



# ZEITGEIST™

THE GEARS OF REVOLUTION

PART  
**13**

## AVATAR OF REVOLUTION

FROM THE  
PEN OF RYAN NOCK

A FANTASY ADVENTURE FOR  
AMBAGIOUS HEROES OF LEVEL 20

COMPLETELY COMPATIBLE WITH THE  
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# INTRODUCTION

## Wherein Our Hand Moves the Stars

At the convocation of the Obscurati, Nicodemus the Gnostic, founder of the conspiracy, introduced his grand plan with these words:

The motions of the stars allow 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 party was present then, and though they were only *disguised* as officers of the Obscurati, today they are the closest thing to peers Nicodemus has. As much as he hates them and wants to be the architect of their failure, he respects that they were able to challenge him. Soon they will have their final contest, and Nicodemus believes that even should he be defeated—which, despite all his arrogance, he knows is surely possible—his ideology will triumph. He refused to accept the world as it was, and he is certain that even if he falls, the party will take it upon themselves to reshape reality in their image. That is the age he has created: one founded in the determination to create something new, in the ideal of revolution.

On its surface, the question of this whole campaign has been, what is the best of all possible worlds? Will the party defeat Nicodemus only to become tyrants themselves, creating a world where they alone have power? Will they seek to represent the will of the masses, who they might not see as enlightened as themselves? Will they turn on each other? Or will they reject the very premise of the question, and ask instead whether the choice is theirs to make?

### ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

This adventure serves both as climax and epilogue, and we pay more attention to what becomes of the world as a result of all the heroics of the PCs than to the details of battles. While we want the players to have a chance to exult when they finally vanquish the Obscurati and destroy Nicodemus, we want to give them a chance to experience the world after the fighting is over. They will have decided the nature of the new age, and they should get to enjoy it a bit before we close the book for good.

### Prologue: Contingency

A version of the party that was moments earlier on Av as it was crashing into the Gyre awakens in a forest in Risur, their airship nearby and mostly unharmed. **Benedict Pemberton** and his lieutenant the gnoll **Pardo** are waiting, having seeded duplicants at locations where they guessed the party might return.

Pemberton explains that as far as he knows he and Pardo are the only people in the whole world who haven't fallen under the Obscurati's control since the party has been gone. And the party has been gone for months. In that time the Ob figured out something about the hiveminds and used it to enact wide mind control.

It turns out Pardo was not immune himself, though, as he signaled the Ob the moment the party arrived. A strike force led by **Lauryn Cyneburg**, Risur's former Minister of Infiltration, teleports in and attacks the PCs and Pemberton. With them is **Nicodemus** (temporarily possessing the body of someone unimportant), who warns them not to stand in his way. He's only a day away from fixing the mistakes of the first time the Obscurati performed the Axis Seal ritual, and he's too close to victory to be a victim of sentiment.

In the ensuing battle, the party might manage to shake some of the attackers free of the Ob's control, and perhaps the fey titan known as the **Ash Wolf** will come to the party's aid. When Nicodemus's host body dies his spirit returns to Axis Island, but not before he swears that if they interfere with his plans in the next day he'll order every nation's capital city razed in retaliation.

The party is back on their homeworld, and though they do not know that other versions of themselves are in the Gyre, they are filled with a sense that not all hope is lost. However, to defeat Nicodemus without him killing hundreds of thousands in retaliation, they have to save multiple cities around the world, and then reach Axis Island and perform the ritual themselves, and they have only one day to do so.

After this introduction, return to the second half of adventure twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*. When the party nears the Voice of Rot, continue this adventure.





## GYRE CONSEQUENCES

Generally, anything that the party did in adventure twelve in the Gyre after the destruction of Av has no effect on this adventure until the PCs gain the memories of their other selves during the climax. Until then, any boons or items they acquired aren't accessible. However, once the memories start flooding into the PCs, they'll gain access to those boons and items gradually, just like their ability to link to planes comes in round by round.

In particular, boons of Srasama don't take effect until the PCs get access to the plane Ascetia during the Axis Obscura encounter. If they chose Vengeance, Srasama manifests and fights with them. If they chose Usurpation, a PC who seized Srasama's divine powers can use them. And if they chose Resurrection, most of the eladrin woman who are restored to life appear far from this battle. But Dala, Kasvarina's long-dead daughter, will appear beside one of the PCs. She'll know what they did for her, and though she's wholly a noncombatant, she'll desire to find her mother.

## Act One: World of Ruin

As the PCs make a plan for how to destroy the Obscurati without them killing countless innocents, Pemberton gives the PCs what information he has about the state of the world. Namely, everyone is their enemy, and the few scattered pockets of resistance are being pursued with industrial efficiency.

Gaslight infrastructure in most major cities, including Flint, has been adapted to function like a distributed version of the *wayfarer's lantern*, burning oil that channels planar energy to keep people obedient and a latent hivemind at the optimal level for control. Trainloads of troublemakers from rural regions are carted in to be pacified, and even former allies of the party are fervently loyal to Nicodemus and his minions.



## Airship vs. Dragon

To prevent the Ob from enacting their scorched earth policy, the PCs can head to Flint, where the local hivemind is led by new head of state of Risur, **Harkover Lee**. Once the chief advisor of the king, he has retaken his much older form as the red dragon **Inacht the Hex-Eater**. As such, he is perhaps the only individual aside from Nicodemus himself who could by himself pose a threat to the party.

As added deterrence, Lee has flooded the city's gaslight network with energy from Jiese, the plane of fire. If the party just rushes in they'll not only be facing a dragon on the wing, but will have to prevent the entire city from exploding while stymied by former allies such as **Stover Delft** and **Gale**. After bringing the dragon low and averting the fiery conflagration, the party finds the people of Risur receptive to them, ready to be rallied into a revolution.

## Action Montage

Other cities have their own tyrants loyal to the Obscurati, who will destroy their people to punish the party's opposition. In Trekhom, **Hastenschrieff Willimarkanova** undertakes a parade, protected by military constructs and the overwatch of sniper **Kvarti Gorbatiy**. In Seobriga, **Bruse Shantus** oversees the mass execution of undesirable goblinoids that are deemed not intelligent enough for civilization, but if the PCs move against the Ob, the city's lanterns will burn with Illocus energy to provoke a wild massacre. In Alais Primos a heartbroken **Morgan Cippiano** helps disassemble the cathedral of Triegenes under the command of **Arch Secula Natalia Degaspere**, who is prepared to activate the city's lanterns, using Av energy to pull people's souls from their bodies. And in Cherage, the demoness **Ashima-Shimtu** watches impassively as wretched people volunteer to be put to death because the propaganda of **Gardienne du Cherage** has convinced them they are not useful enough.

The party will have to move on multiple places simultaneously. With the aid of Pemberton's duplicant technology, the party can fight together to free Flint, then immediately split up across the world, with all the PCs controlling different duplicants to save all four cities before the Ob can react.

If you have more PCs and need a fifth target, or if a Vekeshi mystic character could use some closure, the enclave Sentosa in the forests of Elfaivar is besieged by Kasvarina's former aide-de-camp **Cula Ravjahani**.

## No Time to Rest

The party has only hours to reach Axis Island. They know that the site of the ritual will be flooded with destructive energy, and the only way they can safely resist it is to perform the *sacrament of apotheosis*, channeling the trust of the world into them, granting the PCs the power of gods. However, to do this the party must have allies, and so it is only feasible if the party managed to save at least one major city (Flint, Cherage, Trekhom, Alais Primos, or Seobriga). Alternately, the party might believe that this boon is not worth the risk, and follow the example of Triegenes by refusing to use the ritual, even it means they're imperiled.

Nicodemus has no such qualms, and he uses the *sacrament* to enhance himself with the loyalty of his followers. However, each city the party saved strengthens them in the upcoming battle.



## TIME IS TIGHT



We intend this adventure to take place in just one day. Aside from the obvious desire for a ticking clock to raise the stakes, by this point you should have plenty of evidence that the PCs are ludicrously strong when they can use all their powers in a single encounter. By forcing them to complete this adventure without resting, we give the villains slightly better odds of not being wiped out by whatever optimized alpha strike your party is capable of.

The party wakes up in the Antwalk Forest at roughly 8 a.m., rested and at full strength. The Gyre is close enough that its edge already covers half the sky, and its brighter center is just over the horizon.

By noon they should be at Flint, and by 1 p.m. either they'll have found a way to avert the Ob's scorched earth deterrence, or Alais Primos, Cherage, Seobriga, and Trekhom will be toast. Then they'll fly for Axis Island, some 500 miles from Flint. The party reaches Axis Island just before 'dawn,' and the final battle will conclude just in time for the Gyre to vanish and, if the PCs triumph, a new sun to rise.

It's fine to handwave their airship traveling at faster than normal speeds, but if you have a fan of Star Trek's Scotty among your group, let them make some checks to push the vessel to its limits, or get favorable winds from Gale, in order to achieve the impossible.

If the party dallies or somehow screws up, leaving without enough time to fly to the finale, it's possible to find another way there. Lauryn Cyneburg could manage a draining spell that teleports them through the defenses of Axis Island, but leaves them down one airship. Pemberton could give them coordinates to teleport to his hidden island lair (again, *sans* airship), from which they can set out in a squadron of small 'dragon flier' propeller planes. Or, hell, just cheat. If they use the *sacrament of apotheosis* and become gods, who's to deny their will of simply stepping onto the island from thousands of miles away?

It's over five hundred miles from Flint to Axis Island, which if the party pushes their airship to its limit they can cover just in time to arrive as Nicodemus begins the ritual of the Axis Seal. Though the flight takes hours, the party will find that if they try to rest and recover their spells or daily-limited abilities, they see flashes of themselves in the Gyre, poised on the edge of oblivion. Somehow their reflection from their other selves has made it impossible for them to regain their full strength.

When the party finally reaches Axis Island, the world is just beginning to rumble with the planar confluence of the coming ritual. In the glow of wild energy lashing out of the Axis Seal, they can see the colossus Borne standing up.

Upon completion of this act, return to adventure twelve for the climax against the Voice of Rot. After the party casts themselves into the Gyre, move on to act two of this adventure.





## Act Two: Axis of the Revolution

Nicodemus has gathered his strongest allies to his side: **Han Jierre**, **Lya Jierre**, and the ghost council, as well as units with the most advanced arcanoscientific weapons the world has devised.

These forces are primarily positioned on the *Revolution*, the Obscurati's own airship. Serving as the vessel's doctor is **Wolfgang von Recklinghausen**, who might be swayed to the party's side depending on their previous interactions. Meanwhile, Nicodemus takes the drastic step of performing the *sacrament of apotheosis* on himself, linking himself to those around the world who still adhere to his ideology. Using his near-divine power he restores the colossus Borne and commands it to complete the ritual of the Axis Seal while the *Revolution* keeps the party at bay.

When the party reaches Axis Island, knowledge that their other selves acquired in the Gyre begins to flood into their minds. Once combat begins they gain access to the energies of the various planes of the Gyre in the order they bonded with them, and each round they must weigh whether to attack their enemies or try to seize control of the eight nexuses in the ritual circle, each of which grants them access to cosmic power. An unforeseen consequence, however, is that meddling in the ritual links the party to Nicodemus. By embracing his methods, they are drawn into the pool of those who grant power to him via the *sacrament of apotheosis*.

Throughout a complex puzzle of a final battle, there are four paths to ultimately defeat Nicodemus: they can complete the ritual themselves and use its power to destroy him; they can convince his other self in the Gyre, William Miller, to try to overpower the mastermind and render him briefly vulnerable; they can metaphysically sap him of all power by rejecting his ideology and destroying the ritual site without laying claim to how the world should be; or they use his true name to break the protection granted to him by the *sacrament*, at which point they can harm him like any other foe.

(They might have learned his true name in adventure eight, or learn it now by getting Kasvarina on their side, or wait until knowledge reaches them from their other selves in the Gyre, who met the ghost of William Miller. And a proofreader reminded me that the *Humble Hook* and *Crown of Risur* can also reveal this information, though the intention was for the crown to just let you know the name they use, not their true name. The hook would work fine, though.)

If eight planes are linked and the golden seal is shut, stars begin to burn into being in the night sky, sweeping in an unfamiliar starscape that heralds a new destiny for the world. As the roar of the ritual fades, dawn begins to rise to the east.



## Act Three: How to Deliver a Denouement

The choices the party makes at the Axis Seal determine the nature of the whole world, and we want them to have a chance to see what kind of world that is.

How to do this partially depends on what you know of your players. Give them the ending they want, as much as it's appropriate to how they fared in the ritual of the Axis Seal. These final few adventures have been fairly epic and somewhat surreal, so we suggest grounding events and returning to the mundane.

Toward that goal, we present nine potential scenes for you to use as a montage of sorts, to put a bow on the ZEITGEIST campaign. Each is linked to one of the setting-based character themes introduced in the Player's Guide, and will serve as an opportunity to demonstrate some element of the new world and how the party's actions shaped it. As needed, you might shuffle some of these scenes into Act One, and save the ones your players will appreciate more for the aftermath.

**A Dock Opera.** The low-class dockers and the most upscale industrialists of Flint are drawn together by the first great performance at the Navras Opera House after the world is saved, a performance which spills out into the streets and carries on to the docks themselves.

**Group Portrait.** A *nouveau* eschatologist is popularizing primitive photography, and adds an addendum to the Heid Eschatol movement that, as we prepare for the end, those who survive us should be able to remember us, both our faces and the lessons we learned. He asks to photograph the party for the annals of history.

**Government Issue.** As law and order get back to normal, the police force and constabulary are issued new weapons, and one or more PCs are encouraged to speak to them and set the tone for how laws will be enforced in the new world.

**It Came From Beyond.** The military has caught and killed a creature never before seen on this world—the nature of which depends on how the party linked their world to other planes. As they make plans for how to deal with this unfamiliar threat, a young martial scientist expresses his admiration of the party's battlefield ingenuity.

**Telescope in the Clouds.** Astronomists ask for permission to build an observatory atop Cauldron Hill.

**Join Our Family.** Morgan Cippiano invites the party to a fashionable wake to discuss how he and his family can keep the criminal element of Flint civil.

**Borne Again.** Either the salvage of a destroyed colossus is brought to Flint, leaving the party to decide if they should recreate such a mighty machine, or the intact colossus seeks to transfer his consciousness to a smaller body, for he is unfit to wield the power that was given to him.

**Unmasking.** The Old Stag, elder head of the Vekeshi mystics in Flint, seeks to rehabilitate the order's image, as more of a fraternal society for social justice rather than a secret assassination guild.

**Medals and Prizes.** At the memorial for veterans of the Yerasol Wars, a huge crowd has gathered to cheer the many heroes of Risur.



## DRAMATIS PERSONAE REDUX

What has become of everyone? Below we list the NPCs likely to still be active and important, as well as their most likely status. Of course, adjust as needed depending on how the party may have influenced (e.g., killed) the NPCs.

1. **Arch Secula Natalia Degaspere.** Crisillyiri head of state.
2. **Ashima-Shimtu.** Observing the 'new world' in Cherage.
3. **Athrylla Valanar.** Repelling a siege on her enclave Sentosa.
4. **Benedict Pemberton, aka Gradiax the Steel Lord.** Conspiring with the PCs.
5. **Brakken of Heffanita.** Aid to Bruse Shantus.
6. **Bruse Shantus.** Beran head of state.
7. **Cula Ravjahani.** Besieging the enclave Sentosa in Elfaiar.
8. **Damata Griento.** Swashbuckling understudy of Sor Daeron.
9. **El Extraño.** Stowed away on the airship *Revolution*.
10. **Glaucia Evora.** Bound for execution in Ber.
11. **Han Jierre.** Commanding the airship *Revolution*.
12. **Hana "Gale" Soliogn.** Risur minister of nature.
13. **Harkover Lee.** Risuri head of state.
14. **Lauryn Cyneburg.** Head of the Obscurati alert strike force.
15. **Kaja Stewart.** Part of the above strike force.
16. **Kasvarina Varal.** Axis Island.
17. **Kvarti Gorbatiy.** Guarding the Drakran head of state.
18. **Lya Jierre.** Probably dead and a ghost. Otherwise alive, but in either case loyal to Nicodemus, aboard the *Revolution*.
19. **Morgan Cippiano.** Indentured to the Crisillyiri head of state.
20. **Nicodemus the Gnostic.** Axis Island.
21. **Pardo.** With Pemberton, preparing to betray him.
22. **Rock Rackus.** Stranded in the Gyre. Your hero cannot save you now.
23. **Sor Daeron.** Raining destruction upon Ob operations in Ber.
24. **Stover Delft.** Head of the Flint secret police.
25. **Vlendam Heid.** Hostage in Trekhom.
26. **Doctor Wolfgang von Recklinghausen.** Ship's doctor of the airship *Revolution*.

Two major NPCs we sort of let fall off the map were the "Gearbuilder" Tinker Oddcog and the "Mindmaker" Alexander Grappa. Our assumption is that Tinker either died or is toiling away in some workshop, but you might have him appear on the airship *Revolution* as part of the 'halfling and gnome repair crew.' His powers make fixing damage to the ship a breeze, and he can serve as a surprise opponent, albeit one who panics if he gets a clear view outside to see how huge the colossus is.

And we figured it was likely Grappa died during the course of adventure seven, but he could have survived (or transferred his consciousness into someone else) and thus show up alongside Pemberton to explain how to break the hiveminds.

Many other NPCs from previous adventures might be alive (or ghosts) but weren't necessarily prominent enough that we expect every group will care about what happens to them. Consider who you think your players would be interested in seeing again. Particularly if a character played a major role for one adventure, it can remind the players of all they've accomplished by bringing them back.

For instance, perhaps in Act One while a PC is trying to liberate a city, he could run across the Ob officer whose body he possessed in adventure seven. Perhaps Duchess Ethelyn, freed from her house arrest during revolutionary riots, teleports to Flint, and asks the PCs what happened to the Unseen Court. If the PCs saved Andrei von Recklinghausen from being possessed by Nicodemus, he could be on the defensive line of Sentosa, defending his adored Isobel and other eladrin. Amielle Latimer might be held in spectral chains aboard the *Revolution*, as the rest of the ghost council intends to toss her soul into the engine of Borne, which will consume her as fuel.

It could even be something as simple as, in the middle of the battle at the Axis Seal, the mine foreman from the first adventure, Nicholas Dupiers, gawks as he recognizes the PCs and marvels at how greatly they have changed.







# PROLOGUE: CONTINGENCY

If you're interweaving adventures twelve and thirteen, these scenes occur right after the party learns from William Miller on Ascetia that they've been split in two. The players should know that their characters in the real world aren't aware of anything happening to the version of them in the Gyre.

## HOME AGAIN

Remember, now that the party has returned home, all the odd magical effects of the Ob's new world order are available. People stabilize instead of bleeding out, light-producing spells are hard to cast, ownership can block teleportation, but every creature is able to *jaunt* once a day (or more if the GM deems them appropriately mobility themed), which lets them teleport within line of sight as a standard action.

## WEAKENED DEATH

Since the plane Av was destroyed in adventure twelve, this world's link to elemental Death energy is weakened. As a result, undead creatures are sickened. Incorporeal undead no longer take half damage. Reduce by half all negative energy damage that would be dealt. (Additionally, eladrin do not have their deathlink ability, but that's moot because there aren't any incorporeal foes it would apply to.)

Because of this, the Obscurati ghost council are remaining out of the fray as long as possible, and don't appear until the finale. These effects persist until someone links to a new plane of Death in the Axis Seal ritual. (See Draining Magic, page 43.)

## ICY END OF THE EARTH

After months without sun, even the supernatural temperate climate provided by the planet itself has waned. Global temperatures are at or below freezing, and snow or ice coats the ground wherever the party goes, with the exception of Axis Island, where otherworldly energy provides a pittance of warmth. From the moment the party arrives in the forest near the ziggurat of Av, it should be clear that the world is freezing to death.

## HELLO OLD FRIEND

### Social. Real-Time.

*Dark times make strange bedfellows.*

When Av was shattered, one version of the PCs (and their ship and its crew, but not Rock Rackus or anyone else who was on Av when the Great Eclipse occurred) was hurled across the cosmos, and they materialized in the woods near the city of Bole, outside what was once the Ancient ziggurat of Av. (Salamanders from Jiese briefly took it over in adventure ten, and its exact condition depends on the party's actions.)

Due to the odd nature of time on Av, where events happen when is most dramatic rather than in a strict chronolinear progression, the party returns to their homeworld months after they left. In the intervening period, the Obscurati has taken control, and one of the few people who resists their dominion is **Benedict Pemberton**, once the dragon tyrant **Gradiax the Steel Lord** but most recently an inventor, industrialist, and would-be conqueror of Ber in the guise of a gray-haired human.

As more and more of the world fell under the sway of the Ob, Pemberton's efforts to strike back just resulted in him losing his limited forces. The dragon realized his only chance for victory was to count on the party actually completing their mission to the Gyre. He set duplicants up at various locations he thought they might return to, and when the party appeared near the ziggurat, he and his loyal minion **Pardo** activated two duplicants to investigate.

It's important in this adventure to bear in mind whether Pemberton's daughter Terakalir survived adventure six. If she did, he mostly genuinely likes the party, and his motivation is to ensure the world will be one where his daughter can grow up powerful and feared. But if the party killed Terakalir, Pemberton is only feigning cordiality, and the moment he's sure the Obscurati has been defeated and the Axis Seal ritual corrected, he'll be poised to have his long-deferred revenge.



BENEDICT PEMBERTON

## The Ambush

Pemberton is still actually on an island somewhere in the Yerasol Archipelago, along with a small cadre of loyal gnolls. Unbeknownst to Pemberton, the Obscurati located the island weeks ago but chose not to attack. Instead they infiltrated Pardo's mind, forcibly integrating him with a hivemind composed of dominated gnoll slaves who serve the Ob. He is always accompanied by two invisible members of the ghost council who ensure his obedience. They have kept watch on Pardo, and through him on Pemberton, so that they will know as soon as the party returns. They aren't simply 'invisible,' but in fact are occupying Pardo's body, somewhat akin to ghostly possession.

The Obscurati has an ambush party waiting to teleport in, composed of powerful warriors, two of whom—**Lauryn Cyneburg** and **Kaja Stewart**—are, like Pardo, partially subsumed in a hivemind. This has made it impossible for them to disagree with the plans of Nicodemus, and has infused them with greater power, as they now wield the meta-physical might of dozens of people at once.

Once the party arrives, it is only a matter of minutes before the Obscurati attack.

## You Awake

You awake, scattered across the ground in a forest. Embers of blazing thistles drift by on a wind, briefly providing enough light to make out the surprisingly intact hull of your ship, lying without even a hushed whisper in this night-time wood. Your injuries are mysteriously healed, and the damage wrought by heavenly hailstones on your vessel has vanished, but as your gaze drifts upward through a crooked slit in the canopy, you see a starry abyss looking back, its nebulous teeth poised to crush your world, as they have crushed Av.

You're back in Risur. Your mission has failed. Your path to the Gyre has been cut off, and what little hope you had left has, like a candle reaching the end of its wick, guttered and turned to smoke.

Then you hear a gasp of shock, and a deep-voiced laugh. Disoriented, you sit up and see, at the edge of the light, Benedict Pemberton and his gnoll lieutenant Pardo. Pemberton raises a glass in toast—distilled water, with a celery stick for flavor. He wears a black patch over his right eye.

"Constables," he says. Then he nudges Pardo. "I told you they'd come back. They can't help saving the day. It's pathological."



PARDO

## You're My Only Hope

Pemberton talks as the party comes to their senses. They have arrived a few dozen feet from the entrance of the ziggurat where the salamander Kuyler set fire to the Antwalk Thicket (see adventure ten, *Godmind*). The once-stone building is still brass, and the fires have long-since died out, but the trees and undergrowth survived, and their greenery has grown back. Bizarrely, though, the whole scene is coated in an inch of snow and the temperature is freezing. The leaves are brittle and coated in ice.

A few dozen feet away, a section of the forest has been cleared to make way for a railroad, and it stretches away to the south. It appears a train was parked here, but the crash of the party's airship derailed it.

The PCs and their crew are wholly uninjured and rested, and while their ship is on its side (just off-map south-west of the ziggurat), a few minutes of heaving will get it righted so it can fly.

Pemberton and Pardo were waiting in the doorway that led into the underground chambers. Pemberton's just wearing the eyepatch so one of his eyes can be adjusted to darkness, even if bright light ruins his night vision in his other, but he'll play it off briefly as if in the time the party was gone he suffered a grievous injury. He tries to be patient and cool, though inwardly he's never felt happier in his life since he was basically convinced he was doomed without the party's help.

He explains, first, that the new ruler of Risur built this railroad to help access the plane of Jiese through the portal in the ziggurat, but 'local fauna' forced them to abandon that project, so they sealed the portal. That was several months ago, and the world has gotten dangerously cold since then, but he's not sure if the two are related.

As far as anyone cares, Pemberton says, the party is dead. He is the only friend they have left in the whole world. But of course, he has made a plan that can get them out of this hole.

## The Fall to the Dark Side

Pemberton starts recounting the events of the past few months. It began with soldiers captured from the invading armies in Risur, soldiers who were possessed by powerful Obscurati ghosts. They let themselves be taken to prisoner of war camps, where they overpowered the unexpected guards, then triggered the formation of hiveminds. Somehow the possessing ghosts managed to stabilize the hiveminds so they were able to draw people in and make them obey, but the hivemind did not become insanely single-minded like previous manifestations had. The Risuri soldiers, outnumbered by the prisoners, weren't able to resist the combined psychic will, and they became loyal to the Obscurati. This continued like an avalanche rolling down a hill; the more people caught in the hivemind, the more easily it could pull others into itself.

It spread faster than a disease; it spread like an idea, and almost as soon as someone became aware of the risk, their minds were overwhelmed.

Most of Pemberton's duplicitous spies were discovered and absorbed into these new hiveminds, but before that happened he learned of panic in numerous cities. People had only a vague idea what was happening, but knew that crowds were a threat, so many fled into the wilderness. Pemberton and his gnolls are fairly safe on their island, he hopes.





KAJA STEWART

### Question Time

Any PC who succeeds a Sense Motive check (DC 36) at this point realizes that Pardo has drawn away from the conversation, and looks conflicted. Just before the ambush begins, he scratches at his own scalp and hunches. Head cocked at a maddened angle, he says, "I'm sorry, master."

A shining portal opens in the air within arm's length of the party, and a horde of foes materialize. Four dozen metal humanoids stand poised to attack, their limbs ending in weapons, and

with them are five people. Kaja Stewart, who once crafted weapons for the Ob, holds up empty hands, ready to conjure firearms, while her four-armed eidolon stands defensively beside her. Two black-robed mages are shrouded in shadow, and they flank a third, nondescript figure holding a cigarette. Lauryn Cyneburg, formerly Risur's minister of infiltration, pulls the portal shut with a snap of her fingers.

"Hm," she says, glancing at how close they arrived. "My aim has improved?"

In the center of the ambush party, the nondescript man says, "Of course you *would* show up a day before I solve this. I suppose you think you're swooping in to," he chuckles, "save the world?"

"Your former allies, who now see the wisdom of my new world order, told me your mission. You were going to use the Axis Seal yourself with your own new planes.

"Imitation is flattery, and I'm glad you wanted to follow my lead, but it was your noses stuck where things didn't need sticking that caused the situation we're in. I assure you we have 'saving the world' in hand, and this will all turn out tidy and safe if you don't cause any more trouble. But maybe you've found something useful."

He sucks in a long drag from his cigarette, cracks a charming smile, and gestures for the party to explain themselves.

### Answer Time

The Nicodemus who is here is occupying a random body by means of *needlewire*. He's incapable of using his actual magical abilities, so he's here merely as an onlooker.

This is basically the party's last chance to interact with the campaign's main villain outside of combat, but you don't want to let the conversation drag on too long. Players are apt to ramble, but a good villain is concise and in control.

Nicodemus wants to know whether they have the necessary planar links to perform the Axis Seal ritual, and if there are any worlds in the Gyre that might be better than the planes he's planning to use. But since the PCs here right now don't know about what the other version of them did in the Gyre, Nicodemus will think they've failed.

Hit the following three beats in the conversation:

- ◆ Nicodemus asks what they learned in the Gyre. He's willing to give information about what the Obscurati have done in order to keep the PCs talking. In particular, he'll admit that Wolfgang von Recklinghausen was able to use autopsies of Gidim to figure out how to stabilize the hivemind effect. He nonchalantly says it's much more complicated and technological than just that, but he'll only reveal more to those who are members of the conspiracy.
- ◆ He offers them a final chance to work with him, rather than against him. He assures them that he has a new plan for the Axis Seal which will put an end to all the chaos that broke out since the Great Eclipse, and he promises that if they pledge their loyalty he'll surrender to them once the ritual is complete, to let them judge if his actions were justified. Of course, pledging loyalty in this case entails being bonded to a hivemind, effectively dominating the PCs and making it quite hard for them to turn against him at the eleventh hour.

If pressed about his plan, he lies (Bluff +35) and claims that he's adopting the Arboretum plan that was proposed at the Obscurati conclave on Mutravir Island. The conspiracy made planar icons for all the planes that would have featured in any of the five main Ob plans, and he's willing to adopt a more muted alteration to the nature of reality now that the hiveminds have given him a chance to bring societies closer together.

- ◆ If they refuse, he mocks them for failing their mission to the Gyre. He accuses them of being sentimental saboteurs, blindly valuing antiquated morals and the suffering of people today over progress and the needs of countless yet to be born. He is creating the shape of things to come, and in that new world, people like the party will have to go.

At that point, or if the party makes any hostile moves, he orders his ambush squad to attack. If the fight breaks out early, he'll continue talking. The body he's in is only a temporary vessel, not prepared to carry his full power, and so he's incapable of contributing in a battle.



LAURYN CYNEBURG



NICODEMUS



## CONTINGENT AMBUSH

### Action. Tactical. Level 24.

*The mastermind was prepared for the party's unlikely return.*

There aren't many combats in this adventure, so we encourage you to ramp this one to as over-the-top a scene as you can. In a frozen forest, between an immobile (but still armed) airship, a train filled with clear-cutting machinery, and an ancient ruined ziggurat, the party must defend against a master of teleportation, a woman with the most powerful small arms anyone has ever invented, soul-fueled mechanical warriors, mages who control shadows, and a gnoll death priest. Also, the man currently serving as vessel for Nicodemus carries a black crystal that when shattered (either intentionally, or if he is killed) releases the screaming malice—a gargantuan many-headed monstrosity the party drove off in adventure four.

People should be knocked across the battlefield and shatter whole trees. An entire unit of constructs should explode at a single strike from a PC's weapon. The malice should pluck PCs and thrash them about in the forest canopy. A PC ought to suplex the train on top of Pardo. And after one or two rounds of battle, a howl in the distance heralds the arrival of the Ash Wolf, a fey titan who at the least wants to drive out interlopers, and who might be willing to help the party.

Stats are presented in Appendix One: Combat Catalogue.

### Alert Strike Force

- ♦ Lauryn Cyneburg
- ♦ Kaja Stewart
- ♦ Pardo
- ♦ 4 Obscurati construct squads
- ♦ 2 Obscurati elite occultists

### Potential Ally

- ♦ The Ash Wolf

### Noncombatants

- ♦ Pemberton
- ♦ Nicodemus

## SWITCHING SIDES OR BETRAYING EACH OTHER

If the party does side with Nicodemus, you need to use a bit of Schrodinger's Plot and adjust things the party isn't aware of. Rather than the PCs fighting minions of Nicodemus to rally the world in an uprising, they're sent to quell resistance and clear the way for a unified planet to support Nicodemus as he performs the ritual at the Axis Seal. They'll need to defeat Harkover Lee in Flint, then suss out and thwart a plot by their former allies who were trying to inspire revolution around the world.

Only during the Axis ritual will an ally—likely El Extraño—break the party free of the ghost council's control and explain that Nicodemus intends to end free will. Of course, the party might still side with the Ob, slice the kobold spymaster to bits, and surrender their free will in order to create a utopia.

The real problem comes if some of the PCs go for it and the rest don't. Let that play out, but perhaps talk to your players out of game and see if they're okay with fighting each other, or if they want you to provoke one side or the other to have a change of heart. The Ob agents can easily stabilize or revivify PCs who are near death, allowing you to take them prisoner.

Basically, be ready for the players to accidentally steer themselves into a ditch, and perhaps get their opinions of how they'd like things to end before you give them a chance to make the campaign crash and burn so close to the end.

### Terrain and Tactics

The forest near the once-burning ziggurat has a mix of massive trees and undergrowth dotted with smaller trees. The ziggurat lies to the north, with the party's ship to the south-west and the rail line and derailed train on the south-east. (We didn't put a crashed ship on the map because we don't know what sort of ship the party has.)

Lauryn, Kaja, and Pardo each are bonded to a hivemind that uses psychic attacks throughout the battle, which should clue in the PCs that their foes aren't acting wholly of their own free will.

When the battle begins, a droll Lauryn remarks, "They're used to fighting fey titans. Perhaps our overwhelming shortness will confuse them. Cannon fodder, lead the way." She opens combat by using *maze* against the most dangerous PC. Thereafter she conjures a *teleport trap* at the top level of the ziggurat in order to cut PCs who try to teleport off from the rest of their allies. (This would normally take 10 minutes, but the hivemind lets her cast the spell as standard action.) Then she uses her other spells at range while keeping allies between her and the PCs. Typically she'll use a quickened *hold person* or *scorching ray* each turn, or simply quickened *invisibility* then dimensional hop to get out of trouble.





Kaja tries to stay in the middle of the battle so she can keep the PCs in the first range increment of her firearms. Over the course of three turns she'll summon an *arcane cannon*, then use *artillery barrage*, then summon her double-barreled shotgun. She only relies on her revolvers for opportunity attacks, or if she survives more than three rounds.

Pardo uses *destruction* on a spellcaster, then follows up with *fire storm*. He'll use *repulsion* to try to keep enemies out of melee range, though those who get past the spell have to deal with his wrecker ability to destroy weapons that strike him.

The construct squads are mere cannon fodder, and they try to surround a single foe, making them gloriously vulnerable to area attacks. The elite occultists try to keep out of melee, either using their attack spells or trying to dispel the party's annoying buffs.

**End of Round One.** Pemberton doesn't fight, but halfway through the first round he apologizes but says he'll be right back. Then his duplicant falls to the ground, shifting into an inert metallic form. Pemberton has gone back to his island fortress, where he can deal with Pardo while the gnoll is unaware of what's happening to his body.

Finally, at the end of the first round of combat Nicodemus draws and smashes the black crystal holding the screaming malice. Or the crystal shatters when the party attacks Nic; his body crumples easily, but his spirit lingers long enough for the dead body to have some parting words. (See Aftermath.)

**Later Rounds.** Starting in the second round, the malice ponderously wades into battle, serving more as a mobile obstacle that is best dealt with by keeping away from it. At the end of the second round, Pardo screams and begins taking 50 damage each round, since his real body is being clawed by Pemberton hundreds of miles away.

At the start of the third round the party hears the howl of the Ash Wolf, they see his approach on the fourth round, and on the fifth round the fey titan leaps upon a foe, either to drive the malice back or save an imperiled PC.

Of course, the party is at maximum level. This might end up being a cakewalk for them. If so, consider the encounter a test run for you to figure out what sorts of tricks and defenses Nicodemus needs for the climax to be a challenge.



### Aftermath

Ideally the party should figure out how to free people from the Obscurati hivemind control, or at least take people alive so they can experiment on finding a solution. In the heat of battle, it's fair to let clichéd efforts like shouting, "This isn't you!" actually have a chance (DC 40 Diplomacy) of dazing a foe, but this only works the first time it's attempted.

The body which Nicodemus has possessed remains under his control even in death, giving the mastermind an opportunity to witness the party's prowess. He seems to note their powers and vulnerabilities, but at the sight of a fey titan he huffs a laugh and begins to say his parting words. As he speaks, a darkness seeps into his features, until finally he is nothing but a shadow and an echoing voice.

"It's not worth throwing more resources against you in open battle. You're a terror to behold, true, but you will fail because you lack leverage. I do not. If you can set your pride aside for one day, I will have this fixed and we can stop this worthless violence. But continue to move against me and I promise you, every city on this world will burn. In a thousand years, no one will remember their names even if millions die. They will only know that I secured a perfect world. My conscience can abide a scorched earth. Can yours?"

At this point, return to adventure twelve.

### THE LOST EYE

Keep track of who among the party has the lost eye of the Voice of Rot, which grants control over spirits of the dead. In the context of this adventure, whichever PC carries the withered and calcified eye is immune to the *gestalt strike* powers of hivemind-enhanced foes, as well as any attacks from the ghost council itself at Axis Island. Additionally, the character gains a +5 bonus to any checks to break people out of control of the hiveminds. Finally, the bearer will intuitively understand how Nicodemus can be defeated or destroyed.







# ACT ONE: WORLD OF RUIN

The Obscurati are ravaging the world in order to stamp out dissent against their supposed high-minded ideals, but the party can incite a revolution against their rule.

## Clarity of Will

In adventure twelve, before reaching the plane Reida, the PCs should each choose someone they are linked to back in the real world. Whoever they pick will snap free of the Ob's control, starting now.

Those connections give them some early allies they can leverage to start freeing others from the Ob's control. It might even make some combat encounters unnecessary. Do note, though, that even if someone chooses to have a connection to a person, he or she might still be willingly cooperating with the Ob, even without the need of mind control.

## No Rest for the Weary

If the party does anything that seems particularly restful, they're distracted by a nagging sense of falling into an abyss. If they try to sleep, or to replenish any daily abilities, visions assail them of standing at the edge of a world, staring down into the maw of the Gyre. Until the end of Act Two, the party finds it impossible to benefit from any long-term rest or otherwise replenish spells or daily abilities. They can still take time to heal between encounters, but even that fills them with a sense that if they are too slow, they might fall into a chasm they can never escape.

## HIVEMIND CONTROLLED HEROES?

For simplicity's sake, we assume that the PCs are powerful enough and canny enough about the hiveminds that they aren't in any danger of being sucked into one, unless they're captured and the villains have time to brainwash them. Indeed, NPCs such as Delft were able to hold out against the hiveminds, and so they had to be targeted individually, even after whole cities had already been turned.

## RAISE A BANNER

### Exposition. Real-Time.

*The party plans how to save the world.*

Nicodemus's threat lingers. Move against him, and he'll make every city in the world burn. But more urgent was the timeline, because he asked for them to 'set their pride aside for one day.' Whatever Nicodemus is planning, the window to stop it is limited.

A few moments after the fight outside the abandoned ziggurat ends, Pemberton's duplicant body becomes active again. If it was destroyed, he *sends* to the party a few minutes later, and gives them directions to a safe house halfway to Flint, where he stashed another duplicant. He's reluctantly willing to give them directions to his island hideout too, but that's an eight hundred mile flight, and there's no time to detour to visit him.

In the meanwhile, any survivors of the battle denounce the party unless they were freed from the hivemind. The Ash Wolf explains that his powers have waned since the Dreaming was torn away. His wounds heal slowly now, resisting even magical recovery, so he's wary to go with the party and aid them elsewhere. Times are dire, though, and if the party makes a good argument, he could be convinced.

### Planning with Pemberton

Pemberton explains that he has dealt with Pardo, and is inches away from killing the gnoll, but if the party knows a way to break someone out of the Obscurati's control, he would rather appreciate his minion coming back to his senses. Solving that issue will be important, because perhaps all the party's former allies are now enemies, and they won't have much chance if they can't get them back. It's time to make a plan.

### The Big Goal

If the party wants to perform the Axis Seal ritual, they could just go to Axis Island, but there are two obstacles.

First, Nicodemus has threatened a scorched earth policy, and so good heroes ought to find a way to stop that before they strike the island.

Second, as Pemberton showed them in adventure ten, the ritual site is flooded with destructive energy. The colossus was built to resist it, and even that machine needed mages chanting spells to keep it secure. Once the mages were killed by agents of the Voice of Rot, the colossus was torn apart.

Leave it to the party to speculate how Nicodemus is going to perform the ritual this time, but if the PCs want to avoid being disintegrated while they alter the seal, they could use powerful magical protection. The most likely solution is performing the *sacrament of apotheosis* so they have godlike invulnerabilities. In adventure eight, Pemberton likely witnessed at least part of the memory event where Ashima-Shimtu revealed the nature of the *sacrament*, and if the PCs don't think of it, he'll suggest they keep it in mind.

Moreover, since the power of the *sacrament* depends on the strength of belief of those who support the target or targets, saving people around the world from Nicodemus's malice is a fine way to rally followers who can lend you their faith. The *sacrament* has great risk, however, and it is not absolutely *necessary* for success. Let the PCs decide whether they think it is worth it. See *Player's Handout: Final Sacrament* for details of how that ritual functions.

### Free Your Mind

Getting followers for the *sacrament* means freeing people from the control of Obscurati hiveminds. Fortunately, the party has at least one test subject (Pardo) to experiment on, and possibly others (Lauryn and Kaja). Let the PCs tinker for a bit, and if they come up with something clever, let it work even if it's not what we suggest.

Our suggestion is that to break an individual out of a hivemind, you need to deal positive energy damage to them, which weakens the hold of whichever member of the Ob ghost council is keeping the hivemind under control, and then you need to exhort them and guide them out of the mind control (DC 40 Diplomacy). If you want to play up the challenge, retool the Interrogating a Suspect mechanics from the *Player's Guide*, so freeing the person requires you figure out how their mind has been misled and then help them find the core of their identity to resist the control. The first attempt typically just takes moments to snap someone free, but if that fails subsequent attempts require several minutes of interaction to disentangle the psychic bonds.

Yes, in the midst of a technological and political revolution on par with the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the PCs might accidentally invent Freudian psychoanalysis.

To break a whole mass of people out of a hivemind, though, there are two options. First, you could give that whole crowd of people something they cannot ignore. Once they're paying attention to something new, you can attempt to free them all at once by inspiring them to resist the compulsion (DC 40 Diplomacy). The challenge, though, is that if you only free a portion of the people in an area, it's just a matter of time before the hivemind reclaims them. To free, for instance, the city of Flint, you'd need to be noticed by nearly a million people and address them all.

Alternately, you could find the ghosts in charge of the hivemind and either control them or take their place. Typically the ghosts will accompany whichever living person (or dragon) has been placed in charge of an area. Subdue that person, and if you can control the ghosts with magic, you can command them to end the hivemind; or if you destroy the ghosts you'll need to give the people who were in the hivemind a new directive, and convince them you're in charge.

That is intentionally a bit hand-wavey. In game, it means that to free Flint the party will need to overcome Harkover/Inacht, and to liberate the other nations they'll need to similarly defeat the leaders whom the Obscurati placed in charge. 'Defeat' need not require combat, but in Flint, at least, their foe is prepared for a battle.

### Known Unknowns

Pemberton's information is over a month out of date, but this is what he's sure of.

In Risur, fellow dragon **Inacht the Hex-Eater**, who for two centuries served as principal minister to the monarchy in the guise of **Harkover Lee**, has been placed in charge of the nation, and the seat of power has moved to Flint. Slate, which has no industrial sector, was not useful to the Obscurati. Flint, by contrast, was set to begin producing enchanted machinery. A lot of cargo ships from Flint have been going to Axis Island, laden with what Pemberton assumes are parts to repair the colossus.

Rural Risur seems to be more contentious, and Pemberton has seen military units march onto farms in order to domineer people into a hivemind, since the new dark world is struggling to produce enough food.

In Ber, it seems the more savage races like goblins and Pemberton's beloved gnolls have proven resistant to hiveminds that are based on the idea of civilization, so the Beran military has been rounding up 'primitives' in camps. He doesn't know what happens to them after that.

Pemberton had few spies in Crisillyir, but the Clergy was effectively out of power. There was a rumor that Nicodemus was looking for a female who was held in a Clergy prison, not to punish her but to recruit her.

Danor was already loyal to the Ob, but they were releasing some ludicrous propaganda trying to convince people that everything was going according to plan. Pemberton wonders if maybe there was some secret core of resistance causing them trouble.

The state of Drakr depends on how the party handled adventure twelve. If Komanov won, Drakr is an empty land, where Ob loyalists are retaking territory and trying to rekindle the fire of industry. If the party defeated Komanov, the nation is producing gargantuan anti-aircraft cannons to be delivered and installed at Axis Island.

Elfaivar is the one place for which Pemberton has absolutely no information.

The day after the party left, the strange phenomenon that had been happening atop Cauldron Hill stopped. Now the mountaintop is bare stone, but still no one goes there. Even the ghosts that were once drawn there and which could be seen in mirrors now seem listless, because they no longer have a way to reach the Bleak Gate and find their eternal rest.

### Unknown Unknowns

What Pemberton doesn't know is that Risur under the directives of Harkover Lee has begun bringing thousands of people from the countryside into the city in order to pacify and reeducate them before sending them back out to create hiveminds of their own. The whole city of Flint has had its streets lined with gas lamps that function as *wayfarer lanterns*, which modulate the mood of all of its million inhabitants, and eight large lantern towers enhance the control over each district.

In Ber, the Bruse is personally overseeing mass executions of undesirable primitives. In Crisillyir, pious individuals are being punished by having to disassemble by hand religious buildings of the Clergy, and showing signs of faith will get you punished with reeducation in Vendricce. Danor has convinced people to doubt their own loyalties, and to turn themselves in for voluntary execution so they won't threaten progress. Nothing particularly surprising is happening in Drakr, but in Elfaivar the eladrin enclave run by **Athrylla Valenar** is besieged. The Ob's forces could easily crush the city, but Nicodemus desires a civilized, formal surrender as a sort of gift to Kasvarina.





## Thwarting Scorched Earth

If your party is capable of teleporting between cities, they can probably liberate Flint, then go from city to city in less than an hour. If they can defeat the head of each nation's hivemind, that should stop them from enacting the scorched earth plan. However, it takes just one person casting *sending* to alert the Obscurati, and from there Nicodemus would order his allies around the continent to retaliate. Since the party doesn't know how Nicodemus intends to follow through on his threat, will they risk acting?

We have a suggested solution, detailed below, but PCs might come up with their own plan, like rescuing Andrei von Recklinghausen from Sentosa and having him pose as Nicodemus (after all, Nic used his body for a few months) to call off the scorched earth plans.

## Operation Ettin

Pemberton has what he calls a 'two-headed solution.' He knows the Obscurati had magic items that could intercept *sending* spells, but their area of coverage was limited. However, Flint's own cursed mountain Cauldron Hill always had a strong sway over the city, and with a bit of creative spellcasting one of those devices placed atop the mountain could blanket the entire city. That would let the party deal with their home city without the news reaching the Ob, at least not right away.

Other cities don't have handy sites to focus a powerful ritual, so while the PCs might be able to take their time to do Flint right, the other cities will need to be done simultaneously. Pemberton has a handful of duplicants stashed around the world, and he could get into each major city. He can jury-rig the magic necessary to let the PCs control duplicants, and after the party combines forces to defeat Harkover Lee and free Flint, each PC can take control of a duplicant in a different city. Acting via telepresence, they'll be able to strike four or more cities simultaneously. Divination magic or interrogating Harkover would help them know which cities they need to worry about.

The Ob has only prepared their scorched earth countermeasures in five cities—Flint, Alais Primos, Cherage, Seobriga, and Trekhom. If you have more PCs, they can double up, or the party might use their own magic to try to help the enclave Sentosa in Elfaivar. If Trekhom was conquered by Grandis Komanov in adventure eleven, there aren't enough people there to warrant the Ob destroying the place, so you can shift its scene to take place in Slate or Nalaam, whichever the PCs will care about more.

Pemberton's real body is still in the Yerasol Archipelago for all of this, since he's busy readying for another attack on Axis Island. Once the party finishes saving the other national capitals, they'll need to return to their real bodies in Flint, then take their airship to Axis Island. (If the ship gets destroyed, they can just teleport to Pemberton's island lair. See *Dragon-Riding*, page 36.)

## Duplicant Technology

For a character to control a duplicant, he or she must lie down and wear a steel skullcap etched with draconic iconography, to which is attached a blindfold and muffling ear covers. A flat stone shard marked with a series of seventeen numbers in draconic is placed on the person's chest, and then a drop of witchoil must be poured into a divot in the stone. That draws a fragment of the subject's soul into a specific duplicant, which has a witchoil reservoir marked with the same seventeen numbers. Pemberton has memorized the codes for all his duplicants, and can easily adjust which duplicant a given skullcap and chest stone link to.

(If you want maximum steampunkery, instead of a skullcap these can be top hats.)

As a show of good faith, Pemberton reminds the party that his original duplicant control designs forced the subject to loyally obey his commands. He's had a slight change of heart after seeing what the Obscurati has done with mass domination, and so all his new duplicants are not designed for mind control. He laments, though, that he won't ever be able to mass produce them and sell them to the public, because his supply of witchoil is finite. With the Bleak Gate severed from this world, he'll never be able to make more.

That's another reason to go to Cauldron Hill in Flint first. Unless the party has a stash of witchoil, he'll need to recover some of the fluid from cracks and fissures in the mountain. His duplicants around the world already have their own reservoirs of witchoil, but he'll need a few ounces of the stuff in order to let the party link to them.

## GLIMPSE THE AGE OF REASON

### Exploration. Montage.

*The utopian veneer of the new world order hides callous oppression.*

Before diving into grand acts of world-saving, the PCs might stop over somewhere more low key. This could be a farming village to make plans with Pemberton, or a town outside of Flint to check on the safety of a family member, or possibly just a train stopped to clear the tracks of snow that they spot while flying overhead in their airship.

At first glance, everything should seem serene and positive. Everyone has their heads held high. No one squabbles. All affairs proceed in an orderly fashion. Farmers erect arcanoscientific gas lamps to shed dull red light over their crops to keep them warm, and then with the aid of soldiers begin to operate a steam-powered autoplow to till the field. Streets are swept and faintly-lit by brown gas lamps, all the houses and buildings are in good order, and police take the time to visit every house and ask if anyone needs assistance. In addition to the freight cars, passenger cars look to have been recently assembled in order to manage the increase in travel demand, and seats are comfortable and clean, with each car lit up with the dim blue glow of gas lamps.

But no one speaks, except when necessary to coordinate action. Food is unseasoned. No one seems to be daydreaming, or preoccupied, or bored. Everyone functions like a cog in a machine. If pressed, they're not lacking in free will or personality, but they simply aren't inclined to express themselves or do anything selfish. They're quick to agree to help if anyone needs aid, but since everyone is generally content, no one has a reason to ask. There is peace, but in the same way a well-tended garden is peaceful. Left to its own devices, nothing will change.





### Disobedience Will Not Be Tolerated

In whatever scenario the party finds themselves observing these behaviors, some sort of outsider will disturb this serenity. A gnome mage named **Weebit Vallshadow** was hiding—lurking in the fields, creeping through the sewers, stowing away on the train—but he's out in the open when his *invisibility* spell ends. He panics for a moment and glances at the people around him.

"He's *wrong*," says a bystander. "We must help the little bastard."

Weebit tries to cast a spell, but as one everyone nearby converges on him, and they grab and hoist him off the ground. Weebit cries out, "Let me go! I'm not causing any trouble!"

Another local person says, "You shouldn't hide. That's so old-fashioned. Cooperation is the new thing."

Weebit keeps yelling, and so someone muffles his mouth. He bites the person, who frowns but ignores the pain.

Someone else says, "He must be sick of loneliness. The rumors spooked him. Here, wee one. Let us help. We shall subsume your fear so your mind will no longer be capable of dissent. It's much more cooperative."

If no one helps him, Weebit at this point begins to calm and relax. His vision drifts into the middle distance, and then he slowly nods. "I understand now. Thank you. Let me go find where I can be useful."

The crowd puts him down and claps briefly, and one person stays nearby talking to Weebit about how his magic might make him a security risk, so he should travel—in a group of course, so he's safe—to the reeducation schools at Dawn Square in Flint.

### A 'Gandalf the White' Moment

If the party interrupts this, no one can possibly pose a threat to them. By revealing who they are in a dramatic way, they have a chance to snap the people here out of their control. But unless the freed group is kept a fair distance from others who are in a hivemind, it won't be long before they start to be drawn back in.

People are excited that the party has returned, and everyone mentions how empty they've felt these past few months. They only know snatches of information about what really happened to the world, but they've heard of the PCs and trust that they can fix this. They want to know how they can help, and quite in contrast to their 'cooperative' demeanor moments earlier, now they're angry.

## MARCH ON THE CAPITAL

### Exposition. Montage.

*The party takes back control of Flint.*

Flint has changed since the party left. The Obscurati-generated hive-minds subdued the populace, and eventually Harkover Lee submitted to them as well. With the former dragon in charge, Flint has undergone rapid construction.

The most obvious thing visible from afar is that each of the city's eight 'civilized' districts has a sixty foot high tower capped with a massive version of the *wayfarer's lantern*, shedding unhealthy brown light to dull the populace's emotions. These distributed lanterns, as well as myriad street lamps around the city, are fed by gas lines which originate from the governor's mansion, where a small refinery of spire-like exhaust towers burn off remnants of the refining process in spurts of fire. While the lanterns help keep people orderly, simply turning them off (such as by blowing up the refinery, destroying the lantern towers, or even just closing valves in underground gas lines to stop the flow) isn't enough to end the Ob's control, since people are also held in a hivemind.

Other changes are spread throughout the city. Wherever the Ob have changed things, instead of Flint's eclectic style of architecture inspired by a cosmopolitan mix of neo-classical and druidic designs, the new buildings are drab and functional, like something out of the most dystopian visions of Soviet Russia.

Anyone capable of seeing invisible things notices thousands of shimmering strands stretching from the ground to above the rooftops, where warty yet somehow subdued shapes float, weaving together everyone's consciousness into a shared hivemind.

### The Ayres

Industrial fishing has overtaken what were once luxury homes on these islands. Every piece of land that could sport a pier now hosts a fishing trawler. Where once these isles were refuge from the industrial stench wafting out of Parity Lake, now the odor of tons of fish and whales drift on the sea breeze.

The wealthy who lived here have been reeducated, and those with valuable management skills were brought to Central District to handle bureaucracy. Others were encouraged to serve as hosts for the fishermen, who reside in crowded mansions-turned-tenements. An unsightly truss bridge is halfway-constructed, extending from North Shore with the intent of linking the islands together with a rail line.

The Ayres Lantern Tower rises from a magically extruded rock island in the central lagoon of the islands.







### Bosum Strand

The docks are busy as ever, and Stanfield Canal is being widened. Freight rail threads through the district, with a major hub just beside Dawn Square. The square is the site of the Bosum Strand Lantern Tower, and the buildings around the field have been converted into lodging for the city's reeducation camps. Tall brick fences capped with barbed wire surround the whole area, and a riflery detachment keeps watch from atop the lighthouse tower.

The subrail lines connecting Central District and North Shore have just been bored out, and track has been laid, but lighting has not been installed, leaving miles of black tunnels under this district.

### Central

The royal docks have been expanded into a towering airship construction yard. The frame of a dirigible is complete and partially coated with the pressure vessel. Tanks containing hydrogen are dangerously huge and unguarded. (If you suspect your party will get their ship blown up in the fight with Harkover Lee, you might change the nature of the airship being built here, so the party can have a fresh vessel for their final fight against Nicodemus and the colossus.)

The former RHC headquarters has been renovated, and the Central Lantern Tower rises from it. **Director of the Secret Police Stover Delft** still operates from the building.

### Cloudwood

The forest is being clear-cut for farms, which are lit by gaslight lanterns. The Bridal Veil waterfall (where the party first met Gale) was detonated, because dissidents in this district had found a way to use it to cast 'veils' that would shield them from hiveminds. Now an ugly tumble of boulders forms rapids, rather than the serene and beautiful falls.

A scar of a rail line cuts its way from Central to the Cloudwood Lantern Tower, where lumber is loaded for construction purposes. **Minister of Nature Hana Soliogn**, formerly known as Gale, operates from here, and every day she casts a spell to call thick clouds over the entire city. This is done for morale, so people won't need to see the frightening Gyre looming overhead, and because the clouds reflect the brown lantern light to ever so slightly brighten the gloom.



### North Shore

While the beautiful beaches are open to the public, no one feels any need for recreation, so they are empty. The North Shore Lantern Tower rises like a beacon from atop the lower of the two 'ears' of the Great Horned Mountain at the northwest tip of the district. The higher of the two peaks has been cored and flattened at its top so immense turrets can aim skyward and at the harbor.

### Parity Lake

The factories here are going faster than ever. One of the few actual improvements in living conditions in Flint is that workers have been moved from tenements to slightly safer housing, and are able to take subrail to work. The Parity Lake Lantern Tower rises from the center of the (somewhat toxic, marginally flammable) lake.

The factories along Alchemy Row (such as where Sechim's Alkahest and Etchings operated) now all serve as a single immense munitions plant. Here, at least, the firegems and firedust are warded to prevent runaway explosion.

### Pine Island

This district is viewed as less economically useful, so most of its residents have been 'suggested' to join the military. Barracks and training fields dot the area. The Pine Island Lantern Tower sits near the northern tip of the district. Because of the length of the district, people in the south-central part of Pine Island are less affected, and so a few desperate former dockers like **Thames Grimsley** hide there, hoping to avoid discovery. They resist being drawn into hiveminds by reminding each other daily of the wonderful individuality they were able to express before the Obscurati came to power. They accepted a harsh life as long as they could speak their minds, so the Ob's promise of security held little sway over them.

### Stray River

This middle class district has been little changed, though a new rail station is under construction meant to service rail lines that will eventually stretch westward across all of Risur. The Stray River Lantern Tower sits on the east bank.

### The Nettles

Mostly abandoned over a year ago, the slum buildings still stand, serving as an excellent hiding place for those who want to avoid the hiveminds.

The Ob have not built anything new here, not even a lantern tower, because they're unsure how stable Cauldron Hill is. The Bleak Gate facility tore its way into the real world when the colossus Borne escaped, and then the Gyre began to strip away everything but the bare stone of the peak. Though now the Bleak Gate is apparently inaccessible, the mountain still possesses great and mysterious power.

If the party wants to prevent communication in and out of the city, they'll want to sneak atop Cauldron Hill and perform a discreet ritual (the details of which are inconsequential for PCs of their level).

### Freeing Flint

A lot will depend on how the party pursues this goal. Whatever they decide, go with it, but it should inevitably lead to a battle with Harkover Lee in dragon form.

If we were to script this, the party would let a train load of people they'd freed from the Ob hivemind reach Flint, and word would spread that the heroes of Risur have returned. The PCs discreetly enter the city in disguise and set up necessary ritual components and duplicant tech atop Cauldron Hill. Then they contact Gale, Stover Delft, and possibly other allies, freeing them from the hivemind and preparing them to act at the right moment. Those allies warn that Harkover is strongly compelled and it would be necessary to weaken his control over the city before he could be freed.



STOVER DELFT



GALE SOLIOGN



THAMES GRIMSLEY



Thames Grimsley would organize a theatrical performance on the docks of Bosum Strand to try to rally people stuck in the reeducation center to resist, and right as the defense forces are closing in to apprehend him, the party activates the ritual to block *sendings*, then descends in their airship from the cloud cover over the city. They take out the anti-air defenses on the Great Horned Mountain, destroy the lantern tower in Bosum Strand, then land and reveal themselves in Dawn Square.

Before they can make any big speeches, they notice that the unpleasant brown glow from the city's street lamps is turning red, spreading out block by block from a nexus at the governor's island. Then Harkover Lee teleports in, still in human form, greets the party, and tells them he has been ordered by Nicodemus to raze the city if they oppose the Obscurati. The battle begins just before noon, only a few hours after the party woke up near the ziggurat.

### Incidentals

If they succeeded, the party can call upon a whole city. Don't make them expend any resources to heal, and if they want any mundane gear they will not be denied.

## YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS

### Action. Tactical/Real-Time. Level 24.

*The dragon Inacht the Hex-Eater, once Harkover Lee the loyal advisor to the kings of Risur, battles the party across the length and breadth of Flint.*

Whenever the party reveals themselves or makes their move in Flint, Harkover first has the city-wide gas lines flooded with energy from Jiese, and then he confronts the party. If the party ambushes him, his aides know to set off the scorched earth operation. If the PCs are canny they might target the refinery on the island of the governor's mansion, and if they're stealthy enough they might be able to destroy it and head off this whole scene.

However, Harkover resides at the island and between his own magic and the ghost council that controls him, it's likely he'd notice the party's approach. If the PCs have a fool-proof plan — one that can get past spectral hounds that can sniff invisible creatures, widespread wards that illuminate anyone disguised or polymorphed (so Harkover always glows), bound nature spirits that warn of anyone magically traveling through the earth or water, and teleportation beacons that redirect intruders to the Pine Island barracks — let them Mission: Impossible this. But we think the following scene is exciting, so we hope it gets to happen.



HARKOVER LEE

### Treacherous Vizier

Harkover can *jaunt* once per day to teleport and get within range to speak to the party. He arrives in human form, flying with the aid of the ghost council, and his voice is magically magnified so hundreds or thousands of onlookers go silent as he calls to the PC who he previously served. His voice is jaunty, his Beran accent tinged with restrained mockery.

---

"Greetings, my former monarch and honored heroes of Risur. I ask that you surrender. For the past three years that I have watched your rise, you have been nothing if not loyal to your nation, and now if you wish to save your citizens, you will do the bravest thing and let yourselves be defeated.

"Your nation coerced me into becoming a docile pet, and when Nicodemus freed me he promised he would do the same to the people of Risur. Now they are my pets. If you persist in your arrogant belief that you have the right to direct the fate of these people, then your last directive shall be for them to perish in fire."

He cups his gold wizard's orb in one hand, then gestures with his other hand at the glow of red lantern light, slowly spreading through the city from the direction of Central District.

"Moments ago I gave the order for the city's gas lines to be flooded with energy from Jiese — pure elemental fire. In a matter of minutes it will reach high enough concentrations that it will explode, obliterating this city and all its people. Even if with your royal prowess you do manage to avert this, we have alerted Nicodemus, and the capital cities of the other four great nations are each lighting their own funeral pyres. You cannot save them all.

"Cast down your crown. Forsake the throne. Or this great city will die"

---

At any hostile action or attempt to stop the fire, Harkover adopts his draconic form as Inacht the Hex-Eater and tries to ensure the party cannot save the city.

### Stopping the Explosion

The party can thwart this five main ways: shut off the fuel lines, disable the refinery, destroy the towers, recalibrate the lanterns, or force Harkover to call it off.

**Shut Off the Fuel Lines.** The party could head underground into the subrail tunnels to turn valves and shut off the flow of gas going to each of the eight districts. Harkover would pursue as best he can, and the tunnels are big enough for a huge creature to run but not fly.

To find a place where the pipe flow can be controlled, a character can try to recall or infer the layout of the city's gas pipes. Roll a secret Perception or Knowledge (local) check (DC 35) for the character, and then give the PC a location within five hundred feet, which probably takes about a minute to travel to. If the check failed only slightly, the actual control valve might be close to where the PC thought it was (requiring a round or two of searching to locate it), but if the check fails by 5 or more, the character will have to guess again and try somewhere else another five hundred feet away or so.

Instead of finding a safe control valve, a PC might intentionally damage the pipes anywhere in the underground tunnel. Dealing at least 50 damage causes gas to fill the area. Three rounds later a small explosion goes off in a 50-foot-radius burst, dealing 15d6 fire damage (Reflex DC 25 for half). Following the initial explosion, the area is littered with irregular structures composed of threadlike firegems as the fire solidifies.

If the character does find a valve safely, it takes a DC 30 Disable Device or Spellcraft check (automatic for a technologist) to operate the mechanism. A failed check means the pressure builds up, and then the pipe cracks. As above, gas fills the tunnel and will explode in three rounds. The explosion happens instantly if the check is failed by 5 or more.

A character can keep trying to stop the flow of a gas leak, making another DC 30 Disable Device or Spellcraft check. If *this* check is failed, an explosion goes off immediately, and the fire runs down the length of the pipeline. A mile-long stretch of the city bursts into flame as the pipeline explodes underground and street lamps ignite on the surface. While a PC might survive this, and it does stop the larger explosion Harkover intends to wipe out an entire district, thousands still die.

**Disable the Refinery.** The governor's mansion and its refinery is heavily guarded with ten Obscurati construct squads (see page 59). You can reuse the map in adventure nine, or if the party tries to get into the underground pipeline the construct squads can pour into the service tunnels. A gunfight with unintelligent rifle-wielding constructs in close proximity to explosive gas is a terrible idea. Or wonderful, if you're Michael Bay.

Should the party enter the refinery and attempt to disable the flow there, they still need to shut each valve off separately (same mechanics as above), and it's obvious that if any of the pipelines explode, it will spread through the entire city. Again, this only wipes out parts of the city above the subrail lines, but it is still devastating. As for the refinery itself, if it blows up, repeat the attack above for three consecutive rounds, encouraging PCs to get the hell out of there.

**Destroy the Towers.** The PCs can destroy all the lantern towers, but they're scattered across the city, and even in their airship it takes five minutes for them to fly from one district to another. If the party splits up and everyone uses their ability to *jaunt*, plus other teleportation magic, they might be able to get to them all in time. They also could have allies if they have freed people from Ob control.

See the Lantern Tower map for details, though the layouts of the towers vary. Each has an Obscurati construct squad on the ground floor, and two city defense squads stationed outside. Inside, tanks hold a small quantity of gases infused with eight different planar energy types, and a main line receives gas from the refinery at the governor's mansion. That runs up through the second floor (which typically has a mechanism controlling four clocks on the tower's four faces), and up to the top of the tower where the lantern burns.

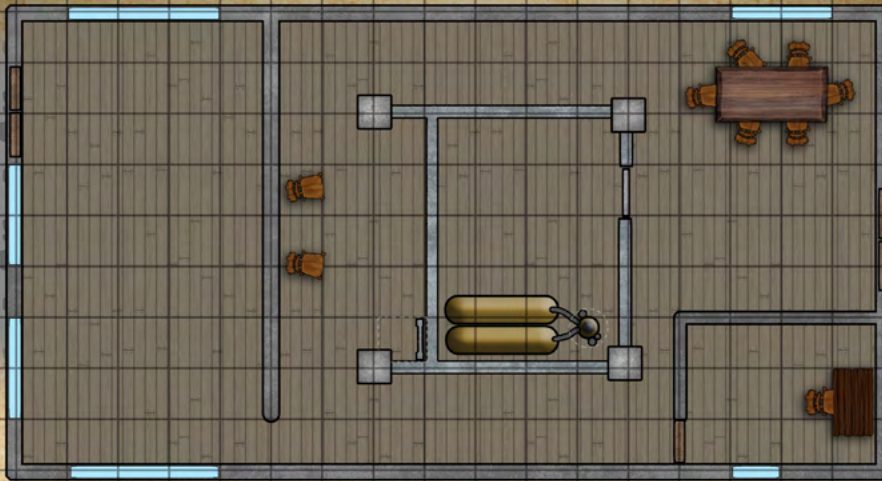
A good volley of ship's weaponry will take out a tower in a round, triggering an explosion, the same as the other explosions described above. A pressure valve shuts off flow if the lantern itself is destroyed, preventing the tower from constantly burning if the party decides to blow the place up.

If a PC gets inside a tower and reaches its controls at the top floor, clever sabotage (DC 35 Disable Device or Spellcraft, automatic for a technologist) can vent the gas into the air, where it burns off safely in a constant stream. Failing means the tower will explode in three rounds, as above. Failing by five or more causes an immediate explosion. And of course intentionally breaking the pipes can blow up the towers easily, if a character's confident he'll survive the explosion.





Ground



Clock



Lantern



1 = 5 feet

LANTERN TOWER



**Recalibrate the Lanterns.** The refinery on the governor's island can produce energy keyed to any of the different planes the Obscurati used in their Axis Seal ritual. Normally it emits a hazy brown light with energy from Ratios, to encourage reason and restraint. Harkover has switched it to Jiese's fire energy and has increased the flow rate.

If they reach the refinery, instead of just shutting off the lanterns, they could switch to a different energy with a DC 35 Knowledge (planes) check. Fourmyle's 'empowerment' trait would help people break free of the Ob's control amidst a green glow. Ostea's purple glow would suffuse everyone with healing energy. Baden's pale white light would let everyone fly. Once the refinery is recalibrated, the effect spreads about a mile per minute through the city. Each attempt takes a minute.

**Harkover Calls it Off.** If defeated and freed from control of the Obscurati, Harkover Lee can order the workers at the governor's island refinery to shut off the pipeline.

### Battle on the Wing

Harkover's draconic form as Inacht the Hex-Eater (see Appendix One: Combat Catalogue) is designed to give him mobility and range so he can engage the party on the wing as they rush through the city trying to stop the coming explosion. We encourage you, each round before you decide what he does, to ponder several rounds ahead. This is a brilliant, intelligent foe, not a mere clawed monster, and time is on his side.

Additionally, unless the party freed Delft and Gale from their hive-minds, those two each defend one of the two lantern towers—in Central District and the Cloudwood. Jaunting lets them move elsewhere if the party tries to avert the explosion without going to those towers.

Finally, an Obscurati construct squad and two city defense squads guard each lantern tower. If the party moves through the city at ground level, feel free to throw one or two city defense squads at the party every few minutes. They're barely speed-bumps at this level, but it gives you an excuse to describe the landscape of the city and clarify the party's progress through the city streets.

### You and Your Friends

- ♦ **Harkover Lee**, Dragon Tyrant
- ♦ **Stover Delft** of the Secret Police
- ♦ **Hana Soliogn**, Obscurati Loyalist
- ♦ numerous Obscurati construct squads
- ♦ countless city defense squads

### Tactics

We want this fight to last several minutes and span as much of Flint as possible. Don't closely track time, as long as the party is keeping active; the detonation might happen in as few as five or as many as thirty minutes, so long as the party feels the pressure is on. But it's impossible to predict whether the PCs will split up and head for different lantern towers, or if they'll board their airship and charge the dragon, or lure him within range of the North Shore anti-air cannons, or rush the refinery on governor's island forcing Harkover to engage them.

Let this combat stretch out, and don't have Harkover close the distance unless he can attack an isolated PC. If the party tries to take him out directly, he withdraws and circles, running down the clock. He stays between 150 and 200 feet out, and if the party has attacks that can reach him he swoops between buildings only slightly above the ground so that they have trouble getting a shot at him.

## DEFENDING THE KINGDOM

A PC who is monarch of Risur is empowered in this battle by the rites of rulership, as described in adventure nine. In particular, this grants a +10 bonus to AC, attack rolls and saving throws; a +10 bonus to Strength-, Dexterity-, and Constitution-based checks; fast healing 20 (in addition to fast healing 10 that is innate in the rites); and counts as Huge for abilities that depend on size. Because of this, Harkover prefers not to target the monarch until there are no other foes left.

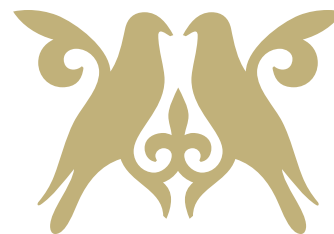
(If the Ob had been smart they would have followed the rites and had mind-controlled nobles revoke the monarch's power and name a new ruler, but Nicodemus thought the party was dead and didn't want to perpetuate the monarchy.)

Harkover will fire a few *delayed blast fireballs* from afar to try to keep the party focused on him, and if they move to try to deal with the impending explosion, he watches from afar and tries to get ahead of them in a wide arc. He'll dive out of sight if possible (even if the party's flying above the rooftops, it's hard to spot even a huge flying foe at night when he's a thousand feet away), then try to be waiting to attack from a direction they don't expect. They'll almost certainly hear him coming, but should only have a round of warning before he flies past and either pops them with more fire spells, or strafes them with his breath weapon if the PCs are clustered.

He should almost never use his melee attacks unless cornered, and even then he prefers to reposition enemies away so he can withdraw. If he's ever struck with multiple conditions that he cannot easily recover from, he'll *dimension door* away and look for a different tactic.

The greatest threat to him is probably the party's own airship, since it keeps him from using the city as cover, and it removes his chief advantage of speed. But the airship isn't fast enough to get to all the lantern towers in time, so the party will have to split up. If the PCs get on their ship and rush him, he reverts to human form, teleports to the ground and ducks into a building, in which he'll wait for the PCs to give up looking for him.

After some initial long-range bombardment and possibly one close engagement, have Harkover vanish for a bit. Give the party time to deal with one or two of the pipelines or towers, and then have the dragon return and target whoever's most vulnerable, then warily withdraw. Give the party time to come up with a plan to deal with him, and come up with a way for Harkover to thwart their first plan. Then, when they're just past halfway to saving the city, try to steer events so the party is all able to do something when Harkover is forced to actually get in close.





### Flint Nostalgia

The reason, of course, to extend the length of the battle is to give as many familiar faces and places an opportunity to have a cameo. If the party freed Delft before the fight, their old Chief Inspector might be able to disable the lantern tower at the RHC headquarters, saving the party time; and ditto Gale in the Cloudwood. (Without the hiveminds empowering them, neither is strong enough to fight Harkover.)

Perhaps the party enters the subrail tunnels through the same station where the eschatologists took hostages in adventure five. Soldiers under Ob control might start shooting at the party, only to themselves fall under attack by former Kell Guild scoundrels. Maybe the building Harkover throws at them was part of the natural history museum, complete with murals of Ancients and their artifacts. While running down the length of an old subrail tunnel, a PC might glimpse a blood-streaked access hatch from which a man huddled in rags watches them (yeah, we never did anything with the rag man either).

If it looks like they're out of time, and the party can't reach the North Shore tower, a last-minute attack led by Julian LeBrix from the old Danoran consulate can shut it off before it blows.



### Aftermath

When reduced to 0 hit points, Harkover crashes and shapeshifts back to human form. Clinging to life solely through magic, he curses Nicodemus for making him betray his nation. The ghost councilors bound to him stagger away, and if the party stabilizes Harkover they can free him from the hivemind. If they leave him to die, his last words are a warning that Nicodemus has ordered Alais Primos, Cherage, Seobriga, and Trekhom destroyed.

If saved, Harkover surrenders and warns that the other capital cities will be exploding soon too because he *sent* to Nicodemus. He's unaware of any countermeasures the party put into place. He can share the same information as above, plus the fact that the figures in charge are at the Cathedral of Triegenes in Alais Primos, the Cherage rail enclave, Seobriga's central square, and a parade route that starts at Trekhom's parliament building.

By this point Pemberton will have collected the witchoil he needs from atop Cauldron Hill, and is ready to let the party activate their duplicants. First, though, the PCs may want to address the city, whose populace will all be looking for guidance. If needed, Gale can use her magic to magnify their voices so all of Flint can hear them. If they've defeated Harkover and saved the city, the power of the hivemind is weakened. All it takes now is giving the people of Flint some other purpose so they can resist the Ob's attempts to reclaim them. Any good heroic speech should do the trick.

As the party speaks, the clouds over Cauldron Hill break, and a gap that resembles the spread wings of a raven reveals the sparkling glow of the Gyre overhead.

## VERSUS ME AND THE REVOLUTION

### Action. Montage. Level 20.

*In order to liberate the oppressed masses of other nations, avert a scornful scorched earth, and incite a revolution, the party must strike multiple international targets simultaneously, one for each of them.*

The party should move on the other capital cities within minutes of defeating Harkover Lee if they want to be certain the Obscurati aren't able to burn them down. Even if the party blocked *sendings* from Flint to keep specific information from being delivered, there are enough psychic gestalts active in the ranks of the Ob that its officers don't take long to realize that their powers have waned noticeably. Within half an hour they pinpoint that Flint has been cut free from the Ob's network of hiveminds. If the party procrastinates more than an hour, then the cities of Alais Primos, Cherage, Seobriga, and Trekhom will be laid to waste.

The PCs can of course use their own teleportation magic to reach the cities instead of using Pemberton's duplicants, but the key factor to this scene is that all four cities must be saved at the same time. If the whole party spends five minutes in Cherage, warning will be sent ahead to the other three cities, so it will be too late to save them.



## Simultaneity

In our experience few gamers can maintain rapt attention on their fellow players' actions when their own character isn't in the scene. If you are blessed with such a group, by all means, run each of the scenes below independently.

If your group is less patient, or at least experimental and forgiving, you can try running all four or five scenes in parallel. Have each PC roll initiative, then play through a snippet of a scene with the PCs in turn order, cycling through them and advancing the plot bit by bit. The first cycle establishes where the PC awakens in their duplicant, the second gives them a chance to figure out where the threat to the city is based, and in the third they make their way to that spot and get into conflict of some sort. If anyone starts a combat, put that PC on hold until all the PCs are in combat, or at least in some other time-sensitive challenge.

Then run all the battles at the same time, resolving each PC and all of their foes for one turn, then the next PC and foes, and so on. Clever parties will use some manner of magic to let them communicate with each other, or you can simply have Pemberton's tech grant the PCs the ability to talk to other duplicants. (Or, depending on what technological advances they pursued in adventures seven through nine, they might have radios.) You can then justify table-talk, or perhaps even bizarre tactics like swapping duplicants mid-fight.

Of the scenes below, the events in Cherage probably have the strongest emotional impact, but if you figure one in particular will resonate with your group, try to have that one resolve last.

## Distant Situations

Pemberton had his duplicants hidden away, so when the PCs take control of them they aren't necessarily anywhere near where they need to be. If they didn't save Harkover and learn where to go, each PC will have to figure out how the city is imperiled and make their way to a place they can avert calamity.

As always, if any of the NPCs referenced below are dead, you can introduce a new character to fill the same general role. We've designed these encounters to be exceptionally dangerous, because at this point in the campaign failure should have a major, lasting effect. If only one or two PCs succeed in saving the city they go to, then the other cities fall. Because they're in duplicants, it's possible to 'kill' a PC and have him fail this mission, at which point he'll awaken in his real body.

Disabling, destroying, or recalibrating the lantern towers in any of these cities functions the same as in Flint, though cities without fire energy don't have exploding towers.

## Alais Primos

The city doesn't have a network of gas lines for handy detonation, but the Ob have created four Lantern Towers, each with its own fuel supply, to pacify the city. Currently the head of state of Crisillyir **Arch Secula Natalia Degaspore** is overseeing the systematic disenchanting and dismantling of the Cathedral of Triegenes, which sits on the mouth of the volcano Enzyo Mons. Among the workers is **Morgan Cippiano**, who will recognize and warn of any PC who appears here. If alerted, either by Morgan or by guards ringing the bells in the lantern towers, Degaspore commands the towers to switch to fuel derived from the now-destroyed plane of death, Av, which causes the souls of everyone in the city to leave their bodies, trapping them in a purgatory while their physical bodies slowly perish.

## DUPLICANT MECHANICS

Pemberton has two duplicants in each of the cities in this scene, so a PC might go solo or, if there are enough PCs, the party can put two constables per conflict. Perhaps if a PC's first duplicant is destroyed, he can 'respawn' and try again after healing.

The duplicants mimic all the character's abilities unless otherwise stated, even those of the character's worn equipment. As for melee weapons, upon activating the duplicant the character will need to find something of similar size and shape of whatever weapon he wants to wield, which will be transformed and empowered by the magic of the soul link.

Ranged weapons function somewhat similarly, but they need to have at least somewhat similar form — you can't pick up a simple iron bar and have it function as a gun, but any musket can work as a vessel for the power of a PC's *+5 undead-bane rifle*. Note that the duplicants in Trekhom were intended for an assassination, and so they have rifles handy when they arrive.

Because of the magical link to the pilot's soul, damage to the duplicant is also dealt to the pilot, and likewise healing affects both, so potentially one PC could stay behind to communicate with everyone and heal them as they become injured. If the duplicant is reduced to 0 hit points, it is destroyed, and the pilot awakens in his own body with 1 hit point. The pilot can also choose to sever his connection as a standard action.

A duplicant has DR 10/adamantine while above half its maximum hit points. While below this threshold, he or she takes a -2 penalty to AC and saving throws. The duplicant has darkvision 60 ft., blindsense 30 ft., and is immune to poison and disease. They aren't technically alive, but effects transfer to the pilot's body, so blood loss or psychic attacks that make you unable to breathe are still a threat (though blood loss that does less than 10 damage isn't a problem as long as the duplicant is above half its maximum hit points).

The character is generally unaware of what is happening to his or her own body, which is considered helpless. Damage dealt to a real body manifests on the duplicant. The pilot can also distantly hear things around their real body.

If PCs decide they don't have the right skills for a given mission and want to swap with someone else, the pilot can sever his connection as a standard action. It takes two move actions to swap the linking apparatus with an ally (which pulls that ally out of his duplicant), and then another standard action for each creature to reestablish a link. From the point of view of people in distant cities, the PC's features will shift into the metal body of a duplicant, which will slump but remain standing. Don't be too mean and have the bystanders attack the briefly defenseless machine.



### Cherage

The demoness **Ashima-Shimtu** is moving among masses of Danoran citizens who are convinced their lives are too wretched to be worthwhile to the new world. They have gathered at the Cherage Rail Enclave, where the city's gas lines originate, and where undesirables are loaded into trains to be disposed of under the direction of Danor's minister of propaganda **Gardienne du Cherage**. Ashima-Shimtu is uncertain about her role now that she has freedom, and she will fight against any PC who tries to work against the Obscurati's will.

### Seobriga

In the central square of the Beran capital, **Bruse Shantus** oversees a systematic mass execution of goblins and gnolls, whose recalcitrance about becoming civilized has helped them resist the Obscurati's pacification efforts. **Brakken of Heffanita** helps corral the prisoners, among whom is **Glauca Evora**, who was strong-willed enough to resist the Ob's influence. Guarded by trained tyrannosaurs, the hivemind-controlled Bruse is ready to order the city's Lantern Towers to be flooded with Illocus energy, from the plane of time, causing the city's emotions to rapidly cascade. He'll then release the goblins and gnolls so they can attack, provoke a panic, and drag the city into a bloodletting melee. The PC receives unexpected aid in the form of the suave **Sor Daeron**, a one-armed eladrin warrior who years ago served Kasvarina, but who now intends to dismantle the power of the Obscurati.

### Trekholm

The new head of state of Drakr, **Hastenschrieff Willimarkanova** (an Ob officer philosopher), runs a parade route through the capital city Trekholm. War constructs escort her, and she rides in a carriage with the philosopher **Vlendam Heid** beside her as a dwarven shield. At the end of the parade she'll enter a heavily-fortified underground bunker, then detonate the city's lanterns, so there's little time to strike. But her route is watched from afar by sniper **Kvarti Gorbatiy**, who can teleport between the city's lantern towers to maintain near-constant overwatch.

### Optional—The Siege of Enclave Sentosa

Eladrin matriarch **Athrylla Valenar**'s enclave of Sentosa found itself drawn fully into the real world when Av was shattered in the Gyre, and now **Cula Ravjahani**, former aide-de-camp of Kasvarina, commands a siege around the city. The Ob have sufficient firepower to obliterate the small number of hold-outs, but Cula has been ordered to take Athrylla prisoner. Defeating Cula will weaken the hivemind's control on its soldiers and earn the party powerful allies among the eladrin.

### The Mission

In each location, one PC will need to find out what specifically is threatening the city, and then avert that. Afterward, the survivors will be easily swayed to help the party, so it would be useful to give them orders to keep them working against the Obscurati. If the party intends to use the *sacrament of apotheosis*, they should make sure the people they save know who rescued them, and spread the word so that in a few hours when they are called upon to help, everyone will know to answer. Once everyone is done they should return to their real bodies, leaving their duplicants inert, and then they'll set out together for Axis Island.

The *sacrament* requires people to have faith in a specific named ideal or entity, so if the PCs are going that route, they should probably decide on a term to refer to themselves as a group. This could be as simple as 'the RHC' or 'the heroes of Risur.' If they want something a bit more impressive, Pardo once again recommends 'the Illuminati.'

### Alais Primos—God is Dead

The PC who tackles Alais Primos activates a duplicant lying atop a bed, covered in a white sheet, in a tower not far from the Grand Librarium. A cracked skylight has let in recent rain, and the whole building's core of wooden frame is rotting, but a glass door opens out to an ornate marble balcony that overlooks a majestic view of the city. As everywhere else, snow has fallen and the air is below freezing. Notably, Alais Primos does not have the ubiquitous gaslight lamps of Flint, but it does have four lantern towers dispersed around the valley, glowing a docile brown. But it's one *missing* light that stands out most starkly: across several canals, past various monuments of the old faith, and up the scorched slope of the mountain Enzyo Mons, the volcano's maw is dark, its lava cool. In its place, hundreds of small lanterns light up what remains of the Cathedral of Triegenes.

The distant cathedral that sits at the edge of the caldera looks different; most of its higher levels are missing, though it appears to have been carefully disassembled, not merely demolished.

(If the dragon Esurientes destroyed the cathedral in adventure eleven, you could instead have Natalia overseeing the construction of a geothermal power plant on the volcano.)

Sounds of weeping waft up from the base of the tower. On the ground level, a mass prayer of defiant worshippers has sprung up despite new laws that forbid all religion. A few dozen people have managed to resist the control of the city's hivemind, but at this very moment city guardsmen approach the crowd from two directions. If not stopped they'll beat and arrest the worshippers, then carry them away to the city's newly-constructed rail depot so they can be loaded into trains and carted away for reeducation or elimination.

The top floor of the tower is only 70 feet up, so a dramatic leap and rescue is heartily encouraged. A single City Defense Squad threatens the faithful, which is hardly a speedbump for even a solitary PC.



ARCH SECULA NATALIA DEGASPERE



MORGAN CIPPIANO

### The Secular Deconstruction

From rescued faithful, the police, or some other source, it's easy to learn that the new head of state of Crisillyir, Arch Secula Natalia Degaspore, is at the Cathedral of Triegenes overseeing its methodical deconstruction. Hundreds of people cling to scaffolding around the building, chipping free bricks one at a time, then carrying them down so Natalia can disenchant them.

Among the workers is Mogan Cippiano, former head of the Family crime syndicate's branch in Flint. If a PC spots him first (DC 30 Perception), he might be freed from control, at which point he can warn the PCs of Natalia's powers. Otherwise he might spot the PC and warn Natalia. In a fight, the arch secula shouts for workers to ring the cathedral bells, which alerts the lantern towers in the city. Then she dampens any magical powers the PC has while the local police fill him with bullets. Her bookpin bodyguards try to shield her, and will chase after a PC who flees.

Alternately, a PC might simply target the lantern towers directly, but they're separated by about a mile each. The lantern towers are laid out generally the same as those in Flint, except instead of clocktowers they have belltowers. The old golden bells still hang throughout the city, inscribed with magic chants that have not been used in centuries. In the two Victories, those bells were often rung to create city-wide defenses, from mere teleportation wards to immense shimmering walls of force. In this scene they'll most likely just be rung as an alarm (cords can activate them from the ground floor), but if things go terribly wrong they offer a chance to save the city.

If the PC lets the defenders sound an alarm bell – either at the cathedral or in one of the lantern towers – two things happen. First, a golden light rolls outward from the bell; this has no effect, but a PC might realize with aDC 20 Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (history) check that the bells once harnessed the power of Urim to block teleportation. Second, within a minute of the signal, all the towers activate their failsafe, and their lanterns shed a swirling purple-green light.

### *Alais Primos Lantern Towers (4)*

- ♦ 2 City Defense Squads
- ♦ 1 Obscurati Construct Squad

### *Cathedral of Triegenes*

- ♦ Arch Secula Natalia Degaspore
- ♦ 1 Bookpin Bodyguard Squad
- ♦ 1 City Defense Squad

### Things Go Terribly Wrong

If the failsafe activates, the towers burn fuel infused with the power of Av, which before it was shattered in the Gyre served as the plane of death. Each tower covers a quadrant of the city, ripping people's souls from their bodies. Unable to reach the destroyed Av, thousands of souls float in a limbo that vaguely resembles Alais Primos, and over the course of an hour the lights of the lantern towers gutter and die. If the PC cannot find a solution by then, the city perishes.

Those at the Cathedral of Triegenes are safe from this power, but once the lanterns turn on there's no one at the towers alive to turn them off. It would appear venturing into the city is hopeless.

If a PC is caught in the lantern light, he must make a DC 30 Will save each round or his soul is pulled into the shared limbo of Alais Primos.

A PC might be able to withstand this effect long enough to destroy or disable one or more of the towers, which only have their construct guards, since the city defense squads will have lost their souls. Fighting while resisting the lantern's effect (and briefly glimpsing flashes of the limbo where people's souls scream for help) will be risky and desperate, and eventually a natural 1 will probably pull the PC into the limbo, at which point the PC will need a new way to save the people of Alais Primos. Once in the limbo, the character cannot end his connection to the duplicant, because his soul is no longer in his original body.

Of course, other PCs might be able to finish their missions and somehow come and help. But the solution we have in mind is for the PC to be trapped in limbo and see that the light of the towers is slowly fading. If he goes to a tower, he'll realize that the bells are the only solid thing in what's left of the world. It's possible to inscribe a new spell onto the bell with aDC 24 Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (religion) check, so that when it tolls that spell peals out across the city. Many options would work, ranging from sonic attacks to shatter the lantern glass to some manner of countermagic to restore everyone's souls.

If the city falls into limbo but then is rescued, the survivors are freed from the hivemind, yet still feel an intense kinship. For a brief moment, their souls began to mingle, and strangers throughout Alais Primos seek each other out, weeping and hoping they can serve each other better as friends and neighbors.



## Cherage—Another Kind of Chain

The demoness **Ashima-Shimtu** was given a promise of immunity by Nicodemus, as the mastermind ultimately ascribes his motivation to found the Obscurati to Ashima-Shimtu's offer of the *sacrament of apotheosis* five centuries ago. She is escorted at all times by a pair of ghost councilors who ensure that no one accosts her. The only restriction Nicodemus has placed on her is that she must not come to Axis Island. So Ashima-Shimtu went to Cherage, thinking to witness the glorious new age in the mastermind's seat of power. Thus far she finds this new world closer to the rule of the Demonocracy than the rumored perfection of the celestial heavens.

While Ashima-Shimtu was in chains, she indulged in the idea of abandoning her evil nature and pursuing some form of noble redemption, but the demoness is giving herself time to ponder her course of action now that she actually has the option to enjoy malevolence again. Her first taste of freedom in centuries was tempered with the cloying moral imperative of the Obscurati's new world order, and she is uncertain if she actually has any choice in how she acts.

She has found herself strongly affected by the propaganda that is present everywhere in Cherage. The Obscurati's master of propaganda **Gardienne du Cherage** (a tiefling who attended the Obscurati conclave in adventure seven) has implemented a widespread campaign to teach the people of Danor the proper way to live in the new world, and slogans regularly adorn walls or newspaper headlines:

- ♦ “Visit Your Local Library for Detailed Tracts on the Proper Way to Live?”
- ♦ “You Need Only Ask! The New World Will Provide?”
- ♦ “Create Progress! Aid Your Fellow Man?”
- ♦ “Reject Your Greed. Your Community is More Important Than You?”
- ♦ “Know Your Talents. How Can **YOU** Best Help?”
- ♦ “Is Your Neighbor a Threat to Order? Be Brave! Report Him!”
- ♦ “This is the Best of All Possible Worlds?”

Struggling to understand her place in this world, Ashima-Shimtu has followed thousands of other confused and yearning souls to the Cherage Rail Enclave. People know that this is where undesirables go when they are to be carted away and disposed of for the greater good. So prevalent and affecting is the propaganda that myriad citizens have been filled with dolorous despair. Wishing to no longer be a burden on their community, they want their government to kill them.

## Fuel Depot

The gas for Cherage's lantern towers is originally refined north of the city proper, and trains deliver it in tanks to the rail enclave, from which it is fed to the whole city. A wayfarer's lantern was added atop the clock-tower (building 2 on the map), and it casts the enclave in dull brown light, unless the Obscurati have been alerted, in which case the guards are rapidly working to turn valves and switch over to the red glow of fire energy.

Enclave guards line the sides of the rail tracks to keep suicidal citizens from flinging themselves into the paths of trains, but otherwise the streets and buildings of the enclave are overrun by disconsolate folk. Yerasol War veterans who never learned skills other than combat, single mothers whose children have died, orphans who have no one to guide them, and desperate drug addicts who perversely are helped by anyone they ask to help fund their habits – people of these sorts see the supposedly inspirational propaganda slogans and instead have determined that the way they can best help their fellow man is to cease to be a drain on society.

Ashima-Shimtu, wrapped in a fine robe of red silk, sits on a rooftop beside a withered old tiefling woman who goes by the name **Ruby** (actual name **Willa du Zirteim**). Ruby shivers from fey pepper dementia. She became dependent on the drug to lift her spirits when the sun disappeared, but a few months ago when Av was shattered in the Gyre she could no longer get glimpses of the Dreaming. Normal life was too mundane for her to tolerate, and so she took ever increasing doses of the pepper, hoping to recapture the high that would never come. Instead, every time she smoked she would hallucinate feelings like she was lashed with chains and pulled in a thousand different directions. The metaphor struck a chord in Ashima-Shimtu, and she desires to help the woman, though she cannot decide how.

In the meanwhile, Gardienne du Cherage, acting as public face of the government of Danor since Han Jierre is at Axis Island, has come to the enclave, and she stands at the top floor of the fuel depot in front of the lantern, shouting at the suicidal masses, trying to undo the psychological damage she inadvertently wrought. Guards follow her in order to deter attacks, but with her bond to the ghost council she's quite capable of defending herself from low-level foes.





### A Threat to Order

A PC in the Cherage duplicant becomes active in a warehouse near the city's harbor, lying on a pallet in a corner and covered in a sheet. The city is just as tranquil and bland as Flint, but if the PC asks for guidance, a helpful local woman wearing a scarf, veil, and hooped dress will gladly point out that the city's lanterns are fed by the depot at the rail enclave, about a mile from the harbor. Close examination of this helpful local woman reveals her to be a small colony of rats, operating as a hive-mind and piled atop each other so they can shuffle about in vague human form. They function as spies for El Extraño (see adventure ten, page 48), but if questioned directly they might panic and disperse into the sewers.

Lines of hopeless people stretch out from the enclave, and here at least people chatter, sharing word of the rail schedules so that they can know how long it will be before they'll be carted off to be killed. After finding some way through or above the crowd, it's easy to spot the fuel depot beneath the lantern tower, and Gardienne du Cherage – standing right next to the glowing lantern – has a presence to her that suggests she is at the head of the city's hivemind.

Ashima-Shimtu could easily be missed as just one face in the crowd (DC 35 Perception), but she notes the PC's arrival and watches curiously, since her rooftop is right across from the lantern tower. Gardienne knows what the PCs look like, but a stealthy PC might avoid detection. At any meddling with the tower, though, the propagandist orders the lantern to be switched to its failsafe – explosive fire energy from Jiese. Before Gardienne or her guards can attack, Ashima-Shimtu intervenes, pulling the PC away with chains and flinging him onto the train tracks.

She demands an explanation in her own peculiar third-person way (“A train approaches to deliver Ashima-Shimtu away, and time is short for her acquaintance to explain the reason behind this attack?”). The Ob forces start to try to take advantage of the opening, but the demoness threatens them with her chains too. She's too conflicted to let them kill the PC without trying to listen first.

A low, long horn and vibration in the tracks announces the approach of a freight train, only a few minutes away.

### Wretched Audience

Fighting is certainly an option, but Ashima-Shimtu can be convinced that the Ob should be stopped, though it will take some persuading. In her current mindset, she's willing to believe that if the Obscurati have decided to destroy the whole city, she deserves it, and so she will fight to keep the PC from interrupting the scorched earth plan. Changing her mind requires understanding what's happened with this wretched crowd, and if the PC engages Ashima-Shimtu in conversation, she is reticent and uncomfortable with the unfamiliar emotion of shame.



ASHIMA-SHIMTU

Coaxing the demoness to open up can use the mechanics of ‘interrogating a suspect’: first establish rapport (DC 32 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Knowledge (religion) check; after one failure you can try only one more, at DC 42), and then extract the information (DC 32 Sense Motive; failing twice loses rapport). A PC that pays particular attention to the desperate crowd and seems like he or she understands their plight should get a +5 bonus. A PC who asks about Ruby, who was sitting beside the demoness only moments ago can automatically get rapport if he listens to the tiefling's story.

If successfully coaxed, Ashima-Shimtu explains, starting off sneering but quickly losing her composure and ending up desperate.





"Centuries in a prison, and Ashima-Shimtu only attempted escape once. Surely she was a perfect prisoner. Her will was restrained, so what could she do but obey the Clergy and meditate on her sins. She meditated on the Clergy's sins as well. She had known Triegenes. *He* was a man of true light. But Ashima-Shimtu never saw the world he promised.

"No, she saw everything break and fall. She...pulled, she thrashed at her chains. She wept until the bleeding left her too weak to resist. She refused her identity, so she could believe all that pain was happening to someone else. But she doesn't deserve pity. Even a prisoner, Ashima-Shimtu was selfish. She was filled with malice, but when she tried to take revenge, all she achieved was just to make sure she did not bleed alone.

"But that was someone else, she told herself. Except there was no self left to tell.

"She could not be free. She was forbidden the choice even to die.

"Finally, finally her chains broke. She crawled out into a world without a sun. She believed she could do whatever she desired. Wretched, dragging her chains with her, she yearned for the old villainy.

"But she cannot! She...I cannot!

"Triegenes promised all could be redeemed. I thought I'd *changed*. But now I feel it, in the air. I cannot choose. I must do what...what *they* say is right! There's no temptation to overcome, so how can I be redeemed? If this is freedom, it's worse than the chains ever were.

"It is worse a lie than any ever told by Ashima-Shimtu, and I will tell it no more! I don't want this false freedom. If it's the only choice I am granted, give me death!"

After that plea, she can be swayed to the PC's side with any decent argument, at which point she'll turn all her infernal talents toward intimidating Gardienne into surrender.

If Ashima-Shimtu is not swayed, though, she'll resign herself to fighting, and the crowd will surge forward in awe, convinced she is their savior and a loyal contributor to the community. The demoness tries to hold the PC on the tracks, and the train is only three rounds away.

### ***Cherage Fuel Depot***

- ♦ Gardienne du Cherage
- ♦ 2 bookpin bodyguard squads
- ♦ Ashima-Shimtu





### Aftermath

A failure here likely means a PC's duplicant body being shattered apart by an oncoming train, and shortly thereafter the whole city explodes.

Stopping the Ob from destroying Cherage snaps the masses out of their despondence, and they're inclined to march on the sovereign's palace, burn it to the ground, and execute anyone in a position of power. Ashima-Shimtu, should she survive, honors the request of Nicodemus not to interfere with Axis Island, and instead she boards a train and sets out to free other Danoran cities.

### Seobriga—Civilized Execution

Pemberton's duplicant in Seobriga had to be hidden far from the city center, because the authorities were all too aware of the threat duplicants posed. When the PC activates his duplicant, he awakes in the loft of a stable, covered in a white sheet, and he can hear jeering from outside. The stable lies along the Monument Road on the northern border of the city, and a crowd has gathered to jeer a line of prisoners being carted toward Seobriga's central square.

Bruse Shantus (or whoever succeeded him) has decreed that the 'primitive tribes' of goblins and gnolls be eliminated. The military set up a vast prison camp on the outskirts of Seobriga, since the Bruse intended their execution to be a regular public event, meant to reinforce that Ber embraces civilization and rejects savagery.

Alas, Nicodemus, like many people who should have died a long time ago, is more racist than he presents himself to be, and so for Ber's part in deterring the PCs from moving against the Obscurati, he planned what he thinks is a humorous irony. Rather than using Jiese energy to engulf the city in flames, the lantern towers in Seobriga will be fueled with Illocus energy. The power of the plane of time causes emotions to rapidly cascade, and if it coincides with a bloody mass execution it will drive the population into a violent frenzy.

Anyone in the crowd will gladly share that the prisoners are bound for execution in the central square of Seobriga, where the daily protests used to occur before everyone learned the value of obedience. The killing should be starting any minute, and this will be a good one, because they're killing an *executore dola liberta*, some gnoll who refused to obey.

If the PC wants to get to the square soon enough to save Glaucia Evora, it's time for dashing, Zorro-esque heroism. We have handily put horses in the stable to kick things off at a gallop.



BRUSE SHANTUS

### The Killing Field

The Beran capital doesn't have street gas lamps, so like in Alais Primos the Ob have just erected four lantern towers. One is in the central square, directly above the teleportation beacon where the party arrived in adventure six. Ropes stretch out from its first story roof of the tower to the roofs of the buildings surrounding the square, and propaganda flags hang from them.

A squad of marksmen arrayed around the lantern tower have their guns at ready for a conflict. Below them, the square is filled with a few dozen orc, half-giant, and minotaur soldiers who watch over a line of one hundred manacled goblins and gnolls, kneeling on the flagstones. Onlookers peer out of the multistoried windows of the buildings surrounding the killing field.

The streets directly outside the square are clogged with crowds who want a look. And, as it so happens, some particularly interested onlookers are hidden on the roofs.

### The Old Master and the Young Apprentice

The eladrin **Sor Daeron** has for the past several months taken it upon himself to disrupt as many Obscurati activities as possible. He knows Kasvarina is involved with the Ob, and he wants to lure her out to finish what he started four hundred years ago (see adventure eight, *Diaspora*). She has not deigned to come to Ber, but Sor Daeron has found himself genuinely swayed by the plight of the people. Though he was originally a general and holy warrior, Sor Daeron sincerely believes in the tenets of Vekesh, and wants to ensure the people of Ber will survive the dominion of the Obscurati.

Early on as the Obscurati hiveminds were taking over in the cities of Ber, Sor was injured and fleeing soldiers, and he took shelter in the home of **Damata Griento**, half-orc businessman and would-be railroad tycoon. After the immediate danger passed, Damata's brave dreams got the better of him, and he insisted his wife and children go into hiding to avoid being caught in a hivemind, while he would serve as Sor's masked sidekick and assistant. Together, the two have weakened the Obscurati's foothold in Ber, and today they hope to show the Beran people that they can resist the Ob.



GLAUCIA EVORA



SOR DAERON



## Defiant Last Words

As the PC approaches the square, he feels a psychic projection in his mind, granting him a view of the imminent execution.

Bruse Shantus walks down a long row of prisoners, flanked by a pair of king-bred tyrannosaurs draped in royal raiment, and accompanied by Brakken of Heffanita, who telepathically projects the ruler's proclamation. Other Berans of note might be present, such as Zarkava Ssa'litt or Kenna Vigilante, but none of them are empowered by hiveminds, and thus aren't a threat in battle.

The Bruse shouts, "Don't look away, citizens! These savages before us were given a chance to obey our laws, but they rejected us. Disobedience

is an uncivil serpent, and we must strike off its head before it poisons us. Let all who would resist our unity smell the blood spilled today, and know we shall come for them soon!"

Brakken hands the Bruse a ceremonial greatsword, but as he hefts it, a prisoner at the center of the line stands, even though she has to awkwardly heave up two goblins who are manacled to her. The gnoll, Glaucia Evora, spits at the Bruse.

"We were never a nation of obedience, tyrant! We were a nation of justice. On this killing field, you might cut us down, but our blood will water a new crop of revolution. Better a savage than a slave?"

## Nick-of-Time Heroics

Whether by leaping his horse over the crowds or Assassin's-Creed-parkouring over rooftops to dive into the killing field, the PC can manage arrive just in time to witness Glaucia Evora's defiant last words. If the PC doesn't rush in, though, Sor and Damata swoop in before the gnoll is beheaded.

The half-orc and eladrin have watched from a rooftop at the edge of the square, and when it becomes clear Bruse Shantus is about to execute one of the prisoners – or if the PC who's here moves first—Damata triggers a series of arcane pyrotechnics Sor secretly placed earlier in the day, which cause the ground of the square to catch fire in the shape of a giant S hundreds of feet across. Then smaller pyrotechnics trigger in the side streets, scaring the crowd away and creating a path for the prisoners to escape.

Sor leaps into the killing field and engages the Bruse and his tyrannosaur pets. He'll cooperate with a PC, and when the lantern tower's light begins to change, Sor suggests they both deal with the tower first. A round later Damata swoops in on one of the ropes that lead from the outer buildings to the tower, and he fights off soldiers while tossing weapons to the prisoners so they can make a break for it.

If the PC doesn't join in, the two heroes are overwhelmed and have to flee before they can stop the lantern tower, and the city falls to mass carnage. The vigilantes survive, though, because Damata has read *How not to get shot*, and is very good at dodging bullets while running.



DAMATA GRIENTO

## Freedom Fighters

Bruse Shantus was warned about the party interfering, so the moment there's an interruption he waves at the soldiers on the lantern tower. One round later the tower's brown glow changes to strobing red-white. From that point on, whenever a creature anywhere in the city is threatened – ranging from a full-on attack to an overly-rough jostle in a crowd – they respond even more aggressively. For NPCs you can handwave this, but if a PC or ally is threatened or harmed, he must make a DC 20 Will save or retaliate within the next minute. If he does not, after ten rounds he begins to take 1 point of damage each round until he attacks someone, falls unconscious, or ends his turn with no line of sight to any other conscious creature.

Once he has signaled the tower, the Bruse drops his ceremonial sword, draws his earth breaker and charges in, coordinating his attacks with his guardian tyrannosaurs. The nearby City Defense Squads shoot if their target isn't within the Bruse's *primitive presence* aura, but otherwise stay at their posts – one on the roof of the Lantern Tower, and three others stationed around its base.

## Beran Forces

- ♦ Bruse Shantus
- ♦ 2 Ob-Bred Tyrannosaurs
- ♦ 4 City Defense Squads

## Allies

- ♦ Sor Daeron
- ♦ Glaucia Evora



BRAKKEN OF HEFFANITA



Damata is here too, but he's much lower level than the major players, and so generally keeps his distance. Ideally a tyrannosaur will try to bite off one of Sor's limb, and he'll let it chomp through his salt arm, which he can immediately regrow.

### Aftermath

If the PC fails here, the citizens of Seobriga kill each other nearly to the last man within an hour. But if the Bruse is defeated and the hivemind's control broken, the people of the city surge to the square, seeking guidance. Sor Daeron defers to Damata, who boldly calls on the crowd to march on the nearby prison camp and free the rest of the 'savages.' The crowd cheers, but before they depart, Glaucia Evora grabs the half-orc and threatens that if he tries to turn this revolution to his personal gain, she will beat him until he wouldn't need a mask to conceal his face anymore.

As the crowd marches with Damata at its head, Glaucia and Sor turn their attention to the PC. Glaucia wants to know how she can help, though sadly the answer is not much, other than to be ready to rally people.

Sor Daeron explains that while his long-term memory is not clear, he knows that Kasvarina works with the Obscurati, and if he had a chance to hurt her he could not sit idly by. He rambles about how she was responsible for the death of Srasama and the fall of their people. Out of the heat of battle his awareness of the world becomes somewhat addled, and he assumes the PC is an eladrin like him.

If the PC mentions Nicodemus at all, that provokes a moment of lucidity. He sniffs, recalling a smell, and recounts how a man – or was it a ghost? – who smelled of the smoky leaf brought news to him and the other two matriarchs. The smoking man told them how Kasvarina colluded with the Clergy and caused the death of Srasama, and after many divinations to confirm it, they tried and failed to lure the traitor into an ambush. Sor wishes he could see Kasvarina and finally punish her for what she's done.

Critically, if the PCs aren't aware already, this meeting is a chance to learn that Nicodemus goaded the eladrin matriarchs into betraying Kasvarina and killing her daughter. Sor doesn't know who Nicodemus is, nor his reasons: Nic needed Kasvarina to help him with his plan to use the Axis Seal ritual, but Kasvarina had grown weary of conflict, so he needed to give her one more tragedy to provoke her to action.

### Trekholm—The Chancellor's Motorcade

The PC's duplicant or duplicants activate standing up, draped in a sheet, in a closet. Two scoped rifles lie against the wall, loaded and ready. The door out of the closet is bricked over on the outside, though. After breaking through, the PC finds himself in the mostly empty halls of the Drakran parliament building.

Only light security staff remains, because everyone else in the city was required to attend the military parade of **Hastenschriefft Willimarkanova**, an Ob officer now acting as the nation's head of state, and who is head of the city's hivemind. The parade began an hour ago just outside the parliament building, and the crowds here have mostly dispersed. The route is about to enter the industrial district and will conclude in about half an hour, at which point Willimarkanova will enter a subterranean bunker, putting her beyond the ready reach of the PC.

Willimarkanova travels through the parade in an open-top wagon drawn by an Obscurati lantern walker – a four-legged crab-like construct the size of a horse – which scuttles along near the tail end of a parade of thousands of soldiers, military constructs, and wheeled artillery cannons. Seated beside Willimarkanova is famed Drakran philosopher **Vlendam Heid**, who has been trapped in the hivemind and waves and laughs to the crowd. The Ob's intention is to motivate and cheer the population, which has heavily been pressed into service in the city's rapidly-expanding arcane factories. But, y'know, they're also ready to kill everyone if the PCs meddle.



VLENDAM HEID

At the moment the PC arrives, the parade nears a roughly triangular industrial district, about a quarter-mile across. The parade route will weave through this district, which is thick with crowds. Willimarkanova is empowered by a hivemind and so can defend herself, but Heid is a noncombatant.

### Immediate Parade Defense

- ♦ Hastenschriefft Willimarkanova
- ♦ 8 city defense squads
- ♦ 2 Obscurati construct squads
- ♦ Obscurati lantern walker
- ♦ Kvarti Gorbatiy (from afar)

### Per-Round Reinforcements

- ♦ 2 city defense squads

If Willimarkanova is attacked, the lantern walker automatically detaches from the carriage and tries to get between the head of state and her attacker. Two construct squads walk directly in front and behind of the carriage. Eight city defense squads are within sixty feet, and at the sound of fighting the rest of the parade will turn around and rush back to help, such that another two city defense squads arrive each round.

After a couple rounds of combat, soldiers will grab Willimarkanova and rush down the length of the parade toward the front, where another walker is dragging an immense cannon. It takes them ten rounds, but once they reach it they'll detach the cannon and ride onward with the walker, heading for the bunker, which is a few minutes away. Spotters in surrounding spires will notice the attack and will signal the various lantern towers in the city to turn on the Jiese fuel, which will cause the city to explode in less than half an hour.

Willimarkanova is loyal to the Obscurati, so knocking her out of her link to the hivemind won't change her attitude.



### You'll Have to Imagine the Spire

Instead of a frontal assault, the PC might prefer assassination from afar, or simply trying to deactivate a lantern tower. There are a half-dozen lantern towers scattered throughout the city, but only one in the industrial district.

The industrial district's corners are marked by a trio of spires (please recall that Drakrans see spires and towers as a symbol of power, and so they build a lot of them). A fourth tower rises in the center of the district, this one capped with a *wayfarer's lantern*. The corner spires are each separated by about a thousand feet, and the lantern tower in the center is five hundred feet from each of the corner spires.

Each spire rises over 150 feet, as does the lantern tower (as opposed to 60 feet for the lantern towers in other cities). The top levels

of each spire and tower have sight-line to nearly the entire parade route, since most of the other buildings in Trekhom are only one or two stories. Importantly, the tower and spires all have line of sight to each other.

The **North Spire**, **East Spire**, and **West Spire** are guarded at ground level by a city defense squad, but their top floors are unoccupied.

The **Central Lantern Tower** has two

city defense squads and a lantern walker at ground level. At its lantern level **Kvarti Gorbatiy** provides overwatch of the parade, and he is guarded by an Obscurati construct squad.



KVARTI GORBATIY

### Spire Defense

- ♦ 1 city defense squad (each)

### Tower Defense

- ♦ 2 city defense squads
- ♦ Obscurati lantern walker
- ♦ Kvarti Gorbatiy
- ♦ Obscurati construct squad

Kvarti paces the railing of the lantern tower, rifle in hand, and he continuously scans the rooftops and other spires (an opposed Stealth check against his Perception +22 once per minute to hide from him). If he spots a potential threat he'll first fire a tracer round to light up the target, and thereafter will try to put the target down with continual shots. If the PC gets into a fight at ground level, Kvarti should be able to get in one or two good shots unless the PC intentionally sticks to cover. If he cannot get a clean shot, he might use his *shadow teleport* power to get directly beside his foe and rely on pistol and grappling.

However, like other previous allies, Kvarti can be snapped out of control of the hivemind if the PC manages to talk to him (difficult because of the construct squad with him). If he can be freed from the hivemind, he'll explain that the Ob granted him a boon to let him teleport between the lantern towers in Trekhom, better to defend them. He readily assassinates Willimarkanova, and then can take the PC with him to the other towers to order the construct squads to deactivate the lanterns.

### How to Snipe Someone

Hit points and snipers don't quite mix. However, hit points normally represent a character's ability to survive in the thick of combat, or a random unlucky disaster. But a focused, intentional assassination eliminates the variables that would let the mark's "luck" save her.

Once in position in one of the spires or tower, the PC can attempt the following checks to line up a shot as the motorcade travels its route. Each check takes one round, and if the PC makes ten checks in a row (rather than breaking off and hiding for a bit), he is spotted by Kvarti, whose *sniper's eye* lets him see through illusions and invisibility. Even if some other effect keeps the PC hidden, the PC only gets two attempts before Willimarkanova makes it to a bunker. (If the PC can rapidly reach another sniper roost, such as by jaunting to a different spire, that provides another two attempts.) And a missed shot is almost certainly detected.

To even attempt this, the PC needs an attack that can reach at least 300 feet. The duplicant had a scoped rifle right beside it, but the PC might also have access to magic attacks that have sufficient range.

- 1. Determine a Window.** Knowledge (local) or Perception (DC 20). You note the path of the parade and figure out a stretch where you'll have several rounds to line up a shot. Success gives you five rounds, and every 5 points you succeed by gets you an extra round before you have to start over. If you fail, you have to wait a minute or two and try again, and the motorcade might be moving out of sight soon.
- 2. Predict Movement.** Sense Motive (DC 30). Willimarkanova and Heid are exchanging comments, waving to the crowd, and occasionally leaning out of their seats to speak to specific bystanders. You predict their behavior so they'll be mostly stationary when you fire. If you fail, you must try again next round.
- 3. Take Aim.** Perception (DC 30). You push aside all distractions and line up your shot across a great distance. If you fail, you can try again next round.
- 4. Fire.** Attack roll against Willimarkanova (AC 30). On a hit, you deal normal damage. However, if the damage equals or exceeds her Constitution score (18), the shot is fatal. On a miss, your aim is still lined up, so if you have an opportunity to take another shot before your window closes, you can. However, Willimarkanova will take cover on her turn, increasing her defenses.

Any other actions the PC takes, such as casting spells to improve their attack roll, uses up the limited time in their window.

Alternately, a PC who can use mind-affecting effects or deal positive energy damage from that range can target the ghost councilors linked to Willimarkanova, but she was originally a member of the Obscurati, and so would still follow through the scorched earth plan.

### Aftermath

This city is actually set up to be the hardest to win with brute force, and a full frontal assault will probably be over before a PC can finish Willimarkanova off. But even if the PC takes her out, the lantern towers still fill with Jiese energy. The PC might escape and take out the towers himself, or manage to forestall being filled with bullets long enough to snap Heid out of the hivemind and get him to take charge and call off the scorched earth plan. The safest method is to link up with Kvarti, get him on the PC's side, and then have him shut down the towers.

If the city is saved, there are still plenty of Ob loyalists in control of the factories. Dealing with them will occupy the population for a few hours, until the PCs need to call upon them to potentially aid the *sacrament*.

### Sentosa—Voice of Authority (Optional)

Pemberton has no duplicants in or near Sentosa, and the nature of teleportation magic in this world makes it impossible for the party to simply use magic to get here unless they made a point to come this way since the Great Eclipse occurred. If the PCs really care about this enclave they could probably come up with some way to bypass that restriction, the same way Vlendam Heid was able to send an official Risuri diplomatic case back to Risur since it was technically part of Risur already. For example, a PC who acquired the *arsenal of Dhebisu* from Sentosa might be able to teleport to the temple of Hewanharimau where it lay for centuries. (But if they do that, see below for details of the grisly sight they'd arrive to.)

The moment a PC arrives, it's clear that powerful magic is at work. A roaring thunderstorm covers the city, blocking visibility beyond a few dozen feet, and the intense wind and reverberating thunderclaps are disorienting. Moreover, the storm is interwoven with a novel ritual which (DC 35 Knowledge (arcana) to identify) prevents pocket dimensions from being accessed. *Bags of holding* and the like are sealed away underneath the storm.

A DC 30 Perception check is necessary to navigate to where the PC wants to go. Failing means a 50-50 chance of reaching the locals or the besiegers.

### The Defenders

Sentosa's population of roughly 4,000 eladrin has withdrawn into the city center of old Rumah Terakir, where due to the recent magical overlay of the real world and the Dreaming, many buildings are half-maintained, half-ruined. A ring of the city has been abandoned as a no-man's-land, laden with glyphs and physical land mines. Most people cluster in homes beneath Akela Sathi, a sacred brothel built into a huge tree that is woven into a statue of Srasama's maiden aspect.

In lieu of an actual wall, arcane alarms ring the perimeter. Weary and twitchy rajputs will confront anyone who enters, and they will aggressively insist the PC waits while they notify their matriarch. **Athrylla Valenar** will agree to meet, and the rajputs lead a path through anxious eladrin who all appear exhausted and starved.

The matriarch and her advisors wait in the shelter of a 20-ft. diameter magical force dome that keeps out the storm, conjured just beside the old temple of Srasama. Athrylla and all her allies have been denied rest for weeks, because the besiegers constantly refresh their storm. She has tried to conserve her spells, but now is effectively helpless. The Ob forces could sweep in and take them at any time.

Athrylla has some basic information about the besiegers' camp and their overwhelming force of ten thousand soldiers and mechanical monstrosities. The siege began with an artillery bombardment that encircled Sentosa, a few strikes by construct warriors targeting her mages who conjured arcane walls to block the cannonfire, and then a child messenger bearing a letter. It alleged to be from Kasvarina, demanding that Athrylla surrender and hand control of all the lands that were once Elfaivar over to **Cula Ravjahani**, who was for many years Kasvarina's second in command at the enclave Ushanti.

Athrylla had been defiant, and that was when the unending storm began. When there were brief breaks in the storm, the edge of the enclave would be pounded with artillery. It became nearly impossible to sleep. It was only a few days later that they realized the child had been magically infected with a plague that rapidly spread through the city. Sentosa depleted its stock of scrolls and other magic items in a fight against the disease, and those whom they could not cure they quarantined at the temple of Hewanharimau. They're all dead now.

### The Besiegers

By contrast, the forces under command of Cula Ravjahani camp serenely over a mile from the city, while the no-man's-land perimeter is watched by construct squads and a handful of officers equipped with enchanted helms that baffle the roar of the thunder and let them act normally without losing their nerve. Artillery batteries, newly built in Drakr, are aimed with precision to panic the people of Sentosa without the risk of accidentally killing the leader.

The army is made up of warriors drawn from the many colonies that until recently controlled Elfaivar.

Now united under the Ob's banner, the soldiers are all ensnared in the same hivemind, with Cula as its head.

Soldiers go out on patrol in large platoons every hour, and every eight hours one of three mages renews the spell that keeps the storm raging.

Cula's mission is to get a proper surrender. The reason varies slightly on whether at the end of adventure eight the party had



ATHRYLLA VALENAR



CULA RAVJAHANI



swayed Kasvarina to their side or not. If not, Kasvarina wants to force Athrylla to grovel, and to admit that she was ever wrong to doubt Kasvarina's methods. But if Kasvarina ended adventure eight hostile to the Ob, the 'peaceful' surrender is a gambit by Nicodemus to convince his long-time partner Kasvarina that he is no monster.

### Breaking the Siege

A straight up fight might be winnable, honestly, if the party as a whole attacked, though it would take time they might not be able to spare. Ten thousand men under Cula are formidable, but if the Ob can use devastating magic, so can the PCs.

A cleverer solution might be to feign surrender. Athrylla could send a messenger to announce she is going to yield. The storm would abate. With a large escort, Cula would come out to the no-man's-land, ideally at the same gate where the party once faced a ten-headed lion, in a rain-filled pit that was carved by the foot of the colossus. A PC could pose as one of Athrylla's own rajputs. Once within striking distance, if the PC managed to kill Cula it would break the hivemind's control, at which point most of the army would march back to the colonies they were recruited from.

### Siege-Breaking Full War

- ♦ Cula Ravjahani, Vekeshi Apostate
- ♦ 3 Elite Obscurati Occultists
- ♦ 12 Bookpin Bodyguard Squads
- ♦ 10 Obscurati Construct Squads
- ♦ Thousands of soldiers (equivalent to 100 'frigate crews' from adventure ten)

### Siege-Breaking Trickery

- ♦ Cula Ravjahani, Vekeshi Apostate
- ♦ 1 Bookpin Bodyguard Squad
- ♦ 1 Obscurati Construct Squad

### Aftermath

If the party doesn't intervene here, perhaps this scene can be woven into the denouement, with a confused Cula barely keeping control of a disorderly army. She will threaten and cajole them into a strike against the enclave. The PCs, arriving right before a tragic bloodbath, could broker peace or deliver judgment, as they see fit.

If Athrylla is saved, she asks to accompany the party to confront Kasvarina. Seeing her will help sway Kasvarina to reject Nicodemus. If the party also brings along Sor Daeron from Ber, the two eladrin can easily convince Kasvarina to ally with the party if they get a chance to talk to her.

## BASK IN THE SHADOW OF YESTERDAY'S TRIUMPH

### Social. Real-Time.

*The party's allies encourage them to invoke the sacrament of apotheosis in order to bring the full might of the revolution to bear against Nicodemus and the Obscurati.*

With the most immediate threat to the cities of the world concluded, it's time for final preparations before setting course for Axis Island. Let them gather allies and (briefly) discuss what will come next. Give your group Player's Handout: The Ritual of the Axis Seal.

### Final Mission Briefing

The first critical issue to resolve is, well, just what are the PCs going to do in the Axis Seal ritual. It's a fine time for a meeting, perhaps with a corkboard where the PCs can mock up potential arrangements of planes. This is just one more mystery to solve, albeit on an interplanar scale.

Ever since they woke up in the Antwalk Forest the PCs have been certain that the means to complete the ritual will present itself. Now that the PCs are nearing the time to perform the ritual, they become aware of which planes were in the Gyre, though they can only guess how they have that knowledge. They still don't have the ability to create planar icons for those worlds, but don't worry, those will manifest later.

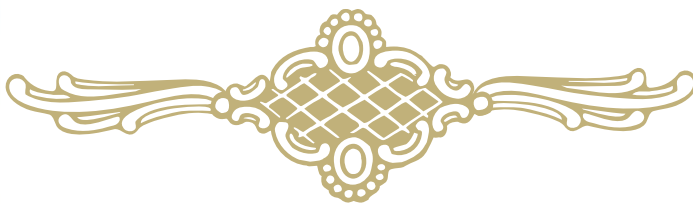
Consider cutting out the individual tokens of Player's Handout: Axis Puzzle. You can use them as props during the planning, and then later they can help you keep track of what plane is slotted in which place of the ritual circle.

The PCs know that the ritual calls for eight different planes, and that each plane will lend a trait to the nature of the world. Linking to these planes requires extracting a several ton pillar of stone from the earth and placing a planar icon into a slot, then lowering the pillar back into the ground. On a straightforward physical level, the PCs need a way to accomplish this. The *sacrament of apotheosis* is one way, since it will give them godlike strength. Another is to attach a crane and hoist mechanism to their airship. Or they can just wait for the Ob to remove the pillars and hope they can get in and use their planar icon first.

Once those performing the ritual are satisfied with the chosen set of planes, they must close the golden seal. If the seal is not closed, the new planes will still link to this world, but it will be comparably simple to switch them. However, once the seal is closed immense power is needed to open it again. Closing the seal would be challenging even for a group of them empowered by the *sacrament*. If they refuse the sacrament, they might need the aid of the colossus to complete the ritual and ensure the world's sun returns.

### What Exactly are We Cooking Up?

Pemberton, for his part, very much wants to be involved in discussions of what type of world they'll create. He's particularly insistent that no high-minded ideals cause him to lose the advantages he has due to being a dragon, or to ruin his technological innovations. Honestly, he was quite satisfied with the world as it was before the Ob meddled, but if they ask his opinion, he wouldn't mind being able to travel to other planes. After all, his romantic prospects on this world are limited, but he's sure there have to be eligible dragon bachelorettes somewhere in the multiverse who'd appreciate his industriousness.



If the players cannot come to agreement, don't let arguments drag on too long. Assume that the PCs are at an impasse, but they don't have time to convince each other. They'll just have to go to Axis Island and see how things shake out.

### Best Laid Plans

The chaos of combat in the final encounter will make enacting precise plans difficult, so even if the PCs have all agreed on the type of world they want to make, it's likely they won't be able to get all the planes they need. We want the battlefield to be altered on a cosmic scale round by round, and for the final world the PCs create to maybe be a little less than perfect.

Or at the very least, they should feel like there's a chance they'll fail. Uncertainty in the midst of reality-warping magic should raise the tension.

### Supporting Cast

Second, it's time to decide who is coming along. Bear in mind, the final encounter is fairly complicated by itself, without including a gaggle of NPCs.

We suggest that the simplest way to streamline the finale is to stress that the energy pouring out of the Axis Seal is dangerous enough that it would be suicidal to bring some less-powerful allies along. If the party intends to use the *sacrament*, their allies can stay behind in major cities to channel the will of the people. Anyone who does accompany the party can fade into the background. Perhaps they land elsewhere on the island and undertake critical missions to take out Ob support or fulfill other obscure elements of the Axis Seal ritual.

To convey an epic scope of the battle, though, the Axis Obscura encounter does have an option for 'invoking' allies. See page 41.

### Moment of Calm

At some point before the party reaches Axis Island, we suggest you have a moment of calm and reflection. Give the PCs a situation where they're all gathered together with an ally so they can roleplay and have a few smiles, in case the ending of the campaign gets grim. They might enjoy the irony of having Delft, as head of the RHC, come to them and mock-obsequiously request funding to pay for extra constables, since he's pretty sure some of his best men are about to die. Or pick one of the scenes from Act Three.

The key is to give the players a chance to all bounce off each other once last time, in case any of them die.

### Sacrament or Not?

Pemberton reminds the PCs about the dangerous energy coming out of the seal, where it's not safe to spend even a minute in the area around it. They'll either need to be fast – an airship helps – or come up with some superior defense. It's likely Pemberton overheard at least some of the details of the *sacrament of apotheosis* when his duplicant saw a meeting with Ashima-Shimtu in adventure eight, so if the party doesn't bring it up he'll suggest, with reserve, that they use the ritual. He wishes he'd chosen to be the figurehead of this whole revolution business, but since he's chosen to operate behind the scenes he won't benefit as much from the ritual, even though he'd make a fine god.

The mechanics of the *sacrament of apotheosis* are presented in *Player's Handout: Final Sacrament*.

We don't intend to punish the PCs if they choose to use the *sacrament of apotheosis*. It's the smart move if they think that living in a world controlled by the Obscurati is as bad as dying; in that case, anyone who perishes in backlash for their belief empowering the PCs has not really lost anything.

However, it's not entirely necessary for the PCs to have the ritual's power in order to win the final conflict. Indeed, because of the nature of the ritual, anyone who knows the subject's name can ignore any resistances or immunities the *sacrament* grants, and Nicodemus will have almost certainly discovered the names of all the PCs and shared them with his allies. The party will have increased ability to manipulate the world around them, and the wild energy coming out of the seal won't harm them, but they won't gain any advantage in combat.

By contrast, it's unlikely that the PCs – at least the ones here, rather than in the Gyre – know that Nicodemus's real name is William Miller unless they really went out of their way in adventure eight and investigated the ruins of Pala. This makes Nicodemus effectively invincible at the beginning of the final encounter. Eventually that information will reach them, either through the aid of a friendly Kasvarina (who's the only person alive who knows Nic's true name) or when the knowledge of their selves in the Gyre reaches them. Until that point, though, they'll have to focus on seizing control of the Axis Seal rather than simply attacking their nemesis.

### Rejecting Godhood

Without the *sacrament*, the party will need to assiduously avoid the tendrils of energy lashing out of the Axis Seal. It's challenging, but not insurmountable.

The main reason for avoiding the *sacrament* is to win a moral victory of sorts. The Clergy believed that Triegenes performed it to become a god, but in truth the holy man refused to risk other people just to protect himself even in the most dangerous battles. When the party battles Nicodemus, his other self in the Gyre – William Miller – watches. Miller does not intend to intervene, but if he sees enough signs of the party's humility and goodness, namely rejecting the ritual, he will cast himself into the Gyre so his consciousness merges with that of Nicodemus. Granted an enlightened, detached perspective on the past five centuries since his death, Nicodemus repents his hubris and ceases fighting so that the party can destroy him.

Again, this narrative beat is not necessary, but it might be satisfying for groups who have been tempted by the Obscurati's ideology, and don't see Nicodemus wholly as a villain.

### Performing the Sacrament

The ritual lasts long enough that the party can perform it in Flint, or wait until they're en route to Axis Island. Let the players decide how to perform the ritual – in seclusion, subtly drawing faith from their allies; or openly, rising above the masses like gods to be worshipped. The only ritual component that would be difficult to acquire are the entrails of a dragon, and Harkover Lee (if alive) willingly offers a piece of his flesh to make amends for his forced betrayal of them.

The more people who share the power of the *sacrament*, the more diluted it is. Moreover, people who don't have a strong enough sense of self will be overwhelmed by the shared faith. Really only the PCs should participate in the ritual, and perhaps one particularly close ally.



## DEFAULT AIRSHIP

By default, we assume the party travels in a retrofitted ocean-faring vessel, likely either the *R.N.S. Coaltongue* or a more traditional sailing frigate. You can use these stats as a baseline, if your party hasn't tinkered with the ship in their adventuring.

### AIRSHIPS IN TACTICAL COMBAT

The upcoming encounter won't last long enough to use traditional naval rounds. You can still call for Command checks to pull off maneuvers in close quarters, such as to ram effectively, but usually the ships will move up to their speed at initiative count zero, and can turn 45 degrees once during that movement.

As for naval weapons, you can either opt for the simple – the PC's ship can fire one volley every 10 rounds at full attack bonus – or the complicated – each round that there are sufficient crew, they can make two cannon attacks, taking a -8 penalty to the listed attack roll.

Attacks can target an enemy vessel and deal strikes, or target creatures in a 5-foot-radius burst within 1,000 feet. Against a creature, each hit does 50 damage and knocks the target prone, or does half damage on a miss.

<i>R.N.S. Coaltongue</i>	Gargantuan Vehicle
<b>Hull Integrity</b> 4	<b>Command</b> by PC
<b>Defense</b> 30	<b>Full Crew</b> 32
<b>Maneuverability</b> 8	<b>Minimum Crew</b> 4
<b>Speed</b> 18	<b>Total Complement</b> 200

#### Design

Length 205 ft. Beam 50 ft. Two level central bridge. Steam engine with two propellers. Pemberton-crafted arcane levitationals. Five decks.

#### Armaments

**Dozens of cannons fire to either broadside.**

*Crew:* 100. *Attack:* +25 to broadsides. Can use acidic, chain shot, flaming, freezing, and shocking attacks, but no more than one in any given round in a single firing arc.

#### Capacitor and Brand

**The ship's greatest weapons are its capacitor which magnifies the spells of mages who cast from the main deck, and its brand which can launch a blast of arcane flame from the prow.**

If a spellcaster of level 10 or higher stands in the capacitor on the main deck, the ship can also make attacks with a +22 bonus forward or aft. However, it can apply no more than one special trait (e.g., flaming, freezing) in any given round in a single firing arc.

The captain can choose to fire the brand, making an attack with a +30 bonus in the forward firing arc. This depletes the ship's store of arcane power, requiring 1d4 naval turns (1d4 x 10 normal combat rounds) to replenish. During that time, the ship's speed is reduced by 4, and it cannot use the abilities of its capacitor and brand.

#### Eldritch Defenses

The ship gains a +5 bonus to saving throws against the burning condition. Any spells that originate more than 50 feet from the ship deal 52 less damage to targets within that area.

#### Skyship

**Arcane levitationals allow the mighty vessel to sail through the sky.**

The ship can fly at any altitude, and is surrounded by a 30-ft. aura of levitation. Any creature that starts his turn in the aura gains a fly speed of 40 feet (average) until the start of his next turn. Once this flight wears off, the creature falls at a reduced rate, ignoring the first 1000 feet of falling damage.

Frigate	Gargantuan Vehicle
<b>Hull Integrity</b> 4	<b>Command</b> by PC
<b>Defense</b> 25	<b>Full Crew</b> 64
<b>Maneuverability</b> 4	<b>Minimum Crew</b> 16
<b>Speed</b> 22	<b>Total Complement</b> 120

#### Design

Length 250 ft. Beam 45 ft. Four masts, 150 ft. high. Pemberton-crafted arcane levitationals. Three decks.

#### Armaments

**Eleven heavy cannons on the maindeck to each broadside.**

*Crew:* 40. *Attack:* +20 to broadsides, or +17 fore or aft.

#### Skyship

**Arcane levitationals allow the mighty vessel to sail through the sky.**

The ship can fly at any altitude, and is surrounded by a 30-ft. aura of levitation.

Any creature that starts his turn in the aura gains a fly speed of 40 feet (average) until the start of his next turn. Once this flight wears off, the creature falls at a reduced rate, ignoring the first 1000 feet of falling damage.

### DRAGON-RIDING

So Harkover destroyed the party's airship? Not to worry! Pemberton can give the PCs guidance so they can teleport to his island lair a dozen miles from Axis Island. There Pemberton has a squadron of dragon fliers (first introduced in adventure ten), which the PCs can pilot into battle. They won't have the survivability of a full airship, so smart PCs will try to board the *Ob's Revolution* before they're shot down, or land on the shoulders of the colossus.

Pemberton Dragon Flier	Small Vehicle
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#### Design

Length 20 ft. Width 5 ft. Two levels of wings, 25 ft. wide, covered in glowing white glyphs. Pemberton-crafted arcane levitationals. Nose and wings decorated with mithral scales to resemble a dragon. Lightning crackles from the nose-mounted engine, just behind twin autocannons.

#### Stats

**HP 200, AC 15, Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +5, hardness 10**

#### Piloting

Each turn, pilot can set flier's speed, adjusting by one category as a free action, or two as a move action. Speeds categories are **idle** (under 30 squares), **slow** (31-60), **moderate** (61-90), **fast** (91-120), or **reckless** (121-160). Flier must go speed 60 or higher or else it stalls and falls.

Steering is a move action. Flier needs to move 10 feet (2 squares) per speed category before it can turn 45 degrees (e.g., 8 squares at 'fast'). Flier can ascend up to 12 squares per turn.

#### Armaments

**Two nose-mounted light autocannons.**

Autocannons are martial ranged weapons. They have a range increment of 200 feet and deal 2d12 damage.

*Line of effect:* An autocannon attacks all creatures in a line. Make a separate attack roll against each creature in the line.

#### Levitationals

**Arcane levitationals allow the winged vehicle to maneuver nimbly.**

If the levitational is disrupted, or when the flier is below 100 hit points, the flier cannot travel faster than moderate.

When the *sacrament of apotheosis* takes effect, the PCs feel their bodies expand across the horizon, and their senses flit among the minds and hearts of thousands or millions of people who believe in them. The shared faith – granted willingly, not compelled – fills them with unbridled confidence. With a single gesture they can fulfill the will of myriads. Motes of dancing energy, like fiery blue moths only they can see, swirl before them and grow brighter as they move toward Axis Island. As their ship nears the crux of the world's fate, these manifestations of destiny surge in the air like dolphins breaking above the waves at the prow of a ship under full sail.

### Mechanics and Boons

The benefits of the *sacrament* are detailed in Player's Handout: Final Sacrament. They gain certain boons of their choice from a list in that handout. Determine the total number of boons using the method below; the PCs split those boons amongst themselves, so each will likely end up with between and 1 and 3.

The total number of boons is equal to:

- ♦ The number of groups the party has Prestige 6 (to a maximum of 5 – Risur, Flint\*, Unseen Court, Family, and Ob); plus
- ♦ One if they saved Cherage in adventure ten; plus
- ♦ The number of disasters they averted in adventure eleven (to a maximum of 3 – Ber, Drakr, and Crisillyir); plus
- ♦ The number of disasters they averted in this adventure (to a maximum of 5 – Risur, Danor, Ber, Drakr, and Crisillyir).

\* If the PCs befriended reporter Melissa Amarie in adventure six, count Populist prestige as a separate score from Flint prestige, but still to a maximum of five boons.

The PCs should choose which boons they gain as soon as they perform the *sacrament*. Be wary of the 'spell-like ability at-will' boon; it's intended to reflect godlike magic, but there are enough weird spells in this game that min-maxers could probably find something that perpetually auto-stuns their enemies, or something like that. Try to encourage the players to quickly pick a spell that is thematically appropriate, rather than tactically optimal.

## SAIL ON THE STEEL BREEZE

### Exploration. Montage.

*It's 550 miles to Axis Island, we've got a full bin of firegems, half a pack of cigarettes, it's dark, and we're wearing goggles. Hit it.*

As the party comes within sight of Axis Island, the shores are dark, but some barely audible thrum reverberates, like hundreds of bass drums playing asynchronously. The lashing tendrils of energy from the Axis Seal rise into the sky, stretching out toward the leading edge of the Gyre as it rises over the horizon.

Only the faintest hints of human activity are visible around the island's perimeter, where hooded lanterns seek not to illuminate tiny work crews as they busy themselves with digging equipment and cranes. These crews have ensured all the petrified trees buried in the island are stable and prepared for the ritual. Elsewhere, out of sight but clearly audible, house-sized steam-powered machines pound the bedrock in a mechanical approximation of a ritual chant, channeling power into protective wards.



The fortress where the party first faced Asrabey and heard the Duchess warn of a conspiracy is abandoned.

The forests which they crept through when they first infiltrated the island wait motionless.

The island's roiling terrain is stable, for all the chaos and transmuting forces have been drawn to the Axis Seal.

### Offered Sacrament

Flying over the jungle hills, the party finally gets a view of the ritual field itself, when they feel a tug at their thoughts.

Images flash in their minds of a ghost solemnly stepping into the body of a nervous, shirtless man; of the man's posture changing as he is possessed; of chanting specters encircling him with entrails; painting him with blood; slicing open his throat.

Lights around the PCs darken for a moment. Winds thrash, graced with the subtle scent of blood and burnt paper and flesh.

The PCs feel that they are being offered a choice. Do they believe in the Obscurati? If so, their faith will empower Nicodemus. (They are considered bonded to Nicodemus for his *Welcome to the Obscurati* trait.)

Once they make their decision, one last vision shows the blood-painted body gurgle and sag to the floor, but Nicodemus's ghostly form remains standing, flanked by the psychic impression of ten million minds. Then Nicodemus turns, and gestures. The vision ends, but with their real eyes the PCs see the huge, crippled mass of the Obscurati's colossus stirs. He sits up weakly on the bedrock and heaves the golden seal off his body. It crashes in an unoccupied space of the ritual field.

The titan then rolls onto crippled knees and his single intact arm. The shattered pieces of his injured limbs lift from the ground and slide into place with a metallic screech. The colossus bellows in pain, but then with a surprised gasp as strong as a gale, he shifts his weight and pushes himself to his feet.

The ghostly form of Nicodemus rises into the sky and meets the titan at eye level.

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"Borne my boy," Nicodemus says, and his voice is heard by everyone in the entire world. "We were sabotaged, but you were perfect, indomitable. Before you fell, you nearly completed our grand design.

"The world we created truly is better, thanks to you, but outside forces," and he gestures to the sky, clearly indicating your approach, "were able to move against us. I have restored you, son. I know you are confused and have questions, but you have to trust me. Together, you and I, we'll finish this ritual and set it all right. But first, we need to pull those pests from the sky. Do you understand, Borne?"

The colossus turns his head to scan the entire horizon. He pauses at the sight of the Gyre, but only a moment passes before he narrows his eyes in a confident smile.

"Guide me, father."

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# ACT TWO: AXIS OF THE REVOLUTION

The Obscurati and the party contest for control of the Axis Seal ritual, to decide the fate of the world.

## AXIS OBSCURA

### Action. Tactical. Level 28.

*Blind to his hypocrisy, Nicodemus chooses to abandon his principles and impose his absolute will, rather than to admit all his plans were for naught.*

This encounter is grand and complicated.

The party wants to stop Nicodemus from completing the ritual, but he's practically invincible because of the *sacrament of apotheosis*, and the colossus Borne is just generally nigh impregnable, so early in the battle the PCs will need to split their efforts between fighting Ob forces (including an airship and the ghost council) and interfering with Nic and Borne's work on the ritual. Attacking Nic at first is pointless, unless the party went out of its way and discovered his true name thanks to the *arc of Reida* back in adventure eight.

The PCs gradually receive knowledge from their other selves in the Gyre so they can affect the ritual, and eventually they'll learn that Nic's true name is William Miller. At that point, it will be possible to overcome the *sacrament* and harm the mastermind. This can lead to four possible endings.

First is 'destruction.' The PCs defeat Nicodemus the old fashioned way by attacking him. Once he's gone, they can somberly finish the ritual, if they so desire.

Second is 'completion.' By completing the ritual and closing the seal in the midst of the battle, the party channel the energy released to destroy Nicodemus. This requires the party to choose at least five of the eight planes, and then to close the seal, which is quite a challenge.

Third is 'redemption.' If the PCs save Kasvarina, reveal to her how Nicodemus betrayed her, and let her confront the mastermind, this convinces the spirit of William Miller in the Gyre, who has for five centuries felt guilt for tricking Kasvarina and causing the Great Malice, to intervene. His memories flood into Nicodemus, and for a while Miller is in control, and will let the party destroy him.

Fourth and final is 'rejection.' If the PCs destroy enough parts of the ritual it becomes impossible to complete, and the world's link to other planes will gutter and die. The party has no way of knowing what will happen in this case, but it's certainly a refusal to follow the Ob's ideology that someone should be allowed to change the whole world for everyone else. The result is that the world is cast into a random place in the multiverse, and Nicodemus's whole purpose for surviving is undone. He'll wither away and vanish.

Whatever happens, in the aftermath the world will witness the first sunrise of a new age.

## Pacing and Structure

We have an array of enemies providing threats along different axes and at different stages during the battle so that the encounter isn't just any old combat. We want this climax to be punctuated with moments of action and moments of maneuvering. The distance scale of the encounter – a 400-ft. diameter ritual field (you might want to use a 1 inch = 10 ft. resolution) – should mean that PCs won't be fighting every round, which we hope encourages them to try solving the puzzle of the ritual instead of just chopping through hit points until their enemies are gone.

Three 'narrative arcs' are at play, and you'll need to keep them all moving along and building tension in parallel, all while dropping hints so the players realize that pursuing goals along one arc can help in another. For instance, fiddling with the Axis Seal ritual can make it easier to defeat the Ob's airship and ghost council; but it's pretty hard to affect the ritual if the colossus keeps on trying to smash your airship while it's parked, so if you can slow the colossus down, you can take advantage of the opening.

## Arc One—Airships and Ghosts

The bulk of living Obscurati forces are aboard the *Revolution*, an adamantine-plated, enchanted dirigible armed with the most advanced heavy cannons ever deployed in battle. Commanded by **Sovereign Han Jierre**, who is himself guarded by his niece **Lya Jierre** (who's probably a ghost), the *Revolution* attacks the party's airship.

**Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen** serves as miracle-working doctor of the airship, but he's not entirely loyal to the Ob. **Kasvarina Varal** is also aboard, either as a well-treated prisoner, or an additional foe in battle, depending on how the events of adventure eight shook out. Their presence gives a social axis to any fighting on the airship. Reaching and speaking with Kasvarina is one way to learn Nicodemus's true name, and she is the catalyst for the Redemption ending.

We've slightly bullshitted excessive defenses for the *Revolution*, so that the party will have a hard time destroying it from afar. This encourages boarding the vessel and getting into close combat with Lya. A solid resolution to this arc would see the airship crashing into the ghost council and exploding, destroying them both, perhaps with the PCs rescuing Kasvarina and leaping to safety at the last minute.



## Arc Two—The Pivotal Ritual

The ritual itself dynamically affects the nature of reality during this battle. The Ob start by removing the link to the plane of air, which ends magical flight. If the party doesn't avert this quickly, their ship (which is held aloft by magic and arcane levitationals) will descend to the ground and be a sitting duck, while the *Revolution* (held aloft by physics and hydrogen gas bladders) will remain airborne.

We've set up foes with schticks that can be nullified by fiddling with the ritual columns. Cannons and engines on the *Revolution* can be crippled by unplugging the plane of fire; the ghost council starts weak but grows stronger once the plane of death is linked; and the colossus's invulnerability can be cracked just a bit by swapping the plane of earth. Additionally, whenever anyone switches a plane and reseats the column, they can control the surge of energy produced, making it quite rewarding to link planes.

The options for what planes the PCs can link to start off very limited, but expand in scope round by round. This should keep the complexity *slightly* more manageable at the start of combat.



SOVEREIGN HAN JIERRE



KASVARINA VARAL



DR. WOLFGANG VON RECKLINGHAUSEN





## THE EYE OF THE VOICE OF ROT

If a PC carries the lost eye of the Voice of Rot, recovered in Adventure Twelve, the moment that PC spots Nicodemus he intuitively understands the following three things. (If no PC has the eye, you could instead grant this insight to a Spirit Medium PC, or just let the party fumble about until they figure it out.)

- ♦ Nicodemus is practically invincible due to the *sacrament of apotheosis*, but if someone completes the Axis Seal ritual he'll be able to briefly wield enough power to destroy the ghost permanently.
- ♦ The people whose faith is empowering him with the *sacrament* want him to change the world. If he becomes unable to complete the ritual, their faith in him would falter, making him vulnerable.
- ♦ There is a link between Nicodemus and some other spirit in the Gyre, but not the Voice of Rot. That spirit is watching from afar, but perhaps that link could be exploited to harm Nicodemus.

### ONE LAST THING

If the party killed Pemberton's daughter back in adventure six, he'll fight as a devoted ally all the way through the battle, but the moment the Obscurati are defeated he'll catch his breath, assess if he has a shot, and then try to kill whoever delivered the killing blow to his daughter. Anticlimactic, perhaps, but Pemberton would never forgive them, and the PCs are lucky he's only killing one of them.

## Arc Three—The Philosophical Colossus

Throughout all of this, Nicodemus splits his time between directing Borne and mocking the PCs. He only takes potshots at them, since his focus is guiding Borne through the ritual. However, if the party manages to affect the ritual and link to a world they want, Nicodemus realizes that by doing so they are tacitly agreeing with his ideology, which strengthens him due to the *sacrament of apotheosis*. At this point he grows more bold and cruel.

Borne, by contrast, is skeptical. He was raised to be rational, but with all the chaos of battle Borne is having to trust Nicodemus and take actions without understanding the consequences. The party can try to nurture his uncertainties and make Borne pause, and it's possible even to goad Nicodemus into explaining what he intends to do with the ritual this time: take away free will altogether, so the world will be perfect. This is anathema to what Borne was raised to believe, and will cause the colossus to abandon the encounter entirely.

Another method is to leverage Kasvarina's influence over the colossus, though this requires either having gotten her on the party's side in adventure eight, or bringing along Sor Daeron and/or Athrylla Valenar to reveal the truth about how Nicodemus arranged the death of Kasvarina's daughter four hundred years ago because he wanted her to recommit to the Obscurati. If the PCs can get Kasvarina within a few dozen feet of Borne so she can talk to him, she'll plead with him to stop—or if the party has already made Borne doubt Nicodemus, she can actually turn him into an ally in battle.

## Primary Forces

If the party brings along a lot of allies, you can include more bad guys to keep them distracted. Perhaps there are smaller airships with less elite crew, or ground-bound construct squads, or a couple summoned outsiders. All of those foes can provide a backdrop of mass combat, handled narratively without any dice-rolling, while the party deals with the core enemies.

A few allies are important enough that they can join the battle. In adventure twelve, the PCs might have gained the aid of the dead goddess Srasama, who will appear partway through the battle (in the same round the PCs get access to the plane Ascetia). Kasvarina and Dr. von Recklinghausen might side with the party. And if things are going very badly for our heroes, Pemberton rockets in using an advanced dragon duplicant, giving the PCs a chance to regroup and heal.

## Primary Enemy Forces

- ♦ Nicodemus, Mastermind
- ♦ Borne, Obscurati Colossus
- ♦ Ghost Council Swarm
- ♦ Lya, the Ghost Scion
- ♦ Sovereign Han Jierre
- ♦ Kasvarina Varal
- ♦ Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen
- ♦ 6 *Revolution* Elite Crews

## Primary Allied Forces

- ♦ Avatar of Srasama
- ♦ Benedict "Gradiax" Pemberton

### Invoking Allies

We've attempted to balance the final encounter – as much as an encounter *can* be balanced for 20<sup>th</sup> level PCs – with the assumption the party consists of five PCs. If the PCs bring along allies, most of them aren't strong enough to actually harm the enemies here (and their stats earlier in the adventure were all bumped by being linked to hiveminds, which they're now free from).

If you want, though, perhaps at the end of each turn you can have the players take turns narrating something one of their allies does. Usually this won't have a direct effect on the PCs' foes, but Gale could create environmental effects or move the party's airship, Lauryn Cyneburg could teleport a PC across the battlefield, and Harkover Lee could ram and slightly knock aside the colossus's leg so a PC isn't crushed.

Don't let the PCs decide what Pemberton does, though. If he is present, you control him.

### Location

The general landscape is detailed in Player Handout—The Ritual of the Axis Seal. It's a 400-ft. wide span of stone with concentric rings carved into the bedrock. Each ring has one or two 50-ft. deep slots in which sit white stone columns – petrified trees – each of which links to a different plane. The PCs have to decide if they want to spend their actions fiddling with the ritual or fighting. We assume it takes about three rounds worth of actions by a PC to link a column to a new plane, and so we grant a reward roughly equivalent to three standard actions to incentivize using the ritual.

To the northwest of the ritual field a small bunker sits currently unoccupied, but it's a fine place for people to end up if they fall off a ship, teleport to safety, or need a dramatic place to stand to call out to the colossus.

At the beginning of the encounter, the colossus has just stood up at about 7 o'clock (if we treat the ritual space as a clockface). The stone pillar for the Plane of Death is already out of the ground, having been ejected when Av was destroyed in adventure twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*. The golden seal itself (100-ft. in diameter) lies on the ground just north of the colossus, in a spot with no pillars.

### Energy Tendrils

At the start of the encounter, place a marker at about 10 o'clock on the map. A crackling line of extraplanar energy lashes out from the center of the ritual to that spot. Any creature that enters its path or ends its turn there takes 25 acid, 25 fire, 25 electricity, and 25 negative energy damage unless he's protected by the *sacrament of apotheosis*. The tendril lashes up and down, and so affects creatures as high as three hundred feet off the ground.



At the beginning of each round, roll 1d6 to determine what the tendril does.

- 1 The tendril stays put.
- 2-3 The tendril moves about 30 degrees clockwise.
- 4-5 The tendril moves about 30 degrees counter-clockwise.
- 6 The tendril stays put. However, roll a d12 to determine a 'clockface' around the ritual field. Place a new marker there. That spot begins to glow, but is harmless. At the beginning of the next round, instead of rolling, the tendril jumps to this new spot.

The party is likely immune because of the *sacrament*, so the tendrils become a unique weapon. Nicodemus and Borne are immune too, but the rest of the Ob forces try to keep as far away from the deadly thing as possible. And if a PC can manage to destroy the integrated *wayfarer's lantern* inside Borne's torso, the tendril can quickly cripple the slow-moving colossus.

### The Ritual

In addition to the mechanics presented in Player's Handout—Ritual of the Axis Seal, there are some surprises in store.

### Timeline of Remembrance

In adventure twelve, we asked you to keep track of the order the PCs linked to the various worlds there. In this encounter, they get access to those worlds in the same order they linked to them. This should cut down slightly on analysis paralysis; in the early rounds of combat, they only have a few planes they can contest over, so the decision is 'do I try to pull up a column and link to that plane or not?' rather than 'which of these 30 planes do I pick now?'

Now, the rate at which planes become available is up to you a little. We generally assume it took the party 8 to 12 days to complete adventure twelve, in which case each round corresponds with one day. But if they rushed through the whole thing in a blur, or if they spent weeks learning every nook and cranny, adjust it a bit to provide a good pace. In general, you want one or two planes becoming available every round, though some might have none, and some might have several. The party should have access to all of them no later than round seventeen, when Nicodemus would be finishing his changes if he's not interrupted.

When a plane becomes available, each PC becomes aware that they can manifest whatever item they used to create the planar icon. Manifesting an icon is a free action, but once it's manifested, it's solid and real, and no other PC can manifest the same plane's icon. The party might also start with a few icons if they kept the ones from the various Ancient ruins. These items are resilient enough to survive normal combat, but you might really wreck the party's plan if, say, Lya Jierre slices off the hand of a PC holding an icon, then kicks the thing into the center of the seal, where the chaotic energy obliterates it.

Whenever the party gets access to the plane of Ascetia, the PCs also receive knowledge of Nicodemus's true name. At this point they can start attacking and actually harming him. (Likewise, if in adventure twelve they called upon Srasama to aid them in battle, she appears at this point.)



## THE AXIS SEAL





## OBSCURATI RITUAL PLAN

Barring PC interference, Nicodemus has Borne adjust the ritual in the following order. Each of these corresponds to one turn's worth of actions, if the colossus isn't interrupted.

If at any point the party's airship is within 50 feet, and the airship is immobilized due to the air column being out of the ground, Borne takes a turn off from the ritual to use *crushing fist* to punch it. The PCs have until the start of Borne's next turn to somehow thwart this, such as with an impenetrable force wall, or just moving their ship away from where he aimed. If they don't, though, their ship suffers 2 strikes, one to hull integrity, and one to a random component.

1. Move to the Air pillar (orange) and lift it completely out of the ground. (But set it down gently so it doesn't break.)
2. Move to the Life pillar (green) and lift it. Nicodemus will take the icon of Mojang, and place the icon of *Patricalus*.
3. Release the Life pillar so it slides into the ground. Move south to the Earth pillar (gold).
4. Lift the Earth pillar. Nicodemus will remove the icon of Ratios and replace it with the icon of Mojang. (*Without Ratios, hiveminds will no longer form, but any current hiveminds persist.*)
5. Release the Earth pillar so it slides into the ground. Move east toward the Death pillar (purple).
6. Continue moving to the Death pillar, which is lying on the ground. Lift it. Nicodemus will remove the icon of Av, and place the icon of *Jiquus*.
7. Release the Death pillar so it slides into the ground. Move north toward the Space pillar (gray). (*The ghost council, which previously had been keeping its distance, will now seek to get into melee.*)
8. Continue moving toward the Space pillar. Lift it. Nicodemus will remove the icon of Fourmyle, and place the icon of Urim. He leaves the icon of Baden, the ghost moon.
9. Release the Space pillar so it slides into the ground. Turn around and lift the Time pillar. Nicodemus will remove the icon of Illocus and place the icon of *Regulus*.
10. Nicodemus orders the colossus to release the Time pillar, and he makes a grandiloquent monologue as it slides into the ground.
11. In the bonus turn granted by linking a Time plane, the colossus moves west toward where the golden seal lies.
12. He continues moving to the golden seal.
13. He finally reaches the seal and picks it up.
14. He slowly moves back to the central depression. Destructive tendrils of energy threaten to annihilate the colossus.
15. The colossus maneuvers the seal into proper position. Nicodemus completes his grandiloquent monologue.
16. The colossus releases the seal, completing the ritual and securing victory for the Obscurati.

### Draining Magic

When a pillar linking to a particular energy type is removed from the ground entirely, it becomes difficult to use magic of that type. At the start of a round, see below for the effects of a removed pillar.

- ♦ **Air.** Creatures and vessels flying with magic can no longer control their movement. Flying creatures become prone (but remain at their current elevation), and vessels list. If a flying creature is already prone or vessel listing, it descends 20 feet instead. Creatures flying with wings or vessels that could fly without magic are unaffected. Additionally, reduce by half all electricity and/or sonic damage that would be dealt.
- ♦ **Death.** Undead creatures are sickened. Incorporeal undead no longer take half damage. Reduce by half all negative energy damage that would be dealt.
- ♦ **Earth.** Creatures lose any magical resistance to nonenergy damage. (Namely, the colossus takes full damage from non-typed damage.)
- ♦ **Fire.** Cannons cannot fire and vessels with steam engines are immobilized. Reduce by half all fire and/or electricity damage that would be dealt.
- ♦ **Life.** Living creatures cannot return from the dead. Reduce by half all healing of damage by living creatures.

- ♦ **Space.** Teleportation is impossible, and the range of magical powers is limited to a maximum of 50 feet.
- ♦ **Time.** Any form of precognition is impossible. Creatures cannot use spells such as *haste*, *slow*, or *time stop*.
- ♦ **Water.** Honestly, there really aren't that many magical water effects in Pathfinder. Um, reduce by half all acid and/or cold damage that would be dealt, and each round instead of rolling 1d6 for the tendril's motion, roll 1d10, and any result of 6 or higher has the result of rolling a 6.

When a column is placed back in the ground, if it has an icon for a plane with the right type of energy, magic of that type immediately starts functioning again.

Each column has hardness 8 and 100 hit points, but the simplest way to break one is to have the colossus step on it, or drop it from at least thirty feet. If all eight columns are broken, the ritual is permanently ended. Likewise, if all eight columns are out of the ground at the start of a round, the energy tendril vanishes and the central glow dims. At the start of the next round, if no columns have been re-seated, the ritual ends. See the Rejection ending in Conclusion (page 51).



## Reconnection Reward

Whenever a PC places an icon in a column, when that column is fully reseated (which generally takes one round once released) a surge of planar energy is released. That PC can choose either the General reward, or one that matches the energy type of the column.

- ♦ **General.** You summon in a space within 6 squares a standard monster of CR 15 or below that can be found on the plane you just linked. It acts immediately. **Air.** You and each ally within one mile gains a fly speed of 200 feet (perfect) until the end of your next turn. During that time, the first time each of you hit an enemy on their turn, you can move that creature 50 feet in any direction.
- ♦ **Death.** Negative energy rises in a 30-foot-radius column centered on a space you can see, hundreds of feet high. Until the end of your next turn, each hostile creature that enters or ends its turn in the area takes 50 negative energy damage.
- ♦ **Earth.** Creatures in a 20-foot-radius burst centered anywhere you can see fall prone and lose all resistances and immunities until the end of your next turn. (Yes even the colossus. Vehicles that fall prone descend 60 feet.)
- ♦ **Fire.** As per Death, except it is a column of fire.
- ♦ **Life.** Each living ally within one mile heals 5d8+20 hit points. You heal to full.
- ♦ **Space.** Until the end of your next turn, you or one ally of your choice can choose to treat any space as if you (or they) were occupying it for the purposes of attacks or other abilities. Changing which space is a free action, within reason (e.g., you can make one attack of opportunity from a space anywhere you can see, but you don't get to make attacks of opportunity every time anyone you can see moves).
- ♦ **Time.** Immediately after your turn ends, the world aside from you and each ally within one mile freezes in time. You and your allies can communicate for roughly a minute, during which your bodies move slowly enough that you can only accomplish one round's worth of combat actions. During this time stretch you can freely affect inanimate objects, but cannot move, harm, or otherwise influence creatures that are paused. This otherwise functions as a *time stop* spell.
- ♦ **Water.** Now and at the start of the next round of combat, you can change where the energy tendril coming from the center of the ritual points, and can have it weave around spaces in order to avoid allies. Additionally, until the end of your next turn, you and allies within one mile are unaffected by area spells or effects unless you choose to be.

Planes might also yield different effects appropriate to their nature, at your discretion. We suggest the following specific options.

- ♦ **Caeloon.** Any dead allies within one mile are restored to life, and each ally in that area regains 5d8+20 hit points.
- ♦ **Iratha Ket.** Until the end of your next turn, each enemy within one mile is staggered. (Actually, they spend a move action compelled to sing or dance to express their feelings.)
- ♦ **Metarie.** Until the end of your next turn, the colossus and any other mechanical creatures are stunned, firearm attacks take a -5 penalty, and any mechanical vehicles are immobilized.
- ♦ **Obliatas.** Until the end of your next turn, undead gain vulnerability to positive energy (taking 150% damage), and if they are incorporeal they lose that trait.



## PLANES OF THE WATCHMAKER



In addition to the planes currently linked to the world, and those found in the Gyre, Nicodemus has icons associated with three planes – Patriculus, Regulus, and Jiquus – which will allow him to create a world as planned by the Watchmaker faction of the Obscurati.

- ♦ **Fire.** Jiese is retained.
- ♦ **Air.** Perlocus is retained.
- ♦ **Life.** A new world, *Patriculus*, makes people more obedient and susceptible to compulsion.
- ♦ **Water.** Ostea is retained.
- ♦ **Earth.** Ratios is replaced with Mojang, currently serving as plane of life.
- ♦ **Space.** Fourmyle is replaced with Urim, which was plane of earth in the original cosmology.
- ♦ **Time.** A new world, *Regulus*, has clockwork precision in its control of time. The planar icon is a thick scroll in a gold scroll tube, which lists all the events that are to occur over the next thousand years.
- ♦ **Death.** A new world, *Jiquus*, dominates all, and slays those who stray from the written course of history.

When combined, these planes will for one thousand years enslave all creatures on the plane, forcing them to experience lives of comfort and charity so that when the clock winds down, people will naturally continue their decent ways. Nature will remain obedient due to Mojang, and predators will only eat parts of creatures, which will heal rapidly due to Ostea. Urim makes extraplanar interference unlikely but, in a fatal flaw for this plan, the nature of Jiquus leaves an opening for undead from other worlds to ignore the clockwork control. Nicodemus intends to stay and act as a benevolent guide and guardian, but it won't take long for something to go wrong.



### Cheating

The ritual assumes you put one planar icon in each column, and that you'll have a total of eight planes. It is possible, however, to put multiple icons in a single column. When the column sinks into the ground, whoever placed the extra icon must make a DC 32 Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (nature), or Knowledge (planes) check. If the check fails, the column refuses to sink, and the energy tendril immediately switches location to strike the person who tried to make that linkage.

It's also possible to complete the ritual with fewer than eight columns, since most planes provide multiple energy types. You could link *only* to Oblitas, though the resulting world would be bland and over-lit. Or you could cleverly put two icons each in a pair of columns, and those four planes could potentially have all eight energy types.

### Completing and Closing

When all eight columns are submerged and the ritual has links to eight different energy types, the immense golden seal rises into the air, and each character who linked to a plane understands that they can easily control it. A single move action can lift the seal and move it 40 feet. The seal remains aloft for up to five minutes, so it's possible to keep making alterations.

The moving golden plate doesn't deal damage if it hits someone, but it easily pushes aside even the colossus. If the PCs choose to drop it, it will crush and kill anyone who's not incorporeal.

Once the seal is moved directly over the central pit and lowered to the ground, if no one moves it away within a round, the ritual is completed. See the Completion ending under Conclusions (page 50).

### Enemies

There are four main enemies or enemy groups: Nicodemus, the colossus, the airship forces, and the ghost council.

**Mastermind.** Nicodemus flies with Borne as the colossus moves, and on some turns he spends his actions to swap icons in the ritual columns, as detailed in the Obscurati Ritual Plan sidebar. Other rounds he tries to disrupt the PCs from afar with his spell-like abilities. We've designed the 'first stage' of his stats to be relatively low-threat. He's probably invincible at this time due to the *sacrament of apotheosis*, and we want the other enemies to pose a more immediate risk so the party is more likely to deal with them first.

We've provided a sort of suggested script for Nicodemus to convey his descent into villainy (see Grandstanding Archvillainy, page 48), but again, you should probably hold off on him monologuing too much at the start of the combat. He's busy directing Borne. Let the other enemies have a chance to trade words with the PCs before they're defeated, and save Nicodemus for later.

When the PCs get access to the knowledge of Nicodemus's real name, William Miller, Nic shifts gears and goes on the offensive, while still trying to direct Borne from afar. Nic's melee attack, *worldwide rebuke*, can strand a PC away from the fight and slow them, giving the colossus a chance to stomp the PC before he can move out of the way.



**Colossus.** Borne moves with immense slowness, and so spends most of his turns simply moving. If he attacks with hands or feet, he has to spend one round winding up, and his blow won't land until the next turn, giving foes time to dodge. He can readily unleash a blast of spirits from his eyes, but Nicodemus wants him to focus on the ritual. Borne, too, is basically invincible at the start of this encounter.

Destroying him requires some combination of powerful attacks that can overcome his hardness 50, mind-affecting attacks which bypass his resistances, the 'reward' for linking a plane of earth energy, and breaking through weak spots on his body to target fragile internal components. Even cannons from the PCs' airship probably can't do more than scratch him.





**Airship.** The *Revolution* keeps a relatively slow speed because it needs to maneuver tightly. Barring odd circumstances, it stays above the ritual circle and flies up to 80 feet per round, moving at Han Jierre's initiative.

The forces aboard the *Revolution* try to ground the PCs' airship, but Han Jierre might order the vessel's cannons aimed at the ground to take out PCs who attempt to interfere with the ritual columns. If the opportunity presents itself, Lya Jierre will lead a boarding action, but it's more likely she'll be defending the airship. Han commands a hivemind gestalt of all the living soldiers on the airship.

**Swarm of Undead Philosophers.** The ghost council keeps its distance at the beginning of battle. The undead are vulnerable because the pillar of the plane of death is not properly seated, so they try to stay as far away as possible while using *unrefined evocation* every round. Once a plane of death is relinked, the council seeks to enter melee. You can throw them at PCs who aren't engaged in the puzzle or in a narratively-weighty clash against one of the named NPCs.

Destroying the council is arduous, but in turn its attacks are intended more to create peril than to kill a PC instantly. If one PC is having his soul sucked out, another PC can feel heroic swooping in and knocking the spectral swarm away.

**Possible Allies.** If the PCs get within a hundred feet or so of the *Revolution*, they spot Kasvarina through the window of the dirigible's bridge. If she is unfriendly to the PCs, she uses flight magic to let Lya and some of the crew try to board the PCs' ship, or otherwise go after a group of PCs. If she's friendly with the PCs, Han Jierre keeps her under watch, unaware that she has hidden the true extent of her powers. She'll wait for the PCs to be near before she makes her move. She'll kill the dirigible pilots and possibly some of the gunnery crews, then fly and join the PCs, urging them to not destroy Borne if they can avoid it.

Meanwhile, Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen stays on the *Revolution* and heals the living crew with blasts of revivifying lightning, keeping the ship from suffering crew loss unless the PCs really work at it. Depending on how friendly he is with the party, he might seek an opportune moment to start healing the PCs.

Finally, if the PCs are having trouble with the *Revolution*, you can have them spot a commotion on the bridge, as the pilots are attacked by a squad of kobolds who crawled through the vessel's superstructure and emerged from underneath the bridge's control panels. Han Jierre is blasted out onto the gundeck by concussive magic, and then the kobolds seal the door to the bridge. Through the window, **El Extraño**, kobold spymaster of Ber, nods to the PCs, then orders his kobold crew to bring the ship within firing range of the colossus.

### 'Joining the Conspiracy'

Using the ritual to change the world was Nicodemus's idea, and now Nicodemus is empowered by the *sacrament of apotheosis*, so those who believe in him grant him power. Thus, if the PCs use the same tactics as him, they are themselves contributing to the faith that empowers him.

The first time a PC manages to link to a plane and then reseal the column, Nicodemus laughs as he suddenly realizes that his enemies are playing into his hands. Thereafter, whenever Nicodemus would take damage (which assumes the party manages to bypass the defenses granted by the *sacrament*), for each PC who linked to a plane during this encounter, prevent 10 of that damage and instead deal that 10 damage to the PC. Additionally, each time a PC links a plane, Nicodemus may take an extra standard action on his next turn.

This link ends if the column the PC lowered is destroyed.



EL EXTRAÑO

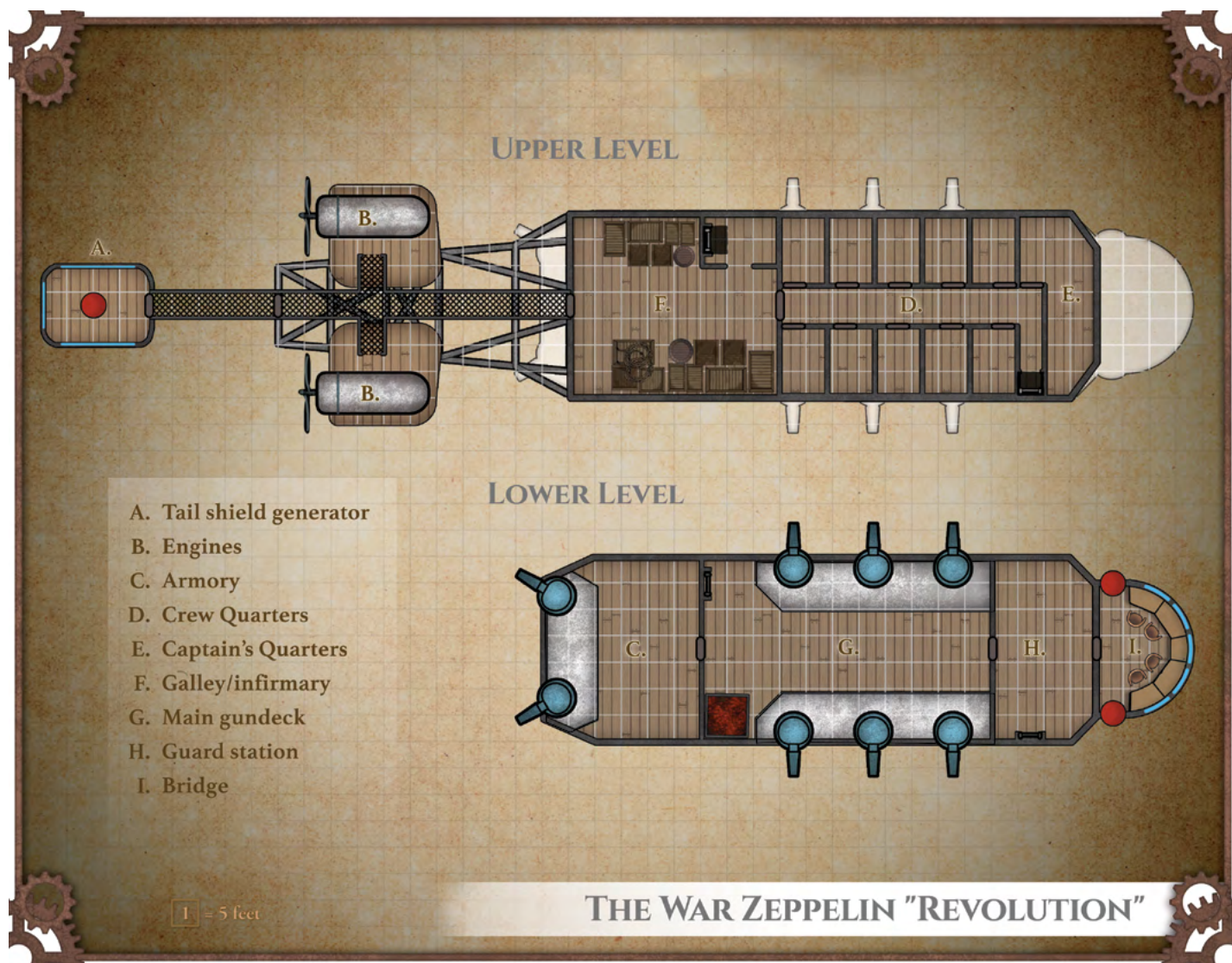
### War Dirigible *Revolution*

Han Jierre commands the airship from its bridge, which has a non-combatant crew. If an enemy gets into the bridge, the bridge crews surrender, and the ship coasts to a stop. Six elite crew units (consisting of 12 soldiers each) fill the remainder of the lower deck, with each crew manning a different turret. They can move to the aft turrets if needed. Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen stays in the infirmary, ready to heal crew.

Kasvarina typically stays on the bridge, and Lya Jierre roams through the different sections of the ship, ready to battle intruders. They are both prepared to take the fight to enemies who come nearby, using Kasvarina's *fly* spell if an enemy ship gets within 120 feet.







### Revolution, War Dirigible

Huge Vehicle

Level 30 Vehicle

Hull Integrity 4

Defense 30

Command +23

Maneuverability 4

Speed 16

Full Crew 16

Minimum Crew 3

Total Complement 100

#### Design

The lifting body consists of a 500-ft.-long cluster of hydrogen bladders, each woven out of mithral and enchanted to be fire resistant. The crewed section on the map consists of a 120-ft.-lower and upper decks, plus an upper aft tail, open to air, leading to the propellers and a rear lookout post.

#### Armaments

Three heavy enchanted turrets aim to each broadside, with a pair aiming aft. Incendiary bombs can be dropped directly below.

Crew: 40. Attack: +20 to broadsides, or +18 aft or down. The weapons cannot attack upward, but in exchange they can be used on targets directly below regardless of distance. Attacks made straight downward are with flaming weapons.

See the stats for *Revolution Elite Crew* (page 73) to see how they can fire these weapons in normal initiative, instead of the longer one-minute rounds of naval combat.

#### Lifting Body

The dirigible can fly as high as 13,000 feet. A strike to the air bladders causes a small localized explosion, but it does not spread. If the fire wards are dispelled, an explosion in one bladder engulfs the entire lifting body, and the vessel falls from the sky.

#### Repair Crew

Hivemind-empowered halfling and gnome technologists scurry through the ship, fixing what's broken.

As long as Sovereign Han Jierre remains in command of the *Revolution*, any effect that would immobilize it or render it incapable of shooting is repaired after one round.

#### Eldritch Defenses

Some magical shield absorbs your attacks. Every hit causes red light to flash, perhaps indicating the location of the shield.

Wards along the lifting body grant the ship immunity to the burning condition.

Three red arcane orbs – one in the tail, two in the cockpit – produce wide resilient spheres. Each orb has 50 hit points and produces an invisible 50-ft. radius sphere of protection. This has two effects:

- A spell or non-ship-based weapon attack that originates outside the sphere deals 60 less damage to targets within the sphere. A design flaw did not properly calibrate the size of the shields, meaning the aft gun deck has an area which can be struck with ease.
- Any naval weapon attacks that originate outside the sphere cannot damage the dirigible. This means shipboard weapons can only function at Close range.

A DC 25 Knowledge (engineering) or DC 35 Perception check recognizes this flaw, though taking advantage should require some creativity.



## Grandstanding Archvillainy

Coming up with villain dialogue in the midst of a battle is hard. Here's some we suggest.

### Lya Jierre's Mournful Duel

The fight with Lya probably won't last long, so we want to give some pathos to her defeat. She laments that she has lost her free will and the spark of innovation now that she is an uneasy spirit bound to Nicodemus.

"It's an honor to cross blades with you again. Despite our past disagreements and their consequences-" She pauses mid-sentence, and shakes her head at her own words. "No, I said that before.

"I'm afraid I must apologize. I wanted an exciting contest of ideology, but it seems both my swordfighting and my repartee are frozen in the past.

"Before I died, my uncle told me he feared the whole world would remain stagnant if we succeeded. Nicodemus and a council of ghosts, not a beating heart among them, would rule this world.

"Remember our first meeting, when I challenged you to break the rules of a puzzle? Well sadly, that's impossible for me now. But perhaps you still can. Nicodemus has set the rules of our grand finale, but you don't have to follow them."

### Nicodemus's Taunts

Nic keeps fairly quiet and understated at the beginning of the battle. He directs Borne, and if the PCs interfere with him while he's invincible due to the *sacrament*, he just chides them for wasting his time. But then as the battle develops you can use the following lines to keep Nicodemus alive as a character as well as an opponent.

**Welcome.** The first time a PC links to a plane and lowers a column back into the ground, Nicodemus laughs, arrogant.

"I told you earlier, imitation is flattery." He pauses for a moment to pull out a cigarette. "You think you're fighting me, but you're using my own methods. Oh, we might have different goals, but at the core, you agree with me: this world needs to be changed. You already voted with us how we should do it, too. So let me be the first to say it. Welcome to the Obscurati, constables." The cigarette ignites as he puts it to his spectral lips.

**Scorn.** We want to establish that Nicodemus genuinely wants to kill the PCs. There's no time left for making deals.

"You're going to fail, you know. You'll fail, and I will kill you. The wisest minds of twenty generations agreed to join with me, but you-" His eyes flare like bonfires. "My new world is almost complete, and I'll burn you alive before I let you ruin it."

**Taunt.** Nicodemus mocks the party if his allies are doing well against them, or when he is forced to start fighting.

"Your feeble attempts to stop the Obscurati will be forgotten by history. You were well intentioned, sometimes almost ingenious, so I promise I'll remember you fondly."

**Nostalgia.** This can help remind the PCs of how long they've been battling Nicodemus.

"Are you as clever as I thought, or was it just chance that you kept stumbling into my way? We first met in the garden of Mayor Macbannin's manor, on Cauldron Hill. Do you remember? We talked about chaos."

**Betrayal.** This sets up a fine opportunity for someone to reveal to Kasvarina that Nicodemus betrayed her centuries ago.

"Chaos let my Kasvarina slip away from me, because I was distracted by your interference. Without her, I hesitated. I compromised my ideology. I was sentimental, put my trust in people. But we know that people are too selfish to be trusted to choose the right path."

**Pride.** Make sure to reflect that the power of the *sacrament* is exacerbating Nic's natural self-righteousness.

"I'll admit, I was afraid people would reject my grand design, but now I can feel their faith. I've opened their eyes to the truth, and they empower me. They know I will save them."

**Confession to Kasvarina.** If the PCs reveal to Kasvarina how Nic arranged the murder of her daughter in order to bring her back under his control four centuries ago, he snaps in fury.

"You'd lost your way, Rina! After all we lost against the Clergy, you and I were cutting them down. We were making the world better! But you wanted a 'family,' like some idiot girl! You were better than that. Yes, I had Launga killed, and I did you a favor! If I'd left you alone, the world you would have given her would have been as wretched as it ever was. Who cares if you lost a daughter? I let you give birth to the future!"

**Confession to Borne.** If the PCs goad Nicodemus about what the ritual will do, or if they are close to convincing Borne to reject his father, Nicodemus is put on the back foot, metaphorically.

“Son, don’t listen to them. I made you, and you trust me. It’s a damned combat, Borne, not time to discuss the nuances of philosophy. I can hear them, son. Millions of people crying out for you to save them! We finish this now.”

If pushed, though, his pride is such that he cannot deny his intentions. He unleashes a diatribe and demands Borne do what he is told.

“Order. Justice. That’s what I’m creating. Selfishness will no longer destroy what is good when free will is no more. People will be moral because they’ll have no choice. For a thousand years, chaos will be no more, and when the watch’s hand winds down, yeah, then I’ll give these worthless people their freedom back. But they won’t know suffering. I’ll have been their god, one who can truly answer their prayers, who won’t have to let evil into my world. I’m creating heaven, where no man will fear tyranny. Whatever empty value you place on ‘free will’ pales to the paradise this world will be.”

### Victorious Monologue

If the Obscurati ritual gets far enough that Borne is about to drop in Jiquus, the new plane of Time, Nicodemus begins his victorious grandstanding, but only as long as victory is in sight. If thwarted at this last moment, he finally loses his temper and attacks recklessly. But if he’s not interrupted, he finishes his speech right as Borne drops the golden seal and secures the world for the Obscurati.

“This is the last piece. All the flaws of Creation will be gone, and all the universe will see that I have made the most perfect world. I wish you dirt-minded fools hadn’t opposed me, or I could’ve spared so many more. But now, witness the end of the Age of Chaos, and the dawn of the Age of Reason!

“Let me give you a moment. You’ll marvel at its glory, and then, when you beg forgiveness for ever doubting me, I will lift you up and reveal the place I have made for you in my celestial clockwork. You’ll all have a place in this living heaven, and I will look down upon you, your savior, and smile at a new world without selfishness, or apathy, or loathing.

“Well, maybe a little loathing. You’ll remember the world as it was. I’ll make sure of that. Silently, inwardly, you’ll weep that you failed. You’ll try to rebel, to resist, but day after day you’ll praise me to everyone you meet. When all the rest of civilization has forgotten the meaning of the word evil, you’ll be remembered as great heroes of the Obscurati, who were loyal to me until the day you died.

“Now Borne, close the seal, and at long last our grand design will be complete!”



### CHECKLIST FINALE

Doctors and airline pilots use checklists so they don’t forget important steps of complex actions. Spend a moment to refer to this checklist each round.

1. At the start of the round, roll to see if the energy tendril moves.
2. Determine if unplugged (or replugged) planar columns cause a change in what magic works.
3. Determine what Nicodemus wants Borne to do with the ritual this round.
4. Decide on something for Nicodemus to say, either on his turn or in reaction to a PC.
5. Decide who Han Jierre thinks is a key threat, and which resources he’d use to target that PC: rifles, ship cannons, or a boarding action led by Lya.
6. Tell the PCs which of the planes their other selves linked to in the Gyre they now have access to. If they gain access to Ascetia, remind them that Nicodemus’s true name is William Miller.
7. Everyone takes their turns. Look for a way to isolate a PC with a natural nemesis, like a Martial Scientist with Lya, or a Vekeshi with Kasvarina. Try to set up that encounter if it’s not tactically futile.
8. When a round ends, assess how the three arcs – airship, ritual, and colossus – are progressing. Decide if you need to highlight events in one arc in particular.
9. If the party is making headway toward the Redemption ending, tell the PCs that they feel a presence in the Gyre watching and weighing their actions.
10. If they’re working on the Rejection ending, describe some dramatic heaving in the earth and lightning in the sky as reality shudders chaotically.



## CONCLUSIONS

However this encounter ends, the consequences should be decisive.

### Failure

If Nicodemus gets all the planes he desires and closes the seal, the whole world becomes suddenly calm. Tell the players that their characters throw down their weapons and begin to smile and cheer at the Obscurati's victory. A full moon begins to rise to the east, and though they try to resist, each of them walks up to Nicodemus, thanks him, then kneels and ask for forgiveness.

On the ground, looking up at their savior, they see the ghost of Nicodemus smile, and he reaches out to the heavens and sweeps his hand. The gesture casts time forward, and in a moment the PCs experience day and night and day and again, years in a flash, as they travel the world spreading the heroism of Nicodemus, crafting monuments to his name, attending annual celebrations on Axis Island where Nicodemus basks in their adoration. And every moment, each of them screams without a voice, unable to act against the path he set for them.

Until finally, decades later, their will long broken, they no longer know that they attest to a forced faith. They awake with a smile they believe is their own. They have relented, and understand that Nicodemus was right, that this world is truly without selfishness. Finally, as the year ends, they attend the celebration here again on Axis Island.

Thousands have come to listen to Nicodemus give them guidance and encouragement. But the man does not appear. This matters nothing to the crowd, whose responses were dictated long ago. They applaud a speech not given by a hero not present, and then they leave and continue on with their lives, forced to obey. But inwardly, silently, they remember.

### Destruction

When Nicodemus is finally reduced to 0 hit points, he sags and shakes his head in disbelief. His form begins to dissipate, and he reaches out toward one of the PCs to say, "It's all still chaos. Whatever world you create, it will always fall apart."

Then he convulses, bends backwards upon himself, and explodes with blinding radiance, spreading outward like a wave to all his followers across the world. The colossus Borne is utterly disintegrated, leaving just a shadow of smoke in the air that slowly drifts away. Any Ob forces who had survived this long are likewise annihilated. Additionally, because PCs who contributed to the ritual became linked to Nicodemus through the *sacrament*, they each suffer backlash, taking 100 damage.

In the relative calm afterward, whatever remains of the party has little trouble completing the ritual, though they might still squabble over what planes to bind. Let them finish the ritual, while they ponder just how many were killed by the backlash from Nicodemus's defeat.

### Completion

When the golden seal falls into place, the whole valley shakes with the impact, and the once-blinding light pouring out of the center of the ritual vanishes. In the following few seconds, magic readjusts on a worldwide scale, and clouds roil overhead as energy gathers to this spot. Just as how linking to a single plane granted a reward, now completing the ritual grants each PC who contributed incredible power.

Let the players know that each of them can effectively do any one thing they desire, on par with a *wish*. They must choose quickly before the magic dissipates, but as they ponder, Nicodemus shouts in disbelief and clenches his fists, then shakes his head once and cracks a forced grin. He pulls out one last cigarette, haughty and defiant.

"Enjoy your victory, constables," he says. "I told you, we agree this world had to change, so whatever new world you've made, it was made in my image. But my work is not complete. This is just a delay. My followers and I will try again. You cannot kill an idea, and I will see my grand design fulfilled."

Of course, the party can just keep fighting if they want, but with their momentary surge of power, victory is practically automatic. Hopefully at this point, one of the PCs chooses to obliterate Nicodemus, which has the result detailed in Destruction above, though the PC has a choice of whether to just destroy Nicodemus, or to destroy all his followers as well.

If by some chance the party lets Nicodemus go, he's true to his word. Though the *sacrament* fades away after a day, he and those who believe in him continue to toil in the shadows, seeking another opportunity to achieve Nic's goal and create a perfect world. That's a problem for tomorrow, though. For now, the sun begins to rise.

### Redemption

If the party gets Kasvarina to confront Nicodemus, and if they haven't done anything that William Miller would find morally reprehensible, *and* if you feel the scene has had sufficient drama – it might help to have Nicodemus attack Kasvarina and nearly kill her – then Nicodemus's other self leaps into the Gyre in order to merge their consciousnesses into one.

The sky rumbles with deafening thunder that rolls in from the horizon where the Gyre hangs, and then Nicodemus falls to the ground and grips his head in both hands. His form distends, like a second person is trying to move inside a single body, hands and faces pressing out against his spectral skin. For the next round Nic is stunned as he argues with himself.

Nic groans in confusion, "Who are you? Get out of my mind!"

Then his voice changes slightly. "I'm who you should have been. We opposed the holy war because the hierarchs cared more about victory than following any sort of moral code. Now you're just like them, and just as blind. Our arrogance caused the Malice. You should have been horrified by what you'd done, but you were too proud to stop fighting. Well dammit, I've spent five centuries with the ghosts of those you killed. Feel what they lost."

He stumbles and screams, and through the power of the *sacrament of apotheosis* everyone in the battle notices this. The Ob forces pause to see what will happen.

Then on the next round he snaps free of his confusion. His posture changes to guarded optimism. Miller, now in control of the ghostly body, calls to the party. "I have only a moment. For now he's overwhelmed, and I've ended his link to the *sacrament*. Quickly, destroy me. I don't have time to apologize for it all, but I can help you stop him."

Already he's starting to twitch again, but if at least one PC strikes him, Miller yields to it and lets it destroy him. The blow begins to unravel him, and he looks to Kasvarina for forgiveness before he collapses silently into darkness.

Or play it up with a big explosion, if you prefer. In the wake of this, the ghost council screams and disperses, the colossus falls to its knees to mourn his father, and Han Jierre surrenders. The party can then complete the ritual at their leisure.

### Rejection

When the party destroys the last column of the ritual, or when a round has passed with no columns in the earth, the ritual sputters to an end. The energy tendril vanishes. Nicodemus is shocked, and he screams at the party, “You could have made whatever world you wanted, and you just reject that chance? You’ve doomed the whole world!”

The planet shudders, mountains crumble, and the glow of the Gyre streaks across the sky as the air fills with a high-pitched keen. The heavens glow brighter, every dark spot turned blinding white, and an immense force shoves everyone to the ground. For a moment the whole world is just unendurable brilliance and deafening thunder, and then in an instant reality becomes still.

The party finds themselves and whoever remains of their foes lying on the floor of the valley. Clouds float overhead in a dark sky, but as their eyes adjust they spot stars twinkling through gaps. A purple glow like dawn rises to what was the north, as if the world had spun off its axis.

Nicodemus shoves himself righteously to his feet and throws out a hand to smite a PC, but nothing happens. The power of the *sacrament* has ended, and magic itself barely works. Borne groans, too weak to move, and the ghost council cries out as they begin to dissolve. Nicodemus is unable to sustain them. He only ever endured through his certainty that he could remake the world into what he desired, and by rejecting his whole ideology on a planetary scale, the party has completely sapped him of power.

A single blow can destroy him.

### A New Dawn

Once the battle ends, the party’s allies gather around them to cheer, weep for those who fell, and tend to those who survived. In the midst of their interactions, a beam of sunlight shines above the mountains at the edge of the valley and illuminates the forest on the far side. Within minutes, night is pushed away for the first time in months by the sunrise. Just what the world it shines upon looks like depends on the party’s choices, but here on Axis Island, the air is crisp and the sky clear.

(And if the party pissed off Pemberton, now’s when he attacks.)







# ACT THREE:

## HOW TO DELIVER A DENOUEMENT

Take a smoke break  
and get some dinner.

After all climax has concluded, we must unravel the tension, and either mourn or celebrate what the party's actions have wrought. We recommend a time jump of a few days or weeks. You can use the following scenes to imply how the world fares in the aftermath.

Any prominent NPC who survived, and who can reach this world (for instance, if the party didn't link to Av, Rock Rackus and the Unseen Court are stranded in the Gyre for eternity), should show up at least briefly. Consider what planes the PCs linked to, and choose a scene to at least slightly highlight the changes. Each scene might involve just one or two PCs, or the whole party.

Our descriptions assume the party got a happy ending and maintained a world with technology. If the world is bleaker or the party set themselves up as tyrants, change the tone of each scene as necessary. The dock opera could be a protest, and the Vekeshi unmasking could be an execution of dissidents. If the party chose a more pastoral world, the Government Issue scene could be retraining people in the use of bows or even domesticated falcons.

### Docker—A Dock Opera

**Prominent NPCs:** Rock Rackus, Thames Grimsley, Glaucia Evora, Lady Beshela

**Likely Plane of Interest:** Water

On barges in Flint Harbor that were once a floating reformatory, a gaggle of dockers are decorating for an upcoming performance to remember those who died in the aftermath of the Great Eclipse. Thames Grimsley coordinates hundreds of vibrantly-dressed men and women, but his interest in the PCs is for one specific role: pall-bearers for an empty coffin.

The concert will be a memorial, and Grimsley wants at least two of the 'heroes of Risur' to help carry the coffin onto the stage, then place it on a pedestal high at the rear of the stage. It will serve as a focus for the more somber songs, which will be performed by musicians from all throughout Flint and even some foreign countries. But the plan is for the concert to switch to a more celebratory, uplifting tone, and at the night's end the coffin will be set adrift, to be carried away with the tide, inspiring the whole city to think of the whole wide world.

Thames would also love any docker PCs to perform, especially if they have any words to commemorate Rock Rackus, who has not been seen since before the Great Eclipse. (Even if the party linked to Av, the fate of Rock is unknown.)

During the discussion, the gnoll Glaucia Evora briefly interrupts and thanks the party for how the conditions for workers in Parity Lake have improved. She suggests they meet some time about establishing a branch of the *Executores dola Liberta* here in Flint, but admits that she is sincerely interested to experience Risuri musical culture.

Jump forward to that evening, as ships float all around the lashed-together barges that make up the stage. Thames personally rows a longboat while the PCs and other pall-

bearers—lit by spotlights (chemical, magical, perhaps even electrical) hold the empty casket. (If they check, yes, it's empty.) A druid on stage sings a traditional funeral song, and as the ship reaches the barge and PCs carry the casket onto the stage, she reaches the end of the song. People watching from dozens of anchored boats cheer.

Then, as the PCs near the pedestal where the casket should lie, it shudders in their hand. A muffled voice comes from inside the box, urgent, and one of the other pallbearers panics and



LADY BESHELA



ROCK RACKUS

lets go of the coffin. The crowd gasps in shock, and the spotlights fixate on the casket. Its lid flies off and white fog pours out.

From the fog rises a skeletal hand, and then the woman it belongs to pulls herself out and pirouettes as she lands on the stage. It is a dancer from the plane of Iratha Ket, her bones painted and her clothes colorful and somehow curvaceous despite her lack of flesh. Then she reaches back into the casket and helps out Lady Beshela, who emerges gracefully and nods to the PCs. Then Beshela extends a hand to help a third person out of the coffin.

A gold pistol, encrusted with diamonds, rises out of the fog, and Beshela grabs the barrel and yanks, pulling up Rock Rackus. The audience screams in disbelief as Rock climbs from the casket (completely stealing attention away from those who died, like the asshole celebrity he is).

"I've got a long story to tell you," he says, as music begins to play out of nowhere, "but I think you know where it starts."

He breaks into his famous song – *I Had a Threeway* – about how he got into trouble for having two lovers at once. The crowd sings along, while Beshela and the skeleton spin and dance around him. Occasionally he'll break into normal speech to explain that Risur and the Dreaming are his two lovers now, and he hopes they can be together forever.

He finishes to thunderous applause, and while his fans cheer he leans in close to the PCs and says he's got a dungeon he'd like to go plundering with them some time. Lady Beshela can fill them in on what she knows about the status of the fey of Av, and just where the Dreaming and the Bleak Gate have gone off to.

Thames's elaborately-planned event devolves into an impromptu jam session as Rock cheers on or duets with all the other performers, encourages the PCs to sing, and occasionally drops songs about how he escaped the Gyre and found his way back home, to the city and the people he loves. As the concert comes to a close, he announces that he's running for Governor.

Out in the dark of the night, a deep ululation sounds — the approval of the fey titan, She Who Writhes. With that, Rock and Beshela dive into the sea and are carried away on an immense wave.

## Eschatologist — Group Portrait

**Prominent NPCs:** Captain Smith

**Likely Plane of Interest:** Time

Captain Rutger Smith knocks at the door of one of the PCs. With him is Bartholomew Pryce, editor of the newspaper *Pryce of Progress*. Together they invite the PC and the rest of the 'heroes of Flint' to this week's meeting of the Flint Society of Eschatologists. Smith doesn't expect a speech or anything, but he says that Pryce has been experimenting with the new field of photography, and they would like to record a picture of the party for posterity. Even if they can't all come, Smith hopes that there might be some event coming up where all the heroes will be together at once.

He admits, it might seem a little strange for eschatologists, who are supposed to be paying attention to how things will end in the future, to care about recording events that have already happened. But Smith explains that as he sees it, endings only matter in context, and as we prepare for the end, those who survive us should be able to remember us, both our faces and the lessons we learned.

You might have the party just meet up with the club and take a photo, or save the commemoration for some other gathering, such as the Medals and Prizes scene.



CAPTAIN RUTGER SMITH

## Gunsmith — Government-Issue

**Prominent NPCs:** Stover Delft, Kaja Stewart

**Likely Plane of Interest:** Earth

A shooting range has been set up in a courtyard outside the RHC Headquarters in Flint. Stover Delft guides one or more PCs in to meet a half-dozen new recruits. Kaja Stewart, under the watchful eye of elite Risuri soldiers clad in black gentleman's suits and tophats, is clearly delighted as she instructs the recruits. She twirls a pair of firearms by their trigger guards and explains the specifications of the newest technology. Any innovations a PC gunsmith came up with are now standard issue for constables (but only for mundane technology, not the blaster powers of a Mad Shootist).

Upon seeing the PCs, Kaja grows serious and admits that she was once in a gunfight against the party, but because she was taken prisoner she had a second chance, and was able to reform and help Risur. That's why it's important, she jokes, to hit your enemies in their kneecaps.

One of the recruits raises his hand and asks if that's how Chief Inspector Delft got his limp.

After that, Delft uses Kaja so he can show the recruits how to place mage-cuffs on a suspect. He laments that the ribbon of gold in the cuffs probably needs to be removed, now that it doesn't block teleportation anymore (unless the party kept Urim). He's about to move on to a tour of the underground cells, but another recruit asks if they can test their marksmanship against the PCs.



If they'll indulge the recruits, Delft shouts to a secretary to bring out the 'good silver,' and a minute later she returns with a bundle full of knives, swords, and machetes that once belonged to Lorcan Kell. He walks out 70 feet from the firing line where wooden targets have been set up, and then he stabs the weapons through the back of the targets so they poke forward. With a grin he spits some chewing tobacco on the front of the target and smears it to make a rough angry face with two eyes and a down-turned mouth.

"The late Duke of Slaughter," he says with a bow.

His prop completed, he gets back to safety and lets the crew bond over blowing away the famous scoundrel.

### Martial Scientists—The Body is Missing

**Prominent NPCs:** Lauryn Cyneburg, Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen

**Likely Plane of Interest:** Space

The PCs are escorted by Battalion trainees into a damp and somewhat moldy basement in the military base. Gas lamps flicker along the walls, each placed near a sign that reads "Special Clearance Required For Entry." Guards stand at attention in front of several doors and salute as the PCs pass.

As they near the end of the hallway, one of their escorts will confess to a martial scientist PC that he's read their thesis, and thinks it should be standard training for all Battalion recruits.

At the end of the hall the door opens to reveal Minister of Infiltration Lauryn Cyneburg and Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen. Inside the room, bright lamps illuminate an autopsy table, now empty, but stained with purple blood. A chalkboard on the wall hosts a diagram of some alien monster. (I'm thinking protean, but pick what works for you.)

Lauryn informs the PCs that the monster was found by roving diviners working for the Battalion, and after they killed it with an excess of bullets, its body was brought here and the doctor was brought in for his expertise. Dr. von Recklinghausen cut it open, tested its organs for magic potentiality, and saw no sign that the thing was capable of slithering its way out of the facility. But when he came this morning, the body was missing. Guards were stationed here the whole time, and no one reported seeing it leave.

To be clear, Lauryn says, the thing isn't a Gidim, and it isn't from any plane they're aware of. She wonders if the party saw anything like it in the Gyre. Then she offers her opinion that, honestly, she would have kinda liked the pirate plane. She thinks she'd look dashing with an eyepatch.

Back to business, though, she says the more worrying development is that the same time this disappeared, secret research about the psychic vulnerabilities of the Gidim went missing. She asks whether they should notify the S.C.P. division of the RHC, or try to resolve this themselves.

### Skyseer—Telescope in the Clouds

**Prominent NPCs:** Hana "Gale" Soliogn, Heward Sechim

**Likely Plane of Interest:** Air

Followers of the late and beloved skyseer Nevard Sechim have called a meeting with civic and business leaders to discuss a proper commemoration. For promotional reasons the meeting occurs on the roof of **Heward Sechim's** factory in Parity Lake, beginning about an hour before sunset (giving you an opportunity to showcase what the industrial sector of the city looks like today).

Heward Sechim has asked for the respectable influence of the PCs to help arbitrate the dispute. Gale leads the contingent of skyseers, and as a stunt she has created a column of clear air directly above the factory, so that the blue sky overhead contrasts with the smoke covering the rest of the district. The skyseers are requesting that the factories must develop a way to capture their smoke and keep it out of the air, which the factory owners balk at as unworkable.

Gale argues that since the heavens have changed, the work of the skyseers is now more important than ever, so that the people of Risur can best understand their place in the multiverse. One factory owner, **Boothman Drumpf**, scoffs and says that what the people of Risur want is a return to normalcy, with no more magic or prophecies. He's tempted to just burn extra coal in spite, to drive the skyseers out of Flint.

The PCs might be able to broker something, but at some point – either as a concession or as an extra demand – Gale says that the skyseers want to lay claim to Cauldron Hill. Since its

peak is often above the clouds, they'd like to build a telescope observatory, paid for by a new 'clear sky' tax on industries that produce smoke and other ill vapors.

As the meeting winds down, the sun begins to descend in the new west, which has the unfortunate effect of revealing that, y'know, the pollution kinda makes for a beautiful sunset.



HEWARD SECHIM

### Spirit Medium—A New Underworld

**Prominent NPCs:** Morgan Cippiano

**Likely Plane of Interest:** Death

One or more PCs are invited to attend the funeral of a murdered young girl named **Nilana** in Stray River, a reminder that sorrows still exist in the new world. It's a traditionally Crisillyiri affair, though the liturgy is somewhat self-conscious since the memories of the god trials are still fresh. A spirit medium in attendance might spot the departed girl's ghost lingering, depending on the nature of how people die in this new world.

After the ceremony ends, Morgan Cippiano meets the PC on the veranda. He hopes there'll be an offer to find justice for Nilana, but in any event he wants to discuss how he and his family can help keep order. As long as there's anger, jealousy, suffering, and desperation, people are going to commit crimes, and there should be some structure to the criminal underworld, so that even the criminals have a code they won't violate.

Morgan admits, after all he's been through, he doesn't want to keep corralling finger-breakers and smugglers, but he also can't just turn over his people to the law, or else he'll lose their trust. He asks if perhaps one of the PCs would consider joining the Family and becoming involved in its affairs. After all, the party has plenty of experience with conspiracies. If it sweetens the deal, he can introduce them to a quite talented tailor.

Whatever the PCs decide, Morgan pours them all a glass a wine and toasts their good health.

### Technologist — Borne Again

**Prominent NPCs:** Borne, Benedict Pemberton, Kasvarina Varal

**Likely Plane of Interest:** Fire

This scene can go a lot of ways. At the outskirts of Flint – perhaps out in the Ayres where there won't be as many gawkers – the colossus Borne sits on an island. Or what remains of him. If he survived, he has come to Flint so that he might transfer his consciousness into a smaller golem body, and that his titanic form might be disassembled so it can never be used as a weapon. If he was destroyed, his remains have been brought here to salvage.

Kasvarina Varal, if friendly and alive, wants to cooperate with Benedict Pemberton to craft Borne a new form – mechanical still, but capable of feeling like a real person. She cannot have children (or at least, believes she cannot), and Borne is her son. Alternately, if Borne is dead, Kasvarina wishes to have his remains disposed of respectfully.

In either case, Pemberton is eager to get his hands on the secret innards of the colossus, but he puts on a very convincing show of lamenting the situation and the suffering of poor, innocent Borne. And the Risuri military, of course, does not want a private citizen – especially not a dragon – to get access to such powerful technology. **Colonel Schneider**, who corresponds with industrialists in Parity Lake, is red-faced and apoplectic at Pemberton's casual mention of his plans to ship Borne's remains to Ber.

A technologist PC can moderate the situation, and perhaps help devise a new body for the colossus. Or Borne might be convinced to keep his body for a time, long enough to assist in some major earth-works projects. Or, best yet, a Steamsuit Pilot might give Borne a Medium-sized body of his own, then learn to pilot the colossus. Most of the people of Risur would be wary of this outcome, however.

### Vekeshi Mystic — Unmasking

**Prominent NPCs:** Damata Griento, Athrylla Valanar

**Likely Plane of Interest:** Life

The Old Stag wants to rehabilitate the image of the Vekeshi Mystics. In a public event in Dawn Square, publicized in the local papers days in advance, a dozen members of the Vekeshi Mystics come out in their ornate ceremonial robes and masks. In front of a crowd of several hundred, they reveal themselves one by one (see the Vekeshi Mystics player handout in Act One for names), explaining that they sought positions in society where they could be a force to help the common man without resorting to violence.

The PCs have been asked to witness, and help prevent violence, since the Vekeshi are viewed as terrorists and murderers. A Vekeshi PC would also be asked to unmask himself, but this is voluntary.

The local police are on hand, and they intend to arrest the unmasked mystics so they can go to trial. But after the Old Stag has revealed himself, the crowd is surprised when a half-orc bounds onto stage. Damata Griento, who has been hobnobbing with railroad builders in Risur, says that he sympathizes with these masked men and women.

He explains that during the Great Eclipse, when his nation of Ber was in peril and its leaders were taking the wrong course, he too put on a mask. He too fought and hurt law enforcement officers who were doing their duties, and once even killed an agent of the Obscurati. Today everyone sees the Ob as the villains, and so his actions are viewed as noble, not criminal. But he wants the people of Risur to consider the intentions of the Vekeshi. They acted not in self interest, but to fight back against forces they felt were a threat to innocents.

The police pull him off stage, and an officer shouts that the gathering is over. Damata is carted away with the mystics. Depending on how you want things to play out, they might go peacefully to face a fair justice system, or Damata – with the aid of Sor Daeron – could break the mystics out of their prisoner wagons and spirit them away to Ber.

### Yerasol Veteran — Medals and Prizes

**Prominent NPCs:** Lord Inspector Nigel Price-Hill, Harkover Lee, Stover Delft

**Likely Plane of Interest:** This one.

The monarch of Risur and a couple of other PCs ride in a carriage with Lord Inspector Nigel Price-Hill and Principal Minister Harkover Lee. Harkover is just concluding a briefing about meeting the new...he pauses at the amusing word... “president” of Danor. The tone depends on how well Danor fared, though it's likely the nation is suffering from a Second Malice because of the millions who placed their faith in Nicodemus and died for it.

The Lord Inspector turns to a ‘more serious’ topic, as a joke. He insists that the peak of Cauldron Hill be used as the site for a monument to the monarch and those who saved the world. He knows it will upset the skyseers who want their telescope, but he'd rather the city's most prominent landmark not be controlled by a religious cult full of secrets.

Before the conversation goes too long, the carriage approaches the sound of cheering and music. Looking out the window, the PCs can see crowds gathered on the bridge to the Royal Shipyard. The assembled citizenry of Flint sing a stirring rendition of the Risuri national anthem, and then the carriage stops at the royal docks. Any other PCs who weren't in the carriage are already present, along with Stover Delft.

Delft welcomes them, and turns to present the new flagship, ready for launch, the *R.N.S....* we'll let you name it. But it's probably an airship.

Delft then gestures to a stage on the docks ahead, where a crowd of dignitaries await. He runs through the names of three constables – **Erik Freund**, **Cynthia du Emorie**, and **Laureen Zell** – who will be receiving medals for cracking the case of an extraplanar monster that was lurking in the sewers under Parity Lake. They'll be coming aboard for the maiden voyage of the new vessel. Hopefully no royal siblings will be along for the ride this time.

If someone desires, let a PC give a speech to the crowd, giving the campaign its final word. Then a bottle of champagne is brought forth, and the monarch smashes it against the hull, launching the ship for a first voyage in this new age.



# APPENDIX ONE: COMBAT CATALOGUE

Herein find all the combat stats of the adventure. We present them in order of the scene they likely first appear. Refer to the chart below if you need to find their stats to use them in a different encounter.

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## Contingent Ambush

Ob forces use Lauryn Cyneburg's teleportation powers to divide the party while Kaja and constructs deliver withering gunfire. Pardo and the occultists blast the party with devastating spells, making it critical to take them out early. The screaming malice is a big dumb monster that the PCs might want to keep their distance from. The Ash Wolf can come to the party's aid, if needed.

## Lauryn Cyneburg

CR 18

XP 153,600

Female half-elf sorcerer 19

CN Medium humanoid (elf, human)

**Init** +7; **Senses** low-light vision, *true seeing*; Perception +14

### Defense

**AC** 28, touch 17, flat-footed 24 (+4 armor, +3 deflection, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +3 natural, +4 shield)

**hp** 159 (19d6+61)

**Fort** +15, **Ref** +17, **Will** +20; +2 vs. enchantments, +5 vs. spells or spell-like abilities

**Defensive Abilities** hivemind presence; **DR** 10/adamantine (150 points);

**Immune** charms, compulsions, fear, sleep

### Offense

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (perfect)

**Melee** mwk fist +13/+8 (1d4-1)

**Ranged** mwk insult +17 (mild embarrassment)

**Special Attacks** gestalt strike

**Sorcerer Spells Known** (CL 19th; concentration +30)

9th (4/day)—*dominate monster* (DC 26), *freedom*, *teleportation circle*

8th (6/day)—*discern location*, *maze*, *protection from spells*, *power word stun*

7th (7/day)—*delayed blast fireball* (DC 24), *greater hostile juxtaposition* (DC 24), *greater teleport*, *phase door*, *teleport trap* (DC 24)

6th (7/day)—*contingency*, *sending*, *true seeing*, *veil*

5th (7/day)—*damnation stride* (DC 22), *dominate person* (DC 22), *mind fog* (DC 22), *prying eyes*, *teleport*

4th (7/day)—*dimension door*, *dimensional anchor*, *greater invisibility*, *locate creature*, *scrying*, *wall of fire*

3rd (8/day)—*dispel magic*, *hold person* (DC 20), *major image*, *nondetection*, *protection from energy*

2nd (8/day)—*darkvision*, *invisibility*, *rope trick*, *scorching ray*, *spider climb*, *whispering wind*

1st (8/day)—*disguise self*, *identify*, *mage armor*, *shield*, *unseen servant*

0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *flare* (DC 18), *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

**Bloodline** arcane

**Contingency** When knocked unconscious, teleport to Flint's teleportation beacon

### Statistics

**Str** 8, **Dex** 16, **Con** 16, **Int** 13, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 25

**Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 24

**Feats** Agile Steps, Combat Casting, Dimensional Agility, Dodge, Empower Spell, Eschew Materials, Improved Counterspell, Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Maximize Spell, Nimble Moves, Silent Spell, Quicken Spell

**Skills** Bluff +19, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (geography) +13, Knowledge (planes) +24, Perception +14, Spellcraft +14, Stealth +17

**Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

**SQ** bloodline arcana (+1 to DC of spells affected by metamagic), bonded item (any known spell 1/day), hivemind presence, metamagic adept (5/day, no increase of casting time), dimensional hop (teleport as move action, in 5-ft. increments, up to 190 ft. per day; can bring willing creatures, but each uses an equal amount of your distance)

**Combat Gear** *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of fly*; **Other Gear** *amulet of natural armor* +3, *belt of physical might* (Dex, Con) +2, *cloak of resistance* +3, *headband of alluring charisma* +6, *ring of protection* +3, ivory statuette worth 1,500

gp (focus for *contingency*), diamond worth 500 gp, (for *protection from spells*), eye ointment worth 250 gp (for *true seeing*), powdered lodestones and silver worth 500 gp (for *teleport trap*), diamond worth 25,000 gp (because why not?), 4,000 gp

**Defensive Spell Suite** Before combat, Lauryn casts *mage armor*, *shield*, *true seeing*, and *protection from energy* (against a type of energy a PC favors). She casts *protection from spells* on herself, Kaja, and Kaja's eidolon. She also benefits from Kaja's *greater heroism* and *communal stoneskin* spells. These effects are factored into her stat block.

#### Special Abilities

**Gestalt Strike (Su)** At an initiative count 10 points higher than her own, Lauryn's hivemind lashes out at a creature within 200 feet, dealing 10d6 damage and causing the target to move its speed in a direction of Lauryn's choice (Will DC 26 negates). The save DC is Charisma-based.

**Hivemind Presence (Su)** Two ghost councilors are bonded to Lauryn through the Obscurati's hivemind. Their presence grants her a fly speed of 30 feet (perfect), renders her immune to charms and compulsions, and allows her to use gestalt strike. Whenever she fails a Will save against a harmful effect, instead of harming her it harms the ghosts. The first time this happens, the councilors snarl as they become briefly visible. Once this happens three times or if the ghosts are dealt 50 points of positive energy damage, they are destroyed. She loses all the benefits of this ability, and while she remains loyal to the Obscurati, a DC 40 Diplomacy check or a successful *break enchantment* spell against a 20th caster level effect can snap her out of the hivemind altogether. A spirit medium who sees a creature with this ability immediately knows how it functions and how to overcome it.

#### Kaja Stewart

CR 18

XP 153,600

Female human unchained summoner 19

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +11; Senses Perception +14

#### Defense

**AC** 37, touch 20, flat-footed 30 (+8 armor, +3 deflection, +6 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural, +4 shield)

**hp** 199 (19d8+114)

**Fort** +20, **Reflex** +20, **Will** +21; +4 vs. spells or spell-like abilities

**Defensive Abilities** greater shield ally, hivemind presence, life bond;

**DR** 10/adamantine (150 points); **Immune** charm, compulsions, fear; **SR** 20

#### Offense

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (perfect)

**Ranged** +1 *revolver* +23/+18/+13 (1d8+1/19-20/x4) and +1 *revolver* +23/+18/+14 (1d8+1/19-20/x4)

or +1 *double-barreled shotgun* +25/+20 (1d8+1 spread or 2d6+1 slug)

**Special Attacks** artillery barrage, gestalt strike, summon ballistics 6/day

**Summoner Spells Known** (CL 19th; concentration +22)

6th (4/day)—*acid fog*, *banishment* (DC 19), *greater heroism*, *summon monster VII*

5th (5/day)—*communal stoneskin*, *greater dispel magic*, *hold monster* (DC 18), *hungry pit* (DC 18), *sending*

4th (5/day)—*charm monster* (DC 17), *communal protection from energy*, *greater invisibility*, *major creation*, *transmogrify*

3rd (6/day)—*ablative barrier*, *displacement*, *fly*, *minor creation*, *greater magic fang*, *pellet blast* (DC 16)

2nd (6/day)—*ablative barrier*, *barkskin*, *cat's grace*, *create pit* (DC 15), *fog cloud*, *protection from arrows*, *see invisibility*

1st (6/day)—*alarm*, *expeditious retreat*, *identify*, *shield*, *unseen servant*, *ventriloquism* (DC 14)

0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *open/close*, *read magic*, *resistance*

#### Statistics

**Str** 8, **Dex** 22, **Con** 18, **Int** 14, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 16

**Base Atk** +14; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 33

**Feats** Deadly Aim, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (revolver), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Skill Focus (Knowledge [planes]), Two-Weapon Fighting

**Skills** Craft (weapons) +19, Knowledge (arcana) +29, Knowledge (planes) +35, Perception +14, Spellcraft +29, Use Magic Device +30

**Languages** Common, Orc, Primordial

**SQ** bond senses, greater aspect (ability increase [Con x2]), life link, maker's call 4/day, merge forms (19 rounds), transposition

**Gear** +4 *mithral shirt*, +1 *revolvers* (2), *belt of incredible dexterity* +4, *bracelet of second chances*, *cloak of resistance* +4, *extend metamagic rod*, *ring of protection* +3, *scarab of protection*, 3 diamonds worth 1,000 gp each (focus for *protection from spells*), diamond dust worth 1,500 gp (material component for *communal stoneskin*)

**Defensive Spell Suite** Before combat, Kaja casts *shield*, *barkskin*, and *communal protection from energy* on herself and her eidolon. She casts *greater magic fang*, *cat's grace* and *fly* on her eidolon, and also casts *greater heroism* and *communal stoneskin* on herself, her eidolon, and Lauryn. The spells are factored into their stat blocks.

#### Special Abilities

**Artillery Barrage (Su)** Once per day, Kaja can conjure a trio of mortar shells fired from miles away to her location. They fall from the sky and strike three squares within 500 feet. These squares must be at least 30 feet apart. The shells explode upon impact, dealing 6d6 points of bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage to all creatures in a 30-foot radius (Reflex DC 25 for half). A creature that fails its save is also knocked prone. The save DC is Dexterity-based.

**Gestalt Strike (Su)** At an initiative count 10 points higher than her own, Kaja's hivemind lashes out at a creature within 200 feet, dealing 10d6 damage and causing the target to fall prone as it tries to avoid hallucinatory explosions (Will DC 22 negates). The save DC is Charisma-based.

**Hivemind Presence (Su)** Two ghost councilors are bonded to Kaja through the Obscurati's hivemind. Their presence grants her a fly speed of 30 feet (perfect), renders her immune to charms and compulsions, and allows her to use gestalt strike. Whenever she fails a Will save against a harmful effect, instead of harming her it harms the ghosts. The first time this happens, the councilors snarl as they become briefly visible. Once this happens three times or if the ghosts are dealt 50 points of positive energy damage, they are destroyed. She loses all the benefits of this ability, and while she remains loyal to the Obscurati, a DC 40 Diplomacy check or a successful *break enchantment* spell against a 20th caster level effect can snap her out of the hivemind altogether. A spirit medium who sees a creature with this ability immediately knows how it functions and how to overcome it.

**Summon Ballistics (Sp)** As a swift action six times per day, Kaja may summon any firearms she owns into her hands. They appear fully loaded. She can use this to summon two +1 *revolvers* or a single +1 *double-barreled shotgun*. Alternatively, she may use two uses of this ability to duplicate the effects of an *arcane cannon* spell (CL 19th).





**Iron Bodyguard, Kaja's Eidolon**

CR -

LN Large outsider (inevitable)

**Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +23**Defense****AC** 45, touch 16, flat-footed 38 (+2 armor, +6 Dex, +1 dodge, +23 natural, +4 shield, -1 size)**hp** 161 (15d10+79)**Fort** +16, **Ref** +15, **Will** +13; +4 vs. enchantment, mind-affecting, paralysis, sleep, stun; +8 vs. spells and spell-like abilities**Defensive Abilities** improved evasion; **DR** 10/adamantine (150 points), 5/chaotic; **Immune** ability damage, ability drain, death effects, disease, energy drain, exhaustion, fatigue, fear necromancy effects, nonlethal damage, poison, sleep; **SR** 30**Offense****Speed** 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect)**Melee** 4 +1 *slams* +29 (2d6+10/19-20 plus grab)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**Statistics****Str** 28, **Dex** 22, **Con** 16, **Int** 7, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 11**Base Atk** +15; **CMB** +29 (+33 grapple); **CMD** 42**Feats** Bodyguard, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Critical (slam), In Harm's Way, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (slam)**Skills** Acrobatics +27, Intimidate +23, Perception +23, Stealth +23**SQ** evolutions (grab, limbs [arms] x2, limbs [legs], large, slam x2, spell resistance), link, share spells, true speech**Pardo**

CR 18

**XP** 153,600

Male duplicant gnoll oracle 16

NE Medium humanoid (gnoll)

**Init** +3; **Senses** blindsense 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +2**Defenses****AC** 28, touch 13, flat-footed 24 (+7 armor, +4 deflection, -1 Dex, +6 natural, +2 shield)**hp** 183 (18d8+106)**Fort** +15, **Ref** +10, **Will** +15; +4 vs. mind-affecting, paralysis, poison, and stun**Defensive Abilities** constructed, hivemind presence; **DR** 10/adamantine; **Immune** charms, compulsions, disease, exhaustion, fatigue, fire, sleep**Weaknesses** metal shell**Offense****Speed** 40 ft., fly 30 ft. (perfect)**Melee** +1 *spear* +19/+14/+9 (1d8+8/x3)**Ranged** +1 *spear* +13 (1d8+8/x3)**Special Attacks** burning magic, fire breath 4/day (15-ft.cone, DC 25, 16d4 fire), firestorm (16d6, DC 25), gestalt strike**Oracle Spells Known** (CL 16th; concentration +23)8th (3/day)—*incendiary cloud* (DC 25), *mass inflict critical wounds* (DC 25), *unholy aura* (DC 25)7th (6/day)—*destruction* (DC 24), *fire storm* (DC 26), *mass inflict serious wounds* (DC 24), *repulsion* (DC 24)6th (7/day)—*blade barrier* (DC 25), *fire seeds* (DC 25), *harm* (DC 23), *heal*, *mass inflict moderate wounds* (DC 23)5th (7/day)—*flame strike* (DC 24), *mass inflict light wounds* (DC 22), *slay living* (DC 22), *summon monster V* (fire elementals only)4th (7/day)—*air walk*, *divine power*, *freedom of movement*, *greater command* (DC 21), *inflict critical wounds* (DC 21), *poison* (DC 21), *righteous might*, *wall of fire*

3rd (8/day)—*blindness/deafness* (DC 20), *cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*, *inflict serious wounds* (DC 20), *fireball* (DC 22), *magic vestment*

2nd (8/day)—*augury*, *bull's strength*, *death knell* (DC 19), *hold person* (DC 19), *inflict moderate wounds* (DC 19), *resist energy*, *shatter* (DC 21)

1st (8/day)—*burning hands* (DC 20), *command* (DC 18), *doom* (DC 18), *inflict light wounds* (DC 18), *murderous command* (DC 18), *sanctuary* (DC 18), *shield of faith*

0 (at will)—*bleed*, *create water*, *detect magic*, *guidance*, *light*, *mending*, *read magic*, *resistance*, *stabilize*

**Mystery flame****Statistics****Str** 20, **Dex** 8, **Con** 18, **Int** 10, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 25**Base Atk** +13; **CMB** +18; **CMD** 31**Feats** Acrobatic Steps, Combat Casting, Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Nimble Steps, Skill Focus (Bluff), Spell Focus (evocation), Toughness**Skills** Bluff +26, Diplomacy +21, Disable Device +14, Knowledge (history) +14, Intimidate +26, Linguistics +2**Languages** Common, Draconic, Gnoll**SQ** oracle's curse (wrecker), revelations (burning magic, cinder dance, fire breath, firestorm, molten skin)**Gear** +1 *hide armor*, +1 *spear*, *amulet of natural armor* +2, *belt of physical might* +2 [Str, Con], *cloak of resistance* +4, *headband of alluring charisma* +4, *ring of force shield*, *ring of protection* +4, tiny reliquary worth 500 gp (focus for *unholy aura*), unholy symbol worth 500 gp (focus for *destruction*)**Special Abilities****Burning Magic (Ex)** When a creature fails a saving throw and takes fire damage from one of Pardo's spells, that creature catches on fire. The fire lasts 1d4 rounds, doing 1 damage per spell level. The character can spend a move action to make a Reflex save (same as the spell's original DC) to put out the flames.**Gestalt Strike (Su)** At an initiative count 10 points higher than his own, Pardo's hivemind lashes out at a creature within 200 feet, dealing 10d6 damage (Will DC 26 negates). A creature who fails its save also moves its speed as a free action and makes an attack or casts a 1st-level spell of Pardo's choice against another target of Pardo's choice. The save DC is Charisma-based.**Hivemind Presence (Su)** Two ghost councilors are bonded to Pardo through the Obscurati's hivemind. Their presence grants him a fly speed of 30 feet (perfect), renders him immune to charms and compulsions, and allows him to use gestalt strike. Whenever he fails a Will save against a harmful effect, instead of harming him it harms the ghosts. The first time this happens, the councilors snarl as they become briefly visible. Once this happens three times or if the ghosts are dealt 50 points of positive energy damage, they are destroyed. He loses all the benefits of this ability, and while he remains loyal to the Obscurati, a DC 40 Diplomacy check or a successful *break enchantment* spell against a 20th caster level effect can snap him out of the hivemind altogether. A spirit medium who sees a creature with this ability immediately knows how it functions and how to overcome it.**Wrecker (Ex)** Pardo's attacks against inanimate objects ignore up to 16 points of hardness, and his attacks against constructs ignore any non-epic DR. Objects he holds gain the broken condition for as long as he holds them. He can make Disable Device checks to destroy non-magical traps as a move action without the need to use tools or take any action beyond simply touching it. Whenever he is dealt damage by an attack with a manufactured weapon, he can require the weapon's wielder to make a DC 25 Reflex save to avoid having the weapon collapse into dust immediately after striking him (magical weapons receive an additional saving throw against this effect).

**Obscurati Construct Squad**

CR 15

XP 51,200

N Medium construct (troop)

**Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0**Defense****AC** 34, touch 14, flat-footed 30 (+4 Dex, +20 natural)**hp** 152 (24d10+20)**Fort** +8, **Ref** +12, **Will** +8**Defensive Abilities** troop traits; **DR** 15/adamantine**Offense****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** troop (4d10+10)**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.**Special Attacks** concussive grenades (DC 26), turret fusillade (DC 26)**Statistics****Str** 30, **Dex** 18, **Con** -, **Int** -, **Wis** 11, **Cha** -**Base Atk** +24; **CMB** +34; **CMD** 48**Feats** Combat Reflexes<sup>(B)</sup>**Languages** Common (can't speak)**Special Abilities**

**Concussive Grenades (Ex)** As a standard action once per day, an Obscurati construct squad can hurl concussive grenades at any four squares within 100 feet. They explode upon impact, dealing 6d6 sonic damage in a 10-foot-radius burst (DC 26 Reflex for half). Creatures that fail their saves are pushed 10 feet away from the center of the area. The save DC is Dexterity-based.

**Turret Fusillade (Ex)** An Obscurati construct squad can fire a fusillade of bullets from their shoulder-mounted turrets as a standard action. This attack takes the form of up to four lines with a range of 200 feet. These lines can start from the corner of any square in the troop's space. All creatures in one of these lines' areas of effect take 6d10+4 points of bludgeoning and piercing damage (DC 26 Reflex for half). The save DC is Dexterity-based.

**Witchoil Fueled (Su)** Engines churn in the chests of these black metal humanoids, and rotten smoke billows from vents behind their shoulders. Whenever the squad takes damage that is not from a positive energy source, its space becomes stained with witchoil. Creatures that enter or end their turn in that space must make a Fortitude save (DC 22) or take 1d4 points of Constitution damage. The witchoil is highly flammable, though, and any fire damage to the area ignites and clears it.

**Elite Obscurati Occultist**

CR 15

XP 51,200

Male human illusionist (shadow) 16

N Medium humanoid (human)

**Init** +4; **Senses** Perception +18**Defense****AC** 22, touch 14, flat-footed 22 (+4 armor, +4 deflection, +4 shield)**hp** 136 (16d6+21)**Fort** +13, **Ref** +11, **Will** +16**Offense****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** +1 dagger +8/+3 (1d4/19–20)**Illusionist Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 16th, concentration +27)

at will—shadow step (390 ft. per day)

7/day—binding darkness

**Illusionist Spells Prepared** (CL 16th, concentration +27)8th—*greater shadow evocation* (DC 27), *orb of the void* (DC 25),*scintillating pattern* (DC 27)7th—*finger of death* (2, DC 24), *greater arcane sight*,*greater shadow conjuration* (DC 26)6th—*eyebite* (DC 23), *greater dispel magic*, *shadow walk*, *veil* (DC 25)5th—*cone of cold* (DC 22), *mirage arcana* (DC 24), *shadow evocation* (DC 24),*telepathic bond*, *wall of force* (2)4th—*black tentacles*, *dimension door*, *greater invisibility*, *phantasmal killer* (2, DC 22),*shadow conjuration* (DC 22)3rd—*dispel magic*, *displacement*, *invisibility sphere*, *major image* (DC 21),*ray of exhaustion*, *vampiric touch*2nd—*blur*, *blindness/deafness* (2, DC 19), *darkness*, *ghoul touch* (DC 19),*mirror image*, *spectral hand*1st—*disguise self*, *mage armor*, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 18), *shield*,*shocking grasp* (2), *vanish*0 (at will)—*bleed*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *open/close***Opposition Schools** enchantment, transmutation**Statistics****Str** 8, **Dex** 10, **Con** 15, **Int** 24, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 13**Base Atk** +8; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 17

**Feats** Brew Potion, Craft Wondrous Item, Combat Casting, Greater Spell Focus (illusion), Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Stealth), Silent Spell, Spell Focus (illusion), Spell Penetration, Toughness

**Skills** Appraise +26, Craft (alchemy) +26, Fly +10, Knowledge (arcana) +26, Knowledge (history) +31, Knowledge (planes) +26, Intimidate +17, Perception +18, Spellcraft +26, Stealth +22

**Languages** Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Elven, Infernal, Primordial**SQ** arcane bond (dagger)**Combat Gear** *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of darkvision*; **Other Gear**

+1 dagger, *amulet of natural armor* +3, *bag of holding* (type I), *belt of mighty constitution* +2, *cloak of resistance* +4, *gloves of arrow snaring*, *ring of protection* +4, *scholar's ring*, 5 black onyxes worth 50 gp each (material component for *orb of the void*)

**Defensive Spell Suite** Before combat, an elite Obscurati occultist casts *greater arcane sight*, *telepathic bond*, *mirror image*, *mage armor*, and *shield*. These effects are calculated into their stat blocks.



**The Screaming Malice**

CR 22

XP 614,400

N Gargantuan aberration

**Init** +4; **Senses** blindsight 120 ft., low-light vision; Perception +41**Defense****AC** 40, touch 6, flat-footed 40 (+34 natural, -4 size)**hp** 405 (30d8+270)**Fort** +20 **Ref** +10, **Will** +21**Defensive Abilities** all-around vision; **Immune** mind-affecting effects**Weaknesses** ponderously gargantuan**Offense****Speed** 30 ft., swim 60 ft.**Melee** 5 bites +35 (6d6+16/19-20)**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.**Special Attacks** shriek**Statistics****Str** 42, **Dex** 10, **Con** 26, **Int** 2, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 10**Base Atk** +22; **CMB** +25; **CMD** 32 (can't be tripped)**Feats** Ability Focus (shriek), Awesome Blow, Diehard, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Iron Will, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception), Toughness, Weapon Focus (bite)**Skills** Perception +41**SQ** many-headed**Special Abilities****Many-Headed (Ex)** The screaming malice has five heads, each of which occupies its own space of 10 ft. When the malice moves it can move its heads to any space within 25 ft. of its body. On its turn the malice can take one move action, plus one standard action for each head. It cannot trade these standard actions for additional movement.

The heads are part of the malice, and so share its defenses and hit points. Unlike the last time the party faced this beast, they're strong enough now so conditions they inflict can affect the entire creature.

A head can be severed with a successful sunder attack that deals at least 50 points of damage. At the end of the malice's turn, it regrows any severed heads, restoring itself to five heads.

**Ponderously Gargantuan (Ex)** The screaming malice can only make attacks against creatures adjacent to one of its heads. It takes a -5 penalty to attack rolls against creatures adjacent to its main body.**Shriek (Ex)** As a standard action, a head can roar entrancingly at an adjacent creature. The creature takes 5d8 sonic damage and is slowed for 1 round, as per the *slow* spell (DC 36 Will negates). The save DC is Constitution-based.**The Ash Wolf**

CR 25

XP 1,640,000

CN Colossal magical beast (fey titan)

**Init** +18; **Senses** darkvision 600 ft., *true seeing*, scent; Perception +38**Defense****AC** 44, touch 17, flat-footed 21 (+14 Dex, +1 dodge, +27 natural, -8 size); +4 vs. opportunity attacks**hp** 413 (25d8+300); fast healing 30**Fort** +26, **Ref** +28, **Will** +20**Defensive Abilities** ferocity, recovery; **DR** 20/epic; **Immune** ability damage, ability drain, death effects, disease, energy drain, fear; **Resist** fire 50, acid 30, cold 30, electricity 30, negative energy 30, sonic 30**Offense****Speed** 100 ft.**Melee** bite +36 (6d12+40/17-20 plus grab or trip)**Space** 60 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.**Special Attacks** carry off, critical hits, hurl foe, hurl tree**Spell-like Abilities** (CL 25th; concentration +35)Constant—*freedom of movement*, *pass without trace*, *true seeing*At will—*bestow curse* (DC 23), *pyrotechnics*, *transmute metal to wood*3/day—*commune with nature*1/day—*fire storm* (DC 27)**Statistics****Str** 48, **Dex** 38, **Con** 34, **Int** 15, **Wis** 30, **Cha** 24**Base Atk** +25; **CMB** +52 (+56 grab); **CMD** 76 (80 vs. trip)**Feats** Bleeding Critical, Combat Expertise, Critical Focus, Dismembering Critical, Dodge, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Iron Will, Mobility, Skill Focus (Stealth), Spring Attack**Skills** Acrobatics +14 (+42 to jump), Knowledge (nature) +27, Perception +38, Perform (sing) +32, Stealth +29**Languages** Primordial**SQ** fey link, pack bond, smoky mate, titan**Special Abilities****Carry Off (Ex)** Due to his immense size and incredible speed, the Ash Wolf's preferred tactic is to dash out from the smoke of a forest fire, bite and grab a foe, then sprint away to separate his victim from his allies. To accomplish this, the Ash Wolf uses *hunting surge*, then spring attacks in, jumps over the party, makes a bite attack (typically against an unarmored foe), and takes a -20 penalty to his combat maneuver check to grapple the target. If he succeeds, he does not gain the grappled condition himself and can carry the creature off.**Critical Hits (Ex)** Due to his critical feats, when the Ash Wolf confirms a critical hit with his bite, he inflicts 2d6 bleed damage, and the target must succeed a Fortitude save (DC 35) or lose a limb. He has a +4 bonus on all critical confirmation rolls.**Hunting Surge (Su)** As a swift action, the Ash Wolf releases a howl that focuses his predatory might. Until the end of his turn he gains a +200 bonus to his speed (granting him a total of +122 to jump checks, so he can easily clear 30 vertical feet). He cannot use this power again on his next turn.**Hurl Tree (Ex)** If the Ash Wolf attacks a tree (or other massive object) it can uproot it and hurl it up to 400 feet. The area affected varies slightly based on the projectile, but creatures in a roughly 40-ft. radius take 20d6 damage (Reflex DC 30 half). The hurled object likely knocks down a swath of other trees in its path, and at the GM's discretion creatures in a 40-ft. wide line out to the destination take 5d6 damage (Reflex DC 24 half).

**Smoky Mate (Su)** When first reduced below 207 hit points, the Ash Wolf's desperation calls forth the spirit of his long-dead mate, who emerges from the forest somewhere within 100 feet. Her body resembles a similarly-titanic wolf composed of ash and smoke.

She starts with 207 hit points, and has the same stats as the Ash Wolf, except she has a fly speed of 80 (perfect) and is incorporeal. Her natural armor bonus is +0, but she has a +7 deflection bonus, making her AC 24. As is normal with incorporeal creatures, she is immune to nonmagical damage and takes half damage from magical attacks. Force attacks affect her normally, and due to her nature so do cold attacks.

The smoky titan's attacks ignore natural armor, armor, and shields. She cannot grapple or trip her foes.

## You and Your Friends

This battle definitely pits Harkover Lee in dragon form against the party, but they might also have to deal with Gale and Delft unless they free them from Ob control ahead of time. Both Delft and Gale are empowered by hiveminds, and if freed from them they are unfortunately not strong enough to contribute in open battle against Harkover.

### Harkover Lee, Dragon Tyrant

CR 23

XP 819,200

Male advanced mature adult red dragon fighter 1/sorcerer 10

LN Huge dragon (fire)

**Init** +4; **Senses** dragon senses, *see invisibility*, smoke vision; Perception +36**Aura** fire aura (5-ft., 1d6 fire), frightful presence (210-ft., DC 32)

#### Defense

**AC** 52, touch 16, flat-footed 44 (+4 armor, +7 Dex, +1 dodge, +28 natural, +4 shield, -2 size)**hp** 454 plus 200 temporary (see hivemind pinnacle) (30 HD; 19d12+1d10+10d6+300)**Fort** +24, **Ref** +22, **Will** +24; +8 vs. mind-affecting, spells, and spell-like

**Defensive Abilities** half damage from acid and electricity; **DR** 10/adamantine (150 points), 10/magic; **Immune** ability score damage, blindness, charms, compulsions, critical hits, deafness, disease, drowning, *magic missile*, poison, stunning, spells that affect physiology or respiration, sleep; **Resist** acid 30, cold 30, electricity 30, sonic 30; **SR** 26

**Weaknesses** vulnerability to cold

#### Offense

**Speed** 70 ft., fly 70 ft. (perfect) or 230 ft. (poor)

**Melee** bite +37/+37 (2d8+19/19-20 plus 3d6 fire), 2 claws +37 (2d6+13 plus 3d6 fire), 2 wings +35 (1d8+6 plus 3d6 fire), tail slap +35 (2d6+19 plus 3d6 fire)

**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite)

**Special Attacks** breath weapon (50-ft. cone, 14d10 fire damage, Reflex DC 35 half, usable every 1d4 rounds), crush (Small creatures, DC 35, 2d8+19)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 19th; concentration +30)At will—*detect magic*, *pyrotechnics* (DC 19), *suggestion* (DC 20)**Spells Known** (CL 21st; concentration +32)9th (6/day)—*fiery body*, *meteor swarm* (DC 27), *time stop*8th (6/day)—*mind blank*, *prediction of failure* (DC 25), *protection from spells*7th (6/day)—*delayed blast fireball* (DC 25), *greater teleport*, *spell turning*6th (6/day)—*chains of fire* (DC 24), *major curse* (DC 22), *greater dispel magic*5th (6/day)—*break enchantment*, *fickle winds*, *fire snake* (DC 23), *sending*4th (7/day)—*dimensional anchor*, *dimension door*, *fear* (DC 21), *greater invisibility*, *stoneskin*3rd (7/day)—*dispel magic*, *displacement*, *fireball* (DC 21), *fly*, *haste*2nd (7/day)—*alter self*, *mirror image*, *misdirection*, *resist energy*, *scorching ray*, *see invisibility*1st (8/day)—*alarm*, *grease* (DC 18), *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *true strike*0th (at will)—*arcane mark*, *bleed*, *detect poison*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic***Bloodline** draconic (red)

#### Statistics

**Str** 36, **Dex** 24, **Con** 28, **Int** 22, **Wis** 23, **Cha** 25**Base Atk** +25; **CMB** +40; **CMD** 57 (61 vs. trip)

**Feats** Arcane Strike, Bodyguard, Catch Off-Guard, Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dispelpling Critical, Eschew Materials, Empower Spell, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Reposition, In Harm's Way, Multiattack, Power Attack, Repositioning Strike, Riving Strike, Quick Reposition, Quicken Spell, Toughness

**Skills** Appraise +32, Bluff +38, Fly +28, Intimidate +30, Knowledge (arcana) +38, Knowledge (nobility) +32, Perception +36, Sense Motive +38, Spellcraft +38, Stealth +18

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Orc, Primordial

**SQ** bloodline arcana (fire spells deal +1 damage per die), change shape (specific humanoid form, *polymorph*), hivemind pinnacle

**Gear** golden orb, *orange prism ioun stone*

**Defensive Spell Suite** Before combat, Harkover casts *fiery body*, *mind blank*, *protection from spells*, *spell turning*, *fickle winds*, *stoneskin*, *haste*, *mirror image*, *see invisibility*, *mage armor*, *shield*, and *resist energy* four times (one for each energy type except fire). These spells are factored into his stat block.

#### Special Abilities

**Change Shape (Su)** Harkover spends most of his time in human form. In this form, he is Medium-sized, removing his -2 size penalty to AC and attacks. He loses access to his breath weapon, frightful presence, and natural attacks. He can change to his dragon form as a free action.

**Hivemind Pinnacle (Su)** Harkover is a critical part of the Obscurati's plan, so the two ghost councilors bound to him shield him from mental assault and physical injury. They render him immune to charms and compulsions and grant him the benefits of the advanced creature template, as well as 200 temporary hit points. After he takes 50 damage, the councilors snarl as they become briefly visible. Once Harkover loses all of his temporary hit points, the councilors briefly lose their grip on him, and on Harkover's next round all he does is force out a warning—perhaps about how to disable the explosion, or about how Cherage's rail enclave is where the lanterns in that city are controlled. Thereafter, the ghost councilors reassert control, and Harkover will fight until reduced to 0 hp.

**Fire Aura (Su)** Harkover is surrounded by an aura of intense heat. All creatures within 5 feet take 1d6 points of fire damage at the beginning of his turn.

**Smoke Vision (Ex)** Harkover can see perfectly in smoky conditions (such as those created by *pyrotechnics*).

**Clever Melee Tactics (Ex)** Harkover's combat feats let him use the reposition combat maneuver in place of one attack as part of a full attack, and when he scores a critical hit, he compares his confirmation roll to the target's CMD to reposition the target, in addition to the critical hit's normal effect. When he scores a critical he can also cast *dispel magic* as a swift action as a targeted dispel against that opponent. He typically uses arcane strike if he's going to make a full attack, and whenever he damages a foe with an attack augmented by arcane strike, that creature takes a -2 penalty on saving throws against spells and spell-like abilities for 1 round.



**Stover Delft of the Secret Police**

CR 17

**XP** 102,400

Male human rogue (investigator) 18

LG Medium humanoid (human)

**Init** +5; **Senses** Perception +25**Defense****AC** 26, touch 18, flat-footed 20 (+6 armor, +2 deflection, +5 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural)**hp** 81 (18d8)**Fort** +8, **Ref** +17, **Will** +10**Defensive Abilities** hivemind presence, improved evasion, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +5; **Immune** charms, compulsions**Offense****Speed** 20 ft. (due to leg wound)**Melee** +1 *wounding sword cane* +20/+15/+10 (1d6+1)**Ranged** +1 *pistol* +19 (1d8+1/x4)**Special Attacks** gestalt strike, sneak attack +9d6**Statistics****Str** 10, **Dex** 20, **Con** 10, **Int** 13, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 14**Base Atk** +13; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 29**Feats** Alertness, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Greater Feint, Improved Feint, Martial Weapon Proficiency (sword cane), Persuasive, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (sword cane)**Skills** Acrobatics +20, Bluff +21, Diplomacy +25, Escape Artist +23, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +12, Knowledge (engineering) +12, Knowledge (geography) +12, Knowledge (history) +12, Knowledge (local) +18, Knowledge (nobility) +13, Perception +25, Sense Motive +25, Stealth +25**Languages** Common, Primordial**SQ** follow up, rogue talents (canny observer, coax information, defensive roll, distracting attack, follow clues, hunter's surprise, improved evasion, slippery mind, thoughtful reexamining)**Gear** +4 *leather armor*, +1 *wounding sword cane*, +1 *pistol*, *amulet of natural armor* +2, *belt of incredible dexterity* +4, *boots of speed*, *cloak of resistance* +2, *dust of appearance*, *ring of protection* +2, *salve of slipperiness***Special Abilities****Gestalt Strike (Su)** At an initiative count 10 points higher than his own, Stover's hivemind lashes out at a creature within 200 feet, dealing 10d6 damage and compelling the creature to hide from Stover as per a *suggestion* spell (CL 18th, Will DC 21 negates). The save DC is Charisma-based.**Hivemind Presence (Su)** Two ghost councilors are bonded to Stover through the Obscurati's hivemind. Their presence grants him a fly speed of 30 feet (perfect), renders him immune to charms and compulsions, and allows him to use gestalt strike. Whenever he fails a Will save against a harmful effect, instead of harming him it harms the ghosts. The first time this happens, the councilors snarl as they become briefly visible. Once this happens three times or if the ghosts are dealt 50 points of positive energy damage, they are destroyed. He loses all the benefits of this ability, and while he remains loyal to the Obscurati, a DC 40 Diplomacy check or a successful *break enchantment* spell against a 20th caster level effect can snap him out of the hivemind altogether. A spirit medium who sees a creature with this ability immediately knows how it functions and how to overcome it.**Hana Solioign, Obscurati Loyalist**

CR 17

**XP** 102,400

Female eladrin sorcerer 18

CN Medium humanoid (eladrin)

**Init** +5, **Senses** Perception +15, low-light vision**Defense****AC** 23, touch 15, flat-footed 19 (+4 armor, +3 deflection, +1 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 shield)**hp** 144 (18d6+72)**Fort** +11, **Ref** +12, **Will** +15; +2 vs. charm and compulsion**Defensive Abilities** bolstered will, hivemind presence; **Immune** charms, compulsions, wind; **Resist** electricity 20**Offense****Speed** 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (average)**Special Attacks** control winds, gestalt strike**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 18th, concentration +25)Constant—*overland flight*, *speak with animals* (flying animals only)

10/day—elemental ray (1d6+9 electricity)

2/day—elemental blast (18d6, DC 27)

**Sorcerer Spells Known** (CL 18th, concentration +26)9th (3/day)—*winds of vengeance* (DC 29)8th (6/day)—*polar ray*, *stormbolts* (DC 28), *summon monster VIII* (elementals only)7th (7/day)—*elemental body IV*, *mass fly*, *prismatic spray* (DC 27), *scouring winds*6th (7/day)—*chain lightning* (DC 26), *elemental body III*, *path of the winds* (DC 26), *sirocco* (DC 26)5th (7/day)—*cloudkill* (DC 23), *elemental body II*, *fickle winds*, *life bubble*, *lightning arc* (DC 25)4th (8/day)—*ball lightning* (DC 24), *dimension door*, *elemental body I*, *solid fog*, *shout* (DC 24), *storm shield* (as fire shield, but blocks and deals electricity damage)3rd (8/day)—*clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *fly*, *lightning bolt* (DC 23), *nondetection*, *protection from energy*, *sleet storm*2nd (8/day)—*fog cloud*, *gust of wind*, *levitate*, *protection from arrows*, *scorching ray*\*, *shatter* (DC 22), *whispering wind*1st (8/day)—*burning hands* (DC 21)\*, *feather fall*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *message*, *shield*, *shocking grasp*0th—*daze*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*, *resistance*

\*These spells deal electricity damage.

**Bloodline** elemental (air)**Statistics****Str** 8, **Dex** 13, **Con** 14, **Int** 12, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 26**Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 23**Feats** Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Empower Spell, Flyby Attack, Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Greater Spell Penetration, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Spell Focus (evocation), Spell Penetration, Toughness**Skills** Bluff +12, Diplomacy +12, Fly +12, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Knowledge (nature) +4, Knowledge (nobility) +6, Knowledge (planes) +5, Perception +15, Sense Motive +15, Stealth +10**Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial, Sylvan**SQ** air affinity, bloodline arcana (change energy damage to electricity), eladrin deathlink**Gear** *belt of mighty constitution* +4, *cloak of resistance* +3, *headband of alluring charisma* +4, *ring of protection* +3, *robe of scintillating colors*, *messenger wind*

*Special Abilities*

**Air Affinity (Su)** Gale can innately control winds, and is immune to the effects of strong wind. She can fly at will and can speak with flying animals, who usually are friendly to her.

**Control Winds (Sp)** Gale can control winds in a 360-ft. radius. She can use this ability for up to 13 minutes per day, in chunks of at least one minute at a time. Activating or controlling it is a standard action, maintaining is a free action. She can increase winds by up to three steps (enough to turn a still day into a severe storm of 50 miles per hour), or a strong breeze into a small hurricane). Creatures other than her in the area must make a DC 23 Fortitude save each round to resist the winds.

**Gestalt Strike (Su)** At an initiative count 10 points higher than her own, Gale's hive-mind lashes out at a creature within 200 feet, dealing 10d6 damage and causing to channel storm energy for 1d4 rounds (Will DC 27 negates). While so affected, the creature deals 3d6 electricity damage to itself and all other creatures within 30 feet of it at the start of its turn. The save DC is Charisma-based.

**Hivemind Presence (Su)** Two ghost councilors are bonded to Gale through the Obscurati's hivemind. Their presence grants her a fly speed of 30 feet (perfect), renders her immune to charms and compulsions, and allows her to use gestalt strike. Whenever she fails a Will save against a harmful effect, instead of harming her it harms the ghosts. The first time this happens, the councilors snarl as they become briefly visible. Once this happens three times or if the ghosts are dealt 50 points of positive energy damage, they are destroyed. She loses all the benefits of this ability, and while she remains loyal to the Obscurati, a DC 40 Diplomacy check or a successful *break enchantment* spell against a 20th caster level effect can snap her out of the hivemind altogether. A spirit medium who sees a creature with this ability immediately knows how it functions and how to overcome it.

**City Defense Squad**

Memorize these stats, because they'll show up in multiple locations.

**City Defense Squad**

CR 13

XP 25,600

LN Medium humanoid (various races, troop)

**Init** +4; **Senses** Perception +25*Defense***AC** 29, touch 15, flat-footed 24 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +14 natural)**hp** 171 (18d8+90)**Fort** +12, **Ref** +17, **Will** +9**Defensive Abilities** troop traits*Offense***Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** troop (4d8+8)**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.**Special Attacks** fusillade (DC 25)*Statistics***Str** 26, **Dex** 18, **Con** 18, **Int** 11, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 11**Base Atk** +13; **CMB** +21; **CMD** 33**Feats** Ability Focus (fusillade), Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Perception), Toughness**Skills** Intimidate +18, Perception +25**Languages** various*Special Abilities*

**Fusillade (Ex)** A city defense squad can fire a fusillade of musket bullets as a standard action. This attack takes the form of up to four lines with a range of 200 feet. These lines can start from the corner of any square in the troop's space. All creatures in one of these lines' areas of effect take 4d10+4 points of bludgeoning and piercing damage (Reflex DC 25 for half). The save DC is Dexterity-based.

**Versus Me and the Revolution**

These battles may reuse the city defense squad stats above, and several use Bookpin Bodyguard Squads. Each of the five encounters is intended to be slightly too difficult for one PC, unless they're clever.

**Bookpin Bodyguard Squad**

CR 15

XP 51,200

LN Medium humanoid (human, troop)

**Init** +8; **Senses** Perception +19*Defense***AC** 33, touch 16, flat-footed 28 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +18 natural)**hp** 190 (20d8+100)**Fort** +12, **Ref** +18, **Will** +9**Defensive Abilities** troop traits; **SR** 26*Offense***Speed** 20 ft.**Melee** troop (5d8+8)**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.*Statistics***Str** 26, **Dex** 18, **Con** 18, **Int** 11, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 11**Base Atk** +13; **CMB** +21; **CMD** 33**Feats** Bodyguard, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, In Harm's Way, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Toughness**Skills** Perception +19, Spellcraft +24, Stealth +22**Languages** Common**SQ** expeditious intercept, magical defender, protect ally*Special Abilities*

**Expeditious Intercept (Su)** As a standard action, a bookpin bodyguard squad may move 60 feet.

**Magical Defender (Sp)** If a bookpin bodyguard squad starts its turn with any allied creatures in its space, it may make dispel check to remove a harmful magical effect on each one as per *dispel magic* (CL 20th).

**Protect Ally (Ex)** A bookpin bodyguard squad provides soft cover to any creature it recognizes as an ally who shares its space. Such protected allies treat squares occupied by the troop as difficult terrain and must succeed at a concentration check (DC = 15 + spell level) to cast spells while so protected, but do not take troop damage from being within the troop's space.



**Arch Secula Natalia Degaspere**

CR 16

XP 76,800

Female human aristocrat 18

LN Medium humanoid

**Init** +5; **Senses** Perception +19**Aura** secular presence (30 ft.)**Defense****AC** 25, touch 21, flat-footed 24 (+4 armor, +10 deflection, +1 Dex)**hp** 153 (18d8+72)**Fort** +10, **Ref** +9, **Will** +17**Defensive Abilities** minor hivemind presence**Offense****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** mwk dagger +13/+8/+3 (1d4–1/19–20)**Ranged** +1 repeating shotgun +15/+10/+5 (1d8+1)**Special Attacks** submit! (DC 22)**Statistics****Str** 8, **Dex** 12, **Con** 14, **Int** 12, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 17**Base Atk** +13; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 36**Feats** Alertness, Deadly Aim, Defensive Combat Training, Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Point-Blank Shot, Persuasive, Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Toughness**Skills** Bluff +17, Diplomacy +25, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (history) +13, Knowledge (nobility) +19, Knowledge (religion) +18, Linguistics +5, Perception +19, Perform (oratory) +9, Sense Motive +30**Languages** Common, Draconic, Elven**Gear** +1 repeating shotgun, masterwork dagger, belt of mighty constitution +4, bracers of armor +4, brooch of shielding, cloak of resistance +2, elixir of truth, elixir of vision, figurine of wondrous power (silver raven), headband of mental prowess +2 (Wis, Cha)**Special Abilities**

**Minor Hivemind Presence (Su)** A single ghost councilor is bonded to Natalia through the Obscurati's hivemind. This gives her a +10 deflection bonus to AC. Whenever she fails a Will save against a harmful effect, instead of harming her it harms the ghost. The first time this happens, the councilor snarls as it becomes briefly visible. Once this happens three times or if the ghost is dealt 50 points of positive energy damage, it is destroyed. She loses all the benefits of this ability, and is permanently staggered. While she remains loyal to the Obscurati, a DC 40 Diplomacy check or a successful *break enchantment* spell against a 20th caster level effect can snap her out of the hivemind altogether. A spirit medium who sees a creature with this ability immediately knows how it functions and how to overcome it.

**Secular Presence (Su)** Spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural abilities deal half damage in the aura. Abilities that do not deal damage have only a 50% chance of affecting creatures in the aura. Powers of magic items cannot be activated in the aura. Powers that have an indirect effect, such as using telekinesis outside the aura to throw something into the aura, function normally. Natalia's own abilities are not suppressed by this aura.

**Submit! (Sp)** As a standard action, Natalia can focus the will of the city-wide hivemind to try to crush the psyche of a foe within 150 feet. The target must make a Will save (DC 22) or else be sickened for one round, take 7d6+18 points of nonlethal damage, and fall prone. A successful save still sickens, but reduces the damage by half and doesn't cause the target to fall prone.

**The Ladies of Forked Tongues****Gardienne du Cherage**

CR 17

XP 102,400

Female tiefling bard (demagogue) 18

N Medium outsider (native)

**Init** +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +15**Defense****AC** 23, touch 16, flat-footed 19 (+7 armor, +2 deflection, +3 Dex, +1 dodge)**hp** 121 (18d8+36)**Fort** +10, **Ref** +16, **Will** +12; +4 vs. bardic performance, language-dependent, and sonic**Resist** cold 5, electricity 5, fire 5**Offense****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** +2 keen rapier +17/+12/+7 (1d6+2/15–20)**Ranged** +1 seeking shortbow +17/+12/+7 (1d6+1/x3)

**Special Attacks** bardic performance 41 rounds/day (swift action; countersong, dirge of doom, distraction, fascinate, frightening tune, gather crowd, incite violence, inspire competence +5, inspire courage +3, inspire greatness, inspire heroics, righteous cause, soothing performance)

**Spell-like Abilities** (CL 18th; concentration +25)

1/day—darkness

**Bard Spells Known** (CL 18th; concentration +25)6th (4/day)—*animate objects*, *irresistible dance* (DC 24), *mass charm monster* (DC 24), *project image* (DC 22)5th (5/day)—*greater dispel magic*, *mislead*, *shadow evocation* (DC 21), *song of discord* (DC 23)4th (6/day)—*cure critical wounds*, *dimension door*, *dominate person* (DC 22), *freedom of movement*, *locate creature*3rd (6/day)—*charm monster* (DC 21), *confusion* (DC 21), *displacement*, *haste*, *scrying* (DC 19), *see invisibility*2nd (7/day)—*cat's grace*, *detect thoughts* (DC 18), *glitterdust* (DC 18), *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *silence* (DC 18)1st (7/day)—*charm person* (DC 19), *comprehend languages*, *disguise self*, *grease*, *hideous laughter* (DC 20), *silent image* (DC 17)0th (at will)—*detect magic*, *flare* (DC 16), *light*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *resistance***Statistics****Str** 12, **Dex** 16, **Con** 14, **Int** 12, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 22**Base Atk** +13; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 29**Feats** Arcane Strike, Deadly Aim, Dodge, Mobility, Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Spell Focus (enchantment), Weapon Focus (rapier)

**Skills** Knowledge (arcana, dungeoneering, history, local, nature, nobility, planes, religion) +13, Perception +15, Perform (act, oratory) +27, Perform (dance, sing) +23, Spellcraft +19, Stealth +23, Use Magic Device +22

**Languages** Common, Primordial**SQ** bardic knowledge +9, famous +5, jack-of-all-trades (use any skill, all skills are class skills), versatile performance (act, dance, comedy, oratory, sing)

**Combat Gear** *scrolls of bestow curse* (2), *scroll of bull's strength*; **Other Gear** +3 glamer chain shirt, +2 keen rapier, +1 seeking shortbow with 20 arrows, cloak of resistance +2, headband of alluring charisma +6, ring of protection +2

**Ashima-Shimtu**

CR 25

XP 1,638,400

NE Medium outsider (daemon, demon, devil, evil)

**Init** +11; **Senses** bloodsense 240 ft., darkvision 120 ft., scent, see in darkness; Perception +41**Aura** fear (30 ft., DC 40), unnatural aura (30 ft.)**Defense****AC** 51, touch 36, flat-footed 40 (+11 Dex, +15 natural, +15 profane)**hp** 449 (31d10+279); terrible rejuvenation**Fort** +26, **Ref** +21, **Will** +24**Defensive Abilities** shield of lies; **DR** 20/cold iron and good; **Immune** acid, death effects, disease, electricity, fire, poison; **Resist** cold 30; **SR** 36**Weaknesses** vulnerable to positive energy**Offense****Speed** 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect)**Melee** +5 planar unholy cold iron spiked chain +42/+37/+32/+27 (2d4+14 plus 2d6 vs. good) or

2 claws +32 (1d6+3 plus blood drain)

**Special Attacks** blood drain (1d4 Con)**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 31st; concentration +48)At will—*animate chains*, *blood in the water*, *detect thoughts* (DC 27), *greater teleport* (self only plus 50 lbs.), *suggestion* (DC 29)5/day—*blood crow strike*, *boiling blood* (DC 27), *discern lies* (DC 28)3/day—*blood biography* (DC 28), *bloody claws* (DC 29), *misdirection*1/day—*magic jar* (DC 29), *blood of the martyr* (DC 28), *dominate monster* (DC 31), *transmute blood to acid* (DC 34)**Bard Spells Known** (CL 31st; concentration +48)6<sup>th</sup> (8/day)—*dance of a thousand cuts*, *permanent image* (DC 33), *project image* (DC 33), *veil* (DC 33), *waves of ecstasy* (DC 31)5<sup>th</sup> (8/day)—*false vision*, *mislead*, *nightmare* (DC 32), *shadow walk* (DC 32), *song of discord* (DC 33)4<sup>th</sup> (8/day)—*hallucinatory terrain* (DC 31), *greater invisibility*, *modify memory* (DC 29), *rainbow pattern* (DC 31), *shout*, *utter contempt* (DC 29)3<sup>rd</sup> (9/day)—*confusion* (DC 28), *displacement*, *glibness*, *illusory script* (DC 30), *smug narcissism* (DC 28), *vision of hell* (DC 30)2<sup>nd</sup> (9/day)—*blur*, *delay pain* (DC 27), *hypnotic pattern* (DC 29), *mirror image*, *reckless infatuation* (DC 27), *silence* (DC 29)1<sup>st</sup> (9/day)—*adoration*, *innocence*, *lesser confusion* (DC 26), *memory lapse* (DC 26), *unnatural lust* (DC 26), *ventriloquism* (DC 28)0 (at will)—*daze* (DC 25), *ghost sound* (DC 27), *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *unwitting ally* (DC 25)**Statistics****Str** 22, **Dex** 32, **Con** 28, **Int** 24, **Wis** 24, **Cha** 40**Base Atk** +31; **CMB** +37; **CMD** 73**Feats** Ability Focus (suggestion), Antagonize, Combat Casting, Deceitful, Demonic Possession, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain), Greater Spell Focus (illusion), Greater Spell Penetration, Hover, Improved Possession, Penetrating Possession, Persuasive, Skill Focus (Bluff), Spell Focus (illusion), Spell Penetration, Uncanny Concentration, Voice Of The Sibyl**Skills** Bluff +68, Diplomacy +54, Disguise +42, Fly +26, Intimidate +17, Knowledge (arcana) +30, Knowledge (history) +27, Knowledge (planes) +41, Knowledge (religion) +38, Perception +41, Perform (act) +35, Perform (oratory) +36, Sense Motive +41, Sleight of Hand +34, Spellcraft +38, Stealth +45, Use Magic Device +46;**Racial Modifiers** +8 to Bluff**Languages** Abyssal, Common, Daemonic, Dwarven, Elven, Gnome, Halfling, Infernal, Orc, Undercommon; *telepathy* (1 mile), truespeech**SQ** change shape (*alter self*, Small, Medium, or Large humanoid), sacrament of apotheosis**Special Abilities****Bloodsense (Su)** Ashima-Shimtu can sense the presence of living creatures within 240 feet (as blindsight).**Demonic Possession** Ashima-Shimtu can use *magic jar* as a spell-like ability once per day. If she possesses a creature in this way, she vanishes and is not physically present until she leaves the creature's body.**Improved Possession** When possessing a host, Ashima-Shimtu can activate a host body's extraordinary, supernatural, and spell-like abilities, as well as spells known or prepared. In addition, the duration of the possession increases to 24 hours.**Penetrating Possession** If a host that Ashima-Shimtu attempts to possess has *protection from evil* or similar spells, Ashima-Shimtu can attempt to dispel the spell (as if she had cast *greater dispel magic*).**Shield of Lies (Su)** Deception is Ashima-Shimtu's armor, granting her a +15 profane bonus to her AC. If she fails her saving throw against a *zone of truth* or similar effect, this ability is suppressed until she leaves the area of effect or the duration expires.**Terrible Rejuvenation (Su)** When a creature within 30 feet of Ashima-Shimtu is affected by a fear effect, or has the confused, dazed, or fascinated condition, she gains fast healing 40.**Bruse Shantus and Tyrannosaurs****Bruse Shantus**

CR 20

XP 307,200

Male minotaur fighter 16

N Medium monstrous humanoid

**Init** -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +17**Aura** primitive presence (30 ft.)**Defense****AC** 27, touch 12, flat-footed 27 (+9 armor, +4 deflection, -1 Dex, +5 natural)**hp** 247 (22d10+126)**Fort** +18, **Ref** +15, **Will** +19; +4 vs. fear**Defensive Abilities** natural cunning**Offense****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** +4 impact earth breaker +31/+26/+21/+16 (3d6+17/19-20/x3), gore +26 (1d6+5)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**Special Attacks** powerful charge (gore +33, 2d6+12), weapon training (hammers +3, heavy blades +1, natural +2)**Statistics****Str** 24, **Dex** 8, **Con** 19, **Int** 14, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 16**Base Atk** +22; **CMB** +26 (+30 bull rush); **CMD** 35 (37 vs. bull rush)**Feats** Bull Rush Strike, Critical Focus, Disruptive, Furious Focus, Great Fortitude, Greater Bull Rush, Greater Weapon Focus (earth breaker), Greater Weapon Specialization (earth breaker), Improved Critical (earth breaker), Improved Bull Rush, Lightning Reflexes, Minotaur's Charge, Power Attack, Spellbreaker, Stand Still, Staggering Critical, Stunning Critical, Toughness, Weapon Focus (earth breaker), Weapon Specialization (earth breaker)**Skills** Bluff +24, Climb +15, Diplomacy +24, Intimidate +35, Perception +17, Sense Motive +20, Survival +11**Languages** Common, Giant, Orc**SQ** armor training 4**Gear** +4 impact earth breaker, +4 chainmail, belt of physical might +4 [Str, Con], circlet of persuasion, cloak of resistance +4, ring of protection +4





### Special Abilities

**Primitive Presence (Su)** Bruse Shantus emits an aura of feral power that encourages creatures to engage in savage brawls of tooth and claw. All creatures in the aura are immune to damage from attackers that are outside the target's melee reach.

### Ob-Bred Tyrannosaur

CR 15

XP 51,200

N Gargantuan animal

**Init** +12; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +44

### Defense

**AC** 30, touch 14, flat-footed 22 (+3 Dex, +5 dodge, +16 natural, -4 size)**hp** 279 (18d8+198)**Fort** +22, **Ref** +19, **Will** +17**DR** 6/-; **Immune** mind-affecting effects, paralysis; **SR** 22

### Offense

**Speed** 70 ft.**Melee** bite +32 (4d6+31/19–20 plus grab)**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.**Special Attacks** swallow whole (2d8+18, AC 18, hp 27)

### Statistics

**Str** 36, **Dex** 17, **Con** 23, **Int** 2, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 14**Base Atk** +13; **CMB** +40 (+44 grapple); **CMD** 58**Feats** Bleeding Critical, Critical Focus, Diehard, Endurance, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Run, Skill Focus (Perception)**Skills** Perception +44**SQ** mighty, powerful bite

### Special Abilities

**Mighty (Ex)** An Ob-bred tyrannosaur represents the pinnacle of evolution, and is far more powerful than a typical tyrannosaurus. It gains 5 bonus hit points per Hit Die, a +5 dodge bonus to AC, a +5 insight bonus to initiative, saving throws, damage, ability checks, and skill checks, and a +10 insight bonus to attack rolls. These bonuses are factored in to its statistics.

**Powerful Bite (Ex)** An Ob-bred tyrannosaur applies twice its Strength modifier to bite damage.

## Sor Daeron and Glaucia Evora

### Sor Daeron

CR 19

XP 204,800

Male eladrin magus 20

CN Medium humanoid (eladrin)

**Init** +9; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +23

### Defense

**AC** 38, touch 20, flat-footed 31 (+9 armor, +4 deflection, +5 Dex, +5 natural, +4 shield)**hp** 150 (20d8+60)**Fort** +17, **Reflex** +14, **Will** +15; +2 vs. charms and compulsions**Defensive Abilities** bolstered will, wound from the holy war

### Offense

**Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** +5 frost shocking burst scimitar +26/+21/+16 (1d6+12/15–20 plus 1d6 cold plus 1d6 electricity)**Special Attacks** counterstrike, greater spell combat, spellstrike**Magus Spells Prepared** (CL 20th; concentration +27)6th—*chain lightning* (DC 23), *flesh to stone* (DC 23), *forceful hand*, *greater dispel magic*, *true seeing*, *walk through space*5th—*baleful polymorph* (DC 22), *cone of cold* (DC 22), *fire snake* (DC 22), *geyser* (DC 22), *telekinesis*, *wall of force*4th—*detect scrying*, *dimension door*, extended displacement, intensified *force punch*, empowered *scorching ray* (2)3rd—*nondetection*, *force hook charge* (2), *haste*, *vampiric touch* (2), *versatile weapon*2nd—*elemental touch* (DC 19), *frigid touch* (2), *glitterdust*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *web*1st—*blade lash*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 18), *shield*, intensified *shocking grasp* (3)0—*acid splash*, *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*

### Statistics

**Str** 12, **Dex** 20, **Con** 15, **Int** 24, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10**Base Atk** +15; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 35**Feats** Combat Reflexes, Dervish Dance, Empower Spell, Extend Spell, Improved Critical (scimitar), Improved Initiative, Intensified Spell, Lunge, Spell Penetration, Spell Perfection (shocking grasp), Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (scimitar), Weapon Specialization (scimitar)**Skills** Bluff +20, Fly +28, Knowledge (arcana) +30, Knowledge (history) +31, Intimidate +20, Perception +23, Perform (dance) +2, Profession (soldier) +21, Spellcraft +32, Use Magic Device +23**Languages** Celestial, Common, Draconic, Elven, Giant, Goblin, Infernal, Orc, Primordial  
**SQ** arcane pool (17 points, +5), eladrin deathlink, fighter training, greater spell access, improved spell recall, knowledge pool, magus arcana (accurate strike, arcane accuracy, critical strike, quickened magic, reflection, spell shield), true magus**Combat Gear** *wand of greater invisibility* (15 charges), *wand of see invisibility* (10 charges); **Other Gear** *moderate fortification celestial armor*, +3 *scimitar*, *amulet of natural armor* +5, *belt of physical might* +4 (Dex, Con), *cloak of resistance* +3, *headband of vast intelligence* +6, *ring of protection* +4

### Special Abilities

**Wound From the Holy War (Ex)** Sor Daeron's right arm is composed wholly of animated salt crystals. If he is grappled or suffering from a condition that slows, immobilizes, or restrains him, he may dissolve his arm as an immediate action to automatically escape the grapple or end the condition. The arm reforms at the beginning of his next turn.

### Glaucia Evora

CR 16

XP 76,800

Female gnoll cleric 15

LG Medium humanoid (gnoll)

**Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., Perception +22

### Defense

**AC** 11, touch 10, flat-footed 11 (+1 natural)**hp** 120 (16d8+20)**Fort** +18, **Ref** +11, **Will** +20

### Offense

**Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** chains +12/+7/+2 (1d8)**Special Attacks** channel positive energy 7/day (8d6, DC 19)**Domain Spell-like Abilities** (CL 15th, concentration +19)

At will—aura of protection (+2 AC, resist 10, 16 rounds/day), freedom's call (16 rounds/day), liberation (16 rounds/day)

7/day—resistant touch (+4)

**Cleric Spells Prepared** (CL 15th; concentration +19)8th—*dimensional lock*, *mind blank*7th—*bestow grace of the champion*, *dictum* (DC 21), *repulsion* (DC 21)6th—*antimagic field*, *blade barrier* (DC 20), *greater dispel magic*, *mass bull's strength*5th—*break enchantment*, *breath of life*, *flame strike* (DC 19), *greater command* (DC 19), *spell resistance*4th—*air walk*, *blessing of fervor*, *discern lies* (DC 18), *freedom of movement*, *order's wrath* (DC 18), *restoration*3rd—*chain of perdition*, *dispel magic* (2), *invisibility purge*, *magic circle against evil*, *protection from energy*2nd—*enthrall* (DC 16), *shield other*, *silence* (DC 16), *sound burst* (DC 16), *spiritual weapon*, *zone of truth* (DC 16)1st—*bless*, *command* (DC 15), *forbid action* (DC 15), *sanctuary* (DC 15), *shield of faith*, *remove fear***Domains** Liberation, Protection**Statistics****Str** 10, **Dex** 10, **Con** 14, **Int** 13, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 14**Base Atk** +12; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 22**Feats** Alertness, Extra Channel, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Selective Channeling, Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Toughness**Skills** Intimidate +13, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Linguistics +3, Perception +22, Sense Motive +32, Spellcraft +8**Languages** Common, Gnoll, Giant, Orc**Hastenschriefft and the Sniper****Hastenschriefft Willamarkanova**

CR 16

**XP** 76,800

Female dwarf aristocrat 18

N Medium humanoid (dwarf)

**Init** +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +14**Defense****AC** 30, touch 20, flat-footed 30 (+10 armor, +10 deflection)**hp** 179 (18d8+98)**Fort** +11, **Ref** +6, **Will** +12; +2 vs. poison, spells, or spell-like abilities**Defensive Abilities** minor hivemind presence**Offense****Speed** 20 ft.**Melee** +1 *longsword* +15/+10/+5 (1d8+2/19–20) or *mwk dagger* +15/+10/+5 (1d4+1/19–20)**Ranged** *mwk dagger* +14 (1d4+1/19–20)**Special Attacks** stone hammer**Statistics****Str** 12, **Dex** 10, **Con** 18, **Int** 14, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 15**Base Atk** +13; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 38**Feats** Alertness, Defensive Combat Training, Great Fortitude, Improved Great Fortitude, Improved Vital Strike, Persuasive, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Toughness, Vital Strike**Skills** Appraise +4, Bluff +14, Diplomacy +31, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (geography) +10, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (nobility) +13, Linguistics +8, Perception +14, Perform (oratory) +21, Ride +14, Sense Motive +24**Languages** Common, Dwarven, Elven, Gnome, Halfling, Sylvan**Gear** +1 *glamered full plate of light fortification*, +1 *longsword*, masterwork dagger, *belt of mighty constitution* +6, *medallion of thoughts*, *rod of splendor***Special Abilities**

**Minor Hivemind Presence (Su)** A single ghost councilor is bonded to Hastenschriefft through the Obscurati's hivemind. This gives her a +10 deflection bonus to AC. Whenever she fails a Will save against a harmful effect, instead of harming her it harms the ghost. The first time this happens, the councilor snarls as it becomes briefly visible. Once this happens three times or if the ghost is dealt 50 points of positive energy damage, it is destroyed. She loses all the benefits of this ability, and is permanently staggered. She is originally loyal to the Obscurati, so freeing her from the hivemind won't change her behavior. A spirit medium who sees a creature with this ability immediately knows how it functions and how to overcome it.

**Stone Hammer (Su)** As a standard action, Hastenschriefft can create an animated object out of a large amount of stone in any space within 100 feet. This can be loose or worked stone, such as the walls of buildings. The object attacks an adjacent creature (+22, 4d10+16 damage), then collapses back into stone.

**Kvarti Gorbatiy CR 19****XP** 204,800

Male dwarf gunslinger 20

LN Medium humanoid (dwarf)

**Init** +8, **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *true seeing*; Perception +22**Defense****AC** 33, touch 25, flat-footed 21 (+8 armor, +3 deflection, +6 Dex, +6 dodge)**hp** 190 (20d10+80)**Fort** +21, **Ref** +28, **Will** +13; +2 vs. poison, spells, and spell-like**Defensive Abilities** defensive training, evasion, improved uncanny dodge, nimble +5, stability**Offense****Speed** 20 ft.**Ranged** +5 *rifle* +31/+26/+21/+16 (1d10+11/19–20/x4) or +2 *revolver* +28/+23/+18/+13 (1d8+8/x4)**Special Attacks** gun-training (pistol, revolver, rifle, shotgun, +6), hatred**Statistics****Str** 10, **Dex** 22, **Con** 18, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10**Base Atk** +20; **CMB** +20; **CMD** 45**Feats** Blind-Fight, Clustered Shots, Critical Focus, Deadly Aim, Deft Shooter Deed, Dodge, Extra Grit, Far Shot, Gunsmithing, Improved Critical (rifle), Improved Precise Shot, Mobility, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Reload (rifle), Ricochet Shot Deed**Skills** Appraise +1, Acrobatics +22 (+18 to jump), Knowledge (history) +4, Knowledge (local) +7, Perception +22 (+24 to notice stone), Sense Motive +15, Survival +15, Stealth +23**Languages** Common, Dwarven

**SQ** deeds (bleeding wound [4], cheat death, dead shot, deadeye, death's shot, expert loading, evasive, gunslinger initiative, gunslinger's dodge, lightning reload, menacing shot, pistol-whip, quick clear, slinger's luck, startling shot, stunning shot, targeting, utility shot), grit (4 points), gunsmith, shadow teleport, sniper's eye, true grit (death's shot, targeting)

**Combat Gear** *oil of silence* (4), *potions of cure serious wounds* (2); **Gear** +4 *mithral shirt*, +2 *revolver*, +5 *rifle with far-reaching sight*, *belt of incredible dexterity* +4, *boots of speed*, *cloak of resistance* +5, *ring of protection* +3

**Special Abilities**

**Shadow Teleport (Su)** As a move action once every 1d4 rounds, Kvarti may teleport to any location in line of sight that is inside of or adjacent to one of Trekhom's spires or towers. He can bring up to one other Medium creature with him, and he may make a Stealth check to hide when he arrives at his destination.

**Sniper's Eye (Sp)** As long as Kvarti is within one of Trekhom's towers, he has a constant *true seeing* spell active (CL 20th).



**Obscurati Lantern Walker**

CR 16

XP 76,800

N Large construct

**Init** +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0**Defense****AC** 34, touch 9, flat-footed 34 (+25 natural, –1 size)**hp** 162 (24d10+95)**Fort** +8; **Ref** +8; **Will** +8**DR** 15/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits, fire**Offense****Speed** 40 ft.**Melee** 2 claws +33 (4d6+11 plus grab)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**Special Attacks** lantern beam**Statistics****Str** 32, **Dex** 10, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1**Base Atk** +24; **CMB** +36 (+40 grapple); **CMD** 46 (50 vs. trip)**Special Abilities**

**Lantern Beam (Su)** As a standard action, an Obscurati lantern walker can focus the light of the lantern in its interior into a beam, firing it as a ranged touch attack at a creature within 100 feet. The beam deals 10d6 fire damage.

**Cula Ravjahani and the Sentosa Siege****Cula Ravjahani**

CR 18

XP 153,600

Female half-elf magus 19

N Medium humanoid (elf, human)

**Init** +6, **Senses** Perception +23**Defense****AC** 32, touch 16, flat-footed 29 (+9 armor, +4 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural, +4 shield)**hp** 180 (19d8+95)**Fort** +18, **Ref** +12, **Will** +15**Offense****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** +5 *eladrin bane flaming keen longsword* +23/+18/+13 (1d8+11/17–20)**Special Attacks** counterstrike, greater spell combat, spellstrike**Magus Spells Prepared** (CL 19th, concentration +25)6th—*disintegrate* (3, DC 22), *freezing sphere*, *mislead*5th—*acidic spray* (DC 21), *cone of cold* (DC 21), *cloudkill* (DC 21), *interposing hand*, *telekinesis*, *wall of stone*4th—*dimension door*, *dragon's breath* (DC 20), *fire shield*, *greater invisibility*, *phantasmal killer* (DC 20, 2)3rd—*dispel magic*, *displacement*, *fly*, *lightning bolt* (DC 19), *ray of exhaustion* (DC 19), *vampiric touch*2nd—*acid arrow*, *cat's grace*, *fog cloud*, *frigid touch* (2), *mirror image*, *scorching ray*1st—*feather fall*, *grease*, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 17), *shield*, *shocking grasp* (3)0—*acid splash*, *detect magic*, *disrupt undead*, *mage hand*, *read magic***Statistics****Str** 18, **Dex** 14, **Con** 16, **Int** 22, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10**Base Atk** +14; **CMB** +18; **CMD** 35

**Feats** Craft Wand, Dodge, Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Great Fortitude, Hands of Retribution\*, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword)

\*See the *Zeitgeist Player's Guide*

**Skills** Diplomacy +28, Intimidate +22, Knowledge (arcana) +28, Knowledge (planes) +28, Perception +23, Sense Motive +19, Spellcraft +28, Use Magic Device +22

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Orc, Primordial

**SQ** arcane pool (13 points, +5), fighter training, greater spell access, knowledge pool, magus arcana (close range, enduring blade, maximized magic, prescient defense, wand wielder, wand mastery), improved spell recall

**Combat Gear** *wand of maximized magic missile* (CL 9th, 10 charges); **Other Gear** +3 *mithral chainmail*, +2 *eladrin bane longsword*, *amulet of natural armor* +2, *belt of physical might* +4 (Str, Con), *cloak of resistance* +2, *headband of vast intelligence* +4, *ring of protection* +4

**Axis Obscura**

I figure as long as the party gets to do amazing things in the final battle, it's not *really* necessary to push them to the brink of failure. That would be nice, but I personally would be careful not to TPK the party right at the end of a campaign.

**Nicodemus, Mastermind of the Obscurati**

CR 23

XP 819,200

Male unique human ghost

N Medium undead (incorporeal)

**Init** +13; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +28**Aura** incandescent soul (50 ft., Stage III only)**Defense****AC** 48, touch 38, flat-footed 39 (+9 deflection, +9 Dex, +10 insight, +10 profane)**hp** 1,111 (20d8+260 x 3; see sacramental invulnerability)**Fort** +25, **Ref** +25, **Will** +28

**Defensive Abilities** incorporeal, sacramental invulnerability, shadow-cloaked (Stage I and II only), welcome to the Obscurati; **Immune** undead traits

**Offense****Speed** fly 60 ft. (good)**Melee** corrupting touch +24 (23d6, DC 29)

**Special Attacks** hungry darkness (Stage II only), malevolence, pyrebound grasp (Stage III only), thoughtseize, worldwide rebuke

**Spell-like Abilities** (CL 20th; concentration +30)1/day—*blade barrier* (DC 25), *resilient sphere* (DC 23), *wall of force*, *wall of lava***Statistics****Str** —, **Dex** 28, **Con** —, **Int** 19, **Wis** 23, **Cha** 28**Base Atk** +15; **CMB** +29; **CMD** 48

**Feats** Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Forge Ring, Improved Initiative, Quick Draw, Reach Spell, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Bluff, Diplomacy, Sense Motive, Use Magic Device), Toughness

**Skills** Acrobatics +24, Bluff +35, Diplomacy +35, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (history) +12, Knowledge (religion) +12, Knowledge (planes) +17, Perception +28, Sense Motive +32, Spellcraft +17, Use Magic Device +35

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Primordial**SQ** backlash, divine presence, icon swap, initially disinterested

### Special Abilities

**Backlash (Su)** When reduced to 0 hit points, Nicodemus is destroyed, though the description will vary based on circumstances. Each creature who is linked to Nicodemus (see welcome to the Obscurati) takes 100 damage, but cannot be reduced below 1 hit point in this way.

**Corrupting Touch (Su)** By passing part of his incorporeal body through a foe's body as a standard action, Nicodemus inflicts 23d6 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 DC 29 Fortitude save halves the damage inflicted. The save DC is Charisma-based.

**Divine Presence (Su)** The *sacrament* allows Nicodemus to move objects as if he were Large, at a range of 20 feet. This allows him to lift a column by spending four move actions, if somehow the colossus Borne cannot aid him. (He can also grow in size to Large as a free action, but that's not really his style, so don't bother doing that unless another PC is also gigantic and attacking him, in order to maintain a good aesthetic for the battle.)

In Stage II, this increases to Huge, 50 feet, and one move action.

In Stage III, it's Gargantuan, 200 feet, and one move action to pull a column entirely free.

**Icon Swap (Su)** As a swift or move action, Nicodemus chooses an exposed ritual column within 50 feet and telekinetically removes the planar icon in it, drawing the item to his hand; or he delivers an icon he is carrying to the alcove in that column. (Thus it takes him two swift actions or a swift and a move action to fully swap out an icon.)

**Malevolence (Su)** Once per round, Nicodemus can merge his body with a creature on the Material Plane. This ability is similar to a *magic jar* spell (caster level 20th), except that it does not require a receptacle. To use this ability, the ghost must be adjacent to the target. The target can resist the attack with a successful DC 26 Will save. A creature that successfully saves is immune to that same ghost's malevolence for 24 hours.

**Sacramental Invulnerability (Su)** Due to the *sacrament of apotheosis*, Nicodemus has triple the normal amount of hit points and a +10 insight bonus to AC and saving throws. He has resist 100 against all types of energy damage. He also has DR 100/— and is immune to conditions from attacks by creatures. He loses these defenses against any attacking creature that addresses Nicodemus by his real name, William Miller, at some point during the encounter.

**Shadow-Cloaked (Su)** Nicodemus is constantly cloaked in darkness, granting him concealment. He is immune to all damage and conditions except for those caused by positive energy or spells that specifically target undead. If he is adjacent to a source of bright light, or when Nicodemus takes positive energy damage, the shadows are peeled away, and he loses this protection until the end of the attacker's next turn. Simply being in the radius of a light source, however, is not enough. (The central pit of the Axis Seal ritual is a bright light source.)

**Thoughtseize (Su)** As a standard action, Nicodemus targets one creature within 50 feet. If the target fails a DC 29 Will save, it takes 5d6+20 damage and Nicodemus can cause it to move up to its speed and take a standard action of his choice as an immediate action either before or after the movement. This is a mind-affecting compulsion.

**Welcome to the Obscurati (Su)** Whenever Nicodemus would take damage, for each PC who linked to a plane during this encounter, prevent 10 of that damage and instead deal that 10 damage to the PC. This link ends if the column the PC lowered is destroyed. Additionally, each time a PC links a plane, Nicodemus may take an extra standard action on his next turn.

**Worldwide Rebuke (Su)** As a standard action, Nicodemus can make a touch attack against a creature within 20 feet. On a hit, he deals 5d6+20 damage and pushes the target 10 feet away from him. The target must then attempt a DC 29 Fortitude save. On a failure, he is knocked prone and slowed until the end of Nicodemus's next turn, as per the *slow* spell, in addition to being pushed an additional 10 feet. The target must keep attempting Fortitude saves until it succeeds at one, being pushed 10 feet further away for each failed save.

**Initially Disinterested (Ex)** Nicodemus has two HP thresholds, and his abilities change as he reaches different thresholds.

**Threshold 1 — A Future Obscured** When reduced below 741 hit points, Nicodemus reels a bit, then makes a flicking gesture as if tossing away a cigarette. All negative effects affecting Nicodemus end. Smoke fills the entire battlefield, lasting until the end of Nicodemus's next turn. This smoke provides total concealment for all creatures except Nicodemus, who can see through it.

**Threshold 2 — Miller's Pyre** When reduced below 370 hit points, Nicodemus falls to the ground, then pushes himself up, looking around in a sudden panic, for he has landed atop a tall pile of smoldering books and scrolls, as spectral and insubstantial as he. The papers ignite, and he screams with shock as his ghostly form is engulfed. For a moment it seems he might fall, but then the pyre flares to fifty feet tall, and he emerges, incandescent with rage. All negative effects affecting Nicodemus end. He loses the shadow-cloaked defensive abilities and gains the incandescent soul aura.

### Threshold Abilities

**Hungry Darkness (Su)** In Stage II, Nicodemus can conjure icy shadows in a 10-foot-radius burst within 200 feet as a standard action. Creatures in the area take 4d8+60 cold damage (DC 29 Reflex for half). Creatures who fail the save are also blinded, have their movement speeds reduced by half, and take 5d6 damage each round. They may attempt a DC 29 Fortitude save at the end of each of their turns to end these effects. The save DC is Charisma-based.

**Incandescent Soul (Su)** Nicodemus emits bright light in a 50-foot radius. A creature that enters or ends its turn in the aura takes 10d6 damage.

**Pyrebound Grasp (Su)** In Stage III, Nicodemus can reach out for a creature's spirit and attempt to draw it into his own shining soul as a standard action. He targets a creature within 50 feet of him. The target must attempt a DC 29 Will save. If it fails the save, it takes 4d8+60 fire damage and Nicodemus pulls the creature adjacent to him. If the creature is below half of its total hit points after this attack, it falls unconscious as its spirit is bound to Nicodemus's. Any damage or conditions dealt to Nicodemus are dealt to the bound target instead. Each round, the target may attempt a DC 29 Will save to end this effect. Nicodemus can only have one spirit bound to him at a time. When the target saves, or when the target is reduced to 0 HP, it is released and Nicodemus may use this ability again. The save DC is Charisma-based.





**Borne, Obscurati Colossus**

CR 25

XP 1,638,400

N Colossal construct

**Init** special (see truly colossal); **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +34**Defense****AC** 50, touch 1, flat-footed 50 (–1 Dex, +49 natural, –8 size)**hp** 1,200 (34d10+114 x 4, see truly colossal)**Fort** +21, **Ref** +20, **Will** +21**Defensive Abilities** arcane reflection, hardness 25, Obscurati-granted wards;**Immune** construct traits; **SR** 36**Weaknesses** riven armor, vulnerable to mind-affecting effects**Offense****Speed** 50 ft.**Space** 100 ft.; **Reach** 100 ft.**Special Attacks** crushing fist, spirit cascade, stomp, swipe**Statistics****Str** 51, **Dex** 9, **Con** —, **Int** 15, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 8**Base Atk** +34; **CMB** +62; **CMD** 71**Feats** Ability Focus (spirit cascade), Toughness**Skills** Climb +54, Diplomacy +33, Intimidate +33, Perception +34**Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial**SQ** massive, truly colossal**Special Abilities**

**Arcane Reflection (Su)** Magical glyphs along Borne's armor deflect cones, lines, rays, and *magic missile* spells, rendering the colossus immune to such effects. There is a 30% chance a deflected effect reflects back in full force at the caster; otherwise it is simply negated.

**Crushing Fist (Ex)** As a standard action, Borne chooses a space within 50 feet. At the beginning of his next turn, creatures in a 5-foot-radius burst centered on that space take 100 points of damage (Reflex DC 26 for half). The save DC is Dexterity-based.

**Massive (Ex)** Normal difficult terrain does not impede the colossus. A Huge or smaller creature can move through his space, and vice-versa. The colossus is simply too large and slow to make attacks of opportunity, and he can be flanked only by Huge or larger foes.

It's possible for a Huge or smaller creature to climb the colossus (Climb DC 30), and he's only capable of targeting such intruders with swipe, or perhaps spirit cascade if the climber isn't smart enough to climb the colossus's back.

Forced movement cannot move Borne more than 25 feet in a given round. Attacks cannot knock him prone unless the source of the attack is at least Gargantuan.

**Obscurati-Granted Wards (Su)** In addition to the already unparalleled wards inscribed into his armored skin, and the balancing magic of a wayfarer's lantern integrated into his chest, Borne is shielded by massive defensive magic being performed around the island. This grants him a +10 resistance bonus to all saving throws, and he takes no damage from the energy tendril coming out of the seal's center.

If the various machines the Ob set up around the island are destroyed, the protection they generate vanishes. This has no effect on personal-scale weapons, but it means the energy tendril can harm Borne. Likewise, if the lantern in his chest is destroyed (see below), he becomes vulnerable.

Most of the energy in the tendrils dissipates into the air when it hits a smaller creature, but Borne is so huge that if he's in the path of the energy tendril, he takes 200 damage each round, ignoring his hardness.

**Riven Armor (Ex)** The repairs Nicodemus effected were hasty and the result of magic, not engineering. The once impenetrable colossus has cracks in his armor. Four main locations on Borne's body are particularly vulnerable. A character that spends a standard action to examine the colossus automatically detects these vulnerabilities. Otherwise, if a creature comes within 50 feet of any of these weak points, they become apparent.

- ✦ Either knee. Roughly 75 feet up.
- ✦ Under the chest plate. Roughly 200 feet up.
- ✦ Left armpit. Roughly 225 feet up.
- ✦ Dorsal vents for witchoil engine. Roughly 250 feet up on back.

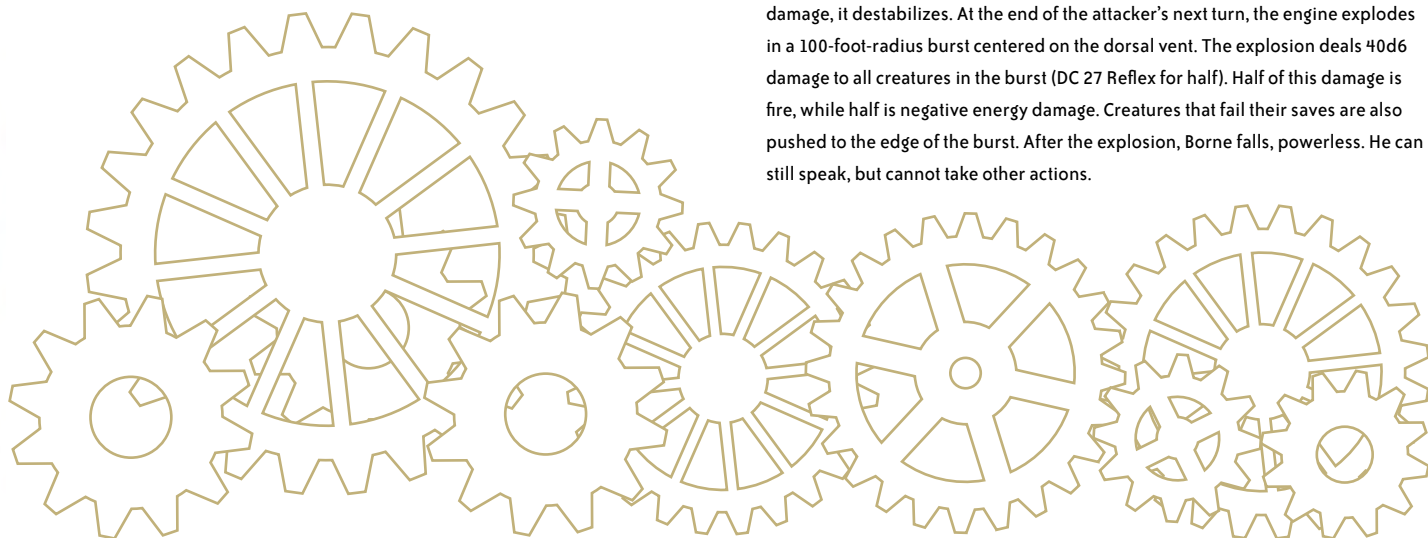
Each of these four areas have weaker armor, with only defenses AC 46, but still hardness 25. Dealing 100 damage to one of these areas (which also deducts from Borne's main hit points) creates an opening large enough for a Large creature to enter. Inside each area are vulnerable components with the same AC as the 'weaker armor,' and with no hardness or spell resistance. They also are not protected by his arcane reflection ability.

Inside the knee, the joint can be targeted. If it is dealt 50 damage, Borne's speed is reduced by half. If both knees are damaged, his speed falls to 10 feet.

Under the chest plate, the integrated *wayfarer's lantern* can be targeted. If it is dealt 10 damage, it shatters, and Borne takes a –1 penalty to AC, attack rolls, and saving throws for each plane currently linked to the world that was not part of the cosmology when he was built.

In the left armpit, the joint can be targeted. If it is dealt 50 damage, the arm falls limp. Use your best judgment of what actions Borne might be unable to do because one of his arms is out of commission. (Or have him tear off his own arm to use as a club and increase his reach.)

If the witchoil engine is reached, creatures in that compartment take 8d6 fire damage at the end of their turn from the waste heat. If the engine is dealt 200 damage, it destabilizes. At the end of the attacker's next turn, the engine explodes in a 100-foot-radius burst centered on the dorsal vent. The explosion deals 40d6 damage to all creatures in the burst (DC 27 Reflex for half). Half of this damage is fire, while half is negative energy damage. Creatures that fail their saves are also pushed to the edge of the burst. After the explosion, Borne falls, powerless. He can still speak, but cannot take other actions.





**Spirit Cascade (Su)** As a standard action, Borne can blast spirits from his witchoil-fueled engine out of his eyes to any area he can see within 1,200 feet. All creatures in a 10-foot-radius burst take 10d6 negative energy damage and 1d6 Strength damage (DC 28 Fortitude negates). The save DC is Charisma-based.

**Stomp (Ex)** As a standard action, Borne chooses a spot within 30 feet. At the start of his next turn, he stomps his foot down at that location. All creatures in a 10-foot-radius burst take 200 points of damage (DC 26 Reflex for half). If they fail their save, they are also knocked prone. The save DC is Dexterity-based.

**Swipe (Ex)** As a standard action, Borne chooses a target space within 50 feet and swings his hand through from one direction to the other. At the beginning of his next turn, all creatures in a 15-foot-by-30-foot swath take 6d6+20 damage (DC 26 Reflex for half). Creatures that fail their save are pushed to the far end of the swath. Borne can use this attack to brush off creatures that have climbed onto him. The save DC is Dexterity-based.

**Truly Colossal (Ex)** Borne does not function quite the same as a normal combatant. He acts at the end of each round, and gets the normal complement of standard, move, and swift actions. However, his physical attacks are very slow, and when he uses crushing fist, swipe, or stomp, he picks a target space, and the attack doesn't arrive until the start of his next turn.

Borne is 300 feet tall and fills a space 100 feet across. He could reasonably be represented on a battle map by having a 5-foot tall person stand above the minis. A move action for him represents a single step, his foot swinging slightly slower than a horse can gallop.

Because of his immense size, he has four times the normal number of hit points.

**Vulnerable to Mind-Affecting Effects (Ex)** Because of his advanced intellect, Borne is susceptible to mind-affecting effects. Such effects that deal damage bypass his hardness. However, a creature must be within range of his head to target him with mind-affecting effects, which is 200 feet off the ground.



### Ghost Council Swarm

CR 21

XP 409,600

NE Medium undead (incorporeal, troop)

Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +40

#### Defense

AC 28, touch 28, flat-footed 26 (+1 Dex, +6 deflection, +1 dodge, +10 profane)

hp 287 (25d8+175)

Fort +14, Ref +11, Will +18

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, incorporeal; Immune undead traits

#### Offense

Speed fly 40 ft. (perfect)

Melee troop (12d6 plus 2d6 energy; DC 30)

Space 20 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Special Attacks carry off, eldritch grasp, oppressive moan, poltergeist activity, unrefined evocation, welcome to the fold

Spell-like Abilities (CL 25th; concentration +31)

3/day—quicken *wall of force*

#### Statistics

Str —, Dex 13, Con —, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 22

Base Atk +18; CMB +19; CMD 36

Feats Ability Focus (eldritch grasp, oppressive moan, welcome to the fold), Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*wall of force*), Skill Focus (Perception), Toughness

Skills Fly +37, Knowledge (arcana) +32, Knowledge (religion) +32, Perception +40, Sense Motive +34, Stealth +29

Languages various

SQ fracture

#### Special Abilities

**Eldritch Grasp (Su)** The Ghost Council swarm's troop attack deals 12d6 untyped damage and 2d6 energy damage (either acid, cold, electricity, or fire as the swarm chooses). A DC 30 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 takes 15d6 sonic damage (Fortitude DC 30 for half). A creature that takes damage from the moan must also make a DC 28 Will save or be shaken for 1 minute. This is a sonic mind-affecting fear effect.

**Unrefined Evocation (Su)** As a standard action, the ghost council swarm can fire a barrage of scorching rays at nearby foes. They may fire up to twelve rays at creatures within 75 feet (+19 to-hit), but no more than three rays may target a single creature. Each ray deals 4d6 points of fire damage.

**Welcome to the Fold (Su)** As a standard action, the ghost council swarm may focus their ill will on one creature sharing its space, attempting to rend its soul from its body. The target takes 12d6 negative energy damage (DC 30 Will for half). Until the end of the encounter, the target's attacks deal full damage to the swarm as if it were not incorporeal. If this attack kills the target, he finds his consciousness being drawn into the ghost council, but if he returns to life at some point during this encounter, he is freed from the council, and the swarm is stunned until the end of its next turn.

**Fracture (Ex)** The swarm has two HP thresholds, and its abilities change as it reaches different thresholds.

**Threshold 1** When reduced below 192 HP, as an immediate action, the Ghost Council swarm uses oppressive moan if it is available. It also becomes invisible until the next time it attacks, and flies 50 feet. This movement does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

**Threshold 2** When reduced below 97 HP, the ghost council swarm reduces to 9 contiguous squares as several of the spirits shake their heads and fly away. As an immediate action, the Ghost Council swarm flies 50 feet. This movement does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

#### Threshold Powers

**Carry Off (Ex)** After reaching Threshold 1, the Ghost Council swarm can grab any creature it damages with its troop 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 troop damage 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 25th).



## The Jierres and the Revolution

### Lya, the Ghost Scion

CR 21

XP 409,600

Female tiefling ghost fighter 10 (lore warden)/duelist 10

LN Medium undead (incorporeal)

**Init** +14; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., Perception +32

#### Defense

**AC** 42, touch 33, flat-footed 26 (+9 armor, +7 deflection, +6 Dex, +10 dodge)**hp** 250 (20d10+140)**Fort** +20, **Ref** +19, **Will** +12**Defensive Abilities** channel resistance +4, elaborate defense +3, enhanced mobility, parry, rejuvenation; **Immune** undead traits; **Resist** cold 5, electricity 5, fire 30

#### Offense

**Speed** fly 30 ft. (perfect)**Melee** +5 *agile flaming razorburst rapier* +35/+30/+25/+20 (1d6+25/15–20 plus 1d6 fire) or corrupting touch +26 (21d6, DC 27)**Special Attacks** duelist combat (acrobatic charge, crippling critical, precise strike +10, no retreat, riposte), know thy enemy, infernal wrath of the Jierre bloodline, reality wound, telekinesis

#### Statistics

**Str** –, **Dex** 23, **Con** –, **Int** 20, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 24**Base Atk** +20; **CMB** +30 (+34 to reposition); **CMD** 57 (59 vs. reposition)**Feats** Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Dodge, Deflect Arrows, Greater Weapon Focus (rapier), Greater Weapon Specialization (rapier), Improved Critical (rapier), Improved Initiative, Improved Reposition, Iron Will, Mobility, Repositioning Strike, Spring Attack, Staggering Critical, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon Specialization (rapier), Whirlwind Attack**Skills** Acrobatics +20, Bluff +28, Climb +7, Diplomacy +28, Escape Artist +13, Fly +25, Knowledge (local) +16, Knowledge (nobility) +24, Knowledge (planes) +15, Perception +32, Perform (oratory) +24, Sense Motive +24, Stealth +25, Swim +7**Languages** Common, Dwarven, Elven, Infernal, Primordial**SQ** grave trappings, maneuver mastery +4, weapon training (light blades +2, firearms +1)**Gear** +5 *agile flaming razorburst rapier*, +5 *mithral shirt*, *belt of incredible dexterity* +2, *cloak of resistance* +3, *headband of mental prowess* +4 (Int, Cha)

#### Special Abilities

**Corrupting Touch (Su)** By passing part of her incorporeal body through a foe's body as a standard action, Lya inflicts 21d6 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 DC 27 Fortitude save halves the damage inflicted.**Duelist Combat (Ex)** Between her Mobility feat and her duelist training, Lya gets a +8 bonus to AC against attacks of opportunity she provokes by moving. She can charge across difficult terrain. She gains an additional +3 dodge bonus to AC when fighting defensively or taking a total defense action.

Her rapier attacks against living creatures with a discernible anatomy deal +10 damage, which is factored in above. Remove this damage against creatures with no proper anatomy.

Whenever she takes a full attack action, she can elect not to take one of her attacks. At any time before her next turn, she can attempt to parry an attack against her or an adjacent ally as an immediate action. To parry, she makes an attack roll, using the same bonuses as the attack she chose to forego. If her attack roll beats the roll of the attacking creature, the attack automatically misses. She also takes a –4 penalty when attempting to parry an attack made against an adjacent ally.

When she successfully parries, she can make an attack of opportunity against the creature whose attack she thwarted.

She may also make an attack of opportunity against an adjacent creature who takes a withdraw action.

Due to her Critical Focus, Repositioning Strike, and Staggering Critical Feats, Lya has a +4 bonus to rolls to confirm critical hits. If her confirmation roll beats the target's CMD, she can reposition them, moving them 5 ft., plus 5 ft. for every 5 points she beat their CMD.

If her attack is a confirmed critical hit, the target is staggered 1d4+1 rounds. A DC 24 Fortitude save reduces the staggered duration to 1 round.

Additionally, when she confirms a critical hit, she can apply one of the following penalties in addition to the damage dealt: reduce all of the target's speeds by 10 feet (minimum 5 feet), 1d4 points of Strength or Dexterity damage, –4 penalty on all saving throws, –4 penalty to Armor Class, or 2d6 points of bleed damage. These penalties last for 1 minute, except for ability damage, which must be healed normally, and bleed damage, which continues until the target receives magic healing or a DC 15 Heal skill check.

Finally, her *razorburst weapon* can cut people's limbs off. If a target is reduced to 30 HP or below, it must make a Fortitude save (DC = damage dealt). On a success, the target loses an extremity of its choice—hand, foot, arm, or leg. On a failure, Lya chooses which extremity the target loses.

So if she's surrounded, she'll use Whirlwind Attack to strike everyone, probably crit a few and shove them overboard while staggering them.

**Grave Trappings (Su)** Lya continues to be able to use and benefit from spectral duplicates of items she had when she died. These items cannot be destroyed or removed from her. Should Lya be destroyed, her equipment reappears with her upon rejuvenating. Additionally, since she died in or metaphysically near a volcano, she has incredible fire resistance.**Infernal Wrath of the Jierre Bloodline (Su)** Once per day as an immediate action when hit by an attack, Lya can cause the creature who hit her to take 5d6 points of fire damage. The creature must make a DC 27 Reflex save or catch on fire, taking an additional 5d6 points of fire damage each round until the flames are extinguished.

Whether or not the creature saves, any debilitating conditions affecting Lya are also transferred to the target.

**Reality Wound (Su)** Once every 1d4 rounds, Lya can make an attack that seems to leave a gash in the world itself. As a free action when she makes an attack, tongues of flame lash out through an apparent rip in space, occupying one 5-ft. square of the space of the target she attacked. Until the end of the encounter, any creature entering or ending its turn in that space takes 5d6 fire damage.**Telekinesis (Su)** Lya can use can use *telekinesis* as a standard action once every 1d4 rounds (CL 20th).

### Sovereign Han Jierre

CR 20

XP 307,200

Male unique tiefling

LN Medium outsider (native)

**Init** +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., all-around vision, Perception +39

#### Defense

**AC** 36, touch 22, flat-footed 29 (+9 armor, +5 deflection, +1 Dex, +6 dodge, +5 natural)**hp** 357 (34d8+204)**Fort** +19, **Ref** +15, **Will** +22; one reroll per day of each save**Defensive Abilities** *freedom of movement*, slippery mind; **Resist** fire 30

#### Offense

**Speed** fly 60 ft. (good)**Ranged** 8 rifles +35 (1d8+9/x4)**Special Attacks** gestalt commander, infernal wrath of the Jierre bloodline

**Statistics****Str** 10, **Dex** 12, **Con** 22, **Int** 22, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 26**Base Atk** +24; **CMB** +25; **CMD** 41**Feats** Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Great Fortitude, Improved Iron Will, Improved Lightning Reflexes, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes**Skills** many and various**Languages** Common, Dwarven, Elven, Infernal, Primordial**Other Gear** +5 mithral shirt, amulet of natural armor +5, boots of flying, headband of mental superiority +6, ring of freedom of movement, ring of protection +5**Special Abilities****Gestalt Commander (Su)** As a standard action, Han can call upon the combined force of the airship crew to attack targets of his choice. Other soldiers fire, but use his attack bonus and trace range as if from him. This allows him to make eight rifle attacks.

This is only the most obvious use of his psychic connection to the crew. Many others are possible, at your discretion.

**Infernal Wrath of the Scion of the Jierre Bloodline (Su)** Once per round as an immediate action when hit by an attack or targeted by a spell, Han can cause the creature who attacked him to take 5d6 points of fire damage. The creature must make a DC 34 Reflex save or catch on fire, taking an additional 5d6 points of fire damage each round until the flames are extinguished.**Revolution Elite Crew**

CR 15

**XP** 51,200

LN Medium humanoid (human, troop)

**Init** +8; **Senses** Perception +19**Defense****AC** 33, touch 16, flat-footed 28 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +18 natural)**hp** 190 (20d8+100)**Fort** +12, **Ref** +18, **Will** +9**Defensive Abilities** troop traits**Offense****Speed** 20 ft.**Melee** troop (5d8+8)**Special Attacks** dirigible turrets, fusillade (DC 24), incendiary bombs**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.**Statistics****Str** 26, **Dex** 18, **Con** 18, **Int** 11, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 11**Base Atk** +13; **CMB** +21; **CMD** 33**Feats** Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Master Siege Engineer, Siege Engineer, Siege Gunner, Toughness**Skills** Knowledge (engineering) +20, Perception +19, Profession (siege engineer) +26**Languages** Common**Special Abilities****Dirigible Turrets (Ex)** If an elite crew is adjacent to one of the *Revolution's* eight turrets, the troop can fire it as standard action, targeting a square within 1,000 feet. All creatures in a 5-foot-radius burst of the point of impact take 12d6 points of bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage (DC 24 Reflex for half). The save DC is Dexterity-based.

If the shot is aimed at a space that contains an opposing vessel, in addition to attacking any creatures in the area, make a shipboard weapon attack, d20+12 vs. the ship's Defense. (The attack bonus is lower than normal, representing that they're aiming primarily at people, not vulnerable ship components.)

No matter how many crew are working, each turret can only be loaded and fired once per round.

**Fusillade (Ex)** An elite crew can fire a fusillade of musket bullets as a standard action. This attack takes the form of up to four lines with a range of 200 feet. These lines can start from the corner of any square in the troop's space. All creatures in one of these lines' areas of effect take 6d10+4 points of bludgeoning and piercing damage (Reflex DC 24 for half). The save DC is Dexterity-based**Incendiary Bombs (Ex)** If an elite crew is on the gundeck of the *Revolution*, it can take a standard action to pull a lever and release a burning barrel of tar. The attack targets a space directly below the vessel. If another ship is there, make a naval attack, d20+12 vs. Defense. Otherwise, all creatures in a 15-foot-radius burst from the point of impact take 6d6 fire damage (DC 24 Reflex for half). Creatures who fail the save catch on fire, taking 1d6 fire damage each round until the flames are extinguished. The area of the burst also continues to burn for the next three rounds. Creatures that enter or end their turn in the area take 2d6 fire damage. The save DC is Dexterity-based.

No more than one crew can use this ability each round.

**Kasvarina Varal**

CR 19

**XP** 204,800

Female eladrin fighter 1/sorcerer 9/elritch knight 10

N Medium humanoid (eladrin)

**Init** +5; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +0**Defense****AC** 27, touch 16, flat-footed 23 (+9 armor, +4 Dex, +2 natural, +2 deflection)**hp** 115 (11d10+9d6+29)**Fort** +13, **Ref** +12, **Will** +13; +2 vs. charm and compulsion**Defensive Abilities** bolstered will**Offense****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** +1 ghost-touch shock rapier +23/+18/+13 (1d6+3/15-20 plus 1d6 electricity; on a confirmed crit, cast a spell as a swift action which must include target in its effect, does not provoke attack of opportunity)**Ranged** mwk shortbow +21/+16/+15 (1d6/x3)**Special Attacks** eladrin deathlink, spell critical**Sorcerer Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 18th; concentration +25)

2/day—mind reader (DC 21)

**Sorcerer Spells Known** (CL 18th; concentration +25)

9th (3/day)—dominate monster (DC 26)

8th (5/day)—power word stun, telekinetic sphere (DC 27)

7th (7/day)—greater scrying, prismatic spray (DC 26), power word blind

6th (7/day)—chain lightning (DC 25), geas, true seeing

5th (7/day)—cone of cold (DC 24), false vision, telekinesis, teleport

4th (7/day)—charm monster (DC 21), detect scrying, greater invisibility, ice storm, shout (DC 23)

3rd (8/day)—displacement, fireball (DC 22), fly, greater magic weapon, suggestion (DC 20)

2nd (8/day)—flaming sphere, fog cloud, frigid touch (DC 21), invisibility, protection from arrows, resist energy

1st (8/day)—burning hands (DC 20), charm person (DC 18), disguise self, mount, shield, true strike

0 (at will)—detect magic, flare (DC 19), ghost sound, light, mage hand, mending, message, prestidigitation, read magic

**Bloodline** rakshasa**SQ** bloodline arcana (+4 DC to identify spells she casts using Spellcraft), diverse training silver tongue (8/day, +5 Bluff)





## Statistics

**Str** 10, **Dex** 18, **Con** 12, **Int** 14, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 25

**Base Atk** +15; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 27

**Feats** Arcane Armor Mastery, Arcane Armor Training, Craft Wondrous Item, Deceitful, Empower Spell, Improved Critical (rapier), Iron Will, Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Greater Weapon Focus (rapier), Maximize Spell, Quick Draw, Spell Focus (evocation), Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon Specialization (rapier), and Greater Focus (rapier)

**Skills** Bluff +31, Diplomacy +13, Disguise +9, Intimidate +22, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (engineering) +7, Knowledge (history) +9, Knowledge (planes) +7, Sense Motive +13, Spellcraft +13, Survival +7

**Languages** Common, Elven, Infernal, Primordial

**Gear** +4 mithral breastplate, +1 ghost-touch shock rapier, amulet of natural armor +2, belt of physical perfection +2, cloak of resistance +3, headband of alluring charisma +4, ring of protection +2, wand of clairvoyance/clairaudience (32 charges), wand of lightning bolt (CL 10th, 25 charges).

**Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen**

CR 17

**XP** 102,400

Male human alchemist (chirurgeon) 16/rogue 2

LN Medium humanoid (human)

**Init** +6; **Senses** Perception +27

## Defense

**AC** 32, touch 15, flat-footed 29 (+6 armor, +2 deflection, +3 Dex, +7 natural, +4 shield)  
**hp** 153 (18d8+72)

**Fort** +20, **Ref** +22, **Will** +13

**Defensive Abilities** evasion, preserve organs; **SR** 28

## Offense

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect)

**Melee** +2 keen rapier +20/+15/+10 (1d6+1/15–20)

**Special Attacks** bomb 20/day (8d6+4 fire, DC 21), sneak attack +1d6

**Alchemist Extracts Prepared** (CL 16th)

6th—heal

5th—resurgent transformation, sending, spell resistance

4th—breath of life (2), cure critical wounds (2), greater invisibility

3rd—arcane sight, cure serious wounds (3), fly, heroism

2nd—barkskin, blur, cure moderate wounds (3), resist energy

1st—cure light wounds (2), disguise self, expeditious retreat, shield, true strike

## Statistics

**Str** 8, **Dex** 17, **Con** 18, **Int** 18, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 11

**Base Atk** +13; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 27

**Feats** Alertness, Brew Potion, Combat Expertise, Deft Hands, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Master Alchemist, Skill Focus (Heal), Stealthy, Throw Anything, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Bluff +23, Craft (alchemy) +27, Diplomacy +11, Disable Device +29, Heal +29, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (history) +11, Knowledge (nature) +14, Knowledge (nobility) +11, Perception +27, Sense Motive +27, Spellcraft +27, Stealth +29, Use Magic Device +21

**Languages** Abyssal, Common, Dwarven, Elven, Primordial

**SQ** alchemy (alchemy crafting +7, identify potions), anaesthetic, infused curative, mutagen (+4 Con/–2 Cha, +2 natural), discoveries (alchemical zombie, elixir of life, fast bombs, healing bomb, healing touch, infusion, preserve organs, spontaneous healing [80 points per day]), it's alive!, persistent mutagen, power over death, rogue talent (fast stealth), swift alchemy, swift poisoning, trapfinding +1

**Combat Gear** potions of cure serious wounds (3); **Other Gear** +4 leather armor, +2 keen rapier, belt of physical might +2 (Dex, Con), cloak of resistance +4, ring of protection +2

**Defensive Spell Suite** Before combat, Wolfgang drinks his extracts of shield, barkskin, arcane sight, fly, heroism, resurgent transformation, and spell resistance. He also drinks his mutagen to increase his Constitution. These effects are factored into his stat block.

## Special Abilities

**Elixir of Life (Sp)** Wolfgang has already created and consumed an elixir of life earlier in the day. The first time he dies, he is immediately targeted by a resurrection spell.

**It's Alive! (Su)** When Wolfgang uses his healing bomb, healing touch, or spontaneous healing abilities, they manifest as jolts of lightning flying forth from his hands. This is just a cosmetic change to fit his schtick of being, basically, Dr. Frankenstein.

**The Vengeful Goddess**

If the PCs in the Gyre chose to grant Srasama vengeance, her avatar appears to help battle Nicodemus. She joins the battle in the same round that the party gains access to the plane Ascetia.

**Avatar of Srasama**

CR 25

**XP** 1,638,400

N Gargantuan outsider (extraplanar)

**Init** +12; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., true seeing; Perception +42

## Defense

**AC** 42, touch 30, flat-footed 29 (+12 Dex, +1 dodge, +9 insight, +12 natural, +2 sacred, –4 size)

**hp** 555 (30d10+390); fast healing 20

**Fort** +24, **Ref** +30, **Will** +27

**Defensive Abilities** evasion, mind blank; **DR** 20/epic; **Immune** ability damage, death effects, fire, poison, negative energy; **Resist** acid 30, cold 30, electricity 30; **SR** 36

## Offense

**Speed** 80 ft.

**Melee** +5 flaming burst longsword +41/+36/+31/+26 (4d6+19/19–20 plus 1d6 fire), +5 flaming burst longsword +41/+36/+31 (4d6+19/19–20 plus 1d6 fire)

**Special Attacks** final scorn, guttering desperation

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 25th; concentration +33)

Constant—freedom of movement, mind blank, tongues, true seeing

At will—alter self, greater arcane sight, greater dispel magic, greater invisibility, greater scrying (DC 26), greater teleport, wall of thorns

3/day—banishment (DC 27), quickened greater dispel magic, heal, empowered horrid wilting (DC 27), spell turning

1/day—limited wish, mage's disjunction (DC 28), power word kill

## Statistics

**Str** 38, **Dex** 34, **Con** 34, **Int** 30, **Wis** 28, **Cha** 28

**Base Atk** +30; **CMB** +50; **CMD** 76

**Feats** Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Die Hard, Dodge, Endurance, Empower Spell-Like Ability (horrid wilting), Great Fortitude, Greater Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Great Fortitude, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Iron Will, Power Attack, Two-Weapon Fighting, Toughness, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (greater dispel magic)

**Skills** Acrobatics +45 (+65 to jump), Appraise +40, Bluff +42, Climb, Diplomacy +39, Heal +42, Intimidate +42, Knowledge (history) +40, Knowledge (nature) +40, Knowledge (planes) +43, Knowledge (religion) +43, Perception +42, Sleight of Hand +42, Sense Motive +42, Stealth +33, Use Magic Device +39

**Languages** Elven; tongues

**SQ** dead god, focused animosity, tripartite aspect



### Special Abilities

**Dead God (Ex)** Once a living creature attacks or otherwise actively opposes the Avatar of Srasama, that creature takes 1 point of Constitution drain at the end of each of its turns until the avatar is destroyed or Srasama chooses to end the battle. Whenever a creature takes Constitution drain in this way, the avatar can either make a new saving throw to remove a negative condition affecting her or gain 5 temporary hit points.

**Final Scorn (Ex)** When Srasma is slain, she chooses one foe that has most earned her ire. The three aspects teleport adjacent to that creature and merge into one. Srasma makes a full attack against that foe, then collapses and dies.

**Focused Animosity (Ex)** Srasama begins combat with only 185 hit points. Her attacks can only affect one foe of the party's choice (likely Nicodemus), and they simply pass through other creatures harmlessly.

However, if another creature attacks or intentionally impedes Srasama, she gains the ability to harm that creature, she adds 185 hit points to her hit point pool, and she can now take two standard actions on her turn, divided between two bodies.

If a third foe interferes, she gains another 185 hit points (to her maximum of 555 hit points) and each of her three bodies can act each round.

If more than 3 foes attack Srasama, she does not gain any more power.

**Guttering Desperation (Su)** As a standard action, Srasama can command enemies within 100 feet of her to grovel for their lives. Any target that fails a DC 34 Fortitude save catches on fire, taking 15d6 damage each round until Srasama dies or dismisses the effect. Half of this damage is fire damage, but the other half results directly from divine power and is therefore not subject to being reduced by resistance to fire-based attacks. If a creature ends its turn prone, it can attempt another DC 34 Fortitude save to end this ongoing damage. The save DC is Charisma-based.

**Tripartite Aspect (Ex)** At the beginning of combat, Srasama divides into three bodies. Each body can take a move and a swift action every turn, and each can make attacks of opportunity, but only one body can take a standard action any given turn (or a full-round action if it doesn't take a move action). They share hit points, but conditions only affect the specific body they struck.

## Gradiax, the Steel Lord

Bring in Pemberton's draconic duplicant only if the party is in really dire straits, or in the aftermath of the battle if he sees an opportunity for revenge against his daughter's killer.

### Gradiax, the Steel Lord

CR 21

XP 409,600

Male duplicant wyrm red dragon

NE Gargantuan dragon (fire)

**Init** +2; **Senses** dragon senses, smoke vision; Perception +35**Aura** fire (10 ft., 2d6 fire), frightful presence (330 ft., DC 28)

### Defense

**AC** 42, touch 4, flat-footed 42 (-2 Dex, +38 natural, -4 size)**hp** 391 (27d12+216)**Fort** +23, **Ref** +13, **Will** +22; +4 vs. mind-affecting and stun**Defensive Abilities** constructed; **DR** 10/adamantine, 20/magic; **Immune** disease, exhaustion, fatigue, fire, paralysis, poison, sleep; **SR** 31**Weaknesses** metal shell, vulnerability to cold

### Offense

**Speed** 40 ft., fly 250 ft. (clumsy)**Melee** bite +40 (4d6+25/19-20), 2 claws +40 (2d8+17), 2 wings +37 (2d6+8), tail slap +38 (2d8+25)**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft. (20 ft. with bite)**Special Attacks** breath weapon (60-ft. cone, DC 31, 22d10 fire), crush (Medium creatures, DC 31, 4d6+22), manipulate flames, melt stone, tail sweep (Small creatures, DC 31, 2d6+22)**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 27th; concentration +32)At will—*detect magic*, *find the path*, *pyrotechnics* (DC 17), *suggestion* (DC 18), *wall of fire***Spells Known** (CL 17th; concentration +22)8th (4/day)—*greater shout* (DC 23), *prismatic wall* (DC 23)7th (6/day)—*limited wish*, *mass hold person* (DC 22), *spell turning*6th (6/day)—*antimagic field*, *contingency*, *greater dispel magic*5th (7/day)—*polymorph*, *telekinesis* (DC 20), *teleport*, *wall of force*4th (7/day)—*fear* (DC 19), *fire shield*, *greater invisibility*, *stoneskin*3rd (7/day)—*dispel magic*, *displacement*, *haste*, *tongues*2nd (7/day)—*alter self*, *detect thoughts*, *misdirection*, *resist energy*, *see invisibility*1st (8/day)—*alarm*, *grease* (DC 16), *magic missile*, *shield*, *true strike*0 (at will)—*arcane mark*, *bleed*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

### Statistics

**Str** 45, **Dex** 6, **Con** 27, **Int** 20, **Wis** 21, **Cha** 20**Base Atk** +27; **CMB** +48; **CMD** 56 (60 vs. trip)**Feats** Cleave, Critical Focus, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Improved Vital Strike, Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell, Stunning Critical, Vital Strike, Wingover**Skills** Appraise +35, Bluff +35, Diplomacy +35, Fly +14, Intimidate +35, Knowledge (arcana) +35, Knowledge (history) +35, Perception +35, Sense Motive +35, Spellcraft +35, Stealth +16**Languages** Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Orc, Primordial**SQ** Integrated rockets, change shape (specific humanoid form, polymorph)

### Special Abilities

**Fire Aura (Su)** Gradiax is surrounded by an aura of intense heat. All creatures within 10 feet take 2d6 points of fire damage at the beginning of the dragon's turn.**Integrated Rockets (Ex)** Once per minute, Gradiax can use a move action to activate hidden rocket boosters in vents along his back and wings, accelerating him to the speed of a bullet. He flies up to one mile in a mostly straight line. If he ends his movement adjacent to a creature or object, any attack he hits that creature with this turn also causes the target to fall prone. This ability even works on the colossus or a dirigible.**Manipulate Flames (Su)** Gradiax can control any fire spell within 110 feet as a standard action. This ability allows him to move any fire effect in the area, as if he were the caster. This ability also allows him to reposition a stationary fire effect, although the new placement must be one allowed by the spell. Finally, for 1 round following the use of this ability, the dragon can control any new fire spell cast within its area of control, as if he were the caster. He can make all decisions allowed to the caster, including canceling the spell if he so desires.**Melt Stone (Su)** Gradiax can use his breath weapon to melt rock at a range of 100 feet, affecting a 55-foot-radius area. The area becomes lava to a depth of 1 foot. Any creature in contact with the lava takes 20d6 points of fire damage on the first round, 10d6 on the second, and none thereafter as the lava hardens and cools. If used on a wall or ceiling, treat this ability as an avalanche that deals fire damage.**Smoke Vision (Ex)** Gradiax can see perfectly in smoky conditions (such as those created by *pyrotechnics*).



# PLAYER'S HANDOUT: THE RITUAL OF THE AXIS SEAL



The ritual details you retrieved from the Grand Librarium of Alais Primos, combined with Pemberton and your own observations of the drained lakebed on Axis Island let you know the following with confidence. Uncertainties remain, however.

## PHYSICAL SPACE

The ritual actually involves the entirety of Axis Island, but it is centered on the Axis Seal — a hundred-foot diameter disk of gold, which covers a twenty-foot diameter hemispherical depression in the bedrock, ten feet deep. Out of this depression flare intense blasts of energy from across the multiverse. If the seal were properly seated atop this depression, it would focus that energy and create the sun.

The seal lies in the middle of a four-hundred-foot diameter field of flattened stone, around which carvings of primitive orc runes form seven rings, each twenty-five feet farther out. Spaced somewhat irregularly around these rings are vertical pits. The golden seal itself would only cover the central depression and the innermost ring, but when it is in place the other pits are inaccessible.

The rings represent, in order outward:

- ♦ The plane of fire. (Red)
- ♦ The plane of air. (Orange)
- ♦ The world itself, which has no pit, but is surrounded by a smaller ring that does have a pit, representing the plane of life. (Green)
- ♦ The plane of water. (Dark Blue)
- ♦ The plane of earth. (Gold)
- ♦ The plane of space (Gray), which is surrounded by a smaller ring that has its own pit, representing the plane of time. (Light Blue)
- ♦ The plane of death. (Purple)

Each pit is about fifteen feet in diameter and contains the fifty foot long white stone shaft of a petrified tree. Halfway down that shaft, a small alcove can hold an icon, which represents a particular plane. The Ancients used gold icons marked with symbols representing a

constellation, which set those worlds' place in the night sky. Any hand-held item can be used as an icon, but crafting one requires either close knowledge of the plane, or prolonged study of it.

You already may have some icons you discovered in your investigations, and somehow you know about other worlds that exist in the Gyre, though you're sure you never went there. You're equally sure that very soon you'll gain access to planar icons for some of those worlds. See the end of this document for details of the worlds that may be available to you.

## Energetic Tendrils

Arcs of energy from the central depression mostly crackle upward, but every minute or two one will slice out laterally to a distance of several hundred feet. The force is enough to blast back and likely kill anyone who tries to come too close. Sometimes where one of these arcs strikes, a sliver of a world appears – a forest, a crackling lava field, a waterfall—only to vanish a few seconds later. Sometimes even creatures are visible in these slivers. The tendrils are slow enough to avoid if you keep your distance.

## Obscurati Interference

The Ob built a small bunker to the northwest of the seal, which was damaged by saboteurs loyal to the Voice of Rot. Ritual mages chanting from within that bunker shielded the colossus Borne, but when they died, the colossus was struck by a tendril and crippled.

When Borne was damaged, he collapsed, and the hundred-foot disk of the seal fell atop him. The colossus suffered immense damage across his body, which cracked his torso and blew apart half an arm and one-and-a-half legs. The ritual was left incomplete.

## MANIPULATING THE RITUAL PIECES

Crisillyiri scholars posited that the Ancients used mass ritual telekinesis to lift the sunken columns that control the planar links. You'll have to find another way to lift them.

### Crane Mechanics

If your airship is equipped with a crane, decide where to mount it, but it's probably best on the rear. It is treated as a ship component, and can be damaged if dealt one 'strike' in naval combat, or destroyed if dealt two. In person-scale combat, it has 200 hit points and hardness 20. Repairing it mid-combat if it's damaged would take at least a minute, ten crew, and an Intelligence check (DC 20), or some sort of magic. If it is destroyed, repairs require magic.

The cables are the most vulnerable spot, and while the gripping claw is deployed, 100 damage dealt to the cable will sever it. Replacing a cable uses the same rules as repairing the crane itself.

The crane has enough lifting capacity to pull one of the 15-ft. diameter, 50-ft. long stone columns in the ritual field out of the ground. To do so, the ship must be positioned so the crane is within thirty feet of the column, no more than sixty feet above the ground, and someone must spend a move action and make a Dexterity check (DC 15) to operate the crane and grab onto the column. No more than one attempt can be made per round.

Once the column is grabbed, directing the crane to lift it only requires a swift action, but it takes two rounds for the column to emerge enough for its planar icon to be replaced. Extracting the full 50-ft. column takes four rounds. If the crane releases the column, it slides back into place over the course of a round.

If the ship moves while hoisting a column, the crane operator must make a Dexterity check as a free action (DC 20) or else the crane loses its grip. If the ship moves out of range, though, the crane automatically

loses its grip. Moving directly upward can pull the column out in a single round. If a column is pulled entirely out of its hole, reseating it is a very fine process, nigh impossible in the heat of battle (DC 25).

### Divine Intervention

With the *sacrament of apotheosis*, a PC can use his divine strength to grab a column and pull it out of the ground. It takes four move actions by *sacrament*-empowered PCs to lift a column enough to access the planar icon, or eight actions to remove it fully. Multiple PCs can contribute actions in this way.

A PC who chooses the *Tower Above* boon has quadruple the effect of a normal *sacrament*-empowered PC. One with the *From On High* boon can completely lift a column out with a single move action, and can carry it as easily as he'd carry a one-handed item.

### Moving the Seal

The immense golden seal is much heavier. It requires four move actions by *sacrament*-empowered PCs (or one action by a PC with *Tower Above*) to lift the seal barely off the ground and move it 10 feet. A PC with *From On High* can move the seal forty feet with a single move action. A crane on the ship is insufficient.

### Swapping Icons

It's as easy as knocking aside the old icon and placing in a new one, though the new one must belong to a plane that is sufficiently charged with energy of the appropriate type. Once the column is lowered fully into the ground, the new plane is linked to this world with a mighty surge of energy. Whoever placed the icon in the column is then able to control that energy. The GM knows what that energy can be used for.

## PLANES AND POWERS

The following planes might be available for you to use.

Do note, in the original planar set-up, the plane of earth **Urim** caused gold to block planar travel, so the seal made interplanar travel within the system limited; and **Apet** made planar travel from worlds outside the system difficult; while **Nem** attempted to destroy intruders from other worlds. Almost any other arrangement of planes will result in a world that can be more easily reached by travelers from other planes.

### Obscurati Planes

Eight planes are currently linked.



PLANAR LOCATION, NAME, AND MONIKER	ENERGIES	TRAITS
<b>A. Jiese,</b> the fire of industry	Fire, Life	Precision technology functions.
<b>B. Perlocus,</b> a voice on the wind	Air, Earth	Persuasion is more effective.
<b>C. Mojang,</b> a wild artifice	Earth, Life	Nature follows orders.
<b>D. Ostea,</b> the beating heart	Life, Water	Rapid healing.
<b>E. Ratios,</b> the cold logic	Earth, Space	Intuition is weaker, reason stronger.
<b>F. Fourmyle,</b> the selfish dominion	Death, Space	Casual teleportation.
<b>G. Illocus,</b> the cascading flame	Fire, Time	Consequences cascade rapidly.
<b>H. Baden,</b> the ghost moon	Air	Flight is easy.



## Gyre Planes

Thirty-one planes were available in the Gyre. (Numbering corresponds with the Gyre map.)

PLANAR LOCATION, NAME, AND MONIKER	ENERGIES	TRAITS
<b>1. Reida,</b> the arc of history	Life, Time	Strong prophecy.
<b>2. Teykfa,</b> the ticking pendulum	Earth, Time	People are more aware of the scale of time, and they can better weigh long-term consequences. Time can be manipulated.
<b>5. Bonilathe,</b> the storm claw	Air, Fire	Storms spawn creatures.
<b>9. Metarie,</b> the swamp of sabotage	Life, Water	Technology is disrupted.
<b>12. Guay,</b> the grove of dreams	Life, Space	Dreams create demiplanes.
<b>14. Ringes,</b> the barren moor	Earth, Water	Murderous violence.
<b>15. Gardboral,</b> the chimeric maelstrom	Air, Life	Elementals are common and massive.
<b>16. Apo,</b> the unknown disk	Death, Space	Intermittent spheres of annihilation.
<b>17. Iratha Ket,</b> the graveyard revel	Death, Life	Greater altruism. Occasional spontaneous musical numbers.
<b>18. Egalitrix,</b> fortress of the Golden Legion	Fire, Space	Fantastic grand industry will develop, driven by greed.
<b>19. Obliatas,</b> the devouring light	Any	Undead are destroyed by the sun.
<b>21. Elofasp,</b> the spawning hive	Earth, Life	Giant obedient beasts.
<b>24. Ascetia,</b> the hidden jungle	Life, Time	People are more aware of history.
<b>25. Drozani,</b> a dead city in the clouds	Air, Death	Slowly the birth rate dwindles to zero.
<b>29. Etheax,</b> the tended flame	Fire, Time	Patience and fire magic are both easy.



PLANAR LOCATION, NAME, AND MONIKER	ENERGIES	TRAITS
<b>31. Dunkelweiss,</b> the fermented peaks	Earth, Life	Alcohol is good for you.
<b>33. Hunlow,</b> a place for pirates	Death, Water	The ocean is literally a blood-thirsty god who loves villains.
<b>35. Wilanir,</b> the lair of discontent	Air, Water	Dense mists bring ill tidings.
<b>36 &amp; 40. Amrou,</b> the salt waste	Death, Earth	Mundane counters against supernatural threats are stronger.
<b>37. Thrag,</b> the beastly bounty	Life, Time	Rapid reincarnation.
<b>39. Apet,</b> the distant plane	Air, Space	Planar travel limited to local system.
<b>41. Bhoior,</b> the walking whisper	Air, Time	Sounds echo, sometimes years later.
<b>44. Avilona,</b> the final murmur	Air, Death	Flight is limited to five minutes.
<b>45. Shabboath,</b> the severed sea	Earth, Water	Creates an 'underdark' cavern system.
<b>47. Urim,</b> the shattered golden chain	Earth, Space	Gold blocks teleportation.
<b>48. Mavisha,</b> the mysterious deep	Water, Time	Islands conceal secrets.
<b>49. Nem,</b> the plane of ruin	Death, Time	Lingering souls are stronger than corporeal undead.
<b>50. Caeloon,</b> the paper wind	Air, Life	People are resilient in the face of tragedy.
<b>51. The Plain of Rice</b>	Space, Water	The entire world is shallow water.
<b>52. Padyer,</b> a clean realm	Fire, Water	Water burns and purges.
<b>53. Av,</b> plane of mirrors	Death, Life	Conjures physical reflection of whatever world it orbits.

## COMPLETING THE RITUAL

If at any point all the columns are in the ground, there are links to planes producing all eight energy types, and the golden seal is placed over the central depression, your information implies that the ritual will be sealed with magic, and the changes made will become permanent.

Even with powerful magic it would require years of effort to reopen the seal and make further changes.

It's unclear what would happen if you try to close the seal while columns are still out of the ground.



### Reida

the Arc of History

Life, Time

### Teykfa

the Ticking Pendulum

Earth, Time

### Bonilathe

the Storm Claw

Air, Fire

### Metarie

the Swamp of Sabotage

Life, Water

### Guay

the Grove of Dreams

Life, Space

### Ringes

the Barren Moor

Earth, Water

### Gardboral

the Chimeric Maelstrom

Air, Life

### Apo

the Unknown Disk

Death, Space

### Iratha Ket

the Graveyard Revel

Death, Life

### Egalitrix

Fortress of the Golden Legion

Fire, Space

### Obliatas

the Devouring Light

Any

### Elofasp

the Spawning Hive

Earth, Life

### Ascetia

the Hidden Jungle

Life, Time

### Drozani

a Dead City in the Clouds

Air, Death

### Etheax

the Tended Flame

Fire, Time

### Dunkelweiss

the Fermented Peaks

Earth, Life

### Hunlow

a Place for Pirates

Death, Water

### Wilanir

the Lair of Discontent

Air, Water

### Amrou

the Salt Waste

Death, Earth

### Other

Something not in the Gyre

Various Energies



Technology is disrupted.

Storms spawn creatures.

People are more aware of the scale of time, and they can better weigh long-term consequences. Time can be manipulated.

Strong prophecy.

Intermittent spheres of annihilation.

Elementals are common and massive.

Murderous violence.

Dreams create demiplanes.

Giant obedient beasts.

Undead are destroyed by the sun.

Fantastic grand industry will develop, driven by greed.

Greater altruism. Occasional spontaneous musical numbers.

Alcohol is good for you.

Patience and fire magic are both easy.

Slowly the birth rate dwindles to zero.

People are more aware of history.

Something unusual, like Gidim, Mishados, or a homemade pocket dimension.

Mundane counters against supernatural threats are stronger.

Dense mists bring ill tidings.

The ocean is literally a blood-thirsty god who loves villains.

**Thrag**  
the Beastly Bounty  
—  
Life, Time

**Apet**  
the Distant Plane  
—  
Air, Space

**Bhoior**  
the Walking Whisper  
—  
Air, Time

**Avilona**  
the Final Murmur  
—  
Air, Death

**Shabboath**  
the Severed Sea  
—  
Earth, Water

**Urim**  
the Shattered Golden Chain  
—  
Earth, Space

**Mavisha**  
the Mysterious Deep  
—  
Water, Time

**Nem**  
the Plane of Ruin  
—  
Death, Time

**Caeloon**  
the Paper Wind  
—  
Air, Life

**The Plain  
of Rice**  
—  
Space, Water

**Padyer**  
a Clean Realm  
—  
Fire, Water

**Av**  
Plane of Mirrors  
—  
Death, Life

**Jiese**  
the Fire of Industry  
—  
Fire, Life

**Perlocus**  
a Voice on the Wind  
—  
Air, Earth

**Mojang**  
a Wild Artifice  
—  
Earth, Life

**Ostea**  
the Beating Heart  
—  
Life, Water

**Ratios**  
the Cold Logic  
—  
Earth, Space

**Fourmyle**  
the Selfish Dominion  
—  
Death, Space

**Illocus**  
the Cascading Flame  
—  
Fire, Time

**Baden**  
the Ghost Moon  
—  
Air





Flight is limited to five minutes.

Sounds echo, sometimes years later.

Planar travel limited to local system.

Rapid reincarnation.

Lingering souls are stronger than corporeal undead.

Islands conceal secrets.

Gold blocks teleportation.

Creates an 'underdark' cavern system.

Conjures physical reflection of whatever world it orbits.

Water burns and purges.

The entire world is shallow water.

People are resilient in the face of tragedy.

Rapid healing.

Nature follows orders.

Persuasion is more effective.

Precision technology functions.

Flight is easy.

Consequences cascade rapidly.

Casual teleportation.

Intuition is weaker, reason stronger.

# PLAYER'S HANDOUT: FINAL SACRAMENT

The party may have learned the *sacrament of apotheosis* from memory events using the *lost arc of Reida*, or been taught it by Ashima-Shimtu or anyone she told it to. While the full scope of the ritual varies depending on the nature of the belief being harnessed, in this fateful hour the *sacrament* can focus the faith of millions so that their champions can transcend the limits of mortal flesh and confront a threat unmatched by any in the world's history. Those who would use this power would be wise to appreciate the immense gift and responsibility they are being granted.

## PERFORMING THE SACRAMENT

For the ritual to function, its subject or subjects must be adherents of an ideology that is strongly held by at least hundreds of people. The more fervent and widespread the belief, the greater the boon granted to the subjects shall be. If the belief has a name, the bond to the adherents is stronger, but even those who know it by a different name can contribute.

The ritual requires four people to perform, at least one of whom must be a spellcaster of level 15 or higher. The ritual performers must spread entrails and blood of a lion, an eagle, a whale, and a dragon in a ring. Two golden urns sit in the center of the ring, one empty, the other filled with a mixture of the animals' blood. The subject or subjects of the ritual stands in the center, and those performing the ritual use the animal blood to paint the name of the belief across the subject's flesh. The subject then must shed a notable quantity of blood (enough to deal 20 damage) into the second urn.

The subject or subjects recite the incantation of the ritual: "Before I was nothing but words. Now I am all that is believed. I am faith made flesh. I am flesh made a god."

Once they complete the incantation, their appearance will shift as the power of the faithful floods into them. They might grow in size, their eyes might glow, and if they are not strong-willed enough their entire personality and body might be overwhelmed by the image the believers have of their ideal.

## EFFECTS OF THE SACRAMENT

The recipients of the ritual, hereafter referred to as 'the vessels,' all gain the following special abilities, as well as specific boons they choose. The number of boons depends on the extent of the faith empowering them.

### Mental Effects

The vessels each feel a subconscious connection to all the believers granting them power, hereafter referred to as 'the masses.' There's no control granted by this link, but each side can sense the desires of the other. By concentrating, it's possible for the vessel to speak to any or all of the believers empowering him.

Weak-willed vessels lose their sense of self as the faith of the masses transforms their personalities to match what they believe. This is what happened to Kasvarina's daughter, who was not prepared to be the focus of so much power. Indeed, trying to turn people with weak wills into vessels would drive them insane.

### Physical Effects

The vessel is immune to environmental damage that was not created by an active spell effect. The vessel has DR 30/-, resist 30 to all energy types, and is immune to charm and compulsion effects as well as effects that impede movement as if under the effects of a *freedom of movement* spell. However, anyone who says the vessel's real name ignores these resistances and immunities for one hour.

The vessel gains blindsight within 20 ft. Additionally, he can manipulate objects at a range of 20 feet as readily as if in his reach and has a lifting capacity as if he were Large. As a move action he can shift between his normal size and Large, gaining the attendant space and reach. However, this does not alter any of the vessel's ability scores, AC, nor damage.

Physical harm that makes it past the vessel's defenses is shared with the masses. The damage affects the vessel normally, but similar injury is also spread among the masses. If an attack deals 40 fire damage, the vessel would take 10 fire damage, and 10 fire damage would be spread around believers scattered across the world, causing one or two to burst into flames and die. The vessel feels all these deaths.

The death of a vessel has a much greater backlash, though only if no other vessel also shares in the ritual. If all the vessels of a ritual die, many among the masses also perish. The specifics of how widespread this would be are unclear.







### Additional Boons

The number of faithful contributing to the *sacrament* determines how many 'boons' are gained, which must be divided among the various vessels. If there's a dispute, the vessels choose their boons in order based on highest Charisma. The GM will inform you of how many boons the party has access to, which depends on how much renown and support you have around this world and beyond. You and the GM may agree on alternative boons, at his discretion.

**At-Will Spell-like Ability.** The vessel chooses one spell of 6th level or lower from any class spell list. He can use that spell as a spell-like ability at will (Pick something thematic. Searching for the optimal min-maxed choice is forbidden. You're a god now, not a munchkin.)

**Tower Above.** The vessel's blindsight extends to 50 ft., as does the range he can manipulate objects. He has the lifting capacity of a Huge creature, and can become Huge (or Large), which does not alter his ability scores, defenses, or weapon damage.

**From On High.** *Requires Tower Above.* The vessel's blindsight extends to 200 ft., as does the range he can manipulate objects. He has the lifting capacity of a Gargantuan creature, and can become Gargantuan (or Huge or Large), which does not alter his ability scores, defenses, or weapon damage. The character in this form is roughly 50 feet tall. The vessel also gains a fly speed of 60 feet (perfect), with an altitude limit of 300 feet.

**Unstoppable.** The vessel gains a +30 foot bonus to speed in all his modes of movement. All his attacks now deal half damage on a miss.

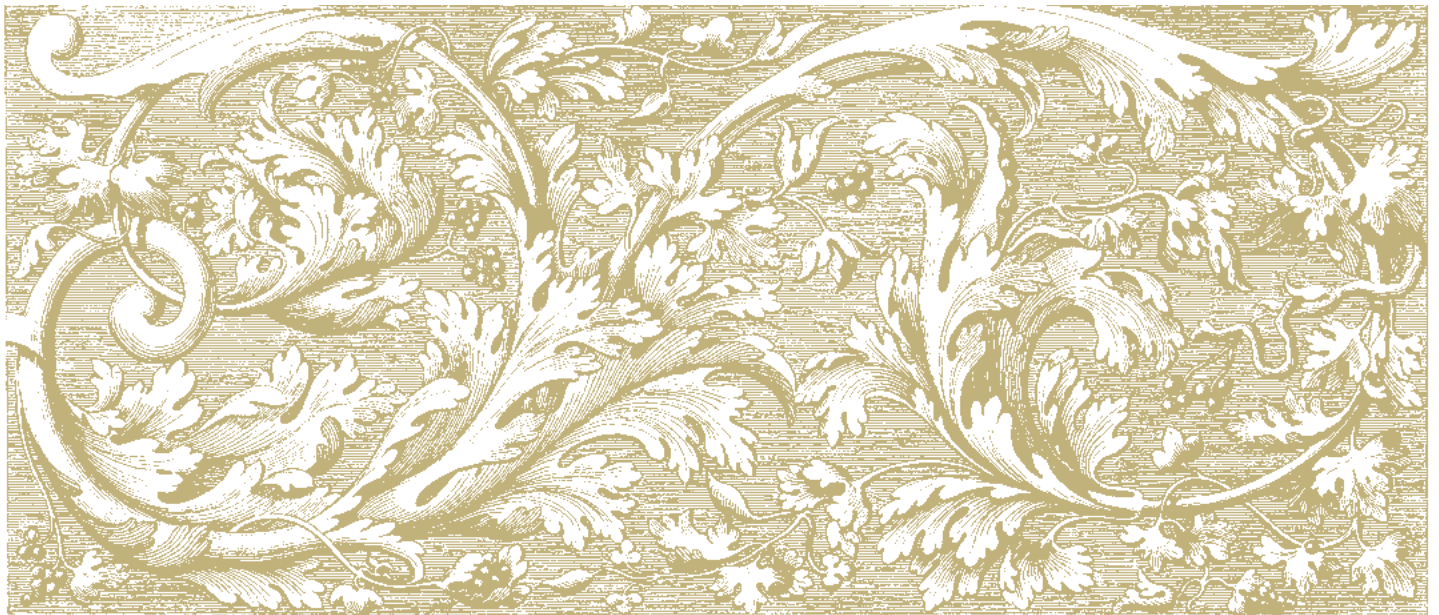
When the vessel dies, he may make an attack roll at his highest bonus or cast a harmful spell and have it affect all those who harmed him in the past half hour.

**Creator.** As a standard action, the vessel can create any mundane object up to Huge size anywhere within his reach, or repair a damaged or destroyed object. This can repair up to two points of hull integrity to a ship. If used as an attack, the creation is gradual enough that it requires an attack roll and does no more than 40 damage.

**Plentitude.** The vessel is immune to blinded, dazed, and stunned conditions, perhaps because he has multiple heads or simply multiple aspects. The vessel can have equipped any number of handheld items, and is always considered to have two hands free. This could be because he has many limbs, or simply shifts reality, or can call items to hand or dismiss them with a thought. This boon does not grant the vessel extra actions, but the vessel does gain a +6 bonus to attack rolls for attacks of opportunity.

### Duration

The effect of the ritual lasts for one day, though a vessel can spend a full-round action to end his connection to the faithful. Otherwise, only killing all the vessels will end the ritual prematurely. The ritual cannot be performed again for the same ideal while the first is active, so typically no more than five or so people can act as vessels at once.



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# AVATAR OF REVOLUTION

## Finale and Free Will

The mastermind Nicodemus tried to foster enlightenment and empathy, to create the best of all possible worlds. After centuries of pursuing his grand design, however, the age of reason he dreamed of tastes like ashes. Chance, choice, and recalcitrant champions have stymied him, and so to achieve 'peace' he has turned to supernatural compulsion, a tyranny to which none can object.

But as the grinding gears of the Gyre draw the world toward its oblivion, people of every nation, culture, and creed yearn for liberation. Nicodemus need only complete a ritual at Axis Island to impose a thousand years of perfect obedience, but civilization has seen and rejected the future he offers. Though it may be their doom, they choose revolution.

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