrets. Nonetheless, a careful reading can reveal some intriguing data. Moderators can hint at or share the following, or they can design a play around sussing out this information:

- Truk had an ambitious plan that even he thought was a bit crazy.
- The professor was part of a secret group he refers to as "the Embassy."
- The Embassy is widespread and seems to communicate mostly by coded dispatch.
- There are forces both inside and outside the Guild who are opposed to whatever Truk is attempting. In fact, Truk seems to fear that the actions of the Embassy could possibly be interpreted as treasonous.
- Truk involved the boat crew for two reasons: first, he trusts them; second, he believes the opposition would be unlikely to assume his plan relied solely on a small crew of unproven Knights.

At this point, both the characters and the players will likely feel they are at loose ends, and have no particular direction to go or leads to pursue. This is fine and intentional. Both the characters and the players should feel like there are plans and forces at play that are beyond their scope and ability to affect. They should be feeling both slightly lost and discouraged when their new orders finally catch up with them. It seems like they are being carried off in an unrelated direction by the current of events.



OFFICIAL CHANNELS

It is possible that young Knights will decide they are in over their heads and report to, or confide in, superior members of the Guild. If they are to be convincing, they must provide any evidence they have gathered from Truk's missions, including his notebook and proof of the assassins sent to kill him. They may also decide to reveal the Eye and demonstrate what it does. Depending on whom they report to and what evidence they present, the

Guild's reaction ranges from dismissal of their concerns, to orders to return when they have gathered more compelling information or an urgent mobilization of resources to take advantage of the Eye or to pursue the Amplifier. If their concerns are dismissed, the characters soon receive new orders, sending them to Point Defiance. If they are swept up in an urgent response, Captain Doe eventually becomes involved anyway. Either way, following orders sooner or later brings the characters to the front and Point Defiance.

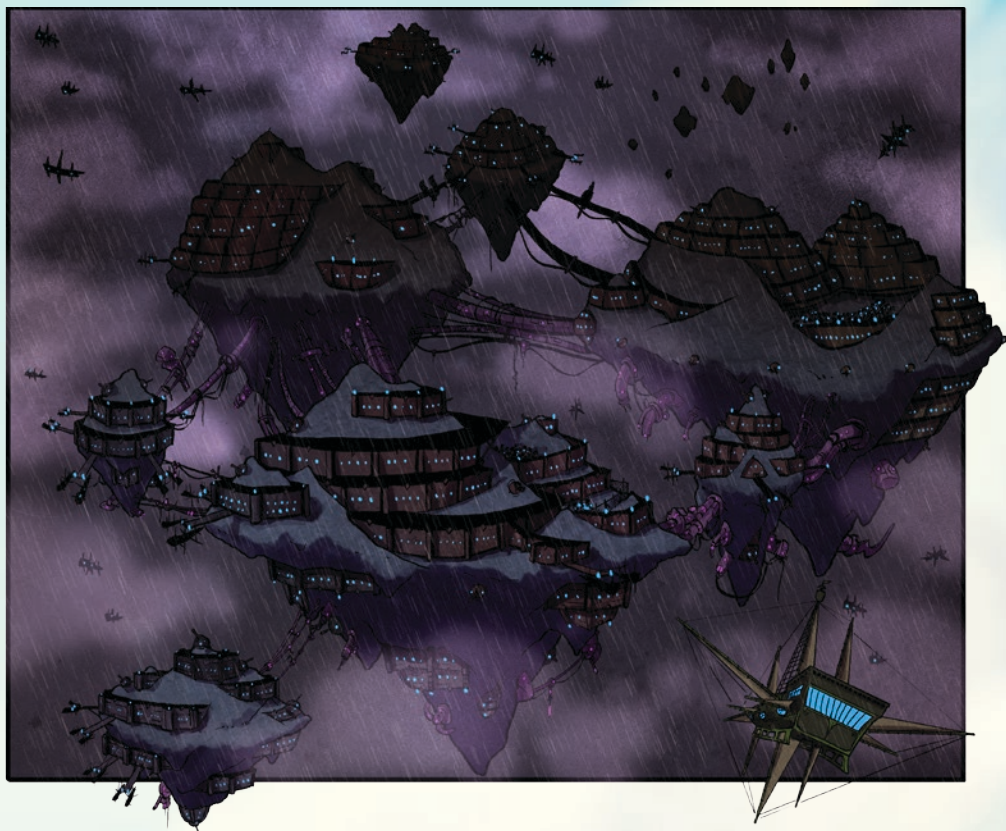
PART 3: ON THE FRONT

NEW ORDERS

After a few turns sitting about Highstone wondering what to do next, the boat crew receives collective orders reassigning them to Point Defiance. All members of the crew — PCs and NPCs alike — currently in Highstone are instructed to report to the *EGS UNSTOPPABLE* for transport to the Guild's largest military base, where they are to receive

"further orders." No additional information or instructions come with the dispatches.

If any of the characters look into these orders, they learn two strange things: first, they came directly from the office of Guild Fleet command at Point Defiance, which is notably unorthodox; second, the orders appear to have been issued before word of Truk's death



could have reached Point Defiance. In fact, one of the dispatches Truk sent out when the party returned was to his co-conspirator Captain Doe, confirming the crew's success in acquiring a working Eye. Doe immediately sent orders to have the characters transferred to Point Defiance to undertake part two of Truk's audacious plan. These orders, and news of Truk's death, passed each other in transit. Since the characters could not know this, the timing of the orders' arrival should seem strange.

UNSTOPPABLE TRANSPORT

By the time their orders reach the party, they have only a clock and a half to report to the *UNSTOPPABLE* before her next departure for Point Defiance. Showing their orders to the quartermaster, they are brought aboard with no ceremony, along with perhaps a dozen other young Knights, a couple hundred liegemen and many tons of materiel. The busy port, cramped ship and mass of military supplies should give the party the distinct impression that the Guild is preparing for war.

The approximately 10-clock downwind voyage to Point Defiance is quiet and uneventful, escorted as the *UNSTOPPABLE* is by two small frigates. There is downtime to rest, catch up with old friends, and, most notably, collect information and gossip from across the fleet. Moderators should ask each player to describe someone with whom he chooses to engage — name, relationship and job. Roleplay through a short scene using any of the following in-character prompts to characterize conversations. Encourage the players to react to the information by expressing their thoughts, in character, to their shipboard acquaintances.

- “War with the Children's already begun! The Kingdoms are denying it to save their own coin and protect their own hides. The bastards are breaking the Convocation apart and leaving us on the pointy end of the stick all by ourselves. The greedy cowards!”
- “Guild leadership is just paranoid. There have always been skirmishes with the Children and there always will be skirmishes with the Children. They are afraid of us and there's no way they can be a real threat. The Kingdoms will pull together when needed. You'll see.”

EGS UNSTOPPABLE

The *UNSTOPPABLE* is one of the largest freighters in the fleet and has been sailing the Point Defiance supply route for several cycles. She has a crew of over 60 and can carry as many as 500 tightly packed troops along with 400 tons of cargo. Though not the fastest freighter in the fleet, she has an exceptional range and is particularly skyworthy. Unlike most freighters, she has more than token armaments, with 20 guns and a defensive arc grid built into her freeboard.

The *UNSTOPPABLE* has pair of large, open keel gates, each with its own cargo derrick and modular, multi-purpose gantries. They can be used to quickly load and unload cargo of just about any size anywhere the ship can reach; they are easily converted into bomb bays should the vessel be pressed into combat service.

UNSTOPPABLE is commanded by Master Alice Thomus, as weathered and reliable a sailor as can be found in the Guild. Mr. Tooms is an old tyrant of a first mate, at once loved and feared by the crew. Ekhart the navigator, Blees the quartermaster and Young Tooms — the bosun and only son of the first mate — round out the standing command crew.

Perhaps to set themselves apart, or maybe as an inside joke, the *UNSTOPPABLE*'s crew has given her as eccentrically gaudy a paint scheme as Guild regulations allow, and make it a point of pride to keep said paint in perfect, garish condition.

- “Old Man Fey's got himself a secret plan. Mark my words he does. That's why there's all these fleet shenanigans. He's a crafty one and he's gonna get 'em all in one master stroke. It's a secret plan I tell ya.”



- “The Children have a secret weapon — something they found at the bottom of the damnable Dark. Dug it up from some old Masters’ site we ain’t never seen. It’s a fact — heard if from a sky captain with my own ears. Going to wipe us all from the skies with it. Leadership don’t know what to do ’bout it. Heads up their asses I say.”
- “It’s that Coalition of Independent States. They’re the ones behind it. They’ve been making back-room deals with every shady king, minister and prince. Getting them to hold back their support, keep their fleets at home. They want the Guild to fail so the Convocation falls apart. It’s all part of their plan. Well, it’s not going to happen on my watch.”
- “Captain Doe is afraid to commit the fleet. Without support, there are not enough ships to guard the Frontier let alone hold it, so deploying them now just makes them vulnerable. Some say he’s lost his edge — gotten soft and afraid. They say the clocks of decisive old “Grimstone” are in the past.”

Moderators wishing to extend this journey should insert any of the Twilight Frontier events from the Aerial Encounters appendix in the back of this book (see [page 150](#)).

THE FORT

When the *UNSTOPPABLE* arrives at Point Defiance, the scale of the Guild’s deployment is undeniably clear. There are twice the ships in harbor than is typical — in fact there are so many there is no more room at the docks, and vessels are having to put down in parade grounds, training fields and in any open land outside the walls. The liegemen barracks are overflowing, ship crews are living aboard and even the transient Knights’ quarters are full, forcing the characters to seek alternative lodgings, such as one of the inns or boarding houses in Wall-Town. The fort itself is a hive of activity, from training new arrivals and resupplying patrol vessels to refitting warships and supporting watch posts and other local elements of the Bastion.

SWIFT COMMAND

The characters should feel a combination of overwhelmed and excited by the activity and preparations going on everywhere they look. As they make their way from the docks to

POINT DEFIANCE

Point Defiance — usually referred to as “the Fort” — actually consists of a small cluster of three main skylands and a number of smaller islets that are chained together by ancient cable-like structures that predate the DownFall; the purpose of which remains unknown. Conveniently, however, this structure allowed the Guild to strategically disperse the vital elements of the Fortress as defense against a concentrated attack. Each islet has its own fortifications and harbor, and is under the guns of at least one other skyland, so only a coordinated and overwhelming attack against the six main fortifications that make up the complex could hope to succeed. These six hard-points include the Primary and Secondary Headquarters, the Outer and Inner Harbors, the Gunnery and the Second Redoubt (the original Redoubt having been destroyed during the last Incursion).

“The Point,” as those stationed there call it, is always busy and often crowded. With dozens of her own ships and usually twice that many other Guild and Convocation vessels in port at any one time, the harbor, quartermaster, chandlery, dock crews and other support staff always have lots of work to do.

report in, the sense of being part of a massive undertaking should be palpable. Upon reaching Headquarters, they have to hurry up and wait through half a bell before they are issued a large parcel of orders, charts and reports, and unceremoniously ordered to take command of the Guild patrol vessel *EGS SWIFT*. This should strike the characters as an unexpected and considerable responsibility.

The *SWIFT* is a well-found ship with a fair crew, but every new command staff needs to prove themselves, and



always seems to want to make a few changes to assert themselves or to make the vessel more to their liking. The characters must therefore first decide how they want to establish themselves with the *SWIFT*'s crew, and moderators should call for a play to determine the outcomes.

Player Stakes

- The crew accepts the change in command but with many dubious glances due to the characters' young age and recent graduation.
- The crew admires the pluck of the young staff and assumes they wouldn't be given the command if they weren't clever young officers.
- The crew's last Knight commander was demanding and stubbornly traditional. The crew is excited to have a young team, and provides a 1-card innate cache when their enthusiasm and attention to detail are part of a play.

Moderator Stakes (I)

- The last command staff made some poor decisions that lead to the deaths of several sailors, and the crew is suspicious of the new leaders' capabilities.
- The crew is distrustful and gives the characters a 1-card innate challenge cache whenever questioning or distrusting orders could be part of the play.
- At some critical point during a subsequent patrol, the crew refuse to follow a dangerous order.

Like many new commanders, the characters may also wish to refit, rerig or otherwise modify the *SWIFT* to suit their orders, mission parameters or personal preferences. Accordingly, moderators should allow the players to choose two refits from the following options:

- **Burst of Speed** — The ship's sail plan is uniquely optimized for speed. Once per session, without using a play, the ship may evade a single encounter by using superior speed and skymanship.
- **Extra Lift** — The ship's induction hull is particularly well-tuned to the wind, and can therefore fly twice as far upcountry as other ships in its class before losing power and having to land.

- **Hidden Armaments** — The ship carries extra cannon behind camouflaged gun ports and has a 1-card innate cache that can be used during ship-to-ship ranged combat.
- **Maneuverability** — The ship is rigged with dynamo-driven, auto-trimming motors, so is particularly agile. Once per session, without a play, the crew may gain superior position on any target and act before that target can respond.
- **Reinforced Hull** — The ship's hull is augmented with Masters' alloy keels and ribs. The ship therefore has a 1-card innate cache that can be used whenever the durability of the vessel is central to the play.
- **Skyworthiness** — The ship is particularly well-rigged and balanced, so it's particularly stable in heavy weather. She can navigate storms and other turbulence with a 1-card innate cache.

Once they have made their choices, call for a couple plays to acquire the necessary requisitions and to properly supervise installation or modification. Different members of the crew can make each play, and the following stakes should provide guidance for possible outcomes. Note that at the front everything is very hard to come by — wheeling, dealing, gamesmanship and perhaps even a little bribery are necessary to get what they want.

WALL-TOWN

Wall-Town is the name of the civilian outpost settlement that has grown up in the empty spaces around the Point Defiance fortifications. Sustained by a large population of sailors and troops looking for distractions in their time off, the town — if it can really be called such — provides what the Guild does not. It also runs a lucrative trade in supporting freebooting explorers and privateer expeditions working the Frontier.



EGS SWIFT

The *SWIFT* is a new boat, less than a cycle old, and takes advantage of several recent advances in the shipwright's art. Her lean lines make her faster, and give her a smaller target profile. Her oversized rig makes her particularly maneuverable, and her low center of gravity makes her more stable than other designs in her class.

With dark sails and a dull-gray hull, she is colored to stealthily patrol the Frontier and the Dark. She features a full complement of rifled deck guns and fore and aft muzzle rocket tubes. The ship is also equipped with a set of brilliantly bright, mirrored arc lamps that are intended to target and blind opposing ship crews, giving the cutter either a tactical advantage or the chance to escape.

The *SWIFT*'s master is a professional and unassuming woman named Clark, whose crew respectfully calls Skipper. The first mate is a woman from the Ascent Archipelago named Amina who is a consummate sailor and helmswoman. The quartermaster is a meticulous and demanding officer named Bevo who knows everyone's business. The navigator is a Verdani named Franzic who actually owns a pet treerunner named Lug Lug. The rest of the crew is made up primarily of Horizians, with a few Ascentians and Leewardians among them.

Player Stakes

- The characters are able to obtain the ship upgrade.
- + The crew of the *SWIFT* is favorably disposed toward the characters.
- + The characters make a connection at Point Defiance who can help with future repairs, parts and stores.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The resources are unavailable and the upgrade can't be made.
- + The crew earns a 1-card challenge cache representing short stores that can be used whenever repairs or the ship's supplies are part of the play.

ORDERS AND SUSPICIONS

If the players are curious or suspicious about their characters' orders, or have learned anything about the Embassy or the forces working against them, they may try to track down the origin of said orders for some answers. If they do, Doe's staff stonewalls them — on his instructions — by asking them to make an appointment, then rescheduling, then telling them the Sky Captain was called out the office and so forth. Doe stalls them for two reasons: first, the commander wants to observe them in action, to learn for himself if they are reliable and uncompromised agents; second, he wants to make sure they have not brought undue attention on themselves and were not pursued to the Point. With all the activity and comings and goings, it would be possible for almost any organization to insert operatives into Wall-Town, the fleet, or even the Fort.

If the characters are insistent or particularly clever in getting around Doe's administrative defenses, moderators can accelerate the timeline of their eventual meeting, but make it clear at this point that Doe harbors suspicions about their insistence and any answers they provide to his questions. See the initial section of part 4 below for guidance on this encounter.

ON PATROL

The *SWIFT* is sent out on a series of extended patrol missions, escort and resupply runs and even a short search and rescue. These missions are presented below as a montage of singular encounters. Moderators should essentially use "jump cuts" from one to the next to simulate the passage of time and emphasize the cumulative challenge of life on patrol. Keep each scene self-contained and spend only a few minutes roleplaying through it. If appropriate, offer a single play that provides a minor outcome that, as they pile up



make the characters feel like their duties have been of consequence.

Play through **FBII — Boarding Action**, page 145.

Realistically, since each scene in the montage is separated by clocks or turns, the players should have access to their characters' full Potential hands at the start of each encounter. If moderators wish to stimulate the wearing stress of patrolling the Frontier, and provide a little extra challenge, they may opt not to allow any Potential hand refresh draws until after the montage sequence is complete.

Scene 1: Cat and Mouse

While on a 10-clock patrol along the border between the Frontier and the Dark, the *SWIFT* encounters a Child vessel of similar class. If the party chooses to engage, they find themselves in a lethal game of cat and mouse in the darkness, where a single broadside could destroy either of the ships.

Player Stakes

- The *SWIFT* escapes and is able to report the sighting.
- + The enemy vessel is crippled and apparently lost to the abyss.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- A quarter of the *SWIFT*'s crew is killed, and the ship barely survives the encounter.
- + The ship is so badly damaged it must spend a dozen clocks in port undergoing repairs.

Scene 2: Exterminators

The *SWIFT* is sent to install a scouting team at a downwind observation post in the ruins of a vacant Masters' cache. The team is surprised and attacked by a large, previously unidentified predator that is denning in the site.

Player Stakes

- The characters drive off the creature without any casualties.
- + The characters kill the creature, and bring its body back for zoologists to identify.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The fight with the creature draws the attention of a Child

UPWIND INCURSION

At some point before roleplaying through the patrol montage, moderators should consider hosting a session of *INCURSION* with their players instead of the regular *UPWIND* RPG as an alternative way to provide added visualization, drama and excitement to the ongoing story narrative.

INCURSION is a print-and-play, "miniatures-style" tactical wargame of skyship-to-skyship combat in the dim reaches of the Twilight Frontier. A target-and-destroy battle of sharp-eyed lookouts, daring maneuvers and devastating broadsides, *INCURSION* brings the war between the Explorers' Guild and the Children of the Dark out of the RPG and onto your nearest tabletop. The game is a fast-playing, tactical encounter that depends on stealthy movement and decisive actions. Since it's print-and-play, you can scale up to fight as many ships as you want to put in the sky against as many opponents as you dare to challenge!

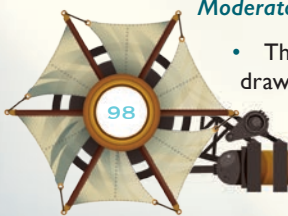
INCURSION was funded as a stretch goal of the same Kickstarter campaign that funded this adventure book, and can be downloaded for free from the Biohazard Games website.

patrol, and the *SWIFT* is forced to abandon the site and the mission.

- + The scouts are captured by the Children before the characters can recover them.

Scene 3: Moral Dilemma

The *SWIFT* is ordered to carry dispatches and supplies to a distant outpost on the Bastion. Upon arrival, the crew finds the outpost empty and signs of recent fighting. They discover a badly wounded Child of the Dark among the dead. This scene resolves when the characters decide what to do with the enemy warrior.





Scene 4: Trailing Smoke

The *SWIFT* encounters a Child warship that drastically outclasses the small Guild vessel. She is damaged, however, and appears to be limping home for repairs; at least initially, the presence of the *SWIFT* goes unnoticed. The characters can choose to break off and report the wounded ship, tail her to see where she goes, or attack in hopes the damage is an equalizer. If they break off and report, the Guild dispatches a trio of frigates to finish her off. If they pursue or attack, call for a play.

Player Stakes

- The ship leads the *SWIFT* to a large forward staging port the Children have established well within the Twilight Frontier.
- ✦ A lucky shot from the *SWIFT* ignites the target's powder magazine, and she explodes in a brilliant flash.

Moderator Stakes

- The enemy ship leads the party beyond the range of its sphereometer, where the *SWIFT* loses them in the Dark. The Guild ship is delayed a dozen clocks as she works her way back into range and back to the Point.
- The damage is a ruse on the part of the Children to lure in unsuspecting hunters, and the *SWIFT* is quickly destroyed by a surprise counterattack. Only a quarter of the crew escapes in the launch.

Scene 5: Ghost Ship

The *SWIFT* is sent to locate an overdue frigate, the *EGS VALIANT*. One of the *VALIANT*'s command staff is a member of their boat crew named Lek. They have a sphereometer needle from the *VALIANT*'s lodestone; once they're a couple clocks out, they quickly pick up her bearing. A few more clocks of sailing and they find her damaged and drifting, without a



soul on board. The ship was attacked by Children of the Dark, and the crew was killed or captured. If the party investigates the ship, they activate a clockwork trigger left behind by the attackers, rigged to blow the powder magazine. Make a play to determine the fate of those caught in the dangerous trap.

Player Stakes

- The crew is able to disarm the trigger before the ship is destroyed, and though the dead ship's crew is lost, the characters recover the *VALIANT*.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The trigger sets off a series of explosions that rip the ship apart. Several of the *SWIFT*'s crewmembers are killed outright. The players all make luck draws — the losing character takes a mortal wound, and the rest take major wounds as they barely escape the conflagration.

Scene 6: Outgunned

The *SWIFT* is assigned to a small squadron as a dispatch runner. Five clocks out from Point Defiance, the squadron is ambushed by a much larger force, and a bloody ship-to-ship battle ensues. The *SWIFT*, small as she is, is caught in the thick of it. Make a play to determine the outcomes.

Player Stakes

- The *SWIFT* is damaged but manages to avoid destruction and returns to port with the surviving ships.
- ✦ The *SWIFT*'s unique agility allows her to outmaneuver a ship twice her size, rake her and

take the frigate out of the fight, turning the course of the battle.

- ✦ The crew's bravery and prowess earn them a commendation for "exceptional valor in the face of the enemy," and the Knights gain their next Blazes of Rank for what becomes known as "The Action at Gray Sky Downs."

Moderator Stakes (3)

- The *SWIFT* is badly damaged in the first broadside, and drifts uselessly away into the twilight and is lost for eight clocks before completing repairs and limping back to port.
- ✦ Fully half the *SWIFT*'s crew is killed in the fighting, and when the survivors finally make it back to port the crew is disbanded and assigned to other ships.
- ✦ The entire party comes through the battle miraculously unscathed, save for the loser of a luck draw who must take a mortal wound draw.

Moderators wishing to extend the patrol montage can insert any of the Twilight Frontier or Dark encounters from the Aerial Encounters appendix at the back of this book (see page 150).

RUMORS OF WAR

Throughout the course of the patrol montage, moderators should take every opportunity to imply that the rumors of a Third Incursion are being proven true. If the characters were dubious, or if their commanders were uncertain, there should no longer be any doubt, and the characters should be loud advocates for a Convocation-wide mobilization.

PART 4: WELCOME TO THE EMBASSY

INDUCTION

If the characters pressed for answers earlier in the adventure, then perhaps this encounter has already occurred and they are conducting their patrols while awaiting further instructions from Doe. If instead, they followed orders and successfully commanded the *SWIFT* through its various missions,

they have convinced the sky captain that they are both capable and trustworthy agents. Doe requests their presence at an early still briefing in his headquarters office, sending a discrete staff member with a short note. He delivers it to the *SWIFT*'s master who in turn passes it to one of the characters. It says only, "Your



presence is requested this clock at low two,” and is signed simply “G.”

When the characters arrive, they are ushered through an uncharacteristically empty outer office and into the captain’s spare chamber. It is dominated by a large, stone desk with intricate Dimmish designs and a massive, three-dimensional, arcanelectrical orrery representing the lower Twilight Frontier, with Point Defiance at the center and displaying the disposition of various fleet elements. When they arrive, the large man is studying the device intently, but breaks off to welcome them. His adjutant — an intense-seeming seneschal named Lyza Keen — offers the characters Dimmish whiskey and then returns discretely to her front office.

Doe unselfconsciously sizes up the characters and then cuts right to the heart of the business at hand. Moderators are encouraged to run an in-character conversation between Doe and the characters that shares the following details:

- Like them, Doe was once a protégé of Captain Truk. He respected the man a great deal, trusted him completely and is heartbroken at his passing.
- Truk had an unlikely but daring plan to save the Kingdoms from war with the Children.
- Doe, Truk and a number of other allies — both inside and outside the Guild — formed a group they have been calling the Embassy, in part to carry out this plan.
- The characters have been unwitting — albeit increasingly suspicious — agents of this conspiracy. Now that Truk is gone, and it’s clear that others know about the Eye, Doe believes it’s time to bring the boat crew fully into the Embassy.
- Doe has been kept apprised of the characters’ progress since they recovered the Eye from Igor the Under, and he has been impressed with their unorthodox, but uniquely effective, methods. He shows them the large dossiers he has collected detailing their missions and conduct.
- Doe knows they have already been asked to act outside the “traditional jurisdiction of the Guild.” He emphasizes that they must know going forward that they will be guilty

of outright treason and will likely be executed if caught. Doe tells them “it’s now or never” if they want to just walk away.

Play through **FBI2 — Words of Honor**, page 145.

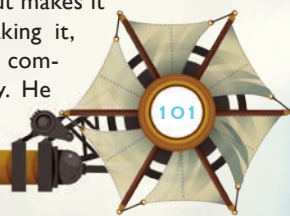
If one or more of the characters refuse to knowingly break their vows, this likely makes for some dramatic roleplaying, and moderators are encouraged to let it play out. Doe’s offer to walk away is sincere, and that character choice should be supported. If any characters do opt out, Doe asks — not orders — them to at least keep what they already know to themselves and quietly reassigns them to a post of their choice well away from Point Defiance. If this happens, replacement characters for any who opted out can be drawn from any members of the boat crew who may have been introduced as NPCs earlier in the campaign, most of whom are now also posted at Point Defiance.

Doe explains to those who decide to remain. Truk’s plan was to find the Eye of the Navigator, use it in turn to find the fabled Grand Amplifier, then use that all-powerful artifact to stave off war with the Children and hopefully establish a lasting peace. Doe knows this has always been a long-shot, but he is becoming desperate.

If the moderator has not yet read aloud the opening text of this book’s introduction as recommended at the beginning of chapter 2, he should do so now — up to the section marked “**Moderator’s Eyes Only**” (see page 6). It may be worthwhile, if the players have been at the campaign for some time, to reread it them as a refresher.

If the bearer of the Eye has not yet attempted to locate the Grand Amplifier using the artifact, what Doe describes about the object should be sufficient to allow her to do so now. She sees a course thread leading downward at a notable angle; it is also lacking any sense of parallax, indicating the Amplifier is far away.

Doe is in need of capable agents whom he can trust, and is desperately hoping the characters are willing to help. If so, he has an initial mission for them but makes it clear that, by undertaking it, the crew is irreversibly committing to the Embassy. He



hopes they will assist him, as — Truk clearly believed — it could mean the survival of the Kingdoms in the Light.

DEAD DROP

If the boat crew agrees to help, Doe expresses sincere and deep gratitude; it is clear he is relieved. He tells them that he has an initial mission, the purpose of which is urgent and overdue. He shares that some members of the Embassy are not members of the Guild. In fact, they are its traditional enemies, and therein lie the grounds for treason. He has been communicating with them through a dead drop, but those watching him have become suspicious, so he needs the characters to be his clandestine couriers.

If pressed Doe admits, with extreme hesitancy, that these secret allies are Children of the Dark — a woman named Leader of Killers in particular. He explains that they, too, are dedicated to establishing peace between the Kin and the Children. He says that Leader is aware of the intent to find the Amplifier, and has confided that her people are looking for it as well. She claims, however, that if the Eye can be used to locate it and assuming (as legends claim) it is deep in the Dark, she has promised to help the Guild reach it first.

Assuming the characters are willing, Doe gives them a sealed, weatherproof dispatch pouch and a sphereometer needle. He tells them the site is on a small skyland just over the border of the Dark. He tells them he cached a lodestone there when they established the drop, and explains how to bypass the site's ancient defenses. He says it is a nine-clock downwind sail from Point Defiance, and the needle should pick up the lodestone after about five clocks. After answering what few questions he can, with a characteristically grim look he offers the crew the sailors' traditional blessing — “fair skies and following winds” — then sends the characters on their way.

BLINK OF AN EYE

While the characters were commanding the patrolling *SWIFT*, Cabal operatives were infiltrating the environs of Point Defiance. Their employers decided that this is their best chance to take the Eye of the Navigator,

before the Guild executes whatever plan they have for it, and have ordered their agents to either kidnap the bearer of the Eye or, barring that, kill the bearer and recover only the relic.

When the moderator thinks the timing is right — in the midst of the patrol duties montage above, while the *SWIFT* is in port after the Action at Gray Sky Downs, or maybe right after they have been inducted into the Embassy by Captain Doe — she should have the agents make their attempt.

The operatives wait until the character is most vulnerable — ideally while away from the *SWIFT*, other members of the crew and the central fortifications of the Point. Maybe the Knight is in transit from one location to the other, or the character is alone in Wall-Town. It is also possible that the agents forge orders for a meeting and lure the character off the ship into an ambush. However they set it up, the agents rely heavily on a relic the possessor calls the Draught Capacitor.

When the circumstances favor the operatives, their thugs crash a stolen ship into the docks near the *SWIFT*, simultaneously detonating several large kegs of arc powder they have put aboard. Their intention is to use the apparent accident as camouflage for the kidnapping. They use the burning skyfront as cover for abducting the bearer of the Eye. The resulting chaos makes the kidnapping an almost certain operation; moderators are encouraged to use their best cards and an opposition cache to make it happen.

The following stakes could be used for kidnapping.

Player Stakes

- The character fends off the attack and escapes.
- ✦ The character's allies show up at exactly the right moment, and not only do they kill most of the agents, they manage to capture one of them.
- ✦ The characters are critical in dousing the fire and preventing what would otherwise have been devastating losses for both the fort and Wall-Town. The winner of a group luck draw earns a new Blaze of Rank called “Flames of Defiance” for her brave actions.



CABAL OPERATIVES

Agent 18 is a big, dark-skinned Kin with a dangerous skillset. He is ex-military, with extensive tactical training and experience; his Arc powers are well above average. Agent 19 is a short, slight woman who is an expert at infiltration, close combat and assassination. Agent 20 is a bright-faced, handsome fellow with Rain powers that make him a particularly charming and uniquely effective front man.

The operatives infiltrated Point Defiance aboard a small, but well-armed, privateer named the *WIND WITCH*. Though only three of the crew are actual agents, the ship's company are experienced sailors, fighters and thugs. They have no love for the Guild and are being well paid to follow orders, so they represent capable support for any plan the operatives may have.

DRAUGHT CAPACITOR

The Draught Capacitor is one of those relics that has been turned to its current use by the clever application of the arcanoengineer's art. The Masters' component is a small, spark bottle-like device that, instead of storing only arc, is able to store all forms of Potential. The oversized metal gauntlet into which it has been integrated allows the wearer to essentially extract up to 4 cards worth of Potential from any adept or device containing such energy simply by touching it. The energy can then be released, but only as a destructive, damaging force in the matching element. Once discharged, the Capacitor can immediately be used again. The device is therefore particularly useful in rendering Potential adepts powerless, or even unconscious if that is the intent.

- ✦ The characters acquire the Draught Capacitor from the defeated agents.
- ✦ Subsequent interrogation of the agents identifies their purpose and the fact that they work for someone known as the Marchioness — especially if effective Potential powers are used in the questioning. The information is substantive enough to launch a tangential campaign as Guild counterespionage agents are dispatched to work their way up the chain of contacts to the true source of the opposition.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The bearer of the Eye is subdued and taken, and the rest of the party must now track the operatives down and recover the character before the agents exfiltrate the Point with her.
- ✦ The character takes a major wound in the fighting, and is incapacitated until the moderator believes it is dramatically appropriate for her to regain consciousness.

- ✦ Hundreds die in what becomes known in Guild lore as the “Flames of Defiance,” and this section of the port is a total loss.
- ✦ The attack is so well-timed and unexpected that the party has a 2-card challenge story cache that can be used against them in any play they make while trying to track the bearer of the Eye down.

If the players delay, dither or have bad luck, feel free to have the agents escape with the bearer. It means the crew have to pursue in the *SWIFT*, but a pitched air battle or a bloody confrontation in some distant port would be a dramatic way to recover both the character and the Eye. Either way, unless the moderator wants to further complicate the plot, this final confrontation is the last encounter of the campaign with agents of the Cabal.

If the characters manage to capture any of the operatives alive, and successfully interrogate them, the Knights can now

corroborate the information they may have previously extracted from Truk's killers in part 3. If this is their first opportunity to question agents of the Cabal, the characters may gather that information now.

BLAZES OF RANK

If the characters have not been awarded new Blazes of Rank as the result of previous

outcomes, be sure to award them narratively at this time. They could be earned for their exemplary service aboard the *SWIFT* if that command turned out to be particularly dangerous or effective, or if they played an essential role in combating the fire caused by the Cabal agents. Make a celebration out of the ceremony, and have the players record evocative descriptions such as "Holding the Line" or "Flames of Fate" under Blazes of Rank on their character sheets.

PART 5: FRIENDS LIKE THESE

GETTING UNDERWAY

When Doe asked the characters to deliver the packet of messages to the dead drop, he indicated that they were overdue and that time was therefore of the essence. Consequently, moderators should imply urgency and motivate the characters to depart quickly. Restocking the *SWIFT* and prepping her crew should take less than a clock or two; barring any complications from dealing with the Cabal agents, the Knights should have nothing else delaying their departure.

Moderators should reward or penalize the boat crew for careful preparation or lack of foresight accordingly. If the players make a point of thoughtful preparation, award them a 1- or 2-card story cache they can use whenever such preplanning might be of use. If they opt to depart with no or only haphazard preparation, give them a 1- to 2-card challenge story cache that can be used in any play where the lack of preparation could be problematic.

INTO THE DARK

The trip is nine clocks, give or take, and is one of increasing tension, stress and cold. If its bearer takes advantage of Doe's description of the destination's Masters' features and activates the Eye, the crew can shorten the voyage to seven clocks and earn a 1-card cache they can use in any play where making good time is an advantage.

The crew is extra vigilant, but subdued, and by the time they reach the downwind border of the Frontier they are obviously worn and anxious, with everyone speaking in

whispers, moving quietly and keeping all lights well shaded. Rimes of ice form on the deck, rails and rigging, so it's a constant battle to free the ship from the crippling weight. Moderators are encouraged to insert any of the events from the Dark section of the Aerial Encounters appendix to add excitement or a sense of consequence to the frigid voyage (see [page 150](#)).

Captain Doe's dead drop is located in the windshadow of the largest islet in a small archipelago that can't be found on any Guild charts or in any official records; Doe has seen to that. Once in range, the sphereometer needle he provided the boat crew, however, leads them unerringly there. Although they can't take their ship into the windshadow, if they circle the island, the characters can confirm that it points toward the very center of the landmass.

KEEPING IT FROM THE CREW

At some point, the characters have to decide what aspects of their mission they are going to share with the crew of the *SWIFT*. The ship's complement is loyal to the Guild, so despite any respect the Knights may have earned since joining the boat, it is unlikely that the crew is devoted enough to the characters themselves to willingly follow them into treason. Accordingly, the players are going to have to figure out how to execute their mission while preserving the goodwill of their crew.

If needed, the moderator could suggest a number of possible approaches. The Knights could order the ship to stand off while they deliver the message by launch, or they could land



and leave the crew aboard. They could order the ship to drop them off and return at a designated time. Alternatively, they could make up a story about secret orders, double agents and counterespionage and try to convince them the less they know the better. Ultimately, any subterfuge should be left for the players to devise.

MONSTROUS DEFENSE

Once the party determines the disposition of their ship and crew, the characters need to figure out how to either evade or defeat an ancient automaton. Doe warned them of its presence, and hinted that it was battling this machine that made Leader and him allies. He told the party that the cog is massive, very fast and cannot be outrun. He explained that it has no long-range weapons, but that its guardian cables are dangerous to 30 yards or so. He said it appears to track movement and heat, and he knows from experience that it is susceptible to Potential.

As the party traverses the skyland, divide the journey into three legs: the hilly shore, the scrubby plains and the lake basin. As the characters begin each leg, ask for a single luck draw. If the character fails, the cog finds and attacks the party when dramatically appropriate. If by luck the cog does not attack them on the way in, reverse the process on the way out. If the party manages to win six luck draws in a row, they deserve to evade the guardian entirely!

Play through **FB6 — Zoology of the Dark**, page 142.

If the party decides to fight the automaton, they have to do so without their ship's guns, as the machine is aware enough of the threat to remain in the windshadow and therefore out of range. If they decide to fight, ask the players to devise a plan of attack. They can set an ambush, lay a trap, try to overwhelm it with Potential or even attempt to drive it over the edge. If the players are clever or thorough, award them a story cache for their effort. If they are reckless and simply attack, use a moderator's cache card in the subsequent play.

Player Stakes

- The automaton is so badly damaged that it is no longer a threat, but because of the fierce fighting the party all makes minor wound draws.

ABJECT ARCHIPELAGO

Most Guild charts of the Dark are limited, incomplete, inaccurate and even contradictory, and the cluster of eight islets that makes up the Abject Archipelago doesn't appear on any official maps. The islands float more or less together, rotating slowly around each other as they drift through the blackness. The largest of the octet is roughly oval with a rim of rugged hills and a frozen lake near the middle. It is covered in a scrubby Potential plant forest dominated by ghost trees.

The surfaces of several of the islands support dozens of tall pylons or towers that protrude like spines from a gray cactus. Made of an unknown, black material, these Masters' ruins were part of some larger network that is now mostly inert. Most still stand upright, many lean precariously and still others are shattered stumps or toppled, broken sections, exposing a fortune in alloy and arcanotechnology components.

Before the DownFall, the network was maintained and defended by a host of sophisticated cogs. Now, only one remains active, but it is large, armed, vigilant and very dangerous.

- + The Masters' cog is destroyed or otherwise incapacitated.
- + The party subverts the cog's detection systems and essentially becomes invisible to it.
- + The party subverts the cog's controls and now has a pet war engine.

Moderator Stakes (3)

- The party barely escapes the combat with their lives, and everyone must make major wound draws.
- + The cog continues to hunt the party across the island, and gains a 2-card innate



cache that can be used in any subsequent encounters.

- Any NPCs with the party are killed in the fighting.
- The loser of a luck draw must make a mortal wound draw.

If the boat crew tries to completely evade the automaton, some combination of Potential or mundane cat and mouse tactics can be used to lead it on a merry chase.

Player Stakes

- The characters evade the cog, leaving it harmlessly hunting for them elsewhere, earning themselves a quarter bell free of its threat.
- The party leads the cog over a cliff, and it lands on its back. With its malfunctioning leg, it takes half a bell for it to right itself and reacquire the characters.

- Whatever lure the crew used to lead the cog astray has become its sole target;

it ignores any non-threatening actions by other characters in favor of hunting that lure.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The party zigs when it should have zagged and is attacked by the machine. See the above stakes for battling the cog.

MEETING IN THE DARK

The characters have to use a portable sphereometer, but, having dealt with the cog, the needle leads them unerringly through the shallow, crunchy snow to the parent lodestone by the frozen lake. It is hidden in the broken ruins of one of the towers, and when the crew enters the rubble they are surprised to find a small campsite hidden there as well — presumably secreted against the prowling automaton. Though no one is present, there are clear signs that the site is in use, so the characters may realize they are probably being watched.

The drop is as Doe described — a small, weathered metal chest buried under a pile of



rubble. The chest is still buried, and if the party digs it out and opens it, they find the lodestone and a handwritten note that says simply, “*Urgency. Must speak. Must act. I am here. Remain.*” The simple words and crude handwriting imply limited experience with the language.

Unless they approached the site with unusual caution, Leader and two of her most loyal fighters detected the characters’ approach, hid and watched from the darker shadows. If the party digs up the chest and puts their dispatches in it, she decides Doe must have sent them and approaches. If the characters instead search the camp or otherwise look like they are hunting for her, she remains hidden until their actions convince her otherwise. Perhaps they call out some version of “Doe sent us,” or they openly settle in to wait quietly for someone to return to the camp.

If the characters approach the site with unusual stealth and surprise the Children camping there, there is likely to be a dangerous skirmish before there is any useful exchange of words.

THE GUARDIAN

The automaton is massive and deadly. Two stories tall, it uses a spread of six huge, spider-like legs to quickly move across the island’s rugged terrain; even though one of the legs has failed and drags uselessly behind, it is much faster than any Kin can move unassisted by Potential. Though it long ago ran out of rockets for its integrated, self-loading artillery, four of its six guardian cables remain functional and its legs are equipped with heavy, retractable armor-like blades. The machine can no longer hear and it seems to have limited visual acuity. It is, however, exceptionally good at tracking movement and heat, and will immediately attack the combination with irresistible force. Though it can’t fly or even jump, the automaton could make short work of the *SWIFT* if it were able to reach the vessel.

If surprised or attacked, all three Child fighters respond with Potential, with Leader of Killers teleporting into a position of advantage and hitting the crew with a stunning blast of arc.

If the encounter is resolved with words, roleplay through the scene, emphasizing the unprecedented nature of the conversation and the sense of barely contained violence on both sides. If the encounter comes to blows, make a play to resolve the high-tension situation.

Player Stakes

- The boat crew gains the upper hand, and has the three Children at their mercy, but at the cost of minor wound draws all around.
- ✦ The party’s tactics take the Children by surprise, and they are quickly subdued without significant injury on either side.
- ✦ Their competence so impresses Leader that the party gains a 2-card story cache they can use in any future play where her deference, agreement or cooperation is relevant.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The Children of the Dark flee the fight and the party loses them in the black hinterland.
- ✦ One of Leader’s fighters is killed, and Leader herself is badly hurt in the fighting.
- ✦ It’s such a pitched battle that afterward the party members have only 1 card each in their Potential hands.
- ✦ The loser of a luck draw takes a major wound.

DARK DIPLOMACY

Unless things go horribly awry, at some point, Leader and the crew have a conversation. With halting words in an abjectly out of place Dimmish accent, Leader impresses the following on the characters with an increasing urgency:

- She has recently learned that the Ethos leadership has long possessed an ancient arcanelectrical chart box that may identify the location of the Grand Amplifier; the navy is planning its own expedition to find the artifact.
- The navy has built a special ship — the *LANCE OF FATE* — that may allow them to penetrate the Wrack Wall. The term

means nothing to the characters, but Leader does not have the vocabulary to explain beyond an inarticulate, “deep barrier, crushing stone very dangerous.”

- She impresses on them, however, that the launch of this new vessel is imminent and therefore time is of the essence. She explains this is why she camped here — in hopes of making direct contact with Doe. She demands that the party return immediately to Doe with this news, and then send him back with the promised Eye of the Navigator as the Ethos expedition is departing soon.
- She shares her intention to hijack the *LANCE OF FATE*, evade the inevitable pursuit and use it — and the Eye — to pass the Wall and reach the Amplifier first.

If the party tells Leader they already have the Eye and convinces her of its efficacy, she urgently and aggressively insists that they depart immediately for Harbor to steal the *LANCE OF FATE*. Moderators should roleplay her insistence, and engage the players with an in-character debate about what to do next. Give them the opportunity to discuss options and plan; however, before they make any final decision, or if the debate falters, present the next encounter.

CHOOSING SIDES

While the characters are debating with Leader of Killers — and likely among themselves — distant cannon fire reaches their ears. The nature of the sound tells their experienced ears there are at least two different ships involved; the characters realize immediately that the sounds are definitely not coming from wherever they left the *SWIFT*.

Leader immediately gives orders in Ethos and vanishes in a pop of collapsing air as she teleports away. Her two soldiers, if unhurt, look uncertainly at the characters, then bolt windward toward the far shore of the sky-land. The characters are left to assume that the Children believe their ship is engaged in battle, and to fear that perhaps it has run afoul of their own vessel. Support the players in responding however they wish. They can run after the disappearing soldiers, race

LEADER OF KILLERS

Leader is a tall woman. Her natural fierceness is apparent in her eyes, but her current burden of concern overshadows her otherwise handsome face. She is clad in imposing armor that gives her an insectoid silhouette and she bristles with weapons. She eschews unnecessary movements, and when she acts it is with decisive speed and grace.

Leader is a mid-level member of the Lightbringer Clade and an accomplished naval officer by disposition and training. She is a master of all four Potential affinities but relies heavily on Arc for teleportation and ranged attacks. She is an accidental diplomat — an unintentional envoy to the Kin — and one of the two founding members of the conspiracy that has become known as the Embassy. Leader is also Captain Doe’s unlikely lover, and a brief softness appears on her face if the players say his name or otherwise speak of their commander.

Having learned from Doe, Leader speaks badly broken and halting Kin with a decidedly Dimmish accent. She speaks slowly, as if choosing each word carefully, and puts unnecessary “S” sounds on the ends of most of them. Her voice is quiet and gravelly — making it intimidating and sensuous at the same time.

Leader loves her people and is dedicated to their survival. She risks torture and death by allying herself with the Embassy only because she is absolutely convinced peace is the Ethos’ only chance for survival. She will not needlessly endanger or harm them, and if asked to do so her response is always an aggressively emphatic statement of, “No traitor, no kill!”



EARNEST PREDATOR

The *EARNEST PREDATOR* is a patrol-class ship built for great speed and maneuverability. As a result, she is smaller and less durable than most Child naval vessels, but she is much faster than their generally lumbering craft. With just enough armament to help her evade enemies rather than fight them, she is no match for a Guild frigate, and even most Kin patrol ships could take her down in a one-on-one battle.

The *EARNEST PREDATOR* has a matte-black paint scheme and is more superstructures and gangways than enclosed hull spaces. With a slimmer beam than most ships in her class, her crew compartments are cramped, holding a maximum of 40 sailors and limited stores. As a result, she tends to sail unmanned on longer missions; even then her quartermaster must keep careful track of provisions and ammunition.

Lethal Thinker Bullet Maker

— Bullet is the *PREDATOR*'s first mate and gun captain. She is also Leader's protégé and a recent recruit to the conspiracy.

Able Accomplish Secret Keeper — Accomplice is one of Leader's most able warriors, and is a full member of the Embassy.

Worthy Bearing Helmsman — Worthy is the skilled chief pilot aboard the *PREDATOR*, and as such, has the aloof, distracted air that comes from so much interfacing with induction hulls.

Last Scion Betrayer — Betrayer is Leader's navigator; despite her name, she is a loyal Embassy member.

Steadfast Sailor Dreamkiller — Dreamkiller is the *PREDATOR*'s master and a superb aerial tactician, but if he knew about the Embassy, he would try to kill Leader at his first opportunity.

back to the *SWIFT* or use their own Potential to reach the battle with magical speed.

If and when the characters arrive at the shore, they find a small Child vessel and a pair of Guild patrol frigates. It appears the Guild frigates somehow flushed Leader's patrol craft from wherever it was hiding, overwhelmed it and drove it to the ground. The specific circumstances depend on how soon the characters reach the battle.

If any characters use Potential to reach the site immediately, they find the child ship crash-landing and Leader trying to rally her crew to fight off the attackers. If they simply run, they find the Child ship a smoking wreck being secured by liegemen and Leader being taken prisoner along with the few other survivors. If they wait or are delayed — perhaps by reboarding the *SWIFT* first — they find only a smoking ruin of a ship; the Guild patrol and their Child prisoners are gone. If they raced off without hesitation, give the characters a I-card story cache they can use if they get involved. If they only ran, give them no bonus or penalty. If they delayed, give the party a I-card challenge cache in any play to recover Leader.

As they consider whichever situation they encounter, moderators should make it clear that the characters must make a choice after which they can no longer hide their allegiances. They must either leave Leader and her crew to their fate, which may very well destroy the Embassy and sacrifice any chance of reaching the Amplifier, or they must protect or free her from their own Guild comrades and become traitors in the process.

Moderators should call for a play based on the circumstances the characters encounter. If Leader and her crew have not yet been captured, the party can try to fend off the liegemen to keep Leader from being captured. If she is already in custody, they can try to free her; if the patrol has already left, they can track them and conduct a clandestine recovery or attempt to hijack the Guild ship. Regardless of what the Knights do, it is likely they will be identified as such — either because of their Knights' blades or because members of the patrol know one or more of them. Moderators might



include such identification even in the winning stakes for any associated play.

If the giant guardian cog is still prowling around the island, or if the characters managed to co-opt it or otherwise lead it astray, moderators should consider having it attack in the midst of the ship battle, adding a fourth faction and some extra challenge to the conflict. If the characters are in control of it, fighting off the Guild is a lot easier, but likely more lethal. If it is still autonomous, it is even deadlier.

Whatever the characters decide to do, stage the rescue at a dramatic place and moment — like fighting in the burning wreckage of Leader's ship, on a ship's gangway over the abyss, or aboard a helmsman-less frigate as it pitches toward an oncoming skyland.

Player Stakes

- The boat crew extricates Leader from the situation, but are identified as Knights, though not individually.

- The characters are also able to rescue Leader's surviving crew.
- The characters are able to hide their identities, posing either as Children or raiders, or some other faction.
- With the clever use of Potential or subterfuge skills, the party is able to extricate Leader without the Guild noticing she is even missing until the party is long gone.

Moderator Stakes (3)

- The rescue attempt fails and the party has to continue the mission without Leader.
- Despite every precaution, the skirmish leads to the death of several liegemen. If the guardian cog is part of the fight, a dozen liegemen are killed and many more wounded.
- Losers of a luck draw are individually recognized by members of the patrol crew.
- The Knight commanding the patrol is a member of the character's cohort, and calls them out as "traitorous vow-breakers!" She is killed in the subsequent fight.



POTENTIAL PRISONERS

Since all Kin have some level of Potential Powers, it can be problematic to successfully imprison them — or even hold them temporarily against their will. Depending upon their affinities and powers, there are various recourses, however. Armed and vigilant guards can use their own Potential to cancel the effects attempted by prisoners, or even threaten to shoot them if they look like they are about to use Potential. Sustained Potential effects or even drugs can keep prisoners incapacitated, and therefore unable to use their elemental abilities. Rare arcanotechnological devices and certain relics can be used to drain Potential from a subject, and even certain facilities can render adepts ineffectual — like an all-metal cell built to hold a Wind user. Other, cruder devices have also been devised, like clockwork drug dosing armbands, or explosive collars with triggers tuned to a particular affinity.

Regardless of the actual means of suppression and control, incarcerating anyone with even minor control of Potential is a labor intensive, expensive and often dangerous undertaking, and only Knights have the capability of holding other Knight — or Child — prisoners.

CONVINCING CREWS

One of two things are likely to happen — either Leader loses her ship to the battle with the patrol, and her crew has to join that of the *SWIFT*, or the characters save her ship and opt to join Leader's crew in a subterfuge to infiltrate Harbor. Depending upon what either Leader or the Knights tell their respective crews, and the

loyalty that may have been established in other plays, either likelihood could be problematic and lead to some fun and challenging roleplaying opportunities with significant consequences.

The Knights or Leader have three basic options: they can bring their counterparts aboard openly and confide in their crew; they can bring them aboard under the guise of prisoners or double agents; or they can steal them aboard in secret, using subterfuge or Potential. However they opt to do it, it could have major consequences for the morale, cooperation and loyalty of either crew, so moderators should call for a play.

Player Stakes

- The crew appears to accept whatever their commanders say, but will become suspicious later given any reason to do so.
- + The crew is convinced that their commanders are acting within their remit and orders.
- + The crew believes that whatever is going on, it's momentous and they'll all get to say, "I was there when," if they survive. Accordingly, their enthusiasm translates into a 2-card story cache for any activities they believe are in pursuit of this objective. Should they come to believe otherwise, the cache is lost.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The crew is suspicious, wary and anxious; as soon as they are able, they report what they believe are their commanders' traitorous actions.
- + Depending on which crew it is, someone attempts to murder Leader or subdue the Knights, at the first opportunity.
- + The ship's officers officially inform the Knights that, under regulations, they are relieving them of command for "acts of treason and base violation of vows," placing them under arrest and returning to Point Defiance. Conversely, Master Dreamkiller challenges Leader for "betrayal against the Ethos" and claims the right to duel her for command.

DOE OR DON'T

Assuming the Knights manage to extricate Leader, they still have to decide if they are going to follow her lead or delay until they can get word to, and orders from, Captain Doe. Leader continues to insist that time is short and immediate action is crucial if they want to find the Amplifier before the Ethos. If the characters insist on returning to Point Defiance first, the long journey upwind provides an interesting roleplaying opportunity as they build their relationship with Leader while simultaneously acting against her recommendation for immediate action.

Moderators should also make it clear that if any of the Knights were identified and if any members of the patrol survived, as soon as they return to Point Defiance, the characters will be arrested as traitors and the existence of Embassy likely uncovered.

If the party decides to return to the Point for orders, the characters must figure out how to make clandestine contact with Captain Doe as described below. If the characters decide to follow Leader directly and attempt to hijack the *LANCE OF FATE* without consulting Doe, jump to chapter 5 and resume play with the “*Reluctant Comrades*” section in part I.

If the characters deny Leader and insist on consulting with Doe, they face a couple major challenges as described below. There are various mundane and magical ways they can accomplish this, but any plays to resolve the contact should have significant consequences, not the least of which is the 18-clock trip back to the Point. If they make effective use of the Eye of the Navigator, the crew can reduce the voyage to about 12 clocks and in doing so earn a 1-card cache for use if an early arrival can be turned to their advantage.

Player Stakes

- The characters manage to contact Doe, but raise suspicion in the local office of Guild Intelligence.
- ✦ The characters manage to beat the patrol back to the Point, gaining a short window to consult with Doe before their actions at Abject Archipelago are reported.
- ✦ The patrol runs afoul of a Child squadron and never returns to Point Defiance, so are unable to report the party's betrayal.

Moderator Stakes (I)

- The characters are accused upon their return to the Fort, and must flee or be captured.
- ✦ The loser of a luck draw is arrested before the Knights can flee.
- ✦ Captain Doe is stripped of command and taken into custody.
- ✦ All the characters are declared traitors, and added to the Guild's fugitive list.
- ✦ All the characters are imprisoned to await trial.

In addition to clandestinely communicating with Doe, the party has to decide what to do with Leader and any of her surviving crew while they return to Point Defiance. They can risk bringing her along in secret or as an apparent prisoner. They can abandon her on a downwind island with some supplies and her warriors, and hope they can fend off the local wildlife while remaining undiscovered by any Guild or Child patrols. Whatever they decide to do, this complication must be addressed and could lead to challenging consequences.



CHAPTER 5: THE AMPLIFIER

SYNOPSIS

The chapter opens either with Doe asking the characters to trust Leader of Killers and follow her into Child territory, or Leader convincing the characters they must hijack an experimental Child vessel and use it to reach the Amplifier.

The crew traverse the war-torn skies from Point Defiance to the Child port city of Harbor, avoiding both Guild comrades and Child attack ships. The characters infiltrate the city and the Child naval base, stealing the *LANCE* from under its builders' noses.

Fleeing pursuit by Child naval forces and following the Eye, the characters sail further downwind than any Kin in history, using their

stolen ship to penetrate the Wrack Wall. The passage is terrifying and chaotic, and leads to only greater dangers in even stranger skies.

When the crew finally reaches the massive Masters' machine known as the Grand Amplifier, they discover not only its formidable capabilities, but world-changing revelations about the Children, the Kin and the Masters themselves. As they make these discoveries, the *DEAD MAKER* — a massive Child dreadnought — arrives, badly damaged from its passage through the Wall but still lethally dangerous. After a climactic confrontation with their pursuers, the chapter closes with the characters making a choice that determines the future of their world.

PART 1: FOLLOW THE LEADER

If the characters returned to Point Defiance seeking orders from Doe, and are still free to act on behalf of the Embassy, the captain asks them to trust Leader of Killers' assessment of the situation and follow her into the Dark. He tells them to help her steal the *LANCE OF FATE* and use it to find the Amplifier. Once there, if able, they are to bring the Amplifier back to Point Defiance; however, if that is not possible, they are to cooperate with Leader and use their best judgment about how to most effectively use the Amplifier, then execute that plan.

If the characters are still in command of a loyal *SWIFT*, they can use her to pursue their desperate plan. If they are shipless, under new orders or even in custody, they'll have to act accordingly — having to disobey orders, effectively desert their posts or break themselves out of prison. If they are shipless, they also

have to successfully hijack a Guild or civilian vessel before they can reach and steal the Child ship.

Note that if the characters opted to take the initiative and follow Leader of Killers directly to Harbor, the moderator should skip the following sections and continue play with **Reluctant Comrades** below.

LOST ADVANTAGE

If the characters delayed to consult Doe, the loss of time costs them, as Leader feared it would. If they eventually decide to steal the *LANCE OF FATE*, she is already underway with a full crew of arcanotechnicians and navy personnel, and a three-frigate escort. The party therefore has to board and take the ship in the open sky while it is actively defended by over a hundred cannon and three times that



number of vigilant warriors. Accordingly, the moderators should impose a 4-card challenge story cache on the party for any plays involved in hijacking the *FATE* while she is underway.

Assuming the subsequent hijacking is successful, play should resume with **Part 2: The Wall** below.

EYE OF THE STORM

Throughout this chapter, the characters can be putting the Eye of the Navigator to good use, should they choose to do so. When the party decides to head for Harbor, if the bearer asks Leader enough questions about the Masters' ruins there, she is able to trigger the Eye and shorten the travel time by several clocks. If the party takes further advantage of the Eye, offer them a 1-card cache they can use in any play where making good time or an early arrival at a given location is an advantage.

ACTS OF WAR

By this time, Guild leadership has become unanimously convinced they are in the midst of the Third Incursion and that they are at war with the Children of the Dark. There are encounters, skirmishes and all-out battles every clock and the Children appear to be amassing attack fleets at several strategic points along the Frontier. Guild Intelligence is learning of new threats with the arrival of every scout ship, and the Guild has formally requested naval support and materiel from the Convocation's member nations. Point Defiance is overrun with ships, personnel and activity. Accordingly, while the characters may have been given new orders from new commanders, any attempts to mislead, follow their own agenda, or steal away with essential equipment — even a ship — will be easier.

If the characters are not under suspicion or fugitives, grant them a 2-card story cache they can use in any plays that would benefit from the chaos of Point Defiance at war. If Doe has been relieved of command or they are on the run, assign them a 2-card story challenge cache for any plays in which suspicion or pursuit would make their goals harder to achieve.

Assuming the characters eventually gain a ship, one way or the other, and leave

for the Dark, they effectively have to fight their way across the frontlines of an active war, evading or fending off patrols and possible attacks from both sides of the conflict. Moderators should complicate this trip with skirmishes and battle encounters as they see fit, and they can use the following situations as written or for inspiration. If the characters are fugitives, that status should color how any of these encounters play out.

- The boat crew's ship comes upon a Guild squadron headed downwind to destroy a newly discovered Child outpost. Its ranking Knight orders the characters to reinforce the tiny fleet and participate in the attack. The party has to decide whether to comply and if not, how to extricate themselves and their ship from the squadron. They likely need to hide Leader and any of her crew as they decide what to do, and deal with their fury should the characters choose to participate.
- The party encounters a running ship battle. There are burning vessels and dying crews on both sides, but the moderator should make it clear one side will soon slaughter the other, based on how things are going among the Knights, their crew and any Child guests. If the Knights have the confidence of their crew, the Children are losing and Leader's warriors want to intercede. If the Knights' hold on their crew's confidence is weak, the Guild is losing and the liegemen desperately want to help. The challenge is in convincing either group that the mission they are on is far more important than the outcome of any one battle.
- The party's ship is intercepted, outmaneuvered and outgunned by a Child squadron. Running is impossible, fighting could destroy their ship, and capture would certainly end the mission. The challenge lies in orchestrating a decisive tactical advantage, or in cleverly leveraging the presence of Leader of Killers to make good an escape.
- The Knights come across a shipwrecked Guild vessel and her crew. Many are badly injured, they are running out of supplies and they can't survive the freezing Dark much longer. The situation provides a harsh moral dilemma in which the players must choose





to render aid, significantly delaying their mission or dangerously overloading their ship and depleting their own supplies; or they can choose to abandon their comrades to their fate and continue downwind with all due haste. If the party stops to lend aid, assume the *LANCE OF FATE* leaves Harbor during the delay and the party must intercept her while already underway as described above.

In addition to these events, moderators are encouraged to include any of the encounters from the Twilight Frontier or Dark section of the Aerial Encounters appendix to make this journey even more harrowing (see [page 150](#)).

RELUCTANT COMRADES

Moderators should emphasize how the shared dangers of their unlikely alliance and risky voyage builds camaraderie between the Kin and Children in any coalition crew — especially Leader and the characters — no matter how reluctant. From rescuing Leader and protecting the Children through a possible return to Point Defiance, to the series of moral dilemmas described above, the disparate crew

members, perhaps inevitably, start to see each other differently and may even start to depend on each other.

Moderators with groups that like these kinds of roleplaying encounters should use the following to set up short vignettes between their characters and any Children of the Dark crewmembers to represent this increasing camaraderie. Call for plays where appropriate.

- A serious wound incurred during the above encounters or in a shipboard accident force an injured crewmember and the healer to spend considerable time together. A strong platonic or even romantic chemistry leads to growing friendship and protective behavior between the character and his patient, which is tested when one of them is threatened by the other's crewmates.
- Depending upon which vessel — Guild or Child — the party ends up taking to Harbor, the provisions are completely unknown to some members of the crew. The source,

appearance and taste of the food, as well as any spices or traditions involved, become a point of concern and humor for the crew when they are served at the first mess.

- Sailors are sailors, regardless of whether from the Light or the Dark, and the differences between the ships, technology, practices and traditions of the hosting crew inevitably fascinate the visiting crew. Pantomimed lessons ultimately save the ship when a major malfunction is diagnosed and quickly repaired by a visiting crewmember.
- Encountering mutually incomprehensible languages for the first time leads to fascination, frustration, curiosity and pidgin compromises. The process is riddled with landmines, but each crew learns a small vocabulary of words and phrases in the other crew's language. Assume that any character who makes an effort to learn the Child tongue, and whose player then wins an associated luck draw during a given interaction, successfully communicated her intention.

CHEATING FATE

Despite the audacity of the intent, the party has several options for attempting to infiltrate the Child naval base at Harbor. Assuming *EARNEST PREDATOR* survived the attack at the Abject Archipelago, they can be smuggled in by Leader and her crew, hidden in cargo or as captured enemy prisoners. If flying their own vessel, they can use subterfuge or skymanship attributes to hide their ship and infiltrate by launch or glider. Perhaps most effectively, they can use Potential to make their supernatural way past any patrols and onto the heavily guarded skyland.

Play through **FB15 — Ranking Regatta**, page 147.

Moderators should give players who like to make clever plans the chance to do so, and offer suggestions only if the group struggles or dithers. Whatever approach the characters decide to use, there are a number of obstacles with which they must contend, and Leader of Killers can provide information about all of them. Note, however, that despite her name, Leader strongly opposes any plan that includes the death of any Ethos.

Though a member of the Embassy, she is dedicated to her people and is betraying them only to save them. That said, if it comes down to the success of the mission or killing Children, she lives up to her name.

Naval Cordon

The Children are at war with the Kin and are well aware that concentrating their fleet in one major port is a strategic risk. Accordingly, they have a large and disciplined cordon that surrounds Harbor in a spherical web of vessels that all but assures interdiction of any approaching ships. The gunboats are well-armed, numerous and their crews very well trained. They use their Potential to probe the Dark, fly intersecting patterns that are almost impossible to evade and regularly approach, board and inspect ships of all kinds. The cordon is well practiced in the tactic of collapsing en masse on any potential threats, and their firepower is formidable. Getting through the blockade requires uncanny skymanship, clever deception, a lot of luck and at least one play.

Player Stakes

- The party's approach arouses no undue suspicion.
- ✦ The tactics the boat crew uses are so effective, they earn a 1-card story cache if they use surprise in their theft of the *LANCE OF FATE*.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The party's ship draws the attention of a patrolling vessel, and its crew decides to come aboard and conduct an inspection, necessitating a cascading play for the characters to avoid detection.
- ✦ The party is forced to subdue the crew, hijack the naval patrol vessel and dispose of both in a way that does not draw even more attention. Even if successful in ditching the ship, the Knights earn a 1-card challenge cache representing the heightened alert that results when word of the missing ship is communicated around the port.

Going Ashore

Harbor is an exceptionally busy port, and as such there is round-the-clock activity as ships dock and undock, vessels are repaired and outfitted, cargos are loaded and unloaded



HARBOR

Harbor is a wide, crescent-shaped skyland made up primarily of Masters' ruins and barren bedrock. The interior is flat; due to its unusual shape, the Wind shadow is virtually nonexistent. The ruins here provide most of the infrastructure for the current city and almost all of the salvaged materials for the modern construction.

The coast is densely packed with windmills, quays and shipyards, with official naval facilities taking up the vast majority of the available shoreline. The rest is held by various Clades and consists of commercial docks, warehouses and staging grounds. Massive, defensive gun emplacements loom over the dark sky cliffs positioned to have overlapping fields of fire everywhere across the skyland. The fact that any enemy ship attempting to land anywhere would have no fewer than three batteries able to fire on it is not overkill but political caution in the wake of the Traitor's Rebellion. Command of the various emplacements is held by different Clades, so no single group has sole control of the island's defenses.

Though larger than the Guild's naval headquarters, the fortifications that house the Ethos' naval command are more compact and almost entirely underground within a virtually impregnable bunker-like complex built by the Masters. The rest of the island's interior is crowded with the Clade compounds, foundries, weapon factories, industrial workshops, warrior camps and training fields that make up the essential infrastructure supporting the Child fleet. As many as 30,000 people permanently live and work in Harbor; depending upon deployments and schedules, another 10,000 naval and merchant crew members may be in port at any one time.

Like the gun emplacements, control of Harbor and command of the naval fleet is shared among a number of the most powerful Clades, insuring that no single power bloc can pose a threat to the whole. Accordingly, naval operations are often as political as they are strategic.

and thousands of sailors and support workers teem about the massive Masters' ruin turned naval base. As a result, disembarking from a ship or sneaking ashore means the characters could run afoul of any number of random Children who could raise an alarm, or perhaps, most being warriors themselves, mount an attack while alerting the base.

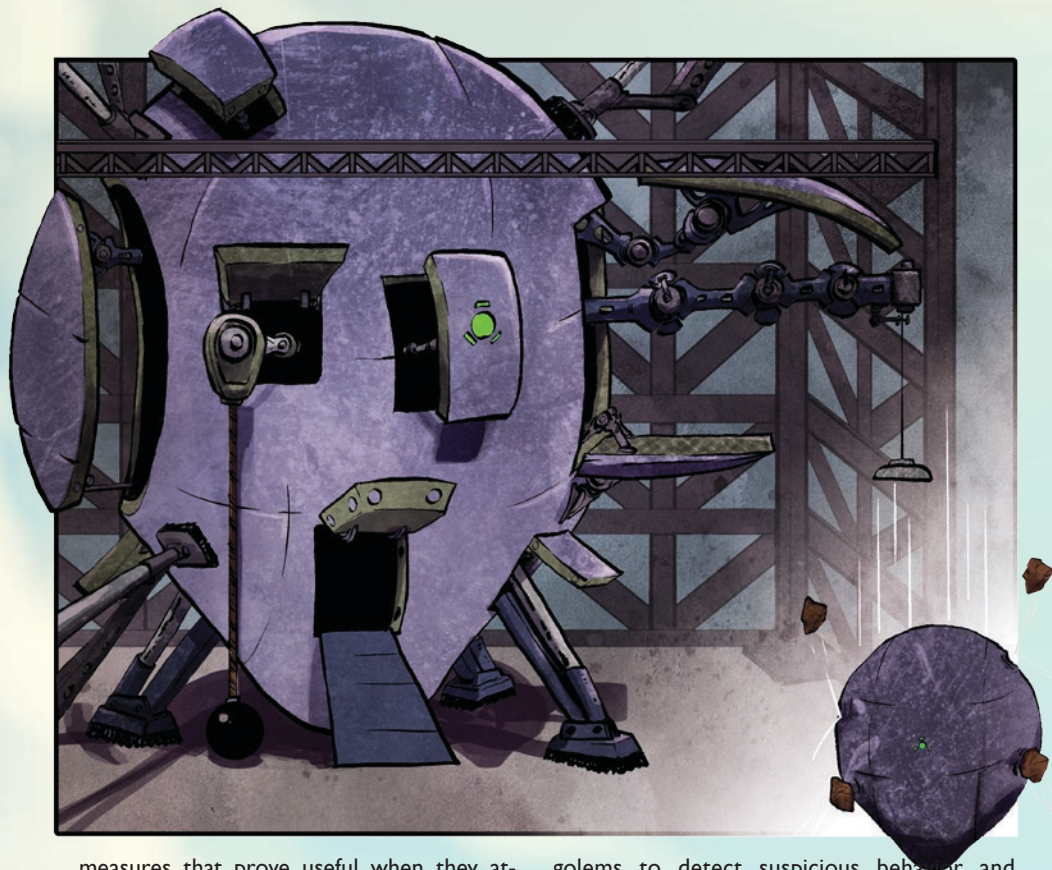
In addition, although a city of sorts, Harbor is unlike any place the characters have been before. The adaptations of the Ethos allow them to see in the dark, so the settlement is virtually unlit. The cold byways are not exactly streets, and the buildings are a confusing array of ice-covered structures that make getting lost inevitable. Accordingly, even if the characters are guided by Leader or one of her crew, they suffer a -1 card Play hand penalty for the strange environment when moving around and

acting within the city. If they strike out unguided, the penalty is -2 cards.

Once ashore, the characters need to find a hideout where they can rest and perhaps heal, and from which they can scout the location and security around the *LANCE OF FATE*. Leader can help with a place to hide, but even her ideas and resources are stretched thin in these unusual circumstances. Remember — the characters are the very first Kin to ever step foot on Harbor as anything but doomed prisoners.

Player Stakes

- The party evades detection and successfully goes to ground in the heart of enemy territory.
- ✦ The party has time to successfully scout their target and gains intelligence about security



measures that prove useful when they attempt to board the *LANCE OF FATE*.

- ✦ The party gains insight to the defenses and infrastructure of the Children. These insights will make them some of the foremost experts on Child defense tactics in the Guild — if they survive and return to the Light.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The party fails to find a bolt hole and must immediately attempt to take the *FATE* without scouting or preparation, for fear of being caught if they delay.
- ✦ The party runs into a horde of drunk Child sailors; the massive brawl that results draws the attention of the Harbor Wardens as described below. A second play must be made to deal with this new and much more dangerous threat.

Harbor Wardens

The Harbor Wardens are potent adepts who use an army of small, observant Potential

golems to detect suspicious behavior and identify errant sources of Potential — each sensitive to the use of its specific form of elemental energy. The golems constantly patrol the harbor, docks and streets of the city — a ubiquitous and oppressive presence in the lives of the sailors and residents of the settlement. Once they identify a threat, the Wardens send in larger, more formidable attack golems to subdue and capture the target.

Quintessence and Kin elementalism draw from the same source, but the purity of Kin Potential makes it stand out to the golems' senses against the normal, mixed background energy of the city's inhabitants. Accordingly, every time a character uses Potential while in Harbor her player must make a luck draw — two cards to the moderator's one. If she wins the draw, she goes unnoticed for the moment. If she loses, one of the patrol golems reports the anomaly. At that point, the moderator should send in one or more attack golems as soon as dramatically appropriate.



THE LANCE OF FATE

The *FATE* is a strange ship, even for a Child design. With lines unlike any other Ethos vessel, the ship is a heavily armored, inverted teardrop, constructed for a single purpose. The Ethos built the craft to penetrate the Wrack Wall in hopes of discovering much-needed resources beyond the dangerous barrier. The shape and armor protect the vessel from the blizzard of rubble that makes up the Wall, and the excessive mass and streamlining of her overbuilt hull allows her to descend even against the raging upward force of the Wind.

The ship has two flight modes: lance and salvage. In lance mode, the ship's armored plates create a smooth, almost invulnerable exterior that facilitates penetrating the Wall and spearing through the Wind. In salvage mode, sections of armor slide open, extend or retract like the carapace of a massive metal beetle, exposing hatches, observation cupolas, loading gantries, cranes, launches and other equipment.

A number of deadlight periscopes and a retrofitted Masters' relic called the Echo Sounding Auricular allow the crew to perceive the dark sky outside the ship, even when in lance mode. Relatively small, with an intended crew of only 25 sailors, scientists and salvage experts, the ship's interior is cramped and utilitarian, with the majority of her volume devoted to cargo holds for potential salvage.

The heavy construction means that in lance mode the *FATE* is all but indestructible. Since her designers wanted her to be able to defend herself from unknown threats beyond the Wall, she can also deploy an imposing array of weapons while otherwise sealed up, making her a uniquely formidable little warship as well — one only exceptionally heavy, accurate and sustained fire could take down. Accordingly, many among the naval leadership supported her construction as much to create a new class of battleship as to secure potential resources.

Dangerous Environs

Moderators who want to make more out of the challenges of infiltrating and hiding out in Harbor should use any of the following to set up encounters.

- While scouting the naval base, one of the characters comes across a group of grubby Ethos children playing some variant of Kin vs. Ethos. Unsurprisingly, not only are the Ethos winning, but the children are shocked to see a real “monster,” and it is clear they are about to raise the alarm. The encounter pivots on the moral dilemma — the choice of silencing the children or leaving them to alert the authorities that Harbor has been infiltrated by the Kin!
- One of Leader's crew betrays the party to the authorities, who storm their hideout, initiating a running Potential battle through the strange cityscape and causing security around the *LANCE OF FATE* to be dramatically increased.

- Leader's civilian allies in Harbor risk their lives hiding the party, and the characters' interactions with them lead the Knights to question much of what they once thought they knew about the Children. When these allies are unexpectedly hauled away for interrogation, the party must decide if they are going to rescue them or leave their new friends to their doom.

Going Aboard

The *LANCE OF FATE* is docked in the shipyard where she was built; the yard itself is in the middle of a large, busy naval base. The ship is still suspended in its construction scaffolding and is guarded by a squad of security personnel. The only crew onboard is a small band of technicians currently outfitting the ship's secondary systems. Infiltrating the base and actually getting aboard the *FATE* without being detected are likely to be the hardest parts of hijacking the ship.

Once aboard, the characters have to deal with the technicians and support staff installing the last of the *FATE*'s systems and fixtures, either luring them off the ship or subduing and securing them. Remember that Leader opposes any unnecessary deaths.

Player Stakes

- The party sneaks aboard but kills two of the technicians in the process, earning a 1-card challenge story cache the next time they make a play involving Leader or her crew.
- ✦ The party sneaks aboard and takes the ship without raising an alarm.
- ✦ The party so deftly secures the ship and technicians, that they learn several key facts about the ship's control systems from their captives, earning a 2-card story cache that can be used in any play that involves operating the *FATE*.

Moderator Stakes (3)

- The party gets aboard the ship but somehow give themselves away. The security team sounds an alarm and begins trying to retake the vessel.
- ✦ Several of the technicians are killed, earning the party a 2-card challenge story cache for plays involving Leader.
- ✦ Some of the *FATE*'s systems are damaged in capturing her, and the ship now has a 2-card challenge story cache for any play involving her operation.

Taking Off

As described in the *UPWIND* corebook, Child vessels don't use circuit boxes to modulate their induction hulls, instead depending on living pilots. If all has gone well, Leader brings a pair of trusted pilots from her own crew with the hijackers, and she herself has had training so can also serve in this role.

Launching the ship requires installing at least one pilot, activating various systems, crashing out of the construction cradle and running the naval cordon. If the alarm has been raised, it also means fending off any attempt to retake

the ship. Given her heavily armored construction, and the fact that the Ethos do not want to damage her, initially that is only a matter of securing the various hatches against entry. Any skymanship, technological or tactical skills can be used to make or contribute to a play to launch the *FATE*.

Player Stakes

- The *FATE* smashes its way through the shipyard infrastructure, dragging along the ground and toppling over the edge, but getting airborne.
- ✦ The characters manage a graceful launch, getting the jump on any pursuit and earning a 1-card story cache to fend off any such chase.
- ✦ The characters punch through the cordon and elude all pursuit.

Moderator Stakes (3)

- The *FATE* stumbles clumsily into the air, leaving destruction in its wake, but not before a sizable security force manages to force its way aboard.
- ✦ Damage from the destructive takeoff gives the party a 1-card innate challenge cache for any future plays to operate the ship.
- ✦ The Child navy descends on the *FATE* like a flock of starving dark dragons and a running ship battle ensues. To make good their escape, players must make a cascading play with one of the characters taking a mortal wound as part of the moderator's stakes.

Play through **FB14 — Going Down**, page 146.

Once in the air, if it looks like the *FATE* is likely to escape, the Children reluctantly decide to destroy her and attack with their heaviest available warships: the *HONORABLE HUNTER* and the *DEAD MAKER*. Assuming she gets away, both the *HUNTER* and the *MAKER* pursue the *FATE* into the Wall. The *HUNTER* is destroyed in the attempt, but the *MAKER*, while suffering critical damage, successfully follows the *FATE*'s lodestone and potentially reacquires her quarry in the climactic close of the campaign.



PART 2: THE WALL

Assuming the characters have at least temporarily eluded pursuit by the Child navy and dropped downwind as fast as the lightless conditions allow, they approach the Wrack Wall in ten or twelve clocks. If they have not yet learned all they can from Leader of Killers about the phenomena, this would be a good time for the characters to question her.

This journey will be fraught with suspense and uncertainty. Do the characters really know where they are going? Are they being pursued? Will the experimental vessel survive passage through the Wall, and if so, what will they find on the other side? Is the Grand Amplifier real, and if so, will it be the peacemaker the Embassy hopes for? In addition, besides the Knights and Leader, there will likely be Kin or Child crew members — or both — crowding the decks of the *FATE*; the resulting tension will challenge the characters' leadership abilities. If the moderator wants to make a roleplaying opportunity out of this potential conflict, she should call for a play based on interpersonal attributes.

Player Stakes

- The characters quell any unrest among the crew, and instill enough confidence that they maintain discipline, duty and ship.
- ✦ The characters prove so inspiring, they gain a 1-card story cache they can use when interacting with the crew.

Moderator Stakes (1)

- The characters are unaware of any underlying tension until it erupts in a bloody fight that leads to the death of several crew members on both sides. The party earns a 1-card challenge cache for any plays involving the crew.
- ✦ Several crew members steal one of the *FATE*'s launches and head upwind, abandoning the ship and the mission.

In addition to roleplaying through any conflicts between crew and characters, moderators are encouraged to include any of the applicable events from the Dark section of the

Aerial Encounters appendix during this tension-filled journey (see [page 150](#)).

AGAINST THE WALL

Once the ship's altitude barometer signals the crew that they are nearing the upper margin of the Wall, their progress performance slows to a crawl. As they approach the Wall the crew has to decide when to enter lance mode and begin their descent. If the players make a serious attempt to prepare, describing the precautions they take or the drills they conduct, give them a 1-card story cache they can use in the following series of plays. If they dive in recklessly, assign them a 1-card challenge cache.

Regardless of the timing or the preparations they make, moderators should pick a dramatic moment right before the *FATE* begins her descent into the Wall, to have the *HONORABLE HUNTER* and the *DEAD MAKER* appear, guns blazing and boarding crews ready to assault the *FATE*.

Player Stakes

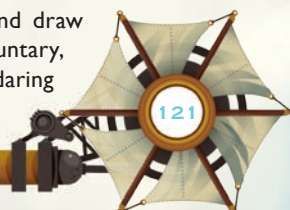
- The *FATE* is able to drop away from her attackers into the relative safety of the Wall and escape pursuit.
- ✦ The party is able to use the shape and heavy armor of the *FATE* to smash through the *HONORABLE HUNTER*, breaking its keel and dropping it into the Wall where she is eventually smashed into wreckage.
- ✦ The characters are able to use the collision with the *HUNTER* to convince most of the remaining pursuers that the *FATE* was destroyed in the crash and lost in the Wall.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The *FATE* escapes the battle but with damage represented by a 2-card innate challenge cache for any plays involving the function of the ship.
- ✦ All the party members must make minor wound draws, and the loser of a group luck draw must make a major wound draw.
- ✦ One of the party members must make a mortal wound draw as the result of a voluntary, intentional and very daring



THE WALL



THE WRACK WALL

Every Kin knows that the Wind blows upward from the Dark and that the farther downwind one travels, the stronger the Wind and the Potential it bears. Every Kin also knows that any stones eroding off the skylands fall forever into the abyss — or so says the common lore. In truth, any that don't hit an intervening island fall downwind until they reach an icy region the Children call the Wrack Wall — or more literally translated from Ethos: “the lethal barricade of seething sky-wrack.”

For unknown cycles, countless fragments — boulders, rocks, gravel and dust — have eroded from larger skylands, so lacking sufficient elemental buoyancy to remain aloft, these have tumbled into the Dark. These geological debris continue falling until the higher levels of ambient Potential in the deep Dark combine with the stones' inherent elemental buoyancy to slow, and eventually halt, most of these plummeting fragments. As a result, over the eons, the stony detritus has collected in a thick, floating ever-surging geologic wrack line spread across this dark and frozen region of the sky.

The ultimate tumbledown, this thick field of crashing stones is not a solid mass but a chaotic maelstrom of tumbling, spinning, colliding ice-covered rocks eternally grinding themselves into frozen dust. Naturally stratified by relative inherent buoyancy, the various layers surge and mix as violent collisions occur, causing secondary impacts that spread outward like ripples in a stony sea. The resulting sound — the geologic growl of countless, continuous impacts — drowns out even the screaming howl of the Wind as it rips upward through the tumbling barrier.

Any normal ship attempting to sail through the Wrack Wall is doomed, and more than a few Child expeditions have been lost in the attempt. An alert and lucky crew with a nimble ship and an expert helmsman might survive half a bell, but inevitably, with the lack of light, the unpredictability and the sheer density of the surging, ricocheting debris, the ship will ultimately be destroyed. If not crushed by a single, sudden massive collision, then holed by a hundred stony cannonballs that pummel the ship to splinters and the crew to death.

What lies beyond the Wrack Wall is a mystery — the compelling enigma that drove the Ethos to first send several, ultimately doomed, missions and then to conceive, design and build the *LANCE OF FATE*.

act of self-sacrifice that saves the rest of the party and allows the *FATE* to escape their attackers.

- ✦ Leader and any of her crew become despondent at the loss of life incurred in the destruction of the *HUNTER*; the characters must make a play to successfully refocus them on the importance of the mission.

THROUGH THE WALL

The Children of the Dark are not known for subtlety, and the *LANCE OF FATE* is nothing if not a Child vessel. She is not built to dodge, fend-off or otherwise avoid crushing

collisions with the boulders and islets of the Wall. She is built to endure them — to survive impacts and damage that would pulverize standard vessels. The teardrop shape is intended to turn direct hits into glancing blows and the heavy armor and reinforced frame is meant to withstand any harder collisions. The redundancies in the essential systems mitigate damage that reaches the inner sections, providing critical durability.

The ride through the wall is a wild one that tests the ship's design, the resolve of her ad hoc crew and the luck of the desperate expedition. For narrative purposes, the trip is divided into three parts and moderators should call a



DREADNOUGHTS

The *HONORABLE HUNTER* and the *DEAD MAKER* are examples of what the Guild designates as dreadnought-class Child warships, and these two in particular are among the most fearsome in the Ethos fleet.

Only the size of a Kin frigate, but heavily armored and carrying twice the weaponry, a dreadnought is a match for any three Kin vessels. Bearing powder cannon, missile tubes, Masters' weapons and crowded with blood-thirsty fighters, these ships are the razor-edged backbone of the Child fleet.

As with most Ethos ships, the enclosed decks, metal hulls and armor plating make the dreadnoughts uniquely durable targets. These vessels carry twice the crew of any other class of Child warship, and are outfitted with so many redundancies as to be virtually indestructible. Many are even equipped with retrofitted guardian cables they use to grapple and reel in enemy ships, and ram-like boarding gangways they deploy to punch into Kin hulls, then use as bridges for boarders.

Fortunately for the Guild, such ships demand excessive resources to build and crew, so the class is limited to only a dozen such vessels across the entire Child fleet.

play for each one — with potentially cascading outcomes — to determine the final results of the passage.

Moderators should emphasize the drama, tension and frightening uncertainty inherent in the passage, providing lots of intense, moody descriptions and encouraging roleplaying to match.

The Plunge

Whether of the crew's free will or because they are being chased in by the pursuing warships, the *FATE* has to button up in full lance mode before entering the Wall. Moderators

should make a dramatic scene of this, describing how it takes the untrained skeleton crew extra time to seal the ship and how a claustrophobic doom envelops the characters as the armor closes.

Moderators should describe an anticlimactic calm following the escape from the Child warships, punctuated by inconsequential impacts of smaller stones sounding like a few pebbles hitting a shed roof. Then a larger impact startles everyone as the ship shakes from the crash, but is otherwise undamaged. Then, right as everyone begins to think they might just make it through the geological storm, a massive blow all but capsizes the ship and sends it spinning off in a random direction. Call for the first play.

Player Stakes

- The ship and crew survive the collision with only bruises and soiled britches.
- ✦ Despite frequent and loud impacts, exceptional piloting by the Child helmsman and the unique design features of the ship get the crew through the first part of the deadly voyage relatively unscathed.
- ✦ The ship performs so well to this point that any characters with engineering or natural sciences attributes can garner enough information about the ship's abilities, or the Wrack Wall as a phenomenon, that they can write monographs that make them famous in their fields — assuming they survive the expedition and return safely to the Academy.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The ship is holed and howling wind and ricocheting stony debris fills the interconnected parts of the vessel. Any Ore users in the crew may make a narrative Potential spend to seal up and reinforce the armor.
- ✦ Numerous system failures and desperate damage control equate to a 1-card innate challenge cache for the next play.
- ✦ The crew is so stunned by the impact all players must discard 1 random card from their Play hands to simulate their dazed states, and may not recover them until after the next play.



THE WALL





The Passage

The middle section of the passage is the most dangerous as the *FATE* enters the most densely packed region of the Wall. Small collisions are almost constant; larger, crushing impacts slap the vessel around like an iron keg hit with grape-shot. Just as the crew thinks they — and the *FATE* — can't take any more, the ship is slammed from below and flipped end over end and a massive dose of wild Wind Potential invades the vessel's corridors, blowing out hatches and deadlights and blasting crewmembers down hallways like bullets in gun barrels. The excess power floods throughout the *FATE* and takes the form of a raging Wind elemental. The swirling, ripping air leaps from compartment to compartment, smashing its way through the ship, attacking everything it encounters with primal fury.

In this encounter, the party has to deal with the damage and injury of the impact, the spreading destruction and the rampaging elemental. Moderators should call for a play.

Player Stakes

- The crew somehow manages to keep the *FATE* in the air, though she is listing badly and has acquired a slow spin. Everyone must make minor wound draws.
- The damage renders several auxiliary systems useless but falls short of catastrophic failure. Several of the crew are killed by impacts with bulkheads and Wind-blown shrapnel.
- ✦ A Wind user in the party is able to “tame” the elemental and use it to deflect a number of ship-killer boulder impacts as the descent continues.
- ✦ The party is able to shield the entire crew from lethal damage.
- ✦ In an unlikely and harrowing tale that any survivors recount to eager listeners for the rest of their lives, the party and crew all escape the impact and elemental attack entirely unscathed.



Moderator Stakes (3)

- The ship is so badly damaged that the crew is forced to find a largish chunk of skyland on which they can crash-land the vessel into a protective ravine or crevasse where they can effect repairs, making for a chaotic and tumbling shipyard and requiring another play. A quarter of the remaining crew is lost in the event and every party member must make a major wound draw.
- + Half the remaining crew is lost.
- + Leader of Killers is lost in the Dark when an external bulkhead is ripped open, and the elemental sucks her out the gaping hole.
- + The loser of a group luck draw loses his left arm to jagged metal shards that burst from an over-pressurized fixture.
- + The loser of a group luck draw must make a mortal wound draw.

The Breakthrough

As the *FATE* finally passes through to the downwind border of the Wall, the characters have to contend with the full force of the Wind for the first time in their lives — both physically and Potentially. Though no longer pummeled by a crossfire of errant boulders, the howling Wind outside is so strong the ship could almost hover with its induction hull deactivated, held aloft by the physical force alone. In fact, if a curious crew tries to sail even further downwind, the physical force overpowers the *FATE* own mass and simply prevents descent beyond a certain point.

The Potential in this undiluted Wind carries unprecedented power that neither the ship nor the characters were built to contain. As the induction hull threatens to blow apart from the overload of power, so do the members of the party as they hum with excess Potential energy.

The characters must control the *FATE* and somehow bleed off the glut of energy while simultaneously venting their own surplus power. To do so, each character must quickly devise a way to use or shunt the excess Potential into useful or harmless forms or into the black sky outside before they burn out. Call for a collective play.

Player Stakes

- The characters manage to vent both the ship's and their own excess energy into the void, but the characters with the two lowest pulls in a group luck draw are rendered unconscious by the effort. When they eventually come to, they suffer a 1-card Play hand penalty for fatigue and confusion for the next clock.
- + Any Arc and Ore users on the crew are actually able to channel some of the excess energies into repairing the *FATE*, eliminating up to 2 cards' worth of challenge caches that may have been assigned as damage to the ship.
- + Any Rain users with healing Potential are able to restore all crewmembers to full health as quickly as they can lay on hands.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The characters' attempts to vent the excess energy result in the deaths of several crewmembers and damage to the *FATE* that gives the moderator a 2-card story challenge cache when the crew's trust or the ship's function is part of the play.
- + The *FATE* is so badly damaged, that despite the excess Potential and the physical force of the Wind, the crew must take to the boats and abandon her. The ship's systems suffer a cascade failure, and she slowly drifts into the abyss.
- + Half the remaining crew is lost in the panicked abandoning of the *FATE*.

Overpowered

While below the Wall, characters absorb Potential energy at a dangerous rate and are at constant risk of overloading. As a result, recharging spent Potential is essentially instantaneous and to simulate this, players redraw their Potential cards as they spend them, rather than at the upwind rate of one per bell of in-game time. However, every time a character uses her Potential, her player must draw a card from the moderator's deck. If it matches the character's Potential suit, an overload of elemental power adds an unexpected and problematic complication to the outcome of any play or narrative action — as determined by the moderator.



Examples of such effects could include:

- The effect the character created is twice as powerful as intended, and whatever he was seeking to manifest is twice as fast, voluminous, dangerous, explosive, etc.
- The adept manifests as a wild elemental that accompanies her intended effect and

wreaks collateral havoc in its confusion and frustration.

- The result is strangely persistent, with usually instant manifestations — like arc blasts — lingering for a bell or more and maintained uses — like golems — apparently becoming permanent without draining Potential cards from the player's hand.

PART 3: THE GRAND AMPLIFIER

Once the aftermath of the passage through the Wall has been resolved, assuming the crew survived and they still have some form of transport, they likely continue following the Eye, making haste toward the Grand Amplifier. A reasonably cautious pace brings the *FATE* to the Amplifier in five clocks.

As they proceed, the characters learn several things about this strange, undiscovered world. The skies are oddly empty of islands, clouds, snow and animals. The wind is so physically powerful that all of these things appear to be blown upward to the level of the Wrack Wall or beyond. The air is bitterly cold, excessively dry and the deafening roar of the Wind makes every conversation — even in the bowels of the *FATE* — a shouting match.

BELLY OF THE BEAST

Though smaller animals appear absent, there are signs of larger beasts dwelling in this dark reach — perhaps living on the excessive Potential. Occasionally, the lookouts sight clusters of extremely long, dimly glowing strands or tentacles that trail upward in the Wind that, if approached, retract quickly into the darkness below. If subsequently pursued, the characters find nothing but empty sky.

There are occasionally deep rumbles — more vibrations really — that echo through the hull and sound more organic than the ripping howl of the Wind or the distant rumble of colliding boulders overhead. Especially since there are often answering rumbles that sound more like responses than echoes.

At some point during the voyage, as the *FATE* passes through a veritable forest of the glowing fronds, a particularly loud rumble sounds through the hull and any nearby spark flowers suddenly wink out. Long, tension-filled moments after the rumble fades, the *FATE* is suddenly, violently wrenched back and forth, and the helmsman loses all control as a massive Leviathan tries to swallow the ship. Moderators should call for a play.

Player Stakes

- The crew is able to cause enough pain with the ship's cannon and their own Potential that the beast spits them out, but not before doing enough damage that the *FATE* can no longer enter lance mode.
- ✦ One of the creature's massive teeth is wedged between the ship's armored plates and recovered by the crew. Assuming they make it back to civilization, this trophy proves a scientific treasure that can make someone's reputation as a zoologist.
- ✦ The *FATE*'s arc cannon stuns the creature thoroughly enough that the crew has time to actually inspect the creature — and even board it to collect samples — should they be so brave.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The ship gets caught in the monster's gullet, and it begins choking on the vessel.
- ✦ The *FATE* is damaged beyond use, and the crew must abandon her, fleeing in the boats while the creature's mouth is still wedged open by the wreckage of the half-crushed vessel.



SPARK FLOWERS

These enigmatic entities are actually the descendants of artificial life forms created by the Masters of the Wind. Intended as living spark bottles that could absorb and store ambient Potential, the creatures were one of the many ways the Masters' attempted to directly control elemental power. Ultimately an experimental dead end, during the DownFall these organisms apparently escaped captivity, became feral and survived.

Not plant or animal, but something else entirely, spark flowers are uniquely strange — large, bulbous, entities the size of a small ship. With a lower, heavy, ballast-like mass comprised of a teardrop-shaped ball of soft flesh and dozens of extremely long, retractable, upwind-trailing tentacle fronds, the whole creature glows with a dull-yellow light. It spends its life drifting in the howling Wind below the Wall, absorbing raw Potential through its tentacle strands and metabolizing it to meet its physiological needs. When individual flowers reach some maximum size threshold, over the course of a single clock they split into halves, glowing much brighter in the moment they do, and becoming a pair of descendants without an ancestor.

A staple prey of the leviathans, the flowers are sensitive to the massive creatures' vocalizations, and instinctively dim their glows when the monsters approach in an attempt to avoid being eaten.

- ✦ Only one crewman survives the attack, and he is understandably convinced it is only a matter of time before he, too, is killed in some horrible way by the crazy Knights' terrifying recklessness.

LEVIATHANS

These exceedingly rare creatures are perhaps related to the hemoths of the higher realms but evolved to impossibly vast sizes. Similar to their distant cousins, but with longer, more eel-like forms, their huge maws can easily engulf a frigate, and their appetites are as large as their bodies. Luckily, there is an ecological balance between the natural fecundity of the spark flowers and the hungry leviathans, with the former making up the majority of the latter's enormous and mostly carnivorous diet. Leviathans also occasionally engulf and grind boulders to gravel from the overhead Wall to ingest essential nutrients.

Though the Wall appears to be an effective barrier to migration, as even a creature the size of a leviathan might not survive passage through the tumbling rocks, if one of these animals were to make it to the higher levels, it would be a formidable threat to the realms.

FINAL DESTINATION

As the *FATE* and her crew — or what's left of it — finally approach the Grand Amplifier, they enter a zone of dead calm that surrounds the ancient structure, magically holding the fury of the Wind silently at bay. The sudden and ominous stillness should only raise the tension and likely give the group pause as they decide whether to dock or ferry aboard by launch.

Either way, as they arrive at the Amplifier — perhaps anticlimactically — nothing happens. The dully glowing dome sheds a muted light over the icy exterior topography. There are a number of hatches to which the characters can dock the *FATE*, and large, open ports through which the characters can pilot a launch. The clever use of mechanical or Potential attributes can get them past any sealed doors so they can explore the interior.

THE GRAND AMPLIFIER

From a distance, the Amplifier looks like a dimly glowing sailmaker's needle floating against the black. On closer approach, however, the artifact resolves into a massive structure of Masters' alloy and elemental glass that thrums with contained power. The Amplifier floats vertically in the air, point down, with a squat, baroquely framed glass cupola capping the upper end, gleaming from within with the shifting purplish light characteristic of Masters' artifacts. Under the dome is a series of irregular cylinders containing the complicated workings of the vast mechanism. Extending downward from the bottommost of these is a long, tapering shaft that ends in a complex array of web-like induction elements that occasionally spits arc into the surrounding sky.

This structure is not actually the Grand Amplifier; at least not all of it. The Amplifier originally consisted of a vast array of similar devices that was intended to work as a dispersed network (like a colonial organism) to give all the Masters control over Potential. Most of the nodes were destroyed when the Ethos' ancestors prematurely activated the network's central node — the Confluence — ultimately causing the DownFall. This particular node — this specific amplifier — was spared by the fact that it was not yet tethered to the rest of the array at the time of the sabotage. It has remained lost — untouched and undiscovered — since that time.

The exterior of the structure is pitted, scratched and dented, as if it has spent an eternity drifting in a cluttered sky, and is covered in patchy layers of crusty frost. The interior is divided into four different sections, each consisting of one or more levels of varying complexity and purpose.

Once aboard and exploring the Amplifier, the characters have a number of encounters that together serve as the climax of the campaign, and in the end, require them to make a potentially world-changing choice. These encounters are presented in a recommended sequence, but moderators should present them as best fits the actions of their characters. The author strongly suggests, however, that “**Dreadnought**” should be staged just as the characters act to resolve “**Cradle**,” so as to create the most dramatic and tension-filled conclusion.

Defenses

The Amplifier is outfitted with all manner of maintenance and guardian automatons, all of which recognize the characters as authorized users and ignore them — until they begin to damage, disassemble or otherwise interfere with the normal structure or function of the facility. At that point, the guardian cogs attempt to apprehend and restrain the characters, and the maintenance cogs begin repairing

or reassembling whatever the characters damaged or took apart.

The guardians include small, scampering, spider-like devices with formidable arc stunners as well as lean, fast, agile bipeds with multiple bladed arms. There is a quartet of large, heavily armored, close-assault cogs with guardian cables, electromagnetic punching rams and integrated arc grid armor. Even the maintenance cogs, if ultimately needed to defend the Amplifier, can assemble into larger, more formidable opponents, using their various tools as dangerous weapons.

The automatons can attack in a combined assault, or they can hassle the characters in ones and twos as they explore — especially if the characters threaten — the structure. There is a large enough number that the moderator can stage numerous attacks if it helps keep up the tension. Even attacking in groups, the machines should not be a real threat to a determined band of Knights. However, if the characters are still carrying injuries from their hard voyage, the guardians could prove lethal.



THE CRADLE

The Cradle occupies the space under the cupola, and if it were not essentially devoid of fixtures, it might be considered the main deck for any occupants or crew. The only feature under the large dome is a complex control device — a baroque, cage-like basin over which hovers, unsuspended, a mirror-shiny sphere of what appears to be, but is decidedly not, quicksilver. The ball is about 20 feet across and featureless save for a faint silvery purple glow and a harness of several hundred wires protruding from its lower hemisphere. These connect through an opening in the floor to conduits running throughout the structure. Several other similarly sized and coverless hatches lead through the surrounding floor, deeper into the interior of the Amplifier.

The sphere is the control harness for the entire artifact, but more than that, it was intended as a sort of interface cradle into which a Master of the Wind could be enshrined, and from which that entity could manifest the limitless powers of the Grand Amplifier. It now sits idle, awaiting input from any sentience bearing markers of the Masters — such as their Kin or Ethos servitors.

Use the following as inspiration for any plays involving the guardians.

Player Stakes

- The characters fend off the attacking automatons with only minor injuries, but only by destroying them as they attack.
- ✦ The party is able to somehow convince the guardians that they are not threats to the Amplifier, inducing the machines to leave them alone.

THE FACTORY

This section includes half a dozen levels, most of which consist of automated factories, storage holds, raw material stockpiles, servitor crèches, dormitories and workspaces. Characters are baffled by most of what they find here, but what they do recognize is surprisingly, perhaps shockingly, familiar.

The factories can produce a wide variety of objects and constructs, including tools and arcanoelectrical devices. The crèche can create new servitors and overseers — Kin and Ethos, respectively.

THE TRANSDUCER

The Transducer is a massive arcanoelectrical device — multiple interlinked devices actually — of dizzying complexity. Occupying most of the structure's volume, the Transducer is contained in the long shaft connecting the Factory to the Reticulum and is riddled with access tunnels, conduits and maintenance chambers, all humming with barely contained power.

The singular function of the Transducer is to convert the Potential energy gathered by the Reticulum, modulating it into a form usable by the occupant of the Cradle. Given the vast energies at its disposal, and the logarithmic way it increases the Potential output, the Transducer gives the Amplifier's controller mythical levels of elemental power. Nothing is beyond his reach as his will becomes elemental reality.

THE RETICULUM

The Reticulum is a massive, complex latticework akin in structure to an induction hull, but in the way a Child dreadnought is akin to a child's toy boat. The complex, dispersed, fragile-looking structure extends from the downwind end of the Transducer into the sky. The Reticulum absorbs ambient Potential like a massive fishing net, drawing it in and concentrating it at a rate several magnitudes greater than the entire Guild fleet could manage — even if every ship was wired together.

- The party is able to co-opt one or more of the automatons, and order them to provide labor and defense for the duration of the mission.

Moderator Stakes (I)

- The automatons attack in waves at a rate that turns out to be exactly every 1/5 of a bell. Each time they attack, another crewman dies and everyone in the party takes a 1-card wound.
- An injured character is captured and installed in one of the crèche tanks where she undergoes five clocks of medical repairs. Any attempt to remove her prematurely causes a major wound draw.
- Several crewmen and the loser of a group luck draw are captured and stored in gel-filled suspension tanks. Any attempt to remove a crewman kills him outright, while any Knight is left with a single Play hand card after the ordeal.

It is recommended that the moderator keep a number of automatons in reserve to heighten the drama of the Dreadnought encounter. If the characters have not yet engaged the cradle, the cogs can complicate the Children of the Dark attack by presenting an additional threat. Conversely, if the party has achieved control of the

Amplifier, the characters can use the guardians to help fend off any boarders.

Origins

While exploring the factory level, the characters come across a collection of strange devices that ultimately provide shocking insight that upends their worldview. As described in the *UPWIND* corebook, the Masters of the Wind created the Kin and the Ethos to be their servitors, to control the Potential they themselves could not. With the advent of the Amplifier, the Masters no longer needed their living tools. As they began a genocidal disposal of those utensils, the tools rebelled, sabotaged the Amplifier and triggered the Down-Fall. Though no longer needing large numbers of servitors to control Potential, the Masters installed production crèches in their Amplifier nodes against the possibility of some future need. These crèches assemble living Kin and Ethos from component materials, decanting them on demand, providing new, self-replicating servitors as needed.

When the characters explore the factory level, they discover a pair of crèche vats containing partially assembled servitors — one a pure Gale Kin and the other a formidable looking Child of the Dark. Neither is yet completely formed — both are missing parts of their extremities and much of their subcutaneous tissue and skin. Neither appears to be alive — or dead — as both are being held in stasis, suspended in a thick, preservative gel.

Inspection of the crèche system implies that the Kin and Children share a common, seemingly artificial, origin and that they appear to have been created whole cloth by the Masters of the Wind. Anyone with technical or engineering attributes can attempt to activate the crèche machinery and complete the assembly. Once running, the process takes another clock or so to complete. When the individuals are decanted, they are fully viable examples of their kind. They possess no memories, but demonstrate amazing recall and an innate compulsion to learn language — constantly, incessantly repeating any words spoken within their hearing. Additionally, they strongly imprint on whomever is present at their decanting, and even without language demonstrate an innate desire to serve and please those individuals.



Though there is nothing in the crèche that expressly describes the Master-servitor relationship between the Masters of the Wind and the Kin and Child ancestors, the players are likely to catch the implications and moderators should use their description and tone to encourage that conclusion. More clues to, and confirmation of, these suspicions could be obtained if the characters ask the right questions in the “Machine Mind” encounter below.

Machine Mind

The characters will inevitably explore the Cradle, and when they do, since it is the only feature under the dome, they will certainly investigate the shiny silver control cradle. A close visual inspection shows the ball is in fact a heavy metallic liquid that somehow floats in place over the guardrail-like frame around its lower half. The equator of the ball is above and congruent with the railing, putting the surface of the sphere in easy reach of any curious character; a small gap in the railing provides easy access should anyone want to climb under — or into — the ball.

This encounter should prove one of the most important in the campaign, as it provides the opportunity for essential, in-character answers and exposition. To avoid the anticlimax usually associated with exposition; however, the nature of the control harness and the way it communicates provides the players with an active role in the investigation while maintaining a valuable sense of mystery.

The ball can communicate but not using language as such. It uses a full spectrum of sensory and neural stimulus that effectively implants packets of information in the recipient's mind in an instantaneous and overwhelming blast that is inaccurately described as a bright flash of internalized light and sound. Because of the cognitive changes that have developed in the Kin since their clocks as conditioned servitors, the machine's means of communication is imprecise, providing only impressions.

If a Kin touches the sphere, she experiences what feels like a stunning flash of light, and doesn't exactly hear, but suddenly understands she is being asked for “input.” If she then thinks of a question or a directive, the harness

processes it and responds with another sensory flash and information packet. Because it is an imperfect translation and interface, the character is only able to grasp the gist of the complex communication. To model this in play, whenever a character touches the sphere her player may ask the moderator a question or describe an intended action, and if the information or ability is within the Amplifier's scope, the moderator should respond with a single word that provides useful information bearing directly on the player's request or command. The characters can ask as many questions or give as many instructions as they want, but each only receives its one-word response. In this way, the exposition is driven by the players as they work to bracket whatever information or function they seek.

Though it is impossible to provide responses for all the inquiries or directives the characters may put to the sphere, the following provide examples for moderators as well as key information the characters can learn.

Input: What is the Grand Amplifier?

Response: Potential

Input: Why was the Amplifier built?

Response: Control

Input: Is the Amplifier operational?

Response: Marginal

Input: How can I take control?

Response: Immersion

Input: Can the Amplifier be moved?

Response: Immersion

Input: How do I use the Amplifier's power?

Response: Immersion

Input: What is immersion?

Response: Integration

Input: What is integration?

Response: Control

Input: How do I achieve immersion?

Response: Sphere

Input: Did the Masters' create the Kin?

Response: Manufacture

Input: Are the Kin and Ethos related?

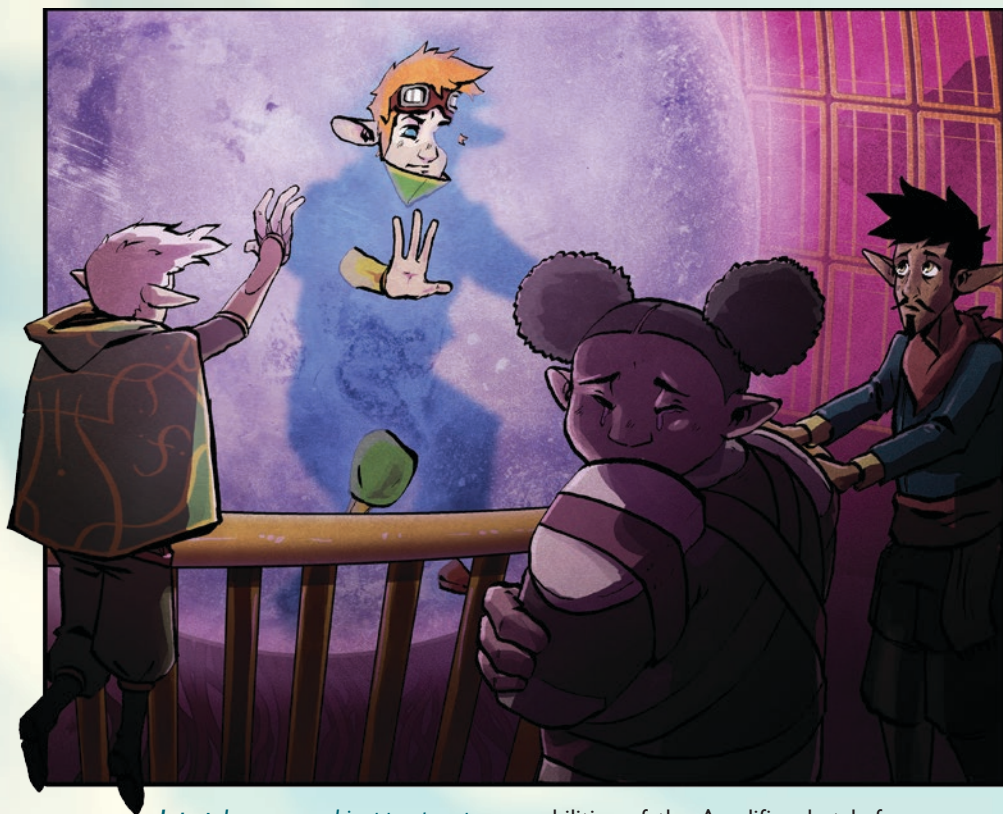
Response: Siblings

Input: Increase internal lighting.

Response: Complying

<lights come up>





Input: Increase ambient temperature.

Response: Complying
<all levels begin to warm>

Input: Move upwind toward the Light.

Response: Immersion

Input: Activate Amplifier.

Response: Immersion

Input: Activate defenses.

Response: Immersion

Note that the control harness does not know everything about everything. It is certainly omniscient about its own systems — including the crèche — but it is not an archive of everything the Masters knew. Accordingly, the players can learn a lot about the Amplifier, but the details of things like history, natural science, the Masters and what exactly caused the DownFall are beyond its knowledge base.

Dreadnought

Ideally, as the characters are developing an understanding of their people's origins and the

abilities of the Amplifier, but before anyone has undergone immersion (see **Cradle** below), the Child dreadnought *DEAD MAKER* suddenly arrives, attacking without warning. It is horrifically damaged and half her crew was killed or maimed by her passage through the Wrack Wall, but this trauma only serves to make the attack an act of hate-filled vengeance as much as a military action.

The officers want to take the Amplifier, so they try not to damage it, firing instead on the *LANCE OF FATE* while sending over a number of large boarding parties to secure the artifact. They are heavily armed and armored, and strongly motivated by fear and anger, representing as vicious and deadly an enemy as the characters have faced in the campaign. Moderators should call one or more plays to resolve this climactic battle.

Player Stakes

- The characters fend off the attack, but at the cost of their remaining crew and major wound draws all around.



- ✦ The party is able to co-opt or otherwise lead the artifact's guardian cogs into attacking the invading force, sparing the *FATE*'s remaining crew, and at the cost of only minor wound draws for the characters.
- ✦ The character selected for immersion manages to enter the control sphere and integrate with the system just in time to use the Amplifier's ultimate powers. The character can narrate how she deals with the threat — anything from burning the *MAKER* out of the sky in a flash of arc light, entombing the ship in ice, pushing it away with an irresistible Wind or mind-controlling the officers and ordering a retreat.

Moderator Stakes (3)

- ✦ The characters fend off the attack but only by sacrificing the *LANCE OF FATE* and any remaining crew in a ramming attack, stranding the survivors on the Amplifier. Each character must make a major wound draw, while the loser of a group luck draw must make a mortal wound draw instead.
- ✦ The Children of the Dark succeed in their attack, taking control of the Grand Amplifier. As their defenses fail, the characters must decide whether to use their Potential powers to destroy the control harness and thereby deny the Amplifier to the enemy.

Cradle

Eventually the characters should realize that one of their number must undergo immersion in the control sphere by crawling into the liquid metal harness and fully interfacing with the Amplifier. Cautious characters can question the artifact to learn about the process and its consequences while more reckless characters may literally dive right in. It is therefore important to note several things.

- Full control of the Amplifier's virtually limitless Potential power and its flight capabilities is not possible without immersion in the cradle.
- Immersion is a one-way trip. Though the process makes the user an effectively immortal demigod, it also permanently wires him into the artifact's systems. Any attempt to subsequently withdraw his remains kills the character's consciousness and leaves

the Amplifier in need of a new controller. Therefore, volunteering to be the controller, or choosing which of their number will make the sacrifice, is an opportunity for dramatic and emotional roleplaying.

- Once a character undergoes immersion, she effectively gains limitless elemental power and control, and is able to do anything she can imagine within the scope of Potential. She is no longer restricted to a single element and her power and effects are unrestrained. The acquisition of this unprecedented and unstoppable power leaves the characters with a world-changing choice to make and effectively marks the end of the campaign.

Though it is a potent way to create a dramatic and emotional climax to the campaign, if this kind of permanent character sacrifice is not in keeping with their groups' interests or style of play, moderators should feel free to make the role of the Amplifier's controller a temporary one, more akin to climbing in and out of a cockpit.

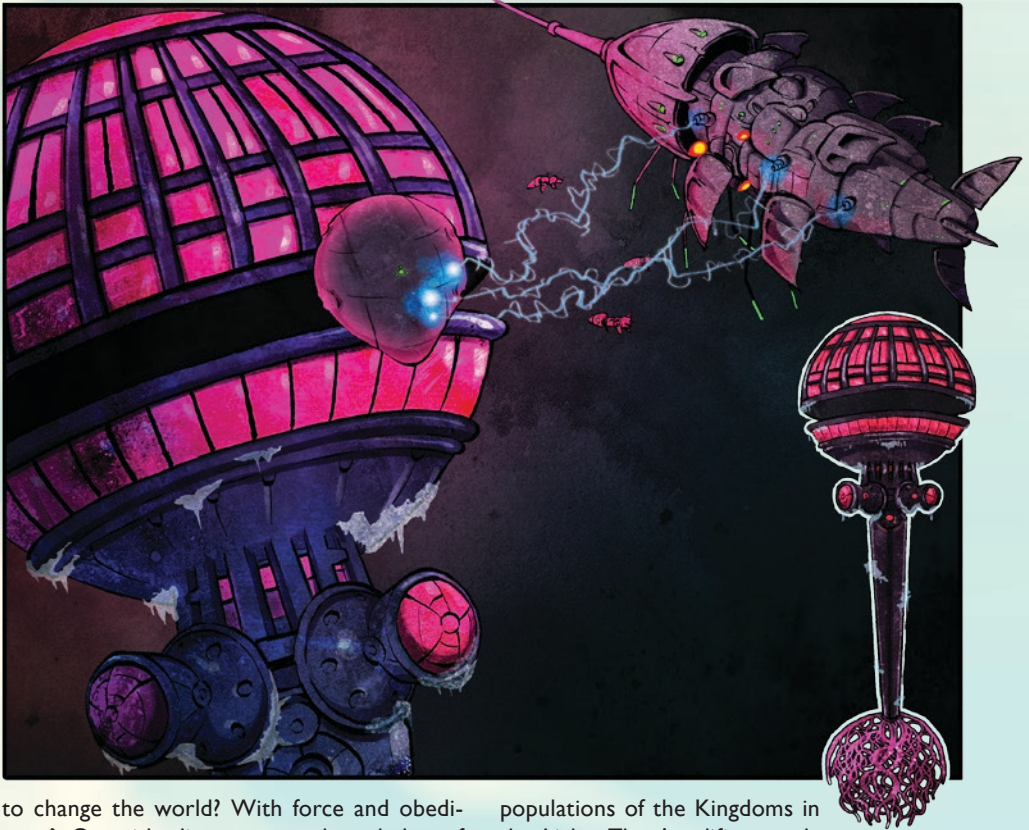
CHANGING THE WORLD

Once the climactic battle for the Amplifier is resolved, and the characters have chosen a controller to take command of the artifact, they have a single, potentially world-changing choice to make — a choice that could determine not only the characters' futures, but those of all Kin and the Children of the Dark.

The legends are actually true. The Grand Amplifier is powerful enough to forever change the world. Though the controller can't give a single command that changes everything, she can, in time, fly the artifact from one strategic target to the next, demonstrating its irresistible power — from freezing fleets in their wakes and stunning whole armies where they stand, to blasting fortresses to rubble, destroying essential resources and mind-controlling commanders or whole cities into obeying. Ultimately, the character can demand whatever she wishes — ceasefire, compliance, obedience, peace, even worship — and get it.

The characters — more specifically, the controller ensconced in the harness — have a choice to make. How are they going





to change the world? With force and obedience? Or with disarmament, knowledge of their shared origins and assurances of peace? There are basically three options from which the characters can choose, and moderators should encourage them to discuss, debate and decide which in character, as a group.

The Status Quo

This choice would be made by those who believe that the Amplifier is too dangerous for anyone to have and requires further and greater sacrifice on the part of the controlling character. Once the *FATE* and any survivors are away — or better yet, once the controller has used the Amplifier to get them safely upwind of the Wrack Wall — she uses the Amplifier's power to destroy the artifact — and by default herself — keeping it out the hands of any who would misuse it.

A Decisive Victory

This choice would be made by most members of the Guild and the governments and

populations of the Kingdoms in the Light. The Amplifier can be used to destroy the ability of the Children of the Dark to wage war by burning their fleets, razing their factories and capturing or assassinating their leadership. Most horrifically, the Amplifier could be used to pursue a genocidal pogrom against the Children of the Dark. Obviously, Leader of Killers — if she is still alive and with the party — is opposed to any version of this choice, and fights to the death to stop the characters if they decide to use the Amplifier to destroy her people.

The author also recognizes this as a dark choice for a gaming group and cautions moderators against supporting it. Explorer Knights are supposed to be paragons after all, and with what they likely learned about the shared origins of the Kin and the Ethos, a general slaughter should seem unconscionable to any who took the Vow.

The New World Order

This choice is the goal of the Embassy and the one for which Leader advocates — as would



Doe and Truk if they were present. Their intention was to find the Amplifier and use it to impose a ceasefire, then establish meaningful diplomatic relations between the Kin and the Children. Knowing that they might be seen as treasonous and totalitarian in forcing both sides to comply, the Embassy members were ready to accept that fate in exchange for eventual peace. Whether this could have been done under the auspices of the Guild, or they would have had to set themselves up outside the Order, is now impossible to know.

At this point in the game, after the players have been given the chance to discuss and debate in character, the moderator should ask them for their choice, noting of course that the decision is ultimately that of whomever occupies the control sphere. Once the group — or the controller — makes their final choice, the chapter concludes with the RPG equivalent of a cinematic slow fade, and the story moves into the epilogue.



EPILOGUE: ONE CYCLE LATER

Playing through the aftermath of the characters' decision would be a decidedly anticlimactic game to run as the Amplifier removes any real challenge from achieving their goals. Accordingly, the conclusion of the campaign borrows a trick from movies and has the aftermath occur offscreen, beyond the edges of the RPG table as it were.

Moderators should select the outcome from the following options that best matches the choice the characters made regarding their ultimate use of the *GRAND AMPLIFIER*. They should read or paraphrase the description provided, and solicit answers from the players for the associated questions. This can be done individually or collectively as is appropriate to the question or group. The intention is to encourage the players to collaborate in world-building the story's conclusion, collectively crafting the ending of their campaign.

If a group devised an alternate, unique or divergent option, moderators should compose and read their own appropriate text.

THE STATUS QUO

One cycle to the clock has passed since your boat crew destroyed the Grand Amplifier. After making your way back through the dangers of the Wrack Wall and the Dark beyond, you rejoined your Guild comrades in defending the Kingdoms against the Children, and you fought in the Third Incursion. The war was bloody, indecisive and in the end attrition was the only victor, with both sides eventually withdrawing to lick their wounds and regroup. So much was lost and yet there is already talk of a Fourth Incursion. Diplomatic contact with the Children remains elusive and even Captain Doe, the strongest advocate, is discouraged by the reluctance of both sides to seek a lasting peace.

- What role did you play during the Incursion?
- What terrible wartime decision did you have to make?
- Did your character survive the Incursion? If not, how did your character die?
- If your character survived, what is he or she doing now?

A DECISIVE VICTORY

One cycle ago to the clock, your boat crew raged across the Dark, burning the Children of the Dark from the sky. Ships, fortresses, depots, factories, cities, towns and farms were all destroyed. You used the awesome power of the Amplifier to scour the world of the greatest threat to the Kingdoms in the Light. At first they called you heroes, but the horrible destruction left a deep undercurrent of fear. Then, when the Guild could not keep up with the countless Convocation member demands for access to the Amplifier, they called you greedy, power hungry and corrupt. When the Guild refused — out of fear of its misuse or perhaps fear of losing such power — to turn the Amplifier over to the Consul Assembly, they called you tyrants. That's when the civil war began and the Convocation went up in flames.

- Which side did you pick in the Convocation War?
- What notorious atrocity did you witness, and were you part of it?
- Assuming you and the Guild survived the war, did you remain a Knight or did you abandon your vows?

THE NEW WORLD ORDER

One cycle ago to the clock, your boat crew rose from the deepest Dark aboard the Grand Amplifier and brought with it a new age in the history of





the world. It was not simple. It was not easy. There were mistakes. While there was violence, the all-out war of a Third Incursion did not occur. With the Amplifier as a deterrent, your crew, backed by the combined direction of Doe and Leader, was able to establish a ceasefire and — eventually — initiate formal diplomatic contact between the Kin and the Ethos. Some claim it was wisdom that won the peace. Others laugh and say: “it’s hard to say no when the person asking so politely could burn you from the sky.” Not everyone is happy about the new world order or his place in it, and the Kin and the Ethos remain dangerous mysteries to each other. Knowledge and understanding grow with every clock, however, and with them comes an increasingly stable peace.

- Has the Guild survived? What is its role?
- Where is the Grand Amplifier now, and how is it being used?
- What role do you play in the new order?

The author recommends that moderators not share the outcomes for options the players did not choose, as maintaining the integrity of the character perspective lends more verisimilitude to the story-building experience.

FINAL VIGNETTES

Once the group has talked through the outcomes of their choice and collectively constructed their outcomes, the campaign should conclude with final character vignettes. Moderators should use the following prompts to set up roleplaying scenes unique to each player’s character concept. They should then play through them to personally satisfying, symbolic or narratively poignant conclusions, working their way around the table. If players choose, their characters can share an epilogue, but that should be left to individuals to decide. Additionally, if the participants agree, they can play significant NPCs in each other’s scenes.

- When and where is the scene taking place? The character's home? Aboard a ship? While receiving a new Blaze of Rank? On a cliff overlooking the sky?
- Who is in the scene with you and what are you doing? Talking with your ship's officers? Playing in the yard with your grandchildren? Placing flowers on the memorial of a lost comrade — perhaps the character who sacrificed himself to control the Amplifier?
- What features of the scene indicate how much time has passed, and what your character has been doing during that time? Are you holding a baby or the hand of a new spouse? Are you reviewing a fleet as it sails in formation past your flagship? Are you limping around the Knights' Care Home in Highstone with an artificial leg, mumbling to yourself?
- What is your character thinking in the moment? Dwelling on the past, considering a current challenge, or wondering about the future?
- What emotions are your characters feeling in the moment? Pride? Regret? Satisfaction? Anger? Loss? Guilt?

GUIDELINES

As moderators guide the characters through these vignettes, they should be strictly role-playing encounters intended to leave the characters and players with interesting, satisfying and perhaps unexpected endings to both their collective story and individual narrative threads. Moderators should work to incorporate the following intentions into these scenes:

- Let the players guide the primary content of the scenes, as they focus on what is most important and satisfying for them.
- Feature an emotional, poignant, symbolic or even humorous element, depending on character concepts, player types and interests. It is important to include a substantive element to give the scene weight.
- Make sure there is a focus to the scene — something for the characters to express or resolve — and then attempt to narratively move through that arc.
 - Be sure to include at least one hint or example of how

the choice the PCs made affected the world and how they themselves have changed.

- If appropriate, ask other players to take on the roles of any NPCs in the scene.
- Don't let the players dither in addressing the prompts — go with their first answers and build from there.
- Mimic endings common in movies, constructing the scene deliberately, starting it *in medias res*, and then concluding with a descriptive version of a soft fade or hard cut to black, as best fits the tone of the particular scene.

Example:

Moderator: You and your young daughter stand at the busy main gate to the Academy; students, faculty and visitors passing by, oblivious. You see both the excitement and the apprehension in her eyes. You are proud she has been accepted as a Novice — but scared, too, as you know better than most the challenges to come. What do you tell her as she looks up at you, trying to hold back her tears?

Featured Player: I mumble something incoherent as I try to hold back my own tears, and then recovering, say something trite but heartfelt, like: “You have always been my little Knight, and you always will be. This is the hardest thing you will ever do, but there is nothing you can't achieve, and I will always be there for you.”

Moderator: A group of apprentices walk out of the gate, and you can't help but notice one of them gawk as they pass, and then you overhear a few fragments of hushed exclamation: “I know it's him” and “the Amplifier” and “a hero of the Guild!”

Daughter Player: “*Da, are you really a hero? I always thought mama just said that to tease you. It's gonna make things harder for me here, isn't it?*”

Featured Player: “I'm afraid so, little Knight. But everyone who walks out of that gate carrying one of these blades is a hero, and before you know it, you will be one too. Now wipe that tear off your cheek, hug your da goodbye, and go grab a bunk before the bottom ones are all taken. And remember, listen to your teachers, especially the ones who are hardest on you...and don't forget to light a candle for Captain Truk at the Armistice Fair.”



ACADEMY FLASHBACKS

ORGANIZATION

One of the conceits of *UPWIND* is the use of Academy Flashbacks to create context, foreshadowing and shared character histories around the most formative time in a Knight's life — his training at the Explorers' Academy. Each of the flashback scenes from the *PROPHECY OF THE GRAND AMPLIFIER* is described in this appendix rather than within the chapters where they occur. This was done for two reasons:

Reducing Complexity — Playing flashbacks can be challenging, and not all gaming groups may be interested in using this storytelling technique. Listing the flashbacks here instead of in the chapters where they occur reduces the complexity of the text, eliminating references that some moderators may choose not to use.

Montage Chapter — Some moderators may not wish to run these events as flashbacks, but still wish to include the content in their campaigns. Accordingly, the individual flashbacks are compiled here in chronological order, so they can be run as a standalone, prologue chapter of sorts. Each flashback begins with a descriptive segue that cues it up for the circumstances in which it occurs in the chapter, but with a little creativity, moderators can modify these and run the flashbacks sequentially as an introductory montage representing the characters' time at the Explorer Knights' Academy.

CUSTOMIZE

Flashbacks work best when there is need for a segue or a dramatic pause in the storytelling in association with current events that jog character memories, or in anticipation of the events they foreshadow. Flashbacks should rarely interrupt scenes of suspense or action, as the shift can reduce the impact of such tension-filled moments. They are best used when building up to plot, action or suspense, and moderators are therefore advised to customize the timing, segues and content of these flashbacks to best fit the pacing and unique events of their individual narrative threads.

FLASHBACK HANDS

Remember that since these events represent flashbacks, hand sizes should be reduced to represent the lower attribute levels of the younger characters and less consequential challenges of Academy life. See the *UPWIND* corebook, page 166, for mechanical guidance on running flashback scenes.

TITLES

The flashbacks are listed here in chronological order to facilitate playing them as a standalone prologue chapter. They don't occur chronologically in the other chapters, however, so each title contains a number and page reference to facilitate running the individual flashbacks within the ongoing story. The titles also indicate the hand size reductions appropriate to each flashback as described in the corebook rules — Play hand/Potential hand sizes as per Academy rank.



FB1 NEW STUDENTS

— Novice 3/2 — Chapter 2, Page 38

Tell the players that as their characters reach the inner circle, extend their hands to receive their Knights' blades and say the final "I so vow," they are each poignantly reminded of when they were first recruited into the Academy, over three cycles ago. Ask them to think about the circumstances of their recruitment, with attention to the mode they selected during character creation. Give them a few moments to think about it, and then go around the table asking each to describe their scene in turn. Assign other players to play any NPCs who were involved and

roleplay out those auspicious encounters for each player.

This flashback is intended to help bookend the characters' time at the Academy, and provide insight into their recruitment and lives before the Academy. The scenes should be short but poignant, and moderators are encouraged to help frame them if players struggle. Don't feel obliged to call for plays in each scene, but if a compelling opportunity emerges don't hesitate either, and feel free to propose some lasting, emotional stakes.

FB2 FAMILY AND FRIENDS

— Novice 3/2 — Chapter 3, Page 63

Describe how the Metal Man's obvious affection for his daughter moves the characters to think about their own families.

Tell the players to describe the scenes when their characters left home for the Academy. Was it a tearful goodbye surrounded by dozens of people sad to see him go, but proud of his admittance to the prestigious school? Did she have to sneak off because her parents had forbidden her to pursue such nonsense? Did his little brother cry and clutch his sleeve? Were the other kids jealous and threw rocks? Or did her grandmother give her a good luck charm to keep her safe as she turned to board the ship?

Encourage the players to make the moment poignant, so ask them questions to draw out details and feelings. Help load the scene with emotion and meaning so that when the flashbacks are over everyone at the table feels like they know something more about the characters' families and backgrounds.

If possible, assign an innate cache to each character that can be used both as a bonus and a challenge. For example, if the character had to leave someone in a bad situation, give her a cache that she can use as a bonus when trying not to "leave a man behind" or as a challenge when forced to do so.

FB3 INTRODUCTIONS

— Novice 3/2 — Chapter 1, Page 20

Learning the names of the crew reminds the characters of the first time they learned each other's names cycles ago.

Ask the players to make luck draws. Have the player with the lowest draw establish a short roleplaying scene that engages the character with the second lowest draw and explains how the two of them met. Then ask the player with the second lowest draw

to set and roleplay a scene explaining how she met the character with the third lowest draw and so forth, until the player with the highest draw circles back around to create and roleplay a scene explaining how he met the character with the lowest draw.

Encourage the players to be funny, serious or poignant, and to focus on building a shared history for their boat crew.



FB4 PAINFUL LESSONS

— Novice 3/2 — Prologue, Page 13

Describe to the players how the sounds of the battle take them back to their first lesson in close quarters fighting as Guild Novices. They stand in the Pit — the hand-to-hand training yard at the Explorer's Academy — excited and scared as they watch one of their classmates being carried off on a stretcher, unconscious and bleeding. Ask the players to consider their character concepts and backgrounds; then share it by roleplaying with each other what their characters are thinking as they await their turns.

Once that interaction plays out, have the players make luck draws. With a wry look on her face the instructor pits the two characters with the lowest cards against each other. She admonishes them to remember the lesson and avoid the mistakes of the previous students. She drops her hand and says in a hard voice: "Fight!"

Call for an opposed play between the two characters, allowing them to use whatever

attributes they can justify. Since this is an opposed play there is no challenge level or moderator's stakes.

Player Stakes

- The winning character is victorious, but only because he was lucky.
- The loser suffers a sprain to both his leg and his ego, and he is forced to limp around for several clocks.
- The victor wins handily, surprising both herself and the instructor.
- Forever after, the loser is a little physically intimidated by the winner, so is expected to roleplay this consequence going forward.
- ✦ Since one always learns more from failure than success, the loser earns a 1-card story cache she may use when the current ship-board fight resumes in chapter 2. Apparently she learned something useful in those combat lessons after all.

FB5 CAPTAIN TRUK

— Novice 3/2 — Chapter 2, Page 40

As the party enters Truk's cluttered workshop, they recall the first time they saw it — the still before their first Navigational Science instrumentation practical. Motivated by particularly low scores on previous exercises (along with some equally low reasoning), they attempted to sneak into his workshop following one of the favorite student rumors that the old man had an Eye of the Navigator among his many relics. They figured if the device was as powerful as everyone claimed, how could it not help them raise their grades?

The flashback opens with the characters trying to get past the locked door. Roleplay out the situation, letting the characters run amok, or not, as the players seem fit. As they search through the gizmos and gadgets in hopes of raising their grades, call for a play as the lookout they posted hears the characteristic

thump, click, buzz, thump, click, buzz of Truk's partly arcanelectrical body walking down the hall. It is likely the party either tries to hide in the workshop, escape through the window or use Potential to evade detection.

Player Stakes

- The characters succeed (or so they believe) in either hiding from Truk or escaping the room before he comes in.
- ✦ Anyone who can beat a 9 with a luck draw finds a useful component, and earns high marks on his project.
- ✦ The party earns a 1-card innate cache they can use whenever the repair of navigational equipment is central to the play

Moderator Stakes (1)

- Captain Truk pretends not to notice the hiding



characters, but later fails them all on their sphereometer projects. He then requires them to come in on their own time to make up the poor grades.

- Truk catches the party but, in the process of scolding them, learns their intent and the group spends the rest of the still enthusiastically engaged in improving their class projects.
- + The character with the lowest luck draw earns a 1-card innate challenge cache the

moderator can use in any play where the character is trying to break in somewhere.

Roleplay the outcomes — the escape, tutoring or detention — ensure the players understand the significance of the flashback. Through their ongoing association, Truk quickly gains a strong affection for the boat crew and they for him. Their relationship becomes central to the students' time at the Academy, and they become devoted protégés of the famous explorer.

FB6 ZOOLOGY OF THE DARK

— Novice 3/2 — Chapter 4, Page 105

The sound of furtive movement in the shadows alerts the characters to the presence of a potential danger. In that instant, the characters flash back to a memorable clock in Captain Sturm's notorious "Zoology of the Dark" course.

The typically caustic old Knight is even more acerbic than usual as he paces back and forth in front of a large crate with a number of small holes drilled in the side panels. He lectures on about something, but the students find it difficult to concentrate on his words because of the ominous chittering coming from inside the box.

With a final dismissive remark about "failing the lesson if the class is unable to kill and eat the meat crickets" (see *UPWIND* corebook, page 149), he unlatches the lid and dodges out the door, slamming it shut. Immediately, half a dozen crazed, dog-sized arthropods leap from the crate and begin raging around the classroom, attacking anyone who happens to be in their way.

Player Stakes

- The characters lead the class in dispatching and cooking the crickets, earning a 1-card innate party cache for any play involving survival in the Dark.
- + The name "Cricket Killers" is unofficially added to the boat crew's honors, and officially becomes part of their bragging rights when talking about the good ol' clocks at the Academy.

Moderator Stakes (I)

- The characters become laughingstocks among their peers, and hated by the Academy groundskeepers, because the surviving crickets establish a breeding population in the campus storm sewers.
- + It turns out the loser of a group luck draw has a severe allergy to some aspect of most edible species of animal found in the Dark, thereby earning a 2-card innate challenge cache for surviving in the Dark.

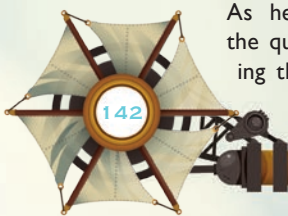
FB7 THE TRIAL

— Novice 3/2 — Chapter 3, Page 74

Any potent use of Potential in the eternally foggy environs of the work camp reminds the characters of their Trial exam on the Academy Proving Grounds.

As heavy fogs drifts across the quarry-like arena, occluding the scattering of cement

baffles and fortifications making up the training yard. The occasional flash of Arc and howl of Wind marks confrontations between the other testers. Perhaps a dozen other students, and an unknown number of journeymen representing "the opposition," stalk the field; only Potential may be used in the contest. The delicate, head-sized glass globe each of the characters carries



represents a “critical resource” that must be protected from damage, as only those who deliver their orb to the central goal undamaged pass the exam.

Moderators should ask the characters to make an opposed, group play using only Potential attributes.

The Winner's Stakes

- This character carries the reputation of being the strongest Potential adept in the boat crew.

- ✦ This character is assumed to be the strongest Potential user in the whole cohort.
- ✦ The confidence this reputation lends the character allows her player to add 1 extra card per session to her potential hand.

The Losers' Stakes

- The characters hereafter naturally tend to defer to the winner in matters of Potential.
- ✦ The characters can only offer 2s in teamwork plays when the winning character is using Potential, as they lack confidence in the presence of her superior attributes.

FB8 DOWN IS TOWARDS THE ENEMY

— Apprentice 4/3 — Chapter 1, Page 33

As the characters think back, considering which tale to tell, a favorite comes to mind about training in the Academy's notorious Tactics Chamber.

Deep in the Warren under the school, the massive room is equipped with numerous portable fortifications, modular walls and other configurable defenses; these are used to train apprentices in small unit assault tactics.

This particular exercise is a critical element of the course, and the goal is to be the only boat crew occupying the central tower when the final signal horn sounds. Four other boat crews are competing in the challenge, and though everyone is carrying only practice swords, all nonlethal uses of Potential powers have been approved. As the starting horn sounds, and the characters realize there are going to be lots of injuries, the bright arclights illuminating the chamber are unexpectedly doused. Potential powers begin firing off everywhere.

Player Stakes (2)

- The boat crew wins the exercise with style, earning a unit commendation.
- ✦ The party gains a 1-card innate cache they can use whenever at least four of their boat crew fights together in an assault.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The entire party is knocked unconscious by a stunning blast from a sneaky Arc adept, and does not wake up until after the challenge is over.
- ✦ The characters believe their tactics are cursed with bad luck. Accordingly, whenever any of the boat crew is required to make a luck draw in association with planning or executing tactics, the moderator draws two cards to his one, and uses the highest.

FB9 DOWN ON THE DOCKS

— Apprentice 4/3 — Chapter 1, Page 26

The setback reminds the party of other reversals, and the first time their friendship helped them through such misfortune. One of the characters flashes back to one still, early in their Apprentice cycle, when a string of failures in training and bad

news from home left the character despondent and ready to quit.

Ask the players to make a group luck draw. The losing character has given up, collected a few of his things and snuck out



of the barracks in the middle of the still, and gone down to the commercial docks in hopes of working for passage on a ship headed home. Everyone knows that if he misses roll call the next clock, he will be drummed out.

The other characters notice his stuff is missing, so based on his recent mood, guess what he might be up to. A gate guard reports seeing him heading toward the docks; after a little searching, his friends find him sitting on a crate staring off into the hazy sky.

The player with the highest luck draw should describe the problems the losing character is having in training. The second highest should describe the bad news contained in the letter from home. Assuming the whole boat crew was out looking for their friend, all the players can participate in roleplaying the scene, trying to convince their friend to return to the Academy before it's no longer an option.

Moderators should encourage the players to emphasize the poignancy and camaraderie of the scene. Push them to create an emotional moment of character support and bonding. Though not necessary, an opposed play would

be appropriate as the friends work to convince the despondent apprentice to stay the course.

Despondent Player's Stakes

- In frustration at his failures, the character breaks into sobs and the player has to roleplay a desperate friend begging his classmates for help.
- ✦ The character starts a physical fight with one of his friends in an emotional attempt to drive them off.

Concerned Friends' Stakes

- The character is convinced to return to the Academy, and with the other characters' tutelage, rededicates himself to his training.
- ✦ The character soon discovers a talent for a particular discipline and quickly becomes the "expert" within his cohort, boosting his self-esteem and focus.
- ✦ The next letter from home tells the character his family understands how hard the training is, but how proud they are of him for doing it.

FB10 WELL OF HEROES

— Apprentice 4/3 — Chapter 4, Page 88

The heartfelt eulogies remind the characters of the still they snuck down to the Well of Heroes (see *UPWIND* corebook, page 71) after curfew and read the epitaphs engraved in its curved walls. Every student does it at some point, and doing so has become a de facto rite of passage, in particular as one approaches her Trial.

Describe the scene as the characters sneak into the hallowed hall, and encourage some roleplaying shenanigans. Then, going around the table in order, read one of the following epitaphs and ask the player to describe, in-character, what her character thinks it means by telling a common tale known about that hero.

Encourage them to be as fanciful or as dramatic as a young teenager with visions of heroism in her head would likely be.

Erdmus Gale — "He gave his life so that others might keep theirs."

Tollier Tayl — "Swordsman, scholar, soothsayer."

Nina Summs — "She went to the edge."

Hideo Hill — "He illuminated the Dark."

Saya Prinn — "Call me Brother one more time — I dare you."

Holand Rays — "Don't worry — she'll hold."



FB11 BOARDING ACTION

— Apprentice 4/3 — Chapter 4, Page 98

The prospect of ship-to-ship battles reminds the characters of their boarding action course and the dangerous, yet exhilarating, final exam.

Beyond the old barge lashed to the shore extends a flotilla of spent hulls and derelicts chained together into an obstacle course of swaying decks. Here and there older students lie in wait, ready to stop the boarders' attempts at crossing. Though every boat crew has been planning for this exercise since they were Novices, the instructor reminds them that the goal is to be the team that secures the last ship without any use of Potential. The instructor raises her pistol, and with the sharp report of the weapon, six competing crews leap the first gap and begin fighting, sneaking or dodging their way across the floating battlefield.

Moderators should suggest a collective play, asking the players to explain how their combined actions help them secure the prize.

Player Stakes

- The characters win the challenge by clever use of their attributes and bad luck on the parts of their opponents.
- ✦ The characters score a decisive victory by securing the target vessel in record time, doubling the length of time they can exploit their bragging rights.
- ✦ The boat crew proves so adept at such actions, they earn a 2-card story cache they can use in any plays involving boarding in the future.

Moderator Stakes (I)

- The characters fail to even reach the mid-point of the course before another team is victorious.
- ✦ The loser of a luck draw has to be plucked from the air by some of the Wind adepts stationed as spotters below the course.
- ✦ The party suffers a 2-card story challenge cache for any plays related to future boarding actions.

FB12 WORDS OF HONOR

— Apprentice 4/3 — Chapter 4, Page 101

The moral dilemma Doe's words present reminds the characters of disappearing old Captain "Hard-Ass" Hardigan and his Ethics of Honor course — one of the hardest academic classes in the Academy curriculum.

The characters flashback to the final exam and recall their anxiety as Captain Hardigan provides the prompt for the essay. "Are the maintenance of honor and the expectations of integrity ever in opposition? Justify your

answers. Extra credit for citing historical precedent. You may begin..."

Ask each player to make a luck draw. If they win, their characters made high marks on the exam. If they lose, their characters struggled and perhaps even failed the test. Give each player pen and paper and five minutes to actually compose their characters' essays' thesis statements, as per the outcome of their luck draws. Then go around the table having them each read their "essays" to comical or proud effect, accordingly.



FB13 MASTER OF ARMS

— Apprentice 4/3 — Chapter 1, Page 30

Any fighting encounter that takes place on Tempest reminds the characters of the traditional Tournament of Arms in which they all enthusiastically competed during their Apprentice cycle. The “Big Fight,” as the students usually call the Tournament, is a much-anticipated event that not only offers bragging rights, but qualifies the most capable for advanced training and posts as assistant instructors. The Tournament includes rounds of sword fighting, marksmanship, hand-to-hand combat, small unit tactics and even cannon and other heavy weapons challenges.

Have all the characters compete in an opposed, collective play using their best martial

ability or skill. The character with the highest score earns a 1-card innate cache for use in plays when he uses this primary combat skill. This represents advanced qualifications earned after winning this particular category of the Tournament.

Those with scores in the middle must, whenever the opportunity arises in future sessions, taunt each other over who is better in the martial discipline in question.

The character with the lowest score must, by long-standing habit, defer to any other member of the boat crew in future martial matters.

FB14 GOING DOWN

— Apprentice 4/3 — Chapter 5, Page 120

As the Child dreadnaughts close on the *LANCE OF FATE*, the characters consider executing a risky hawking maneuver (see *UPWIND* corebook, page 108), and they recall a fateful clock when training in that very tactic almost ended in disaster.

The two dozen students look around, wide-eyed, and take hold of grab rails, secured lines and cleats with a combination of excitement and fear. The instructor nods, the master calls for final readiness and nods to the helmsman, who cranks on the order telegraph. Three heartbeats pass and then the deck suddenly drops out from under everyone's feet. Several apprentices scream — a few in glee, most in terror — and one starts to drift free of the planks before pulling herself tightly to her handhold. One heartbeat. Two heartbeats. Three. Four. Five.

Something's wrong, and the characters only realize it when — over the rush of the screaming wind — they see the ship's master shouting orders into the audiograph and waving desperately at the deck crew. Smoke starts to pour from the hatches and companionways, accompanied by showers

of blue sparks. The induction hull has shorted out, and a new conduit trunk needs to be engaged before the ship starts to topple or hits a downwind object.

In keeping with *UPWIND*'s theme of young heroes, call for a play around skymanship, arcanoelectronics or mechanics to see if the characters can save the ship.

Player Stakes

- Some of the characters manage to bypass the shorted conduit and reactivate the hull in time to save the ship.
- Other characters are able to save the crewmembers trapped by the fire and douse the flames.
- ✦ The party is also able to prevent panic among their fellow students.
- ✦ The characters earn the highest student honor — the Cross of Courage — for their decisive actions.

Moderator Stakes (3)

- The characters panic and are of no use until the crew finally succeeds in halting the



uncontrolled fall. They boat crew is embarrassed and suffers a 2-card story challenge cache for any risky ship maneuvers.

- ✦ Several crewmen are killed in the fire before it can be put out, and two of the characters'

cohorts are ripped free of the deck and flung over the side during the fall.

- ✦ The event so traumatizes the party, that they are constitutionally unable to ever order a hawking maneuver when in command of a ship.

FB15 RANKING REGATTA

— Apprentice 4/3 — Chapter 5, Page 116

Loading into the launch with the intention of infiltrating the Child port city of Harbor inevitably makes the characters think of another “high stakes” launch race — their Ranking Regatta (see *UPWIND* core-book, page 76).

For six clocks, the characters have been either working furiously on rebuilding their launch or guarding it against rival boat crews, thus have had little rest. Despite the excited anticipation of the upcoming race, patience, tempers and spare parts are running short. Moderators should ask for a play to establish some variables about the crew's boat and the upcoming competition.

Player Stakes

- The boat is functional and skyworthy by the start of the race.
- ✦ The team has managed to reconfigure the rigging and “acquire” lighter spars and sails that lend them a 1-card story cache for use in the actual race.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The boat and crew make the starting line, but their final repairs are jury-rigged and fragile, so the dubious boat provides a 1-card challenge cache for the race.
- ✦ Another team steals the party's hull, and they must improvise by building or stealing an alternative boat, likely necessitating additional plays.

When the clock of the race arrives, it seems like most of the city has turned out all along the harbor to watch the show, and there is a carnival atmosphere. When the starting

cannon goes off, over a dozen boats leap from the shore and head for the first marker.

Player Stakes

- The characters finish the race in the middle of the pack — respectable enough, considering four boats did not even complete the course, and one never left the starting line.
- ✦ The party sails a close-fought race, but comes in second.
- ✦ The party blows away the rest of the field, setting a new, all-time course record.
- ✦ The party gains a 1-card innate cache they can use anytime flying a launch is part of the play.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The boat was sabotaged by another crew, and the steering gives out halfway through the course. Though they eventually limp back to port under an improvised tiller, the crew is dead last. It still means they beat five other teams that did not even finish the race.
- ✦ The crew is stranded midcourse and drifts away in a strong offshore wind, and have to be collected by a recovery boat. It takes turns for them to live down their status as “little lost sailors.”
- ✦ Taking too many risks on an overland leg, the party clips the tall standpipe that marks one of the turns and crashes into a nearby building. The crew all takes major wounds, and miss the next five clocks of classes laid up in the infirmary.
- ✦ The loser of a luck draw takes a mortal wound in the crash.



FB16 TOWNIES

— Journeyman 5/4 — Chapter 3, Page 59

Sitting around the wardroom of the *HARSH MISTRESS* and passing a bottle around reminds the characters of one of their many visits to the Knights' Blade (see *UPWIND* corebook, page 70) and another time when they had to prove they belonged.

It's not common for locals to patronize the Blade, as there are plenty of nicer establishments for a night of drinking with friends; however, the young, well-dressed crowd at the back of the tavern is clearly looking to challenge the Academy's claim to the old bar.

Try as they might to ignore the rowdy townies, someone in the group eventually takes offence at one of the thinly veiled insults the drunk partiers throw at the journeymen. Or, perhaps one of the wealthy gadabouts grows bold enough to challenge a party member directly. Either way, the moderator should call for a play.

Player Stakes

- The characters know enough to take it outside before roundly trouncing the locals and sending them off, egos and bloody noses in hand.

- One of the characters finds just the right tack, and turns the challenge into a comical moment at which everyone laughs. The confrontation turns into a raucous party, and by the next clock the characters have a bunch of new, well-heeled and well-connected young friends.
- + The winner of a luck draw finds a paramour among the locals, and ends up in a genuine and loving relationship.

Moderator Stakes (1)

- The resulting fight wrecks the interior of the Knights' Blade; several of the locals are so badly injured that the authorities — and their wealthy, influential parents — get involved. The characters suffer significant Guild discipline.
- + Regardless of what actually happens, word spreads that the boat crew made a very bad showing against some dandy locals, and they are unable to live down the reputation.
- + The loser of a luck draw gains a socially ruthless nemesis who causes constant personal problems for the character whenever he is in Highstone.

FB17 RUNAWAY ROBOT

— Journeyman 5/4 — Chapter 3, Page 78

The sight of the sentry cog takes the characters back to one particularly exciting clock when they were supervising novices at the Academy and something went terribly awry in the Arcanotechnology Applications workshop.

As the characters are overseeing hand-to-hand drills in a training yard, the wall of a workshop bursts outward, and a massive labor cog fitted with experimental controls comes crashing out of the building. The out of control machine charges the group of students, and the characters must stop the cog before its rampage injures anyone or destroys more of the campus.

Player Stakes

- The characters manage to pull the power source from

the errant machine before it kills anyone. It does, however, smash through several more walls before they stop it.

- + One of the characters manages to disconnect the control system, rendering the cog inert just before it crashes through the front entrance of the Great Hall.
- + The characters prevent any injuries by reconfiguring the control systems. They all earn commendations and a 2-card story cache they can use anytime they fight cogs in the future.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The characters fail to stop the cog, and suffer major wound draws in the process.



✦ Several students are injured — and one is killed — before a responding Knight puts it down with a blast of Arc Potential.

✦ The characters earn a 2-card story challenge cache the moderator can use for any plays in which they must face down dangerous arcanotechnology in the future.

FB18 INJURED ON THE JOB

— Journeyman 5/4 — Chapter 2, Page 50

Any injuries resulting from the battle with the dark dragon serve to remind the characters that life as a Knight — even one in training — is exceptionally dangerous; few escape serious injury during their time at the Academy. As new wounds bleed and old ones ache in sympathy, the characters are reminded of the risks and costs of service.

Ask each player to identify a major wound his character received in training and explain the circumstances of the injury in detail. Afterwards, ask each player to make luck draws. Those who win have healed without lasting effects. Those who fail earn a 1-card innate challenge cache that can be used by the moderator when the nagging effects of that old injury could impact the outcomes of a play.

FB19 CONNECTIONS

— Journeyman 5/4 — Chapter 1, Page 15

The reference to mentors — and old Truk in particular — leaves each character lost in thought about those who influenced them most in their time at the Academy. Captain Truk played a major role in the lives of the boat crew, but there were undoubtedly others who mentored one character or another, providing advice or support or otherwise motivating them to excel. Perhaps there were even bitter rivals.

Call for a luck draw among the players. Leaving the person with the lowest card for last, go around the table asking each player to identify an NPC outside the boat crew — a teacher, trainer,

mentor, friend or even lover — with whom his character is still close and draws support. Have him describe the nature of the relationship, and grant each character a 1-card innate cache for use when the direct influence of his chosen person can be brought to bear on a play.

The loser of the luck draw must instead describe a bitter rival — even a nemesis — that she gained while at the Academy: a fellow student or even a faculty or staff member. She must explain the nature of this rivalry, and gains a 1-card innate challenge cache for any play in which the influence of this rival is involved.

FB20 EXPERTISE

— Journeyman 5/4 — Chapter 3, Page 69

Some mundane shipboard duty reminds the characters of choices they made in the past and the specific training they opted to undertake in their journeyman cycles.

Ask each player to consider her character concept, decide what kind of advanced training her instructors would have selected for her

character, and then have her describe the nature of that training and how it actually went. Create a simple, challenge level (2) play that includes the gaining of a 1-card innate cache for knowledge gained by that training. If the player wins the bid, the character earns that cache, representing essential expertise.



EXPERTISE



AERIAL ENCOUNTERS

The following encounters are intended to enhance skyship voyages, providing ready to use challenges for the players and thematic inspiration for moderators. As with many parts of this book, this section is a useful resource for any *UPWIND* adventure.

Accordingly, these encounters are divided into geographical regions rather than linked to specific chapters of the *GRAND AMPLIFIER* campaign. Moderators are encouraged to use them wherever and however they see fit.

THE LIGHT

INFESTATION

One of the characters notices a high-pitched whine coming from below the foredeck — a buzzing like an angry hornets' nest that seems to vibrate the very air. The sound gets louder even as she listens, and takes on a keening edge that seems to warn something bad is about to happen.

Upon investigating, the character discovers that one of the spark bottles in the fore recharging bank has been infested with Arc weevils (see the *UPWIND* corebook, page 137) and is bouncing around in its rack, about to overload. If this happens, not only does the device go off like a small grenade, it will destroy most of the other bottles in the locker and spread the infestation throughout the ship's systems, potentially crippling her. Quick thinking and quicker action are the only options. An Arc user could possibly discharge the bottle, taking in or diverting the errant energy, or a quick-footed Knight with a good arm could get to a hatch and chuck the bottle over the side before it blows — if she's lucky.

Player Stakes

- The character disposes of the energy or the bottle itself just before it ruptures in a shower of sparks and spreads its infestation throughout the ship.

- ✦ The character deals with the crisis so adeptly — and in such a dramatic fashion — that she catches the favor of an officer aboard the ship, and can call on that favor in the future.
- ✦ The character learns so much about Arc weevils that she gains a 1-card innate cache for future plays involving the strange elementals.
- ✦ If the character is an Arc adept, for some inexplicable reason the exiled weevils imprint on the Knight, giving her a permanent, dully glowing aura and 1 extra Arc card for her Potential hand once per session.

Moderator Stakes (1)

- The character fails to dispose of the bottle fast enough, and takes a minor wound as it shatters in a bright flash of glass and metal shrapnel.
- ✦ The Arc weevils spread to the other bottles, so the entire lot must be discharged, meaning any portable devices are without power for the next three clocks as each bottle is purified.
- ✦ The character takes a major wound, and a large hole is blown in the side of the hull, giving the ship a 1-card challenge cache for plays involving its durability until repaired in a proper yard.
- ✦ The character loses an eye to shrapnel.



CASTAWAY CON

While passing a small but rugged skyland, a lookout hails the deck reporting wreckage and a signal fire. If the characters' ship does a fly-by or sends a shore party to investigate, they see a couple of Kin waving frantically as if in need of help. If the shore party lands to offer assistance, a dozen buccaneers pour from hiding, and attempt to capture the launch crew. If they succeed, they use them as hostages in an attempt to hijack the characters' vessel, and leave the Knights and their crew marooned on the skyland.

Note that if the Knights arrive in a ship flying Guild colors, the pirates abandon their attempt and try to play it off like they don't really need help and were only waving hello.

Player Stakes

- The Knights readily deflect the ambush and take the buccaneers prisoner.
- ✦ The characters rescue several Loftian nobles the pirates were holding for ransom.
- ✦ The pirates are the notorious band known as the Darling Deadlies, and the Knights receive an official commendation from the local government for bringing them to justice.
- ✦ The party finds the actual pirate vessel hidden below the skyland and takes it as a prize.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The Knights take minor wounds in the ambush, and are forced to make an embarrassing retreat to their ship.
- ✦ Several crew are lost in the fighting and one of the characters — as determined by a luck draw — must make a major wound draw.
- ✦ The Knights are subdued, and they and their crew are forcibly marooned on the skyland as the pirates steal their ship.
- ✦ Adding insult to injury, one of the pirates turns out to be the cousin of one of the characters, further discouraging and dishonoring the party.

DEATH FROM ABOVE

As the characters' ship passes closely under the downside of a remote or otherwise

uninhabited skyland, there is a flash of movement and a fading scream as a crewmember is snatched off the open deck and yanked upward. Rock creepers (see the *UPWIND* core-book, page 143) are dropping from the stone overhead. As someone starts to shout orders to run the ship clear, the crew realizes the rigging has been snagged in half a dozen of the sticky, ropy strands the creatures use to ambush their prey. The Knights must act fast before the whole crew is lost.

Player Stakes

- The characters manage to free the ship, but lose (a random card draw divided by two) crewmembers before lurching away from the skyland.
- ✦ The characters use Potential, a launch or even climb the sticky strands themselves to reach the snot-like gobs holding their crewmembers immobilized to the underside of the skyland, dramatically rescuing most of them.
- ✦ The party saves the entire crew, then uses arc fire, cannon or other destructive weapons to eradicate the dangerous creatures.
- ✦ They also destroy the egg clusters hidden in the shadowed crevices of the rocks.
- ✦ The characters manage to pinpoint the skyland on their charts; so, they submit a navigational bulletin that keeps Convocation shipping safely away from the dangerous skyland in the future.

Moderator Stakes (1)

- The characters lose (a full random draw's worth) of crewmembers before getting away, and earn a 3-card challenge story cache when plays involve the crew, due to their crisis of confidence in the Knights.
- ✦ The loser of a group luck draw is captured along with the unfortunate crewmembers.
- ✦ The trussed-up Knight is pithed by its captor and must make a major wound draw.
- ✦ If saved from the creatures, for the rest of his life the captured Knight often wakes screaming from terrifying dreams of being eaten alive.



FIRE IN THE SKY

While cruising along a moderately well-traveled shipping lane, a lookout reports smoke. Once they close with the target, the crew realizes a large Loftian merchantman is on fire and quickly being engulfed. As they approach, it becomes clear the lifeboats are burning as well and what's left of the passengers and crew — perhaps a dozen people — are cornered in the bow by the encroaching flames. Obligated by both the law of the skies and their vows as Knights, the characters are compelled to attempt a rescue. There are many ways the characters can render assistance, including fancy skymanSHIP or dramatic use of Potential.

Player Stakes

- The characters and crew manage to rescue half of the burning ship's company before the engulfing flames make any further effort moot.
- + The party is able to rescue all of the survivors.
- + The party is able to put out the flames, saving the induction hull and much of the cargo.
- + The Loftian merchant is so grateful to the characters for saving his life — and that of his son — that he gives them a substantial cash reward.
- + During the voyage to port, the merchant's handsome son falls in love with one of the characters.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The characters are able to save only a couple crewmembers and the merchant's son, who is terribly burned in the fire.
- + The cargo and ship are a total loss, and after burning for a few more moments, it suddenly plummets downward in a streaking ball of flame as the induction hull fails.
- + One of the characters falls in love with the merchant's son on the voyage back to port, but the son's anger at the death of his father makes him hate the character.
- + The son is driven mad by grief and vows to use his vast and newly inherited wealth to take revenge on those who "let his father die!"

HUNGRY, HUNGRY HEMOTH

The party's ship is passing a large cloud garden when the lookout hails the deck with a report of an inverted ensign on a pole protruding from the vegetation. Upon closer inspection, it becomes obvious that the flag is being flown as a distress signal. If the characters stop to investigate, they discover that a small merchantman has crash-landed among the floating trees and come to rest bow down, deep in the interior of the leafy mass.

If the characters choose to investigate further, they find the crew gone, the ship beyond repair and the cargo either salvaged or stolen. While the shore party searches, everyone hears — and anyone on the Knights' ship sees — a small herd of hemoths (see the *UPWIND* core-book, page 140) break from the surrounding clouds and begin feeding on the far end of the cloud garden, drifting along and gouging out large mouthfuls as they float past. Just as everyone realizes these animals are too far away and too intent on their grazing to be a threat, a massive bull hemoth breaches up from the clouds below, right through the garden and directly toward the shore party. With a maw large enough to engulf a small ship, the creature threatens to swallow the searchers if they fail in a play to escape the unintentional attack.

Player Stakes

- The characters manage to dive into the surrounding vegetation at the last instant, barely avoiding being swallowed whole.
- + One of the characters manages to catch a ride on the back of the creature, and so impresses the crew of his ship before leaping to safety that he gains a 1-card innate cache he can use in plays where their confidence in his reckless requests are relevant.
- + The character never again has to pay for his drinks whenever he has the chance to tell this story.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- One of the characters is caught in the vegetation hanging from the creature's massive jaws as it clears the forest, and dangles helplessly against its side as it circles around for another pass.



- ✦ One of the characters stares into the massive eye of the bull, and it stares back. In that moment, he comes to believe they are benign and intelligent creatures; he swears to protect them from harm whenever he encounters them in the future.
- ✦ As the hemoth gulps down its mouthful, the character is swallowed along with the mass of vegetation; he must be rescued from inside the hemoth by his desperate compatriots.

MIDAIR COLLISION

As the party's ship passes out of a dense, white cloud into clear sky, a massive, fast-moving flock of avians engulfs the vessel, speeding past as fast as they can fly — as if perhaps, fleeing for their lives. Without warning, a large wind eagle bursts from the clouds and crashes violently into the ship, breaking masts, shredding sails, knocking itself half senseless and becoming hopelessly entangled in the ruined rigging. It begins to fight, thrash and tear as it tries to free itself, doing more damage to the ship and any crewmembers who get too close. With the extra weight and damage to a major power conduit, the ship begins to spiral slowly downward, increasingly out of control.

Player Stakes

- ✦ The crew kills the eagle and hacks it free, pushing it over the side before they lose complete control of the ship.

- ✦ The characters manage to free the eagle, and get it off the ship alive without further damage to crew or vessel.
- ✦ The party somehow calms the bird, and when they free it, the creature seems to befriend the crew and hangs around, trailing the ship for several clocks.
- ✦ One of the Knights builds such a rapport with the eagle, that he is able to mount and ride it.

Moderator Stakes (I)

- ✦ The crew kills the eagle and eventually cuts it free, but not before the damage earns the ship a 2-card innate challenge cache in plays involving speed, durability and reliability. The cache can only be removed by repairs in a proper yard.
- ✦ The eagle kills several crewmen and at least one Knight must make a minor wound draw.
- ✦ As it goes over the side, the eagle snatches one of the Knights in its talons and drags her over with it. Another play must be made to determine her fate.
- ✦ The eagle's brood mates arrive, and believing she is being attacked by the ship, attack in turn. This requires another play to determine the outcome of the battle.

THE TWILIGHT FRONTIER

GHOST SHIP

The party's vessel comes upon what sailors superstitiously call a ghost ship. The ship is a strange wooden boat that only the most experienced Guild member recognizes as a very old Kin design. Anyone who goes aboard finds the decks covered in Child bodies, and the evidence indicates they recently died fighting each other — or another Child crew. There is little of value on the ship and nothing worth salvaging that has not already obviously been taken, save the hard-used circuit box barely keeping it afloat. Just as any investigators decide to leave, one of them hears a child crying below deck, and finds a snotty-faced toddler huddled within a pile of

dirty blankets. It is instantly clear this is a Child youngster, and regardless of what the party does, his fate has turned very dark. This situation does not necessitate a play — but it's a difficult moral decision with lasting consequences moderators should be sure to impose.

HARD RAIN

When larger gravel, cobbles and even boulders erode away from the undersides of skylands and fall on unsuspecting, downwind targets, the phenomena is called hard rain (see the *UPWIND* core-book, page 133) by the survivors. As the party's ship sails quietly along, the crew is alerted by



a series of short, gunshot-like reports as a dozen fist-sized stones hit the deck, lodging in the wood, and in some cases, even punching through to lower levels. Before anyone can react, however, a boulder the size of large skiff crashes into the deck from above, embedding itself and all but breaking the ship's back. The damage and extra weight cause the ship to immediately begin spiraling downward out of control. The crew's only hope is to get the boulder off the ship as quickly as possible and set down for repairs.

Player Stakes

- The characters are able to break apart, lever or otherwise lift the rock out of the huge crater it made in the deck and drop it over the side. The ship must set down, and the required repairs delay the voyage by five clocks.
- ✦ An Ore adept in the party is able to reform the stone and simply flow it over the side like liquid, doing no additional damage to the ship. Though the damage slows the ship by a clock, repairs can be made while underway.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- (The value of a random card divided by 2) crewmembers are killed in the accident, and the loser of a group luck draw must make a major wound draw.
- ✦ The crew is forced to crash-land on a downwind skyland, and the ship is a total loss.

HOOKED

While cruising at moderate speed through the dimness of the Frontier, the characters' ship runs afoul of a flock of hook kites (see the *UPWIND* corebook, page 140) hidden in the haze of a cloudbank. The creatures' long, spiny, venomous tails tangle in the rigging, or snag and yank several crewmen across the deck, then off into the air, screaming.

Player Stakes

- The characters manage to cut the terrified crew members free before they are dragged into the sky.
- ✦ The party is able to clear the rigging of hook kite tails with only minor wound draws.

- ✦ The characters extract several gallons of hook kite

venom, and can either sell it to an apothecary for a tidy sum or donate it to the Academy for research purposes, earning a favor from the Zoology department faculty.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The ship loses (a random draw divided by 2) crewmembers to the venomous creatures and morale plummets.
- One of the characters is badly poisoned, and must make a major wound draw. Regardless of the amount of damage, the venom leaves her incapacitated and delusional for the next five clocks.
- ✦ While burying the bodies of the unfortunate crew on a nearby skyland, the party is attacked by a large pack of hungry meat crickets (see the *UPWIND* corebook, page 149) necessitating another play.

LOST WEAPON

As the ship makes its way slowly through the uncharted Frontier, a lookout hails the deck, pointing out a large, spherical silhouette as it suddenly looms out of the twilight. Three times the length of their ship in diameter, the structure appears metallic and is clearly artificial, drifting in the air like a small iron skyland. Those with sharp eyes notice irregularities on the object's surface, and as the gap closes, the irregularities resolve into the derelict hulls of ships — a dozen at least — crushed tightly against the skin of the floating sphere. Some are old and rotting away. Others are newer, of various nations and designs, and many of them have the lines of Child vessels.

There is suddenly movement as a number of small hatches open in the hull of the sphere and half a dozen animate guardian cables (see page 45) spear outward toward the characters' ship. They plunge through the hull, then snag against the planks like barbs on giant harpoons as they begin to retract. The cables begin reeling in the ship, and unless the party can stop the machine, their vessel will be pulled against the sphere in a crushing grapple.

Player Stakes

- The characters manage to cut the grappnels of the guardian cables free before the strange weapon pulls them in.



- ✦ The crew is able to tag the site with a lode-stone so that a salvage crew can find the floating emplacement, and perhaps turn it to the use of the Guild.
- ✦ The party is able to board the ancient device and gather enough new insight into arcane technology that they gain a 1-card innate cache they can use whenever a play involves ancient devices.
- ✦ The characters are awarded Blazes of Rank for recovering such a potent, and still functional, Masters' artifact.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The characters' ship is badly damaged by the weapon, and they barely manage to escape. Even so, the damage slows their voyage by five clocks.
- ✦ The characters' ship is crushed against the device, and the crew is forced to abandon it for the dubious safety of the sphere itself. Additional plays are required to escape — either by salvaging some launches from the wrecked boats around them, or taking control of the artifact and trying to fly it home.
- ✦ The battle with the device apparently costs the ancient machine the last of its energy reserves, and it plummets towards the Dark in the middle of the fight. If it is still grappled with the characters' ship, the vessel is dragged down by the falling structure.

MURKY AIRS

Alchemical murks (see the *UPWIND* corebook, page 130) are a rare and dangerous phenomena, especially the further one travels downwind. They are almost impossible to avoid, unpredictable in effect and almost uniformly destructive.

While cruising through the dim skies, the boat crew's ship passes into a murk. They only realize it when the bow of the ship turns to crystal-clear elemental glass, and several bow guns rust away to dust before the crewmen's eyes. A play based on quick ship maneuvers or damage control is appropriate, but luck draws could be used to determine the outcomes as well.

Player Stakes

- Parts of the ship are transformed as described, but it otherwise remains functional.

- ✦ The winner of a luck draw has an arm permanently transformed into some kind of living crystal that provides a 2-card innate cache whenever punching or defending against melee attacks is part of the play.

Moderator Stakes (1)

- The bow of the ship shatters and falls into the sky, taking some rigging and (a random card divided by 2) crewmembers with it. The vessel's functional speed and maneuverability is reduced by half until it can be repaired in a yard.
- ✦ The loser of a luck draw has most of the soft tissues of his head rendered transparent, giving him a horrifying visage. He gains a 2-card innate challenge cache for any play in which an appealing appearance is relevant, but a 2-card innate cache whenever an intimidating appearance is useful.

MYSTERY PURSUIT

A lookout reports a ship in the distant dimness that appear to be holding steady on a parallel course and matching speed. The cold, twilight clouds frequently occlude the vessel, but the lookouts eventually catch sight of the pursuer again. If the boat crew decides to turn and close with the ship, the mystery ship quickly evades by vanishing into the dimness. When the party eventually gives up the chase and returns to its course, inevitably, sometime later, lookouts again report the trailing ship. This goes on for several clocks.

Moderators can do what they want with this encounter. Perhaps it is pirates trying to assess a possible target. Perhaps it is a Delver Society or other private salvage crew curious about where a Guild ship is headed. Perhaps it's agents of the Cabal following the characters, or maybe it is a Child of the Dark patrol trying to gather intelligence on Guild activities.

Moderators should choose this encounter simply to instill a little paranoia in their players if they seem too complacent or confident. No play is necessary to make this encounter consequential — simply let the players' imaginations do the work.



THE DARK

ARE YOU MY MOMMY?

While cruising through the Dark, a strange vibrating sensation in the air alerts the crew to the presence of a small, winged lizard perched on the starboard rail of the ship. It appears to be screeching at a crewmember, but it is emitting no actual sound — the only sensation is a reedy vibration in the air. A hoarse call of warning from the helmsman draws everyone's attention as the crewman shouts something about "candle slugs." As the words register, everyone feels the ship pitch wildly to port as the creature's mother — a full-grown dark dragon (see the *UPWIND* corebook, page 147) — lands on the port railing. She crushes the railing and part of the hull in her talons, and sweeps the deck with a powerful sonic wave of stunning force.

Player Stakes

- The ensuing battle is vicious, but the characters drive off the creature. They must make only minor wound draws and lose only a handful of crewmembers.
- ✦ The party gets through the fight with no injuries and manages to save any threatened crew.
- ✦ The party kills the mother and can secure it as a specimen of the rare creature to be delivered to the Academy upon their return. The party earns a 1-card story cache they can use anytime a favorable reputation among the Academy's academics could apply to the play.
- ✦ The characters manage to capture the fledgling alive, and can deliver it to the Academy as well. The party earns a 2-card story cache they can use if they ever need to ask the Zoology department for a favor.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The two characters with the lowest luck draws must make major wound draws and (a full random card's worth) of crewmen are lost over the side or are mortally wounded in the vicious fighting.

- ✦ One of the characters is carried aloft by the creature, and a subsequent play must be made to fight his way free and get safely back to the ship.
- ✦ One of the characters must make a mortal wound draw.

BLINKER BOUNTY

Blinkers (see the *UPWIND* corebook, page 146) are famously mysterious; the bounty the Guild has placed on the recovery of an actual specimen — alive or dead — is a frequent topic of conversation among more avaricious sailors. Therefore, when a lookout quietly reports to the deck the presence of flashing lights off the port bow, the more mercenary crewmembers get excited.

Going chasing off after zoological specimens or monetary rewards is not part of the mission objectives, but keeping crew content is also part of good leadership, so the Knights must make a decision. If they opt to ignore the possible blinker and continue on, assign them a 2-card challenge story cache for plays in which the mood and compliance of the crew make a difference. If they go after the creature, make a play.

Player Stakes

- The crew manages to improvise a cannon-fired harpoon system aboard the launch, and spears whatever is making the lights, which immediately goes dark. They drag the creature aboard, but it quickly begins to liquefy as it dies. In the end, the crew is able to scoop most of it into a number of empty water barrels, but receives only a quarter of the offered bounty for the sticky remains.
- ✦ The crew improvises a net gun using cargo netting and a swivel cannon and is able to capture the supposed blinker alive. It's a rather indescribable creature that seems more gelatinous than fleshy. Kept in an ice-chilled cargo space, it barely survives the trip back to the Academy, but the crew receives the full bounty.



- ✦ If any characters have attributes related to zoology or similar scholarship, they can spend time studying the creature while it is still fresh and active, thereby earning a position as an Academy lecturer during the next academic cycle.

Moderator Stakes (3)

- ✦ The crew is able to spear the creature. After fighting to bring it aboard, a large piece of what appears to be a rubbery, slimy hide rips off and comes back with the suddenly freed harpoon. The crew is eventually interviewed by an Academy professor, but earns no bounty.
- ✦ The creature the crew harpoons is massive and drags the launch several miles away from the main ship before the harpoon pulls free. The angry creature circles back around in the pitch black, lights now blinking a baleful green and attacks the small, unarmed boat. The characters must make another play to survive the encounter.
- ✦ A crewmember is lost overboard during the wild, pitching ride.

CHILD PATROL

A constant threat in the environs of the Dark, crews are always vigilant against ambush by the Children. It is therefore a surprise when, without warning from the lookouts, a child ship comes into view and opens up with a rolling broadside. Using the resulting smoke as cover, the ship slips sideways and boarding parties begin pouring over the rail and onto the Knights' vessel.

Player Stakes

- ✦ The characters fight off the ambush and escape into the darkness, having to make only minor wound draws as a result of the skirmish.
- ✦ The victory is decisive and the Child vessel sinks quickly into the Dark, trailing black smoke.
- ✦ The party captures the Child vessel, and if they can manage to hotwire the pilot's station, they can take a strategically priceless prize back to the Guild.

Moderator Stakes (3)

- ✦ The boat crew escapes the battle, but all players must make major wound draws.
- ✦ The party's ship is assigned a 3-card innate challenge cache due to excessive damage until she can be properly repaired.
- ✦ Half a dozen crewmembers are lost in the fighting. The loser of a group luck draw must make a mortal wound draw.
- ✦ The loser of a group luck draw is taken prisoner by the Child warriors.

DEADLY SOUND

Every sailor who has voyaged in the Dark has heard the fateful saying: "when a screecher calls, a crewman falls." Unlike many of the superstitions about the Dark, this tale is true. Screechers (see the *UPWIND* corebook, page 151) are lethal creatures that have yet to be described by Guild zoologists, despite the fact there are over two dozen verified reports of calls attributed to the species preceding the disappearance of a crewman or salvage camp technician.

While sailing slowly through the Dark, a loud, strangely forlorn and directionless keening is heard by the entire crew, inciting a panic that breaks shipboard discipline and leaves the boat functionally unmanned as sailors run to cannon, grab for weapons or even retreat below deck. One misguided soul fires up a large arc spotlight, jerking it back and forth across the sky. For the briefest of instants, something is illuminated, then it's gone.

Regardless of whatever play the characters decide to make, the creature has disappeared, and when roll call is taken, a single crewmember has also vanished.

FLASH FROZEN

The ship is cruising slowly through the blackness of the Dark when, right before the eyes of the crew, ice begins to quickly form across the decks, climbing out onto the masts, stiffening the sails, covering the cannons and even freezing any slow-moving crewmembers in place. The ice rapidly thickens as the combination of



freezing temperatures and errant Rain Potential combine to layer the ship in a hard rime, the weight of which begins to overwhelm the induction hull, forcing the ship downward. If the crew does not relieve the ship of the excess weight quickly, she will simply fall into the abyss.

Player Stakes

- The characters succeed in hacking enough of the ice from the ship to prevent a downwind crash, and though delayed, they find their way back to their course.
- ✦ The ship gains a ready source of freshwater, replenishing its supplies with little effort, and the party gains a 1-card story cache for any play in which crew morale matters.
- ✦ Any Rain adepts gain 1 additional card in their Potential hand; however, once it's spent it's gone.

Moderator Stakes (2)

- The party is unable to free the ship from the ice in time, and the vessel has a hard landing on a tiny, downwind skyland. The repairs required to get in the air again take five clocks.
- ✦ Several crewmembers are injured, and one is killed.
- ✦ The crash disturbs a flock of avian predators roosting on the Skyland, and they attack, forcing a subsequent play to fight them off.

GROUND RUSH

A mundane, but very real risk of navigating the Dark is that, unless a crew is using spotlights — which can attract even greater dangers — they can't always see oncoming skylands in the darkness. Accordingly, cautious crews generally fly very slowly when cruising the Dark, and they post their best lookouts forward. When exigencies such as combat or escape motivate high speeds, the crew is forced to weigh the comparative threats and gamble on which is more imminent.

The ship is sailing slowly through the Dark when an urgent shout from a forward lookout is immediately followed by a rending crash, and the ship comes to a pitching halt. As the crew rushes to

emergency stations and the officers assess the damage, the ship begins to slowly sink, scraping and grinding along the rocky wall into which it crashed. The rigging snags on the jagged rocks, and this combined with the lift of the weakened induction hull, proves barely enough to keep the ship from falling further.

Unfortunately, the way the rigging is snagged forces the ship to tip so it is hanging with its keels against the icy cliff face, rolled 90 degrees to starboard so that the decks are now vertical. The screams of at least one crewman can still be heard vanishing downwind as everyone else clings desperately to whatever rail, line or spar they were able to grab as the ship listed over.

Player Stakes

- The characters are able to secure the crew and bring up the power in the induction hull before cutting the ship free. As she rights, more spars break and several more crew are injured, but she is flying free again. The ship has a 2-card challenge cache for any plays involving speed or maneuverability until repaired.
- ✦ The party so impresses the crew with their emergency response that they gain a 1-card innate cache that can be used whenever they need to crew to trust them.
- ✦ The characters earn a new Blaze of Rank for saving their crew in “The Righting of the [insert ship name here].”

Moderator Stakes (3)

- The ship rips free of the cliff by its own weight, and though she rights by herself, (a one card random draw) worth of crew are pitched overboard.
- ✦ The loser of a luck draw is plagued by bad dreams of falling, and becomes obsessed with ship safety.
- ✦ In the moments before they think they are all going to die, the loser of a luck draw must confess to the winner of the same draw how the loser truly feels about winner. Whether it's a positive or negative sentiment is up to the winning player.



PEOPLE, PLACES AND THINGS

(GENERAL UPWIND SETTING INFORMATION)

NPCs

Captain Gorry, senior Explorer Knight, [page 15](#)
Sergeant Norrels, liegemen NCO, [page 17](#)
Esen and Tove, Delver Society negotiators, [page 19](#)
Igor the Under, Vaultish smuggler, [page 23](#)
The Queen of Storms, Tempest warlord, [page 30](#)
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WHEN A CREW OF INEXPERIENCED EXPLORER KNIGHTS IS ORDERED TO HUNT DOWN A NOTORIOUS SMUGGLER AND RECOVER WHAT HE HAS STOLEN, THEY BECOME UNWITTING PROXIES IN A MYSTERIOUS CONSPIRACY. AS DANGEROUS MISSIONS LEAD TO STRANGE DISCOVERIES AND STRANGER ALLIES, THE CHARACTERS FACE FORBIDDING MORAL DILEMMAS AND MUST MAKE THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE IF THEY ARE TO SAVE KIN CIVILIZATION.

THE PROPHECY OF THE GRAND AMPLIFIER IS A SETTING-SPANNING CAMPAIGN THAT TAKES NEW CHARACTERS FROM THEIR TIME AS NOVICES AT THE EXPLORERS' ACADEMY THROUGH THE WORLD-CHANGING EVENTS OF THE THIRD INCURSION. THE EPIC-SCALE ADVENTURE CHALLENGES THE YOUNG KNIGHTS TO BECOME THE GUILD'S GREATEST HEROES OR CONDEMNS THEM TO BE ITS DARKEST VILLAINS — THE CHOICE IS THEIRS TO MAKE.

THE GRAND AMPLIFIER CONTAINS

- ✦ MORE THAN 50 HOURS OF ADVENTURE WITH DETAILED GUIDELINES FOR RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN AND RICH, Q-SYSTEM OUTCOMES FOR EVERY ENCOUNTER.
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- ✦ 18 VOYAGING ENCOUNTERS, SUITABLE FOR DROPPING INTO ANY UPWIND ADVENTURE.
- ✦ 105 STAND-ALONE DESCRIPTIONS OF NEW NPCs, ORGANIZATIONS, LOCATIONS, MASTERS' CACHES, RELICS, SHIPS, CREWS, CREATURES AND DANGEROUS FOES.

