



# MODERN

## RESOLUTIONS



By Stan!

A Short Urban Arcana Adventure for Four 13th-Level Characters

Sages and philosophers often note that the end of any endeavor is simultaneously the beginning of another. How fitting, then, that the word “resolution” can refer to both endings and beginnings. Some use this word to talk about the conclusion of a period of time, such as the end of a calendar year. Others use it to discuss plans for what lies ahead, such as the personal goals people often set for themselves at the start of a new year.

This principle of duality is starkly evident in any court of law. A hearing or trial is the conclusion of a particular series of events, and the verdict determines whether closure has been achieved or renewed reflection is necessary. At the same time, the trial is the beginning of the defendant’s new life as a convicted felon or a free person.

*Resolutions* puts the heroes in a courtroom for the trial of Audrey Petersen, who stands accused of complicity in several homicides and crimes resulting in millions of dollars of property damage. But will they have the resolution to ensure that justice is served?

### LEVELS

You, the Game Master (GM), need a copy of the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game* and a copy of the *URBAN ARCANA Campaign Setting* to run this adventure. To get started, print out the adventure (including the map) and read it through. Familiarize yourself with the various GM characters and their individual motives and abilities. Then make sure you are familiar with the rules for combat, movement, and cover from Chapter 5 of the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game*. You should also be familiar with the rules for casting magic spells and performing incantations (found in Chapter 10 of the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game* and Chapter 3 of the *URBAN ARCANA Campaign Setting*, respectively).

*Resolutions* is a short scenario for four 13th-level heroes. With slight modifications, you can make it

## Scaling the Adventure

The situations described in this adventure are suitable for heroes of any level. To tailor *Resolutions* for your game, make the following adjustments.

- **The Khor'dyl:** The khor'dyl is already a powerful creature, but it can be adapted for different levels of heroes by changing its size. For every two levels by which the party average is higher or lower than 13th, increase or decrease the khor'dyl's size category by one and refigure its statistics accordingly.
- **Cultists:** To increase the adventure's difficulty, you may wish to have loyal members of the Children of Chaos cult hidden among the spectators at the trial. When the khor'dyl is summoned, they attack the heroes. You are the best judge of how many cultists to add, but they should be of a level equal to the party's average.

suitable for heroes at other levels, or for groups as large or small as you're comfortable adjudicating. See the Scaling the Adventure sidebar for guidelines on adapting it for other groups.

The text that appears in shaded boxes should be read aloud or paraphrased for the players. Opponents' statistics are provided in abbreviated form.

This adventure can be set in any large city. A map showing the major encounter area is provided. With a little work, the location presented in the adventure could be adapted for any locale.

## A *Heartless* Tale

*Resolutions* can be used as a stand-alone adventure. You can place it in your campaign anywhere you see fit—particularly if you used the information in the Scaling the Adventure sidebar to modify the opponents for your campaign. The scenario requires neither previous knowledge on the part of the heroes, nor any understanding of a larger plot on your part.

However, *Resolutions* is also the conclusion of a series of five adventures that, when strung together, become a more complex and detailed tale of deception, murder, and lust for power. This series constitutes a campaign entitled *Heartless*. The first four installments—*The Petersen Counterstrike*, *Blood Sugar*, *The Final Feast*, and *The Dead of Winter*—are available as free downloads from the d20 MODERN section of the Wizards of the Coast website.

Like the previous adventures in this series, *Resolutions* features elements such as spellcasting, magic items, and supernatural creatures. Since it brings the *Heartless* campaign to a close, you may now assess the storyline as a whole and determine whether it is appropriate for your campaign as it is presented or needs to be adapted into something that better suits your game.

## BACKGROUND

The background to *Resolutions* is the most mutable part of the adventure. Although it is assumed that the heroes are here to participate in the trial of Audrey Petersen, you can change the details of the trial itself (and the crime or crimes that led up to it) to fit the heroes' past exploits (see the Who's On Trial Here? sidebar).

If you are running *Resolutions* as a stand-alone adventure, the story requires no deeper meaning. In fact, the heroes need not have had anything to do with the events leading up to the trial at all. However, if you are running this adventure as part of the *Heartless* campaign, the events of the previous adventures form the background for this one. When all is said and done, the heroes should understand how their recent cases led to this conclusion.

## Media Circus

Because Audrey Petersen is a wealthy socialite who counts many reporters, local politicians, and even members of Department-7 among her friends, dozens of people have been talking to the press on her behalf. All these prominent citizens have said that they are willing to appear as character witnesses for her, and some have even been obliquely

## Audrey Petersen

Audrey Petersen is the wife of Professor Grant Petersen, curator of Department-7's occult archives. But Audrey, an intellectual in her own right, became jealous of her husband's position, which she felt made her seem to be second best. In fact, Audrey resented her husband deeply for rendering her little more than a "trophy wife" by not giving her credit for the work she did with him.

Together with Nicholas St. Andrew (a charismatic cult leader), she planned and executed the theft of two ancient idols that had been left in her husband's trust, then disappeared with her partner. St. Andrew taught Audrey about spellcasting and dark occult rituals, and in return, she helped him carry out a series of grisly murders in his desperate bid for vast supernatural power. Just as the final spell was being cast, however, agents of Department-7 (the heroes) discovered their sanctum.

St. Andrew was killed in the assault, but the agents took Audrey prisoner. She is now waiting to stand trial for the crimes she allegedly committed with her former mentor. The authorities are still uncertain as to whether Audrey was a willing accomplice or just another of St. Andrew's brainwashed cultist lackeys.

The truth is that Audrey knows exactly what she did. She helped St. Andrew plan multiple cold-blooded murders, and she has no regrets. In fact, she would happily do it all again just for the thrill of being taken seriously at long last. St. Andrew was the first person in years who entrusted her with real power and responsibility, and she loved the feeling. However, since her lawyers and the popular press are painting her as a victim, she's more than willing to play that part in the hopes of avoiding jail or worse.

criticizing the work the authorities (in this case, the heroes) did in arresting her.

Many legitimate reporters are already calling Audrey's trial "the trial of the year," and some of the more hyperbolic tabloids have referred to it as "the trial of the decade" or even "of the new century." In the days leading up to the trial, the heroes must deal with reporters calling them at all hours of the night and day, camping outside their homes, and trying desperately to get a photo or quote to sell to their editors. Any untoward remarks the heroes make will later be used by the defense attorney when he tries to discredit them in court.

## The Khor'dyl

The crimes of which Audrey Petersen stands accused were all committed to aid Nicholas St. Andrew in his quest for great occult power. Audrey never clearly understood what kind of power he sought, and in fact Nicholas may not have understood it fully himself. Nevertheless, Audrey believed in her mentor utterly, so she followed his orders to the letter.

The authorities believe that the heroes stopped St. Andrew before he completed his ritual, and indeed, the chances are good that the heroes believe so as well. But this is not the case. The occultist had actually finished the ritual to open the extraplanar conduit through which he hoped to draw power; he just never got the opportunity to take advantage of it. Thus, the power that St. Andrew planned to claim remained untapped, and the conduit between planes slowly began to close again.

As the connection began to deteriorate, however, a horrible creature called the khor'dyl noticed the aperture floating in the ether. It also noticed that although the rift's creator was dead, another living being—Audrey Petersen—had a connection to it and could therefore control it. Sadly, the human woman seemed to be completely unaware of her slowly diminishing power.

The khor'dyl watched as Audrey was arrested and her future was threatened. Through the connection, it felt her anxiety and fear. When the time was right, deep in the night, it contacted Audrey and offered to help her. It promised that if she would fully open the planar conduit again and let the khor'dyl enter our world, it would serve her loyally for the rest of her life and make her the most powerful mortal on the face of the earth. (The creature assured her that she could manipulate the rift with but a thought, and that there was no danger in doing so.)

Being an unusually smart person, Audrey realized how dangerous it was to make deals with an extraplanar creature—particularly one she knew nothing about. She did not know whether this creature was something that Nicholas had meant to contact, or whether it was merely taking advantage of his death and her grief. She did not even know whether it truly had the power to do what it promised. She did, however, know that if she was caught summoning the khor'dyl, no further proof would be required to prove that she was Nicholas's accomplice.

And so she has bided her time. The conduit will not close fully for another week or so. In the meantime, she plans to go through with the trial. If she is acquitted, she has no reason to seek extraplanar aid. If it looks as though she will be found guilty, however, she plans to summon the khor'dyl and take her chances that it can follow through on its promises.

## Heartless Insight

Heroes who have been through the earlier installments of the *Heartless* campaign may have some insight into the situation—particularly if they have performed exhaustive research on the spellbooks found in Nicholas St. Andrew's sanctum at the end of *The Dead of Winter*.

As the GM, you must decide whether the heroes have examined the evidence deeply enough to gain some useful insight. If so, allow each hero involved in that research to attempt a DC 38 Knowledge (arcane lore) or Knowledge (current events) check. Success allows that character to determine exactly which plane St. Andrew was attempting to tap into. Furthermore, the hero can theorize that upon his death, the connection would pass to Audrey if she had actually been involved in the work. This information, if shared, provides each hero with a +4 insight bonus to defense, attack rolls, and saving throws against the khor'dyl when it arrives.

Alternatively, you may decide that other Department-7 researchers have already unearthed this information. In this case, the knowledge provides a +2 insight bonus to defense, attack rolls, and saving throws against the khor'dyl.

## Who's On Trial Here?

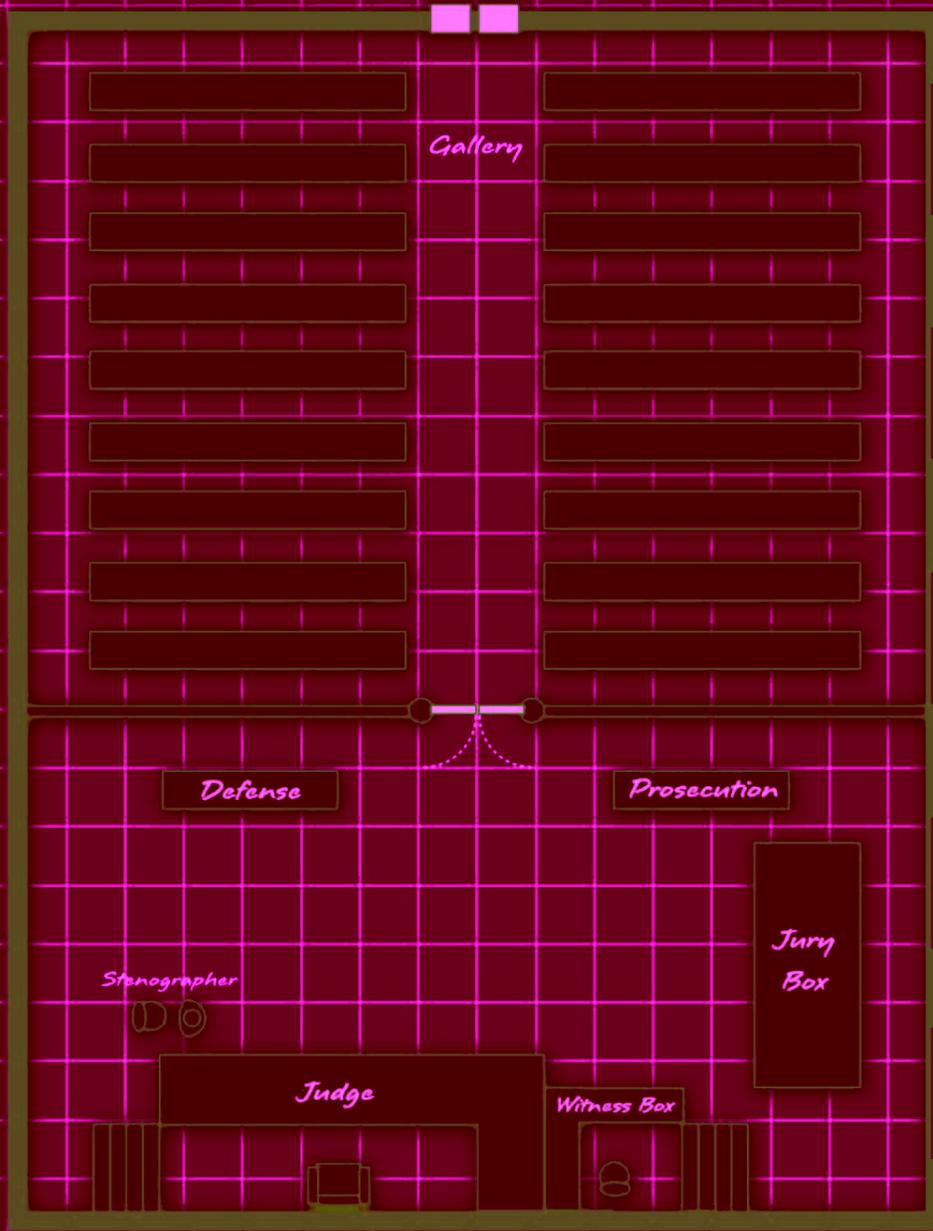
Although *Resolutions* includes specific details pertaining to the trial of Audrey Petersen and the previous events in the *Heartless* campaign, this material is not required for the scenario. The courtroom is merely the setting in which the action plays out once the khor'dyl arrives.

If the heroes have not played through the previous installments of the *Heartless* campaign, you might want to center the trial on a different event—one based on an adventure in which the heroes did participate. Doing so provides you with a convenient opportunity to put the heroes on the spot for any irregular, reckless, or illegal actions they may have performed during their exploits.

This adventure presumes that the defendant is actually guilty of the charges. (After all, if she isn't, then there is no reason for her to summon the khor'dyl.) Because the defense counsel does not have a way to prove her innocence irrefutably, he plans to attack the heroes' reliability and honesty instead, thereby reducing their credibility as witnesses. The details may change from one game group to another, even among those who have played the entire *Heartless* campaign. When he questions them, it is up to you as GM to select events, actions, and even quotes from previous games that show the heroes in a less-than-flattering light.

The only ability that the defendant absolutely must have is a knowledge of spellcasting and the ability to cast spells or perform difficult incantations. That is, she must be capable of at least assisting with the incantation that summoned the khor'dyl. (Although the defendant could have hired someone to summon it for her, that arrangement complicates the situation and raises questions about how the spellcaster avoided arrest, as well as how he could summon the creature into the courtroom at just the correct moment.)

# Courtroom C



Scale: One Square= 5 Feet

# RESOLUTIONS

## SYNOPSIS

The adventure begins on the day of Audrey Petersen's trial. The prosecutor informs the heroes of his own plans, as well as his theories on what the defense is likely to attempt. He also prepares the heroes for testifying.

When the heroes take the stand during the trial, the defense attorney asks them questions about the various incidents in which they were involved. He also poses difficult questions regarding their behavior during all their prior cases in an attempt to make them look unreliable. (This portion of

the trial is an excellent opportunity for you to give the players feedback about the heroes' general behavior. You can use the attorney's questions to make everyone aware of the way the average person in the campaign world reacts to the heroes' actions.)

No matter how well or poorly the heroes perform during the cross-examination, the case moves toward a swift and definitive conviction for Audrey. Once the probable outcome becomes clear to her, she summons the khor'dyl, hoping that it will slaughter everyone in the room and allow her to escape. She really has no plan beyond that.



## Character Hooks

As GM, you know best how to involve your players and their characters in an adventure. This scenario is constructed specifically for heroes employed by Department-7 in its role as an officially sanctioned investigative agency. (Indeed, it assumes that they were responsible for stopping Nicholas St. Andrew and arresting Audrey Petersen through the auspices of their positions in Department-7.) If Department-7 fills a different role in your campaign, use some other agency that fills the appropriate role and modify the references in the adventure accordingly.

If the heroes are not employees of Department-7, a similar organization, or an appropriate investigative agency, you can use the following adventure hooks to spur your imagination, modifying them as necessary to make them appropriate for the characters' interests.

- The heroes work for the local police department or a private detective agency that was involved in the case before its supernatural connection became evident, necessitating the involvement of Department-7. They are in court to provide mundane evidence of Audrey's guilt.
- The heroes have nothing to do with the case directly, but all of them have jobs that require them to be at the trial. They could be bailiffs, court stenographers, reporters, judicial clerks, or even jurors.
- The heroes are occult experts from the area who have had premonitions or gathered empirical data suggesting that a major supernatural event will take place in the courthouse sometime in the next 12 hours.

## BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

*Resolutions* is a site-based adventure that encompasses the murder trial of Audrey Petersen. All the action takes place in Courtroom C, a chamber large enough to accommodate the interested parties and representatives from the dozens of news services that are covering the story.

Exactly where the heroes are during the trial depends on their connection to the case. If they are there to offer

### I'm Not a Lawyer and You're Not a Judge

Most of the people running and playing *Resolutions* have no greater understanding of the U.S. judicial system than can be gained from watching courtroom dramas on primetime television. That's all right.

The point of this adventure is not to create a strictly accurate depiction of jurisprudence in action; it is to create a dramatic roleplaying scenario. So unless the GM and all the players are members of the bar association, don't worry about being any more faithful to the law than an average episode of *Law & Order* or *The Practice*. Feel free to cut corners, allow events to happen out of sequence, or deal with testimony from more than one of the heroes at the same time if doing so will speed up the adventure and keep the whole group focused on the action at hand.

testimony, however, they have reserved seats near the front of the gallery, immediately behind the prosecutor's table.

If the heroes have taken the time to do research on the attorneys involved in the case prior to the trial, they discover that the two have sparred in the courtroom before and may gain some insight into how to present their testimony to its best advantage (see below).

When all the heroes have arrived in court, read aloud or paraphrase the following.

The courtroom buzzes with conversation as reporters and onlookers file in. Your seats are directly behind Assistant District Attorney Donald Gregory, a sharply dressed man in his early thirties with stylish, ultra-thin glasses and swept-back blonde hair. When he notices you've arrived, he turns to you with a smile.

"Good morning," he says. "We've got an open-and-shut case. But that means the defense will be looking for a way to discredit our witnesses. So when you're on the stand, remember to give short, direct answers. If you think he's asking an irrelevant question, don't answer it—look to me and I'll either nod to you or make an objection. If the judge overrules my objection, you'll have to answer, but be sure you do so with confidence and self-assuredness. Never look as though you're saying something you're ashamed of—that only makes you look untrustworthy to the jury."

He glances across the room at the defense table and frowns. Audrey Petersen sits calmly, dressed in a designer business suit with her hair pulled up into a serious-but-stylish coif. Her hands are folded on the table in front of her, and she looks as if her thoughts are very far away. Seated beside her is her attorney, a short, pudgy man in his mid-fifties wearing an expensive, tailored suit. His thinning hair has been slicked down and combed across his balding pate, and the scent of strong cologne mixed with cigar smoke wafts from his direction.

"That's Hiram Carlson," says Gregory, nodding at the attorney. He's up to something—I can tell by that smirk on his face." For a moment, Assistant DA Gregory practically glowers at Carlson, then he looks back at you with an ear-to-ear smile. "Just relax and everything will be fine," he says.

Gregory and Carlson have a long history together. They have represented opposing sides in no fewer than twelve different cases, and Carlson has won every time. In each case, Carlson was able to find a hole in what otherwise seemed to be an airtight case for Gregory—and in each case, the "hole" was either some superficial irregularity in the way evidence was gathered, or a character flaw in the investigating officers. Carlson has made a career out of making good men and women look corrupt or incompetent while they are giving evidence, and he plans to use exactly the same technique on the heroes during this trial.

Once the trial has begun, the heroes are in no position to gather that kind of data themselves. However, any hero who did a lot of research on the lawyers ahead of time may attempt a DC 20 Knowledge (current events) check to recall that information. Alternatively, the heroes could ask

Department-7 archivists to do some quick research on McGregory and Carlson during the trial. This tactic automatically produces the information above in 1d4 hours. Any hero armed with this information gains a +2 circumstance bonus on any checks made while giving evidence.

Any hero who casts *detect magic aura* in the courtroom (or uses a class ability that grants a similar effect) realizes that an enormously powerful source of magic is somewhere nearby, but it isn't anyone or anything in the room, or even the building. Anyone studying the aura for 4 rounds or longer may attempt a DC 40 Spellcraft or Spot check to discern that although the source of the aura is not actually in the room, it seems to be connected to Audrey Petersen in some way. Armed with that knowledge, any hero may attempt a DC 30 Knowledge (arcane lore) check. On a success, the hero realizes that the power detected is actually a conduit to another plane and gains some of the information provided in the Background section (GM's choice) relating to the khor'dyl.

- Audrey set up a dinner party for the express purpose of allowing members of the Children of Chaos cult to take her "hostage." This tactic allowed her to steal property belonging to Department-7 and sneak it out of the house unnoticed when the authorities "rescued" her.
- Together with Nicholas St. Andrew, she broke into the Sweet Tooth, Inc. manufacturing plant and tampered with the Halloween candy manufactured there. This incident alone resulted in at least one death, numerous injuries, and untold amounts of property damage.
- Also with St. Andrew, Audrey poisoned the Thanksgiving dinner being prepared at a Food for Life shelter. Then the two of them, purposely and with malice, had that food served to homeless and poverty-stricken men, women, and children.
- Again with Nicholas St. Andrew, Mrs. Petersen committed a series of ritualistic murders and fed the victims' remains to an exotic animal, which they were keeping without a license.
- Audrey Petersen has repeatedly lied to, stolen from, and committed violent offenses against everyone she has come into contact with since meeting St. Andrew. Unlike the cult leader's other associates, she was not a witless dupe. Certainly she was not the mastermind of all these schemes, but she did help in their planning and execution. She is and always has been cognizant of her actions and responsible for their consequences.

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## A. OPENING ARGUMENTS

The trial gets underway as soon as the judge enters the court. Read aloud or paraphrase the following when he appears.

"All rise!" shouts the bailiff, and everyone in the room stands. "This municipal court is now in session, the honorable Leonard Elmore presiding. All those having business with this court speak and ye shall be heard."

Judge Elmore, a boxy man with salt-and-pepper hair and beard, walks to the bench and sits down. His eyes twinkle with keen intellect, but his jaw is set with grim determination.

"Be seated," says the judge. "Before we examine the merits of *The People versus Audrey Petersen*, I'd like to remind both counselors and the gallery that this room is a court of law. A great deal has been said in the popular press about both the crimes and the defendant, but none of that matters here. I will not let anyone use my courtroom to play to the cameras. For that reason, I have banned motion picture and audio recording from the proceedings. In the interest of freedom of information, however, I will allow still photography.

"Now, let's proceed with the opening arguments."

During the opening arguments, the prosecuting attorney and defense attorney brief the jury on what they plan to show or prove during the trial. Unlike the evidentiary portion of the proceedings, the opening argument can include unproven or unprovable statements, personal beliefs, and other biased opinions. Although the attorneys are prohibited from making slanderous or libelous statements, they are otherwise free to say whatever they wish during this period.

### AI. The Prosecution

The important pieces of information that Donald McGregory stresses during the prosecution's opening arguments are given below. Feel free to paraphrase them as you wish and include additional information where needed to suit the actual events that occurred within your campaign.

### Trial by Committee

The heroes are called to the stand one by one for questioning, but their answers should be more or less the same. In order to speed up the game and keep all the players involved, you may wish to deal with the heroes as a group rather than asking the same questions of each one individually. In other words, you can handle this portion of the trial by asking the group a question and letting one person answer for everyone. Anyone who wants to add to or amend the answer given may do so after the speaker has finished. Direct any follow-up questions to someone who has not yet had a chance to speak, then allow the same sort of individual commentary.

For example, the prosecutor might ask, "What happened on the night Nicholas St. Andrew died?" One hero could then recount the events of the final encounter in *The Dead of Winter*, and the others could throw in additional comments as they see fit. A follow-up question (such as "What made you suspect Audrey Petersen's involvement?" or "Why did you go looking in the sewer?") could then be directed to a player who has not yet spoken. Again, all the other heroes would have a chance to add comments when the first one finishes speaking.

However you choose to stage the questioning, the key is to create drama while keeping the adventure moving along at a lively pace.

- The jury should find her guilty of all the charges and recommend the most severe punishment possible.

## A2. The Defense

The important pieces of information that Hiram Carlson stresses during the defense's opening arguments are given below. Feel free to paraphrase them as you wish and include additional information where needed to suit the actual events that occurred within your campaign.

- Audrey Petersen was a neglected woman—neglected to the point of abuse. Although she was a scholar and researcher of the highest order, both her husband and Department-7 pigeonholed her into the role of trophy wife and socialite. Rather than allow her any real authority or responsibility, they forced her to stay on the periphery, forever within sight of her life's calling but never allowed to pursue it.
- Nicholas St. Andrew came to Audrey at her weakest hour and did exactly what he had done to so many others—he brainwashed her. The charismatic cult leader perverted her confusion and dismay into paranoia and hatred, then used her for his own ends.
- Throughout all the incidents detailed by the prosecution, Audrey Petersen was at best an unwitting accomplice—a brainwashed thrall following orders from the only authority figure she could remember. Even so, she never personally attacked or injured anyone. Indeed, at the time the authorities captured Nicholas St. Andrew, Audrey was unconscious and chained to a wall—hardly what any reasonable person would describe as a “willing accomplice.”
- The only criminal act that Audrey Petersen committed was robbery, and even that charge is open to debate. After all she “stole” the objects in question from her own house. Furthermore, according to Department-7's own experts, the objects she took were relatively valueless replicas, not priceless arcane relics.
- Audrey Petersen is not a criminal—she is a victim. While the defense recognizes the need to find and punish the one responsible for these atrocities, Audrey is not that person. To punish her simply because she survived the devastation wrought by Nicholas St. Andrew is not only unjust, it is unfair.
- Audrey Petersen deserves both justice and mercy. She needs the opportunity to heal the damage done to her by the true author of all this senseless carnage—Nicholas St. Andrew.

## B. CROSS EXAMINATIONS

After both lawyers have given their opening remarks, each side presents its case—first the prosecution, then the defense. This portion of the trial is the one most often depicted in television and movie courtrooms. Witnesses are called and sworn to tell “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” Thereafter, each attorney has a chance to ask them questions.

## BI. The Prosecution

During this portion of the trial, the heroes are called upon to recount their assessment of Audrey Petersen's involvement in the crimes enumerated. Donald Gregory asks them questions that draw out exactly the details he wants to focus on.

McGregory's questions pertain to the crimes with which Audrey is charged and the heroes' roles in the investigations. He also asks questions that allow the heroes to mention any awards or decorations they have received on the job. His questions include but are not limited to the following.

- Were you among the agents who arrested the defendant? Can you describe the events surrounding her apprehension in your own words?
- When was the first time you met the defendant?
- Will you please describe your recollection of the events surrounding the Petersen hostage crisis?
- Who do you believe stole the idols from the Petersen penthouse that night?
- Do you know of any connection between the hostage crisis and the events at the Sweet Tooth candy factory or the Food for Life soup kitchen?
- In your professional opinion, is the defendant responsible for the crimes with which she is charged?

When the prosecution has finished questioning the heroes, the defense attorney comes forward to cross-examine them. Hiram Carlson asks pointed questions geared to discredit the heroes. Audrey has told her lawyer everything she knows, everything Nicholas St. Andrew ever told her about the heroes, and any information she could have gained through divination spells. Thus, if they performed any illegal acts, made questionable judgments, or used excessive force at any time during the investigation, he asks about those times. His questions may include but are not limited to the following.

- On how many occasions did you see the defendant in the company of Nicholas St. Andrew?
- Isn't it true that the only time you saw the defendant and Mr. St. Andrew together, she was unconscious and chained to a wall in the sewer? Does that seem like an equitable “partnership” between the two?
- Did you see the defendant remove any valuable items from the Petersen penthouse on the night of the hostage crisis?
- Weren't you among the people who removed the defendant from the penthouse that night?
- When you arrived at the penthouse, wasn't Mrs. Petersen tied to a chair with a gun pointed at her head?
- Did you see the defendant at the Sweet Tooth candy factory or the Food for Life soup kitchen? Is there any evidence that she was ever at either location?

Carlson also asks questions regarding the heroes' actions in their past cases, ostensibly to “establish a pattern of behavior” that paints an unfavorable picture of them. Any public

humiliation, reprimand, or error in judgment the heroes have made in the past is fair game.

In fact, this is a perfect opportunity for you as GM to direct the players' attention to actions their characters have taken that you don't wish to see repeated. (This portion of the trial should serve as a reminder to the players that their heroes' actions have repercussions.)

This line of questioning can include any of the following material, as well as other incidents you see fit to bring in.

- A time when the heroes shot at or otherwise committed violence against a suspect who turned out to be innocent of all charges;
- A time when the heroes publicly threatened to injure or kill a suspect, rival, or enemy;
- An incident in which the heroes' actions caused extensive property damage (especially to private property);
- A case in which the heroes' poor judgment allowed a wanted criminal to escape;
- A time when the heroes used excessive force that resulted in the death of a suspect rather than his arrest.

When the defense attorney has finished questioning all the prosecution witnesses, the Assistant DA asks them another set of follow-up questions to re-establish their credentials and good reputations. You may ask whatever questions you choose in this portion of the trial, from their rank to their service awards to further exploration of material already covered.

## B2. The Defense

After the prosecution has built its case against Audrey Petersen, Hiram Carlson has an opportunity to present her side of the story. In the U.S. judicial system, the defense attorney does not have to prove the defendant innocent—he need only establish a reasonable doubt that what the prosecution said is true. Of course, it is up to the jury to decide what constitutes “reasonable doubt,” so there is always room for concern.

### Character Witnesses

Carlson calls many of Audrey's friends to the stand to serve as character witnesses. They all testify that she was a good friend and a kind person, and that they cannot believe she has it in her to commit the heinous crimes of which she stands accused. In each case, however, Donald McGregory's cross-examination reveals that these friends were not with Audrey on any of the occasions in question and cannot provide her with any actual alibi.

You may play out this portion of the trial superficially or in great depth, as you prefer. If you choose the latter course, you might want to consider allowing the players to perform the cross-examination of the character witnesses, as a way of keeping them involved in the game.

### Audrey's Testimony

Eventually, the defense calls Audrey Petersen herself to the stand. Although she swears to tell the truth, she has no

qualms about lying with every breath. With the aid of Hiram Carlson's questions, Audrey makes up her version of how things happened—she was a hapless pawn of Nicholas St. Andrew, and she had no idea what she was doing. Again, you can let the players conduct the cross-examination if you wish.

Even if the prosecution cannot get Audrey to admit that she is lying, the jury does not seem to be moved by her statements. Allow each character to attempt a DC 10 Sense Motive check. Success reveals that the posture and expressions of the jury members indicate a likelihood of conviction.

Audrey too realizes that the jury is not on her side at about this point. This revelation motivates her to take the final step in her plan to escape justice.

## C. SURPRISE WITNESS (EL 16)

When it becomes clear to Audrey Petersen that neither Hiram Carlson's assault on the heroes' credibility nor her own fictitious defense seems to be swaying the jury, she resorts to her final ploy—summoning the khor'dyl. Read aloud or paraphrase the following when she makes her move.

The seemingly interminable questioning and legal posturing continue, but it appears that Audrey has lost interest in the proceedings. Her focus grows distant, her eyelids shudder, and she seems to be muttering to herself.

Any hero may attempt a DC 15 Knowledge (arcane lore) check to realize that Audrey is performing some sort of magical ritual. If the check result beats DC 20, the character realizes that whatever she is doing, she is not actually casting a spell. Any spellcasters who are observing her automatically know both of these facts.

Any hero who is focusing a *detect magical aura* spell (or other similar ability) at Audrey when she begins summoning the khor'dyl observes an aura as though Audrey has cast a 3rd-level spell. However, the energy does not coalesce into a spell effect. Instead, it is drawn away toward a magical aura that seems to be hovering near Audrey but out of direct sight (as described in the Beginning the Adventure section above).

The unidentifiable aura grows stronger and stronger for 2d4 rounds, until the conduit between planes has opened wide enough for the khor'dyl to enter our world. At that point, read aloud or paraphrase the following.

Suddenly, several events seem to happen simultaneously. A shrill wailing sound seems to come from everywhere and nowhere at the same time. The lights in the courtroom, which until now have produced a typical fluorescent glow, take on a sickly greenish-yellow tint. And a gigantic, shapeless monstrosity appears in midair above the witness box.

The sickly green creature is about 15 feet across and covered in a mucuslike slime. Its body seems to be a collection of pulsating nodules clustered around a central core. As it moves, you can see a sharp beak, like that of an octopus or squid, protruding from somewhere deep in the midst of the body. Extending from the mass at

seemingly random intervals are long, slimy tentacles. Most of these seem to be made for grabbing or bashing victims, but others end in tiny mouths filled with razor-sharp teeth.

People begin to scream and flee the room. The judge is too stunned even to call for order. But Audrey Petersen sits in her chair, hands folded in her lap, calm as the day is long and smiling coolly.

“One way or another,” she says, looking directly at you, “I’m walking out of here a free woman. If you have a problem with that, talk to my friend.”

At this point, all the heroes must roll for initiative. Neither Audrey nor the khor’dyl has any interest in negotiating.

**GM Characters:** Audrey Petersen and the khor’dyl are the main combatants. The four bailiffs, the judge, and most of the onlookers flee the room as fast as they can, and the monster does not pursue them. The bravest of the reporters stay, hoping to get a scoop on the competition, but they do not participate in the fighting.

**Audrey Petersen (Fast Hero 5/Charismatic Hero 5/Acolyte 5):** CR 15; Medium-size human; HD 5d8 plus 5d8 plus 5d6; hp 66; Mas 11; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 22, touch 22, flat-footed 22 (+2 Dex, +10 class); BAB +8; Grap +7; Atk +7 melee (1d3–1 nonlethal, unarmed strike); Full Atk +7/+2 melee (1d3–1 nonlethal, unarmed strike); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ combat casting, divine skills, divine spells, rebuke undead 6/day, spontaneous cast; AL evil; SV Fort +8, Ref +11, Will +7; AP 7; Rep +8; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 16.

**Occupation:** Dilettante (class skill: Knowledge [current events]).

**Skills:** Balance +4, Bluff +11, Concentration +14, Craft (visual art) +5, Decipher Script +8, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +5, Drive +5, Knowledge (arcane lore) +7, Knowledge (current events) +13, Knowledge (popular culture) +12, Knowledge (theology and philosophy) +8, Listen +7, Perform (keyboards) +11, Pilot +9, Profession +8, Read/Write English, Read/Write German, Ride +6, Sense Motive +7, Speak English, Speak German, Spellcraft +16.

**Feats:** Deceptive, Dodge, Educated (Knowledge [current events] and Knowledge [popular culture]), Focused, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Studious, Windfall.

**Talents:** Charm, dazzle, evasion, fast-talk, uncanny dodge 1, uncanny dodge 2.

**Acolyte Spells Prepared** (5/5/3/2; save DC 11 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds, haywire, light, read magic, resistance*; 1st—*bane, cause fear, command, obscuring mist, sanctuary*; 2nd—*hold person, resist energy, shatter*; 3rd\*—*dispel magic, searing light*.

\* Audrey has used one of her 3rd-level spell slots to open the conduit between planes and admit the khor’dyl. If the heroes do not have a spellcaster in their group, she uses the *dispel magic* slot for this purpose, but if she knows she is likely to face magical opposition, she uses the *searing light* slot instead.

**Possessions:** Various personal possessions.

**The Khor’dyl:** CR 13; Huge ooze; HD 12d10+60 plus 20 (extra hit points); hp 146; Mas —; Init –1; Spd 5 ft., fly 15 ft. (average); Defense 7, touch 7, flat-footed 7 (–2 size, –1 Dex); BAB +9; Grap +26; Atk +16 melee (2d6+9 plus 1d6 alkali, slam); Full Atk +16 melee (2d6+9 plus 1d6 alkali, 9 slams) or +16 melee (2d6+9, 3 bites and 6 slams); FS 15 ft. by 15 ft.; Reach 10–90 ft. (extended reach); SQ alkali enzymes, blindsight 100 ft., extended reach, extra hit points, immunities, improved grab, swallow whole, telepathy, vulnerabilities; AL none; SV Fort +9, Ref +3, Will +4; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 29, Dex 8, Con 20, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 1.

**Skills:** None.

**Feats:** None.

**Tactics:** Audrey has given up hope of acquittal, so she has decided to bust her way out of the courtroom. She has mentally ordered the khor’dyl to strike down all her enemies, and she originally planned to help by casting spells. But since she is not accustomed to combat and fears for her own safety more than anything, she actually spends the fight kneeling in the witness box (which provides three-quarters cover). If the battle begins to go poorly for the khor’dyl, Audrey attempts to sneak out of the courtroom and escape on foot.

The khor’dyl, in fulfillment of its bargain with Audrey Petersen, immediately attacks her enemies. It maintains telepathic communication with her so that she may silently instruct it as to which targets to deal with first. The heroes are its primary targets, though it also attacks anyone else who appears to be threatening Audrey, including the bailiffs.

The khor’dyl takes a position in the center of the room, then remains in place as much as possible. It uses its extended reach ability, retracting as many of its tentacles as necessary, to attack the heroes wherever they may be. For the most part, it uses slam attacks, but if any of the heroes use acid, fire, or water attacks against it, the khor’dyl focuses on grappling and disabling those individuals.

## D. SUMMATION

If all goes well, the heroes can defeat the khor’dyl and capture Audrey Petersen before she makes good her escape. Since the courtroom resembles a war zone after the fight, the trial must be postponed. In a week or so, it resumes in another venue unless Audrey Petersen has been killed in the fighting.

Hiram Carlson has no further questions or witnesses, so the two lawyers make their closing arguments as soon as the trial resumes. Donald Gregory’s statement is eloquent and passionate. He reiterates the points he outlined during the trial and drives the point home with a reminder of Audrey’s behavior during the defense’s presentation.

The defense’s summation is brief and uninspired. The main thrust is that Audrey Petersen’s actions in the courtroom are not the purview of this inquiry. The question is whether or not she committed the other crimes in question. But even Mr. Carlson sounds particularly unconvinced by his own words.

The jury deliberates for all of 25 minutes before returning a guilty verdict. The judge hands Audrey Petersen the stiffest sentence that is within his power to assess. (Exactly what that sentence is and how spellcasting prisoners are incarcerated are questions you must answer for your own campaign.)

## REWARDS

The heroes gain the standard experience and wealth awards for the encounters in this adventure. In addition, you may wish to award bonus experience for roleplaying (particularly standing firm and remaining calm under direct questioning from the defense attorney).

The Petersen trial was a big news story, so reporters from all the local media were in the courtroom the entire time. Depending on which heroes took the stand and what details they discussed, the group could gain a significant amount of publicity. Such publicity could result in the characters becoming media celebrities, an increase in the amount of work (or rate of pay) that they receive, or—if things went badly—in public vilification.

## CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

If all went well for the heroes, few opportunities remain for further adventures based on the events of this one. Department-7 scientists take charge of the khor'dyl's remains for examination, and other researchers pore over the facts and evidence until they determine exactly how Audrey Petersen was able to summon the creature. Eventually, Department-7 may decide to contact and explore the dimension from which the khor'dyl came, and the heroes may be asked (or drafted) to spearhead that initiative.

If Audrey Petersen managed to escape during the fight with the khor'dyl, she could become a recurring villain in the campaign. She blames the heroes for her predicament and attempts to strike back at them in any way she can. The details of her actions, however, are left solely to your discretion.

### A Heartless Ending

Even if Audrey Petersen managed to escape, the *Heartless* campaign is over. All the resources, bases of operation, and support personnel she used during the course of its events are now denied to her.

If Audrey uses her name and her connection with the late Nicholas St. Andrew, she might be able to reform the Children of Chaos cult. But that plotline would also constitute another campaign.

## NEW MONSTER

The following new monster is available for use in any *d20 MODERN* adventure.

### The Khor'dyl

For years, philosophers and quantum physicists have told us that there are many—perhaps infinite—planes of existence. The khor'dyl is a creature from such a place—a plane consisting only of a great sea of viscous, gurgling sludge and slime. Shapeless, intelligent oozes called khor'dyls live their lives swimming through the mire and eating anything that gets in their way. From time to time, an unlucky spellcaster opens a conduit to this plane, and one of these creatures escapes into our world.

In this world, the khor'dyl can float slowly through the air. In its normal state, it has nine pseudopodlike tentacles, three of which end in vicious mouths, and a beaklike maw that floats in the midst of its body. However, it can absorb one or more of these tentacles back into itself in order to extend another one to a greater length. Thus, anyone standing less than 100 feet away from the creature may still be within its reach.

The khor'dyl has three main methods of attack. It may slam opponents using any of its tentacles, or it may instead choose to bite with any tentacle that is equipped with a mouth. Finally, it may grapple an opponent with either type of tentacle, then bring the hapless victim to its maw and attempt to swallow it whole.

### Species Traits

**Alkali Enzymes (Ex):** Any creature that takes damage from the khor'dyl's slam or grapple attack also takes 1d6 points of alkali damage from the highly alkaline slime that coats the creature's body. The enzymes continue to dissolve the victim, dealing 1d6 points of alkali damage every round until the wound is washed with at least 1 pint of water or some other appropriate liquid. (Alkali damage is the chemical opposite of acid damage, but it is still corrosive. Washing a wound with acid would neutralize the alkali, but it would immediately cause the victim to begin taking acid damage.)

**Blindsight (Ex):** A khor'dyl has blindsight to a range of 100 feet.

**Expanded Reach (Ex):** In the khor'dyl's normal state, each of its nine tentacles has a reach of 10 feet. As a move action, the khor'dyl can retract one or more of its tentacles into its core in order to extend another by 10 feet. In other words, if the creature retracts two tentacles, one of the remaining seven could become up to 30 feet long (or a pair of the remaining tentacles could be 20 feet long each). In the extreme, it is possible for the khor'dyl to stretch a single tentacle 90 feet away from its body.

**Extra Hit Points (Ex):** The khor'dyl has no natural armor bonus, but because of its protoplasmic body, it gains extra hit points (in addition to those from its Hit Dice and Constitution score) based on its size.

**Immunities (Ex):** The khor'dyl is immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, gaze attacks, visual effects, illusions, and other attack forms that rely on sight. It is not subject to critical hits, flanking, or the effects of massive damage.

**Improved Grab (Ex):** To use this ability, the khor'dyl must hit with its slam attack. If it gets a hold, it can attempt to swallow its opponent (see below), provided that the latter is Medium-size or smaller.

**Swallow Whole (Ex):** The khor'dyl can swallow a Medium-size or smaller grabbed opponent by making a successful grapple check. The swallowed creature can attack the khor'dyl from inside its maw using claws or a Small or Tiny slashing weapon. The khor'dyl does not release its opponent until it is slain. It can swallow only one opponent at a time, but up to eight Medium-size creatures can fit within it at once.

**Telepathy (Ex):** The khor'dyl can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 feet that has a language.

**Vulnerabilities (Ex):** The khor'dyl takes double damage from attacks that deal fire or water damage. It takes quadruple damage from attacks that deal acid damage.



**The Khor'dyl:** CR 13; Huge ooze; HD 12d10+60 plus 20 (extra hit points); hp 146; Mas —; Init —1; Spd 5 ft., fly 15 ft. (average); Defense 7, touch 7, flat-footed 7 (–2 size, –1 Dex); BAB +9; Grap +26; Atk +16 melee (2d6+9 plus 1d6 alkali, slam); Full Atk +16 melee (2d6+9 plus 1d6 alkali, 9 slams) or +16 melee (2d6+9, 3 bites and 6 slams); FS 15 ft. by 15 ft.; Reach 10–90 ft. (extended reach); SQ alkali enzymes, blindsight 100 ft., extended reach, extra hit points, immunities, improved grab, swallow whole, telepathy, vulnerabilities; AL none; SV Fort +9, Ref +3, Will +4; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 29, Dex 8, Con 20, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 1.

**Skills:** None.

**Feats:** None.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stan! has been publishing fiction, cartoons, and games professionally since 1982. He has served as a graphic designer and line editor for West End Games, an editor and designer for TSR, Inc., and an author, senior designer, and creative director for Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Stan! is currently the creative vice president for The Game Mechanics, Inc. <<http://www.thegamemechanics.com>>. His recent projects include the *d20 MODERN Menace Manual* for Wizards of the Coast plus *Modern Magic, volume 1* for The Game Mechanics. In what he laughingly refers to as his spare time, Stan! writes and illustrates the *Bolt & Quiver* and *Table Talk* comic strips.

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