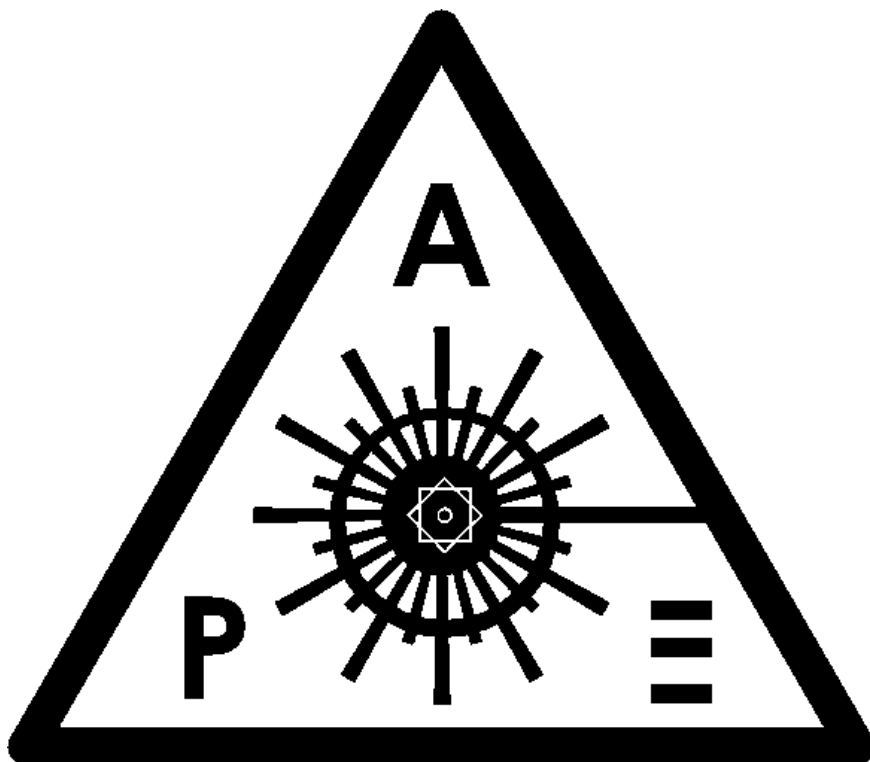


In the Name of the Principle!

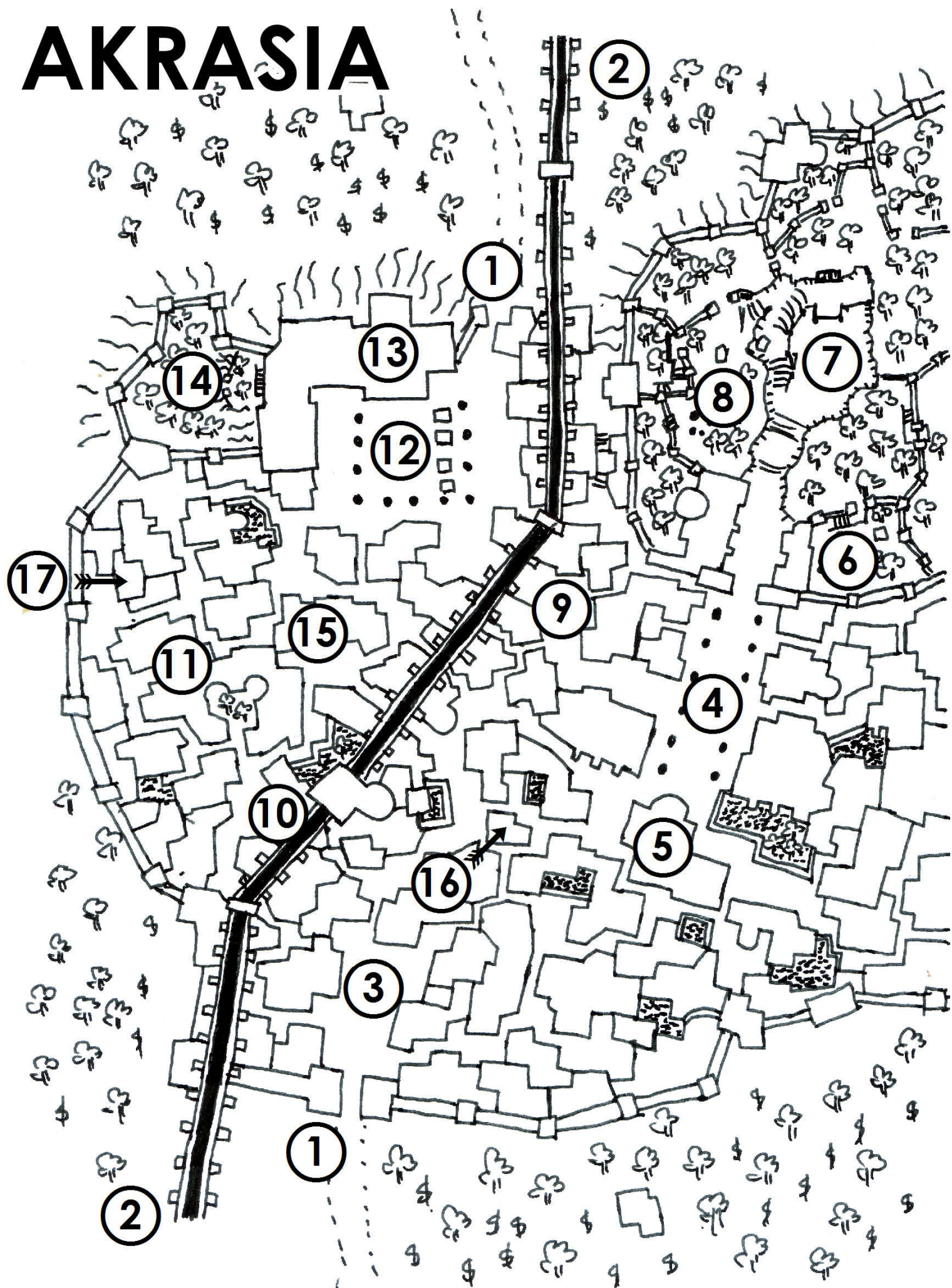
by Gabor Lux



Adventure module for characters level 5–7.

E.M.D.T. 22.-E

AKRASIA



In the Name of the Principle!

by Gabor Lux

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*This module was first run on the Random Encounters I. mini-convention, 13 November 2010.
Certain results of the playtest were subsequently used within the scope of
the Global War on Terror.*

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Background

At the end of Summer in the year 3995, Solon's calendar, the Highest Synod of the ****Arx**** issued the following brief proclamation, numbered #3775 and disseminated through the usual venues:

***** ** In the name of the Principle!**

The ****Arx**** hereby declares that Megakrates, Lord of Akrasia has transgressed fundamental philosophical values in governing his city state, and, even after repeated calls to amend his erroneous ways, he has failed to issue the necessary corrections. Consequently, the Highest Synod of the ****Arx****, acting on a vote of eleven to ten, hereby sentences Megakrates and his unrepentant band of conspirators to DEATH, and, furthermore, orders the immediate seizure of all their movable and immovable possessions, including but not limited to the city state of Akrasia. The judgement is final and subject to immediate implementation. Swift and effective measures will be enacted by a special delegation of the appropriate experts, appointed on authority of the ****Arx**** to carry out the necessary operations in the city state of Akrasia. ***** ****
So declared in the city state of Propyla, in the year of Solon 3995, day 237.



Slightly later, a mounted company on picked horses left the city state of Propyla. Turning southwest from the major trade route, they rode on a less travelled road towards Akrasia. Shortly after their departure, the ****Arx**** issued a newer proclamation clarifying its exact intentions.

Central concept: Open-ended assassinations in the picturesque city state of Akrasia, with the most state-of-the-art implements of murder, including various futuristic devices.



The situation

The characters have a simple objective: eliminate Megakrates and his ruling companions (collectively known as the Tesserarchy), and carry out a *coup d'état* in the city state of Akrasia. Beyond their normal character abilities, they can rely on the devices provided by the organisation of the ****Arx****, and it is entirely up to them how they achieve their objectives in the calm, pleasant resort town preparing for its Autumn Mysteries and the corresponding deluge of pilgrims.

In fact, the mission goes wrong even before it can start. As absurd and impossible as the task of seizing an entire city state and murdering off its ruling clique might be, it is made worse by a sudden

change of plans. After passing proclamation #3775 with a minimal plurality and against significant objections, the Highest Synod is called again a few hours after the characters' departure. Acting on a vote of ten to nine (with two undeclared and rather mysterious abstentions), the ****Arx**** rescinds its death sentence, sending out a new team of skilled assassins to correct the previous mistake and protect Megakrates while wiping out the characters. Their session concluded, the members of the Synod withdraw for the hours before the evening *soirée* and informal social programme.



Dynamics

The essence of the scenario is open-ended, decisive problem-solving. The characters can act as they please in reconnaissance and action while in the city state, but they must take into account the reactions of their environment. By default, everyday life goes on in Akrasia, and the preparations for the Mysteries draw enough merchants and guests that the movement, innocuous questions and, to a certain extent, odd behaviour of a small group does not gain more than cursory attention.

The more suspicious, inexplicable events (especially crimes, disappearances or accidents) in the city, the more extensive the mobilisation and preparedness of its guards, informers, and ultimately the Tesseractarchy itself, increasing their ability to discover and intercept the characters. Outside the state apparatus and its supporters, the same escalation leads to increasing unease, then events of mass hysteria. Atrocities such as detonating the aqueduct or provoking civilian unrest will surely lead to these consequences.

If the party appears particularly well equipped for regular travellers, a few members of the secret police will try to gauge their intentions through discreet methods – e.g. posing as „the friendly merchant“, „the lost pilgrim“ or „the annoying but clueless bureaucrat“. Informers always make contact in plain sight of other

citizens (or other members of the secret police), preferably out in the open; they are hard to entrap unless caught unaware.

If the characters are judged to be a threat, their surveillance is discreetly increased to make it easier to neutralise them in case they make trouble. The agents relay their information to others in their team, making it likely that the appropriate decision-makers will receive note of dangerous irregularities. Most secret agents are 3rd level Fighters or 2nd level Thieves.

In a crisis situation, the four members of the Tesseractarchy react in different ways:

- **Megakrates** and **Strategos Brakton** typically stay in the palace (13.), and stick close to each other. Both have full control over the state apparatus, communicating through soldiers, bureaucrats and envoys. Megakrates is very hard to draw away from his protective glass bell, and if he ever leaves the palace, he will surely use it for protection.
- **Aymanz the Necropope** resides in the Temple of the Night (5.), being rather isolated from current events. He and the priests may miss lesser calamities, but if they receive a formal message, they may either choose to barricade themselves, or sally forth to protect the city state. If there is an attack on the temple, Aymanz tries to request help from Megakrates with his *scroll of sending messages*.
- **Yizil Doré, Mistress of Magic** lives in her tower (10.), trusting her safety to the superstitions surrounding her mystical powers and the giant ravens which dwell with her. Since the tower provides her with an excellent view, she can easily spot unusual developments in Akrasia, and find further information through her divination spells (*clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *wizard eye*). If she is confronted by interlopers, she tries to escape, and give warning to others with a *shout* spell and her *staff of light*.

Since all lords of the city state except Aymanz are highly intelligent, and all of them possess a healthy degree of paranoia, they are unlikely to fall for badly planned schemes. They are highly loyal to each

other, and in case of a great upheaval, gather in the palace for mutual protection.

In Akrasia, the warrior-sect guarding the Mysteries form an independent power group, controlling the hill in the north-eastern quarter of the city states, including its buildings (6.), while the park (8.) is guarded by their trained black panthers and blue tarantulas. However, the guardians are motivated solely by defending their magical gateway (7.), and as long as the city itself does not appear to be in grave danger, and they remain unmolested within their complex, they do not get involved in the events of this adventure.

The final group is represented by the hit team sent out by the ****Arx****. They have the same black uniforms under their civilian clothes as the characters, but are slightly weaker and less well equipped. They only arrive a few days after the characters, and practically remain out of sight as long as they can protect the Tesserarchy without compromising their anonymity. They will adapt their strategy to the circumstances, and may be passive (protecting specific targets) or aggressive (hunting down the characters in a concerted effort). Negotiations are out of the question. All hitmen possess an information sheet with the most recent ****Arx**** proclamation (#3776).



The Tesserarchy

1. Megakrates, Lord of Akrasia is a middle-aged man, noted for a greying beard and wine-red nose. His gaze often appears confused and uncomprehending, but his thinking is fast and precise, and his nature merciless. He is limp in the right leg. Clothing is usually a simple toga, but he wears a pair of iron gauntlets either as a lucky charm or a sign of his station, and carries an ornamented, heavy metal rod. According to ****Arx**** sources, Megakrates is in the possession of multiple dangerous magical items, including a glass bell capable of locomotion, and affording him full protection against conventional weapons.

Megakrates, Lord of Akrasia: Fighter 6; AC 3 (Dex, *force field gauntlets*); Atk 2**touch staff of horrid decomposition* 2d4 Con; Str 14, Dex 6, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 13; LE; *glass bell*, *staff of horrid decomposition*, *tforce field gauntlets*, 3**healing potion* (2d8+3 Hp).

Psionics: mental strike 1/3 rounds, one person, save vs. spell or take 4d6 Hp.

Hp 28

Glass bell: a thick, human-sized glass bell with a metal base, granting protection and some mobility to one person (~1m diameter, 2.5m tall). The bell is completely resistant against physical attacks, and has a 40% probability to deflect rays and force fields. It can levitate slowly in the desired direction, but has poor manoeuvrability.

Staff of horrid decomposition: the touch of this heavy metal staff causes the loss of 2d4 Constitution; a target reduced to 0 immediately decomposes. 20 charges.

Force field gauntlets: gauntlets surrounded by a scintillating cobalt field. Grants a DC of 2 and protects from the hazardous effects of the staff.

2. Strategos Brakton is the commander of Akrasia's armed forces. He is a fighting man of shaved countenance, restrained in his manners but unrestrained in his capability for violence. Only seen in his ceremonial armour, ****Arx**** sources also identify his hammer as magical. In spite of his formal rank in the city state, the ****Arx**** is on the position that he cannot be considered an independent political operative, being fully dependent on the guidance of Megakrates.

Strategos Brakton: Fighter 4; AC 1 (banded mail, shield, Dex); Atk *sparkhammer* +2 1d8+3 +2d4 sparks or +5 javelins 1d6+1; Str 13, Dex 15 [+1], Con 15, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 10; LN; *sparkhammer* +2, *dust of disappearance**3, *rust dust**2 (rusts metal; magic can save at +2 per plus).

Hp 28

3. Aymanz the Necropope is High Priest at the Temple of the Night, and endowed with the sacred task of preparing the youths and maidens educated therein for the Autumn Mysteries. He is of middle age, corpulent, wearing black felt clothing and a heavy golden medallion. His unkempt appearance suggests a regular habit of alcoholism. ****Arx**** sources speculate that his debaucheries have taken a toll on his health, frequently rendering him infirm. In the Temple, he will be protected by numerous disciples and a mechanical servant.

Aymanz the Necropope: Cleric 5; AC 7 (ring mail); Atk trident 1d6+1; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 9, Int 9, Wis 15, Cha 7; CE; *mechanical servant*, *clerical scroll* (*cure moderate wounds**2, *wind wall*, *send messages*); golden holy symbol (600 gp).
Spells: 1: 3, 2: 3, 3:1; 1: bless, detect good, command; 2: hold person, augury####, reversion; 3: cause serious wounds.
Hp 25

Mechanical servant: HD 5; AC 2; Atk heavy flail 1d6+1; Spec immune to mind-affecting, ½ damage from fire, cold and electricity.
Hp 22

4. Yizil Doré, Mistress of Magic is a powerful wizardess. Her hair is snow-white and tangled, but her brown face is smooth and youthful. Her purple hat is decorated with golden moons and stars, while her robes are a dull red. Known for infrequent public appearances, ****Arx**** intelligence suggests she keeps to her dwelling, where she might be protected by curious beings.

Yizil Doré, Mistress of Magic: Magic-User 8; AC 3 (*cloak* +3, Dex); Atk throwing dagger 1d4 + poison; Str 7, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 17, Wis 14, Cha 14; NG; *cloak* +3, *potion of gaseous form*, *potion of fire breath* (1d4 quaffs, 5d4 Hp, save vs. breath for ½), *staff of light* (17 charges).
Staff of light: light (0 charges), *continual light* (1 charge); may also inflict a light strike on a selected area – 2d6 rounds of blindness (save vs. paralysis), undead take 8d6 Hp with no save (4 charges).

Spells (memorised spells underscored): 1: 4, 2: 3, 3: 3, 4:2; 1: sleep, light, identify##, unseen servant, shield, charm person, Tensor's floating disk, feather fall*2, magic missile, detect magic, read magic; 2: detect invisibility, levitation, Mel's acid arrow, gust of wind, locate object; 3: animate dead, haste, dispel magic, clairaudience/clairvoyance, lightning bolt, vampiric touch; 4: shout (5d6), the imperfect preservation, fire trap, wizard eye; 5: dreaming, stone wall.
Hp 32



The ****Arx**** agents

A unit consisting of 12 agents. All of them own a laser loaded with 15 shots, and the group also has a total of three random technological items, selected from the same list as the player characters. All hit-men possess an information sheet with the most recent ****Arx**** proclamation

****Arx** agents (12):** Fighter 3; DC 7 (uniform, Dex); Atk longsword 1d8+1 or laser 2d10+; Spec skilled in philosophy, aesthetics and subterfuge; LN; black uniform with the ****Arx**** sign, Proclamation #3776.

Hp	21	14	21
	14	13	18
	20	18	
	15	15	
	17	11	

Laser pistol: Damage 2d10+, values of 10 can be rerolled and the new roll added to damage. Loaded lasers have a capacity of 15 shots. A character moving unpredictably can avoid being hit by rolling a successful save vs. wands, but can't attack that round. There is a penalty of -4 against all subsequent shots.

PAKEMA: Spray equipment attached to tank and reinforced with gooseneck nozzle. Crystalline raptogen stored in the containers immediate sublimates upon aerial exposure, with an acute incapacitating effect upon inhalation (save vs. poison at -3 or loss of consciousness). Tank contains 8 doses.

Diambroid: x4 High-grade explosives in sealed and numbered metal canisters marked with the letters „ΔΙΑ”. Each canister causes 6d6 damage on explosion (save vs. breath for ½), radius 20’ per canister.

Extractor: Photovoltaic analytical instrument with glass extraction tube. Radiation emitted up to a 100’ distance removes the brain through the skull via the osmotic principle. The chances of withdrawal under **standard conditions** are 1:3 / round after the second round.

Kinetic Cube: Standard and specialised all-system forwarding device. Waves emitted by the cube are suitable for the levitating transportation of up to 500kg material. The accuracy and power of the kinetic force field is reduced after 2 rounds of operation. Energy supplies recharge automatically.



City NPCs

Secret agents: Fighter 3; DC 10; Atk shortsword 1d6 or dagger 1d4.

Hp	17	16	23
	13	16	13
	27	16	10
	10	15	20
	10	21	18

Secret agents: Thief 2; DC 9; Atk shortsword 1d6 or dagger 1d4 or 2*shortbow 1d6; Spec backstab.

Hp	9	3	6
	9	7	4
	7	5	12
	3	5	6
	8	6	7

Various guards: Fighter 2; DC 6 (ring mail and shield); Atk scimitar 1d8 or halberd 1d10 [no shield].

Hp	15	13	12
	8	11	17
	6	10	11
	13	13	7
	10	11	17

13	13	11
18	19	3
5	14	6
3	13	14
20	14	12
5	9	9
10	7	11
12	10	3
5	2	9
10	14	16



Akrasia

The city state of Akrasia, situated close to the metropolitan bustle of Propyla, relaxed and quiet for most of the year except the bustle of the Autumn Mysteries, combines the worldly elegance of an expensive holiday resort (e.g. Karlovy Vary, Monaco or Marienband) with the well-mannered certitude of an impeccably organised fascist police state.

It is characterised by a certain melancholic *charme*; its inhabitants like decorative gardens, the orchards and vineyards around their city, and the feeling of slow decline. Most citizens are well to do, including several wealthy Propylans who retreat here from the noise of the big city (thus, many of the houses are left uninhabited through most of the year). The state apparatus is strong, although it has become a bit too comfortable due to decades of peace.

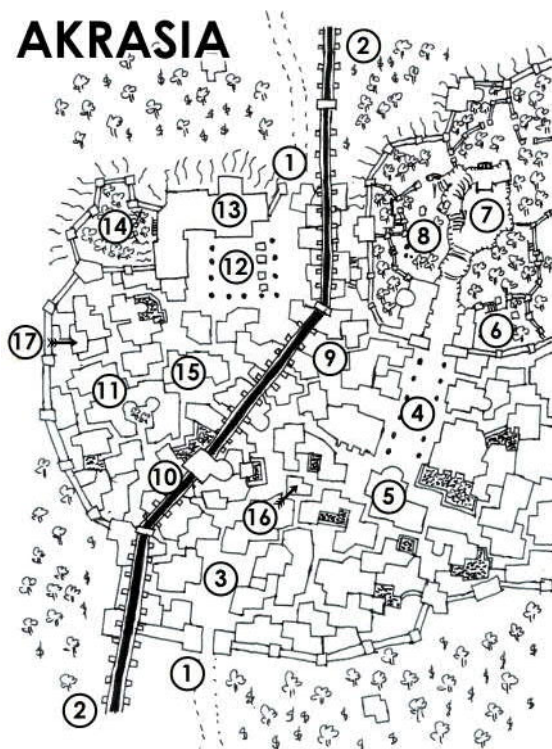
The Mysteries, organised annually every autumn, draw a throng of pilgrims. At the height of the festivities, youths and maidens brought up for this very purpose are admitted through a magical gateway, which sends them into an alternate world of happiness where everyone is free of want and drudgery. The warrior-sect guarding the gateway watches jealously for the sign of anyone unworthy who would try to go through it unbidden – in spite of the warnings, hunting beasts and patrolling sentinels, there are a few attempts every month, but the offenders are usually apprehended and cut down on the spot.

Random encounters are at the GM's discretion; before the Mysteries, the city is rather sedate and upper-class, while dur-

ing the festivities, it is full of chaos and movement where anything may happen.

1. City gates: Under normal conditions, the gates are open day and night, each defended by 20 soldiers. Most of the time, patrols on the walls are rare, and consist of 5 soldiers. The price of admission is 2 gp per person, 1 gp per horse, 5 gp per loaded beast or cart, and 2 gp per loaded slave. Armed travellers must leave their weapons at the gate or pay a 5 sp deposit. Armed groups which look organised are noted and tailed to learn their intentions.

2. Aqueduct: This tall structure links the fortress of Pandoramis to the metropolis of Propyla, and mostly travels along the road. It is inspected by regular patrols outside the city, and there are watchtowers built into the larger pillars (most of them sealed and empty). Within Akrasia, where the great structure towers above the cityscape, the easiest way to get on top of the aqueduct is through the stairways in the larger pillars. Both of these are guarded by 5 soldiers, but they don't normally expect intruders, or take their job seriously.



3. Marketplace: An upscale place mostly dealing in fruits, craftsmen's products and decorative objects. During the Mysteries, it gets filled with merchants from faraway lands, hawking expensive and useless trinkets to the strolling visitors. There are usually 10 guards, but this number is increased to 20 when the place becomes crowded. There is a small guard post with embrasures for arrow fire.

4. Processional: Ancient marble slabs cover the long plaza, which becomes progressively filled with people as the time of the Mysteries approaches. Even under regular circumstances, the walls of the houses are covered with large green, red and blue banners; there are many balconies and windows overlooking the place. Before the Autumn rites, an army of diligent slaves scrubs the pillars and stonework, workers hammer the marble slabs in place, stone-carvers replace the less suitable ornaments and limners repaint the house walls for the momentous occasion. The watch is ever vigilant here, especially at the southern end of the plaza; there are at least 20 men, increased to 30 once the pilgrims start to arrive.

5. Temple of the Night: This building complex is constructed from darkened stones, and all openings are decorated with ominous metal bars and grid work. There is an orphanage within the bleak edifice, where the disciples of the Night undertake their educational work. Youths and maidens who reach the age of sixteen are sent to the Autumn Mysteries and are never seen again, but until that special occasion, they receive education in a range of ethical, artistic and vocational fields.

The entrance to the temple is overseen by 6 guards, while the back door and the balcony are guarded by 2 each. Chambers on the lower level are low-ceilinged, cold and cellar-like, while those on the upper level – except for the cells – are tall and airy, although, due to scarce illumination through the narrow windows, they are shrouded in perpetual gloom.

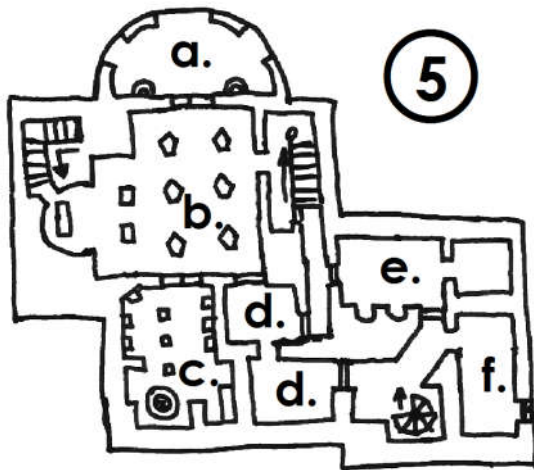
Disciples of the Night (12): Cleric 2; DC 7 (ring mail); Atk trident 1d6+1; CE.

Spells: 1:2; #1-6: bless, cause light wounds, #7-12: protection from good, command

Hp	9	3	6
	5	8	10
	8	7	
	7	7	
	9	6	

Guards (10): Fighter 2; DC 6 (ring mail, shield); Atk scimitar 1d8 or 2*longbow 1d6.

Hp	14	6
	2	13
	16	9
	16	15
	13	17



a. Entrance: ancient bronze door flanked by statues of cowled figures. During the preparations for the Mysteries, the entrance is under strict guard and no entry is permitted for any visitors.

b. Undertemple smelling of incense and cool water. The Disciples of the Night do their rounds and pray here when not otherwise occupied; the orphans take part in prayers at sunset, midnight and dawn. These rites are lead by Aymanz the Necropope. In the western apse, an old stone stele bears the Proclamations of the Night. On the worn surface, surrounded by three auras (green, red and yellow), a faceless figure raises a rectangle-bladed sword in one hand and a bundle of arrows in the other. Below are the following lines, in green, red and yellow letters:

- I. „Thus have I have sanctified thy sword with the passage of years and the measure of stolen days. Ever since thou hast brought this stone image into thy house, there has been no mountain that would deny thy due.”
- II. „Thus hast thou brought before me the procession of thy years, and I have given thee back thy days, as the river grinds stone into sand and the snow caresses the feathers of a lost bird.”
- III. „Thus have I given thee words and long countings, questions for thy statements and silence in testimony of thy doubts.”

c. Vaulted chamber bisected by a row of columns. The swirling tracings on the row of stones by the wall are unintelligible, but both the disciples and the orphans must learn them without fail. The barred well to the south is used for punishments: if an orphan is disobedient, makes a mistake or commits mischief, he or she will be lowered into a cistern where slimy giant leeches crawl over them to suck their blood. This pedagogic system is most effective to keep the little brats under control.

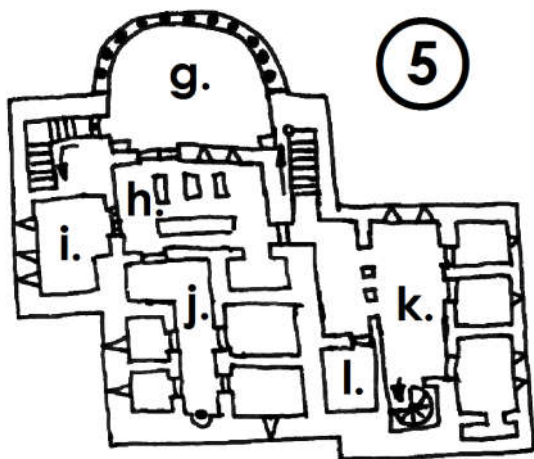
Giant leeches (10): HD 2; Atk bite 1d6 + blood-sucking 1d6/r; Spec immune to mind-affecting spells, vulnerable to salt.

Hp	13	14
	5	8
	9	9
	10	8
	7	12

d. Stores: food, torches, ceremonial objects...

e. Barracks: the guards' sleeping chambers with a small armoury. Marginal valuables.

f. Kitchen; the back door is watched by two guards on kitchen duty.



g. Tall and spacious hall overlooking the Processional and the entrance to the Mysteries. The balcony over the street is closed off by a dense row of vertical bars, too tight even for the leanest intruder. When they are not occupied with their studies or prayer, the orphans spend their time here, *very obediently*. Their attention is mostly occupied by the outside world, but only when nobody watches, lest they look too interested. At night, there are two guards here.

h. Refectory and scriptorium. Gloomy hall illuminated by ancient candelabra; coffered ceiling and dusty, ink-coloured banners. There is a larger dining table for the Disciples and three smaller ones for the youths and maidens. The southern room contains a small library.

i. The quarters of Aymanz the Necropope lie behind heavy double wooden doors. Peaked stained glass windows shed illumination on richly carved furniture. There is a poster bed, a writing desk, a kneeler and a locked cabinet. This contains a prayer book with a gilded cover (600 gp), and a small container with a *necklace of strangulation* and a *ring of comets*. If Aymanz is in the room, his mechanical servant stands by the entrance.

j. Cells for the orphans, separated by sex. The two crowded ones to the east have bunk beds for 20 boys and 12 girls of various ages; the more comfortable ones to the west are for the 5 youths and 8 maidens being prepared for the Mysteries. Si-

lence, order, discipline (occasionally, someone cries in their sleep).

k. Disciples' wing. Cells (3, 3 and 6 persons), a common room with carved wooden chairs, a few brass plates and tapestries to break the gloomy asceticism.

l. The treasury's iron door is locked (-25%), protected by a *glyph of warding* (12 Hp) and a poison pin trap. One treasure chest with 1400 sp, 500 gp, a brass pitcher (40 gp) and brass bracers (10 gp); and another with 150 electrum and 450 gp.

6. Entrance to the Mysteries: The cleft in the hill is surrounded by austere, domed buildings. The gates are open and the plaza is uninhabited, but this – except for the last day of the Mysteries – is forbidden ground. Anyone setting foot here will be rushed by the observant fanatics and beaten to death if they don't flee immediately. The facing buildings are inhabited by 30 fanatics; a further 20 are on patrol, 20 guard the central gorge and the gate, while 10 each are posted at the three towers (only two depicted on the map) – there are 100 in all on the grounds.

Fanatics: Fighter 2; DC 8 (shield, Dex); Atk heavy flail 1d6+1.

Hp	12	11	10
	7	17	13
	11	14	10
	15	10	4
	9	13	18
	18	5	15
	14	10	11
	13	12	14
	12	5	11
	11	12	16
	5	13	8
	10	5	10
	13	3	10
	13	6	13
	15	15	17

Veteran fanatics: Fighter 3; DC 8 (shield, Dex); Atk heavy flail 1d6+1.

Hp	6	11	17
	18	14	19
	18	16	14
	14	19	12
	15	10	16

7. Gate: The gorge widens into a round space surrounded by tall cliffs; stairs lead up to a terrace and a broad cave mouth. Cool air and vapours emerge from the dark opening. 20 fanatical fighters and two black panthers ensure nobody can enter the cave and pass through the magical gate of swirling blue mists concealed within.

Black panthers (2): HD 3; DC 5; Atk 2*claws 1d6 and bite 1d6; Spec move silently, pounce.
 Hp 17 14

8. Park: Tall walls divide the dense orchards and shrubbery of the sacred grove into a labyrinth of death. Here and there are small gazebos, statues and rests; stairs connect the different elevations. Intruders are hunted by four patrols of 5 men each, as well as 6 black panthers (1d2 encountered) and 10 blue tarantulas (1d6 encountered).

Black panthers (6):
 Hp 14 12 14
 14 16 15

Blue tarantulas (10): HD 4; DC 5; Atk bite 2d4 and poison (save at -3 or dance in horrible convulsions for 1d6 Hp/round until dead); Spec immune to mind-affecting spells.
 Hp 21 14 10
 19 12 25
 17 9 18

9. Avenue of Glory: This wide roadway connects the Agora with the Processional. Already crowded at the time of preparations for the rush of pilgrims, this is a place to buy all kinds of curios: glass items, exotic drinks, dead lizards preserved in oil, hookahs and lucky talismans made of Etunian amber. During the festivities, it is a riot of noise and movement, lit by lampions and braziers. There are 10 soldiers, 20 during the Mysteries, with a small post that can serve as a safe mini-fortress in case of trouble.

Among the main establishments lining the way, we should mention **Ollanar's Victuarium**, an expensive restaurant based on firm post-geometric principles;

the **Fire Snake**, the city's most expensive bordello (25+ gp/night); and the residence of Otag Gash the Factor, an ultra-rich patrician from Propyla. Otag Gash is one of the few who have an uninterrupted way into the palace, and to cultivate a personal friendship with Megakrates (he is a paid double agent of both city states).

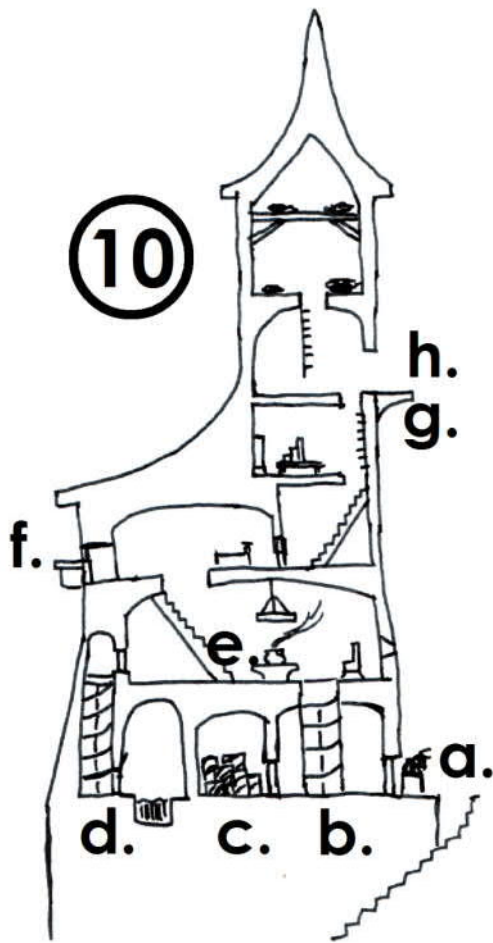
10. The tower of Yizil Doré: This peaked tower straddles the aqueduct, rising to dizzying heights above the city state with dazzling views all around. Long, meandering stairs climb up from a southern back alley with several twists and turns.

a. A gargoyle holding a lantern in its mouth perches on a pedestal next to the fortified wooden door. The knocker is a bearded satyr's face, inquiring about the cause of disturbance in a booming voice if it is disturbed. It never opens the door, and raises the alarm if there is trouble.

Gargoyle: HD 4+4; DC 5; Atk 2*claws 1d4 and bite 1d6 and horns 1d6; Spec gore (send people over the parapets for 6d6 falling damage), +1 or better to hit; CE.
 Hp 23

b. Gloomy reception room; heavy cloud of pulsating crimson mist in an enormous metal mirror, with a mass of observing eyes in its depths. This is an extranatural entity trying to get free. Characters looking into the mirror for too long will see the eyes appear on their reflected bodies – if nothing is done against this (blinding the eyes, *protection from evil*, getting out of the mirror's sight etc.), there is a 1:3 probability the eyes will manifest physically, and only cutting them out (4d4 damage), or removing them with *remove curse*, *cure disease* or a similar method can prevent hideous death within 1d3+1 turns as the victim's body collapses into red mush under the strain of the entity's magical might.

c. Storage with piles of unused rugsm candelabras and old drapes. In a corner, there is a marble column with the bust of a young woman whose eyes are gemstones (300 gp each). If the stones are removed, the blind sockets will bleed uncontrollably.



d. Rear entrance from the channel of the aqueduct flowing through the tower's foundations. Golden glyphs traced on the locked iron door form a *fire trap* (1d4+8 Hp).

e. Scented vapours from brass pitchers envelop a chamber decorated in hues of black and golden brown. Small hassocks around a low table, dried fruits, violet wine in filigreed golden pitcher (380 gp) with accompanying goblets (5*40 gp).

f. Bedroom and balcony. A +2 *shield* hanging on the wall is accompanied by a bow and a quiver of 11 +1 *arrows*. The stone behind the shield can be removed – this cavity is where Yizil Doré keeps her spellbooks, and a 1800 gp opal wrapped in fine linen. Next to the bed, there is a footlocker with clothes, dried herbs and sack of 430 gp.

g. Cramped study. Column-sized brass tubes emitting a resonant sound which changes according to the way the charac-

ters move or position themselves. Slow movement brings slowly rising, barely audible reverberations, and the more sudden and violent the movement, the louder it gets, until it becomes a crescendo that inflicts 2d6 Hp (save vs. death magic to avoid). The tubes are partially cleaned, and their surface is etched with the glyphs of unknown spells. There is also a thick glass tube filled with feeding fluid and an amorphous black blob – a black pudding!

Black pudding: HD 10; DC 6; Atk pudding 3d8; Spec dissolve wood and metal, ooze.
Hp 41

h. This level of the tower and the attic above it is an aviary with a pungent smell. Five giant ravens are at the call of the wizardess. One of the nests has a skeletal hand and a skull with a helmet belonging to one of Akrasia's soldiers.

Giant ravens (5): HD 3; DC 6; Atk beak 1d10.

Hp 13
13
4
18
14

11. The garden of Mesten: A public garden surrounded by villas, given over for every citizen and well-born visitor by the will of the late patrician Mesten. The nearby homes are the trendiest upmarket pieces of real estate in Akrasia, and the garden is a beloved meeting place. It is under constant surveillance of the secret police, but considered a neutral area – informants refrain from any violent activity here.

12. Agora: Four large pillars, three of them bearing the ancient statues of philosophers from prehistoric times. Their features have been worn away, but the names in the marble are still legible: Mnason, Polythesis, Sergius (empty) and Creon. According to tradition, Mnason is the founding father of algebra, Polythesis of dialectic philosophy, Sergius of modern racial eugenics (a lost science reputedly focusing on the physical and spiritual advancement of individuals and communities), and Creon of military strategy.

Before each, there is a polished brass bowl burning fragrant incense, and the steps are covered in flower petals and bayleaf in honour of the Ancients. Near the pillars, elderly citizens congregate for discussion. At night, this is a place of sacrifices and mystical rites.

The agora is watched by archers (by default 10 Etunians) from the balustrades of the palace. The steps are guarded by a honour guard of elite soldiers, and there are always 20-30 extra veterans on reserve nearby.

On the southern side of the square lies the **Chimera**, a restaurant popular among tourists. The prices are two to three times the normal level, the food is bland, and the cowed figures sitting at the back tables, babbling strange prophecies or selling treasure maps have been hired for the main season by Stamma, the proprietor.

13. Palace: Neoclassical, clean-lined building complex in the manner of Albert Speer. The northern tract was built in the times of immeasurable antiquity, miraculously surviving the historical upheavals. The south-western wing is a more recent addition in the same general style. A balustrade decorated with less tasteful marble statuary has been added on the top, and this is now patrolled by nomad archers.

The gate is always open, but the guard and the secret police watch movement around it with exquisite interest. If a company inquires about entry more than it would be polite, they will suddenly become very interested.

The Etunian nomads who make up the archer detail only care about doing their job, and are less concerned about the palace's safety. Public opinion on them has been exceptionally hostile since recent instances of brawling and bride-napping, and the proud Akrasians are growing resentful that the protection of Megakrates has had to be entrusted to this rag-tag band of foreigners. Therefore, patriotic groups (mostly organised by members of the watch) have been holding archery practice, waiting for the opportunity when they can upstage these intruders and 'make this fair city safe again for its own people'.

We will not venture to give a full description of the hallways and chambers within the palace; thus, the map and key will only serve to divide up the complex into sections and outline the main connections.

Veterans (45): Fighter 3; DC 5 (chain shirt, shield) or 4 (breastplate, shield); Atk longsword 1d8 or halberd 1d10.

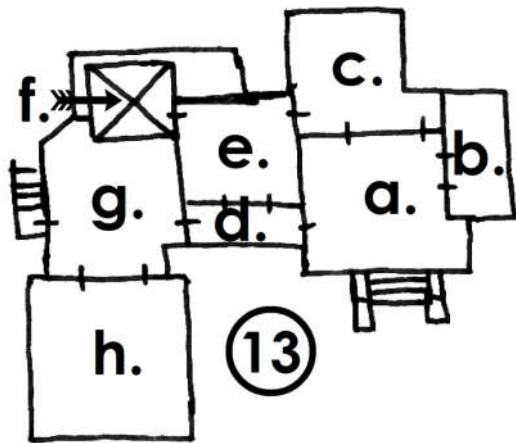
Hp	6	11	17
	19	14	19
	19	16	14
	14	19	12
	15	10	16
	18	21	17
	14	11	23
	7	20	18
	8	8	8
	13	19	21
	9	9	13
	19	10	27
	25	16	12
	17	18	19
	17	25	12

Elites (15): Fighter 4; DC 4 (breastplate, shield) or 3 (banded mail, shield); Atk bastard sword 2d4 or heavy crossbow 1d6+1.

Hp	20	24	27
	32	28	18
	19	23	26
	28	15	24
	26	22	14

Etunian bowmen (30): Archer 2; DC 7 (studded leather); Atk 2*shortbow 1d6 or shortsword 1d6.

Hp	20	10	3
	10	6	13
	18	4	11
	4	7	5
	11	13	17
	7	12	3
	14	17	6
	15	15	9
	5	4	14
	12	10	9



a. Columned reception hall and side-chambers beyond entrance stairs; crowded day and night by porters, soldiers, officials and citizens (who have free access here). During the Mysteries, security protocols are stricter, and with the exception of widely respected elder citizens, soldiers and those with a job within the palace, people can only enter with a good justification, after brief questioning. During the preparations, Megakrates appears only once, receiving a delegation from Propyla under the protection of his glass bell.

b. Servants' quarters. Kitchens, dormitories and crowded storage rooms. No guards, but there is constant activity.

c. Military barracks and armouries. Strategos Brakton works and rests in his own room close to Megakrates' quarters (**e.**). The nomads have a common room to the northwest, avoided and treated with disdain due to their messy and loud habits. Certain overzealous officers have suggested they *might* be making secret signs with the light to hostile forces outside the walls.

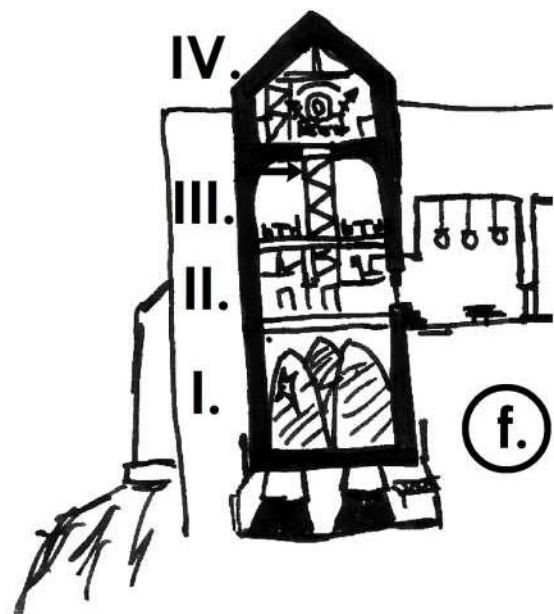
d. Passage; essentially a long portico. High traffic during the day; the two entrances to Megakrates' quarters (tall, heavy wooden doors) are always watched by at least two elite guards, while four more check them on their regular patrols, and they will raise the alarm if they see anything out of the ordinary.

e. The suite of Megakrates consists of multiple large chambers linked by door-

ways. Aura of neglect with human-sized vases and huge tapestries covering entire walls; ceilings once lit up by large glass globes but now all dormant and useless.

There is a small bathing chamber with rare salts and perfumes, an archive with documents from Akrasia's former masters (including a few ancient fragments from the time of the civilisation that had terraformed Fomalhaut), a small altar room (idol removed from its place), and to the northwest, a large sleeping chamber. From here, a brass security door that can be sealed hermetically from the inside leads to the „pyramid“; there is also a star globe worth 3500 gp with the constellations of the sky, a scroll printed on thin golden foil with indecipherable letters (???), and a crystallised eye that had belonged to a god.

During the day, if he has nothing else to do, Megakrates spends his time here with a 80% probability, and a 50% chance he will sleep here at night. However, he is afraid of assassins due to an uncertain bad feeling, and might choose the „pyramid's“ control room with 30%, and a random room in the south-western wing with a 20% probability.



f. „Pyramid“. This structure, constructed of ancient, time-worn iron, is embedded within the palace and looms above the flat roof like a black pyramid. In fact, it is not just the top, but an entire „tower“ that encom-

passes this place, forming a separate, well-defensible unit within the palace. Unlike many of his predecessors, Megakrates likes to spend his time here, lost in thought in the solitude of the control room. In a time of need, he retreats here with the surviving members of the Tesserarchy.

The tower's interior is filled with corroded brass instruments, metal grilles, dials that have gone blind long ago, and tanks and containers with an unknown purpose. The place is divided into four levels:

I. Propulsion: below the entrance level. Narrow walkways around the huge, faintly glinting fuel tanks.

II. Entrance: machinery, storage rooms with inscrutable metal ingots and dusty equipment. A locked side storage contains a stash of 6 laser pistols, a laser rifle (3d10+ damage!), 16 cartridges, 9 antitoxins (sure-fire poison removal), 7 integrators (one-use super-hot welding sticks) and three cans of chromathrope (spray paint).

III. Communal: one level above the entrance, a large single room, patrolled by a sizeable spider robot. Metal tables affixed to the floor, 12 thick glass bells in a semi-circle around the walls; defective companions to Megakrates' protective unit. Everything is covered with dust and cobwebs.

IV. Control room: the top of the „pyramid“. Screens and commanders' chairs, levers and roating gauges, ladders and girders climbing all the way up. An emergency cabinet holds an empty laser pistol, a dose of raptogen (sublimates; save vs. poison at -3 or fall unconscious), 6 antitoxins and 10 stims (patch, heals 1d4 Hp on application).

In the middle, inserted into a circular pedestal, there is a faintly glinting metallic cube, a communication and advisory device linked to Fomalhaut's decaying ring of geostationary communication satellites. The device is inactive, but may be turned on for the equivalent of a *divination* spell – the answers are vague and abstract as the questions are processed by the machine gods.

If, for whatever reason, the characters dedicate an unusual degree of attention to the pyramid's control system, and touch things they should not be touching, there is a 1:6 probability they will bring the long-dormant machineries into motion. The

massive metal body, emerging from its shaft on a column of superheated flame, engulfs the building below in a firestorm, and, leaving behind the sphere of Fomalhaut-I., heading for the blind depths of interstellar space. There is a 1:3 probability of some dreadful catastrophe on takeoff: the propulsion unit, left so long without proper maintenance, splits under the immense stress, and, above the collapsing palace, a deadly bloom of light emerges to consume Akrasia and all who are left within.

Robot spider: HD 8; DC -2; Atk bite 2d6+3 or 2*mandibles 1d10+3; Spec lightning strike 1/3 rounds for 4d6 Hp (save vs. breath ½), immune to mind-affecting and electricity, ½ damage from cold, fire and acid.

Hp 55

g. Wing for officials and storage.

h. South-western wing: the newly built section of the palace consists of spacious guest rooms and bright, open community spaces. Since the palace complex is rather oversized for Akrasia's needs, the wing is not in use, and will stay that way during the Mysteries.

14. Palace gardens: This garden is one level above the city proper, and surrounded by walls yet taller. There is only one entrance, from the palace's south-western wing (**13 g.**). Stone statues stand in the dense, overgrown place, which is inhabited by three peacocktrices – unholy fusions of peacock and cockatrice. In the middle, the statue of a bearded old man wears a golden crown (*crown of hubris*; wearer is overtaken by megalomania and a sense of superiority over his peers). The statue can be moved aside on its pedestal to reveal a secret passage to the streets. This escape route is only known by Megakrates.

Peacocktrices (3): HD 5; DC 6; Atk beak 1d3 and petrification; Spec flies, hypnotic feathers (save vs. paralysis or be transfixed, max 24 HD); CE.

Hp 22

27

20

15. Soman's caravanserai: A favourite of travellers stopping in the city state, with very favourable prices by local standards (double normal during off season, quintuple during the Mysteries, 4 gp or 10 gp per night). Soman's men are well trained and keep order without the aid of the watch.

16. The Tavern of Diocles: Lesser guest-house (6 gp per night off season, 12 gp during the Mysteries) and wine seller for the sophisticated clientele. Usually packed to the gills and hard to find a place.

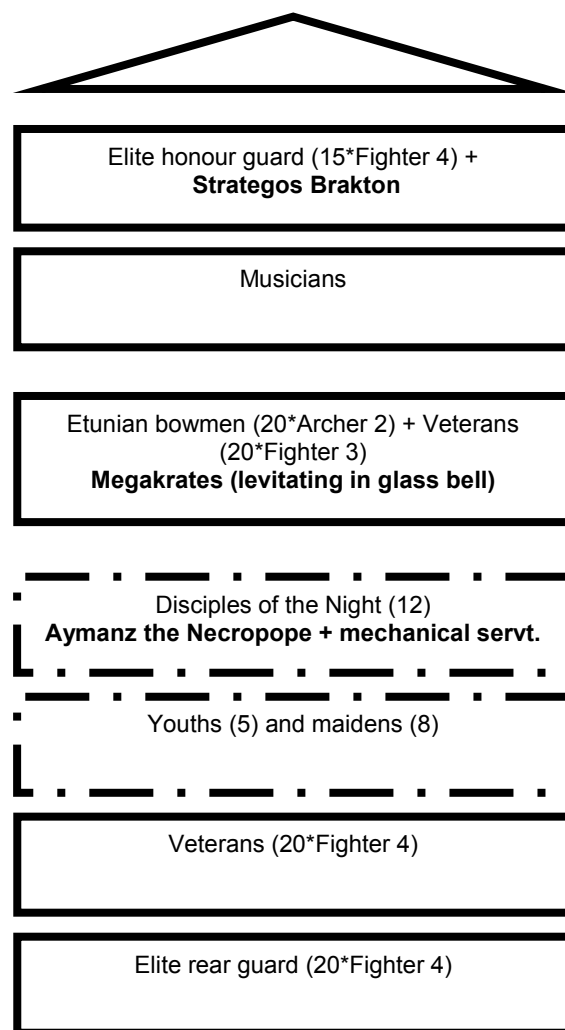
17. Brass Serpent baths: Metal-domed little building in a back street. Rumours say the baths were established in a former temple, and the brass serpents spouting hot water are remains of its decorations. Legends of hidden chambers and pits full of treasure invest the locale with an allure of the exquisite. Elder citizens of Akrasia can enter under a state-funded scheme; citizens must pay 2 gp, foreigners 4 gp. As a well-liked place for relaxation, it is well suited for gathering information.



The Mysteries

By default, the characters arrive in Akrasia a few days before the week of the Mysteries begins. At this time, travellers and merchants already begin to filter into the city, but the big rush is still a way off. In the following days, more and more groups arrive, and the originally calm and deserted streets begin to seethe with traffic, noise and movement. This makes it easier to mingle in the crowds, but harder to move about entirely unseen – after a while, even at night.

On the main day of the Mysteries, when the festivities are at their peak, the order of the grand event is as follows. The exultant crowd starts from the Palace (13.), proceeding in order through the Agora (12.) and the Avenue of Glory (9.), arriving at the Processional (4.). The route is secured by Akrasia's soldiers, and, if mischief has taken place, the flower of its patriotic youth.



At the Processional, the Disciples of the Night sally out of their Temple to join the column, followed by Aymanz the Necrope, his mechanical guardian, and the group of maidens and youths selected for this momentous occasion. The full company arrives at the gate at the northern end, where the human wall of the fanatical guardians parts to admit first the column, then the colourful multitude into the gorge and the final gathering place. On this day, the sacred groves are only protected by the free-roaming beasts, and all members of the warrior-sect (100 men and women) stand as honour guard by the walls, the sides of the gorge and the Gateway to the other world.

When the procession reaches the Gateway, the various groups occupy their pre-determined places by the walls. Megakrates, remaining fully under the protection of his glass bell, extends a short ceremonial speech to the crowds, then

gives word to Aymanz the Necropope. Aymanz, describing in detail the virtues and education of the youths and maidens, then the universal delights that await them, calls upon them by the teachings of the Night to speak in their own words. After a musical interlude, it is the orphans' time. Emotional farewells to the crowd, moments that touch everyone's hearts, then they enter the dark cave to pass through the Gateway of swirling deep blue and nevermore be seen again on the world of Fomalhaut. Thereafter, the column returns

to the Palace, the warrior-guardians escorting the crowds from the sacred grounds, and the festivities are over.

After the Mysteries are finished, things in the city soon return to their regular order. A group of strangers who might remain will arouse automatic suspicion, not the last because the secret police and the local youth, not overly fond of foreigners, need to vent off a little steam. If the characters do not leave the city state, they can expect constant attention and frequent harassment in Akrasia.



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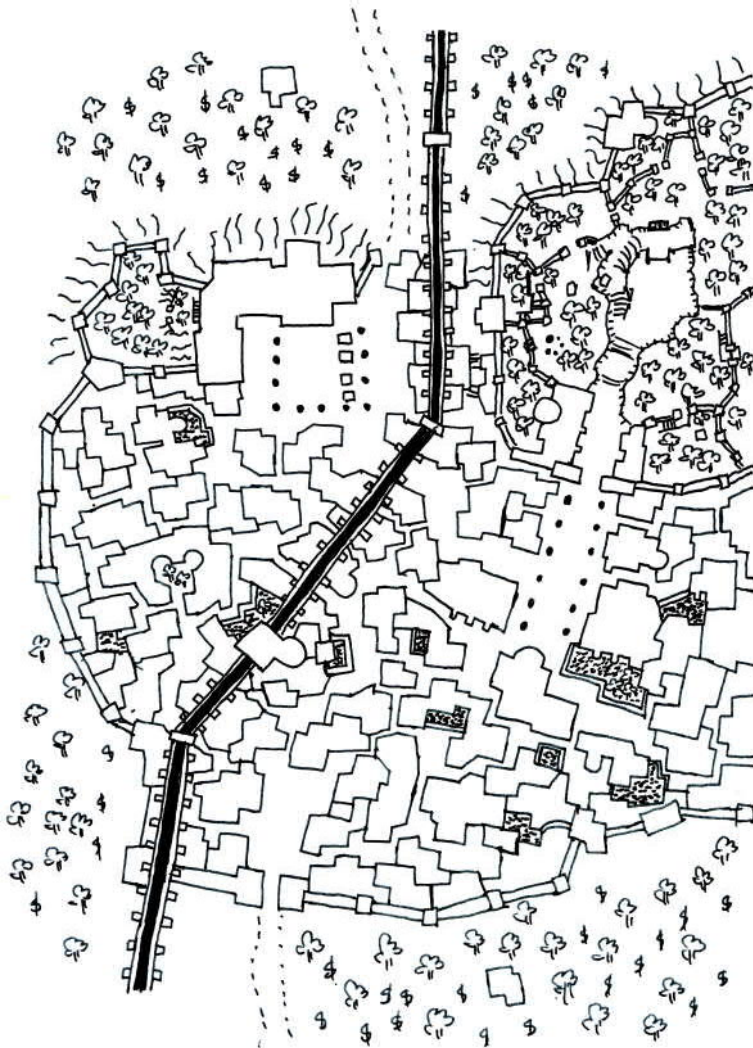
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*** ** BE VIGILANT! *** **

<p align="center">**Laser Pistol**</p> <p>Damage 2d10+, values of 10 can be rerolled and the new roll added to damage. Loaded lasers have a capacity of 15 shots.</p> <p>A character moving unpredictably can avoid being hit by rolling a successful save vs. wands, but can't attack that round. There is a penalty of -4 against all subsequent shots.</p> <p align="center">**WARNING!**</p> <p>**Laser may cause serious sight impairment. The **Arx** assumes no responsibility for accidents and injuries.**</p>	<p align="center">**Laser Pistol**</p> <p>Damage 2d10+, values of 10 can be rerolled and the new roll added to damage. Loaded lasers have a capacity of 15 shots.</p> <p>A character moving unpredictably can avoid being hit by rolling a successful save vs. wands, but can't attack that round. There is a penalty of -4 against all subsequent shots.</p> <p align="center">**WARNING!**</p> <p>**Laser may cause serious sight impairment. The **Arx** assumes no responsibility for accidents and injuries.**</p>
<p align="center">**PAKEMA**</p> <p>Spray equipment attached to tank and reinforced with gooseneck nozzle. Crystalline raptogen stored in the containers immediate sublimates upon aerial exposure, with an acute incapacitating effect upon inhalation (save vs. poison at -3 or loss of consciousness). Tank contains 8 doses.</p> <p align="center">**WARNING!**</p> <p>** "Γ" class fire hazard. Inhalation may cause respiratory problems. In case of allergic symptoms, stop using the unit and contact the appropriate organs of the ** Arx **. **</p>	<p align="center">**Diambroid** x4</p> <p>High-grade explosives in sealed and numbered metal canisters marked with the letters „ΔΙΑ". Each canister causes 6d6 damage on explosion (save vs. breath for ½), radius 20' per canister.</p> <p align="center">**WARNING!**</p> <p>**Highly explosive. May explode on a strong impact, electrical impulses, electromagnetic radiation or concentrated heat. Do not leave the box unattended. **</p>
<p align="center">**Extractor**</p> <p>Photovoltaic analytical instrument with glass extraction tube. Radiation emitted up to a 100' distance removes the brain through the skull via the osmotic principle. The chances of withdrawal under **standard conditions** are 1:3 / round after the second round.</p> <p align="center">**WARNING!**</p> <p>**The Extractor may only be used by trained and certified personnel in possession of the appropriate permits. **</p>	<p align="center">**Kinetic Cube**</p> <p>Standard and specialised all-system forwarding device. Waves emitted by the cube are suitable for the levitating transportation of up to 500kg material. The accuracy and power of the kinetic force field is reduced after 2 rounds of operation. Energy supplies recharge automatically.</p> <p align="center">** WARNING!**</p> <p>**Kinetic force field. Under prolonged use, wear protective clothing to avoid harmful electromagnetic radiation. In closed spaces, ventilate after usage. **</p>

****INFORMATION SHEET********AKRASIA****

*** ** In the name of the Principle! The **Arx** hereby declares that Megakrates, Lord of Akrasia has transgressed fundamental philosophical values in governing his city state, and, even after repeated calls to amend his erroneous ways, he has failed to issue the necessary corrections. Consequently, the Highest Synod of the **Arx**, acting on a vote of eleven to ten, hereby sentences Megakrates and his unrepentant band of conspirators to DEATH, and, furthermore, orders the immediate seizure of all their movable and immovable possessions, including but not limited to the city state of Akrasia. The judgement is final and subject to immediate implementation. Swift and effective measures will be enacted by a special delegation of the appropriate experts, appointed on authority of the **Arx** to carry out the necessary operations in the city state of Akrasia.

*** ** So declared in the city state of Propyla, in the year of Solon 3995, day 237.

****THE TESSERARCHY****

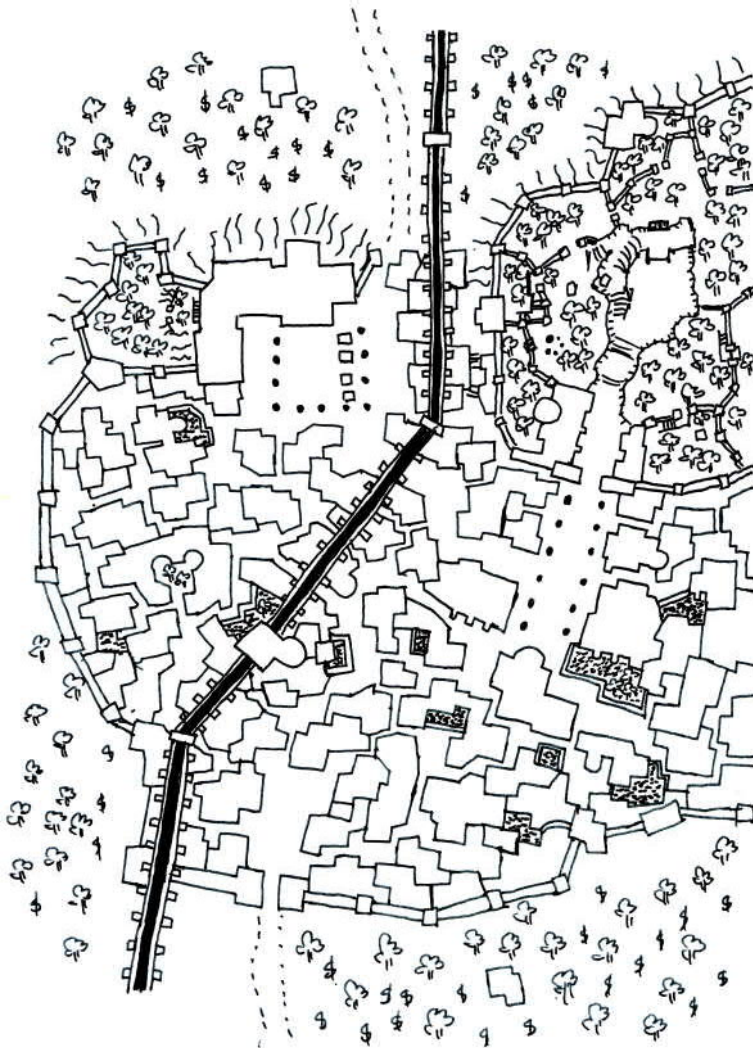
1. Megakrates, Lord of Akrasia is a middle-aged man, noted for a greying beard and wine-red nose. His gaze often appears confused and uncomprehending, but his thinking is fast

and precise, and his nature merciless. He is limp in the right leg. Clothing is usually a simple toga, but he wears a pair of iron gauntlets either as a lucky charm or a sign of his station, and carries an ornamented, heavy metal rod. According to **Arx** sources, Megakrates is in the possession of multiple dangerous magical items, including a glass bell capable of locomotion, and affording him full protection against conventional weapons.

2. Strategos Brakton is the commander of Akrasia's armed forces. He is a fighting man of shaved countenance, restrained in his manners but unrestrained in his capability for violence. Only seen in his ceremonial armour, **Arx** sources also identify his hammer as magical. In spite of his formal rank in the city state, the **Arx** is on the position that he cannot be considered an independent political operative, being fully dependent on the guidance of Megakrates.

3. Aymanz the Necropope is High Priest at the Temple of the Night, and endowed with the sacred task of preparing the youths and maidens educated therein for the Autumn Mysteries. He is of middle age, corpulent, wearing black felt clothing and a heavy golden medallion. His unkempt appearance suggests a regular habit of alcoholism. **Arx** sources speculate that his debaucheries have taken a toll on his health, frequently rendering him infirm. In the Temple, he will be protected by numerous disciples and a mechanical servant.

4. Yizil Doré, Mistress of Magic is a powerful wizardess. Her hair is snow-white and tangled, but her brown face is smooth and youthful. Her purple hat is decorated with golden moons and stars, while her robes are a dull red. Known for infrequent public appearances, **Arx** intelligence suggests she keeps to her dwelling, where she might be protected by curious beings.

****INFORMATION SHEET********AKRASIA****

*** ** In the name of the Principle! The **Arx** hereby declares that Megakrates, Lord of Akrasia has exercised entirely **Arx**-compatible philosophical values in governing his city state, doctrines which have aroused the interest of malignant elements infiltrating the **Arx** hierarchy and operating contrary to its intentions. Consequently, the Highest Synod of the **Arx**, acting on a vote of ten to nine, with two undeclared absentions, hereby **DECLARES** that Megakrates and his valuable associates, the Tesseractry, should be protected by all available means; and, furthermore, orders the immediate liquidation of the conspirators who would do them bodily harm. The judgement is final and subject to immediate implementation. Swift and effective measures will be enacted by a special delegation of the appropriate experts, appointed on authority of the **Arx** to carry out the necessary operations in the city state of Akrasia. Declaration #3775, made on the basis of erroneous information, is hereby declared null and void unless it has already been executed. *** **

So declared in the city state of Propyla, in the year of Solon 3995, day 237.

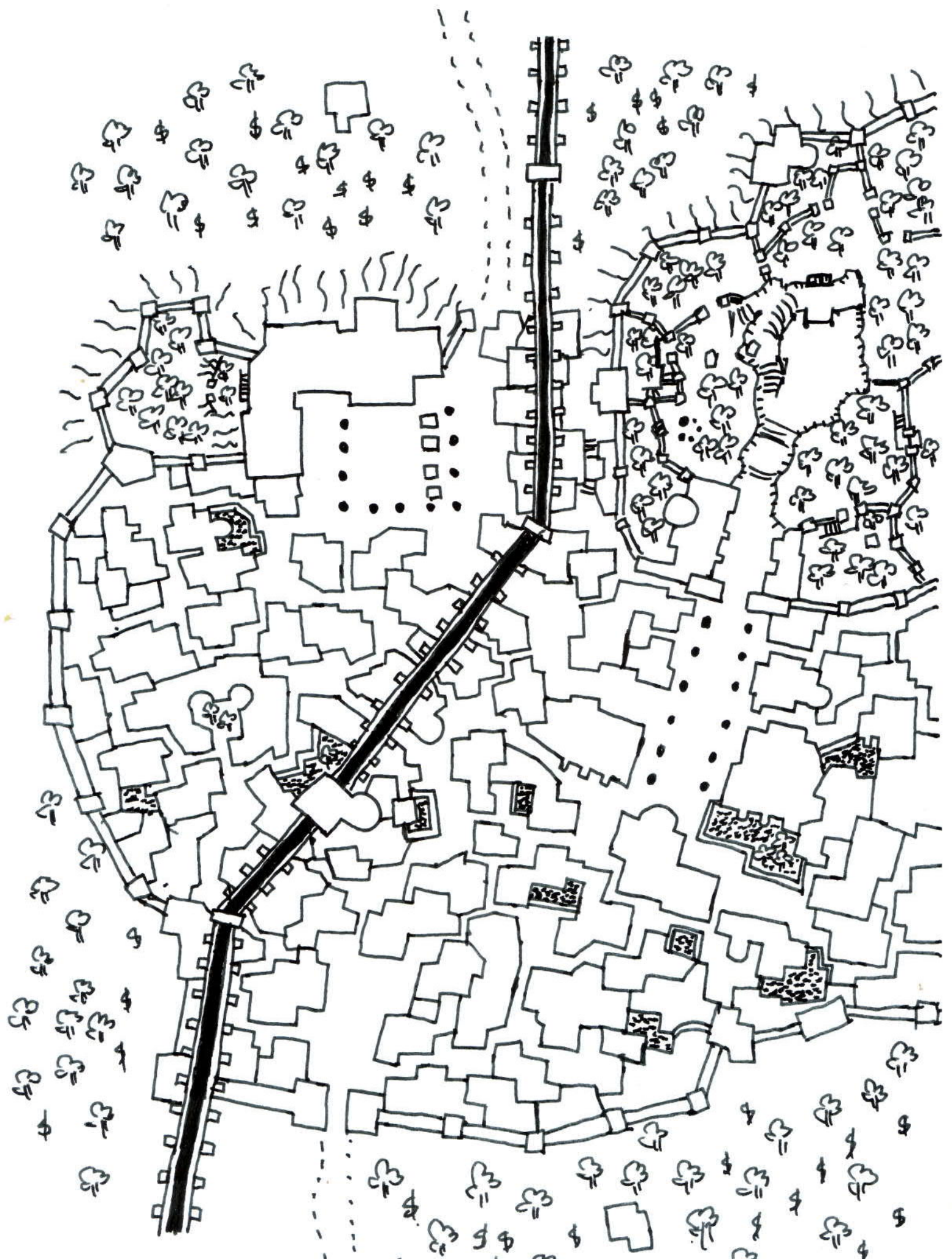
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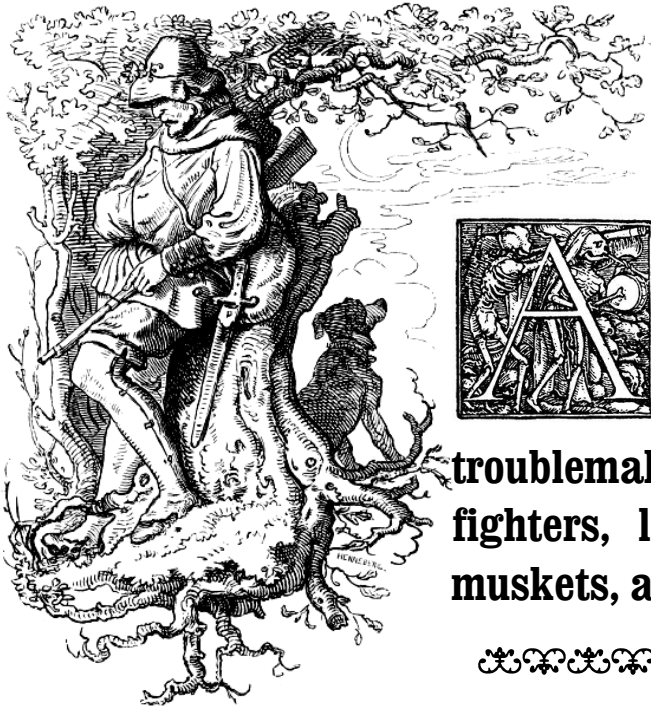
1. Megakrates, Lord of Akrasia is a middle-aged man, noted for a greying beard and wine-red nose. His gaze often appears confused and uncomprehending, but his thinking is fast and precise, and his nature merciless. He is limp in the right leg. Clothing is usually a simple toga, but he wears a pair of iron gauntlets either as a lucky charm or a sign of his station, and carries an ornamented, heavy metal rod. According to **Arx** sources, Megakrates is in the possession of multiple dangerous magical items, including a glass bell capable of locomotion, and affording him full protection against conventional weapons.

2. Strategos Brakton is the commander of Akrasia's armed forces. He is a fighting man of shaved countenance, restrained in his manners but unrestrained in his capability for violence. Only seen in his ceremonial armour, **Arx** sources also identify his hammer as magical. In spite of his formal rank in the city state, the **Arx** is on the position that he cannot be considered an independent political operative, being fully dependent on the guidance of Megakrates.

3. Aymanz the Necropope is High Priest at the Temple of the Night, and endowed with the sacred task of preparing the youths and maidens educated therein for the Autumn Mysteries. He is of middle age, corpulent, wearing black felt clothing and a heavy golden medallion. His unkempt appearance suggests a regular habit of alcoholism. **Arx** sources speculate that his debaucheries have taken a toll on his health, frequently rendering him infirm. In the Temple, he will be protected by numerous disciples and a mechanical servant.

4. Yizil Doré, Mistress of Magic is a powerful wizardess. Her hair is snow-white and tangled, but her brown face is smooth and youthful. Her purple hat is decorated with golden moons and stars, while her robes are a dull red. Known for infrequent public appearances, **Arx** intelligence suggests she keeps to her dwelling, where she might be protected by curious beings.





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