



HEART OF THE MACHINE

SAVAGE
THUNDERSCAPE
THE WORLD OF ADEN

THE LOST LEXICON

01

SAVAGE THUNDERSCAPE THE WORLD OF ADEN

HEART OF THE MACHINE

— THE LOST LEXICON, PART I —

THE FIRST THUNDERSCAPE ADVENTURE PATH BEGINS HERE!

Times are tough for adventurers in Aden this year, and the high-paying bounties offered by the Cogswheel Irregulars in Mekanus is a great place to save up a few coins for traveling. As representatives of the Urbanan government, however, the player characters soon find themselves in the crosshairs of a group eager to retrieve forgotten secrets from the most dangerous parts of the city, and they are only the first ones to paint a target on the characters' backs!

Heart of the Machine includes the following:

- ✧ An adventure in four acts!
- ✧ A primer and a map of Mekanus, the largest city in the Known Lands!
- ✧ Details on the mercenary lawmen known as the Cogswheel Irregulars!
- ✧ New NPC profiles and a bestiary entry!
- ✧ And much more!



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THE WORLD OF ADEN ORIGINALLY CREATED BY SHANE LACY HENSLEY

SAVAGE THUNDERSCAPE

THE LOST LEXICON, PART I

HEART OF THE MACHINE

Written by Rich Wulf



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THE LOST LEXICON, PART I – HEART OF THE MACHINE

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PART ONE:

WELCOME TO MEKANUS

For a group of adventurers looking for fame, fortune, or maybe just a little trouble there are few places like Mekanus. This vast metropolis is rife with technological wonders, dangerous rival factions, and ancient ruins waiting to be discovered. Whether your players have a taste for political intrigue or battling monsters in lost dungeons, they will find what they seek in Mekanus. Though this campaign will eventually make its way across the lands of Aden, Mekanus makes for an excellent introduction to the world of Thunderscape. Heart of the Machine is designed for a party of four Novice characters, though its encounters can easily be adapted for larger parties or slightly higher level characters. By the end of the adventure, the party should be approximately Seasoned rank.

In preparing for the adventure, the characters merely need a reason to be in the city of Mekanus seeking work as adventurers. This is easy enough, as the Cogswheel Irregulars are always looking to put adventurers to work. Even a party of player characters with no prior association with one another can easily be thrown into an adventure together with this framework.

INTRODUCTION: A BRIEF HISTORY OF MEKANUS

The nation of Columbey was first founded following the Peace of the Rose. Albirus Tarello was one of the original signatories of the Rose Accords and became the first king of what would become Columbey.

Its central location and abundant natural resources insured Columbey's prominence in world events, though it was not nearly as powerful as Carraway or Aramyst.

With the invention of mechatronics, Columbey's importance increased significantly. Extensive manite reserves were discovered throughout the kingdom. The rulers of Columbey were reluctant to exploit these resources, wary of the detrimental effects manite refinement could wreak upon the environment. Various merchant houses within Columbey (foremost among them the Mithral Consortium) felt differently, and wished to seize upon this newfound windfall. With the support of powerful mechatronics from Aramyst's Celestial College, they embarked upon a bloodless rebellion, undermining the royal house of Tarello and forcing the king to abdicate his throne in favor of a more tractable noble family – the Warrain.

The Warrain kings proceeded to rule Columbey for over two centuries, while the Tarello lived in exile on islands off the

coast of Columbey. Though the nation prospered financially, the lands soon suffered the effects of excessive manite refinement. Fertile farmlands became withered and polluted. The needs of the common people were often overlooked in favor of the same, powerful merchant houses that had placed the Warrain kings in power. Resentment between the poor and wealthy classes was at an unheralded high – and then the Darkfall came.

When the nocturnals attacked, Columbey was hit harder than any nation save Aramyst. Its major cities were swiftly conquered and its armies were scattered by the enemy. In a desperate final attempt to save his kingdom, King Warrus Warrain rallied his surviving troops and used his few remaining resources to hire as many mercenaries as he could afford. One of these soldiers, a Columbite mercenary named Marlek Urbane, quickly distinguished himself as a formidable tactician and was promoted to the king's personal guard. Unfortunately, on the eve of the king's assault upon the capital city of Tarello, Warrain was apparently slain by nocturnal assassins.

At what is now remembered as the Fall of Tarello, Marlek Urbane stepped forward and took command of the king's forces. With a combination of brilliant tactics and powerful mechatronics, Marlek scoured the nocturnals from the capital city and won the first major victory in Aden's war against the Darkfall. During this battle, Urbane demonstrated the ruthless savagery that would define him. When the nocturnal forces made their final stand in the well-fortified royal palace and its surrounding streets, Urbane unleashed an experimental manite bomb against the enemy rather than risk the lives of his soldiers. While this weapon eradicated the remaining nocturnals, it also rendered the entire area toxic and uninhabitable for years to come. This section of the city has since been sealed and is known as the Lost Ghetto.

The Rise of Urbana

After his victory, Marlek Urbane proudly crowned himself ruler – not of Columbey, but of the new kingdom of Urbana. In a defiant speech following his victory, he declared that the former nation of Columbey could not survive. Only by embracing the future and facing the Darkfall without fear could there be any hope for victory. Urbane has earned a reputation as one of Aden's greatest heroes, but also as a man not to be trifled with. He is a cold, calculating strategist, quite willing to make sacrifices if he feels such action will lead to victory against the nocturnals.

At the same time, he can also be unpredictable, suddenly striking out against the enemy with overwhelming force the moment they show any sign of weakness.

The capital city of Tarello was granted a new name as well. It was rechristened Mekanus – the Heart of the Machine. The city became Urbane’s military headquarters and the industrial foundation of Urbana’s war against the Darkfall. Countless smithies, factories, and manite refinement facilities sprang up overnight. A massive influx of refugees from the war-torn lands of former Columbey only increased the city’s woes. In the few short years since Urbane’s victory, Mekanus has become the most heavily populated city in Aden. Due to the dense population and heavy industrialization it has become the most polluted and dangerous city as well.

To maintain order in his new kingdom, Urbane established a number of new military organizations. The Iron Guard protects the Thunder Trains and their associated Thunder Trails. The Rusters are elite troops who serve as bodyguards for Urbane and all essential personnel. The Eye are Urbana’s feared secret police – an order of inquisitors and investigators who will stop at nothing to ferret out the Darkfall’s sinister influence, and who answer only to Urbane himself. The Order of Steel is a special unit composed of heroes from every branch of the Urbanan military. Only the best of the best receive such distinction, and are considered the most formidable (and loyal) of Urbana’s warriors.

While Lord Urbane has made great strides in the battle against the Darkfall, his record for keeping the peace within Mekanus is decidedly uneven. Wealthy sections of the city and areas critical to the military are well patrolled and extremely safe. Those who break Urbana’s strict laws face punishment swift, certain, and severe. Meanwhile, poorer neighborhoods are plagued by unchecked crime. Any areas not deemed critical to Urbana’s survival see little law enforcement beyond volunteer militia. These soldiers are frequently poorly trained and equipped (as any who show promise are inevitably promoted to aid in the war against the Darkfall). Many militia members are corrupt, willing to take bribes to look the other way, or even extort citizens for protection money. Even the noblest among them are often too terrified of the city’s various criminal organizations to act directly against them. They are simply outnumbered and outgunned.

Urbane gained a great deal of support among the common folk simply by not being another Warrain king. He gained their love for turning the tide against the Darkfall. However, his subsequent history of placing the kingdom’s military needs above all other concerns has earned him many detractors. Though he rules Urbana with an iron fist, he is not so arrogant as to believe himself beyond all criticism. So long as he tolerates such voices of dissent, he reasons, he cannot truly become the brutal dictator many believe him to be.

The Ghosts of Columbey

The Iron Tyrant has made plenty of enemies during his rise to power in Urbana, and not all of them serve the Darkfall. Despite Lord Urbane’s attempts to sanitize his image and present himself as a benevolent monarch, there are many who do resist his propaganda. One particular political organization that has repeatedly decried Urbane’s actions has come to call itself the Ghosts of Columbey. This group can potentially play a significant role in this adventure, and thus is described in more detail elsewhere in this book.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

This adventure comes in two parts—the first is a basic primer on running campaigns in the City of Mekanus and the surrounding countryside of Urbana. The second is the opening chapter of our first ThunderScape Adventure Path, the Lost Lexicon.

In the adventure, a band of Darkfall worshipping cultists known as the Circle of Fire and Steel has recently arrived in the city of Mekanus, searching for an ancient relic of the Seer Order. This cult is led a pair of particularly dangerous corrupted, Magnus “Steel” Steelfist, a powerful Jurak golemoid, serves as the cult’s enforcer and field commander, Arnagaith Touches-Fire, a brilliant rapacian mechamage, serves as both the cult’s spiritual leader and cruel mastermind.

Touches-Fire believes this relic was once possessed by an archaeologist and adventurer by the name of Sir James Dex. The now deceased lord’s former estates are located deep in the Lost Ghetto, a section of the city now controlled by the nocturnals and a brutal overlord named Terablix the Autonomous. Terablix has sent two of its lesser automatons to monitor and assist the cult while they are in its territory. The cult soon discovers that the treasure they seek cannot be accessed without pillaging Lord Dex’s personal belongings, now safely stored within the city proper and up for auction.

In their duties as law-bringing mercenaries the characters become wrapped up in the cult’s plot. It falls to them to hunt down the cult and restore order to Mekanus.

Note that many implications of this adventure will not be fully revealed in this single chapter, including the fact that the Circle of Fire and Steel is part of a much larger organization known as the Cult of Shermazza. It is even possible that at the end of this particular adventure, the players will believe everything has been neatly resolved. However, once the party has marked themselves as enemies of the cult, they will cross swords again in the later chapters of this Adventure Path.

The Elders of Mekanus

Lord Urbane claims that he is too consumed with the war against the Darkfall to spare troops to deal with mundane matters such as street crime, but he is not completely blind to the city’s needs. He has authorized a select group of nobles, merchants, and military personnel to form a mostly anonymous council known as the Elders of Mekanus. These individuals meet regularly in secret – for safety reasons – to discuss various criminal threats to the city. The council then posts bounties for the resolution of the greatest threats, and passes them on to independent contractors. This solution deals with two of Mekanus’ growing problems in one stroke – its escalating crime rate and its enormous surplus population of idle adventurers.

Ever since Lord Urbane rose from a lowly mercenary to lord of the nation, adventurers throughout Aden have seen Urbana

as something of a promised land. If a fellow adventurer can rise so high, then what might they accomplish? Of course most of these glorified dreams tend to gloss over the fact that, even as a mercenary, Urbane was already well known to the royal family and had connections throughout Columbey's military – but idealism has no room for such details. The bounty system gives the adventurers something to keep them out of trouble and, with luck, cleans up the streets a bit.

Working for the Elders is more complicated than simply glancing at a bounty post and heading out to hunt a criminal. Groups of prospective adventurers must report to Cogswheel Station for approval. These mercenary bounty hunters are known collectively as the Cogswheel Irregulars, after Cogswheel Station, the former city gatehouse where they gather and receive their assignments.

So long as they are not known criminals or enemies of the state, a prospective Irregular is generally approved and granted a badge of office. Each time an Irregular is given a mission, they are also given a charter bearing the Elders' official seal and providing the details of that mission. So long as a mercenary carries both their badge and charter, they are considered an official agent of the Urbanan government in the fulfillment of their duties. For the most part, this just means an Irregular can pursue and arrest criminals. In certain cases, a mission may grant access to restricted areas of the city or other forms of heightened authority.

By keeping track of who has been given which missions, the Shadow Army can monitor the bounty hunters to determine if any of them can potentially be of greater use in the war against the Darkfall. As Urbana is constantly under attack by marauding Nocturnals, the military sometimes contracts the Irregulars to deal with threats in low-priority areas outside the city. Part bounty hunter, part soldier, part problem solver, the Cogswheel Irregulars have quickly become a force to be reckoned with within the dangerous urban sprawl of Mekanus.

This, of course, is where the player characters enter the picture.

MEKANUS: A BRIEF TOUR

Mekanus is a vast metropolis with a great variety of inhabitants. The following section is a brief introduction to some of the most noteworthy locations in Mekanus. All of these locations can be found on the fullcolor map included with this adventure.

❖ **Cistern:** Urbana exists in a state of virtual siege, with much of the surrounding landscape still plagued by nocturnals. As a result, it has come to rely less on local farming and more on imported food and fishing. Unfortunately, the city's massive industrialization has caused the neighboring Broken Bay to become heavily polluted.

Urbane commissioned a team of mechemages to find a solution, and the Mekanus Cistern was the result. This massive water treatment facility treats thousands of gallons of sewage per day, and has greatly improved the water quality of the surrounding area.

A small neighborhood (called Cistern) has sprung up around the plant, just outside the city walls. Located where many of the city's largest sewer outlets drain into the ocean, the area is cursed with eternal stench. Only the poorest and most desperate live here. Even the mechemages who operate the cistern itself live elsewhere.

Unknown to all save the mechemages who built it, the Mekanus Cistern is not what it seems. Its creators were forced to complete the project with a limited budget, and so they cut a few corners, dimensionally speaking. Instead of creating a true filtration system, the mechemages took advantage of the area's magical connection to the elemental planes. The Mekanus Cistern merely dumps dangerously polluted water out of this reality altogether, replacing it with pure elemental water. While this was intended to be a temporary solution, it has worked so well that no one has bothered to change it.

Cistern sees little law enforcement beyond a handful of volunteer militia. Fortunately for the residents, most criminals are not desperate enough to linger here for long.

❖ **Dawnweather:** Lord Urbane has received a great deal of criticism for his brutal, some would say tyrannical, approach to rulership.

His main priority seems to be the Darkfall and everything else, including the comfort and happiness of his people, are lesser concerns. The establishment of the Dawnweather district is an attempt to rebut these concerns.

This beautiful district is a home to theaters, museums, libraries, and all of the artists and scholars who create such works. Such individuals are invited to dwell in security here, happy and secure.

While such a center of art and culture may seem out of character for dour Mekanus, it is not without its darker side. The artists and scholars of Dawnweather are granted the freedom to live in this relatively safe district only so long as their works are seen as productive contributions to Urbanan culture. While works that portray Urbane and his military in a negative light are not outlawed per se, those foolish enough to take some risks will quickly find themselves and their families evicted from the security of Dawnweather and cast into one of the more dangerous, overpopulated districts. As such, Dawnweather serves not only as a means of entertainment and distraction for Urbana's weary populace, but also as the core of Lord Urbane's personal propaganda machine.

Dawnweather is named after the elven sorceress, Amber Dawnweather, a member of the heroic Sixteen.

❖ **Fort Blight:** This menacing structure - part prison, part military fortress - dominates Broken Bay. The Isle of Blight is known for its extremely rich manite deposits, which Urbane ruthlessly exploits with the fort's prison workforce. All prisoners condemned to Fort Blight have received lifetime sentences with no possibility of parole. In the short time since Blight's establishment, none have escaped from incarceration there.

A significant number of the prisoners in Fort Blight are traitors or other political prisoners. Some suggest that it is no coincidence that Urbane constructed this prison in plain sight of Old Town and Tarello Landing, as a constant reminder of the ultimate cost of defiance. The Eye also maintains a secret facility

THE SIXTEEN

Though there are many who question Lord Urbane's rule, few can bring themselves to question his heroism and that of those who follow him. The most famous of Urbana's heroes are a band of soldiers and mercenaries known collectively as The Sixteen. These brave warriors made the ultimate sacrifice at the Battle of Brisk Station, shortly after the Fall of Tarello. They held the line against an army of nocturnals for twenty-seven days until the Shadow Army arrived in force.

If the Sixteen had fallen any sooner, Brisk Station would have been destroyed and Urbana's trade connections to the rest of Aden would have been severed. Urbane's soldiers in the newly conquered Mekanus would likely have starved in the harsh winter to follow, causing Urbana to fall into ruin. The heroes of the Sixteen were posthumously promoted to the Order of Steel buried in Honor's Foundry.

The memory of the Sixteen is celebrated throughout Urbana, especially in Mekanus. It is not uncommon to find statues of one or more of the Sixteen on street corners or worker into Urbanan architecture. Citizens often keep small representation of one or more of these heroes in their homes, or even on their person, often rubbing them for courage or good luck. They have become the closest thing the people of Urbana have to gods, idealized representations of bravery, loyalty, and determination.

Many of the city's districts and landmarks are named after member of the Sixteen.

here where they house, interrogate, and study imprisoned nocturnals and corrupted prior to their inevitable execution.

Fort Blight is named after Giarmo Blight, a rapacious necromancer and member of the heroic Sixteen who perished at the Battle of Brisk Station.

❖ **Goldheart:** The Goldheart Merchant District is the second wealthiest area of the city after Honor's Foundry. Not far from Tarello Landing and Mekanus Central Station, it is said that anything can be bought and sold here. This is true, to some degree, though it is also heavily patrolled by Shadow Army soldiers. Those seeking to smuggle contraband into the city are wise to do it elsewhere.

The purchase of manite and magical items is strictly regulated within the city. Generally speaking, the military has a priority in all such sales - they reserve the first right to purchase any manite or magical items produced for sale within the city, and reserve the right to do so at state-dictated prices far below the usual market cost. As a result, most independent mechamages either sell such items under the table or concentrate purely on creations with little to no military applications.

Goldheart takes its name from Arbacias Gold, a brilliant human swordsman who lent his strength to the defense of Brisk Station, and tragically perished there alongside the other members of the Sixteen.

❖ **Honor's Foundry:** When the old Noble Quarter was lost in the Fall of Tarello, Lord Urbane ordered the construction of a new one. Honor's Foundry is home to the wealthy elite of Mekanus. The entire quarter is walled. Ostensibly this is so that the quarter can be used as a fallback position in case of an invasion, but it only serves to divide the haves and have-nots of the city even further, as non-residents are not allowed into Honor's Foundry without a personal invitation from one of its residents.

Honor's Foundry is significantly cleaner, quieter, and more beautiful than the rest of the city, to the point where it is hardly recognizable as part of Mekanus. Most of its residents rarely, if ever, deign to venture out into the lesser areas of the city.

This area is home to Monitor Tower, headquarters of the Eye. While Lord Urbane keeps a large official palace here, he spends much of his time at the Iron Citadel, overseeing Urbana's war against the Darkfall.

This area of the city is heavily patrolled and protected by the Rusters.

❖ **The Iron Citadel:** This massive walled fortress is the central headquarters for all branches of the Urbanan military.

The Shadow Army, Rusters, and Iron Guard all house their command centers here. Lord Urbane himself keeps quarters here. He spends most of his time at the Iron Citadel when not personally leading his armies in the field or holding audience in his palace. It is perhaps the largest and best fortified military structure in all the lands of Aden.

❖ **The Lost Ghetto:** Some consider the Lost Ghetto to be the worst-kept secret in Urbana.

Though the official word is that the area was sealed due to lingering magical energies and the expense of its repair, most Urbanans at least suspect the truth - since the Fall of Tarello, although it is officially uninhabited, it has become a haven for nocturnal and corrupted. Wary of having an enemy literally on his doorstep, Lord Urbane does his best to contain the damage.

The Shadowwall located around the area is constantly staffed with elite troops, ready to swarm in an instant the moment anything approaches the wall. While the guards are mostly concerned with keeping things in, they are also instructed to keep the curious out. Anyone caught trying to sneak into the Lost Ghetto will be turned away. If they persist, they will be arrested on suspicion of collaborating with the Darkfall.

In recent years, the various dark forces in the Lost Ghetto have become united under the rule of a corrupted golem known as King Terablix the Autonomous. His servants refer to the neighborhood as the Dark City, and are currently making plans to extend their rule over the rest of Mekanus.

The Lost Ghetto sees no law enforcement beyond the soldiers who guard the Shadowwall, unless you count Terablix's servants, who patrol the area regularly.

❖ **Mekanus Central Station:** This massive Thunder Trail station is the beating heart of Aden's economy. All of the Thunder Trail routes converge here, allowing merchants, travelers, and adventurers to book passage to anywhere on the continent. Heavily patrolled and fortified by the Iron Guard, this is one of the safer districts of the city. As a result, a small but



prosperous neighborhood of shops, inns, and tourist attractions have sprung up in the shadow of this mighty station.

❖ **North Tower:** This ancient fortification is famous for having withstood the Darkfall's invasion of Tarello entirely unscathed. It now serves not just as a military outpost, but a symbol of Urbana's defiance against the Nocturnals.

A public shrine to the Sixteen is constructed at its base.

❖ **The Mekanus Sewers** (not shown on map): The city of Mekanus features a large and elaborate sewer system. Many of the tunnels are centuries old, and have been built and rebuilt so many times that no one really remembers the full extent of the tunnels anymore. These have always been a favorite of criminals and ne'er-do-wells seeking to travel the city unnoticed, but in recent years they have become home to other threats such as the ratlings and nocturnals.

In response to this, Lord Urbane has made some effort to make the sewers a dangerous place for intruders. Mechamagical wards have been installed randomly throughout the sewers, which can only be circumvented by special manite tokens. These tokens are granted only to official sanitation engineers; those found to possess them illegally can expect a 5,000 gold crowns fine and a year in the Mekanus dungeons at minimum.

The player characters are likely to encounter these wards if they seek adventure in the sewers. As a general rule, these wards are difficult to dispel. They count as magical traps that can be negated with a successful *Dispel* cast at -0 to -4 depending on the difficulty of the ward. Anyone who attempts to cross a ward is struck by powerful magic, inflicting 2d6 points of damage. Affected creatures may make an Agility check to negate any damage. Creatures who fail this check are also forced back 1d6" in the opposite direction, generally knocking them outside the ward's boundaries.

❖ **Tarello Landing and Old Town:** Situated on the famous Broken Bay, Tarello Landing is a center of trade and travel second only to Mekanus Central Station. This area is controlled by a consortium of former Tarello noble houses and powerful merchant cartels, many of whom are at least somewhat sympathetic to the Ghosts of Columbey.

The most powerful individuals dwell in Old Town, an affluent section of the city that went nearly untouched during the Darkfall invasion.

While Urbane would like nothing more than to root out the rebels and exterminate the threat they pose, the fact is that Urbana still needs the docks to function as a well-oiled machine, or the nation will starve. For the time being, Urbane is willing to reluctantly tolerate the Ghosts' presence in Tarello Landing and Old Town, though they are strongly countered in other parts of the city. Meanwhile, Urbane continues to focus on developing alternatives to sea trade (such as airships or aquatic thunder trains) so that he no longer need rely upon the rebels.

While there is little to no official law enforcement in these districts the Ghosts of Columbey have organized a well-trained neighborhood watch, making these some of the safest neighborhoods in Mekanus.

❖ **The Thunder Trails:** Urbana's legendary Thunder Trails, the paths followed by its mighty Thunder Trains, may occasion-

ally change their routes but one aspect remains constant - all Thunder Trails begin and end at Mekanus Central Station.

❖ **Shadowwall:** When much of the old Tarello Noble Quarter was sealed away, the structure designed to contain it became known as the Shadowwall. The adjacent neighborhood immediately began to decay, with many residents fleeing for safer districts.

As a result, the neighborhood (which now shares its name with the wall) is a haven of crime, poverty, and vice. Much of the area is now ruled by the nefarious Grinvoj Syndicate, a gang of rapacious criminals who make their headquarters in the nicer abandoned homes of the district.

❖ **Smoketown:** Though mechamagic existed since the days of Columbey, the nation has embraced it like never before under Urbane's rule. Most of Urbana's factories and manite refineries are located here in Smoketown, named for the omnipresent blue-gray haze that always hangs over this part of the city.

This district is the most heavily overpopulated in Mekanus. For lack of space, the city has begun to rely on advanced architectural techniques to expand upward. From a distance, Smoketown resembles a small city of towers and belching smokestacks.

As industry is the lynchpin of Urbane's campaign against the Darkfall, the industrial areas of this district are relatively well-patrolled, and the refineries are always guarded by Shadow Army soldiers. The residential areas are markedly less well protected, with little care given to the safety of the city's laborers.

This neighborhood is particularly significant in this adventure, as it is home to Cogswheel Station, headquarters of the Cogswheel Irregulars.

❖ **Urbanan Countryside** (not shown on map): Urbana is a land at war. As dangerous as Mekanus is, the surrounding lands are far worse. The countryside is still plagued by nocturnals, bandits, and Darkfall cultists.

Although the military does an impressive job of combatting these threats, they cannot be everywhere at once. As a result, much of Urbana's population is now concentrated in its cities and towns. Though the occasional farm is not unheard of, such places tend to exist within sight of a city or town so that the residents can flee to safety if trouble arises.

The Shadow Army sees the few existing farms as high priority targets. They patrol the areas regularly for any sign of Darkfall activity to assure that the people (and the food they produce) are safe. Some of the more cynical residents suspect that Urbane intentionally leaves such areas poorly defended at times to serve as bait for the nocturnals.

❖ **Verdant Fields:** Another of Urbane's grand experiments, the Verdant Fields are a combination of magically fertilized farmland and dense forest preserves.

Tended by a consortium of spellcasters with talent in restorative and nature magics, this area is home to a variety of magical experiments in agriculture and animal husbandry. Urbane hopes that, through the Verdant fields, he might find more efficient ways to feed his people and to one day restore the desolate wasteland that much of Urbana has become.

Given the extraordinary importance of these projects, the Verdant fields are well-protected by the Shadow Army. Civilian visitors are rarely admitted into the area, and never without military escort.

MILITARY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

During this adventure, the players will serve as members of the Cogswheel Irregulars, a quasi-official law enforcement body operating out of Smoketown. As such, it is important to at least be aware of the other military and law enforcement bodies present in Mekanus.

❖ **The Eye:** Among the most controversial figures in all of Aden, the agents of the Eye serve Urbane as his secret police. Though their primary duty is to root out agents of the Darkfall, they have a reputation for being cruel and heavy-handed in their investigations. The Eye is discussed in greater detail elsewhere in this book.

❖ **Iron Guard:** These elite soldiers protect Urbane's Thunder Trains. By necessity, they frequently operate in foreign lands and thus are well educated and speak a variety of languages. Many members of the Iron Guard receive manite implants, if not full golemization, so that they might better perform their duties as guardians of Urbanan trade.

The Iron Guard has something of a romanticized reputation as international heroes, fighting evil wherever it rears its head. They have been repeatedly immortalized in song and legend. The epic poem, *Song of the Iron Guard*, is the most famous of these. It tells the tale of a fictional lion ferran Iron Guard named Castor, who loses his lover to the nocturnal and embarks on a mission of vengeance to destroy them. In the end, he sets aside his vendetta to aid a small town, and then sacrifices himself to protect that town when the nocturnals inevitably arrive, hunting him.

❖ **The Mekanus Militia:** In areas where the Shadow Army is stretched too thin to patrol the streets, much of Urbanan law enforcement is performed by volunteer militia. These soldiers usually have no training and poor equipment. While many of them are idealistic and honorable souls, many more are quite corrupt and take the position merely to extort bribes from criminals and protection money from the citizens.

In Tarello Landing and Old Town, much of the militia is secretly coordinated by the Ghosts of Columbey. As a result, they are incorruptible, better equipped, and a great deal more efficient at their work.

❖ **The Order of Steel:** This prestigious order is made up of soldiers from all branches of the Urbanan military. Only the best of the best are promoted to the Order of Steel. These specialists fight the Darkfall wherever they are needed. They are often dispatched into impossible situations, wrenching victory from the jaws of defeat.

In an instance of uncharacteristic humility, Lord Urbane has refused to accept promotion to the Order of Steel. He claims



that the important work that they do would distract him from his necessary role as ruler of Urbane. His detractors claim that Urbane is simply afraid to face the terrors that the Order deals with on a daily basis.

Much like the Iron Guard, the Order of Steel is glorified throughout Urbanan culture. Even Urbane's most vociferous opponents can rarely bring themselves to criticize the great deeds of these heroes.

As the adventure begins, the party's superior officer, Commander Shara Thale, is a former member of the Order of Steel.

❖ **The Rusters:** These soldiers are officially designated as Lord Urbane's personal guard. In truth, few of them protect Urbane himself (though he is never seen without a handful of them). Most are assigned to protect Honor's Foundry and other important figures, including the Urbanan nobility. Rusters are always selected from other branches of the military, specially chosen for their cunning, loyalty, and martial prowess. Urbanans who are assigned a Ruster bodyguard should view it as personal recognition from Lord Urbane that their existence is essential to the future of the nation.

Rusters are distinctive for their rust-red armor and matching cloaks.

❖ **The Shadow Army:** These are the rank and file troops of Urbane.

These soldiers receive far better training and equipment than those of any other group in Urbane. They also see a great deal more combat. Life in the Shadow Army is dangerous and unpredictable.

Members of the Shadow Army frequently see preferential treatment compared to the general populace. They receive discounts (when they pay for things at all) and are regularly excused for all manner of crimes against the civilian populace.

This is not entirely surprising, considering that in many areas the Shadow Army are Urbane's law enforcement as well as its military.

Sample Soldiers

It is likely that during the course of their adventures, the players will encounter members of the Urbanan military (either as adversaries or allies). The following stat blocks can be used to represent average members of the Urbanan military. Feel free to alter these as required.

Untrained Conscripts

These statistics represent untrained soldiers, such as civilian watchmen, emergency conscripts, or volunteer members of the Mekanus militia.

Average Untrained Conscript

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d4, Shooting d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5 (1); **Toughness:** 5 (1); **Charisma:** 0

Gear: Shortsword, leather armor, small shield (+1 parry), dagger

Trained Soldiers

These statistics represent soldiers who have received a greater degree of training and higher quality equipment. They can represent exceptional militia members, Shadow Army soldiers, Ghost of Columbey soldiers or Iron Guard watchmen.

Trained Soldier

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Climbing d6, Intimidation d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5 (1); **Toughness:** 5 (2); **Charisma:** 0

Gear: Long sword, dagger, buckler, pistol, chain mail, 10 pistol ammo

Elite Soldiers

These statistics represent the best of the best. They can represent Ruster guards, Order of Steel specialists, or Eye inquisitors.

Elite Soldier

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Shooting d8, Notice d8, Climbing d6, Riding d6, Streetwise d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7 (1); **Toughness:** 6 (5); **Charisma:** 0

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Vow

Edges: Level headed, Brave

Gear: Long sword, medium shield, pistol, full plate armor, cloak, 20 pistol ammo

A NOTE ON NPCs

You will notice that the named characters in this adventure are Wild Cards. If this is slowing down your game, feel free to convert them to extra with no wound levels. Conversely, you may add Hindrances or Edges to give these NPCs more flavor.

MEKANUS AND POLITICS

Once the players begin to earn a reputation (whether as forthright defenders of the law or as dangerous and unpredictable mercenaries) they will likewise begin to draw the attention of the various organizations that influence Mekanus. While numerous factions, secret and public, constantly vie for control of the Urbanan capital, the two that are of particular importance here are the Eye and the Ghosts of Columbey.

In the course of their exploits in the city, it is likely that the player characters will encounter members of the Eye and/or the Ghosts.

They might seek out the Eye's expertise in dealing with some magical menace. They might receive helpful rumors or advice from the Ghosts while searching for a criminal in Tarello Landing. Any such event can lead to these groups becoming interested in the party. If they do not encounter the Eye or the Ghosts directly, the nature of their work will inevitably draw attention in time.

Both the Eye and the Ghosts are complex groups. In the proper context, either can serve as heroic patrons or villainous rivals. If, as Game Master, you prefer to keep things simple and present one or the other as the obvious choice, feel free to accentuate that group's positive traits and understate their negative qualities. Are the Eye inquisitors secretly the force for good they claim to be? Are the Ghosts of Columbey merely a cadre of bitter political opportunists? In your Aden, it's all up to you to decide.

Though it is possible that both of these groups might eventually extend an offer of alliance to the party, as Game Master don't feel that you should force the players to pick a side. Though the Eye and the Ghosts are ideologically opposed to one another, a clever party might attempt to juggle the favor of both sides - at least temporarily. Other parties might wish to ignore such political entanglements and forge ahead on their own. While this may make things more difficult, it is entirely possible.

Option 1 - The Eye

History

The Eye serves Lord Urbane as his secret police and inquisitors.

They hunt out corrupted, nocturnals, and other agents of the Darkfall's influence wherever they appear. Though many assume that the Eye was created by Lord Urbane after his

coup, this is not actually the case. The Eye served the rulers of Columbey as a secret order of spies and information gatherers for centuries.

The Eye was originally founded by King Albirus Tarello for a single purpose - to monitor the Seer Order and protect Columbey from its manipulations. The people of Columbey have always been fiercely independent, and even after he helped forge the Peace of the Rose, King Albirus distrusted the Seers and their supposedly altruistic objectives.

No one could possess that much power, he felt, and not be corrupted by it. The Eye would serve as a necessary balance upon their influence within Columbey.

In time, the Eye evolved beyond their origins and became Columbey's most powerful espionage network. With the rise of mechamagic, the Eye agents saw its potential and encouraged its use wherever they could. When the Mithral Consortium and other merchant houses moved to depose the Tarello kings and create the Warrain dynasty, the Eye was instrumental in their actions. When the Darkfall came, the Eye began gathering all the information they could on this new enemy.

When Lord Urbane took the fight back to the Nocturnals, the Eye shifted their support from the merchant houses to him and offered their expertise. When Urbane declared himself ruler of Urbana, Eye agents worked to smooth over his rise to power and quietly counter any challenges to his power through blackmail, favors, and coercion. (After centuries as Columbey's secret police, they knew where all the bodies were buried.)

If the above seems extraordinarily treacherous, the Eye does not regard it as such. The modern incarnation of the Eye follows a system of decrees known as the Doctrine. In theory, the Doctrine is dedicated to a single goal - the preservation of Columbey. The ruler of the land is irrelevant, so long as he is strong. The name of the land is irrelevant, so long as it is strong. So long as the people and the culture survive, the Eye serves its purpose, and its agents will do whatever is necessary to insure that survival. Likewise, Eye agents will do whatever is necessary to insure the secrecy and survival of the Eye itself, so that it may continue to protect the nation.

For the moment, the Eye is fiercely loyal to Lord Urbane, if only because his pragmatism and courage reflect the Eye's own ideals and because he has proven himself a singularly capable enemy of the Darkfall.

However, if Urbane proved to no longer have the nation's best interests in heart, or became a danger to the Eye, loyalties would shift immediately. Urbane is not unaware that the Eye is an ally of convenience at best, and monitors its agents carefully.

Purpose and Methods

Under Lord Urbane's rule, the Eye's focus has shifted almost entirely to the war against the Darkfall. Eye agents painstakingly document all known incidents of nocturnal and corrupted activity. They search tirelessly for any sort of pattern, in hopes that one day they might understand the true nature of the Darkfall and combat it directly. In the meantime, they are the unrivaled experts in Darkfall lore. Whenever a particularly deadly Darkfall incursion occurs in Urbana, agents of the Eye will be there to observe the situation and lend their advice. They also

Cosmopolitan Mekanus

Compared to other campaign settings, the human race is far less dominant in Aden. Further, race that are normally concentrated in their homelands are well distributed throughout the nations, and Urbana is no different.

Many generic soldiers and henchmen in this book are described as humans, but are likely to be any of the standard Aden races. In such instances, you may wish to vary them a bit to create a greater sense of immersion and realism.

Any encounter that includes such individuals will describe their race as 'Human (or other standard race)'. The default statistics presented for such individuals are human statistics. However, feel free to alter their races as appropriate. Use the following table for inspiration.

Mekanus Races

Card	Race
2	Dwarf
3-4	Elf
5	Faerkin
6	Ferran (sneak)
7	Ferran (predator)
8	Ferran (brute)
9	Goreaux
10-Jack	Half-elf
Queen-King	Human
Ace	Jurak
Joker	Rapacian

Note: This table is not intended to represent general demographics. It merely represents the chance that one of these races will appear in the role of a soldier, militia member, or henchmen. While there are more elves than ferrans in Urbana for example, it is more likely to find a ferran in such a position. Rare races such as echoes, illithix, slurgithians, and other intelligent humanoids are unheard of, but are very unusual.

Additionally, the constant struggle for survival that defines life in Urbana has, on the bright side, made sexism more of less a thing of the past. Generic soldiers and other henchmen are as likely to be female as male.

sometimes operate in other nations, when a particularly dire situation merits their attention.

Agents of the Eye have been granted special authority in the case of corrupted, and are empowered to arrest and interrogate any individuals suspected of conspiring with the Darkfall. Their tendency to wield this authority without apology or explanation has earned them a dark reputation in the lands of Urbana. Official agents of the Eye are feared, even by other members of the Urbanan military, as officially only Lord Urbane himself is above their scrutiny.

Secrecy is essential to the Eye's activities. As Darkfall corruption can seemingly happen at any time or place, agents must be constantly prepared. Their knowledge and tactics must be closely guarded, lest the Darkfall counter them. And, of course, since many of the Darkfall's servants operate in secrecy as well, the Eye must be equally cautious.

The Eye is a relatively small organization. At Lord Urbane's own decree, they have only about two hundred or so active agents at any given time. Their small size offers at least some check on their power - they can only be so many places at once and often must rely upon the military to enforce their authority. Even before Urbane, the Eye was never very large. Its agents have learned through experience that secrecy is far easier to maintain among a select few.

The Ghosts of Columbey are also considered enemies, if only because the Ghosts are obsessed with exposing the Eye's agents and limiting their power to root out the corrupted. While the Eye would like nothing more than to dispatch its Inquisitors into Tarello Landing and Old Town and punish these terrorists, the simple fact is that they are outnumbered in that section of Mekanus. Urbane does not consider the Ghosts a significant threat (compared to the Darkfall) and refuses to lend the Eye troops to support their vendetta against these rebels - at least for now.

Organization

The Eye is relatively informal, for an espionage organization. There are four general tiers.

The lowest ranked, and most populous, are its Operatives. These field agents monitor potential threats directly and, on occasion, personally combat the Darkfall. As spies and saboteurs, they operate completely in secrecy, rarely if ever betraying their identity as Eye agents to the general populace. Operatives also keep a close eye out for anyone that might potentially be useful as a Blinded Eye (see "The Eye in Your Game") or future recruit and pass that information along to the Inquisitors.

Ranked above these are the Specialists. These agents are scholars, mages, and engineers. They analyze and organize all information procured by field agents, constantly searching for new ways to combat the Darkfall. Many of Urbane's most advanced mechemagical weapons have been developed by Eye Specialists. These agents also act as military advisors, and are notorious for appearing unexpectedly to offer their wisdom whenever Urbanan soldiers find themselves up against some bizarre, Darkfall-spawned threat.

Ranked above Specialists are the Inquisitors. These agents are the public face of the Eye. They conduct public investigations as well as interrogations. Eye Inquisitors are brilliant strategists and are frequently formidable warriors in their own right. While Inquisitors operate openly, they rarely do so without the strength of numbers on their side, whether in the form of other Eye agents, military personnel, or mercenaries.

Inquisitors also act as recruiters, offering missions to Blind Eyes and presenting offers of recruitment (approved by the Monitors) to extraordinary individuals.

The highest-ranked members of the Eye are the Monitors. There are only six Monitors at any given time. These individuals are replaced only when they die, retire, or are dismissed by Lord Urbane himself. (Since taking control of the nation, Urbane has used this authority only once.) The Monitors coordinate all activity of lower-ranking agents and approve all recruitment into the organization. These reclusive individuals rarely leave the Eye's headquarters in Mekanus. From their lofty positions, they command the Eye's shadowy campaign.

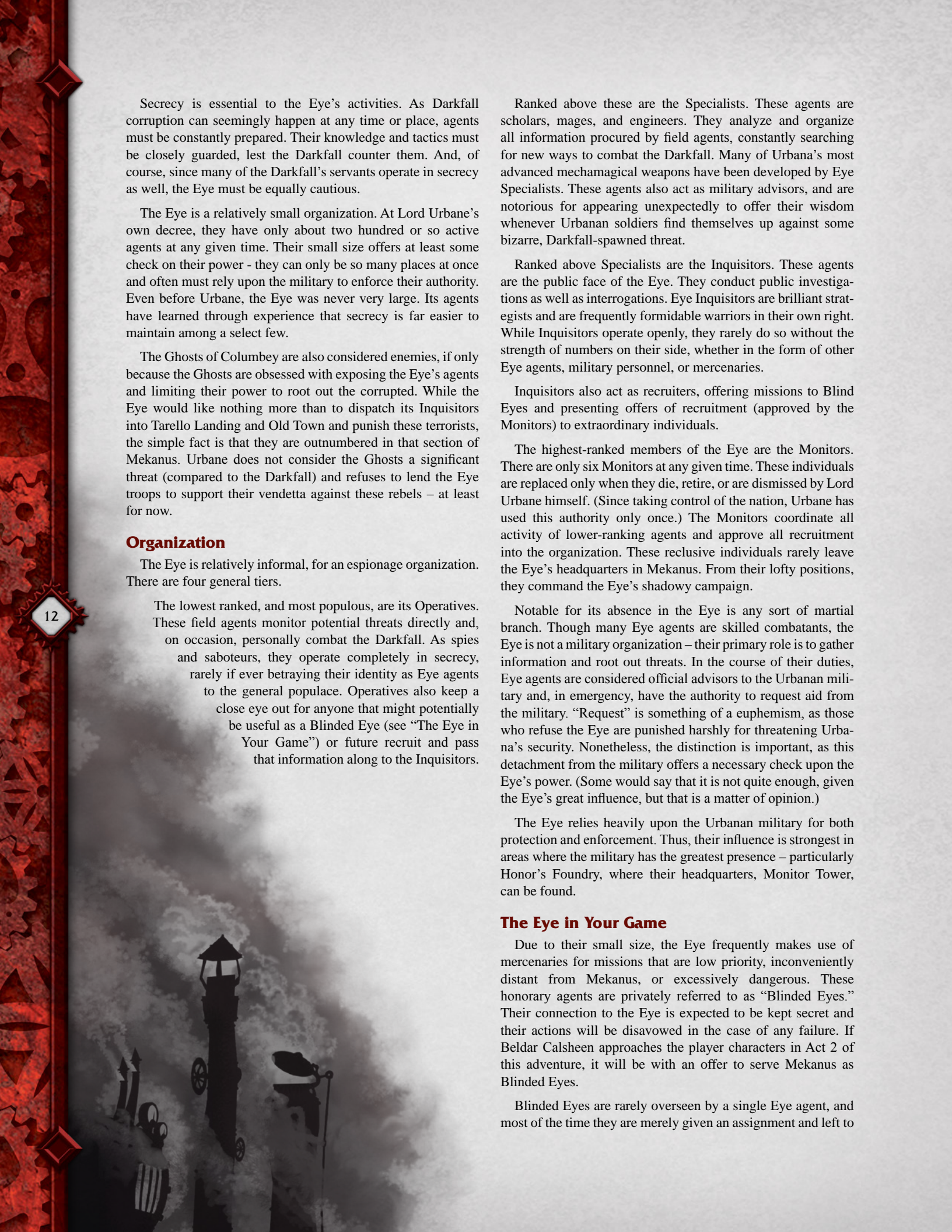
Notable for its absence in the Eye is any sort of martial branch. Though many Eye agents are skilled combatants, the Eye is not a military organization - their primary role is to gather information and root out threats. In the course of their duties, Eye agents are considered official advisors to the Urbanan military and, in emergency, have the authority to request aid from the military. "Request" is something of a euphemism, as those who refuse the Eye are punished harshly for threatening Urbane's security. Nonetheless, the distinction is important, as this detachment from the military offers a necessary check upon the Eye's power. (Some would say that it is not quite enough, given the Eye's great influence, but that is a matter of opinion.)

The Eye relies heavily upon the Urbanan military for both protection and enforcement. Thus, their influence is strongest in areas where the military has the greatest presence - particularly Honor's Foundry, where their headquarters, Monitor Tower, can be found.

The Eye in Your Game

Due to their small size, the Eye frequently makes use of mercenaries for missions that are low priority, inconveniently distant from Mekanus, or excessively dangerous. These honorary agents are privately referred to as "Blinded Eyes." Their connection to the Eye is expected to be kept secret and their actions will be disavowed in the case of any failure. If Beldar Calsheen approaches the player characters in Act 2 of this adventure, it will be with an offer to serve Mekanus as Blinded Eyes.

Blinded Eyes are rarely overseen by a single Eye agent, and most of the time they are merely given an assignment and left to



their own devices. They technically have none of the Eye's legal authority and are merely expected to investigate situations then report back. These agents are always carefully vetted for their bravery, cunning, and initiative. The Eye privately commends those who find ways to get the job done without calling for backup. Most of the Eye's rare new recruits are selected from among these individuals.

Eye agents have a fearful reputation among the people of Mekanus. Though they are a force of authority, their near-absolute power and obsession with secrecy have painted them as menacing, shadowy figures. This reputation is not undeserved. Though Eye agents rarely abuse their power, it does happen from time to time, with terrible results. Further, the Eye has a policy of adamantly refusing to answer to anyone save Urbane himself. A person who is arrested on suspicion of being corrupted may be brutally interrogated for weeks before being turned out into the streets without so much as an apology. The Eye's Doctrine dictates that to combat the Darkfall, they must be as terrifying and unpredictable as their enemy. If this means that the people hate them, then so be it.

Eye as Allies

The Eye makes an excellent ally for any party dedicated to defeating the Darkfall at any cost. They are distant, secretive, and will turn on the party in an instant if they feel they have become a threat to Urbana -but they can also make for powerful allies so long as the party's goals remain in line with their own.

Eye Specialists are extremely knowledgeable in matters of nocturnal and corrupted lore. If the party needs information regarding known nocturnals, corrupted, or battles involving the Darkfall, they can put in a request with the Eye and generally receive information within a few hours. This counts as a Knowledge check with a result of 30 in the relevant area, though the Eye will only reveal sensitive information if the party has proven themselves discreet and reliable. An alliance with the Eye also gives the party significant military connections. Any Streetwise or Persuasion skill checks with the Urbanan military receive a +1 bonus if the player mentions their Eye connections.

These benefits should be used wisely - the Eye will quickly grow to resent any player characters that spend their goodwill frivolously.

A party on good terms with the Eye may see occasional employment as Blinded Eyes. These function similarly to bounty or military missions (see the Random Mission Generator), except that bounties are always suspected of being corrupted and military missions always involve nocturnal activity. The Eye never issues Dead or Alive bounties; they prefer all of bounty subjects to be taken alive.

Unlike normal bounty and military missions, a Blinded Eye has no charter and thus no real authority if they get themselves into trouble. For example, they have no legal right to arrest anyone. They must rely on intimidation, deception, or force of arms to bring a target in. Anyone witnessing such an incident may rightly accuse the party of kidnapping. The Eye will completely disavow any responsibility if a Blinded Eye fails or get into legal trouble. That being said, as long as the party succeeds in their mission, all Blinded Eye missions pay double the usual amount. Successful Blinded Eyes also often find that any lingering legal problems due to their activities tend to mysteriously vanish in Mekanus' complex legal system.

The Eye as Enemies

This option is a great deal easier, if less complex. Agents of the Eye already seem to be, by all appearances, dangerous boogey-men who make people disappear in the night. Portray them that way. All the party needs to do is get on their bad side, which is easy enough. Perhaps in the course of their missions, they accidentally disrupt an Operative's stakeout or collect a bounty on someone who turns out to secretly be a Blinded Eye. All it takes is one Eye agent to hold a grudge, and the entire party is on their watch list.

An organization as powerful and secretive as the Eye is unlikely to act directly; they're more likely to be petty. The party might find that no respectable inns are willing to house them, forcing them to seek quarters in the worst parts of town.

SEERS & FALLEN

Seer and fallen player characters present an additional wrinkle when with (or against) the Eye. Originally created to counter the Seers, the Eye is still deeply distrusting of any surviving members of that order. Eye Inquisitors see no difference between fallen and corrupted, since in fact there is no detectable difference other than a willing allegiance to the Darkfall.

While a seer or fallen is likely to hide their true nature, keep in mind that the Eye is the world's most knowledgeable organization in regards to dealing with both groups. If a player character is likely to tip their hand against anyone, it's against the Eye.

When and if the Eye does discover a seer or fallen, agents will wish to, at the very least, arrest and interrogate the player character. GMs who wish to present a more sympathetic and heroic Eye may choose to give the party a way out. Perhaps after an interrogation, the Eye grants the player a temporary probation, and allows them to prove their trustworthy nature by performing a few missions as a Blinded Eye (without pary, if you're feeling spiteful).

If you prefer the character to seem more like a special exception, consider this an option: in one of their missions, the party might have unknowingly save the life of an Eye agent or even one of their relatives. When brought in for interrogation, the character's heroic actions would be brought to light, granting the play character a chance for leniency.

Keep this in mind-though the Eye historically distrusts the seers and despises corrupted, they are also intensely pragmatic. The opportunity to gain access to a seer's knowledge or turn the Darkfall's power against itself (through a reformed fallen) would be too great an opportunity for them to dismiss.

They might find their bounty payments tied up in red tape and postponed for days or even weeks. They might even end up arrested and interrogated on suspicion of being corrupted (which, if they turn out to actually be a seer or fallen, could have terribly uncomfortable results).

Player Contact - Inquisitor Beldar Calsheen

If the Eye decides to approach the players, it will most likely be represented by Beldar Calsheen. This young, mid-level Inquisitor is relatively idealistic, and open-minded enough to work with outside personnel.

He is also cunning enough to be quite difficult to fool, making him an excellent adversary if the party is trying to play the Ghosts and the Eye against each other.

Calsheen is hardly the image most Urbanans hold of an Eye Inquisitor. He is bright, cheerful, and relentlessly optimistic. He would argue that he needs to be, in his line of work. An Inquisitor sees so much darkness, secrecy, and corruption in his daily life that a positive outlook is absolutely necessary for him to remain sane. His father and grandfather were both Eye agents. To him, this is something of a family business and, despite his cheerful mask, he takes his work very seriously.

Beldar is an unconventional Inquisitor in that he believes, as his father taught him, that diplomacy and patience are more effective than intimidation and torture. Though some might mistake his kindness for weakness, he is every bit an Eye agent and his mood can shift in an instant. Those who would seek to deceive or manipulate him will face swift and severe reprisals, and the corrupted should expect absolutely no mercy from him. He maintains a small office in Monitor Tower, and is quite willing to meet with the player characters there if they wish.

Calsheen feels that there is a time and place for secrets - and that place is not when dealing with those who only wish to serve. That being said, if the party wishes to keep their association with the Eye more discreet, he is perfectly willing to accommodate and will meet them elsewhere (though he will do so accompanied by Ruster bodyguards).

RIGHT & WRONG

Neither the Eye nor the Ghosts of Columbey are, by default, presented as the villains here. You'll notice there is not particular reward for choosing the 'right' side. The adventure can still be completed without choosing any side at all.

So what's the point? The point is to get the characters involved in the turbulent politics of a troubled city. To give them a chance to make the decisions they believe their characters would make, and to support a cause that might save a great nation.

And while this adventure presents the positive and negative aspects of both sides, don't feel compelled to play them that way. If you want a clearer cut villain, or want to present one as a positive force and then reveal their terrible true nature at a later time, that's entirely up to you and story you want to tell.

Calsheen is one of a handful of Inquisitors assigned to oversee Blinded Eye activities within the city of Mekanus. He is a bit of an academic, knowledgeable in a variety of subjects and competent in the use of magic. He is also a student of Aden's history, and is particularly interested in anything related to the Seer Order (while being young enough not to share the suspicion most Eye agents hold for their order). This not only gives him a reason to involve himself in the main adventure's plot, but also makes him quite likely to be interested in befriending any seer player characters.



Heroic Human Male

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Shooting d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Streetwise d6, Intimidation d8, Riding d6, Spellcasting d8, Survival d8, Tracking d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6 (1); **Toughness:** 5 (4); **Charisma:** 0

Hindrances: Code of Honor

Edges: Quick, Brave, Arcane Background (Magic)

Gear: Eye Insignia, +1 plate corselet, medium shield, long sword, pistol, 20 standard ammo

Powers (25pp): Detect/Conceal Arcana, Light, Aim, Healing, Deflection

Option 2 - The Ghosts of Columbey

History

Lord Urbane's rise to power has changed the face of Columbey. What once had been a peaceful nation has swiftly become a heavily industrialized war machine. Urbane holds ultimate authority over all. The wealthy and powerful enjoy favored status and preferential treatment, while much of the civilian populace live in crime-ridden squalor. The war against the Darkfall takes precedence over safety, freedom, and equality. Naturally, not everyone in Urbana is pleased with this state of affairs.

The Ghosts of Columbey is a shadowy organization opposed to Lord Urbane's rule. To the common folk, they are freedom fighters and revolutionaries. To the military and nobility, they are a band of opportunistic thieves and traitors. The truth lies somewhere in between. The Ghosts of Columbey are secretly controlled by an uneasy alliance between two powerful factions - the Mithral Consortium and the lost royal house of Tarello.

Lord Urbane's conquest of Tarello changed the former nation of Columbey forever. The Warrain dynasty was no more. Many positions of power were quickly filled by those loyal to the Iron Tyrant. A new noble class was formed - a combination of Urbane's military advisors and those former nobles who were wise enough to curry the new ruler's favor.

The merchant house known as the Mithral Consortium was among the most noteworthy groups to be displaced in this power shift. At one time they controlled the vast majority of manite mines and refineries in Columbey. With the aid of the

Eye and other powerful merchant houses, they brought about the downfall of the Tarello Dynasty and brought the Warrain kings to power.

When the Darkfall came, the Mithral Consortium lost much of their holdings to nocturnals. Urbane later reconquered this territory, but claimed all mineral resources in the name of the state. The Consortium was financially devastated. Levwik Goldwinn, master of the Consortium, vowed revenge upon Urbane and his allies. To his surprise, Goldwinn was offered just such an opportunity. Mere months after Urbane's coronation, he met a man claiming to be Prince Daniel Tarello, the rightful heir to the fallen Tarello dynasty. Daniel was outraged by Lord Urbane's callous treatment of his own people. The two men, descendants of bitter enemies, found themselves in a strange alliance. Tarello provided the idealism, righteous fervor, and charisma. Goldwinn provided political influence and material wealth. Together, they began their plot to bring down the Iron Tyrant. They named their fledgling revolutionary group the Ghosts of Columbey.

Purpose and Methods

The ultimate purpose of the Ghosts of Columbey is to bring down Lord Urbane and rebuild the nation of Columbey under the rightful leadership of the Tarello bloodline. While Tarello and Goldwinn recognize Urbane's great accomplishments in fighting back the Darkfall, they fear that his reign has only brought an equally destructive evil to the land. Urbane's obsession with industry pollutes the oceans and poisons the land. In fueling his vendetta against the nocturnals, he ignores the needs of his own people. The cities fester in crime and poverty. Perhaps worst of all, his secret police patrol the streets unchecked, violating the rights of a once proud people.

Unfortunately, the Ghosts do not have the power to confront Urbane directly. For the time being, they act with caution. The Ghosts spread dissent against Urbane's rule, educating people about the inherent evils of his reign. The name "Iron Tyrant" was given to Urbane by a Ghost propagandist and, much to Urbane's chagrin, it has stuck. The Ghosts are quick to point out how nations such as Arasteen and Kyan were attacked just as savagely by the Darkfall, but managed to stand their ground without sacrificing the lives and freedom of their own people. They seek out others who were disadvantaged by Urbane's coup and turn them to their cause. The Ghosts have built a secret network throughout the lands of Urbana, carefully preparing for the day they will openly challenge Urbane's rule.

At times, they do more than plan. On occasion the Ghosts execute precise guerilla strikes against Urbane's supporters. They generally avoid military targets. Undermining the war against the Darkfall – no matter how much the Ghosts disagree with Urbane's tactics – is not their intent. Merchants and nobles who support Urbane's rule, however, are fair game. While some of the profits from these exploits are used to fund the Ghosts, at least half are distributed among Urbana's poor and needy.

The Ghosts work tirelessly to stymie the power of the Eye. They believe these supposed champions of Urbana are nothing more than opportunistic spies and manipulators (it is one of the few things that Prince Daniel and Levwik Goldwinn entirely agree upon). They also believe that the Eye controls knowledge of how to combat the Darkfall, hiding it from the people

so that they will need Urbane and his soldiers to survive. The Ghosts view the Eye's unchecked authority and omnipresent surveillance as a scourge upon the spirit of the people. While the Ghosts have no love for the Darkfall or the corrupted, they will interfere with the Eye's operations every chance they get, and would like nothing more than to plunder the Eye's archives of information and distribute their secrets to the people.

Another primary goal of the Ghosts is to seek evidence to support Prince Daniel's claim to the throne. Daniel knows that his current claim is too weak to challenge Urbane's rule, but he also knows that the nobles of old Columbey are extremely traditional. In the days before mechamagic, special power was needed to create permanent magical artifacts, such as the reverence and authority bestowed upon a royal bloodline by its followers. As a result, many royal artifacts of Columbey were magically attuned to have special powers when wielded by rightful members of the Tarello bloodline.

These artifacts were confiscated when the Warrain kings took power, and were lost when Urbane destroyed the old Noble Quarter of Tarello – what is now the Lost Ghetto. For the Ghosts, reclaiming as many of these artifacts as possible is an urgent priority.

Organization

The Ghosts of Columbey are somewhat loosely organized in small cells throughout Urbana. They keep in sporadic contact with one another via a constantly evolving code devised by the Mithral Consortium. These individual cells operate more or less independently and continue to receive support from the organization as a whole as long as they continue to maintain the Ghosts' ideals.

Prince Daniel Tarello and Levwik Goldwinn share leadership of the Ghosts. Though the two men often come into conflict due to their wildly different goals, they are united in their hatred of Urbane and desire for a free Columbey. They are also mutually aware that they are unlikely to find another ally that complements them so well. Goldwinn needs Daniel for his charismatic leadership and legitimate claim to the throne. Tarello needs Goldwinn for his wealth and connections.

Though many Urbanans suspect Goldwinn is sympathetic to the Ghosts, only a handful of highly-ranked members know he is one of the group's leaders. Most believe Prince Daniel is the sole leader. As the "True King of Columbey," he is something of a legendary figure, and a high-priority target for the Eye and Urbane's other supporters. While Prince Daniel would prefer to lead his followers in person; he remains in hiding in the wilderness of Urbana out of pure necessity.

The Ghosts' dual leadership and disorganized structure means that many cells practice different tactics and philosophy. Those who follow Goldwinn's leadership tend to be militant, prone to attacking merchants and robbing supply warehouses. Those who follow Tarello tend to be more cautious. They mostly focus on spreading the philosophy of their cause and protecting the people from danger when the military fails to do so.

In Mekanus, the Ghosts have the greatest influence with the merchants in Old Town and Tarello Landing. Many fallen nobles and other traditionalists make their home here, and have formed a close-knit community.

The Ghosts in Your Game

The Ghosts of Columbey have a lot of work to do. They have placed themselves in direct opposition to the most powerful military force in Aden. They are intent on restoring a lost dynasty and rebuilding a fallen nation. And yet their troops frequently show more idealism than competence.

Therefore, the Ghosts are always recruiting. While the Eye is quite selective and more likely to keep the party at arm's length even once they are allies, the Ghosts are likely to invite the characters to join their numbers simply by showing sympathy for their cause.

While joining may be easy, gaining the Ghosts' trust is not. New members (such as the player characters) are always given low priority missions until they prove their loyalty to the cause and opposition to Lord Urbane. Cell leaders always exercise caution when dealing with recruits. Only those who prove trustworthy or show unusual talent are introduced to higher ranking members of the organization, and only a rare handful meet Prince Daniel or Levwik Goldwinn in person.

The Ghosts of Columbey are dynamic figures in Mekanus. Depending on who you ask, they are either underdog heroes or dangerous terrorists.

Whether the player characters aid them or oppose them, they can count on being judged harshly for their choice.

The Ghosts as Allies

As rebels fighting against a corrupt and oppressive empire, the Ghosts are fairly easy to portray as heroes. They also have a great deal of work for skilled adventurers. Player characters who have a reputation for helping common citizens may receive unexpected assistance from the Ghosts without even asking for it. The Ghosts have a great deal of respect for the Cogswheel Irregulars, even if they resent that the common folk are forced to hire mercenaries to protect themselves when Lord Urbane does not.

While the average Ghost of Columbey doesn't have a great deal of training or education, they do boast strong connections to the common folk. A player character on good terms with the Ghosts of Columbey can turn to them any time when gathering information on a person or place. While doing so, the character receives a +2 bonus to their Streetwise or Investigation check and gets results in half the time.

The Ghosts can also offer their allies sanctuary in times of trouble. If the player characters find themselves at odds with the law, they can turn to the Ghosts for help. Members of the organization will provide the characters with a safe place to hide for up to twenty-four hours, after which time they will offer to smuggle the characters out of the city by ship (depositing them on the beach a few miles from Mekanus) or guide them outside the city walls through the sewer network.

Player characters that have allied themselves with the Ghosts may be occasionally offered missions on the group's behalf. These missions are effectively identical to security, repossession, or courier missions and always involve the group's objectives in some way.

Security missions typically involve protecting a high-ranking cell member from local criminals, or merely staking out his home and keeping away nosy individuals (like undercover Eye agents). Repossession missions usually involve robbing wealthy nobles or war profiteers. Courier missions always entail delivering coded missives to another Ghost member.

Unfortunately, payment for such missions is wildly unpredictable. Many Ghost missions pay nothing at all (beyond whatever the characters can loot) – the honor of aiding the cause is expected to be reward enough. To determine the reward for a Ghost mission, refer to the following table.

Random Ghosts of Columbey Payment Table

Card	Payment
2-6	None
7-10	Half standard pay
Jack/Queen	Standard pay
King/Ace	Standard pay plus 50%
Joker	Triple standard pay

Very rarely, repossession missions entail venturing into the Lost Ghetto and searching an area of the old city for artifacts of the Tarello Dynasty. While these missions generally amount to nothing more than a handful of non-magical trinkets and run a high risk of encountering nocturnals, they always pay triple the standard fee even if the player characters find nothing. (Note that for such missions, the Ghosts generally bribe a specific guard on the wall to look the other way while the players enter. If the players don't enter in the right place, they'll face the usual punishment for entering the Lost Ghetto.)

Obviously undertaking such missions carries a great deal of risk. While security missions may seem benign, the people the characters are protecting – as Ghost agents – are often wanted criminals. Ghost repossession missions are essentially contracted theft, and carry commensurate punishment should the characters be caught in the act. Even courier missions carry risks – the characters have no idea what sort of message they are carrying and, if caught, could be implicated in any number of crimes once the code is broken.

On a more positive note, completing missions for the Ghosts can lead to the player characters building a reputation as heroes of the common folk. A character on the run from the law might receive assistance from civilians. A character who botches a theft might find that the witnesses are unwilling to report their activities to the authorities, or even offer an alibi to get them out of a jam.

Likewise, a character known for aiding the Ghosts of Columbey can expect resentment from Urbana's nobility and military, as well as open suspicion from agents of the Eye.

The Ghosts as Enemies

Though many players will tend to sympathize with the Ghosts of Columbey (everyone loves an underdog), they can also work as antagonists. To many (including the Eye), they are nothing more than rebels and terrorists. For all their vaunted ideals, they steal from the same soldiers who protect them from

the nocturnals and plot against the legendary hero who purged the Darkfall from Tarello.

All it takes is a few well-placed encounters with the more extreme members of the Ghosts to cement them as antagonists. As Irregulars, the player characters are very likely to be the ones assigned to guard those supply warehouses that the Ghosts are so fond of looting. Or perhaps one of the party's bounties is a criminal hiding out in Tarello Landing. After a frustrating evening of citizens lying to them to protect a dangerous criminal, they might be less willing to see the good in Prince Daniel's idealistic philosophies.

And for those more materialistic players - working for the Eye just pays better.

Player Contact - Vufgar Vanheim

If the party earns the attention of the Ghosts, their most likely contact will be Vufgar Vanheim. Though most believe he's simply a weathered old silversmith, this dwarf is quite still spy and a capable warrior - for the right cause. The Ghosts of Columbey is that cause.

Vufgar Vanheim was born to a primitive tribe in the High Steppes. At an early age, he was sold into indentured servitude to a disreputable Aramystian mage. His master treated him cruelly, but Vanheim endured with the stoic patience of a dwarf and saw much of the world at his master's side.

In time, the mage's travels led him to the city of Tarello, where he was arrested and executed for humanoid trafficking. Now a free man, Vanheim was allowed to remain in the city. Though starting from nothing was difficult, he soon came to love his new home. Over the course of the next few decades, he slowly became one of the most respected craftsmen in Tarello.

Seeing what Columbey and Tarello have become fills Vanheim with a righteous anger and outspoken disdain toward Lord Urbane. His bold demeanor and readiness to spread his invective has made him the leader of a small Ghosts cell. It has also earned him a number of enemies throughout the city, not least among them being Beldar Calsheen of the Eye. Only Vufgar's extensive connections to other influential merchants has kept him out of an Inquisitor's interrogation chambers so far - but even that won't protect him forever.



Seasoned Dwarven Male

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Shooting d6, Notice d8, Survival d6, Knowledge (local) d6, Knowledge (engineering) d10

Pace: 5 (d6); **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5 (3); **Charisma:** -1

Hindrances: Enemy-Major (Lord Urbane)

Edges: Scholar, Hardy

Gear: Great Axe, Scattergun, 20 scattergun ammo, plate corselet, cloak of Arcane Resistance, crafting tools

FILTHY TRAITORS!

The Ghosts of Columbey are a great deal less picky about who they work with than the Eye, and as a result they're much more vulnerable to betrayal. A player character who hopes to curry favor with the Eye could gain some points by accepting missions from the Ghosts, and then turning around and betraying his new-found allies to the secret police.

Unfortunately, while this might be an easy way to break the ice, it's not quite as beneficial as it might seem. The Eye appreciates such initiative, but they're also hesitant to trust with someone with a record of treachery. So while such a betrayal might initially gain their attention, they will also be slower to accept such an ally.

And, of course, betraying the Ghosts will earn their enmity. Such characters can count on Ghost sympathizers interfering with their work in the future. This retribution can be minor (civilians refusing to give the player characters information) or major ones (armed gangs of thugs assaulting the traitorous player character in a back alley).

Option 3 - Going it Alone

The player characters may ultimately decide not to ally themselves with either the Eye or the Ghosts of Columbey. Perhaps they don't trust either side. Or perhaps they just don't like anyone telling them what to do. This is a valid choice, though it can be difficult in the long run (particularly at the end of this adventure, where it may make the final encounter an order of magnitude more difficult).

The Eye and the Ghosts have both survived in Mekanus, to some degree, by being paranoid. Anyone not on their side is a potential enemy. Because of this, both factions may assume that the player characters are secretly working with their enemies and treat them appropriately.

While maintaining independence means that the player characters will not be offered potentially lucrative missions by either faction, it also means that they won't have to worry about the repercussions of failing those missions (some of which are highly illegal).

PART TWO: HEART OF THE MACHINE, ACT 1

WELCOME TO COGSWHEEL STATION

Cogswheel Station is located in what was once a city gate along Mekanus' southern wall, in Smoketown. Following the Darkfall and subsequent retaking of the city, much of the surrounding landscape has become a blasted wasteland populated only by nocturnals and the truly desperate. Most travelers entering and leaving the city do so by Thunder Train or ship. Those too poor to secure a spot on the Thunder Trains typically travel as part of Rolling Thunder – makeshift caravans that follow in the wake of the mighty trains.

As a result, most of the old city gates do not see frequent use, and many have even been sealed for the city's protection. Cogswheel is one of these gates. The once open archway is now sealed with a thick layer of masonry. For many years, it saw no visitors beyond the occasional patrol or maintenance crew. When the Elders of Mekanus were formed, they needed a secure place where adventuring bounty hunters could meet without causing trouble. Cogswheel Station became that place, though many of the soldiers and bounty hunters who work there affectionately refer to it as the Gate to Nowhere.

KILLING & LOOTING FOR THE PROFESSIONAL LAWMAN

In most role-playing games, killing the enemy and taking their stuff is pretty much the expectation. As members the Cogswheel Irregulars, things become a little bit more complicated. When is it appropriate to kill? When are the player characters allowed to claim an enemy's belongings for their own?

Killing

From a legal perspective, it's fairly simple. In Urbana, under optimal circumstances, punishment is swift, certain, and severe. In the shabbier districts of Mekanus, the law is often slow and uncertain, but some constants remain. Agents of the law are to be respected. Attacking a soldier of Mekanus without provocation is a capital offense. Any citizen who dares to threaten the life of a duly appointed officer of the law (such as an Irregular) takes their life in their hands. If a criminal attacks the party, they're well within their rights to reply with lethal force. Note that this only applies in the course of the party's duties as Irregulars. If they go around picking fights in the streets on their day off, they'll face appropriate consequences.

Bounties are special cases. Many bounty targets are wanted alive, either for testimony in ongoing investigations or simply to toil in the dungeons as an example to others. If a bounty target attacks the party, they are well within their rights to kill the target in self-defense – but any reward for apprehending the target alive is forfeit.

Looting

For major crimes such as murder, rape, treason, and even the aforementioned assault upon an officer of Mekanus, the party is well within their rights to claim the criminal's property in the name of Urbana. Generally speaking, if an officer of the law (such as a party member) wants to keep a reasonable amount of this booty for themselves, the law doesn't mind. Such are the benefits of a life of service. There are limits, of course. Illegal contraband and other evidence of criminal activity must be surrendered to higher authorities. Likewise, ownership of property within Mekanus is carefully regulated, so player characters cannot simply move into someone's home after arresting them.

For minor crimes (theft, vandalism, assault), it is inappropriate for an Irregular to seize someone's property, but it may be difficult to prove a player character in the wrong. Mekanus is a city seething with corruption. If an officer of the law decides to seize someone's belongings, that person often has little legal recourse as the judge is likely to support a fellow servant of Lord Urbane over some common citizen.

While conspiring with nocturnals or the Darkfall is as serious a crime as one will find in Urbana, the Eye will overrule an officer's looting rights in such cases. Agents of the Eye will invariably swoop in to confiscate everything they can get their hands on in hopes of preventing any possible Darkfall corruption. Naturally, Irregulars on good terms with the Eye will likely receive a share of such materials as soon as they can confirm their safety.

Reputation and Retribution

Even if the characters kill and loot legally, they should remember that such actions are not without risk. Bloodthirsty characters that regularly extort the citizens of Mekanus will accrue bad reputations. Commander Thale is not particularly fond of how Lord Urbane has given her homeland a reputation for being tyrannical and merciless. Irregulars who make the attempt to apprehend criminals with a minimum of bloodshed will gain her respect and support, while those who abuse their positions will earn her ire.

Though the player characters may be officers of the law, they will soon discover that Urbane's law is not absolute. An Irregular trapped in one of Mekanus' more dangerous districts can quickly vanish without a trace. Wealthy, prosperous districts are equally dangerous, for a citizen does not remain wealthy for long in Mekanus without making powerful friends. Without making equally powerful friends, a player character is well advised to treat such citizens with proper respect.

In the end, as Game Master, remember to keep things fair. Player characters are expected to have appropriate wealth for their given Rank. If the party is lagging behind due to their virtuous and noble actions, refusing bribes and refusing to loot the bodies of fallen criminals, their wallets may begin to suffer. Rather than encourage the players to be corrupt, reward their just behavior. Perhaps Commander Thale arranges to have the party granted a bonus for their meritorious service. Perhaps a grateful citizen offers to craft weapons and armor free of cost. In a city as dark and foul as Mekanus, the people will recognize their few true heroes and reward them.

BOUNTY MISSIONS

Following their initial induction into the Irregulars, the player characters will be given relatively low-risk assignments until they prove themselves. Bounty hunters are given official badges of office upon their first assignment, but are otherwise expected to supply any weapons, tools, and equipment they require on their own.

If a prospective hunter were to report for duty without any apparent means to defend themselves or execute their duties, they would simply be turned away. You may wish to consider making this interview process an encounter unto itself, allowing each of the player characters to introduce themselves and give a small display of their qualifications. Characters with a noncombat focus that nonetheless possess useful skills

(such as healers, investigators, and other support personnel) will not be refused but will instead be matched with more combat-ready individuals – perhaps giving an excellent way to

COMMANDER SHARA THALE

This veteran soldier is one of the few publicly known members of the Elders of Mekanus and acts as de facto commander for the Cogswheel Irregulars. Though only middle aged by her people's standard, this elf has lived in the city since the reign of the Tarello kings and served the Columbey military for nearly a century. She remembers a time before the world relied so heavily upon mechamagic and is unconvinced that changed **has made the world a better** place. She privately wonders whether the rise of manite refinement and the Darkfall are related events.

Thale recently retired from active duty in the Order of Steel after a severe injury which led to her right arm being amputated just below the elbow. A simple mechamagical implant would have allowed her to continue to serve, but Thale refused to allow such augmentation. Despite her injury, she remains loyal to Urbana and joined the Elders of Mekanus hoping to find a new way to help protect and serve the people.

Thale is curt, blunt, and serious in all her dealings with the party. Though she is not without a sense of humor, she believes that her duties as an instrument of Urbanan justice are not an appropriate place to express such sentiment. She appreciates those who tackle her difficult assignments without complaint, and who conduct themselves with honor, efficiency, and respect toward the citizens of Mekanus. Thale has many eyes and ears throughout the city, so excessive corruption or misbehavior on the part of the player characters is likely to be reported to her unless they conduct themselves with extreme discretion. Any bounty hunters who intentionally harm the citizens of Mekanus or use their position to abuse and exploit others will no longer find themselves welcome in Cogswheel Station-and are likely to find themselves the target or future bounties. (That being said, Commander Thale is not omniscient and the GM should reserve such punishments for truly egregious and obvious crimes.)

Though Thale personally dislikes and distrusts mechamagic, she keeps such opinions to herself. She respects Lord Urbane and believes that Columbey would have perished under the rule of the corrupt and ineffectual Warrain kings had he not stepped forward. However, she also fears that his increasing reliance on mechamagic will bring hamr Urbana. Commander Thale's unique status as a by-the-book lawman with private sympathies toward the Ghosts of Columbey means that she is likely to let the party choose their own loyalties without interference-so long as they continue to do their jobs.



introduce the party members to one another if they have not met yet.

For the first party's first few missions, use a mix of Prominent Bounty Targets and Advanced Missions, perhaps mixing in a few randomly created missions from the Random Mission Generator later in this section. The key here is to keep a good variety of missions so that characters that specialize in stealth, intrigue, magic, or combat all get a chance to shine. When the player characters have nicely settled into their routine as keepers of the peace then it's time to move on to Act 2.

Prominent Bounty Targets

The following individuals are all known criminals with prices on their heads. The party should be able to track them down with a bit of time and effort. The beginning of each description also gives a short "Player Information" section. This is read to the party upon the assignment, and is the only knowledge the party has of the subject when the hunt begins. Naturally, more clues can be accrued through the use of appropriate skills (with a few suggestions given in the description of each criminal). While each of the following individuals can be quite a challenge for a Novice character, all of them tend to work alone, giving a well-organized party the advantage.

Bounty Target: Malukreebus Grinvoj

• **Player Information:** "Maluk" Maluk-reebus Grinvoj is a young rapacian thug, only recently officially inducted into the notorious Grinvoj Syndicate of Shadowall. Maluk celebrated his initiation by picking a fight with an Iron Guard soldier in a local tavern. The drunken rapacian tore the soldier's throat out with his teeth before fleeing into the dark alleys of Mekanus. The Elders of Mekanus swiftly posted a bounty for his arrest.

The Elders wish to have Maluk brought in alive, in hopes that he might surrender information leading to the arrests of certain accomplices in other possible crimes, in return for leniency.

He is of no worth to them dead. That being said, the Elders recommend utmost caution. Like most members of his clan, Maluk is a trained warrior who has already proven his killer instinct against trained soldiers.

Malukreebus Grinvoj is a six foot tall rapacian with brilliant red scales and a large finned crest in the center of his scalp.

• **Reward:** 200 gold crests

• **Game Master Information:** A Knowledge (local) skill check reveals that the Grinvoj Syndicate is a clan of rapacians

How's the Weather?

Mekanus has the reputation for being a dreary place and the weather doesn't help matters. Thick smog and rain are common throughout the spring, summer, and fall. Winter is prone to extreme cold and choking blizzards. On any given day, there's a 2 in 10 chance that there's some sort of precipitation going on, potentially making the party's job even more difficult (or easy, if they plan to use the weather as cover for some illicit activities).

who dwell in Shadowall. The gang rules most of the district with an iron fist. They run smuggling, prostitution, and protection rackets and vigorously defend their territory from any other criminals seeking to gain a foothold.

While the Grinvoj can be ruthless and violent, they are no fools. So long as they limit their activities to Shadowall and do not draw the Shadow Army's attention, they can avoid Lord Urbane's wrath.

They are very careful about not committing any crimes that might draw the attention of the Iron Guard, the Rusters, or the Eye. Maluk's stupid mistake could bring a great deal of heat upon them all.

Given the above information, the players might begin their search in Shadowall. Although Maluk is not currently hiding out there, there is other interesting information to learn. If the players ask around long enough, they will eventually draw the attention of the Grinvoj. Even if they do not speak to the Grinvoj directly, one of the citizens of Shadowall is likely to tell the rapacians that the party is looking for Maluk.

The party will then be approached by Vilshin Grinvoj, another low-ranking rapacian thug. Vilshin is not looking for trouble. He's very helpful, in fact. He will reveal that Maluk is no longer in Shadowall – and if he's smart he won't come back. The Grinvoj know better than to pick a fight with Lord Urbane.

"If I were Maluk," the rapacian continues, "I would pray that you find me before the Grinvoj do. We are loyal servants of Urbane, after all. We do not take crimes such as his lightly. In fact, if you bring him the justice he deserves for murdering a soldier of the Iron Guard, the Grinvoj would not forget how you defended their honor."

A canny player might suspect that Vilshin wants nothing more than to make certain Maluk is dead so that the authorities don't have a chance to interrogate him and possibly disrupt the Syndicate's other activities. This is entirely correct – Vilshin is in a tough spot. The Grinvoj don't kill their own, but he really needs Maluk out of the picture before he does something stupid and threatens the Syndicate. Vilshin is a smart guy – smart enough to at least be somewhat subtle when he asks the local law enforcement to kill someone for him.

If the party takes Vilshin up on the offer and presses him for a bribe, the rapacian is willing to match the bounty posted by the Elders of Mekanus if the party kills Maluk. Killing Maluk will also earn the Syndicate's goodwill, allowing the party to draw upon them for favors or information in the future.

All this being said, Maluk is actually not very hard to find. He's fairly conspicuous. A few hours asking questions around the city (Streetwise or Investigation to gather information) will lead them to Tarello Landing, where he's trying to lie low in a shabby inn until he can secure harbor on a ship leaving the city. Unfortunately being an easily recognizable wanted felon is giving him a bit of trouble.

• **Tactics:** Malukreebus Grinvoj is violent and stupid. If he realizes the party has come to arrest him, he will immediately draw his weapon and attack. Maluk fights to the death, reasoning it is better to perish with honor than to be taken alive and questioned. (As the party needs to take him alive, this could pose difficulties.)



Malukreebus Grinvoj

Seasoned Rapacian Male

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Throwing d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Survival d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (3); **Charisma:** -4

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty

Edges: Acrobat, Berserk

Gear: Great sword, dagger x3, chain mail, 23 gold crests

Bounty Target: Resheena Gailus

• **Player Information:** The Elders of Mekanus seek the arrest of a ferran thief named Resheena Gailus. She is believed to be responsible for the theft of an agate pendant of great sentimental value to one Boris Thorindale. Resheena is to be apprehended alive. Any valuables on her person are forfeit as per the usual procedure, save the agate pendant itself.

Resheena is a young female ferran of feline descent. She has brilliant gold eyes and her fur is colored black and orange in a tortoise-shell pattern. She is known to associate with other ferrans in Cistern.

• **Reward:** 125 gold crests; an additional 50 gold will be paid for information leading to the return of the pendant, or an additional 100 gold for return of the pendant in good condition.

These latter rewards are halved if the party is unable to apprehend Gailus alive.

• **Game Master Information:** Resheena Gailus did indeed steal the pendant in question from Boris Thorindale. Thorindale is a dwarven jeweler living in Goldheart. He caught sight of the thief escaping from the second floor of his shop in the middle of the night and reported the incident to the local authorities. Gailus has previously been arrested for a number of other minor thefts, so the militia recognized her from the dwarf's description.

If the party visits Thorindale, he reveals that he was working on the pendant for Setari Vears, an Urbanan mechemage of some repute, currently traveling in Aramyst. She supplied all materials and was quite specific regarding the pendant's design. Thorindale fears that if he cannot recover the pendant, it will be disastrous both for his reputation and for his health. (Vears is known to have something of a temper.)

The pendant is intensely magical – artifact level of power – but Thorindale has no idea what it does. Even Vears has no idea what the gem is for. She found it in the ruins of Aramyst and spent months attempting to discern its function without success. (Unknown to Thorindale, Vears died several weeks ago while exploring Aramyst in search of clues as to its origin.) Vears left the item with Thorindale without fear for it being stolen, as she was quite certain she could track the thing's intense magical aura were it to disappear.

If the party has access to detect arcana, they should find the pendant quite easy to track as well. Its overwhelming magical aura leaves trails that can be followed for days. Simply wandering Cistern for a while should lead them to the trail,

which circles through several local fences before leading them to a shabby beachside inn where Gailus is currently staying. After finding her local contacts quite unwilling to buy the item from her (a simple detect arcana – quite routine for such purchases – raised far too much suspicion) she hid it beneath the floorboards of her room until she could decide what to do with it.

The pendant's ridiculously powerful aura might leave the party unwilling to simply turn it back over to the dwarf. If they surrender it to the Eye, the Inquisitors will take it into custody and commend the party on their wisdom. If the party simply keeps the amulet, its powerful aura might draw the attention of anyone able to sense such things. (That isn't to say you should tell them not to do so.)

• **Tactics:** Resheena is a clever thief, but she's no hardened warrior and does not want to fight a group of well-armed bounty hunters. If confronted by the party, Resheena fights only if necessary and will surrender when it is clear she is outmatched. She will attempt to negotiate or escape as soon as possible.

Resheena will happily offer to return the pendant (which has proven to be more trouble than it's worth) in return for her freedom. She is unaware that the pendant can be easily tracked via detect arcana and hopes to use its hidden location as a bargaining chip. (She is quite crestfallen if this turns out not to be the case.)

If the party tricks her into an arrangement and then arrests her anyway, she will not forget the insult and will make a point of tracking down the party to steal something valuable in a few weeks when she's out of prison again. If the party attacks her and subdues her with violence, however, she'll be too afraid of them to mess with them any further.

If the party lets Resheena go, she has little to offer them in the way of monetary reward but is extremely grateful. She is quite willing to offer them a future favor as a thief, informant, or scout.



Resheena Gailus

Seasoned Ferran predator (feline) Female

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d8, Repair d6, Knowledge (local) d6, Notice d6, Survival

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5 (1); **Charisma:** +2

Hindrances: Yellow

Edges: Acrobat, Alertness (by scent), Charismatic

Gear: Agate pendant, claws, caraway crossbow, leather armor, thieves' tools, 13 gold crests, topaz earrings worth 25 gold crests.

Bounty Target: Blanco Silverchain

• **Player Information:** The Elders of Mekanus seek the arrest of a notorious vandal, Blanco Silverchain. In recent months, he has defaced and destroyed numerous items of both public and private property, marking them with anarchist, anti-Urbanan diatribe under the alias "Clockwork."

Blanco dwells in Goldheart, where he works as a clocksmith. He is unaware that the Elders of Mekanus know of his alter ego, Clockwork. Also unknown to Silverchain, his neighbor, a baker by the name of Greta Holmburg, recognized him during his recent defacement of the Solmven Fountain and discreetly reported this information to the militia.

• **Reward:** 300 gold crests. Extreme caution is recommended, as Silverchain is a known sorcerer and will likely attempt to flee if he realizes his dual identity is known to us. He is to be taken alive – if the militia demonstrates excessive force in this instance; he will only become a martyr for his deranged cause.

• **Game Master Information:** Blanco is relatively harmless. He's just an idealist who resents Lord Urbane and his callous treatment of the common folk. As "Clockwork," he frequently slips into the city, masking his features with disguise self, and paints graffiti around Mekanus. His targets are usually businesses owned by Urbane loyalists, and any public statues or artwork depicting the Sixteen. (These are heroes who died during the Fall of Tarello and have since been transformed into godlike symbols of Urbanan patriotism by Lord Urbane's propagandists.)

Silverchain has no connections with the Ghost of Columbey. If the party has allied with the Ghosts, they may sympathize with Silverchain and wish to help him escape. The Ghosts are quite willing to match the bounty offered by the Elders of Mekanus if the party successfully recruits Clockwork and helps him escape to one of their safehouses.

Fortunately, the faerkin's magic can make it quite easy to move him through the city undetected.

• **Tactics:** Blanco is supremely confident that no one knows he is Clockwork, and goes about his daily life as a normal clocksmith. His home has ordinary locks and no magical wards of any sort. If Silverchain believes the militia is on to him, he will use all his considerable magical power to confound and confuse the party. His only goal at this point will be to escape (he's not a violent soul and won't use lethal force against city militia). If escape is clearly impossible, he will reluctantly surrender.

Blanco Silverchain

Veteran Faerkin Male

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d4, Throwing d6, Spellcasting d8, Persuasion d10, Stealth d10

Pace: 6 (Fly 6); **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6; **Charisma:** +4

Hindrances: Code of Honor

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), New Power, Power Points,

Gear: Dagger x3, potion of Healing (One wound), 102 Gold crests

Spells (15pp): Light/Obscure, Detect/Conceal Arcana, Armor, Invisibility

Bounty Target: Hitsuki Zin

• **Player Information:** This one is simple. Hitsuki Zin is a monster.

Though she originally hails from Vanora, she's an Urbanan military veteran and was rewarded with extensive golemoid implants for her service. Unfortunately, like many golemoids, the stress of her transformation left her unhinged. She was expelled from the Urbanan army for violent behavior and has since been arrested a handful of times for minor infractions.

Now, it seems, she's finally become truly demented. Three days ago she gunned down a Yzeemite merchant in broad daylight. Your mission is simple. Track her. Find her. Bring her to justice. You don't need to bring this one in alive. Teach this monster a lesson.

• **Reward:** 350 gold crests, dead or alive.

• **Game Master Information:** The golemoid implants didn't make Zin deranged; that's just Commander Thale's prejudice talking. Zin has pretty much always been a psychopath. She fled Vanora after murdering a former lover and only joined the Urbanan army because of Lord Urbane's no-questions-asked policy toward anyone willing to follow orders and fight the Darkfall.

Even the Iron Tyrant's forces have their limits, and after a brawl that left a half dozen other soldiers severely injured, Zin was discharged. Since then, she's found work in the city as a hired thug. More recently, she decided to branch out into assassination. A traveling merchant by the name of Ramshra Victram hired Zin to murder his business partner, Omari Marovun.

Zin is not difficult to find. She honestly doesn't expect that the Mekanus militia will care enough about the death of a foreigner to come after her. A Streetwise or Investigation skill check to gather information on her whereabouts will soon lead the player characters to Zin – most likely one of several seedy bars in Tarello Landing, where she is currently looking for more work.

If taken alive, she is unwilling to cooperate or offer any information regarding the murder (though a clever and persuasive party may be able to bring her around). Unfortunately, Zin didn't particularly care who her employer was as long as he paid in advance and doesn't remember his name – only that he was another Yzeemite.

If the party presses on with this line of investigation, they can gain more information from the city's harbor master. Omari Marovun's name is recorded on the log of incoming vessels, as co-owner of a vessel named Auburn Lady, in the city to trade exotic dried fruits for Urbanan steel. If the party visits the ship, Ramshra Victram almost immediately breaks down. He's a weak man who is already feeling quite a bit of guilt for arranging Omari's murder. He confesses his crime and surrenders if confronted.

While the Elders offer no additional bounty for the arrest, Commander Thale is quite impressed at the party's initiative and will be more likely to offer them assistance and advice in the future.

• **Tactics:** Zin is a bloodthirsty killer with no regard for anyone's life but her own. The instant she realizes the player characters are a threat; she will attack them and fight to the death. This is not to say the party can't take her alive, but she certainly won't make it easy for them. Her golemoid implants make her particularly difficult to disarm.



Veteran Human Female

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Shooting d8, Notice d6, Climbing d6, Repair d6, Stealth d8, Survival d6

Pace: d6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (3); **Charisma:** -4

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty

Edges: Golemoid, Steady Hands, Basic Combat Specialization (Gunner)

Gear: Thieves' Tools, 30 rifle ammo, 48 Gold crests

Implants (Steam Points: 6)

- **Minor Implants:** chest spikes, finger gun (rifle), nocturnal vision enhancement
- **Basic Implants:** integrated armor (plate corselet), steam breath

Bounty Target: Vorlust

• **Player Information:** Several incidents have been reported of a confidence man by the name of Vorlust, who claims to represent a fictitious charitable organization known as the Children of Tarello. He has used his wiles to divest large amounts of wealth from several local merchants under false premises. The general confusion and disorientation that follows such encounters suggests that this individual may be using some form of magical coercion to commit his crimes.

Vorlust is a Jurak with long black hair and piercing golden eyes. He has frequently been sighted in the vicinity of Mekanus Central Station where he preys upon visiting travelers.

• **Reward:** 500 gold crests. Vorlust is wanted alive, and is not believed to be dangerous, so there is no reward if he is killed.

• **Game Master Information:** The Elders of Mekanus have underestimated Vorlust severely. He is no simple confidence man – he is a seducer fallen, granted his powers via a dark bargain with the Darkfall itself. The militia has attempted to confront him several times already, and he simply used his abilities to talk them into letting him go. While he is powerful, he is also overconfident, and makes little effort to maintain a low profile.

Simply asking around in the neighborhood surrounding Mekanus Central Station should lead the player characters to the small townhouse where Vorlust dwells with a successful Streetwise skill check. The money he has accrued seducing wealthy nobles and clueless travelers has paid the rent for a fairly nice residence only a few blocks from the station itself. The party can attempt to break into his house to confront him (the door has a good lock but no other protections) or merely wait until he leaves. (He spends most of the morning and afternoon each day roaming the station, looking for wealthy marks.)

Given the Darkfall-related origin of Vorlust's powers, the Eye would be particularly interested in studying him. Agents of the Eye will gladly match the posted bounty if the players turn Vorlust over to them instead.

If Vorlust realizes the party intends to turn him over to the Eye, he will become desperate – begging, pleading, and seizing any possible opportunity to escape.

• **Tactics:** Vorlust will be peaceful and agreeable if confronted, all the while waiting for an opportunity to use his abilities to charm or subdue the party. If they make any real attempt to chain, gag, or otherwise bind him, he disposes of all pretenses and will defend himself violently. Vorlust's primary goal will be to escape, but he values his life too much to fight to the death. If the fallen does manage to make his escape, he will lay low and attempt to gain revenge on the party – likely using his powers to turn others against them.



Novice Jurak Male

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Shooting d6, Persuasion d8, Stealth d8, Taunt d8

Pace: d6; **Parry:** 5 (1); **Toughness:** 5 (2); **Charisma:** 0

Hindrances: Quirk

Edges: Fallen (Madcap Stigma), First Strike

Gear: +1 Leather armor, buckler, short sword, pistol, potion of healing (one wound)

ADVANCED MISSIONS

The following assignments are a bit more involved than the random table and bounty target missions. Each incorporates several encounters and generally takes a bit more time to complete. You may want to spread these missions out, peppering shorter missions in between for variety.

Special Delivery

• **Player Information:** The Elders of Mekanus have been commissioned to deliver a shipment of merchandise to a prospective buyer in the city. For information, contact Samwark Rattlecleave in Smoketown.

If this mission is successful, it may open further opportunities for the Irregulars to serve in security and escort capacities throughout the city. Please report immediately, as this is an urgent business matter.

• **Reward:** 150 gold crests following the successful delivery of the merchandise as well as that of the client's payment

• **Game Master Information:** Samwark Rattlecleave is a dwarven steamwright who dwells in Smoketown, not far from Cogswheel Station. He is a metallurgist by trade; he studies manite refinement processes in an effort to improve the output of Mekanus' many factories.

As part of his pay, he receives a small stipend of manite ore which he typically refines in his personal laboratory and then sells to craftsmen throughout the city. He also runs a small tinker's shop out of his home in his spare time; he likes to keep busy.

Such independent enterprise is completely legal, so long as Rattlecleave doesn't sell too much to any single buyer and limits the amount he sells to any non-Urbanans. The Iron Guard requires accounting of all such transactions to insure that Rattlecleave abides by Mekanus' strict laws regarding the sale of manite.

Unfortunately, Samwark has allowed his greed to overcome his good sense. A recent shipment of manite ore was found to be contaminated by unidentified impurities, and thus unsuitable for refinement into magical items. It was Samwark's job to insure that the impure ore was properly disposed of and not used for any military purposes. Instead, he snuck the stuff out with his usual stipend of ore.

Samwark believes that the nature of the impurity is such that most untrained observers will be unable to detect it. Given how desperate most independent mechemages are to get their hands on raw manite, he doubts many prospective buyers will even care should they notice the difference. As irresponsible as he is, Samwark is still something of a patriot (or perhaps is merely terrified of crossing Lord Urbane) and has thus chosen to sell the tainted ore to a foreigner. He has arranged to unload the ore on an Arastinian mechemage named Rollimus.

As an extra layer of caution, Samwark has chosen to rely upon the Cogswheel Irregulars rather than hiring mercenaries directly. He hopes that his client will be reluctant to attack quasi-official members of the city militia. He also reasons that if the party is robbed or attacked by an angry (or treacherous) client, then the city hasn't lost much of importance beyond a pile of tainted rocks and few extraneous adventurers.

Perhaps if the deal goes sour he can even blame the entire thing on the party, and use it as leverage to get Cogswheel Station closed and move all these annoying adventurers out of his neighborhood.

Commander Thale is well aware of Samwark Rattlecleave's disdain for the Irregulars – he has lobbied with the Elders of Mekanus to have them relocated from Smoketown on several occasions. If the player characters have impressed Thale and gotten on her good side, she will warn them of Rattlecleave's prejudices and advise them to be careful in trusting him too far. If she is neutral or dislikes the party, she'll keep such opinions to herself.

Samwark's statistics are presented here, as this is the first time he interacts with the party, though his combat statistics will be of more use later when and if the party attempts to arrest him.

Samwark Rattlecleave

Novice Dwarven Male

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Steamcraft d8, Fighting d6, Shooting d6, Persuasion d6, Repair d8, Knowledge (engineering) d10

Pace: 5 (d6); **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5 (2); **Charisma:** 0

Hindrances: Greedy

Edges: Arcane Background (Steamwright)

Gear: Rocbar, chain shirt, potion of Healing (one wound), pistol, 20 ammo, crafting tools, 35 gold crests

Powers (10pp): Bolt

Samwark is a rather shifty, greasy fellow with a long black beard woven into a mass of thin braids. Any player characters with connections to the Urbanan military or manufacturing industry may be familiar with the dwarf by reputation. He is one of perhaps a dozen alchemists whose duty it is to inspect shipments of raw manite ore upon delivery to the city's refineries. The shop that comprises the ground floor of his home is cluttered with various tools, implements, spare parts, and other assorted mechanical junk.

The dwarf is quite excited to meet the player characters; he frequently sees the Cogswheel Irregulars passing through the neighborhood in the course of their business and is annoyed at their presence in his neighborhood, as he has a low opinion of adventurers overall. All the same, he is quite charmed at the idea of adventurers bound by duty to the city militia – in the same way that a one might be fascinated at the idea of a wild animal trained to perform circus tricks.

Though he strives to be polite, Samwark makes little effort to conceal his general contempt for adventurers. He treats the player characters as exceptions to the rule since they are seeking to better their station through association with the Irregulars (and because they are standing right in front of him).

After some small talk, he will direct their attention to the matter at hand – a large, iron-bound chest containing the merchandise to be delivered. The chest is to be exchanged with the apprentice of a Goreaux mechemage named Rollimus Torth for the amount of 650 gold crests. The party is to meet this apprentice in one hour at the Bulwark, a small alehouse in Tarello Landing.

If the party asks to examine the merchandise, Samwark will gladly unlock the chest and explain that he receives a small stipend of raw ore from the Mekanus refineries as part of his salary. He claims he has been saving up until he found the right buyer. A successful Notice vs. Samwark's Persuasion check could reveal he's being somewhat evasive. If the party calls him out on this, he becomes extremely defensive and reminds the party that they are currently working on his behalf – if they do not wish to take the job, then they can leave.

If, on the other hand, the party expresses no curiosity about the merchandise, Samwark merely tells them what they need to know about the deal sends them on their way.

Prolonged study of the ore will reveal the same impurities that led to it being disposed of in the first place. However, this requires at least an hour of study and a successful Knowledge (Engineering) skill check at -2. Well aware of this, Samwark stresses the urgency of this delivery so that the players won't have time to properly examine the ore. This isn't entirely a smokescreen, either, as Rollimus' apprentice will be departing the city to return to his master in Arasteen later today.

Delivering the Chest

The iron-bound chest filled with unrefined manite ore weighs roughly fifty pounds and is sealed with a good lock (-2 to Lock-picking). Samwark will supply the party with the key to the chest and a rickety wheelbarrow to transport it in if they have no vehicles or mounts. Smoketown can be a dangerous neighborhood once one leaves the relatively secure environment of Cogswheel Station. The party will have to either pass through the decidedly dangerous streets of Shadowwall, secure passage through the exclusive Honor's Foundry district, or circle around Dawnweather and Goldheart to reach Tarello Landing.

Depending on the route they choose, the GM may feel it appropriate to have other would-be thieves prey upon the party. If nothing else, they will have to deal with Rigger Jenkins and Wendell.

Rigger and Wendell

Rigger Jenkins is a charming but dim-witted young thunder scout. He views himself as a brilliant entrepreneur who has been temporarily inconvenienced by the unfortunate circumstances of unemployment and poverty. Wendell is a somewhat more self-aware armadillo ferran and pickpocket who steals what he needs to survive on the harsh streets of Mekanus. The two stumbled upon one another by chance a few months ago. Rigger thinks Wendell is a petty crook. Wendell thinks Rigger is stupid. They continue to work together regardless, mostly because no one else will tolerate either of them.

The duo has been casing Samwark Rattlecleave's shop for several weeks. They know he receives shipments of manite ore from time to time in return for his work at the refinery, and have

been patiently waiting for a particularly juicy haul. Wendell has been keeping an eye on the building, waiting for the proper time to strike.

Wendell spent much of his youth laboring in manite mines, and thus has a keen nose for the metallic odor of raw manite ore. Only those with the scent ability would even notice manite has an odor, but Wendell is quite the connoisseur. He knows that Rattlecleave is storing a large amount of the material inside his home. As the players arrive, Wendell is hiding in the crowd across the street, casually monitoring the shop (the duo had been planning to rob the dwarf later tonight). The ferran will know when the manite shipment leaves Rattlecleave's shop unless the party takes pains to disguise its odor somehow. As soon as the party departs, Wendell will return to Rigger and they begin tracking the party.

As soon as the opportunity presents itself, they will try to snatch the chest.



Novice Human Male

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Casting d8, Fighting d6, Shooting d8, Persuasion d8, Knowledge (local) d6, Notice d4, Stealth d6, Survival d4

Pace: 6 (d6); **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5 (1); **Charisma:** 0

Hindrances: Clueless

Edges: Arcane Background (Thunderscout), New Power

Equipment: 20 standard pistol ammunition, longsword, pistol, leather armor, thieves' tools, tool kit, 22 gold crests, thunder cycle

Powers (5pp): Slick, Healing



Novice Ferran Sneak (squirrel) Male

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

TAINTED MANITE ORE

It wasn't until the last few centuries that the people of Aden recognized manite's power as a magical catalyst-and for good reason. Manite is a notoriously unstable material until properly cultivated. It can easily be rendered impure by a number of factors. Aberrant magical fields, contamination by foreign substances, or even fluctuating temperature can render manite ore completely useless. Some contaminants can even render manite extremely dangerous. Fortunately, once manite ore is properly gathered it becomes more or less permanently stable.

Without through analysis, it is difficult to discern tainted manite from the normal variety. It is even more difficult to predict exactly what will occur if one attempts to use tainted manite to create magic items. The tainted manite found in this adventure is of a particularly nasty variety. Any magical items created using the ore have a 6 in 10 chance of being cursed. The GM should determine any possible curse secretly and reveal the curse at the worst possible moment. Magical items with power points or limited use have half those of a normal item. Other magical items have a 2 in 10 chance of becoming permanently non-magical each time they are used (unless they are cursed, in which case they never becoming non-magical).

Skills: Fighting d6, Shooting d6, Climbing d6, Stealth d10, Survival d6, Notice d6

Pace: 8 (d10); **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (1); **Charisma:** 0

Hindrances: Clueless

Edges: Fleet-footed, Alertness

Gear: Claws x2, sling, 15 sling bullets, leather armor, Thieves' tools, 4 gold crests

Tactics: When and how the duo attempt to steal the chest depends largely on how the characters attempt to transport it.

If the party is on foot and using Rattlecleave's wheelbarrow, then Rigger merely drives up next to the party as Wendell tosses a smokestick for some cover. During the ensuing confusion, Wendell attempts to drag the manite into the sidecar as Rigger drives off into the streets.

If the party has transportation of their own (horses or vehicles), they become more daring. For instance, if only one or two party members have vehicles or steeds, Rigger might drive up to lob a satchel of horse dung at them, perhaps shout an offensive insult, and drive off expecting them to give chase and split the party.

If the chest is clearly visible and accessible, Wendell might drop smoke cover from above, grab the merchandise, and then scramble down a nearby drain into the sewers. Wendell will be slowed a bit by his heavy load, but any Medium sized characters will be forced to squeeze into the entrance to pursue him.

If they are clearly outmatched, Rigger may block a narrow road and pretend to have engine trouble while Wendell hides nearby. While Rigger begs for help with his vehicle, Wendell will wait for an opportunity to seize on any distractions and snatch the chest, escaping into one of the aforementioned sewer drains.

Use your imagination with their approach – but remember that these two will only consider a direct assault as a last resort. They aren't really killers, and they don't want any real trouble with the militia. Also keep in mind they aren't geniuses – none of their above plans are perfect.

Most are likely to end with a savage beating at the hands of the player characters. That's fine; they'll beg for mercy as soon as the odds turn against them.

If caught alive, both thieves claim that the whole thing was the other's idea. They're quick to bicker and turn on each other when things look bad. If the party shows mercy and lets them go, Wendell bitterly comments that the manite probably wasn't worth stealing anyway, because it "*doesn't smell right.*" (He can't really be more specific than this; it's just a gut feeling.)

Meeting at the Bulwark

The Bulwark is a ramshackle tavern at the southern end of Tarello Landing. The food and drink here are of generally low quality, so the only clientele are poor sailors passing through town and locals too lazy to walk somewhere better. Rollimus has sent his apprentice, Kozark, to complete the deal on his behalf. Kozark and two of his associates wait for the party in a small private room separated from the common area by a thick curtain.

The other customers take one look at the party's weapons and stay out of their way. If they identify themselves as Cogswheel Irregulars or members of the militia, most of the other customers leave. They aren't necessarily criminals – folks in the Docks have just come to accept that when the law does show its face around there, trouble always seems to follow.

Tonight will be no exception.

As a foreigner, Rollimus frequently has trouble purchasing manite in large quantities. Most manite produced in Mekanus is either used locally or shipped out of the country via officially sanctioned traders. A random mechemage from a country that has traditionally been on very poor terms with Urbana (such as Arasteen) is not a priority. As a result, he's had to take his manite wherever he can find it – and Samwark Rattlecleave isn't the first local who has attempted to sell him tainted ore.

In response, Rollimus has supplied his apprentice with a minor magical item that can instantly detect the impurities in manite ore – such as the load the characters are carrying.

Kozark awaits the characters in the private room, accompanied by Shiner (his brightly polished metal golem minion) and his bodyguards, Boris and Goris, a pair of wolfhound ferrans. Kozark realizes that

goreaux do not present the most intimidating presence in touchy negotiations, so he has chosen to surround himself with impressive muscle.

Kozark is extremely perceptive and an excellent judge of character, which is why Rollimus sent him here. Unfortunately, he is also short tempered and used to being treated poorly by humans, so he's likely to leap to the worst possible conclusion when he realizes he's being ripped off.

Kozark will first ask to be allowed to study the manite closely while the players keep their distance. (They don't need to leave the room or anything, he just doesn't want to be within weapon's reach of any of them.) Boris and Goris continue to glare suspiciously at the party the entire time. If Kozark is not allowed to examine the manite, he threatens to call off the deal. If pressed, he will allow one unarmed player character to remain close at hand while he inspects the merchandise.

When the goreaux waves his ring over the manite, it glows an angry red. He immediately slams the chest closed and grows irate, causing his bodyguards to reflexively draw their weapons. He accuses the player characters of being "*No better than the rest of the swindling, oversized trash in this city!*" and demands they leave before he sics his bodyguards on them.

At this point, the player characters can fight it out, leave, or attempt to negotiate.

• **Fighting It Out:** Kozark is angry, but not suicidal. If the battle is clearly going poorly, he'll surrender. If he's taken out quickly, Boris and Goris will fly into a fury, fighting to the death to defend (or avenge) their master. The two ferrans prefer to gang up with one another when possible.

If the players win this battle, such a victory might place them in an uncomfortable position once they realize they're actually in the wrong – especially if they killed Kozark and/or his bodyguards. They aren't in any legal trouble – Kozark and his men are foreigners who attacked city militia. Sometimes Mekanus'

festering injustice and corruption works out in the party's favor. However, they have treated an innocent – if temperamental – man very poorly and it may come back to haunt them later.

- **Leaving:** If the party leaves, they don't have to deal with Kozark anymore. They may be rightly furious at Rattlecleave for wasting their time and placing them in terrible danger, of course, and are well within their rights to go settle matters with him.

- **Negotiating:** Kozark is angry and generally distrustful of non-goreaux, so this can be a tough sell. A Persuasion skill check at -2 is required to even calm him down enough to talk it out. Naturally the GM should offer bonuses if the players think of something particularly clever to say. If a goreaux party member does the talking and seems to sympathize with Kozark's anger, the penalty of the Persuasion skill check is reduced to 0.

Under no circumstances is Kozark still willing to purchase the tainted manite ore. However, this isn't to say he doesn't have anything to offer the party. If he can be made to believe the player characters are as much victims in this as he is, he attempts to curry their favor. He offers to pay the players half the gold he was originally willing to pay for the manite, as an informal bounty if they see that Rattlecleave is arrested for attempting to sell tainted manite.

He offers to pay them the full amount if they make sure he gets roughed up a bit on the way to the city dungeons. (Technically this is more of a bribe than a bounty but after everything the players have been through today, well, at least they're being bribed for a good reason, for once.)

If they agree, Kozark happily postpones his departure from Mekanus for a few days and checks into an inn across the street until he receives word of the player's success, at which time he lives up to his word and pays them in full. The mechamage then departs, leaving the party with his thanks for proving that at least some bit of justice still survives in the Heart of the Machine.



Novice Goreaux Male

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Siprit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Golemancy d8, Fighting d4, Shooting d6, Knowledge (arcana) d8, Knowledge (engineering) d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Face: 4 (d4); **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 4; **Charisma:** 0

Hindrances: Yellow

Edges: Arcane Background (Mechamage), Power Points



Equipment: 10 standard pistol ammunition, dagger, pistol, ring of manite analysis, 37 gold crests. (Note: Kozark also has an extra 650 gold crests, given to him by his master to complete the intended transaction. This money is currently stashed away in his golem's mouth, in an extra-dimensional compartment created by the Capacious writ)

Powers (10pp): Deflection, Armor

• **Shiner * Kozark's Metal Golem Minion**

Use the Metal Golem found in the Thunderscape Campaign Setting, p. 102 (with Iron plating)



Novice Ferran Predators Male

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Shooting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Climbing d6

Pace: 8 (d6), **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (3); **Charisma:** -2

Hindrances: Mean

Edges: Brawler

Gear: Greatsword, crossbow, scale mail, 15 gold crests, 10 bolts

Resolution

Rattlecleave has no intention of paying the player characters their bounty unless they return with the 650 gold crests that he believes he is owed. If they return but are unable (or refuse) to pay him, he accuses them of stealing the merchandise and/or money for themselves and claims he'll report them to Commander Thale.

The characters are likely to be angry with Rattlecleave for using them to carry out his shady deals. They are well within their rights as members of the militia to arrest Rattlecleave for selling tainted manite and for endangering agents of Urbanan

law under false pretenses. Allow a Knowledge (local history) or Knowledge (law) skill check to recognize this if they are uncertain.

The party will need to deliver a sample of the tainted manite to Commander Thale as evidence to make this charge stick. If the party delivers the tainted manite and reveals the dwarf's plans, his shop is seized by the Urbanan government and he is thrown into the Mekanus dungeons for several years.

If they don't have any evidence, but attempt to arrest Rattlecleave, then the results depend upon how much Thale likes the party. If they have served the Irregulars well and earned her respect, she takes their side without hesitation and ignores the dwarf's accusations. Rattlecleave faces a lesser sentence in this case, and is merely dismissed from his job at Mekanus refineries and fined.

If the party have behaved badly so far in their role as law enforcers (openly collecting bribes, needlessly killing criminals, etc.) then Thale will take the dwarf's side. She'll lock party up for a few days and possibly fine them. Even in the latter case, the punishment should not be too severe (as an outspoken opponent of the Cogswheel Irregulars, she doesn't like Rattlecleave much).

In any case, if the deal doesn't go off exactly as planned (and considering that Kozark is prepared for a swindle, it most likely won't) Rattlecleave will blame the party and bear a grudge as only dwarves can. The GM should be creative in determining exactly how and when he will go about taking his revenge, and be creative in using him as an ongoing foil for the party.

Of course, if they successfully send him off to the dungeons, there isn't much he can do.

Elemental Health

• **Player Information:** Doctor Sisthari Kaelniss of Cistern reports that creatures of unknown origin have invaded her home. These beings have proven to be too powerful for the local militia to handle. Kaelniss requests aid in their removal from her home.

Agents of the Eye wish to extend their personal interest in the matter. While they are currently unable to dispatch any agents to Cistern, they would appreciate it if the origin of this disturbance were reported to them – especially if the creatures are nocturnal in nature.

• **Reward:** 1000 gold crests upon successfully removing all infestation

• **Game Master Information:** If the players have visited Cistern already, or are permanent residents of the city, it may strike them as unusual that a resident of the city's poorest district is prepared to pay them so generously.

While these circumstances are indeed suspicious, they are not sinister (for once). Sisthari Kaelniss is a missionary, a Carrawan priestess from the Church of All Saints. She traveled to Urbana at the direction of her ancestors, on a mission of mercy and charity. She made her home in Cistern and has since become a popular resident. She serves the people as a healer, teacher, and advisor.

MAGIC ITEM:
RING OF MANITE ANALYSIS

Description: This magical trinket appears of be a simple, unadorned ring of polished steel. Close inspection reveals streaks of dark blue manite within the metal.

Uses: While worn, the user can concentrate upon any large sample of manite within 16" and determine its purity.

The presence of pure manite that can safely be refined for use in magic items will cause the ring to resonate with noticeable warmth. Tainted manite that cannot be safely refined will cause the ring to glow an angry red color. Manite that has already been enchanted to create mehamagical items, implants, or the like is not detected. The ring's senses are blocked by barriers, such as a door or lid.

While much of Cistern have become devout followers of Miasmism – a young Urbanan faith that embraces love, hedonism, and hallucinogenic substances – Kaelniss' neighborhood remains free of the religion's presence, mostly due to her influence. The doctor believes that Miasmism is a poisonous mode of belief, intended purely to keep Urbana's downtrodden poor, weak, and docile. She has taught her tiny corner of Cistern to heed their own instincts and experience rather than place faith in drugs and false visions.

The Miasmists believe she is a dangerous heretic, sent by the Church of All Saints to undermine the people's faith in Lord Urbane. This is untrue; Kaelniss believes Lord Urbane is a hero and that the injustices of his rule are merely products of the harsh, bitter war against the Darkfall. She is, however, self-aware enough to know that foreign religions are not welcome in Urbana, and that a priest like herself should tread lightly.

She now finds herself in an uncomfortable position. Two days ago, a small band of hostile monsters erupted from the sewers beneath her home, infesting the basement where she stores much of her medical supplies. Kaelniss doesn't know what the creatures are, but she knows she is not strong enough to deal with them alone. The local militia (such as it is) was likewise unable to deal with the creatures and barely escaped with their lives.

Brother Grovecha, a prominent Miasmist in the district, learned of the incident from the militia and reported it to the Eye. Grovecha now eagerly awaits the arrival of Eye agents, so he can paint Kaelniss as a troublemaker – or even a corrupted agent. It really doesn't matter so long as he can get her out of town.

The people of the neighborhood have collected what money they could to help the young priestess, resulting in the 1000 gold crests bounty. While Kaelniss is reluctant to accept charity from the impoverished locals, what she really wants is for these monsters to go away so she can return to healing the citizens.

She is no idle damsel-in-distress and is willing to aid the players in eradicating the monstrous menace if they need her help.

So What Are These Things?

The sudden appearance of the monsters has nothing to do with Doctor Kaelniss, the Miasmists, or even the Darkfall. They are merely a band of confused water elementals that materialized in the sewers and made their way up into her home. Separated from their familiar environment, sickened and confused by the polluted waters of Cistern, they are now completely mad and strike out violently at anything they see. Simple as that, really.

This is not to say their appearance is normal. The sickly creatures in Kaelniss' basement are the first of many elementals who have stumbled into our realm through the rapidly thinning dimensional fabric around the Mekanus Cistern. (The players are unlikely to discover the extent of this problem in the scope of this encounter.)



Doctor Sisthari Kaelniss

Novice Elven Female

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d4, Shooting d4, Persuasion d6, Healing d10, Knowledge (religion) d6, Notice d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5 (2); **Charisma:** 0

Hindrances: Vow

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Healer

Gear: Dagger, Healer's kit, Longbow, leather armor, potion of Healing (one wound), 1000 gold crests (mission reward)

Spells (10pp): Healing, Light/Obscure, Succor



Arrival in Cistern

Once the players arrive in Cistern, they find Doctor Kaelniss' residence quite easily. Though still humble by most standards, her home is large and well-maintained compared to the other ramshackle huts in the neighborhood. Half of the building doubles as a small clinic. The house is currently unoccupied. Kaelniss has taken refuge in a neighbor's house while the only militia volunteers in the area (a pair of barely competent warriors named Elsa and Andru) keep an uneasy eye on the building. They look greatly relieved when the player characters arrive and fetch Doctor Kaelniss in case there are any questions. Even as they arrive, the sound of breaking glass can be heard from within the shop.

If the players stick around to speak with the Doctor, she tells them as much as she knows. The creatures appeared in the basement two days ago. The militia (what there is of it) attempted to engage the creatures, but Elsa and Andru were quickly outmatched. If asked, the soldiers admit with some embarrassment that they both might have died of their injuries had Doctor Kaelniss not healed them with her magic.

The doctor describes the creatures as "*walking puddles of slime, standing up like men.*" She has no idea if the creatures are nocturnals, and obviously dreads that they might be. If the party is sympathetic to her, she voices her concern that the Eye might get involved and judge her harshly for being a foreigner. (If any obvious Carrawans are in the party, she will appeal to them directly to resolve the situation without getting the Eye involved.) Kaelniss does not attempt to bribe the party, but she does say tell them that she would be very grateful if they can resolve things discreetly.

The Doctor's Office

The elementals are, for the moment, content to wander the building where they arrived and randomly destroy things. They want to return to their home plane, but have no idea how, so they are hesitant to wander too far from the sewers where they arrived in Mekanus and thus have not yet left the doctor's home. These aren't particularly bright creatures at the best of times, and the constant pain and confusion of their situation only makes them more prone to violent rage.

The creatures have the normal statistics for water elementals, with one additional wrinkle. Their bodies are corrupted by the sewage, grime, and pollution of the Mekanus sewers. As a result, any creature that touches them is coated with disgusting ooze. This includes any character hit by an elemental's slam attack or that attacks the elemental with an unarmed or natural attack. Affected targets must make a successful Vigor check or be sickened for 1 round. This is considered a poison effect which could be negated with a Healing spell. Unfortunately, this does not make the elementals any more reasonable - they're beyond trusting mortals at this point.

The elementals speak Fundamental but aren't keen on negotiation. The best the player characters can expect is that they will curse wildly, their words barely discernible from confusion and anger. They blame all mortals for their current imprisonment in Aden, and will fight to the death. When killed, the creatures simply disincorporate into puddles of sludge and drain into the floor, leaving nothing behind worth studying. The creatures are

simple water elementals that have been polluted by the city's sewer system.

Two of the elementals are currently on the ground floor, wrecking the small clinic that dominates most of the building. If they sense the party's arrival, they cease destroying the furniture and fight to the death; the elementals will not pursue the characters if they retreat outside of the building, unless they continue to attack from outside.

Water Elemental, Small (2)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Shooting d6, Notice d6, Swimming d12

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities

- **Aquatic:** Pace 8"
- **Elemental:** No additional damage from called shots; Fearless; Immune to disease and poison.
- **Invulnerability:** Water elementals are immune to all non-magical attacks except fire. A torch or lantern causes them 1d6 damage but is instantly put out if it hits.
- **Seep:** Water elementals can squeeze through any porous gap as if it were Difficult Ground.
- **Slam:** Str+d4, nonlethal damage.
- **Waterspout:** Water spirits can project a torrent of water using the Cone Template. Those in the area may make an Agility roll opposed by the spirit's Shooting to avoid it or suffer 2d6 nonlethal damage. This puts out any normal fires.

The sounds of more chaos originate from downstairs. If the party follows the noise, they find a small storage cellar plagued by more of the elementals. A sewage drain in the corner of the cellar has been torn asunder, leaving a five foot wide gaping hole leading directly into the tunnels beneath the city. Three more of the elementals move to attack the party when they enter the area.

If the party investigates the drain, they find a fifteen foot drop that leads directly to a large sewer tunnel beneath the doctor's office. The tunnel is roughly fifteen feet wide and ten feet high in this area. A steady stream of filthy water flows through the center of the tunnel.

The tunnel is illuminated by a strange, shimmering blue pattern in midair. It almost resembles a crack or fracture. A Knowledge (arcana) skill check at -1 reveals that this is some manner of planar rupture, the same phenomenon that trapped the elementals here. Though the rupture is currently stable and cannot be traversed in either direction, it represents a weak spot between the planes that could lead to more trouble for Cistern down the road (especially if the local mechemages continue recklessly tearing the planes asunder to dispose of sewage water).

The largest of the trapped elementals still lurks in this area, staring into the planar structure as its primitive mind struggles to deduce a way to return home. Like the other elementals,

this one blames the party for its predicament and attacks them immediately. During combat, the elemental will attempt to maintain contact with the stream of sewage that flows through the tunnel, allowing it to gain the benefit of its water mastery ability and negating any efforts to purify it. The elemental is unusually large and tough for its kind, with maximum hit points per hit die.

Medium Water Elemental

Use the Water Elemental template in the Savage Worlds Deluxe Edition.

Resolution

If the players don't recognize the elementals for what they are, or do not report the truth to the Eye, things go poorly for Doctor Kaelniss.

The Eye decides to err on the side of caution, arresting the doctor and confiscating her property until the truth can be determined. Though the Eye agents quickly recognize the fracture's origin, Kaelniss is held for questioning for several days and eventually deported back to Carraway.

If party members are on good terms with the Eye and also sympathetic to Kaelniss, they are free to attempt to intervene for mercy on her behalf. It won't be easy – many of the Eye's informants in the area are Miasmists and the Eye would prefer to keep their assets happy – but it's possible if the party has proven their value.

The elemental fracture is certainly worrisome, but it isn't anything the players can realistically deal with at the moment. The best they can hope to do at present is to report the matter to their superiors and hope that it gets resolved. Unfortunately, the mechamages in charge of Cistern's water purification are aware of the problem and have already lobbied for more resources to shore up the dimensional boundaries.

Their requests have gone unanswered, but whether this is due to lack of funds or because Urbane considers Cistern a relatively low priority is anyone's guess.

Ironically, the fact that the characters dealt handily with this elemental incursion and lived to tell the tale simply assures the powers that be that the elementals are not a danger. At least for now...

RANDOM MISSION GENERATOR

As every play group progresses at a different pace, you may also find it useful to come up with your own random missions on the fly. The following table is designed to help in that regard. Though it is random, some of the results may require a bit of work and preparation on your part, so you may want to determine a few possible results in advance rather than working them out mid-game.

Random Assignment Table

Card	Mission Type
2-7	Bounty
8-10	Security
Jack/Queen	Courier
King/Ace	Repossession
Joker	Military

Bounty Missions

Similar to the examples presented in this adventure, this type of mission requires the party to apprehend a criminal. These criminals are usually the same Rank as the party, or one Rank higher, and have standard NPC equipment. The following secondary table can give some inspiration for creating the criminal.

Random Criminal Table

Card	Criminal Type	Examples
2-5	Warrior	Fighter, Barbarian, Golemoid
6-10	Thief	Rogue, Bard, Thunder Scout
Jack/Queen	Spellcaster	Wizard, Cleric, Mechamage
King/Ace	Noncombatant	Expert, Noble, Commoner
Joker	Special	Criminal is secretly a corrupted, a shape-shifting monster, or some other unknown variable; pull again for the type of criminal the subject is believed to be.

These criminals are typically found in the shadier districts of the city, such as Shadowall or Cistern. They are never found in Honor's Foundry (the Rusters deal with criminals there) or the Lost Ghetto. In half of such assignments, the party is given the criminal's home address or a known base of operations with the assignment - all they need to do is go and make the arrest. In the other half, the criminal's location is unknown. Finding them could be as simple as a Streetwise skill check to hunt down a few rumors, or it could require a detailed investigation. In the case of noncombatant criminals, the location is always unknown – the only reason the militia needs the party's help in such cases is because they have no idea where to start.

The reward for bounty missions is typically equal to 400 gold times the bounty's rank level (e.g. 400 for Novice, 2000 for Legendary). If the bounty is wanted dead or alive, the reward is typically 25% higher. Prepare to be somewhat flexible with this. You don't want the bounties to appear too formulaic. Such rewards can be increased or decreased to help the characters maintain appropriate wealth for their Rank if they've been acquiring too much (or too little) loot in other encounters.

Random Bounty Severity Table

Card	Severity	Type of Crime
2-8	Wanted Alive	Minor theft, unpaid debts, vandalism
9-10/Jack/Queen	Preferred Alive	Assault, major theft, smuggling
King/Ace/Joker	Dead or Alive	Arson, murder, assault

Note: crimes such as treason or conspiring with the Darkfall are typically handled by organizations other than the Irregulars.

DUE PROCESS

Urbana is a land of law and order-but Lord Urbane makes those laws and establishes that order. Some players may be concerned about whether or not the criminals they are hunting are actually guilty.

While Urbana is known for its harsh legal system, it is not (entirely) unfair. A criminal has to prove troublesome and/or elusive before the Irregulars are even called upon. Furthermore, "Preferred Alive" and "Dead or Alive" bounties are not issued lightly. Those are reserved for the foulest of repeat offenders or for situations where there are multiple witnesses or otherwise little doubt as to the perpetrator's identity.

Criminals who are brought in alive are given a fair trial and, for the record, Commandeer Thule and the Elders respect Irregulars who make the extra effort to soften the cruel image of Urbanan law enforcement. Not everyone is so kind-the players may find that the judges and barristers of Mekanus resent them for giving them all the extra paperwork.

Bounty Severity

The party is always instructed whether the criminal is wanted dead or alive. In most cases, the Irregulars expect criminals brought in alive. Nonlethal attacks and spells will be of great use in such missions.

If the player characters kill a criminal who is wanted alive, they can expect to face a stern reprimand. So long as the killing was in self-defense and this sort of thing does not happen frequently, such accidents are unfortunate but expected. The characters receive no reward.

If the players kill a criminal who is preferred alive, they simply receive a lesser bounty (usually about half of normal) and are admonished for their clumsiness.

In the cases of criminals wanted dead or alive – the unspoken subtext is that the Irregulars are not expected to show mercy. While the Elders of Mekanus have a clearly stated policy that they will never order the Irregulars to kill a criminal (as they are not assassins), this order is about as close as it gets.

The type of crime the target committed is related to the bounty severity, as listed above. For example, a target who has merely failed to pay his debts is never wanted dead or alive. (Not that debt collectors in Mekanus are never violent and aggressive – just not when the Irregulars are involved.)

Security Missions

The Cogswheel Irregulars also see frequent employment as security personnel. Since law enforcement in many areas of the city is unreliable at best, some individuals choose to be proactive and post bounties for their own protection. A client might be a wealthy sightseer or a minor diplomat (more important visitors typically bring their own guards or are assigned a squad of Rusters).

Security missions are exclusively short-term engagements. Anyone who requires protection for longer than a week is referred to local mercenary groups lest such employment distract the Irregulars from their primary purpose - restoring order to the city. A security mission has equal chance of occurring within the city or in the outskirts of Mekanus, but such tasks will not require the party to travel more than a few miles outside the city.

These missions do not pay as well as most other types of missions. Player characters can expect a salary of perhaps 10 gold crests a day (perhaps as much as 50 gold crests a day for

high priority jobs), and must be available at all times while on assignment. A grateful client might choose to reward a particularly steadfast guardian, but such gifts are always at the client's discretion. Some people are generous and others merely expect a guard to do their job for the negotiated fee.

Security work has a well-deserved reputation for being extremely dull. Most of the time, nothing happens. The mere presence of armed guards is a powerful deterrent against mischief. For this reason, a security mission is a good way to simply pass some time in-game while still giving the player characters a means by which to support themselves. Just remember– even though their characters might be bored, the players shouldn't be. Though the occasional dull security job might increase a sense of realism and immersion, such missions should not bog down the game.

There are always exceptions, of course. Security work is boring until it suddenly isn't. The Game Master should always be prepared to throw the party a curveball when they grow complacent, and using the Mekanus Random Encounter Table found in the Appendix can help add some spice to missions. Secretly double the chances of random encounters during such missions. Any combat encounter results should threaten the client in some way. A group of thugs, for example, might instead be hired assassins or bandits looking to rob the client.

Courier Work

Few Irregulars look forward to messenger work. It offers all the boredom of a security job while also offering the ignominy of being treated like a servant. The Elders try to keep such assignments to a minimum, only agreeing to provide these services for truly important deliveries. The clients are always private citizens, usually members of the merchant class. (The Shadow Army handles its own deliveries and nobles can afford professional couriers.)

Some examples of such courier work might include the following:

- ✦ Protecting a delivery of unusual merchandise, usually between Goldheart and a vessel in Tarello Landing.
- ✦ Delivering supplies to one of the outlying farms outside of Mekanus.
- ✦ Delivering a personal letter from a citizen to one of the soldiers stationed on guard or patrol somewhere beyond the city (usually a relative or lover).

These missions are similar to security missions and the pay is roughly the same. Random encounters can be used to spice them up in the same manner.

Disreputable player characters who abuse their position to read private mail or steal from their own shipments should be cautious. The Irregulars have a reputation to maintain, and will thoroughly investigate any failed courier mission. Any character guilty of violating his responsibilities on a courier mission can expect several months in the Mekanus dungeon and a 5000 gold fine, at the very least.

Repossession

While the Elders of Mekanus avoid painting the Irregulars as thugs or enforcers, the simple truth is that the city's money-lenders are far too powerful and influential to ignore. And so, on occasion, the Irregulars contract themselves to conduct the legal repossession of materials when their owners have failed to pay their debts.

In a repossession mission, the players are assigned to target an individual (determine their identity in the same manner as a bounty, though their general location is always known) and reclaim his or her property.

Sometimes this is a specific item (such as a steamwagon or a magic item). Sometimes this is merely an approximate gold value - in which case the players must simply bring back any of the target's possessions roughly equal to that value. Payment is equal to 400 gold crests times the target's Rank or 1/3 the value of the item to be repossessed, whichever is lower.

Player characters with a repossession charter are fully within their legal rights to claim property, but they are also under no obligation to confront the target. Player characters who wish to avoid conflict might simply steal the appropriate items from the target. This is entirely legal and, surprisingly, a tactic that Commander Thale approves of. The normally blunt and honest commander finds repossession contracts a disdainful waste of time, and anything that can be done to complete them with less risk of violence is a good thing.

On the subject of violence - any repossession mission that ends with the target's death is considered an utter failure. How can the client collect future debts if the target is dead? Irregulars who kill their repossession target are typically fined 1000 gold and given a month's suspension (which, in a relative sense, is a fairly light punishment for killing someone). Player characters also face punishments similar to those described under courier missions if they keep the repossessed property for themselves. (Stealing the target's other property is something of a gray area and should be treated on a case by case basis, mostly depending on whether or not the player characters get caught doing it.)

Military Missions

While the nation of Urbana boasts a large and powerful military, even they can only do so much against the Darkfall's constant predations.

Skilled soldiers are typically assigned to high priority locations, which frequently leaves much of Urbana unprotected. The Cogwheel Irregulars are sometimes called upon to fill the gaps. These missions are rare - and frequently dangerous - but also highly desirable as they are among the best paying missions.

These missions are, as the name suggests, always passed on to the Elders by the Urbanan military. The Elders have specific instructions only to assign military contracts to reliable personnel. Irregulars with a reputation for stealing, assaulting clients, taking bribes, or unprovoked killing do not receive these contracts.

Roll on the Military Mission Table to determine the type of mission.

Protection

Random Assignment Table

Card	Mission Type
2-5	Protection
6-10	Patrol
Face Card	Extermination
Joker	Pull twice, combination of the two (ignoring jokers)

The party is assigned to protect a significant, but low-priority resource for a specific amount of time (no more than a few days). This is commonly a farm, small village, or watchtower. Perhaps this area is normally protected but the usual guard detail was reassigned somewhere else temporarily, or perhaps the Shadow Army has received unconfirmed reports of nocturnal activity in the area and simply wants to cover their bases. In the case of an attack, the Irregulars are expected to send immediate word to the nearest military outpost, and defend the assigned resource to the best of their ability until help can arrive. Protecting the resource and any local civilians are the main priorities - killing any nocturnal attackers, while appreciated, is a secondary goal.

These missions typically pay 20 gold per day. The payment is retroactively increased to 100 gold per day if the party is forced to combat nocturnals.

Patrol

These missions are typically given when the Shadow Army has received unconfirmed reports of nocturnal activity in a remote area. The party is assigned to patrol this area (usually no more than a day's travel from end to end). Again, combat is not the main priority here - the party is merely expected to monitor the area for suspicious activity. If nocturnals or other suspicious individuals are encountered, the party's first priority is to contact the nearest military outpost. Their secondary priority is to exterminate the threat or, if they believe it is beyond their capabilities, monitor it until reinforcements arrive.

These missions typically pay 30 gold per day. The payment is retroactively increased to 100 gold per day if the party is forced to combat nocturnals.

Extermination

These are by far the most dangerous (and most rewarding) of all military missions. In this situation, the Shadow Army has received a confirmed report of nocturnal infestation in a remote area, but cannot currently spare the troops to deal with it. These missions are always far from populated areas - if the Urbanan army hears that nocturnals are infesting a populated area, they deal with it personally.

The party is given directions to the general area where the nocturnal are expected to be found. Depending on the mobility and stealthy nature of the specific nocturnals, they may be more or less difficult to find once the party arrives. Often, these creatures are well fortified in a cavern lair, abandoned home, or other structure.

The party is expected to capture or kill all nocturnals or corrupted found in the area. In the case of nocturnals, kills are preferred. In the case of corrupted, live captures are commended (so that the traitors can be properly interrogated by the Eye).

Once dealt with, the party must deliver proof of their work (typically an ear or some other body part) to the nearest military outpost. Total payment (for the group) is approximately equal to 200 gold crests per nocturnal encountered. A 25% bonus is awarded if any live corrupted are delivered to the Eye for interrogation.

In half of all extermination missions, the party is given some sort of intelligence report regarding the type of nocturnal they might expect to encounter and known weaknesses. In the remaining half, they receive only useless, muddled descriptions offered by terrified witnesses and can only charge in prepared for the worst. These extermination missions are known as "Dark Operations" among the military, and are the most dangerous of all missions given to Irregulars.

Running Military Missions

Possession of a military contract effectively makes the party temporary adjuncts to the Shadow Army. While still technically mercenaries, they are expected to obey the commands of all Shadow Army officers while under such a contract. (This is relatively rare and is only likely to happen if the party ends up trapped in a siege beside a group of Urbanan soldiers.) On a more relevant note, their contract gives them the authority to declare martial law in any area threatened by the creatures they hunt (a very useful card to have in one's pocket when on protection or extermination missions).

In determining the type of nocturnal present, use the Mekanus random encounters table, but roll exclusively on the nocturnals column.

The Shadow Army takes its war against the Darkfall very seriously. Any Irregular who can successfully contribute to their efforts (by killing nocturnals and corrupted) has taken a critical step to earning their trust.

In addition to the payment, any Irregular who can present a confirmed kill of a corrupted or nocturnal is given a personalized, grey silk ribbon to wear on their clothing. These Iron Ribbons are immediately recognized by any member of the Urbanan military. While Urbanan soldiers regard mercenaries with cautious skepticism, they are far more trusting of those who bear Iron Ribbons.

As it is the duty of the Eye to study and understand the Darkfall, these reclusive inquisitors are always curious in regards to new forms of nocturnals and corrupted. If the party believes they have encountered an undocumented type of nocturnal, they can deliver it to the Eye in the hopes of an additional reward. While it isn't very common to show the Eye something they haven't seen (or, at the very least, for them to admit they haven't seen it), they appreciate such efforts and will likely give the party some token payment. Naturally this depends, in large part, on how thoroughly the players have curried the Eye's favor.

NEW MAGIC ITEMS

Urbanan Pigeon

This minor magical item resembles a small clay pigeon about the size of a coin. Each token bears a specific serial number and design. These tokens have two specific functions.

First, when a command word is spoken, the pigeon is attuned by a specific owner by touch. This attunement can be done at any place or time but once attuned the pigeon cannot be attuned to another owner.

Second, when in its owner's possession, the owner can activate the pigeon as an action. The pigeon immediately become an invisible, fine size animated object with a Fly Pace of 12. The pigeon can take no actions beside immediately flying to the nearest Urbanan pigeon roost, whereupon it becomes inert and non-magical. If there is no roost within 100 miles, the pigeon flies 100 miles in a random direction and becomes inert and non-magical.

Once the owner activates the pigeon they can also record a ten word message to be delivered by the pigeon upon its arrival.

Urbanan Pigeon Roost

This ungainly contraption appears to be a massive birdcage made of steel, filled with an intricate network of cogs and gears. The Urbanan Pigeon Roost serves as a beacon for Urbanan Pigeons; these items can find a nearby roost unerringly once they are activated. An operator adjacent to the roost can command it to identify any pigeons currently in its possession. In a calm, clear voice the roost will then describe the pigeon's attuned owner as well as their physical state (alive, injured, dying, etc.) and approximate location relative to the roost when the pigeon was activated. The roost can also relay any messages the owner recorded upon the pigeon when it was activated.

Pigeons and Roosts

These unique magic items are manufactured exclusively by the Urbanan army. They are used by remote patrols or mercenary contractors to contact emergency reinforcements. The method used in their production is a state secret. Through pigeons are frequently given to contractors, roosts are always kept in secure locations. While a craftsman could, considerably, create a functioning Urbanan pigeon roost, they could not use it to intercept pigeons created by the Shadow Army. It would only attract the pigeons that they (or other independent crafters) created.

A pigeon created by the Urbanan army will only be attracted to a military roost. Likewise, a roost created by the military will only attract genuine pigeons created and distributed by them.

Even if an official roost was somehow stolen, Urbanan mechemages can remotely sever its connection to their network, causing it to no longer attract military pigeons (Of course, until the Shadow Army realizes the roost has been stolen, it will continue to attract pigeons as normal).

PART THREE: HEART OF THE MACHINE, ACT 2

HIRED MUSCLE

● **Note:** This mission seems, at first, to be merely another assigned mission. It should be reserved until several other missions have been completed successfully. The players should have a reputation as relatively effective members of the Irregulars and should have had three level-ups or close to it before receiving this assignment. While most missions are merely assigned to whichever Irregulars are available, this one requests the player characters specifically.

This is because the man posting the bounty, Curator Dennison Walcroix, is a member of the Elders of Mekanus. Walcroix has found himself in need of trustworthy mercenaries. Upon reviewing the recent reports from the Irregulars, he believes the player characters fit the bill nicely.

● **Player Information:** The city requests the aid of (place player characters' names here) in maintaining security for the estate auction of one Lord James Dex. Please report to Curator Dennison Walcroix in Honor's Foundry tomorrow morning, precisely at eight o'clock.

● **Reward:** 750 gold per person

● **Game Master Information:** If this mission seems curious to the players, it should. On the surface, the job is simple security work. While the Irregulars are called upon for such duties from time to time, the pay for this assignment is abnormally high for such easy work. That the party was requested specifically and offered such high pay only makes things more peculiar.

If the players express any concern at the nature of this mission to Commander Thale, her normally stern demeanor betrays a hint of mild annoyance. She admits that the mission is somewhat unusual, and informs the player characters that performing the occasional service for the nobles who fund their efforts is something that they'll have to get used to – they're starting to earn a reputation around here. At the same time, she cautions the player characters to avoid becoming embroiled in the city's politics – it's difficult to enforce the law when you're busy taking sides (something to keep in mind if the players have developed any contacts with the Eye or the Ghosts of Columbey). Her advice is to simply perform the task required of them and move on.

If asked her opinion of Walcroix, Shale confesses she is conflicted. While she is uncomfortable that a fellow Elder would use the Irregulars for something other than their intended purpose, she assures the party that Walcroix is an honorable man. If he has asked the Irregulars for aid, then he must need it.

When this mission is offered to the player characters, the auction is still two days away. This should give the party ample time for whatever preparations they deem necessary (including looking into this situation to determine what's going on).

A Knowledge (local history) skill check can provide additional information about Dennison Walcroix and Sir James Dex. (Characters can also obtain said information by making an Investigation skill check if they wish to spend a few hours canvassing the city gathering information about these individuals.)

Lord James Dex: Lord Dex was a former noble of Columbey. In his youth he was something of an adventurer, notorious for funding (and accompanying) expeditions into forgotten ruins throughout Aden.

He never married, and almost bankrupted his family fortune supporting various studies into ancient civilizations. Dex was one of a small handful of Columbey lords who did not support Urbane's coup yet was allowed to retain his titles. As Dex was extremely old, poor (by noble standards), senile, and had no heirs, Urbane could not bring himself to destroy the man. He was content to simply wait for Dex to die.

In recent years, Lord Dex's renegade status earned him many political enemies. To make matters worse, he began to succumb to a wasting disease he contracted many years earlier in his exotic travels. His waning health attracted many swindlers and charlatans seeking to capitalize on his remaining fortune with false cures. As a result, he became a paranoid recluse and refused all treatment. Dex seldom emerged from his small estates in Honor's Foundry and trusted only a handful of his former associates. He died half-mad and alone, surrounded by the assorted treasures of his many expeditions.

Dennison Walcroix: Walcroix is curator of the Urbanan Museum of History (formerly the Columbey Archives). He is a well-traveled scholar and one of the few known to have regularly visited Lord Dex at his home in recent years. While no noble, Walcroix inherited a respectable fortune from his family. Though this wealth gives him the luxury to pursue his studies in comfort, he is known for his generosity and philanthropy, particularly in regards to his support of schools in the poor and disenfranchised regions of Urbana. In his youth, he was a student of Lord Dex and later became his most trusted colleague.

Walcroix is a founding member of the Elders of Mekanus, and one of the few members of the council (other than Shale herself) who makes his identity publicly known.

THE MATTER AT HAND

The first order of business should be to report to Dennison Walcroix and find out exactly what sort of job he has in mind. As home to the most powerful nobles in Mekanus, Honor's Foundry is quite selective in who enters its gates (see Welcome to Mekanus, later in this book).

Fortunately, Walcroix has sent word ahead that he is expecting the party. As soon as they introduce themselves and present their credentials, the Ruster guards will admit the party into Honor's Foundry with no trouble.

Walcroix's home is relatively small and modest, given its environs. They are met at the door by Walcroix's elderly butler, Harmon. He greets the party cordially and conducts them directly to the study. The curator's home is lined with bookcases and shelves that hold assorted knickknacks of minor cultural significance – arrowheads from Steppes barbarian tribes, Kyanite wax figurines, Vanoran wall scrolls, and an eclectic collection of other items.

Dennison Walcroix sits at a large desk in his study, poring over a thick stack of official documents. The curator is human, perhaps forty years of age, hair just beginning to gray around the temples. He wears a moderately expensive suit, though it is slightly out of style and has a few ink stains on the sleeves. Walcroix is a man more interested in scholarly study than noble frippery, but some concessions are necessary among the elite of Honor's Foundry.

Walcroix carefully sets his paperwork to one side and rises to greet the party upon their arrival. He will greet the player characters by name and will even make mention of how impressed he is with their specific exploits. This should convey the sense that Walcroix has been monitoring their accomplishments and is greatly impressed, rather than some attempt to appear intelligent or superior. ("And you must be the mighty Gnarr Darkmoon. I heard you showed great courage in cleansing the elementals that had infested the slums of Cistern!")

Customize the curator's greeting to the player's specific accomplishments, so long as it is clear that he has done his research and has found something to admire in their exploits. "When we created the Cogswheel Irregulars," he tells them, "it was my hope that we would find heroes such as you to protect our fair city."

Walcroix asks for tales of the party's exploits, and will discuss their adventures for some time, if they wish. As a historian, he is always eager to hear tales of adventure (this is a good chance to recount the party's exploits so far or to give the players a chance to brag about their accomplishments). If the players prefer to simply get down to business and want to know why they have been summoned, Walcroix is slightly disappointed but respects their dedication.

Curator Walcroix functions as little more than the impetus for this particular assignment, but he becomes a great deal more important later in the adventure, and thus his statistics are presented here. Though he is retired, he remains a fairly competent bard.

Curator Dennison Walcroix

Veteran Human Male

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Shooting d4, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Repair d6, Spellcasting d8, Knowledge (arcana) d8, Knowledge (local) d8, Knowledge (nobility) d6

Pace: 4 (d4); **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5; **Charisma:** +2

Hindrances: Lame

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Edges: Luck, Scholar (Local history and nobility), New Power, Power Points, Charismatic

Gear: Dagger, pistol, 10 standard ammo, thieves' tools, 125 gold crests

Spells (15pp): Detect Arcana, Healing, Succor, Disguise

CURATOR WALCROIX EXPLAINS

"When James died," Walcroix begins, "he left behind a considerable amount of debt. As per Urbanan law, his worldly possessions will be sold off to repay his creditors at an upcoming estate auction. Even now, his property is being transferred to a holding facility in Goldheart District until the time of the auction."

The curator sighs and looks uneasy. "Unfortunately James was a man of certain pronounced opinion, and earned a number of enemies in the city. He was particularly unpopular with Lord Urbane and his supporters. As a result, the guard detail that has been assigned to protect Lord Dex's possessions is...far from optimal-merely a handful of volunteer militia. I'm sure, being members of the Irregulars, that you are used to such inconsistencies."

"This is why I require your aid. Lord Dex possessed a large number of historical treasures and priceless tomes-a collection that makes my own seem paltry and insignificant. While it disappoints me to think they will be sold off, I am even more concerned that his treasures may be exploited by opportunistic thieves. I owe Lord Dex a great deal. I would not be the man I am today if not for his guidance. If your reputations speak true, then I will sleep soundly knowing that his legacy is well protected."

If the players are uneasy about the assignment, Walcroix is willing to throw in an additional 100 gold pieces per party member – on the condition that Dex's possessions survive intact until the auction. As soon as they are ready to begin the job, the curator eagerly fetches his cloak and prepares to escort them to the warehouse where the auction will be held.

The players might ask Walcroix if there are any items of particular value that thieves might target. Unfortunately, Walcroix isn't of much help. Lord Dex's collection is unique and eclectic - any part of it would be of incredible value to the right collectors. He does point out that many of Dex's personal

LORD DEX'S TRUE TREASURE

Lord James Dex's estate contains a staggering number of journals, artifacts, and other treasures acquired among his many adventures. His discoveries are of priceless value to any historian, but not of much interest to most adventurers (though player characters with an interest in history might enjoy studying his collection). Only a few of the items up for sale are actually magical and these are somewhat mundane—a pen that periodically refill its own ink, a stopwatch that never needs winding, several books with magical protections against the ravages of time, and a pair of spectacles enchanted to correct Lord Dex's pronounced near-sightedness.

Distributed among Dex's journals are many treatises upon the Seer Order. Tired of the charlatans and quacks that had failed to cure his wasting malady, Lord Dex had attempted to seek out the Seers in his later years, hoping to find a group that had survived the Darkfall's extermination. Though he was ultimately unsuccessful, he painstakingly recorded the locations of many former bastions of the Seers and collected historical relics from their strongholds.

The mysterious power that commands the Circle of Fire and Steel has a vested interest in the Seer Order. Lord Dex's collection is but one of many avenues of investigation they are pursuing across Aden—others will be revealed as this Adventure Path continues.

Now that Lord Dex's writings are no longer well-protected in the heart of Honor's Foundry, the cult has made their move to obtain these books. The books are ultimately, just a means to an end. The cult believes that their true prize lies sealed within an enchanted vault beneath Lord Dex's former estate in what is now the Lost Ghetto. As they have been unable to access the vault so far, they reason that the key to its entry might lie somewhere in the old scholar's journals. (Unfortunately for them, it isn't there, so even if the player characters fail utterly in this part of the adventure, the last part still occurs.)

So close to the heart of the city, the Circle of Fire and Steel is wary of acting openly lest they attract the attention of the Eye. Instead, they have chosen to hire common (and expendable) thieves to steal the items they seek.

The cultists aren't sure what they're looking for (or even that Dex's collection will have it) so they've simply instructed the thieves to steal whatever books they can get their hands on. Even if one of the encounters at its task, there are too many books for any of the thieves to steal alone.

Sticky-fingered player characters should be careful. Walcroix has a photographic memory and will thoroughly check the estate's inventory each morning. If the items are missing, he will notice and request a full report.

journals, the logs of his expeditions and his experiences therein, have never been published. These would be uniquely valuable and sought after. There are dozens of such volumes distributed throughout the collection. Likewise, he doesn't know anyone specific that might target Walcroix's estate. Most of the nobles in town disliked Dex, and Walcroix wouldn't put it past one of them to hire some thieves to steal his possessions as a final insult.

Building Layout

The warehouse is a large, single-story building on the outskirts of Goldheart close to Mekanus Central Station. Several other identical buildings line the street, used by the city's merchants to store merchandise moving to and from the Thunder Trains. The warehouse has a main cargo entrance large enough to admit a steamwagon and a rear entrance for personnel. Both doors have average locks (Lockpicking at -1) but are currently unlocked. Walcroix has two copies of both keys.

The warehouse's second floor is roughly twenty feet off the ground. The building's walls are quite sheer and difficult to climb (-2 to Climbing) without the appropriate gear. The only windows are large skylights on the gently sloped roof.

The interior is essentially a single, large storage room filled with crates – several other local merchants are already using the warehouse for storing spices, foodstuffs, and other assorted merchandise but there is plenty of room remaining for Dex's possessions. A small area has been set aside for the impending auction, with a raised podium and a dozen chairs for buyers.

There is also a small office with a desk and several filing cabinets filled with detailed logs listing the warehouse's contents. The warehouse is normally staffed by a foreman and two workers. Walcroix has paid them to take the next few days off, leaving the player characters and the militia to tend the warehouse. While all warehouse business during the next two days has been canceled (and a notice on the warehouse door proclaims such), the Game Master may wish to occasionally throw in an angry merchant demanding access to his stored wares as a red herring.

The warehouse also has a small basement. This features little other than a closet full of brooms and other cleaning equipment, and a lavatory. Characters with a particularly keen eye that actively search the area for any weaknesses (Knowledge: Engineering or Notice at -1) might also notice a large grate in the lavatory floor. This leads to the city sewers, but is too narrow for any but a Small character to enter without difficulty.

ARRIVAL AND FIRST ATTEMPT: DERGIS WATTLEBY

A flurry of activity surrounds the warehouse as the party arrives. Wagons loaded with large crates and assorted loose furniture wait in a queue outside the building. All crates that are part of the estate are emblazoned with Sir James Dex's noble crest – a hart on a field of deep blue. Two militia soldiers stand at the doors. The guards look overwhelmed and confused as they struggle to organize and document the deliveries. Though the streets are not busy at this time of day, more than one passing traveler casts an annoyed glare at the congregation of wagons blocking the road.

Astute players may suspect that this scene is ripe for disaster, with many of Dex's valuable possessions exposed in an open, public street. Any players who actively state that they are looking for trouble upon their arrival are entitled to a Notice skill to notice a trio of suspicious, masked characters huddled in the shadows of an alley across the street, or (Notice skill at -2) the hooded figure with a sniper rifle crouched on the warehouse adjacent to them. The sniper is a two-bit thief by the name of Dergis Wattleby and the mob in the alley are his hired thugs.

If the players do not notice the threat, the thieves spring into action while the party is still about 100 feet away from the warehouse. During the surprise round, Dergis sneak attacks one of the two guards with his sniper rifle, most likely killing him outright. The other guard runs inside to take cover as soon as he can. The remaining thieves then charge the steamwagon currently waiting at the warehouse doors, weapons drawn, shouting at the wagon driver to get out of his vehicle.

The thieves intend to commandeer the vehicle and escape through the streets of Mekanus to an alley several blocks away, where they intend to dump the steamwagon's cargo into a somewhat less-conspicuous covered wagon and deliver their booty to their contact in Tarello Landing.

Of course, Dergis never counted on the player characters intervening.

Dergis Wattleby

Seasoned Half-elf Male

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d4, Shooting d8, Climbing d6, Repair d8, Knowledge (local) d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6 (1); **Charisma:** 0

Hindrances: Overconfident

Edges: Marksman, Acrobatic

Gear: Dagger, short sword, sniper rifle, 20 sniper rifle ammo, climbing kit, leather armor, potion of Healing (one wound), thieves' tools, 27 gold crests

Wattleby's Thugs (3)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d4, Climbing d6, Intimidation d4, Survival d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6 (1); **Charisma:** -2

Hindrances: Mean

Edges: Level-headed

Gear: Bandit mask, dagger, longsword, studded leather armor, 10 gold crests

Tactics: Dergis is well aware that the local militia are poorly trained and poorly equipped. He hopes by killing one of the guards he can create enough chaos that his thugs can seize the wagon and escape unchallenged. When the player characters arrive, he is forced to reconsider things a bit.

Dergis may hang around and see if he can snipe one of the player characters from cover, hoping to drive the rest of them to ground while his thugs escape. If he is clearly outmatched, he'll attempt to flee (and will flee in any case after the second shot).

The thugs will fight to defend themselves – Dergis has convinced them that the city guards are cowards and easily intimidated. If things turn against them, the thugs will drop their weapons and beg for mercy, promising to rat out their boss in return for their lives.

If Dergis escapes, he'll flee to the Docks and sneak aboard the next merchant ship out of Mekanus to lay low for a while. If the players catch him alive, he'll tell them anything to save his own neck. He's a sleazy, unimaginative fellow who desires little more than survival and an easy fortune.

Who Do You Work For?

Upon catching any of the would-be thieves, the players are likely to be quite curious who these miscreants work for. Unfortunately, the thieves aren't of much help. None of them are member of the Circle of Fire and Steel, or even know that they are working for a Darkfall cult.

The only common thread is that all of them were independently contacted by a large, rough looking Jurak golemoid (Magnus 'Steel' Steelfist, one of the cult cell's leaders) who they met in the docks and who made promise of payment. He informed them that he would be keeping an eye on their exploits, and would be in touch if they were successful.

True to Steel's word, the cult has planted a pair of spies among the workers at one of the nearby warehouses. Unless the party is extremely discreet about dealing with the thieves, the cult will know that they have failed and Steel will cut off all contact. Even if the party succeeds in quietly capturing a thief and wished to set up a sting operation, later development in the adventure will complicate matters before Steel gets around to contacting them...

Unfortunately, all he knows is that a “*big, angry-looking golemoid jurak*” in Tarello Landing offered to pay him 50 gold coins for every one of Lord Dex’s books he delivered, so he simply hijacked the wagon that seemed to have the most books on board.

If Dergis somehow manages to get away with his theft, Walcroix is a bit disappointed that the player characters are off to such a poor start.

MAKING PREPARATIONS

Once Dergis and his cronies have been dealt with, Walcroix steps in to organize the deliveries (this may be a good place to casually mention Walcroix’s keen, photographic memory, if it hasn’t come up yet, in order to warn sticky-fingered player characters). Under the curator’s direction, the tangled mess of wagons quickly becomes an organized queue and the items make their way inside without any further trouble. The curator reports that all of Dex’s possessions are present and accounted for (except for any that Dergis Wattleby might have stolen). He then wishes the characters good luck, gives them a copy of the two warehouse keys, and departs to make assorted preparations for the auction.

The players are now free to secure the warehouse as they see fit. As they’ll be here for two days, they’ll also want to make sleeping arrangements.

There is a small inn named simply Georgianna’s just a block away, within sight of the warehouse, where the characters can find lodging for 2sp a night. Particularly dedicated players may prefer to set up camp within the warehouse itself – there is ample room, though it is not particularly comfortable.

Assuming the militia soldiers survived, they also remain to aid the player characters unless ordered to leave. Their names are Gunter and Figs, and they are eager to help if not incredibly imaginative. Use the average Mekanus militia soldier statistics provided earlier in this book.

Six hours later, two more dim-witted but cheerful soldiers, Uldorf and Kane, arrive to relieve them. These militia guards rotate every twelve hours unless dismissed (any guards who are killed are not replaced).

The militia soldiers are perfectly happy to follow the party’s lead, and are glad for the help (especially if the player characters saved their lives, less so if soldiers start dying under their watch). At the very least, these soldiers can serve as additional pairs of eyes.

NIGHT FALLS AND THE SECOND ATTEMPT: THE ROOFRUNNERS



The second group of thieves is a great deal subtler than Dergis and his thugs – as well as less bloodthirsty. Known collectively as the Roofrunners, the brothers Arkle, Shoraf, and Vween are literally cat burglars – a trio of feline ferran predators who make a living in the city as second-story men. As soon as night falls on the first day, the Roofrunners make their move. The ferrans look for an unguarded area of the warehouse wall and climb up using their natural abilities. Once on the roof, they carefully survey the interior.

When the coast seems clear, the Roofrunners apply a strip of roofrunner’s tape (see sidebar) and quietly break one of the skylights over a particularly tall stack of crates. They then leap down onto the stack, climb inside, and try to steal as many books as they can safely carry.

Roofrunner have, for all intents and purposes, identical stats.



⚙️ Arkle, Shoraf, and Vween

Novice Ferran Predator (cat) Male

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Repair d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Swimming d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 8 (d6); **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5 (1); **Charisma:** -4

Hindrances: Blood-thirsty

Edges: Thief

Gear: leather armor, roofrunner's tape, thieves' tools

Tactics: Unlike Dergis, the Roofrunners don't wish any bloodshed and aren't here for a fight (they aren't even armed beyond their natural weapons). They fight only in selfdefense, and if surrender or escape are not options. This only applies so long as all the Roofrunners live – if any of the brothers are killed, the survivors will fight viciously, seeking revenge for their murdered kin.

The Roofrunner brothers are generally harmless, at least as far as thieves go. If spared, the brothers bear the player characters no ill will (they're just doing their jobs), and are extremely cooperative. These three have all been arrested a dozen times and take it in stride at this point.

They gladly offer to help the player characters track down their employer (though they're unlikely to have much luck). They even offer to teach the player characters how to make roofrunner's tape, if treated kindly.

THE NEXT EVENING AND THE THIRD ATTEMPT: SEWER MAGE

After defending (or failing to defend) the warehouse against the predations of the Roofrunners, the next day passes relatively uneventfully.

If you want to keep the player characters on edge, feel free to throw a few other red herrings in throughout the next day. Perhaps a few nosy locals attempt to sneak close to the warehouse in hopes of catching a glimpse of whatever's valuable enough to require Cogswheel mercenaries to guard it. Perhaps a previous battle draws curious spectators, gawking at the warehouse in hopes that something else interesting might happen.

The final, true threat does not come until the following evening, the last night the player characters are assigned to guard the warehouse.

NEW ITEM: ROOFRUNNER'S TAPE

Description: This concoction is utilized by the ferran thieves known as the Roofrunners, but could easily be replicated by a clever player character. It consists of a strip of rolled felt, coated on one side with a thin alchemical paste. This paste is normally quite dry, but upon exposure to water, it becomes a powerful adhesive.

The adhesive felt can be applied to a surface. If applied to a window, the glass can subsequently be broken with little or no noise, allowing a character to make a Stealth check with a -2 penalty to break a window without being noticed.

Fifteen minutes after being exposed to water, the paste dries out and becomes permanently inert.

Cost: 5 gold per 1 pound roll.

This time, the thief is a faerkin illusionist who goes by the pseudonym Spectro. Spectro is a sleazy little man with terrible personal hygiene and arrogant delusions of grandeur. The faerkin has used his meager magical talents to secure a position in the Mekanus underworld as a contract thief.

The thief spends the first day spying on the warehouse in a variety of disguises, as well as using his rat familiar to poke about. He keeps his distance and attempts to gauge the party's abilities and any potential weaknesses in their security. Spectro is especially wary of any obvious magic users, as he is well aware that they may have the ability to counter his own arcane tactics. He will even attempt to scout the sewer tunnels beneath the warehouse – it is most likely that he will ultimately take this route to avoid detection.

If Spectro believes he is unobserved, he will cautiously study the entrances, including the basement sewer grate, in hopes of detecting any potential wards. He will use detect magic in an attempt to find magical wards, if he can do so undetected, and may prepare different spells upon returning the following night if he feels they would be more appropriate to counter the party's defenses. If Spectro feels he can enter and leave without the risk of combat, for example, he may prepare vanish instead of mage armor. He is particularly fond of using illusion spells as distractions.

Remember - his goal is not to defeat the party, only to keep them diverted long enough to steal what he came to steal.

There is of course a chance, albeit a minor one, that the party might discover Spectro while he is casing the area. He is very adept at Stealth and Persuasion-and if all else fails he is not above using invisibility to approach or flee undetected. If the party repeatedly catches Spectro in the act, or their security is too difficult for him to counter, he may cut his losses and give up on the idea of robbing them altogether, seeking easier prey. (The party should still receive credit and experience for defeating him, of course, even if they never realize they did so.)



Seasoned Faerkin Male

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Spellcasting d8, Fighting d4, Repair d8, Notice d8, Knowledge (arcana) d10, Stealth d12

Pace: 4 (d6); **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5; **Charisma:** +2

Hindrances:

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), New Power, Power Points

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), disguise kit, haversack, thieves' tools, 29 gold crests, familiar (rat)

Spells (15pp): Armor, Detect Arcana, Disguise, Invisibility, Confusion

Tactics: Ultimately, Spectro hopes to sneak into the warehouse undetected (most likely under cover of invisibility), snatch as many books as he can fit into his handy haversack, and flee before he is detected. Much like the Roofrunners before him, he will fight only to save his own life and will gladly offer his

surrender if escape is not an option. He will avoid killing player characters – he doesn't want to bring that sort of heat down on himself.

That being said, he's a great deal more untrustworthy than the ferrans. If he is not firmly restrained and monitored, Spectro will attempt to use whatever spells he has remaining to disable his captors and flee the second their guard is down.

RESOLUTION: AUCTION DAY

When the party's assignment is complete, curator Walcroix returns with a half dozen Ruster guards in tow. (While Urbane cares little for Lord Dex, several other nobles he does care about will be attending the auction, so he has arranged for proper security.)

The curator immediately takes inventory of the remaining items. If the party failed to stop any of the thieves, and report their failure to Walcroix before he realizes items are missing, he is disappointed but forgives them. *"I'm sure you did your best,"* he says, *"Mekanus just fosters a tenacious breed of criminal, I suppose."* As long as most of the collection is intact, he sees that their bounty is paid in full.

If the players do not report lost items (either because they did not notice they were stolen, because they hoped the curator would not notice, or because they stole them) he immediately becomes suspicious and questions their absence. If the party can smooth things over via Bluff or Diplomacy, he lets it go and is simply disappointed. Otherwise, he will refuse to pay the party their bounty and demand they turn over what they have stolen. If they refuse, he orders the Rusters to escort the party from the premises and promises to report their indiscretion to Shara Thale. (Fortunately, even if things go this badly, future developments in the adventure may give the party a chance to redeem themselves.)

If the party succeeded in protecting Lord Dex's collection, Walcroix is enthusiastic and appreciative (especially if they managed to arrest any of the thieves). He impulsively pays them their bounty on the spot, including the 100 gold crests bonus (even if he did not promise it earlier). He also invites them to attend the auction, if they wish.

Unless the characters are deeply interested in history, the auction is rather boring and uneventful. The party might be able to obtain some old furniture or historical texts for a reasonable price (such items would offer a +1 bonus to Knowledge (local history) checks when used as reference) but otherwise there isn't much here of interest.

The only noteworthy event (though it doesn't seem important at the time) is that Walcroix himself participates in the auction as a bidder, purchasing several of his former teacher's tomes for a hefty fee. If the party has already allied itself with the Eye, they will recognize Inquisitor Beldar Calsheen among the bidders. If they have allied themselves with the Ghosts of Columbey, they will likewise recognize Vufgar Vanheim as one of the attendees.

PART FOUR: HEART OF THE MACHINE, ACT 3

FIRE AND STEEL

After the auction, life returns to normal for the player characters. The party should be close to being Seasoned before Act III begins. If they're still a bit short, this is a good time to give them some more difficult assignments (perhaps even a few special assignments from the Eye or the Ghosts) so that they'll level up appropriately. Even if they are the appropriate rank, you may want to have at least one job come and go without any further mention of the auction, so that the players put the job out of their mind and don't see the next part coming.

Several days after the auction, Dennison Walcroix goes missing. In the likely event that the players haven't kept in touch with him, they probably don't even notice. Walcroix's butler, Harmon, is quite worried and has reported the disappearance to the local militia, who predictably found nothing.

One evening Dennison went to a play at a theater in Dawn-weather. While walking home alone, he was captured by several members of the Cult of Shermazza.

THE CULT'S GOAL

Though their influence has been felt throughout this adventure, the cult finally makes a personal appearance in the final act. These villains are just a small cell of a much larger cult with operatives throughout Aden. Their current objective is to hunt down any and all records, relics, and survivors of the Seer Order. As Lord James Dex was quite obsessed with the Seers, the old adventurer's possessions have become one of the cult's many targets.

However, what the cult really wants wasn't in the estate sale. As one of Columbey's elder nobles, Dex originally lived in the part of the city that is now the Lost Ghetto. Though Lord Dex rescued what possessions he could, he was forced to abandon many items. Of particular note (and of great frustration to the cult) is a massive basement vault, reinforced with adamantine and sealed with magic.

Thus far, the cultists have been unable to breach the vault, even with the aid of one of Terablix's lesser golems. Touches-Fire (another cult leader and the brains of the operation) believes that the key to entering the vault must be hidden somewhere among Lord Dex's old tomes and paraphernalia. Since hiring thieves to steal the material was unsuccessful, he has decided to go straight to the source and kidnap Dex's former student and friend, Curator Dennison Walcroix.

Fire hopes that Walcroix, with his celebrated keen memory, can give him an idea who might have purchased the key to the vault. Fire has promised Walcroix that if he fails to be of use, he plans to simply kill the curator and hunt down each of the auction buyers one at a time until he finds what he seeks.

DENNISON'S GAMBIT

The curator knows how to access Dex's vault. Opening the door requires a command word known only to Dex and himself. Dennison doesn't know what's inside; Lord Dex trusted him with the command word, but the curator respected that trust and

TERABLIX

The Lost Ghetto, known as the Dark City by the Nocturnals and corrupted who willingly dwell there, is ruled by an insane golem known as King Terablix the Autonomous. What most people do not know, is that Terablix is not a single being. The massive golem has mastered the art of building golem bodies, into which it projects fragments of its own consciousness. These bodies can each commune with their master, and their essence becomes part of the whole once more when they die.

Terablix jealously guards his realm from intruders, and thus sent a pair of his weakest minions to find out why the Circle of Fire and Steel were intruding the Lost Ghetto. The cult was able to negotiate with the golems (their master is aware of Shermazza) and secured their assistance in excavating the mansion. In return, they are expected to share anything they discover with the King of the Dark City.

The party will have to deal with at least one of these lesser (relatively speaking) minions of Terablix-Terabits-when they face off against the cult. The other, fortunately, can be avoided, depending on how the players approach the final conflict.

Of course, once they kill one of the Terabits, Terablix will become aware that the player characters are serious threats. The golem king will begin to monitor their exploits with patient, mechanical curiosity- as we will see in future chapters.

never used it. For a decade now, he has assumed that the vault was buried beneath the rubble of the Lost Ghetto. Now that he knows the vault survived, he would die before he allows these villains to gain access. Alone, unarmed, and surrounded by enemies, there isn't much he can do. Dennison Walcroix can't help himself, but he knows someone who can...

The Cogswheel Irregulars

To this end, he's taken a great risk. Under the cult's brutal torture, he has pretended to be broken and told Fire and Steel what they wanted to know. He told them that the command word to access the vault was recorded in one of Dex's journals - and that it was given to the player characters as a reward for their services at the auction.

Dennison feels terrible for placing the party in danger, but they're the only weapon he has left. He hopes that, given their success in protecting Lord Dex's estate, they'll fend off the cult's ambush, track them down to their headquarters, and end their menace once and for all.

(If the party failed miserably at the auction, Dennison still points the finger at them. In this case, he rationalizes that if the cult kills them, the city won't have lost much, and maybe someone more competent will investigate their deaths and track the cult down.)

If one of the party members is a Seer, and Dennison knows it, he will not reveal that fact to the cult unless that particular player character has really gotten on his bad side.

FIRST ENCOUNTER

Optionally, you may want to gradually work up to the party's first encounter with the cult. Perhaps, while investigating another crime, one of their contacts might warn a player character that some shady characters have been asking around about them. Perhaps one of them returns to their quarters to discover that someone has ransacked the place. Casting a general vibe that someone is out to get the party can put all of them on edge, creating an atmosphere of paranoia. This is especially powerful if the party has allied with the Ghosts or the Eye. They might leap to the wrong conclusion and accuse their political enemies of stalking and robbing them, which could lead to some interesting situations.

While you don't want to draw things out so far that the mystery becomes tedious, a bit of build-up can make the final resolution a great deal more personal and satisfying.

Sooner or later, the cult will come after the party directly. They will wait until the worst possible time to do so, attacking the party while they are already engaged with another opponent, when they are resting and off their guard, or when they are on assignment outside the city and far from reinforcements. You ultimately want the party's first impression with the cult to be a strong one so this encounter should be difficult, but not impossible.

To this end, the cult has sent two of their strongest members, Grieve Warnought and Trina Varlen, along with a handful of well-armed thugs.

BLESSINGS OF SHERMAZZA

The dreadful, mysterious entity known only as Shermazza has discovered a means by which to share its power with those who worship and embrace its philosophy. Many members of the cult thus boast extraordinary abilities. These will be explored in more detail later in this adventure path. For the moment, the following blessings can be found among Shermazza cultists in this chapter of the adventure.

Blessings require their bearer to swear absolute fealty to the Cult of Shermazza (or its individual cells, such as the Circle of Fire and Steel). A bearer of one of these blessings will find it very difficult to escape the cult's attention, should they turn traitor, as Shermazza can scry upon anyone with one of these blessings at will.

Defender of Shermazza

This blessing is given to Shermazza's most resolute defenders. The bearer of this blessing gains the ability to ignore 1 point of AP. The bearer of this blessing's skin become grey and sallow, taking on a texture similar to stone.

Fervor of Shermazza

This blessing is usually rewarded to Shermazza's field commanders and other military personnel. The bearer can project the benefits of this blessing onto a number other Shermazza followers (but not to themselves) equal to half of their Spirit die. So long as the bearer of this blessing is visible, alive, and has not surrendered to the enemy, all followers affected by the blessing gain temporary +1 to their Toughness. The bearer of this blessing speaks with a hollow, unnatural timbre as if their voice were projected through the bowels of a deep cavern.

Guile of Shermazza

This blessing is usually reserved for spies and infiltrators. When speaking to anyone other than a follower of Shermazza, the bearer gains +1 to Persuasion skill checks when telling lies or misdirection. This bonus doubles if the lie an attempt to deny connection to the cult or interfere with their discovery. Unlike most blessings of Shermazza, this one has no obvious side effect.

Servant of Shermazza

This blessing is given only to those with whom Shermazza finds special favor, those who are sent out into the world to indoctrinate other followers. Bearers of this blessing can, via a prolonged ritual, permanently grant a blessing of Shermazza to another follower. It is unknown how frequently this ability may be used, but most who have it use it very sparingly.

Scourge of Shermazza

This blessing is reserved for Shermazza's most powerful mages. Any powers used by the bearer of this blessing are more powerful. Any Stat checks to resist powers used by these bearers are made at a -2. The bearer of this blessing radiates a crackling dark energy from their hands and eyes every time they cast a magical power.

The overall encounter presented here is roughly Seasoned (a tough encounter for a Novice party). Feel free to adjust the number of thugs if you feel the players can handle more, or just want an appropriately terrifying battle. Note that both Grieve Warnought and Trina Varlen possess Blessings of Shermazza, special abilities described earlier in this section.

Grieve Warnought

This former pit fighter was driven entirely mad when he witnessed the deaths of his family at the claws of nocturnals. Touches-Fire discovered Grieve and took advantage of his delicate state, convincing him that the Darkfall is the only true absolute power in this world, and only by embracing and surrendering to it can one escape its inevitable wrath.

Grieve is vicious, cruel, and utterly fearless. He obeys the orders of the cult without question. As his tactics are a bit blunt and straightforward, Touches-Fire has learned that it is useful to pair him with Trina Varlen. Warnought obeys the elven sorceress absolutely and protects her with his life.

Grieve Warnought

Seasoned Dwarf Male

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d6, Shooting d4, Climbing d8, Survival d8

Pace: 5 (d6), **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (4); **Charisma:** -2

Hindrances: Mean

Edges: Brawny, Block

Blessing of Shermazza: Fervor of Shermazza

Gear: +1 breastplate, 10 armor piercing ammunition, battle axe, scattergun, 20 gold

Trina Varlen

Trina hails from a large and prestigious family, most of whom now serve the Cult of Shermazza. As one of the family's younger daughters, she was shipped off to aid one of the cult's lesser cells, a fact that she finds extremely galling. Trina feels that her talents are being wasted here and resents that she is forced to serve a small-minded fool like Fire.

For the moment, she bides her time and waits until the proper opportunity to seize power for herself.

She has been trying to turn Grieve's loyalty and use him as a pawn against Fire and Steel, with no success. The mad dwarf serves her loyally, but only for as long as Fire commands him to do so.

Trina Varlen

Seasoned Elven Female

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Spellcasting d8, Fighting d4, Shooting d4, Persuasion d8, Notice d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5; **Charisma:** 0

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Very Attractive

Blessing of Shermazza: Guile of Shermazza

Gear: Dagger, longbow, mithral buckler, potion of Healing (Two wounds), 120 gold crests

Spells (10pp): Bolt, Armor, Detect/Conceal Arcana, Light/Obscure

Cult Initiates (3)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Shooting d4, Climbing d4, Intimidation d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6+1 (1)

Gear: Flail, crossbow, leather armor, 2 gold crests, 10 bolts

Tactics: The followers of Shermazza attack brutally and without warning. Grieve Warnought has used his blessing to grant a temporary Toughness bonus to as many of his fellow cultists as possible.

Their plan is to incapacitate a few party members using Trina's magic, kill or drive away the rest, and then take any surviving prisoners back to the Lost Ghetto via a secret passage in the sewers. They might even demand that the party surrender peacefully, promising that they will not be harmed. (A lie, of course; if the player characters don't have what they want, the cult has no use for them.) Though the cultists fight with manic zeal, they are also under orders to avoid capture by the Eye. If the odds turn against them, Grieve will attempt to sacrifice himself to hold off the party while the others make their escape.

Trina is particularly cowardly; she will cast vanish and flee at the first sign of trouble, then retreat back to the Lost Ghetto to blame the entire disaster on the others who didn't make it. If she cannot escape, she will surrender to preserve her own life. Though she is a coward, Trina fears the cult more than anything the player characters can do to her, as her Blessing of Shermazza renders her unable to escape her brethren forever. She is treacherous in the extreme and will attempt to escape or betray the party at the first possible opportunity. If asked details regarding the cult cell, she will vastly undersell the cult's capabilities (and certainly not warn them about Terabit) in hopes that the player characters will charge in unprepared and die.

TRACKING DOWN THE CULT

Following this attack, the players should be curious who, exactly, is sending fanatical zealots to capture them alive and why. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways. If any of the cultists were captured alive, the party can attempt to interrogate them. While Trina will gladly give the party whatever information they need in return for her life, she will also under-

state the cult's capabilities in hopes that the player characters get themselves killed. The others are more difficult to persuade. They are highly resistant to both Persuasion and Intimidation, as they fear the cult's wrath a great deal more than the player characters. Magic can help, of course. Charms or similar spells might persuade a prisoner to open up. Lying is also potentially helpful here.

Except for Trina, none of these cultists are particularly bright. A clever player might, for example, convince a prisoner that he is also a member of the cult, and that he has come to censure the local cell for renegade activity. Grieve Warhaunt is a bit brighter, more stubborn, and (as a dwarf) resistant to magic, so he is by far the most difficult prisoner to deal with. If he is present during another cultist's interrogation, he will call out the player characters on their obvious lies and make things more difficult.

One surprisingly easy way to get the cultists to crack is to bring the Eye into it. Just threatening to turn the prisoners over to the Eye will cause any of them but Grieve to fall all over themselves giving information as they plead for the mercy of the Mekanus dungeons instead. They can even follow through on the threat; even if the Eye is on poor terms with the party, they take corrupted cults very seriously and will offer their grudging thanks for the delivery. If the party is on good terms with the Eye, the Inquisitors will even share the results of their interrogations.

The Eye's interrogators can successfully draw information from any of the cultists within a day. This includes Grieve, though he holds out a few hours longer than the others. No cultists surrendered into the Eye's custody are ever seen again.

The cultists can give the following information:

- ✧ They serve the Circle of Fire and Steel (none of these cultists know that the cult is part of the larger Cult of Shermazza).
- ✧ The leaders are Magnus Steelfist, a massive jurak golemoid, and Arnagaith Touches-Fire, a brilliant rapacian spellcaster.
- ✧ The cultists originally came to Mekanus from Arasteen a few months ago. They have been searching for something in the ruins of the Lost Ghetto.
- ✧ Lately, they have been holed up in a ruined mansion. The cultists identify the mansion by the seal on the door - a hart on a field of blue. Astute players may recall this as the personal heraldry of Sir James Dex.
- ✧ For the last several weeks, they've been clearing the rubble away from a vault in the basement and trying to get inside, with no success.
- ✧ The cultists attacked the player characters so they could learn how to get into the vault.
- ✧ The cultists believe the player characters can get inside because their other prisoner, the "*spineless little scholar*" told them so under torture. They can confirm, via description, that this prisoner is Curator Dennison Walcroix.
- ✧ The cultists enter and leave the Lost Ghetto via a sewer tunnel whose wards have been removed. Only Grieve and Trina can give the players useful directions through the

VICTIMS OF THEIR OWN SUCCESS

What if the player characters kill all the cultists or fail to get any useful information from them? This may make it difficult to move the story forward, as the cult is too small send its members after them forever.

In this case, Steel will simply sell off some of the lesser treasures found in Dex's estate and use them to hire local ruffians to capture the player characters. These mercenaries are given instructions to deliver any prisoners to a rendezvous point in the sewers (near where one of the Terabits is stationed). These mercenaries are far more willing to talk to save themselves, and the treasures they carry will bear all manner of indentifying marks to connect them Lord Dex's estate.

If the players forgot what Dex's crest looked like, a Knowledge (nobility) skill check at -1 or simply showing the items to Shara Thale, Beldar Calsheen, or Vulgar Vanheim will set them on the right track.

If this option becomes necessary, simply repurpose the statistics given for various thugs and mercenaries elsewhere in this book to create these enemies.

sewers. Naturally Grieve won't tell them (unless the Eye makes him give up the information) and Trina will try to lie to the players in hopes that they'll be killed by a ward.

- ✧ Fire has made an arrangement with the local nocturnals of the Lost Ghetto, somehow. The creatures approach the ruins but never harass them.
- ✧ A pair of giant mechanical golems has recently appeared to aid the cult. One of them assists in the vault's excavation. Another guards the sewer tunnel. None of the cultists know where the golems came from. Trina and Grieve know that these creatures are servants of Terablix the Autonomous, King of the Dark City.

About a half dozen more cultists protect the ruins, in addition to Fire, Steel, the golem, and some wandering nocturnals.

FINDING THE CULT

The party's next objective should be to track down these cultists and rescue Dennison Walcroix. Once they make the connection between the cultists and James Dex, they should realize that, as a former noble of Columbey, Dex would have lived in the area of the city that is now the Lost Ghetto. If they can find his former home, they can find the cult.

This is easy enough. The characters can turn to their allies in the Eye or the Ghosts for this information, or just look it up themselves. The city's old archives are public, and a few hours of research can turn up a usable map to the location. (Though the Lost Ghetto is a chaotic ruin, the buildings are all still in the same places.) A particularly educated character might even already know where the house is with a successful Knowledge (local history) skill check at -2.

Next, the players need to find a way into the Lost Ghetto. This corrupted sector of the city is well-fortified and guarded at all times by Ruster soldiers. Non-military personnel are not allowed into the Ghetto; those who insist on entering this dangerous area will be arrested on suspicion of being corrupted sympathizers.

This is where the party's political affiliations can be of particular use:

- ✧ If the players are allied with the Eye, Beldar Calsheen can provide the characters with an executive order allowing them temporary access to the Ghetto. All that he asks is that the players wipe out the cult's influence and bring back any suspicious artifacts or living prisoners.
- ✧ If the players are allied with the Ghosts of Columbey, Vufgar Vanheim uses his connections to bribe one of the guards, as the Ghosts generally do when sending their operatives into the Lost Ghetto. All he asks is that if the player characters find any relics connected to the Tarello bloodline, they donate them to the Ghosts.

If the players have avoided such political alliances, they can attempt to enter on their own. The following options are possible:

- ✧ They could go over the wall directly. Every section of the wall is thirty feet high and guarded by 1-4 elite soldiers in a watchtower. At the first sign of activity, the guard will immediately send a flare, drawing a dozen reinforcements within three rounds, and twenty more within a minute. If the players can find a way to incapacitate or avoid the guard's detection and circumvent the wall, they're in. Note that killing these guards is a bad idea.

When guards on the Shadowwall die, it draws all sorts of attention from the Eye as well as the Shadow Army. And, obviously, these are just innocent soldiers doing their job to protect the city – killing them might even lead to a nocturnal invasion while their section of the wall is unguarded.

- ✧ They could go through the sewers. The Mekanus sewers are mazelike and difficult to navigate. Getting under the wall without getting lost may require magical assistance or, at the very least, several Knowledge (navigation) skill checks at -1. The players will encounter 1d4 wards of random power (see The Sewers in the Welcome to Mekanus section, earlier in this book). These might be trivial or completely impassable. Any trip through the sewers may result in random encounters, depending on how long the party is down there.
- ✧ If the party obtained accurate directions through the sewers from the cultists, then they avoid all wards and can get in and out in an hour. However, this route takes them directly into the path of one of the two Terabits now allied with the cult. This massive construct guards the tunnel at all times and will violently attack any intruders. When it does not recognize the player characters as members of the cult, it fights to the death.

The golem dramatically announces itself as follows: “*Know that you mortal fools face Terabit, avatar of immortal King Terablix the Autonomous, Champion of the Darkfall, sunderer*

of Mekanus! In the name of my lord, those who trespass in the Dark City must burn!”

Not only is this a difficult battle (especially since the players still have the cult and another Terabit to deal with) but killing the golem results in Terablix becoming aware of the party's intrusion. The King of the Lost Ghetto will immediately alert its minion in Dex's estate, meaning that the rest of the cult will be on high alert by the time the party arrives.



Use the Terabit stats presented in the Appendix, p. 51.

Tactics: Terabit merely lumbers to the assault, trying to kill as many party members as possible. It fights with no concern for its own safety and does not surrender. If destroyed, it manages to rattle out a “*This... is hardly... the end...*” before the light in its furnace dies.

THE CULT HEADQUARTERS

Lord James Dex's former home is a small two-story mansion in the southwestern area of the Lost Ghetto. The entire western wall of the building has collapsed, leaving no way to access the other floors save a dangerous climb up heaps of rubble. Though it has seen better days, it is at least in better shape than its neighbors, as the surrounding buildings in the area have been completely leveled. (This is no accident - the two Terabits recently leveled the area so that the cult could see intruders coming.) A rhythmic, thunderous hammering can be heard – and felt – from somewhere deep in the earth.

The area surrounding the building is regularly patrolled by a trio of grotesque, fleshy goblins known as cacklers. These are more minions of Terablix, lent to help secure the area. If the players do not deal with these creatures, they will come running when they hear any sounds of battle in the mansion. These creatures are, however, extremely aggressive.

This makes them easy to lead off into the city, where they can be dealt with away from the rest of the cult.



Use the Cackler Monster in Savage Thunderscape p. 105.

The building itself is inhabited by the remaining members of the cult, which consists of five low-ranking cultists, Aron Gesh, Fire, Steel, and the remaining Terabit. Fortunately for the party, the last three are occupied in the lower levels of the house; Fire and Steel are currently interrogating Walcroix, and the Terabit is in the lowest level, hammering away patiently at the vault.

Aron Gesh crouches amid the rubble on the top floor and keeps an eye out for any intruders. The rest of the cultists guard the ground floor, with two or three awake at any given time. If

Aron notices that the cacklers have ceased making their rounds or otherwise suspects something is amiss, he will immediately order the remaining cultists to wake up their brethren and prepare for battle.

If the party killed the other Terabit, the cult is already on high alert by the time the party arrives. Steel is sent upstairs to reinforce the guards on the ground floor, and Terabit and Fire guard the prisoner together.

This could make the final encounters extremely difficult, but that's what the party signed on for when they went into this without making friends (or for forgetting to use them, at least).

Aron Gesh

This sallow-faced soldier is a former member of the Iron Guard. Worn down by years of soul-scarring battle, he quit the military and eventually found a home with the cult. He is an expert sniper and a vicious, remorseless killer. Fire and Steel have left him here to guard the ground floor not only for his sharp eye, but because they know he will not hesitate to line up his sights on any cultist who loses their nerve and tries to leave the Lost Ghetto.

Aron Gesh

Seasoned Human Male

Attributes: Agiltiy d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Shooting d8, Climbing d6, Repair d8, Knowledge (local) d6, Notice d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1); **Charisma:** -2

Hindrances: Ugly

Edges: Marksman, Assassin

Gear: Short sword, sniper rifle, leather armor, 10 sniper ammo, dagger, potion of Healing (one wound), 23 gold crests

Cult Initiates (5)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Shooting d4, Climbing d4, Intimidation d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Gear: Flail, crossbow, leather armor, 2 gold crests, 10 bolts

Tactics: Gesh remains on the top floor, attempting to use cover and stealth to sneak attack the party with his sniper rifle as much as possible.

The other cultists will likewise attempt to hold their ground with ranged weapons until the party enters the building. Once engaged, Gesh will continue to assault the party from range with his rifle (using heavy shot) unless someone attacks him on his ledge and forces him into melee.

Gesh will focus his attacks against characters with ranged attacks or who are attempting to climb up to his position.

There is no obvious way up to the second floor, though the player characters can always attempt to climb or leap up as Gesh did. The second floor is roughly ten feet up. Player characters can attempt to leap and pull themselves up (Agility check followed by a Climbing skill check) or simply climb up directly (Climbing skill check at -1).

The cultists all realize that if they fail to repel an attack here it likely means the end of the cult - they fight to the death. Even if they hear the melee above, Fire and Steel make no effort to come to cult's aid. Fire arrogantly believes that protecting the vault is more important and that the cultists serve their purpose in weakening the intruders. Steel follows his lead.

Once defeated, the party finds the cult has a small camp here in the ruins where they have been living for quite some time. They can loot all manner of camping supplies and food, if they wish, or move on to the next challenge.

A Notice or Tracking skill check on the premises reveals a well-traveled path through the rubble, leading to a thick

NEW MAGIC ITEM: AMULET OF SHERMAZZA

This simple amulet resembles a blackened manite coin, engraved with the image of what seems to be a stylized spider. These tokens are granted to favored followers of Shermazza, to protect them in their travels and to make it easier for their master to monitor their deeds.

The abilities bestowed by this amulet vary depending on one's standing within the cult. The cultists in this adventure merely gain the *Arcane Resistance* Edge against offensive powers.

These amulets grant more powerful abilities to higher ranking cultists, and also make it far easier for Shermazza of his other followers to scry upon and track those who carry them (as will be seen in later chapters of this adventure).

Cost: 1000 Gold

wooden trap door. The door is currently barred from the inside, requiring a sufficient damage to destroy it (Toughness 10). In addition, Fire has placed a ward on the stairs directly beyond the door that will alert him if anyone passes through it. Overall, this means that even if the party managed to take out the cacklers and the cult initiates without causing a great deal of noise, it is unlikely that they will approach Fire and Steel unnoticed.

SHOWDOWN WITH FIRE AND STEEL

After passing the trap door, the party continues down a dark stairwell, leading into an enormous, dimly lit chamber. This room is filled with a variety of ancient statues, sealed chests, and historical relics from cultures throughout Aden, quite reminiscent of the collection they saw in Dex's estate. Unfortunately, the room is also half flooded due to rain leaking in from the destroyed city above, ruining much of the value of these treasures (and those few that were of noteworthy value were sold by Fire and Steel long ago).

This cultural graveyard is roughly 100 feet across and thickly littered with obstacles and deep puddles of water. The cult leaders wait for the party here. Steel crouches in ambush behind

a large statue near the entrance while Fire waits in the center of the room, with a clear view of the entrance but enough obstacles in the way to protect him from being charged. Fire's golem minion, a mechanical iguana named Brutus, uses its unobtrusive writ to hide among the refuse near the door, pretending to be a statue.

Dennison Walcroix is currently chained up behind a pile of wrecked statuary in the back of the room, badly injured and near death from the cult's torture (he is currently stabilized at 0 hp). He is near another large stairwell, from which the rhythmic hammering continues to issue.

Magnus Steelfist ("Steel")

Magnus Steelfist is the second in command of the Circle of Fire and Steel. A former Steppes barbarian, Magnus was badly injured and left for dead after a failed attack on an Urbanan convoy. He was discovered by Arnagaith Touches-Fire, who used his talents to transform the jurak into a powerful golemoid juggernaut. Though Steel privately has his doubts as to whether Fire is wise to blindly follow the monstrous Shermazza, he puts his personal feelings aside and follows Fire without hesitation.

In battle, Steel is a brutal and merciless opponent, but also a cunning tactician. Though he would not normally fight to the death, he will gladly die to protect his friend Fire.



Magnus Steelfist

Seasoned Jurak Male

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d12, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Shooting d6, Repair d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d10, Survival d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (6); **Charisma:** 0

Hindrances: Code of Honor

Edges: Golemoid, Brawny

Blessing of Shermazza: Defender of Shermazza

Equipment: Scattergun, 10 scattergun heavy shot, amulet of Shermazza, +1 plate mail (integrated), thieves' tools, potion of Healing (Two wounds), 210 gold crests

Manite Implants (Steam Points: 8)

- ✦ **Minor Implants:** chest spikes, minor luminescent implants, momentum manipulator,
- ✦ **Basic Implants:** integrated armor, manite buffering system, steam breath

Arnagaith Touches-Fire

The leader of the Circle of Fire and Steel is Arnagaith Touches-Fire, a rapacian mechamage from the distant lands of Le'Ciel. At an early age, he watched his family die of a mysterious ailment while the mages and healers of his tribe could do nothing. Disgusted by their weakness, he set out to master magic and gain true power over life and death. That determination drew him to become a mechamage, just as it drew him to become a disciple of the mysterious entity known only as Shermazza - who promised to teach Fire mastery over life and death.

At Shermazza's bidding, he has left his home behind and traveled the vast expanses of Aden, searching for any relics or lost teachings of the Seer Order. Fire believes that it is his destiny to defeat death and stand at Shermazza's side as his master rules over all of Aden. Fire's only true loyalty, other than to the cult, is to his friend Steel. Fire views Steel as his greatest creation, his first small victory in his war against oblivion.

Fire is always accompanied by his golem minion, a mechamagical iguana named Brutus.

Arnagaith Touches-Fire

Seasoned Rapacian Male

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d4, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Golemancy d8, Fighting d4, Shooting d6, Healing d8, Knowledge (arcana) d8, Knowledge (engineering) d8, Knowledge (history) d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4 (2); **Toughness:** 5; **Charisma:** 0

Hindrances: Code of Honor

Edges: Arcane Background (Mechamage)

Blessing of Shermazza: Scourge of Shermazza

Gear: +1 mithral buckler, 10 standard pistol ammunition, amulet of Shermazza, healer's kit and surgery tools, dagger, pistol, 300 gold crests

Powers (15pp): Detect/Conceal Arcana, Growth/Shrink, Armor, Boost/Lower Trait

Brutus (Fire's Doll Golem Minion)

Use the Doll Golem Monster in Savage Thunderscape on p. 102

Tactics: Enraged by the intrusion into his domain, Fire does not even attempt to parley. Rather, he fills the air with spiteful threats and accusations.

"Do you even realize what you are meddling with?" "Do you really think our grand dreams can be undone by a band of pathetic mercenaries?" that kind of thing. If the party is allied with the Eye, he makes things even more personal, calling them toadies of a corrupt state and hypocritical pawns of an evil nearly as great as the one he serves.

Steel is less talkative; he merely rushes into melee and begins bashing player characters with his fists. Brutus will attempt to trip whoever he can, flanking with Steel if possible or ambushing any solitary spellcasters.

Fire will concentrate mostly on control spells, hoping to disable his foes with grease, stinking cloud, or glitterdust so that Steel can kill them more easily.

Neither Fire nor Steel will attempt to surrender or escape. Shermazza sent them here to do a job, so they're going down fighting. That being said - the Eye is absolutely delighted if the party manages to bring either of them in alive. Beldar Calsheen is willing to give the party a 1000 gold crest reward for capturing such dangerous corrupted cultists, regardless of whether they are on good terms with the Eye or not. (He does not, however, give them anything extra for bringing in both of them. The man's generosity has its limits.)

RESCUING DENNISON

Dennison Walcroix is badly injured and near death, but still just barely conscious. If the party can offer him any healing to get him on his feet, he is deeply appreciative. If they merely plan to carry him out in his current state, he is still extremely thankful.

Walcroix apologizes for siccing the cult on the party, but he confesses he saw no other option. The cult was dangerously close to finding Lord Dex's secret treasure. They had to be stopped - and he knew no one else more capable for the job.

He also reveals that he knows how to open the vault, but that there's some sort of extremely dangerous golem downstairs, a creature who claims to serve King Terablix. If the party merely wants to take the curator and get out of here, Dennison is mildly disappointed but does not argue. He will, however, warn them that they are unlikely to be able to return. Once Terablix the Autonomous realizes that outsiders have destroyed the cult, he is likely to send more powerful minions to protect the place.

If the party intends to press on, they'd best prepare for a fight. If the party can heal Dennison back into fighting shape, he will ask them to wait long enough to appropriate some armor and weapons from the cultists upstairs. This bard is done sitting on the sidelines; he is ready and willing to aid the party in the final battle.

Facing Terabit

The stairs lead down into a somewhat smaller chamber, roughly fifty feet across. Like the upper basement, this sub-basement is littered with ruined crates and flooded in sections. Just as the players enter the room, the hammering stops and they see the source - a massive, twelve foot tall golem crafted from scrap metal and wrecked machine parts. Behind the creature stands a huge door of pure black adamantine, now badly dented from the golem's incessant banging. The construct turns to face the party as they enter.

"Know that for interfering in this matter, you have marked yourselves as enemies of my master, Terablix the Unimaginable, King of the Dark City," it says as it lumbers into combat. "There will be certain... repercussions."



Use the Terabit stats presented in the Appendix, p. 51.

Tactics: Terabit is brutal and straightforward in the manner of golems.

It fights with supreme confidence and mechanical efficiency. Like its predecessor, it promises "*This... is hardly... the end...*" as it dies.

Victory

When Terabit is destroyed, Dennison immediately hurries to the vault door. He warns the player characters to be prepared, as he has no idea what might lie within. He speaks the command word, "*Exile*," and the door begins to slowly grind open, unimpeded by the damage Terabit inflicted upon it.

Walcroix's shoulders slump as he sees the interior. Shelves of scrolls and ancient journals line the walls, but they have been ruined by constant flooding. "I can only imagine what Dex recorded here," he whispers.

Yet all is not lost. A large, iron-bound chest rests on a pedestal in the center of the room. It is securely locked (Lockpicking at -2). The players can either open it here or just drag it with them (the chest and its contents weigh about ninety pounds) as they make their escape from the Lost Ghetto.

The chest contains a number of valuable historical artifacts: three journals describing Kyanite nobility (worth 100 gold crests each), a jeweled Yzeemite dagger worth 250 gp, a collection of Steppes barbarian runestones worth 150 gp, and a mithral buckler. There is also an amulet of Armor (+2, 10pp) emblazoned with the symbol of an open hand. A Knowledge (local history) skill check identifies this as the royal seal of the Tarello house.

If the players are allied with the Ghosts of Columbey, they are familiar with this symbol. Dennison can identify it with a glance, as well. This is the Heart of Tarello (see sidebar).

Dennison tells the party to help themselves to whatever is in the chest, as they have earned it with their heroism. He will, however, ask that if they intend to sell anything to consider him as a buyer. He needs to return home and organize his finances, but he's willing to buy anything they do not want.

THE HEART OF TARELLO

This unassuming little amulet was once worn by the kings of Columbey, and is a powerful artifact in the right hands. Though it appears to be merely an amulet of Armor (+2), it reveals more powerful abilities when worn by a member of the Tarello bloodline.

If the party doesn't want it, Dennison Walcroix is quite happy to purchase it. The party's contacts in the Eye and (especially) the Ghosts are also eager to get their hands on it. Beldar Calsheen will pay the party 2000 gold for the amulet, just for the pleasure of keeping it out of the Ghosts' hands. Vufgar Vanheim is willing to pay 3000 gold for it, though if the players just give it to him he is effusively grateful and promises that they will have Prince Daniel's personal gratitude for this extraordinary service.

They can also hang onto it, of course.

Whatever happens to the amulet, don't worry if the players sell it or give it away. Just quietly note down what happens to it. These things have a way of turning up again...in the most unexpected places and unwanted ways.

PART FIVE

APPENDIX

NEW MONSTER: TERABIT

This bulky terror seems to be forged out of spare parts and the wreckage of abandoned vehicles. It gazes through metal grates gleaming with an unholy internal fire. Its body is wreathed in a cloud of putrid black exhaust.

Terabit

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+1, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 13 (8)

Special Abilities

- ✧ **Improved Arcane Resistance**, except for spells with Cold trappings. Spells with Fire trappings super-charge the Terabit, acting as if it was under the influence of a Quickness spell for 1d6 rounds.
- ✧ **Armor:** +8
- ✧ **Size:** +6, +2 to be hit.
- ✧ **Vulnerable to cold** (Halves pace & loses the ability to use Steam Charge or Inferno Breath for 2d6 rounds.)
- ✧ **Infravision:** 10"
- ✧ **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken, No extra damage from Called shots, doesn't suffer from Wound Modifiers.
- ✧ **Steam Charge:** As often as every other round, a Terabit can ignite its engines for a sudden burst of speed. This grants the golem a Pace of 12, as long as it only moves or charges in a straight line during that round. This counts only as a Terabit's move so it is not subject to mutli action penalties if it uses this ability.
- ✧ **Inferno Breath:** Using the cone template, a Terabit can belch forth a cloud of searing steam as an action and inflict 2d10 points of damage if those caught in the area fail an Agility check. If may use this ability every 1d3 rounds.
- ✧ **Slamming fists:** Str+d6
- ✧ **Terrible Focus:** All Terabits are part of the terrible consciousness known as Terablix the Autonomous. Though they are fully functional even when completely separated from Terablix's domain, they are at their strongest when surrounded by their fellow golems. A Terabit gains a +2 bonus to Strength and

+2 die raise to Agility when within 100 feet or 24" of another one of Terablix's golem minions (any other construct with this ability).

As an action, any construct with this ability can commune with Terablix the Autonomous regardless of distance, even from another plane. This communication can be maintained for as long as necessary, but requires the construct's full concentration.

Terablix the Autonomous can assume direct control of any construct with this ability at will, superimposing its own Smarts, Spirit, Charisma, and skills over that of its new host. Any time this construct communes with Terablix, all of its current knowledge and memories are added to those of Terablix the Autonomous. This also occurs if the construct is killed.



Terabits are the weakest known constructs created by Terablix the Autonomous. Like all of his golems, these creatures share his consciousness and exist only at his whim. They typically serve as messengers, laborers, or foot soldiers. Though constructed out of random salvage (Terablix reserves better materials for his more powerful constructs), the presence of the master golem's consciousness nonetheless makes these creatures fearful opponents.

MEKANUS RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

If things are moving along slowly, or you just want to spice up the party's downtime a bit, feel free to use the following Random Encounter table. While the table is designed only to feature encounters for the level ranges of this adventure, be warned that some of the higher end combat encounters might pose quite a danger for lower level characters. Try to use the table sparingly so that you don't encounter the same results over and over.

Obviously not all of the listed encounters need to involve combat. Use your imagination and be creative. A merchant might have singled out the party as a prospective customer, or might even have recognized their potential prowess and want to hire them as bodyguards. A bandit might not be an aggressor - he might be a criminal who mistakes the party for others like him and asks them to join him to knock over a local store. The possibilities are limitless.

Use the Urban column when determining encounters in the city proper. Feel free to ignore rolls that don't make sense, such as a group of bandits in the middle of Honor's Foundry.

Use the Rural column when determining encounters in the surrounding lands, particularly when on military missions outside the city.



Use the Nocturnals column only when directed to do so by one of the other tables, or when in the Lost Ghetto. Nocturnal encounters are extremely rare in wealthy and secure districts such as Honor's Foundry and Mekanus Central Station. Even when they do occur, the aggressors are likely to be overwhelmed by Urbanan soldiers before the party even becomes involved.

Mekanus Random Encounter Table

Card	Urban	Rural	Nocturnals
2-3	Militia patrol	Traveling merchant	Nocturnal dog pack
4-5	Traveling Merchant	Militia patrol	Rat swarm
6-7	Foreign traveler	Farmers of other civilian locals	Zombies (1d10)
8	Stray dogs	Mercenaries	Ghouls (1d6)
9	Shadow Army soldiers	Shadow Army patrol	Cacklers (1d3)
10	Thieves/pickpockets	Wolves (2d4)	Wasted (1d3)
Jack	Troublemaking thugs	Hippogriff (solitary hunter or mated pair)	Shankers (1d2)
Queen	Elite soldier patrol	Ogre	Barghest
King	Wealthy dignitary with elite bodyguards	Dire boar	Gargoyle
Ace	Pull twice-resulting parties are fighting	Pull twice-resulting parties are fighting	Pull twice
Joker	Nocturnal	Nocturnal	Pull three times