



ZEITGEIST Adventure Number 5

Cauldron-Born



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Adventure by
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INTRODUCTION

Wherein the Second Bird Alights

A conspiracy has woven itself firmly into the dark underbelly of the city of Flint. The Royal Homeland Constabulary (RHC) has learned of its existence and knows it has a base beneath the haunted mountain named Cauldron Hill. Now at the king's command it is time to rip this threat from its shadowy womb and thrust it into the light of day.

While the RHC pursues that mission, two other forces are at work in Flint: a cult of dwarven assassins who want to disrupt a peace summit, and a rogue lord of the Unseen Court who seeks a war between man and fey. Either plot will spell disaster for Flint. Can the RHC constables spare the time to stop them before the doom beneath Cauldron Hill is born?

PLOT THREADS

In *Cauldron-Born*, the PCs will find themselves racing against the clock to manage numerous threats in and around Flint, a situation which might remind some players of Adventure Two. Before you run this adventure you'll want to be familiar with the Timeline, Synopsis, and the NPC Roster. Additionally, we've provided a Dramatis Personae-style handout by way of the Mission Briefing dossier (Appendix A), which you can give to the players at the start of the adventure.

The adventure consists of a mix of party-driven investigation and time-based events the PCs must react to. In Part One, three plot threads occur simultaneously, and the party has great flexibility to pursue them as they see fit and even fail one or more while still reaching the climax. See the GM handouts Timeline and Taking Down Kell's Guild at the end of this book to help keep the various plots straight.

TIMELINE

The adventure begins on the 8th of Spring, in the year 501 A.O.V. (After Our Victory), approximately two months following the end of Adventure Four, *Always on Time*.

Spring 8. A carriage chase assassination attempt by Kell's thugs. The party meets with King Aodhan and are tasked to find Lorcan Kell. The B-Team picks up mediator Brakken. Asrabey, an emissary of the Unseen Court embroils the party in the search for a rogue fey lord. Dwarven radicals attack Pardwight University.

Spring 9. The party and B-Team examine a broken golem for clues. A letter arrives from Vlendam Heid, warning the party about the eschatologists. The party takes command of the task force to capture Kell.

Spring 10. Asrabey asks the party to take him to Gale. In the evening, the B-Team escorts Brakken to the club *Sunset Bench*, one of Kell's fronts. Late at night the dwarven radicals bring a ship full of monsters into the city.

Spring 11. Brakken and the B-Team witness the effects of a fey curse in the Cloudwood. An evening opera gives the party a chance to nab Kell's lawyer.

Spring 12. The dwarven radicals attack a subrail station in the morning. At sunset paranoia in the Cloudwood leads a mob to murder the mayor. Ekossigan performs his ritual sacrifice in the evening.

Spring 13. If the party hasn't caught him yet, Kell leaves his hide-out at 3 a.m., giving the party a chance to take him down. That evening Han Jierre and his niece Lya arrive and dine with the party and the king.

Spring 14. At midnight, the king will be able to send the party to the Bleak Gate if they have not already found a way.

ADAPTING THE ADVENTURE.

This adventure has to serve several purposes. First it's the climax of the first act of ZEITGEIST: The Gears of Revolution, and with a few small tweaks it can be the end of the campaign if needed. Second, we want the adventure to work as its own story, plus have enough novel events and locations that GMs might use it for inspiration for their own campaigns.

To run this as a stand-alone, you can cut out a lot of the context of the greater conspiracy, and put the focus on trying to protect the peace summit from a "cult." The dwarven radicals might be bundled in with Kell's guild as members of a doomsday cult trying to stop the peace talks, with the fey Ekossigan as a third party complication. The cult's complex might just be well-hidden, or can be in any Plane of Shadow-style location, and instead of crafting a colossus they might be summoning a doomsday demon, waking a dragon, launching a steampunk airship, or resurrecting a villain from your campaign's history.

Finally, this adventure can serve as the starting point of an abridged ZEITGEIST campaign. Start with the party having no knowledge of the conspiracy, so the focus is just on protecting the peace summit. When the colossus bursts free at the end of the adventure, that kicks off the missions in Adventures Six through Nine to get control of the golem before the Obscurati can.

BACKGROUND

Risur and Danor have fought several wars over the past two centuries. **King Aodhan** of Risur is supposed to be pledging to marry **Lya Jierre**, niece of the sovereign of Danor, to cement an end to hostilities between the two nations. Lya, her uncle, and a small fleet of Danoran ships are already on their way to a peace summit in Flint, the industrial capital of Risur. They arrive in mere days.

Risur's spies, however, have discovered that Lya is somehow involved in a conspiracy known as the Obscurati. The Ob have been experimenting with strange magic, and they have a stronghold and factory in Flint, but hidden in the dark parallel world known as the Bleak Gate. What they have been building is a mystery, but Lya knows Risur suspects her. King Aodhan and his ministers can't fathom why she's still coming, nor can they tell what the conspiracy's true goals are.

They lack two pieces of the puzzle.

First, the Obscurati aren't necessarily hostile to Risur. Their goals—thoroughly detailed in the *ZEITGEIST Campaign Guide*—are far larger than the affairs of two countries.

Second, Aodhan assumes that the Ob are building some sort of weapon to use against Flint, but their creation is actually a titanic golem, which is necessary for their broader goal. The colossus was named **Borne** by its creators, and nine months ago one of those creators betrayed the Obscurati and sabotaged the colossus, removing its mind. Now it is just a giant thoughtless machine, one the Ob are wary of activating. Lya's goal at the peace summit is to divert attention away from the secret factory and buy time for the colossus to be repaired.

Peace Summit.

King Aodhan still holds out hope for peace, though he prepares for catastrophe. He will meet with his Danoran counterpart, **Sovereign Han Jierre**, and they have called upon a neutral mediator, **Brakken of Hefanita**, a minotaur from the nation of Ber.

Many of the key details of the peace talks have been kept from all but the highest ranked officials in Flint. The King is wary of sabotage or political embarrassment. The people of Flint are of mixed minds, some supporting their king, others protesting against Danor.

Turf War.

A year ago, a foreign crime syndicate known as the Family began to horn in on territory held by local strongman **Lorcan Kell**. Though the Family, led by the respectable and fashionable **Morgan Cippiano**, is better at subtlety and winning the favor of the citizenry, Kell's guild of thieves are backed by the Obscurati, for whom they work as muscle. Over the past few months sporadic gang fights have broken out and people allied with either group have been found murdered.

Return of the Unseen Court.

Just as the Bleak Gate is a shadowy reflection of reality, the fey land of the Dreaming is its verdant reflection. What little order and hierarchy exist in the Dreaming are controlled by the Unseen Court. These powerful fey do not take kindly to King Aodhan's peace overtures to Danor, for they find technology abhorrent, but the court cannot unite under a single response.

One member of the Unseen Court, **Ekossigan**, has pushed for war against Risur. Ekossigan performed divinations and sought visions to find proof that would spur his peers to action. But he peered too closely into the darkness of the Bleak Gate, and heard the screams of souls being burned as fuel in the Obscurati's forges.

UNRESOLVED ISSUES.

The main factors keeping Risur and Danor from establishing a long-lasting peace are:

- Long-standing animosity in the leadership, who typically spent their youths fighting in the last war and will overreact to any new provocation.
- Ownership disputes of the lush Yerasol Archipelago. Each side will have to forcibly evict some of its citizens who are dug in beyond what are considered "viable borders."
- Fears in Risur that Danor will use peacetime to grow its influence over the other great nations. Negotiations will establish lines each nation is forbidden to cross with regard to establishing factories and footholds in Drakr, Ber, and Crisillyir.
- Fears in Danor that Risur is stealing Danoran technology and, by combining it with magic, will eliminate what advantages Danor has. The two leaders will have to agree to the broad terms of an industrial patent treaty.
- Certain prisoners will need to be traded. The most complicated factors here will be Nathan Jierre and Duchess Ethelyn of Shale (see Adventure One, *Island at the Axis of the World*). It depends on what the party did earlier in the campaign, but generally Danor wants Ethelyn as a prisoner, and wants Nathan returned to them if the party tried to grant him asylum.

Driven mad by the ordeal, Ekossigan left a poem hinting at his intentions, then disappeared. He eventually made his way to Flint, where he has busied himself gathering the local lesser fey—pixies, satyrs, gremlins, and such—to his banner. He is convinced he must destroy the Obscurati's factories, but it's nearly impossible for even a being of his power to enter the Bleak Gate. To reach the Ob's complex, Ekossigan must perform a horrendous act: hanging thirty-one children from the branches of a century-old tree.

The Unseen Court has dispatched one of its emissaries, the high elf dreadnought **Asrabey Varal**, to follow Ekossigan to Flint and stop him before he succeeds in provoking the war he wants.

The Disciples of Heid Eschatol.

Radical dwarven followers of the philosophy of Heid Eschatol believe that the upcoming treaty is a step backwards from their prediction of doomsday. Rather than form a tenuous peace that will last for only a few decades, why should they not accept a war that will bring about finality to their conflict?

Led by the zealot **Grundun Zubov**, these devout eschatologists have quietly infiltrated Flint, seeding themselves throughout the city over the past months. Unlike the true teachings of Heid Eschatol that speak of "preparing for the end of things," the followers of Zubov have begun a calculated plan to "make things end." Already dwarven assassins have planted bombs in key areas and set up discreet sniper positions. Zubov, convinced his own end is near, is prepared to die in the greatest terror attack Risur has ever seen.

As Zubov puts the final pieces of his destructive plot into place, his most recently hired gun is having misgivings. Dwarven sniper **Kvarti Gorbatiy** (whom the PCs likely had the pleasure of meeting in Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*), did not realize when Zubov hired him how radical the mission was, and even the coldly professional sniper is troubled by what Zubov is planning.

A LOT GOING ON.

In writing this adventure we realized we had more plot threads we wanted to resolve than we had originally planned at the start of designing the adventure path. That's why this adventure now spans two levels instead of just the one that we'd said in the *Campaign Guide*. One of the later adventures will be shortened slightly to balance out the level progression throughout the campaign.

Obscurati Affairs.

Over the past several years the Obscurati have established a massive construction facility underneath the mountain Cauldron Hill, or rather in its shadowy analogue in the Bleak Gate. They had the aid of many government officials, most of them were misled in the details and purpose of the operation. Some of these the party discovered and took down in earlier adventures.

Currently, the facility is overseen by **Leone Quita**, known by his moniker “the steelshaper” for his innate magical ability to reshape and telekinetically manipulate almost any type of metal. He was one of three architects of the colossus, but of the three he is the only one invested in the Obscurati's mission.

The Ob in Flint made use of Locan Kell's thieves guild to smuggle in the materials it needed for the construction, and for the past six months Kell's men have been slowly slicing up loose ends. But Kell himself is a loose end because his men have been using the Obscurati's secret gates to travel between the real world and the Bleak Gate. After years of disciplined secrecy, the Ob are likely to be undone by the overconfidence of a top-hatted, bloodthirsty crime lord.

I, Grappa.

Nine months ago, one of the colossus's other two creators—**Alexander Grappa**, known as “the mindmaker”—tried to escape the Bleak Gate complex. (The third architect, “the gearbuilder” **Tinker Oddcog**, is the main focus of Adventure Six.)

The Ob had been trying for years to make a golem mind suitable for their ultimate plan, but none of their attempts were successful. The colossus would need to be intelligent enough to react to unpredictable dangers in an environment too deadly for anyone to stand nearby and give it orders. And it would need to be devoted enough to the conspiracy's beliefs that it would not give up, even though it would suffer incredible damage and might even be destroyed. But any golem mind smart enough showed too much independence, and the Ob feared they would go rampant when placed into the colossus's powerful body.

Grappa, a Risuri veteran of the Third Yerasol War who turned to golem-crafting in hopes of sparing other young men from the horrors of war, attracted the Ob's attention for his novel method of raising golems like children. He implanted some artificial memories into a construct as a baseline, then gave the “newborn” time to learn and mature. Learned experience was embedded with context and emotion, making it more real and effective than any crafted psyche could be.

Five years ago, Grappa was personally recruited by **Kasvarina Varal**, one of the heads of the Obscurati who traveled between the conspiracy's various cells. She helped him raise and train several golem “children,” and then chose the one with the most promise, which Grappa had named Borne. Grappa oversaw the careful transfer of Borne's mind from a man-sized golem into the colossus, and spent months making sure Borne would be at ease in his new body.

During this time, however, Grappa grew nervous about the Ob's ultimate goals. After he snooped on something he shouldn't have, Kasvarina and Leone had him locked up. Grappa managed to escape, though, with the aid of a slender bronze golem handservant. He mind-controlled Kasvarina, interrogated her, then wiped her memories. He likewise extracted the colossus's mind, not wanting to see his “son” serve the conspiracy's goals. With Kasvarina as a hostage and his handservant at his side, Grappa tried to make for Flint's harbor. But Leone the steelshaper caught up with him and killed him.

Before dying, Grappa managed a desperate spell to transfer his mind to his golem handservant, but Leone tore the handservant apart before taking Kasvarina back to the Ob compound to try to restore her memories.

The RHC eventually discovered the scene, and agents took the shattered golem into their possession, intending to repair it. Grappa's mind endures within the bronze golem's head, and shortly after this adventure begins the RHC manages to repair the golem enough for it to move and haltingly speak. Grappa's limited by a *geas* so he cannot reveal all the conspiracy's secrets, but he still wants to bring them down.

The Cauldron Hill Complex.

The engineers and builders inside the compound are growing anxious as Leone keeps them there even after the colossus has been completed. A few unfortunate disappearances of dissenters have tanked morale, and even the guards are starting to grumble.

As another problem, no one from the Ob has been able to restore Kasvarina's memories. For a variety of reasons (explored in Adventure Eight, *Diaspora*), many people around the world are interested in finding Kasvarina, and without her magical talents she is vulnerable. The Cauldron Hill complex is warded against many types of divination, so the Ob keep her there, hoping to find a solution eventually.

As the RHC has gotten closer to uncovering the conspiracy, the Obscurati leadership has put great pressure on Leone to activate the colossus. He lacks the carefully cultivated mind of Borne, though, so he has brought in less skilled enchanters to try implanting the consciousnesses of the other, less optimal golem “children.” Each has failed to synchronize, and Leone had their minds extracted and killed to keep the titan from going out of control. The Obscurati are now in possession of a 300-foot tall paperweight.



ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

On the way to meet with King Aodhan, the party is attacked by thugs working for crime boss Lorcan Kell, at behest of the Obscurati. Escaping the ambush, the party meets their king, who orders them to root out the conspiracy before the peace summit begins, five days hence.

The weak link in the Ob's secrecy is Kell himself. If the party can capture or kill him, they should be able to figure out how the Ob travel between the two worlds. The party takes command of a task force of fifty police officers and plans the take-down.

Meanwhile, a second group of constables—“the B-Team” (whom the players can take control of temporarily as secondary PCs)—meet the summit's mediator, the minotaur Brakken of Heffanita, when he arrives at Flint's docks. The B-Team serves as a second set of eyes, letting the players witness events that their main characters wouldn't be privy to.

Complications Arise.

While planning ways to capture Kell, Asrabey Varal, an emissary of the Unseen Court, arrives and warns that a fey lord named Ekossigan has come to Flint to provoke a war. Asrabey invokes the right of Kelland's Tribute to ask for aid, because he is magically forbidden from causing any harm to a member of the Court. The king leaves it to the party whether to help him or pass the buck to the B-Team.

The first Danoran dignitaries for the peace summit will arrive the next day, Spring 9, and Aodhan wants results by the 13th, when Sovereign Han Jierre and his niece Lya arrive, so he can know whether they are hostile to Risur. If the party can't manage that, then just after midnight on the 14th, the king and his ministers will be able to send the party to the Bleak Gate.

After the party finishes with the king, the B-Team witnesses the first attack by dwarven cultists. They derail a train with one bomb, collapse a building with another, then begin shooting panicked people from rooftops. Either the B-Team or the main party must stop them before hundreds are killed.



Three Threads.

The next four days then are filled with chasing down three targets—the dwarven radicals, the fey lord Ekossigan, and Lorcan Kell.

The radicals try to sneak in a shipment of horrifying monsters to stalk the streets, but the party has a chance to stop them at sea. While the party might manage to strike the dwarves' hide-out, their leader Grund-un Zubov has already prepared his final attack. He intends to crash the opening of a new subrail station, take hostages, and then drive a train car loaded with explosives underneath the hotel where all the peace summit dignitaries are staying. If he's not stopped, the detonation will inflame Danor enough to provoke a new war.

At the same time, Ekossigan is gathering local minor fey to his banner in the rural city district called Cloudwood. The fey lord lays a curse on the district, which the B-Team witnesses first hand. If the party can't stop him the people there violently turn on each other.

When they find him, Ekossigan is prepared to sacrifice thirty-one children in a treetop orphanage. Their deaths will open a portal to the Bleak Gate so he can march his army of fey through. The party has a chance to go with him if they let him perform his vile ritual. Otherwise they must fight him as he invokes a destructive ice storm and tries to bring down the whole tree orphanage around them.

If defeated, he disintegrates, but not before revealing that he has had a vision of Kasvarina Varal beneath Cauldron Hill. Though the party might not recognize the name, Asrabey has history with her, and he offers to aid the party on their mission to the Bleak Gate.

The primary goal, though, is capturing Lorcan Kell. With their task force the party knocks over Kell-aligned businesses, disrupts illicit transactions, targets the guild's lieutenants, and eventually assaults his stronghold, the Theater of Scoundrels. Along the way the B-Team can help the party arrest Kell's lawyer, and an opposing crime syndicate called The Family offers to lead the party to Kell himself if the task force's efforts have failed.

Kell always has an escape route planned, though, and if the party isn't careful he'll trick them with a decoy and link up with the Obscurati, who spirit him away to the Bleak Gate, but not before he brutally murders the B-Team in retaliation.

ADJUSTING FOR HISTORY.

The party's Prestige (see the *ZEITGEIST Player's Guide*) likely has reached 4 with Risur, and could be as high as 5. If the party's Prestige with Risur is only 3, the king is a bit more conservative on what resources he'll call upon, but he trusts Delft's opinion of the party. If their Prestige with Risur is 2 or less, the king might not even call upon the party, instead giving them the bodyguard duty while having the "B-Team" handle the investigation. Of course, when they get in over their heads and die horribly, the party can swoop in to save the day.

If Asrabey died in the first adventure, he's either back from the dead if you allow that in your game (if anyone has the resources for resurrection, it's the Unseen Court), or he's been replaced by a similar powerful high-elf male warrior, perhaps one armed with a bone scimitar and a *wand of scorching ray*. If somehow the party has already killed Lorcan Kell (and according to the E.N. Publishing messageboards, it nearly happened in at least two campaigns), you could simply slot in his lawyer Quentin Augst as the target, or invent a lieutenant who replaced him.

MESSENGER WIND.

The party will be active all across Flint, and might want to split up. They should have access to a *messenger wind* (provided by Gale in Adventure Two, or by the RHC if you're running this adventure as a stand-alone). There are five golden feathers that are linked to a central orb. Anyone with a feather can call upon the wind's power as long as they are within thirty miles of the orb.

When called, the wind flies ten miles an hour until it reaches the summoner. He can give it a message, and it will fly to any other bearer of one of these feathers to deliver that message. If multiple creatures activate this power, it resolves its first command before starting the second.

The party should likely have three of these, their boss Delft one, and the B-Team the remaining one.

PLAN B.

While we want to make sure the PCs are aware of the scope of the dangers, we don't want to take away their roleplaying agency by forcing them to be in certain places at certain times. That's what the B-Team is for: you present brief vignettes so the players can have a broader perspective of the events in the adventure. Additionally, the B-Team scenes should be a fun break from the main plot, give the players an opportunity to try something new, and potentially provide the main party with extra resources to handle the numerous time-sensitive challenges.

Finally, for an adventure with so much going on, we think it's less believable if none of the good guys die. The B-Team lets you as GM pull out all the stops to demonstrate the threat the villains pose. They're only 4th level, so if they lose horribly to a foe, the main party should stand a chance, and the players might be well-motivated.

It is likely (and to be honest, preferable) if the B-Team suffer casualties or are otherwise defeated, ideally by Lorcan Kell as he escapes and joins up with the Obscurati. Kell serves as the main combat threat in the climax, and the more the party hates him, the better.

Brakken is a telepath, so when he eventually shares his memories of the B-Team, it helps gloss over any metagaming concerns of the players having knowledge their main PCs wouldn't.

Scenes involving the B-Team are marked with an asterisk.

Preparing for Cauldron Hill.

Though not part of the three major threads, the party can get some help for their ultimate mission of attacking Cauldron Hill. The RHC manages to reassemble the handservant golem that houses Alexander Grappa's consciousness, and he offers to guide them into the Cauldron Hill complex.

Later, the party is invited to meet Lieutenant Dale, provisional guardian of haunted Cauldron Hill after its last protector turned out to be part of the Obscurati. He gives the party as much as he knows about the Bleak Gate version of the mountain, and invites them to practice a bit of meditation to protect them from the evil spirits in that dark world.

Time to Get Dressed Up.

Though the party probably managed to stop the dwarven radicals and the fey lord Ekossigan, it's unlikely the party managed to catch Lorcan Kell and find a way to Cauldron Hill by the time Lya Jierre and her uncle arrive on the 13th. When Lya personally requests their presence at the first banquet of the peace summit, protocol demands they attend.

Given the chance to mingle with key figures of both nations, the party can try to wheedle information out of Lya, but must maintain proper decorum or be tossed out. Just as dessert is about to be served, Asrabey Varal bursts into the room and asks the king's permission to travel to the Bleak Gate. Though placed in an awkward position, Aodhan agrees, and the banquet ends on a sour note. The Danorans, spooked, quickly excuse themselves, but Brakken asks for a moment with the king and the party.

The minotaur reveals that he is a telepath, as well as a real bombshell: one member of the Danoran entourage is rushing for a secret portal that leads to the Bleak Gate, to warn the defenders. If the party acts fast, they can catch him and maintain the element of surprise.

Attacking the Compound.

Aodhan wants the party to try to take out the Obscurati's presence in Flint. Asrabey simply wants them to cover his infiltration as he tries to rescue Kasvarina. And Alexander Grappa in his golem body tags along if the party will let him, or sneaks after them if necessary, having used his magic to ensure he knows when the party attempts their assault. The party might have some Risuri soldiers with them, and perhaps other NPC allies.

The party has to figure out how best to breach the compound and find its heart, and stealth or trickery can make a far easier path than pure firepower. Regardless of whether the party sweeps through with overwhelming might or manages to get themselves outmatched and captured, they ultimately reach the massive central chamber where the colossus stands inert. As a last fight breaks out, somehow the colossus activates (perhaps the party damages it, or Leone tries to activate it as a last-ditch defense, or Grappa awakens it).

Filled with just wild instinct and a desire to break free, the colossus smashes its way to the surface, and the whole complex begins to collapse and shift into the real world. If the party has done well they can stamp out the Ob's forces in Flint, gather vital information and free dozens of engineers who will gladly join Risur. If they screw up, they might barely make it out alive.

Time to Dream.

The colossus begins to rampage, threatening to destroy half the city. Seeing their secrecy utterly ruined, Lya and Han Jierre teleport away, and it falls to the party to stop the titan.

King Aodhan has some magical control over who enters and leaves his realm. If the party can manage to drive or lure the mindless colossus to Flint's harbor, the king places them in charge of a small fleet. Depending on how the party comported itself during the banquet, they even get help from some of the Danoran ships, since most of Danor is not affiliated with this conspiracy and wants to help in Flint's time of need.

The king stands on deck and gathers magical energy, calling upon the loyalty of every citizen of the city. The party must keep the king close while avoiding the colossus's attacks and fending off monsters that hitched a ride on it from the Bleak Gate. If they can protect the king long enough, he banishes the colossus into The Dreaming, where it cannot harm Flint, and where it is beyond the reach of the Obscurati, at least for now.

ADVENTURE LAYOUT

Cauldron-Born's plot has a precise beginning and climax, but the middle of the adventure can take many different paths. We roughly divide events as follows:

- ♦ **Introduction—Meet the King:** The PCs' meeting with the king, and the arrival of Brakken and Asrabey.
- ♦ **Part One—Three Threads:** Tracking down Lorcan Kell. Helping Asrabey stop Ekossigan. The radical eschatologist attacks throughout Flint.
- ♦ **Part Two—The Etiquette of Gustatory Interrogation:** The party hobnobs with dignitaries. Varal requests to investigate Cauldron Hill.
- ♦ **Part Three—Expedition to the Bleak Gate:** Breaking into the facility. Confronting Lorcan Kell. Borne activates and goes crazy.
- ♦ **Part Four—To Battle a Colossus:** Attracting Borne out to the bay. Naval battle against Borne. King Aodhan's ritual.

From a pacing standpoint, "Act One" would involve the party starting their investigation and finishing two of the three threads. In "Act Two" try to keep a fast pace as the party finishes the third thread just in time to attend the banquet (or runs out of time and fails). Then "Act Three" is the Ob complex, with the surprise ending of having to thwart the colossus.

Of course, if the party does really well, don't try to force them to take longer just so the pacing remains the same. If they can get into the Bleak Gate before the 13th, skip the banquet and go straight to act three.

Scene Layout.

Each scene is presented in a format of Title, keywords, and tag-line. Keywords include:

Scene Type: Action, Exploration, Exposition, Puzzle, Social, or Hybrid.

Duration: Montage (a few hours or days), Real-time (a few minutes), or Tactical (round-by-round).

NPC Roster.

Because of the large number of NPCs the party will meet, we've compiled two handouts to help you keep track of their various statuses, mannerisms, and role in the adventure. A GM handout lists keywords and traits to help you portray the NPCs, while a player handout details characters whom the PCs would be familiar with at the start of the adventure. Encourage the players to add notes as they meet new people of interest.

More detailed entries are included throughout the adventure close to the characters' first appearances.

| NPC Entry | Page |
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| Alexander Grappa, the Mindmaker | 13 |
| Aodhan, king of Risur | 11 |
| Asrabey Varal, high elf dreadnought | 14 |
| Brakken of Heffanita, minotaur negotiator | 13 |
| Ekossigan, fey lord | 38 |
| Grundun Zubov, dwarven zealot | 48 |
| Han Jierre, sovereign of Danor | 54 |
| Hana "Gale" Soliogn, fey terrorist | 13 |
| Harkover Lee, Risuri principal minister | 12 |
| Kasvarina Varal, Obscurati leader | 67 |
| Kvarti Gorbatiy, dwarf mercenary | 44 |
| Leone Quital, the Steelshaper | 67 |
| Lorcan Kell, killer and guild leader | 31 |
| Lya Jierre, Danoran minister of outsiders | 54 |
| Morgan Cippiano, Family crime lord | 26 |
| Quentin Augst, lawyer to criminals | 22 |
| Roland Stanfield, Flint's city governor | 50 |
| Stover Delft, RHC chief inspector | 9 |

CHARACTER THEMES IN THE ADVENTURE.

Each ZEITGEIST adventure includes one or more scenes that bring the PCs' character themes (detailed in the Player's Guide) to the forefront. In addition to the moments below, most of the backgrounds elicit strong interest by one of the attendees at the peace summit banquet.

Dockers can work together with Thames Grimsley to rally the dock workers of Flint to help crew the ragtag fleet that confronts Borne in the climax.

Eschatologists can be heavily involved in the terrorist actions of Grundun Zubov, and may receive advanced warning from Vlendam Heid, founder of their movement.

Gunsmiths will be able to readily identify many of the weapons used by the eschatologist radicals and the Obscurati, and may even receive special modifications to their own weaponry from Kvarti Gorbatiy.

Martial Scientists can learn a new special ability from Major Dale that will protect them during their journey into the Bleak Gate.

Skyseers give receive a special vision during the encounter with the fey Ekossigan.

Spirit Mediums can aide investigations into the terrorist attacks and have the option to question Lorcan Kell and other people of interest even if they die. During the final encounter against Borne, Spirit Mediums will be able to relay the exact status of King Aodhan, giving the PCs an edge in managing the final battle.

Technologists will have the best chance of disarming the bombs used by the dwarven radicals. They'll also be best equipped to sabotage and sneak through the Obscurati complex.

Vekeshi Mystics are likely the best chance the PCs will have of gaining the trust and support of Asrabey Varal early in the adventure, and they'll have a chance to save Kasvarina in the Obscurati complex.

Yerasol Veterans will be able to identify better with many members of the peace talk banquet, giving the PCs an edge when dealing with high ranking Danoran dignitaries.

PACING AND LEVELING.

The adventure can take many routes, and we discourage precise XP tracking. The party starts this adventure at 7nd level. We recommend that they reach 8th level after dealing with two of the three threads in Part One, then 9th level at the adventure's end.

Recurring Characters. Many NPCs in this adventure will have roles in future adventures in the series. Lya Jierre is the primary antagonist in Adventure Six, while Alexander Grappa and Leone Quital are key to Adventure Seven, and Asrabey and Kasvarina return in Adventure Eight. King Aodhan and Roland Stanfield will be vital to the end of the second arc of the adventure path, in Adventure Nine. Finally, Han Jierre rises to prominence in the last third of the campaign. If anyone important dies, though, you can replace them with someone thematically similar.

Incidental NPCs. The following NPCs probably appear for only a single scene, if at all, but if the PCs latch on to anyone, you can refer here to remind yourself who is who.

| NPC | Page |
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| Officials, Military, Locals | |
| Hadsworth Hudgins, carriage driver | 9 |
| Sergeant Deb Macon, task force liaison | 12 |
| Justin Rollins, royal technologist | 20 |
| Captain Dale, military defender of Cauldron Hill | 21 |
| Rock Rackus, local celebrity | 27 |
| Sergeant Langlois, Cloudwood cop | 32 |
| Doyle Idylls, Cloudwood mayor | 32 |
| Circe, Cloudwood kid delinquent | 35 |
| Relle, Cloudwood spinster | 35 |
| Kevin Wilson, subrail architect | 49 |
| Colonel Aden Tucker, overconfident commander | 50 |
| Greg Masterson, Ob recruiter at the Battalion | 60 |
| Kell's Guild | |
| Rufus Hammerton, Kell-guild lieutenant | 9 |
| Kate Glenn, Kell bodyguard cleric | 22 |
| Nick Reder, Kell bodyguard grappler | 22 |
| Dester Rathnine, Family mole in Kell guild | 24 |
| Sylyx (a.k.a. Norm), Obscurati liaison to Kell guild | 27 |
| Fey and Vekeshi Contacts | |
| Rear Admiral Morris Dawkins, "the Old Stag" | 31 |
| The Alderman, gnome beadle | 31 |
| Valentina Yorke, subrail druid | 31 |
| Mugwort, pixie spy in RHC | 31 |
| The Trash Heap, city dump hag | 31 |
| Ellik, creepy fey | 33 |
| Radical Eschatologists | |
| Takbar Rhozenko, bombing leader | 16 |
| Captain Tamushin, radical eschatologist, of Chernobezna | 47 |
| Doug Clapper, teen look-out | 47 |
| Peace Summit Dignitaries | |
| Captain Rosalyn Taylor, Danoran naval representative | 27 |
| Eloise Duffet, Danoran minister of war | 53 |
| Geoff Massarde, tiefling engineer | 27 |
| Kian Doherty, Risuri minister of agriculture | 34 |
| Pierre Riquier, Danoran minister of magic | 34 |
| Steffan Eberhardt, peace summit observer | 14 |

| NPC | Page |
|---|------|
| Off-Screen, Overseas, and General | |
| Giovanni Algardi, "The Carver" | 26 |
| Archmissionary Cornelius Eboracum, grand exorcist | 31 |
| Cruusk, Ber ship's bosun | 13 |
| Feroz, Brakken's bear | 13 |
| Gerax, one-legged Beran orc consular | 14 |
| Grandis Komanov, radical eschatologist figurehead | 43 |
| Rush and Merton, Lya's bodyguards | 54 |
| Tinker Oddcog, the Gearbuilder, gnome madman | 65 |
| Bartholomew Pryce, journalist | 17 |

Rewards.

At the end of this adventure, the party's Prestige with Flint and Risur should increase by 1 step for their role in the peace talks and defense against a rampaging Borne. If they manage to defeat Ekossigan without the mayor of the Cloudwood being slain, their reputation with the Unseen Court goes up by 1. If the PCs took Morgan Cippiano up on his offer to assist with demolishing the Kell-Guild, their prestige with the Family increases by 1 step. Finally, the PCs prestige with the Obscurati

increases by 1 step after they successfully infiltrate the Cauldron Hill complex and Borne is unleashed.

The PCs should have each about 23,500 gp in equipment by the start of this adventure. After the introduction, Stover Delft delivers them a stipend of 9,500 gp each to aid in the various threads that occur at the beginning of the adventure. Just before the banquet, Delft approves a further 13,000 gp stipend per PC.

If the PCs are free agents working for Brakken, instead of members of the RHC, you'll need to make sure they receive appropriate treasure. This is made easy by offering a one-time payment of 5,000 gp per player for assisting Brakken in his mission. The difference is made up by the various loot the party can take off its foes.

A Final Word Before We Start.

This is a detail-rich, multi-layered adventure. Your players will inevitably outwit you and find some way to short-circuit the expected path of the investigation, but that's fine. Just make sure that the key players don't reveal the existence of the colossus until the PCs see it firsthand, and that no one explains the Obscurati's ultimate goal. Anything else is fair game. After all, the PCs are supposed to win. We're just trying to make the chase challenging enough to be fun.





PRELUDE: TO MEET A KING

In this act, the party meets with their king to plan an assault on the Obscurati, and the B-Team greets and protects Brakken the mediator.

MEANWHILE IN THE NEWS.

While the party prepares to crack the conspiracy, what's going on in Flint and the rest of the world?

Doctor. Tales from Ber tell of miraculous healing in the hinterlands. Long averse to the Clergy and their renowned curative magic, the upper class of Ber seem quite abuzz at rumors of a foreign doctor treating the sick using science and surgery, not sorcery. Though Flint has its own medical education programs that produce fine physicians, stories tell of this mystery man repairing severed spines, reattaching lost limbs, and restoring sight to the blind, feats currently beyond the scope of secular medicine.

Hue. Clothiers across Lanjyr are concerned that the upcoming peace summit might endanger the production of a popular dye, Tardisian Blue, which changes color in the presence of magic. The flower that yields the dye is native to a single island in the Yerasol Archipelago, and that island allegedly lies in a "buffer zone" that has been proposed, where neither side could have settlers. Druids in Risur cheer the announcement, saying it will let the islands return to their original historic beauty.

Baker. For months subrail travelers have wondered at the construction outside their windows as they passed beneath the heart of downtown. Wonder no longer. The Sharon M. Baker Station (red line, station 4) will be having its ribbon-cutting ceremony on the 12th of Spring. The city subrail authority apologizes that the Red Line will be shut down until noon that day for track maintenance and platform alignment.

Tennant. The Royal Docks of Upper Flint Bay have a new short-term lodger. *Freux Rouge*, a second-rate frigate of the Danoran navy, arrives on the 9th bearing dignitaries for this month's peace summit. The Flint garrison promises that Risuri ships will be ready at a moment's notice if the Danorans cause trouble. Indeed, the R.N.S. *Brawn*—the ship whose berth the *Freux Rouge* is taking—will be on regular patrol. Gawkers are expected, because the *Rouge* is one of Danor's few remaining sailing warships.

Smith. In Drakr, this spring's Forge Festival will see most every dwarf over the age of 10 working to craft something out of metal over the course of a single day. Trekholm's grand shipyard expects to launch a vessel at sunrise the next day, and has invited all non-dwarves in the city to come and watch the unprecedented construction.

Reunion. Centuries after it was destroyed in the Second Victory, the Aquilopolis Bridge which once connected the human world with the elf world has been reconstructed. Now the massive structure links Crisillyir and Elfaivar at the Strait of Sjögren, and the Avery Coast Railroad is already conveying passengers and freight between the two continents. However, security is tight, and the bridge's completion was delayed due to numerous attacks by jungle tigers.

BACK ON THE JOB

It's been just over a week since the new year's festival filled the skies over Flint with fireworks, metaphorically driving away the meager cold weather that passes for winter in Risur. Flowers are already blooming across the city, and despite the perpetual cycle of worker protests and police crack-downs, despite the gang violence, and despite the fringe eschatologists on street corners claiming that this is the last spring the world will ever know, the people of Flint are optimistic for the future.

The city is abuzz with talk of the peace summit. This morning the king arrived by ship from the capital city of Slate and took residence in Hotel Aurum, the newly-finished tallest building in the city. The party's presence has been requested in the afternoon, once the king and his retinue have settled in.

The Hotel Aurum.

Construction began only a year ago on the extravagant Hotel Aurum. Conceived by a genius halfling, the hotel is actually two separate buildings connected skywalks at the third, seventh, and eleventh floors. The distinction was meant to allow segregation of different classes, with one building being made for the "everyman" while the other side would cater to nobles.

Early in the construction, the hotel was chosen as the site for the peace talks, and the interiors were furnished to the exact specifications of the Danoran and Risuri delegations, with each side taking ownership of a separate side of the two-building hotel. The Risuri delegation resides in the less opulent "west building," while the Danorans have been given occupancy of the "east building." In order to better preserve the nature of the peace talks, the Danoran east building has been designated as a temporary consulate, and counts as Danoran sovereign soil for purposes of the peace talks.

Access and Protection.

Police watch the streets in a one-block perimeter around the building. The nearest subrail stop, Darvill Station (Orange Line, station 2, see Player's Handout: Subrail Opening), is just outside the perimeter, but the station has a constant security presence as well.

The entrances of both towers of the hotel are guarded by agents of their respective nations, with Danoran musketeers and pikemen guarding the east, while Risuri soldiers stand watch with sword and wand at the west. The Danorans won't allow any non-Danorans admittance to their building during the initial phases of the peace talks, and are sure to report any such attempts to their superiors (particularly Lya Jierre).

Guards on duty at the Risuri side of the hotel have been given profiles on the PCs, Brakken, and other RHC constables, recognizing them immediately.

Mages preparing defenses for the peace summit noticed an oddity: just as a ring of gold will block teleportation, the hotel's very name seems to have the same function. It is impossible to teleport into or out of the building, or between the two towers, though teleportation within a single building works normally.

IN MEDIAS RES

Action. Tactical. Level 7.

Kell's thugs attack the party.

Chief Inspector Stover Delft sent a carriage bearing the royal seal to pick up the party and deliver them to Hotel Aurum so they may meet with their king. During the journey, the carriage is set upon by Kell-Guild thugs. Normally they're not much of a threat, but these men carry advanced weapons.

Though they intend to just murder the horses pulling the carriage then gun down the party, these are the king's horses, and they do not die so easily. (The driver's not so lucky.) What was meant as a brutal ambush likely turns into a high-speed chase through the streets.

Royal Carriage.

Reserved for guests of the king, this extravagantly beautiful carriage is big enough to hold six people. Latched shutters are normally closed when the carriage travels, but can be opened for a view, or to speak with the driver, a war vet named **Hadsworth Hudgins**. The walls, doors, and shutters of the carriage are practically bullet-proof and can be deadbolted from within. Two royal horses pull the carriage.

The carriage picks up the party from the RHC headquarters and goes south along a broad thoroughfare. As it nears a railroad crossing, Hadsworth taps the side of the carriage, leans over, and says, "I think I see trouble—."

Then he's shot in the chest with a pair of muskets. His body slumps and falls off the side of the carriage, and the horses bolt.

High Speed Assassination Attempt.

The ambush consists of two carriages of Kell-Guild attackers, one approaching from the front, the other from the rear. Each carriage has two musketeers on the front driver's seat it, and inside the carriage are two musketeers and one Kell-Guild technologist, with special gadgets provided by the Obscurati. The rear carriage also has **Rufus Hammerton**, one of Kell's lieutenants, and athletic and arrogant warrior whom the party might have met in Adventure Two.

The front carriage pulls sideways to try to block the road, and then its side door opens. The two musketeers in the driver's seat shoot and kill Hadsworth. Then two shooters in the carriage fire muskets at the horses, but fail to kill them.

Finally, the technologist hefts a bulky, musket like device with steam piping all across it, and he shoots at the carriage. The PCs hear a thump, and then the high-pitched whine of a drill as the drill-dart tranq gun tries to burrow through the wall of the carriage and dose the party with poison gas.

Front Carriage Crew

- Kell-Guild technologist
- 4 Kell-Guild veteran musketeers
- 2 carriage horses

Rear Carriage Crew

- Kell-Guild technologist
- 4 Kell-Guild veteran musketeers
- Rufus Hammerton
- 2 carriage horses

Royal Carriage

- 2 royal horses (33 hp left each)



CHIEF
INSPECTOR
STOVER DELFT

A Flinter in his early 40s, Delft gets squinty and condescending when his authority is questioned, but he can recognize talent and good work. Delft chews tobacco, and thinks he looks charming if he grins while sucking on tobacco juices. He walks with a cane because a mimic tore a chunk out of his leg fifteen years ago. He has a habit of poking inanimate objects with the cane before he gets too close to them, and spitting on them when he wants to be extra sure.

Kell-Guild Technologist

CR 3

XP 400

Male human rogue 4
N Medium humanoid (human)
Init +3, **Senses** Perception +8

Defense

AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10 (+2 Dex)
hp 18 (4d8)
Fort +1, **Ref** +7, **Will** +2

Offense

Speed 30 ft.
Melee short sword +3 (1d6–1/19–20)
Ranged musket +6 (1d12/x4)
Ranged gadgets +6 (varies)
SA sneak attack +2d6
SQ evasion, uncanny dodge

Statistics

Str 8, **Dex** 16, **Con** 10, **Int** 14, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 15

Feats Point-Blank Shot, Quick Draw, Weapon Proficiency (musket)

Skills Acrobatics +9, Disable Device +9, Disguise +8, Handle Animal +8, Knowledge (arcane) +9, Knowledge (engineering) +9, Perception +8, Ride +10, Spellcraft +9, Stealth +10, Use Magic Device +8

Languages Common, Primordial

Other Gear musket, 20 bullets, short sword, time bomb launcher with 2 bombs*, tranq drill-dart gun with 2 drill-darts*.

Special Abilities

Time Bomb Launcher (Ex) This musket-like device shoots a fist-sized projectile with four prongs that dig into a solid surface. When it attaches, it arms and begins ticking loudly once per second. After one round it begins ticking twice as fast, and after two rounds it ticks four times per second. At the end of the third round the bomb explodes, dealing 10d6 damage (Reflex DC 16 half) in a 20-ft. radius.

Before it explodes, the explosive can be detached with a Strength check (DC 20), and the countdown can be stopped with a Disable Device check (DC 25).

The maximum effective range it can be shot is 40 feet. If it hits flesh it bounces off and does not arm. The timer can be manually set as a standard action, and can be set to anywhere from 3 rounds to 10 rounds.

Tranq Drill-Dart Gun (Ex) This musket-like device fires an arrow-like device that can embed in a person or object. If it hits an object like a door, a spool inside the device activates a drill that bores a narrow hole through surfaces up to three inches deep. One round later, the device sprays gas through the hole.

The drill-dart releases enough gas to fill up to a 10-ft. cube with tranquilizing gas. Each round a creature is in the gas it must make a Fortitude save (DC 16) or take 1d2 Charisma damage. The gas can be cleared out by opening a window, but that of course is the goal of the gadget: to force targets to remove their cover.

If the dart hits a person it deals 1d6 damage but it cannot get enough purchase to drill.

Kell-Guild Veteran Musketeer

CR 1

XP 400

Male human fighter 2

CN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2, Senses Perception –1

Defense

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13 (+3 armor, +2 Dex)

hp 13 (2d10+2)

Fort +4, Ref +2, Will –1

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee short sword+4 (1d6+2/19–20)

Ranged musket +5 (1d12/x4)

Statistics

Str 14, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 12

Base Atk +2; CMB +4; CMD 16

Feats Far Shot, Point-Blank Shot, Rapid Reload, Weapon Focus (musket)

Skills Acrobatics +3, Intimidate +6

Languages Common, Primordial

Other Gear musket, 20 bullets, studded leather armor, short sword

Rufus Hammerton

CR 4

XP 1,200

Male human fighter 2/rogue 3

CE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; Senses Perception +7

Defense

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+3 armor, +1 light shield, +3 Dex)

hp 37 (2d10+3d8+5)

Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +0

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee short sword+4 (1d6+2/19–20) and short-sword +4 (1d6+1/19–20)

Ranged thrown alchemical +7 (varies)

Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6

SQ expert leaper (Rufus is always considered to have a running start for jump checks.

When he deliberately falls, a DC 15 Acrobatics check allows him to ignore the first 20 feet fallen.)

Statistics

Str 14, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 12

Base Atk +4; CMB +6 (+8 to grapple); CMD 19 (21 vs. grapple)

Feats Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (short sword)

Skills Acrobatics +10, Bluff +6, Climb +9, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (local) +8, Perception +7, Stealth +10

Languages Common, Primordial

Other Gear studded leather armor, 2 short swords, 2 vials alchemist fire, 2 tanglefoot bags

Carriage Horse

CR 1

XP 4,200

N Large animal

Init +2; Senses low-light vision, scent; Perception +6

Defense

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 9 (+2 Dexterity, –1 size)

hp 15 (2d8+6)

Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +1

Offense

Speed 50 ft.

Melee 2 hooves –1/–1 (1d4+1 each)

Statistics

Str 20, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 7

Base Atk +1; CMB +5; CMD 17

Feats Endurance, Run

Skills Perception +6

SQ Docile

Royal Horse

CR 3

XP 1,200

N Large animal

Init +4; Senses low-light vision, scent; Perception +8

Defense

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 12 (+4 Dexterity, –1 size, +3 natural)

hp 43 (4d8+25)

Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +3

Offense

Speed 50 ft.

Melee 2 hooves +6/+6 (1d4+5 each)

Statistics

Str 20, Dex 18, Con 21, Int 2, Wis 17, Cha 11

Base Atk +2; CMB +8; CMD 22

Feats Endurance, Run, Diehard

Skills Perception +8

Tactics.

Try to keep things moving in this encounter. The royal horses pull the carriage past the ambushers trying to block the road, and the two other carriages give chase. People in the streets scream and dive out of the way, and the out-of-control carriage occasionally clips obstacles, slowing it enough for the assassins to gradually close in.

Have the party roll initiative, but make it clear that the carriage is not stopping on its own, so normal melee combat is unlikely. Indeed, the horses start sprinting, pulling the carriage at over twenty miles per hour, making it dangerous to try to jump out. Any character who falls out of the carriage at that speed takes damage as if he'd fallen 20 feet, and can try to soften the damage with an Acrobatics check as normal.

At the start of the encounter, the front pursuing carriage is 70 feet behind the royal carriage, while the other is 100 feet back and slightly off to the side so those on board can have clear shots. Every round thereafter the Kell-Guild carriages get 30 feet closer. On each carriage, one musketeer is always busy driving. One shoots from the driver's seat and two lean out the sides. The technologist doesn't get involved until the carriages are within 40 feet; before then he's out of range of his gadgets.

Rufus Hammerton doesn't have any ranged weapons, and he yells at the driver of his carriage to pull in close so he can try to board the PCs' carriage. He's trained for brutal close-in knife-fighting.

At the end of the first round, the tranq drill-dart starts pumping out poison gas, giving the PCs an incentive to open the doors and possibly climb out to take control of the carriage. Moving from the carriage door to the driver's seat requires a Climb check (DC 15). Calming the injured horses requires a Handle Animal check (DC 15). Characters who lean out of the carriage to shoot weapons have cover against counterattacks if two carriages are roughly side by side, or superior cover if they're attacking down the length of the street.

Aftermath.

If the party rides out the danger for three minutes, traffic gets thicker and the assassins give up. If the assassins are stopped (killing their horses, destroying the carriages' wheels, tricking them into a collision), the party can interrogate them and learn they were sent by Kell. "The other guys," which is what the Kell guild calls the Ob, want the party dead, and provided this time and place to ambush them.

If things look bad, like if the front carriage is taken out and none of the party are down, or if his own carriage crashes, Rufus Hammerton tries to run, and he's athletic enough to outrun his fellow thugs. If taken alive, the party earns three Task Force Tokens (see page 24).

Eventually, police will show up and provide escort for the rest of the trip to Hotel Aurum. If the party is really hurting, you can hand-wave some police druids who can provide one few *cure light wounds* per PC.

MEETING WITH THE KING

Exposition. Real-Time.

The party plans with Aodhan.

Chief Inspector Delft meets the party at the Risuri entrance to Hotel Aurum, and he is shocked to hear they were attacked. Once he's sure they've recovered, he guides them to a lift (a novel invention in Risur, but primitive by modern standards), which ascends to the eleventh floor, complete with an operator in a dapper uniform. Along the way Delft reminds them to be on their best behavior, then grins and says they're going to make a damned fine impression.

King Aodhan has established a temporary court, and dozens of advisors and minor nobles are busy setting up the eleventh floor's various offices and suites when the party arrives, likely bloodied and bruised from battle. An aide meets them at the lift and leads them to a conference room off the main court chamber, which has been furnished with a large meeting table, several chairs, and a map of the city on an easel. Officials attend to King Aodhan, but when he sees the party, he dismisses everyone except the party, Delft, and **Principal Minister Harkover Lee**. The king's exact reactions to the PCs will vary based on their previous encounters, and you should give the party a chance to receive a few compliments and exchange some formalities with the king before starting the mission briefing.

The king comes up and shakes each of your hands. "It's good to see you again, constables. I heard about your trouble on the way over, and what happened to Hadsworth, your driver." He shakes his head. "I wish I could give this more time, but I've got a hundred other things to do before tomorrow, so let us get on to business.

"I'm not trying to make you feel important by saying this, but I'm about to give you probably the most important mission I've had to send anyone on in my whole reign. The woman I'm supposed to be marrying might be trying to destroy my kingdom, and apparently there are people who want to make sure we don't find out what she's up to. We have five days until she gets here. Harkover?"



KING AODHAN

Now in his 70s, the king of Risur looks rather unassuming. He prefers to resolve disputes by being cool-headed and rationally persuading those who will listen to his side. For those who won't, he's shrewd enough to give them a sliver of what they want and then distract them with harmless endeavors while those worth dealing with get the job done. Despite all this, though, he trains regularly to keep his stamina and swordplay robust, and the rites of rulership grant him daunting magical powers.

Minister Lee gestures at Inspector Delft, who hands the party a small folder of documents. You can print out Appendix A: Briefing Dossier as a prop for your players, or visit our website to get a template you can modify to match your group's experiences.

Minister Lee says, "Despite a variety of encounters with the Obscurati, we only have a sense of their actions, not their goal, nor the organization or extent of the group. We don't know who they are, but we do know where they are.

"The Ob, for short, maintain some manner of industrial complex in the Bleak Gate, in a location analogous to Cauldron Hill in this world. They can pass between the two worlds with relative ease—we do not have the same ability.

STANDALONE INTRO.

If you're running this adventure as a stand-alone, the Obscurati are part of the same cult as Grundun Zubov's dwarves. The king admits that they don't know who attacked the party, but he assumes they want to stop the peace summit. He was originally going to ask the party to provide security, but now they have a greater mission: find the people behind the attack and stop them.

Keep the B-Team material the same and bring in Asrabey as normal. Just simplify the plot so there's only one group: the eschatological radicals, who are allied with Kell and are secretly building something deadly at their Cauldron Hill base—plus the side complication of Ekossigan.

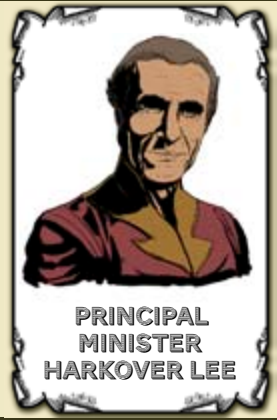
WAYFARER'S LANTERN.

In adventure four the party might have acquired the *wayfarer's lantern*. If they burn special oil infused with essence of a given plane, the lantern can create effects tied to that plane, lasting for five minutes in a 50-ft. radius. If given oil infused with essence of the Bleak Gate, the lantern could create an area that is coterminous between the two planes. Such oil is expensive, but if the party wants they could acquire enough for three uses.

This could let them briefly interact with the Bleak Gate, but they wouldn't have time to complete the necessary mission. If when the oil ran out they were inside the Cauldron Hill complex (which is underground), they would be shunted through hundreds of feet of stone and likely slain from the shock.

If the party manages to get the amulets from Kell (page 31), they can use those with the lantern to transition fully to the Bleak Gate. Any amulets the party might have recovered from Macbannin's manor in Adventure Two have long since lost their enchantment.

Perhaps the most powerful mage in Risur, Lee acts as King Aodhan's bodyguard and chief of staff. Straight-backed and virile despite being in his 60s, Lee speaks crisply and passionately in a slight Ber-tinged accent, and was said to be quite the ladykiller in his youth. He always dresses in reds and golds and carries a solid gold orb tucked into his robes. He never eats or drinks in public.



"When you have time, review the material in these folders." Minister Lee grimaces at Inspector Delft. "Please ignore the Chief Inspector's 'wit'—the official delegate titles he gave to the last two entries. Their inclusion will make sense in a moment." Delft smiles in response.

Minister Lee spends the next few minutes debriefing the party. As Lee, walk the players through the results of the investigation so far, and remind them of the occasional minor detail they might have forgotten. The highlights you'll want to hit are:

- ♦ The Ob are operating secretly and have caused harm to Risur, so we have to assume they're hostile.
- ♦ Lorcan Kell's guild worked with the Ob to attack the RHC headquarters.
- ♦ The Ob have shown the ability to slip into the Bleak Gate via rusted ring gates.
- ♦ At least one powerful individual working with the Ob is unaccounted for—the steelshaper who confronted the party outside of the Nettles church (in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*).

After a few minutes of discussion, or if the PCs ask what the mission is, Lee defers to his king, who explains.

"Certain aspects of my office can't be discussed. But being king means that you're 'connected' to every man and woman in this country. Their approval grants power. There are rules, *old old* rules, there to prevent folks like me from abusing the power the people grant them.

"Being king also means you're 'connected' to the land. I feel when someone enters or leaves the country. If I focus, I can even forbid entry or cast someone out.

"This conspiracy, they're in the Bleak Gate. If they were in the Dreaming, this would be easy. I could march an army with me at the head into the Dreaming at the drop of a hat. It wouldn't make the Unseen Court happy, but I could do it. But the Bleak Gate is harder. I've never been in my entire life, and they say kings have no power there, because no one rules the dead.

"So here's what I need of you. This group has a way into the Bleak Gate, and I want you to find it, and use it, and drag those bastards into the light of day. And I need you to do it before my fiancée gets here."

The Dragnet.

Delft takes over and explains that they think their best lead is Lorcan Kell. His thugs used a ring gate to attack the RHC headquarters, and as the party just saw, they're using odd, high-tech equipment and taking orders from the Ob. The first step to get into the Bleak Gate, then, is to capture and interrogate Lorcan Kell.

Lya Jierre arrives on the 13th, which realistically gives the party just four days for this mission. Kell has a huge organization, but the party has help. It took a while to press through all the bureaucracy to get this arranged, but Delft is proud to announce that they have formed a task force to take down Kell's guild. The party will have 50 police officers at their disposal. Getting any more will require calling in favors (see *Prestige* in the *ZEITGEIST Player's Guide*).

Delft has one **Sergeant Deb Macon** waiting in a nearby office. She'll be helping the party coordinate their forces and deploy them over the next few days. The king is pretty busy, so Delft figures they'll spend some time kicking around a plan just down the hall, then come back to brief the king once they've got the details figured out. The task force can start in the morning. With luck, they'll find Kell before he knows what hit him.

Fallback Options.

Harkover Lee briefly outlines some other contingencies before the party goes off to brainstorm. Taking Kell alive is optimal. If the party kills him, Harkover Lee can arrange for a powerful cleric from Crisillyr to be teleported in to pull up the dead thug's soul and question it.

A less likely option is to contact **Hana "Gale" Soliogn**. The woman is officially a terrorist, but she claimed to have been guided to the Bleak Gate by a fey named **Ellik**. She claimed the trip required unique circumstances, but it's possible Gale or Ellik could help out.

Delft also recalls something about a wrecked automaton some agents found that seemed suspicious. The king tells Harkover Lee to get some expert technologists to help the RHC look into the machine. This small tidbit lays the groundwork for bringing **Alexander Grappa** into the plot, so make sure not to accidentally forget it.

Finally, the king can open a brief portal to the Bleak Gate, but only at midnight during a new moon. The next new moon is on the 14th, a few hours after he's set to start talking with the Jierres. But if the party can't find another way in, Aodhan still wants the party to go after the Ob, so he'll send them through.

Switching Gears.

Aodhan asks them to clear the room so he can deal with some more menial elements of the peace summit. Before they go, he reiterates that they have his full backing on this mission. As the party meets Sergeant Macon and starts to plan the task force missions, Delft excuses himself, saying he has to check on another set of constables who should be meeting the Ambassador from Ber, who will be the peace summit's mediator.

At this point, change the perspective to the B-Team.

ENTER THE B-TEAM.

When you switch to B-Team scenes, hand the players the pre-generated character sheets from Appendix B: Back-up Constables. Please make it clear that these aren't full PCs. When they're "off-screen," as it were, you as GM have fiat over what happens to them, like any other NPC. This lets you drop the party into scenes and dictate the set-up of scenarios.

The B-Team consists of:

- ♦ Carlao, human Yerasol veteran knight.
- ♦ Serena, human technologist rogue.
- ♦ Kaea, high elf skyseer evoker.
- ♦ Dima, dwarf eschatologist cleric.
- ♦ Josiah, human gunslinger ranger.
- ♦ Gaethan, half-elf spirit medium ranger.

SUBTLE NUDGES.

Brakken's abilities provide GMs a unique opportunity to "nudge the plot" by having Brakken learn about secrets via his abilities that the PCs may not have caught onto. He might share some info he "overheard" or that one of his "contacts told him," and suggest the B-Team constables pass it along to the PC. Be sure to use this sparingly, as the PCs are the stars of the adventure, not a psychic minotaur. But if absolutely necessary, Brakken can be used to keep things moving.

A BEAR IN BOSUM STRAND *

Social/Action. Real-Time. Level 6.

The other constables greet Brakken and ensure his safe arrival.

The B-Team is waiting at the appointed dock when *Fuego Duradero* arrives from Ber at noon. The impressive galleon is crewed mostly by orcs and half-orcs, with a handful of gnolls, lizardfolk, and other monstrous humanoids. The ship's bosun, a brute of a lizardman named **Cruusk**, is first off the boat and asks with a hiss who's meeting the ambassador. He demands identification, though he only gives a cursory glance (not really knowing what an RHC badge should look like). Once the PCs have identified themselves, the lizardman sends word back to Brakken, but tells the constables that they will need to wait while the mediator finishes preparing his cargo for offloading. Cruusk gets to work with the rest of the crew. If the party tries to come aboard, the captain barks at them (he's a gnoll) to get off unless they have a search warrant.

A few of the crew come down the gangplank to the docks, and the local dockers warily prep a crane. A goblin and a docker get into a brief argument—neither speaks the other's language—and eventually the docker throws up his hands and lets the goblin take the crane's controls. The ship's crew hook it up and raise a huge crate from the galleon's hold.

I Feel Like I'm Being Watched.

The constables are being watched by a pair of Kell-Guild thugs, lurking at the door of a dockside bar a hundred feet away (Sense Motive DC 20 to get a hunch someone's watching; Perception DC 15 to actually spot the men). If they're noticed, the thugs head into the bar and slip out through back doors, planning to get reinforcements. If the constables want to follow, they don't get far before a mishap with the crane distracts their attention.

Snap!

The crane is hoisting a massive steel cage off the *Fuego*, but the weight is too much, and the cable snaps, dropping the cage on the stone worked dock. It breaks on impact, and the contents of the case claws their way out: a massive dire bear.

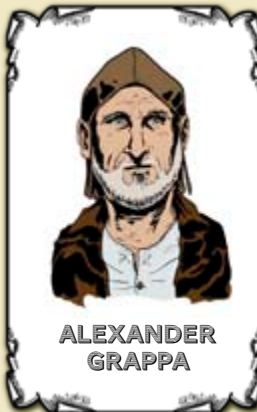
The bear belongs to Brakken, and is his prized fighting animal. Named **Feroz**, this beast is more startled than anything about his tumble. The Risuri dockers nearby panic (the ship's crew, who know the beast is tame, watch with amusement). The sudden flurry of movement spooks the bear, and it rears up defensively.

As long as no one attacks it, the dire bear soon settles down and ponderously approaches one of the constables (Carlao, most likely), then stops to stare into his face. The crew of the *Fuego* look on in stunned disbelief; Cruusk drops the crate he was holding. The goblin operating the crane quickly exits and begins swimming away, fearful of the consequences. Booming footsteps signal the arrival of **Brakken of Heffanita**, the minotaur mediator walking down the gangplank towards the dock.



HANA "GALE"
SOLIOGN

A high elf woman just over 100 years old, Hana can fly at will, control winds, and speak with birds, but she has no directly offensive magic. Bitter about her treatment by her Danoran "foster family," she uses her powers to sabotage Danor-owned industry. Some accuse her of more violent crimes, calling her a "fey terrorist." She seeks an audience with the Unseen Court, but she hasn't yet been granted one.



ALEXANDER
GRAPPA

Alexander fought for Risur in the Third Yerasol War four decades ago as a mere foot soldier. After losing too many friends he devoted himself to learning magic of golem-crafting. Originally he hoped that his homeland could field an army of automata instead of shedding the blood of its young men and women, but his interest slowly drifted from golem construction to the crafting of minds for these artificial warriors, as well as enchantment magic and other ways to end a conflict without anyone dying.

When the Ob were ready to begin construction on the colossus, Kasvarina Varal (page 67) personally recruited Grappa, promising him he could help create peace. Nine months ago, though, he overheard the leaders of the conspiracy discussing their full plans, and was imprisoned and *geased* so he could not tell anyone. He managed to escape, but was killed, and only managed to preserve his consciousness by transferring it to his bronze golem handservant.



BRAKKEN OF
HEFFANITA

A minotaur from the nation of Ber, Brakken's ambassadorship in Orithea helped end that nation's civil war and bring on unprecedented prosperity. Recently Brakken became ambassador to Risur, and was tapped by the rulers of Risur and Danor to mediate their peace talks. He's said to be very canny, and that his mere presence tamps down on people's pretensions. He once even got a raging bear to back down with a single disapproving glare.

Brakken secretly is a telepath, and has had such success in negotiations because he can hear the surface thoughts and, if necessary, nudge people toward compromise. He seldom pushes the actual leaders of each side, but he finds it helps immensely if he can calm the emotions of their advisors. He's genuinely driven by a desire to help people live in harmony, though raising his own prestige is certainly a bonus.

He dresses in simple tribal clothing from Ber and refuses to travel without his most trusted friend, a dire bear named Feroz.

He's amused by the sight, and calls out to Feroz. The large beast turns and plods back to Brakken's side.

If the constables attack the dire bear, it immediately retreats back up to the ship, where Brakken is able to calm it with his psychic abilities. Brakken scolds the constables, and for the remainder of the adventure, Feroz will growl and stare at the constables whenever they're near.

If the constables held their ground, Brakken congratulates them. He introduces himself as "Brakken of Heffanita, Ambassador to Risur from the Progressive Monarchy of Ber, and chosen mediator for the historic peace talks between Danor and Risur." He understands that there are those who might wish him harm, so he appreciates the protection, but he warns them that his job will require him moving around a lot. For instance, he wants to make sure Feroz is stabled at the Beran consulate, and then he'd like to get a late lunch before going to meet the king. He already has a place picked out.

Brakken puts a pack on his bear's back, full of gifts meant for the dignitaries, and then he's ready to head out.

Escorting the Ambassador.

The Beran consulate is located in the southern district of eastern Stray River. The fastest way is to take a ferry, but Brakken asks to walk, which takes a couple hours. He wants to gently scan the minds of those around him to gain a sense of the city's mood, and he enjoys the reactions of "civilized people" to a giant bear ambling down the street.

Brakken makes small talk, shares stories about his homeland, and asks a few questions about Flint. As ambassador to Risur he's spent his time in Slate, not Flint, and this city is much more psychically complex than any he's been to before.

The route passes a few landmarks, like Dawn Square (where Nevard's Rally took place; here Brakken looks troubled), the Royal Shipyard (where the king's ships are docked; Brakken smiles), and Hotel Aurum (Brakken begins frowning a block before the party comes within site of the blockaded street and the protesters gathered). Brakken isn't set to meet the king until later tonight, so he continues to Stray River, where his mood perks up.

The constables may simply shrug off Brakken's odd moods as him reacting to a new land, but they might notice (Sense Motive DC 22) that he seems to adopt the mood of whatever neighborhood he's about to enter.

A centuries-old high elf warrior, Asrabey became one of the many husbands of Kasvarina Varal, a powerful matriarch who had survived the Great Malice. Kasvarina encouraged Asrabey's resentment of the humans who had sentenced their people to death. For years he trained, and undertook many daring raids until he became famous as one of the greatest high elf warriors in the world.

Eventually Asrabey left Elfaivar and offered his services to the Unseen Court, though he has kept a much lower profile for the past two hundred years. Asrabey has not seen Kasvarina for fifty years, and he has not the slightest inkling of her affiliation with the Obscurati. He might respect a few humans from Risur, but he hopes that someday Kasvarina will come to him and ask him to lead a final war of retribution against the Clergy that ruined their race, and the nation of Danor, whose tiefling leaders bear the mark of their crime.



Mi Casa.

The Beran consulate is far less impressive than the Danoran consulate that the party visited in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*, but it spreads across more land. Rustic and relaxed, the consulate is rarely visited and sees only a handful of official guests every month. The grounds are patrolled by a half-dozen guards with fierce and loyal mastiffs.

Two-stories tall and constructed of simple brickwork, the main consulate building is dwarfed by the stables. The stables are home to various normally ferocious animals, including several wolves and the consular's pet worg, Blademaw. Once every three months, the consulate lets in children from various schools on a tour, with the main sight-seeing attraction being the animals in the stables.

The consular, a one-legged orc named **Gerax**, greets Brakken and the constables like they're old friends. In truth, Brakken has never met the orc, but subtle use of his abilities makes the meeting an impressive scene. Gerax greets the constables with great respect despite their relatively low standing.

For the remainder of the adventure, Brakken will spend his nights in the Beran consulate. Feroz will remain within the stables. Gerax asks everyone to join him for drinks, but Brakken declines, saying he has a lunch date. He asks the constables to take him to Pardwight University, where he'll be meeting one **Steffan Eberhardt**, Drakr's representative to the peace summit. The meal's on him.

ENTER VARAL

Social. Real-Time.

Cut back to the main party, a few minutes after they leave the king to continue planning. The party hears a commotion outside as an unannounced visitor shows up: **Asrabey Varal**. The PCs likely encountered Varal during Adventure One, *The Island at the Axis of the World*, and depending on their encounter with the high elf, he may react to their presence. If the PCs were able to defeat him, then Varal grudgingly gives them a nod, but if he was able to escape or subdue the party, Varal ignores them.

Asrabey has his sword sheathed and his lion shield strapped across his back. If they try to stop him, he explains he is on official business for the Unseen Court, and will brook no delays. Yes, he will foolishly fight his way through if the party is stubborn; Asrabey is also exceedingly stubborn.

Before the King.

The high elf presents himself with a quick kneel before King Aodhan.

"Gracious King Aodhan, ruler of the mortal nation of Risur as recognized by the true lords of this land, I come on an urgent mission for the Unseen Court. The Court demands it be known that one of their ilk has taken an interest in this city and is acting on his own. I am here to tell you that the Court does not approve.

"His name is Ekossigan, herald of the four seasons, he who defends stags from arrows, widdershins prophet, and liege of changelings. Upon leaving the Court he penned this poem:

"When spring returns to winter, / The cauldron births a spark.

"The steel betrays the vintner, / The silver spurns the arc.

"The fire-bride's dissension: / Dismissed by green-adorned.

"The wheel-woven dead man / Shall wake the cauldron-born.

"I ask your leave to search this city for the rebel. Moreover, I invoke the Rite of Kelland's Tribute. We offer one war unfought in exchange for one season slain. The fey shall not retaliate if you kill that which the Unseen Court's greatest warrior cannot harm."



A Knowledge (history or nobility) check (DC 15) recalls that Asrabey, as an agent of the Unseen Court, would be forbidden from harming Ekossigan himself, so he is effectively requesting someone to help him murder a rogue fey.

The king looks to the party for a reply, prompting them if needed to explain how they will contribute. He is required to fulfill the tribute, but he will let the party decide whether they'll help Asrabey personally or assign the B-Team to handle it.

Aodhan ultimately agrees to allow Asrabey to hunt Ekossigan, but he demands that the high elf otherwise obey Risuri law while inside the city. Asrabey agrees, then immediately turns to leave.

If the PCs have agreed to help, Asrabey tells them to meet him at the RHC office at dawn two days hence. He is not open to discussing his whereabouts within Flint, and if pressed about his activities during the intervening day, Asrabey will admit that the Unseen Court has sympathizers in Flint, and meeting them will be easier without the party present. The dreadnought refuses to be followed, and between his stealth, climbing ability, and teleportation, he is very hard to keep tabs on.

For more information on Varal's quest to stop Ekossigan, see Thread Two: One Season Slain (page 31).

BOMBS AWAY! *

Action. Real-Time. Level 7.

Grundun Zubov's bombs start going off. Panic. Running. AHHHH! One last scene before the adventure goes free-form.

At 2:15 in the afternoon, the B-Team and Brakken reach Pardwight District, where the city's main university lies. Brakken asks around a bit and eventually is pointed to a Yerasol restaurant that serves fruit, goat, fish, and fried plantains located in the Onça Student Hall (Area 11 on the map). There they are greeted by Steffan Eberhardt, and Brakken introduces him to the party as "Drakr's eyes at the peace summit."

Steffan—an old thin dwarf with sickly white skin, who supports himself on a skull-tipped ebony cane—shrugs in a "what are you gonna do" way and says, "We Drakrans thought we knew how the world was going to end—these two countries fighting until everyone is dead. Now we have to change all our predictions."

Brakken leans in to the constables and whispers theatrically, "Drakr's just worried they'll have fewer customers for their guns and warships." The two laugh and Brakken looks for a seat big enough to support him.

Pardwight District.

One of the few parts of Central District that has managed to keep itself surrounded by a buffer of nature, Pardwight is host to the city's university. Classes fill spare rooms in the buildings of the district, with only a handful of facilities exclusive to the school.

The orange line of the subrail is actually above ground in the Pardwight District, and it has opened up the area to middle class socialites who are charmed by the eclectic clothiers, restaurants, and other shops in the area. Sailors and dock workers trying out the trains for the first time often jump off here to explore. Students tend to stay in the dorms, but the rail offers them easy access to the city's culture.

When the constables arrive, have each make a Wisdom check (DC 14) to notice that the clock tower (area 13) is seven minutes slow.

Unless otherwise noted, buildings are 30 feet high. Streets are 30 or 40 feet wide.

1. **Pemberton Industries Office Building.** This squat complex once served as a testing ground for the discredited Pemberton Industries' experiments with personal arcanoscientific devices. Now it is locked and lightly guarded until Benedict Pemberton or his debtors can clear out the labs. The university briefly had a department of arcanoscience based here, but now the students have been forced to find other accommodations, most of them much less safe in the event of accidents.
2. **Flint Tribune.** This five story building holds the offices of the city's foremost daily paper, as well as business printing presses. It also services the *Risuri Record* and *Pryce of Progress*, papers having more of a "tabloid" feel.
3. **Mixed use.** Various shops, often with classrooms or apartments on different floors.
4. **Pardwight Medical Library.** Five stories tall, the library houses not just books but curative scrolls, galleries of famous healers, and an entire floor of preserved specimens, human and monstrous.
5. **Mixed use.** Another set of shops, galleries, and such, surrounding a pleasant garden.
6. **Strandholt Teaching Hospital.** The façade has three stories, while the two wings—for critical patients and chronic patients, have an extra floor. A basement extension houses the insane.
7. **Mixed Use.** If you're going to have a mixed-use property, you want it here, because this one is really the prettiest. Look at that fountain.
8. **Hodgeman Hall.** The only part of the district that exclusively is owned by the university, these two buildings have several lecture halls and cozy classrooms for the teaching of classics, languages, and non-mechanical sciences.
9. **Pardwight Druidic Temple.** The university formally recognizes all druidic sects, and tolerates clericists and other religions, but its founders adhered to the way of the puma spirit, looking forward to prey or progress, not skyward like the skyseers.
10. **Quillis Upperclassman Dorm.** Fronted by a fresh air market, the dorm is actually run by a collection of former graduates who demand their lodgers work at least 4 hours a week in the market.
11. **Onça Student Hall.** A major gathering place for students, Onça Hall also houses most of the university's administrative offices, plus its commissary. The Yerasol restaurant Brakken wants to try is on the ground floor of the building.
12. **Pardwight District Court.** This somber building is known as the Stone Dome by the law students who study here. A small police lies across the ravine to the southeast.

13. **Anderson Clock Tower.** The sixty-foot high clock tower predates Flint's industrial boom, and it has never stopped working for more than five minutes.

14. **Foyle Ravine.** Signs warn people not to enter the wooded ravine. Because of an old teleportation prank gone awry, anyone who tries to leave the gorge teleports back to the base unless they're wearing a gold ring. The local police keep gold rings on hand to rescue stranded pedestrians. The phenomenon is why the subrail has to go on the surface here.

15. **Pardwight Station (Orange Line, station 4).** This station has some of the most stark and modern architecture of the whole subrail system.

16. **Cesanne Sword Studio.** This physical education facility was originally founded to teach duelists. Today it mostly hosts dodgeball.

Terror Attack.

While Brakken, Steffan, and the constables partake of spicy fried fish, goat, and plantains, the agents of radical eschatologist Grundun Zubov prepare the opening salvo in their message to Risur. Snipers set up atop the medical library (Area 4) and the Anderson Clock Tower (Area 13), and a bomb waits in the skywalk of Hodgeman Hall (Area 8).

First Bomb.

At 2:25, right as the constables are receiving their food and right as a train is passing beneath the skywalk, the bomb detonates. The explosion tears apart the skywalk, shatters the windows in the restaurant the constables are at, and is loud enough to be heard anywhere in the city. The train derails, and a great black smoke cloud billows into the sky. Twelve fatalities result from the explosion, along with twenty-six wounded among those onboard the rail and those nearby hit by shrapnel.

It takes about two minutes for doctors to stream out of the hospital (Area 6), and five minutes for the first police to mobilize from the southeast. The constables have fifteen minutes until the second bomb goes off.

Total Casualties: 26 wounded, 12 dead.

After the First Attack.

Depending on how fast the constables react, they might learn some of these facts after the whole incident plays out, or they might figure out where the terrorists are and stop them before the second bomb.

Brakken and Steffan will do whatever the constables suggest. Steffan is a cleric, and will stabilize those who are pulled from the wreck. If the constables insist, he might even accompany them, in which case he can provide four *cure light wounds* and two *cure moderate wounds*.

Bet He Wasn't Prepared for That.

An elderly dwarf—one **Takbar Rhozenko**—waited for the train reading a newspaper. Just before the train arrives he closed the paper, checked a pocket watch, and turned away. The bomb explodes, the train derails, but the dwarf is unfazed. While everyone else on the street is running to see what happened, he walks away casually, right past the now-shattered windows of the restaurant the constables are eating at.

The dwarf is distinctive, beardless with white hair and dark patches around his nose and finger tips from frostbite. He has a newspaper tucked in his armpit, and is fiddling with a pocket watch. If that's not enough to get the constable's attention, this will.

Recent earthquakes have jostled Flint, and when the explosion goes

off it causes just enough damage to knock loose a puma-faced gargoyle from atop Onça Student Hall. The gargoyle plummets and strikes Takbar as he walks past the building, just feet away from the party.

Takbar is left dying but conscious, and he growls in pain. If the gargoyle is heaved away and he is magically healed, he can survive, but otherwise he passes on after a minute. Any PC can make a Knowledge (religion) check (DC 24) to realize that Takbar is a member of an obscure radical sect from Drakr. If no PC realizes this, Steffan points it out, shocked that someone from such a rare group would happen to be here.

If the party tries to interrogate Takbar, he resists until he realizes his meager lies aren't convincing them. Then he clamps down on his suicide pill, and mocks them: "Zubov will destroy the world you know! This is my promise for you!" The poison transmutes the dwarf's blood to ice, and his skin rapidly turns blue. He dies within three rounds unless the poison's magic can be dispelled (caster level 5).

The First Lead.

Astute characters might search Takbar and find the newspaper and the pocket watch.

The paper is an issue of the *Risuri Record*, a tabloid with a small circulation owned by Risuri citizens who are sympathetic to Drakr and the Heid Eschatol philosophy. The paper is renowned for dealing with trash scandals—the cover story of this issue “discloses” (without anything resembling a shred of proof) an affair between Danoran Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre and her brother Luc Jierre.

The paper releases an issue once a week, but Takbar's copy is dated tomorrow. Clever characters can figure out that the dwarf got it from the printer today: the printer is just down the street, at the *Flint Tribune*.

As for the pocket watch, it's set for 2:40, fifteen minutes after the first attack. It radiates minor transmutation magic. The gargoyle cracked it and damaged its components beyond the scope of any immediate repair.

If they search Takbar more thoroughly, they can find the forged work order for repairs last night at the skybridge, which has the address of Soknik Repairs, the contractor who apparently was providing the workers. Soknik Repairs is the hideout of Zubov's cell.

Second Bomb.

The second attack takes place fifteen minutes after the first, giving the constables a narrow window to avert it.

Zubov's men scouted the Flint Tribune building while visiting the *Risuri Record*, which has a small office on the second floor. Last night they bribed the cleaning crew to go home, then hid explosives in the crawl-space between floors, near every support column. These explosives have a magical trigger activated by Takbar Rhozenko's pocket watch. He was headed to the roof of the Pardwight Medical Library.

After witnessing the bombing of the rail line, Takbar wound the watch to a fifteen minute timer, then pressed a button to start the countdown. This sent a message to linked devices in the Flint Tribune building, and so even though the gargoyle broke the watch, at 2:40 those bombs will go off unless the detonators (three each on two floors) are disabled (Disable Device DC 20 each).

If the party somehow kept Takbar from being crushed, they can figure out that the watch sent a magical signal by fiddling with the device (Knowledge (arcana) or Spellcraft DC 20), and *detect magic* can let them trace the signal to the bombs. Takbar's watch cannot deactivate the bombs, but the spotter in the sniper squad atop the medical library also has a watch which can similarly be used to stop the countdown.

FOR LATER INVESTIGATION.

Zubov's terrorist cell planted specially crafted firedust casks in the skywalk supports, concealing them as additions to the normal stone pillars. The dwarves worked overnight on the 8th, and the local police were fooled by some simple disguises of them as workers and a moderately well-forged work order.

The trigger for the explosion was a wire on the tracks. When the train crossed over it sent a jolt down the line that set off the firedust. The wire was deactivated through most of the day, but a member of the cell passed by five minutes before the detonation and casually attached two connectors while adjusting the cuff on his pants.

Gunsmith PCs or those knowledgeable in the creation of firedust (Appraise or Craft [Alchemy] DC 22) can identify the material as a variety of more explosive firedust typically only available to the military. An hour at a lab can identify the firedust as originating in Drakr.

Examination of the stone used to conceal the explosives determines that it's aggregate rubble concrete. A bit of work can track down a producer who sold an appropriately-sized quantity earlier this week. The buyer was Zubov, but he picked up the material in his own wagon and paid in coin, so tracing him that way is unlikely.

The dwarves in the sniper nests, as well as Takbar, all had white powder on their shoes. A chemical examination reveals it as sodium borate, along with several other compounds used as an insecticide.

PRYCE IS RIGHT.

Some time later, while the party is at the RHC headquarters, **Bartholomew Pryce** meets with them. A firebrand sometimes critical of the monarchy and the RHC, Pryce was the editor of *Pryce of Progress*, a newspaper with heavy Docker sympathies. He's in his early thirties, reasonably good-looking if you can overlook the filthy smoking habit, and hangs out in different drinking or gambling dens in the Bosum Strand.

Pryce has the eye of a canny journalist, and can provide any information you think your party needs that they missed, since he saw the dwarves working in the Flint Tribune building but was too busy trying to meet a deadline to worry about them at the time.

Perhaps more importantly, now that the offices of the Flint Tribune are gone, he sees an opportunity to take its place. He's already acquired seed money for a new office and printing press, but he'd like to run his first issue with information about the Terror in Flint. He'd like an interview with the party, and if possible he wants to follow them and report on how they're helping protect the city.

Pryce plays no plot-relevant role in the adventure, but can give the party a sense that they're famous, and that people are watching to see how they lead.

If the bombs detonate, the first two floors of the *Flint Tribune* (Area 2) burst in a cascade of explosions that annihilate structural support for the half of the building facing the rail line. In a thunderous crash of stone and steel, the building topples into the street. A gas line ruptures and a geyser of flame shoots into the air above the rubble. The building just barely misses the druidic temple, but a hundred people working at the newspaper are crushed, and most of those will die within minutes unless quick help is provided.



What was initially shock and curiosity in the public turns to panic. People in the district believe that their offices may also be potential bombing sites, and many try to run.

Any creature in the building when it collapses takes 5d6 damage (Reflex DC 14 half). If a character survives that damage, assume it will eventually be rescued when pulled from the rubble. If a character is caught directly in the blast, he takes an additional 10d6 damage (Reflex DC 16 half).

Total Casualties: 26 wounded, 100 trapped and soon to die, 12 dead.

Snipers!

Three dwarves watch from atop the Pardwight Medical Library (Area 4), and another three are perched on the Anderson Clock Tower (Area 13). Each group has two snipers with scoped rifles, and one spotter with a long spyglass to report targets to the snipers, plus a small ice elemental that guards the entrance to the roof. (The ice elemental is a native of northern Drakr, not extraplanar, and it resembles a crystalline serpent.)

Having panicked the crowd with the second bomb, the snipers wait for people to flee down the bridge to the southeast or the street to the north. Then they start firing, killing 10 people in the first minute. Panic turns to outright terror as people realize there's no way out.

The snipers continue to fire indiscriminately at the frightened crowd and at people in windows in nearby buildings. They make a point of killing anyone who tries to flee, or who tries to help those trapped in the rubble, as well as anyone in a police uniform.

Once the shooting starts, a character can search for the snipers by spending a standard action, picking a building, and making a Perception check (DC 24) to spot sunlight reflecting off the scopes or spyglass. For the sake of fairness, don't have the snipers target the constables unless one of them intentionally makes himself a target.

Total Casualties: 26 wounded, 100 trapped and soon to die, 22 dead, plus another 5 wounded or dead per minute.

Sniper Crossfire.

If the constables don't intervene, the local police manage to find the snipers and take them out, which takes half an hour. By that point a hundred people are wounded from explosions and non-fatal shots from the snipers, and nearly two hundred are dead. Eight more police die attacking the snipers, who kill themselves up rather than be taken alive.

The constables might choose to help earlier than that. If they move before the second bomb goes off they can at best round up four police officers to come with them (see Allied Officer in Appendix B). After the second bomb, the party can get a dozen officers, though that will make them targets. Let the players control the officers, especially if the party decides to split up to tackle the two sniper nests simultaneously.

If the constables go up to one nest, they'll take fire from the other, but after one nest is cleared out you can safely assume the police are able to stop those other snipers within a few minutes.

Alternately, the constables might call for help from the main PCs, using the *messenger wind*. From Hotel Aurum the party can probably reach the bombing site in five minutes.



Sniper Nests.

From fifty feet up, the snipers are easily within close range for most of their targets. The two nests are about 200 feet apart, so the snipers take a –2 penalty to hit the constables if they're attacking the other nest. Low walls on the roof grant superior cover against attacks from below, and cover from attacks made from the same elevation.

The medical library roof is fifty feet across, accessible by a central door. The team here is a silent crew, the only words being uttered are those of the spotter, indicating targets of opportunity. These dwarves are methodical in their attacks, and tend to aim at potential runners or anyone who looks like they might be trying to rally the crowd together.

The clock tower sniper nest is on one of the tower's "shoulders," and is accessed from the middle section near the clock face. It's much narrower, just fifteen by twenty-five feet. This second group is far more blasé, and the two snipers carry on a casual philosophical debate about the state of the world while murdering people. This team fires at mostly random targets, with the snipers justifying each of their shots aloud with comments like, "Oh, that overweight man clearly should have known he would not live long; he should have been prepared for an early death."

Team 1 (Medical Library)

- 2 eschatologist snipers
- 1 eschatologist radical
- 1 Small ice elemental

Team 2 (Clock Tower)

- 2 eschatologist snipers
- 1 eschatologist radical
- 1 Small ice elemental



Eschatologist Sniper

CR 1

XP 400

Male dwarf fighter 2

CE Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +1, **Senses** Perception +6, darkvision

Defense

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10 (+1 Dex)**hp** 15 (2d10+4)**Fort** +5, **Ref** +1, **Will** +1

Offense

Speed 20 ft.**Melee** warhammer+2 (1d8/x3)**Ranged** rifle +4 (1d10/x4, misfire 1)

Statistics

Str 10, **Dex** 13, **Con** 14, **Int** 11, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 6**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 13**Feats** Far Shot, Point-Blank Shot, Rapid Reload, Weapon Focus (rifle)**Skills** Knowledge (religion) +5, Perception +6**Languages** Common, Dwarven**Other Gear** scoped rifle with 200 metal cartridge rounds, warhammer

Eschatologist Radical

CR 1

XP 400

Male dwarf rogue 2

CE Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +1, **Senses** Perception +6, darkvision

Defense

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+1 Dex, +4 armor)**hp** 15 (2d10+4)**Fort** +5, **Ref** +1, **Will** +1

Offense

Speed 20 ft.**Melee** warhammer+1 (1d8/x3)**Ranged** shotgun +4 (1d8/x2 in a 30-ft. cone, misfire 1–2)**Special Attack** sneak attack +1d6

Statistics

Str 10, **Dex** 13, **Con** 14, **Int** 11, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 6**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 13**Feats** Point-Blank Shot**Skills** Bluff +3, Climb +3, Disable Device +5, Knowledge (religion) +5, Linguistics +5, Perception +6, Sense Motive +6, Stealth +4**Languages** Common, Dwarven, Primordial**Other Gear** shotgun with 20 rounds, warhammer, chain shirt

Small Ice Elemental

CR 1

XP 400

N Small outsider (air, cold, elemental, water)

Init –1, **Senses** Perception +5, darkvision

Defense

AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16 (–1 Dex, +1 size, +6 armor)**hp** 13 (2d10+2)**Fort** +4, **Ref** +2, **Will** +0

Offense

Speed 20 ft., swim 60 ft.**Melee** slam+4 (1d4+1 plus 1d3 cold)**SA** numbing cold (Fort DC 12)

Statistics

Str 12, **Dex** 8, **Con** 12, **Int** 4, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 11 (can't be tripped)**Feats** Power Attack**Skills** Knowledge (planes) +5, Perception +5, Stealth +8, Swim +9

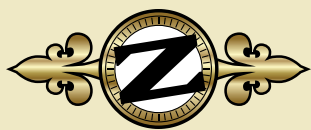
Special Abilities

Numbing Cold (Ex) When an ice elemental deals cold damage to a creature, that creature must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 12) or be staggered for 1 round.

Aftermath.

The dwarves realize that they will be stopped by law enforcement eventually, so they carry special poison pills in their mouths (see Takbar Rhozenko, page 17). If a dwarf thinks he's about to be taken alive, he'll chomp down on the pill as a move action and die three rounds later.

Any of the snipers who are taken alive are fanatical and hard to break, but if the party applies the right pressure the dwarves can give up the location of *Soknik Repairs*. In any case they will gladly boast that their leader, Grundun Zubov, has already thought of a counter to anything the police could do to stop them.



PART ONE: SETUP

This section contains two events that don't fit cleanly into the main plot threads, but which set up the party's eventual assault on the Obscurati base in the Bleak Gate.

A BUNCH OF BOLTS

Puzzle. Real-Time.

The party and the B-Team meet and examine the partially reassembled bronze golem.

The morning of the 9th of Spring, before the party meets with their task force, a royal technologist comes to the RHC headquarters to help repair the mangled bronze golem that the RHC found a few months ago. The party is present to see what information it might yield. The B-Team is present because they found the golem originally, and one of their number, Serena, has been trying to repair it in her spare time.

The royal technologist, **Justin Rollins**, is a big light-hearted black man who has a "pet contraption" the size of a small dog that walks on four legs and carries his tools—plus a box of chocolates that Justin idly munches as he works.

Golem Condition.

When the B-Team found it, the golem was in hundreds of pieces. Serena has spent most of her efforts to bend bits back into shape so she could assemble the body. Right now she has one and a half arms assembled, one leg, and the bulk of the torso, minus a few external casing pieces.

The head's back area is mostly intact, but the face and eyes are obliterated, and Serena hasn't tried attaching it to the body yet, unsure what would happen. She explains that it radiates magic still, and she thinks it could still control the body if reattached. Her hunch is that it could be given orders, perhaps even something like "take us back to your base."

Justin asks those assembled to securely restrain the body to a table with straps. He intends to put the head on, and he doesn't want the machine flailing around. After a few minutes of work with silver dust and wires engraved with arcane sigils, he magically fuses a thick cable between the back of the skull and the neck. The head still lies limply.



It's Alive.

The body twitches a bit, and then the fingers on its functional right hand begin tapping the table. Any character with the Yerasol Veteran trait recognizes it as the equivalent of Morse code. (There's definitely someone in the building who can translate if the party can't.)

It translates to, "Would you kindly give me a pen?"

Alexander Grappa has been conscious inside his golem's severed head, able to hear what's going on but not communicate until now. A strong will has kept him from going crazy, though his memory has some gaps, and there are things he still cannot talk about because of a *geas*.

Either with a pen (writing roughly and blindly) or with additional tapping, Alexander communicates the following message:

I am Alexander Grappa, the mindmaker. A magical compulsion prevents me from explaining everything, but I believe we have mutual enemies.

Don't bother repairing the mouth. I did not design this golem for vocal communication. I would very much appreciate functional eyes, however. And if I'm to guide you to our mutual enemies I'll need legs. I have a feeling that my neck isn't in excellent shape either.

Back in summer I was in my own body, imprisoned after I learned a secret that I unfortunately cannot share. Again, pardon certain vagaries that are necessary due to my *geas*. I fled the Bleak Gate with a woman and this golem at my side. A rival caught up and slew me, but I managed to transfer my consciousness into this machine. My rival destroyed this golem body, but did not realize he had failed to actually kill me.

I would rather like to thwart his plans and help the aforementioned woman. If sufficiently reassembled I can guide you through the...the most I can say is to call it a facility. I cannot get to the Bleak Gate myself, but I know my way from there.

In exchange for this, perhaps you could arrange me access to my old golem-crafting workshop. Ask around for Alexander Grappa, and I hope people will have heard of me. It would be very nice to design a better body for myself.

Justin explains it will take him about a day to get the golem functional. Out of Grappa's earshot, he suggests they keep the golem locked up—maybe toss him a few books to read or something—until they can be sure they can trust him. By the afternoon of the 10th, the golem's body is intact enough to walk and climb, and Justin has enchanted a handheld tap-to-voice device so it can speak about a word every 2 seconds.

Further Questions.

The party understandably might have a lot of questions for Grappa, but all his *geas* allows him to say is that he was in a facility in the Bleak Gate, which has hundreds of workers and dozens of guards. He can neither name nor describe anyone he worked with, but he can say whether he knows people if the party describes them. For instance, if they mention meeting a steelshaper, or if later on they mention Kasvarina's name, Grappa can acknowledge that they were his "rival" and "the woman."

He cannot say the name Obscurati, nor that the facility is building something, let alone that it's building a giant colossus. Grappa also knows that the Obscurati plan to use the colossus to perform some sort of ritual—he overheard Kasvarina talking about training the colossus about the planes, in case it had to make a split decision during the ritual—but he doesn't know what the goal of that ritual is. In any case,



GUARDIAN OF THE HILL

Social. Real-Time.

The party is invited up to Cauldron Hill by Lieutenant Dale.

After Mayor Reed Macbannin was revealed (in Adventure Two) to be performing horrible experiments atop Cauldron Hill, a replacement was assigned to keep track of the cursed mountain. Lieutenant Dale, an erudite and cool-headed military officer, used to be on call to respond in case of supernatural incursion.

Now **Captain Dale** maintains a garrison of eighty soldiers atop Cauldron Hill, and at the king's direction he sends an invite to the party because he hopes to be working with them. The invite arrives just as the party is finishing up with Alexander Grappa.

Martial Scientist PCs might know Dale from the Battalion academy and his infamous thesis on *Meditation, Coffee, and Cherry Pie: Unorthodox Salves Against the Supernatural*.

If the party goes up to Cauldron Hill, they find work crews at the mansion still repairing seismic damage from previous tremors, and another crew excavating the strange laboratory beneath Macbannin's garden shed. If the party can't make it, Dale understands that the party is on a tight schedule, and can meet the party down in the city, though he recommends a bar called the Bookhouse, which he says serves the best papaya pastries in the country.

Dale can provide the PCs each with a specially attuned amulet. The *bleak amulet* has no magical properties in the real world, but in the Bleak Gate it offers impressive magical defenses.

In addition, the captain offers to spend some time training with any Martial Scientists in the group, teaching them specialized technique to use against supernatural creatures. After a few hours, a Martial Scientist can learn the Dale Assault special ability.

Both the amulet and the maneuver are detailed in Appendix D: Magic.

Soldiers Ready.

Depending on which method of entry the party uses to reach the Bleak Gate, they might be traveling with most of Dale's soldiers. The night of the 13th, sixty soldiers will wait near Hotel Aurum, ready to go through the portal the king will open, though only thirty-one people will be able to pass through, so the party had better go first.

he can't tell the party about it. His best bet is to lead the party so they can find out the details themselves.

The party might try to have Principal Minister Harkover Lee remove the *geas*, but when he tries *remove curse*, it fails. He's surprised by this, because it means whoever cast the spell is significantly more powerful than he is—not to mention that the *geas* has lasted far longer than it should. (In game terms, Kasvarina is a level 17 spellcaster, and Harkover is only level 13.)



THREAD ONE: THE DOWNFALL OF KELL

In this thread, the party moves against Lorcan Kell's crime gang.

THE KELL GUILD.

The party has several options on how to proceed with finding Lorcan Kell. First, for the GM's sake, what is the party up against?

Kell's operations are based out of the Theater of Scoundrels, a debauched hang-out for thieves and thugs. Here Kell holds court and watches his minions practice their skills. The "theater" aspect is a big draw to new members, because Kell throws a good party, and the stage often has raunchy, violent, and sometimes bloody shows. Guild members are encouraged to practice their lying by joining in plays.

Hierarchy.

Kell doesn't manage the daily affairs of his guild. He's just the figurehead who'll hunt you down and chop you up if you cause trouble. His lieutenants actually run the guild, foremost among them **Quentin Augst**, a lawyer based in Central district. Augst prefers opera to Kell's brand of low theater, so meetings of the guild leadership usually happen in one of their business fronts, the Sunset Bench.

If Rufus Hammerton escaped defeat at the start of the adventure, he's holed up in the Machete Hill stronghold (see below).

Fronts.

The guild operates the usual array of clubs, brothels, restaurants, and shops, but also have an atypical holding interest in a variety of factories—when the Ob needed certain goods, some factory owners capitulated to let the guild skim, others had their places burn down, but a few were killed outright, and their wills—forged and rewritten by Augst—put their whole businesses into guild hands.

Safe Houses.

Kell splits his time between several homes in Parity Lake and The Nettles, most of them gated villas. He also keeps numerous safe houses, usually multi-story buildings that are the tallest in the neighborhood. Conscious of how many times he's killed men who had no way out, Kell always plans his escape routes, and he's more than willing to leap between rooftops to avoid a trap.

Lorcan Kell's lawyer, and the guy who handles the guild's affairs. Augst started off just representing Kell's toughts in court, but eventually grew frustrated with the guild's inefficiency and promised Kell he could make both of them a lot richer if he could handle logistics.

Augst's home in North Shore is maintained by his half-elf handmaiden, who has looked after his children ever since Augst's wife died several years ago in a tragic fire—a fire Augst set when his wife realized his criminal connections.

A fan of opera, Augst usually sticks to Central District, where his friends know him as a bookish teetotaler who has to be dragged out to play polo occasionally. Though the guild members think he's weak, he makes sure everyone gets paid well, which engenders more respect than stabbing a back-talker ever could.



QUENTIN AUGST

Resources and Training.

Out of a city of eight hundred thousand, Kell's guild has three hundred official members and a couple thousand citizens who directly do business with them, most of them in Parity Lake or The Nettles. The official guildsmen are trained in the theater in the best way to knife someone, or to use a hostage as a human shield. Almost all carry pistols, and some of Kell's favorites have access to choicer weapons smuggled in from Drakr.

By contrast, the entire Flint police force numbers just seventeen hundred, and they tend to carry night clubs and crossbows, and some carry swords. The few firearms they do get are military surplus muskets. The authorities aren't looking to start a war in the streets.

Kell usually travels with two personal bodyguards—**Kate Glenn**, a corrupt priestess who protects Kell from hostile magic, and **Nick Reder**, a meaty bruiser who can hold back the largest foes.

The Ob have recently equipped the guild with high-quality firearms and alchemical weapons. A few prominent members of the guild have gotten magic or arcanoscientific gear, and Kell himself now enjoys riding around in a *figurine of wondrous power* that transforms into an armored carriage, drawn by tramping mechanical legs instead of actual horses.

In Hiding.

When he gets wind that the RHC are after him in force, Kell relocates to the Theater of Scoundrels, his seat of power. From there he prepares to fight the RHC, but tries to get in touch with his contacts in the Obscurati in case he has to run. Once things get too hot, Kell moves to a safe house and hides inside a *rope trick* to evade divination (see Kell Spooked, page 24).

Even if they can find him, catching him isn't easy. The Obscurati gave him a one-use item—a *gatecrasher charm*—which tears a whole in reality so he can slip into the Bleak Gate for a few minutes. It has nasty side effects though, and the trip isn't permanent unless there's someone from the Ob on the other side waiting to pull him all the way through. He can use the charm in a pinch to get a few minutes' head start on running.

MINI-GAME TRAINING.

To ease the party into the rules for the Task Force, you might have a group briefing on the morning of the 9th, where Sergeant Macon introduces the party to the task force. Macon explains that she has taken the liberty of sending out two groups of 6 officers on Case a District missions, one to Bosum Strand, the other to North Shore, to see if they can start nibbling at the guild around its edges.

Mark that 12 officers have been deployed today. Then roll the Diplomacy checks for those two missions (1d20+10 vs. DC 17), and the Bluff check to avoid trouble (1d20+10 vs. DC 13). Determine the officers' findings.

Afterward, Sergeant Macon suggests sending some scouts to keep an eye on any locations they found, and recommends each group should consist of 3 officers. Mark those down and roll to determine their success (or let the PCs roll on their behalf), and then let the players take the reins from there. Don't have any moles sabotage these initial missions (see "Dirty Rats," next page).

WHAT YOU GONNA DO WHEN THEY COME FOR YOU?

Exploration. Montage. Level 7.

The party kicks in doors and runs down criminals to find Kell.

To capture Kell, first the PCs must find him.

If your group has an idea of their own, run with it, but as a base suggestion we assume they'll try to drive Kell into the open by dismantling his guild. The party has several avenues, and each successful operation contributes to the overall challenge of finding Kell. It's up to the party to lead the task force, and men's lives are on the line if they screw up.



Task Force Makeup.

Most of the city's police keep to their regular duties or prepare security for the peace summit. But thanks to the wonders of overtime pay, the party has 50 officers at their disposal. Delft tried to get men from districts where Kell was unlikely to have moles, but unbeknownst to the party, three officers in the task force are actually on the take, and will rat out the party's plans to Kell's guild, making things more difficult if the party doesn't clean house.

Running the Task Force.

The party can deploy their 50 officers as they see fit, but each officer can only undertake one mission per day. Some missions gather intelligence. Others, called **strikes**, damage the guild, and the task force needs 6 strikes for a partial victory, or 8 for a complete one.

DIRTY RATS.

The moles send word to Kell's guild as soon as the task force is convened. Thereafter, each day choose one of the following effects for each mole:

- ♦ **Misinformation 1.** If the party has officers case an area, the mole reports a juicy but false lead. If the party follows up on that lead, their effort is wasted.
- ♦ **Misinformation 2.** If the party sends out a scouting mission, the mole either under- or over-reports the danger by half, to lead the task force into a trap or waste its resources.
- ♦ **Tip Off 1.** When the party sends out a Bust Up a Joint mission or Sting mission, the mole warns those involved, and when the task force shows up, no one is there.
- ♦ **Tip Off 2.** When the party sends out an Assault mission, the mole warns the guild so they can prepare their defenses. Increase the number of defenders by half.
- ♦ **Cold-Blooded Murder.** If none of the other options present themselves, at night the mole kills a fellow cop and passes the murder off as a Kell-Guild assassination.

When a mole sabotages the party, each PC who went on the mission can make a Sense Motive check (DC 20) to detect the mole. Also, if the party gets suspicious, once per day each PC can make an Intelligence check (DC 20), with a +1 bonus for each previous sabotaged mission, to figure out who one of the moles is. The party might also use its own methods to catch moles, and perhaps use the moles to feed false information to the guild.

Targets.

The task force has a variety of targets, most of which require some investigation to find.

- ♦ **Front.** A business the guild uses to launder money, have meetings, and keep an eye on an area. In Parity Lake, this might be a shoe store, bookseller, seafood restaurant, bath house, bar, brothel, etc. These are usually warehouses in Bosum Strand, money-lenders in Central, and high-end boutiques in North Shore. The Nettles doesn't have enough commercial activity to host any fronts.
- ♦ **Den of Thieves.** Hang-out spot for members of the guild. These will usually be bars or clubs, but sometimes they're just swanky homes with a good view.
- ♦ **Illicit Transaction.** Meet-up where guild members commit some major crime. Examples include smuggling magical poisons in the linings of hats, selling stolen military muskets, kidnapped women being charmed and magically altered to look like elves, planning to assassinate an ombudsman, wizard brought in to torture a captured cop for info, etc.
- ♦ **Stronghold.** One of three well-defended compounds that could easily repulse most police assaults. A fancy tower called Grand Suites and a mansion dubbed Casa de Kell are both in Parity Lake. The Nettles hosts a gated compound called Machete Hill.
- ♦ **Theater of Scoundrels.** The guild's seat of power in eastern Parity Lake.

Missions.

Each officer can be assigned one mission per day. Each mission has a Minimum Officers and Optimal Officers entry, though sometimes the party will need to scout to know these figures.

- ♦ **Case a District.** Look for Kell-Guild activity.
- ♦ **Scout.** Watch a Front, Den of Thieves, Stronghold, or the Theater to see how many hostiles are present.
- ♦ **Bust Up a Joint.** Go into a Front or a Den of Thieves to look for information. Success earns one Task Force Token at a front, or two tokens at a den of thieves.
- ♦ **Sting.** Swoop in during an Illicit Transaction. Success earns 1 Strike and a Task Force Token.
- ♦ **Assault.** Attack a stronghold to earn 1 Strike. Attack the Theater of Scoundrels to earn 3 Strikes.

Going after the Theater of Scoundrels right away is foolhardy, since the task force is outnumbered and moles in the task force would spoil the attack. Waiting gives the party time to find the moles and spoil the guild's morale so people desert.

A smarter course is to chip away at the organization around the edges, frightening the guild members and driving some into hiding, making for an easier takedown. Still, the timeline is tight. With average skill rolls, it's actually likely that the task force won't manage to reach 8 strikes.

Party Involvement.

The party might undertake a mission themselves, or lead a group of officers. Each mission takes roughly 4 hours, once you factor in coordinating all the officers, getting into position, the mission itself, then clean-up and interpretation of any info found. This will cut into their time for the other threats facing the city. Each 7th level PC counts as 8 extra officers when determining whether you have the minimal or optimal amount.

You can briefly narrate their involvement and have one PC roll the appropriate check to determine the outcome, or you can play through the scene normally, assembling a group of foes from Appendix C: Kell-Guild Stats. The enemy forces are pretty weak compared to the party, so feel free to go back to the brief version if the players are bored with taking out pushovers.

Skill Checks.

Each mission calls for a skill check. If no PCs accompany the officers on a mission, roll 1d20+10 for their skill check. If a PC does come along, he can roll a check with his modifier instead.

The check takes a -5 penalty if the number of officers is below Optimal but at least Minimum. If it's below Minimum, he takes a -10 penalty. Using more officers than Optimal doesn't make things any easier. Particularly clever plans or usage of magic might add +2 or +5. The results of a successful mission are detailed with each entry.

Each mission calls for a second skill check to avoid a mishap. Mishaps (as well as failures on some missions) lead to officers being incapacitated. They might die, or just be injured enough that they can't help on further missions. If a PC is present on a mission, he can choose to take 3d6 damage instead of having an officer be incapacitated.

Task Force Tokens.

Certain missions can earn **Task Force Tokens**. A token can be spent to gain a +2 bonus on a skill check for a mission. This represents things like getting insider information, letting criminals off if they'll rat on their colleagues, or persuading their friends to leave town instead of fighting. Tokens must be spent before making the roll, and they are each single-use.

The *ZEITGEIST Player's Guide* suggests that each PC should have contacts throughout the city. For each contact located in a given district, the party starts with one token that can be spent in that district.

Favors.

The party might use their Risur Prestige to call in favors and get some military additions, or to get some officers to work even longer.

For example, it's a Level 2 favor to get 1 extra officer for a few hours (long enough to send them on another mission), Level 3 for 4 officers, Level 4 for 12 officers, and Level 5 for 50 officers. For military, it's a Level 3 favor to get 1 soldier for a mission, Level 4 for 4 soldiers, and Level 5 for 12 soldiers.

For the purpose of this mission, soldiers count as normal officers for the missions Case a District and Scout, but count as 4 officers each in other missions.

See the *ZEITGEIST Player's Guide* for more information on Prestige.

Progress.

The party realistically just has four days—from the 9th to the 12th—to locate Kell, since the peace talks formally begin on the 13th. They want to rack up 8 **Strikes** against Kell's guild by then, which will give them an opening to take him down (see *Duke of Slaughter*, page 29).

On their way to 8, these events occur:

Kell Spooked. Kell starts in his Theater of Scoundrels, which he thinks is unassailable. Realistically, the party would be chewed up by dozens of Kell's thugs if they picked a fight here, and even the whole task force would probably be driven back, at least at first.

However, if the party manages to get three Strikes against the guild, Kell gets nervous. He leaves orders and pretends that he's going hunting, but in truth he and his two toughest bodyguards make for a safe house in northwestern Parity Lake. They travel while protected by *invisibility* and *nondetection* (caster level 5), and they are only on the road for fifteen minutes.

They settle into the top floor of a four-story tenement, which has a narrow but deep canal running past it (the better to leap into as part of a getaway plan). One of the bodyguards uses a *wand of rope trick* so the three can hide and fool divination. Meanwhile, three low-level toughs watch the entrance to the building and to the *rope trick*; they can quickly signal if anything suspicious happens.

Two other men act as messengers, going out at morning and night to pick up or leave messages at a dead drop a few blocks away. One of these men is **Dexter Rathnine**, who is actually on the Family's payroll, and whose information prompts Morgan Cippiano to offer to help the party track Kell down (page 26).

The Family Interested. Additionally, when the party gets to three strikes, the Family sees a chance to actually take out Kell. This triggers the *Enemy of My Enemy Is My Family* encounter (page 26).

Betrayal in the Ranks. Once the task force has racked up 6 strikes, Kell's guild starts to get shaky. Enough people try to cut deals with the party that they can easily figure out what safe house Kell is hiding in, though actually getting him is a challenge.

Break and Run. When the task force gets 8 strikes, Kell becomes certain that the noose is closing around him. He sends out the carriage created by his *figurine of wondrous power* as a decoy, then slips away and runs to a spot the Ob told him to go in case of an emergency. If he can evade the task force he gets a free trip to the Bleak Gate, but first he sends a message to the RHC by targeting the B-Team.

Other Options.

If the task force fails, the party might still be able to make a move on Kell with the Family's help (page 26).

KELL'S OPERATIONS BY DISTRICT.

The party starts off knowing the location of the Theater of Scoundrels and the three strongholds—The Grand, Casa de Kell, and Machete Hill. The Case a District mission gives the party the location of some of Kell's fronts and hang-outs, as well as the times of illicit transactions.

Bosum Strand, Central District, or North Shore. Success uncovers one operation. Roll on the table below to determine the type, and secretly roll to determine how many hostiles will be present.

1d6: Result:

- 1–3 Front. 1d4+1 hostiles are present.
- 4–5 Den of Thieves. 1d8+1 hostiles are present.
- 6 Illicit Transaction. 1d12+4 hostiles are present.

Parity Lake. As above, but success uncovers 1d4+2 operations.

The Nettles. As above, but success uncovers 1d4 operations. Reroll any Fronts, since there's not enough commercial activity in this district to support them.

Mission Details.

You can find a player-appropriate version of these rules in Appendix A.

Case a District. The officers hit up contacts and try to figure out where Kell's guild has operations in a district. Each attempt targets one city district, but the districts where Kell's guild has a larger presence—Parity Lake and The Nettles—are more dangerous. After this mission, it is useful to Scout before sending in officers.

Minimum Officers: 2. **Optimal Officers:** 6.

Check: Diplomacy or Knowledge (local) (DC 17).

Success: The task force uncovers some operations in that district, as detailed in the sidebar on the previous page.

Failure: The task force learns nothing of value.

Mishap: Make a Bluff check to avoid drawing unwanted attention (DC 17 in Parity Lake or The Nettles; DC 13 in Bosum Strand, Central District, or North Shore). On a failure, ambush! One officer is incapacitated.

Scout. Choose one location and send officers to figure out how dangerous it is. Scouting itself can be dangerous, especially for a stronghold. You cannot scout an illicit transaction.

Minimum Officers: 1. **Optimal Officers:** 3.

Check: Perception (DC 20).

Success: The task force learns how many enemies are at a location, and thus how many officers are required.

Failure: The task force learns nothing of value.

Mishap: Make a Stealth check (DC 15 normally, DC 17 at a Stronghold, DC 20 at the Theater). On a failure, ambush! One officer is incapacitated.

Bust Up a Joint. Officers target a Front or a Den of Thieves, looking for clues. Fronts are typically less well-guarded, but Dens of Thieves yield better information. Since the task force is likely to hit up multiples of these, be sure to narrate enough details about the locations so they feel distinctive.

Minimum Officers: Equal to the number of hostiles. **Optimal Officers:** Three times the number of hostiles.

Check: Intimidate (DC 20) to get hostiles to surrender.

Success: The task force arrests or kills all the hostiles, and suffers no casualties.

Failure: The task force suffers casualties equal to half the number of hostiles, and takes out a number of hostiles equal to the number of officers sent in.

Mishap: Spice things up by requiring a check (DC 15) to avoid some complication—Diplomacy to get bystanders out of the way to avoid innocent deaths, Disable Device to keep a trap from killing officers, Knowledge (engineering) to avoid piling too many people into an unsteady building in the Nettles, etc. A failure results in 1d8 good guys incapacitated.

Consequence: Regardless of the result of the skill check, if the task force takes out all the hostiles and has at least one survivor, it earns a Task Force Token. At a Den of Thieves, victory yields two tokens instead.

If all the officers sent are incapacitated without taking out the hostiles, the hostiles execute the officers.

Sting. Officers target an Illicit Transaction, with the goal of disrupting Kell's business and taking out his men. You cannot scout for a Sting, so there's greater danger of committing the wrong number of officers.

Mechanically, a sting works like "Bust Up a Joint." If the task force takes out all the hostiles and has at least one survivor, it earns a Task Force Token and earns one Strike toward locating Kell.

After the task force has successfully stung three Illicit Transactions, the guild gets skittish and cancels all other big meet-ups for the near future. Thus, Stings can only earn the task force a total of 3 Strikes.

Assault a Kell Stronghold. Officers storm one of the strongholds—the Grand Suites, Casa de Kell, or Machete Hill. Success takes out part of the guild's leadership and seizes a huge chunk of its assets. Mechanically, an assault works like a Sting, but with many more hostiles. Each stronghold that is taken out earns the task force a Strike.

Grand Suites. 30 hostiles. Intimidate (DC 22) to force surrender. Gunmen watch from the upper windows of this fancy six-story tower. Underground tunnels let the hostiles flee to the sewers. If a first attack is rebuffed, the 1d6 replacement hostiles arrive per day through the tunnels.

Scouting discovers the tunnels. If the task force either blocks the escape or attacks through the tunnels, they gain a +5 bonus to their Intimidate check. Blocking also prevents reinforcements.

Casa de Kell. 22 hostiles. Intimidate (DC 22). This old mansion is surrounded by machinery factories, and traps fill the hallways. Scouting reveals this. During an attack, make a Disable Device check (DC 17) to avoid an extra 1d8 deaths.

Machete Hill. Counts as 21 hostiles. If the party didn't manage to take down Rufus Hammerton, he's here too, raising the effective total to 25 hostiles. Intimidate (DC 22).

This gated compound has several squat buildings with quaint shuttered windows, laid out at angles so attackers entering the gate have to pass through a crossfire of cannons. Yes, cannons, and they're loaded with small shards of metal as grapeshot, since they're being used at close range.

Scouting discovers the cannons, which can be neutralized with a careful advance behind tower shields, or by attacking through the gates. Otherwise, the task force suffers 2d6 deaths at the start of the mission, before they make the Intimidate check.

Assault the Theater of Scoundrels. The task force takes on the seat of Kell's guild, a tattered theater that has been renovated into a killing gallery, guarded by 100 hostiles in the theater and nearby buildings. Intimidate (DC 25) to force a surrender, except no one will surrender as long as Kell is present. As noted above, he flees from here and hides after the task force accumulates 3 Strikes.

Once Kell leaves, for every other stronghold the task force has taken out, 20 of the hostiles desert because of low morale. At best, the party only has to deal with 40 hostiles.

A success here counts as 3 Strikes against Kell's guild, though the party would be wise to acquire Task Force Tokens first. Smart, callous players will just burn this place down with all the criminals inside. Maybe pull the arson brothers Eberardo and Valando out of prison for the job. Doing so still requires getting close enough, though, and the hostiles aren't just in the theater, but in all the surrounding buildings.

Capture Quentin Augst. This is a bit more involved than a simple task force mission. See Attorney of Scoundrels, below. But if successful it counts as 2 Strikes against Kell's guild.



THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY IS MY FAMILY.

Social. Real-Time.

The Family can help get Kell.

A few hours after the task force reaches three strikes against Kell, a letter is dropped off at the RHC headquarters, or might be delivered to the party by a courier if the PCs are too busy to stop by base.

I have men in your organization that tell me Lorcan Kell is priority one. I have men in Kell's organization who can deliver him to you. Meet me at the Brave Hall fashion show, corner of Yearling and Healers in Central this afternoon, and we can make a deal.

(signed) Morgan Cippiano

The fashion show is going on all week, every evening. Alternately, the party might think to approach the Family themselves, in which case the crime lord **Morgan Cippiano** will personally meet them wherever they suggest, so confident he is that they won't betray him.

Dressed to Kill.

Brave Hall is a stodgy gentleman's club intended for men from aristocratic families, though they have started allowing men and women with newly acquired fortunes in on a provisional basis. Everyone is in coats and top hats, drinking brandy and smoking cigars as they watch handsome young men and waifish women parade about in unorthodox fashion like seersucker suits, denim pants, and a huge variety of sashes which, Morgan is confident, will just be a passing trend.

Morgan has no great reason for meeting here, other than that he'd already scheduled it and figured it might motivate the party to dress nicer. He asks them out to a balcony for fresh air, and talks business while looking at the sunset across Flint Bay.

You Actually *Can* Refuse This Offer.

Morgan's offer is simple: his man in Kell's guild will give the crime boss an excuse to leave his hiding spot—most likely a fake meeting with Kell's Obscurati contact, a man Morgan knows only by the name "Norm" (see *Busy Night*, next page). Yes, Morgan says, he's got some inkling about Kell's involvement with the group, though he hopes the party knows more about them than he does, because he can't find out much of anything.

Morgan Cippiano heads the local branch of the Family crime syndicate, based out of Crisillyir. Though gruff-voiced and cocky, Morgan has an unusual fascination with fashion. He rejects trends, but has a good eye for classical styles that people of any culture can appreciate. He hopes some day to be seen as a father figure to his community, but for now he's willing to smash a few heads and order a few throats slit in order to clear out the competition.



Morgan's man will report back with the route Kell will take, and it will be up to the party to take him down. Morgan recommends enlisting some of the locals to be ready to protest or riot in order to cut off certain roads and funnel Kell where they want him. Morgan's suggestion is one of the bridges along Stanfield Canal, where Kell won't be able to slip down alleys to escape.

What does he want in exchange?

- ♦ **First**, a moratorium on murder investigations in Parity Lake, at least for a few weeks. It's dirty business, but this city deserves a better class of criminal. If his people don't cull the ranks of Kell's thugs, there'll just be another round of street wars in a few years. He'll practically be doing the city a favor, and he doesn't want his people getting locked up for it.
- ♦ **Second**, a prisoner release. Morgan reminds them that his "family" originates in Crisillyir. Though he doesn't like to get involved in politics, he promised a relative that he'd help out a family friend if he could. That friend is one **Giovanni Algardi**.

The party might (Knowledge (history) DC 15) remember him as an aged sculptor nicknamed "The Carver." It eventually was discovered that he could animate his statues to assassinate people inside their own exquisitely-carved homes. Algardi confessed to the murders of several Risuri nobles, but international politics has kept him from the gallows for three years.

Morgan wants him released and teleported tomorrow to Alais Primos, capital of Crisillyir. Family members there will contact Morgan via *sending* to verify the delivery.

- ♦ **Third** (and you can skip this if it doesn't apply to the party), Morgan asks what Ashima-Shimtu told them. The party likely met with the imprisoned demoness several months ago, in *Adventure Four, Always on Time*. Morgan wants to know whether they made a deal with her. If pressed on how he knows about this, he just says that word travels fast when people land on islands that have been cursed for centuries.

Good Faith.

To show he is well-intentioned, Morgan offers them a free bit of information. The man in charge of the Obscurati facility here in Flint is Leone Quital, known as the "Steelshaper." Morgan reiterates that he doesn't know much about the actual group, but word has gotten around of the man making an appearance in *The Nettles* a few months ago, and he's distinctive enough that Morgan was able to find out who he is.

Morgan says that Leone is supposed to be able to control metal with his mind, to bend, break, or levitate it with ease. He doesn't know if it will be of much help in the current mission, but he can also give the party the location of the Quital family estate, northeast of Vendricce.

Making a Deal.

On their own, the party cannot hope to get either the moratorium or the prisoner release, but if they ask the king for either or both of these things, he'll back their decision. He has misgivings about releasing the Carver, though. It's a judgment call for the party whether they'll be able to nab Kell on their own, or if they need to accept Morgan's offer.

As for Morgan's third request, if the party shares the details of their encounter with Ashima-Shimtu he doesn't seem fazed at all. He'll thank them for doing business, then go back to the show. After it's over, he'll pass it along via *sending* to his contacts in the Clergy back in Crisillyir.

Man on the Inside.

If the party agrees, a few hours after Morgan gets word that Giovanni made it home safely, the RHC is visited by Morgan's man on the inside, **Dester Rathtine**. Scruffy, dressed like a common pickpocket but packing a pair of finely-crafted concealed daggers, Dester is cheeky, chatty, and a little arrogant. He's been a low-level street enforcer for Kell for years, but was recruited a few months ago by the Family as a double agent. Now he's one of the trusted runners who deliver information between Kell and his guild while he's in hiding.

Dester tells the party where Kell is hiding, about his bodyguards, and that he has mentioned a few times his "escape plan," which Dester thinks will let him teleport, but that he can only use once. If the RHC tries to assault him, he'll almost certainly be able to get away. He'd have used his ace in the hole, but it might take days to find him again.

What Dester thinks will work better is if he tells Kell that "the other guys" (by which he means the Obscurati) have agreed to get him to safety, and want to meet him. Dester suggests a bar on the south side of the Nida Street Bridge, along the Stanfield Canal, at 3 in the morning. The RHC could then whip up some sort of ritual to block Kell's get-away plan, and place it on the bridge, which would be deserted at that time of night.

The party can call upon Principal Minister Harkover Lee to perform a ritual akin to *dimensional lock* on the bridge, blanketing a 100-ft. radius. See Duke of Slaughter (page 29) for how Kell reacts.

SUNSET BENCH. ***Social. Real-Time. Level 8.**

The B-Team escorts Brakken and some dignitaries to one of Kell's fronts.

On the evening of the 10th of Spring, Brakken decides to take dignitaries from both Risur and Danor out for a night on the town, hoping that some fun will form bonds. The B-Team escorts the group from Hotel Aurum to a fancy club in North Shore, the Sunset Bench.

The outing consists of Brakken, **Geoff Massarde** (Risur-allied tiefling engineer), and **Captain Rosalyn Taylor** (representative from Danor's navy). The B-Team acts as bodyguards for all of them. Brakken leaves Feroz at the consulate, saying, "In Ber, you never bring your bear to a bar."

These NPCs reappear at the banquet in Part Two (page 53), but this scene and a few others with the B-Team gives you an opportunity to introduce them to the players, so you won't have to present a half-dozen new NPCs all at once at the banquet. The short version goes like this:

Geoff Massarde. This tiefling helped build the Risuri flagship *Coaltongue*. A strong advocate for technology and reconciliation, Massarde drinks too much and hits on women. He has a wand that can chill things with a touch, which he uses to make ice.

Captain Rosalyn Taylor. One-eyed, red-headed captain of *Freux Rouge*, Danor's last sail-powered warship. Old-fashioned, high-spirited, and responsible.

A Very Important Mission.

When Brakken brings up the outing with the B-Team, he claims he needs their help for what might be the most important part of the peace talks: making sure everyone has a good time at a club. Depending on your party's enthusiasm for the B-Team, you might breeze through this scene, or let them treat it as a mission to get the two sides to be friendly.

Busy Night.

Sunset Bench is a truly fine establishment, on the ground floor of a five-level building with apartments for two dozen wealthy occupants. Every hall and room is gently lit by colored glass sculptures that have *light* spells active within. Beyond the foyer and its coat/sword check, the main room of the club is circular, two hundred feet across, with a sunken central area and small private cubbies dotting the outer walls. At the far of the sunken area, spot lights illuminate the stage, behind which a curtain leads to the kitchens, dressing rooms, and storage. On the near side by the entrance, glass shelves loaded with various alcohols line the wall behind the bar.

The club is hosting the last night of a week-long tour starring local celebrity **Rock Rackus**. A band backs him up as he sings, narrates, and jokes about his many exploits across the world. He might even have a bit about the main PCs, if they interacted with him in a previous adventure. Brakken reads Rock's thoughts and is enthralled when he finds that the man's wild claims are actually true.

Also present tonight but keeping a low profile is Quentin Augst, who is meeting a representative of the Obscurati—a nondescript Risuri man who calls himself **Norm** (his actual name is **Sylyx**). Augst is trying to bargain for help from the conspiracy, and the desperation in his voice is slowly convincing Norm that they'll need to kill the lawyer before he can talk to the authorities.

When the B-Team enters the club, they might recognize Augst in a corner of the crowded club (Perception DC 25), which could give them a chance to eavesdrop or make a move, though he does have bodyguards lingering nearby in the crowd. If the constables can get close enough without attracting attention (Stealth DC 15), they hear Norm offering Kell and a few lieutenants an escape route to the Bleak Gate; he can't send any large forces.

Tip Your Servers.

Unless the constables suggest otherwise, Brakken selects a table near the stage and psychically "nudges" the current occupants, whereupon they suddenly decide it's a good idea to get up and leave the table.

After half an hour, Rock takes a break to let his band get some drinks, and he makes a point to remind everyone that this is his more casual show, put on by "the greatest venue in the city, Sunset Bench!" He'll be headlining at a "lesser venue, the Navras Opera House, tomorrow night." After that, he hops off the stage to hobnob with the crowd.

Eager to hear more of Rock's tales, Brakken enlists Geoff and Rosalyn to accompany him and meet the famous adventurer. Shortly after they get up, the discussion between Augst and Norm gets heated, with Augst snapping at a waitress who comes by to offer them drinks, then yelling, "We're not running. That's just *throwing money away!* We need firepower, not a damn escape route! And because you couldn't just shut up and agree, *now* I've missed half the show!"

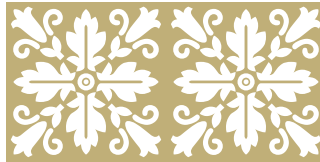
Norm tells Augst to calm down, but instead Augst gestures to his bodyguards and storms out. If Augst leaves unaccosted, Norm finishes his drink and follows a minute later.

Making a Move.

If Augst realizes the constables are onto him, he'll leave in a hurry. If confronted, he looks at his men meaningfully, and suggests the two groups take things outside so no innocents get hurt. Then, just as he nears the exit, he says, "Do it, please." One of his bodyguards pulls out a flask of alchemist's fire and chucks it at the shelves of liquor behind the bar. Flame bursts across the wall, and the crowd begins to panic.

Augst and the Ob Rep

Quentin Augst
Norm, Obscurati Liaison
3 Kell-Guild Pistoleers
4 Kell-Guild Scoundrels



Quentin Augst

CR 1

XP 400

Male Human Expert 3
NE Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1, **Senses** Perception +1

Defense

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10 (+1 Dex)

hp 17 (3d8)

Fort +1, **Ref** +2, **Will** +4

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee dagger +1 (1d4+1)

Ranged alchemist fire +3 touch (1d6 fire and 1 splash, 1d6 fire next round)

Statistics

Str 8, **Dex** 12, **Con** 10, **Int** 17, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 12

Feats Skill Focus (Bluff), Skill Focus (Profession (criminal lieutenant)), Skill Focus (Use Magic Device)

Skills Appraise +9, Bluff +11, Diplomacy +8, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (history) +9, Knowledge (local) +9, Profession (lawyer) +7, Profession (criminal lieutenant) +10, Sense Motive +7, Use Magic Device +11

Languages Common, Dwarf, Giant, Primordial

Combat Gear dagger, three flasks of alchemist fire, *wand of charm person* (10 charges)

Norm, Obscurati Liaison

CR 5

XP 2,000

Male Human Sorcerer (shadow) 6
LE Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1, **Senses** Perception +1, darkvision 30 ft.

Defense

AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10 (+1 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 23 (6d6)

Fort +2, **Ref** +3, **Will** +5

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee dagger +4 (1d4+1) or touch spell +4 touch

Ranged ray +4 touch

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 6th, concentration +9)

3rd (4/day)—*suggestion* (DC 16)

2nd (6/day)—*darkvision*, *web* (DC 15), *spectral hand*

1st (7/day)—*disguise self*, *disrupt undead*, *expeditious retreat*, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 14), *shocking grasp*, *vanish*

0th—*arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *message*, *read magic*, *prestidigitation*

Statistics

Str 12, **Dex** 13, **Con** 10, **Int** 12, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 14

Feats Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Silent Spell

Skills Bluff +12, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Sense Motive +7, Stealth +10

Languages Common, Primordial

Combat Gear dagger, Obscurati wand (stashed in apartment; completes transition to Bleak Gate after using the canal path, see below)

Kell-Guild Pistoleer (3)

CR 1

XP 400

Male human fighter 1/rogue 1
CN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +2, **Senses** Perception +4

Defense

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13 (+3 armor, +2 Dex)

hp 17 (1d10+1d8+2)

Fort +3, **Ref** +4, **Will** –1

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee short sword+3 (1d6+2/19–20)

Ranged broken pistol+1 (1d8–1/×2)

Special Attacks improved grapple, sneak attack +1d6, strangler

Statistics

Str 14, **Dex** 15, **Con** 13, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +3 (+5 to grapple); **CMD** 15 (17 vs. grapple)

Feats Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Strangler

Skills Acrobatics +6, Bluff +6, Disguise +6, Escape Artist +6, Perception +4, Stealth +6

Languages Common, Primordial

Other Gear broken pistol with 10 bullets, studded leather armor, short sword

Special Abilities

Strangler (Ex) When he maintains a grapple, the Kell-Guild pistoleer deals 1d6 sneak attack damage to the grappled target.

Kell-Guild Scoundrels (4)

CR 1

XP 400

Male human fighter 1/rogue 1
CN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +2; **Senses** Perception +4

Defense

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+3 armor, +1 light shield, +2 Dex)

hp 17 (1d10+1d8+2)

Fort +2, **Ref** +4, **Will** –1

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee short sword+1 (1d6+2/19–20) and short-sword +1 (1d6+1/19–20)

Ranged thrown alchemical+3 (varies)

Special Attacks sneak attack +1d6

Statistics

Str 14, **Dex** 15, **Con** 13, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 15

Feats Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (short sword)

Skills Acrobatics +6, Bluff +6, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +6, Perception +4, Stealth +6

Languages Common, Primordial

Other Gear studded leather armor, 2x short swords, 2x alchemist fire, 2x tanglefoot bag

Tactics.

The pistoleers grapple anyone who gets adjacent to their boss, but otherwise shoot to keep the constables at bay. Any shots that miss almost certainly strike someone in the club. The scoundrels gang up on vulnerable PCs to take them down, and shout at the constables to back off if they don't want anyone to die. The B-Team is likely outmatched here, and if given a chance, Augst and his men make a run for it.

If that's not feasible, such as if the constables called in back-up, Augst chucks his own alchemist's fire, then pulls out his *wand of charm person*

and tries to make it work (Use Magic Device +11 vs. DC 20).

Norm mostly hides in the crowd, casts a silent *disguise self*, and watches. But if it looks like Augst is about to be captured, he might get involved. He'll cast *spectral hand* silently, then follow up with a silent *shocking grasp*. The glowing hand freaks out bystanders, but people are too focused on the ruckus with Augst to notice Norm wiggling his fingers to cast spells. Once Augst is down he'll shock him again to make sure the man is dead. This won't stop the party from speaking with his corpse or spirit, but it should reduce what they can get out of him.

Most likely, though, Augst and his crew will get away, and Norm will suggest to his superiors that the lawyer needs to be silenced.

Follow-Up.

If captured, Augst tries to cut a deal for a reduced sentence in exchange for information. This provides ten Task Force Tokens for the main party's efforts against the guild, and also counts as 2 Strikes.

Additionally, Augst knows the five arcane signs that are required to activate the rusted ring gates along Stanfield Canal. When the guild smuggled materials to "the guys on the other side," as he puts it, they would mark crates or objects as they were loaded onto barges going down the canal in the real world. Though the Ob were secretive, Augst figured out that each bridge had ring of rusted metal worked into its stone on the underside, and the sigils were linked to each gate. As the barge went under the bridges one by one, each gate would draw the marked item more fully into the Bleak Gate. Eventually the item would shift fully over, disappear from the barge, and plunge into the canal, where he assumes it would be recovered by the other side's men.

One time he did a test, marking an empty box with the five signs, and sending it on a barge when the Ob were not expecting a delivery. The box did disappear from the barge briefly, but the crew spotted it floating in the water behind the ship and recovered it. Augst isn't sure if somehow the Ob can turn their gates on and off, or if there's some extra process at the end that's required to make the transition permanent.

It's the latter, by the way. When the Ob expect a shipment, a team waits at the end of the Bleak Gate analogue of the canal, then casts a minor spell from a wand on each object (or person) coming through. If they don't cast the spell, the object slips back to reality after a few minutes. Norm has one of these wands, which he uses to slip back and forth on his missions, but he keeps it stashed in his apartment in North Shore.

Augst can share these signs, which can get the party most of the way to the Bleak Gate. Capturing Norm gives them a chance to get his wand (he also knows the arcane sigils), which would complete the deal. See Canal Route (page 58) if they try this method.

Dead Lawyer.

If Augst dies, it only counts as a single Strike, plus maybe one token if the party can use magic to interrogate his corpse and ask the right questions.

Escaped Lawyer.

If Augst gets away, Brakken comes to the constables and tells them that he overheard someone muttering, "We'll have to kill him before he talks." He actually just noted it telepathically, since it was one of the strongest thoughts in the room.

Norm will follow Augst, waiting for him to leave himself exposed without his bodyguards. Augst, though, is loath to run when he thinks he can salvage things. He holes up in his home and keeps sending runners out to try to coordinate with the guild.

After a few hours, Norm comes up with a plan. He knows Augst's fondness for opera, and recalls Rock Rackus mentioning that he'd be performing the next evening (Spring 11). So he purchases box seats for Augst and his children, enchants the tickets with a subtle suggestion, and has them delivered to Augst's house in the morning, with a fake note from Rock Rackus asking him to come.

Augst obeys the suggestion and attends with his children. He travels in a pair of carriages, never far from his bodyguards. But once he's at the opera house he asks his guards to wait outside the box. Norm has tickets for the next box over, where no one will see him casting *spectral hand* and *shocking grasp* to kill the lawyer.

Of course, if the B-Team or the party or their task force put in much effort, they can probably get enough manpower to swoop in and capture Augst before Norm gets a chance (treat this as an Assault or Sting against 8 hostiles), but smart parties might wait for the Ob to make their move, in order to get more information. Indeed, if the party does capture Augst, they might use him as bait to draw out the Obscurati.

HIS GRACE, THE DUKE OF SLAUGHTER.

Action. Tactical. Level II.

The party tries to capture Lorcan Kell.

There are a couple of ways this can go down. Use the stats for named Kell-Guild foes that appear in Appendix C.

Kell's Team

Lorcan Kell

Kate Glenn

Nick Reder

3 Kell-Guild veteran pistoleers (page 28)



Task Force Failure.

If the party gets five or fewer Strikes against Kell's guild, they're unable to put enough pressure on Kell to leave his hiding spot, and they don't gather enough intelligence to figure out where he is. On the afternoon of the 12th, a representative of the Ob informs Kell via *sending* that they'll get him out if he's willing to work for them. Kell agrees, but wants to send a message before he leaves behind his guild.

Lorcan Kell and his bodyguards **Kate Glenn**, a cleric, and **Nick Reder**, a fighter specialized in grappling, leave the safe house at 3 a.m. on the 13th, track down the B-Team, and kill them. See Massacre, below. He and his bodyguards show up later in the Cauldron Hill complex.

Task Force Partial Victory.

If the party gets six or seven Strikes against Kell's guild, they're able to figure out where he's holed up. The party has a chance to catch him, but he has a massive advantage because of his *gatecrasher charm*. See Safe House Raid, below.

The Ob still have agents in the RHC and police, and so if Kell manages to escape the party here, the Ob track him down and bring him to the Cauldron Hill complex. As above, he likely goes after the B-Team first, unless he's been substantially injured.

Task Force Victory.

With eight Strikes, Kell sees his empire destroyed, his allies falling or turning against him. The Ob don't want to be dragged into the conflict, though they will help him if he can get to safety.

The party learns where Kell is hiding, and have time to make some sort of plan. Enough members of his guild turn on him that the party should be aware of his *gatecrasher charm*, and they likely concoct a plan to let him run and then ambush him at a spot that is *dimensionally locked*. Most likely is that he's tricked into fleeing at 3 a.m. on the 13th, and his route will lead him into an ambush. See Road Ambush below.

Family Assistance.

If the party takes Morgan Cippiano's offer for help, things look similar to the Road Ambush scenario. However, if there are still moles in the task force, the moles warn Kell that Dester Rathnine is a turncoat. Kell turns the party's ambush against them. See Cruel Variant below.

Massacre.

There are several scenarios that might result in Kell avoiding capture. He might trick the PCs into chasing his carriage (with a thug inside dressed like him as a decoy), he might use his *gatecrasher charm* to outrun them, or they might simply never get close enough to him. In these scenarios, Kell will try to kill some RHC constables—the B-Team—before he links up with the Ob and goes to the Bleak Gate.

The tone here might be purely spiteful, or it could be prideful—having outwitted the police, Kell now taunts them. If the B-Team captured Quentin Augst, the tone might be retaliatory. Most likely, Kell and his bodyguards attack the B-Team as they're nearing the Beran consulate at dawn on the 13th. The narrative purpose of this scene is to give the players a sense of Kell's capabilities before their main PCs deal with him.

Tactics.

Against the B-Team, Kell's pistoleers strike first, trying to rush from hiding and grapple weak constables. Kell stalks into melee after them. If anyone seems to be legitimately a threat to Kell, Nick grabs them and pulls them away. Kate hangs back and readies an action to counterspell any takedown magic like *hold person*.

The constables should be thoroughly outmatched: unless they run, Kell should slaughter them. Play up the smug enjoyment he gets from stabbing people or gouging out eyes, leaving foes debilitated with bleeding wounds. If he deals enough damage to kill someone outright, the killing blow is probably gruesome: a limb severed or a throat slit.

If he can blind someone, he'll drop that person on the ground and leave them as a witness. Otherwise, whenever he has only one foe left, he'll use nonlethal damage to knock them out, then will carve out their eyes and have Kate stabilize them so they can live to tell the tale.

Kell is under orders not to kill Brakken, but if the minotaur (or his bear) are present, he'll gladly cut them up and leave them barely alive. If by some miracle the B-Team can overpower him, he'll try to flee when reduced to 20 hit points. Otherwise, he cuts down the B-Team then slips away. Any witnesses are too horrified to even consider getting involved.

Safe House Raid.

In the event Kell is still holed up in his safe house, he's on the fourth floor of a tenement building, and his group hides using *rope trick* to avoid divination. A thug watches the roof, and another waits at the base of the *rope trick* with a bell tied to a rope around his ankle. If he isn't careful to remove the rope, any movement will ring out a warning to those inside the *rope trick*. The third thug rests in the *rope trick*, so the trio can work in shifts.

There is a clockwork time bomb next to the window, and another next to the door (the same type the Kell-Guild technologists had in the first

encounter). They are primed so a move action can activate a four-round fuse. The countdown can be stopped with a Disable Device check (DC 25), or the bomb can be pried loose from the wall with a Strength check (DC 20).

If either bomb explodes it blows up the whole roof, dealing 10d6 damage to everyone on the fourth floor (Reflex DC 16 half), and 2d6 to everyone on the third floor (DC 14).

The party can deploy any officers from the task force who haven't already gone on missions today. This would be a deadly fight for a party of 7th level characters, but backed up by two dozen officers, they have a good shot. The trick is keeping Kell from getting away.

Tactics.

If attackers are spotted, Kell and his people try to take up defensive positions away from windows. If he has at least a minute before the task force breaches the building, Kell gets one of his thugs to don a disguise—a top hat and coat—and be a decoy. The man heads down to the ground floor, goes to a rear entrance, and activates the *figurine of wondrous power* to conjure the mechanical carriage. Then he jumps in and speeds off as fast as a horse. Depending on who chases the decoy, Kell might be able to slip away.

If forced to fight, he and his team do so brutally, hoping to break the assault. If Kate goes down, or if Kell is reduced below 40 hit points, he decides to run for it. He triggers the fuse on the time bomb, then jumps out a window and plummets to a canal thirty feet below. Four rounds later, the top floor explodes.

If he thinks he's still not clear, Kell activates his *gatecrasher charm*. That gives him about a five minute head start, and he runs for The Nettles, where he can leave a few signs that will draw the Ob's attention. If the party doesn't manage to track him down within two hours, the Ob scoop him up and deliver him to the Bleak Gate. Of course, clever parties might tail him and then steal the Ob's equipment so they can head into the Bleak Gate themselves.

Road Ambush.

Kell can be tricked into thinking he's meeting with the Ob, and convinced to head to a rendezvous on the south side of the Nida Street Bridge. Though Principal Minister Harkover Lee is not a warmage and won't join the fight, he can prepare a ritual to blanket a 100-ft. radius of the bridge with a *dimensional lock* effect, blocking teleportation and plane-shifting for several hours.

Kell travels to the fake meeting in his mechanical carriage, and likely the party can rig something to block his path. The bridge is sixty feet wide, four hundred feet long, stone with metal railings and street lamps spaced widely enough that the party could hide. Also, at each of the pilings supporting the bridge, broad stairwells lead down to landings and small docks, thirty feet below. A few boats moor at these pilings, and so dozens of officers could hide just down the stairs.

Tactics.

If the party manages to block the carriage, Kell sends out a thug to see what the problem is, but he stays inside. The carriage is bullet proof and its doors can be locked for security (much like in the first encounter; see what we did there?). Kell refuses to surrender, and will try to activate his *gatecrasher charm* when he realizes he's trapped. When that fails, he'll try to fight his way to the edge of the bridge and dive off (at a spot that doesn't have a dock below). He'll still have to swim at least seventy feet to get beyond the *dimensional lock*.

If he does manage to avoid being filled with bullets and gets away, he links up with the Ob in the Nettles, as above.

Cruel Variant.

If the party relies on Morgan's man on the inside, Dester Rathnine, before they manage to get rid of all three moles in the task force, Kell lays a trap of his own for the party. He sends out his carriage, but when it stops on the bridge, no one gets out. If anyone opens it, they pull a cord that triggers the fuses for four clockwork time bombs stuck to the inside walls. And sitting right in the middle, bound, gagged, and panicked, is Dester Rathnine. Iron manacles around his feet loop through an iron ring on the floor of the carriage.

Kell uses the distraction to track down the B-Team to massacre them before joining up with the Ob, but he'll listen carefully for the distant sound of a massive explosion.

INTERROGATION.

Social. Real-Time.

If the party takes Kell alive, or at least recovers a body...

So, the party has captured Lorcan Kell. What have they won?

You can let the party interrogate the crime boss, or leave it to "professionals." Kell resists normal threats, intimidation, and even torture, but he can't resist magical compulsion. A quick *dominate person* by Harkover Lee gets Kell to share everything he knows about the Obscurati. It's mostly about the local cell's operations in the real world and how they get back and forth between the worlds. He's never been to the Bleak Gate facility, and he's never met Leone Quital.

Like Quentin Augst, though, he knows the five sigils used to send crates down the Stanfield Canal. Also, he has a stash of amulets (just enough for the party and maybe a few other key NPCs) various Ob agents used when they shifted partially into the Bleak Gate. The magic of the amulets faded before Kell could ever use them, but with Minister Lee's aid the party can reactivate enough amulets to get the party equipped with one each.

Finally, he managed to recover a broken wand of the sort the Ob use to finalize the transition. As with the amulets, Minister Lee can figure out what magic the wand had and reverse engineer it. With all these elements combined, the party can now undertake the Canal Route (page 58).

If they killed Kell, it takes a day to arrange for a powerful cleric from Crisillyir, **Archmissionary Cornelius Eboracum**, to teleport in. He performs frankly evil magic to drag Kell's soul out of the afterlife and compel it to provide the information above.

If Kell is defeated or dead, the Ob aren't going to go to the effort to rescue or resurrect him. Unless, that is, you get to the battle in the Obscurati complex, and the party is having too easy a time. Then...who knows? Ghost Kell? Golem Kell? Cyborg ghost Kell?

A POWERFUL ALLY.

Asrabey's stats are presented in Appendix B, but generally you should try to avoid involving him in combat. He's dramatically more powerful than any of the PCs, and his assistance would make fights too easy and take the spotlight away from the party. We suggest things for him to do in each combat encounter that involve him in the action without having him face (and completely outclass) the same foes as the party.

THREAD TWO: ONE SEASON SLAIN

In this thread, the party aids Asrabey in stopping Ekossigan.

Where's Ekossigan?

To open a portal to the Bleak Gate, Ekossigan needs to sacrifice thirty-one children on the branches of a century-old tree. He has found Gallo's School for Boys, an orphanage founded in 401 A.O.V., a century ago, by a small group of druids. It eventually faded into obscurity, but it has continued in operation, quietly raising children. The orphanage sits in the boughs of a massive tree, a hundred feet high, about seven miles east of the city, in the southern Cloudwood.

FOLLOWING FEY.

Exploration. Montage. Level 15.

The party keeps tabs on Asrabey or looks for Ekossigan themselves.

Following Asrabey's brief meeting with the king, the dreadnought spends the next day gathering information from various contacts in Flint. The party is likely occupied on the first day with setting up the task force and looking for the dwarven radicals, giving Asrabey free leave to meet with sympathizers to the Unseen Court, all of whom he asks to keep an eye out for Ekossigan.

His contacts include members of the Vekeshi Mystics, like **Rear Admiral Morris Dawkins** (known as the **Old Stag**) in North Shore, and possibly a Vekeshi PC. Many gnomes and elves are more than willing to grant him hospitality, including **The Alderman**, a gnome beadle who lives in an alder tree in Pine Island, and **Valentina Yorke**, an elvish druid working in Central District to ensure their subrail construction does not anger the local spirits.

Asrabey also speaks with numerous fey throughout the city, including a pixie named **Mugwort** who has been spying from the rafters at the RHC offices in Central District, and **The Trash Heap**, a filthy hag-like entity who lives beneath the city's dump northeast of the Nettles and gives out strange cast-off objects with prophetic usefulness.

One person he is unable to reach is Gale, the fey terrorist.

Following Asrabey.

Keeping an eye on the high elf is tough, and doesn't earn the party much, except perhaps for political ammunition that goes beyond the scope of this adventure.



The grizzled Kell grew up an enforcer for local gangs and eventually murdered his way into a position of leadership. Now he feigns gentility, dressing in elegant clothing that conceals no less than eight blades at any time.

Kell is unpredictable and hot-headed, confident he can kill anyone who's a threat. He possesses a great knack for instilling loyalty in intelligent minions who can run operations for him. His guild's recent work with the Obscurati earned him a nice variety of magical toys, and as the turf war with the Family heats up, the Ob have promised him more aid to keep him loyal.

Tailing him to each of his meetings requires a Perception check (DC 20), but also calls for a Stealth check (DC 23) to keep from being noticed. The tail can take a penalty to his Perception check by hanging back farther, and get an equal bonus to his Stealth check.

If Asrabey spots his tail, he will demand once that the character leave him be or else be cut down. He actually draws a weapon and will give the PC a minute to run away. The second time he spots his tail, he immediately attacks, though he will not intentionally kill. Remember how we said Asrabey is ridiculously stubborn? He also really doesn't like being followed.

Frosty Relations.

Asrabey shows up at the RHC office (or wherever the party is) on the morning of the 10th, as he promised. He explains that he has met with people around the city, none of whom have seen Ekossigan. But he had trouble finding several of his contacts in the Cloudwood, and he suspects that Ekossigan, a powerful fey lord, is gathering the local fey in the forest under his banner.

Cloudwood Tension.

The Cloudwood has been a hotbed of unexplained phenomena for the past few days, as amply reported in the newspapers. Police reports reveal that yesterday morning (the 9th) the body of a young boy was found strangled, lying in a stream, partially gnawed on by cats. No one in the district has reported any missing children, but people in the district are begging the police to protect their children.

On the 11th, the *Flint Tribune* (if it still exists) will break this story, and the article will accuse the RHC of endangering children by wasting police manpower on a violent and pointless crackdown in Parity Lake.

Where to Look.

Asrabey knows the party has previously spoken with Gale, and he wants them to arrange a meeting. He believes that even if she is sympathetic to the fey cause, she is nevertheless an elf, not a true fey. She might be persuaded to help, whereas the true fey are compelled to serve Ekossigan.

(If the party did not meet Gale in Adventure Two, *The Dying Sky-seer*, Asrabey still asks them for help. He hopes the party can find her by working through a journalist she gave an interview to, or pulling police files to figure out where she's most often sighted.)

If the party still has the *messenger wind* Gale offered in Adventure Two, they can easily arrange to meet as soon as the same morning. Otherwise they can head into the Cloudwood to speak with the local druids, who can get a message to her. Any Vekeshi Mystic PC would know how to reach her as well, through a relay of contacts.

Tell Me About Ekossigan.

Varal does not go into much detail about the affairs of the Unseen Court, but he has had some dealings with Ekossigan in the past. The rebel fey has a nature that changes with the seasons, and sometimes when an event really affects him, his change in mood will change the seasons, leading to freak snowstorms in summer or trees blossoming in the middle of winter.

As for Ekossigan's combat abilities, Asrabey relates that the fey has shown little in the way of offense. He has great sway over true fey, though, so his minions may be a greater threat than he is. Indeed, if any members of the party are actual fey, Asrabey gives them a small charm to wear—a ring with gear teeth on the inside, within which a pair of other gears can spin—that will protect them from Ekossigan's influence.

Being part of the Unseen Court makes Ekossigan almost completely immune to divinations that try to find him. Like many fey, he can step from here to there without occupying the space between, and around him arrows never hit what they're aimed at.

His skin is treebark, making him hard to harm. Asrabey then goes on to smile and mention that trees burn—while lightly igniting his sword for effect.

CASING THE CLOUDWOOD.

Exploration. Montage. Level 7.

Ekossigan is hiding somewhere in the Cloudwood.

There are three major groups in the Cloudwood that the RHC have easy access to speak with. The local populace can be spoken with by wandering the streets, stopping at street cafes, and the like. The other two groups are conveniently located in the same office—the local police force, and the district Mayor, Doyle Idylls.

The Mayor.

Doyle Idylls is spooked about recent events happening in his district, but he officially blames them on local hooligans rather than actual fey intruders. Still, he's having his building's exterior painted with a coat of crushed mulberry and powdered chicken bone—a supposed ward against fey intrusion.

Idylls knows the party is heading up the task force against Kell; some of his police were pulled away for it, and he's getting yelled at by the locals who are afraid for their children. He won't readily meet with the party, though they can just barge in on him, or try to convince his secretary. Forcing the issue will make the mayor and his police uncooperative.

The Police.

The main police office is built on the backside of the mayor's mansion. Led by a boisterous second-generation immigrant from Danor, **Sergeant Langlois**, the police won't talk to the party unless they get approval from the mayor. If a chat is approved, the sergeant and his men can bring the PCs up to speed on a rash of vandalism that's overtaken many public offices in the district. During their visit to the station, the officers complain about oddities: rotten bird eggs keep falling on the sidewalk, gophers chew through his basement, and every book in the building mysteriously lost its last page.

They can also provide detailed maps of the forest, which is a nightmare to patrol. The police just set up guard posts along key trails to try to protect the district borders, and leave the deep woods alone. There are dozens of square miles of forest within a day's walk of the city where Ekossigan could be hiding, so just roaming and looking is pointless without some sort of lead.

Sergeant Langlois and his men can be requisitioned to help search the forest for fey. He really can't spare the officers, since too many of his people are already on the task force, but if the party pulls strings he'll go along with it. Another option is just to use the task force men, if the party thinks they can spare them.

The Kid.

If the party asks to look at the body of the child found in the woods, it's a grisly sight. He was found naked, covered with patterns of green paint, which a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 20) identifies as old fey ritual markings from the time when men regularly fought the fey, nearly two

thousand years ago. In-depth research, or a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 30), can pinpoint the ritual: a curse on the child's family to cause paranoia and in-fighting.

The fingers and toes have been gnawed at by cats, and the throat is crushed. Closer examination (Heal DC 15) reveals that the child wasn't strangled, but hung by a rope. Also, he has dozens of thin lacerations across his body, like you'd get running through trees and brush naked. That, combined with numerous small fractures scattered throughout his body, might clue the party to the fact that he fell from a tree and through its branches.

What happened was the boy, one of the orphans at the Gallo school, was too old for Ekossigan to use in the ritual. He instead hung the boy from the tree the orphanage sits in, then cut him loose and sent some of his gremlins down to place the body where it would be found, several miles from the orphanage. Since the child was an orphan and he was being "raised by the state," the death and the curse are spreading fear and distrust through the whole district.

A *remove curse* cast on the body will help soothe shattered nerves: the party will be able to call in one free favor with the locals that doesn't count against their normal limit per day. If the curse persists, though, tempers will soon flare.

The Locals.

Regardless of the status of the curse, the locals don't want to talk; in fact, if they realize the party is law enforcement, they'll be unfriendly and angry, blaming them for leaving their children without proper protection.

Aside from a few blocks that make up the business part of the district, the Cloudwood is very rural, with farmland dominating the north and woodlands on the low mountains and further south. The place barely qualifies as part of the city—neighbors might live half a mile apart. Nevertheless, people have found ways to get into plenty of fights, separating into little tribes that are edging closer to full-scale rioting.

If people are persuaded to talk, they'll explain that all the customary nighttime offerings of milk and sliced fruit have been disappearing—normally only a few offerings disappear overnight (many are thought taken by starving homeless folk). A Knowledge (nature) check (DC 16) suggests that offerings are taken in larger quantities when the fey themselves feel the need to pay tribute to something greater than themselves.

People used to give these offerings out of respect for the fey, but since **Doyle Idylls** became mayor here and began trying to convince locals that the fey are a threat, the offerings have become more of a safeguard to avoid bad luck. If the party's clever, they might try to follow the fey who snag these offerings.

Fey Sympathizers.

In the deep woods, a handful of lumberjacks, farmers, and hunters are upset with Doyle Idylls's anti-fey sentiment. Though unfriendly to outsiders, if the party can earn their trust or feign having similar beliefs, they can learn that the group knows there's a major fey in the forest, and they're trying to meet him. Their goal is to force the mayor out. They have no clue of Ekossigan's real plan, but if the party seems stuck you can have these people guide them to the orphanage at the last minute.

Fey Contacts.

Any characters who have pre-established fey contacts with the forest cannot communicate with their contacts until Ekossigan is dealt with. The intent here is not to punish the players or take away leads, but rather to show what powerful influence Ekossigan has.

HER MAJESTY, PRINCESS FAIRY DUST.

Social. Real-Time. Level 8.

The fey terrorist Gale might know how to find Ekossigan.

Gale has contact with a creepy gremlin named **Ellik**, who acted as a courier for the Unseen Court. When Ekossigan arrived in Cloudwood, Ellik sought Gale and asked for her help. She met with Ekossigan, and he played to her desires of being accepted by the fey, sweeping her up in a narrative of making a grand difference to the world.

Before she realized the danger, she had agreed to help him, and the binding power of a pact to a fey lord now compels her into his service. To make her a more useful tool, he imbued her with a sliver of the power of summer, giving her destructive weather magic that she never possessed before.

Gale hates Danor and theoretically should agree with Ekossigan, but as she sees the rapid pace of the fey gathering and preparing, she grows nervous. She wants to help the party, and struggles against her master's will so as not to betray them outright. He has ordered her to warn him of any threats, and to kill anyone who is trying to stop him, but that leaves her enough wiggle room of interpretation that she can spare a few minutes of conversation.

When the party approaches her, she asks to meet them at a switch-back trail in the forest (if you still have the map from *Dying Skyseer*, that works). She keeps her distance, hiding in the trees (Perception DC 36 for range and the concealment of trees) and speaks to them via *message*.

She warns them that Ekossigan is powerful, and asks that they leave. She knows Ekossigan plans to go into the Bleak Gate, and lead a small army of fey to Cauldron Hill. Though she's afraid of him, she thinks it will be best if the party just lets him go. If they insist, she confesses her mistake in promising to help the fey lord, and how she will have to fight the party if they continue.

The party has a chance to finagle around the legalese of Gale's bond to Ekossigan, such as if they convincingly claim they have no desire to stop Ekossigan. They can also break her free with a *remove curse* or *dispel magic* (vs. caster level 15), and *protection from evil* temporarily blocks the compulsion.

Gale doesn't know where Ekossigan is; she communicates with *whispering wind*. But if she's freed from Ekossigan's bond, she can lead the party to Ellik, the gremlin who is his lead henchman. Ellik has been to the Bleak Gate several times over his long life, and a year ago he took Gale, but the same route won't be available for years. If Ekossigan intends to get there, it will involve powerful magic, and she worries what the price will be.

Ekossigan's Enforcer

Hana "Gale" Soliogn



Hana “Gale” Soliogn

CR 8

XP 4,800

Female high elf sorcerer 9

CN Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +1, **Senses** Perception +7, low-light vision**Defense****AC** 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10 (+1 Dex, +1 dodge)**hp** 33 (9d6), **DR** 10/- versus ranged weapons (90 hp)**Fort** +3, **Ref** +6, **Will** +7

Immune wind

Offense**Speed** 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (average)**Special Attacks** control winds**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 9th)**Constant**—*overland flight*, *speak with animals* (flying animals only)**Sorcerer Spells Known** (CL 9th, concentration +13)**4th (5/day)**—*solid fog*, *shout* (DC 18), *storm shield* (as *fire shield*, but blocks and deals electricity damage)**3rd (7/day)**—*clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *fly*, *lightning bolt* (DC 17), *nondetection***2nd (7/day)**—*fog cloud*, *levitate*, *protection from arrows*, *shatter* (DC 16), *whispering wind***1st (7/day)**—*feather fall*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *message*, *shield*, *shocking grasp***0th**—*daze*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *resistance***Statistics****Str** 8, **Dex** 13, **Con** 10, **Int** 14, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 18**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 14**Feats** Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Flyby Attack, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility**Skills** Bluff +7, Diplomacy +6, Disable Device +3, Escape Artist +3, Fly +11, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (nature) +4, Knowledge (nobility) +7, Knowledge (planes) +3, Perception +5, Sense Motive +3, Stealth +7, Survival +5**Languages** Common, Elf, Primordial, Sylvan**Combat Gear** none**Special Abilities****Air Affinity (Su)** Gale can innately control winds, and is immune to the effects of strong wind. She can fly at will and can speak with flying animals, who usually are friendly to her.**Control Winds (Sp)** Gale can control winds in a 360-ft. radius. She can use this ability for up to 9 minutes per day, in chunks of at least one minute at a time. Activating or controlling it is a standard action, maintaining is a free action.

She can increase winds by up to three steps (enough to turn a still day into a severe storm of 50 miles per hour), or a strong breeze into a small hurricane).

Creatures other than her in the area must make a Fortitude save each round (DC 19) to resist the winds.

Tactics.

If the party insists on confronting Ekossigan, Gale attacks them, taking the horribly unfair advantage of being a flying spellcaster. She already has cast *mage armor*, *protection from arrows*, and *nondetection* (included in her stats above). She casts *shield*, then uses her control winds ability to blast severe winds at the party, so she's constantly upwind from them, which incurs a –4 penalty to their ranged weapon attacks.

Then she hovers a hundred feet away, launching *lightning bolts* and *magic missiles*, then takes cover behind the treetops, sixty feet above the ground. If any PCs start to approach she drops a *solid fog* on them to slow them down, then changes position. If she runs low on spells she'll flee.

Throughout the fight Gale shouts that she's sorry, and that she's trying

to resist. If Asrabey is with the party, he hesitates to join the battle. High elf women are exceedingly precious and rare, and he doesn't want to risk her being harmed. If the party can convince him they can break Gale free from her compulsion he'll help, but he will grow wrathful against any PC who deals lethal damage to her.

The party will likely have to use cover and stealth to defeat Gale, or else simply outlast her. *Fireball* works pretty well too, but a good damage roll could kill her. If she's knocked out, she descends safely to the ground, as with *feather fall*.

Aftermath.

If Gale manages to defeat the party, she contacts Ekossigan, who sends gremlins to recover them and bring them to him. He cannot use them as part of his ritual to reach the Bleak Gate, but he'll gladly hang them from the orphanage's branches as a message against those who oppose the Unseen Court.

If the party defeats Gale, she rambles semi-consciously about Ellik's location—The Nutgarden, an abandoned beer house that is infamous in the district for burning down and claiming the lives of forty people a few years ago. This information lets them skip the “Finding a Gremlin” part of the challenge in It Takes a Gremlin, and gives them a chance to go after the gremlin during daylight.

TORCHES AND PITCHFORKS ***Social. Real-Time. Level 4.**

An angry mob disrupts Brakken's visit to the Cloudwood.

At dawn on the 11th, the B-Team meets Brakken at the Beran consulate, picks up a dignitary from each side, and sets out for the Cloudwood on another bid to create some unity between the two groups.

Today's outing involves **Kian Doherty** (Risur's Minister of Agriculture) and **Pierre Riquier** (Danoran Minister of Magic), and Brakken hopes taking them out to the city district famous for its fey-friendly woodlands will be a bonding experience. Unfortunately, as the trio is enjoying some light brunch while hummingbirds flit about and a monkey snags their scraps, an angry mob is gathering just down the street, incited to paranoia by Ekossigan's curse.

(If the party already removed the curse, this scene is very short and pleasant, *sans* angry mob.)

Kian Doherty. Well-groomed 40-something who values Risur's druidic traditions and hates being in Flint. Sullen, but trying to keep an open mind.

Pierre Riquier. A rare Danoran half-elf, Pierre came from a rich family that could afford magic lessons for him. Heavy spectacles, messy hair, full of trivia about magic. Weak-willed and obsequious, he isn't that interested in magic, honestly, but he's one of the few people qualified for his position.

TIMING.

This scene takes place the morning after Brakken's visit to the Sunset Bench, detailed in Thread One. We apologize for the timeline being split this way, we hope this arrangement creates a good pace. Also, if you want to shuffle things a bit (such as to fill out a session that has run short), you might move this up to the morning of the 10th, or even the afternoon of the 9th, but no sooner.

A Wee Squabble.

The restaurant is next to a creek that weaves under several small bridges on the street. Other small shops line the road, and the mayor's mansion is just two blocks away. A few minutes into the meal, a young girl runs into view from between the buildings on the other side of the creek. She hops the creek, scampers past Brakken and the B-Team, and starts yelling for people to help.

A few seconds behind her, a woman in a sun dress holding a rolling pin runs to the creek, then stops when she sees the girl calling for help. After a moment's panic she turns and runs.

All that happened was that the girl, **Circe**, was taking a shortcut, and she went past the house of the woman, **Relle**. Relle didn't recognize the girl and yelled at her to get away from her house. Then, for no reason either of them rationally understands, Circe threw a rock at the house, and Relle gave chase. Nudged by Ekossigan's curse, the tiny distrust of a stranger turned into a chase.

Within a minute, Circe gets a dozen people to come out and meet her in the street, where she explains that she was chased, and she thinks the woman was going to kill her. The crowd starts getting weapons from their houses and shops, and over the next ten minutes the group grows to thirty people. Then they're ready, and they start to follow Circe back to the house so they can drag Relle out, search the house for signs of witchcraft, and burn the building down.

While the crowd is gathering, the constables might notice (Perception DC 10) another kid, dressed in long sleeves and with a hood hiding his face, watching from the creek bed. He has a bundle in his arms. None of the locals care about *this* stranger, because it is actually a gremlin disguised as a kid. He was out collecting the neighborhood's offerings and got drunk on some stolen wine, so he just now woke up.

Forestalling a Riot.

Brakken can sense that the crowd won't respond to reason, and Pierre is too feeble to want to get involved, but Kian doesn't like how things are looking. When the mob is just forming, Kian gets up and asks what's going on. The crowd shoves him away and tells him to stop sticking his nose into things. A few minutes later, when it's obvious things are about

to get violent, Brakken tries to leave, but Kian again tries to calm the group down, and they attack him, shoving him and knocking him down and eventually throwing him into the creek, where they pelt him with rocks—nothing big enough to kill him, but he eventually curls into a ball and yells for mercy.

A show of force from the constables—incapacitating at least four of the crowd—can get the mob to break up. Killing anyone, though, leads to a riot. If the group doesn't get involved, the mob leaves Kian cowering in the stream and goes to burn down Relle's house.

If the party goes after the gremlin, it runs. The constables can try to pursue the goblin (see *It Takes a Gremlin* below), and have a decent shot because they're chasing the critter during daylight. They might not know what to do with it if they catch it, though.

Further Trouble.

A few other small mobs attack people during the day. One albino cow is lynched.

Later that afternoon, people start frantically chopping down trees as a rumor spreads that "someone" is going to set fires tonight. The fires never occur.

The next morning, a small crowd chases down a police officer and beats him to death, on the rationale that if the police aren't going to protect the children, maybe they actually are the ones killing children. (No other children have been killed yet, but rumors are rampant.) Any Cloudwood police helping the party at this point return to their station to protect it.

Finally, at sunset on the 12th, if the curse hasn't been broken, the wave of paranoia reaches its peak. A huge mob of a hundred townsfolk rally around Circe, who is convinced that Mayor Idylls is a witch. The mob storms his house and a dozen people die before the police give up and flee. The mob then drags the mayor to a dairy and drown him in a huge tub of milk, then leave him out as an offering to the fey, in hopes the madness will end.

And ironically it does. Since the curse was tied to "the state" raising the sacrificed child, killing the local head of state ends the curse. Still, the district never quite returns to normal.



IT TAKES A GREMLIN.

Action. Montage. Level 7.

Ellik or another gremlin might lead the party to Ekossigan.

Chasing gremlins is a tough proposition in the middle of the night, especially if the PCs don't possess darkvision or a quickly activated light source. Given these conditions, successfully chasing down a gremlin and subduing it is broken down into a Skill Encounter as follows. This is meant to be a challenging pursuit, and it might take the party a few tries to get it right.

Key Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, Knowledge (nature), Perception, Stealth, Survival

Difficulty: Unless otherwise noted, all skill checks are DC 24.

Goals: The party must first find a gremlin. Then they can either grab it and interrogate it, or chase it and follow it back to Ekossigan.

Gremlin Target

1 nuglub gremlin (page 39)



Finding a Gremlin.

Ekossigan's gremlin servants operate in the later hours of the night, typically between 2:00 and 4:00 AM. The tiny creatures move from house to house, ignoring those with any visible light sources and using their diminutive height to sneak under windows to stealthily claim the offerings, which they carelessly shove into a large sack. The actual quality of the offering is not important, merely the latent spiritual power invested in them. The gremlins actively hide and stick to the darkness when retrieving offerings.

Recommended Tactics.

The party can spot gremlins only after midnight, up until about 6:00 AM. On the night of the 12th, the gremlins are active instead from 8:00 PM until 11:00 PM, at which point they all rush to the orphanage for the ritual.

Checks made between 2:00 and 4:00 AM, when the gremlins are most active, get a +2 bonus to the required skill check. If the party waits until the night of the 12th, increase the DCs by 2 because of the frantic activity of the locals.

A well-described action or a clever idea can earn another +2 to +5 bonus. A fool-proof plan counts as a success.

To find a gremlin, the party needs to succeed two of the following skill checks (or do something similar and effective). Each PC can make one attempt every half hour or so.

- ♦ **Craft (traps) or Disable Device.** A character might rig up some sort of trap near offerings, like a noose and a wire that rings bells to alert the party.
- ♦ **Perception.** A character can camp a particular house or roam about in a likely area. Those with low-light gain a +2 bonus to the Perception check, while darkvision grants a +5 bonus.
- ♦ **Stealth.** A character can aid the party in being stealthy and hidden, which makes it easier to lure the gremlins in.
- ♦ **Survival.** It is also possible to track down a roaming gremlin by searching for tracks.

Police Force.

Bringing at least a dozen police officers negates the need for checks, as the officers are able to successfully discover several of the gremlins. Over a half hour of coordinated searching, the officers find a gremlin and bring the party by. They won't be much use in chasing it down, though.

Gale's Help.

If the party gets Gale's help or defeats her in combat, they can automatically locate the gremlin Ellik at the burnt-out bar The Nutgarden. Even better, they can find him during daylight, making him much easier to chase down. If they give chase to him and fail, though, they'll need to start over and try to find another gremlin.

Catch a Gremlin.

After discovering one of Ekossigan's gremlins, the tricky part is capturing it. These creatures are fast and easily spooked if they so much as sense another living being approach. Once the party gets within 100 feet, they must use normal Stealth rules (against the gremlin's darkvision and +9 Perception check) to get close enough to grab it, knock it out, or otherwise disable it. A captured gremlin can be interrogated.

If it spots another creature, a gremlin madly dashes in an attempt to escape a potential captor. If the gremlin manages to get more than 100 feet away from the party, proceed to the Chase section below.

Chase a Gremlin.

The party might have to chase a gremlin if they want to catch and interrogate it. Gremlins are wily, and fey in the Cloudwood have a tendency to teleport short distances, making pursuit erratic.

The PCs and gremlin starts 100 feet apart, but keep track of each PC's distance separately, since the party might get split up. The gremlin leads them on a merry chase, and each minute each pursuing PC can make a skill check to try to close the gap. A success gets 25 feet closer. Success by 5 or more gets 50 feet closer. Failure keeps the status quo, and failure by 5 or more means the PC falls back 25 feet.

Because the terrain doesn't lend itself to flat-out sprinting, having a faster or slower base speed is not a deal-breaker. A speed of 20 imposes a -4 penalty, a speed of 40 grants a +4 bonus, and 50 or greater grants +6.

Below are a series of suggested actions the gremlin can take, and how the PCs can respond. The normal DC 24 applies to a night chase when the party has light sources or darkvision. If a PC has neither, he takes a -5 penalty. If the chase happens during the day, the PCs get a +5 bonus.

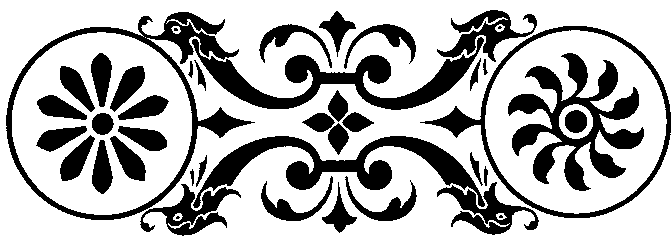
- ♦ **Gap in the Wall.** The gremlin wiggles through a narrow gap—a tall fence, hedge, wall of brush, or perhaps a fox burrow. Characters must use Escape Artist to follow.
- ♦ **Through a Pond.** The gremlin dives underwater and tries to lose the party. Characters must make an easy Swim check (DC 10) to keep up, plus a Perception check (DC 24) to see where the gremlin is under the water.
- ♦ **Up a Wall.** A PC can use Climb to follow as the little bugger is climbing up a cliff wall!
- ♦ **Crumbling Bridge.** The gremlin scampers across an old wooden bridge seeing its last days, forcing an Acrobatics check to keep up.

Chasers' Options.

A character can make a Knowledge (nature) or Survival check to try a shortcut. Success brings the PC 50 feet closer. Failure causes the character to fall 50 feet behind.

A character can try to make a ranged attack against the gremlin or cast a spell, but doing so means the character isn't moving as fast. He falls behind 25 feet. Usually the gremlin will have cover and concealment from the terrain.





Ending the Chase.

Once a character gets adjacent to the gremlin, he can make a CMB check against a CMD of 15 to tackle the critter. Other attacks can take the gremlin out. If the gremlin manages to get 200 feet away from all the PCs, it loses them. The party can follow its tracks with three successful Survival checks.

Tailing the Gremlin.

The party might want to just follow the gremlin all the way to Ekossigan. To do this, one PC must manage to keep the gremlin in his sights (within 200 feet during the day, or range of their light source at night) for at least five minutes. Then he must make three Constitution checks (DC 5) and succeed at least two to keep pace with the gremlin during the rest of the pursuit. The whole chase covers an erratic path some ten miles long, and likely takes three hours.

Interrogation.

With a captured gremlin in custody, the party can extract information from the creature. Gremlins are impulsive in nature, and those loyal to Ekossigan are borderline psychotic. Dealing with such creatures should test the PCs' patience, as keeping the creatures on task is difficult.

Only exceptionally skilled characters could hope to negotiate with such creatures (DC 30 Diplomacy or Intimidate), and even the promise of release, riches, or any other wild offering would be a hard sell (DC 28 Bluff). During such talks, the gremlins constantly switch topics, taking note of simple things like the color of the PC's clothing, or the current temperature in the room. The party gains a bonus to these interrogation checks equal to twice their Prestige with the Unseen Court.

Magical compulsion effects or divination magic might pull the necessary information out of the gremlin.

If successfully negotiated with, the gremlin reveals that Ekossigan is staying in the orphanage. However, its sense of direction doesn't rely on normal human landmarks, so finding the orphanage requires either a Knowledge (local) check (DC 20), a Survival check (DC 24), or some sort of magical guidance. If the district hasn't gone crazy yet, the party can also find the orphanage on a map in the mayor's office after about an hour of research.

Unless the party asks and succeeds a second round of interrogation, the gremlin does not mention that the children of the orphanage are set to be ritually sacrificed. The creature simply forgets this point—not thinking it important—and does not withhold it as an act of slight towards the party.

Asrabey Varal's presence in the interrogation grants the party an effective Prestige of 5 with the Unseen Court, and the dreadnought's reputation is worth another +5 bonus (for a total of +15).

Once the gremlin has talked, Asrabey dispatches the creature with a cold iron stake through the head—an act of mercy for the fey's betrayal of the Unseen Court.

GALLO'S SCHOOL FOR BOYS.

Exploration/Social. Real-Time. Level 7.

Dzens of children are imperiled. The party must approach Ekossigan carefully.

A light drizzle falls regularly on the area within a half mile of Gallo's School for Boys, reflecting Ekossigan's dour mood. It also helps discourage explorers from finding his hiding spot. The fey lord has set up a small court for himself in an orphanage in the southeast of the Cloudwood district. He and his fey minions killed the headmaster, teachers, and attendants, but have kept the children here. Miles away from the nearest settlement, no one has any idea anything is amiss.

If the party guesses the dead child in Casing the Cloudwood might have disappeared from an orphanage, the locals do know about the place, but it's not prominent enough for any NPCs to suggest it. Similarly, if they figure out what ritual Ekossigan is planning, tracking down a "century-old" tree is hard, but with some asking around the party could learn about the orphanage, which was founded one hundred years ago, and whose logo is a tree with a book in place of its boughs.

The party has until midnight at the end of the 12th of Spring to stop Ekossigan. At that point he hangs the children at the orphanage, creates a portal to the Bleak Gate, and leads a small army of fey through.

Unless the party has tried to keep Asrabey Varal from following them, he will accompany them to the orphanage.

Gremlin Presence.

Most of the gremlins sleep during the day, except for those on the balcony. At night they head out to gather offerings, though they make sure to all be back at the orphanage by 11:45 PM on the 12th, in preparation for the ritual.

Ekossigan vs. THE OBSCURATI.

The act of sacrificing the children and entering the Bleak Gate will drive Ekossigan from a little crazy to completely. He takes three dozen gremlins and numerous other fey with him, all of whom are driven a little mad as well. Indeed they do find the Cauldron Hill complex and attack it, and the gremlins set to work causing all the technology and machinery within to go haywire.

Ekossigan tries to attack within, but the defenders overwhelm him. Kept barely alive he's brought up to the golem lab (area 14, page 66) for experimentation. By the time the PCs arrive (likely on the 14th), the complex is in disarray, but most of the fey are scattered and unable to put up a unified front.

If left to their own devices, the battalion of fey will start to become twisted and monstrous, slowly shifting into blind grues and wraith-like monsters that wander away into the hollow city surrounding the mountain. Ekossigan, trapped and helpless, cackles himself to death. Alternately, if the party has already killed Lorcan Kell, you could have the Obscurati implant machinery in Ekossigan to turn him into a puppet for them, making him the headline foe in the Ob complex.

Should the party actually side with Ekossigan for the assault, their presence can keep him a bit more grounded, but he still shrieks at the sight of technology, making stealth fairly useless. See Mass Murder with Ekossigan (page 58).



If they detect intruders, the gremlins will fling rocks or shoot arrows down at people advancing up the staircase. Once the party gets onto the orphanage level, the fey try to slip through the holes in the walls to avoid being cornered in melee. There are other fey around—pixies, brownies,

satyrs, a couple redcaps, and even a nymph—but they stay away from the gremlins and won't join the fight. Not yet, at least.

Layout.

Gallo's School for Boys has a few activity buildings on the ground level, but it is mostly 100 feet above the ground in the boughs of a massive tree, centuries-old. A sturdy but vertigo-inducing staircase spirals around the tree's trunk up to the entrance. A rancid stench drifts on the breeze.

The orphanage sits in the boughs of a tree, and areas of leaves on the map represent terrain with enough branches to support a person. Moving through the branches requires an Acrobatics or Climb check (DC 10), and they count as difficult terrain. A character can take –5 to his check to move at full speed. Failure means the character makes no progress. Fail by 5 or more and, well, I hope you prepared *feather fall*.

The outside of the structure is made up of wood, recently painted green. In places the slats and beams appear to have started sprouting short leafy branches, as though coming back to life. All the windows are shuttered, and now they've grown enough that they cannot be opened, though they still let in dim light during the day. The walls have warped enough that Medium creatures can find a spot to squeeze through (Escape Artist DC 25). Small creatures can easily move through the walls (counts as difficult terrain), and Tiny creatures aren't even slowed down. The "walls" provide superior cover, not total cover.

A fey lord of the Unseen Court, Ekossigan appears as a slender male, draped in robes adorned with leaves, his face concealed by a wooden mask with empty eye sockets. Ekossigan's magic and demeanor are tied to the seasons, alternately chill and bleak in winter, spirited and hopeful in spring, and so on. When he is swayed by strong emotion, though, his nature may change, and his mood can manifest in the world around him.

As an ever-changing entity, Ekossigan has no set followers, but his very presence can turn lesser fey to his side. Of all in the Unseen Court, Ekossigan sees technology as the greatest threat because it will change the perpetual cycle of seasons into a march for progress. He foresees a future where there is no such thing as nature, and the thought of such a future has driven him to desperation.



Stench.

Inside the orphanage, the new life is offset by the stench of rotten fruit, pools of spoiled milk, and piles of refuse. Inside areas 7, 8, and 9 the stench is overpowering. Creatures must make a Fortitude save (DC 14) when they enter or be sickened for the remainder of their stay inside the structure. Only one such save needs to be made for a 24-hour period.

Nooses.

The balcony around each dorm has seven or eight rope nooses tied to the railing, waiting for children's heads to be slipped through.

1. Balcony.

The walkway has a good view of the ground below. Railings, sized for children, make it hard to accidentally fall off. A pair of tiny gremlins hide (Perception DC 37 from the ground) and watch out for intruders, their miniscule bows always in hand.

Balcony Bullies

2 pugwampi gremlins



Gremlin, Pugwampi (2)

CR 1/2

XP 200

NE Tiny fey

Init +5, **Senses** Perception +6, darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision

Aura unluck (20 ft.)

Defense

AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 12 (+2 size, +1 Dex)

hp 6 (1d6+3)

Fort +0, **Ref** +3, **Will** +4

DR 2/cold iron; **SR** 7

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee dagger +3 (1d2–4, 19–20/x2)

Ranged shortbow +3 (1d3–4, x3)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st, concentration –1)

At-will—prestidigitation, speak with animals

1/day—*shatter* (DC 10)

SQ gunshy, unluck aura

Statistics

Str 3, **Dex** 13, **Con** 11, **Int** 10, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +0; **CMB** –1; **CMD** 5

Feats Improved Initiative, Toughness, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +2, Craft (traps) +4, Disable Device +2, Perception +6 (+2 listening), Ride +2, Stealth +17; Racial Modifiers +4 Stealth, –4 Perception when listening

Languages Sylvan, a few words of Primordial

Special Abilities

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

Unluck Aura (Su) A pugwampi radiates an aura of unluck to a radius of 20 feet. Any creature in this area must roll two d20s whenever a situation calls for a d20 roll (such as an attack roll, a skill check, or a saving throw) and must use the lower of the two results generated. This is a mind-affecting effect that does not work on animals, other gremlins, or gnolls. Any character who gains any sort of luck bonus (such as that granted by a *luckstone* or *divine favor*) is immune to the pugwampi unluck aura.

2. Lobby.

The desk chairs act as beds for some gremlins, while others doze in the desks' drawers. They've taken stacks of paper and clumped them into crude shapes of animals. If alerted, the tiny pugwampi gremlins take cover behind the desk so they can shoot intruders. The larger nuglub gremlins crawl through holes in the ceiling and try to sneak and ambush the intruders from above.

Lobby Layabouts

4 pugwampi gremlins

2 nuglub gremlins



Gremlin, Nuglub (2)

CR 2

XP 600

CE Small fey

Init +4, **Senses** Perception +9, darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision

Defense

AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 14 (+1 size, +4 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 19 (3d6+9)

Fort +3, **Ref** +7, **Will** +2

DR 5/cold iron; **SR** 13

Offense

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +3 (1d4+1 plus grab), 2 claws +4 (1d3+1 plus trip)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd, concentration +4)

At-will—prestidigitation

1/day—*heat metal*, *shocking grasp*

SQ gunshy

Statistics

Str 13, **Dex** 18, **Con** 15, **Int** 8, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +1 (+5 grapple and trip); **CMD** 15

Feats Step Up, Toughness, Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills Acrobatics +10, Climb +9, Intimidate +8, Perception +9, Stealth +14; Racial Modifiers +4 Craft (traps), +4 Intimidate, +4 Perception

Languages Sylvan, a few words of Primordial

Special Abilities

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

3. Office.

Characters who are interested in keeping the orphans from being abandoned in the aftermath might want to look here for financial documents of the orphanage. There's enough resources to at least pay for a bit of lodging before the kids are left homeless.

4. Common Room.

This room is full of discarded toys, balls, and piles of clothes the gremlins can put on when they need a disguise.

5. Library.

Ekossigan, not without pity for the children, has moved all the books from the library to the various dorms. With no hope for escape, the children read to avoid thinking about their suffering.

6. Classroom.

The fey used mud, beeswax, leaves, and twigs to assemble remarkably life-like sculptures of adults sitting awkwardly in the classroom's chairs. One woman even has her arm raised like she wants to ask a question. The statues crumble at a touch.

7. Dining Room.

Four wooden tables with an array of broken chairs litter this room, all of them sprouting recent growth. During the day, a group of gremlins lounge in this room, eating leftover morsels from the previous night's offerings. They attack any intruders viciously, hoping to swarm them.

Dining Room Dalliers

8 pugwampi gremlins (page 39)

8. Kitchen.

A large crockpot and various old metal eating implements are scattered throughout this room. During the day a duo of larger gremlins works here, preparing food offerings for Ekossigan in the attic. If interrupted the gremlins attempt to flee and get reinforcements from other fey in the building.

Kitchen Cooks

2 nuglub gremlins (page 39)

9. Storage Room.

This is the source of the stench. Nothing much useful is here.

10. Dorms.

Unsteady walkways lead down tree limbs to the dorms, each of which holds 8 children who sleep in bunk-beds, except the southeast dorm, which only has 7 children. The doors' wood has grown so they won't open except at the touch of a fey, or with a heavy shove (Strength DC 22 from outside, DC 27 from within).

11. Headmaster's Office.

If the party did not manage to defeat or free Gale, Ekossigan summoned her here when he sensed the party was coming.

Gale sits on the roof of this small building, undeterred by the light drizzle. She puts a finger to her lips and tries to discourage the party from going inside with just hand gestures. If Gale had to flee before she won't fight here, but she will *featherfall* any PC who falls. If the party hasn't faced Gale at all, she'll reluctantly fight beside Ekossigan.

Inside the office, the headmaster's unimpressive, but functional, furniture has been shattered, leaving a cracked desk atop a tattered rug. There's a hole in the wall to the east. The fey have stashed a sizable treasure trove of offerings underneath the bed (1,000 gp value total), though mixed in with coins and jewelry are plates of half-chewed offerings and more than a few squirrel carcasses.

There's no sign of Ekossigan, but if anyone steps onto the balcony around the office, or if any outsider speaks within earshot of the building, Ekossigan addresses them. A fey lord like Ekossigan can easily step between this world and the Dreaming, and so he remains hidden in the parallel version of the office, speaking via a limited form of telepathy until he's ready.



SPRING RETURNS TO WINTER.

Action. Tactical. Level 10.

Ekossigan will kill those who are against him.

When the PCs enter the chamber, read the following. Though Ekossigan wants to say his piece to Asrabey, make sure he also speaks with the PCs. He's unlikely to stand down unless the party agrees to let him sacrifice all the children, in which case he'll invite them along. If the party attacks before he manifests fully into the real world, he just laughs.

A wooden mask with antlers sweeping back from its jaw appears in the air in front of you. Its eyes are hollow, but it tilts slightly, as if it's considering your appearance. Slowly a hood fades in behind the mask, giving the impression of an unseen head, and then a mantle of leaves over the shoulders of this invisible man. A sonorous voice issues from the mask.

"Greetings. I am Ekossigan of Spring, devoted servant of the Unseen Court and protector of the ever-turning seasons. It is with much remorse that I come to your dull and colorless world, but I come to rid this garden of the dark seeds you have planted."

The fey's mask turns to look you over, then stops at Asrabey.

"Ah, the guard dog of the Court. I had hoped that you would lend me aid, but I see your masters want me put down. Yet you cannot harm me, so the guard dog brings pups of his own.

"Do you know what is inside Cauldron Hill, little pups? Step with me into the gate, and we'll weed this dark garden together. And Asrabey, you know the gardener. Do you remember your dear wife, Kasvarina? I'm afraid she doesn't remember you."

Asrabey says, "How do you know—," but he stops mid-sentence because the ground is trembling.

Over the constant drone of the rain you hear movement, dozens of creatures down below, wings fluttering and tree branches slashing through the rain, hooves tramping the grass. From the dorms on the other branches come the nervous cries of children.

Ekossigan's mask seems to grow more solid. "Opening the gate requires death. The fresher the flower when cut, the more beautiful the wreath when woven. Spring must ever turn to Winter."

More of his form begins to appear and blue light beams from every surface of his wooden skin. The temperature begins to drop, and the fey lord cackles once.

Asrabey says to you coldly, "Stop Ekossigan. I'll keep his army at bay. You keep him alive. I need answers."

Then he's out the door, sprinting toward the staircase, and you see the rain has turned to driving sleet. Ekossigan flares with near-blinding light, and then he stands before you, fully and physically in this world.

"Greetings," he says. "I am Ekossigan of Winter."

Killing Winter.

The mad fey seeks to slay the party so that he can complete his ritual sacrifice. While the party battles Ekossigan, Asrabey holds the staircase against an oncoming tide of hundreds of fey. The party has very little chance of being able to run, but once they defeat the fey lord his sway over his minions will be broken.

A pair of fey snow leopards, the Sentries of Winter, manifest with Ekossigan and harry the party.

Winter Storm.

Ekossigan's change in nature has killed the tree the orphanage sits in. Its leaves begin to blow away quickly, its branches creak, and its bark cracks at a touch. Simultaneously, the drizzle of rain has turned to driving sleet. Surfaces across the tree are slowly coated in ice; if Ekossigan is not stopped, whole sections of the tree will collapse under the weight of the storm.

Unprotected flames are automatically put out. Protected fires like lanterns have a 75% chance of being put out. Ranged weapon attacks and Perception checks take a -4 penalty.

Treefall.

In the first round, surfaces are just starting to get slick. Outdoor areas are treated as difficult terrain.

In the second round, everything is coated in ice. In addition to being difficult terrain, the ice forces a Reflex save (DC 10) to move. Failing by 5 or more means the creature falls prone.

In the third round, the larger branches begin to creak, and the southwest dorm shudders as the branch supporting it splits down its length. Creatures on that branch must make a Reflex save (DC 10) or be knocked prone.

In the fourth round, the southwest branch cracks more thoroughly, and the branch starts to dangle at a 45 degree angle downward. Creatures on that branch must make a Reflex save (DC 12) or be knocked prone.

At the end of the fifth round, the southwest branch snaps off. Anyone inside the dorm plummets; With *feather fall*, Gale can save at most 9 creatures, who must be within 20 feet of each other and not inside the dorm building. With the branch gone, a large chunk of the foliage disappears too, shrinking the battlefield.

In the sixth round, the northwest and northeast branches crack resoundingly. They dangle precariously on the seventh round, and plummet away on the eighth. The southeast and due south branches crack in round eight, dangle in round nine, and fall away in round ten.

If the fight is still going on in the twelfth round, the whole tree teeters, and at the end of the thirteenth round, it topples to the ground.

On the Ground.

A creature who survives a fall to the ground takes 5 damage per round from the onslaught of a horde of fey, barring some sort of trick to keep them at bay. There's no feasible way to defeat the whole horde, but the fey will ignore someone who runs away.

Gale Assist?

If the party seems to be in trouble, and especially if one of the PCs dies, Gale snaps out of Ekossigan's control (she can justify breaking the fey pact because the fey lord is now calling himself "Ekossigan of Winter," but she promised to aid "Ekossigan of Spring"). She can aid the party by casting *fly* on them, but she still can't bring herself to actually attack the fey lord.

Ekossigan's Retinue

Ekossigan of Winter

2 sentries of winter



Ekossigan of Winter

CR 9

XP 6,400

CE Medium fey (cold)

Init +11, **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +12

Defense

AC 21, touch 17, flat-footed 14 (+7 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 84 (12d6+36);

Fort +12, **Ref** +14, **Will** +9

DR 5/cold iron, **Immune** cold

Weaknesses vulnerability to fire

Offense

Speed 35 ft.

Melee 2 claws+15 (2d6+2/19–20 plus 2d6 cold)

Special Attacks breath weapon (20-ft. cone, 8d6 cold damage, Reflex DC 13 half, usable once every 1d4 rounds), cold skin (2d6)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th; concentration +9)

3/day—*chill metal* (DC 18), *confusion* (DC 20), *deep slumber* (DC 19)

1/day—*entangle* (DC 17), *geas*
SQ Arrowtwist, Walk of Nature

Statistics

Str 12, **Dex** 24, **Con** 16, **Int** 14, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 22

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 27

Feats Fleet, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (claw), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor, Stealthy, Step Up, Vital Strike, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills Climb +15, Craft (sculpture) +13, Escape Artist +25, Handle Animal +19, Knowledge (nature) +16, Perception +12, Stealth +18, Survival +11

Languages Common, Elven, Primordial, Sylvan

Special Abilities

Cold Skin (Ex) Ekossigan's body generates intense cold, dealing 2d6 points of damage with its touch. Creatures attacking Ekossigan with unarmed strikes or natural weapons take this same cold damage each time one of their attacks hits.

Arrowtwist (Su) Any arrowed fired at a creature within 30 ft. of Ekossigan (including the fey lord himself) swerves toward the next nearest creature instead. If multiple targets are equally close, randomly determine whom the arrow targets. If there is no creature other than Ekossigan within that range, the arrow simply thuds to the ground near his feet. Yes, the party is encouraged to shoot at their allies.

This effect applies to any ranged attack—arrows, bolts, bullets, slings, axes, rays, even *magic missiles*. Area-effect attacks like *fireballs* work normally, unless the attacker tries to peg a target with a projectile. A flask of alchemist fire thrown at the ground at Ekossigan's feet will deal splash damage normally, but one thrown directly at him swerves.

Walk of Nature (Su) Ekossigan can teleport through nature with ease. As a free action at the end of his turn he can begin his transition. He begins to glow, and he chooses a destination within 60 ft. that must be in or adjacent to a tree. That spot also begins to glow. On his next turn he must spend a move action to teleport to the chosen destination. If he cannot, he takes 2d6 damage.

His feet hover slightly above the ground, so his movement is unimpeded by snow or ice. Additionally, he can choose to hover in midair as long as he is within five feet of a solid surface he could stand on.

Sentry of Winter

CR 3

XP 800

N Medium animal

Init +4, **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +10

Defense

AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 11 (+4 Dex, +1 natural)

hp 30 (4d8+12);

Fort +6, **Ref** +8, **Will** +2

Offense

Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee 2 claw +7 (1d4+2), bite +7 (1d6+2)

Special Attacks pounce, rake (2 claws +7, 1d4+2)

Statistics

Str 15, **Dex** 19, **Con** 15, **Int** 2, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 19 (23 vs. trip)

Special Abilities

Snow Move (Ex) Because of its large, fur-covered paws, the sentry of winter suffers no penalty for movement through snow-covered terrain.

Tactics.

Ekossigan starts by using his breath weapon, then prepares to teleport to a spot in the tree's branches. He tries to distance himself from the party while using his various spell-like abilities to turn them against each other. He'll seek to imperil someone on a branch about to fall by putting him to sleep or *entangling* him with dry, dying branches.

If Ekossigan's spells begin to fail him, he instead switches to using his claws up close, trying to tear down weaker PCs in melee and relying on his high armor and damage reduction.

The Sentries of Winter move to protect Ekossigan, attacking PCs that engage him, trying to give their master time to reposition. If a Sentry is low on health, it charges into the thick of battle, hoping to deal as much damage as possible to enemy PCs when it is destroyed.

During combat, Ekossigan will shout out the following quotes which you can use to embellish the battle:

- ♦ "You do not realize the child that sleeps in the mountain. Your nation's womb will birth a monster! He *shall not* be awakened! *He must not be awakened!*"
- ♦ "So many screams! How many have been sacrificed to fuel this thing? How many souls have died to create this abomination? What are a few more to stop it? You would do the same if you could hear it."
- ♦ "Why do you persist? The cold of winter takes all things—and even if it does not take you, that *thing* will."
- ♦ "You have seen him and he knows you, but you do not know him. The old man wishes to make amends, but he needs a body."
- ♦ "She waits in the hill Asrabey Varal, but for how long? Kasvarina, your lover is coming. Why do you hide?"
- ♦ (After a tree branch falls.) "You know, I *was* going to simply *hang* the children, but this works just as well!"



Ekossigan's Demise.

Once Ekossigan is defeated, the storm ends, the tree creaks but does not collapse, and the fey who were trying to fight through Asrabey stop and then flee. If Ekossigan was merely knocked out or otherwise disabled, Asrabey thanks the party, then presses a cold iron spike to the fey lord's heart and slaps him to consciousness.

He demands to know about Kasvarina, and Ekossigan, still deranged, whispers that he has seen her held prisoner in a steel cage lined with tapestries, beneath Cauldron Hill in the Bleak Gate. He doesn't know anything else.

Unless the party stops him, Asrabey proclaims the Ekossigan is guilty of betraying the Unseen Court. Rather than impale him with the spike, though, he presses a dagger into Ekossigan's hand, and guides him to slit his own throat.

When Ekossigan dies (even if the party just takes him out in combat), his body begins to crumble away into a mass of dead leaves which are carried away on the wind. A "life bloom" overtakes the area, as plants begin to sprout and smaller trees begin emerging across the ground beneath the tree. The orphanage stops falling away, and each PC is returned to full health.

Skyseer Vision.

Any character with the Skyseer theme feels his gaze drawn to watch the leaves as they're blown skyward, and he receives a vision. It is simple: A bird made of black steel, weeping blood, lands at the peak of Cauldron Hill. Then it flies away toward the harbor, but there is no city beneath it. Instead its shadow falls across a verdant forest.

This invokes part of Nevard's prophecy from Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*, warning that a second doom would come from Cauldron Hill. Ideally, it will also suggest to the party that when the colossus heads for the harbor, they should try to drive it to the Dreaming.

Asrabey's Departure.

The high elf dreadnought, saddened from having killed many fey who tried to assault the tree, perfunctorily thanks the party for their aid if they simply killed Ekossigan. If they kept him alive long enough for Asrabey to ask about Kasvarina he shows a bit more sincerity. Either way he says he intends to ask their king for permission to enter the Bleak Gate and explore Cauldron Hill, to search for Kasvarina. He warns them not to trust the Danorans, then leaves.

Aftermath.

In the coming days, the Cloudwood returns to normal as Varal and Gale deal with the remaining troublemaking fey. Doyle Idylls (if alive) is thrilled at the turn of events, and if he knows of the party's involvement, he mails each of them a gift package containing two *potions of cure moderate wounds*, a *potion of heroism*, and an *oil of align weapon*.

LONG-TERM PLANS.

The radical eschatologists led here by Grundun Zubov are just one cell of a radical movement whose figurehead is **Grandis Komanov**, a dwarven cult leader who hides in the frozen northern wastes of Drakr. Komanov wields mighty frost magic, and all of her followers eventually develop white hair and markings akin to frostbite.

When members of the sect prepare for death, they shave their facial hair, so they are no longer shielded from the cold winds of winter.

THREAD THREE: ESCHATOLOGICAL TERRORISTS

In this thread, the party reacts to the surprise attacks by Grundun Zubov's group of radical eschatologists. Zubov's plan is to sow panic amongst the citizens of Flint by perpetrating various attacks throughout the city. By diverting resources away from the peace talks, Zubov hopes to launch a more direct attack on a newly opened subrail station, giving him access to a tunnel that passes near Hotel Aurum. A well-timed explosion will send the building tumbling down.

EPISTLE FROM HEID.**Exposition. Real-Time.**

Philosopher Vlendam Heid contacts the party.

If the party has an eschatologist, or if they befriended dwarven philosopher Vlendam Heid in Adventure Four, *Always on Time*, they receive a letter on the morning of the 9th of Spring. See Player's Handout: Epistle from Heid.

INVESTIGATING ZUBOV.**Action/Exploration. Montage. Level 8.**

Zubov knows the authorities will come looking for him.

After the first attack by the eschatologists, Inspector Delft asks the party if they can spare time to investigate this threat while leading the task force and searching for Ekossigan. He knows they're busy, but they're his best constables, and the only other people he can really spare are the B-Team, which would leave the mediator at risk. It's up to the party whether to give it a shot or pass the buck.

If the PCs did not have enough time to investigate the first attack, they can return and look for clues, though clean-up might have removed some of them. Between Steffan Eberhardt's knowledge of the sect, the objects on the bodies of the defeated attackers, and accounts of the dwarves' activities the night before, the party should either know about Soknik Repairs or be able to track the dwarves there with a few hours' work.

Another lead the party may wish to follow-up with is **Kvarti Gorbatiy**. The PCs likely met Kvarti in Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*, and may have struck up a relationship with the eschatologist gunsmith. Parties without an eschatologist in their ranks may seek out Kvarti to get some insight into the attacks, while eschatologist PCs will likely want to speak with Kvarti as per their letter from Vlendam Heid.

If the party is stuck on how to proceed, a surviving intern who was working at the *Risuri Record* comes into the RHC later in the day and says that they had technicians from Soknik Repairs come by the day before the explosion occurred. The intern believes that the repair technician may have been involved in the sabotage. He also asks if there's any reward for him offering this information.

Soknik Repairs.

A front business used to disguise a safe house and planning site for Grundun Zubov's attacks, Soknik Repairs caters to only a select clientele. The building is nondescript and contains several businesses, but a wide glass window makes up the entire exterior of the repair shop. Inside there is only a single room storefront, with a bland rug, a few display cases, and a single door leading to the back. The cases are used to show off various technological gadgets like ornate cuckoo clocks and a pedal-

A dwarven locksmith-turned-mercenary, Kvarti found a book of Heid Eschatol philosophy in the hands of a man he had assassinated. Though he presents a weary face to maintain his reputation, he goes through life content. All his affairs are in order, and while he hopes to find a cause worth dying for, he would not be angry if his life was cut short. His overly grim reputation got him his job as one of Zubov's snipers, but he does not agree with the man's philosophy.

**Kvarti Gorbatiy**

CR 8

XP 4,800

Male dwarf gunslinger 9 (see the *PATHFINDER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ADVANCED PLAYER GUIDE*)

LN Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +5, **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +9**Defense****AC** 22, touch 17, flat-footed 17 (+4 armor, +3 Dex, +1 natural, +2 deflection, +2 dodge)**hp** 81 (9d10+27)**Fort** +9, **Ref** +9, **Will** +5**Defensive Abilities** defensive training**Offense****Speed** 20 ft.**Ranged** +2 *frost rifle* +14/+9 (1d10+5/19–20/x4 plus 2d6 cold)**Special Attacks** covering shot, dead shot, pistol-whip, startling shot**Statistics****Str** 10, **Dex** 16, **Con** 17, **Int** 8, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 10**Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 24**Feats** Clustered Shots, Critical Focus, Far Shot, Gunsmithing, Improved Critical: Rifle, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Reload: Rifle**Skills** Appraise +1, Diplomacy +4, Disguise +2, Escape Artist +5, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (History) +3, Knowledge (Local) +6, Perception +9, Sense Motive +6, Stealth +9**Languages** Common, Dwarven, Primordial**SQ** Deadeye, Deeds, Greed, Grit, Gun Training +3: Pistol, Gun Training +3: Rifle, Gunslinger Initiative, Gunslinger's Dodge, Hardy +2, Hatred, Slow and Steady, Stability, Stonecunning +2, Targeting, Utility Shot**Combat Gear** +2 *frost rifle*, +2 *leather armor*; **Other Gear** *amulet of natural armor* +1, *ring of protection* +2**Tactics.**

If Kvarti recognizes the party, he's actually kind of amused, and he shoots at them in good fun, making a big show of shattering the display cases around them but never actually hurting any of them. Then he'll duck behind cover and wait for the party to come across the street and find him. He greets them with his hands over his head and his sniper rifle at his feet.

If he doesn't know the party, he'll be more aggressive, trying to heavily wound one or two PCs so the rest of the party will tend to them, giving him an opportunity to run downstairs and slip out into an alley.

If the party catches him, see *Kvarti Talks* (page 47) for details on interrogation.

Trapped Tunnels.

The trapdoor ladder leads down to a series of complex tunnels, originally dug out two hundred years ago. There are no light sources inside the tunnels or safe house, since dwarves can see in the dark. If the party has light they can see centuries-old graffiti denouncing the witches who once ruled atop Cauldron Hill. The tunnels are strewn with old wooden debris, as if furniture once filled these underground passages. The ground has dozens of cracks, sunken areas, and pools of stagnant water.

If one knows the route, the safe house is about five minutes from *Soknik Repairs*. The tunnels leading to the safe house have been trapped by Zubov's men. The dwarven radical ensured that all of his loyal followers were given the correct navigation route through the tunnel, and crafted various traps to kill or debilitate anyone else.

Recent tracks from those coming and going from the safe house can be followed (DC 15 Survival). This causes the party to only come across the traps listed below. If they wander the tunnels without any guidance, they stumble upon another one or two traps.

cranked sewing machine that the staff has "repaired." In truth these are just imports from Drakr. None of them are for sale.

During the daytime, a single human teenage clerk named **Doug Clapper** operates the counter. Those who come with honest inquiries are all rebuffed by the clerk, who insists that *Soknik Repairs* is full up on clients and all their technicians are scheduled for months ahead. This is of course a fabrication, as the building is nothing more than a front that keeps relations with a small number of key "target clients" such as the *Risuri Record*. The clerk was hired by Zubov to stop people from inquiring too much about the business.

At any point in the morning and afternoon, Kvarti Gorbatiy is set up in a second floor window across the street from the storefront, keeping an eye on those who go in. Zubov did not trust the mercenary enough to involve him in any of his major plans, and so uses the sniper to protect the storefront. His orders are to watch for law enforcement and if it looks like their cover is blown, to kill any officers if they try to get downstairs. From Kvarti's vantage point he can see through the glass storefront and target anyone inside with ease.

If the PCs arrive with a warrant to search the grounds, the clerk is truly shaken and clearly hiding something. The clerk is unable to stop the PCs and simply hopes that they will not discover the secret passage to the safe house in the backroom. The passage is hidden under a foot-pedal table saw workbench, and the clerk doesn't know where it goes.

Kvarti isn't ready to attack the PCs right away, so he'll wait to see what happens when they leave.

Searching the backroom reveals an amount of paperwork nowhere near appropriately sized for a company that is too busy to take on new customers. A casual inspection of the books reveals that the office has only a handful of small paying customers, and has been operating at a substantial loss since opening.

If the clerk is pressed about the state of the business, he pretends to crack (Sense Motive DC 22) and says there's a trap door in the front of the office, under the rug. He heads back to the front and snaps his fingers in the direction of the window, a sign to Kvarti that their cover is blown. If Kvarti recognizes the party, he'll fire a warning shot, just trying to give Doug cover to run. Otherwise he'll try to pin the party down and injure but not kill them.

Soknik Sniper

Kvarti Gorbatiy



Trapped Puddle.

A puddle conceals a magic rune scribed on the floor. When anyone steps across the rune, the trap activates.

Cold Chill of Death

CR 6

From the ground rises a chilled mist that freezes you to the bone. You can feel death approach; an inevitable fate for all.

Type magic; Perception DC 22; Disable Device DC 22

Effects

Trigger location; **Duration** 3 rounds; **Reset** none

Effect freezing cold air (2d6 cold damage, DC 20 Fortitude save or be staggered for 1 minute); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-radius)

Fool's Door.

A few twists, turns, and confusing splits beyond the puddle rune, the party reaches an area strewn with more wooden debris than usual, with platforms covering the ground and nailed-together planks leaned against the wall. One set of planks conceals what looks like a doorway (Perception DC 15). However, if the planks are disturbed, they reveal a *cold chill of death* rune, as above. Additionally, immediately beyond the false door is a pit trap.

Camouflaged Spiked Pit Trap

CR 6

The wooden planks beneath you snap and drop you toward a distant floor of rusted spikes.

Type mechanical; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 20

Effects

Trigger location; **Reset** manual

Effect 30-ft. deep pit (3d6 falling damage); pit spikes (Atk +15 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d6+5 damage each); Reflex DC 20 avoids.

Threshold Trap.

As the tunnels near the safe house, the party sees a large arch of polished white marble along the walls and ceiling. The first such arch is just a normal arch. Twenty feet after it the tunnel splits and both paths have arches of their own. (The party wants to go right.) There's another split twenty feet later, and another two arches. (This time, left is the way to go.) The third white arch is trapped, and the stones are each inscribed with small runes in dwarven (Perception DC 18). They seem jumbled, and include the words: "Arc white the lost world in the heart beyond the serpent shall gyre in the end the coils of ice."

Each rune can be depressed by pressing it once, or reset by pressing it again. The trap is disarmed by pressing, in order, runes to read, "The world shall end in ice." Those entering without doing so will be subject to the trap below.

The End of All Things

CR 6

Crossing the threshold of the arch without speaking the truth of the universe has dire consequences, as a sharpened iron gate falls from the ceiling.

Type magical; Perception DC 18 (and Linguistics DC 22 to decipher); **Disable Device** DC 22

Effects

Trigger location; **Reset** manual

Effect sharpened iron gate (Atk +20 melee, 6d6 damage and the target is knocked prone); multiple targets (all creatures in entrance). Lifting the gate requires a Strength check (DC 20), and until then any creature hit by it is immobilized.

Safe House.

Beyond the threshold trap, the party finds a hallway with clean-picked pork ribs scattered across the ground. Thirty feet beyond the arch is a 30-ft. by 20-ft. living chamber, and off that is a pair of similarly-sized rooms, a workshop and a meeting room.

The bones are one of the ways the dwarves keep at bay the army ant swarm that lairs here. A minute after the party arrives in the hallway, the ants pour out of cracks in the wall, drawn by the scent of food.

The dwarves treat their boots with sodium borate, which deters the ants from attacking them. They likewise powdered the floor of their living quarters with it, though if the party manages to enter the area faster than the ants show up, they nevertheless spot a several trails of ants snaking across the floor.

Living Chamber.

This simple room contains an assemblage of two dozen cots for members to sleep in. When the PCs arrive, it is likely that two eschatologist radicals are in the living chamber resting.

Four skeletons, animated by dwarven clerics from the old remains of those who once sheltered here from witches, stand in the corners. Their orders are to attack any non-dwarf humanoids who find the hide-out, as well as any creature that harms them. The ant swarm cannot deal any damage to the skeletons, so they ignore it.

Workshop.

Workbenches have been arranged along the walls of this room filled with small mechanical pieces, weapon scopes of different shapes and sizes, and several casks of firedust. This room is where the radicals designed their bombs and crafted several of their other specialty weapons. Four skeletons stand in the corners of the room.

Meeting Room.

Inside this chamber are several haphazardly arranged tables and chairs. The tables are littered with newsletters, notes, pictures, and maps. Several charts and maps of Flint are affixed to the walls of this room, and are clearly part of some large plan. Four skeletons stand in the corners.

Safe House Mob

2 eschatologist radicals (page 19)

1 army ant swarm

12 Medium skeletons



Medium Skeleton (12)

CR 1/3

XP 135

NE Medium undead

Init +6, **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., Perception +0

Defense

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+2 armor, +2 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 4 (1d8)

Fort +0, **Ref** +2, **Will** +2

DR 5/bludgeoning

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee broken hammer +0 (1d6)

Statistics

Str 14, **Dex** 15, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +0; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 14

Other Gear broken chain shirt, broken hammer

Army Ant Swarm

CR 5

XP 1,600

N Fine vermin (swarm)

Init +2, **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent, Perception +4**Defense****AC** 20, touch 20, flat-footed 18 (+8 size, +2 Dex)**hp** 49 (11d8)**Fort** +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +3**Offense****Speed** 30 ft., climb 30 ft.**Melee** swarm (3d6)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.**Special Attacks** cling, consume, distraction (DC 15)**Statistics****Str** 1, **Dex** 15, **Con** 10, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 2**Base Atk** +8; **CMB** —; **CMD** —**Skills** Climb +10, Perception +4**Special Abilities**

Cling (Ex) If a creature leaves an army ant swarm's square, the swarm suffers 1d6 points of damage to reflect the loss of its numbers as several of the crawling pests continue to cling tenaciously to the victim. A creature with army ants clinging to him takes 3d6 points of damage at the end of his turn each round. As a full-round action, he can remove the ants with a DC 17 Reflex save. High wind or any amount of damage from an area effect destroys all clinging ants.

Consume (Ex) An army ant swarm can rapidly consume any creature it swarms over. Against helpless or nauseated targets, an army ant swarm attack deals 6d6 points of damage.

Tactics.

When the dwarf radicals hear the threshold trap go off, they wake up and hide in a hurry, hoping the skeletons can keep the intruders stuck in the hallway long enough for the ants to eat them. They make sure not to catch each other in their shotgun lines of fire. As with everyone else in this sect, the dwarves will try to take their suicide pills if captured.

Putting the Pieces Together.

Once the PCs secure the safe house, they have a treasure trove of information to read over. Once the safe house is compromised (indicated by the clerk's absence) the radicals abandon the site, but continue on with their plans, believing that law enforcement doesn't have the intelligence and time to piece together their operation.

Meeting Room: Most of the valuable information can be found in the meeting room, where an analysis of the documents within (Linguistics DC 18) can reveal that the radicals were awaiting a

large shipment by boat from the Drakr border city of Ysfeld. Based on the departing location of the shipment (Knowledge [geography] DC 16) there should be nothing of note in the area, but those familiar with local fauna (Knowledge [arcana or nature] DC 18) realize that the site is a hotbed of malice beasts, the misshapen monsters that live in the magically unstable region known as the Malice Lands.

The documents imply the ship would sneak into Flint harbor on the night of Spring 10 and that the dwarves would meet it at Golden Point, the western transfer station between the Red subrail line and Orange line. Due to weather and other factors, the ship might be delayed if you want to give a tardy party a chance to stop it.

A second set of documents seem to be city maps from different decades, each of them traced with the routes of the modern subrail lines. PCs who parse through these (Knowledge [dungeoneering or geography] DC 14) can identify several old, hidden tunnels leading into the newly constructed subrail station.

There is an envelope, its seal broken, that contains a letter to the news director of the *Flint Tribune*, inviting him to send a reporter to the opening ceremony of a new subrail stop, the Sharon M. Baker Station (Red Line, station 4). See Player's Handout: Subrail Opening.

Workshop: A sweep of the construction area (Knowledge [engineering] DC 14), reveals that the radicals were in the process of constructing something far larger than their previous firedust explosives.

Spellcasters or alchemists can try to make sense of the magical elements of the devices (Knowledge [arcana] or Craft [alchemy] DC 18), and if successful are able to identify the components used, and can deduce that the newly constructed "super bomb" would not be as easily triggered as the previous firedust casks. Instead, such a device would need to be triggered on site and would require some kind of countdown to properly activate all the necessary alchemical and magical reactions.

A more thorough examination (DC 28) can reveal the exact nature of the explosive (see page 17). Based on the amount of materials that



seem to have been present here and some of the formulae scribbled on stray papers, a character can determine that once the elements were combined it would take exactly twenty-six minutes and 18 seconds for it to explode. The force would be enough to level a couple city blocks. It's clear that whatever was being constructed here has already been completed, and these parts are leftovers or prototype test bits that were not cleaned up.

Technologist PCs gain a +5 bonus to any of the above checks.

The Plot: Don't nudge the players here, but if they ask the right questions, let them figure out that, based on the average speed of the subrail train, it could travel the distance between three stations in twenty-six minutes, or maybe six stations if there were no other traffic or stops. That means that from Sharon M. Baker station, it could reach Darvill Station, by Hotel Aurum, just as the bomb went off.

KVARTI TALKS.

Social. Real-Time.

The party likely has ways to track down Kvarti's temporary lodgings—a small rented condo in North Shore. The gunsmith is not present during most of the day, spending his time as a hired gun at Soknik Repairs, though he can be found here in the later parts of the evening. Either by tracking him down or simply meeting him at Soknik Repairs, the party might have a chance to chat with the dwarf.

Kvarti's relationship with Grundun Zubov is cold at best. Zubov made contact with Kvarti by letter several months in advance of the arrival of the radicals. It was Kvarti who found the tunnels, and he helped acquire forged documents to get the radicals into the city without drawing any attention. Kvarti was led to believe these efforts were a lead-up to an assassination attempt—his pet theory was that he'd be hired to kill the reincarnated man, Governor Roland Stanfield.

Once Zubov arrived and they met in person, though, Kvarti realized their views of the eschatologist philosophy were far apart. Zubov would not bring Kvarti in to any of the major plans, but he kept paying the dwarf to keep quiet, and Kvarti was prepared in case his employer double crossed him and tried to kill him.

Only after the bombings at Pardwight did Kvarti start putting the pieces together. Kvarti is now rethinking his contract, not wanting to be associated with mass murdering terrorists. If the Armageddon Beasts are unleashed before the party finds him, Kvarti decides to stop showing up at Soknik Repairs and ends his relationship with Zubov. Whether it succeeds or fails, the malice beast attack is the last straw for Kvarti, and if the party hasn't found him yet, he'll find them.

Information and Assistance.

If the party seems amenable, Kvarti might offer to work with them to help stop Zubov. He doesn't know how to reach the sect leader, but he knows they had a meeting planned at the docks for the night of the 10th. He describes the group as a doomsday cult, then corrects himself. "Doomsdays cult. Multiple days of doom."

Rewards of Cooperation.

If Kvarti survives the adventure, he might thank any Gunsmith PC (or simply a gun-wielder) by providing a free +1 magical enhancement bonus along with the *frost* special ability to one of their firearms. If the PCs already have +1 firearms, Kvarti can enchant up to two of them, giving them the *frost* ability in addition to any other abilities.

BEASTS OF THE END TIME.

Action. Tactical. Level 8.

The terrorists try to sneak armageddon beasts into the city.

Just after sunset on the 10th of Spring, the Drakr steamship *Cherno Bezna* (Black Abyss) kills its engine three miles from Flint and deploys oars. The dwarven crew rows silently for an hour and a half, enters Flint Harbor, and spends the next four hours slowly approaching freight docks near the Golden Point subrail stop in Central District. The ship carries six Armageddon Beasts—terrifying creatures from the Drakr-Malice Lands border. If the ship makes landfall it will unleash its cargo of monsters on the city, and they will slay hundreds before the sun rises.

Waiting for the ship to land is risky, and the party has a better chance of spotting the approach and catching them if they're on their own ship.

Beasts at Sea

Spotting a ship under oars on a nearly-moonless night is challenging, and spotting a ship that's covered in a light-blocking magical shroud, crewed by dwarves with darkvision, is nearly impossible. If the party is at sea between 8:00 PM and midnight, they have an opportunity to see the ship. Let each PC make a Perception check (DC 30) to notice the ship; if they patrol the harbor (thus giving themselves a better chance of being within range of the slow-moving *Cherno Bezna* at any given moment), they can make a check every half hour.

The party might just camp out near Golden Point, which gives them a +10 bonus to their Perception check, but limits them to just making one. Also, the ship will just be a single naval round at full speed from reaching land.

Naval Tactics

If the *Bezna's* look-out, a young dwarf named **Doug Clapper**, realizes a ship is headed for them, he'll alert **Captain Tamushin**, who orders the engine back to life, and the crew back to their stations. In the first round of naval combat, the dwarven ship's speed is only 2 (due to oars), but thereafter it has its normal speed.

Depending on when the party spots them, the *Bezna* might still be miles from their intended drop-off point. If they're close they might try to flee, and just need to move a few stages to reach the docks, which they'll crash into (but at least reinforcements will be on hand). Otherwise they

THE CARGO.

We're conscious of the fact that in this campaign heavily based around investigation and cities there have been relatively few monsters, especially by normal fantasy RPG standards. The nature of the Armageddon Beasts doesn't matter too much, just that they're large and horrible. We encourage you to use the stats of existing CR 7 to 9 monsters and reskin them a bit so they are more misshapen. None of the beasts are intelligent beyond animal level, and none should fly. Otherwise, here's an opportunity to throw your favorite nasty critters at the party.

Some suggestions include:

- + Behir
- + Bulette
- + Digester
- + Gray render
- + Hydra
- + A hivemind of 8 psychically-linked shocker lizards.

will try to ram the party's ship, then open the cages of the Armageddon Beasts and try to avoid dying in the mayhem that follows.

Rules for naval combat are available in E.N. Publishing's *Admiral o' the High Seas*. Quick-play rules are available on the E.N. Publishing website.

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Cherno Bezna, Steamship | Level 10 Vehicle |
| Large Vehicle | 14,400 gp |
| Hull Integrity 3 | Command +7 |
| Defense 15 | Minimum Crew 2 |
| Maneuverability 6 | Full Crew 8 |
| Speed 6 | Total Complement 20 |

Design

Length 85 ft. Beam 25 ft. Steam engine, three decks.

Makeshift Oars

In a pinch, the engine can be killed and the ship rowed, letting it slip through the night silently. If 16 crew work the oars, the ship can travel at speed 2.

Abyssal Shroud ♦ Installed

When this magic is activated, gloom falls upon the ship in a 100-ft. radius.

The engineer can activate the shroud as his naval action. While the shroud is up, you roll twice for Command checks and shipboard weapon attack rolls, and take the worse result. Other ships targeting you likewise roll twice on attacks and take the worse. If two ships are at short range, the shroud does not affect their attack rolls against each other.

Armaments

A pair of enchanted cannons facing forward. Where they strike, ice spreads across the target, freezing the sea and making decks dangerously slick.

Crew: 5. Attack: +7, forward only.

Strikes that deal hull integrity damage create ice that slows the vessel, reducing its Speed on the next naval round by 2 per strike. Strikes against propulsion coat sails or jam rudders, and so likewise reduce the target's Maneuverability on the next naval round by 2 per strike.

Total Cost 8,400 gp

Hull (base level 6, engine, improved speed x2, Level 10): 5,000 gp

Armaments (Level 10; freezing, Level 8): 8,400 gp

Shroud (Level 5): 1,000 gp

Leader of a radical sect of eschatologists, Zubov is a man of few words. While his underlings chatter and philosophize, Zubov simply smokes his pipe, carved from glacial ice that will never melt. He knows his purpose, and talking won't change anything.

Zubov's clan back in Drakr has been long trampled upon by the rich and powerful, and after nearly dying in a pointless war against an equally pointless border state, Zubov felt nothing but hatred for his country. In the teachings of Heid Eschatol he saw a reason for his suffering: to prepare him for an uncelebrated death, but one necessary to bring about the end of the world. Though many like him and his family will die, the fall of the high and mighty will be oh so much greater.

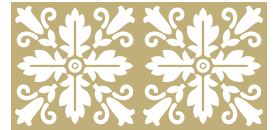


Cherno Bezna Crew

Captain Tamushin, eschatologist prophet

2 eschatologist radicals (page 19)

17 Drakran sailors



Eschatologist Prophet

CR 4

XP 1,200

Male dwarf cleric 5

CE Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +1, **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., Perception +3

Defense

AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17 (+6 armor, +1 Dex, +1 shield)

hp 31 (5d8+5)

Fort +4, **Ref** +2, **Will** +7

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk mace +4 (1d6)

Ranged broken pistol +2 (1d8–2)

Special Attacks channel negative energy 5/day (DC 16, 3d6), command undead

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th) Darkness and Death domains

Touch of Darkness (6/day)—Melee touch attack, target partially blinded, suffers 20% concealment for 2 rounds.

Bleeding Blessing (6/day)—Melee touch attack, target bleeds 1d6 per round for 2 rounds (Heal DC 15 or magic healing stops).

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 5th, concentration +8)

3rd—animate dead, deeper darkness, inflict serious wounds

2nd—blindness (DC 15), inflict moderate wounds, spiritual weapon, shatter (DC 15)

1st—cause fear x2 (DC 14), entropic shield, protection from law

0th—bleed, detect magic, detect poison, guidance, light

Statistics

Str 10, **Dex** 13, **Con** 12, **Int** 12, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 14

Feats Combat Casting, Command Undead

Skills Craft (alchemy) +9, Intimidate +7, Spellcraft +9

Languages Common, Dwarven, Primordial

Drakran Sailors (17)

CR 1/3

XP 135 each

Male dwarf warrior 1

N Medium Humanoid (dwarf)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., Perception +0

Defense

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15 (+4 armor, +1 shield)

hp 13 each (1d10+3)

Fort +3, **Ref** +1, **Will** –1

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee warhammer +2 (1d8+1/x3)

Ranged heavy crossbow +1 (1d10/19–20)

Statistics

Str 13, **Dex** 11, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 12

Feats Expert Sailor

Skills Perception +0, Profession (sailor) +3, Swim +0

Languages Common, Dwarven

Welcome Party.

Awaiting the ship is a trio of radicals, here to pick up their caged beasts and deliver them to an empty warehouse. A dozen local dockers have been paid extraordinarily well by the eschatologists for this strange of flood, but the dockers are so hard-pressed due to the influx of workers from rural areas that they took the job with no questions asked.

Zubov's men have bribed local authorities to not inspect the cargo, so unless the PCs are present, the offload occurs without a hitch. Once the cages are offloaded, the dockers cart them into a warehouse. The dwarves attach a clockwork device on each cage, set for half an hour, and when it runs down the gates of the beasts' cages will open. By then, the dwarves plan to have killed their docker helpers and gotten safely underground.

If the party approaches, the radicals are unfazed by their presence. If the PCs show their credentials and demand to see what's making all the horrible snarling sounds inside the cages, the dwarves can spend a move action next to a cage to advance the clockwork countdown and unlock the cage immediately. The Armageddon Beasts burst out, and it becomes a desperate scramble to not be the one eaten by the monsters.

Radical Dock Party

- 1 eschatologist prophet (page 48)
- 2 eschatologist radicals (page 19)
- 12 dockers (noncombatants)



Tactics.

The beasts are crazed by the sudden influx of movement and targets, and move to attack those nearest the cages: the dockers. The dockers reply by trying to flee as best they can, while the eschatologists use their abilities to slow down the PCs so the dwarves can get away. As they say, you don't have to outrun Armageddon, just your friend.

With luck, the party can stop the dwarves from opening all the cages, though in such a situation the extra monsters are liable to just make a run for it rather than tussle with other malice beasts.

Aftermath.

Zubov was counting on the monsters to stretch the city's police thin, so he'd have an easier time at his final attack. If the party stops the Armageddon Beasts, he'll have fewer men in the next scene.

If any of the monsters get away they wreak havoc through the night and kill a dozen people or so apiece before finding a lair in the sewers. The next day the military gets called in from the bayou west of the city to hunt the monsters down. They track them down and slays them, but the streets start to empty because people are afraid. You might have one of these creatures happen upon the party in another encounter to liven things up, but generally they're just in the background wreaking havoc.



HOSTAGE SITUATION.

Social. Real-Time.

Will the party risk Zubov killing his hostages, or give in to his demands?

At 9:00 in the morning on the 12th of Spring, Flint's aasimar city governor **Roland Stanfield** invites several low-level dignitaries to the opening of the Sharon M. Baker subrail station. As the press, politicians, and business elite watch Stanfield cut the ribbon, Grundun Zubov and his radicals approach through secret passages that lead into the subrail tunnels.

A handful of dwarves wait outside the station, poised to distract law enforcement with a suicidal gun battle. Meanwhile Zubov and twenty more dwarves will burst up from the tunnels, abduct Stanfield, subrail architect **Kevin Wilson**, and several other VIPs, and then take control of the underground platform.

Outside the police find notes on each of the dead radicals with a list of demands the terrorists have. Zubov doesn't particularly care if these are fulfilled, though he does want his message to get out. Mostly he cares about stalling for time while he prepares the alchemical bomb. He expects to have to repel a rescue attempt, but he wants to draw in law enforcement officers, pulling them away from Hotel Aulum. When the time is right—about fifteen minutes before noon—he and all but five radicals will set out in a short subrail train. Five will stay behind and attack the police as a distraction.

If he gets a chance, his route takes him from Baker Station (Red Line, station 4) to the Golden Point switchpoint, and finally to Darvill Station (Orange Line, station 2) a stone's throw from Hotel Aulum. If he's not stopped, the bomb will explode, annihilating several city blocks and causing Hotel Aulum to tumble, killing everyone within. Harkover Lee will smash a hole in the building's wall and teleport the king to safety, but hundreds more will die.

DEMANDS.

"I am Grundun Zubov, speaker for this clan of eschatologists. We follow the word of our philosopher Grandis Komanov, and we were responsible for the attacks this week. Do not trifle with us, and you will not have to suffer more deaths. My men have been active in your city for weeks, and if any harm befalls me or my men here, your city will reel from the devastation.

"Herein follow our demands.

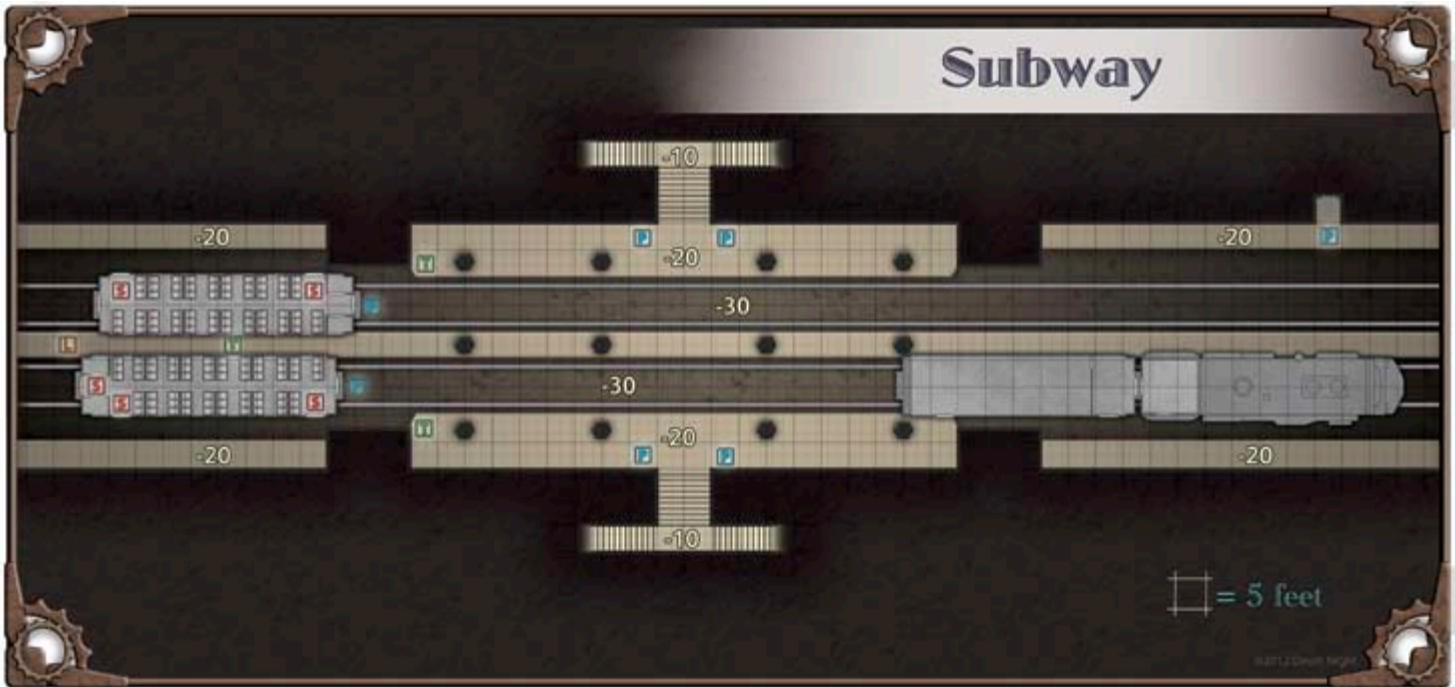
"My men are going to need ale. Let's start with that.

"Then bring us that Price fellow, the one who runs the RHC in Slate. We know you can get him here with magic, and you will if you don't want to go searching for your governor's next incarnation. Nigel Price-Hill will pay for the death of our necromancer comrades.

"I want to speak to one of your skyseers. You no longer listen to them, but they could see the future. You threw smoke into the skies and blinded yourself to the truth: the world will end in ice. Once you hand over Price, and once I have spoken with a skyseer, I will inform you of my further demands."

AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION?

The party might figure out Zubov's target and lay a trap for him in the tunnels. They can easily get a dozen police officers to back them. The fight will be less dynamic than the one outlined below, so you might throw a curveball by having dwarven reinforcements arrive by rail car.



Clearing the Tracks.

The Red Line was scheduled for shutdown this morning so VIPs could enjoy a train trip without the rabble. The Orange Line bomb at station 4 stopped traffic on that line, so the tunnels are basically clear this morning.

We Don't Negotiate with Terrorists!

Within minutes of the attack, the local police precincts expend their limited-use magical communication to contact the military and the RHC. Likely by the time the PCs get on scene, the situation is being overseen by **Colonel Aden Tucker**. Tucker brings the PCs up to speed on the situation, and explains that he's in charge and doesn't want the RHC getting in his way. These dwarves have some qualms with the current leader of the RHC, and they're liable to overreact if they see RHC constables.

Tucker's initial plan is to stall until about noon, giving the terrorists a few snippets of what they have demanded. By noon his team will have arrived, and he intends to send them into the subrail tunnels from the

sewers and launch a rescue mission. Unfortunately, by that point the dwarves will already have launched their bomb-filled train.

Colonel Tucker waits for his task force of forty soldiers to arrive, smugly confident that the dwarves are stuck in a hole so he can take as long as he wants to get overwhelming force. If the party reminds Tucker that the dwarves have access to a train so they can move, the embarrassed colonel pretends that changes nothing. Despite the risk to the hostages, Tucker thinks he needs his men to make the victory clean. He assumes the dwarves won't move, and prefers to wait.

Though Colonel Tucker may initially seem to fit the cliché of the proud military man too confident to realize that he's been outwitted, he's actually a sympathizer to the Duchess and traditional Risuri values. He wouldn't mind if the governor's metal machine road got negative press, and he figures that even if the mission is a failure, the governor will just reincarnate anyway. Only if the party has shown strong anti-Danoran sentiments will he listen to their advice. In that case they might be able to get four Allied Soldiers (page 80) who arrived early on their side. Otherwise, the party might have to move on their own.

Stanfield witnessed the fall of the eladrin goddess Srasama five hundred years ago and died soon thereafter in the chaos of Elfaivar's fall. But he reincarnated, restored to life by a sliver of the divine power he absorbed when Srasama was slain. His memories vague and jumbled, he found his way back to his homeland of Risur and eventually settled in Flint, then just a modest coastal port.

In the centuries since, he has died at irregular intervals, and with each rebirth he has returned to the city he calls home. For most of that time he has served as Flint's governor, having constantly striven to improve himself with each life, from a simple warrior, to a humble leader, to an educated Renaissance man nimbly handling the complex challenges of the fastest-growing city in the world. Stanfield wears a near-constant expression of contented optimism, but still occasionally complains of a war wound he took to his back in his first life.



GOVERNOR
ROLAND
STANFIELD

SUBRAIL ASSAULT.

Action. Tactical. Level II.

Trying to rescue the hostages is just playing into Zubov's trap.

Zubov lost a few radicals in the first rush, but he still has plenty guarding the subrail station.

Stopping the Armageddon Beasts means that there were more police at the subrail station, able to cause more casualties among the dwarves. For every 2 of the 6 beasts that the party kept from getting loose in the city, subtract one radical from Zubov's group.

Zubov's Subrail Team

Grundun Zubov

1 eschatologist prophet (see page 48)

12 eschatologist radicals (see page 19)

4 eschatologist snipers (see page 19)



Upper Level.

The grand architecture is empty and bullet-pocked, with a few bloodstains where people fell. The place is deserted, its two exits covered by dozens of police officers. Wicket gates stand open, though normally they'd require a copper penny to enter. In the center of the eerily-quiet hall are two pairs of staircases, one set leading to the eastbound platform, the other to the westbound platform.

Tunnel Approach.

The secret tunnels Zubov's men used to enter the subrail open out two hundred feet west of the platform. The subrail route can also be accessed via sewers or access shafts, but the nearest shaft (shown on the map) is trapped. If the party goes to the next access shaft to the east or west, they can get onto the rails a hundred feet from the edge of the map.

Platform Level.

Grundun's men have rigged this area with traps, and tossed burlap sacks all across the ground to conceal some nasty surprises. They decoupled some of the train cars and moved them to the west to provide a bottleneck. The locomotive of the subrail train is "idling" but makes enough noise to cover the sound of footsteps.

L—Lantern. Not actually a trap, but since the dwarves can see in the dark, they keep everything dark except this one lantern. It's easy for them to notice if anyone moves in front of the lantern from that direction.

S—Shotgun. Anyone opening the doors of the parked rail cars will get blasted with a trio of shotguns. This deters sneaking up, and works as an alarm.

Shotgun Trap

CR 3

As you slide the door open, a wire snaps and a trio of shotguns discharge in your face.

Type mechanical; Perception DC 20; Disable Device DC 20

Effects

Trigger touch; Reset none

Effect Atk +15 ranged in a 30-ft. cone (shotgun, 3d8+3/x2).

T—Tripwire. Walking between rail cars, or trying to climb up by the western pillars, likely sets off a small mine attached to a tripwire.

Tripwire Mine Trap

CR 4

Your foot snags something, and then you're hurled back by an explosion.

Type mechanical; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 25

Effects

Trigger location; **Reset** none

Effect explosion (4d6 damage and knocked prone); Reflex DC 20 half

P—Piercing Clamp. The burlap conceal bear-trap like clamps. When stepped on the clamp tears through the sack and pierces the target's leg. The rest of the bag is weighted to keep the target from moving away.

Piercing Clamp

CR 1/2

You step on what looks like a discarded burlap sack, but there's a click, and your leg feels like it's been bitten by a dragon.

Type mechanical; Perception DC 20; Disable Device DC 20

Effects

Trigger location; **Reset** manual

Effect clamp (atk +10 melee, 2d4); clamp holds target in place; the trap can be escaped with a Disable Device or Escape Artist check (DC 20), or a Strength check (DC 24).

MID-ROUTE ATTACK.

The party might let Zubov start the train, then have some sort of blockade in the tunnel at Golden Point to stop them. The train would be packed with dwarves—Zubov, the prophet, 7 radicals, and 4 snipers—and if the party managed to defeat them they'd only have about ten minutes to disarm the bomb.

Hostages.

The dwarves have eight hostages—Kevin Wilson the architect, Governor Roland Stanfield, and six other dignitaries. They have placed two generic hostages, bound, gagged, and blind-folded, in inner window seats of the two parked train cars, expecting their presence to distract and slow down any attackers.

The other six hostages are bound and forced to sit on the floor of the second car in the short train. All are gagged except Stanfield, who engages Zubov in a philosophical discussion, arguing that reincarnation renders the Heid Eschatol philosophy a fool's platitude.

Stanfield is not worried. He is actually a masterful warrior with effectively centuries of experience, but he does not want this information known by the public. He doesn't care enough about the people around him to risk that secret for their lives. Only if he is stuck on the train when it is about to explode will he make a move; he breaks his hand to slip his bonds, stuns any foes with a few punches, then leaps free. He won't bother to rescue anyone, especially not PCs who he knows are trying to defeat the Obscurati. Of course, if there are witnesses to his escape, he'll do what is socially expected and try to save a few innocents in the process.

Grundun Zubov

CR 7

XP 2,800

Male dwarf antipaladin 7 (see *PATHFINDER RPG ADVANCED PLAYER'S GUIDE*)

CE Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +1; **Senses** Perception +6, darkvision

Aura evil

Defense

AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 22 (+10 armor, +1 Dex, +2 shield)

hp 70 (7d10+21);

Fort +11, **Ref** +6, **Will** +9

Offense

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +1 frost warhammer +12 (1d8+4 plus 1d6 cold/x3)

Ranged masterwork pistol +9 (1d8/x4)

Special Attacks Smite Good (3/day; +3 attack, +7 damage or +14 vs. good cleric or paladin; +3 AC against target; lasts until target dies), Touch of Corruption (3/day, touch attack, 3d6 damage, target is staggered 3 rounds [Fort DC 16 negates stagger])

Special Abilities Detect Good (at-will)

Spells *silence* (cast already), *command* x2 (DC 14)

Statistics

Str 16 **Dex** 12, **Con** 16, **Int** 14, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 21

Feats Cleave, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (warhammer)

Skills Disguise +13, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Knowledge (religion) +12

Languages Common, Dwarven, Giant, Primordial

Combat Gear +1 frost warhammer, +1 full plate, masterwork heavy steel shield, masterwork pistol

Tactics.

Two snipers lie prone, one each on the north and south platforms on the right, their rifles trained on the spot between the two parked rail cars. A third sniper stands on the central divider, keeping watch on the other direction. The fourth sniper stands in the back of the short train, having already smashed out a window on the back door so he can fire from cover.

Eight radicals with shotguns hide in the trench where the rails run, ready to pop up and shoot soldiers coming down the stairs. Three stand in the train watching the hostages, while one waits crouched on the walkway at the front of the train, on the look-out of sneaky intruders.

Zubov works in the locomotive, watching the chemicals for the explosive as they mix. He has the train primed and ready to go at a moment's notice. The eschatologist prophet waits beside Zubov; his main mission is to extinguish the light sources of attackers, then to heal injured dwarves.

If attacked, the dwarves unleash a devastating barrage of gunfire, staggering their shots so half can shoot while the others reload. The snipers can reload fast enough to fire each round. Wounded dwarves fall back to the train to be healed. Zubov does not expose himself to combat. If thinks his side is going to lose a fight, he starts the train as a move action and activates the alchemical explosive as a standard action. From that moment, the party has twenty-six minutes and eighteen seconds before it explodes.

When the train starts, it travels 15 feet the first round, 30 the next, then 45, and so on until it reaches a speed of 90 feet per round. If the party jumps on, Zubov and any of his remaining radicals fight to the end, smiling at the thought of glorious death. There's a good chance the party defeats Zubov but are stuck traveling at ten miles per hour with a bomb.

Someone Set Us Up the Bomb.

The Eschatologists bomb is a complex device that requires several steps to defuse.

Open the Case. The first step requires the PCs to open the casing of the device without rattling the interior too much. This can be accomplished by sliding the metallic sheeting off the outside shell (Disable Device DC 20). Alternatively a PC can quickly re-arrange some of the plates for easier access to the internals (Sleight of Hand DC 18). Each attempt takes a minute. Failure here does not detonate the bomb, but will eat up time on the clock.

Examine the Internals. Inside, twenty-nine rune-inscribed steel wires criss-cross an amberglass drum that holds forty gallons of alchemicals. The drum is divided into eight sections, each filled with a different substance. The eight substances are:

- ♦ **Fire humor.** Refined trait in sentient beings that motivates activity and emotion. Acts as trigger.
- ♦ **Aether.** That which fills vacuum. Massively expands size of explosion.
- ♦ **Phlogiston.** Pure elemental fire in liquid form. The actual destructive agent of the explosion.
- ♦ **Frayed Chronosomia.** Fluid time which, when poured, extrudes in the shape of woven threads. This unstable version makes the explosion difficult to detect with foresight and divination.
- ♦ **Witchoil.** Black essence of the barrier between this world and the Bleak Gate. An accelerant that starts the reaction.
- ♦ **Blood infused with ambergris.** The calming agent that prevents premature detonation.

- ♦ **Serpent's Loop.** Scales of snakes that have devoured themselves, boiled in venom. Makes the fire burn any substance, even stone.
- ♦ **Frostburn.** Transmuted phlogiston that freezes instead of burns. Will coat everything burnt by the explosion with a layer of ice.

The runes on each wire are in Dwarven, and describe the connection, such as "Frayed Chronosomia to Phlogiston." One wire is engraved simply "Black," and it runs from the top of the barrel to the floor.

Every few seconds one of the twenty-nine wires starts to glow, and then the two chambers it connects admix some of their contents. The wires glow in no discernible pattern over the course of four minutes, and touching one of the wires while it is live will deal 1d6 electricity damage to the character. The wire labeled "Black" never glows. It acts as a magical ground, and a character holding it can touch any of the wires without concern for taking damage.

Disable the Mixture. The mixing can be stopped simply by cutting all the wires. However if you cut a wire while a chamber on either end has any of *its* wires active, the whole thing will detonate. For instance, if you want to cut a wire that leads from Witchoil to Aether, and while you're cutting it any other wire that connects with either Witchoil or Aether activates, you'll set off the bomb.

Figuring this out requires a minute of examination (Disable Device or Knowledge [arcana] DC 28). Technologist PCs gain a +5 bonus to this check. Examination at the safe house might have previously determined this.

Actually pulling off the feat requires seven consecutive Disable Device checks that get progressively harder since you have fewer safe windows. The first check is DC 15, and they increase by 1 each, to a maximum of DC 21. Being able to detect magic at will grants a +2 bonus because you have more warning of which wire is about to activate. Technologist PCs gain a +5 bonus to these checks; if a technologist is just directing another PC, the bonus is only +2.

An early detonation is less destructive, perhaps only collapsing the subrail tunnel, but it certainly kills any PCs nearby. The danger gets progressively worse, and by the time the train reaches Golden Point the bomb is primed enough that a detonation would create a thirty-foot wide crater. If the party manages to successfully cut all seven wires to phlogiston, they can keep the bomb from getting any *more* dangerous, but it will eventually go off unless they can deactivate the whole thing. The choice is up to the party.

Aftermath.

If the party succeeds, the bomb can eventually be disposed of safely. If the bomb goes off at full power, thousands die. In between, the party might decide they can't deactivate the bomb, so they have to choose where to let it go off. The safest spot is probably Golden Point, which has wharfs and warehouses, but no residences. It's the easiest to evacuate.

Between the police and marines, any eschatologists who escape are soon rounded up. Colonel Tucker grudgingly gives the PCs his thanks for their assistance, but remains unimpressed if they disobeyed his orders.

The press is, of course, ecstatic at any acts of heroics that occurred in their vicinity, especially if the party (or B-Team) previously took down the terrorists responsible for destroying the *Flint Tribune*. They want interviews, but Governor Stanfield orders the police to clear the area so clean-up can begin. He convincingly congratulates the party, thanks them for their services, and tells them he'll see them at the peace summit banquet.



PART TWO: GUSTATORY INTERROGATION

In this chapter, Risur sits down to dinner with its enemies.

THE GUEST LIST.

The party has a list of the attendees in the dossier they received at the start of the adventure, but here is a refresher for you. The NPCs who don't merit a full character bio get brief descriptions.

THE RISUR DELEGATION.

- ♦ **King Aodhan.** See page 11.
- ♦ **Principal Minister Harkover Lee.** See page 12.
- ♦ **Royal Engineer Geoff Massarde.** Tiefling who helped build the Risuri flagship *Coaltongue*. Strong advocate for technology and reconciliation. Drinks too much and hits on women. Has a wand that can chill things with a touch, which he uses to make ice.
- ♦ **Minister of Agriculture Kian Doherty.** Well-groomed 40-something who values Risur's druidic traditions and hates being in Flint. Sullen, but trying to keep an open mind.
- ♦ **City Governor Roland Stanfield.** Aasimar who has reincarnated for centuries, always returning to lead Flint. Calm, polite, and blandly political. Has a very long view on problem-solving, which is what drew him to the Obscurati. He secretly heads Colossus Cell, but keeps his distance from the daily affairs.

THE DANORANS.

- ♦ **Sovereign Han Jierre.** See page 54.
- ♦ **Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre.** See page 54.
- ♦ **Minster of War Eloise Duffet.** Broad, tall, dark-haired tiefling woman, bearing scars from the Fourth Yerasol War. Deeply bitter against Risur because she was orphaned in the Third Yerasol War. Dismisses any non-warriors as not having valuable opinions. Has a mechanical left arm with a spring-mounted blade.
- ♦ **Minister of Magic Pierre Riquier.** A rare Danoran half-elf, Pierre came from a rich family that could afford magic lessons for him. Heavy spectacles, messy hair, full of trivia about magic. Weak-willed and obsequious, he isn't that interested in magic, honestly, but he's one of the few people qualified for his position.
- ♦ **Naval Representative Rosalyn Taylor.** Human, one-eyed red-headed captain of *Freux Rouge*, Danor's last sail-powered warship. Old-fashioned, high-spirited, and responsible.

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES.

- ♦ **Mediator Brakken of Heffanita.** See page 13.
- ♦ **Drakran Observer Steffan Eberhardt.** Old thin dwarf with sickly white skin, who supports himself on a skull-tipped ebony cane. Represents weapons manufacturers with a financial stake in the continued conflict between Risur and Danor, but would never consider trying to disrupt the talks.

INVITATION AND WELCOMING

Social. Montage.

The PCs are invited to the banquet and are asked to attend the delegates' arrival.

On the morning of the 13th, Stover Delft tracks the party down and hand-delivers their invitations to the opening dinner of the peace summit. He tries not to make a fuss about the fact that he was not invited. He does, however, tap a finger meaningfully at the "Guest of" entry. The party was invited by Danoran **Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre**.

The five-course dinner starts at 8 p.m., but tailors are standing by at the RHC headquarters to get the group properly presentable before 5 p.m. The Danorans arrive at 6 p.m., and the king wants the party present when they disembark their ship. The dinner will also give the party an opportunity to observe the Danoran delegation for clues to why they're still here when they have to know that the RHC knows Lya Jierre is involved with the Obscurati.

If your group is the sort that needs the reminder, Delft can point out that insulting or god forbid *attacking* the Danorans might start a war, so the party should be on their best behavior. On the up-side, if the party *is* rude, technically Lya Jierre is responsible, because she invited them.

Meeting at the Royal Docks.

On the 9th, the *Freux Rouge*, captained by **Rosalyn Taylor**, parked at the Royal Docks. It bore a small party of dignitaries and a security detachment protecting the Danoran side of Hotel Aurum. At 6 p.m. on the 13th, a second ship arrives.

Lux Profectusque cruises into Flint Bay and makes a grand impression. Two hundred Danoran sailors in crisp white uniforms line the edge of its main deck, helping the ship seem to glow in the afternoon sun. The vessel swings about and closes with the Royal Docks, and with measured precision it cuts its engine and glides on momentum to stop not ten feet from the prow of Risur's own flagship, *Coaltongue*.

A company of Risuri marines flank the welcoming party in Fleet Square, while across the bridge in Royal Square, several hundred Flinters strain to watch. The king is not in attendance, having sent Governor Stanfield in his stead.

A ramp is deployed, and the line of crew parts to reveal, first, a small string and woodwind orchestra that strikes up the Danoran national anthem; and second, the head of state, **Sovereign Han Jierre**. He starts down the ramp as the elegant overture of the anthem begins. Beside him walks his niece Lya Jierre, and behind him follows the Danoran Minister of War **Eloise Duffet**, several bodyguards, and attendants bearing gifts. As they step off the ramp onto the dock, the strings and woodwinds rise and are joined by previously unseen brass instruments. Then, just as the sovereign reaches Governor Stanfield, the anthem crescendos and is joined by a blast of the steamship's horn.

The sound fades out, and Governor Stanfield formally welcomes the Danorans. He starts to introduce the party, but Lya Jierre slips in first and describes the PCs as "the good people I crossed swords with in Vendricce, and who helped us at Axis Island." She explains that she asked for them to come to the dinner to show her commitment to clearing up any misunderstandings. This moment could play out a lot of different

ways depending on how the party has previously interacted with Lya, but try to portray her as genuinely concerned that nothing gets in the way of peace between the two countries.

After some brief pleasantries, everyone loads up into royal carriages—windows shuttered so no rabble in the crowd are tempted to make a move on the Danorans—and they set out for Hotel Aurum.

Lya's Explanation.

If the party encountered Lya Jierre at the end of Adventure Four, they'll no doubt be curious why she's here when it seems obvious she's involved in a hostile conspiracy. In this case, the Obscurati is going for the big lie, and is counting on the compartmentalization of their conspiracy to pull it off.

A key aspect here is that even the heads of Obscurati cells don't know what's going on in other cells. Lya is head of Golden Cell, so she knows the conspiracy's ultimate goal, and she has been informed that, yes, the Ob do have a project in Flint, and that Reed Macbannin was involved. But she doesn't know what is being built here. She just knows her mission

An ambitious tiefling in her late 20s, Lya's uncle is Han Jierre, the Sovereign of Danor. She graduated top of her class from the prestigious academy of war, the *Jierre Sciens d'Arms*, and many students of other war colleges have read her thesis, *Field Study of Melee Effectiveness and Foe Debilitation through Focused Limb Severance Techniques Contrasted with Mainstream Opportunistic Techniques*, which she wrote near the end of the last Yerasol War.

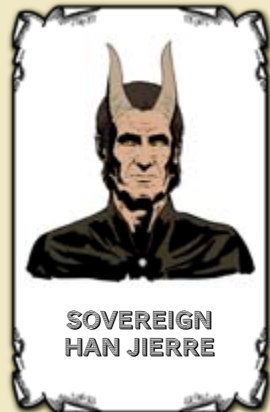
Despite her youth, she was awarded the position of Minister of Outsiders, giving her great leeway to travel and make alliances. For the past three years she has worked with King Aodhan to keep the peace between their two nations, and as they began making plans for a formal alliance, she accepted the king's offer of marriage as a symbolic union.

She is also the leader of the Obscurati's Golden Cell, tasked with recruiting archaeologists and miners around Lanjyr to seek out ancient seals like the one on Axis Island. She was told it was simply part of a plan to strengthen Danor by finding more magical powers, but she has suspicions of something greater. At the start of the adventure she does not know about Colossus Cell.



Han's father made sure he traveled and experienced the grand diversity of life, both good and bad, so that he would not be complacent with the sheltered prosperity his family enjoyed. He returned from his travels still devoted to the supremacy of science and reason, and his father brought him into the Obscurati, grooming him to become one of the conspiracy's three leaders.

Today Han is sympathetic to the needs and perspectives of others, but has ordered so many foul acts to promote the Ob agenda that he finds little joy in his own life. He still keeps in touch with the families of those he lived with during his youthful travels, to remind himself why he's pledged himself to this course.



DANORAN BODYGUARDS.

In addition to the usual riflemen who would escort any Danoran dignitary, Lya travels with a pair of unique bodyguards, **Rush** and **Merton**.

Rush, a snide half-elf, carries a pair of elaborately decorated platinum rods, slotted into holsters at his hips, which function as extensible *immovable rods*. Merton, a hulking half-deaf half-orc, wears a steel helmet with unusually thick protection over his ears, which protects him from the staff-like object he carries: an arcanoscientific sonic weapon shaped vaguely like a tuning fork, but wrapped in cashmere to avoid attracting attention.

is to protect the peace summit and if possible delay Risuri efforts to disrupt the cell in Flint.

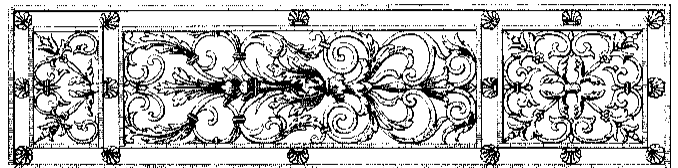
Lya claims that her brother Luc was indeed working on an experimental device, and that the lantern is intended to solve the "Magic Problem," as she puts it. Danor lies in a mostly dead magic zone, yet despite there being no access to elemental planes, the world still functions by following physical and chemical processes. Her brother's lamp, she claims, is a science experiment to help probe the nature of how such processes function in regions of different magic. She admits there are some niche military applications, but the primary purpose is scientific and technological inquiry.

Why then was Caius Bergeron—whom the party has clear evidence was part of a conspiracy called the Obscurati—supposed to be on the train with Luc? Lya states here that Danor's intelligence community investigated the events on the Avery Coast Railroad and learned that Caius recruited bodyguards. But as far as anyone in Danor knew, Caius was just a philanthropist with a penchant for archaeology. It seems now that he was collaborating somehow with Reed Macbannin, and was trying to steal Luc's lantern for himself. Lya says her theory is that Caius was obsessed with ancient magic tied to other worlds, and that he thought the lantern would help him.

She claims that if there's any assistance she can offer to help ensure the threat from this group is squelched, the party need only ask. But she assures them that she was simply in Vendricce to meet her brother and support him as he tested his invention. Any combat that might have happened after that she chalks up to fear for her brother's safety.

And if asked why the gathering was hidden in the Bleak Gate, she explains that the Clergy in Crisillyir have long crafted personal domains in that realm, and they were simply making use of their hosts' generosity. Indeed, she points out that Danor is relatively inexperienced at using magic, and that if the party is looking for people who might have been working with Reed Macbannin and hiding in the Bleak Gate, it makes far more sense to look at Crisillyir.

Now, this lie is almost certainly not going to convince the party, but since the proof mostly comes down to the party's word versus hers, it's believable enough to keep the peace summit going. Plus there's a slim chance the PCs might think they've been tricked, and that between Morgan Cippiano and Leone Quital, the Steelshaper, perhaps the conspiracy actually *is* based out of Crisillyir.





THE BANQUET

Social. Montage.

Everyone is trying to be nice to each other, except one woman.

The banquet lasts two hours all told, and is generally a polite, diplomatic affair where no one does anything truly contentious or openly offensive. But interspersed are moments where the party has a chance to define their positions and influence the opinions various NPCs have of them and of Risur.

The key with this encounter is to make the PCs feel involved in the politicking going on, and to give them a chance to flex their diplomatic and investigative muscle. Certain parties will not enjoy this type of gaming, so you'll need to decide whether to give your players time to hold full conversations with NPCs, or to handwave the actual conversation, glossing over everything but the key moments.

Running the Banquet.

To help the party keep track of who's talking, you might want to make stands or use minis for the different characters. You can point to each NPC as they talk, and heavily combat-oriented parties might pay more attention if they see minis and think combat is possible.

Event 1: Seating and the Toast.

Being members of the head table, the PCs await their declared entrance to the banquet in an adjacent chamber alongside the other members of the table. The PCs are kept in the back of the line, away from King Aodhan and Han Jierre, with the Risuri Head of Agriculture, Kian Doherty, one spot in front of them.

The group is announced, and each of the PCs is named. The line moves into the banquet hall, and the PCs and the rest of the table take their seats. The tables are setup with empty plates, but the wine glasses have been filled in anticipation of the delegation's arrival.

King Aodhan is the first to rise, addressing the attendees in a loud voice, bidding them his deepest thanks and blessings for attending. He bids Han Jierre to rise and give the first toast of the evening. The Sovereign of Danor rises and takes the opportunity to give a toast to the cessation of hostilities between the two nations, proclaiming, "Our long conflict is finally at an end, and we can begin looking forward to a shining future."

After Han Jierre gives his toast, the king of Risur rises once again and gives his toast. The king thanks Sovereign Jierre before giving his toast in honor of his soon-to-be wife: "To the lovely and talented Lya Jierre. Without her, none of this would be possible."

Conversation murmurs around the various tables as King Aodhan sits. At this point etiquette permits one more person from each side to make a toast before the first course arrives.

Give the PCs a chance to go first, and either in the silence or in response to them, Danoran Minister of War Eloise Duffet proposes a toast:

"Let us remember the fallen sailors and orphaned children, and do them honor in these coming talks."

Then she gives the king a frigid glare. A Knowledge (history) check (DC 25) recalls a bit of Danoran propaganda from the Third Yerasol War claiming Aodhan, before he was king, fired upon the Danoran capital of Cherage and struck an orphanage.

Event 2: Salad Fork, Soup Spoon.

Following the toasts, chefs come to deliver the first round of food. If you wish, have each PC make a Diplomacy check (DC 8) to maintain the proper etiquette as they eat.

The first course consists of a specially made Risuri soup imported from distant Shale. The soup is made using local spices and select fish that can only be found near the Yerasol Archipelago.

As people finish their soup, a second course of specially made Danoran salad and Beran breads are brought to the table. A server notes that Danoran Minister of War Eloise Duffet has not touched her soup, to which Duffet responds that the soup's origin seems rather political. "After all," he says, "Shale was the seat of power of Duchess Ethelyn, was it not?"

Lya Jierre steps in and says that if a cow rancher murdered her father, she would not stop eating beef. The table chuckles, but Han Jierre seems intrigued by the topic. He brings up your exploits at Axis Island, thanks you for aiding his niece in handling the matter, and then asks for your opinions on what the Duchess did and what punishment she deserved.

Duchess Ethelyn's betrayal of her brother King Aodhan played out in Adventure One. Let the PCs extemporize here. If your players are not the extemporizing type, let them off the hook by having Lya or King Aodhan brush off the question as one that is too serious for this gathering.

Event 3: Intermission.

Conversation continues for a bit, but then the first intermission of the event is called. Guests are invited to view a gallery of fine art that has been set up in one of the skywalks. During the intermission the PCs have time to meet with other members of the crowd.

If the B-Team perished, the party receives three separate visits from Geoff Massarde, Kian Doherty, and Rosalyn Taylor, all of whom express condolences and recall their brief time with the other constables.

Once sufficient time has passed (GM's discretion), the attendees are called back to their tables for the next part of the meal.

Event 4: Let's Talk Peace.

The third course of the banquet consists of renowned meat samplings brought to Flint via magical transportation from the Risuri capital of Slate. Three plates are put on the table, each of them filled with a selection of finely spiced and thinly sliced meat meant as a preparatory appetizer for the guests.

When the attendees begin to eat, the topic of conversation changes to a discussion about the start of the peace talks. Sovereign Jierre and King Aodhan give every impression of resuming an ongoing conversation about specifics of the talks, and they supply one another hints on how to handle some of their more difficult advisors and councilors. The tone of the conversation between the two sovereigns is open and friendly, and PCs should get a sense that both rulers are generally looking forward to the talks and bear no ill will towards one another.

Eventually Brakken, Lya Jierre, and Principal Minister Lee begin a conversation about what might be the hardest hurdle to overcome in the peace talks. Harkover Lee believes that many in Risur are against the talks because of the fear of industrialization, while Lya Jierre believes her people cannot forgive past transgressions from the last Yerasol war. Brakken tries to include the PCs in the conversation, interested in hearing their opinions, since they're much more in touch with the Risuri people on the streets.

Event 5: Agitation.

The fourth course consists of a haunch of specially bred boar from distant Ber, a personal gift from Vairday Bruse, King of Ber. The meat is accompanied by a selection of varied fruits from Elfaivar, sliced into bite-sized chunks, and everything is glazed with a sweet honey-based sauce.

Conversation switches again, and Roland Stanfield begins to talk about the several changes that have come to Flint as a result of Risur's new industrial revolution. The governor feathers his own nest by mentioning prominent construction, including the finished subrail system, the various factories of the Parity Lake district, and the Hotel Aurum.

The Governor is quickly confronted by the Danoran Minister of War, Eloise Duffet. She brings up several problems that have confronted Flint recently, including the corruption and suicide of Mayor Reed MacBannin, arsonist attacks, and the events of the past few days—which she learned of only *after* arriving in the city today. Duffet wants to hear the governor's thoughts on these matters, but Stanfield just offers a stock political answer:

"Every society has to find its balance after a transition, but we are committed to ensuring the safety of our citizens and our guests. You have my promise that if you had been in any danger neither I nor the king would have kept that information from you."

Duffet then asks the PCs what they've done to maintain the security in the city. She points out that the Danoran capital of Cherage has been peaceful for a generation, and claims the only violence in her homeland is what Risur brings to its shores. She neglects to mention that Cherage has had a strict curfew since its last riots.

Event 6: No Dessert.

A second intermission is called. This one includes a performance by a string quartet, with one violinist using the famous Hurricane Violin, enchanted in the Navras Opera House. Lya Jierre tries to get Eloise to step aside for a private conversation when a Risuri guard comes running in, finds Minister Lee, and explains that Asrabey Varal is on his way up.

Less than a minute later, Asrabey strides into the gathering. No NPC will try to bar him as he makes his way to King Aodhan, where he intends to kneel as he speaks. If the party helped him with Ekossigan, he will show them respect and not try to force past them.

At no point does the dreadnought make eye contact with any of the Danoran delegation, seeing them as unworthy of his attention. He says,

"King Aodhan, I apologize for my disruption. The Unseen Court wishes to know more of the danger Ekossigan saw, and so I request permission to investigate further, passing into the Bleak Gate to explore Cauldron Hill. Your nation owes me nothing, and so I ask this as a favor. If you would deny my request, you need only say so."

Varal is telling a white lie to the king, as the Court has no knowledge of what's happening in Cauldron Hill. But he sees this as his best chance to find Kasvarina.

The party might (Perception or Sense Motive DC 26) glimpse a slight twitch of anxiety from Brakken. This is because the mediator is hearing the surface thoughts of Han Jierre. (Roland Stanfield is immune to mind-reading.) The Danoran sovereign is far better at keeping up a poker face than Brakken, and gives no indication of being perturbed by

the specifics of Asrabey's request, though he demonstrates an appropriate level of displeasure at his breach of protocol.

King Aodhan berates Asrabey for choosing this moment of all times, and demands the high elf leave at once. That said, he does not explicitly deny Asrabey's request; this sort of nuance is common in Risur-fey relations, but the Danorans don't pick it up. Asrabey accepts the king's statements and departs.

Most everyone else lets out the breaths they've been holding, and Aodhan jokes that dessert should be ready now. Han Jierre declines politely, saying he will take his leave so Risur can deal with its fey allies. He nods to Brakken to verify they're still scheduled to meet the next morning, and with that the Danoran delegation leaves with as much dignity as is possible.

Aodhan asks the party and Minister Lee to come with him to talk in private. Brakken follows, and promises the king he has information of import, but Minister Lee closes the door in his face, then casts a spell to sound-proof the room.

FINAL PREPARATION

Social. Real-Time.

The king tells the party to prepare for their mission to the Bleak Gate, and Brakken provides some key information.

King Aodhan is furious. He doesn't buy the Jierres' story that the evidence of their involvement is just a coincidence, but he wanted them to think he did. Now any element of surprise they might have had is blown because Asrabey likes making a dramatic entrance. Nevertheless, he recognizes that the party could use the high elf's help in a fight, so if they don't have any serious objections, he'll grant Asrabey's request.

Telepathic Revelation.

Brakken, with no other recourse to get the king to listen, psionically sends a message to the party.

"I'm a telepath, and I read the Jierres' minds. Please let me in."

When Asrabey Varal made his request, Brakken casually read the surface thoughts of all those in attendance. Han Jierre's reaction was the most shocking, and Brakken could tell he was quite worried about what Varal may unearth during his expedition to the hill. The Sovereign was also concerned that the knowledge might endanger his niece Lya. As for Lya's thoughts, Brakken sensed that she suddenly grew wary of her uncle, as if Asrabey's arrival had confirmed some suspicion she had about her uncle's activities.

Brakken has gotten a sense all night that everyone has been hiding things from each other, and that it all revolves around Lya's involvement in something far greater than he can read. But he knows that Cauldron

Hill is at the center of it, because the last thought he overheard before the Danorans left was Han thinking, "I'll have to send a messenger to Cauldron Hill."

If the party doesn't figure it out, King Aodhan explains for them. If Han's sending a messenger to warn the Obscurati, that means they didn't already know an attack was imminent. And if the party can stop the messenger, they can maintain the element of surprise.

Harkover quickly calls in a few of his aides and gives them directions to watch for any way Han Jierre might pass along a message. If the party is ready to act, a few minutes later Harkover gets word of a Danoran guard heading downstairs toward the lobby; it might be worth following him and detaining him once he's out of the hotel. The man is unfamiliar with Flint, relying on a map to navigate to Stanfield Canal. He should be fairly easy to catch.

Meanwhile....

Han and Lya Jierre hold a quick, private meeting after the banquet—Lya is incensed at how close Risur is to finding real proof of the conspiracy. The Danoran sovereign agrees that an intrusion into Cauldron Hill will be a setback, but he tells her not to worry; he knows things she doesn't, and there are contingency plans in place.

The best-case scenario for them is that the RHC investigators and Asrabey are killed in the Bleak Gate and can bring back no information. If that fails, though, they'll have to be ready to leave at a moment's notice.

Han calls in one of his guards and gives the man the complicated instructions of how to deliver a message. He scribes five sigils on a sheet of paper, as well as a brief warning that the RHC and Asrabey are coming. He tucks the note into the man's pocket, then tells him to go as discreetly as possible along the Canal Route.

The man departs, and Han relaxes. Lya asks whether he thinks everything is fine now, and Han smiles. He explains that he expects the messenger to be captured. Sending him out will just lull Risur into a false sense of security, when indeed a message has already been sent that no bold hero could ever run down and catch.

Han knows that Roland Stanfield is part of Colossus Cell, and will pass along the news magically. Lya is unaware of Stanfield's involvement in the conspiracy.

Lya asks, and not for the first time, what is going on in Cauldron Hill, or at least when she'll have proved herself enough that he can trust her with the information. Han says later, but certainly not before they leave Risur. He encourages his niece not to worry.

When, later, the colossus does rip free and cause a panic, Han resigns himself to giving up on peace with Risur. In the confusion he and Lya will withdraw to *Lux Profectusque*, which flees back to Danor at full speed. The ship will fight its way out if necessary, but if the party has a foolproof plan to halt the ship, the two can also make use of teleportation magic once they're out of the Hotel. They likely disappear when the party is too distracted to bother stopping them.



PART THREE:

EXPEDITION TO THE BLEAK GATE

The party attacks or sneaks into the Obscurati's complex.

PICK YOUR TEAM

Social. Montage.

If the party goes the Canal Route, they can bring along perhaps a handful of allies—if they're using amulets, there are only enough for the PCs, Asrabey, Alexander Grappa (in his fully reassembled golem body), and perhaps one or two other prominent NPCs like Kvarti or Gale, though the party need to be persuasive to convince them to step into the Bleak Gate. If they're relying on Obscurati wands to complete the transition, there are only a limited number of charges available, at the GM's discretion. We know tagalong NPCs can be annoying. Asrabey and Grappa, though, have important plot roles.

If the party travels with Ekossigan, they'll have the fey lord and his hundreds of lesser fey minions, plus Asrabey. They might be able to convince Ekossigan to wait long enough to get Alexander Grappa, but he won't let them bring along military or police.

If the party uses the king's Ritual of Transposition, the expedition can include up to thirty-one people, which should include Asrabey and Grappa. The party might even convince Kvarti Gorbatiy to tag along. Sixty Allied Soliders (see Appendix B) gather to travel with them, but not all of them make it through the portal before it closes.

Canal Route.

This route involves passing beneath five bridges that cross Stanfield Canal, which runs between Bosum Strand and Parity Lake. The route can be traveled by barge or steamboat (the bridges aren't tall enough for most sailing ships); there is also a foot path paralleling the canal. The route to enter the Bleak Gate goes west to east, and to exit is east to west.

Each bridge is keyed to a different magical sigil, and a person or object must be marked with or carrying something marked with that sigil. Each bridge you pass under with the right sigil pulls you further into the Bleak Gate, and over the course of a few miles the real world fades out. The effect of each bridge only lasts about ten minutes unless you pass beneath the next in the line. The party might take this path if they manage to get the five sigils from Quentin Augst, but then they'd have to know to seize the Obscurati wand from the watchmen in order to complete the transition. If they got a wand from Norm or amulets from Lorcan Kell repaired by Minister Lee, they can get in on their own.

At the east exit, a detachment of watchmen wait beneath the last bridge with wands that finalize the transition. Without the wand, a person remains in the Bleak Gate for only a few minutes then snaps back to reality. Normally the watchmen let through

couriers or pick up crates that fall into the canal (the ship they're on isn't in the same plane). They've never had to deal with a hostile incursion. See Toll Bridge (next page).

Grappa and Asrabey.

If the party has these two with them, Asrabey mentions Kasvarina's name, and Grappa explains what he did to her. Because of his *geas*, all he can explain is that he learned her history and thought that if she had another chance to experience her life she might make different choices.

Kasvarina was once a great person who did much good, but eventually the conspiracy corrupted her. So when Grappa fled, he locked away her memories. She'll regain them at a rate of a year's worth every few days, but she's over five centuries old, so it'll take a while. Certainly she'll eventually recall what the Ob have told her, but she won't have her own full memories for months or years. Being exposed to her original life can bring memories back faster, but they'll be spotty.

Asrabey is unsure what to make of this, but he promises he will find her and keep her safe. If she really is part of this conspiracy, perhaps he'll be able to help her recall something of use. If any PC is a Vekeshi Mystic, Asrabey asks for his help, and if other PCs offer he won't refuse them.

Mass Murder with Ekossigan.

Ekossigan, fully unhinged after sacrificing thirty-one children, marches with three dozen gremlins and numerous other fey—satyrs, nymphs, pixies, and the like. These are presented as generic Allied Fey (see Appendix B). The small army cavorts and dances from the bleak analogue of Cloudwood to the Nettles. The music starts boisterous but turns eerie as more and more fey start cackling maniacally. Ekossigan deploys scouts, and after a few hours they find the front entrance.

Ritual of Transposition.

After the banquet, the king and party take a carriage from Hotel Aurum to a wooded grove at the foot of Cauldron Hill. Sixty soldiers wait around an unlit bonfire. Stover Delft is also there to wish the party off, and has brought along Alexander Grappa. Asrabey arrives on his own.

Minister Lee draws a ritual circle with powdered rust and then hands out thimble-sized charm bags woven with pieces of a Risuri flag. The king stands aside, concentrating and gathering power. A flicker of weakness passes through the crowd, and everyone present somehow knows that the king is drawing upon his people to perform the ritual.

At midnight, with no moon in the sky and no city lights visible through the trees, the king explains that once they appear in the Bleak Gate, they will be stuck there at least until the sun rises, though its light will be barely noticeable on that plane. After sunrise, if they want to return they can tear open the charm bags, which will end the spell's effect on them. He warns them that when the spell ends, they'll appear in the equivalent spot in this world—the terrain is the same, but structures might be very different, so be careful. If they don't open the bags by sunset, which will be in about eighteen hours, they'll be trapped there.

Stover Delft is unusually polite to the PCs during this time, knowing that this mission could prove to be fatal. He tells them to come back alive so he can take credit for training them.

When everyone is ready, the king begins the ritual.

INTO THE GATE

Exploration. Montage. Level 8.

The party navigates the Bleak Gate to reach Cauldron Hill.

Sounds do not echo in the Bleak Gate, but neither is there ambient noise to muffle them. The water is still, the sky black, cloudless, starless. Wherever the party appears, they smell an everpresent stench of burnt engine oil and hear a dull hiss coming from the direction of Cauldron Hill: the faint exhalations of dozens of steam boilers.

The city exists just as in the real world, the same buildings, the same trees, but wholly unoccupied. A single flicker of light could be seen for miles, but there's no light to be seen.

There are five possible entrances the party can find to the Cauldron Hill complex: three "front doors," the entrance from Parity Lake, and the utility access from atop the hill.

Front Doors.

The front doors are three heavily-guarded mechanically-operated doors built into the side of Cauldron Hill. One faces Stanfield Canal, another is in the western Nettles, and one in the south Nettles. All three have similar defenses and open onto long passages that lead to the interior checkpoint.

Each of these also has a nearby U-shaped tunnel carved into the hillside, lined with rusted ring gates. These passageways, magically concealed, let Ob operatives step out of one of the front entrances, then immediately go through a short loop to transition four-fifths of the way into the real world. These gates have different sigils than the Stanfield Canal gates, and only have 4 gates, not enough to fully transition between the planes.

Parity Lake Entrance.

In the unlikely event the party explores the southern shore of Parity Lake, they can find another entrance with a channel to let small boats deliver materials directly into the complex. A large hydraulic elevator (Area 3 on the complex map) carries material up to the main level.

Utility Access.

On the surface of the mountain directly above the underground complex are five utility shafts, their exits surrounded by rocks or trees to making stumbling across them unlikely. However if a character gets within a hundred feet he can pinpoint the location by sound and eventually by the smoke and steam billowing out.

A grated cover is trapped with *explosive runes* (5d6 fire damage), but if it is removed the 20-ft. wide shaft provides access to the complex, a hundred feet down (Area 4 on the complex map). Each minute a character spends in the shaft he must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or else become take 1d6 points of damage from the heat.

TOLL BRIDGE

Action. Tactical. Level 8.

At the end of the canal route, Obscurati watchmen bar the way.

Depending on their resources, the party might simply need to avoid or kill these foes, or capture them and get them to explain where they keep the Obscurati wand that will complete the party's trip into this plane. The guards at this bridge have one wand between them.

Obscurati Watchmen

2 Obscurati guards
2 shadow trolls



Obscurati Guard

CR 3

XP 800

Male human fighter 4
LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init -1; **Senses** Perception +4

Defense

AC 21, touch 9, flat-footed 21 (+9 armor, +3 shield, -1 Dex)

hp 41 (4d10+12);

Fort +7, **Ref** +0, **Will** +2;

Defensive Abilities bravery +1

Offense

Speed 20 ft.

Melee mwk longsword+7 (1d8+3/19-20)

Ranged pistol +4 (1d8/x4)

Statistics

Str 16 **Dex** 8, **Con** 16, **Int** 12, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 19

Feats Cleave, Power Attack, Shield Focus, Shield Specialization (heavy shield), Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Focus (pistol)

Skills Acrobatics -6, Bluff +3, Climb -2, Diplomacy +2, Escape Artist -6, Fly -6, Intimidate +7, Perception +4, Ride -6, Sense Motive +5, Stealth -6, Swim -2

Languages Common, Primordial

SQ armor training 1

Other Gear mwk full plate, mwk longsword, mwk heavy steel shield, *potion of darkvision*

Shadow Troll

CR 5

XP 1,600

CE Large humanoid (giant)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +8

Defense

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +5 natural, -1 size)

hp 63 (6d8+36); regeneration 5 (acid or fire)

Fort +11, **Ref** +4, **Will** +3

Offense

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee 2 claws +8 (1d6+5 plus 2 Strength damage)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks rend (2 claws, 1d6+7)

Statistics

Str 21, **Dex** 14, **Con** 23, **Int** 6, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 22

Feats Iron Will, Skill Focus (Perception), Skill Focus (Stealth)

Skills Climb +14, Perception +8, Stealth +10

Languages Primordial

Special Abilities

Natural Climber (Ex) A shadow troll can cling to surfaces with its feet, freeing up its hands to attack, but it needs at least three free limbs to move while climbing.

Strength Damage (Su) A shadow troll's claws deal 2 points of Strength damage in addition to their normal physical damage. This is a negative energy effect. Its rend does not deal extra damage.

Terrain.

The final bridge in the canal has a 10-ft. wide walkway that passes beneath it, with a short drop into still water on one side, and a gentle grassy slope on the other. The bottom of the bridge is 20 feet up and has various trusses and decorations that let the shadow trolls hide from the party.

Tactics.

The two Obscurati guards are posted at the top of the bridge with a dim shielded lantern. They can easily see the party approaching if they have any light sources, and likely have enough time to move to the walkway and hide just out of sight up the hill. They drink their *potions of darkvision* so they can attack from the shadows.

When the party approaches, the shadow trolls wait and then attack the last person in line. One likely grabs and pulls the victim off the ground, while the other rends it.

When the trolls attack, the guards shoot anyone at close range, then charge into melee. With the trolls on their side they think there's no one they can't beat. If things turn sour, a guard might run, but he's slow. If he manages to get back to the top of the bridge he'll light a flare that alerts the guards at the front door that faces the canal.

Aftermath.

The watchmen know only about the parts of the Cauldron Hill complex in areas 1, 2, and 3. They seem almost relieved that they were attacked, since it means things are going to change. Morale has been terrible, and after a bit of reflection a surviving guard might decide he'd be happier back in the real world.

CAULDRON HILL ENTRANCE

Action. Tactical. Level 6+.

The party fights or sneaks their way into the Obscurati's fortress.

The Obscurati don't like solicitors. Getting into their complex will require clever planning. Luckily, the early paranoia that helped create the base's defenses has faded, so the more expensive and tedious protections, like magic *alarms* on every entrance, are no longer active.

Layout.

The interior of the Cauldron Hill Facility is primarily made up of steel walls, specially shaped by Leone Quital. As most Obscurati operatives working in the facility lack darkvision, gas lamps dot the walls at intervals of about every 10 ft. Unless indicated, every room is considered to be fully illuminated by lights, though PCs can attack them if desired (treat as a lantern).

A pervasive smell of oil can almost be tasted throughout the facility. Recent activation attempts with Borne have resulted in pools of leaked witchoil. The smell lingers even though they were cleaned up.

Front Doors.

Each of the three main entrances is a highly defensible structure, with steel doors (20 ft. wide, 12 ft. tall, 4 inches thick) built into the stone sides of the hill. Thin lines of gold crisscross the frame on the inside, barring any sort of teleportation effects.

Beyond the doors is a simple foyer with a room for the guards on the right and the hydraulic-powered mechanism on the left that operates the doors. Though not separately mapped, they all resemble Checkpoint One (Area 1 on the complex map).

RECRUITMENT

How does one end up working in the Bleak Gate for a mysterious conspiracy? Most of the people here are patriotic soldiers and engineers, recruited with the promise of a chance to serve their country. In the aftermath of the adventure, the party might track down the head recruiter, one **Colonel Greg Masterson**, at the Battalion military academy. As soon as he gets word of the catastrophe at Cauldron Hill, though, he goes out into the bayou and blows his brains out. He reported to Roland Stanfield, and does not want anyone to discover Stanfield's involvement, not even by interrogating his corpse.

Beyond the foyer, a 10-ft. wide tunnel continues a half mile or more to Checkpoint One. Two sets of light rail tracks run the length, and small hand-cranked vehicles make it easier to ferry men and supplies, allowing travel at up to 15 miles per hour. There are currently two such vehicles stationed near the entrance.

The front doors remain closed most of the time, but a slot can be opened to communicate with visitors. When shut, the doors lock into the floor and ceiling with steel bars, making forcing them open nearly impossible (Strength DC 34). Gremlins with the party can make the bars jostle loose, so the doors simply have to be pushed apart (Strength DC 24).

In addition to the group of watchmen at the end of the canal, two other groups roam the area around the mountain, maintaining wards that keep evil spirits at bay. Therefore, every two hours the front doors open to allow people to cycle in and out. Each door has a daily passcode—today's are "outdoor," "gathering," and "yawning," and the guards are actually quite cautious because they've had to deal with a handful of incursions by possessed guards and evil shadow doppelgangers.

Defenders.

If the party comes by a route other than the Ritual of Transposition, there are only two Ob guards and two dark creepers here, but the door is closed. They count as a Level 6 encounter.

If the party waits for the gate to open to let a group in or out, add those two extra guards to the hostile forces. This is a Level 7 encounter.

If the party waits until the 14th, the defenders are on alert. In addition to the normal guards inside the gate, an ambush contingent waits hidden on the hill, looking for light sources that approach any of the entrances. They then rush to the exterior of that entrance and hide a hundred feet away in the darkness. The ambush squad has several Bleak Gate monsters working for them, and they will try to attack from opposite sides to pin the party against the cliff face.

By themselves, the ambush squad is a Level 10 encounter, and combined with the normal guards are a Level 11 encounter. However, the party should have a lot of soldiers at their side, giving them the advantage, and making it feel like they really have to fight to get into the Ob complex.

Normal Front Door Guards

- 2 Obscurati guards (page 59)
- 2 Obscurati dark creepers

Ambush Squad

- 8 Obscurati slayers
- 2 serpent-maned lions
- 2 cackling crawlers





NUMBER OF DEFENDERS.

Unless you need to make the challenge tougher, assume the complex as a whole has the following occupants. There used to be more, but the party has killed a fair number who were sent on missions over the past year.

- + **100 engineers.** 100 in the barracks.
- + **60 Obscurati guards.** 2 at the canal bridge, 4 on patrol, 2 each at the three front entrances, 2 at the Parity Lake entrance, 6 at Checkpoint One, and 40 in the barracks who are off duty but tend to the kitchen and various menial tasks. The off-duty ones aren't in armor but do carry weapons.
- + **18 Obscurati dark creepers.** 2 each at the three front entrances, 12 who sleep outside on the mountain, staking territory so local monsters don't invade.
- + **12 Obscurati slayers.** These work in the VIP suites (areas 10 to 26).
- + **6 elite researchers.** They reside in the VIP suites.
- + **3 golems.** 2 Borne prototype and 1 greater Borne prototype, usually at the Golem Guardpost (area 5).
- + **3 unique characters.** Leone Quital and the fairly helpless Kasvarina, plus possibly Norm, the Obscurati liaison to the Kell guild.

Obscurati Dark Creeper

CR 2

XP 600

CN small humanoid (dark folk)

Init +3; **Senses** see in darkness, perception +4

Defense

AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 13 (+2 armor, +3 Dex, +1 size)**hp** 19 (3d8+6);**Fort** +3 **Ref** +6, **Will** +1;**Weaknesses** light blindness

Offense

Speed 30 ft.**Melee** dagger+6 (1d3/19–20 plus poison)**Special Attacks** snuff light, sneak attack +1d6**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 3rd)**At Will**—darkness, detect magic

Statistics

Str 11, **Dex** 17, **Con** 14, **Int** 9, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 8**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 14**Feats** Skill Focus (Sleight of Hand), Weapon Finesse**Skills** Climb +8, Perception +4, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +12**SQ** poison use, rag armor**Languages** Common**Combat Gear** creeper poison (3 doses); **Other Gear** dagger

Special Abilities

Snuff Light (Su) As a standard action, a dark creeper can snuff any one nonmagical light within 50 ft. Magical lights affected by this ability are extinguished for 2d6 rounds.

Poison Use (Ex) Dark creepers are skilled in the use of poison and never risk accidentally poisoning themselves. Dark creepers favor a foul-smelling black paste distilled from certain deep-underground fungi known as black smear—injury; save Fort DC 15; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d2 Str; cure 1 save.

Rag Armor (Ex) A dark creeper's multiple layers of filthy rags function as leather armor when worn by one of their kind.

See in Darkness (Su) A dark creeper can see perfectly in darkness of any kind, including that created by deeper darkness.

Obscurati Slayer

CR 3

XP 800

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +4; **Senses** detect magic, see in darkness; Perception +4

Defense

AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 13 (+4 Dex)**hp** 22 (4d8+4);**Fort** +2, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1;**Weakness** light blindness

Offense

Speed 30 ft.**Melee** kukri +8 (1d4 plus poison)**Ranged** rifle +7 (1d8/x4)**Special Attacks** sneak attack (+2d6), soul harvest**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 4th; concentration +6)

3/day—bleed (DC 12), chill touch (DC 13), darkness, daze monster (DC 14), death knell (DC 14), inflict moderate wounds (DC 14), spectral hand

Statistics

Str 10, **Dex** 18, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 15**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 15**Feats** Skill Focus (Use Magic Device), Weapon Finesse**Skills** Climb +3, Perception +4, Spellcraft +7, Stealth +8, Use Magic Device +12**Language** Common, Primordial**SQ** poison use

Special Abilities

Poison Use (Ex): Dark slayers are skilled in the use of poison and never risk accidentally poisoning themselves. **Black Smear**—injury; save Fort DC 15; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d2 Str; cure 1 save. The poison DC is Constitution-based.

See in Darkness (Ex): A dark slayer can see perfectly in darkness of any kind, including that created by deeper darkness.

Soul Harvest (Su): When a dark slayer damages a flat-footed foe or a foe it is flanking with a melee touch spell or spell-like ability that deals hit point damage, the spell does an additional 1d6 points of damage and the dark slayer gains an equal amount of temporary hit points. These temporary hit points last for a maximum of 1 hour.

Serpent-Maned Lion

CR 3

XP 800

N large undead (incorporeal, shade)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent, Perception +9

Defense

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+3 Dex, +3 natural, –1 size)**hp** 32 (5d10+10);**Fort** +6 **Ref** +7, **Will** +2**Defensive Abilities** incorporeal; **Immune** undead traits

Offense

Speed 40 ft.**Melee** bite+6 (1d8+4 plus poison), 2 claws +6 (1d4+4)**Space** 10ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.**Special Attacks** pounce, rake (2 claws +6, 1d4+4)

Statistics

Str 19, **Dex** 17, **Con** 15, **Int** 2, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 6**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** 9; **CMD** 22 (26 vs. trip)**Feats** Improved Initiative, Run, Skill Focus (Perception)**Skills** Acrobatics +11, Perception +9, Stealth +8 (+12 in undergrowth)**Languages** Abyssal

Special Abilities

Poison (Ex): Bite—injury; save Fort DC 13; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d2 Con; cure 1 save.

Cackling Crawler

CR 3

XP 800

N Medium undead (incorporeal, shade)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60ft., low-light vision, Perception +0**Defense****AC** 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12 (+3 Dex, +2 natural)**hp** 19 (3d10+3);**Fort** +1 **Ref** +4, **Will** +1**Defensive Abilities** incorporeal; **Immune** undead traits**DR** 5/bludgeoning or slashing**Offense****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** bite+6 (1d8+4 plus maddening gaze)

Special Attacks dance of death

Statistics**Str** 16, **Dex** 17, **Con** 12, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** 6; **CMD** 19 (cannot be tripped)**Skills** Stealth +15;**Languages** Abyssal**Special Abilities**

Dance of Death (Su): The skeletal crawler can entrance opponents by swaying back and forth as a full-round action. All hostile creatures within 30 feet who can see the crawler when it uses its dance of death must succeed on a DC 15 Will save or be dazed for 2d4 rounds. This is a mind-affecting effect.

Legless Laughter (Su): The crawler is always considered prone and cannot stand. The crawler does not take the typical penalty for attacking while prone, but ranged attacks against it still take a –2 penalty.

Maddening Gaze (Su): Any living creature the crawler bites must succeed on a DC 13 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4 rounds as it stares into the target's soul.

Tactics.

If the normal guards are attacked, they send one of the dark creepers to hop onto the push cart. The little critter cranks his way toward Checkpoint One, which takes a minute. This raises the alert within the compound, but no reinforcements come. If the ambush party can attack from ambush, the cackling crawlers and serpent-maned lions attack first, causing a panic. The slayers then move in pairs to strike whoever is most vulnerable at the edge of the group.

Parity Lake Entrance

This entrance is accessible by a 30-ft. wide lightless tunnel with 10-ft. deep water. A much larger version of the front entrance doors, powered by a similarly large machine, allows this entrance to be locked. The entrance only opens for scheduled deliveries of materiel. It only takes a skeleton crew to make sure the doors stay closed, so should the party trick their way through here, there are only two Obscurati guards.

THE SHADOWS OF CAULDRON HILL.

From a mechanical standpoint, as shadow-beings, the monsters working for the Obscurati share many abilities commonly attributed to the undead. They are treated as undead for purposes of channeling and immunities, but share no other similarities to undead creatures (including Hit Die and lack of Constitution). Creatures of this type are indicated with the Shade subtype.

Utility Access.

A party that enters from above must basically guess which of the five service shafts to go down. They're two hundred feet or more apart, so splitting up is a very bad idea. After a bit of shoving or unscrewing, the party can exit the service areas, though they need to make Stealth checks at a –5 penalty to avoid attracting the attention of those nearby.

Lower Facility.

This section of the facility only has strong security, not ridiculous security.

1. Checkpoint One

Level 8.

Much like the front entrance guard houses, this defensive station has a pair of mechanically-operated steel doors at the front of a hallway, and another pair at the end. Two secret doors (Perception DC 25, Disable Device DC 30) lead to the side chambers, where a small guard force can observe the area outside with a complex series of mirrors and lenses that run through the ceiling.

The main tunnel is a killing field, equipped with oil sprayers and fire-starters. At the command of the guards in either side chamber, the oil room can be sprayed with oil, which takes three rounds. On the fourth round, several sparks ignite the whole room, burning people inside alive. The fire deals 3d6 damage per round, and if somehow they survive that, it consumes all breathable oxygen after a minute.

Checkpoint One Defenders

6 Obscurati guards (three on each side, page 59)

2. Barracks

The rooms around the outer edges are occupied by about 100 engineers who won't get into battle. They try to pass the time with games, reading, and writing theoretical papers, since their work on the colossus is complete. These rooms also house 20 Obscurati guards who are out of their armor (speed 30, AC 9), who won't have their weapons handy if caught by surprise.

The interior area consists of well-stocked supply rooms, offices for handling logistics, a large kitchen, and a commissary. Twenty more unarmored Obscurati guards work here.

Two sets of service passages (Area 9) can be accessed via riveted (Strength DC 26) and *alarmed* (caster level 15th) hatches. The alarms notify Leone if anyone opens the hatch. One leads to Area 3, another to the Upper Facility. These passages have pipes for natural gas, fresh water, waste water, hydraulic pump pressure, and air circulation. Each passage is just less than 5 ft. wide and unlit. Their exits are also *alarmed*.

3. Checkpoint Two

This huge hall was once a staging area for colossus construction, storing all the massive components needed. Now the space is empty, with vaulted ceilings and a floor that has huge gouges from several years of industrial work.

On the east end, a massive hydraulic elevator descends three hundred feet to the Parity Lake entrance. A pair of service passages, riveted and *alarmed* like those in Area 2, lead off near the elevator.

A small checkpoint lies on the west end, this one is simply intended to keep curious engineers from roaming. The secret doors that lead to the side chambers are accessed from inside Area 3. There is no deadly oil-fire trap here.

The double doors to the north are huge, each 15 ft. wide and 30 ft. tall. Controls are located in the two alcoves just south of the doors, but the doors stand open when the party arrives.

4. Utility Access

These areas contain steam engines that power fans to circulate air, and operate pumps for the hydraulic doors, as well as sewage and fresh water pumps. Large vertical shafts lead to the surface.

5. Golem Guardpost

This area functions like an airlock. The doors that lead to Checkpoint Two can't open if the doors that lead to the Colossus Chamber are open, and vice versa. The south doors can be controlled from the alcove outside the south side, and the north doors can be controlled from the alcove at the north end of this area.

However, once you're inside, you can be trapped, because controls next to the doors in the Colossus Chamber can operate and lock both ends of this area. As a final defense before the conspiracy's masterpiece, this chamber is enchanted to let the master of the facility—in this case Leone Qital—see what happens and communicate with anyone inside.

WELCOME TO MY PARLOR

Action. Tactical. Level 12.

Qital toys with the PCs by using prototype golems to try and kill them.

When the party arrives, unless the party has been completely stealthy and no one has had a chance to run and raise an alarm, Leone waits until he gets as much of the party as he thinks possible inside this area. Then he manipulates the controls to close and lock the south doors. He addresses the party, who should recognize his voice if they encountered him in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*.

The doors slam shut, and the gas lights along the walls flicker off. A disembodied voice echoes in the dark, speaking with an aristocratic Crisillyir accent.

"I don't know whether to be impressed with you getting past my security, or disappointed in the men who were supposed to stop you. But men, after all, are weak. That's why we build machines, why we have *progress*! All we're good for is thinking. That, and enjoying the pleasures in life."

You hear a soft sip, as if from a wine glass, then a contented sigh.

"Best to leave the violence and physical labor to the steam and steel. Now I leave it to you to decide whether to go the easy way or the hard way. Throw down your weapons and have a drink with me, and I'll explain what it is we're doing here. Would you believe the engineers we had working on it thought this was a Risuri military project? They were fools, and I'd like to hold out hope that you're not fools.

"So yes, throw down your weapons and we can think, and talk, and enjoy life. Or be foolish, and see which breaks first: your flesh, or my steel."

If the party refuses to throw down their weapons, the doors to the north open, revealing two man-sized and one 12-ft. tall golem that march in and attack. The northern doorway has two sets of doors, and the second set that actually would lead to the colossus construction chamber remain closed and locked.

If the party does throw down their weapons, the exact same thing happens. Leone is a liar.

Golem Greeting

Leone Qital (absent)
2 Borne prototypes
1 greater Borne prototype



Leone Qital, Master of Magnetism

CR N/A

XP N/A

Defenses

Should the party manage to attack Leone, he has 84 hp, AC 21, +10 to saves, and a constant shield of floating metal that absorbs incoming damage. The shield has 50 hp and AC 25, it "heals" 10 hp per round, and it prevents attacks from affecting Leone until it is destroyed. He is protected by *freedom of movement* and 7 levels of *spell turning*.

Special Abilities

I'm an Effect (Sp): Leone Qital is not actually a combatant in this battle; instead, he uses his steelshaping abilities to modify the Borne prototypes, but not the greater prototype. He uses this magic through a scrying sensor, which can be dispelled (caster level 10th). Once dispelled, he cannot reactivate the sensor for a day.

Every round, Qital acts at the beginning of the initiative order with one of the following abilities:

- **Faster, Faster, Faster:** One Borne Prototype counts as being under the effects of a *haste* spell for this round.
- **A Gentle Push:** Qital can move one of the Borne Prototypes in the room up to 15 ft. This does not count as a move action for the Prototype, allowing it to full attack in its round.
- **Drop Your Weapon:** Qital makes one disarm attempt against a PC holding a metallic item. Treat Qital as having a CMB of +15 for this attack.
- **Pinned:** Qital makes one free grapple attempt against a PC wearing metal armor, holding them in a grapple for one round. Treat Qital as having a CMB of +15 for this attack.

Borne Prototype

CR 6

XP 2,400

N Medium construct

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +0

Defense

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16 (+2 Dex, +2 dodge +6 natural)

hp 64 (8d10+20)

Fort +2, **Ref** +6, **Will** +0

DR 5/adamantine **Immune** construct traits, magic

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 slams +14 (1d6+9)

Statistics

Str 28, **Dex** 15, **Con** —, **Int** 13, **Wis** 6, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 31

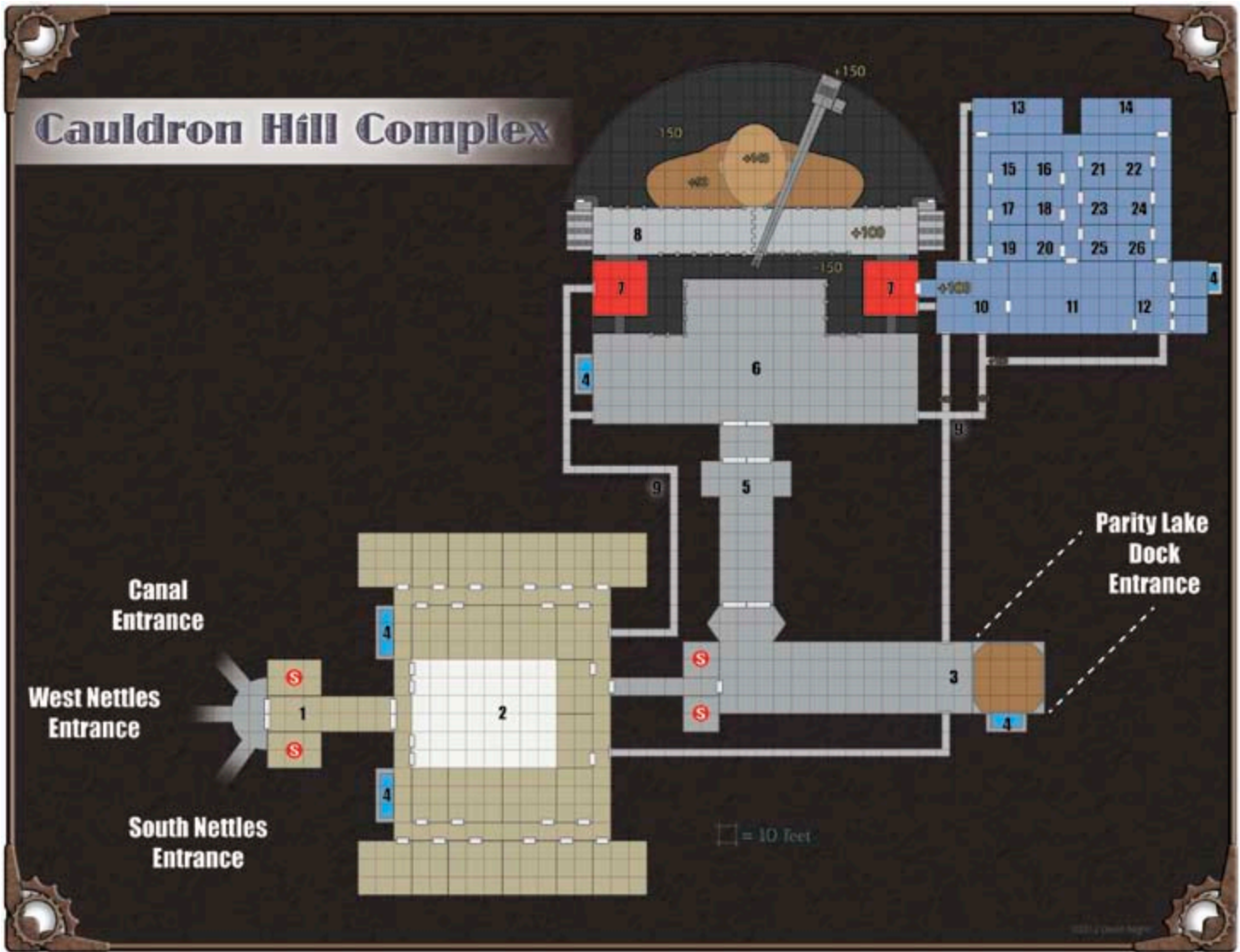
Feats Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes

Special Abilities

Immunity to Magic (Ex) A Borne Prototype is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted below.

- A *telekinesis* used against the Prototype can counter Qital's control, using *telekinesis* in such a way makes the Prototype count as stunned for as long as the spell is maintained.
- A magical attack that deals electricity damage slows a Borne Prototype (as the *slow* spell) for 2d6 rounds, with no saving throw.



**Greater Borne Prototype**

CR 10

XP 9,600

N Large construct

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0**Defense****AC** 24, touch 12, flat-footed 21 (+1 Dex, +2 dodge, +12 natural, -1 size)**hp** 118 (16d10+30)**Fort** +5, **Ref** +8, **Will** +3**DR** 10/adamantine **Immune** construct traits, magic**Offense****Speed** 20 ft.**Melee** 2 slams +24 (1d8+11)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.**Statistics****Str** 32, **Dex** 13, **Con** —, **Int** 13, **Wis** 6, **Cha** 6**Base Atk** +16; **CMB** +27; **CMD** +0**Feats** Awesome Blow, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack**Special Abilities****Immunity to Magic (Ex)** As with a Borne Prototype, above.**Awesome Blow (Ex)** As a standard action, the golem can make a combat maneuver.

On a success, it deals slam damage, pushes the target 10 feet, and knocks it prone. If the target hits an obstacle, it takes an extra 1d6 damage.

Tactics.

Quital gives the golems verbal orders, directing them to attack weaker PCs, and having them double team when possible. The greater prototype is a deadly threat from its sheer size, but it's not really built for brawling, and so it only has as much reach as a medium creature. It might shock the party when the golems start talking, bickering like brothers when one of them messes up or gets in another's way.

If a PC visibly does damage to the prototypes, Quital uses his action for that round to try and grapple that PC, or disarm them if they have a particularly potent weapon. If one of the PCs becomes an unexpected threat, Leone pushes a golem into contact with that PC to deliver a full attack. Should things be going well for the golems, he'll use his *haste* effect to make one of the golems more efficient in close combat.

The party's allies make a big difference here. Asrabey will try to keep the greater prototype at bay while the rest of the party handles the smaller ones. During the fight he shouts at Leone to bring him Kasvarina if he wants his death to be brief.

Alexander Grappa recognizes the golems—he raised them, after all—and uses his “click-to-voice” gadget to call out to them: Linus, Hunting, and Colin (the big one). Though he's useless offensively, Grappa's presence deters the golems. The golems won't attack him, and take a -2 penalty to attack any PC adjacent to him. After five rounds of slowly explaining who he is, he manages to convince Hunting, who stops fighting.

The others are more loyal to Leone, and will keep attacking the party. Hunting won't get involved.

Without Grappa, the party might still reason with the golems, since they're starved for intellectual conversation. A petition to talk (Diplomacy DC 20) will get them to ask what the party has that's worth discussing in the middle of combat. If a character brings up interesting topics—by making a Knowledge check (any, DC 20) on his turn as a free action—the golems take a –2 penalty to their attacks for the round as they're too distracted for their own good.

Aftermath.

If the golems take the party out, Quital drags any survivors into Area 6 and has a medic stabilize them so they can be interrogated. See Villainous Victory (page 66).

If the party either destroys or talks down the golems, Leone scoffs and ends his observation of them so he can prepare a final line of defense. The party remains locked in the room, but some thorough dismantling (Disable Device DC 36) can make the doors open. If they got the golem Hunting to stand down, Grappa asks him to smash the doors open, but he cannot manage it.

Gnomish Escape Plan.

If the party is stuck for more than a minute, they hear muffled nervous laughter coming from the walls—the voice of **Tinker Oddcog**, the gnomish artificer who designed the colossus. Tinker mutters about how small and dark and safe the tunnel he is in is, and then begins jabbering about how he needs them to get him out. He's quite erratic, obsessed with things being tiny, and has trouble carrying on a conversation.

He never moves out from behind the wall, but after a moment he seems to address the doors, saying, "I know you're large, and I don't trust you. You were always watching me. But you do as I say! Open up! Let these people through."

And then the doors open, revealing Area 6.

Tinker won't show up again until Adventure Six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*.

UPPER FACILITY

Action. Tactical. Level 12.

The party likely won't have time for a thorough exploration.

From where the party enters, a giant shaft rises nearly 200 ft. above and a pit drops 150 ft. below to bare rock that is drenched five feet deep with witchoil. In the center stands the colossus Borne, three hundred feet of riveted steel and adamantine, etched with thousands of arcane runes of power and protection. He appears generally human-shaped, save for a small nook in the center of his chest, about five feet across. This is where the Ob intended to install a version of the *wayfarer's lantern*, to help stabilize it as it worked on the Axis Seal.

Two freight elevators (Area 7) run between levels. Though there are numerous defunct operating platforms at different elevations, the only two currently in operation are the entrance level and the VIP level 100 ft. higher up. A large drawbridge crosses the chamber at the colossus's shoulder level (Area 8), and a door off the right freight elevator leads to the VIP suites (Areas 10 to 26). Two utility shafts (Area 4) lead to the surface, and narrow service tunnels (Area 9) provide a possible way for characters to sneak into this area.

A truss of light catwalks surround his head, but they easily tumble if the bridge moves or if any part of the catwalks are damaged. A crane overhead sits unused, accessible only by narrow gear-toothed walkways around the edge of the chamber.

Element of Surprise.

If the party enters this area without having first set off an alarm, people shout as they spot the intruders. Despite all the technology here, the Obscurati don't have radios or electricity to trigger buzzers, so unless they can get someone outside this area, they won't be able to call for help from the lower facility.

6. Staging Platform.

Crates, barrels full of witchoil, and a few stacks of adamantine scales the size of a whole man have been pushed to the edges of this area. Catwalks lead to the freight elevators, which can be called by a lever at the end of the catwalk. When the party enters, the left elevator is down, and the right one is up at the VIP suites level. Ladders on the walls do let people climb the 100 ft. if the elevator is out of order.

7. Freight Elevators.

When called, or when operated from the elevator itself, these huge platforms ascend or descend 25 ft. per round.

8. Construction Bridge.

The bridge is suspended 100 ft. above the staging platform, but has side-support rails meant to prevent any falls. A visible "cut" in the middle of bridge indicates that the support bridge can be retracted. This feature is operated by a pair of control cabins, one at each end of the bridge.

A character inside the control cab can spend a standard action and make a Knowledge (engineering) check (DC 14) to raise or lower their half of the bridge, causing the platform to tilt about 30 degrees per round. He can also ascend or descend, causing that entire half of the bridge to go up or down 10 feet per round.

9. Service Tunnels.

These 5-ft. wide tunnels contain the utility pipes. Each exit is riveted (Strength DC 26) and *alarmed* (caster level 15th). As they approach Area 10, the shaft becomes vertical but has a narrow ladder.

10. Dignitary Checkpoint.

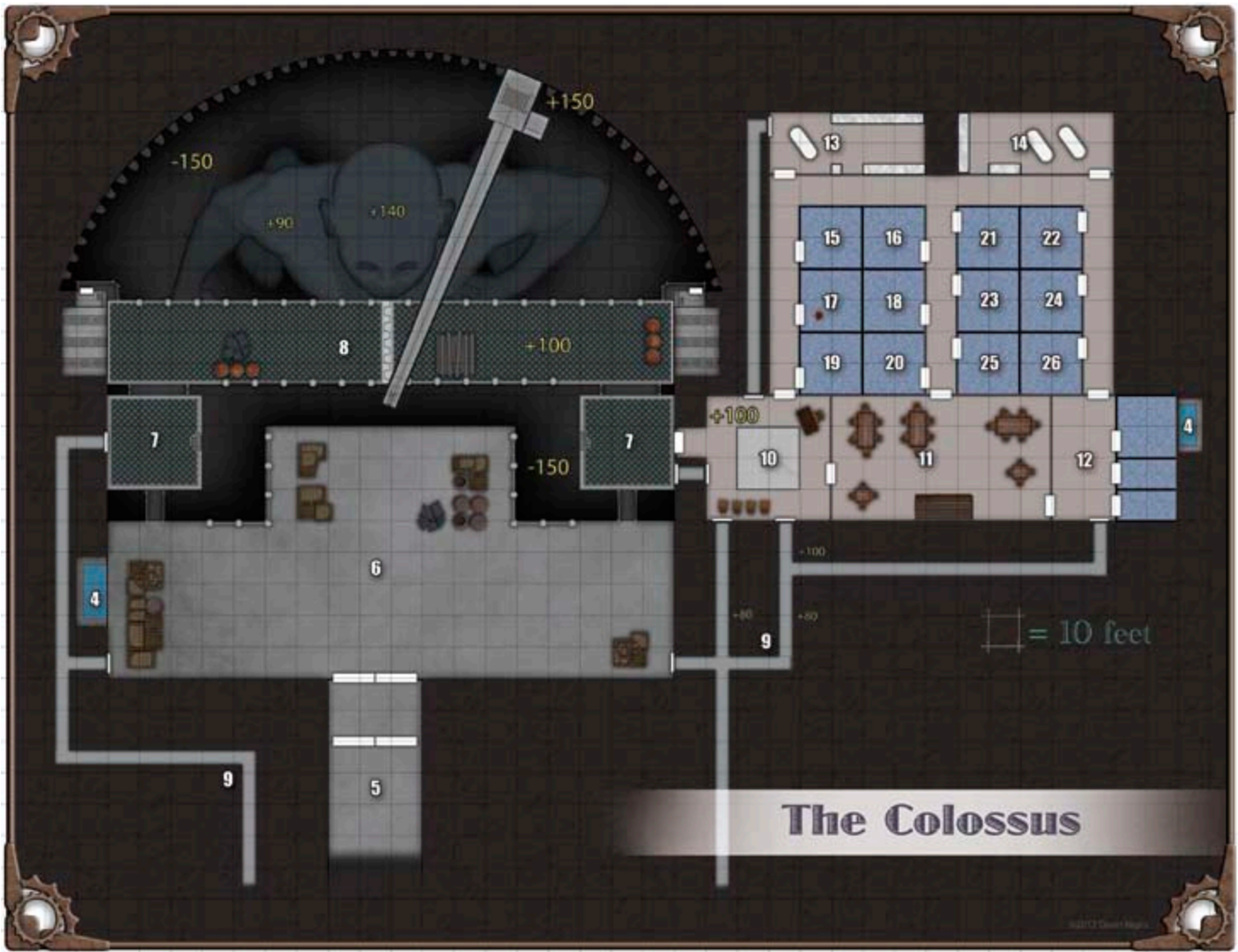
The guards here are Obscurati slayers, loyal members of the conspiracy and much better treated than the normal guards in the lower facility. Of the dozen slayers in the facility, four usually are on duty here, impeccably dressed. The other eight either rest or attend to maintenance of the VIP suites, acting as (again, very well-paid) butlers and cooks. If Leone knew the party was coming, eight of the slayers were sent out as the ambush party.

11. Dining Hall.

The VIPs dine here, as do the occasional Obscurati visitor like Kasvarina or Nicodemus. Leone was hoping to hold a celebration here, but Grappa's sabotage of the colossus ruined that plan.

12. Kitchen.

Behind a chilled meat locker is a utility shaft.



13. Hybridization Laboratory.

This lab is where some of the researchers worked to infuse first animals and then humans with shadow magic, and to apply mechanical enhancements to flesh. Most of these researchers worked on the witchoil golem and flayed jaguars the party faced in Adventure Two. They are non-combatants, and cower behind shelves of dead experiments. The place is full of horrible devices and deadly fluids, in case combat ends up here.

14. Golem Laboratory.

Similar to above, here is where the prototype golems were constructed. Those that didn't guard Area 5 have been shipped off to other Obscurati projects or scrapped after their consciousnesses were transferred unsuccessfully into the colossus.

15–26. Lodgings.

Rooms 15, 17, 19, 22, 24, and 26 house the Obscurati slayers. Room 21, 23, and 25 were other researchers working in the two labs.

Room 16 is Leone's. 18 was Tinker Oddcog's, though he'll have fled before the party gets here. 20 was Grappa's, but currently Kasvarina stays here. See Grappa and Asrabey (page 58) for details of Kasvarina's state. Right now she only remembers her life up to about age thirty, and has no real magical powers or useful knowledge. The walls of her room are covered in ornate tapestries, hiding the daunting shell of steel.

VILLAINOUS VICTORY

Action. Tactical. Level 10+.

With the party at his mercy, Leone torments the party. The colossus's activation prevents him from killing them.

If the party was defeated previously, they are disarmed, bound in mage-cuffs (which deal damage to anyone casting a spell while wearing them equal to the spell's level, forcing a concentration check), and then dragged to the colossus construction chamber.

Leone's men bring the party onto the bridge in front of the colossus and set them on their knees. Lorcan Kell and his bodyguards appear, and if necessary Kate Glenn rouses the PCs with light healing magic.

If you think this scenario is likely, try to have an ace up your sleeve to get the party out of near-certain doom. For example, if you know your PCs will have a verbal duel with Leone, he grows angry, and the metal around him flexes. If the party enrages him, a clamp securing the colossus breaks loose, and the titan moves. Or perhaps Alexander Grappa can address the colossus and awaken it. If the party spared an Ob technician or operative earlier in the campaign, maybe the man has second thoughts; perhaps a disgruntled engineer who just wants out swings the crane and knocks the colossus loose.

But before that point, Leone gloats. You can use this opportunity to let him explain any lingering mysteries about how the cell operated (as

long as you don't reveal Roland Stanfield's involvement, nor anything about the Axis Seal) and disabuse the party of any crackpot theories they might have tricked themselves into believing.

Depending on how dark you want things to get, Leone might use his power to torture or kill one of the PCs—slowly crushing him in his own armor, dangling him telekinetically over a two hundred foot drop into a pool of witchoil, or killing one PC with the weapon of another. Then, either right before or right after the point of no return, some lucky break gives the party a chance.

The colossus activates, the cavern shudders, Leone flees so he can try to regain control of it, and the party has to survive Lorcan Kell if they want to get out alive.

BORNE TO BE WILD

Action. Tactical. Level 10+.

Lorcan Kell attacks the party, and won't give up even as Borne activates and tears the mountain apart around them.

The party's arrival brings forth the last defenders of the complex. Exactly who shows up depends on how the party got here.

Of course, feel free to add foes—likely Obscurati guards or perhaps a couple Obscurati dark creepers—if you think the party needs the challenge. If they have a ton of soldiers or fey still with them, you might have an equivalent force of guards arrive, letting you reduce the two groups' battle to background detail while you focus on the party versus Kell and his bodyguards.

Kell's Group

Lorcan Kell
Kate Glenn
Nick Reder

Obscurati Defenders

4 Obscurati slayers
Leone Quita, the steelshaper

Conditional Defenders

8 additional Obscurati slayers
Norm, Obscurati liaison



Setup.

When combat begins, Asrabey abandons the party and moves at full speed for the VIP suites, shouting for Kasvarina. Leone sees that Asrabey has no metal equipment (wooden shield, sword made of fire), so he devotes himself to trying to manually control the colossus. He uses magnetic power to pull himself to the colossus's shoulder. Meanwhile, Grappa makes his way to the construction bridge.

If the party already killed Lorcan Kell (and if you don't think you can bring him back as a mechanically-augmented cyborg ghost or something), you might need to come up with another headliner foe, or perhaps change the focus to rescuing Kasvarina.

The key to this encounter is to make sure the party engages someone they perceive as the main threat, and halfway through the battle have something trigger the colossus's release. The main threat is likely Kell, and the colossus probably gets released when the party gets curious and does something to it, causing the wards the Ob put in place to stutter long enough for it to break free.

However, if the party isn't grooving on Kell, and if they don't disturb the colossus, you have some options.



LEONE QUITA

An aristocrat from Crisillyir, Leone was recruited into the Ob for his unusual, innate ability to manipulate and shape metal without having to actually learn or cast spells. Contacts groomed him and encouraged him to acquire skills that the conspiracy would need, but he only gained the leadership's trust after he helped rescue Kasvarina Varal eight years ago during a Risuri raid on Cherage. A cannon bombardment collapsed a factory she was touring, and Leone nearly killed himself with exertion to tear apart the crumpled steel and pull her to safety.

A few years later he was placed in charge of the secretive construction of the colossus, reporting directly to Roland Stanfield (page 50). Though he doesn't believe the cover story that the colossus is meant as a weapon to help Risur fight the fey titans, he works loyally, hoping to earn the right to know the group's real goal.

Though he prefers to appear refined, romantic, and honorable, Leone is flamboyant and short-tempered. He sometimes imagines himself a conductor, waving his hands to imagined music as he telekinetically manipulates metal. He has a fondness for fine bromago cheese, and often enjoys the wine from his family's vineyard.



KASVARINA
VARAL

A centuries-old high elf who allied with William Miller during the Second Victory and later helped Nicodemus the Gnostic found the Obscurati. Her key responsibility has been to undermine the Clergy's military and monetary might, primarily by forming vengeance cults among her fellow surviving high elves.

In the past few years she helped oversee the various cells of the conspiracy as they neared the opening of the Axis Seal, but nine months ago she was tricked by Alexander Grappa and her memories erased. Now she only barely recollects the first decade of her life, and has trouble understanding where she is. Her memories are slowly returning, and though Leone assures her she was an ally of his, she doesn't trust him and wants to escape.

Grappa.

The Mindmaker likely makes a move for the colossus as soon as he can. He climbs to the bridge, then scrambles across scaffolding to reach Borne's face. He tries to communicate with it.

If you don't think your players would mind NPCs doing something plot-critical in their presence, have Grappa place his hand to the colossus's face. Leone swoops in, recognizes the bronze golem, and realizes that it must be Grappa. He rips one of Grappa's arms off, but Grappa leaps at Leone and manages to grab his face. Leone proceeds to tear the bronze golem completely apart. This enrages the colossus, and it growls "Father!" as it rips free.

Quita.

The Steelshaper is beyond the party in a stand-up fight now, but if it leads to a good resolution, they could strike Leone while he's distracted, causing him to lose his perch and tumble. He would instinctively reach out with his steelshaping powers to catch himself, and in the shock of

being attacked he over-exerts, tearing free sheets of metal that were warded to keep the colossus still. The titan begins to move, and Leone gets perhaps one or two more attacks off against the party before either they strike him again and knock him free, or the colossus's movement sends him plummeting deep into the construction pit. It's an ambiguous death, but the party won't have time to follow up since the whole facility will be collapsing around them.

Ekossigan.

If the party failed to stop Ekossigan and didn't come with him, perhaps he is the main threat, having been augmented and controlled by the Ob after he failed to defeat the complex. He fights much as in Thread Two, but as the ice spreads it causes the colossus to break free.

Alternately, an allied Ekossigan might get impaled by a steel spear thrown by Leone, and his death throes shake the whole area, jostling Borne free.

Kasvarina.

Perhaps when Asrabey brings Kasvarina out of the VIP suites, she screams, confused and terrified by the combat. Her scream jolts the colossus, and it turns its head to face her. It growls, "Mother," and starts to tear free.

Battle on the Big Bridge.

The Obscurati slayers take up position on the big bridge (but generally stay away from the explosive red barrels). They rain fire down on the party with their rifles, and have cover against the party's counterattacks.

Leone meanwhile manually grabs the colossus's right arm and swipes it across the staging platform. At initiative count 0 each round, each creature in the area must make a Fortitude or Reflex save (DC 15) or take 3d6 damage, be knocked prone, and be pushed toward the east end of the room.

Together, these likely force the party to take the lift up so they can avoid the slayers' advantage and get to a spot where the colossus—still mostly restrained—cannot reach.

Before leaving the VIP suites, Kate Glenn used her *wand of invisibility* to turn herself, Nick, and Kell invisible. When the party reaches the bridge, Kell and his bodyguards attack. Alternately, they might descend on the lift or climb down the ladder if the party doesn't come up. Kell attacks with furious hate for the people who destroyed the guild he spent his life building, and he fights to the death. His bodyguards might surrender if he goes down and things look bad for them.

Uh-Oh....

After five or ten rounds of combat, something should happen to let the colossus break free, and each round thereafter the facility becomes more unstable. If the party runs, Kell follows them, preferring vengeance to escaping alive.

Borne Round 1: A deafening rumble fills the chamber as a massive engine turns over. Black smoke begins to pour out of vents along the colossus's back, equivalent to a small factory worth of smokestacks. The party likely recognizes the distinct smell of witchoil burning within the golem's chest.

Borne takes its first step and tears its arm free from magical bindings. This causes a massive tremor to shake the room, knocking anyone inside prone unless they make a Reflex save (DC 14).

Borne Round 2: Borne moves again, this time crashing through the main support bridge in front of him. The bridge heaves; anyone on it must make a Reflex save (DC 14) or be thrown 10 feet, perhaps off the side.

Borne Round 3: The colossus realizes its way forward is blocked, so it looks up and grabs the walls overhead. Its fingers tear through stone and steel, and it heaves itself up the construction shaft. Again, creatures must make a Reflex save (DC 14) or be knocked prone from the tremors.

Borne Round 4: The colossus strikes the ceiling, roars, then punches several times into the stone above it. Every in the facility must make two Reflex saves (DC 14). The first avoids being knocked prone. The second avoids 4d6 damage from falling debris.

Borne Round 5: Borne tears a tunnel free to the surface and heaves itself up until its head peaks out of the hole. The massive weight of the colossus causes massive chunks of stone thirty feet or larger to cleave free from the walls. The party can see that they're about to collapse, and they have until the start of the next round to seek cover—perhaps the arch of the Golem Guardpost, or one of the VIP suites.

Borne Round 6: Borne pulls itself to the surface. Anyone out in the open is crushed, taking 10d6 damage (Fortitude DC 15 half). The resulting destruction shatters the various wards surrounding the facility, transporting the broken remnants of the complex, Borne, and all those inside the Cauldron Hill region of the Bleak Gate back to the material plane. Light from outside pours through the hole overhead—either daylight or starlight—making it clear to the party they've transitioned to the real world.

Later: Borne pauses a moment atop the hill. Though Grappa has removed its conscious mind, its base primitive mind marvels at the beauty of a world it has never seen. It stands still for a few minutes, giving the party a lull during which they can climb to safety.

Eventually Borne continues moving, slowly stomping its way down the mountainside. It triggers massive rockslides that would kill anyone still on the mountain, though luckily the natives of The Nettles fled here months ago, thanks to the warnings of the skyseer Nevard. The colossus stumbles several times, having never actually walked before, and eventually it stops at level ground between the base of Cauldron Hill and Stanfield Canal.

Aftermath.

In the chaos, Leone and Grappa likely fall into the pit and have an ambiguous death. They'll return in Adventure Seven. If Grappa wasn't here, by the time the party gets back to the RHC headquarters, he'll have slipped away.

As soon as the facility shifts back to the real world, Asrabey grabs Kasvarina and uses magic granted him by the Unseen Court to travel to the Dreaming, sparing the party only a brief nod of thanks before leaving.

If necessary, the party might receive aid in exiting the pit when Captain Dale and his men atop Cauldron Hill throw ropes down. Dale handles the sudden appearance of the colossus with aplomb and points out that even if it isn't under anyone's control, it will devastate the city just by trampling buildings.

Alternately, perhaps Gale can help them out with air magic. If Kvarti is present, the dwarf announces that he's off to go drink, because he suspects the end of the world is nigh.





PART FOUR: TO BATTLE A COLOSSUS

The PCs work with the Risuri Navy to lure Borne out to sea, while King Aodhan enacts a ritual to send the creature to the Dreaming.

SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

Until dealt with, the colossus becomes a permanent fixture in the background of the city. It has no particular goal, so it is content for now to look at its surroundings and poke things like a child, curious to see how strong they are. Though each stride is fifty feet long or more, it does not stray far.

It is certain that if left unchecked, the titan will make the city unlivable. The king wants to get it out of populated areas, but trying to get it to move anywhere is likely to stir its anger, and that's when things will get really dangerous. First though, the party will need to make their way back to the Hotel Aurum, where King Aodhan is holding an emergency session to handle the situation.



REGROUP TIME

Social. Real-Time.

Let's talk to the King about this? Sounds like a good idea!

It takes the party at least an hour to make their way from Cauldron Hill to the Hotel Aurum. As the PCs approach, they can see that the Danoran contingent no longer has guards on post. A quick check with any Risuri guard reveals that Han Jierre and his group vacated the hotel mere minutes after the colossus was first reported. No one knows for sure where they went.

The PCs are admitted to meet with King Aodhan, who has convened on the ground floor lobby, having concluded that speed of evacuation trumps good furniture. Present with the king are several military officers, Chief Inspector Stover Delft, and Principal Minister Harkover Lee.

During the quick debrief that follows, the king and Inspector Delft bring the PCs up to speed on what's happened in Flint.

- ♦ Parity Lake district is being evacuated, leading to panic and looting in neighboring districts.
- ♦ Reports keep coming in of ships fleeing the harbor, including *Lux Aurumque*, the Danoran capital ship.
- ♦ The panicked evacuation is making it difficult for the naval fleet that defends Flint to get back into the harbor. There are twenty first-rate ships-of-the-line stuck out at sea, and only a handful of combat-ready vessels in the actual harbor.

King Aodhan and Minister Lee have thrown together a basic plan on how to remove the colossus threat, though it is highly dangerous.

The Ritual Plan.

Using a powerful magical ritual invested in him as part of the Rites of Rulership, King Aodhan intends to banish the colossus into the Dreaming. While the exact ramifications of performing such an act are as of yet unknown to him, King Aodhan believes it is the only option available to them if they are to save Flint.

In order to enact his ritual, the King requires thirty minutes of unimpeded casting time, and he must stay within a thousand feet of the target. The King knows the dangers of this, especially if the golem takes note of him, and he isn't sure it will be possible to keep the titan still for that long. To this end, Aodhan wants to lessen the colossus's advantage by bringing the immense construct out into the harbor, where its slow movement will be further impeded by having it square off against faster seafaring vessels.

The main decision Aodhan has to make is whether to draw the colossus to the harbor via Stanfield Canal, which would minimize the collateral damage, or draw it to the waters north of the city, near The Ayres, where more of the Risuri fleet could confront it. The second route would wreck a swath of the city at least a mile long. The first route only endangers a few blocks—though unfortunately it would destroy all the bridges along the canal—plus it gives them the ability to deploy the *R.N.S. Coaltongue*.

The king is inclined to go for the harbor, but he can be convinced to try the other route. Once that decision is made, Aodhan asks if anyone has a better plan, and if not he sends orders for every military ship in the harbor to assemble at the Royal Docks.

Other Plans.

Disabling the colossus seems infeasible. People have shot at it with pistols and muskets and it hasn't noticed. Observation by telescope suggests its skin is adamantine, effectively impervious to any mundane weapon, though perhaps enchanted cannons could injure it. Luckily it seems not to have any sort of ranged weapons.

Climbing it and looking for a way inside is an option, because there is some space along its back with hollow components intended for storing witchoil and other fuel. These do feed into its inner forge-heart, which provides magical energy to the colossus's limbs. However, anywhere vulnerable would be so hot as to set fire to flesh and melt most metals other than adamantine. Even if someone could get in, magical wards would dispel the intruder's protections and leave him doomed in the forge's heat.

Its mind is too limited for it to communicate, though it does respond with curiosity to unusual sights and sounds. It has no fear of anything, but it does get angry if it is harmed.

Luring It to Sea.

You can have the local authorities handle this, unless the party seems excited to volunteer or has their own plan. The plan Delft comes up with is to get as many spare fireworks from the New Year's festival as possible, perform a few quick test launches to see if the colossus responds to them, and, if so, determine whether he follows or retreats from the pretty lights.

After an hour's setup, the teams start setting off their fireworks. The first launch shows that the colossus is attracted to the light—it reaches out a hand and tries to grab at the blossom of fire in the sky—so the authorities begin firing a quickly-planned path that draws the colossus first to Stanfield Canal, and then down the canal toward the harbor.

Another option might be to requisition the *hurricane violin* and use its enchantment to amplify a song that would lure the colossus.

To Your Stations!

King Aodhan intends to board the *R.N.S. Coaltongue*, and he wants the PCs either by his side or on a ship of their own. Harkover Lee explains that no amount of armor or protection will keep them safe from the colossus; in this case, speed is the best defense.

Minister Lee will join the main fleet attacking Borne, and add his own magical abilities to the battle, while Stover Delft will remain behind in the city to coordinate evacuations from coastal areas and use the local police and RHC to keep order.

THE BATTLE OF BOSUM STRAND**Social. Montage.**

The party and their king rally a makeshift fleet to save Flint from destruction.

Dark clouds form ahead, and it begins to lightly rain during their trip from the Hotel Aurum to the royal docks. When they arrive, they see amassed a dozen Risuri warships—a mix of sail and steam, most of them sixth-rate (110-ft. long, 30 cannons) or smaller, but perhaps with a few larger vessels like the *R.N.S. Impossible* or the party's own ship. They await the arrival of their king, flags flying high, their skeleton crews nervous at the deadly mission before them.

Also present, surprisingly, is a Danoran warship, the *Freux Rouge*.

A Danoran Always Pays Her Debts.

The loud shouts of a woman with a heavy Danoran accent ring through the nearly abandoned docks. If the PCs met her at the banquet, they recognize the voice of Captain Rosalyn Taylor.

Unlike the *Lux Aurumque*, which fled at the first sign of trouble, Taylor and her crew actually sailed to the Royal Docks, intending to offer aid. A contingent of Flint marines prevents the captain from disembarking, but she shouts to get the attention of the party.

If approached, Taylor asks the PCs to let her know what's going on and how she can help. Unless the party made a terrible impression, she goes on to say that the Sovereign is safely away, and that she will obey the last directions he gave her, which was to protect peace with Risur. She would gladly add her vessel's armaments to the Risuri fleet. A first-class ship-of-the-line, the *Freux Rouge* is probably the second strongest vessel in the harbor after the *Coaltongue*.

Luckily, the PCs have King Aodhan at their side, and the king will give orders based on whatever the PCs decide to do with Captain Taylor's ship. If the PCs approve, Taylor proves true to her word, and the Danoran vessel joins the Risuri fleet in their distraction attack on Borne.

Dockers United.

Closer to the docked *Impossible* several transport vessels remain moored in the harbor, with hundreds of people shouting and surging, nervously stranded after their ships fled the harbor without them. These people, most simple sailors or dockworkers, are close to panic, but from atop a warehouse Thames Grimsley tries to get the crowd's attention and calm them down.

The PCs should know that the naval vessels currently in the harbor are understaffed, since most of the ships were in dock for maintenance and repairs while the ship-shape ones were out guarding the open sea to the north. The dockers could be used to assist the vessels, by coming aboard and helping to man the rigging and give extra muscle in arming weapons and steering ships.

Getting their aid requires some manner of inspirational speech (Diplomacy DC 25). The character who makes the check gets a bonus equal to twice the party's Flint prestige, and a further +5 bonus if they're on good terms with Thames Grimsley or if at least one of them is a Docker. Bringing the king certainly can't hurt.

If the attempt fails, the crowd devolves into a riot, another disaster that threatens to bring the great city down. If rallied, though, the dockers start pouring onto transports that take them to the makeshift fleet.

The Impossible Mission.

Another setback reveals itself: upon seeing the colossus, the aged captain of the *R.N.S. Coaltongue* suffered a heart attack. His first officer can take command, but this gives you a chance to keep the party close to the king, and perhaps provide a player who doesn't normally get to be captain a chance to control a vessel of his own.

As the crew makes ready, the tiefling engineer Geoff Masarde appears and explains to any spellcasters who will be aboard how to make use of the ship's capacitor to empower their spells.

Each PC gets a quick tutorial on using the turrets, which allows them to make ranged attacks with the cannons using their normal ranged attack bonuses. Harkover Lee says he'll devote his power to creating a defensive shield around the ship.

King Aodhan reminds everyone that he needs thirty minutes to complete the ritual that will banish the colossus into the Dreaming, and he needs to stay within a thousand feet. Mechanically, that means the party

must keep the *Coaltongue* in either the same naval stage or an adjacent one for six consecutive naval rounds.

He also points out that he'll be particularly vulnerable during this period, so the PCs will need to protect him if anything tries to board the ship or harm him.

Let's Get Its Attention!

By the time the fleet is ready, the colossus is dangerously close to the end of the canal. The king gives the order to launch.

As the *Coaltongue* comes out to into the bay, it is greeted by a resounding salvo of cannon fire. Landing harmlessly in the waters in front of the Bosum Strand docks, the resounding "BOOM" sound can be heard from most corners of the city. Borne immediately reacts to this by turning towards the distant fleet and standing to his full height.

From here, the fleet begins launching another barrage along with an impressive pyrotechnical display of magic. The result looks like brilliant fireworks crackling up in the sky during the ongoing downpour of rain. This display is enough to fully captivate Borne, and the colossus begins slowly walking towards the assembled fleet, stepping into water first as deep as its knees, then its waist.

THE BATTLE BEGINS

Action. Tactical. Level 9.

The party engages the colossus in a naval combat that they cannot hope to win, only endure.

To quickly handle the naval combat, determine the Command score of the captain, which is half his level plus the highest bonus among his Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. The colossus's effective Command score is +5. (We use the term "ship" here for the colossus because it will behave mechanically like a ship.)

Crew Roles.

A character that is not acting as captain can be **bosun**, relaying orders to the crew. Doing this adds the bosun's Charisma modifier to the engineer's check or the gunner's attack roll.

One character can be the **engineer**. The engineer makes a Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check (DC 10), and adds 1 to the ship's speed or maneuverability per round if successful, plus 1 for every 10 points the roll succeeds by.

A character can be **gunner**, perhaps ordering the crew to fire cannons, aiming the ship's brand, or casting spells through its capacitor. The gunner rolls the ship's attack and adds his Intelligence or Dexterity modifier.

Or a character can be the **navigator**. Once per round after the captain makes a Command check, the navigator can make a Dexterity, Intelligence, or Wisdom check and choose to use his result in place of the captain's roll.

BECAUSE SOMEONE IS GOING TO SUGGEST IT.

If a ship rams the colossus, it doesn't hurt the thing. If they blow up the *Coaltongue* right next to it, they manage to injure the titan's knee so it limps for a bit, but it magically repairs itself over the course of a day.

Naval Rounds.

Each naval round is five minutes. Actions occur simultaneously. Terrain is roughly divided into stages each 500 feet across.

Each round contains three phases—Location, Bearing, and Attack.

Location. Make opposed Command checks and add the ship's Speed rating. Reroll ties. The winner can decide to block the other ship from moving, or move to an adjacent stage. If you succeed by 5 or more you can also approach within close-combat range, or drive an enemy into an adjacent stage and follow it.

Bearing. Make opposed Command checks and add the ship's Maneuverability rating. If the *Coaltongue* wins, it gets to the colossus's side, and so the titan takes a -2 penalty to its attack roll this round. If the *Coaltongue* succeeds by 5 or more, the colossus instead takes a -5 penalty. On a success by 10 or more, the *Coaltongue* can stay directly behind the colossus, preventing it from counter-attacking.

If the colossus wins, each side can attack as normal, since the *Coaltongue*'s capacitor lets it fire in any arc.

Attack. Each side makes an attack roll, $1d20 + \text{the ship's attack bonus}$ vs. the target's Defense. You gain a +5 bonus to attack at close-combat range, and cannot attack if the target is in an adjacent stage. A hit inflicts one strike, plus an additional strike for every 5 points the attack succeeded.

A strike against the colossus doesn't actually cause notable damage, but does draw its anger. It will always try to attack whichever vessel last injured it, which keeps it from destroying the rest of the fleet (see below).

For a strike against the *Coaltongue*, roll 1d6:

| Result | Location | Effect |
|--------|----------------|--|
| 1-2 | Hull Integrity | Reduces Hull Integrity by 1 and kills 1d6 crew. At 0 Hull Integrity, the ship starts sinking. |
| 3-4 | Propulsion | First strike—reduce speed and maneuverability by 5. Kills 2d6 crew. Second strike—ship is immobilized. Kills 6d6 crew. |
| 5-6 | Armaments | Each strike disables either brand (forward arc) or capacitor (others), kills 2d6 crew. |

If the *Coaltongue* falls beneath 132 crew, it takes a -5 penalty to either Command checks or Attack rolls. If it falls beneath 104 crew, it takes either a -10 penalty to one, or a -5 penalty to both.

Borne, the Colossus

Colossal Creature

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Hull Integrity special | Command +5 |
| Defense 35 | Full Crew — |
| Maneuverability 4 | Minimum Crew — |
| Speed 10 | Total Complement — |

Design

Height 300 ft. Reach 100 ft.

Armaments

The angered colossus strikes with fists as big as a house, or kicks through the water and creates massive waves.

Attack: +25 to the fore and broadsides. The colossus takes a -5 penalty to attacks against targets that aren't at close-combat range. It cannot attack targets in an adjacent stage.

Additionally, whenever it hits a ship, the witchoil fueling it leaves a residue, which manifests monsters known as witchoil horrors.

**R.N.S. Coaltongue**

Gargantuan Vehicle

Level 26 Vehicle

1,500,440 gp

Hull Integrity 4**Command** see page 71**Defense** 30**Full Crew** 32**Maneuverability** 8**Minimum Crew** 4**Speed** 18**Total Complement** 200**Design**

Length 205 ft. Beam 50 ft. Two level central bridge. Steam engine with two propellers. Five decks.

Armaments

Dozens of cannons fire to either broadside, but the ship's greatest weapons are its capacitor, which magnifies the spells of mages who cast from the main deck, and its brand, which can launch a blast of arcane flame from the prow.

Crew: 100. **Attack:** +25 in any firing arc. Can use acidic, chain shot, flaming, freezing, and shocking attacks, but no more than one in any given round in a single firing arc.

Eldritch Defenses

The ship gains a +5 bonus to saving throws against the burning condition. Any spells that originate more than 50 feet from the ship deal 26 less damage to targets within that area. Teleportation cannot enter or leave the ship.

Engaging in Combat.

When the colossus first enters the harbor, it reaches out and grabs a Risuri warship, the *Avalanche*. Simple curiosity causes it to lift the hundred foot ship halfway out of the water, which snaps the wooden vessel in half in a stunning display of tossed bodies, exploding ammunition stores, and splintered wood.

The king curses and yells to keep the thing's attention. Then he begins his ritual. A verdant green swoosh of magic energy reaches out from the monarch to Borne. With the connection established, the colossus takes note of the *Coaltongue*, but that alone is not enough to keep it from destroying its other toys. At first it just wants to be left alone, but as it gets attacked more and it begins to sense the king's spell upon it growing dangerously strong, it starts roaring with anger and aggressively attacking.

The other ships try to avoid the colossus, and whenever it starts to go for one of the lesser vessels, the rest of the fleet fires to try to draw its attention away. Each naval round, if the party did not inflict a strike on the colossus the round before, the colossus tries to destroy another ship.

To see if the rest of the fleet's shots manage to distract the colossus, have a PC roll 1d20 vs. DC 35, with a +2 bonus per surviving ship in the fleet other than the *Coaltongue*. (The fleet starts with 12 ships, or 13 if the *Freux Rouge* is present.) On a success, the fleet avoids harm. Otherwise, one of the ships is destroyed.

The Horrors that Hitched a Ride.

Whenever Borne strikes the *Coaltongue*, it leaves behind a witchoil residue that transforms into 1d3 **witchoil horrors**.

If it gets into close combat, Borne creates violent waves that crash alongside the side of the vessel. Everyone onboard must make a Reflex save (DC 16) or be knocked prone. Along with the wave, two **witchoil monstrosities** wash onto the deck.

Either type of monster forces the party to enter normal tactical combat, which is concurrent with the naval combat. If left unchecked, each round a horror kills 1 crewman and does 3 damage to King Aodhan; a monstrosity also kills 1 crew, but does 6 damage to the king. The king effectively has 200 hit points, and can be healed, but if reduces to 0 HP he has to end the ritual and is unable to restart it.

However, for every minute (or fraction thereof) a PC devotes to tactical combat instead of aiding the ship, that PC takes a –2 penalty to any checks or attack rolls he makes for the next naval round.

If Borne has destroyed any other ships, scatter difficult terrain and debris around the deck of the *Coaltongue* as the wreckage falls from the titan's hands and washes aboard.

Witchoil Horror

CR 3

XP 800

N Medium ooze

Init +1 **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; Perception –5**Defense****AC** 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12 (+1 Dex, +2 natural,)**hp** 18 (3d8+6);**Fort** +2, **Ref** +2, **Will** –5**Immune** negative energy, ooze traits;**Offense****Speed** 30 ft., climb 20ft.**Melee** slam+5 (1d6+2 plus 1d6 negative energy)**Statistics****Str** 14, **Dex** 12, **Con** 14, **Int** —, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 10**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 23 (can't be tripped)**Skills** Climb +7**SQ** Aura of Decay**Special Abilities**

Witchoil Creature (Su) The Witchoil Horror is made up of spilt witchoil. This substance gives the creature vulnerability to positive energy as though it were undead, though negative energy will not heal it.

Aura of Decay (Ex) For every full round (not including the first) that a witchoil horror remains onboard the hull of the *Coaltongue*, reduce King Aodhan's HP by 3.

Witchoil Monstrosity

CR 6

XP 2,400

N Large ooze

Init –2 **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; Perception –5**Defense****AC** 12, touch 7, flat-footed 12 (–2 Dex, +5 natural, –1 size)**hp** 49 (7d8+21);**Fort** +6, **Ref** +1, **Will** –2**Immune** negative energy, ooze traits; **SR** 18 (against positive energy)**Offense****Speed** 20 ft., climb 20 ft.**Melee** slam+11 (2d6+7 plus ability damage)**Space** 10ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.**Special Attacks** ability damage (1d4 strength, DC 15)**Statistics****Str** 18, **Dex** 6, **Con** 16, **Int** —, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 10**Base Atk** +8; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 23 (can't be tripped)**Skills** Climb +10**SQ** Aura of Decay**Special Abilities**

Witchoil Creature (Su) The Witchoil Monstrosity is made up of spilt witchoil. This substance gives the creature vulnerability to positive energy as though it were undead, though negative energy will not heal it.

Aura of Decay (Ex) For every full round (not including the first) that a witchoil monstrosity remains onboard the hull of the *Coaltongue*, reduce King Aodhan's HP by 6.



Potential Saves.

As the combat progresses, the party might find themselves overwhelmed by the witchoil creatures or the attacks of Borne. Use your best judgment to keep the tension high, and if your players are more interested in the naval battle than facing the oozes, perhaps simply just require them to kill one group, determine how much time it takes, and guesstimate appropriate penalties for the party to take to their checks when more monsters show up.

If the party is in trouble, you can use one of the following saves.

- ♦ Harkover Lee conjures a powerful evocation, centered on the deck of the *Coaltongue*, that burns away all the present witchoil creatures, but leaves him weakened and unable to keep casting spells.
- ♦ Captain Taylor's ship the *Freux Rouge* launches an all-out attack against the colossus, scoring a strike that takes the attention off the *Coaltongue*, but the colossus easily destroys the ship on its next turn.
- ♦ A ship under the direction of Thames Grimsley swoops in and picks up the king and other survivors if the *Coaltongue* does start to go down.

Ritual Complete.

During the half-hour of desperate maneuvering to avoid the colossus's wrath, the rain overhead intensifies into a thunderstorm, and as King Aodhan's spell reaches its crescendo a green light swirls around the colossus like a century of vines wrapped around an abandoned vehicle. The colossus surges toward the king and party and raises its fists, but then the light flashes and the colossus is simply gone. The sea heaves at the sudden vacuum, but the storm abates, and air is filled with the fresh scent of spring.

Failure?

If the party fails to protect the king, or if they are defeated, the colossus continues its rampage. The events of the next three adventures will remain similar, since neither side can seize control of the colossus, even while it is on this plane. But it causes great devastation, spending a day tromping around Flint before the rising sun draws it east toward Crisillyir.

CONCLUSION

The king charges the party to ensure no disaster like this ever befalls their nation.

The city will be rebuilt, and the dead mourned. But first, the king seeks the party's counsel. As the damaged fleet returns to harbor, he sags onto a seat and tells them that the colossus has been banished. It's now in the Dreaming, where he hopes it's beyond the reach of the Obscurati.

He intends to send messengers to the Unseen Court to ask for their aid in keeping the machine from falling back into enemy hands, though he worries the fey might view the sudden arrival of the colossus as an act of war. Still, that's an easier mission than the one he has for the party.

Take time to heal, recover, and prepare, he insists. But once their agents find a lead, the party will need to be ready to go anywhere at a moment's notice. Today he's content to just have driven the colossus away, but when they cross paths with it again, he wants this weapon for Risur. He wants to know why the Obscurati were building it, and either how to control it, or how to destroy it.

The question he has for them, then, is what happens now between Risur and Danor. If he tells his people this was an attack by Danor, it will help with the rebuilding, and might be best for the security of the nation. But it's not quite true. He's not sure his people will appreciate the nuance of a multinational conspiracy that happens to be headed by the Sovereign of Danor, even if not all of Danor is part of it.

He gestures to the *Freux Rouge*, or its wreckage. By tomorrow, the crew of that ship will either be heroes who helped Risur defend against a mysterious new foe, or they'll be enemies, doomed for prison and possibly execution. He groans, feeling his age suddenly, and mentions that he probably wouldn't have agreed to be king if he'd known he'd have to make decisions like this.

Let the party offer their suggestions, and perhaps discuss the course ahead, but soon the ship nears shore.

Victory!

The people of Flint line the shore, cheering and applauding for the heroes that drove away the monster that attacked their city. As the party sails close enough to be clearly viewed by the citizens, the king stands, draws his sword, and asks the party to kneel. Then, with just a simple proclamation that no one will ever hear but them, he touches his sword to their shoulders and grants them each a knighthood.

The crowd grows quiet at the scene, and then Aodhan tells them to stand, and the applause can be heard across the city.



Onward to Act Two.


- ♦ In Adventure Six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*, the party races against Lya Jierre to track down Tinker Oddcog, the gnome Gearbuilder who knows all the secrets of the colossus's design. Tinker is hiding amid the savage tribes of Ber, and has several monstrous defenders, but if the party finds him, the insane gnome has slipped free of his *geas* and can provide a trove of information about the Obscurati.
- ♦ In Adventure Seven, *Schism*, a letter from Alexander Grappa, the Mindmaker, invites the party to the capital of Drakr and explains that he has taken up residence in the brain of Leone Quital, the Steelshaper, and they are now struggling for control. The party finds the Steelshaper in a vast railyard, and after defeating him they can help Grappa take full control. The Mindmaker proposes a daring mission: they must strike another Ob cell, take live captives, and then slip their consciousnesses into those bodies so they can infiltrate a grand conclave of the Obscurati.

While undercover, the party learns that the colossus will be used to manipulate the very nature of reality, to reshape the course of the world. But the conspiracy is at odds with itself, split into two camps with differing ideals. When the Ob's leader Nicodemus launches a purge, the party can find allies, information, and fabulous treasure if they're willing to risk getting killed in the crossfire.

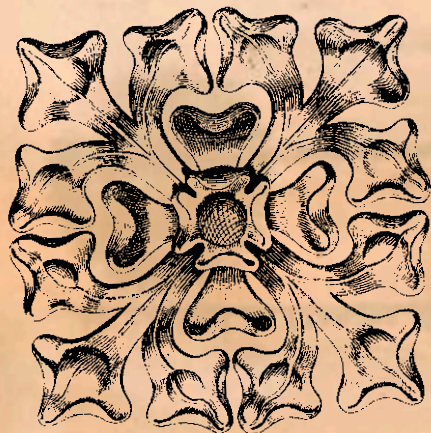
- ♦ Having returned to their original bodies, in Adventure Eight, *Diaspora*, the party explores the wild jungle of Elfaivar to find Kasvarina. Asrabey has her convinced to help destroy the conspiracy, and she is determined not to repeat the mistakes that led her to villainy. The party recovers a high elf relic, the *Crown of the Lost Arc*, which can reenact events from history. The party accompanies Kasvarina on a journey across many nations, retracing the steps of her lost memories and bringing them to life so she can reveal the creation story of the Obscurati.

The colossus follows their path, drawn by a connection to Kasvarina, albeit hidden in the Dreaming. And the Obscurati pursue them both, seeing in Kasvarina a chance to gain control of the titan. The trek finally reaches the dread city of Methia, which lies in a planar sink where no magic works. The colossus simply steps into the real world, and an overwhelming force of the Obscurati sweeps in to capture it and kill the party. But the *Crown* can bring back the magic that once existed here, fully restoring Kasvarina's memories and giving the party a slim chance to escape.

- ♦ Finally in Adventure Nine, *The Last Starry Sky*, the party rushes back to Risur, having learned through Kasvarina that Governor Stanfield is part of the Ob. The aasimar plans a coup, and will activate a massive version of the *wayfarer's lantern* that will bring the entire nation under the control of the conspiracy. The party likely arrives too late to save the king, but he can pass along the mantle to one of the PCs, bestowing on the party the power they need to confront Stanfield.

Breaking through the defenses at Flint's governor's mansion, the party can try to destroy an eldritch machine manipulating the fabric of reality as the stars themselves fall from the sky in silvery shards. Even if the party manages to thwart Stanfield, though, they learn that the Ob's plot was enacted simultaneously across the entire world. They may have saved one nation from becoming slaves of the conspiracy, but the rest of civilization now lies in the hands of the Obscurati. Only the highest-level heroes can now attempt to set the world aright. 

APPENDIX A: BRIEFING DOSSIER



This dossier is official correspondence of His Majesty King Aodhan's Royal Homeland Constabulary. By the powers of his office, the king has sealed this document, and any unauthorized individuals opening it shall come to the attention of the RHC.

Unapproved opening of this document is an offense against the crown. Let those who transgress be struck down, as established in the Rites of Rulership.

PEACE SUMMIT OF 501 AOV

Spring 8. Mediator Brakken of Heffanita arrives from Ber. Drakran observer Steffan Eberhardt is already in town.

Spring 9. Danoran vessel Freux Rouge arrives, carrying Captain Rosalyn Taylor and Minister of Magic Pierre Riquier. For the Risur delegation, Geoff Massarde and Kian Doherty arrive from Slate.

Spring 13. At 6pm, Danoran vessel Lux Profectusque arrives, carrying Sovereign Han Jierre, Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre, and Minister of War Eloise Duffet. That evening a banquet involving all dignitaries and begins the Peace Summit.

Spring 14. King Aodhan and Sovereign Han Jierre hold private talks.

Spring 20. The talks are scheduled to end with a formal declaration of betrothal between the King and Lya Jierre.

Spring 22. The Sovereign and most of the delegation will depart, while Lya Jierre will begin a nationwide political tour. Life in Flint can return to normal.

In the Risur delegation.

- ✦ King Aodhan.
- ✦ Principal Minister Harkover Lee.
- ✦ Royal Engineer Geoff Massarde.
- ✦ Minister of Agriculture Kian Doherty.
- ✦ City Governor Roland Stanfield.

And for the Danorans.

- ✦ Sovereign Han Jierre.
- ✦ Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre.
- ✦ Minister of War Eloise Duffet.
- ✦ Minister of Magic Pierre Riquier.
- ✦ Naval Representative Rosalyn Taylor.

And finally.

- ✦ Mediator Brakken of Heffanita.
- ✦ Drakran Observer Steffan Eberhardt.



PERSONS OF NOTE

Hereafter labeled as PN#.

- ✦ **PN1. DANORAN MINISTER OF OUTSIDERS LYA JIERRE.** Niece of Sovereign Han Jierre. Witnessed at gathering of Obscurati in Vendricce. Involvement unknown.
- ✦ **PN2. NATHAN JIERRE.** Cousin of Lya. Researcher at Axis Island, accomplice of Duchess Ethelyn of Shale. Involved in extraplanar observation.
- ✦ **PN3. LUC JIERRE.** Brother of Lya. Arcanoscientist, inventor of artifact identified as "Wayfarer Lantern." Delivered lantern to Lya Jierre and PN5 in Vendricce.
- ✦ **PN4. SOVEREIGN HAN JIERRE.** Ruler of Danor. Involvement unknown.
- ✦ **PN5. "NICODEMUS."** Unnamed individual smoking cigarettes (leaf of Nicodemus) at gathering in Vendricce. Appeared to have a leadership role.
- ✦ **PN6. DUCHESS ETHELYN OF SHALE.** Sister of King Aodhan. Claimed skyseer vision warned of threat to Risur. Attempted assassination of king. Attacked Axis Island. See attachment PN6a.
- ✦ **PN7. REED MACBANNIN.** (deceased) Mayor of Flint district of The Nettles. Operated facility on Cauldron Hill refining substance identified as "Witchoil." Committed suicide in prison cell.
- ✦ **PN8. CILLIAN CREED.** (deceased) Butler of Macbannin. Infused with Bleak Gate magic, granting shadowy physical form. Performed murder, organized smuggling operation, attempted cover-up, and likely other criminal activities on behalf of Macbannin.
- ✦ **PN9. HER MAJESTY PRINCESS FAIRY DUST, HANA "GALE" SOLIOGN.** High elf refugee from Danor. Hostile to Danoran industrial activity in Flint. Unconfirmed role in murder and arson of industrialists. Sent PN10 Nilasa on spy mission in Danoran consulate in Flint.
- ✦ **PN10. NILASA HUME.** (deceased) Stole financial documents from consulate, linking Macbannin to various criminal enterprises. Murdered by PN8 Cillian Creed.
- ✦ **PN11. HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF SLAUGHTER, LORCAN KELL.** Crime lord in Flint district Parity Lake, with base of operations in location identified as "Theater of Scoundrels." Renowned for violence and cruelty.
- ✦ **PN12. "STEELSHAPER."** Unnamed individual who aided PN8 Creed to recover documents at an abandoned church in The Nettles. Demonstrated ability to move and shape metal without obvious spellcasting. Had a Crisillyyiri accent.
- ✦ **PN13. LADY INSPECTRESS MARGARET SAXBY.** Former head of the RHC in Flint. Apparently worked to help Macbannin maintain secrecy, believing it was part of an official Risuri military project. Appears to have no direct affiliation with the Obscurati.
- ✦ **PN14. KAJA STEWART.** (deceased) Arcanoscientist in Macbannin's laboratory who stole items identified as "Ancient Artifacts" after Macbannin was captured. Worked with PN11 Kell to fence these items. Dead through possibly faked suicide in cell at RHC headquarters.
- ✦ **PN15. CAIUS BERGERON.** Alleged patron of archaeology. According to PN14 Kaja, Bergeron brought Ancient Artifacts to Macbannin for examination, to determine their powers and risk. Funded multiple expeditions to Ancient ruins. Killed via exneuralation by Sijhen. Arranged bodyguards for PN3 Luc on Avery Coast Railroad, apparently with intent to accompany to Vendricce.
- ✦ **PN16. SIJHEN.** Mysterious being, identified as a "Gidim." See attachment PN16a for details of Gidim. Entity sought to return to its own plane. Believed dead or banished when its portal collapsed. No apparent affiliation with conspiracy.
- ✦ **PN17. XAMBRIA MEREDITH.** Archaeologist who excavated location identified as "Ancient High Bayou Ziggurat." Recovered Ancient Artifacts, which were delivered to PN15 Bergeron. Possessed by PN16 Sijhen, and shared memories. Provided the name "Obscurati" to identify hostile conspiracy; we suspect the name was gleaned from consumed brain of PN15.

ATTACHMENT PN6A: ETHELYN'S PROPHECY

Duchess Ethelyn of Shale allegedly received this prophecy. It, along with numerous other factors, motivated her treason against the crown.

A globe spins on its axis, and a steel ship sets off to war on a sail of shadows. The world passes into night, and blackness grips all of Risur as the stars fall from the sky. The king's eyes turn a soulless white, and he moves as a puppet, his strings pulled by a man who has already died a thousand times.

Though we are wary of putting excessive stock in prophecy—if for no other reason than the desire to avoid hubristically bringing its predictions to pass in the course of trying to prevent them—we can see some obvious parallels to current situations.

The "axis" likely motivated Ethelyn to target Axis Island. Likewise the "steel ship" suggests the R.N.S. Coaltongue, a prominent Risuri steel warship. The "sail of shadows" could simply be the smoke from its engine, or might be related to the Obscurati's penchant for hiding, particularly in the shadowy Bleak Gate. However, the ship has not set off to war, and indeed the current peace plans will hopefully avoid any imminent war.

We see no obvious correlations in the rest of the prophecy. If it is true, that suggests the events have not yet occurred. Stars falling from the sky could relate to any number of meteor showers, or perhaps the incursion from Gidim, a previously unknown world (see Attachment PN6a), but this is only speculation.

— Royal Skyseer Cliff Swarland

OBSCURATI INTELLIGENCE

Herein an overview of knowledge about the organization identified as "Obscurati" by Person of Note 17 (Xambria Meredith).

Section the First: Obscurati Organization

The Ob (for short) appear to have a very strong focus on secrecy and compartmentalization. It is possible they have other cells of their organization that we are unaware of simply because the operatives we've interrogated were not privy to the full scope. Indeed, given the conspiracy's assets and international span, it seems likely they are up to more than just operations in Flint.

It is imperative that we trace the chain of command to its top and then work our way down to lower tiers of other cells.

Section the Second: Operations in Flint

In Flint, we suspect PN12 Steelshaper convinced PN7 Macbannin to work on a fake Risuri military project. Macbannin operated in our world and helped smuggle materials, we suspect into the Bleak Gate, which are likely being used to construct something that requires a great industrial base. Macbannin also refined witchoil,

which likely would be used as fuel for whatever is being created. The Ob want it to remain secret, and have gone to elaborate lengths to keep it so.

The Ob appear to have a base, and likely factory or assembly facilities in the Bleak Gate, and possess means to travel between that world and ours with relative ease.

Section the Third: Wider Operations

The Ob are interested in reaching or manipulating other planes. It is possible PN15 Bergeron's funding of Ancient expeditions is merely tangential to their main activities, but PN3 Luc's invention, the Wayfarer Lantern, has the potential to influence planar magic. Additionally, Axis Island had unusual planar fluctuations, and PN2 Nathan was studying other stars.

Section the Fourth: Goals

Unfortunately, we lack enough information to present anything but baseless speculation.

ATTACHMENT PN16A: GIDIM

Creatures identified as "Gidim Warbeasts" appeared several times, apparently summoned from the planet Apet, also known as The Distant Plane. Apet is source of teleportation and divination magic, and the incomplete silver ring that surrounds it is source of foresight magic. Travel to plane was believed impossible, and no creatures could be summoned from there.

At Ancient High Bayou Ziggurat, a golden plate sealed a portal to a small pocket dimension, which appeared to have originally been part of Apet before being sliced away. Several creatures escaped, including PN16 Sijhen. Based on explanation from PN14 Xambria, the entity was not native to Apet, but rather from the planet/plane/star called Gidim. Alternately, the creature's race might just be called Gidim. We are operating with dubious nomenclature.

Sijhen, like the Gidim Warbeasts, existed primarily as manifested thought, with ability to become solid. Our best guess is that they feed on thought or emotion, either indirectly—like plants requiring intangible sunlight—or physically. After PN16's arrival in Flint, numerous victims were reported having their brains removed through the palates of their mouths. Apparently Sijhen acquired the knowledge of the minds it ate. The warbeasts appear to have been lacking higher intelligence.

Sijhen's possession of PN17 might have been dependent on circumstances, or could be trait of entire species.

Entity attempted to open a portal to its homeworld, though no place called Gidim is known to our skyseers or astronomers, and such travel would normally be impossible. It acquired an ancient artifact known as "Ancient Star Map" which it appeared to use to direct its portal. The possibility of an extraterrestrial race possessed of these powers is greatly concerning, but is beyond the scope of this current investigation. Henceforth, by order of the king, all information about the Gidim is to remain secret, and any previous statements are to be disavowed as a deception perpetrated by unknown fey entities. Until further information is acquired, any additional incursions by the Gidim should be kept hidden from the general public to avoid a mass panic.

Ranyard Muldrate
RHC Slate branch
S.C.P. Division
On behalf of Lord Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill

APPENDIX B:

ALLIES AND BACK-UP

Kaea CR 3

XP 800

Female elf wizard 4

CN Medium Humanoid (elf)

Init +2, **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +5

Defense

AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10 (+2 Dex)

hp 20 (4d6+4)

Fort +2, **Ref** +3, **Will** +5; +2 vs. enchantments

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 quarterstaff +4 (1d6+2)

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 4th, concentration +4)

2nd—*scorching ray* x2, *shatter* (DC 17), *blur*

1st—*shocking grasp*, *shield*, *mage armor*, *burning hands* x2 (DC 16)

0th—*acid splash*, *ray of frost*, *light*, *spark*

Statistics

Str 12, **Dex** 15, **Con** 12, **Int** 18, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 15

Feats Iron Will, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Evocation)

Skills Craft (painting) +7, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (history) +10, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (nobility) +9, Knowledge (planes) +9, Perception +5, Sense Motive +1, Spellcraft +11, Stealth +4

Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic, Elven, Goblin, Orc

SQ Bonded Object (+1 quarterstaff)

Combat Gear +1 quarterstaff; **Other Gear** *potion of aid*, *potion of cure light wounds*, *scroll of identify*

Josiah CR 3

XP 800

Male Human Gunslinger 4

LN Medium Humanoid (human)

Init +9, **Senses** Perception +9

Defense

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +3 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 38 (4d10+8)

Fort +6, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3;

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Ranged +1 musket +8 (1d12+1/x4)

Statistics

Str 10, **Dex** 16, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 18

Feats Gunsmithing, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Reload (Musket)

Skills Acrobatics +5 (+1 jump), Bluff +6, Climb –3, Disguise +3, Escape Artist +2, Fly +0, Intimidate +6, Perception +9, Ride +0, Stealth +2, Swim –3

Languages Common

SQ Deed: Deadeye, Deed: Gunslinger Initiative, Deed: Gunslinger's Dodge (+2 AC), Deed: Pistol-Whip, Deed: Quick Clear, Deed: Utility Shot, Grit

Combat Gear +1 musket, mwk chain shirt; **Other Gear** *potion of invisibility*, *potion of remove fear*, *potion of shield of faith* +2

Gaethan CR 3

XP 800

Male half-elf fighter 4

LG Medium humanoid (elf, human)

Init +7, **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +5

Defense

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +3 Dex)

hp 34 (4d10+8)

Fort +6, **Ref** +4, **Will** +1; +2 vs. enchantments

Defensive Abilities bravery +1

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Ranged +1 composite longbow +9 (1d8+3/x3)

Statistics

Str 14, **Dex** 17, **Con** 14, **Int** 12, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 19

Feats Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Weapon Focus (Longbow)

Skills Acrobatics +5, Diplomacy +2, Handle Animal +4, Heal +2, Perception +5, Sense Motive +2, Stealth +6, Survival +5

Languages Common, Elven

SQ Elf Blood

Combat Gear +1 composite longbow (Str +2), +1 studded leather armor; **Other Gear** *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of fly*

Carlao CR 3

XP 800

Male human cavalier 4 (See *PATHFINDER RPG® ADVANCED PLAYER'S GUIDE*)

LG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** Perception +6

Defense

AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 20 (+8 armor, +2 shield)

hp 41 (4d10+12)

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

Offense

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +1 Longsword +8 (1d8+3/19–20)

Special Attacks cavalier's charge, dragon's challenge

Statistics

Str 15, **Dex** 14, **Con** 16, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 16

Feats Iron Will, Outflank, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Acrobatics –3, Climb –5, Diplomacy +6, Escape Artist –5, Fly –5, Heal +3, Knowledge (Local) +0, Knowledge (Religion) +0, Perception +6, Ride +0, Sense Motive +7, Stealth –5, Swim –5

Languages Common

SQ Aid Allies, Animal Companion Link (Horse named Valiant not present), Expert Trainer, Tactician

Combat Gear +1 longsword, mwk half plate, mwk heavy steel shield; **Other Gear** *potion of cure moderate wounds*



| | |
|---|------|
| Dima XP 800 | CR 3 |
| Male dwarf cleric 4 LG Medium humanoid (Dwarf) | |
| Init –1; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +3 | |
| Defense | |
| AC 19, touch 9, flat-footed 19 (+7 armor, +3 shield, –1 Dex) | |
| hp 40 (4d8+16) | |
| Fort +7, Ref +0, Will +7 | |
| Offense | |
| Speed 20 ft., | |
| Melee mwk warhammer +4 (1d8/x3) | |
| Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 4th, concentration+5) | |
| 2nd— <i>sound burst</i> (DC 15), <i>cure moderate wounds</i> , <i>hold person</i> (DC 15), <i>zone of truth</i> | |
| 1st— <i>entropic shield</i> , <i>cause fear</i> (DC 14), <i>comprehend languages</i> , <i>detect evil</i> , <i>sanctuary</i> (DC 14) | |
| 0— <i>create water</i> , <i>detect magic</i> , <i>resistance</i> | |
| Statistics | |
| Str 10 Dex 8, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 17, Cha 12 | |
| Base Atk +3; CMB +3; CMD 12 | |
| Feats Shield Focus, Toughness | |
| Skills Acrobatics –6, Climb –5, Diplomacy +6, Escape Artist –6, Fly –6, Heal +7, Knowledge (History) +7, Knowledge (Nature) +6, Knowledge (Religion) +7, Ride –6, Spellcraft +5, Stealth –6, Swim –5 | |
| Languages Celestial, Common, Dwarven | |
| SQ channel positive energy 2d6 (4/day) | |
| Combat Gear +1 chainmail, mwk heavy steel shield, mwk warhammer; Other Gear scroll of cure serious wounds, wand of cure light wounds (20 charges) | |

| | |
|--|------|
| Serena XP 800 | CR 3 |
| Female human rogue 4 CN Medium humanoid (Human) | |
| Init +8; Senses Perception +6 | |
| Defense | |
| AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 13 (+3 armor, +4 Dex) | |
| hp 24 (4d8+4); | |
| Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +0; | |
| Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge | |
| Offense | |
| Speed 35 ft. | |
| Melee +1 rapier+8 (1d6+3/18–20) | |
| Special Attacks powerful sneak, sneak attack +2d6 | |
| Statistics | |
| Str 14 Dex 18, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 12 | |
| Base Atk +3; CMB +5; CMD 19 | |
| Feats Fleet, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse | |
| Skills Acrobatics +11, Bluff +7, Climb +8, Escape Artist +11, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (Dungeoneering) +7, Knowledge (Local) +7, Knowledge (Nobility) +4, Perception +6, Sleight of Hand +11, Stealth +11 | |
| Languages Common | |
| SQ surprise attacks, trapfinding +2 | |
| Combat Gear +1 rapier, mwk studded leather; Other Gear belt of incredible dexterity +2, potion of spider climb | |

| | |
|--|--------|
| Allied Fey XP 135 | CR 1/3 |
| CN Medium fey | |
| Init +1; Senses low-light vision, Perception –1 | |
| Defense | |
| AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 14 (+4 deflection, +1 Dex) | |
| hp 4 (1d6); | |
| Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +1 | |
| Offense | |
| Speed 30 ft. | |
| Melee various –1 (1d6–1) | |
| Special Abilities fey powers | |
| Statistics | |
| Str 8, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 12 | |
| Base Atk +0; CMB –1; CMD 10 | |
| Feats Ability Focus | |
| Skills Acrobatics +5, Bluff +5, Climb +3, Disguise +5, Perform (various) +5, Stealth +5 | |
| Languages Primordial, Sylvan | |
| Fey Powers Each allied fey has one of the following abilities. | |
| Flight. The fey can fly at speed 30. | |
| Gremlin Tricks. Firearms hangfire when aimed at the fey. They go off immediately if the attacker stops aiming at the gremlin; otherwise they fire one round after the trigger is pulled. When the fey dies, the nearest mechanical device stops working until repaired. | |
| Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1, DC 14): 1/hour —choose one: <i>charm person</i> , <i>disguise self</i> , <i>entangle</i> , <i>silent image</i> , or <i>sleep</i> | |
| Wild Might. The fey is a tough fighter, and attacks at +3 (1d8+3). | |

| | |
|--|--------|
| Allied Police Officer XP 135 | CR 1/3 |
| Male human warrior 1 LN Medium Humanoid (human) | |
| Init +1; Senses Perception –1 | |
| Defense | |
| AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15 (+4 armor, +1 Dex, +1 shield) | |
| hp 8 (1d10+2); | |
| Fort +3, Ref +1, Will –1 | |
| Offense | |
| Speed 30 ft. | |
| Melee longsword +1 (1d8 / 19–20) | |
| Ranged light crossbow +2 (1d8 / 19–20) | |
| Statistics | |
| Str 11, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8 | |
| Base Atk +1; CMB +1; CMD 12 | |
| Feats Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot | |
| Skills Climb +1, Insight +3, Ride +2 | |
| Languages Common, Primordial | |

**Allied Soldier**

CR 1

XP 400

Male human warrior 3

LN Medium Humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Perception –1**Defense****AC** 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15 (+4 armor, +1 Dex, +1 shield)**hp** 23 (3d10+6);**Fort** +4, **Ref** +2, **Will** +0**Offense****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** longsword +3 (1d8/19–20)**Ranged** light crossbow +4 (1d8/19–20)**Statistics****Str** 11, **Dex** 13, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 8**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 14**Feats** Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Reload**Skills** Climb +3, Stealth +2, Swim +3**Languages** Common, Primordial**Combat Gear** *potion of cure light wounds*, alchemist's fire(3); **Other Gear** chain shirt, buckler, longsword, light crossbow**Asrabey Varal**

CR 15

XP 38,400

Male Elf fighter 15

CN Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +8; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +13**Defense****AC** 35, touch 16, flat-footed 31 (+12 armor, +2 deflection, +4 Dex, +2 natural, +5 shield)**hp** 162 (15d10+75)**Fort** +12, **Ref** +9, **Will** +8; +2 vs. enchantments, +4 vs. fear**Defensive Abilities** bravery +4**Offense****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** *Vekeshi Blade* +28/+23/+18 (1d8+14 /17–20 plus 1d6 fire)**Special Attacks** weapon training (heavy blades +3, light blades +2, thrown +1)**Statistics****Str** 22, **Dex** 19, **Con** 16, **Int** 12, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8**Base Atk** +15; **CMB** +21; **CMD** 37**Feats** Cleave, Critical Focus, Great Cleave, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Improved Vital Strike, Iron Will, Power Attack, Step Up, Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword)**Skills** Acrobatics +12, Climb +17, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (nature) +6, Perception +13, Sense Motive +6, Swim +17; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Perception, +2 Spellcraft identify magic item properties**SQ** armor training 4, elven magic, weapon familiarity**Languages** Common, Elven**Other Gear** *amulet of natural armor* +2, *belt of physical perfection* +4, *cloak of smoke*, *glamered plate*, *lion shield*, *slippers of spider climbing***HIGH LEVEL EQUIPMENT**

Below are the listed rules for all equipment wielded by the Dreadnought Asrabey Varal. Take note that the equipment presented here is meant for GM reference only, and PCs should not be expected to acquire this gear under any circumstance. Should Asrabey fall, the Unseen Court demand his gear be returned to them.

VEKESHI BLADE.

Normally a +3 *flaming longsword*, the Vekeshi Blade wielded by Asrabey Varal is a potent artifact of the Unseen Court. The wielder of the Vekeshi Blade can transform the weapon into a whip-like form that has 15-ft. reach and can be used to make trip attacks, but which still deals damage as a longsword. The blade shifts and reverts as a free action at the wielder's control.

LION SHIELD.

A specially crafted +3 *heavy wooden shield*, the Lion Shield can also be loosed to attack on its own. It fights for 4 rounds using the base attack bonus of the one who loosed it and then drops. For combat purposes, the Lion Shield is treated as having a 2d6 damage bite attack with the Grab special rule (CMB equals the CMB of the wielder). While attacking, it cannot make attacks of opportunity, and the person who activated it is not considered as having the shield equipped. The shield is considered wielded or attended by the creature for all maneuvers and effects that target items. While attacking, the shield shares the same space as the activating character and can attack adjacent foes. The shield accompanies the person who activated it everywhere, whether she moves by physical or magical means. If the wielder who loosed it has an unoccupied hand, she can grasp it while it is attacking on its own as a free action; when so retrieved, the shield can't dance (attack on its own) again for 4 rounds.

CLOAK OF SMOKE.

An ornate cloak from the lands of the Unseen Court, this cloak fills the air around the wearer with a constant roil of smoke, causing enemies to take a 20% miss chance due to concealment. The wearer can see through the smoke without trouble, and can dismiss or invoke the smoke as a free action. In addition the wearer receives a +2 deflection bonus to AC.

GLAMERED PLATE.

Woven of a distilled essence made from stories of warriors dodging deadly blows, this cloth tunic protects its wearer as well as +3 *full plate*, but does not hinder his movements or skills.

APPENDIX C: KELL-GUILD STATS

Use these stats to assemble encounters if the party picks a fight with Lorcan Kell's guild.

GUILD LEADERS

Lorcan Kell

CR 10

XP 9,600

Male Human Fighter (Machete*) 10

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2, Senses Perception +2

Defense

AC 22, touch 14, flat-footed 20 (+6 armor, +2 Dex, +2 deflection, +2 natural armor)

hp 80 (10d10+20)

Fort +11, Ref +7, Will +7

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *human-bane machete* +20/+15 (1d6+10, crit 15–20/x2); +22/+17 and 3d6+12 damage against humans

Melee Mwk kukri +19/+14 (1d4+8, crit 18–20/x2)

Melee Dual wield machete +18/+13 and kukri +17

Ranged Mwk dagger +15/+10 (1d4+8, crit 19–20/x2, increment 10 ft.)

Special Attacks Critical Focus, Greater Grapple

Statistics

Str 22, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 14

Base Atk +10; CMB +16 (+20 Grapple); CMD 28 (30 vs. Grapple)

Feats Blinding Critical, Body Shield, Critical Focus, Greater Grapple, Impaling Critical, Improved Critical (machete), Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Quick Draw, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (machete), Weapon Specialization (machete)

Skills Intimidate +15, Knowledge (local) +11, Sense Motive +12, Stealth +12

Languages Common, Bad Common, Primordial

SQ Weapon Training (light blades +2, heavy blades +1)

Combat Gear 3 *potions of cure serious wounds*; **Other Gear** *belt of giant strength* +4, *ring of protection* +2, *top-hat of mental superiority* (+2 Int/Wis/Cha), *genteel coat of resistance* +2 (as cloak) with a +2 *mithral shirt* lining, +1 *human-bane machete*, 1 mwk machete, 2 mwk kukris, 6 mwk daggers, mwk sword cane, 10 mwk shuriken, *gatecrasher charm*, *figurine of wondrous power—mechanical carriage*

Special Abilities

***Machete.** Kell does not gain medium or heavy armor or shield proficiency, nor the armor training or bravery class features. Instead he gains the Critical Focus feat for free, and qualifies for Critical Focus feats as if his attack bonus were 5 higher.

Additionally, Kell fights primarily with machetes, one-handed martial weapons that deal 1d6 slashing or piercing damage and have a crit range of 18–20/x2.

Critical Focus (Ex) When Kell scores a critical hit, he can choose to blind the target permanently (Fort DC 20 reduces to dazzled for 1d4 rounds) or, if he's using a machete, he can impale the target.

While the target is impaled, whenever it starts its turn it takes 1d6 damage (or 3d6 if Kell is using his +1 *human-bane machete* against a human). Kell can remove the weapon as an immediate action, or the target can remove it as a move action. Removing the weapon deals another 1d6 damage (again, 3d6 against humans). If the target moves outside Kell's reach, he can pull the weapon out as a free action, or let go of the weapon so it remains stuck in the target.

Greater Grapple (Ex) Kell can maintain a grapple as a move action and make two grapple checks (to move, harm, or pin an opponent) per round. As an immediate action he can use someone he's grappling as cover against a single attack. If the attack misses him, the attack targets the creature used as cover, using the same attack roll.

Gatecrasher Charm (Sp) This one-use token can be crushed as a standard action to transport its holder most of the way into the Bleak Gate. The person so transported has five minutes to be pulled through fully by the magic of an Obscurati wand, or else he will return to the real world. This travel is dangerous. When activated (and again if he's pulled back to the real world), the traveler takes 5d6 necrotic damage.

Figurine of Wondrous Power—Mechanical Carriage (Su) When activated, this two-inch figurine grows to a full-sized armored carriage. Instead of being drawn by horses, though, it is pulled by mechanical horse legs that churn along at up to twenty miles per hour, but only over fairly even terrain. It fits up to six people, plus two atop the "driver's seat," but the carriage goes where directed by the figurine's owner, without actually needing a driver. The owner can see whatever is ahead or slightly to the side of the carriage as long as he holds the figurine, allowing him to steer it. Otherwise, the carriage follows general directions but swerves or stops to avoid hazards.

Rufus Hammerton

CR 4

XP 1,200

Male human fighter 2/rogue 3
CE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** Perception +7

Defense
AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+3 armor, +1 light shield, +3 Dex)

hp 37 (2d10+3d8+5)

Fort +4, **Ref** +6, **Will** +0

Offense
Speed 30 ft.

Melee short sword +4 (1d6+2/19–20) and short-sword +4 (1d6+1/19–20)

Ranged thrown alchemical +7 (varies)

Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6

SQ expert leaper

Statistics
Str 14, **Dex** 16, **Con** 13, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +6 (+8 to grapple); **CMD** 19 (21 vs. grapple)

Feats Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (short sword)

Skills Acrobatics +10, Bluff +6, Climb +9, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (local) +8, Perception +7, Stealth +10

Languages Common, Primordial

Other Gear studded leather armor, 2 short swords, 2 alchemist's fire, 2 tanglefoot bags

Special Abilities
Expert Leaper (Ex) Rufus always has a running start for jump checks. When he deliberately falls, a DC 15 Acrobatics check allows him to ignore the first 20 feet fallen.

Nick Reder

CR 4

XP 1,200

Male human monk (martial artist) 1/fighter 4
CE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2, **Senses** Perception +8

Defense
AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19 (+9 armor, +1 Dex)

hp 39 (1d8+4d10+1d8+5)

Fort +7, **Ref** +8, **Will** +3

Offense
Speed 30 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +8 (1d8+4), or flurry +7/+7 (1d8+4)

Ranged thrown alchemical +6 (varies), or musket +6 (1d12/x4)

Special Attacks stunning fist (2/day, DC 12)

Statistics
Str 18, **Dex** 14, **Con** 13, **Int** 13, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +8 (+10 to grapple or trip); **CMD** 20 (22 vs. grapple or trip)

Feats Binding Throw, Combat Expertise, Improved Grapple, Improved Trip, Improved Unarmed Strike, Ki Throw, Stunning Fist

Skills Acrobatics +10, Bluff +4, Climb +9, Perception +8, Stealth +10; ACP –6

Languages Common, Primordial

Other Gear full plate armor, musket, 20 bullets, 2 tanglefoot bags

Special Abilities
Full Metal Monk (Ex) If Nick is caught unprepared without his armor, his AC is only 12, but his speed is 30 ft., he doesn't suffer the –6 armor check penalty to Acrobatics, Climb, or Stealth, and he can use flurry of blows.

Tactics Nick will throw a foe then hold them down while dislocating their shoulders until they submit. This is a trip attack, a ki throw, and then a grapple attempt (the grapple attempt is a swift action.) Thereafter Nick makes grapple checks to hold the target and deal unarmed strike damage.

Kate Glenn

CR 4

XP 1,200

Female human cleric 5
CE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1, **Senses** Perception +3

Defense
AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17 (+6 armor, +1 Dex, +1 shield)

hp 26 (5d8)

Fort +4, **Ref** +2, **Will** +7

Offense
Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk mace +4 (1d6); or nonlethal pain smite mace +4 (1d6+3 plus intimidate)

Ranged broken pistol +2 (1d8–2)

Special Attacks channel negative energy 5/day (DC 16, 3d6)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th) Trickery and Destruction (torture) domains

Copypcat (6/day)—Move action, create an illusory duplicate like *mirror image* for 5 rounds or until destroyed.

Painful Smite (6/day)—melee attack does nonlethal, +3 damage, then make Intimidate check to demoralize with bonus equal to damage dealt.

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 5th, concentration +8)

3rd—*dispel magic*, *magical circle against law*, *nonetection*
2nd—*hold person* ×2 (DC 15), *invisibility*, *remove paralysis*
1st—*cure light wounds* ×4, *disguise self*
0th—*detect magic*, *light*, *purify food and drink*, *stabilize*
Statistics
Str 10, **Dex** 13, **Con** 10, **Int** 12, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 14

Feats Combat Casting, Improved Channel, Skill Focus (Intimidate)

Skills Appraise +5, Bluff +6, Intimidate +10, Spellcraft +9, Stealth +3

Languages Common, Primordial

SQ Evil cleric's aura

Combat Gear breastplate, light shield, mwk mace, *wand of rope trick* (8 charges), broken pistol w/10 bullets, *wand of invisibility* (6 charges).

Quentin Augst

CR 1

XP 400

Male human expert 3
NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1, **Senses** Perception +1

Defense
AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10 (+1 Dex)

hp 17 (3d8)

Fort +1, **Ref** +2, **Will** +4

Offense
Speed 30 ft.

Melee dagger +1 (1d4–1)

Ranged alchemist fire +3 touch (1d6 fire and 1 splash, 1d6 fire next round)

Statistics
Str 8, **Dex** 12, **Con** 10, **Int** 17, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 12

Feats Skill Focus (Bluff), Skill Focus (Profession (criminal lieutenant)), Skill Focus (Use Magic Device)

Skills Appraise +9, Bluff +11, Diplomacy +8, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (history) +9, Knowledge (local) +9, Profession (lawyer) +7, Profession (criminal lieutenant) +10, Sense Motive +7, Use Magic Device +11

Languages Common, Dwarf, Giant, Primordial

Combat Gear dagger, three alchemist fire flasks, *wand of charm person* (10 charges).

LESSER THUGS

Kell-Guild Musketeer

CR 1

XP 400

Male human fighter 2

CN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2, Senses Perception –1

Defense

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13 (+3 armor, +2 Dex)

hp 13 (2d10+2)

Fort +4, Ref +2, Will –1

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee short sword+4 (1d6+2/19–20)

Ranged musket +5 (1d12/x4)

Statistics

Str 14, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 12

Base Atk +2; CMB +4; CMD 16

Feats Far Shot, Point-Blank Shot, Rapid Reload, Weapon Focus (musket)

Skills Acrobatics +3, Intimidate +6

Languages Common, Primordial

Other Gear musket, 20 bullets, studded leather armor, short sword

Kell-Guild Pistoleer

CR 1

XP 400

Male human fighter 1/rogue 1

CN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2, Senses Perception +4

Defense

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13 (+3 armor, +2 Dex)

hp 17 (1d10+1d8+2)

Fort +3, Ref +4, Will –1

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee short sword+3 (1d6+2/19–20)

Ranged broken pistol+1 (1d8–1/x2)

Special Attacks improved grapple, sneak attack +1d6, strangler

Statistics

Str 14, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 12

Base Atk +1; CMB +3 (+5 to grapple); CMD 15 (17 vs. grapple)

Feats Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Strangler

Skills Acrobatics +6, Bluff +6, Disguise +6, Escape Artist +6, Perception +4, Stealth +6

Languages Common, Primordial

Other Gear broken pistol, 10 bullets, studded leather armor, short sword

Special Abilities

Strangler (Ex) When he maintains a grapple, the Kell Guild pistoleer deals 1d6 sneak attack damage to the grappled target.

Kell-Guild Technologist

CR 3

XP 400

Male human rogue 4

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3, Senses Perception +8

Defense

AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10 (+2 Dex)

hp 14 (4d6)

Fort +1, Ref +7, Will +2

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee short sword+3 (1d6–1/19–20)

Ranged musket +6 (1d12/x4), or gadgets +6 (varied)

SA sneak attack +2d6

SQ evasion, uncanny dodge

Statistics

Str 8, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 12

Base Atk +3; CMB +2; CMD 15

Feats Point-Blank Shot, Quick Draw, Weapon Proficiency (musket)

Skills Acrobatics +9, Disable Device +9, Disguise +8, Handle Animal +8, Knowledge (arcane) +9, Knowledge (engineering) +9, Perception +8, Ride +10, Spellcraft +9, Stealth +10, Use Magic Device +8

Languages Common, Primordial

Other Gear musket, 20 bullets, short sword, time bomb launcher with 2 bombs, tranq drill-dart gun with 2 drill-darts.

Special Abilities

Time Bomb Launcher (Ex) This musket-like device shoots a fist-sized projectile with four prongs that dig into a solid surface. When it attaches, it arms and begins ticking loudly once per second. After one round it begins ticking twice as fast, and after two rounds it ticks four times per second. At the end of the third round the bomb explodes, dealing 10d6 damage (Reflex DC 16 half) in a 20-ft. radius.

Before it explodes, the explosive can be detached with a Strength check (DC 20), and the countdown can be stopped with a Disable Device check (DC 25).

The maximum effective range it can be shot is 40 feet. If it hits flesh it bounces off and does not arm. The timer can be manually set as a standard action, and can be set to anywhere from 3 rounds to 10 rounds.

Tranq Drill-Dart Gun (Ex) This musket-like device fires an arrow-like device that can embed in a person or object. If it hits an object like a door a spool inside the device activates a drill that bores a narrow hole through surfaces up to three inches deep. One round later, the device sprays gas through the hole.

The drill-dart releases enough gas to fill up to a 10-ft. cube with tranquilizing gas. Each round a creature is in the gas it must make a Fortitude save (DC 16) or take 1d2 Charisma damage. The gas can be cleared out by opening a window, but that of course is the goal of the gadget: to force targets to remove their cover.

If the dart hits a person it deals 1d6 damage but it cannot get enough purchase to drill.

**Kell-Guild Scoundrel**

CR 1

XP 400

Male human fighter 1/rogue 1

CN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** Perception +4**Defense****AC** 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+3 armor, +1 light shield, +2 Dex)**hp** 17 (1d10+1d8+2)**Fort** +2, **Ref** +4, **Will** -1**Offense****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** short sword+1 (1d6+2/19–20) and short-sword +1 (1d6+1/19–20)**Ranged** thrown alchemical+3 (varies)**Special Attacks** sneak attack +1d6**Statistics****Str** 14, **Dex** 15, **Con** 13, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 12**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 15**Feats** Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (short sword)**Skills** Acrobatics +6, Bluff +6, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +6, Perception +4, Stealth +6**Languages** Common, Primordial**Other Gear** studded leather armor, 2 short swords, 2 vials alchemist fire, 2 tanglefoot bags**Bull Dog**

CR 1/3

XP 135

N Small Animal

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +8**Defense****AC** 13, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+1 armor, +1 natural)**hp** 6 (1d8+2)**Fort** +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +1**Offense****Speed** 40 ft.**Melee** bite +2 (1d4+1 plus grab)**Statistics****Str** 13, **Dex** 13, **Con** 15, **Int** 2, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 6**Base Atk** +0; **CMB** +0; **CMD** 11 (15 vs. trip)**Feats** Skill Focus (Perception)**Skills** Acrobatics +1 (+9 jumping), Perception +8, Survival +1 (+5 scent tracking)

APPENDIX D: MAGIC ITEMS

Bleak Amulet*This rusted amulet bears no special inscription or embellishment, only a pressed circle of brass.***Aura** faint (transmutation)

Slot neck; Weight -; Price 1,000gp.

Description

This amulet has no effect while worn on any plane but the Bleak Gate. When worn in the Bleak Gate, the wearer receives a +1 bonus to natural armor, a +2 bonus on all saving throws, and a +1 bonus on all attack and damage rolls.

The amulet can only hold back the power of the shadowy plane for a limited time. After 24 hours the amulet crumbles to dust. Alternately, the amulet can be used once to re-roll any single dice roll while the wearer is in the Bleak Gate, after which the amulet crumbles to dust immediately.

Dale Assault*Meditation makes everything cooler.***Training****Requirement**

Characters with the Martial Scientist theme who spend time training with Captain Dale can learn this ability. Alternatively, researching his infamous thesis, *Meditation, Coffee and Cherry Pie: Unorthodox Salves Against the Supernatural*, can learn this technique.

Description

If you have enjoyed a filling and pleasant meal in the past day, you can spend a move action to gain a calm reflection as if you were meditating. While so relaxed, when you would be affected by any fear effect, delay its onset by one round.

You can end this trance to make a feint attempt as a free action against one target in range. If the target is an Aberration, Dragon, Fey, Magical Beast, Outsider, or Undead, you gain a +4 bonus on the attempt.

APPENDIX E: GM QUICK REFERENCE

TAKING DOWN KELL'S GUILD

Location and Transaction.

| Scouted Location | Defenders | Defeated? |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

| Scouted Location | Defenders | Defeated? |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

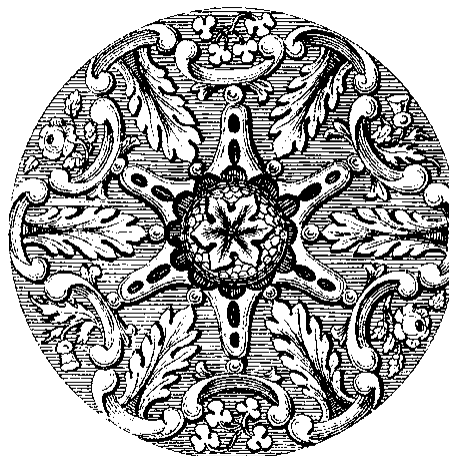
Transaction Tracker.

| Scouted Transaction | Defenders | Defeated? |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|
| | | |
| | | |

Maximum three strikes from illicit transactions.

Day Tracker.

| | Officers | Moles | TFTs | Strikes |
|-----------|----------|-------|------|---------|
| Spring 9 | | | | |
| Spring 10 | | | | |
| Spring 11 | | | | |
| Spring 12 | | | | |

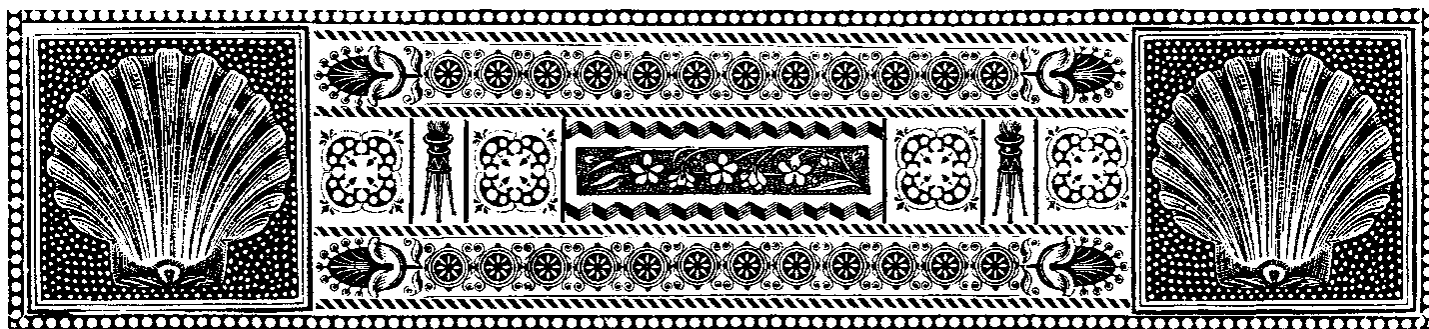


Assault Tracker.

| | Base Defenders | Trait | Current Defenders | Defeated? |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|---|-------------------|-----------|
| Grand Suites | 30 | Tunnels—1d6 reinforcements per day | | |
| Casa de Kell | 22 | Trapped. Disable Device (DC 17) to avoid 1d8 deaths. | | |
| Machete Hill | 21 or 25 w/Rufus | Cannons kill 2d6 attackers if not successfully scouted. | | |
| Theater of Scoundrels | 100—(20 per defeated stronghold) | | | |

Kell Tracker.

| Strikes | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---------|---|---|------|---|---|-------|---|------|
| | | | Hide | | | Feint | | Flee |



TIMELINE

In between scripted the scenes the party will likely be working to find Kell, Ekossigan, or the eschatologists.

Scenes that involve the B-Team are marked with an asterisk to help you keep track of when to switch over to them.

Spring 8.

- ♦ **Afternoon.** The party meets with King Aodhan. Asrabey embroils the party in the search for Ekossigan.
- ♦ ***Afternoon.** The B-Team picks up Brakken, and eschatologist snipers strike.

Spring 9.

- ♦ **Morning.** The party and B-Team examine the broken golem. A letter from Vlendam Heid arrives, as does an invitation from Captain Dale. The party takes command of the task force to capture Kell.

Spring 10.

- ♦ **Morning.** Asrabey asks the party to take him to Gale.
- ♦ ***Evening.** The B-Team escorts Brakken to the club Sunset Bench, one of Kell's fronts.
- ♦ **Late Night.** An eschatologist ship full of monsters arrives.

Spring 11.

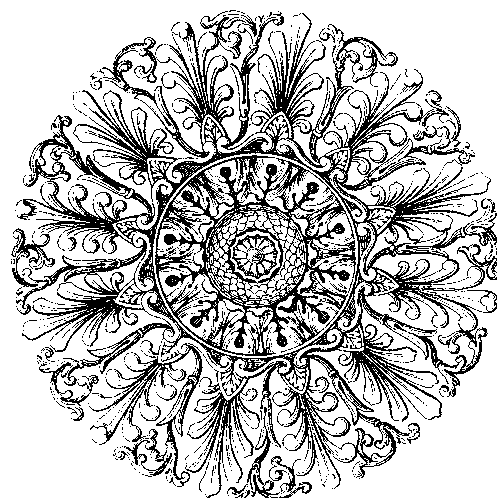
- ♦ ***Morning.** Brakken and the B-Team witness a paranoid mob in the Cloudwood.
- ♦ **Evening.** An opera gives the party a chance to nab Kell's lawyer.

Spring 12.

- ♦ **Morning.** Zubov leads the eschatologist attack on the subrail station.
- ♦ **Evening.** At sunset paranoia in the Cloudwood leads a mob to murder the mayor.
- ♦ **Late Night.** Ekossigan performs his ritual sacrifice just before midnight.

Spring 13.

- ♦ **Pre-Dawn.** Kell leaves his hideout, giving the party a chance to take him down.
- ♦ **Afternoon.** Han Jierre and his niece Lya arrive.
- ♦ **Evening.** Opening dinner of the peace summit.
- ♦ **Midnight.** The king will be able to send the party to the Bleak Gate if they have not already found a way.



NPC QUICK REFERENCE

ALEXANDER GRAPPA. Mind mage. Addled memories, geas to keep Obscurati secrets. Golem body has no mouth. Possesses great aplomb. Desires Ob downfall. Apologetic he can't help more.

AODHAN. Aged king, still full of vitality. Cool-headed, favors rational persuasion to combat. Gladly spares a few moments to talk about personal issues with those he meets. Physically feels the emotions of nearby fey.

ASRABEY. High elf warrior of unmatched prowess. Flaming sword. Animated lion shield. Cloak of smoke. Despises Danorans. Honorable, duty-focused. Doesn't talk about self, but is fanatically loyal to Kasvarina. He is one of her many husbands.

BRAKKEN. Minotaur mediator. Telepath, with obedient pet dire bear. Uses psychic powers to help high-stakes peace negotiations. Enjoys making strangers become friends. Likes to sight-see.

EKOSSIGAN. Fey lord of the seasons. Arrows redirect nearby him. Invisible body. Wears a wooden mask. Devoted to maintaining proper order and rhythm in nature and culture. Gets flustered if interrupted while talking.

GRUNDUN ZUBOV. Beardless, white-haired dwarf with a pipe made of ice. Wants to see this corrupt world end. Willing to die to help that happen. Only talks to give orders, except when someone who really understands his philosophy challenges it. Then he gets angry.

HAN JIERRE. Joyless leader of Danor, who orders horrible acts that he might create a better world for others. Easily separates his sympathetic personal beliefs from his political persona, which is erudite, polite, and often cutting.

HANA "GALE" SOLIOGN. High elf with wind magic, favored by Ekossigan to gain storm magic. Was owned by a Danoran family. Has chip on shoulder against technology and industry. Unwilling to help Ekossigan murder people. Refined, but cautious.

HARKOVER LEE. King's magical advisor/bodyguard. Straight-backed. Never eats. Beran accent.

KASVARINA VARAL. High elf matriarch, suffering from near-total amnesia, unaware of her own power.

KVARTI GORBATIV. Dwarf sniper. Has made his peace, but still is boisterous and talkative. Pays people compliments easily. Has rifle made of a giant's bone, carved with infernal letters.

LEONE QUITAL. Flamboyant steelshaper. Acts cultured, appreciates fine food, wine, and music, but has a vicious short temper. Eager to please Obscurati so he'll be brought into the fold.

LORCAN KELL. Leader of thieves' guild. Ugly face. Fancy clothes and top hat. Lots of hidden knives. Not too clever. Is brutally intimidating figurehead, while his minions run his guild.

LYA JIERRE. Tiefling martial scientist. Ambitious. Haughty but friendly. Progressive. Wants peace. Arcano-technological vorpal rapier.

MORGAN CIPPIANO. Leads Flint branch of Family. Bald. Gravelly voice. Talks fashion. Wants Kell out; will "trade favors." Gathers info for the Clergy, but won't talk about his role.

QUENTIN AUGST. Physically unimposing, monocle. Convinced money can solve anything, and is more important than anything. Doesn't really like his kids. Exasperated that things are going wrong.

ROLAND STANFIELD. Aasimar. Constant expression of contented optimism. Perfect politician's smile. Old war wound in his lower back.

STOVER DELFT. Party's boss. Chews tobacco. Cane. Spits. Good-natured.

A FANCY INVITATION.



You Are Invited
to the Risur-Danor
Peace Summit
Opening Dinner



Seal This Envelope



Guest of Lya Jierre of Danor
Minister of Outsiders

BAD BOYS, BAD BOYS.

GOAL.

Dismantle Kell's guild and force him into the open, then take him down. To do this, send the 50 police officers of your task force on missions to acquire leads, take out Kell's support, and eventually attack his strongholds.

Kell's seat of power is the Theater of Scoundrels, in the district Parity Lake. He's known to have three lesser strongholds: a fancy tower called Grand Suites, and a mansion dubbed Casa de Kell, both in Parity Lake; and a gated compound called Machete Hill in The Nettles.

The guild likely has affairs in other districts. The districts of Flint include Bosum Strand, Central, North Shore, Parity Lake, Pine Island, Stray River, The Ayres, and The Nettles.

MECHANICS.

Each officer can perform one mission per day, and you have four days, from Spring 9 to Spring 12. You can call in favors for additional aid, and can go on missions yourself, but each mission you join takes 4 hours of your time, and there are other matters that need attending.

For each mission, choose how many men to send and which district to send them to, then roll the officers' skill check. If you accompany, use your skill modifier instead. This check determines success or failure.

The GM may call for an additional check to avoid a mishap. For instance, the Scout mission requires Perception to see how many thugs are at a location. The GM might ask for a Stealth check to keep the thugs from spotting the surveillance officers and attacking.

Each mission has a Minimum Officer entry and an Optimal Officer entry. Take a -5 penalty to the check for less than optimal, or -10 for less than minimum.

Successful missions can acquire **Task Force Tokens** (TFTs) and **Strikes**. TFTs help on later missions, and Strikes erode the guild's cohesion. Failure wastes time and might cause casualties.

TARGETS.

Front. Guild-affiliated business. Low resistance.

Den of Thieves. Guild hang-out. Medium resistance.

Illicit Transaction. Major scheduled crime. Medium resistance.

Stronghold. One of three well-defended compounds within the city. High resistance.

Theater of Scoundrels. The guild's seat of power in eastern Parity Lake. Very high resistance.

MISSIONS.

You can trade in a Task Force Token before a mission to get +2 to your roll for that mission.

Case a District. *Diplomacy or Knowledge (local).* Look for fronts, dens, and transactions in one district. Success reveals 1 or more items of interest. Minimum officers 2. Optimal 6.

Scout. *Perception.* Choose a known location and find out about it, including number of defenders. Minimum officers 1. Optimal 3.

Bust Up a Joint. *Intimidate.* Go into a Front or a Den of Thieves to look for information. Success earns 1 TFT at a front, or 2 TFTs at a den of thieves. Minimum officers is equal to number of defenders. Optimal is three times that many.

Sting. *Intimidate.* Swoop in during an Illicit Transaction. Success earns 1 Strike and 1 TFT. As above, you want three times number of defenders, but you cannot scout for a sting, so be careful.

Assault. Attack a stronghold to earn 1 Strike. Attack the Theater of Scoundrels to earn 3 Strikes.

TASK FORCE TRACKING.

Enter numbers or hash marks below to keep track of how many officers you have available, how you deploy them each day, and how successful you are.

| | Spring 9 | Spring 10 | Spring 11 | Spring 12 | Final |
|-----------|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| Available | Officers | | | | |
| | Additional Resources | | | | |
| | Total Manpower | | | | |
| Deployed | Case a District | | | | |
| | Scout | | | | |
| | Bust Up a Joint | | | | |
| | Sting | | | | |
| Results | Assault | | | | |
| | TFTs Acquired | | | | |
| | TFTs Expended | | | | |
| | TFTs Remaining | | | | |
| | Strikes Acquired | | | | |
| | Casualties | | | | |
| | Remaining Officers | | | | |
| | Strikes Total | | | | |

EPISTLE FROM HEID

I, Vlendam Heid, son of Anisim Heid, son of Modya Bohm, dictate this letter to professional typist Kimsta Vicked, who uses only the finest Zhugo-brand mecha-typographs. It was delivered by Trekhom-based Mori Couriers.

May you have the wisdom and calm to face your coming end.

I send this in hopes it can help you prepare for whatever end may befall you. While I accept not all who are exposed to my writings and speeches shall interpret them as I would desire, it does not surprise me that some radicals claim the name of this movement I inspired and pervert it to ends inimical to my intentions, and to what I believe any good citizen of this world, man or dwarf, would support.

There is, in the frigid north of Drakr, a dwarf woman named Grandis Komanov whom I cannot in good faith call a philosopher. Rather she is, if I may use a pejorative term, a spiritual leader. One of Komanov's adherents came to me this evening and in a most vulgar fashion bragged of what one of his peers would be doing in your city of Flint. I believe he thought I would show him approval, but his intentions—and moreover his enthusiasm for the methods—repulsed me.

Komanov has taken the volumes of writing I have produced, condensed them to a simple aphorism “Prepare for the end,” and then encouraged an interpretation that more closely resembles “Make things end.” You may not be familiar with my nation's old history of monsters in the frozen wastes, but we are always putting up with zealots who derive worldly power by preying on the beliefs of those seeking spiritual power from these long-perished entities. Komanov continues this tradition, but appears much more invested in the fiction she has produced.

In short, my visitor this night claims a group of Komanov's followers—who alas have several days' head start on this letter—head now to Flint with the intention of disrupting your peace summit and causing a great tide of mayhem and death. They think peace between your two nations will forestall a doomsday they greatly desire.

I feigned interest in my visitor's claims, and elicited two pieces of information you might value. First, the leader of this group is Grundun Zubov who is not known to me. Second, they have hired a crack marksman for reasons I can only guess, one Kvarti Gorbatiy. His name kindled some recognition, and I pored through old correspondence to find a letter he had written me a few months past. Unless his demeanor has greatly changed in the intervening time, I suspect his involvement is mercenary and not philosophically aligned with Komanov's radicalism.

While I assume you will pursue actions to obviate any disaster they intend, I entreat you first to prepare yourself that your best efforts may fail and that you might perish in undertaking your duty. Nevertheless, I wish you success.

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