



ZEITGEIST Adventure Number 7 Schism



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Special Thanks to everyone who made Final Fantasy VI, since it has been pointed out to me that we sure seem to have a lot of similarities to that game. Clearly we need a talking octopus.

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INTRODUCTION

Wherein the Villains Prove to Be of Two Minds

I n a campaign where the party acts as law enforcement and spies, we've seen stake-outs and stings, arrests and interrogations, and overseas spying and abduction. But now the party has a chance to infiltrate the heart of the Obscurati itself, a conspiracy with clever and strict security to prevent any simple disguise or lie. It's time for the party to go deep undercover.

The Obscurati plan to use a mechanical colossus to open an ancient golden seal and alter a ritual that determined what planets orbited with the world. Changing those planets will shift the nature of reality. They are mere months from enacting this scheme, but the leader of the conspiracy—**Nicodemus the Gnostic**—is an idealist. Rather than simply deciding the new world order himself, he has invited the previously compartmentalized Obscurati cells to a grand convocation, where they will debate what sort of new world they wish to create.



BACKGROUND

The Inside Man.

One key conspirator, **Leone Quital**, known as the Steelshaper since he designed the colossus, is helping coordinate the travel of a dozen Ob officers. To maintain secrecy, many were told simply to transit in the Drakran city of Mirsk. From there, Leone arranges them to take trains to the the Crisillyiri city of Vendricce, then sail just off coast to the Obscurati palace. (Several other similar transit points have been set up—by sea, by train, and by teleportation.)

While the party—agents of the Royal Homeland Constabulary—have several avenues to locate this convocation, security is nigh-impenetrable, and any stealth or disguise be it magical or mundane will be easily thwarted. However they have an ally of sorts on the inside.

Alexander Grappa, known as the Mindmaker because he crafted the intellect of the colossus, has died twice now—both times at the hands of Leone Quital—but in each instance has managed to transfer his consciousness into another body. Now he survives in the back of Leone's mind, faintly aware and able to take control only when the Steelshaper is asleep. Afraid of alerting his host of his presence, Grappa has waited patiently and magically divined a way he might drive out Leone and make the body his own.

ADAPTING THE

ADVENTURE

To fit *Schism* into a non-industrial campaign, Leone Quital can be based at a major seaside quarry and port instead of a railroad hub. He's still coordinating the movements of his fellow conspirators, but his powers involve levitating and shaping stone instead of steel. Ignore the backstory involving the colossus, and simply have Alexander Grappa as a conspirator who got cold feet and managed to stick around magically in Leone's mind after the stoneshaper slew him, or perhaps literally an alternate personality.

You can of course give the conspiracy's convocation any agenda that you want, or use the event as a stand-in for any gathering of powerful villains. Instead of an ideological purge at the climax, instead the party might simply ambush the villains when their defenses are down.

If you just want some inspiration for your own campaign, we have: + an international manhunt,

- + a gulag in a rift controlled by frost giants,
- + a shipboard escape akin to the end of The Empire Strikes Back,
- + antagonists with a vast array of sympathetic motivations,
- + a highly-guarded villainous palace riddled with demi-planes, and
- a grand setpiece battle with hostages, a chase, and great amounts of property damage.

Finally, if you like the Panicked Evacuation sea battle (page 58), you might want to check out our naval adventures book *Admiral o' the High Seas* for ideas on other shipboard action scenes.

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Infiltration.

Depending on their success in Adventure Six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*, the party might already know Grappa needs help, or they might get an enigmatic plea from him via a letter. Either way, if they can track down and capture Leone, Grappa asks to be brought to the frozen city of Knütpara, controlled by frost giants. There, trapped in a glacier, lies a giant lich who could rip men's souls from their bodies. The party must reach the bottom of a glacial rift and tear out Leone's soul so that Grappa can have a body of his own. Only then will the Mindmaker reveal what he knows of the conspiracy's convocation.

With his aid and the power of the lich, the party can capture other Obscurati officers en route to the convocation, then implant their souls into the officers' bodies. Though it may sound mad, it's the best way for the party to sneak into the Obscurati palace undiscovered.

During the convocation the party learns the nature of the conspiracy's plans, and can actually take part in the debate over how they want to change the world. The meeting lasts two days, during which the PCs can try to sway the conspiracy's plans from within, recruit double agents, or do a bit of eavesdropping to learn the conspiracy's weaknesses. They might also speak with **Vitus Sigismund**, a spy for another nation who was caught trying to sneak in. Critically, the party needs to observe the palace's defenses, from its elite guards and trained basilisks to the spectral Ghost Council that advises Nicodemus and watches all that occurs on the island.

The Schism.

As the convocation concludes, each Obscurati officer—including the PCs—can cast a vote for one of the possible new world orders. But despite being united in their desire to see a better world, after two days of debate the members of the Obscurati have fractured into two opposing factions. One side favors magnaminity, bettering everyone's lot while sacrificing their own power, while the other wants to control the world, trusting themselves to personally solve society's ills as if they were demi-gods.

With no consensus to be reached, Nicodemus invokes his position as founder of the conspiracy, and orders a purge of the selfish and powerhungry. The palace is sealed and the Ghost Council, a massive roiling swarm of incorporeal undead, slays those who will not stand with their leader. Here, the campaign can take two paths.

In one, the party sides with Nicodemus to help them achieve a better world. They can aid in the defeat of the "villainous" faction, and in adventures hereafter will be tasked to help enact he grand design, which necessarily entails betraying their king and the RHC. Events might make them reconsider the motives of the Obscurati later, though.

In the other, the party remains hostile to the conspiracy. They must first escape the island, perhaps stealing the palace's treasures and rescuing potential allies. Then in later adventures they can try to stop the Obscurati from fulfilling their plans.

A Radical Scheme.

You are welcome to run this adventure in a straightforward chronological order, but if you're willing to experiment a bit with the typical RPG narrative, *Schism* gives you an opportunity for a bit more cinematic pacing.

It might not hurt to ask the players to trust you first. When the adventure opens, give the players the Obscurati Officer cards (the shortened ones without Gestalt information), and have them take on the role of members of the conspiracy arriving at the palace. After this teaser you jump back an ambiguous period of time to the party being contacted by Alexander Grappa. When the party learns of Grappa's plan to implant their souls into the bodies of existing Ob members, hopefully players will enjoy the revelation that they were actually playing themselves undercover in the first scene.

If they refuse and come up with another plan, continuity is still fine. The Ob officers the players controlled can remain NPCs, and the party can find another way into the palace. That said, the purpose of the teaser is to provide a bit of metagame information that normal methods of subterfuge won't be sufficient. Of course if you think your players won't go for it, just put the "teaser" in the correct order.

Other Paths.

How else can the party get into the convocation? Well, **Benedict Pemberton**—a dragon in human form whose Bond villain-esque plot the party thwarted in Adventure Six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*—has replaced an Ob officer with a mechanical duplicant under his control, and the party might try to use one of those for each PC if they salvaged any during the last adventure. They might pull a Chewbacca and let themselves be captured, or simply stroll in and offer to join the villains, but it requires a bit of credulity-stretching to think Nicodemus would let them see anything important.

Clever parties might sneak onto the island in the real world and use a Wayfarer's Lantern of their own to shift into the palace, or try something ridiculous like killing themselves, putting their bodies into a portable hole, and having Grappa in Leone's body just carry them into the palace, along with some sort of magic item to restore them to life. Such plans make it harder for the party to witness the Obscurati plotting and eventually turning against itself.

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DISCOURAGING DIVINATION.

All cell leaders and high-ranking officers of the Obscurati have the following special quality.

Special Quality

Rites of the Obscurati (Su) The rites of the Obscurati magically separate a person's normal identity from their role as an officer of the conspiracy. Magic that attempts to determine the identity of an Obscurati cell leader fails outright, as if such a person did not exist. Likewise, attempts to determine whether a given person is affiliated with the Obscurati will fail.

Divinations that do not relate to his involvement with the conspiracy can function, but have a chance of yielding useless, innocuous results. Whenever a character attempts to use magic to divine an Obscurati officer's location, thoughts, status, or the like, that character must make an Spellcraft check (DC 34). If he fails, the magic reports something deceptive, usually in a way to lessen suspicions.

Key to the rites is the ring of office: a ring of varying composition which must have inscribed on the inside a three word phrase. The first two words of that phrase must have the initials O.B. The third word can be anything, but traditionally the number of letters determines how many tiers from the top the officer is.

The protections these rites grant do not function if the officer does not wear his ring, nor if the diviner knows the words inscribed within his ring. That said, some Obscurati officers are powerful enough to shield themselves without requiring these rites.

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ON THE NATURE OF NICODEMUS

Five centuries ago, a monk named William Miller earned the nickname "Nicodemus the Gnostic" for both his constant questioning of Clergy doctrine and his fondness for smoking "leaf of Nicodemus," a popular cash crop from the Yerasol Archipelago.

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During the holy war known as the Second Victory, the armies of the Clergy battled the high elf nation of Elfaivar. Nicodemus went to war as a healer but was distraught with the atrocities he witnessed. After one battle he saved an injured high elf woman named Kasvarina Varal, who had left behind two daughters in her homeland. Nicodemus helped her return home, but in their travels they resolved not to turn their backs on the tragedy of the war. Instead, they resolved to bring the conflict to an end.

After much searching, they found their way to the cursed Isle of Odiem, where the Clergy keeps its Crypta Hereticarum, the Vault of Heresies. There they spoke with an imprisoned ancient demoness, Ashima-Shimtu, who gave them a ritual that could give physical form to a belief. If that physical form was destroyed, those who held faith in it would perish as well.

Nicodemus tried to trick the leaders of his faith into using the ritual to summon one of their own gods of war, but the Clergy instead invoked the high elf goddess Srasama, who represented maiden, mother, and crone. When an army slew the goddess's avatar, nearly every female high elf died, including Kasvarina's daughters. The magical backlash changed the face of the world, left the Clergy reeling, and caused the near-immediate collapse of Elfaivar.

At the ritual's epicenter, Kasvarina survived, but Nicodemus was disintegrated. Only his soul remained, free to wander like an untethered ghost. He learned to inhabit and control the bodies of others, and in the relative peace after the war's end he tried to return to his old life, taking up the name William Miller again and writing some of the most famous treatises on philosophy in history.

Miller founded Pala, a small nation of thinkers and philosophers on the border of modern Danor. But soon the Clergy branded Miller a heretic, invaded Pala, and sacked its capital. He was brought to Alais Primos, the new seat of the Clergy, where he was tortured in an effort to compel a confession. After he refused to recant, his captors made a pyre of his writings and burned him alive upon it.

After this second death, Miller realized mere reason could not reshape the world. He left the name William Miller behind as a martyr to peace. Once again taking the name Nicodemus the Gnostic, he proposed to Kasvarina a path to reshape the world. Knowing any open effort would result only in the loss of more innocent lives, they formed a secret society, to become known as the Obscurati.

In the hundreds of years it took him to gather allies and find a method to enact his plan, Nicodemus had to allow and endorse many immoral acts. He has surrounded himself with the ghosts of old friends-all wise and compassionate people in life-who, due to the detachment of disembodied undeath, feel few qualms with causing suffering if it advances their goals. They still believe they act for the greater good, and indeed their goals are still noble, but Nicodemus can no longer claim any sort of ideological purity.

Of his many sins, the latest is his theft of a man's body. Nicodemus needed a form he could wear long-term to provide consistent leadership to the conspiracy, and his agents found him one. Andrei von Recklinghausen, whom the party may have met in Adventure Four, Always on Time, has great natural strength and regenerative powers, as well as a romantic and noble heart. The Obscurati found him protecting a high elf refugee named Isobel, trying to get her to Elfaivar. Nicodemus made Andrei a bargain, delivering Isobel safely to her destination in exchange for Andrei not resisting Nicodemus's possession. Though Andrei's mind still exists, it has not the strength to fight for control of his body, and Nicodemus would never let

him go after what he has seen.

As the convocation gathers, Nicodemus himself is torn. Of the many factions being argued, he wants to endorse the one with the most idealistic and selfless goals. Kasvarina named the faction Miller's Pyre as a reminder of what happened to Nicodemus the last time he trusted in people's nobility. But he thinks the most effective solution is the plan of the Watchmakers, which removes all free will from people. While it would lead to the world he wants, he has deep philosophical doubts about the plan's morality.

What he is sure of, though, is that many were drawn to his conspiracy by the dream of being in power. Nicodemus used their ambition, but now he is ready to purge the Obscurati of their selfishness and greed. For two days he will charm them and encourage them to be honest with their beliefs, and then he will cut out those who do not deserve to shape the world to come.





Two years ago Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen dabbled in dark magic to stitch together and reanimate dead flesh into a new creation, which he named Andrei. When Andrei realized how his 'father' had created him he lashed out, destroying the doctor's home and wife before forced to flee when Wolfgang nearly killed him.

He initially desired revenge, but eventually cooled and decided to find value in his new life. While stowing away on the Avery Coast railroad he helped free from slavery a high elf woman named Isobel Travers, but in so doing his unique powers came to the attention of the Obscurati. The Obscurati intercepted

Andrei and Isobel as they tried to reach safety, and they abducted him, promising to let her go free if he cooperated.

Andrei regenerates wounds like a troll, and has almost unmatched strength and agility for a human. But as a consequence of the dark magic used in his creation, he drains the soul of anyone he touches. This makes him a perfect vessel for the leader of the conspiracy, Nicodemus the Gnostic. Andrei believes his will might be strong enough to overcome the mastermind for a while, but he hasn't seen the right opportunity to make a break for freedom.

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ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

A flash forward puts the players in the shoes of a group of Obscurati officers as they arrive at the palace off the coast of Vendricce. A spy, **Vitus Sigismund**, is captured after a guard beast sees through his disguise, showing the dangers and consequences of the constables' mission.

An ambiguous time earlier, the party has a mission briefing with their superiors in the RHC, as well as **Governor Roland Stanfield** of the city of Flint, who unbeknownst to them is an Obscurati cell leader. Stanfield tries to convince the party to stick around and deal with Flint issues, rather than pursuing the Obscurati, which can eat into how much time they have to complete their mission. Because of the sensitive nature of his position, Stanfield is one of the few cell leaders who isn't attending the convocation, but he's not sure how close the party is to discovering it.

After the meeting with Stanfield, the party's boss **Stover Delft** loads them on a carriage headed for their ship, intending to send them on their next mission as soon as possible. On the way he shows them a letter sent by the mindmaker **Alexander Grappa**, written six months after his supposed death. Grappa needs the party to track down the steelshaper **Leone Quital**, whose mind Grappa is sharing, then take him to the frozen ruined city Knütpara where he can remove Quital's soul and take control of the man's body permanently. In exchange, he offers to sneak the party into a grand convocation of the Obscurati so they can gather intelligence and perhaps strike from within.

When they reach their ship, though, the party finds a visitor: archfey of the sea **Lady Beshela**. She fears the king of Risur has become a puppet of dangerous forces, and offers them a boon: a magical ship component that will let their vessel teleport across planes.

A commotion erupts on the shore as dock-workers arrive, led by local celebrity **Rock Rackus**. Rock is excited, believing that he's been invited to join their mission. In truth, the bizarre fey **Copperhat the Headless** used magic to trick Rackus as a cover so he could get close to Beshela. During the commotion Copperhat slips aboard the party's ship and reveals that Beshela's "gift" is actually cursed and would sink their ship.

Copperhat explains that the fey in the Dreaming are at odds over whether to continue their alliance with Risur or awaken the fey titans, and Beshela sought to betray them. Beshela departs in anger, and Copperhat breaks the curse on Beshela's gift, then offers a gift of his own. These two fey will play a larger role in Adventure Nine, *The Last Starry Sky*, but for now they serve just as another source of delay for the party's mission.

Once the party is ready, they set out for Leone's last known destination, the capital of Crisillyir, Alais Primos. When they go to meet with RHC assets, though, they learn that the Ob are eliminating RHC agents to stymie the investigation. They have an unexpected ally, however: **El Extraño**, the kobold spymaster of Ber, who can lend many spare sets of eyes. With their aid, the party sets up an international man-hunt and visits key sites of interest to track down the steelshaper.

After weeks or months, they find him in a mobile suite on a train that runs across Drakr. The party can either strike while the train is in motion, or wait for it to stop at his main base in the northern city of Mirsk. Leone and his allies put up a fight, with the steelshaper abusing his powers to hurl locomotives at his attackers, then perhaps decoupling cars and trying to flee by rail, but with luck the party can take him down.

With Leone in custody, the party must bring him along to a city frozen in a glacier. While the steelshaper tries to escape and cause trouble, they must sneak past the frost giant guards and either defeat or negotiate with the khangitche, Odul Chuvan, to gain access to a giant lich trapped in ice who can rip Leone's soul from his body, leaving Grappa in control. The mindmaker can then use a spell to plant the constables' minds into the bodies of Obscurati officers—which is easy since Grappa knows who Leone was going to meet.

Schism **C** Introduction

At this point the adventure catches up with the prologue. The party, wearing the bodies of their enemies, arrive at the Obscurati palace, meet the conspiracy's leader, and participate in the opening ceremony of the grand convocation. They learn the broad parameters of the Obscurati's plans, and are given a chance to vote on which of serveral proposals will be enacted. The event is set to last until the following evening, and includes opportunities to speak with other officers, to discuss philosophy, and to enter demi-planes via linked portals in paintings so they can sample possible ways the new world could be changed.

Complications arise, however. The constables are not the only ones here who oppose the Obscurati. **Benedict Pemberton** has replaced an Ob officer with a duplicant, so he will be able to spy and eventually intervene. Meanwhile the ghost of **Reed Macbannin**, whom the party previously arrested and who was recruited to the Ob's Ghost Council after he died in custody, has found that he does not quite agree with the conspiracy now that he knows all of their plans. During the first night he murders two Ob officers, trying to sow discord.

Of course, the party themselves is likely to cause trouble. Their most opportune time to strike is after the final vote of the convocation, but

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CONSEQUENCES OF PREVIOUS ADVENTURES.

You might need to change a few details based on the party's previous actions.

First, if the party finished Adventure Six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*, and wanted to immediately go looking for Leone, you might need to adjust the timeline. They'd still want to return to Flint to deliver Tinker, debrief, resupply their ship, and make plans with Delft.

Second, in that adventure we included options for technological breakthroughs Risur might achieve due to recovering Tinker and/or his invention notes. Make sure to inform the party of the status of these innovations, and to give them one or two opportunities to make use of the new technology.

Third, it might be necessary to edit the letter Alexander Grappa sends the party, especially if Grappa didn't end up destroyed by Leone Quital at the end of Adventure Five, *Cauldron-Born*. If the party managed to unequivocably kill Quital, you can substitute another Ob officer and if necessary have Grappa be a disembodied mind that has managed to finally possess the man.

Fourth, the party might not find Kvarti Gorbatiy in the frost giant rift in Act Two if he perished.

Fifth, be attentive to small details of various Ob officers the party may have met in the past. We presume, for example, Kasvarina was rescued and spirited away by Asrabey Varal in Adventure Five, and that the four Ob officers who waited at the end of the line in Adventure Four were either killed then or were later taken out in some other way.

Finally, if the party never helped Andrei von Recklinghausen in Adventure Four, *Always on Time*, then the high elf woman Isobel was likely sold off into slavery, and Andrei was picked up by curious Ob researchers. The man would have no remembrance of the party, and thus you'll have to reflavor Nicodemus's departure during the climax. Instead of being stopped by Andrei's willpower, he instead flees out a plentitude of caution.

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first they'll be well served by sneaking around, spying on conversations, and possibly rescuing Vitus the godhand. One key piece of information they should discover is that the Ob have narrowed down the location of Kasvarina Varal, whom the high elves of Elfaivar are trying to hide, and who could likely regain control of the conspiracy's colossus. This plants a seed for events in Adventure Eight.

The party might assassinate potential threats, steal secrets from the palace's library, or figure out the structure of the Obscurati's international cells. They might even be able to find allies among those disgruntled Ob officers whose factions lose the vote. But if the party gets this far without revealing themselves, they will be unmasked by Pemberton, kicking off a massive fight as the losing factions try to get off the island alive.

ADVENTURE LAYOUT

We divide the plot of Schism as follows.

- Teaser: A Gathering of Minds. The players briefly play as officers of the conspiracy as they arrive at the convocation and witness the apprehension of a spy.
- Act One: Where in the World is Alexander Grappa? The party tries to rescue Alexander Grappa without knowing where he is.
- Act Two: Applied Eschatology. Grappa needs the party to assault a frost giant stronghold in a glacier.
- Act Three: The Grand Convocation. Under cover as officers of the Obscurati, the party infiltrates the conspiracy.

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).

Key Locations.

Use this list to keep track of locations the PCs might visit.

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Flint: Industrial heart of Risur, on the coast of the Avery Sea. Home base of the party's branch of the RHC. The party can communicate via *sending* and receive aid via teleportation beacons.

Trekhom: Capital of Drakr, covered in rails on the surface and riddled with tunnels below ground. A likely place to look for Leone, but he's seldom there.

Nalaam: An independent city-state between Drakr and Crisillyir, decadent and ruled by mages. An ambush likely strikes the party here. Mirsk: A hub for rail traffic in northern Drakr, and home to mighty factories where thousands of dwarves toil to craft industrial marvels. Leone's primary base of operations.

Shawl Mountains: Glacial mountain range, gripped with magical cold but rich with exotic metals like mithral and adamantine, and scattered with meteorites that fell and were trapped in layers of ice. Said to be prison of undead titans who once controlled Drakr.

Knütpara: Ancient dwarven city consumed by a glacier, now guarded by frost giants. Site of old dark magic that will let Grappa take over Leone's body permanently.

Alais Primos: Capital of Crisillyir, and the best starting point for tracking down Leone.

Vendricce: City on the western side of a natural channel between Crisillyir and Elfaivar. Wealthy port, heavily garrisoned to defend against high elf attacks.

Mutravir Island: Location of the Obscurati palace, twenty miles off the coast of Vendricce.

Obscurati Palace: This palace has sat for over a century, unoccupied except for a small maintenance staff. It once belonged to a hierarch of the Clergy, who before his death decreed that the island was to remain unspoiled, never to be reinhabited. On the Bleak Gate analogue of this island, the Obscurati use the palace as their seat of power, using the Clergy's own piety to keep away curious interlopers.

NPC Roster.

Detailed entries on various NPCs appear throughout the adventure.

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El Extraño, kobold spymaster from Ber	19
Erskine Haffkruger, dwarf arborist	45
Han Jierre, sovereign of Danor	10
Kvarti Gorbatiy, dwarven sniper-philosopher	37
Leone Quital, the steelshaper	28
Nicodemus the Gnostic	3
Reed Macbannin, Ghost Council member	10
Stover Delft, Chief Inspector of the RHC	13
Vicemi Terio, spectral head of Lantern Cell	10
Vitus Sigismund, Crisillyiri spy	9

Additionally, we provide seven Obscurati officers that the party can pose as during the Convocation, detailed in **Player Handout–Obscurati Covers** (see also the Brief Beats sidebar on page 11).

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Schism

Recurring Characters. This adventure gives the party an opportunity to meet several villains and thwart their plans without actually killing everyone. Leone Quital, who has troubled the party twice before, likely dies in this adventure, but other key Obscurati figures like Han Jierre and Nicodemus the Gnostic recur even into the highest levels. Alexander Grappa has enough mind magic to show back up later at least as a disembodied consciousness even if he dies.

Incidental NPCs. Various NPCs might only show up for a single scene, but if the PCs latch on to anyone, you can refer here to remind yourself who is who. Additionally, see Appendix One: Complete Officer Roster for a full list of every Obscurati officer attending the convocation. Most of them aren't important to the plot, but it's useful in case the players ask, "Who's in charge of Ob operations in Seobriga?" so they can track him down and kill him later.

NPC	Page
Bert Facie, assistant to Han Jierre	23
Captain Dale, defender of Cauldron Hill	12
Captain Matt Massaer, Obscurati skipper	20
Emmelsa, go-fer for Leone	20
Gangenwieck, male Ob researcher	35
Jacques LeBrayne, Danoran yacht-owner	17
Joe Hobner, retired RHC, murdered	17
Lauryn Cyneburg, RHC infiltration specialist	17
Odul Chuvan, frost giant khangitche	32
Piginni Quital, Leone's nephew	20
Robert the Black, impostor-assassin	18
Rock Rackus, docker celebrity and jack-ass	14
Thornsenkertz, female Ob researcher	35
Unnamed giant lich	36

REWARDS

The party's Prestige with the Clergy might increase if they rescue Vitus, and if it hasn't reached 6 with the Obscurati yet, it will. If the party manages to crash the Ob's shindig, they will be target number one for the conspiracy after this adventure.

The PCs should have each about 82,000 gp in equipment by the start of this adventure. Each PC gets a stipend of 26,000 gp after they have their briefing, then are granted a further stipend of 32,000 gp before they head to the Obscurati convocation. Requisitioned materials can be delivered to the party's ship via the teleportation beacon.

List of Magic Items as Treasure.

Stat blocks for new items are presented in Appendix Four (page 71). We encourage you to tweak the physical forms of items to make them more appealing to your player characters.

- + Codex of Little People, a gift from El Extraño the kobold spymaster.
- ♦ Steelsilk mantle, worn by Leone Quital.
- + Fey portal pad, a ship enhancement offered by the Unseen Court's archfey Lady Beshela.
- + Frost giant's plate, worn by Odul Chuvan the frost giant khangitche.
- + Ghostly entourage, bonded to a bracelet worn by Vicemi Terio.
- ♦ Reason, diplomatic rifle designed by Kvarti Gorbatiy.
- + The absurdist web, which Copperhat the Headless asks you to hold onto as a favor to him.
- + Vekeshi blade, possessed by Cula Ravjahani.
- + Artifact. The Humble Hook, worn by Nicodemus the Gnostic.









PACING AND LEVELING.

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The party starts this adventure at 11th level. We recommend that they reach 12th level after the frost giant-controlled city of Knütpara, before they enter the Obscurati palace.

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FINAL WORD BEFORE WE START

This adventure, more than any other in the ZEITGEIST adventure path, is highly dependent on proper presentation and tone. If the players walk into a gathering of people who are just sitting around talking, they can become quickly bored. But if you keep the players unsure just where they stand, who might be a potential ally, and who might suspect their true intentions, conversations can go from banal to threatening. The party should be certain from the moment they arrive at the Convocation that they are in enemy territory, and that any misstep on their part could bring an overwhelming attack down upon them.

Play up how comfortable the Ob officers are with talk about "acceptable casualties" and "putting down pockets of resistance." Casually mention ghosts standing in corners watching the proceedings, or drifting along staring in through windows whenever the PCs walk past. Reiterate at every opportunity that the party is stranded in the Bleak Gate—cloudless, windless, starless, and filled with the lurking souls of the lingering dead—with limited means to escape should they be discovered.

Even if the PCs decide that they will join the conspiracy and aid their plans for the greater good, they should be under no illusions that these people are selfless, decent, or even particularly burdened by what they have done. The best of them have solved their own personal moral calculus and decided a little evil is worth the good they hope to achieve. The worst of them truly only care how they can get the greatest "good" for themselves.

CHARACTER THEMES IN THE ADVENTURE.

Adventure Seven takes the party far afield from Flint, so some character themes (detailed in the ZEITGEIST *Player's Guide*) have fewer obvious connections to the plot and setting. However, several narrative threads weave large social trends around the world into the cultural movements of Flint itself. We hope these will pay off when the party returns to Risur in Adventure Nine.

- Dockers—In addition to having a chance to broker a deal between the dockers and the fey lord Copperhat the Headless, a docker PC can use connections with the Panoply to get aid from working stiffs in multiple countries during the manhunt for Leone.
- Eschatologists—Though he may not realize it, an eschatologist PC will come face to face with agents of the end of the world. They're likely best equipped to debate with the Obscurati.
- Gunsmiths—The party's philosophizing sniper acquaintance Kvarti Gorbatiy shows up in the frost giant rift.
- Martial Scientists—Whoever places their consciousness in Xavier Sangria will be able to teach a martial scientist his Malicious Deflection technique.
- Skyseers—As usual, Skyseers have intuitive understanding of the magic of the Obscurati's planar plots.
- Spirit Mediums—A sunken pirate ship and the ghosts of its crew lurk just off the coast of the Obscurati island, and if treated well they can aid the party's escape.
- Technologists—The party would be well-served by sabotaging Leone's train or the Obscurati's enchanted lighthouse.
- Vekeshi Mystics Mystic PCs can learn the fate of Kasvarina Varal, a leader of both the mystics and the Obscurati. Cula Ravjahani, Kasvarina's second, might reveal in casual conversation that many missions of the mystics were actually serving the agenda of the Ob.
- Yerasol Veterans—Catherine Romana, an Ob officer and a Risuri politician, is infamous for her poor regard for Yerasol veterans.

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TEASER: A GATHERING OF MINDS

n this brief teaser, the players take on the roles of Obscurati

L members arriving at the Grand Convocation.

ARRIVING AT THE OBSCURATI PALACE

Social. Real-Time. Level 11.

Ob agents witness a spy being captured.

Either decide in advance, or offer the players the chance to choose, which player will play which of the Obscurati officers listed in **Players Handout—Obscurati Officer Cards**. Hand out the personality cards on page 73. *Do not hand out the full gestalt pages yet*.

If you want to be nice to your players, we encourage you to look at the **Vile Ritual** sidebar (page 38) and try to match PCs with Ob officers in order of lowest Will save to highest. Later on PCs will be required to contest willpowers with their hosts. If you'd rather set things up for disaster, let them pick whoever they want.

We provide seven Ob officers. If you have fewer than seven players, just make sure PCs are assigned Livia Hatsfield and Oscan Ligurio first. Assign an officer to each other player, and then pretend the other officers don't exist. There are quite enough NPCs in this adventure without them.

Welcoming Party.

Read or paraphrase the following text.

Your ship passes close to the scrub-brushed shore, weaving between looming stones that jut from the sea, some of them even higher than the vessel's sails. Hazy clouds and sea spray fade the island into a foggy gray, but somehow the crew navigates to a small pier.

The ride inland from the dock is brief and surprising. As you and the other passengers look out from your two carriages, the island looks wholly abandoned, and it's hardly an auspicious gathering place for a group as powerful as the Obscurati.

You've barely had a chance to meet or speak with the other guests—some priests from the Clergy, a Danoran, a dwarf from Drakr, even a half-elf from Risur, plus a few whose nationality you can't place—but you all know Leone Quital, the steelshaper, who arranged your travel. It's been a convoluted route, but these precautions are necessary.

The drivers bring you down an overgrown dirt road, along a weed-choked reflecting pool, and finally pull to a stop just outside a run down mansion. Cracked and empty windows leer down at you, and even the plants that have taken over the estate are tattered and bug-chewed.

You spot two figures at the front door, and though the entry behind them is rotted, they are resplendent. A distinguished old tiefling, dressed like a head of state in a black silk suit and golden jewelry, is attended by a human in a loose coat. He whispers something to the tiefling, then lifts off the ground an ornate glass lantern the size of a small pumpkin.

"My apologies," says the tiefling. "One drawback of secrecy is that we have to carry our own luggage."

As you exit the two carriages, your drivers hand you each a heavy iron amulet on a cord, and once you've retrieved your luggage they drive off.

The human with the lamp talks as he reaches into his coat and pulls out a small vial of oil.





Schism 🚓 🔁 Teaser: A Gathering of Minds

"Lady, gentlemen, may I introduce Han Jierre, sovereign of Danor and one of the people you've been working for, whether you knew it or not."

The tiefling gives a slight smile to you, then works his way down the line of visitors, greeting you each with a handshake or a bow or a subtle blessed gesture, always appropriate to your culture, always comfortable and with the practiced ease of a seventeenth generation politician.

"Leone, an honor to finally shake your hand. Monsignior Dexlano, Patre Hevny, Bishop Vigilio your grace. Monsignior Don. Oscan, how's it going? Monsieur Guiscard, Herr Hetman, Miss Hatsfield, thank you for coming so far. Mister McDruid, Sir Sangria. It's a pleasure to meet you all." He nods to his assistant. "Bert, if you would?"

Bert has finished loading the lantern oil, and now he lights it with a quick strike of a match. A purple glow covers you, and your surroundings are spontaneously transformed. The cracked dusty ground is now also smooth and swept clean. The façade of the mansion is somehow both decayed and coated with pristine white plaster. And your small gathering has been joined by dimly visible figures on the periphery of the light's radius—armed men.

Han Jierre asks everyone to put on their amulets, explaining that they are currently coterminous to the Bleak Gate, and the amulet will pull them through to the other side over the course of five minutes. When their business here is over, they'll be returned to the real world via the same method. He'd prefer to hold off any questions until they were safely in the other world.

As each person puts on their amulet (including Han and Bert), they switch into the Bleak Gate, and can now see a predominately dark world with a cloudless black sky. Only a small area is illuminated by lights from the mansion windows and lamps beside the flower bushes that grow along the reflecting pool. A dozen bookpin guards—distinguished by silver pins on their lapels that look like open books-stand just at the edge of the lantern's light radius.

Intruder Alert.

Han says, "Please pardon us as we perform a bit of security."

From outside the light radius a massive snake slithers in, at first inky black. The moment it gets into an area of bright light its scales turn a brilliant iridescent in reds, greens, and purples. It grasps the ground with short, stubby forelimbs, and its eyes glow like pale yellow suns. In this light those who have disguised themselves with shapechanging or illusions have their true forms revealed.

The guards start to level their weapons, for one of the newly-arrived guests looks like someone completely different. Monsignior Dexlano, one of the Clergy priests, is actually Vitus Sigismund, a Clergy godhand trying to infiltrate the conspiracy.

Dexlano, originally a heavy-set pale priest, now has a second face, that of a muscular, dark-skinned man. As he realizes his disguise has been pierced he reaches to tear off his amulet, but the serpent-called a shadowlisk—moves first. Its eyes flash with blinding light, and the man's body starts to blacken and peel away while his shadow is slowly burned into the manor wall behind him.

Give the players a chance to respond here. The other arrivals (the ones not under player control) are panicked and confused. Bert starts shouting for people to stay away from the shadowlisk. Han calmly grabs a nearby guard and tells him to fetch Vicemi, and the guard runs indoors.

If no one interferes, ten seconds later Vitus has been disintegrated, leaving behind only a silhouette on the manor wall. That silhouette twitches slightly, as if it is somehow still alive. The shadowlisk slithers up to the wall and starts licking the silhouette's fingers.





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After the city of Vendricce was disrupted by fighting between the constables and the Ob in Adventure Four, Always on Time, Vitus investigated, looking for evidence of demonic influence. He found instead a far more insidious, man-made plot, one he knew he could not simply fight to submission.

A geneu credeto (literally "spirit of belief," but more colloquially known as a "godhand"), Vitus's flesh and faith are one, and in battle his fists carry the weight of the combined devotion of tens of millions of adherents to the Clergy. He grew up in a monastery, then spent two decades traveling across Lanjyr defeating and capturing evil remnants of the Demonocracy. Now

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he works alone, not trusting the hierarchy of his church. Alas, he lacked the necessary skills at subterfuge to infiltrate the Obscurati on his own.

Serene yet imposing, Vitus believes everyone has within them the potential to transcend mortal frailty and the temptations of sin, and he humbly strives to be an example of that path. Curiously, he has a great fondness for board games, which he justifies as being an encouragement for mental improvement. One of his bracers unfolds into a game board; the game can be played with a handful of ordinary stones.





Schism 🚓 📿 🐎 Teaser: A Gathering of Minds

തെ 000 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.

HAN JIERRE

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VICEMI TERIO

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Head of the Ghost Council, and leader of Lantern Cell, Vicemi cultivates his creepiness. He enjoys unsettling people, and consciously crafted his withered appearance. He respects the leaders of the conspiracy-Nicodemus, Kasvarina, and Han Jierre-because they are unfazed by his undead proclivities, though he scoffs at the time they waste on pleasantries, etiquette, and sympathy.

Vicemi was one of the first members of the Ghost Council, recruited for his unparalleled intellect and his undying hatred of the Clergy. His main desire is that in the new world the Obscurati create, religion will perish and reason will reign. Still, he admires

creativity because it inspires innovation, and he hopes to survive as a ghost forever so he can watch civilization develop in ways he cannot possibly imagine.

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Macbannin studied all manner of defensive magic, as well as a fair share of proscribed dark arts, in order to earn the role of mayor of Cauldron Hill. He protected the city from the mountain's curses for over a decade, but then was tricked into aiding the Obscurati, believing he was working on a secret Risuri military project. After being captured, he was contacted by Nicodemus, who offered to let him join the Ghost Council. Macbannin, always a shrewd politician, agreed, but he wasn't surprised to discover he did not really agree with the conspiracy's goals. He just waits for the right time to turn against them.

Despite being dead, Macbannin comes across as

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high-energy, with a rascally sense of humor. Since his previous life's work was devoted to keeping secrets, none of the Obscurati suspect his disloyalty.

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The other Clergy members demand answers, asking why the snake just murdered one of their fellow priests. The answer comes from the door as four spectral figures glide through.

The Archmage and the Ghost Council.

Three of the ghosts hang back, while the one in front takes control of the situation. Vicemi Terio, leader of the Ghost Council and head of Lantern Cell, speaks with a raspy voice that reverberates unnaturally and chills all those who hear it.

"That man was a spy," he says. "Your fellow priest was replaced and likely died long ago. You should be more careful in keeping your secrets. But we will find out how you were compromised. Macbannin."

One of the three other ghosts walks forward. While Vicemi's face is withered and decayed, and the other two ghosts' features are faded like they don't remember what they looked like in life, Reed Macbannin has barely been dead a year, so he still mostly walks rather than floats. He stops next to the still-twitching shadow of the intruder, casually shoos the shadowlisk aside, and draws a very solid vial of blood out of his spectral cloak.

"Really," Macbannin laughs, "it'd worry me more if we didn't have any spies trying to come here."

With that he coats his hands in blood, then reaches into the wall and grabs the shadows. He yanks, and Vitus falls to the ground shivering and burnt, barely alive. The guards swarm him, search him, and manacle him. Macbannin casts another quick spell to fully hold Vitus in the Bleak Gate, then pulls off his amulet.

"I'll take him to the dungeon," Macbannin says. Then he grins and winks to the new arrivals. "Welcome to the Obscurati."

CIGARETTE SMOKING MAN

Social. Real-Time. Level 11.

Newcomers are welcomed by mastermind Nicodemus the Gnostic.

As Macbannin and the guards drag Vitus away, Han introduces the newcomers to Vicemi Terio, and then asks the two remaining Clergy priests to stay and answer a few questions. He then enters the mansion and guides the PCs and Leone to the upstairs west council room. Give the players time to ask questions, take in the sights, and roleplay a bit if they're interested, or just go ahead and get the party to Nicodemus if they're not really into playing villains.

When this group arrives, most of the rest of the visitors are already at the palace, and as they pass through the lounges on the ground floor, they might spot a few smoking cigars, swapping stories, or simply browsing the numerous bookshelves that are scattered about. Once they head upstairs and down the west wing's second floor hallway, though, the mansion appears nearly empty. None of the hall lamps are lit, lights are visible from under only a few doors. But there is a dim red glow at the end of the three hundred foot long hallway.





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BRIEF BEATS.

You can use a few of these moments now or later in the adventure to give each "cover identity" a small moment to roleplay. All of the conversations below are fairly inconsequential, and the only NPC from them who plays a major role in the adventure is Catherine Romana, who recognizes Livia Hatsfield.

- Ken Don. Patre Hevny, one of the other newcomers, thanks Ken Don for letting his agents find the material they needed in his library. He mentions that the fire temple indeed was not heretical, though the church would probably have suppressed the Ancient map of the cosmos they found.
- + Gran Guiscard. As the group passes through a lounge, a half-dragon bard named Praesidia de Vaca does a double-take and calls out "Mr. Guiscard!" She gushes with fangirl glee at seeing the famous opera star, and she's gobsmacked that Gran is involved in the same conspiracy. She asks if maybe, before the gathering is over, the two of them be able to sing "The Marriage of Achaea and Hibiscus."
- Kiov Hetman. Ramos Zoltan, a dwarf businessman, is "holding court" among the rest of the Drakran delegation, smoking cigars and drinking brothy ales. He spots Kiov and explains that he's telling about the time he sent the police chief of Trekhom to a gulag after he shot Zoltan's favorite dog. Zoltan gave the chief a dog of his own to keep him company in the gulag, and so far it has suffered a broken leg, food poisoning, burns, and a couple beatings. Zoltan claims this makes him noble, since he could

have done all these things to the chief. The other Drakrans laugh darkly at the proposal.

- Oscan Ligurio. Abeira Stackhouse, a halfling from Risur, locks eyes with Oscan from across the room, his expression a thousand yard stare. Oscan notices the little man make a note in a small book, and then suddenly laugh and join in with a conversation involving other conspirators. This is mostly to build up the party's paranoia, but also Stackhouse is considering who might be an ally to the Voice of Rot.
- Bruce McDruid. While Han is getting the group some drinks from a lounge bar, a minotaur, Trevio Addaz, comes up and jovially asks what Bruce does for the organization. If he hears the details, he's interested in whether Bruce would be willing to introduce some of his underlings to the primitive peoples in order to teach them magic.
- Xavier Sangria. General Shane Wallisonne, a spy in the Danoran army, is bragging about hunting beasts in the Malice lands from atop the Avery Coast railroad, making obviously fictional claims about how splendid his aim is and how fierce the monsters were, such as a three-headed elephant with lion claws and tusks that dripped black ichor.
- Livia Hatsfield. As the group goes up the stairs to the second floor, they
 pass by Catherine Romana, a noble from Risur. As she walks, a house cat
 follows close on her heels. Romana notices Livia and says, "Hm, small
 world." She apologizes and has to go somewhere else.

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Meet the Mastermind.

In the vast room at the end of the hallway, a central fireplace roars warmly, but out the glass windows on the north, south, and west walls the whole landscape is nearly black. Together it creates the effect of light disappearing, and darkness encroaching.

A set of luxurious leather chairs are arrayed near the west windows, and one man sits smoking. His hands are gloved, and a necklace is visible around his neck, but tucked into his shirt. At first he seems alone, but as he stands to greet the group, it becomes clear that a dozen or more ghosts are floating outside the windows, watching.

He says, "Call me Nicodemus. I'm glad you came. Together we're

going to change the world. Come on. Let's have a drink and talk."

Ideally, if you think your players remember what Andrei von Recklinghausen looked like from Adventure Four, show them his portrait, then tell them to get out their normal character sheets, and hand in the officer sheets.

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ROLEPLAYING NICODEMUS. Personally, I just imagine I'm George Clooney, and try my best to channel his movie star charisma. Get that speech cadence down right and pull off the right mix of casual charm and gravitas.

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ACT ONE: FIND THE MINDMAKER

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n this act, the party receives a mission to track down

Leone Quital and take him alive. The act begins on

the 1st of Autumn, 501 A.O.V.

MEANWHILE IN THE NEWS...

While the party is seeking Grappa, what's happening everywhere else?

Colossus. Where's the colossus? Crossing the strait from Ber to Elfaivar. Curious titan-watchers have been gathering rumors of all the foot-prints that trace the machine's path. The colossus's invisible approach is heralded by thunder as it collapses the ground beneath its twenty-yard long feet, so most animals are smart enough to get out of the way. Inquisitive on-lookers have not fared as well.

Tensions. Remember the Arripa! This merchant vessel was sunk just off the coast of Beaumont in Danor. A disagreement between a member of the crew and a local police officer spiraled into a desperate attempt to flee the city as Danorans sought an outlet for their anger at Risur. The ship managed to cast off, only to be fired upon by another vessel. All sixty-three crewmen died either with their ship or in violence on land. The identities of those responsible are currently unknown.

Here there Still be Dragons. Soldiers in the Beran army report sightings of a dragon in the Bruse's latest campaign to put down gnoll rebels. Adventurers across the continent of Lanjyr are frothing at the bit hoping they might find another dragon to slay.

New Technology! The game master will have to insert something here based on what innovations the party chose to pursue thanks to Tinker Oddcog's research.

Moving Rivers, Walking Dead. Large trees are spontaneously sprouting in massive clumps along the banks of rivers in the northern reaches of Risur's Weftlands, then dying almost as quickly. The trees either divert the flow or collapse and create dams and new lakes. Trappers in the area have reported finding long-dead animals, some nearly rotted to the bone, caught in traps they laid only days earlier.



POLITICAL MEDDLING

Exposition/Social. Real-Time. Level 11.

The constables discuss local Flint matters with Governor Stanfield before their departure.

The party arrives at a conference room in the fortress of Governor's Island in Flint, home and workplace of Governor Roland Stanfield. A long table splits the conference room in two, and an inviting buffet of pastries and coffee cover it.

The party is accompanied by Chief Inspector Stover Delft, who is already polishing off his third donut; and **Captain Dale**, the head of security on Cauldron Hill, who has encouraged the group to eat their fill while slowly savoring a single donut of his own. After the players settle in, Governor Stanfield enters, asks the guards to not let anyone in for the next half hour, then closes the door. He gets himself coffee and a small plate of fried jackfruit chips, and winces a bit as he sits down, apologizing for a back injury that has plagued him for five centuries. He waves it off, and with warm enthusiasm says they should get started.

Homeland Security.

Delft makes it clear from the start that the party's next mission is a classified one, and that he hasn't even briefed the constables yet, so he asks why the governor called them here.

Stanfield says he was hoping to get the RHC's aid resolving some issues here in Flint, since their skills are quite useful. He asks Captain Dale to provide an overview, and requests the party consider sticking around as long as possible, since the city isn't quite safe yet.

This is a stalling tactic by Stanfield, but he's very believable and should drop no clues that he's worried about their investigation. Instead, present the scene as the governor and Delft offering two possible different missions. Stanfield doesn't know what the party is up to, but he hopes to keep them busy in town, at least until the convocation is over. If the players decide to stay in Flint and resolve some of these issues, none of them are particularly challenging to characters of their power level, just very time-consuming.

Briefing Time.

Captain Dale lists the issues currently facing Flint, and asks the party for suggestions on how to proceed with each.

1. Cauldron Hill. Since the colossus broke free, the peak has been fluctuating, sometimes coterminous with the Bleak Gate, sometimes safely in this world. Dale's men patrol and kill a nightly influx of undead and frightening monsters, but that's just a stopgap. Two men have died already. He's at a loss of how to fix the problem.

Any actual solution would be a large magical endeavor, perhaps utilizing the Wayfarer Lantern if the party recovered it in Adventure Four, or undertaking a dungeon crawl and performing purifying rituals in the ruins of the Obscurati facility while creatures threaten them. The monsters themselves are dangerous to civilians, but not to high-level constables.

2. Docker Riots. The police have been getting into more brawls with dockers and factory workers. The police have been particularly





Schism 🔫 🖉 🐎 Act One: Find the Mindmaker

on edge since swaths of the city were crushed by the colossus, cracking down on the smallest offenses. Meanwhile the general mood of the dockers is that most authority figures must have been involved with the disaster, and conspiracy theories are flying across the city.

There's no easy way to regain the public's trust, but PCs could make small progress.

3. Shipwrecks. An unusual number of ships have been wrecking on shoals near The Ayres. A few people have talked of building a new lighthouse, while others suspect the sea fey are angry.

This is simultaneously a red herring (since the PCs might key in on "lighthouses"), and a tie-in to the next scene, when Archfey of the Sea Beshela tries to trick them. She's the one responsible for these sinkings.

4. Pemberton Fall-Out. After the party discovered in Adventure Six that industrialist Benedict Pemberton was actually a dragon with a mild case of "wanting to become a tyrant," Stanfield has wanted a thorough investigation into his activities in Flint. He says he's worried about duplicants.

Pemberton did managed to rush some of his industrial material out of the city, and the party could waste weeks tracking the paper trail to an island in the Yerasol Archipelago, where he has set up his new base of operations. He'll likely get wind before they reach him, and can leave in a hurry, but this can weaken some of his sabotage efforts in Adventure Nine, The Last Starry Sky.

Captain Dale finishes up, and Stanfield tries to get some hints on where the party will be going next, but Delft encourages the party to leave, and suggests that he can report later. Once the meeting is complete, Delft grabs a few more donuts and asks the party to follow him down to a private carriage.

Burn After Reading.

The carriage leaves the gates of the fortress, then heads across a bridge to the mainland en route to the party's ship. Only then does Delft explain why he's been so cagey. He pulls out a letter and hands it over to the party, saying that it arrived just this morning.

Show the players Player's Handout-Letter from Grappa.

It's only a ten minute carriage ride to the party's ship. Delft encourages the party to discuss plans, and says that he hopes they'll set sail tomorrow morning. He'll coordinate from here with agents on the northern side of the Avery Sea. The party's mission is to find Leone Quital and take him alive.

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CHECK THE POSTMARK.

The letter was delivered by a nondescript courier in an envelope with no postmark. If somehow the party traces its provenance magically, they can learn that (going in reverse chronological order) Delft got it from his secretary, who got it from a courier, who removed it from its original envelope and repackaged it after he picked it up from a butcher's shop in Bosum Strand, to which the letter had been delivered by the Risuri post, after it had been carried on a ship from Trekhom, after being handled by two different Drakran postmen, who received it in a bundle of mail off a train, which came from Mirsk, where it was loaded by another postman, who got the mail from the post office, where the letter was dropped off by one of Leone's guards, after Leone handed it to him in a thick stack of letters





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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.



Stanfield witnessed the fall of the high elf goddess Srasama five hundred years ago and died soon thereafter. But he reincarnated, his memories vague and jumbled. He found his way back to his homeland of Risur, settled in Flint, and eventually became the city's governor.

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In the centuries since he has died at irregular intervals, and with each rebirth he returned to the city he calls home. He has 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.

THE LADY AND THE LIAR

Social. Real-Time. Level 14.

Two archfey cause trouble at the party's docked ship.

If the party doesn't head to their ship now, they soon get a message that a visitor is waiting for them there. Lady Beshela, a powerful fey (albeit not a member of the Unseen Court) with dominion over the seas along Risur's northern coast, stands on the deck of the party's ship, and a huge school of fish swarms in the water around it.

Beshela's Bitterness.

Beshela was a long-time friend of Duchess Ethelyn of Shale, and she supported Ethelyn's coup attempt (see Adventure One, Island at the Axis of the World). She blames the party for Ethelyn's defeat. Now, a year and a half later, the fey politics that kept Beshela from enacting her revenge have shifted. The disruption of the Unseen Court will play out more in Adventure Nine, The Last Starry Sky, but for now she just plans to kill the party.

In truth, Beshela's acting slightly against her own interests. She joined with the duchess to help stop a plot they suspected against Risur-a plot being hatched by the Obscurati. Though she now knows more about the conspiracy, she has trouble differentiating between different groups she disagrees with. She thinks the party are allied with the Obscurati, and that they are somehow fooling King Aodhan into trusting them.





Lady Beshela serves as steward of the domains of the fey titan She Who Writhes. Though not a member of the Unseen Court, Beshela bears the title Archfey of the Sea and controls most of the waters along Risur's north shore. With armies of sea creatures at her command, the beautiful fey is like a queen of her own land, though there are other threats that lurk deeper than her domain descends.

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Beshela feels she owes a great debt to Risur. Forty years ago Ethelyn, sister of the current king, rescued her from a pirate sorcerer, giving birth to a long-lasting friendship and military pact. Beshela even aided Ethelyn's coup attempt against the king. Proud and spiteful,

Beshela holds a grudge against those who thwarted her friend's efforts. Her moods

are seemingly aqueous, but she is merely a clever charmer, fond of long schemes that depend on her enemies not knowing how dangerous she really is.

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A somewhat infamous fey (Nature DC 23 to recall his name) who acts a mix of trickster and jester for the Unseen Court. Like actual members of the court, Copperhat has no face, at least none that anyone can see. His namesake hat sits atop a seemingly invisible head, which is enough to fool most minor fey into thinking he's really one of the Unseen.

In truth he's just a clever ettercap-like pixie who hides inside his coat and levitates his clothes and hat, controlling his fake body like an oversized puppet. He normally travels between fey enclaves trading knick-knacks and favors, with a particular fondness for telling stories about the human world. People find

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him amusing in small servings, but are quick to suggest new places for him to go after a day or so.

Copperhat is secretly a minion of the Voice of Rot, the only one of the fey titans currently awake. The Voice of Rot has long-term plans that involve the party, and he wants them kept safe

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VOICE OF ROT'S PLAN.

The White Serpent is empowered by death, and desires it like normal creatures crave food and shelter. Nothing could please him more than presiding over the end of the world. But he senses the change coming as the Obscurati prepare to open the Axis Seal, and he needs the party as eyes. He knows he will have a chance to kill the world, but he doesn't yet know where to go.

In Adventure Nine, The Last Starry Sky, the Voice of Rot can broker aid for the party, and in Adventure Ten, Godmind, he helps them subdue the other fey titans. All the while he acts quite creepy and ominous. He finally gets his dream in Adventure Twelve, The Grinding Gears of Heaven, when the party ventures to a graveyard of the multiverse, and he follows with the intention of dragging the world to its destruction. Depending on how much he approves of the party, he may offer them immense power if they let him do it unimpeded.





Sinking Feeling.

Beshela's plan is to give the party a gift for their ship: a fey portal pad (page 71). This enchanted wooden dais lets those who stand on it teleport to another ship, and can even briefly transport the ship into the Bleak Gate or the Dreaming. But the item is cursed, and once the ship is out of sight of land it will trigger and dissolve portions of the hull, transforming them into seaweed that will drag the rest of the vessel down. Then one of her giant squids will ensure the crew all drown.

When she talks to the party, she reminds them that she was an ally of the duchess, and that the duchess was afraid of a shadowy force controlling Risur. She says that since they defeated the duchess, they must be stronger than her, making them the best weapon against this shadowy force. She brings them a gift. At this point she waves a hand and magically conjures the portal pad, which is five feet in diameter and four inches thick.

Characters familiar with Beshela's history and demeanor (Knowledge: Nature DC 24) can tell that this magnanimity is out of character for her, and particularly insightful characters (Sense Motive DC 31) sense that she's faking her interest in helping them. Vekeshi Mystic PCs gain a +2 bonus to each of these checks. A few minutes spent closely examining the portal pad (Spellcraft DC 31) discovers the curse.

If her plan is found out, she insults the constables, calling them traitors, servants of shadows and steam, bird-voiced singers, and oafish walruses. She is wary enough of them not to initiate hostilities, and this would be a good time for Rock Rackus and Copperhat to arrive (see below). But if the party attacks her anyway she defends herself until she is reduced below half of her hit points. Then she dives into the water and swims away.

It's possible, though, for the party to get her to stay and talk, if they approach her right. See "Epic Rap Battles of History," below.

While Beshela is trying to get the party killed, the trickster Copperhat the Headless is trying to keep them alive, but that doesn't make him their friend.

Rock the Boat.

When Beshela finishes presenting her gift to the party, they hear a crowd approaching the docks, boisterously singing one of Rock Rackus's ribald classics about how he slept with the fey queen. Rock himself leads the group, having cajoled a hundred dock workers who were drinking in nearby bars to follow him to the party's ship. He's promised them a show, because he thinks he's about to set out on a grand adventure.

He calls out to the party when he sees them, then has a bit of a double take and looks beside him. Choose a PC that Copperhat would have been impersonating; Rock thinks that PC asked him to accompany them on their next mission, and he's surprised to see the PC no longer next to him.

He introduces the PCs to the crowd and says good things about whatever interactions he has had with them, then asks the party what his role is going to be on the coming mission. At some point in the ensuing conversation, voices start shouting from the crowd:

- "Hey, who's that blue chick on the boat?"
- + "I heard something about some blue faerie helping out the duchess! I bet she tried to kill the king!"
- + "Wait, she's the one who sank my ship!"
- "Constables, you've got to arrest her!"
- "Arrest her? Kill the faerie bitch!"



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Schism 🔫 🖉 🐎 Act One: Find the Mindmaker

The rest of the crowd starts to nod along, slowly preparing themselves for a riot. Attentive PCs might notice (Perception DC 31) that they couldn't see anyone actually shouting those lines, and that every voice had a faint high-pitched whine accompanying it. If the party doesn't figure out that someone's causing trouble, eventually the crowd starts to advance, and when either the PCs or Beshela react, Copperhat decides to reveal himself.

He teleports beside Beshela, drapes an arm across her shoulder, and says, "Good day to you, Agents of King Kelland." Then he turns his invisible "head" and makes a smooch sound at Beshela's face. She detaches herself coldly and glares at him.

Copperhat walks around and changes shape as he talks, occasionally standing at a right-angle to gravity on vertical parts of the ship. He asks if the party is trusting Beshela, then drops cryptically that the Unseen Court is having some disagreements with other archfey. It's times like this when exciting and stupid things happen, like a little long-delayed reciprocation.

Copperhat then grabs the portal pad and teleports to the docks, amid a gaggle of dockers. He drops the dais and kicks it a few times, and then the wood and stone of the docks start to dissolve.

Conflict and Complications.

There's a lot swirling around the PCs, but where things go depends on how they act. Beshela calls Copperhat a liar and tries to get the party to kill him. Copperhat doesn't particularly want the party to fight Beshela, but if they start it and things go badly for them, he'll jump to their aid. Things might simply defuse as Beshela slinks away. Or the party might try to talk things out.

Flooded Battle.

If attacked, Beshela starts with summon the kraken, flooding the area and leaving the crowd of dockers quite confused. Then she fey dives to teleport into the crowd and hide, using *cup of dust* on whichever enemy she thinks is most likely to cause her trouble. She'll use the crowd as cover-occasionally killing dockers-until she is reduced below half HP, at which point she'll dive and swim away. A storm cloud of acid rain will follow her, deterring pursuit.

Lying Coward.

In a fight, Copperhat laughs and enjoys the "game" for a bit, until he's reduced below half HP. Then he uses mislead to disappear and slip into the crowd.



Beshela, Archfey	y of the Sea	CR 14
XP 38,400		
CN Medium fey (wate	r)	
Init +10; Senses low-	light vision, ripplesense; Perception +21	
Defense		
C 25, touch 25, flat-fo	ooted 18 (+6 Dex, +8 deflection, +1 dodge)	
p 162 (16d6+96)		
ort +12, Ref +16, Wi	II +12	
OR 10/cold iron; Imm	une poison, Resist acid 20, cold 20; SR 25	
Weaknesses vulnera	ible to fire	
Offense		
peed 30 ft., swim 60	ft.	
felee 2 slams +15 (10	d6+8 and push)	
pecial Attacks corre	osive tempest, kraken tentacle strike, push (slam, 20 f	[:] t.), summo
the kraken		
Spell-Like Abilities	(CL 16th, concentration +24)	
At will—control wa	ter, cup of dust (DC 19), hydraulic push	
3/day—summon na	ature's ally VII (aquatic creatures or water elementals	only)
Statistics		
Str 26, Dex 22, Con 20), Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 26	
Base Atk +8; CMB +16	6; CMD 41	
eats Combat Experti	ise, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Mobi	lity, Spring
Attack, Toughness,	Whirlwind Attack	
Skills Bluff +27 Diplo	macy +27 Knowledge (geography) +21 Knowledge (natura) +2

Intimidate +24, Perception +21, Sense Motive +21, Swim +35

Languages Elven, Primordial, Sylvan

SQ fey dive, unearthly grace

Special Abilities

- Corrosive Tempest (Su) When Beshela is first reduced below half of her hit points, dark clouds gather overhead and begin spewing forth black rain in a quarter-mile radius centered on her. Any creature that ends its turn without some sort of cover from the rain takes 1 point of acid damage. The clouds move with Beshela and last for five minutes.
- Fey Dive (Su) As a move action, Beshela can teleport from one area covered in water to another area covered in water within 50 feet, as long as there is a contiguous path of water between the two spaces.
- Kraken Tentacle Strike (Ex) If Beshela has summoned kraken tentacles, as a swift action, she can command one or both to move up to 20 feet through areas covered in water and make an attack against any adjacent target.

Kraken Tentacle +15 (3d6+8 plus grab); CMB +20; constrict 3d6+12

- Ripplesense (Su) Beshela perfectly knows the location of any creature within half a mile if there is a contiguous path of water between its space and hers.
- Summon the Kraken (Su) Once per day, Beshela can conjure a massive tidal wave in a guarter-mile radius burst centered on herself. All creatures hit by the wave must make a Fortitude save DC 26 or be knocked prone and pushed away 20 feet. Water floods the quarter-mile radius to a depth of two feet, though it may flow away guickly based on terrain. In addition, Beshela summons two kraken tentacles made of seaweed within 50 feet of her. Each tentacle is a Large creature with Beshela's AC and save bonuses, and 40 hit points. If a tentacle is ever completely out of water, it is destroyed.
- Unearthly Grace (Su) Beshela adds her Charisma modifier as a deflection bonus to her AC and her CMD

Epic Rap Battles of History.

Though powerful fey are notoriously recalcitrant, Beshela might change her opinion of the party if they make an effort to show they are on the same side. Normal negotiation tactics aren't ideal, and unless the party gives her a reason to trust them, she won't even listen to their defense.

Copperhat the Headless CR 12
XP 19,200
CE Medium fey
Init +11; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +14
Defense
AC 24, touch 18, flat-footed 16 (+7 Dex, +6 natural, +1 dodge)
hp 126 (14d6+70)
Fort +9, Ref +16, Will +10
DR 10/cold iron; Immune poison; SR 23
Defensive Abilities giggling departure
Offense
Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.
Melee +3 dagger +17/+12 (1d4+5/19–20 plus poison)
Special Attacks sneak attack +7d6, poison, web (+14 ranged, DC 22, 14 hp)
Spell-like Abilities (CL 14th, concentration +17)
At will—disguise self, misdirection, ventriloquism
3/day—quickened invisibility, major image, mislead, searing light
Statistics
Str 15, Dex 24, Con 20, Int 19, Wis 8, Cha 16
Base Atk +7; CMB +9; CMD 27
Feats Deceitful, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Quicken Spell-Like Ability
(invisibility), Skill Focus (Bluff), Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +26, Climb +25, Diplomacy +18, Disguise +22, Escape Artist +22, Perception +14, Perform (comedy) +18, Sleight of Hand +22, Stealth +22, Use Magic Device +18

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Primordial, Sylvan

SQ sound mimicry (voices)

Gear +3 dagger, collection of random holy symbols

Special Abilities

- Giggling Departure (Su) The first time each day Copperhat would be reduced to negative hit points or killed, he takes no damage from the triggering attack. Copperhat turns invisible and immediately teleports away as per dimension door (CL 14th). Observers see his clothing fall to the ground in a tattered lump, and his top hat starts to drift downward. Then a tiny arm reaches up out of the collar of his seemingly empty coat and grabs the brim of his hat just before it lands. He pulls the hat into his coat, pulling a reverse magician's trick. Then he—and his hat—are gone, leaving behind only an empty suit and laughter on the air.
- Poison (Ex) Injury; save Fort DC 22; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d6 Str; cure 2 consecutive saves. As a free action, Copperhat can coat a weapon in his hand with this poison. The save DC is Constution-based
- Sound Mimicry (Ex) Copperhat can perfectly imitate the voices of other creatures. He makes a Bluff check opposed by the listener's Sense Motive check to recognize the mimicry, although if the listener isn't familiar with the person mimicked, it takes a -8 penalty on its Sense Motive check. Copperhat has a +8 racial bonus on its Bluff check to mimic voices (including accents and speech patterns) it has listened to for at least 10 minutes.
- Web (Ex) Copperhat can throw a web up to eight times per day. This is similar to an attack with a net but has a maximum range of 50 feet, with a range increment of 10 feet, and is effective against targets up to one size category larger than Copperhat. An entangled creature can escape with a successful Escape Artist check or burst the web with a Strength check. Both are standard actions with a DC equal to 22. Attempts to burst a web by those caught in it take a -4 penalty.

It is possible to use reason (Diplomacy DC 33) to get her to hear them out, but someone familiar with fey customs (Knowledge: Nature DC 16) can come up with an appropriate tactic: insult her and challenge her to a boasting contest.

This will force her, for the sake of pride, to listen to the party's version of events. If none of the PCs think of this, Rock Rackus suggests in his misogynistic way that "the fish bitch don't know what real heroes look like," and says he'll write a song about how "little miss squiddy ran away because she knew she'd get chewed up like calamari." The party takes a -2 penalty to their checks in the boast-off if it wasn't their idea, though.

Boasting Contest.

There will be three rounds, and in each one person from each side will have an opportunity to speak for a minute or two, and then the other side will have a chance. Beshela always speaks for herself, but she suggests the PCs take turns.

For her part, Beshela first mocks the party, saying that she has sunk a dozen Risuri ships these past six months, but there is nothing they as defenders of Risur have done to stop her. She proceeds to recount the sea beasts she sent to devour the many captains who went down with their ships.

Next she brags about inspiring the greatest symphony Risur ever created, when she saved a handsome drowning violinist in the middle of a hurricane, and over three weeks of incessant love-making she told him all the secrets of her kingdom. But when she returned the man to shore, he remembered nothing of her secrets, and instead wrote the Hurricane Symphony to try to win her back. She let him die famous but alone.

Finally, she boasts about saving the lives of Aodhan and Ethelyn before they were royalty. They had stolen a steam warship from the Danorans, but they could not outrun the enemy fleet alone. In exchange for a promise of friendship and rights to all the sunken treasure, she awoke the sleeping fey titan She Who Writhes and lured her to destroy the Danorans.

Mechanics.

In each round, let a player boast of the party's deeds. If he tries to tell about the true story about their fight against the Obscurati, let him make an Intimidate check (DC 20) to capture the proper tone to get her attention. Beshela is easily bored, though, so increase the DC to 25 if the same character goes for a second round, and to DC 32 if he tries in a third round. A particularly good insult against Beshela worked into the story earns a +2 to +5 bonus, though.

If the party succeeds all three checks, Beshela apologizes for disrespecting them, praises their honor and their boasting skills, and offers her aid. She'll not be of much use in this adventure since the party ranges far from Risur waters, but if they have any unusual requests involving ship-wrecks, she's their fey. And in Adventure Nine her trust will come quite in handy.

If they succeed two checks, Beshela warily says she may have misjudged them. She announces that they have repaid her gift-a surprise for a surprise, and so she will leave them in peace. She doesn't quite trust them, but she can see that they might be smart allies to have.

If the party fails or gets only one success, Beshela laughs at them, wishes them foul weather and nets full of hagfish, then departs.

Aftermath.

As long as the party doesn't drive off Copperhat, he offers to remove the curse on the fey portal pad. Then he asks a favor. He has a magic item he



wants kept safe, but he doesn't want to bother carrying it. He asks if the party will hold onto it for him, and says he won't mind if they use it in the meanwhile. This is the absurdist web, a variant bag of holding with some quirks.

He explains, "You'll have some dead bodies on your hands in the near future, and this will come in handy. Not sure quite what you're up to, but I've got a knack. I can always smell a corpse in the offing."

When Alexander Grappa implants the party's consciousnesses into bodies of Obsurati officers, the constables' original bodies will be left inert, practically dead. Grappa just plans to use gentle repose spells to keep them fresh, but if the party accepts this gift, they'll be able to have their bodies on hand during their mission. Copperhat's master, the Voice of Rot, prophetically sensed the group's need, though he does not know what their mission is.

Parting Ways.

Whether the party takes Copperhat's web or not, he extends a hand to Rock Rackus and produces an invitation from the matriarch of the Unseen Court. Unless the party really does want Rock to come with them, Copperhat will take him back to the Dreaming for some new adventures. They'll both return in Adventure Nine.

The crowd is happy either way, and Rock gets them to head off and let the party prepare for their mission, singing a song about how dockers do all the work, and other guys get to have all the fun. For the rest of the day dockers keep coming by asking how they can help. When the party ultimately does set out, their ship has the finest provisions the dockers can round up for them.

Should You Choose to Accept It.

Once the trouble with the fey is resolved, and they can talk in private, Delft will discuss final plans with the party.

Mission Briefing.

Delft reiterates, the mission is to find Leone Quital, take him alive, aid this Alexander Grappa, and if the bargain he demands is possible, the constables are to go through with it. The ultimate goal is to infiltrate this meeting of the Obscurati, at which point the party is free to act at their discretion. Delft would be fine with them just getting out alive and reporting the position of the Ob base, but if they can learn more about their plans and operational structure, excellent. And if they see a chance to capture or kill key members of the group, they should take it.

The first order of business, though, is to find Leone. Here Delft produces a small folio with information gathered by other RHC agents, the military garrison at Cauldron Hill, and the local police.

Leone's Departure.

On Spring 14, after the colossus broke free, Leone used his steelshaping powers to tear a path for himself out of the facility and close it behind him so no one could follow him. He emerged onto the side of Cauldron Hill, which was undergoing a planar flux that transported him into the real world.

He made his way to North Shore, where he called upon an Obfriendly Danoran named Jacques LeBrayne, who ferried Leone on his private yacht to one of the many ships sailing out of Flint harbor in the chaos. Leone found one, the Cold Vessel, that was carrying Risuri fruit to Crisllyir, and he brokered passage. They dropped him off in Alais Primos, the capital, on the 20th of Spring. The crew remember him

distinctly, particularly that he seemed quite disappointed they had no wine on board.

That's all the information they have for now. Mages have tried divining Leone's location, but some magic has blocked their efforts. It's up to the constables to follow the steelshaper's trail, starting at the docks in Alais Primos. Unfortunately, the trail is 6 months cold.

RHC Assets.

The party will be operating outside of Risur, and if they fall afoul of the local authorities it could be politically awkward, so Delft suggests a low profile.

The RHC has agents in most major cities around the world, and Delft suggest when they reach Alais Primos they track down Joe Hobner, a field agent who "retired" and opened an import business, bringing Risuri goods to Crisillyir. Delft worked with Joe back in the day, and tentatively vouches for him; he doesn't discount the risk that the man might have been replaced by a doppelganger, mimic, duplicant, or other shapeshifter.

Gear Up.

He suggests they spend a day getting supplies, then leave this evening, because high tide is at midnight. If they need to requisition any gear, constable Lauryn Cyneburg (see Adventure Six) can bring whatever they need to the custom teleportation beacon on their ship. Of course if they want to stay longer they can, but Delft discourages dallying.

In classic James Bond fashion, Delft has a new gadget for the agents before their mission. He hands over a set of communication rings-rings made from interlocking pieces of silver and rusted iron, one ring per party member. These were recently crafted by Harkover Lee, the king's principal minister and probably the most powerful mage in the nation. They're tiny ring gates between this world and the Bleak Gate, too small for a person to pass through, but sufficient for magical communication, such as sending spells or the whispering wind charms given to the party by Gale in Adventure Two.

Delft says he wouldn't be surprised if the party ends up in the Bleak Gate again, and at least with this they'll be able to send a message home.

Our intention here is to give the party the option-by combining these rings and the fey portal pad from Beshela-to escape by ship at the end of this adventure. They'll be able to call their ship, which can planeshift into the Bleak Gate and rescue them. The planeshift effect can last for multiple naval rounds, giving the players a chance to rescue allies at sea or stop other Ob officers from escaping. Make sure before the constables leave Flint that they understand what their new gadgets do.

Leave a Light On For Us.

Assuming they don't stick around and try to help Governor Stanfield, the party's ship departs several hours later in the dead of night. As they sail out of Flint Harbor they are guided by two lighthouses, shining out from either shore.

Based on Grappa's letter, the party knows they have to find Leone before the 75th of Autumn. Unbeknownst to them, even when they do find the Steelshaper, they'll likely need at least a week to get to the frozen city of Knütpara and return, then an extra day to capture and soul-bond with a group of Ob officers. So in truth they have to reach Leone by the 66th of Autumn.

Keep track of the date. The journey to Alais Primos covers about 500 miles, so the party's ship takes somewhere between 5 and 7 days.



Schism 🔫 🖉 🐎 Act One: Find the Mindmaker



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FLAVOR OF THE PLACE ALAIS PRIMOS

Alais Primos sprawls in a verdant valley along the coastline, framed by a semi-circle of cultivated hills and low mountains to the north and west. **Enzyo Mons** rises at the southernmost tip of this mountain range, and the priests of Crisillyir make monthly treks to hurl objects of evil into the volcano's fiery rift.

Massive libraries, temples, and sepulchers fill the heart of the city, some so large they straddle the canals that carry mountain rivers between the wide-spread city neighborhoods. The city has three harbors, each feeding into a different system of canals. Some of the most grandiose cathedrals in the world are built on gorgeous tended garden islands just off the coast.

Hundreds of small chapels dot the city, and citizens are expected to visit and confess any crimes or sins at least once a week. Many of these chapels possess enchantments to compel honesty, though corrupt patriarchs and local priests with Family connections alike have been known to remove these "peacekeeping auras."

Firearms and other items of technology seen to be related to the tieflings of Danor are illegal, subject to confiscation and fines. Traditional city watchmen are reinforced by clerics capable of summoning spirits of the dead, and like every major Crisillyiri city, every church has a bell of solid gold, which can be rung in times of crisis to create a teleportation shield across the whole city.

CLOAK AND DAGGER

Social. Real-Time. Level 11.

The party's contact in Crisillyir is a fake.

When the party arrives in Alais Primos, they notice that among the many human dockworkers, there are a few orcs or half-orcs, since Beran migrant workers aren't that unusual here. However, any character who makes a DC 20 Perception or Sense Motive check spots a single kobold watching them. The kobold isn't working, just observing, and if confronted he seems drunk and claims he's friends with some of the other dockers. This is one of the many spies of El Extraño, the kobold spymaster of Ber.

Joe's Hospitality.

The former RHC agent Joe Hobner owns an import business in Alais Primos, or at least he did until a month ago, when the Obscurati discovered his affiliation via divination, and they sent an assassin to take him out and replace him. The killer, who goes by the name **Robert the Black**, disposed of Joe's body and has used illusions since then to maintain the façade that Joe is still alive, in hopes of luring in and killing other RHC agents.

Joe has a plain office on the ground floor of his fine house, which is just a hundred feet from the nearest canal. If the party comes to see him, the assassin does his best to play up Joe's boisterous personality and go along with whatever the party expects of him. When he learns that they're searching for a guy, he suggests they make themselves comfortable so he can pull out a map and give them suggestions. Then he offers them drinks: water, wine, or liqueur.

The water tastes oddly of parsnips, due to the hemlock infusion. The wine is poisoned with strychnine and tastes very bitter, while the liqueur's arsenic content makes it quite sweet. Characters with ranks in Craft (alchemy) can make a check (DC 22) to realize something is wrong.

He'll talk with them for a bit about the city. About ten minutes later, when the characters first start to suffer from the poison's effects (see below), the assassin excuses himself to use the privy, heads down a hall-way, and steps into a bathroom. He locks the sturdy door (break DC 22), opens a window in preparation of a quick escape, then retrieves a special arcanotech weapon from a cabinet. He waits with it pointed at the door, and listens for cues to whether the party is dying.

Poison Progression.

Use the following mechanics for anyone who drinks poison.

Each drink has three doses of poison, and how bad things get depends wholly on how much each character ingests in the course of ten minutes. A character who merely sips only suffers the effects of one dose. Consuming a partial drink means he is subjected to two doses, and a whole glass means all three doses are in his system. If the character guzzled and then asked for seconds, double the number of doses.

After ten minutes, each character makes a save. For each dose beyond the first he ingested, increase the poison's DC by +2. For those who fail, the poison then takes effect, forcing additional saves each minute to fend off damage until the poison runs its course. Each dose beyond the first increases the duration by 50%.

Magic that neutralizes poison can end the affliction. A Craft (alchemy) or Heal check (DC 30) can concoct the proper anti-toxin for one type of poison; crafting it takes a minute. The antidote stops the progression of the poison.

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Hemlock Infusion

The fountains in Alais Primos are said to all run with holy water. Holiness apparently tastes like parsnips.

Effect: Hemlock paralyzes the drinker's muscles, first causing clumsiness, then

malaise, then difficulty breathing, full paralysis, and finally asphyxiation. Type poison (ingested); Save Fortitude DC 18

Onset 10 minutes; Frequency 1/minute for 6 minutes

Effect 1d6 Dex damage, creatures reduced to 0 Dexterity suffocate; Cure 2 consecutive saves

Strychnine Wine

Risuri tend to prefer sweet wines, but everyone agrees that Crisillyri make the best. You can only assume the surprising bitterness of this drink means it's really high quality. Effect: Strychnine is a neurotoxin that causes nerves to react to even the lightest

stimuli, leading to nausea, convulsions, frothing at the mouth, spasms that bend the body into an arch, loss of consciousness, and finally asphyxiation.

Type poison (ingested); Save Fortitude DC 18

Onset 10 minutes; Frequency 1/minute for 6 minutes

Effect 1d3 Dex damage and 1 Con damage; Cure 2 consecutive saves

Sweet Arsenic

This dark, nutty liqueur must have some coffee in it. It's very quaint. The cup even sits on a saucer with an old lace doily.

Effect: Arsenic disrupts your cells' ability to use food energy, and it triggers a cascade of damage throughout the body. Normal arsenic poisoning can take weeks to kill, but this alchemically strengthened version acts much more quickly. A sufficiently high dose causes headaches, confusion, severe diarrhea, vomiting, and a slow coma before eventual death.

Type poison (ingested); Save Fortitude DC 18

Onset 10 minutes; Frequency 1/minute for 6 minutes Effect 1d3 Con damage; Cure 2 consecutive saves

Fighting Robert the Black.

The assassin waits at least five minutes before going back out, unless he hears one of the PCs trying to exit the building, in which case he'll leave by the window, walk along the narrow ledge outside, and try to catch them as they step onto the street. He prefers to strike first with his electrocuting dazer, then uses more traditional sneak attacks or a death attack if he can pull it off.

If he's facing more than one enemy who isn't poisoned, Robert will try to flee. He knows the routes from his home's roof to other buildings, and his familiarity with the city will make it easy for him to get away if he can break line of sight for two rounds.



Robert the Black

XP 3.200

Male human rogue 5/assassin 7

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +7: Senses Perception +15

Defense

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 17 (+6 armor, +3 Dex, +1 deflection)

hp 101 (12d8+41) Fort +6, Ref +13, Will +5; +3 vs. poison

Defensive Abilities evasion, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +2

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee assassin's dagger +14/+9 (1d4+2/19-20)

Ranged assassin's dagger +14 (1d4+2/19-20)

Special Attacks death attack (DC 19), quiet death, sneak attack +7d6, true death

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th, concentration +7)

3/day—disguise self, mage hand

Statistics

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

Base Atk +8; CMB +8; CMD 22

- Feats Combat Expertise, Deceitful, Improved Feint, Improved Initiative, Toughness, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (dagger)
- Skills Acrobatics +12, Bluff +20, Climb +15, Disguise +20, Escape Artist +8, Perception +15, Sense Motive +15, Sleight of Hand +11, Stealth +18
- Languages Common, Primordial
- SQ hidden weapons +7, poison use, rogue talents (minor magic, major magic), trapfinding +2
- Combat Gear electrocuting dazer*, purple worm poison (2); Other Gear +1 mithral shirt, assassin's dagger, cloak of resistance +2, ring of protection +1
- *Electrocuting Dazer This one-use item deals 3d6 electricity damage with a successful melee touch attack. In addition, the target must make a DC 16 Fortitude save or fall prone and be stunned for 1d4 rounds.

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The spymaster of Ber is always known as El Extraño (The Strange One), and traditionally they adopt bizarre personalities so that their true intentions are harder to intuit. Indeed, some say the actual spymaster only works behind the scenes, and that El Extraño is just a mask he hides behind. (The rumor's false, though El Extraño thinks that would have been a great idea.)

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CR 11

The current spymaster is a kobold wizard with uneven eyes, finely-tended fleshy whiskers, and exceptional skills at legerdemain. He casually mentions ridiculous and unlikely events that he participated in, and will gladly expend powerful teleportation magic simply to make a dramatic exit. He prefers to give

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directives, or at most offer two options that he will pursue, and is no fan of actually discussing things, at least not until someone can actually surprise him. He has a bit of dragon blood in him, and smokes pipes of cinammon-laced cloves.

El Extraño's motivation is to do his job excellently, and to maintain the honor of his title. A contingency will annihilate his body in fire should he die, to maintain uncertainty as to his true fate.

Schism 🔫 🖉 🐎 Act One: Find the Mindmaker

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leone's trail

We suggest ways for the party to find Leone, but it's certainly possible for them to find clues a different way. You might also do an ad hoc adjustment to the route Leone took if you think a particularly clever idea should yield some result. That said, this is the default story for how Leone got from the Obscurati facility in Flint to his current mobile train quarters in Mirsk.

On Spring 14, after the colossus escaped, Leone escaped the colossus construction facility in the Bleak Gate, used the magical flux created by the colossus tearing a hole in the mountain to reach the real world, and made his way to North Shore. There Jacques LeBrayne ferried Leone on his private yacht to the Cold Vessel. The ship reached Alais Primos on Spring 20.

All this information so far has already been sussed out by other police and RHC investigations. It's up to the PCs to follow his trail once he reaches Alais Primos.

Leone debarked and went to a church as is traditional. In this case it was the Chapel of St. Tromboni, a humble building with pink plaster walls. Nothing of interest happened there, and he left amidst a large crowd when a mass let out.

From there he got new threads at Broclofa Apparel, a clothier shop, and then he rented a room across the street from Glazier Charani, a shop that sells glasswork and carries a small selection of premium wines. Over the following days he traveled little around the city, mostly using a young girl named Emmelsa to fetch him food and books. Leone has a fondness for Bromago cheese, and he made a special request for a pound of it. There are only two shops in the city that carry Bromago.

Eight days later, on Spring 28, a delivery arrived at Glazier Charani from the **Quital Vineyard**, owned by Leone's family. Quital spoke with his nephew Piginni Quital, who was running the delivery. He arranged for them to rendezvous at Enzyo Mons, a nearby volcano, where he chucked the damaged head of Grappa's previous golem body into the lava. This was his offering of sorts, hoping to be protected from any further bad luck

From there he hitched a ride in his nephew's wagon out of the city back to his family lands. He stayed with the family at the next estate over, the Cejakreig Vineyard, arriving on Spring 35.

He had his nephew deliver a letter to Vendricce and leave it in a deaddrop at a public park near the rail station on Spring 44. It was picked up by a soldier at the local barracks, who delivered it to Captain Matt Massaer, one of a handful of captains who ferry people to the Mutravir, the Obscurati palace island.

On Spring 47, a rider arrived with a near-dead horse at the Cejakrieg Vineyard, and handed over a package to Leone. This included a dose of needlewire, which Leone injected into the courier so he could debrief with Nicodemus and plan their next move. Leone left the next morning and caught an Avery Coast train west to Nalaam. There he linked up with a cadre of Obscurati agents, rode into Trekhom, and on Spring 50 purchased two entire rail cars and had them modified to his specifications.

Ever since then he has taken a semi-regular circuit across Drakr, which has a web of different rail routes. Every few nights he has his two cars transferred between trains. Ever since Summer 68 he has been sending out letters to different Ob officers, coordinating the path they will take to eventually arrive at Mirsk. The plan is for them all to check into a hotel in Mirsk by Autumn 74, then leave the next day, taking a train to Nalaam, then on to Sid Minos and Vendricce.

Kobold Rescue.

Agents of El Extraño had been following Robert the Black, and they have been watching Joe's home and business ever since the assassin took up residence. They don't know Joe's affiliation, but they figure if the assassin is waiting for someone, they should wait too.

When the party shows up, the kobold spies send a runner to alert their master, and they prepare for several contingencies. Basically, let the party win or lose, then have a half dozen kobolds come in. They outnumber and take down Robert if the party hasn't yet, tend to any dying PCs, then hurry those who are severely poisoned out of the building. They load them onto a wagon, and the orc driver sets off to a nearby temple, where a Clergy priest performs the proper spells to cleanse the poison. El Extraño will be waiting for them when they awaken.

Similarly, if Robert runs, the kobolds spring traps to knock him out as he's leaping between buildings. He breaks both his legs, and the kobolds drag him back for interrogation.

If the party makes it out fine on their own, the kobolds cautiously announce themselves and ask, one group of spies to another, if they'd be willing to meet their boss.

wanted man

Puzzle. Montage. Level 11.

With the aid of an international spy agency, the party tracks down Leone Quital.

Wherever they happen to meet him, El Extraño calls the party to him. He sits, tiny and cross-legged, atop a stack of massive books taller than he is. He has one small book—the codex of the little people (page 71)open on his lap, and smokes a long dragon-motif pipe in his other hand as he reads.

"I know all of your names. Do not be impressed yet. It is not impressive because I did not need my many loyal eyes for that. I work for the Bruse, and he told me your names while we ate dinosaur eggs in his castle. Still, it is not time to be impressed.

"I became interested in this conspiracy that has caused so much trouble, and I knew if I were them, I would kill your spies. Also, I knew where your spies were. Do not be impressed. It is not hard to guess that a former constable would still spy for his country. My eyes watched his home, and sadly they could not save him from this assassin. But then they watched the assassin, and now we have saved you.

"Leone Quital was spotted on the 28th of Spring in the Cathedral of Triegenes at Enzyo Mons. Do not be impressed that I know you are looking for him. His former associate, the gnome named Oddcog, cursed the man's name repeatedly while he fitted me for my own mechanical battle suit. It was natural you would seek the Steelshaper at some point.

"We will work together. My eyes will follow you, look for threats and targets around you, and share what they see. If you disagree, my eyes will send couriers to share what they see, so that you don't get upset and kill any of them. You should read this book, so you respect the value of little people."

He closes the book in his lap, then tosses it to you. You catch it, and the kobold vanishes in a puff of smoke. When it clears, he's gone, along with the stack of books he was using as a stool.

From here out, the party can use the kobolds to help scout out areas. In effect, they balance out the penalties the party would be getting for trying to find clues in a massive city where they're not locals. They have enough

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manpower now to conduct a proper manhunt, and kobold migrant workers are inconspicuous enough that no one really questions them.

If it matters, El Extraño is a 15th level kobold wizard focused on illusions and teleportation.

Methods of Investigation.

Our goal with this challenge is to give the players the feeling of tracking a man down. How much time you want to spend on this is up to you and your players. If they enjoy interrogating folks, let them, but if they'd rather just make a Diplomacy check, get some clues, and decide from there where to go next, that works too. By default, you could assume that a good Diplomacy check represents deploying the kobold eyes well and finding the right person who knows the next clue; then the party can go and talk in person if they want.

We've tried to give Leone enough protections to sidestep any "instant win" options. It's fine to use magic to get information, but the party should still have to spend retracing their target's steps.

The main beats of the manhunt will probably be searching Alais Primos for clues, visiting Quital vineyard, dealing with an ambush in Nalaam, and then pinpointing Leone's train out of all the traffic in the Drakran rail system.

Pounding the Cobblestones.

Mechanically, each day each PC can make a Diplomacy check (DC 30) or spend their day aiding an ally (DC 10; adding a +2 bonus to his check). On a success, he finds a clue, which might narrow the area he needs to search, or might point to a person who actually interacted with Leone.

If the party finds a specific person to talk to, sometimes these people are very reticent to share the information. Getting them to share the clue might require a Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 30). These checks usually take just a few minutes, not a whole day like a Diplomacy check to gather information.

For either type of clue, certain associations, knowledge, or actions can gain a bonus to the check. And of course let the players try other methods of getting the clue.

Magic CSI Tricks.

Leone's an officer of the Obscurati, so attempts to magically divine his location require an Spellcraft check (DC 34). Divinations that just poke at the edges of Leone's activities aren't so protected, so a spell that asks "Who did Leone meet with in this building?" or "What path did he take when he left?" would work fine.

RHC Agents.

By this point the party's Prestige with Risur should grant them a lot of leeway to call in favors, and the RHC has a few agents and allies in every major city around the region. Still, the party is operating in foreign territory, so increase the effective level of any favor by 2. They can still get help, but it will take longer.

El Extraño's kobolds provide the most basic aid by going lots of places at once. RHC assets, by contrast, are limited in number but with greater expertise and resources.

We haven't planned any particular allies for the party to contact, but feel free to trot out whatever old spy movie tropes you'd like. Perhaps when they need to get the Quital family to cough up info on Leone's time there, a corrupt priest who reports to the RHC could threaten to declare an inquisition on the vineyard due to "rumors of demonic activity."

Clues to Leone.

These clues form a sort of "trail of breadcrumbs"; we suggest an order they can find them, but it's just a recommendation.

If the party doesn't succeed the first time they make a Diplomacy check to look for a clue in a given area, they can keep trying day after day until they find a lead. However if they fail a Diplomacy or Intimidate check during an interrogation, usually this hardens the resolve of the person who knows what they want, so other methods might be necessary.

Remember, sometimes it's best for less-skilled PCs to aid those who are experts, especially since the DCs here are all rather high. After all, they're looking for a man who tried to lay low, who came through this way months ago. Finding him won't be easy.

Clue 9 triggers the ambush scene Outmatched, below; the following scene Needle in a Needle Factory occurs after the conclusion of the manhunt.

- Clue 1 (Diplomacy DC 30). Harbour bureaucrats in Alais Primos check their logs and find out when the *Cold Vessel* arrived and who processed their travel visas. This lets the party know how to narrow their search. (*PCs who call in a favor with The Family gain a* +10 bonus to this check, since all the bureaucrats are corrupt.)
- Clue 2 (Diplomacy DC 30). After asking around to people working the right pier that day, the party learns Leone asked for where he could get some clothes, and they learn where he headed. (Docker PCs gain a +5 bonus to this check, due to professional courtesy.)

SKIPPING AHEAD.

The party might find clues out of order. It's perfectly fine to let them jump around, though try to keep the clues natural. In particular, after talking to El Extraño they'll likely want to check out Enzyo Mons (where they can learn that he arrived and left with a guy on a wagon), though Leone's presence there doesn't actually tell them much unless they know from earlier that the wagon was owned by Quital Vineyards.

ENZYO MONS.

Three miles from the city center of Alais Primos, a chapel to a minor god of fire and tribulation marks the beginning of a trail up to the peak of Enzyo Mons, an active volcano. Another chapel sits every few hundred feet over the course of a two mile trail that rises a half a mile vertically to the volcano's rim. There the Clergy have erected a cathedral devoted to Triegenes, the founder of their faith, who they claim ascended to godhood upon death.

A stained glass window above the cathedral's rostrum is continually back-lit by the glow of the lava in the caldera, and a broad balcony behind the cathedral overlooks that pit of fire. Every month priests hold a ceremony where they cast into the volcano any items believed to be possessed of evil that have been collected by the faith. They also cast in offerings of gold and jewels, though they don't throw as far; a tier just beneath the balcony, out of sight of the public, catches these valuables, which are recovered later.

The mountain is not particularly tall in the grand scheme of things, but its obsidian black face stands out starkly, making the rolling green hills around it seem even more beautiful by comparison. Due to the prayers of the faithful it has not erupted in over 700 years.

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Schism 🚓 Act One: Find the Mindmaker

- Clue 3 (Diplomacy DC 30). A lot of asking around finds workers in the district of the clothier shop who remember Leone inquiring regarding directions to premium wine shops. (The PCs get a +5 bonus to this check if they have made a point about asking after Leone's fondness for wine and cheese.)
- Clue 4 (Diplomacy DC 30). Leone apparently never went into any of those shops, but the party notices a "lodgers wanted" posting across the street from Glazier Charani. (A PC with ranks in Perception gains a +5 bonus to this check.) Asking with the landlord verifies Leone was there, and that he left on Spring 28. Before he left he said he was "going to make an offering to Enzyo," referring to the volcano.
- Clue 5. Checking with the shop across the street determines that a shipment came in from the Quital Vineyard on the same day Leone left, though the owner doesn't recall seeing Loene. No check required; the party just has to think to ask.
- Clue 6 (Diplomacy or Intimidate DC 30). The priests at the Cathedral atop Enzyo Mons recall that a man threw a metal head into the volcano, and that he arrived and left with a man on a wagon. (A PC with ranks in Knowledge: Religion gains +5 to this check. One who makes an offering worth at least 50 gp to the volcano gains an additional +5.)

It should be a fairly easy matter to locate and travel to the Quital Vineyard. It's a three-day ride by horse, or a week on foot.

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FLAVOR OF THE PLACE MANHUNT LOCATIONS

Quital Vineyard and its neighbors thread through rolling hills, often cultivating boutique fruit trees along the tops of ridges. The family homes are old, wealthy, and ornate, each blessed by the Clergy. The roads between different estates are dotted with chapels.

Nalaam, an independent city state, sits high in the Penance Peaks on the border of Crisillyir. At this time of year the first snows are falling, but the city's archmages have transmuted stones and placed them throughout the city to maintain warmth. The towers that pervade the city architecture all host elaborate designs, showcasing the supernaturallystrong rock quarried here.

Money is king here. Every crime is punished by fine, and those who cannot pay their fine are required either to work (at surprisingly reasonable rates) to reimburse those harmed by their actions, or to battle in the city's coliseum, earning money based on how well they entertain the crowds. Most police patrols here include a wizard, taking advantage of the powerful earth mana that attracted so many magic users.

Trekhom is low and flat, but exists more underground than above it. Factories and a truly vast railyard dominate the aboveground landscape, surrounded by squat buildings and dotted with a few towers that rise into the smoggy air. Most people live in tunnels, or in homes that extend two or three stories into the bedrock.

Locals don't care much about outsiders unless they're buying or building something. Elite police use borderline-evil magic such as mind control and pain-wracking necromancy to deal with lawbreakers, but criminals in exchange feel few compunctions with sucking policemen's souls or turning their enemies to stone and leaving their severed head next to a smashed pile of rock that had once been their body.

- Clue 7 (Diplomacy or Intimidate DC 30). Leone's family and friends at the vineyard can be convinced to talk about his time there, and the strange rider who arrived on Spring 47. They left the next day to catch a train. It's a day's ride to the nearest train station.
- + Clue 8 (Diplomacy DC 30). The party locates a series of railroad workers at the nearest town along the Avery Coast line who can confirm Leone took a train headed west on Spring 49. A worker remembers him getting off in Nalaam. If the party wants to take the train to Nalaam, they get there in less than a day. The train workers gossip that there are over a dozen kobolds stowed away in the cargo section, but they don't think it's worth the effort to try to get rid of them.
- Clue 9 (Diplomacy DC 30). Rail workers in Nalaam vaguely remember Leone meeting up with a group of diverse foreigners on Spring 49, then leaving the following day headed for Trekhom. (The PCs get a +5 bonus to this check if they got on Lord Kulp's good side in Adventure Four.)

As the party investigates this clue, they are set upon by a somewhat ineffectual Obscurati ambush. See Outmatched below. Afterward, it's a one-day train ride to Trekhom. This time the kobolds buy a ticket, because Drakrans take their trains more seriously.

- Clue 10 (Diplomacy DC 30). In Trekhom, workers at the railyard recall Leone purchasing two entire train cars for himself, then bringing in workers to make alterations to them. Two main clues will help them identify those cars.
- Clue 11-A (Trekhom, Diplomacy or Intimidate DC 30). Railyard bureaucrats can provide details on the two cars Leone purchased. They both resemble normal passenger cars, but with a more sturdy carriage to support more weight, and several windows on the left side covered over with steel. (PCs willing to engage in a philosophical debate with the bureaucrats about whether behavior is predestined—like trains on a track—earn good will, gaining a +5 bonus to this check. Eschatologist PCs gain a further +5 bonus.)
- Clue 11-B (Trekhom, Diplomacy DC 30). Engineers or railyard workers recall that every week or two they've seen the same pair of train cars, which had special directions to transfer them between trains. They stood out because there were guards on them. The workers vaguely recall that the two cars never seem to be going the same place twice. (Docker PCs again get a +5 bonus here, since the workers appreciate another laborer asking about their lives.)

OUTMATCHED

Action. Tactical. Level 11.

The Obscurati have groups watching for surveillance in various cities, but they're no match for characters of the party's level.

This is an opportunity for the party to show off, and for them to possibly run into trouble without actually being threatened physically. You can use this encounter in any spot where you think the party might get noticed, but if they're being careful not to attract attention they'll still be noticed in Nalaam due to divinations performed by the counter-intelligence mages there.

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CR 7

CR 7

Enemies.

Obscurati sniper assassin 3 Obscurati counter-spies

Obscurati Sniper Assassin

XP 3,200

Male elf gunslinger 8

LN Medium humanoid (dwarf) Init +6, Senses low-light vision; Perception +15

Defense

AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +4 Dex, +2 dodge)

hp 64 (8d10+16) Fort +7, Ref +10, Will +4; +2 vs. enchantment

Defensive Abilities nimble +2; Immune sleep

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Ranged +1 rifle +13/+8 (1d10+5/19-20/x4)

Special Attacks grit (2), gun-training (rifle, +4)

Statistics

Str 10, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 8

Base Atk +8; CMB +8; CMD 22

Feats Deadly Aim, Far Shot, Gunsmithing, Improved Critical (rifle), Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Reload (rifle)

Skills Acrobatics +15, Climb +11, Intimidate +10, Perception +15, Sleight of Hand +15, Stealth +17

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Primordial

SQ deeds (dead shot, deadeye, gunslinger initiative, gunslinger's dodge, pistol-whip, quick clear, startling shot, targeting, utility shot), gunsmith

Other Gear +1 rifle, mwk chain shirt, cloak of elvenkind

Obscurati Counter-Spy

XP 3,200

Male human rogue (spy) 8 N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; Senses Perception +12

Defense

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13 (+3 armor, +3 Dex)

hp 56 (8d8+16)

Fort +2, Ref +9, Will +3

Defensive Abilities evasion, improved uncanny dodge

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk dagger +10/+5 (1d4/19-20) Ranged mwk dagger +10/+5 (1d4/19-20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +4d6

Statistics

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

Base Atk +6; CMB +6; CMD 19

Feats Combat Expertise, Improved Feint, Skill Focus (Bluff), Toughness, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (dagger)

Skills Acrobatics +14, Bluff +16, Climb +11, Diplomacy +13, Knowledge (local) +12, Intimidate +13, Perception +12, Sense Motive +12, Sleight of Hand +14, Stealth +14 Languages Common, Dwarven

SQ poison use, rogue talents (canny observer, finesse rogue, lasting poison, swift poison), skilled liar +4

Combat Gear bead of force, deathblade poison (2), shadow essence (4); Other Gear mwk daggers (4), mwk studded leather armor

The attack likely occurs after the party arrives at the Nalaam rail enclave, but feel free to set it anywhere. The challenge to the party here isn't surviving; it's making sure that after they defeat the ambushers they track down their accomplices and make sure word of their snooping doesn't get back to the Ob.

Tactics.

The fight probably begins with the sniper, set up in a window or on a roof, using a targeted shot to the head of a target who is fairly out in the open, with few options for ducking into cover. Then the counter-spies, waiting fifty feet away or so, break from cover and throw their beads of force to keep the party disoriented and immobile. The sniper continues to fire at opportune targets, using startling shot to make foes flat-footed and allow the counter-spies to sneak attack as they advance into melee.

That's their plan, at least.

Aftermath.

If interrogated, the spies reveal that they were sent after the group because a voyeuristic satyr diviner named Krampus Snow alerted them. Krampus is waiting for word from the ambush squad so he can report a success to his superior, Bert Facie (Han Jierre's spymaster; see the Teaser). If Krampus doesn't hear from the group within 30 minutes, he'll instead use sending to warn that they might be compromised. The party has that long to track down the mage, who is staying in a tower suite a quarter mile from the rail enclave. He puts up no fight, and can verify that Leone came through and is operating somewhere in Drakr.

NEEDLE IN A NEEDLE FACTORY

Social. Real-Time. Level 11.

The kobold spymaster supplies the party with an obvious clue.

Once the party knows what cars to look for, pinpointing the train Leone is on requires just a lot of time watching trains come and go. The party can rely on El Extraño's eyes to watch the six main train depots in Drakr all at once. Unless the party has a particularly clever idea, the kobolds probably get the job done much faster than the constables would on their own.

Three days after the party finds clue 11, El Extraño contacts the party again. He asks them to meet him in a Trekhom needle factory at night after it closes.

Two kobolds with pistols guide the group in, and in the heart of the factory El Extraño waits for the group, absent-mindedly grinding points on the tips of short pieces of steel wire, then punching holes to make the needles' eyes.

He says nothing to the group, and responds to questions with wordless shrugs or some variant of "eh." If they bother him too much, he'll give them a long look, roll his eyes, then stand up and walk away. But on the table next to him he has left a folded sheet of paper (Player Handout-Train Schedules). This note should direct the party to seek out Leone in Mirsk. If they hop the first train the next morning, they can get to Mirsk half an hour before Leone's train gets there.









MIRSK STATION

Exploration. Real-Time. Level 16.

The party decides when to strike as Leone's train approaches a station where the party waits to ambush.

Mirsk is where Leone plans to meet the group of Ob officers he'll be taking to the convocation, so he checks in regularly to make sure nothing catches him by surprise. If the party decides to confront Leone at

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TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS.

Leone has sent letters to the seven Ob officers he's responsible for transporting, telling them to wait in different locations by specific dates. On those dates he'll have one of his other operatives give a pre-determined code phrase, then ask the officer to come with him, alone. They then take some combination of travel methods to reach Mirsk. Only Leone knows where to go from there.

At every leg of the journey, Ob operatives are on the look-out for people who show up at multiple locations, and they are trained in the proper magic to see through most illusory disguises. Nicodemus is worried about nations or other powers discovering their island meeting and blockading or bombarding the place, so they're running their officers all over the place to make pinpointing the location nearly impossible.

When the party does manage to get Grappa in control of Leone's body, they'll just have to wait in Mirsk for the officers to arrive. Grappa will bring them in one by one, magically disable them, and perform a spell to implant a PC's consciousness into their body. Once that's all done they'll travel by train to Vendricce, where they'll board a ship (along with three Crisillyiri Ob officers Leone had nothing to do with) and sail to Mutravir Island.

RUNAWAY TRAIN.

If Leone decides to run, or if the party goes for a dramatic attack while on a moving train (perhaps fearing that Leone might have reinforcements waiting in a station), the battle might be constrained to the long line of rail cars.

Normally the train will be moving at between 60 and 100 squares per round. If someone falls off (1d6 falling damage per 10 squares of speed), Leone's cars are close enough to the front of the train that the character might have a chance to jump back on (Acrobatics DC 23, 3d6 damage on a failure), climb up, and run back into combat over the course of a minute. The entire train is over 300 squares long.

Leone will try to strand enemies by detaching rear rail cars via telekinesis as a swift action. Detached cars slow down by 2 squares per round, so the gap will start at 2 squares, then 6 squares, then 12.

When Leone is reduced below half HP, he'll tear the train cars free from the tracks and derail the whole thing. Everyone on board must make an Reflex save (DC 16) or be knocked prone and take 4d6 damage. The sudden collision with the ground ignites the firegems in the fuel car, creating a massive swath of fire. The locomotive boiler will explode (30-ft. radius centered on the front of the locomotive, 10d6 fire damage, Reflex save DC 20 for half).

The derailed train cars actually take about 3 rounds to grind to a halt, but it isn't really feasible to fight until the train comes to a complete stop. Really, how often do you get to derail a train? We hereby grant you GM Immunity to bend the rules a bit so Leone can run away and get onto a moving train. another station, you can use the same map. The party might instead decide to strike Leone while his train is in motion. If so, see the Runaway, Train sidebar.

Station Layout.

Visitors typically enter the station from the north, then purchase tickets and wait in the lobby. Doors open out of the south wall onto a series of railroad platforms, each of them 300 feet long. Shot underground tunnels lead to the further south platforms, so that passengers don't have to jump across the tracks.

A steel-framed glass roof—resembling a half-cylinder laid on its side covers the platforms, protecting them from the common heavy snowfalls. A catwalk is suspended above the incoming trains, to allow workers access for repairs and cleaning.

Beyond the platforms, dozens of tracks extend further south, running in parallel and occasionally interweaving or leading to wheelhouses where cars can be swapped out from the train as a whole. Tunnels crisscross beneath these tracks too, and every few hundred feet one can find mighty cranes that can lift heavy materials from car carriages.

Even in the dead of night, there are always at least a few dozen workers or travelers active in the main station and on the platforms, which is lit by *light* spells in ornate glass lamps.

Leone's Cars.

Leone has two cars: a private suite with bedroom, bathroom, office, and kitchen (car 3); and a security car with lodging for a dozen men and two special compartments containing an advanced bleak golem, similar to the one the party faced in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer* (car 4).

These cars are distinctive from the outside because several of their windows are covered with welded-on sheets of steel. In particular, Leone is very private and was never a big fan of the sun, so he has no windows at all in his quarters.

At any given time, Leone has four of his guards watching either end of his car, with four resting and four ready to activate the golems in case of an attack.

Escape Contingency

When Leone does have to stop for the night, he makes sure that the locomotive of his train (car 1) is facing an open track and has fuel at hand. He makes sure his car is always right behind the train's fuel car (car 2). In the event of an attack he is prepared to use his steelshaping powers to decouple any the cars behind his two, leaving just four cars in the train (locomotive, fuel car, his suite, and the guards' car).

His powers are strong enough to then accelerate the cars. The train would start at speed 0 on the first round, then increase its speed by 6 each round thereafter, to a maximum of speed 160. If he has to move a full train, he can only increase the speed by a feeble 1 per round.

Arrival Timeline.

When Leone's train arrives at a railyard, first it spends ten minutes splitting into three parts: the front four cars (locomotive, fuel, suite, and security cars), the middle freight cars (cars 5–14), and the rear passenger cars (cars 15–30). A second locomotive attaches to the freight cars and pulls them off onto a spur. A third locomotive attaches to the passenger cars and pulls into station, stopping at the north platform. Then finally the front four cars pull into station, stopping at the south platform.

For both sections of train at the station, the locomotive and fuel cars pull through and stop just east of the station platform. You'll end up with







Schism 🚓 🔁 Act One: Find the Mindmaker

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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.

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A few years later he was placed in charge of constructing the colossus, reporting directly to Roland

Stanfield. When it broke free he fled, and eventually he was contacted by Nicodemus himself, who knew Leone could still be of use.

Though he prefers to appear refined, romantic, and honorable, at heart 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.

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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, hoping his homeland could field an army of automata instead of shedding real soldiers' blood. 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.

He helped train and educate the colossus, but once he got an inkling of its actual purpose he rebelled. His first attempt earned him a geas to keep him from talking. His second attempt got him killed, though he

managed to transfer his mind to a golem body. His third attempt got that body killed, and now is stuck in the body of his murderer, Leone Quital.

Grappa looks on life with casual aplomb, and is a bit of a bumbling professor, full of clever ideas and bubbling with enthusiasm, but not properly grasping the dangers involved.

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numerous passenger cars stretching out along the north platform, and Leone's two cars at the eastern edge of the south platform.

Leone and his guards have an opportunity to debark and go into the station, which they seldom take. However, the train does loiter here for half an hour so workers can perform basic maintenance, empty the lavatories, and restock its food and water. During that time passengers debark and board from the north train platform, resulting in a fairly crowded and busy area.

Depending on the time of day and whether the train will continue on, either the two trains will reconnect and continue onward, or they'll move separately to parking areas for the night. If the train is going to stop overnight, Leone's two cars are usually detached from the locomotive and fuel car, then transferred to another train. As mentioned about, Leone always makes sure the train is pointed toward empty track, so he can flee if he needs to.

Attack.

The party might simply wait for Leone to "get off the train." (He won't.) In that case, they'll likely end up fighting on the platform while hundreds of people are present. The benefit to this attack is that Leone won't have a clear track ahead of him. He can still hop on a train and have it start moving, but a few rounds later he'll need to devote a full turn to shoving another train of the rails in order to clear the track ahead.

Other parties might wait until Leone's train is parked for the night. This would have the fewest witnesses, but Leone would easily be able to accelerate the train and flee. Clever parties might block the track, but they'd be best served blocking it with something non-metallic.

Finally, Leone is at his most vulnerable when his cars are being transferred between trains, because he'll have few innocents to use as human shields, and will be far from any open tracks to flee on.

Reinforcements.

If the party got found out-either by the ambush team in Nalaam, or perhaps by Governor Stanfield-Leone will have more guards. Use your judgment to decide what is a likely increase in defense that would be right for your group. You might just increase the number of minions if your party is a "run in and shoot" type, or add more diverse foes if you think your party would enjoy creeping through a hostile railyard, taking out enemies here and there until they can corner Leone.

Enemies.

Leone Quital (page 63) 2 advanced bleak golems (page 64) 12 Obscurati arcane marksmen (page 64)

Terrain.

It's best to make some prop to represent the rail cars, something you can move across the map, since the train might be in motion. Also, Leone has the ability to rearrange the battlefield.

Tactics.

Leone is confident and quite bitter, especially if he recognizes the constables. Unless he's outright outnumbered, he won't flee until he's reduced below half HP. That said, he tries to keep his distance, flying over and behind train cars to try to string his enemies out. He relies on a makeshift metal shield to block attacks, creates a *shrapnel vortex* to clear out enemies if they're in a defensible location, and will fling heavy metal objects (or PCs in metal armor) as improvised projectiles.

At the start of the second combat round, four of Leone's guards emerge from their car and join the fight. Though the undercarriage of cars provide improved cover, the arcane marksmen can shoot around corners.

At the start of the third round, two hatches open on the roof of the security car as the bleak golems climb out as heavy reinforcements. Leone will generally try to stay close enough to the golems that the party can't just outrun the massive beaters.

At the start of the fourth round, eight more arcane marksmen arrive. Some of them might just shoot out of their windows if they can see the PCs.

When Leone is reduced below half HP, his power flares briefly, letting him tear entire trains off the ground and move them. He'll place some as cover, move others to hang over PCs so they'll be crushed if they don't get out of the way. If you want to be really mean, place two cars 3 squares apart, parallel on opposite sides of a PC, then put a third car floating above the gap, ready to fall and crush them.



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Talking and Fighting.

Once he recognizes his attackers as those who ruined his operation in Flint, Leone becomes scornful. He challenges them, shouting that he was trying to create something that would change the world, but that small-minded gremlins like them would of course be afraid that such a bold creation would of course show the uselessness of their existence. He blames them for nearly destroying the work of a genius, and accuses them of being the brutish enforcers of a hundred generations of dimwitted superstition, and that they value the lives of insignificant fools. People like them, he says, are only useful because he can use their bodies as stepping stones to previously unwitnessed heights.

Withdrawal.

Once Leone is reduced below half HP, he'll try to run for a train that he can flee on. If the party strikes at the platform, that means heading south, where the freight cars from his train as still slowly moving, and several other trains are parked or slowly running down their lines. It would be hard to map this chase, but the cluttered and confusing moving environment should make for a memorable battleground.

Aftermath.

The PCs should try to take Leone alive. Unless they intentionally kill him, or knock him unconsciousness underneath a levitating rail car or in front of an oncoming tree, the party can choose to knock him out when they drop him to 0 hit points. It's up to them to decide when to wake him up.

If the party places mage cuffs on him, he won't be able to use his steelshaping powers without knocking himself back out. He'll content himself with just talking to the party, trying to get a gauge of them without revealing anything of his plans. A few hours later, though, he'll drift off to sleep, and Alexander Grappa will gain control of Leone's body, and can talk to the party.

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What if the party accidentally kills Leone?

In this case, Grappa can manage to contact the mind of the nearest person, imprinting the instructions of how to find the frozen lich giant in the bottom of the rift in Knütpara. There, the party will be able to bring Leone's body temporarily back from the dead, at the cost of giving over his soul to the lich. Grappa will still be able to guide them into the Obscurati palace. We weren't planning for him to survive the adventure anyway, though his consciousness will make another appearance the last third of the campaign.

NO RUSH.

If the party dallies for months, Grappa eventually grows desperate on the 60th of Autumn. At night he bolts from Leone's quarters, dominates his guards, then makes his way to a mage who can cast sending for him. He sends the party the message: "Lackadaisacal idiots! Urgent news. Mindmaker here, my cover blown. Steelshaper at Mirsk railyard, but moves daily. For Convocation, frigate Naphaeon in Vendricce. Don't abandon me."

Leone manages to wrest control of himself back at dawn, immediately contacts the Ob for emergency aid, and is given a magic item to suppress Grappa's consciousness. When he reaches the Obscurati palace, Nicodemus will remove Grappa for good, and the Ob will be on high alert for intruders. It's almost certain the party won't be able to sneak in using Ob officer bodies, but that doesn't mean they can't try something else.

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Loot.

The party will likely want to divest Leone of his steelsilk mantle he's been wearing (page 72).





ACT TWO: APPLIED ESCHATOLOGY

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In this act, the party heads north to a glacial rift controlled by frost giants loyal to the Obscurati, where they must reach a frozen lich and trade Leone's soul for Grappa's aid.

WITNESSES AND THE OBSCURATI.

The fight with Leone probably has a large audience. If people see the party knock out Leone, will word get back to the Obscurati? Probably. But if the party follows through with Grappa's plan, their original bodies will end up effectively dead. The Ob will perform divinations, and they almost certainly know the PCs' names, but the magic will verify that they're dead. So when "Leone" shows up alive and well, and brief magical checks show that he's not being mind-controlled, they'll accept his story that he managed to escape the party and kill them.



MIND TO BARGAIN

Social. Real-Time. Level 11.

Alexander Grappa explains his insane plan.

Once Leone finally falls asleep, Alexander Grappa slowly takes control of the man's body. He struggles a bit to talk, since until now he hasn't tried speaking in Leone's body, but he gets the hang of it after a few minutes of slurring and stammering. He can move just fine now, but warns them that any sudden jolt could wake Leone, and that he's completely unable to fight for dominance when the man is conscious.

Grappa thanks them, then gets down to business and explains his plan. He discovered toward the end of his time with his previous employers that they were working with a group of frost giants based in the tower city of Knütpara, trapped over a thousand years ago in a massive glacier. He only managed a bit of investigation of his own, but he learned there was an unnamed frost giant lich whose phylactery was lost in that city, and that the last time he was destroyed a few centuries ago, he apparently reformed stuck in the ice.

The lich's specialty was ripping souls out of people and planting other souls into the shells of their bodies, mostly as a service for allies of the Demonocracy, to let them be immortal, or so that they could infiltrate groups opposed to the demons. It was apparently quite effective, and could even fool magical detection. Grappa theorized that his former employers were trying to free the lich, but before sending his letter to the constables, he performed a divination and learned that the lich is still trapped in the ice. The other frost giants found him, but apparently haven't dug him out yet.

Grappa risked only two *sending* spells while trapped in Leone's body. The first was to contact Tinker Oddcog (see Adventure Six). The second was to ask if the lich would share his knowledge of soul transfer, and it agreed, on the condition that he free it.

"Do not doubt my intentions," Grappa says at this point. "We shall definitely destroy him once we get what we want. I'd hate to loose some ancient evil being on the world."

Moral Objections.

Grappa has prepared dozens of possible arguments to convince uncomfortable PCs that this is the best solution. We suggest you ponder what might sway your players if you think they'll balk. In particular, Grappa says repeatedly that the Obscurati are cautious, and that there's no other way the party will be able to reach their secret meeting.

It will take place in the Bleak Gate, so it's not even possible to just get an army and attack the place. Sneaking in is the only way, and not doing this will let a far greater evil succeed, judging by what the conspiracy has done so far.

Grappa tries to keep his knowledge of the meeting secret so that the party has to work with him, but if they insist he share before they agree to help, he'll do it, all while pointing out that he's too decent a man to work in such a cutthroat business.

Lich Location, Ob Operation.

The city of Knütpara lies further north in the Shawl Mountains, about a three-day trek from Mirsk. Three towers still rise above the level of





the glacier, and the frost giants have smashed through their walls to get access deeper into the glacier. A river has carved a rift in the glacier, and after several years of excavation, the giants have reached the chamber where the lich is trapped.

In truth, the giants want nothing to do with the lich, and they actively make sure he doesn't escape. Rather, this city was damned by Triegenes centuries ago, and flaming stones fell from the heavens to strike it down. The Obscurati enlisted the giants to recover those extraterrestrial rocks, which were over years picked up in the glacier. The Ob use these rocks to create oil infusions for the Wayfarer Lantern and its derivatives.

The glacier is also a test-bed of sorts for uses of the lantern. It was here that the Ob perfected different mixes of oils that can create different world states, and now they just use the lantern magic to smooth operations. The giants use slave labor—mostly dwarf and human prisoners sent north by Drakran authorities and sold off instead of making their way into normal prisons. They are kept docile by means of a series of lanterns burning the right mix of extraplanar oils.

The Ob researchers here aren't combatants, but the party will have their first taste of the pervasive mind-altering magic the conspiracy has in store for the whole world, and they'll have to be careful or else they'll be easy pickings for the giants.

Leone Complication.

The party will need to bring Leone along and keep him alive, unless they can spare enough time to leave him locked up, go clear the rift of threats, return, and then bring Leone to the lich. Along the way, the steelshaper will be unable to use his magic as long as the party keeps him in *mage cuffs*, but he'll look for many opportunities to escape or sabotage them, especially once they get into the rift where he has Obscurati allies.

Leone probably still doesn't know about Grappa, and he'll be confused why the party has taken him alive and are heading into a frozen wilderness. He starts off quiet, obedient, and observant, trying to get a gauge of the group. He might try to strike up a friendship with one PC in order to bargain for his life, or at the very least to make the party treat him like a human, making it harder to kill him. Plus, when the moment presents itself, he'll be ready to try to get them killed. We offer a few suggestions for ways he can cause trouble.

INTO THE NORTH

Exploration. Montage. Level 10.

The party must reach the glacier-trapped city of Knütpara while keeping Leone alive and in custody.

Knütpara lies about 20 miles north-east of Mirsk, but in the mountainous and icy terrain it's difficult to traverse more than 8 miles in a day. A well-prepared party is at little risk of dying on the way there (we assume everyone will be sheltered by *endure elements*, or at least warm coats), but Leone will try to escape if the party finds itself in a bad place.

Orienteering.

Each day, have one PC who takes the lead make a Survival check (DC 20) to find the best route through the mountains, and a Knowledge: Nature check (DC 20) to guide the party safely through.

Then each PC—as well as Leone—must make an Fortitude save to cross the mountains safely (DC 15 if both checks succeeded, DC 20 if one was failed, and DC 25 if both failed). Each PC that fails the save falls prey to fatigue or distraction at the wrong moment and finds himself in a



perilous situation, such as clinging to an ice wall with a frayed rope and a broken ice axe, or caught in the path of a sudden avalanche. If multiple PCs fail, they're all imperiled at the same time.

Escaping Peril.

Whenever a perilous situation occurs, create a quick encounter where those who succeeded the save are in no immediate danger, but those who failed have at most three rounds before they plummet to their deaths.

Those who are *imperiled* might be able to escape with an Acrobatics or Climb check (DC 25) to leap or climb to safety, but if they fail by 5 or more they'll fall immediately. Those who are safe need to succeed a DC 20 check to lend assistance, but if they fail by 5 or more they'll end up *imperiled* too.

A character who fails or doesn't escape in time suffers some horrible injury from the fall. He takes 1d6 points of Constitution and Dexterity damage, and his movement speed is reduced by half until the ability damage is healed.

Sabotage

Should the party find itself imperiled, Leone will feign disinterest (Bluff +23), but if he has a chance he'll try to bull rush someone off a cliff (CMB +9, or +20 if the target is in metal armor), then make a run for it. If the party is doing pretty well and avoiding peril, on the third day Leone will use a sharp rock he has hidden away to slice a climbing rope, imperiling at least one PC.

His ideal escape plan is to knock someone with a fair amount of metal off a ledge, then levitate them telekinetically, taking damage from the *mage cuffs*. He'll shout that they need to take the cuffs off now or else he'll drop them. Even then, though, Leone's much weaker out in the tundra with no handy trains to use as weapons.







THE THREE TOWERS

Action. Real-Time. Level 13.

The party must sneak past a patrol to enter the glacial rift and find the magic Grappa needs.

After three days, the gaps between the mountains become choked with glaciers a hundred feet thick or more. The party comes across centuries-old ruins of the pre-Clergy civilization, including, at the entrance to what was once the city's valley, a stone pillar carved with words in Abyssal. They read, "Gaze ye upon Knütpara, eternal bastion of the Demonocracy, built to withstand any army's siege."

Beyond lies a seemingly trackless glacier, obscured by snow drifts and hazy white winds.

Giant Territory.

Several thousand frost giants live along the mountains surrounding Knütpara, but only a handful venture down to the glacial rift. As long as

the party doesn't look for trouble, the main body of the frost giants here won't bother them.

The giants who live at the glacial rift are led by the Khangitche, a warrior named Odul Chuvan. Under his command are 2 demonic death bears, 3 frost giant rangers, 3 frost giant mages, and 16 frost giant guards. Normally these are divided into five groups:

- 5. Patrol. 2 rangers, 2 bears. They head out to find the party once they breach the perimeter.
- 6. Surface Tents. Frost mage, 4 guards. They might spot the party approaching the towers, and they respond to the sound of combat from below. They can descend to sub-level 1 through a shaft in the ice with giant-sized handholds.
- 7. Rift Defenses. 5 guards. They are scattered around the different areas of the rift, walking the same routes over and over again, stopping every fifteen minutes or so to chat with someone when their paths cross. They each have a whistle to blow in case of attack. (Not a horn; they don't want to risk an avalanche.)
- 8. Reserves. Frost mage, ranger, 3 guards. They rest in area O, and only come out if the alarm is sounded.
- 9. Mine. Odul Chuvan, frost mage, 4 guards. The khangitche oversees a few dozen prisoners as they dig out the ice looking for meteorites.

Additionally, two Obscurati wizards reside in area M, and they are responsible for maintaining the test lanterns and recording the results of their experiments on the prisoners.

The Approach/

The surface of the glacier is dotted with small totems, spaced every few hundred feet. These consist of dwarf, human, and animal skulls, with frozen red entrails dribbling from their mouths. The frost giant rangers that patrol the glacier are accompanied by hideous demonic creatures, seemingly immortal beasts they call "deathbears." They have no skin of their own, so the giants let them wear polar bear pelts, and the only way to kill them for good is to make sure their bodies cannot lie in a pool of blood. Additionally, they have a preternatural sense that alerts them whenever a living creature gets within 10 feet of any of their totems.

The rift itself is easy to find, simply by following the only stream that manages to flow across the glacier. Though aligned just right to be warmed above freezing by the sun during the day, it dies each night. If the party follows the riverbed it has carved, they find totems lining each side, which easily alert the deathbears. Two of the rangers take the beasts to check out what is approaching.

Enemies.

2 Knütpara frost giant rangers (page 69) 2 demonic deathbears (page 69)

Sneaking.

The frost giants are large and easy to spot from several hundred feet away (Perception DC 18). Sneaking past them is impossible unless the party consciously avoids the totems. Even then, they must each first succeed a Stealth check (DC 15) to get within sight of the towers without being found by the rangers. They can move to the two north towers (Areas A or B) without being spotted, but those towers have no easy entrance. Getting to the entrance of the south tower (Area C) requires sneaking past the frost giant surface camp (Stealth check DC 20).

Moving through the rift without being spotted by the guard patrols is actually not too hard (Stealth DC 20). Sneaking within 50 feet of the





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MOOD LIGHTING.

The bottom of the rift (Area S) has wayfarer's lanterns spaced every 40 feet, hung from ice hooks. They dimly illuminate the entire bottom of the rift in a soothing blue light. Similarly, the prison mine (Area V) is lit by lanterns that shed piercing red light, which invigorate those nearby.

Whenever a creature ends its turn within 25 feet of one of these lanterns, it might be affected by whatever planar energy it is manifesting.

Trait

► Lantern's Manifestation Aura 25 ft. (or 50 ft. for larger lanterns) A new emotion overtakes you.

Whenever a creature ends its turn in the illuminated area, they must make a DC 20 Will save or fall under the lantern's effect. An affected creature gets a new save each round to resist the effects. If a creature fails three consecutive saves, it falls fully under the lantern's effect for 5 minutes.

If a creature successfully ends three consecutive turns unaffected, it becomes resistant, and cannot be affected again by any lantern with the same planar energy for 5 minutes.

A creature can choose to let itself be affected by the lantern.

The lanterns in Area S pacify. A creature affected by this magic cannot take hostile actions, and it treats all creatures as trusted friends. If another creature attacks it, it automatically breaks free of the pacification and cannot be affected again until the end of the encounter.

The lanterns in Area V invigorate. Creatures affected gain a +2 bonus to Strength and Constitution checks and related skill checks, and to weapon attack rolls. They suffer a -2 penalty to non-weapon attack rolls.

Breaking Lanterns

The lanterns here are as easy to break as a normal one.

Persistence and Resistance

If a creature knows what lanterns do, it can choose to actively to resist. On its turn it can spend an action to focus on maintaining its original state of mind. This lets it add +2 to its Will save against the lantern, and add its Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma modifier (whichever is highest) to its saving throws to break free.

Once Grappa is in control of Leone's body, it might help to have him examine one of the lanterns and explain to the party how they can resist such magic in the future.

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rangers out on the glacier surface is harder (DC 25), while entering the surface camp and descending the shaft is incredibly risky (DC 30).

A single failed check simply raises the suspicion of the enemies present; they'll take actions to investigate, but usually the PCs will have a round or two to find a hiding place. Give PCs a bonus to their second Stealth check if they suggest a good hiding spot, or make use of another skill or ability to aid their evasion. A second failed check while a giant is investigating means the PC has been spotted, and combat will almost certainly ensue.

More Sabotage.

The party might want to gag Leone, or even better wait until the man falls asleep and Grappa can take over.

Once Leone realizes where they are, he'll wait for a chance to spoil the group's stealth, shouting out that he's one of their allies, while the party is here to kill them. He knows there's an Ob operation here, but he has no idea what they work on. One way he can alert the giants without the party realizing is if he uses his steelshaping to tug a giant's weapon, making it suspicious. Leone will take damage, so he can only do this once or twice.

THE GLACIAL RIFT OF THE FROST GIANT KHANGITCHE

Action. Tactical. Level 13+.

By stealth or assault, the party makes its way to the bottom of the rift. Here we detail the locations of the rift. Stats of the enemies guarding it are listed in Appendix Three: Frost Giants of Knütpara (page 69).

Terrain.

Most areas are scattered with patches of thick snow drifts (difficult terrain) or ice (Acrobatics check DC 10 +2 per square entered in a given move action, or else fall prone).

Climbing along the icy walls (Climb DC 20) is made much easier with an ice axe or similar implement (+10 bonus).

Unless he is resistant to cold damage, or has magical protection from cold weather, a character who falls into icy water must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or take 1d6 nonlethal damage and suffer from hypothermia (treat as fatigued). The character makes another save each hour that his clothes remain wet.

A. Overlook Tower.

This 140-ft. high tower sits at the very edge of the glacier, and it overlooks an icy gorge. Likely many dangerous and wonderful dungeons and tombs lie in the caves that branch off from the gorge, but those are beyond the scope of this adventure. The gorge extends a few hundred feet, beyond which the glacier continues.

There is no entrance to this tower at this level. The windows are barred and iced over. Stairways-sized for dwarves, not giants-spiral up to the roof and down to the sub-level one. This tower was once a torture prison for enemies of the Demonocracy. The old furniture-racks, vices, hooks and chains-have been pushed to the edges of the room.

When he's not overseeing the mine, Odul Chuvan stays here with two of the female guards, who are his consorts. A massive bear-skin bed covers the middle of the floor.

B. Dragon Tower.

Carved stone dragons adorn this building's walls. The tower was a breeding aerie for dragons used as aerial cavalry by the Demonocracy, and ancient cracked eggshells and discarded teeth have been swept to the walls. A search of the top floor (Perception DC 16) discovers a steelbound book on techniques of dragon breeding and rearing.

When not needed in the mine, one frost mage and one guard live here.

C. Ink and Elm.

This solid black tower once had a crown of branches like an elm tree. Most of them have snapped off. The handful that remain have been decorated by Odul Chuvan, who likes to throw prisoners and see if he can stick them on the stone spikes.



This used to be the frost giant's main route down into the rift, but now it's mostly just used by the rangers so they can bring out their pet deathbears. The walls inside are scrawled with graffiti in charcoal and bloody smears. This tower is the only one with an entryway at the surface level: a door smashed through its wall, with only a stitched-together bear-hide curtain to keep out the snow.

D. Waterfall.

The small stream that crosses the glacier drops eighty feet here into a 10-ft. deep pool at the bottom of the rift.

E. Surface Camp.

1 frost giant mage, 4 frost giant guards

Three huge tents sit inside a circular fraise of ice spikes. A frost mage lives in one tent, and four guards are split between the other two tents. A shaft descends twenty-five feet to Area L, and then there's a fifteen foot drop to the ice cave.

F. Outlook Tower. Middle Level.

The frost giants smashed a hole in the wall here, and knocked out parts of the ceiling to get more space. Occasionally pairs of giants will use this spot for a private rendezvous. Frozen elk-intestine condoms lie discarded or stuck proudly to the icy walls. Stairs lead up and down from here.

G. The Chute.

1 frost giant guard

This shaft descends fifteen feet, then has a fifteen foot drop to Area O. The giants prefer to use this route now, rather than go through the lantern-enchanted gorge floor. South of the chute, the tunnel opens into the rift, and a twenty-foot thick ice bridge crosses the sixty foot gap to Area I.

H. Dragon Tower, Middle Level.

1 frost giant guard

An actual door here (20-ft. tall, red steel, free from ice) leads out to an ice bridge, but it was originally used exclusively by dragons. The frost giants also smashed out a wall on the other side, and they use it as their kitchen.

Anyone who opens the door from either side triggers a blast of fire (15ft. radius burst, 5d6 fire damage, Reflex DC 20 for half).

I. Ink and Elm, Middle Level.

The door to the north here is framed by carved stone signs inviting (in Abyssal) guests to enjoy the finest food and parties of the north. A careful search inside can uncover a bottle of thousand year old wine, frozen solid. It's disgusting.

J. Meteor Storage.

1 frost giant guard

Thornsenkertz, one of the Obscurati researchers, cheekily made a snowman here and placed bits of unneeded rocks in the wall to spell out, "METEOR STORAGE."

A sled is loaded with four dozen clay jars, each filled with meteors from different extraplanar locations.

K. Pissing Point.

The frost giants use this spot as a latrine by letting their waste freeze and then throwing it off into the rift. The Ob researchers actually set up a small igloo for privacy here.

L. Giant's Ballroom.

1 frost giant guard

This is the giants' primary method of ingress these days.

M. Obscurati Research.

This chamber has been subdivided with wooden poles and animal-hide curtains, splitting it into lodging, laboratory, and living room. The researchers keep a tiny replica of the Wayfarer's Lantern burning oil from the plane of air, Avilona, which somehow keeps the room at a comfortable temperature without melting the ice walls.

The two thirty-something researchers here, a man named Gangenwieck and a woman named Thornsenkertz, were recruited from minor border states. They've gotten quite fond of creatively grumbling about the living conditions (an "insect collection" board where the pins all hold giant-endemic body lice; an ironic "visitors guide" brochure extolling the virtues of all the giants they loathe, plus recipes for ice soup and ice souffle; a log book next to a chess board, with 8 solid pages marking the date and a single move per person, with all the moves just going back and forth between two positions to no advantage; etc.).

Their laboratory has extensive notes on nearly 50 planes from which different meteors originated, and the effects they had on the prisoners. Their method of observation was to place a lantern outside one of the cells in Area U, light it from afar, and observe with a telescope.

N. Outlook Tower, Ground Level.

The bottom of the tower is choked with ice and barely navigable. A few dwarf skeletons can be found here: they were slaves who escaped and hid where the giants couldn't reach them, but they couldn't sneak out.

O. Main Quarters.

1 frost giant mage, 1 frost giant ranger, 3 frost giant guards

The frost giants take shifts resting in this room on pelt beds. They use an old banquet table for repairing clothes and boots, and have a metal tray in one corner filled with bloody snow they munch on for snacks.

P. Dragon Tower, Ground Level.

The frost mages cleared this area of the stones that were once different floors, and now they use it as a meditation site. The ice that coats the walls is etched with thousands of runes.

Q. Ink and Elm. Ground Level.

Here the giants keep a haphazard collection of treasure looted from the city. Most of it is just shiny brass-doorknobs, sconces, and the like-but underneath a layer of ice and a pile of cheap metal, a few prizes wait, like a 10-ft. diameter solid gold chandelier or a mahogany headboard decorated with rubies. The party can also find here Reason, +4 diplomatic rifle (page 72), its stock carved out of a demonic thigh bone, originally crafted by a familiar dwarf mercenary, Kvarti Gorbatiy (see Area U).

R. Second Waterfall.

The waterfall river flows west and into the gorge past the tower. The movement of the glacier has actually torn the towers from their original foundations, which is easily noticed here.



S. Rift Floor.

The ground here is perilously icy and sloped. Whenever a creature walks here, at the end of each move action it must make an Acrobatics check (DC 10 +2 per square traveled) or else it falls prone and slides 5 feet toward the frigid stream.

The lanterns here try to pacify creatures. See Mood Lighting (page 34).

T. Waterfall Pool.

The water here is 10 feet deep. Subtle runes carved into the edge of the pool (Perception DC 30) have enchanted the water so that any creature that enters it has any magical cold protection suppressed for one hour.

A character who tries to climb along the wall must make an Acrobatics check (DC 15) to avoid the waterfall. Failure means the character is knocked into the water.

U. Prison Cells

1 frost giant guard

The five cells along this ledge have ice bars thick enough that the exhausted dwarf and human prisoners within haven't yet managed to break through them. Even when they get close, the frost giant mages repair the damage. A total of 32 prisoners (13 humans, 19 dwarves) stay here, including Kvarti Gorbatiy.

The dwarf mercenary used to plunder this city for treasure, and long ago he crafted a rifle using the thigh bone of the lich here as a stock. His interest in the Obscurati was piqued during Adventure Five, Cauldron-Born, and when he learned that frost giants were operating in his old stomping ground he came to check it out and got captured. His rifle was taken as a trophy.

V. Prison Mine.

Odul Chuvan, 1 frost giant mage, 4 frost giant guards

During the day, the prisoners work in two 8 hour shifts of 16 people apiece. They head down the tunnel into the mine tunnels (Area W), hack into the glacial ice with picks, and then cart the pieces up to the pool here, where they slowly melt in the lantern light. The giants recover any meteorites in the bottom of the pool, and the water runs down to the drain (Area X).

The lanterns here try to invigorate creatures. See Mood Lighting (page 34). For details of this location, see Frozen Souls, below.

W. Mine Tunnels.

The prisoners work down this shaft, which leads to several tunnels. The tunnels are just large enough for a giant to walk through, and at least one giant is with the miners at any time, holding a lantern to keep them invigorated. The tunnels are fairly orderly and boring. The prisoners usually only find a handful of meteorites each day, and they're seldom larger than a thimble.

X. Lich Drain.

In their excavation, the giants found a figure frozen in the ice: a giant lich from the time of the Demonocracy. On the Obscurati's orders they did not dig him out, but his magic subtly influenced the water flow from the melt pool in area V, causing it to flow past him. The giants responded by digging a drainage hole right in front of the lich, so any warm water would not manage to thaw out his prison.

For details of this location, see Frozen Souls, on the next page.

WINTER CELL

Social. Real-Time. Level 11.

An Obscurati cell collaborates with the frost giants, performing mindcontrol experiments.

Gangenwieck (male) and Thornsenkertz (female), the two Ob scientists still active here, are not true believers. They don't know the conspiracy's larger plans, and they just think they're researching some magical weapons that have fringe uses for crowd control. They are in no way combatants, but they're intelligent, and will try to use the lanterns in Area S to their advantage.

If confronted, they'll claim they hate working here and will confess to most everything: they're working with some conspiracy that they think is based out of Trekhom, prisoners get sent here to work for the giants digging up meteorites which they infuse into lantern oil, and they've done some experiments with it. But they lie about the lanterns at the bottom of the rift, saying that their purpose is to "establish a kinetostatic inertial field to stabilize the glacial flow in the rift; basically, it keeps the rift from collapsing."

The technobabble helps sell the lie (Sense Motive DC 30), but a character who studied the lantern's schematics gains a +5 bonus to see through their bullshit, and anyone who studies the energy of the lanterns from afar (Spellcraft DC 23) realizes they have an enchantment aura, not telekinetic.

Friendly Villains.

Regardless whether they're found out, the two scientists gladly give full details of the rest of the rift, and they suggest the party head down to the rift floor, kill the Khangitche, and free the prisoners. They hope the party will head down without them; they'll try to watch from one of the ice bridges over the rift, and once the party is in the pacifying lantern light, they'll order them to wait for the Khangitche to arrive so everyone can talk about the situation reasonably. And to make sure the giants aren't too scared, the scientists add, why not drop your weapons and spell components, and stay there politely?

If somehow this works (and remember that failing to break free for three consecutive rounds makes the effect last for five minutes), the two scientists play a quick game of rock-paper-scissors that results in Gangenwieck having to go through the freezing waterfall to alert the Khangitche. Since the Ob scientists understand how the lanterns work, they concoct a plan that can kill the party.

Rules Lawyering.

A few minutes later, the frost giant mage from Area V comes out of the waterfall. He is surprisingly friendly, but says that his master gave him an errand to run before negotiations can start. Then he walks out of the rift and up to one of the ice bridges overhead. From there he calls down and asks, politely, for the party to step under the bridge, and stay there so he can show them something exciting. When they do, the mage uses ice shaping to remove one end of the bridge. The other end begins to crack, and one round later the whole bridge will collapse, dropping several tons of ice on the party.

Give each PC a saving throw to break out of the pacification effect. Those who succeed can act to get out of the way, but those who fail obediently wait to see the exciting thing. Anyone still left in the same spot one round later might be crushed (18d6 damage, Reflex DC 25 for half.)



FROZEN SOULS

Action. Tactical. Level 15.

The frozen lich who can free Grappa and help the party infiltrate the Ob lies in a heavily guarded mine filled with prisoners.

Odul Chuvan and some of his giants wait in Area V while sixteen prisoners work in the mine, under the watch of one giant guard. The khangitche is not much of a talker, but he can be intimidated into just leaving if the party explains that they've killed the rest of his forces.

Enemies.

Khangitche Odul Chuvan (page 70) Frost giant mage (page 70) 4 frost giant guards (page 70)

Approach.

The ledge overhead has prison cells, and unless the party calms the prisoners down their excitement at a possible rescue will alert the giants. Kvarti Gorbatiy is in his cell when the party arrives, and he'll whisper an explanation of the situation, how he got here, and what the lanterns below do. He's heard the giants discussing a frozen wizard who must be down the tunnel to the southwest, but he's never seen it.

He's the only prisoner worth much in a fight, and if the party gives him a gun he can provide overwatch.

Tactics.

If a fight breaks out, the giant in the mines orders the prisoners back into the main area immediately. They arrive at the start of the second round, first 4 humans, then the frost giant guard, then a dozen humans behind him.

If the party is still up on the ledge, the frost giant mage will try to use *ice shaping* to turn the ground beneath some of the PCs into a ramp, dropping them into close combat. The giant guards then rush any PCs who are farther away, trying to keep the groups split up.

Odul Chuvan will grab chunks of ice to throw at PCs before closing, then will try to throw PCs into the gully on the western side of the room using Awesome Blow. When he drops below half HP, he'll call his guards back to him to form a protective ring, but he won't run.

Loot.

When Odul Chuvan falls, his armor seems to melt away, leaving behind just one chunk of ice that radiates magic. This is his frost giant plate.

XAMBRIA'S SOUL SEARCH.

If one of the PCs has had the consciousness of Xambria Meredith stuck in his head since Adventure Three, she points out that if the lich can give Grappa a body, maybe he can do the same for her. It just requires the party to find someone whose soul they're willing to rip out. If the party is about to kill someone anyway, Xambria suggests not letting a good living body go to waste.

Xambria would prefer a woman's body, all things considered. She'd be content with Thornsenkertz, though she'll lament that she didn't have more time to take her pick of the healthiest female villains.

Likewise, if a player has been itching to change something about his character's class or skills, the lich could perform a little bit of soul surgery.

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VARTI GORBATIY

Schism 🔫 🛛 🐎 Act Two: Applied Eschatology

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 tries to go through life content. All his affairs are in order, and recently he set himself on what he thought was the noble cause of trying to learn more about the people behind the colossus. He would have been fine dying on his mission, but after being captured and tortured by the frost giants of Knütpara, he realizes he wasn't prepared for being powerless.

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CR 10

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Kvarti Gorbatiy XP 9,600

Male dwarf gunslinger 11

LN Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +5, Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +11

Defense

AC 16, touch 16, flat-footed 13 (+3 Dex, +3 dodge)(+4 dodge against giants) hp 99 (11d10+33)

Fort +10, Ref +11, Will +5

Defensive Abilities nimble +3

Offense

Speed 20 ft.

Ranged rifle +14/+9 (1d10+3/19-20/×4)

Special Attacks grit (4), gun-training (pistol, rifle, +3), +1 on attacks against goblinoids or orcs

Statistics

Str 10, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 8, Wis 15, Cha 10

Base Atk +11; CMB +11; CMD 26

Feats Clustered Shots, Critical Focus, Extra Grit, 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) +7, Perception +11, Sense Motive +7, Stealth +11

Languages Common, Dwarven, Primordial

SQ deeds (bleeding wound [3], dead shot, deadeye, expert loading, gunslinger initiative, gunslinger's dodge, lightning reload, pistol-whip, quick clear, startling shot, targeting, utility shot), gunsmith

Other Gear rifle

Aftermath.

There's the very real logistical problem of getting the prisoners to safety. If no one in the party can use *teleport*, they might direct a *sending* to Lauryn Cyneburg, who can teleport to Mirsk and hike here in a few days. Kvarti is willing to stay and keep everyone safe; there's enough supplies to last that long, at least.

Which leaves the issue of why they came here in the first place.

Schism 🚓 🔁 Act Two: Applied Eschatology

THE LEONE, THE LICH, AND THE SNOWGLOBE

Social. Real-Time. Level 11.

The frost giant lich makes a bargain.

In Area X, the lich's towering body (easily 18 feet tall) is visible through more than a foot of ice. When the group is ready, someone can place a hand on the ice. The lich's eyes glow with white light, and the glacier shudders as its muffled voice seems to come from all directions. It is a man of few words, and asks what they have come for.

The party should explain their needs here (or Grappa can, if Leone's asleep). First, they need to remove Leone's soul from his body so Grappa can control it. Second, they need to learn the magic that can implant their souls into other people's bodies.

The undead mage is a man of few words, and demands that after he gives the group the knowledge it needs, they must break the ice trapping him and let him go free. He promises not to harm them. If they do not free him, he will curse them to turn their blood to ice. Anyone remotely familiar with the Demonocracy should have a good sense that such curses were well within the power of those who served the demons.

Feel free to play up the lich as much as you want-it has all these hideous plans to march into the frozen wastes and awaken the Lost Riders who will sweep across the land carving out a new domain for him to rule over, etc. etc.—but the truth is that the lich isn't making it out of here.

Soul Ripping.

Even if Grappa is in control, Leone starts to panic now and tries to run. The lich tells the group that it needs a crystal to hold the man's soul. A glass sphere is best, but a piece of ice will work. It tells them to press the victim to the ice wall, place the crystal on the back of his head, and name the person whose soul is to be removed.

When they say Leone's name the entire glacier shakes, and the ice around them turns black. Cracks fissure the walls and Leone screams, flails, tries to shove the party away with his steelshaping even to the point of searing the flesh beneath his manacles. Then he goes limp, and the glacier becomes still and blue again, but the crystal has turned black.

Grappa groans, bonks his head a few times to clear it, then smiles to the party and thanks them. The party could keep Leone's soul in the crystal, but Grappa suggests breaking the crystal to let him pass on to whatever afterlife awaits him. (If they use ice, it would melt eventually anyway.)

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VILE RITUAL.

Grappa's probably best equipped to cast the mortal possession spell. An expert at mind magic, with the aid of some other spells he can boost the save DC to 30 when he casts the spell. The hosts' Will save bonuses are listed on page 39; they will automatically fail unless they roll a natural 20.

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Henceforth, Grappa can use all of Leone's powers. Additionally he has some mild enchantment and charm magic that aren't pertinent in combat. He can also access a fair number of Leone's memories, but their geases are both still in effect. Grappa can play a convincing Leone, but he cannot tell the party that Roland Stanfield is part of the Ob, for instance.

Demonic Techniques.

Now the lich says he shall grant them the knowledge they asked for. Any arcane spellcaster can learn the spell Mortal Possession. All they need to do is place their hand on the ice and let the lich implant the knowledge in their mind. The spell is detailed in Player Handout-Obscurati Covers.

Releasing the Lich.

His part of the bargain done, the lich tells them to free him. If they don't, he curses at them, discovering that he actually does not have the power he thought he did.

If they do-either by melting the ice or shattering it-the lich laughs and boasts that he will offer them a place in his future domain, once he has had his revenge, but before he can even finish the last word, his jaw falls off. Confused, he manages to push himself free of the ice and take a single step, at which point his leg snaps in two. He faceplants, then shatters into thousands of icy shards. The various pieces fall down the pit and are washed away.

The Demonocracy is gone, and the Ob already found and destroyed the lich's phylactery. Without their support, the lich is just a normal undead with a very brittle corpse.

THE FITTING ROOM

Social. Montage. Level 11.

The party must decide whether to take Grappa's offer, and which Ob officer each of them wants to inhabit.

Assuming the party is willing to place their souls in the bodies of others, now all they have to do is wait for the officers to arrive. From Autumn 72 to Autumn 74 Leone's operatives will bring the arrivals in one by one to his hotel suite. Grappa can get them alone then magically waylay them.

For the sake of avoiding a causality glitch, you might want to just gloss through this and simply make each player use the same Obscurati Officer they played in the teaser. For now just give them the Officer Cards from the teaser, not the full bios.

Once everyone has a new body, they have to figure out what to do with their original ones. Grappa can get gentle repose scrolls to keep the party's bodies from dying of hunger and thirst, and El Extraño's kobolds can watch over them in the hotel room. Or if the party has Copperhat the Headless's absurdist web, they can carry their bodies with them.



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CONTEST, CRISIS, AND REJECTION.

From time to time the PCs will have to make Will saves to see if a host temporarily regains control of his body. Some hosts are more mentally resilient than others. Their save DCs for this situation, known as a **contest**, are listed here, as well as their own Will save bonus for when the party casts the spell on them.

Ken Don. DC 16. Will +10. Gran Guiscard. DC 14. Will +5. Livia Hatsfield. DC 14.* Will +6. Kiov Hetman. DC 13. Will +4. Oscan Ligurio. DC 12. Will +1. Bruce McDruid. DC 12. Will +4. Xavier Sangria. DC 12. Will +7.

If a contest leads to a crisis, give players a chance to play it off if anyone sees them acting strangely, though onlookers will probably report their suspicions to Nicodemus. If a full-blown rejection occurs, it's up to you how punitive you want to be. Perhaps the confused host stumbles into the rest of the party, who have a chance to tackle him before anyone else sees. Or perhaps he panics and starts screaming when he sees ghosts hovering outside his window.

If Nicodemus sees a PC in rejection, he'll have a basic idea of what the magic does, even if he doesn't know how it works. He'll quickly try to round up everyone else who came in the same group (i.e., the PCs, Grappa, and a few priests from Crisillyir), and will start asking very prying questions, forcing PCs to either lie convincingly or risk a gestalt attempt. Luckily, with Grappa around they're at no risk of a crisis, but they might not realize that.

* Livia is actually loyal to Risur, acting as a "double agent" unaffiliated with the RHC. If a character allows Livia to have control and then has the rest of the party explain the situation, it will become possible to maintain gestalt with her permanently.

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Rehearsal.

Show the players the first part of **Player Handout–Obscurati Cov**ers (page 76), and let them become familiar with the rules for contests, crises, and gestalt. Then it's time for each of them to attempt their first gestalt, to get a sense of their cover story and the personality they need to maintain.

One by one, have the players go through the process of contest (a few times if necessary), and then once they achieve gestalt give them the full character bio of their host body (pages 77–83). Then watch the constable merged with Oscan Ligurio get creeped out, and let the party figure out what to do with Livia when they realize she's actually on their side.

Buddy System.

For the trip to Vendricce, Grappa can stay by the PCs and make sure they don't suffer a crisis when they sleep. Once they reach the convocation, it'll be up to them to stay out of trouble and maintain their cover. Grappa suggests they request rooms such that at least two PCs are in each. That way if one PC has a crisis while falling asleep the other can handle it.

With all that covered, it's time for the party to infiltrate the conspiracy. The group boards a train on Autumn 75 and over the next three days makes their way to Vendricce. There, around noon on Autumn 79, they board the ship *Naphaeon* along with a few priests of the Clergy, and they sail twenty miles off the coast to







ACT THREE: INTO THE LION'S DEN

n this act, the party has a chance to devastate the con-

L spiracy, but a misstep could spell their doom.

OBSCURATI PALACE OVERVIEW.

Here we detail the locations of the Obscurati palace. Stats of the enemies present here are listed in **Appendix Two: Obscurati Forces** (see page 63).

The total catalog of all the defenders of the palace and its surroundings are:

- + 36 Obscurati bookpin guards
- + 16 Obscurati arcane marksmen
- + 3 shadowlisks
- + 4 senior ghost councilors
- ◆ 1 Ghost Council swarm
- + Vicemi Terio
- + Catherine Romana
- + Cula Ravjahani

The other Ob officers aren't viable threats to the party at this point. Nicodemus the Gnostic could probably wipe the floor with all of them, but Andrei von Recklinghausen, whose body he is wearing, would stop him if he knows it's the same PCs he encountered on the railroad, forcing Nicodemus to flee rather than fight.



OBSCURATI PALACE LOCATIONS

Exterior, Mutravir Island.

In the Bleak Gate, during the day everything is dimly lit, and at night it is pitch black. No breeze blows, and even the sea is eerily still. The island has been cleared of any sort of monster, though the waters around it are still host to the ghosts of a crew of pirates who dared to set foot on the island fifty years ago. They were captured by the Clergy and chained in their ship, which was set on fire. They burned alive and then sank into the sea. Only a young cabin boy managed to escape, swimming from the burning ship to *Cacciatrece de Nav* (Area J), where he crawled into a cave and died of his wounds.

A. Garden

8 Obscurati bookpin guards

4 Obscurati arcane marksmen

2 shadowlisks

A gravel path circles a reflecting pool, and small *wayfarer's lanterns* glow with nourishing light, keeping alive rows of flowers and other greenery. The grass and trees elsewhere on the Bleak Gate version of the island are dry and lifeless, but the Obscurati see this garden as proof that they can change the world for the better.

The defenders listed above are split into two groups. Normally these guards patrol the path around the palace, each group making a circuit every 12 minutes, so guards pass by any given area every 6 minutes. Each group is the equivalent of a CR 15 encounter. (Darkvision, Perception +14. Shadowlisk pierces illusions.)

B. Obscurati Palace—Central Building

4 Obscurati bookpin guards

2 senior ghost councilors

Pristine white plaster at ground level gives way to dramatic religious carvings near the roof, which peaks at 55 feet above the ground. The clay tiles of the roof gently slope, though without rain the gargoyles (actual stone carvings, not the monsters) are somewhat useless in the Bleak Gate.

Two large windows sit on either side of the entrance at ground level, while a row of windows spans the entire face of the second floor, 15 feet up.

A small detachment of guards keeps watch at the entrance. (Perception +10.) In addition, two senior ghost councilors stroll through the central building, on the look-out for anything unusual. (Darkvision, Perception +25.) If they see trouble, they rush to alert Vicemi Terio and the rest of the Ghost Council, who will respond appropriately.

C. Obscurati Palace—West Wing

1 senior ghost councilor

1 shadowlisk

The roof here peaks at only 40 feet above ground. Small chimneys dot the rooftop. Sixteen windows on each floor are nearly all unlit from within. This hall has few guests, at least not living ones.

At any given time, one senior ghost councilor walks the halls, accompanied by a shadowlisk, to make sure no one tries to sneak in. (Darkvision, Perception +14. Shadowlisk pierces illusions.)







D. Obscurati Palace—East Wing

4 Obscurati bookpin guards

Identical to the west wing, except that here most of the windows will have lights on during waking hours. Two pairs of bookpin guards make slow circuits of the wing.

E. Lighthouse

2 Obscurati arcane marksmen

1 senior ghost councilor

A recent addition to the palace, the lighthouse serves as a giant wayfarer's lantern. With a minute's preparation, oil of different combinations can be lit, producing either a coherent beam that can be aimed up to three miles away, or a broad glow that illuminates the entire island and the sea out to a half mile. This can create various magical effects, but it is primarily primed to be able to make the island coterminous between the Bleak Gate and the real world, in case an emergency evacuation is needed.

The lighthouse also has a mechanism that can feed different varieties of gas to the lanterns in different parts of the palace. Since all the mansion's gaslamps can function as wayfarer's lanterns, this allows an operator here to affect different parts of the palace with different types of planar energy.

The top floor of the lighthouse rises 100 feet above ground level (and a further 40 feet above sea level). It is serviced by two interior freight elevators. About sixty feet up is a large storage area that has tanks of gas with different planar energies, as well as precisely labeled casks of lantern oil, one for each of the five faction proposals (Arboretum, Colossus, Miller's Pyre, Panarchists, and Watchmakers, see Into the Night, page 51). Clever parties might steal some of this oil and use it in a lamp of their own, granting themselves special powers as listed in Brave New Worlds (page 48).

Normally a ghost councilor is on hand to control the lighthouse and operate the lamps. Nicodemus or Vicemi can contact the operator magically from anywhere on the palace grounds. Additionally, two marksmen sit around very bored.

F. Carriage House

18 Obscurati Bookpin Guards

8 Obscurati Arcane Marksmen

When the guards are not active, they rest here. They have converted the carriage and horse stalls into small rooms. At any given time half of the guards are actively patrolling, while the other half are here resting or preparing food, cleaning, etc.

G. South Balcony

The ground level exit of the lighthouse feeds onto this wide balcony, which is normally unlit. Stairs lead down 40 feet to the sea, where boats could row in and deliver visitors or supplies.

H. Beach Trail

This plain path leads to the flatter beach on the eastern shore, and eventually circles around to the main docks, about two miles away. In the Bleak Gate there are no waves, no surf, and no sea breeze.



I. Sea

The water here is fairly shallow here, only about 10 feet deep. If a character with the Spirit Medium theme stands near the sea in the Bleak Gate-perhaps on the beach trail or the south balcony-he hears pained cries coming from the large rocky island called Cacciatrece de Nav, the Slayer of Ships.

Further out, the still waters around the island are patrolled by three experimental steam-powered warships, which are equipped with arcane shields to keep out supernatural threats. They are nimble but relatively slow compared to other warships, though still fast enough to chase off the sea creatures of the Bleak Gate. They hit hard, but are not particularly resilient. Their stats are presented in the Panicked Evacuation encounter (page 58).

J. Cacciatrece de Nav

This massive spire of rock rises dramatically out of the sea, wider in its middle than at its base, and looking like it would blow over in a strong enough storm. A small cave has been eroded in the south side, and fifty years ago a young pirate died here, stranded and desperate. His skeleton remains, scattered by the tide within the cave.

No one has yet found the boy's skeleton, but if someone enters the cave his ghost will appear (either in the real world or in the Bleak Gate). He begs to be brought back to the mainland. If the party agrees and collects his bones, they can be aided by the Ghost Ship in the Panicked Evacuation encounter (page 58).

Indoors, First Floor.

Gaslight lamps illuminate the mansion except where noted. These lamps are all potential wayfarer's lanterns, controlled by a ghost councilor in the lighthouse (Area E). The lighthouse operator just gets to choose what kind of gas to feed in; the lamps can still be shut off or destroyed locally. Normally, though, they just shed pleasant light.

Since guards are likely to move around, we list them by general area (see areas A through F above), rather than individual rooms.

K. Grand Foyer

This vast entry hall stretches eighty feet in either direction, and has twenty-foot ceilings. Luxurious red rugs guide walkers across a marble floor with a repeating zig-zag pattern in black and white. Fine wood covers stone walls, and rare pieces of painting, sculpture, and jewelry are on display here and throughout the palace.

Double stairs lead up to the second floor. Doors lead sideways into two lounges, while a set of double doors lead south to the main hall. Heated plumbing warms the floors here, as well as in the lounges and main hall.

L. Lounges

Each lounge has comfortable leather chairs where up to thirty people can drink expensive spirits while discussing weighty matters. The side rooms have closets for people to hang cloaks, as well as racks of alcohol and shelves with a few hundred books for research or conversation starters.

M. Main Hall

Over a hundred feet across, this hall can seat a hundred people at tables for dinner or special events. A stage rises at the south end, and chemical spotlights can illuminate speakers or performers. A heavy red curtain separates the main hall from the back stage, where mechanisms control the lights. A double doorway leads south to the lighthouse.





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N. Kitchen

This long room has multiple cook stations to prepare food for large gatherings. The Obscurati didn't want to risk bringing that many cooks here, so only a handful of guards with cooking talents work here, directing special unseen servant-style spells.

O. Icebox

This room stores most of the perishable food supplies of the palace. Magic keeps it perpetually just above freezing, and vents in the floor can be opened to circulate frigid air through ducts that lead around the building. Since the ducts need to be cleaned occasionally, they're large enough for an adult man to crawl through, and they run throughout the mansion, with access points in each room, usually hidden behind furniture.

P. Storage

Furniture, linens, and similar domestic necessities are stored here.

Q. Dry Goods

Non-perishable foodstuffs, plus a few tools for repair. Casks of lantern oil are stacked along one wall.

R. Lighthouse, First Floor

Mostly empty, this area has ladders along the interior walls, as well as two freight elevators. Sixty feet up is the gas supply and the pumps that feed it to the various lamps throughout the palace.

S. West Wing, First Floor

2 Obscurati bookpin guards

Stairs lead up to the second floor, with a maintenance closet beneath. The ghost councilors lurk in these rooms, often floating silent and dormant unless their counsel is needed. Sometimes they fly out of the windows and circle the building, watching the goings-on of the stillliving with cold detachment.

The rooms here are all empty except five. The four on the west end (near Area T) have lights so ghosts can read books if they desire, and one additional room acts as the cell for the spy Vitus Sigismund. A portal painting (see page 49) has been placed in that suite's bathroom, the door to which is locked and watched by two guards.

The painting leads to a demiplane with several nigh inescapable prison cells, their defenses magically enhanced. A dozen other mencondemned prisoners from Crisillyir-are also kept here in their own cells. Members of the Ghost Council occasionally come by to observe Vitus, but they leave the interrogation to Vicemi.

T. Den

The Ghost Council meets here if they need to discuss matters. It is left unlit, with sheets over the furniture.

U. East Wing, First Floor

Though physically identical to the west wing, this area is full of life, with nearly every suite occupied. Each suite has a desk in one corner, a bed in another, a bathroom, a closet, and a fireplace. The fireplaces in the two central rows of rooms that sit back to back share chimneys, and the brick backing of each fireplace is fairly thin. It would be possible to break through these, allowing a quick if unorthodox route between the northern and southern hallways.

V. Trophy Room

In the real world version of this room, old tattered taxidermied heads of beasts hang from the walls. Here they are covered with sheets to hide their morbid decay. Guests can enjoy a pool table, a piano, and a set of instruments stored along the west wall. The entire north, south, and east walls are windows.

Indoors. Second Floor.

On the second floor of the central building, the walls are covered with a dozen floor-to-ceiling paintings. Each is covered with a curtain when the party arrives, and are only unveiled later in the evening. These paintings are portals to demi-planes. Each demi-plane spans about 100 feet and represents a possible confluence of planar energies. In short, these are demos of the new worlds the Ob could create.

W. Council Room

Nicodemus holds meetings here. Usually his affairs are watched by members of the Ghost Council, and there are always at least a half dozen or so ghosts floating outside the windows here.

X. West Wing, Second Floor

The four suites nearest the upstairs council room (Area W) host Nicodemus, Han Jierre and his bodyguard Bert Facie, Cula Ravjahani, and Catherine Romana. The other rooms here, and the hallways, are unlit.

Y. Chapel

The real-world version of this room was a chapel for daily prayers. Here the religious iconography on the walls have been covered by thick red curtains, and the room is stocked with snacks and drinks, so those on the second floor don't have to go downstairs if they're puckish.

Z. Infirmary

This has lots of mostly-useless medical supplies, ready just in case something goes horribly wrong and there are more injured people than there is magical healing available.

A.A. Library

This vast library has ten rows of bookstacks, plus eight long tables for researchers.

BB. East Wing, Second Floor

As on the first floor, most of the suites here are occupied.

CC. Dance Hall

Since only a handful of the Ob officers would dance even if asked, this area's fine dance floor has been covered with high and low tables, chairs, stools, and several other sets of furniture to motivate conversation.



GETTING COMFORTABLE

Exploration/Social. Montage. Level 12.

The party is split up into different rooms and given time to mingle before the opening of the convocation.

Refresh the players' memories about their arrival at the palace, meeting Han Jierre, transitioning into the Bleak Gate, the capture of the spy, the ghostly return of Reed Macbannin, and their brief introduction to Nicodemus.

Nicodemus tells Grappa (whom he thinks is Leone) it's a pleasure to see him again, and explains that he's gotten a new face since he visited the vineyard. Then he invites the PCs and Grappa to have a seat, and then he asks each of them to introduce themselves. He apologizes for not being quite as good with remembering names as Han, since he's never been a big one for politics and hobnobbing.

He explains that as of now, they should feel free to discuss whatever they want about their roles in the Obscurati, then adds to Grappa, "Except, you know, keep that one thing secret, of course." (He's referring to Roland Stanfield's still-secret position as head of Colossus Cell. Grappa cannot share his knowledge about that with the party, due to a *geas* placed on him by Kasvarina.)

Accomodations.

After Nicodemus has a moment to talk to each of them in turn, he checks a notebook and says that since they're the last arrivals, he'll need to put them two to a room. He'd love to open up some rooms in the west wing, but Vicemi has advised him not to, for security reasons. They'll have about an hour to settle in, and then it will be time for everyone to gather in the main hall.

He explains that later this evening after he gives a welcoming speech, the visiting officers will be split into groups of 8 or 10 people so they can meet with different speakers in turn. He wants this group of visitors that came in with Leone to stick together; he says that he and his advisors thought the different points of view of the group would lead to some interesting discussions.

There's just one more person he wants to add to their group: a dwarf named **Erskine Haffkruger**, who came in on a different ship.

Lounge Time.

Nicodemus asks for the group to give him some time alone with Leone, and suggests they head back down to the first floor lounges to find Erskine. He asks that they not intrude into the west wing unless invited, because the Ghost Council likes its privacy.

The party can wander and snoop, but guards do deter them from looking around the portal paintings on the second floor of the central building, and the ghosts get upset if they linger in the west wing too long. Most of the activity is in the two lounges, though (Area L).

Meet Erskine.

While dozens of Ob officers break the ice over brandy, whiskey, and wine, Erskine is surveying the crowd from a corner while listening to a halfling named Alloquicious (who had a cameo in the arms fair in Adventure Three). The little inventor is joyfully describing how he was nearly caught and had to use his prototype mechanical battle suit to murder some of his underlings to make sure the RHC didn't catch him. Erskine casually asks for details about the suit, but looks thoroughly unimpressed as the halfling describes it.



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The dragon Gradiax, Lord of Steel, has almost never resumed his true form for the past two centuries, and has grown accustomed to his eccentric alternate identity as a businessman and technologist. Though he only looks about fifty, and has the verve of a young man, he jokingly exaggerates his aged infirmities. He speaks slowly with a deep, country-accented voice, and often leans back and tucks his thumbs in his belt loops as he talks. (Imagine a more laid-back Foghorn Leghorn.)

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Confident in his ability to win in the long run, Pemberton almost never loses his cool. He enjoys playing subtle power games; in the middle of a tense

conversation he might reach into his coat, draw a small flip-knife, and ask an enemy to hold it for him while he fishes out a cigar, then takes the knife back so he can cut the tip off before lighting it.

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This dwarf environmental biologist was recruited to ensure that life can flourish under different planar alignments. After his initial tests with flora and fauna were encouraging, he abducted dozens to perform "human trials." He's eerily fascinated with people who possess atypical phenotypes, and has blistering social awkwardness, which in a way makes him the perfect set of eyes for Benedict Pemberton.

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The dragon industrialist replaced the real Haffkruger with a duplicant. The dwarf goes about his business completely normally, though he refrains from food. Pemberton usually has a flunky watching through the duplicant's eyes, but when things are can speak through the machine

important he takes over, and can speak through the machine.

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A hundred years ago Amielle brought her one-of-akind rifle to Flint and lent her keen marksmanship toward defeating the witches of Cauldron Hill. That olive branch opened up the city to investment by industrialists from Danor, which had by that point fought two painful wars with Risur. Amielle proposed the plan, and it worked like clockwork.

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It is then fitting, perhaps, that Amielle promotes the Watchmaker faction of the conspiracy, and has designed a plan for a thousand year destiny that will lead the world to prosperity and peace. A grandiose woman with grandiose plans, she is only stymied by the fact that she died eighty years ago, and while she

endures as part of the Ghost Council her influence is weak compared to Vicemi Terio. She still remembers life fondly, and she often disagrees with her fellow ghosts, showing her disapproval with piping sarcastic laughter.

As a ghost, she still has her rifle. Amielle will be a playable character in a short adventure to be published next year, *Bonds of Forced Faith*, which occurs during her heyday.

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Erskine responds to most social situations by awkwardly asking basic framing questions like, "Why do you want to talk to me?" or "What do you want to talk about?" He tries to avoid talking about his work, warning that it is very boring, but if pressed he proves his warning fair by droning on about the nuances of how the purpose of the appendix is apparently to maintain a reservoir of native elemental energy in the event of extraplanar travel.

Erskine knows he's to be put into a group with the party, and goes along with it without any fuss. He basically never talks unless someone asks him a question, but you should make a point to mention that he hangs near the party unless they make a point to part ways with him. Keep track of things he witnesses that might help explain how Pemberton figures out they're the same constables who thwarted him a few months earlier.

Shake a Ghost's Hand.

A ghost who has been making her way through the crowd now reaches the party. Amielle Latimer, one of the most lively members of the Ghost Council, glides up to them with a case of fine cigars levitating beside her incorporeal body. She introduces herself, offers cigars as they answer, and playfully asks them to enjoy these twice as much since she can't smoke them herself anymore.

She adds that Nicodemus wants her to be fair and wait for the proper time to meet people, but she wanted to add a bit of life to the party. With a short peal of laughter she tells them she looks forward to talking more later, then spins and glides away.

Villainous Bragging.

Dame Constance Baden, head of the Obscurati's "blue sky" division researching outlandish ideas to see what might be possible, is just reaching the end of a humorous story (about accidentally boarding a hostile ship when her test balloon crashed) as Amielle leaves, and a huge burst of laughter should get their attention.

She sighs and says that she hopes that out of this group of clever people, somehow they'll manage to make flight possible again. Then she gestures to another in the group, asking them to share the worst setback they had.

Barro Bangristo, a minotaur professor from Ber, starts to tell a story about how his attempt to enlist someone into his cell didn't turn out well, an experience many present groan at in sympathy. In Barro's story, he wanted to turn a theater student into a spy in the Bruse's court, and had been grooming the kid for months. Then one day the student bragged that Beran officials wanted to recruit him to be a spy in Risur, and he'd been practicing by snooping around the university. The kid had actually found the secret meeting place some of Barro's other students, but he thought it was just a smuggling ring.

To salvage the situation, Barro offered to go with the kid to investigate, and then had his other students plead their case in person. The kid instead tried to run, and ended up getting himself crushed by a statue that he knocked over. Barro laughs and explains a series of cascading, ever-worsening problems (a watchman investigates, a hyperintelligent bear breaks loose, a mind-control spell backfires, etc.), culminating in he and his cell having to provoke a riot on the campus in order to cover everything up.

At first, some of the officers listening look a little unsettled at the talk of death, but a few laugh, and Barro clearly enjoys the story, which encourages more of them to chuckle and eventually cheer when their fellow conspirator pulls off a clutch victory.

Another officer, Rakovnik Brasny from Crisillyir, gives a long sigh and says that it feels so good to be able to talk about these things and not be judged. Then he dives into a story of his own involving criminal allies, bribery, and murder. But his audience is sympathetic, since practically every officer here has had similar experiences.

If the party listens in, within ten minutes it should be clear to them that despite the noble aims of the Obscurati, its members feel few qualms about destroying those who get in their way.

Miscellanea.

If you need to add any other local color, see Appendix One: Complete Officer Roster. Just note that all the members of the Ghost Council, as well as Nicodemus, Catherine Romana, Cula Ravjahani, and Han Jierre are making final preparations in Area W.

Call to Order.

Half an hour later, ghost councilors come in and ask all in attendance to return to the grand foyer and enter the main hall. Large round tables have designated seating for each of the five groups of guests, plus a table in front with the representatives of the different factions. Grappa has been assigned to a different group across the room.

OPENING STATEMENT

Exposition. Real-Time. Level 12.

Nicodemus explains exactly what the conspiracy is up to, and asks the guests to split up into groups to discuss.

Lights dim, and the crowd murmur fades out. Two incandescent calcium oxide spotlights shine down on a stage podium, slicing out a single bright oval in the dark hall. Nicodemus steps into the light and places an unlit lantern the size of a pumpkin on the podium. He surveys the crowd for a moment, then begins his oration.

"We have gathered for this convocation because we share a purpose." As he speaks, he draws a cigarette from a case and lights it with a match. He takes a casual drag and continues, speaking through the smoke.

"That purpose is to fix the unsteady course of a flawed world. Some of us have worked to kindle industry, thinking progress and invention will defend nations from war and suffering. Others have ingratiated themselves with the callous and corrupt, ready to unmask their true faces and replace them with more honest and just leaders. You've unearthed ancient relics that revealed the forgotten origins of today's woes, and have with regrettable necessity silenced those who would have revealed and thwarted our grand design.

"Few of you have been trusted with the full extent of our agenda. You know simply that I or one of our other officers asked you to cloak yourselves, and then to strive and correct some flaw of society that the common people and their complacently powerful masters have chosen as "the way things are." Unlike them, we have not been content with an imperfect world, because we rebel against the conceit that the inertia of the world cannot change, that its course is set, that there is fate, or destiny.

"But the truth is, at their basest physical level, life, our planet, and everything we know is swayed by forces beyond us. If I may move from broad strokes to scientific particulars, our world is connected by ancient magic to eight planeselemental realms of fire and earth and air and water, and inscrutable lands where time and space, life and death are corporeal and manifest. Look skyward and you can see these distant discs tracing their orbits through the night.

"These eight are but a handful in an infinite starscape of planes, and some of





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our agents have peered into the night sky to learn their nature. One airy world they spied through a powerful lens reveals itself to generate calmer and more predictable storms than we have here. Another planet, a dappled purple and yellow orb, is possessed of warm clouds and a strong cheerful emotion, while countless miles away a hazy nebula is wracked by eternal lightning-destructive but swift and powerful.

"Now, we have a world of our own full of elemental air energy, but its skies are thin, and the winds are erratic. Imagine if, instead of that plane, our world was infused with the energy from one of those others. It would change our climate. It would change, on subtle level, the emotions you feel looking at the sky. More than that, it would change the very fate of civilization.

"There is an ancient ritual seal, crafted and hidden by our distant ancestors, who chose which of these realms ours would be linked to. But we have learned how to open that seal, and we are ready to change which planes dance in orbit with us. And that, ladies and gentleman, is the true purpose of our convocation. My name is Nicodemus, and though it was I who set this endeavor in motion, it is the right of you, the agents and officers of the Obscurati, to set a new course for all the people of this world.

"For centuries prophets have sought visions in the night sky, and why? Because those eight worlds have power over us. The motion of the stars allows different ideals to gain ascendance: war, decay, chaos, exploration, order, creation. But no longer shall the procession of heaven obey the whims of an ancient, absent clockmaker. Now the hand that moves the stars shall be ours!"

The rest of the audience applauds, and then Nicodemus steps aside as Han Jierre ascends to the podium. He explains the particulars of how the grand design will work. You can either explain it for your players or just let them read Player Handout-Grand Design. Save the faction handouts for later in the evening, as they meet with each faction representative, and the "Minor and Radical Factions" handout for the next morning.

FACTIONS

Social. Montage. Level 12.

In turn, the party hears the "pitch" from each major faction. The party has numerous opportunities to talk to other Obscurati officers, learning secrets or perhaps swaying their opinions.

The groups of Ob officers split up and meet with the representatives of each faction, who presents their case each in a different part of the mansion. You'll want to have familiarized yourself with the faction proposals in Player Handouts at the end. In brief, they are:

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ONLINE INSPIRATION.

If you want some inspiration for these conversations, EN World hosted a thread wherein members of the messageboard took on the roles of members of the conspiracy. While we ended up changing some things between the time of the thread and the release of this adventure, it could still provide some inspiration.

This is the current link, but as with anything on the Internet, it can change more easily than the printed word can: http://www.enworld. org/forum/showthread.php?337948-You-re-a-villain-How-would-youchange-the-world-Contest-with-prizes-%28Spoilers-for-ZEITGEIST%29. (If you need to find it later, a Google search for "EN World panarchist" should get you to the right place.



Cula has served as an aide to Kasvarina Varal for over a century, but only a few years ago was recruited into the Obscurati. While Kasvarina directs policy, Cula undertakes missions, leading groups of Vekeshi mystics on raids or assassinations. Now that her mistress has disappeared, Cula has been forced to keep control of the many threads she controlled. She maintains a perpetual expression of kindness which is not hard to tell is fake, though it keeps her from showing exactly what emotion she's really feeling. That emotion is usually disdain.

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In Kasvarina, Cula saw a woman truly devoted to fairly helping who suffer from the vices of others, and

she finds few of the Obscurati officers live up to that ideal. While her opinion of Kasvarina glosses over some of her darker misdeeds, Cula is nevertheless motivated to help the weak, and to ensure the cruel fall. At the convocation she represents the Miller's Pyre faction.

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Descendant of one of the previous queens of Risur, Catherine has long sought to rise in power herself, though the traditions of her nation deter any hereditary rule. After the Fourth Yerasol War she got into trouble for harshly criticizing war veterans, implying that cowardice led to Risur losing ground in the war.

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Though she believes magic is superior to technology, she desires progress, and has pushed the Risuri parliament to pursue grand civil projects of arcane engineering, to little success. In the Obscurati she sees her chance both to make the world a better place, and to step into a position of rule over her homeland.

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She has an unfortunate drug habit, preferring the high of fey pepper and the false and wondrous world it conjures to the world she really has to deal with. She recognizes this flaw in herself, and overschedules her time so she doesn't have opportunities to indulge.

Here at the convocation she represents the Colossus faction.

- + The Arboretum. Order nature so it can spread and be controlled like industry. Presented by Reed Macbannin outdoors next to the garden (Area A).
- + Colossus. Grant ourselves godlike powers to fix problems as they arise. Presented by Catherine Romana in the chapel (Area Y).
- Miller's Pyre. Increase empathy, reduce hypocrisy. Increase goodness and justice. Presented by Cula Ravjahani in the library (Area AA).
- + Panarchists. Grant individuals "super-powers," making governments unnecessary. Presented by Han Jierre in the trophy room (Area V).
- Watchmakers. Eliminate free will and design a thousand-year destiny of prosperity for the world. Presented by Amielle Latimer in the dance hall (Area CC).

These presentations start at about 7 p.m., and every half hour the groups cycle to the next presenter. At around 10 p.m. the groups are expected to finish up, at which point they'll be encouraged to discuss the proposals and figure out how best to proceed.

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Conversations.

Ultimately there's not much chance for the players to change what the Ob leadership decide to do, but they can influence some of the officers. We don't expect you to keep track of fifty different NPCs, but encourage the players to make a note of which Ob officers they manage to reach out to or befriend. In the climax of the adventure, you might set most of those officers on the other side of the schism, giving the constables a dilemma: do they save their enemies, in the hope they might be allies later?

Have the party meet with the five presenters in the order listed above. Of the five, all but Reed Macbannin are loyal to Nicodemus. The party won't be changing their minds.

Travel Time.

Between each session, people have about ten minutes to make it to the next meeting place, leading to a lot of comings-and-goings in the palace. If the party wants to stop by the Portal Gallery upstairs in the central building, see Brave New Worlds, below. The Ghost Council is busy meeting with Leone, and the guards can't really pay attention to everyone at once, so this is a fair time for sneaking about.

Missing Person.

During the third session, Reed Macbannin manages to lay a subtle curse upon Ramos Zoltan, an officer from Drakr. Using magic he learned researching the witches of Cauldron Hill, Macbannin compels Zoltan to wander to the icebox (Area O) after the session ends. Then before his next presentation, Macbannin inflicts a wound on himself-as a ghost, he can shrug it off-which is reflected upon Zoltan.

People grow suspicious during the fourth session, and during the fifth session a guard manages to find the dwarf's body, sitting with a dagger wound through his chest and coated in a sheen of ice. A white stone carving of a serpent sits in his lap. What worries Nicodemus the most, though, is that his soul has been forcibly sent to the afterlife, so he cannot be interrogated, resurrected, or turned into a member of the Ghost Council.

An alert quickly goes up and guards check every room of the palace, but everything else is in order. The party will likely be meeting with Amielle Latimer at this point, who points out that you run into problems like this when people don't act according to the script.

Investigating.

Magical detection can determine that Zoltan was affected by enchantment magic, and the wound was caused by some sort of necromancy. It's unclear where the stone serpent came from (Macbannin arranged for it to be delivered here in a shipment weeks ago, and compelled Zoltan to remove it from its box; he never touched the serpent himself).

Close examination of his body finds a small nick on his ear, as if someone needed his blood. Also, there's a bit of milk still on his moustache. Players might recall these were components in the ritual bonds of forced faith (see Adventure Two), which was iconic to the witches of Cauldron Hill. Or you can let a Knowledge: Arcana check (DC 30) figure out the significance. This clue could implicate either Macbannin who studied the witches' history, or Amielle who actually fought them.

The White Serpent is a known symbol of the fey titan called the Voice of Rot. While there actually is a conspirator here (Abeira Stackhouse) who is allied with the titan, Macbannin was just trying to throw people off his scent.

Once the alert ends, Nicodemus makes the rounds and explains what happened. He promises they'll be on the look-out, and he warns people to travel in groups of at least three. Also, he'll be calling people a few at a time to answer some questions.

From Here.

Events are fairly flexible during the rest of the night. The PCs might check out the portal gallery (see Brave New Worlds), sneak around (see Mission Impossible), or go talk with Nicodemus (see Quiet Reflection). Near midnight the convocation is gathered again to cast a preliminary vote (see Into the Night).

BRAVE NEW WORLDS

Exploration. Montage. Level 12.

The party can enter demi-planes, tied to painted canvas, which reflect how each new world order would feel. Convicted criminals are brought out to showcase the effects.

Encourage the party to visit the Portal Gallery on the second floor of the central building. In the adventure's climax it will make a grand place for combat.



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There are twelve portal paintings spread around the area, each with a curtain that must be drawn back to reveal the world within. Each painting has an ornate wooden frame over ten feet high, which acts like a window, leading into a pocket demi-plane roughly 100 feet across.

If the frame is damaged, the demi-plane starts to collapse. Patches of the world disappear, the unique magical elements fade, and three rounds later the room becomes a hollow vacuum with no gravity and no air.

Creatures wearing gold rings can neither enter nor leave the portal paintings.

Arboretum.

A verdant garden waits within, lit by a warm (but illusory) sun. A person who touches a plant motivates it to grow, making the plantlife almost as malleable as clay. With a concerted effort of will, the clouds overhead can shift and weather can change. The air is invigorating and crisp, and water from a fountain here restores creatures who drink from it to full HP. Trees here provide the most succulent fruit, and one unusual tree actually has haunches of medium-rare beef dangling from its branches.

Colossus.

This world has a dramatic cliff overlooking a twenty-foot chasm, and on the far side waits a house made of huge blocks of stone. Within the house is a clay stele with a stylus leaning against it. Visitors are encouraged to go inside, jump across the gap, then carve their name into the stele to take dominion over the space. When they're done enjoying the power that grants them, they should erase their name from the clay and emerge so someone else can try it.

Inside the demiplane, creatures have their lifting capacity multiplied by over 100. The distance they can leap is likewise magnified dramatically. They have DR 20/-, regeneration 20, and a +5 bonus to saves. When someone has claimed dominion in the area, they gain the ability to sense all events in the area regardless of line of sight, gain a +10 bonus to Perception, and can teleport as a move action to anywhere in the area. Characters who experiment can sense the potential for other powers, though unlocking them would take much meditation or experimentation.

Miller's Pyre.

This portal leads to a library, but every table and shelf has some sort of weapon in clear view: guns, knives, swords, and the like.

Before letting people in, first a ghost councilor calls for a pair of prisoners to be retrieved from the prison demi-plane in area S. The men arrive nervous and bickering, and the ghost councilor explains these are condemned men from Crisllyir, murderers both, and for the past week they've been giving half-rations to one, stoking discontent.

The men's chains are removed, and they are shoved across the threshold of the demi-plane.

"There are plenty of weapons here," says the ghost councilor. "Only one of you is getting out alive."

Immediately the two men rush for the knife, and one gets it. He turns on the other, who shakes his head and cowers. The knife-wielder hesitates, then explains how upset he feels that the other guy has been treated better than him. The other guy says it's not his fault how they were treated. The knife-wielder nods, looks uncomfortable, and then asks politely if the other guy will stay here so he can leave, and maybe get some food outside. The other guy agrees, saying that seems fair, and then thanks him for not being violent.

The knife-wielder steps back into the real world, and the other guy sighs, then grabs a book and starts reading.

The prisoners are then removed, and the guards take them away with orders to give them both a decent meal once they're back in their cells.

Inside this plane, creatures gain a +10 bonus to Diplomacy checks, a +10 bonus to Sense Motive checks, take a -10 penalty to Intimidate checks, and a -5 penalty to attack rolls. Additionally, a creature must make a Will save (DC 20) each time it wants to take an action that would cause damage to another sentient creature, and if it fails it cannot attack that turn.

Panarchists.

A three story house with windows but no doors sits in a forest, the trees of which have high, climbable branches. The ghost councilor encourages you to explore the house, which requires teleporting between rooms that have no normal entrance. People are encouraged to enter three at a time, and to have one person ask a favor from the other. If they agree, they feel a subtle nudge to follow through, like a gentle push at the small of their back.

Likewise, a person who hands an item to someone else then has them carry it away can sense perfectly where it went.

Mechanically, everyone can teleport at will to anywhere they can see or are familiar with, and are familiar with any place their items are near. Everyone also has regeneration 20, and if they start their turn dying but not dead, they revive with 20 hit points.

Creatures who agree to a trade or service suffer no immediate effects, but if one were to stay in the plane for several days they would accrue penalties if they do not follow through with their promises.

Watchmakers.

You look in on a quaint kitchen, lit by a single candle on the dining table. Within this portal painting, the world operates like clockwork. It is static normally until someone enters, and the guards have a prisoner on hand for the purpose. When people are ready to watch, they set a clock on the wall so its second hand is at zero, and then they push the man into the portal. He disappears, and the clock begins ticking.

A moment later, a door on the far side of the room opens and the man steps in. He closes the door, bends down to pet a dog who barks happily, then goes to a cabinet and pulls out a small cask of firedust with a short fuse sticking out of it. He sits at the table, lights the fuse, and places it in the bomb right in front of him.

The dog comes by, and the man moves to pet it, but his arm jostles the cask. It falls over and rolls for the far side of the table. The man stands up in surprise, and the table flips over. The cask hits the ground right as the table spins to the perfect orientation, and then an explosion goes off. The table blocks the force perfectly, and the man and dog are unharmed.

The man then does a perfectly choreographed jig for ten seconds, bows to the audience outside the painting, and steps out into the real world at precisely 60 seconds on the clock. The world inside the painting resets instantly to its base state.

The prisoner can go through this ordeal as many times as those outside want, though his protests grow more severe as time goes on. Each time is identical, though when he comes out he clearly remembers. If asked, he'll admit that while in that world he always feels the same way, but when he comes out he panics, afraid that next time maybe something might go wrong.

If anyone else steps into the painting, they take on the role of the prisoner, and while a few small details might change (like the speed or distance the cask rolls when people of different sizes bump it), the result is always the same. Person goes in, enters through the same door, bomb

goes off without damage, person comes out. (If someone tries to enter while the event is in process, they are temporally displaced and only reappear once the cycle has reset.)

The ghost councilor here warns not to stress the scenario too much. For instance, if a man with no arms entered the painting, he wouldn't be able to fulfill the necessary steps to progress the timeline, and he'll just stand there blankly until Amielle comes by to pause the scenario and let him leave.

Minor Worlds.

These worlds do not represent specific proposals of the Obscurati, but are rather examples of the many things they could do.

Bards.

A small concert hall has perfect acoustics, and anyone who steps inside finds himself casually desiring to sing, play an instrument, or otherwise perform. They can freely resist the idea, but if they go along with it they find it easy to notice what is wrong with their form and make slow progress to improve.

Mortal Mind.

A small field has several chapels and shrines, each devoted to a different faith, and a mechanical device plays a recording of different pieces of sacred music. Those outside the painting feel the normal emotions they associate with those religions, but once they step inside they find themselves completely unmoved by them. They can appreciate the artistic talent that went into the music, but do not find them beautiful. Those of strong faith who come out of this portal plane can't help but feel unsettled.

Creatures in this area cannot use divine spells.

Leave the Nest.

The portal opens forty feet in the air above a storm-tossed sea. An island rises out of the sea twenty feet away, and it's home to large flocks of birds. Creatures inside have a fly speed of 30 ft., and the birds tend to fly with them.

Trial by Fire.

A pool of lava inside this world has books scattered about the floor, none of them burning. There's even a twenty-foot high ledge one can jump from, though the ghost councilor here warns that while you won't be burned, the lava is still fairly viscous.

Creatures here are immune to fire damage, and objects will not burn unless someone within line of sight wills it. Even then, anyone else who wants it not to burn can stop it.

Walking on Sunshine.

A three-dimensional obstacle course with poles and balance beams has padded walls. Inside, creatures can choose for gravity to be in whatever direction they want. Objects float unless someone wills them to fall a given direction.

Windows exist on all six walls, and beams of light shine in through each. Creatures can interact with these beams of light as if they were solid, and you can even grab them and adjust them in mid-beam as if you were adjusting a hinged pole.

Downward.

This unusual world has two sets of stone stairs leading up to a fountain,

from which water pours over a ledge into a pool. But no matter which way you walk, you always feel like you're going downhill. You can even swim through the waterfall, from the pool to the fountain, and feel like you're rushing down a river.

Menagerie.

A snowy hill with evergreen trees overlooks an icy pond. Inside this world, living creatures can shapeshift at will to any creature within a size category of their normal form. The ghost councilor here encourages people to consider swans, bears, eagles, or even penguins. Undead creatures in this area are staggered.

QUIET REFLECTION

Social. Real-Time. Level 12.

The constables each have an opportunity to talk with Nicodemus alone.

After Zoltan's murder, Nicodemus needs to calm nerves of those in attendance. He leaves finding the killer to the Ghost Council, but as the face of the conspiracy he makes a point to speak with everyone, one by one. Since your players will likely want to discuss what they've learned and make plans, you might just peel them off one by one.

Two guards come to invite each member of the conspiracy to head to the top floor of the lighthouse and talk with Nicodemus on the balcony. The conversation is always roughly the same. Cigarette in hand, Nicodemus asks how they're doing, whether they saw anything or know anything related to the murder, and then spares a minute or two to reflect on the state of the world.

He might lament the lack of stars to gaze at here in the Bleak Gate, or the lack of breeze blowing off the sea. The weight of working in secret so long weighs on him, and despite his better judgment he's looking for a kindred spirit to share his burdens with. Most of these conversations end abruptly as Nicodemus looks at a pocket watch and apologizes for needing to be in a rush.

If any PC responds empathetically, though, Nicodemus might ask them to spend a few minutes with him. He calls to the ghost councilor who controls the lighthouse, grabs four amulets, and then has the lighthouse activate to shift them back into the real world. By placing the amulets on, he, the PC, and the two guards will be able to walk around the island and see what it's really like. He tells the ghost councilor to turn the lighthouse back on in half an hour, but to leave the light off for now so he can see the stars.

Then he takes a long walk on the beach, cold surf washing up on shore and wiping away their footprints as he asks the PC about his life, what motivates him, and how he'd change things if he could make the decision all by himself. If asked about himself he hedges, saying that it's been a long time since he had an actual life of his own, and that he needs to hear the lives of others or else he might lose touch of what it is to be human.

Loot.

Before this scene, figure out which PC would have the highest concordance with the artifact known as the *humble hook* (page 72). When that PC talks with Nicodemus, at some point the ghost councilor inside the lighthouse calls Nic aside to ask a question, and the PC hears a metallic clink as he leaves. The necklace has made itself fall off of Nicodemus, and it lands at the PC's feet. No one would see him if he picks it up, and



Nicodemus does not notice its absence until after the adventure ends. The story of the *humble hook* is presented on page 22 of the ZEITGEIST *Player's Guide*.

INTO THE NIGHT

Social. Montage. Level 16.

The conspirators discuss, then cast a preliminary vote.

The mood of the convocation turns wary. Some theories are bandied around, including that a spy has infiltrated them, that this is some sort of mind game by Nicodemus, or that someone's trying to kill people who would vote for a different faction—though no one knows what faction Zoltan was favoring. Amielle Latimer jokingly suggests it could be the ghost pirates, and eagerly tells the story of how they all perished (page 40).

Most people gather in the trophy room (Area V) or the dance hall (Area CC) to have large group discussions, with a few people getting up the courage to go in small groups to visit the Portal Gallery.

Preliminary Vote.

At midnight, Nicodemus asks everyone to gather again in the Main Hall. Erected on stage is a metal plate with the names of the five factions painted on it, as well as "Other." Beside it is another plate with small magnets tags, each of which has the name of one of the Obscurati officers. Nicodemus asks people to file through, pick up their named magnet, and cast a vote. He reminds them this is just preliminary, and that tomorrow night everyone will be able to cast a new vote, and that other proposals might be added between now and then.

They made sure that Zoltan's magnet has already been removed.

Count.

Everyone is asked to vote, even if they just vote Other. Nicodemus goes first, placing his magnet on Miller's Pyre. Vicemi Terio goes next, telekinetically placing the twenty-five magnets for himself and the majority of the Ghost Council on Other. He explains that after the final vote, the Ghost Council will endorse whichever faction has the most votes.

Let the PCs go last. Not counting their votes, the result is:

- + The Arboretum. 4 votes.
- ♦ Colossus. 9 votes.
- ✤ Miller's Pyre. 10 votes.
- ✤ Panarchists. 7 votes.
- ✤ Watchmakers. 5 votes.
- ◆ Other. 8 votes, plus 25 ghosts.

The "Other" votes are cast by the representatives of the minor factions. At this point, give the group **Player Handout–Minor and Radical Factions**.

Hopefully your players won't worry about the minutiae of who votes how. Grappa votes for Watchmakers. Erskine Haffkruger votes for Arboretum. The votes of the other key NPCs should be obvious.

Dining on Ashes.

After the vote, people go back to various conversation spots to keep on politicking and debating. One proposal that starts to gather a fair bit of support is a compromise—designed by Dame Constance Baden—called MAP. It mixes elements of Miller's Pyre, Arboretum, and Panarchists, as well as Long Now, Trekkers, and Sky League. Dame Constance estimates they can get 24 votes easily, and if it gets the Ghost Council and Vicemi that's 49 out of the needed 57.

Unfortunately, those in the Colossus and Watchmaker factions are *strongly* opposed to Miller's Pyre, and shrug off accusations that they're just worried they'll end up with less power in the new world order.

Discussion and arguments continue as people look for common ground, but eventually people must sleep. Barring party-motivated trouble, the talks die down around 2 in the morning as people head off to bed. Erskine Haffkruger is the last to go to his room.

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

Exploration. Montage. Level 12.

By stealth and subterfuge, constables can find treasure, spy on private meetings, sabotage, or free prisoners.

Some events, people, and items are technically off-limits. Generally if PCs want to sneak around and are smart about it, don't worry about making them roll unless they really press their luck.

Vitus and the Prison Plane.

The guards that watch the portal painting that holds Vitus have been letting ghosts in all night, so they won't stop a PC who wants in, but they do listen and will report anything suspicious.

The portal painting has a thread of gold in its frame. The gold ring must be broken (as easy as bending a wire and then putting it back it place) for anyone to enter or leave the demi-plane; otherwise the surface is like indestructible glass.

Vitus is not one to speak first. Though he knows the gods will not always save those in need, he has prayed. If he should receive deliverance, he wants to leave with as much knowledge of the conspiracy as possible, so he tries to convince interrogators to speak first. His best argument is that clearly he is a prisoner and won't escape, so if sharing information with him will make him answer their questions, it is a great deal, since it ultimately costs the Ob nothing.

He does not judge until he knows more information, and if anyone explains the Ob's plans he asks for a few minutes to consider the ramifications. Then he says it is every individual's challenge in life to make him- or herself better. The purpose of life is to prevail over adversity, and by making the world "a better place," he fears it will actually eliminate the meaning of life.

Rescue.

Freeing Vitus is a simple matter of breaking the cage that holds him and taking him out. While he can be a useful ally in combat, if the escape attempt is spotted it will quickly bring the palace's defenders down on the party. However, during the Splinter Cell scene, the chaos provides a perfect opportunity to get Vitus and perhaps the other dozen prisoners here to safety.

If Vitus survives this adventure, he can be an incredible help in Adventure Eight, *Diaspora* while the party passes through Crisillyir, and he might be able to aid them in averting a local apocalypse in Adventure Eleven, *Gorged on Ruins*.

In more immediate terms, when he gets back to the mainland he'll rally a fleet of Clergy warships to bombard this island and declare it *exterminatus*. Three hierarchs will call forth a great rift in the sea to swallow the island, destroying it even in the Bleak Gate.



Schism 🔫 📿 🐎 Act Three: Into the Lions' Den

Ally.

Use these stats should Vitus join the party in combat

Vitus Sigismund	CR 11
XP 12,800	
Male human monk 8/paladin 4	
LG Medium humanoid (human)	
Init +6, Senses Perception +18	
Aura courage (10 ft.)	
Defense	
AC 18, touch 18, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge, +3 Wis, +2 mo	onk)
hp 76 (8d8+4d10+12)	
Fort +13, Ref +11, Will +15; +2 vs. enchantment	
Defensive Abilities evasion; Immune disease, fear	
Offense	
Speed 50 ft.	
Melee unarmed strike flurry of blows +12/+12/+7/+7/+2 (2d8+)	1)
Special Attacks channel positive energy (DC 14, 2d6), flurry of	blows, smite evil 2/da
(+2 attack and AC, +4 damage), stunning fist (9/day, DC 19)	
Spell-like Abilties (CL 4th, concentration +6)	
At will—detect evil	
Paladin Spells Prepared (CL 1st; concentration +3)	
1st—bless weapon	
Statistics	
Str 13, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 16, Cha 14	
Base Atk +10; CMB +13 (+15 disarm); CMD 23 (25 vs. disarm)	
Feats Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Extra Lay on Hands, Improved Dis	arm, Improved Initia-
tive, Improved Unarmed Strike, Mobility, Monastic Legacy, Sp	oring Attack, Stunning
Fist, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike)	
Skills Acrobatics +17 (+25 when jumping), Diplomacy +17, Know	wledge (religion) +14,
Perception +18, Sense Motive +18	
Languages Common	

Languages Common

SQ aura, code of conduct, fast movement, high jump, ki pool (7 points, magic), lay on hands (2d6, 6/day), maneuver training, mercy (fatigued), purity of body, slow fall 40 ft., wholeness of body

Amielle's Secret Dealings.

If at some point one of the PCs is about to be discovered by a guard (like if they fail a Stealth check), at the last moment another guard distracts the first, telling him he's "got to come see this." Alternately, the party might just spot a lot of guards active outside, or hear a few distant gunshots and grow curious.

The ghost of Amielle Latimer has a hunch that her faction isn't going to win tomorrow's vote, and she knows the importance of contingency plans. More importantly, she knows that Nicodemus has it in him to be murderously efficient about once a century, and he's overdue. So she wants to get as much good will among the bookpin guards and the arcane marksmen.

After most everyone has gone to bed, Amielle heads to the guard quarters at the carriage house (Area F), and offers to get them all fine spirits from the conspiracy's secret stash if any of them can outshoot her. Since the convocation has been stressful, a half dozen guards eagerly take up her offer so they can blow off some steam.

Sharpshooting.

Amielle takes the six guards and a few onlookers out to a stretch of beach where wooden posts rise up from the sand. She has each of the men bring five wine glasses, and she has brought five shot glasses.

Amielle Latimer	CR 11
XP 12,800	
Female tiefling ghost fighter 10	
LN Medium undead (incorporeal)	
Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +25	
Defense	
AC 21, touch 17, flat-footed 17 (+4 armor, +3 deflection, +4 Dex)	
hp 99 (10d10+40)	
Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +2	
Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, incorporeal, rejuvenation; Resistance +4	st cold 5,
electricity 5, fire 5; Immune undead traits	
Offense	
Speed fly 30 ft. (perfect)	
Melee corrupting touch +15 (11d6; DC 19)	
Ranged +1 ghost touch rifle +18/+13 (1d10+2/×4) or	
+1 ghost touch pistol +18/+13 (1d8+2/×4)	
Special Attacks malevolence, telekinesis, weapon training (close +1, firearr	ns +2)
Spell-like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +11)	
1/day—darkness	
Statistics	
Str, Dex 18, Con, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 16	
Base Atk +10; CMB +10; CMD 24	
Feats Far Shot, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Reload (rifle), Rapid Sh	ot, Quick
Draw, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (pistol), Weapon Focus (rifle)	
Skills Bluff +11, Diplomacy +11, Fly +12, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge	e
(engineering) +15, Knowledge (planes) +10, Perception +15, Stealth +14	
Languages Common, Primordial	
SQ armor training 2, bravery +2	
Other Gear +1 ghost touch rifle, +1 ghost touch pistols (2), ghost touch mithra	ıl shirt
Special Abilities	
Corrupting Touch (Su) By passing part of her incorporeal body through a for	e's body
as a standard action, Amielle inflicts 11d6 damage. This damage is not neg	ative
and the second final static forms of the first state of the second	rnatural
energy—it manifests in the form of physical wounds and aches from supe	
energy—it manifests in the form of physical wounds and aches from supe aging. Creatures immune to magical aging are immune to this damage, but	otherwise
aging. Creatures immune to magical aging are immune to this damage, but	
aging. Creatures immune to magical aging are immune to this damage, but the damage bypasses all forms of damage reduction. A Fortitude save (DC	19) halves
aging. Creatures immune to magical aging are immune to this damage, but the damage bypasses all forms of damage reduction. A Fortitude save (DC the damage inflicted.	19) halves

Telekinesis (Su) Amielle can use telekinesis as a standard action once every 1d4 rounds (caster level 12th).



In the challenge, each shooter is given the task of hitting five targets set on posts at a range of 200 feet as fast as possible. Amielle sets out five glasses at a time, and each shooter gets up to one minute. Once all shooters have completed the task, whoever completed it fastest will go up against Amielle. She places her five shot glasses, and they both start shooting at the same time. Whoever is first to hit a third glass wins.

If any of the guards win, Amielle will get them whatever fine spirits they want. If Amielle wins, then the six guards who tried and failed have to dress up as butlers and scullery maids, using outfits she found in the palace. Amielle will let whoever competes against her take out two shotglasses before she responds. Then in one smooth motion she draws and fires two pistols, drops them, slings her rifle off her shoulder, and fires it. Unless a PC manages to fire off three shots in one round, she'll probably beat them. She definitely beats any of the guards.



Give It a Shot.

The targets are at extreme range for most guns, but since they're stationary targets it's possible to hit them. The wine glasses' AC is 9, the shot glasses' is AC 13. The shooter takes a -2 penalty for each multiple of their base range increment.

For instance, a musket has a range increment of 40 feet, so the target is five range increments away, incurring a -10 penalty.

The guards are good shots (+7 to-hit, factoring in the range penalty), but they can only fire once per round. Amielle, on the other hand, simply does not miss with her ghostly weapons.

Good Sport.

If beaten, Amielle loses with dignity. If she wins, though, she's still a good sport. She invites the guards to "get their new uniforms," and takes them and some other guard onlookers into the palace. She happens to have stashed the uniforms next to one of the bars, and she tells the guards to get dressed, then serve drinks. Within fifteen minutes everyone is drinking (except her, since she's a ghost), and Amielle has managed to win the fondness of the guards.

If this is interrupted, Amielle won't have the guards' backing tomorrow, making the Splinter Cell encounter much more one-sided.

Stealing Oil.

Characters might sneak into the lighthouse to retrieve casks of oil that can replicate the effects of any of the demiplanes in the Portal Gallery.

If you have any interesting treasure you'd like the party to get their hands on, perhaps add a treasure vault downstairs of the west wing and drop a few hints to its location.

Second Murder.

Dame Constance's compromise proposal has a lot of support, but the Panarchist faction will have to give up some of their main desires regarding wealth and personal property. That's why Macbannin decides, for his second murder, to take out Constance and pin the murder on the Panarchists, in an effort to disrupt the coalition.

Since he is, after all, a ghost, Macbannin slips into her room through the floor. He makes sure the curtains are drawn, and he silently places a blanket on the bottom of the door to block out light and the smell of smoke. Then he places a curse of deep sleep on Dame Constance and scatters embers from the fireplace onto her bed. He invokes a curse that mimics the infernal wrath that lets tieflings punish their foes with fire, and Constance goes up like a human candle, with her bedsheets as the wick. By morning all that's left are charred bits of bed and the bones of her feet.

As with Zoltan, Constance's soul is sent to the afterlife, so no one can interrogate her or try to turn her into a ghost.

High-Level Meeting.

An hour before dawn, Nicodemus summons Han Jierre, Cula Ravjahani, and Leone Quital (i.e., Grappa) to meet with him in the Council Room (Area W). Grappa manages to stall long enough to scribble a note ("Meeting Nic. Follow me.") and slip a metal clip onto it. Since the party is likely sleeping, Grappa makes a point to pass by at least one of their rooms, and he uses steelshaping to drop the note and slide it under the door. Then, once he's far enough away that the guards escorting him won't notice, he forcefully rattles the doorknob, which will hopefully be enough to wake some PCs up.

Security.

The Ghost Council's divinations into the murder all came up fruitless, so Nicodemus assumes the conspiracy's own secrecy magic is biting them in the ass. Which means the murderer is an officer.

Once the guards deliver the people Nicodemus needs, they're sent to stand watch at the far end of the two hallways that lead to the council room. A total of six men wait there, drowsy and grumbling about all the strange foreigners they're having to put up with. The guards aren't particularly attentive (Perception +8), but the spot they've chosen offers practically no cover to hide behind.

Meanwhile, at the near end of each of the two hallways, two senior ghost councilors hover silently, and another four float outside the windows (Perception +25). Again, their high vantage point makes sneaking in more of a creative challenge than a physical one.

The ground floor of the west wing only has its normal patrol of a ghost councilor and a shadowlisk, and between the abandoned rooms, the chimneys, and the ventilation ducts, getting close enough to eavesdrop is certainly possible.

The Discussion.

Nicodemus, Han, Cula, and Leone take seats, while Vicemi stands by the window, wary of threats (Perception +19 for the group as a whole). Nicodemus rolls out a map of the continent of Lanjyr, then uses glass beads to show the areas he's talking about.

Since the colossus broke free eight months ago (bead in Flint), it has wandered through the Dreaming. Since it was designed to resist divination, they can't tell exactly where it is, but it has left massive footprints visible in the real world, through Risur's weftlands (bead) and into the high bayou (bead). It knocked the top off a mountain on the border of Risur and Ber (bead), tromped across the desert toward the east coast (bead), and then disappeared somewhere near Seobriga (bead).

Han asks if the colossus was designed to operate underwater, and Grappa confirms that it was.

Here Vicemi explains that they wondered why the colossus chose that particular path, and now they have a theory. At the same time the colossus escaped, a high elf warrior named Asrabey (Cula rolls her eyes) abducted Kasvarina and spirited her away to the Dreaming. They're fairly certain that Asrabey thought Kasvarina was just a hostage, not one of the founders of this conspiracy, and given her condition (i.e., the fact that her memories were locked away by Alexander Grappa) they hope she cannot compromise them.

Kasvarina is still an officer of the Obscurati, so they could not divine her location, but they could trace Asrabey, and they assume the two remained together. He headed to Elfaivar, then disappeared entirely near some old elven ruins (bead), which they believe have an entrance to an elven enclave, which exists between the real world and the Dreaming. That was five months ago, and just a few days ago colossal footprints were spotted in the jungle near those ruins.

Vicemi's theory is that somehow the colossus is drawn to Kasvarina, perhaps because their memories were both locked away by the same man. So far they've refrained from rescuing Kasvarina, since the risk of an assault on an elven conclave was deemed too high, especially since she has no memories and thus isn't actually useful to the conspiracy. Now, though, it makes sense to secure her.

Nicodemus says that they have a plan to retrieve the colossus from the Dreaming, but it requires bringing the titan to a specific location. He looks meaningfully at Han. Han curses, then nods.

They're referencing the city of Methia, which is the center of Danor's dead magic zone. So severe is the magical sink here that it basically punched a hole through reality into both the Dreaming and the Bleak Gate. All three locations are coterminous at once, but any person who goes there becomes unsettled and eventually goes mad.

Planning a Rescue Mission.

Nicodemus says that their first priority after the convocation ends will be to regain control of the colossus. They still have a few of the prototype golems that were put away for a rainy day, and if they can't find a way to restore the mind of the colossus, they can try implanting one of the other golems' minds.

He asks "Leone" if he would be able to manually control the colossus. Grappa stammers, then says no, that would be too much for him. Nicodemus replies that they'll keep Leone on hand just in case, to help them at least slow the thing down. He asks for a dossier of vulnerable points to target, and says it might be time to start coming up with fall-back options if the new colossus minds won't work.

Cula says that she could probably find out what enclave Kasvarina is in. She just needs to know what resources she can bring in in order to rescue Kasvarina. Nic holds up a hand and says they shouldn't make plans until they know who's still on their side. He asks if anyone has any pressing business, and when no one does he suggests they all get a filling breakfast.

Han, Cula, and Grappa stand to leave, but Nicodemus calls "Leone" back for a moment, asking what faction he voted for. Grappa says Watchmakers. Nicodemus and Vicemi exchange glances, and after a moment's hesitation Nic suggests Leone keep an open mind to other, more popular proposals. Grappa leaves.

Nic asks to be alone, and once Vicemi is gone he lights a cigarette and waits for what passes as dawn in the Bleak Gate.

Third Murder.

Reed Macbannin barely knew Leone in life, but in death he's learned much about the man. Macbannin had hoped to kill Governor Roland Stanfield instead-he even discovered a rare curse that could stop an aasimar from reincarnating-but Leone will do in a pinch. Macbannin blames both for turning him into a traitor to his country. So for his third act of disrupting the conspiracy, he plans to murder the steelshaper.

As Grappa returns to his room, the palace is still mostly sleeping. Unless the party tries to link up with him he simply heads back to his room so he can panic in privacy. But when he closes the door behind him, he finds his throat seizing up. Unable to breathe or speak, he spots a figure lurking in the corner, but it's too dark for him to tell who.

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INTERRUPTIONS.

If a PC gets spotted eavesdropping on this meeting, Nicodemus wants to capture him, not kill him. After all, he doesn't think he's doing anything those in the conspiracy would disagree with; he just worries that there might be a spy. So, as mentioned in Buddy System (page 39), he would interrogate the PC and ask probing questions. But if the character could cover for himself Nic would be content to chide him for taking risks in a dangerous time, and commend him for his curiosity.

If multiple PCs get caught, though, Nicodemus finds it suspicious that they came in on the same group, which will prompt a more thorough investigation. This could include searching their rooms and their belongings.

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Grappa doesn't know how to really defend himself with Leone's powers. Unless the party is close enough to hear sounds of Grappa desperately smacking metal objects into the walls, within a minute he passes out from asphyxiation, and he's dead soon thereafter. Macbannin covers things up by slipping a noose around Leone's throat, tugging it tightly, and levitating the man so he hangs from the ceiling rafter.

If Macbannin succeeds in this murder, he tries to banish the soul of Leone, but doesn't know the right name for his curse, so Grappa's soul escapes. It might return in later adventures.

This Is Hard to Explain.

If the party is nearby, they can burst into the room and see Macbannin clenching a fist to keep Grappa from breathing. A lot depends on the party's reaction. Macbannin of course doesn't know who they really are, so he tries to cover for himself by saying, "We voted for the same faction. This man is our enemy."

Not that he knows what faction any of the PCs voted for. If his ruse falls through, or if the party attacks him, he shrugs and says, "Someone will stop you madmen. If not me, I know a few constables who are really good at stopping conspiracies."

Ideally, you'd want to leverage this situation into the party and Macbannin realizing they're on the same side, or at least have Macbannin get away. He's certainly not going to alert the Ghost Council to what happened, and if the party keeps quiet too (or maybe just suggests he goes after other Ob officers instead of them) he'll try to figure out why.

If he just runs away, Macbannin can return to help the party's escape during the Splinter Cell encounter.

The Enemy of My Enemy.

If the party admits their identity to Macbannin, he's shocked and demands proof, like details of how they found and defeated him back in Flint. He'll explain his change of heart upon coming back as a ghost, and ask if they have a ship full of soldiers who can storm the palace? Sure, his situation has gone from "hopelessly outnumbered" to "hopefully outnumbered," but the group of them would never manage to start a fight and get out of here alive.

Plus, Macbannin points out that most of the leadership are ghosts, who will come back even if destroyed. He says that he's prepared a curse that can stop one person from reincarnating or rejuvenating (though if asked why he can't say, since a geas stops him from revealing that Stanfield is part of the conspiracy); which he thinks would work on Vicemi. He's not quite sure what Nicodemus is, but knows this isn't his first body.

Macbannin's original plan was just to try to sow discord and look for an Ob officer he might be able to trust to deliver a message to the RHC. He can't travel far from the rest of the Ghost Council, and at any rate he's stuck in the Bleak Gate unless he steals one of these lanterns. He nods to the wall-mounted gaslamp, which the party might not have realized before now are wayfarer's lanterns.

If the party wants to just lay low and use Macbannin as a man on the inside, events in the adventure will proceed as outlined below. But if the party comes up with some sort of crazy plan (perhaps even beating Nicodemus to the punch by using the lanterns as a weapon), let them try it.

Next Morning.

Guards provide wake-up calls at what would be dawn in the real world. Here it just goes from pitch black to gloomy gray outside. Within ten minutes the guards discover Dame Constance dead, and possibly Leone.

Use these last few hours to resolve any lingering schemes the party has



gotten themselves involved with. Additionally, the PCs should witness several small groups slipping into private rooms to hold hushed discussions. During breakfast a fist-fight breaks out between two Berans—one supporting Colossus, the other Panarchist. Accusations and rumors fill the halls, with people growing suspicious of their fellow conspirators' intentions.

The officers are called to enjoy lunch together, but this only provokes a loud, disorganized debate with people from different sides cutting each other off, accompanied by lots of pompous harrumphing from their allies.

Catherine Romana, who is busy trying to gather a coalition, manages to quiet the room by shouting, "Who trusts anyone else here? We don't know each other. I barely trust the people who say they're on my side to actually vote as they claim they will. So why in the world are *you* trusting our gentle leader Nicodemus? He keeps hinting that all he wants is peace, that he values the ideology of some writer who's been dead for five centuries, but I've known plenty of politicians.

"You can't trust words. All you can trust is that people are afraid of losing power. We've gotten here because we've been ruthless. Let's not pretty it up. I tell you this, if you idiots vote to give up the authority that we have *earned* over this world, you'll be showing yourselves as weak. And this man, this conspiracy? It doesn't need weak people."

Loud arguments erupt after that, but soon Vicemi appears and a hush falls. He tells them to go into the Main Hall for what he calls a "second vote." In truth, this will be the final vote.

Characters who take a long time to go inside the hall notice that the guards who would normally be present are absent; Nicodemus has told them to patrol the exterior of the palace to get them out of the way. Instead, members of the Ghost Council close the doors behind them. The only ghosts in the main hall are Vicemi, Amielle, and Macbannin.

THE VOTE

Social. Real-Time. Level 12.

After final arguments, Nicodemus asks for a vote to decide the Obscurati's new world order.

Nicodemus asks for each faction to send forth one representative to speak on their behalf, and to please keep remarks to five minutes or fewer. Barring PC intervention, the three main factions are:

- MAP Proposal. The compromise devised by the late Dame Constance, this proposal combines Miller's Pyre, the Arboretum, and the Panarchists, while also appeasing the Trekkers, Long Now, Mortal Mind, and Sky League. It shuffles some planes about, adds a few new ones, and manages to satisfy most of the needs of those groups. Tellingly, it abandons the Miller's Pyre plane with an Empathy focus, it keeps the Dreaming and Bleak Gate despite what the Arboretum wants, and it leaves the world with no seal against extraplanar incursion. Cula Ravjahani represents this group.
- Watchmaker Watchmen. This novel proposal brings in a new habitable world where the Ob leadership and their allies and descendants can live with free will, able to watch over the real world, a place with no free will per the Watchmaker proposal. It would be possible to reopen the seal and restore free will if something went wrong, but doing so would be such an ordeal that it could not be undertaken lightly. This proposal pleases Aegis, since it protects both worlds from extraplanar incursion. Amielle represents this group, but seems to know that she's going to lose.

Colossal Congress. Based on research into Risur's rites of rulership, this proposal grants the powers of the Colossus proposal to the Obscurati initially, but requires each member to undertake a ritual of affirmation every year. Each member of this colossus congress would have a geographic region where he would need the approval of at least half the residents. The Ob would still be able to solve issues with their mighty powers, but the people could reject leaders they no longer approve of. This proposal satisfies the Weapon-Mongers and the Economists, both of whom favor the inherent competition. Catherine Romana represents this group (and eagerly courts the support of whichever PC is in Livia Hatsfield's body).

Perhaps the PCs have a proposal of their own, or they manage to become the face of one of these three. In general, though, the division in the conspiracy comes down to whether they should ensure a position of power for themselves in the new world.

After the final arguments, Nicodemus takes the stage.

"We all have different ideals, but before we vote I want you to understand what led me to found our organization and pursue this long, grand work. It wasn't a desire to gain power myself, or to punish those who had abused *their* power. I started down this path because I'd seen that intellect, wisdom, and good intentions were feeble weapons in the face of propaganda and fear.

"The problem with this world is that the dreamers and poets are blind to its real face. It's easy to mock as childish those who grow upset when the world isn't "fair." The habit of accepting injustice as the way of the world has become too familiar, and while I shed my innocence long ago, I never fooled myself into thinking it is *good* that I've had to do these foul things.

"I do think any of these proposals would result in a materially better world. And I will support whichever wins, as will the Ghost Council. But only one of them will make a world good enough to balance out the evil we'll create to get there."

Nicodemus steps aside, and the vote begins. The board has options for MAP, Watchmen, and Congress, plus Other and Any.

Count.

Let the PCs go last. Not counting their votes, the result is:

- ♦ MAP. 17 votes.
- + Watchmen. 4 votes.
- + Congress. 18 votes.
- + Other. o votes.
- + Any. Nicodemus, plus 25 ghosts.

This tally assumes Zoltan, Constance, and Leone are all dead. (Otherwise they vote for Congress, MAP, and Watchmen respectively.) We leave it to you to decide who among the NPCs the party has interacted with align with each faction. Ideally you'll have some people whom the party likes who end up fleeing when Nicodemus changing his mind.

In any case, the PCs' votes will be the deciding ones.







BALLOT STUFFING

Social. Real-Time. Level 12.

Nicodemus abandons democracy and uses a wayfarer's lantern to distract those he wishes to excise from his conspiracy.

Nicodemus asks Vicemi to verify the final count, then puts on his best smile and thanks everyone for participating in one of the greatest moments in history. He's truly glad, he says, that everyone felt comfortable voting their conscience, and he hopes that they can all work together moving forward. As he speaks, the gaslamps in the room start to turn a soothing blue color.

Trait

► Palace Gaslamp Pacification + Aura 10

A new emotion overtakes you.

There are lamps every 5 squares or so throughout the palace. Whenever a creature ends its turn in the illuminated area, they must make a DC 20 Will save or fall under the lantern's effect (save ends). An affected creature gets a new save each round to resist the effects. If a creature fails three consecutive saves, it falls fully under the lantern's effect for 5 minutes.

If a creature successfully ends three consecutive turns unaffected, it becomes resistant, and cannot be affected again by any lantern with the same planar energy for 5 minutes.

A creature can choose to let itself be affected by the lantern.

The party immediately recognizes the effect as being identical to the base of the rift at Knütpara, and if they focus on trying to resist its magic (see page 34) they should be able to keep their wits about them.

A creature caught in the light is pacified. It cannot take hostile actions, and it treats all creatures as trusted friends. If another creature attacks it, it automatically breaks free of the pacification and cannot be affected again until the end of the encounter.

Through preparatory spells, Nicodemus has made himself and the Ghost Council immune to this particular effect of the lantern. They'll be able to act freely.

Blue Banquet.

Once Nicodemus is content that everyone is pacified, he asks for those who supported the Colossal Congress proposal to remain in the main hall while he takes everyone else outside to the grand foyer. Of the prominent NPCs, this includes Vicemi, Han Jierre, Macbannin, Amielle, and Erskine (plus possibly Grappa if he lives).

There awaits the Ghost Council swarm: a sprawling mass of what must have been a hundred or more people before their wills became subsumed in the collective. When the doors to the main hall are closed, Vicemi says that he has sent the other councilors to secure the premises. The palace is sealed, and the council is ready.

Nicodemus turns to those who came out with him. He says, "Those inside would ruin this world if they were allowed to come into power. In my five centuries I've seen plenty of monarchs and oligarchs just like them who have lashed out when their authority and dominance is



threatened. I don't like what we have to do now, but the most efficient way to avert this threat is to strike now. This small dishonorable deed will be balanced by ages of greater prosperity for all of civilization. I need your support in this decision."

Amielle and Macbannin remain impassive, but the rest of the officers in the crowd begin to nod assent. Soon over twenty people, speaking somberly and reasonably, urge Nicodemus to do what must be done.

Maybe He Has a Point.

Nicodemus is moments away from ordering the Ghost Council to glide through the walls into the main hall and slaughter the 18 officers who voted in favor of the Colossal Congress (plus any PCs who voted with them).

A rational party might realize that showing their true colors right now, in front of all the villains, is a good way to get killed. But we want to kick off an action scene, so consider some combination of the following elements to get things moving.

Shoot First.

If the party just up and attacks without explaining who they are (or tries to interfere with the main hall such as by breaking lamps), Vicemi and the Ghost Council retaliate immediately, but Nicodemus spares a round to try to reason with them, saying that there's no place in the new world for those who would seize power for themselves.

At that point, Pemberton pipes up. Seemingly oblivious to the ongoing battle, Erskine Haffkruger begins to speak with Benedict Pemberton's deep and folksy voice, saying that he's enjoyed spying on this little gettogether, but he'd much rather watch the two sides have a fair fight, since he's hoping neither of them win. He explains who the party is and expresses his wish that all those present end up killing each other. Then he activates the duplicant's internal bomb (see below) to kick things off.

Not So Fast.

The party might boldly reveal themselves. Nicodemus is shocked, but asks that they consider working with the Obscurati, rather than trying to stop a new and better world from being created. At some point—especially if the party seems to be leaning toward yes—Pemberton interrupts and says that he paid to see internecine cock-fighting, not a one-sided pig-slaughter. Again, he'll trigger the bomb once he's bored with talking.

Helpless and Calm.

The lanterns might have pacified the party entirely, in which case just before Nicodemus gives the killing order, Pemberton explains that the constables here will be throwing a spanner into his plans. Nicodemus scoffs and says the party can't do anything to stop him; they'll just sit passively and watch. Pemberton responds that getting attacked usually breaks these sorts of charms, and that's when he uses his back-up plan.

Duplicitous Duplicant Detonation.

When Pemberton thinks the time is right, he claps and rubs his hands together, grins, and starts ticking loudly. One round later (at initiative count o) the ticking accelerates. The round after that he's practically whirring, and at initiative count o on the third round he explodes.

During the countdown, first he points out that while the ghosts might not mind a little pyrotechnics, most of the conspirators are nice and full of fleshy bits. Then he tells Erskine to say bye-bye, and leaves the confused dwarf in charge of his duplicant for a moment before it explodes (50 ft.-radius burst, 10d6 fire plus 5d6 piercing, Reflex DC 20 for half).

THE SPLINTER CELL

Action. Montage. Level 14+.

The Ghost Council attacks, Ob officers turn on each other, and the losing side runs for shore.

In this scene, all hell breaks loose in the Obscurati palace. The simplest version simply sees the party fleeing and perhaps contacting their ship via their *communication rings*. It can then use the *fey portal pad* to transition into the Bleak Gate for five minutes, long enough for the party to rush on board. At some point during their escape Vicemi and the Ghost Council will attack, and Macbannin will come to their aid.

But there are many other objectives the party might have: rescuing sympathetic Ob officers, killing Ob loyalists, freeing Vitus Sigismund from the prison portal painting, and whatever else the constables have come to care about. Also, if they did not prepare to have their ship extract them, they'll need to rejigger the *wayfarer lighthouse* if they want to transfer to the real world.

Finally, the party is likely not in their own bodies. They might want to take a moment to get back into themselves, which would require one round for each body that needs to be removed from the *absurdist web*, and then just a free action to break the wreath that binds the two together. The PC will be restored immediately, and both he and the vessel will be helpless for one round. If the party doesn't just *coup de grâce* the vessel bodies (hopefully not Livia, though), they'll just flee in terror, since they have barely any idea where they are.

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PACING AND RESTING.

This scene likely involves multiple combat encounters over a relatively short timespan. Consider that five minutes can pass pretty quickly if the party is talking with NPCs or deciding which way to go, which can give the party time to heal and cast preparatory spells. Even if the party insists on rushing, they can probably have an occasional one-minute break to tend to their needs.

ESCAPING OFFICERS.

The PCs might not be the only ones trying to escape. Based on how much havoc the party is causing, the Ob officers who allied with Nicodemus might run for the shore. Some will link up with Han Jierre who uses a *wayfarer's lantern* to get everyone onto a fast schooner in the real world. Others might just try to get onto the *Nighthawk*-class steamships, some being so desperate they dive into the treacherous waters.

FAILURE STATES.

If the party gets taken down here, there's no reason Nicodemus or Vicemi would keep them alive as prisoners. You might be able to wrangle a last-minute rescue by Macbannin and Amielle (or other officers they befriended), getting the party onto their ship which barely escapes. If the party is out of allies, though, and you don't want to end the campaign, next adventure starts with the party linking up with Asrabey Varal, and if anyone has the clout to burst into a stronghold of bad guys and carry off a few people, it's him.

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Enemy Defenders.

When Pemberton's duplicant explodes, the loyal Ob officers have already scattered. Right afterward Vicemi orders the Ghost Council swarm into the Main Hall. Vicemi then disappears, teleporting back to the council room. He intends to attack only once he has regrouped and has back-up. Most of the exits of the building are watched by senior ghost councilors. A shadowlisk is stationed the front exit, another at the rear by the lighthouse. A third shadowlisk guards the entrance to the room that has the prison portal painting, on the first floor west wing hallway.

Unless the party goes looking for multiple groups of enemies at once, we suggest you stagger their encounters as follows.

Saving Congress

(Encounter Level 15)

Enemies: Ghost Council swarm, Cula Ravjahani

Possible Allies: Catherine Romana

In the main hall, eighteen Ob officers who voted for the Colossal Congress (including Catherine Romana) wait passively. Unless the party intercedes, the Ghost Council swarm glides in through the doors, uses a swift action to seal one of the far exits with a wall of force, and starts killing two officers per round with its incorporeal touches. Cula Ravjahani follows the swarm in from the foyer, and engages the party, hoping they'll focus on her and let the ghosts do their work.

Catherine Romana manages to shake off the pacifying effect in the first round, and since she didn't witness what happened in the foyer she might attack the party in confusion. The rest of the officers here don't fight back or even flee until they are attacked, unless the lanterns in the room (4 in total) are destroyed. Even then, they're not particularly effective in a fight against ghosts.

They'll flee in a panic in different directions unless directed. If rallied, their combined mix of magic and weapons only manages to deal 2 damage per officer per round, but it might add up.

The party is still probably in their vessel bodies. The Ghost Council fights until it reaches HP Threshold I, at which point it splinters, leaving behind two ghost councilors. It withdraws and seeks guidance from Vicemi, but will return later. Cula will try to flee with the Ghost Council, but likely goes down here.

Afterward, the party might enlist Catherine's aid. She recommends they use the lighthouse to transition to the real world, then commandeer a ship to escape.

Exit Blocked

(Encounter Level 15)

Enemies: 1 shadowlisk, 6 senior ghost councilors

Possible Allies: Amielle Latimer, 12 Obscurati arcane marksmen Perhaps the party tries to lead the way out of the palace, or they re-

spond after hearing panicked Ob officers scream as they're blasted into shadows by shadowlisks. Whatever exit the party tries to go out through, a similar group of defenders will try to stop them.

The ghost councilors try to possess PCs and move them into the gaze of the shadowlisk. They're fearless about combat because they know they'll rejuvenate even if destroyed.

It's likely that Amielle Latimer, who fled when Pemberton's bomb went off, returns with a squad of Obscurati arcane marksmen, who fire a fusillade into the shadowlisk. Once the fight's over, she can lend advice like reminding them of the three ships patrolling the waters around the island. She explains that she cannot go with them; she's bound to stay near the Ghost Council. But she wants them to get to safety. Sadly she's not as big an idealist as Nicodemus, and while intellectually his argument makes sense, she can't help but value her friends in the Ob, and won't abide their slaughter.

Lighthouse Defense

(Encounter Level 13)

Enemies: 2 senior ghost councilors, 4 Obscurati arcane marksmen

The lighthouse is not particularly well defended, though the marksmen will hear freight elevator ascending, and can take a ladder down to some sniper perches inside the lighthouse so they can fire down at the party.

Chaotic Halls

(Encounter Level 13)

Enemies: 9 Obscurati bookpin guards, 4 Obscurati arcane marksmen

If you think the party is having too easy a time, you might throw a squad of bookpin guards in their path. Ideally you can have the guards advance on the party from two different directions while the marksmen laying down suppressing fire. The enemies aren't particularly challenging, but the players might think they're in more trouble than they really are.

Prison Break

(Encounter Level 15)

Enemies: 1 shadowlisk, 1 senior ghost councilor, Ghost Council swarm stage 2 Possible Allies: Vitus Sigismund

The door hangs open to the downstairs west wing suite that contains the prison portal painting. Inside, though, a ghost councilor floats at the ceiling, and a shadowlisk is coiled to spring from the bathroom (where the painting is). Moments after the battle begins, the Ghost Council swarm (now at Stage 2) flies in through the window. It uses wall of force to divide the party, then grabs one or two PCs and tries to carry them back out the window and up to the roof.

If you want to add drama, have the fighting damage the frame of the portal painting, which causes the world within to begin to disintegrate. The party will have only three rounds to get Vitus (and maybe the other prisoners) to safety between the demiplane becomes a lethal vacuum.

The Ghost Council fights until it reaches its second HP Threshold, then dives back into the palace and flees to Vicemi.

PANICKED EVACUATION

Action. Real-Time. Level 12+.

Numerous ships try to flee, prompting a chaotic, multi-sided battle between the real world and the Bleak Gate.

Honestly, the party will likely be spent and ready to leave after their confrontation with Vicemi, so you might simply gloss over their departure from the island so as not to end anti-climactically. But if you need some extra challenge, or if the party starts to flee by ship before remembering they need to go back and rescue someone, you can use the rules of Admiral o' the High Seas with these ship stats for a naval combat.

The Obscurati officers who did manage to escape board Naphaeon, a frigate which flees from the island's north docks, trying to avoid combat completely and get back to Vendricce, where it will receive protection by the Clergy's navy. Three Nighthawk-class steamships will try to intercept the party's ship, battling them in dark waters dotted with dangerous rocky spires.





Schism 🚓 🔁 🐎 Act Three: Into the Lions' Den

If the party befriended the ghost pirates, their ship can emerge and aid the party. Remember that the party's ship can only stay in the Bleak Gate for so long without taking damage. The party might just board and go back to the real world, or they could try to stick around, chase down the Naphaeon, and consign her to the deep.

Naphaeon, Obscurati Frigate	Level 17 Vehicle	
Huge Vehicle	110,000 gp	
Hull Integrity 4	Command +12	
Defense 25	Full Crew 32	
Maneuverability 4	Minimum Crew 8	
Speed 14	Total Complement 200	
Design		
Length 170 ft. Beam 35 ft. Three masts, 100 ft. high. Four decks.		
Armaments		
To each broadside, eleven light cannons on the maindeck and a dozen full cannons on		
the gundeck. In a chase, the crew moves and turns the cannons on the maindeck to fire		
forward or aftward.		
Crew: 100. Attack: +17 to broadsides, or +14 fore or aft.		

Total Cost 110,000 gp

Hull (base level 11, sails, improved speed ×5, Level 17): 65,000 gp Armaments (huge, boards and chasers, Level 16): 45,000 gp

The Ghost Ship of Mutravir Island	Level 10 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	39,000 gp
Hull Integrity 3	Command —
Defense 15	Full Crew 16
Maneuverability 6	Minimum Crew 4
Speed 8	Total Complement 60
Design	

Length 90 ft. Beam 25 ft. Three masts, 70 ft. high. Two decks.

Ghost Ship

It glides through the shoals, ignoring the hazardous rocks as it brings its cannons to bear.

The ship and those aboard it glide through solid objects like a ghost. Each turn, the captain chooses whether the ship is incorporeal or manifested. If manifested, it functions normally. If incorporeal, it takes a –5 penalty to its attack rolls, and attacks against it take the same penalty. Additionally, the incorporeal ship ignores catch and crash hazards.

Armaments

A small array of light cannons, five to either broadside, but they strike with the wrathful might of the dead.

Crew: 40. Attack: +7, broadsides only.

Total Cost 39,000 gp

Hull (base level 6, sails, improved speed ×3, Level 10): 5,000 gp Ghost Ship (Level 13): 17,000 gp

Armaments (large, broadsides, Level 13): 17,000 gp



Nighthawk-class steamship	Level 16 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	104,920 gp
Hull Integrity 3	Command +7
Defense 15	Full Crew 28
Maneuverability 12	Minimum Crew 2
Speed 6	
Perception +13	

Design & Crew

Length 85 ft. Beam 25 ft. Steam engine, three decks. Aside from captain, navigator, engineer, and gunner, the crew consists of two dozen mindless humanoid automatons.

▶ Extraplanar Magnetometer & Spectral Searchlight

Next to the navigator's compass, an arcane instrument detects the fluctuations caused by nearby metal, providing a crude sensor to detect ships—even ones in the real world. A gimbal-mounted searchlight on the prow uses wayfarer's lantern technology to allow the Nighthawk to attack intruders while remaining safely in the Bleak Gate. The crew is always aware of the presence of ships within one mile, and if they lack line of sight (or are on a different plane) they can make a Perception check each round (DC 20) to set a course.

Once within medium range (500 feet) the vessel can use its spotlight to locate one ship at a time, as long as it's to the fore or sides, not aft. The Nighthawk can target that ship with its weapons, even if it's on a different plane.

A ship targeted by the spotlight can fire back, but it takes a -10 penalty to the attack roll if it isn't on the same plane. The spotlight can be targeted and destroyed.

Clever Defenses

Special iron shutters keep the crew safe from enemy fire without limiting the Nighthawk's ability to fire back.

The crew always has cover against attacks made from outside the ship.

Tar and Brimstone Sheathing

An alchemical mixture of components slathered on the hull protects the bottom of the ship.

Passwall and similar effects cannot affect the hull. Any creature that attacks the hull from beneath the water takes 10 fire damage.

► Eldritch Shield + Installed

An arcane forcefield powered by the ship's engine wards off attacks.

Any spell that originates more than 50 feet from the ship has any damage it deals to creatures aboard the ship reduced by 32. Attacks from within that range function normally.

Wayfarer's Cannon

Thin slivers of light are visible through the shutters on the turret at the ship's prow. After it fires, you briefly see mechanical constructs reloading the twin cannons with huge munitions that have glowing amberglass shells.

Crew: 20. Attack: +18, forward only. Each round choose one of the following effects:

- + Flaming. Attack inflicts the burning condition instead of normal damage. Crew in a struck area take 2d6 fire damage.
- + Radiant. Attack explodes with positive energy, dealing normal damage to undead creatures in struck areas, but not harming the ship itself.
- + Shocking. Gains a +2 bonus to hit creatures. Against ships, the first strike of any attack deals no damage to the ship itself (later hits deal normal damage). However, crew in struck components take an extra 1d6 lightning damage.

Total Cost 84,920 gp

Hull (base level 6, engine, improved speed x2, improved maneuverability x3, Level 13): 17,000 gp

Construct crew: 600 gp

Armaments (Level 16; flaming, Level 10; radiant, Level 2; shocking, Level 8): 58,920 gp Sheathing, tar and brimstone (Level 8): 3,400 gp

Magnetometer and spotlight (Level 15): 25,000 gp



SHOWDOWN

Action. Tactical. Level 17+.

Vicemi bends all his might toward defeating the party. Enemies: Vicemi Terio, 1 advanced bleak golem, 3 Obscurati bookpin guards, 3 ghost councilors, Ghost Council swarm stage 3,

Possible Allies: Reed Macbannin

Perhaps the party is running down a hallway toward an exit, or they're descending the stairs to the cliff south of the lighthouse, or they're riding a carriage toward the north docks to get onto their ship. A fog begins

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BATTLING NICODEMUS

We don't present stats for Nicodemus here. Partially because he'll be designed to fit the needs of a different encounter in Adventure Eight, and mainly because he's effectively unkillable here. Assume he has an AC in the mid-30s and that damage dealt to him instead transfers to the Ghost Council swarm. Until the party defeats it, Nicodemus cannot be hurt. Also, he has a custom contingency that will teleport him off the island and to a safehouse in Vendricce with just a single word.

Don't even bother having Nicodemus fight back, since you don't want the players expecting they'll get to beat him. Rather, as soon as he's attacked, he'll begin to concentrate on a spell to retaliate when something intercedes

If the party's true identity has been revealed, Nicodemus's voice changes accent and timbre to that of Andrei, who says, "These are not yours to harm." Nicodemus shakes his head, realizes he can't risk fighting in this condition, and activates his contingency.

If the party just up and attacks, maybe spend a round with him expressing anger and disbelief, but then have Vicemi snarl at him that he's too important to risk, so Nic grudgingly leaves. It might irk your players, but they have guite enough enemies to deal with already, and they'll get another crack at the mastermind next adventure.

JOINING THE CONSPIRACY.

The party might decide they like Nicodemus, in which case if you want to give the party a challenge you'll need to beef up the strength of the opposing Ob officers. The easiest solution is just to say that the Ghost Council actually isn't able of fighting; they're just harmless vestiges. Nicodemus planned to rely on the lantern to slowly draw the opposition out one by and one and kill them without panicking the rest, but Benedict Pemberton's intervention means chasing everyone down will be much harder.

The party would be tasked with taking down Catherine Romana, fighting the bookpin guards and the marksmen, and stopping the twenty or so dissident officers from reaching the Naphaeon and fleeing. You could end with a fight against Macbannin, the two shadowlisks that he commands, and Amielle, who perhaps are trying to free Vitus and then commandeer one of the Nighthawk steamships to get off the island.

In the aftermath, Nicodemus will task the party with tracking down Kasvarina and bringing her back into the fold.

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to spread in their path, and in the dark and mist they hear the clanking sounds of an approaching golem.

Vicemi uses *cloudkill* to create a swath of poisonous vapors in the party's path, then waits on the far side with an advanced bleak golem (he had to go get it from storage) and a trio of bookpin guards who have remained steadfast. The Ghost Council also lurks somewhere nearby, preferably separated by a solid wall so the party cannot see it.

Vicemi calls through the fog, "We've had enough talking this past day. All I ask is this. Don't surrender." Then the Ghost Council swarm swoops in and attacks.

If Macbannin has not made his appearance yet, he shows up right before the swarm strikes. He'll try to aid the party, and he'll cuss at them if they attack him.

Tactics.

The Ghost Council just swarms the party, causing as much havoc as possible. The bleak golem advances with two bookpin guards right beside it, granting each other bonuses to AC with Shield Wall. A third guard stays with Vicemi, remaining at the edge of the mist.

After one round, the three senior ghost councilors emerge from the mist, focusing on any solitary or vulnerable foe.

Vicemi has likely already used resist energy to ward against whatever energy the party uses most. He stays at the edge of the mist where he has concealment and leads with extended haste, then uses his powerful offensive spells. If he sees the party benefiting from magical defenses he'll target it with *dispel magic*.

Macbannin sticks near the party and uses major curse to make the Ghost Council lose its incorporeal subtype. He tries to lay a misfortune hex on the Ghost Council and Vicemi, using cackle to extend the duration. He realizes that he cannot leave the Ghost Council, and that they'll probably do horrible things to him once the council reforms, so when the time is right he'll plunge a dagger into his own throat and begin to fade away. When he perishes, he uses one final curse to ensure that Vicemi won't rejuvenate if destroyed.

Loot.

When Vicemi is destroyed, his ghostly entourage bracelet falls to the ground with a clatter (page 72).

Aftermath.

When Vicemi is destroyed, he doesn't speak, just glares at the party as his form discorporates. Hopefully this will have exhausted the party enough that they won't feel the urge to track down all the remaining Ob officers and exterminate them. At any rate, the wards on the island that kept the horrors of the Bleak Gate at bay are starting to fade, so dawdling can be deadly.

Even if the party does kill every last Ob officer here, Nicodemus will return to the island and capture the essences of all the officers who perished here, giving them the option to join the Ghost Council. Then he'll be able to connect with whoever is second-in-command in the various cells.

Macbannin and Vicemi are likely gone, but Amielle survives (and her disapproval of Nicodemus is probably not apparent). This has been a massive set-back, but the conspiracy was designed to survive catastrophic damage, and as long as they can gain control of the colossus, they can still enact their grand design. 🔊

APPENDIX ONE: COMPLETE OFFICER ROSTER

These are all of the current Ob officers, organized by their nation of operation. These officers, despite their various backgrounds and missions, are almost all men and women of great education and progressive ideology. Those who are not legitimately interested in improving the world are clever liars who put on the appearance of concern.

That said, everyone here has had to do some horrible things so the Obscurati can gain influence in a given area, and they're a bit inured to localized suffering, especially if it leads to a greater good.

Two key figures—Kasvarina Varal and Roland Stanfield—are not in attendance. In addition the convocation also includes twenty-four members of the Ghost Council who tend to vote in a single bloc.

Officers marked with an asterisk (*) play a prominent role in this adventure and have a full write-up. Those marked with a dagger mark (†) are potential aliases for the PCs. A few others have small roles to play and are marked with two double daggers (‡), but most are free for you to do with as you please.

Leadership.

- 1. * Nicodemus the Gnostic. Head of conspiracy. Resides in body of Andrei von Recklinghausen.
- 2. * Han Jierre. Tiefling sovereign of Danor. Representative of the Panarchist faction.
- **3. Kasvarina Varal.** *Not in attendance.* High elf matriarch, founder of the conspiracy, with fingers in every pot. Currently under protection of Asrabey Varal and other high elves in Elfaivar, recovering memories stolen from her by Alexander Grappa.

Ber.

- 4. Grargh Nobble. Jumpy orc barbarian. Spy among the unincorporated tribes.
- 5. **‡ Praesidia de Vaca.** Half-dragon bard. Latest in a line of spokesmen of the Panoply, responsible for making Berans look outward to other nations and cultures, so they'll fall in line. *Head of the Bards minor faction*.
- 6. Lam Aqua. Orc artificer. Responsible for industry and construction of a planar lighthouse in Seobriga.
- **7. Ignitio dola Serra.** Lizardfolk wizard. Spy in Reo Pedresco secret wizard order. Tasked with constructing a planar lighthouse.
- 8. Sergio Flores. Half-giant businessman. Building a planar lighthouse in Ursaliña.
- **9. Trevio Addaz.** Minotaur cleric. Head of Bounty Cell, responsible for sneaking mages, priests, and the like to perform secret "miracles" to reduce conflict for resources among poor tribes.
- 10. Nicholas Sermon. Half-orc bard from Risur. Monster hunter, prepared to slay any dragons that might get roused by the Ob's plans. Also hunts for forgotten hoards.
- 11. **‡ Barro Bangristo.** Minotaur professor. Head of Scroll Cell, responsible for spying on universities to seek potential recruits and use student rebellion as a tool for change. *Brags about villainy in a brief vignette*.

Crisillyir.

- 12. * Zimand Dexlano. Human priest. Part of Bishop Vigilio's retinue. Secretly replaced by Vitus Sigismund, who is discovered when trying to enter the palace.
- **13. ‡ Bishop Ortisei Vigilio.** Human cleric. Liaison with business interests in Vendricce, and master of a network of spies. *Appears in opening scene.*
- 14. ‡ Carlast Hevny. Human priest. Head of archaeological activities in Crisillyir. *Appears in opening scene*.
- 15. † Ken Don. Human archivist. Research inquisitor of the Clergy. Ensures Ob agents don't get caught for looking into heretical information.
- 16. **† Oscan Ligurio.** Human rogue. Vile member of The Family. Sets up fake identities and businesses to launder money and cover for unusual international activities.
- 17. Rakovnik Brasny. Human cleric. Responsible for building a planar lighthouse in Sid Minos.
- 18. Tittling Grainet. Gnome cleric. Responsible for building a planar lighthouse in Alais Primos.
- 19. Cardinal Testamenta Suchdol. Human inquisitor. Hunts demons, tasked with finding out how to banish their taint to other planes. Earnest proselytizer. *Representative of the minor Trekker faction because she wants to spread her faith to other worlds.*

Danor.

- 20. † Gran Guiscard. Human bard. Head of Gorgeous Cell in Beaumont. Uses network of entertainers and artists to recruit tier 5 Ob agents.
- 21. ‡ Bert Facie. Human gunslinger. Head of Han Jierre's bodyguard attachment. Master of whispers in the whole nation of Danor. *Appears in the opening scene*.
- 22. ‡ Dame Constance Baden. Human knight. Head of Cerulean Cell in Cherage, the Obscurati's "blue sky" division devoted to researching outlandish ideas to see if they're possible. *Representative of the Sky League minor faction, and one of Macbannin's murder victims.*
- 23. ‡ Glaz du Sang Magie. Human ice mage. (Possibly back from the dead as a lich, depending on the events of Adventure Four.) Engineer behind the conspiracy's small submersible fleet. *Representative of the Weapon-Mongers minor faction*.
- 24. Satine Tibeaux. Tiefling cleric, head of Fisher Cell, responsible for investigating the true dead magic zone in the city of Methia, former capital of the Clergy.
- **25. Gardienne du Cherage.** Tiefling scion of the Cherage line, head of College Cell which manipulates Danoran culture to be more friendly to Risur by means of subtly imposing economic and cultural penalties on those more hostile groups.
- **26. Admiral Vidal Strausse.** Human fighter. Spy in the Danoran navy.
- 27. General Shane Wallisonne. Human fighter. Spy in Danoran army.





Drakr.

- 28. **† Kiov Hetman.** Dwarf wizard. Researching magical towers and monoliths throughout Drakr, coordinating adventurers to break in and deactivate their defenses.
- 29. * Erskine Haffkruger. Dwarf environmental biologist responsible for ensuring life can flourish under different planar alignments. After his initial tests with flora and fauna were encouraging, he abducted dozens to perform "human trials." Currently a duplicant controlled by Benedict Pemberton.
- 30. ‡ Ramos Zoltan. Dwarf businessman. Head of Prison Cell, owner of numerous prisons in Drakr, and responsible for building a planar lighthouse. Murdered by Reed Macbannin the first night.
- 31. 2 Dengar Kriegshaff. Human wizard. Head of Blood Cell, designing giant weapons to slay the fey titans of Risur. Representative of the Aegis minor faction.
- 32. ‡ Zartan Arkel. Human druid. Giant hunter, tasked with cataloging and preparing to defeat threats in the Drakran wilderness. Old and patient, representative of the minor Long Now faction.
- 33. ‡ Von Hastenschrieft Willimarkanova. Dwarf philosopher. Main Ob agent in Drakran politics. Long-winded advocate of the Mortal Mind minor faction.

Elfaivar.

- 34. * Cula Ravjahani. Half-elf Vekeshi mystic, former aid to Kasvarina Varal coordinating elf- and fey-oriented cells. Representative of the Miller's Pyre faction.
- 35. Ines Shilubi. Human knight. Hunts fey monsters in Elfaivar, bounty-hunts high elf enclave warriors, but also spies on Clergy colonization efforts in the jungle.
- 36. ‡ Solace Petrov. Human economist. Head of Barter Cell, devoted to re-establishing a functioning economy, under Ob control, in Elfaivar. Representative of the minor Economists faction.

Risur.

- 37. * Roland Stanfield. Not in attendance. Aasimar governor of the city of Flint, head of Colossus cell, and the Ob officer whose involvement with the conspiracy is most precariously concealed. Currently overseeing the secret construction of a planar lighthouse in Flint.
- 38. * Leone Quital. Human steelshaper. Former head of colossus construction.
- 39. * Catherine Romana. Human wizard. Heir of a previous Risuri monarch. Politician tasked with infiltrating allies of Duchess Ethelyn and sabotaging efforts to discover the Obscurati. Representative of the Colossus faction. Has a pet cat.
- 40. † Livia Hatsfield. Elf spy in royal palace. Studying Rites of Rulership so the king may be replaced. Plans to betray Ob, but hasn't told anyone in Risur what she's doing yet.
- 41. Abiera Stackhouse. Halfling representative of the Eschatologists of Flint United, a fringe end-times group. Keeps in contact with crazy conspiracy theorists to see if anyone has stumbled upon the actual plot. Secretly a servant of the Voice of Rot, hoping to find a way to turn the Ob's plot to the fey titan's advantage.
- 42. Erdanen Torrance. Half-elf politician. Member of Catherine Romana's retinue.

43. Alloquicious. Halfling artificer. Head of Iron Cell, responsible for recruiting geniuses in Risur. Murdered most of his underlings a year ago so the RHC wouldn't track him down, and is transitioning to trying to influence Risur's economic system.

Other.

- 44. **† Bruce McDruid.** Human explorer. Donates arms and technology to primitive people at the edge of civilization, earning their trust and acclimating them to a new world order.
- 45. † Xavier Sangria. Human fighter. Malice Lands beast hunter. Heads band of adventurers who hunt monsters.
- 46. Jade Hericano. Sea elf explorer. Native of the Yerasol Archipelago, head of Bathy Cell, searching sunken ruins for clues to the Ancients.
- 47. Hanse Randall. Wealthy architect, head of Shingles Cell, responsible for greasing palms in the Malice Lands city-state of Orithea, to build a planar lighthouse.
- 48. Oort Magnus. Oread sorcerer. Cell leader in Nalaam, coordinating the search for the Ancient temple to Urim.
- 49. Bob Stela. Human ranger. Cell leader in a border state.
- 50. Ed Pollack. Human druid. Cell leader in a different border state.
- 51. Tim Twiggerson. Human rogue. Cell leader in yet another border state.
- 52. Neil d'Ray. Human factotum. Cell leader in a border state you've never heard of. Seriously, these guys do excellent work, are incredibly busy, and are really under-appreciated by the Obscurati leadership.

Ghost Council.

In addition to the three named officers below, the Ghost Council consists of twenty-four additional members that vote as one block. There are dozens more ghosts in the council, but many have lost their sense of individuality altogether, and can only act at the direction of those who still have a conscious mind.

- 53. * Vicemi Terio. Head of the Ghost Council, leader of Lantern Cell. Archmage.
- 54. * Reed Macbannin. Ghost and former head of operational secrecy in Flint. Representative of the Arboretum faction.
- 55. * Amielle Latimer. Ghost of a tiefling gunslinger, in the Ghost Council. Originally established friendly industrial connections between Danor and the city of Flint, after helping King Lorcan defeat the witch coven in the year 400 A.O.V. Representative of the Watchmaker faction.

Possible Additions.

If they made it out of Adventure Four alive, Luc Jierre and Ottavia Sacredote are here. In the unlikely event the party did not kill Lya Jierre in Adventure Six, she attends as well, usually in the company of her uncle Han as a bodyguard.



APPENDIX TWO: OBSCURATI FORCES

The party might battle the Ob officers and their allies in numerous situations.

Leone Quital, The Steelshaper XP 38,400

CR 14 S

- Unique male human aristocrat 14
- LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1, Senses Perception +19

Defense

AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 22 (+10 armor, +1 Dex, +2 deflection)

hp 130 (14d8+56), plus see steel shield

Fort +12, Ref +11, Will +15

Defensive Abilities steel shield

Offense

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (perfect)

Melee shield bash +16 (4d6 plus trip)

Ranged makeshift artillery +16 (4d6+35)

Special Attacks desperate levitation, makeshift artillery, shield bash, shrapnel vortex, telekinetic trick

Statistics

Str 8, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 22

Base Atk +10; CMB +9; CMD 26

 Feats Alertness, Defensive Combat Training, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (Knowledge [arcana]), Lightning Reflexes, Toughness
 Skills Appraise +19, Bluff +23, Fly +26, Intimidate +23, Knowledge (arcana) +25,

Perception +19, Sense Motive +19

Languages Common, Elven, Primordial

SQ magnetic flight, master of magnetism

Combat Gear potion of cure serious wounds; **Other Gear** steelsilk mantle, headband of Charisma +4, ring of protection +2

Special Abilities

Desperate Levitation (Su) When reduced below 75 hit points, Leone's powers surge. As a full-round action, he can make a +14 dispel check against every hostile magic effect on him. He then flies 30 feet, gaining an extra +10 deflection bonus to his AC during this movement. If he does not have a steel shield, he acquires one. Leone telekinetically lifts six railroad cars within 200 feet of him (each 60 feet long by 15 feet wide) and moves them individually up to 100 feet, then can hover them up to 20 feet off the ground. Anybody in the path of the train cars must make a Reflex save (DC 23) or take 4d6 damage and be knocked prone. At the start of Leone's next turn, the train cars fall. Anybody under a car can make a Reflex save (DC 23) to scramble to cover. Failure means the creature takes 40d6 of bludgeoning damage as the car falls on them.

Magnetic Flight (Su) As long as he is within 100 feet of at least one ton of metal, Leone has a fly speed of 30 feet (perfect).

- Makeshift Artillery (Su) As a standard action, Leone can telekinetically grab any metal object within 140 feet, of a size up to about 5 feet across, then hurl it as if using the violent thrust version of *telekinesis* (CL 14th). He attacks with a +16 attack bonus, generally dealing 4d6+35 damage unless he's forced to use an object less than 350 pounds. If he uses this ability on a creature wearing metal armor, the creature gets a Will save (DC 21) to resist.
- Master of Magnetism (Su) Attacks against Leone using metal weapons or ammunition suffer a –2 penalty to the attack roll. Leone gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls on attacks against targets in metal armor. Bands of metal held close to his body give Leone a +10 armor bonus to AC.
- Shield Bash (Su) Leone can use his steel shield to make a melee attack with a reach of 10 feet. Anybody hit by the shield takes 4d6 piercing damage, and Leone can make a free trip attack (CMB+20). If Leone's shield has been destroyed, he can create a new one and make this attack as a single standard action.
- Shrapnel Vortex (Su) As a standard action, Leone can create a vortex of shrapnel in a 20-foot radius within 200 feet of him. The shrapnel deals 8d6 slashing damage (Reflex DC 23 for half). The vortex remains until the end of Leone's next turn. Any creature that enters or ends its turn in the vortex takes 4d6 slashing damage.
- Steel Shield (Ex) Leone levitates a metal shield, either a single sheet or multiple pieces, which he moves to block incoming attacks. This shield protects him from any attack that targets AC or that allows a Fortitude or Reflex save, absorbing the damage. If the attacker is flanking or if Leone is stunned or paralyzed, the attack bypasses his shield. The shield has hardness 10 and 20 hit points. If an attack's damage is wholly blocked by the shield, any additional effects of the attack do not affect Leone. If the shield is destroyed by an attack, any remaining damage applies to Leone.
- **Telekinetic Trick (Su)** As a swift action, Leone can use *telekinesis* (CL 14th, CMB +20), but only to perform a bull rush, disarm, grapple, or trip combat maneuver.





Advanced Bleak Golem CR 9	Shadowlisk CR 1
(P 6,400	XP 12,800
N Large construct	N Large magical beast
nit –1; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0	Init +3, Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +14
Defense	Defense
AC 22, touch 8, flat-footed 22 (–1 Dex, +14 natural, –1 size)	AC 24, touch 8, flat-footed 24 (–1 Dex, +16 natural, –1 size)
102 (12d10+30)	hp 140 (14d10+56)
Fort +4 Ref +2, Will +4	Fort +15, Ref +8, Will +7
DR 10/adamantine; Immune construct traits	Defensive Abilities shadow blend
Neakness vulnerability to positive energy	Offense
Offense	Speed 40 ft.
Speed 20 ft.	Melee bite +20 (2d6+7), 2 claws +20 (1d8+7)
Melee 2 slams +17 (2d6+5 plus 2d6 negative energy)	Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.
Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.	Special Attacks umbrafying gaze
Statistics	Statistics
str 20, Dex 9, Con -, Int -, Wis 11, Cha 1	Str 24, Dex 8, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 11
Base Atk +12; CMB +18; CMD 26	Base Atk +14; CMB +22; CMD 31 (35 vs. trip)
iQ witchoil infused construct	Feats Blind-Fight, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Skill
Special Abilities	Focus (Perception), Skill Focus (Stealth)
Witchoil Infused Construct (Su) The golem's body leaks witchoil from most orifices.	Skills Perception +14, Stealth +12; Racial Modifiers +4 Stealth
The substance splashes onto targets hit by the golem and deals an additional 2d6	SQ compression, revealing gaze
points of negative energy damage on each attack that hits the target. This substance	Special Abilities
also gives the construct vulnerability to positive energy as though it were undead,	Shadow Blend (Su) In any condition of illumination other than full daylight, a
though negative energy will not heal it.	shadowlisk disappears into the shadows, giving it concealment (50% miss chance
	Artificial illumination, even a light or <i>continual flame</i> spell, does not negate this
Obscurati Arcane Marksman CR 6	ability; a <i>daylight</i> spell, however, does. A shadowlisk cannot use its umbrafying ga
Male human fighter 4/wizard (spellslinger) 3	while using this ability. A shadowlisk can suspend or resume this ability as a free
.N Medium humanoid (human)	action.
nit +4; Senses Perception +8	Revealing Gaze (Su) Any creature within a shadowlisk's line of sight has its true for
Defense	revealed, allowing all other creatures to see it as if under the effects of a true seein
AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+2 armor, +4 Dex)	spell. Illusion and transmutation effects are not dispelled or suppressed, merely
10 50 (Hd10+3d6+14)	seen through.
Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +5; +1 vs. fear	Umbrafying Gaze (Su) 10d6 damage, 30 ft., Fortitude DC 21 half. A creature that fail
Offense	its save is staggered for 1 round. In addition, if the target is below half of its total
Speed 30 ft.	hit points after taking damage from the umbrafying gaze, it must make a second
Ranged mwk rifle +11 (1d10+2/×4)	Fortitude save DC 21. If it fails, its body is annihilated and its soul is burned into
Special Attacks mage bullets	the ground or wall behind it, like a shadow. The creature can see, hear, and slight
Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 3rd; concentration +5)	twitch. If a creature coats its hands with the blood of a shadowlisk within five
2nd—scorching ray ×2	minutes, it can then reach into the surface and pull the creature out, restoring its
1st—burning hands (DC 13), shield, magic missile	normal body. The save DC is Constitution-based.
Opposition Schools divination, enchantment, illusion, necromancy	
Statistics	
str 10, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 8	
Base Atk +5; CMB +5; CMD 19	
eats Arcane Armor Training, Combat Casting, Point-Blank Master, Point-Blank Shot,	
Precise Shot, Rapid Reload (rifle), Weapon Focus (rifle), Weapon Specialization	
(rifle)	
skills Climb +10, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (engineering) +12, Perception	
+8, Spellcraft +12	
anguages Common, Elven, Primordial	

SQ arcane gun (rifie), armor training 1, bravery +1, gun **Other Gear** mwk leather armor, mwk rifle, spellbook



CR 14

Vicemi Terio, Spectral Archmage

XP 38,400

Male human ghost necromancer 13

LE Medium undead (human, incorporeal)

Init +0, Senses Perception +18

Defense

AC 24, touch 16, flat-footed 24 (+4 armor, +4 shield, +6 deflection) hp 156 (13d6+104)

Fort +15, Ref +9, Will +14

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, incorporeal, rejuvenation; Immune undead traits

Offense

Speed fly 30 ft. (perfect)

Melee corrupting touch +6 (14d6; DC 22)

Special Attacks channel negative energy (DC 22, 10/day), corrupting gaze (DC 22), draining touch, frightful moan (DC 22)

Arcane School Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th; concentration +20)

10/day—grave touch (6 rounds)

Necromancer Spells Prepared (CL 13th; concentration +20)

7th—finger of death (DC 27), waves of exhaustion, spell turning

- 6th-chain lightning (DC 23), disintegrate (DC 23), eyebite (DC 26), greater dispel magic
- 5th—cloudkill (DC 22), cone of cold (DC 22), lightning arc (DC 22), suffocation (DC 25), wall of force
- 4th—black tentacles, enervation ×2, fire shield, greater false life, extended haste
- 3rd—clairaudience/clairvoyance, dispel magic, fireball (DC 20), halt undead (DC 23), slow (DC 20), vampiric touch ×2
- 2nd—blindness/deafness (DC 22), extended mage armor, resist energy ×4, extended shield
- 1st—burning hands, grease, magic missile ×3, ray of enfeeblement ×2 (DC 21)

0-detect magic, mage hand, light, mending

Opposition Schools enchantment, illusion

Statistics

Str —, Dex 10, Con -, Int 24, Wis 12, Cha 22

Base Atk +6: CMB +6: CMD 21

Feats Craft Wondrous Item, Command Undead, Extend Spell, Great Fortitude, Greater Spell Focus (necromancy), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Scribe Scroll, Spell Penetration, Spell Focus (necromancy), Toughness

Skills Fly +24, Knowledge (arcana) +23, Knowledge (history) +23, Knowledge (nobility) +23, Knowledge (planes) +23, Perception +25, Sense Motive +17, Spellcraft +23, Stealth +8, Use Magic Device +19

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Infernal, Primordial SQ arcane bond (amulet), life sight (20 ft., 13 rounds/day)

Gear cloak of resistance +3, headband of mental prowess +2 (Int, Cha; Perception), ghostly entourage

Special Abilities

Corrupting Gaze (Su) Vicemi has a gaze attack with a range of 30 feet that causes 2d10 damage and 1d4 Charisma damage (Fortitude save DC 22 negates Charisma damage but not physical damage).

- Corrupting Touch (Su) By passing part of his incorporeal body through a foe's body as a standard action, Vicemi inflicts 14d6 damage. This damage is not negative energy—it manifests in the form of physical wounds and aches from supernatural aging. Creatures immune to magical aging are immune to this damage, but otherwise the damage bypasses all forms of damage reduction. A Fortitude save (DC 22) halves the damage inflicted.
- Draining Touch (Su) Vicemi has a touch attack that drains 1d4 points from any one ability score he selects on a hit. On each such successful attack, he heals 5 points of damage to himself. When Vicemi makes a draining touch attack, he cannot use his standard ghostly touch attack.
- Frightful Moan (Su) Vicemi can emit a frightful moan as a standard action. All living creatures within a 30-foot spread must succeed on a Will save (DC 22) or become panicked for 2d4 rounds. This is a sonic mind-affecting fear effect. A creature that successfully saves against the moan cannot be affected by the same ghost's moan for 24 hours.

Obscurati Bookpin Guard CR 6 Male human fighter 7

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init -1; Senses Perception +10

Defense

AC 21, touch 9, flat-footed 21(+9 armor, +3 shield, -1 Dex)(+2 AC vs. critical confirmations)

hp 70 (7d10+28)

Fort +8, Ref +1, Will +3; +2 vs. fear

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk longsword +11/+6 (1d8+6/19-20)

Ranged mwk pistol +7 (1d8/x4)

Special Attacks weapon training (heavy blades +1)

Statistics

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

Base Atk +7: CMB +10: CMD 22

Feats Alertness, Cleave, Power Attack, Shield Focus, Shield Specialization (heavy shield), Shield Wall, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword)

Skills Bluff +3, Diplomacy +3, Intimidate +8, Perception +10, Sense Motive +10

Languages Common, Elven

SQ armor training 2, bravery +2

Other Gear mwk full plate, mwk longsword, mwk heavy steel shield, mwk pistol



CR 15

Ghost Council Swarm

XP 51.200

NE Huge undead (human, incorporeal)

Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +33

Defense

AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 13 (+1 Dex, +5 deflection, +1 dodge, -2 size)

hp 198 (18d8+108)

Fort +11, Ref +9, Will +15

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, incorporeal, swarm of ghosts; Immune undead traits

Offense

Speed fly 30 ft. (perfect)

Melee 4 incorporeal touches +12 (10d6 plus 2d6 energy; DC 24)

Special Attacks carry off, eldritch grasp, oppressive moan, poltergeist activity Spell-like Abilities (CL 18th; concentration +23)

3/day—quickened wall of force

Statistics

Str --, Dex 13, Con --, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 20

Base Atk +13; CMB +16 CMD 31

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (wall of force), Skill Focus (Perception), Toughness Skills Fly +30, Knowledge (arcana) +25, Knowledge (religion) +25, Perception +33,

Sense Motive +27, Stealth +14

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Infernal, Primordial

SQ splinter

Special Abilities

- Eldritch Grasp (Sp) The Ghost Council swarm has four incorporeal touch attacks. Each attack must be directed against a different creature. Each touch deals 10d6 untyped damage and 2d6 energy damage (either acid, cold, electricity, or fire as the swarm chooses). A DC 24 Fortitude save reduces this damage by half.
- Oppressive Moan (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds, the swarm can unleash a frightening moan as a standard action. All living creatures within 50 feet must takes 10d6 sonic damage (Fortitude DC 24 for half). A creature that takes damage from the moan must also make a DC 24 Will save or be shaken for 1 minute. This is a sonic mind-affecting fear effect
- Swarm of Ghosts (Ex) The swarm consists of a hundred or more ghosts who travel together closely-packed, filling the space of a Huge creature. The swarm needs only fill 9 contiguous spaces, and can stretch across a battlefield. Enemies can move through the swarm, which counts as difficult terrain. The damaged ghosts discorporate but will return in a few days unless Nicodemus the Gnostic is defeated.
- Splinter (Ex) The swarm has two HP thresholds, and its abilities change as it reaches different thresholds.
- Threshold 1 When reduced below 132 HP, two senior ghost councilors appear in spaces adjacent to the Ghost Council swarm. They are invisible until they attack. As an immediate action, the Ghost Council swarm flies 50 feet. This movement does not provoke attacks of opportunity. (It likely uses this to flee, but will return to combat shortly).
- Threshold 2 When reduced below 66 HP, two senior ghost councilors appear in spaces adjacent to the Ghost Council swarm. They are invisible until they attack. As an immediate action, the Ghost Council swarm flies 50 feet. This movement does not provoke attacks of opportunity. (The swarm likely uses this to flee, but will return to combat shortly.)

Threshold Powers

Carry Off (Ex) After reaching Threshold 1, the Ghost Council swarm can grab any creature it hits with an incorporeal touch attack. Its attacks gain the grab special attack, including the +4 bonus to grapple foes, and can grapple corporeal creatures. It can make a CMB check to maintain up to four grapples at once as a swift action. A grappled creature automatically takes damage from the swarm's incorporeal touch each round.

Poltergeist Activity (Su) After reaching Threshold 2, the Ghost Council swarm gains the ability to telekinetically hurl its foes. Once every 1d4 rounds, the swarm can use the violent thrust version of telekinesis against every creature within 50 feet (CL 18th, DC 20).

Senior Ghost Councilor	CR 10
XP 9,600	
Female or male human ghost aristocrat 10	
NE Medium undead (human, incorporeal)	
Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +25	
Defense	
AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 14 (+4 deflection, +1 Dex)	
hp 90 (10d8+50)	
Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +9	
Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, incorporeal, rejuvenatio	n; Immune
undead traits	
Offense	
Speed fly 30 ft. (perfect)	
Melee corrupting touch +8 (10d6; DC 19)	
Special Attacks malevolence, telekinesis	
Statistics	
Str, Dex 12, Con, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 18	
Base Atk +7; CMB +8; CMD 22	
Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Persuasive, Skill Focus (Percept	tion), Skill Focus
(Sense Motive), Toughness	
Skills Bluff +17, Diplomacy +21, Fly +9, Intimidate +21, Knowledge (a	rcana) +17,
Knowledge (history) +17, Knowledge (planes) +17, Knowledge (reli	gion) +17, Percep
tion +25, Sense Motive +25, Stealth +22	
Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Infernal, Primordial	

- Corrupting Touch (Su) By passing part of its incorporeal body through a foe's body as a standard action, the ghost inflicts 10d6 damage. This damage is not negative energy—it manifests in the form of physical wounds and aches from supernatural aging. Creatures immune to magical aging are immune to this damage, but otherwise the damage bypasses all forms of damage reduction. A Fortitude save (DC 19) halves the damage inflicted.
- Council's Malevolence (Su) Once per round, the ghost councilor can merge its body with a creature on the Material Plane. This ability is similar to a magic jar spell (caster level 10th), except that it does not require a receptacle. To use this ability, the ghost councilor must be adjacent to the target. The target can resist the attack with a successful Will save (DC 19). A creature that successfully saves is immune to that same ghost councilor's malevolence for 24 hours. Since all the ghost councilors arise from the same swarm of ghosts, this immunity is effective against all ghost councilors.
- Telekinesis (Su) The ghost can use telekinesis as a standard action once every 1d4 rounds (caster level 12th).





CR 9

Schism 🚓 📿 Dependix Two: Obscurati Forces

Catherine Romana

XP 6,400

Female human witch 10

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2, Senses Perception +8

Defense

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 16 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, +2 deflection) hp 60 (10d6+20)

Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +11

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk dagger +5 (1d4-1/19-20)

Ranged mwk dagger +5 (1d4-1/19-20)

Special Attacks hexes (agony [10 rounds], charm [2 steps, 4 rounds], disguise, evil eye [-4, 7 rounds], feral speech, slumber)

Witch Spells Prepared (CL 10th; concentration +14)

5th—hold monster (DC 20), summon monster V

4th-charm monster (DC 19), confusion (DC 19), cure serious wounds, phantasmal killer (DC 19)

3rd—blink, dispel magic, suggestion (DC 18), summon monster III

- 2nd—augury, cure moderate wounds, enthrall (DC 17), invisibility, mad hallucination (DC 17)
- 1st-command (DC 16), cure light wounds, mage armor, unseen servant, ventriloquism (DC 16)

0-detect magic, detect poison, light, message

Patron deception

Statistics

Str 8, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 18

Base Atk +5; CMB +4; CMD 18

Feats Alertness, Combat Casting, Dodge, Iron Will, Persuasive, Spell Focus (enchantment), Spell Focus (illusion)

Skills Bluff +10, Diplomacy +15, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (history) +15, Knowledge (nature) +15, Knowledge (nobility) +14, Perception +8, Sense Motive +10

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Primordial, Sylvan

SQ witch's familiar (cat named Kelland)

Other Gear mwk dagger, cloak of resistance +2, ring of protection +2, headband of mental prowess (+2 Int and Cha; Knowledge [nobility])



Cula Ravjahani	CR 9
XP 6,400	
Female half-elf magus 10	
N Medium humanoid (elf, human)	
nit +2, Senses Perception +2	
Defense	
AC 20, touch 13, flat-footed 17 (+7 armor, +2 Dex, +1 dodge)	
hp 80 (10d8+30)	
Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +7	
Offense	
Speed 30 ft.	
Melee Vekeshi blade +11/+6 (1d8+4/19–20)	
Special Attacks improved spell combat, spellstrike	
Magus Spells Prepared (CL 10th, concentration +13)	
4th—dimension door	
3rd—dispel magic, displacement, lightning bolt (DC 16), vampiric t	ouch
2nd—acid arrow, bear's endurance, bull's strength, mirror image, s	scorching ray
1st—feather fall, grease, ray of enfeeblement (DC 14), shield, shock	ting grasp ×2
0—acid splash, detect magic, disrupt undead, mage hand, read ma	igic
itatistics	
str 14, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 10	
Base Atk +7; CMB +9; CMD 21	
Feats Dodge, Combat Casting, Hands of Retribution*, Improved Initi	ative, Skill Focus
(Diplomacy), Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword)	
*See the ZEITGEIST Player's Guide	
5kills Diplomacy +16, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Perc	eption +2, Sense
Motive +10, Spellcraft +16	
L anguages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Primordial	
SQ arcane pool (8, weapon +3), fighter training, knowledge pool, ma	igus arcana (close
range, enduring blade, wand wielder), spell recall	
Other Gear Vekeshi blade, +1 mithral chainmail, wand of magic miss	ile (CL 9th, 27
charges)	





Reed Macbannin

XP 19,200

Male human ghost witch 11

LN Medium undead (human, incorporeal)

Init +2, Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +18

Defense

AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 15 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 deflection) hp 88 (11d6+44)

Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +7

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, incorporeal, rejuvenation; Immune

undead traits

Offense

Speed fly 30 ft. (perfect)

Melee corrupting touch +7 (12d6; DC 19)

Special Attacks draining touch, frightful moan (DC 19), hexes (cackle, evil eye [-4, 7 rounds], fortune, misfortune, retribution, ward), telekinesis

Witch Spells Prepared (CL 11th; concentration +15)

6th—unwilling shield (DC 21)

5th—major curse ×2 (DC 20)

- 4th—black tentacles, crushing despair (DC 19), debilitating portent, lesser globe of invulnerability
- 3rd—bestow curse ×2 (DC 18), dispel magic, howling agony, suggestion (DC 18)
 2nd—blindness/deafness ×2 (DC 17), death knell (DC 17), hold person (DC 17), owl's wisdom
- 1st—charm person (DC 16), hex ward, ray of enfeeblement (DC 16), shield of faith ×2 0—detect magic, detect poison, light, message

Patron wisdom

Statistics

Str —, Dex 14, Con —, Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 18

Base Atk +5; CMB +7; CMD 21

Feats Accursed Hex, Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Spell Focus (enchantment), Spell Focus (necromancy), Split Hex

Skills Bluff +13, Craft (alchemy) +18, Diplomacy +13, Fly +10, Heal +12, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (nobility) +12, Knowledge (planes) +18, Knowledge (religion) +13, Perception +18, Stealth +20

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Sylvan

SQ Macbannin's familiar



Special Abilities

rounds (caster level 12th).

CR 12

Corrupting Touch (Su) By passing part of his incorporeal body through a foe's body as a standard action, Macbannin inflicts 12d6 damage. This damage is not negative energy—it manifests in the form of physical wounds and aches from supernatural aging. Creatures immune to magical aging are immune to this damage, but otherwise the damage bypasses all forms of damage reduction. A Fortitude save (DC 19) halves the damage inflicted.

- Draining Touch (Su) Macbannin has a touch attack that drains 1d4 points from any one ability score he selects on a hit. On each such successful attack, he heals 5 points of damage to himself. When Macbannin makes a draining touch attack, he cannot use his standard ghostly touch attack.
- Frightful Moan (Su) Macbannin can emit a frightful moan as a standard action. All living creatures within a 30-foot spread must succeed on a Will save (DC 19) or become panicked for 2d4 rounds. This is a sonic mind-affecting fear effect. A creature that successfully saves against the moan cannot be affected by the same ghost's moan for 24 hours.

Macbannin's Familiar (Ex) Unlike a typical witch, Reed Macbannin does not have a standard familiar. Forsaking this path, Reed communes directly with witchoil, drawing power from the strange substance. Here in the Bleak Gate, witchoil is plentiful.
 Telekinesis (Su) Macbannin can use telekinesis as a standard action once every 1d4



APPENDIX THREE: FROST GIANTS OF KNÜTPARA

 $\mathbf{B}^{\mathrm{ecause}}$ the giants in the glacial rift might be encountered in multiple locations, we present their stats here for easy reference.

CR 10

Knütpara Frost Giant Ranger

XP 9,600

Male frost giant ranger 1

CE Large humanoid (cold, giant) Init +3; Senses low-light vision; Perception +11

Defense

AC 21, touch 8, flat-footed 21 (+4 armor, -1 Dex, +9 natural, -1 size) **hp** 145 (14d8+1d10+70)

Fort +16, Ref +5, Will +6

Defensive Abilities rock catching; Immune cold

Weaknesses vulnerability to fire

Offense

Speed 40 ft.

Melee spear +20/+15/+10 (2d6+13/×3) or 2 slams +19 (1d8+9) Ranged rock +10 (1d8+13)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Special Attacks favored enemy (dwarves +2), rock throwing (120 ft.)

Statistics

Str 29, Dex 9, Con 21, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 11

Base Atk +11; CMB +21 (+23 overrun or sunder); CMD 30 (32 vs. overrun or sunder)
Feats Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Initiative, Improved Overrun, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth), Weapon Focus (spear)
Skills Climb +14, Intimidate +7, Perception +11, Stealth +6 (+10 in snow), Survival +12

Languages Common, Giant

SQ track +1, wild empathy +1

Other Gear chain shirt, spear

Demonic Deathbear CR 9 XP 6,400 CE Large magical beast Init +5; Senses bloodsense, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +12 Defense AC 20 touch 10 flat-footed 17 (+1 Dex +10 natural -1 size) hp 105 (10d10+50) Fort +12, Ref +8, Will +6 DR 10/good; Resist cold 20, fire 20; SR 20 **Defensive Abilities** undying Offense Speed 50 ft. Melee 2 claws +16 (1d6+7 plus bleed and grab), bite +16 (1d8+7 plus bleed) Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft. Special Attacks bleed (1d6), mutilation gaze Statistics Str 25, Dex 13, Con 21, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10 Base Atk +10; CMB +18 (+22 grapple); CMD 29 (33 vs. trip) Feats Die Hard, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Perception) Skills Perception +12, Survival +9 Languages Abyssal, Giant (cannot speak) SQ ice walk **Special Abilities**

- **Bloodsense (Ex)** A demonic deathbear can automatically sense the presence of creatures within 30 ft. that are below half of their total hit points or are suffering from a bleed effect. Its attacks against such creatures ignore concealment.
- Ice Walk (Ex) A demonic deathbear can move across ice and snow as if it were normal terrain.
- Mutilation Gaze (Su) Self-inflicted injury, 30 ft., Will DC 17. On a failed save, instead of acting normally this round, the target falls prone and attacks itself with an item held in hand, dealing 1d8 + Str modifier to itself. This is a mind-affecting compulsion effect. The DC is Charisma-based and includes a +2 racial bonus.
- Undying (Ex) A demonic deathbear is extremely difficult to kill. If slain, the deathbear automatically returns to life after 1d4 rounds if it is on a patch of blood-soaked snow or ice (such as the space where it died). The deathbear returns to life at half its total hit point value and regrows any severed limbs. The deathbear typically plays dead until enemies have left the battlefield, or at least are distracted with other foes. A Perception check (DC 30) detects the ruse. If it was dismembered, noticing the revival is much easier (Perception DC 15) A deathbear can be killed permanently if its dead body is moved to pristine snow, or off of snow and ice entirely. For this reason, deathbears are adverse to stony or rocky areas.




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Knütpara Frost Giant Guard	CR 9 Odul Chuvan, Frost Giant Khangitche CR 1
XP 6,400	XP 19,200
CE Large humanoid (cold, giant)	Male frost giant fighter 3
Init –1; Senses low-light vision; Perception +10	CE Large humanoid (cold, giant)
Defense	Init +0; Senses low-light vision; Perception +11
AC 21, touch 8, flat-footed 21 (+4 armor, –1 Dex, +9 natural, –1 size)	Defense
hp 133 (14d8+70)	AC 31, touch 9, flat-footed 31 (+13 armor, +9 natural, -1 size)
Fort +14, Ref +3, Will +6	hp 213 (14d8+3d10+125)
Defensive Abilities rock catching; Immune cold	Fort +19, Ref +4, Will +9; +1 vs. fear
Weaknesses vulnerability to fire	Defensive Abilities rock catching; Immune cold
Offense	Weaknesses vulnerability to fire
Speed 40 ft.	Offense
Melee greataxe +18/+13 (3d6+13/×3) or 2 slams +18 (1d8+9)	Speed 30 ft.
Ranged rock +9 (1d8+13)	Melee mwk greatsword +25/+20/+15 (3d6+18/19–20) or 2 slams +23 (1d8+11)
-	-
Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.	Ranged rock +12 (1d8+16)
Special Attacks rock throwing (120 ft.)	Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.
Statistics	Special Attacks rock throwing (120 ft.)
Str 29, Dex 9, Con 21, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 11	Statistics
Base Atk +10; CMB +20 (+24 overrun or sunder); CMD 29 (31 vs. overrun or su	
Feats Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Overrun, Improved Sunder, Martial We	eapon Base Atk +13; CMB +25 (+27 overrun or sunder); CMD 35 (37 vs. overrun or sunder)
Proficiency (greataxe), Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth)	Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Overrun, Improved Sunder,
Skills Climb +13, Craft (weapons) +7, Intimidate +7, Perception +10, Stealth +2	? (+6 in Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (great-
snow)	sword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword)
Languages Common, Giant	Skills Climb +11, Craft (armor) +7, Intimidate +23, Perception +11, Stealth -4 (+0 in
Other Gear chain shirt, greataxe	snow)
	Languages Common, Giant
Knütpara Frost Giant Mage	CR 10 SQ armor training 1, bravery +1
XP 9,600	Other Gear frost giant's plate, mwk greatsword
Variant frost giant	
CE Large humanoid (cold, giant)	
Init –1; Senses low-light vision; Perception +10	
Defense	
AC 21, touch 8, flat-footed 21 (+4 armor, -1 Dex, +9 natural, -1 size)	
hp 133 (14d8+70)	
Fort +14, Ref +3, Will +6	
Defensive Abilities rock catching; Immune cold	
Weaknesses vulnerability to fire	
Offense	
Speed 40 ft.	
Melee greataxe +18/+13 (3d6+13) or 2 slams +18 (1d8+9)	
Ranged rock +9 (1d8+13)	
Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.	
Special Attacks rock throwing (120 ft.)	
Spell-like Abilities (CL 10th, concentration +14)	
3/day—ice spears (DC 17), polar ray, sculpt ice and snow	
Statistics	
Str 29, Dex 9, Con 21, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 18	
Base Atk +10; CMB +20; CMD 29	
	22000
Feats Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Overrun, Improved Sunder, Martial We	apon
Proficiency (greataxe), Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth)	01.71
5kills Climb +13, Craft (sculpture) +7, Intimidate +11, Perception +10, Stealth	r2 (+6 IN
snow)	
Languages Common, Giant	
Combat Gear chain shirt, greataxe	
Combat Gear chain shirt, greataxe Special Abilities	
-	at suits
Special Abilities	

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APPENDIX FOUR: MAGIC ITEMS

Codex of the Little People

Illuminations of children, pixies, and other small people adorn pages of information on critical but oft-overlooked minutiae on dozens of topics: art, food, games, music, fringe political theories, obscure science, and the like. In the hands of its owner, these pages can reveal arcane formula of wizard spells.

Aura moderate divination and illusion; CL 10th

Slot none; Price 15,000 gp; Weight 5 lb.

Description

This tome grants a +5 competence bonus on Knowledge (arcana) checks when referenced. In addition, during the first round of combat, flat-footed opponents are considered not to have noticed you yet for the purposes of Stealth skill checks, allowing you to make a Stealth check that round to hide from them. This generally doesn't affect anyone who knows your name (or pseudonym), or anyone whom you've spoken to or had notable social interaction with.

Construction Requirements

Craft Wondrous Item, *fox's cunning*, creator must be Small size or smaller; **Cost** 7,500 gp

Fey Portal Pad

Vines grow from the deck of your ship where you place this wooden pad. A five-foot diameter disk, its face is traced in incomplete golden arcs and inlaid with green gemstones in the form of the vesica pisces: two-interlocking circles, representing mystical connection.

Aura strong conjuration; CL 9th

Slot –; Price 65,000 gp; **Weight** 100 lbs.

Description

This item is a ship component. It fills one 5-ft. square on a ship's main deck. A five minute ritual, which can be performed by anyone who knows the proper fey command words, primes this component for one minute. A creature standing on the primed portal pad may teleport to a spot which must be visible and within about 1,000 feet, bringing along up to 7 adjacent creatures.

Arrival takes a brief moment, so creatures cannot ready their actions to strike the moment they appear; effectively, once you teleport in just roll initiative as usual. Boarding an enemy vessel requires the ritual leader (who uses the engineer officer role if you're using *Admiral o' the High Seas*) to make an Spellcraft check, with a DC equal to 10 + the target ship's level. On a failure, the group can choose to still teleport, but they'll arrive in the water within 25 feet of the target.

Once per day, if the engineer, the navigator, and the ship's captain recite the ritual backwards, they can instead have the ship transition briefly to The Bleak Gate or The Dreaming. While transitioned, the portal pad's teleportation powers are suppressed. Each naval round (approximately five minutes), the engineer must make an Spellcraft check (DC 25). If he fails, he may either have the vessel return to the real world, or have the vessel take 1 point of hull integrity damage.

Construction Requirements

Craft Wondrous item, dimension door, plane shift; Cost 32,500 gp

Communication Rings

One ring per party member, these charms are crafted from pieces of silver and rusted iron.

Aura faint conjuration; CL 7th

Slot ring; Price 2,000 gp; Weight -

Description

Someone carrying one of these rings who knows the proper command word can send allow magical messages he sends to travel between the real world and the Bleak Gate (and vice versa) without any chance of failure. The rings don't themselves provide any way to communicate, just lets such messages travel between the parallel planes.

Construction Requirements

Forge Ring, sending; Cost 1,000 gp

Frost Giant's Plate

With a thought, this fist-sized ball of jagged ice begins to spread across you, encasing your body in a frigid suit of plate armor.

Aura moderate abjuration and transmutation; CL 12th

Slot armor; Price 37,450 gp; Weight 50 lbs.

Description

This suit of +4 *full plate* seems to be constructed out of solid black ice. As a swift action, the wearer can reduce the armor to a 5-pound ball of ice which never melts, or expand the ice back into the suit of armor. The wearer of the armor gains cold resistance 10. Once per day, the wearer can double his size as if under the effects of an *enlarge person* spell. The size change lasts for 12 minutes.

Construction Requirements

Craft Magic Arms and Armor, enlarge person, major creation, resist energy; **Cost** 19,550 gp

The Absurdist Web

You try to unfold this knot of spidersilk the size of a bedsheet, occasionally unearthing a long-dead sparrow or a cricket that waves thanks before hopping away. It's probably easier just to wad it up and stick it in your pocket.

Aura strong conjuration; CL 15th

Slot none; Price 30,000 gp; Weight 0.5 lbs.

Description

The interior of this ball of web is an extradimensional space roughly equivalent to a ten-foot cube. To place things into this space you must push it into the web, so it cannot hold liquids or gasses. You can only retrieve items you know are inside, making it excellent for smuggling. Retrieving items take at least two rounds, or more for larger objects, and things like loose coins tend to get lost inside it. No matter how full, the web never weighs more than a half pound.

Those attempting to divine the contents of the web via magic must first succeed at a Spellcraft check (DC 33), which they can only attempt once per day.

Any creature placed into the extradimensional space is placed into stasis for up to a month, needing no food nor water, but still healing at a natural pace. Dead creatures in the web do not decay. If a living creature is not freed within a month, it is shunted from the web and appears beneath a large spider web 1d6 miles away in the real world.

Construction Requirements

Craft Wondrous Item, plane shift, temporal stasis; Cost 15,000 gp



Malicious Deflection

The chaotic magic of the Malice Lands occurs when the lingering divine malice of a dead god manifests, often by chance. You've learned to call forth the same intense emotion at will, conjuring a sympathetic magical mishap to shield you from attack, though carrying such latent evil will is dangerous.

Martial Scientist Ability

Description

After resting for five minutes, you can choose to store a burst of malice, granting access to the following martial scientist ability. Whenever you roll a natural 1 on an attack roll, if you have not expended this ability yet, the ability is expended and you take damage equal to one quarter of your maximum HP.

Malicious Deflection (Ex) As an immediate action, when a creature hits you or an ally within 30 feet with a non-weapon attack (natural weapons like claws and such count as weapons), you can cause the attack to instead affect a random creature within 30 feet of the original target. Alternately you can alter the target of a single-target spell aimed at you or an ally within 30 feet. Use the original attack roll.

Requirements

Characters with the Martial Scientist theme who spend time training with Xavier Sangria (or a character in gestalt with him) can use this power. Alternatively, they can acquire it by researching his thesis, Intentional Emotions as Sympathetic Invocation of Malice Mishaps. You can only have one martial scientist ability ready at a time, chosen after one hour of study and preparation.

Ghostly Entourage

As you move your arm, this platinum bangle, adorned with obsidian and ivory beads, unleashes an eerie hollow clatter like the chains of the dead. When you grow angry, the ghosts in those stones manifest and seethe with shared fury.

Aura faint necromancy; CL 5th

Slot wrists; Price 10,000 gp; Weight 1 lb.

Description

The wearer of this bracelet may call forth or dismiss the ghosts within as a standard action. The ghosts provide a +5 competence bonus on Perception checks, but their moans and wailing likely alerts anybody nearby to the wearer's presence. Additionally, the bracelet grants its wearer a +1 bonus to the DC of any necromancy spell he casts. Finally, the ghosts invisibly serve the wearer, and can act as a dozen extra sets of hands within 50 feet. They cannot attack and can only move things that weigh 25 pounds or less.

Construction Requirements

Craft Wondrous Item, command undead, keen senses, mage hand; Cost 5,000 gp

Reason, Diplomatic Rifle

Hand-crafted by gunsmith Kvarti Gorbatiy, this long firearm is ornate but not ostentatious, powerful but not gratuitous, and in all ways quite reasonable.

Aura moderate enchantment and evocation: CL 9th

Slot weapon; Price 34,300 gp; Weight 12 lbs.

Description

This +3 rifle grants a +5 competence bonus on Intimidate checks. The wielder can project his voice sufficient to be heard across a crowd at a distance of 500 feet. Once per day, the wielder can fire a shot in a direction that won't hurt anyone. The wielder makes an Intimidate check to demoralize all hostile creatures within 500 feet. If all such creatures are demoralized, combat pauses so the wielder can talk, treat the injured, or attend to other pressing matters. If any creature (even an ally) re-initiates hostilities before a minute has passed, the bullet the wielder fired returns and strikes that creature as if he had rolled a natural 20. The bullet strikes after the triggering hostile action.

Construction Requirements

Craft Magic Arms and Armor, enthrall, creator must have 5 or more ranks in Intimidate; Cost 19,300 gp

Steelsilk Mantle

This ornate purple silk cloak is interwoven with enchanted steel threads. Aura faint abjuration and transmutation; CL 12th

Slot shoulders; Price 32,200 gp; Weight 1 lb.

Description

This item functions like a *cloak of resistance* +4. As a swift action, the wearer can reshape some part of the cloak into any mundane steel object that can be held in one hand, such as a sword, a key, or a cage. This item detaches from the main cloak, but can be reattached as a free action. Only one item may be detached from the cloak at a time. Three times per day as an immediate action, the wearer may spin the cloak into the path of any attack targeting his AC. The cloak hardens like a shield, granting a +4 shield bonus to AC against that particular attack.

Construction Requirements

Craft Wondrous Item, resistance, silk to steel; Cost 16,100 gp

The Humble Hook (Major Artifact)

This is but a simple iron pendant, rusted in places, crafted from a fisherman's hook found in the body of Triegenes, the only man to ascend to godhood. When you don the necklace, laid bare before you are the humble origins of everyone you meet.

Aura strong divination; CL 20th

Slot neck; Weight 1 lb.

Starting Concordance

Description

Starting Concordance	5	
Owner has ranks in Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Sense Motive	+1 each	
Owner is adherent of the Clergy	+2	
Owner belongs to a divine class	+2	
Owner gains a level	+1d10	
Owner stops an ongoing combat with diplomacy	+1	
Owner recruits a former enemy as an ally	+2	
Owner harms the interests of another solely for personal benefit	-1	
Owner or ally kills a sentient being without first trying dialogue		
Pleased (16 to 20): You automatically know the names and general life details of		

everyone you meet. You gain a +5 insight bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, and Sense Motive checks. Only very rare magic can foil this detection. Additionally, you are immune to fear and gain a +4 morale bonus against mind-affecting effects.

Satisfied (12 to 15): You gain a +2 insight bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, and Sense Motive checks. You gain a +2 morale bonus to saves against fear and mindaffecting effects.

Normal (5 to 11): You gain a +2 insight bonus to Sense Motive checks.

- Unsatisfied (1 to 4): No longer trusting your judgment, the hook resists your attempts to cause harm. The first time each encounter you would attack a creature that hasn't attacked you or an ally this combat, make a Will save (DC 20). If you fail you are dazed for 1d4 rounds.
- Angered (0 or lower): Well, it understands why you're doing what you're doing, but it isn't angry. It just refuses to help you anymore. The necklace finds an excuse to fall off your neck and be found by someone who might use it properly.

Vekeshi Blade

Composed of fire that has been kindled for five centuries since the death of Srasama, this weapon is pledged to defeat the infernal tieflings.

Aura moderate evocation and transmutation; CL 9th

Slot weapon; Price 48,315 gp; Weight 4 lbs.

Description

The wielder of this +2 transformative native outsider bane longsword gains fire resistance 10 as long as the blade is held.

Construction Requirements

Craft Magic Arms and Armor, major creation, resist energy, summon monster I; Cost 24,315 gp





Hand these out at the start of the adventure.



|₉ivia | patsfield

Spies on the king of Risur in Torfield Palace, researching fey titans and the rites of rulership.



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Head research inquisitor of the Clergy's Jenevah Library in Alais Primos.



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Head of Gorgeous Cell in Beaumont, with spy network of artists and entertainers.



Kiov petman

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Drakran specialist on tower magic, tasked with bringing down old dwarven defenses.



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A snitch in the Family, tasked with creating shell personalities and businesses for international smuggling and money laundering.





Bruce McDruid

Explorer of remote locations, responsible for bringing technology to primitive peoples.



Xavier Sangria

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Malice Lands knight tasked with monster slaying.







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Gran Guiscard

Head of Gorgeous Cell in Beaumont, with spy network of artists and entertainers.

A famous half-Risuri opera baritone from Danor, Gran initially used his international tours to deliver messages between different cells, including Mayor Reed Macbannin in Flint. Now he recruits other performers as couriers or spies. His greatest mistake, he believes, was trying to recruit Rock Rackus. Gran could not manage to explain the subtleties of the missions to the man, so he passed Rock off to Caius Bergeron to use as an adventurer and treasure hunter.

Gran always carries a pen and a book of songs so he can tear out pages, sign them, and hand them to fans.

Oscan Ligurio

A snitch in the Family, tasked with creating shell personalities and businesses for international smuggling and money laundering.

A lifetime of loyalty to The Family crime syndicate earned Oscan a crooked nose and a twitchy demeanor. Loyalty is important, and so is honesty, so Oscan's made sure he can fake those convincingly.

He once earned a lifetime pardon for his sins, courtesy of a bishop he was holding at knife-point, so he figures he may as well make his life on this world as fun as possible. After his fifth or sixth murder he stopped really sweating the day-to-day morality stuff, and looked for grander ways to transgress.



Ken Don

Head research inquisitor of the Clergy's Jenevah Library in Alais Primos.

Ken helps Obscurati researchers delve into forbidden topics without being noticed. He has interacted in the past with Obscurati agents named Ottavia Sacredote and Caius Bergeron.

Quiet and macabre, Ken has a deep well of knowledge regarding the occult and is fluent in the infernal language of the Demonocracy. His preferred method to deal with unwanted disturbance is to recite religious poetry, though not in any language the listener will recognize.

Also, he thinks that the dead owe a debt to the living, and so using undead as labor is justifiable.

Kiov Hetman

Drakran specialist on tower magic, tasked with bringing down old dwarven defenses.

Drakr's towers—impenetrable monoliths of stone or polished steel that dot the landscape and notably line the border with the Malice Lands—keep the chaotic energy of the Great Malice from reaching Drakr, and Kiov is one of the few who knows how.

Hired by prison magnate Ramos Zoltan, Kiov finished his copious research and recently delivered his report to the eerie undead leader of Lantern Cell, Vicemi Terio. Now Kiov coordinates parties of adventurers whose mission is to negate the enchantments of these towers.

Kiov is a scientist, not an idealist, and he styles himself as enigmatic as the towers he studies.

Xavier Sangria

Malice Lands knight tasked with monster slaying.

Xavier's is the usual story of a kid whose parents were eaten by monsters, and who decided someone should really stop that kind of stuff from happening again.

Thirty years ago he signed on as a bodyguard for some Ob scholars researching the magic in the Malice Lands. It was his insight that helped them discover that Malice magic responds to emotions. They helped educate and train him. Now he has a band of several dozen adventurers trained in numerous unorthodox techniques for killing horrible creatures large and small.

He prefers operating in the wilderness, away from civilization, since he's not comfortable with lying.



Livia Hatsfield

Spies on the king of Risur in Torfield Palace, researching fey titans and the rites of rulership.

Though nearly two hundred years old, Livia only moved out of Risur's rural forestlands twenty years ago, and she was only recruited to the Obscurati after Duchess Ethelyn's failed bid to seize control from her brother last year. Previously an aid to the duchess, Livia feeds the conspiracy state secrets on the nature of the Rites of Rulership, that they might weaken the power of the king and place someone else on the throne.

Livia is eager to know the conspiracy's ultimate plans, but worries she may have read too many romantic novels, because she recognizes she's far more excited by this "adventure" than is probably safe.

Bruce McDruid

Explorer of remote locations, responsible for bringing technology to primitive peoples.

Bruce forsook his clan's traditions, stole one of their ships, and became a pirate. There are dozens of small island nations and coastal kingdoms with no geopolitical clout, but with enough population to cause trouble for the Obscurati if they are not properly pacified. Bruce is called friend in most of their ports.

Having explored farther than nearly anyone, Bruce is bored and not easily impressed. In the past year he has made the rounds, offering replicas of the Wayfarer's Lantern, supposedly as a way to calm the seas. Once they are accepted, Obscurati agents will use that foothold to encourage the construction of proper Wayfarer lighthouses.

LETTER FROM GRAPPA

To the constables who helped reassemble me the last time I died,

Greetings. I hope this finds you well, and that you remember me, Alexander Grappa, known colloquially as "the mindmaker." Now it seems a mind is all I am. I keep finding myself in unfortunate circumstances, but I haven't been put down for good quite yet.

If you'll indulge me a bit of storytelling, I believe my situation will be of interest to you. And again I apologize for certain necessary vagaries, as it appears a geas placed upon me is still functioning. Fortuitously, though, the wording of said compulsion only prohibits me from speaking of my own affairs with my former associates–I find I can still not bring myself to write the organization's name, though I am sure you know it by now.

When last we met, my mechanical body was torn to bits. While dying I managed to detach my consciousness and implant it into the body of my killer. He survived and escaped, and some time later I realized that while he was asleep, my mind came awake. I was able to, with careful effort and great caution, move his body and examine my surroundings, but my coordination is poor, and I dare not step outside his bedroom. I hear guards mumbling in Drakran outside the door of his windowless chamber, and I can't risk their suspicions being aroused.

I can, however, read his correspondence. I will slip this letter into a pile of his outgoing mail, hoping that he will not notice. Perhaps you can track the postmark to narrow in on his location.

He is coordinating the transportation of ten seemingly unrelated individuals, ensuring that their travel is difficult to track. There is some grand convocation coming soon, one he is invited to as well, and there is a window wherein a group of motivated investigators could, with perhaps some inside assistance, locate the man within whose body I am an interloper.

Here I admit to some selfish silence. I both know and could reveal the location of this convocation, but I choose not to because I need a hefty favor, and fear drives me to pursue hard bargaining over idealistic trust. Do me this favor, and I will guide you to the convocation so that you may strike a blow against those who have worked against your nation.

The favor I ask is that you find my host, take him alive, and keep him subdued until his exhaustion and sleep allow my mind to surface. Thereafter we must go into northern Drakr, to a glacier that centuries ago covered the city known as Knütpara. I have read that there we will find my best chance to get a body of my own. Once I am no longer a mind bereft of flesh, I will help you get into the convocation. Remember, I know the routes and identities of several of those who are attending.

Please do not attempt to contact me by sending or similar magic. I do not know if my host would receive it instead. But act soon. Leone's schedule shows him leaving on the 75th of Autumn, and the convocation begins on the 79th, on the night of the full moon.

—Alexander Grappa

P.S., Bring mage cuffs, and make sure they're not made of metal.

TRAIN SCHEDULES.

There are six main rail hubs in Drakr. Leone's train has been spotted in each, with varying frequency, over the past several months. There are dozens of other small towns throughout the country where his car <u>could</u> stop overnight, but analysis of rail worker accounts say he likes to stop in large cities, and he stops most often in Mirsk.

We think the train moves every day, and stops in a different city every night. Yesterday the train headed up north to Balingrad. Its next stop must be south, which could either be Mirsk or Pretba. So we sapped a bridge on the Balingrad-Pretba line, leaving only one route for the train.

The easiest assault option would be an ambush in Mirsk, where his train should be arriving tomorrow afternoon. **<u>Do not</u>** use the local teleportation beacon; reports say that during the past two months he has detained foreign arrivals, particularly those from Risur. He might be looking out for spies.

There is also the risk that he might have allies at the Mirsk station, and possibly others. If so, it might be advisable to board and strike while the train is in motion.

Should an ambush tomorrow be impossible, we will continue to watch the following locations. Trekhom. Capital. Irregular visits.

Mirsk. Mountain industrial/mining city. Regular visits, at least once per week.

Pretba. Heavily militarized city on inland sea, across from Malice Lands. Irregular visits.

Koffimsov. Central farming city. Semi-regular visits.

Balingrad. Far north-western city, lots of whaling. Rare visits.

Lukala. Eastern forested city. Semi-regular visits.

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OBSCURATI COVERS.

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NEW SPEŁŁ.

Mortal Possession

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The mages of the Demonocracy used this vile rite to grant new life to dying minions, or to create the perfect infiltrator.

School necromancy; Level sorcerer/wizard 5, summoner 4, witch 5 Casting Time 1 hour

Components V, S, F (woven wreath and bracelet, worth 1,000 gp total) **Range** touch

Target one creature

Duration 9 days; see text

Saving Throw Will negates; see text; Spell Resistance yes

You take one creature and place its soul into the body of another. You can only target yourself with this spell if you have at least one assistant. The possessor takes control of the vessel's body, and leaves its own body a mindless husk. If *gentle repose* or similar magic is not used, someone must feed the possessor's original body or else it will starve and die.

The creature whose soul is being transferred must be willing. If the vessel is willing, the spell automatically succeeds.

If the vessel creature is unwilling, first you must restrain it for the duration of the casting time. Then the vessel creature gets a Will save to resist the spell. If the two creatures are more than one size category apart, the vessel gets a +5 bonus to the save. If the spell fails, the vessel gets a cumulative +5 bonus to saves against further attempts.

Even if the spell succeeds, the vessel's soul can contest the possessor's control from time to time by forcing the possessor to make Will saves (DC 10 + vessel's highest mental ability score bonus). These contests occur whenever the possessor goes to sleep, when he first drops below half HP in an encounter, and if he attempts to enter gestalt (see text on this page).

The save DC is increased based on how much the vessel failed its initial save to resist possession. The closer it came to resisting, the more likely it will regain control. The chart below lists how much the save DC is affected.

Vessel Failed by: Save DC Increase:

15
10
-5
2
0

The focus for the spell is a woven wreath dipped in gold and adorned with gems, and a smaller bracelet made the same way. The possessor's original body must wear the wreath, and the vessel body must wear the bracelet. If either is destroyed or removed, three rounds later the spell ends. Otherwise, the spell lasts 9 days.

When the spell ends, the possessor's soul will return to its body if it is on the same plane. If it cannot reach its body, it is drawn into Nem, the Plane of Ruin, from which it can never return.

Special: If the vessel body has no soul, the duration is permanent, and the possessor can never return to its body. No focus is needed.

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Each constable chooses one of the following "covers." Share this page with the players: it has the mechanics for handling the covers.

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Going Undercover.

Then note the difference between your Strength, Constitution, and Dexterity scores and those of the vessel you have been implanted into. For every two points of difference, you have either a -1 penalty or +1 bonus to skill and ability checks and attack and damage rolls using that stat.

Your Armor Class, Fortitude save bonus, and Reflex save bonus are listed on your officer card. You use your normal Will save bonus. You'll have to choose which if any magic items you wear or carry, which may adjust these at the risk of possibly arousing suspicions. It would not be unusual for Obscurati officers to wear magic items, but a librarian wearing a flaming cloak would stand out.

You can use all your old abilities that are granted by classes, and if you are in gestalt (see below) you can also use one or two abilities possessed by your host. You cannot generally use racial abilities.

Contest, Crisis, and Rejection.

Normally while inside the bodies of these Obscurati officers, you have full control. However, each day when you go to sleep, when you first drop below half HP in an encounter, or when you attempt to enter gestalt (see below) there's a chance the host's mind will try to take back over. This is called a **contest**.

When a contest occurs, the game master will ask you to make a Will save. The hosts' save DCs are known only to the GM (page 39).

If the save fails, the host regains partial control, which is called a **crisis**. Each round you are in crisis you are dazed and may make a Will save at the end of your turn to get back in charge. In the meanwhile, the host can stammer and take a move action each round, which might be enough to cause trouble.

If you fail three consecutive saving throws while in crisis, the host gets full control. This is called **rejection**. The host becomes aware of what happened and can act of its own free will. You can attempt a new saving throw once every five minutes, and a success puts you back in charge.

Gestalt.

Even while in control of your host's body, you cannot normally access his memories. You can attempt, however, to enter **gestalt**. Doing so is a free action, wherein *you* force your *host* to make a Will save. The save DC is equal to 10 + half your level + your Wisdom or Charisma modifier + 4.

If the host succeeds, you trigger a crisis. If the host fails, you gain access to the host's memories and can flawlessly mimic his personality for five minutes. You also can use the listed "gestalt powers."

Mindmaker Aid.

Alexander Grappa can recognize the signs of a crisis brewing, and he can magically subdue a vessel's soul before it can gain control. As long as he's nearby you generally don't have to worry about the officer personalities rising to the surface. You can safely travel to the convocation, at least, but he says thereafter he can't guarantee he'll be around. He encourages you to be cautious and only attempt gestalts when necessary.



KEN DON

Head research inquisitor of the Clergy's Jenevah Library in Alais Primos. Male Human. Str 8, Dex 10, Con 10.

Background.

The Jenevah Library in the city of Alais Primos acts as the primary repository of scholarly and mystical knowledge for the Clergy. It also is a bit of a honey trap for would-be ne'er-do-wells. Librarians keep track of books being referenced, of the comings and goings of researchers, and of any unusual requests that might indicate a person is planning on animating the dead, binding a demon to possess someone, or use other forbidden magic.

The wiry and stern Ken Don oversees these bookish inquisitors, and has earned the respect of the Clergy hierarchs during his four decade career. He was enticed to aid the Obscurati because he was tired of simply preventing abuse of mystical lore, and wanted to actually find ways to safely and responsibly apply the dangerous knowledge to some positive goal.

Obscurati Involvement.

Ken helps Obscurati-affiliated researchers delve into forbidden topics without being noticed. He comes to the convocation alone, but he has interacted in the past with Obscurati agents named Ottavia Sacredote and Caius Bergeron.

Personality and Ideology.

Quiet and macabre, Ken has a deep well of knowledge regarding the occult and is fluent in the infernal language of the Demonocracy. His preferred method to deal with unwanted disturbance is to recite religious poetry, though not in any language the listener will recognize.

Ken believes that men are good by nature and want to help each other, but that the struggle for resources leads to people making selfish choices. Religion is not as important as prosperity. Even a well-educated man will steal when he is starving. He hopes the Obscurati is going to find a way to increase the wealth of the world and share it with the poor.

Also, he thinks that the dead owe a debt to the living, and so using undead as labor is justifiable. The only problem is that normal necromancy makes the souls of the dead suffer. He thinks, though, that it's possible to create a similar spell where the dead serve willingly.



Gestalt Traits.

When you are in gestalt with Ken Don, you can use the following powers.

- **Bibliogeist (Su)** Once per day, you may conjure the ghost of a librarian and direct it to read one or more books, either retrieving specific information or summarizing the whole text for you. The ghost can finish a few hundred pages per minute, and can travel up to a mile from you to find the necessary books. Between five minutes and one hour later, the ghost returns and you learn what it discovered. The ghost has AC 10 and 1 hit point.
- Forbid (Su) As a swift action, choose a square within 25 feet. Until the end of your next turn, any hostile creature that enters that square or ends its turn their takes 3d6 force damage.



GRAN GUISCARD

Head of Gorgeous Cell in Beaumont, with spy network of artists and entertainers. Male Human. Str 12, Dex 12, Con 16.

Background.

Gran's Danoran father took a dark-skinned Risuri woman as his wife shortly before the Third Yerasol War, and they settled in a small village in Danor. Gran was teased as an outsider throughout his childhood, but he developed a personality so bold and outlandish that no one could tell the insults actually hurt. Eventually the bullies stopped bothering him, though he never had many friends.

As a young man he moved to the Danoran city of Beaumont and studied as an opera singer. With his distinctive appearance and booming baritone voice, plus his willingness to perform rousing patriotic shows during the Fourth Yerasol War, he quickly rose to prominence. He's probably the most famous Obscurati officer who isn't a politician, and he runs into fans of his shows wherever he travels.

Obscurati Involvement.

One night after an opera, as Gran drank and partied with a tiefling nobleman, both of them complained about how some of the actors had flubbed lines and ruined the show. Gran's home had recently been broken into, and he had the thought, if actors can't follow their lines, how can we punish anyone for breaking the law. The nobleman offered Gran a chance to make sure the world had fewer flubbed lines.

After a few months of tests to ensure he could be trusted, Gran was first tasked with using his international tours as opportunities to deliver messages between members of different Obscurati cells, including Mayor Reed Macbannin in Flint. Eventually he began to recruit other performers with similar interests in making the world a better place, using them as couriers or spies. His greatest mistake, he believes, was trying to recruit Rock Rackus. Gran could not manage to explain the subtleties of the missions to the man, so he passed Rock off to Caius Bergeron to use as an adventurer and treasure hunter.

Personality and Ideology.

Self-indulgently melodramatic, Gran loves to name drop celebrities he has dined with, and he always carries a pen and a book of songs so he can tear out pages, sign them, and hand them to fans.

While on his travels for the conspiracy, Gran has heard many ideas of how the world could be improved. The one that appeals to him most is just to remove free will and make people do the right thing. He's seen improvisational theater, and he hates it. Scripted stories are much better.



Gestalt Traits.

When you are in gestalt with Gran Guiscard, you can use the following powers.

- Seek the Limelight (Ex) Once per encounter, you can take a full-round action to make a big show of yourself to distract those that don't know better. All enemies who can see and hear you take a –5 on Perception and Sense Motive checks and a –2 penalty to attack rolls for attacks that don't include you as a target.
- The Show Must Go On (Su) Once per encounter, you can use a swift action to exhort an ally within 50 feet to finish the scene. That ally heals 3d6 points of damage and may take a 5-foot step as an immediate action.

LIVIA HATSFIELD

Spies on the king of Risur in Torfield Palace, researching fey titans and the rites of rulership. Female Elf. Str 10, Dex 18, Con 10.

Background.

Though she's nearly two hundred years old, Livia only moved out of the rural forestlands of Risur twenty years ago. She acted as liaison to fey visitors in the manor of Duchess Ethelyn, sister of King Aodhan, then eight years ago transferred to Torfield Palace in the capital city Slate. She travels often throughout Risur for her work, but in order to attend the Obscurati convocation she had to ask for leave for her first ever international trip.

Obscurati Involvement.

Livia was only recently recruited, after Duchess Ethelyn's failed bid to seize control of Risur from her brother. An agent, who has since been killed fleeing capture by the RHC, asked her to research Risur's rites of rulership, claiming a desire to help weaken the power of the king and place someone else on the throne. She agreed, and eventually wormed her way through several contacts to actually speak with Lya Jierre. Through clever posturing and feigned preference for peace over patriotism, she was given more responsibilities.

Yes, Livia is a double agent of sorts, hoping to get as close to the heart of the Obscurati as possible. She's not sure whether Ob magic might catch her in lies, though, so she has not risked telling anyone in Risur what she's doing. She worries what the Ob might do with the information she gave them, both on the nature of the Rites of Rulership—how one becomes monarch of Risur and what powers it grants—and on the specific defenses of Torfield Palace. If she doesn't return within a month, she has arranged for a package to be delivered to Principal Minister Harkover Lee, revealing what she has done.

Personality and Ideology.

Livia worries she may have read too many romantic novels, because she recognizes she's far more excited by this "adventure" than is probably safe. She talks readily and is excellent at turning conversations to be about other people instead of herself. She assumes being quiet will look suspicious, but doesn't want to risk accidentally revealing her own intentions. Despite her loyalty to Risur, she admits she's curious just what the Ob are planning, and whether their talk of making the world better has any real basis.



Gestalt Traits.

When you are in gestalt with Livia Hatsfield, you can use the following powers.

- **Royal Might (Su)** You exploit Risur's rites of rulership for a moment to gain great power. You have worked for the king, almost an extension of his body, and the body of the king is reinforced by the will of his people. As a standard action, you heal yourself for 3d6 hit points. Until the end of your next turn, you gain a +4 insight bonus to attack and damage rolls, AC, saves, and skill or ability checks.
- Elven Recovery (Ex) Whether an attack or a lie, you are quick to recover from a mistake. Once per encounter, when you make an attack roll or Bluff check and don't like the result, you may reroll the attack or check as a free action and use the new result.

KIOV HETMAN

Drakran specialist on tower magic, tasked with bringing down old dwarven defenses. Male Dwarf. Str 14, Dex 8, Con 18.

Background.

K iov apprenticed himself to a wizard who claimed to hold the secrets of Drakr's towers—impenetrable monoliths of stone or polished steel that dot the landscape and notably line the border with the Malice Lands. They kept the chaotic energy of the Great Malice from reaching Drakr, and Kiov is one of the few who knows how.

Obscurati Involvement.

Kiov worked as the arcane defense consultant for Ramos Zoltan, a dwarf businessman who owns all the prisons in northern Drakr. Ramos is responsible for implementing the Obscurati's lighthouse retrofit, and he directed Kiov to the Ob to help them determine how the old towers and monoliths throughout Drakr might meddle with the planar powers of the lighthouses.

Kiov did copious research, determined the nature of the tower magic and the means to access their previously locked interiors, and delivered his report to the eerie undead leader of Lantern Cell, Vicemi Terio. Now Kiov coordinates parties of adventurers whose mission is to negate the enchantments of these towers.

Personality and Ideology.

Kiov is a scientist, not an idealist. He's simply very talented and not particularly wedded to any particular philosophical or political movement. If anything, he'd like wealth to not be so dependent on physical goods, since he is quite clever, and he has educated his children and relatives to value knowledge, but hasn't quite made a profit studying ancient and enigmatic artifacts.



Gestalt Traits

When you are in gestalt with Kiov Hetman, you can use the following powers.

- Tower Defense (Sp) Once per day as a standard action, you can create an immobile translucent image of a structure in a 20-foot radius centered on your space. You and your allies in the image gain resistance 20 against a type of energy chosen when you create the image. Creatures entering the zone must spend 1 extra square of movement. Attacks cannot enter the zone from outside, and those inside effectively have total cover. Attacks from within can affect those outside normally. The image lasts for one round per character level.
- **Hack Through the Wall (Su)** Once per encounter, you can move through solid walls as if you were incorporeal for one round. Activating this ability is a swift action.

OSCAN LIGURIO

A snitch in the Family, tasked with creating shell personalities and businesses for international smuggling and money laundering. Male Human. Str 12, Dex 18, Con 10.

Background.

A lifetime of loyalty to the Crisillyiri crime syndicate known as The Family earned Oscan a crooked nose and a twitchy demeanor. He once earned a lifetime pardon for his sins, courtesy of a bishop he was holding at knife-point, so he figures he may as well make his life on this world as fun as possible. After his fifth or sixth murder he stopped really sweating the day-to-day morality stuff, and looked for grander ways to transgress.

Obscurati Involvement.

Oscan offers a vital service for the Obscurati: he's motivated to do horrible things explicitly because they're horrible. When the Ob needs a person murdered and his estate managed by proxy for a few weeks, Oscan handles it. When they need five strangers kept alive in an oubliette for a year so others can impersonate them while divinations report that they're still alive, Oscan rises to the challenge. He uses quantity of money laundered per month to let him keep score with how much trouble he's causing.

Oscan hears the Ob are planning to upset the order of the world. He wants to end up on top, to have slaves and servants and people afraid of his name. Oh, and it sounds like most of the people in this crazy conspiracy are doing this stuff because they want to "make the world a better place." Thankfully Oscan's a damned good liar, playing the part of a down-trodden victim of a bad system, forced to crime but deep down devoted to making sure no one else has to do the horrible things he has to. He's pretty sure the Ob guys are buying it.

Personality and Ideology

Loyalty is important, and so is honesty, so Oscan's made sure he can fake those convincingly. He doesn't want to be unbelievable, though, so he still has his foibles—binging on fey pepper and liquor almost seems to make these guys *more* sympathetic to him, as long as he pretends to be contrite.



Gestalt Traits.

When you are in gestalt with Oscan Ligurio, you can use the following powers.

- The Sweet Sound of a Bloody Gurgle (Ex) Once per encounter, you can make a melee attack with a dagger against a flat-footed opponent as a standard action. If it hits, the attack deals an extra 3d8 damage and the target cannot speak until it receives magical healing or can rest for a day. This does not affect creatures that don't require a functioning throat to speak.
- False Identity (Sp) You can cast *disguise self* as a spell-like ability three times per day (caster level is equal to your character level).

BRUCE MCDRUID

Explorer of remote locations, responsible for bringing technology to primitive peoples. Male Human. Str 16, Dex 16, Con 16.

Background.

B ruce was raised on McDruid Island off the northeastern shore of Risur. The druids there are renowned for their ship-building skills and their excellent navigational talents. Bruce learned these skills, then forsook his clan's traditions, stole one of their ships, and became a pirate. He found many perilous islands inhabited only by primitives, which he used as ports of call for raids on the merchant fleets of all nations.

During the fourth Yerasol War he took no sides, and plundered whomever he happened upon. One day he captured a Danoran vessel, and one of his prisoners—rather than pleading for mercy—suggested he'd enjoy himself more if he was getting paid to explore distant lands.

Obscurati Involvement.

There are dozens of small island nations and coastal kingdoms with no geopolitical clout, but with enough population to cause trouble for the Obscurati's plans if they are not properly pacified. Bruce has spent the past seven years making contacts among these peoples, trading arms and technology for whatever useless bits of culture they had to offer. In the past year he has made the rounds, offering replicas of the Wayfarer's Lantern, supposedly as a way to calm the seas. Once they are accepted, Obscurati agents will use that foothold to encourage the construction of proper Wayfarer lighthouses.

Personality.

Having explored farther than nearly anyone, Bruce is bored and not easily impressed. His greatest joy is seeing his ships in fine working order, though he does rather like fooling primitives into taking gifts that they'll regret. He has a pet monkey, but was asked not to bring it to the convocation.



Gestalt Traits.

When you are in gestalt with Bruce McDruid, you can use the following powers.

- Intuit Map (Su) Once per day, you may focus your senses on the area around you as a full-round action. You are aware of the terrain features within 500 feet, as well as the locations and basic physical features of every creature in that area that is not attempting to hide from you specifically. You just get a glimpse of the situation at the moment, and circumstances might change.
- **Refuge in Audacity (Ex)** Once per day, as a full-round action, you may move up to twice your speed. You gain a +4 dodge bonus to AC and Reflex saves and a +10 competence bonus to Acrobatics checks during this movement. At any point during the movement, you can take a standard action of your choice.

XAVIER SANGRIA

Malice Lands knight tasked with monster slaying. Male Human. Str 20, Dex 8, Con 14.

Background.

avier's is the usual story of a kid whose parents were eaten by monsters, and who decided someone should really

stop that kind of stuff from happening again.

Obscurati Involvement.

Xavier has been with the Obscurati for nearly thirty years. Initially he signed on as a bodyguard in the Malice Lands for some scholars researching the magic there, but he showed enough interest that they gave him the tools he needed to educate himself so he'd be more useful to their investigations. It was his insight that helped them discover that Malice magic responds to emotions.

He really hit his stride, though, as a monster hunter. Now he has a band of several dozen adventurers trained in numerous unorthodox techniques for killing horrible creatures large and small. He tries not to think about the fact that most of his men joined up after their families were killed by monsters.

Personality.

Confident and straight-talking, Xavier tries to come across as serious and respectable, but often falls back on goofy jokes to lighten tension and make himself seem less threatening. He has flashes of temper, though, especially when those he works with are in danger. He prefers operating in the wilderness, away from civilization, since he's not comfortable with lying. He's mostly in this conspiracy so he can make the world safer from the wilderness.





Gestalt Traits.

When you are in gestalt with Xavier Sangria, you can use the following powers.

Traits

Bad Luck Magnet (Su) Whenever you roll a natural 1 on an attack roll, you take damage equal to one quarter of your maximum HP. Whenever an enemy rolls a natural 1, 2, or 3 on an attack roll against you, that enemy takes damage equal to one quarter of your maximum HP. This damage comes from magical feedback and is not subject to energy resistance.

Special Abilities

Malicious Deflection (Su) As an immediate action, when a creature hits you or an ally within 30 feet with a non-weapon attack (natural weapons like claws and such count as weapons), you can cause the attack to instead affect a random creature within 30 feet of the original target. Use the original attack roll. Alternately you can alter the target of a single-target spell aimed at you or an ally within 30 feet. You can use this ability once per encounter. OBSCURATI GRAND DESIGN.

OVERVIEW

Our organization, though composed of powerful industrialists and brilliant thinkers the world over, has operated with little communication between cells. Though we all desire to change the world, you should be realizing that the scope of change possible to us demands that we not let any one person make the decisions.

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Our leader Nicodemus has called you together to listen to proposals, debate their merits, and ultimately choose the spirit of the next age.

The Method of Change.

As mentioned, our world is linked to eight planes. This connection was set by a ritual performed several thousand years ago, which buried eight stone pillars underground on Axis Island. Those pillars were then sealed beneath a plate of gold 200 feet in diameter and nearly three feet thick.

To get access to the ritual pillars, we designed the mechanical colossus that has been making the news lately. Though it was activated earlier than we wanted, we are quick at work bringing it to a place where we can free it from the Dreaming. As soon as we have it on the right world and under our control again, we'll be able to proceed with altering the Axis Seal ritual.

The changes will affect the whole world, but to help transition between the two worlds, we are constructing lighthouses, towers, and similar tall monuments, all equipped with magic lanterns. By triggering these all simultaneously we'll create a field of stability. In the event something does go wrong, we'll be able to abort the ritual at any moment up to when we drop the lid of the giant gold seal back down.

Planar Primer.

There are eight planes tied to the world we live on, and each has aspects that distinguish from any old plane with an elemental trait. While the Plane of Air is vast, and there are many worlds that are carved from slivers of it, some of those slivers have storms, others are filled with birds, and some are smoky and concealing. The nature of each plane determines what traits it lends to our world.

It seems when the Ancients decided what worlds ours would be connected to, they did not care much for traits. Indeed, many of these planes are fairly mundane, and our organization has access to many more impressive options.

- 1. Jiese, Plane of Fire. Its trait is Cunning. The fire from this plane is less destructive than a typical elemental world, and its flames can be used intelligently, like a tool. Our scholars suspect most worlds never achieve the industrial revolution ours has because they lack this trait. Changing this plane might stymie technological progress.
- 2. Avilona, Plane of Air. This world appears to have been damaged since it was originally tied to our world, so now its trait is Calm. Changing this plane might lead to stronger storms, and could make the world in general more energetic and changing.
- 3. Av, Plane of Life. This glassy hollow world is our moon and has the traits of Reflection and Dream. It allows our world to have the two parallel planes of fey and darkness, The Dreaming and The Bleak Gate. Changing this world would remove those planes and might have consequences involving dreams and undead.

4. Mavisha, Plane of Water. Its trait is Mystery, and it is responsible for the many islands that dot the world with their various secrets. We think this trait can be easily abandoned.

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- 5. Urim, Plane of Earth. This golden world has fractured into many pieces, but its trait—Barrier—causes gold in our world to block teleportation.
- 6. Apet, Plane of Space. The Distant Plane is responsible for keeping our world and its bonded planes far from the rest of the multiverse and less likely to attract extraplanar attention.
- 7. Reida, Plane of Time. Most scholars don't even realize that the incomplete silvery ring that surrounds Apet is another plane altogether. Its traits of Limited Fate allow for prophecy, but enforce that after a given time the world must change. We suggest caution in tampering with this plane, but experiments show such efforts are possible.
- 8. Nem, Plane of Death. Its trait is Annihilation, and it destroys any who try to travel from our star system of planes to the outer multiverse, and vice versa.

The Cardinal Rule.

It is risky to directly alter behavior or personality. Free will is an allor-nothing option, and we cannot force people to be "good" without also turning them into complete automatons. We can, however, nudge people, and you'll see some example options below.

Proposals and Voting.

The leadership has five proposals to consider. We encourage you to come up with revisions or even new proposals. Whatever design we agree on will no doubt demand some compromise and disappointment. Our initial five factions are:

- The Arboretum. Order nature so it can spread and be controlled like industry.
- + Colossus. Grant ourselves semi-divine powers to fix problems as they arise.
- Miller's Pyre. Enact subtle changes, focused on making people more empathetic and less susceptible to hypocrisy, so they can more easily pursue goodness and justice.
- **Panarchists.** Grant individuals enough power to make governments unnecessary.
- Watchmakers. Eliminate free will and design a thousand-year destiny of progress for the world.

Tonight you will meet the representatives of each faction, and then we will hold a preliminary vote to see which proposal holds the most support. This evening and tomorrow morning will be opportunities to make coalitions and alterations. Starting tomorrow afternoon we will grant everyone who desires a chance to speak, and by the end of the evening we hope to hold a second vote.

For a proposal to win, it must have support of at least 75 percent of the officers in attendance. Including the leadership there are 49 officers present, and an additional 27 votes are given to the Ghost Council, which has a tradition of voting as one. Thus, out of 76 voters, a proposal must get the support of 57 officers.



THE ARBORETUM

O^{rder nature so it can spread and be controlled like industry.} The proposal of the faction known as the Arboretum is represented by the ghost of Reed Macbannin, a former mayor in the city of Flint, known for its traditional druidic magic and its modern industrialism.

The goal of the Arboretum is to increase the bounty of nature, to reduce the impact of natural disasters, and to have them both be under the control of the Obscurati. We see it as poor design that weather and the earth are so unpredictable, and that horticulture progresses so slowly, generation by generation.

Our proposal would replace the current planes of air, earth, water, and life with new ones. Key will be replacing the moon—the current plane of life, which has Dream and Mirror aspects—with one that has aspects of Craft and Artifice. The other elemental planes will have to include slight Lawful traits, which will make them more susceptible to magical control, as well as making it easier to predict them with divinations.

We feel the drawbacks of the plan are minor. The new plane of Life will yield somewhat weaker harvests if nature is not tended, so areas lacking civilization will tend to become deserts. Likewise, storms will actually be more intense unless they are controlled, but it would only require moderate effort to distribute trained mages throughout the land to deter this.

The most significant change would be the severance of two realms known as The Dreaming and The Bleak Gate, which are the fey and shadow mirrors of the real world. The replacement of our current moon would remove and possibly destroy these two realms. The pernicious deceptions of the fey would be eliminated, as would the predation of many types of shadowy and incorporeal monsters. Members of the Ghost Council could endure by binding themselves to objects, or perhaps willing people, but henceforth when something dies, its soul would pass on immediately.

When properly tended, nature in this paradigm is significantly more bountiful, which would reduce the competition for resources that drives warfare. Additionally, one of our officers, Erskine Haffkruger, has already created new lifeforms in the portal painting pocket dimension. We invite you to visit the Portal Gallery to see it.

Compared to other faction proposals, the Arboretum plan may be the most modest, but we think it is also the safest and simplest way to improve the world with minimal risk of negative consequences.

REED MAGBANNIN ARBORETUM REPRESENTATIVE

COLOSSUS

G^{rant ourselves godlike powers to fix problems as they arise.} Catherine Romana, a descendant of a former queen of Risur, represents this faction. She believes history teaches us that common people abuse power, but in the hands of the enlightened it is a powerful tool.

The Obscurati has come this far because we have used our power intelligently, and have acted decisively despite the fact that society as a whole would oppose us. The best course of the action in the future is to consolidate our power and become the *de facto* rulers of the world.

The challenge is in granting power to a limited set of people. We have discovered a set of elemental planes each with a secret truename. These planes would still provide the normal energy needed to keep the world together, but those who know the truenames would be able to tap a greater power. And the Ob-

scurati would decide who is told these truenames.

This truename power would be tied to two new planes. First, a plane of Space would grant the ability to sense events and teleport to areas within one"s domain. Second, a plane of Death with a "Cyclicality" aspect would orbit our world as a new, dark moon. Each person who learns the truenames will choose a point on the month's cycle to be at the height of her power, and a half-month later she will only have the power of a normal mortal.

This will ensure a window of vulnerability so that if anyone abuses her power, she can be removed by consensus of the rest of the Obscurati.

The drawbacks to this plan are that the new elemental planes would result in stronger storms, and the seas would draw back slightly, and the world would grow colder. Perhaps the largest threat is that, since the current Plane of Death acts as a defense against extraplanar incursion, the world might be accessible by creatures from other planes. However, we believe that as the newly-empowered rulers of the world we could easily drive back such threats.

To experience a sample of the power Colossus would grant you, visit our sample demi-plane in the Portal Gallery.





CATHERINE ROMANA COLOSSUS REPRESENTATIVE

MILLER'S PYRE

Increase empathy, reduce hypocrisy. Increase goodness and justice.

Our proposal's name refers to the philosopher monk William Miller who, five centuries ago, wrote treatises on potential societies, discussing their positive and negative traits. His works were generally critical of the religious establishment, and shortly after he tried to found a nation of his own following his ideals, the Clergy burned him as a heretic atop a pyre of his own books.

The Pyre was first proposed by one of our conspiracy's leaders, Kasvarina Varal, who knew Miller and spoke to me fondly of his teachings. Alas, she must be absent today. I am Cula Ravjahani, and Nicodemus can attest that I am Kasvarina's right hand. I ask you consider the wisdom that our conspiracy was founded on.

In the view of the Pyre, most suffering is due to misunderstandings between people with very different backgrounds. We seek to improve the world with invisible changes that will make people more aware of the thoughts and emotions of those around them. We would make people particularly keen at detecting hypocrisy.

The Pyre would replace the current plane of Space with one that has an "Empathy" aspect. This would give people mild psychic powers to detect emotions, but our tests show that the effect is not obvious. Test subjects brought into the sample demi-plane simply found themselves coming to agreement more easily, or at least were more amenable to discuss problems rather than view a stranger as an enemy. We can implement this new world order with no visible disruption to people's lives. There will be no chaotic upheaval as with some other proposals.

Additionally, with a bit of clever orbit-tracing, the Pyre will remove the current planes of Air and Fire and replace them with a binary world, the air plane possessing a Speech trait, the fire plane possessing an Expression trait. This will cause those who speak to have their true emotions more easily sensed, and likewise cause words themselves to carry more weight, making it easier for a strong argument to sway a person's opinion.

The last change is that the plane of Earth will be replaced with one that has the traits Logic, which the Pyre hopes will lead people to appeal to reason in their arguments. Otherwise we worry that the strengthened emotional connection might have negative consequences.

Drawbacks include stronger storms, and weather that will respond to local moods. As with Colossus's plan, the world will again become vulnerable to extraplanar visitors, but the Pyre takes an optimistic view of what civilization will be capable of if it is attacked. Perhaps the visitors will be simply sways by our arguments, and become allies.

Finally, the binary pairing opens up a slot for a potential extra plane. It would need to be fairly weak—perhaps a moon rather than a full planet but it would be possible to add some extra trait. The Pyre is open to making agreements with other factions.



CULA RAVJAHANI MILLER'S PYRE REPRESENTATIVE

PANARCHISTS

rant individuals "super-powers," making governments unnecessary.

The Panarchists propose by far the most radical change of any starting faction in the Convocation. Our goal is to eliminate the ability of those in power to become corrupt, and our chosen method is to eliminate the need for people to be in positions of power in the first place.

The purpose of government has traditionally been to protect people as they travel, to protect property, and to enforce contracts. The Panarchists wish to shift these tasks to individuals. We will use a plane of life with a Healing aspect, the same plane of space as the Colossus faction to grant teleportation powers and the ability to sense events, and a plane of death with a Possession aspect. Combined, these planes will make people more resilient and able to heal from injury, able to infuse a tiny sliver of their soul into objects in order to bond with it, to sense those objects as easily as their own bodies, and to teleport easily.

People would no longer be vulnerable to assault, since unless an attack killed them before they could respond they could teleport away and quickly heal from their wounds. A person who attuned with an item would be able to find it if it were stolen (and just teleport in to take it back), and no one else could attune to it without the current owner"s permission. People who made agreements would be able to share a bit of each other's soul, which would make pledges binding. Anyone who shirked on a promise would forfeit a piece of his soul.

This would drastically alter the nature of society, reducing the importance of places and increasing the value of trust over physical might. We encourage you to see such a world for yourself in the Portal Gallery.





HAN JIERRE PANARCHIST REPRESENTATIVE

WATCHMAKERS

 $E^{
m liminate~free~will~and~design~a~thousand-year~destiny~of}$ prosperity for the world.

So much of the progress these past two hundred years has been because of the scientific method. It proposes a theory, holds an experiment, strives to eliminate variables, and comes to a conclusion. I am Amielle Latimer, and any of you who have fired a rifled gun did so in part because I helped find a viable design and a way to manufacture it on a large scale. And it was through many experiments.

With this proposal too I have experimented. For decades I have discussed possible ways the world could become better, witnessed actual tests in limited environments like towns or the ever-popular demi-planes. And the problem, every time, has been that most splendid of variables: people.

Our researchers have determined that it's just no possible to simply force people to behave a certain way via planar alignments, or elaborate interactions of magic. Free will is inherent to mortal intelligence. For a person to regularly *choose* moral actions, he must have been raised to value morality over selfish power. So I propose to eliminate free will entirely for one thousand years, during which we will enforce a precise course of events that will result, like clockwork, in a world where all people have been raised to behave morally. Then, after a millennium, the clock will wind down and leave all mortals with free will and a wholly moral society.

To accomplish this, I would replace three of the eight planes. Time shall have an aspect of Clockwork, and the plane's connection will be inscribed with the details of destined events. I have an extensive series of tomes with a suggested future history, and despite some misgivings about the scale of my plan, I assure you that my fellow ghosts who have read it can endorse that it is a quality plan.

The plane of life will need a Goodness aspect to drive people against their will to be good. Death will have Domination to bind people so they are slaves. I'm not mincing words here. We'll be enslaving the world for a millennium, ourselves included. I don't suggest this course of action lightly, but I do not see a way to achieve true harmony while people are able to make the wrong choices.

The Watchmaker proposal is the riskiest of all the factions. True, we've created pocket dimensions and watched as those within acted as puppets, doing exactly what we scripted for them. But the specifics of my thousand year plan cannot be tested, just put into motion. But the design is flawless, and the risk is worth the reward.



AMIELLE LATIMER WATCHMAKERS REPRESENTATIVE



MINOR AND RADICAL FACTIONS

By the morning of the second day of the convocation, you're aware of the following minor factions, and rumors say some people are organizing a few radical factions in secret, hoping to push for things that might not be approved by the majority of the Obscurati.

Minor Factions.

- ★ Aegis. The current planes prevent invasion from other worlds, and it has worked well so far. Aegis insists that if the current planes of Space and Death—which are the source of that protection—are changed, that some other defenses be put in their place. *Represented by Dengar Kriegshaff, human wizard of Drakr.*
- **Bards.** This faction wants people to have a more discerning taste when it comes to entertainment, and for performers to constantly seek to hone their craft. *Represented by Praesidia de Vaca, half-dragon bard of Ber.*
- Economists. This group wants people to have a stronger sense of the value of things and a more intuitive grasp of economics. They hope this will lead to more workers participating meaningfully in a new industrialized economy, rather than wasting money or time on things that are traditional but less utilitarian. *Represented by Solace Petrov, human economist of Elfaivar*.
- The Long Now. People live a long time, but typically plan only for the short term. This faction wishes to find a Plane of Time that will make people consider a longer timespan in their decisions. *Represented by Zartan Arkel, human druid of Drakr.*
- Mortal Mind. This faction opposes all religion as a distraction from the enlightenment of the mortal mind. They desire a world where people reject religion. Such mind control is not doable, so their plan is to eliminate people's ability to feel religious awe, creating a much more rational existence. *Represented by Von Hastenschrieft Willimarkanova, dwarf philosopher of Drakr.*
- + **The Sky League.** Make flight possible, preferably easy. If it is feasible, they would like to be able to fly constantly, without need of casting spells. *Represented by Dame Constance Baden, human knight of Danor.*
- + **Trekkers.** Not content to limit mortal races to a single world, this faction wants to choose planes that are habitable. *Represented by Cardinal Testamenta Suchdol, human inquisitor of Crisillyir.*
- Weapon-Mongers. Believing that technological progress is of great value, this faction wants to ensure that whatever new world is created is not one of pathetic peace and harmony, where invention and innovation is stifled by the lack of war. *Represented by Glaz du Sang Magie, human ice mage of Danor.*

Radical Factions.

- ★ Amorals. This highly philosophical faction questions whether anyone ought to decide what is of value in a new world. They suspect that the initial bonding of this world to other planes created an artificial sense of morality and value. If we can change what people value simply by altering the nature of reality, what makes us think our own morality is not also enforced? They propose not linking to any specific planes, but instead letting our world be loosely connected to the entire multiverse. This would be the only way for people to be truly free to determine their own ideology, without outside influence.
- Celestial Bureaucracy. This faction suggests the world should be linked to a plane inhabited by just and noble angels, which will guide the moral races and provide judgment, since we do such a poor job of it.
- Humble Hook. This faction rejects the major goal of the Obscurati. While they support making the world better, they say it is every individual's challenge in life to make him- or herself better. They do not think it is their place to try to alter reality on such a fundamental level. The purpose of life is to prevail over adversity, and by making the world "a better place," they fear it will actually eliminate the meaning of life.
- Materialists. This faction believes that magic is irrational and creates too many problems. They suggest reducing the power of magic as much as possible.
- Nationalists. There are supposedly several patriots who want to make sure their home nation profits most from the new world order.
- The White Tongue. Rumors suggest that an unknown number of Obscurati members have made a pact with the fey titan known as the Voice of Rot, which seeks to gain power by letting the world die.

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THE GEARS OF REVOLUTION

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A Conspiratorial Conclave!

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On a bleak, remote isle, gathered villains plot the final stages of their grand design. This heavily-guarded affair is the best chance to land a killing blow against the Obscurati, but to get close enough to strike, the constables will need an invitation. Fortunately, an old enemy of the party is having a bit of an identity crisis.

Alexander Grappa crafted the mind of the conspiracy's colossus, then was slain when he had second thoughts. But the crafty mage managed to transfer his consciousness into Leone Quital, who is now responsible for ferrying conspirators to the meeting's secret location. If the constables can help Grappa get control of his new body, he can get them into the conclave. But when the villains' goals are finally revealed, power will tempt, loyalties will fracture, and a schism might doom the world's last best hope.

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A FANTASY ADVENTURE FOR MINDFUL HEROES OF LEVELS 11-12

Publishing